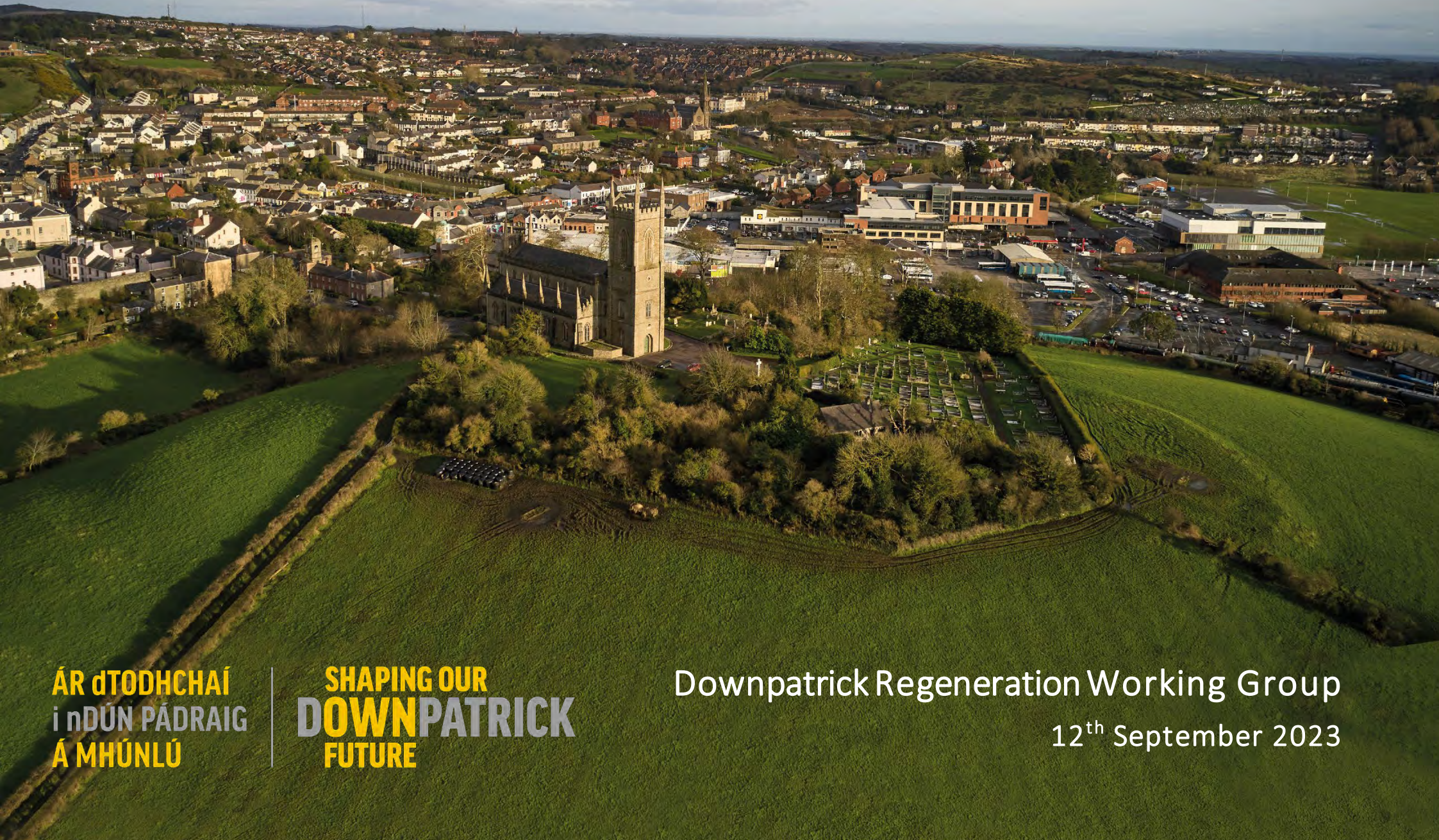


# Downpatrick Living High Streets Framework



ÁR dTODHCHAÍ  
i nDÚN PÁDRAIG  
Á MHÚNLÚ

SHAPING OUR  
**DOWNPATRICK**  
FUTURE

Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group

12<sup>th</sup> September 2023



# Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	page 1
Purpose	page 1
Context	page 1
Plans, Policies & Strategies	page 3
Facts about Downpatrick	page 8
Community Insights	page 10
Process to Co-Design the Framework	page 12
 <b>2 Vision</b>	 page 13
Downpatrick, at the Heart of the Story of Ireland!	page 13
Objectives	pg. 13
 <b>3 Action Plan</b>	 page 14
The Strategies	page 14
Strategy A: Communications & Marketing	page 16
Strategy B: Making the Most of Existing Assets	page 18
Strategy C: Activating & Connecting Streets & Spaces	page 24
Strategy D: Image - Tackling Vacancy, Frontages & Gateways	page 30
Strategy E: Community Needs & Wants	page 34
The Projects	page 36
 <b>4 Next Steps</b>	 page 45
Maintaining Momentum	page 45
Governance Matters	page 45
Funding Opportunities	page 46
 <b>Appendices</b>	 page 49
Appendix A Document Review	page 50
Appendix B Case Studies	page 51
Appendix C Ideas Scrapbook	page 63
Appendix D Acknowledgements	page 70

## Preface

We have as much going for us, if not more, than any other County Town. The history, the linkages and the scenery in this area should have us at the forefront of any tourist's agenda. We cannot let go of this opportunity. I feel there are potentially exciting times over the next few years. We hope to have an Executive back soon and funding streams opening up again. There is talk of American money and foreign investment. We in Downpatrick need to be "shovel ready" to avail of every opportunity that presents itself.

My sincere thanks to you all on behalf of the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group for your enthusiasm, your feedback, and your contributions to this process.

Malachy McGrady, Chair of Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group

# 1 Introduction

## Purpose

This Downpatrick Living High Streets Framework has been co-produced by the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group, with participation from local communities of interest and mentored by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland. It sets out a series of Strategies with Actions and Projects to deliver change.

This community-led Downpatrick Living High Streets Framework (Framework) is underpinned by local knowledge and sets out the needs and wants for Downpatrick, prioritising them as deliverable Actions. The vision for Downpatrick is ambitious and the incremental nature of the Actions and Projects will ensure it remains relevant and continues to bring together key stakeholders. The Framework reflects relevant plans and documents and points to places where more information can be found.

## Context

### Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group

The Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group (DRWG) was formed in September 2022. The DRWG comprises community and business representatives with key individuals from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) and DfC Regeneration (DfC).

The DRWG brief was to look at what is not working in Downpatrick, what we could improve, what could attract people here, and what physical and perceptual aspects need to change, and to draw together plan of action to rejuvenate Downpatrick.

Downpatrick was selected by DfC as the first pilot scheme for the Living High Street Initiative at the end of November 2022. This Initiative is being led by DRWG, in collaborations with NMDDC and DfC. Mentored by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland to co-design the Framework.

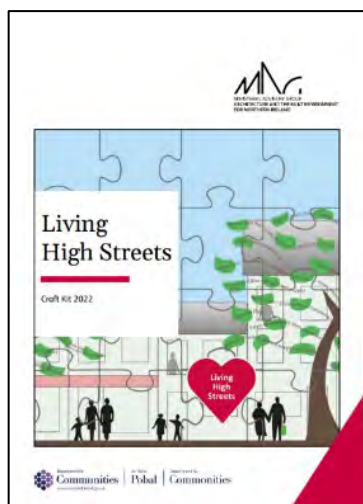
ÁR dTODHCHAÍ  
i nDÚN PÁDRAIG  
Á MHÚNLÚ

SHAPING OUR  
DOWNPATRICK  
FUTURE



# 1 Introduction

## Living High Street Initiative

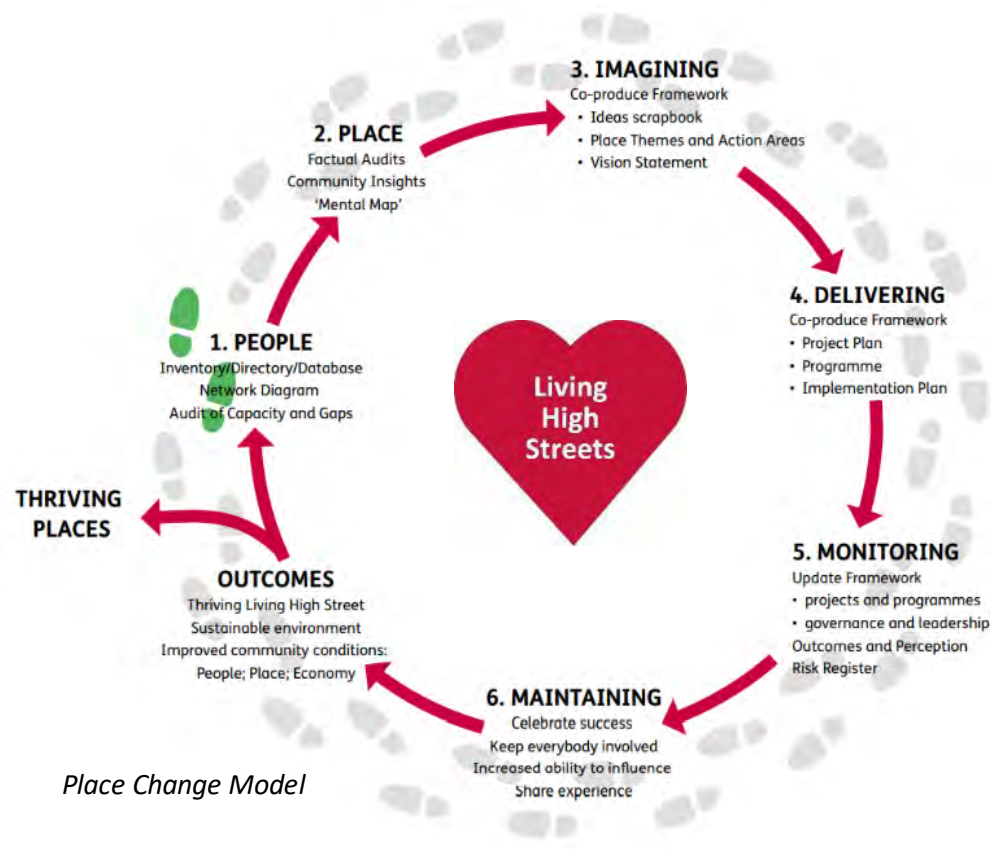


In March 2022 MAG published the **Living High Streets Craft Kit**. The Living High Streets is a fresh approach to placemaking that empowers local communities in collaboration with key stakeholders to re-imagine their high streets. The adjacent Place Change Model is central to the approach and with six theme's culminating with thriving places. The Craft Kit sets out each theme's purpose, associated questions and intended outcomes. The questions have been designed to facilitate guided conversations in workshops to co-produce a Framework to shape sustainable Living High Streets for the future.

This approach also builds social capacity and skills, along with instilling a community-led process to maintain positive change over the long-term. It promotes continuity, with local people having a sense of ownership and control over their place, its stewardship and the consequent pride.

The Downpatrick pilot launched with a series of five workshops between December 2022 and March 2023. Interested parties and user groups from Downpatrick and beyond were invited by DRWG to participate and contribute through the workshops focusing on themes one to four, facilitated by MAG on behalf of the DRWG. To complement the workshops, a digital engagement platform was set up with two surveys to engage the wider community to in the process. A public event was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and additional feedback was provided by students from SERC and Routledge.

The knowledge, insights and ideas provided by everybody through the workshops has been essential to the process and shapes the Strategies and Actions in this co-designed Framework.



# 1 Introduction

## Plans, Policies & Strategies

This section of the Framework draws from previous and current policies, guidance and strategies to provide an overview. It identifies links to other relevant initiatives that must be addressed in parallel to the Actions and Projects in the Framework to avoid duplication and / or gaps that limit the vibrant future of Downpatrick and its people.

### Local Development Plan

Important policies in the town centre, are unlikely to change from the Extant Local Development Plan for Downpatrick is the **Ards and Down Area Plan 2015**. These relate to the Town Centre boundary, extent of the Conservation Area, Primary Retail Core, Protected Route and Protected Housing.

NMDDC are currently preparing the Local Development Plan (LDP). The **LDP preparation process, timetable**, Preferred Options Paper and Statement of Community Involvement can be found on the NMDDC website. When adopted, it will replace the extant LDP for the Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 and the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (in so far as they apply to the district). The adopted LDP will provide a 15 year plan framework to support economic and social needs in the district, in line with regional strategies and policies, while providing the delivery of sustainable development.

The **Local Development Plan Evidence Base** includes many excellent baseline studies including a Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study, which was prepared on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council - April 2022. This states that at that stage Downpatrick had circa 20% vacancy which is comparative to similar size towns in Northern Ireland but higher than the UK average of 12%. The report includes a GOAD Map which illustrates the different retail categories in Downpatrick.

## Heritage, Conservation & Culture

The historical **Conservation Area Guide for Downpatrick** was produced in 1985 by the former Department of the Environment (DOE). It provides information on the planning context, historical development, description or character appraisal of the area, the designation and guidelines for development proposals.

Downpatrick has a distinctive character with the town centre, set between two hills with steep, narrow streets curving up and around the hills, giving a complete sense of enclosure. A number of buildings, including Down Cathedral and the Southwell Charity are of special architectural interest, while the many fine town houses, in themselves good examples of Georgian domestic architecture, are an important ingredient of the townscape and provide an essential foil to several imposing public buildings.

English Street, Irish Street and parts of Scotch Street and Church Street and Market Street are within the Conservation Area and there are a significant number of Listed Buildings. There are 113 Listed Buildings located within the wards of Cathedral, Knocknashinna and Quoile. The majority of the Listed Buildings are within the centre of Downpatrick, mainly within the Conservation area along English Street, Irish Street / Stream Street and the southern part of Church Street. These streets represent Downpatrick's Georgian and Victorian influences, they give unique historic character and greatly enhance the built environment. Saul Street, lying outside the Conservation Area is also of note featuring a number of Listed Buildings.

NMDDC have published **Advice Guide 8 - General Principles of Good Shop Front Design**. Most alterations and improvements to shop fronts will require permission and more than one type of permission may be required. Repair works do not normally require consent. This guide offers guidance for shop fronts within Conservation Areas, on Listed Buildings or on buildings adjacent to Listed Buildings and Areas of Townscape Character. However, this guidance should be used for all shop fronts in Downpatrick.

# 1 Introduction

A **Heritage Asset Audit** was undertaken for the DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) and Heritage Lottery Fund in May 2018. The following general summary of findings were reflected in the workshops and recorded in the Community Insights. Downpatrick has a true wealth of heritage assets with a rich cultural infrastructure and excellent visitor attractions including: Down County Museum; St. Patrick Centre; Down Arts Centre; Downpatrick and County Down Railway; and the Racecourse. However, a general feeling remains that the town has not capitalised on this heritage infrastructure as well as it might.

**Heritage** – there are significant sites in terms of archaeology and townscape. These could be a bigger draw to visitors and help underpin economic regeneration. There is a lack of linkage between sites, perceived lack of interest and investment, and general deficit of awareness about the opportunities. The story of St. Patrick has dominated people's perception of heritage in Downpatrick. While this is a highly significant story with international appeal, it has resulted in less awareness of other aspects of the underlying town and community heritage.

**Tourism** – there have been several tourism-related programmes in Downpatrick, but this seems to have left a relatively confused situation. For example, there seems to be several trails which are only partially present. There needs to be an accessible, simple approach to visitors, which links the disparate elements together. There is a lot of focus on tourism in the town, and a growing sense that this should be a key economic / social driver. There is clearly an issue with tourist accommodation.

**Community** – while there are examples of where heritage providers have engaged with the community (the Museum has been particularly active) there is a sense that this has only been partially successful. There are real opportunities to develop greater links and participation. There is lots of interest in volunteering, and this could be developed.

The recommendations in this Audit remain relevant and are considered as part of Actions in this Framework.

The **Built Heritage at Risk Northern Ireland** (BHARNI) register has been compiled by Ulster Architectural Heritage as part of an agreement with DfC. Within the town centre the following are buildings on the Register:

HB ref	Address	Conservation Area	Grade
HB18/19/021	62 Scotch Street	Outside	B2
HB18/18/006	Gatehouse, New County Gaol (Down High School)	Outside	B+
HB18/20/070	41 Irish Street	Inside	B2
HB18/20/025	39 Irish Street	Inside	B2

The two properties on Irish Street are currently owned by DfC and form part of the Former PSNI and Irish Street Car Park Development Site, see Strategy D, Action 3. These will be addressed through the regeneration of this significant development site.

NMDDC initially published their **Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy** in 2020 (relaunched 2022). This is a district wide strategy and includes reference to the Down Arts Centre and Down County Museum in Downpatrick.

This Strategy includes priorities in years 1- 3 to:

- Strengthen and support our culture, arts and heritage sector;
- Reimagine and grow our arts venues and museums; and
- Bringing our arts, culture and heritage to life for our residents and visitors.

# 1 Introduction

## Tourism Northern Ireland

In 2019, **Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI)** launched a new tourism experience brand, Embrace a Giant Spirit, <https://discovernorthernireland.com>. It has been tested locally and with key international markets to ensure it gives Northern Ireland prominence on the island of Ireland and internationally.



Northern Ireland – Embrace a Giant Spirit means two things: sharing the giant spirit of Northern Ireland; and awakening the giant spirit in our visitors. The giant spirit is made up of four ‘inspirers’:

1. Big heartedness - delivered on by being yourself, being passionate and being local.
2. A rich heritage of legends & stories - delivered on by being proud, being legendary and being celebratory.
3. Originality and a talent for being pioneering - delivered on by being creative, being collaborative and being unique.
4. Land, water & sea - delivered on by being celebratory, being adventurous and being natural.

TNI have various toolkits that could help to develop experiences for: Cultural Heritage; Food and Drink; and Unlocking the Outdoors. TNI have recommended that at this stage DRWG should focus on experiences and content not brand.

## NMDDC Tourism

The **NMDDC** tourism website is <https://www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/> which is linked to the discover Northern Ireland website. There are also plans and guides for Downpatrick and the wider area at the bottom of the webpage **Maps & Brochures - Visit Mourne Mountains.**

NMDDC have prepared a draft Tourism Strategy 2023-2028 that sets out their vision, strategic objectives and ambitions for the next five years. The draft Tourism Strategy is set out in two parts:

- Strategic Analysis: a summary of the research and recommendation outcomes that inform the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028
- Action Plan 2023-2028: outlining the strategic priorities and associated actions that should be undertaken over the upcoming years

There are five strategic priorities for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028:

1. Invest in Communications
  - 1.1 Redefine a new destination brand for Newry, Mourne and Down (NMD)
2. Invest in NMD’s Community
3. Maximise Commercial Capability
4. Engage in Data Collation and Analysis
5. Prioritise Investment in tourism related infrastructure

**NMDDC is inviting everyone to provide feedback on the draft Executive Summary via the online survey which is open until 21 November 2023.**



# 1 Introduction

## Downpatrick Masterplan

The **Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan** (Masterplan) was commissioned by Down Council and the Department for Social Development in 2010. It contains relevant baseline information and outlines ambitious proposals for the development of Downpatrick.

Significant projects delivered include: South Eastern Regional College (SERC); Leisure Centre; Public Realm Improvements in Scotch Street, Market Lane, Market Street, St. Patrick's Square; Frontage Improvements Schemes to 13 properties on Irish Street, 15 on Church Street, 3 on Bridge Street, 3 on Scotch Street and 2 on English Street. The former Downe Hospital and Down High School / County Gaol Site are on-site. There are other projects planned including: Public Realm Improvements in De Courcy Square and Church Street; and Dunleath Park skate park / pump track.

There are objectives and strategies in the Masterplan that should be considered and are referenced under specific Actions and Projects in Section 3 of this Framework:

- Lighting Strategy
- Signage Interpretation Strategy
- Living and Working Over the Shops
- Evening Economy
- St. Patrick's Square
- Grove Retail Quarter
- English Street Public Realm
- Reknit the historic fabric by reopening entries



*Extract from Masterplan*



# 1 Introduction

## Access & Movement

In January 2021, NMDDC commissioned Sustrans to produce an **Active Travel Masterplan** for the district. This brief was to set out a 10-year vision for the district where cycling and walking are viable and attractive travel choices.

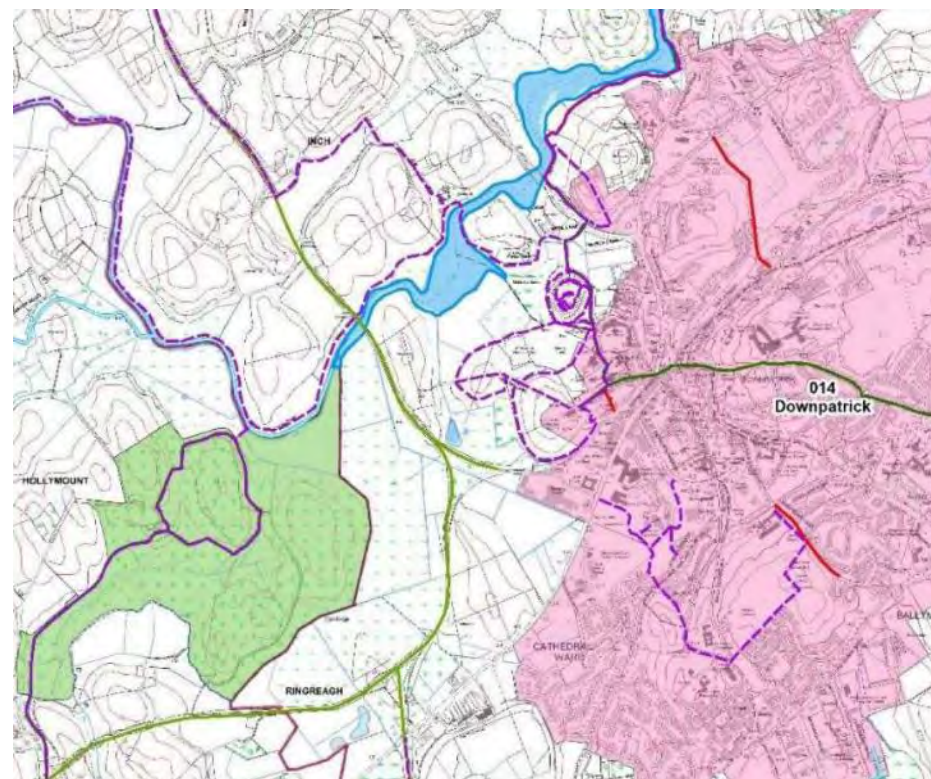
There are proposed interventions including new cycle routes, suggested locations for controlled pedestrian and cycle crossings, cycle parking, filtered permeability (bollards/ planters), and School Streets.

It proposes trialling the closure of part of Market Street to provide the opportunity for residents, visitors and business owners to experience the town centre without heavy traffic. The proposed alternative route for north and southbound vehicles during the trial is via St. Patricks Avenue, Irish Street, John Street, Fountain Street, Scotch Street, Saul Way, and Church Street.

**Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland** are a not-for-profit organisation who make it easier for people to enjoy the outdoors. There are currently two walks identified on their website. <https://walkni.com/> and <https://outmoreni.com/map/>

Quoile River Walk - begins at the Down County Museum, passing the Mound of Down, travelling along the Quoile River taking in sights such as Quoile Countryside Centre and Steamboat Quay.

Lecale Way - extends from the heart of Downpatrick, taking in Strangford Lough and finishing in the seaside resort of Newcastle. Tower houses, castles and ancient monuments are dotted throughout its landscape and a wealth of wildlife can be discovered along the contrasting shores of Strangford Lough and the Irish Sea.



*Extract from Outdoor NI Draft Community Trail Plan*

In October 2017 Outdoor NI prepared a Draft Community Trail Plan including additional trails (purple dashed) and greenways (green) that connect existing trails (purple), shown on the plan above. Feasibility studies are being undertaken for some of the routes.

Outdoor NI are also looking at a framework to develop 'Signature Walking Routes' for TNI to align walking with the Embrace a Giant Spirit brand.

# 1 Introduction

## Facts about Downpatrick

### Characteristics

Downpatrick is thought to be one of the earliest settlements in Ulster, centred on the Cathedral Hill with the ramparts of the fort or 'dun' still faintly visible. The religious and political significance of the town makes it an area of the utmost archaeological and historical importance.

Downpatrick is a former market town and continues to be an important service and retail centre for the wider district and lies 35 kilometres south-east of Belfast, at the south-western tip of Strangford Lough. The town's historic character is established by the 18th century narrow and sloping street pattern, along with the small individual scale and variety of its buildings. The town is composed mainly of two and three storey terraced houses of simple rectangular form with pitched roofs and gabled ends.

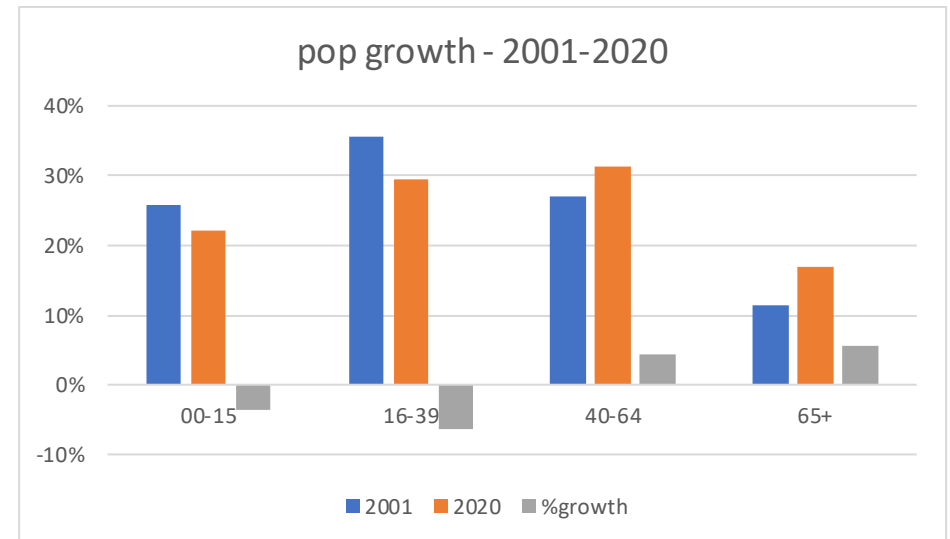
The town grew during the 19th century, adding a railway and shifting the town centre from Irish, English and Scotch Street's towards the new Market Street. The 20th Century saw the development of housing across adjacent hills, a shopping centre and retail park along with the closure of the Belfast and County Down Railway.

From a traffic perspective, the historic street pattern creates a pinch point where Irish, Church and Market Street's meet, causing congestion. It is part of the A25, a protected route and over the years the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) have tried various ways to alleviate the traffic in Downpatrick. This remains an ongoing challenge.

### Demographics

Downpatrick is classified as a Medium Town based on the NISRA Census 2011, with 10,874 residents living the townlands, and 20,049 within the wider catchment (based on the District Electoral Area).

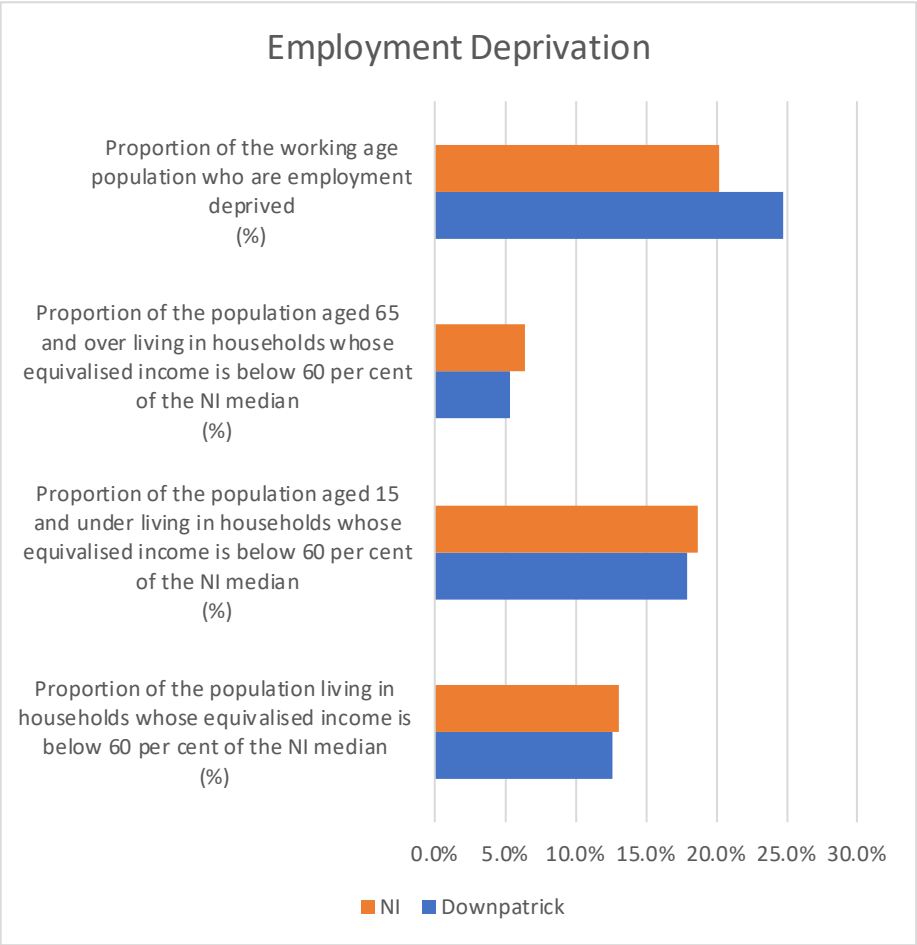
The demographic profile of Downpatrick has changed since 2001, with the population of the wider catchment area getting older, as illustrated in graphic below. Notably the proportion of the town under the age of 40 has dropped by 10%, while the number of residents over the age of 65 is now 17% of the total population (up from 11%).



# 1 Introduction

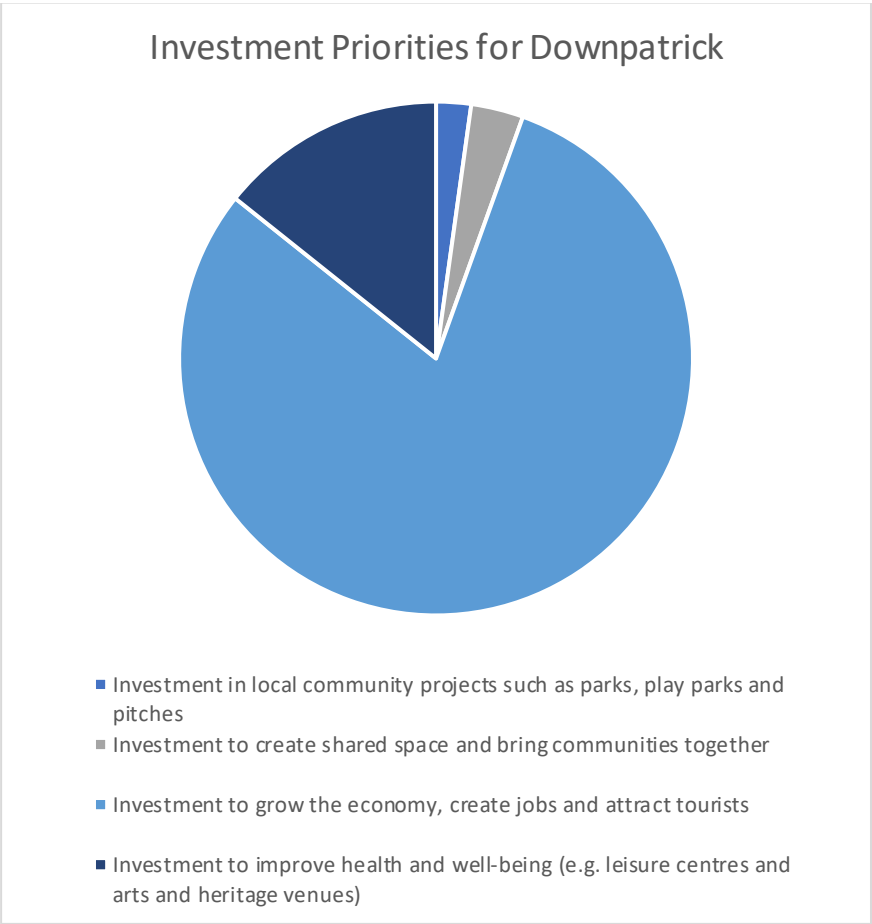
## Employment

In 2011, 65% of the working population were classified as economically active (2011 Census), with an unemployment rate of 5.6%. Within the labour force, there is a degree of employment deprivation in Downpatrick, with 25% of the working age population employment deprived (this is 25% higher than the Northern Ireland average of 20%). It is also observed that 13% of the population are living in households designated as low income.



## Development Priorities

In line with observed employment issues, based on a Residents Survey carried out by NMDDC in 2022, the priority of those residents interviewed was the need to create jobs and attract tourists as a key investment priority for the area. This is illustrated in the graphic below.





# 1 Introduction

## Community Insights

Extensive local knowledge was shared throughout the workshops. Both facts and perceptions have been brought together as community insights that contribute to the evidence that shapes the Framework.

### Sense of Place / Environment

The community appreciate the natural and built environment in Downpatrick. In particular, the heritage and beautiful buildings that contribute to the sense of place. The fine Victorian and Georgian Listed Buildings on English Street, Irish Street and Scotch Street along with the topography add to the character and uniqueness of Downpatrick.

The historic streets are often not seen by people passing through the town as the primary route is along Market Street and Church Street. It was noted that vacant buildings in the Conservation Area have a negative impact on the streetscape while also presenting an opportunity for restoration.

The green and civic spaces in and around Downpatrick are valued amenities along with the wider landscape. These include St. Patrick's Square, Scotch Streets, The Grove, De Courcey Square, Dunleath Park, the Quoile and the Mound of Down. It was considered that there was room for improvements in terms of their use, links, lighting etc.

### Tourism & Visitors

Initial comments suggested that there wasn't much to do in Downpatrick. However, through discussions, this perception shifted, concluding that in fact there are lots of things to see and do. Destinations include Down County Museum, Down Arts Centre, St. Patrick's Centre, the Cathedral, Inch Abbey, Downpatrick and County Down Railway Museum, the Mound of Down, Racecourse, Library, Leisure Centre and Dunleath Park.

It is a fact and perception that visitors tend to go to just one attraction and therefore generate limited local spend. There appears to be a lack of connectivity both physical and digital to support attractions in the town.

It was noted that no two tourists are the same and they expect different things - couples on a break, coach tours, families, young people etc.

Much of the tourism is currently focussed on the St. Patrick Story which could be expanded as well as other heritage and culture assets promoted.

### Entertainment & Evening Economy

The community acknowledge that the Down Arts Centre brings people into Downpatrick but felt that it would benefit from having be more diverse an offer and longer opening hours.

There is a perception of a limited evening economy, overnight accommodation and taxi services. Although there are hospitality venues including: Denvir's restaurant, lounge and snug bars; Murphy's Bar and Restaurant; Brendan's Bar and Restaurant; and Mabel's Ice Cream Parlour a family destination opens until 10pm every night of the week.

In discussion, the chicken and egg analogy were used in terms of generating demand and supply.

### Shopping & Services

There is a good provision of convenience shopping but tends towards single trips (in and out) rather than contributing to the wider economic activity. There appears to be limited incentives to dwell in Downpatrick or make multi-purpose trips.

Downpatrick has a good quality independent retail businesses and local cafes. However, the cafes tend to close at 4pm and shops and services at 5.30pm. Outside of 9-5 Monday to Saturday it is felt that there are limited facilities open.

# 1 Introduction

## Access & Movement

There were many discussions about the need to give pedestrians priority in Downpatrick. Issues included air and noise pollution making the high streets unpleasant to dwell in.

There is a perception that Downpatrick suffers from congestion. However, this appears to be mainly at certain times of the day and relates to the impact of the schools and through traffic. There is a need to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists which would make it pleasant to spend time in Downpatrick.

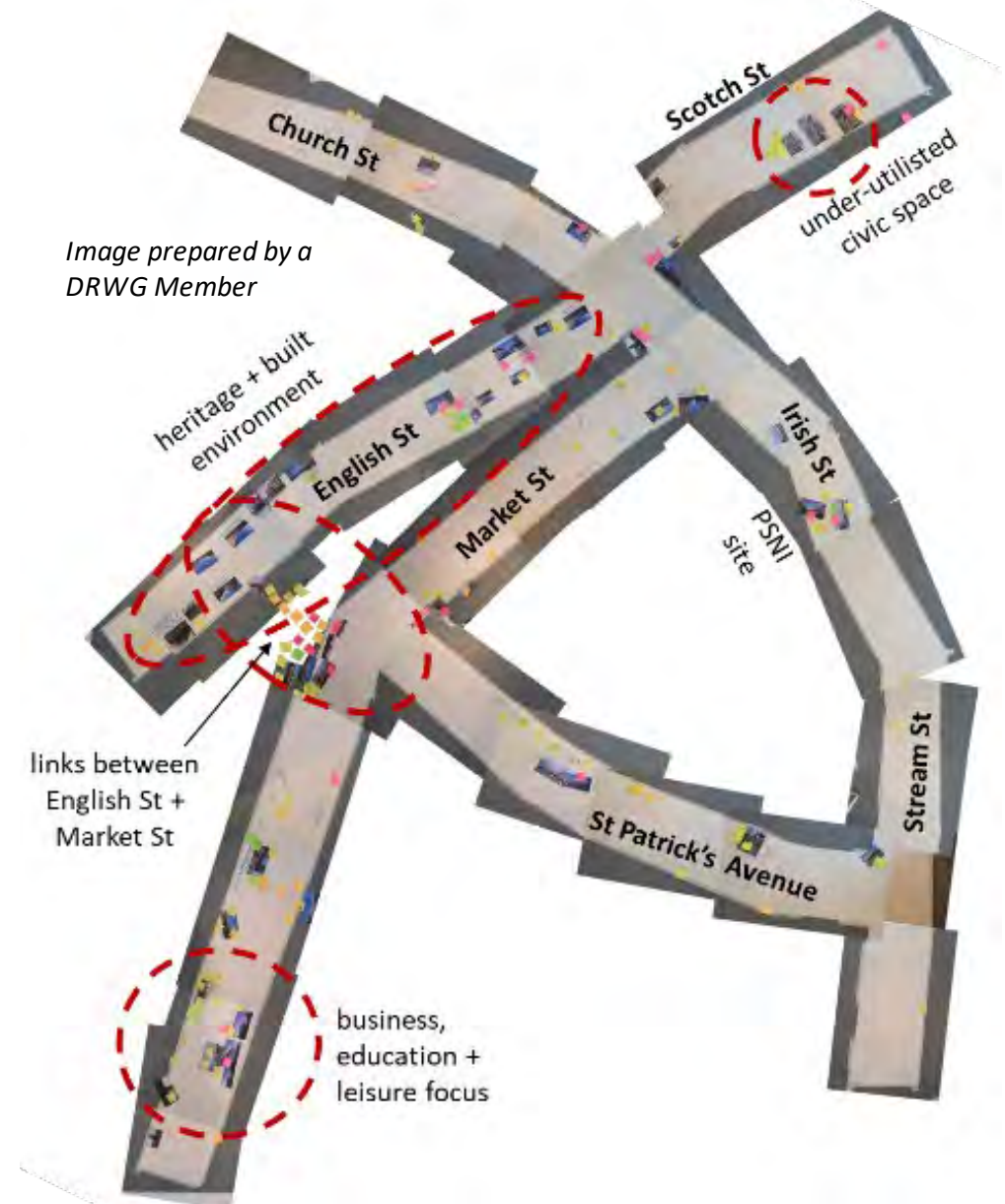
Public transport is provided from the Bus Station and there was said to be good services. There are long gaps between some services, that the community assumes that reflects demand. The Bus Station closes relatively early resulting in the loss of facilities such as toilets, digital timetable etc. making it a less attractive travel option after 5pm.

Parking is always a contentious topic and discussions reflect that. It was perceived that there is not enough parking, but it appears the issues relate more to signage and costs.

## Anti-Social Behaviour

There were many discussions about anti-social behaviour. However, it appears to be localised around The Grove and Asda car park etc. with perception suggesting it is a greater problem than the reality. A lot of work has been done to reduce and divert this behaviour and there are plans for a skate park / pump track facility in Dunleath Park for young people.

It was noted that there are too many negative stories about Downpatrick and the community needs more positive messages to be covered by the media.



## Spatial Observations

The image above was co-designed at workshop 2. It illustrates the importance of The Cutts, linking Market Street to English Street; appreciation of heritage value on English Street; cluster of business and services; potential on Scotch Street; significant opportunity on former PSNI site on Irish Street.

# 1 Introduction

## Process to Co-Design the Framework

At workshop 5 and the public event on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 all the ideas that emerged from previous workshops were shared. There were both place based and Downpatrick wide ideas. The community were asked to prioritise the ideas to inform the Vision and Objectives as well as the Actions and Projects in the Framework.





## 2 Vision

### Downpatrick, at the Heart of the Story of Ireland!

For centuries, Downpatrick has been a seat of kings, a centre of worship, home to the Ulaid, Celts, Normans, Saints, and Scholars. It is the gateway to the once great barony of Lecale, the County Town of Down. It has been forged by those who have gone before, and their legacy is in the rich heritage they have left behind. From the Stone Circle at Ballynoe, to the Abbey at Inch, the Cathedral which watches over all from high on the Hill of Down, the essence of Ireland is all around. It was to here that Patrick was drawn to start his mission. It was here that he established his first Church, it was here that he died, and it is here that he remains, buried in the shadow of the Cathedral, in the centre of the town.

Downpatrick doesn't only have a past; it has a bright and vibrant future. It continues to be a centre of learning with its renowned secondary schools and further education colleges. It is a place where families can thrive, close to the sea, with beautiful rolling countryside on the doorstep.

There are activities for all to enjoy from golf, to sailing, through field sports of every kind, to horse racing. It is a town to be discovered with heritage on every street, and a town full of ambition. It is a town determined to be pedestrian friendly, where people can linger and soak up the hospitality of the locals and be amazed by the skills and talents of the growing artistic community. It is a place focused on having fun and giving joy. A welcoming place. A place which aims to thrive. A place which wants to be great, as it always was. A place, of which, we can all be proud!

## Objectives

**Sustainability** is overarching. It will contribute to community wellbeing, supporting environmental recovery and biodiversity, and increasing economic resilience. This includes supporting and improving everyone's sense of meaning and pride in Downpatrick, delivering a clean environment, promoting sustainable land use, and endorsing Green Growth initiatives to create environmentally sustainable businesses and jobs while addressing climate concerns.

**Town Centre First Approach** will provide a focal point for employment, leisure and all the services people depend on. All future provisions for community facilities, education and health etc. must be provided in the town centre to regain and retain the vibrancy, purpose and sense of place that will be attractive to people living, working and visiting. Downpatrick must function as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the district.

**Valuing Heritage** is a golden thread that runs through the Actions and Projects. The aim is to conserve and value heritage, as well as strengthen and promote greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage, culture and arts. It is important to revitalise the old buildings and embrace the communities' stories and memories of Downpatrick.

**Improving Connectivity** aims to make Downpatrick a safe, accessible and legible place for all. This relates to physical connectivity and digital links to share information about activities and businesses in Downpatrick. It aims to connect people and businesses to maximise the potential of what Downpatrick and its community offers.

**Welcoming Place for Everyone.** Reimagining a town that appeals to locals and visitors alike with places that attract a multi-generational community with a wide range of accessible facilities, services, businesses and activities.

# 3 Action Plan

## The Strategies

The following Strategies, Actions and Projects have emerged through the co-design process. The adjacent diagram summarises the spatial aspects of the Framework. It acknowledges the necessary overlaps between the Strategies, Actions and Projects.

There are a series of built and natural assets in and around Downpatrick that are wonderful and through collaboration and connectivity will improve what Downpatrick offers to locals and visitors. Given Downpatrick's historic context, heritage and culture along with creativity will feature throughout.

The First Steps should be delivered in the first year. It is important to be recognised that some of the Actions are sequential and it is therefore critical that surveys and audits are addressed as priorities.

There will also be future Actions and Projects that will continue to emerge as Actions are delivered. This Framework should be treated as a Working Document that is updated, revised and refreshed on an annual basis, at a minimum.

It will be important to monitor progress. The Action Tracker associated with this Framework is a working tool to assist DWRG and partners to assess timescales and consider programming and potential resources. It should be updated quarterly, including issues and mitigation, along with new ideas as Downpatrick improves and new people get involved.

The Ideas Scrapbook, in Appendix C, contains all the ideas that have been gathered through the workshops and Digital Engagement Platform. It will be important to reflect on these to capitalise on new opportunities that emerge as Actions and Projects progress.



# 3 Action Plan

## Strategy A: Communications & Marketing

- Action 1: Strengthen Relationships, Networks & Connectivity
- Action 2: Promote Downpatrick to Locals, Visitors & Investors
- Action 3: Increase Pride in Place

## Strategy B: Making the Most of Existing Assets

- Action 1: Make assets more connected
- Action 2: Maximise potential of Down Arts Centre
- Action 3: Maximise potential of Down County Museum
- Action 4: Maximise potential of Library
- Action 5: Maximise potential of St. Patrick Centre
- Action 6: Maximise potential of Downpatrick and County Down Railway
- Action 7: Maximise potential of Bus Station
- Action 8: Maximise potential of South Eastern Regional College

## Strategy C: Activating & Connecting Streets & Spaces

- Action 1: Activate Existing Spaces & Programme More Activities
- Action 2: Enhance the Size & Attractiveness of Markets
- Action 3: Create a Cleaner Environment
- Action 4: Give More Priority to People
- Action 5: Develop a Legible, Safe Network of Routes & Trails
- Action 6: Improve Public Spaces & Create Event Space

## Strategy D: Improving Image - Tackle Vacancy, Frontages & Gateways

- Action 1: Encourage the Use of Vacant Buildings, Spaces & Sites
- Action 2: Former PSNI and Irish Street Car Park Site
- Action 3: Collaboration to Occupy Vacant Properties
- Action 4: Frontages – Restoration & Improvement
- Action 5: Improve Approaches & Gateways into the Town

## Strategy E: Community Needs & Wants

- Action 1: Indoor & Outdoor Spaces & Activities for the Community
- Action 2: New Toilets
- Action 3: More Affordable Housing

## Projects:

1. St. Patrick's Square
2. Market Street and St. Patrick's Avenue
3. Scotch Street
4. De Courcy Square
5. Church Street
6. Irish Street
7. Entrances to Lynn Doyle Place
8. English Street
9. Dunleath Park
10. Event Space
11. The Grove, Grove Shopping Centre, car parks, Department of Health Building, Bus Station, Downpatrick and County Down Railway, Rathkeltair House, link to Downe Retail Park



### 3 Action Plan - Strategy A

#### Strategy A: Communications & Marketing

- Action 1: Strengthen Relationships, Networks & Connectivity  
Action 2: Promote Downpatrick to Locals, Visitors & Investors  
Action 3: Increase Pride in Place

**Aim:** to increase links and synergies between businesses, building owners, services, education, customers and the public. This Strategy aims to maximise mutual benefits for all by sharing what's on; who's doing what, where and when; making connections and increasing connectivity; and sharing promotional opportunities. It is also important to celebrate success and maintain momentum.

**Strategic Priority:** DRWG must ensure a collaborative approach with NMDDC, Tourism NI, asset owners, managers, businesses and communities. Consider process and timing to align actions and avoid duplication of effort and gaps.

#### Action 1: Strengthen Relationships, Networks & Connectivity

*– links with all Strategies*

##### First Steps:

- 1a DRWG to work with Down Business Centre (DBC) with County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN), Down Community Arts (DCA) to expand the Down Business Centre Directory.
- 1b DRWG to share information across the network, in and out-going. DBC to propose a process and format to share information, potentially using the Directory and Mailchimp.

##### Next Steps:

- 1c DRWG, with DBC, CDRCN and DCA and NMDDC, review and continue to expand and update the Directory.
- 1d DRWG with DBC, CDRCN and DCA and NMDDC, to monitor impact of sharing information, review and revise processes when required.

#### Action 2: Promote Downpatrick to Locals, Visitors & Investors

*– links with Action 1 and Strategy B, Action 1*

##### First Steps:

- 2a DRWG to identify partners to work with to promote events, activities and businesses in Downpatrick.
- 2b DRWG to work with NMDDC (Tourism, Arts, Culture team), Tourism NI, partners and businesses to increase visibility of activities and events. NMDDC to share guidance on "Ways to Promote your Tourism Business" with DRWG and partners promoting Downpatrick. Any questions please contact Visitor Services at [visitorservices@nmandd.org](mailto:visitorservices@nmandd.org) or 033 0137 4046. All partners and businesses to each add their events and activities to Visit Mourne by using #Visit Mourne. NMDDC to promote these events through website.
- 2c NMDDC to issue list of events and activities in Downpatrick town centre to the St. Patrick Centre 10 days before the end of each month. St. Patrick Centre to prepare monthly A1 poster to display in their front window and circulate for other venues to display in and all to share digitally.
- 2d DRWG to improve links with existing news channels to share local information and what's on to ensure all businesses and residents are engaged - Down Recorder, Down News, existing Facebook, Instagram, websites etc.
- 2e DRWG to promote existing collateral and websites:
- **Downpatrick Historic Walking Tour**
  - **Downpatrick Town Map**
  - **Saint Patrick's Way**, this Pilgrim's Walk takes between 6 -10 days and starts from St. Patrick Centre, Downpatrick.
  - **Downpatrick Walk**, a walk along the banks of the River Quoile, this walk starts from St. Patrick Centre, Downpatrick. It reveals the Quoile's stories and secrets, from the natural surroundings of rounded hills and marshes to how people transformed a tidal river into a freshwater wetland thriving with wildlife.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy A

- **Lecale Way** is part of the Ulster Way from Downpatrick to Strangford, Ardglass, Tyrella and Dundrum finishing in Newcastle. This two-day walk passes through pretty villages, wild coastline and historic sites.

#### Next Steps:

- 2f DRWG to work with NMDDC, Tourism NI, partners businesses and residents to create collective strategy that addresses local, and visitor needs:
- Create a calendar of co-ordinated events and activities that can be shared to maximise connectivity and marketing opportunities.
  - Develop a Downpatrick Passport with top 10 things to see and do.
  - Develop a set of experiential days out for different audiences: family day out, couples weekend break, Saturday day out for young people, seniors' day trip into town, relaxed Sunday, children's play day etc.
  - Identify physical, digital and oral collateral to support the offer: signage, sculptures, street art, tours, maps etc.

It is anticipated that this will lead to future Actions and Projects.

- 2g DRWG to encourage businesses to participate in the NMDDC "Make it Local" campaign, a promotional initiative. It has been running for several years and is designed to promote and bolster homegrown companies across Newry, Mourne and Down, by encouraging people to shop and spend locally.

To build the message of Make it Local, businesses throughout the district are encouraged to include the Make it Local digital assets on their platforms. At the bottom of the **Make it Local** web page there are digital assets including: Logo Stamp, Email Signature and Headers for Facebook and Twitter, that businesses can download and use.

- 2h DRWG to work with Downpatrick Town Committee, DBC, local businesses and primary schools within the BT30 postcode to revisit opportunity to develop a 'Shop Local Loyalty Card'. The Card could benefit local businesses and primary schools by generating extra footfall for businesses and additional funding for schools.
- 2i DRWG, working with NMDDC, do surveys and monitor the impact on footfall, businesses, facilities and perceptions.

#### Future Actions and Projects may include:

- Signage, sculptures, street art etc.
- Tours – Green Badge tours, Museum, St. Patrick Centre, Art Centre etc.
- Downpatrick Passport, maps

### Action 3: Increase Pride in Place

Having Pride in place and celebrating success will be important to maintain momentum. This has direct links to the need to nurture and encourage stewardship and volunteering to deliver the Actions and Projects in this Framework.

#### First Steps:

- 3a DRWG, working with CDRCN and DBC to consider how annual awards could be developed to celebrate contributions by groups and individuals.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy B

#### Strategy B: Making the Most of Existing Assets

- Action 1: Make Assets More Connected
- Action 2: Maximise Potential of Down Arts Centre
- Action 3: Maximise Potential of Down County Museum
- Action 4: Maximise Potential of Library
- Action 5: Maximise Potential of St. Patrick Centre
- Action 6: Maximise Potential of Downpatrick and County Down Railway
- Action 7: Maximise Potential of Bus Station
- Action 8: Maximise Potential of South Eastern Regional College

**Aim:** to be more connected (physically, signage, marketing, visitor pass) with more access and longer opening hours / days. Increase access and use of these places with improve links with other uses to increase footfall, spend and benefits for all.

**Strategic Priority:** DRWG need to ensure collaborative approach with NMDDC, Tourism NI, asset owners and managers. Consider process and timing to align actions and avoid duplication of effort.

#### Action 1: Make Assets More Connected - link Strategy A, Action 2

Downpatrick has notable assets such as Down County Museum, Down Arts Centre, St. Patrick Centre, the Cathedral, Inch Abbey, Downpatrick and County Down Railway Museum, the Mound of Down and the Racecourse.

It is acknowledged that each organisation has its own objectives and associated business plan whether part of a wider ownership or individually. However, this tends not to lead to wider social, environmental or economic benefits for the local people, businesses and place.

Throughout the process it has been acknowledged that although Downpatrick has a lot to offer, the assets are not well connected physically or in terms of marketing. This has limited Downpatrick's potential as a destination for locals and visitors.

#### First Steps:

- 1a DRWG to identify key asset owners of visitor destinations to collaborate with and meet quarterly.
- 1b Collaborators to add their events and activities to Visit Mourne by using #Visit Mourne. NMDDC to promote these events through website. NMDDC to issue list of events and activities to St. Patrick Centre 10 days before the end of each month.
- 1c St. Patrick Centre to prepare monthly A1 poster to display in their front window of St. Patrick Centre and circulate to others to display in and share digitally.

#### Next Steps:

- 1d DRWG, working with NMDDC consider potential resource to set up a system / process to create a collective calendar of events and share information to maximise collaboration between assets, businesses and communities in Downpatrick.
- 1e DRWG to work with NMDDC, TNI, asset owners and businesses to maximise collaboration to increase their use and potential, focusing on experiences and content.
- 1f DRWG, working with NMDDC (Tourism and Regen) and DBC to work with existing businesses and asset owners to create opportunities for café culture and a night-time economy in line with events calendar. Theme nights, local cafes, restaurants and events. This needs to include any physical and digital infrastructure required.

**Projects:** Monthly events poster

**Future Projects:** Signage, Maps, Downpatrick Passport etc.



### 3 Action Plan - Strategy B

#### Action 2: Maximise Potential of Down Arts Centre

The Down Arts Centre is recognised as a valued facility that holds exhibitions, shows, music events and a range of classes and workshops. However, it has been highlighted throughout the process that it is underutilised, partly due to perceptions, programming and opening hours. Down Arts Centre and Down Museum collaborate to deliver programmes across the two facilities.

Saturday activities and workshops are held in the Museum.

##### First Steps:

- 2a Down Art Centre host an Artist in Residence, Aine McKenna. Part of this residency is to work with local community groups such as Headway, Chest, Heart and Stroke, Men's Shed, Life Change Changes Lives & Secondary and Primary schools.
- 2b Down Arts Centre will host a Theatre group in residence, Dramability, a mixed ability drama group, for 2022 / 2023.
- 2c Down Arts Centre will host two summer schools with classes for children and adults for August craft month and Dramability performances and summer schemes.
- 2d Down Arts Centre opens two to three evenings mid-week for classes and exhibition openings and at the weekends for performances.
- 2e Rooms in Down Arts Centre are utilised by South Eastern Trust, Irish classes, Chest Heart and Stroke, U3A and various schools and community groups, Downtime Festival and Poetry NI.
- 2f The Arts Team is working with Poetry NI, Sofar (a global music community that connects artists and audiences through live music) and various performers to perform smaller gigs regularly in the Studio Bar on Thursday nights while exhibition openings are taking place to further maximize use of the centre.
- 2g Down Arts Centre and Down Community Arts are undertaking an audit of artist in the district to give a clearer concept of what artists need from the two organisations.

- 2h Down Art Centre will continue to collaborate with Down County Museum and add events and activities to Visit Mourne by using #Visit Mourne so they can be included in the monthly events poster.

- 2i DRWG to promote the programme of activities, workshops and shop.

##### Next Steps:

- 2j Use the Audit of Artists needs and wants to identify what additional resources are needed to enhance artist's development in the district. Possible empty shop premises as exhibition space / studio space.
- 2k Down Arts Centre to utilise the new box office system, Ticketsolve, to create an audience development strategy for the Arts Centre and District.
- 2l Down Art Centre to share capacity and costs for hiring the various facilities in the Arts Centre with DRWG. It is envisaged the venue could be used more frequently, subject to capacity. Use the Audit of Community Needs and wants to increase the use of facilities.
- 2m Down Art Centre to support the NMDDC Events Team by enhancing programming of their festivals at Down Arts Centre and Down County Museum.
- 2n Down Arts Centre to work with artists, local community groups and Comhaltas (promote traditional Irish music and culture around the world) to maximise the centre as a meeting space / social hub / rehearsal space.
- 2o DRWG to work with Down Arts Centre to consider how they could be supported to expand the programme of activities to attract different audiences, in particular young people.

## 3 Action Plan - Strategy B

### Action 3: Maximise Potential of Down County Museum

The Down County Museum is recognised as an important heritage and cultural facility. Located in the restored buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century County Gaol of Down it is an accredited museum with over 10,000 objects and over 50,000 photographs in its collection. In addition to permanent galleries across two buildings, the Museum has a programme of temporary exhibitions which cover diverse subjects.

The Museum provides a regional service for Downpatrick and its hinterland including, Saintfield, Strangford, Newcastle, Castlewellan and Ballynahinch. It offers educational programmes to schools in Downpatrick and across the county to connect children and young people with their history and heritage. The handling collection which can be utilised in outreach programmes, and collections will be accessible via a new website.

A combination of pandemic response and organisational restructure affected the provision of services at the Museum. Opening hours have returned to five days a week, as well as Bank Holiday Mondays throughout the year. In addition, the Museum is open for evening events that align with the audience development objectives. Down Arts Centre and the Museum collaborate to deliver programmes across the two facilities. Current priorities for the Museum are:

#### Audience development

- Redeveloping a core programme of schools' sessions for primary schools across the district.
- Family events linked to the calendar and museum collection, most of which are free.
- Tours of our site for visitors.

#### Collections

- Enhance access to collection through digitisation and online collection.
- Maintain the historic buildings in which the Museum is housed.
- Evolve programme of two temporary exhibitions per year.

#### First Steps:

- 3a Museum to continue to run family activities throughout the year, linked to calendar events and exhibitions and collaborate with Down Art Centre. Museum to continue to add events and activities to Visit Mourne by using #Visit Mourne so they can be included in the monthly events poster.
- 3b Museum to collaborate with sector partners to maximise collections access, interpret our collections in new ways and with new audiences and engage in community consultation.
- 3c Museum to continue to seek opportunities to maximise synergies and opportunities between them and other activities and businesses in Downpatrick.
- 3d Museum to continue to monitor and record visitor numbers.
- 3e Museum to continue piloting evening events – free and / or paid to align with audience development / new exhibitions. *See Case Study on Last Taste of Home Dining Experience & Twilight Market at Down County Museum in Appendix B.*
- 3f DRWG to promote the Museum and events.

#### Next Steps:

- 3g Museum to investigate opportunities to re-introduce the café.
- 3h Museum to share proposals for new activities and seek to collaborate on events, increasing audiences in terms of diversity and numbers. Explore potential to provide complementary activities for St. Patrick's Day, and / or cross-promote Christmas events etc.
- 3i Museum to monitor impact of additional collaborative marketing and share with DRWG on quarterly basis.
- 3j Museum to work with TNI and DRGW to further increase offer and promotion.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy B

- 3k Using the Audit of communities needs and wants (Strategy E, Action 1) DRWG to work with NMDDC to identify what additional events / activities could use the Museum as a venue or as an event partner.
- 3l DRWG, working with Museum, DCA, CDRCN, Library and NMDDC to identify who and how to continue engagement with communities to collect stories and knowledge that could be shared in an exhibition, events etc.
- 3m Museum to collaborate with DRWG, NMDDC and DfC on enhanced signage / trails to promote visitor pathways.

#### Action 4: Maximise Potential of Library

The Library, ideally located on Market Street, has been identified as a safe, welcoming space for all. The Heritage Gallery, within the library, is an amazing resource and hidden gem. It has been highlighted that like other assets in Downpatrick it has untapped potential.

##### First Steps:

- 4a Library to monitor and record visitor numbers and share with DRWG on quarterly basis.
- 4b DRWG to encourage Library to promote activities on the notice boards outside and to add their events and activities to Visit Mourne by using #Visit Mourne. NMDDC to promote these events through website.

##### Next Steps:

- 4c Library to monitor use and time profiles to see if additional opening can be delivered - cost / benefit analysis.
- 4d DRWG to encourage Libraries to collaborate with Museum, Arts Centre and County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN) to engage with communities to collect stories and knowledge that could be shared in an exhibition, events etc.

- 4e DRWG to encourage Library to consider extending opening hours of the library, tie in with other events, late night shopping etc.

#### Action 5: Maximise Potential of the St. Patrick Centre

The St. Patrick Centre has been identified as an important destination for locals and visitors. It is acknowledged that it operates as a business and has developed a strong offer in relation to experiences, tours, hospitality and crafts and gifts.

There is potential to increase synergies and links with other destinations and businesses in Downpatrick to increase footfall, spend, length of visit and wider benefits as well as maximising the potential of St. Patrick Centre.

##### First Steps

- 5a DRWG to engage with St. Patrick Centre as part of Strategy B, Action 1.
- 5b St. Patrick Centre to add events and activities, including the walking tours, to Visit Mourne by using #Visit Mourne. NMDDC to promote these events through website.
- 5c NMDDC to issue list of events and activities to St. Patrick Centre 10 days before the end of each month. St. Patrick Centre to prepare monthly A1 poster to display in their front window and circulate for other venues to display in and share digitally.

##### Next Steps:

- 5d DRWG to request St. Patrick Centre to monitor visitor numbers and impact of collective marketing with the monthly poster.



### 3 Action Plan - Strategy B

5e DRWG to request a proposal from St. Patrick Centre that addresses each of the aspirations of the community:

- Increase community uses in the St. Patrick Centre: community / family cinema events in auditorium.
- Consider ways to increase visual links to the Grove to maximise natural surveillance and potential links to the gardens.

It is anticipated that this will lead to future Actions and Projects.

#### Action 6: Maximise Potential of Downpatrick and County Down Railway

The Downpatrick and County Down Railway (DCDR) has been identified as a unique destination, as a working heritage railway museum. It operates on a voluntary basis with defined opening / running times that are available to book online. Event days bring significant visitors to Downpatrick, with most events selling out.

There is potential to increase synergies and links with other destinations and businesses and community groups to increase footfall, spend, length of visit and wider benefits such as more local community involvement as well as maximising the potential of the Railway as an attraction.

##### First Steps

- 6a DRWG to engage with DCDR as part of Action 1.
- 6b DCDR to continue to add events and activities to Visit Mourne by using #Visit Mourne so they can be included in the monthly events poster.

##### Next Steps:

- 6c DRWG to work with NMDDC (Tourism), DCDR and, in conjunction with other key stakeholders, to develop proposals that address the aspirations of the community see how they could be progressed:
- Improve connections (physical, signage, marketing), e.g. improve walking routes and connections in the immediate vicinity into the town centre and other attractions and improve arrival and boundary treatments.
  - Address the issue of unrestored rolling stock at station frontage.
  - Improve synergies with other local organisations, such as food and drink providers or its own food and drink experience to bring people to the centre.
- 6d DRWG will work with DCDR, DfC and NMDDC (Regen) to review opportunities to strengthen the railway experience, revisiting the proposals to extend the railway line to the St. Patrick Centre (*Link to Future Project ?*: The Grove, Grove Shopping Centre, car parks, DCDR, Library and Department of Health Building) and to the Downpatrick Racecourse, subject to support from the racecourse and land owners, as well as support the DCDR's ongoing efforts to extend to Ballydugan Lake and the Viking Village.

It is anticipated that Action 6c and 6d will lead to future Actions and Projects.

#### Action 7: Maximise Potential of Bus Station

The Bus Station is a critical part of Downpatrick's infrastructure, providing bus services across the district and beyond. Although the buses continue to run, the facilities including ticketing, café, toilets and departure screen close at 5pm Monday to Friday and at 3pm on Saturday. This has a negative impact on peoples feeling of comfort and safety. It is acknowledged that this is standard for this scale of Translink facility, but it has an impact on accessibility to and from Downpatrick.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy B

#### First Steps:

- 7a DfC, on behalf of DRWG, to engage with Translink to discuss potential to addresses each of the aspirations of the community:
- Improve safety and accessibility by extending opening hours of the Bus Station and associated facilities: café, toilets and digital timetable. Coincide with events/activities - late opening of library on Tuesdays, late night shopping etc.
  - Improve local town bus routes and timetable to increase use.
  - Move the Service Depot to release part of their site for redevelopment.
  - Integrate a taxi rank /drop off into the car parks at the rear of the bus station.

#### Next Steps:

- 7b DfC, on behalf of DRWG to develop a proposal with Translink that addresses each of the aspirations of the community. It is anticipated that this will lead to future Actions and Projects.

#### Action 8: Maximise Potential of South Eastern Regional College

The Downpatrick Campus of the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) is a vibrant learning environment with a welcoming and friendly atmosphere and fantastic facilities designed to hone student's specialist skills and training. It specialises in hairdressing, beauty, hospitality, computing, travel and tourism, art and design, engineering, motor vehicle, early years, health and care, animal care and construction trades.

SERC is seen as an important asset in different ways from the skills to the café and synergies with businesses and the wider community. Throughout the process there have been ideas to increase the potential of SERC.

#### First Steps:

- 7a NMDDC, on behalf of DRWG, to engage with SERC to discuss potential to addresses each of the aspirations of the community and students:
- Explore links and synergies to help encourage local young enterprise and increase links between businesses, SERC and the public. This could include places for employment / training as well as encouragement for fledgling businesses and potential pop-ups.
  - Improve signage, visibility and marketing for facilities that are available to the public:
    - De Courcey hair and beauty salon and Spa
    - McNeill Room, training restaurant open for breakfast and lunch Monday to Friday and Bistro Wednesday evening, term time and can be hired as a venue for a group dinner party.
  - Within SERC students asked for:
    - more appealing environment to hang out
    - somewhere to display their artwork
    - advice on life + business skills

#### Next Steps:

- 7b NMDDC, on behalf of DRWG to consider if, how and when they could progress proposals that address the aspirations of the community and students. It is anticipated that this will lead to future Actions and Projects.

## Strategy C: Activating & Connecting Streets & Spaces

- Aims:** This strategy has interlinked aims:

- Strategic Priority:** DRWG need to ensure collaborative approach with NMDDC, DfC, Dfl, Tourism NI, community and businesses. Consider processes and timing to align actions and avoid duplication of effort.



### 3 Action Plan - Strategy C

#### Action 1: Activate Spaces & Programme More Activities

Activities and events are enjoyed in Downpatrick and generate a great buzz and increase footfall. Participants through the workshops have expressed a desire to have more frequent activities, events and markets.

##### First Steps:

- 1a DRWG, working with NMDDC, community groups and businesses to enhance existing core events for St. Patrick's Day, Easter, DownTime Summerfest, Halloween, Christmas and Culture Night.
- 1b DRWG, working with NMDDC, CDRCN, DCA, Downpatrick Community Collective (DCC) and businesses to generate ideas for events and activities that could add to these core events. More dining experiences at Museum? Men's Shed / allotments event to create flower boxes / hanging baskets etc. Knit and natter creations for next festival / event? Include temporary interventions - use spaces and streets differently.
- 1c DRWG, working with NMDDC identify capacity and constraints such as licences, permissions, costs, health and safety etc. for each existing space and potential spaces including: St. Patrick's Square (with and without road closure); Scotch Street; The Grove; English Street; De Courcy Square; Irish Street car park; car parks at the rear of the Grove Shopping Centre etc.
- 1d DRWG, DCA, DCC and other events organisers, working with NMDDC, DfC and DfI identify potential temporary interventions in the streets and spaces required to make them more usable for activities and events. This will lead to further Actions and Projects.

##### Next Steps:

- 1e DRWG, working with NMDDC, CDRCN, DCA, DCC, Town Committee and businesses look to expand the range of activity at core events for St. Patrick's Day, Easter, DownTime Summerfest, Halloween, Christmas and Culture Night.

- 1f NMDDC, CDRCN, DCA, DCC, Town Committee and asset owners to consider how, where and when to intensify the frequency events, music, activities based on the successes of core events at St. Patrick's Day, Easter, DownTime Summerfest, Halloween, Christmas and Culture Night to create a calendar of events and activities across the spaces in Downpatrick.
- 1g NMDDC, CDRCN, DCA, DCC, Town Committee and asset owners to consider how and where to increase animation for every Saturday throughout the summer.
- 1h NMDDC, CDRCN, DCA, DCC, Town Committee and asset owners to monitor impacts of increased activities on businesses and community wellbeing, review and adjust if required.

#### Action 2: Enhance the Size & Attractiveness of Markets

NMDDC facilitate a weekly Saturday market in St. Patrick's Square. There is currently only one regular trader selling flowers and plants.

There is also an Artisan Market on the third Saturday of every month from 11.00 am – 3.00 pm with an average of 18 stalls selling a variety of goods. Downpatrick Community Collective (DCC) organise the monthly Artisan Markets, on behalf of the council, in Downpatrick, Newcastle, Newry and Warrenpoint. The stalls are kept in a storage unit inside a secure compound in the car park behind the Grove Shopping Centre. The Artisan Market is seen as a success and moving it to St. Patrick's Square has increased visibility and viability.

Participants through the workshops have expressed a desire to have more diverse and frequent markets in Downpatrick.

##### First Steps:

- 2a NMDDC and DCC to continue to monitor footfall and evaluate costs and benefits of Artisan Market for other businesses.



### 3 Action Plan - Strategy C

- 2b DRWG with support from NMDDC, to explore potential opportunities to progress temporary intervention to trial closing the road from Market Street to the roundabout outside St. Patrick Centre. *Link to Project 1: St. Patrick's Square*

Should this be progressed NMDDC, DCC and businesses to monitor impact after three months and assess benefits.

- 2c NMDDC and DCC to consider potential for additional Artisan Market days to enhance existing core events for St. Patrick's Day, Easter, DownTime Summerfest, Halloween, Christmas and Culture Night.

#### Next Steps:

- 2d NMDDC and DCC and local business to monitor costs and benefits of the market and Artisan Market and increase frequency if viable and consider different types of market, if feasible.

#### Action 3: Create a Cleaner, Safer Environment

There has been significant investment in the public realm, and it has been raised that it should be better maintained. It has been noted that recently Downpatrick has felt cleaner, and this Action appears to have already started.

#### First Steps:

- 3a NMDDC to continue to maintain, monitor and manage existing civic and green spaces, streets and pavements. To include power wash, bins emptied more frequently at busy times, street furniture could be sanded and repainted and better maintenance of the four telephone boxes.
- 3b Subject to funding, CDRCN and Town Committee, to work with DfI and Community Allotments to improve the planters on Irish Street. *See Project 6: Irish Street*

#### Next Steps:

- 3c Subject to funding, CDRCN and Town Committee, to work with DfI and SERC, Clanrye to explore opportunities to repoint the walls of the planters on Irish Street through heritage skills training. *See Project 6: Irish Street*
- 3d DRWG, working with the Town Committee, CDRCN expand volunteer groups to increase management and maintenance of spaces. DRWG to consider expanding the **Adopt A Spot** as part of **Live Here Love Here** civic pride programme that embraces community participation and stewardship to increase management and maintenance of places. *See Dunleath Parkrun Case Study in Appendix B.*
- 3e DRWG, working with the Town Committee, CDRCN to consider having a quarterly Local Hero to encourage 'ownership' and stewardship of places by the community. Survey and monitor the impact on people and place, review and revise if required.
- 3f DRWG to work with NMDDC, DfC, DfI and HED to progress a lighting strategy. As set out in the 2011 Masterplan: the main objective of the lighting strategy will be to formalise a framework which results in an improvement in the quality and design of lighting within Downpatrick's streets and public spaces. Levels of comfort and public safety will be raised by way of a well-structured lighting strategy. This will complement both the historical and contemporary components of the town while picking up on existing themes and colour palettes.

The lighting strategy should consider alternative solar powered lighting, low height lighting in parks, motion activated lighting etc. It needs to be cognisant of the flood plain, environmental designations and the conservation area. It should include consideration of lighting buildings and structures in addition to streets and spaces.

It is anticipated that this strategy will lead to future Actions and Projects.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy C

- 3g DRWG, working with NMDDC, DfC and local stakeholders to increase passive surveillance. Collectively they should ensure that all future projects and activities contribute to increasing natural surveillance by providing more eyes on the streets and spaces. This can be delivered through developments that have frontages that are open and bright and provide opportunities to visually engage from inside out. It can also be done through increasing footfall and people walking between places to generate activity and visibility.
- 3h DRWG, working with NMDDC should seek opportunities for sustainable initiatives such as recycling bins, water collection for watering plants, planting, drinking water fountain etc.
- 3i DRWG, working with NMDDC and DfC seek opportunities to develop initiatives and projects that contribute to a cleaner greener Downpatrick.

#### Action 4: Give More Priority to People

Despite being the historic and retail centre of Downpatrick, the arrangement of street space within the town centre serves to facilitate the movement of vehicles rather than offering a comfortable, relaxed pedestrian environment. Throughout the workshops there has been an aspiration to improve the environment for people and cyclists rather than vehicles. The historic pattern of Downpatrick contributes to its charm but also impacts the configuration of streets and pedestrian flow. There are also traffic noise and air quality issues, especially around the Market Street, Irish Street, English Street, Church Street junctions.

#### First Steps:

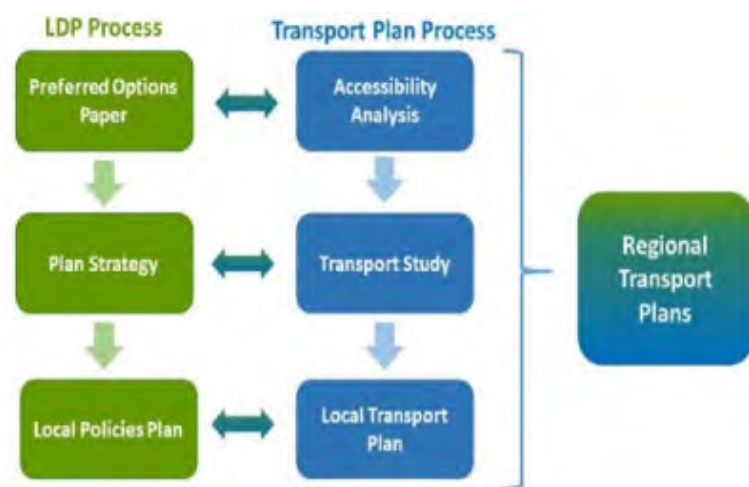
- 4a DRWG to work with NMDDC, DfC and DfI to improve traffic management and enforcement including:
  - Manage deliveries and servicing of businesses to balance the requirements of developing a people friendly public realm, with the needs of retailers and facilities.
  - Encourage the restriction of delivery times, to maximise the use of the space of shoppers during peak times.
  - Enforce no parking on pavements and in public spaces.
  - Restrict the egress from car parks at the rear of the Grove Shopping Centre to stop private vehicles driving through St. Patrick's Square.
- 4b DRWG to work with NMDDC, DfC, DfI and businesses on a range of short-term interventions to trial reduced traffic access such as:
  - Use movable bollards / planters to stop traffic in St. Patrick's Square on event and market days. *Link to Action 2b and Project 1: St. Patrick's Square*
  - Use movable bollards / planters to stop traffic in Scotch Street for event and activities.
  - Close Market Street from Irish Street to St. Patrick's Avenue on event days.

#### Next Steps:

- 4c DRWG to encourage NMDDC, DfC, DfI to progress proposals set out in the Active Travel Masterplan prepared by Sustrans. Make cycling and walking viable and attractive travel choices by improving footpaths, segregated cycle lanes, toucan crossings and cycle parking.
- 4d DRWG to work with NMDDC, DfC and DfI to change all the pedestrian crossings to have audible traffic signals as they are currently not safe for those visually impaired.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy C

- 4e DfI to coordinate with DRWG, NMDDC and DfC on a Local Transport Plan, see below alignment between the Transport Plan and the Local Development Plan processes. DfI indicated that this will commence when the NMDDC Draft Plan Strategy is submitted to DfI. The Transport Plan will include a Traffic Management Strategy and Parking Strategy (which may be undertaken separately - see below), as well as a review of the provision for walking and cycling improvements in the town. It is anticipated that this will be published in parallel with the NMDDC Plan Strategy.



- 4f DRWG to work with DfI, NMDDC and DfC to investigate the potential to commence a Traffic Management Study in advance of the submission of the Draft Plan Strategy. This will allow the 'Strategic Traffic' moving through the town to be quantified and identify the requirements of the road network to facilitate this movement. This will also allow the investigation of whether alternative routings through the town could be considered for this traffic movement, and whether there is the potential to reroute some or all this traffic so that it does not need to go through Downpatrick town centre.

- 4g DRWG to work with DfI, NMDDC and DfC to develop a Parking Strategy for the town. This strategy will consider the rationalisation of the existing car parks with improved directional signage, and preferably VMS displays showing number of spaces available. This will also include a pricing strategy to influence where people choose to park and proposals to rationalise the different parking apps currently used to pay for parking.
- 4h DRWG to work with NMDDC, DfC and DfI to consider options for wider and better footpaths to improve 'on-street' opportunities for businesses, and to improve the safety and 'comfort' of the pedestrian environment. This may include short term interventions to temporarily use on-street parking for seating, planting, displays etc.

#### Action 5: Develop a Legible Network of Routes & Trails

Downpatrick has an amazing array of assets in and around the town centre as well as in the wider area. However, there is currently a lack of legibility and connectivity could be enhanced to increase what Downpatrick has to offer locals and visitors. The following diagram illustrates potential links that could be made through improving some paths and introducing signage / way markers. A mixture of routes should be developed that could be signature walks that focus on heritage and cultural destinations; youth trails linking the planned skate park / pump track in Dunleath Park, cinema, Leisure Centre and Mabel's Ice Cream Parlour etc.; and recreational trails out to the Mound of Down and the Quoile.

##### First Steps:

- 5a DRWG, working with NMDDC, DfC, Town Committee and asset owners start to use the preferred routes to link places and spaces as part of events. Consider temporary creative signage, chalk on pavements, installations such as ribbons, yarn bombing, signs attached to light columns, posters in windows.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy C

- 5b DRWG, to promote the use of existing trails and guides, see Strategy A, Action 2e.
- 5c NMDDC to ensure all the existing finger post signs point in the right direction.

#### Next Steps:

- 5d DRWG, working with NMDDC and DfC, DfI to progress the design of a network of routes and trails for different audiences: heritage and culture; family recreation; nature and wellbeing; running, cycling etc. This will include infrastructure and collateral such as: signage, interpretation, lighting, seating, bins, outdoor gym equipment, cycle parking facilities etc. This is likely to include existing and new routes and spaces that will emerge as future projects.
- 5e DRWG, working with NMDDC and DfC, DfI to progress a feasibility study for bridge to the Downe Retail Park from the DCDR area behind Rathkeltair House. See *Project 11*.

### Action 6: Improve Public Spaces & Create Event Space

Ideas have emerged to improve existing public spaces and create event spaces, and these should be considered collectively in terms of functions and priorities and links to Action 1 of this Strategy. The outputs from Action 1d combined with 1i and monitor impacts of increased activities should inform priorities for the delivery of temporary and longer-term improvements to streets and spaces. There are also links with Strategy E, Action 1 to determine needs and wants.

The objectives that should inform briefs for each project are set out under Projects at the end of this Section.





### 3 Action Plan - Strategy D

#### Strategy D: Improving Image - Tackle Vacancy, Frontages & Gateways

- Action 1: Encourage the Use of Vacant Buildings, Spaces & Sites
- Action 2: Former PSNI & Irish Street Car Park Site
- Action 3: Collaboration to Occupy Vacant Properties
- Action 4: Frontages – Restoration & Improvement
- Action 5: Improve Approaches & Gateways into the Town

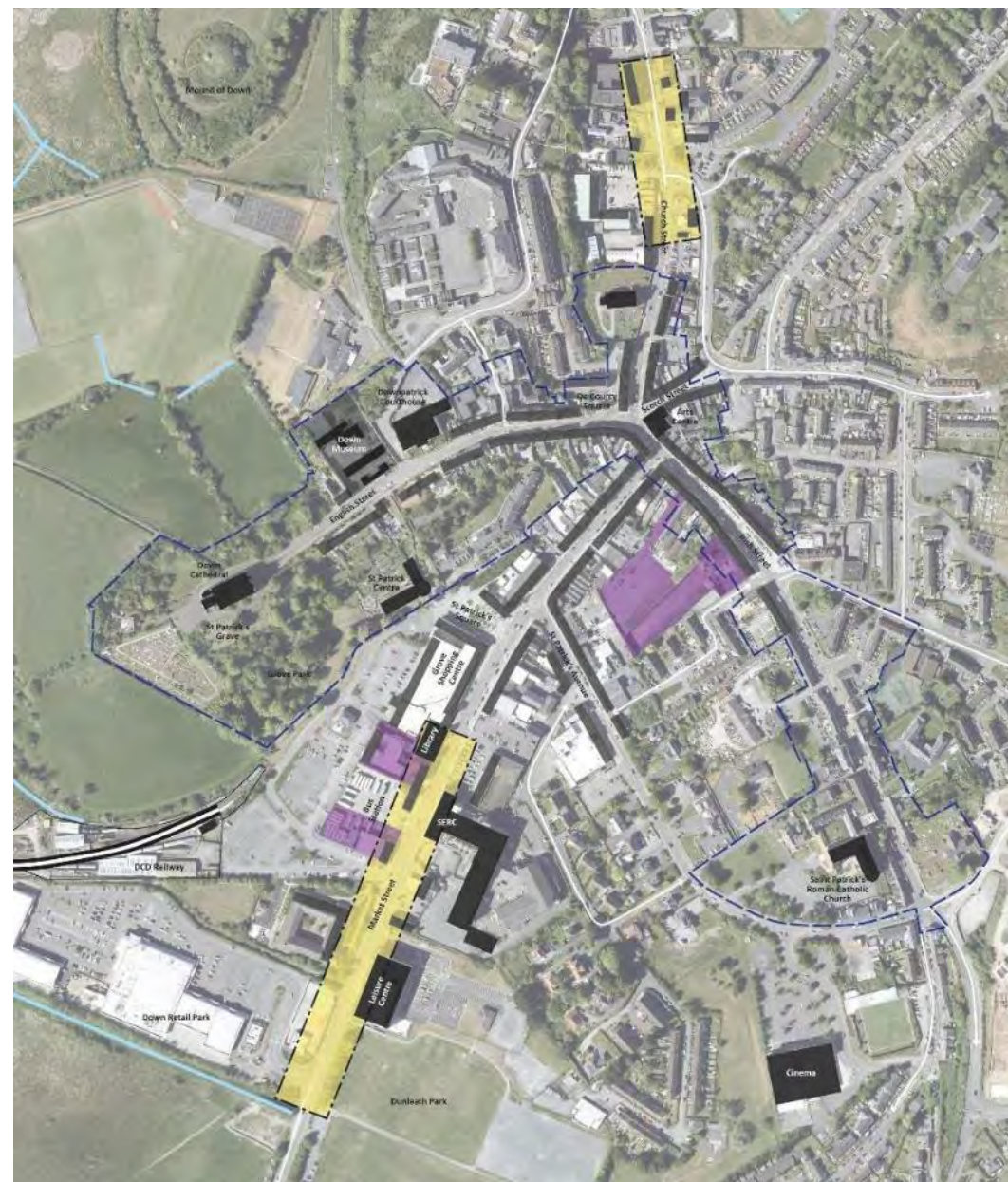
**Aim:** to improve the image and quality of the built environment to attract people and investment. There are several complementary Actions to this Strategy as addressing vacancy is complex and challenging. Improving frontages will encourage further investment and occupation by improving the visual appearance of Downpatrick.

There are also potential processes that could assist businesses to collaborate and share the costs of taking on a unit and contributing to the vibrancy and footfall. Busy attractive places tend to attract more people which in turn attracts more businesses and investment.

**Strategic Priority:** DRWG need to work with DfC, NMDDC, HED, Downpatrick Property Trust Limited and business owners to focus on key priorities and catalysts for change.

#### Case Studies in Appendix B

- *Downpatrick Property Trust Limited: Building Restoration Projects*
- *Bangor Courthouse – Community Asset Transfer and Refurbished Listed Building*
- *Village Catalyst Pilot Programme*
- *Collaborative ‘Pop-up’ in Vacant Unit, Downpatrick*
- *Project 24, Bangor*
- *Courthouse Shared Space Creative Hub Project in Bushmills*
- *Revite Scheme on Irish Street, Downpatrick*
- *Armagh Shopfront Scheme, Upper English Street, Armagh*



### 3 Action Plan - Strategy D

#### Action 1: Encourage the Use of Vacant Buildings, Spaces & Sites

##### First Steps:

- 1a DRWG, with support from Down Business Centre, DfC and NMDDC to map and monitor vacancy and create a list of property owners:
- Update existing proforma to record known vacant properties, ownerships, status, Listing, within Conservation Area, condition and include photos.
  - Set out process for updating and update on quarterly basis.
- 1b DRWG, with support from, NMDDC, HED and DfC to identify and review derelict, unmaintained Listed Buildings and buildings in the Conservation Area.
- 1c DRWG, with support from Down Business Centre, to request rates relief in Downpatrick town centre (need to consider extent) and lobby High Street Task Force NI when the Executive returns.

##### Next Steps:

- 1d DRWG, with support from, NMDDC, HED and DfC to consider options for derelict, unmaintained Listed Buildings and buildings in the conservation area to encourage action by property owners and options for enforcement, inclusion in Action 3 etc.
- 1e DRWG, with support from, NMDDC, HED and DfC to consider potential for financial incentives to address dereliction and vacancy.
- 1f DRWG to look at opportunities to work with NMDDC, DfC, TNI and building owners to convert vacant and residential upper floors into visitor accommodation above shops.

#### Action 2: Former PSNI & Irish Street Car Park Development Site

Transforming the former PSNI site/Irish Street car park is a great opportunity for Downpatrick and has significant potential to be a catalyst for regeneration. Many ideas have been generated and the walkabout at workshop 4 provided an opportunity to see inside the main Listed Building and appreciate the scale of the site. Ideas included, but are not limited to:

- Great opportunity for mix of uses given the level differences across the site - restaurants / shops / hotel / underground parking etc.
- Amazing views and it would be lovely to have a tiered restaurant with views to the Cathedral
- Need to link to the square / car park
- Need to balance parking and use of developable space on the site
- Irish Street car park could be a fantastic public space which could be used to hold events – ‘Concert Hall Square’

##### First Steps:

- 2a Following no submissions for the Development Brief in February 2023 DfC, NMDDC and DRWG are working on next steps to progress this significant site with catalytic potential. DfC will provide updates on a quarterly basis.
- 2b Subject to findings of Strategy C, Action 1b, consider temporary interventions to use the car park and or lower part of former PSNI site for events / activities to coincide with horse racing events, Christmas, St. Patrick's Parade, Halloween, Downtown Fest etc, to change how this part of Downpatrick is used and demonstrate potential for this to be a space as part of the development of the site. Note that for health and safety reasons there needs to be a minimum of two access points for emergency vehicles which impacts practicalities and feasibility.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy D

#### Action 3: Collaboration to Occupy Vacant Properties

There are potentially various business models that could assist in occupying vacant properties. In 2022 a cluster of four local businesses collaborated to share vacant premises for the run up to Christmas 2022. This was successful and the DRWG want to explore the potential for this scheme to be replicated. *See Case Study: Collaborative 'Pop-up' in Vacant Unit, Downpatrick, in Appendix B.*

##### First Steps:

- 3a DRWG working with Down Business Centre, NMDDC and DfC to create an audit (through Invitations for Expressions of Interests, meetings) of:
- Willing property owners - add to pro-forma from Action 1a to include willingness to pursue combined businesses rental of properties and assist property owners.
  - Potential businesses (existing, potential innovators, SERC opportunities etc.).

##### Next Steps:

- 3b DRWG working with DBC to support property owners and businesses to progress collaboration to occupy vacant units.
- 3c DRWG working with DBC to monitor progress, share good news stories and consider if any amendments are required.

#### Action 4: Frontages – Restoration & Improvement

Recent Frontage Improvements Schemes have been delivered by NMDDC and DfC to 13 properties on Irish Street, 15 on Church Street, 3 on Bridge Street, 3 on Scotch Street and 2 on English Street. In addition, the frontages of vacant properties at 14 and 16 Church Street have been improved as part of addressing dereliction. It is acknowledged that improvements to frontages can make a significant impact of the appearance of a place, making it more attractive to people, businesses and further investment. It is therefore

proposed that additional Frontage Improvements Schemes should be progressed.

##### First Steps:

- 4a DfC and NMDDC to consider most appropriate process for a shopfront revitalisation scheme and associated level of funding required.
- Option A – grant funding from Council / DfC for building owner to arrange improvements that comply with design requirements.
  - Option B – DfC/NMDDC procure and commission contractor to undertake specified works to selected buildings.
  - Option C – DfC/NMDDC procure and commission an architect to design and procure contractor to undertake works to selected buildings.
- 4b DRWG, with support from DBC and NMDDC to add to the proforma in Action 1a, the quality of frontages and which have been addressed by previous Revite Programme. Consider prioritisation of frontages that have not been addressed to date.

##### Next Steps:

- 4c DfC and NMDDC, working with DRWG, to develop a frontages strategy. Set out a consistent set of high-quality materials, design and colour scheme for signage and frontages to enhance the heritage feel and remove or creatively paint roller shutters. See **Advice Guide 8 - General Principles of Good Shop Front Design**, in Section 1. This should be used for all shop fronts in Downpatrick.
- 4d DRWG, with support from DBC, NMDDC and DfC invite expressions of interest from owners and agree extent / phases, subject to funding.
- 4e DfC and NMDDC to lead delivery of frontages restoration and improvement scheme on phased basis in line with DRWG prioritisation. This should lead to a programme or set of projects.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy D

#### Action 5: Improve Approaches & Gateways into the Town

It is recognised that first impressions are important and influence people's perception of a place. Through the workshops it was concluded that none of the approaches into Downpatrick present the best image of the town and all the approaches and gateways should be improved as a priority.

##### First Steps:

- 5a DfC and NMDDC to share comments with the consultant, when appointed. The consultants will consider how to improve this gateway and approach into Downpatrick and how Church Street could be unified as an attractive entrance to the town. This could include vertical elements - if not trees then - banners/lighting, sculpture, signage, street art etc. to create a rhythm and identity. *Link to Project 5: Church Street*

##### Next Steps:

- 5b DRWG to review options that emerge for Church Street and generate ideas to assist design development.
- 5c DRWG, with support from NMDDC and DfC, generate ideas and objectives to inform brief for Market Street as a gateway.
- 5d DfC and NMDDC to develop a proposal for the Market Street approach to improve this gateway and define the approach into Downpatrick. This could include planting, banners/lighting, sculpture, signage, street art etc. to create a rhythm and identity.

##### Future Projects

- Church Street environmental improvements
- Market Street approach and gateway enhanced
- Signage, sculptures, planting, street art etc.



### 3 Action Plan - Strategy E

#### Strategy E: Community Needs & Wants

Action 1: Indoor & Outdoor Spaces & Activities for the Community

Action 2: New Toilets

Action 3: More Affordable Housing

**Aim:** to address the communities needs and wants. It is critical to audit existing facilities and spaces, their use and future needs and opportunities. There were a series of ideas that emerged through the workshops including:

- Space for retired population to come together.
- Space for young people – community centre, social pod, pool hall, well-being spaces, café hub. Need tables, chairs, sofas, tea & coffee, area to hang out, to meet people of similar age. Rehearsal space, urban sports, climbing wall, bouldering, rock-climbing.
- Recreational activities to encourage young families with a safe space for children (away from traffic) e.g. funky moneys – play adventure.
- Better facilities for sports activities - athletic club, triathlon, running club, football teams, canoeing etc.
- New toilets.
- Water drinking fountain.

**Strategic Priority:** DRWG to provide the cohesive platform, with support from CDRCN, DCA, DBC, NMDDC and DfC to assist communities and businesses to fulfil their potential and contribute to the wider regeneration of Downpatrick.

#### Action 1: Indoor & Outdoor Spaces & Activities for the Community

This Action is linked with all the other Strategies and should be treated as a priority by DRWG. The needs and wants of the community must be assessed as the first part of this Strategy. This will inform and shape and future Projects and Activities that emerge for the other Strategies and/or become Projects and Activities in their own right.

##### First Steps:

- 1a DRWG working with CDRCN, DCA, and DBC to develop a questionnaire. The purpose is to undertake an audit which will feed into the Directory Strategy A, Action 1 and also evidence existing needs and aspirations.
- 1b DRWG working with CDRCN, DCA to undertake an audit of community groups needs and wants:
  - Existing groups and facilities i.e. who's doing what, where and when.
  - Aspirations of groups – what else they'd like to do, where, how much space needed and how often.
  - Identify how much prepared to pay for activities and /or potential sources of funding.
- 1c Down Arts Centre and DCA to undertake an audit of artists / creatives needs and wants.

##### Next Steps:

- 1d DRWG working with CDRCN, DCA, DBC and asset owners to assess if existing facilities could meet the need of communities. Rooms may be available in the Down Arts Centre and Down County Museum or Rathkeltair House, the Library or St. Patrick Centre.
- 1e DRWG working with CDRCN, DCA, DBC to collate as evidence of what facilities are available and assess what's missing - quantum and quality.

### 3 Action Plan - Strategy E

- 1f DRWG working with all partners to consider links with Strategies A, B, C and D to assess where the evidenced needs could be accommodated and whether existing facilities, buildings and / or spaces can be:
- Used in current format.
  - Require interventions to make them usable and therefore become and Projects.

#### Action 2: New Toilets

It was agreed that the existing toilets are not fit for purpose and alternative provision will need to be considered. NMDDC have a Public Toilet Strategy that was published in May 2021, in partnership with the British Toilet Association. This provides the context for potential options that could be considered.

This action should also consider the future potential for the space the current public toilets occupy on Market Street. This is a prominent location and one of the rare places along Market Street that has a wider footpath. With the removal of the toilets from the current this could be enhanced as a small space. Careful consideration should first be given to whether the adjacent lane along with removal of the toilets could provide an alternative access to the Folds, adjacent to the St. Patrick Centre. If this is a feasible solution it would provide a significant opportunity to remove vehicles from St. Patrick's Square.

##### Next Steps:

- 2a DRWG, with support from Council and DfC, to consider all appropriate options for providing new toilets – whether in existing facilities, repurpose spaces, adjacent to a new / improved space etc. This needs to reflect the NMDDC public toilet strategy and the brief needs to be carefully considered in terms of location, quantum and timing to relate to the other Actions for events and activities.

- 2b Should an alternative access to the Folds be achievable and acceptable this should become a Project and the brief expanded to also look at creating a public space to replace the toilets when they are provided in a new location.

#### Action 3: More Affordable Housing

##### First Steps:

- 3a DRWG to work with DfC and NIHE to establish the existing and projected needs for social and affordable housing.

##### Next Steps:

- 3b DRWG to work with DfC, NIHE and housing associations to encourage the types and distribution of affordable housing in Downpatrick to encourage families and young people to stay in Downpatrick.

# 3 Action Plan - Projects

## The Projects

The following projects have been identified through the workshops and these should be prioritised subject to findings from Strategy C: Activating & Connecting Streets & Spaces, Actions 1 and 6 and Strategy E: Community Needs & Wants, Action 1. The analysis and audits must be completed before any significant capital projects are progressed.

Funding significant capital projects will need evidence of benefits and the projects therefore include trialling temporary interventions and monitoring benefits. The following sets out objectives for each project that should inform briefs for progressing these projects.

1. St. Patrick's Square
2. Market Street & St. Patrick's Avenue
3. Scotch Street
4. De Courcy Square
5. Church Street
6. Irish Street
7. Entrances to Lynn Doyle Place
8. English Street
9. Dunleath Park
10. Event Space Options
11. The Grove, Grove Shopping Centre, Car Parks, Department of Health Building, Bus Station, Downpatrick and County Down Railway, Rathkeltair House & Link to Downe Retail Park

The following should be supplemented with information gained from Strategy C, Action 1d – which identifies capacity and constraints such as licences, permissions, health and safety etc. and Action 1i which identifies any temporary solutions that improve the use of spaces.

DRWG could request MAG to undertake a Design Review of Projects as the briefs need to be progressed.

### 3 Action Plan - Projects

#### Project 1: St. Patrick's Square

Significant environmental improvements were implemented in St. Patrick's Square in 2011. It is therefore unlikely that a significant capital project could be justified in the short term. However, through the workshops there have been many discussions about its limited functionality. The ideas that emerged through the workshops have been developed into objectives. The actions should be trialled, and impacts monitored to create an evidence base that could, in time, provide the basis for a more significant capital project to transform St. Patrick's Square.

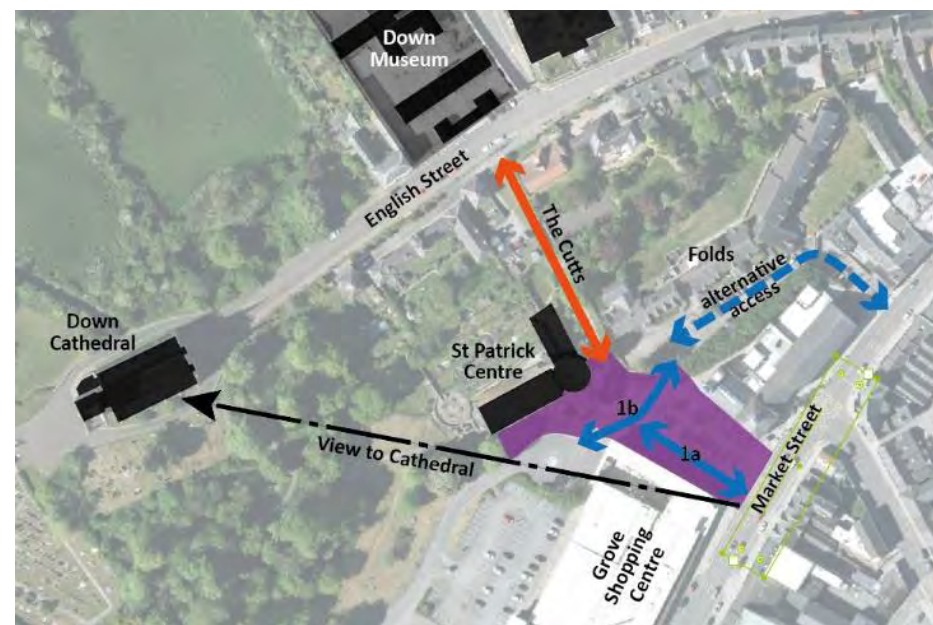
**Objective 1** Make St. Patrick's Square safer and more usable by removing vehicular access through it. There are two parts to this objective 1a and 1b.

A movement and public realm study) study could be commissioned to test a number of scenarios and relative cost / benefits. Initially temporary interventions should be trialled, and impacts monitored to inform the study.

Initial Phase – Reduce the amount of existing traffic through the Square that is not essential. Introduce additional signage that directs traffic on Market Street to the car parks from the access road beside the Bus Station and prohibits right turn out of the car park at the roundabout. Increase enforcement of traffic management to reduce traffic passing through St. Patrick's Square and stop parking on pavements.

##### **1a from Market Street to front of St. Patrick Centre**

To justify any future reconfiguration of the Square, trial temporary road closure for Artisan Market and other events. DRWG with support from Council and DfC, to progress temporary intervention to trial closing the road from Market Street to the front of the St. Patrick Centre to primarily make it safer and increase available space for activities.



##### **1b from roundabout across the front of St. Patrick Centre**

To facilitate removal of the street from the roundabout across the front of St. Patrick Centre an alternative access to the two Folds beside the St. Patrick Centre would need to be provided. This could be via the lane beside the public toilets on Market Street. Council, DfC and DfI to assess the feasibility of providing alternative access to the Folds (consider where it could be achieved technically, and whether it is viable and acceptable).

If there is a potential solution it would provide a significant opportunity to remove vehicles from St. Patrick's Square in the longer term. The brief should also include improvements to the access to the entrance of the St. Patrick Centre which is constrained by the level difference. *Link with Strategy 2, Action 5.*



### 3 Action Plan - Projects

**Objective 2** Encourage people to stay /spend time here and facilitate people centric occupation of square.

Ideas included informal family seating, seats arranged that are suitable for people to meet friends, buskers, pop-ups, tables, covered areas etc.

Trial temporary interventions that add to the functionality for people to use the space. This could be for activities through the summer months with movable seats and tables. Monitor impacts in terms of costs and the financial and non-financial benefits to businesses and the community. *Link with Strategy C, Action 1 and 2.*

**Objective 3** Increase the use of The Cutts, promote, make it more visible and accessible to visitors and locals.

Phase 1 - Ensure all the existing finger post signs point in the right direction so that the existing trails can be promoted. *Link with Strategy A, Action 2 + Strategy C, Action 5.*

Phase 2 - Replace railing to increase visibility of the Cutt up to English Street from St. Patrick's Square.

#### Considerations for Future Brief

Should it be feasible to remove either or both streets through the Square and funding becomes available consider redesigning the Square to:

- Enhance the functionality that reflects needs identified through trials from the objectives above and findings from *Strategy E, Action 1.*
- Consider potential reconfiguring levels to improve access into the St. Patrick Centre.
- Consider the need for four telephone boxes and whether one telephone box and one for defibrillator unit would be adequate and reduce visual impact.

Should the Grove Shopping Centre be redeveloped there would be significant benefits to opening the view to the Cathedral from St. Patrick's Square and Market Street by realigning the frontage onto St. Patrick's Square.

#### Project 2: Market Street & St. Patrick's Avenue

**Objective** To give more priority to people. *Link with Strategy C, Action 4.*

There is an aspiration to widen pavements and reduce the road space on Market Street between the junctions with St. Patrick's Avenue and Irish Street. This is not a new idea, but it has been suggested that to inform the potential benefits, temporary interventions should be trialled on Market Street and St. Patrick's Avenue.

Phase 1 - Consider options for short term interventions to temporarily use on-street parking bays for seating, planting, displays etc. *See Parklet Case Study in Appendix A.*

Consideration should also be given to temporarily closing Market Street between St. Patrick's Avenue and Irish Street for events to trial the re-routing of traffic and the impact on businesses and footfall in the town.

Phase 2 – Consider the options that could be progressed from the outcome of the Transport Plan. *Link with Strategy C, Action 4.*

#### Project 3: Scotch Street as a space

**Objective** To reduce vehicles using Scotch Street and make it a safe, usable space.

Phase 1 – Increase enforcement of traffic management to reduce traffic in Scotch Street and stop parking on pavements.

Phase 2 - Consider options for short term installations such as seating, planting to temporarily close access to the street for activities and monitor impacts.

### 3 Action Plan - Projects

#### Project 4: De Courcy Square

DfC and Council have commissioned consultants to develop proposals to remodel De Courcy Square. The scope has been refined to include the following objectives:

- To design the space as a whole – extend to the wall and the front of properties.
- To encourage ‘ownership’ of places by the community that are safe and over-looked, encouraging pride in place.
- To be designed for residents and the local community first. Consider how residents and local community want to use the space – active play for young and/or passive, restful space? Needs to be usable, seats that face each other, interactive local information, address the existing service boxes – integrate/hide/move?
- Residents want:
  - a nice space to look out at – perhaps create small garden areas to create some private space / separation from rest of square.
  - a place for people to put their bins (not just outside one of the GF flats).
  - more trees and planting.

Once the design options are drafted these will be shared with DRWG, local community and residents as part of the consultation process before the designs are finalised and funding sought to implement them.

In addition, the Council should engage with the building owner regarding the management and maintenance of bins and communal service area to the rear.

#### Project 5: Church Street

DfC and the Council have an environmental improvement scheme planned for Church Street. The initial phase is completed and there are more elements planned. *Link to Strategy D, Action 5.*

The future phases should include the following ideas and objectives from the workshops:

- Environmental and frontage improvements to be to the same high standard along all of Church Street.
- Improve the approach and gateway into the town to make it more welcoming and consistent.
- Enhancement and better maintenance of footpaths, flowers, planting and trees.
- Improve frontages, remove or creatively paint roller shutters.

#### Project 6: Irish Street

Phase 1 – Subject to funding, County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN), Down Community Arts (DCA), to work with DfI and Community Allotments to improve the planters on Irish Street. Remove existing whin bushes / gorse and replace with native wildflowers that will contribute to habitat for pollinators. *Link to Strategy C, Action 3.*

Consider including the planters in the Live Here Love Here, Adopt a Spot and have volunteer rota to maintain the plants.

Phase 2 – Subject to funding, CDRCN and DCA, to work with DfI and SERC, Clanrye to explore opportunities to repaint the walls of the planters on Irish Street through heritage skills training. *Link to Strategy C, Action 3.*

Phase 3 – Enhance the triangular space at junction of Irish Street and John Street as a focal point. DRWG with support of CDRCN and DCA, to engage with NIHE to consider potential community project to enhance this space as a focal point for the community. Consider including seating, planting etc.

### 3 Action Plan - Projects

#### Project 7: Entrances to Lynn Doyle Place

**Objective** Improve entrances to Lynn Doyle Place on Irish Street and St. Patrick's Avenue.

Phase 1 - DRWG with support of CDRCN and DCA, engage with NIHE to consider potential community project with seating, street art, lighting, plants, hanging baskets, sculpture etc.

#### Project 8: English Street

English Street is rich in history and the architecture reflects this. The workshops highlighted this, and the following objectives reflect discussions.

**Objective 1** To improve English Street as a high-quality space respectful of the beautiful buildings and setting of the Cathedral that can be used as an events space with the Cathedral as a stunning backdrop.

Phase 1 – DRWG with support of Down Community Arts (DCA), Council (events, Museum and Arts Centre) to consider using English Street for events to test how the space could be used and identify any constraints and barriers. The findings should be used to inform Phase 2, a brief for environmental improvements to English Street.

**Objective 2** improve the footpaths on English Street to be sympathetic to the historic environment and fit-for-purpose.

Phase 1 – Increase maintenance and management on English Street. Council to initially assess the extent of improvements required to footpaths.

#### Considerations for Future Brief

DfC and Council to use the findings from both Phase 1 activities and Strategy C, Action 1 to inform a brief for environmental improvements to English Street. This should include including lighting, seating, parking, interpretive signage etc that reflects the context of being within a Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Area of Archaeological Potential and Area of Significant Archaeological Interest for Downpatrick.

#### Project 9: Dunleath Park

Dunleath Park is a valued recreational space with pitches and trails. A trail has been improved and is used for the Park Run as well as informally used by runners, walkers and dog walkers. Limited provisions for young people was frequently raised and the need to make places they feel welcomed. Discussions at the workshops identified potential improvements that should be considered if funding is made available.

Phase 1 – A skate park / pump track facility has been designed and has secured planning permission. This is located close to the cinema and proposals should include enhancing the entrance to the park from St. Patrick's Avenue with signage to the new facility.

Phase 2 – Lighting would improve the usability of the park, especially in autumn and winter. Most of the park is within the flood plain and planning permission would need to be sought for any lighting. However, this is not considered to be a technical issue and consideration should be given to various solutions such as solar powered lights, movement sensor lights, low level and or ground level lights etc. The Lighting Strategy should include proposals for the park, although this could also be developed as a stand-alone project, subject to funding.

### 3 Action Plan - Projects

#### Project 10: Event Space Options – *Link to Strategy C, Actions 1 and 6*

Given animation of Downpatrick has been a common theme, various event spaces should be considered. However, it is also acknowledged that these spaces may only be used half a dozen times a year.

St. Patrick's Square is currently used for events and the Artisan Market. However, it may not be the best location for events in the future. English Street, the Irish Street car park and the Pay and Display car park between the St. Patrick Centre and the Grove Shopping Centre have been identified as desirable locations for events. The other surface car parks, Dunleath Park and The Grove may also have potential.

It will therefore be important to evidence cost benefits to inform whether additional temporary or permanent infrastructure is viable. Use the findings from the following to inform testing the use of different spaces to assess cost/benefit that could inform investment in infrastructure and facilities that would make the space more usable on a more regular basis.

Strategy C, Action 1d – which identifies capacity and constraints such as licences, permissions, costs, health and safety etc.; and,

Strategy C, Action 1i which identifies any temporary solutions that improve the use of spaces trial using various spaces.

#### Project 11: The Grove, Grove Shopping Centre, Car Parks, Department of Health Building, Bus Station, Downpatrick and County Down Railway, Rathkeltair House & Link to Retail Park

This area, situated behind Market Street's retail frontage, comprises a mixture of diverse uses: The Grove, Grove Shopping Centre, Department of Health Building, Bus Station, Downpatrick and County Down Railway, Rathkeltair House and the Wastewater Pumping Station. Most of these uses tend to be closed from 4-5pm with limited activity in the area after 5pm.

This area has a fragmented character and feels isolated from the rest of the town by an access road and several large surface car parks. It includes cultural and historic focal points but lacks coherence and structure. The area also suffers from a lack of natural surveillance which should be generated by overlooking from the frontages of adjacent buildings and footfall from people moving through the area.

Each existing facility has individual potential, and a cohesive solution should be sought to maximise the sum of the parts. However, it is also acknowledged that it is likely that each facility will bring forward their own proposals at different times making it even more important that an overall Spatial Framework should be established for this area. The following objectives reflect many of the ideas shared at the workshops and should be incorporated into a brief for a Spatial Framework for this area.

- Objective 1 To create a coherent area that has a legible structure that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles.
- Objective 2 To increase natural surveillance from positive frontages
- Objective 3 To increase natural surveillance by improving linkages to encourage people to walk between destinations and facilities.



### 3 Action Plan - Projects

#### **Objective 1 To create a coherent area that has a legible structure that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles.**

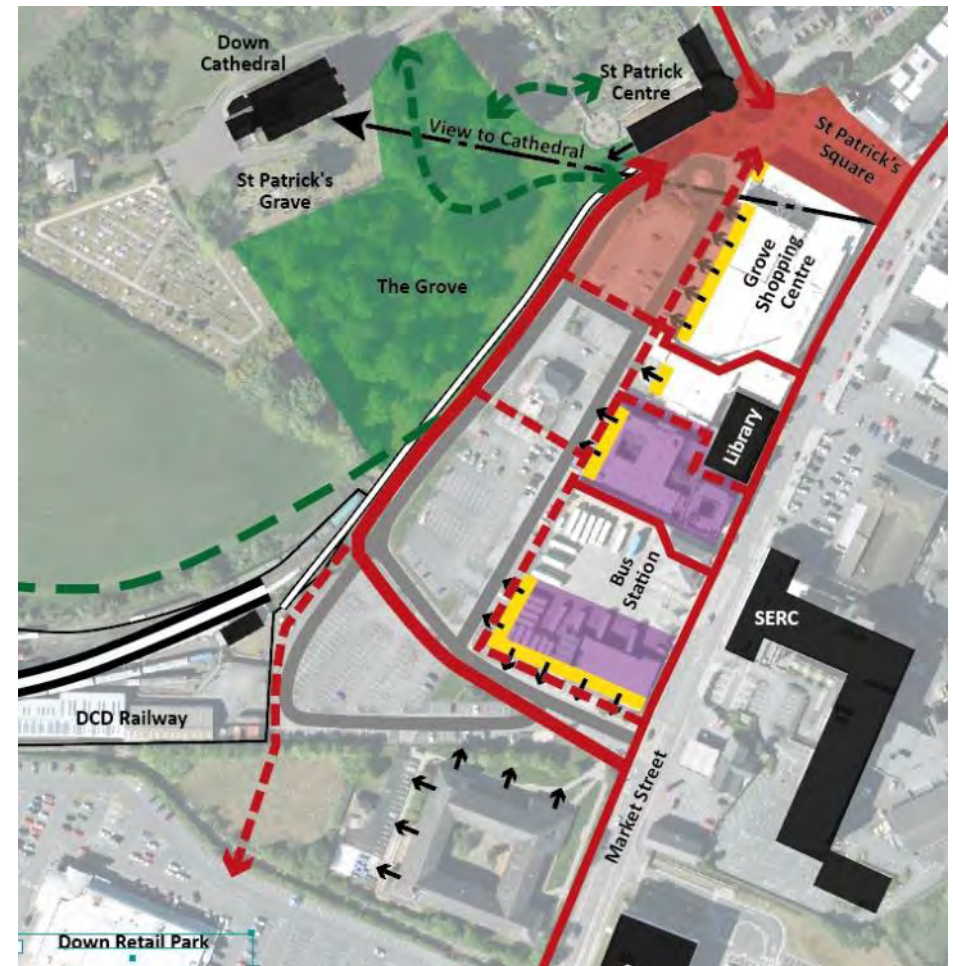
Strengthen and extend the primary route from the St. Patrick Centre, along the Grove to the DCD Railway and beyond. This route should include enhanced lighting, footpath widening and signage. Opportunities must be considered to animate this route, see ideas in Objectives 2 and 3.

It should include a bridge to the Downe Retail Park which must be sensitive to the setting of the surrounding historic landscape, given its proximity to the scheduled area of Cathedral Hill. It is within the Area of Archaeological Potential and Area of Significant Archaeological Interest for Downpatrick and there is potential for encountering below ground archaeological remains which could be mitigated through a programme of archaeological works. Given the constraints it will need to be modest in scale and design. A feasibility study should test options as it could have wider benefits if one-way vehicular movement could be facilitated from the Retail Park as well and pedestrian and cycle provisions. When funding becomes available this should be progressed as a specific Project.

The footpath along the rear of the Grove Shopping Centre, Department of Health Building and Bus Station should also be enhanced with lighting and footpath widening. Consideration should be given to rationalising the surface car parks to make them more coherent and create a new street along the rear of the Grove Shopping Centre rather than fragmented car park access roads. This is linked to Objectives 2 and 3 to increase natural surveillance and create positive frontages.

New safe pedestrian routes should also be designed to link between these routes along natural desire lines. For example, at the Bus Station and Grove Shopping Centre.

Street names in Downpatrick are important and the streets in this area should be given names that reflect the heritage of Downpatrick, ideas could include Railway Street, Steam Street, Grove Way etc. Names could be suggested as part of a local competition.



#### **Objective 2 To increase natural surveillance from positive frontages.**

Feasibility of reconfiguring the units in the **Grove Shopping Centre** should be considered to provide frontages along the rear of this block. Consideration should be given to whether any of the units could be subdivided to have frontages to either Market Streets or the new street. This may include creating service access corridors through the building from Market Street to the new street. This is likely to require additional openings to be punctured through the façade to increase natural surveillance.

### 3 Action Plan - Projects

Should this not be feasible consideration should be given to adding commercial pop-ups / incubator units along this edge to create natural surveillance from active frontages.

The future repurposing of the **Department of Health** buildings provides opportunities to create frontages to both Market Street and the new street. In addition, new connections should be considered through this plot to increase connectivity between Market Street and this area. This could also provide an opportunity to create an additional entrance into the Library.

The **Bus Station** is acknowledged as an important destination. As set out in Strategy B, Action 7, DRWG aspires to improve the existing facility as a Transport Hub and the brief should seek to reflect this. Opportunities should be sought to enhance the rear entrance into the Bus Station, making it more legible with a direct footpath and signage. There may also be merit in moving the taxis to have a drop-off pick-up location in the car park as part of the Transport Hub.

DRWG also has an aspiration to relocate the **bus depot** and redevelop that part of the bus station. Should there be potential to progress this, careful consideration must be given to create positive frontages to Market Streets, the new street and the existing access road. Should this not be progressed consideration should be given to enhancing the boundary treatments.

**Rathkeltair House** is a government building and is occupied by different Departments. It also hosts a Connect2 Regional Hub which are part of a new hybrid working policy that offers a blended approach for civil servants to work from home, remotely, or in the office. It provides a local, well-equipped and flexible working environment which also supports business needs. It does provide some natural surveillance, but this could be increased through enhanced boundary treatments and less fortification. Opportunities should be sought to maximise physical and visual connections to contribute to the natural surveillance in this area.

**Downpatrick and County Down Railway (DCDR)** is a recognised destination. As set out in Strategy B, Action 6, DCDR and DRWG aspire to enhance the potential of this asset. This could include improvements to the point of arrival with better pedestrian links and signage. There is also potential to enhanced boundary treatments whilst acknowledging the need to make the compound secure. There is also potential to revisit proposals to extend the railway line to the St. Patrick Centre, whether as a functioning line or an aesthetic nod to the former tracks along this alignment with railway sleepers or rail lines in the footpath.

Opportunities must be considered to animate the route between the St. Patrick Centre, along the Grove to the DCDR and Retail Park beyond. This should include the design and development of an architecturally distinctive, yet sensitive and robust built edge along the existing access road. This could be with incubator units and/or commercial pop-ups to create a streetscape with active frontage to create natural surveillance of the route, The Grove and car parks. Explore partnerships with SERC and wider stakeholders as a test bed for creative industries. There could also be potential for a railway carriage café. *See Case Study in Appendix A for Project 24 in Bangor.*

The **Wastewater Pumping Station** sits in isolation within the car park. This is an essential part of the infrastructure but as a use it does not contribute to the positive image or feel of the area or create any natural surveillance. Consideration should be given to improve its appearance with street art, sculptures, signage etc. to make it more attractive and focal point in the area.

### 3 Action Plan - Projects

**Objective 3 To increase natural surveillance by improving linkages to encourage people to walk between destinations and facilities.**

Delivering Objective 1 would create the infrastructure required to facilitate this Objective.

**The Grove** provides a beautiful setting for Down Cathedral, a Grade A Listed Building. It is within the Conservation Area and a Local Landscape Policy Area all the trees are therefore protected. It is also within the Area of Archaeological Potential and Area of Significant Archaeological Interest for Downpatrick and there is potential for encountering below ground archaeological remains. This combines to make this a sensitive area which will require careful design considerations.

**The Grove** does not currently provide the green amenity space it could for locals and visitors and could be enhanced. It should be a destination as a beautiful landscape that is a place for everyone to enjoy, spend time and be safe. It connects the heritage and visitor assets and should be a focal point with lighting and places to picnic. Wesley Stone should be highlighted as a point of interest and the existing Seating Stones need to be either relocated or added to as a feature as part of a heritage trail to encourage appropriate use.

As set out under Strategy B, Action 5 DRWG have aspirations to increase links and natural surveillance from the St. Patrick Centre. Considerations should be given to views from the St. Patrick Centre into the Grove and potential links between the gardens and outdoor café seating and the Grove.

In addition to becoming more of a destination **The Grove** should also provide a beautiful walk up to English Street where the Cathedral, Museum and the Mound of Down can be accessed. A more visible, accessible route needs to be designed that is more natural and DDA compliant with railings.

## 4 Next Steps

### Maintaining Momentum

A wide variety of stakeholders, businesses and communities participated in the process to co-design this Downpatrick Living High Streets Framework. It will be important to maintain momentum following the launch and Actions progress to start the next phase of participation and action on the ground.

It will be important to monitor progress and the Action Tracker is a working tool to assist DWRG and partners to assess timescales and consider programming and potential resources. The Tracker will help to stay nimble and keep everything live and capable of responding to opportunities as they arise. The Tracker includes a risk register that identifies issues and mitigation.

### Governance Matters

The DRWG was established in September 2022 and members have given valuable time and commitment to the process. There may be further consideration of the Members required to progress the Actions in this Framework and the shape of the Group should evolve as required in the future.

There are various governance models such as Community Improvement Districts (CID's), Area Partnerships, as Business Improvement Districts (BID's), etc. The document "**Emerging learning from the first phase of the CID programme**" March 2023 states that "Establishing a new structure takes time, and can take focus away from 'doing' visible activities and engagement. Our observation so far is that focusing on this too early carries a risk of slowing progress as pilots may become bogged down in models, structures, roles and responsibilities. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis where businesses and communities may be struggling, there is a strong drive for pilots to be seen to be taking action."

Current thinking is that the DRWG should be allowed to evolve as appropriate in the future and focus on Actions and purpose of the Group.

The DRWG will continue to meet on a regular basis to review Actions and share information and progress.

Quarterly Officers Working Group Meetings should be planned with partners (TNI, Dfl, HED, Various Council Depts – Regen, Planning, Tourism, Leisure, DfC Regen) that own Actions to update progress on Actions.

Also, quarterly meetings with Destination / Events Partners: DRWG-Hosp, DCA, CDRCN, DCC, Arts Centre, Museum, DCDR, Libraries, St. Patrick Centre and NMDDC Tourism.

Resourcing will be key, including local champions and paid staff, a robust volunteer base, and stable funding. It is envisaged that in addition to the DRWG Members resource will include DRWG Secretariat, County Down Rural Community Network, Down Community Arts, Down Business Centre, Downpatrick Property Trust, various NMDDC Departments, DfC and Dfl.

The Downpatrick Property Trust Limited (DPT) has gained valuable experience through the restoration and refurbishment of three buildings and could look at and manage future projects within the Downpatrick Conservation Area, subject to the availability of funding. The Trust is operated by a Board of Directors made up of local business people and residents who give their time in a voluntary capacity. Projects undertaken by the Trust are not considered economically viable by the private sector to deliver and if there is a private interest the Trust must withdraw from the project.

A RACI Matrix should be prepared for new Actions and Projects to ensure that there is clarity in who will be leading, who is involved and who needs to know. These roles may change over time. **RACI stands for:**

**Responsible:** is the person/organisation in charge of leading the process.

**Accountable:** is the person/organisation who is accountable for delivering the process. They give permission for it to be initiated (in some cases) or approve the results, delivery and monitoring/evaluation.

**Consulted:** is a person/organisation who can contribute to the process. They may be a stakeholder or subject matter specialist that supports the process with experience and knowledge.

## 4 Next Steps

**Informed:** other people will need to be informed of processes and when an activity has important consequences for any of the people involved, they should be kept informed.

### Funding Opportunities

Funding in terms of capital and revenue will be challenging, given the current economic issues. However, many of the Actions identified for the first steps do not require substantial funding and a more collaborative approach could see significant progress in the first year. This will also shape the future requirements for budgets and evidence of the needs and benefits to justify funding. The DRWG, with support from Council and DfC, will know what is needed and will be ready to engage with funding bodies and elected representatives to put Downpatrick on the agenda.

There may be funding from various sources such as High Street Task Force NI, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund, National Lottery Awards for all Northern Ireland, Peace Plus, Live Here Love Here, DfC, Council and others. Sponsorship opportunities and possibly crowd funding could also be considered.

#### National Lottery Heritage Fund

The **National Lottery Heritage Fund** (NLHF) has launched its 10-year strategy that sets out their ambitions to support projects of all sizes that connect people and communities to the UK's heritage. Over the next decade they will take a longer-term view, investing in heritage for the future as well as for the present. They will invest in places, not just individual projects, to bring about benefits for people, places and the natural environment.

The four new investment principles will guide all decision making through open programme funding, strategic investments or when entering new collaborations and partnerships. Projects need to take all four investment principles into account in applications. The strength of focus, and emphasis on each principle, will be for applicants to demonstrate.

**Investment principle 1 Saving heritage** by conserving and valuing heritage, for now and the future.

**Investment principle 2 Protecting the environment** by supporting nature recovery and environmental sustainability.

**Investment principle 3 Inclusion, access and participation** by supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage.

**Investment principle 4 Organisational sustainability** by strengthening heritage to be adaptive and financially resilient, contributing to communities and economies.

The 10-year strategy is supported by three-year delivery plans, setting out how the aims of the strategy will be delivered. They will allow NLHF to take a flexible approach, adapting to heritage sector needs and responding to external events or opportunities over the 10 years.

The **2023–2026 delivery plan** sets out the key milestones and how NLHF will deliver National Lottery investment for the first three years, as well as how NLHF are transitioning to their new strategy in 2023–2024. This plan will be updated annually as part of NLHF business planning processes.

The Heritage Fund will also continue with open programmes with devolved decision-making using the local knowledge and expertise in Northern Ireland.



## 4 Next Steps

### Architectural Heritage Fund

The **Architectural Heritage Fund** (AHF) is a registered charity, working since 1976 to promote the conservation and sustainable re-use of historic buildings for the benefit of communities across the UK, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas.

The AHF exists to help communities find enterprising ways to revitalise the old buildings they love. They help them with advice, grants and loans. Their support acts as a catalyst for putting sustainable heritage at the heart of vibrant local economies. For over 40 years, they have been the leading social investor in creating new futures for historic buildings.

Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) has launched their 2023 – 2028 Strategy. The strategy sets out AHF's mission, values and priorities, and describes its strategic aims for the next five years, including its 50th anniversary in 2026.

They strongly encourage discussing any potential application with the Northern Ireland **Support Officer** before submitting an application.

The AHF can provide grants in Northern Ireland, subject to eligibility, to help with assessing the viability of a project, or to help fund development costs. AHF generally expect applicants to cover at least 50% of the cost of the work. i.e. you must normally be able to match our grant offer with your own funds or with funds raised from other sources, although some exclusions apply.

### National Heritage Memorial Fund

As a fund of last resort, the **National Heritage Memorial Fund** (NHMF) provides financial assistance towards the acquisition, preservation and maintenance of some of the UK's finest objects and landscapes. These range from historic houses and works of art to trains, boats and ancient landscapes.

### High Street Task Force NI

The High Street Task Force NI (HSTF) Report "Delivering a 21<sup>st</sup> Century High Street" was published in March 2022. The Report contains 14 Recommendations. At the time of the Report's release by the then Junior Ministers (Gary Middleton and Declan Kearney), it was anticipated that an Executive would have been formed after the May 2022 elections and that steps would have been put in place towards a 5-year plan for supporting our high streets in a meaningful way.

### National Lottery Awards for All Northern Ireland

This **National Lottery Awards funding programme** is suitable for voluntary or community organisations, public sector organisations. National Lottery Awards can consider a wide range of projects to support, develop and strengthen communities through this programme. They can also consider projects that are supporting communities to cope during the cost-of-living crisis.

This programme can fund projects that'll do at least one of these things:

- bring people together to build strong relationships in and across communities
- improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage

Applications can be for funding to deliver new or existing activity or to support your organisation to change and adapt to new and future challenges.

Funding between £300 and £10,000 and groups can apply for up to £10,000 at a time and up to £20,000 in total in any 12-month period. This is an ongoing funding programme and applications should be applied for at least 12 weeks before you want to start the activities or spend any of the money.

## 4 Next Steps

### Live Here Love Here

**Live Here Love Here** is Northern Ireland's largest civic pride programme. Live Here Love Here is a positive, people-powered campaign focused on improving our local environment and building a sense of civic pride in our local communities.

They offer a range of programmes to support groups across all stages of their environmental journeys - from one-off clean ups with BIG Spring Clean, to creating healthier communities through Adopt A Spot, to encouraging others to step-up and take action through the Ambassador Programme. They also provide grants.

### PEACEPLUS

**PEACEPLUS** is a new European Union funding Programme, designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

As the previous programmes are coming to an end, the European Commission made provision for a new PEACEPLUS Programme. The new Programme will continue the commitments made by the Commission, the UK Government and the Irish Government to support peace and reconciliation.

The PEACEPLUS Programme has been divided into six themes – each of which aims to address longstanding social, environmental and economic challenges which have and continue to impact our community. Within each theme there are several investment areas – these will have a more specific focus and target organisations such as local authorities or community groups.

#### Theme 1 Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities

The aim of this theme is to unite communities, help them rebuild and learn from a difficult past. Projects under this theme will help community groups grow stronger, work better together and create spaces for all to share.

#### Theme 2 Delivering Socio-Economic Regeneration and Transformation

This theme focuses on small businesses and technology. The aim is to connect people by finding new ways to do things using technology and the internet, as well as learning new skills. Projects can also help unite communities using technology.

#### Theme 3 Empowering and Investing in Our Young People

Projects under these investment areas will help increase diversity by bringing different communities together. There will also be a focus on mental health and wellbeing – issues that are affecting young people increasingly today.

#### Theme 4 Healthy and Inclusive Communities

This theme focuses on rural communities and aims to help those who are dealing with the legacy of the Troubles. The intention is also to:

- bring health and social care services together and
- support people to live independently in their own community.

#### Theme 5 Supporting a Sustainable and Better-Connected Future

Environment and conservation are key for this theme. It will focus on land, coastlines and the wildlife within them across Northern Ireland and the border counties. Projects will also work to improve cross-border transport links between north and south.

#### Theme 6 Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration

While the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes have made significant contributions cementing cross-border collaboration, challenges persist and some of them have arisen in the last number of years. Projects under this theme will help organisations across the community communicate, interact and learn together.

It is envisaged that DRWG should explore opportunities across a range of themes as projects and programmes develop.

# Appendices

Appendix A	Document Review	pg. 50
Appendix B	Case Studies	pg. 51
Appendix C	Ideas Scrapbook	pg. 63
Appendix D	Acknowledgements	pg. 72

# Appendix A – Document Review

The following documents and websites are worth looking at if you need inspiration.

- Ballybrilliant: Heritage-Led Regeneration in 5 Irish Towns
- Creating Places for People: RIAI Town and Village Toolkit
- Scotland's Towns Partnership web-based Toolkit
- Power to Change

## Ballybrilliant: Heritage-led Regeneration in 5 Irish Towns

**Ballybrilliant** is a Heritage Council/ Irish Walled Towns Network publication on heritage-led regeneration. It features five Irish towns - Carlingford, Westport, Tramore, Fethard and Youghal - where communities have worked to ensure that their town remains vibrant but also true to its origin and identity. This is heritage-led regeneration, where heritage is a resource to promote and create interesting places.

These case studies demonstrate the need for leadership and people-centred responses in our towns. It includes helpful information on how your town can become a better place in which to live, work and visit!

## Creating Places for People: RIAI Town and Village Toolkit

The **RIAI Town and Village Toolkit** provides practical advice, references and successful case studies of places that have with architectural and urban design expertise positively overcome challenges. Case studies include Clonakilty, Cloughjordan, Westport, Tuppercurry and Waterford's Viking Triangle.

## Scotland's Towns Partnership web-based Toolkit

Scotland's Towns Partnership **Web-based Toolkit** is designed to be a source of inspiration for anyone who wants to make their town centre better. Whether you're from a local authority, community group, business, social enterprise or other organisation – you will find ideas here that you can put into action.

The **Inspiration tab** has success stories from town centres across Scotland. Please browse, be inspired, and imagine what you could do in your town centre. Examples include: Dumfries, Huntly, Paisley, Stromness and Aberdeenshire.

## Power to Change

**Power to Change** was set up in 2015 with a £150m endowment from The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF) and was due to close in 2022. They received a further £20m from NLCF which enabled them to set out a new five-year strategy to continue supporting the sector.

Their mission is to strengthen communities through community business. Their 2021-26 strategy sets out how, using strategic funding, trusted partnerships, rigorous research, policy insight, and a strong network of remarkable community businesses we will back the sector, creating the ideas, evidence, and exemplars that make the case for others to back them too.

There are many documents and articles and **case studies** which are frequently added to.

# Appendix B – Case Studies

The following Case Studies have been prepared to assist with progressing some of the Actions and Projects.

- Last Taste of Home Dining Experience & Twilight Market, Down County Museum
- Dunleath Parkrun
- Downpatrick Property Trust Limited: Building Restoration Projects
- Bangor Courthouse – Community Asset Transfer and Refurbished Listed Building
- Village Catalyst Pilot Programme
- Collaborative ‘Pop-up’ in Vacant Unit, Downpatrick
- Project 24, Bangor
- Courthouse Shared Space Creative Hub Project in Bushmills
- Revite Scheme on Irish Street, Downpatrick
- Armagh Shopfront Scheme, Upper English Street, Armagh
- Parklets
- Continuous Pavements

## Last Taste of Home Dining Experience & Twilight Market, Down County Museum

**Project Description.** The Last Taste of Home event was originally conceived as an exclusive dining experience and performance based within the cells of the Gaol at Down County Museum. As the proposal was developed, the event expanded to include a free-to-enter twilight market in the Museum courtyard from 5-10pm on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March. This promoted local artisan food and drink produce within the region that included an outdoor bar serving only local drink from the region and Northern Ireland. The event included a treasure hunt and face painting was available for children in a distinct area.

**Objectives and Need.** The event aimed to raise the profile of local food & drink artisan producers within the region and showcase the Museum and Courtyard. The target audience included the local community, visitors and invited influencers.

**How was it delivered?** The event was delivered by the regions “Savour Visit Mourne Food and Drink Cluster” supported by NMDDC via the Tourism NI product Development Fund. Savour Visit Mourne, Food and Drink Cluster are a group of the finest artisan producers in the region. There is a shared belief among the producers in the Savour Visit Mourne Food and Drink Cluster that what they grow, breed and produce has to be done in the most sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

The Cluster includes the Mourne Larder, and the ticketed dining experience was delivered in collaboration with celebrity chef Paul Cunningham of Mourne Larder, in the Museum.

Other members of the Cluster promoted and sold their produce at the twilight market and Downpatrick Community Collective were subcontracted to provide the stalls and live music. Denvir’s Coaching Inn are also in the Cluster, and they delivered the outdoor bar, set within the historic and atmospheric setting of the museum courtyard.

The Museum charged the organisers a fee to cover staffing as the event was out of the Museum opening hours.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** The event was successful and there have been requests for other events to be held in the Museum and Courtyard. The ticketed dining experience was very successful with 60 people attending and over 400 people enjoyed the evening at the twilight market and outdoor bar.

There is potential for future evening events. These pilots could also increase opportunities to align with audience development and / or new exhibitions at the Museum.

*Source: NMDDC - Down County Museum & Tourism*



# Appendix B – Case Studies

## Dunleath Parkrun

**Project Description.** Dunleath Playing Fields parkrun offers an opportunity for the local community, regardless of age or gender, to come together on a regular basis to enjoy the outdoors and get physically active. It is aimed at encouraging people to run, jog, walk and volunteer together. The 5km event happens every Saturday morning, is open to everyone and free to enter. An average of 60 runners and walkers participate in the weekly Park Run.

**How was it delivered?** The parkrun at Dunleath Playing Fields was established in March 2022 headed up by the Downpatrick Town Committee. There are now over 40 volunteers on the register with a rota for each week. In addition, as part of the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful ‘Live Here Love Here’ Campaign, the organisers have accessed funding through the Adopt a Spot Programme which enables groups of volunteers to adopt, and care for, previously neglected places in their local community. The funding has been used to provide litter picker equipment to maintain the cleanliness of the designated area of the track as part of the pre-course checks. There is a register of over 40 parkrun volunteers and a weekly rota is drawn up to ensure smooth running of the event.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** There is growing awareness about the public health benefits of community-based exercise events such as parkruns which focus less on competitive sport and more on collective activity. In addition to the physical health benefits, participation can often help to reduce social isolation or loneliness by providing opportunities to connect with others.

Each week participants are encouraged to come together for a post parkrun coffee at a local café, helping to support local businesses as well as fostering a sense of belonging within the community. Because the parkrun is free-to-enter, and open to all age ranges, it is a truly accessible and inclusive community event.

**Reference:** [home | Dunleath Playing Fields parkrun | Dunleath Playing Fields parkrun](#)

## Downpatrick Property Trust Limited: Building Restoration Projects

**Project Description.** Downpatrick Property Trust Limited is a company limited by guarantee set up in 1992 to assist with the restoration and refurbishment of buildings in the Downpatrick conservation area. The Trust is operated by a board of directors made up of local business people and residents who give their time in a voluntary capacity. All projects undertaken by the Trust are not considered economically viable by the private sector to deliver.

**Objectives and Need.** The Trust was set up in recognition of the large number of derelict and under-utilised buildings within Downpatrick Town Centre with the understanding that built heritage can play a vital role in the regeneration of towns and cities, reinforcing a sense of community and acting as a catalyst for improvements to the wider area.

The Trust is specifically restricted to buildings in the Conservation Area and therefore adopts a sympathetic and heritage-led approach to building re-use. For projects to be considered, they must be deemed not economically viable for private sector development.

**How was it delivered?** The Trust was formed in the early 1990’s as an initiative of the Downpatrick Regeneration Office. This was an organisation set up and funded in collaboration with Down District Council, Department of Environment (DoE) Urban Development Grant (UDG) and the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). The concept on which the Trust was set up was to carry out its first project using a mix of DOE, IFI and Council funding. Following the sale of the restored building the proceeds would then be used as a rolling fund for subsequent projects.

**What was achieved?** Downpatrick Property Trust Limited have delivered three completed restoration projects to date, as follows.

## Appendix B – Case Studies

The Trust's first project in the mid 1990's was located at 8-10 Irish Street, a prominent building in the town centre facing directly onto the north end of Market Street. Whilst the aim of the Trust was to retain as much of the building structure as possible, the state of dereliction of this property necessitated demolition and full rebuild in accordance with the original plans and layout. The completed project was subsequently let out to community and charity groups.

In the late 1990's the Trust carried out its second project at 8-10 English Street which was restored to provide a mix of commercial and residential lettings. In addition, four small apartments for residential use, known as Britches Close, were built to the rear of the building. Funding for this project was received through the Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative (HLF THI) scheme along with grants from DOE and IFI. On completion, the building was sold to a local businessman.

In 2004/5 the Trust embarked on the restoration of 5-7 Irish Street known as 'Breen's Corner'. This is a prominent Listed Building in the town centre of significant historical interest. Despite calls for the demolition of the building, the Trust fully refurbished the property using HLF THI grant funding. The final project consisted of six self-contained residential flats and project costs were in the region of £500,000.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** In 2019/20 the Trust were approached by the owner of Denvir's Coaching Inn regarding the provision of over-the-shop hotel/guest accommodation, similar to a model delivered in Boyle, Co. Roscommon. The proposal put forward would assist with the Trust's core object of adaptive re-use for heritage buildings whilst also providing much needed guest accommodation within the town, increasing tourist footfall and commercial revenue generation for the town centre. At this time, the Trust acknowledged that the existing apartments had not been adequately maintained by the residents and had fallen into disrepair and that the proposal offered a sustainable long-term use for the upper floors of the building. A lease agreement was negotiated with Denvir's Hotel to rent the refurbished accommodation to provide additional guest rooms for the Inn which only had six rooms of its own.

This arrangement has operated very successfully to date. The Trust received no funding for this project with necessary repairs and remodelling funded out of the Trusts reserves along with a loan from Community Finance Ireland. The repayment of this loan is ongoing and serviced from Rental income.

The Trust is available to look at and manage future projects in the town conservation area subject to the availability of funding.

*Source: Downpatrick Property Trust Limited*

### Bangor Courthouse: Community Asset Transfer & Refurbished Listed Building

**Project Description.** Originally built as a bank in 1866, Bangor Courthouse was converted to a magistrate's court in 1954. Decommissioned in 2013 it lay empty until Open House took ownership in December 2020 via Northern Ireland's first Community Asset Transfer (CAT) exchange for £1.

**Objectives and Need.** The mission of Open House is to create events and experiences that empower people and transform places. The project proposed to deliver a permanent base for the Festival which aims to place creativity at the heart Bangor's identity and economy using music, art, culture and festival events as a regenerative force to help cement its place as a modern seaside destination.

**What was achieved?** The Court House is a Grade II Listed Building and has now been restored and repurposed as a permanent music and arts venue for Open House at a cost of £1.9m.

The Court House is owned and operated by registered charity Open House Festival Ltd and run on a not-for-profit basis. The main works commenced in Sept 2021 and were completed in Aug 2022. A theatre licence and entertainment licence were secured in Oct 2022 and the venue opened to the public on 20th October with an initial programme of music, comedy and film.

# Appendix B – Case Studies

**How was it delivered?** Open House Festival began in Bangor in 2013 running a seasonal programme of arts and music events over the summer months hosted in local venues, Council parks and spaces. Following on from a successful first few years of programming Open House submitted an expression of interest to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to acquire the Courthouse for use as a permanent venue through the CAT process. Support in principle was received from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Garfield Weston Foundation to fund the project. The DfI Minister confirmed support for the project and instructed the department to allow time for Open House to progress their business plan and funding applications.

NLHF initially required Open House to demonstrate local support for the project through a crowd funding exercise. Open House raised approx. £50k in donations over one year. The project then moved to the next stage with completion of funding applications. They also prepared a business plan to highlight the sustainability of the project to the Department of Justice (DoJ) who, in parallel, completed a business case to justify the transfer of the asset at nil value (market value was £350k). Funding offers were then confirmed following which DoJ completed the transfer in December 2020.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** With DfC contributing c£300k in capital funding, Open House were required to go through a public procurement process utilising CPD to appoint a contractor. This created delays and required the use of NEC3 contract format which was not ideal for the type of project. All project bids were substantially above the cost estimates created 18 months previously, due to the effect of Brexit and Covid on construction costs and supply chains. Significant effort was required to secure additional funding to allow the appointment of the contractor.

Some of the key elements contributing to successful delivery:

- A strong board at Open House with a wide range of skills and in-depth experience in property, project management, legal, venue management, comms and marketing and local government. This mix of skills was invaluable to guiding the project and managing risks and issues.

- Support from the DfI / DoJ Ministers to allow Open House time to detail their proposal and secure funding support.
- Open House Festival was an established organisation with a strong track record of events delivery and local support.

The project benefits are wider than just the creation of a new venue as it also contributes to the wider regeneration of Bangor City Centre.

*Reference: [About Us - The Court House \(courthousebangor.com\)](https://www.courthousebangor.com/about-us)*

## Village Catalyst Pilot Programme

**Project Description.** The Village Catalyst Pilot Programme explores the benefit of investment in the conservation of historic buildings at risk in small rural settlements as a means of tackling rural poverty and social isolation.

The grant scheme is a partnership initiative between the Department for Communities (DfC) Historic Environment Division (HED), the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF), the Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE).

Applications were invited from charities, social enterprises and other not-for-profit groups in rural villages of less than 5,000 people who wished to tackle rural poverty and social isolation in their area, by developing a sustainable use for a disused historic building in their village.

**Objectives and Need.** The pilot seeks to achieve targets that relate to DfC Historic Environment Division's (HED) aims to encourage the conservation of heritage at risk and DAERA's aims to tackle rural poverty and social isolation.

**What was achieved?** The pilot initially identified a shortlist of six projects with four projects supported through to delivery stage: **Gracehill Old Post Office, Pat Murphy's House, The Woolstore and The Chandlers House.**

## Appendix B – Case Studies

**Gracehill Old Post Office** the centre of Gracehill village is the only remaining intact Moravian settlement in Ireland. The Listed former post office has been converted to a B&B as a training facility for people with learning difficulties and autism to help them realise their full potential, in partnership with the NOW group and Mid & East Antrim Borough Council. This has given the building a new purpose which will sustain it, while giving back to the community.



**Pat Murphy's House** sits in the heart of Ederney and has historically been a social focus in the village. Ederney Community Development Trust have worked on the restoration, extension and adaptation to the previously 'at risk' Listed Building to provide a new community wellbeing hub. The building will also function as a tourist wayfinding facility for local heritage and interest sites and a coffee shop, with lettable spaces for health and wellbeing in the main building and the extended accessible outbuilding to the rear.



**The Woolstore, Caledon** was a vacant building in the conservation area, built in the early 1800s and used to store raw wool for the vast Caledon Mill. The community was keen to restore the building as a tangible link to the industrial past and coupled with Caledon Regeneration Partnership identifying a need to provide childcare facilities within the village, the restored and extended building has now delivered for the community.



**The Chandlers House**, a Listed former bank occupies a key position on the marketplace square within Rathfriland village. The repair and adaptation will provide community space and social housing in conjunction with NIHE; four apartments will be provided within the building and a ground floor community space in the former banking hall with connected outdoor space bringing further benefits for the rural population.



**How was it delivered?** The programme was developed by HED with input from a Project Board consisting of representation from DAERA and the AHF. The pilot utilised resource budget from DfC to enable the selection of schemes and management of the project. Capital budget, transferred to DfC from DAERA, supported the identified projects.

Three routes of support were available for projects:

- Funding to support groups to carry out project viability work to help organisations look at potential uses for a building and its current condition.
- Funding for project development work to cover some of the costs of developing and co-ordinating a project, establishing that the end use of the project is likely to be viable, and taking the project towards the start of work on site.
- Funding of up to £200k available to support project delivery, i.e., capital works on site.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** HED commissioned an interim evaluation of the Village Catalyst Pilot Programme which was delivered in March 2021. Emerging benefits and learnings include the following:

- Without the scheme, the four projects would not have happened, or at least they would not be as far advanced. In addition, the groups were unlikely to have considered the proposed range of uses without the support and guidance of AHF.

## Appendix B – Case Studies

- The strength of the programme is in the partnership approach - utilising expertise, knowledge, and resources across government Departments with mutual benefit in meeting their respective aims and objectives.
- The partnership is greatly enhanced by the involvement of AHF and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) who have considerable expertise in the adaptive re-use of historic buildings. The opportunity for early engagement with both organisations and the potential for support and opportunities for co-funding projects is seen as hugely beneficial.
- The Programme is showing early signs of stimulating further investment by the private sector, supporting the refurbishment of other buildings within the village to meet local needs.
- Early introductions to each of the partner organisations helps establish and build relationships between the funders and the group as well as clearly demonstrating the role and responsibility of each stakeholder.
- AHF's role in providing support during the development process, and the co-ordination role to bring the projects to implementation stage was crucial.
- Time spent carrying out meaningful engagement with the local community to ascertain what current needs exist in their area is critical. However, it was also noted that needs can change over time, so building in review processes and flexibility is also important.
- Advance payments for groups with limited access to financial reserves would be helpful. Identification of a lead funder who could help co-ordinate grant drawdowns could help speed up the claim process, helping to reduce cashflow issues.
- Programme costs were identified as being key to delivering many of the services that would tackle and address rural poverty and social isolation, supporting opportunities for further development of social enterprising skills.
- The range of services being delivered through the programme was varied and reflective of the broad range of needs in rural communities.

*References and Images: HED and [Village Catalyst Pilot case studies / Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)*

### Collaborative 'Pop-up' in Vacant Unit, Downpatrick

**Project Description.** Downpatrick Town Committee supported the set-up of a temporary pop-up was set up with four businesses sharing a single vacant unit adjacent to St. Patrick's Square for a limited period, in the run up to Christmas 2022.

**Aims and Objectives.** Pop-up shops are temporary retail spaces. This short-term approach to running a business can be used for specific product promotion, raising brand awareness or testing the market. Pop-ups can be an outlet for innovation and creativity and can be used as the first step for businesses looking to establish a more permanent retail base.

**How was it delivered?** The Downpatrick Town Committee gained consent from the landlord to allow one business to take the lease and sub-let space to the other three. The primary lease holder took responsibility for rent and bills and the others paid them as part of their sub-lease agreements. Each business adjusted their business insurance to cover their own requirements.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** The businesses reported good sales and could see the benefits of the collaborative approach to keep costs low and reduce financial risk whilst increasing the visibility of their products. Additional time to plan the project as well as the increased marketing and publicity would have made the venture more successful.

Operational issues, such as the sharing of keys and associated arrangements for opening proved challenging. This led to some inconsistency in opening times, potentially affecting customer confidence in the reliability of the offer.

There was negative feedback from some of the established traders in the town who highlighted the advantages of the pop-up businesses reduced running costs. Consultation with existing businesses to explain future endeavours would help alleviate this issue. Better marketing and promotion could also potentially reach new audiences and attract additional footfall to town which could potentially benefit other traders.

*Source: Downpatrick Town Committee*



## Appendix B – Case Studies

### Project 24, Bangor

**Project Description.** Project 24 created a unique new attraction on Bangor's seafront consisting of a shared community garden as well as a space for performances, art installations and community events – the 'Hub'. Colourful art pods, created using customised shipping containers, could be split into mini artist's studios and their contemporary glazed fronts allowed visitors to interact with the creative industries based there. Other contemporary and high-quality design interventions, such as street furniture and lighting, helped create a vibrant, welcoming and creative space to visit and work in.



**Objectives and Need.** Project 24 aimed to create a new temporary arts and community space on Bangor's seafront (Queen's Parade), transforming a derelict and run-down location, whilst plans for the wider regeneration of the area were progressed.

**What was achieved?** The Project 24 hosted more than 80 established and emerging artists within its small but quirky shipping containers. These artists have worked in print, paint, photography, textiles, jewellery and much more. Project 24 has also played host to a range of family, creative and engaging events including Christmas Switch-ons, Summer Fun Days, Sundown Markets and Film Festivals, welcoming tens of thousands of visitors over its lifetime.



The project was initially set to run for 24 months but due to its popularity, and given the timescales surrounding the Queen's Parade development, North Down Borough Council (Council) took the opportunity to extend its lifespan, enabling more creatives to take part and welcoming more visitors to the location. Throughout this time, it has stimulated significant interest with numerous best practice visits seeking inspiration for meanwhile use projects.

**How was it delivered?** The concept developed through consultation, community engagement and stakeholder partnerships. It was awarded funding of from the Department for Communities (at that time known as the Department for Social Development) with a contribution from Council.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** Project 24 created a new destination for Bangor. It was conceived as a temporary project with the plan being to move the project to another area in the Borough when the current Queen's Parade site was ready for development. The project has been deemed a resounding success, having a positive impact on the City of Bangor, and receiving numerous awards celebrating its innovative approach to place-making and design. Many of the artists who used the Project 24 space have gone on to achieve further successes both within the Borough, and beyond.

**References:** *Project 24 NI Transforming a Derelict Location - Project 24 NI Regional Development Office Post Project Evaluation*

**Images:** *DfC Regional Development Office Post Project Evaluation*

# Appendix B – Case Studies

## Courthouse Shared Space Creative Hub Project in Bushmills

**Project Description.** The Courthouse Shared Space Creative Hub project will incorporate the sensitive restoration and extension of the derelict Courthouse building in the centre of Bushmills village, transforming the building into a creative hub for the whole community. Construction work began in December 2022, with an anticipated opening date of March 2024.

Bushmills Courthouse is a Grade B1 Listed Building of significant heritage value. It has been vacant since the 1970's and placed on the Buildings at Risk Register in 2004. It is a prominent building in the centre of the village and is situated within the Bushmills Conservation Area. Enterprise Causeway acquired the property in 2016.

**Objectives and Need.** The regeneration, transformation and extension of this significant building, into an inclusive creative shared space will provide sustainable future for the building, as well as providing new facilities within the village which will promote enterprise.

The new facility will feature a messy studio and café as well as meeting, event and retail space. With provision for up to 15 workshop spaces, it will offer like-minded designer / makers a home to help create, market, educate, support, collaborate and build a strong vibrant creative sector. Activities and workshops will aim to bring people from all backgrounds, ages and abilities together to learn, explore and acquire new skills and develop their interests in arts, culture, heritage and food.

**How is it being delivered?** The new shared space has been funded through the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. Match-funding was provided by the Department for Communities and Department of Rural and Community Development, Ireland. Running in parallel with the renovation and construction works is a programme of community outreach activity, creating opportunities for shared learning experiences to explore and understand cultures, traditions and backgrounds.

**References:** [The Courthouse / Causeway Enterprise \(enterprisecauseway.co.uk\)](http://enterprisecauseway.co.uk)

## Revite Scheme on Irish Street, Downpatrick

**Project Description.** This Revite Scheme for Irish Street comprised several regeneration initiatives, including improvements to shop frontages and a derelict building within the Downpatrick Conservation Area, along with branding, marketing, advertising and promotional events.

Principal outcomes included minor works to shop fronts along Irish Street as well as redecoration and installation of graphics panels to the derelict former police station building. Other initiatives, such as the creation of a website and the purchase of promotional items were used to market the area a destination to visit, shop, live, work and invest in.

**Objectives and Need.** Irish Street had previously benefitted from significant public realm improvements to include new footways, lighting and street furniture. However, delays in the delivery of the public realm scheme led to a disruption to trading within Irish Street. It was recognised that this disruption could potentially change people's shopping habits away from the town centre, and that the area would benefit from a follow-on revitalisation scheme and marketing strategy.

The Revite Scheme was targeted at businesses in the area to aid recovery following the inconvenience of the construction works and to capitalise on the benefits offered by the improved environment. The project took account of the significant disparity between the new streetscape and the shop frontages in Irish Street, many of which were tired and in significant need of restoration. More generally, it was an attempt to increase the attractiveness and overall prosperity within the town centre area through enhancement of existing buildings, creating a place where people wanted to be.

**What was achieved?** The scheme assisted business owners or tenants to invest in their buildings making the area more attractive for people to visit, invest and shop in the area. Thirteen shop front improvements were completed enhancing the physical appearance and condition of properties including painting, shop front repair or replacement and signage.

# Appendix B – Case Studies

A marketing consultant was appointed to develop the branding element of the project leading to the production of high-quality visuals and co-ordinated promotional material which presented a professional image.

**How was it delivered?** Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) applied for funding from the Department for Communities (DfC). The project was supported by an active Steering Group comprising elected representatives and local businesses who worked in partnership with Council and the Department to produce a Revitalisation Action Plan for the project.

The project was managed and implemented by officials from NMDDC supported by DfC and Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD). The project was due to run for 7 months at a cost of £110,000.00. Due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic the delivery timeline was extended accordingly.

Building owners or tenants could apply for a 100% grant of up to a value of £6,000 to carry out eligible repairs or improvements to building frontages. Applications from building owners or tenants had to be accompanied by the following information:

1. Specifications of the proposed works. If proposals are for a new shop frontage or substantial alterations, plans and/or detailed drawings will be required, clearly shown at an appropriate scale what is proposed.
2. Proof of ownership of building/copy of lease. Evidence of relevant permission to carry out work.
3. Evidence, where required, that Planning Approval has been received.
4. Proof of all necessary approvals e.g. Building Control (if applicable)
5. At least three competitive tenders from bona fide reputable contractors. All quotations should be signed, dated and on headed paper. The funders reserve the right to check validity of tenders.
6. A Current photograph of your shop front.

Grants were based on the lowest tender for the eligible works detailed in the agreed specification.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** The project delivered an enhanced shop frontage scheme, improving the aesthetics of the street and promoting the area as a place visit, shop, live, work and invest in.

Feedback has been positive from local businesses, elected representatives and members of the public. Businesses on Irish Street have confirmed that the scheme has improved the sense of civic pride in the area and that footfall has increased. Further benefits are the strong partnership developed between the Council and local businesses and the ongoing website activity, with businesses in Irish Street engaging with the new forum and agreeing arrangements for the future maintenance of the platform.

The project was delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic and, as a result, restrictions negatively impacted the works to shop fronts as well as marketing and promotional elements of the project. Several applicants closed their businesses or withdrew from the scheme, whilst others only partially completed planned works and did not availing of the maximum grant available. In addition, Council was unable to deliver a planned promotional campaign and other associated events.

Aside from the implications of Covid-19 on the project timelines and deliverables further observations include:

- The funds available (up to a max. of £6,000) were insufficient to deliver a transformative impact to the area and are likely to be insufficient to encourage business owners to deliver anything other than minor improvements, repair or redecoration. More significant works, which would have significantly enhanced the Conservation Area and improved overall outcomes, such as repair or maintenance of rainwater goods and the re-instatement of traditional windows were unlikely to be delivered due to the level of funding on offer.
- A co-ordinated approach to design, with reference to design guidance associated with the Conservation Area, would have assisted business owners and Council staff in delivering works to bring greatest impact, with high quality design and detailing respecting the historic fabric of this area of the town.

# Appendix B – Case Studies

## Armagh City Pilot Shutter Removal & Shopfront Scheme

**Project Description.** The Armagh City Pilot Shutter Removal and Shopfront Scheme involved the removal of security shutters from properties within the Armagh Conservation Area and the provision of new, or improved, shop fronts including security glazing. External property improvement works were also carried out to enhance the streetscape frontage of the buildings within the pilot scheme.

**Objectives and Need.** The quality of shop fronts was noted as being of great importance to the character of the Armagh Conservation Area, having the potential to significantly impact the vitality and viability of local businesses and retailing, helping to make Armagh a more attractive place for people to visit, invest, shop and live in. Conversely, the environment created by extensive frontages of roller shutters gives the impression of a hostile and aggressive area thereby discouraging pedestrian use and impacting the evening economy, whilst often encouraging vandalism and property abuse.

The aim of the pilot project was to deliver transformative change to a small group of buildings within the City Centre Conservation Area through the removal of security shutters. The project was a pilot scheme aimed at assisting business owners in making their premises secure, whilst helping to contribute to the creation of a safe, inviting and attractive streetscape.

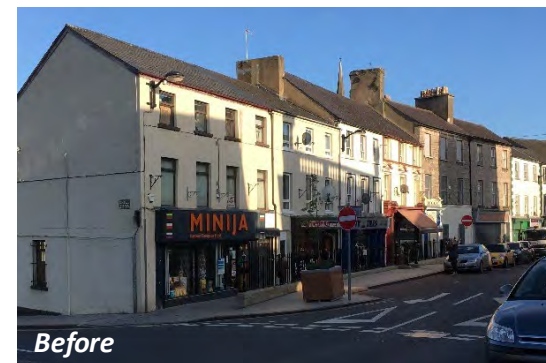
Key objectives were as follows:

- Improve the complete street facing property façade;
- Impact positively on the overall streetscape / townscape;
- Tackle prominent buildings or blocks of buildings, therefore achieving greater impact for the townscape;
- Repair / reinstate traditional architectural / historic features of the building, using traditional materials where appropriate; and,
- Provide a high-quality design to new elements, sympathetic to the historic streetscape.

**What was achieved?** Works were carried out to remove shutters and install new facades on four properties in Upper English Street, Armagh. The inclusion of specialist security glazing (from a local company) meant that there was minimal impact on the insurance costs for each property. Works also included timber sliding sash windows to the first and second floors, minor repairs and replacement rainwater goods, where required. Although the properties were located within the conservation area, the emphasis was on good quality, sympathetic design and robust detailing using appropriate materials, rather than pastiche.

**How was it delivered?** The Department for Communities (DfC) Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (Council) and Armagh City Townscape Heritage funded the pilot scheme which was delivered by the Council. The works were carried out as a single project with an Integrated Design Team appointed to develop the proposals and oversee the works through to completion, led by a conservation architect.

The design team worked directly with the Council's Regeneration Department and relevant statutory stakeholders to develop appropriate designs which were then approved by the building owners prior to submitting a planning application.



# Appendix B – Case Studies

A main contractor was appointed to complete the works on all four properties, and liaised closely with the design team, building owners and occupiers to minimise the disruption to businesses. All works to the external facades were fully funded through the scheme, with building owners paying the required Planning Application and Building Control fees. The project was carried out between 2019 and 2021 with delivery on site impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Project Benefits and Learnings.** The project has had a positive impact on the streetscape and has stimulated further private investment. Three of the four properties now offer residential units above their commercial premises. (ARMAGHI, Nov 2022). As this was a pilot project aimed at demonstrating key principles and encouraging further uptake of development funding the project structure was such that the building owners and tenants were well-supported throughout the project with the design, statutory approvals, procurement and project delivery being managed by the Council and their appointed Consultant Team.

In addition, the works were almost fully funded. Whilst building owners were consulted at key stages, and approved all necessary design works, all project risks were covered by the Council who effectively acted as clients for the scheme. This allowed for a level of control over the design proposals, ensuring that they were both unique and complementary to each other and delivering transformative change within this area of Upper English Street. In addition, project delivery through a single contracting team gave rise to efficiencies in both cost and programming.

Later versions of shopfront improvement schemes within Armagh City are partially funded with significantly reduced funding available. Responsibility for statutory approvals, designs and appointment of contractors lies with the building owners or tenants.

*Source: Consarc Design Group & Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council*

## Parklets

**Description.** A parklet is an extension of the pavement to provide enhanced space and amenity for people using the street. They are usually installed within car parking bays and can take up several parking spaces. Often provided as a temporary or demountable construction, the road level is increased to the pavement level over the width of the parking spaces to become an extension of the footpath, allowing for seamless transition between the two. In some cases, where space allows, the displaced parking can be relocated to the outside of the parklet, to remove a lane of traffic creating a buffer between passing vehicles and parklet users.

Parklets offer a place to stop, sit, and rest while using the high street. Often, they will include planting and street furniture, and some will integrate art or some other visual amenity. A parklet may also accommodate bicycle stands within the space or near to it, to encourage active travel and provide a safe space to leave your bike while using the street.

**Benefits and Need.** Parklets can provide a number of benefits, including:

- Encouraging active travel by promoting access to walking and cycling; parklets can offer a safe space to leave your bike while using the high street;
- Increasing access to green spaces, improving mental health and wellbeing
- Stimulating economic growth through increased footfall and revenue for local businesses
- Supporting local retailers by extending their floor space
- Increasing community interaction by encouraging people to spend more time enjoying our streets
- Improving the look and feel of our streets

**How can it be delivered?** Each setting will have a different set of parameters, so some bespoke design is usually required. Careful consideration is needed to ensure existing road drainage is unaffected or repurposed, while the geometries, levels, falls and surrounding context of each location will need addressed.



## Appendix B – Case Studies

Liaising and seeking approval with statutory bodies is critical from an early stage, these include DfI Roads, the Local Council Planning Department (in many cases Permitted Development Guidance can be adhered to). Best practice would also seek guidance from Inclusive Mobility & Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) to maximise accessibility. If the intended use is associated with a café or restaurant, then a Pavement License must also be applied for to the local council. An architect or urban designer would generally be employed to assist with statutory compliance. A professional understanding of highway considerations, pedestrian safety, working with utility services, maintenance requirements and time considerations is required. In addition, the general principles of urban design and place-making should be considered as well as technical and material robustness and quality.

Although often thought of as a low-cost intervention, it is however vitally important that parklets are designed and executed to a high standard so that they are appropriately robust, safe and attractive in a public realm setting, while also allowing for quick and easy demount and re-use where required.

### Continuous Pavements

**Description.** A continuous footway or pavement is where a street pavement carries on across the intersection of one street into another without level change or surface interruption.

From the driver perspective the carriageway will rise as a 'raised table' with vehicles passing up and over to continue, prompting slower speeds on approach and highlighting that priority/emphasis is given to the pedestrian.

**Objectives and Need.** Continuous pavements express the Highway Code priority of pedestrian users as they approach a crossing.

**How can it be delivered?** Technical design, approval and installation will be by DfI Road Service as the statutory body responsible for the adopted roadways. Therefore, early engagement and agreement with Roads Service is required at an early stage.

# Appendix C – Ideas Scrapbook

The following ideas cover **Downpatrick as a whole** and combine ideas discussed at all the workshops.

## Activities + Programming

- Current events are great but want more high quality, ambitious daytime and evening events and activities for all, weekly if possible? music, atmosphere, activities.
- Outdoor multi-generational and family events for both community and tourists to provide opportunities for people to come together.
- Want specific events and activities for young people – they want to feel welcome and safe not bored and harassed. Needs more range of activities available, live music, clubs, courses, language courses, acting school, drama club in evenings + weekends.
- Want better facilities for sports activities - athletic club, triathlon, running club, football teams etc.
- Climate change, biodiversity and wellbeing - want to increase trees and wildlife with links to learning - could schools work with RSPB and Ulster Wildlife.

## Frontages + Streetscape

- Want consistent, high quality materials, design, colour scheme for signage and frontages to bring together the heritage feel.
- Want to improve all frontages, remove or creatively paint roller shutters.
- Need guidance / licensing for signage, displays, seating on footpaths to get the right balance between vibrancy and clutter.
- Want more / better environment
  - Shopfronts, displays
  - Interactive signage / signposting
  - Cleaner, maintenance, stewardship
  - Lighting and seating
  - Water drinking fountain
  - Trees, flowers and planting
  - Cycle facilities - lanes and racks

## Access + Movement + Landscape

- Want more focus on people, not cars. People want to park near shops and facilities. Need to create an interesting place that encourages them to walk more around town.
- Need wider and better footpaths to improve opportunities for businesses and increase feeling of safety.
- Need accessible pedestrian crossings – currently not safe for visually impaired as they don't make a noise.
- Develop better public transport and active travel.
- Want to introduce standardised interactive signage to show available car-park spaces.
- Need to rationalise parking apps to pay for parking.
- Want to provide access to the surrounding countryside and heritage - extend routes around the town - encourage visitors to stay longer as well as benefits to health and wellbeing of residents.
- Want better parks and public spaces, greenways – safe walking routes to improve access and provide leisure and recreation.
- Want to create Heritage Trails with guided and self-guided tours, interpretation and access to heritage. Street Names provide connection with history.

## Offer + Vacancy + Underused Spaces

- Town needs to feel vibrant, 'open-for-business'
- Great assets but need to be more connected (physically, signage, marketing) and wider opening hours / days: Arts Centre, Museum, St. Patrick Centre, Downpatrick and County Down Railway, Racecourse, Golf Club, Yacht Club, Library, Leisure Centre.
- Want indoor and outdoor spaces for the community:
  - space for retired population to come together.
  - space for young people – social pod, pool hall, well-being spaces, café hub, area to hang out and meet people of similar age. Rehearsal space, urban sports, climbing wall, bouldering, rock-climbing.
- Want more Café Culture – young people and all ages want this.

# Appendix C – Ideas Scrapbook

- Want more variety of shops with relevance for young people like the Quays Shopping Centre in Newry. Could Sports Direct or New Look move into Grove Centre and make it more of a mall.
- Want recreational activities to encourage young families. Create safe space for children (away from traffic) e.g. funky moneys – play adventure.
- Want more affordable housing and types of accommodation suitable for young professionals.
- Want a better night-time economy. Want uses like hotel, quality restaurants. Theme nights: local restaurants to encourage people out.
- More facilities for night meetings – including open spaces being more welcoming for communities in the evening. Later opening hours: Library, Arts Centre, Museum, St. Patrick Centre
- Want rates relief to encourage disused buildings to be occupied and encourage start-ups. Also relates to vacant rates and VAT.
- Need to re-use old and vacant buildings. Want to set up a scheme / initiative that focuses on re-using vacant buildings to encourage pop-up businesses, incubation spaces, community and youth uses. Want to explore clusters of businesses sharing premises.

## **Governance, communications, marketing etc.**

- Need to create a brand image
  - Downpatrick the County Town for Down
  - Downpatrick – where the story of Ireland begins
- Need to change perceptions - embellish unique assets the town has to offer, need to promote what Downpatrick has to offer. Wild Atlantic Way verses Irelands Ancient East which could be built upon. Develop narrative?
- Need to improve connections between building owners and businesses.
- Strengthen business relationships, networks and connectivity. Could there also be a Down Business Centre presence in Downpatrick?
- Want more collaboration between businesses, communities, arts and crafts.
- Need maps – signs on streets, paper maps, digital maps.

- Want Blue plaques to be inserted and maintained to show famous people from the area.
- Anti-social elements / issues need to be dealt with appropriately (not papered over).
- Light up green spaces, streets and links and passive surveillance to deter anti-social behaviour.
- Need to encourage ‘ownership’ of places by the community that are over-looked, safe. Pride in place.
- Fragmented powers, to facilitate delivery we need better dialogue and connections between local stakeholders, Council and Departments.
- Want to create Town Centre Management Strategy.
- Want to learn and share best practice in other towns and cities.
- Need a formal way for young people to have their views and opinions listened to.
- Want a fully resourced representative group to promote the town with administrative support to:
  - Support Town Committee and other established groups
  - Liaise with owners, help organise events and help connect people better
  - Promote working in partnership to achieve common goals.
- Want a local newsletter to share local information and what’s on (door-to-door) plus social media to ensure all residents are engaged.
- Want a local voucher scheme that encourages use of local shops and facilities.
- Maximise technology to encourage young into the town.
- Want QR Codes on marketing material to recommend places to go, eat, shop
- Want awards and/or champions.

# Appendix C – Ideas Scrapbook

The following **ideas are place specific** and combine ideas discussed at all the workshops.

## St. Patrick's Square

- Want to remove car access from Market Street to extend St. Patrick's Square across whole width of the space and to the front of St. Patrick Centre.
- Need to allow delivery and emergency services access to businesses and Fold.
- Want to see if access to the Fold can be changed to being up the lane beside where the toilets are to remove the need for access across the front of St. Patrick Centre?
- Need traffic management to be enforced. People ignore no right turn out of the car parks which means there is more traffic in the square than needed.
- Want to establish a programme of activities for the space.
- Want more people centric occupation of square - informal family seating, seats arranged that are suitable for people to meet friends, buskers, pop-ups, tables.
- Want Market Day - stalls one day a week selling locally sourced produce (farmers market as well as monthly artisan market).
- Want facilities to encourage people to stay /spend time here.
- Want a covered area for sitting and eating.
- Want to create a water feature for kids play.
- Need better maintenance - power wash, bins overflowing, street furniture, seats could be sanded and repainted.
- Want to consider need for 4 telephone boxes. Could we have one telephone boxes and one for defibrillator unit? Can they be better maintained.
- 'The Cutts' needs to more promoted, visible and accessible to visitors. Need to replace railing to increase visibility of the Cutt up to English Street.
- Want to enhance accessibility to St. Patrick Centre.

- Want to enhance community uses within St. Patrick Centre - community cinema / evening opening for events.

## English Street

- Want to improve English Street as a high-quality space respectful of the beautiful buildings and setting of the Cathedral. Plant trees, provide more seats, improve road surface, standardise car-parking, in a way that makes it usable for events.
- Want to use English Street as an events space with the Cathedral as a stunning backdrop.
  - Outdoor cinema / theatre
  - Outdoor concerts at the Cathedral
  - Festivals
  - Continental-style markets
  - Pet shows / events for dog-owners
- Want better access to the Down Museum with longer opening hours and weekend opening.
- Want to consider options for a café to be reinstated in the Down Museum.
- Need to maintain the heritage to strengthen the character of Downpatrick.
- Want heritage and other buildings along English Street to be better maintained and enforcement needed to ensure buildings, especially listed buildings are well-maintained.
- Need footpaths on English Street to be sympathetic to the historic environment and fit-for-purpose. Want it to be clean, well-maintained, well-lit and welcoming.
- Want to provide better access to green space and nature - Create links from the top of English Street to The Mound, Inch Abbey and beyond to Quoile Heritage Centre.

# Appendix C – Ideas Scrapbook

## De Courcy Square

- De Courcy Square needs to be designed for residents and the local community first.
- Residents want:
  - a nice space to look out at – perhaps create small garden areas to create some private space / separation from rest of square.
  - a place for people to put their bins (not just outside one of the ground floor flats).
  - more trees and planting.
- Management and enforcement of the bins/rubbish associated with the flats needs to be addressed.

*Note: Proposals being explored by Council and DfC and these comments have been shared with the design team. As it is a public open space there may be ownership issues that restrict it, or even part of it becoming private or communal space for residents. But the design of this space needs to address amenity issues.*

## Church Street

- Want environmental and frontage improvements to same standard along all of Church Street.
- Want to improve the gateway into the town to be make it more welcoming.
- Need enhancement and better maintenance of footpaths, flowers, planting and trees.
- Want to improve frontages, remove or creatively paint roller shutters.

*Note: DfC and the Council have an environmental improvement scheme planned for Church Street. The initial phase is completed and there are more elements planned for the future.*

## Scotch Street

- Want to make Scotch Street pedestrianised within the historic heart of the town, with collapsible bollards for delivery / emergency access only.

*Note: Scotch Street is not currently fully pedestrianised and is used as a short-cut. Introducing a No Right Turn from Irish Street will ensure cars entering Scotch Street do not contribute to traffic congestion.*

- Want to make Scotch Street a focal point for:
  - Cafes and outdoor seating areas
  - Small artisan shops and local crafts
  - Arts and culture with a quirky feel
- Want to keep and extend the fairy lights as it looks great.
- Want signage and shopfronts to be consistent and high quality to maintain the heritage feel.
- Want more planting and trees.
- Want to build on the strengths of the Arts Centre to be more of a social hub, appealing to the general public, diversify uses, extend opening hours, with programming to also appeal to younger audience.

## Irish Street

- Very little needed to enhance Irish Street as heritage street with established businesses.
- Want to make the triangular open space into an attraction as a green focal point with seating.
- Need to maintain the lovely stone walls from previous schemes.
- Limited vacancy and dereliction but needs addressing.
- Some living above the shops in Irish Street, could there be more incentives for more?

# Appendix C – Ideas Scrapbook

## Irish Street Car Park / former PSNI Site

- Transforming the former PSNI site/Irish Street car park is a great opportunity for Downpatrick:
  - could have restaurants / shops / underground parking etc.
  - could it be a great Hotel location?
  - great opportunity for mix of uses given the level differences across the site
  - amazing views and it would be lovely to have a tiered restaurant with views to the Cathedral
  - needs to link to the square / car park
  - needs to balance car parking and use of development space on the site
- Irish Street car park could be a fantastic public space which could be used to hold events – ‘Concert Hall Square’. Want this space to be used in the shorter term to have weekend events to coincide with horse racing events, Christmas, St. Patrick’s Parade, Halloween, Downtown Fest.

Note: DfC, Council and DRWG are working through a strategy for this key development site.

## St. Patrick’s Avenue

- Want to improve image of businesses with more businesses and landlords to take pride in the appearance of shopfronts, flowers outside the door etc.
- Want all the shopfronts to be painted to complement each other – run a Revitalisation Scheme and list what colours, materials, improvements they must make to secure funding.
- Want to improve entrances to Lynn Doyle Place with seating, street art, plants, hanging baskets. Would residents like to have an arch like Market Lane or a sculpture?
- Want to improve the quality of linkages and signage along St. Patrick’s Avenue to the cinema, proposed skate park / pump track at Dunleath Park, professional services, new housing etc.

- Want to improve visibility of window displays – in particular parked vans obstructing views.
- Is there potential for making use of outdoor spaces and side alley for seating for restaurants and cafés?
- Need to address the vacant prominent corner building and site:
  - 62 Market Street, street art has helped but a long-term solution is needed. Invest in the property or add seating area or market pods / pop-up pods for new traders.
  - Listed Northern Bank – there are issues with the footprint of the building and viability.

## Market Street – historic part

- Want to change the road infrastructure to reduce pollution, activate disused buildings and act as a catalyst for regeneration.
- Want to look at options to give more focus on people, not cars:
  - remove the majority of on-street parking which impacts traffic flow in Market Street?
  - is there potential to make Market Street one way?
  - could it be pedestrianised?
  - could there be a trial to close Market Street, to coincide with events – link to events in the car park?
- Want to widen footpaths to:
  - give businesses and shops a better street presence / space to see displays
  - create parklets / spaces for people to gather
- Good variety of shops, provides a very good baseline to work up from but want less charity shops.
- Need better public toilets – Bus Station, St. Patrick Centre, SERC all close and no acceptable toilet facilities available.
- Need public toilets to be relocated – is this the right place and type of facilities?



# Appendix C – Ideas Scrapbook

- Want this area to be improved.
  - Is the space behind the public toilets – public land/NI Water?
  - Could public toilets be repositioned back from the street and upgraded.
  - Want a small green space, maybe games zone, chess boards, Jenga etc. a space for younger people?
- Planters need new flowers.
- Need to address vacancy, in particular, heritage buildings where it's harder to make businesses viable, floor plans, levels, listed status, building regs etc.
- Market Lane needs to be better maintained, clearer footpath, too many A-board signs out.
- Want to have more elements like the lovely arch at Market Lane.

## Market Street – south of St. Patrick's Square

- Different styles of buildings and want to unify the feel of Market Street.
- Want to widen footpaths.
- Want to create more places for all ages to gather, sit, chat, eat.
- Want to reconfigure larger vacant retail units into smaller units.
- Need to re-occupy empty units - potentially with youth initiatives.
- Want to introduce pop-up shops / services.
- Want shops to open later to support public events.
- Don't want amusement arcade in prominent Bank of Ireland building since it doesn't add to this being a family friendly town and would have blank facades.
- Market Street has reasonable shop frontages that should be consolidated.
- Consider rationalising units, including retail, library and vacant Department of Health building to:
  - optimise retail frontage to Market Street and create active frontage, with a community focus facing the Grove Park and car parks
  - connect with the improved Grove Park, overlooking the Cathedral, strengthening the heritage

- reuse closed Department of Health building with facilities for elderly and opportunities for skills/training
- increase size of Library, incorporating Department of Health building
- Want library to be better linked to the street and want later opening times.
- Want to create a Transport Hub:
  - Bus Station needs maintenance and investment
  - Relocate the bus service yard
  - Need to provide evening access to Bus Station and associated facilities
  - Make more of the cafe in bus station to spill/open to street
  - Centralised taxi rank as part of transport hub
  - Free shuttle bus into town from outskirts, a 'busy bus'
  - Have a "Town Tram" that links bus station, St. Patrick Centre and Railway Station
- Want taxi kiosk to be upgraded, painted or replaced.
- Want to consider southern approach, a key arrival point, create a town gateway including artwork and boundary treatments.
- Want better links (visual and physical) to and from Civil Service Hub in Rathkeltair House.
- Create a social hub for people to meet at Leisure Centre.

## SERC

- Want to explore links and synergies with SERC to help encourage local young enterprise and increase links between businesses, SERC and the public. Places for employment / training as well as encouragement for fledgling businesses.
- Within SERC need more signage for canteen and make public aware of current facilities.
- SERC students want:
  - more appealing environment to enjoy
  - somewhere to display their artwork
  - advice on life + business skills

# Appendix C – Ideas Scrapbook

## Car parks to rear of Market Street / Back of Grove Shopping Centre

- Need to make the Grove and car park areas safe and accessible for all.
- Need to rationalise the car parks, better presented, better pedestrian connections, lighting, signage.
- Want to increase activity and overlooking along improved links. Create a heritage trail depicting the connections with the St. Patrick Centre, Cathedral, Railway Station, Mound of Down, Wesley Stone, Market Street.
- Need a bridge to create link from the Railway to the Retail Park.
- Want an alleyways project around the Grove Shopping Centre – needs lighting and street art related to Downpatrick's heritage and culture.
- Want to activate the rear of Grove Shopping Centre. Create of new street with incubator units / pop-up's for start-ups – possible link with SERC. May need to reduce parking.
- Want to turn the pay and display car park into an event space as extension to St. Patrick's Square and move public toilets to this location.
- Want to introduce evening time functions / facilities.
- Want to improve appearance of pumping station and sub-station with street art.
- Want to move the Translink Bus Service Yard and make better use of this prime site.
- Suggestion to rename the area as the 'Railway Quarter' and name the Car Park access road 'Railway Street'.
- Want to enhance the setting of Rathkeltair House, Bus Station and Service Yard and Grove Shopping Centre with active frontages and less 'fortification' (fences, bins stores, etc.)
- Could the materials and feel of this area reflect the historic railway.
- Dunleath Park great facilities with football, Park Run etc. but potential for more use, needs improving and more lighting.

*Note: DfC and the Council have a skate park / pump track proposed in the Park.*

## The Grove

- Want the Grove to become a beautiful landscape that is a place for everyone to enjoy, spend time and be safe. It connects the heritage and visitor assets and want it to be a focal point with lighting and places to picnic.
- Need more and better maintenance and management of trees, shrubs, lighting and paths.
- Need a safe, free outdoor space for young people, but is this right place for that?
- Need an obvious, accessible route to the Cathedral. Develop a more natural route that is DDA compliant with railings.
- Want St. Patrick Centre to open up and overlook the Grove Park and paths.
- Seating Stones need to be either relocated or an additional feature (heritage trail) added to encourage use.
- 'Wesley Stone' should be highlighted as a point of interest.

## Downpatrick and County Down Railway

- Want better presentation / visual welcome and signage.
- Needs to improve the image with visible trains in good condition and fences improved.
- Want to improve profile of the station, possibly move the entrance closer to the St. Patrick Centre and consider extending the rail line towards the St. Patrick Centre, its original line.
- Great day out with link to Inch Abbey but needs to be more connected (physical, signage, marketing) and wider opening hours and days.
- Want to consider opportunities to strengthen the railway experience, extending railway lines to the Racecourse.
- Want to improve presentation of rolling stock as things of interest.
- Want better synergies with other activities, including places to eat and or its own food eatery experience to bring people to the Centre.
- Want better connections in the immediate vicinity in respect of high kerbs.
- Want car park at front of Railway to be used for food markets with German style huts at Christmas.

# Appendix D – Acknowledgements

All images contained within this document are subject to copyright restriction and cannot be reproduced without the owner's permission.

## Photograph

The copyright for the photograph on the front cover of this Framework is owned by NMDDC and taken by Mccadden Design, Belfast.

The copyright for the image on page 11 is owned by a DRWG Member.

The copyright for the photograph on page 12 is owned by NMDDC.

## Diagrams

MAG prepared all diagrams in this Framework and MAG own the copyright for them. The aerial base plan used in the diagrams was supplied by NMDDC and therefore requires the conditions of its use to be set out as per below.

“This plan is a NMDDC publication. Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this map at the time of publication. NMDDC, cannot, however, accept responsibility for errors and omissions and where such are brought to our attention, the amendment of any future publications, as appropriate shall be entirely at our discretion.

The content of this map has been compiled from the OSNI large scale structured vector database. This material is Crown Copyright and is reproduced with the permission of Land and Property Services under delegated authority from the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. Crown Copyright and database rights 2022 CS&LA156.

No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission of the copyright owners.”

## Statistics

All statistics referred to were supplied by NMDDC.