

KILLYLEAGH PUBLIC REALM COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Virtual consultation by ZOOM

23rd June 2020

Co-ordinated by:

Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency and Down Business Centre

On behalf of:

Newry Mourne and Down District Council

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1. BACKGROUND

Historically, eligibility for investment by the Department for Communities (DFC) in public realm (PR)/environmental improvement (EI) was restricted to urban areas with a population greater than 5,000. The DFC is now changing its eligibility criteria to include smaller towns with a population less than 5,000, but greater than 2,500.

In Newry Mourne and Down Council area, this now brings forward:

1. Bessbrook
2. Castlewellan
3. **Killyleagh**
4. Rostrevor
5. Saintfield

What can be funded

Eligible public realm/environmental improvement works can include upgrade works to pathways, street lightening, landscaping, and street furniture. Other works may be considered, subject to further discussion and approval from DFC, such as revitalisation works including upgrades to building facades and visual improvements to vacant or derelict properties. The eligible boundary will be within the town centre, i.e. within the 30-mph zone.

Requirement

Working with DFC, Newry Mourne and Down District Council will be putting in place a forward capital plan that will identify over the next 5 years schemes to be profiled for public realm investment. This will enable the Council and the Department to better plan budgets, submit funding applications, commission early pre-development design works, and apply for statutory approvals – all of which, are required ahead of scheme implementation.

The Council now needs to put in place a forward capital plan for these 5 rural settlements, which now fall within the public realm remit of DFC. Implementation of the forward plan will be subject to funding from DFC. Putting in place a forward plan will enable Council to take some early steps to work schemes up to a point where they are “funding ready.” To inform this plan, some scoping work has been required to identify where the need for investment in public realm/environmental improvement is greatest.

Community Engagement

To formalise the inclusion of these 5 rural settlements in a forward work plan for submission to DFC, and to develop potential future scheme proposals, Newry Mourne and Down Council engaged **Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency (NMEA)** and **Down Business Centre (DBC)** to prepare a report for consideration. These organisations are a local enterprise partnership whose sole aim is the furtherance of economic and business development within the Newry Mourne and Down region. The partnership is assisted by Eamon Larkin, Managing Partner of **Milligan Reside & Larkin**, and uses the services of other professional advisors across a range of disciplines.

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The Brief

The brief given to NMEA and DBC was to consult with stakeholders in Killyleagh to learn their views on what public realm works should be prioritised in Killyleagh and to prepare a final consultation report for the District Council to consider.

Consultation – during Covid 19

All consultations were undertaken within the terms of the Government’s 2020 Covid 19 public health guidance, remotely using email and video / telephone conferencing.

Killyleagh Overview

The population of Killyleagh is estimated to have grown to 3,900 (from 2,590 in 2001). Around one fifth of the population in Killyleagh are under 16 years, which is equivalent to the NI average. Additionally, the village comprises a slightly higher older population than the NI average, with 17.23% of the population aged 65+ years of age. The population is growing faster than the NI average.

In relation to housing, the environment and transport, there is a high proportion of people renting (39.02%) and a relatively low percentage of housing is owner occupied (58.37%). More than a quarter of households in the village have no access to a car or van. Furthermore, the area falls within top 50% most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and scores particularly low (within the top third most deprived SOAs) in terms of education, skills, and training, as well as proximity to services.

Previous studies of the area include an in-depth **Killyleagh Village Renewal Plan (2018)** prepared at the request of Newry Mourne and Down Council by the community (in conjunction with **Ove Arup and Partners**).

2. THE CONSULTATION: When did it take place? Who participated?

The Killyleagh stakeholder consultation was carried out using the Zoom video-conferencing platform on Tuesday 23rd June 2020. The attendees were as follows:

Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency

Dr Conor Patterson (Facilitator)

Colin Hanna (Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency)

Eamon Larkin (Milligan Reside & Larkin Architects)

Down Business Centre

Janice McDonald

Joe McCoubrey

Newry Mourne & Down Council representative

Margaret Quinn (Project Development Manager)

Killyleagh participants

Ken Tait

Ann Fee

Clive Scholar

Morris Crawford

Elizabeth Crilly (Sir Hans Sloane Centre)

Noreen Cairns

Chris Hagan

Gawn Rowan-Hamilton

Jim Lindsay

Eddie Rea

Kitty Crawford

Breige Jennings (County Down Rural Community Network)

Lise Curran (County Down Rural Community Network)

Councillors

Patrick Brown

Robert Burgess

Terry Andrews

William Walker

Kathryn Owen

3. WHAT PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS DO CONSULTEES THINK ARE NEEDED?

Consultees participated in a virtual tour of the town using the Google Street View app. Some of the photography used by Google was recent but some dated from 2016. Consultees said that these older images served to highlight the extent of the deterioration of some buildings in a relatively short period. Several pictures showed the extent of the change particularly in Main Street. Stakeholders stressed the importance of preventing a vicious cycle of dereliction developing. As well as the need for general improvements to shop frontages and streetscapes and issues with the maintenance of open spaces and inadequate management and use of various facilities and amenities, there was a deepening problem of vandalism and antisocial behaviour. It was vital that pride was restored in the village.

The key issues highlighted by the consultees were:

- Enhancements and improvements to the seafront area from Seaview towards Cuan Beach
- New lighting at an arterial walkway on Shore Street/Seaview area
- Provision of a slipway at Seaside Road
- Clean-up and management of flower beds and street tree areas
- Improve Sir Hans Sloane memorial space and adjacent car park at Frederick Street
- Replace public toilets close to Killyleagh Castle
- Repaint town Library and explore ways of using vacant second-floor space
- Action required to the Moses Arch/Moses Lane area
- Derelict buildings
- The introduction of a 'Shop Fronts' scheme
- Main welcome and internal directional signage
- New pavings/footpaths
- Support for the Sir Hans Sloane Centre
- Street Lighting

SPECIAL NOTE

Several projects are currently under review and action has already been planned for some others (though much more needs to be done). These include:

Moses Arch: A £15,000 scheme was submitted under Peace IV to improve the Moses Arch and the area around it. This is currently being processed through Newry Mourne and Down Council working with the County Down Rural Community Network.

Housing Properties adjacent to Killyleagh Castle: A scheme to provide new housing units has been lodged for planning approval by a private developer. Consultees indicated that they were prepared to offer strong support for the project.

Library: It was reported that Library NI had agreed to repaint the town library.

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The condition of the town library is a major concern. Whilst the group welcomed the news that Library NI intend to repaint the building, there was a consensus that the upper floor of the building should be put to community use (for hosting meetings for example) and that the car parking area to the front of the building could be better used as an open-space resource.



3.1 SHORT TERM

1. Derelict Buildings: The increase in the number of vacant buildings and the poor condition of others in the town centre has been a source of increasing concern in recent years. At a minimum work is required to clean up, make safe, and repaint these vacant buildings to visually enhance the village's streetscape. A 'False Front' scheme was suggested by consultees as a way of addressing the dilapidated atmosphere which is beginning to prevail in parts of the village core, although it was recognised that private sector owners would need to be bought in as co-sponsors if a project was to be delivered.



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A number of derelict buildings are blighting the streetscape of Killyleagh. Some are considered unsafe (repairs to roofing being particularly essential). This dereliction is particularly noticeable in two buildings at the main crossroads entrance to High Street (pictured opposite).
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2. Shop frontage scheme (including repainting, new signage, and replacement of gutters). There is strong evidence that shop owners would support and participate in a renewal scheme on a 50/50 shared-cost basis. The introduction of such a scheme is considered overdue in Killyleagh. Similar schemes have had an extremely positive effect in other towns in Northern Ireland. Consultees said that not only would it greatly enhance the visual appeal of the village's core it would also provide an impetus for owners of derelict properties to take action to find new productive uses for their depleting assets.

3. New pavings/footpaths: It was agreed that replacement surfaces were required at Catherine Street and High Street to replace an uneven patchwork of paving and tarmac.

4. Upgrade existing public toilets:

The public toilet block located in front of Killyleagh Castle was highlighted as being in a poor state of repair and the building itself as visually unappealing. The building requires an urgent upgrade. Consultees said that it should be replaced with a



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building which was more in keeping with the historically significant buildings around it, especially the Castle.

5. New Public Toilets

A second public toilet facility in the village was also strongly recommended. It was said that there had been a significant increase in recent years in visitor numbers in the harbour/shore area. It was argued that those numbers will continue to grow, particularly so if the village renewal schemes highlighted elsewhere in this report come to fruition. At present, the only toilet facilities available to people visiting the shore area are those located at the Castle, access to which would be impractical from a distance point of view and also because of the absence of adequate signage.

6. Signage: Consultees said that the village was poorly served by signage. Welcome signs were required on the three main approach roads – from Downpatrick, from Killinchy/Comber, and from Crossgar/Shrigley. There was also a need to improve internal signage, particularly signs to direct visitors to the Castle, the Harbour, and the new Sir Hans Sloane Centre.

7. Street Lighting: LED conservation lights should be fitted to Catherine Street, Plantation Street, Shore Street, Castle Lane, and Irish Street. Existing conservation lights at High Street should have LED 'lamps' fitted.



8. Flower beds and trees: The group highlighted an urgent need to tidy up and maintain the two grassy areas at the entrance to Strangford View, just off Irish Street. It was also felt that a row of small trees on one side of High Street could be replicated on the opposite side.

9. Sir Hans Sloane Centre: This was highlighted as a valuable new resource in the village. There was a feeling however, that more could be done to support the Centre, through its increased promotion and usage by Newry Mourne and Down District Council for example. The Centre had the potential to be used for community meetings and to host other public events. It was also felt that support should be given to enable more external signage to be added to the building.



10. Commemorative area at Frederick Street:

Consultees said that the commemorative Sir Hans Sloane plaque and seating areas at Frederick Street required an upgrade, to make it a more appealing open public space by adding flower beds, improving seating, and adding further items of interest, such as wall murals. The adjacent car park was described as poorly laid out and underused as a result. It was argued that an improvement in the surfacing and marking of the park would lead to greater usage and thereby help to offset the lack of parking in the village.



11. Artificial Metal Tree

There was consensus that a vandalised tree at the junction of Catherine Street/High Street needed to be replaced. The preferred option was the installation of an artificial Metal Tree which would be vandal-proof and would blend in with other street furniture, such as the lighting installations.

12. General Clean-up

Consultees highlighted several areas in the village which needed urgent clean-up attention. These included:

- The removal of vegetation from the Gocean brick wall. Also, patch-point the wall, replace missing copings and power-wash the area.
- Repair and repoint the Dibney Bridge walls and railings.
- Rebuild the step access from the road on the south side of the river leading to Frederick Street and St Mary's Stile.
- Tidy up the set of steps leading north to the Bridge Centre and paint the railings at the steps.

3.2 MEDIUM TERM

1. Seafront: The general seafront area at the Netwalk leading to Cuan Beach and the Quay was highlighted by the consultees as needing significant attention. It was argued that a range of improvements in this area would not only enhance the overall visual appeal of Killyleagh but would also offer practical ways in which the local community could benefit from increased access to amenities.



The suggested schemes to achieve this were:

- An extension of the path from the Quay around Seaview to Cuan Beach.
- The provision of a public slipway for the launch of small boats at the Netwalk. It was noted that Killyleagh is the only Strangford Lough village without such a facility.
- Replace lighting at Shore Walkway. Current lighting is fixed into a wall and is subject to vandalism. It was recommended that this lighting be replaced with tall-pole lighting.
- Repair the sea wall.
- General tidy-up of the full route (grass verges etc.).



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4. WHY ARE THEY NEEDED?

The **Killyleagh Village Renewal Plan (2018)** clearly sets out the rationale for government funding of public realm improvements in the village:

- *“Safety and connectivity are crucially important for community mobility, therefore a project which strengthens the key linkages within the village will improve levels of community safety.”*
- *“The quality of the physical environment has the ability to express the character of the village. A project which aims to enhance the physical landscape to revitalise the unique and picturesque setting of the village.”*
- *High quality environmental improvements to historical assets play an important role in creating a focal point in a village. Both pedestrians and road users are provided with a sense of arrival by the effective use of public realm.”*

Killyleagh’s public representatives and other local stakeholders see the proposals outlined in this report as representing the minimum level of intervention required to enhance the village’s appearance and appeal. They contend that this package of support is needed because continued deterioration during the last decade has had (and is continuing to have) a significant adverse effect on the area’s physical infrastructure and on community morale.

4.1 What would be the benefits of making these improvements?

The improvements identified through this consultation would have wide-ranging impacts. These include:

- Adding a new dimension of renewal to the general seafront area of the village
- Creating an immediate and significant visual uplift to the village’s streetscape and general appearance
- Increasing public safety (particularly in relation to footpaths and pedestrian accesses)
- Uplifting economic activity resulting from increased shopping footfall as a result of more visually appealing retail frontages
- Boosting community morale
- Encouraging additional ‘village pride’ initiatives by individuals and groups.

4.2 What would be the negative effects of doing nothing?

The potential economic and social costs of continued environmental decay are likely to be substantial. The main negative effects would be:

- An opportunity would be missed to revitalise an important and neglected section of the Strangford Lough coastline
- A decline in the visitor experience of Killyleagh would continue
- The reputation of statutory bodies for responsiveness and delivery would be weakened.
- There would be an ongoing loss of community morale
- The longer decline was allowed to continue the higher the ultimate costs of remedial action would be.

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5. WHAT WOULD BE THE COSTS OF SHORT-TERM SCHEMES?

The projects identified through this consultation are listed below. Total costs involved in the implementation of each project will require to be worked up to take account of all expenditure items, including the:

- Appointment of design team (Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Structural Engineer etc)
- Preparation and costing of final designs
- Pre-tender and post-tender collaboration
- Planning submissions
- Final scheme costs.

This report does not include a full summary of these costs. It is sufficient at this stage to insert an overall estimated per-project cost (which takes account of the above).

SHORT TERM PROJECTS

	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COST
1	Derelict Buildings: Implement a 'False Front' scheme incorporating up to 8 x buildings.	£6,000
2	Shop frontage scheme: Allow for a 50/50 take-up of up to 20 x business owners	£40,000
3	Replacement/upgrade of pavings/footpaths at Catherine Street and High Street	£10,000
4	Upgrade/Replace public toilets	£15,000
5	New Public Toilets (to be located in the general harbour/seafront area)	£75,000
6	Signage: Approach 'welcome' signage and internal directional signage	£15,000
7	Street Lighting: LED conservation lights fitted to Catherine Street, Plantation Street, Shore Street, Castle Lane, and Irish Street.	£40,000
8	Flower beds/trees at Strangford View and High Street	£5,000
9	Sir Hans Sloane Centre signage	£3,000
10	Commemorative area at Frederick Street (to include car park renovation)	£25,000
11	Artificial metal tree at the junction of Catherine Street/High Street	£10,000
12	General clean-up of key areas around the village	£30,000

MEDIUM TERM PROJECT

	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COST
1	A major scheme to redevelop large sections of the village shorefront could be implemented as a single project or broken down into the various components parts as outlined in Section 3.2.1 of this report. The recommendation is that because of the uniqueness of the area and the potential to demonstrate a positive and significant regeneration of an important physical resource, that an overall scheme be taken on board. However, the scale involved should not prohibit the implementation of vital individual issues which require attention along the shore front.	£175,000

5.1 Sources of Funding

The Department for Communities (DFC) will be the primary funding source, however efforts will be made to also investigate alternative sources of funding that may become available. Working in conjunction with identified funders, Newry Mourne and Down District Council will identify eligible projects that could be selected for securing funding to meet project costs.

6. Next Steps

This report has been submitted to Newry Mourne and Down Council for consideration and discussion at various levels. Opportunities for funding will be reviewed with DFC / DAERA and other potential funders. Where funding opportunities are identified, further consultation will be completed with communities to progress scheme design, with necessary agreement through Council obtained.

It will be for the Council, working closely with the Department for Communities / appropriate funder, to move forward as follows:

Action	Outcome
Step 1	Secure Funding
Step 2	Appoint a Design Team
Step 3	Secure Planning Permission
Step 4	Tender for a Contractor
Step 5	Complete Construction