

# Concept Design Report

Donaghadee Commons Masterplan

Concept Stage

60668704

March 2022

#### Quality information

Document name	Ref	Prepared for	Prepared by	Date	Reviewed by
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#### Revision history

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorised	Name	Position
01	25-03-22	For Submission	Ricky Martin	Adam Grudgings	Landscape Architect

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The Commons Park Landscape

## 1.0 Introduction

AECOM and The Destination Developers have been appointed by ANDBC to develop a concept plan with commercial study for Donaghadee Commons Park. The concept plan, which will be non-statutory, will provide a framework for the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration, recreation, tourism and leisure initiatives in Donaghadee.

The Commons presents an amazing opportunity for Donaghadee to be seen as a successful sustainable growth town with a contemporary mix of live, work, visit, play and study opportunities. As a signature tourism, recreation, and leisure destination, the Commons parkland defined by its wellness opportunities, and sea views, combined with adjacent lands for development, will continue Donaghadee's revitalisation and growing appeal as a place to live and visitor destination.

## 1.1 Project Benefits

Benefits of a reimagined Commons include:

- 1.** Offer a high quality outdoor leisure, recreation, entertainment and wellbeing experience
- 2.** Enhanced parkland delivering more biodiversity
- 3.** Support civic pride, quality of life and to shape improved perceptions of the town regionally and nationally
- 4.** A place to accommodate new uses and experiences, for example a home for the Sir Samuel Kelly, flexible hall to accommodate small scale events, markets, conferences and exhibitions; business spaces "co-working spaces", a boutique hotel, more homes
- 5.** A visitor centre to welcome tourists with gallery and exhibition spaces to tell Donaghadee stories
- 6.** More day and overnight visitors in the town
- 7.** Adds more to the overall Ards Peninsula offer, helps develop a stronger visitor experience
- 8.** Gives Tourism NI a strong product to support the "Giant Spirit" proposition and spread visitors across Northern Ireland
- 9.** The Commons and new development present Donaghadee as a sustainable growth town as the population expands
- 10.** Direct and indirect jobs, training, education, and spend

# 2.0 Site Context

The Commons is a linear stretch of open parkland situated on the east coast of Northern Ireland in the Town of Donaghadee. Donaghadee has a long maritime heritage with key assets in the historic train line, the harbour and RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly. It also has a wealth of listed buildings, structures and monuments which provide a unique character to the town with conservation area status protecting the built heritage and surrounding boundary. The Coastline is also a major natural heritage asset protected through RAMSAR, ASSI, and SPA designations. The town has also benefited from retaining its open spaces of which the Commons is the most significant. This provides a unique opportunity to create a linear coastal park of local and regional significance which will appeal to both locals and visitors building on its combined maritime, built and natural heritage assets to create a unique and distinctive visitor experience as part of the popular Mourne Coastal Route.

The Copeland Islands located off the coast of Donaghadee are internationally important sites for breeding seabirds and waders such as the Manx Shearwater and Arctic Tern and nationally important breeding sites for the Mediterranean Gull and Common Elder, in addition to their native plant communities and geological features.

The existing characteristics of the park are illustrated on photographs 1 -16 and summarised below:

- 1.** Underutilised pavilion and poorly maintained carpark
- 2.** Narrow uneven pathways
- 3.** Overly maintained grassland
- 4.** Underutilised former putting green
- 5.** Hidden access to Ballyvester coastal walk
- 6.** Underutilised picnic area close to community centre
- 7.** Coastal landscape interface close to marina
- 8.** Unattractive boundary fencing at boatyard
- 9.** Narrow uninviting park access from Marine Drive
- 10.** Poorly maintained shelter with accessibility issues
- 11.** Unattractive boundary fencing and poly-tunnel housing Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat
- 12.** Overgrown vegetation on historic railway line
- 13.** Well utilised path with potential for surfacing upgrades
- 14.** Underutilised carpark
- 15.** Poor location for recycling centre
- 16.** Attractive wall art hidden from pedestrian footfall



# 3.0 Site Analysis

Site analysis was undertaken to identify key themes within the existing Commons and wider context. A swot analysis (see table below) study was undertaken to determine the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to explore potential solutions for negatives and also to enhance existing positives.

The diagram plan (right) visually represents the analysis study providing rational through our development of the masterplan proposals.

## S trengths

- Location and **Views** (Copeland Islands & Beyond)
- Designations – ASSI/RAMSAR/Natura 2000
- Maritime **Heritage** and Settlement History
- RNLI – **Sir Samuel Kelly** Lifeboat
- Existing User Groups
- Positive Developments**
- The Harbour and Lighthouse Marina
- Tennis and Bowls Clubs
- Playground
- Annual Events
- Large Open **Greenspace**
- Site in council ownership

## W eaknesses

- Poor **signage** and information
- Lack of adequate **pedestrian connections**
- DDA compliance
- Segregation** through parking areas
- Recycling centre location
- Extensive areas of mown grass
- Hidden marina
- Inaccessible** shore/sea
- Playground location

## O pportunities

- Stronger **role/purpose** for the town
- Strengthen the **live, visit, study** and **work** reputation
- Growing population
- Active community/business** groups
- Connections with the town centre
- Destination branding
- Lighting** Strategy
- Visitor **Hub Building**
- Path network enhancements
- Re-wilding**
- Wayfinding** and **Interpretive Signage**
- Hotel
- Links to wider Greenways and Hunts Park
- Gateway** from Millisle Road
- Cycle Hub**
- Sculpture Park**

## T hreats

- Exposed** location to the **weather**
- Planning **regulations** and **designations**
- Lack of **capital** and **operation funding**
- Market demand
- Parking** pressures
- Disconnected public open space

- Existing playground under refurbishment
- Recycling centre inhibits potential pedestrian links
- Potential development site
- Car parking bisects open greenspace
- No sense of arrival
- Unwelcoming park entrance
- Wide pedestrian path frequently used
- No connection with historic railway
- Steep, uneven, narrow footpath
- Isolated playpark location
- Unwelcoming shelters
- Lack of gateway to Commons
- Frequently used sports facilities
- Underutilised putting green



- Harbour and lighthouse proximity
- Poor pedestrian connections. No footway
- Site exposed to the elements
- Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat to be repositioned
- Boatyard positioning and transparency
- Hidden marina
- Unightly sewage treatment
- Potential access to rocks and sea

Open landscaped areas

Motorhome aire de service

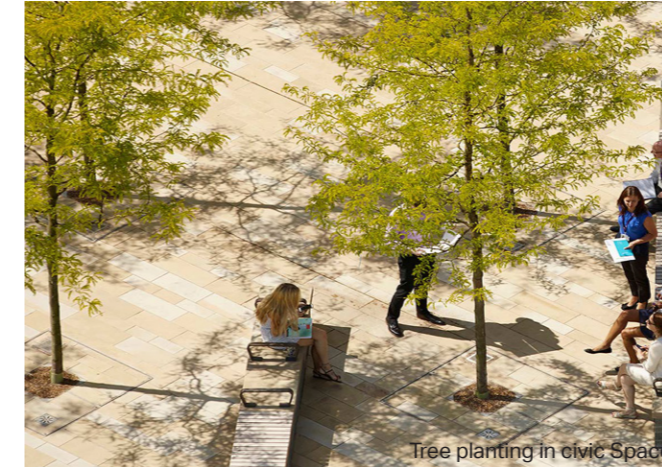
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats
- ① Harbour and Company Wood Fired Kitchen
- ② RNLI Charity Shop
- ③ Pier 36
- ④ Meadowbank Social & Rec Club
- ⑤ Donaghadee Lifeboat Station
- ⑥ The Copeland Distillery
- ⑦ Donaghadee Community Centre
- ⑧ Amenity Building
- ⑨ Historic Lighthouse
- P Existing Carpark
- Existing Tennis Courts
- Existing Bowling Green
- Dog walking route
- Running route
- Disability access route
- Viewpoint
- Line of historic railway

# 4.0 Proposed Park Redevelopment

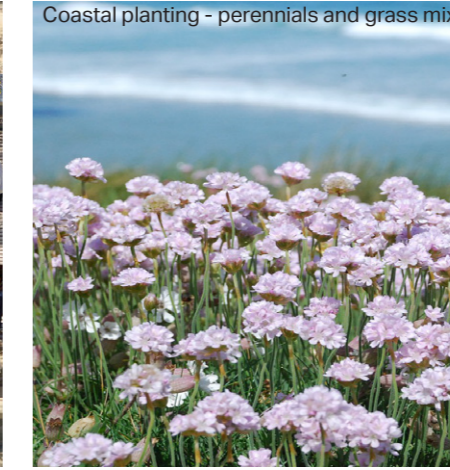
## 4.1 Commons Link

The Sir Samuel Kelly Square visually attracts pedestrians from the waterfront to a new mixed use Visitor Hub with a strong linear pedestrian connection to the Commons Park

1. Sir Samuel Kelly Square paved in natural stone including feature lighting, seating and native tree / shrub planting. Servicing access to commercial developments will be maintained
2. Two storey Visitor Hub with a double height at the southern end to house the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat overlooked by a gallery level on the first floor. A flexible space for small occasional markets, exhibitions, a small museum dedicated to the Sir Samuel Kelly is also included within the space. Furthermore, a cafe and co-working meeting room spaces can be provided
3. Carpark reconfiguration with new tree planting and improved pedestrian links. Shared carpark between visitor hub and Community Centre. Spaces removed from the Sir Samuel Kelly Square will be incorporated within this car park
4. Exposed aggregate concrete path (4m wide) connecting Plaza and Visitor Hub to The Commons. Natural stone wall between path and carpark with openings will allow pedestrian flow. Native planting with pockets of wildflower to provide a colourful, biodiverse buffer between the path and property boundaries
5. Repositioning of the Boatyard with new screening boundary fencing and re-configured access.
6. Coastal path safely connecting The Parade to new pedestrian path
7. Potential development site by others



Tree planting in civic Space



Coastal planting - perennials and grass mix



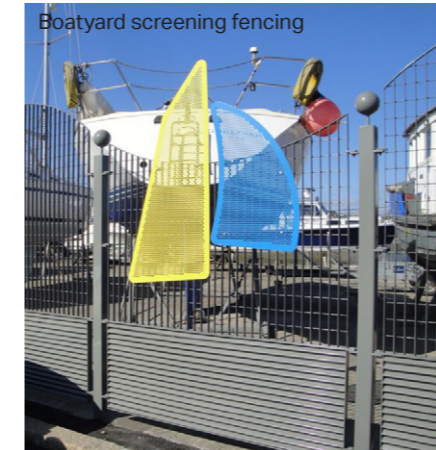
Biodiversity rich wildflower planting



Natural stone wall between pedestrian path and car park



Tree lined avenue at community centre car park



Boatyard screening fencing



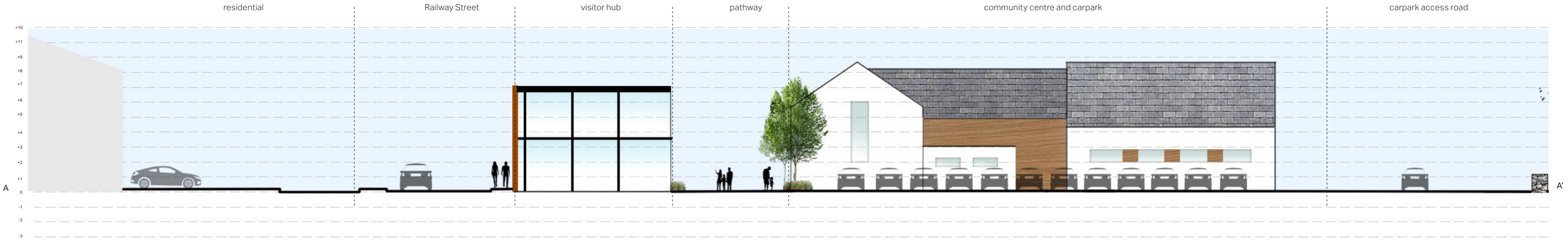
Two story visitor hub



Pedestrian link

### 4.2 Section A-A'

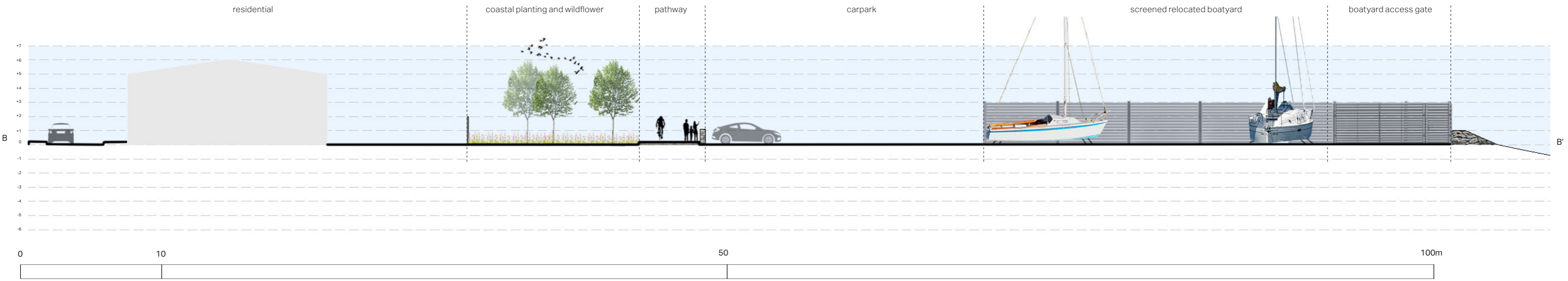
Proposed Visitor Hub located next to the Sir Samuel Kelly Square and Community Centre encourages pedestrian movement to the commons via the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat located to the southern end of the building



### 4.3 Section B-B'

4m wide Pedestrian Commons link with coastal buffer planting located at residential boundary edge

Boatyard fencing replaced with new attractive panelling



## 4.4 Visitor Hub Concept Design

The Visitor Hub concept is a two storey multifunctional showcase space for visitors and the local community. It will educate visitors on Donaghadee's local history incorporating opportunities for sensory interaction.

Ground floor will provide a double height space at the southern end where Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat is housed, overlooked by a "gallery/mezzanine level" from the 1st floor. It is a flexible space for small occasional markets, exhibitions with potential for a small dedicated Donaghadee museum/gallery area close to the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat.

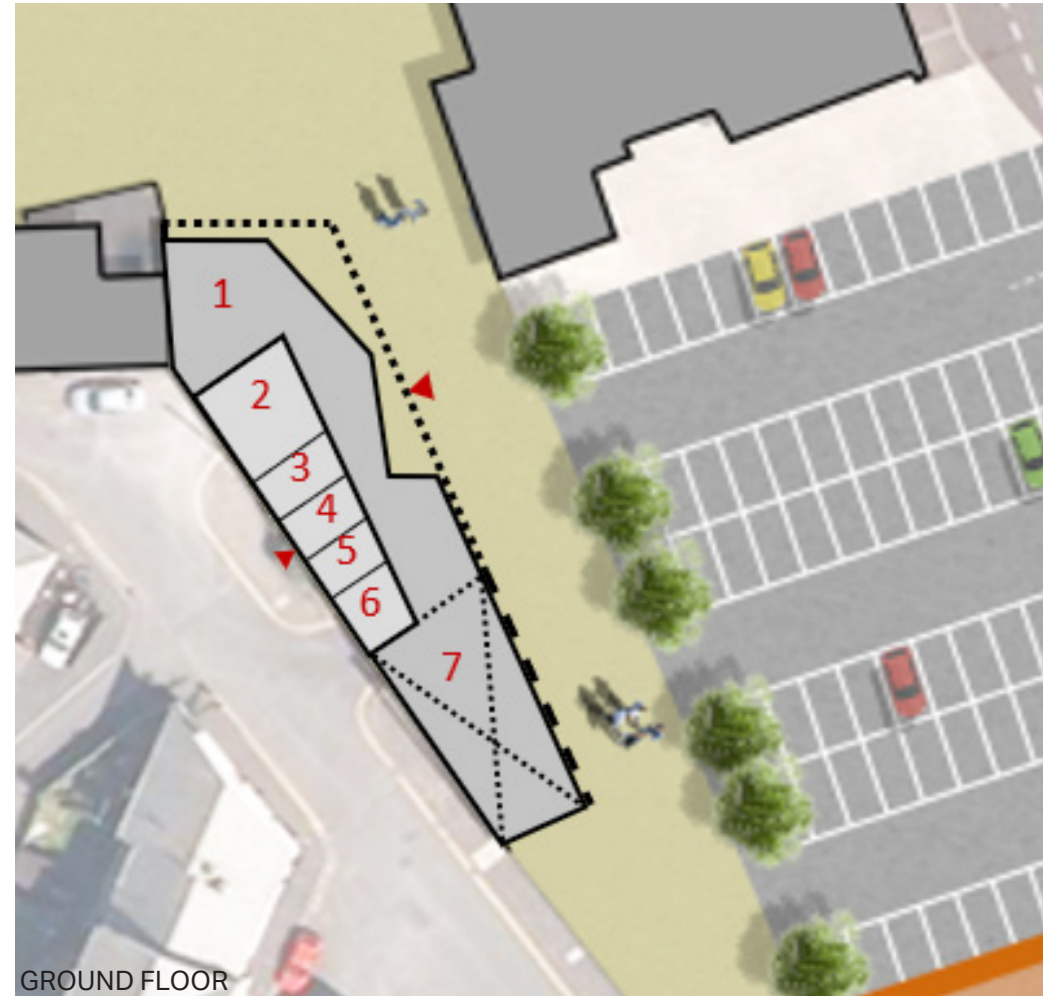
The ground floor will also contain visitor amenities, services, lift/stair core and back of house. Simple coffee dock/small café; Co-working spaces; Classroom/Meet room space; Entrance/Exit focusing towards the pedestrianised square at the north end will optimise activation.

The 1st floor will provide gallery/exhibition spaces; Co-working space with outdoor terraced seating area.

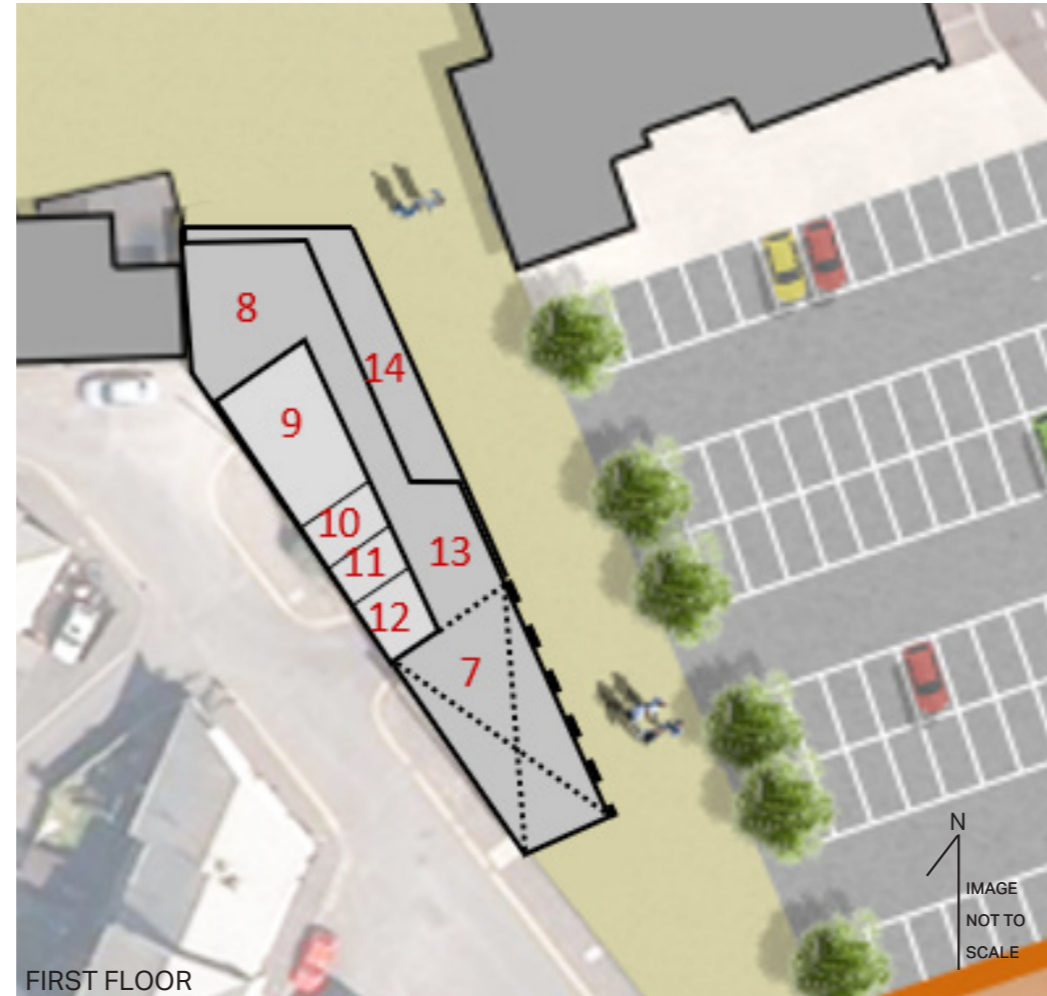
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>1.</b> Museum / Gallery            | <b>8.</b> Gallery / exhibition area   |
| <b>2.</b> Classroom / co-working area | <b>9.</b> Co-working Space            |
| <b>3.</b> Office / counter            | <b>10.</b> Service Access             |
| <b>4.</b> Service Access              | <b>11.</b> Bar                        |
| <b>5.</b> Toilets                     | <b>12.</b> Stairs / lift for visitors |
| <b>6.</b> Stairs / Lift for visitors  | <b>13.</b> Bar seating area           |
| <b>7.</b> Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat   | <b>14.</b> Terrace                    |



Visualisations of proposed Visitor Hub



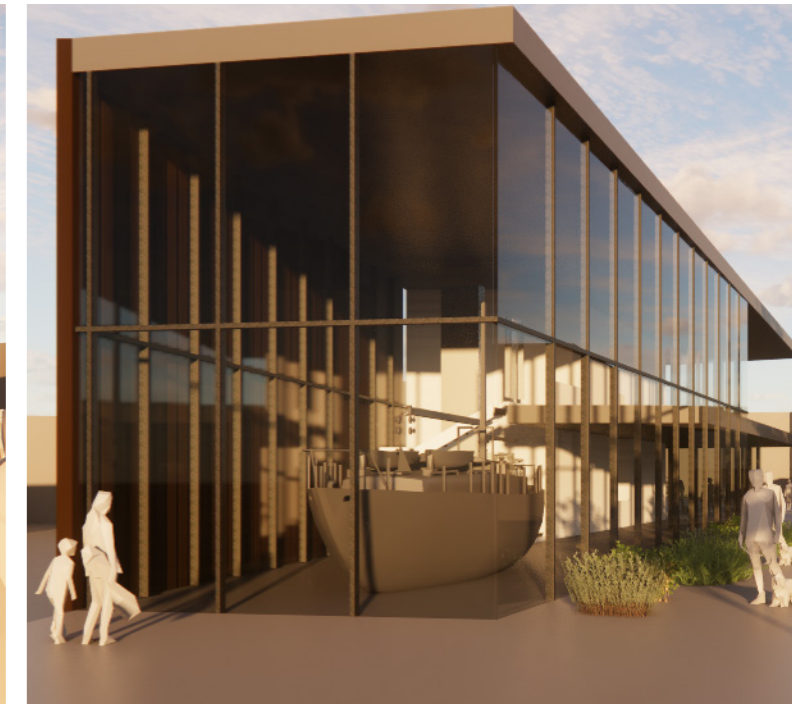
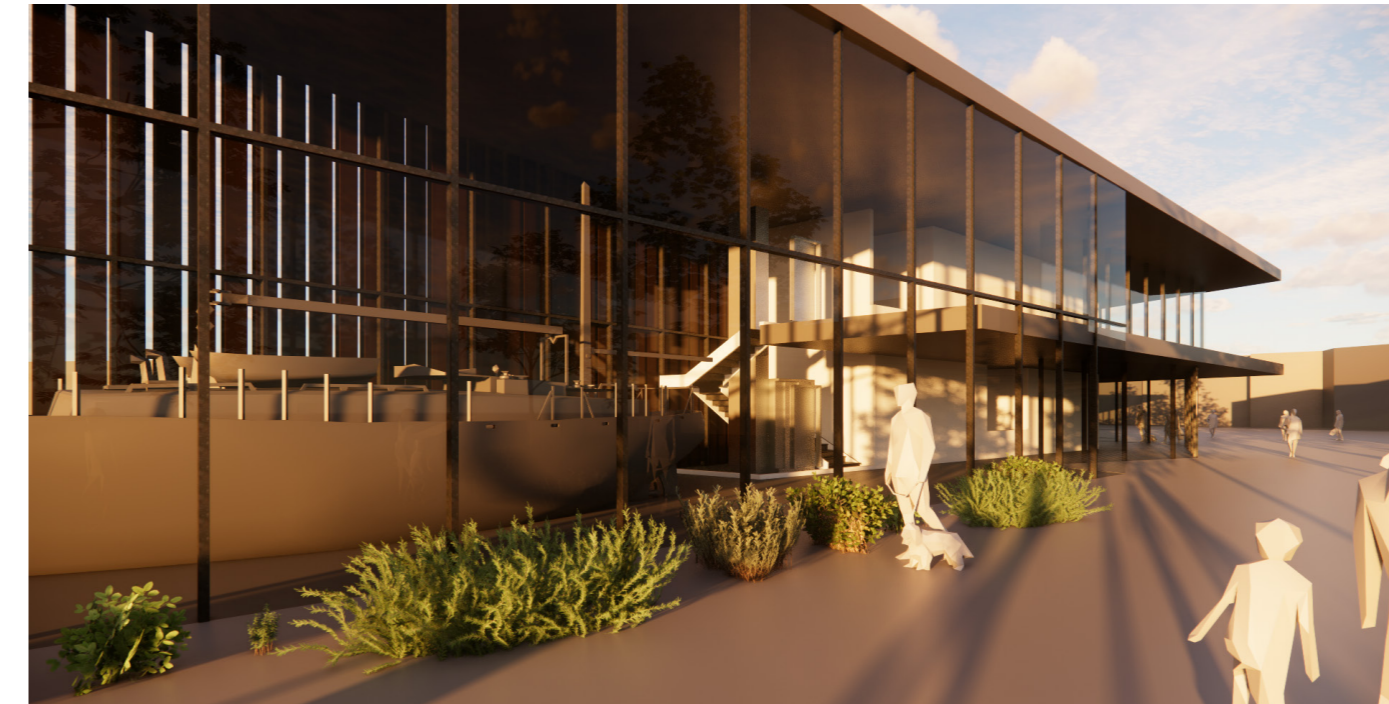
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



IMAGE  
NOT TO  
SCALE



Pop-up weekend market stalls



Maritime memorabilia



Arts and crafts events



Pop-up coffee stalls



Collaborative work spaces



Bar / wine tasting experience

### 4.5 Precedent images

Images to showcase ideas for both the intended internal function of the Visitor Hub as well as the exterior aesthetics.



Double height exhibition space



Glass facade

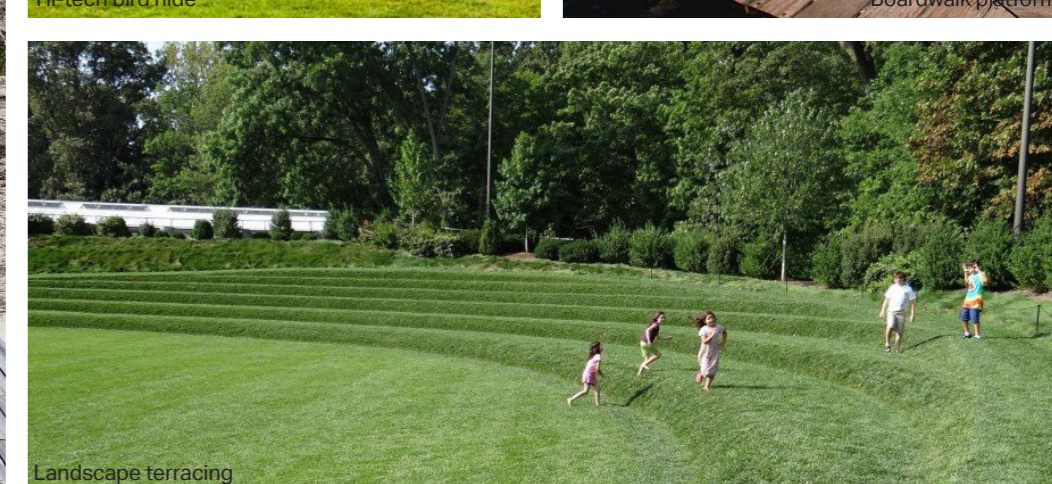
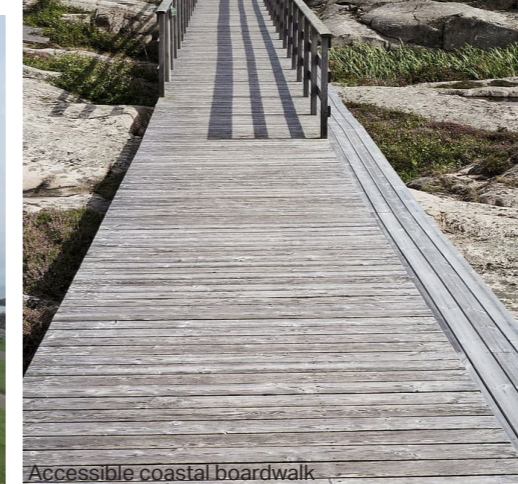
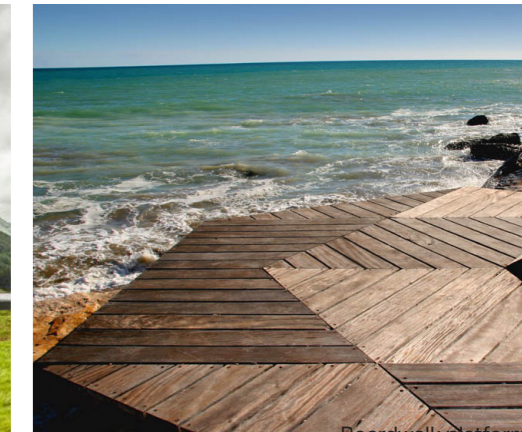


Open plan entrance foyer

## 4.6 Commons Park

Reconfigured path network meandering through the coastal landscape, subtly enhances the existing character. A new elevated timber board walk with sculptural bird hide behind the marina and sculptural land form terracing can be used for summer events

1. Hi-tech bird hide with live video footage of the wildlife on the Copeland Islands
2. Elevated timber board walk allows accessible coastal exploration
3. Potential location for public art installations
4. Land form terracing allows elevated platforms for events
5. Existing shelters to be re-imagined as a part time art / photography gallery
6. Reconfigured, widened and illuminated shared pedestrian / cycle path network

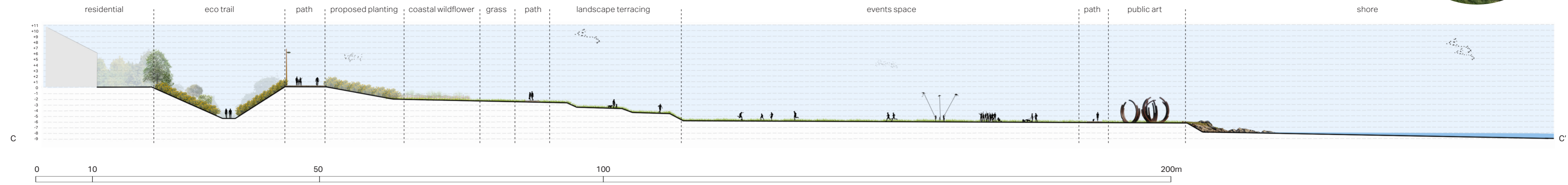
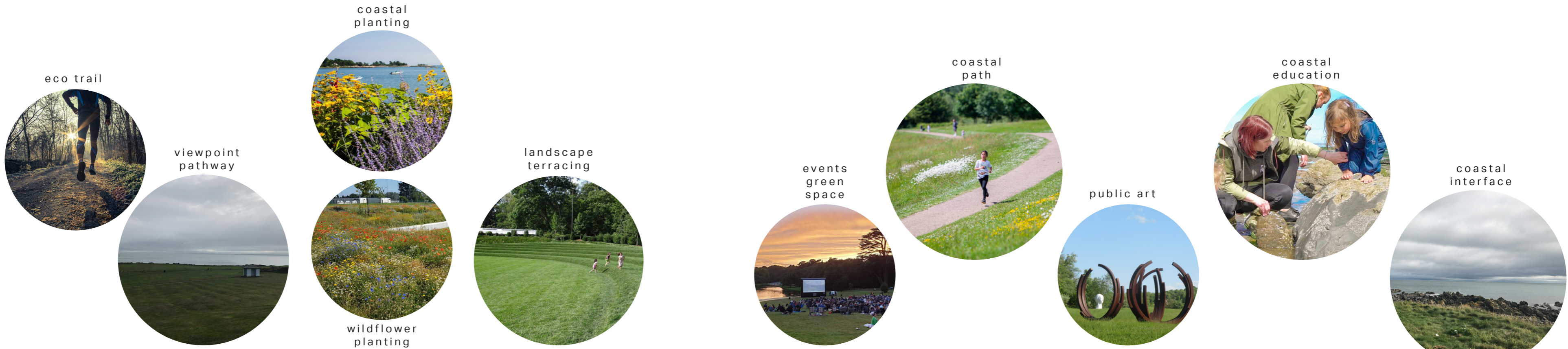


## 4.7 Section C-C'

Compacted gravel eco trail reopens route of historic train line and light columns illuminate upper path

Rewilding through the introduction of coastal and wildflower planting encourages biodiversity. Landscape terraces provide daily exploration as well as amphitheatre use for public events

Existing open space has been enhanced through realignment of path networks and a public art piece acts as an eye catching focal point



## 4.8 Activity Hub

Activity hub featuring a mix of recreational activities including a pump track, skate park, play zone, outdoor exercise zone as well as a cafe extension to the pavilion and RV site

1. Pump track incorporated into the landscape
2. Coastal rewilding planting to enhance biodiversity
3. Skate park incorporated into the landscape
4. High end inclusive active play zone
5. Compacted gravel Eco Trail through historic railway cutting
6. Architectural shelter / viewpoint and stepped access to carpark
7. Recycled rubber surfaced outdoor exercise zone with new gym equipment
8. Car Park resurfacing / extension providing additional parking spaces
9. Pavilion refurbishment and extension to incorporate cafe / cycle hub hire facilities
10. Sculptural gateway feature with incorporated signage
11. Environmental improvement scheme with improved pedestrian connection to Hunt's Park
12. Surface improvements and entrance features at Hunt's Park gateway
13. Quick win project - RV site with promenade access and private path to Pavilion for wash room access
14. Jetty to allow water sport sea access
15. New seawall to reduce tidal flooding



Coastal edge and character retained



Active play zone



Sunken cycle / skate track



Outdoor exercise zone



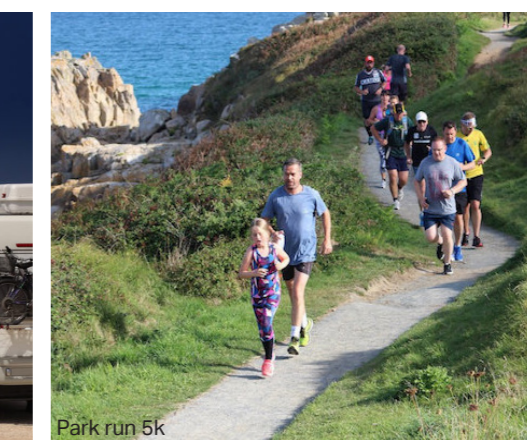
Sculptural gateway feature



Architectural shelter



RV site



Park run 5k



Cycle rental hub

### 4.9 Section D-D'

Compacted gravel eco trail reopens route of historic train line and timber light columns illuminate upper path

Open green space retained and additional rewilding coastal / wildflower planting to enhance biodiversity

Activity play zone is easily accessible from the car park adjacent to the sunken pump track and skate park further screened by planting

illuminated pathway



eco trail



recreational grassland



play zone



coastal planting



sunken pump track



wildflower planting



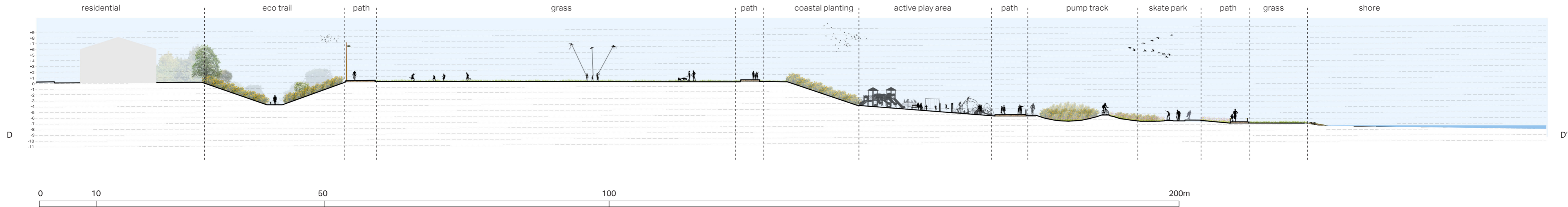
sunken skate park



low level lighting



coastal interface



Hunt's Park access



park entrance feature



pavilion cafe



outdoor seating area



coastal interface

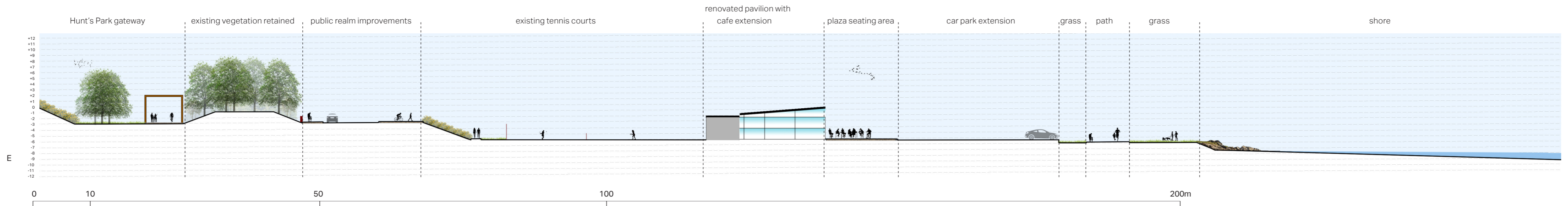


### 4.10 Section E-E'

Pedestrian connection strengthened from Hunt's Park through the use of gateway features reflecting the route of the historic railway line.

Environmental improvements on the Millisle Road enhances pedestrian flow to and from the Commons.

Pavilion refurbishment and cafe extension with outdoor seating provides southern hub for congregation and place making.



# 5.0 Phasing Programme

## 5.1 Strategy

In establishing the Commons as a stronger destination for Donaghadee and the wider Ards Peninsula, the phasing strategy is centred initially on enhancing the core coastal park experience. These “public space” interventions are likely to be lower cost and in Ards and North Down control, so subject to funding, should be able to be implemented quickly. This then starts to change perceptions of the Commons, build more interest and prime the context for the larger improvement and development projects in phases 2 and 3.

### Phase 1 - Paths and Planting

Delivering the first phase as a park enhancement through path upgrades and additional planting a step change in the park offer and its environmental experience, the Commons can offer for the core existing users. This means the upgrade of the paths and inclusion of a boardwalk, jetty and flood prevention seawall, as well as additional planting to provide a more natural and higher level of biodiversity. This will set the tone for further phases to the south and north and start to change perceptions of the Commons, that could be elevated more by a fresh destination brand.

The former putting green presents an opportunity for the Council to earn income through a use where there is proven demand for Donaghadee; this is from the owners and users of recreational vehicles (“RVs”) or motor homes. In phase one the old putting green will be upgraded to accommodate RVs.

The southern pavilion will be refurbished and extended offering a conservatory style café open to all. Phase 1 projects

- Main Park – planting to enhance biodiversity
- Paths, boardwalks and jetty and flood prevention requirements
- Refurbished shelters
- Entrance archway and signage
- Old putting green converted to RV parking for overnight stays, ideally relocation of “aire de service” to this location
- Southern pavilion extended to include conservatory café area and more welcoming offer for all weather members and visitors.

### Phase 2 - Activity Area

With the Commons coastal park revitalised offering an enhanced user experience phase 2 will deliver contemporary amenities for users of all ages. These are the primarily civic leisure and recreational park uses that will help to add more interest and appeal from the town and greater Belfast region.

- Bike “pump track”
- Skate Park
- Activity play zone centred around natural play
- Outdoor gym (“functional training”) and classes area

### Phase 3 - Development and Urban Wellness

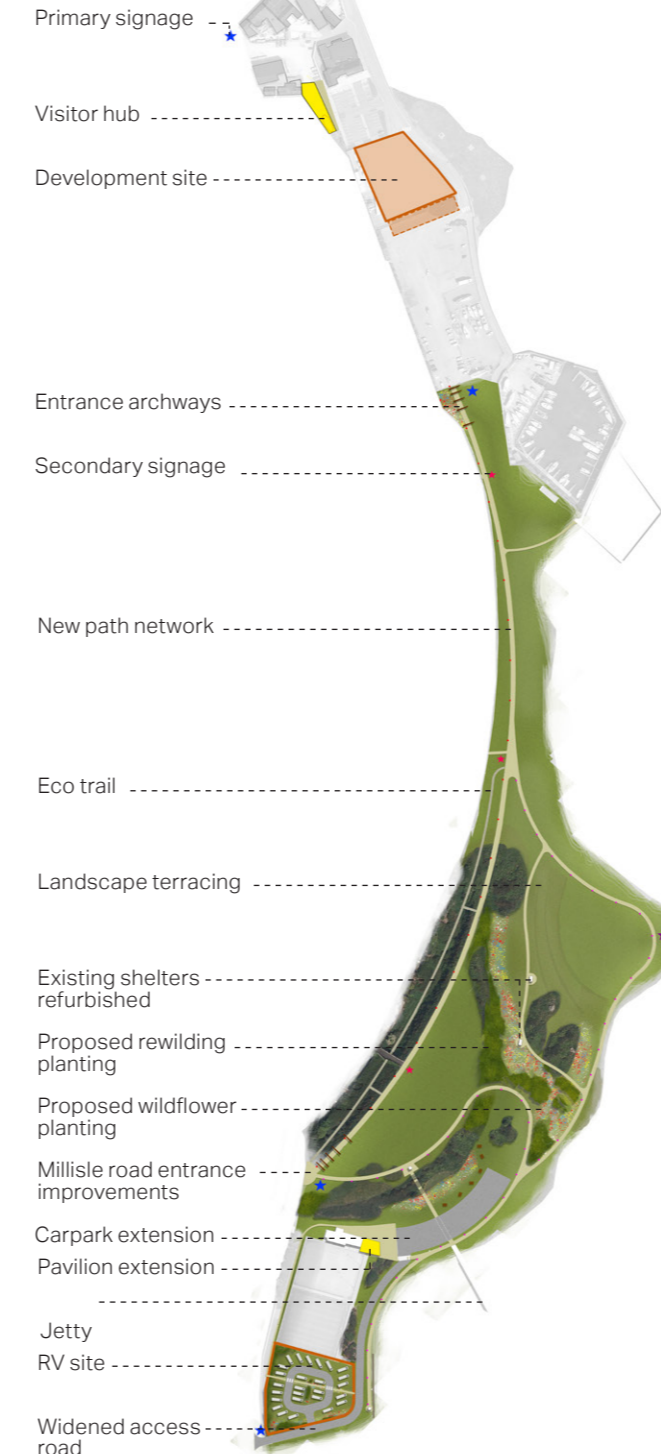
With the brand of the revitalised Commons established the market will see Donaghadee through fresh eyes, the aim will be for private sector developers, in partnership with Ards and North Down Council, to deliver a high quality mixed use scheme. An urban extension for Donaghadee will complement the core town centre and the Commons itself. With more moving parts in this phase this will be more complex, requiring the relocation of the recycling area to a new location, the boatyard moved a short distance to join the marina, plus the rationalisation and improvement of car parking to also include some dedicated coach park spaces, to accommodate tours from cruise ships and other coach trips.

The vision will be centred on urban wellness and comprise the following projects:

- Visitor centre where many Donaghadee stories might be captured, a permanent home for the Sir Samuel Kelly plus space for the cultural uses (gallery for art and photographs), civic tourist office, spaces for pop up speciality retail, co-working office space and food & beverage
- A business space, leisure and entertainment offer
- Potential for residential development

The aim will be to generate a mix of capital to help fund the visitor centre and income to support high quality maintenance and management of the Commons as an enhanced community asset and visitor destination for Ards and North Down.

## Phase 1



## Phase 2



## Phase 3



# 6.0 Materials Palette

## 6.1 Seating

100% robust recycled polymer contemporary seat. Root fixed suitable for coastal conditions with few maintenance requirements. Anti-graffiti, does not absorb water and dries quickly



## 6.4 Picnic Table

100% robust recycled polymer contemporary Picnic Table. Root fixed suitable for coastal conditions with few maintenance requirements. Anti-graffiti, does not absorb water and dries quickly



## 6.7 Paving

Natural stone paving in colour Buff, to extend the public realm scheme, strong and attractive with high slip resistance



## 6.8 Exposed Aggregate Concrete

Exposed aggregate concrete colour Buff, strong and attractive with high slip resistance



## 6.2 Feature Lighting

Hardwood timber feature lighting to be located in the Sir Samuel Kelly Square. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions



## 6.5 Path Lighting

Hardwood timber lighting to be located on Upper path. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions



## 6.3 Low level lighting

Hardwood timber low level path lighting. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions. Designed to illuminate when motion is detected close by. Minimises adverse impacts to nocturnal wildlife



## 6.6 Finger Post Signage

Hardwood timber signage to be located at secondary park entrances. Attractive, robust and suitable for coastal conditions



# 7.0 Public Consultation Analysis

## 7.1 The Purpose

The purpose of the public consultations were to tailor concept design proposals which derived from stakeholder meetings during the analysis stage of the project. They involved local residents and traders in providing opinions and feedback on a draft masterplan which allowed for refinement of the subsequent design proposals

## 7.2 The Process

ANDBC and AECOM carried out two online public consultation events on the evenings of January 27th 2022 and February 24th 2022. The process involved an introduction by ANDBC to the background of the project and progress to date. AECOM then explained the design proposal through a power point presentation and concluded with a questions and answers session with option to either verbally ask or type questions into the open chat room. Online and hard copy questionnaires were also provided to gain further feedback about the proposals. The pie charts (right) show the results of the collective responses

## 7.3 The Outcome

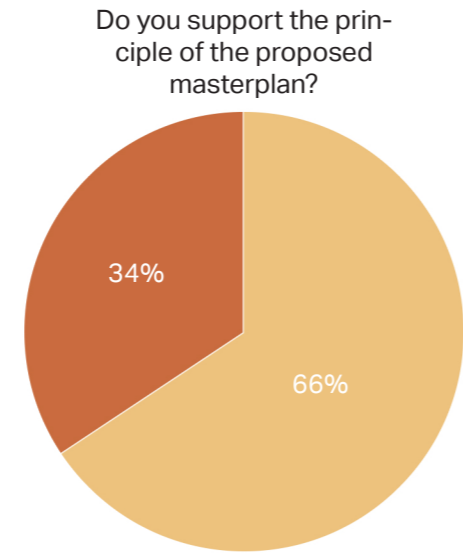
Online, handwritten feedback forms as well as questions raised during the public consultations were collated and analysed to produce a list of proposed variations to the masterplan. This determined which proposals were altered in the masterplan

“Any improvements to Donaghadee, particularly The Commons, would be very welcomed”

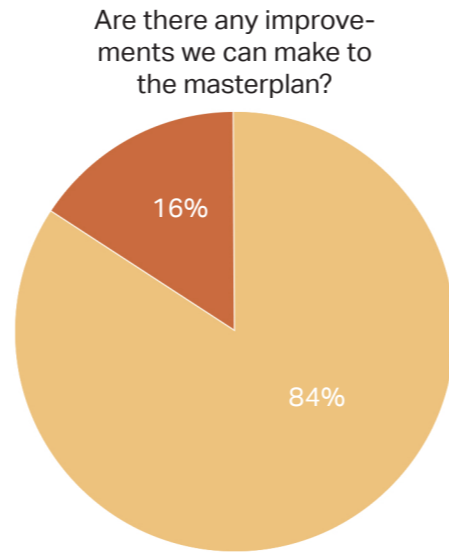
“It is a great area and with some purposeful development will add so much more to the community for local people and for those visiting”

“We love going to the commons to walk the dog and let the kids play in the park. It would be great to have more things to do”

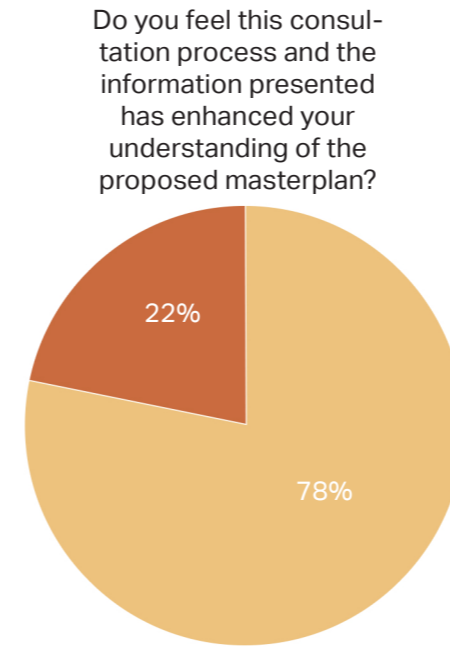
“Plenty to keep kids entertained. Will bring a lot of people to the town”



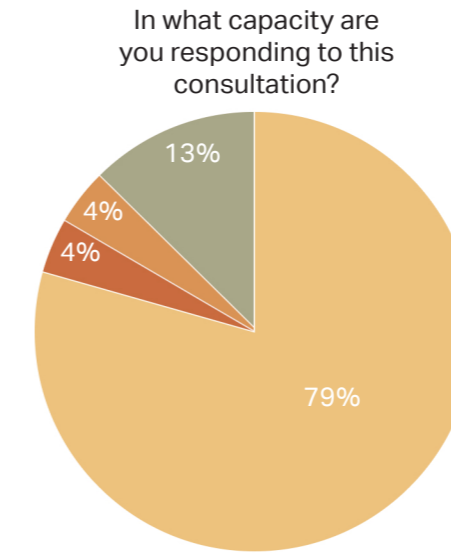
● Yes  
● No



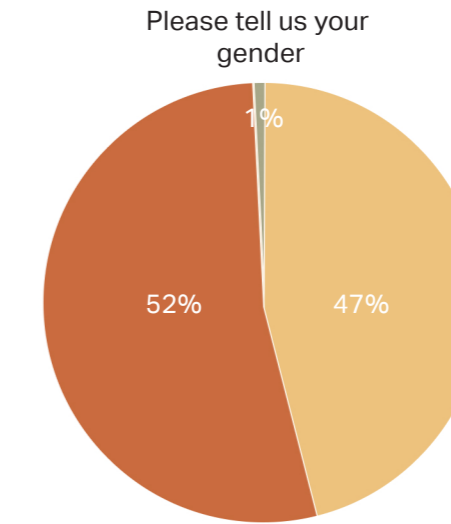
● Yes  
● No



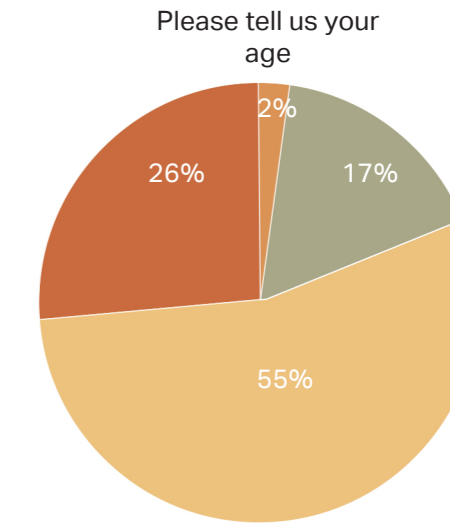
● Yes  
● No



● As a member of the Public living near the project area  
● As a business owner/service provider located near the project area  
● As a representative of a public/community organisation  
● Other



● Male  
● Female  
● Other



● 40-60  
● 61+  
● 25-39  
● 18-24

## 8.0 Executive Summary

The Commons presents an amazing opportunity for Donaghadee to be seen as a successful sustainable growth town with a contemporary mix of live, work, visit, play and study opportunities for all.

The Commons will offer enhanced, walking, cycling, relaxing and outdoor play opportunities for all within the parkland that has biodiversity at its core. The wider study area can be “stretched” to accommodate more uses on brownfield lands. As a signature tourism, recreation, and leisure destination defined by its wellness opportunities, the Commons Coastal Park, combined with the urban regeneration and development on brownfield lands, will continue Donaghadee’s revitalisation and grow appeal as a visitor destination and place to live.

### 8.1 A MARKET OPPORTUNITY EXISTS

The initial target visitor market will be more day visits and overnight stays, from the 1 million people in the Belfast City Region (City Deal definition) within approximately 60 minutes’ drive.

Product, brand, marketing and sales initiatives will extend this to:

- The rest of NI and Eastern Coastal Corridor to the 2.2 million people in the Greater Dublin Area all within a 3 hour drive
- City break visitors to Belfast who with improved transport could access Donaghadee - Great Britain, rest of the Republic of Ireland and overseas visitors to Belfast

- Coach trips from the c 149 cruise ships who call at Belfast

- Overseas market segments will primarily be a mix of touring Great Escapers and Culturally Curious from

the island of Ireland’s core markets of Britain, North America, France and Germany

The town centre health check undertaken in 2015 as part of the Town Centre Masterplan essentially remains valid. There is an improved context of population growth. In the post Covid world, Donaghadee with its attractive setting and lifestyle advantages should outperform NI population growth. This will bring about increased demand for more things to do and for spaces for people to work from in Donaghadee through hybrid working/working from home.

- The large area of brownfield land currently used as free car parking presents a significant opportunity cost. It presents a superb opportunity to be Donaghadee’s urban regeneration and development project to drive more critical mass for the town centre and accommodate contemporary uses. Crucially with large areas in public sector ownership it presents an opportunity for the Council to capture value from its ownership. Through development the Council should seek a capital and/or income receipt that will contribute to the capital cost to deliver the Commons masterplan and provide ongoing financial support for operations

- This commercial development is likely to comprise a hotel (est 40 key) and spa & wellness facility, business space (co-working/serviced office space), appropriate retail, food & beverage, leisure and multifamily residential

- Non-commercial development opportunity exists for a visitor centre hub to tell the many stories of Donaghadee and offering high quality visitor services.

### 8.2 EMERGING PROPOSITION

The vision is for a premium urban coastal park with an enhanced town centre offer.

The Commons will be reimagined into a high-quality coastal parkland destination with activities – indoor and outdoor – welcoming everyone. A new network of trails will reach out across the foreshore, plus bind the Commons into the urban fabric. A destination brand with consumer appeal will leverage the public and private investment to support visitor growth.

There will be three zones of activity

1. North. A mixed-use development as an urban extension of the town centre

2. Central. The core Commons parkland a place to walk, run, relax, and enjoy Irish Sea views plus an appropriate programme of events and activities

3. South. Amenities for activity by all ages plus a new Recreational Vehicle overnight stay facility to cater for this fast growing market

Points of differentiation will include:

- A compelling tourism, leisure, and recreation offer outdoors and indoors
- A mixed use integrated urban extension of new development

- Premium independent market positioning across all offers

- Takes ownership on telling Irish Sea stories within the new Visitor Centre, including the locally iconic Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat

- Wellness will form a key part of all offers

### 8.3 STRATEGIC ACTIONS TOWARDS DELIVERY

Improvement & Development

- Phase 1. Central. Transformation of the landscape, paths, and coastal boardwalks plus enhanced biodiversity.

- Phase 2. South. Recreational Vehicle park, Enhanced pavilion and natural play and recreational facilities.

- Phase 3. North. A mixed-use urban regeneration and development scheme, including the multifunctional visitor centre

### Branding and marketing

We consider not enough people know about the Commons. The reimagined Commons needs a fresh brand and marketing strategy to leverage proposed investment by the public and private sectors.

The Commons should be split into identifiable zones with a supporting brand proposition that appeal to identified audiences and markets.

### Management

Local people are passionate about the Commons parkland and well organised. A new vehicle that engages local people attracts multiple funding sources to ensure high quality maintenance and operations. Perhaps a form of Tourism Business Improvement District that expands on the work existing businesses, organisations and individuals have done.

### A Business Plan for the reimagined Commons

A very early business plan has been prepared to consider the Commons as an integrated destination centred around a multifunctional Visitor Hub of some 800 sqm gross. This high level work suggests

- A high quality multifunctional Visitor Centre Hub could attract 25,000 visitors in year 1 rising to 30,000 in year 5.

- Average turnover during the 5 year period might be £431,500 pa (Ticketed events, Café + Retail, Room Hires, Coworking space, Festival & Events, RV Park and Sponsorship and Donations)

- Average Costs during the 5 year period might be £366,000 pa (Costs of sales, Staff costs 8 FTE and operational costs)

- Average net surplus during the 5 year period might be £65,500

The multifunctional visitor centre hub and associated amenities will not be viable a viable property development. Like the rest of the Commons coastal park need to be funded by public sector sources. However the early indication is that it could cover its operational costs. More detailed concept, design, and business planning work is required.

### Funding sources are likely to include

- Capital: Levelling Up, Peace Plus, NI Executive, Capital from enabling development, National Lottery, Ards & North Down Council borrowing, Sponsorship/Naming rights/Donations

- Land: sale of council owned land might mean £350,000 per acre for a multi-family apartment scheme. Adopting a development position and working with an experienced

developer/builder this then might be translated into an investment asset that is likely to have attractive investment prospects and a potential capital value of c £1million + and deliver income to support ongoing operations of the Commons

- Operational: Income from enabling development, Ticketed events and activities, Local businesses, Sponsorship/Naming rights, Precept on local tax for and Ards & North Down

### 8.4 BUSINESS CASE FOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AT THE COMMONS

- More day and overnight visitors, making more trips, staying for longer and spending more money

- Larger town centre population supporting vibrancy and spend at existing businesses and traders

- Direct and indirect jobs, training, education, and spend. Estimate of 8 FTE jobs to deliver the Visitor Centre and Commons experience.

- The Commons combined with new and appropriate development (including workspaces for local start-ups, homeworkers) presents Donaghadee as a more sustainable growth town not solely a tourist town

- Civic pride, Quality of Life, Engagement, and Wellness, plus enhanced biodiversity

- Adds more to the overall Ards Peninsula offer, helps develop a stronger visitor experience

- Gives Tourism NI a strong product to support the “Giant Spirit” proposition and spread visitors across NI

- Will be a showcase of the best of Environmental, Social and Governance (“ESG”) investing.

# The Commons, Donaghadee

## Concept Masterplan

1. HARBOUR AND COMPANY WOOD FIRED KITCHEN
2. RNLI CHARITY SHOP
3. PIER 36
4. MEADOWBANK SOCIAL REC CLUB
5. DONAGHADEE LIFEBOAT STATION
6. THE COPELAND DISTILLERY
7. DONAGHADEE COMMUNITY CENTRE

1/1000 A0



Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) have appointed AECOM as a landscape design led multi-disciplinary team to re-imagine the Commons Park as a great destination that can strengthen the market positioning and appeal of Donaghadee. Through offering a differentiated, compelling and appropriate experience it will add to both Ards and North Down as well as the wider Northern Ireland Tourism offer.

Donaghadee has a long maritime heritage with key assets in the harbour and RNLI Sir Samuel Kelly. It also has a wealth of listed buildings, structures and monuments which give the town its unique traditional character. Conservation Area status has protected the built heritage within its boundary. The coastline is also a major natural heritage asset protected through RAMSAR, ASSI and Outer Ards SPA designations. The town has also benefited from retaining its open spaces of which the Commons is the most significant. This provides a unique opportunity to create a linear coastal park of local and regional significance which will appeal to both locals and visitors building on its combined maritime, built and natural heritage assets to create a unique and distinctive visitor experience as part of the popular Mourne Coastal Route.

- The Concept Masterplan offers:
- A new mixed use Visitor Hub with a primary focus on Donaghadee's impressive history.
  - Creation of a modern, high quality and sustainable Coastal Park that is a hub for leisure and recreation providing connections to the Town and into the wider greenway networks currently being developed.
  - Eco trail exploration of the old railway line.
  - Integration of the Marina / Boatyard / Tennis / Bowls clubs into the wider park proposals.
  - High end recreational activities such as a site, an in ground pump track, skate park and natural play area / outdoor gym to encourage all ages.



VISITOR HUB



ECO-TRAIL



PARK ENTRANCE FEATURE



SCULPTURAL SHELTER



GATEWAY FEATURE



COASTAL CAFE



SHARED PATH NETWORKS



ROCKPOOL EXPLORATION



BOARDWALK



SCULPTURAL BIRD HIDE



PUBLIC ART



AIRE DE SERVICE CARPARK



PUMP TRACK



ACTIVITY PLAY ZONE

# Accessibility report

## Donaghadee Commons Masterplan

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Concept stage  
60668704  
March 2021

### Quality information

<u>Prepared by</u>	<u>Checked by</u>	<u>Verified by</u>	<u>Approved by</u>
Adam Grudgings	Ricky Martin	Ricky Martin	Catherine Adams

### Revision History

<u>Revision</u>	<u>Revision date</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Authorized</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
01	25-03-22	For Submission	Ricky Martin	Adam Grudgings	Landscape Architect

### Distribution List

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**Introduction**

1.1 AECOM were appointed to undertake a Visual Audit of existing conditions of footways in Donaghadee, highlighting common barriers encountered in the pedestrian environment. This chapter was compiled following an inspection of Donaghadee Commons Park, connections to Hunts Park and Donaghadee Harbour and Town. The chapter is an insight into the current Pedestrian Networks and seeks to identify potential obstacles or hazards for both disabled and elderly as well as provide recommendations for inclusive and accessible design.

**Visual Audit**

1.2 Audit of routes: (See Photo Location Plan for image reference)

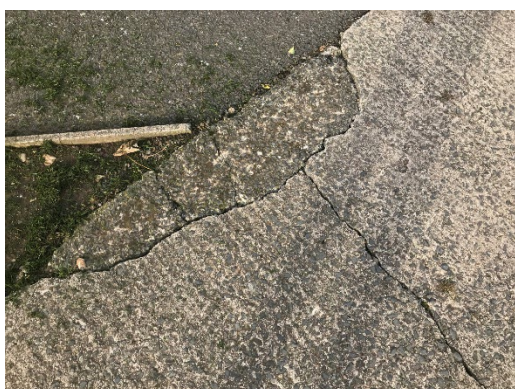
a) Inconsistent materials, steep gradient and low-quality repair to path at Millisle Road pedestrian access.



b) Inconsistent edging materials and steep gradient at Milisle Road pedestrian access.



c) Cracks in concrete footway at Milisle Road pedestrian access.



d) Uneven narrow footways and grass encroachment on upper path.



e) Uneven, cracked footways at southern car park entrance path.



f) Steep Gradient and pedestrian obstruction on entrance path between Millisle Road and Putting Green site.



g) New uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on Millisle Road to better connect Hunts Park and the Commons.



h) Narrow entrance, steep gradient and loose gravel path at Hunts Park entrance.



i) Narrow, poorly installed uneven paths with broken edges.



j) Steep gradient path from Marine Drive and weathered loose gravel on connecting path.



k) Poorly maintained, uneven, narrow path with steep gradient and broken edges.



l) Poorly maintained shelters unsuitable for wheelchair users due to ground levels.



m) Unsafe pedestrian connections from Donaghadee Harbour to Commons.



n) Steps connections between Commons car park and Railway Street unsuitable for wheelchair users.



o) Broken footways on Railway Street and no tactile paving, unsuitable for wheelchair users.



p) Connection to Copeland Distillery from Donaghadee parade unsuitable for wheelchair users.



### General Findings

- Absence of safe pedestrian connections to Town centre and Harbour.
- Absence of essential facilities such as dropped kerbs and tactile paving.
- Poorly maintained, loose and uneven surfaces and broken edges.
- Narrow and steep access routes unsuitable for wheelchair users.
- Absence of inclusive signage.

## Technical Guidance

- 1.3 The following section refers to guidance from the BS 8300-1:2018, Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment<sup>1</sup>. The British Standards Institute is recognised as the UK's National Standards Body. Access Routes should have a firm, slip-resistant reasonably smooth surface, cobbles, bare earth, sand or unbonded gravel are not recommended.

### Guidance on Width of Access Routes: BS 8300-1:2018 Clause 8.1.2.

To be accessible, the minimum surface width of an access route (i.e. between walls, kerbs or path edges should be:

- a - At least 1800mm for general routes. *The minimum space required for wheelchair users and people to pass each other on an access route is 1800mm however a width of 2000mm is preferable.*
- b – At least 1500mm if passing places are provided. (See Clause 5.3)
- c – At least 1200mm in existing developments, subject to a case being made in an access statement.

### Guidance on Passing Places on Access Routes: BS 8300-1:2018 Clause 8.1.3.

Where the width of an access route is less than 1800mm, passing places should be provided to allow two wheelchair users to pass each other. Passing places should be provided at junctions or corners. A passing place should be 2000mm long and 1800mm wide located within direct sight of the next passing place, or at a maximum distance of 25m from another.

### Guidance on Gradients on Access Routes: BS 8300-1:2018 Clause 8.4.1.

An access route should either be level along its length or where the topography of the land prevents this should be gently sloping or incorporate a ramp in accordance with Clause 9.2. Where an access route has a gradient of steeper than 1:60 but not as steep as 1:20, it should usually have a landing for each 500mm rise. On access routes with steeper than 1:30, a level resting place adjacent to the route may be provided as an exception. A level landing must also be provided where a change of direction occurs. A cross-fall gradient should not exceed 1:50 except when associated with a drop kerb or adjacent resting place. Where there is no cross fall to a landing there should be adequate drainage to prevent ponding at the foot of a ramp or slope.

### Guidance on Tactile Paving on Access Routes: BS 8300-1:2018 Clause 8.4.2.

Appropriate tactile paving should be used, where necessary, on access routes to provide warning, guidance or information to people who are blind or partially sighted.

### Guidance on Drainage Gratings on Access Routes: BS 8300-1:2018 Clause 8.2.1.5.

If feasible, drainage gratings should be positioned beyond the boundaries of the access route. Gratings in an access route should be flush with the surface level and slots should be 13mm wide or less. The diameter of circular holes in grating should not exceed 18mm. They should be slip resistant with frictional characteristics. Dished channels should not be incorporated within an access route as they increase the risk of tripping.

### Guidance on Street Furniture locations on Access Routes: BS 8300-1:2018 Clause 8.2.1.1.

Street furniture, such as signposts, litter bins, cycle stands and seats should be located at or beyond the boundaries of an access route. If located in the access route their presence should be clearly apparent, e.g by ensuring visual contrast with the background against which they will be seen.

### Guidance on Ramps: BS 8300-1:2018 Clause 9.2.

Where a ramp is necessary, its existence and location should be clearly indicated as the person approaches. A ramp should have the lowest practicable gradient within the range 1:20 and 1:12 and the maximum corresponding length between landings. No individual flight ramp should have a going greater than 10m or a rise more than 500mm. The surface width between edges of ramp and landings should not be less than 1500mm. An upstand of at least 100mm should be provided at the edge of a ramp and should contrast visually with the ramp surface. A handrail should be provided on each side of a ramp throughout its length. Handrail heights should be between 900mm and 1000mm from the surface of the ramp or pitch line and between 900mm and 1100mm from the landing.

<sup>1</sup> The British Standards Institution (2018) "BS 8300-1:2018, Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment." BSI Standards Limited 2018 pp.33-50.

**General resolutions for improvement:**

- Smooth, non-slip wide access routes.
- Where access routes are narrow, provisions should be made for passing places.
- Gentle gradients for access routes no steeper than 1:20 or ramp with handrail is required.
- All furniture and signage to be accessible and located off access routes.

**Appendix: Photo Location Plan**



<sup>2</sup> Google Maps. 2022 *Donaghadee Commons* NTS. Google Maps [online] Available: <https://www.google.com/maps/@54.6397295,-5.5320901,14.54z> [accessed 05-01-22]

# Donaghadee Commons Park – Planning Overview

## Introduction

AECOM have been commissioned by our client, Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC), to prepare a concept plan for Donaghadee Commons Park (outlined in red in Figure 1), hereafter referred to as the 'subject site'. The concept plan, will be non-statutory, providing a framework for the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration, recreation, tourism and leisure initiatives in Donaghadee. This will build upon the Donaghadee Masterplan (published in March 2015) which set out a 15-year vision for the area. Within the Donaghadee Masterplan, The Commons is highlighted as a key access point, a key developmental opportunity, a key leisure destination, a key recreational area and an opportunity for heritage and tourism.

Stage 1 of this commission requires an analysis of land use, public realm, tourism, leisure and recreation opportunities within the identified red line boundary, including current and planned development. As part of this, the client wants to specifically explore the potential for a caravan site to complement the existing aire de service provision on site. This note assesses the subject site to identify the potential development opportunities and constraints, considering regional and local planning policies.

**Figure 1 Subject Site**



## Site Context

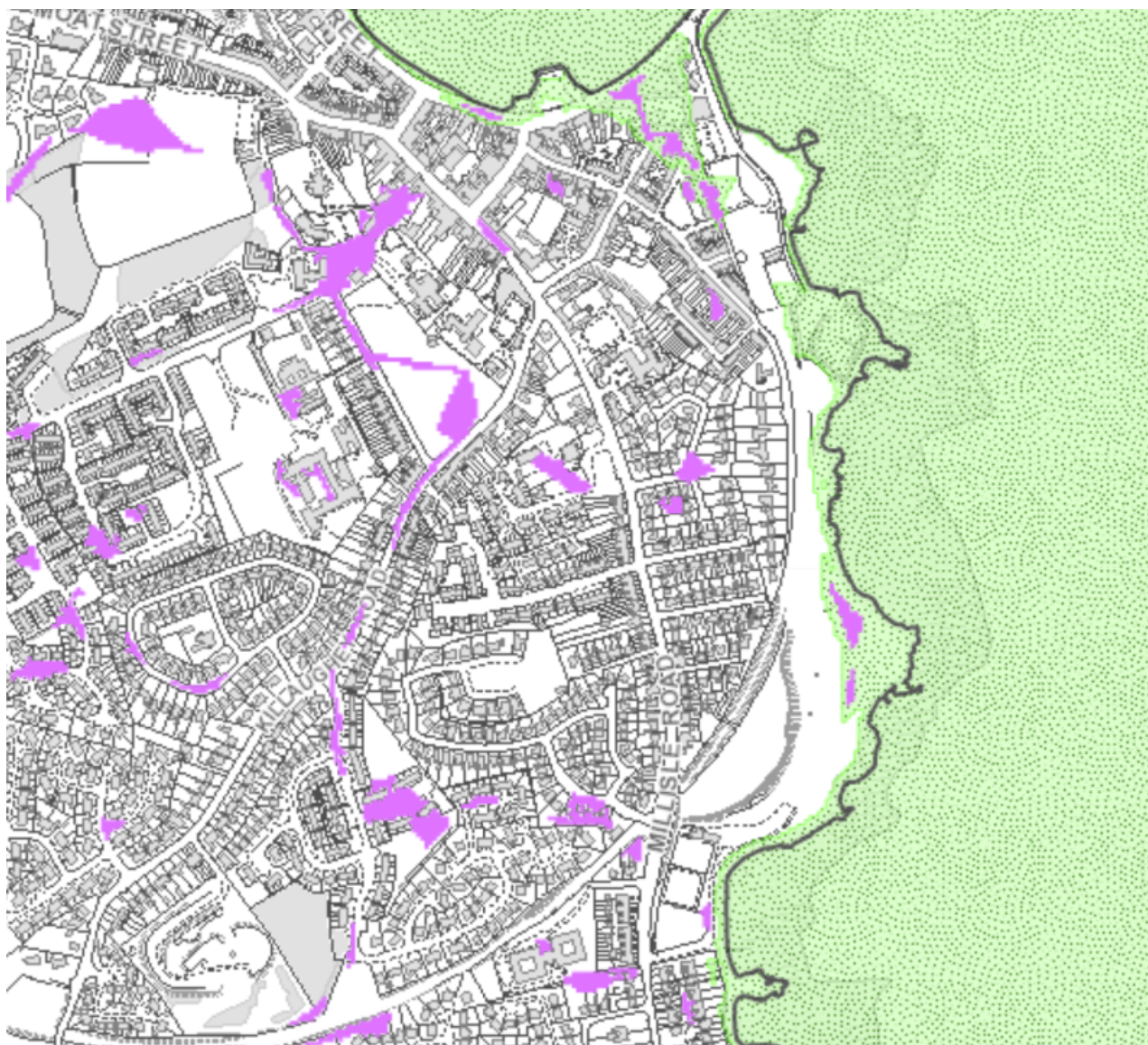
The subject site largely comprises The Commons, a public park located to the south east of Donaghadee town centre. Facilities include tennis courts, a bowling green, a playpark, an aire de service and associated car park. The subject site also includes Copelands Marina, an adjacent car park and a former bus depot site. The Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat is currently housed within a temporary shelter located in the car park adjacent to Copelands Marina.

## Relevant Designations

### Flood Risk

A review of the Flood Hazard Map (NI) shows that the sea coastal floodplain runs along the east of the subject site (indicated in green), with these areas prone to a 1 in 200 year chance of flooding from the sea. Small, low lying areas of the site may also be prone to surface water flooding from an extreme 1 in 200 year rainfall event (indicated in purple).

Figure 2 Flood Map (NI)



### Environmental Designations

A review of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Natural Environment Map Viewer (Figure 3) indicates there are a number of statutory designations for nature conservation located along the eastern boundary of the subject site, including North Channel Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Outer Ards Ramsar, Outer Ards Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and Outer Ards Special Protection Area (SPA). A review of ANDBC's Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) - Interactive Map confirms that there is no record of any TPOs within the subject site.

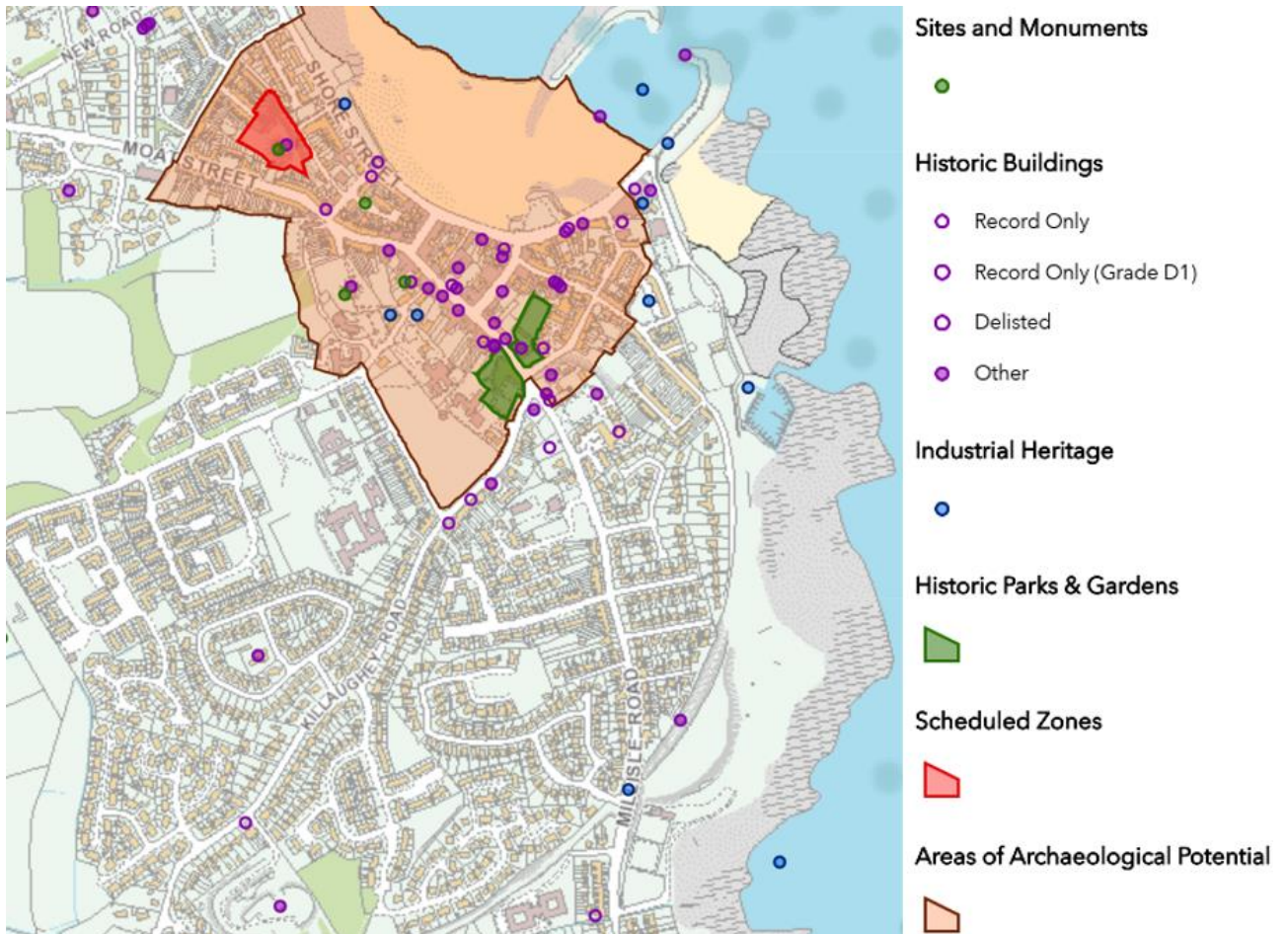
**Figure 3 Environment Map Viewer**



### Heritage Designations

The Department of Communities (DfC) Historic Environment Map Viewer (see Figure 4) indicates that there is a Grade B2 listed bridge within the subject site (reference HB24/07/027), located at Norwyn Avenue off the Maise Road. This bridge provided access over a former railway to The Commons. There's also an Industrial Heritage Record associated with corn mill ruins (reference 02580:000:00) located adjacent to Copeland Marina. There are a number of heritage designations within the wider vicinity of the subject site, largely focused within Donaghadee town centre, this includes listed buildings, a scheduled zone, industrial heritage records and an area of archaeological potential.

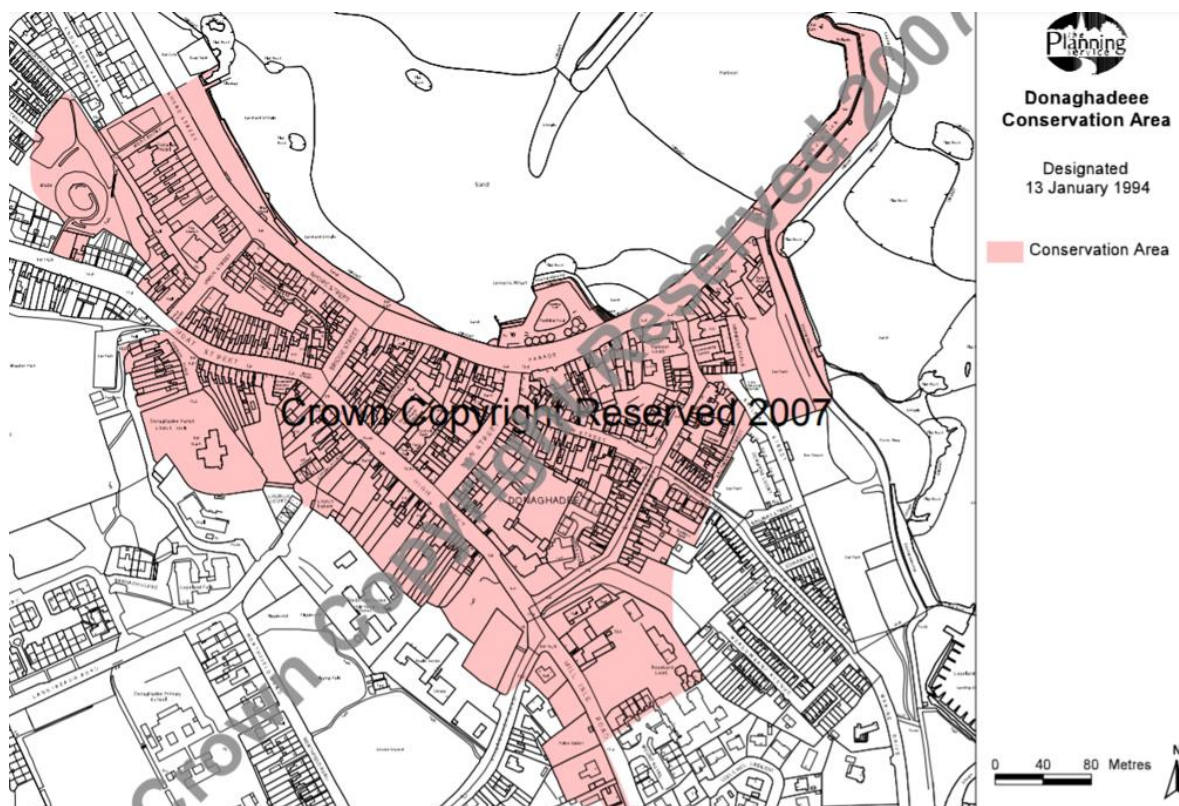
**Figure 4 Historic Environment Map Viewer**



## Donaghadee Conservation Area

The Donaghadee Conservation Area was designated on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1994. As shown in Figure 5 this conservation area extends across the majority of the town centre. Development proposals within the Conservation Area will be required to comply with the guidelines contained in the Donaghadee Conservation Area Design Guide.

**Figure 5 Donaghadee Conservation Area**



## Planning History

The planning history of the subject site has been investigated using online search facilities. Table 1 sets out relevant applications within the boundary of the subject site, no relevant applications were identified in the immediate vicinity of the site.

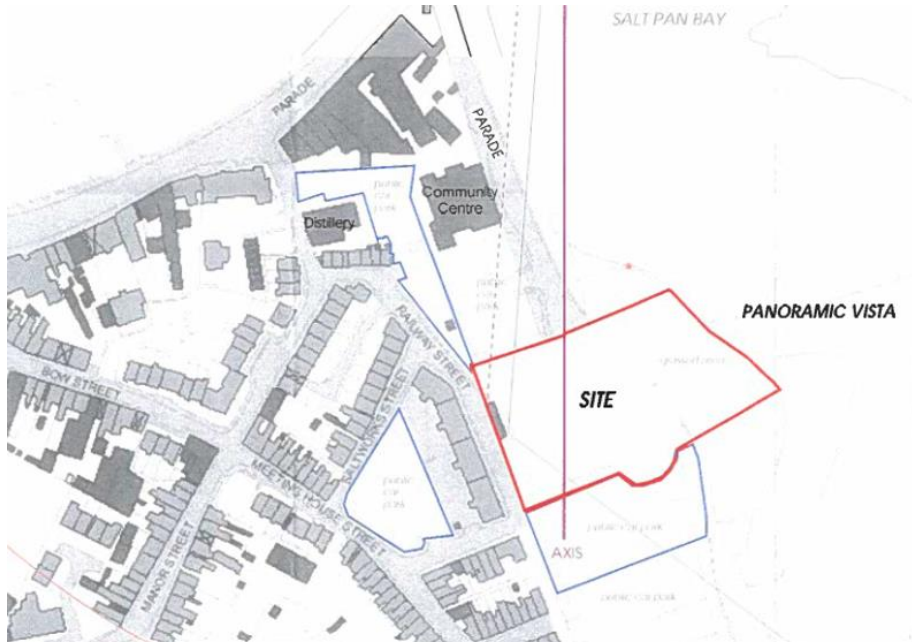
**Table 1. Relevant Planning History**

Planning Reference	Proposal	Address	Status/Date
LA06/2018/0290/F Submitted 23 <sup>rd</sup> Mar 2018	Temporary curved box steel frame shelter/canopy for over a vessel for restoration purposes	Car park adjacent to Copelands Marina The Quarry Donaghadee BT21 0HE	Permission Granted 5 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2018
LA06/2020/0119/PAN Submitted 5 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2020	40 bedroom 4* hotel including spa, restaurant, meeting rooms and function facilities	Former bus depot Parade Donaghadee including partial adjoining public car park foreshore area and car park adjacent 43 Manor Street Donaghadee BT21 0HG	Application Received
LA06/2020/0530/F Submitted 19 <sup>th</sup> Jun 2020	Proposed greenway for approximately 31.5km following the existing North Down Coastal Path from Kinnegar to Bangor in the most part and then the A2 to The Commons Park, Donaghadee. To incorporate new 3m and 4m wide asphalt paths, the widening of existing paths to 3m and 4m, a shared-use path in the existing verge along the A2/Warren Road, pedestrian/cycle bridges at Royal Belfast Golf Club, Grey Point Fort and The Long Hole, boardwalks at Gray Point Fort and The Long Hole and associated landscaping, fencing, site and ancillary access works.	From Airport Road West at Kinnegar Hollywood to The Commons Park Donaghadee	Under consideration

As shown in Table 1, planning permission was granted for a temporary shelter to help preserve the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat located at the car park adjacent to Copelands Marina.

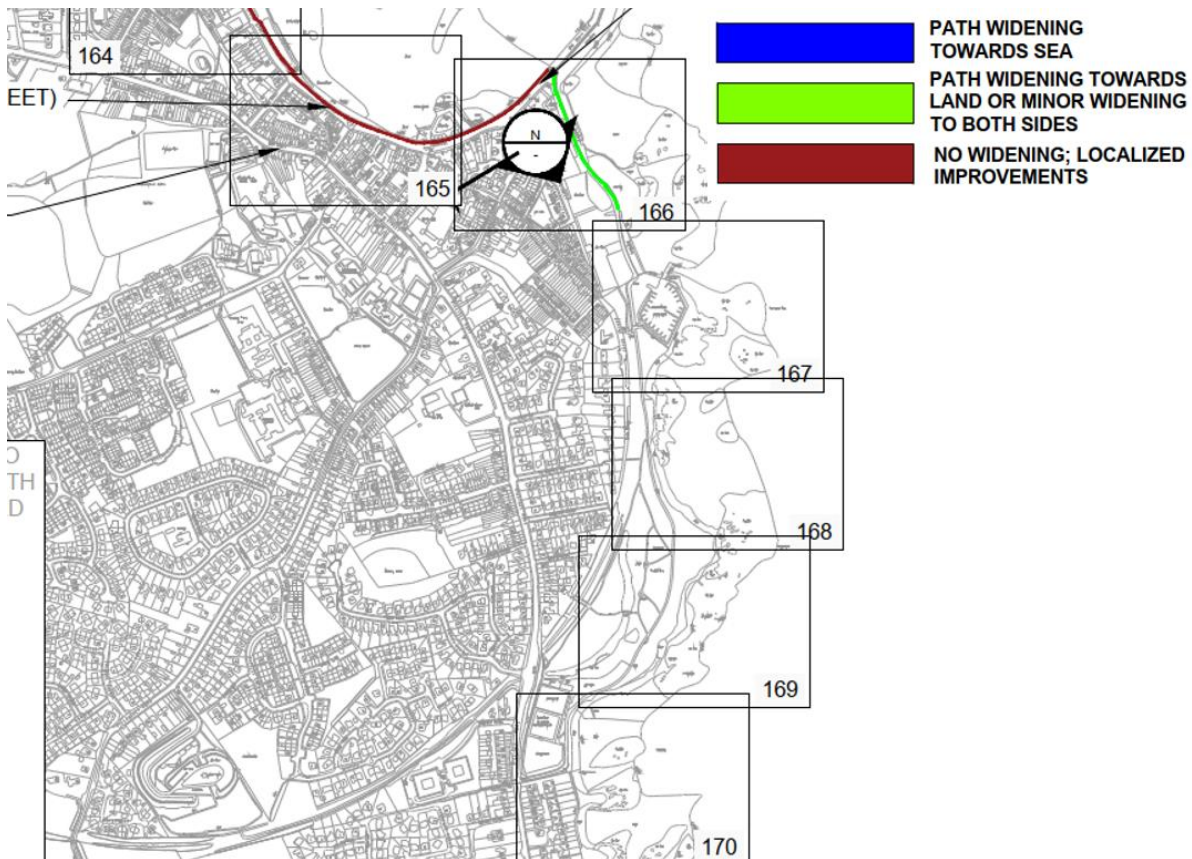
A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) was submitted to ANBC on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020 in relation to pre-application community consultation (PACC) for a proposed hotel on the former bus depot site (see Figure 6). This proposed development includes 40 bedrooms, a spa, restaurant, meeting rooms and function facilities. No decision has been made on the acceptability of this PAN and it's not clear if this PACC has been carried out.

**Figure 6 Hotel Proposal (ref:LA06/2020/0119/PAN)**



A planning application for a new greenway stretching from Kinnegar to Donaghadee was submitted on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020. This proposal includes path widening works between the harbour and Commons Park (see Figure 7). The greenway proposals for the Commons Park itself largely comprise way finding and signage.

**Figure 7 Kinnegar to Donaghadee Greenway Proposal (LA06/2020/0530/F)**



# Planning Policy Context

## Regional Planning Policy

Regional planning policy comprises the following:

- The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 – Building a Better Future
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 2015
- Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

The RDS is a long-term plan which sets out the overarching strategic planning framework for Northern Ireland to 2035. The SPPS consolidates over 20 PPS's into a single document, setting out regional planning policies for securing consistent development of land in Northern Ireland under the reformed two-tier planning system. The PPSs set out the policies on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. The SPPS has not yet replaced all PPSs, until ANDBC adopts a new Local Development Plan (LDP) PPSs (with the exception of PPS 1, PPS 5 and PPS 9) will be treated as a material consideration in the determination of any planning application on the subject site.

## Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

The following PPSs are of relevance:

### **PPS 2 - Natural Heritage**

This PPS sets out a general presumption against development proposals that would have impact on, or cause damage to, habitats, species or features.

### **PPS 3 - Access, Movement and Parking and PPS 3 – Clarification of Policy AMP 3**

This PPS and the subsequent clarification sets out the planning policies for vehicular and pedestrian access, transport assessment, the protection of transport routes and parking. Policy AMP 1 and AMP 2 outline criteria for new accesses and intensification of the use of existing access onto a public road, permitting those that do not adversely impact upon public safety. Policy AMP 7 and AMP 8 require adequate provision of car parking and cycle facilities for development proposals, with the precise amount determined according to the characteristics of the development and its location.

### **PPS 4 - 'Planning and Economic Development' and PPS 4 - Clarification of Policy PED 7**

This PPS sets out the planning policies for economic development uses. Economic development uses comprise industrial, business and storage and distribution uses. Policy PED 6 states a small community enterprise park/centre or a small rural industrial enterprise on land outside a settlement will be permitted where it is demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:

- a) there is no suitable site within the settlement;
- b) the proposal would benefit the local economy or contribute to community regeneration; and
- c) the development is clearly associated with the settlement, but will not dominate it, adversely affect landscape setting or otherwise contribute to urban sprawl.

### **PPS 6 - Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage**

This PPS sets out planning policies for the protection and conservation of archaeological remains and features of the built heritage. Policies BH1, BH2, BH3, and BH4 relate to archaeological evidence and set a presumption in favour of the physical preservation in situ of archaeological remains of regional importance and their settings. Policy BH 11 sets out a presumption against development which would adversely affect the setting of a Listed Building. In relation to conservation areas, the desirability of preserving or enhancing the conservation area is a material consideration in assessing proposals for development beyond its boundaries which would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area.

### **PPS 8 - Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation**

This PPS outlines policies for the protection of open space, the provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation. Policy OS 1 sets a presumption against development resulting in the loss of existing open space or land zoned for the provision of open space. The presumption against the loss of existing open space will apply irrespective of its physical condition and appearance. An exception will

be permitted where it is clearly shown that redevelopment will bring substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh the loss of the open space.

Annex A of PPS 8 defines 'Open Space' as:

*"all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also act as a visual amenity".*

Annex A goes on to list illustrative types of open space, including:

*"natural and semi-natural urban green spaces – including woodlands, urban forestry, grasslands (eg. meadows), wetlands, open and running water, and rock areas (eg. cliffs)".*

Proposals for outdoor recreation in the countryside and noise generating sports /outdoor recreational activities will only be permitted if there is no detrimental effect on the natural environment or residential amenity.

### **PPS 15 (Revised) - Planning and Flood Risk**

This PPS sets a general presumption against development proposals within the floodplain. Where the principle of development is accepted by the planning authority through meeting the 'Exceptions Test', the applicant is required to submit a Flood Risk Assessment for all proposals. Planning permission will only be granted if the Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that:

- a) All sources of flood risk to and from the proposed development have been identified; and
- b) There are adequate measures to manage and mitigate any increase in flood risk arising from the development.

### **PPS 16 – Tourism**

This PPS sets out policy for tourism development, including the main forms of tourist accommodation and tourist amenities. Policy TSM 2 states, planning permission for new tourist amenities in the countryside will be granted where it is demonstrated that:

- a) it is in association with and requires a site at or close to a particular tourism attraction located in the countryside, or
- b) the type of tourist activity in itself requires a countryside location.

### **PPS 21 - Sustainable Development in the Countryside**

This PPS sets out planning policies for development in the countryside. For the purpose of this PPS, the countryside is defined as land lying outside of settlement limits as identified in development plans. Policy CTY 1 states that all proposals for development in the countryside must be sited and designed to integrate sympathetically with their surroundings and meet other planning and environmental considerations including those for drainage, access and road safety.

Policy CTY1 sets out cases when planning permission will be granted for non-residential development in the countryside, this includes:

- tourism development in accordance with the TOU Policies of PSRNI (superseded by PPS 16);
- industry and business uses in accordance with PPS 4;
- outdoor sport and recreational uses in accordance with PPS 8; and
- a necessary community facility to serve the local rural population.

## **Local Planning Policy**

ANDBC are currently preparing a new LDP to guide development decisions within the Borough up to 2030. The LDP Preferred Options Paper (POP) was published in March 2019, however, given the POP's strategic nature it has limited influence on how the subject site could accommodate future development. We therefore turn to the extant statutory development plan for the area, the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (Adopted March 2009).

## Adopted - Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (March 2009)

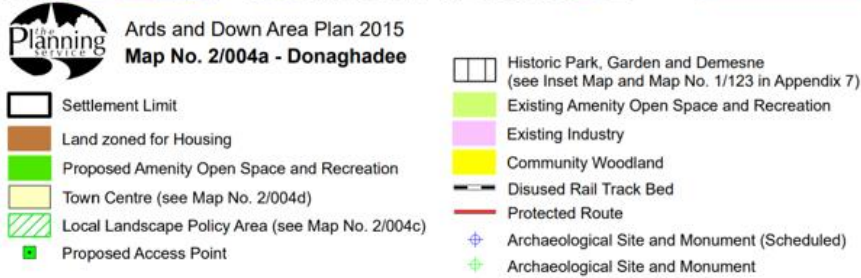
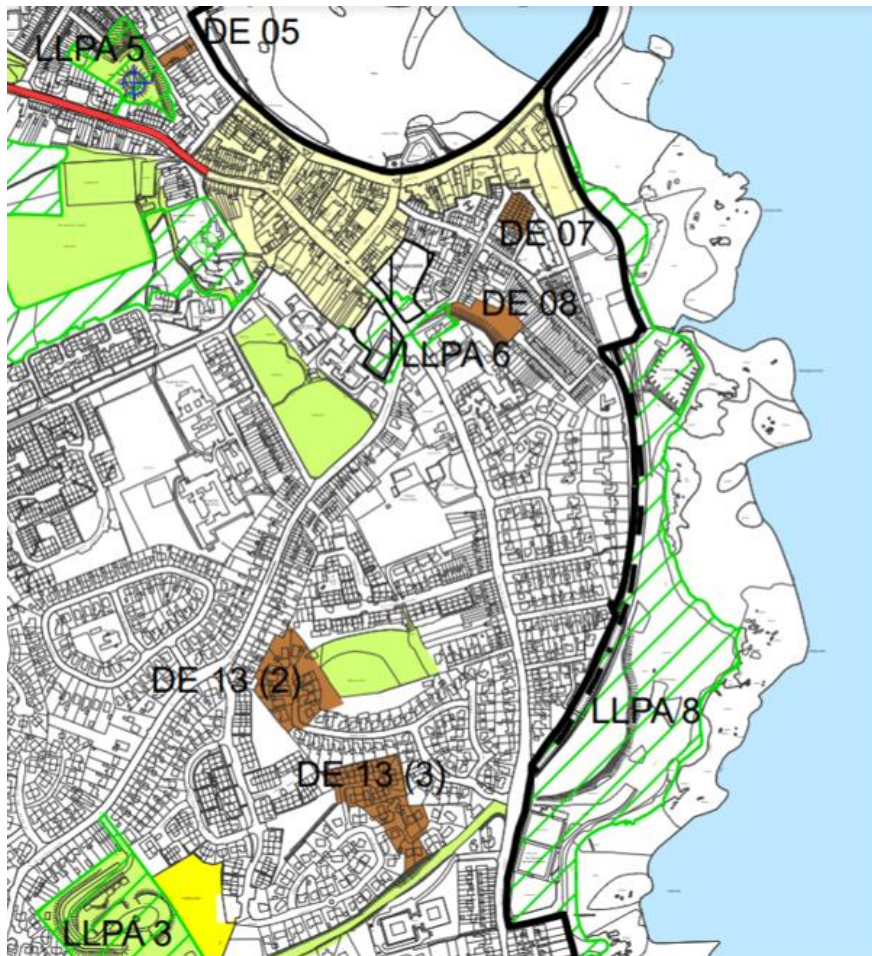
Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 - Map No. 2/004a (Figure 8) indicates that the subject site is outside the development limit of Donaghadee and designated within a Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA). A disused railway track running along the western boundary of the subject site is also shown for informational purposes.

Volume 2 of the Ards Down Area Plan 2015 identifies the following features that contribute to LLPA 8 “The Commons” and coastline:

- *Attractive stretch of coastline affording views out to sea; and*
- *Valuable area of local amenity importance with extensive public walkways, and including both passive and active recreational areas.*

Policy CON 2 - Local Landscape Policy Areas states; “*planning permission will not be granted to development proposals which would be liable to adversely affect the environmental quality, integrity or character of these areas*”.

**Figure 8 Map No. 2/004a Donaghadee Settlement**



# Licensing

## Caravan Site

As previously noted, the subject site includes an aire de service facility which allows motor home users to charge batteries, dispose of waste water and take on fresh water. Currently overnight sleeping/camping in motorhomes at this site is prohibited. Under the Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 1963, potential caravan site operators are required to apply to the local council for a Caravan Site Licence to lawfully provide overnight motorhome accommodation. Before applying for a caravan site licence, the operator must have:

- secured planning permission for the caravan sites
- sufficient insurance
- met the model licence conditions for caravan or camping sites for Northern Ireland.

Any planning application for motorhome accommodation on this site would be considered on its own merits, against the range of planning and environmental considerations relevant to the site and the proposed use.

# Development Potential

## Principle of Development

The subject site currently sits within a relatively restrictive planning policy context. The subject site is located outside the Donaghadee settlement limit and is therefore considered to be in the open countryside. There is a general presumption against development within the countryside, however, developments that integrate sympathetically with their surroundings and meet other planning and environmental considerations may be considered acceptable. Although the subject site is not formally designated as open space, the definition of open space extends to informal recreation spaces and communal green spaces in and around housing (as set out in Annex A of PPS 8). Again, there is a presumption against development that would lead to the loss of existing open space. Any future proposal on this site would likely have to meet the requirements of PPS 8 by demonstrating substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh any potential loss of the open space.

## General Considerations

Taking the development potential of the options into account, the following points should also be considered for the development of the subject site:

- Compatibility of proposed and existing uses - The design, layout and use should not conflict with adjacent land uses, adequate and appropriate provision should be made for parking. No adverse impact on the residential amenity of existing dwellings would be permitted.
- Committed developments – The proposals should consider relationships with other proposals within the subject site i.e. the proposed hotel and greenway.
- Environmental designations - The proposals should ensure there is no impact on the adjacent statutory nature conservation designations. It's also important to consider other locally important habitats, species or features.
- Heritage designations – The proposal should ensure there is no adverse harm caused to the existing Grade B2 bridge and other listed buildings within the vicinity. The proposals should consider the protection and conservation of the corn mill ruins adjacent to Copeland Mariana, planning policy sets out a presumption in favour of the physical preservation in situ of archaeological remains. The relationship with the adjacent Conservation Area will also be a key consideration, proposals shouldn't affect its setting, or views into or out of the area.
- LLPA - The scale and character of development proposals should not harm the character of the subject site's existing LLPA designation.
- Flood Risk – The proposal should consider measures to manage and mitigate any increase in flood risk arising from the development.

# Technical Note 1

Project:	<b>The Commons, Donaghadee</b>	Job No:	<b>60668704</b>
Subject:	<b>Site Appraisal – Transportation</b>		
Prepared by:	<b>Kim Burgess</b>	Date:	<b>23 March 2022</b>
Checked by:	<b>Tim Robinson</b>	Date:	<b>23 March 2022</b>
Approved by:	<b>Tim Robinson</b>	Date:	<b>23 March 2022</b>

## Introduction

This site appraisal report broadly assesses the existing transport facilities and issues in the surrounding area of The Commons site, Donaghadee i.e., the baseline conditions. The later sections of the report also discuss the transport impact of the proposed Masterplan.

## Site Location

The development area (The Commons) is located to the south east of Donaghadee town centre, as shown below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Site Location Relative to Car Park Locations**



Source – Edited Map from Ards and North Down Draft Car Parking Strategy Stage 1 Report

The site includes the following facilities:

- open space;
- pedestrian pathways;
- outdoor exercise equipment;
- tennis courts;
- bowling greens;
- car parking; and
- a children's play park.

Some of these facilities are illustrated in the images below and overleaf.



**PHOTO 1 – EXERCISE EQUIPMENT – TAKEN ON SITE VISIT 12/10/21**



**PHOTO 2 – OPEN SPACE - TAKEN ON SITE VISIT 12/10/21**



PHOTO 3 - CHILDREN'S PLAY PARK – TAKEN ON SITE VISIT 12/10/21

### Local Highway Network and the Site Access

The main vehicular access to The Commons car park is accessed directly off the A2 Millisle Road, Donaghadee (as shown in Figure 1). The A2 is a Class 'A' road which forms the core of the road network in Northern Ireland.

The access narrows as it leaves the A2, as can be seen in photograph below, and does not allow for an oncoming car to pass another vehicle on entry to the site.

A swept path analysis is included in Appendix A.

The sight lines look adequate as both the X distance and Y would appear to meet standards.

The access point is signposted for vehicles travelling from both directions on the A2 and included notification of a "Motorhome Service Point" and is shown below in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 – Main Access off A2 Millisle Road**



The site can also be accessed by vehicle from The Commons East car park located at the north of the site. This car park is accessed off The Parade which is reached via A2 Shore Street. The Commons East car park access operates in a left in/ left out system as there is restricted vehicle access beyond the access point (to the right). The Commons East car park is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3 – The Commons East Car Park Access**



**Parking**

There are various council owned car parks within the vicinity of the Commons site which are all free for the public to use.

The Ards and North Down Borough Council Parking Strategy and Action Plan notes that car parks in Donaghadee often all have spare capacity, however, occupancy levels increase during peak season. This was confirmed during a site visit on 12/10/21, when all car parks were seen to have ample spare capacity.

The location of the car parks visited are shown in Figure 1 and are discussed in detail in the next section. It should be noted that there is also some on street parking within walking distance of the site, towards the town centre. However, no on-street car parking is considered in this review.

**The Commons Car Park**

The Commons car park is considered to be the ‘main’ car park associated with the site and is accessed off the A2 Millisle Road through the main vehicular access. This car park has approximately 64no. spaces. The spaces in this car park are not marked on with white lining, hence the approximate count. However, there are 2 marked disabled spaces and 2 marked motorhome spaces. These motorhome spaces are accompanied by an Aires de Service (as shown below in Photos 4 and 5). ‘An Aire de service is a stopping place specifically designed for motorhomes that provides dedicated facilities which may include some or all of the following: fresh water fill point, waste water emptying point, chemical toilet emptying point and / or electrical hook-up. Aires de service can be charged or free, in some cases you have to pay further for fresh water or electricity but this is unusual.

Northern Ireland Aires de service points are well used and subsequently motorhome owners spend time and money in the respective towns.’



PHOTO 4 - AIRES DE SERVICE



PHOTO 5 - AIRES DE SERVICE

The above facilities are included in the car park beside two motorhome only parking spaces and provide water and electricity.

There are also toilet facilities within the car park for use by the public. However, it is important to note that although motorhome spaces and facilities are available, overnight parking is not allowed and parking is only permitted between the hours of 06:00-midnight.

Within the Ards and North Down Borough Council Parking Strategy, Draft Action Plan, it is recommended that the motorhome parking at this location be expanded.

### **Donaghadee Community Centre Car Park**

To the north of the site, there are available car parking spaces at the Donaghadee Community Centre. There are a total of 39no. spaces, including 3no. disabled spaces. Although these spaces are likely to be predominantly for the Community Centre, there are no parking restrictions in this car park and therefore the people using the park can avail of this car park. Parking is free in this location.

To the east of the community centre there is also a parking bay capable of holding approximately 3 vehicles.

### **The Commons East Car Park**

The Commons East car park is also located to the north of the site, as shown in Figure 1. There are no marked out spaces in this car park but it is estimated to be able to hold approximately 230no. vehicles.

Signs are on display in this car park noting that overnight parking is not permitted. However, during an early morning site visit (approximately 08:30), motorhomes were seen to be parked in this car park and appeared to have been there overnight.

Within the Ards and North Down Borough Council Parking Strategy, Draft Action Plan, it is recommended that coach parking is provided in this car park.

### **Railway Street Car Park**

Railway Street car park also provides parking to the north of the site, closer to the town centre. 31no. marked car parking spaces are available in this location, including 2 disabled spaces. This car park is also free of charge.

### **Bus Layby**

During the site visit, parking was also seen within the bus layby on A2 Millisle Road (as shown in Photo 6). The layby looks to be designed much larger than a normal bus layby, however it is not clear whether parking is permitted within this area or not. No signs showing parking restrictions were seen here.



PHOTO 6 - BUS LAYBY

**Parking Provision Summary**

Parking Location	No. of Spaces (including disabled spaces)	No. of Disabled Spaces	Motorhome Spaces Available?
The Commons	64*	0	Yes (2 no. spaces)
Community Centre	39	3	No
Community Centre on- street	3*	0	No
The Commons East	230*	2	No
Railway Street	31	2	No
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>

\*Estimated no. of spaces

**Public Transport**

As previously mentioned, there is a bus stop located on A2 Millisle Road directly outside one of the site’s pedestrian access points. This bus stop serves the following bus services:

- Ulsterbus Service 3a – Bangor – Woburn Road;
- Ulsterbus Town Service 303a – Donaghadee – Bangor Town Service Link;
- Ulsterbus Service 7 – Bangor – Newtownards – Ballywalter; and
- Ulsterbus Service 507 - Bangor – Newtownards – Ballywalter.

The site is also located approximately 550m from the Main Town centre bus stops on A2 Shore Street and New Street. These bus stops are served by the same services as those listed above, as well as the Ulsterbus Service 3– Bangor – Ballywalter.

## Pedestrian Access

The pedestrian access points to the site are discussed below:

- **Vehicular access off A2 Millisle Road** – A pedestrian footway is provided from the A2, along the vehicular access road into The Commons car park. From here, the pedestrians can join the internal pedestrian paths.
- **The Parade Access** – The site can also be accessed on foot from ‘The Parade’. This is the road that provides access to the Community Centre car park and the Commons East car park. The road continues until The Commons car park access and then is blocked by bollards, restricting vehicular access towards the site. However, ‘vehicular traffic’ signs are provided after the bollards as certain vehicles have access on this route to reach the boat yard. It is possible that council vehicles may also have access here to service the site. This is likely to be the most common connection to the site on foot when travelling from the harbour area of Donaghadee.
- **The Commons East car park** – A pedestrian access is also available from The Commons East car park directly into the site as shown in Photo 7.
- **William Street/ Marine Drive access** – Two additional pedestrian only access points are provided off William Street/ Marine Way. These connect to residential areas, allowing for access on foot by locals. The second pedestrian access on Marine Drive also leads to a further set of steps connecting to Generals Walk, another residential street. This access is shown in Photo 8.
- **Norwyn Avenue access**– The internal paths within the site can also be reached through a connection onto Norwyn Avenue, another residential street. This pedestrian access is relatively wide and could potentially be used by vehicles. No signage is available here to warn vehicles of the connection to the park which may cause conflict with pedestrians.
- **A2 Millisle Road pedestrian access** – A pedestrian access is also located directly off the A2 Millisle Road and connects near by The Commons car park (see Photo 9). This is an ideal pedestrian access for those travelling from residential areas on the far side of Millisle Road, and also allows for direct connections from the local bus layby for those travelling to the site on public transport. However, it is to be noted that there is no safe pedestrian crossing point provided on A2 Millisle Road near this access.

All of the access points above connect to internal pathways leading to the internal facilities. The exercise equipment and the children’s play park are both accessed directly off the internal pedestrian pathways.

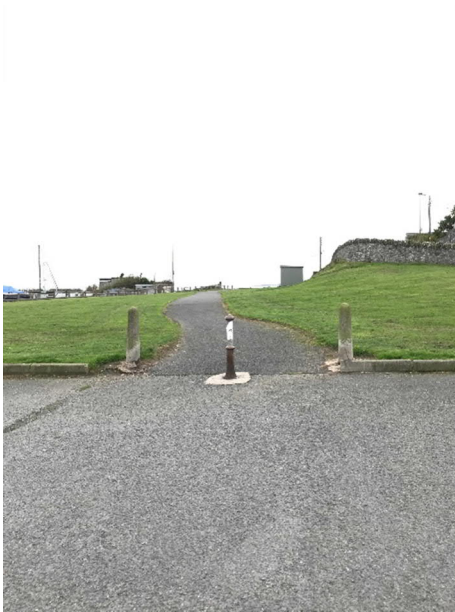


PHOTO 7 - PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FROM COMMONS EAST CAR PARK



PHOTO 8 - PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FROM MARINE DRIVE



PHOTO 9 - PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FROM A2 BUS LAYBY

It should be noted that pedestrian footways are provided throughout the town centre and along A2 Millisle Road allowing for safe access from the town centre and nearby residential areas to all of the noted pedestrian access points.

### Cycle Access

No cycle restriction signs were seen during the site visit meaning that there is nothing to stop people travelling through the site on a cycle. However, on previous Google Maps images, a ‘cyclist prohibited’ sign can be seen at the A2 pedestrian access. This sign was no longer there during the site visits.

There are currently no National Cycle Network routes within Donaghadee, however a current planning application (LA06/2020/0530/F - not yet approved) for a greenway from Kinnegar to Donaghadee would allow for increased access to Donaghadee for cyclists. The route is proposed to travel to The Parade, allowing for excellent connections onto the site.

No existing cycle parking was noticed within the site; however, cycle parking is available at the nearby Community Centre car park allowing for 12 cycles to park.

### Existing Traffic Data

To gauge traffic in the surrounding area, a search of planning online was completed, however, no recent traffic survey data was identified. The latest data found was from DfI Permanent Traffic Counters No. 510 located on the A2, approximately 840m south of the main vehicular access off Millisle Road.

The latest data for this counter was collected in 2014. The data collected in this year is set out below in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Traffic data from DfI Counter Ref. 510. in 2014**

Time Period	Two-way flow in vehicles
AADT	4240
AM Peak (11:00-12:00)	290
PM Peak (16:00-17:00)	350

### Relevant Policies and Plans

#### **ANDBC PARKING STRATEGY**

The ANDBC Parking Strategy Action Plan is currently available in draft format. The aim of this parking strategy is to support the prosperity and sustainability of our town and village centres by ensuring car parking provision is accessible, convenient and of quality standard. The Parking Strategy has assessed the car parks in Donaghadee and noted potential improvements that could be made. These have been mentioned throughout this note where applicable.

#### **ANDBC AREA PLAN – Preferred Options Paper**

The Ards and North Down LDP will apply regional policies at a local level and inform of the policy framework and land use proposals that will guide development decisions within Ards and North Down. The first stage of developing this plan is the publication of the Preferred Options Paper (POP). This sets out the key plan issues and the preferred options to address them.

Within the POP it is noted that there needs to be a shift away from use of the private car and encouragement of more sustainable methods of transport. An option to deal with this was to provide

parking restraints in certain areas which would allow for reduced parking than required by Parking standards. However, it was noted that this is unlikely to be enforced in Donaghadee due to the small population.

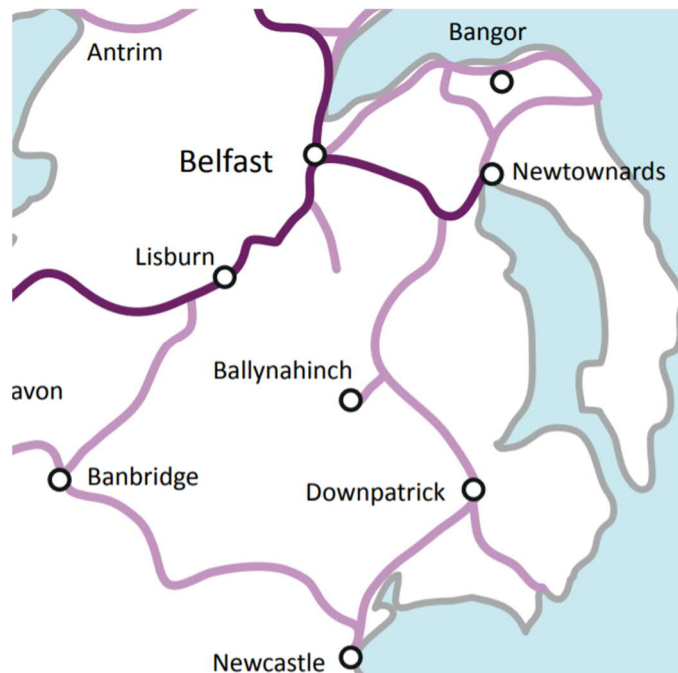
The POP also mentioned how the provision of greenways throughout the local area would not only encourage sustainable travel but to the towns but also boost the local economy and tourism. The Kinnegar to Donaghadee Route ( as previously mentioned) was highlighted as a secondary greenway route that could be provided. This could also connect to the Green Road, Bangor to Donaghadee greenway, another secondary route (See Strategic Plan for Greenways below).

## **Donaghadee Masterplan**

The Donaghadee Masterplan is an evidence-based document that sets out the strategic vision for Donaghadee over the next 15-20 years. The Masterplan notes that a main weakness in the town is the dissatisfaction with parking and highlights an opportunity to improve parking provision and accessibility. The Masterplan focuses on The Commons Park as a potential improvement site as it currently provides underutilised car parks. Opportunities noted for the site included the ability to provide a heritage centre, sporting activity facilities and connection to a greenway to encourage walking and cycling.

## **Exercise - Explore - Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways**

The Strategic Plan for Greenways is the first step towards creating a world class greenway network, which will be a welcome investment in rural development and active travel, enhancing opportunities for recreation, leisure and tourism, offering and creating long term employment and business opportunities. Within this plan there is an aim to provide greenways from both Kinnegar to Donaghadee and Green Road – Bangor. Both of these Greenways would allow for traffic free pedestrian and cyclist routes to Donaghadee, with direct connection to The Commons Park. This will not only encourage more sustainable travel but increase visitor numbers to the area.



**Figure 3 – Secondary Routes from Bangor and Newtownards to Donaghadee (From Figure 1. Map of Primary and Secondary Greenway Routes in Exercise Explore Enjoy - A Strategic plan for Greenways)**

**Summary or Existing Site**

The Commons Park is currently easily accessible in a vehicle, with the main access being located off the A2 Millisle Road. This access is also used for motorhome access however, the access road is narrow and can cause issues when two larger vehicles pass each other.

With regards to parking, there is sufficient car parking provision within the area, with car parks located at the north and south of the site. These car parks were seen to have spare capacity; however, it is believed that the parking demand does increase during peak seasons.

The car parks also provide two motorhome parking spaces which are accompanied by motorhome facilities; however, no overnight parking is permitted.

For those travelling on foot, there are also multiple pedestrian access points available across the site. These allow for connections to the north, south and west of the site, connecting towards the town centre and also to residential areas.

No cycling restriction signs were visible during the site visit so it is therefore assumed that cyclist can use the internal pathways. There was also no cycle parking provided in the park, with the closest cycle parking being located at the Community Centre. It is believed that there is potential to increase the number of cycling and walking trips to the site through by connecting to the proposed Kinnegar to Donaghadee greenway. There is also the opportunity to extend the Newtownards to Donaghadee Greenway (via Green Road, Bangor) though the site.

## Traffic Impacts of the proposed Masterplan

### Overview of Proposals within the Masterplan

The proposed Masterplan for the Commons Park includes various improvements and new facilities for the area including the following:

- Upgraded children's play park;
- Pump track;
- Skate park;
- Bicycle hire;
- Bicycle parking;
- Additional pedestrian pathways;
- A Pedestrianised public realm plaza;
- Upgraded pedestrian access points with associated new toucan crossing on A2 Millisle Road;
- 4m wide shared pedestrian and cycle pathway (to be developed to join to proposed greenway schemes);
- Jetty Facility;
- Boardwalk providing access to rockpools;
- Community art gallery in existing shelter;
- RV Site;
- Upgraded parking; and
- A mixed use visitor hub.

### Cycling

The proposed Masterplan incorporates a 4m wide shared walking and cycle route throughout the site to enable ease of movement by those on cycles. This pathway not only allows for travel throughout the site but also acts as a connection between the proposed Kinnegar to Donaghadee Greenway and the proposed Green Road to Donaghadee Greenway. It is therefore expected that this path will be well used by those on cycles who are travelling along the proposed traffic free Greenway loop between Bangor, Donaghadee and Newtownards.

Cycle parking facilities are proposed within the site to the south of the Pavilion as shown in the Masterplan to allow for cyclists to park their cycles while exploring the rest of the site/ Donaghadee.

A cycle rental facility is also proposed within the site to encourage cycling by both tourists and those who do not have access to cycles.

### Walking

The 4m shared path throughout the site will also be available for use by pedestrians. There are also smaller additional pedestrian paths proposed within the site, as well as various other pedestrian facilities. This includes a new stepped access to the car park, allowing for greater connection from the walking routes; and a pedestrian board walk towards the sea and also a jetty facility which both enable pedestrian connection to the sea.

The site will remain highly accessible for pedestrians with all existing access points remaining. These access points are proposed to be improved to allow for safer, connections. Improvements include the provision of a Toucan crossing on the A2 Millisle Road to enable safe crossing as well as additional lighting along pathways.

Additionally, improved signage is proposed throughout the site and at all pedestrian access points to enable better wayfinding throughout the site and the local area.

**Vehicular Access**

Within the Masterplan the existing vehicular access points remain the same with the main access being located off A2 Millisle Road and another off The Parade. It is proposed that the main access road off A2 Millisle Road will be widened to 6m and resurfaced to allow for two vehicles to pass each other. Additionally, the access off The Parade will be altered slightly to enter directly into the car park, removing the existing road that was blocked by bollards.

Both of these access improvements allow for a better flow of traffic to the main car parks within the site.

**Parking**

As part of the development, it is proposed that the Community Centre car park, The Commons car park and the Commons East car park all be altered to provide additional parking provision and that the existing Railway Street car park be removed and turned into open greenspace.

Table 3 sets out the proposed capacity changes at each of the car parks.

**Table 3- Proposed Parking Provision**

Parking Location	No. of Existing Spaces (including disabled spaces)	No. of Proposed Spaces	Difference
The Commons	64*	97*	33
Community Centre	39	85*	46
Community Centre on- street	3*	3*	0
The Commons East	230*	275*	45
Railway Street	31	0	-31
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>93</b>

\*estimated car parking count.

As shown in Table 3, the development provides a total of 93 no. additional parking spaces to serve the upgraded site.

To ensure that the additional parking provision is suitable for the site, Parking Standards requirements for the additional features to the site have been calculated. It is considered that for the most part, the development will upgrade existing facilities for existing users such as walking paths etc. Therefore only additional vehicle trips, and therefore additional parking is expected to be required for the play park, pump track, skate park and future development site.

It should be noted that discussions on a potential 50 bedroom hotel have taken place for the future development site and therefore for robust parking calculations it is being assumed that this development will be added to the site.

The parking calculations are set out below in Table 4.

**Table 4 – Parking Required for Additional Facilities**

Land Use	Parking Standards Guidance	Development Description	Total Requirement
<b>Hotel</b>	1 space per bedroom plus restaurant, function, conference and bar at 1 space per 5m <sup>2</sup> GFA. Resident staff at 1 space per 3 staff on duty.  Minimum of 1 lorry space and manoeuvring space for a coach.	Approximately 50 no. bedrooms  Estimated to be a restaurant at 50m <sup>2</sup> GFA  Estimated maximum of 12 staff on site at once.	50 bedroom spaces 10 restaurant spaces 4 staff spaces <b>Total = 64 spaces</b> 1 lorry space with turning area.
<b>Play Park</b>	1 space per 3 (based on similar standards)	Assuming 15 people max.	5
<b>Skate Park</b>	1 space per 3 (based on similar standards)	Max 10 visitors at one time	3
<b>Pump Track</b>	1 space per 3 (based on similar standards)	Max 10 visitors at one time	3
<b>Total</b>			<b>75</b>

As shown in Table 4 the site would require approximately 75 parking spaces. This count is considering all visitors to the play park to be new, however, some will already be existing on site making it a robust calculation. It is also considering that all visitors arrive by car which is not expected to happen especially for the skate park and pump track.

It is therefore considered that the 93 spaces on site would be appropriate for the proposed development and is likely to provide flexibility in capacity for peak periods.

Additionally it is to be considered that the provision of a segregated RV site will remove the existing motorhomes parking in the main car parks. This will therefore increase the existing spare parking capacity on site. The improved walking and cycling facilities are also likely to encourage more people to travel to the site through alternative modes of transport rather than the car.

**Impact on the Surrounding Road Network**

It is proposed that due to the improved and additional facilities within the Masterplan, there may be a slight increase in trips to the site.

It is considered that for the most part the development will improve the experience for existing users and therefore not generate new trips, but potentially lengthen the time each vehicle is parked at the site. However, it is considered that new trips are likely to be generated by the following land uses:

- **Play Park** - With regards to the play park it is assumed that there will be nominal increase in trips. This is due to the users of the existing play park simply transferring to use the new facility. However, it is considered that as the play park has been upgraded it may attract new visitors. It is therefore expected that daily vehicle trips to the site are only going to increase by approximately 2% as a result of the new play park.

- **Pump Track and Skate Park** - The pump track and skate park are expected to attract new visitors to the site; however, it is considered that these visitors are likely to be locals arriving on cycle or skateboard. However, to consider the few that may arrive with a bike in their car, it is considered that the existing vehicle trips to the site would increase by 1%.
- **RV Site** – It is considered that this element of the site will attract new trips. Due to the walking distance location to Donaghadee and the local amenities, it is unlikely that vehicles arriving to this section of the site will leave again in vehicles to travel to the town. Therefore, it is most likely that each pitch will have 1 vehicle trip per day. i.e., 22 trips. This is thought to be robust considering not all Motorhome trips will be new due to the existing Motorhome facilities on site.

## Summary of Proposed Scheme

The proposed Masterplan is expected to bring a range of benefits to the site with regards to transport. Firstly the provision of a 4m shared pathway throughout the site and its connections to proposed greenways makes it more attractive for cycling or walking to the site. This not only attracts more people to the area but also allows for potential modal shift from car by existing visitors.

Improvements are also proposed for those who do still arrive in cars. This includes the provision of additional parking spaces and also the widening of the main access road. This is likely to benefit traffic flow in and out of the site as it will allow for two vehicles to pass each other on the main access road.

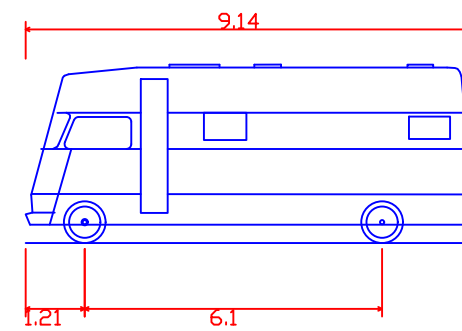
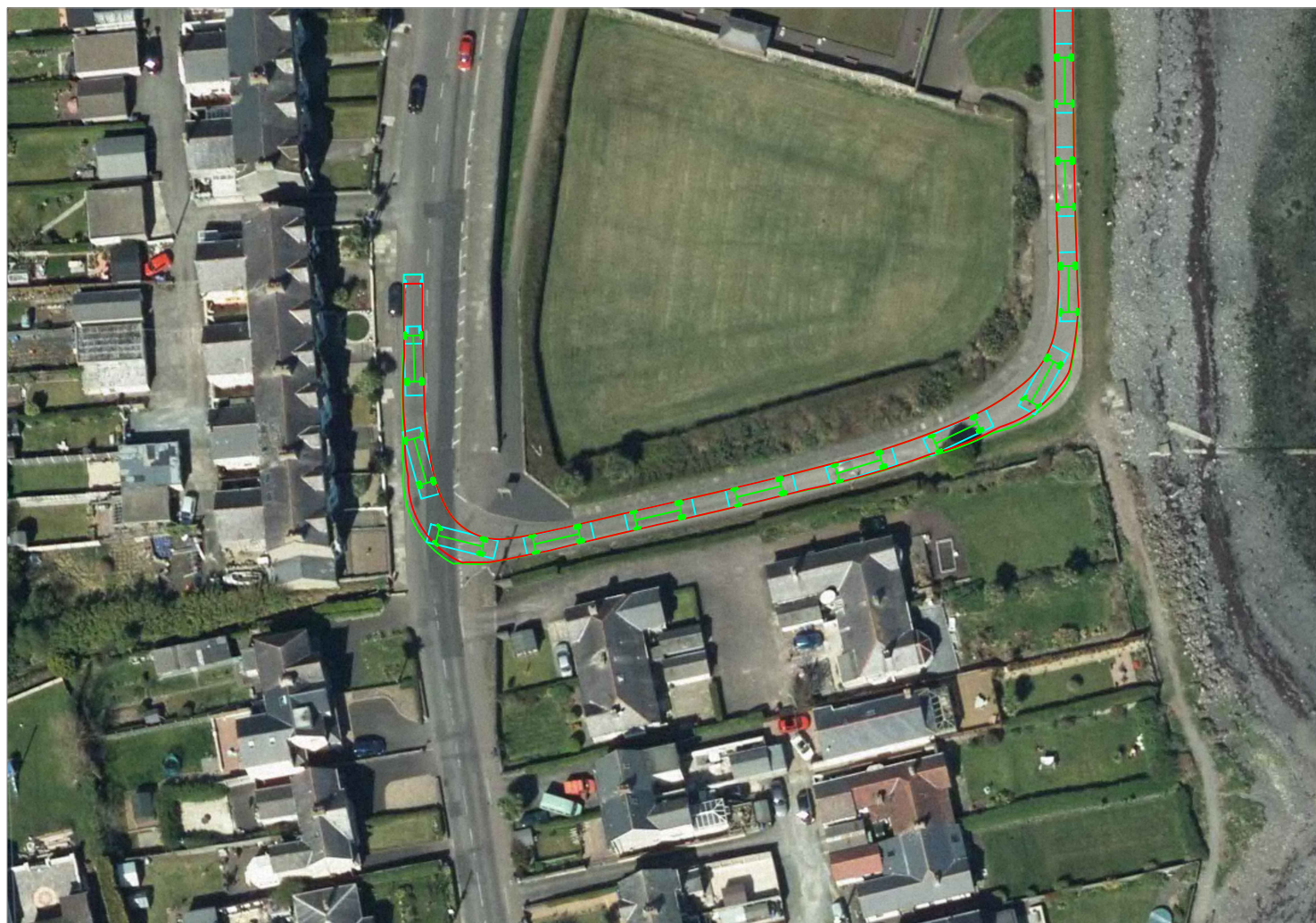
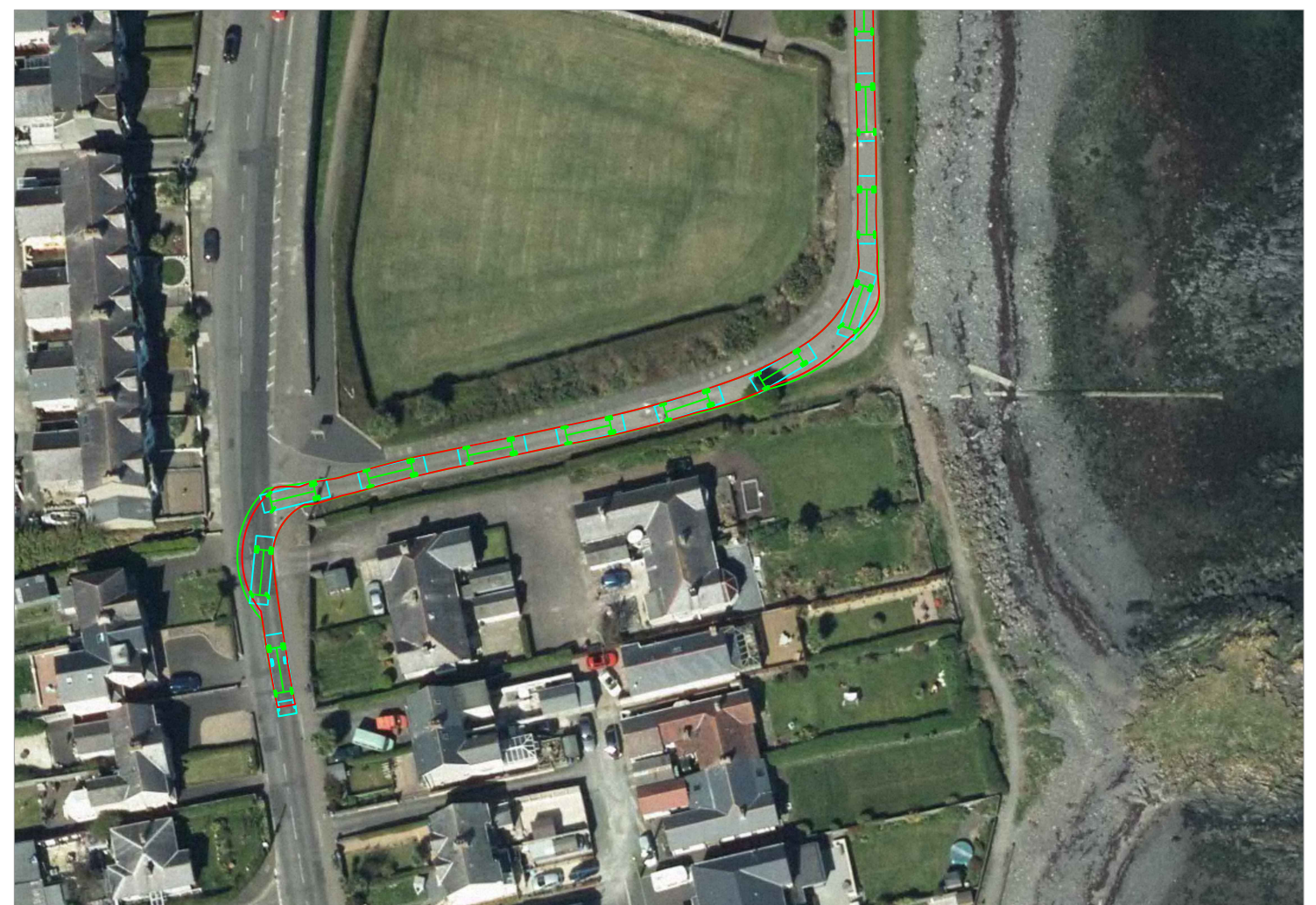
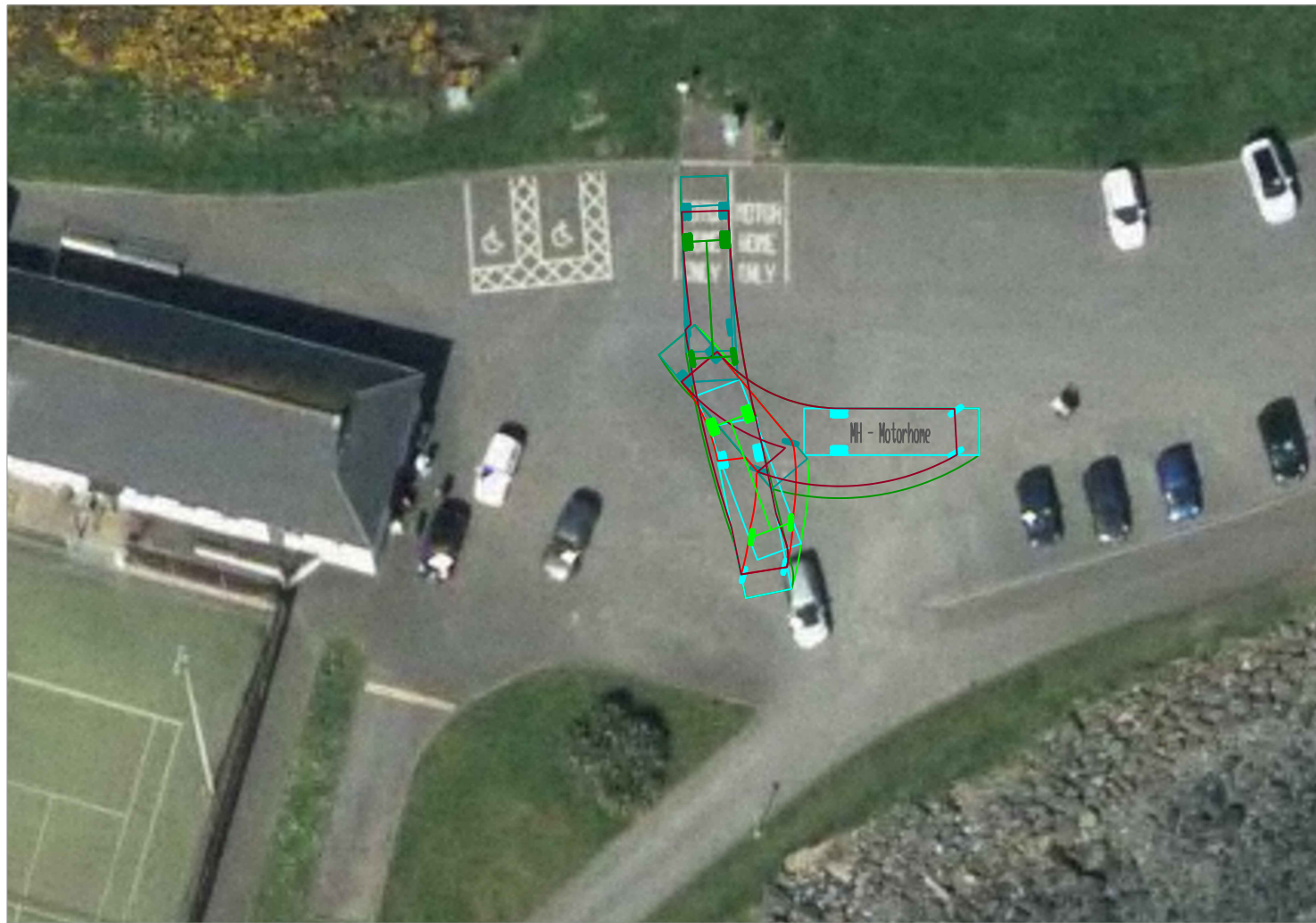
The provision of an RV Site also removes the need for large motorhomes to occupy space within the visitor car parks, therefore allowing for additional parking and manoeuvring space for other vehicles. The extension of existing car parks also allows for more flexibility in parking provision for peak periods.

It is considered that for the most part, the development will improve the site for existing visitors. However, the provision of some new features will likely also attract new visitors. It has been considered that there may be additional vehicle trips to facilities such as the larger play park, skate park, pump track and the RV site. However, these additional trips are not expected to be high and are unlikely to result in significant impact on the external road network.

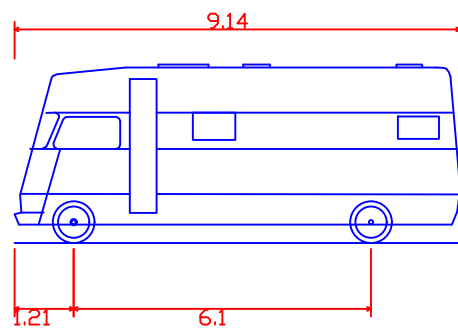
With regards to the rest of the site it is expected that it will serve mostly existing visitors who may spend more time within the site due to the improved facilities. There is also potential that the improved walking and cycling facilities may encourage these visitors to arrive to the site by alternative modes other than the car, therefore easing pressure on the roads.

Therefore, overall it is believed that the Masterplan will allow for improvements to transport to and within the site and is unlikely to have detrimental impact on the surrounding road network

Appendix A – AutoTracking

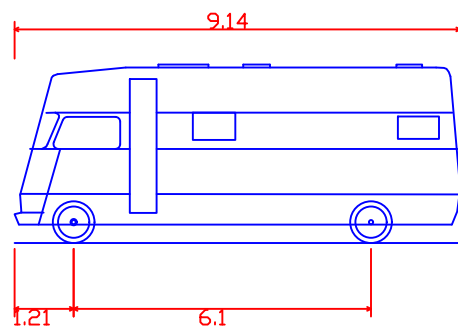


MH - Motorhome	9.140m
Overall Length	9.140m
Overall Width	2.440m
Overall Body Height	3.660m
Min Body Ground Clearance	0.377m
Track Width	2.440m
Lock to lock time	4.00s
Max Steering Angle (Virtual)	33.80°

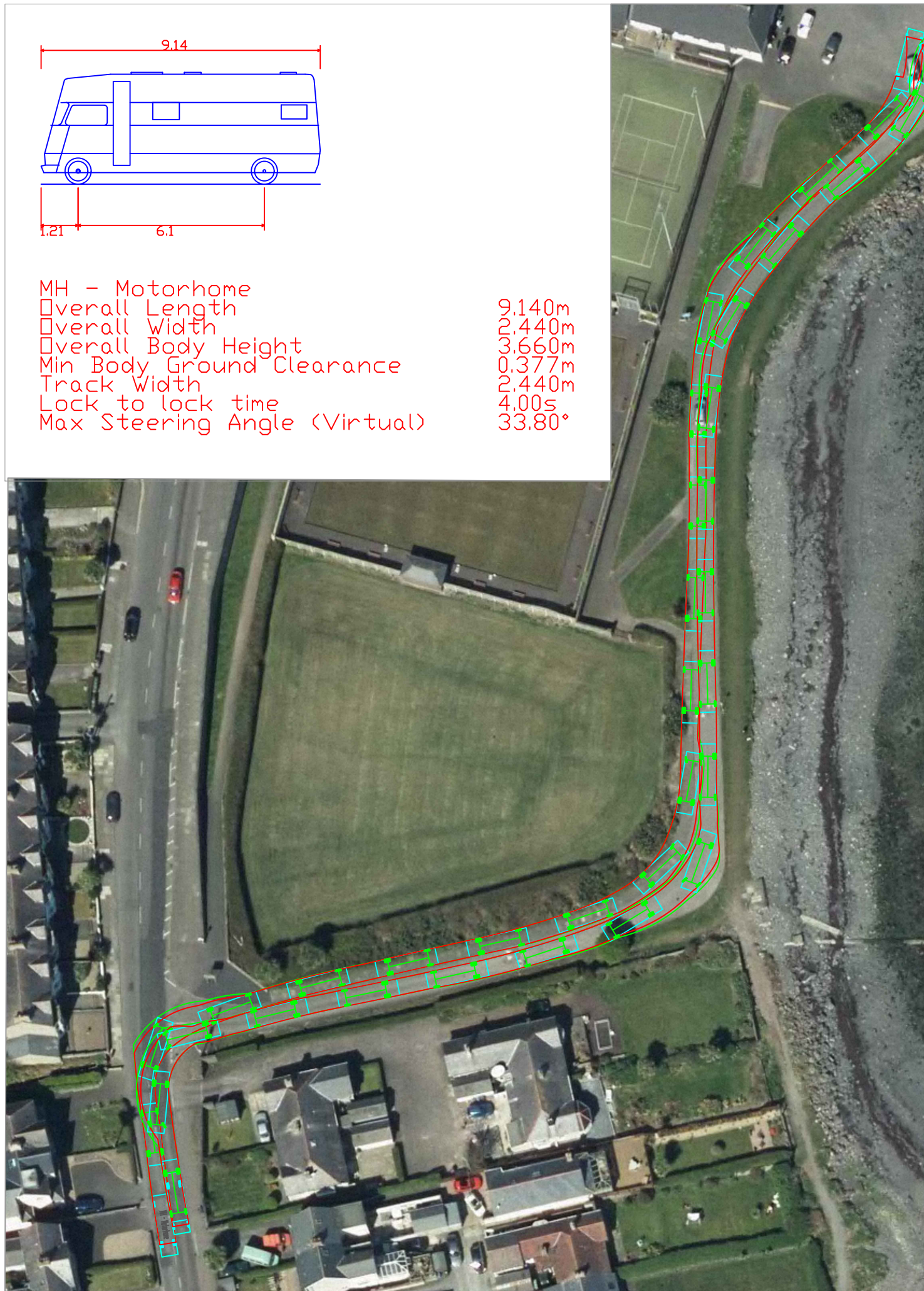


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# The

March 2022, The Destination Developers with AECOM

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Exciting Potential for Donaghadee

The Commons presents an amazing opportunity for Donaghadee to be seen as a successful sustainable growth town with a contemporary mix of live, work, visit, play and study opportunities for all.

The Commons will offer enhanced, walking, cycling, relaxing and outdoor play opportunities for all within the parkland that has biodiversity at its core. The wider study area can be “stretched” to accommodate more uses on brownfield lands. As a signature tourism, recreation, and leisure destination defined by its wellness opportunities, the Commons Coastal Park, combined with the urban regeneration and development on brownfield lands, will continue Donaghadee’s revitalisation and grow appeal as a visitor destination and place to live.

### 1.1.1 A Market Opportunity Exists

The initial target visitor market will be more day visits and overnight stays from the 1 million people in the Belfast City Region (City Deal definition) within an approximately 60 minutes’ drive.

Product, brand, marketing, and sales initiatives will extend this to:

- the rest of NI and Eastern Coastal Corridor to the 2.2 million people in the Greater Dublin Area all within a 3 hour drive
- City break visitors to Belfast who with improved transport could access Donaghadee – tourists from Great Britain, rest of the Republic of Ireland and overseas visitors to Belfast
- Coach trips from the c 149 cruise ships who call at Belfast
- Overseas market segments will primarily be a mix of touring Great Escapers and Culturally Curious (two of the island of Ireland’s core market segments) from Britain, North America, France and Germany.

The town centre health check undertaken in 2015 as part of the Town Centre Masterplan essentially remains valid. There is an improved context of population growth. In the post Covid world, Donaghadee with its attractive setting and lifestyle advantages should outperform Northern Ireland (NI) population growth. This will bring about increased demand for more things to do and for spaces for people to work from in Donaghadee through growth in hybrid working/working from home.

The large area of brownfield land currently used as free car parking presents a significant opportunity cost. It presents a superb opportunity to be Donaghadee’s urban regeneration and development project to drive more critical mass for the town centre and accommodate contemporary uses. Crucially with large areas in public sector ownership it presents an opportunity for the Council to capture value from its ownership. Through development the Council should seek a capital and/or income receipt that can contribute to the capital cost to deliver the Commons masterplan and provide ongoing financial support for operations.

- This commercial development is likely to comprise a hotel (est 40 key) with spa & wellness facility, business space (co-working/serviced office space), appropriate retail, food & beverage, leisure and multifamily residential
- Non-commercial development opportunity exists for a visitor centre to tell the many stories of Donaghadee and offering high quality visitor services. This might have enabling funding from the full commercial development

### 1.1.2 Emerging Proposition

#### The vision is for a coastal park with an enhanced town centre offer

The Commons will be reimagined into a high-quality coastal parkland destination with activities – indoor and outdoor – welcoming everyone. A new network of trails will reach out across the foreshore, plus bind the Commons into the urban fabric. A destination brand with consumer appeal will leverage the public and private investment to support visitor growth.

There will be three zones of activity

1. *Phase 1. Central.* The core Commons parkland a place to walk, run, relax, and enjoy Irish Sea views plus an appropriate programme of events and activities
2. *Phase 2. South.* Amenities for activity for all ages plus a new Recreational Vehicle overnight stay facility to cater for this fast-growing market
3. *Phase 3. North.* A mixed-use development as an urban extension of the town centre and link to the Commons. If sufficient public sector funding is available it might be that the Visitor Centre is brought forward for delivery during Phase1.

Points of differentiation will include:

- A compelling tourism, leisure, and recreation offer outdoors and indoors
- A mixed use integrated urban extension of new development
- Premium independent market positioning across all offers
- Takes ownership on telling Irish Sea stories within the new Visitor Centre, including providing a home for the locally iconic Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat
- Wellness will form a key part of all offers

#### Branding and marketing

The reimagined Commons needs a fresh brand and marketing strategy to leverage proposed investment by the public and private sectors.

The Commons should be split into identifiable zones with a supporting brand proposition that appeal to identified audiences and markets.

#### Management

Local people are passionate about the Commons parkland and well organised. A new vehicle that engages local people attracts multiple funding sources to ensure high quality maintenance and operations. Perhaps a form of Tourism Business Improvement District that expands on the work existing businesses, organisations and individuals have done.

## 1.2 A Business Plan for the reimagined Commons

A very early business plan has been prepared to consider the Commons as an integrated destination centred around a multifunctional Visitor Centre of some 800 sqm gross.

This high-level work suggests:

- A multifunctional Visitor Centre could attract 25,000 visitors in year 1 rising to 30,000 in year 5.
- Average turnover during the 5-year period might be £431,500 pa (from Ticketed events, Café + Retail, Room Hires, Coworking space, Festival & Events, RV Park and Sponsorship and Donations)
- Average Costs during the 5-year period might be £366,000 pa (Costs of sales, Staff costs 8 FTE and operational costs)
- Average net surplus during the 5-year period might be £65,500 pa

The multifunctional visitor centre and associated amenities will not be viable a viable property development. Like the rest of the Commons coastal park there will need to be public sector funding, to prime the context for further private sector investment and to capture longer term economic growth benefits. The early indication is that the Commons Visitor Centre could cover its operational costs. More detailed concept, design, and business planning work would be required.

### 1.2.1 Funding sources are likely to include

- **Capital:** Levelling Up, Peace Plus, NI Executive, Capital from enabling development, National Lottery, Ards & North Down Council borrowing, Sponsorship/Naming rights/Donations
- **Land:** sale of council owned land might mean £350,000 per acre for a multi-family apartment scheme. Adopting a development position and working with an experienced developer/builder this then might be translated into an investment asset that is likely to have attractive investment prospects and a potential capital value of c £1million + and deliver income to support ongoing operations of the Commons
- **Operational:** Income from enabling development, Ticketed events and activities, Local businesses, Sponsorship/Naming rights, Precept on local tax for and Ards & North Down

### 1.2.2 Business Case for Destination Development At The Commons

- More day and overnight visitors, making more trips, staying for longer and spending more money
- Larger town centre population supporting vibrancy and spend at existing businesses and traders
- Direct and indirect jobs, training, education, and spend. Estimate of 8 FTE jobs to deliver the Visitor Centre and Commons experience.
- The Commons combined with new and appropriate development (including workspaces for local start-ups, homeworkers) presents Donaghadee as a more sustainable growth town not solely a tourist town
- Civic pride, Quality of Life, Engagement, and Wellness, plus enhanced biodiversity
- Adds more to the overall Ards Peninsula offer, helps develop a stronger visitor experience
- Gives Tourism NI a strong product to support the “Giant Spirit” proposition and spread visitors across NI
- Will be a showcase of the best of Environmental, Social and Governance (“ESG”) investing.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Purpose Of This Study

Within the 2015 Masterplan the Commons was highlighted as a key access point, a key developmental opportunity, a key leisure destination, a key recreational area and an opportunity for heritage and tourism product. The Commons is a differentiator for Donaghadee and an opportunity to scale up the visitor economy in Ards and North Down.

*Ards and North Down Council require consultants to prepare an inspirational, comprehensive, unique, detailed, and sustainable concept plan for the Donaghadee Commons Park, which will identify how the full regeneration potential of the area can be realised. It would be non-statutory and provide a framework for the promotion, implementation, and timing of urban regeneration initiatives in this area.*

#### 2.1.1 Objective

In discussion with the client group and local stakeholders the objective is reimagine the Commons to 1) provide an improved asset for local people and 2) an asset that helps to increase the visitor economy of Donaghadee and the wider Ards Peninsula. The concept masterplan should take an early business case approach to set out order of magnitude costs, viability of proposals and long-term sustainable operations.

#### 2.1.2 Scene Setting

As one of the closest points to Great Britain, the Normans established the port at Donaghadee and developed trading routes across the Irish Sea to Britain. Other notable elements in the Donaghadee story include:

- Vikings and their settlement in Ireland
- The Moat defensive structure existed in some form over some 1,000 years, the current structure 1818
- Plantation role in the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- Harbour is now 200 years old constructed in 1820 with the signature Lighthouse at the end of the southern harbour wall
- Donaghadee was one of Irelands busiest ports with goods and people coming from Britain, especially, Portpatrick, in Scotland, the shortest crossing GB to Ireland
- Flow of people and goods resulted in railway connections into the rail network, since closed down
- An attractive townscape with a mix of Medieval, Jacobean, Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian buildings. Urban design and placemaking upgrades have been undertaken in recent years
- The Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat rescued 33 of the 44 passengers saved from the MV Princess Victoria ferry. Sailing from Stranraer to Larne, 134 lives were lost, the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century peacetime loss of life in British water.
- Commercial core of shops, cafes, pubs, and business spaces is centred along The Parade, High Street, New Street and Bridge Street
- Residential development throughout the town is attracting more people

- The Commons and surrounding coastline has a large natural heritage dimension designations being part of the Outer Ards Special Protection Area, Ramsar and Area of Specific Scientific Interest
- With the closeness to Britain, Donaghadee is the start/end point for cross Irish sea swimmers. This along with the harbour and sheltered bay has made it a popular sea swimming destination.
- Other water sports are popular, including a sailing club, boating generally and paddle boarding
- The Irish Sea and the narrowness of the stretch to Britain and the proximity of Belfast Harbour means it has been important militarily for centuries;
  - Royal Navy and American Continental Naval ship in US war of independence
  - Beaufort Dyke, the deep sea trench that has been used a munitions dump since World War 1
  - Passage of all shipping, cargo, ferries, and military

## 3 BASELINE CONTEXT

### 3.1 The Commons

The Commons is a large grass area that forms the eastern border of the town centre. We understand it does not form part of the statutory planning town centre designation. As a major asset for the town this designation is something we recommend that Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) should seek to update. Positioning the Commons as part of the Town Centre should support high quality placemaking and development, differentiation, and promotion objectives.

- The northern area of the Commons comprises the foreshore, smaller grassed areas, buildings, areas of vacant brownfield land and hard standing used for parking and a small 40 berth marina
- The central area is the largest area of grassland with residential framing the western boundary. There is a small playground and outdoor gym equipment
- The southern area comprises grassland, a tennis and bowling club, plus hardstanding parking and a small Recreational Vehicle utility point

The area is traversed by a series of paths, there are public benches and several shelters.

Ownership and Users. ANDBC are the primary owner of the north, central and southern area

A private sector developer owns a portion of hard standing in the northern area, which was formerly a bus depot. A proposal for a hotel has been progressed for this site. Whilst the site owner considers its hotel proposal, it has recently been used as a storage area and base for the BBC film crew and cast for the making of Hope Street. This is a drama series that is due to be broadcast on across BBC network in 2022 plus on online and global platforms.

The Marina includes a boatyard for the winter storage, maintenance and repair of boats.

In preparing a concept for The Commons there are some interesting adjacencies that can play a role in the future success of the Commons as an enhanced destination. There are several significant assets, areas of emerging energy that can help in shaping the future Commons.

- The northeast corner of The Parade, The Community Centre and Copeland Distillery, plus the footfall of walkers along the southern harbour wall to the Lighthouse.
- The large area of brownfield land and hardstanding currently used for storage and car parking.
- ANDBC have made urban design improvements in recent years to the town centre and the small square to the north west of the Commons. With The Copeland Distillery and Pier 36 gastro pub and guesthouse, there is a good level of activity in this area and potential for a high quality town square to connect the core town centre to the Commons
- Residential frames much of the western boundary, to the north is a small road “Railway Street” with a modern four-story multifamily apartment complex, south single-family housing stretches to the south, most of which has its frontage away from the coast.

Two crucial components of how a reimagined Commons park might be delivered are planning and funding.

With most of the Commons in public ownerships this should be helpful in bringing forward projects whether community and/or commercially focused. There will be sensitivities that will need to go through the planning process. For example, we would not expect proposals for development on the sea edge of the Commons. However, proposals such as that for a hotel appear positive and capable of generating some significant net benefits for the town - attracting more people, overnight stays, jobs and training opportunities, so a mix of direct and indirect benefits.

There are areas of under used town centre brownfield land and hard standing carparking owned by the Council could capture value that would then help in the funding of the wider community objectives. Such “enabling development” could present a compelling case for planning and development within the town

## 3.2 The Commons Destination

For Donaghadee, the reimagined Commons could become an signature project that continues the towns emerging success. As an identified project from the 2015 Donaghadee Masterplan the reimagined Commons should set the bar high.

To ensure delivery of a terrific new destination and its ongoing success for everyone, excellence is needed in six factors (which any great destination needs):

- The attractors or product that pulls the market
- Services that responds to customer needs
- Infrastructure that helps in place making
- Management that delivers quality operations
- Stories that can be captured for consumer appeal
- Brand that sets out the proposition and communicates to markets and audiences the experience, offer and reputation.

All with an understanding of the market context.

Below are our impressions of the current state of these destination pillars at the Commons.

### 3.2.1 Attractors

**Limited and weak quality.** Opportunity for a stronger and more exciting offer with a range of appropriate contemporary uses

- Sea and coastline
- Playground
- Tennis & bowls club
- Community Centre
- Marina
- Space - tranquillity

### 3.2.2 Services

**Poor.** Few places to engage with visitors and places for them to spend money. Perhaps in summer season temporary offer is introduced – coffee dock, ice cream sellers, deck chairs, seaside games/sports equipment?

### 3.2.3 Infrastructure

**Weak.** Better arrangement and installation of facilities, power, water and signage for year-round programming of events and activities, plus road access.

- Paths – are they in the best locations, can they support peak use, can they accommodate a mix of modes: walking, running, cycling, skating, scooters etc
- Playground – sits in the middle of the largest grass area, is this appropriate, alternate location better at southern or northern end perhaps to allow more space for seasonal events
- Benches – different styles scattered around, are there better locations and might a new arrangement be required
- Toilets – southern end in the pavilion, better signposting, community centre at the north. Can both be publicly accessible
- Car Park – reasonable provision, is it in the best locations, can it be better integrated for improved place making by the reimagined landscape design

### 3.2.4 Management

**Weak.** Appears generally minimal and focused on grass maintenance and an annual summer event. It does not appear managed as a destination. With a fresh vision of a more attractive destination for residents and to attract more visitors leading to an upgrade there is the potential to adopt new structure to manage and “curate” The Commons

### 3.2.5 Stories

A good range of authentic and interesting stories that can be told, many around the Irish Sea to which Donaghadee traces its development. Stories around

- Vikings
- Normans
- People: Irish, British – Scots, English, and Welsh – Plantation
- People; Rest of world

- Trade & passengers
- US Revolution – Ranger (US) v Drake (GB)
- Beaufort’s Dyke - munitions
- RNLI Samuel Kelly
- Sea swimmers

### 3.2.6 Market

**Limited primarily to local people.** Currently dominated by local residents and others coming from Bangor, Newtownards year-round to enjoy a coastal walk and the sea views. Current users identified as local people

- Walkers
- Dog walkers
- Runners
- Families and children for playground
- Tennis and Bowls club members
- Plus, some Belfast City region visitors and RV users

There is the potential for the Commons to attract people from further afield. At the same time it will be important to take local people on the destination development journey.

### 3.2.7 Brand

**Negligible, weak.** Currently only really seen as a local asset. With a reimagined Commons, potential to scale up through a product and brand strategy to appeal to more markets and leverage the proposed investment.

### 3.3 Conclusion

The Commons is a large space that is primarily popular with local people for walking, jogging, taking their dogs for a walk. Occasionally events are held during the summer season.

At present the Commons is an underutilised asset for Donaghadee. It is adjacent to the town centre, offers an attractive natural experience but much more could be achieved that can generate additionality and benefits for the town and wider Ards Peninsula.

As a baseline compared to other “coastal parks” in villages and towns on the Ards Peninsula, the differentiators of The Commons are weak. Perhaps its scale and being part of a positively evolving town centre are its two greatest areas of difference and opportunity.

This is supported by the charming adjacent harbour and lighthouse, plus, its Irish Sea location and its multitude of stories that have framed the Donaghadee story.

In the future it is likely to be a combination of initiatives (product development, events, and activities plus branding and marking) that need to be assembled and packaged to tell a stronger story that will then establish the uniqueness of the Commons and give more people more reasons to visit, to stay for longer, to make more repeat visits and spend more money.

#### 3.3.1 The Commons SWOT

S trengths	W eaknesses	O pportunities	T hreats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Location and <b>Views</b> (Copeland Islands &amp; Beyond)</li> <li>- Designations – ASSI/RAMSAR/ Natura 2000</li> <li>- Maritime <b>Heritage</b> and Settlement History</li> <li>- RNLI – <b>Sir Samuel Kelly</b> Lifeboat</li> <li>- Existing User Groups</li> <li>- <b>Positive Developments</b></li> <li>- The Harbour and Lighthouse</li> <li>- Marina</li> <li>- Tennis and Bowls Clubs</li> <li>- Playground</li> <li>- Annual Events</li> <li>- Large Open <b>Greenspace</b></li> <li>- Sites in council ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor <b>signage</b> and information</li> <li>- Lack of adequate <b>pedestrian connections</b></li> <li>- DDA compliance</li> <li>- <b>Segregation</b> through parking areas</li> <li>- Recycling centre location</li> <li>- Extensive areas of mown grass</li> <li>- Hidden marina</li> <li>- <b>Inaccessible</b> shore/sea</li> <li>- Playground location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stronger <b>role/purpose</b> for the town</li> <li>- Strengthen the <b>live, visit, study</b> and <b>work</b> reputation</li> <li>- Growing population</li> <li>- <b>Active community</b>/business groups</li> <li>- Connections with the town centre</li> <li>- Destination branding</li> <li>- <b>Lighting</b> Strategy</li> <li>- Visitor <b>Hub Building</b></li> <li>- Path network enhancements</li> <li>- <b>Re-wilding</b></li> <li>- <b>Wayfinding</b> and <b>Interpretive Signage</b></li> <li>- Hotel</li> <li>- Links to wider Greenways and Hunts Park</li> <li>- <b>Gateway</b> from Millisle Road</li> <li>- <b>Cycle Hub</b></li> <li>- <b>Sculpture Park</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Exposed</b> location to the <b>weather</b></li> <li>- Planning <b>regulations</b> and <b>designations</b></li> <li>- Lack of <b>capital</b> and <b>operation funding</b></li> <li>- Market demand</li> <li>- <b>Parking</b> pressures</li> <li>- Disconnected public open space</li> </ul>

Source: AECOM and The Destination Developers

### 3.4 Donaghadee The Town

Donaghadee is a small town of 8,000 people, with other local towns such as Newtonards and Bangor close by, so can not be expected to have the full offer that larger towns and cities would have. In terms of a destination town, part of the aim of this project is to revitalise the Commons to continue the improvement seen in Donaghadee as a visitor destination in recent years. In the 1950's/60s there were approximately five hotels that attracted people from across Northern Ireland and Scotland.

In terms of the wider Donaghadee offer as a destination to attract more residents, visitors and businesses, the table illustrates the current offer against key criteria.

<b>Access</b>	<b>Events</b>
<p>Air: Belfast International &amp; City Airports</p> <p>Rail: No service</p> <p>Road: 30 to 40 minutes from Belfast City Centre</p> <p>Cruise: Belfast has 100+ cruise ship calls pa; noted that Pier 36 has an arrangement with some cruise operators</p> <p>Group travel: Some coach tours and potential for more</p>	<p>Cultural &amp; Festivals: Reportedly a large festival weekend during the summer on the Commons. Donaghadee Community Development Association normally run a summer festival between June to September. IN 2019 – 80 events with 35 different organisations. 15k attended</p> <p>Sport: Sailing Club, watersports, golf, football, tennis, bowling clubs</p> <p>Markets: No significant food, arts, crafts, collectables market permanent or footloose</p>
<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>Food &amp; Drink</b>
<p>Branded hotels. None</p> <p>Independent hotels: Pier 36 with a small and high quality “boutique” and gastro pub offering</p> <p>Other Serviced: One Shore Street (B&amp;B) plus several Air BnB style lets</p> <p>Non serviced: Recreational Vehicle parking spaces at the southern end of the Commons</p>	<p>Pubs, Restaurants &amp; Cafes: Good and growing number of high quality. Increasingly strong reputation as a “foodie” town. Pier 36, Bow Bells, Grace Neill’s (claims to be oldest in Ireland), Bull &amp; Claw, Harbour &amp; Co. O</p> <p>Markets: None, comment that efforts had been made in the past but limited support</p> <p>Shops: High quality local butchers; potential for a food hall and delicatessen. No fish shop, despite Portavogie</p>
<b>Attractions</b>	<b>Leisure, Sport &amp; Recreation</b>
<p>Landmarks: The Harbour and Lighthouse, The Moat, The Commons</p> <p>Museums: The Moat, no real collection</p> <p>Heritage Sites: The Moat</p>	<p>Fitness Centre: No, major centre in Bangor</p> <p>Walking: Good, The Commons and the seafront</p> <p>Cycling: Potential for more dedicated cycle ways to link up with Greenway initiatives</p>

<p>Arts &amp; Culture: No notably art gallery, visual or performing arts</p> <p>Gardens/Parks/Squares: The Commons, Hunts Park and Crommelin Park, smaller pocket parks along bayfront – War Memorial (Warren Road); Moat Street; Scope for improved public square/plaza. Improved children’s play area on the Parade under construction</p> <p>Natural Environment: A strength of the town with The Commons and the coastal walkway. RAMSAR and XX [AECOM], Donaghadee is noted as a good place for birdwatching, in particular the Commons</p>	<p>Golf club: to the north of the town centre</p> <p>Participation: Most major team sports catered for. Idea of creating a town sports hub. Strength in water sports, plus tennis and bowls club (on the Commons)</p>
<p><b>Commercial Entertainment</b></p>	<p><b>Retail</b></p>
<p>Cinema: No</p> <p>Theatre: No</p> <p>Nightclub: No</p> <p>Live Music: Yes, pubs and other community and social clubs</p> <p>Amusements: No</p> <p>Competitive Socialising (crazy golf, snooker, pool, contemporary formats): No</p>	<p>High Street Comparison: Very limited. Focus are retail parks around Bangor/A2, Newtonards and Belfast City Centre</p> <p>High Street Convenience: Good – hairdressers, butchers, small supermarket (Coop, Spa)</p> <p>Independent: Small but attractive offer of speciality retailers, likely potential for more. Mauds Ice cream, Butchers, Florists, Bakers, Gifts, Vintage clothing, Books, Records etc</p> <p>Speciality Destination Retail: None. Attractive offer at Eden Pottery outside Milisle</p> <p>Markets: None. Previously discussion of one starting but limited support. Potential for an occasional market given the agricultural, food provenance??</p>
<p><b>Visitor Services</b></p>	<p><b>Business Space</b></p>
<p>Tourism website: Visit Donaghadee, produced by Donaghadee Community Development Association. Charity that is a strong and active mix of businesses and community volunteers</p> <p>Plus AaND council visitor services</p> <p>Tourist information: Limited, no tourism office</p> <p>Wayfinding: Limited</p> <p>Interpretation: Limited. Some good stories; more could be done</p>	<p>Office products: Negligible</p> <p>Business support: Business Centre in the heart of the town, privately run</p>

### 3.4.1 Donaghadee Market Positioning

The following are taken from Time Out and Irish Central during summer 2021, when due to the pandemic the vast majority of people were taking holidays at home. This has seen a huge number of articles about the offer around the British and Irish coastline. We include a few below for what we consider are peers of Donaghadee

Around Britain and Ireland how do other coastal towns get described and how might Donaghadee see itself against these peer coastal towns?

#### **Tobermory, Isle of Mull**

*A Hebridean fishing village in Farrow & Ball colours.*

#### **Clifden, Co Galway**

*Feels untouched, packed with its own entertainment and a great base when exploring the area*

#### **Dartmouth, Devon**

*Exquisite seafood and excellent walking opps.*

#### **St Ives, Cornwall**

*A fishing town with serious artistic clout.*

#### **Lymington, Hampshire**

*A Georgian sailing town with proper salty pubs*

#### **Crosby, Merseyside**

*Vast sands and sculptural surprises*

#### **Donegal Town, Co Donegal**

*A lively atmospheric town*

#### **Cromarty, Highlands**

*A Highland fishing village with a fairytale feel.*

#### **Dungarvan, Co Waterford**

*Thriving seaside market town, overlooking beautiful bay a wonderful sport to spend some time when exploring the beauty of the SE coast*

#### **Aberaeron, Ceredigion**

*Foodie central, with a weird thing for honey.*

#### **Bardsea, Cumbria**

*Quiet, moody and utterly atmospheric.*

#### **Whitby, Yorkshire**

*A trad Yorkshire fishing town that exudes more gothic splendour than David Bowie in 'The Hunger'.*

## **Westport, Co Mayo**

*Our top pick for best seaside towns in Ireland*

## **Clonakilty, Co Cork**

*Bustling with life, lively, welcoming and steeped in history*

## 3.5 The Ards Peninsula

Driving around the Peninsula, in a relatively small area, there is a distinctive mix of towns, villages, attractions, heritage, culture, physical activities and superb natural assets such as the coastline, attractive countryside plus Strangford Loch.

Reflecting its glacial past there are many drumlins that create an attractive rolling countryside environment and high quality farmland for beef, dairy plus arable farming.

The visit Ards and North Down website provides an excellent resource as to what is on offer, things to see and do, that includes.

- Mount Stewart, National Trust House and Estate
- Eden Pottery. A high quality artisan manufacturer, with a make your own experience and high quality café
- Drumawhey Junction. Minature Railway
- North Down Museum. Bangor
- Windmill Hill. Portaferry. Windmill remains offering extensive views
- The Bradley Gallery and Ava Gallery. Bangor. Art Galleries
- Ballycopeland Windmill. Millisle. Working windmill
- Castle Park. Bangor. Extensive woodland park with walled garden
- Somme Museum. Newtownards. Presents Ireland's role in WW1
- Welif Heritage Crafts. Newtownards. Craft workshops and courses
- Bangor Waterfront. Bangor. Large marina and Pickie Fun park

In terms of the other settlements on and around the peninsula.

### Portaferry

An attractive town located at the entrance to Strangford Loch

- Ferry across Strangford Loch
- Shipbuilding in c17<sup>th</sup>
- Popular aquarium

### Cloughy

Small town but with extensive tourism accommodation offer

- Large caravan and residential mobile home sites
- Golf club
- Sand dunes providing a distinctive environment
- Former RAF base and motor racing circuit

## Portavogie

A working town with a significant commercial fishing fleet

- Fish festival and big restaurant looking over sea
- Potential for some sort of fish market in Ddee

## Ballyhalbert

Small town, simple parking and small park area with a big Ulster Scots story and the most easterly point on island of Ireland

## Ballywalter

A village with a small harbour and caravan park that is popular with holiday makers

- Simple visitor offer with parking, small park and playground

## Millisle

Close to Donaghadee, a large beach makes this a popular holiday destination

- Large lagoon offers potential for easier sea swimming, paddle board and other water sports
- Big caravan parks
- Green spaces and playship

## Greyabbey

Small town on the banks of Strangford Loch close to the Mount Stewart National Trust property

- Attractive town
- Ecclesiastical heritage with abbey ruins
- An emerging antiques and collectables offer

All the towns appear to have the basics of visitor amenities of a decent view, park, seating, parking, information boards, café and toilet facilities. A view, brew and loo !

Elsewhere other significant tourism destinations include

### 3.5.1 Ards Competitive Context

It might have been overshadowed in recent years by the Causeway Coast to the north and the Mourne Mountains to the south but the Ards Peninsula and wider Ards and North Down area do present an attractive tourist offer.

A full day touring (drive) around the Peninsula offers an excellent visitor experience in a legible part of Northern Ireland. Potential for improved itinerary development for different types of visitor through experience development plans, whether driving, cycling, walking and for different market segments, such as visitors focused on the natural environment, others on heritage and culture or physical activities.

In the Republic the Boyne Valley and the Meath/Louth coastline have been making some significant strides in terms of product and brand development as part of an integrated tourism development strategy.

### 3.5.2 Trends

There are a number of strategic trends in play that will influence the potential of Donaghadee and the Commons, some of them are set out below

#### Northern Ireland and the Belfast City Region

Belfast has significant energy as it continues to strengthen as the capital of Northern Ireland and as a competitive city that works at a European and global scale. There are significant funds from central Government captured in the Belfast City Deal, whilst Northern Ireland's special circumstances mean EU/UK ("Peace Plus Programme") funds continue to be available.

There are significant brownfield lands in the metro area that continue to be brought forward for development.

Population growth forecasts are positive for Northern Ireland according to NISRA, 2020 growing from 1.896m in 2020 to 1.939m by 2045, this is a period growth of 2.3%, with most growth projected in the decade 2020-2030. It is likely that most of this growth will be in the Belfast City Region. There is forecast to be net migration to Northern Ireland over the forecast period of nearly 50,000 people, which will balance out the decrease in the natural change due to an aging population.

In comparison the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland are forecast by ONS (UK) and CSO (ROI) respectively:

- Scotland a fall of -1.5%
- Wales an increase of 4.2%
- England an increase of 6.7%
- Overall, UK growth trend of 5.8%
- In the Republic population growth forecast by CSO remains high suggesting it will grow to 6m, approximately 20% over the period. With a still relatively young population, albeit a larger ageing group than recent years with continued net migration.

#### Sustainability

There will be numerous ways that this will shape consumer behaviour. Aviation as one of the biggest polluters with a high environmental cost, expect governments to start to influence demand with higher taxation. Can Europeans expect to continue to fly across Europe for £20/€20 as has happened over the last 20 years. Until new clean technology comes many analysts expect a decrease in air travel. Ireland as an island on the northwest edge of Europe has become reliant on airlift to drive its tourism sector. What might the implications be say over the next 10 years for the island of Ireland?

Will this mean:

- Noticeably less continental Europeans and North Americans ?
- A need to pivot to focus more on the domestic NI and ROI market?

- With long established ferry connections, encourage more visitors from GB, perhaps taking their car on the ferry and to similar extent French visitors to the ports of Belfast and Dublin.

## The Pandemic

### *Hybrid working*

People have become used to working from home over the last two years. The consensus appears to be that for many businesses and activities/functions, hybrid working will emerge. Essentially a mix of working from home and in a central office. Will this see talent look to move away from cities to attractive lifestyle locations within reach of their main office.

How might Donaghadee benefit from this trend?

### *Outdoor experiences*

Another trend that has emerged has been people looking for more and more outdoor experiences, whether a pleasant walk-in attractive countryside or the ability to do a variety of activities in the fresh air. This has seen a rapid growth in people taking camping, caravanning and especially touring holidays with recreational vehicles – RVs.

### *The Experience economy*

Millennial and Baby Boomer travellers has identified that many are increasingly looking for ways to improve themselves whilst on holiday. Whether by undertaking culinary or language classes, immersion into distinct foreign cultures, or active participation in archaeological digs, historic study, or various forms of volunteer work, giving them hand-on experience or an opportunity to expand their horizons beyond what's available at home.

What's driving this is the turn towards an *experience economy*. The need to engage, involve and entertain consumers has led to the development of new approaches to marketing. Creating memorable experiences means paying attention to different elements that consumers might be seeking, including education, aesthetics, escapism and entertainment, and factoring these needs into the product offer. The experience economy is perhaps one of the defining outcomes of the smaller "Generation X" demographic cohort, sandwiched between the much larger Baby boomer and Millennial groups.

Many coastal locations are already starting to experiment with this offer, packaging itineraries for multi-generational tourists who are looking for transformational experiences with a focus on education.

### *Authenticity*

Our research indicates that tourists are no longer satisfied with common, mass-produced offers, opting instead for unique, immersive experiences with a strong local component, and they are willing to spend a premium if the experience enriches their life, is of very high quality, or is distinct from something they might find anywhere else.

### 3.6 Residential Catchment

Primarily Donaghadee is a commuter town (8,000) for people working in the Greater Belfast area. Within Greater Belfast city region and wider Northern Ireland, Donaghadee is seen as a pleasant place to visit but not a major tourist destination.

Other towns in ANDBC include Bangor, Northern Ireland’s second largest town (60,000 population), Newtownards (28,000 population), Holywood (10,000) and Comber (10,000).

Each town along with the attractive countryside, landscape, seascape, and Strangford Lough, plus the boroughs heritage all combine to offer an attractive place to live.

As a coastal town Donaghadee on the Ards Peninsula, the town has a limited catchment population of some 8,000 people. Drive times to Belfast is around 30 minutes and many of the Greater Belfast area and its satellite towns are within 60 minutes’ drive. The Belfast City Region as presented in the City Deal project has a population of around 1 million people.

To the south the high growth corridor to Dublin, has a fast-growing population in the coastal belt finishing at the 2.2 m Greater Dublin Area. This presents a major market opportunity

Public transport plus to Donaghadee from Belfast is limited. Essentially you need have a car or be part of an organised coach trip. This will limit the potential market.

Elsewhere in Ireland, competitor or comparator coastal towns/destinations popular with visitors have better access with rail, bus or regular organised coach trips for the City Break tourist. For example:

- Towns such as Holywood Bangor, Carrickfergus, and Port Rush have rail access, whilst The Giants Causeway has regular coach trips from Belfast City Centre.
- In the Republic coastal towns such as Malahide, Howth, Skerries, Greystones and Cobh are also all on the rail network. So a city break visitor in Dublin or Cork, can take the train or have a reliable and frequent bus.

The majority of visitors to Donaghadee will need a car to visit the town. This is likely to mean local residents and greater penetration into the Greater Belfast City Region will be the most important market segment for the Commons in the short term.

**TABLE 1: RESIDENTIAL CATCHMENT POPULATION FOR THE COMMONS**

<b>Market Segment</b>	<b>Size</b>
<i>Residents</i>	<i>Population</i>
Donaghadee	8,000
AND	154,056
Greater Belfast	463,651
<b>Greater Belfast Metro</b>	<b>625,707</b>
<b>Other NI NM+D</b>	<b>181,669</b>
RoI resident Market (Louth & Meath)	425,098
<b>SAY "Domestic" Resident POP</b>	<b>1,232,474</b>

Source: NISRA

## 3.7 Tourism Market

Ards and North Down has produced an integrated tourism, regeneration and economic development strategy. It is rare that tourism gets integrated in such a way and a good move by the council. The offer of the region is captured by:

- Blue:Green Creatively Connected – underpinned by the natural lough, sea and land assets
- Creativity of the people as seen in the artisans, designers, engineers and those who work the land

### 3.7.1 Tourism growth

A major aim of this project for the Commons is to strengthen Donaghadee as a popular visitor destination. In the 1950's/60s there were reportedly five hotels and a wide tourism offering that including boat trips to the Copelands, fishing trips and simple pleasure trips.

Located only a 20 minute drive from Belfast and in very close proximity to George Best Belfast City Airport, Ards and North Down Borough is ideally placed to benefit from both domestic tourism and visitors from further afield. With over 100 miles of coastline, much of the Borough's tourism assets revolve around the unique and varied seascapes, Donaghadee offers an attractive townscape, an increasing range of things to see and do and potential for more.

In 2018 Ards and North Down prepared a position paper on tourism in the borough through to 2030 as part of the planning and development process, some highlights relevant to The Commons in Donaghadee include:

- In 2016, tourism expenditure in the Borough was £46 million . One of the key objectives under the heading of Prosperity in the Corporate Plan is to *'enhance the visitor experience to increase visitor spend through the promotion of cultural, recreational sporting and event offering in the Borough to attract visitors.*

A reimagined Commons can help deliver on this objective.

- Strangford Lough is recognised for the rarity and quality of its landscapes and offers opportunities for touring and a diversity of individual and organised recreational activities. Apart from the attractions of the countryside and the seashores, the plan area has a great variety of other places to visit including country and forest parks, historic houses and gardens, historic monuments, visitors centres such as Castle Espie Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre, near Comber and Exploris Marine Life Centre in Portaferry.

### 3.7.2 Key findings Donaghadee and the Commons can support tourism growth

Ards Peninsula does have a strong offering. These opportunities include eco-tourism, food tourism and the promotion of cultural events. These offer significant potential to prolong the length of visitor trips through overnight stays. Identified tourism activities the area has strength in include

- Rich natural heritage
- Christian heritage
- Activity Tourism – angling, golf, sailing, watersports (including sea swimming), cycling, equestrian
- Food Tourism

**TABLE 2: ANDBC TOURISM CONTEXT IN 2016**



Donaghadee used to have hotel stock, a priority should be a new hotel of a good standard to help drive overnight visits and along with the strong food and drink offer help to drive the night time economy. The proposal for the hotel in Donaghadee in the Commons study area would be a major boost for the town and Ards Peninsula.

Additional forms of accommodation of accommodation would include provision of a dedicated recreational vehicle parking area for overnight stays. This is a fast evolving sector that has accelerated during the pandemic. ANDBC has the second highest number of motorhome owners. These owners are generally older and wealthier but the pandemic has opened up this leisure activity to a younger age group and families.

**TABLE 3: Q3 2020 MOTOR HOMES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Local Government District	Licensed Motorhomes	% owned by LGD
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	715	13%
Ards and North Down	690	12%
Newry, Mourne and Down	571	10%
Mid and East Antrim	547	10%
Causeway Coast and Glens	525	9%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	459	8%
Belfast	430	8%
Fermanagh and Omagh	421	8%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	417	7%
Derry City and Strabane	401	7%
Mid Ulster	400	7%
Unknown / Missing	35	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,611</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: NISRA

Recreational vehicle parking of a high quality is in relatively low supply in Northern Ireland. Those with dedicated parking, water and sewage amenities in a secure environment are highly prized.

Those with good views especially the sea are most sought after the growing motor home/RV community in Northern Ireland who like to travel year round. The improved insulation and amenities modern RV's offer means most owners are happy to travel during the generally quieter shoulder and off seasons.

**TABLE 4: ACCOMMODATION TYPES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

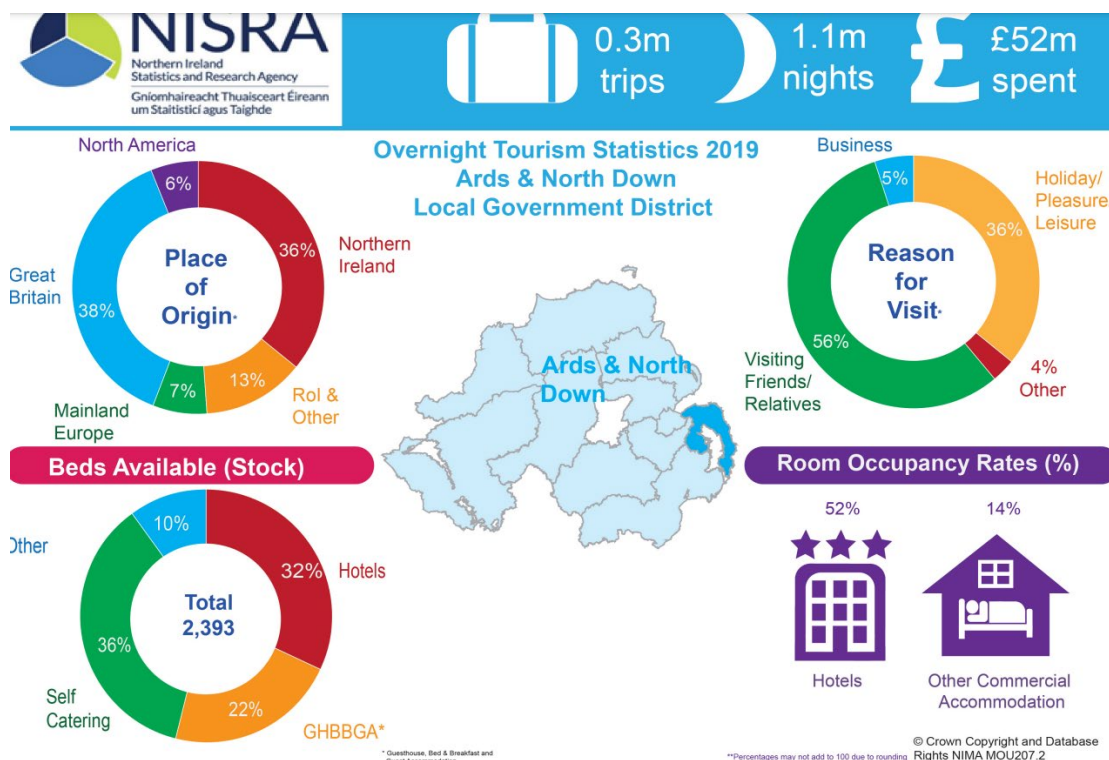
Description	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Hotels and similar accommodation	155	160	165	170	175	185
Holiday centres and villages	15	15	15	10	15	15
Youth hostels	5	5	5	5	5	5
Other holiday and other collective accommodation	80	80	80	100	105	100
Recreational vehicle parks, trailer parks & camping	40	40	40	40	45	45
Other accommodation	25	25	25	20	20	25
<b>Total group</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>370</b>

Source: NISRA, 2021

### 3.7.3 Visitor markets

In 2016, Ards and North Down Borough Council area attracted 283,229 overnight trips (trips taken by external and domestic visitors), 6% of all such trips in Northern Ireland. They stayed for over a million nights (1,087, 260 nights) - 7% of total Northern Ireland nights - and generated almost £46 million, 6% of total revenue generated across Northern Ireland from staying visitors and domestic tourists. Ranked 6th among the 11 Local Government Districts in terms of the number of visitors attracted – see Figure 3 - Ards and North Down has a higher than average length of stay – 3.8 nights compared with a Northern Ireland average of 3.2 nights. By 2019 overnight trips by domestic and overseas visitors grew very slightly to 300,000 pa and generated a similar level over night stays as in 2016. The value of these visits grew slightly to £52million.

**TABLE 5: ANDBC TOURISM PERFORMANCE IN 2019**



**TABLE 6: OVERNIGHT TRIPS IN 2019**



Source: NISRA, 2021

As table 7 shows AND improved performance in terms of number of visitors and their value between 2016 and 2019, moving up the local area rankings for 6 to 5<sup>th</sup>. It is somewhat behind Fermanagh and Omagh and its big lakehold and mountains offer, however with its super landscape, seascape, townscapes and number of attractions and numerous activities on the doorstep of Belfast and a sub 3 hour drive from Dublin with stronger product, brand and marketing development it should aim to challenge for the fourth spot during the rest of the 2020's.

**TABLE 7: ARDS IMPROVING PERFORMANCE BETWEEN 2016 AND 2019**

Local Government Area	Rank	Overnight Trips			Revenue			2019 Source Markets				
		2016	2019	Growth %	£m 2016	£m 2019	Growth %	Holiday, Pleasure & leisure	NI	RoI	GB	Global
Belfast	1	1,460,000	1,900,000	30%	334	417	25%	48%	24%	13%	42%	21%
CC&G	2	810,000	1,100,000	36%	138	192	39%	77%	63%	18%	13%	6%
NM&D	3	571,000	500,000	-12%	61	84	38%	65%	63%	18%	14%	5%
F&O	4	305,000	400,000	31%	51	79	55%	57%	63%	18%	14%	5%
AND	5	283,000	312,000	10%	46	52	13%	36%	36%	13%	38%	13%
M&EA	6	302,000	300,000	-1%	46	57	24%	47%	41%	14%	33%	12%
D&S	7	283,000	300,000	6%	50	71	42%	41%	45%	15%	27%	13%
L&C	8	170,000	200,000	18%	27	20	-26%	24%	35%	13%	37%	15%
ABC	9	145,000	200,000	38%	25	27	8%	19%	39%	13%	35%	13%
A&N	10	218,000	100,000	-54%	38	24	-37%	25%	30%	12%	42%	16%
Mid U	11	179,000	100,000	-44%	30	20	-33%	27%	36%	13%	35%	16%

Source: NISRA

## Market Segments

Significant work has gone into this in recent years and Donaghadee has the potential to appeal to the following segments identified by Tourism Northern Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and the overall marketing agency Tourism Ireland

*NI Domestic*

- Aspiring Families
- Natural Quality Seekers
- Social Instagrammers

*Rol Domestic*

- Indulgent Relaxers
- Open to Ideas
- Families seeking Buss
- Open Minded Explorers
- Budget Explorers

Tourism Ireland - International

- Great Escapers
- Social Energisers
- Culturally Curious

3.7.3.1 Visitor Attractions

The Table below provides visitor numbers for attractions in the Ards and North Down area. Excluding the free Crawfordsburn Country Park there are three major paid attractions or that have a major paid element that between them attract over 600,000 visitors in 2017. This is likely to be weighted to domestic visitors from NI but draw in a significant number of visitors from outside NI, primarily Britain, but also the Republic.

- Mount Stewart House and Gardens
- Pickie Fun park
- Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
- Wetland Centre at 76,000 and 59,000 respectively attract the most visitors

The data suggests that a visitor centre in Donaghadee with the right offer, experience and management could target 20 to 30,000 visits pa.

**TABLE 8: VISITOR ATTRACTIONS IN ANDBC AND 2017 PERFORMANCE**

Attraction	Visitor Numbers		
	2015	2016	2017
Ards Arts Centre	27,500		25,282
Avalon Guitar Factory	45	40	37
Ballycopeland Windmill	361	493	1,911
Ballywalter Park	1,450		10,000
Bangor Abbey	1,016	490	1,099
Castle Espie Wetland Centre	66,175		59,331
Cockle Row Cottages	17,714	16,908	16,051
Crawfordsburn Country Park	585,123	602,532	625,371
Drumawhey Junction Miniature Railway	4,562	5,911	5,573
Grey Abbey	14,912	2,178	1,366
Grey Point Fort	14,910	18,740	11,841
Kirkistown Racing Circuit	3,000		3,000
Mount Stewart House and Gardens	185,663	202,461	217,221
Nendrum Monastic Site	4,764	2,163	3,125
North Down Museum	74,139	76,561	75,944
Pickie Fun Park	221,218	224,849	235,359
Portaferry Visitor Information Centre	6,930	11,131	10,017
Portico Arts and Heritage Centre		5,000	5,000
Scrabo Tower		1,149	4,472
The Lookout, Mount Stewart	19,352	17,188	13,263
Tower House and Visitor Information Centre	26,316	20,471	25,543
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum	169,173	178,608	168,077

Source: NISRA

## 4 SECTOR ASSESSMENT

This section provides a review of potential “products” and “uses” in the Donaghadee area (Ards and North Down Borough Council) to understand potential opportunities for product development at the Commons. It is based on desk research, site visit and stakeholder, conversations at workshops and meetings. The wider Belfast City Region will have a large offering of the subject sectors:

1. Leisure and Recreation
2. Tourism with Heritage and Maritime stories
3. Commercial (retail, office, entertainment)
4. Hospitality

### 4.1 Leisure & Recreation

#### 4.1.1 Overview

This focuses on amenities primarily provided by the public sector and /or local clubs and associations: such as swimming pools, leisure centres, sports pitches, playgrounds, sailing clubs etc and outdoor amenities generally.

In terms of market demand, with a growing population this will support demand with more people of all ages, especially younger families looking for low cost and high quality things to do.

#### 4.1.2 Supply

##### *Leisure Centres*

The following are close to Donaghadee and have a modern high quality leisure, recreation and sports offer

- Bangor: Aurara Leisure Centre
- Newtonards: Blair Mayne Leisure Centre, plus
  - Blacklight Adventure at Blair Mayne, a adventure golf, climbing walls, sky walk indoor attraction
  - A pump track for BMX and mountain bikes has also been developed at Blair Mayne
- Newtownards: Londonderry Park

Other leisure and recreation provision includes

##### *Skate Parks*

- Comber Skate Park
- Portavogie Skate Park

Davagh Forest Park, 50 miles west of Belfast near Cookstown, has been developed with a high quality mountain bike trail offer that includes a pump track . NISRA recorded c 8,000 users in 2013/14 before dipping to between 6 and 7,000 visits before peaking at 10,200 in 2020.

##### *Playgrounds*

- Driving around the Ards Peninsula there was base playground provision at most of the towns

##### *Family Leisure*

This is dominated by Pickie Fun Park in Bangor in an attractive location overlooking the marina and harbour. This consists of various amusements and activities for all age groups but especially children. Including

- Crazy golf
- Boating lake
- Miniature railway
- Splash pad
- Playground

Elsewhere in Ards and North Down are Eddie Irvine Sports and Airtastic Entertainment family soft play both privately operated

*Other*

Millisle has a has a good-sized lido and it is understood that this is being used as an entry level amenity for water sports such as sea swimming and paddle boarding.

*Donaghadee*

Existing leisure and recreation offer

- Harbour sea walls provide a semi enclosed space for a base to pursue active leisure such as sea swimming, boating, kayaking, paddle boarding
- Small marina, for yachts and boats
- Sailing club and slipway
- Golf club to the north of the town
- Tennis and Bowls club at the Southern end of the Commons
- Crommelin Park
- The putting green adjacent to the tennis and bowls club has not been highly used for some time and is now closed
- The Shed Mixed Martial Arts club

**TABLE 9: SWOT OF LEISURE AND RECREATION OFFER**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Natural environment	Travel to larger centres
Ability to do active things outdoors	Similar playgrounds on the Ards Peninsula
Good provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities in Bangor and Newtonards	
Small tennis, sailing and bowling club, plus golf and team sports	
Attractive family leisure offer at Bangor Waterfront – Pickie Park	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Growing population	Funding for capex and opex
Higher quality outdoor provision	
Appropriate for Donaghadee aspired market position	

### 4.1.3 Conclusion

With a growing population there will be more people looking for things to see and do. With its attractive location on the coast and the existing participation of local people in primarily outdoor activities (sea swimming, sailing etc), this perhaps provides a suggestion of where the Commons should consider enhanced provision.

- There appears to be provision of playgrounds in each town, although simple basic offer. An opportunity for the Commons would be to consider a “natural play” amenity
- Issue of skate parks and pump tracks. There is a new pump track in Newtownards at the Blair Mayne Leisure Centre whilst two outdoor skate parks and plus the commercial offering at Eddie Irvine Sports. Larger towns with corresponding larger numbers of children, teenagers and young people the major uses of such facilities
  - Positive on the provision of such an active leisure amenity at the concept masterplan stage, however prior to actual delivery of a masterplan a full business case should be undertaken given the existing provision alongside other activities that offer critical mass. Plus be cognisant of the appropriateness of this type of activity for the type of market position and destination brand that the Commons might want to establish as a new visitor destination to grow Donaghadee’s wider appeal.
- The Commons with a more premium market position should not seek to replicate the offer captured well in Bangor of good quality mass market leisure attractions such as the crazy golf, miniature trains, boating lakes etc

### Market Opportunities

Opportunity for lower costs interventions as part of the revitalised Commons destination that allow local people and the visitor to undertake leisure and recreation activities in the revitalised natural environment. With increased awareness of wellness and appetite for spending time outdoors this suggests the following interventions for future consideration

- Consolidation of outdoor playground and gym into one area to provide critical mass
- Upgrade of paths for walking and cycling plus other modes, scooters, skating with appropriate segregation between users
- Encourage the opening up of the pavilion building and more recognisable ability for visitors to pay and play tennis
- Provision of other simpler outdoor activities such as large chessboard, shuffleboard courts perhaps becoming the hub of this sport in Ireland) and Boules/Petanque court

Repurpose of the putting green into a higher value use. In council ownership this site is one of two in the Commons that presents an opportunity to earn capital and/or income for the council. Three main opportunities:

1. Recreational Vehicle (mobile home) site
2. Development into a residential led scheme
3. An outdoor sporting offer such as shuffleboard and boules/pentaque.

The Commons should consider the following

- Outdoor spaces for exercise classes such as yoga, Pilates, aerobic classes, plus reading area, contemporary band stand/performance space

- Place to access the sea for sea swimming, kayaking, canoeing, paddle boarding and to undertake sea fishing for desks/jettys
- Natural play facility, like a parkour playground
- Enhanced outdoor gym facilities, perhaps consolidated in one area
- Activities such as shuffleboard
- Beach huts for day trip visitors

## 4.2 Tourism Attractions

### 4.2.1 Overview

Visitor attractions and amenities supporting the visitor economy (leisure and business tourists), local. Within this section is information on Heritage and Maritime stories that have the potential to help activate the tourism sector.

In the past Donaghadee was a very popular town for people to visit for holidays, this included people from elsewhere in Northern Ireland and from Scotland. The town reportedly used to have five hotels to cater for holidaymakers. This popularity as a holiday destination has reduced but the town continues to have strong and growing reputation as an attractive town to visit.

Work undertaken for the major Donaghadee masterplan in 2015 gave an indication of where people have been coming from.

*Results of the shopper/ visitor survey indicate that approximately one third of those interviewed came from beyond the Donaghadee catchment area- 9% from Bangor and the rest in small proportions from a number of origins. There are limited things for visitors to do in Donaghadee Town Centre, but the seaside location assists the potential to attract more visitors. Indeed, the survey results reveal awareness among the respondents of the need to improve visitor facilities in the Town.*

The attractive townscape and seascape is the main tourist attraction, in particular the harbour (south wall) and the Lighthouse.

### 4.2.2 Supply

There are limited man-made tourist attractions for the resident or leisure/business tourism market. The natural environment and townscape of Donagahee and the wider Ards Peninsula drivers of visits

Tourism attractions listed in visitor leaflets and brochures include

- The Commons
- Route of the former Belfast and County Down Railway
- Hunt's Park Water tower
- Shore Front and Promenade
- Sailing Club
- Open water swimming and activities in the bay/harbour
- Golf Club
- The small Marina
- The Moat that overlooks the bay a 19<sup>th</sup> century fortification, primarily used as a gunpowder store, but with a history going back to the Norman settlement
- The Copeland Islands and natural history

- Copeland Distillery, a relatively new business that has a small visitor centre and café offering
- The Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat

Ards and North Down have the following designated outdoor activities for visitors

- Walking routes, including Orlock Point, Mount Stewart
- Cycling trails, Stranford Lough and Portaferry
- Canoeing launch sites, Strangford Lough
- Swimming, various including Millisle, Ballyhome

Of note is the Comber Greenway and potential extension to Donaghadee and to connect into Belfast plus the Kinnegar to Donaghadee Greenway

Of northern Ireland’s top 10 visitor attractions, two are relatively close to Donaghadee. In 2019 before the pandemic, Pickie Fun Park and Mount Stewart paid attractions combined attracted nearly 600,000 visitors and both on a growth trend between 2013 and 2019 for the previous years. This is a healthy number of in market tourists.

**TABLE 10: NORTHERN IRELAND TOP 10 VISITOR ATTRACTIONS**

Top 10	Attraction	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2019 - 2020
1	Dundonald International Ice Bowl	n/a	n/a	n/a	500	536	n/a	719	202	-72%
2	Ballyronan Marina	n/a	190	185	192	221	221	263	174	-34%
3	Blackhead Path	n/a	n/a	n/a	209	220	95	n/a	151	n/a
4	Titanic Belfast	604	634	622	668	760	815	823	150	-82%
5	Pickie Fun Park	269	243	221	225	235	397	361	148	-59%
6	Giants Causeway World Heritage Site	754	788	851	944	1,012	1,039	998	139	-86%
7	Mount Stewart House & Gardens	157	155	186	202	217	236	235	132	-44%
8	Slemish Mountain	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	77	n/a
9	Castle Ward	136	120	126	129	135	120	135	72	-47%
10	An Creagán Visitor Centre	32	36	42	49	54	56	60	65	9%

Source: NISRA, 2021

#### Notable other offerings that add to the Ards Peninsula’s experience

- Portaferry. Quaint town that serves as the ferry base on the north side of Strangford Loch. Notable attraction is the Exploris Aquarium, operated by the private sector on behalf of Ards and North Down Council, attracted 180,000 visits in 2016
- Portovoige. Commercial fishing town, not a tourist destination but many visitors will stop to look at the busy fishing fleet.
- Greyabbey. A small village close to Mount Stewart, that has a small but reportedly growing antiques and collectables retail offer
- Mount Stewart. A star attraction, one of Northern Ireland’s leading National Trust destinations
- Bangor. Significant provision reflective of the towns size, role and function. This includes the Pinkie Park, large marina, large but somewhat dated hotel, B&B accommodation stock. Bangor Castle, its parkland, walled garden and the North Down Museum

Other attractions include:

- Scrabo, Killynether Wood and the Somme Museum plus Scrabo Tower that provides views of Strangford Lough and Whitespots Country Park
- Castle Espie Wildfowl and wetland Centre
- Ballycopeland Windmill
- Drumawhey Junction Miniature Railway
- Ark Open Farm
- Eden Pottery
- Kirkistown Racing Circuit

The following tables show recent performance of visitor attractions in terms of visitor numbers. They help to understand what might be possible at the Commons in terms of potential visitors for the reimagined coastal park and for a visitor centre that is aspired to.

**TABLE 11: LEADING MUSEUMS AND ART GALLEIRS**

Paid/Free	Owner	Attraction	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2019 - 2020 (%)
Free	Local Authority	Andrew Jackson Cottage & US Rangers Museum	1,400	2,200	2,000	2,700	3,000	800	2,800	191	-93%
Free	Local Authority	Armagh County Museum	9,500	10,000	11,100	10,200	10,800	11,900	10,300	2,881	-72%
Free	Other Trust/Charity	Armagh Robinson Library	7,100	7,700	8,000	8,300	8,100	8,200	8,100	478	-94%
Free	Local Authority	Carrickfergus Museum	20,100	25,300	16,900	17,000	20,500	23,000	21,200	5,079	-76%
Free	Other Trust/Charity	Craft NI Gallery	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11,900	3,562	-70%
Paid	Local Authority	Enniskillen Castle Museums	34,600	26,500	n/a	n/a	64,700	65,100	85,700	16,909	-80%
Free	Other Trust/Charity	Herdman's Mill Museum	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,000	0	-100%
Free	Local Authority	Larne Museum & Arts Centre	3,700	3,600	3,800	4,900	7,500	6,300	7,800	1,834	-77%
Free	Local Authority	Mid-Antrim Museum at the Braid	24,700	35,000	26,100	28,900	28,900	28,000	n/a	500	n/a
Paid	Other Trust/Charity	Museum of Free Derry	21,300	18,400	13,400	14,300	32,500	34,200	38,000	8,000	-79%
Free	Other Trust/Charity	No 5 Vicars' Hill	3,800	4,000	3,600	4,100	3,300	4,000	4,400	499	-89%
Free	Local Authority	North Down Museum	80,000	78,300	74,100	76,600	75,900	72,400	73,700	25,482	-65%
Free	Other Trust/Charity	Northern Ireland War Memorial	12,700	9,400	10,000	9,800	10,600	9,200	10,000	2,867	-71%
Free	Other Trust/Charity	R-Space Gallery	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,300	1,900	1,500	1,600	604	-62%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum	n/a	n/a	11,200	n/a	12,200	12,100	12,500	1,832	-85%
Free	Other Trust/Charity	Royal Ulster Rifles Museum	1,600	2,900	3,000	3,200	1,700	1,700	2,500	474	-81%
Paid	Private	Siege Museum	8,000	2,700	3,500	8,000	8,000	9,000	15,000	3,000	-80%
Free	Private	The Abingdon Collection	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,800	500	349	-31%
Free	Local Authority	Void Art Gallery	n/a	n/a	4,100	5,700	3,500	4,800	5,900	3,466	-42%
Paid	Other Trust/Charity	Whitehead Railway Museum	7,400	6,400	6,300	5,900	10,600	15,500	12,300	1,568	-87%

Source: NISRA 2020

**TABLE 12: LEADING VISITOR HERITAGE CENTRES**

Paid/Free	Owner	Attraction	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2019 - 2020 (%)
Paid	Local Authority	Arthur Cottage	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	500	400	0	-100%
Paid	Other Trust/Charity	Belfast & County Down Miniature Railway Society Ltd.	n/a	n/a	4,600	5,900	5,600	4,400	8,000	500	-94%
Paid	Private	Belleek Pottery Visitor Centre	187,000	190,800	183,500	188,400	194,100	208,800	182,300	7,600	-96%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Benburb Priory and Valley Park	n/a	10,000	11,000	12,000	15,000	16,000	18,000	18,500	3%
Paid	National Trust	Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge	263,000	323,500	353,500	440,000	434,400	491,900	485,700	34,900	-93%
Paid	Local Authority	Dundonald International Ice Bowl	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	718,800	201,900	-72%
Paid	National Trust	Giants Causeway World Heritage Site	754,000	788,000	851,000	944,000	1,011,500	1,039,200	998,000	138,500	-86%
Paid	Private	Glenshane Country Farm	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	100	300	178%
Paid	Other Trust/Charity	Irish FA Education and Heritage Centre	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9,000	1,200	-86%
Free	Other	Irvinestown Centenary Sculpture Garden	2,000	2,000	2,500	3,000	3,100	3,700	2,000	1,000	-50%
Paid	Private	Pickie Fun Park	269,300	242,800	221,200	224,800	235,400	396,700	360,700	148,000	-59%
Paid	Local Authority	Seamus Heaney HomePlace	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,600	22,500	15,500	33,600	7,800	-77%
Paid	Local Authority	The Navan Centre	50,800	49,400	44,800	45,200	53,300	51,300	55,800	17,800	-68%
Paid	Other Trust/Charity	The Portico of Ards	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,000	5,000	5,900	6,000	200	-97%
Paid	Other Trust/Charity	The Saint Patrick Centre	97,000	101,200	103,400	103,700	110,500	133,800	130,000	15,000	-88%
Paid	Other Trust/Charity	Titanic Belfast	604,400	633,900	621,500	667,500	760,400	814,800	822,800	150,000	-82%

Source: NISRA, 2021

**TABLE 13: OTHER VISITOR CENTRES**

Paid/Free	Owner	Attraction	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2019 - 2020 (%)
Free	Other Trust/Charity	An Creagán Visitor Centre	31,900	35,800	42,100	49,000	54,000	56,100	59,800	65,000	9%
Paid	Government Department/Agency	Armagh Observatory & Planetarium	47,700	50,000	48,700	51,200	52,900	42,300	55,100	12,100	-78%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Beaghmore Stone Circles	-	12,200	16,000	14,200	8,800	11,600	20,900	24,500	17%
Free	Local Authority	Blackhead Path	-	-	-	209,300	220,400	94,800	0	151,100	-
Paid	Government Department/Agency	Greenmount Nature Trail	2,400	-	-	2,700	2,200	2,600	2,600	0	-100%
Paid	Private	Hot Milk Forge	-	-	-	-	-	1,200	700	200	-71%
Paid	Private	Oakfire Adventures	-	-	3,000	3,500	3,000	3,500	12,000	2,000	-83%
	Other Trust/Charity	Slemish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77,200	-
Paid	Local Authority	The Gobbins Cliff Path	-	-	7,900	6,900	9,400	28,500	34,000	6,400	-81%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Tirkane Sweathouse	-	2,000	2,200	2,500	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,200	4%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Tullaghoge Fort	12,500	8,000	9,000	10,000	15,000	11,200	10,800	14,000	30%

Source: NISRA, 2021

**TABLE 14: COUNTRY PARK VISITOR NUMBERS**

Top 10	Country Park/Park/Forest/Garden	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2019 - 2020 (%)
1	Lagan Valley Regional Park (inc Lagan Towpath)	1,397	1,257	1,296	1,375	1,427	1,327	1,328	1,973	49%
2	Antrim Castle Gardens	168	221	343	451	444	438	450	450	0%
3	Dungannon Park	224	332	291	368	348	383	404	321	-21%
4	Roe Valley Country Park	250	250	250	248	273	310	250	275	10%
5	Divis and the Black Mountain	n/a	115	205	205	205	170	181	215	19%
6	Carnfunnock Country Park	205	192	177	162	239	243	267	192	-28%
7	Cuilcagh Boardwalk	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	62	99	66	-33%
8	Manor Park	n/a	37	41	48	46	45	45	46	1%
9	Ness Country Park	25	30	30	82	80	85	35	40	14%
10	Davagh Forest	n/a	38	48	45	43	37	40	39	-2%

Source: NISRA, 2021

TABLE 15: COUNTRY PARKS

Paid/Free	Owner	Attraction	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2019 - 2020 (%)
Free	Government Department/Agency	Big Dog Forest	-	-	-	-	-	1,600	5,800	5,000	-14%
Free	Local Authority	Blessingbourne Bike Trail	-	16,000	16,500	17,600	17,600	13,000	9,200	9,500	4%
Free	Local Authority	Carnfunnock Country Park	204,500	192,200	177,200	162,400	238,600	243,400	267,300	192,000	-28%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Castle Archdale Forest	-	-	-	-	-	17,100	15,100	22,400	49%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Castle Caldwell Forest	-	-	-	-	-	5,200	17,000	12,800	-24%
Free	Local Authority	Cuilcagh Boardwalk	-	-	-	-	-	61,800	99,000	65,900	-33%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Davagh Forest	-	38,300	48,000	44,900	43,300	37,300	39,500	38,700	-2%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Davagh Pump Track	-	8,000	8,100	6,600	6,400	6,900	6,100	10,200	67%
Free	National Trust	Divis and the Black Mountain	-	114,700	204,800	205,000	205,000	170,000	181,000	215,200	19%
Free	Local Authority	Dungannon Park	224,100	331,700	291,100	368,100	347,500	382,600	403,800	320,700	-21%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Ely Lodge Forest	-	-	-	-	-	16,300	27,400	19,700	-28%
Free	Local Authority	Lagan Valley Regional Park	1,396,900	1,257,400	1,296,100	1,374,700	1,426,900	1,327,000	1,327,700	1,973,100	49%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Lough Navar Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	3,500	6,500	4,500	-31%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Lough Navar Scenic Drive	-	-	-	-	-	19,500	15,700	27,500	76%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Magho Pathway	-	-	-	-	-	4,000	6,300	5,500	-12%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Magho Viewpoint	-	-	-	-	-	9,000	14,400	9,600	-34%
Free	Private	Moirá Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000	1,000	0%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Ness Country Park	25,000	30,000	30,000	82,500	80,000	85,000	35,000	40,000	14%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Pollnagollum Cave	-	-	-	-	-	2,600	3,500	3,500	0%
Free	Government Department/Agency	Roe Valley Country Park	250,000	250,000	250,000	248,300	272,600	310,000	250,000	275,000	10%
Free	Local Authority	Round Lake	-	15,500	16,000	34,100	16,700	35,700	15,600	17,300	11%
Free	Local Authority	William McCrum Park	-	-	6,000	3,000	400	900	2,000	300	-85%

Source: NISRA, 2021

### 4.2.3 Implications

Perhaps the opportunity is for the Commons to be seen as a much stronger coastal parkland destination. Might this then see visitor levels similar to parks such as the Rose Valley Country Park, Dungannon Park and Carrickfunnock Country Park?

Whitespots Country Park outside Newtonards is forecast to attract 250,00 local visitors pa, and create 25 FTE jobs.

Country parks/parks/forests attracted the largest proportion of the 21.1 million visits to participating attractions in 2018 accounting for 42% of all visitors

In 2015 there were an estimated 4.7m visits to forests and country parks

How many people visit and use the Commons each year? An early initiative will be to insert footfall counters at entrance to the Commons to understand current usage during the year, days of the week and time of day.

Simplistically assuming an average of 100 people visit each day that would equate to 36,500 visits pa. 300 visits therefore would then push the total number of visits well over 100,000. Then starting to understand the nature of these visits, what are likely to be unique visits, how many are local residents making perhaps several trips a day etc will all help to provide more due diligence and support for product development and in the future enable a stronger story to be told to partners in the public and private sectors.

**TABLE 16: POPULARITY OF ATTRACTION TYPE BY SOURCE MARKET**

<b>Attraction Category</b>	<b>Estimated Proportion of Visitors External to NI (%)</b>	<b>Estimated Proportion of Domestic Visitors (%)</b>
Visitor/Heritage Centre	45%	55%
Workplaces	25%	75%
Historic Properties	23%	77%
Museums/Art Galleries	20%	80%
Other	16%	84%
Places of Worship	13%	88%
Country Park	12%	88%
Gardens	10%	90%
Wildlife/Zoo/Nature Reserve	5%	95%

Source: NISRA, 2021

Excluding place of worship and other, domestic visitors’ preference is for Wildlife/Zoo/Nature Reserve attractions followed by Gardens, Country Parks, Museums/Art Galleries and Historic Properties. Non NI visitors from the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and international markets preference is for Visitor/Heritage Centre and Heritage properties

**TABLE 17: SWOT FOR TOURISM**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Part of an attractive tourist area – Ards Peninsula	Limited provision of serviced accommodation – number of hotels and rooms
Good range of attractions for families and other groups	Better orientation and wayfinding/signage
High quality attractions such as Eden Pottery	
All weather offering	
Mount Stewart	
Outdoor activities	
Large provision of residential caravan and campsites	
Several high quality B&B and small boutique hotels	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Providing a stronger and more integrated offer for the Ards Peninsula	Attracting hotel/serviced accommodation developer and operator
Destination brand development	Residents and tourists managing peak season
Greenway and cycling	
Visitor centre/museum	

#### 4.2.4 Heritage and Maritime Stories

The following are understood to be some of the key heritage and maritime stories associated with Donaghadee.

- History of Vikings, Normans and then waves of migration associated with the 16<sup>th</sup> century plantations, with significant migration from Scotland
- Donaghee's role as a major port between north east Ireland and Britain, especially Port Patrick in Scotland, and the many social, economic, political and transport stories that have emerged over the centuries
- Natural history. The Ards Peninsula, its shoreline of Stranford Lough and Irish Sea coastline and the Copeland Islands have a strong natural environment, in particular bird life. The Irish Sea forms a fundamental part of Donaghadee's heritage, with numerous maritime stories, for example:
  - In 1953 the crew of the Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat (named after a Belfast businessman) saved 33 lives of the 177 people onboard. The Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Trust have been doing lots of work to maintain the lifeboat and to bring its story to life and are actively seeking a permanent indoor home for the lifeboat
  - Beaufort's Dyke, between Northern Ireland and Scotland a deep-water trench that was a dumping ground for munitions post WW1 and WW2, with over one million tons of ordnance dumped here.
  - The American War of Independence was brought to British waters in 1776 when the US Naval ship the Ranger duelled with the Royal Navy's Drake.
- Current BBC TV series Hope Street, will help raise the profile of Donaghadee

#### 4.2.5 Opportunities

Assessment of the area's prospects for future tourism growth

Strong growth potential as a high-quality short stay destination.

- Domestic Belfast City region and wider Northern Ireland market
- Republic of Ireland market in particular the c 2.2 million people in the Greater Dublin Area and eastern seaboard
- Overseas (GB and rest of world) City Break tourists to Belfast and seeking a new experience, barrier is access and the limited public transport
- Travellers car or RV's around Ireland – domestic and overseas

Identification of a potential events area/space

- Provision of a programable and serviced outdoor events and activity space on the central area of the Commons
- Consideration of an indoor multifunctional space within a new Visitor Centre

Recommendations on how to realise the potential growth in this sector

- Focus on a premium market positioning, as illustrated by comparator coastal towns of Ireland and Britain. Perhaps this is captured in the sales brochure for the Merchants house and Mews property development

*Donaghadee is a boutique seaside town that emanates artisan heritage, community spirit and a relaxed coastal culture*

- All product development is aligned to a premium market position and the town is “curated” and managed to a high standard of occupier and operators.
- To include a Visitor Centre and museum and medium sized high quality hotel of c 50 rooms
- With phased upgrade of the Commons with new products and services deliver a strong Destination Brand for the Commons with high quality operations and management
- Locate a tourist information office/facility within the Visitor Centre
- Strengthening of a visitor experience development plan (itineraries) for the Ards Peninsula as its own branded destination, similar to the Causeway Coast and Glens
- Provision of a cultural and/or gallery attraction, perhaps centred on photography of the area, with a programme of events and activities to attract repeat visits and increase dwell time in the town
- Provision of a dedicated RV (mobile home) parking area and as currently provided an aer de service for water, waste and electricity. Bookable and charge a premium price.
- Consider in time a tourist business improvement district that formerly brings the tourism, retail and hospitality sector together

#### 4.2.6 Conclusion

The Commons does provide an opportunity to be reimagined as a high-quality coastal park that can appeal to residents and visitors and especially holidaymakers and day trip visitors

In terms of a tourism product, there is a gap for a year-round/wet weather attraction, a visitor centre to provide a base for the visitor to orientate and for Donaghadee stories to be showcased and in particular to provide a home for the Sir Samuel Kelly.

Donaghadee has some good material that an interpretive planner could work with as part of a museum or visitor centre project.

## 4.3 Commercial

### 4.3.1 Overview

Retail and office space is primarily based on High Street, New Street, Bridge Street, Moat Street, Shore Street and The Parade.<sup>38</sup> The vast majority of this commercial space is small scale.

Primarily private sector commercial uses such as retail, office, business space, residential, F&B, health & fitness club and entertainment uses. The purpose in researching this sector is to understand the market potential of one or some of these uses to 1) add to/or compliment the visitor offer and experience of the Commons and 2) provide enabling development that can help support delivery of non-commercial “public good” initiatives to improve the attractiveness of the Commons as a major asset to help grow the appeal of Donaghadee.

This section draws on some of the analysis from the 2015 Donaghadee Masterplan.

Government, known as “New Deal, New Decade”. In business/property terms, the key takeaway from the Plan is a strategic focus on ensuring that Northern Ireland establishes itself as a global leader within the Tech sector, particularly within the areas of cyber security and Fintech. From a property point of view, we see significant scope within the office sector to deliver on those objectives. Belfast City Centre is now on the BTR radar with Grainger leading the charge. We expect this trend to continue albeit site selection will be imperative to ensure success. In summary, after two plus years of inertia, we are seeing Belfast emerging as a vibrant regional city offering a unique and relevant skill set that ought to deliver significant property opportunities, particularly within the office and residential sectors.

One of the trends brought about by the pandemic is consumer focus on local or hyper local retail and food & beverage businesses. Whilst city centres have been empty of workers and the night time economy quiet. Suburban and town local parades of shops and neighbourhood centres have generally seen an increase in sales with people working from home during the pandemic. With people discovering local businesses and the working from home in hybrid business model the expectation is that such local centres should continue to enjoy strong support and sales from their local population.

### 4.3.2 Retail

#### **The 2015 Donaghadee Masterplan, that included a Retail Capacity Study set out**

*The Town Centre comparison floorspace is estimated at 2,700 sq. m gross, comprising almost entirely independent retailers. The estimated total comparison turnover in the Town Centre is about £4.1 million, with 90% of non-food shopping undertaken in larger centres beyond the catchment.*

*Retailer demand - we are not aware of any specific multiple retailer requirements to locate in Donaghadee at present. In small towns generally, demand can take the form of a slow churn of mainly independent retailers and there is often little published information on requirements or transactions.*

The Retail Capacity Study concluded that there is little scope for significant additions to the comparison. In 2021/22 we do not believe this has changed.

The Pandemic, along with online retail and out of town offers continues to have

The challenges of towns centres and High Streets have been well documented with fundamental changes at play whether online retailing and out of town provision; the pandemic has sharpened these more. Activity has been limited. Lisney identify that the discount retailers such as Lidl, Aldi and Poundland the most active. Poundland notably taking space in Newtownards, Larne and Ballymony. These were relatively large units of 8,000 sqft +. Even if Donaghadee had that size unit is Poundland the type of retailer the town centre would like to attract given the emerging good quality and interesting independent speciality retail offer.

- Donaghadee has a small supermarket offer provided by neighbourhood CoOp and Spa supermarkets.
- The town does have a good and we understand emerging independent retail offer.
- Vacancy in the town centre appeared very low
- Prime retail rents in Belfast prior to the pandemic were £150 zone A rent sqft with yields at 7.25%. In Donaghadee rents will be significantly less at perhaps £9 to £15 sqft.

A search through various regional estates agents shows there is limited availability of retail/commercial space to rent. Ashbury Shopping Centre a neighbourhood retail centre with rents quoting at £25,000 for a unit that breaks down to £8.75 sqft and another unit quoting at £15,000 pa (£15.31 sq.ft).

### 4.3.3 Office

Donaghadee has not traditionally been an office location, there is a minimal offer in and around the town centre often within shop buildings on ground and upper floors.

Belfast City Centre, Belfast Harbour and out of town business parks plus in Bangor and Newtownards are the main commercial hubs in the region where private and public sector businesses and organisations locate office accommodation.

With corporate and SME businesses reviewing office requirements there is likely to be a shift to perhaps a hybrid working model with increased working from home.

Like other core UK cities Belfast has seen large scale office development over the last twenty years. With significant brown field space and major plans for the Harbour area, Transport Hub Belfast will continue to be the commercial centre.

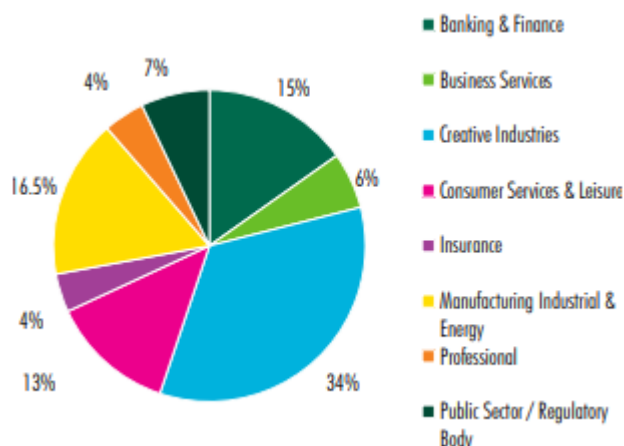
Creative Industries has been increasing as a driver of occupational demand, along with Manufacturing, Industrial and Energy plus Banking and Finance companies.

Prime rents in Belfast prior to the pandemic were £23/sqft and yield of 6% and is of the core UK and Irish cities a high-quality good value location with rents more than half the prime rent in Dublin, £10 less than Edinburgh and generally at a discount to the other core UK regional cities.

Decentralised locations such as Donaghadee will be at a large discount to this. However with the growth of home and hybrid working, attractive and popular lifestyle towns like Donaghadee could see increased demand for business space for individuals to use, corporate to provide decentralised space and space for local people to start a business from in high growth sectors in Northern Ireland such as the Creative Industries.

A search through local estates agents showed limited availability. Space in Bangor town centre is available for ap£11.20 sqft, broadly in line with retail range of £9 to £15 sqft.

**TABLE 18: SECTORS OF OFFICE DEMAND IN BELFAST**



Source: CBRE, Q2 2021

#### 4.3.4 Other : Entertainment, Gyms, Spa and Wellness Centre

Donaghadee does not have indoor or outdoor commercial entertainment (family entertainment centre, cinema, bowling etc or leisure centre, however there are two attractions in Bangor

- Eddie Irvine Sports, an indoor adventure play attraction with karting, 5 aside football, a skate park (Thunder Park), Virtual Reality Car racing, Golf simulator, Padel Tennis, Snooker & Pool, Tag Archery, Laser Combat
- Airtastic Entertainment, an indoor softplay attraction
- Both Bangor and Newtownards have multiplex cinemas

Similarly, there is not a gym, spa or wellness centre in the town, provision is centred in Bangor and Newtownards. Premium spa and wellness centres offerings include:

- The Spa at Culldone, Holywood, a 5 star hotel and spa
- Luxe Day Spa at Blackwood Golf Club at Clandeboye Estate

#### 4.3.5 Hospitality

In terms of hotels and serviced accommodation it is understood that at its peak Donaghadee had 5 hotels and/or bed and Breakfast accommodations.

Today accommodation in the town is limited to three high quality establishments

- Pier 36 – a high quality gastro pub offering 7 rooms
- One Shore Street – a boutique B&B with 5 rooms
- Manor House – B&B offering 3 rooms

Holiday rentals provide the rest of the accommodation offer in the town.

There are several residential caravan, plus caravan and camping sites a few miles to the south of Donaghadee at Millisle

Bangor offers a larger hotel stock reflecting its status and long held popularity as a holiday destination.

Donaghadee has a strong food and beverage offer and has become known as high quality “foodie” destination with the following of pub/restaurants.

- Pier 36 pub and restaurant plus rooms
- The Bull & Claw
- Grace Neills
- Lighthouse Bar & Grill
- Harbour and Company restaurant
- Tivoli Bar
- Bow Bells
- Moat Inn
- The Captains Table

Plus, there are the following cafés and ice cream parlours

- The Stormy Cup
- Bridwell Coffee
- Morellis ice cream
- Mauds ice cream
- The Cabin ice cream

#### 4.3.6 Residential

The Ards Down Area Plan 2015, suggests that over the lifetime of the document, Donaghadee requires approximately 1,000 residential dwellings to fulfil its role as a small town.

The plan indicated a proportion of lands as protected housing to the north west of the town centre boundary.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Housing Associations have cited Donaghadee as an area of relatively high demand for social housing, as well as an area in high demand for affordable housing, The identification of mixed use and cross tenure housing development in appropriate locations has been encouraged and will be important for the sustainable growth of the town.

The vision for Donaghadee to become a thriving seaside resort should mean that a viable attempt should be made to encourage more residential developments \ of development sensitively e.g. apartments.<sup>41</sup>

Seven years on from this work, Donaghadee is a growing town, attracting high demand and reflected in asking and achieved prices.

There are new single family housing estates being development on the fringes of the town, such as Hadlow Hills.

The Merchant House is the refurbishment of a heritage building on the High Street in the town centre to provide a four two-bedroom apartments and four mews style houses. As at March 2022, three of the mews houses are available at £199,950.

Average regional house price prior to the pandemic was £133,620 with Donaghadee property higher than this Zoopla in late 2021 putting the Donaghadee average of all residential types at £197,000.

Major commercial projects are being advanced for development in the area and include the Bangor Waterfront Proposal for major public space upgrade and large mixed use development

**TABLE 19: SWOT OF COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Expanding independent speciality retail offer	No discernible business centre
Strong F&B offer	No enterprise hub for people wishing to start a business
Single family residential	No contemporary office/business space
Population growth	Limited multi-family residential offer
	No private gym, spa or wellness centre
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Growth in speciality retail plus F&B offering	Investment and operator expertise
Business space for start ups, SME's, corporate decentralisers and hybrid/home workers	Planning
Space for a pop up speciality retail offer and/or market	Community objections
Gym, spa and wellness facility	
Residential – multi and single family	

### 4.3.7 Conclusion

The Commons should be cautious on seeking to attract commercial uses that could find space in existing town centre property. Development for retail, office and residential uses on lands in and around the Commons should deliver additionality and benefits for the core town centre.

#### 4.3.7.1 Opportunities

##### *Retail*

A space for pop up retail and Food & Beverage uses

Speciality retail, for example tourist related retail

##### *Office*

Provision a high quality, good value enterprise hub is an good opportunity for Donaghadee and lands adjacent to the Commons.

A serviced office concept to meet post covid hybrid working trends is likely to have potential. Providing a good quality shared office and/co working product is likely to appeal to Donaghadee residents and those from the surrounding area who in the future might work from home for part or all of the week. A workspace that offers home workers the opportunity to meet others and get away from their home is likely to have appeal.

Plus with quality of life and the local experience accelerating as a key determinant of peoples career decision making, the high quality environment and lifestyle opportunities offered by Donaghadee are a key differentiator that is likely to appeal to talent, entrepreneurs and SME's in the post pandemic business space.

This development would help to provide a more balanced sustainable town, with less people wholly commuting out of Donaghadee into Belfast and the core city centre.

##### *Residential*

This is likely to be the highest value use and reflecting the increased prestige of the town and growing demand post pandemic there is likely to be an opportunity for a multi-family apartment scheme in the town. The site of the former bus depot (private ownership) plus the adjacent council owned hard standing area present an opportunity for an appropriate apartment scheme that could contribute capital and/or income to support the councils ambitions for the Commons

#### Other – Gym, Spa and Wellness

If Donaghadee wishes to continue to establish a premium/boutique market position and to align with its healthy outdoor activity offer, development of a high quality spa and wellness centre should be considered.

This might form part of the proposed hotel or as part of the recommended mixed-use development on council owned land.

This is likely to be a good way to drive overnight visits from the rest of Northern Ireland and the Republic, especially the Greater Dublin Area.

## 5 THE COMMONS PLAN

### 5.1 Lessons From Waterfront Development

We have worked on numerous waterfront projects around the world, whilst analysed many others.

High quality waterfront destinations vary greatly in character. They are similar to large scale urban mixed use developments

- Some like Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth, England; Darling Harbour, Sydney, Australia; V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa are very commercial and leisure focused.
- Others, like Medien Hafen in Dusseldorf, Germany, Canary Wharf, London, England, UK are more office and commercial mixed use orientated.
- Others, like Montreal Vieux Port, The Leas Folkestone, Cairns Waterfront, The Pier District St Petersburg, FL are like parks.

The following are some lessons that can be drawn from the best and largest examples of waterfront development around the world. Although at a hugely smaller scale, there will be insights that can inform the potential of the Commons in Donaghadee.

#### 5.1.1 Relationship to the wider conurbation

Most examples of waterfront developments, especially 'festival' waterfronts like Darling Harbour, Baltimore Inner Harbour and the V&A Waterfront, are detached from the central business district, partly because port areas are often located at a distance from modern city centres. Because they are largely self-contained, waterfront developments can create a secure and easily managed environment that is attractive to a middle-class audience but, to attract visitors from the city centre, they need to offer something different to standard retail or leisure facilities.

#### 5.1.2 The development role of the public sector

The public sector often has a key priming role in waterfront projects. A public sector agency had a key development role in Sydney, Cape Town, Baltimore, the London Docklands and Southampton (albeit that Associated British Ports was going through a process of privatisation during the early 1980s). In Portsmouth, Manhattan, San Francisco and Toronto private sector developers were responsible for the delivery of transformational projects within the context of a public sector-led strategy to open up and connect the waterfront.

#### 5.1.3 Ongoing destination management and development

The large 'festival' waterfront schemes (V&A, Baltimore and Darling Harbour) have strong and well-resourced management organisations with a wide-ranging remit. In Portsmouth, Southampton, Gunwharf Quays and St Katherine Docks, investors with vision have sought to add value to existing schemes by upgrading the leisure and retail mix.

#### 5.1.4 Retail and food and beverage are key attractors

Retail in 'Festival' waterfronts typically have a strong character retail component (the original model was the Rouse Corporation in Boston). In Gunwharf Quays, the offer is much more brand-oriented

and Chelsea Piers is more focused on leisure. In all cases, restaurant, cafes and bars on the water are an important part of the mix.

### 5.1.5 Leisure is also very important

Events, visitor attractions and activity on the water (especially focused around a marina) are characteristic of successful waterfront schemes. 'Festival' waterfronts tend to provide a range of visitor attractions, such as an aquarium, maritime museum, historic ships, and boat tours.

### 5.1.6 Residential adds value and helps to drive footfall

Living by the water is very popular – real estate values in waterfront locations are often around 20% higher than non-waterfront locations. Often residential is introduced to help fund other common goods and wider landscape improvements

### 5.1.7 Business space, conferences and venues

Business space tends to be a secondary use in waterfront schemes - it helps to drive footfall during weekdays. A Convention Centre or venue for private or corporate hire is also a common ingredient in larger schemes, which can, in turn, help to sustain large hotels.

### 5.1.8 Making the most of heritage

Waterfront developments that take place in former working docks can take advantage of the 'urban grain' provided by imposing warehouses and other structures. The heritage of the docks, encompassing the built environment, the people who passed through and events that took place, are part of the attraction of this sort of development.

### 5.1.9 Lessons For Donaghadee

Cultural attractions are a major magnet for visitors to waterfront areas and stimulate demand for complementary facilities, e.g. hotels, apartments, restaurants.

- Waterfronts can be designed to "connect up the dots" of seaside destination attractions in order to create a branded experience offer.
- Waterfronts are more attractive when they provide a series of activity magnets and destinations along their length rather than just one or two offers.
- Waterfront parks can be much more than just places to relax and sea views, they can host activities and attractions that complement the waterfront
- Waterfronts offer residents of cities and downtowns room to breathe and relax
- For waterfronts in wet and cold seasonal climates they need to provide some wet weather spaces

The Commons and the surrounding lands, including the large expanse of hard standing currently a vacant site and car park, present an amazing opportunity for appropriate mixed use development. This site should be seen as Donaghadee's urban extension. Here there is opportunity through the public and private sector working collaboratively to bring forward appropriate development that can help to fund the wider transformation of the Commons parkland to the aspired level.

The large hard standing is we understand part of the former railway and bus station. At a much smaller scale, this can be:

- Donaghadee’s version of proposals in Belfast for the 8-hectare site beside Translink’s Europa Buscentre and Gt Victoria Street Stations, the Belfast Transport Hub at Weavers Cross.

Many other similar projects have been advanced in cities and towns in Britain, some in Ireland and around the world over the last 30 years.

With demand for residential strong, trends for more home working, outdoor experiences and wellness, Donaghadee is in a favourable position. The “brownfield” lands adjacent to the town centre present a great opportunity to help deliver the transformation of the Commons parkland and a stronger, vibrant town centre.

## 5.2 Use Options

What will be the appropriate uses and their mix that will support the vision for where Donaghadee wants to be and how can The Commons support Donaghadee on its journey.

Below is a summary matrix of range of offers and experiences with a review of risk and return and what they might mean to Donaghadee’s market positioning.

### 5.2.1 Accommodation

Beach huts, Pods, Holiday Lets, Hotel, RV Parking, Glamping, Single Family/Multi-family Housing



Seaside Hotel



Family Housing



Beach Hut Camping



Glamping Pods



Overnight RV Camping

### 5.2.2 Activity

Fishing deck, Cycle hub, Health & Fitness/Wellness, MUGA, Shuffleboard, Volleyball, Skatepark, Splash pad, padel tennis, boules/petanque, Crazy golf, amusement arcades, Zip wire, Outdoor chess, model boat lake, sea kayaking, Slides, Signature Playground, Lido



### 5.2.3 Infrastructure

Toilets, Larger marina, Gateway Signage, Wayfinding, interpretation & story telling boards, Marina & Boat Yard Viewing, Events canopy, Decks over rocks



### 5.2.4 Business, Retail & F&B Café, Restaurant, Fine Dining, Markets



Co-Working Space



Multi-Purpose Market Space



Food Market

Chandlery



Cycle Hub



Restaurant



Modular Coffee Shop



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### 5.2.5 Cultural & Education

Sculpture park/Public art, Multi-functional Centre, Museum, Sea science centre



Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat Legacy



Multi-Functional Visitor Hub



Maritime Education



Mirrored Pavillion



Interactive Classroom



Interpretive Signage & Wayfinding



Sculpture Park



Sea Science

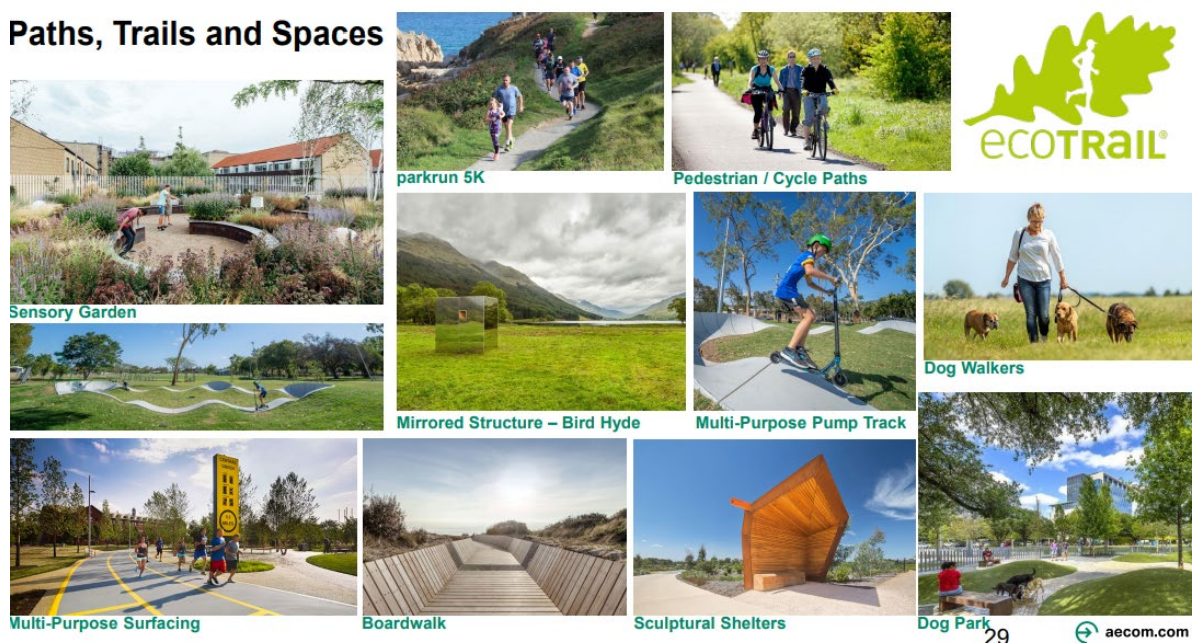
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aecom.com

## 5.2.6 Paths, Trails & Spaces

Escooter trail, Pump track, Trim trail, Cycle Path, Dog Park/Gym, Eco-trail, Sensory Garden, Bird hide, Programmable event spaces, Sculptural Shelters, Lookouts, Boardwalk over rocks/water

### Paths, Trails and Spaces



## 5.2.7 Strategic Actions

A core principle of any urban development such as that proposed for the Commons is to have a mix of three strategies. These strategies can then support more people visiting Donaghadee.

1. Improvement & Development
2. Management
3. Marketing and Promotion

To bring about transformation each of these they all have a mix of practical initiatives and catalyst projects. The Commons is a signature catalyst project to help contribute to local area economic growth and deliver a wider social dividend for the growing Donaghadee community. Below we start to set out what the reimagined Commons might be followed by a preliminary business plan for The Commons

## 5.3 Land And Property

### 5.3.1 Headline Development Issues

The study area includes a large area of brownfield land at northern end by town centre. Part is the former bus depot owned by a private business, however Ards and North Down Borough Council also have a large ownership.

This area should be considered as Donaghadee's urban extension or intensification area. A mini version of the Transport hub or Weavers Cross project in Belfast. Development would focus on providing additionality for the town and not competing with existing uses in the existing core town centre.

Unlocking some of this land for development should deliver value (capital receipt or income) that could be used to contribute to funding of the Commons upgrade, Visitor Centre (which will not be viable) and other physical development projects. Plus provide income to support ongoing high-quality operations and maintenance of the Commons destination.

*The RDS sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints of settlements with a greater than 5000 population*

*Local Development Plan, Preferred Options, March 2019*

With the private sector developer reportedly holding back from their proposed hotel development it might be that with the public sector putting some of their land into the scheme, this might reduce development risk, through delivery of a larger more attractive development.

There is an opportunity cost of providing this free hard standing parking space when market demand suggests there would be the potential for a high-quality urban regeneration development project, for example a hotel, residential and commercial space. Plus, a much-enhanced environment through high quality urban design and placemaking interventions.

It is accepted that parking is required. However, a rationalisation of car parking should be considered in the northern area as part of the reimagining of the Commons into a genuine high quality coastal parkland destination. If in the car parks get very busy, that will be a good quality problem. A parking strategy for the town should be considered. This might result in the future charging in the premium parking areas and improved parking offer elsewhere in the town that would encourage more people to walk through the town (with potential benefits for core town centre traders) to get to the Commons coastal park.

With the public and private sector likely to invest multi-million pound in the Commons upgrade, Ards and North Down Borough Council should consider if strategic land and property acquisitions are possible/desirable?

## 5.4 Conclusion

The Commons can be stretched for future success. However there will need to be an appropriate, viable and sustainable mix of uses that combined can help shift perceptions of Donaghadee and attract existing and new audiences.

Some projects will be low value but can contribute to increasing footfall, for example high quality visitor centre but caution as there will need to be high quality management and in a small town have a multi-functional use.

- Work with and leverage existing assets and hubs of energy
- The differentiators are that make the Commons and Donaghadee an attractive place exist but need to package them up better. Brand and marketing development is needed
- Bring out the heritage and future stories and tell them in a credible and compelling way
- Potential (TBC) for development on council owned sites
- Proposals should generate additionality for Donaghadee not take from other areas of the town
- Big opportunity to help differentiate Donaghadee i) Ards Peninsula and ii) Belfast City Region to add more weight NI's overall offer and experience

## 5.5 Vision And Concept

### 5.5.1 Purpose

The purpose of a re-imagined Commons is to provide a superb leisure and recreation asset for the growing population of Donaghadee and to build upon the growing appeal of Donaghadee as visitor destination. It will help to attract and retain more visitors, encourage them to stay for longer and spend more money. In particular The Commons will attract more holidaymakers and overnight stays in the town.

### 5.5.2 Destination Vision

The reimagined Commons will be an attraction in itself, a re-booted destination and feel part of Donaghadee town centre and be a critical character area of Donaghadee as informed by the Donaghadee Master Plan in 2015. The vision might be centred on urban wellness and comprise the following projects:

### 5.5.3 Destination brand

Places that have not developed a brand strategy still have a brand identity and brand reputation. It is what people who live or work there, or who visit there, think about and how they describe the place in terms of its offer of attraction, services and experiences. We term this the de-facto brand.

De-facto brands are what result from a place not determining its destination brand, when it allows everybody else to brand the place for themselves, giving markets no guidance on what to expect.

When developing destination brand strategies for waterfront places we always look at the combined offers as, in combination, they can often become greater than the sum of their parts, with the Commons and its waterfront, having the potential to epitomise the offer of Donaghadee. This is one of the powerful strategic lessons from the worldwide waterfront development projects of the last 30 years or so.

We asked a number of people not from Donaghadee about the Commons and they did not know of it. With the investment by the public sector and potentially the private sector, a destination brand strategy can help to leverage this investment.

### 5.5.4 Emerging Mission For The Commons

- The Commons will be a re-launched amenity for the Donaghadee community and an iconic product for the promotion of Donaghadee and the Ards Peninsula in regional, national and international tourism markets.
- There will be a critical mass of mini-destinations providing a range of attractions, services, activities events and experiences
- This will break the length of the Commons and its connections into the town centre into individual zones
- The plan is that the Commons will provide a number of interactive experiences – education, leisure, heritage, recreation, sporting, eating and drinking, living and staying

- For the core local and sub-regional market it will provide them with a variety of things to do and encourage more repeat visits and for people to stay for longer.
- For tourists it will provide more things to see and do and help motivate more visitors to come to Donaghadee, whether for a day trip or provide a stronger product for marketing agencies to use to promote the town and the Ards Peninsula to the trade and individual customers
- The Commons will be a hub for activity, along its length while offering a multitude of smaller and more flexible programs and experiences.
- The Commons will focus on new uses and experiences that are appropriate for the location and that will generate additionality for Donaghadee.
- An overarching principle is that the reimagined Commons will be open and offer something for everyone. The design response therefore seeks to appeal to different interests, age ranges and activity levels so that a visitor or a local resident can ‘choose their own adventure’ on each visit to the Commons.

## 5.6 Product Description

### 5.6.1 What It Is

The Commons is reimagined and presented as high-quality Coastal Park with outdoor and indoor activities throughout the year.

### 5.6.2 What It Comprises

Three broad zones of activity at the north, central and south.

- At its northern edge with the core town centre comprises new mixed use development providing contemporary real estate spaces for the visitor and residents plus high quality place making.
- The central area is the core park.
- The southern area is a parkland activity zone. It will include a RV park for this growing market.

#### 5.6.2.1 North

Flowing from Sir Samuel Kelly Square towards The Commons there will be a new Visitor Centre building and mixed-use property development as an urban extension for the town centre.

*Visitor Hub* - A multifunctional space on the site of the current recycling centre. Comprising:

- Tourist information for Ards Peninsula
- Exhibition space for the “Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat” plus Donaghadee history
- Small co-working business space
- Programable space – meetings, pop up markets/retail/exhibitions
- Café with a small retail offer

*Mixed use development* on and around the former bus depot drawing in a portion of public sector lands

- Hotel est 50 keys – perhaps with a spa/wellness centre
- Multifamily apartment

- Small office scheme for local start-ups, shared office space and co-working
- Ground floor retail, food & beverage use(s)

#### 5.6.2.2 Central

This is the essence of the Commons and is an upgraded coastal park with enhanced biodiversity. The aim will be to keep this area as natural and simple as possible. The former railway cutting will be managed as an ecotrail and enable the visitor to walk through it. We understand the tranquillity, space and views are what the core audience – local people – like the most about the Commons

- Improved paths and boardwalks/jetties that extending over the foreshore
- A programmable space for summer events
- Refurbished shelters

#### 5.6.2.3 South

- Reimagined Pavilion: Glazed extension, including a café, toilets & changing facilities (including for use by RV users). Create a more open amenity
  - From Café & retail area: hire of equipment for a small outdoor games area and the tennis/boules courts/rink: Boules/Petanque, Shuffleboard courts, Large chessboard, Croquet, Tennis rackets, bike and potentially scooter/Segway hires
- New active play facilities: outdoor gym, natural play, skate park and pump track.
- Recreational Vehicle (RV) overnight park– former Putting Green surfaced repurposed to accommodate est 25 RVs. Gated and pre-bookable through a simple app for a maximum of two nights.

## 6 BUSINESS PLANNING

Following our research, creative thinking and consultation with local people we have prepared a use mix for the Commons. The following sets out a high level business plan to inform an early business case for investment into the Commons and its immediate surrounds to deliver a superb amenity for local people and elevate the Commons as a high quality coastal park as a signature project to attract more visitors.

In addition to the upgraded of the parkland and enhancement of facilities the destination development of the Commons envisages

At the north end a New multifunctional Visitor Centre on the site of the current recycling centre. It will be approximately 800 sqm gross and across 2 levels and accommodate

- The Sir Samuel Kelly
- The Donaghdee and Irish Sea story exhibition
- Café and retail space
- Meeting, Classroom
- Exhibition spaces for programmable events (some ticketed)
- Coworking space

At the south end

- an extended pavilion including a small café and retail space
- A dedicated RV park for approximately 25 vehicles

An outline visitor forecast has been prepared on visits to the new multifunctional Visitor Centre

**TABLE 20: POTENTIAL VISITORS TO THE COMMONS VISITOR CENTRE IN YEAR 1**

**VISITOR & MARKET PENETRATION**

*Distribution of visits across market segments to show calculated penetration rates*

	% of segment	Visits						
<b>Total attraction visits - Year 1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>25,000</b>						
Independents	80%	20,000						
Tourist Groups (from Belfast cruise ships)	10%	2,500						
School & Education visits	10%	2,500						
			Repeat visit factor	Pen.	Approx pop.	Unique visitors	Repeat visits	% of total visits
<b>INDEPENDENT VISITS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20,000</b>						
Residents	40%	8,000				7k	1k	
Staying tourists	60%	12,000				4k	-	
<b>Residents</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,000</b>		<b>1.3%</b>	<b>626k</b>			<b>32%</b>
Donaghadee	40%	3,200	1.00	40.0%	8k	3k	-	13%
Greater Belfast	60%	4,800	1.20	0.6%	626k	4k	1k	19%
<b>Staying Holiday makers &amp; VFR</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>12,000</b>		<b>0.4%</b>	<b>2,700k</b>			<b>48%</b>
Overseas to NI	30%	3,600	1.00	0.5%	792k	4k	-	14%
Domestic (NI +RoI) to NI	70%	8,400	1.00	0.4%	1,908k			34%
						Avg. group size	Groups per year	Avg Groups per week
<b>TOURIST GROUPS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,500</b>		<b>0.9%</b>	<b>280k</b>			<b>10%</b>
Cruise Ship tours	100%	2,500	1.00	1.0%	280k	45	56	1
								Avg. groups per week (school year)
<b>School &amp; Education visits</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,500</b>		<b>1.6%</b>	<b>155k</b>			<b>10%</b>
Greater Belfast Schools	100%	2,500	1.00	1.6%	155k	30	83	1.60
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>25,000</b>		<b>0.7%</b>	<b>3,481k</b>			<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 21: A FIVE YEAR FORECAST**

OPEN Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Growth	
2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Period	PA CAGR
<b>25,000</b>	27,500	30,250	31,763	30,174	21%	4%
<i>Growth Rate</i>	10%	10%	5%	-5%		

The above analysis has used the following data

**TABLE 22: RESIDENT MARKET CATCHMENT**

Market Segment	Size
<i>Residents</i>	<i>Population</i>
Donaghadee	8,000
AND	154,056
Greater Belfast	463,651
<b>Greater Belfast Metro</b>	<b>625,707</b>
<b>Other NI NM+D</b>	<b>181,669</b>
RoI resident Market (Louth & Meath)	425,098
<b>SAY "Domestic" Resident POP</b>	<b>1,232,474</b>

**TABLE 23: VISITOR MARKET POTENTIAL**

<b>Tourism Visits 2019</b>	
Overnight trips to NI	5,300,000
<b>External Overnight Trips</b>	<b>2,200,000</b>
<i>GB</i>	1,500,000
<i>RoI</i>	800,000
RoW	800,000
<b>Domestic Overnight trips</b>	<b>3,100,000</b>
<b>Total Overnight Holidaymaker Trips</b>	<b>2,700,000</b>
External (GB+RoW)	792,453
Domestic	<b>1,907,547</b>
<i>NI</i>	1,500,000
<i>RoI</i>	407,547
<i>Check</i>	<b>2,700,000</b>
149 Cruise ships passengers into Belfas	279,865

**TABLE 24: SCHOOLS WILL BE AN IMPORTANT USER OF THE COMMONS AND VISITOR CENTRE**

<b>Schools IN Market area</b>	
Primary	84,721
Secondary	70,141
Total	154,862

### 6.1.1 preliminary business plan

A very early business plan has been prepared to consider the Commons as an integrated destination centred around a multifunctional Visitor Centre of some 800 sqm gross.

This high-level work suggests:

- A multifunctional Visitor Centre could attract 25,000 visitors in year 1 rising to 30,000 in year 5.
- Average turnover during the 5-year period might be £431,500 pa (from Ticketed events, Café + Retail, Room Hires, Coworking space, Festival & Events, RV Park and Sponsorship and Donations)
- Average Costs during the 5-year period might be £366,000 pa (Costs of sales, Staff costs 8 FTE and operational costs)
- Average net surplus during the 5-year period might be £65,500 pa

The multifunctional visitor centre and associated amenities will not be viable a viable property development. Like the rest of the Commons coastal park there will need to be public sector funding, to prime the context for further private sector investment and to capture longer term economic growth benefits. The early indication is that the Commons Visitor Centre could cover its operational costs. More detailed concept, design, and business planning work would be required.

**TABLE 25: INDICATIVE P&L COMMONS AND VISITOR HUB**

5 YEAR PROJECTED PROFIT & LOSS	Yr 0	OPEN Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	
		2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	
Visitors pa		25,000	27,500	30,250	31,763	30,174	
<b>INCOME</b>							
Ticket Income		€37,500	€41,250	€45,375	€47,644	€45,262	Hub hosts a programme of ticketed exhibitions each
Commercial Income		€355,548	€375,572	€389,929	€407,195	€412,292	Income from business enterprise
1. Café + Retail Hub & South		€205,555	€214,216	€223,505	€230,040	€229,583	Two Cafes 1) Visitor Hub & 2) In Café South
2. Room Hires		€17,280	€23,040	€23,424	€29,280	€29,760	Room Hires for meetings
3. Coworking		€25,988	€26,637	€27,303	€27,986	€28,685	20 Co working desks
4. Festival & Events		€41,600	€42,640	€43,706	€44,799	€45,919	2 Festivals in summer season 4k attendance
5. RV park		€55,125	€59,039	€61,991	€65,090	€68,345	25 spaces on ex putting green
6. Sponsorship, Donations, Philanthropy & Legacy		€10,000	€10,000	€10,000	€10,000	€10,000	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>€393,048</b>	<b>€416,822</b>	<b>€435,304</b>	<b>€454,839</b>	<b>€457,553</b>	<b>€431,513</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Staff Costs		€266,750	€272,085	€277,527	€283,077	€288,739	8 FTE employees
Operational Costs		€80,000	€81,600	€83,232	€84,897	€86,595	Buildings, Marketing, Small horticultural allowance
Lifecycle Costs Hub & South Café		€5,000	€5,100	€5,202	€5,306	€5,412	Base upgrades of technology
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>€351,750</b>	<b>€358,785</b>	<b>€365,961</b>	<b>€373,280</b>	<b>€380,746</b>	<b>€366,104</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS /DEFICIT</b>		<b>€41,298</b>	<b>€58,037</b>	<b>€69,344</b>	<b>€81,559</b>	<b>€76,808</b>	<b>€65,409</b>

## 6.1.2 Funding

### 6.1.2.1 Land and property

We have reviewed the council owned land in the Commons area. We consider there is the opportunity for commercial development that could provide some funding for the capital or operational costs.

Options for development include:

- Part of the community centre car park
- Part of the existing hard standing car parking area
- The putting green site

How the council wishes to participate needs to be understood, is it simply sell and exit and take the capital receipt to be used to provide some subvention for the capital costs of the Commons upgrade?

Might the council wish to stay involved and receive ongoing income to provide operational subvention that might be required.

There is potentially an exciting transformational small mixed use development could happen on these brownfield lands that in partnership with the private sector could add new property products to this desirable location.

Simple review and discussion with property experts of land values that might be achievable should the council look to sell some of their lands for full commercial value (a multi-family residential scheme with perhaps some ground floor retail, food & beverage use) might generate €375,000 per acre. With the council taking more risk and with a fee development partner and develop a scheme

that is an attractive investment asset that then might mean an investment value of £1m plus as a capital receipt.

### 6.1.2.2 Funding Sources

Other funding sources will include

- Local Authority and borrowings
- National Lottery Grants for Heritage
- Peace Plus Funding
  - £1bn from NI executive, UK Government and EU
  - It is understood that the priority of this funding is on uniting communities within Northern Ireland and north south cross border initiatives. The funding is seen as very competitive. The process for this round of funding is underway with Councils promoting their projects which is then followed by another round of funding applications from the private sector and other parties
- Strategic Investment Board. Would not provide capital funding and increasingly rare to do so, they are more focused on enabling works for projects such as providing funding for masterplans, business plans etc
- Levelling Up. Formerly announced in Q1 2022, Central Government funding to revitalise communities across the UK with a first round Levelling UP fund of £4.6bn. Funds highlighted with \* are perhaps the most likely for the proposals for the Commons
  - UK Community Renewal Fund \*
  - UK Community Ownership Fund \*
  - The Plan for Jobs
  - The Freeports programme
  - UK Infrastructure Bank \*
  - The Town Fund \*
- Northern Ireland Executive. Approaches to departments directly, for example
  - DAERA – Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
  - DFE – Economy
  - DFC - Communities

Key outcomes that they are likely to consider as important will include:

- Green growth and the transition to net zero with enhanced biodiversity
- New businesses, training and and job creation
- Bringing communities together

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

A reimagined Commons can be a landmark project that will be a great new destination for both local people and visitors showcasing the best of Donaghadee and the wider Ards Peninsula.

As a crucial catalyst project the reimagined Commons can help to frame the emerging success, urban development and economic growth of Donaghadee and Ards and North Down. It will do this by being a great public place for the local community first and then strengthen the visitor experience to the town itself and wider region. Overtime it can help to elevate this somewhat hidden part of Northern Ireland's coastline and add more to Northern Ireland's visitor experience

The best of such catalyst projects have clarity on their purpose and have a strong holistic business plan that has strong community buy in. This appears to be emerging following the consultation with the local community in Q1 2022.

Similar public sector led catalyst projects around the world, such as parks, public squares, galleries, and museums, are often not "fully commercial", they generally require a degree of public sector subsidy. Their role however is often crucial in urban development in terms of changing perceptions, generating profile, attracting more people, supporting overall "public goods", great place making, growing demand for the destination and often property values.

### 7.1.1 Recommendations

This flows into the amazing urban regeneration and development opportunity at the north end of the Commons study area. With perceptions being changed by the high quality upgrade of the core Commons coastal park and the southern Commons activity zone this will prime the context for private sector to see this area differently.

Unlocking this for development and presenting as the towns urban intensification opportunity to deliver contemporary and appropriate development that would deliver value to Ards and North Down should be grasped.

As highlighted this could be a capital receipt or ongoing income or a mix of both.

To keep it at as sea of free car parking would present a significant opportunity cost and is it really credible in the modern era? Rationalisation of the parking should be part of this plan If more parking is required that will be a good quality problem. Charging for prime parking areas should be considered. A parking strategy should be undertaken to identify other areas of the town, perhaps on the western side that would encourage visitors to walk through the town centre.

Local people are passionate for their town and the Commons, as part of future management of the Commons as destination this energy should be captured, perhaps through a Friends of the Commons or perhaps incorporating local businesses and landowners in a form of Tourist Business Improvement District.

Ards Peninsula does have potential for more growth through continued product and especially brand and marketing development.

- The differentiators are there there is the charming harbour and lighthouse but hidden, and coast setting, green spaces, townscape and seascapes that have generated lots of heritage and stories.
- There are a combination of things that need to be assembled and packaged to tell a stronger story that will then establish differentiator. Donaghadee should prepare a destination brand and marketing strategy for the Commons as a new signature project for the town. The town should make more noise.
- The Commons can be stretched to strengthen a clear position for Donaghadee with a mix of great outdoor offer and experiences plus new contemporary development on its brownfield lands

The opportunity is for a stronger offer, experience, and reputation with much more consumer appeal that can then attract more people to stay for longer, make more repeat visits and spend more money

A reimagined Commons in addition to boosting Donaghadee, will add more critical mass to the Ards Peninsula as a tourism destination by supporting stronger experience and itinerary development plans.

Donaghadee Consultation Comments		Consultee Comment	AECOM Reponse	ANDBC Response	To be actioned? Y/N
<b>27/01/22 Consultation</b>					
No.	Contact Name(s)				
1	Susie McCullough	The Land owner of old Translink site already have plans for their site. I assume the guys will be speaking to them directly?		yes they have already spoken to Michael Dunlop on their current plans and will continue to engage with them.	
2	Alan Burnside	uneasy about cyclists and pedestrians sharing a path no matter how wide.	The design of the pathway alignment, materials and widths have been developed following previous experience on projects where this has been successful. Victoria Park		
3	Alan Burnside	Glamping site should be used for RVs not huts vulnerable to vandalism.	We are currently looking at this area being an RV only site. This will be discussed with ANDBC and if agreeable this will be updated within the masterplan.		AECOM to add tidal sea wall to masterplan to prevent tidal flooding
4	Swannie	Would it be possible for roads authority to provide a crossing / traffic lights to safely access Hunts Park as there is going to be a large increase in footfall.	The crossing point from The Commons to Hunts park at Millisle Road has been identified as needed improved. As part of the masterplan we have proposed an enviromental improvement scheme that would include improved pedestrian footways/materials and signage. In addition we have proposed a Toucan crossing that would provide a safe and accessible pedestrian/cyclist crossing.		
5	Alan Burnside	Open air gyms are unlikely to succeed as enthusiasts, especially women, prefer privacy.	There is a balance to be struck between improvements and over development. The current position is that the Dee is included in the top 10 towns to live in as featured in the national magazine Coast. Investment is appreciated but it must be carried out in a sympathetic manner.	There are currently a series of isolated exercise equipment located across the site. We are trying to create an activity hub at the South Commons and consolidating the exercise equipment forms part of this proposal.	
6	Alan Drennan		Sympathetic Design has been considered throughout. Enhancements and improvements to the existing site have been a key design driver. E.g – Planting enhancement with no removal of existing planting. No proposals for coastline alterations		
7	Alan Drennan	The point made about the glamping site eventually becoming hotel or apartments - will the council guarantee that any development will be limited to low rise - otherwise people on the Millisle Road will lose their view Is it the intention to charge for the Glamping Huts and RV Camping area? If so the RV's will not pay, they only want to park for free and will use other car parks in the town to do so. I'm afraid I disagree that they bring money into the town, they tend to take up more space and rarely eat/drink in the restaurants and pubs.	Any development that maybe proposed on this site in the future would be subject to funding and planning approval. The view of the local residents along Millisle Road would most definately be considered throughout the design process and further consultation engagement would be carried out.		
8	John	We are concerned about large cycle groups on Warren Road coming into town where the road narrows and clashing with visitors' parked cars, residents' parked cars, and pedestrians	This site would be leased as a private venture so it would be the intention to charge for the use of the site.		AECOM to prove that it is possible to charge. RH evidence
9	Linda	Public art. Can we ensure that local people get a chance to see or vote on any proposals. I certainly would like to hope we will never see anything like the monstrosities we had adjacent to the war memorial this summer.	Any public art that would be proposed would be design in collaboration with the local community and consulted on accordingly. The masterplan at this stage simply identifies location for potential public art. The detailed design of this would be completed at the next stage.		
10	Alan Couser	There is current conflict between users and other users of the Commons Greenway. A number of cyclists treat the Greenway as a race track and other users are up in arms about how the Greenway is used. A number of people have been injured by these people.	The design of the pathway alignment, materials and widths have been developed following previous experience on projects where this has been successful. Victoria Park		
11	Alan Drennan	The huge car park at the Quarry hole are, there is no sign posts to say it is there, also get the Mobile homes back ,not stop them, they bring so much to town.	An appropriate signage strategy is considered through the masterplan. RV have been considered and a dedicated site is being proposed at the current putting green location.		
12	Robert Neil				
13	Alan Drennan	Any lighting on the commons would need to be approved by environmental experts in respect of the wildlife.	All required enviromental surveys will be carried out in order to inform the lighting proposals. Detailed design of the lighting and environmental surveys would be carried out at the next stage.		Add low level lighting to Masterplan and add costs. Motion sensitive
14	Alan Couser	Both paths need to be considered. People do wish to walk along the shore, although the new path may provide better connectivity.....	The path network across the commons has been developed to provide paths/routes for all users		Explore path loop at greenspace
15	Laura McCay	can i query why a Hub is required at the amenity centre site when there is a community centre already in situ.? If this is to facilitate the Lifeboat surely there are other options to consider. This would be a saving of resources	It is appropriate in terms of Town connectivity. It will provide additional uses that the community centre does not offer in order to ensure there is no duplication. eg museum (including Sir Samuel Kelly) / market space, collaborative office spaces, bar / café		
16	Alan Drennan	If you make recycling centre difficult to get to you run the risk of fly tipping	The masterplan is simply identifying a proposals and subsequent benefit to the town if the recycling centre is relocated. The relocation of the recycling centre would be carfully considered and consulted on with the local community before any decesions on its location or access would be made.		
17	Alan Cowan	Perhaps there could be some provision for a social hub for groups to meet as well?	These facilities could be incorporated into either the new visitor hub or the refurbished Pavilion. Details of which will be developed at the next stage with further community engagement.		
18	Naomi McBurney	Possible option for town centre connectivity a heritage walking trail that begins at the south side and drives visitors through to the town with key points of interest.	The main 4m wide footpath that runs along the top of the railway cutting could have a series of interpretational signs that tell the heritage of donaghadee. The detail of this signage strategy would be developed at the next stage of the project.	This can be raised through revision of the masterplans	

19	Lee Cummings	Existing Railway line (eco-trail) at end of his mums garden, subsidence issue?	A detailed survey and further detailed design will be undertaken at the next stage of the project. Any subsidence issues identified within the surveys would be taken into consideration through the design process.	
20	Linda	car parking a challenge in the town, better traffic management	The masterplan has provision for a car park extension to the south. Further reconfiguration to increase parking spaces will be considered at the community centre and area adjacent to the boat yard. The masterplan proposals will be reviewed by the AECOM transportation team and any comments or modifications will be reviewed and incorporated accordingly.	This can be raised through revision of the masterplans
21	Alan Cowan	Provision for MUGA close to community centre.	Given the existing car parking and private development site to the North there is limited opportunities to provide a MUGA close to the community centre.	Consideration needs to be given to the sports hub
22	Linus Merden	Integration of the Commons to town centre is crucial, what about us town centre business people? Subtle lighting would be good, walkers, runners, safety, glamping, can get flooded to so, possible apartments and hotel really? Local residents lives opposite.	Agreed the integration of The Commons to the town centre is crucial. The creation of a pedestrian plaza at the distillery with a new pedestrian walkway linking this to the heart of the commons aims to better connect the heart of the commons with the town centre.	This can be raised through revision of the masterplans AECOM to review side street connectivity.
23	Lyn Sheridan		All required environmental surveys will be carried out in order to inform the lighting proposals. Detailed design of the lighting and environmental surveys would be carried out at the next stage.	
24	Naomi McBurney	Family friendly and inclusive play	The guiding principles of inclusive play would be integral to the design of the play facilities. The design of the specific play equipment will be developed at the next design stage	
25	Robin Mansfield	No mention of history	The history and heritage of Donaghadee will be incorporated within the Visitor Hub and interpretation signage throughout The Commons	AECOM to review narrative of history and heritage in design report
<b>24/02/22 Consultation</b>				
1	Jeremy Cooke	DDee badly needs a space for Digital Startups for new businesses	The proposed visitor hub includes the use of digital start up space as well as collaborative working space	
2	Jeremy Cooke	All grassed areas should be planted with bee-friendly meadow mix DDee used to have a sea water bathing pool for the people who didn't want to sea swim. Could a sea water pool be incorporated?	Species would be native and appropriate for coastal environment	
3	Jeremy Cooke		Better access to the sea is part of our proposals	
4	Janice MacArthur	will the path be a dual space for cyclists also?	Cycle groups would not likely stay on roads. Parks and greenways are predominantly used by recreational cyclists.	
5	Jon Gonzalez	does the pedestrian walk way mean it would be behind the proposed two story building out of site of the sea?	The proposed walkway is located to the front of the proposed visitor hub with views to the sea.	
6	SMcFarland	Has the Council any plans to start charging for Parking within the large Car Park at the boatyard?		Charging for this site is not currently planned turning circle / autocad track 40 foot truck Yes they are, we are looking at how they can be reused AECOM to check if listed. Add removed shelter
7	Leanne McCullough	are those shelters not listed?		
8	Joe McClune	One way to bring tourist and money to the town is to have PARKING SPACES for Motorhomes to park in (a site with facilities not required) This has been proven in other areas in the past few years as staycations promoted ie a small village down south provided parking spaces and brought 1.5 million to the village last year as reported in a Kilkenny newspaper there is currently Japanese knotweed in this area - I'm assuming this will be treated as part of this work.	We are currently looking at this area being an RV only site. This will be discussed with ANDBC and if agreeable this will be updated within the masterplan. Wave return at coastline would be considered to protect the site from coastal flooding.	Calculate RV numbers in site. RH to contact Joe McClune for reports and data
9	Janice MacArthur	pedestrians and 'serious' cyclists (planned to join the Belfast commuter route via the coastal path) do not mix. Have experienced this on the comber greenway and north down coastal path	Invasive species surveys would be taken into consideration through the detail design process.	
10	Leanne McCullough		Cycle groups would most likely stay on roads. Parks and greenways are predominantly used by recreational cyclists.	We are legally bound to deal with this for any development work. Shared space image comber greenway. (share respectfully image)
11	Jeremy Cooke	The play park is already in Lemon's Wharf. I don't think we need another so close	The proposed play park is a different playpark character of natural play to allow wider age group. The proposal involves the relocation and improvement of the existing play park. The design of the specific play equipment will be developed at the next design stage.	
12	SMcFarland	How will the path be illuminated?	All required environmental surveys will be carried out in order to inform the lighting proposals. Detailed design of the lighting and environmental surveys would be carried out at the next stage.	If bollards are approved, costs should be updated.
13	Janice MacArthur	will this area have lighting also as Dee Runners use this route too?	All required environmental surveys will be carried out in order to inform the lighting proposals. Detailed design of the lighting and environmental surveys would be carried out at the next stage.	
14	iPad	Will there be any cycle free paths for pedestrians to use safely	It is not our intention to deter recreational cyclists to use the path networks freely. Appropriate safety measures such as signage would be proposed to encourage safe shared use.	
15	Leanne McCullough	Motorhome and glamping are in the town masterplan for Crommelin Park - as an ecopark - not for the Commons - why here and now	AECOM transportation carried out exercises to determine if the access to commelin is sufficient for motorhome access. Their conclusion noted that the access is no suitable.	This can be raised through revision of the masterplans
16	Leanne McCullough	the pitch and put is regularly flooded in winter	Flooding prevention measures such as wave return at coastline would be considered to protect the site from coastal flooding.	Consult with QS
17	Jeremy Cooke	Glamping cabins will be destroyed over winter Lighting and strategic CCTV in the area is key given the fact that vandalism is sadly a potential risk	We are currently looking at this area being an RV only site. This will be discussed with ANDBC and if agreeable this will be updated within the masterplan.	
18	Janice MacArthur	Could we not have an outdoor classroom - like they have done recently at Belfast castle to teach kids about flood risk ...include a reed bed like Castle espie to deal with waste water from extended pavilion	All required surveys will be carried out in order to inform the lighting and CCTV proposals. Detailed design would be carried out at the next stage.	
19	Leanne McCullough		Education is an important aspect to the proposal and will definitely be considered.	
20	Jeremy Cooke	We should also consider facilitating pop-ups, markets and fairs.	Provision for pop-up markets and fairs is to be incorporated into the pedestrian Plaza design.	Existing Car park already an event space consideration
21	Jeremy Cooke	Motor homes aren't going to go away so we should embrace them and make a few quid of them.	We are currently looking at this area being an RV only site. This will be discussed with ANDBC and if agreeable this will be updated within the masterplan.	

22	Leanne McCullough	agree Jeremy but if they were at Crommelin - with a community of like minded people - campers, glamping - they could walk through town and spend money while going to coast/moat etc	AECOM transportation carried out exercises to determine if the access to commelin is sufficient for motorhome access. Their conclusion noted that the access is no suitable.	
23	Jeremy Cooke	There is the argument to pedestrianise the area in front of Pier 36 and divert traffic behind. A street of tables may make a lot more morning for the town.	This would be difficult to realise as there would be limited access for car to the main car park at the boat yard. The proposal encourages uninterrupted pedestrian movement from the North to the South of the commons.	
24	SMcFarland	When do you hope to start the work?	This proposal is a concept design masterplan with the purpose of securing funding. All works are therefore dependent on future funding attained by the council.	
25	Rosie Woods	And when do they hope to finish? Is there a definite plan for the brown 'potential development site' Community. Centre is not open all day every day hence sending people there to view proposals isn't helping those. With limited WIFI access		The Brownfield site has lost its original funding package but the owners are hopeful that they can still attract funding for a Hotel/Office accommodation.
26	Patricia's iPad	Can there be a link between the railway 'path' within the commons to link to the existing (railway) path to the water tower?	Proposing EI scheme to better connect Hunts Park and the Commons through improved crossing. To be further investigated at later design stage.	
27	Jane Rogers	At the west prom in Portrush the Council tried to provide space for both walkers and cyclists with line markings to zone the areas without success, became too dangerous	Appropriate safety measures such as signage would be proposed to encourage safe shared use.	
29	Gillian McDonald	Sorry I was late to the zoom...Can I ask if there are ideas for building an exercise area without needing to walk far to the next exercise machine.	Outdoor Gym proposed next to pavillion and car park. Closely located equipment allows outdoor gym use without needing to walk far to the next exercise machine.	Amend note to add informal exercise / classes area
30	Rosie Woods	I think it's important to keep cyclists separate somehow, so walkers feel safe and relaxed and avoid accidents	Cycle groups would most likely stay on roads. Parks and greenways are predominantly used by recreational cyclists.	
31	Jeremy Cooke	Outdoor chess or drafts sets ?	Equipment could be rented out of the proposed café / bike rental hub.	
32	Jeremy Cooke	Would a concrete sea swimming pool at the South Commons not protect the commons? What wild life is in the Commons? From what I see it's a desert. Planting half of it with whinns could only make it better.	Potential to be considered at the detail design stage.	
33	Jeremy Cooke	The Motorhome Fraternity have indicated that they would be prepared to pay for the need for excessive maintenance	The proposal includes providing additional planting / rewinding to encourage more biodiversity and reduce the need for excessive maintenance	
34	Janice MacArthur	Please move car parking away from the shore!	Noted	
35	Jane Rogers	And making a link to route to Water Tower?	Proposing EI scheme to better connect Hunts Park and the Commons through improved crossing. To be further investigated at later design stage.	
36	Jane Rogers	I agree that would put motorhome users off if they can't see the sea, surely any tourism is good		
37	Rosie Woods	We don't need more transient sculptural follies!		
38	Jane Rogers	Perhaps railway sleepers on the path is a way to separate cyclists and pedestrians		
39	Rosie Woods	plenty of motorhomes park up at green spaces...and then walk to blue space		
40	Leanne McCullough	Good opportunity for a motor home hire business here?		
41	Jeremy Cooke	Janice, is the Council aware that Motorhome owners are continuing to stay in the Sir Samuel Kelly car park at present?	Consideration for DD stage	
42	John	Surely conservation and environment should be a key concern for ACOM?	The proposal includes providing additional planting / rewinding to encourage more biodiversity and reduce the need for excessive maintenance	
43	Jane Rogers	Wildflower planting covers my house		Masterplan to be updated accordingly
44	smcfarland	Outdoor classroom	Education is an important aspect to the proposal and will definitely be considered.	
45	Janice MacArthur	Parking spaces for motorhomes. Good to bring tourism and money into the area. Could be making money from tomorrow.		
46	Joe McClune	Needs to be integrated into the rest of the town	Connections to the park include signage improvements. Primary and secondary connections. Plaza and recycling centre relocation. RLB to work to.	
47	Leanne McCullough	Why pump park and skate park, should be at the moat.	The Moat is a historic listed site which would mean restrictions on development. The activity hub is focused at southern part of commons.	
48	Leanne McCullough	Flooding in early December of community centre car park couldn't get out	Flood risk surveys would be carried out at detail design stage.	
49	Patricia's iPad	Brent geese land on grass area (but that is manicured, want less of that)	Bird Surveys would be carried out at detail design stage.	
50	Patricia's iPad	Too much cars likely, too much impact on wildlife	Organised car parking to allow for rise in tourism however sustainable travel either by bus or bike is encouraged through the proposed EI scheme on the Millisle Road and bike rental hub / connections to hunts park proposed greenway route.	
51	Patricia's iPad	Concerned about cars and difficult corner	Not wide enough for footpath. Safer by encouraging pedestrians through plaza	AECOM to explore - if possible to widen road
52	Kerry Melville	Walkers, concerned with mix of cyclists and walkers, no warning, will there be lines separation for walkers and cyclists	Cycle groups would most likely stay on roads. Parks and greenways are predominantly used by recreational cyclists.	
53	Tom and Anne Johnston	by changing the Distillery/Pier 36 Car Park to a Plaza we need to make sure that both businesses can still use the area for deliveries	The design of the plaza will indeed have to consider delivery access for the businesses that back onto that space.	
54	John Cauldwell	Do we need another playground? Believe yes, more for children to play in, good to get children playing. Lovely to cycle into town on a safe path, encourage family cycling. Share path be respectful. Encourage with signs.	The proposed play park is a different playpark character of natural play to allow wider age group. The proposal involves the relocation and improvement of the existing play park. The design of the specific play equipment will be developed at the next design stage.	
55	Barbara Johnson	Hi Adam, I actually only had a question. I talked to a number of local traders and most were asking which local businesses you talked to in the process of developing this proposal when you visited Donaghadee ? Kind Regards, Linus	Morning Linus, Thank you for your email. The consultation process commenced with a key stakeholder meeting with invites provided by the Council which included representative groups. The purpose of the recent online public consultations was to allow all those interested to voice their opinion on the proposal. This included local residents and traders.	
56	Linus Merden via email			

Hello Adam, Thank you for your reply, This was really just about how this initial draft came about; the information provided is rather vague to be honest. If something moves forward I was told from council side it is not even so much about the Commons anymore as it is about "the copeland plaza", and that is the bit that I know the traders that definitely got spoken to during the process of creating a plan will be the ones getting more business to the disadvantage of all other traders. I raised my concerns in regards to this before and due to recent developments in regards to planning I can just repeat this notion and that I am happy enough to get more of the traders involved that I spoke to and that approached me, either to see if there is an idea that is fair not only to, I quote what basically every trader says "always the same people". Kind Regards, Linus Menden

57 Linus Merden via email

Hard Copy Comment (no name)

Who need a sculptural ampitheatre for one or possible two shows a year?

The sculptural piece of art would not be used for events. It would be a sculpture design competition by a local artist. Potential events would use a temporary stage as what is used currently and would be located in the open grassed area further inland.

Hard Copy Comment (no name)

Moving Play park close to the car park discourages young ones exercise by wa

Relocating the play park closer to the car park allows for environmental benefits to the central area of the commons such as rewilding and habitat creation. Furthermore, it allows for easier accessibility for children / adults with mobility impairments.

Hard Copy Comment (no name)

The proposed bird hide is not needed, the structure would not last three winter stages.

The longevity and materiality of the bird hide / boardwalk would be explored in detail at the next design stage.

Hard Copy Comment (no name)

The existing shelters provides wind protection from all directions. The proposal only includes one.

Listed status of the shelters to be confirmed.

AECOM to revise design to incorporate the refurbishment of both shelters where possible

Hard Copy Comment (no name)

Where is parking for glampers?

This will be represented at the next design stage

63 Leanne McCullough

rather than competing café with local traders, try a juice bar

The use can be determined in the next stage

64 Leanne McCullough

consider if kiosk for the hire of pedalos, wet suits etc. would be feasible

Potential to be rented from café / cycle hub pavillion extension

65 Leanne McCullough

Pavillion expansion - instead of washing facilities for glamping add toilets [school groups and other users], baby changing and adult changing facilities.

The intention is to allow for public use with accommodation for glamping / RV use also

## The Commons, Donaghadee Public Survey: Summary report

This report was created on Tuesday 01 March 2022 at 16:33 and includes **137** responses.

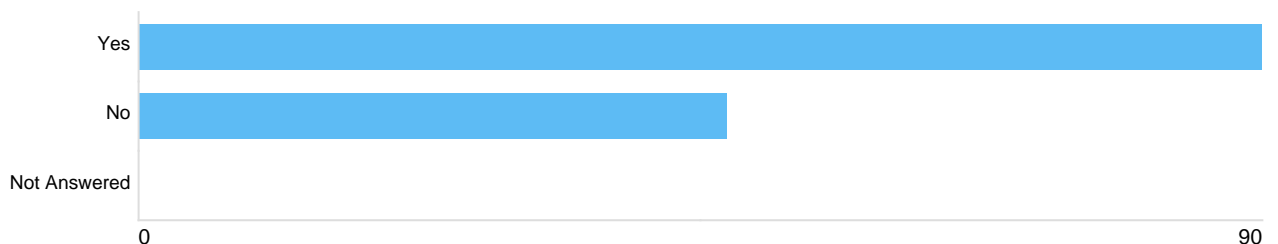
The activity ran from 11/01/2022 to 28/02/2022.

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Question 1: Do you support the principle of the proposed Masterplan?	1
Do you support the principle of the proposed masterplan?	1
Please outline your reasons below:	1
Question 2: Please tell us what you like about the Masterplan	1
Please tell us what you like about the masterplan	1
Question 3: Please tell us what you do not like about the Masterplan	1
Please tell us what you do not like about the masterplan	1
Question 4: Are there any improvements we could make to the Masterplan?	2
Are there any improvements we could make to the masterplan?	2
Please outline these improvements below:	2
Question 5: Do you feel this consultation process and the information presented has enhanced your understanding of the proposed Masterplan?	2
Do you feel this consultation process and the information presented has enhanced your understanding of the proposed masterplan?	2
If no, please state the reasons why:	2
Question 6: In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? (Please tick all that apply)	2
In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	2
Other:	3
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Please tell us your gender	3
Question 8: Please tell us your age (Tick the appropriate box)	3
Please tell us your age	3

### Question 1: Do you support the principle of the proposed Masterplan?

#### *Do you support the principle of the proposed masterplan?*



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	90	65.69%
No	47	34.31%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

#### *Please outline your reasons below:*

There were **137** responses to this part of the question.

### Question 2: Please tell us what you like about the Masterplan

#### *Please tell us what you like about the masterplan*

There were **137** responses to this part of the question.

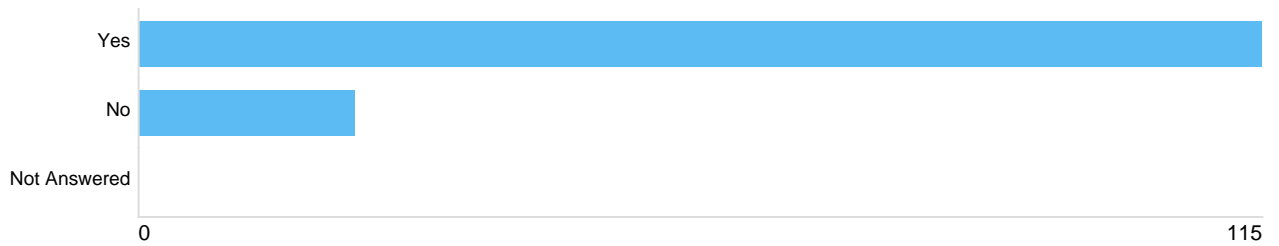
### Question 3: Please tell us what you do not like about the Masterplan

#### *Please tell us what you do not like about the masterplan*

There were **137** responses to this part of the question.

**Question 4: Are there any improvements we could make to the Masterplan?**

*Are there any improvements we could make to the masterplan?*



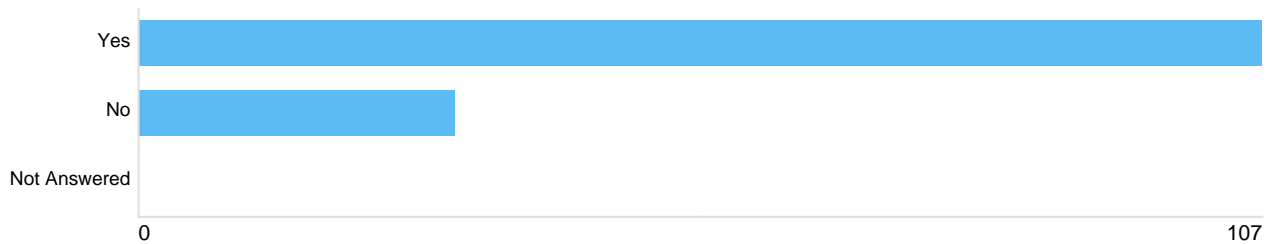
Option	Total	Percent
Yes	115	83.94%
No	22	16.06%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**Please outline these improvements below:**

There were **137** responses to this part of the question.

**Question 5: Do you feel this consultation process and the information presented has enhanced your understanding of the proposed Masterplan?**

*Do you feel this consultation process and the information presented has enhanced your understanding of the proposed masterplan?*



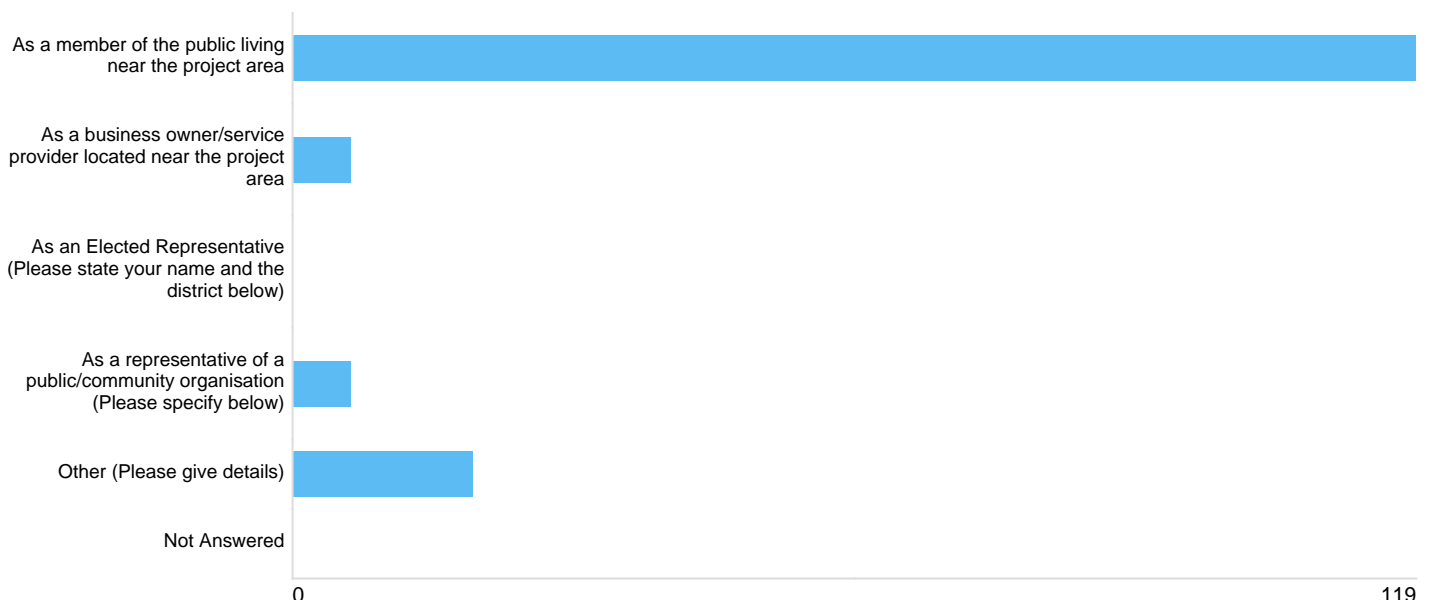
Option	Total	Percent
Yes	107	78.10%
No	30	21.90%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**If no, please state the reasons why:**

There were **137** responses to this part of the question.

**Question 6: In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? (Please tick all that apply)**

*In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?*



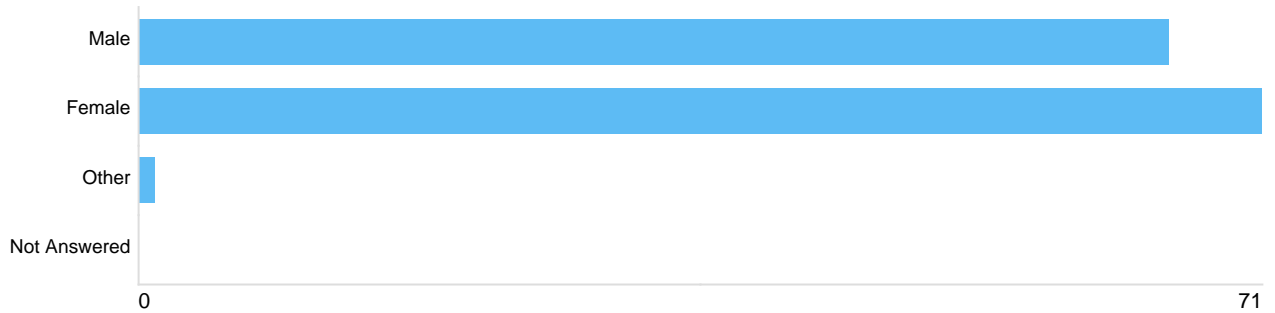
Option	Total	Percent
As a member of the public living near the project area	119	86.86%
As a business owner/service provider located near the project area	6	4.38%
As an Elected Representative (Please state your name and the district below)	0	0.00%
As a representative of a public/community organisation (Please specify below)	6	4.38%
Other (Please give details)	19	13.87%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**Other:**

There were 32 responses to this part of the question.

**Question 7: Please tell us your gender (Tick the appropriate box)**

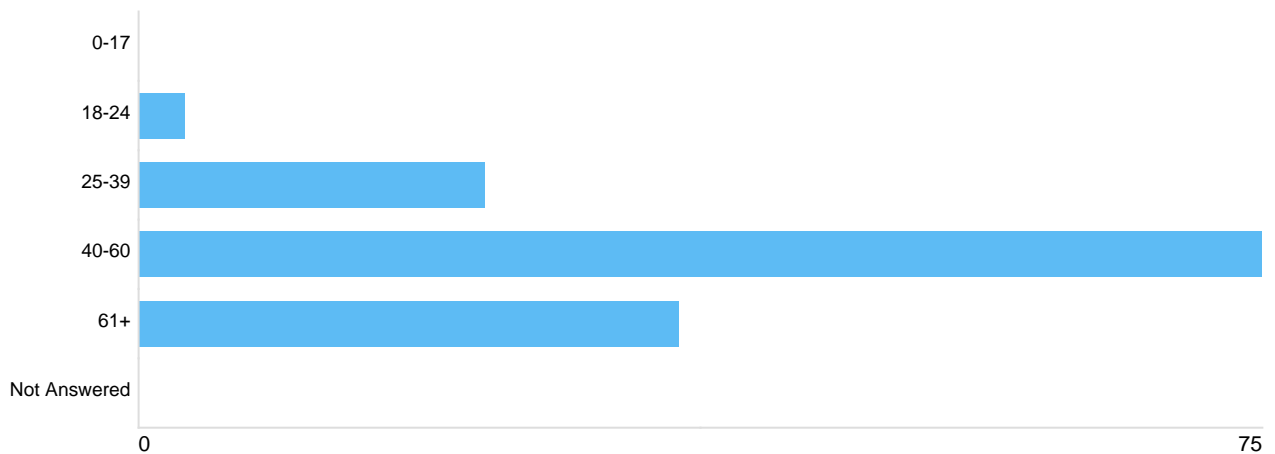
*Please tell us your gender*



Option	Total	Percent
Male	65	47.45%
Female	71	51.82%
Other	1	0.73%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

**Question 8: Please tell us your age (Tick the appropriate box)**

*Please tell us your age*



Option	Total	Percent
0-17	0	0.00%
18-24	3	2.19%
25-39	23	16.79%
40-60	75	54.74%
61+	36	26.28%
Not Answered	0	0.00%