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**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

1

Donaghadee
Masterplan Review
Draft - August 2023

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Introduction

This report has been prepared to summarise the findings of a review of the Donaghadee Town Centre Masterplan and baseline understanding of the Town. It has been researched and prepared by The Paul Hogarth Company, with McGarry Consulting and informed by a public engagement exercise undertaken by Ards and North Down Borough Council.

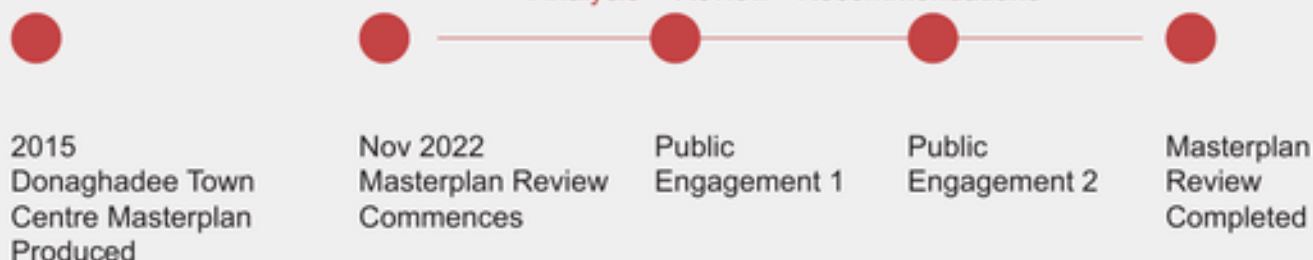
The Masterplan was produced in 2015 and this update is necessary to reflect progress, as well as changes in town and its social, economic, environmental and policy context.

The following section sets out an understanding of current projects, initiatives, an overview of conversations with stakeholders as well as a fresh analysis of Donaghadee.

It is followed by revised priorities and actions for Donaghadee Town Centre to be delivered over the next 8 years.



Analysis - Review - Recommendations





What has happened since the masterplan was written?

The Donaghadee Town Centre Masterplan was produced by AECOM in 2015, since then much has changed. The role of the town centre is changing as more functional and retail needs are met online, there has been a post pandemic shift in patterns of work and commuting and a reinvigorated interest in community and what is local.

Donaghadee has seen much success driven by the community and the work of the Donaghadee Community Development Association resulting in a thriving and attractive town centre despite the challenges.

A summary of projects delivered since 2015 is provided in the following section.

i. Masterplan Delivery

Donaghadee Masterplan Projects		Progress			
		Uncompleted	On-going	Completed	Notes / Comments
The Town Centre					
Shop front improvement scheme			✓		Scheme Implemented
Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)			✓		9 properties including The Moat
Public realm enhancements			✓		
Improving the character and accessibility of existing laneways		✓			Hunters Lane resurfaced
Enhancing Heritage					
Restoration of the walled garden and civic space opposite Manor House	✓				
Reinstatement of historical pedestrian routes	✓				
Development of Opportunity Sites					
Restoration of the Manor House grounds to create an arts and crafts hub to include accessible town centre car parking	✓				
Opportunity for further residential development		✓			
Opportunity to develop a seafront hotel	✓				Plans not progressed
Parking and Accessibility					
Character and accessibility enhancements to the alleyways		✓			Hunters Lane resurfaced
Preparation of a parking strategy			✓		2019
Reuse of backland sites for town centre car parking/ implementation of a traders' car park		✓			
The Harbour					
Redevelopment of the Harbour to include the construction of an outer nib and extension of the North Pier to the Lemon's Wharf – this project would require a feasibility study and economic appraisal as a key short-term action	✓				Donaghadee Harbour Study completed 2019
Explore commercial opportunities building on the redeveloped harbour – café/ice-cream kiosks etc	✓				

Donaghadee Masterplan Projects		Progress			
		Uncompleted	On-going	Completed	Notes / Comments
The Commons Coastal Park					
Construction of a new heritage museum focusing on Donaghadee's maritime and railway heritage	✓				Vision within Commons Masterplan
Creation of the Common's Linear Park to include pathways, play areas, look-out points and new accesses. In the short-term a Site Specific Masterplan should be developed to guide a future development.			✓		Commons Masterplan completed
Formalised boatyard and screening			✓		Within Commons Masterplan
Realignment of the road to the rear of the Community Centre to greatly improve access to the Commons Coastal Park			✓		Within Commons Masterplan
Crommelin Ecopark					
Transforming Crommelin Park into an Ecopark to include fitness and nature trails	✓				Nature trail installed
New motorhome, touring caravan and campsite facilities	✓				
Development of the Donaghadee Sports Hub which has the potential to release several important sites including more comprehensive redevelopment of Crommelin Park			✓		Business Case including site options and operating models in development

ii. Other Delivery/Success





How is Donaghadee today?

Overview

Donaghadee, with a millennium of history, was once the prominent port on NI's east coast. It is now once again a thriving town with a renewed sense of heritage. The town's appeal has been magnified in recent years, seeing an increase in tourism related to cruise ship visits and the popularity of a TV drama filmed there. Donaghadee is 18 miles east of Belfast and 6 miles south of Bangor along the coast with a population of 7,325 (2021 Census). NI's main ports and airports are within an hour ensuring good connections. Furthermore, almost 1 million people live within 75mins drive.

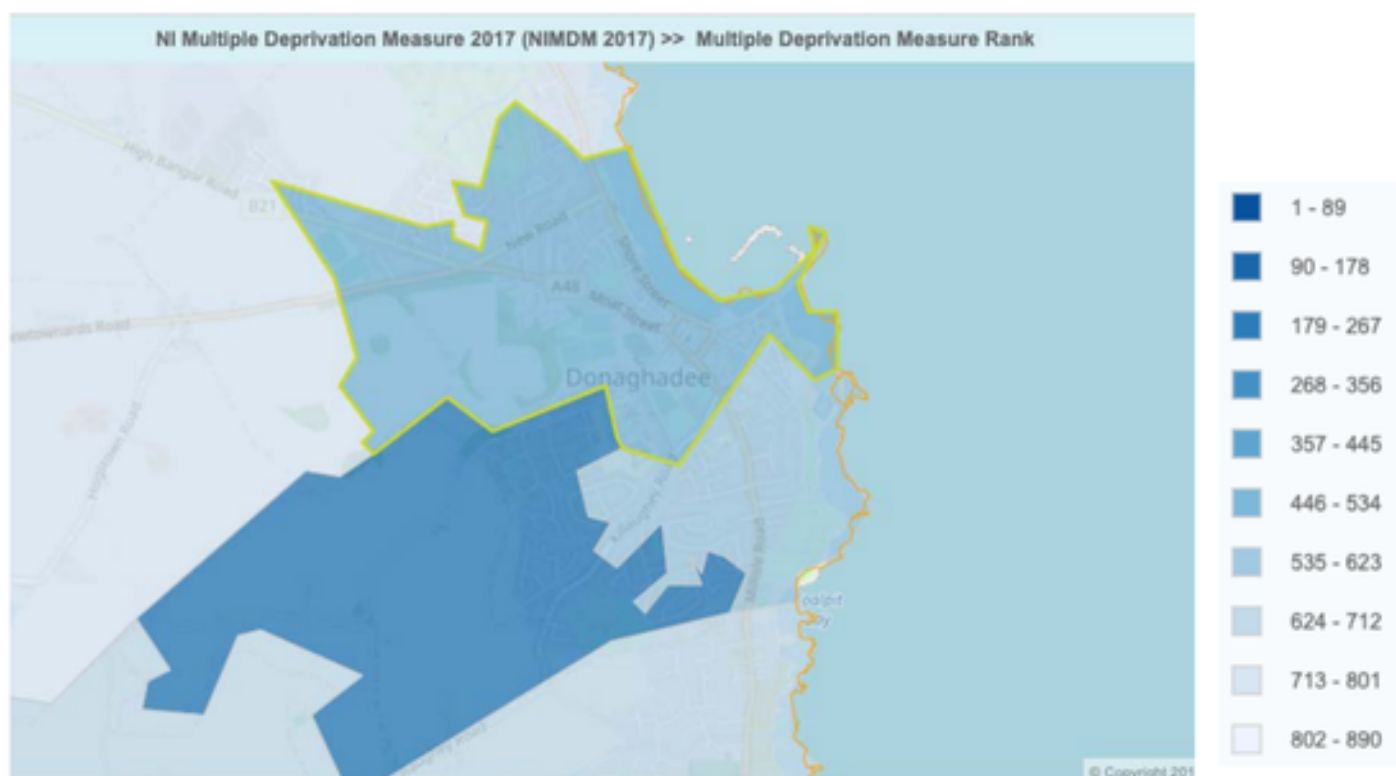


a. Socio-Economic Profile

Town & Town Centre Profile

(Bangor East & Donaghadee J Super Data Zone)

The town centre has a population of 3,292 (2020) a fall of 113 (-3.6%) over the last decade. Donaghadee town centre has an older population (59% over 40, v NI average 49%) and fewer children (15% 0-14 year olds, v NI 19%). Leading to smaller households (80% 1-2 person households v NI 61%). Flats comprise 27% of all accommodation (v ANDBC average 11%) and 1 in 3 have no access to a car or van (v ANDBC 15%). Two-thirds have good or very good health (v NI 79%). Town centre residents have lower levels of qualifications (27% at Level 4 or above, v NI 34%) and low unemployment (4%) with half economically inactive. 65% travel to work by car, with 13% walking or cycling (v ANDBC 6%) and 4% use the bus or train (v ANDBC 3%). Active travel for those travelling to study is 30% Walking or Cycling (v ANDBC 20%) and 32% getting the bus or train (v ANDBC 23%). Only 14% work from home (v NI 19%, ANDBC 23%), with 19% travelling less than 5km to work (v ANDBC 21%). The town centre is considered less deprived than the NI average, with above average 'Access to Services', yet 'Donaghadee North 1' lies amongst the 15% most deprived areas in NI in terms of 'Crime and Disorder'.



b. Sectoral Profile

Property Profile

Donaghadee has 119 properties within the town centre, of which 17 are vacant (14.3%). This fell from over 20% during 2018-19 and is significantly lower than NI average (23.7%). The town centre benefitted from Town Heritage Initiative Schemes, the most recent of which saw £3m of public and private funds invested in the town. There is 1,037m² of office space in the city centre across 17 properties. However, 'Shops, Supermarkets and Showrooms' dominate accounting for almost three-quarters (72.9%, 5,729m²) of the town-centre floorspace.

Business Profile

In 2021, there were 75 businesses (20 'Wholesale & Retail', 15 Food & Accommodation) in the town centre, largely in line with 2013-21 average. Employee numbers are up 54% between 2013 (322 jobs) and 2021 (496 jobs). The dominant sector is 'Food & Accommodation' with 181 jobs (up 42% since 2013), followed by 'Wholesale & Retail' with 93 jobs (v 96 in 2013).

Total business turnover for the town centre has almost quintupled between 2013 (£8.8m) and 2018 (£42.3m), with a dramatic rise of £30m in 'Wholesale & Retail' between 2018 (£6.8m) and 2019 (£36.7m).

[Note, possible statistical anomaly as no increase in jobs or business numbers for this sector over two year period 2017-2019]

Tourism

As of June 2023, Donaghadee has 3 Guesthouses offering a total of 33 bedspaces/14 rooms. There are also 8 self-catering properties offering a total of 48 bedspaces within the town centre boundary.



c. Policy Context

National and Regional

The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)

The RDS puts in place spatial planning, transport and housing priorities that will support and enable the aspirations of the Region to be met.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015 (SPPS)

The SPPS supports positive place making as a people centred approach with the key to successful place-making set out through identifying the assets of a particular place as well as developing a vision for its future potential. Successful place making promotes accessibility and inclusivity for all, acknowledges the importance of creating hospitable and safe places, and emphasises the contribution of vibrancy, adaptability, and diversity of use and how it plays a role in contributing to vitality of place and how it will endure into the future.

Living Places - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland 2014

The Urban Stewardship Design Guide establishes the key principles behind good place making and recognises the wider economic, cultural and community benefits of achieving excellence in the stewardship and design in these places, be they existing or proposed

Local Context

Local Development Plan

The Council is now preparing the Local Development Plan. Until the LDP is adopted, planning decisions are made in the context of the following existing plans:

- **Ards and Down Area Plan 2015**

- **North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995**

Due to the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) being deemed unlawful and subsequently quashed the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 is the statutory development plan for the legacy North Down area.

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017 - 2032

The Big Plan sets out the vision for the next 15 years for Ards and North Down to be a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be. The Plan sets out 5 outcomes to achieve the vision:

Outcome 1:

All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential

Outcome 2:

All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing

Outcome 3:

All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, area safe and feel secure

Outcome 4:

All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy

Outcome 5:

All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment

Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018 - 2030

The Strategy presents a coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity for Ards and North Down. It responds to the vision and outcomes of the Big Plan and is used as a common point of reference for the growth of the economy, the welcoming of visitors and the improvement of both urban and rural places.

d. Donaghadee Today - Conversations & Perceptions

A series of conversations have taken place through the public engagement exercise the Council carried out as well as targeted workshops with the Town Advisory Group, council officers and elected members.

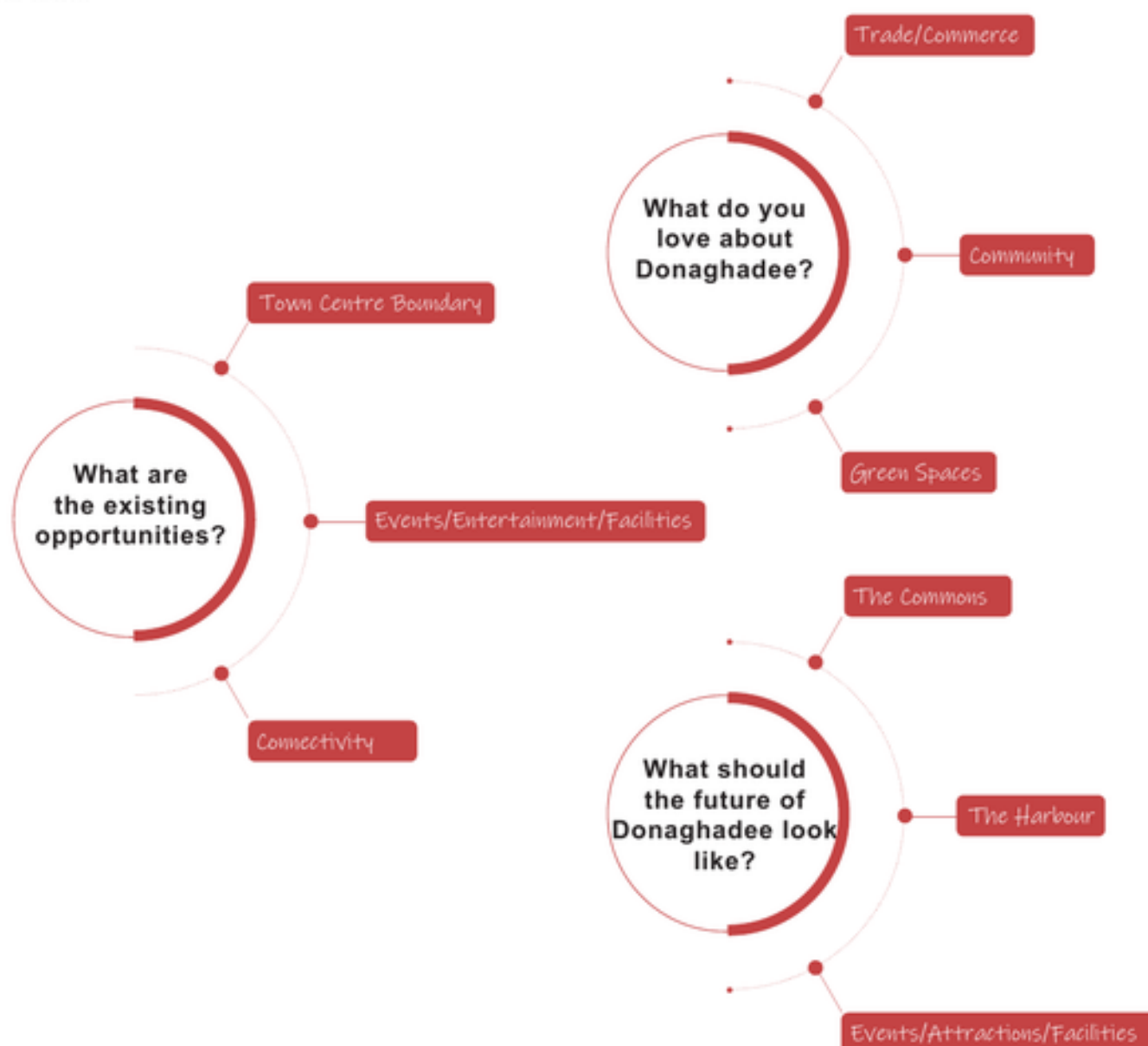
The Council organised a drop-in event and on-line survey providing the opportunity for the community to engage with council officers and representatives from the Donaghadee Town Advisory Group to provide their views and aspirations for the future of the town.

Drop-In Event:

160+ comments

On-line Survey:

23 responses



Why live in Donaghadee?

- Blue Connectivity
- Community
- Commerce/Trade

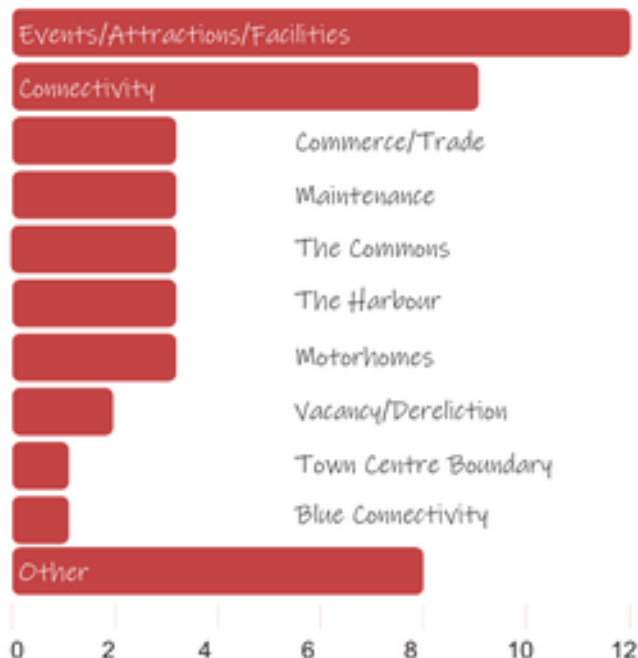
What are the undesirables about Donaghadee?

- Events/Attractions, Facilities
- Connectivity

What is a disadvantage for businesses in Donaghadee?

- No comment

Areas for Improvement



The Future of Donaghadee?



d. Donaghadee Today - Conversations & Perceptions

Through targeted workshops with the Town Advisory Group, council officers and elected members further conversations have taken place.

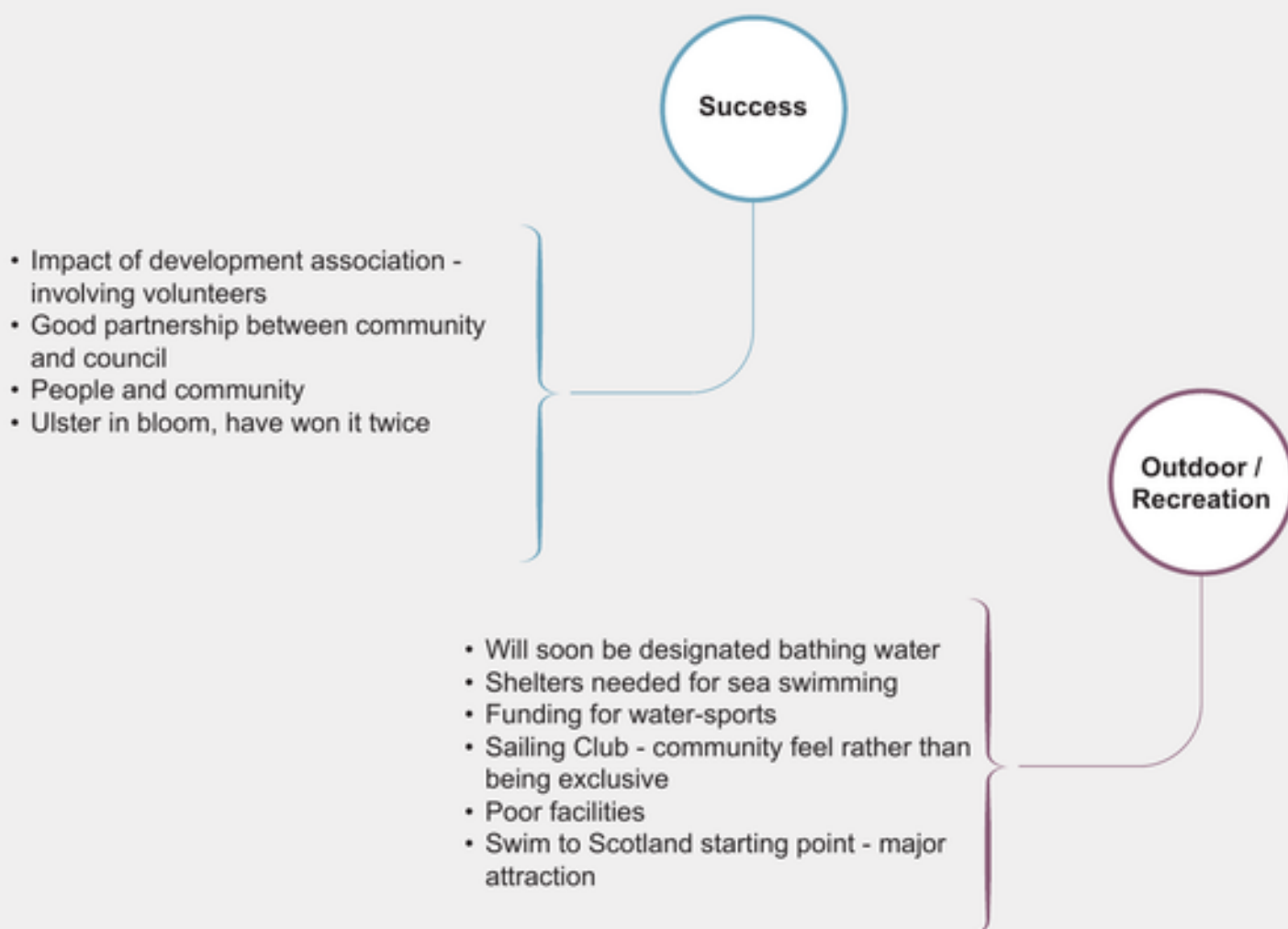
The success of the Donaghadee Community Development Association and the momentum in driving projects forward and getting things done has been highlighted.

The heritage value of the town is significant, the urban fabric is an excellent historic example. It was discussed that the harbour and lighthouse are fundamental to the town centre but are not included in the town centre boundary.

Coastal erosion was highlighted as an issue that needs to be addressed both borough wide as well as in Donaghadee.

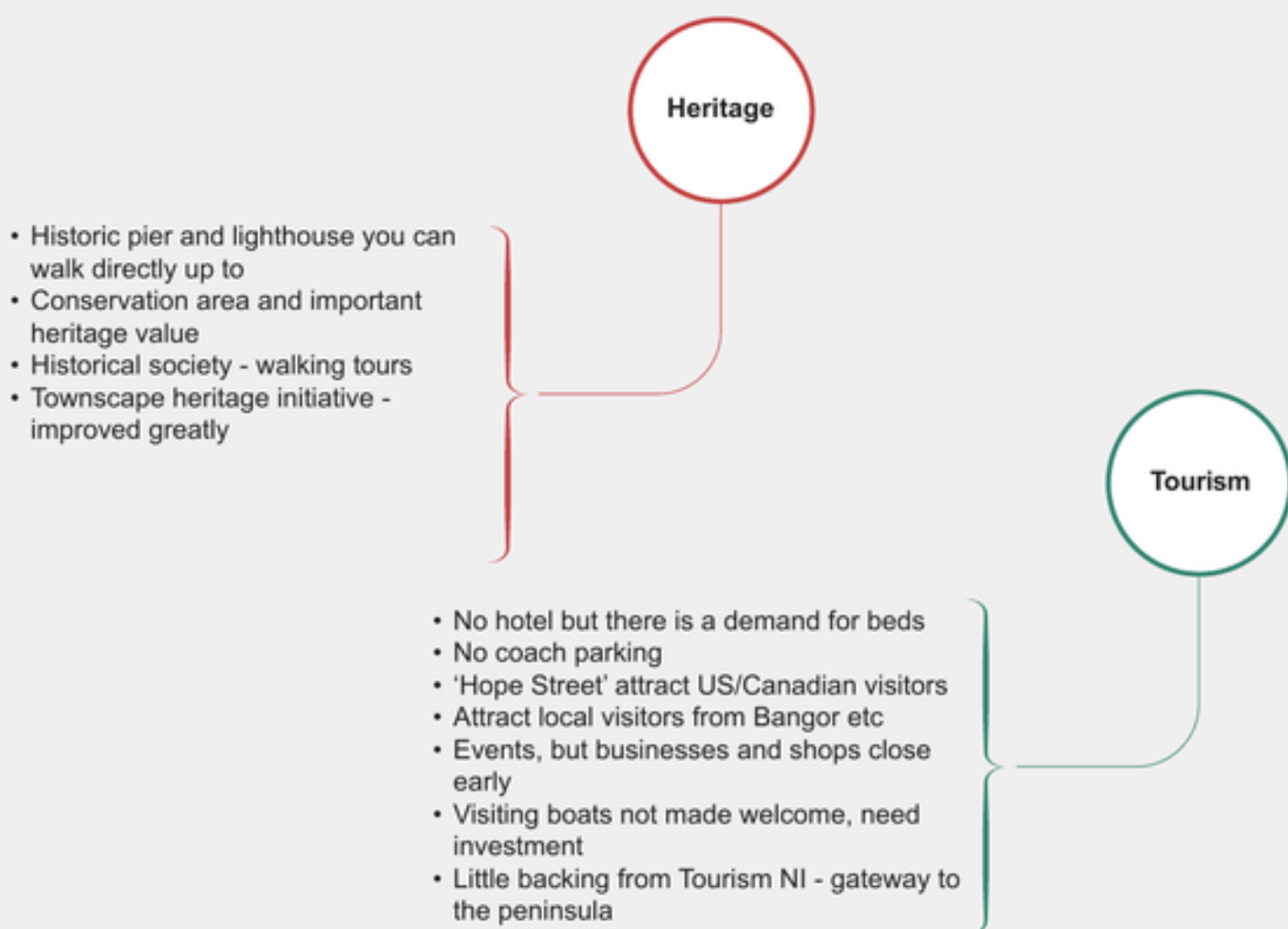
The lack of visitor facilities was discussed with few options in terms of accommodation but an increased demand through attractions draw from the TV series 'Hope Street' and also the starting point for the swim to Scotland.

It was felt that the harbour does not fulfil its potential and perhaps visitor boats are not made welcome. Significant investment is needed to realise the opportunity and capitalise on the significant asset.



Conversations led to the issue of facilities and businesses closing at 5pm, for example the toilets being closed, during organised events in the town centre.

Finally, it was questioned as to whether the masterplan vision is what is currently needed for the town centre.



e. Donaghadee Today - Urban Design Analysis

Located on the Eastern coast of the Ards Peninsula, Donaghadee has many unique qualities - its coastal position, the sweeping Parade leading to the harbour and its historic character and form.

Described throughout history as both 'The Port on Newtownards' and the 'Dover of Ireland' the town has a rich legacy of architectural quality.

As the town has expanded much of it remains within a walkable distance of 800 metres (approximately 10 minutes).

The former railway line now provides excellent pedestrian and cycle connections linking the town centre with the Commons and residential areas to the south.



Donaghadee - Urban Growth



OS County Series 2nd Edition c.1860

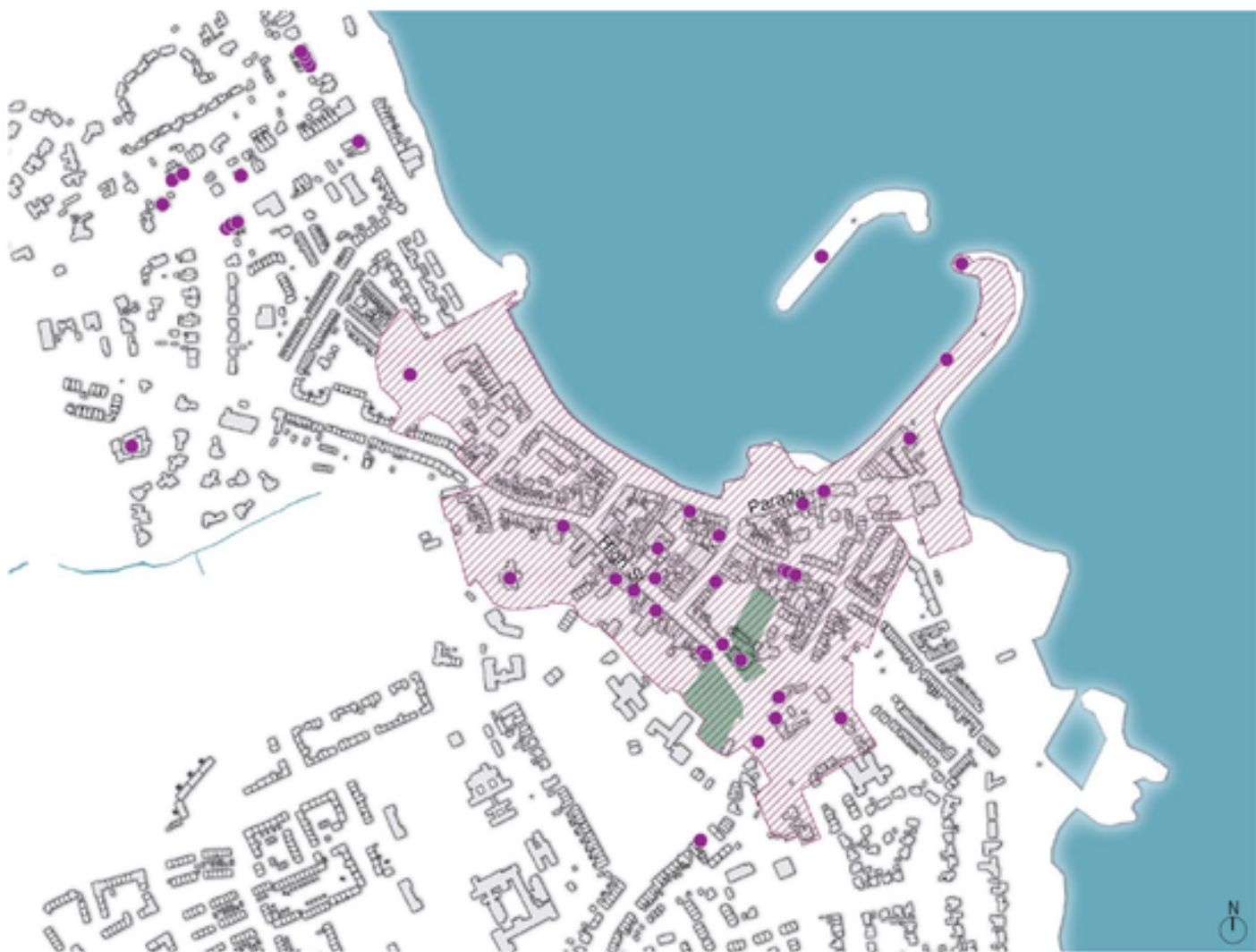


Town Wide Context

Street Pattern & Grain

Donaghadee consists of a simple urban form sweeping around the curve of the bay with two long linear streets and several perimeter blocks providing connections inland from the sea.

The motte creates a break in the grid with the former powder magazine sitting on top creating a dramatic landmark that can be viewed from several points within the town.





Parade



View along High St towards the Motte

The quality of buildings, number of openings, windows, and doors, as well as the extent of architectural detail dictates how attractive stimulating and active those streets will be.

Within the town centre there are many fine examples of buildings adding to the quality and experience of Donaghadee. The Parade is a significant area worth noting, presenting positive frontage to the street with the variety of colour and visual interest.

The lighthouse provides an important landmark and destination at the end of the pier. Easily recognisable from much of the town centre the lighthouse is an important component of place, reinforcing the distinctive character of the town centre.



Ulster Bank, New Street



Donaghadee Parish Church



South Pier and Lighthouse

Movement

Much of the town centre is within a 5 minute walking radius with the grid of streets providing a considerable choice of routes consisting of both streets and laneways, creating a very permeable town centre.

Public realm enhancements encourage movement and adds to the attractiveness of the town centre, out with these areas the quality of the public realm varies impacting the arrival experience along Moat Street and the High Street.

-  Laneways
-  Pedestrian/Cycle Connections
-  Vehicle Movement
-  Landmarks
-  Town Centre





Laneway Connections

Valuable green spaces on the periphery provide important pedestrian connections to residential areas, particularly to the south with The Commons creating connectivity and an easy alternative option to the car.

Success & On-going projects

Since the Masterplan was completed in 2015 there have been several projects already successfully taken place. The Townscape Heritage Initiative provided significant funding benefiting several buildings in the town centre such as Gunpowder Store, which was restored in 2021.

The public realm scheme was successfully completed in the town centre creating a high quality streetscape that responds and celebrates the heritage of the town.

The on-going work of the community has contributed greatly to the success of Donaghadee's town centre through organised events and community projects.



Quality of public realm varies throughout town



Community Spirit



The Way Forward

Analysis Summary:	
Attractive and thriving town centre	✓
Significant impact of investment in heritage buildings and public realm	✓
Strong organisation and capacity	✓
Harbour remains a major issue and missed opportunity	✗
Some areas of car dominance remain	✗
Growth of town changing the dynamic, largely positive although care needed e.g. through strong pedestrian links	!
Some other infrastructure needed to support town centre success e.g. coach parking	!



Masterplan Vision (2015):

"In 2030, Donaghadee will have re-emerged as a thriving seaside town. The redeveloped harbour has provided the catalyst for visitor and community services to return. The increase in tourism activity has stimulated a vibrant waterfront stretching to the Commons, acting as a focus for leisure and recreation.

The increasing popularity of the town has attracted local entrepreneurs and investment from further afield. The town has also become much more accessible with sufficient parking and public transport to service both local people and the influx of visitors throughout the year."

The masterplan vision statement provides a description of Donaghadee as envisaged in 2030. It remains relevant today reflecting priorities raised through engagement and research for this review. More so than when it was written, Donaghadee could be accurately described as a "thriving seaside town".

Masterplan Objectives:

Objective 1:

To ensure future protection of the harbour whilst fully exploiting the economic opportunity and acting as a catalyst for regeneration

Objective 2:

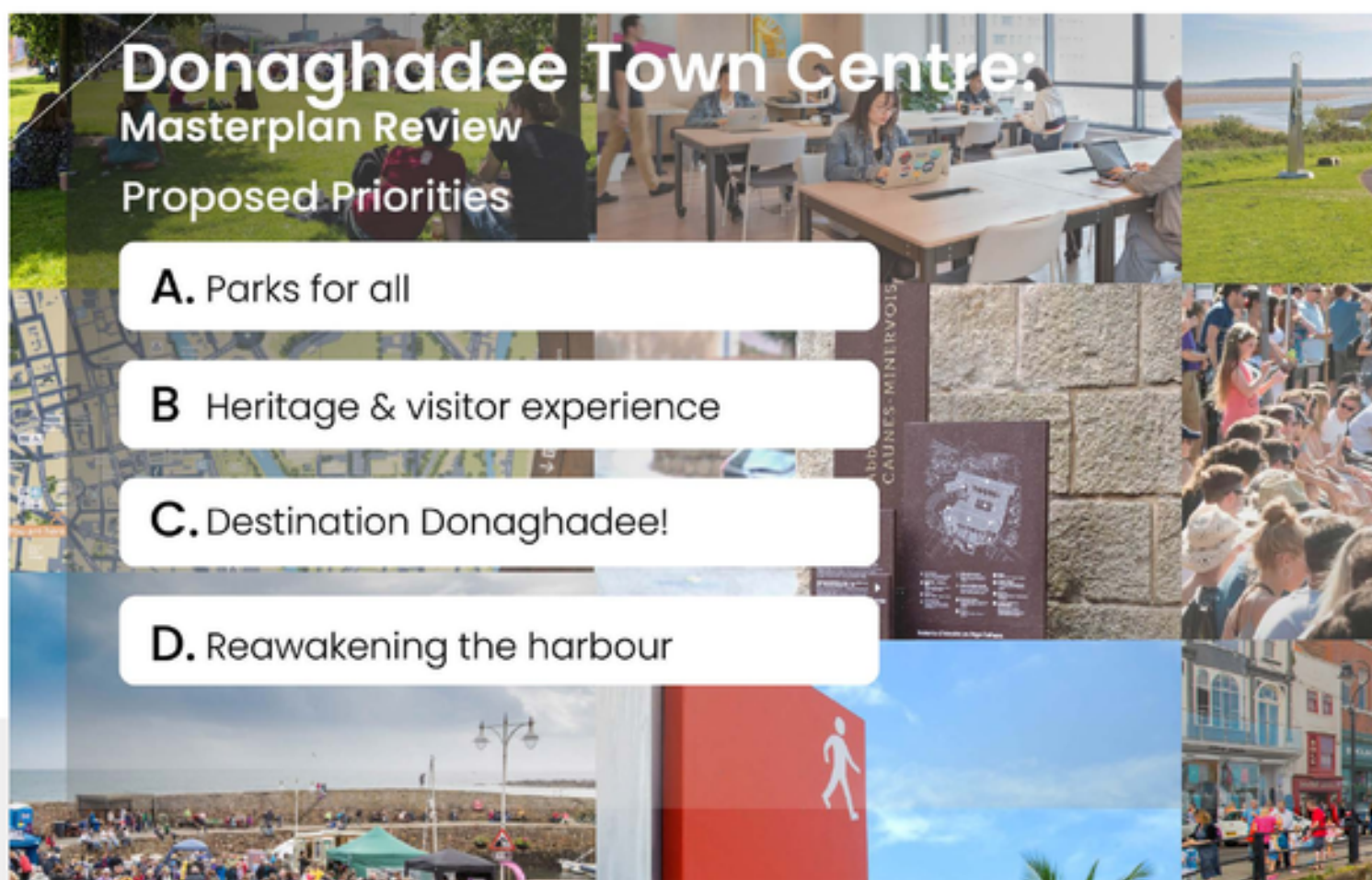
To provide an attractive and accessible town centre

Objective 3:

To protect and enhance Donaghadee's natural and built heritage

Objective 4:

To promote and encourage the development of services and facilities to support the growing tourism sector



New Priorities for Donaghadee Town Centre

Four new priorities are proposed for Donaghadee Town Centre, drawing upon the findings of the research and engagement process.



A. Parks for all

Donaghadee has two parks within easy reach of its town centre. These are greatly valued by local people yet have much scope for improvement through recently developed proposals.

B. Heritage and visitor experience

Building on the success of conservation and restoration works in the town, the opportunity now exists to encourage locals and visitors alike to further explore and engage with Donaghadee's fascinating history.

C. Destination Donaghadee!

The promotion of Donaghadee as a destination of visitors and investment will help to underpin its success and sustain the local economy.

D. Reawakening the harbour

A jewel in the crown of Donaghadee, the harbour should increasingly become the focus of activity and investment, helping it play a more central role once again in the life of the town.



Engagement

A second round of conversations have taken place through a public engagement exercise. By listening to the people of Donaghadee during the first round of conversations the proposed priorities have developed. The public were invited to view information both online and at a drop-in event before providing their feedback through a short online survey. Community engagement was facilitated by members of the team, council officers and representatives from the Donaghadee Town Advisory Group.

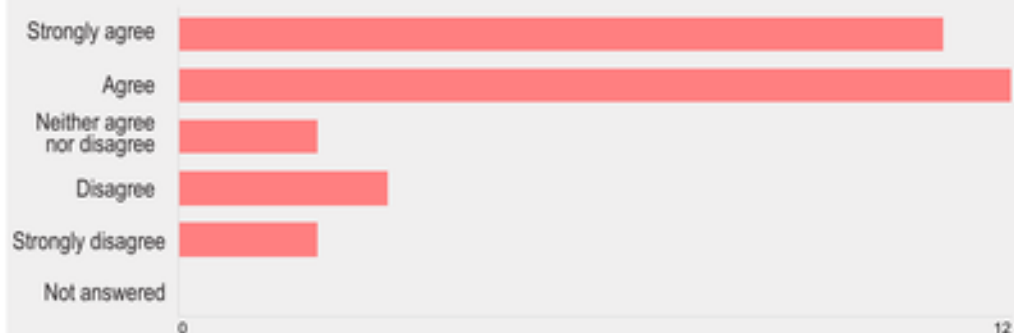
At this stage there was a total of **30 responses** to the survey with the results set out in the following section.



Engagement Results

A. Parks for all

To what extent do you agree with the priority: Parks for All?



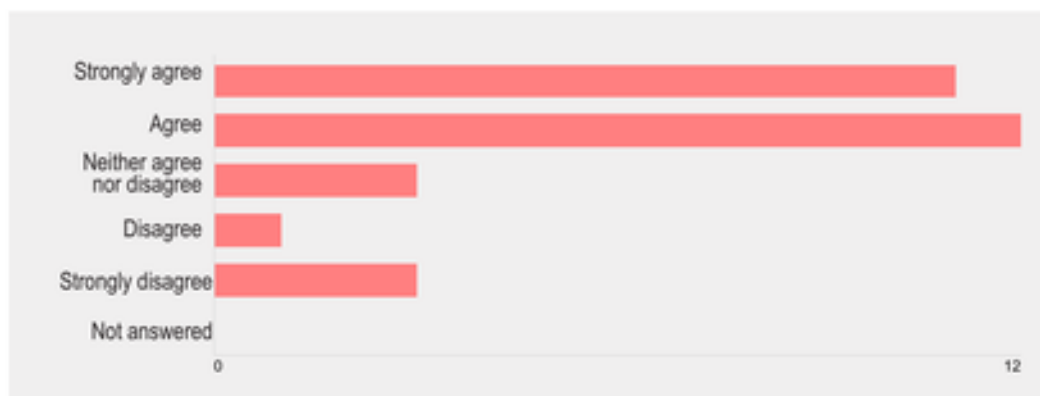
B. Heritage and visitor experience

To what extent do you agree with the priority: Heritage and Visitor Experience?



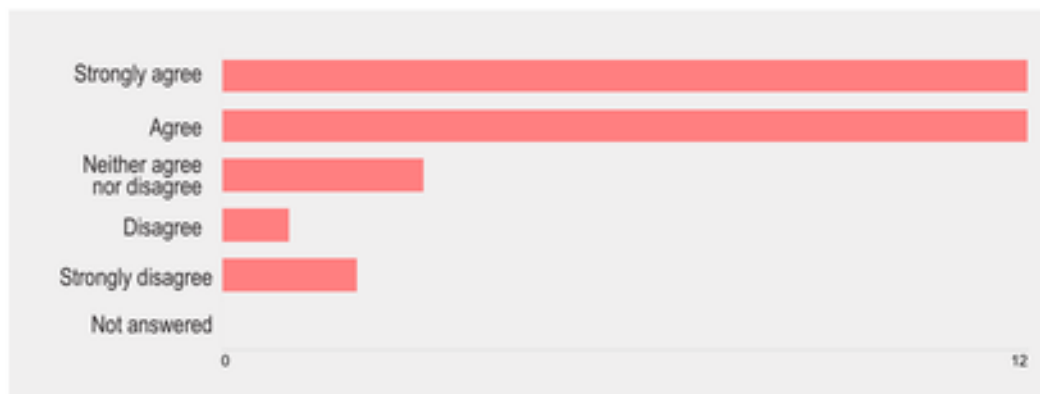
C. Destination Donaghadee!

To what extent do you agree with the priority: Destination Donaghadee?

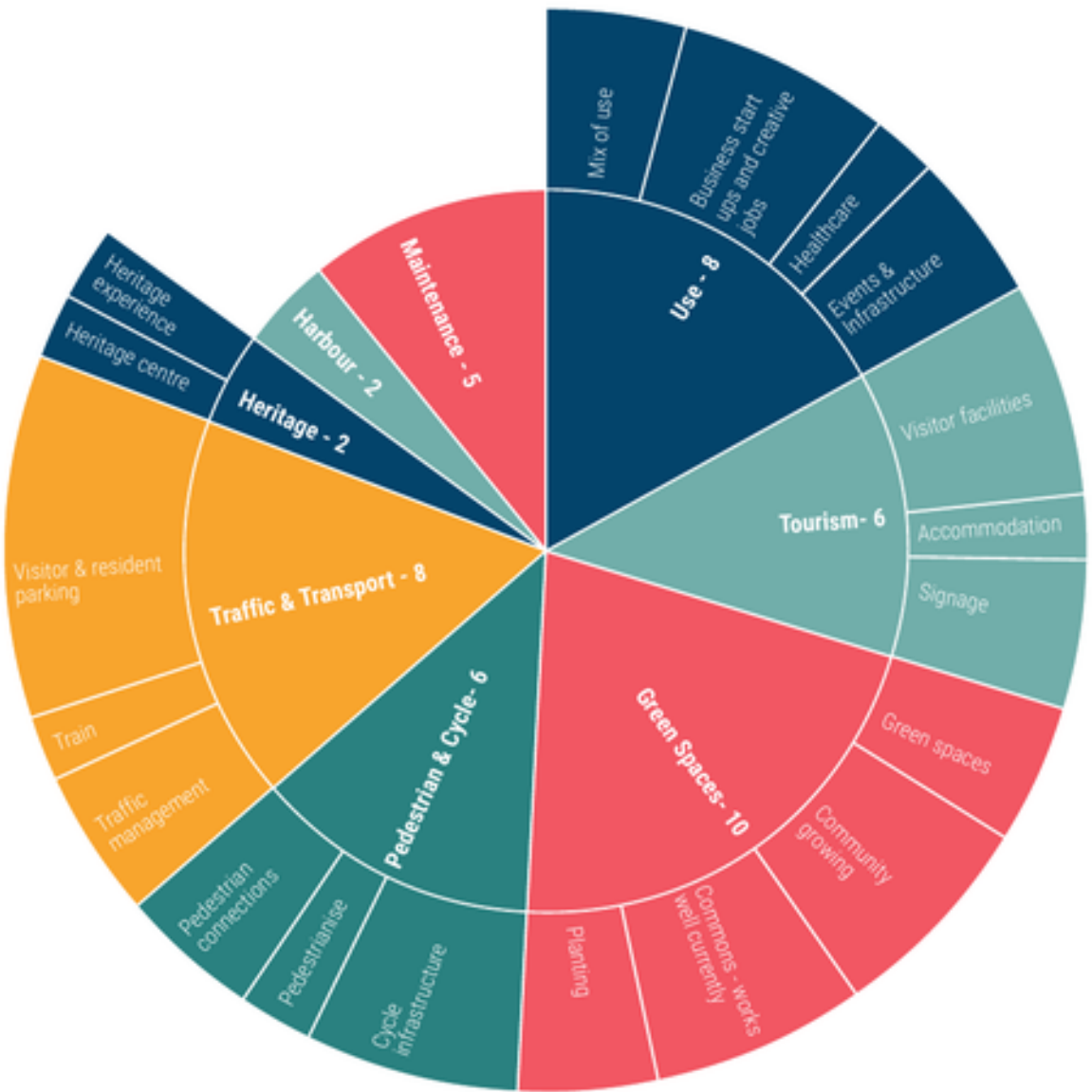


D. Reawakening the Harbour

To what extent do you agree with the priority: Reawakening the Harbour?



Other ideas for priorities for the Town Centre
25 Responses



PRIORITIES

A. Parks for all

Deliver and follow through on the planned transformation of the parks, both the Commons Masterplan and Crommelin Park, tying in with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and providing much needed visitor and youth infrastructure, including the visitor hub and activity hub.

Through engagement, residents have told us they would like green spaces, visitor facilities and pedestrian connections. It is therefore important that plans for both parks within Donaghadee are delivered to address these needs.

The Commons Masterplan has been agreed. It reimagines the space, including:

- a visitor hub
- coastal park
- eco trail exploring the old railway
- integration of the marina, boatyard, tennis and bowls club into wider proposals
- recreational activities

Crommelin Park has been identified for the transformation into an Ecopark, including fitness and nature trails. The community has begun undertaking work to include trails, signage and tree planting.

These are both valuable spaces within the town centre and it is important that momentum continues and actions are prioritised for delivery to realise their potential and make sure they provide high quality spaces that will meet the needs of everyone, including residents and visitors.



Connswater Community Greenway



Ladywell Fields, London

Both these spaces, and others such as Hunts Park, have the potential to become integral and comprehensive elements of green infrastructure within Donaghadee, integrating into the surrounding landscape and supporting biodiversity.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- A.i** Delivery of Commons Masterplan prioritised actions
- A.ii** Delivery of Crommelin Park prioritised actions



Llanelli, Wales



Llanelli, Wales

PRIORITIES

B. Heritage and Visitor Experience

Wayfinding and interpretation to tell the stories and add a layer to the visitor experience, showcasing the town's heritage, providing a unique and immersive experience of exploring the town, including connectivity between Hunts Park/Commons and the Town Centre.

Well designed wayfinding and interpretation without clutter, can have a big impact on someone's experience of a destination or place. It can encourage exploration, engage visitors in their surroundings, increase dwell time and improve accessibility.

Donaghadee's history and heritage is part of its charm and draw for visitors. Communicating and telling its story effectively to visitors will add to the experience of visiting, moving throughout the town and presenting itself with intuitive ease.

Wayfinding and interpretation at key arrival points and destinations will aid movement in Donaghadee but a balance is needed between providing tools for visitors to be confident in exploring and intuitive navigation and individual discovery.

To enhance the visitor experience there is an opportunity for public realm improvements to Railway Street, complementing the proposed heritage centre and providing an enhanced connection between the new facility and the Parade.



Braintree Town Hall - wayfinding signage



Heritage trail wayfinding

Enhanced public realm will draw people towards the proposed heritage centre providing an inviting and attractive approach that people will feel comfortable moving through.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- B.i** Audit of existing signage
- B.ii** Wayfinding and interpretation at key arrival points and destinations
- B.iii** Public realm improvements to access from Railway Street to complement a proposed new plaza at planned heritage centre (subject to the relocation of the Recycling Centre)



Cathar County, France - heritage interpretation



Gagatan Sodar, Sweden

PRIORITIES

C. Destination Donaghadee

Building the reputation and tourism offer, to attract visitors and future investment, such as a hotel and other tourism/business facilities.

Momentum has been building for Donaghadee as a destination and tourism offer through its heritage, hospitality, sea swimming and more recently, its use as the venue for the BBC series 'Hope Street'.

The tourism offering in terms of tourism experiences and attractors, needs further developed in order to provide opportunities for future investment while providing a town that residents feel proud of, and people want to visit.

There is a compelling case made that the town is currently in need of hotel/further tourism accommodation to complement the tourism offer, attracting more visitors and encouraging them to stay longer.

In order for the town to capitalise on its draw as a destination, a process is required to identify sites, promoting them for future use and investment that will strengthen Donaghadee's reputation and offering as a destination.

To support a thriving town centre, which is home to all the civic needs of its residents, focus is needed to ensure the concept of 20 minute neighbourhoods is realised.



Whitby harbour



Padstow, Cornwall

PROPOSED ACTIONS

C.i

Further development of the tourism offering through experiences, attractions and accommodation

C.ii

Identify and promote potential sites for future tourism accommodation investment



Big Bay Swim, Donaghadee

PRIORITIES

D. Reawakening the Harbour

Animating the harbour through events, raising its profile and momentum towards funding for restoration and increased used.

Donaghadee's stories and connections to the sea are exemplified by the historic harbour and lighthouse. It provides a draw and multi-sensory experience while being an incredibly important landmark and asset for the town.

Funding is required for the restoration and development of the harbour, with potential for a breakwater and pontoons that facilitate use of the harbour by sailboats and leisure craft, subject to appraisal and business case.

More berthing space would directly contribute to the visitor economy of the town and strengthen its place as a nautical destination. Until then short term interventions should be capitalised upon to activate the harbour.

The harbour provides a vital public space, and heart to the town, along the seafront. A programme of events throughout the year, accessible to all will provide a range of benefits for the town while momentum builds towards securing funding.



Bristol harbour festival

Events can contribute to the promotion of the town, attracting residents, visitors, increasing the customer base for local businesses and encouraging people to spend more time in the town centre.

It can deepen the connection between people and place. Providing an opportunity for people to see their place through a new lens and instil a sense of civic pride and greater connection for those that live there.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- D.i** Partnership working to establish a programme of events throughout the year to activate the harbour in collaboration with the community-led approach
- D.ii** Source funding to deliver restoration and infrastructure improvements (subject to Business Case / economic viability)



Foyle Maritime festival, Derry/Londonderry



Stonehaven harbour festival

Making it happen

PRIORITIES	PROPOSED ACTIONS	COMMENTS
A. Parks for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Delivery of Commons Masterplan prioritised actions ii. Delivery of Crommelin Park prioritised actions 	Tying in with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
B. Heritage & Visitor Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Audit of existing signage ii. Wayfinding and interpretation at key arrival points and destinations iii. Public realm improvements to Railway Street to complement new plaza at planned heritage centre 	<p>Highlighting destinations, car parking provision and the connections.</p> <p>Improved connection between planned heritage centre, Parade and the rest of the town centre.</p>



PRIORITIES	PROPOSED ACTIONS	COMMENTS
C. Destination Donaghadee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Further development of the tourism offering (experiences, attractions and accommodation etc) ii. Identify and promote potential sites for future tourism accommodation investment 	Develop the visitor economy through tourism experience development and promotion of the town's existing assets to attract future investment. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the growth and popularity of open water swimming and filming events in the town.
D. Reawakening the Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Partnership working to establish a programme of events throughout the year to activate the harbour in collaboration of community led model ii. Source funding to delivery restoration and infrastructure improvements (subject to Business Case / economic viability) 	<p>Raising the profile of the harbour for future funding opportunities.</p> <p>Opportunity to promote Donaghadee as a destination to visiting boats.</p>





Delivery

Introduction

Central to the success of any masterplan is its ability to affect positive change on the ground. As documented in this review of the original town centre masterplans, the rate of project delivery has been varied to date when compared against the intentions set out in the published Action Plans. Reasons for this include the availability of funding, the buy-in of key stakeholders and changes in political context. It is therefore imperative that a clearer understanding is established on how the new regeneration priorities for each town can be taken forward in a manner which fulfils their potential, builds on public support, and actively contribute to the improvement of the settlement in question.

Action Plan Lifespan

Through this review process it has been agreed that the remaining lifespan of the updated town and city centre masterplans is 8 years. This will correlate with two terms of elected Ards and North Down Borough Councillors. Yet unlike the original town centre masterplans, it is not advised to produce a single action plan that will remain unchanged over that period. Rather, the Actions Plans must be considered 'live' documents that are subjected to regular reviews and updates, with a major review and update taking at the halfway stage, in 4 years' time. This will allow for delivery progress to be accurately recorded and for reprioritisation of actions to happen in response to inevitable changed circumstances. After the 8 year period in 2030 it is recommended that new 'place plans' are commissioned for each town centre, based on multidisciplinary research and extensive public engagement.

Monitoring of Progress

Every project takes time to deliver, and an effort has been made here to identify initiatives that can be brought forward relatively quickly, while other more complex actions will inevitably take longer. In recognition of this, all actions are broken down into 14 stages as shown here. This will enable a more accurate and transparent plotting of project progress to take place. A regularly updated masterplan 'dashboard' will show the current state of all projects, helping to inform decision making accordingly.

		Delivery Stages													
		A Project Definition				B Project Development				C Project Funding				D Project Delivery	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Donaghadee	A Parks for all														
	B Heritage and Visitor Experience														
	C Destination Donaghadee														
	D Reawakening the Harbour														

(A) Project Definition

1. Identify Online Project idea & Scale (and ideally case study to help visualise)
2. Identify Project Lead
3. Identify Initial Community/Statutory Support
4. Identify Potential Funding (both to develop and deliver project)

(B) Project Development

5. Determine Land Issue (land ownership, options, access, ability to acquire, likelihood of planning)
6. Identify Potential Project Partners (who, why, how)
7. Outline Key Issues: Need/Demand, Objectives/Aims, Project Management, Financing, 'Net Zero' Impact and Sustainability
8. Detailed Investigation - Proportional Economic & Technical Feasibility Study

(C) Project Funding

9. Detailed Funding Case - Proportional Business Case, Designs, Costing
10. Land ownership/access confirmed, planning permission secured and working capital/project financing in place,
11. Funding Application(s) Submitted

(D) Project Delivery

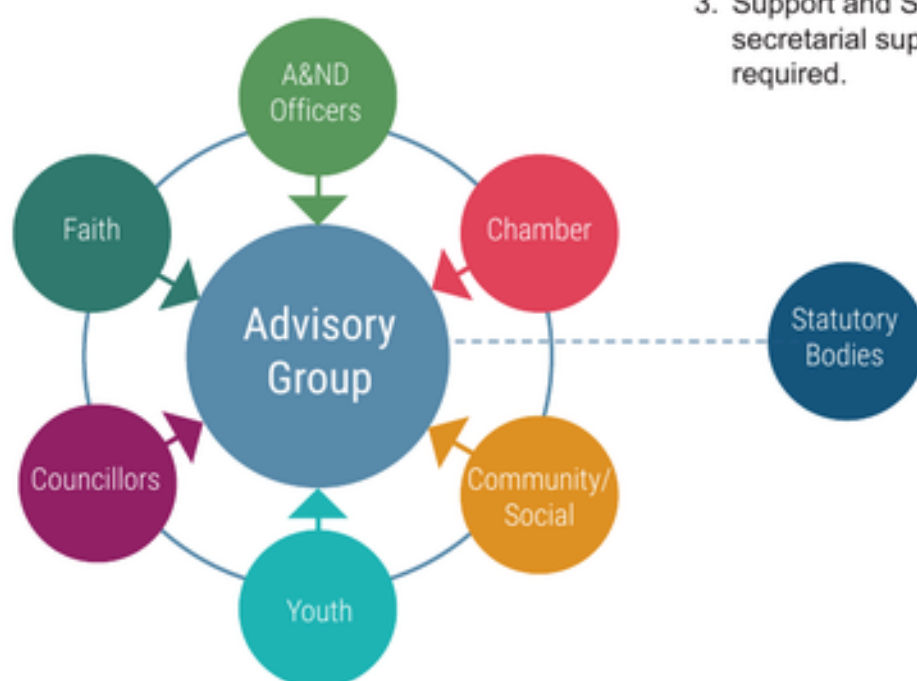
12. Managing Funding - Letters of Offer, Procurement, Construction, Delivery
13. Post Funding Delivery - Adaptation, Delivery, Launch and Official Sign-Off
14. Project Evaluation Complete

Town and City Advisory Groups

The town centre masterplans identify the regeneration needs of each town centre and consequently do not neatly fall to the responsibilities of one organisation (public or private), council or government department. Furthermore, the process of developing viable projects requires the continued input of town centre stakeholders and the public. To reflect this complexity, Ards and North Down Borough Council constituted Town and City Advisory Groups in 2019. These groups, originally known as Town Steering Groups, comprise local representatives of business, community, youth and faith organisations, as well as councillors and officers of Ards and North Down Borough Council. The groups meet regularly through the year, convened by Council officers and led by an appointed chair.

The existence of such groups is to be commended and reflects current best practice being emulated elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Yet the effectiveness of the groups requires review to ensure they play a fuller part of the delivery of masterplan priorities. A key area for review is examining how the groups can be given greater levels of responsibility in a manner that is compatible with the functions of both council and government departments. It is recommended that an independent review is undertaken by an external consultant to work with all the advisory groups to review governance and processes with the view to recommend changes and reference best practice models.

1. Strengthen – Make more representative by inviting more members and volunteers and ensure more regular representation from different council sections and relevant NI Executive departments (eg DfI).
2. Simplify – assign specific tasks to sub-groups, comprising members and invited parties.
3. Support and Signpost – provide training, secretarial support and professional advice when required.



Locally Based Organisations

There is a need to support strong and capable locally based organisations both existing and new, such as Donaghadee Community Development Association and Comber Regeneration Community Partnership. The success comes from dynamic, driven people coming together and making projects happen for their community. Often one project leads to another, and locally based organisations become crucial partners for the public and private sector, promoting a shared understanding of place and the need for a more integrated approach to delivery.

Potential Funding Streams

A range of funding sources are likely to be available for delivery of action plans. These include committed council budgets, and DfC regeneration funding, although noting the challenging fiscal environment at present.

A key issue is the current use of NISRA Town Centre boundaries for the allocation of regeneration funding as those areas do not align accurately with the generally recognised town centre areas. It is advocated that this means of funding allocation is reviewed and ideally changed.

A range of other funding sources not restrained by these boundaries should be proactively explored as follows:

- Community Ownership Fund
- Levelling Up (future rounds)
- Shared Prosperity
- Peace Plus
- Shared Island Funding
- National Lottery (Heritage Fund)
- Ulster Garden Villages
- Groundworks
- Social Finance (e.g. Community Finance Ireland, NESTA)

Outcomes / Indicators

It is proposed that arrangements are made to measure the success of masterplan delivery through the measures of outcomes or key performance indicators. This will require the commissioning of baseline surveys where existing data is not available.

Potential indicators are:

- Town centre footfall
- Town centre cycle journeys
- Biodiversity of key sites
- Animation
- Purple Flag Accreditation
- Residential Accommodation/Housing units within Town Centre
- Population numbers
- House prices (and/or rate income)
- Jobs
- Civic Pride/Perception, Business Perception

