



Ballymahon UR Impact Integrated Action Plan

Longford County Council

About this plan



This Integrated Action Plan provides a roadmap for the regeneration of Ballymahon, with a specific focus on the Pobal le Cheile project. Developed through collaboration between Longford County Council, the URBACT Local Group, and the wider community, it sets out a vision and actions to strengthen social infrastructure, overcome social isolation, and improve connections within the town. The plan prioritizes social impact in urban regeneration, ensuring that community engagement and governance structures support sustainable, inclusive development for all residents.



About URBACT

URBACT is a European programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund that enables cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges. Through networking, capacity building, and knowledge sharing, URBACT supports cities across Europe to design and implement sustainable urban development policies with a focus on citizen participation and community engagement.



About UR Impact

UR Impact is an URBACT Action Planning Network bringing together ten European cities to prioritise social impact in urban regeneration projects. Led by Cinisello Balsamo, Italy, with partners including Ballymahon (Ireland), Murcia (Spain), and seven other cities, the network focuses on placing citizens and their social, economic and environmental well-being at the centre of urban renewal processes through collaborative decision-making and community engagement.

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Introduction

UR Impact aims to embed prioritisation of social impact in urban regeneration projects, supporting the development of connected and sustainable communities. Longford County Council Corporate Plan sets out the aim to create connected, sustainable and prosperous communities by focusing on housing, safety, cultural celebration, sports, integration, diversity and health. To support the delivery of this objective, Longford Town Centre First Department became involved in the UR Impact project under European URBACT programme, co-funded by the URBACT IV European program.

Urban regeneration is a concept that has evolved over time to address the changing needs and challenges of towns and cities. Social impact refers to the effects that actions or initiatives have on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. It focuses on the positive or negative changes in people's lives resulting from specific interventions. Considering

social inclusion and social cohesion in urban regeneration is crucial for creating sustainable, equitable and resilient communities.

Towns and cities embarking on urban regeneration initiatives face a myriad of challenges that profoundly affect their social fabric. One of the primary issues revolves around declining population and ageing demographics. The demographic shift leads to imbalances in the population structure, which can strain local services and create economic vulnerabilities. The exodus of youth seeking better education and employment opportunities elsewhere compound these issues. Fostering effective collaboration and trust between local authorities and citizens also presents a substantial hurdle. This lack of collaboration can impede the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at addressing community needs and ensuring that regeneration projects align with the aspirations and needs of the local population.



Background

Ballymahon in County Longford is a town that appears prosperous but also faces many of the challenges outlined above, including relatively high poverty and deprivation levels in the town core, high migration levels and limited high quality jobs available within the town centre. There has also traditionally been a lack of collaboration and trust with the Local Authority that has impacted the delivery of some projects in the town. There is a sense of a lack of ownership within the town of the challenges it faces.

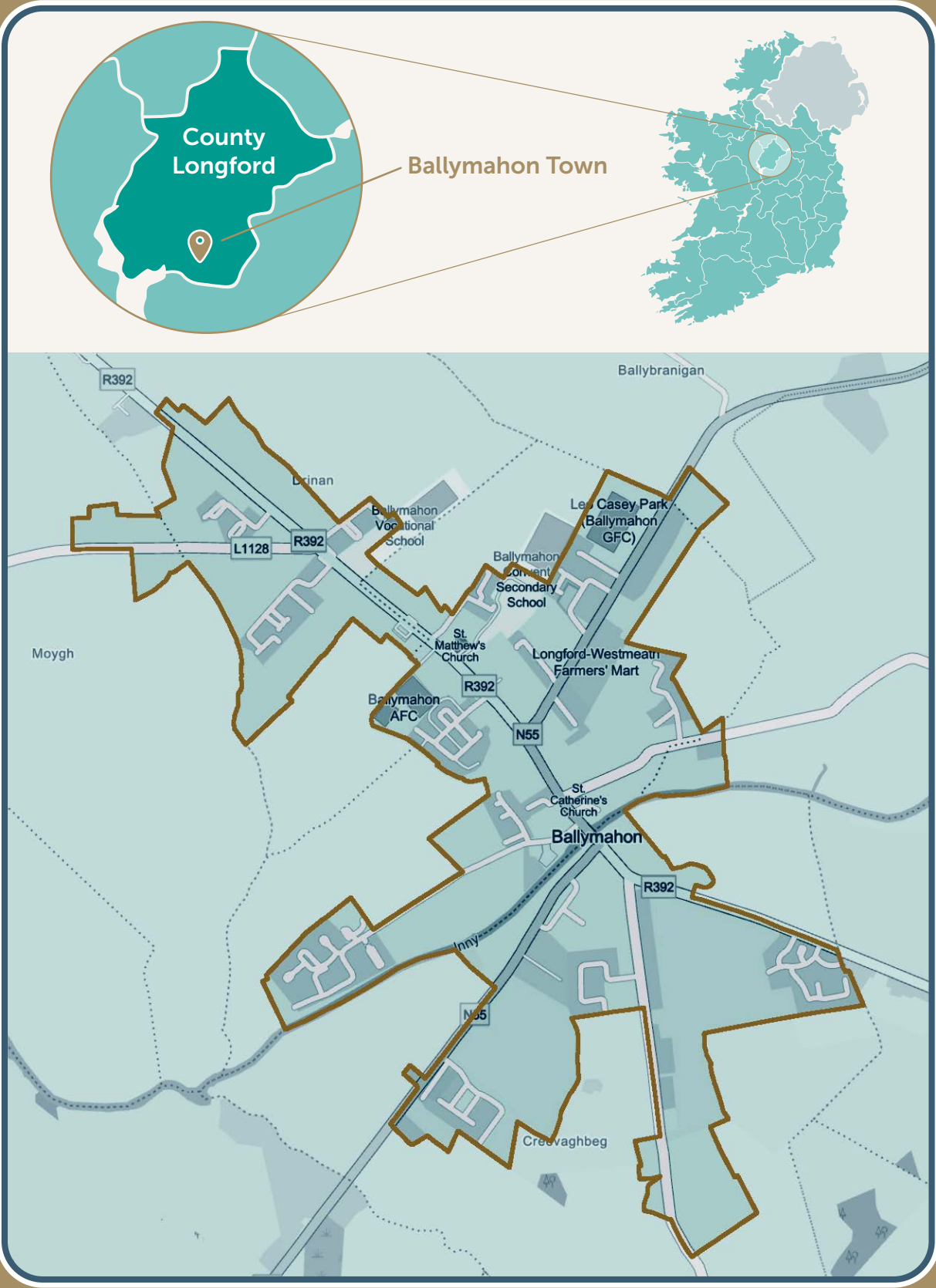
Longford County Council has been working with the local community over the last two years to develop new community services infrastructure within the town through the renovation of a former convent building to accommodate the Family Resource Centre and Day Care Centre, as well as renovate a former library and boy's school to provide additional services for the community. Effective communication and collaboration at the outset are key to the success of this project to ensure that it meets the needs identified by the community. The engagement and consultation with the local community have identified the need for a focus to be put on services for young and older people, and how these groups can be best supported and integrated into active life of the town.

A key challenge in the delivery of this project will be the governance of the project once operational. There will be a number of different stakeholders based within the space and there is a need for a clear understanding at the outset of the needs and requirements, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each of the groups in order to ensure that it is sustainable and well-managed into the future. This improved governance structure will support the community in the delivery of the wider regeneration of the town.



Stakeholder engagement

Ballymahon



Ballymahon

Background

The focus of the U.R. Impact project and this Integrated Action Plan within Longford is in the town of Ballymahon. Ballymahon is identified as a Self-Sustaining Town in the Longford County Development Plan, with a population of 2,674 living in the town. A Self-Sustaining Town is defined in the Longford County Development Plan as a town with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which is reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining. According to the 2022 Census approximately 40% of the population of Ballymahon is of non-Irish nationality, with the highest proportion of people from Poland, Lithuania and Brazil. There are approximately 20 different nationalities represented in the local schools.

Demographics and history

Ballymahon is a small rural town, extending to a size of 1.645 sq. km, as outlined in the map above. According to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, Ballymahon varies from 'very disadvantaged' in the town core to marginally above average as one moves out from the town to the west. Although there are variances throughout the town, the overall unemployment level in the town stands at 16%, substantially above the national average of 4.4%.



Old Boys' School

Ballymahon – Key Facts

- Population: 2,674
- Area 1.645 sq. km
- 40% non-Irish nationality
- 20 different nationalities represented in the local schools
- Local unemployment 16% vs national average 4.4%

Ballymahon

Location and History

Ballymahon is located to the south of the County, close to the border with Westmeath. It is a rural town. The main industry in the town is around the Kepak meat factory. There is also small scale industry within the town, for example furniture making, logistics and small scale engineering. The town serves as the service hub for the surrounding rural areas, with a number of pubs and restaurants along the Main Street, as well as services such as solicitors and auctioneers. There is limited guest accommodation within the town to cater for the tourism industry, some of which are in use for accommodating Ukrainian refugees. Center Parcs Holiday Village is located approximately 4km from the town centre, which attracts approximately 2,000 people to the area on a weekly basis and provides an opportunity for the town to build on.

The town has a rich cultural history and background. It is home to the Bog Lane Theatre and is located close to the birthplace of Oliver Goldsmith, who is remembered and celebrated in the town.

Ballymahon has one primary school, St. Matthew's National School as well as two mixed secondary schools, Mercy Secondary School and Ballymahon Vocational School. The primary school has 369 pupils enrolled (September 2023) with the two secondary schools catering for approximately 1,200 pupils between them. The school is a focal point for the community and is illustrative of the community it serves. In St. Matthew's National School, there are 3 support teachers specifically for children who do not have English as their first language, as well as a part time teacher for children seeking refuge from war, as well as 12 SNA's throughout the school.

Bridgeways Family Resource Centre



Challenges

As noted above, the town has a high level of deprivation and high numbers of non-Irish nationals living in the town. There is a high level of social housing in particular areas of the town. A Family Resource Centre (Bridgeways Family Resource Centre) is located in a former library building in the town centre, offering a wide range of social support services to the local community. The demand for their services has increased significantly over recent years as the population has grown and societal issues have become more pronounced. Some of the challenges faced by the people using the services is a generational cycle of unemployment and subsequent lack of opportunity. Demand for the mental health services provided by the Family Resource Centre has grown by over 500% over the last number of years. They are currently based in a building that was built in 1930 and is no longer fit for purpose.

The Convent Day Care Centre is currently located in the former convent building and is limited in terms of the space available and therefore the services it can provide to the community. The Convent Day Care Centre provides services to older people in the town and the wider area, including dinner, exercise and activity classes to support the continued active engagement.

The 'Pobal le Cheile' project grew from the need to support the community in the development and delivery of community supports. Bridgeways Family Resource Centre and the Convent Day Care will be the primary stakeholders using the space within the Convent. However, there will also be a Youth Reach facility, space for the Tidy Towns and local CE scheme, potential for future Meals on Wheels facility and meeting rooms for organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The large community hall will also be available to the various organisations using the site, as well as to the wider community, including the schools.

Former Convent



Strategic Framework

The Ballymahon Integrated Action Plan has been developed within the national, regional and local policy context and therefore aligns with these planning policy documents. The key policy documents are set out here.

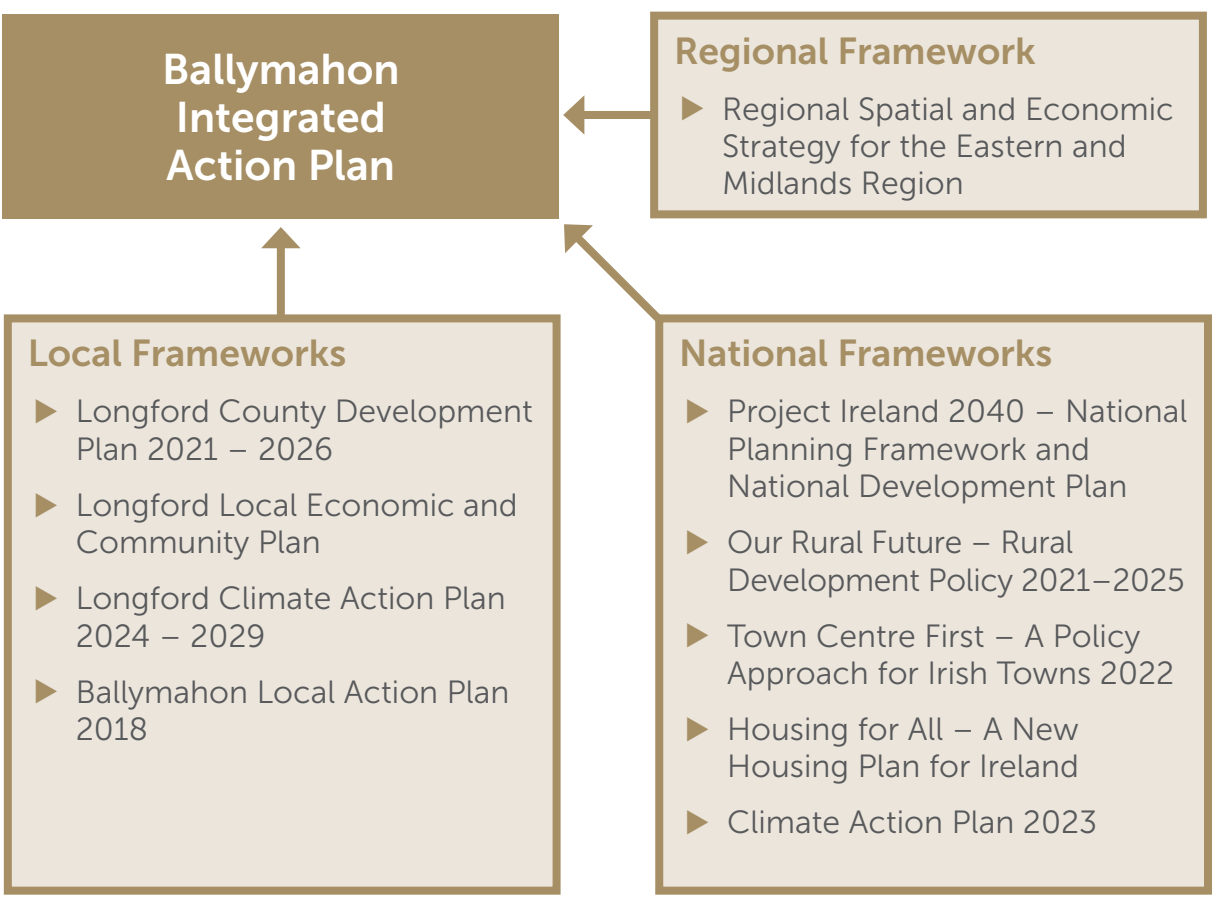
The Plan is an evidence based, non-statutory document and does not form public policy. The plan has been developed in collaboration with the Ballymahon URBACT Local Group, the Town Team, the local community and all other stakeholders within the community. It is intended that the strategy for development and the key proposals as set out in the Plan, will enable the ULG, in collaboration with Longford County Council, to leverage funding in order to implement the key actions for delivery.

The Ballymahon Local Action Plan 2018 identified the need for improved social infrastructure services, as well as improving the town presentation at an important gateway into the town. An application was submitted under Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) 2020 for approximately €7.5m to redevelop an area of the town to improve the social services to be provided to the community. This project will see the redevelopment of the former convent building to accommodate the Family Resource Centre and Day Care Centre, improvements to the Dean Egan library to accommodate a Youth Café and redevelopment of the former boys school to provide enterprise space. The project will also include enhancements to the public realm around these three buildings to create a sense of place and an entrance to the town.

This IAP fits within the policy context above and aims to deliver on the objectives set out within those strategies. At the core of the delivery of this IAP is the aim to embed social impact in the delivery of capital urban regeneration projects. This is achieved through community engagement, listening to what the people living in Ballymahon need to make the town a better place to live, work and visit and identifying and delivering projects that can help realise that.



Strategic Framework



Local Context

URBACT Local Group

The ULG comprises local stakeholders who have a desire to make their town better for themselves, the wider community and for future generations. The members of the ULG have collaborated and engaged on the process of identifying challenges and opportunities within their town.

There were 8 meetings of the ULG during the course of the project, during which the core problems were identified and strengths and challenges were defined. This also included a number of workshops to discuss and develop ideas, engaging the ULG members in the co-creation of the testing actions. A key output of the workshops was the need to create awareness of the project and opportunities for the community in the Pobal le Chéile project. Two wider community meetings were held during 2024, inviting the public to identify opportunities they see in the town. The public events were poorly attended. However, they highlighted the means of communication needs to be more innovative in how events are promoted in order to engage the wider community.

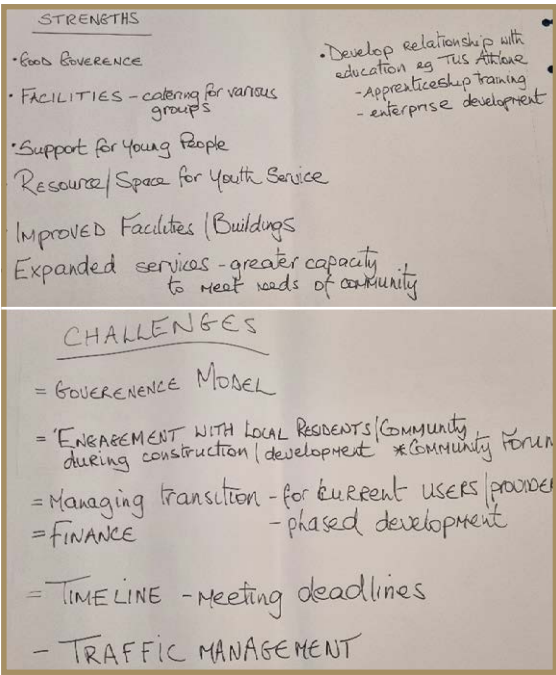
ULG Stakeholders

- ▶ **Local Residents**
- ▶ **Town Team**
The Town Team is a group of local residents, business people, community representatives and other stakeholders who come together to make their area a better place to live, work, visit and invest.
- ▶ **Elected Representatives**
The elected member local to the town sits on the ULG
- ▶ **Tidy Towns**
The Tidy Towns is a local community group with the aim of improving their local environment and to make their area a better place to live, work and visit, creating a 'sense of place' for those living in the area.
- ▶ **Traders Association**
- ▶ **New Communities**
- ▶ **Future users of the space**
Day Care Centre/Bridgeways Family Resource Centre – services catering for the elderly and youth/family within the community

Local Context

SCOT Analysis

Strengths/Opportunities	Challenges/Threats
▶ Enhancing Current Services ▶ Allows expansion of current services and growth – greater capacity to meet needs of community ▶ Funding and Buildings ▶ Experience available in the current organisations and people involved ▶ Social inclusion ▶ Job opportunities ▶ Repurposing of existing buildings – improved facilities/buildings ▶ New Infrastructure opportunities ▶ Regional project ▶ Create new mental health service for the Youth ▶ Good Governance ▶ Facilities catering for various groups ▶ Support for young people ▶ Resource/Space for youth service ▶ Develop relationship with education, e.g. TUS Athlone around apprenticeship training, enterprise development ▶ Proximity of Center Parcs Holiday Village	▶ Governance model ▶ Enngagement with local residents/ community during construction/ development ▶ Managing transition – need for phased development for current users/providers ▶ Timeline – meeting deadlines ▶ Traffic management ▶ Need for additional funding ▶ Challenges delivering the capital project ▶ Planning issues ▶ Inflation



Local Context

The ULG identified three actions that they would like to test over the course of the UR Impact project. The testing actions and current status is outlined below:

1. Men's Shed



Strategic objective: to co-design and re-activate a Men's Shed in Ballymahon.

Testing action: investigate the feasibility of the re-opening of the Men's Shed in Ballymahon, through the hosting of a public meeting to discuss the interest in the Men's Shed including a speaker from the Irish Men's Shed Association to give an overview of the value of Men's Sheds and the key requirements for setting up the Men's Shed. It is also intended as part of this testing action to visit existing Men's Sheds in the area so potential members can talk directly to people in the Men's Shed and learn from them. There was limited progress on this testing action during the course of the development of the IAP. However, it remains an aim of the IAP to progress this action in the coming months.

2. Facilities for Young People

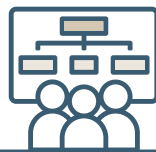


Strategic objective: to co-design facilities for young people in Ballymahon.

Testing action: to explore the models for dedicated youth facilities including 'youth café's' used in other areas through visits to selected towns in Ireland with youth facilities and hosting a facilitated event in the Dean Egan library to ask the young people to identify and design how they would like the space to develop. Early discussions on this testing action noted that the development of such a facility would not be feasible without a dedicated youth officer assigned to the space. Therefore, the testing action was reframed to support the development of 'youth services' in the town in support of the Family Resource Centre. In order to inform the development of this action, a visit was organised to an existing youth services facility in Longford Town and meeting with youth workers located there and the Foróige worker for the county. This informed the ULG on a potential model and the basis for funding for youth services as well as a starting point with Foróige as a potential initial service offering for young people in the town.

Local Context

3. Governance



Strategic objective: to develop governance structures and procedures for the use and management of restored facilities in Ballymahon.

Testing action: to examine good practice models for local management of facilities to deliver social services and to host an initial conversation between the key stakeholders to identify their potential priorities and concerns. Due to delays in progress on the capital project and changes in management structures, the ULG wanted to wait until there is more clarity on the progress of this project to progress the testing action. The identified priorities for the local community in the delivery of the Pobal le Cheile project would be the development of a strong governance model to manage the operational phase of the Pobal le Cheile project, as well as the delivery of enhanced services for various user groups, in particular the youth and retired people to give them more ownership in the future development of the town and to bring vacant and derelict spaces back into active use.

The identification of future regeneration projects, including off-street parking opportunities, location of social and affordable housing, public realm improvements have also been highlighted during the public consultation and will inform the future development of a Town Centre First Plan for Ballymahon.

Learning from Attic Youth Café



Vision

This IAP sits within the context of the Ballymahon Town Centre First Plan, which focuses on the reimagination of the town as a whole to create a town that functions as a viable, vibrant and attractive location for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. The vision of this IAP is to specifically focus on meeting the social and recreational needs of the community, supporting the Pobal le Cheile project through the creation of a centre that people feel part of, supporting the creation of a connected, supported community while respecting our heritage.

This will be delivered through the following objectives:

Create an environment that all sectors of community feel part of the town.

Support the delivery of a sustainable Pobal le Cheile project with a strong governance model.

Introducing our project to stakeholders



Vision

The vision of the IAP to support the development of the social and recreational amenities of the community will focus on the following **four goals**. These goals will be delivered through **seven actions**, detailed on the following pages.



Goal 1

Develop a community-aligned governance structure to support the delivery and management of projects.



Goal 3

Create a town where young people are supported through high-quality services and welcoming spaces.



Goal 2

Provide a space for older people to socialise, get involved, and contribute in meaningful ways.



Goal 4

Improving connections within Ballymahon.

Action 1: Establish Governance Model

Establish a strong governance structure model to support the delivery of the Pobal le Cheile project.



Vision Goal: Develop a community-aligned governance structure to support the delivery and management of projects.

The Pobal le Cheile project focuses on the redevelopment of a number of vacant and derelict buildings to accommodate a number of social services. The need for a strong governance model was identified as critical to the ongoing management and operation of the site once taken in charge by the community organisations. This governance structure will support projects across the wider town and will be a model used for other community led projects across the county.



Expected Results

Establish an innovative and strong Governance Model to ensure local management of facilities to deliver social services in Ballymahon



Lead Actor

Town Team



Key Partners

- Longford County Council
- Future Users of the space, including Bridgeways Family Resource Centre, Convent Day Care Centre, CE Scheme



Outputs

A strong governance structure in place that will manage the ongoing operation of the Pobal le Cheile project and can inform future governance structures



Resources

- Good Practices from similar structures
- Facilitator to work with the various groups



Timescale

- 18 months before completion of capital project



Estimated Total Cost

- €20,000



Potential Funding

- Longford County Council own resources



Context

One of the primary objectives of this IAP relates to the delivery of the Pobal le Cheile project, an ambitious regeneration project to bring a number of vacant and derelict buildings back into active use to support the community, particularly around social and community needs. The funding secured will allow Longford County Council to deliver the capital project on the site, with the renovation of an old convent building into a family resource centre and day care centre for older people. However, Longford County Council recognises the need to work with the community to ensure that there is a strong and specific purpose governance structure to define clear boundaries and support all the users into the future.



Key Activities

- ✓ Engage facilitator to work with the intended end users and stakeholders, including Longford County Council.
- ✓ Carry out a review of existing governance models in Ireland and Europe, including site visits where appropriate.
- ✓ Prepare a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Longford County Council and Ballymahon Town Team/Governance structure for the management of the Convent and Old School in the town.
- ✓ Hold a public meeting in the town to consult with local stakeholders on the draft MoU.
- ✓ Agree and publish the Memorandum of Understanding.
- ✓ Establish a facilities advisory committee for the Town Team consisting of users of the renovated facilities to support the new governance structure.

Action 2: Governance Good Practice Guide

Develop a Good Practice model for local management facilities.



Vision Goal: Develop a community-aligned governance structure to support the delivery and management of projects.

Longford County Council works with communities across the county in the development and delivery of capital projects. A key driver of the involvement in the UR Impact project was to establish a good practice model of governance that could be utilised with communities across the county to ensure the delivery of urban regeneration projects meets the needs of the communities they are serving.



Expected Results

Establish Good Practice Model of Governance of community projects to roll out across the county.



Lead Actor

- Longford County Council



Key Partners

- Local Community groups from across county.



Outputs

A good practice guide for governance structures that can be replicated in other projects across the county to ensure community needs remains at heart of delivery of projects by the Local Authority.



Resources

- Good Practices from similar structures
- Facilitator to work with the various groups



Timescale

- 12 months



Estimated Total Cost

- €20,000



Potential Funding

- Longford County Council own resources



Context

UR Impact aims to embed social impact in urban regeneration projects. Longford County Council wish to ensure that after completion of the UR Impact project, the legacy of that project is sustained with the development of a model that can be replicated in other projects, keeping the community at the heart of the work that we do.



Key Activities

- ✓ Review governance models from Ireland and across Europe.
- ✓ Engage with local universities to ascertain the potential for a research project on good governance models in community structures.
- ✓ Engage with local community groups to identify what is currently working for them and challenges they face.
- ✓ Develop a good practice guide on governance models.
- ✓ Communicate the findings with the various Departments in Longford County Council and our local community groups.

URBACT Local Group (ULG) Meeting



Action 3: Men's Shed

Provide a space for the Men's Shed to establish themselves and grow.



Vision Goal: Provide a space for older people to socialise, get involved and contribute in meaningful ways

There are a lot of retired people in the community that still have a lot to offer and give back to their community. Currently they do not have a space in the town to meet and develop projects. It is proposed to provide a space that could initially be a temporary space that can grow and develop with the group.



Expected Results

Creation of a space for Men's Shed for older men to come together and meet and be creative, contributing to the community



Lead Actor

- Town Team



Key Partners

- Longford County Council
- National Men's Shed organisation



Outputs

A dedicated space available and a group willing to run the Men's Shed.



Resources

- Space to operate the Men's Shed
- Committee to run the Men's Shed
- Funding to upgrade building



Timescale

- 12 months



Estimated Total Cost

- €70,000



Potential Funding

- Longford County Council own resources
- National Men's Shed organisation
- DRCD Funding



Context

There are many older people living in Ballymahon, that although retired still have a lot to offer the community. Currently there is no space in the town for these people to meet and develop ideas and projects. This project would give them a space that could be developed into their own space over time through projects they develop and allow them to continue to play an integral part in the future of their town.



Key Activities

- ✓ Organise a meeting for the Town Team to visit other Men's Sheds around Longford to identify potential opportunities.
- ✓ Host a public meeting to discuss the possibilities of opening a Men's Shed in Ballymahon.
- ✓ Arrange for a speaker from the Irish Men's Shed Association to give an overview of the value of Men's Shed and the key requirements for setting up a Men's Shed.
- ✓ Apply for the temporary use of the Old Boy's School as a venue for a Men's Shed.
- ✓ Apply for funding and manage a contract for the basic refurbishment of the building to meet minimum standards of health and safety.
- ✓ Install basic procedures and equipment for the operation of the building, including alarms, CCTV, a notice of rules of usage, and appointing a person to open and close the building and inspect for defects.
- ✓ Consult Older People Services in HSE Longford and Age Friendly Longford as to best practices of engaging older people in the activities envisaged for the Men's Shed.
- ✓ Set up a committee to manage the Men's Shed and ensure representation from older people and services providers.
- ✓ Call for volunteers to organise activities.
- ✓ Engage facilitator to work with the intended end users and stakeholders, including Longford County Council.
- ✓ Carry out a review of existing governance models in Ireland and Europe, including site visits where appropriate.
- ✓ Prepare a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Longford County Council and Ballymahon Town Team/Governance structure for the management of the Convent and Old School in the town.
- ✓ Hold a public meeting in the town to consult with local stakeholders on the draft MoU.
- ✓ Agree and publish the Memorandum of Understanding.
- ✓ Establish a facilities advisory committee for the Town Team consisting of users of the renovated facilities to support the new governance structure.

Action 4: Hen's Shed

Support the development of a Hen's Shed to provide a space for older women to socialise and give back to their community.



Vision Goal: Provide a space for older people to socialise, get involved and contribute in meaningful ways

Many older women in the community, particularly in disadvantaged areas of the town become isolated as they get older and the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic remains in many parts of our communities where older people fear going out, often affecting women in our communities. The idea of the Hen's Shed provides a space for those women to come together, support one another while also giving back to the wider community.



Expected Results

Development of a Hen's Shed for older women to come together and support one another and the wider community.



Lead Actor

- Town Team



Key Partners

- Longford County Council
- National Men's Shed organisation



Outputs

- A dedicated space available and a group willing to run the Hen's Shed.



Resources

- Space to operate the Hen's Shed
- Committee to run the Hen's Shed
- Funding to upgrade building



Timescale

- 12 months



Estimated Total Cost

- €70,000



Potential Funding

- Longford County Council own resources
- National Men's Shed organisation
- DRCD Funding



Context

Many older women living in and around Ballymahon still have a lot to offer the community. However, there is currently no outlet for them to come together and be creative and contribute to the community. This project would give them a space that could be developed, which could be a shared space with the Men's Shed with the two groups using the space on alternative times and would allow them to continue to play an integral part in the future of the town.



Key Activities

- ✓ Organise a meeting to ascertain the level of interest in the establishment of a Hen's Shed in Ballymahon.
- ✓ Organise a meeting for the Town Team to visit other Hen's Sheds around neighbouring counties to identify potential opportunities.
- ✓ Host a public meeting to discuss the possibilities of opening a Hen's Shed in Ballymahon.
- ✓ Arrange for a speaker from the existing Hen's Sheds to give an overview of the value of Hen's Shed and the key requirements for setting up a Hen's Shed.
- ✓ Engage with the Men's Shed around opportunities for collaboration and shared use of space.
- ✓ Apply for the temporary use of the Old Boy's School as a venue for a shared Men's/Hen's Shed.
- ✓ Apply for funding and manage a contract for the basic refurbishment of the building to meet minimum standards of health and safety.
- ✓ Install basic procedures and equipment for the operation of the building, including alarms, CCTV, a notice of rules of usage, and appointing a person to open and close the building and inspect for defects.
- ✓ Consult Older People Services in HSE Longford and Age Friendly Longford as to best practices of engaging older people in the activities envisaged for the Hen's Shed.
- ✓ Set up a committee to manage the Hen's Shed and ensure representation from older people and services providers.
- ✓ Call for volunteers to organise activities.
- ✓ Engage facilitator to work with the intended end users and stakeholders, including Longford County Council.
- ✓ Carry out a review of existing governance models in Ireland and Europe, including site visits where appropriate.
- ✓ Prepare a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Longford County Council and Ballymahon Town Team/Governance structure for the management of the Convent and Old School in the town.
- ✓ Hold a public meeting in the town to consult with local stakeholders on the draft MoU.
- ✓ Agree and publish the Memorandum of Understanding.
- ✓ Establish a facilities advisory committee for the Town Team consisting of users of the renovated facilities to support the new governance structure.

Action 5: Design Youth Café

Design a youth café that will encourage young people from minority and disadvantaged groups to meet and use the space.



Vision Goal: Create a town where young people are supported through high-quality services and welcoming spaces.

This project aims to support the whole community and support the Pobal le Cheile project in meeting the needs of the different sectors of the community. Providing a safe and interesting space for the young people will be important and to involve the young people in the design of the space will give them ownership and ensure that they make use of it.



Expected Results

Creation of a youth café that will encourage young people from minority and disadvantaged groups to meet and use the space for their development.



Lead Actor

- Town Team



Key Partners

- Foróige
- Longford County Council
- Longford Community Resources CLG
- Longford Westmeath ETB
- Local community groups
- Local Schools
- Maynooth University



Outputs

A dedicated space available to young people and youth workers in place to support the delivery of programmes in the space.



Resources

- Space to operate the Youth Café
- Youth workers to support the youth cafe
- Funding to upgrade building



Timescale

- 12 months



Estimated Total Cost

- €40,000



Potential Funding

- Foróige
- Túsla
- Longford County Council own resources
- DRCD Funding



Context

The community engagement carried out in preparation of this IAP has identified the need for support services for young people in the town, to increase their connection with the town and therefore their willingness to stay/return to the town while also giving purpose to the young people living in the town. Providing a safe and interesting space for the young people will be important and to involve the young people in the design of the space will give them ownership and ensure that they are comfortable using it.



Key Activities

- ✓ Arrange a meeting with the Longford Community Resources CLG who administers SICAP funding for the county.
- ✓ Arrange meetings with the Youth Work Unit of the Longford Westmeath ETB who has a remit for youth work in the county.
- ✓ Arrange meetings with local community groups including sports clubs who will have an interest in supporting dedicated facilities for young people.
- ✓ Arrange visits to selected towns in Ireland with good quality youth facilities.
- ✓ Explore the models for youth facilities used by partners in the UR Impact project and in partner cities of other URBACT projects.
- ✓ Engage a third level institution (possibly the Community Studies Programme in Maynooth University) to hold a seminar in Ballymahon on models for dedicated youth facilities.
- ✓ Identify a suitable space for the temporary hosting of the youth café.
- ✓ Carry out works to the building to make it suitable for a Youth café.

Youth facilities at Attic Youth Cafe



Action 6: Enhance Public Realm

Enhance connectivity among the services and spaces within the Pobal le Cheile project through public realm enhancements.



Vision Goal: Improving connections within Ballymahon.

The buildings identified within the Pobal le Cheile project are located in close proximity but are very separate from one another, particularly with the presence of the high wall along the front of the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board building. This site is located along one of the main entrance routes into Ballymahon and forms part of the first impression of people to the town. The services that will be accommodated within the buildings want to encourage people to use them and to see them as safe and welcoming spaces for the people of the town. The 3 schools in the town are also located in this area and connections between them and the services is important.



Expected Results

Enhanced public realm connecting the spaces between the buildings in the Pobal le Cheile project.



Lead Actor

- Longford County Council



Key Partners

- Town Team
- Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board
- Longford Community Resources CLG
- Local community groups
- Local Schools



Outputs

An enhanced public realm connecting the spaces around the services within the Pobal le Cheile project.



Resources

- Consultants to design the enhanced public realm
- Community engagement
- Funding to carry out works



Timescale

- 18 months



Estimated Total Cost

- €100,000



Potential Funding

- Longford County Council own resources
- DRCD Funding



Context

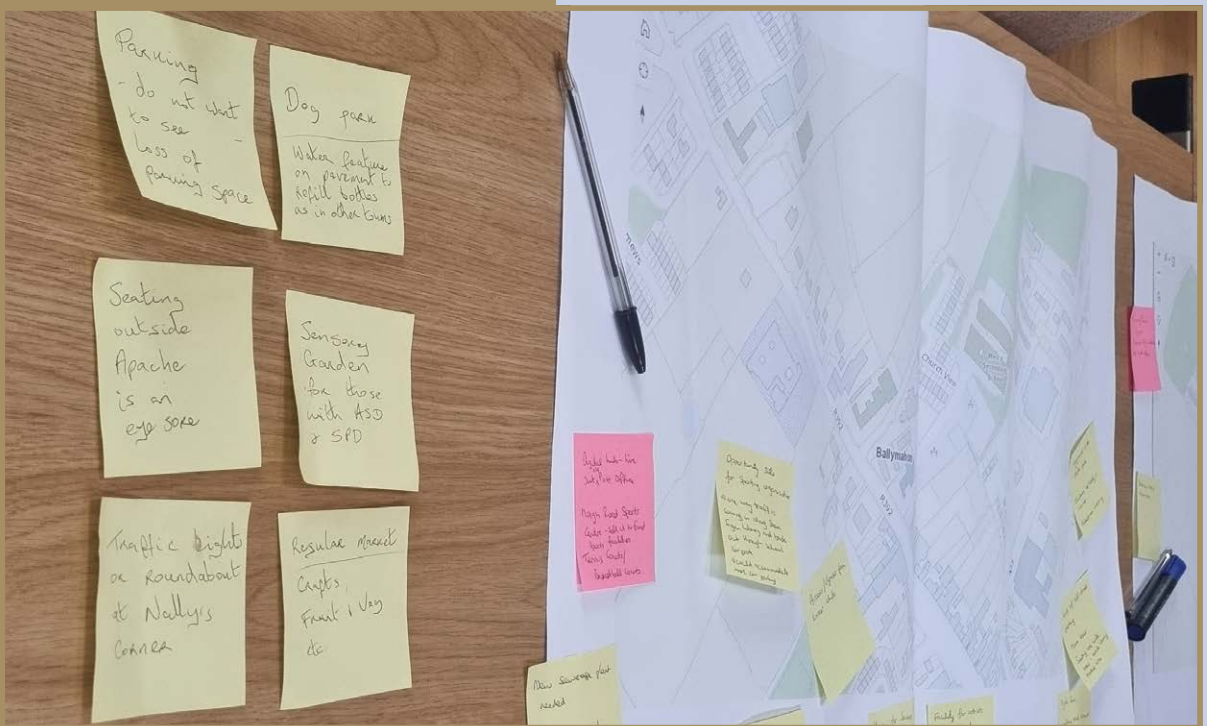
The core aim of the UR Impact project was to embed social impact in urban regeneration projects. As part of the delivery of the capital project under Pobal le Cheile, an integral element of the project was to enhance connectivity within this area of the town to create a place for people to come together. This area is becoming the social hub of the town, with Bridgeways Family Resource Centre, Convent Day Care Centre, 3 schools and the future Youth Café/Men's/Hen's Sheds. The aim of this action is to create a destination within this space to encourage people to move through the spaces freely.



Key Activities

- ✓ Appoint a consultant to carry out public engagement on the needs of the area/potential for community engagement in the area.
- ✓ Design a proposal for the area, in consultation with the community.
- ✓ Prepare and submit funding application for funding to carry out works.
- ✓ Appoint contractor to complete works and carry out works to the area to improve the look and feel of the area.

URBACT Local Group (ULG) Meeting



Action 7: Strengthen community connections

Support the development of better relationships within the town.



Vision Goal: Improving connections within Ballymahon.

This project and the spaces within and around Pobal le Cheile create opportunities for the community to come together and learn from one another, grow together and support the development of the town. The development of the space within the former Convent building will bring together the older people in the Day Care Centre and the younger people through the Family Resource Centre services. Minority and new communities are warmly welcomed into the Family Resource Centre. 3 schools surround the site and create opportunities for the students in those schools to contribute and engage with the services offered in the Day Care Centre and Family Resource Centre.



Expected Results

Strengthened community connections and enhanced engagement among residents and businesses



Lead Actor

- Town Team



Key Partners

- Longford County Council
- Bridgeways/Day care
- Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board
- Longford Community Resources CLG
- Local community groups
- Local Schools



Resources

- Facilitator to work with the various groups
- Community engagement
- Good practice examples



Timescale

- 18 months



Estimated Total Cost

- €10,000



Potential Funding

- Longford County Council own resources



Outputs

A programme of events and opportunities to encourage groups to come together



Context

Throughout the development of the UR Impact project, the diversity within the town and the need to engage further with the minority and new communities was highlighted in order to support them to become more active members of the community. Ballymahon, through the Pobal le Cheile project has the opportunity to be a town that brings all generations together, bringing together the schools with the Day Centre Centre in an innovative way.



Key Activities

- ✓ Bring together the Town Team with the various service providers and schools and a facilitator to look at opportunities for inter-generational and inter-domination engagement and collaboration.
- ✓ Identify and visit good practice examples of work already been undertaken, e.g. McAuley Place, Naas.
- ✓ Support the development of a programme of events to engage the wider community.

URBACT Local Group (ULG) Meeting



Integration

URBACT has defined 12 aspects of integrated urban development, some of which are obligatory aspects of integration such as stakeholder involvement in planning, coherence with existing strategies and sustainable urban development. Other elements are optional including sectoral integration, spatial integration and multi-level governance. Taking part in the UR Impact project has challenged Longford County Council to assess itself on how integrated it is in relation to urban development. Although it is acknowledged that integration is not fully embedded in the work of Longford County Council to date, under the UR Impact project, steps have been taken to improve integration and also identification of gaps in the level of integration and where improvements can be made to ensure integration in this project.

Aspects of Integrated Urban Development

- Stakeholder involvement in planning
- Coherence with existing strategies
- Integration over time
- Stakeholder involvement in implementation
- Sustainable urban development (economic, social, environmental)

Stakeholder involvement in planning

Why relevant

- To codesign IAP, ensuring the needs of the community are fully heard

Current situation

- Not all identified stakeholders have attended meetings

Future action for integration of aspects

- Promote the work of the ULG, deliver small scale actions to raise awareness of ULG and work they do

Coherence with existing strategies

Why relevant

- IAP must align with local, regional and national strategies and policies

Current situation

- Actions identified in IAP align with existing strategies

Future action for integration of aspects

Ensure delivery of actions continues to align with existing strategies and policies

Integration

Integration over time

Why relevant

- Timelines for implementation of actions important to assess implementation and impact of project delivery

Current situation

- Timelines identified in action plan for implementation of actions

Future action for integration of aspects

- Ensuring adherence to timelines and setting realistic timelines

Stakeholder involvement in implementation

Why relevant

- Supports communities and stakeholders having ownership of projects

Current situation

- ULG is in place in Ballymahon. However, a wider representation of the community is needed to ensure that the whole community feel part of the project

Future action for integration of aspects

- Need to identify stakeholders affected by actions, engage them at an early stage and support their involvement in the project

Sustainable urban development (economic, social, environmental)

Why relevant

- Effective urban regeneration must tackle all three pillars of sustainable urban development

Current situation

- As a Local Authority, we are generally good at the economic and environmental aspects.
- A lot of improvement has happened on the social side.
- However, there needs to be better cross departmental integration to ensure all aspects of sustainable urban development are incorporated

Future action for integration of aspects

- Creation of cross departmental working groups to bring together various departments, to bring social impact forward as part of decision making

Monitoring and Communication

The objective of the communication strategy is to pass on the relevant information to the relevant stakeholders who have an interest in the idea or plan. The challenge is to communicate what we are trying to do through a variety of means that involves the use of the internet, social media, local newspaper and radio, public information days and workshops, and ultimately one to one communication with those stakeholders whom we consider to be of greatest value and influence regarding the topic in which we are dealing with. We will aim to ensure that the IAP is communicated effectively to support its implementation. Therefore, the medium chosen will vary, depending on the actions and particular target audience for that action.

This IAP is an iterative document, with the aim to give ownership to the community of the plan and its implementation. It aims to support the community in their ambition to enhance social and community services within the town and to have a strong governance model that can be used for the Pobal le Cheile project, as well as the delivery of Men's Shed and youth support programmes.

The poster prepared as part of this process highlighting the theory of change will be used to inform the local community the vision and objectives, as well as the actions proposed to achieve those. The key message from this IAP is that the delivery of the Pobal le Cheile project is critical to supporting the social services and infrastructure within the town, ensuring that the community is at the heart of the project and the delivery of the project will help the community become stronger together.



Conclusion

It has become clear throughout this process that a strong governance structure is required in order to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Pobal le Cheile project. This is dealt with in detail in the action plan above.

The development of this Integrated Action Plan has provided an important roadmap for the Local Authority and the local community in the regeneration of Ballymahon, specifically around the Pobal le Cheile project. It highlights the importance of community engagement to ensure that urban regeneration projects have a social impact and the potential for this project to transform the social infrastructure of the town. The ULG have played a key role in the development of this Integrated

Action Plan and it is important that they continue to be engaged in the implementation process to ensure the capital project meets the needs of the community and stakeholders. As we move now from the Action Planning Phase under the guidance of the URBACT network to the implementation phase the importance of the process involved in the development of this Integrated Action Plan must not be lost and strengthening of the ULG will be important.

This plan will be used to support the community and the Local Authority in securing funding for delivery of actions identified, in particular in securing funding for elements supporting the delivery of the Pobal le Cheile project.



