

Ballinamore Area Strategy

One vision

One priority plan

Co-ordinated action

Prepared with the participation of the people of the
Ballinamore area.



Courtesy Anna Hryniewicz Solas Art Gallery

Liam Scollan and Margaret Scollan

in association with the Ballinamore Area Steering Group;

May 2018

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Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the work of many people in the Ballinamore area who have been progressing several important projects and whose work in promoting and organising public participation at meetings was vital.

We wish to thank 133 members of the community who participated and took time to work together at workshops and whose names are listed in Appendix 1.ⁱ We thank especially those who have formed a **Ballinamore Area Steering Group** to take this strategy forward and those who have agreed to help implement the projects identified as priorities during the process. The existence of such a group is vital to ensuring that the momentum created can be sustained and have a lasting impact on the area. We thank the artists and Solas Art Gallery, Ballinamore for their kind permission to reproduce their paintings in this strategy, the Commercial Hotel for generously providing the venue for all the public workshops and Smyth's Siopa Ól for kindly hosting the team meetings. Finally we wish to acknowledge the sponsorship by **Leitrim County Council** of this facilitation exercise.

1. Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

This document commences by **introducing the background and methodology** by which The Ballinamore Area Strategy has been prepared. We then set out a brief **overview** of the area and introduce some ideas about the type of **vision** which local people aspire to.

We then describe the **needs, ideas and themes for development** followed by a listing of the **top priorities for the Ballinamore area** including the actions, timescales and those responsible for implementation. We then place these priorities in context by setting out the key strategic goals which they meet and justify their importance in **“Key themes, key goals and their importance for the Ballinamore Area.”**

We then address **external policy priorities**, which local people want local and national government to consider in order to provide an environment which is more conducive to the achievement of its key priorities for development.

Finally in **“Organising for the future of the Ballinamore Area”** we describe the welcome emergence of the Ballinamore Area Steering Group and the crucial role it can play in community leadership, integration and implementation.

1.2 Background

Between February and May 2018 over 130 people from the Ballinamore area participated in a series of public workshops, facilitated by Liam Scollan and Margaret Scollan and were facilitated to create a vision, strategy and plan for the wider area and to identify key priorities.



The workshops were characterised by large enthusiastic attendances, plenty of ideas and a focus on discerning a key vision and way forward. At these workshops each and every voice, both quiet and loud, was heard and is reflected in this plan.

1.3 Overview

Ballinamore and its wider rural environs including neighbouring electoral divisions had a population of 1,971 in Census 2016 constituting a drop of 11% from 30 years previously in 1986.ⁱⁱ From

analysis of population, employment and housing occupation data alone it is clear that the area faces significant challenges to attract people and jobs. Feedback from the first public workshop on 19th February 2018 reflected these challenges.

1.4 Vision

Ballinamore can position itself as a town that promotes science and technology and as a hub centre for a range of outdoor walking and cycling trails and canal journeys. It can also tell a story about journeys through time from heritage of the past to a science-led journey of possibilities for the

future. All these themes emerged in the many ideas and projects which people at the workshops envisaged for Ballinamore. A thriving Ballinamore can lie at the heart of many journeys.

The 400th anniversary of its founding in 2021 will be a timely opportunity to refine Ballinamore's vision and showcase a strong and compelling image of the area.

1.5 Needs, ideas and themes for development

Chief concerns, raised at workshops, included the need for more social facilities for young and older people, poor use of tourism potential, planning constraints, unfair exploitation of forestry, lack of employment, population decline, town centre image and the loss of the County Council's presence in the town.

Participants proposed over 100 project ideas (summarised in Appendix 5 of this strategy) to develop the Ballinamore area. They reflect a strong public desire to develop the area in a holistic manner embracing a wide range of social, cultural, scientific, artistic, economic, educational, sporting, environmental and public policy themes.

1.6 Top priorities for the Ballinamore area

The local community has prioritised 11 actions with the aim of improving the area in social, economic, energy and infrastructure terms. Participants were asked to prioritise projects on the basis of being doable, affordable, impactful and having dedicated people to implement them.

Theme	Goal	Project
Social Young people	To ensure that Ballinamore is a caring supportive place for children and young people.	The completion of a community childcare facility.
Social Older people	To provide more locally accessible opportunities to care for the health of older people.	The extension of nursing care to a 45-bed unit.
Social community	To provide a modern performance and screening facility with the ability to attract viable audiences	The adaption of the Community Centre to facilitate a modern theatre space and multi-purpose usage
Education apprenticeships	To build up provision beyond post primary level in Ballinamore.	To achieve outreach training e.g. apprenticeships in structural steel and agri-industry and other practical skills
Enterprise Facilities	To provide modern facilities which will attract a new generation of entrepreneurs to the area.	The creation of new starter units along the "we-work" principle and possibly linked to the digital hub concept.
Enterprise Tourism	To realise Ballinamore's potential to be a hub for outdoor walking, cycling and canal journeys.	Completion of the Leitrim phases of the 41km Cavan/Leitrim Greenway,
		Development of the St Felim's Visitor Centre and enterprise hub
Energy	To make Ballinamore an energy positive town.	Completion of remedial works to maintain local canal and lake amenities
		Investigation of potential to convert flows from the weirs on the Shannon-Erne into energy for public buildings.
Accessible infrastructure	To support an active, healthy, inclusive life for all residents through having accessible infrastructure for everyone.	Faster broadband for the rural areas outside the town.
		New town plan with new designs which improve access and the streetscape

1.7 External policy priorities

The scale of the challenge facing Ballinamore is such that local development bodies and Leitrim County Council on their own cannot be expected to reverse decline and achieve the level of growth which people believe should happen.

The facilitators met with local government representatives on the 25th April 2018 to discuss specific policy concerns raised in the public workshops and it was agreed that the six Municipal Councillors will convene a meeting with the Government TDs from the constituency to convey the need to achieve more progressive policies in the areas listed below and also to pursue any appropriate amendments to County Council policies. This action will be planned in conjunction with the Steering Group.

The policy matters are: housing planning and septic tank charges, afforestation, N4 investment, business rates, Municipal Area Office and larger scale job creation. Specific matters relating to these external policies are addressed later in this report.

1.8 Organising for Ballinamore's future

The scale and diversity of ideas and projects reinforced the importance of having a group which can hold the emerging vision in all its diversity and inclusivity and help ensure implementation.

A Ballinamore Area Steering Group has now been formed as a result of this process, operating under the auspices of the Ballinamore Area Community Council and in co-operation with the Ballinamore Canal Development Association and the Ballinamore Credit Union.

The effectiveness of that Steering Group will be key to the success of this plan. With good governance, strong team building, community support, a dedicated community worker and funding to carry out its role the Steering Group can be key to Ballinamore achieving its ambitious vision and focused plan.

1.9 The opportunity

As Ireland's most rural county, with 9 out of 10 people living in a rural area, Leitrim is at the vanguard of the challenge to develop the rural economy. This challenge is dramatically reflected in the Ballinamore area. The local enthusiasm behind this visioning exercise shows how the people of this area want to halt catastrophic declines in rural population with a drive to attract people, reverse job losses with projects in tourism, science and technology that will build the basis of a modern local economy and replace the loss of local land and farm resources with more sustainable means to develop farm based enterprises.

The progressive plans of local people in the Ballinamore area provide an opportunity for visionary public policy. Rurally regressive policies can be replaced with policies that target job creation in rural economies, more visionary legislation to achieve sustainable rural dwelling, more urgent measures to address rural internet connectivity and more locally owned and productive farming and forestry land uses.

Ballinamore has an impressive commercial past, an incredible location in a unique and beautiful lake-land, drumlin and mountain landscape, affordable quality housing, award winning education provision, a vibrant arts and culture scene and a positive welcoming community. These factors present the opportunity to embrace Ballinamore's exciting potential and the collective ability of local people and external policy makers to transform the prospects of this part of rural Ireland.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background to Strategy

Between February and April 2018 the people of Ballinamore and surrounding area gathered together at public workshops to assess needs, envision solutions and devise a strategic way forward for their area.

2.2 Brief and approach

The initial brief given to the facilitator was to prepare an action plan and vision for Ballinamore. The full original brief together with the actual sequence of meetings which took place to produce this strategy is outlined in detail in Appendix 2. The process adopted was to maximise public involvement, provide the best opportunities for each attendee to make positive contributions and synthesise each and everyone's contributions into an integrated vision for the Ballinamore area. What results is an open, transparent and inclusive engagement with all those interested, both long-time residents and new comers to the area, young as well as older, quieter voices as well as louder ones and ultimately an engagement that ensures that all opinions are respected and held in this strategy.

2.3 Activities and methodology

The process consisted of three public workshops in which participants developed the strategy and priorities in small groups and plenary sessions. Findings of meetings were fed back to all participants at each stage and also discussed with Council Officials and local Municipal members. The entire process was managed in close consultation with an initial core group of local people which later grew into the larger Ballinamore Area Steering Group which formed during the process. See Appendix 2 for details and timeline.

3. Overview of Ballinamore area

3.1 Introduction

Ballinamore is situated in the heart of the Leitrim lake-lands bordering West Cavan. It is 25km from the nearest rail station in Dromod and the N4 Dublin road, 85km from Ireland West Airport Knock and is equidistant from Dublin and Belfast at just over 160kms from each. (2 hrs by car). It is a gateway to a wide variety of holiday activities with options for walking, cycling, boating, angling, golfing, many places of historical interest and a growing range of festivals.

Located at the foot of Sliabh an Iarainn it was established in 1621 and became a significant hub for the region with the building of the Ballinamore Ballyconnell Canal and the Narrow Gauge Railway.

3.2 Population

The population of Ballinamore and the surrounding areas fell from 2,220 in Census 1986 to 1,971 in Census 2016, constituting a drop of 11%.ⁱⁱⁱ



While the population of the Ballinamore electoral division itself grew by 9% it conceals a dramatic decline in the surrounding rural population in that same period.

If we look just at the surrounding rural areas excluding the town environs the rural hinterland population fell by 29% since 1986.

The Ballinamore area has undergone a significant generational loss of population in the last 30 years.

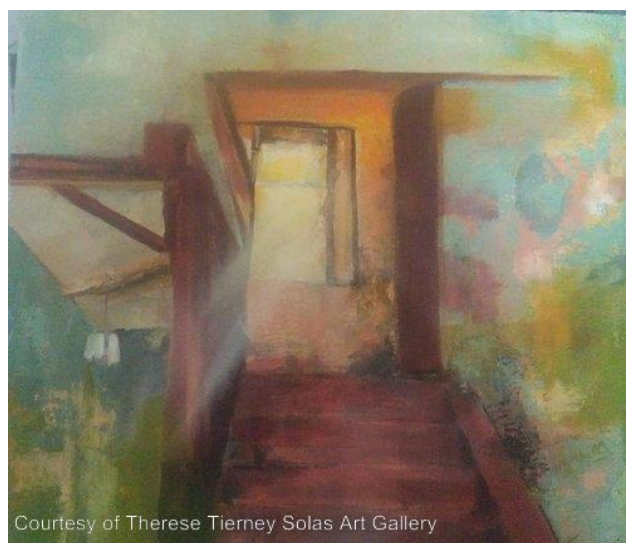
3.3 Employers

Ballinamore currently lacks any employer employing over 50 people. It is unique among the three Leitrim municipal areas in this regard. In a survey we undertook in 2017 identifying employers with over 50 employees we found that Carrick-on-Shannon had 9 large employers employing 1,345, compared to 4 employers with 620 employees in Manorbhamilton and no employers of that size in Ballinamore.

3.4 Housing occupation

A symptom of population decline and lack of significant employment opportunities is the large housing vacancy rate for the Ballinamore Electoral Division. Ballinamore's total housing vacancy rate is 29%, more than double the rate for the State as a whole which stands at 12.8%. See Appendix 3

These findings suggest that Ballinamore faces significant challenges to increase population and reverse decline in its more rural areas, to create employment and to support the services its population requires.



Courtesy of Therese Tierney Solas Art Gallery

4. Towards a vision

4.1 Introduction

We set out below a draft vision based on the projects, suggestions, discussions and research of the area and aiming at creating a distinctive and compelling image for the area.

4.2 Technology, journey and exploration

Ballinamore's origins and more recent history are associated with:

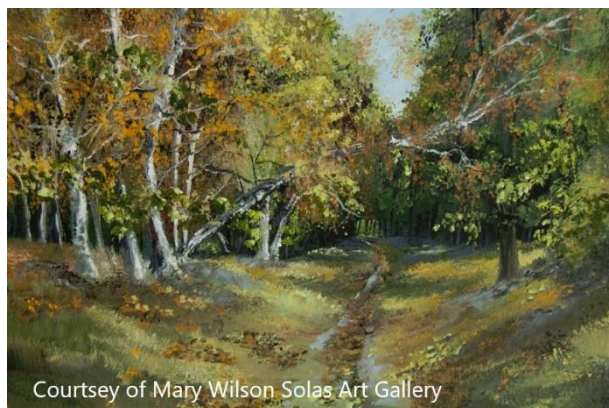
- The arrival of tradespeople and entrepreneurs who created manufacturing industries
- Innovative people who built canals and railways
- A connection point for people travelling north, south, east and west for leisure and business
- A well-established destination for anglers from all over the world to its 28 lakes.

To-day these characteristics are resurgent. In these workshops local people are:

- Reviving the area's tradition to journey either by canal, greenway on the old rail routes and other walking trails
- Aspiring to attract innovators and entrepreneurs through links to science and technology and
- Aiming to rebuild their entire community, its population, its social, cultural and economic life

Ballinamore can position itself as a town that promotes science and technology and as a hub centre for a range of outdoor walking and cycling trails and canal journeys. It can also tell a story about journeys through time from heritage of the past to a science-led journey of possibilities for the future.

4.3 Ballinamore and the theme of journey



Courtesy of Mary Wilson Solas Art Gallery

Ballinamore's known past opens out into a fascinating narrative that includes its mythology, history, justice, pilgrimage, commercial and industrial life and Ballinamore's place in the national struggle for independence. Its rivers, buildings, relics, records and remnants can take visitors on a journey there.

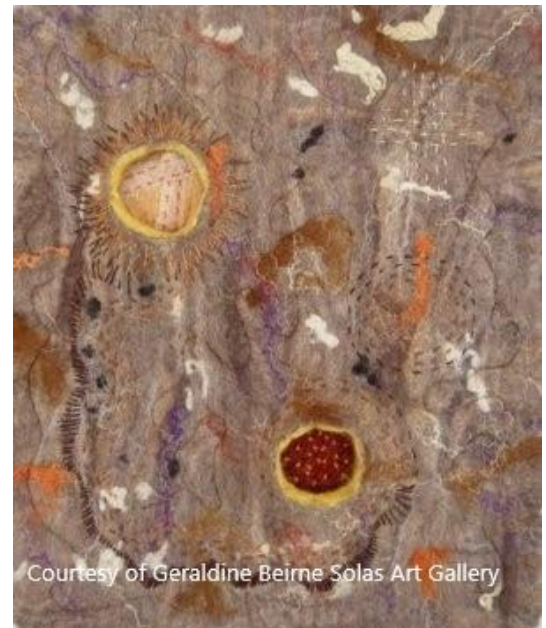
In the recent workshops there has also been a looking forward. Themes of science and technology, digital enterprise are among the ideas expressed for the future.

4.4 Towards a vision for Ballinamore

Ballinamore's past and present and the ideas that emerge in the workshops express many themes about connection, intersection and journey. Ballinamore's community conversation in early 2018 suggests a theme of journey or connection or movement of some sort. We suggest a number of options:

1. *Ballinamore the heart of many journeys*
2. *Ballinamore: Realise the connection*
3. *Ballinamore: Connect with a welcoming community*
4. *Ballinamore: Explore the connections*
5. *Ballinamore: A meeting point of journeys*

We suggest that this is the start of a process where the Ballinamore area will agree on one compelling vision.



Courtesy of Geraldine Beirne Solas Art Gallery

4.5 A vision for Ballinamore 400

The 400th anniversary of Ballinamore's establishment will be marked in 2021. The anniversary will be a major opportunity to celebrate the past and present of Ballinamore and its vision for the future.

It is timely therefore to work from here to agree a common vision for Ballinamore so that the various events can all feed into a strong and compelling image that the people of Ballinamore wish to portray.

5. Needs, ideas and themes for development

5.1 Needs and concerns

At the public meeting on the 19th February around 120 people attended and firstly were asked, in groups, to identify the needs to be addressed in the town and surrounding area. A similar workshop was carried out in the Ballinamore Community School with TY students. Detailed feedback on needs voiced at these meetings is in Appendix 4. Chief concerns included the need for more social facilities for young and older people, poor use of tourism potential, planning constraints, unfair exploitation of forestry resources, lack of employment, population decline, town centre image and the loss of the County Council's permanent presence in the town.

5.2 Ideas for development

At the same workshop on 19 February participants suggested ideas for development. A complete list is included in Appendix 5 "Ideas for Development." Over 100 different ideas were suggested with different actions under headings which included:

- Business regeneration
- Tourism
- Facilities for children and young people
- Social and cultural initiatives
- Measures to make the area a safer place
- Education beyond second level
- Energy and renewables,
- Health and older people
- Improvement to external policies impacting on housing, population, land use and the town and
- Managing local development in a more integrated manner

5.3 Main themes for development

At the second public meeting on 12th March, attended by over 80 people, groups engaged with the many ideas for development and how best to respond to the needs identified at the first meeting. Four broad themes emerged from the second public workshop.



Social: Recreational, educational and health actions focusing on the existing social needs of local people

Economic: Enterprise and tourism actions focusing on generating economic wealth

Energy: Actions in relation to renewable energy to fuel the future of the Ballinamore area and

Accessible infrastructure: Measures to build an infrastructure that improves access and communications for everyone

6. Top priorities for the Ballinamore area

We summarise below the top eleven priorities chosen by participants describing the main themes and sub-themes covered, the priority actions under these themes, the local people responsible, the relevant agencies and the general timeline. Participants were asked to prioritise the very large range of projects on the basis that they are doable, affordable, impactful and have volunteers dedicated to implementing them.

Theme Sub theme Project Ref.	Project Name	Lead person and support team	Key agencies	Start date	End date
Social. Children and Youth. Social A	Community Childcare Facility	Ballinamore Childcare CLG	Leitrim County Childcare Committee Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Ongoing	
Social. Older people Social B	Lobby to extend Nursing Home capacity to 45	Mary McKiernan Aideen Reynolds	HSE	6/18	12/18
Social Arts & Community Social C	Modern theatre and multi- purpose facility	Ballinamore Community Hall CLG: Tom Burns; Alison Gray; Declan Comiskey	LCC; Arts Council St Felim's Diocesan Trust Leader; OPW; Inland Waterways	6/18	4/19
Education Training. Apprentice Education A	Apprenticeships programmes	Sharon Sweeney Pat McGourty	MSLETP SOLAS	6/18	12/18
Enterprise. Facilities Education B	Development of We-work / digital enterprise space	Eamonn Walsh;	Leitrim Enterprise Office	6/18	7/19
Enterprise Tourism Enterprise A	Cavan Leitrim Greenway	Ruairí Sullivan, Gerry D'Arcy, Greenway Sub- committee	Leitrim County Council, Cavan County Council, Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland; Scouting Ireland	Ongoing	Phase 1 2/19 End 12/20
Enterprise Tourism Enterprise B	St. Felims Visitor Centre	Máirín Martin Damien O'Brien	Leitrim County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Diocese of Kilmore	Ongoing	Phase 1 10/18 End: 12/20
Enterprise Tourism Enterprise C	Angling Phase 1: Remedial works programme	Steve Clinch, Brian McKeown Dee Owens, Terry Short	Inland fisheries Ireland	6/18	2/19
Energy Renewable Energy A	Energy positive town	Andy Duffy, Gabriel Toolan, Pádraig MacAodha	SEAI, Waterways Ireland	6/18	12/20
Infrastructure Broadband Infra A	Higher speed broadband in rural areas	Pius Flynn Geraldine Leddy	Eir, Air speed, Imagine and other broadband providers	6/18	12/20
Infrastructure Public Realm Infra B	Town design plan and implementation	Gráinne Harte, Claire McGirl, Federico De Villo Palu	Leitrim County Council LEADER, CLÁR and the town's businesses.	6/18	12/20

7. Key themes, key goals and their justification for the Ballinamore area

7.1 Introduction

We set out below the broader goals served by implementation of the top eleven priority actions and then describe and justify the actions in more detail. We then describe additional projects which form a second tier of priorities chosen by participants and summarised in Appendix 6.

The priorities reflect the reality of local thinking as of May 2018. Priorities can change. If at any stage factors behind current choices change then the Ballinamore Area Steering Group will be advised to consider moving other projects into the priority position from either the second tier or from the full list of 100+ projects in Appendix 5.

The more strategic context provided in this chapter is designed to inform current and any future prioritisation by focusing on the overall goal and why that goal is important.

7.2 Social

Key goals:

To ensure that Ballinamore is a caring supportive place for children and young people.

To provide more locally accessible opportunities to care for the health of older people.

To develop art and cultural facilities



Courtesy of Childrens Exhibition Solas Art Gallery

Justification for top priority:

The completion of a community childcare facility is a top priority, it should modern, secure and serving all young age groups including afterschool.

The increasing proportion of the population aged 65 and over justifies increasing capacity in the town for a 45-bed nursing care unit.

To provision of a modern performance and screening facility with the ability to attract viable audiences and public engagement will

facilitate cultural development.

These top priorities are followed by other, second tier, actions proposed in the various workshops and included in Appendix 5.

Additional themes and project ideas

Additional social themes included measures to:

- Improve services for older people both in terms of nursing care facilities, more day-care facilities and an idea to develop a “village” for people with dementia.

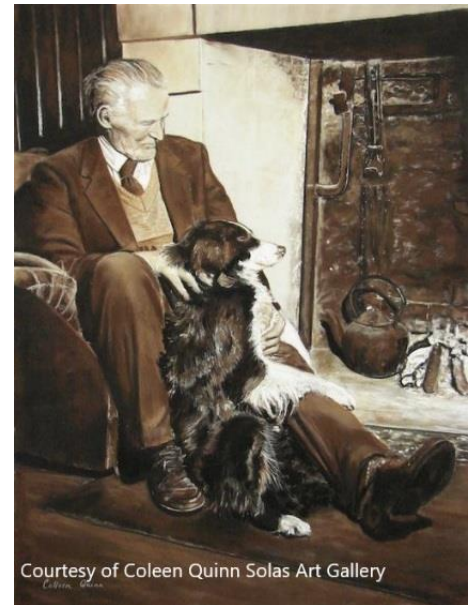
- Have a Family Resource Centre in the town

Cultural themes included ideas to:

- Develop an arts centre for artists
- Create a heritage centre or County Museum

Sports themes include proposals to:

- Build an all-weather sports Astro-turf pitch for public use with running track
- Up-grade sports hall and add a social hub and a swimming pool extension
- Have a gym that is available for everyone



7.3 Education

Key goal

To build up provision beyond post primary level in Ballinamore.

Justification for top priority

The key action to achieve outreach training through the Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). Apprenticeships e.g. in structural steel and agri-industry related training were suggested as areas to start with.

The significant shortfall in appropriate job opportunities in Ballinamore, the national shortage of skilled tradespeople, the priority given by government to providing funding for apprenticeships and the background which Ballinamore has in skilled trades justify this action as a key priority.

Additional ideas

Additional courses suggested include: forestry management/operations courses, environmental studies, horticulture and the use of technology on farm and in households

Establish a new project to encourage the setting up of a TEFL language school targeting Chinese and Brazilian markets

7.4 Economic actions (enterprise)

Goal:

To provide modern attractive facilities which will attract a new generation of entrepreneurs to Ballinamore and the surrounding area.

Justification for top priority

Creating a “we-work” and digital hub facility will provide modern attractive facilities which can attract a new generation of entrepreneurs to Ballinamore and the surrounding area.

A “we-work” style enterprise hub means creating enterprise space in an environment that responds to people’s desire to connect with others in a creative environment and is described as follows:

“WeWork provides welcoming environments where companies grow together in thoughtfully-designed shared office spaces, beautiful lounges, art-filled meeting rooms, private phone booths, micro-roasted coffee, dedicated front desk service, and regularly scheduled events make WeWork a

powerful platform to take your business to new heights."^{iv} There could be every possibility that this concept could be joined with the digital hub concept.

Ballinamore can have the ability to attract significant job creation in certain sectors. Further research should be undertaken to define these sectors. Then external job creation agencies including Enterprise Ireland and the IDA could work pro-actively with such communities in identifying and supporting delivery of enterprise and jobs. Ballinamore has a number of sites where a ready-to-go modern facility could be established in line with a more pro-active approach to larger scale inward investment.

Creating enterprise opportunities is a key priority because Ballinamore has no significant employer base (employing more than 50 people); it is an ideal location to attract young families where there is availability of quality and affordable accommodation and education and it is in keeping with the theme (expressed in the workshops) of investigating opportunities in science and technology.

Local people view the need for jobs as paramount. The attraction of the area to those moving from cities like Dublin is huge because it offers a better work/life balance which is a very positive selling point for the town and surrounding area.

Additional themes and project ideas

- Build a bigger factory unit which is "ready to go"
- Encourage "back-office" facilities from large companies in cities
- Create a farmers co-operative for products such as organic/rabbit/goats cheese or for beef marketing
- Create access to finance locally through business lending from the Credit Union.

7.5 Economic actions (tourism)

Goal

The goal is to realise Ballinamore's potential to be a hub for outdoor walking, cycling and canal journeys.

Justification for top priorities

Ballinamore's preferred strategy to become a hub for tourism is based on its potential to develop three allied activities:

1. Walking, cycling and canal journeys with the flagship development of the Greenway (Enterprise A)
2. Visitor centre (St. Felims) Enterprise B and
3. Angling and water amenities improvements (Enterprise C)

An important supporting activity for all three will be the provision of dedicated marketing resources guided by the preparation of a tourism marketing plan for the Ballinamore area incorporating all of its attractions, activities and festivals. That strategy can be based on key pillars discussed below:

- Walking, cycling and canal journeys
- Journeys in space and science
- A visitor centre at St. Felim's
- Angling and water amenities
- Festivals and
- Historical stories and trails

Walking, cycling and canal journeys

The Greenway

The completion of the 10 km Ballinamore Area Greenway between Fenagh and Aughawillan will open access to a continuous walking and cycling trail between Leitrim and Cavan along the old railway line. It can be the showcase development for many other roaming and expedition options which take in heritage, the arts, hill-walking, town and village looped walks and outdoor adventure e.g.

- McGahern themed walk from Aughawillan to Fenagh
- Mountain trails on Sliabh an Iarainn and Bencroy Mountains with trails from half a day to 20 kilometres
- Pilgrimage and Holy Well routes retraced
- Mountain biking
- Walks and boat trips along the canal

Cavan and Leitrim Greenway Project – Additional Information

The Greenway Project is a potential flagship project for Ballinamore's aspiration to be the "Heart of Many Journeys."

The Cavan and Leitrim Greenway is a community partnership project involving six local development groups, Cavan and Leitrim County Councils and Waterway Ireland. It stretches for 41 kms between Mohil to Fenagh, through Ballinamore, on to Ballyconnell in Cavan and into Belturbet. It provides access to a rich variety of local landscapes including bogs, drumlins, woodland, lake and canal side views, working farms, the Shannon Erne Waterway and the UN recognised Marble Arch Caves Geopark in Co Cavan. Much of the route is in the foothills of the Sliabh an Iarainn and Sliabh Rushen Mountains.

The need for a project such as this is based on strategies such as The Growth Strategy for Leitrim 2015-2021 and the Recreational Strategy for Leitrim 2014 and national economic assessments which demonstrate the significant economic return from the development of Greenways and walking trails. Encouraging progress has been made with the recent announcement on 18th March 2018 of plans to develop the Ballyconnell to Bellaheady part of the Greenway along the Woodford River in Cavan.

The emerging route feeds into established plans for outdoor trails in the region such as the Shannon Erne Waterway and the Geo Park. The Ballinamore to Belturbet section also connects the Scouting Centre in Belturbet with the Scouts Den in Ballinamore and is also part of the proposed National Cycle Network prepared by the Department of Transport under the "Smarter Travel" policy.

The Ballinamore area section is managed by the Greenway Sub Committee. Key funding agencies are supportive of the project and €20,000 has been raised locally to support the project.



Journeys in space and science

For many people, especially younger people, there is an immense interest in astronomy and the advances in technology which make planetary exploration accessible to all. Facilities to explore science and its many possibilities are a natural extension of the theme of journey, strengthening Ballinamore's potential to attract investment and technologically driven enterprise

St Felim's Visitor Centre

The goal is to create a space at St. Felims in Ballinamore where people can see, feel and experience the area's character as a hub for journeys past, present and future.

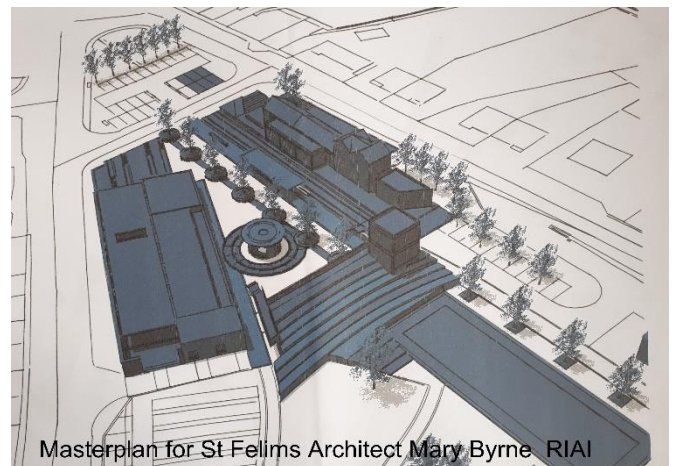
The restoration of the old rail station and sidings is a very timely initiative which can capture the "journey" story of the Ballinamore area in a way that excites and inspires locals and visitors. Given the site's importance in the townscape it will be important that:

- The central theme chosen is consistent with an overall vision for Ballinamore
- It complements and accentuates a wider townscape plan described elsewhere in this report
- It houses projects that are viable in the long-term and that
- A full costing is prepared for the completed construction and the projects housed there.

With these provisos the following range of possible uses are being suggested:

Visitor Centre with a journey theme involving trains, bikes and boats and walking incorporating the Greenway, Sliabh an Iarainn way, bike trails, Cuilcagh walks etc.

- Location for the proposed Greenway H.Q. with bike hire centre
- Telling the journey of Ballinamore
- Senior citizen/youth/tourist cafe.
- Classrooms in the stone building/former railway engine sheds
- Digital hub/ hot desk centre, hub for start-up businesses or craft enterprises
- John McGahern interpretive centre
- Angling resource centre



St. Felim's Visitor Centre: Additional Information

Historical background

The Cavan Leitrim three-foot Gauge railway was built between 1884 and 1887. It ran from Ballinamore, its headquarters, to Dromod where it linked with the Midland Great Western Railway from Sligo to Mullingar. Northwards it linked to Belturbet where it joined the Great Northern. A further branch known as the "tram" ran alongside the public road to Drumshanbo and onward to the Arigna coalmines. It was closed in 1959.^v

The site

It contains two main heritage buildings and a more recently constructed link building, specifically:

1. A former Railway Station building, a detached, eight-bay, red-brick building with a two-story Station Master's house and single-story offices and
2. A railway coach building workshop
3. Later a link building was built connecting the two to form additional classrooms for St. Felims College.

The idea

The idea is to restore this site based on the themes of its former history as a transport hub. Leitrim County Council and the Ballinamore Area Community Council are working together to develop a set of themes that reflect the past and yet provide a viable contemporary role in keeping with an emerging vision for Ballinamore.

Angling and water amenities

The goal is to reclaim Ballinamore area's position as the premier location for angling and enjoyment of outdoor water amenities.

Ballinamore is synonymous with angling, with 28 lakes within a 5-mile radius and 10 miles of riverbank. It has long been a premier location for game and coarse fishing with some of the cleanest and lightly fished waters in Europe.

Key actions to achieve its goal include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Organise showcase events such as an angling school or angling competition "all Ireland"
- Develop activities such as non-motorised water sports e.g. on Garadice lake
- Re-instate notice boards with information at Garadice and Kiltybarden loughs
- Carry out measures to protect fisheries
- Improve and increase the facilities for the waterway such as safety notices and locks so as to reach and surpass the previous number of 8000 boats achieved in 1994.

Supporting themes and project ideas

Festivals

Festivals are a significant means by which Ballinamore celebrates its culture and attracts visitors. They merit support and expansion, specifically:

- Support for more marketing,
- Develop additional festivals such as a John McGahern festival /summer school,
- Build a Camping / Caravan park (especially useful at festivals)

Historical stories and trails

Identify all the historical sites, carry out further research and draw-up inventory to improve on and create trails. Examples of the many places that can be included are Court House, St Felims, Fenagh Abbey and the home of internationally renowned writer John McGahern at Aughawillan.

Further work is required e.g. to Identify links with other areas e.g. monks in Fenagh, Ultach people who fled to Sliabh an Iarainn from Derry, historic walks from Ulster

Develop the area's heritage story through creating different interpretive themes and through refurbishment of the area's historic buildings

7.6 Energy

Goal

To make Ballinamore an energy positive town.

Justification for this priority

For the first project there are four weirs with strong water-flows on the Shannon-erne waterway within two miles of Ballinamore. There is the potential to develop eight weirs from Lough Scur to the Erne using the Archimedes Screw principle.

Additional project idea

Convert farm waste, use wood to create biomass

Accessible infrastructure

Goal

To support an active, healthy, inclusive life for all residents through having accessible infrastructure for everyone.

Justification

Three key projects are prioritised:

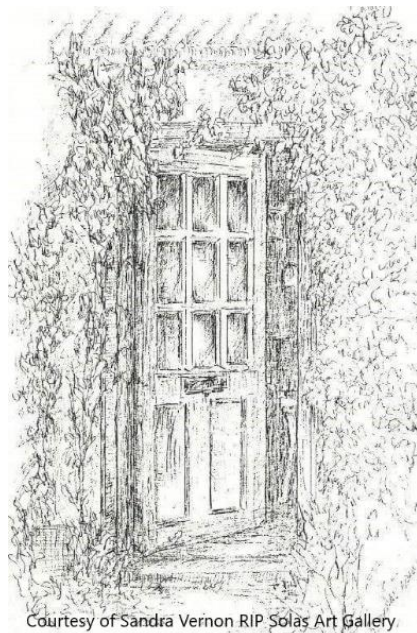
- Faster broadband for the rural areas outside the town.
- A new town plan with new designs which improve access and the streetscape
- More rural transport.

Leitrim lags far behind the national average for internet connectivity with just 58% connected to internet compared to 71% for the State as a whole.

7.7 A new physical town plan

Townscape design and imagery

There is great potential to re-think the design and physical image Ballinamore town and streetscape. Urban design can powerfully complement the overall vision for Ballinamore and the surrounding area.



Courtesy of Sandra Vernon RIP Solas Art Gallery

- In the first instance encouraging painting along the streetscape, provision of floral displays and removal of unnecessary signage. In particular, the façades of a small number of prominent buildings are in need of urgent attention.
- An audit of vacant properties and an integrated plan to improve the image, refurbish or attract re-use of such buildings.
- Greater attention to pedestrianisation and cycling integrated with improved design of car-parking and HGV access in order to make the town more pleasant and accessible.
- Visually reflect the beauty and possibilities around Ballinamore by achieving greater visibility of the actual waterways, walkways, attractions and the use of art and imagery in the town's public spaces.

Design and art work on streetscapes, buildings and public spaces, can offer anticipation to the visitor about to begin their journey. It can reflect the themes of local journeys, waterways, walkways and discoveries that the Ballinamore area offers. Such design can open up an appealing narrative that covers mythology, history, justice, pilgrimage, commercial and industrial life and Ballinamore's place in the national struggle for independence.

The re-development of St. Felims' presents a timely opportunity to complement an overall review of how the town is presented. This can set the tone for a much wider initiative in transforming the physical image of Ballinamore and the surrounding area. The support of Tidy Towns and Pride of Place will greatly boost the achievement of these goals.

The facilitators received a considered thought-piece from one of the workshop participants suggesting possible enhancements to the town's streetscape. We are grateful to her for this and include her piece in full on the next page.

New Town Transport and Access Plan Design: Additional Information

Walking and cycling

Promote walking and cycling as the primary means of travel for shorter trips through the provision of safer routes for people to travel by bike and foot. Create safe, lit and accessible links between residential, commercial, community facilities, schools and open spaces.

Create a safer more pleasant pedestrian and cycling experience within the town by removing HGV's from the main street. (Directing them onto the by-pass). By reviewing the introduction of one-way traffic systems, pedestrianisation and providing properly designed and delineated parking spaces on the main street. Aim to achieve a safer, more pleasant and accessible town.

Parking

Encourage pedestrian movements by promoting the use of and upgrading of existing parking facilities off the main street (e.g. car park behind the Courthouse) and by identifying other alternative parking locations. This will result in reduced traffic congestion, increase footfall and spend within the town.

Public realm space

Create a more vibrant, appealing town centre by enhancing existing community hubs e.g. the existing community centre, local pubs and restaurants, expanding their outdoor seating space where it forms part of the public realm and providing a covered area where people can convene when the weather is bad. The result will be a vibrant town hub accessible and appealing to tourists and locals and promoting social inclusion.

Implementation Stages

Phase	Main activities
Phase 1	Encourage more immediate visual improvements to streetscape in conjunction with Tidy Towns
Phase 2	Cycling, Walking, Public Realm and Parking Strategy for Ballinamore. Incorporating public consultation process
Phase 4	New Town Transport and Access Plan/Design incorporating public consultation process
Phase 4	Review funding streams and phase works as outlined above.
Phase 5	Submit funding applications and construct works.

7.8 Further analysis prior to investment decisions

We note however that investment in these priorities should follow from a rigorous assessment in key areas:

- How they support a central vision for the Ballinamore area,
- Impact in terms of key economic and social goals and quantification of that impact,
- The degree to which they complement and do not duplicate other projects
- Deliverability in terms of organisational and management resources and skills and
- Long-term financial viability.

8. External policy priorities

Background

The scale of the challenge facing Ballinamore is such that local development efforts and Leitrim County Council on their own cannot be expected to reverse decline and achieve the level of growth which people believe should happen. A century of failed policies that have led to consistent devastation of this rural community can be replaced with a decade of positive policies that equals the ambitions and commitment set by local people in this strategy.

The facilitators met with the local Councillors on the 25th April to discuss these policy concerns and it was agreed that the six Municipal Councillors will convene a meeting with the Government TDs to convey the need to achieve more progressive policies in the areas listed below and that this will be done in conjunction with the Steering Group. They will also pursue any appropriate amendments to County Council plans.

Housing planning and septic tank charges

The “T90” test which measures the way that soakage can be dealt with safely from septic tanks is imposed on a pilot basis by different County Councils and has been put in place by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) following EU standards. Because of the poor soakage of much of Leitrim land the county is disproportionately affected by this measure. The measure empowers Local Authorities to impose installation and follow up testing requirements which can cost up to €50k per household.

Afforestation

Current afforestation policy which funds external investors to purchase local land for forestry is causing a haemorrhage of productive land from local ownership.

Local representatives are seeking changes to the County Development Plan to reflect this position as well as exploring measures to restrict licences to those living within a 50km distance to the proposed planting. The Councillors who met the facilitators explained however, that these measures were largely aspirational because the licences are dealt with by the Forest Service and do not need local planning permission except for road access. Despite this there is a concerted effort being made by the County Council to work with the national authorities by monitoring and placing objections where necessary and a desire to continue lobbying actions on this very important issue.

N4

The upgrading of the N4 would enhance travel time between Dublin and Ballinamore. Leitrim County Council is working both with Longford and Westmeath County Councils to move the project as high up the list of public works in the National Development Plan as possible so that this work is carried out. It is seen as a priority by the Councillors

Business Rates

Ideas for a “holiday” from business rates for new businesses had been raised by participants at the public workshops. The Councillors wished to draw attention to a Leitrim County Council’s Town Centre Business Incentive Scheme whereby rates can be reduced over a period of 3 years:

Year 1 - 75% of the annual rates paid in year 1 of trading.

Year 2 - 50% of the annual rates paid in year 2 of trading.

Year 3 - 25% of the annual rates paid in year 3 of trading.

Return of Engineers' offices or provision of Municipal Area Office

The facilitators raised the concerns expressed by local people at the removal of the Area Engineers Offices from Ballinamore. Local people have expressed a strong desire to see a return of some permanent County Council presence to the Municipal Town. The reply at the time of writing was that the County Council has no plans to reverse its previous decision.

Job creation

There was also discussion on national job creation policy focussing on the fact that rural areas such as Ballinamore have the ability to attract significant job creation in certain sectors. If further research was undertaken into the sectors with the best potential in Ballinamore then the larger external job creation agencies including Enterprise Ireland and the IDA could be encouraged to work pro-actively with such communities in identifying and supporting delivery of enterprise and jobs.

9. Organising for the future of the Ballinamore area

9.1 Background

At the third workshop on 9th April 2018 the attendees were comprised of those people who had volunteered to support projects put forward at the second workshop on 12th March.

Attendees at the first public meetings expressed a strong preference for Ballinamore to be better organised as a team to develop and promote the area. The scale and diversity of ideas and projects developed throughout the process had further reinforced the importance of having a group which can hold the broad vision emerging in all its diversity and inclusivity.

9.2 Area Steering Group formed at workshop

The workshop took the form of a round-table discussion chaired by the facilitator where progress so far was summarised, decisions made on what needs to happen now and next steps agreed.

A Ballinamore Area Steering Group was formed under the existing structure of Ballinamore Area Community Council and this will now be the focus for a more co-ordinated approach to local development for Ballinamore and the surrounding area.

9.3 Steering Group – Key initial terms of reference and other characteristics

The following key understandings were agreed by the whole group and were subsequently distributed for consultation with the 130 + consultees and Leitrim County Council:

- It was proposed and agreed that there would be co-ordination with the Ballinamore Canal Development Association and Ballinamore Credit Union.
- It was understood and agreed that this group would act as a support to all existing project groups either already operating or being formed as a result of the current workshops.
- It was unanimously agreed that the group would be entirely non party-political.
- Those not present but who were nominated would be approached to check if they are prepared to join.
- An open discussion around who should be Chairperson ensued. It was proposed that Máirín Martin will chair the Steering Group and this was unanimously agreed by a show of hands.

The facilitator asked all of the group at this stage to check whether there were any objections to any of the steps agreed above including the names of those for the Steering Group. No objection was received by the facilitators at the meeting or subsequently after follow-up written consultation.

9.4 Steering Group members

The following is the final list of members.

Adrian Smith	Damien Hamill	Máirín Martin	Ruairí O Sullivan
Aideen Reynolds	Damien O'Brien	Pius Flynn	Sharon Sweeney
Austin Quinn	Geraldine Leddy	Mary McKiernan	Tom Burns
Claire McGirl	Gráinne Harte	Patsy Connaughton	

9.5 Team formation and effectiveness

The facilitators strongly recommend that every support be given to this fledgling team as it sets about its work. We make the following recommendations regarding the new Steering Group:

To allow itself time and opportunity to form and work as a team and develop further an agreed terms of reference.

It sets aside time and with its parent organisation (Ballinamore Area Community Council) to follow the new Governance Code (2016) which is a code of best practice for good governance of community, voluntary and charitable organisations in Ireland.^{vi} The governance code is seen as a journey along which an organisation or team can travel. It essentially contains a checklist of steps to ensure that it excels in five principles:

- Leading
- Exercising control
- Being transparent and accountable
- Working together effectively and
- Behaving with integrity

With good governance, strong team building, community support, a dedicated community worker and dedicated funding to carry out its role the Steering Group can be key to Ballinamore achieving its ambitious vision and focused plan.

9.6 Role

The Steering Group can have a valuable role in developing and implementing an overall vision for the Ballinamore area and helping to co-ordinate local development through:

- Maintaining a strategic focus on developing the area through initiatives in science, technology, enterprise and tourism while being an advocate for improved social, cultural and infrastructural facilities.
- Ensuring a co-ordinated approach to major funding applications and community fundraising
- Organising collective ways for the entire community to fundraise for agreed priorities
- Convening different groups to encourage greater joint working
- Acting as a point of reference for external bodies
- Acting as a local mechanism for achieving a rigorous assessment and prioritisation of plans for local development projects before they are submitted for funding.

The next step for the group will be to agree its basic constitution and plan of action following its consideration of this report. A copy of the key elements of a basic constitution for a voluntary body is attached in Appendix 7.

9.7 Implementation and monitoring

It is essential that the Steering Group gets dedicated support to help it implement this strategy. Ongoing support from the County Council either through dedicated staff or funding will boost implementation.

We propose regular monitoring and evaluation of progress in relation to this strategy through:

- Nominated project leaders reporting progress to the Steering Group on a bi-annual basis
- Steering Group seeking reports from relevant agencies on a bi-annual basis
- Annual publication of a progress report
- It would also be beneficial if progress in relation to this strategy becomes part of the regular agenda for Ballinamore Municipal Area meetings
- Board member performance evaluation for the Ballinamore Area Steering Group is recommended as set out in the Governance Code for voluntary organisations.^{vii}

Appendices

Appendix 1 List of all consultees/attendees at workshops

Ballinamore Childcare CLG.	Lawrence Fee	Rita Maher	Ciara McTeigue	
Alan Banks	Joe Feely	Máirín Martin	Francesca Moore	Peter Reynolds
Cllr Brendan Barry	Dawn Flynn	Fr Sean Mawn	Brian Mulvey	Nick Richards
Katie Baxter	Pius Flynn	Lynda McAodha	Cllr Caroline Mulvey	Stephen Ridge
Assumpta Bohan	Daniel Flynn	Mark McCaffrey	Sharon Mulvey	Sarah Rowley
Shona Bohan	Evan Gallagher	Caolan McDermott	Tracy Murray	Edel Shanley
Shay Bradford	Tom Gannon,	Claire McGirl	Denis O Brien	Agnes Shortt
Marie Bradley	Damien Gilheany	Joe McGivern	Damien O Brien	Terry Shortt
Tom Burns	Patricia Gilheany	Paddy McGourty,	Paddy O Brien	Adrian Smith
Sonia Clinch	Patrick Gilhooley	Ami McGovern	John O Connell	Mary Banks Smith
Steve Clinch	Niall Gormley	Brendan McGovern	Michael O Haire	Ciaran Smyth
Declan Comiskey	Damien Hamill	Cedie McGovern	Eamonn O Reilly	Ruairi Sullivan
Paddy Connaughton	Conor Harte	Conall McGovern	Colm O Reilly	Abbi Sweeney
Bryan Cribbin	Gráinne Harte	Geraldine McGovern	Lorraine O Rourke	Brian Sweeney
Gerry Darcy	John Harte	Gerard McGovern,	Cllr Paddy O Rourke	Eunan Sweeney
Federico De Ville	Amanda Hewson	Fionnan McGovern	Rory O Rourke	Noel Sweeney
Helen Doherty	Ciaran Hurley	Liam McGovern	Sean O Suilleabhain	Sharon Sweeney
Cllr Gerry Dolan	Carl Johnston	Oisín McGovern	Dee Owens	Graham Thomas
Michael Dolan	Paudge Keenaghan	Desmond McHugh	Gabriel Owens	Lauren Tivnan
PJ Dolan	Martin Kenny TD	Sean McKeon	Simon Power	Gabriel Toolan
Celia Donohoe	Anne Lavelle	Tom McKeon	Ryan Prior	Muriel Travers
Andrew Duffy	Geraldine Leddy	Mary McKiernan	Austin Quinn	Fred Walsh
Kate Duignan	Eileen Leyden	Fergal McLaughlin	Des Quinn	Eamonn Walsh
Margaret Duignan	Pádraig Leyden	P J McLoughlin	Gail Quinn	Pat White
Cllr Caillian Ellis	Pádraig MacAodha	Janette McManus	Aideen Reynolds	Desmond Wisley
Elizabeth Farry	Kay Maguire	David McNiff	Daniel Reynolds	
Frank Farry	Róisín Maguire	Pat McNiffe	MJ Reynolds	

Appendix 2: Original brief and actual activities and timelines

Original brief

Objective

To establish a consensus in Ballinamore¹ among key groupings regarding an overall vision, list of projects reflecting that vision for the town and how they are prioritised.

To establish the nucleus of a Town Team that reflects the consensus reached and is able to lead or implement key projects.

Methodology

To convene and facilitate a series of group and public meetings aimed at reaching a consensus on vision, plans, projects and priorities and how they are to be implemented.

Activities

1. Initial meeting with current group to discuss and agree the objectives outlined above and a methodology and timescale for achieving this.
2. In co-operation with the group to convene and facilitate three public meetings
3. Draft a short Priority Project Plan for Ballinamore following consultations. Review draft based on consultation feedback
4. Hold a final meeting with the group which has emerged from the consultations as the group likely to lead out on the key projects and become a Town Team
5. Finalise plan and submit to Leitrim County Council and other relevant parties as directed by LCC.

Each meeting will be carefully facilitated in order to arrive at projects which are well thought through, viable and doable and have the backing of those that can implement them.

In the course of the facilitation the local Steering Group will be instrumental in publicising the public meetings while the facilitators will support this by drafting communications and publicity.

Actual activities and methodology

As the process commenced the project expanded. Large numbers of people came forward with projects ranging across a wide variety of social, economic, cultural and environmental themes. The geographical area encompassed broadened out to surrounding rural areas. The challenge became one of putting a framework together that would encompass the needs of the area and arrive at a plan and organisational framework that could hold and reflect people's vision and ambitions for the wider Ballinamore area. The time plan below describes how the process adapted to meet this need.

¹ Please note that the focus on Ballinamore widened to include the wider rural area

APPENDIX 2 CONTINUED

Actual timeline

Time W/E	Milestone
9 th Feb	Initial meeting with original informal group to discuss and agree the objectives outlined above and a methodology and timescale for achieving this.
19 th Feb	First public consultation: In co-operation with the original informal core group we convened an initial meeting on 19th February 2018 at which 120 people attended where the needs and possible solutions for development were identified.
12 th March	Second public consultation: We then followed this with a second public meeting on 12th March which sought to prioritise projects, identify people to support them and work towards an overall vision. (Attended by 80 people and including some who had not been at the first meeting)
6 th April	Third public meeting: At our third meeting on 9th April we met with those who had volunteered to support the vision and projects emerging and chiefly addressed the best ways in which Ballinamore could organise itself in a co-ordinated manner reflecting the emerging plan.
25 th April	Meeting with Ballinamore Municipal members
28 th April	First draft of Ballinamore Area Strategy circulated to Steering Group and Leitrim County Council
1 st May	The new Steering Group met to finalise its own input to the draft Ballinamore Area Strategy.
4 th May	The facilitators then circulated the draft strategy to the wider consultative group of 100+ people and all comments were received back by 10th May 2018.
11 th May	The public comments were summarised and sent for consideration to the Steering Group
23 rd May	Final agreed revisions by Steering Group sent to facilitator by 23rd May for final production.
25 th May	Report completed and submitted to LCC and key Stakeholders.

Throughout the process we also called two additional meetings with the original informal core group, met three times with officials and/or local representatives and engaged with individual project promoters. Our focus in all our meetings was to ensure that our approach was consistent with our original brief and that it was building upon existing initiatives and foundations as well as introducing new ideas and means of working together.

Appendix 3: Housing stock and vacant dwellings 2016^{viii}

Table 1

Description	Number
Housing Stock (number)	1,947
Vacant holiday homes (number)	159
Other vacant dwellings (number)	406
Total vacant dwellings (number)	565
Vacancy rate	29%
Vacancy rate excluding holiday homes	21%

Appendix 4: Needs and concerns of local people

At the first public meeting on the 19th February around 120 people attended and were asked, in groups, to identify the needs to be addressed in the town and surrounding area. Participants were asked not to go straight to “projects” but to look at the wider issues. A similar workshop was carried out in the Ballinamore Community School with TY students and their feedback was included in the exercise.

The following needs for development were identified at the first workshop (in alphabetical order):

- **Communication** issues to be improved; mobile reception and Broadband - especially outside the town
- **Crime** control and safety
- **Facilities** for young and old
- **Forestry** – need to control the type and extent
- **Housing:** Appropriate housing especially rentals
- **Industry and Investment**
- **Infrastructure improvements** needed – sewage, lighting
- **Jobs/Employment**
- **Networking with the diaspora**
- **Planning:** Better planning, need to address the planning restrictions and housing/septic tank costs which inhibit new housing
- **Population:** Need to attract new population and retain young people
- **Theme** for the town with a “Flagship” project- unique attraction
- **Tourism: Increase tourism numbers**
- **Town regeneration** including issue of vacant buildings, including historic buildings
- **Traffic control, parking**

Throughout the several public meetings held there was a strong feeling of frustration expressed from many participants that the Municipal Area is being neglected by the Leitrim County Council with a perception that there are disproportionate resources going to Carrick on Shannon. The difficulty for small towns to develop without help and support from local and national authorities was voiced and the need for local representatives to “get behind” the process was seen as central.

There is a real desire for greater engagement with the County Council. The fact that there is no County Council office in the town was seen as a real disadvantage and suggestions were made that a section of the County Engineers office should be returned to the town.

Appendix 5 Ballinamore: - ideas for development:

Summary of ideas suggested by 120 people who attended the first workshop on Monday 19th February 2018

BUSINESS REGENERATION	Information: Census of business in the town – find out what is and what is not here
	Branding: NEED A LARGE FLAG SHIP PROJECT – A RE-BRAND – A THEME
	Make a vibrant town centre:
	Regenerate town centre and refurbish/renovate derelict buildings in the town – make a 5 year plan for all unused buildings be they in private or public ownership.
	Utilise and promote vacant premises in town and market to outside interests for new business
	Encourage people to live in the town centre – fill the empty houses
	Staff in town businesses should park away from the main street to leave for customers
	Need café and a hardware shop in the town
	Indoor area for the farmers market
	BROADBAND to be improved to 7100MB
	Buildings
	Restoration of St Felim's, Courthouse, Convent
	Finance
	Access to finance locally- business lending from the Credit Union?
	Job creation strategies:
	Identify a successful ex-pat who might be able to create employment
	Encourage “back-office” facilities from large companies in cities to be located in the town away from congestion and cost of housing
	Digital hub – hot desks (in Court House?) With coffee dock. Could use as a McGahern centre/genealogical centre- could have monthly “mock” trials
	Facilities to facilitate Added Value/Food products
	Form a business/community co-op- people getting together to provide a retail service at no-profit basis for services not already in the town (bicycle repair?)
	A bigger factory unit “ready to go”
	New starter units for small new businesses – a “hub” for starters – “we work” and link it with the Enterprise Centre in Willow Field Rd – also a social hub when utilised well
	Beef co-op for local farmers
	Farmers co-op for organic/rabbit/goats cheese

CHILDRENN/youth	Youth centre facility
	Breakfast club
	Community childcare facility/ Crèche – modern, secure, for all ages including after school, in conjunction with the current existing group. Use disused national school building when primary schools amalgamated. Funding through DCYA(?) or fund building renovations through peace IV or Leader funds

Crime	To combat crime- “night watch” Gárda community response project , safe pubs initiative and CCTV linking rural areas too
	Safer town project and increase Gárda presence

EDUCATION	Provision beyond post primary
	3 rd level outreach facility
	ETB training / plc courses needed-
	Training hub in the “tech” building for trades/IT/Tourism/hospitality /apprenticeships
	Agri training in the area
	Encourage the setting up of a TEFL language school targeting Chinese and Brazilian markets- use local accommodation and locate in old school building
	Start a Gaelscoil
	The National Schools are being amalgamated and will hopefully be moving into Mean Scoil Fatima in September thus leaving the Boys' National School, and two small girls National Schools vacant. The plan at the moment is that the Childcare will move from the ETB building to the Boys School.

Energy and Renewables	Energy positive town – wind energy for schools community buildings sports and lighting
	Farm waste /biomass to provide energy reduce/reuse
	Bio digestion to provide energy- link with Coillte
	Use Weirs on Shannon Erne waterway to create a micro electricity generation project. 4 weirs within 2 miles of the town with strong water-flows. Run on a co-operative basis. Co-operation potential with Waterways Ireland. Potential to develop al 8 weirs from Lough Scur to Erne in this way, using Archimedes screw system.

HEALTH	Make more use of the community hospital- day care, respite, locate a dentist here
	Increase hospital / nursing home capacity- was planned for 45 bed capacity

Infrastructure/ROADS/TRANSPORT/ TRAFFIC	N4 local maintenance needs to improve through co-operation between councils
	Extension of M4 to Longford- would encourage jobs
	Roundabout needed at the top of the town and traffic control at the fountain
	More car parking needed – workers should park away from main street
	Prioritise pedestrians – provide and prioritise cycleways on Main St
	Footpath needed to graveyard
	Public lighting needed- from Prices-Beirnes and (Tráthnóna)
	Address litter problems along roads and canal
	Public transport for commuters to Carrick Longford Sligo
	Rural transport needed- A shuttle service evenings/night
	Transport pick up from the station and bring to Ballinamore – not just away from the town
	Taxi service needed
Managing development	Bring all organisations together in one team – improve communications between groups
	A paid person to be a “resource” worker for the area- a town project officer
	A designated paid person/a team to do marketing –to promote the town and surrounding area and events co-ordination - need to target tourists domestic and international of all types
	Ballinamore 400 is coming up in 2021 and could be an umbrella/focus for re-marketing the town and launching projects
	A heritage officer – paid- to prepare a business plan and brand the area
	Support for tidy towns and pride of place
	Better utilisation of existing facilities
	Councillors need to be very pro-active

Older people	Facilities for the elderly – a resource centre/day centre
	“Dementia village” facility

POLICY CHANGES NEEDED	Leader application process needs to be simplified
	Planning application charge needs to change. €55,000 charge for planning and septic tank.
	Planning for 90 forests and 9 houses – action needed so rural areas are not de-populated
	Undue delays on planning permissions for houses – need to change policy so more leniency
	Public bodies to use Credit Union and help make a financial hub in the town
	Review of rates need to be lower to encourage business – suggest no rates for 5 years and half for next 5 years – or a “rate free zone” idea
	Rates reductions for new businesses in the town
	De-centralise public sector offices
	Local views need to be taken into account when changes made e.g. re-location of the PO leaving top end of the town – Teagasc re-location
	Locate Council office in the town- use existing spaces

	Get councils (Sligo Leitrim and Longford) to unite on N4 issues
	Address long waiting times for medical services

Rural population	Planning for 90 forests and 9 houses – Action needed so rural areas are not de-populated
	Rural isolation is a problem to be combatted – More transport and activities needed
	Rural transport needed- A shuttle service evenings/night
	Action group/events needed to highlight forestry and planning issues and to illustrate alternatives

SOCIAL CULTURAL	Arts centre for artists with workshops/gallery
	County Museum
	Heritage centre in Court House
	Develop the existing social activities in the old “tech” building – start a community garden
	Rural isolation is a problem to be combatted – more transport and activities needed
	Dance classes, social meetings, gym for all
	Theatre /community centre
	Family Resource Centre in the town

TOURISM	The outdoors: Walking and biking
	Tourism trails and walks developed- walking tours/holidays, hill walking, develop heritage walking trail with guided walks (volunteers?) And use of natural resources A mountain bike project? Cuilcagh walk?
	Identify the historical sites and draw-up inventory – followed by a business/tourism plan include Court House, St Felims, Fenagh Abbey, home of John McGahern at Aughawillan. Identify links with other areas e.g. monks in Fenagh, Ultach people who fled to Sliabh an Iarainn from Derry, Ulster – walks from Ulster to Leitrim?
	Further develop tourism – McGahern centre and walk from Aughawillan to Fenagh
	Greenway –needs to be completed also cycle hire, mountain bike centre
	Water amenities
	Re-instate notice boards with info at Garadice and Kiltybarden loughs
	Improve and increase the facilities for the waterway - there has been a drop in usage in canal since 1994 (8000 boats) to 2017 (1500 boats). Also safety notices etc. at locks
	Angling needs development- huge potential. Could have an “angling school “ or an angling competition “all Ireland”
	Tourist amenities need developing
	Water sports – e.g. on Garadice
	Need to protect fisheries

	Agri-tourism development
	Festivals
	Festivals need marketing
	Develop a McGahern festival /summer school
	Camping / Caravan park (especially useful at festivals)
	Uses from the above for old buildings
	Restore old Court House and make an arts and heritage centre , also a digital hub with communications/computer centre, café, art gallery and greenway facilities
	Planetarium in Court House
	Use St Felims - (A) Station house building - proposal to locate Greenway H.Q. with bike hire centre & Senior citizen/youth/tourist cafe. (B) Classrooms stone building/former railway engine sheds - Proposal to create a Digital hub/ hot desk centre Use St Felim's as a tourist centre and café- some buildings used for start-up businesses with rates holiday. McGahern centre in this premises Angling resource centre, start of the greenway, toilets, food/café Units for crafts/small businesses/hot desk centre Start of Sliabh an Iarainn? Bike trail / Cuilcagh walk
	Railway museum

Appendix 6: Second tier priorities

We set below the second tier priorities under the different themes.

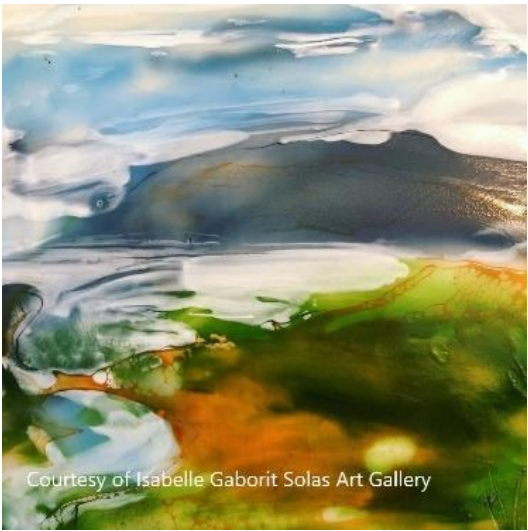
Theme Sub theme	Project Name
Social. Children and youth.	The development of a youth centre and associated café facility Building of a full size Astro Pitch
Social. Older people	Bowling centre Locate dental service in town
Enterprise. Facilities	Create a community co-operative for new retail services.
Enterprise Tourism	Prepare and implement, with support of a dedicated marketing resource, a tourism marketing plan for the Ballinamore area incorporating all its attractions, activities and festivals.
Energy Renewable	Conversion of farm waste Bio digestion and biomass
Infrastructure Transport	Increased availability of rural transport

Appendix 7: Basic constitution for a voluntary group

- How does a person become a member?
- Is there any circumstance under which a person can have their membership taken away from them?
- Would the person losing their membership have a right to appeal?
- How often are meetings of the members held?
- How much notice of meetings should be given to the members?
- Who has the right to vote?
- How will the management committee be elected?
- How often will the management committee meet and what will be the quorum?
- Are there any restrictions on how many terms a person can serve on the management committee?
- Can the management committee delegate any of its work to sub-committees

Implementation review dates

Date	Chairperson Signature
27 th November 2018	-----
28 th May 2019	-----



ⁱ Appendix 1 List of all consultees/attendees at workshops
ⁱⁱ CSO Census 1986 and 2016 for Ballinamore and surrounding electoral areas
ⁱⁱⁱ CSO Census 1986 and 2016 for Ballinamore and surrounding electoral areas
^{iv} www.wework.com
^v Ballinamore The Friendly Town; Leitrim County Council
^{vi} www.governancecode.ie
^{vii} www.governancecode.ie
^{viii} CSO, 2016, Housing Stock by Electoral Divisions