

## Exchange with Scotland's Towns Partnership



# STRENGTHENING THE IRELAND-SCOTLAND COLLABORATION ON TOWN CENTRES

**Venue - Louth County Museum – Dundalk Town Centre**  
**Monday 2nd December 2019: 9.30am-12.30pm**

**Workshop Feedback from Attendees**  
**February 2020**



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



**The Heritage Council and the Dundalk CTCHC Project Partners would like to extend their sincere thanks to Phil Prentice, Chief Officer of Scotland's Towns Partnership for a wonderfully-engaging presentation at the workshop and for the lively Q&A session.**

**A list of attendees is provided at Appendix A.**



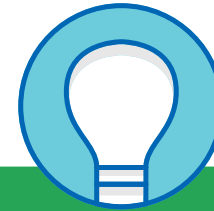
**SITIP** | SCOTLAND'S  
TOWNS  
PARTNERSHIP

**The enthusiasm from the session with Phil Prentice continued into the groupwork, which followed, and the feedback from the groupwork is summarised below.**

# THE FIRST SESSION RAISED THE OVERWHELMING NEED FOR THE FOLLOWING IN IRELAND:



Strong political leadership on towns to support Towns and Town Centre Regeneration

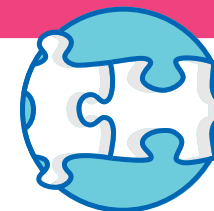


New innovative structures to plan and manage town centre regeneration

Robust data systems, along with in-depth research, on town centres



Collaboration between all players and sectors to ensure change



# FEEDBACK FROM THE ONE WORD GAME/ICEBREAKER

WHAT ONE WORD WOULD YOUR GROUP USE WHEN YOU THINK OF TOWN CENTRES IN IRELAND?

**Potential**

**Challenged**  
(as places)

**Transition**

**Challenging**  
(to get stakeholders involved)



# GROUP WORK WAS UNDERTAKEN FOCUSING ON THE FOLLOWING FOUR THEMES:

- 1. Future Collaboration with Scotland - see [announcement of Bilateral Review](#).**
- 2. Enhancing Partnership, Collaboration and Public Participation on the future management of Town Centres in Ireland.**
- 3. Towards a 'Town Centres First' Policy in Ireland? – Issues, Minister, Departments, Agencies, Private Sector, etc.**
- 4. Private Sector investment – role of BIDs, Chambers and growing partnership with EC, e.g. EC DG GROW, European Investment Bank (EIB).**



## A SUMMARY OF THE GROUPWORK DISCUSSIONS, WHICH TOOK PLACE:

### 1. FUTURE COLLABORATION WITH SCOTLAND

- Common Celtic Heritage should be celebrated – opportunity for sharing and exchange in relation to digital atlases for towns (co-operation opportunities?) and also exemplar towns – what towns are doing it well – share this information between Ireland and Scotland
- Examine population distribution in both countries and landuse strategy/modelling, etc.
- Potential for East-West mechanisms in the Good Friday Agreement (1998)?
- Both countries are on the periphery of Europe – opportunity to build (joint) links to Europe
- Architectural commonality – building relationships – especially youth/schools and older generation – both countries have retained a strong sense of community
- Raise awareness of cultural heritage assets within historic town centres as part of the regeneration and sustainable development opportunity
- Carbon embodiment in old buildings – how is this utilised in Scotland to target revitalisation in town centres?
- Climate Change mitigation measures – e.g. Scotland has completed maritime surveys, islands and coastal risks – particularly to settlements in coastal areas. Potential to share key findings
- Shared social issues – town sizes are similar, i.e. very small towns v's UK's towns – rural housing policy to revitalise small towns – can we share and work on this collaboratively?
- Need to replicate the STP online resource – Understanding Scottish Places - town by town comparisons – models and datasets – these need to be set up in Ireland asap.



## 2. ENHANCING PARTNERSHIP, COLLABORATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF TOWN CENTRES IN IRELAND

- Partnership – towns and town centres are becoming more important in the national political discourse. People are starting to get agitated – Who is the political leader with regard to town centre regeneration/revitalisation? This is not obvious at the moment
- Cross party group needed asap – with a manifesto and commitment to town centre regeneration
- Big picture thinking needed in relation to national strategy – not through one Department or one landuse – our towns need creative policy and action to encourage better-functioning structures and processes
- Research and data hugely important – who is driving this in Ireland? Establish digital atlas programme for our towns/town centres
- Bridging organisations – need an agile disruptor to shake things up and to get systemic change
- Check yourself before making any decision – have the principles of the sequential test been applied to any proposal – we need a Town Centre First policy like Scotland!
- All Departments must work together in collaboration (housing/planning, business/enterprise, heritage, tourism, etc.) – this is not obvious – how do stakeholders engage with Departments on this important issue? Where and what is the interface for collaboration with government departments? (UNECE Aarhus Convention)
- Need systemic change and innovative systems thinking/design – how do we encourage this? who is leading?
- We need to build public trust across and between all sectors – public, private and civic
- Robust and creative National Guidelines needed to enable regeneration of town centres
- Starting point – needs to be with young people – multi methods – educate all ages about the role of town centres in housing, climate change, social inclusion, etc.
- All diverse stakeholders should be brought together in order to work together – need to be facilitators and national champions to support new methods and programmes, etc.
- Young people are the future – participation is not consultation – policy makers need to understand the difference – technology helps – also ‘collaboration’ from the outset
- Use and adopt best practice methods and processes to assist more positive public participation and engagement.





### 3. TOWARDS A 'TOWN CENTRES FIRST' POLICY IN IRELAND – ISSUES, MINISTER, DEPARTMENTS, AGENCIES, PRIVATE SECTOR, ETC

- Rethinking strategy – retail history/structural change – town centres need to evolve and move on – need support this transition and not get stuck
- Towns are too important – must be led by the Department of the Taoiseach
- Agencies – are there too many involved in Ireland or not enough – do we need a disruptor?
- Do town centres need Simplified Planning Zones (SPZ) - see Scotland
- Context needs to be examined and understood before any action – each town is different – not a case of one size fits all
- What is the future population – has this been targeted at town centres? Need SHDs to be town centre focused
- Core Strategy of development plans – Section 28 Development Plan Guidelines should have a role in driving town centre regeneration
- Liveable centres -need to be adaptable
- Need a Phil – enabler, independent force, has facts and political enforcement due to the relationship with the Scottish Minister
- Red tape vs accountability – too much inertia – need to get things moving and changing! Need to address rural housing policy – is it impacting on town centres?
- Expansion of the Living City Initiative needed to Regional Growth Centres at the very least – all towns need support asap
- Reduced/exempted local authority development contributions should be introduced in town centre
- Need for a central funding gateway to be established - a 'one-stop-shop' for town centre funding in Ireland
- Need to acknowledge the importance of creative and cultural spaces and artists, through funding support.





## 4. PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT – ROLE OF BIDS, CHAMBERS AND GROWING PARTNERSHIP WITH EC, E.G. EC DG GROW, EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK (EIB)

- ROI needs an equivalent body like Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP)
- Getting private investment motivated to input into town centres - how?
- Lack of knowledge by local authorities of ownership of buildings (result of fallout of economic downturn)
- Non-uniformity of local authorities charging 50% rates on vacant buildings - some local authorities apply - others don't?
- Too many 'silo' plans, visions, strategies from the public sector - often in contradiction with each other – stronger leadership needed to sort this out
- One plan, one place using real time data, etc.
- Development of Business Improvement Districts (BID) companies - currently four BIDs in the ROI (legislation in place since 2006) versus Northern Ireland with eight BID companies (legislation introduced in 2013). Scotland has 40 BID companies!
- Blockages to further development of BID companies – local authority is a critical partner, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- UK Government provides £60,000 to the development of a BID – no equivalent in ROI
- Community, town centre living, recreational, social and cultural – all important.
- UK Multiples are contracting their footprint in towns and cities - Debenhams, M&S, - town centres need to move to a multi-functional platform - more than shopping and eating etc- need to be about residential and culture/leisure, etc.
- BID is in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government but no-one knows it- stronger links with existing BID companies needed – Dept needs to support BID companies through a national strategy and strategic investment programme, etc.
- Repurposing of vacant units asap – Do Nothing impacts on image and perception of the town centre - there are good working examples of repurposing empty units but no coordinated approach from the local authorities.
- Town centre retail footprint has changed and many units are no longer fit for purpose
- Importance of positive partnership - easy to say - harder to do! – CTCHC Programme in Ireland is a very good start but needs more support
- Grow multi layered links with EC DG Grow, EU Commission and European Investment Bank (EIB) - get help from the EC for Ireland's towns



# APPENDIX A: LIST OF ATTENDEES



## **Leo Bollins**

Oireachtas Joint  
Committee on Rural  
& Community  
Development

## **Tara Buckley**

RGDATA

## **Martin Colreavy**

Department of  
Housing, Planning &  
Local Government

## **Trevor Connolly**

Monaghan Town  
Team

## **Dr Philip Crowe**

UCD and Space  
Engagers

## **Maire Cullinan**

Monaghan County  
Council

## **David Curtin**

IE Domain Registry  
CLG

## **Mark Dearey**

Dundalk BID

## **Deborah Dignam**

Department of  
Enterprise,  
Business &  
Innovation

## **Carmel Fox**

Tipperary Town  
Taskforce

## **Michael Gaynor**

Dundalk Chamber of  
Commerce

## **Sarah Gearty**

Royal Irish Academy  
(RIA)

## **Ronan Gilroy**

Glenina Partnership  
(promoters of Co-  
Housing)

## **Pat Grimes**

Sligo Purple Flag

## **Richard Guiney**

Dublin Town (BID)

## **Ali Harvey**

Heritage Council

## **Sammy Leslie**

Castle Leslie,  
Monaghan

## **Nikki Matthews**

Department of  
Culture, Heritage &  
the Gaeltacht

## **Ivor McElveen**

Heritage Council  
Board Member

## **Colette Moss**

Louth County  
Council

## **Oonagh McCutcheon**

IE Domain Registry  
CLG

## **Martin McElligott**

Dundalk BID

## **Gail McGibbon**

Sligo BID

## **Brendan McSherry**

Louth County  
Council

## **Nicci Nolan**

Eastern and Midland  
Regional Assembly  
(EMRA)

## **Emer O'Callaghan**

Louth County  
Council

## **Phil Prentice**

Scotland's Towns  
Partnership (STP)

## **Marguerite Quinn**

Louth County  
Council

## **John Shanahan**

Drogheda BID

## **Brian Walsh**

Louth County  
Museum

## **Stephen Ward**

Sligo County Council

## **Nathalie Weadick**

Irish Architectural  
Foundation (IAF)

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## **Workshop Organiser/Facilitator - Contact Details:**

**Ali Harvey**, Co-ordinator, CTCHC Programme **E.** [aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie) **T.** 087 419 3458

Finally, there has been excellent feedback from the workshop attendees – many thanks to everyone involved for their time, lively input and support. The Heritage Council and Partners intend to hold more workshops with Scotland's Towns Partnership in 2020, through the ongoing activities of the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Training Programme.



Comhairle Contae Lú  
Louth County Council



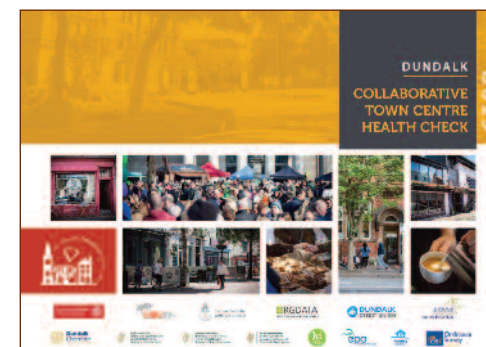
An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil  
Department of Housing,  
Planning and Local Government



Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre  
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly



[www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-training-programme](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-training-programme)