



NEW ROSS

MAIN REPORT 2023

NEW ROSS TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN



New Ross Town Centre First Plan

“Turning the Corner”

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A Playful City

For:

Wexford County Council

October 2023

Preface

The making of the Town Centre First Plan for New Ross has been a collaborative exercise with the community of New Ross, the New Ross Town Centre First Team, elected representatives, officers and advisers, all committed to making New Ross, and its town centre a better place to live in, work in, visit and enjoy. The authors recognise the success of previous initiatives. This Plan has been initiated by the National Town Centre First Policy, and the subsequent tender procurement by Wexford County Council to select a suitable team for this multi-disciplinary task.

The chosen team, consisting of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Land Planning and Design, Optimize Demographic & Socio-Economic Advice, Howley Hayes Cooney Architecture & Built Heritage, Tobin Consulting Engineers, and A Playful City Community & Stakeholder Engagement, has developed this Town Centre First Plan for the entire New Ross Community, with the invaluable support of its active, creative, committed and ambitious Community, the Town Team, and Wexford County Council.

We would like to thank all of the New Ross Town Centre First Team members, Chair Cllr. Anthony Connick, Cllr Michael Sheehan, Mick McCormack (Town Regeneration Officer), Alan Fitzhenry, Mary Browne, Seán Connick, Tomas Kavanagh, Pat Rossiter, Kevin Burke, Patty Murphy, Ruth McGuinness, Sinead Cashin and all stakeholders, interest groups, and most of all, the local community and members of the public who took great interest in the project.

We would also like to thank the New Ross Municipal District Councillors, Chief Executive Tom Enright, Director of Service Liz Hore, Senior Planner Diarmuid Houston, Director of Service Eamonn Hore and all of staff of Wexford County Council who assisted in the completion of this document.

This Town Centre First Plan is a reference document to advise on future sustainable development in New Ross. This plan is better for you and is for you and a better town - it would have been impossible without you!

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The Appendices A – D are available as separate documents.

*Who, What,
Where, How,
and Why*

This Town Centre First Plan is the first of its kind for New Ross. It is driven by the Town Centre First initiative, where effective and deliverable urban regeneration plan has a holistic approach, comprising all aspects of local community, economy and environment, to truly promote

Sustainable Development. The multi-disciplinary team of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds, Optimize, Howley Hayes Cooney, A Playful City and Tobin has assisted the New Ross Town Team and Wexford County Council to develop this plan as a **Reference Document**, to be used as planning and design guidance for future development in the town.

The key to this document, the delivery of proposals and actions, and the sustainable and successful regeneration of the town centre is Community and Stakeholder Engagement. A key outcome that the team intend to generate is more and continuous Community and Stakeholder Collaboration. This plan would have been impossible to produce without the engagement of the community and key stakeholders, and it will be impossible to deliver without the ongoing iterative and open-ended process this consultation has initiated. The conclusion is simple: **The Community is the expert when it comes to the urban regeneration of your streets, places, spaces, parks and buildings.**

*Where we
started
from*


The team visited the town several times, surveyed and engaged with the local community and key stakeholders. This process has been essential to develop a **Baseline Understanding** of what is there, what needs changing, why and how.

An historic hollowing out effect on the town centre, as in many cases throughout the State, has contributed to a Vicious Cycle of low footfall, suppressed socio-economic activity, vacancy and dereliction. No town is perfect, and every town is different, but every town including New Ross has potential. What became clear in the process is what truly unique and valuable heritage New Ross possesses, what potential the town has, economically and culturally, and what an enthusiastic, committed and creative community, including elected representatives and officers, the town is based on!

The making of this plan helped everyone involved to form and strengthen a 'Vision for a Better New Ross'. We consider the term 'Turning the Corner'

*Where we
wanted to go*

very suited to express the transition from New Ross today into a **vibrant, attractive, safe and accessible town for residents and visitors** alike. This positive **transition towards a Virtuous Cycle**, rather than a Vicious Cycle, will be supported by physical 'turning' of key town centre areas such as Quay Street, North Street and South Street into vibrant locations, and it will be supported by a multitude of community and public projects. Furthermore, **reintroducing the River Barrow** as an active and inviting element of the town while **redistributing streetscape** to accommodate active travel (walking and cycling), safe use and socialising are parts of a clear and realistic Vision for the town's community.




**How we
got there**

We provide a consensual Strategy to realise the Vision that the community and key stakeholders have expressed for their town. This Strategy is a plan of pragmatism, optimism, encouraging and embracing change, through a holistic approach, setting out an ongoing process instead of imposing a finite and complete masterplan. The following strategy objectives are set:

- Create a Virtuous Cycle – a Safe & Attractive Town Centre
- Apply Place Making & form a Sense of Place
- Reimagine the Town's Heritage
- Reinvent the Port for Living & Recreation
- Strengthen Community Arts, Activities & Education
- Provide for a Digital New Ross
- Promote Tourism & activate the Hinterland
- Make Transport sustainable – the 10 Minute Town
- Introduce Green – Blue Infrastructure maximising the opportunity presented by the South East Greenway

The community and key stakeholders have developed a large amount of very interesting feasible projects which they propose to make New Ross better. The team has organised and structured these Projects into deliverable, prioritised and fully policy supported **Action Plan**. While each individual project makes a positive contribution to the Sustainable Development of New Ross, it adds to the holistic plan approach of balanced and fair distribution of resources and funding.



**What we have
planned to do,
and when**

A total of **54 Projects** have been included in the action plan. These are structured in six Themes:

- Environment (9 projects)
- Heritage (10 projects)
- Economy (8 projects))
- Placemaking & Movement (11 projects)
- Local Community (8 projects)
- Tourism (8 projects)

The action plan assigns each project a **Priority**, a **Timeframe** (short term / medium-term / long-term), a **Responsibility**, and a **Funding** source to guide the public and private sector for future development.

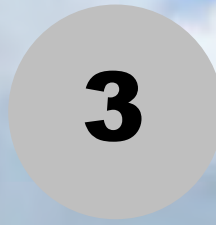
The emphasis of this plan is on the **Process of evolving and potentially changing ideas** how to improve New Ross for everyone who lives, works and socialises, and for everyone who visits, as *“You are never finished...”*



Introduction



Baseline



Vision



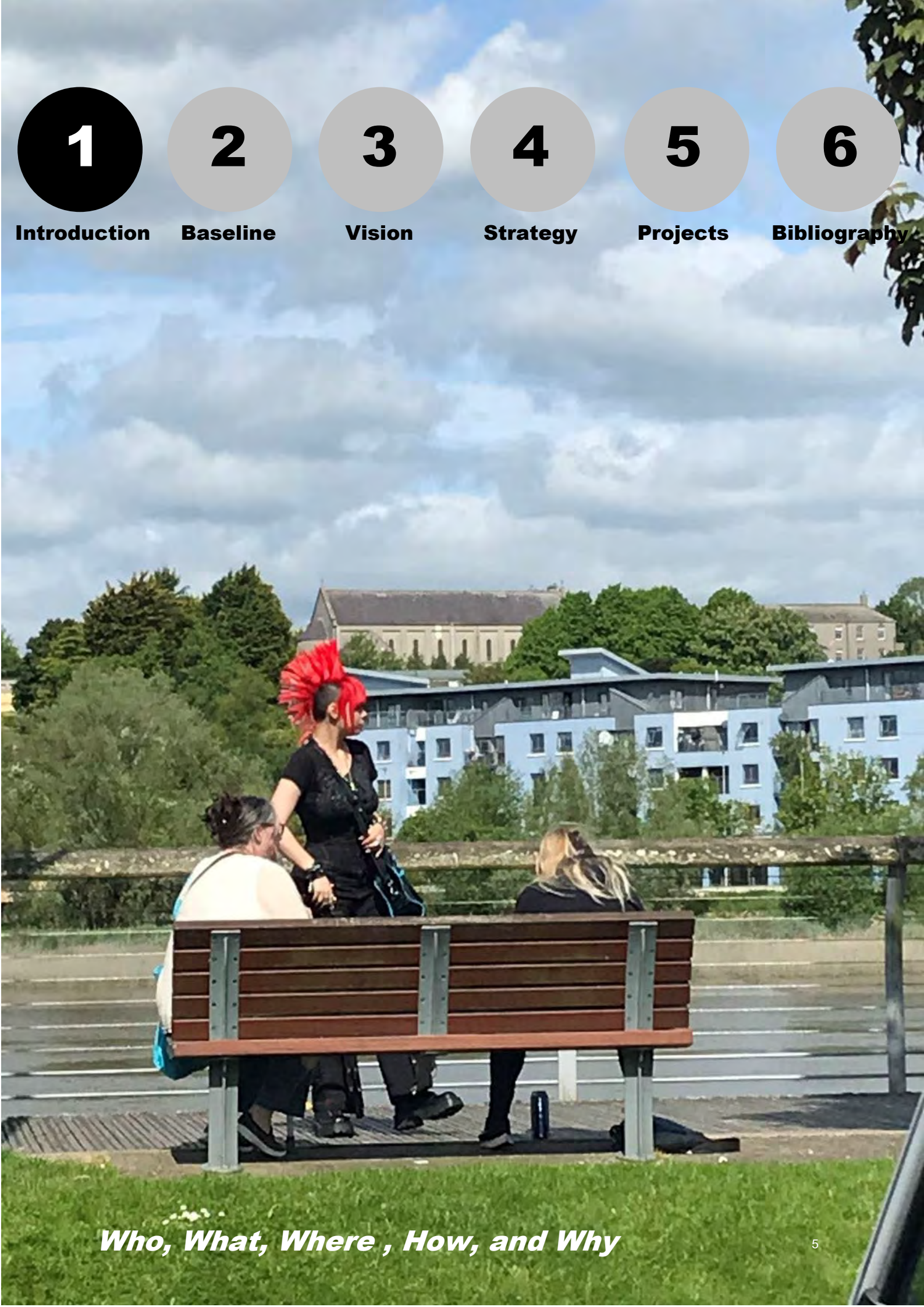
Strategy



Projects



Bibliography

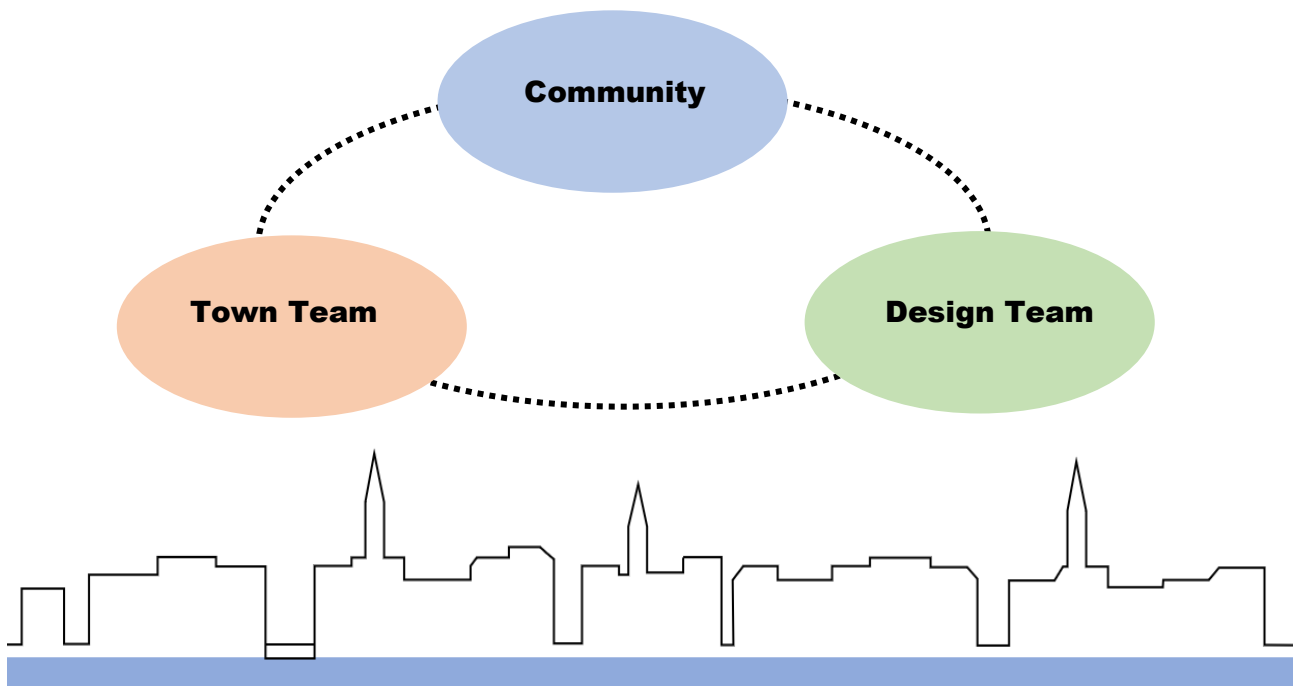


Who, What, Where , How, and Why

Who – The Team

Wexford County Council have appointed the Multidisciplinary Team of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds (town planning, urban design, landscape and townscape), Optimize (demographics, economics, tourism), Howley Hayes Cooney (heritage), Tobin (engineering and access) and A Playful City (consultation and community engagement) in May 2023 to prepare a Town Centre First Plan for New Ross. This urban regeneration plan for the town will be the first of its kind for New Ross to bundle various strands of future development in a collaborative and holistic approach.

A Town Team and a Town Regeneration Officer have been nominated to steer the Town Centre First process and to coordinate the preparation of the Plan in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team. The Town Team represents the various key stakeholders for New Ross in order to address all social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of future development in the town.



What – The Brief

This is an urban regeneration project that focusses on the town centre of New Ross. The Vision, Strategy and Action Plan of the Town Centre First Plan must achieve what is set out in the brief as follows:

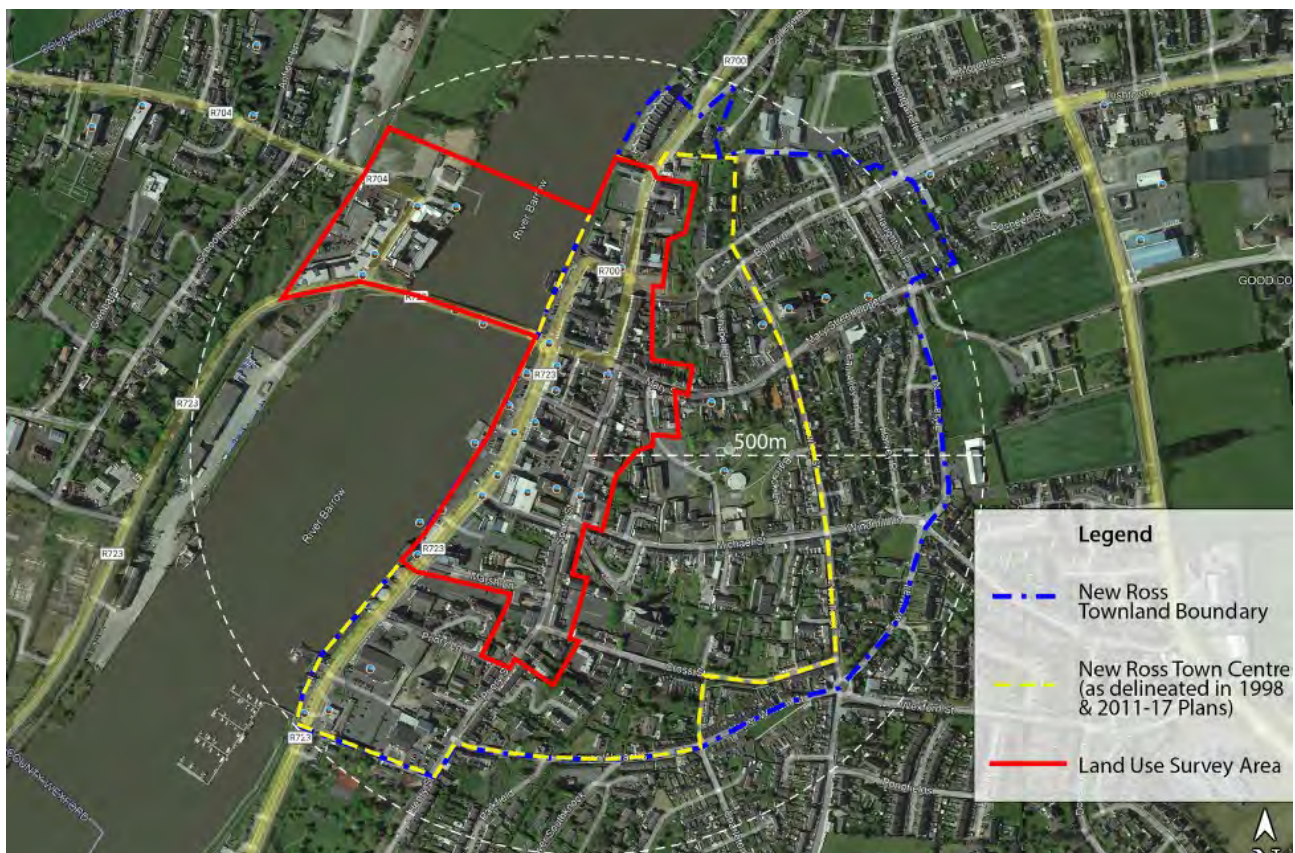
“The Plan must promote the process of strengthening social, cultural, economic and environmental life in the town by addressing the opportunities and challenges which New Ross presents. It must also reference the cultural, economic and social history of the town.”

In the context of New Ross, the Town Centre First Plan should assist to consolidate recently completed public realm projects, as these have become successful places for the community.

Where – The Urban Context

This Plan contains proposals and actions directed to the town centre which are consistent with the Town Centre First policy. The focus on the town centre in terms of proposals and the emphasis of the assessments on the centre does not mean the outer areas and the catchment outside the town have not been considered. A broader assessment of the needs of the town and its hinterland, well beyond the town centre, have been carefully considered in the formulation of strategy and generation of proposals and actions.

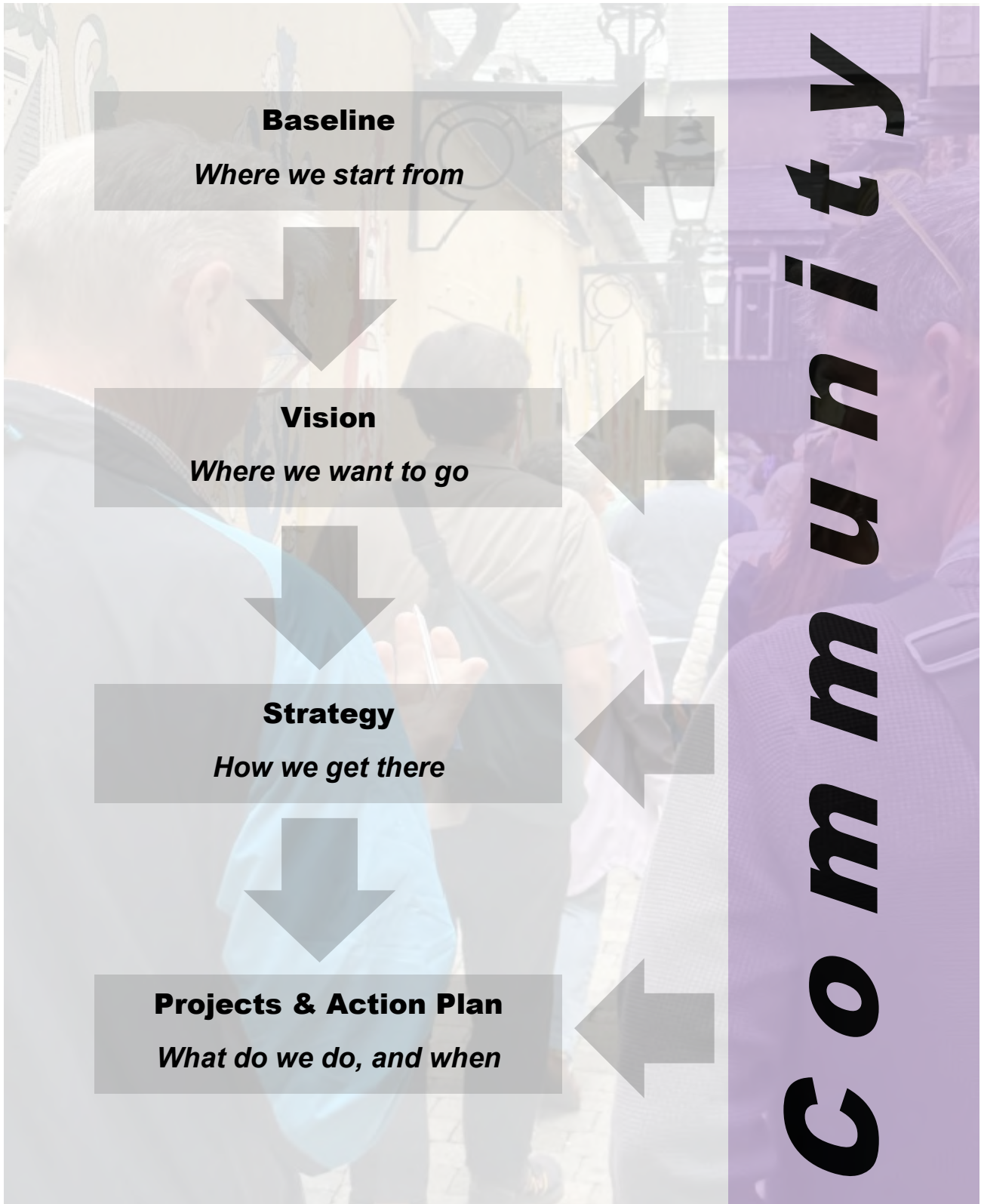
The definition of a general boundary for projects is helpful to keep the Action Plan focussed. However, it was agreed that the regeneration of the town centre cannot be treated in isolation. Physical surveys were contained within a feasible boundary while community engagement and sustainable proposals were reaching beyond any physical town centre boundary – in the sense of a holistic approach to issues of urban regeneration – which generally do not start or stop at boundaries, neither does the community involved.



Survey and Research Area Map for the Town Centre First Plan

How – With the Community

Key to this document is the process, from working with the community and from town surveys to establish a **Baseline** of what exists and what needs to improve, to agreeing a **Vision**, to developing a **Strategy** to achieve it, and to working out an **Action Plan** to structure and manage future development.



Why - Town Centre First Policy

This urban regeneration plan has been prepared in accordance with the Government's *Town Centre First* Policy, under the *Our Rural Future* Policy to support the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages in Ireland. *Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns* aims to improve our town centres, so they can become vibrant and attractive places for people to live, work and visit, while the local community can enjoy better social, cultural and economic services.

The *Town and Village Renewal Scheme* (TVRS 2023) has been a guiding scheme for this Plan as it directly supports the objectives of *Our Rural Future* and *Town Centre First*. The TVRS seeks to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland through a renewed focus on social and economic recovery / regeneration in town centres. Projects will focus on enhancing streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use and make them available as multi-purpose community spaces.

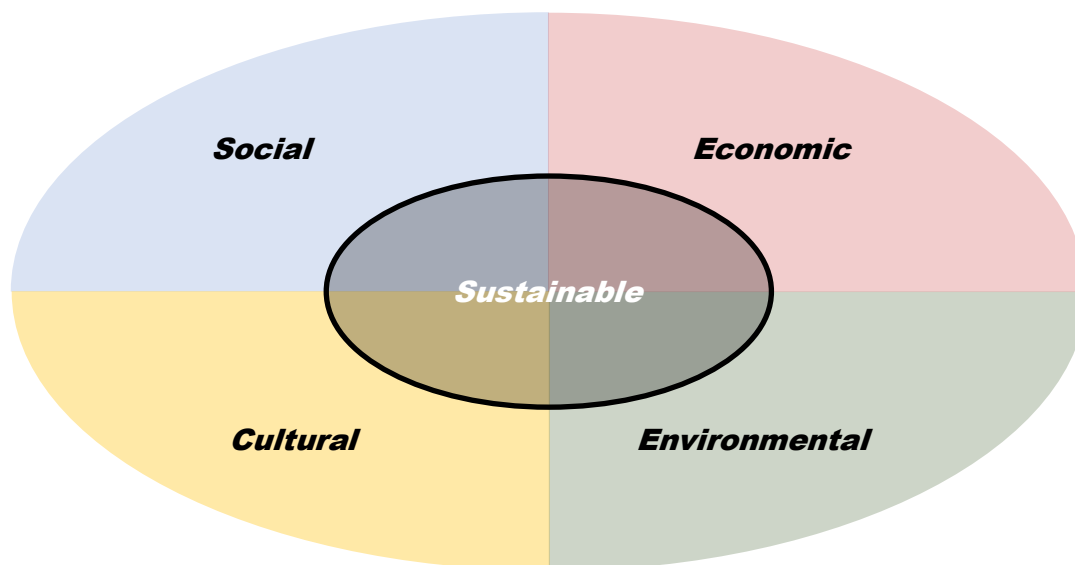
We envisage this *Town Centre First* Plan to become a useful Reference Document for future development in New Ross, and comparable development elsewhere. It provides planning and design guidance, advice and direction over a planned timeframe and process.

In the ambit of the policy, proposed projects will represent a variety of Strands:

- **Reusing vacant buildings & repairing derelict buildings**
- **Connecting & reviving built and cultural Heritage**
- **Strengthening the local Community & Activities**
- **Improving Tourism & its Infrastructure**
- **Optimising conditions for Commercial activity**
- **Enhancing the Public Realm & Environment**
- **Making Transport Mobility more sustainable**
- **Introducing Digital Development and Progress**

Sustainable Development

Urban regeneration in the ambit / remit of the Town Centre First Policy is a form of Sustainable Development, deriving from the Brundtland Report in 1987, and meaning development that is **socially, economically, culturally and environmentally** truly viable and acceptable for all, now and for the future.



The Critical Overlap to achieve Sustainable Development

Socially sustainable for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which address the community in its entirety, are inclusive for all ages, abilities, beliefs and backgrounds, and are based on equitable distribution of means and efforts.

Economically sustainable for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which are most efficient, effective and realistic in their use of material and human resources, most ethical in their goals, supportive for the local economy while not negatively impacting social, cultural or environmental objectives.

Culturally sustainable for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which encapsulate the community's ideas, traditions and evolving lifestyles that are reflected in the town's history, built heritage and character, today, and in the past.

Environmentally sustainable for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which have regard to current environmental guidance and best practice to protect and enhance vulnerable habitats and sites, flora and fauna, minimise human induced climate change, avoid the use of finite resources and contribute to a Circular Economy.

01 Introduction


Who, What, Where, How and Why

These four principles listed above always work in accordance and with one another, never in isolation or in breach of one principle over the other. In essence, While one principle could be the initial objective, the other three will be addressed and will experience a positive impact. Sustainable Development is achieved when projects can clearly indicate a **synergy of social, economic, cultural and environmental** interests and outcomes.

This Town Centre First Plan is aligned with the core principle of Sustainable Development as described above. The 17 Sustainable Development goals set by the UNESCO and listed below will be applied in the larger scale of urban regeneration objectives, in a holistic process, and with strong community involvement.



UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals



"I think New Ross needs more places to go after school or something to walk down to when you need a break"

"It's a fantastic location close to Waterford and Wexford, and other cities and towns in the south east also near beaches and woodlands for walking etc."

"I love that everyone knows everyone, in the shops, in the streets and everyone is always helpful or knows someone who knows someone who can get you what you need, I go shopping and usually come back to town to find exactly what I need and if I need to exchange something"

"New Ross needs more commercial activities & businesses in the town centre, a better selection of restaurants and a hotel to allow it to grow and encourage people to come visit the area".

Where we start from

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Introduction

Baseline

Vision

Strategy

Projects

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Planning Policy, Data and Background Information

This Baseline section serves as an overview of valuable information that has been provided by Wexford County Council, via national and regional policy, and information that is available in the public domain.

While all urban regeneration related policy guidance is relevant for the preparation of this Plan, the following documents have been considered in further detail:

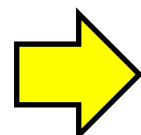
- ***Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028***
- ***New Ross Town and Environs Development Plan 2011-2017 (expired)***
- ***Healthy Wexford County Plan 2020-2022***
- ***Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028***
- ***Digital Town Blueprint New Ross 2023***

A substantial amount of useful and helpful planning policy in the context of urban sustainable development, particularly for town centre regeneration has been produced in recent years. Much of this policy is identified generally as best planning practice. Specific planning policy is promoting town centres as the preferred location for residential use, complemented by suitable employment, commercial activity and retail development. For example, the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 advocate town centres as the preferred location for the development of retail, commerce and community based services. In general, a sequential approach is adopted in national planning guidance and policy which advocates town centres as the preferred location for the above uses, with out of town locations only acceptable where all other opportunities for such development have been exhausted after careful analysis.

It should be noted that there is a significant, and ever increasing, volume of policy guidance and best practice that is expanding from the traditional domain of planning as land-use administration, to comprise the critical matters of community engagement, of climate and environmental protection, sustainable transport, urban design, and funding.

All projects are clearly identified and set out. Most projects are mapped. All projects list key components, perceived benefits, key responsibilities for implementation, key measurements of success, levels of priority and timeframe, and key funders and funding sources. All projects are proven to align with the requirements for all URDF and RRDF funding applications.

Which Policy matters, and why explained the following tables



Planning Policy	
National Planning Policy	Relevance
National Planning Framework	Improve living standards, quality of life, prosperity, competitiveness, and environmental sustainability and promotes compact growth with people living closer to their work, maximise the return on public investment and shift from unsustainable growth patterns.
National Development Plan	Investment in cultural and civic services and recognises investment in high quality infrastructure as being critical for a vibrant heritage and culture sector. Investment in cultural heritage underpins social cohesion and supports strong, sustainable economic growth.
Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns	Cross-cutting and collaborative framework to build sustainable vibrant town centres.
Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide	Core principles of urban design/sustainability.
Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities	Principles and criteria for sustainable and high quality residential environments.
Places for People, National Policy on Architecture	Sustainable and quality development to meet current and forecast population growth (5.7m people by 2040). Repurpose (and reuse for housing) existing buildings, public places and infrastructure, adopt new construction techniques and materials, improve living standards and accommodate new developments, all while making the transition to a sustainable, circular economy and society.
Design Manual for Quality Housing	Guidance on designing residential site layouts, and internal layouts of new apartments/houses.
Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme	Identifies challenges faced by towns and build upon each town's heritage and unique character.
Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities	This relatively outdated document from 2012 sets out criteria to assess the vitality and viability of town centre via a health check. It advocates town centres as the preferred location for large scale retail providing such development can be satisfactorily accommodated in such centres and alternative locations are considered consistent with the sequential approach thereafter.
Regional Planning Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	The application site is located within the Southern RSES which seeks to build on natural and heritage and other assets of the region. New Ross is located within the Eastern Economic Corridor linking Belfast, Dublin and Rosslare.
Local Planning Policy	Relevance
Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028	An overall strategy and development management standards for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county.
New Ross Town and Environs Development Plan 2011-2017 (was in effect until 2019, now expired)	Develop and improve in a sustainable manner the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets of the town and environs. The predominant land use in the town centre is the Town Centre Zoning with the objective; <i>“To provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centre through consolidating development, maximising the use of lands and encouraging a mix of uses”</i> .

Climate and Health Policy	
National Planning Policy	Relevance
The Climate Action Plan 2023	Halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. Actions for responding to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development. Promote compact development and brownfield redevelopment. Supports the regeneration and revitalisation of Ireland's towns, including through reducing demand for travel by car, sustaining economic and social activity at street level and increasing access to shops, employment and amenities by sustainable transport modes.
Department of Health Statement of Strategy 2016-2019	Promotes healthy lifestyle and active living.
National Physical Activity Plan	Supports the provision of an environment for walking, cycling and recreational outdoor physical activity (Action 36).
Regional Planning Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Promotes extension of the Waterford Greenway to New Ross.
Local Planning Policy	Relevance
Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028	Chapter 2 seeks to reduce and adapt to the effects of climate change and to safeguard the biophysical infrastructure and well-being of the county.

Economic and Finance Policy	
National Planning Policy	Relevance
Urban Regeneration and Development Fund	Deliver more compact and sustainable development as sought by Project Ireland 2040. Urban areas to be attractive and vibrant places in which to live, work, visit and invest.
Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023	Revitalise rural Ireland with a renewed focus on town centre economic and social recovery and regeneration, achieved through projects focusing on town centre regeneration, enhancing our Streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use as community multipurpose spaces including refurbishment and renovation. Town is identified as a 'Tourism Hub' and starting point for the Norman Way. Supports South East Greenway extension linking New Ross to Waterford (Waterford MASP Policy Objective 21 (a) and (f)). Important retail and service centre with its own hinterland. Policy Objective 2 (e) supports socio-economic growth and continued investment, development and enhanced connectivity of the Waterford MASP hinterland towns including New Ross.
Regional Planning Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	New Ross is considered an alternative business location with an active port facility.
Local Planning Policy	Relevance
Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028 Draft	Promotes and supports economic, local and community development by WCC and other stakeholders.

Transportation Policy	
National Planning Policy	Relevance
National Sustainable Mobility Policy	Strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport journeys to meet climate obligations. Includes an action plan to 2025. Seeks safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys. Demand management and behavioural change measures to manage daily travel demand more efficiently and to reduce the journeys taken by private car.
National Cycle Policy Framework	Complements National Sustainable Mobility Policy.
National Cycle Network Plan	This required by Action 29 of the National Sustainability Mobility Policy. New Ross is close to but not on the national network.
Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets	Achieve balanced best practice design outcomes for street networks or individual streets.
National Cycle Manual	Promotes a safe traffic environment for all road users including cyclists. It offers guidance on integrating the bike in the design of urban areas.
Regional Planning Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Advocates enhanced sustainable transport links to Waterford Metropolitan Area and between hinterland towns. Improve access from New Ross to M9. Significant travel to work in Waterford Metropolitan Area from New Ross. Improve linkages to Eastern Economic Corridor and to Waterford are a priority as limited public transport (bus) services serving the town.
Local Planning Policy	Relevance
WCC, 2021, New Ross Town Pedestrianisation / Traffic Studies Brief	Studies have been completed as part of managing and redirecting traffic and pedestrianisation of Quay Street.

Urban Design Policy	
National Planning Policy	Relevance
NACTO (2021) Urban Street Design Guide, Island Press	Streets to be reimagined/reoriented prioritizing safe driving and transit, biking, walking, and public activity. Urban streets are public places having a larger role to play in communities than solely being conduits for traffic.
Permeability Best Practice Guide	Promotes more sustainable modes of transport. Ensures that transport considerations are fully addressed as part of land use planning.
Regional Planning Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Use quality urban design to enhance the character of a place and to ensure development is respectful of the existing physical, social, environmental and cultural context. Improving walking and cycling provision in towns and villages, including the re-distribution of street space and upgrade of public realm and urban design
Local Planning Policy	Relevance
Wexford County Council (2020) Public Lighting Specification	Public lighting to provide sustainable, energy efficient lighting solutions.

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A wide river flows from the top center towards the bottom left. The surrounding land is divided into numerous small, irregular plots, some of which are green, suggesting crops or pastures, while others are brown or tan, possibly bare earth or different types of vegetation. The overall scene is a typical agricultural or semi-rural setting.

Community Responses, Observations, Survey Results

- ***What the Community shared with us***
- ***What we have observed***
- ***What we have surveyed***



*The **town centre is hollowed out**, with little residential use, employment, services, retail and industry. These are amassed on the edge or outside the town - a phenomenon that can be observed in many towns in Ireland.*



*The River Barrow is the **dominant geographic feature** of New Ross. The historic size of the port, and its continuous vital role for the town can be sensed everywhere along the riverbanks and from afar. However, one misses the positive image usually associated with a port town and gets the impression of a town that had until recently turned its back on the river.*



*The town centre has a **very compact core** between the Quays and North / South Streets. The buildings and streetscape are of pleasant human scale and have the potential to perform for a compact, vibrant town life in the future.*



Suppressed commercial and social activity during the day, particularly in the evenings and on weekends, when many shops, cafés and services are closed.



The town centre has an abundance of physically appealing buildings and historically important structures, some of which are vacant or derelict, awaiting their renaissance.



Some streets and general public areas appear unsafe and uninviting to use, while possibly attracting antisocial behaviour, particularly at nighttime.



Some streets and general public areas appear **inaccessible and uncomfortable** to use, particularly for the elderly, for children, and other vulnerable street users. General accessibility will always be compromised in New Ross due to the challenging terrain between the river valley and the surrounding hills.



Some streets and buildings appear unkept and poorly maintained while **vacant and derelict buildings and sites** are visible in many places.



Most of the town centre is **dominated by car traffic** and large-scale **parking** resulting from the need and habit to drive to New Ross from surrounding hinterland communities.



The N25 **bypass** has reduced thoroughfare commuter traffic. This has created a **spatial vacuum**, making the R723 too dominant for its purpose in the public realm.



Several **public realm projects** have been successfully realised which are attractive and uplifting for the immediate surrounds. However, they appear isolated and would benefit from consolidation into a **larger scale public realm strategy** that would make them a more valuable part of the town's regeneration..



Public greens such as Pearse Park, Library Park, High Hill and the linear boardwalk and riverside walk are positive additions to the greening of New Ross. However, a **green network** with planting, trees and seating distributed throughout the town is missing.

Understanding the Built Environment

A massing map of New Ross clearly illustrates the dense and largely intact town centre between the Quays and the extent of John Street, North Street, South Street and Priory Street, with the main urban node at the crossing of Mary Street. On the eastern side of the river, the town has expanded, historically into Irishtown, and later into suburban housing estates. On the western side, this expansion has been kept fairly modest, possibly due to the close County border with Kilkenny further west.



Massing Plan of New Ross showing the intact compact core of the town centre versus large scale structures of industry, services, retail on the outskirts

Understanding the Urban Fabric

Simply speaking, a town is made up of a combination of public and private structures. Together, they build what makes the town unique and characteristic – they form the **Civitas**. New Ross' Civitas is an intact, compact and well composed built environment, with the potential to perform much better, socially, economically and environmentally.



Public Buildings in New Ross

plus



Building Blocks in New Ross

equals

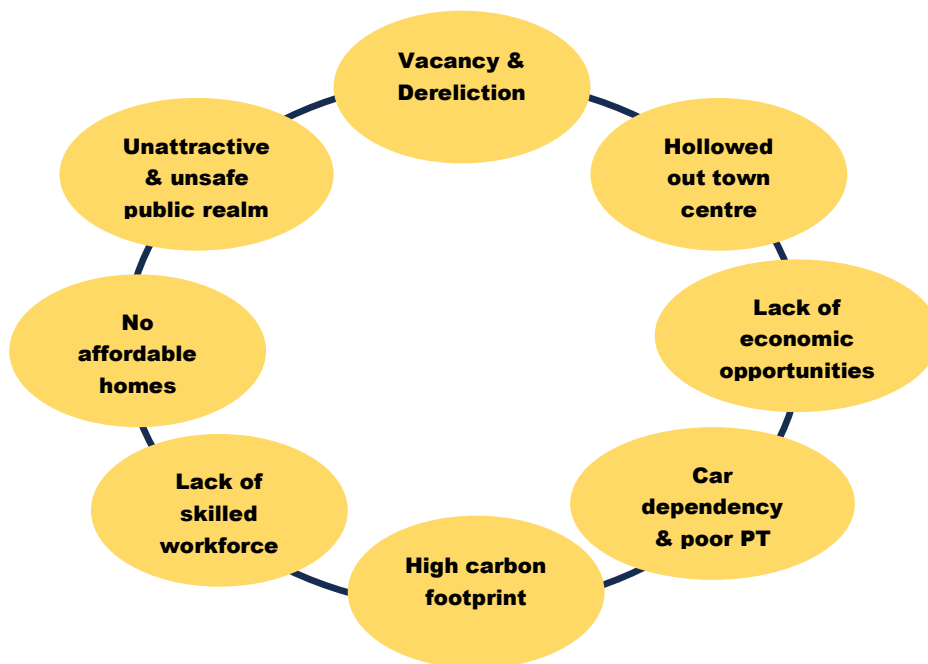


The Civitas of New Ross

The Vicious Cycle of low footfall and suppressed socio-economic activity

Over decades, town centre population, employment, retail, production and services has shrunk. The decline of all port-related industry and logistics has exacerbated this trend in New Ross. People moved to new homes in suburban areas and surrounding regions, businesses moved to available sites on the town's periphery and to greenfield sites. This trend was, and is, supported by a model of economic development that is based on a car dependent life style.

While people are undoubtedly better off, socially and economically, town centres have been hollowed out and are often characterised by low to very low footfall and activity, poor quality streets and spaces, poorly maintained buildings and sites that lead to vacancy and dereliction, and a general lack of safety and comfort. A Vicious Cycle has established itself – simply speaking: *“No one spends time in town because no one spends time in town”*.



Break The Vicious Cycle of low Footfall and Socio-Economic Activity

Wide roads and ample car parking facilitate people driving into town, from their homes outside the town. However, wide roads and ample car parking do not facilitate a vibrant and attractive town centre where one wants to live, work and socialise – they are direct indicators of a low 24/7 town centre population, and a lack of more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and bus transport.

A Team Effort

The multidisciplinary team received very valuable feedback from community consultations and obtained data from various town surveys. These are documented in a suite of separate reports as Appendices A / B / C / D.



*Appendix A
Town Centre Health Check*



*Appendix B
Demographics, Business survey, Vacancy and Dereliction and Tourism Opportunity*



*Appendix C
History, Heritage, Character*



*Appendix D
Public Consultation*

Town Centre Health Check Summary (please see Appendix A for more information)

The Town Centre Health Check has been collaboratively generated with information of land use distribution, vacancy and dereliction rates, transport mobility, heritage, commerce and tourism in accordance with the relevant advice and guidance.

Wexford County Council's very successful public realm projects are to be connected and gaps between to be filled in for 'cross fertilisation' while further individual private schemes should be encouraged. The surveyed vacancy rate, for retail and residential is high and many vacant buildings appear derelict, an economic concern for revitalising these buildings, but also a concern for heritage loss.

Further urban development, public and private, are set in context. The management and coordination of individual projects is critical for the process of an holistic plan for New Ross, to make the town centre more attractive for tourism, retail, employment, recreation and residential use, and indeed all the things that make a town centre successful in all necessary facets.

The quality of the town's built and cultural heritage, from the Norman past to the present is evident and undebated. It will clearly drive and define our vision and strategy for New Ross, to make the town centre more attractive for tourism, retail, employment, recreation, and certainly for residential use.

Our survey results show typical symptoms of weakened land-use and resulting poor social and economic activity in the town centre. Lack of investment, particularly in large, vacant landholdings have contributed to the erosion of the urban fabric. The town's transport mobility concept needs to be revised, for managed parking, permeability and safer, more comfortable streets. The N25 Bypass and proposed Greenway have started this process. New Ross possesses highly valuable assets which are currently underused and underperforming. How these recent trends can be reversed will be assessed, through public consultation and stakeholder engagement, and through collaborative work of our design team.

[See Appendix A – Town Centre Health Check for further information.](#)

Demographics and Economics Summary (please see Appendix B for more detail)

Demographics

The population of New Ross has experienced modest population growth over the last 20 years as indicated by Table 1 below. A small decline occurred between 2011 and 2016, but this decline was apparent elsewhere in Ireland following the national recession at the beginning of this period. What is noticeable is that the population of the urban centre (the Electoral Division of New Ross Urban), including Rosbercon, experienced a long decline between 2002 and 2016 as the population aged and younger subsets moved to the outskirts of the town, its rural environs or elsewhere. In part, the renovation of some apartments in Rosbercon and the arrival of migrants, particularly from Poland, has helped to reverse the decline in the centre of the town since 2016.

Table 1: Population: New Ross (Source: CSO)

Electoral Division	2002	2006	2011	2016	2022
New Ross Urban	4402	4034	3907	3768	3938
<i>Percent change</i>	<i>-4.9%</i>	<i>-8.4%</i>	<i>-3.1%</i>	<i>-3.6%</i>	<i>4.5%</i>
New Ross Rural	2052	3367	4014	3942	4178
<i>Percent change</i>	<i>44.6%</i>	<i>64.1%</i>	<i>19.2%</i>	<i>-1.8%</i>	<i>6.0%</i>
Total	6454	7401	7961	7710	8116
<i>Percent change</i>	<i>6.9%</i>	<i>14.7%</i>	<i>7.6%</i>	<i>-3.2%</i>	<i>5.3%</i>

While the demographics indicate that New Ross is not so different from many other rural towns in having a rather skewed spatial pattern of population with some deprivation in the centre balanced by relative prosperity on the outskirts, it does indicate that the town is missing some of the younger demographics and socio-economic categories normally associated with economic prosperity. This suggests that many people have left (or not moved in) due to employment or housing opportunities elsewhere. The relatively low level of younger population segments presents an issue in that young people often have more disposable income, or are at least are willing to spend this on consumerables and nights out. Young families typically engage in higher spending activity too. The absence of this spending has an inevitable effect on the local economy.

There has been rather little new residential development in the town in recent years. Although it is understood from local sources that there is good demand for accommodation, particularly for families, a shortage of accommodation is deterring some people from moving to New Ross. A case is made in this report for refurbishing vacant and above shop properties and for restoring derelict properties for residential use. However, this argument is made from the perspective of needing to raise the population of the town centre as a stimulus to activity and spending. While there is demand for apartments, these properties are less suitable for the main demand group, but rather for single individuals.

Economy

The New Ross economy has been traditionally dependent on river traffic, but while some bulk shipments continue, this traffic has declined significantly. The occupational profile of the town indicates some legacy of its trading and industrial past with high proportions of the workforce employed in “Processing, Plant and Machinery” and “Skilled Trades” . New Ross is an important services centre for its hinterland and has developed in recent years as a tourism hub. Most businesses surveyed believe the town has benefitted from the reduced congestion and transfer of traffic to the recently opened N25 Bypass. The principal recommendation of the RSES for the Southern Region is to further improve transport connectivity with the M11 to Rosslare and Wexford and with the M9 to Dublin and Waterford.

In terms of retail, New Ross is fortunate in having held on to a good selection of independent retailers in the centre of the town. Responses from the surveys undertaken for the project indicate that local people would like there to be a wider selection of retailers. In practice, this can only happen once there a larger number of people prepared to visit the centre for shopping, including people from the town, its outskirts, and tourists. Attracting more visitors will help keep existing small businesses viable, including the cafes and numerous specialist shops. Moreover, New Ross is not unfavourably positioned in that three of the country’s major retailers are located on the R723 Ring Road close to the town centre. This road is significantly less trafficked than it was prior to the construction of outer bypass. Therefore, there is an opportunity to persuade people to cross the road to the centre of town. Much investment has gone into improving the environment of the quays, along with the Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience and the high quality of the local parks and riverside. If people do make it across the main road to South Street where other retail outlets are located, they find a varied selection of small shops, many with traditional shop fronts which are an often overlooked, but almost unique characteristic of Ireland.

Tourism

The South East Region received 988,000 international tourism visitors in 2019. In County Wexford, these visitors are responsible for the employment of up to 5,000 people and revenue of €282m. The number of domestic visitors was greater at 1.8m. Their numbers have begun rising again following the pandemic. New Ross has received funding as a Destination Town and will be listed as such in the forthcoming new County Wexford Tourism Plan. The town has much appealing heritage with three strands connected to its Norman origins, North American links and its former importance as a port. It has many fine heritage buildings including St. Mary’s Church.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is now contributing to the construction of the Emigrant Park. The town is marketed within the context of Ireland’s Ancient East and there is cooperation with other nearby towns of historic interest, including Enniscorthy, Waterford and Kilkenny. Links exist too with other Norman towns in France, but it is the historical connection with

North America that draws many visitors. Coach passengers are, though, allowed rather little time to explore the towns in which they arrive and much of their spending remains within the Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience which receives 60,000 visitors throughout the year and has an annual turnover of around €1.6 million.

The steep hill to the rear of South Street and North Street is part of the aesthetic attraction of New Ross when seen from across the River Barrow, but it does severely restrict visitor excursions into the town. Once again, the Council has done much to draw visitors up the slope including through the recent construction of the High Hill Norman Garden, although it too would benefit from more awareness and a link to the Quays.

New Ross's connections with America are, of course, a major asset for the town. Linked to this is JFK Arboretum and the Annual Kennedy Summer School which help to maintain the connection and are, along with the Piano Festival, a significant cultural resource. There is a strong need to attract more domestic and other visitors and it is likely that more tourists will be attracted from the Continent now that the Rosslare EuroPort is being expanded. Although situated in self-contained private grounds, the Brandon Hotel is reasonably close to the town centre. However the absence of much other hotel accommodation or a hostel is an obvious and serious deterrent to visitors spending time in the town and contributing to its night-time economy. The Council propose to establish a campervan/motorhome park.. They have also identified a suitable site for a hotel beside the Emigrant Park for which they aim to seek a private investor. It is likely that some investors will take the initiative prior to the opening of the greenway, though a large investor has yet to step forward.

There are some significant tourism developments in the pipeline. The contract for the Norman Heritage Centre has now gone to tender. The centre will display the Ros Tapestry and is likely to contain attractions with much appeal to tourists and families. A farmers' market is also proposed for the area and will help to attract more visitors across the road from the riverside carparking.

Of most significance is the South East Greenway (see **Appendix B**). This will form an extension of the existing, and very successful, Waterford Greenway and has the potential to attract a similar number (up to 250,000) visitors a year to New Ross, noting especially that the town is located close to what will be two of the greenway's principal attractions, namely the Red Bridge across the Barrow and the Mountelliot Tunnel. The recently established ferry service between Waterford and New Ross is likely to be extended to allow for return trips from either end of the greenway, a potentially unique attraction. The sheer number of potential users of the greenway is likely to have a transformational impact on the economy of New Ross, just as the Waterford Greenway has had on Kilmachthomas and Dungarvan. The River Barrow is also identified as an underused tourism asset and a masterplan is now underway on its Blueway potential.

[See Appendix B – Demographics, Business and Tourism Report for further information.](#)

History, Heritage, Character Summary (please see Appendix C for more information)

New Ross's elevated topography and strategic siting intimately bound up with its evolution and history and is a defining part of the town's character and identity. Its natural riverine advantages led to it developing as a significant inland port and Anglo-Norman walled town with a wealth of historic buildings, places and a unique character and considerable untapped potential.

Good conservation, regeneration and placemaking starts with a broad understanding of the place, its history, its evolution, its component parts – natural and manmade - and their significance. Historic structures are of high value and embodied energy even despite sometimes having fallen out of use, and with the urgent need for sustainability, housing and reinvigoration of New Ross, never has appropriately harnessing this existing fabric been more important. With imagination and high design standards, even bold intervention, viable new purpose can be given to buildings and places.

Much has been written on New Ross's long and venerable history and neither the main report nor the History, Heritage, Character report are intended to be an exhaustive synthesis of that, but rather a means to broadly understand its evolution, morphology, fabric and essential character. The History, Heritage, Character report will then give an overview of its existing built and archaeological heritage, before appraising the character of New Ross. This appraisal will include building typologies, materials and prominent detailing, alterations and infill, green space, townscape, important views, street furniture and surfacing and strengths and weaknesses within it.

The report will conclude with a number of heritage recommendations and identify a number of derelict and vacant buildings and structures. These should be considered as drivers for regeneration and greater appreciation of the town's rich heritage.

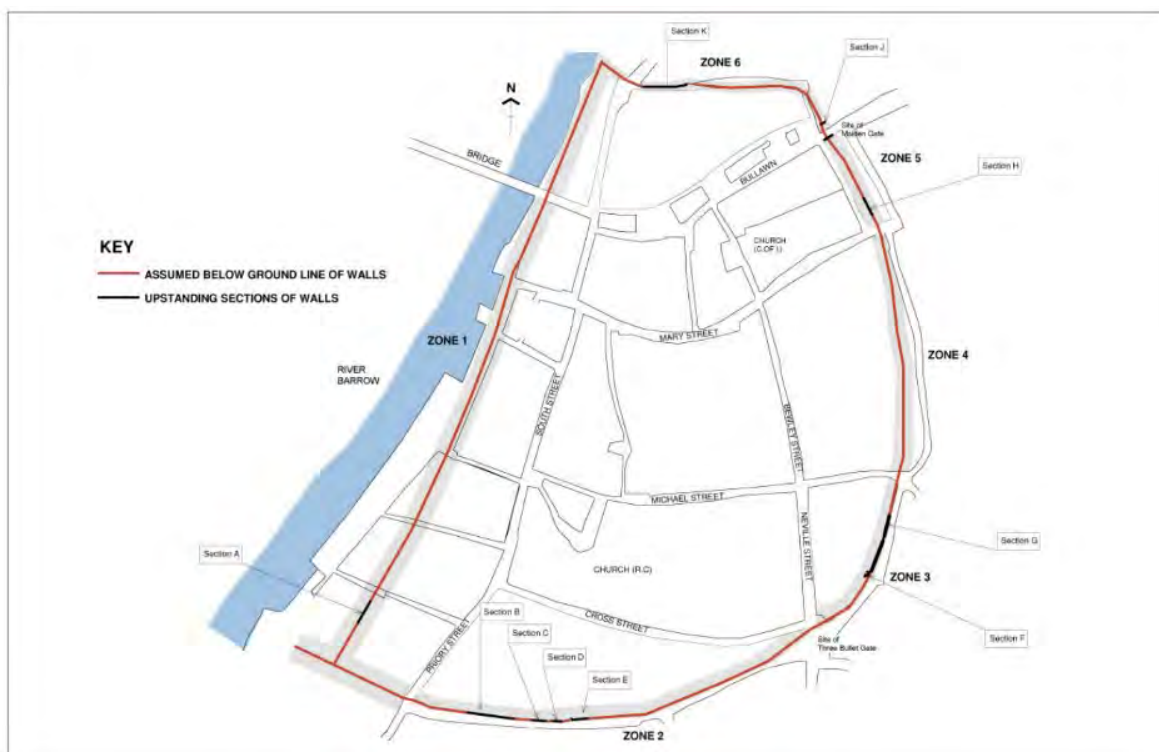


Historic Street Signs

New Ross's history, heritage and character is deeply textured, complex and intriguing – a palimpsest that reflects the principal periods and events that have shaped and moulded the town:

- Pre-Norman monastic settlements in the fertile land along the rivers Barrow and Nore
- Norman heritage that began with William Marshal
- The Irish Confederate Wars
- The 1798 Rebellion
- The Great Famine and its aftermath
- The roots and emigration of the Kennedy Family

The fact that New Ross does not have a castle might appear as a shortcoming. An absence, possibly owed to the fact that William Marshal and other rulers resided nearby, including Kilkenny. A castle is an iconic and characteristic asset for so many Irish towns, and is attracting large numbers of visitors year round. New Ross, however, can compensate with the general richness of its built heritage, much from the Norman era, and particularly the town wall with gates and the medieval layout centred on the port and quay area. New Ross also has a wealth of fine later buildings, including neo-classical vernacular shopfronts and deeply characterful streetscapes.



Map of Historic Town Wall (A. Coey)

In summary, New Ross owns a rich set of heritage assets of all periods and types. Making the most of them is a key element of the town's Vision, and Town Centre First Plan.

[See Appendix C – History, Heritage, Character for further information.](#)

Public Consultation Summary (see Appendix D for more information)

Below is a summary of insights gathered from extensive community and stakeholder engagement, through youth surveys, interviews, walk and talk workshops and a town hall / drop in exhibition style meeting. These have been highlighted under the TCF New Ross themes of engagement.

1. Young People

Young people currently love sports and leisure spaces, parks and green spaces and cafes in New Ross.

Hangout spaces were seen as a priority for young people. There is a desire to provide more youth spaces, particularly outdoor spaces, and cafes and casual dining. The provision of these spaces may lead to increased vibrancy of the town centre.



2. Uniqueness and Character

A great location (nearby coastline, loop walks, natural town terrain of hills and river), sense of community and a proud heritage (The Norman Way, JFK heritage,) are current factors that add to the identity of New Ross.

Tourism, the Norman connection and loop walks were 3 elements that participants would like to see highlighted in the plan going forward.



3. Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

Current tourism recommended by participants highlighted the Dunbrody Famine Ship, local historical walks, Artwork Murals and local walkways.

There was also multiple suggestions to move the tourist office to its own location in New Ross and provide for tourism wayfinding in the town



There is a desire from consultation participants to have a large and small retailer in the town centre of New Ross. Smaller businesses were noted as likely to give more “*personal and friendly services*”.

There were suggestions of multiple domestic and international precedents to take inspiration from with markets, tourism, pedestrianised shopping areas, local craft / art, and community / commercial based activity hubs being highlighted.

4. Inclusivity and Accessibility

The majority of participants found New Ross to be somewhat accessible, however there was a desire to have

- Neurodiverse spaces
- Support / transport for the towns hilly terrain and for local link access
- Pedestrianisation of town centre streets
- River access
- Public toilets
- Public realm furniture / improvements
- Covered areas for inclement weather



5. Diaspora - Old/New

The majority of participants think diasporal elements of New Ross's identity as important and that it should be highlighted in the plan to encourage more people to come and settle in New Ross, both new communities and returning locals.

Town centre living, nighttime economy and improved public realm were highlighted as aspects to make New Ross more appealing to new communities and returning locals.

Inclusion festivals, support for young entrepreneurs, and alternative nighttime activities were also noted as important for new and returning communities.



6. Future Use and Living

Community centred spaces, greater accessibility, and nighttime activities were noted as important for older adults in New Ross.

Safety, lack of amenities and no availability of later opening establishments were noted as popular reasons why participants do not visit New Ross in the evening.

Thinking about the next 20 years of New Ross, participants noted apartment living, choices of shops, reduction of building dereliction, transport facilities and pedestrianisation as part of their answers.



7. Other noted comments from the public consultation

A town centre communal facility could be used for all ages and types of needs. Supporting young people, older people, entrepreneurs, arts and culture.

New Ross as a market and food destination.

Uses for vacant/derelict buildings is a major topic that was highlighted by the community of New Ross.

Community Wayfinding was highlighted as important to find out what is going on in the town. A suggestion was made of a central community info board with community wayfinding for the town centre.



[See Appendix D - Public Consultation Report for further information.](#)

Challenges

- Lack of affordable housing, any housing
- Aging population, lower education levels & opportunities nearby
- Vacancy and Dereliction / lengthy CPO processes (first item on survey responses)
- Lack of hotels / bed nights and tourist offers
- Strong car-dependency from the hinterland and commuter traffic with resistance to change mobility habits
- Scepticism that urban living and design will work here (*'It can't be done' mentality*)
- Existing terrain that rises from the river valley to the hills surrounding the town centre
- Car parking: manage and locate parking more efficiently
- Further enhancing conservation and heritage legacy
- Large underutilised landholdings
- Some isolated areas of some streets are untidy and some unkept shopfronts
- Irish Town community seems disconnected
- Rosbercon community seems disconnected
- Consolidation of the existing public realm projects
- Flood risk with flood defence walls obstructing permeability
- Loss of commercial / mercantile square (historically in various town centre places)
- Uncoordinated tourist information and guidance
- Kilkenny rivalry for Norman Capital of Ireland (No Castle)
- Making the town climate resilient and future proof the town against recession
- Not clear if proposed bridge extension is sufficient, for attractive and safe walking and cycling – A key deliverable of the Greenway connection into town is required
- Not clear if and when proposed Greenway loop along Red Bridge / Mountelliot Tunnel / R700 will be delivered to secure success of this important recreational / tourism infrastructure



***Each Challenge bears
in it an Opportunity
for Change***

Opportunities

- Develop Norman experience. Ros Tapestry returning to proposed Norman Experience Centre
- Strengthen existing compact town centre for living, working, socialising
- Maximise benefits from Green-Blue Network : Greenway / Looped Trails / Red Bridge / Mountelliot Tunnel / Old Train Station
- Activate public buildings: Tholsel, Library, Court House, Scout Hall, Cinema
- Connect existing public greens through green routes & trails
- Apply Sustainable Transport & Active Travel ideas
- Reinvent the port and redevelop strategic brownfield sites
- Mapping and wayfinding for residents and visitors
- Accessibility within the town centre and surroundings
- Explore floating homes or house boats as an option
- Sustainable transport mobility concept : Filtered Permeability / Pedestrianisation / 30km/h speed limit / Shared Space & Pedestrian Priority zones with loading & delivery access
- Green-Blue Infrastructure: NBS / Rewilding streetscape / SuDS / increase urban Biodiversity
- Amalgamate tourist information into single location and online presence : consider proposed Norman Experience centre as location
- Promote and fill event & festival calendar : Kennedy Summer School (weekend event) / Piano / William Marshal / Norman Food Experience etc.
- Activate youth to co-create their own hang out places
- Explore available Funding : URDF / RRDF (both applicable according to TCF Policy) / Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023 / Town Centre Living Initiative / other sources
- Develop Digital New Ross
- Identify sites in town centre for family housing
- New Ross Ambassador Scheme

Realisations to Take Home:

- ***No Town is Perfect***
- ***Every Town is Different***
- ***Some Things Need to Change***
- ***Some Things Should Stay***
- ***A lot can get better***
- ***There is no Magic Bullet***
- ***Rome wasn't Built in a Day***
- ***New Ross has a Lot Going for It!***



Some Things Need to Change
Some Things Should Stay
A Lot can get Better

*Where we
want to go*

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The Community's Vision for the Town Centre is manifold – A good thing!

- + *More Affordable Apartments & Houses*
- + *More Shops, Bigger Shops where appropriate*
- + *More Restaurants & Cafés*
- + *More Hotels & Tourists*
- + *More Services, Jobs & Entertainment*
- + *More Trees, Planting & Seating*
- + *More Public Places to meet, mingle & rest*
- + *More Evening and Nighttime Activities*
- + *Safer Streets & Better Connections between Public Greens*
- + *More Activities & Places for Young People*
- + *Better Bus Service*
- + *Better Footpaths & Cycle Lanes*
- + *Better Access to all Buildings & Public Areas*
- + *More attractive River & Quays*
- + *Better Community Ties between different groups*
- + *More Inclusion of Minorities*
- + *Better Wayfinding & Connections for Residents & Visitors*
- *Less Vacant & Derelict Sites & Buildings*
- *Less Traffic & Cars*
- *Less Antisocial Behaviour & Drugs*
- *Less Social Deprivation & Poverty*
- *Manage Expectations*
- *Propose realistic Projects*
- *Consolidation of the existing public realm projects*
- *Compromised Accessibility due to existing terrain*
- *Identify Pilots that the Community can identify with*

**Creating a Vision for a Place is like painting an Image,
With Colours, Forms, Meaning, and a Canvas!**

What is our joint-up Vision for New Ross?

Here again, the Community is the expert in the forming of a vision for their town!

It is based on feedback from:

- The Community, including the Town Team
- Key Stakeholders, including Wexford County Council
- Observations and Surveys from the Multidisciplinary Team



In general, a very strong overlap can be found, between Community ideas, Key Stakeholder advice, and conclusions and recommendations from the Multidisciplinary Team – They pretty much all want a similar future for New Ross:

A Vision of Place Making:

A vibrant,

safe,

comfortable,

attractive

and accessible

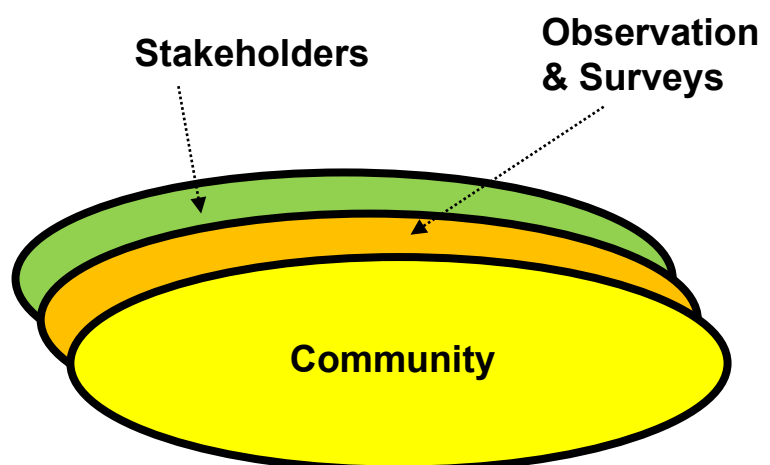
town centre,

to live,

to work,

to meet

and to visit, for everyone.



The Community's Vision for the Town Centre is about Quality of Life

The multidisciplinary team is presenting a vision for a better New Ross that is in full accordance with the objectives of the Town Centre First policy. Some conflicting interests arose in the process to find one common voice and direction. These are normal, and to be expected when it comes to a complex task of forming a Vision for your own place and lifestyle.

The main questions for the community (and perhaps most contested matters among urbanists) are how a town like New Ross should look like in the future:

- ***The redistribution of public space – simply speaking, how much road and parking will be relocated and reduced, where, and how would the community like to use this reclaimed space?***
- ***How can the Virtuous Cycle be started, to attract both, more town centre living, and more town centre business & amenities at the same time?***
- ***How can we create a stronger Sense of Place for the Community in the Town Centre?***
- ***Who is responsible?***

New Ross owns 5 outstanding assets of immense value for Quality of



1. The River Barrow



2. The Heritage of the Normans



3. A Compact Town Centre



4. The Heritage of the Kennedy Family



5. A very Creative & Strong Community

These 5 are essential for the Town's Values, Reputation & Place in the Southeast

They are vital for the Town's IMAGE

1. The River Barrow

The river is over 200m wide when it flows through the town – one of the widest river stretches in the country! The river is tidal which makes for a constantly changing shoreline, with a unique flora and fauna. A living and healthy waterbody on the town's doorstep is a major asset:

- **Natural Beauty & Biodiversity**
- **Exciting everchanging Landscape**
- **Source of the Town's Existence as a Norman Port**
- **Great Opportunity for Sustainable Connection to Waterford, Coast, Inland**
- **Great Opportunity for Recreational and Sports Activities**

We are fully aware of the flood risk that a tidal river creates.

With Climate Change and rising sea levels the town needs to protect itself better from future floods. Therefore, expectations how to make the River Barrow an active and attractive part of the town have to be managed.

Also, the river is a clear physical divide between the main town and Rosbercon.

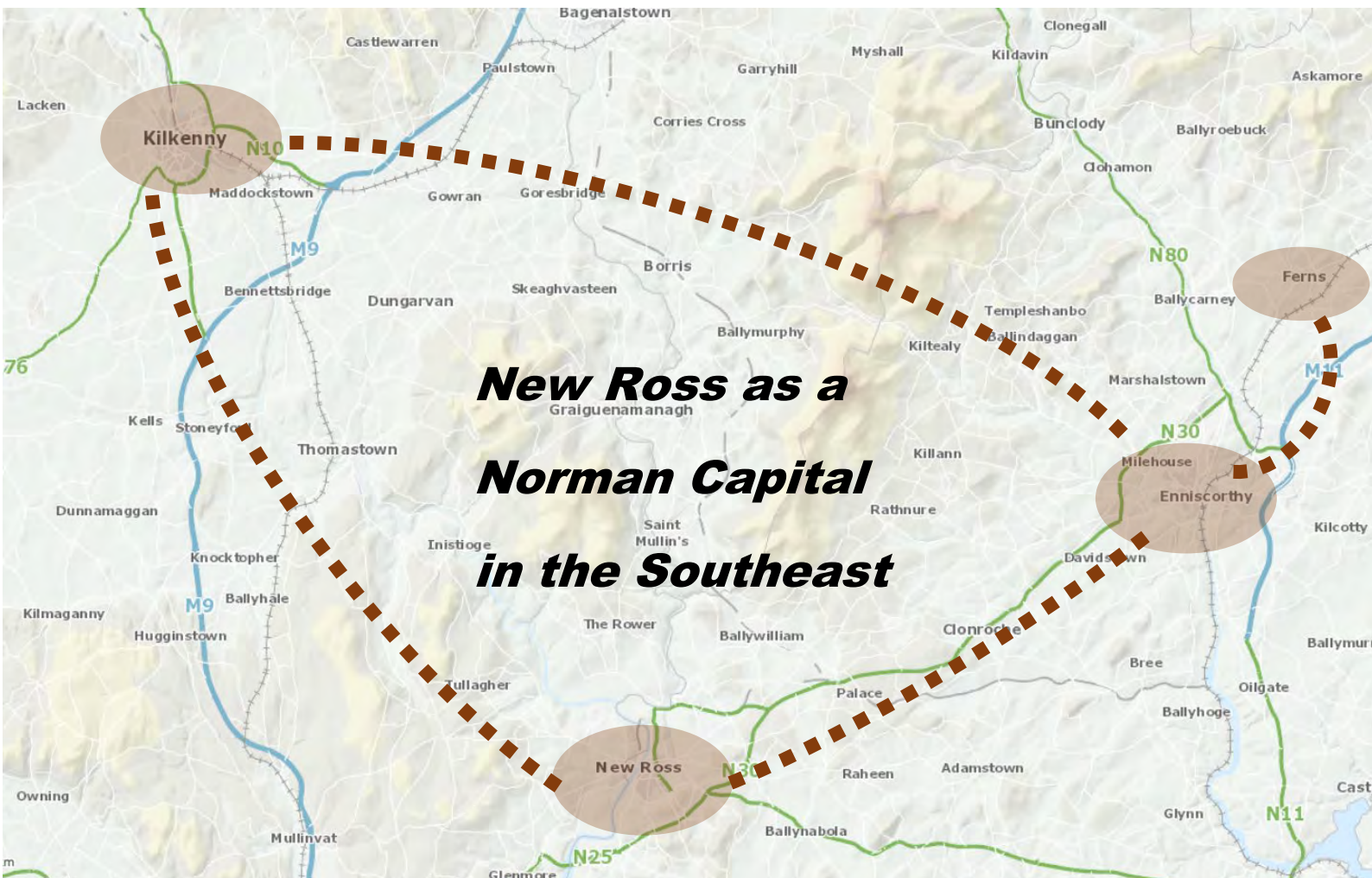
Therefore, to enhance the river means having more, better opportunities to cross it.

2. The Heritage of the Normans

Norman history has shaped New Ross, starting with William Marshal and Isabel de Clare who founded the town more than 800 years ago. Norman heritage, in the form of the town layout, buildings, walls and the cultural narrative of New Ross like The Ros Tapestry can be seen and sensed everywhere in town. The Vision for New Ross is taking the town’s rich heritage on a journey into the future. The Vision for New Ross has to include:

- An almost intact Town Wall (and the ITWN support & background)
- The impressive structure of St Mary’s Church & The Norman Way
- Remains of the Historic Port
- The Ros Tapestry returning to New Ross
- The Development of the Norman Experience Centre on the Quays
- The Strengthening of a Norman Heritage Triangle:

Kilkenny – New Ross – Enniscorthy



3. A very Intact Building Stock in a Compact Town Centre

New Ross has not undergone the process of suburban sprawl to the same extent as many other Irish towns. One reason might be the established medieval setting of streets and places that worked well then, and now. Another reason might be the economic advantage of the riverfront while the terrain rises from the river in every direction.

The building stock in the town centre consist mostly of 'ordinary' terraces houses, with a few more outstanding grander buildings interspersed among them. However, the ensemble value of these buildings is an outstanding physical quality that is unique to New Ross. It undoubtedly adds to the urban density, character and charm of a historic town – a quality we often appreciate so much when abroad in mediterranean villages and towns!

An aerial photograph of New Ross, Ireland, showing a dense urban layout. A large yellow oval is superimposed on the map, highlighting a central area of the town. The background is a light blue color, possibly representing water or a sky gradient.

***The Quality of the
Medieval Vernacular***

4. The Heritage of the Kennedy Family

The Kennedys emigrated from New Ross to the US in the 19th century, long before John F. Kennedy. JFK came on an epic visit to Ireland, and New Ross in 1963. His visit to his family's hometown wrote national history and has put New Ross on the map for many since. The Kennedy Family are the most famous emigrants having left New Ross during the Great Famine in 1848. The Vision for New Ross clearly evolves around Emigration and Immigration, Leaving and Arriving, Loss and Gain. The Kennedy Family from New Ross display this so well:

- **The John F. Kennedy Trust – Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience**
- **The Kennedy Summer School - a Festival of Irish-American History & Politics**
- **The Kennedy Arboretum & Homestead near New Ross**
- **Strengthening Heritage Tourism**

***Make New Ross a Place
that remembers Emigration,
and welcomes Immigration!***



5. A Creative & Strong Community

New Ross has a population of over 8,000 which makes it a mid-size town for Irish standards. CSO data and statistics show one side of the coin. The other side is the sensual, the character and vibe of the place. We hear from the Community that the will and energy to change things for the better are there and strong – bring it on! We hear from locals and visitors alike that the town has so much going for it and that it needs a stimulus to ‘awaken’ from a depression that hasn’t left the town for quite some time.

- Annual Festivals & Events
- The Inclusion of Newcomers
- Theatre – Arts – Music
- Safe & Comfortable Streets & Places
- New & Fresh Businesses like Shops, Services, Food & Beverages
- Local Sports Clubs – from Rowing to Cycling to Boxing and More
- People’s Pride in their Town, and how they show it

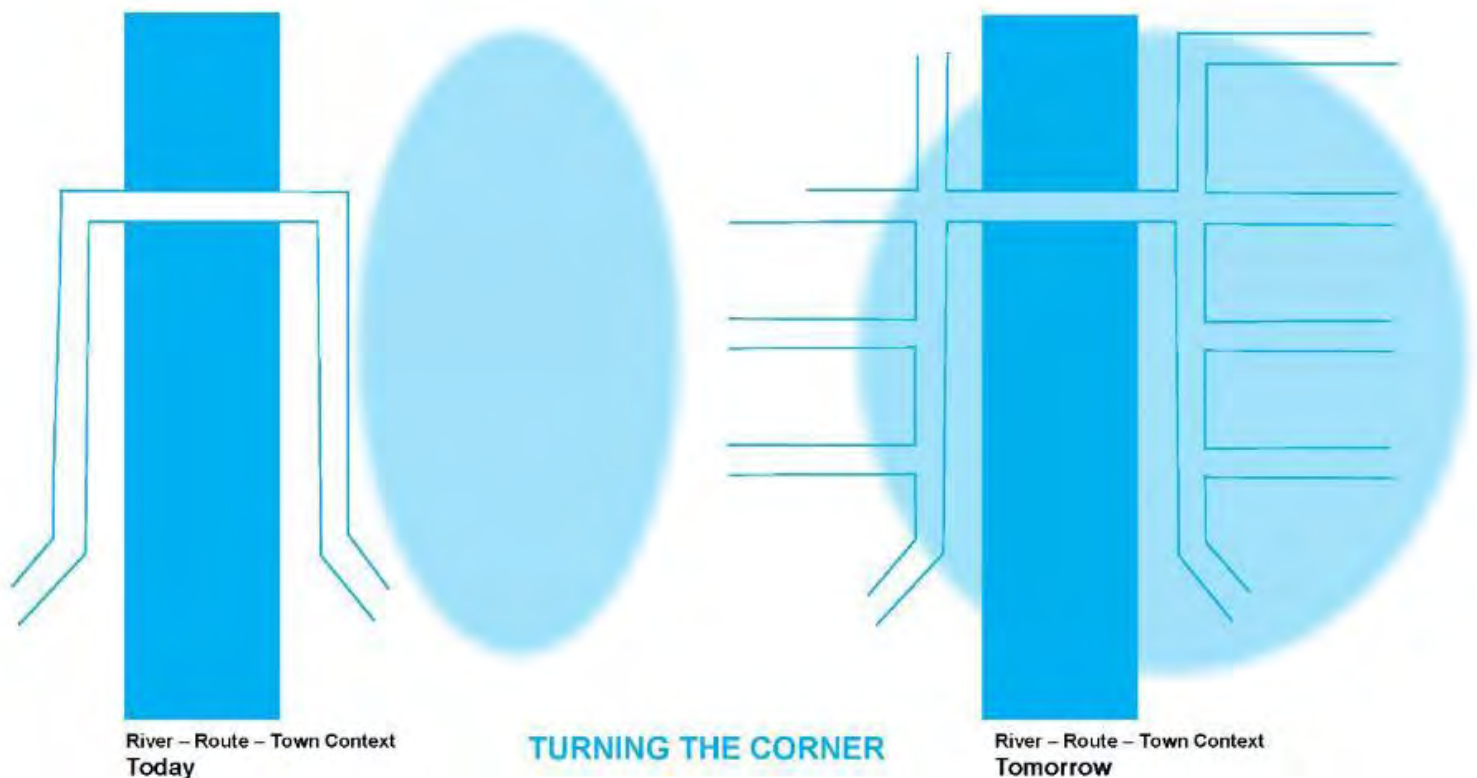
***Break the Vicious Cycle of Depression.
Start the Virtuous Cycle of More Life –
more Living, Working and Socialising
in the Town Centre,
and in the Evenings and at Weekends!***

Reactivating / Reimagining / Reintroducing the river into the town

The current flow of traffic and general movement through New Ross is still set by the main thoroughfare along the Quays. This was the N25 with a higher traffic volume and traffic speed until this section was bypassed in 2020 and the road downgraded to a regional road, the R723.

The bypass has been well intentioned as it reduced the negative impact of through traffic on the historic town centre and has increased economic activity. However more importantly left a legacy of wide roads with car engineered infrastructure and design, in a vacuum – we are experiencing **the Bypass Dilemma**.

The town’s Vision has to include a better version of this space, predominantly by reclaiming road space and making it available as quality public realm, for walking, cycling, for planting & trees, and for sitting and resting, with the best views one can have of New Ross, across the River!



Activating the Quays will pump new Life into the Streets and Laneways that are leading to the river, on both Sides!

Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



The River Walk

Cork City Docklands and Haulbowline Island



Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision

Reviving the Port



Titanic Quarter, Harland & Wolff Shipyards, Belfast



Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



Sabarmati Riverfront, Gujarat, India

The Linear Park



Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



Reimagining Industrial Heritage

Borneo-Sporenburg Docks, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Living on the Waterfront



Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



Amsterdam, Netherlands

Living over the Shop

Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



Dawson Street, Dublin

Living over the Shop

Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



Rye River Café, Kilcock, Co Kildare

Adaptive Urban Reuse

Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision

Adaptive Urban Reuse



Retrofitted Warehouse for Living, Shanghai, China



Retrofitted Warehouse for Living, New York, USA

Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



*Greenway Bridge, Athlone
Co Westmeath & Roscommon*

A Shared Surface Bridge



*Bridge serving as Public Space
Providence, USA*

Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision





***“If you plan for traffic and cars,
you get traffic and cars. If you
plan for people and places, you
get people and places.”***

***Fred Kent, Project for Public
Spaces (PPS.org)***

***Illustrations of pedestrianised Quay Street
(Wexford CoCo)***



***The Vision for a better New
Ross needs to be constantly
nurtured and supported by the
Community and the Local
Authorities – with the Town
Team as the Task Force for the
Town Centre First Plan!***

How we get there

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***"You can't do
it alone..."***

This Strategy establishes Principles for Change.

From the **Baseline**, we have gathered solid information.

From the **Vision**, we have a very good idea what New Ross we want.

What needs to change?

This is **not** a finite Masterplan, with a simple and linear beginning-to-end route.

This is a **Holistic Approach**, to address the various issues we have identified with the **Community**. The Strategy is multilayered, like the problems it tries to resolve. We are suggesting, in no particular order, with projects that overlap and depend on one another, on the **Stakeholders**, and on the **Community**:



Create a Virtuous Cycle – a Safe & Attractive Town Centre



Apply Place Making & form a Sense of Place



Reimagine the Town's Heritage



Reinvent the Port for Living & Recreation



Strengthen Community Arts, Activities & Education



Provide for a Digital New Ross



Promote Tourism & activate the Hinterland



Make Transport sustainable – the 10 Minute Town

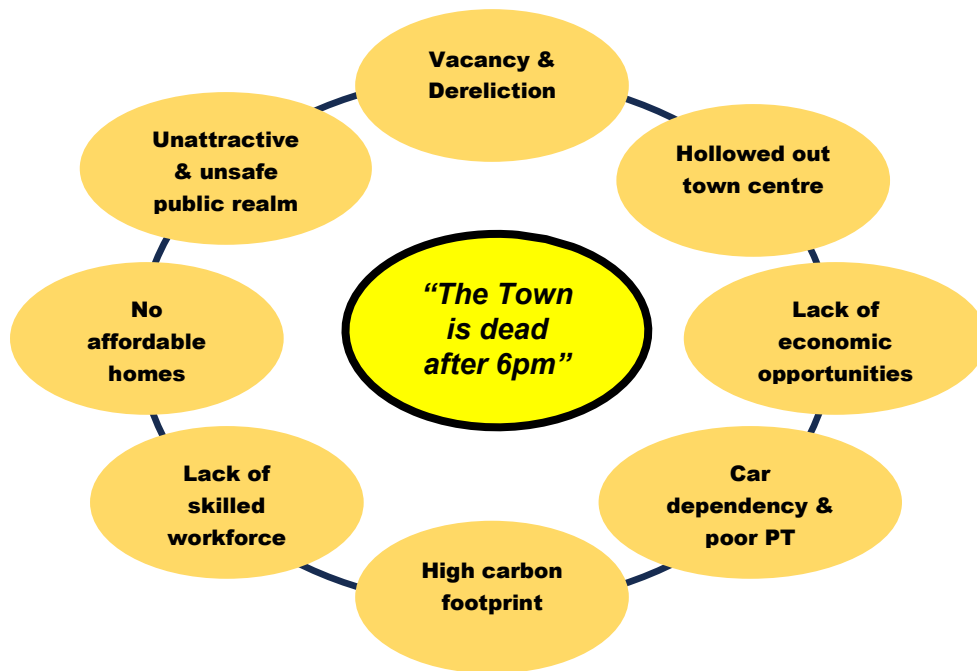


Introduce Green – Blue Infrastructure

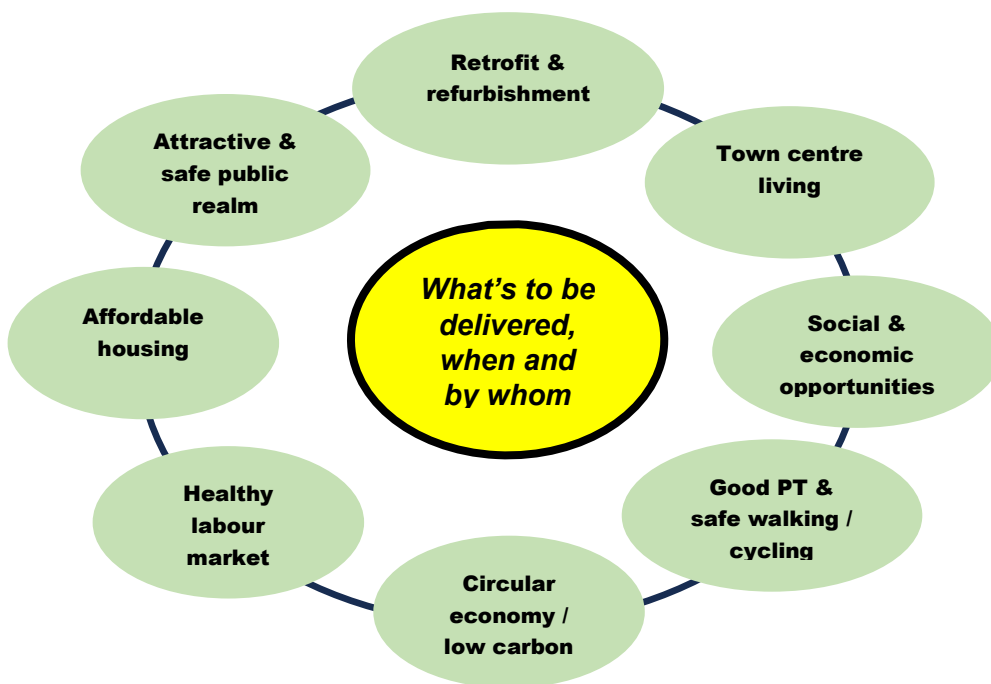


Create a Virtuous Cycle – a Safe & Attractive Town Centre

What keeps the Vicious Cycle in place needs to be tackled and turned to become part of a Virtuous Cycle. Critical in **breaking this Catch 22** is to provide enough incentives from the public side to make private investment attractive. Simply speaking, the town centre has to offer something before people decide to want to live, work and socialise here.



Break The Vicious Cycle of low Footfall and Socio-Economic Activity



Create The Virtuous Cycle of high Footfall and Socio-Economic Activity



Create a Virtuous Cycle – a Safe & Attractive Town Centre

Apply the Principles of Urban Design:

Increase **Footfall**, **Connectivity**, and **Passive Surveillance**, as illustrated below.

UNSAFE

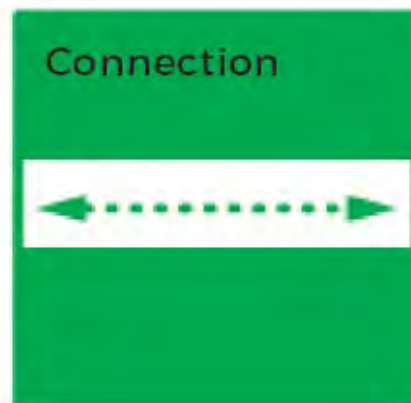


VS

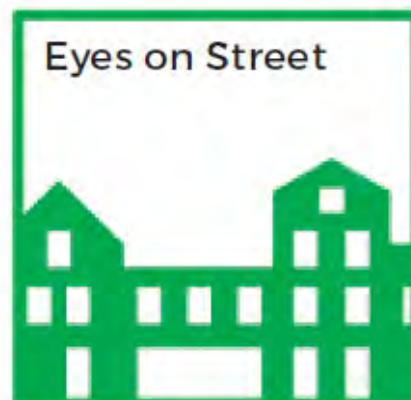
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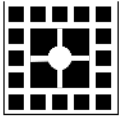


VS



VS





Apply Place Making & form a Sense of Place

Applying Place Making and Sense of Place is about applying Best Practice Examples and Guidance. The Art of Place Making – How to make a place that is **vibrant, safe, comfortable and accessible** for every visitor and community member, regardless of age, ability or background.

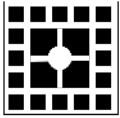
The multidisciplinary team takes insights from own project experience and from best practice guidance such as Irish Urban Design Manual, The UK National Design Guide for successful places, from Gehl’s well-established spatial quality criteria assessment, and from Placemaking guidance by Project for Public Spaces PPS.

What Makes a Great Place?



Project for Public Spaces

Place Making Diagram by Project for Public Spaces (PPS.org)



Apply Place Making & form a Sense of Place

An Analysis of existing public realm in New Ross gives insights about their **Spatial Quality**. The multidisciplinary team perceive these to be good. However, an overall connecting greening concept for the town is required to consolidate existing public realm developments.

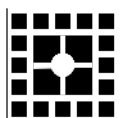
The New Ross Public Realm projects are consistently National award winning developments:

1. New Ross Quayfront re-development was the Chambers Ireland's winning entry under **Enhancing the Urban Environment** in 2015
2. New Ross Quayfront re-development was the winner of Engineers Ireland Excellence Awards in 2014 in the Category **Local Authority Initiative Award**
3. The Library Park was winner of **Best Public Park** in the Community and Council Awards in 2017
4. The Library Park Was also a finalist in the Chambers Ireland Awards in 2018 For **Best Public Park**
5. The High Hill Norman Gardens was a finalist and highly commended in the **Best Innovation in Urban Planning** 2023
6. The last time IBAL included New Ross in their deliberations was 2012 when the town attained the status **Clean to European Norms**
7. Pearse Park, The Library Park and New Ross Marina have all been awarded **Green Flags** and **Blue Flags** for each of the last seven years.



Diagrammatic Analysis of Existing Public Greens in New Ross

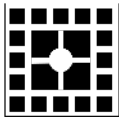




Apply Place Making & form a Sense of Place

Assessing what spatial qualities can be improved at High Hill, O’ Hanrahan Bridge, and on South Street.

Location		High Hill Norman Garden	O’ Hanrahan Bridge	South Street
Date & Time		16:20 20/6/2023	16:00 20/6/2023	16:40 20/6/2023
Weather		Sunny, warm and humid	Sunny, warm and humid	Sunny, warm and humid
P R O T E C T I O N	Protection against traffic and accidents			
	Protection against harm by others			
	Protection against unpleasant sensory experience			
C O M F O R T	Options for mobility			
	Options to stand and linger			
	Options for sitting			
	Options for seeing			
	Options for talking and listening / hearing			
	Options for play, exercise, and activities			
E N J O Y M E N T	Scale			
	Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate.			
	Experience of aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experiences			
Observations / Notes		This is a well designed space with high-quality materials and planting. Due to topography there is less options for mobility.	One can enjoy views of the town and river. The bridge is perceived to be unsafe.	It’s a busy street with both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. This space lacks comfort.



Apply Place Making & form a Sense of Place

Assessing what spatial qualities can be improved at The Quays, Pearse Park, and Library Park.

Location		Quayside (south bridge)	New Ross Park (Pearse Park)	Library Park
Date & Time		16:50 20/6/2023	16:30 20/6/2023	16:00 20/6/2023
Weather		Sunny, warm and humid	Sunny, warm and humid	Sunny, warm and humid
P R O T E C T I O N	Protection against traffic and accidents	●	●	●
	Protection against harm by others	●	●	●
	Protection against unpleasant sensory experience	●	●	●
C O M F O R T	Options for mobility	●	●	●
	Options to stand and linger	●	●	●
	Options for sitting	●	●	●
	Options for seeing	●	●	●
	Options for talking and listening / hearing	●	●	●
	Options for play, exercise, and activities	●	●	●
E N J O Y M E N T	Scale	●	●	●
	Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate.	●	●	●
	Experience of aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experiences	●	●	●
Observations / Notes		One can enjoy views of the river and sunset. This space has the capacity to include diversity of uses, such as a playground.	Large public park in former flood lands along riverbank. There is no protection against noise.	Park in the middle of the town. This space has the capacity to include diversity of uses, such as a children play ground.



Reimagine the Town's Heritage

The town's Cultural and Built Heritage have been well assessed during our surveys, and have been documented in Appendix C – History, Heritage, Character. New Ross owns a **treasure chest of historic buildings, structures and places**, that are idle and can come back to contribute hugely to the daily life in town, for example, among many others:



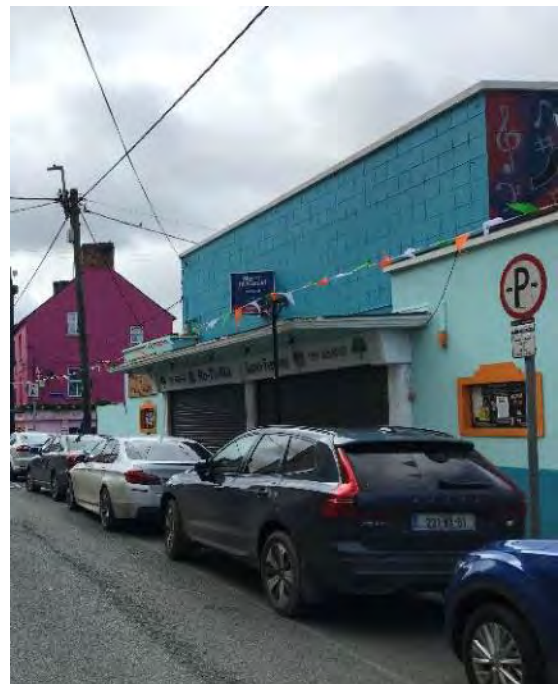
Augustinian Friary



Historic Quay Walls



Court House



Cinema



Reimagine the Town's Heritage

It is not always the single outstanding historic building, but often the ensemble and setting of the ordinary in a compact town centre that mark the value. Many of these 'ordinary' historic buildings have huge potential for **Adaptive Urban Reuse**, particularly for residential use. This should be explored in the context of the Town Centre Living Initiative 2020 (Space Engagers for Dept. Rural and Community Development).



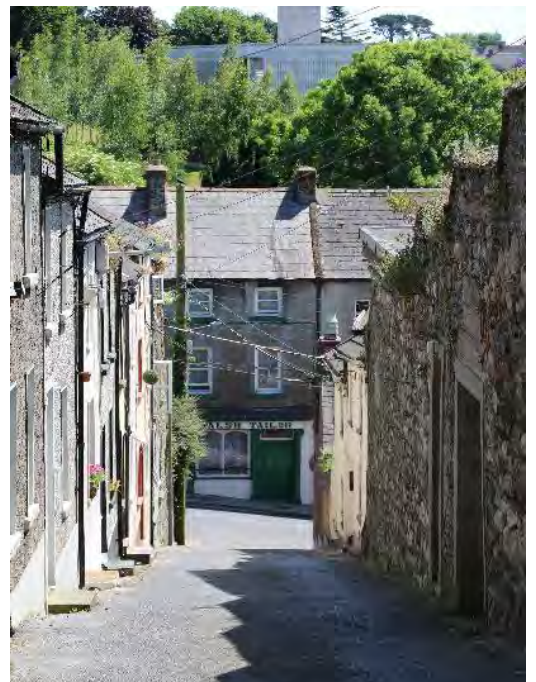
Warehouses on the Quays



Derelict terraced townhouse



The Shambles



Sloped terraced row of houses



Reimagine the Town's Heritage

New Ross has a **strong independent retail scene**. It consists of a large variety of small shops and enterprises that are often unique in their field and that already attract a selected clientele.

Experience of the last decades, and surveys have shown that New Ross' town centre is not very suited for large scale retail. The existing small-scale intact fabric of medieval blocks and sites are not suited for shops which demand a minimum floor space and unlimited access. The result of which is twofold: a) large-scale retail has located on the edge of town, or on available port brownfield sites, b) the town centre core has remained considerable intact (with a few exceptions such as the SuperValu development and its car park).



Green Door pub and bar on Mary Street

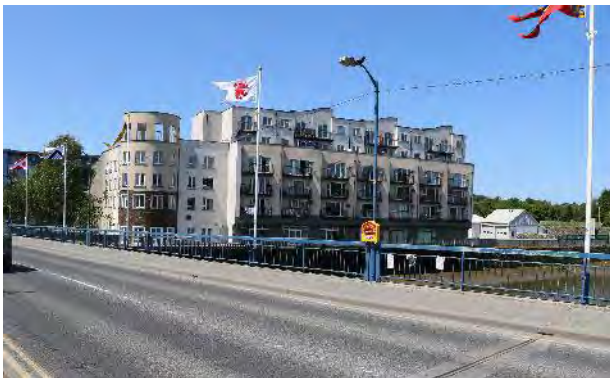


Vibrant, safe and accessible street life between retrofitted Victorian buildings, Dublin



Reinvent the Port for Living & Recreation

Signs of past economic recessions are most visible along the riverfront that formed, and still forms the Port of New Ross. Vacant and abandoned brownfield sites are awaiting a renaissance, for a new life and lease. They are very attractive and suitable locations for residential and recreational use, best in combination in order to add vibrancy and quality of life on people's doorsteps, and in the centre of town. The previous section illustrates **Living on the Waterfront** and **Port Regeneration** very well in Best Practice Examples.



Rosbercon Apartments on the Riverfront



New Ross Port 1924 (Poole Studio)



Vacant Stafford site



New Ross Boat Club (New Ross Boat Club | New Ross | Facebook)



Strengthen Community Arts, Activities & Education

Public art, in the form of murals, sculptures and landscaping are a great driver for a Healthy Community. More Colour uplifts the scene, for residents and visitors alike!– More Art!



Some examples of the many painted house walls in New Ross



Strengthen Community Arts, Activities & Education

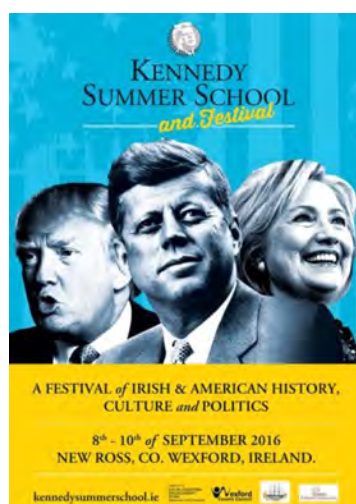
The existing festival calendar for New Ross is already impressive. With 4 festivals that are internationally recognised, the New Ross Guitar festival, Kennedy Summer School, the New Ross Piano Festival, and the Eugene O'Neill International Festival of Theatre. New Ross has established itself as a unique boutique festival venue. These festivals have the potential to leverage additional and added value events, such as a Tall Ships Festival, marrying the Dunbrody Famine Ship to the current festival programme, and other water based events linking the river and its wonderful heritage to the festivals. The annual Kennedy Summer School adds another layer of education and information for all interested parties. **More buildings, spaces and locations** should be identified and retrofitted that are suitable for performance spaces, youth centres, all sorts of community activities, and for training and education.



BIG GAME – New Ross as a potential host for a tall ship festival



SMALL GAME – regular live music



Kennedy Summer School





Strengthen Community Arts, Activities & Education

Children are excellent drivers for town activities, vibrancy and prospect! The Zipit project, for example, in combination with other facilities that particularly (but not only) children find attractive, will drive large parts of the community into the town centre, creating footfall, activity and all positive effects that come with it.



Floating Family Fun Day (A Playful City 2021)



Zipit Adventures Ireland



Provide for a Digital New Ross

Digitise the town! Make **Digital Technology** accessible and normal to use for everyone who wishes to use it in public. It is not rocket science.



Smart Bench installation in park area, London, UK



Provide for a Digital New Ross

Digital Town Blueprint

The Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) town report was prepared for the Department of Rural and Community Development by the Irish Institute of Digital Business, DCU Business School and .IE. The DTB was conducted as part of the Town Centre First initiative to understand the current digital readiness of New Ross.



The DTB was designed to help towns rapidly and cost effectively:

1. *Understand their current digital town readiness and digital competitiveness;*
2. *Compare their town against Irish and international benchmarks;*
3. *Stimulate stakeholder engagement on digitalisation.*

The Town Centre First Policy 7 (p.19) states:

“There is also the opportunity to utilise technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, and to integrate digital technology into daily commercial and social life. Digital technology can improve the quality and accessibility of services, and can be used to address challenges faced by our towns, providing them with new roles in the digital economy.”

Digital Town Score

New Ross received an overall Digital Town Score of 49. Below is an extract of Table 53 of the DTB report that provides a guideline for interpreting the readiness score.

Readiness Score	Dimension Level	Readiness	Guideline Description
40-59	3	<p><i>Defined</i></p> <p><i>Competitive</i></p>	<p>Digital Readiness is Clearly Defined and Documented</p> <p><i>There is clear evidence of digital readiness. Use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities are documented and planned. KPIs are competitive relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages.</i></p>



Provide for a Digital New Ross

What this means for New Ross?

The Town's Digital Score is competitive and relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages. The town has the digital readiness, and the capacity to further improve its digital competitiveness.

The town scores the highest in 'Infrastructure and Connectivity' even though there is limited presence of a Rural Digital Hub and co-working spaces. It also scored well on digital public services in terms of e-Government readiness, with opportunities to improve on e-health.

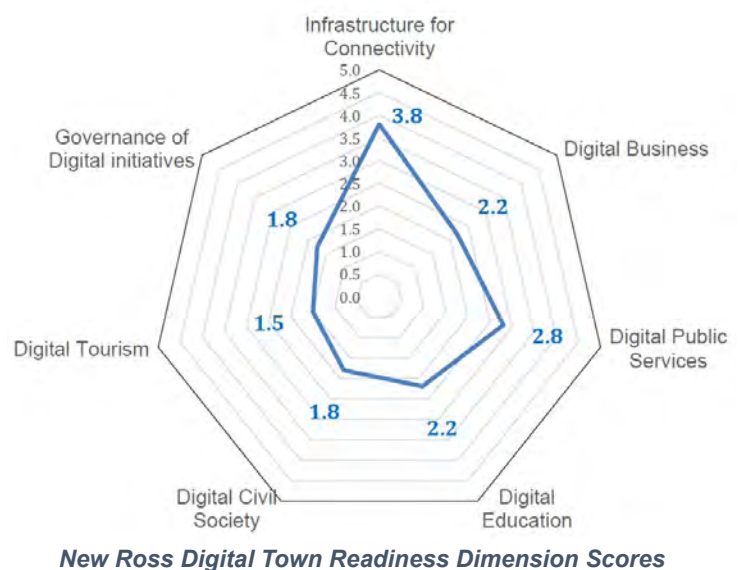
The audit highlight a low level of digital readiness under three key categories: Digital Tourism, Governance and Digital Civil Society.

Given that infrastructure is in place in terms of high speed broadband and connectivity, the town has the potential to invest and improve on other areas such as tourism, governance, education and business.

Proposed Digital Enhancement Opportunities for New Ross

To further improve the digital competitiveness of the town, the town can;

1. Introduce a Rural Digital Hub with co-working spaces;
2. Introduce CoderDojo or similar initiatives to improve the digital capacity of the wider community; and
3. Utilise 'Digital Placemaking' as a tool to improve digital tourism through;
 - Launch of New Ross Heritage Trail App;
 - Introduction of smart street furniture with free wi-fi and device charging points for visitors in tourist attractions, events and destinations; and
 - Digital Installations.



What is Digital Placemaking?

“The augmentation of physical places with location-specific digital services, products or experiences to create more attractive destinations for all.”

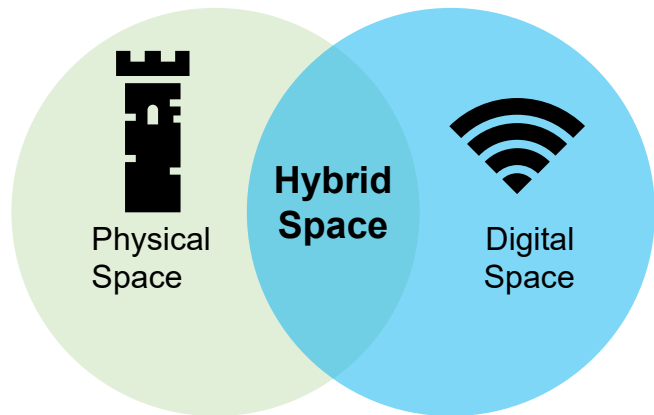
Calvium (Source: <https://calvium.com/resources/digital-placemaking/>)



Provide for a Digital New Ross

How Digital Placemaking Works?

Digital placemaking creates meaningful experiences for people in public spaces. These inclusive and authentic experiences foster a sense of belonging and can be delivered through fixed means – like digital kiosks and other types of connected street furniture – or via mobile and personal devices, including smartphones and wearable products.



“Digital placemaking is concerned with improving relationships between people and places.”

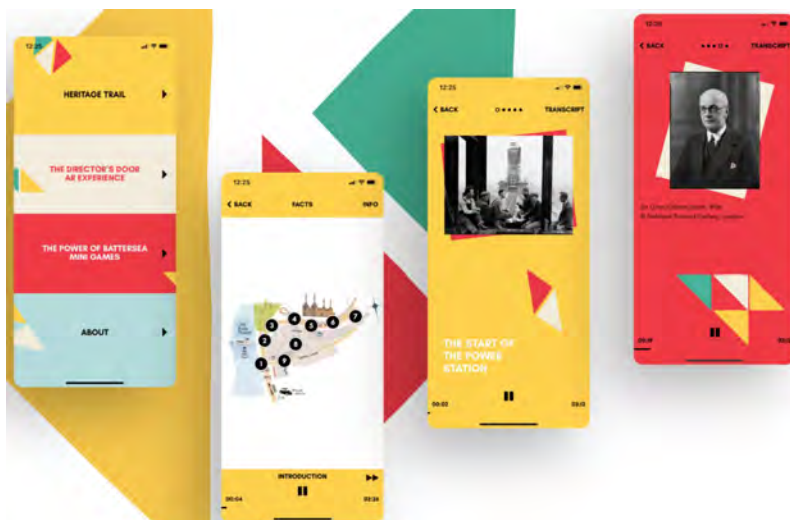
- Calvium (Source: <https://calvium.com/resources/digital-placemaking/>)

Spatially, the public realm is conceived as a mix of physical space and digital space; in other words, hybrid space. When a person is located in public space, their attention can therefore be focused on the point at which physical and digital space interconnect. This new hybrid space expands the range of ways a person can experience the physical space around them.

Best Practice Examples

The Battersea Power Station Heritage Trail app

The Battersea Power Station Heritage Trail is a freely available mobile app with three key elements: a location-based heritage trail for older visitors, a game for younger visitors, and a stunning augmented reality (AR) experience which allows people the chance to access parts of the building still under construction.

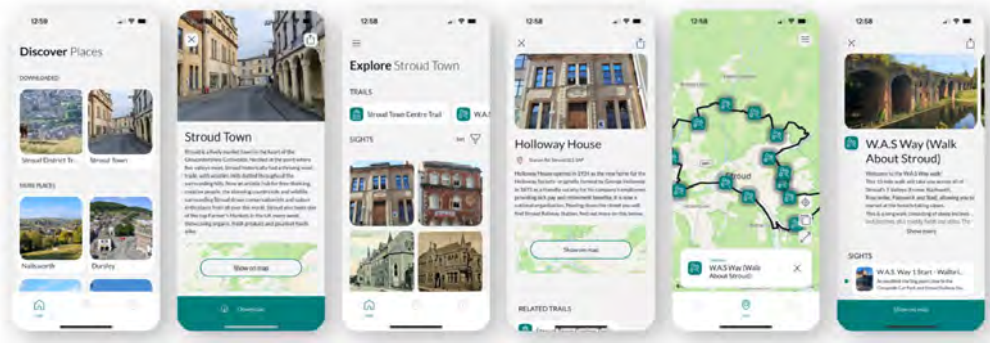




Provide for a Digital New Ross

Discover Stroud Trails App

The Discover Stroud Trails app uses technology to accommodate all users with regard to accessibility. This app allows to highlight different aspects of a destination that might not be good for somebody with a particular disability, such as raised areas or cobbled streets.



Bringing tales of Clifton Suspension Bridge to life

The Bridge Tales App combines dramatic reconstructions, voice overs, photography, short films and interactions to display the history and untold stories of the bridge.



Digital Installations

‘Past and Future Views’ installation is an augmented reality seaside-style binoculars created by Zubr for ‘Ideascape’. This installation is similar to a seaside-style binoculars but enhanced through digital technology. One can see the projection of the past and future of a place / area through them. (Image Source: Paul Blakemore)



Smart Benches

The solar-powered benches offer free Wi-Fi, USB charging ports for mobile phones and sensors which record weather and environmental information.

(Source Image: Smart Bench, London).

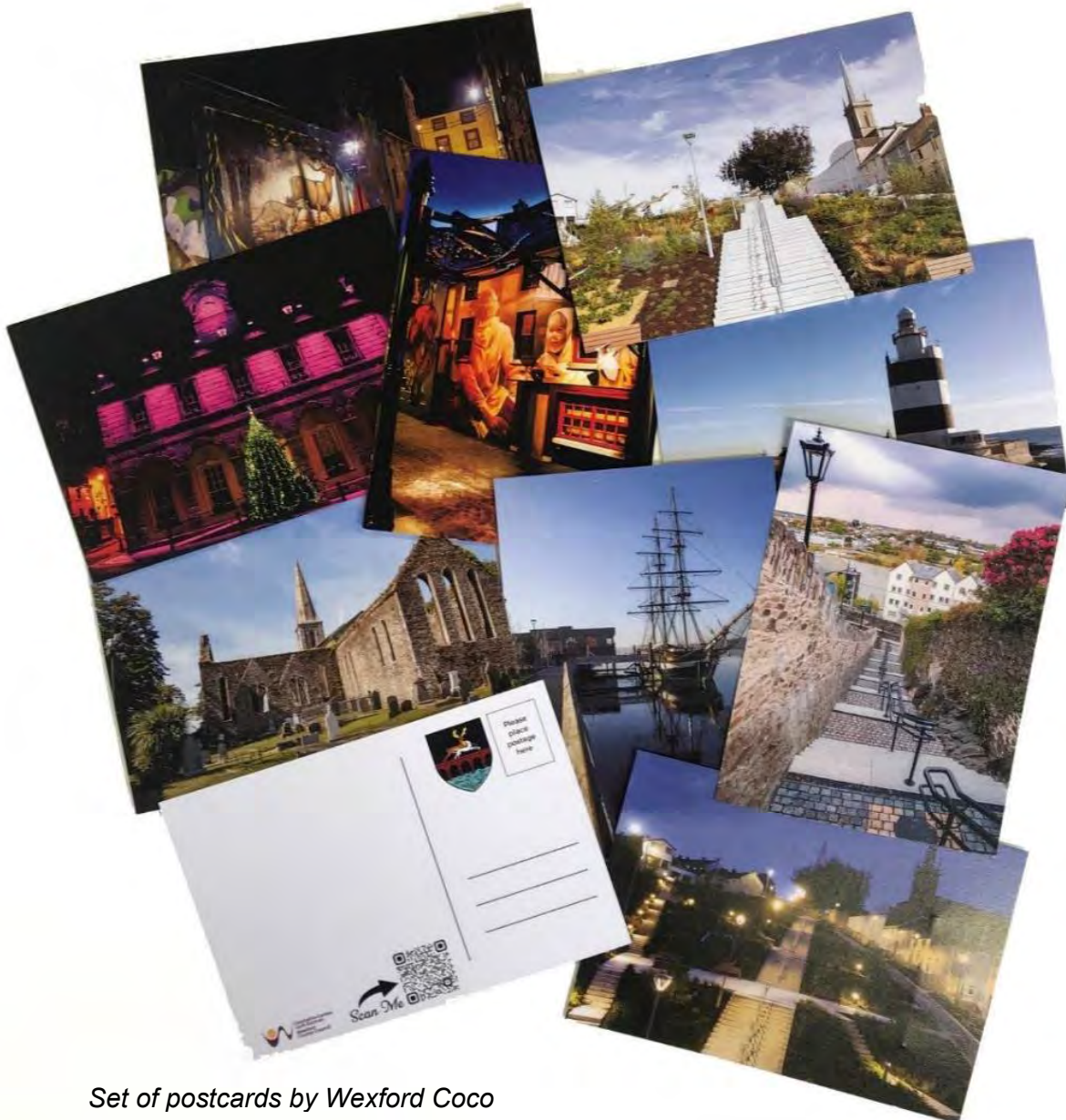




Promote Tourism & activate the Hinterland

New Ross is a town in southwest County Wexford, Ireland. The rivers Barrow and Nore connect the town to Waterford, Kilkenny and Carlow. New Ross is only 30km upstream from the southeast coast, with Dunmore East, the Hook Head Lighthouse and other seaside destinations. Also, New Ross is on a route to Rosslare Harbour for a ferry crossing to the continent.

With plenty of tourism around New Ross, the town has a lot to offer to make visitors stay for longer than a coffee. As described in our Vision, the Norman Heritage, Famine & Emigration, and the unique setting along the river are among the key drivers. The assets are there and need to be mapped in a more choreographed way, easy to understand for local and foreign tourists. What the town clearly needs to attract tourists to stay are B&Bs and hotels for bed nights.



Set of postcards by Wexford Coco



Promote Tourism & activate the Hinterland

Strengthen the connection between New Ross and its immediate and wider hinterland particularly for recreational, environmental and tourist projects, simply because it is very beautiful! Its quality can be physically and visually experienced from almost every location in the town centre – one of the benefits of an intact and compact town centre with little suburban sprawl.

The South East Greenway already takes full advantage of this available, valuable asset. Its proposed route along a disused railway line across the Red Bridge and through the Mountelliot Tunnel is spectacular and will attract large volumes of tourists, for walking and cycling. The project is shared between different authorities who will need to coordinate individual sections of the town loop. The success of this project is not only important for tourists, but critical for the New Ross community, and the **town's social and economic performance**.



Red Bridge across the River Barrow, forming a section of the Greenway loop for New Ross



Promote Tourism & activate the Hinterland

A Day in New Ross - An Imaginative Itinerary for a day visit to the town.





Make Transport sustainable – the 10 Minute Town

A key objective of Sustainable Development for Urban Regeneration is **Sustainable Transport**. The Town Centre First policy promotes Active Travel – prioritising walking, cycling and the use of public transport over the private car. The benefits are undisputed, for a vibrant urban life, and for healthy communities and for the protection of our environment.

The Strategy of this Town Centre First Plan follows the available policy guidance, in particular the:

Permeability Best Practice Guide 2015 (NTA)

National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 (Dept. of Transport)



Your Journey Counts – Government Campaign for Sustainable Transport (Dept. of Transport)



Space requirement per transport mode (Muenster City Council)

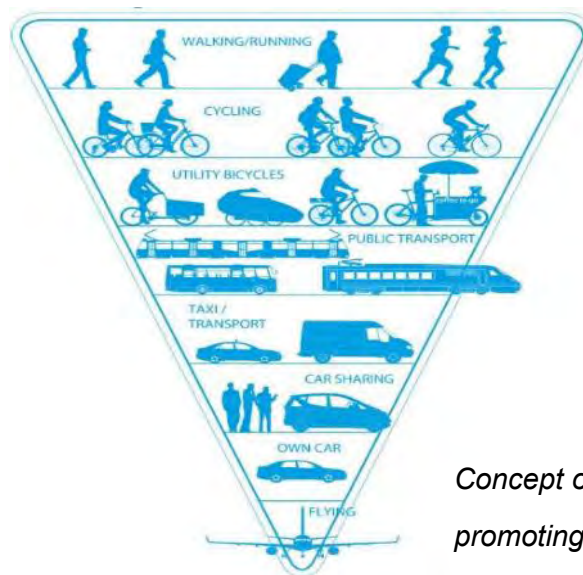


Make Transport sustainable – the 10 Minute Town

The N25 Bypass has fortunately reduced commuter traffic through New Ross. The N25 road has been technically downgraded to a regional road, the R723. This change has left a vacuum of space, particularly along the Quays. We suggest redistributing the streetscape to suit pleasant and safe living, working and socialising in the town centre. To do so, the following concepts and projects should be considered and tested, in close dialogue with the community.

- **Filtered Permeability** (Pedestrian priority over cyclists over bus over cars)
- **Shared Space** (arrangements for loading, deliveries & residents)
- **30km/h speed limit (or lower in sections if advisable)**
- **Universal Design / Access for All**
- **Manage, relocate and reduce car parking in the town centre**
- **Pedestrianisation of selected streets (Quay Street / North Street / South Street)**

Wexford CoCo have progressed this project with feasibility studies undertaken in 2022



Concept of the modal pyramid promoting Active Travel



Explore how much the river can contribute to sustainable transport (Barrow Princess ferry)



Make Transport sustainable – the 10 Minute Town

We suggest to attempt the principles of the 15 Minute City concept to New Ross. A 10 Minute Town concept could reduce car dependent mobility and encourage the modal shift that we need for a vibrant, attractive and safe town centre.



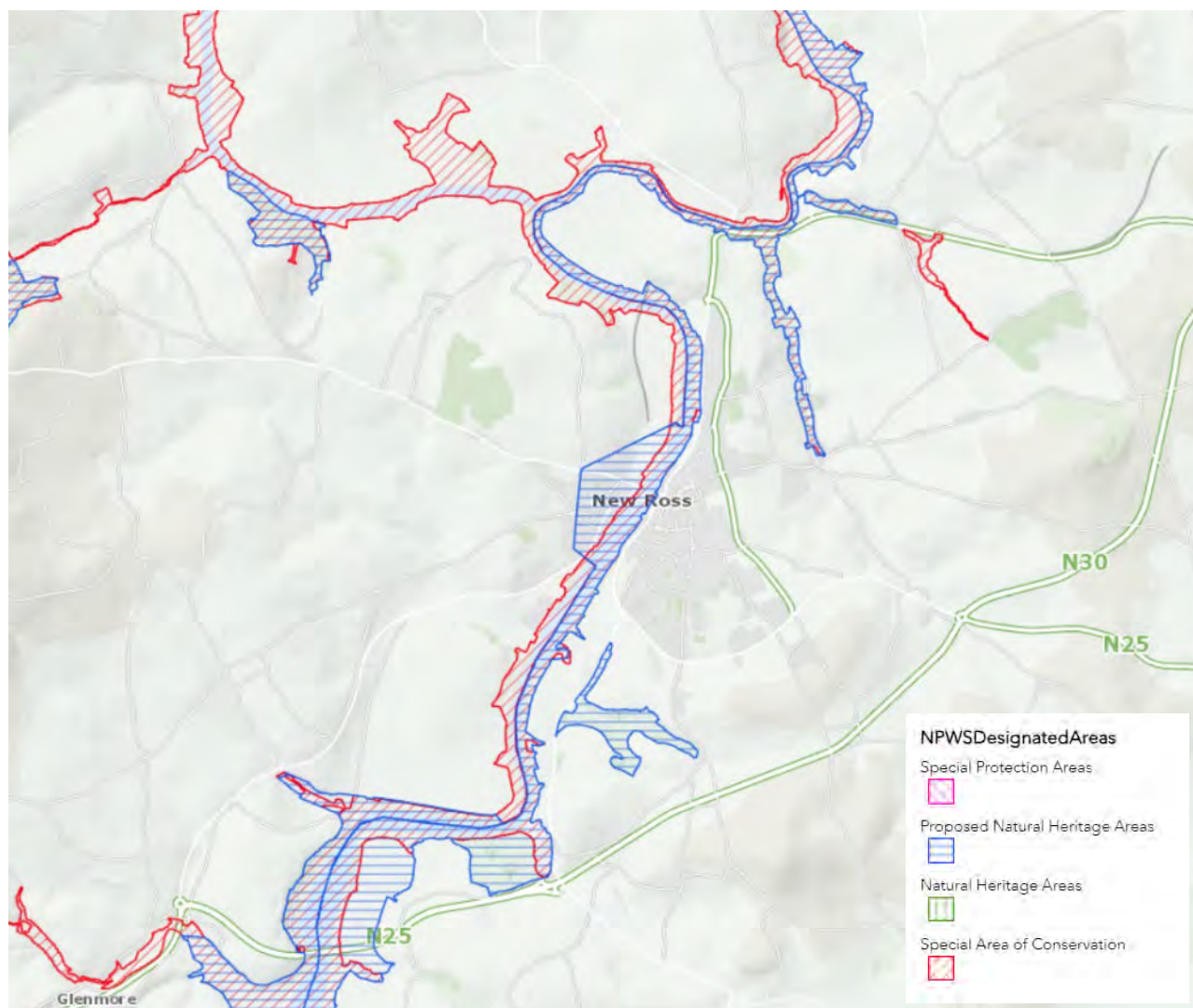
Study report on the 15 Minute concept in Ireland (Hassell)



Introduce Green – Blue Infrastructure

The town of New Ross is embedded into a landscape rich of natural beauty and quality. The Town Centre First Plan makes sure to reap the benefits of the abundance of Natural Heritage on the town’s doorstep.

The map below illustrates the variety of protected sites, such as Natura 2000 sites and Natural Heritage Areas. These are located predominantly along the rivers Barrow and Nore and characterise the immediate hinterland of New Ross. The combination of protected sites and waterbodies makes an ideal base for Green – Blue Infrastructure to enhance them and to make them attractive and accessible for the community of New Ross. The multidisciplinary team advise that development within and around New Ross shall be carefully managed to ensure protection of these designated sites. Furthermore, the Town Centre First Plan includes projects and activities that improve the town’s Green Infrastructure, and hence its quality of the community and the environment.



Map of designated Sites in the New Ross Area (Source: NPWS)



Introduce Green – Blue Infrastructure

Nature-Based Solutions / SUDS / Biodiversity / Rewilding

Nature Based Solutions
Creating benefits to Biodiversity



Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), Rewilding and the introduction of Biodiversity are **Green Infrastructure** measures. They are introduced into cities and towns to act as an interconnected network of natural space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to residents and visitors alike.

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) are interventions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into our built environment, with its greens, rivers, lakes and coast lines.

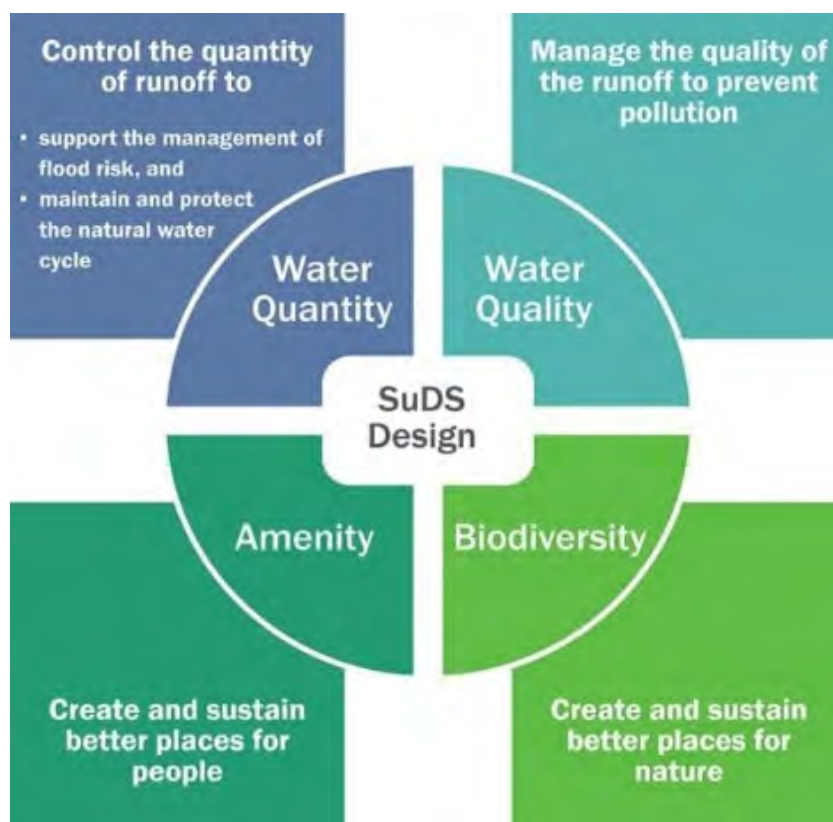


Introduce Green – Blue Infrastructure

Sustainable (Urban) Drainage System

Sustainable (Urban) Drainage Systems (SUDS) is the management and design of rainfall that aims to mimic natural drainage. SUDS reduces flood risk, improves water quality and provides biodiversity. In addition, SUDS improve the public realm with permeable paving, swales, green roofs, rain water harvesting, detention basins, ponds and wetlands.

SUDS are not limited to new developments and can be easily retrofitted into the existing built environment.



The Four SUDS Pillars – and the Outcomes:

- **Less Flood Risk**
- **Better Water Quality**
- **More Biodiversity**
- **Attractive Public Realm**

Provision of high quality open space, protection of biodiversity, wildlife and existing green infrastructure assets, and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) incorporated into new developments are some of the key criteria for protection and enhancement of the natural environment in our towns.



Introduce Green – Blue Infrastructure

Sustainable (Urban) Drainage System – Best Practice Examples



Witham, Essex, UK



Southend-on-Sea, UK



Aberdare, Wales



"We always say it can be done..."

If you could do one thing for the town centre, what would that be?



What we plan to do, and when

1

Introduction

2

Baseline

3

Vision

4

Strategy

5

Projects

6

Bibliography

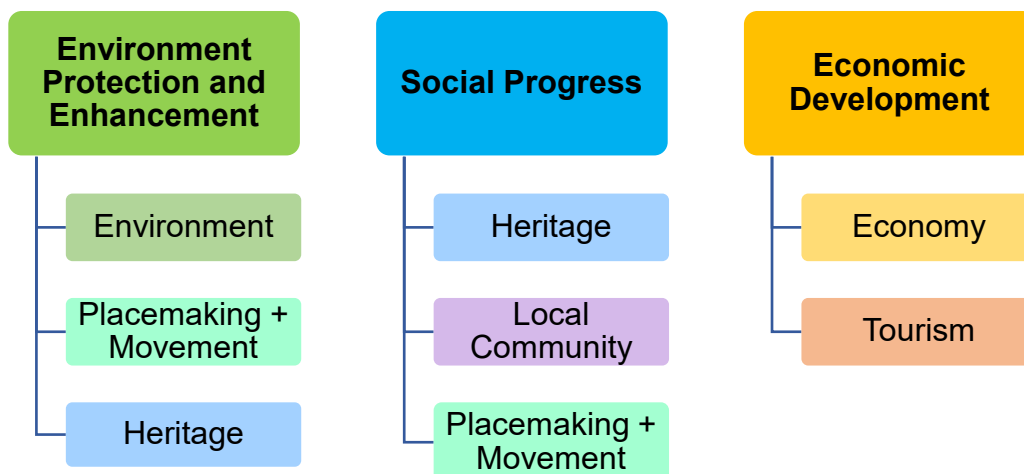
Sustainable Development Themes

The ‘Themes’ set out below are a result what “*we read, what we were told and what we saw*”. The six themes identified are Environment, Heritage, Economy, Placemaking + Movement, Tourism and Local Community. Theme objectives are particularly important as they provide an overarching framework for addressing the individual challenges facing the Town Centre and delivering the Vision. These themes also become a foundation for projects and actions, and form the basis for a delivery strategy.



Sustainable Development Pillars

The three pillars of sustainable development as set out in UN Sustainable Development Goals are ‘Environmental Protection and Enhancement’, ‘Social Progress’ and ‘Economic Development’. The six themes identified are a sub-set of these sustainable development pillars.



The six themes identified broadly relate to the three sustainable development pillars above.

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

Imagine the beside image as a wheel with complementary themes connected at each end and aimed to drive New Ross in a sustainable nature.



New Ross Sustainability Wheel

Actions

Actions have been derived from what we read, what we were told and what we saw. The actions are presented in a schedule below as per overarching theme and each action is identified with an I.D. That ID is then superimposed on a map of the actions below.

Timeframe and Priority

All actions are prioritised according to need, availability of resources, which may fluctuate from time to time, potential impact and deliverability. Actions may be brought forward depending on changing priorities, deliverability, funding and enthusiasm. Constant monitoring of implementation of policies and actions is required. Priorities are identified according to three time horizons.

Term	Timeframe / Year
Short-term	2 years (up to 2026)
Medium-term	3-4 years (up to 2028)
Long-term	5+ years (up to 2040)

Priorities are indicated in a star system contained in the schedule of actions below. The more stars an action has the greater the level of priority, up to a maximum of five. Every project has at least one star to be included in the schedule of actions. Priorities are allocated on the basis of achieving the vision, aligning with the aims and objectives of this report and community support. Priority and timeframe of delivery are shown separately because a priority might take 5 years to complete and an equal priority may only take 1-2 years to implement.

THEME 1: ENVIRONMENT

To uplift the environmental quality of the town and create a vibrant and welcoming town centre.

- Reimagine and reactivate riverfront and increase its visibility from the Main Road and interaction with the town.
- Tackle vacancy and dereliction, and improve character and appearance of the town.
- Improve wayfinding.
- Introduce Urban Greening, Nature-based Solutions (NBS) and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) while protecting and enhancing natural heritage.
- Ensure streets are clean and safely surfaced, and accessible to all (see Theme 4).

EN1 Expose and Utilise Riverfront

- Clean-up sites and buildings along the riverside.
- Improve access to the Barrow River and views along and across it.
- Provide flood protection and necessary infrastructure, where required.



Cork Flood Defence Plans

EN2 Wayfinding / Signage

Improve traffic signages and tourism related wayfinding totems.



Dodder Buoy artefact with world signage

EN3 EV Charging Spaces

Explore locations and install Electric Vehicles Charging Points in public parking areas.



ESB Public EV Charging Network

EN4 Nature-based Solutions and SUDS

All new developments to incorporate nature-based solutions (NBS) and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS).



Sustainable Urban Drainage System

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

EN5 Biodiversity and Urban Greening

Seek opportunities to reduce large hardstanding areas, and introduce trees and pollinator friendly planting, especially along the riverfront.



Build-out areas between parking to sit, dine, meet, watch the world

EN6 Lighting / Safety

Review existing lighting in the town centre and improve with modern energy efficient lighting. Increase CCTV presence to ensure the evening economy is supported by a public realm that is clear, well-lighted, protected, and secure in the town centre. Review appropriate lighting of key historic features, quays and the O'Hanrahan Bridge.



Appropriate lighting is key to safety

EN7 Green-Blue Network

Connect key attractions and locations through green and blue networks. Liaise with Blueways Ireland and Kilkenny County Council.



Create a connecting green and blue ways i.e., greenway and the River Barrow. Explore potential of "Grey Ways" i.e., Zipline alternative.

EN8 Engage with landowners

Continue to actively engage with private landowners and property owners.



Engage with landowners

EN9 Clean Streets

Ensure streets are clean, free from litter, graffiti, vandalism and safely surfaced and free from impediment.



THEME 2: HERITAGE

To strengthen and celebrate the identity of New Ross and safeguard heritage assets.

- Conserve, repair, restore adapt and reuse heritage assets.
- Safeguard existing heritage assets through proactive maintenance, repair and conservation, with technical assistance if necessary.
- Explore the use of digital technology as a means to tell the stories of New Ross through the New Ross Heritage Trail App.
- Appointment of a dedicated Conservation Officer(s) and a County Archaeologist.

H1 New Ross Heritage Trail App

The New Ross Heritage Trail will be a freely available mobile app with three key elements: a location-based heritage trail for older visitors, a game for younger visitors and a set of historic and untold stories of New Ross.



Visit Dublin: Dublin Docklands Discovery App

H2 Shopfront Improvements

Undertake a high level survey of buildings within the town centre to identify existing historic shopfronts and premises that are in need of expert conservation, repair and refurbishment.



Reads Cutlers on Parliament Street, Dublin

H3 Expert Conservation, Repair and / or Refurbishment of Heritage Assets

Undertake a survey of heritage assets within the town centre to identify assets that are in need of conservation, repair or refurbishment.



The Church Café Bar, Dublin

H4 Reuse of existing buildings of interest

Explore the possibility of adaptive reuse / rehabilitation of buildings such as the 'Shambles', the old Christian Brothers School, the former courthouse, St Joseph's NS and St. Micheal's Theatre. This action also relates to Action LC1.



Romelton Quayside repurpose and reuse

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

H5 New Pedestrian bridge at the location of historic bridge

Explore the reconnection from Rosbercon to the Town Centre through architecturally / structurally playful new bridge designed for pedestrians and cyclists. This action also relates to Action PM3.



New Ross Historic Bridge

H6 The Quay / River

Further explore ways to celebrate and appreciate and tell the story of the town, such as the surviving historic quay walls, the former fortifications and associated Port features / machinery. Interactive engagement / activities will be encouraged. In line with Actions EN1, PM2 and T3.



Berth of Ships in New Ross Port c.1920

H7 Create an Exemplar Street

Explore the possibility of creating an exemplar street in the historic core where best conservation practice is ensured and reinstatement of historic features (such as windows) takes place under expert guidance. In line with Action PM5.



South Street, New Ross

H8 Living above the shops

Draw on the experience of other towns where successful re-establishment of residential as a principal town centre use has been achieved and has led to reinvigoration of historic town centres and people 'living above the shop.'



Ramelton, Co Donegal – a successful town to reuse historic buildings & conserve historic shopfronts

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

H9 Alterations to Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) boundaries

Alter the existing boundaries of two ACAs into one ACA that also includes significant elements of streetscape / designated historic buildings not currently included within the boundary, including the Quay area. Boundary to be agreed with Wexford County Council.



ACA boundary to be agreed with WCC

H10 Heritage Events and Activities

Leverage National Heritage Week and Open House weekend to further nationally showcase the town's wealth of built, natural, tangible and intangible heritage. Create a critical cultural mass.



Open House Dublin

THEME 3: ECONOMY

To create a vibrant and resilient local economy and attract investment within the town.

- Encourage investment opportunities.
- Introduce 'Digital Hub' with co-working spaces.
- Promote the extension of opening hours of shops through collaboration of shop owners and service providers.
- Encourage street furniture and pavement / café culture.
- Promote and support new accommodations, B&Bs and bedsits in the town centre.
- Regenerate and reuse vacant / derelict buildings and under-utilised floorspace within the Town Centre.
- Utilise digital technology as a means of promoting existing businesses and attracting new business to the Town.

EC1 Riverfront Development – Rosbercon

Potential for a mixed-use development along with riverside walk, cafes and water sport activities in line with Actions EN1 and T3.



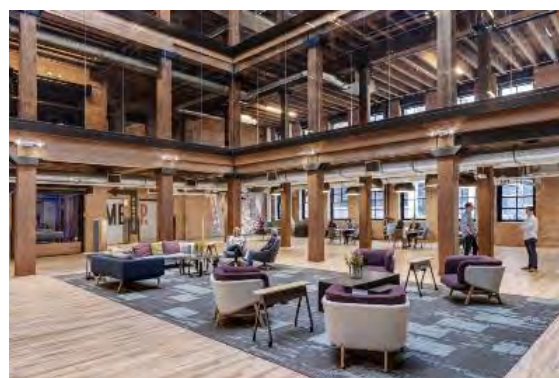
Proposed Waterford North Quays Masterplan



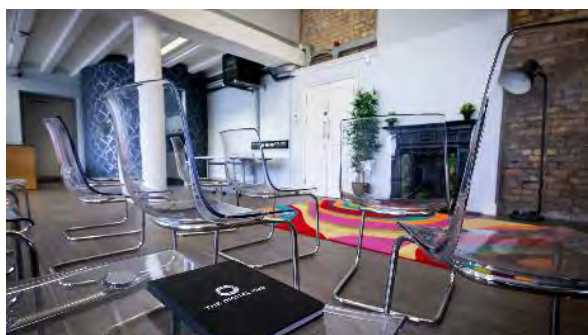
Cork City Docklands is Ireland's largest regeneration project. Over 146ha of land will be developed over a period of 20 years. This will accommodate a population of c.25,000 and a workforce of c.29,000 along with a student population of c.3700.

EC2 Digital Hub

Identify a central and accessible location for a digital hub with co-working spaces through re-use of an existing building.



Factory 603 in Dallas started as a cookie factory in the early 1900's. Now it is a creative office environment in the urban core.



The George Roe Whiskey Distillery was established in 1757 on the site now occupied by The Digital Hub's OneFiveSeven, Gatelodge, Digital Depot and Grainstore

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

EC3 Hotel / Accommodation

An appropriate location for an hotel is identified. The Hotel is expected to be a significant town centre hotel with destination status.



Location of the Hotel

EC4 Repurpose / Reuse Derelict Sites and Disused Buildings

Encourage the refurbishment and reuse of the disused sites and buildings, prioritise:

- Grain Store Enterprise Centre and Lands,
- Dock's Hotel Refurbishment,
- Former Courthouse and Lands,
- Lands at Sugar House Lane,
- St. Josephs NS, and
- St. Michael's Theatre.



Bodmin Jail is a historic former prison situated in Bodmin, England. A large part is converted into a hotel.

EC5 Marina Upgrade and / or Pontoon Development

- Explore expanding the Marina.
- Explore the pontoon's central location behind Harbour Master's office for marine tourism offerings like the 'Barrow Princess' and berthing opportunities for larger yachts.
- Explore Zipline opportunities over the river as per action T3.
- Link marina and pontoon with the Greenway.
- Link "Green", "Blue" and "Grey" Networks.



Newark Marina, River Trent, Nottinghamshire

EC6 New Retail Shops

Improve diversity of retail shops and identify lands within the town centre for high-end, and craft niche and boutique shops. Collaboratively extend shopping hours.



Explore locations for high-street shops

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

EC7 Evening and Night Town Centre Use

- Support and provide venues for artists.
- Explore New Ross as a 'foodie' destination.
- Expand the current 100+ theatre events in St. Michael's Theatre and linking to local cafes and restaurants to provide enhanced visitor experience.



Galway Town Centre

EC8 Advance Factory Butlersland

- Provide a modern, state of the art Advance Factory building on Council owned land at Butlersland.
- Capable of adaptation to meet the requirements of business / industrial companies wishing to invest or relocate.



Site Location: Butlersland, New Ross

THEME 4: PLACEMAKING + MOVEMENT

To reimagine and reactivate the town centre as a place for all.

- Create a safe, friendly and accessible pedestrian environment in the town centre.
- Provide new river crossings, and circular and connected riverside walks with greenway.
- Reimagine car parking arrangements and traffic flow in the town centre.
- Provide dedicated bicycle lanes and bicycle parking.
- Consider provision of a funicular (cable car) system of “tuk tuks / buggies”.
- Have a dynamic and integrated network of movement by different travel means i.e., greenway, boats, pedestrian network, including pedestrianisation, Zipline & possibly Tuk Tuk.
- Connect and widen the pedestrian connectivity in the outside town centre.

PM1 New Town Square / Market Square

Prepare feasibility and a concept plan for a new town square / market square at the location of car park behind the Norman Centre.



Location of New Town Square

PM3 New Pedestrian and Cyclists Bridge

Prepare a feasibility study for a new pedestrian and cyclist bridge at the location of the old bridge directly connecting the greenway to the town centre.



Athlone New Greenway Bridge

PM2 Reactivate Quays

- The River Barrow and its historic setting is a pivotal asset to the town. Enhance the riverfront and riverside in line with Actions EN1 and H6.
- Review parking arrangements, pedestrian connectivity and accessibility, and flood defence along the Quays.
- Reduce carriageway of the existing road, introduce bicycle lanes, parallel parking and urban greening as per standards set out in DMURS.
- Bring activities to the quays is key.



Union Quay & Beasley Street, Cork

PM4 New River Crossing

Prepare feasibility study in liaison with Kilkenny County Council for a river crossing between Marshmeadows and Raheen.



New Ross Bypass

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

PM5 Pedestrianisation of Streets and creation of an Exemplar Street

- Explore the possibilities of pedestrianisation of streets in the town core, especially Quay Street, North Street and South Street.
- Create an Exemplar Street in line with Action H7.
- Identify a suitable street or streets to create an interesting and sheltered pedestrian environment i.e., overhead awning and provision for year round events including dining and evening economies.
- Potential for undergrounding services and other necessary infrastructural works.
- Reduce hardstanding areas and introduce urban greening.
- Encourage use of smart technology.



Pedestrianised South William Street, Dublin

PM7 Review Parking Arrangement

- Reduce car parking in the town centre while enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Reduce hardstanding areas and introduce urban greening.
- If possible relocate town centre parking.

PM6 Review Traffic Flow and Introduce Traffic Calming Measures

- Further investigate traffic flow and pedestrian movement in the town centre.
- Potential for traffic calming measures, junction improvements and incorporation of universal accessibility, to create a safe pedestrian environment.
- Recommend reducing the speed limit to 30 kmph in the town centre, so to create a safe environment for pedestrians.
- Consider one-way system on Cherry's Road to close proposed loop from Rosbercon over Redbridge, through Mountelliot tunnel up onto R700 and back into town.
- Potential for reducing hardstanding areas, introducing urban greening, undergrounding services and other necessary infrastructural works.



Traffic Calming Measures

PM8 Extend and connect Riverside Walks

- Explore the possibility of new river crossings and boardwalks on both sides of the river to create a connected and looped riverside walks.
- Liaise with Kilkenny County Council to create looped walks incorporating Pink Rock Road and R723 and links to Greenway.
- All riverside developments shall consider flood defence works.

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when



Existing parking areas with lack of planting.



Boyne Valley

PM9 Universal Accessibility & Age Friendly Strategy

- Develop a plan with timeframe and programme to align the Age Friendly strategy with the installation of street furniture for mobility impaired and elderly residents who are walking in the Town Centre Area.
- Improve pedestrian network and infrastructure to support all ages in the town centre. All new developments shall be designed for universal accessibility and shall comply with Part M Building Regulations.
- Provide tuk tuks and buggies all season if an anchor all year round activity can be linked.



PM10 Augustinian/CBS/Mary Street links

Explore the opening of historic pedestrian link route connecting Goat Hill through top of High Hill through Augustinian site to Mary's Street.



Existing condition of stairs from Mary Street to Augustinian Church

PM11 Bicycle Lanes and Infrastructure

Provide bicycle lanes and bicycle infrastructure to support greenway.



Amein Street Cycleway, Dublin

THEME 5: LOCAL COMMUNITY

To strengthen and celebrate the people and culture of New Ross.

- Enhance existing community facilities.
- Provide new and improved outdoor spaces and facilities for children and young adults.
- Improve quality and diversity of public open space and community spaces.
- Improve and provide inclusive and safe open spaces.
- Encourage active travel.
- Upskill through digital technology.
- Take a pro-active approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

LC1 Reuse of disused / derelict buildings for use by the local community

Identify buildings for refurbishment and reuse to provide additional uses such as to provide alternative nighttime culture, performance spaces, space for young entrepreneurs and community hubs. See Action H4. For example;

- Former Courthouse
- Augustinian Church
- St. Micheal’s Theatre
- St. Josephs NS



St Luke’s Church, Dublin was refurbished and converted to offices.

LC2 Local Community Hubs

Explore locations for multiple smaller community hubs in the town centre.



LC3 Reactivate Community Hub / Youth Centre

Reactivate Community Hub / Youth Centre at youth centre at Nunnery Lane.

LC4 Community Notice Board with a Community Wayfinding Physical Signage

Choose a town centre location for a local community notice board and a community wayfinding physical and digital signage. This would be a long term effort to update community wayfinding in the town as and when new community assets/buildings/places become available (i.e., communal mixed use facilities.)

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when



Existing New Ross Youth Centre



Community Notice Board

Create a New Ross website / app for the community, residents and visitors.

LC5 Rosbercon Skate Park and Greenway Link

Acquire the site between trail head of Greenway and Boat Club and access to river. This key site acts as synergies between Greenway and new and extended Boat Club activities and facilities. Propose a skate park and outdoor sports facilities.



Site location

LC6 Library Refurbishment

Digital uses and vocational training.



New Ross Library

LC7 Playgrounds

The TCHC identified that many of the public open spaces lack quality play areas and playgrounds.

- Provision of new playgrounds in key public open spaces and improvement of existing playgrounds in the town.
- Introduce natural play areas and safe and secure playgrounds.

LC8 Encourage Active Travel

In line with other actions, encourage Active Travel, Bikeshare and Healthy Living strategies.

THEME 6: TOURISM

To capitalise on the greenway and enhance the town's programme of events and activities.

- Capitalise on the Greenway as an asset.
- Complete the Greenway Loop back to the town.
- Introduce adventure / adrenaline related activities catering for children and youths in particular.
- Use digital technology as a means to tell stories of New Ross through the New Ross Heritage Trail App.

T1 South East Greenway Loop

Connect the greenway to town centre and complete the Greenway Loop to capitalise on the greenway. Engage with Kilkenny County Council and relevant stakeholders.



Recently opened South East Greenway stretch

T2 Norman Experience Centre

Location and plans for the Norman Experience Centre including the Ros Tapestry are prepared. Engage with relevant stakeholders for completion of the project.



Ros Tapestry

T3 Urban Zipline

Identify appropriate locations for Urban Zipline lines in the town centre. Locations may include – High Hill Norman Park and River crossing. The latter can be linked to boating, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, cycling and running.



Zipline in an urban environment

T4 Motorhome Park

Site has been identified for a Motorhome Park. Engage with relevant stakeholders for commencement of the project.



Site location of Motorhome Park

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

T5 Water-based Tourism and Water Sports Activities

- Utilise River Barrow as a tourism and leisure asset in line with Actions EN1 & EC1.
- Prepare a feasibility study to identify appropriate locations for water sports activities avoiding conflict with fishing and commercial port traffic.
- Promotion of paddling, snorkelling, dinghy cruising and open water swimming in accordance with Sport Ireland “Water Trails Criteria for Ireland”.
- Investigate opportunities for paddling trails, snorkelling trails, dinghy cruising trails and open water swimming trails, and the necessary changing areas, slipways etc.



Tall Ships Event

T6 ‘Past and Future Views’ installation

Explore digital technology as a means to showcase past and future. The location of the old bridge and high hill are natural spots for such an installation.

Consider Zipline as a means of providing an interactive experience of heritage in the town (i.e., Zipline for a town).



‘Past and Future Views’ installation is an augmented reality seaside-style binoculars created by Zubr for ‘Ideascape’. This installation is similar to a seaside-style binoculars but enhanced through digital technology. One can see the projection of the past and future of a place / area through them. (Image Source: Paul Blakemore).

T7 Digital Furniture and Technology

Integrate the use of technology and data usage through the Living Lab initiatives and European funding stream. Explore locations to install smart solar-bench / hi-tech street furniture providing 24/7 charging for electronic devices.



Smart Bench, London - This solar-powered benches offer free Wi-Fi, USB charging ports for mobile phones and sensors which record weather and environmental information.

T8 Events and Festivals

Encourage cultural, tourism, and arts events, with activities and festivals throughout the year. Strengthen and expand the existing boutique festivals which occur in the shoulder season. Explore a town centre location for a permanent bandstand and venues for live performances.



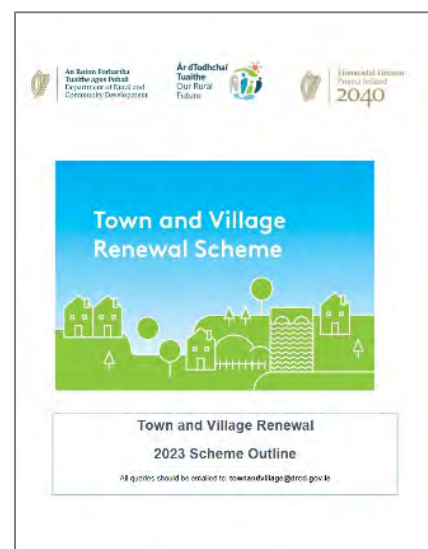
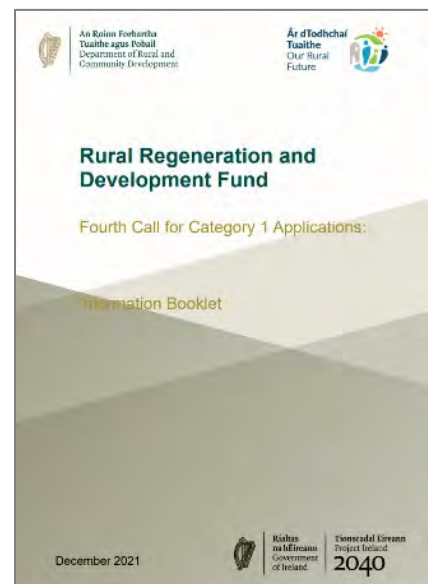
Cobh, bandstand along the Quays

5 Projects & Action Plan

What we plan to do, how and when

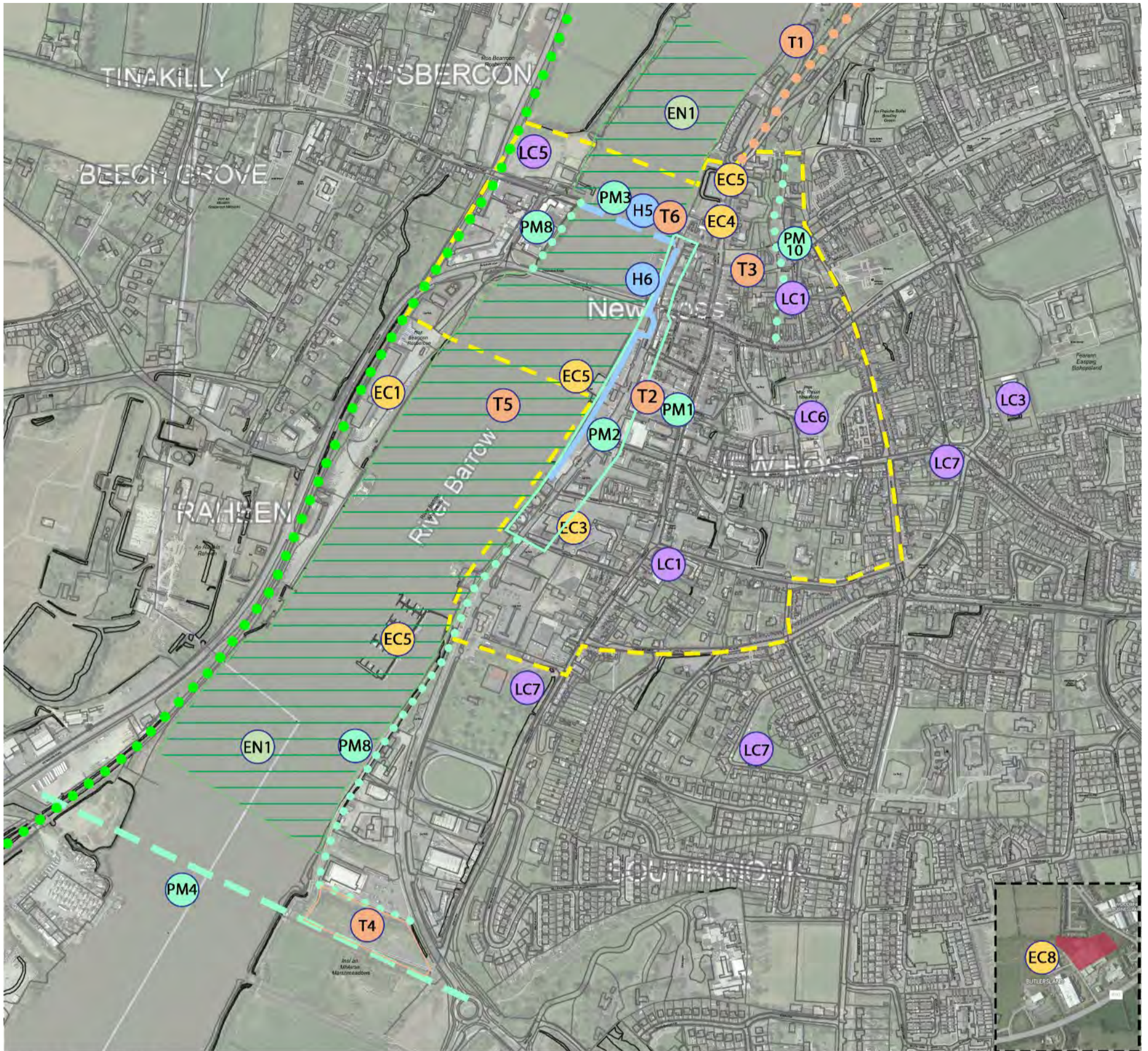
Funding Options

- Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)
- Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund
- Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)
- LEADER Community Led Local Development (CCLD)
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)
- Just Transition Funding (JT)
- European Regional Development Fund
- Active Travel Grants Programme
- Historic Towns Initiative
- Climate Adaptation / Retrofitting Initiatives
- Other Funding Scheme:
 - Destination Towns
 - Community Centre Investment Fund
 - Built Heritage Investment Scheme
 - Historic Structures Fund
 - Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme
 - Play and Recreation Funding Scheme
 - Sports Capital Funding



PROJECTS AND ACTION LIST – PRIORITY, TIMEFRAME, OWNER AND MAIN FUNDER					
THEME 1: ENVIRONMENT					
ID	ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	OWNER	MAIN FUNDER
EN1	Expose and Utilise Riverfront *	★★★★★	Short	WCC / P	N / WCC / P
EN2	Wayfinding / Signage	★★★★★	Short	WCC	WCC
EN3	EV Charging Spaces	★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC / P	WCC / P
EN4	Nature-based Solutions and SUDS	★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC / G	WCC / G
EN5	Biodiversity and Urban Greening *	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC	WCC / G
EN6	Lighting / Safety *	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC	WCC
EN7	Green-Blue Network	★★★★★	Medium	WCC / G	WCC / G
EN8	Engage with landowners	★★★★★	Short	WCC / P	WCC / G
EN9	Clean Streets *	★★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	WCC / G
THEME 2: HERITAGE					
ID	ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	OWNER	MAIN FUNDER
H1	New Ross Heritage Trail App	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC	WCC
H2	Shopfront Improvements	★★★★★	Medium	WCC / P / G	WCC / P / G
H3	Expert conservation / repair / refurbishment of Heritage Assets	★★★★★	Medium - Long	WCC / G	WCC / G
H4	Reuse of existing buildings of interest *	★★★★★	Medium - Long	WCC / P	WCC / P
H5	New bridge at the location of historic bridge *	★★★★	Medium - Long	WCC / G	G
H6	The Quay / River *	★★★★★	Short	WCC	WCC
H7	Create an Exemplar Street	★★★★★	Medium - Long	WCC / G	WCC / G
H8	Living above the Shops *	★★★★★	Medium - Long	P	P
H9	Alterations to Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) boundary	★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	WCC
H10	Heritage Events and Activities	★★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC / P	WCC / P
THEME 3: ECONOMY					
ID	ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	OWNER	MAIN FUNDER
EC1	Riverfront Development – Rosbercon *	★★★★★	Medium - Long	P	P
EC2	Digital Hub	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC / G	WCC / G
EC3	Hotel / Accommodation *	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC / P	P
EC4	Repurpose / Reuse Derelict Sites and Disused Buildings *	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC / P	P / WCC
EC5	Marina Upgrade and / or Pontoon Development	★★★★★	Medium - Long	WCC	WCC / G
EC6	New Retail Shops	★★★★★	Short - Medium	P	P
EC7	Evening and Night Town Centre Use *	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC / P	P / WCC
EC8	Advance Factory Butlersland	★★★★★	Medium - Long	WCC / P	P / WCC
THEME 4: PLACEMAKING + MOVEMENT					
ID	ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	OWNER	MAIN FUNDER
PM1	New Town Square / Market Square *	★★★★	Long	WCC	G / WCC
PM2	Reactivate Quays *	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC	WCC / G
PM3	New Pedestrian and Cyclists Bridge	★★★★★	Medium - Long	WCC / G	G
PM4	New River Crossing	★★★	Long	WCC / G	G
PM5	Pedestrianisation of Streets and creation of Exemplar Street *	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC / G	WCC / G
PM6	Review Traffic Flow and Introduce Traffic Calming Measures	★★★★★	Short	WCC	WCC
PM7	Review Parking Arrangement	★★★★★	Short	WCC	WCC
PM8	Extend and connect Riverside Walks *	★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC	G / WCC
PM9	Universal Accessibility & Age Friendly Strategy	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC	WCC
PM10	Augustinian/CBS/Mary Street links	★★★★	Medium	WCC	WCC
PM11	Bicycle Lanes and Infrastructure	★★★★★	Short - Medium	WCC	G / WCC

PROJECTS AND ACTION LIST – PRIORITY, TIMEFRAME, OWNER AND MAIN FUNDER					
THEME 5: LOCAL COMMUNITY					
ID	ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	OWNER	MAIN FUNDER
LC1	Reuse of disused / derelict buildings for use by the local community *	★★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC / P	G / P
LC2	Local Community Hubs *	★★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	WCC / G
LC3	Reactivate Community Hub / Youth Centre *	★★★★★	Short	WCC / P	G / P
LC4	Community Notice Board with a Community Wayfinding Physical Signage	★★★★	Short	WCC	WCC
LC5	Rosbercon Skate Park and Greenway Link *	★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	G / WCC
LC6	Library Refurbishment	★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	G
LC7	Playgrounds	★★	Medium	WCC	WCC
LC8	Encourage Active Travel	★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	G
THEME 6: TOURISM					
ID	ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	OWNER	MAIN FUNDER
T1	South East Greenway Loop *	★★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC / G	G
T2	Norman Experience Centre *	★★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC / G	WCC / G
T3	Urban Zipline	★★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	WCC / G
T4	Motorhome Park	★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC	WCC / P
T5	Water-based Tourism and Water Sports Activities *	★★★★★	Medium-Long	WCC / P	WCC / P
T6	'Past and Future Views' installation	★★	Medium-Long	WCC	WCC / G
T7	Digital Furniture and Technology	★★★	Medium-Long	WCC	WCC / G
T8	Events and Festivals *	★★★★	Short-Medium	WCC / G	G
<p>Abbreviations:</p> <p>WCC = Wexford County Council G = Government/National Funding P = Private sector</p> <p>* Community Preferred Projects / Actions (top 4 projects / actions identified) – for further information see Appendix D'</p>					



MAP OF ACTIONS

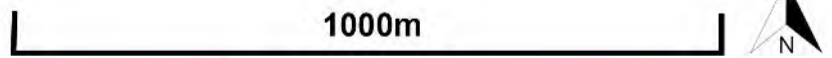
Specific Actions (Site / Location Specific Actions)

EN1 Expose and Utilise Riverfront	LC1 Reuse of disused / derelict buildings for use
H5 New Pedestrian bridge at the location of historic bridge	LC3 Reactivate Community Hub / Youth Centre
H6 The Quay / River	LC5 Rosbercon Skate Park & Greenway Link
EC1 Riverfront Development	LC6 Library Refurbishment
EC3 Hotel / Accommodation	LC7 Playgrounds
EC4 Repurpose Derelict Sites & Disused Buildings	T1 South East Greenway Loop
EC5 Marina Upgrade & / or Pontoon Development	T2 Norman Experience Centre
EC8 Advance Factory Butlersland	T3 Urban Zipline
PM1 New Town Square	T4 Motorhome Park
PM2 Reactivate Quays	T5 Water-based Tourism & Water Sports Activities
PM3 New Pedestrian & Cyclists Bridge	T6 'Past and Future Views' installation
PM4 New River Crossing	
PM8 Extend & connect Riverside Walks	
PM10 Augustinian/Mary Street link	

Town Centre Specific Actions (Within Town Centre Boundary)

EN2 Wayfinding / Signage	EC2 Digital Hub
EN3 EV Charging Spaces	EC6 New Retail Shops
EN4 NBS & SUDS	EC7 Evening & Night Town Centre Use
EN5 Biodiversity & Urban Greening	PM5 Pedestrianisation of Streets
EN6 Lighting / Safety	PM6 Review & Manage Traffic
EN7 Green-Blue Network	PM7 Review Parking Arrangement
EN8 Engage with landowners	PM9 Universal Accessibility
EN9 Clean Streets	PM11 Bicycle Lanes & Infrastructure
H1 New Ross Heritage Trail App	LC2 Local Community Hubs
H2 Shopfront Improvements	LC4 Community Notice Board
H3 Expert Conservation & Repair of Heritage Assets	LC8 Encourage Active Travel
H4 Reuse of Existing Buildings	T7 Digital Furniture
H7 Create an Exemplar Street	T8 Events & Festivals
H8 Living above the Shops	
H9 Alterations to Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)	

●●●● South East Greenway
 ——— Town Centre Boundary





***“You are never
finished”***



**Where you find
more
information**

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Introduction

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Baseline

3

Vision

4

Strategy

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Projects

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NEW ROSS

MAIN REPORT

A Reference Document

2023



NEW ROSS

TOWN

CENTRE

FIRST

PLAN





NEW ROSS

TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK 2023

NEW ROSS TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN



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1. INTRODUCTION

Wexford County Council have appointed the Design Team of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds, Optimize, Howley Hayes Cooney, Tobin and A Playful City in May 2023 to prepare a Town Centre First Plan for New Ross. This urban regeneration plan for the town will be the first of its kind to bundle various strands of future development in a collaborative and holistic approach.

A critical component of the Town Centre First Plan is Town Centre Health Check - a survey-based town appraisal which outlines the town's physical centre, its land-use, vacancy and dereliction, its social and economic performance and transport mobility. The design team have conducted this Town Centre Health Check in the ambit of the national *Collaborative Town Centre Health Check* programme set up by The Heritage Council in 2010.

The objective of physical surveys in New Ross is to collect data and observations that will help to form a better understanding of the town's status, constraints and opportunities for socio-economic development.

We have collected valuable information through observational surveys and counts, questionnaires with locals and visitors and interviews with stakeholders that are illustrated and recorded in this report. Very helpful in the process have been the 15 Steps prescribed by The Heritage Council to conduct a *Collaborative Town Centre Health Check* (depicted on the following page).

Each town is different, in its topography, history and heritage, and in its socio-economic health today. With this comes a tailored-approach for each individual town. New Ross is strongly defined by its rich heritage and its historic importance of the port and Norman settlement. They deserve specific consideration in the Town Centre First Plan and have therefore been covered in this Town Centre Health Check report.

A basic street questionnaire has provided very useful data about the values and status of New Ross while our design team has conducted individual business and community surveys that are presenting more detailed information and are included in this document.



View from Mary Street down Quay Street across O'Hanrahan Bridge

2. POLICY GUIDANCE

The *Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC)* Programme is a trans-disciplinary initiative that The Heritage Council started in 2016 and works in conjunction with participating towns across Ireland.

The *CTCHC* programme has been developed by The Heritage Council, RGDATA and the Retail Consortium, in collaboration with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, the IPI, ILI, RIAI, UCD, LIT Thurles, DIT and QUB.

The objective of *CTCHC* is to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the critical role that historic town centres play. The vitality and viability of town centres have wide-ranging impacts on overall socio-economic, environmental and cultural growth and development, and on quality of life for citizens and visitors alike. The pilot checks that have been conducted aim to develop an innovative town centre-led retail, cultural heritage and tourism baseline to develop a best practice collaborative development model for urban regeneration.

Essentially, *CTCHC* help to build an innovative national capacity-building programme which is designed by, and for, Local Authorities, town centre businesses and local citizens / community groups. Mentoring support from professional practitioners with urban regeneration, urban design and planning experience will complement the programme while the health check results feed directly into the reviews of County Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

Input from members of the public and business owners are encouraged. They are asked to participate and give their views on their experiences in the town centre. It is an opportunity to shape town centres and strengthen them into the future, and to make Irish towns an attractive place to work, live and visit.

This town centre appraisal has been produced in the ambit of a **Collaborative Town Centre Health Check**, an Initiative of The Heritage Council.

Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme The 15-Step CTCHC Process



Advisory 15 Step CTCHC Process (The Heritage Council, 2020)

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The design team have applied several survey methods to obtain all available and necessary data for the Town Centre Health Check. The guiding question was:

What essential and new information do we require to develop and to form a successful Town Centre First Plan for New Ross?

With this objective in mind and considering the reduced length of the TCF Plan programme, we devised a very compact survey session and obtained very valuable data, on land-use and landownership, on vacancy and dereliction, on heritage, on transport mobility and accessibility, on business, tourism and commerce, and on the physical public realm.

The survey methods followed the general principle applied by previous CTCHC projects. As an agreed standard, the land-use survey is restricted to the ground floor and to buildings along public street and paths because these are the areas that can be freely accessed and surveyed.

It was essential to define the survey area to a compact town centre core which would deliver the most valuable data. We assessed with the Town Team that the majority of New Ross' commercial and social activities is concentrated to an area along the Quays, North and South Street, the laneways in between and to an extent to Irish Town and Rosbercon.

Our surveys are a combination of street surveys and desk surveys. We ran an on-street fact-finding questionnaire while our stakeholder engagement team ran a community-focussed survey, and our socio-economic team developed a specific business survey. The fact-finding questionnaire has been included in this report. The community and socio-economic surveys are issued separately.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the design team depended on a comparably small survey team, without the support of larger student / academic groups as has been the case for previous health checks.

- *Fact Finding Questionnaire*
- *Land-use Survey*
- *Development Potential*
- *Vacancy & Dereliction Survey*
- *Heritage Survey*
- *Traffic Counts*
- *Car Parking Survey*
- *Accessibility Audits*
- *Business Survey & Questionnaire*
- *Community Survey & Questionnaire*
- *Public Realm Survey*

4. HISTORY & HERITAGE



Historic Map of New Ross c. 1680

4. HISTORY & HERITAGE

New Ross History

New Ross's elevated topography and strategic siting on the tidal and deep River Barrow, is a defining part of the town's character and New Ross's history is intimately bound up with its fortunes;

The town originated from the founding of the monastery and church by Saint Abban and Saint Evin on the eastern banks of the Barrow in the 6th Century. It was founded by the Earl of Pembroke, William Marshal, a leader of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, and his wife Isabella de Clare, between 1192 and 1207.

A rarity for the time, the fine stone bridge constructed by 1210 led to it becoming known as *Ros Ponte* or *Pons Novus*. By century's end the town had become the busiest port in Ireland and enjoyed huge trading advantages.

New Ross was without defences until the late-thirteenth century. The fosse and stone medieval town was a D-shaped enclosure of the walls with a grid pattern of streets.

New Ross' tax-exempt trading position was the source of a bitter dispute between it and the King's port of Waterford, and soon trade restrictions were introduced to limit its success. This, combined with political unrest, led to a slow decline of New Ross's fortunes from the fourteenth century onwards.

The quayside was the principal locus of economic activity in the town and the line of the fortifications / first quay would have begun behind the line of South Street today.

From the 17th century, the fortunes of New Ross were synonymous with a few large landholding families, most notably the Tottenhams, who bought most of the town from the Earl of Anglesey and held high public office for centuries.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the overlaying of what became the modern town on the existing narrow, essentially medieval, street pattern and subsequent extra-mural development.

The town's history is intimately linked to the 1798 Rebellion as the site of one of its most notorious battles, fought between the Society of the United Irishmen rebels and government forces garrisoning the town.

In the early-19th century the milling industry flourished, and the town boasted over thirty flour and textile mills. Trade in grain, flour, livestock, bacon and butter was the life blood of the town and there was also considerable export of porter, ale, beer and stout.

During and in the aftermath of the Great Famine (1845-7), New Ross was the point of embarkation for many seeking to escape to Canada or America. The present harbour and quay walls were completed in 1852.

In common with the rest of the country, New Ross experienced an economic downturn in the 1980s and '90s, prompting Failte Ireland to make it their designated 'Destination Town' in Wexford as a spur to growth. It has struggled to entirely recover, and progressive vacancy and dereliction have become a by-product of this economic decline.



6" Historic Map of New Ross 1841

4. HISTORY & HERITAGE

New Ross Heritage

Wealth of historic buildings, monuments, artefacts, places and streetscapes of all periods and types, formal and vernacular. Some are obvious and declaratory, and generally recognised by a heritage designation (RMP, RPS, NIAH, ACA) and generally sit within the former historic town walls. Some are individual, others are ensembles or streetscapes.

There are also quieter, less obvious or appreciated features, both within the town, Irish Town and Rosbercorn, which contribute positively to its sense of depth in time.

There are 189 no. heritage features included on the Record of Protected Structures, 165 no. of which are also recorded by the NIAH. RPS mapping only gives the approximate location of a Protected Structure, but not its address and nor does it show the extent of its curtilage or boundary, the subject of many disputes, and nor does it provide a description of a building / feature and why it is protected.

It seems probable that the interiors of many protected structures have been considerably altered since they were added to the record. As the NIAH survey of New Ross was undertaken in 2005 there have been numerous changes to the condition of the heritage features surveyed. It seems that some property owners 'sit' on property and dereliction and vacancy – the highest in the country - blights the town with protected structures sometimes lying vacant and in poor condition;

There are 16 no. sites officially on the derelict sites register but it would appear that there are in fact many more and there appears to be something of a grey area between vacancy and dereliction. There are a number of CPO processes of derelict sites, but it is unclear whether there is much enforcement / prosecution of property owners.

There is one Heritage Officer covering all heritage within the County and no dedicated, technically qualified Conservation Officers to handle the large volume of protected structures and to provide advice and guidance. Large landowners have signaled they would like more guidance / clarity regarding works to protected structures.

Historic mapping, street surveys, drone footage and Google Streetview suggest that there are a considerable number of structures, of variable condition, but of probable interest to the rear of buildings fronting onto main and other streets.

All features in the town are given 'Regional' rating by the NIAH, including the surviving upstanding sections of the Norman town wall. The walls are, however, collectively protected under the National Policy on Town Defences (2008). The town defences are also scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and should be considered as such. The largest number of RMP are clustered around the former medieval upstanding remains of St Mary's Church, the historic religious epicentre of the Norman town, with others scattered throughout the town.

It is notable that the remnants of the former bridge over the river are on the RPS and NIAH, but that the broader historic quay wall, such a central part of the former life of the town, is not. This is anomalous considering most other quay walls in the country are RMP and protected structures.



Berth of Ships in New Ross Port c.1920

4. HISTORY & HERITAGE

A significant opportunity exists to explore the possibility of affording greater understanding and appreciation of the historic quay wall. Usually there would be limestone and granite setts, possibly former crane tracks, mooring rings, railings, steps and material associated with its function as a hugely significant inland port historically. Archaeological testing relating to the probable line of the Norman quay wall, was undertaken in scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP.

There are currently two separate designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) in the town. It is unclear why the two almost contiguous ACA boundaries are not combined to make one, with the boundary further extended to take in other designated features and the broader Quay area, the former port and economic *raison d'être* of the town. ACA as an instrument for the protection and enhancement of the character and appearance of streetscapes and their settings are rather toothless.

Elements of Norman history are evocatively alive in the street pattern and surviving sections of the medieval town wall, former gates and place names. The ruined tower of St Mary's has been the subject of much work under the auspices of the IWTN.

New Ross has a variety of building types; formal and vernacular, institutional, civic, domestic and port-related industrial and commercial of a variety of ages and scales.

There is a simple palette of construction materials consisting primarily of exposed local limestone, some granite and also stucco covered limestone as the most commonly used local materials, with some brick evident. More recent structures are often brick or concrete rendered and painted in a pastiche style to mimic historic styles, forms and detailing.

With ten churches or former churches, three convents, a former Friary, a former monastery and a number of parochial houses, ecclesiastical structures - ancient and nineteenth century – form a significant element of New Ross's character from various religious traditions.

There are remarkably few 18th century buildings in New Ross. Notable among them are the largely overlooked but charming Trinity Hospital in South Street.

Rebuilt in 1805, the stone Georgian Tholsel remains the civic heart of the town, with the principal spine of the historic core – John Street, North Street, South Street, Bridge Street, Mary Street, The Quay and Priory Street, dating largely from the rebuilding in the period after the Napoleonic Wars.

Outside the town walls are many older residential areas, the most notable of which are Irishtown and Rosbercorn, the latter of which has some individual Georgian houses, Victorian Cottages and early-twentieth century detached houses and, notably, the former Franciscan Abbey.

The principal historic spine and streets off it are characterised by a 19th century stucco and painted houses (a 20th century fashion) and commercial buildings of various grains in a loose Classical style – some three storeys over a shop, some two. Where they survive, these shops are very characterful. The main landowners and custodians in the town have had a considerable bearing on the evolution and development of the town's character.



Main Street (now South Street) late 19th century

4. HISTORY & HERITAGE

The River Barrow is the reason New Ross and Rosbercorn developed where they did, and its dramatic expanse is one of its most significant, picturesque and characterful features.

Heritage wayfinding comes in a number of different forms; more recent shield-like signs affixed to cast iron posts that demarcate where the town wall or gates in the town walls would have been sited; and eighteen blue plaques explaining key facets of the town's history and lore. There are also explanatory panels in St Mary's and on the High Hill. However, a profusion of street signage, bins etc. that in some instances create visual clutter and detract from the setting of designated heritage and the wider streetscape .

There are key views such as St Mary's, St Augustines, St Mary & St Michael's, the High Hill, Library Park and streetscape views along Priory Street, South Street, North Street, John Street and up and down Mary Street towards Quay Street and the bridge. Views from the bridge to and from Rosbercorn are important. Less obvious but nonetheless pleasing glimpses afforded through narrow, passages, lanes or streets framed by historic buildings.

Factors that detract from the character and appearance of protected structures, their setting and the wider townscape include:

- uPVC windows and doors replacing historic timber sash windows and doors; Poor quality or inappropriate alterations or extensions to historic buildings. These include applying inappropriate renders, smoothing off historic features, ad hoc extensions are evident to the rear of many historic structures within the town;
- where cement rich mortar has been used to repoint brickwork or boundary walls; where natural slate tiles have been replaced with cement or plastic;
- the use of garish or inappropriately scaled plastic signage and lighting to historic shopfronts;

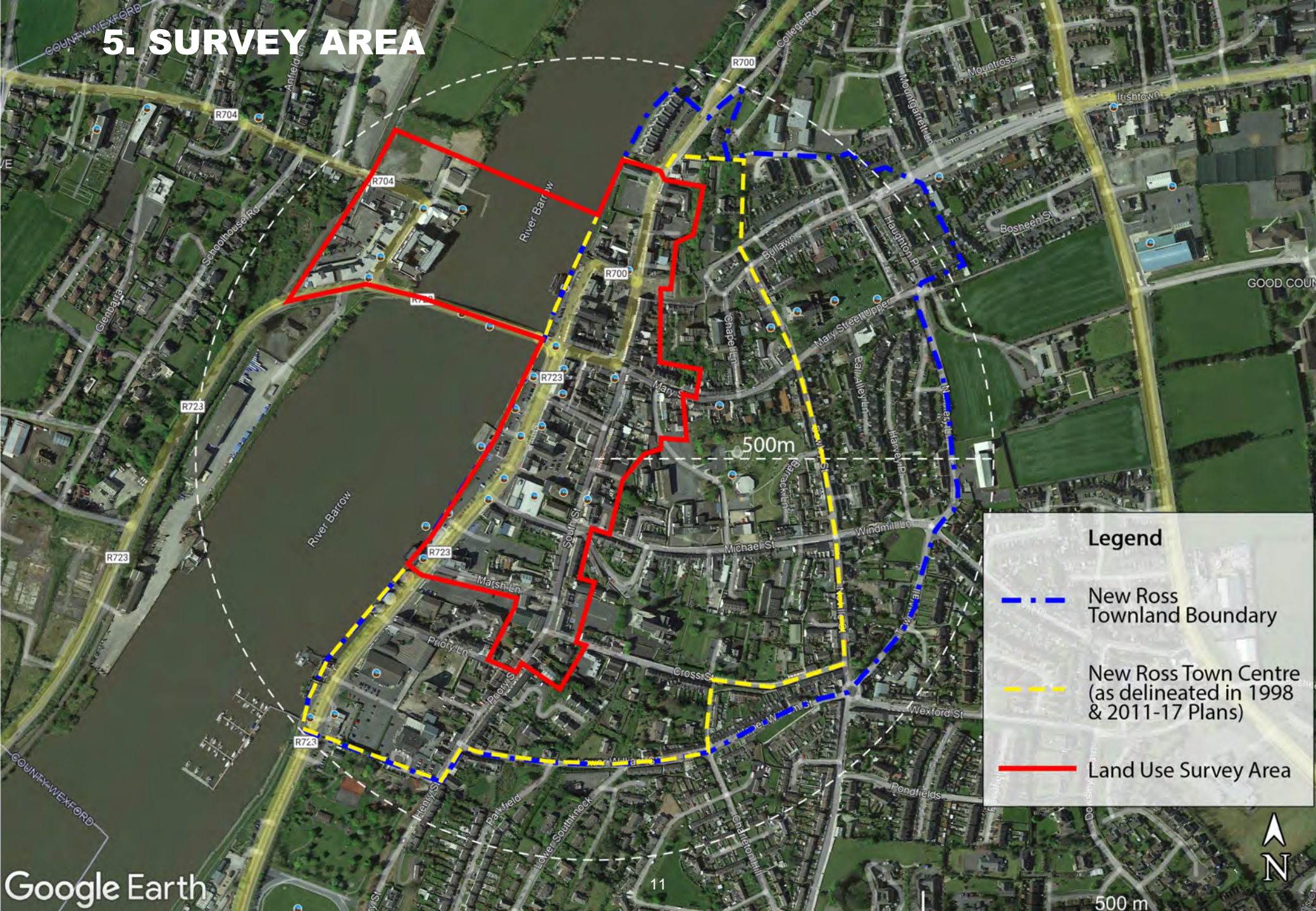
- car parking dominating narrow streets and detracting from the setting of heritage features and streetscapes and principal open spaces;
- where new development dominates the historic character and appearance of the finer grained historic buildings in terms of scale, height massing and materiality, or impacts negatively on views within or across the town.

There are therefore many opportunities for simple improvements to the interpretation, appreciation and settings of historic buildings, heritage and public realm, along with the informed repair, imaginative adaptation and the reuse of buildings currently unused or boarded up.



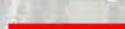


Old Bridge looking west (demolished 1968) late 19th century

5. SURVEY AREA



Legend

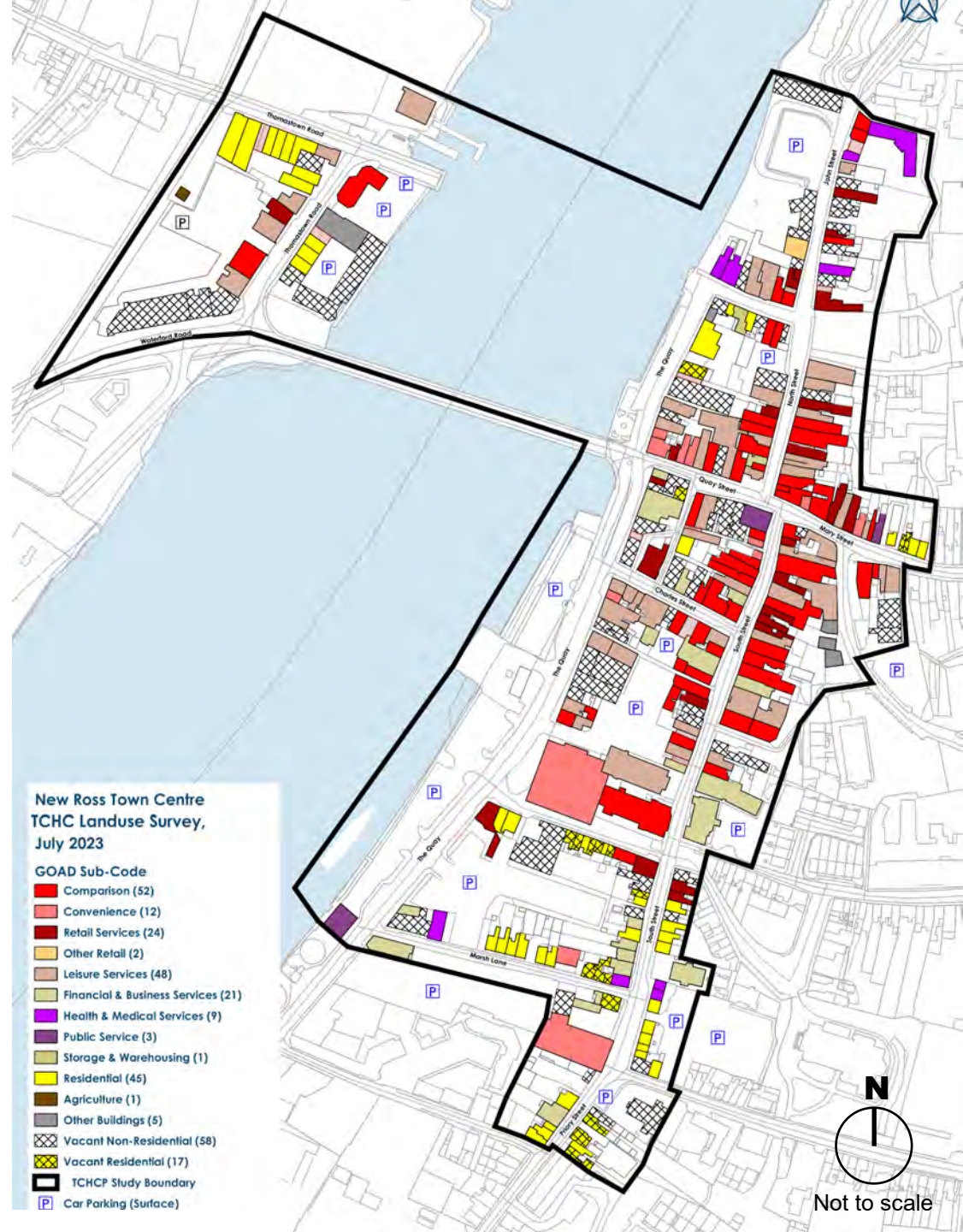
-  New Ross Townland Boundary
-  New Ross Town Centre (as delineated in 1998 & 2011-17 Plans)
-  Land Use Survey Area



6. LAND-USE

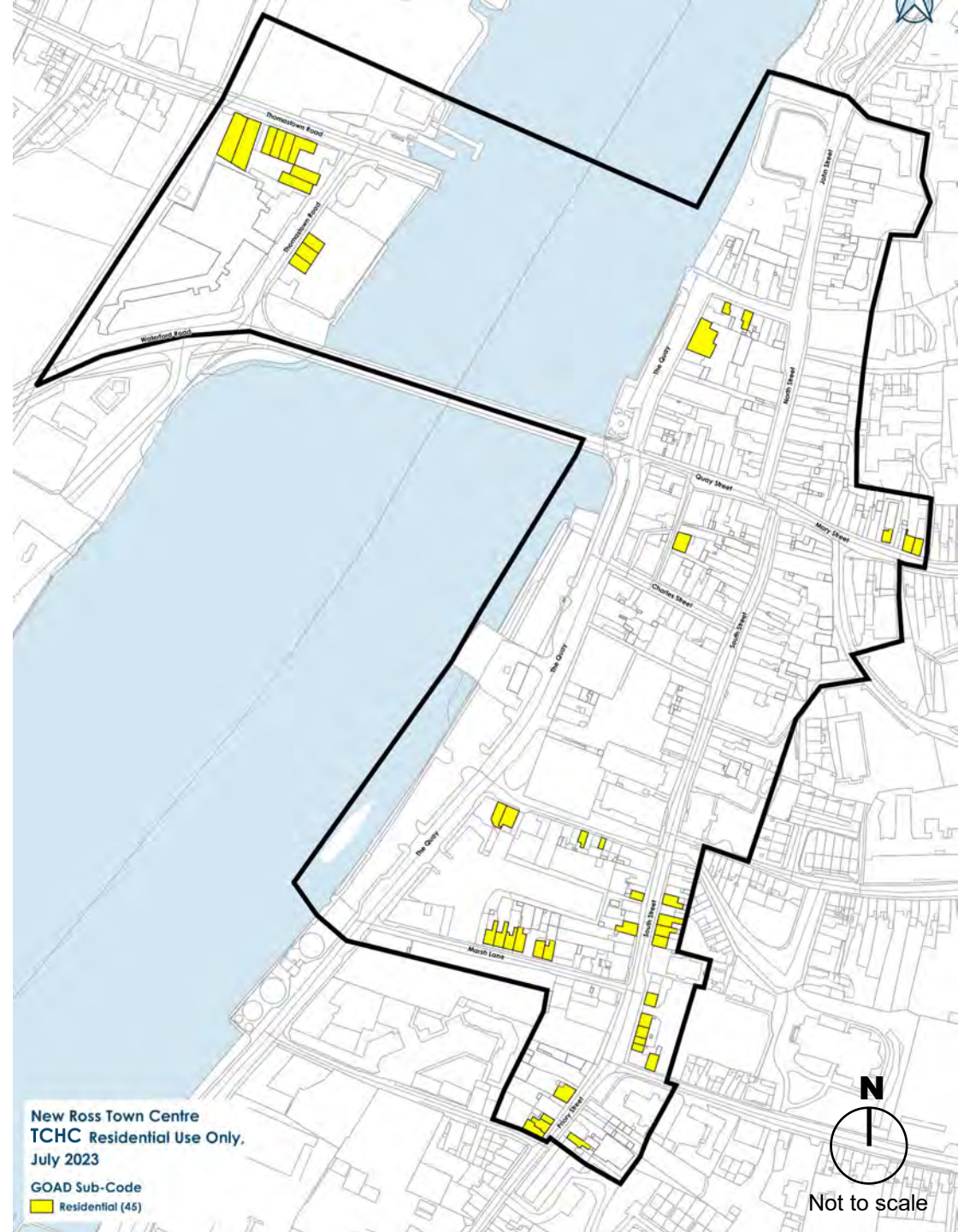
The design Team has conducted a comprehensive land-use survey of ground floor use in the defined town centre survey area as illustrated to the right. The illustrated survey area lies within the established New Ross Townlands area and within the area of the 2011-2017 Town Centre and Environs plan. In addition to these, the design team have agreed with the Town Team to include the area of Rosbercon across from O’Hanrahan Bridge in the western section of New Ross in the land-use survey.

Surveys of the upper floors have not been conducted at this point. In cases, land use on upper floors might differ from the surveyed land-use on ground floor. Furthermore, from observation, it can be assumed that upper floors of premises that are occupied on ground floor are vacant on upper floors. This ‘*concealed vacancy*’ will need to be considered in a more detailed analysis of the socio-economic performance of the town centre, and its desirable occupancy and density.



6. LAND-USE (Residential)

The depicted information of residential use within the survey area is identical to the map on the previous page. Illustrating residential use in isolation is helpful in the Town Centre First Plan process, particularly with regards to enhancing residential use in the town centre, in the form of terraced houses, apartments, and retrofitted commercial buildings where live-work units (living above the shop) could be re-established as a historically successful urban model. The design team envisage to use the depicted information in the context of the Town Centre Living Initiative and other town centre revitalisation schemes.



6. LAND-USE (Vacancy)

The design team have decided to illustrate **Ground Floor Vacancy** (as per land-use survey information) in isolation from active land-use.

The vacancy rate is a clear indicator of the town's health, economically as much as socially. Measures to reverse vacancy will be assessed in more detail in the Town Centre First Plan.

Furthermore, we consider the connection between vacant and derelict premises very relevant insofar as, in our experience, vacant buildings often become derelict over time. Therefore, vacant buildings are potentially in danger of becoming derelict, should no further action be taken to prevent decay. This sensitivity becomes obvious on the map to the right and is described and illustrated on the following page.

Total Ground Floor Units / Buildings surveyed: 300

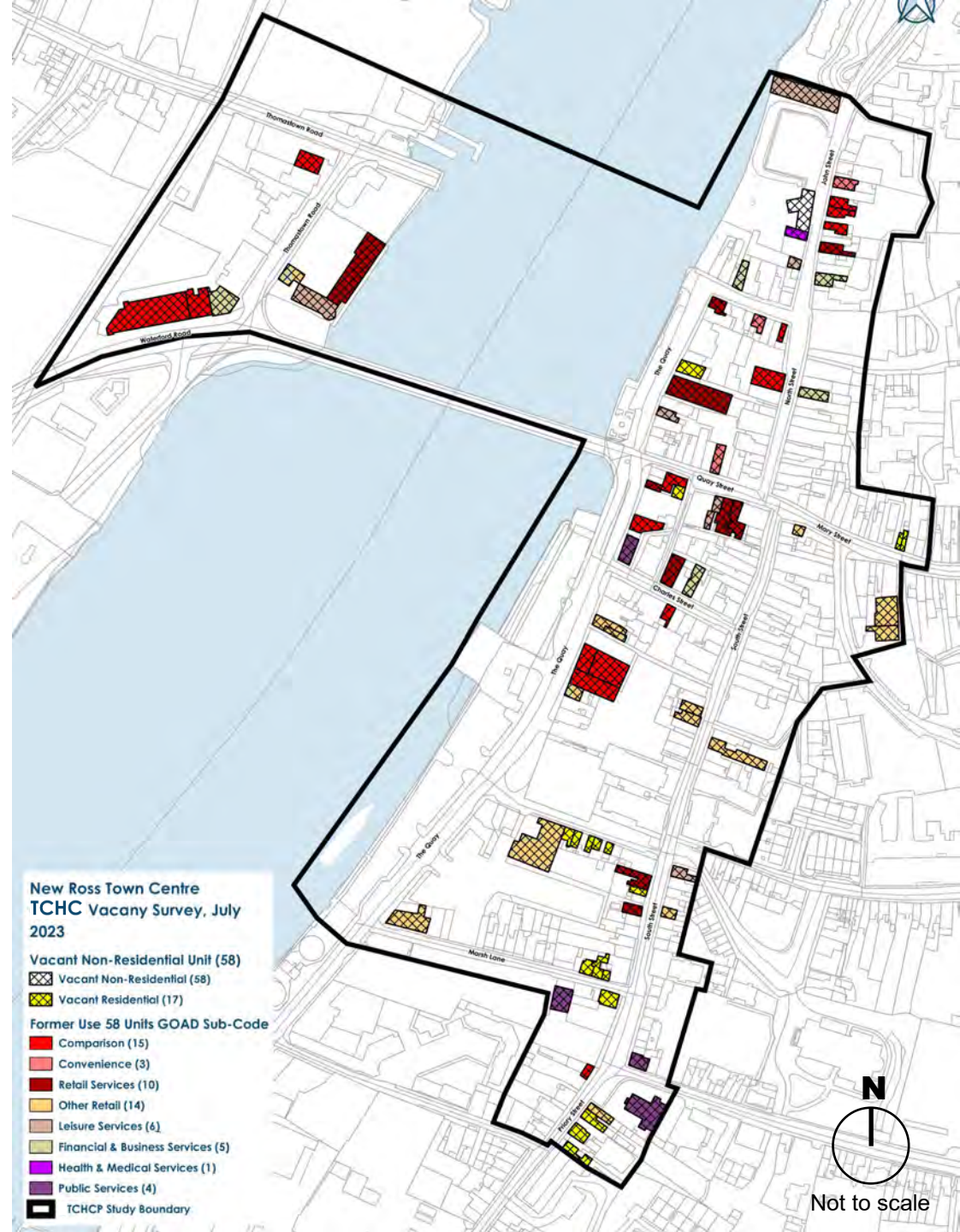
Total Occupancy: **75%**

Total Vacancy: **25%**

Retail Vacancy: **32%**

Residential Vacancy: **27%**

(all percentages are approximate)



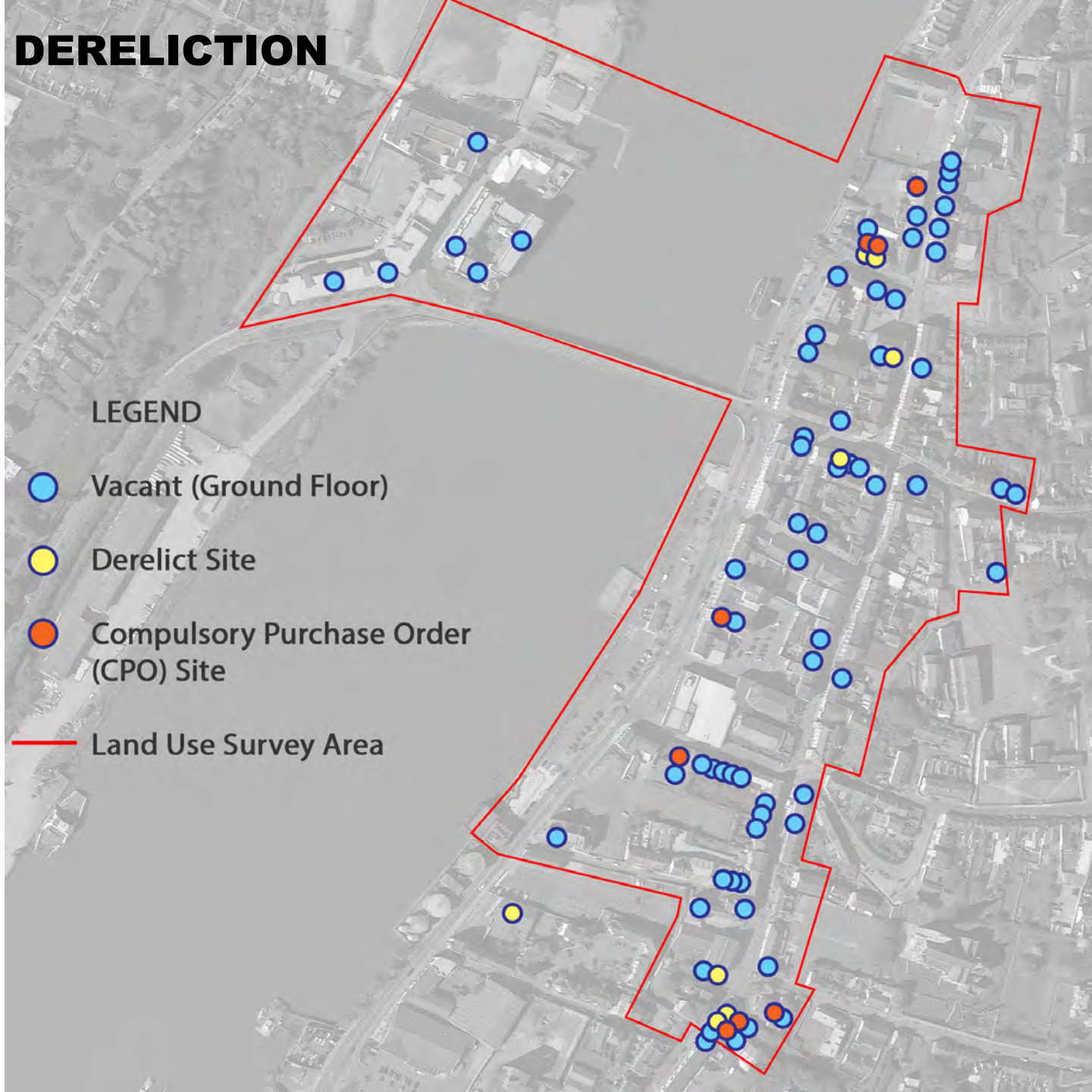
7. VACANCY & DERELICTION

A considerably high figure of vacant ground floor premises were counted during our 'Town Centre Health Check' for New Ross (25%).

It can be assumed that not only the ground floors, but the entire buildings are vacant. It can also be assumed that numerous upper floors of premises with ground floor occupancy are vacant. Street observations during our surveys confirm this assumption.

Many of the premises we surveyed as being vacant are in poor to very poor physical condition. The design team concludes that these buildings are in danger of dereliction if no action to protect them is taken soon. Furthermore, we assume that the real (hidden) number of Derelict Sites is higher than currently registered with Wexford County Council.

The design team stresses the need to protect vacant buildings from dereliction, for two main reasons: a) to protect material assets, and b) to protect historic & heritage values. We understand that many vacant buildings are part of larger vacant sites in landholdings of absentee land-owners. The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process that Wexford County Council apply for repossessing vacant or derelict premises supports to protect the built urban fabric and should be extended to more sites in New Ross.

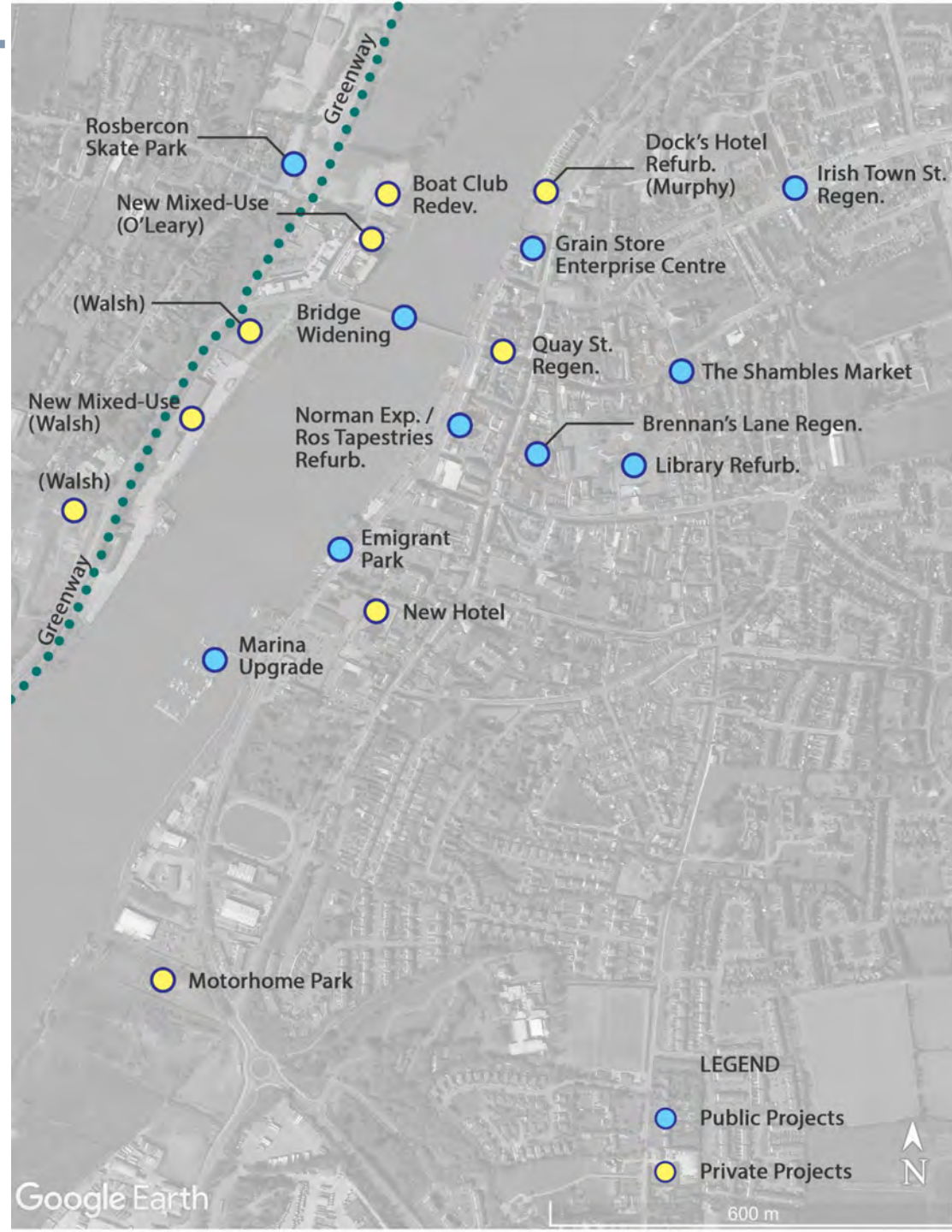


8. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Wexford County Council have identified a variety of projects that are proposed and envisaged as future development for New Ross.

They are a combination of public and private projects. Some of them such as the South-East Greenway and the Emigrant Park are already well progressed and are nearing completion.

Among others such as the Norman Experience, The pedestrianisation of Quay Street, the Grain Store Enterprise Centre, The Shambles Market, The Marina upgrade and Brennan's Lane regeneration are in different design stages and will hopefully be realised in the foreseeable future.



9. DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMY

Demographics / Business / Tourism

While it is agreed that New Ross needs economic growth and greater social sustainability, these needs are not in any way unusual in contemporary rural Ireland. There has clearly been a low and static population in the town centre of New Ross. There is also a high number of vacant properties, many of which are ex-retail, as well as derelict properties. However, these patterns are not unusual in that much recent population growth in rural towns across Ireland has occurred in the suburban environs and rural hinterland. Much economic and retail development has been on the edge of towns in industrial estates and shopping centres which are convenient to reach by road.

Indeed, **Table 1** shows that the population of New Ross as a whole has been increasing steadily since 1996 with the exception of 2011-2016 when growth rates slowed for many rural towns. The Electoral Division of New Ross Urban includes the Town Centre and much of the rest of town including the urban part of Rosbercon. The population of this ED was falling steadily since 1996, but for an increase between 2016 and 2022. A significant increase in population has been experienced since 1996 in the outskirts of the town in the ED) of New Ross Rural to the east, albeit initially from a relatively low base. Some of this increase in the urban part of New Ross would appear to have been due to new migrants, particularly from Poland. Poles account for 6.6% of the population of the urban ED, although they do constitute a greater proportion of the rural ED at 12.4%.

Electoral Division	2002	2006	2011	2016	2022
New Ross Urban	4402	4034	3907	3768	3938
Percent change	-4.9%	-8.4%	-3.1%	-3.6%	4.5%
New Ross Rural	2052	3367	4014	3942	4178
Percent change	44.6%	64.1%	19.2%	-1.8%	6.0%
Total	6454	7401	7961	7710	8116
Percent change	6.9%	14.7%	7.6%	-3.2%	5.3%

Table 1: New Ross Population (CSO 2022)

Table 2 shows the figures for age and confirm an outward movement of the population to the suburbs where there is a much higher proportion of children below the age of 14 and higher proportions of other age classes below 50 years, especially of people between 30 and 40. These data on the age profile are supported by those for family cycle. These Family Cycle figures in **Table 3** show a much higher proportion of households in New Ross Rural belonging to the 'early school', 'pre-adolescent' and 'adolescent' categories than for New Ross Urban. The proportion of people over 65 years is much higher in New Ross Urban at 20.6% than for New Ross Rural at 13.9% and this corresponds to a higher proportion of 'retired' people at 10.3% compared with 6.7%.

	New Ross Urban		New Ross Rural		All New Ross	
Age 0-15	607	16.1%	1032	26.2%	1639	21.3%
Age 16-29	632	16.8%	675	17.1%	1307	17.0%
Age 30-39	499	13.2%	685	17.4%	1184	15.4%
Age 40-49	492	13.1%	578	14.7%	1070	13.9%
Age 50-64	533	20.6%	145	13.9%	390	17.2%
Age 64 +	760	20.0%	424	10.0%	1184	15.4%

Table 2: New Ross Population by Age (CSO 2016)

	New Ross Urban		New Ross Rural		All New Ross	
	families	persons	families	persons	Total families	Total percent
Pre-Family	6.1%	4.3%	7.5%	5.3%	136	6.5%
Empty Nest	14.6%	10.3%	10.8%	7.6%	254	12.1%
Retired	14.6%	10.3%	9.6%	6.7%	242	11.5%
Pre-school	9.2%	9.3%	11.9%	12.5%	211	10.0%
Early school	7.9%	9.5%	16.9%	21.2%	248	11.8%
Pre-adolescent	9.5%	12.3%	15.5%	21.5%	250	11.9%
Adolescent	13.5%	17.2%	16.7%	22.7%	302	14.4%
Adult	24.6%	27.0%	21.4%	26.0%	460	21.9%

Table 3: Family Cycle (CSO 2016)

9. DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMY

Figure 1 provides an illustration of occupations in all New Ross (Urban and Rural). It indicates a high number of people working in “Processing, Plant and Machinery” (17.5%) and “Skilled Trades” (15.7%). These figures are for the previous Census in 2016. New figures are due to be published in September from the 2022 Census, but it is likely that the proportions will not have changed very much since this time.

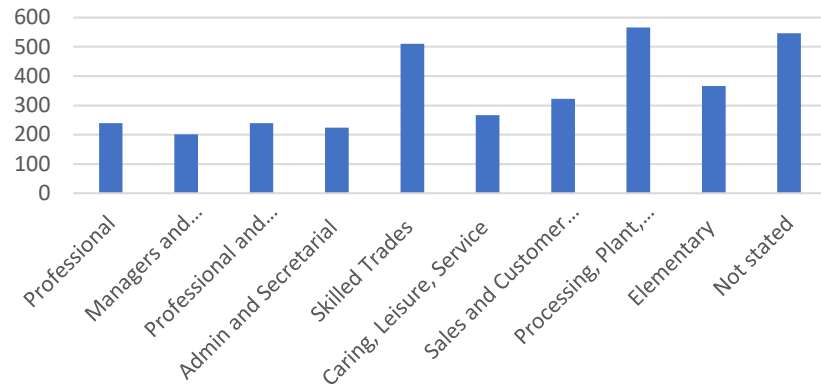


Figure 1: Occupations (CSO 2016)

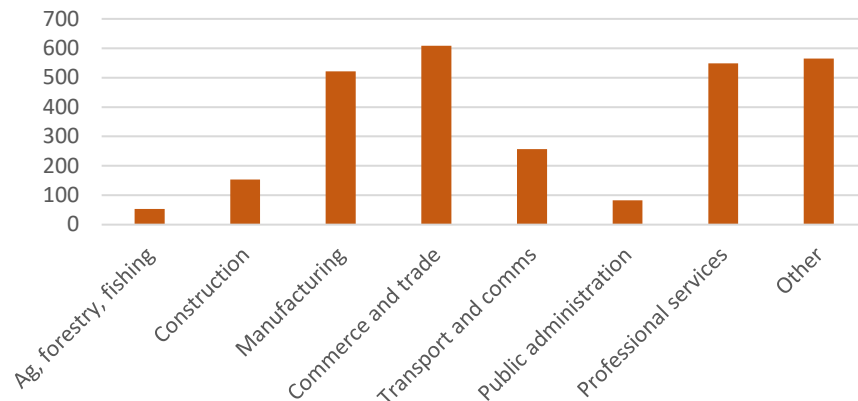


Figure 2: Industries (CSO 2016)

Figure 2 provides a similar picture for industries, with the highest number of people shown to be engaged in “Commerce and Trade” (21.8%), followed by “Professional Services” (19.7%) and “Manufacturing” (18.7%). A very small proportion are involved in “Agriculture, Forestry or Fishing” (1.9%) despite New Ross being at the centre of a large rural area.

At the time of preparation of this Town Centre Health Check, the regional demographics CSO data was not available. This was made available in September 2023. See APPENDIX B – Demographics, Business Survey, Vacancy and Dereliction, Tourism Opportunity and the South East Greenway for updated data and figures.

At this stage, for the purpose of providing a better understanding of the above figures, it is useful to make a comparison with other rural Irish towns.

Gorey is a town which is often compared with New Ross, largely because it is of a similar size, but is perceived to have had more recent success economically. A comparison between the two towns indicates that Gorey has a similar profile, but a more even population structure with a higher proportion of inhabitants in their 30s and 40s. This more even age structure is also apparent for the Gorey Urban ED. The pattern for Family Cycle is similar, but there are fewer families with early school or pre-adolescent children (11.8% and 11.9%) than in Gorey (15.1% and 13.8%) and more households of retired people (11.5% compared with 8.9%).

Social class indicates a higher proportion of people in Gorey belong to the “Managerial and Technical class” (22.4% in Gorey as compared with 17.8% in New Ross). Patterns of Educational Achievement are very similar between the two towns, although there are higher proportions with more advanced qualifications, e.g. Honours Degree at 9.0%, in Gorey compared with 6.4% in New Ross. Occupational patterns indicate a higher proportion of Professional workers at 11.6% in Gorey compared with 7.4% in New Ross, but also a slightly lower level of Managers and Directors at 5.7% compared with 6.2%. There are relatively more people employed in Commerce and Trade in Gorey at 24.8% compared with 21.8%, and a smaller proportion working in Manufacturing at 15.5% compared with 18.7%.

9. DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMY

Relevance of Demographics to Town Plan

An analysis of the demographics indicate that New Ross is not so different from many other rural towns with evidence of a rather skewed population in the centre and some deprivation, being balanced by relative prosperity on the outskirts of the town.

It does indicate that New Ross is missing some of the younger demographics, including people of an age with young families, which suggests that people may have left (or not moved in) due to employment opportunities elsewhere.

New Ross also lacks a third level college, and this is demonstrated by the fact that only a modest segment of the population falls within the 18-25 age range, potentially compounding the problem of there being rather little for young people to do as reported by many of the project meeting participants and survey respondents. However, the comparison with Gorey shows no extreme differences.

At the time of preparation of this Town Centre Health Check, the regional demographics CSO data was not available. This was made available in September 2023. See APPENDIX B – Demographics, Business Survey, Vacancy and Dereliction, Tourism Opportunity and the South East Greenway for updated data and figures

The relatively low level of younger population segments does present an issue in that young people often have more disposable income, or at least are willing to spend this on consumerables and nights out. Young families typically engage in higher spending activity too. What money is spent on nightlife occurs largely in Irishtown which is located outside of the town centre. However, the location is still relatively peaceful with nightspots elsewhere, only more active than the centre of town where most of the very limited activity occurs around John Street and Mary Street. The low level of activity means that the problem of on-street drinking, a problem found in every town, is more evident in New Ross because of the quiet surroundings.

The Role of Retail

An argument given for Gorey's apparent success relates to the presence of the retail multiples being located close to the centre of town. The preferred location of major retailers is a difficult issue for town planners to deal with given that the investment decision is ultimately in the hands of the retailers themselves and their preference is strongly aligned with accessibility rather than sustainability. New Ross is not unfavourably positioned in that three of the major retailers are located on the R723 Ring Road. The road is significantly less trafficked than it was prior to the construction of outer bypass. Therefore, there is some opportunity to persuade people to cross the ring road into the centre of town. This is challenging as weekend shoppers are often single minded in their needs to stock up with groceries for the week ahead and are not necessary in leisure mode. However, the Council has done much to improve the road crossing facilities. Much investment has gone into improving the environment of the quays, with the Dunbrody Famine Ship experience and in the high quality of the local parks. If people do make it across the main road to South Street where other retail outlets are located, they find an attractive environment with a small, but varied selection of small shops.



Traditional New Ross Shopfront

9. DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMY

Visitors and Tourism

This environment of South Street is also an appealing one for tourists, including the many American tourists for whom the Dunbrody Experience is a stage on their coach trip. New Ross has many interesting heritage features whose novelty cannot be underestimated for visitors from North America. However, coach passengers are allowed rather little time to explore the towns in which they arrive and much of their spending remains within the Visitor Centre which is open all year with an annual turnover of around €1.6 million. Similarly, passing motorists, including tourist traffic, are likely to take advantage of the good parking provided beside the river, or to purchase some groceries at one of the three supermarkets or at the service station. Opportunistic visitors may also stop at the Dunbrody Experience café for lunch. In both cases, there is the imperative of letting people know what is to be found in the town centre and of getting them across the main road. To arrive in South Street visitors must pass through the rather derelict-looking backlands around Marsh Lane or Sugarhouse Lane. Good signage is essential in this respect as has been noted by many of survey and project meeting participants. Indeed, the town has already invested in signage, including some good heritage signage, but further interventions would certainly be welcome. The town must also be commended for having invested in lighting, street art and litter bins to make this area less intimidating. This continued maintenance of the area, including discouragement of anti-social behaviour and littering, remains a priority.

Once it has opened, the Norman Heritage Centre, including the housing of the Ros Tapestry, will be an important draw. So too, will be the proposed farmers' market. Attracting more visitors to the town centre will be highly beneficial in keeping the small businesses here viable, including the cafes and numerous specialist shops such as gift shops (Hogans, Brooks), bakers (The Bakehouse, Bridget's Sweet Boutique), the bookshop (Nolans), and art shop (J.Baile). Most of these shops have attractive traditional facades. The planned pedestrianisation of Quay Street is likely to limit the pedestrian severance created by vehicles heading too quickly from the bridge into town and make access easier for pedestrians so long as excessive traffic is not diverted onto South Street.



Mural opposite Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience and Emigrant Flame

9. DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMY

The steep hill to the rear of South Street and North Street is part of the aesthetic attraction of New Ross when seen from across the River Barrow. However, it severely restricts pedestrian and cyclist movement. Once again, the Council has done much to draw visitors up the slope including through the use of heritage signage and most especially the recent construction of the High Hill Norman Garden. The Garden itself, although very visible from across the river, needs good signage from the Visitor Centre because it facilitates visitors in climbing the hill from which they can then gradually descend taking in Chapel Street and Mary Street.

New Ross' links to America are, of course, a major asset for the town. Connected to this is the Annual Kennedy Summer School which helps to maintain the connection and is, along with the annual Piano Festival, a significant cultural resource. However, there is a strong need to attract other foreign and domestic visitors. Everybody agrees that the Brandon House Hotel and Spa is of considerable benefit to the town. Although situated in self-contained private grounds, it is still located reasonably close to the town centre. However, an observation made by many people is the absence of much hotel accommodation or a hostel in the town. This, indeed, is an obvious and serious deterrent to visitors spending time in the town and contributing to its nighttime economy. The proposal to establish a campervan / motorhome park near to the town centre is an inspired one as it will attract more people, including especially couples, to stay overnight and hopefully spend money in town during both the daytime and evening.

The South East Greenway

The design team are of the opinion that the new South East Greenway will have a profound and positive impact on the economy of New Ross. The existing Waterford Greenway has proven to be extremely popular, attracting both mostly domestic users and tourists and is a welcome resource for the health and wellbeing of the people of Waterford.

New Ross itself will be an attraction for the South East Greenway, but the Red Bridge and Mount Elliot Tunnel will be very distinctive major draws for cyclists and walkers on the Greenway. The wider area includes attractions such as Inistioge, the River Nore and Barrow and the Barrow Way, and Enniscorthy and Vinegar Hill. Another prospective unique draw of the South East Greenway would be the potential for users to return by boat via an extension of the service already offered by the Barrow Princess.

The design team estimate that, when eventually complete, the Greenway could attract 225,000 users which would result in expenditure of €3.7 million per year. New Ross could claim €1.74 million of this total expenditure. Economic multiplier effects could raise the local contribution of this expenditure to over €3 million per year.

Rosbercon is certain to benefit from this expenditure. For the town as a whole to realise the economic benefits, it will be necessary to do as much as necessary to attract visitors across the river, including through the addition of cycle lanes to O'Hanrahan's Bridge and a cycle path from Mount Elliot, from where visitors will also be able to stop at Mannion's Farm Shop and Pub or at Woodville House and Gardens. Further recommendations in this respect are contained in the Greenway Report.



Recreational rowing on the River Barrow

9. DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMY

Business Survey

In addition to the Community Survey, the team have also prepared a business survey. The findings of this survey are in APPENDIX B Demographics Business Tourism Data.

Vacancy and Dereliction

Vacancy and dereliction are the twin scourges of Irish rural towns and are present in New Ross too. Indeed, the level of vacancy is understood to be higher than that of other towns in the county, and higher than the national average. Part of the reason for this high level of vacancy is due to history, namely earlier times when New Ross was a prosperous port. It would be difficult to fill all these buildings, especially given the expectations of floor space and accessibility that businesses, and prospective residents now have. Nevertheless, local people are understandably frustrated by the visibility of dereliction and the image that this presents of the town. New Ross is characterised by large landholdings, in the hands of a small group of mostly absent landowners. Some of these landowners have taken initiatives to put vacant buildings back into use, but their more active support for strategic actions would be welcome.

Government has recently increased the number of initiatives available for urban regeneration and the grants that are available for the conversion of rental properties. The new Croí Cónaithe Vacant Properties Refurbishment Grant is available to restore derelict buildings. At present, New Ross has rather few properties available for rent and this discourages migration into the town by young people and others who can provide a local workforce.

The Town Centre Living Initiative (DRDD, 2020) found that it is cheaper to refurbish than to build new, but that renovation is more expensive than a purpose designed building. The respective differences in cost were not great which suggests that positive local initiatives or circumstances can make a difference in encouraging investment. However, cost is far from being the only factor. Other important issues are lack of guidance and information, low land values and returns, planning permission, inaccessibility, parking, structural integrity, difficult of finding retail tenants, rights of way, legal issues, building regulations (energy efficiency, H&S, fire), and the risk of making an investment in an environment of decline and dereliction. Given so many potential issues, a major factor is the lack of confidence that landowners have to make an investment in properties which have an inherently low market value.

The design team believe that the above-mentioned initiatives could be successful to mitigate vacancy and dereliction. We will be combining these proposals with the outputs of the urban design, heritage study and community consultation in our final report and recommendations.



Normandy Food Tour visiting New Ross 2023

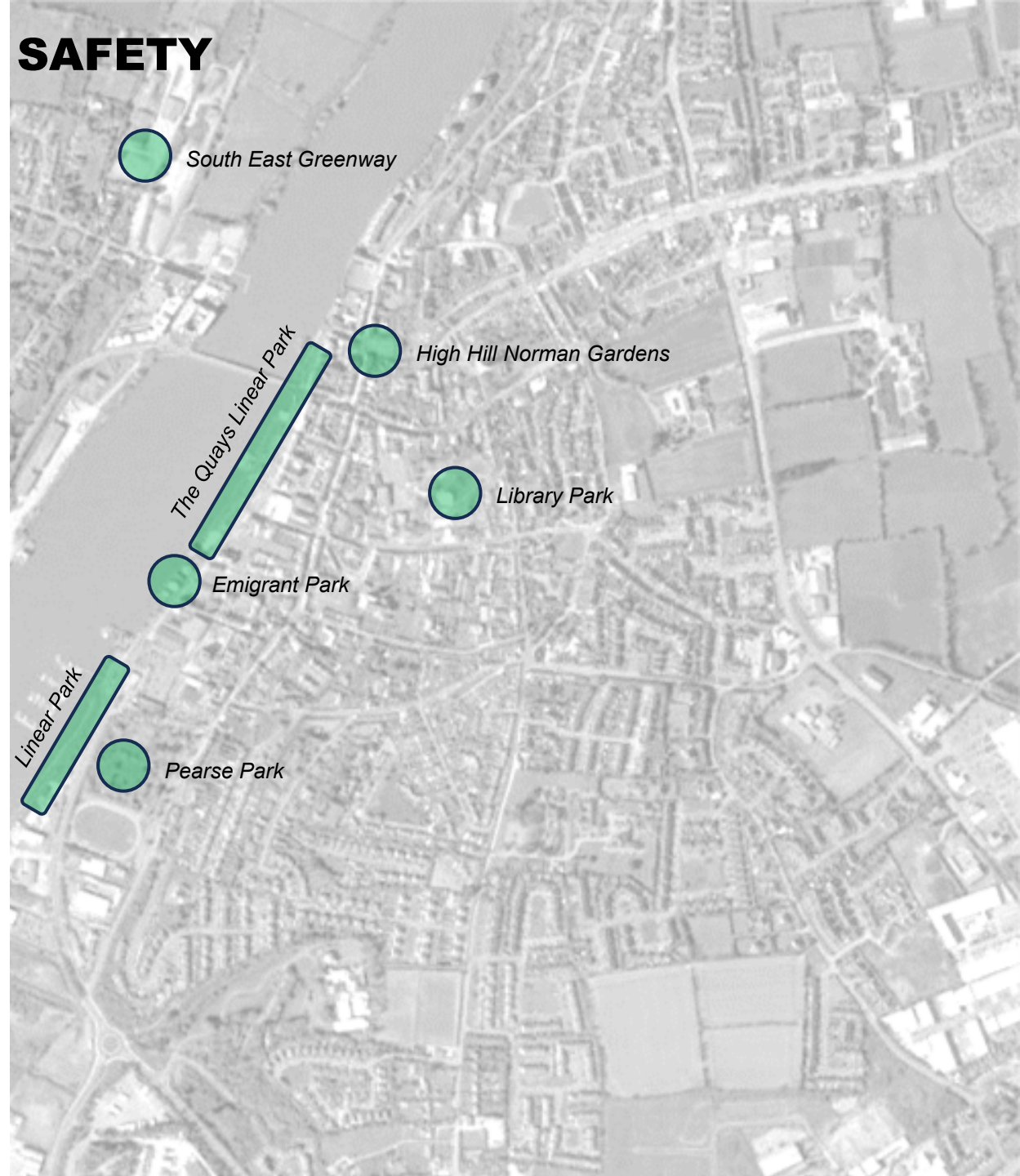
10. PUBLIC REALM & SAFETY

New Ross is rich in large scale and high-quality public spaces that contribute to the very good standard of the town's public realm. Particularly outstanding examples are:

- High Hill Norman Gardens
- Library Park
- Pearse Park
- The Quays Linear Park
- Emigrant Park (under construction)
- South East Greenway (under construction)

Interview feedback from local An Garda Síochána are summarised as follows:

- Generally low crime rates with CSO statistics showing details
- Few crimes that occur are vandalism / shop lifting / drug dealing
- Graffiti most common along laneways and in Pearse Park, mostly by teenager groups
- Regular drug dealing from premises on North Street (eastside, visible from the Tholsel)
- Occasional drug dealing around bus stop on the Quays
- Occasional money collecting visible on dole pay days
- The younger generation seek entertainment in Wexford and Waterford because New Ross has comparably little night life. As a result, the town is relatively quiet at night and weekends
- The Red Bridge & Mount Elliot Tunnel are safety priority for the Greenway. The tunnel will be lit 24/7 and it is assumed tha the tunnel is too remote to become an attractive black spot



11. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

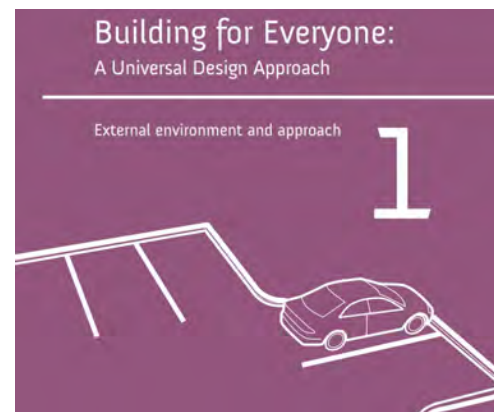
The Accessibility Assessment we conducted has regard to best practice guidance. The objective of unrestricted accessibility is to provide access to our built environment for everyone, regardless of age or ability. For practical reasons, this accessibility audit has been based on personal observations and photographic records during our town surveys and has focussed on quality and conditions of footpaths, street crossings, ramps, stairs, guardrails and general access to premises.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of best practice guidance:

- Building Regulations Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use:
[31b7614c-7df1-439c-abcb-0f16fb3e93a7.pdf \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/public/publication-detail/?id=31b7614c-7df1-439c-abcb-0f16fb3e93a7)
- National Disability Agency – Centre for Excellence in Universal Design:
[Built Environment | Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](https://www.centreforuniversaldesign.com/)
- Universal Access – Driving Global Inclusion:
[Universal Design | Universal Access](https://www.universalaccess.com/)
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS):
[f378bf_583444499f9f4095aaa4d5e05c3cf4b2.pdf \(dmurs.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/public/publication-detail/?id=f378bf583444499f9f4095aaa4d5e05c3cf4b2)
- Best Practice Urban Design Manual:
[07213 UrbanDesignGuide_14May09.indd - 020c668c-4c56-40a5-9b60-41615cf2853e.pdf \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/public/publication-detail/?id=07213UrbanDesignGuide14May09.indd-020c668c-4c56-40a5-9b60-41615cf2853e)
- National Design Guide UK:
[National design guide.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/261202/national_design_guide.pdf)
- 8 – 80 – Cities:
[8 80 Cities | Creating cities for all](https://www.gov.ie/public/publication-detail/?id=880Cities)



Building Regulations
TGD Part M



Centre for Excellence
in Universal Design

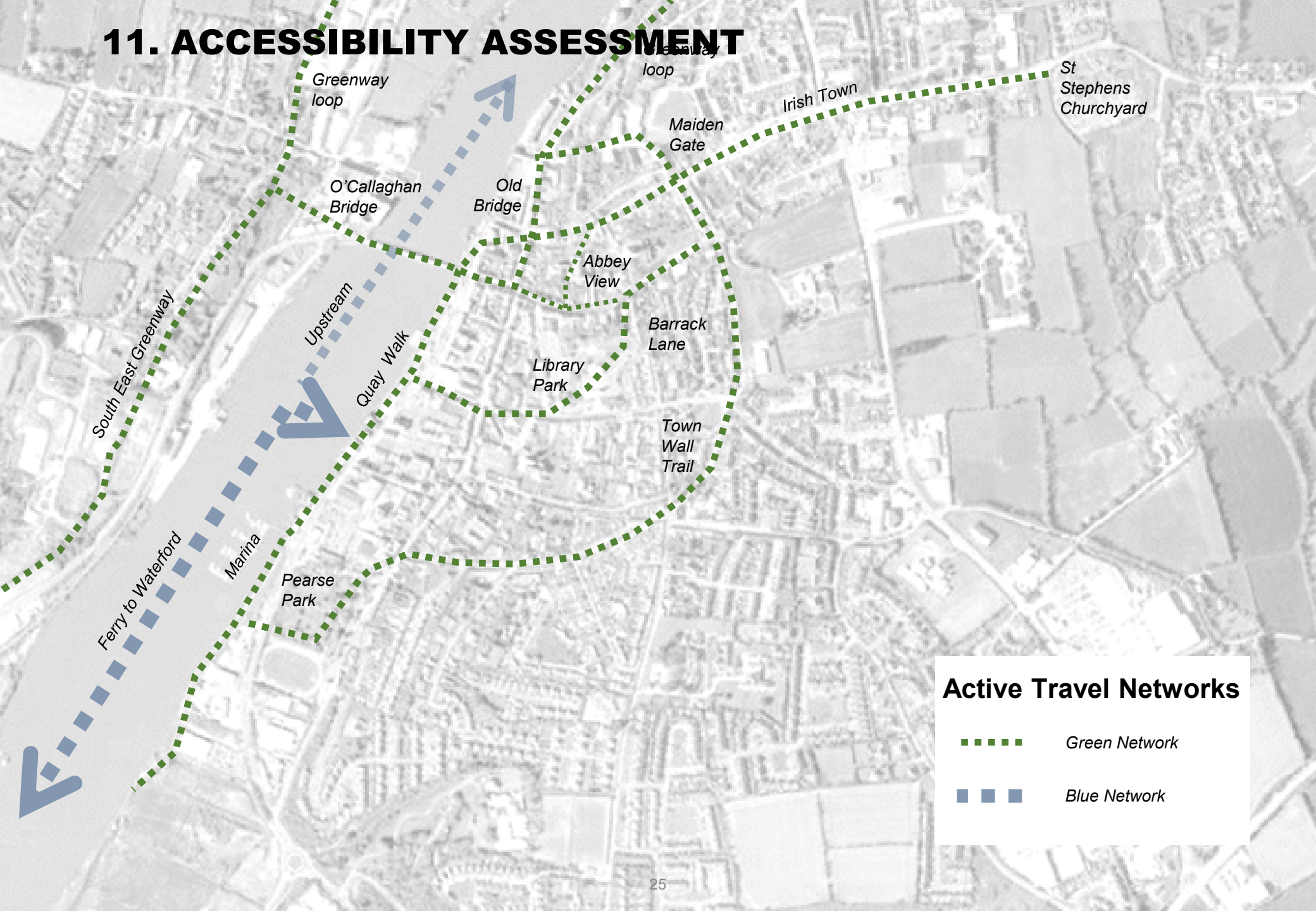


Universal Access
Driving Global Inclusion



Design Manual for
Urban Roads and Streets

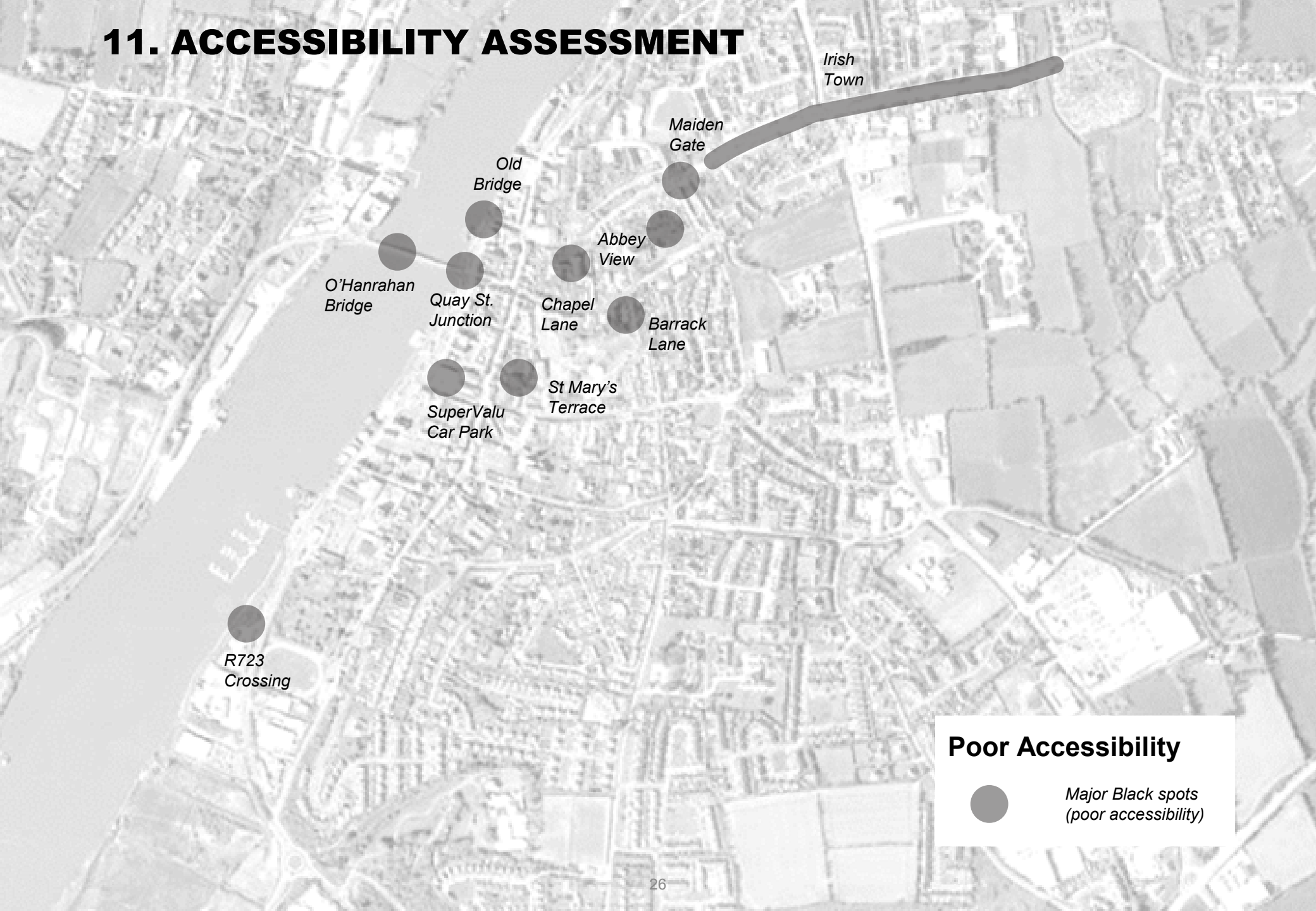
11. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT



Active Travel Networks

- Green Network
- Blue Network

11. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT



Irish Town

Maiden Gate

Old Bridge

Abbey View

O'Hanrahan Bridge

Quay St. Junction

Chapel Lane

Barrack Lane

SuperValu Car Park

St Mary's Terrace

R723 Crossing

Poor Accessibility

● Major Black spots (poor accessibility)

11. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT



Barrow View Heights steps



Conduit Lane pedestrian network



Norman Trail from St. Mary's



Well-marked, positioned accessible parking



Numerous pedestrians along Quays



Car crossing safe for pedestrians



Generous, safe access to Quay walk



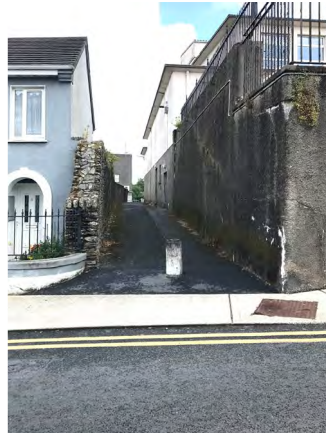
Good signage and way-finding

Positive Examples in New Ross

11. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT



Stepped access not open



Poorly designed sloped route



Dominant guardrail



Unattractive connection



Hidden away access route



Steep street, no ped. refuge



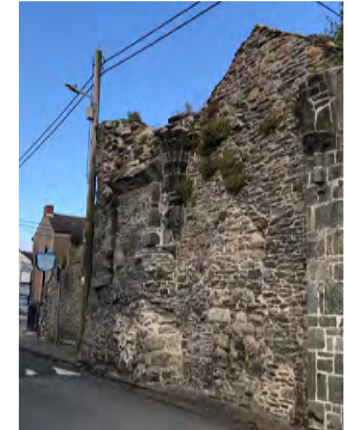
Narrow footpath – wide road



Flood protection blocks access



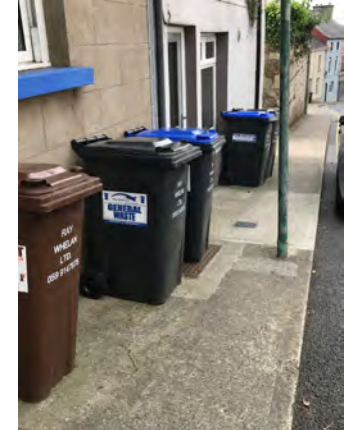
Poor access to retail



No footpath along prime heritage

Negative Examples in New Ross

11. ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT



Narrow and discontinued footpaths, often without dished kerbs and hardly any tactile paving for universal access while bin refuge blocks access in many locations



Cars parked on footpaths despite plenty of parking spaces. Parked cars / vans blocking laneways and interfering with pedestrian flow.

Unsafe, undefined crossing in the heart of the town

Negative Examples in New Ross

12. TRAFFIC COUNTS

Pedestrian Counts were undertaken in New Ross Town on 20th June 2023 for 15-minute intervals in the morning, afternoon and evening at:

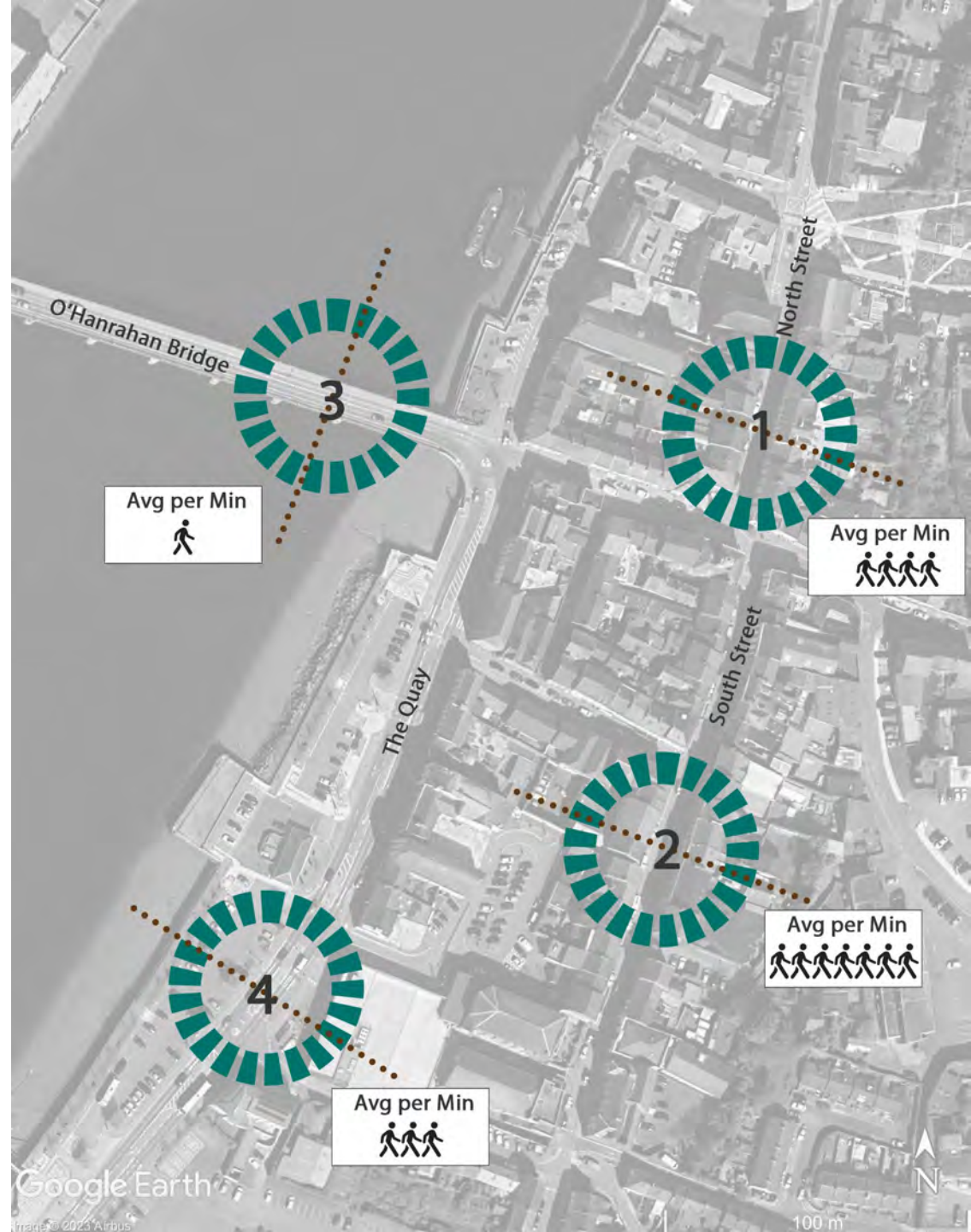
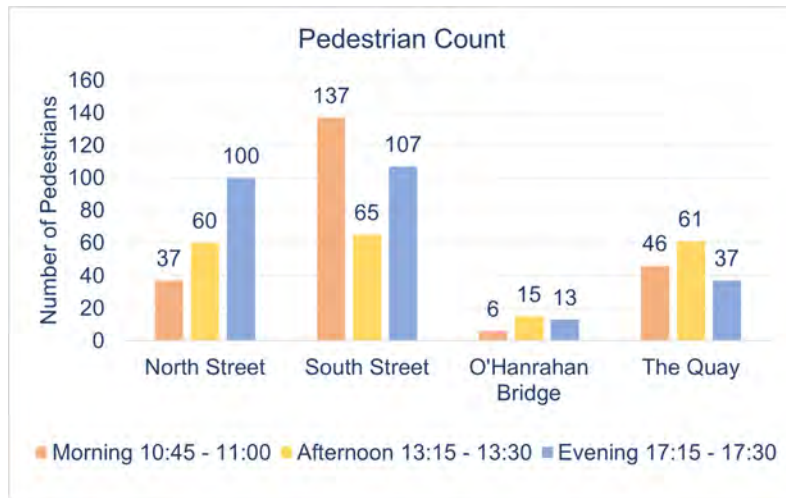
- North Main Street close to Discount Store
- South Main Street close to O'Brien's café
- O'Hanrahan Bridge
- The Quay close to the Supervalu

Procedure

The procedure to be carried out is as follows; standing at these locations, facing across the street, drawing an 'imaginary line' or 'gate' across the street and counting the number of people crossing the line in both directions for exactly 15 minutes.

Observations

The highest average and peak footfall counts were recorded on South Street with the busiest (peak) time recorded being 137 in the morning.



12. TRAFFIC COUNTS

Vehicular Counts were undertaken in New Ross Town on 20th June 2023 for 15-minute intervals in the morning, afternoon and evening at:

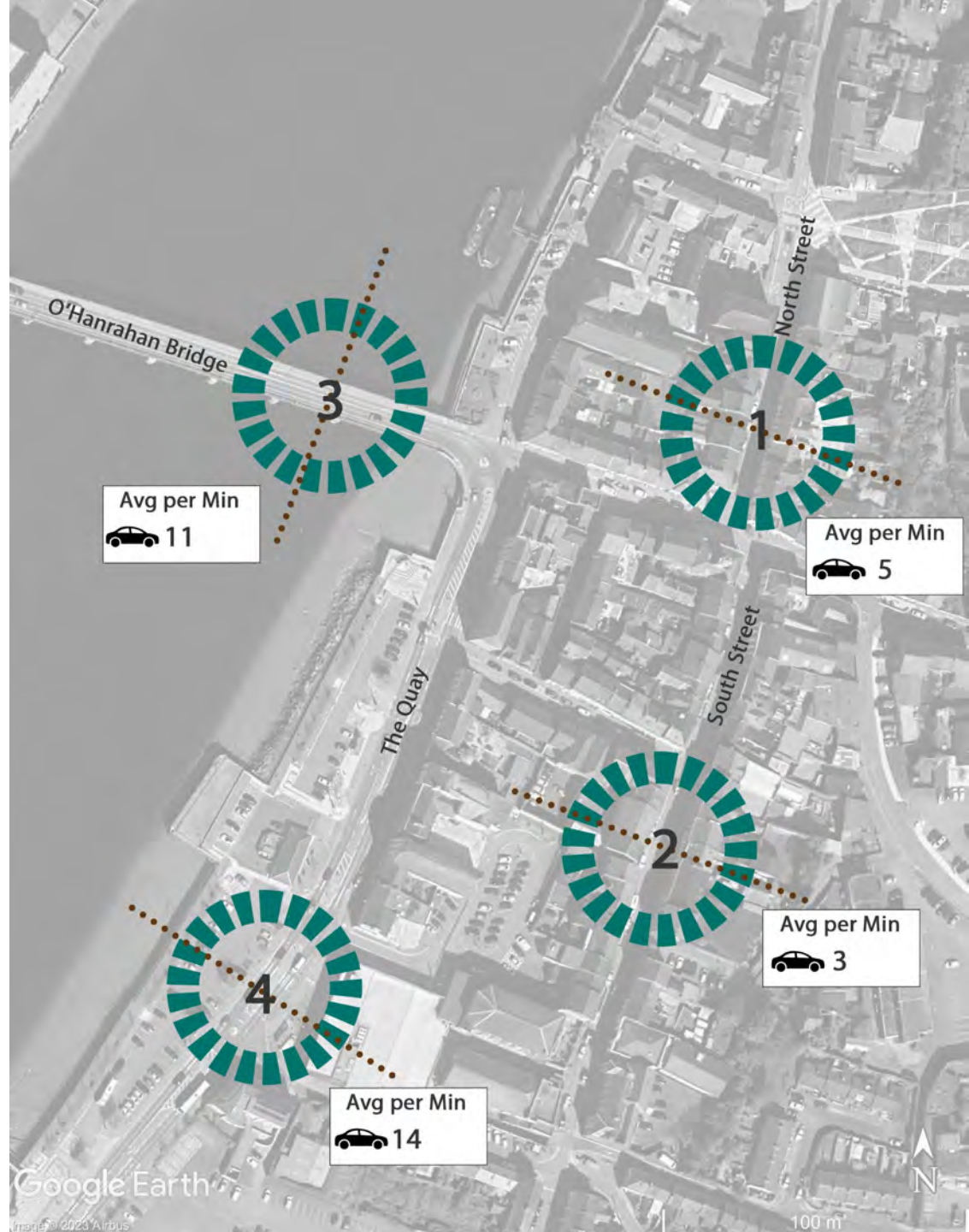
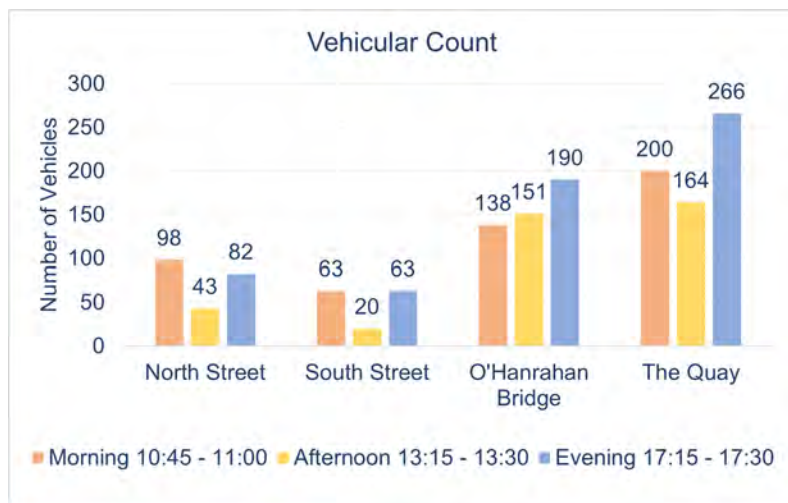
1. North Main Street close to Discount Store
2. South Main Street close to O'Brien's café
3. O'Hanrahan Bridge
4. The Quay close to the Supervalu

Procedure

The procedure to be carried out is as follows; standing at these locations, facing across the street, drawing an 'imaginary line' or 'gate' across the street and counting the number of vehicles crossing the line in both directions for exactly 15 minutes.

Observations


The highest average and peak traffic were recorded on The Quay with the busiest (peak) time recorded being 266 in the evening. The Quay was the busiest and South Street was the quietest through out the day.



13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The following brief on-street questionnaire was conducted in June & July 2023, by the design team and by members of the Town Team.

The results are illustrated on the following pages of this report.

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL – NEW ROSS TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN 

On Street Questionnaire for Town Centre Health Check +

Your answers will help to make New Ross a better town – THANK YOU!

1 - TOWN VALUE -

What brought you to New Ross today?
Work / Shopping / Education / Tourism & Culture / Meeting Friends & Family / Live here

Where is the town centre (in your perception)?
The Quays / Quay St. / Bridge / North St. / South St. / Library / Dunbrody / Irishtown

What do you enjoy most about New Ross?
Please list:
...

What would you change tomorrow if you could?
Please list:
...

2 - TOWN TRANSPORT -


How did you travel today?
Walk / Cycle / Public Transport / Car

Where did you travel from?
From within New Ross / Nearby / Waterford / Wexford / Other

Does the town need more or less parking?
More / Keep as is / Less

Should car traffic be reduced and streets be pedestrianised?
No / Yes / In some areas, where?

Should speed limit be reduced to 30km/h in the town?
No / Yes / In some areas, where?

page 1 

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL – NEW ROSS TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN 

3 - TOWN COMFORT -

How comfortable / inviting do you find the town centre?
Very / Average / Low

Does the town need more greenery?
More / Keep as is / Less

Does the town need more places to sit and meet?
More / Keep as is / Less

How attractive is the riverfront / quays for you?
Very / Average / Low

How often do you visit the other town side across the river?
Often / Average / Rarely

Do you find it easy to get to the other side of the river?
Very / Average / Low

Does the town need more shops?
More / Keep as is / Less

What shops or amenities do you miss?
Please list:
...

Would you like to work in New Ross?
Yes / No / I do

Does the town need more tourist attractions and cultural events?
More / Keep as is / Less

4 - TOWN SAFETY -

How safe do you find the streets during the day?
Very / Average / Low / Is there an area you feel uncomfortable in, where?

How safe do you find the streets at night?
Very / Average / Low / Is there an area you feel uncomfortable in, where?

page 2 

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Questionnaire Findings Summary

The design team, in collaboration with the TownTeam, collected valuable responses from 61 respondents for the questionnaire. Below is a summary of the findings:

1. Town Value

A majority of respondents travelled to New Ross from the immediate surroundings.

Half of the respondents perceive South Street to be the town centre of New Ross

2. Town Transport

Even though a majority of respondents are from New Ross and surrounding areas, most of them travelled to town by car.

One-third of respondents say they would like more parking while almost half of the respondents say they have enough car parking spaces in town.

Two-thirds of respondents would like traffic to be reduced in the town centre and would like some streets to be pedestrianised. Two-thirds say they would prefer a speed limit of 30km/h in the town centre.

3. Town Comfort

One-third of respondents consider the town very inviting, while almost two-thirds were neutral about it.

Most respondents answer that they would like more greenery in the town such as tree planting and soft landscaping.

The majority of respondents would like more places to sit and meet while more than half of the respondents say they enjoy the riverside and the quays.

When asked about the town on the other side (westside) of the river; more than half of the respondents rarely go there, and don't find it comfortable / easy to cross either.

Most respondents say that they would like more shops.

Many of the respondents already work in New Ross and about two-thirds confirm that they like to work in the town, while one-fifth said they would prefer not to work in the town.

Two-thirds of respondents would like to see more touristic attractions and cultural events in town.

4. Town Safety

Generally, our respondents say that they feel safe during the day.

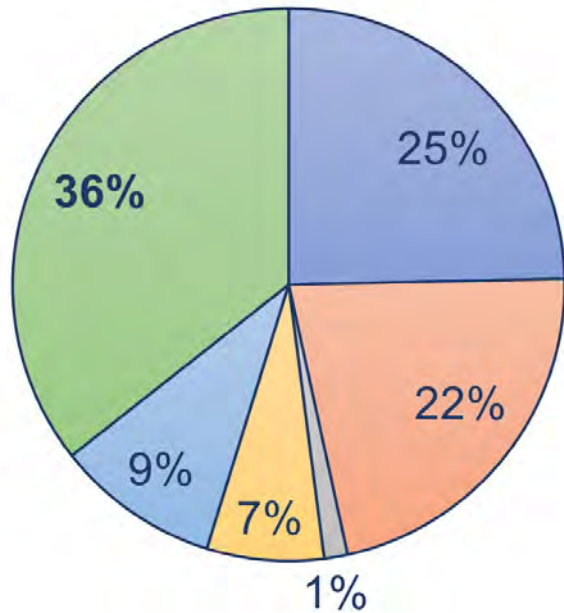
Approx. two-thirds say that they feel unsafe during the night versus approx. one-third who feel safe at night.

However, many respondents say they would not venture out at night as it was unsafe everywhere. But generally, respondents said the Quays, North Street and the laneways are particularly uncomfortable at night-time.

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Town Value

- Work
- Education
- Meeting Friends & Family
- Shopping
- Tourism & Culture
- I live here



What brought you to New Ross today?

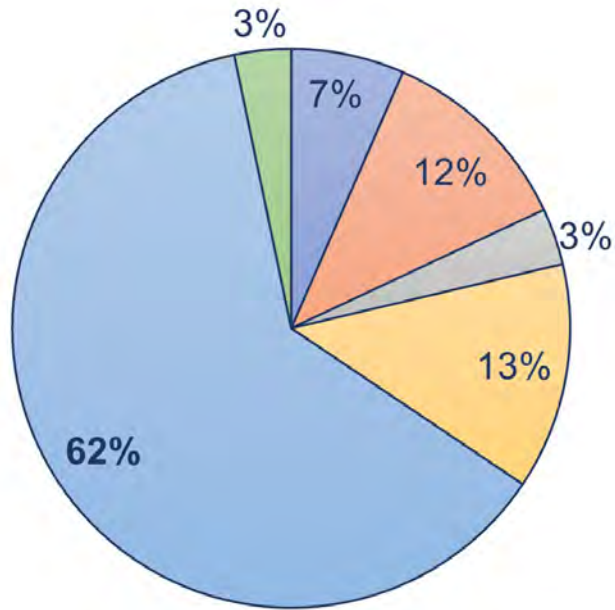


What do you enjoy most about New Ross?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Town Value

- The Quays ■ Quay St. ■ Bridge
- North St ■ South St. ■ Other



Where is the town centre (in your perception)?

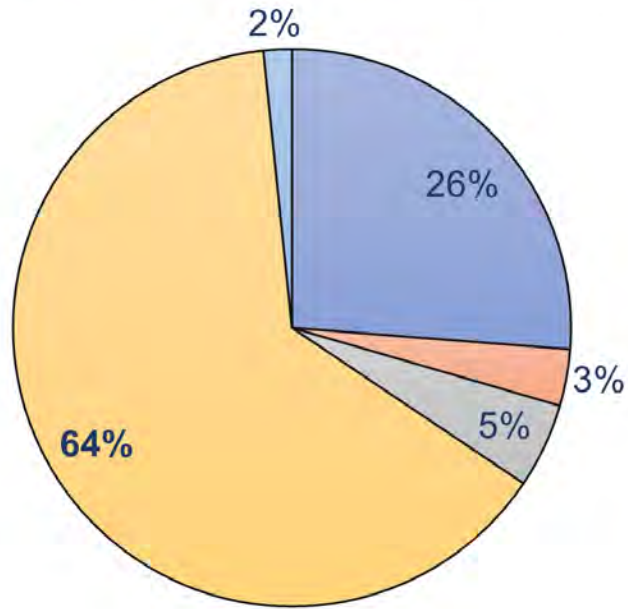


What would you change tomorrow if you could?

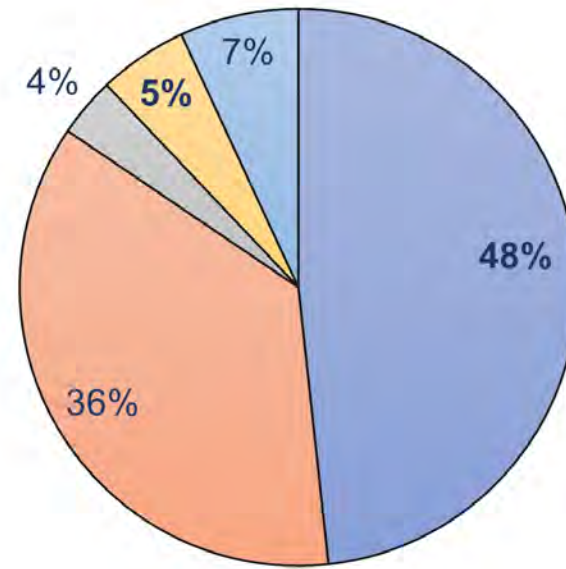
13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

2. Town Transport

■ Walk ■ Cycle ■ Public Transport ■ Car ■ Other ■ From within New Ross ■ Nearby ■ Waterford ■ Wexford ■ Other



How did you travel today?

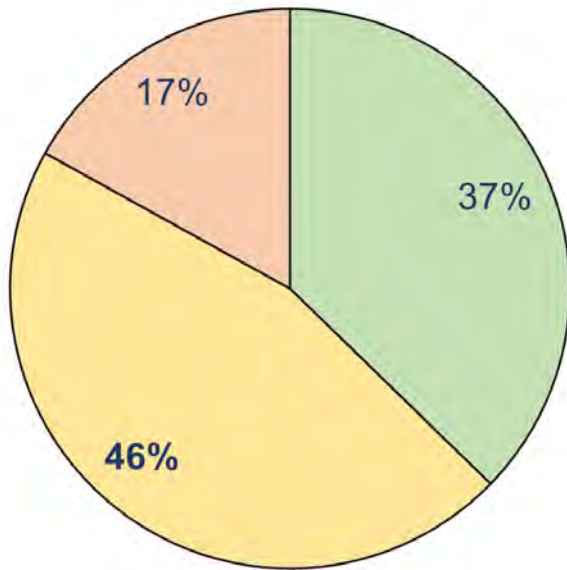


Where did you travel from?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

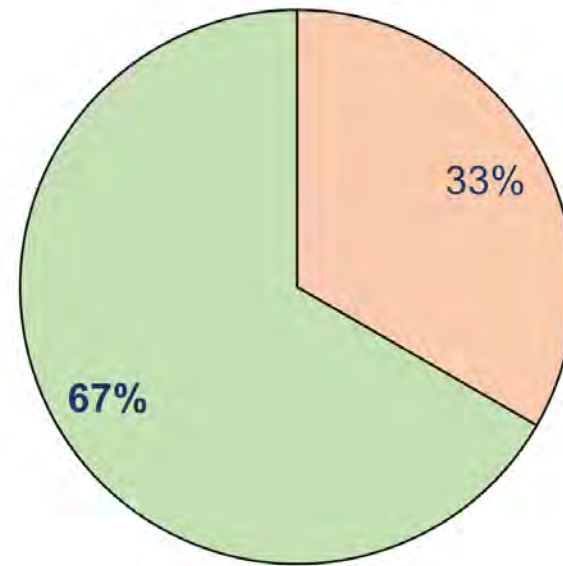
2. Town Transport

More Keep as is Less



Does the town need more or less parking?

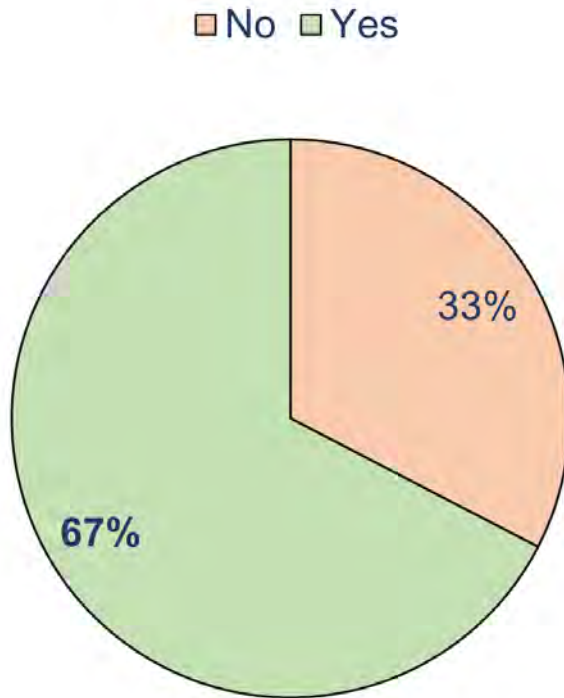
No Yes



Should car traffic be reduced, and streets be pedestrianised?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

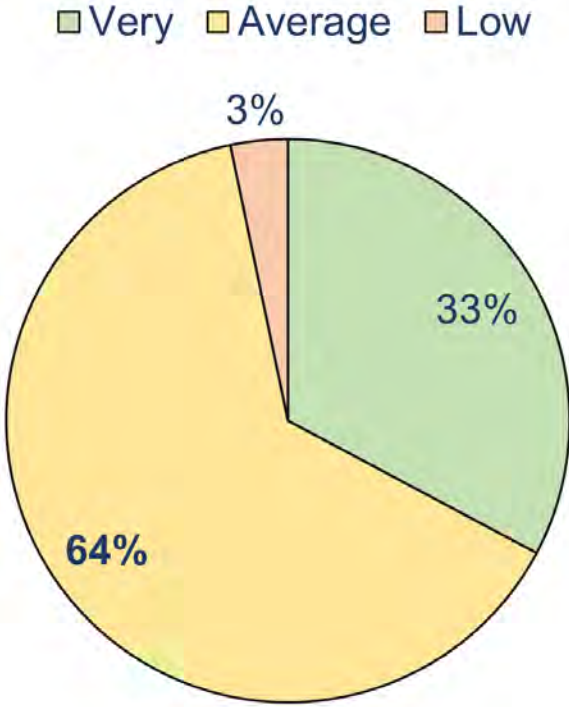
2. Town Transport



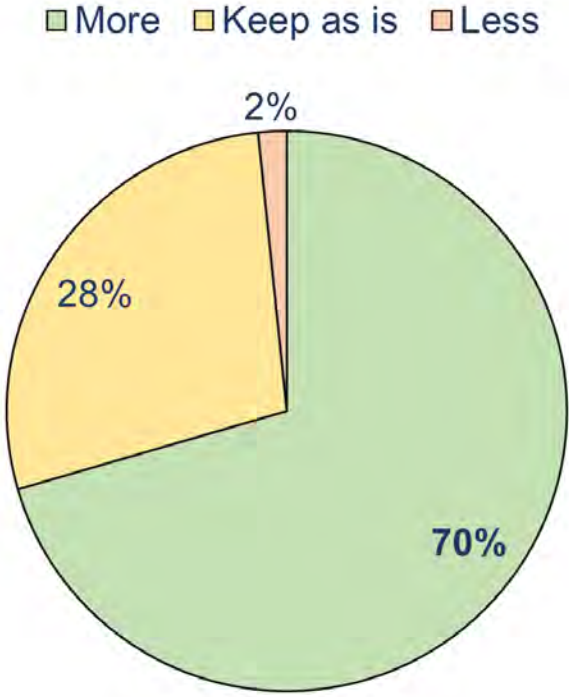
Should speed limit be reduced to 30km/h in the town?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

3. Town Comfort



How comfortable / inviting do you find the town centre?

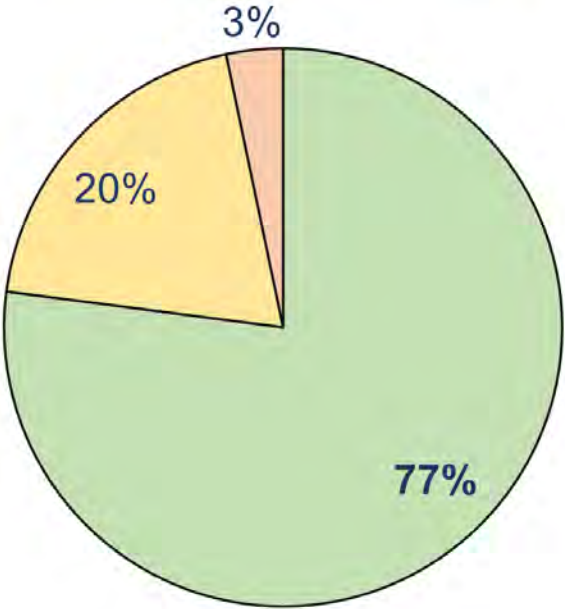


Does the town need more greenery?

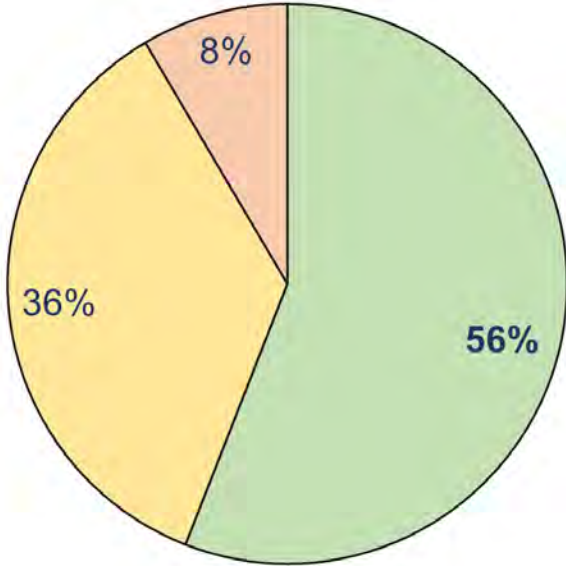
13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

3. Town Comfort

More Keep as is Less



Very Average Low



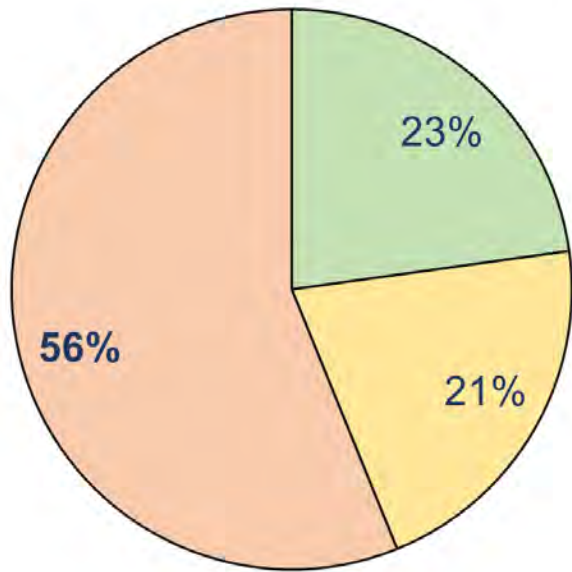
Does the town need more places to sit and meet?

How attractive is the riverfront / quays for you?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

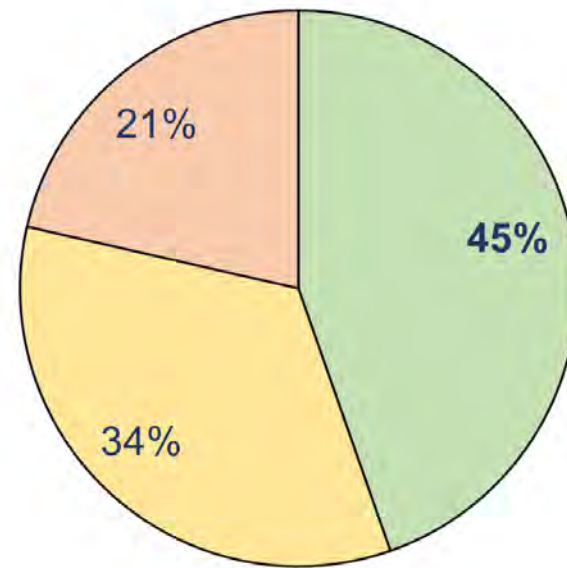
3. Town Comfort

Often Average Rarely



How often do you visit the other town side across the river?

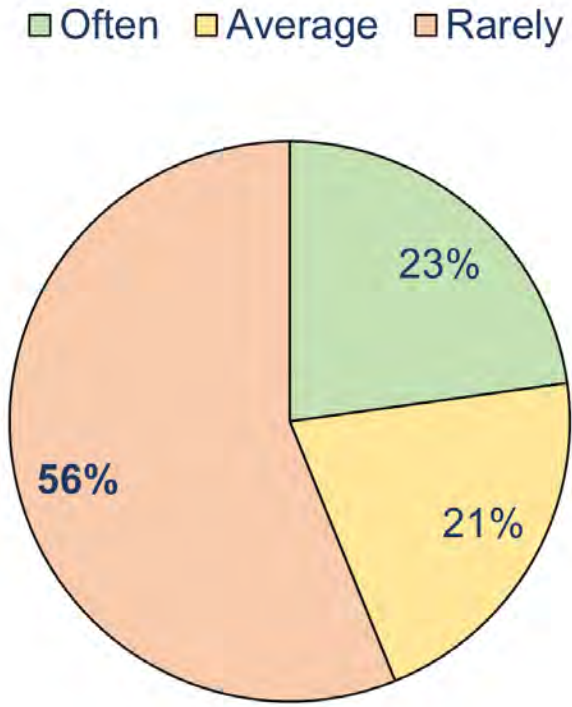
Very Average Low



Do you find it easy to get to the other side of the river?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

3. Town Comfort



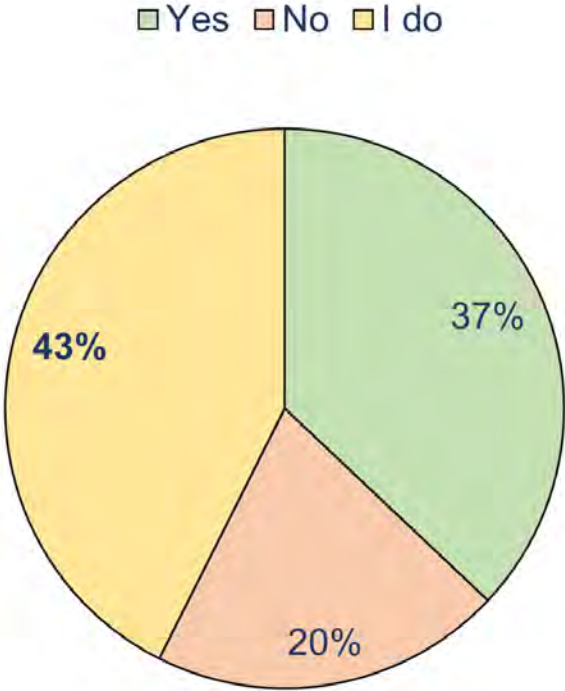
Does the town need more shops?



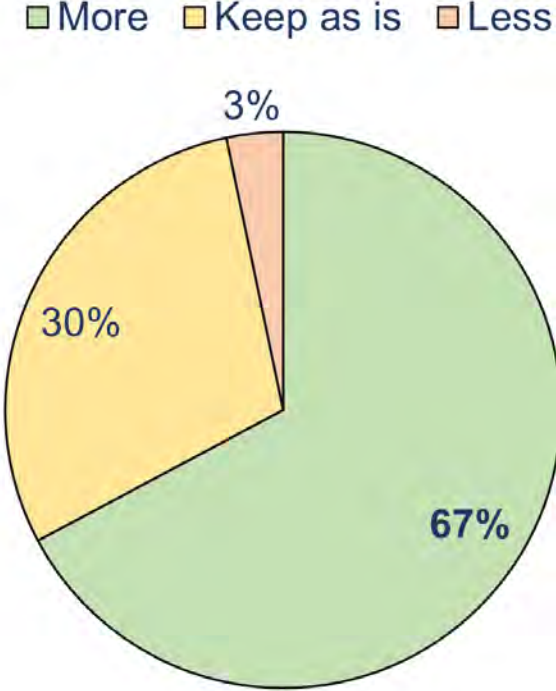
What shops or amenities do you miss?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

3. Town Comfort



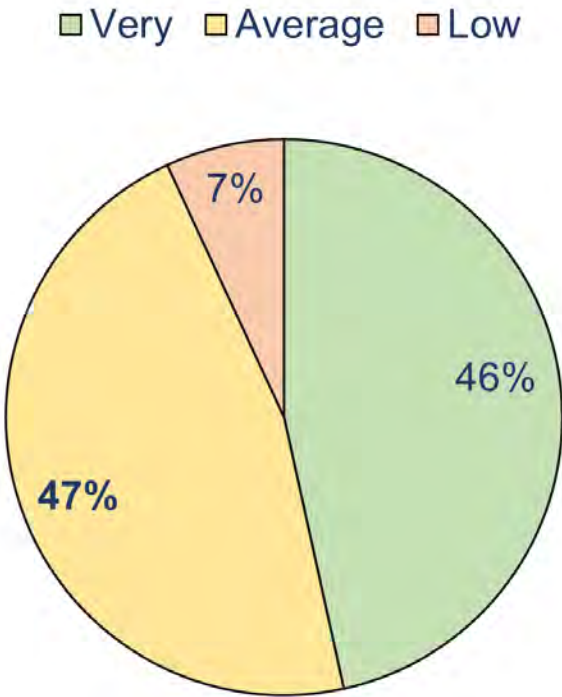
Would you like to work in New Ross?



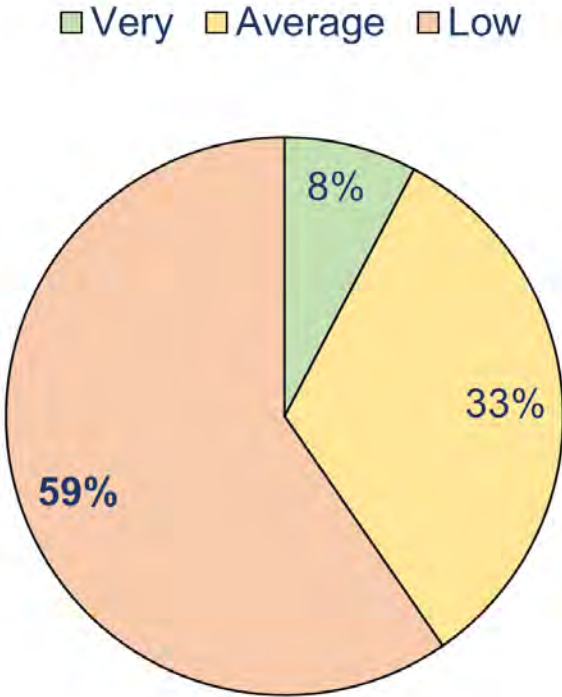
Does the town need more tourist attractions and cultural events?

13. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

4. Town Safety



How safe do you find the streets during the day?



How safe do you find the streets at night?

14. SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

In a collaborative exercise the design team conducted a Town Centre Health Check which produced very valuable data and revealed useful insights about New Ross. The information we compiled and distilled about land-use distribution, vacancy and dereliction rates, transport mobility, heritage, commerce and tourism will be used in the further process to prepare a Town Centre First Plan – a joint-up vision for New Ross and its social and economic future.

Wexford County council have realised many successful public realm projects in New Ross. These now need to be connected and gaps in between be filled for 'cross-fertilisation' while further individual private investment should be encouraged. The surveyed vacancy rate, for retail and residential is high and many vacant buildings appear derelict, an economic concern for revitalising these buildings, but also a concern for heritage loss.

Future urban development, public and private, will be set in context to its contribution to the urban regeneration strategy for the town. The Town Team, in collaboration with the design team will draft an Action Plan for short-term, medium-term and long-term projects. The management and coordination of individual projects is critical for the process of a holistic plan for New Ross – Dots need to be connected!

The quality of the town's built and cultural heritage, from the Norman past to the present is evident and undebated. It will clearly drive and define our vision and strategy for New Ross, to make the town centre more attractive for tourism, retail, employment, recreation, and certainly for residential use.

Our survey results show typical symptoms of weakened land-use and resulting poor social and economic activity in the town centre. Lack of investment, particularly in large, vacant landholdings have contributed to the erosion of the urban fabric. The town's transport mobility concept needs to be revised, for managed parking, permeability and safer, more comfortable streets. The N25 Bypass and proposed Greenway have started this process New Ross possesses highly valuable assets which are currently underused and underperforming. How these recent trends can be reversed will be assessed, through public consultation and stakeholder engagement, and through collaborative work of our design team.

- **Defining a joint-up Vision for New Ross**
- **Achieve Public Consultation Consensus**
- **Agreeing Objectives & Strategy**
- **Agreeing Pilot Projects**
- **Drafting Action Plan:**
 - Short / Medium / Long Term**
- **Writing Heritage Appraisal:**
 - Norman History / Emigration**
- **Refining Transport Mobility Concept:**
- **Filtered Permeability / Parking**
- **Defining Business & Tourism Opportunities**



NEW ROSS DEMOGRAPHICS BUSINESS & TOURISM DATA 2023

NEW ROSS TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN



New Ross Town Centre First Plan

APPENDIX B –

Demographics,

Business Survey,

Vacancy and Dereliction,

Tourism Opportunity and the South East Greenway

Prepared by

Optimize

For

Wexford County Council

October 2023

1.1 Demographics

Introduction

While it is agreed that New Ross needs a combination of both population and economic growth, these needs are not in any way unusual amongst towns in contemporary rural Ireland. There has clearly been a low growth in the population in the town centre of New Ross. This is evident also in the high number of vacant residential properties, although many other properties are ex-retail or derelict commercial premises. These patterns are not, however, unfamiliar in that much recent population growth in rural towns across Ireland has occurred in the suburban environs and the rural hinterland. Much economic and retail development has also been on the edge of towns in industrial estates and shopping centres which are convenient to reach by road, leaving town centres often hollowed out with footfall or retail and social activity.

Indeed, **Table 1** shows that the population of New Ross as a whole has been increasing steadily since 1996 with the exception of 2011-2016 when growth rates slowed for many rural towns. The Electoral Division (ED) of New Ross Urban, which includes much of the town, including the town centre and the built area of Rosbercon, has declined in population, but for a modest increase reported in the latest Census. By comparison, a significant increase in population was experienced between 2002-2006 in the outskirts of the town in the ED of New Ross Rural, albeit from a relatively low base. The ED of New Ross Rural surrounds that of the Urban ED to the east of the river and includes a large rural hinterland as well as some of the town's suburbs. Rosbercon ED is located to the west and is predominantly rural.

The CSO also provides population data for the "settlement" of New Ross which, as of the latest Census data for 2022, consisted of 8,610 persons. The settlement boundary includes Rosbercon. However, the CSO changed the definition of the town at this time so that the 2016 figure of 8,040 is not directly comparable.

The population of the rural environs has therefore continued to increase since 2002, while that of the urban centre has declined. Some of the recent increase in the more urban part of New Ross would appear to have been due to new migrants, particularly from Poland. People of Polish origin account for 3.9% of the population of the urban ED while other EU citizens constitute 5.7%, although Poles do constitute a greater proportion of the rural ED at 12.4%.

Table 1: Population: New Ross

Electoral Division	2002	2006	2011	2016	2022
New Ross Urban	4402	4034	3907	3768	3938
<i>Percent change</i>	-4.9%	-8.4%	-3.1%	-3.6%	4.5%
New Ross Rural	2052	3367	4014	3942	4178
<i>Percent change</i>	44.6%	64.1%	19.2%	-1.8%	6.0%
Total	6454	7401	7961	7710	8116
<i>Percent change</i>	6.9%	14.7%	7.6%	-3.2%	5.3%

Source: CSO

Table 2 shows the figures for *age* and confirms an outward movement of the population to the suburbs where there is a much higher proportion of children below the age of 15 and higher proportions of age classes between 30 and 50 years. These data on the age profile are supported by those for *family cycle* in **Table 3** which show a higher proportion of households in New Ross Rural belonging to the 'early school', 'pre-adolescent' and 'adolescent' categories than for New Ross Urban, although there has been a recent reversal of this position for families with pre-school children. The proportion of people over 65 years is much higher in New Ross Urban at 21.9% than for New Ross Rural at 12.4% and this corresponds to a higher proportion of 'retired' people at 11.6% compared with 6.3%.

Table 2: Age 2022

	New Ross Urban		New Ross Rural		New Ross Town	
Age 0-14	598	15.1%	932	22.4%	1620	21.3%
Age 15-29	652	20.6%	749	18.0%	1513	17.0%
Age 30-39	514	13.0%	591	14.2%	1244	15.4%
Age 40-49	537	13.6%	666	16.0%	1317	13.9%
Age 50-64	794	20.0%	710	17.1%	1554	17.2%
Age 65 +	866	21.9%	516	12.4%	1362	15.4%

Source: CSO

Table 3: Family Cycle 2022

	New Ross Urban		New Ross Rural		New Ross Town	
	<i>families</i>	<i>persons</i>	<i>families</i>	<i>persons</i>	<i>families</i>	<i>percent</i>
Pre-Family	8.4%	6.0%	7.4%	4.7%	9.1%	6.1%
Empty Nest	10.9%	7.8%	10.2%	9.0%	10.2%	6.9%
Retired	16.4%	11.6%	10.0%	6.3%	12.8%	8.6%

Pre-school	8.2%	8.3%	6.8%	6.7%	7.8%	7.8%
Early school	8.4%	10.5%	9.8%	10.6%	9.4%	10.9%
Pre-adolescent	9.2%	11.6%	15.1%	18.2%	12.1%	14.8%
Adolescent	11.4%	14.4%	17.0%	21.3%	14.3%	18.2%
Adult	27.3%	29.8%	23.7%	25.7%	24.4%	26.7%

Source: CSO

In terms of education, the figures in **Table 4** indicate a good proportion of people with an “Upper secondary” qualification **within the town as a whole** at 23.4%. A Lower secondary education was attained by 17.1% of the population while 14.4% have either no education or a “Primary education” only. The level of education attainment has been increasing gradually over time.

Table 4: Education 2022: New Ross town (where stated by respondent)

	None or primary	Lower 2 nd	Upper 2 nd	Tech or vocational	Advanced or Higher	Degree	Honours degree	Postgraduate
Number	754	894	1225	614	652	336	486	269
percent	14.4%	17.1%	23.4%	11.7%	12.5%	6.4%	9.3%	5.1%

Source: CSO

Table 5 provides the latest information on economic status and shows a slightly higher proportion of the population at work in 2022 at 49.3% compared with 46.4% in 2016. The number of people unemployed has correspondingly fallen to 8.4% from 13.5% with the 2022 figures now providing a break-down between short and long-term unemployment. A slightly higher proportion of people have entered the workforce from former family-based responsibilities, although a slightly higher number of people are also now classified as retired.

Table 5: Economic Status 2016 & 2022: New Ross town

	2016		2022	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
At work	2936	46.4%	3449	49.3%
Looking for first job	121	1.9%	97	1.4%
Short-term unemployed	857	13.5%	186	2.7%
Long-term unemployed			397	5.7%
Student	525	8.3%	622	8.9%
Looking after home/family	559	8.8%	500	7.2%
Retired	964	15.2%	1203	17.2%
Unable to work due to sickness or disability	354	5.6%	479	6.9%
Other	354	0.2%	57	0.8%
Total	6329		6990	

Figure 1 provides an illustration of occupations in all New Ross town. It indicates a high number of people working in “Processing, Plant and Machinery” at 14.3% and “Skilled Trades” at 13.1%, although both figures are slightly reduced on those of 16.3% and 14.6% for 2016. By comparison, the proportions of people working in either a professional or technical capacity has increased to 9.6% and 7.8% respectively, from 6.9% and 6.9%, while the proportion in elementary occupations has increased to 11.6% from 10.5%.

Figure 1: Occupations 2022: New Ross town (Source: CSO)

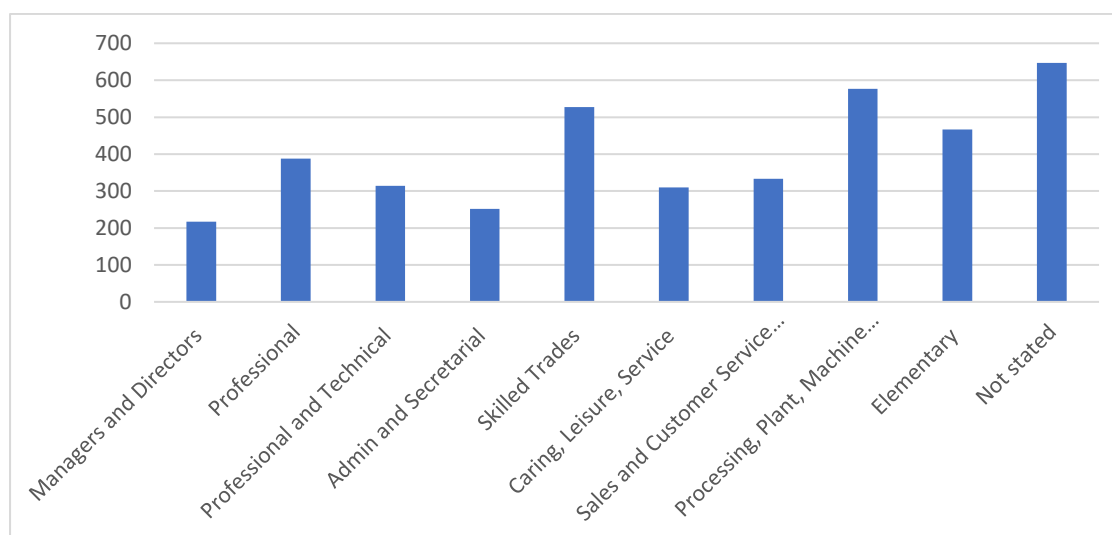
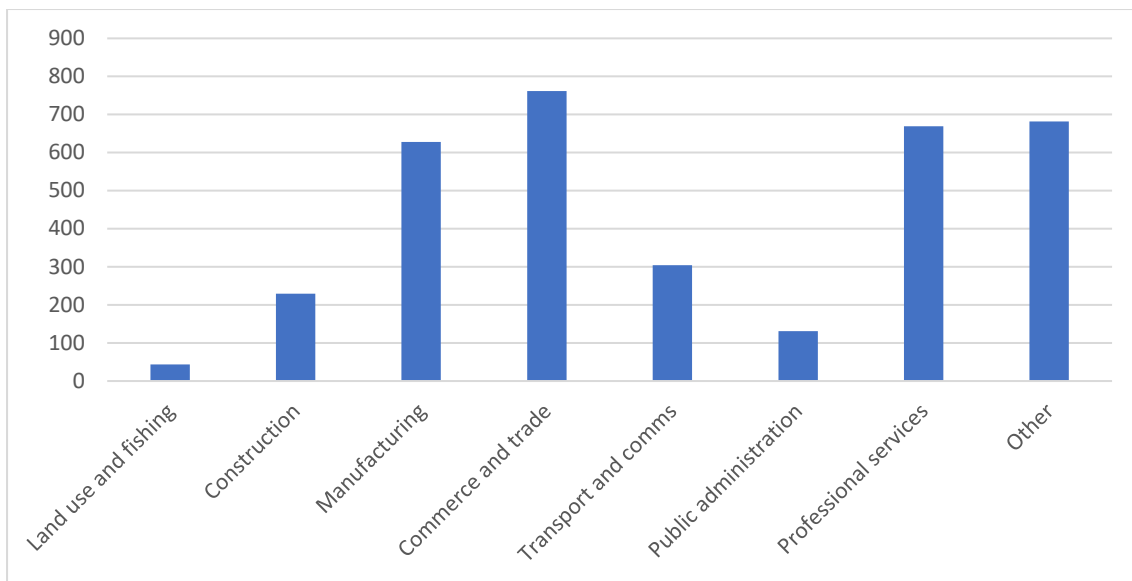


Figure 2 provides a similar picture for industries, with the highest number of people shown to be engaged in “Commerce and Trade” at 22.1%, followed by “Professional Services” at 19.4% and “Manufacturing” at 18.2% (a slight decline on 2016). A very small proportion are involved in “Agriculture, Forestry or Fishing” at 1.3% despite New Ross being at the centre of a large rural area.

Figure 2: Industries 2022: New Ross town (Source: CSO)



It is useful to make a comparison with other rural Irish towns. Gorey is a town which is often compared with New Ross, largely because it is of a similar size, but also because it is perceived to have had more recent success economically. However, a comparison between the two towns indicates that Gorey has a similar age profile. The same is true of the more central areas of both towns. The relative patterns for Family Cycle are similar, but there are fewer families with early school or pre-adolescent children (9.4% and 12.1%) than in Gorey (12.0% and 16.9%) and more households of retired people (12.8% compared with just 5.9%).

Figure 3a: Age class New Ross (Source: CSO)

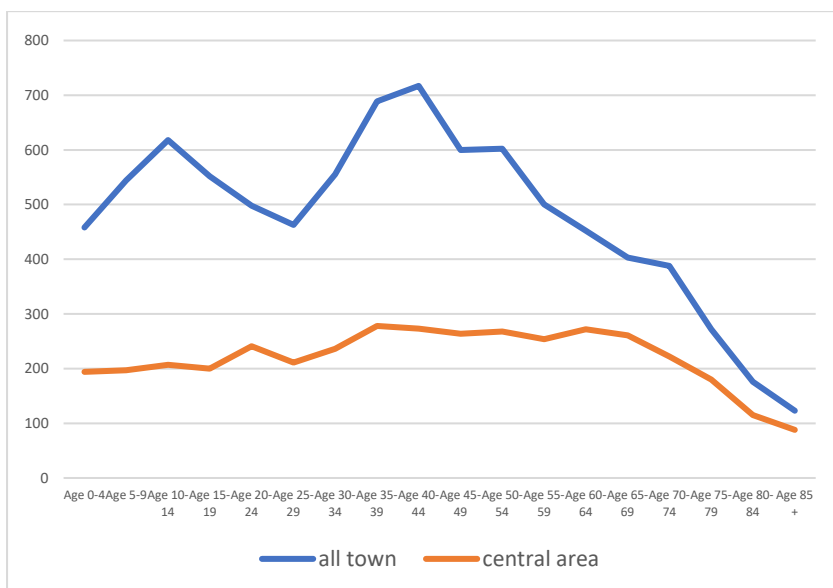
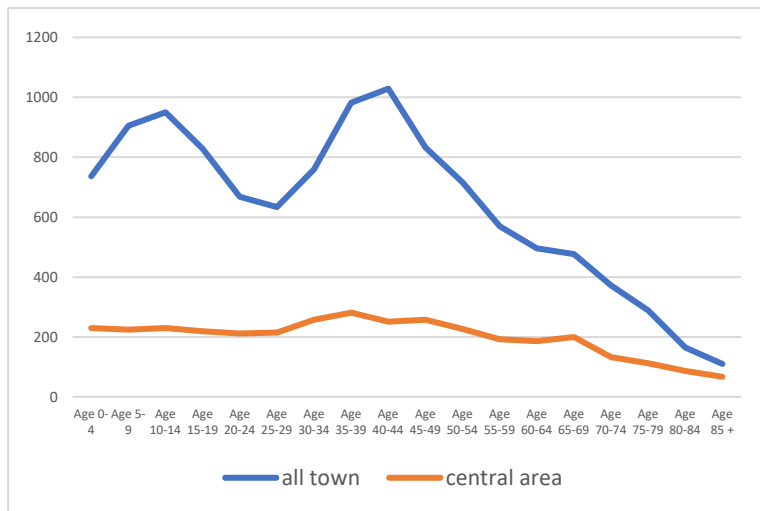


Figure 3b: Age class Gorey (Source: CSO)



Social class indicates a higher proportion of people in Gorey belong to the “Managerial and Technical class” (25.1% in Gorey as compared with 17.8% in New Ross). Patterns of Educational Achievement are very similar between the two towns, and the proportion of people with more advanced qualifications, e.g. Honours Degree, has increased in New Ross from 6.4% to 9.3% to approach the level of 10.2% in Gorey. Occupational patterns indicate a higher proportion of Professional workers at 14.2% in Gorey compared with 9.6% in New Ross, and also a higher level of Managers and Directors at 7.5% compared with 5.4%. There are relatively more people employed in Commerce and Trade in Gorey at 26.1% compared with 22.1%, and a smaller proportion working in Manufacturing at 14.4% compared with 18.2%.

A more distinct difference can be noted when comparing the proportion of people in the urban centre who are in deprivation (i.e. compared with Ireland as a whole) as defined by the Relative and Absolute Deprivation Indices used by Pobal. Here, figures are only available at present of 2016. At this time, Gorey scored better on both counts at -11.5 and -7.1 in 2016, compared with New Ross at -18.6 and -14.4 (the national average is zero), with Gorey also having realised a greater improvement in reduced absolute deprivation since 2011. Some improvement is likely since this time in line with growth in the national economy. Levels of Disability are similar for both Gorey and New Ross, although both reveal much higher levels in the Urban EDs at 21.7% and 20.5% respectively compared with figures for the Rural EDs of 12.5% and 12.6%, a factor partly influenced by relative age differences.

Relevance of Demographics to Town Plan

The demographics indicate that New Ross is not so different from many other rural towns with evidence of a rather skewed population in the centre and some deprivation, being balanced

by relative prosperity on the outskirts of the town. It does indicate that New Ross is missing some of the younger demographics, including people of an age with young families, which suggests that people may have left (or not moved in) due to employment opportunities elsewhere. New Ross also lacks a third level college and this is demonstrated by the fact that only a modest segment of the population falls within the 18-25 age range, potentially compounding the problem of there being rather little for young people to do as reported by many of the project meeting participants and survey respondents. However, the comparison with Gorey shows no extreme differences.

The relatively low level of younger population segments does present an issue in that young people often have more disposable income, or at least are willing to spend this on consumerables and nights out. Young families typically engage in higher spending activity too. What money is spent on nightlife occurs largely in Irishtown which is located outside of the town centre. However, the location is still relatively quiet compared with nightspots elsewhere, being only more active than the centre of town where most of the very limited activity occurs around John Street and Mary Street. The low level of activity means that the problem of on-street drinking, a problem found in every town, is perhaps more evident in New Ross because of the quiet surroundings.

2.1 Frontline results from New Ross Business Survey

A total of 71 businesses responded to the business survey. Of this number, 72% are located in the town centre, 20% on the outskirts, 3% in Rosbercon and 6% out of town. Of these, 45% are retail businesses, 33% are services, and 18% are café's, restaurants or hospitality. Small numbers were recorded for Commerce/Trade/Warehousing, Transport/Communications, Construction/Building supplies, Food/Agricultural, and Industrial/Manufacturing.

Dependence on customers or clients visiting premises

Of the businesses, 73% believe themselves to be *highly dependent* on customers or clients visiting their premises, while 13% are *moderately dependent*. Of the total, 41% are *very dependent* on pedestrian footfall and 24% describe their business as being *moderately dependent*. In addition, 27% stated that their business was dependent on nearby car parking.

Impact of bypass and the effect of traffic






The largest proportion of responses at 39% stated that their business is *positively affected* by traffic movement in the town, but 20% considered this factor to have a *negative* impact, while for 27% this was considered *neither positive or negative*, and for 14% not applicable. Several respondents added that they believe that traffic flows make their business more visible, while others suggested that parking was the greater issue, including paid parking, with one arguing

that parking on Mary Street is “deplorable”. When asked about the impact of the bypass on their business, 33% thought there had been *no change*, while 27% believed there had been a *small improvement* and 20% a *large improvement*. Only 13% believed there had been a *reduction* in business, with one thinking this had caused a large reduction. As trading patterns have changed post-pandemic, some respondents found it difficult to judge and thought also that other factors could be responsible of the changes in the business environment. Three respondents believed that the bypass had made it easier for customers to come into town, including from Rosbercon, Counties Waterford and Kilkenny. It is worth noting here that, in some other towns, bypasses have had a negative effect on passing trade and businesses, whereas in New Ross the improved environment and reduced congestion has been welcomed.

Source of customers and clients

For 24% of businesses, most customers were believed to be *located in New Ross*, but a *larger proportion* at 47% stated that most of their customers were from Counties Wexford and Kilkenny including from within 10km of the town. (Note proportions do not add up to 100%).

Figure 2.1: Source of customers




Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
In New Ross		24.29%	17
Within 10km of the town		47.14%	33
In Counties Wexford or Kilkenny		52.86%	37
Elsewhere in Ireland		21.43%	15
Outside of Ireland		12.86%	9
		answered	70
		skipped	1

Dependence on visitors to tourists

Half of the businesses surveyed had *no dependence* on visitors, but for 14% the dependence is *high* while for 38% it is *slight*. These outcome indicates that, while New Ross is in the process of promoting itself as a tourism Destination Town, the current level of dependence is

modest, although it could, of course, be advantageously increased. Some respondents noted that tourists tend to arrive by coach and not have time to shop in town or otherwise do not have many options to overnight.

Figure 2.2: Dependence on visitors and tourist visitors

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes (slight dependence)		38.03%	27
Yes (high dependence)		14.08%	10
No		50.70%	36
		answered	71
		skipped	0







Availability of business services in New Ross

46% of respondents acknowledged that there are *services* which the business needs which *cannot be found* in New Ross, although for 19% of businesses the question was not applicable. An absence of printing services, a phone shop, cloud-based services and couriers was noted by one business while another mentioned a lack of informal meeting places such as suitable cafes. The absence of sufficient numbers of businesses catering for tourists was mentioned by one respondent, namely restaurants, accommodation, campsites, river activities, bike hire and water points.

Availability of qualified employees

While 13% of businesses reported having *no difficulties* finding suitable employees, 35% acknowledged that it *can be difficult* and the largest proportion at 44% replied that they found it *very difficult*. Of course, what is meant by suitability varies from business to business. It could mean technically qualified or just responsible and hard working. Some feedback on this was provided by a follow-up question in which 48% of businesses referred to *specific skills* and 50% to *insufficient qualifications or capability*. Others referred to a lack of affordable accommodation, a shortage of young people and a lack of transport. One business reported having few applications in response to vacancies. As respondents were allowed to tick more than one box the figures do not amount to 100%.

Figure 2.3: Reasons why if it difficult to find suitable employees

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
Affordable accommodation		21.67%	13
Lack of public transport		16.67%	10
Specific skills needed		48.33%	29
Insufficient qualified or capable employees		50.00%	30
Not enough young people in the town		20.00%	12
Other (please specify):		13.33%	8
		answered	60
		skipped	11

Owning or renting business premises

The largest proportion, 62%, of respondents *own their premises*. 39% rent their premises. Small numbers work from home or the business hub. Of those renting their premises, half (50%) agreed that the rental situation *did impact on their willingness to invest* in the business while 39% stated that it *did not*. For the remainder, the question is not applicable. One respondent said that he/she was not prepared pay for improvements to the exterior, while another referred to the short length of the lease. One respondent replied that the high rent did not leave sufficient funds to make investment while another said their business was ready to expend, but was unable to find suitable properties to either rent or purchase.

Can anything practically be done to improve the town's attractiveness for business?









Most respondents (81%) thought that things could be done to improve the town's attractiveness for business. 10% did not and 9% did not know. There were numerous responses to this question. These cannot be categorised exclusively. Among the responses relevant to the urban realm were the need to reduce *vacancy and dereliction* (7), *pedestrianisation* (3), a *covered entertainment area*, more *events/festivals*, a *crafts hub/market*, *better lighting*, more *street art*, *clean shop fronts*, a *meeting space*, *signage* and

maps (2), public toilets (2), litter and improved footpath maintenance (3), cycle paths and legible road markings. Parking, including free parking (5) (including for short stops) or a lack of parking (2) was mentioned by several respondents. A need for overnight accommodation (2), more large retail chains in centre (2), more tenancies, cafes and restaurants (5), and nighttime activities (2), including a food market, (2). Other suggestions included direct bus services to Dublin, tourism promotion, a business incubation centre, and more business collaboration and cross-promotion. Many respondents referred to the need to tackle anti-social behaviour (7), including on-street drinking, with CCTV or a higher Garda presence.

Can anything be done to increase the number of people coming into the town centre?

Again, there were numerous responses to this question. The responses provide more evidence of agreement across the sample than the individual suggestions to the preceding question. Respondents gave their highest overall ranking to vacancy and dereliction (75%), followed by more diversity of food/eating options (65%), accommodation options (53%), retail diversity (50%) and town centre appearance (50%).

Figure 2.4: What can be done to increase the number of people coming into the town centre.

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Improve footpaths, seating, etc.		19.12%	13
2	Provide cycle lanes and cycle parking		14.71%	10
3	Improved walking and cycle facilities on the bridge		25.00%	17
4	Change or improve car parking		30.88%	21
5	Improve signage		16.18%	11
6	Improve appearance of town centre		50.00%	34
7	Improve visitor/heritage information		13.24%	9
8	Address problems of vacancies and dereliction		75.00%	51

9	More retail diversity		50.00%	34
10	More diversity of food/eating options		64.71%	44
11	More accommodation choice		52.94%	36
12	Evening or Sunday opening hours		29.41%	20
13	More events (e.g. music, arts, food, heritage, etc)		30.88%	21
14	Improve sense of daytime safety		30.88%	21
15	Improve nighttime safety		33.82%	23
			answered	68
			skipped	3

2.2 Proposed strategies in response to the results of results of the Business Survey

Filling the vacuum created by the N25 Bypass

The RSES for the Southern Region has identified transport connectivity as being very important for economic growth. The town is not served by a motorway or by Irish Rail. However, an opportunity has been provided by the opening of the N25 Bypass, prior to which the town suffered from considerable congestion. When asked in the Business Survey about the impact of the bypass on their business, the largest proportion of respondents thought that it had a positive effect on business. These results are interesting. In some other towns, bypasses have had a distinct negative effect on passing trade and businesses. However, in New Ross, the improved environment provided an opportunity to develop new facilities in the vicinity of the road. The investment in the riverfront, together with the crossing facilities, have had a significant positive impact and better linked the town to the river. This positive impact can be built upon through the siting of new attractions such as the Norman Centre and Emigrant Park or through the provision of new facilities for users of the prospective greenway.

Reverse vacancy and repair dereliction

Vacancy and dereliction were the problems that respondents rated highest in the Business Survey. Vacant and derelict buildings are very visible. They affect the attractiveness of the town and present an impression of decay and decline. However, these twin scourges are not unique to New Ross, but affect very many Irish towns. Despite the much publicised Housing Crisis, the vacancy rate in Ireland in 2022 was 7.8%.

There are numerous vacant and derelict properties in New Ross as outlined earlier in this report. Many vacant buildings are represented by former commercial buildings and shops, including rooms above shops. It would be difficult to fill all these buildings given the expectations of floor space and accessibility that businesses and prospective residents now have. Demand for commercial sites is understood to be low, but there is apparent demand for residential. Government has recently increased the number of grants and initiatives available for urban regeneration, including for the conversion of vacant properties into rental accommodation.

Dereliction is more serious and refers to properties in too poor structural condition for use or habitation. The level of dereliction is understood to be higher in New Ross than that of other towns in the county, although this is partly due to the historic legacy of mercantile buildings from when the town was a prosperous port. David McWilliams of the *Irish Times* has described dereliction as being a feature of affluence rather than poverty. Only wealthy people, he argues, can allow such prospective assets to fall into disrepair. Indeed, owners have to pay a penalty of 7% per year for buildings listed on the Dereliction Register. In New Ross the situation is not helped by the rather few absentee landowners who own much of the town. Some owners have taken initiatives to put derelict buildings to use, but others are waiting for assurance that the property market will cover their costs. At present, the commercial market in New Ross is not strong.

It is widely agreed that local authorities have few options in providing local incentives or penalties to disincentivise dereliction. Rather, it is government which is best placed to introduce meaningful penalties for hoarding land rather than putting it to use. Once buildings are added to the Derelict Sites Register, annual levies are applied by local authorities, but these are modest given the frequent low value of properties. Buildings are added to the Register once they have been inspected and found to be in a poor or dangerous condition. The Council first checks the Land Registry to locate the owner, although the register is not comprehensive and owners can often be difficult to identify. Councils prefer to work with owners where they can be identified and are willing to cooperate in returning the building to a stable state. Supports are available, including under the Historic Towns Initiative and the

Repair and Leasing Scheme whereby Local Authorities can support owners in transforming buildings into residential units. Where there is no positive response from the owners, compulsory purchase may be considered with the sale value being net of any levies accumulated.

For vacant properties, the new Croí Cónaithe Vacant Properties Refurbishment Grant has been made available for the renovation. As the take-up of grants to date had been modest due to the need to demonstrate restoration plans for buildings of low commercial, maximum grant levels have recently been increased from €50,000 to €70,000.

The Town Centre Living Project (DRDD, 2020) has found that new build is actually slightly more costly than refurbishment, but that renovation is still more expensive than constructing a purpose designed building. As the respective differences in cost are not great, this suggests that positive initiatives can make a difference in encouraging investment. However, important practical issues include a lack of guidance and information, low land values and returns, structural integrity, uncertain costs linked to building condition, inaccessibility, parking, difficulty of finding retail tenants, rights of way, legal issues and building regulations (e.g. energy efficiency, H&S, fire). Planning permission can be a barrier in some cases, but this requirement has been waived until 2025 for the vacant properties being put to residential use. In some cases, dispensations are also possible, for example in relation to disabled access or insulation, when it comes to hard-to-covert older buildings or first floor premises. A disincentive for many potential landlords has been the fear of problem tenants (of which there is much awareness on the New Ross grapevine). For prospective buyers there is the challenge of obtaining a mortgage, especially for above shop premises. This may require the services of a broker, which is another hurdle, if not necessarily an insurmountable one. Nevertheless, the myriad of possible constraints can appear overwhelming. Local Authorities have Vacant Homes Officers, but there is value in providing more one-stop shop advice and support with grant applications.

Wexford County Council is taking a more proactive approach to dereliction by ramping up inspections and adding buildings in particular poor states of repair to the Derelict Sites Register. It is currently being supported in this endeavour by recently announced new funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) of which €6.5 million has been allocated to Wexford. The fund is a revolving one which is intended to be reimbursed through levies and property sales until 2030.

Despite the many challenges, the principal disincentive for both vacant and derelict properties often boils down to owners' lack of confidence that neighbourhood regeneration will actually occur and that property prices will rise to a level that covers the costs of refurbishment. If the

neighbourhood is one of apparent decline and dereliction, it is difficult to make the first move. One proven way to overcome this is for the authorities to focus their regeneration efforts on one place so that local property owners have the confidence that adjacent building will also be restored, be this with public money, private money or in response to a new investment. A sequential process can follow whereby new activity commences outwards or at nearby locations once the first location demonstrates success. This strategic spatial should be adopted in New Ross together with proposals for investment in the public realm and the built heritage of the town. The new URDF funding can support this in a more strategic approach whereby WCC can compulsory purchase more properties in targeted areas. This approach could favour locations such as North Street or Bridge Street by complementing the public investment which has been made in the Norman Hill Gardens, or that planned in the vicinity of Lady's Lane in line with the opening of the Norman Centre.

Revitalise the town centre

Many responses to both the consultation and business survey expressed a desire to see a greater diversity of shops and more nightlife in New Ross. In practice, decisions affecting greater economic activity are largely in the hands of private businesses and investors. Local Authorities and State Agencies can only provide some leverage. One area of intervention is with regard to vacancy and dereliction as discussed above, particularly where buildings can be made available for residential use, including lower income rentals. Another initiative has been the pedestrianisation of Bridge Street. This will help to reduce pedestrian severance between the Quay and North Quay and between South Street and North Street, but there are some concerns that it could displace traffic elsewhere. Places to sit and rest are important, but only really available at present at the riverside. In this respect, the Local Authority is supporting the opening of an open space in the former butcher's market at the Shambles. It has also attempted to persuade retail outlets to stay open longer or agree on late night opening. This proposal has had little momentum to date as it still requires footfall to be sufficient to cover shopkeepers' costs, noting also the difficulty of finding staff. An increase in visitors is only likely to follow at a sufficient level once the tourism developments of the Norman Centre and Greenway are open. For the latter, it is imperative that nearby car parking is available and that cyclists have the option of being able to take a loop from the end of the formal greenway to the north or be able to safely cross O'Hanranhan's Bridge. If these additional numbers of visitors are to spend time in the town, accommodation is vital. The Local Authority has identified a site for a prospective hotel and is now looking for private investors to take this forward.

The night-time economy

More nightlife can be stimulated through the supply of more accommodation for younger residents and a range of hotels, hostels and B&Bs for overnight visitors. What money is spent on nightlife at present occurs largely in Irishtown which is located outside of the town centre. There is very limited night-time activity in the centre of town. In a few years, though, many visitors will arrive from the Greenway. Families will be amongst these users and can be expected to look for places to relax and eat on the early evening. Young people will stay out until later supporting local pubs. Supporting infrastructure should include the provision of good lighting, nearby car parking, accessibility signage, security, campervan parking, and restoration of vacant properties for resident and visitor accommodation. At present, food options are limited, including within local pubs, some of which are not overtly welcoming to visitors. An expansion of the local taxi service would help too. Applications for Purple Flag accreditation can be made by towns which have succeeded in stimulating more nightlife or made efforts to manage the evening and night-time economy.

Increase hospitality

There is no tourism plan for New Ross. Rather tourism planning originates at county level. The Local Authority has a dedicated Tourism Officer and was instrumental in the successful application for New Ross to become a Destination Town with a target of 500,000 visitors per year. Fáilte Ireland is preparing a new tourism plan, the Wexford Experience Destination Plan, which will draw on the town's Norman heritage and forge links with similar nearby historic towns in Kilkenny and Waterford to develop a distinct identity allied to the *Ireland's Ancient East* brand. Tourism opportunities are emerging with the new development at Rosslare Europort. Work is also underway to link and develop the natural attractions of the River Barrow and Hook head.

A visitor survey in 2019 informed local tourism thinking, identifying the importance of providing more attractions and activities. Families were identified as the largest segment at 23%, but also "Footloose Socialisers" a group motivated by shared experiences, curiosity, history and culinary experiences. Improving the public realm, including through signage, marked trails (of which three principal trails were devised) and a better connection between the Quayside and town were highlighted and remain valid. The report also highlighted the importance of the attractiveness and appeal of the town, well-maintained spaces, opportunities to explore on foot, opportunities linked to street entertainment, food, shopping, special interests and events, together with the town's ability to present a vision and a story of itself. Workshops have recently been held with local people and businesses to explore how a coordinated approach can be achieved that promotes activities, events, shopping and nightlife.

Tourism and the South East Greenway

The South East Greenway has the potential to be transformative in bringing a significant number of visitors to New Ross. Together with the Normal Heritage Centre, it will potentially be the catalyst for the footfall needed to regenerate the town centre and to attract the diversity of shops and services called for by previous town plans and by respondents to the surveys undertaken for the Town Centre First project.

Given the prestige of the Waterford Greenway, the new South East Greenway can be expected to attract around 225,000 users in its early years and to bring in expenditure of around €3.7 million based on the spending characteristics of users of the Waterford Greenway. Given that 45% of overnight users of the incumbent greenway stayed in Dungarvan rather than Waterford, New Ross would be able to attract a similar proportion. This is especially so given that the New Ross end of the Greenway will include the Mount Elliot Tunnel and the Red Bridge which are certain to be the strongest draws for visitors. Moreover, for those cycling the whole way to Waterford, there will be the opportunity to make the return journey by river boat, a unique attraction. At present, New Ross has very little budget accommodation and the number of hotels, guest houses, AirBnBs and hostels would need to increase if it were to attract overnight stays.

The Greenway will be of particular value to Rosbercon given its location. While this is a positive outcome for New Ross, a key objective must also be to ensure that visitors cross O'Hanrahan's Bridge into the town centre. This will require a widening of the bridge to allow for sufficiently wide and comfortable pedestrian and cycling paths. It could also mean strategically siting car parking so that it is not exclusively provided in Rosbercon. As important will be to provide a loop across the River Barrow back into New Ross. This will require cyclists to ascend the hill between the town and the river to the north, but this effort can be mitigated by good facilities. The route would also pass the attractions of Mannion's Farm Shop and Pub and be close to Woodville House and Gardens.

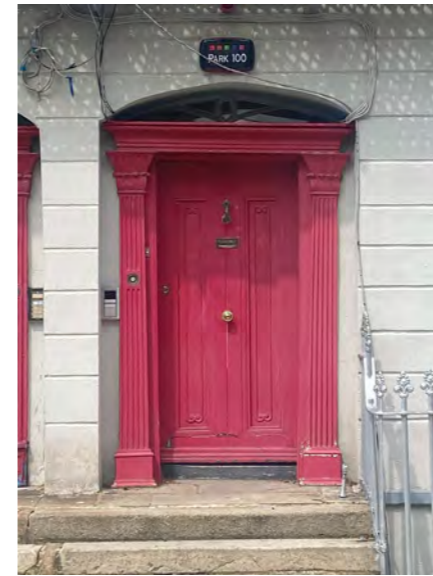
The likelihood that much expenditure will be attracted to Rosbercon is still a good outcome as it is part of the larger urban area and the same economy. It also has its own need for urban regeneration. Despite the width of the river, the attractions of New Ross should encourage many people to cross the bridge. The Dunbrody Famine Ship will be very visible from the west bank. In addition, the Barrow Princess will bring some greenway users directly into the town.

In summary,

- Dedicated car parking should be made available in New Ross. If car parking for the greenway is only promoted along the route itself or at end points, local daytime expenditure will be more attracted mostly to Rosbercon;
- Cycle lanes with good separation from traffic will be needed on O’Hanrahan’s Bridge if expenditure is to be attracted into New Ross and not restricted to Rosbercon;
- A good cycle path along the R700 from Mount Elliot would attract expenditure in New Ross;
- Given the length of the greenway, it is likely that many return trips will be by the Barrow Princess boat to the marina.
- Measures to increase the attractiveness of the town and to draw people into the central area where most shops and cafes are located.

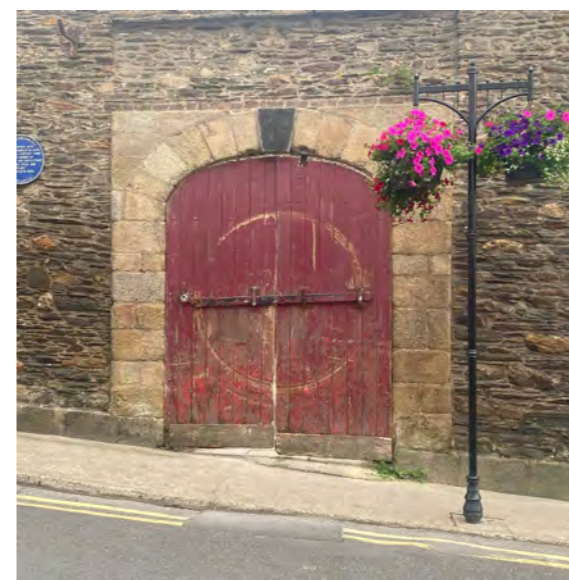
The River Barrow also has potential for tourism development and this is currently being investigated for its Blueway potential by a Masterplan. Waterways Ireland has also already published a five-year management plan for the river as of February 2023. New Ross already has a marina for private leisure boat traffic. The Barrow Princess ferry also provides a tourism service between Waterford and New Ross and it is likely that this will be expanded once the Greenway is in place. The river is already used by the local rowing club who are proposing to expand their jetty and use the river for regular trips and events. Riverhollow Wild Camping is a basic campsite set in natural wooded setting a few kilometres to the north of New Ross.

The river is tidal at New Ross and this restricts the range of water activities which can be proposed, particularly for younger people, but does not prevent more use by boaters, experienced kayakers or the development of the banks for footpaths. Blueways have been established on the River Shannon, Shannon-erne and Lough Derg and are intended as networks of multi-activity recreational trails and sites requiring cooperation between service providers such as canoe trips, cycle hire and places to stay or eat. In County Kildare, the River Barrow Blueway has recently been opened and extends as far south as Athy following funding of €27,000 provided largely by LEADER in collaboration with a local action group. The river and canal are available for both cycling and walking. The Barrow Way is a popular long distance walking route which covers a distance of 114km as far south as St. Mullins. An extension of the route to the south would encounter some barriers in terms of private land, but this need not prevent County Wexford from developing the river’s local potential.



NEW ROSS HISTORY HERITAGE CHARACTER 2023

NEW ROSS TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN



New Ross Town Centre First Plan

APPENDIX C – History, Heritage, Character Report

Prepared by

Howley Hayes Cooney Architecture

For

Wexford County Council

October 2023

New Ross

History, Heritage, Character

ARCHITECTURE



New Ross Town Centre First Plan

September 2023



Howley Hayes Cooney Architecture were appointed by Wexford County Council as part of a design team led by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds working on the Town Centre First Plan for New Ross. This project seeks to produce a place-making strategy focused on the strategic regeneration and compact development of New Ross, in order to increase the resilience of the local economy. More particularly, this report briefly sets out the historic development of the town and analyses its existing heritage and character to understand what is important and what has been damaging to it and its setting, before setting out a number of recommendations for future research and potential phased improvements.



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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Understanding New Ross
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- 4.0 Heritage in the Town
- 5.0 Character Appraisal
- 6.0 Threats and Opportunities
- 7.0 Recommendations



1.0 Introduction

Located picturesquely on the side of a hill that drops away to the Ross river, formed by the tidal and deep Nore and Barrow), New Ross's elevated topography and strategic siting intimately bound up with its evolution and history and is a defining part of the town's character and identity. Its natural riverine advantages led to it developing as a significant inland port and Anglo-Norman walled town with a wealth of historic buildings, places and a unique character and considerable untapped potential.

Good conservation, regeneration and placemaking starts with a broad understanding of the place, its history, its evolution, its component parts and their significance. Historic structures and their settings are of high value and embodied energy even despite sometimes having fallen out of

use, and with the urgent need for sustainability, housing and reinvigoration of New Ross, never has appropriately harnessing this existing fabric and history been more important.

With imagination and high design standards, even bold intervention, new viable purpose can be given to buildings and places.

Much has been written on New Ross's long and venerable history and this report is not intended to be an exhaustive synthesis of that, but rather a means to broadly understand its evolution, morphology, fabric and essential character. The report will then give a brief overview of its existing built and archaeological heritage, before appraising the character of New Ross. It will include building typologies, materials and prominent detailing, alterations and infill,

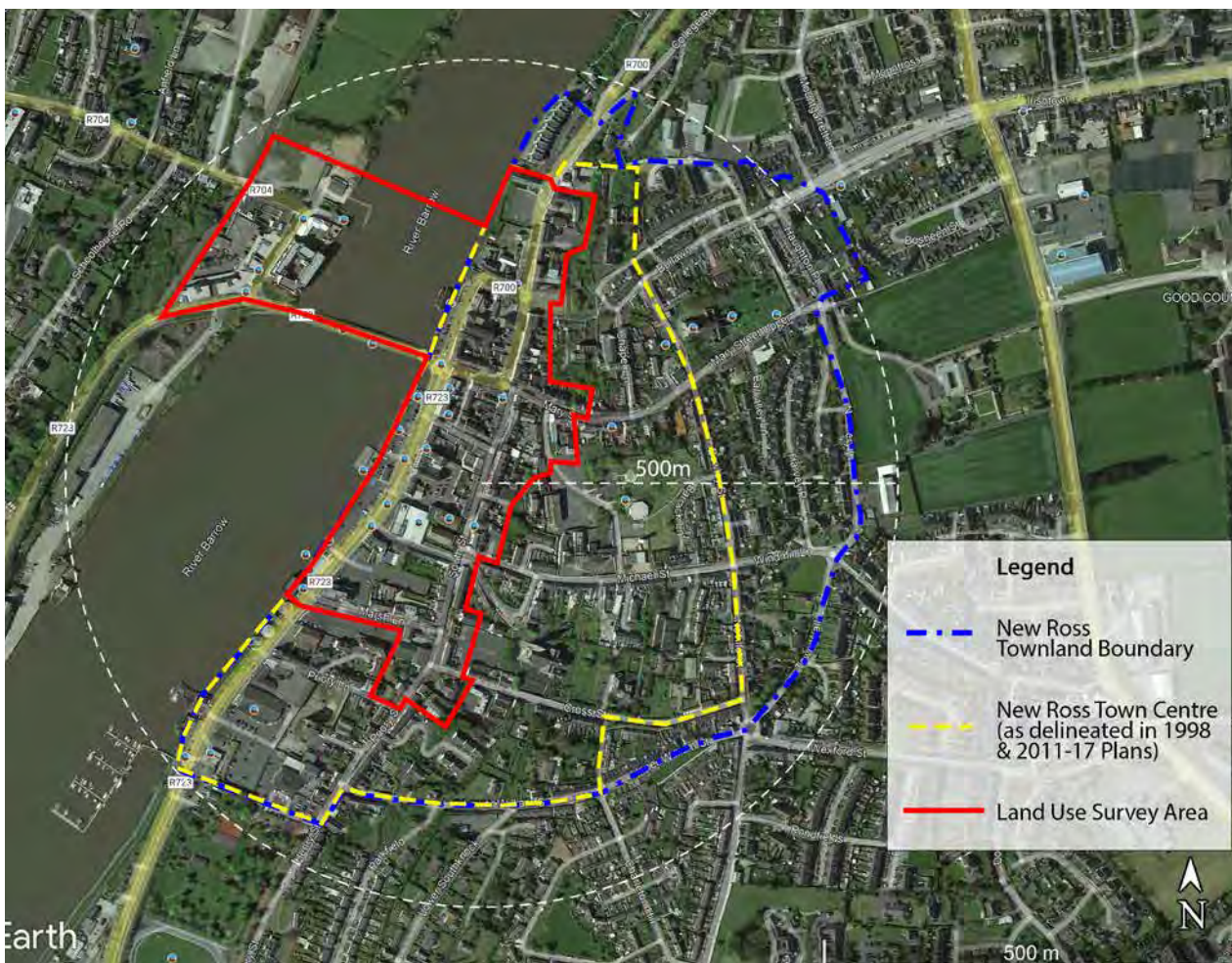


Figure 1 - New Ross Study Area

important views, street furniture and surfacing and positive and negative elements. Green space and nature are discussed in relation to the setting of built and archaeological heritage and how it contributes to the character of the town.

The report will conclude with a number of heritage recommendations and identify a number of derelict and vacant buildings and structures and that could be drivers for regeneration and greater appreciation of the town's rich heritage.

As throughout the country, the Heritage Council plays an important role in Wexford, and by extension, New Ross through the provision of funding for a Heritage Officer. It also provides a broad-ranging advice and guidance series, funding streams like the Historic Towns Initiative, conservation internships, organising National Heritage Week. Its Irish Walled Town Network (IWTN) focuses on uniting and co-ordinating the strategic efforts of local authorities and communities involved in the management, conservation and enhancement of historic walled towns in Ireland, like New Ross. There are four main strands to its work: providing grants for town wall conservation; providing grants for community festivals and heritage interpretation; training community groups on how best to utilise their place's heritage. Coordinating research with third level institutes and publishing advisory documents.

We would like to thank the following people who generously gave of their time and expertise to inform this report: Catherine McLoughlin, Linda Doran, Tom Banville, Tom Fox, Myles Courtney, Clare O'Morchoe.

2.0 Understanding New Ross

Early History

Writing in 1837, Samuel Lewis described New Ross as an inland port, borough and market town, *'beautifully situated on the side of a hill declining so precipitously to the Ross river [formed by the Nore and Barrow], which unite about one mile to the north.'* This elevated topography and strategic siting on the tidal and deep River Barrow, Ireland's second largest river, is a defining part of the town's character and New Ross's history is intimately bound up with its fortunes.

According to Lewis, Saint Abban and Saint Evin built a monastery and church on the eastern banks of the Barrow in the Sixth Century, around which a town evolved called Rossglas, subsequently Rossmactrium, or Rossmactreion, the Wood of the Son of Treoi. New Ross was formally founded by the Earl of Pembroke, William Marshal, a leader of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, and his wife Isabella de Clare, daughter of 'Strongbow' and Eva (Aoife) MacMurrough, between 1192 and 1207. The town was developed in a strategic location near the manorial centre at Old Ross and was intended to serve as a port for the Marshal lands of the Barrow, Nore and Suir valleys.

The first bridge was constructed on the orders of Marshal by 1210, led to it becoming known as Ros Ponte or Pons Novus. By the century's end the town had become the busiest port in Ireland by. Located on the west bank of the river Barrow, Rosbercon was, prior to 1247 part of the borough of New Ross. The existence of a bridge from 1207 linking it to New Ross, and the establishment of a Dominican Priory here in 1267, may have attracted the first settlement (O'Drisceoil, 1996, 29).

New Ross was without defences until the late-thirteenth century when the 'frequent inroads and predatory excursions of the neighbouring Chieftains' and a feud between the Fitzmaurices and the De Burghs in 1264 convinced the

inhabitants of the necessity to construct a defensive wall (Coey et al, 3). A poem of 1265 written in French by Friar Michael 'Bernardi', of Kyldare provides an illuminating contemporary account of its construction by the townspeople.

They made a resolution thus: that a wall of stone and mortar they would build around the town, for that war was causing them concern. At Candlemas [2 February] they began; to mark out the fosse they went, how the wall was to go, the chief citizens went to mark it out...they summoned labourers directly... but the hired men got little done. They sat in Council and discussed the plan as never was [put into effect] in England or France...on Monday to begin with the vintners would go to the fosse...from daybreak till the stroke of three...on Sunday the ladies go...to heave the stone and carry it out of the fosse...declaring that they will built a gate...the fosse is 20 feet [6m] deep and extends for a full league [c.4.5km]. When it is complete there will be no need to have a watch... not an Irishman in Ireland will be so bold as to dare attack it.

(BM Harl, MS Shields 1975-6, 28-32)

Written to commemorate the walling of Ross by its citizens in 1279, a poem, Rithmus facture Ville de Ross, makes clear the disposition and trading advantages the medieval town initially enjoyed:

*In no other isle is known / Such a hospitable town;
/ Joyfully the people greet/ Every stranger in the
street./ Free is he to sell and buy, / And sustain no
tax thereby.*

Soon the distinction between those living *within the walls* and those *without* began to be made. Irishtown to the north developed as a distinct suburb at this point. In 1283 a charter granted to New Ross gave specific permission for the extension of burgages by the reclamation of land from the river (Colfer, 2002, 173). It also stipulated that the burgage plots should be 20 feet wide, many of which were still evident in the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1841.



Figure 2 - 1687 Map (Courtesy of Linda Doran and New Ross Properties)

New Ross's tax exempt trading position was the source of a bitter dispute between it and the King's port of Waterford, and soon trade restrictions were introduced to limit its success. This, combined with political unrest, led to a slow decline in the fortunes of New Ross from the fourteenth century onwards, and its subsequent history was one of repeated attempts at capture.

The town repelled the Duke of Ormonde during the Confederate and Civil Wars in 1641, and later Ormonde defended the town against Cromwell. In 1643, during these wars, the first (Marshal) bridge was destroyed.

The Plan of the Town

In 1577 'the walls stand to this day, a few streets and houses in the town, no small part thereof is turned to orchards. The greater part of the town is steep and streaming upwards.' The earliest known plan of New Ross dates from 1649 and was reproduced by Herbert Hore in his History of the Town and County of Wexford Old and New Ross (1900). The plan shows the D-shaped enclosure of

the walls with a grid pattern of streets and depicts three water gates on the quay with the block house at the southern end and a parallel tower to the north, five gates and five towers are also illustrated at this point.

A description of 1684 by Robert Thomas Leigh, Esq. of Rosegarland provides an instructive account of the town's disposition and makeup at that time:

'New Ross is surrounded with a strong wall, built of lime and stone, seated upon a rock, which is cut on the outside of the wall in the nature of a ditch and adds much to the strength of it. It is in circumference above a mile, and is fortified by the waterside by a citadel and fort, and has twelve strong towers or castles, and four gates to the land side, besides some slips to the waterside. The town so much remains thereof built, being about 150 stone houses, slated, and as many thatched ones, lies on the side of a steep hill or rock, shelving down to the river which lies to the west of it and is navigable for ships of great burden....'

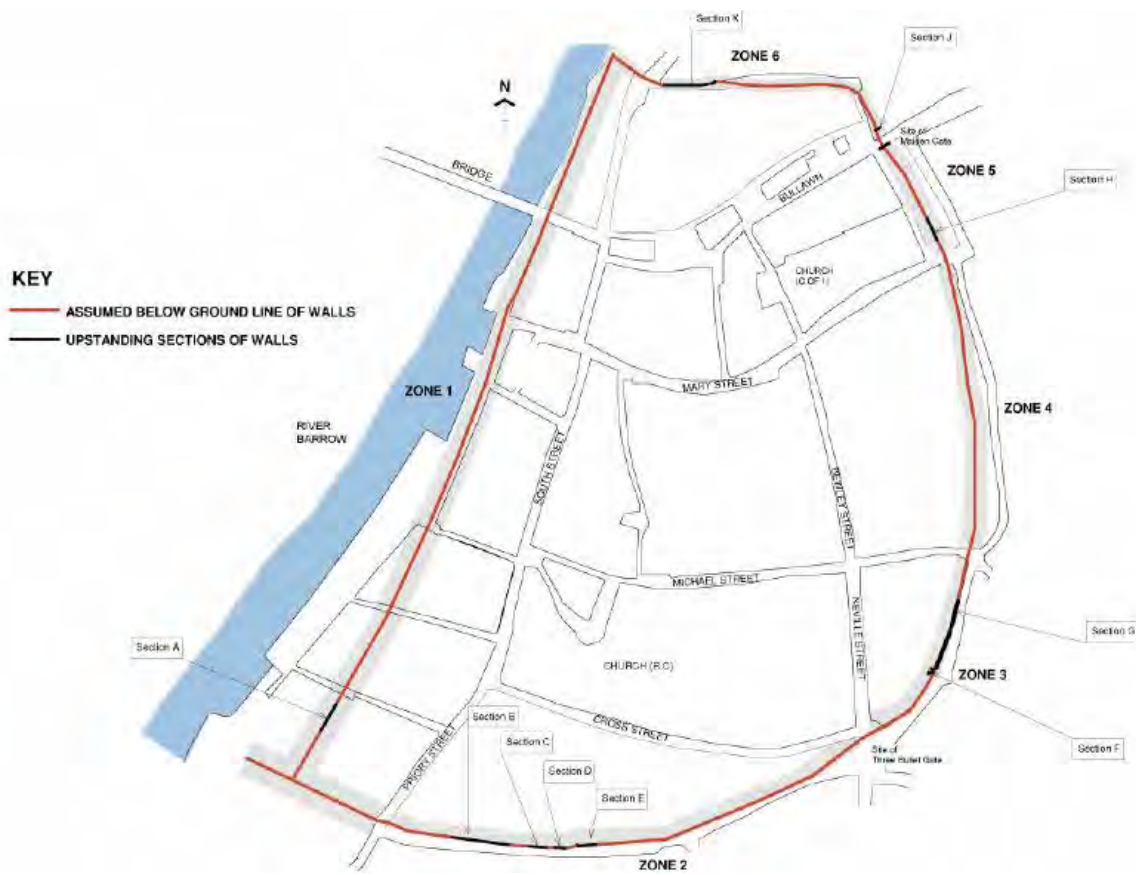


Figure 3 - Map of Town Walls (From Alastair Coey's Town Wall Heritage Plan)



Figure 4 - New Ross Axonometric Reconstruction (Courtesy of Linda Doran)

The quayside was the principal locus of economic activity in the town. *The modern frontage measures 800m in length and it is probable that the medieval quays were of similar length and the line of the fortifications / first quay would have begun behind the line of South Street today.* Though unrefined, early maps and the axonometric reconstruction extrapolated from them, give an idea of the form which the quayside might have taken and depicts the river frontage as divided into a number of projecting sections or jetties. Many of the narrow lanes running at right angles to the quays from John Street, North Street, South Street and Priory Street, probably led to these jetties (O'Drisceoil, 32)

The fosse and stone medieval town as depicted on the 1687 map is more detailed than the 1649 map. It comprised Custom House Quay and Black House Quay adjacent to the river, with North Street / South Street and Friary Street running parallel, and with Church Lane / Nevin Lane laid out to the east. These streets were intersected by narrow lanes leading west-east off the quays and broader streets, such as Cross Lane, Michael's Street, Mary's Street, Bridge Street, Maiden Lane and Market Street, many of which led to gates in the



Figure 5 - Charles 'Tottenham in his Boots' (National Gallery of Ireland)

wall, with minor streets and lanes diverging from these in several directions. Key places such as the Market Place, Priory, Chapel or Barracks served as landmarks and focal points.

From the seventeenth century, the fortunes of New Ross were synonymous with a few large landholding families, most notably the Tottenhams, who bought most of the town from the Earl of Anglesey and held high public office for centuries.

According to Linda Doran:

'The minute books of the town commissioners of New Ross, Co. Wexford, survive from 1685 and vividly capture the unease of the late seventeenth century—the fears of the ruling Protestant minority about the attitudes and affiliations of the Catholic majority.'

It seems that as a response to these fears, the citadel, a fortification on the quay (evident of the 1687 map) was repaired and quarters prepared for officers on constant high alert and the 'Irish' were not permitted to leave their houses at night for a time. New Barracks were constructed in 1700 to bolster military might, and the Folly House, a property close to the Market Gate of the town and the place of Cromwell's recuperation, was not to be rented to Catholics. (<https://www.historyireland.com/capturing-the-quotidian-new-ross-corporation-books-1685-1900>).

The Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the overlaying of what became the modern town on the existing narrow, essentially medieval, street pattern and subsequent extra-mural development. Notably, in 1749 the Tholsel, the seat of political power in the town, was built to the designs of the leading London architect and landscape designer, William Kent (1685-1748) in its present location. Constructed on reclaimed land, its subsiding foundations led to it being rebuilt stone-by-stone in 1806.

In 1777 Charles Tottenham, then treasurer, organised the town's first fire engine, brought from London and costing £57.13s.11d with the fire station located on the Old Customhouse Quay (ibid, Doran). During this time, the town



Figure 6 - Fair Green (French-Lawrence Collection ca. 1865-1914)

moved from largely being a bastion of loyalism, to supporting the movement for Irish independence.

The 1798 Rebellion

New Ross's history is intimately linked to the 1798 Rebellion as the site of one of its bloodiest and most notorious battles. Fought on June 5th 1798 between a large force of Society of the United Irishmen rebels and government forces garrisoning the town, it was a thwarted attempt by the rebels to spread the rebellion beyond Wexford. Though the Rebels succeeded in driving the defending Crown Forces across the bridge and

repulsed a counter attack, ill-discipline and poor leadership led ultimately to failure. It resulted in c.3,000 rebels and 230 garrison members being killed, wounded or going missing, just as vast tracts of the town were destroyed by fire

The Nineteenth Century

New Ross merchants such as the Graves, Howlett and Keogh families establish strong links with ports on the North American east coast such as Savannah, Boston, Quebec and Newfoundland. The milling industry flourished and the town boasted over thirty flour and textile mills. Trade in grain, flour, livestock, bacon and butter was the life blood of the town and there was also considerable export of porter, ale, beer and stout to Newfoundland (Lewis, 1837, 26), whereas timber, tobacco, cotton and other commodities dominated the west-east trade.

W.H. Bartlett's 1830 view of New Ross depicts the then wooden bridge at the centre of the river bookended by tall structures. The walled defences are clear on the town side and tall buildings – presumably corn / grain stores - are depicted lining the Quay in the centre background.

Fairs and markets were vital to the economy of New Ross. In an attempt to control and regulate trading, a corn market was erected in Robert Street in 1818, but it was not a huge success.



Figure 7 - 1830 View of New Ross (W.H. Bartlett, V&A)



Figure 8 - 1827 Tottenham Estate Map (Courtesy of Tottenham Estate Archive)

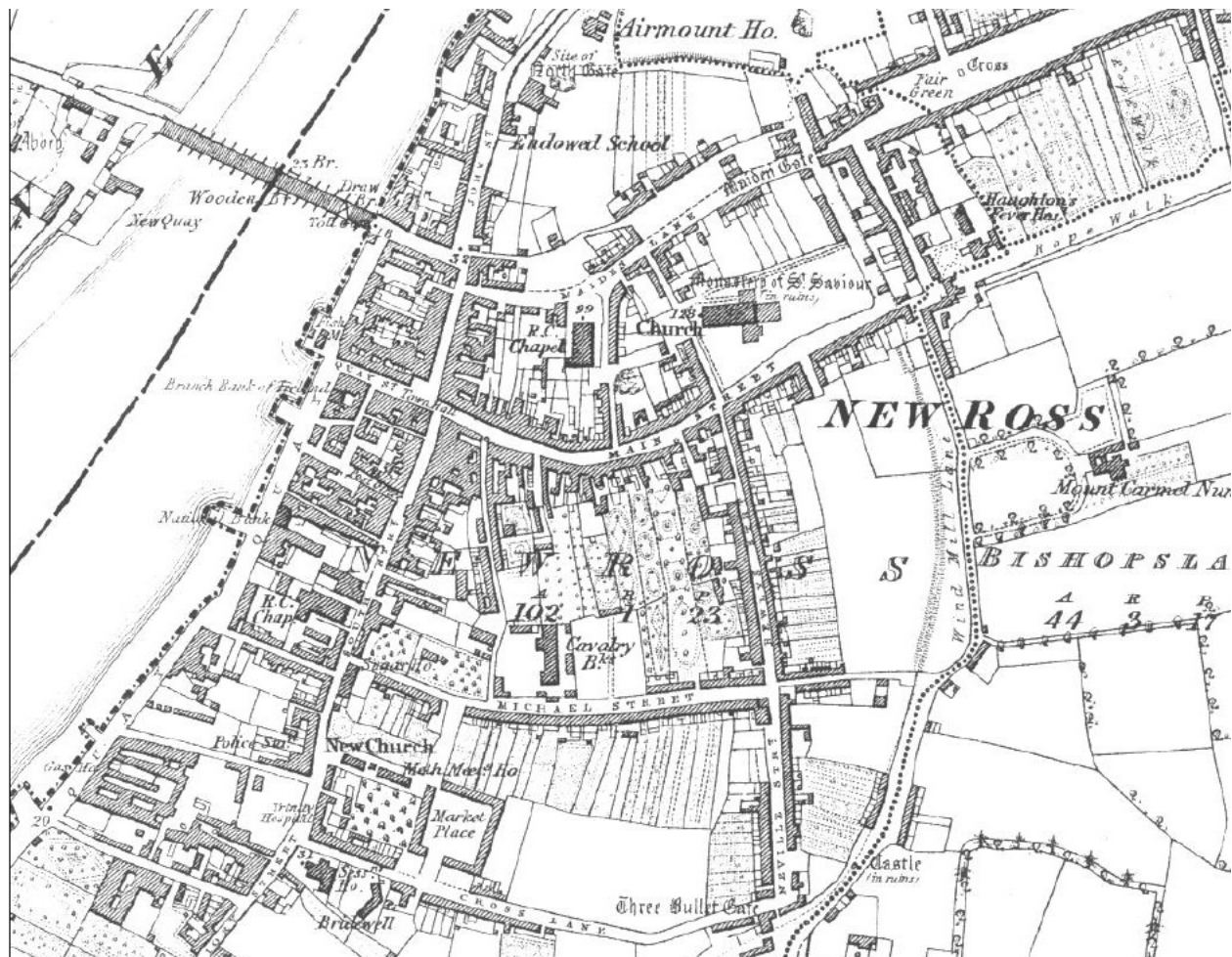


Figure 9 - 1841 First Edition OS Map

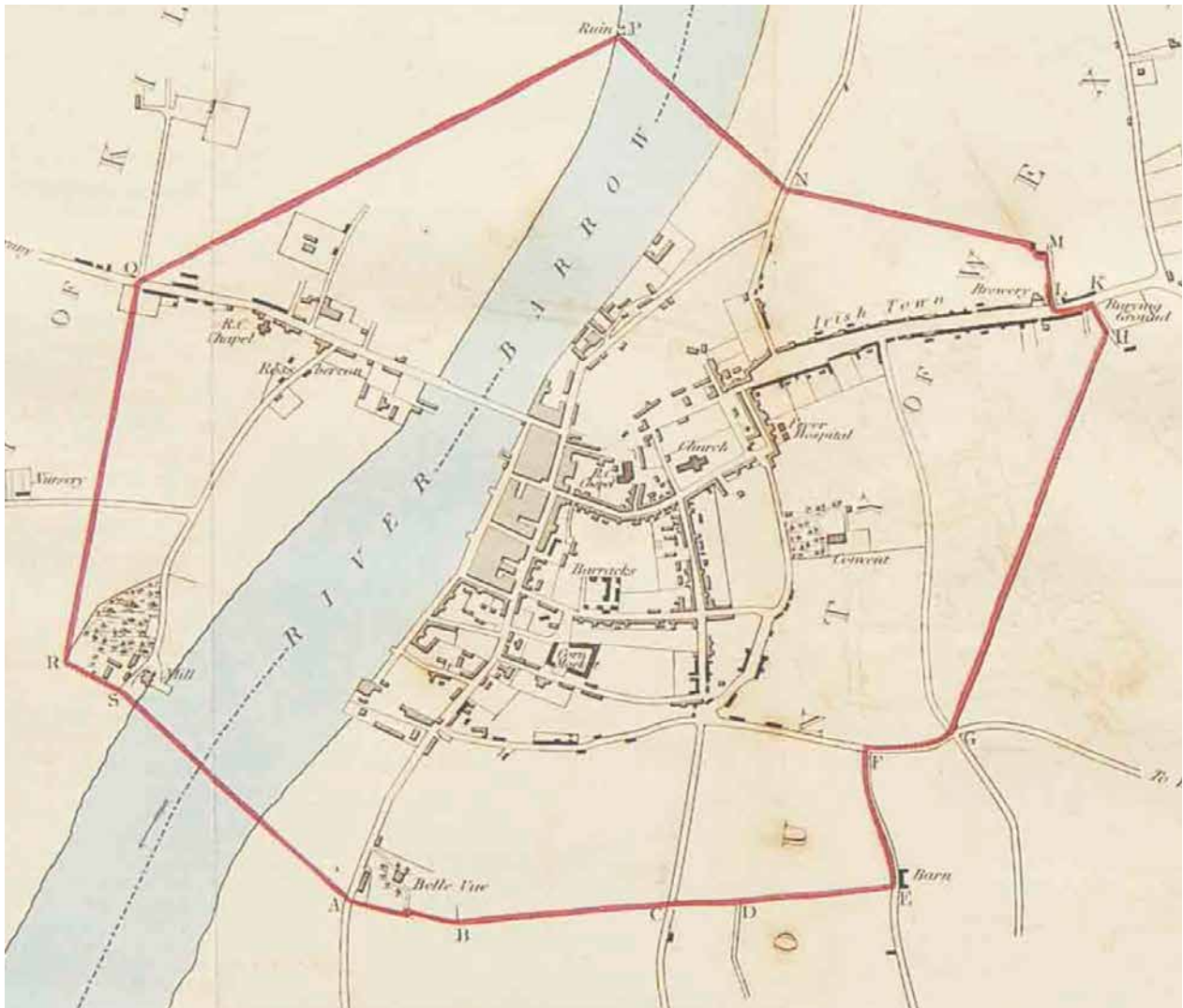


Figure 10 - 1832 Map from Parliamentary Report from Commissioners and Plans

In 1828 tradesmen were compelled to weigh and sell their corn at the market house and by 1832, standing markets, deemed an *obstruction to passengers in the street*, were to be removed to the corn market. In the same year a *Parliamentary Representation, Ireland Report* was published with an elaborate accompanying Corporation boundary map. It gives insight into the constituency and economic situation of the town at that point:

'...the River is navigable up to the town for vessels of 200 tons...there is a wooden bridge over the Barrow... There are in the town 1,040 houses, of all sorts; and the population...is 6,284...[the town's]... general appearance does not denote prosperity; this, however, we are told is owing to the difficulty that existed of late years in obtaining land on leases of sufficient duration to encourage building...'

Observations and passed down stories of New Ross written by Mary B. Dunphy, a teacher, were collected by the National Folklore Commission Schools Collection, between 1937-9, and provide a lively, civic and aesthetically minded account of the town, its principal buildings, spaces and economic disposition.

In a section entitled: 'The Old Peoples Story of New Ross', Dunphy very evocatively captures an earlier time on and around the Quay:

'New Ross to-day is but a sickly ghost of its former self, according to the old people. Shipping abounded in the river. Sailors speaking many foreign languages paraded the quays and streets. The writer's father often described these foreigners to her. Some wore ear-rings, some pig-tails, some big 'baggy' coloured

trousers. These latter were called 'Petticoat' men. There was life everywhere. The bustle and noise of business was the music of the town. Horses and carts carried grain into the large stores on the Quay from all over the countryside. Nothing is left to tell of its former greatness but the huge seven storey stores along the quayside. Alas! these are now empty; and rotting floors, doors, etc only great the eye. The walls are substantially built, however, and show no sign of decay yet. In those good old days great wages were paid for loading and unloading a ship as it would be a hurry to avail of a propitious wind or tide. A man (Mr. J. Power Maudlins) told me to-day that 21s/= per day was refused on the Quay of Ross on one occasion.'

Between the 1832 and the 1841 Ordnance Survey maps, the mantle of the modern town laid over its medieval armature is evident; more infill development is visible and the narrow streets, lanes and alleys of the central core remain, as today, densely woven, with larger grained stone warehouses by that point lining the quays characterfully defining the town's waterfront edge. The Wooden Bridge still stood and a *Fish Market* was marked on the Quay.



Figure 12 - 1840 drawing of Fair Gate by William Frazer (NLI)



Figure 11 - 1840s drawing of Three Bullet Gate by William Frazer (NLI)

At this point the Endowed School and Airmount House stood to the north of the town wall, with Fair Green lying to the north-east of Maiden Gate leading on to Irish Town. Haughton's Fever Hospital (1812) stood at this point on land between Fair Green and Rope Walk. The Monastery of St Saviour's is noted as *in ruins* and an R.C. chapel was evident to its west, with Mount Carmel Nunnery located just outside the town walls, to the east.

The Bridewell was located beside the Session House, to the south of Cross Street, with the Market Place and a 'New Church' to the north, and the Police Station fronted onto South Street and the Cavalry Barracks stood at the heart of the town to the north of Michael Street. Elaborate long narrow gardens are evident behind the houses fronting onto Main Street and Michael Street at this time.

During and in the aftermath of the Great Famine (1845-7), New Ross was the point of embarkation for many seeking to escape poverty by heading to Canada or America. Built in Quebec in 1845, the Dunbrody was a ship that carried thousands on the treacherous journey to a new life in North America. The present harbour and quay walls were completed in 1852.

She describes how the 'Big Snow' of 1867 was the catalyst for the collapse of the old wooden bridge (rebuilt in 1869):

...there had been a heavy frost. The river, though tidal was one mass of ice. The bridge, a wooden structure of great antiquity, was ill able to bear extra weight or pressure... During the night what remained of the bridge was swept into the river. Anyhow, in the morning the town was 'snowed under' and the bridge missing.

Dunphy describes the famous and sophisticated New Ross lace made under the supervision of the Carmelite Nuns. She says 'Point Lace' and 'crochet' were executed in the school:

The fame of the New Ross lace resounded through the world. It won prizes at all exhibitions. The beauty of the design and the perfection of the execution in fragile thread were the marvel of the lace world... At the Chicago Exhibition in 1886 workers from this famous school plied their needles in the presence of huge admiring crowds.

Historic photographs from the Poole, Lawrence Collection:



Figure 13 - Grain stores viewed from the 1869 Bridge



Figure 14 - Early-Mid 20th Century view over the town



Figure 15 - Parade The Quay, 1898



Figure 16 - The Quay, c. late 19th century



Figure 17 - Curved end of the new bridge with view down The Quay



Figure 18 - The Quay, c. late 19th century



Figure 19 - Corner of The Quay & Quay Street



Figure 20 - A view of New Ross across the River Barrow



Figure 21 - Berth for ships with Quay wall visible, Oct 1924



Figure 22 - River Barrow from high ground to North of town with fortified wall

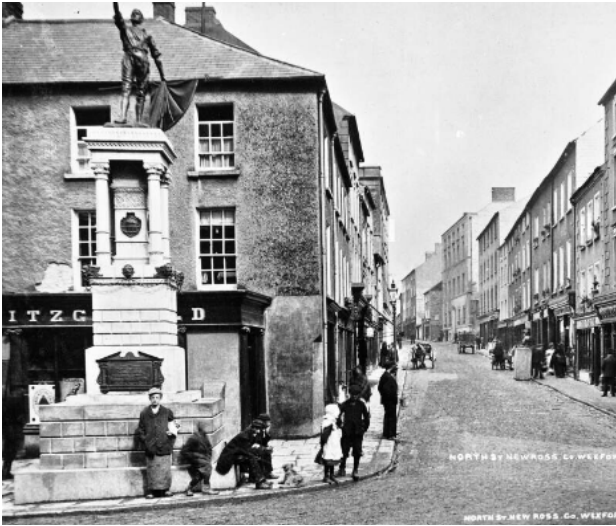


Figure 23 - North Street



Figure 24 - South Street, late 19th century



Figure 25 - 1869 bridge



Figure 26 - Boats and bridge



Figure 27 - Street view of New Ross



Figure 28 - The steps - Robert Street and Michael Street



Figure 29 - A view from Rosbercorn towards the town



Figure 30 - View towards Rosbercorn

The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Writing in 1937-9, Mary Dunphy says of The Shambles meat market and its decline :

This is the 'Market' where meat is or rather 'was' sold. It is situated in Main Street. Long ago all the butchers sold their meat there in their little stalls. It used to be a lively spot, full of fun and banter 'And jokes went round and harmless chat.' But one by one they decamped out of the Shambles and set up butchers' shops in the town. To-day only one vendor of meat plies his job in the Shambles while there are ten butchers' shops scattered through the town.

Dunphy continues:

Some people said they were stones from the architecture of the Fair Gate also called the Bishop's Gate which was demolished by the Urban Council to make room for new houses which they built right in the archway of the Fair Gate. I can recall even now to my minds' eye the particular beauty of one of these stones 'frescoed' all round. The demolition of the Fair Gate was an extraordinary act of historical desecration! One seems at a loss to explain it otherwise than to say it was due to colossal ignorance.

Dunphy describes two former Breweries in New Ross:

Sutton's Brewery [which appears on the 1841 map], Where the Good Shepherd Convent now stands was the site of a very progressive brewery owned by people named Sutton the last representative of these Suttons, Miss Anna Sutton, entered the Carmelite Order at the Mount Carmel Convent, New Ross, in or about 90 years ago. The Brewery then fell into the hands of the Devereux family, the distillers, Wexford, and was later acquired by the Good Shepherd Order in or about 1860. The site is now adorned with the magnificent buildings and grounds of the...Convent [which appears on the 1881 map]. Howlett's Brewery was situated in Priory Lane. It was dominated by the Howlett Residence, the large towering house in Priory Street. used now as a Garda Barracks. There were three gates on the Brewery Priory gate, Trinity gate and Marsh gate. The Howlett family were the princes of the commerical life of New Ross about 90 or 100 years ago [mid-nineteenth century]. They owned fleets of sailing boats and exported the products of the brewery, and imported raw material.

In Dunphy's view, the most significant surviving features of the Town Walls are *The Rope Walk: New Ross being a seaport doing a large export grain trade, rope-making was carried on to an appreciable extent, in the long ago. A long rope walk belonging to Brownes North St. extended from the Town Wall at Nunnery Lane end to Bosheen-a-Slawn. All rope walks have been forgotten but this particular stretch is still referred to as 'The Rope Walk.' One of the forgotten rope-walks was in Michael St. This stretched on towards Mary St.*

New Ross's picturesque setting was the inspiration for the highly regarded Irish artists including Paul Henry (1877-1958) and Tony O'Malley (1913-2003), who for a short time in the late-1950s, made it his home.

In common with the rest of the country, New Ross experienced an economic downturn in the 1980s and '90s, prompting Failte Ireland to make it their designated 'Destination Town' in Wexford as a spur to growth. It has struggled to entirely recover, and progressive vacancy and dereliction have become a by-product of this economic decline.

Two unused buildings on South Quay, close to the key visitor attraction, the replica JFK Dunbrody Famine Ship (opened in 2001), are mooted as the location for a new immersive visitor experience, The Norman Centre, that will chart Wexford's rich Norman history.

Dedicated to the memory of John F. Kennedy, whose great-grandfather, Patrick, was born in the nearby village of Dunganstown, the JFK arboretum near New Ross, County Wexford is home to notable specimen trees and shrubs. President Kennedy returned to his ancestral roots and gave a moving address from the quay in June 1963.

In 2008, Conservation Plan for the Town Walls of New Ross was commissioned by New Ross Town Council, working in partnership with the Heritage Council through the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN). The plan has been prepared by Alastair Coey Architects, which was appointed in September 2007. The purpose of the Conservation Plan was to identify the significance of New Ross



Figure 31 - Tony O'Malley Painting of Mary Street, 1957 (Whyte's online catalogue)



Figure 32 - New Ross Quays by Tony O'Malley, 1961 (Whyte's online catalogue)

Town Walls, the threats to significance, and to propose policies for the future protection and management of the Walls.

A New Ross native, Claire Keegan's tender and much feted historical novella, *Small Things Like These*, was set in New Ross. Central to the fictional plot was the disturbing discovery by the main protagonist of a distressed young woman held captive in the Magdalene Laundry, the Good Shepherd Convent today (erected in 1881). The book is currently being made into a film, with some scenes shot in New Ross.

More recent public realm works along the quay have included the new boardwalk and have considerably increased hardstanding / car parking along the Quay. The recently completed *High Hill Norman Garden* archaeology and public realm project has created a publicly accessible vertical garden that permits the appreciation and understanding of important archaeological artefacts found in and around the area.



Figure 33 - Claire Keegan's *Small Things Like These*

3.0 Relevant Built and Archaeological Heritage Planning Policy

Chapter 13 of the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out policy in relation to Heritage and Conservation. Heritage is defined in the Heritage Act, 1995 as including monuments, archaeology, heritage objects, architecture, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.

There are two primary mechanisms to protect the county's architectural heritage as set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and comprising principally of the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas:

- If a structure is considered to be of special interest, the Council may designate it as a Protected Structure. A Protected Structure is one that is considered to be of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.
- If a group of buildings is considered special and is of significant importance, the Council may designate it as an Architectural Conservation Area.

Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

Section 13.4.1 of the Plan states: In relation to a Protected Structure or a Proposed Protected Structure, the meaning of the term includes the structure, the interior of the structure, the land lying within the curtilage of the structure, any other structure lying within the curtilage and its interior and all fixtures, fittings and features which form part of the interior or exterior of the structures.

A Record of Protected Structures (RPS) was prepared and is available in Volume 5 of the Plan. The RPS presently comprises in excess of 1,400 structures...The curtilage of a Protected Structure is often an essential part of the structure's special interest. In certain circumstances, the curtilage may comprise a clearly defined garden or grounds, which may have been laid out to complement the design or function...

The Built Heritage Objectives of the Council are:

Objective BH01

- To protect the architectural heritage of County Wexford and to include structures considered to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest in the Record of Protected Structures.

Objective BHO2

- To support targeted investment in the built heritage of our region including the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and Historic Structures Fund to assist owners to maintain our built heritage assets.

Objective BH03

- To promote the development of heritage-led regeneration and engage in and promote initiatives to revitalise the historic cores of our towns and villages together with local communities, heritage property owners and other stakeholders.

Objective BHO4

- To consider, in the preparation of future local area plans, a Town first approach to the revitalisation of historic urban centres, which focuses on the repair and upgrade of existing historic buildings and their adaptation to new uses with regard to their architectural character and significance.

Objective BHO5

- To protect our Architectural Heritage in the form of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and identify important groups of buildings/localities suitable for designation as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Wexford County Council will also endeavour to undertake monitoring and review of the RPS and ACAs which may result in recommendations for additions or deletions and enlist measures to prevent dereliction and to support re-use of built heritage.

Objective BHO6

- To protect the curtilage of Protected Structures or proposed Protected Structures from any works which would cause loss of, or damage to, the special character of the structure and loss of or damage to, any structures of heritage value within the curtilage or attendant grounds of the structure.

Objective BHO7

- To ensure development within the curtilage of a Protected Structure is compatible with its character. This does not preclude putting forward innovative contemporary designs that respect the context of the Protected Structure.

Objective BH08

- To promote the retention of any original or early building fabric including for example timber sash windows, stonework, brickwork, joinery, ironmongery, traditional mortars, render and decorative or weather finishes and slate and vernacular architectural details (whether relating to a Protected Structure or not). Likewise, the Council will encourage the re-instatement of historically correct traditional features and retention of original ridge heights as appropriate.

Objective BHO9

- To protect, maintain and enhance the established character and setting of vernacular buildings which are worthy of protection or have architectural heritage value, farmyards and settlements where they make a positive contribution to the built heritage and encourage the re-use and sensitive refurbishment of vernacular buildings using appropriate design and materials and having regard to best practice conservation guidelines.

Objective BH10

- To ensure that applications in relation to Protected Structures include an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment report where it is considered the proposed development entails extensive or complex works with a potential to have an impact on the architectural heritage. This report should assess the implications

of the development on the character of the structure and the area in which it is located. This should be prepared by a suitably qualified person competent to make a qualitative assessment of the potential impact of works on the character and special interest of the Protected Structure and in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Protection-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DAHG, 2011) and any subsequent guidelines.

Objective BH11

- To ensure that all applications for Protected Structures are assessed by taking into consideration the advice contained in the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DAHG, 2011) and any subsequent guidelines.

Objective BH12

- To encourage the repair and retention of traditional timber, rendered and/or tiled shop fronts and pub fronts, including those which may not be Protected Structures. There will be a general presumption against the replacement of original shopfronts with emphasis on retention and reinstatement of traditional proportions and details.

Objective BH13

- To facilitate the retention of older buildings, the Planning Authority will give consideration to the relaxation of car parking and other development management requirements in appropriate circumstances.

Objective BH14

- To ensure that elements of the architectural heritage of the county, such as historic gardens and historic designed landscapes, stone or brick walls, ditches and street furniture that make a positive contribution to the built heritage, are retained.

Objective BH15

- To encourage improvements to energy efficiency in traditional buildings while maintaining the architectural character and significance in line with the Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of Arts, Heritage

and the Gaeltacht, 2011) and the Advice Series Guide on Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government) and any future guidelines and advice.

Objective BH16

- To protect and manage trees in the curtilage of a Protected Structure or in close vicinity that contribute to its special character and setting.

Objective BH17

- To support economic development of large country houses in their role as tourist attractions and other commercial uses to ensure their continued survival.

Objective BH18

- In the event of catastrophic accidental fire damage the rebuilding of a Protected Structure will not be required. Support and advice will be provided in assisting the repair of damaged Protected Structures to achieve a balance between new works and the remaining original features.

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

As set out in The Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012, an architectural conservation area (ACA) is defined as a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of a development plan to preserve. It should be noted that ACA designation is distinct from designation as a protected structure, although protected structures may be located within an ACA area. Protected structures are subject to separate procedures and requirements under the 2000 Planning and Development Act (as amended).

Section 81 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that a development plan shall include an objective to preserve the character of a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines

and heights, that (a) is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or (b) contributes to the appreciation of protected structures, If the planning authority is of the opinion that its inclusion is necessary for the preservation of the character of the place, area, group of structures or townscape concerned and any such place, area, group of structures or townscape shall be known as and is in this Act referred to as an *architectural conservation area*.

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is a State initiative under the administration of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The NIAH was established on a statutory basis under the provisions of the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1999, to identify, record and assess the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistency, as an aid in the conservation and protection of that architectural heritage. Under Section 53 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage may use an NIAH survey to recommend particular structures to a local authority for their consideration for inclusion on their RPS.

The inclusion of structures on the RPS is a reserved function of the elected members of the local authority who may decide to exclude structures recommended by the Minister and, conversely, include structures which have not been recommended by the Minister. The NIAH Building Survey may include structures which have not been included on the RPS and, conversely, the RPS may include structures which have not been included in the NIAH Building Survey. The NIAH Survey of New Ross was undertaken in 2005.

The NIAH has also published a Garden Survey which showcases the historic designed landscapes, demesnes and gardens in the County. As well as being a source of information about history and society, the Council recognises the additional benefits of these landscapes for biodiversity,

climate change and, where such places are open to the public, physical and mental well-being.

Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological sites and monuments are protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004.

At present, a site or monument is protected in one of four ways: –

- It is recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).
- It is registered in the Register of Historic Monuments (RHM).
- It is a national monument subject to a preservation order (or temporary preservation order).
- It is a national monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a Local Authority.
- It is the objective of the Council:

Objective AH01

- To conserve and protect archaeological sites, monuments (including their settings), underwater archaeology and objects including those listed or scheduled for inclusion on the Record of Monuments and Places and/or the Register of Historic Monuments or newly discovered sub-surface archaeological remains.

Objective AH02

- To recognise the importance of monuments and sites and protect the character and integrity of these monuments and sites where appropriate. The Council will consult the National Monuments Service where a development is proposed that may impact on an archaeological monument and/or site.

Objective AH03

- To protect the heritage of groups of important archaeological sites and monuments, inclusive of their contextual setting and interpretation, in the operation of development management.

Objective AH04

- To fully consider the protection of archaeological heritage when undertaking, approving or authorising development.

In considering such protection the Council will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service and the principles set out in Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, 1999).

Objective AH05

- To require an archaeological assessment and/or investigation by qualified persons for development that may, due to its size, location or nature, have a significant effect upon archaeological heritage and to take appropriate measures to safeguard this archaeological heritage. In all such cases the Planning Authority shall consult with the National Monuments Service in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Objective AH06

- To promote a presumption in favour of preservation in-situ of archaeological remains and settings when dealing with proposals for development that would impact upon archaeological sites and/or features. Where preservation in-situ is not possible the Council will consider preservation by record in appropriate circumstances.

Objective AH07

- To protect historic and archaeological landscapes, including battlefields, and promote access to such sites provided that this does not threaten the feature.

Objective AH08

- To include archaeological landscapes, battlefields and historic landscapes as part of the updated Landscape Character Assessment of the County to be prepared following the publication of a National Landscape Character Assessment.

Objective AH09

- To protect historic urban defences (both upstanding and buried) and associated features and safeguard them from inappropriate development in accordance

with National Policy on Town Defences (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008).

Objective AH10

- To identify appropriate archaeological sites in the county to which public access could be provided, and work to secure public access and the provision of signage and interpretation panels, where appropriate, in consultation with the landowner and the National Monument Service, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Volume 2.

Objective AH11

- To retain existing street layouts, historic building lines and traditional plot widths which derive from medieval or earlier origin.

Objective AH12

- To protect historical burial grounds within County Wexford and encourage their maintenance in accordance with best practice conservation principles.

Objective AH13

- To have regard to the Historic Battlefield sites as listed in Table 13.6 (and those which are not listed thereon but that are, or become, known) and when assessing planning applications in the vicinity of a Historic Battlefield ensure there is no harm to the physical character or setting of these sites. Where development is proposed within the identified battlefields, archaeological assessment and recording may be required.

4.0 Heritage in the Town

New Ross has a wealth of historic buildings, monuments, artefacts, places and streetscapes of all periods and types, formal and vernacular. Some are more obvious and declamatory, and generally recognised by a heritage designation (RMP, RPS, NIAH, ACA) and generally sit within the former historic town walls. Some are individual, whereas others are ensembles or streetscapes. There are also quieter, less obvious or appreciated features, both within the town, Irish Town and Rosbercorn, but which nonetheless contribute positively to the character and appearance of New Ross and its sense of depth in time.

There are a large number of designated assets within the defined town centre boundary (as delineated in Wexford County Council's 1998 and 2011-17 Development Plans). There are 189 heritage features included on the Record of Protected Structures (Volume 5), 165 of which are also recorded by the NIAH. As in the rest of the country, the RPS mapping only gives the approximate location of a Protected Structure but not its address and nor does not show the extent of its curtilage or boundary. Where the Protected Structure is also recorded by the NIAH, a link is, however, provided to the record. As the NIAH survey of New Ross was undertaken in 2005, almost twenty years ago, there have been numerous changes to the condition of the heritage features surveyed from that described. It is apparent from both historic mapping, street surveys, drone footage and Google Streetview, that there are a considerable number of historic structures, of variable condition, but of possible interest to the rear of buildings in the centre of the historic core and elsewhere.

All features in the town are given 'Regional' rating by the NIAH, including the surviving upstanding sections of the Norman town wall such as Goat Hill, Maiden Gate, South William Street and 'the location of three bullet gate,' which Alistair Coey's 2008 New Ross Town Walls Conservation Plan identified as being 'the most significant.' They are, however, collectively protected under the National Policy on Town

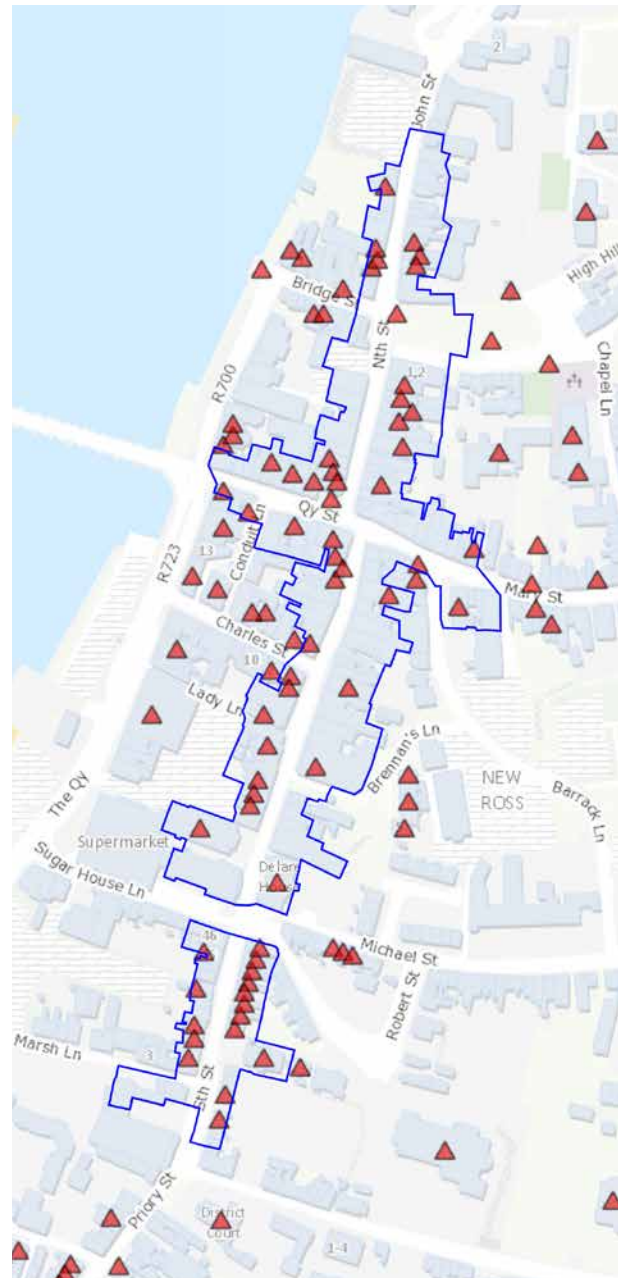


Figure 34 - New Ross Protected Structures with ACA Boundaries

Defences (2008), which states:

'The known and expected circuits of the defences (both upstanding and buried, whether of stone or embankment construction) and associated features of all town defences are to be considered a single national monument and treated as a unit for policy and management purposes. There should be a presumption in favour of preservation in-situ of archaeological remains and preservation of their character, setting and amenity.'

The town defences (WX029-013003) are also scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and should be considered as such. Unsurprisingly, the

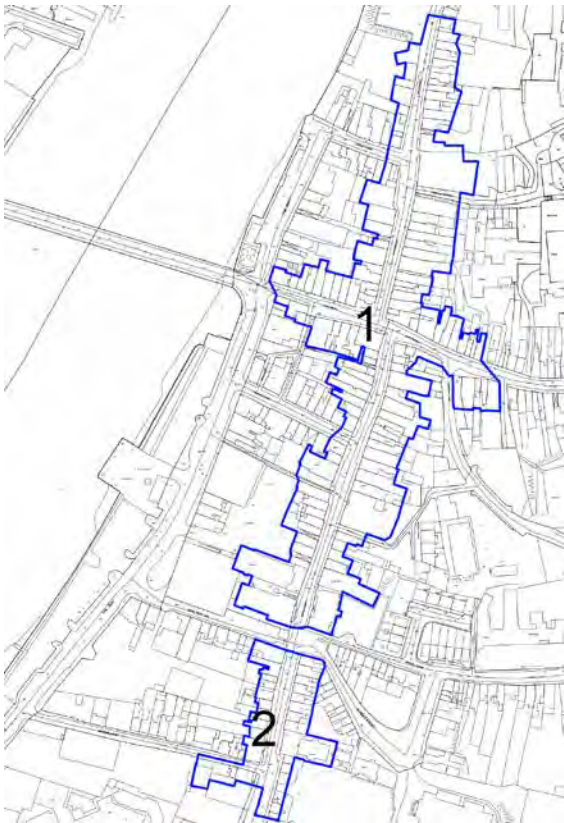


Figure 35 - Map of Current ACA's

largest number of RMP's are clustered around the former medieval upstanding remains of St Mary's Church, the historic religious epicentre of the Norman town associated with William Marshall, with others scattered throughout the town. It is notable that the remnants of the former bridge over the river are on the RPS and NIAH but that the broader historic quay wall and associated port related features do not appear to be designated.

ACA's Boundaries

There are currently two separate designated ACA's in the town - the South Street/North Street/John Street ACA, and the Lower South Street ACA. The boundary of the former essentially follows the line of buildings fronting onto these streets but not their setting. It branches out along Quay Street and a section of Mary Street. It is unclear in places why the boundary stops where it does, sometimes including designated features and sometimes not. Starting at the northern end, the former granary building (NIAH Reg. No. 15605017) to the west of John Street is not included. The 'Steps' and all of its associated heritage are not included are neither High Street, some of Maiden Lane, Church Lane, Chapel Lane and parts of Mary Street, including

the atmospheric thirteen granite steps leading to St Augustine's Church) are not included; south to include NIAH structures standing on Sugar House Lane and the RPS structures standing on Michael Street.

It is unclear why the two almost contiguous ACA boundaries are not combined to make one with the boundary further extended to take in the designated features. An anomaly is the exclusion of the broader Quay area, the former port and raison d'être of the town and the first thing visitors to it see. Its extension to include these features would align more closely with the historic core and the current Town Centre boundary.

Vacancy and Dereliction

A vacant site is defined as either:

- *Residential land (more than 0.05 hectares) where there is a need for housing in the area. The site is suitable for housing and the majority of the site has not been in use for an extended period of time [which is a little vague and unclear];*
- *Regeneration land (other than residential land) where the majority of the site has not been in use for an extended period of time, or the site is having a negative impact on existing amenities or on the character of the area.*

This is a register of lands in the local authority's area that are suitable for housing but have not been put forward for development.

A site can be added to the vacant sites register when the local authority decides that the property has been vacant for 12 months or more. The local authority must give written notice to the owner, of their intention to include a site on the register.

The register must contain the:

- Location of each site including a map
- Name and address of the owner
- Current market value

If you own a site on the vacant site register you may have to pay the vacant sites levy.

The Derelict Sites Act, 1990, defines a derelict site as any land that 'detracts, or is likely to detract,

to a material degree from the amenity, character or appearance of land in the neighbourhood of the land in question because of:

- Structures which are in a ruinous, derelict or dangerous condition, or
- The neglected, unsightly or objectionable condition of the land or of structures on it, or
- The presence, deposit or collection of litter, rubbish, debris or waste.'

Under the Act 1990, local authorities are responsible for dealing with derelict sites in their area. They can use certain powers to enforce the clean-up of these sites.

They can:

- Prosecute owners who do not comply with notices served;
- Make compulsory land purchases;
- Carry out necessary work themselves and charge the owners for the cost;

All local authorities must:

- Maintain a derelict sites register;
- Make the register available for public inspection - It can remove an entry from the Register when it is satisfied that improvement works have been carried out on the derelict site.

Local authorities have similar powers regarding dangerous structures.

Wexford County Council (WCC) has separate roles for Dereliction and Vacancy. There is creeping vacancy and dereliction in the town, apparently the highest rate in the county, with sixteen properties officially on the derelict sites register, though there is perhaps something of a grey area between what is vacant and what is derelict in the town, with the former more often than not leading to the latter.

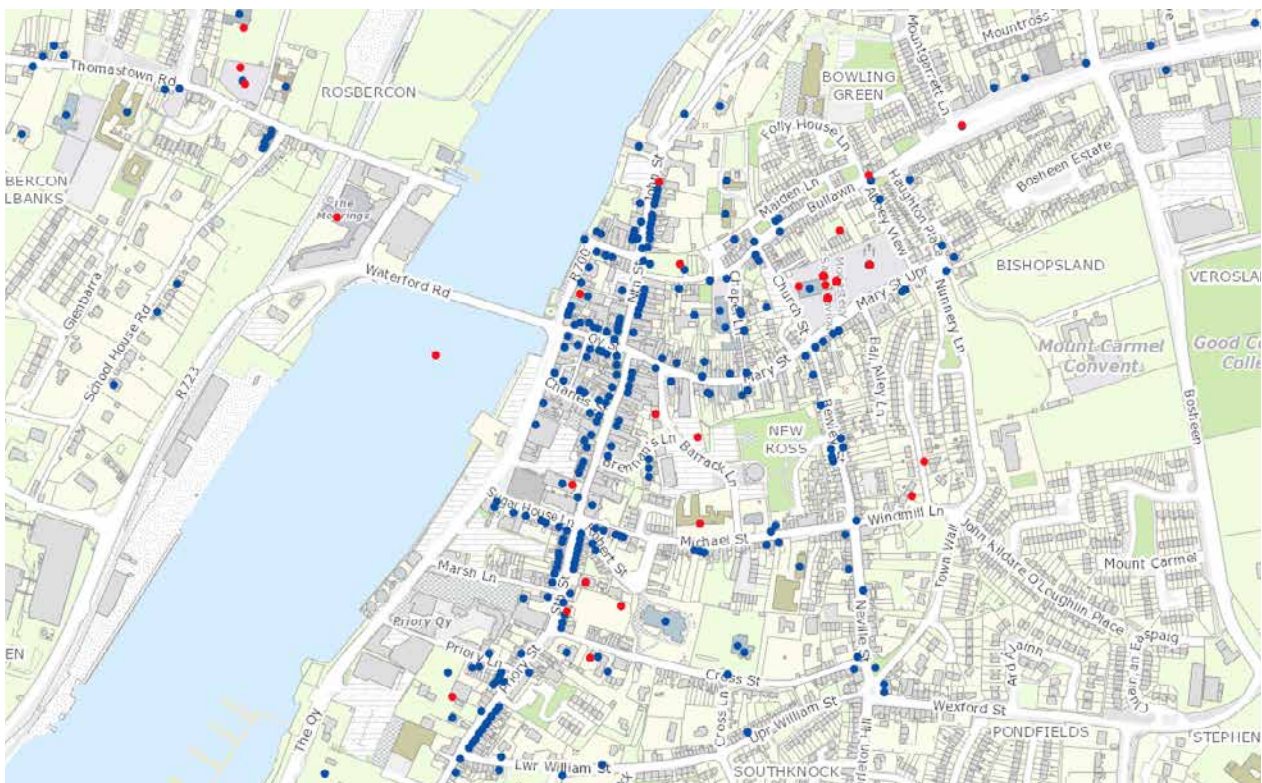


Figure 36 - HER Map showing RMP's (red dots) and NIAH structures (blue)



Figure 37 - Derelict site, Sugar House Lane



Figure 38 - Vacant historic cottages, Irishtown



Figure 39 - Surviving facade, John Street



Figure 41 - Vacant building, Houghton Place



Figure 42 - Vacant houses, Mary Street Upper and corner of Bewley Street



Figure 40 - Dilapidated house



Figure 43 - Derelict building, Priory Street

Table of WCC Currently Recorded Derelict Buildings & their Heritage Designation. This table

does not appear to reflect the additional buildings identified by the survey of the town.

Derelict Record No.	RPS	NIAH	Address
DER2014/001	N/A	NIAH Reg. No. 15605223	6 Chapel Lane, New Ross, Co Wexford
DER2014/002	RPS NR0035	NIAH Reg No.15605027	Gladneys Licenced Premises, 5 John Street, New Ross
DER2014/004	RPS NR0039	NIAH Reg No. 15605014	Harneys Shoe Repairs, 4 John Street, New Ross
DER2019/010	N/A	NIAH Reg. No. 15605033	23 North Street, New Ross, Co Wexford
DER2019/013	N/A	NIAH Reg No 15605270	12 Quay Street, New Ross, Co Wexford
DER2020/003	N/A	N/A	16 Haughton Place, New Ross, Co. Wexford
DER2020/013	N/A	N/A	Bumble Bee Licensed Premises, 3-5 Priory Street, New Ross: To be inspected. In poor condition. The area to be re-developed together with New Ross Courthouse. Town and Village Funding application to be made 2023/24
DER2021/019	N/A	NIAH Reg No.	8 Mary Street Upper, New Ross Y34 CF83
DER2021/022	N/A	Reg No 15605155	9 Mary Street Upper, New Ross Y34WA06
DER2021/022	N/A	N/A	10 Mary Street Upper, New Ross Y34 A403
DER2021/037	N/A	N/A	Chilcomb House, Schoolhouse Road, New Ross, Co Wexford
DER2021/054	N/A	N/A	The Old Garage, The Quay, New Ross, Co. Wexford
DER2022/028	N/A	N/A	35 Bewley Street, New Ross, Co. Wexford
DER2022/033	?	?	Former Bike Shop, Priory Street, New Ross, Co. Wexford
DER2022/033			Old Lock Premises and yard (Old Bike Shop) Priory Street, New Ross.
DER2022/036			26 Beachside Avenue, Riverchapel, New Ross

Former Post Office, Haughton Place is one of a number of boarded up premises / buildings that do not appear on either the vacant or derelict property list.

The URDF funding has enabled greater resourcing within the Derelict Sites Team, which in turn has more recently facilitated a greater level of inspection and serving of notices on such property owners. Where there is a failure to engage with the Council, a 7% annual levy on valuation is applied, to be recouped when the site is sold. In

extremis the property is CPO'd to protect from further dereliction and sold on.

The following structures have been purchased to protect from further dereliction. Other grant schemes of relevance for heritage in the town are: the Historic Towns Initiative, the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, Historic Structures Fund, Vernacular and Thatching grants, Community Monuments Fund and Irish Walled Towns Network grant, all of which are managed by the heritage officer.

CPO No.	RPS	NIAH	Address
PML2015038	NR0068	15605110	Former New Ross Courthouse Purchased
			1 & 2 Priory Street To be demolished for car park for Courthouse Project
PMD2023017	RPS NR0035	Reg No.15605027	Gladney's 5 John Street. Being sold on open market
PMC2019003	No.20 is NR0035 What is 4a?	(No. 20 is Reg No 15605027)	4a / 20 John Street (why under the same number when it's two separate buildings on opposite sides of road?)
PMD2021030	N/A		Old Fire Station. To be sold to HSE
PMA2018012	NR014	Reg No 15605016	Cornstores, 8/9 John Street in order to link John Street with North Quay and to extend the existing riverside walk to the end of North Gate. Basement and yard were CPO'd subsequently (John Stret/Bridge Street CPO No 11 of 2021)
PMA2021009	NR0140	Reg No 15605236	Murphy Building, The Quay - New Ross Tourism Transformation Project

Underappreciated Heritage

- Bridging Point & Port critical factors in New Ross’s development and economic success. Only the balustrade of the 1869 bridge and a small section of the granite historic quay wall remain as evocative and isolated reminders of the town’s elegant former five span bridge and its rich port heritage. Built to the designs of James Barry Farrell (1810-93), Peter Burtchaell (1820-94) and Samuel Ussher Roberts (1821-1900), the bridge opened in 1869 and successfully connected the town to Rosbercorn, at that point. A benchmark used by Ordnance Survey cartographers survives carved into the wall.

- The river and the Quay is generally the first place visitors to the town see but it is currently quite severed from it. The original quay wall of the Norman fortification / citadel is approximately in the location that would have formed part of the Norman walled town. Though apparently undesignated today, the existing quay wall and its associated features presumably survive below the more recent public realm works. Usually there would be limestone and granite setts, possibly former crane tracks, mooring rings, railings, steps and material associated with its historic and present function as a hugely significant inland port historically. Does this survive?



Figure 44 - Stone (courtesy of Myles Courtney)



Figure 45 - Stone Location (courtesy of Myles Courtney)

Key Heritage Structures / Places:

- Vestiges of the Norman Town Walls & Gates (Maiden Gate / Fair Green)
- Ruin of St Mary's Church and graveyard
- The Quay wall beneath the boardwalk and the former line of the Norman fortifications / citadel. Houses and vestiges of former bridge as an evocative reminder of the town's port function
- The *Shambles* (former meat market);
- The Tholsel – one of the most important buildings in the town architecturally & locationally
- The principal spine of the historic core – John Street, North Street, South Street, Bridge Street, Mary Street, The Quay and Priory Street that form visually impressive largely early nineteenth century streetscapes
- Surviving vernacular shopfronts
- Dominican Friary, Rosbercorn
- St Michael's Theatre
- Brennan's Lane / Conduit Lane
- Hospital of the Holy Trinity
- St Catherine's Chapel-of-Ease
- Former Sessions House (Courthouse)
- The Houghton Fever Hospital / Houghton place
- The Augustinian Steps
- Conduit Lane, Brennan's Lane
- The High Hill
- Former grain / malt / corn stores (John Street) along the Quay
- Former Cinema, South Street
- Twentieth century structures such as the post office and the former grain silo on the Quay
- Post Office – significant example of early twentieth century architecture.
- Delare House
- Irishtown / religious institutional structures in and around it.



Figure 46 - View along boardwalk with historic quay wall visible to right



Figure 47 - View North along the Quay



Figure 48 - Burnt out houses

5.0 Character Appraisal

New Ross's character and identity is intimately linked to its natural environment, particularly its strategically important riverine location, port history and defensible topography, key determinants in its evolution and development. Similarly, the main landowners and custodians in the town - the Tottenham, Hayden, Walshe and O'Leary families, along with the Catholic Church, Church of Ireland and Wexford County Council - have had a considerable bearing on the evolution and development of the town's character.

Prominent public and institutional buildings, historic shopfronts, terraced houses, along with the quieter, often unsung structures and features that form the fabric contribute to the character of place. Character is also derived from building materials, architectural style, groups of buildings / streetscape, the use of colour, street patterns, historic building plots, just as the remnants of the Norman town wall, boundary walls, railings and paving defines and demarcates the town's urban form. It also includes the smallest architectural and other features – fanlights, doors, post boxes and street signs. Topography, open space, trees and important views and vistas all combine to create the spirit or sense of New Ross as a place.

Building Typology, Materials & Prominent Detailing

In common with most Irish towns, New Ross has a variety of building types; formal and vernacular, institutional, civic, domestic and port-related industrial and commercial, of a variety of ages and scales. There is a simple palette of construction materials consisting primarily of exposed local limestone, hewn from the town's former quarries or brought from Carlow. Some granite and also stucco covered limestone as the most commonly used local materials, with some brick evident. Significantly, the Norman church of St Mary's was constructed using sandstone imported from England to mimic Caen stone from Normandy. More recent structures are often brick or concrete rendered and painted in a pastiche style to mimic historic styles, forms and detailing.

Elements of New Ross's deeply textured Norman history are evocatively alive in the street pattern and surviving sections of the medieval town wall, former gates and place names. With ten churches or former churches, three convents, a former Friary, a former monastery and a number of parochial houses, ecclesiastical structures - ancient and nineteenth century – form a significant element of New Ross's character from various religious traditions. The prominent landmark of St Mary's Church stands proudly over the town. Its nineteenth century gothic revival incarnation was built on the site of its predecessor, the remaining ruins of which stand atmospherically adjacent.

There are remarkably few eighteenth century buildings in New Ross. Notable among them are the largely overlooked but charming Trinity Hospital in South Street, a modest-scale range built by Charles Tottenham (1716-95) as an almshouse, and Delare House, the former town house of the Tottenham's.

Outside the town walls are many older residential areas, the most notable of which are Irishtown and Rosbercorn. The latter has some individual Georgian houses, Victorian Cottages and early-twentieth century detached houses and, notably, the former Franciscan Abbey.

Rebuilt in 1806, the stone Georgian Tholsel (1749) remains the civic heart of the town, with the principal spine of the historic core – John Street, North Street, South Street, Bridge Street, Mary Street, The Quay and Priory Street, dating largely from the rebuilding in the period after the Napoleonic Wars.

The principal historic spine and streets off it are characterised by nineteenth century stucco and painted houses (a twentieth century fashion). Commercial buildings of various grains in a loose Classical style – some three storeys over a shop, some two, are also a dominant typology. Conceived and constructed to fulfil a complex and

evolved design relating to the display and sale of goods, there are many fine surviving examples. These imbue the town with enormous character,

with the elements of column, lintel and cornice all variations on the form of the most accurate interpretation of the Classical orders.



Figure 49 - Pair of elegant Georgian houses, Bridge Street



Figure 50 - Cottages, Rosbercorn



Figure 51 - Restored shopfronts, Priory Street



Figure 52 - Recently painted building, Sugar House Lane



Figure 53 - Door, Bridge Street



Figure 54 - Detail to historic shopfront



Figure 56 - View down Bullawn towards St. Mary's



Figure 55 - Door and surround, Bridge Street

The Quay / River

The River Barrow is the reason New Ross and Rosbercorn developed where they did and its dramatic expanse is, arguably, the town's most significant, picturesque and characterful feature. The inner edge of the Quay is characterised by smaller grained, two-storey late-Georgian houses, often rendered and painted, some with shops at ground floor. These are interspersed with imposing six-storey mid-nineteenth century stone former grain stores (Roche's etc), more recently rendered and painted. The grand granite neo-classical Bank of Ireland and former National Bank of Ireland (erected to a design of 1861) by William Francis Calbeck (c.1824-72), are handsome architectural statements that speak of historic wealth. The single-storey redbrick Edwardian New Ross post office (1904) stands in playful relief to the architectural austerity of the grain store adjacent and is a unique early-twentieth century building in the town.



Figure 57 - View along the boardwalk with historic Quay Wall visible to right



Figure 58 - Section of the historic Quay Wall visible along the Quay

Alterations, Extensions, Infill

There have been a wide variety of extensions, remodellings and alterations to buildings within the town that have altered its historic character. These are most notable to former historic shopfronts. More recent, often ad hoc, extensions often using poor quality materials to the rear or sides appear of building have been erected with little consideration of the character of the existing historic structure, heritage feature or the wider townscape.



Figure 59 - Vacancy at ground floor and mass of electricity wires



Figure 62 - Poor maintenance, Quay Street



Figure 60 - Lack of maintenance and repair and uPVC windows

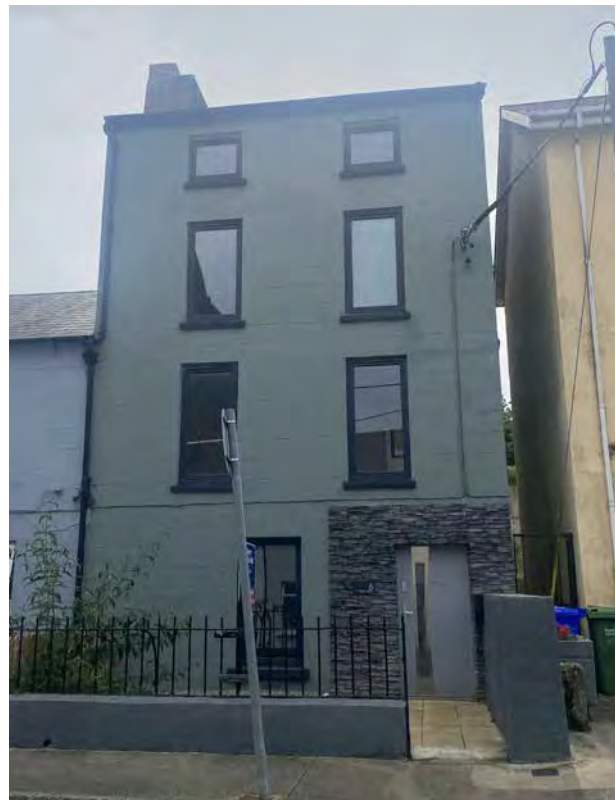


Figure 61 - Inappropriate alteration of historic house that fundamentally changes its character

Street Furniture & Surfacing

There is a variety of street furniture in New Ross dating to different times. Rare surviving hand carved bas relief stone street signs dating to the Georgian period on the quoin stones of a corner building on Priory Place and Priory Lane are particularly characterful and evocative. Heritage wayfinding comes in a number of different forms; more recent shield-like signs affixed to cast iron. There are several surviving historic water pumps and wall-mounted post boxes in the town. In the area bordering the river there are a lot of hard surfaces, car parking but little planting or areas of natural soakage. Throughout the town there is a variety of contemporary seating, lampposts, bins, traffic signs and paving tends to be more recent and footpaths can peter out in places on narrow busy streets or roads. Wall-mounted Victorian post boxes and former water pumps survive in a number of places throughout the town and elegant cast and wrought iron railings surmount boundary walls in places. The more recently painted murals in the town are lively and well-executed though some of the subjects they depict are not related to the town's own history.



Figure 64 - Victorian postbox



Figure 63 - Stone carved street names



Figure 65 - Street signage



Figure 66 - Historic waterpump



Figure 69 - Sign indicating where the former gates in the town wall were



Figure 67 - Elaborate railing



Figure 68 - Street and heritage signage



Figure 70 - Historic milestone

Townscape & Views

The nomenclature of New Ross's predominantly narrow streets reflects former uses, topography, or landowners associated with it. Topography and street or lane width varies, each lending distinctive character and framing views or glimpses. The river views along the Quay, and to and from Rosbercorn are highly significant. Similarly important are views from St Mary's, St Augustines, St Mary & St Michael's, the High Hill, Library Park and streetscape views along Priory Street, South Street, North Street, John Street and up and down Mary Street towards Quay Street

and the bridge. Views from the bridge to and from Rosbercorn are important. Less obvious but nonetheless pleasing glimpses afforded through narrow, passages, lanes or streets framed by historic buildings - such as from the Quay up Charles Street to South Street, up Robert Street and Little Michael Street from south Street / Sugar House Lane, lend a richness to the town's character. There are tantalising and atmospheric glimpses up the gated Augustinian Steps and hilly Chapel and Church Lanes. Prominently sited churches and their Church spires punctuate the skyline as visual markers within the town and from Rosbercorn towards the town.



Figure 71 - View up Michael Street and Robert Street



Figure 72 - View from St. Mary's



Figure 73 - View up Charles Street from The Quay to South Street



Figure 74 - View down Charles Street from South Street



Figure 75 - Characterful lane of houses off Church Lane



Figure 76 - View Along Irishtown



Figure 77 - Mural by the High Steps with the Tholsel in the background



Figure 78 - View up Bridge Street

6.0 THREATS & OPPORTUNITIES

Positive Elements

- Shaped by both nature and centuries of history, New Ross's dramatic riverine setting and steep topography is hugely significant as are views and glimpses along and through it
- The variety of surviving historic structures and heritage features of differing types and ages that both individually, but particularly as streetscapes, are reminders of New Ross's history and define and influence its character.
- Fine surviving historic buildings, some with surviving vernacular shopfronts, doors, fanlights and historic sash windows
- The vibrant vernacular colour palette where it exists
- Surviving historic urban morphology / street patterns
- Historic street furniture such post boxes, lamps, railings and granite plinths and surviving boundary walls / treatments, Ordnance Survey benchmark stones, milestones, stone bollards etc.



Figure 79 - View from the High Steps Towards the Barrow



Figure 80 - Sugar House Lane



Figure 81 - View from the Bridge towards the Town



Figure 82 - Conduit Lane



Figure 84 - Glimpse of spire of St. Mary & St Michael from The Quay



Figure 83 - Historic Shopfront: E.W. Levingstone & Co.



Figure 85 - View down Quay Street towards Bridge and Rosbercorn

Detracting Elements

- As with all Irish towns and cities, creeping dereliction and vacancy are a problem that is evident within the New Ross. It is particularly evident in John Street area, Bullawn, Haughton Place, Priory Street/Cross Street, the corner of Mary Street and Bewley Street, where there are a large number of historic, sometimes Protected, structures lying vacant and in poor or very poor condition

*Subsidence is evident in many historic buildings (dropping cills etc), particularly those located nearer the The Quay as they were built on marshy reclaimed land

- Where historic timber sash or casement windows have been replaced with uPVC etc which has a significant negative effect on the character of the building and streetscape. This is particularly evident along the principal historic arteries of the town – Priory Street, South Street, John Street, Quay Street, Bridge Street and The Quay
- Poor quality or inappropriate alterations or extensions to historic buildings. These include applying inappropriate renders, smoothing off historic features, ad hoc extensions are evident to the rear of many historic structures within the town

- The apparent overprovision of car parking dominates the narrow streets, detracts from the setting of the historic structures, heritage features and streetscapes and principal open spaces such as The Quay and the main churches
- Where cement rich mortar has been used to repoint brickwork or boundary walls;
- Where natural slate tiles have been replaced with cement or plastic
- The use of garish or inappropriately scaled plastic signage and lighting to historic shopfronts
- Where new development dominates the historic character and appearance of the finer grained historic buildings in terms of scale, height massing and materiality, or impacts negatively on views within or across the town.
- Where hard-standing replaces historic gardens or green open space
- The ad hoc variety of paving
- Where collectively too much street furniture detracts from the visual legibility of both individual, often protected, buildings and their settings and the historic streetscape collectively.



Figure 86 - Car parking on The Quay



Figure 87 - Car parking and poor quality design of the SuperValu detracts from the setting of The Quay



Figure 88 - Subsidence evident, The Quay



Figure 89 - Vegetative growth adjacent to inadequate rainwater goods



Figure 90 - Inappropriate uPVC windows, John Street



Figure 91 - Poor maintenance evident to structure to rear of YMCA, John Street

7.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

New Ross's location, topography, built and archaeological heritage, streetscapes and their settings combine to make it a place rich in character and charm and with it, great potential. Its heritage – both the more obvious and the quieter fabric that makes up its weft and weave - is currently underappreciated. The best places are those that celebrate and imaginatively reuse their historic buildings and integrate high quality new buildings and public spaces. New Ross's richest asset is its combination of natural, built and archaeological heritage and these are the foundations on which its future growth and regeneration should be based.

It is an aspiration of New Ross's Town Team to make it the Norman capital of Ireland. In terms of the surviving physical heritage of the town, the absence of strong Norman anchor, like a castle, to tie it to is, however, something of a weakness and would need to be compensated for by strengthening other elements such as the surviving ecclesiastical sites either side of the river, the vestiges of the town wall and gates. A greater appreciation and strengthening of this facet of the town's history might, however, be achieved by collaboration rather than competition with other places in the region synonymous with the Normans, like Kilkenny and Enniscorthy – to perhaps create a Norman triangle of sorts.

The town's port history is rich and should be made more of in terms of the narrative of the town and surviving edifices relating to that, such as the grain stores, be made more of. Despite sometimes having fallen out of use, harnessing the town's existing building stock could, with imagination and high design standards, even bold intervention, find new, viable and sustainable uses, not least for housing, heritage and cultural events, activities and shopping that in turn economic regeneration.

Aspects to be potentially considered in this regard include:

- The allocation of an adequate number of dedicated Conservation Officers to WCC to deal with the large case numbers to advise the owners of protected and historic structures re repair, adaptive reuse and available refurbishment grants.
- This in turn will permit the further provision of guidance on best conservation practice / appropriate works to Protected Structure and qualified builders / craftspeople to undertake them.
- Exploring the possibility of holding workshops on this and developing traditional building skills training in the town, perhaps in one of the former grain stores or industrial buildings.
- The appointment of a dedicated County Archaeologist.
- Further clarity on when *Vacancy* becomes *Dereliction*, as it appears there are more such buildings in the town than are on the list. Today's vacant buildings often become tomorrow's derelict buildings.
- Instituting a legal mechanism / greater enforcement to stop property owners from just sitting on historic / designated structures and letting them fall into decline or make changes that negatively effect the fabric or character and appearance of the ACA / streetscape.
- A number of dispensations with regard to Building Regs, Part B (Fire) and Part M (Access) exist with regard to historic structures. The Government has instituted

- some further exemptions for those who wish to convert certain commercial premises including: turning vacant areas above ground-floor premises and former pubs into residential units do not require planning permission for such works. The exemptions are in place until the end of 2025. A limit of nine residential units can be produced under an exempted development. Someone proposing to undertake works must give the relevant planning authority at least two weeks' notice of the proposed change of use of a premises and any related works.
- With a considered conservation approach, integrating a door, hallway and stairs into an existing (non-protected) historic town house with a shop is technically feasible. Such interventions should, however, be undertaken on a case by case basis based on understanding the history and relative significance of the structure and its fabric, with expert conservation advice.
 - Earlier this year, the Irish Architecture Foundation (IAF) held a series of site visits relating to retail-to-home conversion aimed at sharing knowledge among those who are bringing vacant properties back into use. This event was part of the New Life For Old Buildings project, which organised a series of site visits to renovation projects in Dun Laoghaire, Cloughjordan and Limerick City. Setting up public workshops for interested people in New Ross with people who have undertaken such projects, the Heritage Council and The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and a range of conservation experts, would be very beneficial and help inform what can be done and how.
 - Possible reform of leasehold system. It is not currently permitted to issue new 35 year leases so many that were such are running their course. Repeat leases are apparently problematic and can involve a protracted legal process. There are also repeated difficult cases over curtilage / contested boundaries.
 - Explore the greater appreciation of the more 'ordinary' heritage of the town. The surviving vernacular shopfronts, laneways and streetscapes of the town are integral parts of its character.
 - The alteration of the two ACA boundaries to form one contiguous ACA that also includes significant elements of streetscape / designated historic buildings not currently included within the boundary.
 - As currently framed in national and local policy, ACA's throughout Ireland currently serve more as objectives and guidance but have little weight when it comes to enforcement regarding inappropriate alterations or development that negatively affects their character and appearance, such as uPVC windows in historic / protected buildings, lack of maintenance and repair, inappropriate signage / shopfronts, street furniture, paving etc.
 - Explore the possibility of creating an exemplar street in the historic core where all of the above facets are done correctly.
 - Singular / consistent / recognisable heritage signage and bespoke architectural lighting throughout key sites and areas in the town, to include the historic Quay wall, the location of the former fortifications / citadel.
 - The story of the Port / quay walls / citadel currently appears quite absent. Further explore ways to celebrate and appreciate and tell the story of the town, such as the surviving historic quay walls and associated Port features. Does any historic dock machinery survive and could these be landmarks and / or sculptural features? How do we tell the story of the port and part of the walled town? Use the wealth of oral history that survives (such as Mary Dunphy's accounts collected by the National Folklore Commission).

- Explore the possibility of reinstating the historic Rope Walks (are these mapped?)
- Could a food / fish market / crafts fair be reinstated in the former *Shambles*?
- Leverage National Heritage Week and Open House weekend to nationally showcase the town's wealth of built, natural, tangible and intangible heritage.
- Explore the possibility of further planting, rewilding and rationalising street furniture to provide better settings for important heritage features, including removing some car parking / hard surfaces and providing natural soakage.
- Explore the possibility of the Ros Tapestry returning to New Ross from Kilkenny and the possibility of rehabilitating / making a virtue of the formerly world famous New Ross lace.
- Explore greater appreciation of twentieth century structures like the former cinema on South Street or former industrial structures like the former grain silo by the river. Could the latter be adaptively reused as something like a climbing wall to bring people into the town and provide teenagers with something to do? Could the mid-twentieth century water tower becoming a viewing point / platform with a bar? Could the cinema reopen and form something of a culture cluster with the theatre?
- Insitute a better mechanism with the OPW regarding the care of the ruins of St Mary's. Recent rainfall has caused a large hole to open up in the grounds of the ruins and vandalism is commonplace.
- Exploring how Rosbercorn can be stitched back into the town and the reuse of the Dominican Friary there was an important site/building. Could a more architecturally / structurally playful new bridge be designed to make a better environment for pedestrians and bikes and serve as a visual focal point.
- Explore the possibility of adaptive reuse / rehabilitation of buildings such as the old

Christian Brothers School. Could these be used to create artists studios and workshops or a gallery space. How can a critical cultural mass of artists and makers be encouraged or created such as in Thomastown or Kilkenny?

- Institute an arts festival.

Appendix A

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ARCHITECTURE





NEW ROSS PUBLIC CONSULTATION 2023

NEW ROSS TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN



New Ross Town Centre First Plan

APPENDIX D – Public Consultation Report

**Prepared by
A Playful City**

**For
Wexford County Council**

October 2023



Survey and Workshop Insights

New Ross Town Centre First Plan



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Introduction

As part of the New Ross Town Centre First Initiative, A Playful City (as part of a wider design team) conducted

- a Community Survey and Youth Survey, and
- ran a 'Walk and Talk' workshop with key community stakeholders

in order to gain insights and feedback from the community on how the town thinks and feels towards the changing identity and revitalisation of New Ross Town Centre.

This report will help steer the next steps in terms of a Town Centre proposal and inform further community consultation in the TCF New Ross programme.

Themes of Engagement

The Design Team visited New Ross on May 18th in order to meet

- Liz Hore, WCC Head of Enterprise and lead Director of TCF with senior Planning and Heritage Team and TRO
- WCC representatives from Derelict Sites, Property, Special Projects, Libraries, Arts sections, etc
- New Ross Municipal District Team: Eamonn Hore (WCC Director and Deputy Chief Executive Director over Transportation and Water). Roads team, Port, Marina & Environment and more of the New Ross Municipal District Team
- New Ross Town Team

Post this day, themes of engagement were developed to help reflect key topics talked about in the meetings and put structure to community consultation in New Ross. These themes are:



1. Young People

There is a recognition that the TCF programme will make a strategic vision for the town for the next 15/20y years. Young People are very much part of this conversation as the next generation of town inhabitants



2. Uniqueness and Character

Recognising the existing cultural and historical voices in New Ross as well as defining what character the Town can have in the future.



3. Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

Assessing how the town can support existing businesses, entrepreneurial start ups and what it means for a visitor to New Ross



4. Inclusivity and Accessibility

How New Ross currently supports the diversity of people in the town and what it can do to help the needs of people in the future? How can New Ross support new communities?



5. Diaspora - Old/New

The Dunbrody heritage, Kennedy history, recent immigration - polish/eastern European population and young people leaving the town and coming back to live in New Ross later in their lives



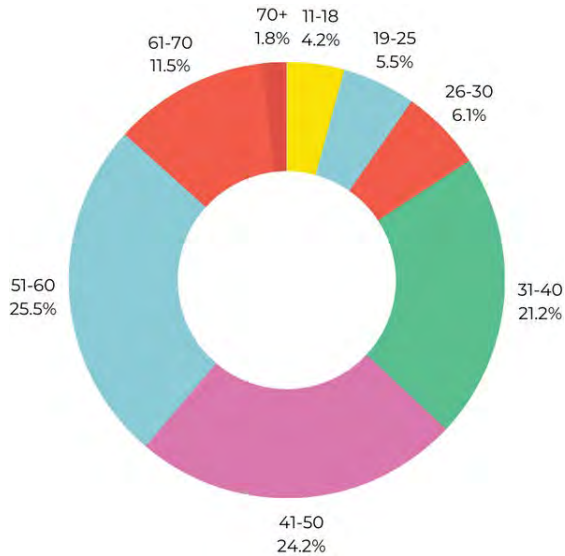
6. Future Use and Living

What would it be like to live in New Ross in 15/20 years time? Can the Town centre support newer ideas of living and working?

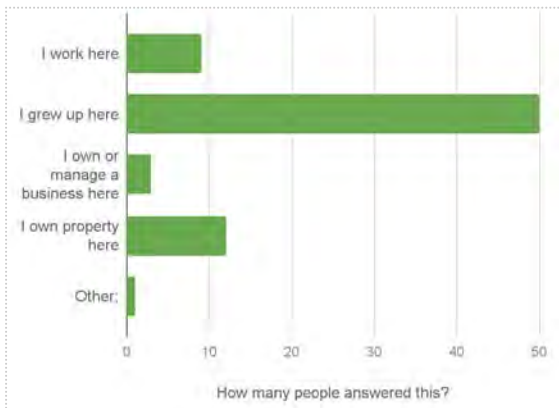
Basic Results from Community Survey

180 people took part in the Community Survey

Age Range

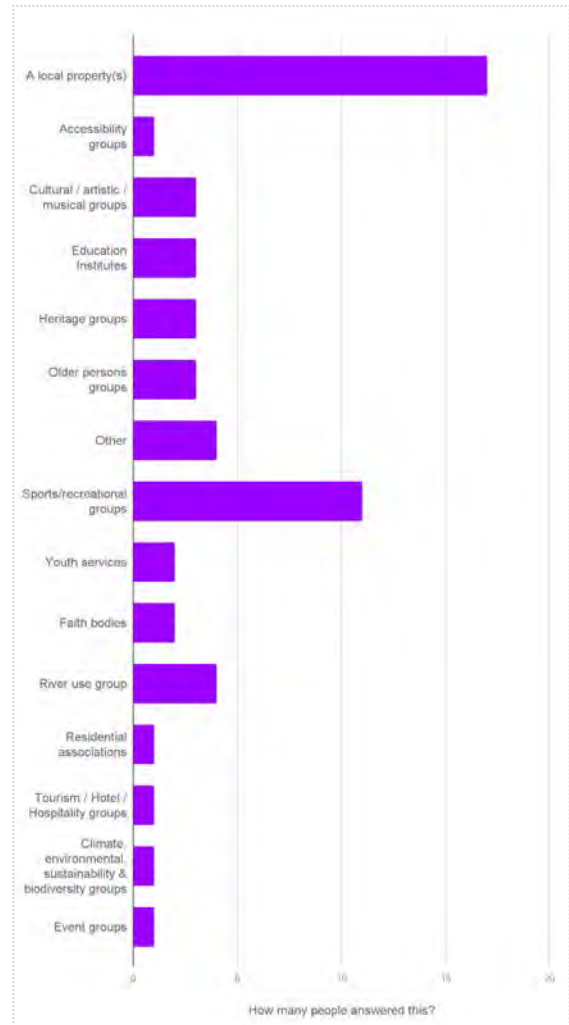


What relationship do participants have with New Ross?



The majority of survey participants grew up in New Ross. Other answers included: I live nearby, I have family here or I visit shops in New Ross

Are participants affiliated with any groups in the area of New Ross?



The majority of participants have local properties in New Ross or are part of sports/ recreational groups in New Ross.

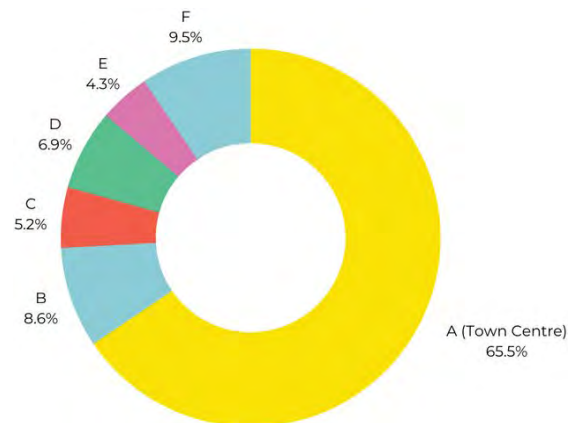
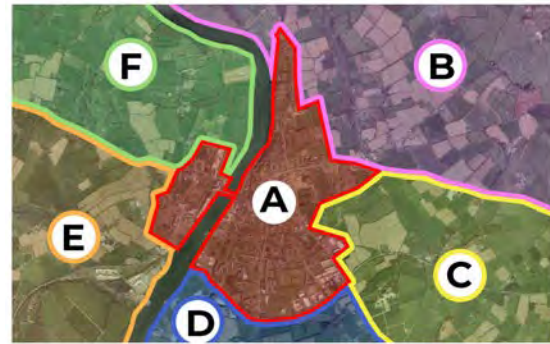
New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights

Local groups that took part in the survey are:

Active Retirees; AIMS choral festival; **Ard Alainn Residents Association**; At. Mary's Church; **Caterpillars parent and toddler support group**; Civil Defence; **Cumas New Ross**; Cushinstown AFC; **DIL New Ross**; Dreambig foundation; **Dunbrody Archers**; FDYS; **Hanley's Local Pharmacy**; Irish Wood Producers; **Lawlors Menswear**; Macmurrrough Farm hostel; **Meals on Wheels**; Mernagh Irish Dancing; **Mountross Residents**; New Ross boat Club; **New Ross Business Assoc**; New Ross Celtic AFC; **New Ross Golf Club**; New Ross Historical Soc; **New Ross Muslim Community**; New Ross Musical Society; New Ross Parish Community; **New Ross Piano Festival**; New Ross Sea Scouts; **New Ross Singers**; New Ross Skate Park Initiative; **New Ross Street Focus**; New Ross Town FC; **Parish Hall Committee**; Primary Principals Network; **Rainbow Youth Club**; Rath Cush GAA; **Riverview residents**; **Shelbourne Women's Group**; St Joseph's Athletic Rosbercon; **St Mary's Church**; St. Canice's Primary School; **St. Joseph's Primary School**; The Grace Church New Ross; **The New Ross Traders Association**; Tidy Towns; **Tullogher Rosbercon Hurling Club**; United Striders AC; **Vibe hair**; Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (Adult Education); **Wexford County Chamber**; Waterford and Wexford Education and

Training Board; **Wexford Food Family**; Women's Shed New Ross; **Youth New Ross**; Wexford Climate Action.

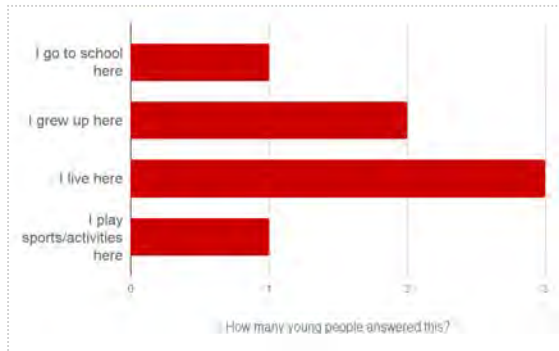
Which area on the map best describes where; you live?



The majority of survey participants live in the town centre of New Ross.

Young People (inc Youth Survey)

What relationship do young people have with New Ross?



What do you think New Ross needs more of?

“More places for young people to hang out safe”

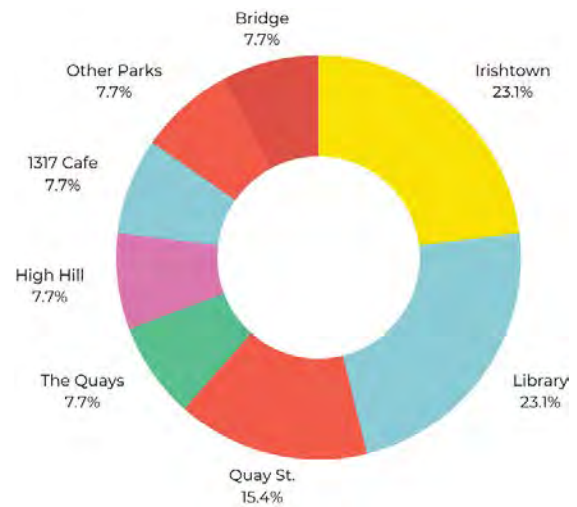
“Hangout spots”

“I think New Ross needs more places to go after school or something to walk down to when you need a break”

“Places for young people to do activities/ clothes shops”

“New Ross needs more commercial businesses in the town centre, a better selection of restaurants and a hotel to allow it to grow and encourage people to come visit the area”.

Where do you hang out in New Ross with friends?



What are your hopes for the future of New Ross?

“A better environment for the newer teenagers to grow up that doesn’t involve being surrounded by drugs influencing them on to younger kids. And just fun stuff for them to do so they don’t have to hang around alleys or parks.”

“They do something with the town bar paint a few walls and plant a few flowers”

Summary of Insights from Youth Worksheet Packs

A youth worksheet pack was issued to multiple schools in New Ross. We received 66 responses from 4th, 5th and 6th class pupils, a summary of which can be found below.

When asked **what young people currently love about New Ross;**

- sports and leisure spaces such as the Apex and various sports clubs,
- parks and green spaces to hang out with friends and
- cafés and restaurants, especially O'Briens,

were the most frequently mentioned answers. When asked about what was important to them, similar answers were selected with places to hang out with friends, sports facilities and better general facilities making up the top three selections.

When asked about **hang out spaces** that are currently used, it was similarly found that young people currently avail of cafés, such as O'Briens, and green spaces such as the park and High Hill. Although this was an open ended question, there was a lot of repetition in the answers, indicating limited spaces for young people to play or hang out. Interestingly, almost **20% of young people don't hang out in New Ross town centre** at all, preferring to stay at home, hang out in their estates or the estates of their friends due to the lack of spaces for young people in the town. This indicates that the **provision of more youth spaces, particularly outdoor spaces, and cafes and casual dining** may lead to increased use of the town centre by young people, increasing the vibrancy of the place.

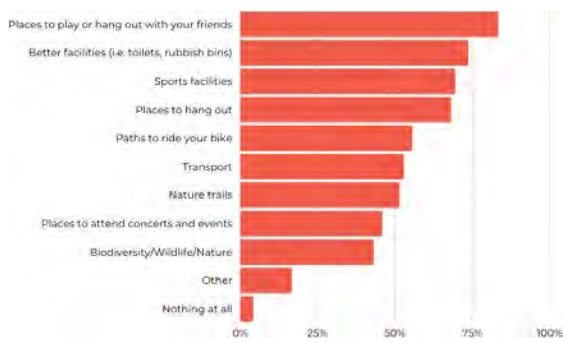
When asked **what kind of shops** they would like to see in the area, **cafés and**

casual dining was the top answer, again indicating both a lack of and a desire for these spaces, with sports shops and clothes shops following up as the next most desired shops. When asked if they could do anything to improve their town, increased **hang out spaces, sports facilities, shops and shopping centres and cafés and restaurants** all came up again as the top 4 answers, despite the question being open ended.

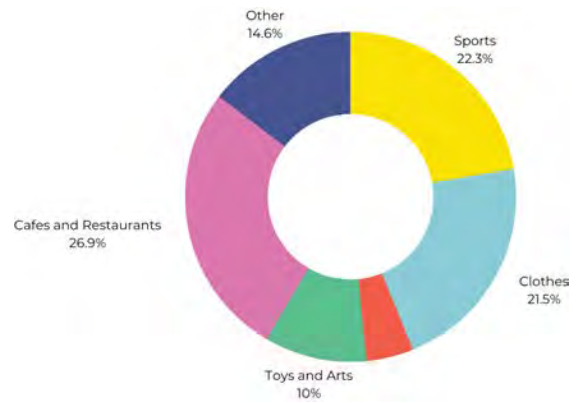
Based on this research, it is clear that **there is a lack of space for young people to gather, play and hang out in New Ross town centre** which is leading to reduced use of the town centre. Despite this, there is a culture of going to cafes with friends and taking part in sport among the young people of New Ross which the plan should aim to elevate and augment via the provision of more of these spaces and opportunities. It is clear, due to the repetition in this survey that these spaces are limited and that diversifying options for young people in the area, may lead to increased use of the town centre by young people, increasing the vibrancy of the place.

New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights

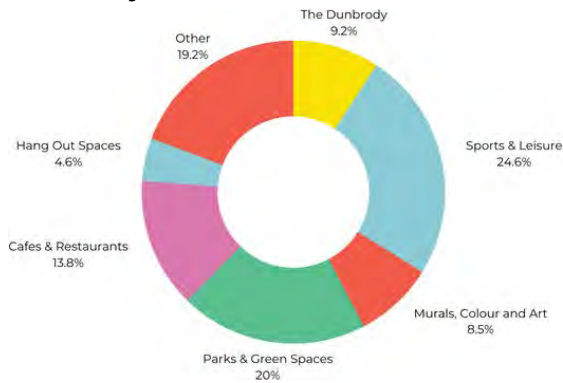
Which of these are important to you?



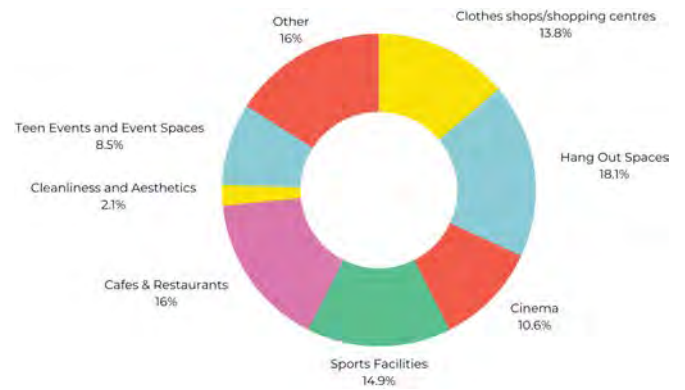
What kinds of shops does New Ross need more of?



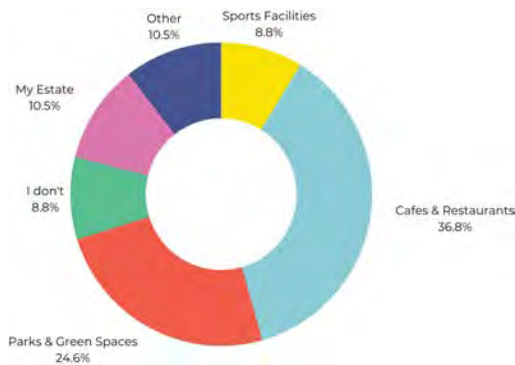
What do you love about New Ross?



If anything was possible, tell us one thing that you would love to see in your town to make it a better place to live..



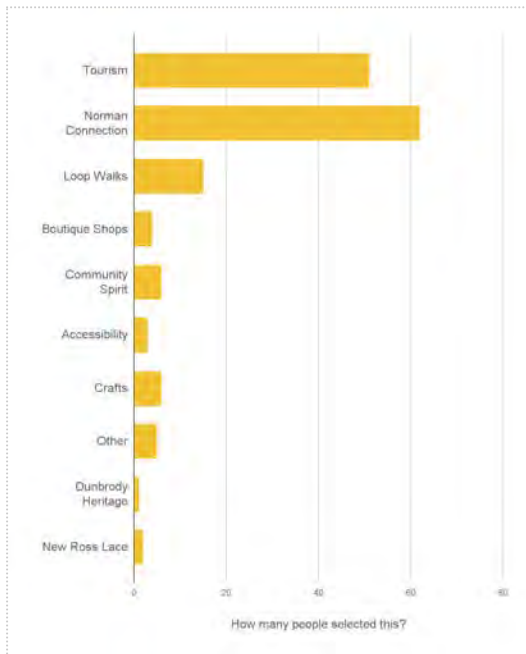
If you play or hang out with friends where do you currently go?



Uniqueness and Character

Participants were asked to select the 3 most important elements of New Ross's character identity that you think should be highlighted in the plan.

Tourism, the Norman Collection and Loop walks were highlighted as the three most important elements in New Ross character identity.



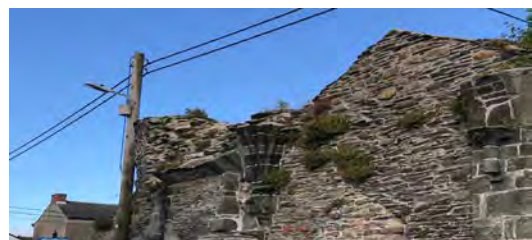
St. Marys Church as part of the Norman Way in New Ross



The Dunbrody Ship



Red Bridge and Greenway Loop



Maiden Gate and the Norman Town Wall

Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

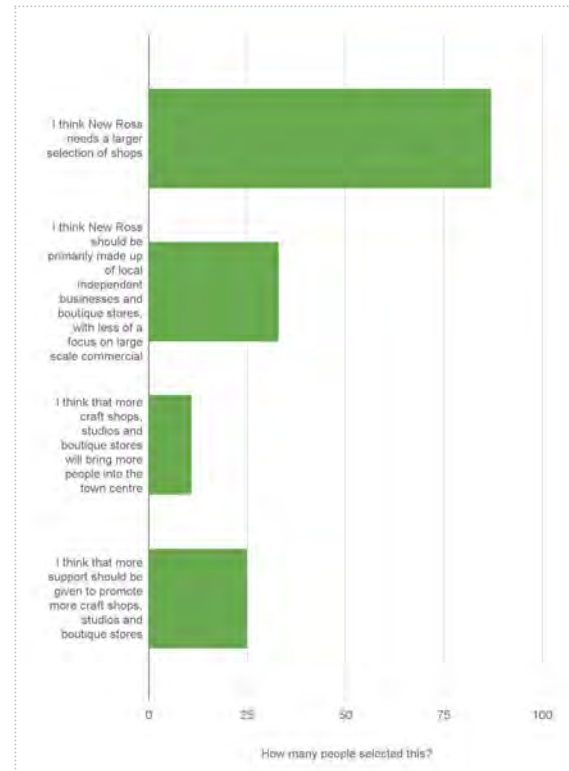
Please select the opinion below that resonates most with you.

The majority of participants suggested that New Ross needs a larger selection of shops in the Town Centre, however there is a desire for smaller boutiques and independent businesses.

“Like every other town we need both big and small retailers but both should occupy spaces in the town centre areas not industrial outskirts outside of those already built but empty like units beside Tesco”

“It’s a market type town... people like the smaller shops, more one to one service provided to its customers”

“Smaller businesses are most likely to offer personal & friendly services. Crafts, especially those creating uniqueness for locals & visitors, have to create interest.”



Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

Do you have any examples of towns or cities you have visited with entrepreneurial style and spirit that you would like New Ross to have?

There were a lot of suggestions both domestically and internationally for examples of towns and cities with an entrepreneurial style.

Some Irish examples included:

- Adare, Co. Kildare
- Westport, Co. Mayo
- Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
- Midleton, Cork
- Cobh, Cork
- Cork City
- Killarney, Co. Kerry
- Skibbereen, Co. Cork
- Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
- Clonakilty, Co. Cork
- Kinsale, Co. Cork
- Limerick City
- Dingle, Co. Kerry
- Kilkenny City

Some international examples included:

- Le Miroir d'Eau, Bordeaux, France
- Bruges, Belgium
- Valparaiso in Chile
- La Rochelle, France
- Bristol, UK
- Exmouth, UK
- Exeter, UK
- Kiama, Australia
- Santiago de Compostella

"The **outdoor dining scene in Cork** is great"

"**Killarney** is a classic example of a town with high standards across the board and a willingness and ambition to **open late and cater for the demands of visitors**. Kenmare also, with its great food scene, independent and chain shops and art scene. A place you could happily spend days in, and yet a small town."

"**Dingle**, plenty of local craft and design shop, very pretty town too, great restaurants"

"**Skibbereen** has really embraced small enterprise, quirky streets and a bustling tourism industry that does seem to support the local community."

"**Bordeaux** has successfully scaffolded a refreshing diversity of boutique stores by bringing in tourism through other means. Even their larger flagships are hidden behind protected building fronts so they provide the most popular modern goods without spoiling the city's aesthetic."

"**Bruges, Belgium** - riverside commercial and community premises are very focused on providing access to and optimising the benefits of the river. Community premises are encouraged to develop facilities for commercial events and tourism activities"

"**Graiguenamanagh - the Activity Hub** is a successful social economy, commercial, community project which has optimised its location on the river barrow and not only operates successfully as a commercial campsite but has also become the centre of the town's community events with performances every weekend."

"The **milk market in Limerick** is a great example of a market that can scale up and down depending on the seasons. New Ross needs a farmers market (Key St on a Saturday morning)"

"**Majority of small European towns** have their shopping areas pedestrianised which reduces pollution and creates a cleaner environment. **Berlin, La Rochelle in France, all towns in Slovenia, Croatia** and many more there is a long list. It's people, the town needs, not cars."

"**Valparaiso in Chile** - bohemian artistic vibes resonates across the whole city through quirky art displays everywhere you look, painted steps etc - the city feels like a playground"

"**Kilkenny City** has a lovely entrepreneurial style with a mixture of boutiques, craft shops and more common stores."

Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

What would the participant recommend to a friend to see in New Ross?

"I do a **1798 walk of the area** when I have family visiting and show them where this is"

"I would always **recommend more walkways** and the river to explore. Including: Kelly's woods, The Red Bridge, Kayak on the river/ boat trip up the barrow or the Nore"

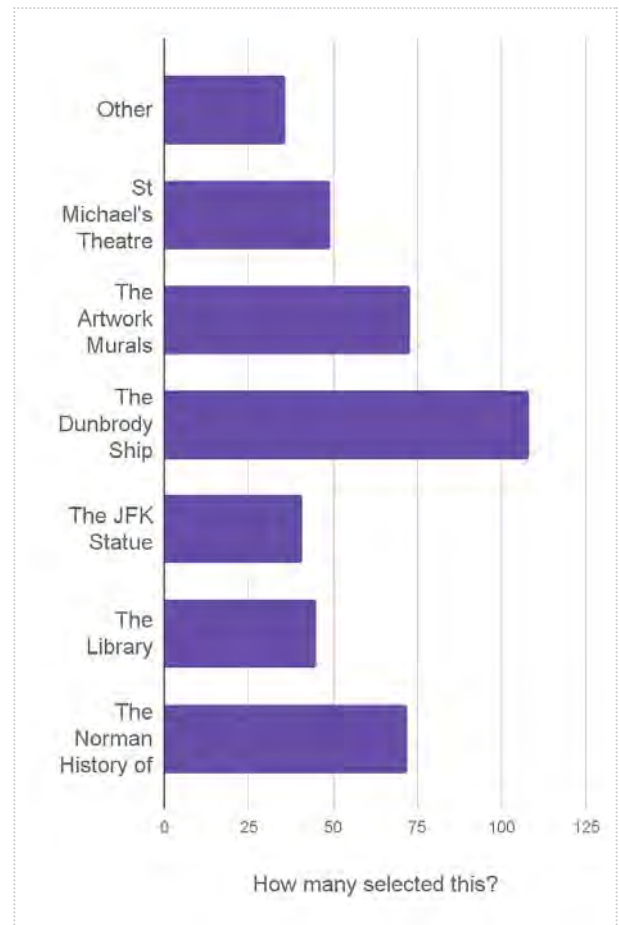
"I would love to see the river **Barrow being utilised effectively by the local community** and hopefully a blue waterway being created which would open our town up to major tourism opportunities"

Other recommendations included: The River Barrow, Town parks and shops, golf courses, local walkways

"**Golf course**, the Greenway"

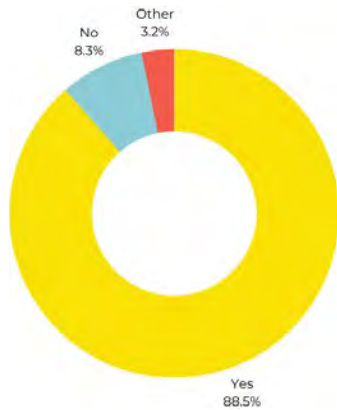
"I did a **history walk** recently. It was great and I really enjoyed it."

"I'd recommend the **town park and shops**"



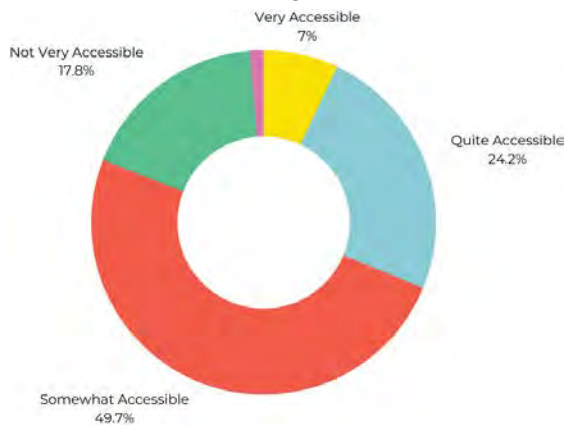
Inclusivity and Accessibility

Does the participant, or any of your family have physical or information needs?



Other answers included: I work with young people who have many needs, My husband, My brother

How would you describe New Ross in terms of Accessibility?



“High kerbs which make it hard to step up/down of as sometimes it's not easy to cross the road”

“Local link should operate at nighttime”

“Shop doors can be very narrow”

“New Ross is a hilly town and the downtown area has limited parking”

“Due to the fact that some buildings are older they aren't wheelchair accessible.”

“The areas where wheelchairs can cross the street are often blocked by cars as they are on street corners.”

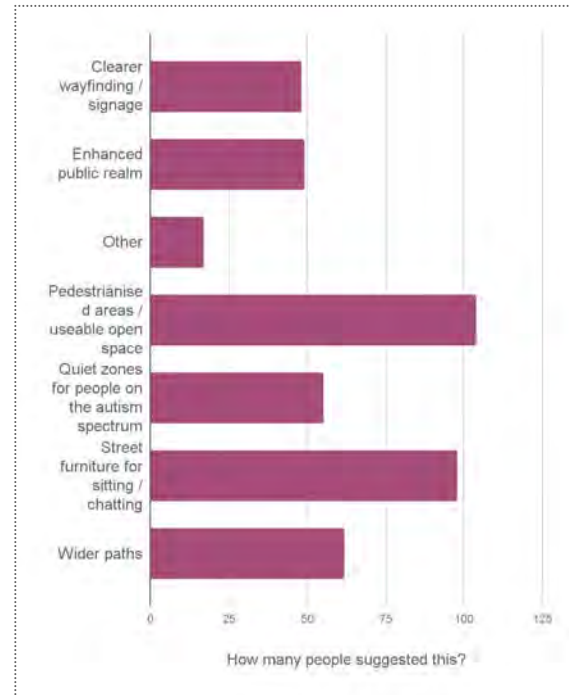
“There's a lack of public toilets.”

“Parking disability spots improved but most tourist walkways have raised stone paths or are hills, no signage for wheelchair toilets, plenty of benches to sit but could be more wheelchair friendly, needs community buses out of hours as no active taxi services, lack of transport after 8pm.”

Inclusivity and Accessibility

How could New Ross improve accessibility in the town centre?

Participants answered strongly in relation to pedestrianisation, street furniture for sitting/chatting, wider paths and quiet zones for people on the autism spectrum / neurodiverse needs.



New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights

Other answers included:

“A **taxi co-operative** which has a single phone contact. Each driver takes a specified night. All drivers work weekends. Each driver has a weekend off on a rotational basis. Allotted taxi rank on the quay. Standard fares anywhere in town and surrounding district. **Shared mini buses** on weekends.”

“**Bike paths around town**. Light then ring road for easier use.”

“**The roundabout connecting the bridge to the town has always been a problem spot**- it didn't work as traffic lights, it barely works as a roundabout, and I've witnessed the one way streets change ways multiple times with only limited improvements to traffic routes each time. I don't think anyone would miss out by having to turn right off the bridge and then use quay Street and south street to access Mary Street or north street instead of the more direct route available now and I do think it would force visitors and tourists to view more of what we have on offer instead”

“**Free parking of some sort** and more parking spaces”

“**Local link buses around the town**, into town from rural areas regularly”

“**Public river access**”

“**Public Toilet in the town centre**”

“**Bin collection** and deliveries finished by 9.30 am.”

“**Irishtown has the space and ability to thrive during the fine summer months in the evenings or at weekends**. It has the ability to facilitate those mobile food vans and with a bit of music, it could be a great place to be. Close off the road from the lights down to greta's old shop and the place would be lovely for a few hours on a weekend evening. Considering the amount of elderly people in the area it would be a great source of company and entertainment for them and everyone else to enjoy the space to move around.”

Inclusivity and Accessibility

Examples of inclusive and accessible design in any towns or cities that participants have visited and would love to see in New Ross?

Examples of inclusive and accessible designs in town and cities are:

- Public covered areas for weather
- Pedestrianisation with street games
- Disabled public toilets
- A public space for a sensory pod or room
- Open outdoor public areas
- Market areas
- Safe playing areas
- Skate parks
- Rainbow crossings
- Princess St in Cork City
- The Apple Market in Waterford City
- Red Square in Waterford City

Quotes from participants:

“A **covered area for the inclement weather** would be fantastic for residents, tourists and community events - covered area on the south quay in Waterford. Something similar to what is planned for the shambles except bigger and more open”

“A **sensory pod or room** in the Tholsel building would be great for the town as I know bringing my 5 year old with **autism** downtown is a huge sensory overload for him”

“**Space for young people to gather**, there are limited places for teenagers to gather.”

“Bray Cabs is an example of how successful a **taxi company** can

be. Their mini buses are all wheelchair friendly.”

“Bunclody, Gorey and Enniscorthy have become more **customer oriented**.”

“Centre of Krakow in Poland. **Large open spaces with markets and tourist hubs**.”

“Clonmel has a good infrastructure regarding a **mixture of pedestrian areas**”

“In Dungarvan especially, the **facilities for the greenaway**, a bike rental space in town centre with **shower and toilets facilities** for local people and visitors”

“I think **rainbow pedestrian crossings** will improve the sense of community and belonging of young people”

“The **hub in Graignamanagh** is fab. Dungarvan has hotels that are available and not too expensive.”

“Any example like the Dutch model where footpaths are removed and the **street is shared equally** would help.”

Diaspora - Old/New

Describe New Ross in terms of Immigration / Emigration?

41% I think this is an important element of New Ross's identity and that it should be highlighted in the plan to encourage more people to come and settle in New Ross, both new communities and returning locals

12.8% I think this is an important element of New Ross's identity but I don't think it's important enough to be incorporated into the plan

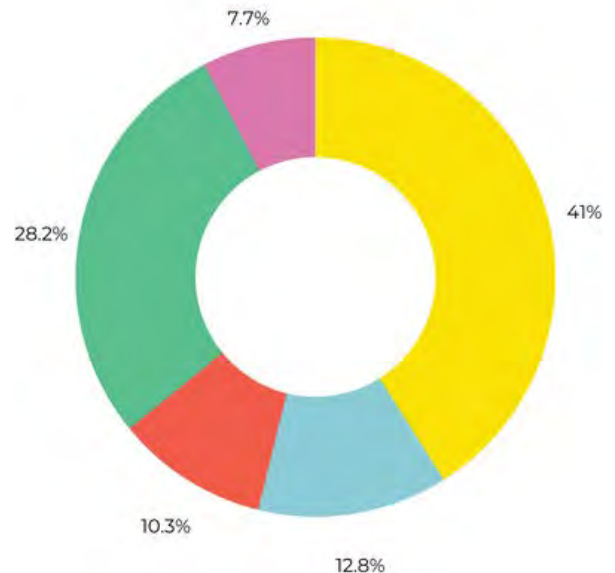
10.3% I don't think this is an important element of New Ross's identity

28.2% I think this is an important element of New Ross's identity and that the resulting diversity should be celebrated

7.7% *Other*, answers included:

“Our **young people are severely let down** here in New Ross both locally and by the government.”

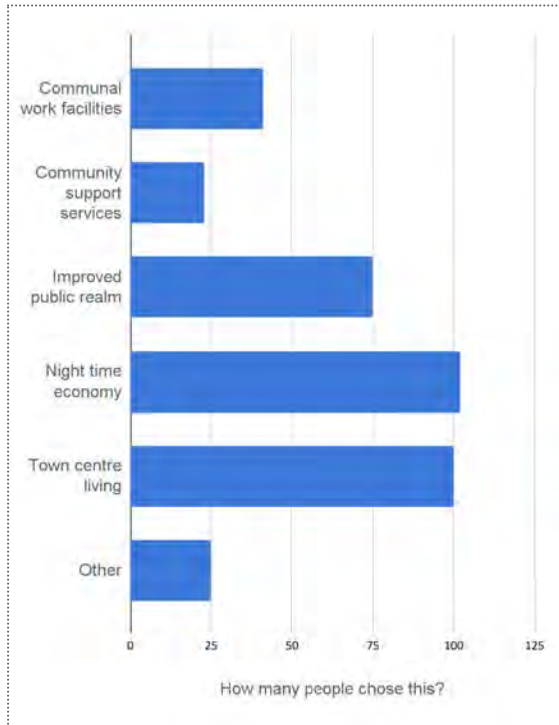
“The **level of diversity is not matched by an acceptable level of inclusion**”



“The largest percentage of Polish people in Ireland reside in New Ross. A **festival to celebrate the polish** that live here... would be great”

How can we make it more appealing for people to come and settle in New Ross, both new communities and returning locals?

Improved public realm, night time economy and town centre living are the majority of participants choices.



Other answers include:

“A proper taxi service and improved public transport and bicycle lanes.”

“A skatepark makes it appealing to the young and young at heart”

“Attractive areas to sit and get coffee / lunch / picnic with a view to the river..”

“Active tourism - so we have a few things to see but minimal tours (only history). An informative trail that connect the activity with local amenities/shops/food might

“Community services”

“Dereliction is really off putting”

“Help businesses thrive.”

“Islamic cultural centre - There is a growing demand for Muslim professionals to move into the town due to faith gatherings taking place regularly.”

“More surveillance to reduce anti-social behaviour.”

“Things for teenagers to do, who aren't interested in sport”

Diaspora - Old/New

What do you think New Ross needs in order to retain young people once they leave school?

Participants noted that New Ross need:

- Alternative evening and night time activities
- Festivals / Cinemas
- Job opportunities / supporting entrepreneurs
- Better transport to nearby education facilities
- Shops openings beyond 6pm
- Recreation apart from sports clubs

Quotes from participants:

“A nightlife besides the pub”

“Life to be brought to town... **bring back the festival, the 4th July festival**, fireworks, market amusements on the quay, the stage on the quay.”

“Jobs- More shops/restaurants create more jobs and people will be more likely to stay. There is basically no choice in restaurants open for sitting down in the evening time.”

“I think young people may want a more **vibrant, livelier night-time town.**”

“In the 1980's until recently we had lots of pubs, nightclubs, we even had a **Cinema** beside the Theatre.”

“More clubs, associations to give people a reason to live and stay in town when they're finished their work for the day.”

“Relevant employment opportunities”

“Better **transport to and from college campuses** in Wexford, Waterford and Carlow”

“Some actual restaurants and shops that **open after 6pm** or on Sundays”

“Encouragement and support for young entrepreneurs to open or move their business into New Ross where there are plenty of vacant commercial properties.”

Future Use and Living

What do you think New Ross needs to improve the quality of life for older adults?

Answers from participants include:

- Arts and culture focus
- On street surveillance and lighting for safety
- Local, accessible transport
- Health / education / community centre
- Easier parking options
- Housing for downsizing
- Accessible walking routes in the Town
- Night time activities
- Public seating / chatting areas

Quotes from participants:

“A focus on **culture and arts.**”

“A **greater Garda presence** during the day as I am noticing a lot of undesirable activity especially in the laneways.”

“A **local bus** that goes to all areas of the town on an hourly basis. As Ross is full of hills, it's hard for the old or disabled to get around”

“An **education centre** in the town in the evening would be great, it's a big loss that Kennedy College stopped doing this”

“**Community centred space** - maybe a local history orientated museum to celebrate local people and history. A space with regular events every week, where people can drop in.”

“**Easier parking options**”

“**Encourage older adults to use our river walk and park to help them to maintain their mobility.**

The above will also help them to meet people. The town needs to ensure that our walking areas are safe.”

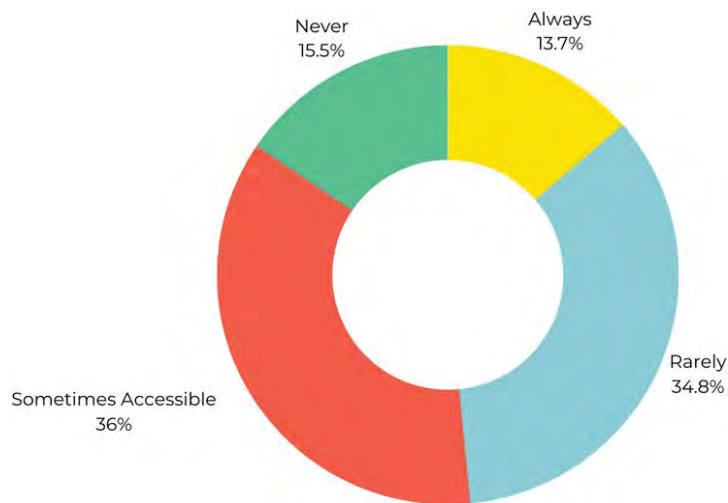
“**Local street events** might encourage neighbours to get to know each other”

“**Housing** suitable for **downsizing**”

“**Make New Ross accessible to them**, community programs that bond them to the younger generation. There's so much we could do, they could read to primary school kids, teach them knitting, sewing, kids could throw Christmas concerts in nursing homes.”

Future Use and Living

Do you currently visit town centre New Ross in the evening or at night time?



Reasons people **do not** visit the town centre in the evening or night time:

"All businesses are closed in the evenings."

"Because there is no taxi services available for the way home"

"I don't feel safe walking alone when it is dark"

"I live outside of the town and there's generally not that much to draw me into town."

"I do not drink alcohol so I do not frequent the pubs too much and then there is nothing else open that's not a pub in the evening to go to."

"Nowhere to go - music and dj in pubs cater for 18-30 crowd"

Reasons people **do** visit the town centre in the evening or night time:

"Events in the theatre, visiting pubs and eating."

"Family business located on the quay. I also work on the quay."

"Late night working"

"Food shopping"

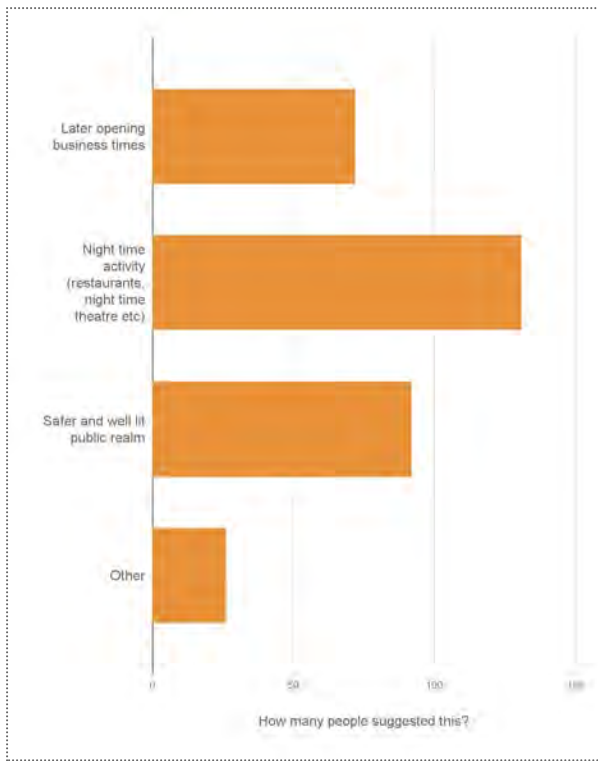
"For rehearsals at night"

"To walk on fine evenings"

"The river is so beautiful at night with nature."

Future Use and Living

Do you have any ideas for how New Ross could improve its night time economy?



Other quotes from participants:

“Allow **big shops and chains** in to town”

“Art - try encourage people that **work in the creative industry** to live and set up in New Ross - **they will add to the culture of the place** - subsidise the creative spaces”

“Get the people of the Town to **unite against any unprovoked attacks** and to make that message very clear”

“**More Garda on foot patrol**”

“**Public transport** to get into and out of New Ross after 7 pm”

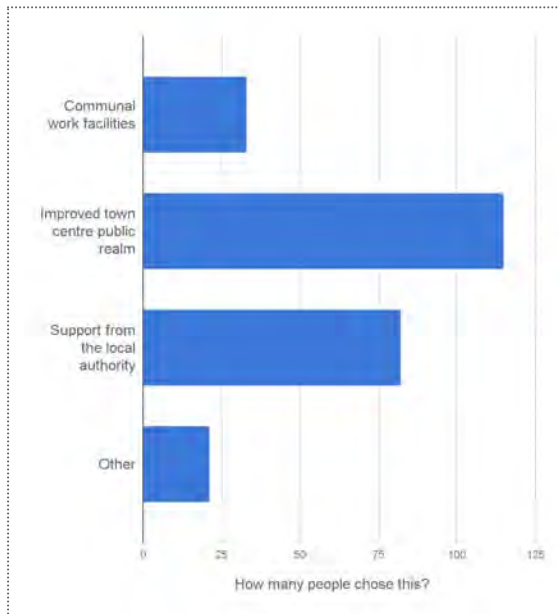
“More **taxis** would encourage more town centre visits and existing venues would stay open later and encourage new start ups”

“**Nightclubs, music bars or gigs venues**”

“We seriously need some good **food restaurant choice after 6pm**”

Future Use and Living

What would make you feel safer in terms of living and doing business?



Other quotes from participants:

“There are people **openly dealing drugs** on a daily basis. There are also people who are **very intimidating** hanging around some of the town's laneways.”

“**More cctv** especially in **Irishtown**”

“More **people living in town**, especially **above shops**.”

“**Too many derelict areas** of town which don't feel safe to walk”

“More people **families living in town centre**”

“We improve the public realm but then **we don't protect it as a safe place for the public** to enjoy day or night and promote the type of behaviour and activity it was designed for.”

“If the **river walk** is designed for people to be active and also relax and enjoy the view, then why not put in some chess/draughts boards/ giant jenga/ a free library/ a jukebox/ a sensory zone for kids something to pass some time with, and have people **more activity using the space** rather than just a space and a few benches.”

Future Use and Living

If you were to live in New Ross Town Centre for the next 20 years of your life, what would you need or like to have?

Participants answered:

- Choice of shops / restaurants
- Communal outdoor space for everyone
- Better Transport facilities
- Well designed apartment blocks
- Safe, accessible streets
- End to dereliction / cleaner town
- Pedestrianisation of the town centre
- Facilities for young people / support for the next generation
- More access to the river
- A stronger sense of community and inclusivity
- Tourism with a community focus

Quotes from participants:

"More **access to river** with the marina being moved to the Harbour Office site"

"**Communal street bins** as in other countries, lots of our older buildings have no yards"

"Would need well **designed apartment blocks** with public realm gardens and communal areas surrounding them and interlinked between buildings. Tasteful design, decent size"

"**Safe environment and better facilities for our young people** so that they would not be a threat on our streets"

"A **better sense of neighbourhood**, where you know the people who live a few doors up. Achieved by **getting to know your neighbour on street carnival days.**"

"All the **derelict and run-down houses** that abut the streets throughout the town **painted up and lived in.**"

"Life to be brought into the town - some energy and positive environment around the town centre and that means **bringing more back into the town centre rather than spread out all over the wider town area.**"

"I want there to be **something for everyone**. A skatepark for the teenagers, a cinema, a community hub used by all ages, an entrepreneurial spirit where anyone can give a go at making, creating or providing a service to the town and tourists. I want to be able to go out for dinner with my friends and all of us to be catered for."

“For our **community to feel safe** and that the town is for everyone and that idea is prioritised and protected.”

“More **facilities for young people**”

“**People working together to help make our town into a busy tourist destination** that turns it into a thriving place of entertainment during the day and evenings, which in turn builds our community spirit, provides work, entertainment, enjoyment for everyone and most importantly gives everyone a sense of purpose, togetherness, a true community.”

“**Good transport links.**”

“**A cleaner town without closed or boarded up shops.** Houses that have been empty for years used. Derelict homes demolished and new homes put in the place. More garda on the street. Ross not being known as a kip. **A new generation with new ideas.**”

“**Pedestrianisation** of parts of the town, improved services, a good range of shops. Ideally an older person should be able to have most of their requirements met in the town.”

“**Increased accessibility** (as I get older), social groups, longer opening hours for businesses. Greater variety and number of shops.”

“As a retired adult better **transport facilities** within our town and surroundings”

Getting Inspired

Tell us one thing that you would love to see in your town based on towns or cities you have visited before

“A **covered area for entertainment no matter what the weather**. More use of the open spaces for street festivals and entertainment”

“A **food market**, even if only open once a week, brings in a variety of food types from asian to traditional burgers and chips to Polish/Ukrainian as a way to unite the community.”

“A **skatepark** or improved public sport's grounds, perhaps decent tennis courts”

“A **town characterised by independent shops, quality cafes** like In a Nutshell, and a cinema showing independent films. And of course flowers on window boxes of businesses and houses throughout the town”

“A **walk in youth centre** with activities for kids that don't charge membership”

“I would like to see **pedestrianisation in the town centre** which in my opinion would attract more nice restaurants and coffee shops and allow people to sit out in the evening chatting and getting involved in the local community. **More street entertainment specially during the Summer Months**”

“I would love to see a **Blueway established** in the town. It would

not only provide better facilities for existing members, but it would also allow our club to establish a transition year course for secondary school children. This could lead to some full time jobs for coaches and safety drivers. It would also allow the club to promote leisure rowing.”

“**Festivals that are well advertised**. Most of the things that go on in town aren't highly publicised so not many people know that they are going on.”

“I really want to see a **big community hub beside our river**, that can cater for several water activities clubs, businesses, community groups, information centres, shops, with outside storage units, green areas for camping, with access for the public to access and egress the river, pontoons for boats..”

“**Coleraine - the town has a wide pedestrianised street** with a mixture of local shops and large stores. The history of the town was in evidence in a big way and it was a pleasant day out.”

“We need **more accommodation for visitors** if we want them to come, plus night time activities”

New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights

"When I was younger I visited a town in Belgium called **Rhodes-Saint-Genese** where certain Sundays would be traffic free times. This meant that on those days, the roads in the **town centre were closed for several hours and people would explore the town using bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades or simply on foot.** The community spirit and true joy on display was palpable and inspirational. **Local businesses used this as an opportunity to sell outdoors,** offering alfresco dining or walk-through (as opposed to drive through) coffee and ice cream or even tables carried to the footpath to display souvenirs and other small items."

"The **Maudlins stream and ponds valley would be an ideal greenway loop** to link with the end of the tunnel and entice people into the top and centre of town."

"The Augustinian church/college and old priest house would be an ideal location for a museum- what a view!!"

Walk and Talk Workshop

Workshop Details

Walk and Talk Workshops were organised, with key stakeholders and members of the New Ross community.

- **Workshop 1:** Mon 26th, 5-7pm
- **Workshop 2:** Tues 27th, 2.45-4.45pm

Location

The workshops began and ended in The Tholsel (New Ross Municipal District Building).

Workshop Schedule

Time	Activity	Activity Description
30 min	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation/Talk on why we are here (consultation process and TCF) - Overview of walking routes and topics that can be discussed) - Handing out of workshop material
30-45 min walk	Walk and Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups to walk in pairs or triplets - Worksheets to be filled by attendees. Guide notes on the worksheets - APC and design team members to contribute to conversation on the walk and encourage filling of worksheets - Open conversation on New Ross - Finish at the Tholsel
30-45 min	Group Round up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Round up of conversations from each group with a summarisation on large boards with post it notes

New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights

Workshop Stakeholders

Key stakeholders were identified with the New Ross Town Team as a result of a stakeholder mapping exercise. The aim was to ensure equitable representation from stakeholder groups. Below is a list of who was invited to the Walk and Talk consultation.

Stakeholder Group	Workshop 1 Stakeholders
Local Businesses / Properties / Tidy town	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chamber of Commerce Reps 2. New Ross Properties formally Tottenham estates 3. New Ross Tidy Towns
Older People / Climate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Ross Active Retirement Reps 2. Meals on Wheels 3. Wexford County Council. Climate Action Coordinator
Recreational / Sports Groups (5-8 attendees)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Ross Celtic Soccer Club 2. New Ross Rugby Club 3. New Ross Striders 4. Geraldine O Hanrahan's GAA Club 5. St Marys and Michaels Boxing Club 6. Barrow Wheelers Cycling Club 7. Apex Leisure Centre 8. St Joseph's Athletic Club

Stakeholder Group	Workshop 2 Stakeholders
Heritage / Tourism Groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Ross Street Focus 2. Ros Tapestry 3. New Ross Historical Society 4. Piano Festival Committee 5. Kennedy Summer School Committee 6. Eugene O'Neill Festival Committee 7. Guitar Festival 8. Choral Festival 9. Visit New Ross 10. Brandon House Hotel
Cultural / Artistic / Musical Groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. St Michael's Theatre 2. New Ross Drama Society 3. New Ross Musical Society 4. New Ross Pipe Band 5. FCA Pipe Band 6. New Ross Singers 7. HFC Brass Band 8. Pantomime Society

New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights

Accessibility / River Users

1. New Ross Boat Club
2. Cumas
3. Dreambig
4. New Ross Able/Disabled
5. Wheelchair users in New Ross
6. New Ross Coarse Angling Limited
7. New Ross Boat Yard
8. Local Link, New Ross

Workshop Attendees

- **Workshop 1:** 12 attendees
- **Workshop 2:** 9 attendees

Design team members from A Playful City, Cunnane Stratton Reynolds and Optimize were also in attendance at the workshop events.



Presentation by A Playful City

Walk and Talk Workshop

Workshop Material

Participants were asked to answer questions based on a reflection of a walk around New Ross. Participants were also asked to put themselves into other people's shoes by addresses the questions in the persona cards

Map and questions



<p>Name _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>Group _____</p> <p>What do you notice the most on your walk?</p> <p>What do you like / not like about the walk?</p> <p>What would you like to see changed in your town?</p>	<p>How can New Ross help your group? Are there features that the town could provide?</p> <p>How can New Ross help your group to be more playful?</p>	<p>What card persona do you have?</p> <p>Card Persona Questions - Please see your card!</p> <p>Observations and Notes from your walk</p>
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Persona Cards

Accessibility and Inclusivity



I am person with a disability

What is the perception of the town in terms of accessibility and inclusivity?

How can a new person be integrated into New Ross if they want to live here?

Future Use and Living



I am young professional

Can New Ross support town centre living and working in the future?

How might this look?

Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism



I am person with a start up business

Where can business be supported currently in New Ross?

Is there a space to sell my product / services? How can New Ross support this?

Diaspora - Old / New



I am person who has moved home after spending some time abroad

Does the town suit have amenities to suit my needs (night time culture, recreational groups, cinema, etc)?

How can New Ross support diaspora that return as well as supporting communities that have moved here?

Young People



I am Young Person in secondary school

Where can I go to hang out in New Ross?

What can be put in place for young people for the future?

Uniqueness and Character



I am involved with a local heritage society

What aspects of the New Ross's character should I show to visitors to the town?

How will New Ross be defined in 20 years time?

New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights



Walk and Talk Workshop

Workshop Results

These results were collated from worksheet transcriptions and workshop conversations. Subject headers highlight themes that the community recognises as potential drivers to positive town centre changes. These headers are in no particular order.

1. Communal Facilities / Hub

It was noted by participants that communal facilities would be of worth to the community of New Ross.

The uses suggested for this included access to facilities for

- young people,
- a primary medical centre,
- active retirement centre,
- rehearsal space,
- recording studios,
- space for arts activities / arts venue
- A place for entrepreneurs

“There is one Youth Cafe 13.17 North; **There needs to be an indoor [youth] facility**”

“The **Augustinian Church would make a great music centre** - auditorium, rehearsal space - recording, etc.”

“If there was a **music centre that enabled tuition, live performance and recording** that would help develop the ongoing benefit from having a music festival in New Ross”

“Small alternative venue... **to rehearse**”

2. Neurodiversity needs

“Need more areas that are **sensory appropriate** for neurodiverse children and adults”

“Could provide **parking for invisible disability such as parents of children who are neurodiverse**”

3. Transport/support for steep hills

The natural terrain of New Ross was highlighted as being a barrier for older people or for a person with mobility issues. The suggestion of a town taxi or local bus route was suggested to help this issue as well as additional support features (outdoor escalator) for challenging hills in New Ross.

“Steps are **steep enough in uphill walks** however the flat parts are very good”

“New Ross has a natural disadvantage- lots of hills. Unfortunately **excludes some from high hill park and library park**; plenty of disabled car spaces but access to shops could be better”

“**A town taxi** has huge potential”

4. Childcare facilities

“Providing safe spaces for childminding close to or in town for those who need to take services for hour to suit work arrangements or event shopping; New Ross is close to the countryside so good choice to bring up children but only with lots of facilities to enable this; New Ross will look like the place of places where young people working busy parents can drop children confidentiality and children feel like a play date / everyone happy”

5. Food destination

“Places to eat in New Ross - could become a foodie destination”

6. Uses for vacant buildings

There was a high level of observation and conversation on vacant buildings in New Ross with a general agreement that these buildings should be used to revitalise town centre living in New Ross.

There were suggestions to use vacant accommodation over shops as a way to improve town centre living. Another use of vacant buildings was to allow space for more bed night accommodation (hostel / hotels) in the Town Centre.

“Improvements of the derelict buildings infrastructure especially the quay, and a few other sites (the old courthouse)”

“Accommodation over shops and other premises with potential to develop”

“We need downtown bed nights”

“How can above shop apartments be rented out to young professionals?”

7. Utilise the physical aspects of New Ross

It was noted that the River Barrow could be utilised more in the context of town centre living. It was also noted that the hills are one of the best natural feature for New Ross but it is not accessibility friendly

“I would like direct river access”

“Lovely views, but not wheelchair friendly”

8. Start up businesses

There was a recognition that in order to have a better town centre, there is a need to support start up businesses in the town.

“Help needed for start up small businesses”

“A better air of prosperity could help make the town more prosperous, however effort needed to bring in investors and new businesses”

9. Safety

Anti social behaviour was seen as an issue on the walk in New Ross.

“I do not like young people sitting and drinking”

New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights

10. Cleanliness

Cleanliness was addressed as an issue by participants

“Some of the lanes **cleaned up a bit.**”

“**Very few rubbish bins**”

“Pretty town but has a **worn / dirty look**”

“There are a lot of recreational groups - but **very little promotion** - so where do you find them?”

“Move the **tourist office to the harbour office.**”

“**More tourists and more activities** for them - keeping people in the town for longer”

11. Night time economy

There is a lack of later shop opening times and choices for night time culture.

“**More choice for late night dining**”

“**Downtown area not attractive at night**, with certain types loitering in laneways and on riverwalk; town needs more for families; more for youth inc. cinemas, skateparks; things for people to do - daytime, nighttime and weekends”

“**Shops open late at least one night a week**”

“No night time culture. We need **more restaurants, pubs and cultural activities**”

12. Community/ Tourist wayfinding

It was noted that it was difficult to find out what was happening in the town in terms of community and tourism. Moving the tourist office was suggested as some participants did not realise where the current tourist office (the Dunbrody Centre) is situated.

It was also noted that more tourist attractions would help bring people into the town.

13. Public realm improvements

There was a recognition of the efforts of murals and colour introduced in the town centre and that aspects of this should be introduced to more of the town

There was a general support of pedestrianisation in the right places with the endorsement of an outdoor performance area and it was noted that there should be outdoor spaces for young people and areas for families to picnic in the town centre.

“**The lanes to be used by small new businesses**, similar to Kilkenny”

“Simple things - **apply colour to walls or sections of the pavement** without necessarily going into more murals, just less grey mouldy cement; bring **plants on the streets; music played in open areas** with speakers on all the time”

“**Bandstand or a suitable outdoor venue** for band recitals”

New Ross Town Centre First Plan | Survey and Workshop Insights



Walk and Talk Workshop

Local Interviews

Conversation with Kevin Burke, New Ross Gard, Town Team member and youth sports worker

On antisocial behaviour, youth work and local crime

- Generally low crime rates to report – CSO show statistic details
- Few crimes that occur are vandalism (graffiti) / shop theft / drug dealing
- Regular drug dealing from premises on North Street (eastside, in full sight from Tholsel)
- Occasional drug dealing around bus stop on the Quays
- Occasional money collecting visible on dole pay days
- Occasional reports about teenagers ‘hanging out’ in larger groups, without any related offences, crimes, except sometimes graffiti (Cooper Lane, Conduit Lane, Pearse Park)
- Teenagers / younger generations entertain in Wexford and Waterford because New Ross has comparably little night life. As a result, the town is relatively quiet at night and weekends
- Asked about safety in the Mount Elliot Tunnel, it will be lit 24/7. It is assumed that the tunnel is not attractive to ‘hang out’ because it is too far away from the town centre and phone reception is very poor which deters teenagers
- 16 years of youth work with local sports groups in New Ross have shown many positive results and a generally active and supportive community without any significant or unusual problems.

Local Interviews

Conversation with owner / manager of The Green Door, 20 Mary Street

On “downtown” business and outdoor space

- Businesses on Mary Street after six - McDonalds lovely Cafe do not count it's all about "downtown"
- I have applied to New Ross Town Council since 2021 for an outdoor space and have been repeatedly refused even though a lot of spaces allocated to "downtown" have been closed up for ages.
- The people who have the power to open the steps have been approached many times we have been told that they have no interest in helping the community and that the rubbish/leftover food being dumped there is not their concern
- I open evenings and earlier at weekends, customers can order food from outside eateries which help other businesses in town. I have no problem dealing with other businesses but people like to sit outside.
- It would be lovely if they could do so in comfort but I have had no help from New Ross Town Council and I have missed out on the best summer of official opening after Covid restrictions were eased as people were still unsure about being inside and as I had no front outdoor space my business suffered
- Quay premises in New Ross not only received 3 outdoor spaces and had the path widened, even though two quayside businesses were closed and the third derelict.

Summary of Consultation So Far

Below is a summary of insights gathered from community / youth surveys, interviews and the walk and talk workshops. These have been highlighted under the TCF New Ross themes of engagement.



1. Young People

Young people currently love sports and leisure spaces, parks and green spaces and cafes in New Ross.

Hangout spaces were seen as a priority for Young People. There is a desire to provide more **youth spaces**, particularly **outdoor spaces**, and **cafes** and **casual dining**. The provision of these spaces may lead to increased vibrancy of the Town Centre.



2. Uniqueness and Character

A **great location** (nearby coastline, loop walks, natural town terrain of hills and river), **sense of community** and a **proud heritage** (The Norman way, JFK,) are current factors that add to the identity of New Ross.

Tourism, the **Norman connection** and **loop walks** were 3 elements that participants would like to see highlighted in the plan going forward.



3. Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

Current tourism recommended by participants highlighted the Dunbrody Ship, local historical walks, Artwork Murals and local walkways.

There was also multiple suggestions to **move the tourist office** to its own location in New Ross and **provide for tourism wayfinding** in the town

There is a desire from consultation participants to have a **large and small retailer in the town centre** of New Ross. Smaller businesses were noted as likely to give more “personal and friendly services”.

There were suggestions of **multiple domestic and international precedents** to take inspiration from with **markets, tourism, pedestrianised shopping areas, local craft/art**, and **community/commercial based activity hubs** being highlighted.



4. Inclusivity and Accessibility

The majority of participants found New Ross to be somewhat accessible, however there was a desire to have

- neurodiverse spaces
- support/transport for the towns hilly terrain and for local link access
- Pedestrianisation of town centre streets
- River access
- Public toilets
- Public realm furniture / improvements
- Covered areas for inclement weather



5. Diaspora - Old/New

The majority of participants think **diasporal elements of New Ross's identity as important** and that it should be highlighted in the plan to encourage more people to come and settle in New Ross, both new communities and returning locals.

Town centre living, nighttime economy and improved public realm were highlighted as aspects to make New Ross more appealing to new communities and returning locals.

Inclusion festivals, support for young entrepreneurs, and alternative nighttime activities were also noted as important for new and returning communities.

7. Other noted comments from the public consultation

A **town centre communal facility** could be used for all ages and types of needs. Supporting young people, older people, entrepreneurs, arts and culture.

New Ross as a **market and food destination**.

Uses for vacant/derelict buildings is a major topic that was highlighted by the community of New Ross.

Community Wayfinding was highlighted as important to find out what is going on in the town. A suggestion was made of a **central community info board with community wayfinding** for the Town Centre.



6. Future Use and Living

Community centred spaces, greater accessibility, and nighttime activities were noted as important for older adults in New Ross.

Safety, lack of amenities and no availability of later opening establishments were noted as popular reasons why participants do not visit New Ross in the evening.

Thinking about the next 20 years of New Ross, participants noted **apartment living, choices of shops, reduction of building dereliction, transport facilities and pedestrianisation** as part of their answers.



Town Hall Meeting Consultation

New Ross Town Centre First Plan



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Projects & Action Plan - What we want to do, and when	8
General Feedback	14

Introduction

Continuing the public consultation on the New Ross Town Centre First Initiative, A Playful City (as part of a wider design team) conducted

- A public drop in exhibition style consultation on the draft Town Centre First plan
- A presentation of draft Town Centre First plan

in order to gain insights and feedback from the community on how the town thinks and feels towards the draft Town Centre First Plan.

34 participants from the local community attended the consultation on the draft Town Centre First Plan and this report will document the community's feedback and responses in order to inform the final document.

Town Hall Agenda

Consultation Details

Date and Time

Thurs 21st September, 6pm-8.30pm

Location

The workshop began and ended in The Tholsel (New Ross Municipal District Building).

Schedule

Time	Activity	Activity Description
18:00-18:30	Registration	Check-In and Drop-In Exhibition Style Consultation
18:30-19:00	Presentation	Town Hall Presentation by CSR
19:00-20:30	Consultation	Drop-In Exhibition Style Consultation and Informal Q&A with design team
19:00-20:30	Video shoot	Stories of New Ross Video Shoot

Town Hall Consultation

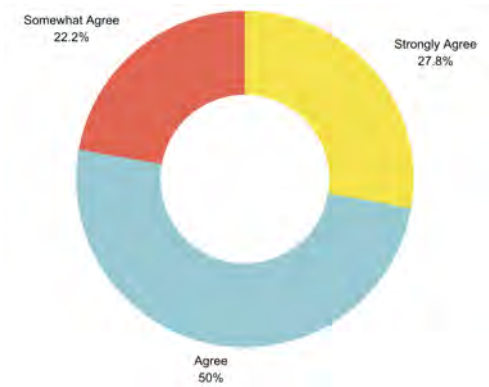


Photographs from Town Hall Consultation Event

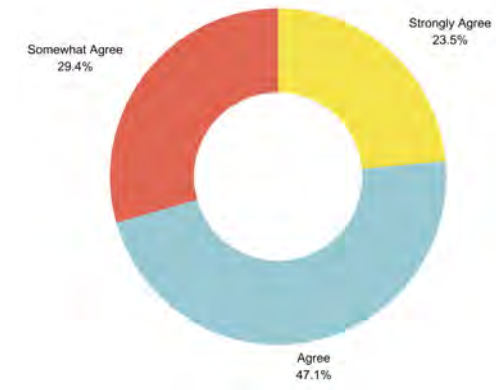
Previous Consultation Insights

Participants were asked *To what extent do you agree with the community insights for each topic?*

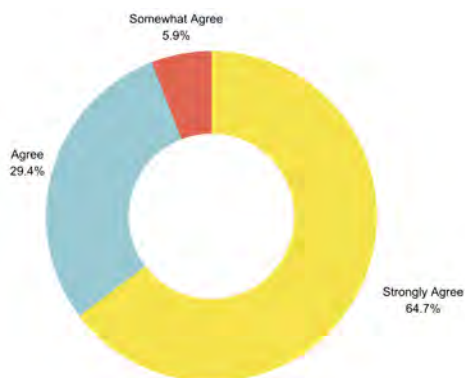
Young people



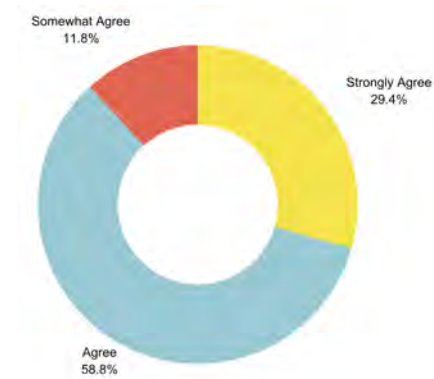
Inclusivity and Accessibility



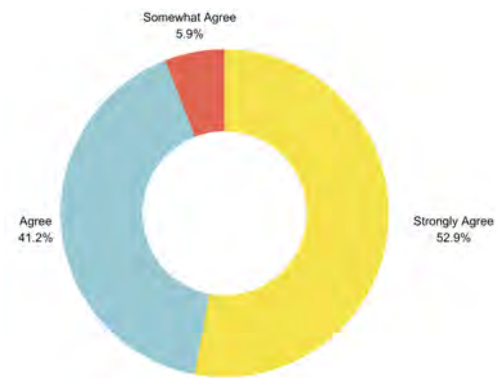
Uniqueness and Character



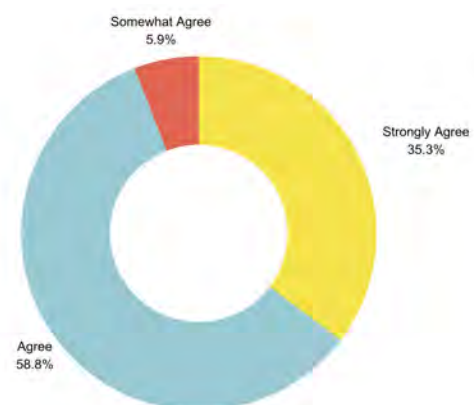
Diaspora - Old/New



Business, Entrepreneurship & Tourism



Future Use and Living



Previous Consultation Insights

The majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed with all of the consultation insights, with no participants selecting disagree or strongly disagree for any section, strongly reaffirming the findings from previous consultation to date.

Participants were also asked ***Is there anything missing that you would like to add?***

Young People

“Talk about reopening youth club - the youth centre is there - it needs to be taken out of the parish hands”

“If families are brought back to live in town centre, what safe play areas are available for kids to play”

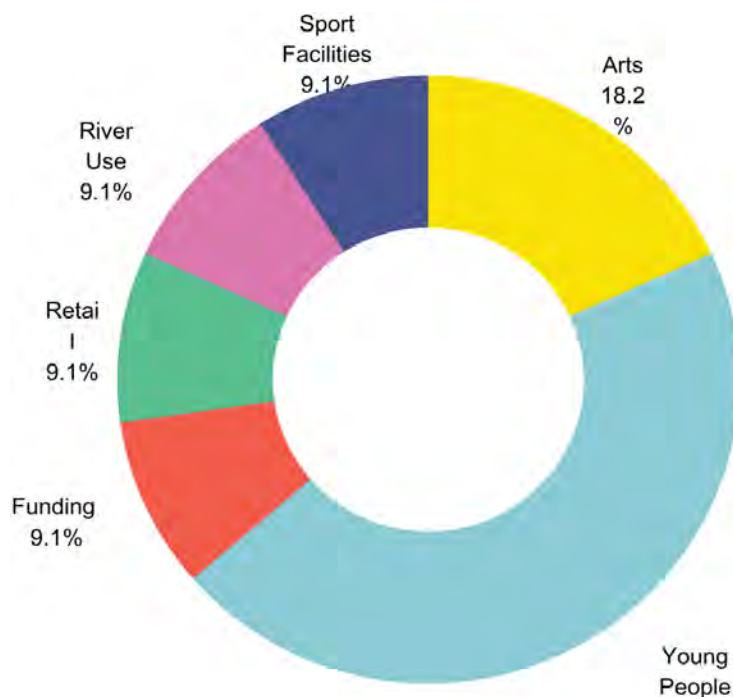
“Spaces for teenagers to meet in open, secure and comfortable area”

Arts

“I think St Michaels theatre should be highlighted more for more funding”

Retail

“Try and encourage supermarkets on the outside of town to set up closer to the town centre”



Vision - Where we want to go



“A vibrant, safe, comfortable, attractive and accessible town centre, to live, to work, to meet and to visit, for everyone.”

Participants were asked to **Rate the Vision for New Ross below by ticking a number on a scale of 1 to 10**



The majority of participants were in favour of the Vision for New Ross, with an average rating of **8.2**

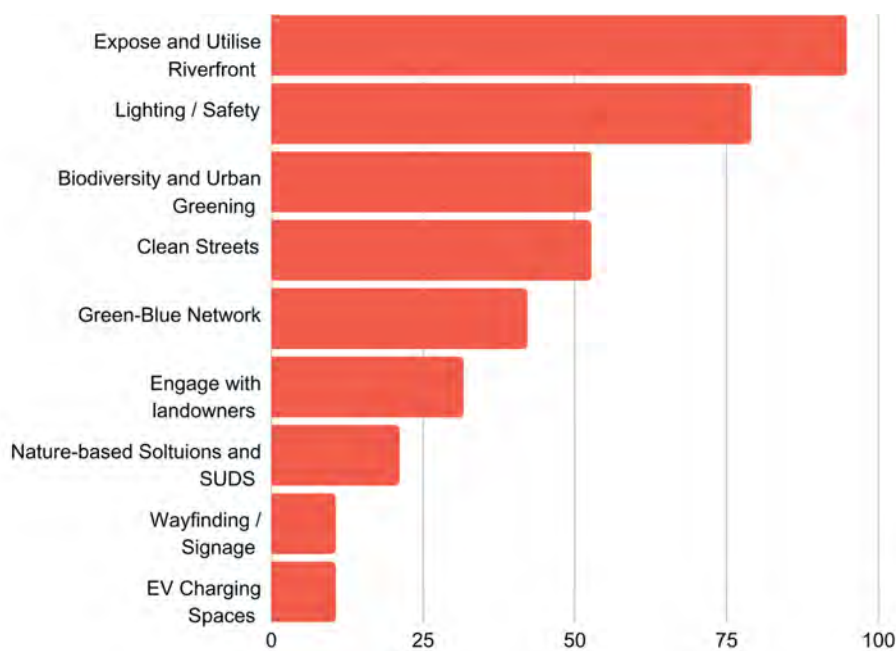
Projects & Action Plan - *What we want to do, and when*

Participants were asked to **Select their top 4 priorities from each of the lists of proposed actions under the 6 areas of intervention**

Environment

The top four community priorities for **Environment** were;

- Expose and Utilise Riverfront
- Lighting/Safety
- Biodiversity and Urban Greening
- Clean Streets



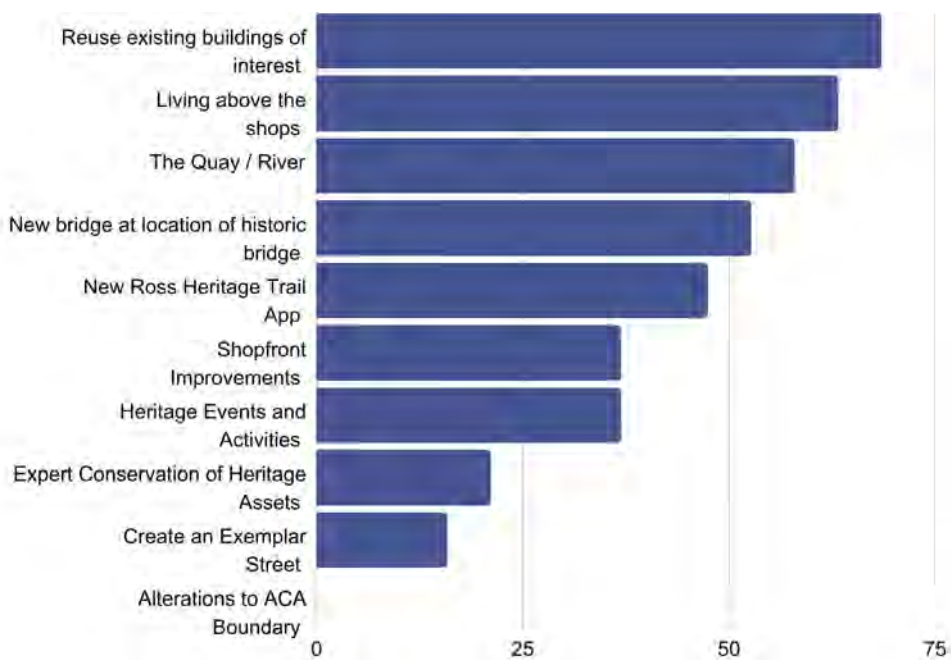
Projects & Action Plan - *What we want to do, and when*

Participants were asked to **Select their top 4 priorities from each of the lists of proposed actions under the 6 areas of intervention**

Heritage

The top three community priorities for **Heritage** were;

- Reuse existing buildings of interest
- Living above the shops
- The Quay/River



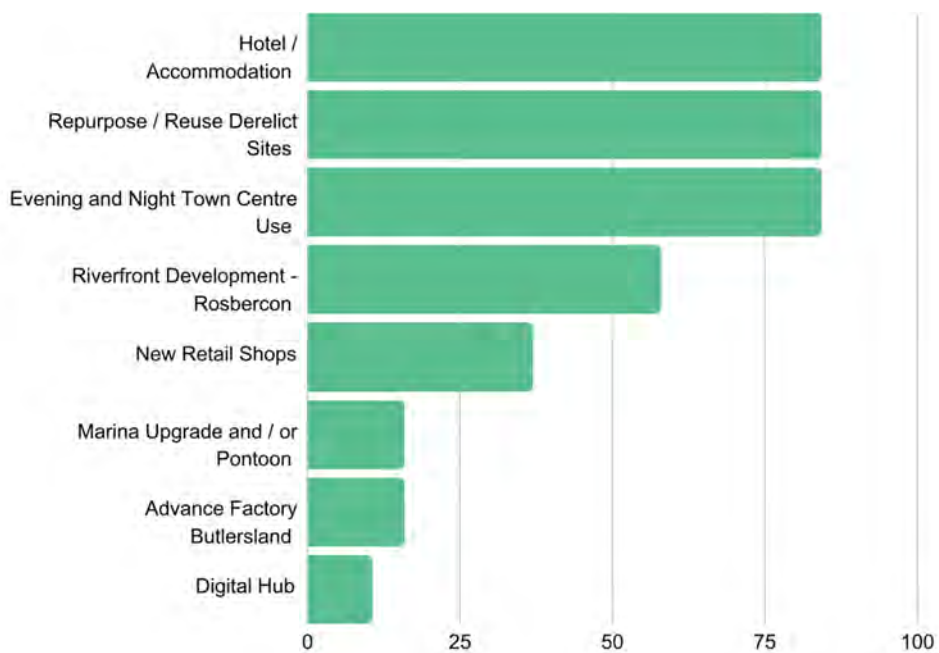
Projects & Action Plan - *What we want to do, and when*

Participants were asked to **Select their top 4 priorities from each of the lists of proposed actions under the 6 areas of intervention**

Economy

The top three community priorities for **Economy** were;

- Hotel/Accommodation
- Repurpose/Reuse Derelict Sites
- Evening and Night Town Centre Use



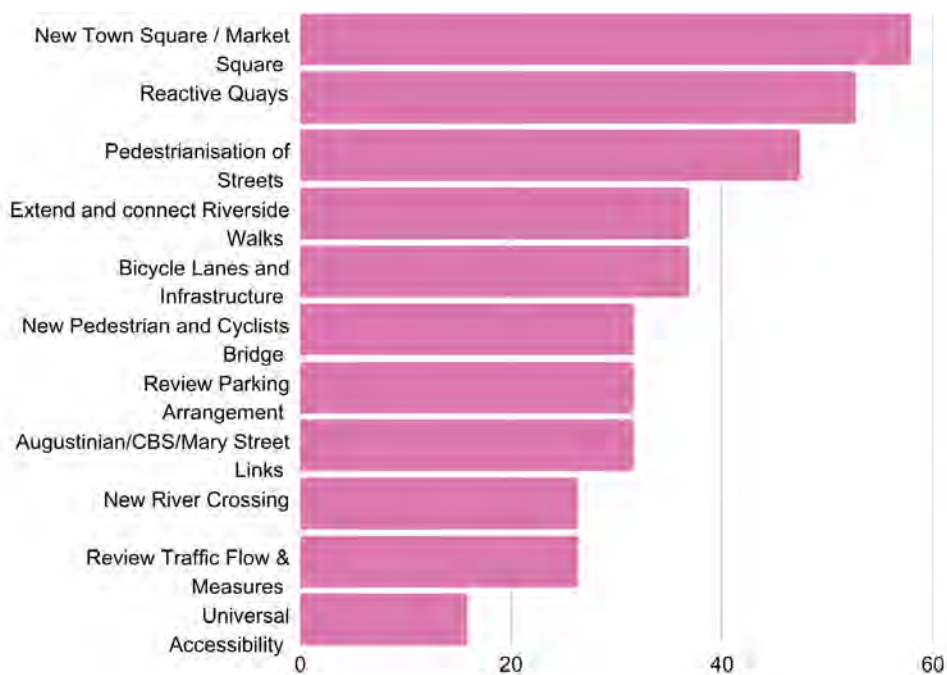
Projects & Action Plan - *What we want to do, and when*

Participants were asked to **Select their top 4 priorities from each of the lists of proposed actions under the 6 areas of intervention**

Placemaking and Movement

The top three community priorities for **Placemaking and Movement** were;

- New Town Square / Market Square
- Reactivate Quays
- Pedestrianisation of Streets



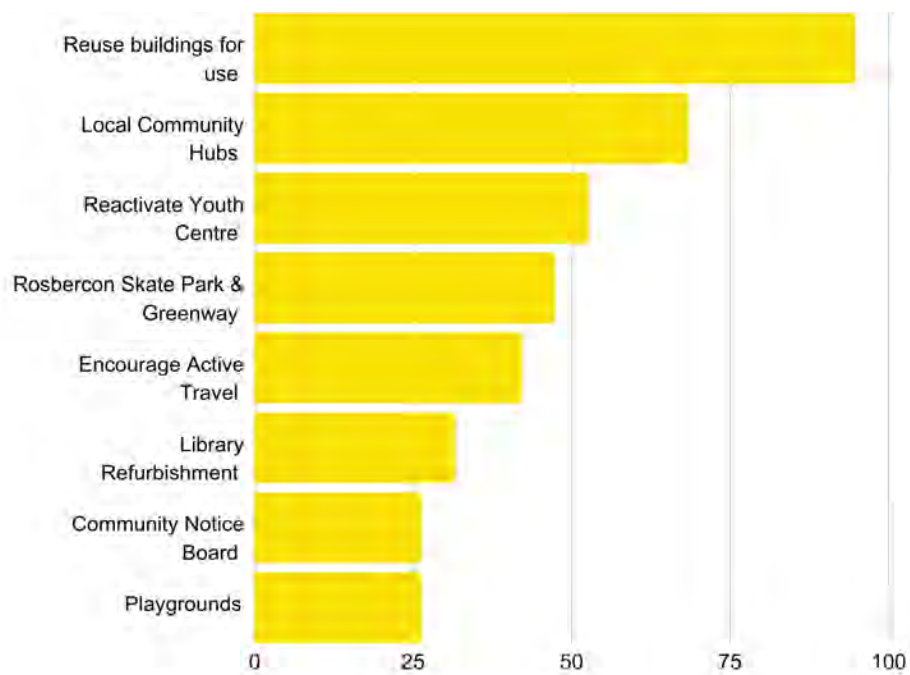
Projects & Action Plan - *What we want to do, and when*

Participants were asked to **Select their top 4 priorities from each of the lists of proposed actions under the 6 areas of intervention**

Local Community

The top three community priorities for **Local Community** were;

- Reuse of disused buildings for community
- Local Community Hubs
- Reactivate Youth Centre



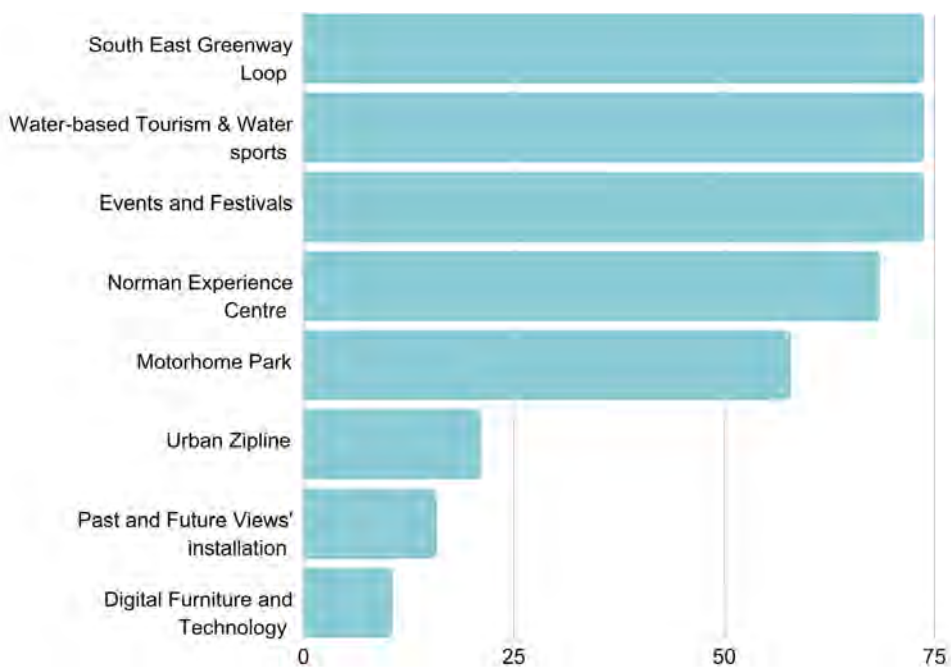
Projects & Action Plan - *What we want to do, and when*

Participants were asked to **Select their top 4 priorities from each of the lists of proposed actions under the 6 areas of intervention**

Tourism

The top three community priorities for **Tourism** were;

- South East Greenway Loop
- Water-based Tourism and Water Sports
- Events and Festivals

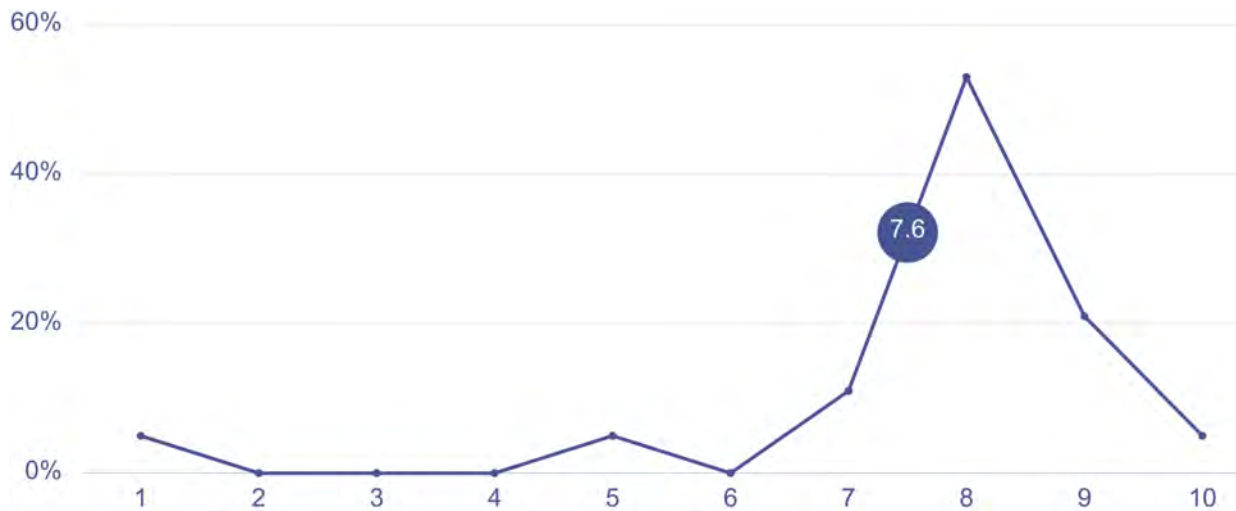


General Feedback

Participants were asked *How would you rate the draft Town Centre First Plan in terms of the following markers of success;*

Comprehensive

The plan delivers across a broad range of issues, themes and topics and caters to all



Participants felt the proposed plan was comprehensive, with an average rating of **7.6**

Achievable

The plan and its associated projects and actions are achievable in terms of scale and time



Participants felt the proposed plan was moderately achievable, with an average rating of **6.6**

General Feedback

Participants were asked *How would you rate the draft Town Centre First Plan in terms of the following markers of success;*

Desirable

The plan and its associated projects and actions are something you would like to see



Participants felt the proposed plan was desirable, with an average rating of **8.4**

Overall

Your overall rating for the plan



Participants were happy with the overall plan, giving it an average rating of **8.1**

General Feedback

Participants were also asked *Is there anything else you would like to add, change or ask?*

Motorhome Park

“The motorhome park and the skateboard park should be switched around, i.e. motorhome park at Rosbercon”

“Motorhome park in town centre not outside town boundary. To keep people in the centre of the town.”

Importance of Funding

“It's all achievable with proper funding and goodwill of the population of the town”

“Fund the plan”

Reuse of derelict spaces

“Need a strong focus on developing the abandoned town centre to a lived in community. Over shop accommodation needs to be prioritised”

“Repurpose old court house”

“We have two empty hotels, why do we not bring them back into use?”

