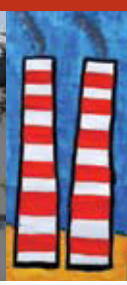
Community-Led Village Design Statements in Ireland

TOOLKIT

October 2012



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

SANDYMOUNT
Village Design Statement
Steering Group

Dublin City
Baile Átha Cliath

HOTEL

Community-Led Village Design Statements in Ireland

TOOLKIT

October 2012

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

SANDYMOUNT
Village Design Statement
Steering Group

Dublin City
Baile Átha Cliath

© The Heritage Council 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be printed or reproduced or utilised in any electronic, mechanical,or other means, now known or heretoafter invented, including photocopying or licence permitting restricted copying in Ireland issued by the Irish Copyright Licencing Agency Ltd., The Writers Centre, 19 Parnell Square, Dublin 1

Published by the Heritage Council

ISSN 1393 6794

The Heritage Council of Ireland Series

ISBN 978-1-906304-20-1

Printed on Recycled paper containing a minimum of 75% de-inked post consumer waste.

Contents

Foreword by the Chairman and Chief Executive

Part 1 **Background and Introduction to the Community-led Village Design Statement Toolkit** **1**

Part 2 **Community-led Village Design Statements – Eight distinct and critical steps** **10**

Step 1	Getting started	11
Step 2	Getting going	19
Step 3	Getting into your stride	29
Step 4	Striding out	36
Step 5	Getting over the jumps	41
Step 6	A clear round	53
Step 7	Meanwhile back at the ranch	58
Step 8	The winner's enclosure	61

Part 3 **Further information and contact details** **65**

Appendices:

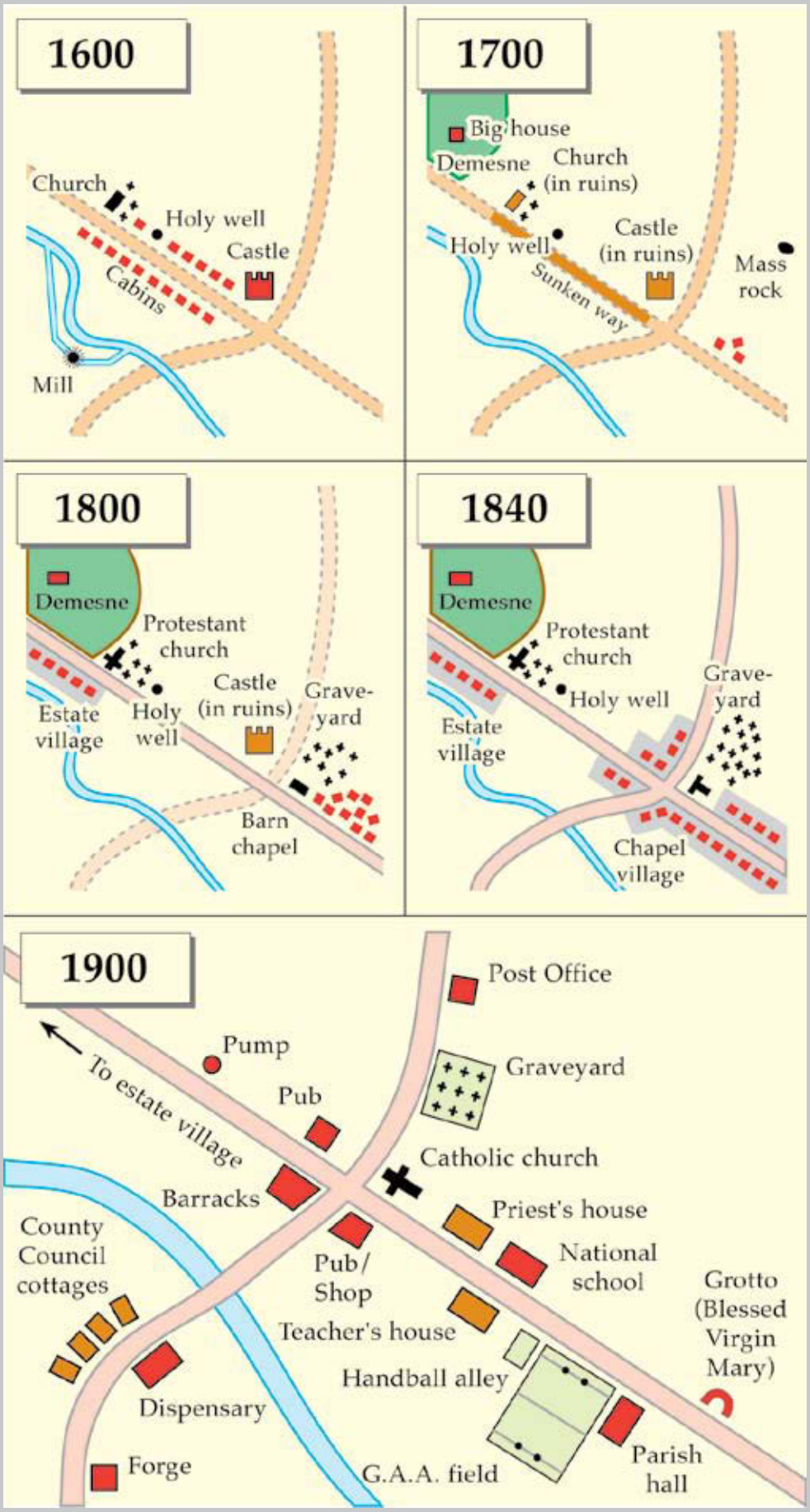
Appendix 1: People involved in the production of the Community-led VDS Toolkit ***66***

Appendix 2: Bibliography and further reading ***68***

VDS Toolkit Fact Sheets:

Fact Sheet No. 1:	**Local Authority Heritage Officers (28 no.) – contact details.**
Fact Sheet No. 2:	**Glossary of useful terms.**
Fact Sheet No. 3:	**Overview of collaborative and participative process – eight steps.**
Fact Sheet No. 4:	**Useful websites.**
Fact Sheet No. 5:	**Project Charter template.**
Fact Sheet No. 6:	**Template for VDS brief – Julianstown VDS Consultants' Brief, June 2009.**
Fact Sheet No. 7:	**Julianstown VDS – scoring matrix.**
Fact Sheet No. 8:	**Sources of potential funding – funding streams.**

This Toolkit has been prepared in accordance with Articles 5C, 6B and 6C of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and the UNECE Aarhus Convention.


1600
Church
Holy well
Castle
Cabins
Mill
1700
Big house
Demesne
Church
(in ruins)
Holy well
Castle
(in ruins)
Sunken way
Mass
rock
1800
Demesne
Protestant
church
Castle
(in ruins)
Grave-
yard
Estate
village
Holy
well
Barn
chapel
1840
Demesne
Protestant
church
Holy well
Grave-
yard
Estate
village
Chapel
village
1900
Post Office
Pump
To estate village
Graveyard
Pub
Catholic church
Barracks
Priest's house
County
Council
cottages
Pub/
Shop
National
school
Grotto
(Blessed
Virgin
Mary)
Teacher's house
Handball alley
Dispensary
Forge
G.A.A. field
Parish
hall

Foreword

by the Chairman and Chief Executive

Irish small towns and villages have in the recent past faced enormous pressure for change.

Rural villages in the east and urban villages within our towns and cities, particularly in Leinster, have been under enormous development pressure. Conversely, long established villages in the west faced significant problems associated with population migration and a parallel decline and decay of the historic built heritage. The pace of change during the 'celtic tiger' period was unprecedented and villagescapes, both rural and urban, changed literally overnight, As a result, communities often struggled to make sense of their new environments and landscapes. We all now know how unsustainable such an approach proved to be.

In anticipation of the development pressure, and building on our commitment to community development, the Heritage Council introduced the first Village Design Statement (VDS) Programme in 2000. The focus of these early VDSs was to raise public awareness of heritage assets and to provide design guidelines to enhance and protect local distinctiveness and local heritage features. Approximately 40 villages benefited during this initial phase of the programme, which operated during 2000-2007 and was externally evaluated in 2008.

The purpose of this Toolkit is to empower and enable more village communities to seize the initiative and start out on the very rewarding road towards creating and implementing their own Village Design Statement.

In essence, the Community-led Village Design Statement (VDS) Initiative seeks to facilitate real and meaningful public participation and engagement in environmental planning, management and decision making matters. Put simply, the community-led approach to village planning and design aims to give a *voice* to village communities and strengthen the overall concept of community-led planning, heritage management and conservation in Ireland.

Since the mid-2000s, a significant shift in the need to secure meaningful public participation has taken place at an international, European and national level. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) and, more recently, the UNECE Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, have been to the fore in driving change. Both conventions have added considerable weight and recognition to the approach adopted by the Heritage Council, and also led to changes within Irish planning legislation.

The current phase of the VDS initiative commenced in 2009 with the setting up of the two pilot projects in Julianstown (rural village) and Sandymount (urban village) using a collaborative and participative approach developed in partnership with the local communities and the local authorities. The processes, outcomes and important lessons learned from both these community-led projects forms the basis of this VDS Toolkit. Our sincere thanks to everyone involved in this collaboration.

This sharing of experience and of practical and clear guidance can now assist other communities to benefit. All of those involved in the development of the Toolkit remain committed to participation through the exchange of good practice.

We hope you find the Toolkit useful.

CONOR NEWMAN
CHAIR

MICHAEL STARRETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Part 1 - Background and Introduction to the Community-led Village Design Statement (VDS) Toolkit

Background

Irish small towns and villages are a 'central component of the history of this island, whose fabric and morphology retain significant traces from the past'[1]. Our small towns and villages have, for a long time, created a significant sense of regional, and sometimes very local, character based on the natural, built and cultural heritage. Put simply, each Irish village is distinctive and unique. A village in the west of Ireland, such as Tulla, is clearly different from a village located in the east, such as Julianstown or Slane. One village may be focused around a central green space, like Malin or Sandymount, while another will be clearly linear in pattern and layout, like Glassan or Coolgreany.

Our unique history and identity have provided us with villages whose street patterns today reflect the layout of early medieval monastic settlements, villages from the Plantation period, ones that began as planned estate villages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or framed around long-established, if often now gone, industries. These settlements were also important market and social centres for the surrounding rural catchment areas. As a result, the **sense of place** created by a village's cultural heritage links directly to a community's **sense of identity**, which can ultimately enhance people's overall **sense of being and belonging and quality of life.**

This **Community-led Village Design Statement Toolkit** has been developed by the Heritage Council in partnership with the village communities in Julianstown (County Meath) and Sandymount (Dublin City), along with Meath County Council and Dublin City Council. This Toolkit sets out a Step by Step Guide to undertaking a community-led Village Design Statement (VDS) in Ireland, using a collaborative and participative process, and has been developed in accordance with the *UNECE Aarhus Convention* and the *European Landscape Convention (ELC).*

While this Toolkit deals specifically with community-led Village Design Statements, it is hoped that the information and guidance provided on relevant **structures**, **processes**, **outputs** and **potential outcomes** will enable and empower local communities throughout the island of Ireland to become involved in shaping their local environments. It is also hoped that it will become a useful 'tool' for community groups who are considering undertaking other sustainable, community-led heritage and planning projects.

We recommend that you read through this guide in full, in order to understand what is involved in the overall community-led VDS process, and that you talk to and meet with other community groups who have already gone through the collaborative and participative VDS process. The Step-by-Step Guide to undertaking a community-led VDS is assisted by **checklists, case studies and helpful tips,** many of which resulted from the pilot community-led Village Design Statements undertaken in Julianstown and Sandymount during 2009-2010 and 2009-2011 respectively.

Pilot Village Design Statements – rural and urban

Two pilot community-led Village Design Statements were undertaken during 2009-2011 to inform the new community-led approach in Ireland and the Heritage Council's VDS Toolkit, as follows:

1. **Julianstown Village in County Meath**, which dates back to the ninth century**,** was the national rural pilot VDS undertaken by the Heritage Council in partnership with the Julianstown and District Community Association (JDCA) and Meath County Council. This community-led VDS, which commenced in June 2009[2], was formally launched by former Minister Ciaran Cuffe in October 2010; and

[1] Source: Atlas of the Rural Irish Landscape, Cork University Press, 1st Edition (1997), pg 180 and 2nd Edition (2011), pg 256.

[2] JDCA created a community play, which was performed at the Heritage Council's VDS Conference at Slane Castle in October 2008. A DVD of the play was produced with the support of the Heritage Council and launched by the JDCA, the Heritage Council and Meath County Council at the JDCA's AGM (evening) in March 2009. The VDS Scoping Workshop 'piggy-backed' the AGM event.

2. **Sandymount Village in the south of Dublin City**, originally part of the Pembroke Estate, was the urban pilot VDS undertaken by the Heritage Council in partnership with the Sandymount Community and Dublin City Council. This community-led VDS, which commenced in September 2009 was formally launched by Minister Jimmy Deenihan T.D. in September 2011.

Both pilot community-led Village Design Statements provide innovative and creative examples of how local communities in Ireland can:

- Become actively involved and engaged in shaping their local environments and landscapes, both rural and urban.
- Play a pivotal role in heritage, environmental planning and sustainable development matters in their locality.
- Establish and develop useful collaborative partnerships and networks with local authorities and statutory bodies.
- Play an important role in the enhancement and promotion of the overall character and distinctiveness of Ireland's villages.

Ultimately, VDS projects strengthen and enhance the overall **sense of place** within our historic villages and improve the quality of life and **sense of belonging** for residents and visitors alike. The **Shared Vision**, **Design Principles** and **Agreed VDS Action Plans** produced as part of these pilots are currently being implemented by the project partners in partnership with agencies including LEADER and Fáilte Ireland.

Your group might find it useful to have a look at the pilot village design statements, along with their accompanying illustrated posters for schools and children, which are available to download at www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning.

Introduction

The following sections explain:

1. **What is a community-led Village Design Statement (VDS)?**
2. **An overview of the new collaborative and participative VDS process.**
3. **Community-led VDS – recommended outputs.**
4. **Community-led VDS – key outcomes.**
5. **VDS support and funding – community investment.**
6. **Summary of funding required for a community-led VDS – indicative costs.**
7. **Support from your Local Authority Heritage Officers and LEADER companies.**
8. **Support from the Heritage Council – Multi-Sectoral VDS Training Workshop (1 Day).**
9. **Consideration of links to the wider policy context.**

1. What is a community-led Village Design Statement (VDS)?

A community-led Village Design Statement is a mechanism for protecting, celebrating and enhancing local distinctiveness and contributes significantly to the delivery of sustainable development. A community-led VDS examines and describes the time-depth and the unique character and distinctiveness of a village settlement that collectively creates a sense of place and proposes agreed design principles and specific and phased actions to ensure the future collective enhancement, effective planning and management, and promotion of the village for the benefit of the community and visitors alike.

Please note that a Village Design Statement (VDS) does not deal with statutory land use zonings – a Village Design Statement (VDS) is **not** a Local Area Plan (LAP).

It is recommended that the following core heritage and design elements, which are often linked, should be explored, analysed and assessed through the preparation of a community-led village design statement:

(i) ***Historic village form and settlement pattern****: shape, layout and setting in the landscape – unique geology, topography and morphology – rural and/or urban – links and connections to surrounding area – role of village – past and present.*

(ii) ***Villagescape, historic streetscape and character areas:*** *architectural types, styles and forms – age range of buildings – height, scale and density of buildings – architectural conservation areas (ACAs).*

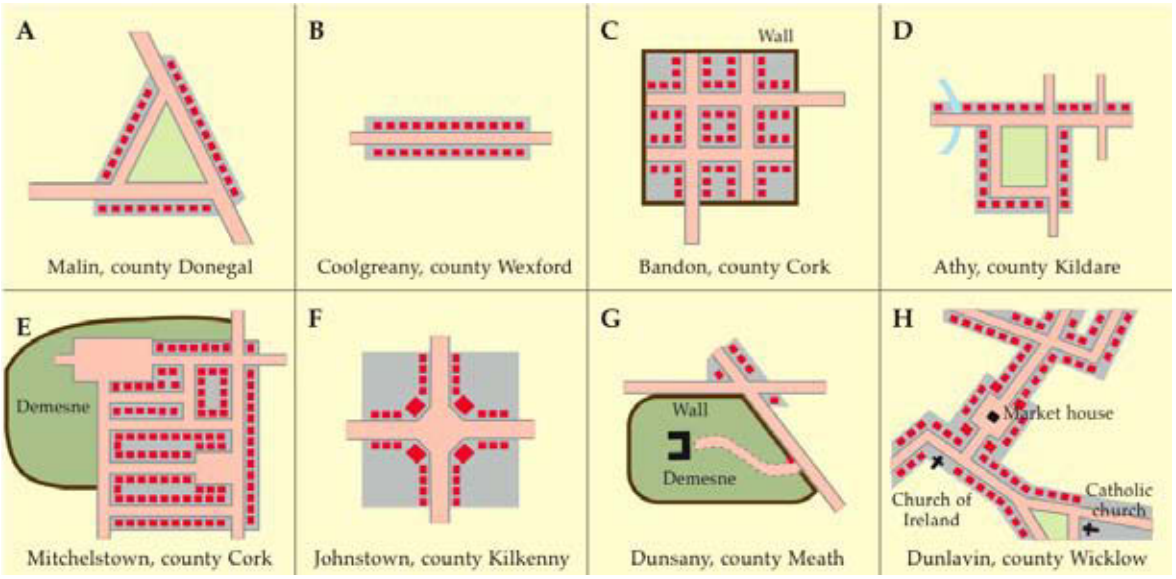
(iii) ***Key approaches to the village****: arrival and departure experiences – views and vistas in and out of the village – historic landscapes – urban and rural.*

(iv) ***Landmarks:*** *key buildings/structures – hierarchy of public spaces, parks and historic gardens – protected structures including civic buildings such as courthouses, barracks, places of worship and bridges. Relationship and links between buildings and spaces – laneways and slips, distinctive features and local materials/textures – gateposts, walls, kerbing, railings, lamps.*

(v) ***Green Infrastructure (GI) and natural heritage****: existing and potential areas – including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Candidate Special Protection Areas (cSPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) – otherwise known as Natura 2000 sites - including coastlines, loughs, estuaries, rivers and streams.*

(vi) ***National Monuments****: archaeological sites and remains and their setting – views to and from these important sites – important memorials and statues.*

Figure 1: Village morphology in Ireland



(Source: Cork University Press, 2011 and 1997.)

2. An overview of the new collaborative and participative VDS *process*

The community-led approach to Village Design Statements, as set out in this Toolkit, embraces a new collaborative and participative approach to village planning and design, whereby local communities, working in partnership with local authorities and statutory agencies, have a real **voice** in how their villages are planned and shaped in the future. For example, collaborative and participative project management structures established at the outset enable and encourage communities to chair and manage their local VDS project.

The approach also encourages the community to work in partnership with project partners and stakeholders within an overall collaborative ***process,*** whereby the scope and objectives of the overall VDS project are agreed at the start in the form of a Project Charter (signed by all partners at the outset) and key outcomes and actions are identified, assessed and prioritised by all partners, as they work through the overall VDS process. Village communities and project partners are assisted and supported in the overall process by the appointment of external consultants with experience of undertaking community-led projects. Consultants are normally brought on board once the VDS project scope and objectives have been identified and agreed by all partners – usually through the holding of a **stakeholder workshop**, which is the basis for the **consultants' brief**. We return to the issue of supporting consultants and the timing of their involvement in the overall community-led VDS process in Section 5, and again in Part 2, below. It should be highlighted that the community-led VDS process is labour intensive and is not for the faint-hearted – the process is not to be undertaken lightly. However, the benefits accruing from the overall collaborative and participative process, as evident in Julianstown and Sandymount villages, are enormous and wide-ranging and include: a strengthened sense of civic pride and sense of place; enhanced trust in the statutory planning system; improved environmental planning and management practices; revitalised local networks and partnerships; and an improved sense of belonging and enhanced quality of life, health and well being of residents and visitors alike.

We examine the recommended outputs and likely outcomes of a community-led VDS further in Sections 3 and 4 below.

3. Community-led VDS – recommended outputs

A community-led Village Design Statement document or report is made up of three key sections:

(i) A **Shared Vision** setting out the community's overall and collective vision (environmental, cultural and socio-economic) for their village for the next 15-20 years – this is effectively the community's Constitution.

(ii) **Agreed Design Principles** that relate specifically to the village. These are to be used by the local community, the local authority and other stakeholders to guide in-fill or new development, within or on the edges of the village, in order to ensure that the existing character and distinctiveness identified through the VDS process is conserved, celebrated and enhanced.

(iii) An **Agreed VDS Action Plan** setting out specific and phased projects that should be delivered by the local community and its partners to ensure the effective planning, management and enhancement of these unique features, which ultimately create a village's overall **sense of place.**

In addition, it is recommended that the VDS also contains an **Illustrated Poster** (double-sided) for local schools and children explaining the overall community-led Village Design Statement process and project. This should include the key features that make up the local character of the village, along with information on the VDS and its Shared Vision, Agreed Design Principles and Agreed VDS Action Plan. It is recommended that key contact details should also be included on the poster. Posters for local schools were prepared for both Julianstown and Sandymount Village Design Statements and are available to download from the Heritage Council's Planning webpage.

Once the VDS document/report and its constituent parts (i.e. the Shared Vision, Agreed Design Principles, Agreed VDS Action Plan and Illustrated Poster for schools) is formally launched by the community and its project partners, the VDS report then becomes the focus for the important implementation and delivery stage.

4. Community-led VDS – key outcomes

The Heritage Council and its partners consider that effective community-led Village Design Statements prepared using a collaborative and participative approach can generate the following key outcomes for village communities, local authorities and other statutory bodies:

Community-led Village Design Statements:

- **Build on existing community knowledge base – enhance community awareness, knowledge and understanding of the unique landscape, environment and heritage features within the historic core and surrounding area of their village.**
- **Provide a community with a valuable planning and management tool to ensure that changes to their village add to, and enhance, local distinctiveness and character, and contribute to the village's overall sense of place.**
- **Link communities to the formal planning system and decision-making processes thereby increasing the likelihood that community-led Village Design Statements will be used by local authorities and the private sector to improve local distinctiveness and character – helps build trust in the system.**
- **Assist the community, local authority planners and others by creating a Shared Vision, agreed Design Principles and an agreed VDS Action Plan that enhances a village's historic form and fabric, and sense of place.**
- **Foster overall community skills, confidence and capacity building in the short, medium and long term.**
- **Promote participative democracy at a local level – enhance the democratisation of the Irish Planning System.**
- **Stimulate socio-economic regeneration, wealth creation and growth in the local village economy, and act as a focus for investment.**
- **Generate social capital and revitalise local networks and partnerships within village communities – both rural and urban.**
- **Enhance the overall quality of life, health and well being, and sense of belonging within communities living and working in Ireland's villages.**

5. VDS support and funding – community investment

Community-led Village Design Statements require support and funding from as many sources as possible from the outset. Support and funding are required in order to create the **structures**, **processes**, **energy** and **momentum** necessary to drive the collaborative and participative **process** forward and to ensure overall success in the short, medium and long-term for the village community and its partners.

As noted above, the overall process is labour-intensive and is not to be undertaken lightly. Ideally, support and funding should come from as many sources of as possible including the local authority, the Heritage Council, LEADER companies, and rural and urban regeneration programmes. The VDS pilots in Julianstown and Sandymount have demonstrated that this partnership approach encourages commitment to, ownership of, and buy-in to, the overall collaborative and participative VDS process from the outset, and on through into the crucial delivery/ implementation phase.

Funding for a community-led VDS

Overall **funding in the range of €14,000-€16,000 is required** to support the setting up/scoping, formulation and launching of a community-led VDS – a breakdown of indicative costs is provided in Section 6 below.

The costs relate mainly to the purchase/procurement of professional technical skills and services (consultants with experience of delivering community-led projects, for example) to **support** and **assist** the community and its partners in the formulation of their VDS (note that implementation costs are separate and are not included in the above figures). It is possible to reduce the overall cost of preparing a community-led VDS by checking if the required skills, interests and talents already exist in the local community (see Step 1 below).

Ideally, funding and support should be in place before you start the overall community-led VDS process. In addition, there is the potential to secure non-financial support – support-in-kind might be provided by local colleges, businesses, printers, or press. Local sponsorship might also help support the overall process, although it is important that this must be transparent to avoid any claims of vested interest.

We would also wish to highlight that the participative process **requires a significant amount of input, energy and effort from the local community in the form of voluntary investment or community investment** – for example, the design and preparation Julianstown VDS required **1,000-1,200 hours** of community investment/ effort. As a result, this guide asks the important question at the outset – is your community sure that it is ready to undertake a community-led VDS?

The two VDS pilots undertaken in Julianstown and Sandymount also demonstrated that **the collaborative and participative VDS process takes around 1.5 to 2 years to undertake and complete**. This is the time span from the start of the process to the formal launch of the VDS Report (consisting of a Shared Vision, Agreed Design Principles and Agreed VDS Action Plan), which marks the commencement of the important implementation phase.

It is recommended, therefore, that your group ensures that support from the community and all the partners, particularly the local authority, will be in place throughout the process. We return to this issue in Step 2 below.

There are numerous effective ways and methods to creatively engage your local village community (of all ages) in a fun and creative way so that they get the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the overall planning and management of their local landscape and environment. These innovative methods can include community plays, photo surveys, video soapbox, children's 3D models, community/public workshops and exhibitions (see Steps 3-5 below).

We also examine how to plan for a successful formal launch of the VDS whereby the community and its partners get to celebrate their achievement and to explain their Shared Vision, Agreed Design Principles and Agreed VDS Action Plan to other statutory bodies and surrounding villages and neighbourhoods. This important stage in the process also marks the start of the formal implementation stage and is often when the issue of funding again becomes critical, see Steps 6-7 below.

As noted above, a small amount of funding is required for the delivery of the formal launch night to ensure that it is an outstanding success for all involved.

Funding for the implementation of a community-led VDS can vary depending on the VDS projects identified in the agreed VDS Action Plan (implementation costs will be significantly higher if the VDS project requires funding for capital works), see Step 7 below.

Finally, we investigate how to plan and undertake project monitoring and evaluation, and examine useful indicators to put in place at the outset, in order to establish a **continuous circle of learning** for all involved in the process through the various stages of scoping, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and lessons learned, see Step 8 below.

6. Summary of funding required for a community-led VDS – indicative costs[3]

A summary of the indicative costs associated with the planning/scoping, formulation, launch and implementation of a community-led VDS is provided in Table 1 overleaf.

Table 1: Overview of indicative costs for VDS

Plan and scoping of VDS:	€1,200-€2,000
Formulation of VDS – purchase/procurement of supporting technical skills and services:	€12,000-13,000
Organising VDS Big Launch Night:	€1,000
Sub-Total	**€14,200 - €16,000**
Implementation of community-led VDS (including monitoring and evaluation):	€50,000+
Monitoring and evaluation:	€2,000

(Source: Heritage Council, 2012.)

7. Support from your Local Authority Heritage Officers and LEADER companies

A useful support for community groups is your Local Authority **Heritage Officer** who will be able to assist you in planning, setting up, and implementation of the proposed community-led VDS (in relation to the provision of administrative and project management support and funding through their County/City Heritage Plans). There are currently **28 Local Authority Heritage Officers** in Ireland and a list of their contact details is provided as Fact Sheet No. 1. Alternatively, if you live in a rural village, your local development company or LEADER company should also be able to assist and support with the planning, setting up, and implementation of the proposed community-led VDS Project.

8. Support from the Heritage Council - Multi-Sectoral VDS Training Workshop (1 Day)

The Heritage Council has developed a **Multi-Sectoral VDS Training Workshop (1 Day)** for village communities, local authorities, statutory agencies and consultants who are interested in undertaking a community-led Village Design Statement using the new collaborative and participative process.

The training workshop aims to raise awareness of the key aims and objectives of community-led Village Design Statements, and also provides an overview of the new collaborative and participative VDS process, the necessary project management structures and processes that must be put in place at the outset, and the potential outcomes of the VDS. Lessons learned from the communities and their partners in the pilot villages (Julianstown and Sandymount) will also be examined and discussed.

The training will focus on the development of key skills including:

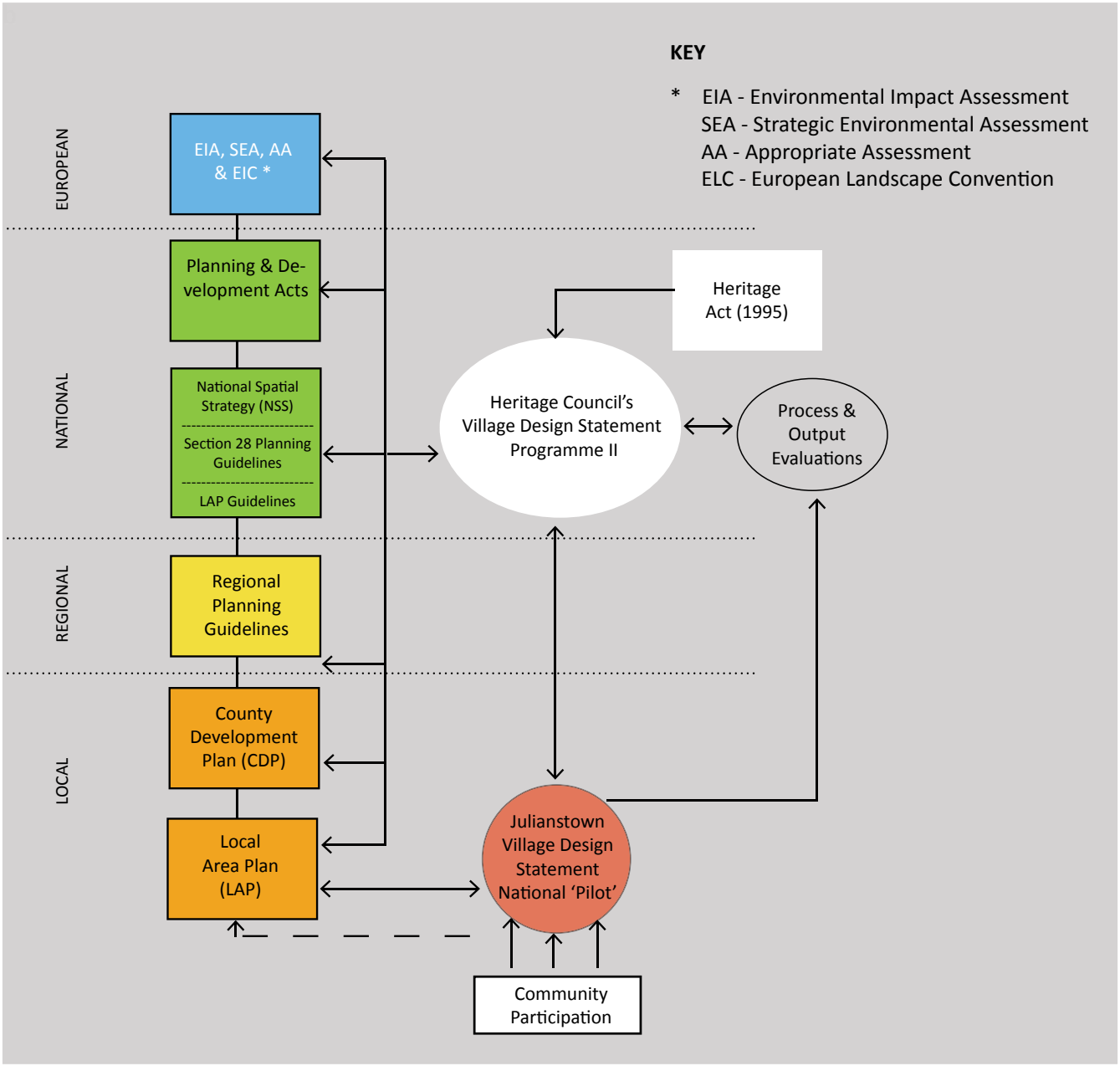
- Overview of what is heritage in Ireland.
- Principles of good design – rural and urban.
- Collaborative leadership.
- Stakeholder mapping and identifying civic champions.
- Building effective partnerships and teamwork – understanding group dynamics (roles in groups).
- Planning and chairing action-focused meetings.
- Project management – scope, cost and timescale.
- Understanding and listening.
- How to build trust – threats to trust.
- How to build a shared vision.
- Managing expectations.
- Participative methods for plan making (collaborative design workshops, photo surveys, video soapbox. and planning for real exercises).
- Mediation and negotiation.
- Celebrating partnership achievements.
- Community-led monitoring and evaluation.
- Mentoring other communities – creating wider social capital.

It is envisaged that the involvement of community groups actively training other community groups, along with practitioners, will give the Heritage Council's Community-led VDS Toolkit training course added gravitas. In addition, the course also involves LEADER companies and Fáilte Ireland. See Key Contacts at the end of Part 3 below.

9. Consideration of links to the wider policy context

Knowledge of the wider policy context enables all the project partners to be aware of **how and where** the local VDS project fits into the overall policy system, particularly planning policy (Diagram 1 below), and will ensure that the community-led VDS links in to existing and proposed environmental, social, economic and cultural programmes (National Development Plan (NDP), National Spatial Strategy (NSS), and LEADER).

Diagram 1: Community-led Village Design Statements – planning policy context



A **Glossary of Useful Terms** is provided as **Fact Sheet No. 2.**

Part 1 - Checklist:

Before progressing on to Part 2 of this Toolkit it might be useful to run through the following checklist to ensure that you are aware of the background to community-led Village Design Statements and that you have an understanding of the following:

1. **What is a community-led village design statement (VDS)?**
2. **The new collaborative and participative VDS process.**
3. **Community-led VDS – recommended outputs.**
4. **Community-led VDS – key outcomes.**
5. **VDS support and funding – community investment.**
6. **Summary of funding required for a community-led VDS – indicative costs.**
7. **Support from your Local Authority Heritage Officers and LEADER companies.**
8. **Support from the Heritage Council – Multi-Sectoral VDS Training Workshop (1 day).**
9. **Consideration of links to the wider policy context.**

Part 2 - Community-led Village Design Statements – Eight distinct and critical steps

Overview

Within the collaborative and participative process there are **eight distinct and critical steps** in the setting up, preparation/drafting, launch and delivery of a community-led Village Design Statement (VDS):

Step:	Indicative Budget[4]:	Objective:
Step 1 – Getting started	€300-€500	Establish the rationale (need) for the community-led VDS Project – three key questions to answer in relation to policy fit; community skills, interests and talents; and heritage base in village.
Answer the above questions before progressing to next Step – Is the Village Community **Good to Go?**		
Step 2 –Getting going	€300-€500	Set up effective VDS project management, and communication and publicity structures, undertake stakeholder mapping, and identify supporting technical resources.
Step 3 – Getting into your stride	€300-€500	Scope out the VDS project, VDS stakeholder workshop, draft and finalise stakeholder workshop feedback report, confirm management structure, sign VDS project charter.
Step 4 – Striding out	€300-€500	Draft and agree a collaborative VDS brief for consultants, advertise for consultants, evaluate tenders and appoint preferred consultant.
Step 5 – Getting over the jumps	€12,000-€13,000	Formulate the community-led Village Design Statement involving the whole village community (grafting, drafting and finalising the VDS)
Step 6 – A clear round	€1,000	Organise and deliver the Big Launch Night – a community celebrates its VDS (take a breather after)
Step 7 – Meanwhile back at the ranch	€50,000+	Implement community-led VDS – reality bites!
Step 8 – The winners' enclosure	€2,000	Undertake VDS monitoring and evaluation – 'a continuous circle of learning'

We would wish to emphasise that careful planning of the **process** is vital and adequate time should be allocated in order to work through each step in the process, as set out below. We recommend that you do not rush the process and that you do not let others rush you either – it normally takes **1.5 to 2 years** to undertake a community-led VDS and to get the VDS to the official launch stage.

A full summary of the collaborative and participative process is provided as **Fact Sheet No. 3.**

[4] In 2012 prices.

Step 1 – Getting started

Objective: Establish the rationale (need) for the community-led VDS project – three key questions to answer in relation to policy fit; community skills, interests and talents; and heritage and design base in village.

In order to get started with your community-led VDS, and to ensure that the VDS will have the strongest chance of succeeding, it is strongly recommended that your group undertake some preliminary research to determine the answers to the following three key questions:

Three key questions:

Q1 – Is there a clear planning **policy fit** for the proposed community-led Village Design Statement at a county/city or local level?

Q2 – Is there a strong **community infrastructure** in place – do village groups collaborate and co-operate – what are the existing and potential skills and creative talents within your village – is your community **Good to Go?**

Q3 – What is the **heritage base** within your village – what are the heritage and design assets in the locality – what makes your village unique and distinctive?

Practical advice on how to go about answering those three key questions is set out below. As noted in Part 1, your Local Authority Heritage Officer (or LEADER company) should be able to assist you in getting started with your community-led VDS.

Q1 – Is there a clear planning policy fit for the proposed community-led Village Design Statement at a county/city or local level?

Although there is policy in place at a national level to support village design statements since May 2009[5], ultimately your community's VDS will stand the greatest chance of success in the long-term if there is existing VDS policy in place at a county or city level, through a statutory County or City Development Plan (CDP), or at a local level through a Local Area Plan (LAP). This policy will support the preparation and implementation of your village design statement and ensures that your local authority is willing to support and work in partnership with your group.

This Toolkit strongly recommends that community-led Village Design Statements should only be undertaken in local authority areas where there is a clear policy fit – namely a planning policy supporting the preparation of community-led Village Design Statements.

Recent changes in the thresholds for the preparation of Local Area Plans (LAPs)[6] under the provisions of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, determines that the supporting policy will normally rest with the County or City Development Plan (CDP).

Two good examples of very strong and supportive VDS Policy are provided in Chapter 4 of the *Draft Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019* and Chapter 3 - of the *South Dublin County Development Plan 2010-2016:*

[5] www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownLoad,19164,en.pdf – see pages 51-52 of the Guidelines – Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, May 2009, which sets out national policy on Village Design Statements for the first time.

[6] Section 12 of the P&D (Amendment) Act 2010, which amends Section 19 of the P&D Act 2000, makes provision for an increase in the LAP threshold from 2,000 persons to 5,000 persons.

Examples of policy fit

***1. Draft Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019* – Chapter 4, Economic Development Strategy – Policy 40 (page 83)**

It is a policy of Meath County Council: '*To facilitate and support the implementation of village design plans and other community-led projects to enhance village environments that have been prepared through a public consultation process whilst ensuring that such plans are consistent with adopted Local Area Plans for such centres.*'

***Draft Meath CDP,* Chapter 9 Cultural and Natural Assets – Objective 23 (pg 174)**

It is an objective of Meath County Council: '*To support proposals from local communities, and community organisations, which seek to have a Village Design Statement for a particular village drawn up through a process involving community participation, the Heritage Council and the Council's Planning Department, subject to availability of resources.*'

***2. South Dublin County Development Plan 2010-2016* – Chapter 3.3.23.i Policy TDL28: Community Support**

'It is the policy of the Council, during the term of this Development Plan, to encourage and support proposals from local communities, and community organisations such as Community Councils, and proposals from Local Area Committees of the Council, which seek to have a Village Design Statement for a particular village drawn up through a process involving community participation, the Heritage Council and the Council's Planning Department.'

Q2: Is there a strong community infrastructure in place – what are the existing and potential community skills, interests and talents within your village – is your village community Good to Go?

In order to get started with your community-led VDS project, we recommend that you undertake some preliminary research that enables you to build a clear picture or baseline of the existing community infrastructure, community activity, skills, interests and talents within your village. (Is there an existing and active Tidy Towns Committee, Pride of Place Team, GAA or other Sports Clubs or Historical Society in place in your village. Is there a civic/community Champion in the village?)

It might be useful to explore the following – what stage are the various groups at – how long have they existed – how many members do they have – have they any experience of setting up and running local projects – do these groups collaborate and co-operate with each other on a regular basis for the common good of the village? Also, is there an appetite within the village community to collaborate with one another for the common good?

Checklist

Tidy Towns Committee	***Pride of Place Committee***
GAA and/or other sports clubs	***Historical society***
Residents and community association	***Business forum/chamber of commerce***

Local skills are very important when it comes to preparing a community-led Village Design Statement and it would be extremely useful to find out if any of the following skills, interests and talents live or are present in your local village community. Also, as people are continuously retraining and re-skilling, it might be worthwhile to find out if anybody is currently undertaking a course in relation to the following skills:

Checklist

Accountancy/finance/book keeping	*Geography (physical and economic)*
Archaeology	*Graphic or exhibition design*
Architecture/design (built and landscape)	*Heritage and conservation*
Construction/engineering	*History*
Verbal, written, visual and performing arts[7]	*Information technology (IT)*
Business development	*Law*
Chairing meetings	*Journalism, media & social/new media*
Community development	*Marketing/market research*
Conflict resolution	*Negotiation and mediation*
Ecology and biodiversity	*Photography*
Economics	*Project management*
Editing[8] *and publishing*	*Public relations/ media advisor*
Education/training	*Quantity surveying*
Engineering	*Secretarial/administration/PA*
Environmental planning	*Traditional crafts (stonemason, carpenter, etc.)*
Environmental science	*Web design*
Event management	*Youth work*

If you have local structures, skills, interests and creative talents within your community they will be an enormous asset to your overall VDS project and it is useful to identify them at the very start of the process. The results of this survey should give a clear picture of what skills, interests and talents are resident in your local community.

As these skills will be extremely important during the VDS process, we would recommend that you only proceed if you have a large number of these skills in your local community – ultimately, this survey should give your group an overall feeling of whether your village community is **Good to Go!**

In the event that you do not have these skills or interests in your locality, you might find it useful to spend time with a facilitator identifying where these skills might be located in order to garner support for the proposed community-led VDS project - are the skills in neighbouring villages or neighbouring schools?

Q3: What is the heritage base within your village – what are the heritage and design assets in the locality – what makes your village unique and distinctive?

Undertaking a heritage survey of your village

In order to understand the heritage, history and evolution of your village and how its unique morphology – shape and layout – and distinctive *character* have been formed over many decades and centuries, we recommend that you explore, survey and brainstorm the local heritage features within your locality.

This historic information will help your community explain to others, including statutory agencies, why your village is special and interesting to live in, work and visit. These heritage elements collectively help to create a village's unique **sense of place**, **sense of identity** and enhance the overall **sense of belonging** for local people.

[7] E.g. theatre, literature, poetry, music, film making, pottery, sculpture.

[8] E.g. a member of the Irish Association of Freelance Editors, Proofreaders and Indexers – see www.afep.ie

What is our national heritage?

Our national heritage is defined under Section 6 of the *Heritage Act 1995*[9] as including:

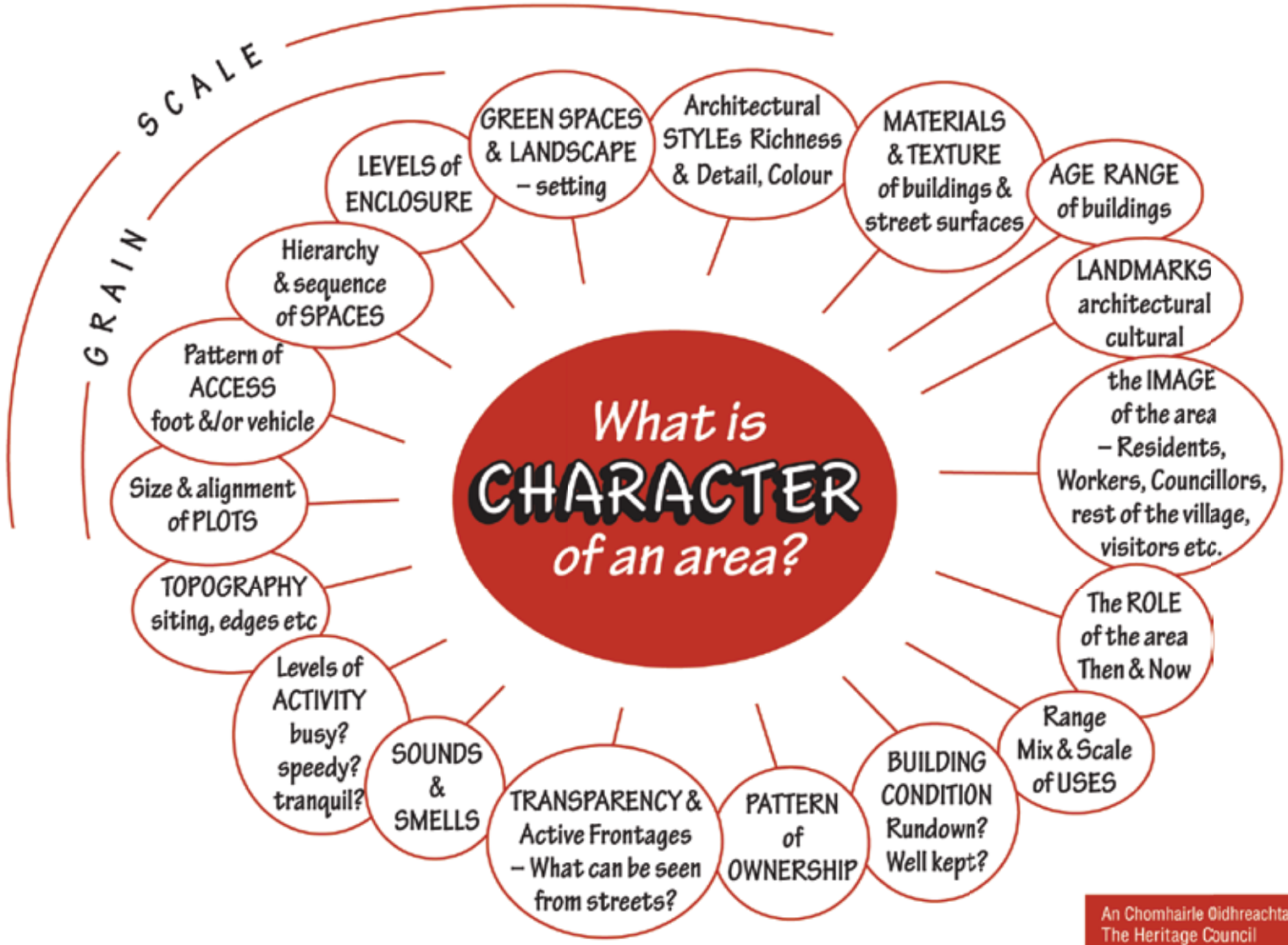
- **Monuments**
- **Archaeological objects**
- **Heritage objects**
- **Architectural heritage**
- **Flora and fauna**
- **Wildlife habitats**
- **Landscapes**
- **Seascapes**
- **Wrecks**
- **Geology**
- **Heritage gardens and parks**
- **Inland waterways.**

You might find it useful to have a look at the following Fact Sheets when undertaking the heritage surveys of your village.

Fact Sheet No.1: Local Authority Heritage Officers (28 No.) – contact details[10].
Fact Sheet No. 2: Glossary of useful terms.
Fact Sheet No. 4: Useful websites.

In addition, for an explanation of what is meant by the *Character* of an area, please see Figure 2 overleaf.

Figure 2: What is Character of an area?



Source: Richard Guise, 2005

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

As noted in Part 1, it might be useful to look at and examine the following core heritage and design elements within your village.

Village character checklist:

1. ***Historic village form and settlement pattern**:* shape, layout and setting in the landscape – geology, topography and morphology – rural and/or urban – links and connections to surrounding area – role of village – past and present. www.heritagecouncil.ie, www.osi.ie/publicviewer/, www.myplan.ie[11], www.ahg.gov.ie, www.buildingsofireland.ie/, and www.google.com/earth/index.html www.nationalarchives.ie

2. ***Villagescape, historic streetscape and character areas**:* public realm, architectural types, styles and forms – age range of buildings – height, scale and density of buildings – Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). www.heritagecouncil.ie, www.nationalarchives.ie, www.irishplanninginstitute.ie, www.riai.ie, www.architecturefoundation.ie, www.iarc.ie, www.myplan.ie

3. ***Key approaches to the village**:* arrival and departure experiences – views and vistas in and out of the village. www.nationalarchives.ie and www.myplan.ie

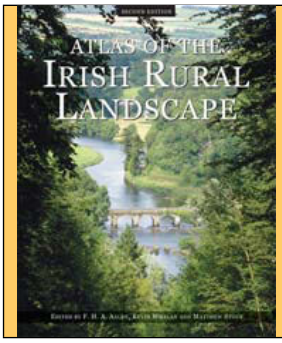
4. ***Landmarks:*** key buildings/structures and hierarchy of public spaces, parks and historic gardens - protected structures including civic buildings such as courthouses, barracks, places of worship and bridges. Relationship and links between buildings and spaces – laneways and slips, distinctive features and local materials/textures – gateposts, railings, lamps. www.buildingsofireland.ie/Surveys/Gardens/

5. ***Green Infrastructure (GI) and natural heritage**:* existing and potential areas – including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Candidate Special Protection Areas (cSPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) – otherwise known as Natura 2000 sites – including coastlines, loughs, estuaries, rivers and streams. www.heritagecouncil.ie, www.npws.ie and www.biodoversityireland.ie

6. ***National Monuments**:* archaeological sites and remains and their setting – views within and without – important memorials and statues. www.heritagecouncil.ie, www.archaeology.ie, www.historicgraves.ie

See also **Fact Sheet No. 4.**

Helpful tip – the *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd edition, November 2011) provides an excellent overview of the Irish landscape and might be a useful starting point for research.



Topics covered in the Atlas include archaeology, field and settlement patterns, houses, demesnes, villages and small towns, monuments, woodland, bogs, roads, canals, railways, mills, mines, farmsteads, handball alleys, and a host of other features. The Atlas combines superbly chosen illustrations and cartography with a text amenable to a general reader. Hundreds of maps, diagrams, photographs, paintings allow the Atlas to present a mass of scholarly information in an accessible way, suitable for any school, college or home (Source: Cork University Press, 2012).
www.corkuniversitypress.com/AtlasoftheIrishRuralLandscape/342

In addition, given the emerging *National Landscape Strategy (NLS)* currently being prepared by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, it is recommended that you also contact and talk to your local authority planning department in order to ascertain what Landscape Character Area (LCA) your village or settlement is located within.

Assessing and answering the three key questions – rationale (need) for project:

The results of the review of planning policy, community skills/talents and local heritage surveys should be presented to your local authority and local LEADER company, if relevant. If the research reveals a clear policy fit, a very strong community spirit and activity, along with the existence of significant heritage assets and features within your village, this evidence should provide a strong argument as to why a community-led Village Design Statement is needed for your village – the local community should now enter into in-depth discussions with their Local Authority Heritage Officer as to how to progress and fund a community-led VDS.

It is extremely important that there are significant honest discussions at this initial stage to determine the realistic capacity of the village community to undertake a community-led VDS including whether a suitable chair from the community can be identified at this stage. The impact of the 'Do Nothing' option should also be explored at this stage.

Following agreement in principle with your local authority and other relevant partners, your village group should then proceed to the next step – Step 2: Getting going.

If however, the research reveals that the community is not quite ready and the existing community infrastructure is not in place, then the statutory partners should provide advice as to how the village community can move forward collectively and develop its community infrastructure and enhance its unique heritage assets and features for the benefit of its local community. One way to progress community activity may be to hold a series of workshops to bring local groups together in order to share and exchange information on what their current activities are and to let other local groups know what their plans are for the future.

In addition, if there is no clear policy fit, it is recommended that the local authority should review its statutory plans in partnership with the village community and take the necessary action to ensure that village design statements are supported and promoted, in accordance with the existing guidelines – *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* (May 2009)[12].

[12] As amended by Section 20 of the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010*.

Step 1 – Checklist:

Q1: **Is there a clear planning policy fit for the proposed community-led Village Design Statement at a county/city or local level?**

Q2: **Is there a strong community infrastructure in place – do village groups collaborate and co-operate – what are the existing and potential skills, interests and creative talents within your village – is your community Good to Go?**

Q3: **What is the heritage base within your village – what are the heritage and design assets in the locality – what makes your village unique and distinctive?**

Step 2 – Getting going

Objective: Set up effective VDS project management, communication and publicity structures, undertake stakeholder mapping, identify supporting technical resources, and consider and select preferred business/organisational structure.

In order to get going, your group will need to carefully consider the following tasks and elements in turn:

1. Establish effective VDS management structures – consisting of a VDS Inter-Agency group and VDS local working group – both groups should be chaired by the same community representative.
2. Establish effective communication and publicity structures (internal and external).
3. Identify supporting technical resources including graduate interns.
4. Consider and select preferred business /organisational structure.

1. Establish effective VDS management structures – consisting of a VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group – both groups should be chaired by the same community representative

The community-led approach to village design statements involves a number of key partners. In rural areas, the partnership is normally made up of the local village community, the County Council and the local LEADER company; and in urban areas, the partnership normally consists of the local village community, the city council and the civic trust.

Table 2: Summary of key project partners' responsibilities

Partner Group	Responsibility to:
Heritage Council[13]	• Prepare and provide a best practice national VDS Toolkit, which sets out the recommended collaborative and participative process for community-led Village Design Statements in Ireland. • Provide multi-sectoral VDS training to enable and empower village communities to work in partnership with statutory agencies in the preparation and delivery of village design statements (Village Design Statements). • Please note that due to a significant lack of resources, the Heritage Council is unable to get involved in individual rural and/or urban VDS projects.
Local village community	• Actively engage in and embrace the collaborative and participative community-led VDS process. • Undertake multi-sectoral VDS training with statutory bodies. • Work with project partners and the selected consultant, and guide and promote community capacity building in the village community. • Guide the research and analysis of local historical, heritage and environmental data and information. • Prepare and deliver a community-led VDS including the key outputs – Shared Vision, agreed Design Principles and agreed VDS Action Plan.

[13] The Heritage Council does not have any responsibility for the procurement of community-led VDS projects.

Local Authority (county and city councils)	• Enable and facilitate village communities, through policy and best practice, to work in partnership with the local authority to ensure a sustainable future for their village and its environment/landscape. • Provide administrative, project management, and funding support throughout the community-led VDS process and beyond into the implementation phase. • Raise the profile of the community-led VDS within the city or county council and ensure that the VDS is implemented in the short, medium and long-term. • Take full legal responsibility for the public procurement element of the community-led VDS process as discussed in Step 4 below.
LEADER (rural areas only)	• Provide administrative, project management and funding support throughout the community-led VDS process and beyond into the implementation phase.
Civic trust (urban areas only)	• Support the community-led VDS process. • Act as an education facilitator in relation to enhancing and promoting the rich architectural elements and historic building practices within our larger settlements. • Encourage partnership with government, local authorities and civic society.

It is vital to the overall success of the VDS project that there is a collective receptiveness and openness by all involved. In some instances, this will require a significant shift in the **mindset** of the various project partners.

Your VDS project will benefit hugely from the involvement of people with background training, experience, and expertise in community-led heritage and in planning and community development programmes and projects. This is a key **Critical Success Factor (CSF)** so we recommend that you ask your colleagues from the statutory partner groups (particularly the local authority) – do they have experience of undertaking successful community-led projects or of working in partnership with communities? If they don't, ask for someone who does have the training, experience and expertise. Don't be afraid to ask this question – asking the question six months into the VDS project will be too late.

Two key layers are needed in the overall VDS management structure to prepare community-led Village Design Statements, consisting of a:

- A **VDS Inter-Agency Group** (made up of the partner groups including the local authority and chaired by someone from the community); and
- **A VDS Local Working Group** (the community).

Setting up a VDS Local Working Group should be possible if (a) the community is active and good to go and (b) the local authority is on board as a result of the policy review and community and heritage surveys (see Step 1 – Getting started).

Completing Step 1 should help to identify potential members from the community that could be involved in both groups.

In terms of the size and constitution of both groups, the following is recommended:

VDS Inter-Agency Group – each project partner group should put forward at least two people in order to ensure that there is continuity (member and a deputy). This group is chaired by someone from the local community in order to ensure an overall sense of **confidence** and **ownership** in the VDS project within the village from the outset– ideally, the vice-chair should also come from the community.

The Local Authority Heritage Officer and Senior Planning Officer should also be on this group and will liaise, on behalf of the group, with their local authority colleagues (engineers, parks, community services, enforcement). The representatives from the statutory partner groups should have considerable collective experience in project management, heritage management, sustainable community development and spatial planning at both policy and practice level. Ideally, the VDS Inter-Agency Group should have six to eight members.

It is recommended that the **chair** and **vice-chair** are elected by a proposer and a seconder at the first meeting of the VDS Inter-Agency Group. These two people should come from an existing group that represents the whole of the village community such as the Village Residents Association or the Tidy Towns Committee. Ideally, they could be involved in a number of local groups.

VDS Local Working Group – aim to involve representatives from each existing community committee, club and business group in the group. Local stakeholders should have a representative on the VDS Local Working Group. Ideally, the group should have fifteen to twenty members. Try get people with the useful skills and interests on this group, as set out in Step 1. Local councillors should be included in this group. It is also recommended that the local youth have representatives on this group, as they are the future of your village. The local youth also have excellent ideas in relation to improvements to and overall management of their village, and bring a refreshing energy to the overall VDS process.

It is important there is consistency in the membership of both groups, particularly the VDS Local Working Group.

Helpful Tip:

In order to set up the **VDS Local Working Group,** it is essential that your community is Good to Go as explored in Step 1 – Getting started.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that the **VDS Inter-Agency Group,** which is chaired by the community, is set up at this stage in order to drive the VDS project process forward. In reality, the setting up of the **VDS Local Working Group** can take longer as local stakeholders need to be identified and approached – care must be taken with membership to avoid any charges of vested interest. See Stakeholder Workshop in Step 3 below.

The **VDS Inter-Agency Group** (chaired by the community) deals with all strategic issues relating to the community-led VDS project including:

- Policy review – including planning
- Project rationale
- Objectives
- Scope
- Funding
- Public procurement[14]
- Project management
- Risk management including mitigation measures
- Removal of systemic and specific blockages
- Project monitoring and evaluation

[14] As noted above, the local authority should take the lead on the public procurement element of the project.

The **VDS Inter-Agency Group** works in partnership with the **VDS Local Working Group**, whose members come from the community and who are responsible for the appraisal and assessment of their village, formulation and agreement of a Shared Vision and options in relation to Design Principles, VDS Action Plan and projects.

The groups work together and share power and control. **Ideally, both groups should be chaired by the same community representative** to ensure connectivity, transparency and to reduce risk.

The VDS Local Working Group consists of representatives from the local community and works day-to-day on the ground capacity building, building support and ownership, and raising the profile of the VDS Project. Important strategic decisions should be taken **collectively and in partnership** – for example, the VDS Inter-Agency Group must seek approval from the VDS Local Working Group before taking useful decisions and vice versa (the groups work in collaboration as the project community).

The glue in the overall VDS project management structure is mutual respect, honesty, understanding and **trust**.

Helpful Tip:

Stakeholder mapping – a useful exercise

Stakeholder mapping is a visual exercise that enables your group to identify and assess the interest and influence of the key stakeholders involved in the proposed community-led VDS project (see Figure 3 below). It is important that key stakeholders are invited to join the VDS Inter-Agency Group or the VDS Local Working Group, at this stage, whichever is more suitable.

Why identify stakeholders? It is important to identify all key stakeholders at the outset of the VDS project as it enables the working relationship to be developed as part of the overall VDS process. It is also easier to work with an agency or organisation if they know what your group has been doing for several months rather than bringing them in late-on in the VDS process. The objective is to build up a rapport and a level of trust with stakeholder representatives in order to minimise overall risk and shocks to the VDS process. For example, one important key stakeholder for your VDS project could be the Office of Public Works (OPW), who might manage a national monument in your locality. Another important stakeholder might be the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), and/or the National Roads Authority. Once you have identified all the stakeholders at the outset, it is important to revisit and update this map throughout the process as different issues may well arise.

An example of a stakeholder map is provided as Figure 3 overleaf.

Figure 3: Julianstown VDS Stakeholder Map

2. Establish effective communication and publicity structures (internal and external)

Effective and clear communication and publicity structures will ensure that your community-led VDS project has the best chance of succeeding in the short, medium and long run by involving others, widening support beyond the project management structures and creating new channels to help you achieve your overall aims for the community-led VDS project. Having clear communications structures – both internal and external - set up and agreed at the outset of the project will help you better plan and prepare for the many challenges you will encounter while working on your VDS. It will be useful to get people with journalism, public relations, and web design skills within your village community, as identified in Step 1, on board or involved at this stage.

Internal Communications

The internal communications is focused on the systems in place for the two groups within the project management structure (VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group), and how you choose to communicate with each other. At the outset, the VDS management structure should discuss and agree how people within the **project community** are to be contacted. It might also be useful to talk to the village groups in Julianstown and Sandymount to share their experiences of project communications on community-led VDS projects. Examples of internal communication items are listed below.

Agreed Internal Communications Items:

1. Having a single list of contact details for the team members (VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group), including emails and mobile numbers has been found to be extremely helpful and it is recommended that this is kept up to date regularly during meetings and circulated at the end of Step 2.
2. VDS project office to be established in the village where all hard copies of Actions/Agendas from meetings are to be kept in a project file. The file is to be accessible to all the community.
3. Agendas for all meetings should be circulated (at least one week before meetings) among and between the two groups for comments/review.
4. Minutes/actions should ideally be written up within three working days of meetings and circulated to relevant persons for action.
5. Actions between the two groups to be co-ordinated by the chair of the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Group.
6. All project documents should be publicly accessible (via the project website and/or the village notice board – see below).
7. Al important project documents such as signed contracts should be placed on the project file, via the chair.

Helpful Tip:

Email addresses and mobile phones

The pilot community-led VDS projects in Julianstown and Sandymount demonstrated that, apart from face-to face meetings, by far the best way of ongoing communicating between/among the VDS Inter-Agency Group and the VDS Local Working Group, particularly if people are dispersed geographically, is by email and mobile phone. Mobile phones enable people to be contacted after office hours (after 6pm) and are extremely useful as most of the work on community-led Village Design Statements takes place outside normal office hours. Try and ensure that your group members have access to a telephone and, if possible, access to email and mobile phones, as part of this stage in the project set-up.

External Communications

In addition, it is also useful if clear external communication and publicity structures are set up and agreed at the outset of the project, including the preparation of a written **Communication Plan** (1 page), in order for members of the community, outside of those working directly on the project (the project community), and the media will be kept informed of your work and progress on the project.

Ideally, the communications plan should identify three key aims, for example:

1. Promote greater pride and awareness of the unique heritage within the historic core of the village and the surrounding area;
2. Promote greater understanding and involvement of the village community in the process;
3. Highlight the contribution the village community can make to the long-term environmental planning and heritage management of the area.

Identifying actions that can help you achieve those aims will become clearer during the process, for example, issuing a press release to local media if you are looking for new skills for the group. Mostly this is an area where you can be creative and come up with some new ideas to help promote your village and your hopes for its future.

Helpful Tip:

Communication Plan Objectives

Key Messages. It is important that your group has ample space and time to work out the key messages about why the group is undertaking a community-led VDS process and the likely benefits and outcomes that will accrue for the local community as a result of the process – try to keep the key messages clear and concise and use ones that you feel highlight the most important aspects of the work being undertaken. **It is usual that the 'key messages' agreed will be used again and again as they speak to the core of what you are hoping to achieve and why.**

For example, a key message might be around the value of community spirit, why you like living there, what will maintain and build on what you have that is unique and/or why it is best to plan for future development. Having these key messages captured at the outset means you have a shared sense of purpose and greater clarity about your aims. Do consider also capturing quotes from the project members and wider community about their hopes for the process in terms of impact before and after – these will provide useful content for press releases, messages on Facebook, website, etc and give it a personal feel. All press releases should include your key message(s) and a quote. Some useful words to consider for discussion when developing your key messages; uniqueness, resources, pride, sustainable, future, community-led, commitment, character, value, heritage. But remember you might have some much better words to use!

The Communications Plan should also establish effective communication mechanisms to provide information and regular updates on project progress.

This includes the setting up of a project website, or webpage on the existing village website and the production of monthly or quarterly village newsletters, use of village notice board and church notes, list of local media contacts, use of Facebook, YouTube, etc. The Communication Plan should also include the setting up of databases with contact details for all people resident or working in the area who participate in the workshops. This Communication Plan should be signed off by the members of each group at the start. An example is provided overleaf:

Example of Communications Plan

- Identify key messages and communication objectives, as per Helpful Tip box above.
- Determine key events and opportunities that will take place during the collaborative process. For example, when the community starts Step 1, when the Project Charter is signed, before the stakeholder and public workshops are held, during the run up to the formal launch of the community-led VDS, etc. As well as publicising the VDS process this is also another good opportunity to recruit volunteers with specific skills that can be utilised during the process.
- Devise and agree a strategy for dealing with the media in order to promote key messages and communication objectives. Outline communication key channels i.e. regional media/national media/website /Facebook/Twitter, and identify what is the best media channel(s) for your key messages and objectives.
- Set up a VDS project website or add a new webpage to existing village website, in order to communicate project progress to the wider community.
- Establish a contact list of national, regional and local media outlets eg. Newspapers, radio and local TV stations.
- Identify two people in the VDS Local Working Group who are willing to take on the task of liaising with the local media and who will prepare and issue the press release, once agreed by the group, to all on the contact list. All press releases should include two mobile numbers on the bottom – be prepared to take calls outside of normal office hours.
- Publish a monthly newsletter and make available in hard and soft copies. In addition, use village notice board and church news to target people who may not have online access.
- Use social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as part of your communitcation strategy. For these mediums to be effective they need to be regulary updated. YouTube, for example, could be used to host videos recorded at public participation events.
- Identify a local accredited photographer - national newspapers will only use images taken by an accredited professional photographers.

It is recommended that internal and external communications be reviewed at the start of each step in the community-led VDS process, to ensure that communications are working effectively and efficiently, and in order to capture any new messages that have emerged as a result of the collaborative and participative process.

Planning and chairing action-focused meetings

It is important that the project management groups have meetings on a regular basis throughout the overall collaborative and participative VDS process, which can take around **1.5 to 2 years to undertake and complete** (excluding implementation). It is recommended that the **VDS Inter-Agency Group** should meet at least once every two months and the **VDS Local Working Group** should meet on a monthly basis. Ideally, all meetings should be held in the village and should be at a convenient time for as many people as possible (during the day for VDS Inter-Agency Group meetings and at the weekend or in the evening for the VDS Local Working Group). Step 1 should have helped to identify a suitable **chair** from the community with experience and expertise of chairing and delivering on decision making through consensus building.

As the management structure is quite complex and involves people from all sectors, it is extremely important that meetings are well-organised, concise and action-focused – traditional minute taking is not recommended. An action-based recording form is recommended and a template is provided overleaf:

Action-based recording form for meetings Agenda Item No.	Action
Group discussion: Provide a concise summary of the group discussion by each agenda item – add in any important ideas or key stakeholders that can play a role in the specific item. **Consensus/agreement**: state the group consensus/ agreement and decision in regard to the agenda item. **Required action:** give a concise overview of the required action needed to progress the agenda item (phone calls, meetings required, reports to be sourced, etc). Remember that these action focused minutes will be available to the wider community – via the project website and village notice board.	**Action by:** Name the person responsible for the action – state the required action and the timescale for delivery. Actions should be revisited at each meeting to ensure that progress is being made on budget and on time. The groups should focus on this column after the meeting**.**

Having **the same chair for both groups** (VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group) is the best way to ensure effective connectivity, communication and trust between the two groups in the project management structure. This structure also helps to minimise overall risk to the community-led VDS process and project.

3. Identify supporting technical resources including graduate interns

A community-led VDS is labour-intensive and is not for the faint-hearted. As such, it might be worthwhile to avail of government-sponsored internship schemes[15] and programmes, which provide work experience placements for graduate interns – these schemes/programmes, and the technical resources that they provide, can be of a huge benefit to community groups undertaking a community-led VDS.

It should be highlighted that both Julianstown and Sandymount Village Design Statements benefited from full-time interns who assisted the groups operating in the overall management structure, particularly in relation to project administration. For example, in Julianstown two interns were in place during 2010/2011 (a graduate landscape architect and a graduate planner). They attended all meetings of both groups, prepared the agenda and minutes for the VDS Inter-Agency Group meetings, organised the exhibition boards for the formal ministerial launch, and prepared the VDS Implementation Plan following the official launch (see Step 7). It is estimated that the interns contributed approximately **1,000 voluntary hours** to the Julianstown VDS project over a 1.5 year period.

In Sandymount Village, the intern who was in place during 2010/2011 (a graduate landscape architect), mapped the historic urban landscape of the village and prepared maps illustrating the **time depth** of the buildings and open spaces, and organised the first Heritage Week event in Sandymount in August 2010 – a talk on the Architectural Heritage of Sandymount Village.

All in all, the two pilot Village Design Statements benefited hugely from the skills and enthusiasm of the graduate interns and the projects were enriched as a result of their involvement[16]. The graduate interns also benefited significantly from the experience of working with village communities in terms of enhanced project management, negotiation and mediation, and plan making skills, contributing positively to their curricula vitae and employment prospects.

We would strongly recommend that you explore the possibility of recruiting a graduate intern from the fields of planning, architecture (built and landscape), and rural and urban design to assist your group in the community-led VDS process, as described in this Toolkit.

[15] For example, see: www.jobbridge.ie/

[16] Julianstown VDS Interns – Jonathan Gannon (2010) and Aoife McGrath (late 2010/2011), Sandymount VDS Intern – Elaine Ring (2010/2011).

4. Consider and select preferred business/organisational structure

At this stage, your group might find it useful to consider the proposed business arrangements of the group and to consider whether the group should be put on a firm legal footing – this is particularly relevant when dealing with insurance. The *Tidy Towns Handbook*[17] *provides a useful overview of the formal structures for your group to consider. According to the handbook, there are three main methods of organisational structure as reproduced in Table 3 overleaf:*

Table 3: Three main methods of organisational structure

1. Ad-hoc structure:	Many small groups are initially happy to have informal arrangements where activities are organised by agreement in a friendly co-operative atmosphere. While this may appear to suit in the early stages, as the group becomes more and more successful at attracting investment and generating interest, the ad-hoc structure may not provide sufficient legal protection to members and not guarantee the transparency that many members of the public will expect. It therefore may not be able to attract a high level of support from public or corporate bodies in the long-term.
2. Constitutional structure:	Writing a short constitution agreed by all members at a general meeting that outlines the objectives of the group, the roles of members and the way in which it will keep its accounts provides a higher level of transparency and accountability. This structure offers some protection to individuals where they can show they act with common purpose. This is the option chosen by many community associations and may be sufficient to draw down grants and other forms of public funding and support.
3. Company structure:	The creation of a company limited by guarantee is the most credible structure as it creates a legal entity for the group above and beyond the individuals involved. It also brings group activities under legal control with the requirement for audited accounts and other directorial responsibilities. Most charities in Ireland adopt this approach and there are potential tax benefits.

(Source: Tidy Towns Handbook, page 4.)

It is recommended that your group seeks legal and financial advice in relation to the appropriateness or otherwise of the above options.

Step 2 – Checklist:

1. **Establish a VDS Inter-Agency group and VDS local working group – both groups should be chaired by the same community representative.**
2. **Establish effective communication structures (internal and external).**
3. **Identify supporting technical resources including graduate interns.**
4. **Consider and select preferred business/organisational structure.**

[17] See - http://www.tidytowns.ie/u_documents/2010%20TidyTowns%20Handbook.pdf

Step 3 - Getting into your stride

Objective: Scope out the VDS project - identify community issues and aspirations (VDS Stakeholder Workshop), draft and finalise Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report, confirm management structure, and agree and sign VDS Project Charter.

Once you have set up the project management and communication structures your group can now move forward into the design and definition stage of the project (the scoping out of the VDS project). This involves the following tasks and elements in turn:

1. Identify community issues and aspirations – VDS Stakeholder Workshop.
2. Write up the key issues arising from the first VDS Stakeholder Workshop.
3. Finalise the *Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report.*
4. Confirm status and structure of VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group.
5. Agee and sign VDS Project Charter.

1. Identify community issues and aspirations—VDS Stakeholder Workshop

In working towards the first key deliverable in Step 3, which is the scoping out of the VDS project, it is important to define the wants, needs, desires and aspirations of the local community in relation to the future planning, design and management of their village. At this stage in the process, we recommend that you organise a participative evening workshop, whereby key stakeholders (including community group leaders) identified during Step 2, have the opportunity to actively discuss, debate and share their thoughts and aspirations in relation to the future planning and shaping of the village. Crucially, this should be an enjoyable event for all involved and should signal to the wider community that the community-led VDS project is moving forward and that the project is underway. The objective of the VDS Stakeholder Workshop is to:

- Enhance team spirit and team activity within the project management structure (VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group).
- Raise the overall profile of the community-led VDS Project.
- Gather support and buy-in for the project from key stakeholders.
- Secure positive PR/publicity for the project.
- Identify issues and aspirations for the future shape of the village.
- Assist in the scoping out of the VDS project.

It is important to highlight that a workshop is a **completely different concept** to a conventional public meeting. A public meeting with a top table and rows of seating creates a 'them' and 'us' dynamic and is not often constructive. It is much better to organise an informal workshop where a brief of the project can be given and then break into small groups, where everyone can have an equal say, contribute ideas and take part in the discussion on the future shaping of their village.

This event is normally organised jointly by the VDS Inter-Agency and VDS Local Working Groups, who as noted above, should have experience of designing and delivering community development and community planning projects. Ideally, they should have expertise and experience of organising and facilitating workshops.

It is important to ensure that you have funding in place to organise and deliver the workshop. The recommended work plan for the workshop is set out in Table 4 overleaf.

Table 4: Planning the workshop

Eight weeks before workshop	• Arrange team meeting and agree roles and responsibilities – prepare a clear list of tasks for the team. • Inter-Agency Group and Local Working Group undertake a village appraisal site visit together – discuss key issues and concerns. • Order copies of statutory plans for the village (Local Area Plan or photocopy relevant chapters from the City Development Plan). • If there is an existing Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) – prepare enlarged plans showing the boundary of the ACA. • Visit possible venues in the village – ensure that the venue has blackout facilities and adequate sockets in the room – check extension lead – if there is a drop down screen, ask them to demonstrate how it looks. • Confirm AV arrangements in relation to projector, screen and laptop. • Check public transport and parking access, confirm availability of signage. • Ensure chairs in venue are comfortable as people will be sitting for around two hours (cushioned chairs are preferable – consider borrowing cushioned chairs). • Select and book venue in centre of village – get written confirmation from the venue and contact details (including mobile number in case of emergencies). • Arrange with venue that numbers will be firmed up one week before the event. • Confirm availability of VDS Project Team (i.e. members from the Inter-Agency Group and Local Working Group). • Circulate 'Date in the Diary' notice to all stakeholders. • Publicise event on project website and newsletter, church notes, local shops, circulate email, etc. • Check to see availability of VIPs – e.g. County/City Manager. • Draft and agree running order for workshop. • Book local photographer and start drafting press statement (refer to list of Community Skills and Talents prepared during Step 1).
Six to eight weeks before the workshop	• Design poster and invitation for event with contact details – include a RSVP at bottom. • Consider asking school to undertake this task as a competition but ensure that they have enough time to prepare and get printed. • Check contacts database established during Step 2.
Six weeks before the event	• Check progress on the work plan – tasks. • Order A1 paper, historic maps of the village, coloured markers (four per table), coloured post-its, sticky dots (several colours) sticky labels, etc. • Get support from the local authority for above and flip charts and exhibition boards (assistance with AV if required). • Check with venue in relation to AV arrangements.
Four weeks before the event	• Distribute poster and invitation to local community groups and their leaders. • Collect stationary order. • Try and gauge how many people are interested in attending. • Double-check availability of VIPs.
Two weeks before the event	• Check progress on the work plan – ensure all tasks are on track. • Prepare a list of confirmed attendees with contact details. • Check in with the venue – undertake another visit to finalise arrangements – confirm provisional numbers. • Contact local press and check deadlines for local regional newspapers, which tend to be printed on a weekly basis. • Organise sign-in sheet and confirm event programme.

Day before the event	• Set up room, if possible – place maps, markers, post-its, sticky dots on each table – (post-its should be unwrapped). It takes approximately two hours to set up a room for a workshop. • Check all AV works. • Confirm numbers for tea and coffee. • Print off event programme – copies should be on each table.
On the day	• Set up room – do not leave this to the last minute – place markers, post-its on each table (post-its should be unwrapped and put on the tables). • Issue press statement in morning (or earlier if required by regional newspapers).
At the event	• Make sure everyone signs in and is given a sticky label with their name on it (try not to use typed nametags as they are too formal for this type of event). • Make sure everyone provides contact details, if not already on list. • Announce any related events (local authority events, Tidy Towns meetings, Heritage Council events, LEADER events, etc). • Take lots of photographs of the group. • Use all the participative tools (coloured post-its, maps, markers) to record ideas. • Announce the Next Steps for the VDS Project – communicate and connect with people at all times. • Expect the unexpected and have fun!!
After the event	• Meet ASAP to undertake a team Lessons Learned exercise – prepare bullet points listing what went right and what things could have gone better the next time around – include the venue staff in the lessons learned – this is meant to be an enjoyable exercise and is not a blame game. • Circulate the Lessons Learned to all the team and also to the venue. • Prepare a *Draft Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report* (see below). • Celebrate as a team – buy buns, relax and have a good chat about the workshop.

Helpful Tip:

Organising workshops:

A suitable venue for a community workshop would be a community hall or school hall located in the centre of the village in an easily accessible place – ideally the venue for the workshop will be neutral [18]. The room should be set up **cabaret style** (around rectangular or round tables) rather than **theatre style** (rows of chairs) and people are asked to sit around the tables as they arrive (ten people max per group/table). Creating name tags out of sticky labels and having a sign in contact sheet as people arrive is also recommended in order to break the ice. An A1 map of the village on each table is extremely useful along with coloured post-its, sticky dots and pens, markers, etc. Use the definition of the *Heritage Act, 1995* as prompts for discussion (landscape/ seascape, villagescape/ streetscape, waterways/marine, wildlife and biodiversity, archaeology and monuments, etc). The main aim of this event is that everyone has fun thinking about their village and helping to shape its future!

[18] Preferably not in a church.

Photograph of cabaret style seating

It is recommended that the VDS Inter-Agency and VDS Local Working Groups act as organisers and facilitators at this event, which will take a few weeks to plan and organise – you will need around six people in total to organise and deliver this event (**Ratio: 1 facilitator per 10 people. Extra people are also needed to work the sign in desk and to manage AV, refreshments, etc**).

It is also extremely important that the workshop event is properly marketed and promoted to key stakeholders in order to raise awareness of the project and its collaborative and participative process. It is advisable to contact stakeholders by letter, email, phone/mobile, etc. to ensure that they attend this important event.

Recommended stakeholder workshop format – running order

1. Introduction to the VDS project team – VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group – **10 minutes**
2. Introduction to VDS project and process – what is a community-led village design statement? – overview of the collaborative and participative process – purpose of this evening's workshop – **15 minutes**
3. Scoping of VDS – group work using maps, post-its and markers (**total 70 minutes**):
   - What do you like about your village? **10 minutes** (warm up)
   - What do you dislike about your village? **10 minutes**
   - Where is the centre of the village – where and what is its historic core? **10 minutes**
   - What would you like your village to be in fifteen to twenty years time? **10 minutes**
   - What can you do to help? **10 minutes**
   - Feedback from groups – **20 minutes**
4. Summary of main points of agreement and explanation of next steps – **10 minutes**
5. Encourage more volunteers to join the local working group (be as inclusive as possible) ask people to write their name and contact details on post-its – have an A1 poster on the wall for these – **10 minutes**
6. Thank you and evening close – **5 minutes**.

Workshop running time: 2hrs

Ideal numbers 30+ people (depending on number of organisers and facilitators)

Urban Villages: as distinct village boundaries tend to be less obvious in urban areas, it might be worthwhile taking time at this workshop to ask the local community where they think their urban village starts and ends, and for them to draw out their responses on maps. Old historic maps are a useful tool for examining the concept of village boundaries (see Step 1 - Q3, please see www.maps.osi/publicviewer/).

It would be beneficial if the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group have already discussed the likely options and possibilities in relation to the village boundary during the planning for this event so that there are no shocks to the process.

Helpful Tip:

Sign of a successful workshop?

The sign of a successful workshop is the number of people who hang around after the event is over – if there is a general 'buzz' in the room people will not want to leave – count the number of people remaining in the room once your workshop is over. This should give you an indication of how the evening went and whether people enjoyed the event.

2. Write up the key issues arising from the VDS Stakeholder Workshop

Prepare a *Draft Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report* (VDS Scoping) summarising the general consensus on the key issues facing the village and the local community. Circulate the report electronically, post on the project website and leave copies in local shops and the post office. Highlight that this draft report is for 'sign off' by the community. This report should not be text heavy – it is better to do it in bullet points – listing agreed key issues first (the report should be ten pages maximum) – include quotes and photographs, where possible.

The report should also contain a list of the people who attended along with their contact details to ensure that people can network and build further partnerships along with details of sponsors, if applicable. Set and publicise a reasonable deadline for final responses and for input from anyone who was unable to attend the Stakeholder Workshop – provide clear contact details (this should also be covered in the Workshop under – *Next Steps* (see above running order – No.4). Consider doing an interview on your local radio to further raise awareness at this stage of the collaborative and participative *process.*

3. Finalise the *Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report*

It is extremely important that a final Feedback Report is prepared covering the issues and topics discussed during the Stakeholder Workshop. This report should be freely available to all interested parties and the wider community – paper and digital (PDF) versions should be produced and distributed.

4. Confirm status and structure of VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group

Hopefully, as a result of the stakeholder workshop, you will have had several approaches and offers from people willing to get involved in the community-led VDS project. Therefore, this event is also an opportune time to review and confirm the status and structure of the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group. In particular, it is a good time to check the size of the VDS Local Working Group, which is the local **engine** for the project – if you have over ten people in this group at this stage, you are doing well – if you have more than twenty people – you are in excellent shape – over twenty-five people and you are exceeding expectations!

5. Agree and sign VDS Project Charter

It is important to agree the key aims and objectives of the community-led VDS project using the information gathered by the VDS Inter-Agency Group and the VDS Local Working Group during the planning and delivery of the stakeholder workshop.

The information and ideas gathered and presented in the *Feedback Report* should also be utilised in defining the general scope of the project. Re-reading Part 1 of the Toolkit will also be useful at this stage.

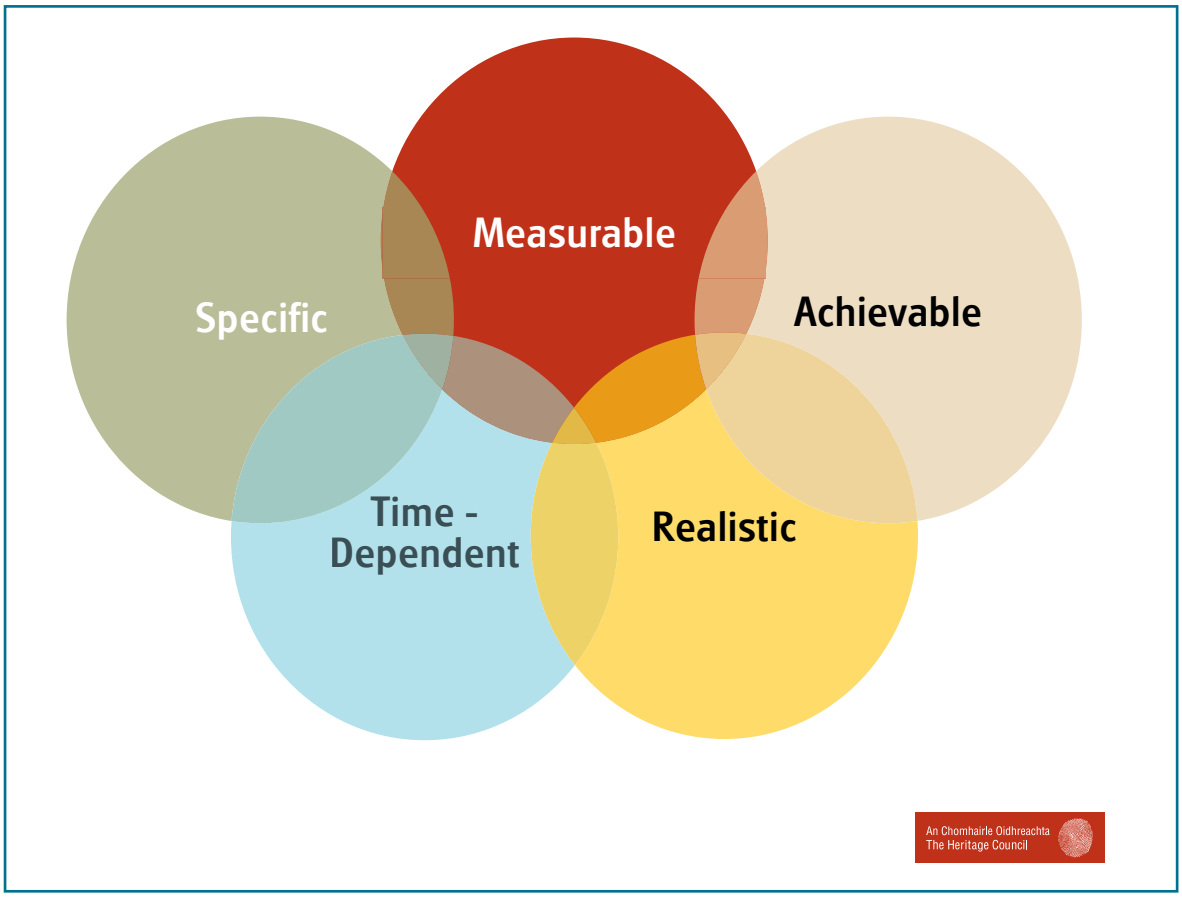
Following the workshop, the VDS Local Working Group and VDS Inter-Agency Group should meet in order to draft up, agree and sign the Project Charter – all partners involved in the collaborative VDS process should sign the Project Charter – a template is provided as **Fact Sheet No. 5.**

It is important that there is general agreement at this stage of the project, particularly in relation to overall project aims and objectives – for example, project objectives should be **SMART- S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-dependent, as described in Table 5 and illustrated in Figure 4 overleaf.

Table 5: SMART Objectives

S	**Specific –** Objectives should specify what they want to achieve.
M	**Measurable –** You should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not.
A	**Achievable -** Are the objectives you set, achievable and attainable?
R	**Realistic –** Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?
T	**Time-dependent –** When do you want to achieve the set objectives?

Figure 4: SMART Objectives



For example, a VDS project objective could be:

Sample Objective No.1: The VDS will assess and describe what is distinctive and unique about Villageville and ensure that these features are enhanced through the local planning system (and other relevant socio-economic development programmes), in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (ELC).

We also examine the issue of Project Objectives in the next step (Step 4: Draft and Agree a Collaborative VDS Brief for Consultants, etc). It is recommended that you have **a maximum of eight objectives** for your VDS Project – normally **five objectives** would be suitable.

Step 3 – Checklist:

1. **Identify community issues and aspirations – VDS Stakeholder Workshop.**
2. **Write up the key issues arising from the Stakeholder Workshop.**
3. **Finalise the *Stakeholder Workshop Report*.**
4. **Confirm status and structure of the *VDS Inter-Agency Group* and *VDS Local Working Group.***
5. **Agree and sign Project Charter.**

Step 4 – Striding out

Objective: Draft and agree a collaborative Village Design Statement (VDS) brief for consultants, advertise for consultants, evaluate tenders and appoint preferred consultant.

Once you have scoped out the VDS Project, prepared your *Stakeholder Report,* confirmed the members in your management structure, and agreed/signed the VDS Project Charter, your group can now move forward into the technical procurement stage of the project. This is the recruitment of suitable experienced consultants **to assist and support the community in the drafting and preparation of the Village Design Statement (VDS)**. This step in the process involves the following tasks and elements in turn:

1. Project partners prepare and agree brief for consultants.
2. Prepare scoring matrix.
3. Advertise for consultants – public procurement process.
4. Short-listing of consultants – evaluation of tender submissions.
5. Interview short-listed consultants.
6. Select preferred consultants – most economically advantageous tender.
7. Appoint consultants and sign contracts.

1. Project partners prepare and agree brief for consultants

Now that the project has been scoped and project objectives have been agreed, it is important that a collaborative *Brief for Consultants and Invitation to Tender* is drafted and agreed as soon as possible. Ideally, the brief should be ready around three weeks after the Stakeholder Workshop to build on the momentum and 'buzz' created by this event.

It is recommended that your group make use of the Julianstown VDS Brief (Template), which is reproduced as **Fact Sheet No. 6**. This brief was prepared collaboratively by the Heritage Council[19], Julianstown and District Community Association and Meath County Council in 2009 and also formed the basis of the Sandymount VDS Brief. The Julianstown VDS Brief has also been used by Meath Partnership (LEADER) in relation to their Village Renaissance Programme[20].

The *Julianstown VDS Brief for Consultants* was structured as follows:

1. **Background to the VDS project** – national planning policy, background to VDS project partners
2. **Key aims and objectives of the Julianstown VDS** – project to consider:
   - Diversity of character, buildings and spaces (formal and informal)
   - Energy (minimise car transport and maximise walking and cycling)
   - Climate change
   - Urban design (centred on people-centred streets and public spaces)
   - Community capacity building (knowledge in the community will be harnessed and utilised)

[19] As noted above in Step 2, the Heritage Council does not have any responsibility for the public procurement of consultants to support community-led Village Design Statements.

[20] See www.meathpartnership.ie

3. **Methodology** – set out the principles of the participative and collaborative process, and the process and timescale. Methodology will be as follows:
   - be widely inclusive of the community and stakeholders
   - promote the principles and practice of collaborative and participative planning
   - have an action-learning approach, which incorporates training and capacity building into the process and prioritises implementation and monitoring (engaging all age groups)
4. **Project management and role of consultants/facilitators** – sets out the management structure and the role of the consultants (see below)
5. **Response to the brief** – consultant skills/expertise (CVs), project budget expenses and fees, pre-tender communication. The consultants were asked to include the following information:
   - How the consultant will respond to the brief, including method statement, timetable and phasing of the proposal
   - Details on how the participation process would be designed and managed
   - The range of professional skills which would be brought to bear including CVs for proposed team members
   - A resource plan[21] showing the breakdown of person hours between professions and stages (detailed costings)
   - Previous experience of the key personnel proposed with client references
   - Extent of professional indemnity cover
   - A current tax clearance certificate will be required
6. **Criteria for selection of consultants** – criteria breakdown:
   - Proposed methodology (50%)
   - Expertise of team and track record (30%)
   - Use of resources (20%)
7. Contract award is based on the **Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT)** according to the above criteria.
8. **General issues** – draft and final reports, output format (number of copies, appendices and circulation), intellectual property and confidentiality, freedom of information (FOI), project management and monitoring.

Helpful Tip:

We recommend using the **Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT)** system of tender selection as opposed to the simple lowest price system of selection, as it enables tender evaluation on the basis of the **quality of the tender offer as well as the price** (using various award criteria such as period for completion, running costs, technical merit, etc).

[21] E.g. a Gantt Chart.

The VDS Brief also set out the recommended role of the consultant, as follows:

Recommended role of VDS consultant – summary

- Inception meeting/walk-and-talk session
- Desktop research of the village – natural and built heritage, historic landscapes, statutory designations, green infrastructure, sustainability, cultural heritage, etc.
- Village appraisal and training session with VDS Inter-Agency Group and Local Working Group
- Facilitate public/community workshops and children's competition in partnership with I-AG and LWG
- Analysis report including production of illustrated maps, plans, graphics and images
- Attend and participate in VDS Inter-Agency Group Meetings and VDS Local Working Group meetings
- Organise and facilitate community workshops – visioning exercise in partnership with VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group – formulate priorities and options
- Prepare feedback from community workshops – draft options
- Formulation and presentation of options arising from community workshops
- Local Area Plan (LAP) Review and/or review of County Development Plan
- First draft VDS production – draft Shared Vision, draft Design Principles and draft VDS Action Plan
- VDS Inter-Agency Group review meeting and VDS Local Working Group review meeting of draft VDS
- Final draft VDS production – Shared Vision, agreed Design Principles and agreed VDS Action Plan
- Sign off by VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group – 'Green Light'
- Final VDS for printing and formal launch.

It is important to reiterate that the consultant is appointed to **support and assist the community in preparing the VDS**. This differs greatly from the more traditional scenario where the consultants prepare a plan themselves with input and in consultation with others. It is prudent at the tendering stage to seek evidence that the consultants are comfortable and committed to working in such a fashion, ideally through experience on other similar community-led projects that can be verified through client references.

In writing a brief, it is useful to put yourself in the mindset of those likely to be responding to its requirements. The more certainty you can provide as to what is and is not required, the more accurately they can respond to your needs. It is particularly helpful to outline a maximum budget, anticipated time commitments. This includes the likely number of meetings and workshops and the requirements for out of hours working (evenings and weekends), so that consultants can fully understand your expectations from the outset. This is particularly important as participative methods are normally labour intensive with knock-on budgetary implications.

A range of different consultants are likely to be interested in tendering for a Village Design Statement, in what can be a very competitive market. The brief is likely to attract urban designers, planners, architects and landscape architects, and potentially economists and community facilitators/capacity builders. The brief should be sufficiently open to attract interest from a diverse range of quality applicants, whilst also clearly defining the particular skills required for the village in question.

Planning, design and communication skills should be regarded as three essential components of their skill base. A temptation should be avoided to overload the brief with a long list of other required specialists, as this will result in a large team, the members of which will only be able to devote small amounts of time to the community-led VDS project.

1. Prepare VDS Tender Scoring Matrix

Your group should also prepare a VDS Tender Scoring Matrix to score the tenders received against the criteria provided in the brief. The scoring matrix, which was prepared for the *Julianstown VDS* and reproduced as **Fact Sheet No. 7**, is recommended. It is very important that your scoring matrix matches the Brief for Consultants and that the criteria listed in the Brief forms the basis of the scoring matrix (the Brief and Tender Scoring Matrix must match).

2. Advertise for consultants – public procurement process

It is recommended that you check with your local authority and/or local LEADER company in relation to their public procurement procedures during the preparation of the brief. It is likely that the funder of the Community-led VDS Project will apply their specific procurements rules, in terms of the number of tender submissions required and the tender procurement timescale/period.

The funder will also be able to provide advice in relation to the handling of tender submissions (where tenders are to be received by mail and by courier within the legal deadline period, and what procedures will be put in place by the funder) if tenderers are late and miss the set deadline.

3. Short-listing of consultants – evaluation of tender submissions

Once tenders have been received within the stated tender period, using the VDS Tender Scoring Matrix, it is possible to assess and score each consultant's tender submission, and to identify the top scoring consultants based on the issued brief. An evaluation panel should be created for this task – it is recommended that that the evaluation panel be made up of members from the VDS Inter-Agency Group and the VDS Local Working Group – four people maximum should be involved in the interview panel and this group is chaired by the Chair of the VDS Inter-Agency Group/Local Working Group. This panel needs to meet to review and discuss tenders received and to score tender submissions using the scoring matrix. (It is useful to ask consultants for electronic copies of their tender so that the documents can be circulated to members of the evaluation panel.)

4. Interview short-listed consultants

Due to the importance of collaboration in the overall VDS process, it is also advisable to hold interviews with the top three short-listed consultants to ensure that there is a genuine rapport between the interview panel and consultants. Dates of interviews should be included in the Brief to ensure that everyone can attend.

5. Select preferred consultants – Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT)

Following interviews, the final scores in the VDS Tender Scoring Matrix (with the preferred consultant clearly identified in terms of the Most Economically Advantageous Tender, should be agreed and signed off by the evaluation/interview panel.

Case study – Julianstown Village Design Statement – national pilot:

The two-level management structure consisting of the **VDS Inter-Agency Group** and **VDS Local Working Group** worked extremely well in Julianstown whereby the VDS Inter-Agency Group, (which was made up of representatives from the Julianstown Community, Meath County Council and the Heritage Council and 'chaired' by a local community person), waited for the approval of the VDS Local Working Group (both groups were chaired by the same person) to appoint the preferred VDS consultants following interviews, which were held in the village.

The community reps on the VDS Inter-Agency Group had also been invited by the other project partners to choose the consultants that they wanted 'to support and assist them' with the community-led VDS Project. The community representatives on the VDS Inter-Agency Group, with the full agreement of the Inter-Agency Group members, presented the recommendation in relation to the preferred consultant to the VDS Local Working Group the following evening. Agreement by the VDS Local Working Group on this recommendation was then communicated back to the VDS Inter-Agency Group – who then formally appointed the consultants.

Resulting Outcome

As a result, everyone moved forward together collectively as one group on the community-led VDS project and the existence and building of **trust** and **partnership** between all involved in the project community was significantly nurtured, demonstrated and enhanced.

6. Appoint consultants and sign contracts

Once the preferred consultants have been selected and both levels of the management structure are in agreement on their appointment, the project partner who is the funder should appoint and sign contracts with the preferred consultant.

Your group is now ready to move onto the next step in the process – the formulation of the VDS (the grafting, drafting and finalising of the Village Design Statement).

Step 4 – checklist:

1. **Project partners prepare and agree brief for consultants.**
2. **Prepare scoring matrix.**
3. **Advertise for consultants – public procurement process.**
4. **Short-listing of consultants – evaluation of tender submissions.**
5. **Interview short-listed consultants.**
6. **Select preferred consultants – most economically advantageous tender.**
7. **Appoint consultants and sign contracts.**

Step 5 – Getting over the jumps

Objective: Formulate the community-led Village Design Statement involving the whole community (grafting, drafting and finalising the VDS).

This step in the process is labour-intensive and as such it is divided into two parts. It involves undertaking the following tasks and elements in turn:

A. Grafting and drafting the community-led Village Design Statement (VDS)

1. **Training and detailed village appraisal by consultants with community.**
2. **Community engagement and public participation:**
3. **Gathering ideas from the community**
4. **Analysing community ideas**
5. **Creating a Shared Vision, draft Design Principles and draft VDS Action Plan**
6. **Testing and agreement of Shared Vision, agreed Design Principles and agreed VDS Action Plan.**
7. **Summary of above.**

B. Finalising and printing the community-led VDS (including poster):

1. **Writing and editing the VDS.**
2. **Finalising the VDS for printing (including VDS poster).**
3. **Final sign off by project management team/project partners.**
4. **Adoption by local authority – city/county council.**
5. **Printing arrangements.**

1. Training and detailed village appraisal by consultants with community

Once you have formally appointed consultants to **assist and support the community** in the preparation of the VDS, the first thing that your group and the consultants should do is organise an inception meeting with the VDS Inter-Agency Group to agree the following:

- Project management arrangements – update Project Charter (Step 3).
- Agreement on VDS methodology and programme including number/type and timing of participative events.
- Lines of communication – update Communications Plan (Step 2).
- Fee payment arrangements and signing of contract.
- Proposed printing arrangements for VDS document.

The first task for the consultants to undertake is a detailed appraisal of the village with the VDS Local Working Group – this should include a walk-and-talk session, (ideally involving members of both groups) and a training planning and design workshop with the VDS Local Working Group. This training planning and design workshop (with the VDS Local Working Group) builds on work undertaken in Step 1 and aims to provide a detailed appraisal of the village. The appraisal can be illustrated using maps/contour maps, aerial photographs, etc. and the results can be utilised throughout the VDS process.

It is extremely important at this stage that the consultants provide training in relation to the concepts and principles of good planning and design using local features within the village to illustrate key points, including the elements listed in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Heritage and design elements to be appraised

Design element	Specific element to be explored and assessed
Settlement pattern and built form – urban fabric	• Pattern of the village/town – distinct zones and layouts. • Streets and routes – are they interesting? • Open space and connections to the countryside. • Relationship between buildings and spaces.
Character – character areas	• Landscape and setting. • Relationship within village/town and heritage assets. • Relationship between village edge and countryside/urban fringe. • Landmark buildings in the landscape – important views and vistas – within and without.
Buildings, structures and spaces – villagescape and streetscape	• Building types and forms. • Height, scale and density of buildings. • Sizes, styles and types. • Public spaces – location and size of squares and parks. • Walls, hedges and fences – local materials. • Distinctive features, materials, details, etc.
Roads, streets and traffic – permeability and movement	• Characteristics of local roads, streets and laneways/slips – access? • Location and quality of parking. • Footpaths and cycleways – walkability and bikeability. • Location and quality of street furniture, utilities and services.
Visitor attractions and facilities	• Museums, arts, heritage and craft centres. • Town walls, castles, grounds and gardens. • Retail offer – markets? • Public parks and river walks - greenways? • Public art?

(Source: A. Harvey, Heritage Officers' Training Seminar, 2009.)

The results of Step 1 should also be used by the consultants during the training workshop. A useful way to assess the baseline and information is to undertake a SWOT analysis – in order to identify and tease out the village's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It might also be useful to consider and test the analysis further using different scenarios in terms of whether the village will stay the same or whether the village will grow and expand. The training workshop should also introduce the VDS Local Working Group members to the concept of formulating a Shared Vision, Design Principles and stimulate the group to start identifying suitable projects that may enhance and promote the village and local distinctiveness. It is important that this training workshop is held at the start of Step 5 as it contributes significantly to overall capacity building.

Helpful Tip:

Visioning exercise

One useful way is for facilitators to ask the group members to envisage their village fifteen years from today – the group is then asked to close their eyes and describe the village – as if they were able to see it – ask them to use adjectives to define their dreams for their future village. Write these words down on a flip chart or on coloured post-its – group the post-its and use the groupings to construct a sentence or a short paragraph that sets out the Shared Vision – seek agreement from the group, review and edit as necessary.

Following this base-line appraisal and the training workshop, your group is ready to fully engage the whole village community (including people of different ages, backgrounds and cultures) in the design and formulation of the VDS, which is made up of:

1. A **Shared Vision** setting out the community's overall and collective Vision (environmental, cultural and socio-economic) for their village for the next fifteen to twenty years – this is effectively the community's constitution
2. **Agreed Design Principles** that relate specifically to the village to be used by the local community, the local authority and other stakeholders to guide in-fill or new development within or on the edges of the village in order to ensure that the existing character and distinctiveness identified through the VDS process is conserved, celebrated and enhanced
3. An **Agreed VDS Action Plan** setting out specific and phased projects that should be delivered by the local community and its partners to ensure the effective planning, management and enhancement of these unique features, which ultimately create a unique sense of place.

The skills, talents and interests within the locality identified at Step 1 will be extremely useful at this stage, as they will help determine the most effective creative and fun way for your community to engage and participate in the VDS process!

2. Community engagement and public participation

Gathering ideas from the community

The collaborative process seeks to promote and facilitate engagement, public participation and capacity building through various participative tools including: **Collaborative Design Workshops, Photo Surveys, Community Plays, and Video Soapbox**. These community planning events can enable the community to explore, express and gather their ideas, in relation to a shared vision and the future planning and design of their village, along with potential ideas for its improvement and enhancement.

Building on the work undertaken in the previous steps (Steps 1-4), it is recommended that your group uses a mixture of participative and capacity building approaches utilising the specific skills, talents and interests that are available within your local community and your consultancy team.

It should be reiterated that one of the core skills required of your consultant should be an expertise in designing and facilitating public participation events and community capacity building. It is also important to remember the VDS outputs as a useful framework during this step in the process as set out above, i.e. Shared Vision, Agreed Design Principles and Agreed VDS Action Plan. Ideally and as noted above, the first planning and design workshop should be with the VDS Local Working Group, which is the engine of the VDS Project.

We look at each participative method in turn overleaf.

i. Collaborative Planning and Design Workshops[22]

Collaborative Planning and Design Workshops follow a similar format to the Stakeholder Workshop undertaken during Step 3 – these are hands-on sessions allowing small groups of people, normally with no previous design experience, to work creatively together to develop planning and design ideas. Groups can be allocated a specific heritage and design topics such as landscape setting and heritage (built, natural and cultural), the village core and movement, green infrastructure and sustainability. The facilitators help the community to interpret their local environment and enhance their understanding of heritage management, and planning and design principles and concepts.

The workshop facilitators start the ball rolling by asking groups to assess where the centre of their village is, where there are problems in the village, where there are opportunities, and where they would want to see things happen/improvements and changes to take place. Ideas can be sketched on base plans and tracing paper overlays – interactive displays can be used as part of the workshop – use colour pens, post-its, sticky dots, colour markers to illustrate ideas and comments. The more colourful the final sheets the better (Post-it boards for ideas – and groups have to use coloured post-its on blank sheets of paper (A1) to illustrate the following:

1. What they **like and dislike** about their village?
2. What would they like **their village to be in fifteen to twenty years time***?*
3. What they would **like to see improved** - how and when?

These summary sheets can then be used during the summing up of the group discussion. It is extremely important that workshops are designed to be fun and enjoyable, particularly as they involve the voluntary input of so many people! Try not to be too serious.

3D Model of village made by local youths, Conor Hoey and Cillian O'Connor Barry, in Julianstown

Helpful Tip:

Grouping of ideas

It is useful to allocate time to group the post-its into common themes or topics before feedback. Also, if the workshop is being held at the weekend, it might be useful to include a group walk around the village, which can be videoed – try and mix the age groups to stimulate discussion and a mix of views – let everyone share the experience of exploring and assessing their village. Recordings can then be posted on the project website.

[22] Ratio: 1 facilitator per 10 people. Extra people are also needed to work the sign in desk and to manage AV, refreshments, etc.

ii. Photo Surveys and Community Plays

If you have a photographer living in your village (identified in Step 1), this might encourage appraisal, analysis and understanding of the village, its villagescape and character by the medium of photography over an agreed period (e.g. to create photomontages of the villagescape highlighting design features within the locality and ideas for village improvement and enhancement). This local talent may also enable a **Children's Photo Survey Project** to be organised as part of the process in partnership with local schools. It's a bonus if the photographer works for the local newspaper!

Photo surveys involve people walking around their village taking photos according to various heritage and design themes. These could include the setting of the village in the landscape (views and vistas, favourite buildings and spaces, variety of design in the village) old and new, nature and biodiversity, movement and traffic. After printing, photos are sorted and categorised with comments from the community added using post-its/markers with arrows. The context of the photos can also be explored using a large map or aerial photograph of the village – the results are then presented by the participants. The photo survey can also form an exhibition and accompanying comment board in the village hall. Alternatively, you might have a resident playwright/dramatist who will be able to facilitate the telling of your village story (its evolution) in a novel way or an artist who can work with children encouraging them to express links to their local environment (e.g. children paint a picture of their favourite place or building in their village).

Children's painting project in Sandymount Village by Laura Callahan

Helpful Tip:

The Julianstown community wrote, performed and recorded a community play as part of the VDS process with support from the Heritage Council and Meath County Council. This innovative method enabled the community to explain the issues within their village in a creative manner to their project partners. Issues that the play touched on included the impact that severe traffic levels were having on the historic village environment and overall quality of life of village residents.

iii. Video Soapbox [23]

A Video Soapbox allows the village community, particularly its young people, to give their opinions and views on their village and local environment. An invitation can be sent out, via local schools, youth groups and sports clubs, stating where the video box will be located and for how long, along with the promotion of prizes for the most original idea, which could be sponsored by local businesses. Ideally, the video box should be located in a neutral venue such as a village hall or post office.

Post-editing, the community can watch the clips and vote online for the best idea or opinion - prizes can then be awarded at community workshops. The video clips should be posted on the project website. Ideally, local schoolchildren should be involved in the organisation and delivery.

(Video clips can also be included in funding applications as part of Step 7 below.) A variation of this idea could involve local teenagers making a short film (10 minutes) presenting ideas of their Vision for the village and where changes would take place. Another variation could be local teenagers working with older age groups to record the **oral history of the village**. Videos could be presented at the start of community workshops and also posted on the project website.

Helpful Tip:

The overall number of participative events that can be designed and delivered as part of the community-led VDS process will ultimately depend on the overall project resources (including budget) and the ability to deliver capacity building in the village community. Therefore, confirmation of the level of funding for the VDS project from both the public and private sector at the very start of the process is critical. We return to the issue of funding in Step 7.

Analysing community ideas

The ideas originating from the community can be analysed and developed further by the VDS Local Working Group and the consultants with the support of the VDS Inter-Agency Group and then fed back to, and tested by, the community at follow up community workshops. The Project Management Group and the consultants should spend quite a number of weeks working through the analysis of ideas in order to formulate a Shared Vision, Design Principles and an agreed VDS Action Plan which sets out a range of prioritised projects by timescale. The Shared Vision should inform the formulation of Design Principles, which in turn should guide the formulation of the agreed VDS Action Plan.

Creating a Shared Vision, draft Design Principles and draft VDS Action Plan

The grouping of ideas throughout the participative events (including workshops) should help to identify common areas where there is a consensus in relation to a shared future of the village and for acceptable and appropriate change. The proposed Shared Vision, Design Principles and VDS Action Plan should focus on the conservation and enhancement of the overall sense of place and villagescape character, and ultimately relate to:

- Landscape setting and relationship to the surrounding area, important views and vistas.
- Village form and fabric – historic settlement pattern.
- Streetscape and public realm – key entrances to the village.
- Built and landscape architecture – style, mass, density, materials, etc.
- Hierarchy and sequence of open spaces (formal and informal) – green infrastructure (GI).
- Traffic and movement –permeability and connectivity - cycleability and walkability.
- Car parking – shared or dual use.
- Access – should be designed for all users.
- Community Festivals and events.

[23] Source: The Community Planning Handbook, N. Wates (2000), page 128.

The community-led VDS should ensure that any new development within the village is of a high quality, enhances the public realm, and contributes to the long-term sustainable growth of the settlement. Revisiting Figure 2 is also useful at this stage. Case Studies from the Julianstown VDS and Sandymount VDS in relation to a Shared Vision and Agreed Design Principles are provided below.

Case study – Julianstown VDS – Shared Vision (pages 17-18)

'Julianstown will grow into an attractive, safe and sustainable village. Founded on its rich history and ecology, it will become home to a vibrant, creative and enterprising community, welcoming to all'.

Three Aims - To:

1. Protect and enhance Julianstown's distinctive identity through its buildings, structures and landscape.
2. Develop Julianstown into a sustainable village with the amenities and quality environment its community desire.
3. Bring a social and economic vitality back to Julianstown.

Case Study – Sandymount VDS – Agreed Design Principles (pages 20-22), Section 7.1 – The Heart of the Village

Objective: to retain the structure and unique character at the heart of the village.

The Green and its interrelationship with the surrounding buildings, is one of the primary elements of Sandymount's unique sense of place. The protection and preservation of this is a primary objective for the Sandymount community.

Principles:

1. Future development should respect the height, scale, density and variety of design of the buildings around the Green and associated shopping area.
2. Existing mature trees should be protected against above and below ground damage caused by development.
3. The continued presence of mature trees should be ensured by regular health and condition surveys and successive replanting, where necessary.
4. The open character and the opportunity for quiet enjoyment that the Green offers should be retained by maintaining the simple layout of paths and lawns. Additional features, which would introduce clutter, should be avoided.
5. The Green's boundary railings are of a style and material that reflect the age of the park and enhance it. They should therefore be retained, inspected and repaired as necessary.
6. The replacement and repair of existing surfaces, kerbs, street furniture, etc., should be carried out using materials which respect and enhance the existing character. In particular, inappropriate contemporary styles should be avoided.

Agreed VDS Action Plans

In addition, you might find it useful to consider the VDS projects that have been developed through the two community-led pilots in Julianstown and Sandymount, which are now being implemented by the local communities in partnership with their project partners.

Case Studies – Agreed VDS Action Plans

Common themes for VDS projects which emerged from the two pilot Village Design Statements include:

- Creation of a quality villagescape: enhanced street frontages – quality streetscape and landscape design.
- Creation of a thriving public realm: improved public spaces – quality street furniture, lighting and pavements using local materials – removal of unsightly utilities.
- Conservation and restoration of historic landmark buildings and distinctive spaces within the heart of the village.
- Establishment of Community Greenways and improved green infrastructure[24] to enhance local biodiversity and improve quality of life – ecology trails.
- Creation of new public spaces - social spaces – formal and informal.
- Development of heritage trails and heritage booklets.
- Exploration of historic landscapes through historic landscape characterisation (HLC).
- Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of statutory Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) – conservation of built fabric.
- Traffic management proposals – reducing impact of buses and cars – improving movement and connectivity, walkability, health and safety, etc.
- Enhanced signage particularly at key entrance points to the village – use of public art by local artists.
- Devise strong village brand based on unique sense of place and community spirit.
- Enhancement of community facilities to encourage community development and capacity building.
- Development of village events and festivals celebrating the unique, local cultural heritage.

3. Testing and agreement of Shared Vision, agreed Design Principles and agreed VDS Action Plan

It is important that the village community be given ample opportunity to review and comment on the draft Shared Vision, Design Principles and VDS Action Plan as they emerge through the process from the collaboration of the VDS Local Working Group and VDS Inter-Agency Group working with the consultants. Consideration should also be given to people who are unable to attend community workshops.

We would recommend at least two community workshops – one to present the draft vision prepared by the VDS Local Working Group, etc. and one to agree on the draft VDS document including the prioritised VDS Action Plan – this is effectively the community's sign off of the VDS document (excludes implementation of VDS).

4. Summary of above

Broadly speaking, the grafting and drafting of the community-led Village Design Statement can involve the following programme. However, each village will require a specific, yet flexible approach that suits your settlement, the local community and your team of consultants.

[24] In Julianstown, GI projects relate to the River Nanny corridor and in Sandymount, GI projects relate to the village green, Sandymount Strand and the River Dodder corridor.

Grafting and drafting of VDS - potential VDS programme:

1. Inception meeting with VDS Inter-Agency Group – 'walk and talk session' around village – confirm project management/communication structures (Step 2), methodology and project programme (using brief from Step 4).
2. Detailed village appraisal by consultants - desk top research and follow up site visit with both groups - building on surveys (undertaken in Step 1) and stakeholder workshop feedback report (undertaken in Step 3).
3. Feedback to VDS Inter-Agency Group – planning of workshops, etc.
4. Training - planning and design workshop with VDS Inter-Agency Group (No. 1) – introduction to planning and design, design analysis, visioning exercises and consideration of VDS projects.
5. Planning and design workshop with children (No. 1) – photo survey and video soapbox (optional).
6. Follow up with VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group.
7. Training - planning and design workshop with VDS Local Working Group (No. 2) – reviewing all feedback, develop draft vision, design principles and VDS Action Plan.
8. Follow up with VDS Inter-Agency Group.
9. Community workshop (No. 1) – presenting appraisal – draft vision, design principles and VDS Action Plan – small group feedback.
10. Planning and design workshop with VDS Local Working Group (No. 3) – reviewing community feedback – finalising shared vision, design principles and VDS Action Plan.
11. Follow up with VDS Inter-Agency Group.
12. Community Workshop (No. 2) – Presentation of draft VDS for discussion and feedback.
13. Follow up with VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group.

B Finalising and printing the community-led VDS (including poster)

The second part of Step 5 involves the following tasks and elements, which are discussed below.

1. **Writing and editing the VDS.**
2. **Finalising the VDS for printing (including VDS poster).**
3. **Final sign off by project management team/project partners.**
4. **Adoption by local authority – city/county council.**
5. **Printing arrangements.**

1. Writing and editing the VDS

Due to the large number of people involved in the overall collaborative and participative process, it is extremely important that the writing and editing of the VDS is streamlined otherwise it will become cumbersome, unwieldy and potentially unmanageable. It is recommended that your group try and agree an outline report structure for the VDS document in the early stages of the process. The structures of the Julianstown and Sandymount Village Design Statements are provided below in Table 7.

Table 7: Report structure of Julianstown and Sandymount Village Design Statements (A4 landscape)

Julianstown VDS (launched 2010)	**Sandymount VDS** (launched 2011)
1. Introduction and background	1. Introduction
2. The collaborative process	2. The collaborative process
3. Context and history	3. History and social context
4. Landscape setting	4. Landscape setting
5. The village	5. Village structure
6. The shared vision	6. Vision for the future of Sandymount
7. Aims (3 aims) – Design Principles listed throughout VDS	Design Principles - The heart of the village - The strand and promenade - The public realm - Green infrastructure
8. Concept - The welcome - The street - The heart - Our heritage - The village - The river - Landscape - Community	7. Next steps and future VDS projects – twelve detailed VDS projects – includes summary of current issues and outline project brief (prioritised with timescale).
8. Agreed VDS action plan – 30 VDS projects (prioritised with timescale)	
9. Moving forward	Total pages = 28
	Appendix a: People
Total pages = 41	Appendix b: National policy context
Appendix a: People	Appendix c: Sandymount planning policy context
Appendix b: Information	Appendix d: Information
A3 double-sided poster for schools included	A3 double-sided poster for schools included

It is also important to establish clear and agreed editorial deadlines and to agree roles and responsibilities at an early stage.

Ideally, three people (maximum) should be involved in the actual writing and editing of the VDS word document – one person from the team of consultants working in partnership with a nominated member from the VDS Local Working Group and a nominated member from the VDS Inter-Agency Group. Work closely with your consultant to ensure that the text is easy to read (avoid jargon and overly wordy document that people won't read).

Also, make the VDS as visual and as attractive as possible – for example, include quotes and images from the participative events, particularly drawings created by children and the youths of the village. For example, a sample of quotes, arising from the community-led VDS process in Julianstown and Sandymount, is provided below:

Julianstown VDS:
'It's the most exciting thing that's happened in Julianstown for 30 years!'
'I would like to see the Old Mill put back together … they should also build a lovely playground for the children to play at and have fun.'

Sandymount VDS:

'Sandymount is a unique, peaceful oasis.'
'A major attraction of Sandymount Green is its tranquillity.'

2. Finalising the VDS for printing (including VDS poster)

Ideally, your consultants should create the graphically-designed version of the VDS only when the structure, text, images and layout have all been prepared, agreed and signed off, as significant editing of a graphically designed version of the VDS can have serious implications on the project timescale and budget. The consultants should also design the poster for schools at the very end of the process – the poster should provide a summary of the collaborative process, the Shared Vision, agreed Design Principles and the agreed VDS Action Plan along with details of key contacts.

3. Final sign off by project management team/project partners

It is recommended that the graphically-designed version of the VDS document (and poster) is finalised by the agreed editing team within a realistic and agreed deadline – ideally it should take around two to three weeks to progress the word document into a graphically designed version of the VDS. This enables the project partners to formally sign off on the VDS document. The project partners might also wish to reflect on the Project Charter at this stage (prepared in **Step 3**). In addition, it might also be useful to facilitate a combined Lessons Learned session with the project management groups, the results of which could be used by other village communities considering undertaking a community-led VDS.

4. Adoption by local authority – city/county council

Once the VDS document and poster have been signed off by all project partners, the VDS should be presented to the local authority council members for their approval by the members of the VDS Inter-Agency Group. The timing of this presentation should be considered at the outset of the overall VDS process. It is unlikely that there will be any changes to the document, due to the overall collaborative process and also as a number of local councillors will have been involved throughout as members of *the VDS Local Working Group.*

5. Printing Arrangements

There are two options for the printing of the VDS document and poster:

1. Printing is undertaken by the local authority – normally the planning department, or
2. Printing is undertaken by an external printer (subject to public procurement rules – check with your local authority).

Printing arrangements, including size of the print run and hence cost, should be discussed and agreed by the project partners and consultants and arrangements included in the overall Project Charter – any review or amendments to agreed printing arrangements should be documented on updated versions of the Project Charter.

Step 5 – checklist:

A. Grafting and drafting the community-led Village Design Statement (VDS).

1. Training and detailed village appraisal by consultants with community.

2. Community engagement and public participation:

- Gathering ideas from the community
- Analysing community ideas
- Creating a shared vision, draft design principles and draft VDS action plan.

3. Testing and agreement of shared vision, agreed design principles and agreed VDS action plan.

4. Summary of above.

B. Finalising and printing the community-led VDS (including poster):

1. Writing and editing the VDS.

2. Finalising the VDS for printing (including VDS poster).

3. Final sign off by project management team/project partners.

4. Adoption by local authority – city/county council.

5. Printing arrangements.

Step 6 – A clear round

Objective: Organise and deliver the Big Launch Night – a community celebrates its VDS (take a breather after!)

As you are nearing the completion of the Village Design Statement document, which includes the Shared Vision, Design Principles and agreed VDS Action Plan, your group should consider the timing and organisation of the official launch of the VDS. The official launch of the VDS is normally held in the evening to enable everyone in the village to attend – young and old. Planning and organising the launch night is similar to the tasks involved in organising a workshop and if your group has followed the Steps in this Toolkit so far, you will have no bother organising a fantastic launch night for your community-led Village Design Statement!

The objectives of the formal launch of the community-led VDS are as follows:

- Celebrate the achievement of the village community and its project partners.
- Create a 'buzz' in the village in relation to the community-led VDS.
- Secure buy-in from funders in relation to implementing the VDS.
- Secure positive PR for the project and the collaboration and participative process.
- Promote the VDS project to other funders not involved in the process to date.
- Expand the Local Working Group Team – volunteers for the implementation phase.
- Formally move from the formulation to the implementation stage of the community-led VDS.

This step involves the following tasks:

1. **Organise work plan**
2. **Prepare programme**
3. **Take some time off after launch – at least two weeks**

1. Organise work plan

The Big Launch Night is normally organised jointly by the VDS Inter-Agency Group (VDS I-AG) and VDS Local Working Group (VDS LWG) and the recommended work plan is set out in Table 8 overleaf:

Table 8: The Big Launch Night – recommended work plan

Eight weeks before launch	• Management Groups (VDS I-AG and VDS LWG) determine if the VDS is on track – confirm date for official sign off (try not to change this date once agreed) – do everything that you can to get the VDS over the finishing line by/on the date agreed. • Ensure the date of the evening event does not clash with any major national event – voting in elections, major sporting event, etc. • Arrange team meeting for both groups (VDS I-AG followed by VDS LWG) and agree roles and responsibilities – prepare a clear list of tasks for the team – both for the Inter-Agency Group and Local Working Group (the Inter-Agency Group normally organises the launch with the Local Working Group organises the VDS Exhibition and community talk on the night). • Inter-Agency Group to check with VIPs regarding availability – the date of the official launch will normally be determined by the availability of the County Manger and/or local TDs and councillors (get to know the county manager's PA!). • Select and book venue in centre of village – ideally, this should be the same location where the VDS community workshops were held (think about your launch when selecting your workshop venues in Steps 3 and 5). • Check out and confirm AV arrangements – the funder of the project should be able to help you with this. • The venue should be able to hold at least 100-150 people as the whole village community will normally turn out for this special night of celebration. • Check venue Fire Cert with venue management – determine number of maximum people allowed in the room (ensure it matches your requirements). • Get written confirmation from the venue and contact details (including mobile no. in case of emergencies). • Arrange with venue that numbers will be firmed up one week before the event. • Circulate 'Date in the Diary' notice to community and VIPs. • Publicise event on project website and newsletter, Church Notes, local shops, circulate email, etc. • Book local photographer and start drafting Press Statement.
Six to Eight weeks before the launch	• Start preparing the VDS exhibition – book display boards – your funder should be able to assist with this. • Design poster and invitation for launch event with contact details – include a RSVP at bottom (it is advisable to try and manage numbers so that you have an idea of how many people will be there on the night). • Consider asking school to undertake this task as a competition but ensure that they have enough time to prepare and get printed. • Check contacts database established during **Step 2.**
Four to six weeks before the launch	• Arrange team meeting (No.2). • Check progress on the work plan (tasks). • Check with venue in relation to AV arrangements. • Try and gauge how many people are interested in attending. • Double-check availability of VIPs. • Check printing arrangements for VDS. • Check progress on VDS exhibition. • Contact local radio and offer to do an interview – this can be pre-recorded or live – pre-recorded is better as you can prepare your answers and key messages in relation to the VDS.

Two weeks before the launch	• Arrange team meeting (No. 3). • Check progress on the work plan – ensure all tasks are on track. • Prepare a list of confirmed attendees with contact details. • Check in with the venue – undertake another visit to finalise arrangements – confirm provisional numbers. • Contact local press and check deadlines for local regional newspapers, which tend to be printed on a weekly basis. • Organise sign-in sheet and confirm event programme – see case study below. • Send event programme to VIPs for agreement – get mobile numbers for VIPs and their team – this is important as the event will be held in the evening – circulate programme to all members of the project community as soon as it is signed off by the VIPs. • Finalise and print off exhibition boards – hold a dummy run of the exhibition – agree who is going to talk from the Local Working Group and what they are going to say – aim for 15-20 minutes. • Confirm delivery date/time for VDS doc. • Order sticky labels as name tags – add in logos, if necessary. • Order thank you flowers/gifts for VIPs and Team. • Print off signs for the room and way to toilets. • Prepare detailed notes for VIPs re. VDS project and key projects contained in the agreed VDS Action Plan, agree with Inter-Agency Group and send out by email. • VDS Chair prepares his/her speech – agree outline with both groups.
Day before Launch	• Set up room, if possible – It takes approximately three hours to set up a room for a launch – agree where VIPs will sit – make sure everyone has a view of the projector screen. • Place a copy of the VDS on each chair – have spare copies at the welcome/sign in desk. • Put up all signage at the venue. • Check all AV works. • Confirm numbers for tea and coffee. • Print off event programme – copies should be given to each person as they arrive.
On the day of launch	• Set up room – do not leave this to the last minute –as noted above, it will take at least three hours to set up the room for the launch. • Issue Press Statement in morning (or earlier if required by regional newspapers) • Radio interview? • Confirm that VIPs are still on track – phone PAs at lunchtime to check on their schedule. • Store flowers and gifts somewhere safe and out of sight at venue.
At the launch	• Make sure everyone signs in and is given a sticky label with their name on it – ask for more volunteers for the implementation stage. • Chair of VDS Project welcomes VIPs and the community. • Follow prepared programme – speeches and formal launch of VDS by VIP. • Community presentation of the VDS – exhibition. • Give out thank you gifts to team. • Take lots and lots of photographs of the group and the VIPs. • Expect the unexpected and have fun – well done!!
After the launch	• Upload photographs from launch onto websites as soon as possible – send to press if required. • Celebrate as a team – go out for a team lunch or dinner and chat about the launch and give yourselves a breather for two weeks!

2. Prepare programme

It might be useful for your group to look at the running order/programmes for other community-led VDS launches – for example, the programme for the Ministerial launch of the Julianstown VDS is provided below as a case study.

Case Study – Julianstown Village Design Statement – Ministerial Launch

A National pilot for the Heritage Council's Community-led Village Design Statement (VDS) Initiative
Launch by Minister Ciarán Cuffe TD, Thursday, 7th October 2010, 7.30pm
The Gallops, Julianstown

Running Order:

7.30pm	**Tea/coffee on arrival at the Gallops, Julianstown**
7.40pm	**Welcome and introductions** Emer Dolphin, Chairperson Julianstown VDS Inter-Agency Group/VDS Local Working Group
7.50pm	**Background to the Heritage Council's National Community-led Village Design Statement Initiative** *Michael Starrett, CEO, Heritage Council*
8.00pm	**Julianstown VDS – Links to Review of *East Meath Local Area Plan (LAP)*** *Fiona Lawless, Director of Services, Meath County Council*
8.10pm	**Official Launch of Julianstown VDS by Minister Ciarán Cuffe TD**
8.30pm	**Overview of Julianstown VDS** *James Hennessey, Director, Paul Hogarth Company Ltd.*
8.45pm	**Implementation of Julianstown VDS – Update from Local VDS Project Teams** *Julianstown Community*
9.00pm	**Julianstown VDS Next Steps – thank you and close** *Emer Dolphin*

Wine and Finger Food after – (J'town Play/DVD to be running in the background on arrival)

Contact Details: Alison Harvey, Heritage Council, Mobile 087 419 3458

Helpful Tip:

It is recommended that your group does not set an unrealistic date for the official VDS launch that results in the team members being put under enormous pressure to organise and deliver the event – pressure should be at a healthy and bearable level. For example, the VDS document should be printed and delivered at least one week before the date of the launch. We would strongly recommend that the VDS document should not arrive on the afternoon of the launch!

3. Take some time off after launch – at least two weeks

Congratulations on the launch and for getting your VDS project to this important stage – your group members should now take at least **two weeks** off from the VDS project in order to recharge and re-energise. Once the two week period is up, your group should move towards– Step 7.

Step 6 – checklist:

1. **Organise work plan.**
2. **Prepare programme.**
3. **Take some time off after launch – at least two weeks.**

Step 7 – Meanwhile back at the ranch

Objective: Implement Community-led VDS – Reality Bites!

As soon as your group has recovered from organising and delivering the formal launch of the community-led VDS for your village, the team should get cracking with the implementation of the VDS. The collaborative and participative process that you have followed, as set out in this Toolkit, should have enabled and empowered your group to build a strong partnership with your project partners, which will enable you to move forward into the implementation stage.

Indeed in reality, the implementation of the VDS will probably have actually started around the time of the formal launch with your project partners picking specific projects listed/prioritised in the VDS agreed Action Plan that they can help implement in the short term – the fact that the VDS Action Plan identifies key project partners helps the delivery of VDS projects as it is clear where partners fit into the delivery stage.

The implementation/delivery of the community-led VDS involves the following deliverables and processes:

1. **Continuation of the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group**
2. **Preparation of a summary VDS Implementation Plan**
3. **Preparing funding applications**

1. Continuation of the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group

It is recommended that the VDS Inter-Agency Group continues to meet every two months to guide and monitor the implementation stage - specifically in relation to the Shared Vision, Design Principles and the agreed VDS Action Plan We deal with monitoring and evaluation in Step 8 of the Toolkit. The VDS Local Working Group should continue to meet on a monthly basis to carry out and report on the ground progress on specific VDS projects in the village.

Hopefully, after the short break, everyone will be feeling re-energised and ready to get cracking with the implementation of the VDS. However, at this stage, your group might want to revisit the position of the chair and examine the possibility of swapping the chair and vice-chair around. The chair will having been going solid with both groups for 1.5 to 2 years at this stage. It is unlikely that they will find this an easy decision to make, but people do burn out and it is important that everyone looks after the team as they move forward with the VDS.

2. Preparation of a summary VDS Implementation Plan

It is strongly recommended that your group prepares a brief VDS Implementation Plan in relation to the Agreed VDS Action Plan, which is updated on a regular basis. This plan should consist of a *pro forma* for each project listed in the Action Plan and could be structured as set out in Table 9 overleaf.

Table 9 – Julianstown VDS Implementation Plan Extract

Julianstown VDS - Old Mill Taskforce	
Agreed VDS Action Plan	**Project No. 13 – Prepare a Conservation and Management Plan (C&MP) for the Old Mill and Bridge**
Objective:	To prepare a C&MP for the Old Mill complex (which includes two protected structures) in the heart of the village and to explore and determine the following: • Understanding of the place • Assess value and significance • Identify issues • Develop conservation policies • Develop a prioritised action plan for its conservation and management
Priority	**High**
Timeframe	**Short-term**
Taskforce Members:	**Organisation/Role:**
Jill Chadwick	Conservation Officer, Meath County Co.
Emer Dolphin	Chair of VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group
Alison Harvey	Planning Officer and Community-led VDS Initiative Manager, Heritage Council
Jennifer Murtagh[25]	Senior Planner, Meath County Co.
Patrick McEnaney	Designated Project Manager of The Conservation and Management Plan
Aoife McGrath	Heritage Council Planning Intern

Agreed Actions:	**Timeline**
1. To compile a Conservation and Management Plan and flood-risk assessment report on the Old Mill site involving all the project partners and relevant stakeholders. The CMP is being project managed by Mr Patrick McEnaney and is due to be completed by June 2011.	mid-2011
2. In the longer term, prepare a tourism feasibility study and design brief or 'Vision' for the site will be established. Taking into account all viewpoints of various stakeholders, this vision statement will feature the aspirations of the community for the site over the coming years.	late-2011
Core source of funding	**Amount**
1. Heritage Council	**€5,000[26]**
Other potential funding sources:	
1. Meath Partnership /LEADER	
2. Meath County Co.	
3. Meath County Co. Indaver Contribution Scheme	

It is recommended that your group focuses on specific projects that are prioritised in the agreed **VDS Action Plan** as **High** and **Short-term**. These are the most important projects for your village and ideally should be delivered in the first 12-18 months of the implementation phase, depending on availability of resources (people and funding), in order to deliver a few high-profile **quick wins** for the community-led VDS. It is also recommended that these VDS projects are the focus of funding applications, as discussed in the following section.

[25] Covering Wendy Bagnall, Senior Planner, Meath County Council.

[26] In 2011 prices.

3. Preparing funding applications

The global economic downturn means that community groups need to be more creative about how and where they source funding for their projects. Essentially, securing funding for projects is hugely competitive. As a result, groups need to be experienced at presenting, promoting and selling/marketing projects to possible funders, both in the private and public sectors. The following general rules apply:

Objective - try to reduce the risk to the funder:

- Read the funding docs carefully and thoroughly.
- State **concisely** why the VDS Project is needed – provide an overview of the key elements of the project along with the planned outputs and outcomes (i.e. what is the overall rationale for project and what will happen in the Do Nothing scenario).
- List the project as it appears in the VDS Agreed Action Plan (e.g. this proposed project is for Street Lighting Improvements in Villageville, which is Project No. 1 of our Agreed VDS Action Plan[27] recently launched by the County Manager).
- Emphasise the commitment and role in getting to this point in the project formulation/scope, the role of the community in the delivery of the proposed project and also their role in funding (has the community also raised funding elsewhere or within the village in support of the proposed project?).
- Give details of the proposed project management structures including monitoring and evaluation – involve qualified and experienced people from your community (as identified in Step 1) – try to use a qualified project manager or one with expertise in managing projects.
- Use your contacts with universities and colleges built up during the VDS process – show that best practice standards will be applied and overseen by a qualified person.
- State clearly the partners involved in the collaboration and partnership – try and be as inclusive as possible.
- Show where there is a clear match between the funders' objectives and the project objectives.
- Set out the key project deliverables and benefits of the project (socio-economic, cultural, environmental and social) is there a likely multiplier effect.
- Demonstrate how the proposed project would be useful to other communities – demonstrated added value at a strategic level.
- Check the application for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors – get a 'cold eye' to proof read the forms before submitting to the funder i.e. attention to detail.

Step 7 - checklist:

1. **Continuation of the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group**
2. **Preparation of a summary VDS Implementation Plan.**
3. **Preparing funding applications.**

[27] The Agreed VDS Action Plan lists projects in terms of priority and timescale.

Step 8 – The winners' enclosure

Objective: Undertake VDS monitoring and evaluation – 'A Continuous Circle of Learning'

In order to assess whether your community-led VDS project delivers overall Value for Money (VFM) in the short, medium and long term, it is strongly recommended that your group establishes effective monitoring and evaluation structures at the outset. This culture of monitoring and evaluation creates a 'continuous circle of learning' for your group and ensures that other groups considering undertaking a community-led Village Design Statement learn valuable lessons from your experience. This culture ultimately ensures that efficiencies are accrued for the public purse.

As such, it is recommended that your group and other village groups in the locality build links and partnerships with colleges, universities and organisations with the capabilities and expertise of undertaking project monitoring and evaluation. We examine project monitoring and project evaluation in the sections below.

1. Project monitoring

It is recommended that the VDS Project should be monitored throughout its formulation/process and implementation stages. Critical stages in the monitoring of the process are as follows:

1. **Before appointment of the consultants** – the VDS project management structures should be reviewed. Has the two level project management structure been set up consisting of the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group? Is the partnership functioning effectively and efficiently? Has the Project Charter been agreed and signed?
2. **6 month review** – the project should be reviewed in terms of progress, budget and timescale. Is the project on budget, on schedule and fulfilling the scope of the project brief?
3. **1 year review** – in terms of progress on the VDS – are the structures and process working effectively[28]?

Suitable sustainable indicators

Community-led village design statements aim to ensure the long-term sustainability of Ireland's villages and to encourage sustainable development within the village and the surrounding area. Potential indicators for sustainability are set out in Table 10 overleaf.

[28] As noted in Part 1, it takes around 1.5 to 2 years to undertake and complete the VDS Report, which consists of a Shared Vision, Agreed Design Principles and an Agreed VDS Action Plan (plus illustrated poster for schools).

Table 10: Suitable sustainability indicators

(An upward pointing arrow indicates that the measurement should rise if the village is moving in the right direction; a downward pointing arrow indicates that the measurement should fall.)

Indicator	Measurement
Raised level of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the village landscape and key heritage features	↑
Quality of the villagescape and public realm/public spaces	↑
Number of heritage assets and features that are celebrated, conserved and enhanced in the village	↑
Number of community groups and local networks in the village – activity in annual Heritage Week and Tidy Towns Competition	↑
Enhanced quality of life, health and well-being of residents and visitors alike	↑
Numbers cycling and walking in the village and surrounding area	↑
Number of vacant properties, particularly protected structures in village core	↓
Percentage of people who live in the village who are employed there	↑
Creation of social enterprises including walking tours, heritage trails, etc.	↑

It is further recommended that monthly progress reports are prepared throughout the process using the following template:

Community-led Village Design Statements – monthly progress reports – template (2 pages maximum)

A. Work undertaken in last four weeks:

1. **Actions undertaken – deliverables**
2. **Blockages encountered – delays – required action to remove?**

B. Work to be undertaken in next four weeks:

1. **Proposed actions – proposed deliverables**
2. **Potential risks – risk mitigation**

Overall project monitoring – review of project scope, budget and time – 'lessons learned'

2. Project evaluation – process and output

Process evaluation

In order to inform this Toolkit' the new collaborative and participative process for community-led Village Design Statements that was designed and applied to the Julianstown VDS pilot, was externally monitored throughout 2009-2010 by the former Tipperary Institute, now known as Limerick Institute Technology Tipperary (LIT Tipperary).

A *Julianstown VDS 'Process' Evaluation Report* was then prepared and published by the Heritage Council and Tipperary Institute in June 2010[29]. This independent evaluation of the community-led VDS process ensured that the new methodology was tested and externally evaluated – the identification of the evaluation findings, including Critical Success Factors (CSFs), forms the basis of this Toolkit.

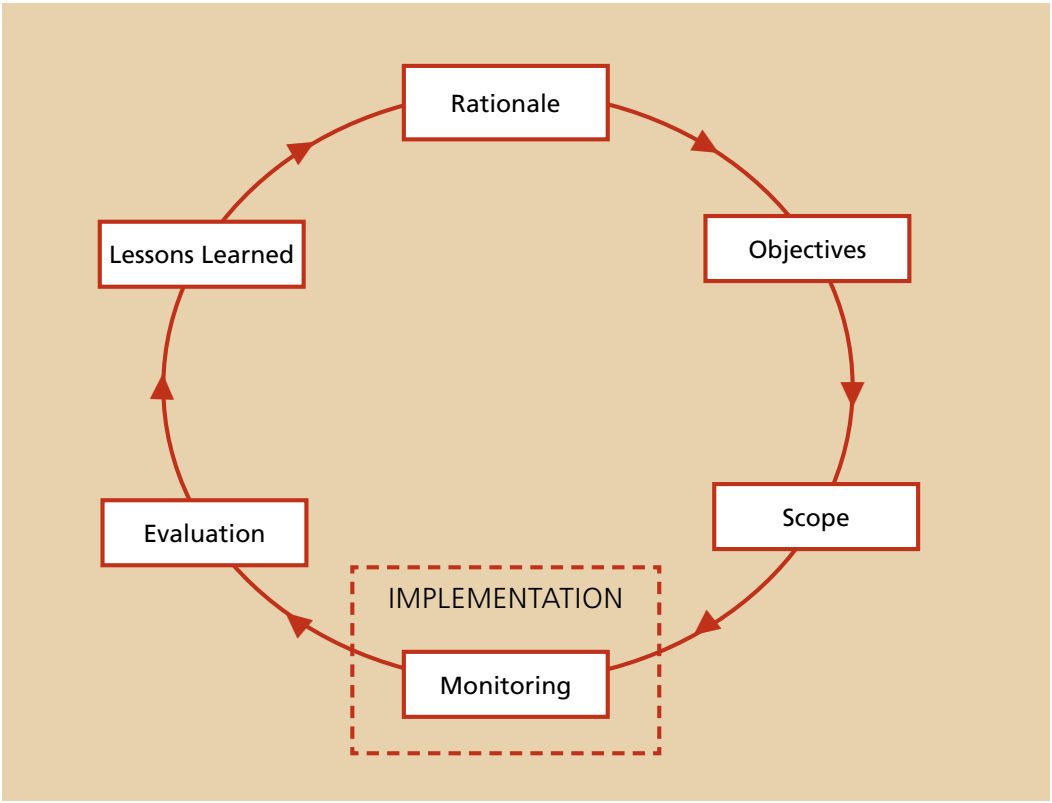
[29] Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS) – 'Process' Evaluation Report, Heritage Council and Tipperary Institute, June 2011.

Given that the community-led VDS process evaluation has already been undertaken for the national pilot VDS, it is anticipated that a process evaluation will not be required for individual community-led VDS projects that follow the step by step guidance set out in the this Toolkit. However, we would recommend that an output evaluation is undertaken.

Output evaluation

Output evaluation uses historic (actual or estimated) information and data, and takes place after the event. Its main purpose is to ensure that lessons are widely learned, communicated and applied when assessing new proposals for other similar projects. If possible and depending on the funding available, it is recommended that your community-led Village Design Statement is independently evaluated during its implementation stage after eighteen months and again after three years to ensure that it the project is on track and that the VDS is delivering on its overall project objectives (SMART Objectives). The continuous circle of learning for the community-led VDS is illustrated in Diagram 2 below.

Diagram 2: Continuous Circle of Learning



(Source: *UK H.M. Treasury Green Book* as amended by A. Harvey, 2012.)

We recommend that the VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group discuss and agree a suitable monitoring and output evaluation framework, resources permitting, for the community-led Village Design Statement (VDS) project during Step 2.

As noted above, it is important that there is on-going monitoring and evaluation of Village Design Statements to ensure overall Value for Money (VFM) for the public purse in the short, medium and long-term. Undertaking Step 8 ensures that VDS structures, systems and processes as set out in this Toolkit continue to improve year on year, and ultimately, that community groups and statutory agencies throughout Ireland can benefit and learn from the experience of other village groups undertaking and implementing community-led Village Design Statements using the collaborative and participative process.

Step 8 – checklist

1. **Project monitoring.**
2. **Project evaluation – process and output.**

Part 3 - Further Information and Contact Details

Finally – our thanks and appreciation!

The Heritage Council and its project partners would like to acknowledge the enormous time, energy and enthusiasm that went into the formulation of the *National Toolkit for Community-led Village Design Statements.*

The Heritage Council extends its warmest thanks and appreciation to all the people involved in the development of the collaborative and participative process designed for its two pilots, and the Toolkit for community-led Village Design Statements – the various Ministers, Government Departments, local authorities (Meath County Council and Dublin City Council), professional institutes (north and south) consultants, and Heritage Council Board Members and colleagues.

A special thank you goes to the local communities in Julianstown and Sandymount who gave their time, energy and input so willingly and productively – a full list of all the people involved at the various national, county/city and local level is provided at ***Appendix 1*.**

Finally, a Bibliography and further reading list is provided at ***Appendix 2*.**

Key contacts

If you require further information on this Toolkit and/or on community-led village design statements, or if you have any general questions in relation to collaborative planning, please contact Alison Harvey, aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie or on the Mobile 087 419 3458.

VDS Toolkit written by Alison Harvey MIPI AILI

Appendix 1: People Involved in the production of the Community-led VDS 'Toolkit'

Name:	*Organisation:*
Wendy Bagnall	Senior Executive Planner, Meath County Council
Emer Dolphin	Chair of Julianstown VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group
Sheila Dunne	Dublin City Council and Sandymount VDS Inter-Agency Group Member
Alison Harvey	Heritage Council – VDS 'Toolkit' Project Manager, Chair of National VDS Steering Group and Member of Julianstown and Sandymount VDS Inter-Agency Groups.
James Hennessey	Associate Director, The Paul Hogarth Company, Consultant for Julianstown VDS
Valerie Jennings	Sandymount VDS Inter-Agency Group Member, VDS Project Manager
Claire Liston	Dublin City Council and Sandymount VDS Inter-Agency Group Member
John McAlinden	Chair of Sandymount VDS Inter-Agency Group
Joe McCarthy	Vice-Chair of Sandymount VDS Inter-Agency Group
Kate Moloney	Planning Assistant, Heritage Council
Paddy Prendergast	Vice-Chair of Julianstown VDS Inter-Agency Group
Gary Soltys	Managing Director, Soltys Brewster Consultants – Consultant for Sandymount VDS

Membership of the National Village Design Statement Steering Group (2007-to date)

Name	*Organisation*
Wendy Bagnall*	Meath County Council
Jeff Bishop	BDOR Consulting, UK (until early 2010)
Deirdre Burns	Heritage Officer, Wicklow County Council (until early 2009)
Dr Caroline Creamer	NIRSA, NUI Maynooth
Niall Cussen	Senior Adviser, Spatial Planning Unit, Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government[7]
Emer Dolphin*	Julianstown and District Community Association
Kevin Giles*	Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Alison Harvey	Heritage Council (Chair)
David Jordan	Planning Intern, Heritage Council (until June 2009)
Dara Larkin	Senior Executive Planner, South Dublin County Council (until early 2009)
Kieran Leddy*	Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)
Ciaran Lynch	Tipperary Institute
Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe	Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick
Emer Sexton*	Planning Intern, Heritage Council
Grainne Shaffrey*	Shaffrey & Associates, Dublin, and Heritage Council Board Member
Simon Wall*	Town Architect, Westport Town Council

Note: * joined in 2010.

People involved in Julianstown VDS

VDS Inter-Agency Group

Name:	***Organisation:***
Wendy Bagnall	Senior Executive Planner, Meath County Council
Jeff Bishop	Director, BDOR Consulting
Emer Dolphin	Chair of Julianstown VDS Inter-Agency Group and VDS Local Working Group
Jonathan Gannon	Intern, The Heritage Council (June 2010 – November 2012)
Alison Harvey	Heritage Council – VDS 'Toolkit' Project Manager, Chair of National VDS Steering Group and Member of Julianstown and Sandymount VDS Inter-Agency Groups.
Pamela Harty	Intern, The Heritage Council (June 2009 - December 2009)
James Hennessey	Associate Director, The Paul Hogarth Company, Consultant for Julianstown VDS
Paddy Prendergast	Vice-Chair of Julianstown VDS Inter-Agency Group
Martin McCormack	Evaluator, Tipperary Institute
Aoife McGrath	Intern, The Heritage Council, November 2010 - May 2011

Julianstown VDS Local Working Group

Cllr Serena Campbell - Meath County Council
Cllr Eoin Holmes - Meath County Council
Emer Dolphin - (Chairperson),
Julianstown & District Community Association
Paul Berrill
Clare Burke
James Carey
Sean Crosson
Miriam Doyle
Nicola Hanratty
Barry James
Alma Jordan
Fred Logue
Mary Logue
Peter Madden
Jenny Markey
Gavan McCullough
Darragh McCullough
Mary Pat Molloy
Leo Monahan
Niamh NiLoinsigh
Paddy Prendergast
Andrew Pufield
Martina Relehan

People involved in Sandymount VDS

Michael Byrne
Valerie Jennings
Lorna Kelly
John McAlinden (Chairman)
Joe McCann
Cllr Paddy McCartan
Joe McCarthy
Eoghan Murphy TD

Cont'd
Áine Ní Chaoimh
Cllr Maria Parodi, Deputy Lord Mayor
Tony Reid

Dublin City Council
South East Area Office
Michael O'Neill, Area Manager
Eileen Brady, Area Manager (retired)
Peter Morley, Senior Executive Officer (retired)
Sheila Dunne, Administrative Officer
Claire Liston, Assistant Staff Officer

Planning & Development Department
Patricia Hyde, Senior Planner
Nicci Nolan, Executive Planner
Charles Duggan, City Heritage Officer

Heritage Council
Alison Harvey, Community-led VDS Programme Manager
Elaine Ring, Intern

Consultant
Soltys Brewster Consulting Ltd.

Supporting Government Departments
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Department of Environment, Community and Local Government

Supporting Professional Institutes
Irish Landscape Institute (ILI)
Irish Planning Institute (IPI)
Landscape Institute (Northern Ireland)
Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI)
Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

Appendix 2: Bibliography and further reading

Aalen F.H.A, Whelan, K and Stout, M (2011 and 1997)	Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape, Revised and Expanded Second Edition, Cork University Press, University College Cork (Published in North America in 2011 by University of Toronto Press).
Council of Europe (2005)	Faro Convention, Faro, Portugal (CETS No. 199)*.
Council of Europe (2000)	European Landscape Convention, Florence, Italy (CETS No. 176).
DoECLG – Tidy Towns Unit	Tidy Towns Handbook, January 2010.
Harvey, A (2012)	Public Participation – The Heritage Council Experience, Conference Paper, ICOMOS & Heritage Council Conference – 'Your Place or Mine?', Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, April 2012.
Harvey, A (2008)	Village Design Statements in Ireland: An Opportunity for Collaborative and Participative Planning, Conference Paper, Heritage Council National VDS Conference, Slane Castle, Co. Meath, October 2008.
Harvey, A (1995)	Community Empowerment in Urban Regeneration in Detroit including President Bill Clinton's 'Empowerment Zones' and the Greater Shankill Area, Belfast, MSc Dissertation, Queen's University Belfast.
Heritage Council (2011)	Community-led Village Design Statements in Ireland, A Review of County Development Plan VDS Policy, report prepared on behalf of the Heritage Council by Ruth Minogue Associates, November 2011.
Heritage Council and Tipperary Institute[9] (2011)	Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS) – A National pilot for the Heritage Council's new National Village Design Programme II – 'Process' Evaluation Report, June 2011.
Heritage Council (2009)	Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages, Village Design Statements – The Way Forward?, January 2009.
Meath County Council	Draft Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.
South Dublin County Council	South Dublin County Development Plan 2010-2016.
UK H.M. Treasury (2003)	The Green Book – Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government.
Wates, Nick (2008)	The Community Planning Event Manual – How to use `Collaborative Planning and Urban Design Events to Improve your Environment.
Wates, Nick (2000)	The Community Planning Handbook – How people can shape their cities, towns and villages in any part of the world.

*As of October 2012