

SKIBBEREEN

Town Centre First Plan

Document No - 23398-1-RPT-01-0002

Skibbereen Urban Regeneration Reference Document

APRIL 2024

CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS
LAND PLANNING & DESIGN



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council





Skibbereen Town Centre First Plan

Prepared by:

*Skibbereen Town Team
Cunnane Stratton Reynolds
A Playful City*

For:

Cork County Council

April 2024

PREFACE

The formulation of the Town Centre First Plan for Skibbereen has been a collaborative endeavour involving the vibrant community of Skibbereen, the Skibbereen Town Centre First Team, elected representatives, dedicated officers, and knowledgeable advisers, all united in their commitment to enhance Skibbereen and its town centre, creating a more enriching place to live, work, visit, and relish. Building upon the successes of previous initiatives, this Plan is a response to the National Town Centre First Policy, set in motion through a meticulous tender procurement process by Cork County Council to assemble a proficient team for this multi-faceted undertaking.

The selected team, comprised of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Land Planning and Design and A Playful City Community & Stakeholder Engagement, developed this Town Centre First Plan with the holistic well-being of the entire Skibbereen Community in mind. The efforts of these groups have been complemented by the unwavering support of an active, creative, committed, and ambitious community, the Town Team, and Cork County Council.

Gratitude is extended to all members of the Skibbereen Town Centre First Team, including Noelle Desmond (Cork CoCo), James Hamilton, Brendan McCarthy, Mark Robins, Aisling O'Neil, Hilda Hegarty, Noel Lawn, Katie Mann, Kevin Cadogan and all stakeholders, interest groups, and, most importantly, the local community and members of the public who have shown tremendous interest and engagement throughout the project.

We extend our appreciation to the elected members of the West Cork Municipal District for their support of the plan development process, including Cllr. Joe Carroll, Chair of the West Cork MD, alongside Cllr. Karen Coakley, Cllr. Deirdre Kelly, Cllr. Caroline Cronin., Cllr. Danny Collins, Cllr. Paul Hayes, Cllr. Ross O'Connell, Cllr. Patrick Gerard Murphy and Cllr. Declan Hurley.

The support from the Chief Executive of Cork County Council, along with the Divisional Managers, Directors of Service and key staff across different directorates has also been invaluable in defining and documenting the shared vision of the Skibbereen community and ensuring that it aligns with existing statutory plans, regulations and policies.

This Town Centre First Plan stands as a comprehensive reference document, offering guidance for future sustainable development in Skibbereen. It is a testament to the collective efforts of the community and its stakeholders; a blueprint for a better Skibbereen that would not have been possible without your invaluable contributions. This plan is for you, by you, and aims to shape a more vibrant and sustainable future for Skibbereen.

CONTENTS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY- *Overview of Plan*

2.0 INTRODUCTION - *Who, What, Where, How, And Why*

3.0 BASELINE - *Where We Start From*

4.0 VISION - *Where We Want To Go*

5.0 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES - *How We Get There*

6.0 PROJECTS & ACTION PLAN - *What We Plan To Do, And When*



1.0

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of Plan

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Who, What, Where, How & Why

This Town Centre First Plan marks a groundbreaking initiative for Skibbereen. It is propelled by the Town Centre First concept, advocating for an effective and feasible urban regeneration plan that takes a comprehensive approach, addressing all facets of the local community, economy, and environment to genuinely promote Sustainable Development. The collaborative efforts of a multidisciplinary team, including Cunnane Stratton Reynolds and A Playful City, have supported the Skibbereen Town Team and Cork County Council in developing this plan as a Reference Document. This document is intended for use as planning and design guidance for future development in the town.

At the core of this document's success lies Community and Stakeholder Engagement, which is essential for the execution of proposals and actions, and the sustainable and thriving regeneration of the town centre. A pivotal objective that the team aims to achieve is fostering more continuous collaboration between the community and stakeholders. The realisation of this plan would have been unattainable without the active involvement of the community and key stakeholders, and its successful implementation hinges on the ongoing, iterative, and open-ended process that this consultation has set in motion. The conclusion is straightforward: **the community holds the expertise when it comes to the urban regeneration of streets, places, spaces, parks, and buildings.**

BASELINE

Where we start from

The team made several visits to the town, conducting surveys and engaging with the local community and key stakeholders. This process has been crucial to developing a baseline understanding of the existing situation, identifying areas that require change, understanding the reasons for these changes, and determining how to implement them. The historical hollowing-out effect on the town centre residential community, a phenomenon observed in many towns throughout the State, has contributed to a vicious cycle of low footfall, suppressed socio-economic activity, and increased vacancy and dereliction.

While no town is flawless, and each one is unique, Skibbereen, like any other town, possesses untapped potential. What has become evident throughout this process is the town's truly unique and valuable heritage, its untapped economic and cultural potential, and the presence of an enthusiastic, committed, and creative community, including elected representatives and officers.

VISION

Where we want to go

The development of this plan has facilitated the formation and fortification of a 'Vision for a Better Skibbereen.' We find the term 'Turning the Corner' apt for expressing the shift from Skibbereen's current state into a lively, appealing, secure, and accessible town for both residents and visitors. This positive transformation towards a Virtuous Cycle, as opposed to a Vicious Cycle, will be substantiated by the physical enhancement of key town centre areas such as Main Street, North Street, and Bridge Street, transforming them into vibrant locations. Additionally, numerous community and public projects will contribute to this positive transition.

Moreover, reintegrating the River Ilen as an active and inviting element of the town, alongside restructuring the streetscape to facilitate active travel (walking and cycling), safe usage, and socialization, constitute integral components of a clear and realistic vision for the town's community. The following unique assets of Skibbereen form the foundations on which the Vision & Strategies are built upon;

- Architectural Heritage
- The River Ilen
- Cultural Heritage
- Community
- Rowing
- Topography & Landscape
- Compact Town Centre
- Culinary Destination

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

How we get there

We present a collaborative strategy to actualise the vision articulated by the community and key stakeholders for their town. This strategy embodies a pragmatic and optimistic plan, advocating for and embracing change through a holistic approach. It outlines an ongoing process rather than imposing a finite and complete masterplan. The strategies for Skibbereen as well as the Projects are developed under the following pillars:

- Movement & Connections
- Nature, Landscape & Environment
- Land Use, Economy and Tourism
- Social Community and Culture
- Built Form & Heritage
- Addressing the River

PROJECTS & ACTION PLAN

What we plan to do, and When

The community and key stakeholders in Skibbereen have generated a considerable number of compelling and feasible projects aimed at enhancing the town. The team has meticulously organised and structured these projects into a deliverable, prioritised, and fully policy-supported action plan. While each individual project contributes positively to the sustainable development of Skibbereen, it also aligns with the holistic planning approach, ensuring a balanced and equitable distribution of resources and funding.

There are a total of 36 projects outlined in the action plan arranged as follows under the six pillars

it is important that the Regeneration Team document the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process they undertake, ensuring full compliance with relevant regulations. This comprehensive documentation serves as a testament to the thoroughness and transparency of the

decision-making process, reinforcing accountability and inclusivity. However, it is essential to recognise that this plan is not a static endpoint but rather a dynamic vision statement and roadmap for the future development of Skibbereen. As such, each subsequent project or objective identified within this plan will necessitate its own individual SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) process at the project development stage. This iterative approach ensures that each stage of Skibbereen's regeneration is assessed for its environmental and societal impacts, promoting sustainable growth and comprehensive community development.



1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



MOVEMENT & CONNECTIONS

- Enhance the public realm for central streets
- Progress the development of Levis Quay public realm
- Advance the development of Riverside Walk
- Advance the Development of Marsh Car Park
- Progress the resolution of the pedestrian bridge connecting the Marsh Car Park to Levis Quay
- Examine the potential for a second pedestrian bridge from Marsh Car Park to the Library
- Ensure Universal Accessibility & Age Friendly Strategy
- Progress the development of safe routes to schools (relief road)
- Examine the potential for the enhancement of flood defences through planting/greening
- Develop wayfinding and signage around the town
- Develop the Rock amenity area
- Promote Active Travel / soft mobility modes



NATURE, LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENT

- Advance the Development of Marsh Ecology park – walks, biodiversity promotion, trails, bird hides, etc.
- Examine the potential for the installation of EV charging spaces
- Promote the principle of nature-based solutions and sustainable urban drainage systems
- Promote Biodiversity & Urban Greening
- Promote Skibbereen as a national Eco-Tourism destination



LAND USE, ECONOMY & TOURISM

- Support Riverfront Commercial Development to capitalise on dual aspect
- Address Vacancy & Dereliction
- Examine the potential to develop Greenways
- Improve Skibbereen’s Digital Blueprint
- Examine the potential for public art / sculpture
- Examine the potential for a digital tourism kiosk
- Promote the River Ilen Blueway
- Promote Skibbereen Heritage Trail and App
- Develop & promote the Skibbereen brand with a unique town identity



SOCIAL COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

- Develop the Town Hall as a venue
- Promote age-friendly / youth initiatives
- Promote Social Inclusion through Active Lifestyles
- Develop and support events and festivals



BUILT FORM & HERITAGE

- Examine the potential for a Shopfront Improvement scheme for the Town
- Promote Conservation, Repair and Refurbishment of Heritage Assets
- Advance the regeneration of the Steam Mill, Ilen Street
- Examine potential of living above shops
- Promote Heritage Events & Activities
- Promote understanding of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designations within the town

ELEMENTS OF THE TCF PLAN

1. Collaboration and Communication

The process of developing a plan for a ‘place’ is a collaborative exercise involving the local residents, local community groups and voluntary organisations, business community, Local Authority and other key stakeholders. These participants form the core of the Town Team. The Town Team ensures continued engagement of a consultative decision-making process with access to a multidisciplinary team of professionals. Community consultation takes place over several stages.

2. Understanding the Place (Analysis and Appraisal)

The process of understanding a place involves consulting with a wide range of people and collecting and collating data/information on the characteristics of the town centre and its surrounding context. Context is therefore key when dealing with specific towns as each town requires a different set of interventions based on size, scale and regional location. Understanding the towns context within the broader region and gaining a detailed insight of its characteristics is key and represents on the first major steps in establishing a vision.

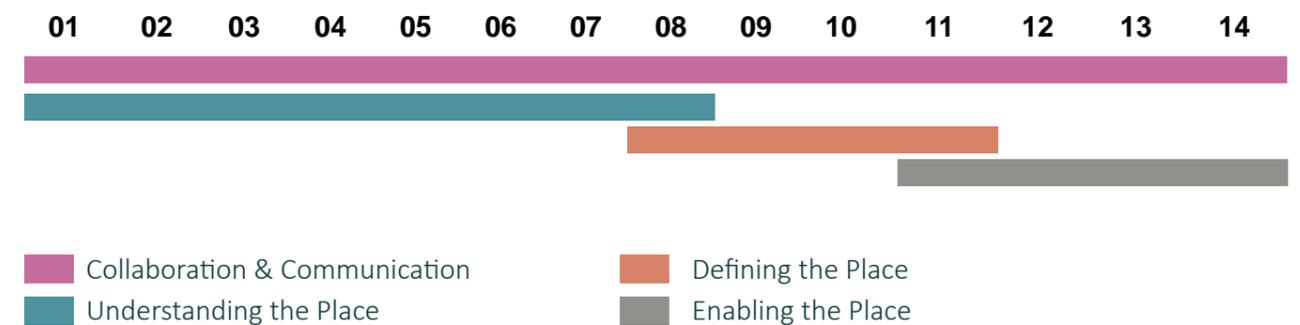
3. Defining the Place (Objectives & Actions)

The process of analysis and appraisal sets the basic ‘building blocks’ for a responsive TCF Plan that provides a holistic response that builds upon existing assets, directly addresses pressing issues and identifies future challenges. The plan is shaped around high level themes, or objectives, that emerge such as role and image. As the objectives are largely aspirational in nature, details consideration must be given to how they can be fulfilled. This may be expressed as a series of ‘Actions’ or ‘Strategies’ that address the steps that are necessary to fulfil the objectives. This may include how the objective is measured, how it will be further developed and how it will be implemented.

4. Enabling the Place

The Vision provides ‘joined-up thinking’ of how individual strategies and projects will work together to make the place. A clear path to delivery should be identified in the TCF Plan. Identified actions or projects should, where practicable, be assigned a timeframe for delivery and identify how it will be achieved.

THE 14 MONTH TCFP MANUAL



- Based on the 4 elements of the TCF Plan as outlined in Appendix 8 of the TCF Policy
- Collaboration & Communication runs throughout the TCF Plan process



View of Skibbereen From The Rock

2.0

INTRODUCTION

Who, What, Where, How, and Why

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Who - The Team

In August 2023, Cork County Council appointed the Multidisciplinary Team of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds (town planning, urban design, landscape and townscape), and A Playful City (consultation and community engagement) to prepare a Town Centre First Plan for Skibbereen. This town centre regeneration plan for the town will be the first of its kind for Skibbereen, bundling together various strands of future development in a collaborative and holistic approach.

A Town Team and a Town Regeneration Officer, alongside elected members, have been nominated to steer the Town Centre First process and to coordinate the preparation of the Plan in collaboration with the multidisciplinary Project Team (Cunnane Stratton Reynolds and A Playful City). The Town Team represents the various key stakeholders for Skibbereen so that all social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of future development in the town can be addressed.



What - The Brief

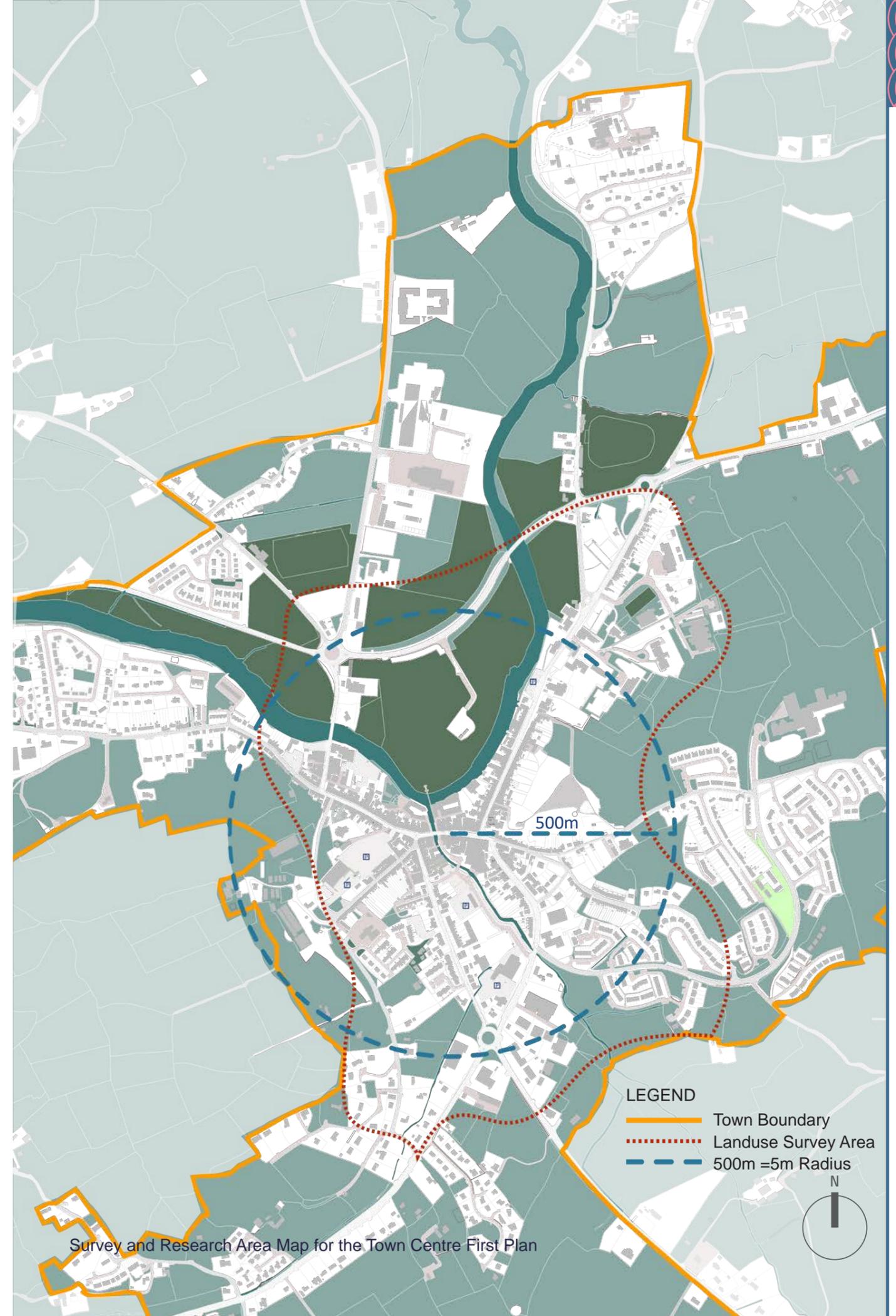
This is a regeneration project that focuses on the town centre of Skibbereen. The Vision, Strategy and Action Plan of the Plan must achieve what is set out in the brief as follows:

- Create a vision for Skibbereen town with a specific focus on regeneration of the Town Core
- Develop buy-in from local businesses, property owners and community stakeholders
- Undertake a detailed study of the Town & its context
- Have particular regard to the outputs of stakeholder engagement when developing strategic objectives as well as projects and initiatives
- Identify potential solutions to challenges or threats highlighted in the plan-making process
- Identify potential projects, initiatives, and interventions that can capitalise on opportunities and strengths identified

Where - The Town Context

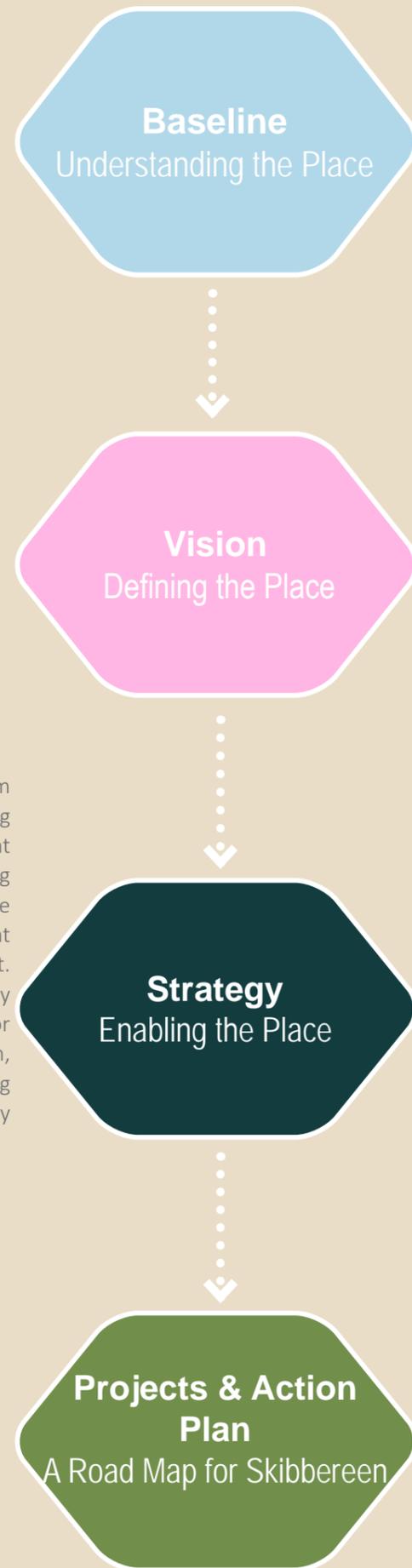
In line with the Town Centre First policy, this Plan contains proposals and actions directed to the town centre. This focus on the town centre in terms of proposals and assessments does not mean, however, that the outer areas and the catchment outside the town have been disregarded. A broader assessment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

The definition of a general boundary for projects is helpful for keeping the Action Plan focused. However, it was agreed from the outset that the regeneration of the town centre cannot be treated in isolation. While physical surveys were contained within a feasible boundary, community engagement and sustainable proposals reach beyond any physical town centre boundary; as neither the holistic approach applied to issues of town centre regeneration nor the community involved starts or ends at boundaries.



Survey and Research Area Map for the Town Centre First Plan

2.0 INTRODUCTION



How - With The Community

Key to this document is the process, from working with the community and conducting town surveys to establishing a Baseline of what exists and what needs to improve, to agreeing a Vision, to developing a Strategy to achieve this Vision, to devising an Action Plan that structures and manages future development. The process outlined here is informed by best practice guidance for Placemaking, for the preparation of a Town Centre First Plan, and for Understanding, Defining and Enabling a Place, complemented and supported by Public Consultation.

COMMUNITY

Why - Town Centre First Policy

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

The Town Centre First Policy seeks to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland through a renewed focus on social and economic recovery / regeneration in town centres. Projects will focus on enhancing streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use, making them available as multi-purpose community spaces.

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

It is envisaged that this Town Centre First Plan will become a reference document for future development in Skibbereen, as well as for comparable development elsewhere. The plan provides planning and design guidance, advice and direction over a planned timeframe and process.

In the ambit of this policy, proposed projects will be presented under the Themes outlined on page 79 of the guidance document - Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns.

THEMES

- Movement & Connections
- Connecting & Reviving Built And Cultural Heritage
- Nature, Landscape & Environment
- Land Uses, Economy & Tourism
- Social Community & Culture
- Built Form & Heritage
- Addressing The River

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development

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

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

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

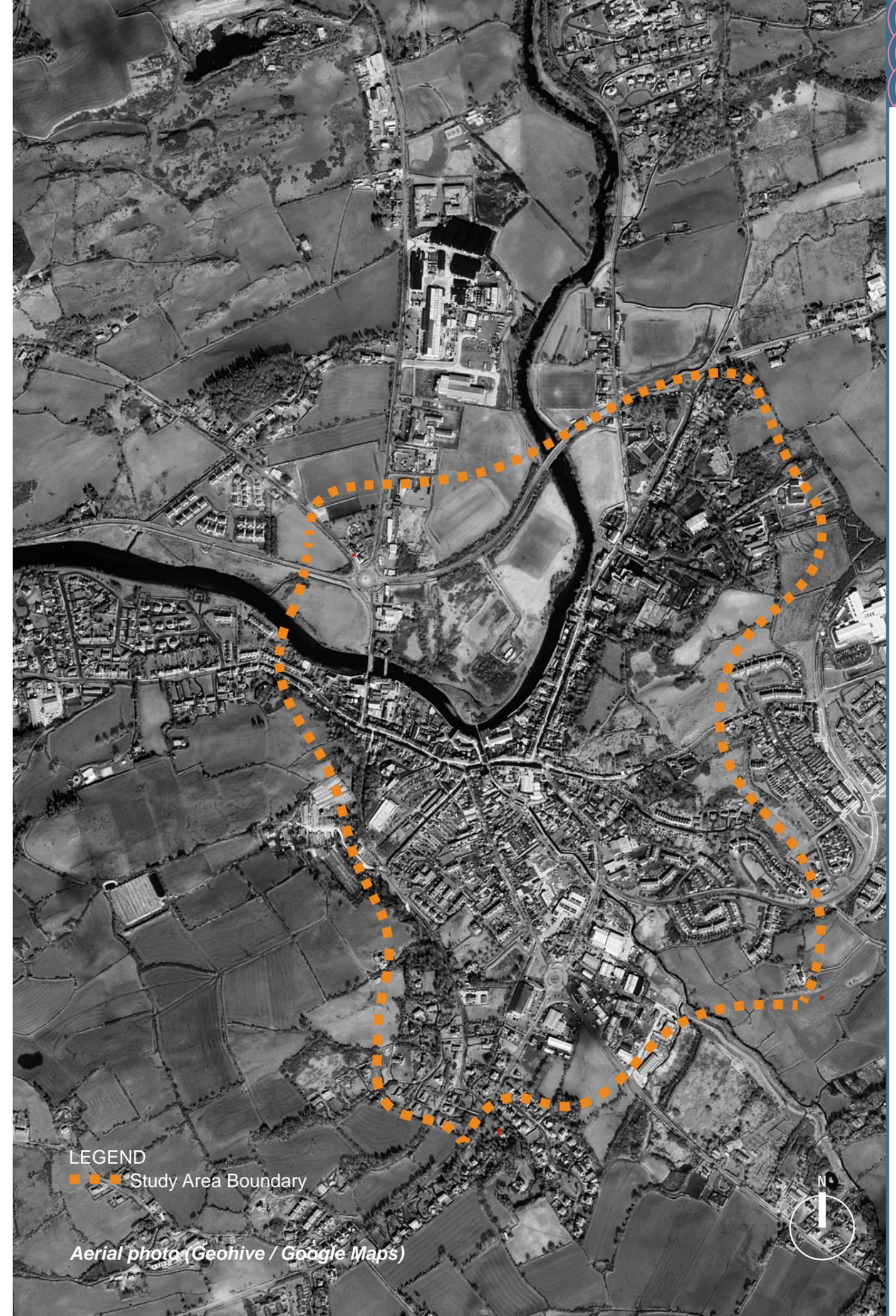
For Town Centre First Skibbereen, achieving *cultural sustainability* entails implementing projects that capture the essence of the community's ideas, traditions, and evolving lifestyles. These projects should resonate with the town's historical roots, built heritage, and character, both in the present and the past.

Similarly, ensuring *environmental sustainability* in Town Centre First Skibbereen involves undertaking projects that align with current environmental guidance and best practices. These initiatives aim to safeguard and improve vulnerable habitats and sites, protect flora and fauna, mitigate human-induced climate change, refrain from depleting finite resources, and actively contribute to the principles of a Circular Economy.

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

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

UNESCO 17 Sustainable Development Goals





View Toward Townshend Street from Mardyke Street

3.0

BASELINE
Where We Start From

3.0 BASELINE

Planning Policy, Data and Background Information

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

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

National Policy Guidance:

- National Planning Framework Ireland 2040
- National Development Plan 2021-2030
- Our Rural Future- Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
- Town Centre First Policy 2022
- Town Centre Living Pilot Initiative 2018
- Urban Design Manual 2009
- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities 2007
- Design Manual for Quality Housing 2022
- Places for People- National Policy on Architecture RIAI 2022
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities- Retail Planning 2012
- Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme CTCHC- The Heritage Council 2020
- National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets DMURS 2019
- National Cycle Network 2022
- Cycle Design Manual NTA 2023

For Funding:

- Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund RRDF

Local Policy Guidance:

- Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Cork County Council Healthy Ireland Strategy 2012-2024
- West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017
- Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009-2015
- Skibbereen Traffic and Transportation Study 2019, by MHL on behalf of Cork County Council

A substantial amount of useful and helpful planning policy in the context of urban sustainable development, particularly for town centre regeneration has been produced in recent years. Much of this policy is

identified generally as best planning practice. Specific planning policy is promoting town centres as the preferred location for residential use, complemented by suitable employment, commercial activity and retail development.

For example, the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 advocate town centres as the preferred location for the development of retail, commerce and community based services. In general, a sequential approach is adopted in national planning guidance and policy which advocates town centres as the preferred location for the above uses, with out of town locations only acceptable where all other opportunities for such development have been exhausted after careful analysis.

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

The following tables provide an overview of policy guidance documents and their relevance in the preparation of the Skibbereen Town Centre First Plan.

3.0 BASELINE

Planning Policy	
National Policy	Relevance
National Planning Framework	Improve living standards, quality of life, prosperity, competitiveness, and environmental sustainability and promotes compact growth with people living closer to their work, maximise the return on public investment and shift from unsustainable growth patterns.
National Development Plan	Investment in cultural and civic services and recognises investment in high quality infrastructure as being critical for a vibrant heritage and culture sector. Investment in cultural heritage underpins social cohesion and supports strong, sustainable economic growth.
Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns	Cross-cutting and collaborative framework to build sustainable vibrant town centres.
Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide	Core principles of best practice urban design and sustainable urban development
Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities	Principles and criteria for sustainable and high quality residential environments.
Design Manual for Quality Housing	Guidance on designing residential site layouts, and internal layouts of new apartments/houses.
Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme	Identifies challenges faced by towns and build upon each town's heritage and unique character.
Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities	This relatively outdated document from 2012 sets out criteria to assess the vitality and viability of town centre via a health check. It advocates town centres as the preferred location for large scale retail providing such development can be satisfactorily accommodated in such centres and alternative locations are considered consistent with the sequential approach thereafter.
Regional Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Overall strategy and management standards for the sustainable planning and development of the region.
Local Policy	Relevance
Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Chapter 9 seeks to sustain and improve the retail profile and competitiveness of County Cork primarily through strengthening and reinventing the role of town centres and other retail locations and by improving the quality of the environment and choice of retail developments on offer. To nurture towns as people centred and liveable places through a Town Centre First approach.
Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009-2015	Develop and improve in a sustainable manner the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets of the town and environs. The predominant land use in the town centre is the Town Centre Zoning with the objective; "To provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centre through consolidating development, maximising the use of lands and encouraging a mix of uses".
West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017 Main Policy Document	Skibbereen is one of the key county towns in the West Cork Municipal District. As a growth/development centre, it performs an important employment, service and social function for an extensive rural hinterland. The Plan recognises the need to provide a better balance of development in Skibbereen and its hinterland so that the town can maximise its potential to attract new investment in employment, services and public transport.

3.0 BASELINE

Climate & Health Policy

National Policy	Relevance
The Climate Action Plan 2023	Halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. Actions for responding to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development. Promote compact development and brownfield redevelopment. Supports the regeneration and revitalisation of Ireland's towns, including through reducing demand for travel by car, sustaining economic and social activity at street level and increasing access to shops, employment and amenities by sustainable transport modes.
Department of Health Statement of Strategy 2016-2019	Promotes healthy lifestyle and active living.
National Physical Activity Plan	Supports the provision of an environment for walking, cycling and recreational outdoor physical activity (Action 36).
Regional Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Chapter 5 Environment seeks to apply climate action and transition to a low carbon economy while protecting, conserving and enhancing our natural capital.
Local Policy	Relevance
Cork County Council Healthy Ireland Strategy 2021-2024	Chapter 8 Economic Development seeks to provide for the development of County Cork as an attractive, competitive and sustainable place to live, visit and do business, where the quality of its economy, natural and built environment, culture and the strength and viability of its communities are to the highest standards.

Economic & Finance Policy

National Policy	Relevance
Urban Regeneration & Development Fund	Deliver more compact and sustainable development as sought by Project Ireland 2040. Urban areas to be attractive and vibrant places in which to live, work, visit and invest.
Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023	Revitalise rural Ireland with a renewed focus on town centre economic and social recovery and regeneration, achieved through projects focusing on town centre regeneration, enhancing our Streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use as community multipurpose spaces including refurbishment and renovation.
Regional Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Chapter 4 A Strong Economy - Innovative and Smart, seeks to enhance a resilient, inclusive and sustainable regional economy, with the economic vision for the Region to enable sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient growth. This requires the development of a strong and diverse economic base.
Local Policy	Relevance
Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Chapter 8 Economic Development seeks to provide for the development of County Cork as an attractive, competitive and sustainable place to live, visit and do business, where the quality of its economy, natural and built environment, culture and the strength and viability of its communities are to the highest standards.
West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017	The overall employment strategy for Skibbereen as set out in the County Development Plan is to focus on local catchment employment and an infrastructure programme to service land supply identified for future employment development focused on medium to small business / industry.

Transport Policy

National Policy	Relevance
National Sustainable Mobility Policy	Strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport journeys to meet climate obligations. Includes an action plan to 2025. Seeks safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys. Demand management and behavioral change measures to manage daily travel demand more efficiently and to reduce the journeys taken by private car.
National Cycle Policy Framework	Complements National Sustainable Mobility Policy.
National Cycle Network Plan	This required by Action 29 of the National Sustainability Mobility Policy. The closest National Cycle Network (NCN) is at Bandon (50km)
Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets	Achieve balanced best practice design outcomes for street networks or individual streets.
National Cycle Manual	Promotes a safe traffic environment for all road users including cyclists. It offers guidance on integrating the bike in the design of urban areas.
Regional Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Chapter 6 Connectivity addresses the role of transport networks to improve the sustainable movement of people and goods. Objectives in this section address the NPF's National Strategic Outcomes of Enhanced Regional Accessibility, Sustainable Mobility and High-Quality International Connectivity
Local Policy	Relevance
Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Chapter 12 seeks to support the delivery of an efficient transport system in the County, supporting connectivity and competitiveness, and to make sustainable travel modes an attractive and convenient choice for as many people as possible in order to deliver economic, social, health, wellbeing, environmental and climate action benefits.
Skibbereen Traffic & Transportation Study 2019 by MHL, on behalf of Cork County Council	The study's aim was to review the existing transportation network and the associated demands both in terms of parking and transportation, with the objective of sustaining growth into the future. This involved the provision of traffic and transportation solutions that prioritised the needs of all road users including pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities. In conjunction with accommodating appropriate levels of access through the town, an on-street and off-street parking strategy was developed.

Urban Design Policy

National Policy	Relevance
NACTO (2021) Urban Street Design Guide, Island Press	Streets to be reimagined/reoriented prioritizing safe driving and transit, biking, walking, and public activity. Urban streets are public places having a larger role to play in communities than solely being conduits for traffic.
Permeability Best Practice Guide	Promotes more sustainable modes of transport. Ensures that transport considerations are fully addressed as part of land use planning.
Regional Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Use quality urban design to enhance the character of a place and to ensure development is respectful of the existing physical, social, environmental and cultural context. Improving walking and cycling provision in towns and villages, including the redistribution of street space and upgrade of public realm and urban design
Local Policy	Relevance
Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Chapter 9 Town Centres and Retail defines the vision outlined in the National Planning Framework for towns and villages is that they must become more attractive and 'liveable' and offer a quality of life that more people are willing to choose in the years ahead. In order to do this we need to continue to invest in and plan our town centres as people focused places.

3.0 BASELINE

Community Responses, Observations & Survey Results

What the Community shared with us



What we have observed



What we have surveyed



COMMUNITY RESPONSE



The River Has Been Abandoned

ADDRESSING THE RIVER

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

MOBILITY & CONNECTIONS

The town centre is not a pleasant place to be as a pedestrian or cyclist and has poor accessibility. Traffic congestion, parking constraints and a degraded public realm present challenges for the development of the town centre



Traffic, Transport, Parking & Access



Climate Action, Green-Blue Infrastructure & Biodiversity need to be developed

NATURE & LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENT

Sustainability is a key focus of the community & much of the feedback centred around placing climate action and the environment at the heart of the plan. Skibbereen has rich ecosystem services and potential to be at the forefront of sustainable development

PUBLIC REALM

The central streets have very poor quality public realm, narrow uneven pavements and degraded materials. Previous proposals for streetscape improvements were only partially implemented to a section of main Street



Streetscape and Town Centre public realm is in poor condition

COMMUNITY RESPONSES



The town centre has a wealth of historic buildings - assets of heritage and adaptive reuse



BUILT FORM & HERITAGE

The town centre boasts numerous visually attractive buildings and historically significant structures, some of which remain unoccupied or in a state of disrepair, and in need of revival.



SOCIAL COMMUNITY & CULTURE

Skibbereen has a strong sense of community with many active community groups driving a host of social and cultural events and initiatives.

Skibbereen has a uniquely strong and active community



NATURE & LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENT

Public green spaces such do not serve the Town Centre very well. The Rock is undergoing re-development with scope for further improvements. Given its topography, it is not fully accessible to all.

Shortage of Public Green Space



So Many Buildings And Shops Are Neglected, Unused Or Derelict



VACANCY & DERELICTION

Certain streets and structures exhibit signs of neglect and inadequate upkeep, with numerous vacant and abandoned buildings and sites scattered throughout various locations.



3.0 BASELINE

Understanding the Built Environment

MAP 1

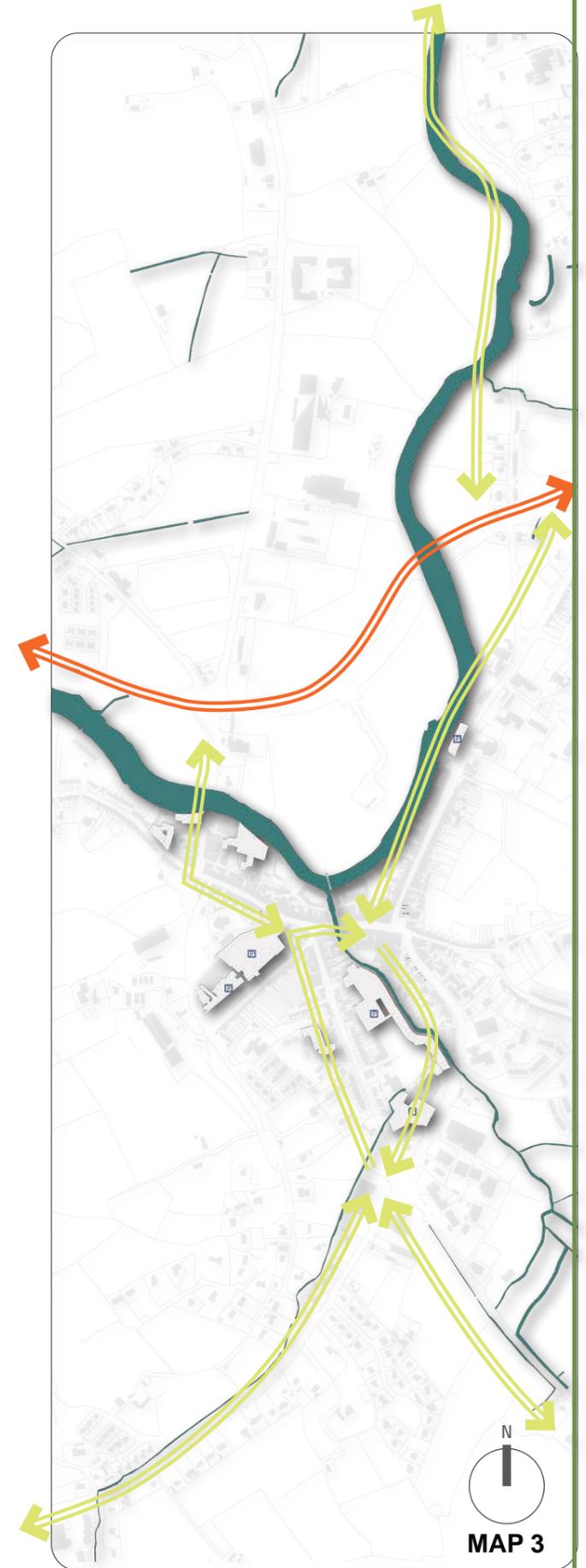
Urban massing and River Ilen as the dominant feature of the settling structure. The densest built environment is visible along the southern and eastern river banks while vast areas of the north have remained undeveloped and free of structures due to the imminent flood risk in these lower plains.

MAP 2

Topography overlay which explains the main expansion of the town in a southerly direction, along the Lough Abisdealy tributary river. Development to the east and west has been more restricted by raising terrain.

MAP 3

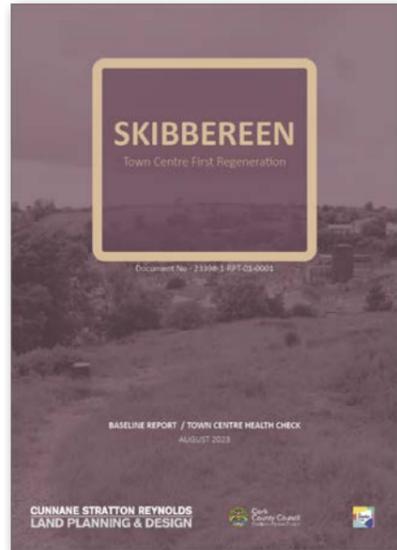
This map illustrates the main N71 National route taking traffic west to Schull and beyond, bypassing the town to the North. Traffic travelling south west to Baltimore and the coastal regions must navigate the complex network of routes through the town centre. Large industry/service/retail development have emerged along the main transport routes to the north.



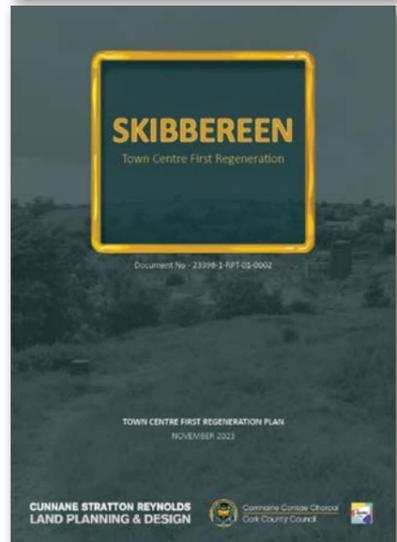
3.0 BASELINE

A Team Effort

The multidisciplinary team received very valuable feedback from community consultations and obtained data from various town surveys. These are documented in the following three separate reports that jointly form the suite of the Skibbereen Town Centre First Plan.



Baseline & Town Centre Health Check Report



Town Centre First Main Report



Public Consultation Report

3.0 BASELINE

Town Centre Health Check Summary

The Town Centre Health Check has been collaboratively generated with information of land use distribution, vacancy and dereliction rates, transport mobility, heritage, commerce and tourism in accordance with the relevant advice and guidance. The surveyed vacancy rate, for retail and residential is high and many vacant buildings appear derelict, an economic concern for revitalising these buildings, but also a concern for heritage loss.

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

The quality of the town's built and cultural heritage, will clearly drive and define our vision and strategy for Skibbereen, to make the town centre more attractive for tourism, retail, employment, recreation, and especially for residential use.

Our survey results show typical symptoms of weakened land use and resulting poor social and economic activity in the town centre. Lack of investment, particularly in large, vacant landholdings, has contributed to the erosion of the town centre fabric. Both trends have contributed to a 'hollowing-out effect' that can be witnessed in so many small towns across Ireland.

Skibbereen's transport mobility would benefit from more permeability, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists (Filtered Permeability), safer, more comfortable and accessible streets (Universal Design for inclusive access), and from managed parking, relocated from the main town centre streets.

Skibbereen possesses highly valuable assets which are currently underused and under-performing. How these recent trends can be reversed will be assessed, though public consultation and stakeholder engagement, and through collaborative work of our design team.



3.0 BASELINE

Consultation Report Summary

Below is a summary of recommendations based on insights gathered from the Town Centre First survey and the Walk and Talk Workshops. These recommendations are highlighted under the TCF Skibbereen themes of engagements / engagement pillars



Young People / Older People

- Develop facilities & spaces for young people
- Develop facilities that are available after 6pm such as entertainment facilities (cinema etc)
- Ensure safe and accessible routes to and from old people homes
- Improve the public realm (eg widening footpaths) to improve accessibility of the town centre for all ages
- Provide outdoor spaces for young people- this could include covered areas for inclement weather at the Rock viewpoint
- Make it more appealing to open up businesses in the town centre by developing these spaces for young people.

“The old empty building by the heritage centre would be a great location for a large youth centre with cinema screen.”

“In 15 years time we should be developing better public transport so less importance should be put on cars.”



Culture / Heritage

- Create new festivals that become a part of the town through existing town strengths such as food
- Endorse nightlife culture through consultation as well through projects and initiatives that activate this aspect
- Tap into the potential of having a focus on art and culture in the town
- Enhance the widely-recognised rich town heritage, and ensure that proposals look to enhance this aspect especially in relation to the existing built streetscape and tight-knit urban form of the town centre.

“The town’s history is woven with tales of resilience, cultural diversity, and significant events that have shaped its identity over the years. From its origins as a bustling market town to its involvement in the Great Famine, there’s a wealth of stories that can offer valuable insights into the past.”

“Maintaining a balance between preserving its rich heritage and embracing modern innovations can create a harmonious and vibrant living environment for residents.”

“More focus on art and culture in a broader sense than just the odd trad session or exhibition in the arts centre. The arts centre especially has such great potential to be a welcoming and creative atmosphere to provide opportunities to the town”



Business / Retail

- Encourage businesses that open beyond 6pm as part of activating the nightlife economy
- Encourage businesses (other than pubs) that can cater for younger people and provide more of a social outlet
- Endorse businesses and retail to support a circular economy and eco-retail
- Exploit the town’s potential as a retail destination through attracting more small independent businesses
- Support local entertainment facilities
- Support the introduction of business support services such as mentoring.

“Reuse / circular economy town- establish this as an identity of the town (like Fairtrade)”



Inclusivity / Accessibility / Diversity

- Improve town centre accessibility by accommodating wider paths, shared surfaces and pedestrianisation
- Include parklets in the emerging plan; these were introduced to the town during the Covid-19 pandemic and were viewed positively
- Improve wider town accessibility- local buses with safe and accessible routes to the outskirts of the town
- Give consideration to a new traffic system in the town
- Migrant representation and consultation should be sought out to reflect current town centre living. This was noted as part of the process of consultation with the Town Team
- Improve access to the local marshes and the River llen
- Support the integration of new community members through a community information hub / space in the town centre collating the activities and locations of various community groups and initiatives.

“There aren’t spaces for people outside the mainstream. Disability access is poor and diversity isn’t a feature of council representatives, gardai, community groups etc”

“Better road/pavement surfaces-these are essential for all users but in particular those with mobility issues”

“Map of town with points of interest in town centre”

3.0 BASELINE

Consultation Report Summary



Sports / Tourism

- Maintain the high standard of sports facilities in the town
- Exploit the potential of the river to encourage tourism to the town
- Support an increase in tourist accommodation in the town; counteract the loss of B&Bs to the area, possibly linked to a lack of nightlife economy.



Community / Education

- Build on the strong sense of community present throughout the consultation process
- Examine the potential creation of a community-led cooperative that could take charge of the town hall and facilitate community uses
- Examine the potential of this strong sense of community as seen as an activator for the night time economy
- Include community uses among potential solutions to derelict buildings within the town
- Help the town centre move forward by building on Council-Community cooperation on aspects such as the town hall, local buses and general community concerns.

“To enhance Skibbereen as a desirable place to live, a combination of community-focused initiatives and strategic development can play a pivotal role.”



Tidy Towns / Environment

- Support community engagement on the issue of climate action awareness
- Endorse active travel and more non-car methods of travel to improve the quality of the town environment
- Enable the integration of more greening into the town centre to promote biodiversity
- Activate the River Ilen and local marshes for town centre living to help locals access more green spaces.

“Missed opportunities... The Ilen river is basically ignored.”

“Attract people to the sides of town less known (River and lanes)”

“Develop the marsh; have walkways into the town from the marsh”

Other Recommendations

Continue the conversation with the Town Team beyond the scope of the project to ensure lasting cooperation between the community and the local authority.



Saturday Market - Mid-Summer

3.0 BASELINE

Challenges



Challenges

01 Shortage of housing, particularly in the town centre

02 Unsafe walking and cycling conditions

03 Vacancy and Dereliction / lengthy CPO processes

04 Lack of hotels / bed nights and tourist offers

05 Strong car-dependency from the hinterland and commuter traffic with resistance to changing mobility habits

06 Existing terrain that rises from the river valley to the hills surrounding the town centre

07 Proliferation of on-street parking

Need to protect and conserve architectural and cultural heritage **08**

Large underutilised landholdings **09**

Some untidy blocks and unkempt frontages detracting from town centre character **10**

Poorly-designed flood risk defence walls, which prevent permeability where desirable **11**

Decline of commercial town centre activity **12**

Uncoordinated tourist information and guidance **13**

Need to making the town climate-resilient and to future proof the town against recession **14**

3.0 BASELINE

Opportunities



Opportunities

01 Strengthening the existing compact town centre for living, working, socialising

02 Activating public buildings, such as Town Hall, Library

03 Developing existing public green areas through green routes & trails

04 Applying Sustainable Transport & Active Travel ideas

05 Reinventing & re-centring the River Ilan in the Town

06 Mapping and wayfinding for residents and visitors

07 Improving accessibility within the town centre and surroundings

08 Implementing a sustainable transport mobility concept: Filtered Permeability / Pedestrianisation / 30kmph speed limit / Shared Space & Pedestrian Priority zones with loading & delivery access

Focusing on Green-Blue Infrastructure: rewilding / streetscape / SuDS / increasing town centre biodiversity **09**

Amalgamating tourist information into a single location paired with on-line presence **10**

Promoting and filling an event & festival calendar **11**

Activating youth to co-create their own hang-out places **12**

Identifying sites in town centre for family housing **13**

Developing Digital Skibbereen **14**

Making the town climate resilient and future-proofing the town against recession **15**

Exploring available Funding : URDF / RRDF (both applicable according to TCF Policy) / Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023 / Town Centre Living Initiative / other sources **16**

3.0 BASELINE

Realisations to take home from observations surveys and community consultation



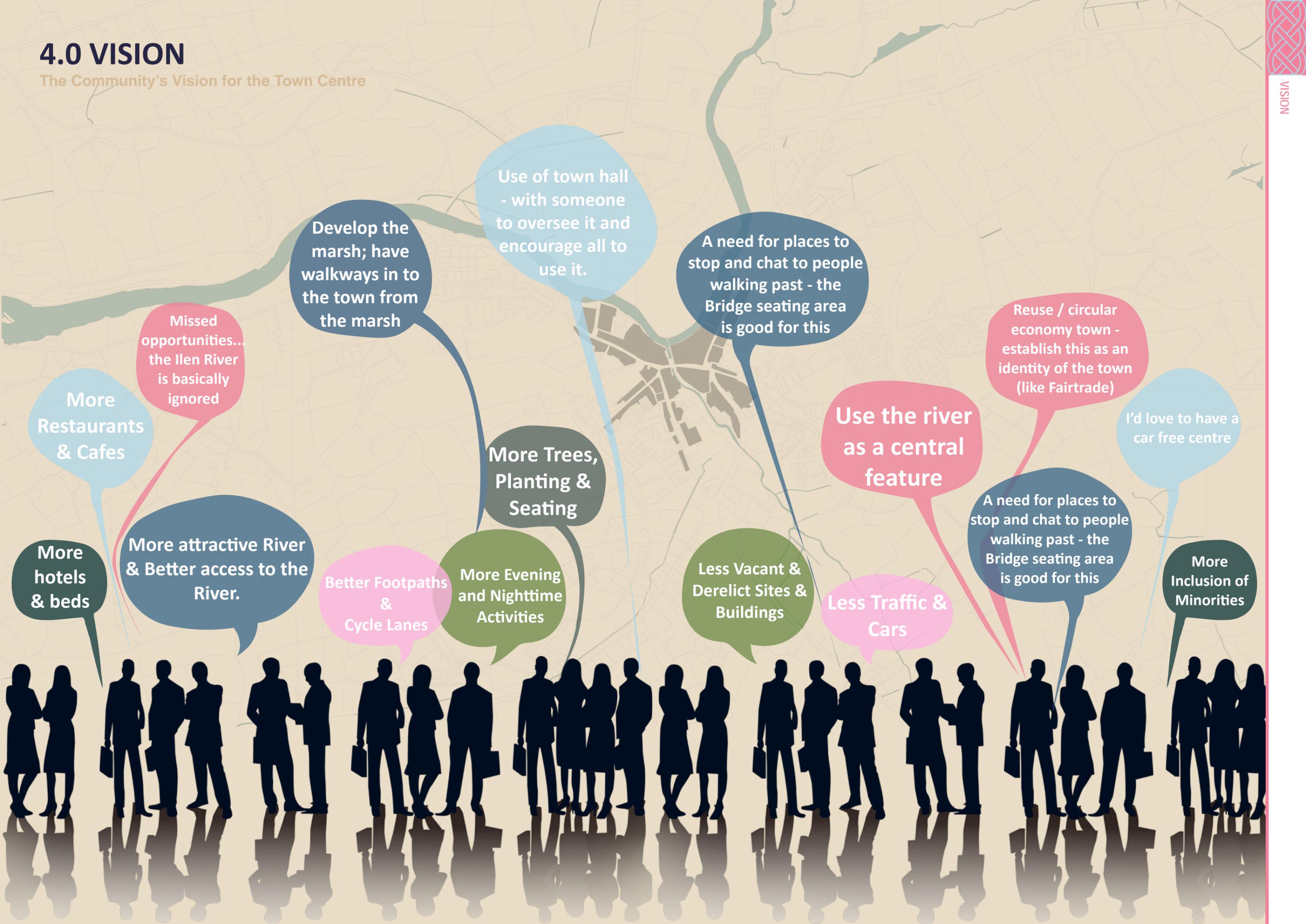


4.0

VISION
Where We Want to Go

4.0 VISION

The Community's Vision for the Town Centre



4.0 VISION

The Vision for the Town Centre

In the future, Skibbereen will continue to evolve into a thriving and sustainable market town that places great emphasis on the preservation of its natural and historic assets. These include the town's historical architecture, picturesque riverside location, green areas, and the surrounding landscape of outstanding natural beauty. Skibbereen will successfully adapt to the challenges presented by our changing climate.

The town will proudly maintain its renowned town centre and vibrant market, which host a diverse array of sustainable businesses catering to the local community. Additionally, Skibbereen will boast high-quality community facilities and infrastructure that play a vital role in enhancing the health and well-being of its residents.

In terms of housing, Skibbereen will offer a variety of sustainable and accessible homes, designed to accommodate a balanced and diverse community. These homes will be developed with a deep respect for the town's unique character and rich heritage.

Getting around Skibbereen and the surrounding areas will be both convenient and eco-friendly, thanks to a well-established network of healthy and sustainable transportation options. The town will be seamlessly connected to Baltimore and Schull and other neighboring communities via efficient public transport systems.

The town will take proactive steps to protect and nurture its parks and other green spaces. This will not only encourage outdoor activities but also serves as a means of countering the effects of climate change and fostering increased biodiversity.

To ensure the success of the plan, active participation and collaboration from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders is crucial. Residents can contribute by fostering a sense of community pride and taking responsibility for the upkeep of their properties. This involves maintaining aesthetically-pleasing and well-maintained spaces that enhance the overall appeal of the neighborhood.

Business owners can play a crucial role by engaging in collaborative initiatives, supporting local events, and investing in sustainable practices that align with the community's environmental goals. Other stakeholders, such as local organisations can contribute by providing

resources and expertise to support community initiatives. Additionally, promoting inclusivity and awareness of environmental issues will strengthen the community fabric, creating a more resilient and vibrant place for everyone.



4.0 VISION

The Eight Outstanding Assets of Skibbereen

The River is central to the character of the Town & represents one of its greatest opportunities

The rich history of Skibbereen, in particular its association with the Great Famine, forms a key part of the cultural heritage

03 Cultural Heritage

04 Community

A vibrant, active and engaged community with energy to mobilise and enrich the life & energy of the Town

06 Topography & Landscape

The landscape character of the town and its rural hinterland is memorable. The town is nestled at the confluence of two rivers

....These assets are the essence of the town's identity

02 The River Ilen

01 Architectural Heritage

A unique and memorable streetscape of beautiful heritage facades and well-preserved shopfronts

05 Rowing

Water-based activities, in particular rowing, are a central part of the culture of the Town & wider region, engaging locals and visitors alike

07 Compact Town Centre

The active heart of Skibbereen is compact and walkable with a clear urban centre

08 Culinary Destination

West Cork has a thriving food scene with Skibbereen at its heart

4.0 VISION

Architectural Heritage A Beautiful Town Centre

Skibbereen's architectural heritage is a mosaic of different styles and eras, reflecting its historical evolution and cultural significance. From Georgian and Victorian architecture to traditional Irish cottages, religious structures, and modern developments, Skibbereen's buildings provide a fascinating glimpse into the town's past and present. Preserving and appreciating this architectural heritage is vital to maintaining the town's unique character and cultural identity.

The heritage architecture of Skibbereen is a mix of Georgian, Victorian and Irish Vernacular styles. Many of the prominent buildings forming the streetscape of the central streets exhibit fine detailing and reference a thriving affluent period of the Town's past.

There are many examples of considered restoration and preservation of this historic fabric in recent years, safeguarding these buildings for the future.

There are other poor examples from the mid-20th century and later, where elements of the townscape were lost and less sensitive development was conducted.

In particular, as economic drivers of the town shifted over the centuries with the abandonment of the river and railway as trade arteries, the shape of Skibbereen has shifted.

Today, the heart of the town faces new pressures as retail habits evolve and lifestyles adapt to a new world.

01

Architectural Heritage

4.0 VISION

02 - The River Ilen

The River Ilen meanders through what can be described as the heart of Skibbereen, where it converges with the Caol Stream. This confluence has historically defined the core of the town, shaping its urban layout and preserving space for these two waterways.

In days gone by, the River Ilen was the town's lifeblood, teeming with activity along its quays and moorings alongside the town. Small boats transported goods to and from the town via Roaring Water Bay. However, the advent of the railway and improved road networks altered this dynamic, redirecting the town's focus towards its central streets—North Street, Main Street, and Bridge Street—arranged in parallel to the curve of the Ilen. Despite the river's proximity to the town centre, it has since receded into obscurity.

This presents an exciting opportunity to reestablish a tangible and conceptual connection between the river and the bustling heart of the town. It also opens up the potential for a range of revitalising initiatives along and near the river, with the aim of repositioning the River Ilen as an integral part of the Skibbereen experience.



River Ilen

4.0 VISION

Cultural Heritage

Skibbereen has a deep and enduring connection to that most tragic period in Irish history; the Great Famine. Skibbereen and the surrounding region experienced some of the most severe consequences of the Great Famine. The town bore witness to immense suffering, death, and the displacement of its population during this period. The Famine left a lasting imprint on the town's history and collective memory.

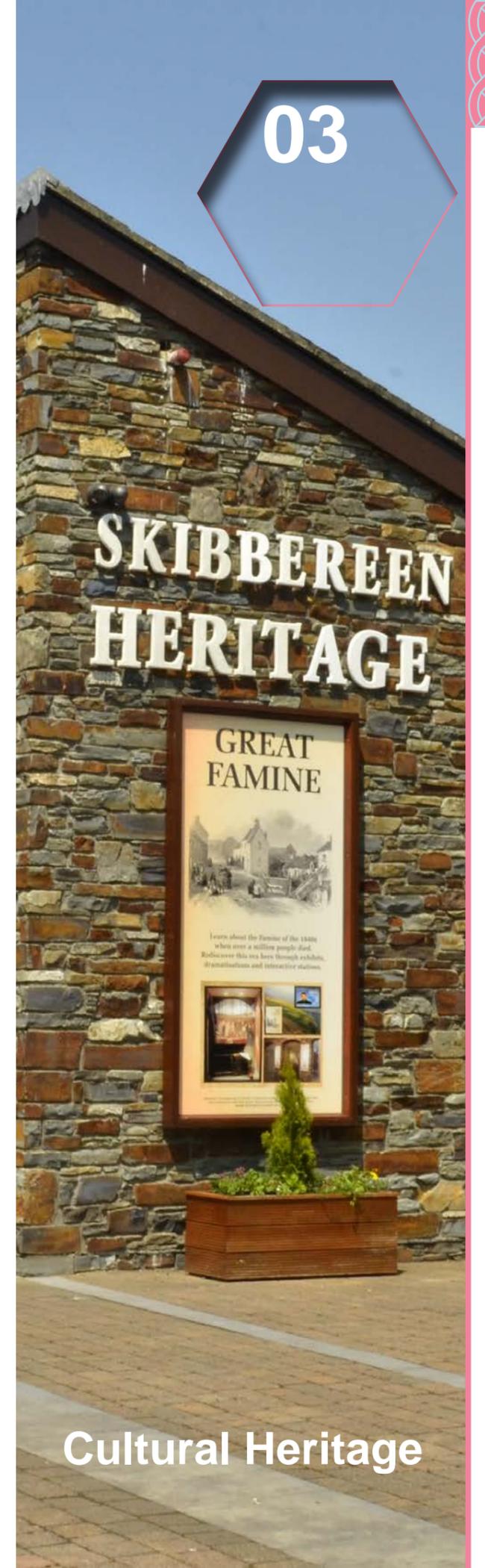
The legacy of the Great Famine is interwoven with Skibbereen's cultural identity. The town has numerous memorials, museums, and historical sites that honor the victims and survivors of the Famine. These cultural landmarks serve as a reminder of the town's resilience and the importance of preserving its history.

Skibbereen continues to commemorate the Famine through various events and initiatives. These activities help educate both residents and visitors about the impact of the Famine. In particular the Skibbereen Heritage Centre, with its beautifully curated exhibits, is a key visitor attraction in the Town. The Heritage Centres' main focus is the Great Famine but it also hosts a permanent exhibition about nearby Lough Hyne as well as providing a genealogy search facility.

This aspect of the Towns' history can be further leveraged to promote heritage tourism. Preserving and promoting historical sites and exhibitions related to the Famine can attract visitors interested in learning about this critical period in Irish history.

The strength of this wonderful component of the contemporary cultural landscape of Skibbereen presents a great opportunity to further showcase the rich historical narrative through the built and cultural fabric of the town.

The town can further enrich its cultural offerings by supporting initiatives that highlight the Famine's impact, such as art, literature, and music.



Cultural Heritage

4.0 VISION

A Strong & Creative Community

Skibbereen, with a population of just under 3,000, may be considered a small town by Irish standards. However, this population figure does not fully represent the town's true essence, as it serves as the heart of a much larger rural and agrarian hinterland. Moreover, Skibbereen plays a vital role in supporting various smaller local towns and villages like Baltimore, Ballydehob, Schull, Leap, Union Hall, and to some extent Drimoleague & Dunmanway, all of which contribute significantly to the town's economy and community.

While official data and statistics from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) provide one perspective, the other side of the story lies in the rich cultural character and spirit of the place. The community's determination and enthusiasm to bring about positive change are evident and robust. Skibbereen has a lot to offer, according to both residents and visitors, and it is primed for a spark to channel this energy towards exciting new initiatives.

The strength of Skibbereens community is manifest in the following ways;

- Annual Festivals and Events
- Vibrant Theater, Arts, and Music Scene
- Welcoming and Secure Public Spaces
- Emerging and Innovative Enterprises, Including Shops, Services, and Culinary Destinations
- Diverse Local Sports Clubs, Ranging from Rowing to Cycling and Boxing
- Community's Strong Sense of Civic Pride & its' cultural participation.
- Welcoming and Embracing New Residents



Community

Image courtesy of Skibbereen Arts Festival Facebook

4.0 VISION

Rowing & Sports

Sports, with rowing at the forefront, have not only contributed to Skibbereen's cultural life but also offer a promising path for the town's future. The shared passion for rowing has created a resilient and proud community, setting the stage for Skibbereen to become a hub of excellence for all sports, boosting the quality of life and wellbeing for many of the community in to the future.

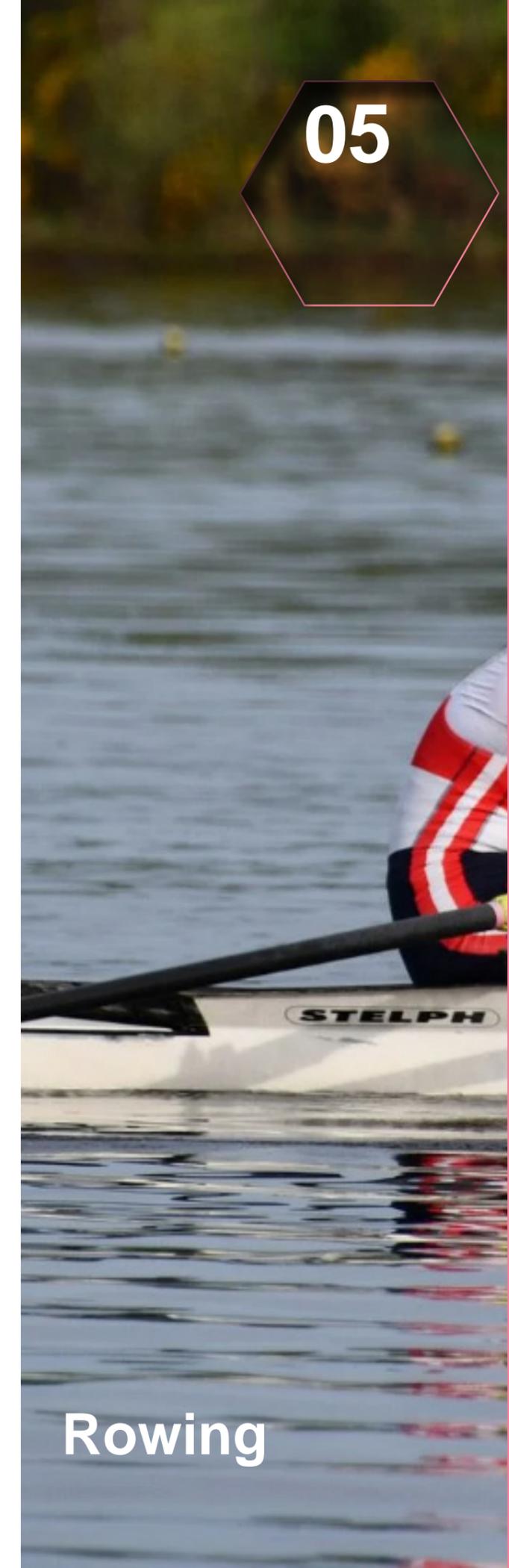
The deep-rooted sporting traditions and achievements in Skibbereen have created a strong sense of identity and community pride.

Skibbereen's rowers have gained international recognition and achieved remarkable success on the world stage. This global acknowledgment brings honor to the town and instills a sense of pride among its residents.

Local rowing stars serve as inspirational figures for the town's youth, encouraging them to pursue their dreams with dedication and hard work.

The Town's sporting credentials extend beyond rowing and the town is well catered for in terms of facilities for GAA, Rugby and Soccer. However, there is huge scope to further invest and capitalise on these assets particularly to further engage young people and connect them with these resources

This influence extends beyond sports, shaping the future aspirations of the town's inhabitants. The town can leverage its rowing achievements to attract more investment, tourism, and talent.



Rowing

4.0 VISION

Landscape & Topography

The topography around Skibbereen provides impressive panoramic views from elevated points, with some hills and headlands offering extensive views of the town and its surrounding countryside.

This is a significant asset to the town, especially the nearby 'The Rock' open space, which is located on a steeply rising headland directly next to the town centre. This open space allows residents and visitors to enjoy its views, and when combined with elevated farmland to the west of the town, it forms a picturesque backdrop with clear views of the rural landscape from within the town.



Landscape
&
Topography

4.0 VISION

Compact Town Centre

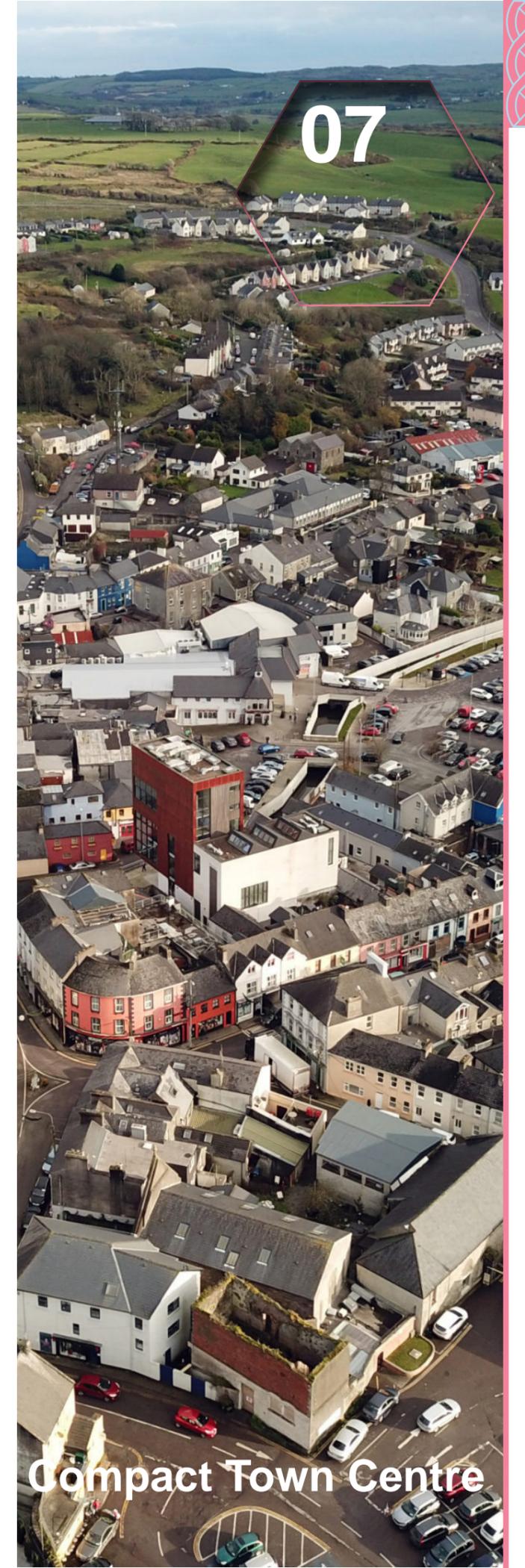
Skibbereen has a uniquely compact town centre most likely arising from geographical constraints including the steeply rising topography and the River. In recent times there has been some suburban sprawl to the north along the wider Ilen Valley alonging with the Marsh Road and the R593 to Drimoleague.

To the South of the Town towards Baltimore is where most of the contemporary expansion has occurred, however it is all within easy walking distance of the core.

The informal medieval street pattern formed at the centre of the town adjacent to the alignment of the Ilen River defines the urban grain we see today and forms the essence of the rural Town Character of Skibbereen which is so valued.

The town centre is predominantly made up of quite distinguished terraced properties with retail ground floor and traditional above shop residences. The other streets spreading out from the main central streets typically contain terraced houses, with a few notably grander structures scattered among them. Nevertheless, the collective value of these buildings presents an exceptional physical attribute that distinguishes Skibbereen.

There are opportunities for development within this tight network of streets and lanes and much can be learned from the character, scale and hierarchy of the existing townscape.



Compact Town Centre



4.0 VISION

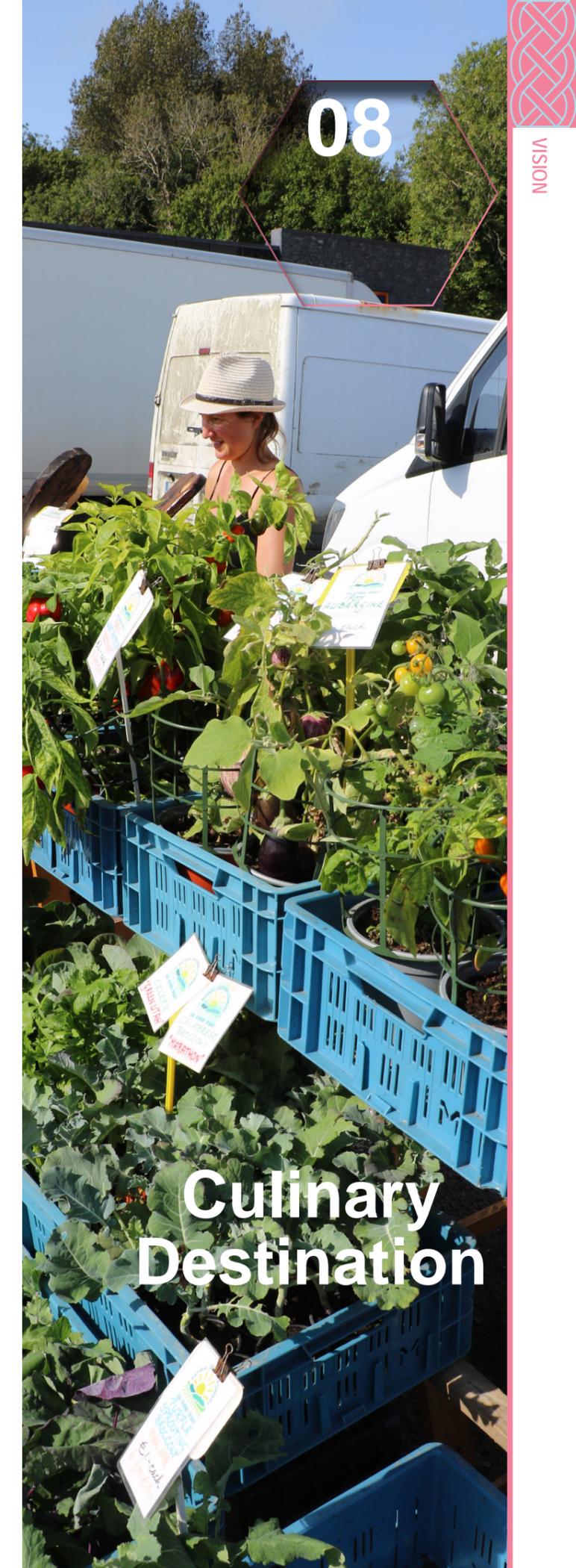
Culinary Excellence /Destination

At the heart of the West Cork food scene, Skibbereen has emerged as a strong culinary destination. Blessed with a rich agricultural landscape and proximity to the Atlantic, the town has become a haven for food enthusiasts seeking a diverse and authentic gastronomic experience.

The vibrant local food culture, shaped by artisanal producers, farm-to-table practices, and a commitment to sustainability, sets Skibbereen apart. The town boasts a tapestry of eateries showcasing the region's bounty, from fresh seafood and artisan cheeses to organic vegetables and grass-fed meats. This culinary tapestry not only celebrates the flavors of West Cork but also serves as a testament to the community's dedication to preserving its culinary heritage.

Capitalising on Skibbereen's culinary prowess presents a golden opportunity for the future economy and tourism. By promoting the town as a gastronomic hub, attracting food festivals, and supporting culinary tourism initiatives, Skibbereen can cultivate a sustainable economic ecosystem. Local businesses, including restaurants, markets, and producers, stand to benefit, fostering economic growth and creating employment opportunities.

Simultaneously, the town can draw in visitors eager to savour the unique tastes of West Cork, thereby enhancing tourism and establishing Skibbereen as a must-visit destination for food enthusiasts worldwide. The fusion of tradition, innovation, and a commitment to quality positions Skibbereen as a culinary gem with immense potential for economic prosperity and tourism allure.



Culinary Destination

4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

Croydon South End High Street, London

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Landscape Architecture: Hassell
 (Other designers involved in the design of landscape: We Made That, Buro Happold, Objectif)
 Project location: Croydon, UK
 Year Built: 2015



The project's main objective was to bring the Croydon community back to its neglected high street. The high street needed to be a safe, inherently welcoming public space; and to do this, the community needed to feel meaningfully involved. The community's vision for the high street included more green spaces, a celebration of the street front's heritage and a more accessible precinct. In response, the proposed design de-cluttered the street to better showcase the heritage of local buildings, and *We Made That* helped make tired shopfronts look new and interesting again. The project's main objective was to bring the Croydon community back to its neglected high street. The high street needed to be a safe, inherently welcoming public space; and to do this, the community needed to feel meaningfully involved. (Croydon South End High Street by Hassell — Landscape Architecture Platform | Landezine).

4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

Wagenhallen Stuttgart Cultural Centre

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Landscape Architecture; G2-Landschaftsarchitekten, Gauder+Gehring
 Architects: Atelier Brückner
 Project location: Stuttgart, Germany
 Year Built: 2020



The Wagenhallen in Stuttgart were erected at the end of the 19th century in order to take some of the pressure off the main railway station at the time. They were initially used for locomotives and later for buses as a maintenance and repair depot. After being converted and extended several times, the Wagenhallen became established as a location for cultural uses from 2003 onwards. TELIER BRÜCKNER extracted the original shape of the Wagenhallen from the existing ensemble and aligned the historically grounded structure with the current uses of the building. The building is now accessed from the south again, along the original course of the rails. This studio building, which offers ideal spaces for paper and media artists, runs parallel to the Wagenhallen and is respectfully distanced from the old existing structure. (Wagenhallen Stuttgart Cultural Centre / ATELIER BRÜCKNER | ArchDaily)



4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

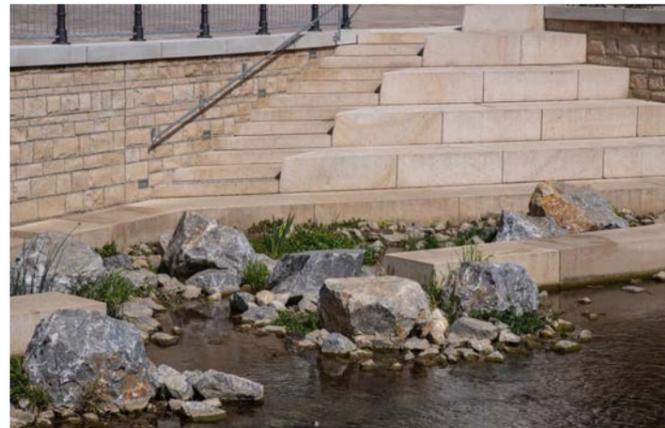
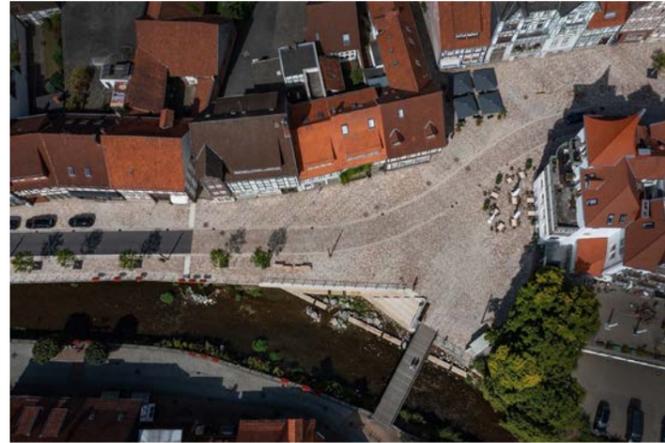
Market Square and River Garden, Bad Salzdetfurth

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Landscape Architecture: POLA

Project location: Bad Salzdetfurth, Lower Saxony, Germany
Year Built: 2021

In this project, the old town centre of Bad Salzdetfurth, dominated by timber-framed houses, underwent two fundamental alterations which reconnect it with nature and transform it into a memorable place that embeds a sense of local identity. The reshaped market square, due to its calm uniformity, intentionally takes a back seat to the historic half-timbered buildings which accentuate the town's history. Uniformly paved square, its simplicity generates an openness for free-form activity. The concept of a multi-functional 'shared space' is framed by a few, deliberately placed design elements. (Market Square and River Garden by POLA — Landscape Architecture Platform | Landezine).



4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

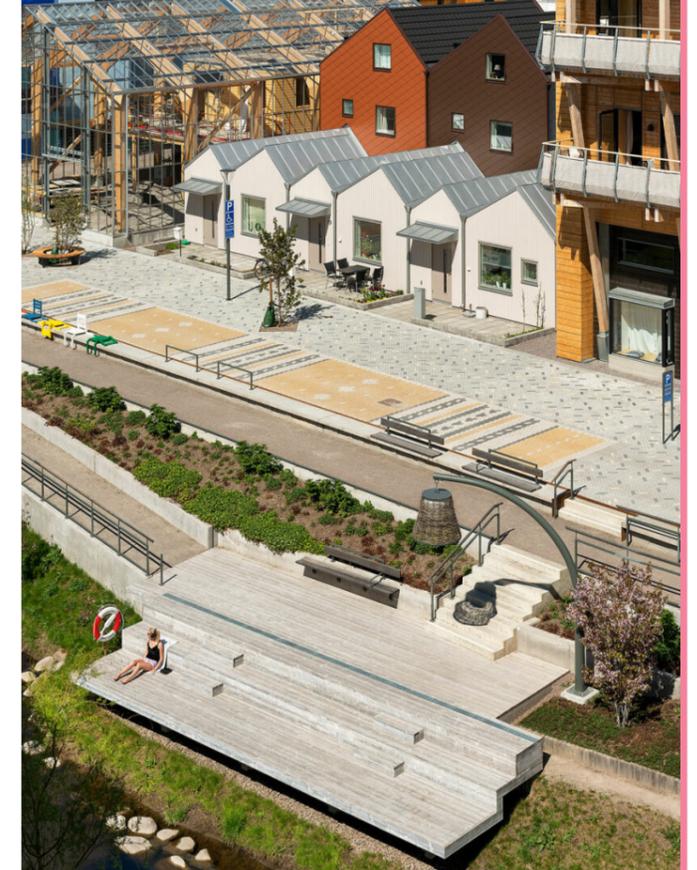
Broparken, Linköping

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Landscape Architecture; White Arkitekter, Linda Moström, Mikael Norman

Project location: Linköping, Sweden
Year Built: 2016

Broparken is a technical stormwater system, disguised as an attractive urban social space, transforming a characterless stretch of land into a much-loved public park. The park invites community interaction by offering a diversity of welcoming, accessible outdoor green spaces and landscaped areas of stone, wood and water. Oversized braided wooden lamps and colorful bridges give nature an imaginative setting that takes its starting point in the motley buildings around it. Wooden bridges, retaining walls and seating stones are carefully placed to increase access to the water along the steep slopes. Pathways snaking their way through reeds and lush beach plantations. From the park's different levels there are walkways that lead on to the buildings next door. (Broparken - an attractive urban social space | White Arkitekter).



4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

Aabenraa City Centre

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Landscape Architecture: Topotek 1
Architecture And Project Lead: ADEPT
Project location: Aabenraa, Denmark
Year Built: 2018

Competing usage patterns had resulted in a counterintuitive spatial structure in the Danish small town of Aabenraa. In the course of the comprehensive redesign, Topotek 1 together with ADEPT developed a vibrant new topology in which the diverse dimensions of contemporary urban life can interact in a dynamic way, respecting the heterogeneous character of public space and activity.

Referencing the existing materials and colour palette, each central public plaza of Aabenraa was redesigned on a single ground plane and characterised with a clear geometric and modern design. This creates a shared space for cars, cyclists, and pedestrians. The main plaza now offers several oversized umbrellas and flexible furniture, making it usable for any kind of event.



4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

The Hive Worcester Library Landscape, UK

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Architects: Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
Engineers: Hyder, Max Fordham
Project location: Worcester, UK
Year Built: 2013

The Hive is Europe's first joint university and public library – a unique academic, educational and learning centre for the City of Worcester and its University.

A wildflower water meadow is the principal landscape, a resource for environmental education, robust enough to deal with seasonal flooding from the river, with low maintenance demands. Locally harvested seeds from a site of special interest include cowslips, orchids, fritillary's and flag irises.

The water meadow also serves a practical purpose dealing with sustainable urban drainage; filtering rainwater and surface water through reed bed swales and working with the environmental engineering of the building by virtue of the evaporative cooling process with prevailing south-westerly winds. (The Hive Worcester Library Landscape by Grant Associates — Landscape Architecture Platform | Landezine)



4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

Stormwater Pond at Exercisfältet

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Landscape Architecture / Planning: Uppsala Municipality

Architects: White Arkitekter

Project Location: Upsala, Sweden

Year: 2021



As our cities expand, so does the need to clean the dirty water from them and protect them from flooding. The new stormwater pond at Exercisfältet in Uppsala solves both problems while contributing to biodiversity and creating a place where people can socialize and go for a stroll.

https://www.archdaily.com/1009686/stormwater-pond-at-exercisfaltet-white-arkitekter?ad_source=search&ad_medium=projects_tab

4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

The old city Centre of Ódena

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Architects: SCOB Arquitectura y Paisaje

Project Location: Ódena, Spain

Area: 5100 m²

Year: 2019

The remodelling of the old city centre of Ódena is based on establishing a new structure that organises and defines its public space based on simplicity and formal clarity. The project involves extending a uniform stone paving throughout the included area, in which vehicles and pedestrians can coexist, giving priority however to the latter. The remodelling of the old city centre represents a change of paradigm; from road crossing to meeting point. From road crossing to meeting point. Prior to its remodeling, Ódena's Plaza Mayor was not in fact a square but simply the centre point space where the six main streets that cut across the old city centre intersected and converged.

https://www.archdaily.com/943551/plaza-mayor-de-odena-renovation-scob-arquitectura-y-paisaje?ad_medium=gallery



4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

Rhine Terrace, Switzerland

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Landscape Architecture: Gustafson Porter + Bowman

Project Location: Switzerland

Year: 2018



Gustafson Porter + Bowman's work at the Novartis Campus in Basel transforms a former industrial site into a contemporary urban parkland that aims to enhance campus life.

The park is situated 6 meters above the Rhine and benefits from long views of the river, inviting users to the edge of the park for contemplation or a walk along the promenade. The space overall creates a deep sense of escape, calm and tranquility.

Comprised of a rich layer of ornamental and structural plants, the 1.7ha site is divided into a series of distinct, intimate terraces and 'outdoor rooms' that allow visitors and staff to relax: Tree Avenue; The Lawn; Promenade; Middle Meadow; Amphitheatre; and Woodland Gardens.

(<https://landezine.com/rhine-terrace-by-gustafson-porter-bowman/>)

4.0 VISION

Best Practice Examples

Development Banks of the Meurthe

1. Movement & Connections
2. Nature & Landscape & Environment
3. Land Use & Economy & Tourism
4. Social & Community & Culture
5. Built Form & Heritage
6. Addressing the River

Architects: Atelier Cite Architecture

Project Location: Park Raon-L'étape,

France

Year: 2012

The area of intervention defined by the project is delimited by the urban course of the river Meurte. By developing both public and natural spaces the project will ensure a sustainable future for this zone.

The strategic position of this area allows the project to impact in several ways:

- By unifying the different entities which make up the town of Raon l'Étape and thus involving the whole community.
- By developing, and installing new ways of transportation permitting a true alternative to the domination of the town by cars.
- By providing a potential base for leisure activities and tourism.
- Finally, the new development encourages a continuity and enhancement of the links between the town of the future and its cultural heritage.

A large beach for leisure activities and a space to relax also serves as a zone for flood control and for the creation of a canoeing area.-Gentle walkways encourage the use of the river banks by the inhabitants of Raon l'Étape.

(https://www.archdaily.com/340042/development-banks-of-the-meurthe-atelier-cite-architecture?ad_medium=gallery).





5.0

Strategic Objectives

How we get there



5.0 Strategic Objectives

Principles for Change

This strategy lays the groundwork for transformative principles. Unlike a rigid masterplan that follows a straightforward and linear trajectory, this approach is far-reaching and holistic. It seeks to tackle the diverse issues identified within and by the community.

Operating on multiple levels, much like the complex problems it aims to address, a series of interconnected projects is proposed. These initiatives are presented without a specific sequence, often overlapping and contingent on one another, relying on the involvement of stakeholders and the community.



Movement & Connections

Prioritise walkability by creating pedestrian-friendly streets, sidewalks, and plazas.

Implement traffic calming measures to slow down vehicles and make the area safer for pedestrians.

Improve public transportation options to reduce dependency on cars.

Develop cycling lanes and pedestrian paths to enhance connectivity within the town and its surroundings.

- Accessibility,
- Ease of movement (vehicular, pedestrian and cycling),
- Traffic congestion,
- Parking provision
- 30km/h Town



Nature, Landscape & Environment

Incorporate green areas and public parks for relaxation, recreation, and community events.

Integrate native plants and sustainable landscaping to enhance the environment. Promote urban greening, street tree planting and integration of native & pollinator planting in to the Town. Promote Biodiversity net gain throughout the town and its hinterland and develop a strong green blue infrastructure strategy

- Public Realm,
- Civic Spaces,
- Town Greening,
- Scenery/Setting,
- Amenities
- Climate,
- Blue Green Infra



Land Use, Economy & Tourism

Support local businesses and entrepreneurship through incentives and incubator programs.

Foster tourism by showcasing the town's unique character and heritage.

Consider implementing smart city technologies to enhance services and infrastructure efficiency. Use technology for monitoring, waste management, and traffic control.

- Tourism
- Mix of uses/housing,
- Variety of shops,
- Employment/services,
- Capacity for growth.



Social Community and Culture

Foster a thriving arts and cultural scene through galleries, studios, theaters, and public art installations. Promote local artisans and craftspeople.

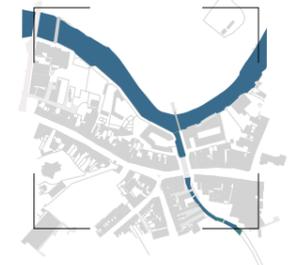
- Events / attractions, tourism,
- Community spirit,
- Social inclusion,
- Safety/security.



Built Form & Heritage

Preservation of Heritage: Respect and preserve the town's historic and cultural assets, including old buildings, landmarks, and traditions. Use adaptive reuse strategies to repurpose historic structures for modern needs. Promote a mix of commercial, residential, and recreational spaces to create a lively and vibrant town centre. Encourage live-work arrangements to attract entrepreneurs and artists. Prioritise sustainable building materials and practices to reduce the environmental impact. Implement energy-efficient and eco-friendly technologies.

- Quality of built form,
- Streetscapes,
- Heritage,
- Vacancy & Dereliction.



Addressing the River

To redefine the river's role in Skibbereen as a valuable asset for the community. Enhancing its appreciation and utilisation by various users, including recreational activities such as kayaking, boating on the Blueway, educational initiatives focusing on biodiversity and geography, and developing a place-making approach to seamlessly integrate the river into the town. With the aim of shifting the historical perception of the river from fear to appreciation, especially considering the pre-flood defence era. With flood defenses now in place, the goal is to rebalance the community's relationship with the river and promote a positive, multifaceted connection that benefits both residents and the environment.



5.0 Strategic Objectives

Movement & Connections

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

Permeability Best Practice Guide 2015 (NTA)
National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 (Dept. of Transport)

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

Promoting Active Travel

Embracing the ethos of active travel and prioritising non-car modes of transportation stands as a cornerstone of the mission to enhance the overall quality of Skibbereen Town Centre. Recognising the transformative impact on both the urban environment and the community's well-being, active travel emerges as a pivotal force in the town's decarbonisation strategy. Beyond its ecological benefits, active travel holds the promise of promoting a healthier community and numerous other advantages.

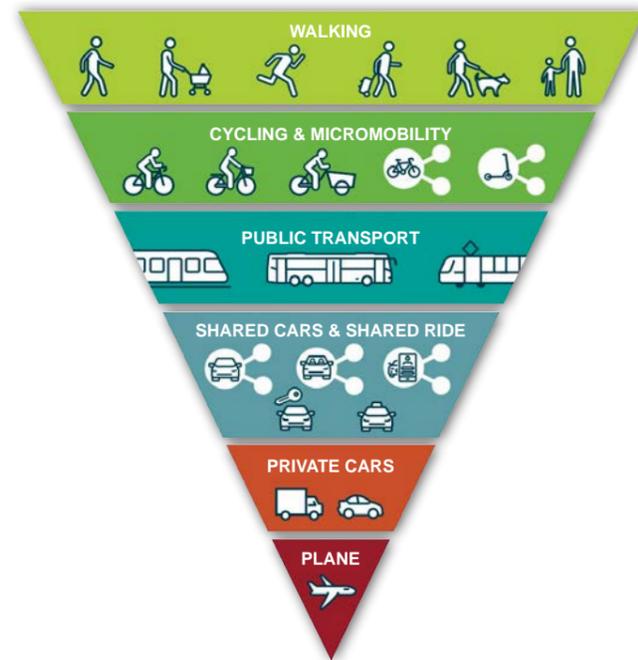
To harness these benefits effectively, a cohesive strategy is vital. This should include a deliberate focus on minimising vehicular traffic within the town centre, thereby paving the way for a more sustainable, vibrant, and people-centric town centre experience.

The following strategies may be employed in future plans for the development of Skibbereens streets and public realm, They will be informed by a Traffic & Transport Assessment that is proposed for Skibbereen which will provide critical insights and recommendations how vehicular traffic and parking should be managed, and how the streetscape should be redistributed for a



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

MOBILITY PYRAMID



www.share-north.eu



CYCLING IN COPENHAGEN

In 2018, 49% of all journeys in Copenhagen to work and education were carried out by bicycle, an increase from 41% in 2016. The City's goal is to get a 50% cycling modal share.

Over the past ten years, the City of Copenhagen has invested 2 billion Danish Kroner (around € 269 million) in cycling infrastructure. The City is making these investments expecting an even greater return, with 4.80 Danish Kroner (€ 0.65) saved for every kilometre travelled by bike, and 10.09 Danish Kroner per person switching from a car to a bike

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Movement & Connections

public realm conducive to safe and comfortable walking, cycling and socialising.

The outcome of this Traffic & Transport Assessment will be important for selected proposals in 6.0 Projects & Action Plan (or Activities or Road Map), particularly all projects within Theme 1 Movement & Connections;

1. One way traffic to free up space for bicycles and pedestrians. The freed up space could also be used for greening, SUDs and biodiversity initiatives.
2. Secure parking for bicycles including e-bikes. Secure parking should include covered, lockable space for bicycles close to public transport stops.
3. Encouraging school children and students to take alternative modes must remain a central objective for Skibbereen. This issue was raised repeatedly in the public engagements. Traffic and parking congestion linked to school drop off and pick up is significant. In the short term creating direct pedestrian connections from the schools down to North Street would help.
4. One or more pedestrian crossings across the N71 bypass to link the town centre, the schools and the amenities to the north of the road are essential.
5. Filtered Permeability / Low Traffic Neighbourhood options to promote Active Travel while reducing car dependent mobility in the town centre.
6. Consider changing Skibbereen to a 30km/h town

Promoting Accessibility

The following guidelines should be adopted as part of any well considered public realm design for the Streets and public open spaces in the town;

- **Accessible Footpaths:** Ensure that sidewalks are well-maintained and have smooth, level surfaces without obstacles. Install ramps at intersections to facilitate easy wheelchair access.
- **Kerb Cuts:** Implement kerb cuts at street crossings to allow for seamless transitions between pavements and roadways, making it easier for individuals using mobility aids.
- **Pedestrian Crossings:** Install audible pedestrian signals and tactiles to assist individuals with visual impairments in navigating road crossings safely.
- **Street Furniture Placement:** Arrange benches, litter bins, and other street furniture to maximise clear pathways for pedestrians, particularly those using mobility devices.
- **Accessible Parking:** Designate and increase accessible parking spaces, ensuring they are conveniently located near public facilities and have

proper signage.

- **Public Transport Accessibility:** Make public transportation stops and stations wheelchair-accessible. Ensure buses are equipped with ramps or lifts, and provide clear information about accessible routes.
- **Public Toilets:** Upgrade public toilets to be accessible, including features such as grab bars, lower sinks, and adequate space for wheelchair maneuverability.
- **Braille and Tactile Signage:** Introduce Braille and tactile signage at key locations, such as bus stops and public buildings, to assist individuals with visual impairments in wayfinding.
- **Well-lit Spaces:** Ensure proper lighting in public areas to enhance visibility and safety, benefiting all pedestrians, including those with visual impairments.

Promoting Ease of Movement (vehicular, pedestrian and cycling)

Promoting ease of movement in all future projects and initiatives requires a comprehensive strategy that addresses the needs of vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists. The following strategies should be adopted;

- **Multi-Modal Infrastructure Design:** Design an integrated transportation network that accommodates vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists. Plan for dedicated lanes and pathways for each mode of transportation where the space allows and in central streets such as Main Street, promoting pedestrian and cycle priority shared surfaces through the use of thoughtful pavement design and signage
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Design:** Prioritise pedestrian safety and convenience by incorporating wide, well-maintained sidewalks with clear markings and designated crossings. Implement traffic-calming measures to enhance safety in pedestrian-heavy areas.
- **Cycling Infrastructure:** Develop an extensive cycling infrastructure, including bike lanes, bike-sharing programs, and secure bike parking facilities. Connect cycling routes to major destinations within the town such as schools, sports facilities and tourism destinations.
- **Public Transportation Integration:** Integrate the public transport route seamlessly into the Town fabric. Ensure bus stops are easily accessible, and incorporate features like covered waiting areas, real-time information displays, and accessibility ramps.

- **Smart Traffic Management:** Implement smart traffic management systems to optimise traffic flow, reduce congestion, and enhance safety. Utilise technology such as traffic signal synchronisation, intelligent traffic monitoring, and adaptive signal control.
- **Parking Solutions:** Skibbereen has a number of well located, central parking areas as well as on street parking throughout. Some of the on-street parking in the heart of the town is compromising the availability of space for widened pavements, tree planting and sustainable urban drainage features and is hindering traffic flow. The proposed Marsh Car Park is considered key to offset the reduction / rationalisation of on-street parking.

Traffic Congestion

A traffic study was carried out in 2011 by MHL which made a number of short, medium and long term recommendations. For various reasons most of these recommendations have not been implemented at the proposed population increase milestones. Cork County Council are commissioning an update to this report taking revised traffic survey in to consideration. This plan does not support any specific recommendations for changes to traffic or parking arrangements in the Town Centre other than strategic objectives to reduce traffic flowing through the central streets and significantly improve the experience of pedestrians, cyclists at all ages and abilities, pending an update to the traffic study. The plan does include projects relating to the Marsh Car Park and the School Relief Road, both of which are considered key to reducing congestion in the Town Centre.



<https://www.rsa.ie/road-safety/campaigns/30km-h-in-urban-areas>

Parking Provision

Skibbereen has to provide car parking for a large catchment area of car dependent hinterland population commuting into town on a regular basis. It is acknowledged that this unsustainable mobility pattern will only change slowly, with an increase in attractive town centre living, with safe and comfortable walking and cycling infrastructure for those who prefer not to drive, and with an improved public transport service, such as Local Link to make the bus a viable alternative to the car.

In addition, community engagement to promote non-car dependent mobility is essential to achieve a paradigm shift that will reduce the presence of cars in Skibbereen in order to redistribute the streetscape and create a vibrant, lively and attractive public realm for all.

Parking provision was a major theme arising from the public engagement feedback.

At present there is a sense that there is insufficient parking in the Town Centre, particularly at busy times, such as Saturday Summer mornings when the market is at its peak. This issue was raised repeatedly through the community engagement. The MHL traffic study from 2011 highlights the issue of long stay parking on-street, which would be better reserved for sort stay, drop-off, loading etc and reduce unauthorised parking which impacts traffic congestion. The study proposes implementing adjustments to the parking landscape across three phases, short, medium and long term based on population milestones. The latter phases also assume the implementation of a public realm and traffic flow strategy which would require the reversion of all on-street parking to short stay, further necessitating greater off-street long stay provision, these factors build a strong case for the Marsh Car Park along with the sense that visitors to the town will use the Marsh Car park to avoid the inconvenience of driving through the central streets.

Town Centre Speed Reduction & Design

With consideration of the recent RSA campaign to reduce town centre speeds to 30km, Skibbereen may wish to review the town centre on a street-by street basis and consider ways to make the streets safer and more comfortable for all road users. Reducing the speed limits to 30km / hr is one way of reducing speeds, but should be complimented by design considerations such as carriageway reduction, introducing pinchpoints, obstacles and other visual cues to slow drivers.

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Nature & Landscape & The Environment

Skibbereen is nestled within a landscape of remarkable natural beauty and quality. The Town Centre First Plan is designed to harness the advantages of the abundant Natural Heritage that surrounds the town.

The combination of this outstanding landscape and the riparian corridor of the River Ilen serves as an ideal foundation for Green-Blue Infrastructure, intended to enhance the appeal and accessibility to the Skibbereen community. Development within and around Skibbereen should be meticulously managed to ensure the safeguarding of these environmental landscape assets. Furthermore, the Town Centre First Plan includes projects and activities aimed at enhancing the town's Green Infrastructure, thereby improving the quality of life for our community and the environment.

Nature-Based Solutions / SUDS / Biodiversity / Blue Green Infra

Nature-Positive is a term now adopted in biodiversity accords to describe goals www.naturepositive.org

Naturepositive goals set out the need to halt and reverse nature loss, through increasing the health, abundance, diversity and resilience of species, populations and ecosystems so that nature is visibly and measurably on the path of recovery.

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), re-wilding, and the promotion of Biodiversity all contribute to our Green Infrastructure efforts. These measures are introduced in cities and towns to create an interconnected network of natural spaces that preserve the values and functions of natural ecosystems while providing numerous benefits to residents and visitors alike.

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) are interventions inspired by nature, offering cost-effective solutions that simultaneously deliver environmental, social, and economic advantages while enhancing resilience. These solutions introduce more diverse natural features and processes into our built environment, which includes green spaces, rivers, lakes, and coastlines.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

Sustainable (Urban) Drainage Systems (SUDS) entail the management and design of rainfall to mimic natural drainage patterns. SUDS reduce the risk of flooding, enhance water quality, and promote biodiversity. They

also contribute to the public realm through features like permeable paving, swales, green roofs, rainwater harvesting, detention basins, ponds, and wetlands. Importantly, SUDS can be retrofitted into the existing built environment, not limited to new developments. Key criteria for preserving and enhancing the natural environment in our towns encompass the provision of high-quality open spaces, the protection of biodiversity, wildlife, existing green infrastructure assets, and the incorporation of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in new developments.

The Four SUDS Pillars – and the Outcomes:

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

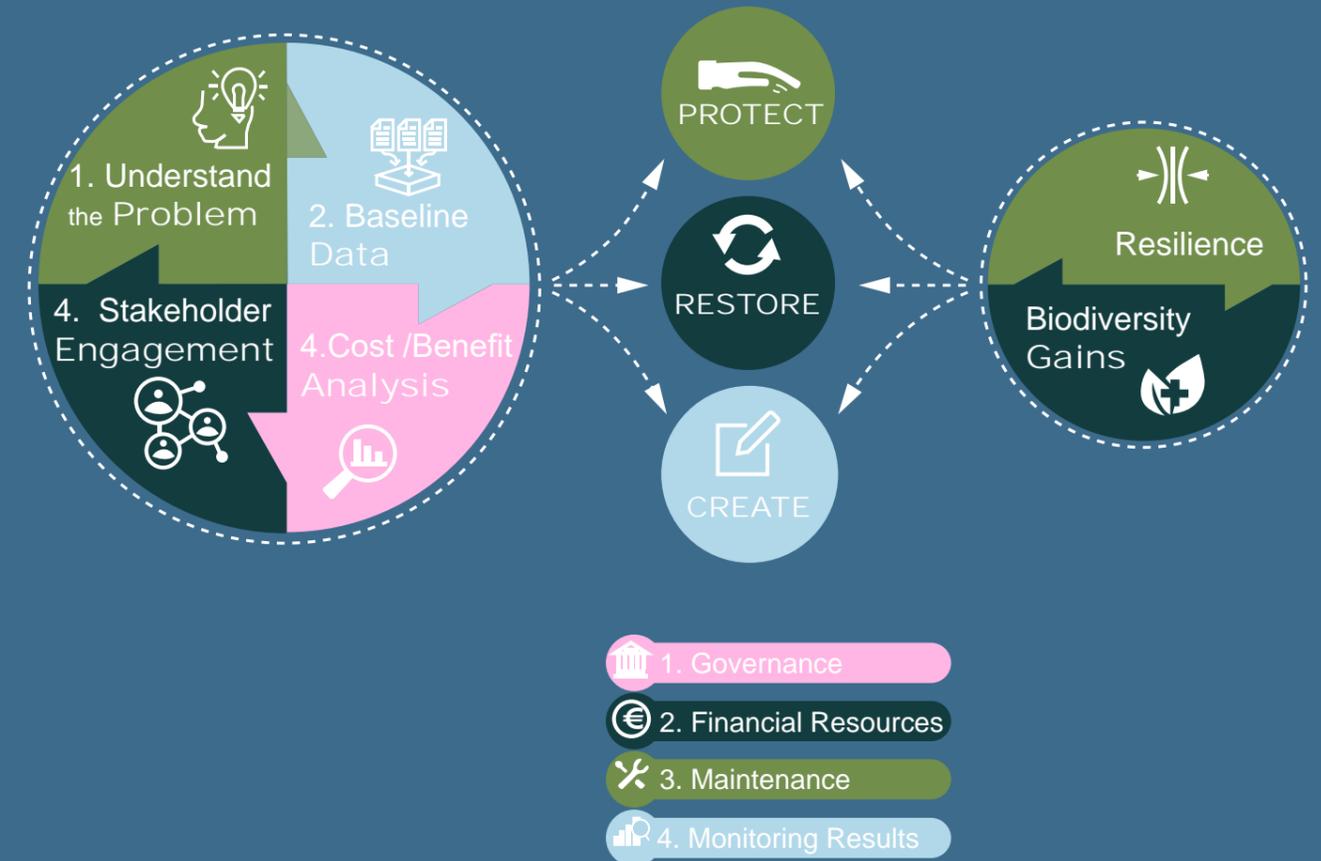
Climate Action

In recognising the critical imperative of local community involvement in climate action, Skibbereen Town Centre is to embark on a transformative journey toward sustainability. A shared understanding of the challenges faced and the decisions required is fundamental to meaningful action within the community, complementing broader initiatives outlined by central government. A robust community engagement programme is thus a prerequisite, designed to encourage participation from private individuals, businesses, local authorities, elected representatives, and other stakeholders. This inclusive programme aims to disseminate information effectively, fostering awareness and consensus on key issues, thereby paving the way for collective action and informed decision-making in our pursuit of a resilient and environmentally responsible town centre. This programme should include information on:

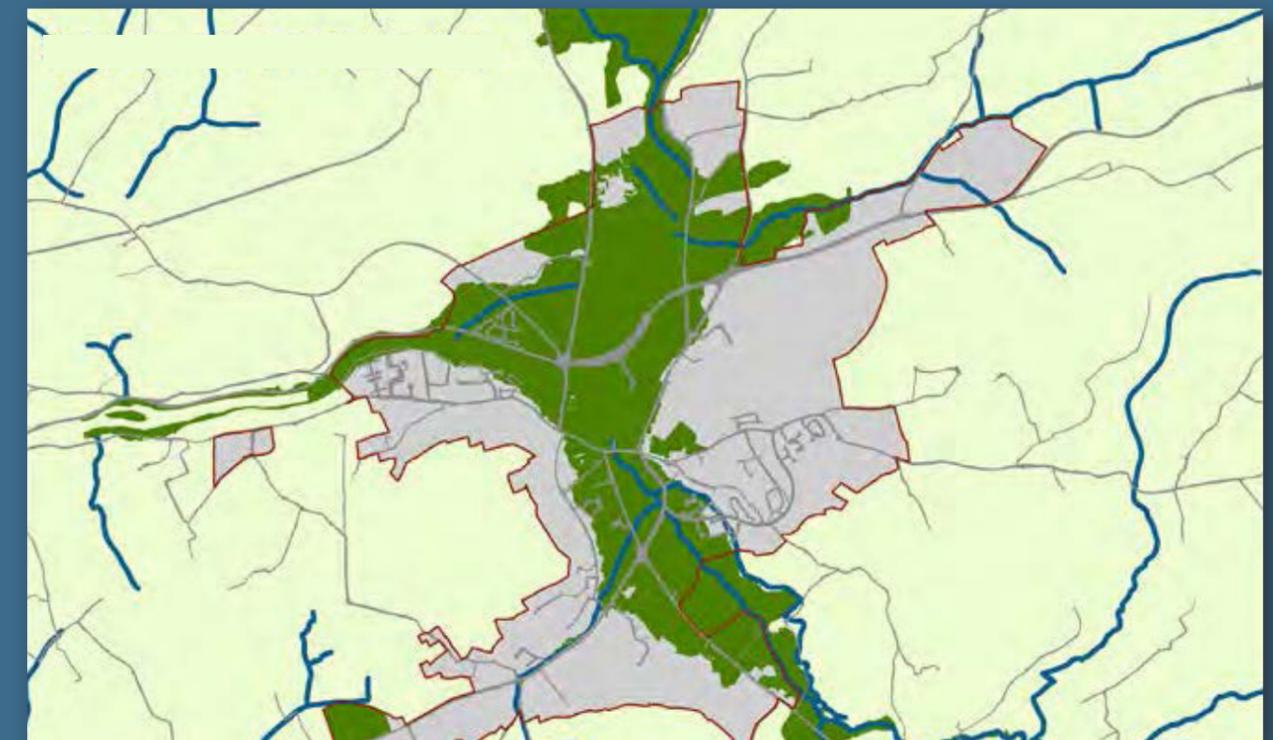
1. The local, regional, national, and international impacts of climate change and how bad it can get if we do little or nothing
2. The local causes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the current carbon footprint of the town. (Available from Net Zero Skibbereen, the town's SEAI Sustainable Energy Community).
3. A survey of the local communities level of knowledge, awareness, and commitment to taking action.
4. A communications strategy for the community.
5. Clear climate goals for the community aligned with Ireland's national commitments on decarbonisation. Greater than 55% reduction by 2030 and net zero by

Nature Based Solutions

Creating benefits to Biodiversity



Principle of Nature Based Solutions (naturebasedsolutions.org)



Skibbereen Green Infrastructure - (Cork County Development Plan - Skibbereen, P145)

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Nature, Landscape & The Environment

- 2040 at the latest.
6. A strategy to lower the cost of the education the carbon footprint of homes, businesses, and the community.
 7. An outline of the available government programmes to support decarbonisation of homes and businesses where investment is required.
 8. Description of existing climate action initiatives in the community, e.g. Cycle Sense, net Zero Skibbereen, CECAS (cecas.ie), etc.
 9. The promotion a variety of engagement activities to involve the community actively. This may include workshops, webinars, public forums, tree planting events, clean-up initiatives, or art installations related to climate change
 10. A strategy for engagement with schools, sports clubs, and other community groups.
 11. A strategy to build partnerships with local organisations, schools, businesses, and governmental agencies to amplify efforts and access additional resources.
 12. A system for gathering feedback from the community. This can include surveys, public comment periods, or regular community meetings to ensure that the engagement efforts align with community needs and desires.
 13. The acknowledgment of the achievements and contributions of community members and organisations in advancing climate action. This can motivate further engagement.
 14. Outline ways to secure funding and resources to sustain our community engagement efforts. This may involve grant applications, crowdfunding campaigns, sponsorship from local businesses, or partnerships with grant-making organisations.
 15. Establish a programme to review and update the community engagement plan based on lessons learned and changing circumstances. Be flexible and open to new ideas and strategies.
 16. Outline initiatives which support local renewable energy initiatives including community energy projects. Skibbereen is located in one of the few regions of county Cork designated as favorable for renewable energy, This could include wind, solar, and anaerobic digestion.

Town Centre Greening

An Urban Greening Strategy is not merely a landscaping endeavor but a holistic approach to redefine the town centre's identity, functionality, and environmental impact. This objective should seek to balance the

demands of urban living with a commitment to preserving and enhancing Skibbereen's natural beauty, weaving green spaces into the urban fabric, fostering a resilient, attractive, and ecologically conscious town centre.

Existing green areas within the town should be enhanced and further new areas designated for green infrastructure, parks, and urban forests. Additionally greenery should be woven into the built environment, including streets, plazas, and rooftops, both existing and new developments.

Biodiversity enhancement is a key component of Urban Greening, incorporating native plant species to support local ecosystems. A tree planting programme to increase the urban tree canopy should be adopted, choosing tree species that thrive in the local climate and contribute to air quality improvement.

This initiative may also promote the inclusion of community gardens, urban farms, or rooftop gardens within and around the town, to promote local food production. Initiatives that encourage residents to grow their own produce should be supported.

Co-director of the Nature Based Solutions Institute and urban forestry researcher in Vancouver, Cecil Konijnendijk, launched the 3-30-300 rule for cities in 2021 to provide a rule of thumb for policy makers to promote green areas in cities. He suggests that every home should have access to:

*“Three decent sized trees for every home;
30% tree canopy cover in every neighbourhood;
A public park or green space within 300 metres.”*

“Many of the world's most ambitious cities in terms of sustainability, including Barcelona, Bristol, Cambridge, Glasgow, Oslo, Sydney and Vancouver have set a goal of min. 30% canopy cover for their town centres.”

Scenery & Setting

Skibbereen is set within a natural landscape that harmonises the historical town centre with the outstanding beauty of its surroundings. Preserving the natural landscape is crucial, especially the River Ilen which winds its way through the town. The river not only adds a calm atmosphere but also serves as an important ecological corridor.

The farmland hills surrounding Skibbereen contribute to

the town's scenic beauty, forming a green backdrop that has endured over time. Preservation efforts should focus on sustainable land-use practices, biodiversity conservation, and maintaining the health of the River Ilen. Protecting these natural assets is essential for Skibbereen's future, ensuring the town continues to thrive alongside its picturesque surroundings.

Civic Spaces

The town has a number of small civic spaces which are an important component of the townscape and heritage. They represent fantastic opportunities to enhance the public realm of Skibbereen and create places for the community to congregate informally or for events. Some work has taken place at the Town Hall Square as part of the Main Street improvement scheme, however there is further scope to integrate this in to a more ambitious pedestrian priority scheme involving the implementation of future highway proposals

Levis Quay is another important opportunity area and the space here is a particularly valuable asset to the town due to its very central location and its adjacency to both the art centre and the confluence of the River Ilen and the Caol Stream.

Public Realm

Some public realm improvements have already been undertaken in Skibbereen, in the area around the Town Hall and throughout main street. In the past there have been various proposals to upgrade the pedestrian environment throughout the town, these proposals pivoted on the implementation of traffic and parking proposals which would free up space for wider pavements, tree planting, shared surface pedestrian priority areas, cycle lanes and on-street parking for short term and disabled bays.

The community engagement and survey both identified the poor quality of public realm and accessibility as a significant issue in skibbereen, but it is acknowledged that a number of other projects need to be undertaken first before anything ambitious can be undertaken with regard to public realm

Amenity Landscape

In an effort to elevate the quality of life and cultivate community well-being, Skibbereen is committed to a landscape strategy that emphasises both the improvement of existing amenity landscapes and strategic investments in new ones (refer to projects, Marsh Ecology Park). Recognising the key role that these spaces play in enhancing the town's appeal, the focus extends to providing a range of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

The initiative underscores the importance of play spaces, with a particular emphasis on neighborhood and doorstep play areas. These spaces are designed to be easily accessible to residents, promoting community engagement and creating vibrant, interactive environments. By enhancing existing playgrounds and strategically investing in new ones within residential areas, the aim is to cultivate a sense of community, encourage outdoor activities, and contribute to the overall health and happiness of the Town's residents.

Moreover, the investment plan considers the ecological aspects of amenity landscapes, incorporating green spaces that contribute to biodiversity and sustainable environmental practices.

5.Strategic Objectives

Land Use, Economy & Tourism

Skibbereen is ideally set at the gateway to West Cork, and is located in the heart of one of Ireland's most spectacular landscapes. The area attracts international and local tourists with many of those coming to the area own second homes along the coastal towns of Baltimore and Schull. There is a sense that Skibbereen misses out on much of the potential because visitors tend to pass through the Town to other coastal destinations. Skibbereen needs to expand its appeal as a destination in its own right, encouraging visitors to the region to stop and stay overnight and to offer more for visitors staying in the area to include the Town as a day trip as part of their holiday. The development of the evening economy and offering more accommodation is key to this.

Cultural Heritage:

- Promote the rich cultural heritage of Skibbereen through events, festivals, and heritage trails.
- Collaborate with local artists, musicians, and historians to showcase the unique cultural aspects of the town.

Outdoor Activities:

- Highlight the natural beauty of the hinterland with hiking, cycling, and water-based activities.
- Develop well-marked trails and promote eco-friendly tourism to preserve the pristine environment.

Local Food:

- Showcase the local food scene through food festivals, farmers' markets, and culinary tours.
- Encourage local restaurants to feature traditional dishes and use locally sourced ingredients.
- Encourage businesses to offer evening and night services / events. ENTE- Evening and Night Tourism and Economy)

Community Engagement:

- Involve the local community in tourism initiatives to create a sense of ownership and pride.
- Establish partnerships with local businesses, encouraging them to offer special deals for tourists.

Digital Presence:

- Develop a user-friendly tourism social media profiles to promote Skibbereen on-line.
- Cork County Council has signed up (alongside Cork City Council) to utilising the Pure Cork brand as the reference point for tourism for the County. There is a dedicated section for Skibbereen on this website <https://www.purecork.ie/skibbereen>
- Utilise on-line platforms to share captivating stories, images, and videos to attract a wider audience.

Infrastructure Development:

- Improve tourism infrastructure, including signage, parking, and amenities.
- Work with local authorities to ensure a welcoming environment for tourists.

Collaboration with Local Businesses:

- Foster collaboration between tourism-related businesses to create packages and enhance the overall visitor experience.
- Encourage the development of unique, locally-made souvenirs.

Educational and Sustainable Tourism:

- Offer educational programs and workshops to tourists, promoting sustainable practices and responsible tourism.
- Implement eco-friendly initiatives to preserve the natural beauty of the area.

Events and Festivals:

- Organise regular events and festivals that cater to various interests, such as music, arts, and sports.
- Use these events as opportunities to attract diverse groups of tourists throughout the year.

Tourism Promotion Campaigns:

- Launch targeted marketing campaigns, both locally and internationally, to raise awareness about Skibbereen as a tourist destination.
- Collaborate with travel influencer's to create buzz around the area.

Eco-Tourism Initiatives:

- Emphasise Skibbereen's commitment to eco-tourism by promoting sustainable practices among tourists.
- Develop guided eco-tours that showcase the area's biodiversity, conservation efforts, and eco-friendly initiatives.

Circular Economy Trade Centre:

- Establish a centre for circular economy trade as a focal point for sustainable business practices.
- Encourage local businesses to adopt circular economy principles, promoting recycling, up-cycling, and minimising waste.

Education and Awareness:

- Incorporate educational programs within the circular economy centre, educating tourists and locals on the importance of sustainable living.
- Showcase success stories of businesses in Skibbereen that have adopted circular economy practices.

Circular Economy Markets:

- Organise regular markets within the circular economy centre, featuring products from local businesses that prioritize sustainability.
- Attract artisans and entrepreneurs who specialize in eco-friendly and up-cycled goods.

Green Accommodations:

- Collaborate with local accommodations to implement green practices, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and water conservation.
- Certify and promote these establishments as eco-friendly options for conscious travelers.



5.0 Strategic Objectives

Land Use, Economy & Tourism

Skibbereen's town centre stands as a reflection of its history and cultural significance. However, a strategic reevaluation of the existing uses is essential to align with the principles of Town Centre First Living. Currently, the town centre includes a mix of commercial, residential, and cultural functions, albeit with room for enhancement. Vacancy is an issue, especially at the periphery of the core streets.

To invigorate the urban fabric, the focus is on promoting a more cohesive and dynamic mix of uses including housing. The existing commercial spaces can be complemented by integrating mixed-use developments that incorporate residential units especially where there is an opportunity to promote living above shops or where vacant shops can be converted to residential use. This approach not only addresses local housing needs but also activates the town centre beyond business hours, promoting a vibrant environment in the evenings. Infusing cultural and recreational spaces within the mix contributes to a more diverse and engaging town centre experience. Furthermore, creating pedestrian-friendly zones and enhancing public spaces encourages social interaction, supporting the vision of a livable and sustainable town centre.

Skibbereen to Baltimore Greenway

The recently approved feasibility study for a Greenway project linking Skibbereen and Baltimore heralds a transformative economic and tourism boon for Skibbereen. It is proposed that all routes will originate in Skibbereen, and connect to the communities of Baltimore, Schull and Drimoleague, if deemed feasible. The project not only improves Skibbereen's allure as a destination but also promotes sustainable economic growth, positioning the town as a vibrant hub within the heart of West Cork's natural beauty. The proposed marsh car-park may represent a suitable trail-head, and this would add legitimacy to this and other associated projects such as the pedestrian bridge connection.

Variety Of Shops

Revitalising Skibbereen's town centre will involve a strategic approach to enhance retail variety, ensuring a vibrant and diverse shopping experience. Actively engaging with local businesses, encouraging new enterprises and supporting existing ones through targeted initiatives. Facilitating the development of niche markets and artisanal offerings will enrich the town's

retail landscape. Collaborative events, highlighting local products, could draw attention to the unique offerings in Skibbereen. By promoting an environment that encourages retail diversity, the aim is to transform the town centre into a dynamic hub where residents and visitors alike can enjoy a wide array of distinctive shopping opportunities. The Skibbereen Chamber of Commerce is a strong and active group, and some of the following actions could further bolster the economic success of the town

Implementing a robust strategy for retail improvement in Skibbereen involves key actions:

- **Business Incubation Programs:** Launch initiatives to support new retail ventures, offering mentorship and resources to entrepreneurs.
- **Incentive Programs:** Introduce incentives such as grants to encourage the establishment and growth of diverse retail businesses.
- **Community Engagement:** Facilitate regular forums for businesses and residents to share ideas, ensuring the community's preferences guide retail development.
- **Market Niche Development:** Identify and promote specific market niches, encouraging retailers to specialise and offer unique products or services.
- **Collaborative Events:** Organise regular events showcasing local products, fostering a sense of community while drawing attention to the diverse retail offerings.
- **Networking Platforms:** Establish platforms (chamber of Commerce) for local businesses to collaborate, share insights, and collectively contribute to the growth of the retail sector.

Smart Infrastructure: Provide for a Digital Skibbereen

Digitise the town! Make Digital Technology accessible and normal to use for everyone who wishes to use it in public.

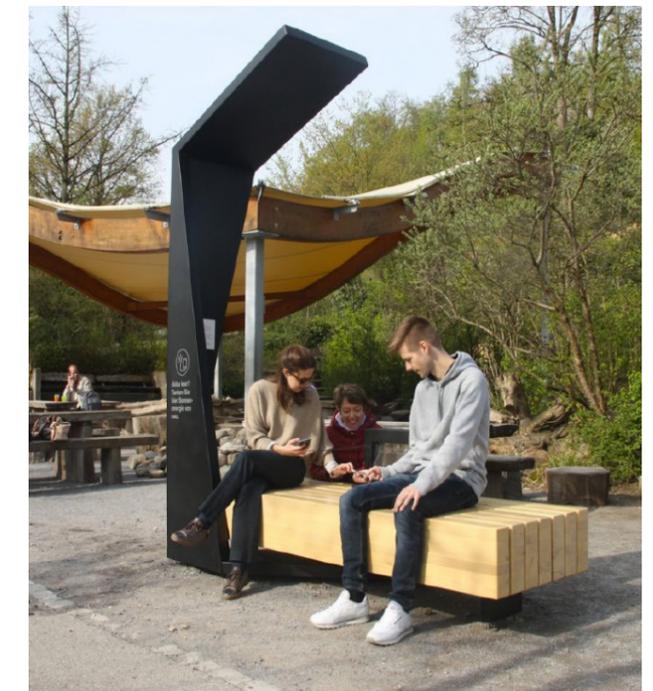
- Consider implementing smart city technologies to enhance services and infrastructure efficiency.
- Use technology for monitoring, waste management, and traffic control.

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

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

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

The Town Centre First Policy 7 (p.19) states:
"There is also the opportunity to utilise technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, and to integrate digital technology into daily commercial and social life. Digital technology can improve the quality and accessibility of services, and can be used to address challenges faced by our towns, providing them with new roles in the digital economy."



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Digital Town Blueprint 2023 Town Report Skibbereen, Co. Cork

16 March 2023

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Land Use, Economy & Tourism

Digital Town Score

Skibbereen received an overall Digital Town Score of 56. Below is an extract of Table 53 of the DTB report that provides a guideline for interpreting the readiness score.

Readiness Score	Dimension Level	Readiness	Guideline Description
40-59	3	Defined Competitive	<p>Digital Readiness is Clearly Defined and Documented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is clear evidence of digital readiness. • Use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities are documented and planned. • KPIs are competitive relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages.

What this means for Skibbereen

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

The town scores the highest in 'Infrastructure and Connectivity' and is already served by a rural digital hub with co-working spaces. It also scored well on digital public services in terms of e-Government readiness, with opportunities to improve on e-health.

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

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

Proposed Digital Enhancement Opportunities for Skibbereen

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

1. Continue to support the existing digital hub.
2. Introduce CoderDojo or similar initiatives to improve the digital capacity of the wider community; and
3. Utilise 'Digital Placemaking' as a tool to improve digital tourism through;
 - Promotion of Skibbereen Heritage Trail App.
 - Introduction of smart street furniture with free wi-fi and device charging points for visitors in tourist attractions, events and destinations; and digital Installations.

What is Digital Placemaking?

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

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

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Land Use, Economy & Tourism

How Digital Placemaking Works?

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

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

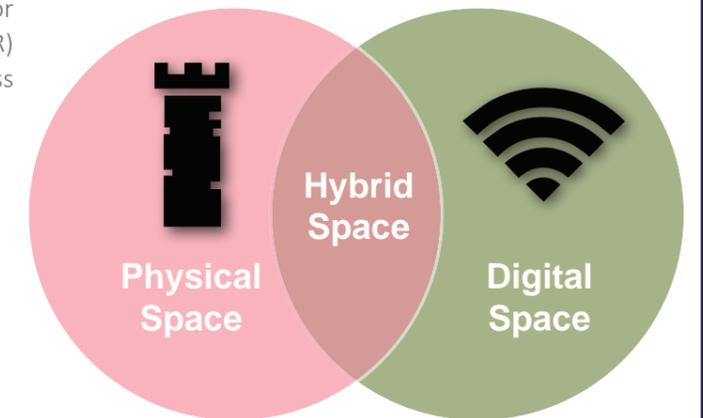
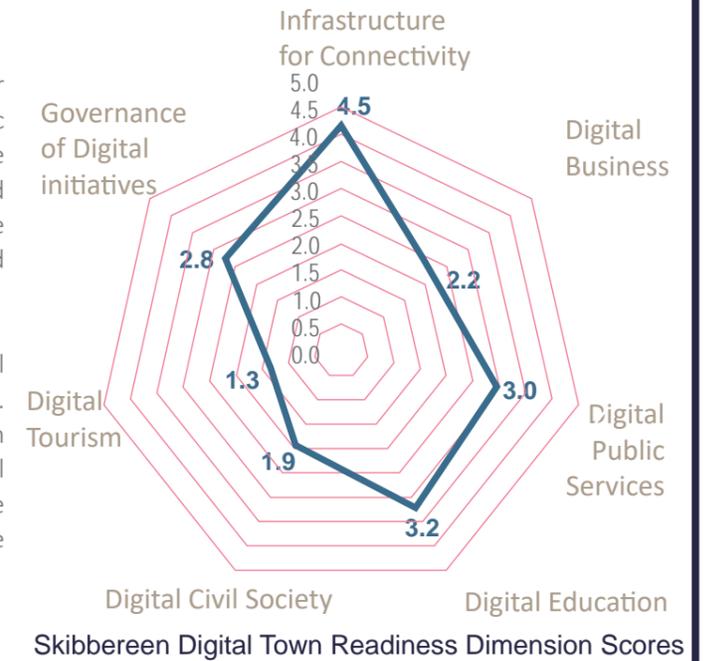
Best Practice Example

The Battersea Power Station Heritage Trail app

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



The Battersea Power Station Heritage Trail app



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

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

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Social Community & Culture

Social Inclusion

Skibbereen's Town Centre First Strategy hinges on promoting social inclusion as its cornerstone. The vision centres on creating a vibrant, accessible hub that celebrates diversity and encourages community engagement. Targeted outreach programs should be initiated to involve marginalised groups, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes. Collaborations with local businesses and organisations will promote inclusive events, promoting a sense of belonging for everyone. Public spaces will be designed with universal accessibility, encouraging interaction among residents of all abilities.

Young People

Elevating the quality of life for Skibbereen's youth was a key priority throughout the community engagement. By amplifying the voices of young people in the vision for the Town Centre, we aim to create a vibrant, inclusive town centre that empowers Skibbereen's youth, enhancing their overall well-being. We'll establish dedicated spaces within the town centre for recreational activities, creative expression, and skill development tailored to teenagers. Collaborations with local businesses will foster apprenticeships, providing valuable work experience. Engaging events, from cultural festivals to sports competitions, will be organized to cultivate a sense of community. Ensuring safety through well-lit areas and community policing fosters a secure environment. By amplifying the voices of young people in urban planning, we aim to create a vibrant, inclusive town centre that empowers Skibbereen's youth, enhancing their overall well-being.

Community Spirit

Building on Skibbereen's existing strength of an incredibly robust community, our focus is on cultivating collaboration. Recognising the town's strong community energy, this strength can be developed by encouraging increased collaboration among residents, businesses, and local organisations. By harnessing the power of collective effort and shared vision, community initiatives can be enhanced, ensuring that Skibbereen continues to thrive as a united and supportive town. Through building on this foundation of unity, a town centre can be established that not only preserves but magnifies the vibrant spirit that makes Skibbereen exceptional.

Safety & Security

In the national context, Skibbereen stands as a relatively quiet town with commendably low levels of crime. However, there must be a commitment to community well-being, the town centre vision places an committed focus on community safety and security. Collaborating with Cork County Council, businesses, and residents, enhanced proactive measures such as regular patrols and community watch programs should be explored. Recognising the unique needs for women's security, the public realm design should emphasise, well-lit areas, clear sightlines, strategic placement of security features and consult with the community, ensuring inclusivity in crafting environments that promote a sense of safety for everyone.

Integration of smart technology in to the urban infrastructure, enhancing the experience of Skibbereen & connecting the physical and digital space



5.0 Strategic Objectives

Social Community & Culture

Arts & Culture

A key objective of this plan is to further promote the Arts in Skibbereen, fostering a thriving arts and cultural scene through galleries, studios, theaters, and public art installations. Any emerging art strategy should promote local artisans and craftspeople.

The Town already has a burgeoning art scene centred around the iconic Uilleann Arts Centre. Promoting a healthy and vibrant community in Skibbereen can be greatly enhanced by the presence of public art, encompassing murals, sculptures, and creative landscaping. The infusion of more color into our surroundings elevates the experience for both residents and visitors and has a real impact on quality of life and civic pride.

Events & Attractions

Skibbereen's festival calendar is already quite impressive. The town has firmly established itself as a unique and boutique festival destination. These festivals hold the potential to enhance their offerings by introducing supplementary events to the existing festival lineup and incorporating water-based activities that celebrate the rich heritage of the river.

It is crucial to identify and re-purpose more structures, spaces, and locations suited for performance venues, youth centres, a wide array of community activities, as well as training and educational purposes.

Children are exceptional catalysts for increased town activities, vibrancy, and prospects. Initiatives which are aimed at children and young people, in combination with other attractions that hold appeal not only for children but for families at large, will draw significant portions of the community into the heart of Skibbereen, nurturing foot traffic, activity, and the manifold positive effects that accompany it.



Street Installation
Image courtesy of Matthew Goff



Landmark Sculpture



Memorial Art



Water Installation



Mural Art, New Ross, Co, Wexford

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Built Form & Heritage

Respect and preserve the town's historic and cultural assets, including old buildings, landmarks, and traditions. Use adaptive reuse strategies to repurpose historic structures for modern needs.

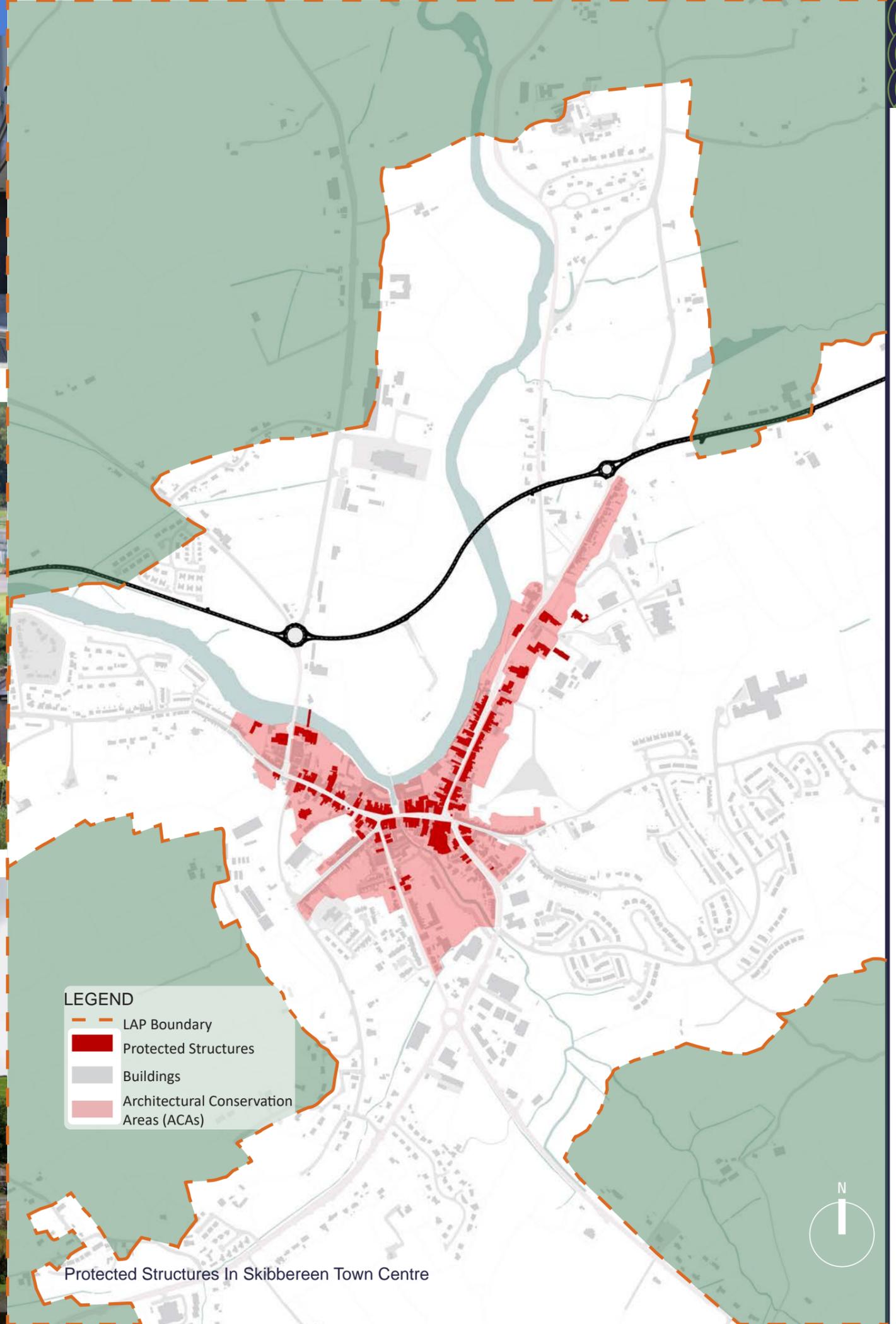
Skibbereen's cultural and built heritage has been assessed and documented in the baseline report. Skibbereen boasts a wealth of historic buildings, structures, and places that hold great potential for enhancing daily life in the town. This potential extends beyond individual historic buildings to encompass the overall character and setting of the town centre, emphasising the value of its 'ordinary' historic buildings for Adaptive Urban Reuse, especially for residential purposes. This potential is worth exploring within the framework of the Town Centre Living Initiative 2020 (Space Engagers for Dept. Rural and Community Development).

Skibbereen also boasts a vibrant independent retail scene, featuring a diverse array of unique small shops and businesses that have already attracted a loyal customer base from within the town and its significant rural catchment. The constraints posed by existing building block sizes do not lend themselves to large-scale retail operations due to limited access and floor area. Consequently, large-scale retail tends to locate on the town's outskirts or available port brownfield sites, while the core of the town centre remains relatively intact, with only a few exceptions, such as the SuperValu development and its associated car park.

Almost all of the buildings along the main central streets are protected structures, which is testament to the caliber of the architecture throughout the heart of Skibbereen.

The Town Hall is a great example of an iconic Town Centre heritage building being renovated and brought back in to use.

The building has fantastic potential to be a key community resource (as expanded upon in the Projects & Action Plan section (6.0) of this document).



5.0 Strategic Objectives

Built Form & Heritage

Quality Of Built Form

Skibbereen exhibits a charming built form, blending historical architecture with modern elements. However, potential improvements lie in promoting sustainable design practices, encouraging community engagement in urban planning, and preserving the town's unique character. Striking a balance between innovation and heritage can enhance Skibbereen's built environment for a vibrant future. One of the core objectives of the Town Centre Policy focuses on how the built form of Town Centre needs to evolve to meet future needs. Since the existing built form of Skibbereen is of extremely high quality, notwithstanding some issues around vacancy and dereliction, great care should be taken to ensure future developments consider the character, scale and materiality of town and are of the highest quality.

Streetscapes

Skibbereen's future streetscapes should seek to merge aesthetics with functionality, prioritising non-vehicular users of the streets, green spaces, and sustainable infrastructure. A thoughtful integration of modern design and preservation of historical character should create inviting, livable streetscapes, promoting a sense of community and belonging. While the architecture and facades which define the edges of streetscapes are important to the quality of the environment.

A great town centre street is characterised by key elements that cater to the diverse needs and desires of its community. Key features include a pedestrian focused environment, a mix of well-maintained historic and modern architecture, vibrant public spaces, diverse and locally-owned businesses, cultural attractions, and thoughtful design that encourages social interaction. Effective traffic management, greenery, and accessibility further contribute to the overall appeal, creating a welcoming and lively atmosphere that reflects the town's unique identity and fosters a sense of community.

Heritage

Skibbereen can strategically capitalise on its heritage built form by implementing actions that combine preservation with development.

- Develop a comprehensive heritage conservation plan, including restoration initiatives for iconic landmarks.
- Encourage community involvement through cultural events and historical programs, encouraging local pride.

- Collaborate with architects to ensure new developments seamlessly integrate with the town's historical aesthetic.
- Implement policies that incentivise businesses to maintain and adapt historic structures, promoting economic vitality while preserving heritage.
- Investing in interpretive signage and educational programs, Skibbereen can engage both residents and visitors, telling the town's story and creating a deeper connection with its heritage.

These actions will not only safeguard Skibbereen's historical treasures but also propel the town into a future where its rich legacy is a driving force behind sustainable growth and community cohesion.

Tackling Vacancy & Dereliction

Although there is no hard evidence to support this since the census data is not granular enough to understand population figures in the heart of the town, there is a perception that Skibbereen Town Centre has been facing a persistent decline in its population since the 1980s, despite overall growth in the town. The aging population and a preference for suburban living among households have contributed to this trend. To address the under-population and high vacancy rates in key areas, a comprehensive strategy is essential for fostering vitality and vibrancy in the town centre.

- Understanding the Challenge: The survey reveals significant under-population in specific parts of the Town Centre, marked by high levels of vacant residences and upper-floor accommodations above businesses in mixed-use streets. While there have been some additions through infill redevelopments, a holistic approach is required to enhance the overall vibrancy of the area.
- Emphasising Vibrancy Metrics: Vitality and vibrancy are crucial for the success of urban centres. Metrics such as footfall, commercial yields, local rental values, vacancy rates, customer views, and retailer representation will be closely monitored. These indicators will guide the strategy to create a bustling and lively environment in the town centre.
- Reuse and Refurbishment: Given that the building stock in the town centre is largely intact, the strategy

will prioritise reuse and refurbishment over redevelopment. This approach not only preserves the town's historical character but also benefits smaller businesses and activities. Adaptive reuse of vacant spaces will be encouraged to bring life back to underutilised properties.

- Enhancing On-Street Presence: Facade and shopfront improvements will be a key focus to support independent retailers and businesses. These enhancements contribute to a positive on-street presence and improve the overall street image, making the town centre more appealing to both locals and visitors.
- Public Policy Support: Aligning with planning and public policy, the strategy emphasises the importance of achieving longer-term vibrancy in town centres. By addressing vacancy, the plan aims to instill confidence among local businesses, investors, shoppers, and visitors, ensuring sustained growth and economic activity in Skibbereen's Town Centre.

5.0 Strategic Objectives

Addressing the River

Placing the River at the Heart of Skibbereen

By refocusing on its river, Skibbereen can create a vibrant and attractive environment that promotes economic growth, tourism and community engagement. This initiative represents a huge opportunity for the commercial and cultural heart of the Town to expand within the curtilage of the Town without expanding outward. This strategy imagines the river and in particular the southern bank or quayside as a new town centre quarter or street with a vibrant evening economy

River Revitalisation:

Recognise the untapped potential of Skibbereen's river as a focal point for the town's revitalisation. Develop a plan to enhance the riverfront, creating public spaces for relaxation, recreation, and community engagement.

Riverside Promenade:

Establish a picturesque riverside promenade with walking and cycling paths, linking key areas of the town to the river. Integrate seating areas, green spaces, and public art installations to encourage residents and tourists to enjoy the premium view over the river.

Waterfront Activities:

Promote water-based activities such as kayaking, boating, and fishing to attract both locals and visitors. Collaborate with local businesses to provide equipment rentals and guided experiences along the river.

Cafes and Restaurants by the Water:

Encourage the development of cafes and restaurants with riverside views, creating vibrant social spaces, utilising the back of properties which back on to the river. Host events like riverside dining experiences or food festivals to attract people to the area.

Riverfront Events:

Organise regular events and performances along the river, such as music festivals, art exhibitions, and cultural celebrations. Utilise the natural amphitheater created by the riverbanks for outdoor performances. (North side of the river)

Historical Interpretation:

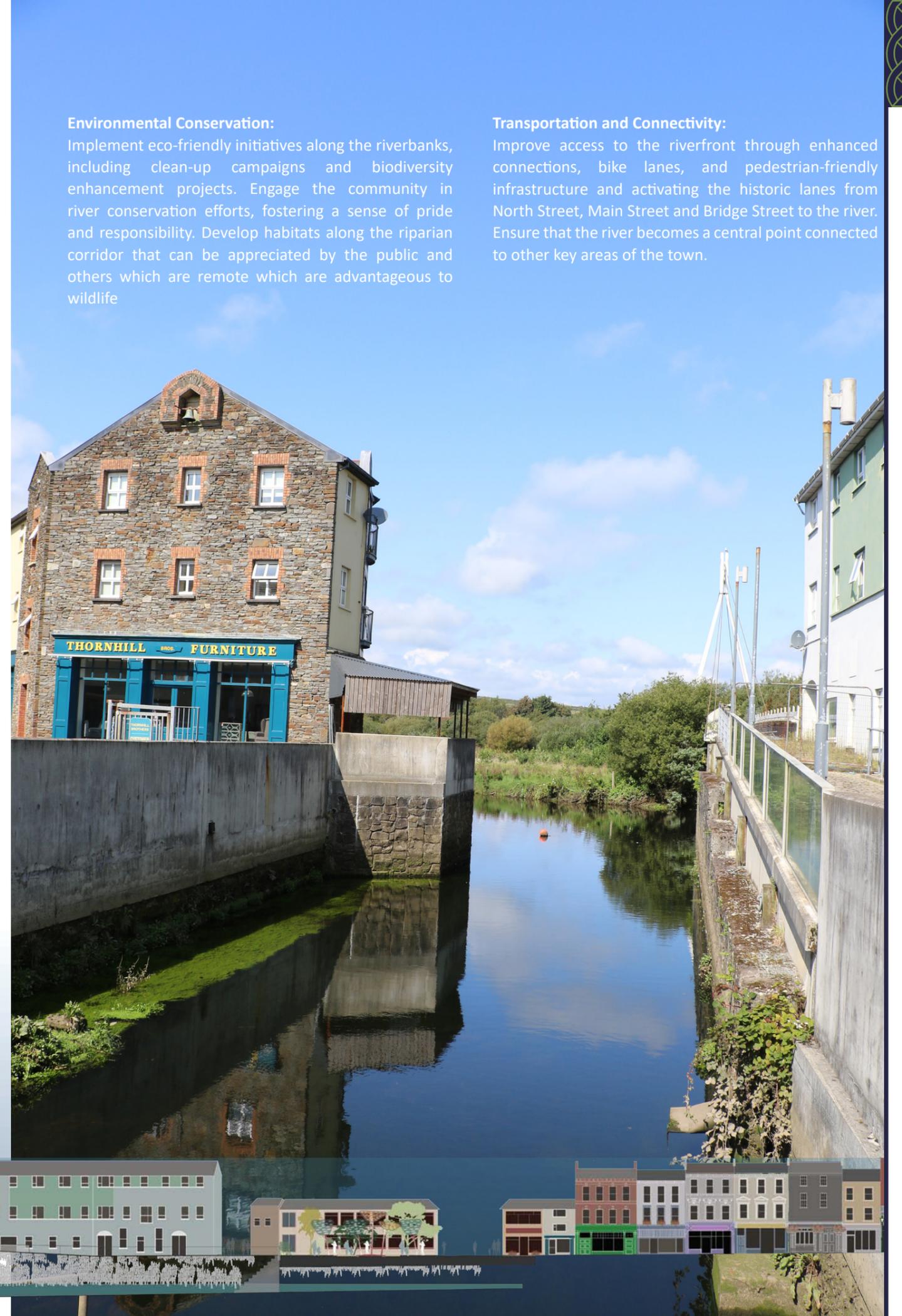
Incorporate historical and cultural elements along the river, providing information about its significance in the town's history. Develop signage and interactive displays that showcase the river's role in shaping Skibbereen's identity.

Environmental Conservation:

Implement eco-friendly initiatives along the riverbanks, including clean-up campaigns and biodiversity enhancement projects. Engage the community in river conservation efforts, fostering a sense of pride and responsibility. Develop habitats along the riparian corridor that can be appreciated by the public and others which are remote which are advantageous to wildlife

Transportation and Connectivity:

Improve access to the riverfront through enhanced connections, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and activating the historic lanes from North Street, Main Street and Bridge Street to the river. Ensure that the river becomes a central point connected to other key areas of the town.





6.0

Projects & Initiatives

What We Plan to Do, and When

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

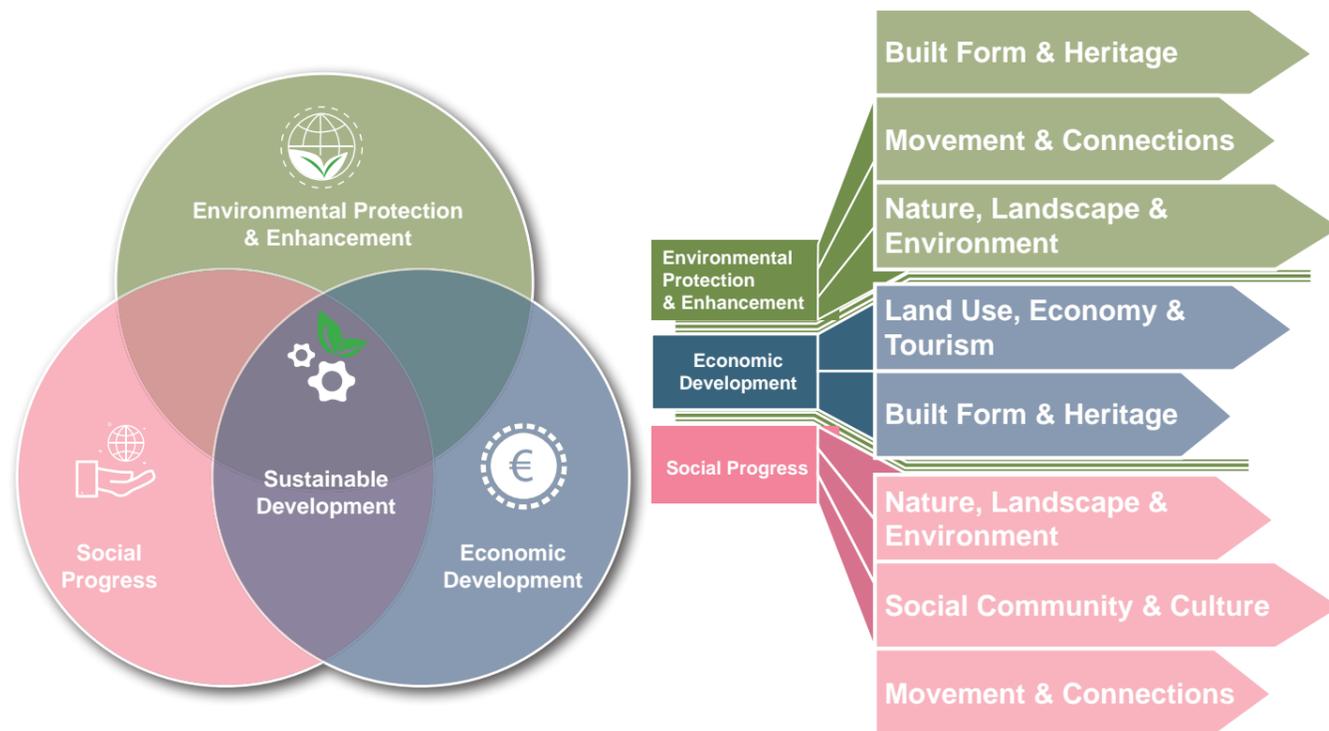
Sustainable Development Themes

The 'Themes' set out below are a result of what "we read, what we were told and what we saw".

The six themes identified are: Movement & Connections; Nature, Landscape & Environment; Land Use, Economy & Tourism; Social Community & Culture; Built Forms & Heritage; Addressing the River. Theme objectives are particularly important as they provide an overarching framework for addressing the individual challenges facing the Town Centre and delivering the Vision.

Timeframe and Priority

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



Sustainable Development Pillars

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

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

Actions have been derived from what we read, what we were told and what we saw. The actions are presented in the following sections as projects.

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

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Actions

current circumstances. Projects might take longer, and change from short to medium, or medium to long should conditions and the progress of other projects change that are unforeseeable at the time of writing.

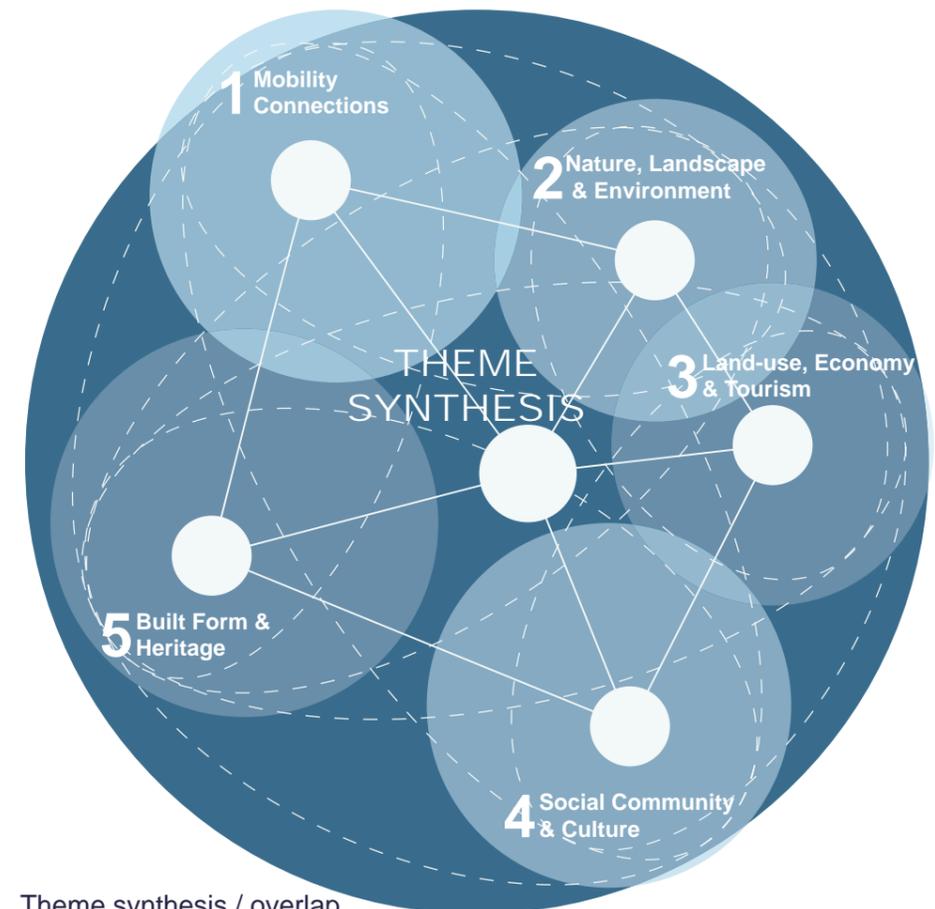
While the categorisation of proposals into short-term, medium-term and long-term projects is envisaged and approximate, time scale might shift due to changing circumstances which could extend timelines for unforeseeable reasons. Critical is the delivery of short-term projects to secure success and community satisfaction while keeping the momentum of urban regeneration progress.

Short-term project for quick return and positive impact are:

- Universal Access & Age-friendly Strategy
- River Ilan Blueway Promotion

- Promote Skibbereen Heritage Trail & App
- Develop Town Hall as a community venue
- Promote Social Inclusion through Active Lifestyles
- Apply for a 30km/h town

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



Theme synthesis / overlap

Projects & Action List - Priority, Time-frame, Promoter

Project List			
Theme 1: Movement & Connections			
ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
MC1	Enhance the public realm for central streets	Long	CCC
MC2	Progress the development of Levis Quay Public Realm	Long	CCC
MC3	Advance the development of Riverside Walk	Medium	CCC/P
MC4	Advance the Development of Marsh Car-Park	Medium	CCC
MC5	Progress the resolution of the pedestrian bridge connecting the Marsh Car Park to Levis Quay	Medium	CCC/G/P
MC6	Examine the potential for a second pedestrian bridge from the Marsh Car Park to the Library	Long	CCC
MC7	Implement Universal Accessibility & Age Friendly Strategy	Short	CCC
MC8	Progress the development of a safe route to school (relief road)	Medium	CCC/G
MC9	Examine the potential for the enhancement of flood defences through planting / greening	Short/ Medium	CCC/G
MC10	Develop wayfinding and signage around the town	Short	CCC/C
MC11	Develop the Rock amenity area	Medium	C/CCC/G
MC12	Promote Active travel / soft mobility modes	Short/ Medium	CCC/G

Theme 2: Nature, Landscape & Environment			
ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
EN1	Advance the Development of Marsh Ecology park – walks, biodiversity promotion, trails, bird hides, etc.	Medium / Long	C/CCC/G
EN2	Examine the potential for the installation of EV charging spaces	Short - Medium	CCC/P
EN3	Promote the principle of nature-based solutions and sustainable urban drainage systems	Medium	C/CCC/P
EN4	Promote Biodiversity & Urban Greening	Short - Medium	C/CCC/P
EN5	Promote Skibbereen as a national Eco-Tourism destination	Medium	P/C

Theme 3: Land Use, Economy & Tourism			
ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
LE1	Support Riverfront Commercial Development to capitalise on dual aspect	Medium - Long	P/CCC
LE2	Address Vacancy & Dereliction	Short - Medium	P/CCC
LE3	Examine the potential to develop Greenways	Medium	C/CCC/P/G
LE4	Improve Skibbereen's Digital Blueprint	Short - Medium	P/C/CCC
LE5	Examine the potential for public art / sculpture	Short - Medium	C/CCC/P
LE6	Examine the potential for a digital tourism kiosk	Medium	C/CCC/G
LE7	Promote the River Ilen Blueway	Short	CCC/P/G
LE8	Promote Skibbereen Heritage Trail and App	Short	C/CCC/P
LE9	Develop & promote the Skibbereen Brand with a unique Town Identity	Short	CCC/P

Theme 4: Social Community and Culture			
ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
SC1	Develop the Town Hall as a venue	Short	CCC/C
SC2	Promote age-friendly / youth initiatives	Short/ Medium	C/CCC/P
SC3	Promote Social Inclusion through Active Lifestyles	Short	CCC/C
SC4	Develop and support events and festivals	Short/ Medium	C/CCC/P/G

Theme 5: Built Form & Heritage			
ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
BH1	Examine the potential for a Shopfront Improvement scheme for the Town	Medium	CCC/P/G/C
BH2	Promote Conservation, Repair and Refurbishment of Heritage Assets	Medium - Long	CCC/G/P
BH3	Advance the regeneration of the Steam Mill, Ilen Street	Medium - Long	CCC/G
BH4	Examine Potential of Living Above Shops	Medium - Long	CCC/G/P
BH5	Promote Heritage Events & Activities	Short - Medium	CCC/P/C
BH6	Promote understanding of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designations within the town	Medium	CCC

Abbreviations:

CCC = Cork County Council
 G = Government/National Funding
 P = Private sector
 C = Community / Residents

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections

THEME 1: Movement & Connections

To envision and revitalise the town centre as an inclusive space for everyone.

- Update existing traffic flow & parking proposals for the Town Centre.
- Create a safe, friendly and accessible pedestrian environment in the Town Centre.
- Provide new river crossings, and circular and connected riverside walks with greenway.
- Provide location appropriate cycle infrastructure including dedicated bicycle lanes and bicycle parking & shared use areas in constrained Town Centre locations
- Connect through soft mobility modes, residential feeder areas with schools and sports facilities
- Promote a dynamic and integrated network of movement by different travel means
- Connect and widen the pedestrian connectivity
- Develop a fully integrated public realm strategy for the Town Centre
- Develop & promote existing and new public open spaces within and close to the Town Centre

Theme 1: Movement & Connections

ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
PM1	Enhance the public realm for central streets	Long	CCC
PM2	Progress the development of Levis Quay Public Realm	Long	CCC
PM3	Advance the development of Riverside Walk	Medium	CCC/P
PM4	Advance the Development of Marsh Car-Park	Medium	CCC
PM5	Progress the resolution of the pedestrian bridge connecting the Marsh Car Park to Levis Quay	Medium	CCC/G/P
PM6	Examine the potential for a second pedestrian bridge from the Marsh Car Park to the Library	Long	CCC
PM7	Implement Universal Accessibility & Age Friendly Strategy	Short	CCC
PM8	Progress the development of a safe route to school (relief road)	Medium	CCC/G
PM9	Examine the potential for the enhancement of flood defences through planting/greening	Short/ Medium	CCC/G
PM10	Develop wayfinding and signage around the town	Short	CCC/C
PM11	Develop the Rock amenity area	Medium	C/CCC/G
PM12	Promote Active travel / soft mobility modes	Short/ Medium	CCC/G

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Central Streets

ENHANCED PUBLIC REALM FOR CENTRAL STREETS	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM01
Timeframe	Long
Promoter	CCC/G
Location	Main St, Bridge St, North St, Ilen St, Market St, Townshend st & Mardyke St.
Key Components	High quality pavement, widened footpaths, additional & improved crossings, seating, decluttering, tree planting, SuDs, integrated art, reduced parking, reduced traffic.

LOCATION: CENTRAL STREETS

Enhanced Public Realm For Central Streets

A public realm vision to unlock the full potential of Skibbereen's central streets, the project should revitalise the public realm and streetscape. Recognising the profound impact that well-designed urban spaces can have on community life, commerce, and cultural vibrancy, this strategy will breathe new life into the heart of Skibbereen. By prioritising the enhancement of the central streets, the project should aim to create inviting, accessible and dynamic public spaces that reflect the unique character of the town. This long term project in its most ambitious form would rebalanced the use of streets away from vehicles to pedestrians, cyclists and soft mobility modes. Parking would be limited to short term loading and disabled bays as required.

Key town centre civic spaces such as the Town Hall Square and the space at Levis Quay would be integrated in to the strategy on a phased basis.

Key to the success of the vision would be a general directive to reduce traffic volumes through the implementation of recommendations arising out of the forthcoming MHL updated traffic and transport strategy.



Clonakilty Public Realm Improvements



Chattam Street, Dublin

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Levis Quay

Progress The Development Of Levis Quay Public Realm

Levis Quay, situated at the confluence of the Caol Stream and the Ilan River in Skibbereen, holds immense potential as a vibrant civic space. The design approach aims to transform it into a contemporary, community-centric area that serves as the centrepiece of the town.

Community Congregation Space:

The design should prioritise creating inviting spaces for community congregation. Open plazas with comfortable seating, planting, and public art installations will encourage people to gather, socialise, and enjoy the bustle of the town set against the River backdrop. Flexible seating arrangements should accommodate different group sizes and activities.

Small Events and Activities:

To cater to small events, the public realm will feature a multipurpose area suitable for hosting various activities. This could include a stage for performances, a space for small markets or pop-up shops, and areas for food stalls. The design will be flexible to adapt to different event scales, ensuring the space remains dynamic and engaging.

Music Events on Saturdays:

Acknowledging the existing small music events on Saturdays, the design should incorporate a flexible performance area with acoustics designed to enhance live music experiences. This space should allow for intimate gatherings and promote a sense of connection between the performers and the audience.

Contemporary Aesthetics:

The design will embrace contemporary aesthetics, incorporating clean lines, modern materials, and innovative landscaping techniques. Thoughtful lighting design will enhance the ambiance during evening events, creating a visually appealing atmosphere that complements the town's character.

Sustainability and Accessibility:

The project should prioritise sustainable design principles, including the use of eco-friendly materials, rainwater harvesting, and native plantings to promote biodiversity. Accessibility will be a key focus, ensuring that Levis Quay is inclusive and welcoming to people of all abilities.

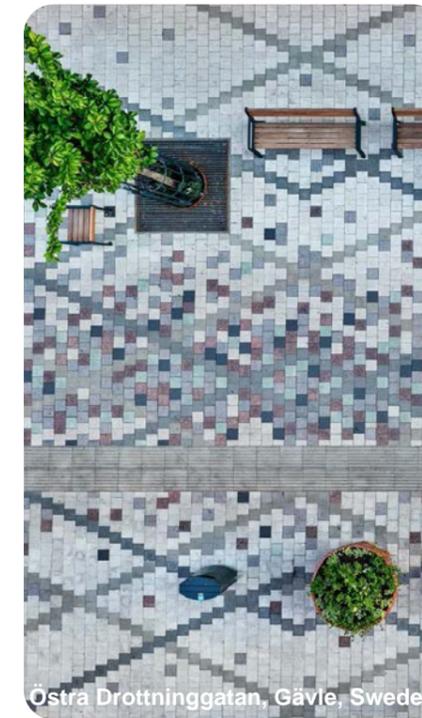


Levis Quay Plan

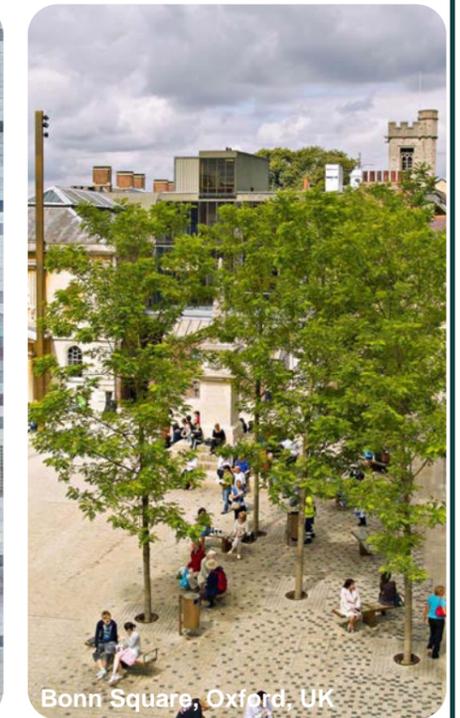
LEVIS QUAY	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM02
Timeframe	Long
Promoter	CCC/G
Location	Main St interface with The Caol Stream and River Ilan
Key Components	Seating, shelter, tree planting, high quality stone pavement, feature lighting, mural, performance area.
LOCATION: CENTRAL STREETS	



Plaza D'en Clos, Ripollet, Spain



Östra Drottninggatan, Gävle, Sweden

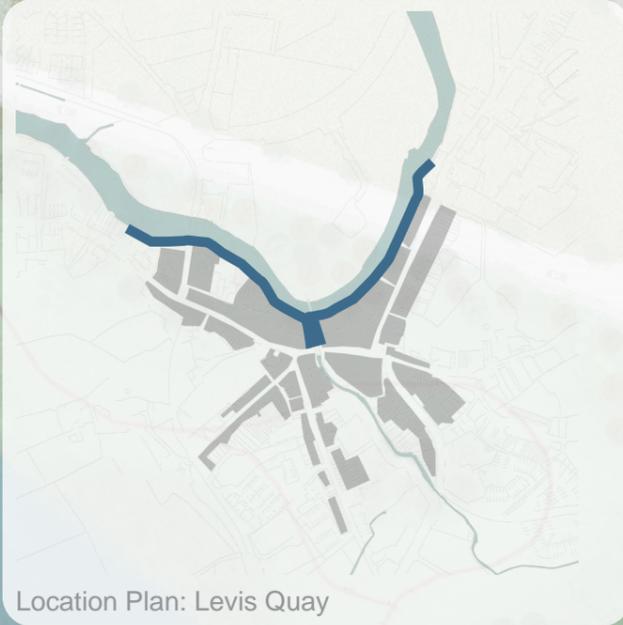


Bonn Square, Oxford, UK



6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Levis Quay

RIVERSIDE WALK	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM03
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	CCC/P
Location	Full Extent TBC. From New bridge to the library & beyond.
Key Components	Fully accessible, tree planting, SuDs, robust & floodable materials, seating, feature lighting, connected to existing streets throughout, safe & activated, commercial / retail frontage.
LOCATION: SOUTH BANK OF ILEN RIVER	



Greenway adjacent to Open Space



Town Centre Riverside



Riverside Promenade



Raised Boardwalk

Advancing the Development of Riverside Walk

This project expands upon an existing initiative to connect the disparate parts of the Ilen waterfront, and to capitalise on the commercial potential of the Riverside aspect. Animating the waterfront with restaurants, cafes and pop-ups will bring people in to the area will activate the promenade, especially in the evening.

Properties backing on to the River can develop separate river-facing commercial units or become dual aspect.

Significant design work has been undertaken for this project, outlining a comprehensive three phase strategy to link the South Bank of the River.

The goal of this project is to link the national routes from the East to the West of Skibbereen in three Stages. The purpose of a multi-stage approach is to encourage sustainable growth for use of the amenity, and to gradually get more stakeholders involved as the use of the spaces grow. It is envisaged that the project will developed in three stages as follows:

Stage 1 – The North Street Boardwalk

Stage 2 – The Commercial Integration

Stage 3 – West Skibbereen Walkway/
BoardwalkConnection

Reference: the Skibbereen Boardwalk Proposal Design Statement, in Association with SECAD, Design Republic, Skibbereen Tidy Towns & Voice.

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

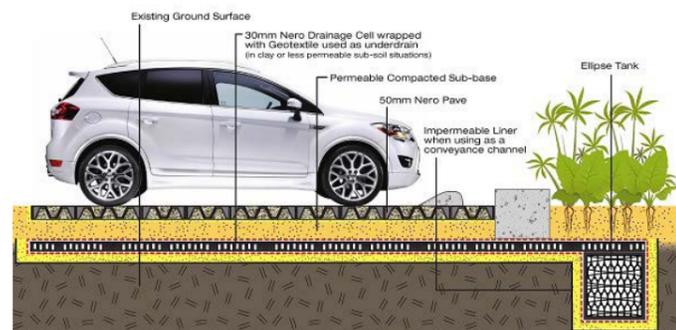
Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Marsh Car Park

Advance the Development of Marsh Car-Park

The design of the sustainable car park at the edge of Skibbereen aims to address the growing parking needs of the town while aligning with contemporary sustainability practices. This project serves not only as a functional parking solution but also as an opportunity to integrate cutting-edge Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and harmonise with the unique marsh landscape that surrounds it. Building upon the approved design, an update could focus on enhancing sustainability and environmental integration. The layout should optimise space for maximum parking capacity while minimising the impact on the natural surroundings. An increased emphasis on green spaces and landscaping will soften the infrastructure's visual impact and contribute to the local ecosystem.



Green Car Park Concept



Marsh Car Park set within an Ecology Park

MARSH CAR-PARK

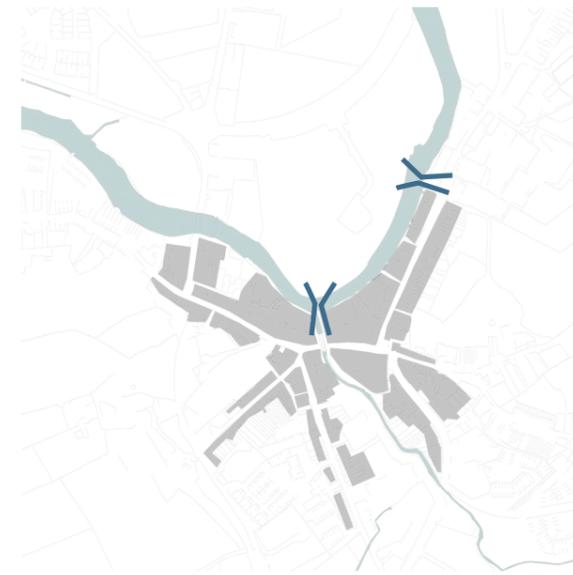
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM04
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	CCC
Location	Previously defined area, raised above flood level within the area known as The Marsh.
Key Components	250 parking spaces, integrated tree planting, SuDS, visual screening, permeable paving, direct safe pedestrian access to Town Centre

LOCATION: NORTH OF THE RIVER

PROJECTS & ACTION PLAN

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Levis Quay / The Marsh

Progressing The Resolution Of The Pedestrian Bridge Connecting The Marsh Car Park To Levis Quay

The existing disused bridge connecting Levis Quay to the Marsh is a longstanding project which is incomplete and has been on hold for many years. The bridge has long been identified as a critical component of Skibbereen's infrastructure, as it can allow the development of the proposed Marsh Car Park to go ahead, providing much-needed additional parking close to the Town Centre. In addition to providing a link to the Marsh the

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO MARSH	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM05 -06
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	CCC/G/P
Location	Location consistent with existing disused bridge at Levis Quay, (potential additional bridge connection at Library PM06)
Key Components	250 parking spaces, integrated tree planting, SuDS, visual screening, permeable paving, direct safe pedestrian access to Town Centre

LOCATION: RIVER ILEN / CENTRAL

added footfall through Levis Quay will help regenerate this part of the key opportunity area. At the time of writing this report, there is an unresolved legal dispute between Cork County Council and the developer of the bridge. Cork County Council are committed to finding resolution and realising this connection.



Existing disused pedestrian bridge

PROJECTS & ACTION PLAN

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Implement Universal Accessibility & Age-Friendly Strategy

Implementing a plan for universal access and age-friendliness in Skibbereen involves practical steps that prioritise inclusivity and community well-being. A comprehensive accessibility audit should be conducted, identifying areas where physical barriers exist and formulating targeted solutions such as ramps, widened sidewalks, and strategically-placed seating areas. Working together with local businesses to ensure their storefronts and services are wheelchair-accessible and accommodating to various needs is crucial.

The implementation of clear signage, both visual and tactile, can enhance navigation for all residents and visitors. Incorporating pedestrian-friendly features, such as crossings with audible signals and textured surfaces, can further contribute to the town's universal accessibility. Moreover, encouraging community engagement through public forums and workshops allows residents to voice their concerns and contribute ideas to enhance age-friendly initiatives.

Investing in smart urban design, including well-lit public spaces, benches, and rest areas, contributes to the creation of a comfortable environment for all. Lastly, the town can collaborate with transportation authorities to optimise public transportation options, ensuring they are accessible and well-connected. By systematically addressing these practical steps, Skibbereen can make significant strides toward becoming a universally accessible and age-friendly town.

UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY AGE FRIENDLY STRATEGY	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM07
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	CCC
Location	Throughout the Town
Key Components	Accessible streets, accessible signage & wayfinding, well lit public realm & community wellbeing

LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE



Accessible Streets

PROJECTS & ACTION PLAN

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Gortnaclohy, East of Skibbereen

(County Development Plan; SK-U-02 Indicative line of options for Gortnaclohy Relief Road)

Progress the Development of a Safe Route to School (Relief Road)

Notwithstanding significant enhancement to the local road network, including the N71 relief road constructed through the Marsh which diverts all passing traffic heading west away from the town centre, there still remains heavy traffic flows and congestion through the town at peak periods. The Skibbereen Town Development Plan, 2009 - 2015 identified an indicative route for the Gortnaclohy Relief Road (to the east of the town), which would redistribute traffic, away from the town centre and connect the N71 directly onto the R595 Baltimore Road.

The northeastern distributor road has been partially completed to the new Community School and it is considered of key importance for Skibbereen that this relief road is completed to the N71. This plan has identified two possible indicative routes for this north eastern section of the relief road, one skirting the eastern edge of the SK- B-05 business lands and a possible alternative shorter route further west which would help improve access to the SK-R-01 lands and potentially also to the schools located in this area and the eastern portion of the SK-X-01 lands.

A SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOL, (N72 - BALTIMORE RD LINK)	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM08
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	CCC
Location	Connecting the Schools at the east side of the town to the N72 and Baltimore Road in the South
Key Components	Full design for both routes, suitable intersection with N71, compliance with road design & safety standards

LOCATION: East of Town

Both routes lines are indicative pending the availability of a full design for the route. The critical requirement for this route is that it joins the N71 at a suitable location that would not compromise the safety, function or capacity of the N71, and otherwise complies with road design and safety standards. The Council will consider route options that satisfy these requirements.

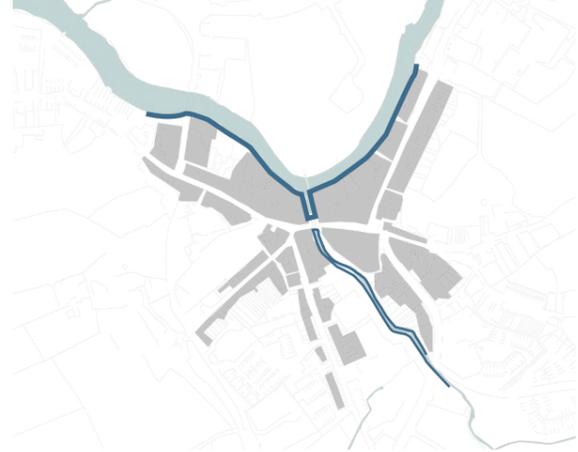


Safe Access to Schools

PROJECTS & ACTION PLAN

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: River / Stream Edge



Climbing plants on support mesh



Caol Stream after flood defence works

ENHANCEMENT OF FLOOD DEFENCES

ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM09
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	CCC/G
Location	Connecting the Schools at the east side of the town to the N72 and Baltimore Road in the South
Key Components	Environmental and aesthetic upgrade of existing flood defence infrastructure

LOCATION: RIVER ILEN & CAOL STREAM

Examine the Potential for the Enhancement of Flood Defences Through Planting/Greening

This project would promote a flood defences enhancement plan in Skibbereen by incorporating strategic planting and greening initiatives on and adjacent to the flood defences. Softening the existing concrete defence walls, introduce rough stone surfaces, and create habitats to enhance the resilience of vulnerable waterfronts against flooding while promoting biodiversity, replacing some of the habitats lost as part of the flood defence works. This approach not only strengthens resilience but also enhances the town's aesthetic appeal, creating a more sustainable and visually pleasing environment. Collaborate with environmental experts to ensure optimal plant selection and landscaping practices, contributing to both flood resilience and the overall beautification of Skibbereen



Caol Stream before flood defence works



Vernacular Stonework Cladding

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Thoroughout

Develop Wayfinding and Signage Around the Town

This Initiative should develop a comprehensive Wayfinding and Signage system throughout Skibbereen to enhance the town's accessibility and visitor experience. It should provide clear navigation for pedestrians and drivers, highlighting key attractions, parking areas, and historical points of interest. Collaborate with local artists for aesthetically pleasing signage design, ensuring a harmonious blend with the town's character and promoting aesthetic consistency for a unified visual identity. By improving navigation and promoting local landmarks, we aim to boost tourism and create a more engaging and visitor-friendly environment in Skibbereen.

WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM10
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	CCC/C
Location	Connecting the Schools at the east side of the town to the N72 and Baltimore Road in the South
Key Components	Wayfinding for drivers, pedestrians & cyclists. Accessible signage. Aesthetic consistency

LOCATION: TOWN WIDE



Information/Wayfinding Kiosk



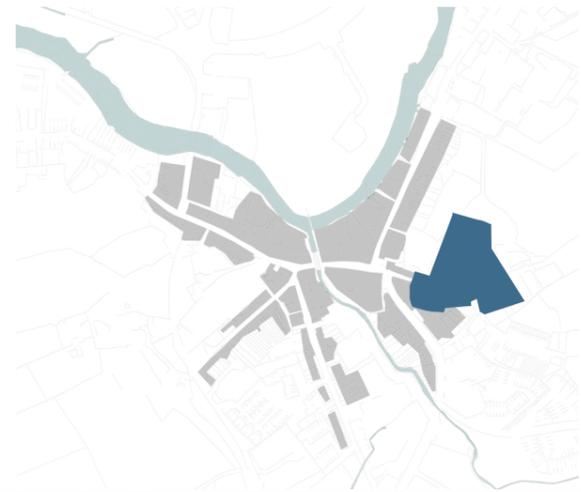
Information/Wayfinding



Sample Wayfinding strategy

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: The Rock

Develop The Rock Amenity Area

The Rock amenity area is a key open space directly adjacent to the heart of the town and with the privileged steep topography leading to panoramic views across the town and countryside. Much work has been done to elevate the quality of this space and work is ongoing. Looking in to the medium/long term, additional investment could further enhance the space particularly considering accessibility and adding amenities to the space for all ages



Landscaped Terraces



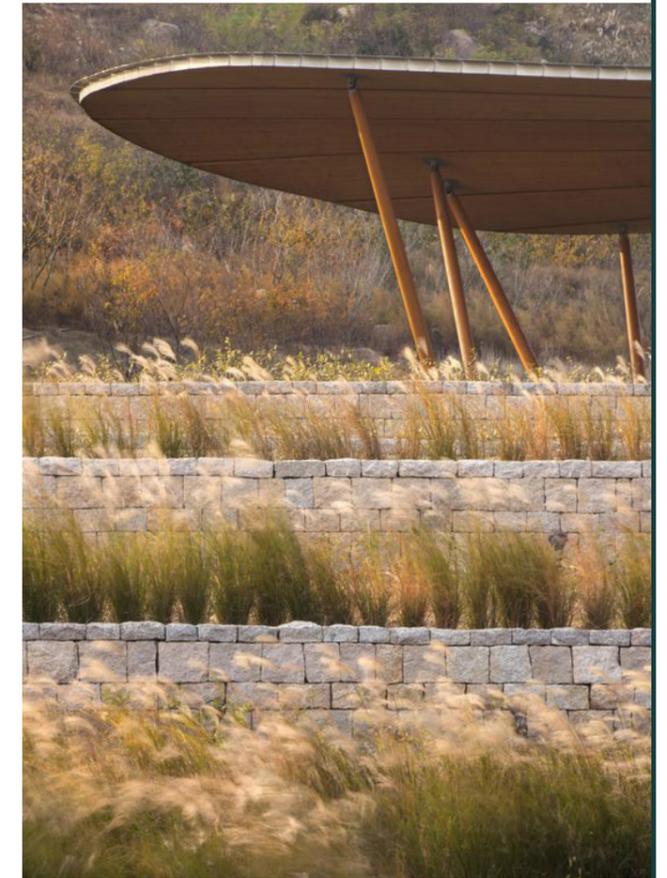
Destination hill-top lookout

THE ROCK, AMENITY AREA	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM11
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	C/CCC/G
Location	Rocky headland directly adjacent to the heart of the Town.
Key Components	One direct accessible route to the 'summit'. Development of archaeological features. New small social spaces. Improved bio-diversity. Improved lighting. Children's play elements (play-along-the way)

LOCATION: THE ROCK, EAST OF TOWN CENTRE



Rest/lookout areas with seating



Terracing, planting and shelter



Creative articulation of slopes and levels using natural materials

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Movement & Connections



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Promote Active Travel / Soft Mobility Modes

Endorsing active travel and more non-car methods of travel is seen to improve the quality of the town environment. Skibbereen already has a very strong community-driven cycle scene (Cyclesense.ie), who are fantastic advocates of all kinds of active travel for all ages and abilities and are working tirelessly to improve cycling infrastructure within and beyond the Town. Active travel has the potential to contribute significantly to the town's decarbonisation plans. This is in addition to its health, community, and other benefits. A coherent plan needs to be developed with a key objective to minimise traffic in the town centre. The plan should consider the following;

- Reconfigured and reduced traffic flow with redesigned streets to increase space for other road users including bicycles and pedestrians. The freed up space could also be used for greening and biodiversity initiatives. This approach will depend on the outcome of an updated traffic study by MHL, not available at the time of publication of this report.
- Out-of-town-centre parking combined with pedestrian infrastructure to move to/from and about the town centre. The proposed Marsh Car park fulfills this objective and other existing peripheral parking areas could be further promoted.
- Provision of bus shelters at designated bus stops which are roofed with natural wild seeded roof tops creating further biodiversity areas (examples in the

ACTIVE TRAVEL / SOFT MOBILITY	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	PM12
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	CCC/G
Location	This strategy should be applied throughout the town and beyond
Key Components	Town-wide cycle infrastructure & greenways, decarbonisation, improved pedestrian environment, edge/out-of-town parking, safe access to sports and open space amenities.
LOCATION: THROUGHOUT	

Netherlands available).

- Establish safe ways to access the O'Donovan Rossa Park and sports grounds on the north side of the N71 bypass for cyclists and pedestrians. These facilities are separated from the town centre and crucially the school by the road.
- The community consultation feedback has shown a strong appetite for on-street parking reduction in the central streets particularly the southern end of North St where cycling is problematic, Main St and Bridge St where pavement widths do not meet minimum standards.





6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Environment Projects

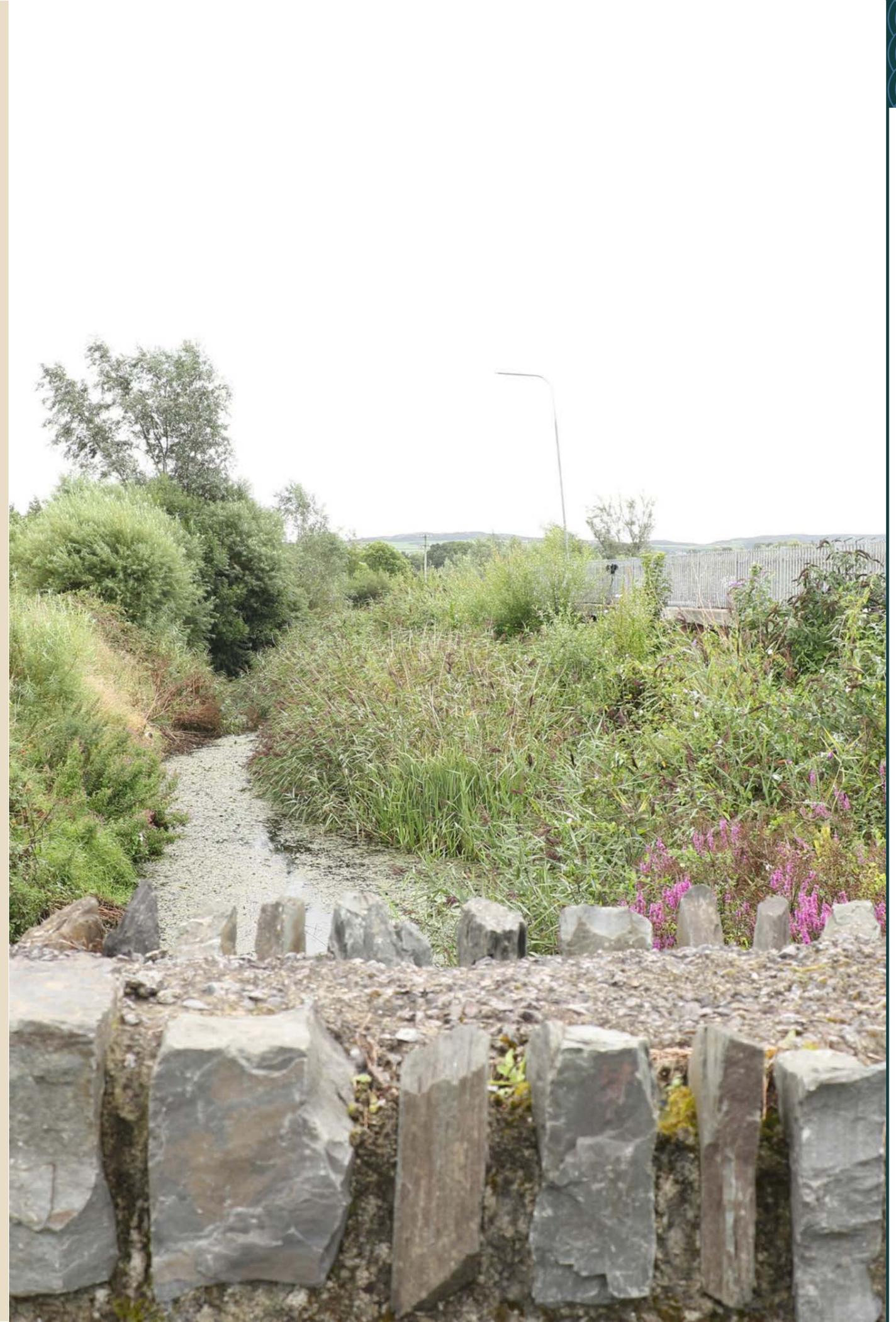
THEME 2: Nature, Landscape & Environment

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

- Reimagine and reactivate riverfront and increase its visibility and interaction with the town centre.
- Enhance the biodiversity and ecological value of the river corridor and improve the educational influence of this ecosystem for users
- Improve wayfinding.
- Introduce urban greening, nature-based solutions (nbs) and sustainable urban drainage Systems (SUDS) while protecting and enhancing natural heritage.
- Develop and encourage current and future initiatives which are aligned with sustainability principles

Theme 2: Nature, Landscape & Environment

ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
EN1	Advance the Development of Marsh Ecology park – walks, biodiversity promotion, trails, bird hides, etc.	Medium / Long	C/CCC/G
EN2	Examine the potential for the installation of EV charging spaces	Short - Medium	CCC/P
EN3	Promote the principle of nature-based solutions and sustainable urban drainage systems	Medium	C/CCC/P
EN4	Promote Biodiversity & Urban Greening	Short - Medium	C/CCC/P
EN5	Promote Skibbereen as a national Eco-Tourism destination	Medium	P/C



6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Environment Projects



Location Plan: Marsh to North of River

Advance the Development of Marsh Ecology Park

The envisaged transformation of the northern space along the River Ilan, encompassing the proposed Marsh Cart Park, embodies The Skibbereen Marsh Ecology Park, - a vision dedicated to enriching biodiversity, advancing environmental education, and establishing a recreational haven for both residents and visitors. This initiative entails rejuvenating underutilised marshland into a flourishing ecosystem, complete with walking trails, birdwatching areas, and educational zones.

Collaborative efforts with local environmental groups, schools, and experts ensure sustainable landscaping that nurtures native flora and fauna. Informational signage will be strategically placed to enlighten visitors about the park's ecological significance, fostering a profound connection with nature.

The Marsh Ecology Park not only bolsters the town's environmental resilience but also provides a serene retreat for the community, aligning seamlessly with Skibbereen's dedication to sustainable urban planning—a verdant sanctuary enhancing the town's overall well-being and ecological diversity. The space could include the elements illustrated on the concept plan adjacent.

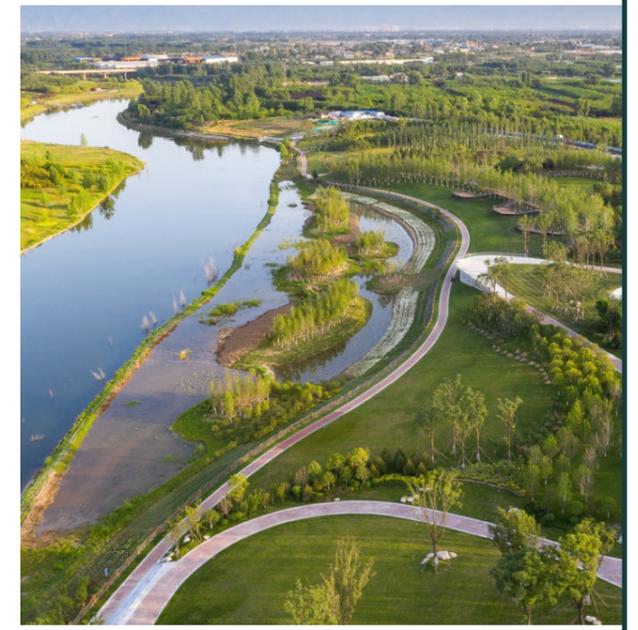


LEGEND

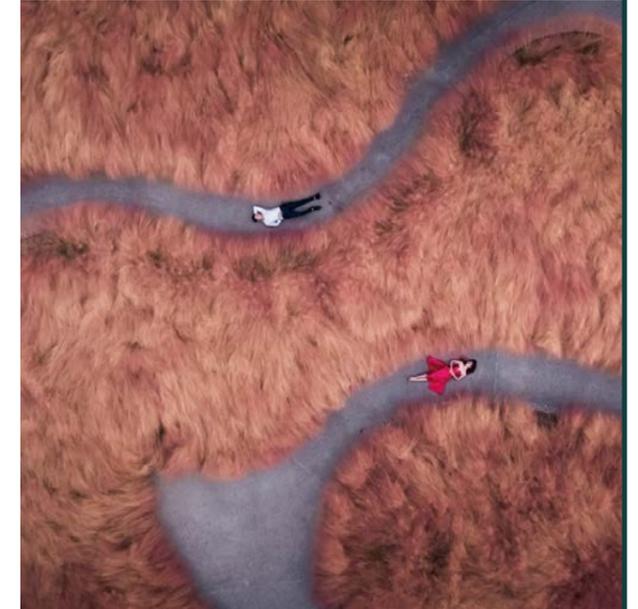
1. Marsh Car Park
2. Pedestrian Bridge
3. Civic Spaces
4. Elevated Riverside Walk
5. Floodable Meadows
6. Wetland
7. Flood Relief Stream
8. Community Garden
9. Rewilded Nature Reserve
10. Levis Quay

Illustrative Concept for Marsh Ecology Park & Riverside

MARSH ECOLOGY PARK	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	EN01
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	CCC/G
Location	The open undeveloped land between the N72 and the River Ilan
Key Components	Rewilded nature reserve, wetlands, floodable meadows, pedestrian access, civic spaces
LOCATION: NORTH OF THE RIVER	



Feng-River-Eco-Park China



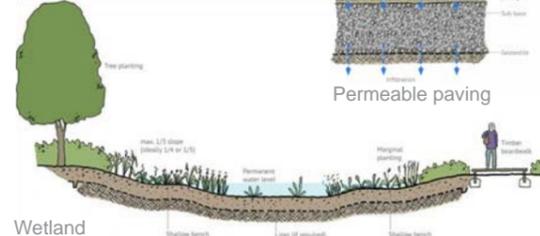
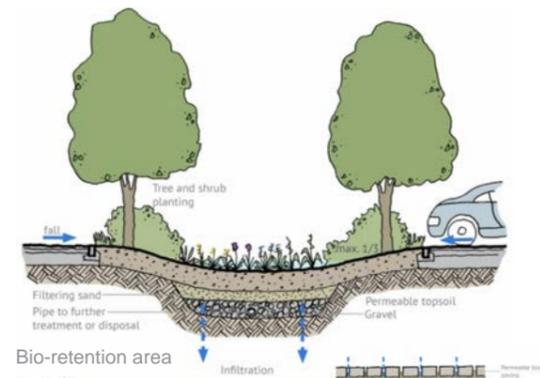
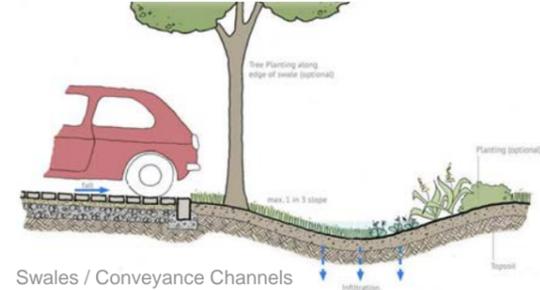
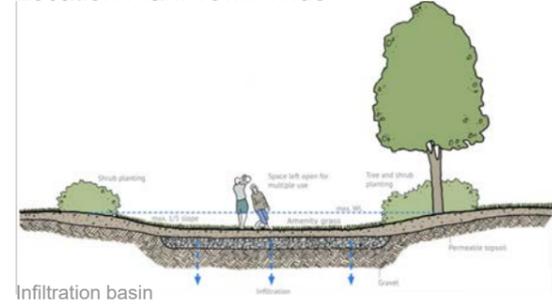
Informal Paths Facilitating an Immersive Experience

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Environment Projects



Location Plan: Town-Wide



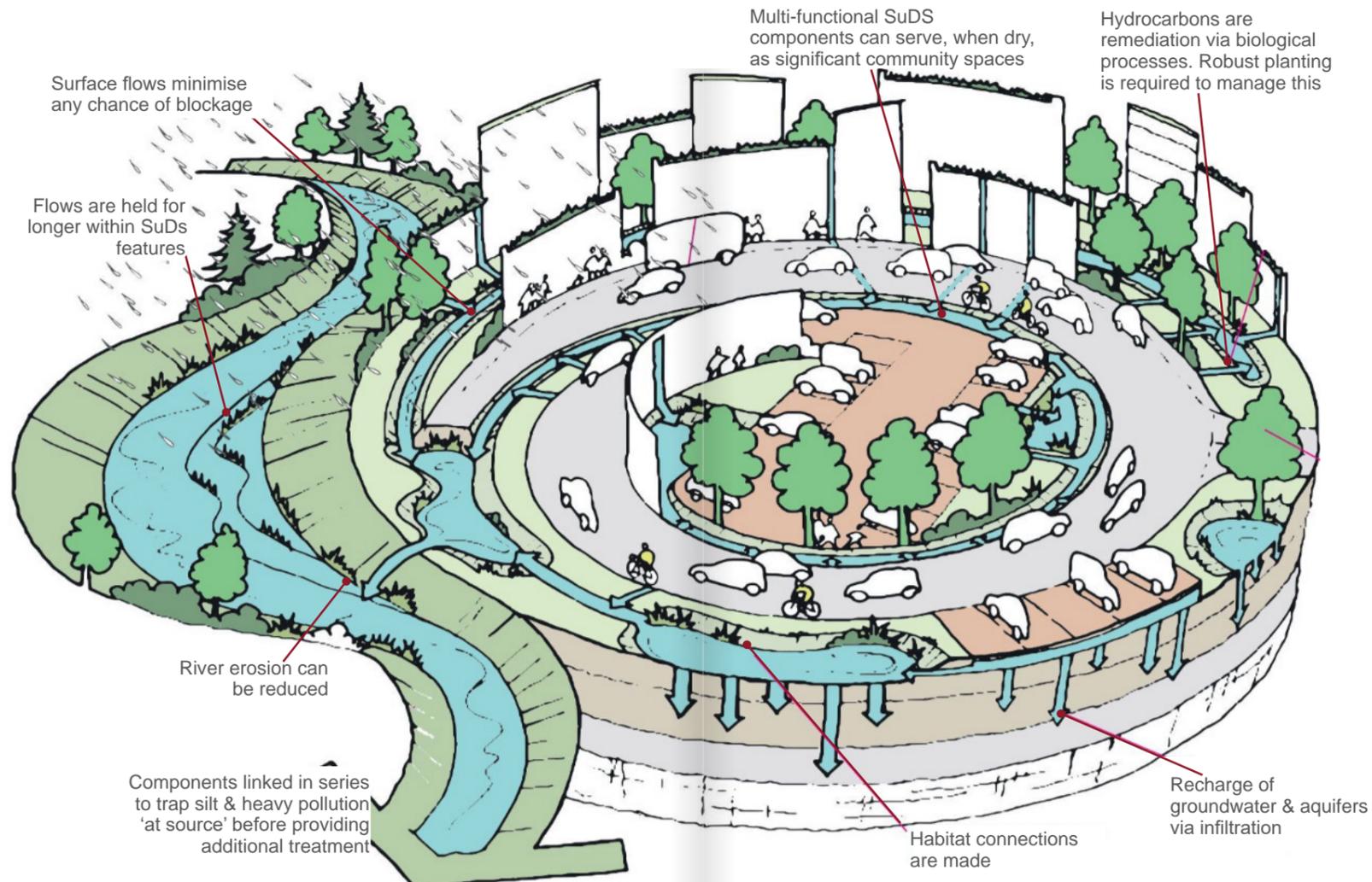
Promote the Principle of Nature-Based Solutions & Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

The importance of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) in addressing environmental challenges and enhancing the overall well-being of the community is strongly supported by this plan. By embracing NBS, which leverage the inherent benefits of nature to address issues like flooding, air quality, and biodiversity, Skibbereen aims to create a resilient and sustainable urban environment. Additionally, the implementation of SUDs ensures efficient stormwater management, reducing the risk of flooding and promoting water conservation. Through a holistic approach that integrates NBS and SUDs, Skibbereen is committed to fostering a greener, more livable community that harmonises with the natural landscape while safeguarding its ecological integrity. The following are key components of a SuDS strategy;

- Source control

- Swales & conveyance
- Filtration
- Infiltration
- Retention & detention
- Wetlands
- Inlets, outlets & control

NATURE -BASED SOLUTIONS / SUDS	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	EN02
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	C/CCC/G
Location	All new developments & regenerated streets and landscapes throughout the town
Key Components	Nature based solutions, swales, Retention channels, constructed wetlands, retention ponds.
LOCATION: THROUGHOUT	



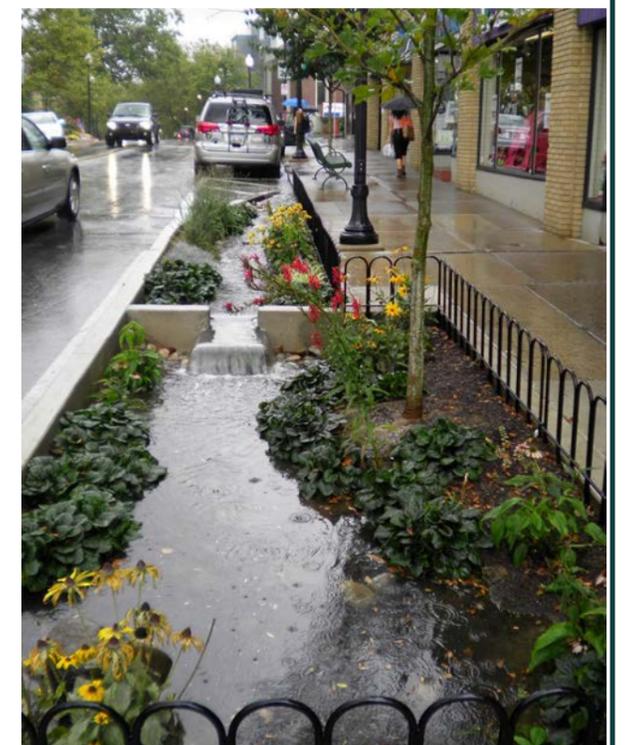
SuDS schemes offer diverse benefits over conventional drainage



Swale on Urban Street



Swale on Urban Street



Allen St, Rain Garden, Pennsylvania

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Environment Projects



Location Plan: Town-Wide

EV CHARGING	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	EN03
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	CCC/P
Location	Throughout the Town, Car Parks, residential on-street parking
Key Components	Collaboration with Businesses, Public-Private Partnerships, Smart City Solutions, Educational Campaigns, Government Incentives, Inclusive Planning

LOCATION: THROUGHOUT

Examine the Potential for the Installation of EV Charging Spaces

The incorporation of electric vehicle (EV) charging points into Skibbereen signifies a progressive step toward sustainable and eco-friendly urban development. By integrating these charging points, Skibbereen not only embraces the future of transportation but also encourages the adoption of clean energy solutions, contributing to a greener and more environmentally conscious community. This initiative supports the growing trend towards electric mobility, making Skibbereen a more accessible and forward-thinking town for both residents and visitors alike.

Resources should be allocated for the installation of a network of EV charging stations strategically placed across the town. Focus on key areas such as the town centre, commercial districts, and public spaces. The following strategies should be employed

- Collaboration with Businesses
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Smart City Solutions
- Educational Campaigns
- Government Incentives
- Inclusive Planning



Charging incorporated in to light columns



Private charging to cross pavement for on-street parking

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Environment Projects



Location Plan: Town-Wide

ECO-TOURISM DESTINATION	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	EN04
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	P/C
Location	Throughout the Town Centre and beyond.
Key Components	Greenways, Eco-experiences, sustainable accommodation, Ecosystem services education

LOCATION: THROUGHOUT

Promote Skibbereen As A National Eco-Tourism Destination

To position Skibbereen as a premier Eco-Tourism destination, the town must embark on a multifaceted strategy.

Begin by assessing local biodiversity, shaping interpretive trails, and highlighting unique ecological features with expert collaboration. Invest in Eco-friendly infrastructure, from sustainable lodgings to low-impact transportation, fostering a town-wide commitment to sustainability. Implement a robust marketing campaign, leveraging digital platforms and collaborations with travel influencers to showcase Skibbereen's dedication to responsible tourism.

Educate and involve the community in conservation efforts, creating a shared commitment. Introduce curated Eco-experiences like guided nature walks to entice Eco-conscious travelers. By intertwining conservation, community involvement, and genuine green practices, Skibbereen can emerge as a beacon for sustainable tourism, inviting visitors to explore its unique natural beauty responsibly.



Cycling Holidays



Ziedlejas Wellness Resort, Latvia

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Environment Projects

BIODIVERSITY & URBAN GREENING	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	EN05
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	C/CCC/P
Location	Throughout the Town Centre and beyond.
Key Components	Urban Greening, street trees, pocket forests, green roofs, green walls, rainwater gardens
LOCATION: THROUGHOUT	



Location Plan: Town-Wide



Promote Biodiversity & Urban Greening

Enable the integration of more greening into the town centre to endorse biodiversity.

Develop an ambitious Greening for Biodiversity Plan. Provide leadership and advocacy and resources for Skibbereen as the most biodiversity friendly small town in Ireland. Bring nature back into the heart of Skibbereen and reward community action. Create biodiverse and accessible pocket forests, nature-rich parks and gardens; green roofs and walls; treelined streets & rainwater gardens. Delivery should include:

- Increase number of street trees (native species) by 70%
- Increase provision (boxes) for building dependent biodiversity, swifts, swallows, martins & bats.
- Ensure all municipal grassland areas follow 'No Mow May Plus' guidelines (exceptions only for absolute road safety etc)



Urban Tree Cover



Green Facades and Roofs

- Increased pollinator planting
- Develop and implement nature friendly enhancements to the grey infrastructure of the flood relief system. From water bird nest sites (e.g. the dipper) to cladding much of the concrete infrastructure with natural stone that provide niches for vegetation and invertebrates to establish and flourish.
- Medium term complete a review of the whole flood risk management scheme to establish opportunities for biodiversity across its area.
- Create a Biodiversity Town Map for Skibbereen and add it to <https://townmaps.ie/skibbereen-town-map/>





6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism

THEME 3: Land Use, Economy & Tourism

To cultivate a dynamic and robust local economy, drawing in investment to enhance the town's economic vitality.

- Promote the principals of sustainability and climate action through ethical and environmentally conscious investment focusing on circular economy as a Skibbereen brand. Encourage investment opportunities.
- Further develop the existing 'Digital Hub' with co-working space expansion.
- Promote the extension of opening hours of shops through collaboration of shop owners and service providers.
- Encourage street café culture through pavement and furniture design
- Promote and support new accommodations, Hotel, B&Bs and bedsits in the town centre.
- Regenerate and reuse vacant/derelict buildings and underutilised floorspace within the Town Centre.
- Utilise digital technology as a means of promoting existing businesses and attracting new business to the Town.

Theme 3: Land Use, Economy & Tourism

ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
LE1	Support Riverfront Commercial Development to capitalise on dual aspect	Medium - Long	P/CCC
LE2	Address Vacancy & Dereliction	Short - Medium	P/CCC
LE3	Examine the potential to develop Greenways	Medium	C/CCC/P/G
LE4	Improve Skibbereen's Digital Blueprint	Short - Medium	P/C/CCC
LE5	Examine the potential for public art / sculpture	Short/ Medium	C/CCC/P
LE6	Examine the potential for a digital tourism kiosk	Medium	C/CCC/G
LE7	Promote the River Ilen Blueway	Short	CCC/P/G
LE8	Promote Skibbereen Heritage Trail and App	Short	C/CCC/P
LE09	Develop & promote the Skibbereen Brand with a unique Town Identity	Short	CCC/P

Abbreviations:

CCC = Cork County Council

G = Government/National Funding

P = Private sector

C = Community / Residents

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Landuse, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Support Riverfront Commercial Development to capitalise on dual aspect

This initiative is strongly linked to the Development Of The Riverside Walk project. Key to the success of that project will be drawing people down to the waterfront with a mix of commercial uses. In particular the promotion of vibrant pop-up shops, cafes, and cultural hubs which could open in the evening to animate the space after dark. This initiative aims to transform the riverfront into a bustling hub of activity, drawing residents and visitors alike to enjoy the scenic views. This River promenade has the potential to become a new destination within the commercial heart of the Town.

At present, the south-bank of the river and the proposed promenade interfaces with the rear of properties which front on to North Street, Main Street and Bridge Street. These businesses could become dual aspect similar to Riverside Cafe on North Street. There may also be an opportunity for separate businesses to front on to the River.

Several lanes connect the streets down to the Riverside, many of which are in private ownership. However, these links are key to the success of the river promenade in encouraging footfall.

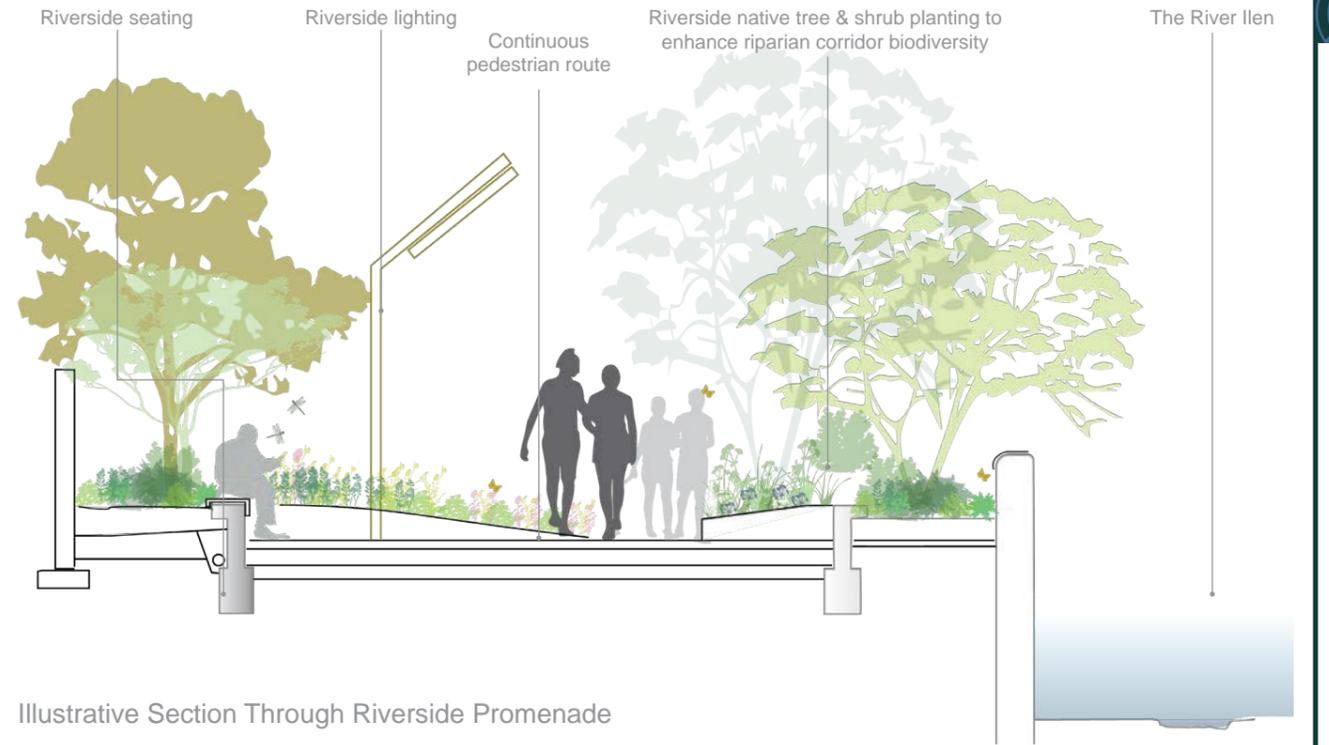
RIVERFRONT COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE01
Timeframe	Medium - Long
Promoter	P/CCC
Location	Predominantly the southern side of River Ilen
Key Components	Riverside walk, mixed uses, vibrant & activated, night time economy, connection with River, key destination, permeability/ connectivity to central streets, dual aspect to streets, trees & planting.
LOCATION: SOUTH SIDER OF ILEN	



Pop-up linear market



Indicative Section from a central Street to the River



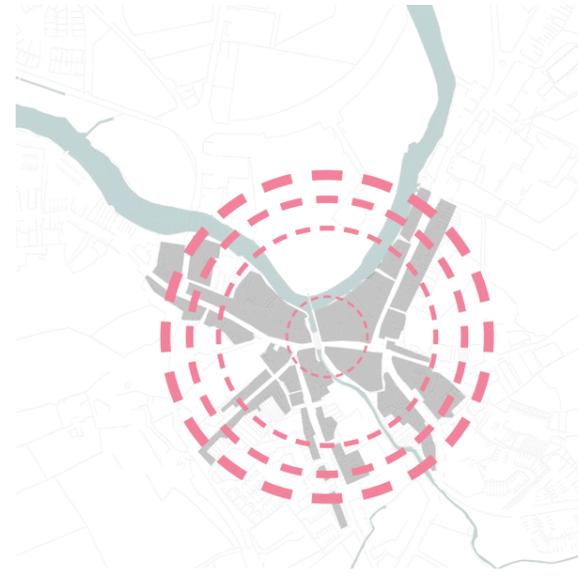
Illustrative Section Through Riverside Promenade



Illustrative Section Through Riverside Promenade & Commercial Unit

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Landuse, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Address Vacancy & Dereliction

Skibbereen’s regeneration must focus on transforming vacant and derelict spaces into vibrant assets, promoting community engagement, and attracting sustainable development. This study assesses the extent of vacancy and dereliction at a high level; however, a further, comprehensive property inventory should be initiated to identify vacant structures and assess their potential for re-purposing. A targeted incentive programme should be implemented, offering grants or tax breaks to property owners who commit to redevelopment projects.

Collaboration is required with local artists and entrepreneurs to transform derelict spaces into cultural hubs, art galleries, or co-working spaces, injecting creativity and energy into the community. Partnerships between local businesses and property owners should be facilitated to encourage adaptive reuse. The community should be engaged through participatory planning sessions to gather insights and preferences, ensuring that redevelopment aligns with residents’ needs.

Lastly, bureaucratic processes should be simplified/ streamlined for approvals in order to expedite transformation efforts. This multi-faceted approach aims to address vacancy and dereliction systematically, promoting a renewed sense of community and attracting sustainable development to Skibbereen.

VACANCY & DERELICTION	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE02
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	P/CCC
Location	Predominantly the central streets including Main St, Bridge St, North St.
Key Components	Adaptive Re-use, living above shops, addressing shifting retail behavior, creating incentives, simplifying approvals.
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	



Kinsale, restored heritage buildings



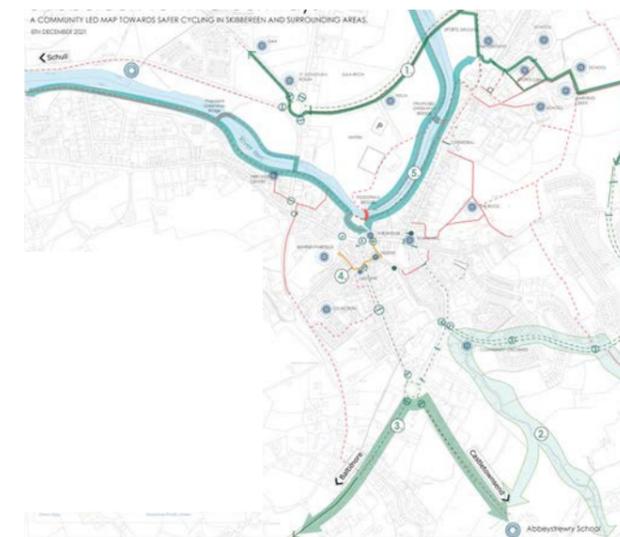
Dingle, Kerry



The Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, United Kingdom

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Examine the Potential to Develop Greenways

The development of West Cork Greenways is being progressed by the Council as part of its ongoing commitment to developing greenways across the county, aligning with the Government’s National Development Plan 2021- 2030. At the time of writing this report the First phase is underway with consultants appointed. It is proposed that all routes will originate in Skibbereen, and connect to the communities of Baltimore, Schull and Drimoleague, if deemed feasible. The trail-head for this and other proposed Greenways could be located in the Marsh Car Park

Several other Greenways have been suggested as part of the community consultation process. A comprehensive cycling infrastructure strategy has been developed by ‘Skibbereen Greenways’, this is documented in the Baseline Report. Five Greenway links have been identified as follows;

- Route 1; Linking Schools with Housing
 - Route 2; Russagh Loop & School-link
 - Route 3; Baltimore Rd- Abbeystrewy
 - Route 4; Fairfield Central Link (not a Greenway)
 - Route 5; Riverside,
- A route to the Skibbereen Rowing Club has also been suggested.

SKIBBEREEN GREENWAYS	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE03
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	P/CCC/C
Location	Predominantly the central streets including Main St, Bridge St, North St.
Key Components	Adaptive Re-use, living above shops, addressing shifting retail behavior, creating incentives, simplifying approvals.
LOCATION: MULTIPLE LOCATIONS	



Image courtesy of Skibb Greenway Facebook



Limerick Greenway

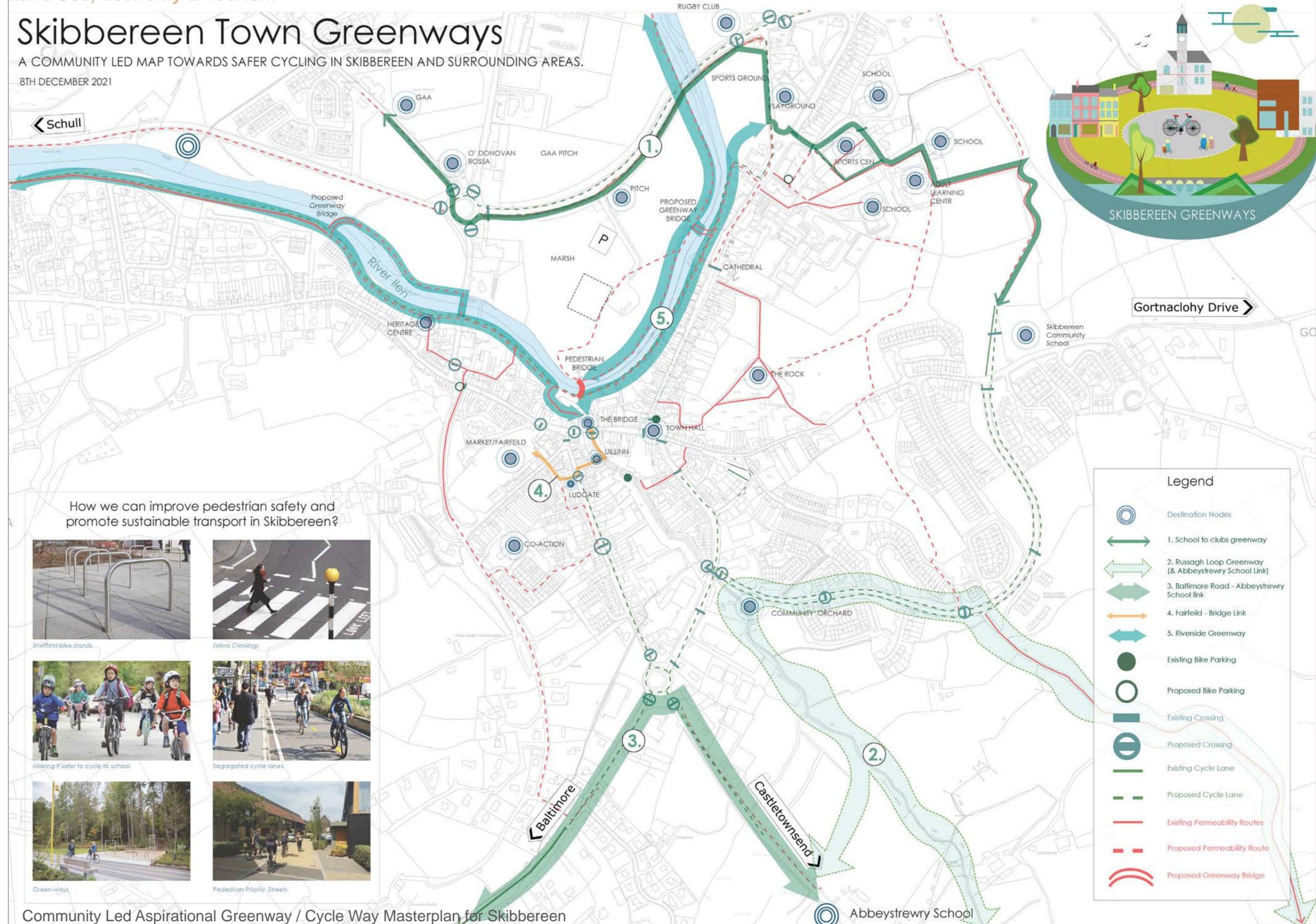
6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism

Skibbereen Town Greenways

A COMMUNITY LED MAP TOWARDS SAFER CYCLING IN SKIBBEREEN AND SURROUNDING AREAS.

8TH DECEMBER 2021



How we can improve pedestrian safety and promote sustainable transport in Skibbereen?



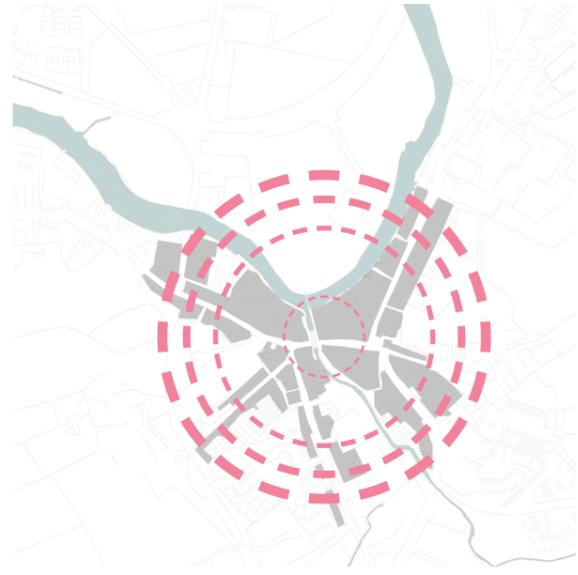
Legend	
	Destination Nodes
	1. School to clubs greenway
	2. Russagh Loop Greenway (& Abbeystrewry School Link)
	3. Ballinore Road - Abbeystrewry School link
	4. Fairfield - Bridge Link
	5. Riverside Greenway
	Existing Bike Parking
	Proposed Bike Parking
	Existing Crossing
	Proposed Crossing
	Existing Cycle Lane
	Proposed Cycle Lane
	Existing Permeability Routes
	Proposed Permeability Route
	Proposed Greenway Bridge

Community Led Aspirational Greenway / Cycle Way Masterplan for Skibbereen

NOTE - THIS IS A COMMUNITY LED ASPIRATIONAL PLAN. THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO INPUT INTO THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN. ALL ROUTES ARE INDICATIVE AND SUBJECT TO SURVEYS PLANNING AND LAND CONSENTS

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Improving Skibbereen's Digital Blueprint

Overview:

Skibbereen's digital blueprint serves as the foundation for its technological infrastructure and community connectivity. To elevate it to the next level, a comprehensive strategy should be implemented, encompassing various facets such as smart infrastructure, digital literacy, local business engagement, and community participation.

1. Smart Infrastructure:

- a. Upgrade Connectivity: Invest in upgrading broadband infrastructure to ensure high-speed internet access throughout Skibbereen, fostering seamless digital communication and encouraging tech-based businesses.
- b. Smart Utilities: Implement IoT technologies to create smart utilities, such as waste management systems and energy-efficient street lighting, enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.

2. Digital Literacy:

- a. Community Workshops: Organise regular workshops and training sessions on digital literacy for residents of all ages, focusing on essential digital skills, online safety, and the use of digital tools.
- b. Collaboration with Educational Institutions: Partner with local schools and colleges to integrate digital literacy into the curriculum, ensuring that the younger generation is well-equipped for the digital future.

IMPROVING THE DIGITAL BLUEPRINT	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE04
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	P/CCC
Location	Throughout
Key Components	Smart infrastructure, Upgraded connectivity, digital literacy, online-platforms, e-commerce capabilities, digital events, telemedicine services & health monitoring devices
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	

3. Business Engagement:

- a. Digital Transformation Support: Offer support and resources to local businesses for digital transformation, including the development of online platforms, e-commerce capabilities, and digital marketing strategies.
- b. Innovation Hubs: Continue to support innovation hubs and co-working spaces to encourage collaboration among local businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneurs, promoting a culture of innovation.

4. Community Participation:

- a. Digital Platforms for Civic Engagement: Develop online platforms for community members to participate in local governance, share feedback, and stay informed about civic initiatives.
- b. Digital Events and Festivals: Host digital events and festivals to showcase local talent, promote cultural exchange, and attract a wider audience, fostering a sense of community pride.

5. Sustainable Development:

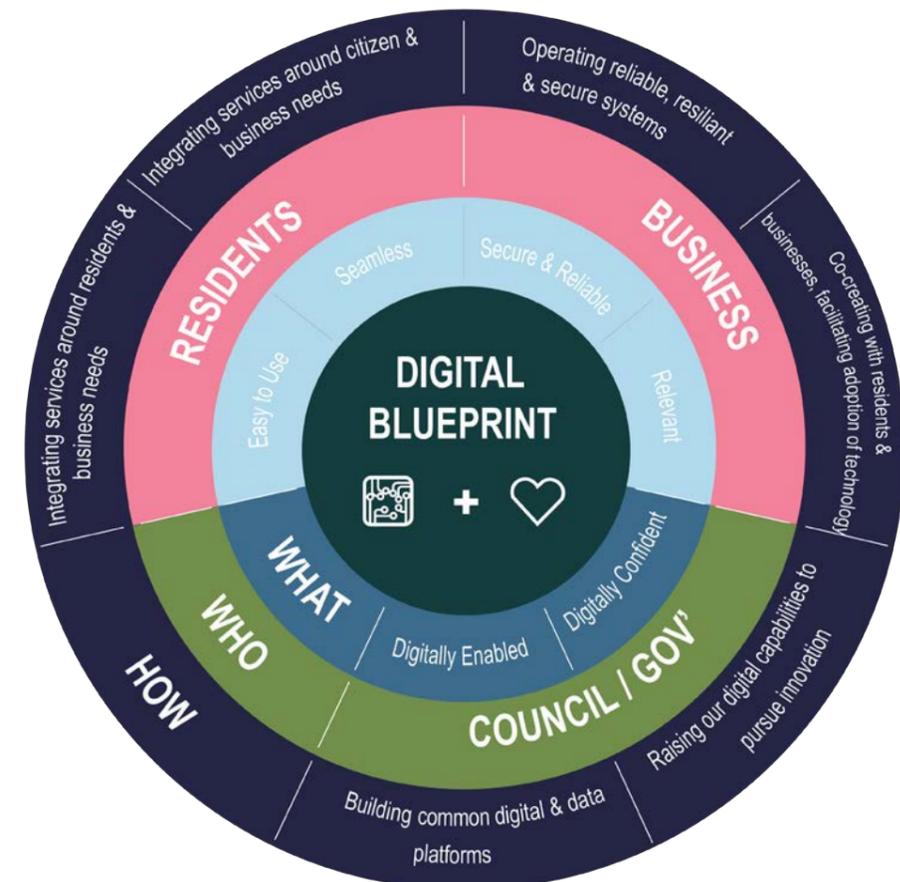
- a. Green Tech Initiatives: Promote the adoption of green technologies and sustainable practices within the community, such as solar panels, energy-efficient buildings, and eco-friendly transportation options.
- b. Digital Health Initiatives: Integrate digital health solutions, including telemedicine services and health monitoring devices, to enhance healthcare accessibility for residents

6. Collaboration with Tech Industry:

- a. Partnerships with Tech Companies: Encourage partnerships with tech companies and start-ups to bring innovative solutions and investments to Skibbereen, creating a tech ecosystem that supports local growth.
- b. Incubator Programmes: Support incubator programmes in nurturing local tech talent, providing resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

7. Marketing and Branding:

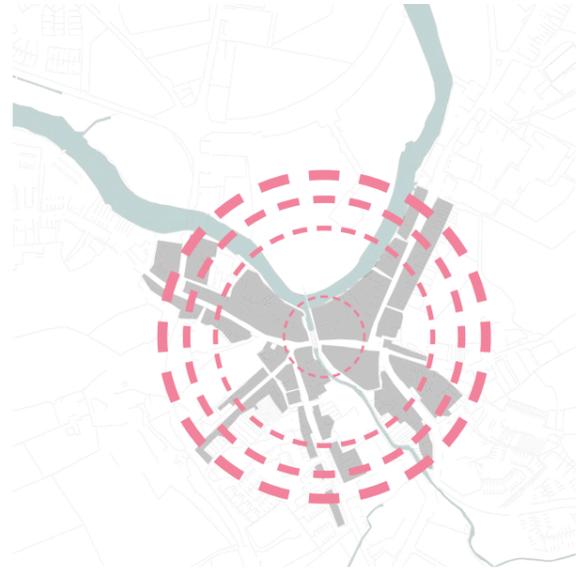
- a. Digital Presence: Strengthen Skibbereen's digital presence through an updated and user-friendly website, active social media engagement, and digital marketing campaigns to attract visitors, businesses, and investors.



Digital Blueprint Strategy

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Examine the Potential for Public Art/Sculpture

A public art and sculpture strategy for Skibbereen should enrich the cultural landscape while promoting community engagement and identity. Embracing the town's rich heritage, the strategy should aim to commission diverse artworks that resonate with local narratives, capturing the essence of Skibbereen's past, present, and future. Integrating public input through participatory processes, the strategy should ensure that residents contribute to the selection of themes and artists, promoting a sense of ownership and pride.

This initiative should prioritise the use of sustainable materials and an environmentally conscious approach, aligning with Skibbereen's commitment to ecological responsibility. Strategic placement of sculptures in key public spaces and along walking routes will enhance accessibility and encourage dialogue. By celebrating Skibbereen's unique character through public art, the strategy should aim to inspire creativity, stimulate economic growth, and promote a shared sense of place for residents and visitors alike. Suggested action plan may include the following;

PUBLIC ART / SCULPTURE	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE05
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	C/CCC/P
Location	Throughout
Key Components	Sculpture, integrated art, interactive art, sculpture trail, murals, arts festivals, promotion of local creatives
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	

1. Organise Stakeholder Engagement Workshop

Plan and execute a workshop that brings together community members, local artists, businesses, and government representatives. This session aims to foster dialogue and collaboration, allowing participants to collectively define the vision and objectives of the public art and sculpture strategy. Invite open discussions to identify key themes and values that resonate with Skibbereen's unique identity.

2. Establish a Selection Committee.

Form a diverse committee responsible for overseeing the artist selection process. Ensure representation from the local community, art experts, and Cork CoCo. Uphold transparency and inclusivity in decision-making to ensure that the committee reflects the varied perspectives of stakeholders.

3. Issue Call for Artists and Proposals:

Initiate a call for artists, inviting them to submit proposals aligned with the identified themes. Emphasise the importance of using sustainable materials and adopting environmentally friendly practices in their submissions.

4. Conduct Community Workshops for Input:

Hold workshops and forums to gather input from residents on preferred locations for installations and specific elements they desire in the artworks. Implement a collaborative approach to integrate the community's preferences into the decision-making process.

5. Publicise Artist Residency Programs:

Promote opportunities for artists-in-residence programs within Skibbereen, aiming to establish a connection between local creatives and the community. Encourage collaborative efforts between artists and residents during the creative process.

6. Develop Fundraising and Sponsorship Initiatives:

Create a comprehensive fundraising strategy to secure financial support from local businesses, government grants, and community contributions. Seek partnerships with local sponsors who share values consistent with the public art initiative.

7. Navigate Permitting and Approval Process:

Collaborate closely with Cork CoCo to navigate the approval processes for public art installations. Prioritise obtaining all necessary planning approval before proceeding with installations.

8. Integrate Art Education Programs:

Collaborate with local schools to integrate art education programs that educate students on the cultural significance of public art. Promote a sense of pride and community connection through creative expression.

9. Plan and Execute Public Unveiling Events:

Coordinate events to unveil and celebrate each new public art installation. Design these events to encourage community participation and showcase the cultural and economic benefits of the public art strategy.



Fragments of Time and Space, Portlaoise Library, David Beattie



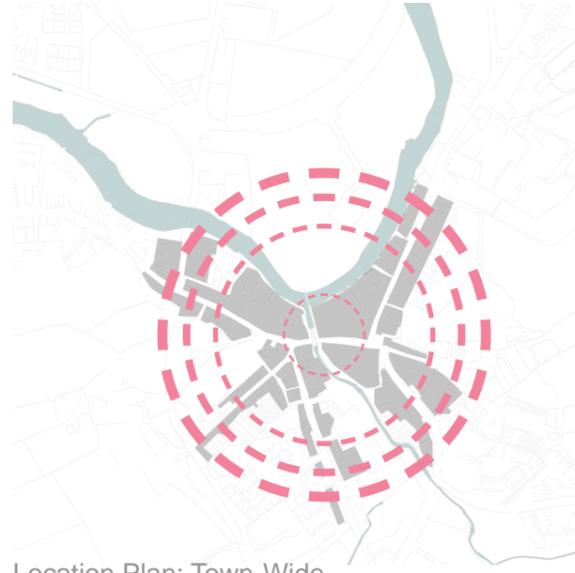
Together & Apart, Anthony Gormley, University of Limerick



'Kindred Spirits' Sculpture, Alex Pentak, Cork, Ireland

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Examine the Potential for an Interactive Digital Tourism / Advertising Kiosk

An Interactive Digital Tourism/Advertising Kiosk is a cutting-edge initiative aimed at enhancing the visitor experience and promoting local businesses. This innovative kiosk will serve as an interactive information hub, offering tourists and residents alike a dynamic platform to explore Skibbereen's rich cultural heritage and discover the array of local shops.

OBJECTIVES:

Enhanced Visitor Experience:

The kiosk seeks to provide an engaging and informative experience for visitors by offering interactive maps, historical information, and a directory of local attractions.

Promotion of Local Businesses:

Showcase the diverse range of local shops, cafes, and services through an interactive directory, stimulate economic growth and community support.

User-Friendly Interface:

Design a intuitive and user-friendly interface accessible to individuals of all ages and technological proficiency, encouraging widespread utilisation.

Real-Time Updates:

Implement a system for real-time updates to ensure

TOURISM / ADVERTISING KIOSK	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE06
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	C/CCC/G
Location	Town Centre, Main St, Town Hall or Levis Sq.
Key Components	Interactive LCD screen, double sided, accommodated in anodized aluminum housing or similar, branded to match town-wide signage, display to revert to advertising when not in use
LOCATION: TOWN-CENTRE	

the accuracy of information regarding business hours, events, and promotions.

FEATURES:

Interactive Map:

Incorporate an interactive map of Skibbereen, highlighting key landmarks, historical sites, and points of interest. Allow users to customise their routes based on personal preferences.

Local Business Directory:

Develop a comprehensive directory of local shops, complete with detailed information, images, and promotions. Enable users to filter businesses by category, facilitating easy navigation.

Events Calendar:

Integrate an events calendar that showcases upcoming local events, festivals, and activities. Include options for users to add events to their personalised itineraries and interface with an app.

Multilingual Support:

Cater to a diverse audience by offering multilingual support, ensuring accessibility for international visitors.

Accessibility Features:

Implement features such as text-to-speech and larger font options to enhance accessibility for individuals with varying needs.



QR Code Integration:

Enable QR code scanning for quick access to additional information, promotions, and discounts offered by local businesses.

AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS:

Design the kiosk with a modern, visually appealing aesthetic that complements Skibbereen's cultural identity. Incorporate local art elements and colors that reflect the town's vibrant spirit.

Technological Specifications:

Utilise state-of-the-art touchscreen technology, high-resolution displays, and a secure backend system for data management. Ensure robust cybersecurity measures to protect user information.

EuroTouch Flexi Mega Outdoor Interactive Kiosk Sign

Interactive map with retail & local attractions

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: The River Ilen

The River Ilen Blueway Promotion

Skibbereen’s existing designated blueway along the River Ilen presents a compelling opportunity for development and promotion, enhancing its appeal to both locals and tourists. The initiative revolves around maximising the river’s potential, cultivating economic growth, and creating a vibrant waterfront experience. West Cork already has a captive market with a keen interest in water based activities.

KEY ELEMENTS:

Business Partnerships:

Actively seek partnerships with local businesses to capitalise on the blueway. Encourage the establishment of kayak and boat rental services, guided tours, and waterfront cafes, creating a comprehensive experience for visitors.

Marketing and Signage:

Implement a robust marketing campaign to promote the blueway, leveraging social media, local events, and collaborations with tourism boards. Clear signage along the blueway will guide users and highlight points of interest.

Community Engagement:

Involve the local community in shaping the blueway’s identity. Encourage events, festivals, and competitions centred around the River Ilen to build a sense of community ownership and pride.

BLUEWAY PROMOTION	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE07
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	CCC/P/G
Location	Town Centre, Main St, Town Hall or Levis Sq.
Key Components	Capitalise on the Blueway, boat rental, guided tours, signage, education, infrastructure, community engagement
LOCATION: RIVER ILEN	

Infrastructure Improvement:

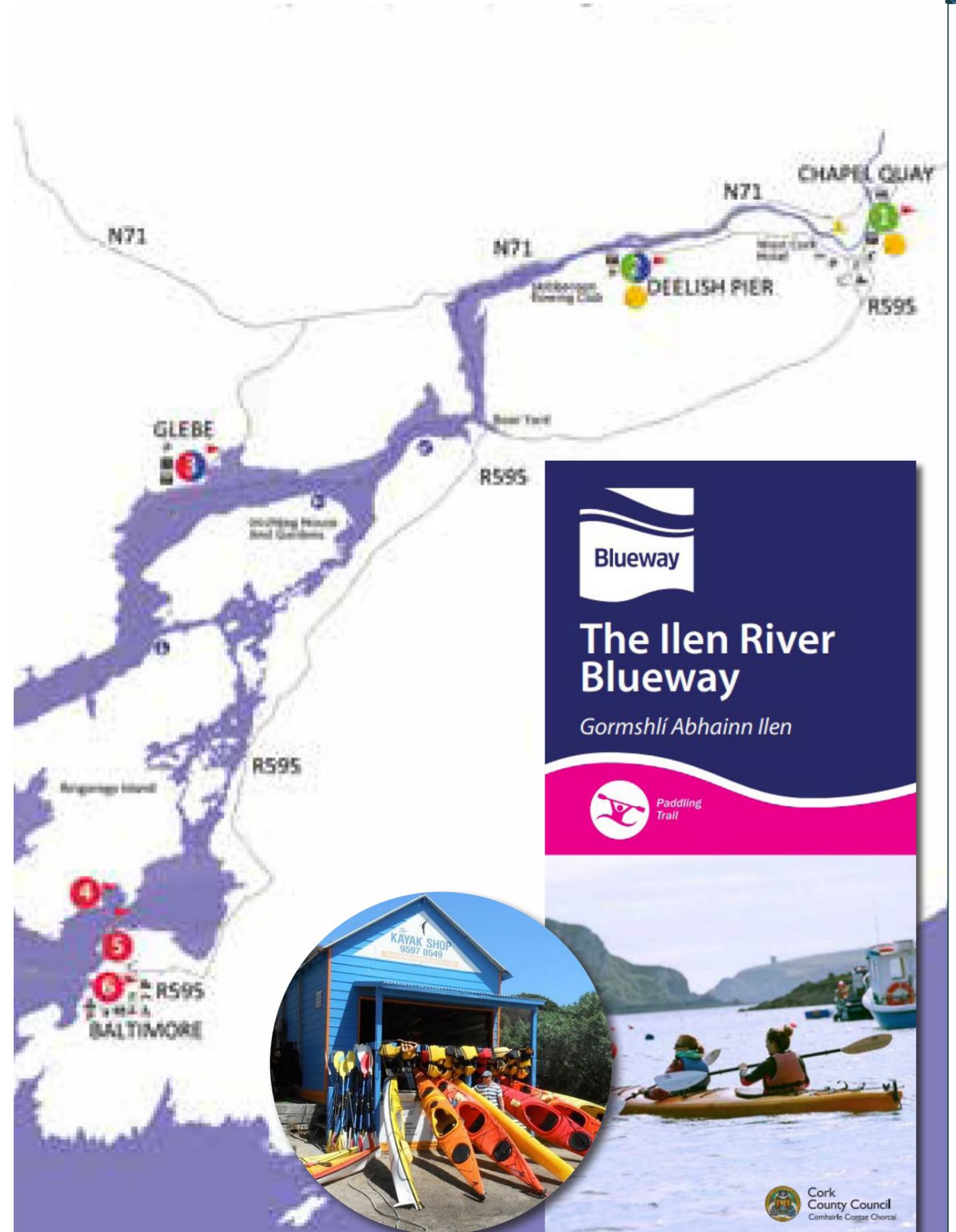
Invest in necessary infrastructure enhancements, such as improved access points, well-maintained trails, and amenities along the riverbank, ensuring a seamless and enjoyable experience for users.

Educational Programs:

Develop educational programs focused on river conservation and water safety. These initiatives not only contribute to the community’s understanding of the river ecosystem but also align with sustainable tourism practices.

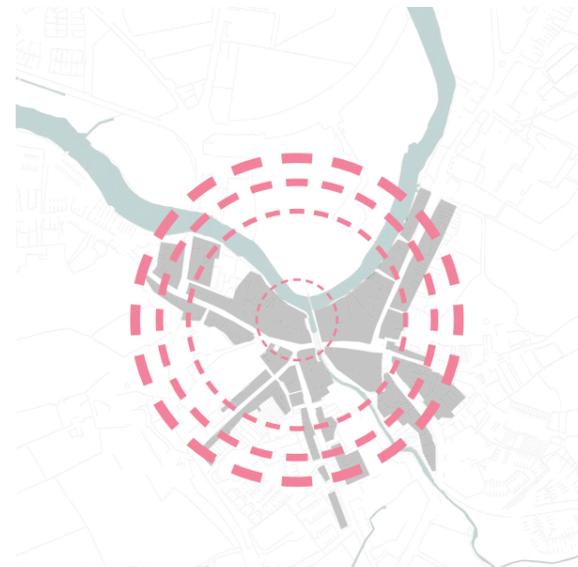
OUTCOMES:

The envisioned blueway strategy aims to transform the River Ilen into a thriving hub for recreational activities, attracting businesses and visitors alike. By encouraging community engagement, improving infrastructure, and promoting responsible tourism practices, Skibbereen’s blueway can emerge as a premier destination, contributing to the town’s economic prosperity and reinforcing its identity as a waterfront destination on the West Cork coast.



6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Promote & Develop Skibbereen Heritage Trail and App

The existing app for Skibbereen is very successful, and guides visitors around a famine story walking trail including a fifteen-stops narrated the tour.

There is scope to broaden the scope of heritage tours for Skibbereen to offer other general heritage walking trails or themed experiences. There is further scope to broaden the appeal of this app as well as promote it more widely.

The Skibbereen trail is available on the downloadable app Guidigo.

App Description

Skibbereen is synonymous with the Great Famine (1845-52) as it was one of the worst affected areas in all of Ireland. At least a million people died during this catastrophe and double that number fled the country within a decade.

This audio tour brings the Skibbereen Famine Story to life to give an insight into the worst humanitarian crisis of nineteenth century Europe.

Skibbereen Heritage Centre also hosts an extensive presentation on this tragic period, the Great Famine Commemoration Exhibition.

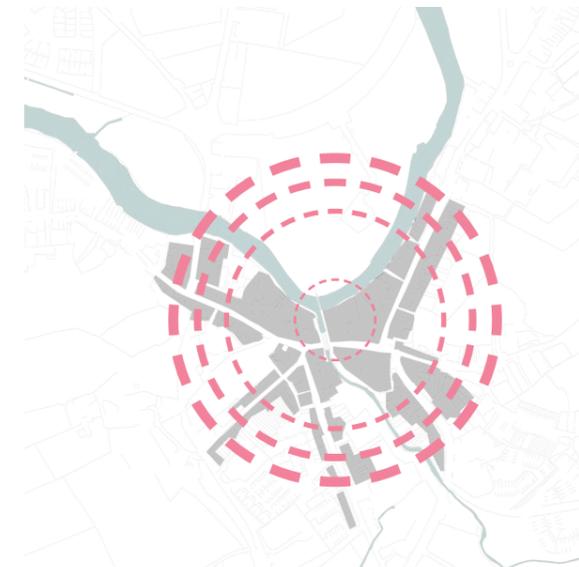
SKIBBEREEN HERITAGE TRAIL & APP	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE08
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	C/CCC/P
Location	Throughout the Town and its environs
Key Components	Broadening scope of app to include further walking trails / themed experiences
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	



App appearance

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Land Use, Economy & Tourism



Location Plan: Entire Town

Develop & promote The Skibbereen Brand with a unique Town Identity

1. Vision and Mission:

Vision: Position Skibbereen as a thriving, sustainable, and culturally rich destination.

Mission: Celebrate the unique history, natural beauty, and community spirit of Skibbereen while fostering economic growth.

2. Brand Essence:

Nature Meets Culture: Emphasise the harmonious blend of Skibbereen's stunning landscapes with its vibrant arts and cultural scene, River, food scene, etc

3. Core Values:

Authenticity: Highlight the genuine, unspoiled character of Skibbereen.

Community: Emphasise the close-knit and supportive community that defines Skibbereen.

Innovation: Showcase Skibbereen as a hub for innovation in sustainable practices, arts, and local businesses.

4. Unique Selling Proposition (USP):

Skibbereen - Where Tradition Meets Tomorrow: Position Skibbereen as a place where rich traditions seamlessly integrate with forward-thinking initiatives.

5. Target Audience:

Cultural Explorers: Those seeking unique experiences in art, history, and community.

Nature Enthusiasts: Outdoor lovers attracted to Skibbereen's natural beauty.

Sustainable Travelers: Eco-conscious individuals interested in green initiatives.

Actions:

1. Branding Collateral:

Develop a cohesive visual identity including a distinctive logo, color palette, and typography that reflects the essence of Skibbereen.

SKIBBEREEN BRAND, UNIQUE IDENTITY

ITEM	DETAILS
ID	LE09
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	C/CCC/P
Location	This project applies to all the Town generally
Key Components	Establishing a brand / USP, understanding market/target audience
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	

2. Cultural Events and Festivals:

Host annual cultural events and festivals to showcase local talent, history, and traditions, attracting visitors and enhancing community engagement.

3. Sustainable Initiatives:

Implement and promote sustainability practices in tourism, emphasising eco-friendly accommodations, transportation, and local products.

4. Public Art Installations:

Commission public art installations that reflect Skibbereen's history, culture, and connection to nature, creating unique landmarks and photo-worthy spots.

5. Digital Presence:

Develop an engaging website and social media profiles that share the stories of Skibbereen, highlight local businesses, and provide useful information for visitors.

6. Collaboration with Local Businesses:

Encourage local businesses to adopt the brand identity and values, fostering a unified representation of Skibbereen.

7. Educational Programs:

Implement educational programs about the history, culture, and natural resources of Skibbereen, creating awareness among locals and visitors alike.

8. Tourism Packages:

Collaborate with travel agencies to create unique tourism packages that encompass cultural experiences, outdoor adventures, and sustainable practices.

9. Brand Ambassador Program:

Identify and engage local influencers or passionate community members as brand ambassadors to share their experiences and promote Skibbereen.

10. Community Engagement:

Facilitate community involvement through workshops, town hall meetings, and surveys to ensure that the brand strategy aligns with the values and aspirations of Skibbereen residents.

By implementing these actions, Skibbereen can establish a strong and unique identity that attracts visitors, developing community pride, and contributes to the overall economic and cultural development of the region.

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Social Community and Culture

THEME 4: Social Community and Culture

Enhancing quality of life and enriching community cohesion in a way that is fully inclusive for everybody in Skibbereen.

- Develop the Town Hall as a venue
- Enhance existing community facilities
- Provide new and improved outdoor spaces and facilities for children and young adults
- Improve quality and diversity of public open space and community spaces
- Improve and provide inclusive and safe open spaces
- Encourage active travel
- Upskill through digital technology

Theme 4: Social Community and Culture			
ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
SC1	Develop the Town Hall as a venue	Short	CCC/C
SC2	Promote age-friendly/youth initiatives	Short/Medium	C/CCC/P
SC3	Promote Social Inclusion through Active Lifestyles	Short	CCC/C
SC4	Develop and support events and festivals	Short/Medium	C/CCC/P/G

Abbreviations:

- CCC = Cork County Council
- G = Government/National Funding
- P = Private sector
- C = Community / Residents

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Social Community and Culture



Location Plan: Town Hall, Main St

Develop the Town Hall as a Venue

Skibbereen Town Hall is owned and operated by Cork County Council. Following a fire in 1955, the present structure was rebuilt and was re-opened in 1960. Since that time various works have been undertaken on the building, most recently with the addition of the glass-fronted extension to the south, incorporating a new foyer and accessible entrance.

The building consists of the main hall with 156 removable seats, a 100-seat balcony, toilets, foyer, clock tower, office, stage and changing rooms.

The pattern of usage has changed considerably over the years and it is now mainly used for theatre production and stage shows. Cork County Council works closely with drama groups, theatre companies, festival committees, schools and the local community to facilitate the use of the Town Hall for a variety of events.

Cork County Council have committed to dedicating additional resources to the Town Hall to explore opportunities to increase usage and add to the social offering in the town. Further refurbishment works proposed for Skibbereen Town Hall include electrical rewiring, replacement of all lights with LED bulbs, new stage lighting and the installation of a new heating/cooling system.



Skibbereen Town Hall



Theatre production in Skibbereen Town Hall

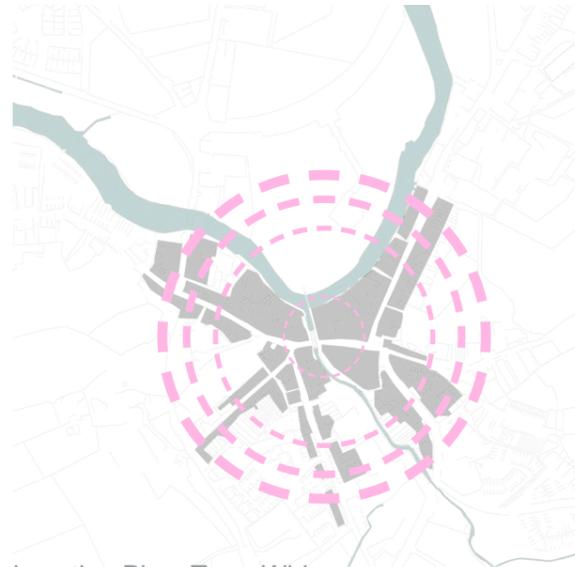
IMPROVE OPERATION OF TOWN HALL

ITEM	DETAILS
ID	SC01
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	CCC/C
Location	The Town Hall, defining the heart of the Town and the junction of Main St & North St
Key Components	Dramas groups, theatre companies, festival organisers in conjunction with Cork CoCo to explore increased usage.

LOCATION: NORTH ST/ MAIN ST

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Social Community and Culture



Location Plan: Town Wide

Promote Age-Friendly/Youth Initiatives

Skibbereen is committed to creating an inclusive community that caters to the needs and aspirations of both its older residents and vibrant youth population. Our project aims to develop and promote age-friendly and youth initiatives, fostering an environment where every generation thrives.

OBJECTIVES:

Age-Friendly Infrastructure:

Collaborate with local authorities to enhance public spaces, making them accessible and accommodating for older individuals. Ensure pedestrian-friendly walkways, seating areas, and facilities that consider the diverse needs of the elderly.

Inter-generational Programs:

Facilitate meaningful connections between different age groups through inter-generational programs. These initiatives will encourage mutual understanding, sharing of experiences, and collaborative activities that strengthen the social fabric of Skibbereen.

Youth Empowerment:

Develop platforms for youth engagement, providing opportunities for skill development, mentorship, and community involvement. Support the establishment of youth-led projects that contribute positively to the town's development.

Recreational Spaces:

Create inclusive recreational spaces that cater to the interests of both older and younger residents. This may

AGE-FRIENDLY / YOUTH INITIATIVES	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	SC02
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	C/CCC/P
Location	Throughout the Town
Key Components	Age friendly open spaces, Intergenerational programs & events, recreational spaces, technology training, community engagement
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	

include parks, community centres, and sports facilities designed to accommodate various age groups.

Promotion of Local Businesses:

Encourage businesses to adopt age-friendly practices and engage with the youth demographic. Establish mentorship programs connecting older business owners with aspiring young entrepreneurs to foster knowledge exchange.

Technology Training:

Provide technology training sessions for older residents, bridging the digital divide and promoting connectivity. Simultaneously, harness the technological skills of the youth to assist and engage with the older population.

Cultural and Educational Events:

Organise events that celebrate Skibbereen's rich cultural heritage, showcasing the talents of both older and younger residents. These events will promote community cohesion and appreciation for diverse perspectives.

Community Involvement:

Engage with community members through town hall meetings, surveys, and focus groups to gather insights

and ideas. Establish advisory committees comprising representatives from different age groups to ensure inclusivity and collaboration.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- Increased satisfaction and well-being among older residents and youth.
- Enhanced accessibility in public spaces for all age groups.
- Growth in youth-led initiatives and entrepreneurship.
- Strengthened social bonds through inter-generational programs.
- Greater awareness and appreciation of age-friendly practices within local businesses.



WHO / Age Friendly Ireland has identified eight key domains requiring a conscious effort to create an age friendly community



6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Social Community and Culture



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Promote Social Inclusion through Active Lifestyles

Skibbereen envisions a community where social inclusion thrives, driven by the promotion of active lifestyles that bring residents together across diverse backgrounds. Our initiative seeks to foster connections, break down barriers, and enhance overall well-being through shared physical activities.

ACTIONS:

Community Fitness Programs: Introduce regular fitness programs accessible to all age groups and fitness levels, encouraging communal exercise that builds bonds.

Inclusive Sports Events: Organise inclusive sports events and leagues, emphasising participation over competition to create an environment where everyone feels welcome.

Accessible Outdoor Spaces: Enhance public spaces to accommodate various activities, ensuring inclusivity for differently-abled individuals and promoting outdoor engagement.

Community Gardens and Green Spaces: Establish community gardens and green spaces that encourage residents to come together, share experiences, and cultivate a sense of belonging.

Information Campaigns: Launch awareness campaigns promoting the benefits of active living, emphasising its positive impact on mental health, social interaction, and overall community well-being.



Shared physical activity

SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH ACTIVE LIFESTYLES	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	SC03
Timeframe	Short
Promoter	CCC/C
Location	Throughout the Town
Key Components	Inclusive Sports events, accessible spaces, community allotments & gardens, education & awareness
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Social Community and Culture



Location Plan: Town-Wide

Develop And Support Events And Festivals

In Skibbereen, known for its dynamic events, the aim is to enhance and support a diverse range of festivals and gatherings. This initiative is dedicated to cultivating a rich social fabric that builds upon the existing vibrant events, offering fresh experiences and strengthening community engagement.

ACTIONS:

Event Diversity: Encourage the creation of a broad spectrum of events, ensuring a varied and dynamic cultural calendar that appeals to a wide audience.

Community - led Initiatives: Support and promote community-led event ideas, empowering residents to actively contribute to the cultural landscape of Skibbereen.

Accessibility: Ensure events are easily accessible to all residents, considering factors such as location, timing, and logistics to encourage widespread participation.

Collaboration: Facilitate collaborations among event organisers, promoting a supportive network that shares resources and expertise to elevate the overall quality of events.

Promotion and Outreach: Implement strategic promotional campaigns and outreach efforts to raise awareness about events, attracting diverse audiences and enhancing community engagement.



Cork Midsummer Festival

EVENTS & FESTIVALS	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	SC04
Timeframe	Short/Medium
Promoter	C/CCC/P/G
Location	Throughout the Town
Key Components	Dynamic events, festivals, gatherings, music & literary events, food events, community led, accessible / widespread participation.
LOCATION: TOWN-WIDE	



6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Built Form & Heritage

THEME 5: Built Form & Heritage

To fortify and commemorate the essence of Skibbereen while preserving its valuable heritage assets

- Conserve, repair, restore adapt and reuse heritage assets.
- Safeguard existing heritage assets through proactive maintenance, repair and conservation, with technical assistance if necessary.
- Further explore the use of digital technology as a means to tell the stories of Skibbereen through enhancement of the Heritage Trail App.

Theme 5: Built Form & Heritage

ID	Action	Timeframe	Promoter
H01	Examine the potential for a Shopfront Improvement scheme for the Town	Medium	CCC/P/G/C
H02	Promote Conservation, Repair and Refurbishment of Heritage Assets	Medium - Long	CCC/G/P
H03	Advance the regeneration of the Steam Mill, Ilen Street	Medium - Long	CCC/G
H04	Examine the Potential of Living Above Shops	Medium - Long	CCC/G/P
H05	Promote Heritage Events & Activities	Short - Medium	CCC/P/C

Abbreviations:

CCC = Cork County Council

G = Government/National Funding

P = Private sector

C = Community / Residents

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Built Form & Heritage



Location Plan: Central Retail Streets

Examine The Potential For A Shopfront Improvement Scheme For The Town

The Skibbereen Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Scheme should seek to enhance the visual appeal and vibrancy of the town by revitalising its shopfronts. The primary goal of this initiative is to develop a welcoming and unified visual appeal, drawing in both local residents and visitors while nurturing economic growth, by raising the profile of the Town centre.

ACTIONS:

Financial Incentives:

Implement a grant programme offering financial incentives for shopfront improvements. Encourage property owners and businesses to invest in facade enhancements, such as repainting, signage upgrades, and architectural improvements.

Design Guidelines:

Develop clear and comprehensive design guidelines to maintain the historical and cultural integrity of Skibbereen's architecture while allowing for creativity and individuality. Collaborate with local architects and designers to ensure a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity.

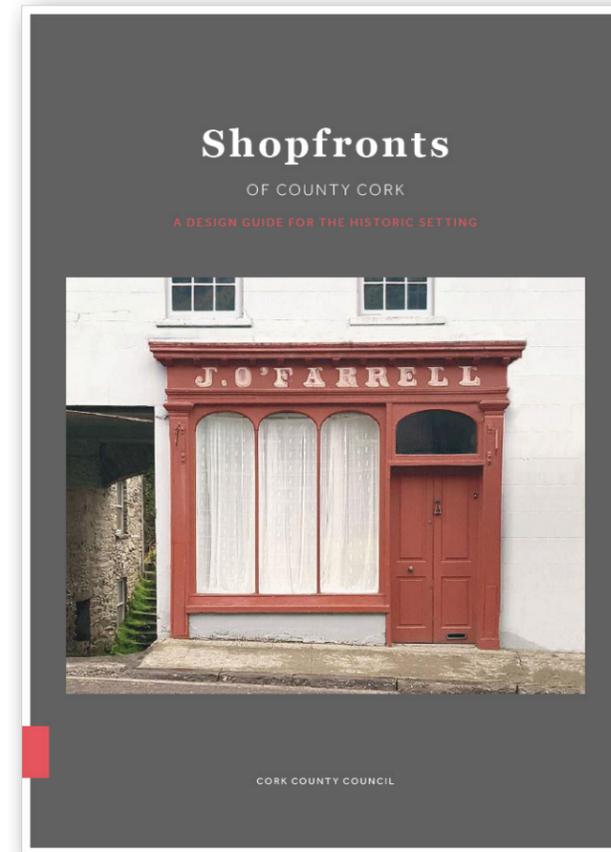
Technical Support:

Provide technical assistance through a dedicated support team, offering guidance on design, construction, and planning processes. Streamline approval process to facilitate a smooth implementation of the improvement projects.

Marketing and Promotion:

Develop a marketing campaign to showcase the transformation of shopfronts. Leverage social media, local press, and community events to highlight success stories and promote the positive impact of the initiative.

The Skibbereen Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Scheme represents a strategic investment in the town's future, nurturing economic growth, community pride, and a vibrant atmosphere that will benefit both residents and businesses alike.



Cork Shopfront Design Guide

SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENT SCHEME	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	H01
Timeframe	Medium
Promoter	CCC/P/G/C
Location	Central retail streets with the presence of shopfronts
Key Components	Conservation of heritage shopfronts, unified design approach, colour code, design guide, creativity & individuality, tradition & modernity
LOCATION: MAIN CENTRAL STREETS	



Heritage Lettering



Recent Shopfront Restoration in Skibbereen



Heritage Shopfront Skibbereen



6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Built Form & Heritage



Location Plan: Central Retail/Streets

Promote Conservation, Repair and Refurbishment of Heritage Assets

Heritage Assets Conservation Initiative aims to preserve and enhance the historical character of the town by promoting the conservation, repair, and refurbishment of its valuable heritage assets. This initiative seeks to instill a sense of pride in the community, attract heritage enthusiasts, and contribute to the overall cultural richness of Skibbereen.

ACTIONS:

Heritage Assessment:

Conduct a comprehensive heritage assessment to identify key assets in need of conservation. Collaborate with local historians and preservation experts to create a prioritised list of structures for intervention.

Financial Incentives:

Establish financial incentives, such as grants to encourage property owners to invest in the conservation, repair, and refurbishment of heritage assets. This will stimulate private involvement in preserving the town's historical legacy.

Educational Workshops:

Organise workshops and seminars to educate property owners, contractors, and the community about the importance of heritage conservation. Provide guidance on traditional building techniques and materials.

Community Engagement:

Foster community involvement through heritage-focused events, walking tours, and informational sessions. Encourage a shared responsibility for the preservation of Skibbereen's unique character.



SPAB Scholar event Derry-Londonderry

HERITAGE ASSETS - REPAIR / CONSERVATION	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	H02
Timeframe	Medium/Long
Promoter	CCC/G/P
Location	Where heritage assets exist throughout the town.
Key Components	Assessment of existing, conservation, repair, refurbishment, adaptive reuse, heritage education, guidelines, traditional techniques.
LOCATION: MAIN CENTRAL STREETS	

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Built Form & Heritage



Location Plan: Ilen Street

Advancing the Regeneration of the Steam Mill, Ilen Street

The Steam Mill, built in the early 1840s and converted for use as one of the first large-scale famine relief soup kitchens in Ireland, is synonymous with the Great Famine. Skibbereen was one of the districts worst affected by the Great Famine and reports from the area attracted worldwide attention. It is, therefore, highly appropriate that the building should be preserved and its story told.

Cork County Council acquired the now vacant and derelict building in 2016 with a view to preventing any further deterioration and repurposing it for active future use. Given the historic importance of the building, the Council plans to repurpose the building for

appropriate new uses, commissioning a future usage and preliminary business case report, as well as a Conservation Management Plan in order to provide a cohesive and realistic proposal for the building.

The position of the site on the south bank of the Ilen River is visually attractive, and its location on one of the main road arteries close to the centre of Skibbereen facilitates visibility and access. Parking is available on the adjacent Heritage Centre site. Outdoor areas of the site offer potential for animation and inclusion of features to enhance the visitor experience.



Interior of Steam Mill

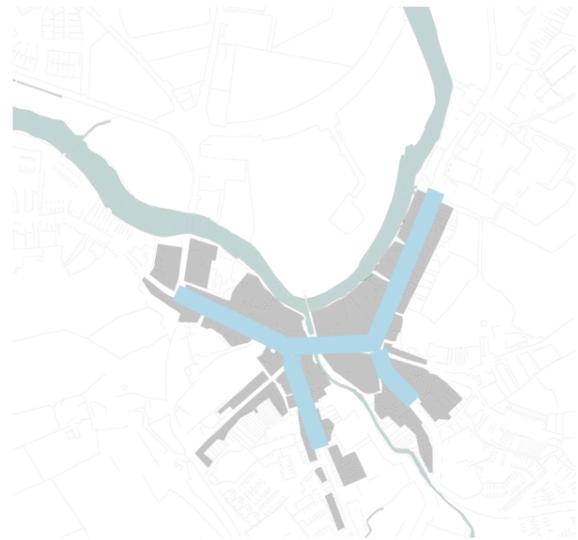


North Elevation of Steam Mill

REGENERATION OF STEAM MILL	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	H03
Timeframe	Medium/Long
Promoter	CCC/G
Location	Ilen Street, overlooking the River Ilen & adjacent to the Heritage Museum & West Cork Hotel
Key Components	Business case report, Conservation Management Plan, adaptive reuse, restoration.
LOCATION: ILEN STREET	

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Built Form & Heritage



Location Plan: Central Retail Streets

Examine Potential of Living Above Shops

Living Above Shops Initiative should aim to unlock the potential of underutilised space by promoting residential occupancy above commercial establishments. This strategy not only addresses housing needs but also contributes to the revitalisation of the town centre, fostering a vibrant and sustainable community.

ACTIONS:

Zoning and Planning Adjustments:

Collaborate with local authorities to review and adjust zoning regulations to facilitate mixed-use developments. Streamline planning processes to encourage property owners to convert upper floors into residential units.

Financial Incentives:

Introduce financial incentives, such as grants or tax benefits, to motivate property owners to invest in the conversion of upper-floor spaces. This will make the prospect of living above shops more appealing and financially viable.

Collaboration with Developers:

Engage with property developers to explore partnership opportunities for mixed-use projects. Foster collaboration that aligns with the vision of a dynamic town centre, combining commercial vitality with residential convenience.

Public Awareness Campaign:

Launch a public awareness campaign to showcase the benefits of living above shops, emphasising the convenience of proximity to amenities, reduced commuting, and the positive impact on the overall town atmosphere.

Community Engagement:

Organise community forums and workshops to address concerns and garner support for the initiative. Encourage dialogue between property owners, businesses, and residents to create a shared vision for a thriving town centre.

Adaptive Reuse Guidelines:

Develop guidelines for the adaptive reuse of upper-floor spaces, ensuring that architectural and historical features are preserved while meeting contemporary living standards. Collaborate with architects and preservation experts to strike a balance.



Main St, Skibbereen

LIVING ABOVE SHOPS	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	H04
Timeframe	Medium/Long
Promoter	CCC/G/P
Location	All central streets with retail ground floor uses & vacant or underused upper floors.
Key Components	Bringing vibrancy in to central streets, improving maintenance of dilapidated buildings, offering additional options for visitor accommodation.
LOCATION: MAIN CENTRAL STREETS	

6.0 Projects & Action Plan

Built Form & Heritage Projects



Location Plan: Central Retail Streets

Promote Heritage Events & Activities

The initiative to promote Heritage Events & Activities aims to celebrate and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the town by promoting engaging events and activities. This strategy intends to attract residents and visitors alike, nurturing a sense of community pride while boosting the local economy through increased tourism.

ACTIONS:

Event Calendar Creation:

Develop a comprehensive calendar of heritage-themed events throughout the year, including festivals, historical walks, and interactive workshops. Collaborate with local historians and cultural experts to ensure diverse and authentic programming.

Collaboration with Local Businesses:

Engage local businesses in heritage promotion by encouraging heritage-themed displays, products, or special offers during events. Cultivate a sense of community ownership and involvement in preserving Skibbereen's cultural identity.

Educational Programs:

Implement heritage education programs in schools to instill a sense of pride and awareness among the younger generation. Encourage student participation in heritage-themed projects and events.

Interactive Exhibits:

Create interactive heritage exhibits in public spaces, showcasing the town's history and cultural significance. Install informational plaques and markers at key

locations, providing context for residents and visitors.

Digital Outreach:

Utilise digital platforms and social media to promote heritage events and activities. Capitalise on the existing Skibbereen Heritage app. Create engaging content, virtual tours, and online resources to reach a broader audience and generate interest beyond the local community.

Community Participation:

Encourage community involvement in event planning and execution. Establish heritage committees or volunteer groups to ensure a collaborative and inclusive approach to celebrating Skibbereen's unique heritage.



National Heritage Week

HERITAGE EVENTS & ACTIVITIES	
ITEM	DETAILS
ID	H04
Timeframe	Medium/Long
Promoter	CCC/G/P
Location	Events could be hosted throughout the town centre, Town Hall, central streets or showgrounds.
Key Components	Preserve & promote cultural heritage, festivals, walks, workshops, authentic programming, heritage displays, education, plaques & markers at key locations,
LOCATION: THROUGHOUT	



**CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS
LAND PLANNING & DESIGN**

Offices;

Copley Hall,
Cotters Street,
Cork, T12T938

Gainsboro House,
24 Suffolk Street,
Dublin 2, D02 KF65

Ardacong, Ballytrasna,
Tuam,
Galway

www.csrlandplan.ie



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council

