

MY TOWN, MY PLAN: A NEW VISION FOR WEST CORK'S TOWNS

Ambitious ideas may become reality if Council-backed

BY EMMA CONNOLLY

BETTER traffic management, new walkways, cycle corridors and better community facilities.

These are just some of the things that stakeholders from four West Cork towns who took part in a community training programme called My Town, My Plan want to deliver for their areas.

Representatives from different walks of life in Clonakilty, Kinsale, Rosscarbery and Skibbereen have developed exciting new visions for their towns after completing the programme in recent months.

Crucially, lots of them used what they learnt to support applications to Cork's next county development plan, which is currently being drafted, which means they could very well come to fruition.

The Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence, part of the School of Business at Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) designed and delivered the programme which was funded through Secad partnership CLG. Each town (there

were eight in total throughout the county and included Carrigaline) had 12 sessions with trainers where they were given skills to help develop their shared vision.

The face-to-face training and consultative sessions began last September and moved online when Covid-19 hit. The programme comprised four core topics, delivered by experts, on developing community projects/enterprises, moving from ideas to validation, legal structures/governance and strategic planning.

In addition, each town group selected four specialist topics most relevant to their town's future development. Each town was represented by people from groups such as historical societies, Tidy Towns, sporting bodies and businesses.

Dr Helen McGuirk, head of the Hincks Centre said: 'We noticed one general theme across most towns and that is the idea of developing greenways/trails and parks, opening up new areas to be explored and enjoyed by locals and visitors.'

'This is particularly pertinent with many Irish holidaymakers opting for a

staycation this year due to Covid-19. The shared learning between the towns has been incredible and the Hincks Centre is delighted to have played a part in empowering these local communities.'

'It was all about the participants and stakeholders working together, thinking creatively, evaluating options and making collaborative decisions to develop clarity and vision for their individual town ideas.'

To keep momentum going on the work already achieved, an online 'shared learning' event will take place for West Cork on September 29th at 7pm. A similar event for South Cork is on October 7th.

Both will showcase each town's work so far and listen to speakers from around the country on topics such as social enterprise, retail in towns and tourism. The events will also introduce the next phase of support that Secad is offering through the Leader 2014-2020 programme.

Helen said this is all about focussing on the 'next step,' and importantly, finding out what funding is available to turn plans to reality. For more see hinckscentre.ie.



Taking part in the programme delivered by the Hincks Centre, part of the School of Business CIT, at Fernhill House in Clonakilty were, from left: Sandra Gallagher, Skibbereen; Alan Clayton, Kinsale; Denis Calnan, Rosscarbery and Margaret O'Donovan, Clonakilty. (Photo: Brian Loughheed). Right: Culture and heritage destinations and improved town centre spaces were among the ideas proposed by participants from the West Cork towns.

GREENWAYS, WALKING TRAILS, CULTURE AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AMONG IDEAS PROPOSED

CLONAKILTY

1. Greenways to various places within the town

2. Climate Adaptation Strategy: take Clonakilty off grid and develop 'Cool Clon' more to achieve this

3. Historical/environmental heritage: more development of our various historical figures that have national and international importance and link them on a trail that would tie in with the greenway/pathways

4. Biodiversity: collaborate with the local Tidy Towns committee to develop the biodiversity garden planned for the town

5. Cork Rebel Way: tie in the history, landscape, people and culture in a coordinated way to promote Clonakilty and surrounding areas for visitors and locals alike

CLONAKILTY – BALLINEEN & ENNISKEANE

1. Traffic management

2. Historical heritage

3. Environmental heritage

4. Revitalise village centres

5. Climate adaptation strategy

6. Rebel Way Clonakilty

DUNMANWAY

1. Traffic management

2. Greenway/walkway

3. Retail centre: re-vitalise town centre

4. Biodiversity: Extend wildlife habitat at Lisheen Field

5. Rebel Way: Extend scope of Rebel Way Route

KINSALE

1. A representative Community Partnership to catalyse action through collective decision making and with this decision-making underpinned by care

2. Environmental-Socio-Economic Plan which would map resources and highlight potential opportunities and vulnerabilities

3. Prioritisation of projects to promote wellbeing of our physical and mental health while cherishing our future environment and with the urgency of climate change foremost in our minds

4. Social Enterprise Centre which could be entwined with a business hub which would create a revenue stream

5. Flagship Project: To create connections within our area, develop a Greenway-Blueway which will exemplify this care for our well-being and where we live. We also advocate for more pathways within our towns and villages

ROSSCARBERY

1. Pride of Place: An attractive place for everybody to live, work and enjoy. To identify different types of walks and cycle trails including beaches, cliffs, sand dunes, boreens and hillsides

2. Capitalise on the Wild Atlantic Way project and the area's landscape, environment, history and culture to offer a unique immersive experience for the visitor. Create new walks and upgrade existing trails with trailheads to link villages and places of historical interest to each other for the benefit of both visitors and local residents. Also give clear signage and interpretive information on the historical sites and the stories that have shaped the local culture

3. Enhance sense of commu-

nity: identify the health benefits associated with walking and outdoor activities. Create awareness of the extraordinary beauty of both the coastal and inland scenery, its biodiversity and the kindness of the people

4. Increased employment with all-round visitor season. Maximise the potential for wellness tourism

SKIBBEREEN

1. Traffic Management Revisit the 2011 Skibbereen Traffic and Transportation Study – Final Report with specific consideration for:

a) Alternative to the completion of the eastern relief road incorporating the new Community School

b) Implementation of a one-way system to relieve congestion on North and Bridge Streets

c) Improvement of parking situation in the town centre eg development of the Marsh area to include car parking area and bus stops



Rosscarbery's participants suggested identifying walks and cycle trails including at beaches, cliffs and sand dunes, and boreens.

Street and user accessibility along all streets. Implementation of cycle corridors at peak school times

3. Apply for Age Friendly town status from Cork County Council and be accepted into the programme for 2020/2021

4. Community facilities for all ages: a) Secure a permanent home for the Community and Family Resource Centre; b) Consider options for Emmet Hall (scout hall) space subject to lease agreement by Cork County Council and Skibbereen Tidy Towns; c) Host an annual com-

munity open day for clubs and groups to share details of their activities; d) Develop a directory with contact details for all voluntary groups in the area; e) Develop greenway alongside the Ilen River from Chapel Quay to Kennedy Bridge; f) Investigate potential to develop a commercial venture for a cinema

CARRIGALINE

1. Sustainable Travel Focus (The 15-minute town): This aims to get the citizens out of their cars and onto safe cycling paths for 15 minutes. It is a se-

ries of small scale projects that will marry with the Carrigaline Public Realm plan and Carrigaline Area Transport Plan, as well as existing policy documents like the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) and Cork Metro Area Cycle Plan.

2. Arts and Culture Centre (The Vibrant Town): This vision will breathe new life into the heart of Carrigaline, by repurposing an existing building, ripe for renovation, into a new focal point for the community. With a town hall model, a mixed-use office (Cork County Council) and flexible meeting spaces; as well as a fully equipped theatrical, exhibition and heritage space. Carrigaline is the biggest county town in the biggest county in Ireland. Our town is the capital of the Carrigaline Municipal District and needs a Town Hall. To assist in reinvigorating the town centre, this space will also include a coffee shop/bar and a new local/tourist information centre, which will help showcase local produce, crafts and amenities to locals and tourists alike.