



Re: Submission from Listowel Business & Community Alliance on the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Introduction

To whom it concerns below are the key areas identified by the Listowel Business & Community Alliance (LBACA) which we consider vital to the development of Listowel Town and the wider North Kerry area.

Listowel is a rural, heritage town and the LBACA welcomes the investment which has taken place in the town over the last couple of years and also the planned investment it needs to transition from a traditional 'market' town to an 'activity' base for North Kerry. Listowel was not given 'Key Town' status under the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region but its importance has been recognised at a sub-regional level (collaboration with Limerick) and as part of the North Kerry/ West Limerick/Shannon Estuary/ Clare network. KCC need to ensure that economic development is spread throughout the county and not just in the Kerry Hub and Knowledge Triangle of Tralee, Killarney and Killorglin.

The 'Town Centre First' policy approach needs to be the priority for Listowel. A Town Centre Health Check was completed for Listowel in 2018. Listowel needs investment and commitment from KCC to help it become a vibrant place for living, investing and working in (by providing sustainable jobs and remote working hubs) by identifying and using its powers (derelict sites, CPO) to remove the blight of underused and vacant urban building stock. There are also opportunities for positive development and the reuse of vacant Kerry County Council owned lands in Listowel town centre.

Overall LBACA are in support of the objective contained in this Draft however we are calling for a more proactive and planned approach regarding funding and development Listowel town and wider North Kerry.

Volume 2 - Draft Listowel 2022-2028

3.1 Introduction & Context

LBACA support the positioning of Listowel as the key tourism driver for North Kerry in the context of the North Kerry Greenway and the Cliff Coast Development Plan.

Suggested addition to objective LIS 3

- Support the policies and projects contained in the rural regeneration development fund submission for Listowel entitled; 'Where Stories Begin' project a new chapter in Listowel's economic transformation and prosperity; including
- Re-establishing the 'Town Square' for both indoor and outdoor events and festivals as the Cultural Heart and Economic Centre of Listowel.
- Positioning Listowel as a hub for Activity Tourism in North Kerry
- Accommodating Enterprise Incubation, Expansion and Remote Working in Listowel

3.2 Demographics & Population growth

Core & Settlement Strategy

It is noted that a population allocation as contained in the Core Strategy of the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028 for the town of Listowel is 529. The LBACA welcomes this allocation and would stress the balance needed between social and private housing developments and that a mix of housing types is required in order to meet and adapt to the changing demographic trends and household profiles in Listowel.

3.3 Climate Action

Transition to a Low Carbon and Digital Economy

Suggested additional objective(s)

- Champion Listowel Town as a pilot Sustainable Town focussing on Sustainable Practices (community, business, and local authority).
- Incentivise the upgrading of existing buildings as they are an essential part of conserving our carbon budget over the coming decades.

3.4 Urban Regeneration

Regeneration of our Towns and Villages

- Continued investment in public realm improvements particularly in Listowel Town Centre and our surrounding villages.
- Maximise the economic potential of the new North Kerry Greenway to help existing businesses and the development of new businesses in North Kerry.
- Support the position for a Rural Recreation Officer for North Kerry.
- Make Listowel a pilot town and provide supports and grants to make the upgrade and retrofitting of vacant properties economical. Make the planning and regulatory process less of a hindrance by positive and proactive engagement for change-of-use construction projects and above-the-shop conversions to expand the availability of housing in towns and villages.
- Take cars off of the street and have a park and stride facility and/or provide alternative parking solutions i.e. use/purchase of lands in backways and infill lands so that more public space can be provided for businesses and residents.
- The concept of placemaking is inclusive and incorporates the history, heritage and culture of towns and how they can develop and embrace the changing vision for towns.
- A Placemaking Audit should be carried out/supported in conjunction with LBACA to help focus on what can be achieved by the town teams as outlined in the governments Town Centre First Policy - assessing strengths and gaps in skills or knowledge of a team and understanding what everyone brings and therefore existing and emergent capacities are captured as strengths. Examining the data on current placemaking capacity also helps to see gaps, where others might contribute to make a diverse group.
- Public Service Departments should be relocated to Listowel i.e., a department of KCC similar to Castleisland Water Services. There are a number of vacant buildings within the town centre that could be used for this purpose. With the influx of remote working a KCC hot desk facility could be located to facilitate those people working in Rathass to travel to Listowel instead of commuting to Tralee. This would lead to increased footfall in the town from additional workers in the town centre.
- More EV charging facilities at Neodata, Childers Park and Woodlands and the Church Carpark on the Bridge Road.

3.5 Sustainable Land Use Development

- Local Renewable Energy solutions in the town should be prioritised and there should be a more open and proactive conversation between KCC and industry (for example Kerry Ingredients) regarding available land and renewable energy projects.
- Identified opportunity sites (The Mart, Castleinch) should be developed in a sustainable way and should take into account Listowel's status as a Heritage Town.

3.6 Retail

Listowel and the wider North Kerry area has faced particular challenges including changing retail patterns, the dominant nature of the car, the increase in people living outside of the town centre and the legacy of a lack of new development.

- The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check should be reviewed and updated from the 2017 version.

Retail Strategy

- Completion of a retail strategy for the town as part of the County Retail Strategy. The last retail strategy undertaken for Listowel was in 2009.

When is the new strategy going to be undertaken?

LIS 40 Facilitate the regeneration of retail shopping in Listowel Town Centre where appropriate and support the recommendations of the County Retail strategy once completed.

LIS 41 Undertake a retail strategy for Listowel as part of the countywide retail strategy

3.7 Economy & Employment

Are there any planned projects in support of the North Kerry/ West Limerick/Shannon Estuary/Clare as a network including Listowel as an economic driver?

Enterprise Development & Business Support

Listowel has experienced the highest number of business closures in the county during the Covid pandemic. To help combat this a business incentive scheme for unoccupied outlets is urgently required.

What are the plans for the digital hub and cultural hub as outlined in objective LIS 69?

LIS 69 Protect the literary artistic and cultural heritage of Listowel and promote Listowel as a creativity and cultural hub for North Kerry.

Further development is required to maximise Listowel's potential as a smart town and the availability of high speed Broadband should be a priority now and used as a further economic and tourism driver for existing and potential new businesses.

Remote Working

Further investment and a proactive economic development plan is required to attract and boost remote working facilities in Listowel town and North Kerry.

North Kerry Greenway and Trailhead Business Supports

There are a number of aspects where Listowel can capitalise on the potential opportunities arising from the arrival of the Greenway, bringing the asset above the level of local amenity and towards a more pronounced tourism feature.

- Support Greenway Business Support training similar to what Limerick businesses have been provided with.

Listowel's Food Tourism Potential

- Food Hub development in Listowel with potential for small food enterprise start-ups and tours and tastings from local producers once the facility is completed in 2022.

Enterprise Units

- Upgrade and expand the current enterprise units located adjoined to the Listowel MD offices.

Signage

- Greater Signage and route recognition of the Clare/Tarbert Ferry facility to encourage visitors to stay in North Kerry and not just pass through on their way to Killarney/South Kerry.
- Listowel Inner Relief Road/Bypass signage strategy to encourage people to come into the town and increase footfall.

Education and Training

- Develop further training for businesses in North Kerry in conjunction with the Kerry LEO which would drive job creation and create sustainable jobs.

3.8 Tourism

There is an urgent need for a Rural Recreation Officer for North Kerry to spearhead the positioning of Listowel as an Activity hub for Activity Tourism in North Kerry and also support new business ideas for rural tourism along the Greenway.

Accommodation options

- Increased visitor accommodation options including camper van and glamping, air bnb, guesthouses and farmhouse

Tourism, Culture, Amenities and Heritage

From Summer 2022 Listowel will act as a destination town for the North Kerry Greenway, offering the features of urban heritage, local shopping, interesting pubs, restaurants and the attractive ambience of the medium-sized Irish town. The existing tourism products such as the Kerry Writers Museum, Lartigue Monorail & Museum, Listowel Castle, are and the new covered outdoor space in the Square all within immediate walking distance of the Greenway, complement well the cycling activity and will be promoted to Greenway users.

- Fáilte Ireland DEDP is currently being prepared for North Kerry. This plan should identify key tourism developments which will enhance the greenway offering. Listowel are very supportive of the Greenway development for North Kerry however its extension from Listowel to Tralee section needs to be progressed immediately. This is vital if the initial investment made by government is to bring about improved visitor numbers in North Kerry.

Sustainable Tourism

The Listowel Business and Community Alliance is working very hard to secure the future of sustainable tourism in Listowel and North Kerry. However, we need additional supports to facilitate and enable us to:

- Incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) logo on all future town signage.
- Support and participate with groups such as Tidy Towns and local authorities to ensure the local landscape is protected and further enhanced.
- Develop projects that will enhance our local heritage, specifically the literary culture that is the essence of what North Kerry is.

River/Blueway/Peatway

- Further development and extension of the walk along the River Feale
- Further development of a blueway plan for Listowel.
- Peatlands – Grants for walks, bogs as amenities.

Arts Projects

- Funding is required for an Art Project for Listowel Inner Relief Road/Bypass and a signage strategy to encourage people to come into the town and increase footfall.

Accommodation Offering in Listowel

- Urgent need for outdoor camping/glamping/campervan parking facilities within Listowel Town (locate a suitable site, planning etc.).
- Further development of outdoor facilities for families - example Aha Bhan park in Loghill - similar development at Childers Park and Woodlands would be a fantastic asset to the area.

3.9 Heritage & Built Environment

Listowel's Architectural Conservation Area Toolkit and Historic Towns Initiative

- Support the continued conservation of Listowel's unique streetscape as outlined in the 'Listowel Heritage and Community Led Regeneration Strategy 2017 -2022' Architectural Conservation Toolkit.
- Listowel was chosen by KCC to as the town to apply for funding under the Historic Towns Initiative in 2021 and successfully used the grant of €200,000 towards the upgrade of buildings in Listowel's Architectural Conservation areas. While this is a fantastic start, further investment and support is needed.

Suggested Objective

To protect and conserve the special character of the historic core of Listowel and ensure that a full understanding of the archaeological, architectural, urban design and landscape heritage of the town informs the design approach to new development and renewal, in particular in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs).

3.10 Recreation, Amenity and Open Space

Skate Plaza/Bicycle Pump Track

The LBACA are supportive of objective L for a bicycle pump track and we urge KCC to apply for funding asap to help to achieve this as per the projects underway in Tralee and Killarney. However, we would like to state that the young people should be involved from the beginning as they know their town and co-design is required.

A suggested location for the Bicycle Pump Track/Skate Plaza could be on Kerry County Council owned lands to the rear of Listowel Castle running alongside the river Feale. The lands are currently zoned O1 in the Listowel Town Plan 2009-2015 as extended and variation no. 3, objective nos. state:

OR -1 Require the preparation of masterplans/design briefs where appropriate prior to the redevelopment of the Castleinch lands and the opportunity sites identified in the plan.

OR-2 'Develop the large landmark riverfront site in a sustainable manner, providing new mixed use/ tourist facilities subject to a flood risk assessment in accordance with 'The Planning systems and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities'.

OR-3 Ensure that a Traffic Impact assessment shall be carried out as part of any proposals for the opportunity sites and Castleinch Masterplan area.

This skate plaza development could form phase one of the overall masterplan for Castleinch and greater public realm improvements for Listowel. The Castleinch masterplan could contain other initiatives such as development of

Blueway facilities, an eco-park and also the possibility of relocating the tennis courts from in front of Listowel Community Centre. This would mean that the users of the area would be cross generational to alleviate any worries regarding antisocial behaviour.

The Skate Plaza could be built in a sustainable way integrating into the landscape using green infrastructure design principles. The design could also tie in with our 'Listowel Characters' project which was started in July 2021 and which involves taking quotes, conversations, excerpts from the work of Listowel and North Kerry writers, poets and songwriters and making them into murals around town — so the streets become a tourist attraction.

Outdoor 'Learn to Cycle' Track

West Waterford town opened Ireland's first outdoor cycle learning track in 2021. The facility will give young children the opportunity to learn to cycle on a track designed to replicate a real roadway, with lines, signs, and pedestrian crossings.

Suggested Objective

To support the outdoor 'learn to cycle' track please amend objective LIS 84

LIS 84 Support the development of a skate plaza and ancillary facilities at an appropriate location in Listowel Town

3.11 Transportation

Enhanced Regional Connectivity

- Listowel Bypass – As part of the new bypass development upgrading is required for the entrance roundabouts including planting and road signage.

3.12 Land Use Zoning

Ensure that enough land is zoned to cater for the projected increase in population.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss or elaborate on any of the above key strategic priorities at any future date should this be required,

Kind regards,

Rose Wall

Rose Wall

Chairperson

Listowel Business & Community Alliance.