



Thriving
Connected
Community
Contributing
Prosperity
Well-being

“ Strabane District is a thriving, connected community that contributes to its own prosperity and well-being ”



Community
Regeneration Plan
Consultation Paper



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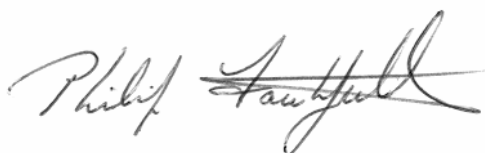
Welcome to the Review of Future Search.

This is regarded as one of the most effective methods of enabling people to make and implement ambitious plans for their community.

I thank all those who have contributed to the point we are at today. Now is the time to review and reflect on where we are and hopefully plan for the future.

Your input is critical in moving the process forward. You may disagree with the priorities already set, you may want to refocus but we now want to plan for the future to “Finish the Job” and eventually make expectations a reality.

Your Future, Your Say – Your Contribution.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Faithfull". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Philip Faithfull
Clerk & Chief Executive

Sector Working Group

Environment

Inequalities, Needs, Challenges and Opportunities

Over recent years the global community has put environmental concerns under the microscope and it has become the single most important driver for economic and social sustainability. There is increasing awareness of the impacts of development on the natural environment and growing level of public support for the protection of this resource at a local, national and international level. It is also recognised that the quality of the environment within Strabane District is a key quality of life consideration which impacts on the attraction of the area as a place to live and work. In addition, the existence of key scenic, cultural and historic assets creates a “sense of place” and provides strong tourism potential.

2. Context

2.1 Situated within the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Strabane District is home to a population of 39,614 people in the west of Northern Ireland. Strabane District Council is located in the North West of County Tyrone and sits on the border with Donegal in the Republic of Ireland. The District Council area covers 861 square kilometres making it the fourth - largest district council by area in Northern Ireland. It is also a particularly rural district as it has the fourth lowest population density of all District Council areas in Northern Ireland.

2.2 Strabane, the economic and civic centre, is a market town which is supported by the rural towns and villages of Castleterg, Sion Mills, Donemana and Newtown Stewart. Local people benefit from close networks of family, friends and neighbourly ties. There is a strong sense of belonging and local people have a welcoming, friendly and relaxed nature.

2.3 Strabane District area has a rich and diverse range of landscapes, wildlife habitats and heritage features that together distinguish its special character and identity. Regarding landscape scale, the scenic Glenelly Valley is known to be the longest valley in Northern Ireland and Killeter Forest is one of the largest areas of conifer in Ireland. Strabane District also has some of the finest angling rivers in Western Europe, with most of the district’s rivers being designated Special Areas of Conservation. The protection, promotion and enhancement of these areas are of vital importance.

3 Biodiversity

3.1 The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy 2002 sets out the main priorities for biodiversity in Northern Ireland and identifies the main factors contributing to the development of the strategy and proposes a range of measures to support biodiversity conservation over the period up to 2016. Priority is given to protecting Strabane District's landscapes, lakes and rivers, particularly in their role as natural habitats and wildlife corridors. The production and implementation of habitat and species action plans remain a priority.

4. Agriculture

4.1 Half of the district's population lives outside the four main towns of Strabane; Castleterg; Newtown Stewart and Sion Mills. In terms of area, most of the District is considered rural and hence dominated by a large farming community. 70,960 hectares are actively farmed with the main agricultural production being dairying, beef and sheep farming and smaller amounts of tillage. Farm size is slightly greater than the average for Northern Ireland at 35.1 hectares compared to 31.4 for Northern Ireland. Agriculture is also an important sector of the local economy - 40% of Strabane District's economy is comprised of those within the agriculture, forestry or fishing industries¹. Strabane District boasts 1,368 farms and 1,144 people employed full time in the sector. Approximately half of all farmers are part time and this number is increasing.

5. Energy Sources

5.1 Strabane District is reliant on fossil fuel burning power stations and domestic heating systems that contribute to global warming and deplete the Earth's natural resources. To reduce CO2 emissions there is general support for the development of renewable energy sources. Indeed, County Tyrone has the highest on-shore potential for producing wind energy in Northern Ireland². Strabane District, outside of the AONB, is an important area for the potential development of wind energy due to the high wind speeds and dispersed low density population pattern. There are concerns however about the growing number of wind farms and their potential impact on landscape aesthetics,

¹ Oxford Economics (2010) Strabane District. An economic forecast.

² DETI's Action Renewables: A study into the Renewable Energy Resource in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland: Generic Resource Opportunities' 2004

conservation interests and the living environment of local residents. The promotion of solar, biomass, geothermal, hydro energy should also be considered. There are potential future proposals relating to bio-gas projects, recycling of slurry waste and anaerobic digester systems.

6. Waste

6.1 Recent changes in waste management policy are reflected in the move away from landfill towards more sustainable and less environmentally harmful practices. Whilst the level of waste being recycled has increased over the last few years, the district has consistently retained the lowest rate of recycling in Northern Ireland.

7. Air Quality

7.1 In accordance with the Air Quality Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 and The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, Strabane District Council have declared three air quality management areas affecting Strabane, Newtownstewart and Castlederg in relation to exceedences of the air quality objectives for particles (PM₁₀). In 1992 the highest black smoke levels in the UK in all years from 1999 to 2004 were recorded in Strabane. The source of the emissions is from domestic emissions of solid fuel (coal) combustion. An Air Quality Action plan was published in 2004 which identified a range of measures that would be taken to reduce the concentration of this pollutant across the district. The action plan has been implemented across the district including measures such as NIHE heating conversion scheme, fuel conversion scheme and smoke control areas. There has been an improvement in overall air quality in Strabane District and, as a result, the air quality meets the EC requirements with a marked reduction in the background concentration previously reported. Conversely however it means that the district is still reliant on fossil fuels for heat and the rising cost of oil has created an issue in relation to fuel poverty.

8. Illegal dumping

8.1 Despite its rich natural heritage and habitats the district is subject to a considerable amount of fly tipping/illegal dumping. The Council has identified that illegal dumping remains a problem and is having an effect on local wildlife habitats, particularly in bog land. Use of disused quarries and/or

other sites for disposal of inert waste under controlled, licensed conditions was cited as a solution in the Draft Area Plan 2013.

9 Street cleanliness

9.1 Street cleanliness and litter has been repeatedly cited by residents as being one of the top three priorities for Strabane District Council³ to pay attention to.

10. Graffiti/Slogans and Murals

10.1 Urban areas within Strabane District feature a range of graffiti, slogans and murals. Whilst there is no research to suggest that the levels within Strabane District are higher or lower than others, it is nonetheless an unwanted and unsightly problem.

11. Green space

11.1 Whilst there is a shortage of open green space in urban Strabane, there clearly is an abundance of countryside only a short distance away. Research has shown that the provision of green spaces, nature trails and rural walking routes all contribute to environmental responsibility therefore provision of these types of green space access should be encouraged. Strabane District Council's residents' survey has often identified requests for more green space.

Vision

A vision for the environment in Strabane District was agreed at the Future Search Conference as:

“The Citizens of Strabane District take ownership of, and responsibility for, their own environment.

This brings about:

- *A clean urban environment*
- *Open Green Spaces accessible for all*

³ Strabane District Councils residents survey 2007/2008/2009

- *Conserved habitats*
- *Valued buildings protected*

Priorities

- Reduce the district's dependency on imported fossil fuels
- Raise awareness of environmental issues such as waste, biodiversity loss and the conservation of built heritage through both education and enforcement.
- Support the local food economy by encouraging connections between the commercial sector and the district's farmers and growers
- Adopt and implement sustainable waste management practices

Proposals

We will reduce the district's dependency on imported fossil fuels by:

- Encouraging the installation of insulation and renewable energy applications
- Promoting the benefits of green energy and energy efficiency throughout the district
- Ensuring that all of the district's assets are developed using sustainable technologies and employing energy efficient measures such as smart metering and solar panels.

We will facilitate the awareness raising, education and enforcement in relation to environmental issues such as waste, biodiversity and the built environment by:

- Setting up an environmental/sustainability forum to provide an integrated approach to sustainable development and environmental issues in Strabane District Council
- Adoption of Sustainable Northern Ireland's "Sustainability Assessment Matrix" tool in order to increase sustainable practice locally
- Engaging with the local Eco Schools cluster to increase awareness and educational initiatives locally
- Ongoing enforcement environmental legislation locally.

We will support the local food economy and the reconnection of the district's commercial sector to its rural farmers and growers by:

- Supporting a strategic urban gardening programme providing support to allotment projects, community gardens and private sector gardens, prioritising low income area groups
- Encourage the growth in the local food economy, the further promotion of the farmers market and the expansion of horticultural training.
- Implementing a food waste reduction programme

We will adopt and implement sustainable waste management practices including:

- Encouraging reuse opportunities through providing education and training
- Creating R&D opportunities with regard to waste treatment technologies, through the higher education sector and indigenous companies.

We will protect, conserve and promote the rich biodiversity and built heritage of Strabane District by working with our partners to:

- consider the development of a 'conservation apprenticeship scheme' to develop skills within Strabane District and allow young people to recognise the environmental sector as a potential career
- Identify, protect and enhance priority wildlife and green space sites in the District
- Survey and control invasive species in the District where possible.

Sector Working Group

Culture, Arts and Tourism

Inequalities, Needs, Challenges and Opportunities

The Strabane District is synonymous with a thriving cultural and community arts tradition with an established reputation for drama, dance, music, literature and visual arts at regional and national level. Many notable personalities are associated with the District including Jimmy Kennedy who penned such favourites as 'Teddy Bears Picnic' and 'Red Sails in the Sunset', celebrated hymnist Cecil Frances Alexander and in the literary field two personalities figure prominently: Strabane born writer Brian O' Nolan who made two pen-names famous; those of Flann O' Brien and Myles Na Gopaleen and Dr. George Sigerson the internationally acclaimed zoologist, surgeon, and social reformer who was also a professor at the National University. Such has been his influence that he had the distinction of being mentioned in James Joyce's Ulysses and Finnegans Wake.

More contemporary connections include The Clipper Carlton show band, local designers who have made important advances in the international fashion scene, the acclaimed artist Phelim Egan and celebrated musician and songwriter Paul Brady.

Context

1. Community Arts

1.1 The community arts scene is a vibrant mix of artists, crafters, musicians and dancers. These include award winning brass bands, performing arts groups such as Puddle Alley and Muchado Theatre Company; music groups including Craic and Strabane Unplugged; dance groups including Solus Dancers and the Pop Dance Academy. Language and cultural groups also play an important part in community life in terms of both Irish language and Ulster Scots activity.

1.2 The Alley Arts Centres opened in March 2007 and incorporates a 270 seat auditorium and an exhibition gallery. It is adjacent to the Strabane Community Library which includes workshop, recording and rehearsal spaces. The programme has a strong community focus and the Alley has become the venue for showcasing brass band and drama festivals, school performances and community led initiatives.

2. Community Festivals

2.1 The festival scene is also strong and includes Strabane Fair Day, Sion Mills Strawberry Fair, St Patricks Day Parade, Diwali Festival of Lights, Johnny Crampsie, Glenelly Rocking by the River, Craic in the Brack, Killeter Fair, Strabane Drama Festival, the North West Music Festival, Strabane Halloween Festival and Sperrins Walking Festival. These festivals offer year-round opportunities to cater for short-break visitors and a cultural outlet for local people. Many smaller festivals are based in non-traditional venues and are sustained by the enthusiasm of local communities.

2.2 The festivals build upon the rich and often unique cultural heritage of their area. They celebrate stories from the past, music, language, literature and dance adding to the product range of cultural attractions that make Northern Ireland a unique place for locals and visitors to explore.

2.3 Highlighting such distinctiveness complements the branding strategy for Northern Ireland which states that: “Northern Ireland is a unique destination - an evolving place: youthful with the benefit of a deep history and culture.” It is important to present the distinctiveness and uniqueness of this area of Northern Ireland as a cultural destination and promote the rich tradition of arts, from literature to music, that are renowned here.

3. Public Art

3.1 The District is home to many well loved public art works including ‘Let the Dance Begin’ depicting five figures engaged in the creation of music and performance of dance. It is one of the largest pieces of public art in Ireland and it has become an iconic feature bestowed with its own nickname – the ‘Tinnies’.

3.2 A number of public art programmes including Re-imaging Communities have explored the concept of renewal, change and respect and the HEART scheme a cross-border initiative enabled twelve towns and villages to utilise public art as a mechanism for heritage, celebration and environmental regeneration.

3.3 Art works include ‘Where Dreams Go’ (Ambrose the Pig) in the Alley Theatre courtyard, the Bowling Green Public Art Sculpture, the Bridging Sculpture in Castleberg, the Burn Walk Sculpture

Trail and 'Departure' in Abercorn Square, as well as smaller works in Sion Mills, Newtownstewart, Castledearg and Donemana.

4. Tourism

4.1 Developing the potential economic benefits of the District through tourism and countryside access products is an important element of creating a vibrant local economy. The geographic location of the district, bounded by the uplands of the Sperrins – a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the rich river systems of the Foyle lends itself perfectly to activity based tourism- notably walking, cycling, angling and canoeing. Enhancing the visitor experience, and adding further value is the wealth of history, heritage and culture which can be enjoyed by visits to local attractions, festivals, craft producers, and music sessions.

4.2 Within the District a wide range of public, private and community providers each contribute to the development, provision and promotion of the local tourism offer. Moreover partnership approaches between sectors and at a regional and cross-border level are facilitated by initiatives such as Sperrins Tourism Ltd. These partnerships aim to further develop the visitor experience and to promote the wider region as a visitor destination in the context of the Sperrins and Northern Ireland.

4.3 Sperrins Tourism Ltd is currently undertaking an extensive consultation process to inform the development of a destination management plan. This is in line with the proposal in the DETI draft Tourism Strategy for key tourism area and destinations within Northern Ireland to be defined on the basis of coherence and well defined geographic areas which are easily recognisable by the market.

4.4 The development of tourism and countryside access products is an important element of creating a vibrant local economy. This view is reflected at a national level, with the Northern Ireland Executive and DETI recognising the considerable scope to boost the contribution tourism makes to the overall economy by investing heavily in its development. For example, although the revenue generated by the tourism sector in NI has almost doubled since the mid 1990's, its overall contribution to the economy (1.9%) remains much less than elsewhere in the UK (3.2%). To redress this, a key target within the draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 is to double the income we earn from tourism from £536 million to £1 billion. This will be achieved by increasing visitors from 3.2 million to 4.5 million; by progressively accelerating spend by visitors; by targeting specific markets and market segments; by supporting indigenous high quality businesses to grow; and by being visitor inspired.

Within this context, and by cultivating our own unique strengths and selling points Strabane has the potential to grow its own local tourism industry in line with these national targets.

5. Festivals

5.1 The North West region hosts a number of large scale festivals, including the Derry Jazz festival, Errigal Arts Festival and the Blue Grass festival. In addition, Derry will host the UK City of Culture in 2013. Each of these festivals generates significant visitor numbers and creates wealth within the region.

5.2 There is an opportunity to utilise economies of scale and scope in working with high profile festivals for the benefit of Strabane District in terms of generating visitor numbers, providing opportunities to showcase local cultural product and in supplementing current arts programming. Taking advantage of the well resourced promotional capacity and reputation of these established festivals would ensure that the programmed activity within the District would be made more accessible to a wider potential audience.

6. Culture Night

6.1 The first Culture Night to occur in Northern Ireland was held in Belfast on the 25th September 2009. For one night only, arts and cultural organisations opened their doors to the general public and offered an evening of free entertainment, discovery and adventure. Offices, artists' studios and workshops, historic buildings, churches were open to the public to enjoy free performances, events, talks and tours. Outdoor areas and even pedestrian streets were animated and turned into performance spaces.

7. Learning and Creativity

7.1 There are a number of programmes within the District that utilise the creative industries, arts and creativity as a means for promoting accredited learning and skills development. These include the Pushkin Trust initiative, Stagewrite performing arts festival for primary schools (delivered by the Alley Theatre in partnership with the NWRC), NW Schools Drama Festival (for post primary schools) and OCN in numeracy and literacy through performing arts (delivered by the Playhouse Theatre and hosted by the Alley Theatre). The NWRC Strabane Campus delivers a range of creative industries courses including a Level 2 in Music Technology and part time course in digital photography, creative jewellery, floral art and DJ-ing.

7.2 However, these learning opportunities are, in some instances, funding led and do not form part of an overall strategic programme for education and skills development within the District. There is a requirement for an integrated strategic programme to explore opportunities for learning through arts and creativity as well as and exploit the potential for value creation through the creative industries.

8. Heritage

8.1 The District has a wealth of cultural, historical and natural assets including, for example: Harry Avery's Castle, the HEART sculpture trail, the Wilson Ancestral Home, the Glenelly Valley & the Sperrins, the River Mourne as well as an untapped source of rich cultural activity provided by language groups, historical societies and traditional music and dance organisations.

8.2 Support for marketing and development of key Cultural Heritage, Historical Assets and Landscape products is served by Tourism Ireland and NITB at the national level and Sperrins Tourism and local authorities at the regional level.

Vision

A vision for Culture, Arts and Tourism in Strabane District was agreed at the Future Search Conference as follows:

“Strabane District unpacks the creative spirit by channelling its energy to infuse vitality into arts, education and tourism.”

Priorities

- Maximise the connections between arts, culture and tourism
- Develop a positive tourism culture
- Develop a programme to build on our rich cultural heritage
- Develop a strategic skills and education programme focused on arts and creativity

Proposals

We will maximise the connections between arts culture and tourism by:

- Developing an integrated arts, cultural and tourism strategy
- Hosting a bi annual tourism event to show case local providers
- Developing an annual events programme
- Building a Strabane presence within City of Culture and other regional events
- Creating an activity based forum for local providers
- Developing activities which offer authentic visitor experiences in History Talks/Music Sessions/Irish Language Classes/Irish-Scottish Dance Taster Sessions.
- Develop Soft Adventure / Activity Events- Taster sessions Golf/Angling/ Craft / Open Gardens

We will develop an annual events programme by:

- Developing a Festivals Body/Committee to co ordinate festival activity
- Developing a series of signature and innovative events of regional/ national importance e.g. Source To Sea Triathlon Event; Extreme Sports In Sperrins –X-Treme Marathon; - Guinness Book of Record Event
- Building a Strabane presence within Culture Night , National Walks Day, European Heritage Days
- Supporting local festivals to expand (post festival parties; Incorporate promotions on accommodation; Shop Windows Initiatives, Bars & restaurants to operate fringe events)
- Developing existing heritage e.g. St Patrick’s Day/Strabane Fair day to enable the telling “Our Story”

We will develop a positive tourism culture by:

- Developing a pool of local ambassadors with a knowledge of the area, local facilities and events
- Developing an outreach programme of practical learning which would focus on: Networking & developing integrated package offers; Development of an eco friendly offer (Green Box);

Innovative Marketing using IT ; Ancestral Research; Product knowledge updates/Telling Our Story; Volunteering Skills ; Tour guiding/ Re-enactment Skills

- Promoting the Strabane District tourist offer at key local and regional events
- Developing a Telling Our Story campaign creating an activity based forum for tourism providers.
- Developing an 'I Luv Strabane' campaign

We will develop a programme to build upon our rich cultural heritage by:

- Undertaking a heritage audit to identify opportunities for improving access to and enhancing the visitor experience through interpretation, living history events
- Identifying heritage sites which can be integrated into national trail initiatives or included within new trails
- Developing a countryside access initiative based on best practice
- Improving the number of and quality of walking routes within the Sperrins
- Improving access to Public land as an educational , eco tourism, healthy living resource
- Improving access to local waters including lakes to stimulate a greater range of activities
- Promoting opportunities for developing soft adventure – products i.e. bird watching, eco tourism, natural photography, leisure cycles with hire
- Developing new Pick 'N' Mix Activity Packages e.g. Relaxation & Zorbing & Husky Dog Trekking, Learn to breaks- Irish and Ulster Scots language and dance, sports

We will develop a strategic skills and education programme focused on arts and creativity by:

- Involving school children in Pushkin Trust and StageWrite programmes
- Developing 3rd Level students in accredited programmes
- Offering vocational training and skills development

Sector Working Group

Social Inclusion and Partnership

Inequalities, Needs, Challenges and Opportunities

1.1 Social inclusion is the overarching term for initiatives which address social policy issues, including inequalities in income, skills levels, education, health, housing affordability and work life balance. Social Inclusion is now part of the framework laws of the European Union. The precise boundaries of the concept are far from determinate, and countries have different definitions, but at its core, social inclusion involves including everyone in social institutions and relations in ways that matter for well being.

1.2 The UK's National action Plan on Social inclusion states ***“Poverty and social exclusion are complex and multidimensional problems. While household income clearly has an important impact on well-being, there are many other factors that help or hinder efforts to transform the lives of those suffering from poverty. Housing, health, education and employment status may all have a role to play. And people are influenced by what sort of neighbourhood they live in, and whether they feel safe from crime or anti-social behaviour.”***

2. Life Times Opportunities Policy

2.1 The NI Social Inclusion strategy aims to ***“tackle poverty and disadvantage and reduce the number of households and children living in poverty and improve the prospects, opportunities and living conditions of those in the most disadvantaged areas and groups by co-ordinated policy and action.”***

2.2 The Lifetime Opportunities Policy adopted in November 2008 by the NI Executive is the result of a previous commitment to review Targeting Social Need policy. The policy is structured around a number of general challenges which become the priorities for future policy and action. These are as follows:

- **Eliminate Poverty** – the focus of future policy and effort must be on the 327,000 people here including children and 54,000 pensioners who live in poverty.

- **Eliminate Social Exclusion** – To provide opportunities for everyone to participate fully in the social & economic life of our community.
- **Tackling Area Based Deprivation** – the concentration of multiple deprivation such as high unemployment, crime and low educational attainment in mainly urban areas poses a challenge for government
- **Eliminating poverty from the Rural Area** - whilst poverty is concentrated in urban areas pressures on the agricultural sector, demographic change and physical isolation leave many rural communities in or at serious risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- **Shared Future** – Essential to promote respect and tolerance between the 2 main communities – there is a challenge to achieve the pace of economic & social change needed to eliminate poverty and social exclusion.
- **Tackling Inequality in the Labour Market** - continue to create employment as a route out of poverty. Promote equality of opportunity for all in accessing employment – inequalities persist based on religion, gender and disability. Policy and legislation must be used as a means of removing barriers to participation in the Labour market.
- **Tackling Cycles of Deprivation** – policy must break the cycle and the process that results in children who are born into poverty developing into underachieving young people & low levels of educational qualification and skills.

In order to address these priorities there is a need to focus on priority needs at different times in peoples lives. The Lifetime opportunities policy defines specific goals and targets for a life cycle approach – early years, childhood, adult working life and later years.

3. Context

3.1 Throughout our research it was identified that “volunteering can play an important role in active citizenship and social inclusion, through its ability to strengthen local communities and facilitate the

involvement of marginalised people in mainstream activities. Volunteers can play an integral role in breaking down the barriers and enabling awareness, working to reduce and minimise the levels of social exclusion & isolation.”

“**It’s all about Time**” – Volunteering in NI 2007 gives a comprehensive insight into volunteering in Northern Ireland in 2007. It describes the numbers of people volunteering, what they are doing and their experience as a volunteer. It also provides detailed information from organisations that involve volunteers as their experiences and practices.

4. Definitions of Volunteering

4.1 Volunteering is defined as “volunteers and volunteering refer to individuals and the work or action they undertake for the benefit of others or the community (outside the immediate family), undertaken by free choice and not directly in return for wages.”

4.2 The report identifies that there are two types of volunteering:

Formal volunteering – “unpaid voluntary work carried out with, or under the auspices of an organisation”.

Informal volunteering – “unpaid or voluntary work carried out outside organisations at neighbourhood level, but outside the immediate family”.

Estimate of total numbers of volunteers (1995-2007): N Ireland

	Formal volunteers	Informal volunteers
2007	282,067	470,111
2001	358,493	759,000
1995	200,000	600,000

Formal Volunteers

- 21% of individuals surveyed are formal volunteers.

- In 2007 the overall economic value of formal volunteers' contribution based on NI average hourly rate was £504m.
- Just under 1/3 of all volunteers are engaged with a voluntary or community organisation which equates to an estimated 87,723 individuals.

Informal Volunteers

- 35% of individuals surveyed.
- The estimated number of informal volunteers fell from 600,000 in 1995 to 470,111 in 2007
- The economic value was £433m.

4.3 Civic & Social Engagement

58% of formal volunteers voted in the general election. 48% of non-volunteers in the same age bracket voted.

4.4 Key Trends – Civic & Social Engagement

- Volunteering increased people's friendship networks
- Volunteering can contribute to an improvement in cross-community relations
- Volunteers vote more than non-volunteers
- Volunteers are more likely to engage in all forms of civic engagement than non-volunteers
- 4.5 Within the district there are many examples of people working together to improve the quality of life of local residents and this is demonstrated through the wide variety of social organisations which have been developed over the years. People have participated in a wide range of activities through resident groups, community organisations and forums and sporting bodies. There are at least 300 voluntary organisations including voluntary and community groups, sporting clubs and cultural groups.

5.0 Poverty & Social Exclusion

5.1 From research it is apparent that there is an inextricable link between social exclusion and poverty and the levels of deprivation in the Council area as reflected in the Noble Indicators (2005 Measures of Deprivation) suggest that Strabane District ranks 3rd worst out of the 26 local government areas for the average Super Output Area rankings when weighted for population size. It ranks 3rd most deprived for local deprivation concentration; 1st for extent of deprivation; 7th for income; and 9th worst for employment. The extent of deprivation is such that 54% of the population of the District live in the most deprived Super Output Areas in Northern Ireland.

Other statistics from the ward breakdowns and town and village statistics include:

- East ward ranks in the worst 1-2% in Northern Ireland for income and employment;
- Five wards – East, Ballycolman, Glenderg, Castlederg and Newtown Stewart - are consistently in the worst 10% in Northern Ireland for the key socio-economic indicators;
- Wards such as Clare, Plumbridge and Slievekirk, rank in the worst 10% in Northern Ireland for proximity to services;
- Wards such as Plumbridge and Victoria Bridge rank in the worst 10% for living environment; Strabane District has 58 Census Output Areas in the worst 10% in Northern Ireland for a combination of economic deprivation, income, employment, and proximity to services.;
- This includes seven Census Output Areas (COA's) in the worst 1% in Northern Ireland;
- This includes East 95zz060002 which is 15th worst for economic deprivation, 14th worst for income and 20th worst for employment, out of 5,022 COA's in Northern Ireland;
- It also includes Plumbridge 95zz110002 which is 1st worst in Northern Ireland for proximity to services (and Glenderg 95zz080002 which is 4th worst) out of 5,022 COA's in Northern Ireland.

5.2 These baseline statistics confirm that high levels of poverty and social exclusion exist in the Strabane District Council area. This is concurrent with the Bare Necessities report on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland which highlights that one in eight households in Northern Ireland (excluding pensioner households) has no one in paid work. These households therefore have inadequate access to material resources and severe restrictions to their integration into a range of social and civic activities exists.”

6. Local Strategies

6.1 A number of local strategies provide a strategic focus on engaging with communities to address the needs of minority groupings in our district. These include ***The Good Relations Strategy & Action Plan 2008-2011*** which aims to address issues of sectarianism and racism through the delivery of local initiatives identified in the 3 year action plan. The strategy highlights a number of specific groupings with social inclusion needs. These include the travelling community – “The travelling community is a large grouping in the district and had specific inclusion needs”; the perceived “exclusion of the protestant community by the Council or from some areas of the district”; migrant workers/ethnic minorities – needs around basic quality of life inclusion and development needs; homophobia and attitudes to people from different sexual orientations; and the “lack of shared neutral venues perceived as an issue by some including the reluctance of the protestant community to use venues in Strabane town.

7. Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

7.1 The document provides a 10 year vision for the Neighbourhood Renewal area which is supported by a 3 year rolling plan, setting out proposed delivery arrangements, programmes and activities against DSD’s strategic objectives for neighbourhood renewal. The action plan is based on 4 strategic themes which includes: community renewal, social renewal, physical renewal an economic renewal.

8. Community Safety Strategy

8.1 The 2008-2011 strategy focuses on addressing community safety issues including Violent Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Drugs and Alcohol misuse across the district and developing programmes in conjunction with partner agencies.

9. The Community Support Strategy

9.1 Strabane District Council’s Community Support Plan was initially developed in 2001 as a way forward in terms of how Council would support the community / voluntary sector. This community support took the form of:

- Funding and provision for Council owned community centres
- Resourcing for community facilities owned by the local community.
- Provision of support for local Advice services
- Grants to local Community Groups.

Strabane District Council has successfully updated its previous Community Support Plan (CSP) to reflect its support to the community and voluntary sector over the next three years (2011 – 2014).

10. Section 75

10.1 All public bodies are required to take into account the requirements detailed within the European Convention on Human Rights. These requirements were integrated in to Northern Ireland's policy framework from October 2000, the Race Relations Order of 1997 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Equality Scheme, and the equality policy that Strabane District Council has, in accordance with its statutory duty and in association with all other local authorities, deems that good relations duties extend beyond religious or/and political dimensions to include also minority ethnic groups. The section 75 categories include the following:

- Persons of Different Religious Belief, Political Opinion, Racial Group, Age, Marital Status or Sexual Orientation;
- Men and Women Generally;
- Persons with a Disability and Persons Without;
- Persons with Dependents and Persons Without.

10.2 Without prejudice to these obligations a public body is also required, when carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group. A public body is bound to have regard for affirmative action. Strabane District Council accepts those obligations, and the strategy reflects their commitment to them.

Vision

A vision for Social Inclusion for Strabane District was agreed at the Future Search Conference as follows:

“We the people of Strabane district commit to upholding the right of everyone to live and accept and to respect ourselves and each other. By working together in partnership in equity, openness, accountability with respect, commitment and integrity in order to meet a common goal or goals, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, religious belief or social status”

Priorities

- Increase participation of key target groups
- Build positive perceptions around place
- Build respect and promote the acceptance of diversity.
- Tackle poverty and social disadvantage through creating vibrant and sustainable communities
- Shared values among all sectors
- Transparency and accountability
- Build and harnessing a sense of pride.
- Isolation (geographical, economic and social)
- Out migration
- Volunteering

Proposals

To increase participation and increase awareness of key target groups and to build respect and promote the acceptance of diversity and build and harnessing a sense of pride by:

- Running joint sports and cultural events. 'Getting to Know You' programmes on a town and rural basis, engaging Protestant, Catholic, LGBT and Ethnic Minority groups and the wider community.
- Work in partnership with a range of stakeholders including the local media to represent the voice of all the communities by

Tackle poverty and social disadvantage through creating vibrant and sustainable communities and build positive and shared perceptions around place

- Develop the skills of our local community in lobbying and influencing particularly with community leaders, local politicians and MLA's on how poverty and social disadvantage is being tackled.
- To carry out a district wide study that will identify space (green/ buildings) that has the potential to be shared.
- To develop partnerships in 4 towns/villages with the business community to examine how the aesthetic appearance of those villages can be enhanced.
- Deliver 2-3 training seminars on lobbying/influencing
- Develop partnerships with the business community to examine the potential of improving the aesthetic appearance of areas.

Carry out a baseline study to identify space that has the potential to be shared.

Increase Prosperity

- Build upon existing research such as the maximising access and rural enablers programme to identify the level and extent of isolation across the district.
- Audit existing community development project activity as well as voluntary activity and showcase models of best practice.

Review the promotion of tourism to promote positive perceptions and address the local economic base of our district and how our own economy is supported in conjunction with the other themes

Sector Working Group

Health and Wellbeing

Inequalities, Needs, Challenges and Opportunities

1.1 The Health and Well Being Sectoral Working Group seek to improve health and well being of the citizens of the Strabane District Council area as part of the wider 'Future Search' process. The group recognises the need to develop a community plan for health and well being which addresses a number of important issues:

1. Recognising the essential link between health and the different aspects of social and economic well being;
2. Reiterating the relevance of the proposals included in the wider plan in addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health.
3. Recognising that raising standards of health locally is a prerequisite for a thriving economy both to raise productivity and to reduce social and financial costs.

1.2 Throughout the process to date there has been recognition of the link between the wider determinants of health and levels of ill health. In particular the wider determinants of health in our area include:

- Low income levels associated with poor diet and health.
- Levels of poverty, debt which lead to anxiety, feelings of inadequacy and breakdowns in families.
- Unemployment and its affect on mental health.
- Poor housing/homelessness and its affect on mental health, accidents in home.
- Social isolation of various socio economic groups in the community.

1.3 The following inequalities in health and wellbeing have been identified

:

- There are 3 times higher respiratory diseases in Ballycolman area than in any other area.
- By February 2011 Strabane had the second highest rate of claimant count unemployment at 7.3%. This was above the regional average of 5.2%. (Source Oxford Economics, April 2011).

- Dental health amongst children in Strabane falls below the Northern Ireland average, both in terms of registration and percentage of children caries free at Primary 1.
- In 2009 there were six alcohol related deaths and three drug-related deaths in the Strabane Council area
- In Strabane in 2009 there were 72 deaths due to Malignant Neoplasm's 106 deaths due to circulatory disease, 41 deaths due to respiratory disease, 16 deaths due to external causes and 6 due to suicide and undetermined intent.
- In 2010 there were thirteen admissions to hospital as a result of mood or anxiety disorder.
- In 2009 there were six deaths due to suicide and undetermined intent
- In 2009, the raw prevalence of patients aged 16 plus (per 1,000 patients) on the Obesity Register was 174.88 for Strabane District.
- In 2009, the raw prevalence of patients aged 16 plus (per 1,000 patients) on the Obesity Register was 175.02 for Strabane District.

1.4 The inequalities and needs which exist locally are clearly evident and can be seen in the baseline research already completed as part of this process. It is essential that the challenges and opportunities which arise now and into the future are utilized in a positive way to make a positive impact on the lives of all members of our community.

2. Challenges and Opportunities

2.1 Health & well-being begins and ends with people and includes all other elements such as:

- Infrastructure
- Education
- Access to services
- Housing issues
- Agri-food sector – one of the best food sectors in NI

- Policies
- Tourism & Leisure

2.2 Within the Strabane District area we are fortunate to have a structure in place which allows continual cross sector engagement to work towards common aims to benefit the local communities. The Public Health Agency and Local Authorities and other statutory agencies are now jointly working on health improvement and are keen to look at what works at local level and address local needs. We have a strong community and voluntary network already in place with some excellent models of community development approaches to health improvement. We need to bring these elements together in line with the various regional and local strategies including:

- Investing for Health 2002
- Fit Futures - 2006 (to address childhood obesity)
- A Fitter Future for All - a 10 year cross-sectoral integrated life course framework to prevent and address obesity in Northern Ireland for 2011-2021 - currently out for consultation
- Promoting Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003- 2008 - (A new strategy for the promotion of mental health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland will be published later this year)
- NI Suicide Prevention Strategy - Protect Life - A Shared Vision 2006 - 2011 (this strategy has been extended to 2013)
- New Strategic Direction for Drugs and Alcohol (NSD) - 2006-2011
- Regional Hidden Harm Action Plan 2008
- Oral Health Strategy for NI 2007

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Public Health Agency (PHA) Strategy for Community Development Approaches to Health & Well Being 2010 will provide an opportunity to attract resources to offer more targeted interventions in communities where it is most needed.

The Health & Well Being SWG recognize that through a multi-level and multi-dimensional approach we can work towards addressing these issues and strive towards achieving the vision for 2020.

Vision

“Strabane District is an area which promotes healthy lifestyle to enable it’s citizens to understand, value and make informed choices for the individual and their families health and holistic well-being”.

Priorities

1. Help to reduce the rise in obesity by promoting and facilitating active and healthier communities locally.
2. Adopt a multi-agency approach to challenge alcohol and substance misuse locally.
3. Promote emotional health and well being across all ages in the community

Proposals

1. We will help to reduce the rise in obesity by promoting and facilitating active and healthier communities locally by:

- Supporting sport in the community, including funding those providing opportunities for children and young people in areas such as soccer, GAA, rugby and other sports for people with a disability
- Promoting sport and exercise amongst young women
- Engaging the Health Forum to review the gains made in terms of health promotion messages at Primary School and consider how to maximise and translate these messages through to Secondary School
- Encourage and support GPs in developing an exercise referral programme and link with existing programmes in other areas
- Continue to roll-out the Cook It programme throughout the District
- Work with the relevant agencies to restrict and perhaps reduce the number of fast-food outlets in Strabane District and work with the existing outlets to provide healthier options

- Introduce pre-diabetic screening through collaborative working with GPs and Community Pharmacies, especially in terms of weight management
- Introduce screening programmes for identifying people most at risk of coronary heart disease and stroke

2. We will adopt a multi agency approach to challenge alcohol and substance locally by:

- Consider implementing a multi-sectoral, multi-agency approach to tackling alcohol misuse such as the Civic Alcohol Forum established by Derry City Council and Derry Healthy Cities
- Work with the Vintners association and local alcohol retailers in an attempt to restrict access to cheap alcohol
- Encourage MLA's and local Councillors to champion steps to restrict access to cheap alcohol
- Provide more services in Strabane District for people with alcohol-related problems
- Establish specific programmes for young people to reduce the level and impact of alcohol-related harm, working with organisations engaged in this field such as Divert and Hurt
- Explore the community mobilisation model to change the culture of alcohol and link with initiatives such as the CAWT cross-border alcohol harm reduction project
- Raise the profile of alcohol-related harms by concerted programmes involving GPs, Community Pharmacists, Health Promotion staff and other agencies in accessible venues and at accessible times throughout the District

3. We will promote emotional health and well being across all ages in the community by;

- Maintain and increase the capacity of the Koram Centre and other counselling services in the Strabane area
- Develop GP practice-based psychological services, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and counselling

- Provide an updated directory of services so that people can be signposted to appropriate mental health services
- Consider implementing initiatives to reduce tranquiliser use such as the Foyle Tranquiliser Initiative
- Encourage community and voluntary sector groups to take on board recommendations made and standards developed by the CLEAR Project in relation to community and voluntary sector mental health services
- Encourage groups from throughout the District to take up mental health training offered through the Trust Health Promotion Department and the CLEAR Project
- Ensure that each provider of services within the community and voluntary and statutory sectors provide complementary service.

Sector Working Group

Regeneration and Infrastructure

Inequalities, Needs, Challenges and Opportunities

1.1 National and Regional Framework

The impact of National and Regional frameworks will have a significant bearing on the potential and opportunities for regeneration within the Strabane District. The impact of these have been addressed within the recently published regeneration plans for Strabane Town Centre and other visioning plans and strategies set for the social, economic and physical regeneration of the wider district. These strategies include:-

STRATEGY	IMPACT
Regional Development Strategy (RDS) Policy SPG – Econ 1	Recognises the need to strengthen the service sector and maximise its capacity to benefit from the economic spill over from towns and villages with a focus on main towns and small villages in rural areas of Northern Ireland
Sub-regional Transport Plan	The impact of the A5 will influence the future development of Strabane and change the landscape and farming uses of some of its rural areas.
PP33 – Access and Movement	Identifies the need for accessibility within town centres, the demand for car parks and the role of public transport.
PPS5 – Retailing and Town Centres	The sustainability of existing businesses depends on opportunities for new trade to be exploited.
PPS8 – Open Space	The quality of life is a particular enhancer for sustaining communities and contributing to improved health for example. Additionally the value of open space as a reason to 'stop and visit ' and area can assist local tourism potential.
PPS15 – Planning and Flood Risk	There is a level of flood risk in Strabane and to a lesser degree in towns such as Newtownstewart and Castleterg. This has an impact on the development opportunities in prime locations, particularly in Strabane.
PPS16 – Tourism	The planning policy for tourism development seeks to support

	and safeguard tourism development; It seeks to facilitate economic growth and social well-being through tourism in ways which are sustainable and compatible with environmental welfare and the conservation of important tourism assets.
People & Place – a Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal 2003	This strategy is a 7-10 year plan to target communities throughout Northern Ireland suffering the highest levels of deprivation. Strabane town has been identified as an area for targeted intervention. Overall 54% of the District population live in the most deprived super output areas in Northern Ireland.
Sport Matters	Establishes the need for increasing opportunities for sport and maximising open space development. Targets in relation to infrastructure include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring 90% of population have quality accredited multi-purpose facilities with 20 minutes • Planning decisions follow PPS8 in relation to provision of spaces for sport and recreation

1.2 The general context for regeneration and the local economic profile of Strabane is set out in the Oxford Economics report – ‘A New Economy a New Response?’ (April 2010). Furthermore the ‘Standing up for the Derg’ visioning framework sets out this context for the Derg Electoral area. A further community planning pilot initiative for the remaining rural areas (Donemana, Plumbridge, Artigarvin, Bready, Magheramason) will distil the overall findings from the Oxford Economic profile to these ward levels during 2011.

1.3 In overall district –wide terms Oxford Economics conclude that ‘an additional 4,000 jobs would make a tangible difference in the economy by 2020 and that this growth in employment should be augmented by environmental, physical, social, equality targets and aims.’ Investment in regeneration initiatives will clearly be a major driver in meeting this target.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The Key implications for the Strabane District in economic and social terms include:

- The current recession and its short to medium term negative impact on investment, development and employment
- The need to diversify the employment base away from agriculture and manufacturing
- The need to increase jobs in business services, retail distribution, tourism
- The concentration on construction employment which is likely to need a long-term recovery
- The need to create the space to enable business/office market to grow
- The Improvements needed in the physical environment
- Greater exploitation of growing markets in Derry, Omagh and cross-border
- Addressing skills and qualification mis-match
- Need to promote sustainable social and economic development, including addressing equality and shared future objectives
- The need to reverse the trend of out migration
- The need to develop a shared future where all communities are happy to live, work and spend time

2.2 The Strabane District needs drivers to stimulate both urban and rural regeneration. Whilst there are a number of factors which are unique to each part, the town and rural areas cannot be viewed in isolation.

2.3 The Department for Social Development published 'A Masterplan for Strabane' (June 2010) which sets out the vision, 'Rediscover Strabane'. This was in line with the recommendations arising from the Committee for Developments inquiry into town centre regeneration. The purpose of this master-planning exercise is to facilitate the physical social and economic regeneration of the town and to provide a basis for planned intervention and identify potential implications for economic and social development, the likely market response to intervention, timescales and potential delivery vehicles.

The purpose of the plan is best defined by the following regeneration objectives, in which the aim of the Masterplan is to:

- Rank and prioritise potential development and opportunity sites
- Advise on the nature, scale and timing of work to restructure and redevelop the opportunity sites
- Make realistic and deliverable recommendations for the period to 2020
- Advise on appropriate transportation, access and parking interventions which might be required to achieve the successful development of the opportunity sites
- Advise on appropriate public realm enhancements to support the regeneration of Strabane town centre
- Support the proposed physical interventions with a framework of short, medium and long-term actions, delivery mechanisms with implementation agencies identified

2.4 The physical context for regeneration focuses on both the need to develop place quality and improve access and movement. This includes the physical elements of the place; what it looks like; how it is arranged; the relationship between the buildings and the open space and how it fits into the landscape. Issues for built form, townscape and heritage are included within the overall concept of place quality.

2.5 From the perspective of access and movement the viability of Strabane town centre needs to be more accessible and pedestrian friendly. Issues with regard to linkages; parking; access from the A5; quality of pedestrian links; bus services; and cycling infrastructure need to be considered.

2.9 The Strabane Town Centre plan proposes to:-

- Enhance and promote the town centre core
- Enrich the existing built heritage
- Create an accessible, legible and welcoming town centre
- Create a safe and attractive animated public realm

2.10 The Mourneberg visioning framework covering the Derg electoral area (Castleberg, Killen, Killeter, Ardstraw, Newtown Stewart) identifies the needs within those rural communities:-

- Bolstering the local economy

- Developing tourism
- Improving our places
- Strengthening our communities
- Cross-border working

2.11 There is a need for both Physical regeneration and economic regeneration initiatives which contribute to the achievement of these proposals. Extending these approaches to include the Districts other settlements is also important.

2.12 Major developments in terms of the A5 duelling proposal are identified in the Regional Transport Strategy. The proposed improvements represent a significant link in longer-term plans to improve connections between Dublin, Londonderry and Donegal. Strabane is well placed to maximise the opportunities from the economic corridor between L'Derry and Dublin. This will allow opportunity to link to city-driven initiatives including the UK City of Culture. The role of rural towns should also be promoted in terms of the services and initiatives being developed at city level.

2.13 The south west access route to Fermanagh is also an important arterial route linkage to services, including the new hospital and the Fermanagh Lakeland's.

2.14 The high speed inter-connector cable provided and project Kevlin will facilitate increased broadband speed to support the needs of the main growth sectors. Additional work needs to be undertaken to increase broadband access to both individual homes and businesses and maximise the development of IT skills in schools. Harnessing the potential of advanced IT and communications technology to improve efficiencies and ensure a sustainable economy.

Vision

The overall vision is for:

“An economically and physically vibrant district with a quality, accessible and sustainable infrastructure, linked to the wider region and beyond”

Priorities

Our priorities for the infrastructure and regeneration of the Strabane District are:

- To regenerate Strabane Town Centre and the towns and villages within the Mournderg and Glenelly electoral areas
- To maximise the private development of potential release sites

Proposals

We will regenerate Strabane Town Centre by:

- Developing the Melvin footbridge
- Developing a 4 court sports hall at Melvin Park
- Upgrading Riversdale Leisure Centre
- Supporting new gateway developments which encourage passing trade to stop and enter the town via enhanced pathways such as Railway Street
- Developing a unified and accessible town centre which encourages people to visit with ease
- Develop Railway Street as a conduit to the retail core through a targeted street enhancement programme
- Undertaking a re-evaluation of customer car parking and delivery arrangements in retail core
- Aiming for better co-ordinated public transport provision for both buses and taxis.
- Addressing vacant shops by targeting potential new retailers, possibly using a subsidised initial rental package, together with business training or support from Invest NI.
- Integration of open market within the wider town centre retail offer to stimulate additional town centre footfall
- Increasing the availability of existing waterside development.

- Developing a quality hotel and resort underpinned by a small number of well-defined saleable attractions such as fishing or outdoor activities
- Maximising the use of existing open space at Lifford Road as a potential eco park through the Riverine project

We will regenerate rural towns and villages by:

- The Arc North West village renewal programme for Newtownstewart, Plumbridge and Douglas Bridge
- Undertaking an environmental improvement programme in Clady Village through the River Links programme
- Developing the Foyle Wetlands, the former Strabane Canal, as a recreational amenity and activity site
- Develop the stables building in Sion Mills as a heritage resource
- Support the conservation and redevelopment of the Sion Mills Masterplan for the former Mill Buildings

We will maximise the private development of potential release sites by:

- Working in partnership with The Department of Social Development to maximise regeneration opportunity for the SCORE site, through a combination of leisure and retail use
- Provide advice and support to the private sector in taking forward development opportunities

Sector Working Group

Education, Training & Mixed Economy

Inequalities, Needs Challenges and Opportunities

Strabane District Council's Economic Development Department, in association with Strabane Employment Task Force engaged in a high degree of local area consultation in the development of an Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan launched on June 2008. This strategy set out Strabane's economic priorities for the period 2008-2013. The Future Search Conference, entitled "Your Future – Your Say" in The Fir Trees Hotel in January 2010 produced 2 Sectoral Working Groups that fitted into the Economic Development Strategy e.g. (1) Education & Training, (2) Mixed Economy. Since there was an identified overlap with these two Sectoral Working Groups they were merged under the title "Education, Training & Mixed Economy". The Sectoral Working Group identified 2 of the priorities of the Economic Development Strategy as a blueprint which could be updated to take cognisance of the views of the new Sectoral Working Group e.g. Priority 2 – Developing the Workforce and Priority 3 – Promoting Productive and Competitive Businesses.

Context

The Strabane District Council population is 39,600 and is forecast to increase to 41,900 by 2021

- The population is young with 26% aged under 16 against a Northern Ireland figure of 24%.
- The district suffers the highest deprivation levels (Income and Employment) in Northern Ireland and has many people reliant on benefits
- 70% of the population has no qualifications (NI figure is 59%) whilst 9% have a degree or higher (against a NI figure of 16%)
- 66% are economically active (in NI overall, 70% are economically active)
- Those in work typically earn low wages
- 99.5% of businesses employ under 50 people
- "Old economy" industries such as farming and construction are important jobs as are retailing and education
- Unemployment currently stands at 7.3%, well above the NI figure of 5.2%

Key Issues

The Sectoral Working Group met on a 5 occasions since the conference and the following were identified as the key issues for this group to tackle:

- Inter-generational unemployment with families/communities having a culture of never having worked, leading to whole swathes of people who essentially “don’t care”
- A feeling of despair with too many young people seeing school/training/education as a waste of time because it doesn’t/won’t lead to anything substantive
- A need for “social skilling” of people to leave them better placed to deal with even the basic tasks of daily living
- The black economy remains very significant locally
- There is a potential to develop sports/leisure-based careers locally

It is felt that in the District’s rural areas the problem is less acute because (a) a more rooted culture of entrepreneurialism and/or a willingness to get-up-and-follow-work and (b) stronger social networks which provide support/help/opportunities for people.

Current Responses to those Issues

There are several organisations/initiatives involved in this area of work locally (e.g. ARC North-West; Chamber of Commerce; community groups/organisations; the Council; DEL; DENI; DETI; Enterprise Centre; Invest NI; Neighbourhood Renewal; NW College; and schools) taking forward the many, many initiatives and programmes in place ... but there is minimal coordination between them.

Any coordination that is happening is limited and very largely voluntary. Experience shows that most organisations won’t do what they don’t have to do but will, naturally, focus instead on their core business/the things they will be measured against: it has therefore been very difficult to get them to collaborate/cooperate if there is no obligation/incentive to do so.

At the same time many responses are seen by those they are aimed at as just temporary conveyor belts, essentially re-cycling people and leading to nothing in particular. Participants aren’t attracted to them or enthused by them.

Main Gaps to be Addressed

It was felt the key strategic need is to (a) make responses meaningful and attractive to their targets (i.e. unemployed people) and (b) make the joined-up delivery of those responses attractive to those organisations doing the delivery. This means there is a need to:

- Get the message across to young people that “Good-grades/good-training = a good job/career = a pleasant, enjoyable life”
- Put in place a working coordination of all the many, many initiatives and programmes that are already in place: unless organisations/agencies are obliged to work together, history shows it won't happen

Strong working partnerships between schools; training organisations/programmes; and employers are central to this.

Addressing these needs proactively would:

- Create opportunities to address Economic inactivity
- Deliver much of the up-skilling necessary for the district to be a competitive location in which to grow the economy of the future;
- Reduce the inequalities in attainment and skills levels evident across the district; and Advance Education and Learning
- Assist in development of Business Sectors
- Encourage Growth through Support, Innovation and create new businesses

Improving the skills of the workforce would provide the district with a sound foundation on which to build an adaptable workforce, one which would be better placed to service the needs of the economy. Encouraging growth of businesses within the district would inject much needed wealth and help to create and sustain jobs in the district.

Vision

The Sectoral Working Group amended the Vision within the Economic Development Strategy to read

“Strabane will be a high performing and diverse local economy, in addition to being an attractive, healthy and prosperous place in which to learn, work, invest and live by 2020.”

Priorities

- Establish which skills are needed in the private sector and upgrade the workforce
- Ease transitions from benefits to work by assessing provision, collation and sharing of skills between different providers and eroding the culture of competition between providers
- Involve and encourage Young Enterprise culture within the district
- Develop Business Park in Strabane and assess property provision for investment
- Develop Franchising Seminar as a tool for Self-Employment
- Develop Business Incubation Centre Programme & Social Economy Model

Proposals

We have arranged our proposals into 3 Programmes of Action as follows:

1. Education & Training

- Early Intervention through the Neighbourhood Renewal programme projects targeted a 0- 6 years
- ABLE FOR WORK Programme with Job Directions
- Pilot Inside Trak Programme to be extended to all post primary schools
- Lobby for expansion and capital development of Strabane Campus of the North West Regional College
- Expand the Strabane Job Ready Programme

2. Mixed Economy

- Develop a Programme of Sales, Marketing, Branding and Mentoring Support for Businesses in the district in co-operation with Invest NI
- Develop young entrepreneurs through Enterprise Programme with the Prince's Trust
- Target Businesses to adopt new markets through eBay Training Programmes

3. Develop the Digital Economy

- Lobby for increased access of high speed broadband and opportunities through Kelvin project
- Create Business awareness of Digital Opportunities
- Target Businesses to adopt new markets through eBay Training Programmes