

‘THE TOWN TEAM’ AS A DRIVER OF MONAGHAN TOWN’S REVITALISATION

SUPPORT PACKAGE



Submission by Monaghan County Council to URBACT GOOD PRACTICE CALL

Contact Person: Máire Cullinan, Executive Planner, Economic Development and Urban Regeneration, Monaghan County Council

Email: mcullina@monaghancoco.ie

March 2017

CONTENTS

Good Practice Summary

Photos presenting Good Practice

Support Package Materials

- **Links to promotional brochures, videos and website**
- **Reports included as PDF documents**

‘THE TOWN TEAM’ AS A DRIVER OF MONAGHAN TOWN’S REVITALISATION

GOOD PRACTICE SUMMARY



Introduction: The Problem and proposed solutions

Monaghan Town (population 6,834 (Census 2016)) is located in proximity to the Border with Northern Ireland. The county town, with a large rural hinterland has a catchment population in excess of 50,000. Local government is administered at county level by Monaghan County Council and also at Municipal District level. The core function of the town is as an employment, retail and administrative centre.

Like many Irish towns, Monaghan has suffered decline in its town centre and a lack of investment, partly as a result of economic recession, with other socio-economic factors also contributing. An unhealthy town centre presents a range of economic, social and environmental problems and inhibits a town's growth and ability to retain young population.

Monaghan's border location has resulted in exacerbated economic impacts from the conflict in Northern Ireland (now post conflict era), economic recession, fluctuating currency differentials between the Euro and Pound Sterling, and the most recent advent of BREXIT. These problems have inhibited economic recovery and contributed to the decline of town centre activity.

The Local Authority initiative to adopt a Town Team approach, a collaboration of economic, social and environmental interests sharing a common goal to improve the well-being of the town for its citizens represents a sustainable model for regeneration. The Town Plan provides a guide for delivering agreed actions.

Timeframes, dates and important milestones

The Local Authority appointed a Town Team coordinator in August 2015. A public meeting held in November 2015 stimulated interest in stakeholders/public to initiate the creating of a Town Team that established in January 2016. A draft Town Team Plan was in place by March 2016. Key achievements of the Town Team are:

- Business stakeholder database, September 2015/ongoing
- Website, September 2015
- Installation of footfall counters, November 2015/quarterly reports
- Quarterly newsletter, December 2015/ongoing
- Retail Investment Prospectus, May 2016
- Top 10 'Foodie Destination', September 2016
- Town Voucher Scheme, October 2016/ongoing
- Age-Friendly town status, December 2016
- Monaghan Town Business Awards, January 2017
- Promotional pack for visiting journalists, February 2017

The Town Team will continue its ongoing focus of improving the public realm, increasing activity around events, and encouraging the evening and night time economy.

Link to strategy

In promoting sustainable integrated communities, the concept positively contributes to achieving the five EU2020 targets. Supporting town centre revival and creating vibrant and viable centres is embedded in national policy in the *Action Plan for Jobs, 2017*. Supporting Sustainable Communities and empowering locals to build better communities with emphasis on regeneration is a key pillar of the government's *Action Plan for Rural Development, 2017*.

The Town Team concept is based on the document, *A Strategy for Rural Retailing* (Retail Excellence Ireland, 2012) and is currently under review to provide *A Framework for Town Centre Renewal* (release mid 2017), fulfilling actions of government strategy documents referred to above.

The concept fits with enhanced functions for economic development and citizen engagement by local authorities under the *Local Government Reform Act 2014* and fulfils objectives of the adopted *Monaghan Local Economic and Community Plan 2016–2022* to promote development in town centres, including appointing a retail manager.

Outputs and results achieved

Improvement to public realm and of sustainable initiatives is evident in the improved Tidy Towns competition adjudication reports. In 2016, Monaghan was awarded 309 marks, increasing from 302 in 2015 and 292 in 2014. The town also secured overall national Pollinator Award and Climate Change Award in 2016.

From inception of the Town Team, the business mailing list has increased from 138 to 244 direct point of contact with business owners. Facebook interaction has increased from 1,300 users in November 2015 to 3,700 users presently.

The number of events increased by two in the Town in 2016 – Black Friday event and Business Awards. Footfall counters have documented the impact of increased activity that events bring to the town centre.

Persons on the Live Register presenting at the Monaghan office has fallen to 1,733 in February 2017, from 2,001 in February 2016 and 2,369 in February 2015.

The Local Enterprise Office has supported sponsorship of the Monaghan Business Awards and a local producers crafts pop-up Christmas shop.

Monaghan, in conjunction with third level students, is currently completing a pilot 'Town Centre Health Check' under a national programme led by the Heritage Council, to provide a baseline of data (land use survey, retailer/shopper satisfaction, rent yields, crime data and environmental quality) that can be updated to give quantitative assessment of the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Potential for re-use and improvement

With many cities suffering from declining centres and challenges of adopting an approach for effective renewal, the Town Team concept is an opportunity for local people to engage in town centre renewal. The concept is an effective and evolving model based on the local authority facilitating the townspeople to take charge of creating active and living town centres for their own enjoyment.

The model is a basic concept of collaboration of economic, social and environmental pillars for sustainable urban integration. The methods involved of holding meetings, agreeing an action plan, delivering activities and continuous review, can be adapted to any city context. The operational activities adopted make the Town Team model adaptable for learning exchange to promote healthy living cities.

‘THE TOWN TEAM’ AS A DRIVER OF MONAGHAN TOWN’S REVITALISATION

PHOTOS PRESENTING GOOD PRACTICE

Photo 1: Locals and visitors soaking up the Monaghan Town festival atmosphere



Photo 2: Success for Monaghan as Top 10 Foodie Destination 2016



‘THE TOWN TEAM’ AS A DRIVER OF MONAGHAN TOWN’S REVITALISATION

SUPPORT PACKAGE - MATERIALS

Promotional brochures, videos and website

20 Things to Know About Monaghan Municipal District

<http://monaghantown.ie/brochure/#>

Monaghan Has IT website

<http://monaghanhasit.ie>

Monaghan Shop Local Promotional Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7up-5Za8Pbk&t=33s>

Monaghan Farm to Fork Promotional Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKaDIWsv9Rw>

Monaghan Shop Local/ Love Local Video Campaign

<https://www.facebook.com/monaghanhasit/videos/1164230507005093/>

Go Monaghan Supporting Sustainable Travel in County Monaghan

<https://gomonaghan.ie/smarter-travel/national-cycle-network/ulster-canal-greenway/>

Monaghan Town voucher

<http://monaghanhasit.ie/town-vouchers>

Monaghan Business Awards website

<https://www.monaghanbusinessawards.com>

Reports included as PDF documents

Land Use Map Monaghan Town Centre November 2016

Monaghan Town Team Newsletter E-zine February 2017

Monaghan Town Centre Footfall Report January to March 2016