

Time to Kickstart



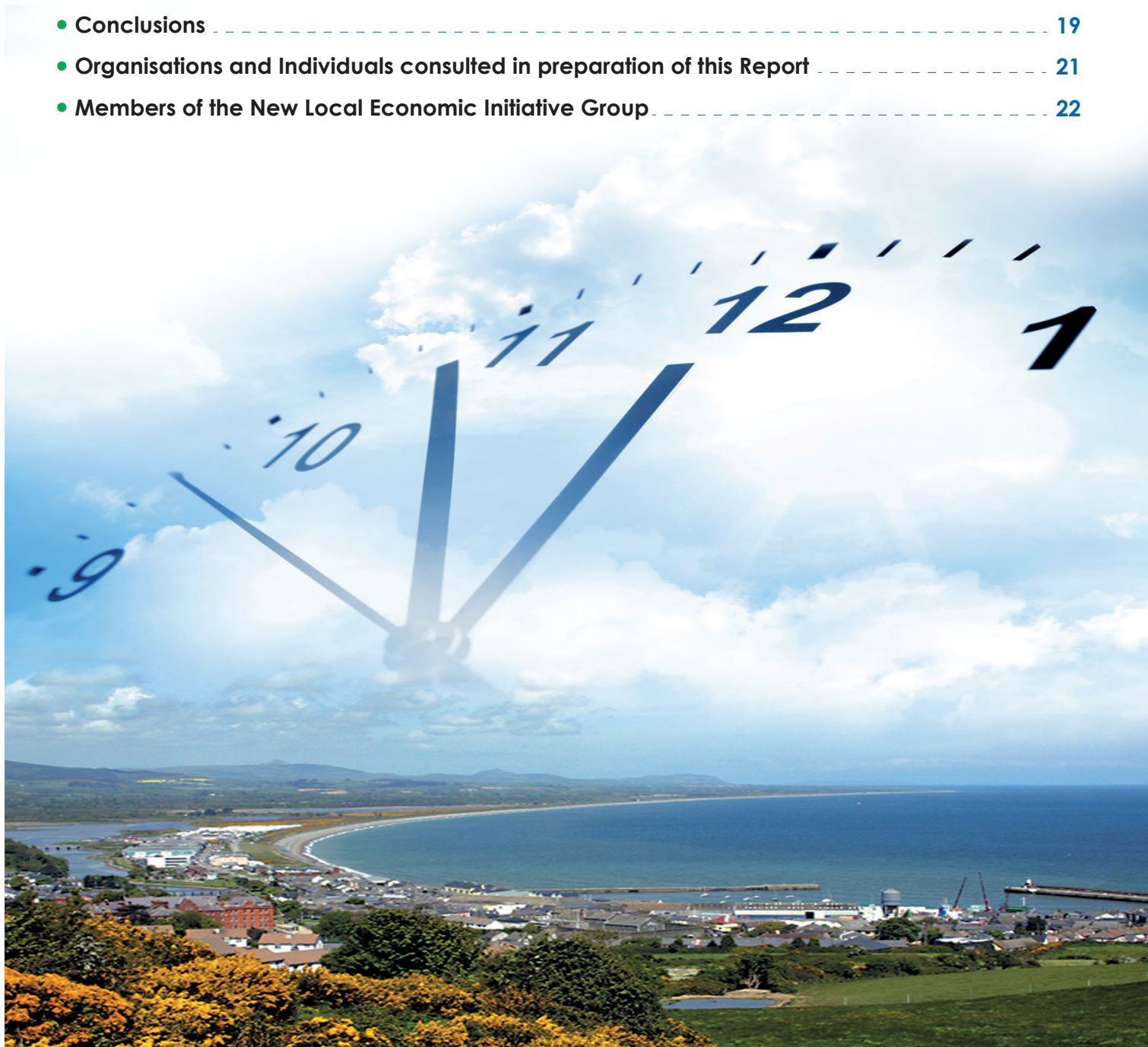
WICKLOW TOWN

*Time to capitalise on the unique potential
of our Location.*



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Introduction

The **New Local Economic Initiative Group** was set up by Wicklow Town & District Chamber in September 2016.

This report “**Time to Kickstart Wicklow Town**” is the work of that group.

Our mission statement is to **maximise the business tourism and social potential of our area and to capitalise fully on the unique selling points of our location.**

The individuals who agreed to participate in our working group all live in Wicklow Town and share a strong common belief that this area has not developed to its full potential

In our group, we had members who have considerable International and National business experience in Export, Trade Development, Commercial Development, Financial & Management Services, Tourism and Local Government.

The objective of our group was to ensure that all the opportunities available to the area are explored and that we put in place a template to ensure that the overall objective of our group can be achieved in the short to medium term.

We have been meeting fortnightly since last September as the full working group. In addition our sub groups have met with key local stakeholders since our formation. We have held meetings with 18 of these groups and individuals.

The following areas have been highlighted by The Local Economic Initiative Group as areas having the most potential to deliver a much needed economic and social injection.

- **Wicklow Town Digital Strategy**
- **Greenway/Blueway**
- **Park and Ride**
- **Wicklow Town Public Realm and enhancing the visual appearance of our Town**
- **Historic Town Status/Heritage Site**
- **Retail Survey**

Detailed costings have not been carried out by this group. Costs are likely to be borne by funding through grant application. The likely sources of funding are identified under each heading in the report.

When the Implementation Group is formed costing the various projects will be a significant part of their work.

This “Time to Kickstart Wicklow Town” Report was commissioned as an initiative by Wicklow Town & District Chamber of Commerce in September 2016.

The process involved determining what opportunities are available to Wicklow Town to develop commercially, economically and socially. The group consulted with 18 key stakeholders in our town and district.

We gave important consideration to the “Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan June 2008” as the basis for the future development of our Town

The Group identified five principal areas for development

Wicklow Town Digital Strategy would require the development of an online presence for Wicklow town to promote our Town and drive local economic activity. Strong broadband connectivity is essential. Our town because of its strategic location and as the administrative capital is the most suitably located town for the establishment of a digital hub in County Wicklow

Greenway/ Blueway: The development of a Greenway/Blueway from Greystones to Wicklow Town along the Murrough for use by walkers, cyclists and water based activity. This will make a significant contribution to the economic and social well-being of County Wicklow.

Park and Ride: Improved public transport will greatly enhance Wicklow Town as a location for business and the quality of life for commuters.

Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan: Improving the environmental quality of the Town for the benefit of local residents, businesses and visitors is vital. Improvements to the three main gateways to our Town would greatly enhance our Town visually and significantly improve the first impression our Town makes on visitors. Backlighting of historic sites in addition to making a successful application for Historic Town status is key to the achievement of this plan.

Historic Town Status/Heritage Site: The Heritage Council of Ireland is planning in 2017 to recognise six to eight towns as Historic Towns. We recommend that an application is made to this body for Historic Town status.

Retail Survey: There is an urgent need to revitalise the Town from a retail perspective. It was agreed that a comprehensive retail survey be undertaken in order to determine the types of business that are missing and the types of business that would have a better opportunity to be more successful.



In our opinion, a key element of the success of Wicklow Town's peers in Ireland is their approach to the use of an on-line presence to promote their town and drive local economic activity.

A second component that is now developing is the use of high speed broadband to create Digital Hubs which can attract small, start-up type businesses to locate in our Town. This would generate additional economic activity and potentially attract those business owners to reside in the area.

We have divided this report into two headings:

1 ONLINE/SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

2. BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY

Online/Social Media Presence

Arklow, Greystones and Bray all have their own independent websites. Wicklow County Tourism's website does have a Wicklow Town link with details of activities, services, attractions etc. but this is part of an overall County Wicklow focused website. If one googles Wicklow Town, links to the Wicklow Tourism website appear but, when clicked on, you are brought into the general page rather than directly to the Wicklow Town page.

There is no active web presence operated specifically for Wicklow Town.

There is a domain name www.wicklowtown.ie which was registered by the Chamber of Commerce but this does not appear in the Google search. When the wicklowtown.ie page is opened an advertisement for PTA IT Solutions appears, whom we understand is the administrator of the site.

There is a reasonably active Wicklow Town Facebook page which is administered by the Chamber of Commerce. It has 5,765 followers.

There is a Wicklow Town Twitter handle @wicklowtown.ie with 143 followers. It hasn't been active since 2012.

Currently there is no Wicklow Town Instagram page.

We carried out research on websites for Dungarvan, Clonakilty and Bray to ascertain their approach. The following is the outcome of that research.

Dungarvan

www.dungarvan.ie is not a standalone site maintained by individuals or an organisation in the town. It is part of a site www.visitwaterford.com which is operated and maintained by Waterford City & County Council. They carry out any updates or changes to content.

Wicklow Town Digital Strategy contd.

Clonakilty:

This site is managed and operated through Clonakilty Chamber of Commerce and we spoke to Christopher O'Sullivan of that organisation. The site is approx. 4 years old and they are currently in the process of having it revamped as they are not happy with its offering compared to the sites they consider as their peers, namely Kinsale, Kenmare and Killarney. It is currently set up to take automatic event feeds from local hospitality venues and this will continue with the revamped site. It is also envisaged that content will be submitted directly with a group of four Chamber members having back office passwords to approve and create their own content. No advertising revenue is generated from the current site. The new site has the capacity to generate revenue from advertising should the Chamber so wish.

In relation to the revamp, they got quotes from three companies and are going with Granite Digital, who were also the designers of the Kenmare website. The cost of the revamp is €5k and will be paid for by the Chamber.

Bray:

As a result of this we did some research instead on the Bray website, www.bray.ie. We contacted Bray Chamber of Commerce who directed us to David Forde, District Administrator for Bray Municipal District as Bray Chamber of Commerce does not have any direct involvement with the site. David Forde advised that the site was initially set up through Bray Town Council/Bray Tourism in 2011. Its set up was funded at the time by the local authority with some support from Failte Ireland. The site is essentially a Bray Tourism site. It promotes events in Bray and hosts a business directory. Bray Municipal District has a separate online presence. Approx. 2 years ago the site was revamped. Maintenance is now carried out by a Kerry-based company, PC Productions. The site is linked to Facebook & Twitter and recently won an award for Best Connected Community. Updates can be uploaded by any organisation but have to be approved first by David Forde. Any expenses that arise are covered by Bray Municipal District Council.

Summary

In our view, an immediate priority for 2017 should be the creation of an independent website for Wicklow Town, owned and operated locally. Most comparable towns in Ireland have one at this stage. For comparison, we feel that the websites of Bray, Dungarvan, Clonakilty, Greystones, Westport and Athlone are good examples of active relevant sites. Site content should include:

- **Historical aspects**
- **Key visitor areas with appropriate individual content and direction maps**
- **Events**
- **Facilities**
- **Accommodation**
- **Hospitality**
- **Access (train times, bus times etc.).**

A lot of this content is already available on the Wicklow Tourism site which is a useful starting point.

Wicklow Town Digital Strategy contd.

It would be an added advantage if the website had links to other appropriate websites such as Wicklow Gaol etc.

It would also be beneficial if some videos were linked to the site e.g. some historical commentary by John Finlay, video of the Area (Pat Brennan's 'No King Has More' or Sean Olanhan's 'Welcome to Wicklow Town' as an example)

Regular daily updating is critical with a direct link to the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages as appropriate.

Connectivity can be driven initially through the active Facebook page and encouragement of linkage through the Wicklow diaspora will generate worldwide prominence for our Town.

We understand that Wicklow County Council will be revamping their own website in 2017. It is imperative that Wicklow Town's site is operational in order for links to it to be included.

Otherwise it will be the only town on the East Coast without its own independent presence on the site.

We do recognise that there will be a lot of work required in updating the site on a regular basis but, in our view, a fully functional website and social media presence is a must for any successful town

An active site will ultimately become reflective of the economic and social wellbeing of our Town.

The cost of its production and the upkeep of a website could be offset by carrying advertisements for local businesses.

Broadband/Connectivity:

It is abundantly clear that strong broadband connectivity is essential to the development of towns like Wicklow. Currently, this connectivity is primarily provided by Eircom, with some other small providers. Overall though, the signal strength in Wicklow Town is not of sufficient quality.

Nationally, the Government are preparing to roll out a **National Broadband Plan**. The National Broadband roll out and implementation will be carried through each Local Authority.

Separately, a number of Companies such as **Siro, Imagine, E-Net and Virgin** are now looking to enter the market in competition to Eircom. From a Wicklow perspective, **Siro** are currently the most interesting.

SIRO is a joint venture between ESB & Vodafone, set up to combine the connectivity of ESB and the technological expertise of Vodafone. **SIRO** has a National roll-out plan in which **Wicklow Town**, along with Bray, Greystones and Arklow is scheduled to commence in late 2017-mid 2018.

SIRO has already been piloted very successfully in Skibbereen with a digital hub called Ludgate (www.ludgate.ie). It has been established with a view to creating 500 jobs in the town by 2020. It has 80 hot spot desks and has already been extremely successfully in enticing individuals and partnerships to relocate to Skibbereen from other parts of the country. Its success has been such that the creation of similar type hubs are under active consideration for other parts of the country.

We feel that **Wicklow Town** is the ideal location for a Digital hub. In discussions with Wicklow County Council, there is support for a hub from that body, but any proposal would have to emanate from within the Town initially. Our view is that there is a short window of opportunity in this area and that the Chamber should set up a Group immediately to investigate this opportunity and should put in place an urgent plan for its development.

Wicklow Town Digital Strategy contd.

Broadband Speed Test

In order to ascertain the true broadband speed in our Town and its environs, our group recommends the designation of a week to test the broadband strength. This should be organised by the Wicklow Chamber of Commerce. This exercise can be carried out by using a simple broadband test app of which there are many. What is required is for Wicklow Chamber to select a date and organise a designated campaign to encourage maximum participation of companies and broadband users.

Timeframe for Website-Quarter 4 2017

Likely funding: Wicklow Chamber

Timeframe for Broadband Connectivity Digital Hub-Quarter 2 2018

Likely funding: Wicklow County Council, Private Enterprise Broadband Provider, Department of Communications Climate Action & Environment.



Our group is convinced that the development of a **Greenway from Greystones to Wicklow** would greatly enhance our area from a Tourism and Business perspective.

The Great Western Greenway in Co Mayo attracted 208,000 visitors to Westport in 2013. It is estimated that €7.2 million was spent in the local economy in 2011. These are the most recent available figures. There has been a considerable growth in the use of the Great Western Greenway from 2011 to 2016.

The linking of Wicklow to Greystones with a full-length greenway would be even more successful for the following reasons:

- Continuous sea-side greenway for circa 25km would be unique in Ireland and would be one of a few in Europe. There is also an opportunity for the inclusion of a Blueway along this route.
- Our close proximity to Dublin would ensure much larger numbers using the facility. Tourists visiting Dublin and indeed residents of Dublin and its environs would be much more disposed to taking day trips to our Town with a considerable spin-off potential for our local economy.
- The Wicklow Greenway would have a very positive impact on Tourism and Business revenues for Wicklow Town, Newcastle, Kilcoole, Greystones and their environs.
- The Greenway would help to deliver the Healthy Ireland Initiative and improve the health and wellbeing of County Wicklow residents.
- The Greenway would expose visitors to the unique wildlife and scenery at Broadlough and the Birdwatch Ireland East Coast Nature Reserve at Kilcoole.
- Increase numbers visiting local attractions such as Wicklow Gaol, Black Castle etc.
- Provide an opportunity to become a member of the EEWA Direction (EU Greenway Association) and apply best international practice to the Greenway.
- Showcase the pristine waters and beaches of the East Coast of Wicklow for water-based activities.

Wicklow County Development Plan 2016 2022 has acknowledged that tourism and recreation makes a significant positive contribution to the economic and social well-being of County Wicklow. Based on statistics on the Great Western Greenway it is estimated that over 70% of the participants complete it on a bicycle.

In order to maximise the development of this plan it is imperative that the greenway would facilitate both walkers and cyclists

Greenway/Blueway contd.

Blueway

In conjunction with the Greenway, consideration should also be given to establishing a **Blueway**. A **Blueway** encourages visitors to engage with the sea by developing trails for water-based activities. An abundance of these can be found on the coastline from Wicklow to Greystones. There is a potential to develop water based business opportunities in the area on the beach north of Wicklow Town to Newcastle and beyond.

Funding of the Greenway/Blueway: National Transport Authority, Town and Village Renewal, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Department of Transport and Tourism, Leader Funding, Wicklow County Council

Timescale: Commencement of work Quarter 3, 2018.

Park and Ride Proposal



Develop a Park and Ride on N11, to serve Wicklow Rathnew, Glenealy and Ashford

Improved public transport would greatly enhance Wicklow as a location for people to live in and do business.

Currently the N11 is at or near maximum capacity with significant daily delays. The train link is at capacity with limited availability to grow.

The bus service is excellent in many respects, but for a variety of reasons, most specifically the time it takes to transport people from Wicklow to their destination, it is not an attractive option for many commuters. One example of the commute from Wicklow, departing 6.15am to Dublin by car takes 50 minutes door-to-door. On a bus, the same journey takes 110 minutes.

We believe that the development of a Park and Ride facility locally would open up a new approach to the delivery of the bus service for commuters, with unlimited capacity for growth.

Presently the 133 bus arrives to Wicklow Town from Arklow. It drives around Wicklow Town picking up passengers from a number of bus stops. It then proceeds to Rathnew, Ashford and beyond making similar pickups. The total time from its first stop in Wicklow Town to the City Centre is 110 mins. Reducing the number for stops will lower the time it takes.

Commuters would have the option of cycling, walking or driving or being picked up by a smaller mini bus from the various pick up points in Wicklow, Rathnew, Glenealy and Ashford, and then departing the Park and Ride facility on a bus that suits their specific needs.

Redesigning the delivery model with the target of increasing the use of the bus service would facilitate the following: The bus service would link with a Park and Ride facility to deliver a number of options to commuters. There would be an express bus straight into Dublin City Centre. Other buses would leave the Park and Ride facility with the first stop dropping people to the Luas e.g. at Sandyford/Carrickmines and then proceed to the City Centre.

Presently the bus service appears to be modelled to deliver the existing commuters. A redesigned model delivering a better quality of service is likely to see many more commuters opt for the revised bus transport instead of driving.

We met with **Wicklow Co Council** who are anxious to look at options as they accept the N11 is at or near capacity. The Senior Engineer in Wicklow County Council has offered to help and has agreed to give us reports that could assist us. The next step should be a meeting with Bus Eireann with a view to pursuing the Park and Ride option.

Nearly every journey up the N11 is tracked from departure to destination along with the time taken on mobile phones. The data is currently not being used to plot and plan an alternative public transport service. We have approached companies who have the data showing journeys and they have said they will not release this information unless a formal request for same is made to them by Government. As this is very valuable data we will pursue this concept further in our future meetings with **Bus Eireann**.

Park and Ride Proposal contd.

The Cost

To subsidise the cost and the on-going running costs the chosen location could be given special planning status as a drive-thru restaurant which would be granted a lease requiring them to maintain the Park and Ride facility with secure bike storage, showers etc. We are advised that Government funding is available for ideas such as this which would help cover the funding costs.

Planning Consent

We understand that Part VIII can be used to secure planning.

Procurement

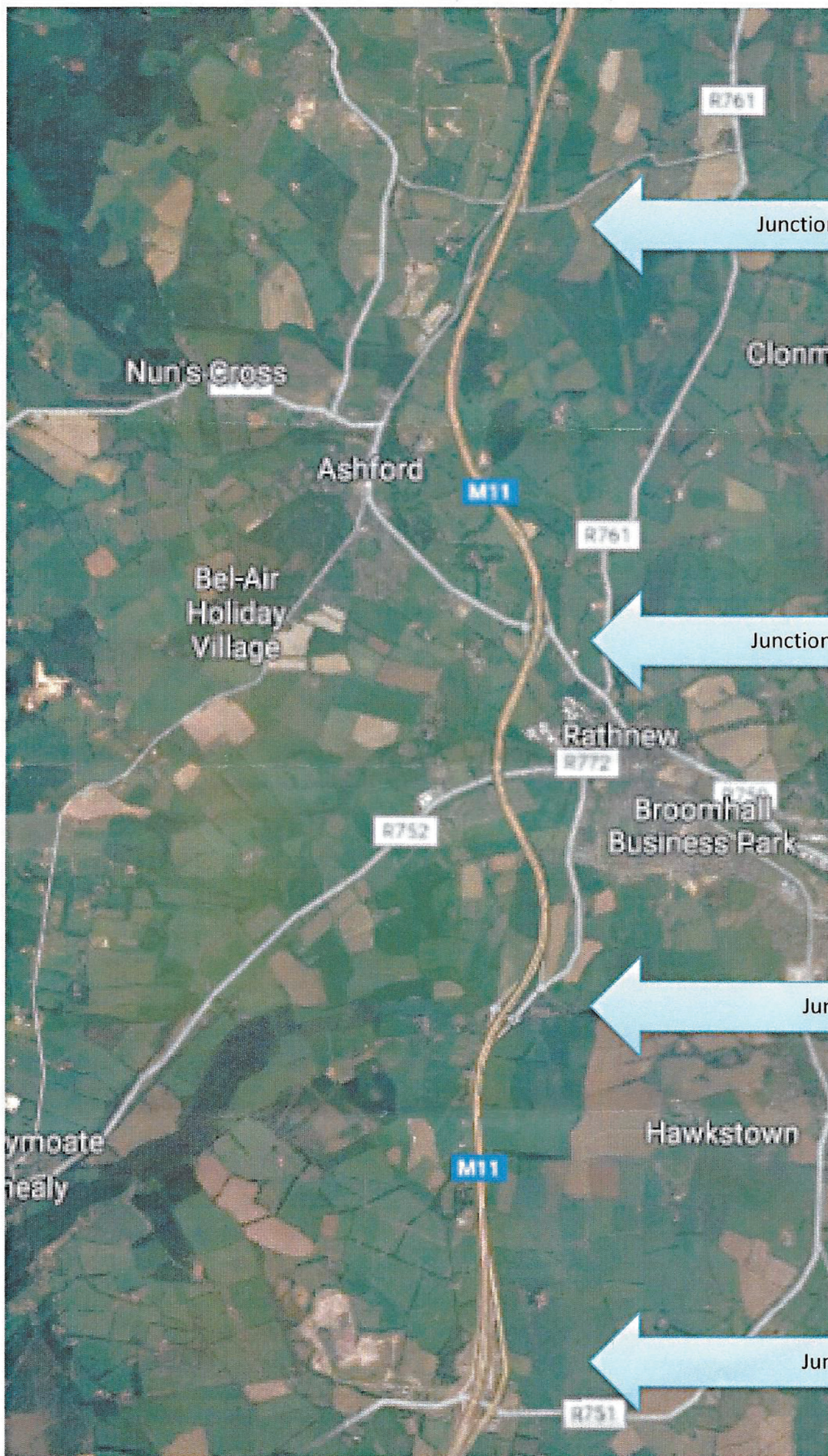
To speed up delivery of this proposal we would propose that the relevant authority advertises for proposals from land owners who could provide 20 -30 acres within two miles of Junction 15, 16, 17 and possibly 18 off the N11 (see attached aerial map).

In their proposal, the landowners should clearly identify the land, along with the following:

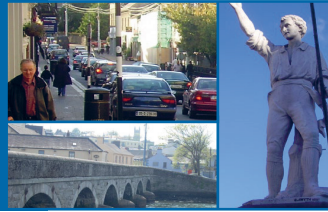
- The price they would sell the land or alternatively the rent they would charge under a 20, 30, and 40 year lease;
- In submitting their proposal for sale, the land owner should submit a signed contract which the acquiring authority should sign for the successful bidder. For the leasing option, the acquiring authority should draft a lease that they would be prepared to sign if they chose the leasing option.

Funding: National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Bus Eireann, Wicklow County Council, Public/Private Partnership

Timescale: Commencement of work Quarter 2- 2018



Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan and enhancing the visual appearance of our Town



The Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan prepared in 2008 for **Wicklow Town Council and The Heritage Council** is still relevant in 2017. It defines Gateways as prominent locations that act as transition points from one place to another, playing an important role in defining the identity and geographic boundaries of a place and influencing first impressions upon arrival. It highlights areas of potential improvement for Wicklow Town.

Tidy Towns

With this plan in mind we consulted with representatives of Wicklow Tidy Towns Committee on areas of priority for them. Based on this consultation and recommendations within the **Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan** we have prioritised the following gateways; Dublin Road, Marlton Road and Dunbur Road as areas for development in 2017. It should be noted that there are considerable marks available in the judging of the Tidy Towns competition for engagement with local Clubs and Community Groups.

Wicklow came very close to winning a major prize in the National Tidy Towns Competition in 2016. It is imperative that the Tidy Towns Committee is supported to do what is needed to get additional points to put Wicklow Town in with an opportunity of winning the top prize.

Putting Wicklow Town on the Tidy Town Winners Map would encourage a vast increase in visitor numbers and bring much needed extra footfall to our Town.

Dublin Road

Erect a significant landmark between Ashford and Rathnew southbound and the Beehive northbound directing visitors to our Town

Erect a sign "Welcome to Wicklow Town" on the railway bridge on the R750 gateway to our Town.

Erect Metal Sculpture St Patrick/Viking indicating Wicklow as a historic Town just before Wicklow Primary Health Care Centre.

Erect a sign "Welcome to Wicklow - A Historic Town"

Marlton Road

The Ashtown Roundabout to be developed with a theme rather than just flower beds. Consider images of Wicklow as a Viking Town or of St Patrick. Give ownership for the upkeep of same to a local sports club. This would ensure that additional points could be awarded in the National Tidy Towns Competition for community involvement.

Erect a sign "Welcome to Wicklow - A Historic Town"

Dunbur Road

Erect a Sign "Welcome to Wicklow - A Historic Town" at the Glen Turn with a sculpture of artwork indicating arrival in a maritime town.

The Quays

We reference a report prepared by **Wicklow Chamber of Commerce circa 2014 which addressed “Wicklow Town Environs and Port Development”**.

We specifically looked at the opportunities that the Quays present.

The South Quay must engage more with the town centre. Improved lighting and signage should be introduced to direct visitors, both to the town centre from the Quays and from the Quays to our Town centre. This will give visitors an opportunity to experience our maritime heritage through the Doctors Steps, Salthouse Lane and Quarantine Hill.

Significant potential exists to create an exciting waterfront area. **(Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan June 2008)**

It is our view that a plan be put in place to develop a marina pontoon facility between Wire Ropes and The Bridge Tavern. Work would be required to facilitate boats at low tide. This development would attract more business to the Quays i.e. restaurants, leisure facilities, art galleries etc. Consultation with landowners and water facility users will be needed. Wicklow Sailing Club will host the Round Ireland Yacht Race in June 2018. If such facilities were completed before then, it would greatly enhance this event and showcase what our Town has to offer.

In order to enable this proposal to be effective, it is imperative that a programme of cleaning and painting of buildings and facades alongside this area should be implemented, with the opportunity for partial financial assistance being sought.

The Courthouse

Our group recognises the importance of the reopening of Wicklow Courthouse in terms of:

- (a)** Maintaining our Towns status as the administrative capital of the county
- (b)** The economic benefit of having the court services based here.

When the Courthouse was closed, this decision directly affected the revenue streams of many local businesses in the immediate vicinity of the Courthouse. It contributed to the closure of some and added to the continued commercial decline of the Mall and Market Square area.

The Court Services (Department of Justice and Law Reform) have confirmed its commitment to relocate the court services back to Wicklow. The finance necessary has not been allocated for the current year. However, they have confirmed that it will be forthcoming under the next allocation of funds.

It is important that political pressure continues to be applied in order that this commitment is honoured and this important service be restored to our Town.

Fitzwilliam Square:

The need to re-vitalise our Town centre is self-evident. The most important capital expenditure planned for this area is the re-development of Fitzwilliam Square. The administrative and planning procedures required to facilitate this re-development have been completed.

It has been confirmed that the finance required from the **National Transport Authority** to complete this re-development has not been allocated for the current year. A number of meetings have been held with Wicklow County Council and Ministers Harris and Doyle to secure funding at the earliest possible opportunity for this re-development.

The importance of securing funding for this important re-development project cannot be overstated in term of its key role in encouraging much needed extra footfall in our Town centre

Dilapidation

The number of derelict sites is an increasing cancer that is destroying our Town centre. Immediate and decisive action is required to arrest this decay. Ownership of these sites should be established without delay. Pressure whether moral or legal should be brought to bear on the owners to take positive action to remedy this serious issue. Realising the full potential of these sites as business and housing opportunities would transform our Town centre.

The Local Authority has a major role to play in leading a multi -agency solution to this problem.

The daily upkeep of our Town is highly important. We recommend the employment of additional full-time general operatives. This should be considered as a priority to enhance the work done by our excellent Tidy Towns committee and their volunteers. These general operatives should have an interest in, knowledge of and passion for Wicklow Town. These qualities are key and should be included in the job description.

Source of Funding: Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, The Heritage Council of Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Leader Funding. Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Repair and Lease Back Scheme), Wicklow Municipal Council

Timescale: December 2017

Historic Town Status/Heritage Sites



As highlighted in the Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan, Wicklow has a relatively wide spread of cultural features (Tourist attractions and cultural buildings) rather than a concentration in its central core. We are of the view that this cultural richness should be developed and highlighted in 2017.

We have identified the rich historical, heritage, and maritime potential for Wicklow Town and the tourism opportunity that this presents.

The Heritage Council of Ireland is planning in 2017 to recognise six to eight towns as Historic Towns. We recommend that an application is made to this body for Historic Town status.

We met with Deirdre Burns Heritage Officer Wicklow County Council with a view to having Wicklow Town recognised as one of Ireland's six to eight new Historic Towns. Ms Burns has agreed to assist with our application. County Wicklow Tourism has indicated they will also support this application. The granting of Historic Town status to Wicklow Town would enable us to market and highlight our historic past.

Public Lighting

Public lighting has a major role to play in highlighting the presence of physical landmarks and special features, with potential for it to be used to powerful and indeed beautiful effect. The lighting of our Town's landmark buildings and structures would add a dynamic vitality and even mystical qualities to its night-time environment. Careful consideration should be given to the most appropriate light fittings and lighting types used for this purpose. **(Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan June 2008)**

Our group recommends the lighting of the following sites and landmarks:

1. The Black Castle
2. Wicklow's Historic Gaol and its Imposing Walls
3. The Three Bridges over the River Vartry.
4. Our Roman Catholic & Church of Ireland Churches
5. The Abbey Grounds
6. The Billy Byrne Monument
7. Wicklow Courthouse

Sites already with lighting may need to be upgraded, hence their inclusion in the above list.

We met with Rev Father Donal Roche and Rev Jack Kinkead regarding the backlighting of their churches. They are fully supportive of this proposal.

Interpretative Panels

The group recommends the placing of Interpretative panels on the major historic sites in the town. One example of this is to place a panel in the Black Castle site showing a bird's eye view of the Castle area and its surroundings. This would inform visitors about its development from the arrival of the Celts, Vikings, Normans, and the 1641 Uprising. There should also be a map with the layout of our Town and linking the other historical sites thus creating a walking trail.

Historic Town Status/Heritage Site contd.

Similar work has been carried out for other towns throughout Ireland by County Wicklow-based graphic designer Hugo Siboga Hogerzeil (Uto). Initial discussions have taken place with him. He has provided the group with a report giving an indication of the type of work required and examples of similar type projects he has carried out elsewhere. This type of interpretation would greatly enhance the visitor experience throughout the town. The placing of QR Codes at this and other sites would give additional and more detailed information.

Geo-physical Survey

We recommend that a geo-physical survey be undertaken at the Black Castle, the Mound at Church Hill and the Abbey Grounds.

A geo-physical survey is a non- intrusive way of establishing what these sites have by way of historical artefacts without digging. An archaeological dig may be required depending on the findings.

These activities would generate publicity for the town and has the potential to develop further visitor attractions.

Retail Survey



There is an urgent need to revitalise our Town as a retail centre. We need to examine further opportunities to bring new retail business to our Town. We recommend that a comprehensive retail survey be undertaken in order to determine the types of business that are missing in our retail mix and to determine the types of business that have a greater opportunity to be successful.

The group contacted **Mr John Jameson, Head of School, Retail and Service Management, Dublin Institute of Technology**. John is a native of Wicklow Town. He introduced us to Dr Bill Dwan Lecturer in Retail Location in the School of Retail and Service Management. Dr Dwan has developed a Retail Provision Index (R.P.I.), which measures the retail capacity of a village, town or city relative to the retail provision of a town. The purpose of this programme is to indicate over-provision, under-provision and opportunities available for other types of retail outlets. Our initial discussions with **Dublin Institute of Technology** indicate they would carry out a survey if requested.

The Retail Provision Survey, when undertaken, will be of considerable value to retailers, investors, developers, policy makers, local authorities and community groups such as the Chamber of Commerce.

A Retail Provision Survey is near completion for Tallaght at the request of South Dublin County Council.

Timescale: Quarter 3 2017

Funding: Private



Conclusions



Many of the ideas contained in these proposals are not new. They have formed part of most reports over the past number of years.

What we hope is different is the specific nature of our plans to kick-start the process of improving our Town as a place to live, work, shop and play and to capitalise on the unique potential of our location. The plans are realistic, achievable and deliverable. Key to making these goals realisable, in the event of Wicklow Town & District Chamber approving this report, is the formation of an Implementation Committee immediately.

We believe we can make significant progress with these plans in the short to medium term time-frame. These recommendations are not the ultimate solution, but rather a kick-start to bigger plans and goals to make Wicklow a town we can all be proud of.

Our discussions with stakeholders in the various areas in this report have been both positive and encouraging. During the course of our deliberations on this report we have identified other areas that are worthy of further investigation once the proposals of this report are implemented or well established in their progress.

Wicklow Port is one such area that requires a special group to investigate the full potential of the port as a business, leisure and tourist facility. It could be argued that as a town we turn our back to the sea, rather than embrace the huge potential it has to offer.

Wicklow County Council is the authority with responsibility for the port area. Now is the opportune time for all stakeholders and the people of Wicklow Town to agree on a comprehensive plan that will facilitate the harbour and port to operate to its full potential for Wicklow Town. In short, a vision for the future of Wicklow Port needs to be developed as a matter of urgency.

Another "big ticket" item that needs to be addressed as a matter of priority is the proposal in the "**Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan 2008**" to pedestrianize the central area of our Town. This is a bold plan that we believe would give Wicklow Town a unique selling proposition. This can only be done with careful planning and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders to guarantee "buy in". The key to its success is the provision of sufficient off-street parking in close proximity to the retail centre to our town. It would necessitate the development of a comprehensive traffic management plan.

Lonely Planet – Time to Capitalise on the Unique Potential of our Location

"Busy Wicklow Town has a fine harbour and a commanding position on the crescent curve of a wide bay, which stretches north for about 12km and includes a long pebble beach that makes for a fine walk. One top notch attraction aside, this is not really a big tourist town and, unless you have your own transport, it doesn't make an especially good base for exploring inland. The tourist office is in the heart of town" Quote from Lonely Planet 2016

The renowned international travel guide “Lonely Planet” in 2016 gives Wicklow the recognition of one top notch attraction. We all know of the many other local attractions that are here to be discovered if they are promoted strategically with local pride and determination.

It is estimated that over one million people visit Glendalough each year. We must find a way of encouraging a percentage of these visitors to come to Wicklow Town. According to legend Wicklow Town was ‘the first place that St Patrick set foot on in Ireland’.

How do we get the circa 50,000 people that visit The Gaol annually to spend more time in Wicklow Town? We must market our many attractions such as The Halpin Trail, The Heritage Trail, The Murrough, The Cliff Walk and other historical sites such as The Abbey Grounds and The Black Castle in a cohesive strategic way.

These are some of our observations of further plans that need to be put in place. If we, as a unified community, were successful in implementing all of the plans and projects outlined in this report, we will have moved our Town forward on the path to real, sustained economic and social progress.

STARTING THE JOURNEY THE FIRST TASK IS

Having the courage, determination and a unity of leadership from all stakeholders in Wicklow Town to enable our Town to achieve the unique potential of our location.



Organisations and Individuals Consulted in Preparation of this Report.

Government Ministers:

Mr Simon Harris T.D. Minister for Health

Mr Andrew Doyle, T.D. Minister of State for Food, Forestry and Horticulture

Wicklow County Council:

Mr Bryan Doyle, Chief Executive

Mr Michael Flynn, Senior Engineer

Ms Helen Purcell, Administrative Officer

Ms Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer

Wicklow Local Enterprise Office:

Ms Sheelagh Daly

Wicklow Tourism:

Mr Fred Verdier

County Wicklow Partnership:

Mr Pat Mellon, Rural Recreation Officer

Wicklow Tidy Towns:

Mr Andrew Lawless and Ms Leonora Earls

Mr David Forde, District Administrator Bray Town Council

Dungarvan Chamber of Commerce

Clonakilty Chamber of Commerce

Ms Sinead Copeland, Principal Officer, Rural Strategy Unit, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Dublin Institute of Technology Retail and Services Management: Mr John Jameson and Dr Bill Dwan

Mr Hugo Siboga Hogerzeil, Graphic Designer/Illustrator

Rev Fr Donal Roche, Administrator, St Patrick's Parish Wicklow

Rev Jack Kinkead, Minister in Charge at Wicklow and Killiskey, Church of Ireland

Acknowledgement

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Members of the New Local Economic Initiative Group

NAME	PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND
Mr David Shannon Chairman	Management Consultant and Managing Director, Toyota Ireland (1994-2014)
Ms Mary Aldridge Secretary	Retired Garda Inspector
Mr Pascal Burke Past President Wicklow Town & District Chamber of Commerce	Management Consultant & Managing Director Burke Oil Products (2000- 2014)
Mr Denis Connolly	Managing Director, Tinakilly House Hotel
Mr Roy Conway	Managing Director, Conway Port of Wicklow
Ms Christine Flood	Senior Executive Officer, Wicklow County Council
Mr Ciaran Lally	Founding Executive Director & Shareholder of export company Promise Gluten Free Bakery
Mr Enda Luddy	Managing Director CBRE (Ireland) - Real estate services and investment company
Mr Michael Lynn	Chartered Accountant and Chairperson of National Council Forest Research & Development (COFORD)
Mr John Slattery	Business Consultant and previously AIB Bank Manager Wicklow Town and Cork City

Time to Kickstart



***Time to capitalise on the unique potential
of our Location.***

