



Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole Local Area Plan Submission - Report

Who are you:	Group
Name:	Newtown 2050
Email Address:	[REDACTED]
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Topic

Regeneration of Communities & Places - Healthy Placemaking - Urban Design - Opportunity Sites in Wicklow Town - Rathnew

Submission

HOUSING - POPULATION - COMPACT GROWTH

Not Kilcoole

The Core Strategy as shown in the County Development Plan designates Kilcoole as a level 4 town - a self-sustaining town in the same category as Newtownmountkennedy, Baltinglass, Rathdrum, Enniskerry. The National Strategy is geared to the population of County Wicklow increasing from 142,000 in 2016 to 170,000 - 173,500 in 2031. It has been agreed with Central Government that level 4 towns will host 12% of this increase in population.

This equates to 1820 houses to be built in level 4 towns of which the number agreed for Kilcoole is 287 between 2016 and 2031. Half of these have already been built.

In order to comply with national strategy, the number of houses to be offered planning permission needs to be carefully controlled. The pressure on the local authority to accede to increasing the number of houses beyond this target will be high. The more houses built, the more stressed the infrastructure (including schools and GP services) will become and the higher the carbon emissions will stray from the National targets ... development away from the transport node of Greystones will promote car dependency.

Greystones and Kilcoole are different conurbations and are categorised differently in the CDP. The number of planning permissions agreed needs to be firmly controlled in the interests of proper planning.

Bray is the Key Town for growth, not Greystones/Delgany. Permission has been given by the Central Government for Greystones/Delgany to 'enjoy' no more than 2000 houses between 2016 and 2031. Like Kilcoole, exceeding this target cannot be reconciled with service and infrastructure provision either. Critical to the LAP is the recognition that there is a limit to the number of houses to be built in the area.

On a different point - Kilcoole and Greystones are separate communities. The development at Charlesland has brought their boundaries closer.

It is imperative that significant green space is maintained between the two towns. There needs to be an objective in the LAP to maintain the distinctive boundaries between these two communities.

Topic

Economic Opportunity - Tourism - Shops & Services - Community Facilities

Submission

1 Increase the amount of space given for small businesses. Zone for small business development and Sustainable tourism related infrastructure.

Build more public housing to reduce cost of housing so workers can afford to live locally.

Explore what facilities and commercial enterprises are needed to serve the whole of the 3 villages and then zone accordingly and provide linkages so that between the 3 villages all needs are catered for.

> Are there deficiencies in the existing retail provision with Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole?

2 Yes the hotel business and small operator is totally missing. Design more spaces for small accommodation set ups that can cater for small number of visitors to support the bigger accommodation of Druids Glen and The Parkview/ Glenview.

> Are there specific areas of tourism that should be targeted for development e.g. water-based tourism and how can the Plan facilitate these?

3 Yes we have proposed the Mountains to Sea project as being the most viable way to increase sustainable development in infrastructure and tourism.

This is cycle, horse and foot based transport between key villages and towns from Kilcoole / Greystones to Glendalough and all the villages in between..

This will help underpin the Glendalough Master Plan and disperse the tourism load from this already overburdened area.

Greystones and Kilcoole have the rail heads. The concept behind the Mountains to Sea Plan is that visitors or modern day pilgrims will journey from there overland along tree covered walkways deep into the rural fabric of Wicklow. With planning it may be possible for them to complete the return journey by taking a train from Rathdrum along the beautiful coast.

Wicklow should be developed as a natural outdoor recreation/ wellness centre catering for walkers, cyclists, horse riders, swimmers etc. Limiting this plan to focus on water based tourism will only restrict possible growth and cross sector support/ enhancement.

Grow local income and create a resilient local economy that is sustainable, green and permanent.

Enabling small entrepreneurs to offer accommodation along the trail is a major source of income to communities along other European pilgrimage routes

> How can the Plan encourage the development of tourist accommodation?

Build it and they will come!

Think outside the box and give the community an incentive to get creative and devise bed nights.

Camping/ glamping, refurbished farm buildings, yurts, huts, converted buses everything considered. A Pilgrim Way from Greystones/ Kilcoole to Glendalough - its hard to imagine how it wouldn't encourage tourist accommodation.

4 The plan can allow relaxation of restrictions on small farms and landowners to allow for the encouragement of farm diversification and facilitate small accommodation development in remote working spaces in rural areas. This would allow additional use of existing buildings and increase the bed-night capacity of Wicklow and rural areas. This is an explicit strategy in the Mountains to Sea project.

5. The areas of east Wicklow are worth looking at to accommodate high end tourism from Dublin and measures to accommodate the workers who might support that industry. The nature of the Tourism industry and film industry is short term contract casual labour supporting the shortfall.

This needs accommodation, short term and specific to workers.

Farm diversification accommodation, Glamping etc.

6. Yes, These areas thrive on small businesses bespoke outlets and local stores. Reduce the amount of chain stores and reduce rates for locally owned businesses. Give a 4 year 25% rate reduction towards anything that supports Wicklow businesses.

7. Yes, specific areas of Tourism can be around water. However, WCC has to stop privatising moorings and marinas. Greystones has become a privatised harbour that is just way too expensive. More needs to be done to increase use and facilities in Greystones that are not private. The Marina is not affordable to local people. There are no other facilities.

Other sources of tourism that really need developing are Cycling connections between towns, Horse Trails into the uplands, walking routes that all connect up.

A map should be commissioned that shows all of the existing trails and public transport connections. Again, these are prioritised under the Mountains to the Sea Project.

This plan is under COP 18 of the County Development Plan. It is an objective written into the County Development Plan to create a route between Kilcoole and Newtownmountkennedy to serve school children, workers and tourism.

Support the bed nights we have and build upon them.

8. The plan should assist under LEADER or LECP the development of small scale accommodation on existing premises.

Topic

Heritage – Biodiversity- Green infrastructure- Climate Action- Energy

Submission

> How do we continue to develop the area while protecting and enhancing its natural heritage and biodiversity?

The two are in direct conflict. It is not possible to have growth without affecting natural heritage and biodiversity. However, there are measures that can be introduced to minimise the detrimental impact of 'growth on biodiversity.

Confine growth to growth centres. Stick to the National Plan. Every house built outside a serviced growth centre contributes a disproportionate amount to Wicklow's carbon footprint. Houses in the hinterland cannot be serviced by comprehensive public transport and they spawn an enormous amount of additional car journeys

Developers need to be properly policed and encouraged to protect natural habitats and to make inordinate efforts to cater for Biodiversity loss. Clearing sites of all trees and vegetation and contours before applying for planning permission ought to be criminalised. The developers have to learn and work to keep as much biodiversity on their site as possible and not pollute local riparian ways before, after or during the building phase.

> Are there any additional buildings, places, trees, views etc worthy of protection in the area?

2. All of the natural resources and habitat should be protected. Our built heritage, especially in Greystones and Delgany, should be really protected. Too many older buildings are being purposely run down and then demolished or burnt.

'All' trees need to be protected. WCC needs to re-visit its tree protection policy and return to the original document before it was watered down. Resources necessary to serve and police a tree protection policy need to be made water tight not as it is now

> Are there any local open spaces or 'green corridors' you would like to see enhanced?

3. We would like to see the Mountains to Sea project being developed and a Green Corridor for Walking Cycling and horse -riding developed from Greystones to Glendalough. This should be wide enough to be planted to develop a wildlife corridor.

> When it comes to land use, what are the key actions we can take to reduce the impacts of climate change?

4. Stop developing on green sites and further develop the town core. Relieving transport volume issues with new roads should not be allowed to encourage new development. eg Kilcoole relief road.

The biggest threat to this area is sea level rise. We have covered this above. Resources should not be wasted on shoring up developments literally built on sand including the Greystones to Wicklow railway line. 'The tide is coming in King Canute'

> How can the Plan address flood risk and build resilience to better cope with the increasing frequency of extreme weather events?

5. No more building on areas at long term risk. The Insurance industry is reviewing how it will deal with Climate Change and any areas on the existing flood maps won't get insurance. Abandon selected areas. Don't pour good money after bad.

Where protecting the coast is an absolute prerogative (eg adjacent to Charlesland) it should be done as sustainably as possible eg with natural planting methods and restrictions.

Climate resilience needs outdoor awareness and activity. Support and encourage climate awareness and community building. We are experiencing a huge influx of people into East Wicklow. We have to learn how to create new communities. This has to be paid for by the developer and WCC / central government. They are the ones that benefit. Local communities are not seeing the benefit of villages becoming towns.

Affordable housing, and self build on government sponsored land.

Topic

Infrastructure - Sustainable Movement - Transportation

Submission

> What are the key transport and movement issues affecting residents, workers and visitors?

> How can we make the towns a safer, friendlier place for pedestrians and cyclists?

> Where should new/upgraded footpaths, cycleways, roads and other linkages be located?

> What are the issues to overcome in moving from the private car to public transport or walking and cycling?

> Are there any services infrastructure issues in the area?

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1. Key transport strategy should be removing kids from cars to school. This will free up road space and give kids independence and discover where they live. The bus services have developed significantly over the past three years. This needs to continue with incentives introduced to encourage it further eg reduce the price.

2. An alternative route for the rail link from Bray south needs to be planned. The tunnel through Bray Head is threatened as is the rail line along the shingle bar south of Greystones. It's time to face up to it and accept that work needs to start on planning for a new inland rail route.

2. Make the public realm more accessible and give people back a reason to be on main street and public areas. Stop them turning into no-go areas (Like Kilcoole main Street)

Further develop community policing liaisons.

Make specific routes through towns and villages joined up with cycle infrastructure separate from road users all together. Follow where possible riparian ways and set back, plant from the water edge and create safe usable corridors. Inter town and village communication is vital.

New links between villages and towns. Kilcoole to Greystones. Kilcoole to Newtownmountkennedy. NMK to Kilcoole for school children, workers and access to rail heads.

The issues in moving to this type of transport is quality, health and safety.

In particular lighting has to be low level to protect insect life and stop glare. Surfaces and access to it. People will not use poor routes that are unsafe, badly maintained and not properly lit. Wifi along the routes is a must for safety.

It has to be made attractive, quality, pride and serving the community not solely business is how it has to be designed.

Not by engineers but by design teams with all communities firmly involved.

eams with a community firmly involved.

File

Final Newtownmopuntkennedy Co. Wickllow 2050 Feasibility Study Executive Summary _10 Feb 2021_.pdf, 1.24MB

The Mountains to the Sea Green-Way A Feasibility Study



Report

January 2021



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



County Wicklow Partnership



Broughshane House, 70 Main Street,
Broughshane BT42 4JW
Tel: +44 (0)28 2586 2070

Email: info@otiumleisureconsultancy.co.uk



Rialtas
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of Ireland

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Newtown 2050 is grateful to the County Wicklow Partnership and LEADER for supporting this study with funding. Many local people also generously helped with fundraising activities and took time to respond to surveys and workshops. Finally, hundreds of school children gave many insightful comments and ideas.

Thank you

ABSTRACT

Throughout history humankind has experienced many crises; wars continue to be waged, economic depressions are commonplace, extreme poverty still afflicts hundreds of millions of people worldwide, COVID-19 reminds us of the 1918 flu pandemic.

Global crises come and go. Not so the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity. This crisis is here to stay and in our betrayal of nature, we have caused it. Irreparable damage to Planet Earth, our home, has already happened. Now is the time to act much more decisively to halt further damage. If we don't look after our home, where will we live?

The challenge presented by climate change and loss of biodiversity is being answered by everyone; local communities, governments and global agencies. The case for action at a local level presents an opportunity to tackle the crisis in an inclusive and responsible way, with equality between us and the flora and fauna on which we depend, and with a vision that is as big as the challenge.

Photo Cover Page:

Aerial view of Newtownmountkennedy looking south west towards the Wicklow Mountains. The forested escarpment towards the top of the photograph defines the coastal sector of the project area. Recent housing developments are evident in the middle of the photograph.

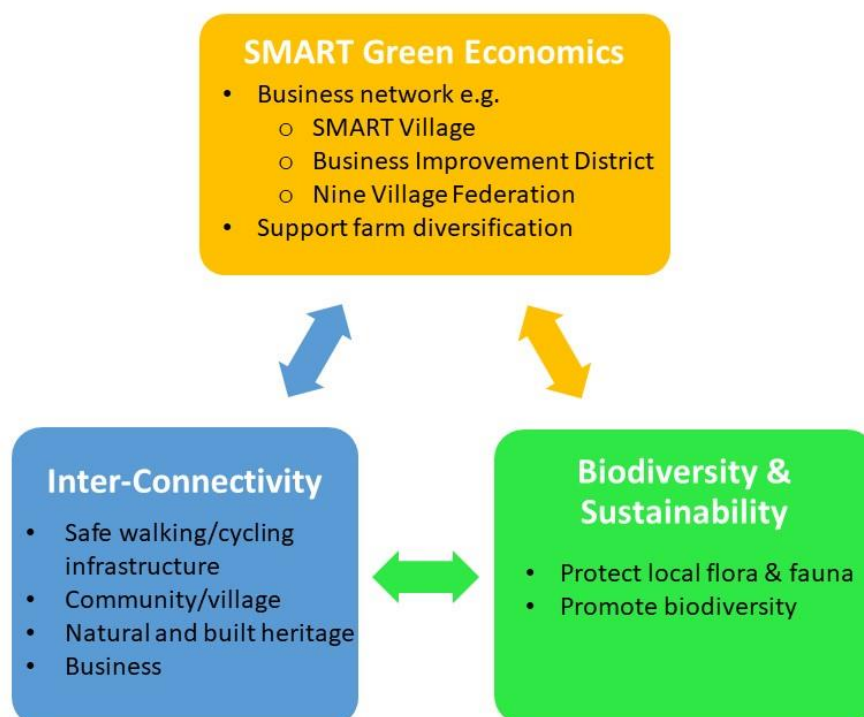
1. Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1** This study has researched the feasibility of *'The Mountains to the Sea'*, Newtown 2050s vision of a critical infrastructure of interlinking walking and cycling routes, business development, and the promotion of biodiversity and sustainability in an area that embraces nine villages in north east Wicklow stretching from Glendalough to the sea; Newtownmountkennedy, Ashford, Kilcoole, Newcastle, Roundwood, Kilpedder, Laragh, Annamoe, Glendalough.



The vision is underpinned by and further explained in three inter-dependent strategic pillars.



- 1.2 The study has considered the project’s strategic relevance, concluding that, on all levels Newtown 2050s vision and three strategic pillars demonstrate considerable potential to contribute to global, national and regional strategies and initiatives that seek to mitigate the worst effects of climate change and the loss of biodiversity. The vision is inclusive and the scope of the three strategic pillars means everyone can relate to and embrace one or more of the elements. This is a key understanding; that the project advocates community involvement and actions to supplement and complement the activities of government and its agencies. Newtown 2050 views it as essential that local communities and local organisations roll up their sleeves and make their contribution to national and global actions that combat the climate emergency. The people of Wicklow, as evidenced in this study’s findings, want to contribute; this project gives them an opportunity to make a real and tangible contribution to something they feel strongly about.
- 1.3 The outworking and intended outcome of the vision is a sustainable Wicklow, most likely evidenced in a series of transition towns and villages – see section 1.20. Newtown 2050s vision can be looked on as a precursor to enabling people to change their behaviour, adopting a greener way of living on and with this earth.

Strategic Relevance

- 1.4 Virtually every international, national and regional development strategy produced over the last decade addresses the need to tackle the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity. Perhaps the most stark statistic is contained in the UN Climate Change Annual Report 2019 which states ‘..... an estimated 1 million species are on the brink of extinction owing to human activity’. Newtown 2050s vision resonates with a host of global and national strategies as these examples show:-

The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; UN

'Goals for conserving and sustainably using nature may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors'.



European Green Deal; European Commission

'The aim is that the EU will be climate neutral by 2050 by carrying out a series of initiatives that will protect the environment and boost the green economy.'

EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2050; European Commission

'Making nature healthy again is key to our physical and mental wellbeing and is an ally in the fight against climate change and disease outbreaks. It is part of a European recovery that gives more back to the planet than it takes away'.

National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)

The plan's vision is 'that biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems'.

Tourism Development & Innovation 2016-2022

In strengthening the appeal of Ireland for international visitors, the strategy aims to strengthen and enrich local communities as they take on an enhanced role in developing tourism at a local level. The strategy recognises Ireland's natural environment as 'the cornerstone of Irish tourism'.

Outdoor Recreation Plan for Public Lands and Waters in Ireland 2017-2021

Health benefits and wellbeing alongside economic benefits are cited as reasons for investing in outdoor recreation. Sport Ireland report - April 2020 - significant increases in walking and cycling during the early stay at home phase of COVID-19 restrictions.

Need

Climate Need

- 1.5 Ireland's National Climate Action Plan 2019 outlines the growing challenge of climate change that is facing Ireland and the rest of the world. The plan recognises *'the accelerating impact of greenhouse gas emissions on climate disruption must be arrested'* and sets out actions for all sectors of the economy. One of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland is the transport sector; in 2018 transport was the second largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland. Alongside transport, agricultural activity is amongst the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. This project can offer an alternative source of livelihood for the rural community as it looks to diversify its farming activities and embrace climate change.

40 years of Global Change

1980

- 3.7 billion people
- 200 million vehicles
- 45 million barrels oil daily

2020

- 7.8 billion people
- 1.5 billion vehicles
- 100 million barrels oil daily

Health Need

- 1.6** Need is also evidenced from a health and physical activity perspective. The National Activity Plan reveals Irish statistics on the poor health consequences of physical inactivity to be significantly higher than European and global averages for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, breast cancer and colon cancer. The plan also acknowledges the social and economic cost of physical inactivity both in children and adults. The plan urges local authorities to prioritise the development of walking and cycling infrastructure. Exercising outdoors in rural environments, often referred to as Green Exercise, is increasingly seen to be more beneficial than exercising in urban environments, not least in relation to mental health. Interestingly, COVID-19 lockdowns have resulted in more people walking and cycling with sales of bicycles in 2020 rocketing. It is likely that the increased interest in outdoor recreation will continue at some level, lending weight to the need for this project.

Green Economics Need

- 1.7** Green economics, that is, connecting a green brand to the economy and promoting the parallel recovery of both, is recognised as the way forward. The need for such an approach is more pronounced in rural economics; in the Mountains to the Sea vision, the idea is that creating networks and partnerships through initiatives such as SMART Villages and Business Improvement Districts (BID) will encourage villages in the project area to share resources and connect businesses, supporting new and existing enterprises and building a vibrant and sustainable rural economy. By way of demonstrating what's possible, the feasibility study researches the *direct economic benefits* of the Great Western Greenway and the Waterford Greenway, and the *indirect economic/societal benefits* resulting from investment in infrastructure projects that promote greater levels of physical activity. Both approaches to measuring economic benefit demonstrate a positive return on investment in walking and cycling routes, although it's noted that this study has not looked at detailed routes or the cost of developing them.

Consultation

- 1.8** For the purposes of this study, four online surveys were conducted to gather opinions and ideas as well as inform people about the project. Key questions addressed current levels of walking and cycling, how new walking and cycling routes might be used, perceived benefits of the project and the level of support for it. One survey was conducted with the project area's community, another with businesses, a third with primary school children and a fourth with secondary school pupils. Local people were also able to join in online workshops and local organisations were invited to a stakeholders forum.

Community Survey

- 1.9** The large number of responses – 1,260 – to the community survey is in itself a reflection of the interest in Newtown 2050s vision, the results pointing to widespread support with over 200 people registering for project updates and offering to help move the project forward. Whilst residents of Newtownmountkennedy account for 39% of responses, the three villages of Newtownmountkennedy, Kilcoole and Kilpedder together account for 70% of the responses. These villages lie close to each other in the coastal sector of the project area and it may be the case that their residents are more aware of Newtown 2050s vision than residents elsewhere in the project area.
- 1.10** The community survey has, through the information obtained, achieved several notable results. It has engaged a significant percentage of those living in the project area, helping them understand and identify with Newtown 2050s vision and strategic objectives and it has sparked the respondents' imagination as to the project's potential to deliver outcomes that will have a positive impact on their lives, on community life and on local biodiversity.

Business Survey

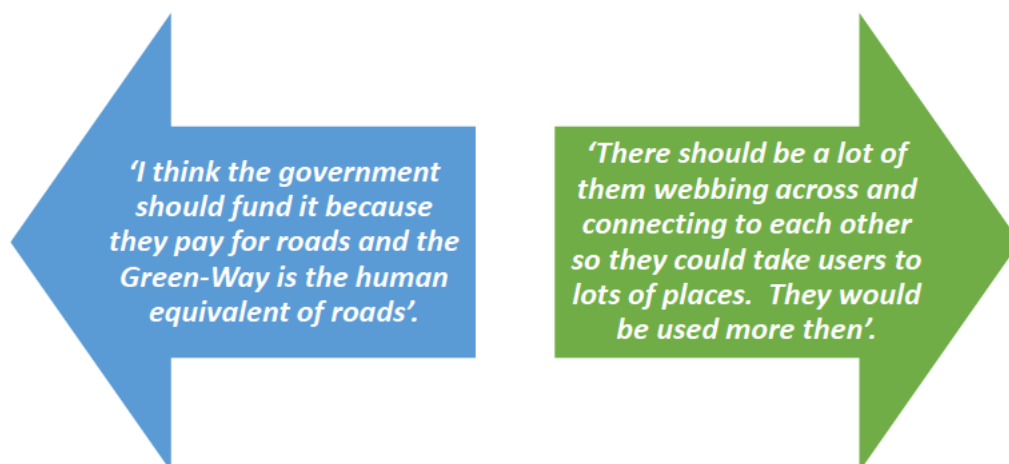
- 1.11** The business survey – 23 responses – sought views on the SMART Village initiative, the Business Improvement District (BID) initiative and the idea of a Nine Village Federation. Support for and interest in these initiatives in terms of helping businesses in rural settings is evident in all the responses. In relation to SMART Villages, of the nine 'needs/challenges' presented to the respondents, '*job opportunities to allow young people the option of staying/living in their home area*' tops the list whilst '*fast broadband, sustainable travel, biodiversity protection, digital-hubs for remote working, farm diversification, social connections*' are also rated as very/extremely important. The idea of a BID initiative, which involves businesses working, investing and delivering projects as a collective is also favourably received. Similarly, the Nine Village Federation idea has sparked a good deal of interest amongst the respondents. The level of interest in and support for these business initiatives merits further investigation and consultation. The business survey respondents confirm their support for the Green-Way and its potential benefits whilst highlighting concerns such as vehicle parking, ancillary facilities and the need to mitigate the risk of an adverse impact on flora and fauna. The challenge is to successfully promote Wicklow's unique selling point and not to promote its destruction.

Schools Survey

- 1.12** Over the coming years the Mountains to the Sea project will have a telling impact on today's children hence the importance of seeking input from this generation. For primary schools that responded to the survey, 58% of the children either walk or cycle to school, however, nearly three times as many children walk as cycle. The lack of suitable paths is cited as one of the reasons why more children cannot walk

or cycle to school. The primary school children were able to express their opinions in final comments; the most perceptive comment covered health benefits, reduced air pollution, impact on climate change and traffic congestions; *‘It might make the journey shorter, lead to more exercise and fitness, less air pollution. Would lessen the impact of climate change. Would not be stuck in the car, less cars/traffic on the road. Good for the community’.*

1.13 For secondary school pupils, nearly two thirds of the 161 respondents rely on family members to get about, that is, being driven, although a significant number walk or cycle to most places. For those that don’t walk or cycle much as part of their normal activities, the most frequently cited reason, at 39%, is the lack of safe paths/trails/routes, with a further 18% reckoning that walking or cycling on roads is not a safe option for getting about. The flip side of safety concerns preventing walking and cycling is that 97% of the pupils stated they would walk or cycle more often if safe paths were developed. The open comments recorded by these secondary school pupils - over half of the pupils recorded a comment – demonstrate an excellent understanding amongst young people of the challenges in developing the proposed Green-Way and the benefits that it could bring. Here are two such comments:-



Online Public Workshops

1.14 A series of three public workshops was delivered during November 2020; these were delivered online due to COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings. Five topics were covered – here’s a sample of key findings:-

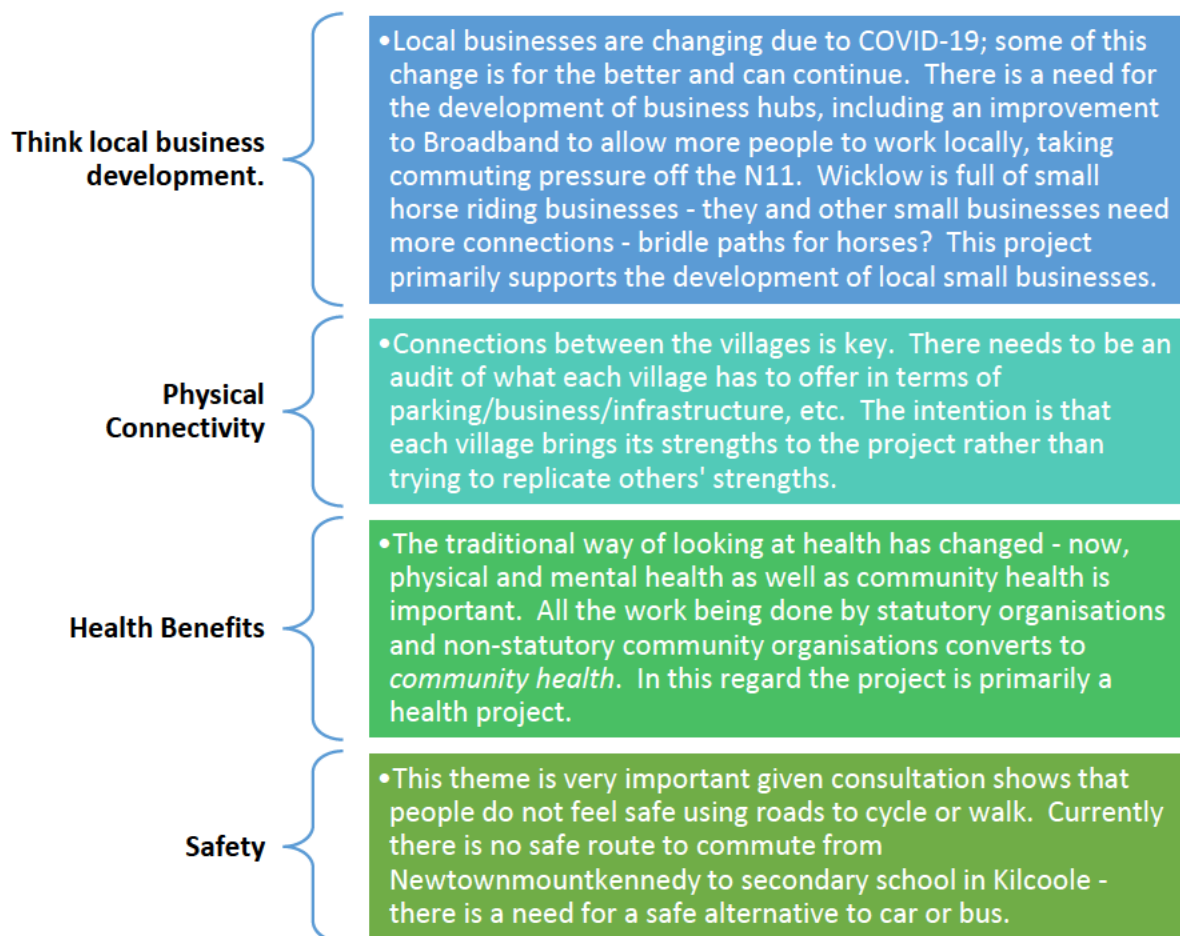
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People see the Green-Way as providing more options and more opportunities for recreational activities, whether cycling, walking, running or even horse-riding. There is a sense that people look forward to having opportunities for outdoor recreation, perhaps as a result of COVID-19 'lockdowns' that have constrained people in getting out of their homes. Having a network of off-road routes that can be easily accessed by people living locally is viewed as a significant step forward in the provision of recreational facilities in the area. Many of the participants suggested they would be able
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	<p>to <i>'stay local'</i> for recreational activities and <i>'explore the surrounding areas'</i>. Whilst the long-term vision is to construct a completely new network of routes, in the meantime certain routes could follow forest tracks or, in suitable locations such as the sea road in Newcastle, a pedestrian and bicycle priority system would discourage non-local traffic whilst promoting active travel.</p>
<p>Nature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being able to connect with nature appears to be an important consideration for families, more than for individuals. This points to parents' recognition of the need to encourage awareness of nature and natural habitats in their children. One comment referred to a <i>'greater appreciation of the outdoors'</i> which implies a greater appreciation of nature.
<p>Exercise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular exercise reduces the incidence of life-limiting conditions and it's never too late to get started! The workshops emphasised the opportunities for older people to exercise through using the Green-Way, either walking or cycling; one comment suggested <i>'it may encourage some older people to try cycling as they will feel safer than sharing roads with vehicles'</i>. The connection being made between exercise and safety is clear, again highlighting that opportunities for older people to exercise in the project area are, perhaps limited. Another comment draws attention to the fact that having options for exercising close to home means a car journey is not required.
<p>Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The workshop participants recognise the opportunities for local businesses presented by the Green-Way, for both existing businesses and new businesses. The potential for smaller businesses, locally owned, is viewed as being important. Comments point to a range of businesses including bike rental, outdoor wear, bed & breakfast, cafes and food outlets. The thinking amongst the participants is that the Green-Way will attract not only 'new' visitors but it will also encourage people living locally to stay within the area for the recreational activities that the Green-Way makes possible. Given that the Green-Way routes will link villages, discussion also identified the potential for existing shops to benefit from a spin-off from increased footfall in the area.
<p>Biodiversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As one of the project's main drivers and objectives, it's perhaps gratifying to note that local people, as evidenced in discussion across all workshops, put the importance of biodiversity and its protection at the top of the list of all impacts. One participant reckons, <i>'if planned and managed properly the Green-Way could create an amazing biodiversity – 25km x 4 or 6 metres is a lot of planting'</i>. Other comments refer to opportunities for localised wilding and creating a wildlife corridor. Another comment draws

attention to construction of the Green-Way; *‘the materials have to be non-oil based. Keep the insects and wildlife being able to live alongside us’*. Yet another comment highlights the risk that inappropriate lighting would kill insects. This concern regarding biodiversity emphasises the importance of taking care not to compromise the project’s objectives during construction. There is a danger of killing the very thing that makes Wicklow special. An environmental classification index assigned to all areas would highlight areas less critical than others, allowing more or less human intrusion; road-widening is not a sustainable solution.

Online Stakeholders Forum

1.15 The Stakeholders Forum was well attended by local organisations and agencies, giving Newtown 2050 an opportunity to explain the project and listen to the views of those who will play a key role in helping to move it forward. The mood of the workshop was positive, lending weight to the validity of Newtown 2050s vision. A key piece of advice is to split the project into ‘bite-size chunks’ that are achievable, each one adding to the overall vision and building momentum along the way. Attendees highlighted the importance of several key themes in the following discussion:-



Newtownmountkennedy

1.16 The decision to embrace Newtownmountkennedy as a case study has given rise to several proposals, most notably connecting to the railway station in Greystones and to the secondary school in Kilcoole, so connecting villages in the coastal sector, demonstrating and emphasising how the villages associate with each other. The idea of these local routes was born out of a desire to engage residents in the move towards a sustainable village. As a real and visible project it has the support of many residents, however, the search for off-road cycle and walking routes is just a first step on a much bigger journey which all communities must start to give everyone hope for the planet. Whilst the Mountains to the Sea project will play out differently across the project areas, in Newtownmountkennedy the idea of routes connecting with nearby villages is attractive, real and popular.

1. Newtownmountkennedy ↔ Greystones

Northwards from Newtownmountkennedy taking in the Garden Village housing development and Kilpedder then turning east to Greystones, picking up the existing cycle path on the town's outskirts to connect to the train station and schools.

2. Newtownmountkennedy ↔ Kilcoole

East from Newtownmountkennedy, connecting to the centre of Kilcoole and Coláiste Chraobh Abhann, a co-educational, multi-denominational second level community college.

1.17 With HUB13, a *remote working hub*, already operational close to Newtownmountkennedy, it offers an example of how other villages and farm businesses might get involved in the government's recent – December 2020 – announcement prioritising remote working⁽¹⁾. In looking to encourage new and existing businesses in the tourist and food & drink sectors, Newtownmountkennedy will tap into the expertise and resources of agencies such as Fáilte Ireland and initiatives such as Wicklow Naturally. As a destination in its own right Newtownmountkennedy is seen to have a rich history and heritage which could be used to help draw visitors to the village.

1.18 The promotion of biodiversity and sustainability in Newtownmountkennedy and in the project area can be pursued in two ways:-

- By planting trees, shrubs, wildflowers, etc on either side of two proposed routes between the village and Kilcoole and Greystones. If an average 4 metre width of planting is achieved along these two routes it is estimated

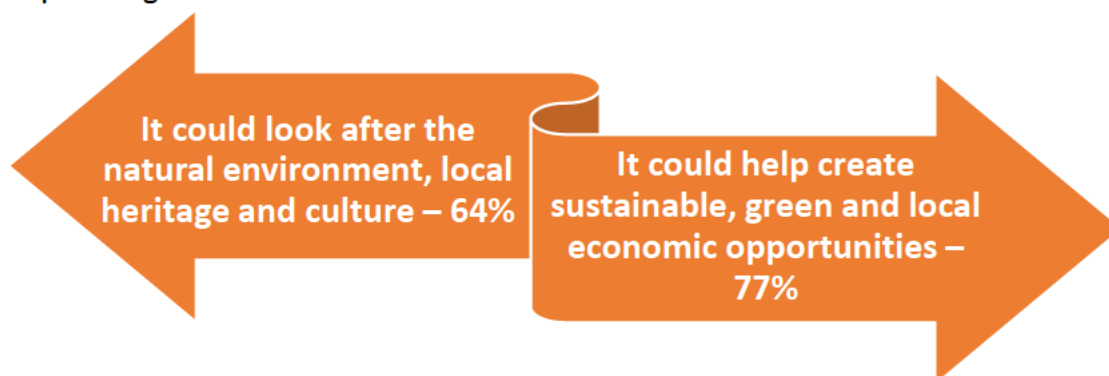
⁽¹⁾ The Department of Community and Rural Development announced it is examining the possibility of developing around 400 remote working hubs.

approximately 4 hectares of planting could be put in place⁽²⁾. Dense planting – about 3 trees per square metre – will maximise the biodiversity gain.

- By designating the project area as a biodiversity reserve and mobilising local people, schools, businesses and stakeholder organisations and agencies to be pro-active in protecting and promoting biodiversity.

Nine Village Federation

1.19 Newtown 2050 has brought this vision and project proposal to a point where it has engaged local people, local communities and stakeholder organisations and agencies. The next steps will require an entity that is representative of the entire project area, that is, the nine villages identified by Newtown 2050 and their environs. The idea of a Nine Village Federation⁽³⁾, mooted by Newtown 2050, was tested in the online community survey by asking ‘Do you support the creation of a Nine Village Federation?’ and proposing eleven potential outcomes for respondents to select. Of the 1,003 survey respondents who addressed this question, 94% expressed support for the idea of a Nine Village Federation. The two top scoring outcomes were:-



Other high scoring outcomes speak of *attracting more visitors, community benefit, promoting and safeguarding biodiversity across the project area, lobbying for continued investment in sustainable green infrastructure, allowing people to make greener choices, help to develop events and programmes unique to the project area.* One such programme could be squads of young ‘Route Rangers’ trained and engaged under the government’s post COVID-19 back to work scheme, physically planning, designing, building and managing Green-Way routes. These teams of young people, employed locally, would partner with and be mentored by experienced professionals, a positive move to help address unemployment in the wake of COVID-19, incentivised by EU Green Deal funding and benefiting the entire community.

⁽²⁾ Assumes 11 kilometres of paths and 2 metres width on each side of the path.

⁽³⁾ At this stage the name is not finally determined – many consultation comments don’t like the use of ‘federation’ – eg, very ‘Game of Thrones’!

What Works Elsewhere?

1.20 Bringing Newtown 2050s project to the attention of local communities, organisations and agencies has clearly sparked imaginations and engaged people in the vision. What is achieved by the project will be measured in part by what it helps other achieve. A good starting point is to form the Nine Village Federation. In so doing, Newtown 2050 could usefully check the project's status against the essential ingredients for a transition community as presented by the Transition Network⁽⁴⁾.



⁽⁴⁾ *The Transition Network is a global 'movement of communities/coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world'. Member group Laois Environment Action Forum – LEAF – promotes all things green.*
www.transitionnetwork.org

Feasible?

feasible (adjective): able to be done

The Vision

1.21 The vision presents highly attractive and desirable concepts that, in fitting with the visions of global, national and regional organisations and strategies have a great deal of integrity even at this aspirational stage. The study simply, yet importantly, tests the idea that a green approach to economics, to connectivity and to biodiversity is relevant and necessary right now. It has tested the idea with organisations, with individuals and with communities in the project area. Whilst the study has not identified a network of routes, the vision has caught the imagination of everyone involved in consultation. Action on climate change, by government and its agencies and by communities, matters to everyone. The study evidences that people are behind the need for a plan and local actions that make a difference to their lives; without a plan in place, past mistakes and missed opportunities will repeat and strategies for addressing climate change risk failing. The big question is who will take the lead on taking actions that will begin to deliver the vision.

The Strategic Pillars

1.22 Inter-Connectivity across the project area is deemed to be feasible but only if it is delivered in a series of projects, each of which is financially and technically realistic, and, well, feasible. Comprising a coastal sector, and an uplands sector the topography of the project area suggests ‘one size fits all’ is not possible, that paths/trails will be a mix of *flat, undulating, hilly, forest, open* to suit the terrain and the land that is secured to host routes. The study has not considered detailed routes, however the entire network could be anything from 25 kilometres to 50 kilometres and above. Indeed, if the early routes are proven to meet their objectives, the potential of the network will only be limited by funding. The two routes put forward for Newtownmountkennedy as early routes need to be further developed and tested for technical and financial feasibility.

1.23 Green Economics, explained for this project *as empowering and encouraging local businesses in accommodation, eco-tourism, hospitality, food & drink*, green economics is deemed to be feasible based on evidence gathered from research and consultation. However, any and all efforts to empower and encourage local businesses must be considered in tandem with the ongoing strategies and work of central government, the council and other stakeholder agencies. The work of economic development is specialised, requiring resources, key skills and experience. Care is needed to ensure that efforts to progress economic development within this project supplement strategies and activities that are already in place, therefore, more research is needed to identify how best to

empower and encourage local businesses without risking duplicating or even compromising existing work.

- 1.24 Biodiversity & Sustainability** and the creation of a single designated area is, based on the evidence from research and consultation, eminently feasible given that it will be achieved partly through the construction of paths and trails and partly by designating the entire project area as a biodiversity reserve and involving the twelve and a half thousand residents in green living. As a 'Mountains to the Sea' vision, there will clearly be different zones with altitude and terrain changes; this can be seen as an opportunity to educate urban visitors as well as local residents about biodiversity in the field by comparing and contrasting zones. In many ways it will be a showcase for the council and wide government, a test-bed and proving ground for similar initiatives throughout the country.

What Next?

- 1.25** This study evidences the relevance of Newtown 2050s vision and the considerable interest it has generated in people living and working in the project area, in council members and officers and in a wide range of stakeholder organisations and agencies. With Transport Infrastructure Ireland's recent allocation of a team of engineers to County Wicklow for the next five years, the vision may begin to be realised sooner than expected. Most importantly, delivery needs an organisation with effective leadership that is representative of the entire project area. The following steps for What Next? are based on the research and extensive consultation conducted for the study.

Step 1: Update Residents and Stakeholder Organisations

- **Rationale:** The work of the feasibility study has built a momentum and an expectation that something will happen, as well as building interest in and support for the project. Around 200 individuals who responded to the community survey are willing to help as things move forward, and stakeholder organisations expect to hear more about the project. The study's findings allow Newtown 2050 to present a 'shovel-ready' project to key stakeholder organisations, not least Wicklow County Council in the knowledge that upcoming funding schemes through the LEADER programme will seek to promote biodiversity. It is imperative that lines of communication are maintained.

Step 2: Establish a Nine Village Federation

- **Rationale:** Newtown 2050 is, by its very name, generally associated with Newtownmountkennedy and its close neighbour Kilcoole, as evidenced in the geographical spread of responses to the community survey, yet the project area covers nine villages. It is important that the entity taking the project forward is representative of the entire project area. The Nine Village Federation, established as a constituted group, will add to the project's credibility and lend weight to funding applications. Care is needed in setting up the federation that the skills and experience needed to move things forward - marketing, financial, technical, leadership, administration, etc - are matched to those stepping forward as volunteers. The federation will need a financial resource to cover operational costs - administration, office accommodation, work programmes, etc. As the federation establishes itself, paid staff will be needed to implement work programmes, however, volunteers will continue to shape, lead and oversee the project.

Step 3: Prepare a Strategy and Master Plan

- **Rationale:** The complexity of the project points to the need for a strategy and master plan to (i) communicate to residents, stakeholders and potential funders how the work of the federation will make a difference, and (ii) establish a plan of action, setting out a work programme over a period of time. The strategy and master plan demonstrate professionalism in the federation's approach and give accountability for its work. In their preparation it is strongly recommended that the federation engages with and gets buy-in from a range of partner organisations on an ongoing basis.

- 1.26 These three What Next? steps will focus minds and help in taking the project to a point where it can begin to realise Newtown 2050s vision of a unified rural community influencing the way people think about the environment, changing the way people go about their daily lives – and making a difference. The scale and scope of Newtown 2050s Mountains to the Sea vision and the three strategic pillars that underpin it is extensive. However, it is presented at a time when looking the other way is no longer an option.

Leadership

- 1.27 Tackling climate change and biodiversity loss is clearly a global challenge that is being addressed by governments. The success of their actions will depend in some measure on how they bring communities on board and work with them. To this point The Mountains to the Sea Green-Way vision has been crafted and led by the community. Such a community effort is best continued from the bottom up by a group that takes its lead from Newtown 2050, building on their pioneering work which has recognised the imperative of creating a vision and a community-based solution to climate change that is as big as the challenge.

1.28 In clustering nine villages to deliver on inter-connectivity, green economics and biodiversity & sustainability, the project is reflected in the county’s development objectives within the upcoming Wicklow County Development Plan 2021-2027. This creates an opportunity for the council to adopt the project, integrate it into the plan and lead the Nine Village Federation to fully realise the project’s considerable potential over the coming years. Local government is encouraged by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to have a strong role in community development. The Mountains to the Sea Green-Way proposal presents a potential model for collaborative working and themed community development, addressing global challenges through local actions, that can be tested and replicated in like-minded communities across the county, and potentially, across the country.

The Last Word

1.29 The outputs and outcomes of Newtown 2050s vision and of government action on climate change and biodiversity loss will be realised in the coming years and decades. The United Nations recognises the role that young people are playing in advocating action, therefore, it is appropriate to give the last word to a young person’s response to the schools’ survey.

‘More needs to be done for climate change. It’s ridiculous how little we are doing to save our home’.