



Mayo
Community
Futures

Communities Planning For Their Future

BALLYHAUNIS
COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN
2016 - 2021

Ballyhaunis Community Council

Ballyhaunis Chamber

INTRODUCTION

BALLYHAUNIS COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The Ballyhaunis community participated in the Mayo Community Futures programme in 2006 which resulted in the Ballyhaunis Community Action Plan 2007-2010. This plan summarised our community's view on:

- what Ballyhaunis was like then
- the vision for the future of our area
- the issues that mattered most
- the priorities for projects and action

The plan guided our community development over the 9 years since the plan was launched.

We have now finalised a process of renewing the action plan by identifying projects and actions which the community wishes to focus on for the 5 years 2016 - 2021. The preparation of the renewed plan has been carried out by the Ballyhaunis Community Council and the Ballyhaunis Chamber with guidance and support from the Mayo Community Futures Programme.

LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SAY

This Renewed Action Plan is the result of the following process:

Progress Update: we evaluated what we had achieved from our plan, what was no longer relevant and what we had left to achieve

Community Views Event: the whole community were invited to give their views on what they think should be included in the renewed plan

Business Survey and Youth Survey: we conducted these surveys to gather the specific views of our businesses and our youth

Update Community Profile: we had a look at the housing and population demographics to see what had changed since we last did our plan

Workshop Event: data from the surveys, community views event and the progress update were collated into themes. Everyone in the community was invited to a workshop event which facilitated the community to prioritise actions by voting with dots for what they thought was most important

Renewed Action Plan: the results of the workshop event were devised into the community action plan by Mayo Community Futures. The plan was approved by the community

Community meets Agencies: an important aspect of the process is that communities and agencies meet to see how they can work together to deliver the actions in the plan. This event is organised by Mayo Community Futures.

OUR COMMUNITY NOW

We have summarised below the main changes in the **Community Profile** since the 2007 - 2010 Action Plan.

BALLYHAUNIS COMMUNITY PROFILE 2016

Population

In 2011 the Census recorded the population of Ballyhaunis and its surrounding area as being just over 5,300 - an increase of just under 10% on the 2006 figure of 4,800. Local knowledge expects further increases of a smaller nature to be recorded in the 2016 Census. When more accurate data becomes available from the CSO early in 2017 we will update them.

Ballyhaunis is unique in the diversity of its residents. The town has a substantial non-Irish national population, with significant numbers of Polish, Lithuanian and UK Citizens as well as a very substantial Asian and African population. The 2011 census revealed that Ballyhaunis had the highest proportion of non-Irish nationals at 41.5% in the country and local knowledge considers this figure to have remained fairly static. Again, we will update this data when the 2016 Census figures are released. While many organisations work to promote integration there appears to be a lack of input by state agencies in the provision of infrastructure and services to cater for the needs of such a diverse community.

Housing

Within the town of Ballyhaunis there were 857 households recorded by the 2011 Census but very few additional houses have been built over the last five years. Currently, local knowledge estimates that around 43% of households are owner occupied and 57% of our households live in rented accommodation (33% in private rented accommodation and 24% in public and other types of accommodation). While demand for rented accommodation remains strong, there are a substantial number of houses for sale in what remains a weak housing market.

Employment and the Local Economy

The economy of the Ballyhaunis area remains dominated by food processing and steel fabrication businesses. Manufacturing and commerce/trade employ around 70% of the local workforce. The town lost its AIB Bank branch and a number of shops and businesses in the town have closed in the last five years. We will update our employment figures when they become available in 2017 from the Census office. Farming is now primarily a part-time / supplementary income activity with only a handful of people (24) employed full time in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Education

Ballyhaunis Family Resource Centre operates 2 childcare services - Greater Tomorrow (for children under 3 years living at the Old Convent Direct Provision Centre and the Community Preschool at St. Mary's Abbey, which provides a morning and afternoon service for children aged 3 years and older. There are also private playschool and Montessori services in the town and surrounding areas. There are approximately 330 children attending the town's National School - Scoil Íosa - which despite undergoing a building expansion programme is once again full to capacity. A further 4 rural National Schools provide for the other children who live in the wider Ballyhaunis area. The Community School has also recently undergone a building expansion and currently caters for 555 young people, with this number anticipated to grow over the next 5 years. Adult Education provided for by the Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board which offered a range of certified courses and English language classes will now move to the neighboring town of Claremorris. It is hoped that some of these services (especially English language supports) will be maintained on an outreach basis.

Health and Care Services

There are 3 private medical centres supported by 6 GP's providing primary care services and one public Health Centre operated by the HSE, providing a range of ancillary health services. There are 2 dental practices in the town and 2 chemists. There is one nursing home in Ballyhaunis with a number of others within a 5 mile radius. Residents of Ballyhaunis use the hospital service in Castlebar, Galway and Roscommon. The town has an active defibrillator group, with trained volunteers and equipment in all areas of the town and surrounding areas. Western Care Association provides a wide range of services in Ballyhaunis for people with learning disabilities. An 'out of hours' medical service is provided by West Doc.

Community Organisations, Clubs and Groups

Over the last five years a number of new community based groups and organisations have established themselves. A local Historical and Heritage group has been formed as well as a Men's Shed Association. The Scout Group was re-established after a gap of over 25 years and now caters for over 50 members (boys and girls). Other groups include Ballyhaunis Beekeepers Association, Quilters Group, Ballyhaunis Fit4Life and Men on the Move. Ballyhaunis Sports Network operates under the guidance of Mayo Sports Partnership and Ballyhaunis Town Soccer Club has been established with a new pitch at Station Rise. The Abbey Partnership organisation recently concluded its first 10 year plan and brought its activities managing the former Augustinian property at St. Mary's Abbey to an end. The Abbey Trust company, who hold the 999 year lease with the OSA (Order of Saint Augustine), are currently in the process of recruiting new members onto the Abbey Partnership.

Roads and Transport

Ballyhaunis is well served by public transport being on the railway line connecting Dublin to Westport and also on a number of Bus Éireann routes.

Over the last 5 years improvements have been made in the town to increase pedestrian safety with the development of 2 pedestrian crossings (near the playground and community school). A 3rd crossing is planned for Bridge St. at the Post Office.

Environment

It is just over five years since the town's sewage and waste water system was upgraded and this naturally plays a vital role in maintaining the town's environmental management - an important consideration given our food processing industries and farm activity.

Community Facilities and Open Spaces

A community garden has been developed on the Abbey Grounds and has grown to be a positive addition to the town's overall community facilities. The local swimming pool was also refurbished during the last five years. A new children's playground and outdoor sports facility was developed at the town's newest and largest estate "The Maples" which also provides a cricket practice net. This particular development also provides practical support for our local Cricket Club, who has been severely under resourced since their formation many years ago. Ballyhaunis also has a small but excellent library service providing access to Mayo County Library and to the internet.

Theme 1 - Traffic, Parking and Footpaths

Walking and cycling have grown in popularity in recent years both as a means of personal fitness and as a social outlet. The provision of walking and cycle paths, both around the town and as a means of access to facilities, provides a challenge for the town. The community has identified some walking and cycling lanes that they would like to see developed.

The smooth movement of traffic, pedestrian safety and the effective use of car parks to encourage and facilitate shopping and visitors is an issue that also needs to be addressed.

The community has highlighted a number of priorities that they would like to see initiated as part of an extensive Pedestrian and Traffic Management Plan.

Main Priorities

The introduction of walking/cycling lanes with lighting including:-

- Bypass Road
- Galway Road to Devlis' cottages
- Doctor's Road to Rugby pitch
- Knock Road to GAA pitch and onward to the Centre of Excellence

Traffic Flow and Parking

- Identify clearly marked parking/no parking areas in all streets
- Provide better access from off-street car parks to main shopping areas
- Introduce a one way system on certain streets
- Extend the 50km/hr speed limit on Clare Road to Hazelhill Road junction
- Install traffic calming measures on Hazelhill Road and at Devlins
- Stricter enforcement of parking laws
- Lobby for the ring road to go ahead

Pedestrian Safety

- Provide pedestrian crossings where necessary
- Develop the Smarter Travel project

Theme 2 - Townscape and the Environment

While much work has been done by TidyTowns and Residents Associations in recent years to make the town more appealing visually, there are still a number of empty and unused community buildings in the centre of the town. Many of these are in strategic and central locations. Refurbishment and development of these buildings to provide a wider range of services and facilities for the town would create more community resources, a stronger social fabric and allow greater opportunities for residents to come together. It would also create a more visually attractive town and an enhanced environment for both residents and visitors.

In the process of compiling this plan, the community has identified a number of steps they would like to see taken to improve the Townscape and Environment.

Main Priorities

Look at maximising uses for community buildings including:-

- The Convent Primary school
- The Parochial Hall
- The Scout Den
- The Courthouse

The Square

- Lobby for the development of the Square as a focal point for the town and as a venue for outdoor events/activities

Enhancement

- Encourage people to maintain their local areas e.g. Residents Associations etc
- Encourage and support TidyTowns 3-year Plan
- Establish a Junior TidyTowns Committee
- Promote composting of green waste, recycling etc
- Improve the appearance of the approach roads to the town

Maximise the use of the river

- Clean the Dalgan river
- Develop better facilities for fishing in local lakes

Theme 3 - The Local Economy

The number of empty residential and retail properties creates both challenges and opportunities for the development of the town. Their development could provide a supply of premises to potential investors, accommodation providers and entrepreneurs and would strengthen the business potential of the town. Improvements to the facades would make the town appear fresh, enthusiastic and vibrant.

Here are some of the priorities the community have put forward to help develop the local economy.

Main Priorities

Develop tourism accommodation

- Seek an investor in relation to providing a hotel
- Expand the range of B & B's, self-catering etc

Provide a One Stop Shop for Tourist Information

- Provide maps of local places of interest and historic features
- Present information on upcoming events and activities
- Provide details on walks and sporting activities
- Install public toilets

Develop Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities

- Look at innovative ways of revitalising empty shop units such as offering them to young entrepreneurs
- Explore opportunities for self employment
- Look at increasing the range of retail choice

Assess the potential of the empty properties in town

- Encourage owners of empty retail and residential units to enhance their properties
- Create a database of possible properties for potential investors

Marketing and Promotion

- Co-ordinate town marketing campaigns, special occasions, festivals etc

Theme 4 - Community Facilities and Services

The area is fortunate in having a number of excellent outdoor facilities but is poorly served in relation to indoor activities, either sporting or social. The potential of the Friary both as a location for further outdoor activities and as an anchor for cultural/heritage tourism has not yet been fully realised.

The following priorities have been identified as factors that would expand the range of facilities and services to the community and make Ballyhaunis a better place to live in.

Main Priorities

Community Security

- Lobby for the Garda station to be open for longer periods
- Look for a greater Garda presence in the town

Indoor Amenities

- Investigate the feasibility of a new indoor leisure facility

Optimise the use of the Friary

- Work with the Abbey Partnership to develop the Friary as a Culture and Heritage Centre
- Look at offering guided tours
- Look at developing the grounds of the Friary further as an Outdoor Amenity Area, e.g. outdoor gym

Provide facilities and activities for young people

- Finalise existing plans for a Youth Café
- Provide a wider range of activities for younger people

Extend the range of Childcare facilities

- Explore provision of crèche facilities in the existing vacant crèche building in The Maples housing estate

Multicultural Centre

- Look at the possibility of developing a Multicultural Centre to promote understanding of diverse cultures and heritages and as a resource for bringing people together

Theme 5 - Celebrating Diversity

While much work has been done to date by the community to encourage participation by all of the ethnic communities in the town, integration still remains a challenge. Sporting activities for young people has been identified as a valuable tool to assist in the breaking down of barriers and this has proven to be very effective.

Here are some of the priorities the community has put forward to support an inclusive society for all residents of the area.

Main Priorities

Promote Integration and Participation

- Provide training and supports to break down barriers and encourage integration
- Support participation in community events, sports, festival etc
- Look at how other communities have embraced integration

BALLYHAUNIS COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN 2016 - 2021

This plan guides our community and our organisations on the actions to be implemented over the next five years.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK PART IN THE PROCESS THE RESPONSES HELPED TO INFORM THE PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN THIS PLAN

MAKING IT HAPPEN!

Ballyhaunis Community Council and Ballyhaunis Chamber will take responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the plan as a whole. We are keen to work in a coordinated and inclusive manner and we are anxious not to duplicate or overlap the good work that is being done at present by a variety of active voluntary groups. We will continually strive to ensure that we are truly representative community organisations, open and transparent and that we adhere to good governance practices.

REVIEWING THE ACTION PLAN

We will, from time to time, look at how we are all doing at implementing this plan. We will convene a REVIEW meeting annually to take stock of what has been achieved to date, as well as agreeing on updated actions for the next year. This will be incorporated in an Annual Progress Report for the Mayo Community Futures Programme.

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MAYO COMMUNITY FUTURES

The Community Futures programme assists communities to prepare their own action plans in a way that is inclusive and participatory. The process not only leads to good action planning that really reflect the priorities of communities but also encourages people to get involved in making things happen locally. Plans prepared in this way strengthens the communities ability to access funding for their priority projects and effectively represent their interests at area, county and national levels.

The programme is managed by a partnership of community based organisations and agencies who are committed to supporting communities in having a say in their own future.

Mayo Community Futures is funded and supported by Mayo County Council. If you would like to know more about Mayo Community Futures please contact:

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