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Searching for Space:

What place for towns in public policy?

Lauren Pennycook

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Contents

Foreword

With a remit to improve the wellbeing of people across the UK and Ireland and as one of the largest foundations in the UK to be towns-based, it is fitting that the Carnegie UK Trust has a programme of work on towns – the home to millions of people across the jurisdictions.

Towns are the geography in which so many of us work, interact with public services, and spend our leisure time, and therefore the economic and social opportunities provided within them are influential on our personal and community wellbeing. To date, the Trust's work has sought to support these opportunities in towns across the UK and Ireland by securing public access to greenspace; celebrating community-led design of public places; and providing the chance for town centre and high street entrepreneurs to trade. We have also sought to facilitate learning between towns by showcasing international examples of success in improving the outcomes experienced by towns; supported cross-border partnership-working by towns practitioners facing similar challenges; and created a new data platform for Scottish towns practitioners and communities.

Governments across the UK and Ireland have developed policies designed to improve place-based economic, social, environmental, and democratic outcomes. However, they are not doing it alone. In researching towns policy across the jurisdictions we observed a change to traditional ways of working. Summarised by a concept we term the 'Enabling State', there is increasingly a move from top-down to bottom-up; from silos to working together; from representation to participation; and from doing-to to doing-with, as governments seek to develop policy in an age in which the demands on our public services, and how we work, travel, and consume goods and services, have changed beyond recognition. Governments are increasingly engaging the business and third sectors and devolving power to citizens in the development of their towns, in a bid to ensure that they are attractive places to live, work, and visit in the 21st century.

However, towns are a neglected area of public policy, rarely taken in their entirety as the basis for formal policymaking and often without a powerful group advocating for their interests. Instead, policies are often applied to towns by extension, for example, in funding or initiatives to support general urban regeneration, regions serving economic powerhouse cities, or rural hinterlands. Equally, policies are routinely designed to support the development of communities, with no regard to the outcomes experienced by the wider town in which they sit. We therefore found this exercise in researching towns policy across the UK and Ireland to be difficult, time consuming, supported by limited data at a meaningful level, and defined by a lack of consensus on basic information such as the definition of a town, both within and across the jurisdictions.

We were unable to find a single cross-jurisdictional analysis of towns policy within academia, policy, or practitioner resources, which indicates that there is currently limited learning being undertaken across disciplines or jurisdictions. We hope that this report contributes to the evidence base on towns policy by providing a snapshot of the priorities and actions of current governments across the UK and Ireland, and facilitates learning of the successes and challenges in improving the outcomes of our towns across disciplines and borders, and therefore improving our wellbeing.

Martyn Evans
Chief Executive

Introduction

The places where we live are critical to our wellbeing. The physical and social structures of our cities, towns, villages, and islands provide us with economic and social opportunities; formal support systems in local public services; and informal support systems in the relationships with our friends, families, and neighbours.

From small rural settlements to large urban cities, in upland, lowland, and coastal communities, where we call home provides us with a unique sense of place, identity, and shared history which shapes the local narrative about where we live.[1]

As the home to millions of people across the UK and Ireland, governments across the jurisdictions have developed policies designed to improve economic, social, and environmental outcomes in towns and to strengthen local decision-making and democratic accountability.

As a system of component parts,[2] towns are affected by a large number of policy areas, such as housing; transport; economic development; culture; heritage; land ownership; and regional development.[3] As such, governments across the UK and Ireland have focused on different policy areas in a bid to improve the outcomes experienced by towns and their residents, delivered by different departments and partner bodies, and with different levels of resource, in line with their priorities.

1   The British Academy, *Where We Live Now: Making the case for place-based policy* London: The British Academy 2017 http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/WWLN%20Making%20the%20case%20for%20place-based%20policy_web.pdf [accessed April 2017]

2   Department for Communities and Local Government, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, and Association of Town and City Management, *Developing Resilient Town Centres* Manchester: Centre for Local Economic Strategies 2015 https://cles.org.uk/our-work/publications/developing-resilient-town-centres/ [accessed April 2017]

3   The Heritage Council, *Policy Proposals for Ireland's Towns* Kilkenny: The Heritage Council 2015 http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/policy_proposals_irelands_towns_2015_5mb.pdf [accessed July 2017]

However, in contrast to the local narrative, the national and regional policy narrative of towns is largely negative, and one of decline.[4] In academic, policy, and practitioner circles, towns are typically defined and categorised in relation to other areas, as 'satellite', 'commuter', or 'dormitory', or by their past, as former coal or post-industrial, in need of regeneration, resilience, or future proofing.[5] This narrative has framed national policy which, in times of austerity, often targets towns or communities experiencing the poorest outcomes for place-based investment; develops structures for more local decision-making; and forges connections between less and more prosperous places.

This report provides an overview of how towns are defined; the context in which policies are developed; the main national policies and initiatives designed to improve economic, social, environmental, and democratic outcomes of towns across the UK and Ireland; the key players active in supporting towns in each of the jurisdictions; and policies and initiatives pursued at regional and local levels to plan, regenerate,

and increase citizen participation in towns and the services provided within their boundaries. A case study of the efforts undertaken by public or private sector organisations, or cross-sectoral partnerships, to improve the economic or social outcomes of a town is provided for each jurisdiction, as an example of work undertaken to address place-based challenges. Information on the policies, initiatives, key partners, and case studies was obtained by desk-based research which was supplemented by a small number of interviews with practitioners to further understand how these policies translate into practice.

This report is not an attempt to provide an exhaustive list of every policy framework, initiative, or innovation designed to improve the physical and social structures of towns across the UK and Ireland, or to evaluate or comment on if they have met their objectives – only the citizens in these towns can determine if the design of, opportunities available, and services provided within their town contribute to their wellbeing. The report does however, seek to provide an overview of the policy landscape and to analyse the gaps which exist in policy levers which can improve outcomes at a town level, and examine the opportunities to advocate for their introduction.

4   Cadywood, G. and A. Paget, *Talk of the Town* London: Demos 2015 https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Talk-of-the-Town-PDF-Final.pdf [accessed July 2017]

5   Coca-Stefaniak, A and Carroll, A, 'Traditional or experiential places? Exploring research needs and practitioner challenges in the management of town centres beyond the economic crisis' *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal* 9 (1) 35-42, 2015

Defining our towns

Governments across the UK and in Ireland have developed their own definitions of place through the use of different criteria such as population thresholds, accessibility, and proximity of dwellings.

With considerable variation in population and geography between and within the jurisdictions,[6] there is no single definition of a town and no recognised performance framework used across the UK and Ireland.[7]

In Scotland, settlements of less than 3,000 people are defined as rural and population settlements of 10,000 or more are considered urban[8] to classify where the estimated 5.4 million population live.[9] The Scottish Government Urban/Rural Classification uses criteria of population, with thresholds of 125,000, 10,000 and 3,000 people, and accessibility, based on analysis of drive time, to provide a six-fold classification of place in Scotland, from large urban areas to remote rural areas.[10] Within the Classification, Accessible Small Towns are defined as settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more, and Remote Small Towns are characterised within the same population parameters but with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 people or more.[11] There is a further eight-fold classification which distinguishes between remote and very

remote areas to define a Very Remote Small Town as a settlement of 3,000 to 9,999 people, with a drive time of over an hour to a settlement of 10,000 or more.[12] An estimated 662,500 people live in Scotland's Accessible Small Towns, Remote Small Towns and Very Remote Small Towns combined.[13]

The 10,000 population threshold is also used to define places as urban in England and Wales[14] to classify where the estimated 57.4 million population reside.[15] A cross-classification of settlement form and settlement context, characterised by differentiating between two levels of population sparsity, assigns places to one of four urban or six rural categories — from the Major Conurbation urban category to the rural Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings in a Sparse Setting category.[16] In both urban and rural categories, towns reside in both sparse and non-sparse settlement contexts. The definition of a town is based on settlement form rather than considerations of population size, economic function, or historic role.[17] Towns are defined as

6   The British Academy, *Where We Live Now: Making the case for place-based policy* London: The British Academy 2017 http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/WWLN%20Making%20the%20case%20for%20place-based%20policy_web.pdf [accessed April 2017]

7   Coca-Stefaniak, A., *Successful town centres – developing effective strategies* London: Association of Town & City Management 2013 http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/pdf/Successful-Town-Centres.pdf?2 [accessed April 2017]

8   Scottish Government, *Scottish Government Urban/Rural Classification 2013-2014* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2014 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0046/00464780.pdf [accessed April 2017]

9   National Records of Scotland (2017) *Mid-Year Population Estimates Scotland, Mid-2016: Population estimates by sex, age and area* https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/population-estimates/mid-year-2016/16mype-cahb.pdf [accessed August 2017]

10   Office for National Statistics (2016) *Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland* https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland [accessed April 2017]

11   Ibid

12   Ibid

13   National Records for Scotland (2015) *Population Estimates by Urban Rural Classification (2001 Data Zone based)* https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/special-area-population-estimates/population-estimates-by-urban-rural-classification [accessed April 2017]

14   Bibby, P. and Brindley, P., *The 2011 Rural-Urban Classification For Small Area Geographies: A User Guide and Frequently Asked Questions (v1.0)* London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239478/RUC11user_guide_28_Aug.pdf [accessed April 2017]

15   Office for National Statistics (2016) *Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland* https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland [accessed April 2017]

16   Bibby, P. and Brindley, P., *The 2011 Rural-Urban Classification For Small Area Geographies: A User Guide and Frequently Asked Questions (v1.0)* London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239478/RUC11user_guide_28_Aug.pdf [accessed April 2017]

17   Ibid
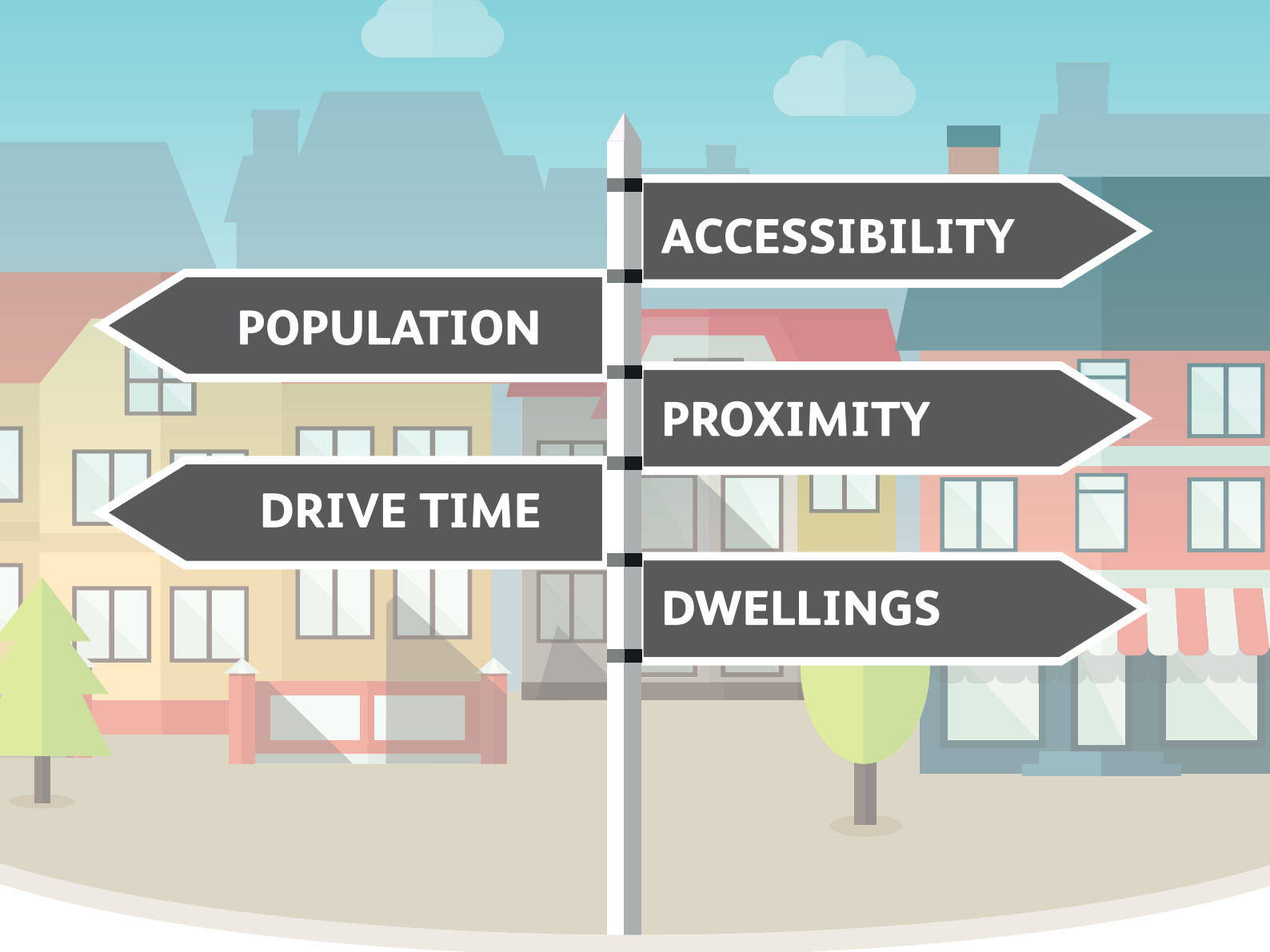
having a core, including areas which are densely populated, and having a minimum of 500 dwellings within 800 metres.[18]

In Northern Ireland, an urban town or city is defined as a locality within a settlement with a population of 5,000 or more, based on the 2011 census,[19] for the estimated 1.8 million people who live in Northern Ireland.[20] Three levels of geography are used to report data within the Department for Communities' Town Centre Database – town centre boundary, settlement boundary, and new catchments areas. Catchment areas are designed to capture data on the use

of a town or city centre to access goods and services by those living outwith the town or city centre boundary, and are created using drive time analysis – the average time it takes to drive to the central point of the town or city centre map.[21] Towns and cities in the database are classified by population thresholds, and drive time analysis is applied to differentiate between Small Towns based on their accessibility.[22] Belfast and Derry City have their own bands with populations of over 280,000 and 83,000 respectively; followed by Large Towns with a population of over 18,000; Medium Towns with a population of 10,000-17,999; accessible Small Towns with a population of 5,000-9,999 within a 20-minute drive time to the town centre of a settlement with a population of at least 10,000; and remote Small Towns with

18   Ibid

19   Department for Communities (2016) *The Northern Ireland Town Centre Database Background Paper* https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/ default/files/publications/communities/tcd-background-information- feedback-request.pdf [accessed April 2017]

20   Office for National Statistics (2016) *Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland* https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/ populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/ populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland [accessed April 2017]

21   Department for Communities, *The Northern Ireland Town Centre Database Background Paper* Belfast: Department for Communities 2016 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ communities/tcd-background-information-feedback-request.pdf [accessed April 2017]

22   Ibid

a population of 5,000-9,999 outwith such driving distance.[23] Almost 610,600 people live in Northern Ireland's 37 towns.[24] 13% of the population live in Large Towns; 6% reside in Medium Towns and 6% live in Small Towns in Northern Ireland.[25]

In Ireland, there is a distinction made between Legal towns and Census towns to categorise where the 4.76 million population reside.[26] The Local Government Act 2001 established five cities, five boroughs and 75 towns as urban areas with legally defined boundaries.[27] In the 2011 Census, a new Census town was classified as a cluster with a minimum of 50 occupied dwellings, with a maximum distance between any dwelling and the building closest to it of 100 metres, and where there was evidence of an urban centre, such a shop or school, but is not legally defined.[28] For the purposes of census reports, urban settlements are defined as towns with a population of 1,500 or more, while settlements

with a population of less than 1,500 are classified as rural.[29]

In the absence of a common definition across the UK and Ireland, bespoke policies and initiatives designed to improve outcomes within towns have developed in the different jurisdictions. Improving outcomes in towns involves public, private, and voluntary sectors and a range of economic, social, environmental, and democratic policies, for example, economic development; health; education; skills; social care; enterprise; greenspace; urban regeneration and sustainability; place-making; transport; housing; land ownership and culture and heritage, all of which are a system of inter-connected policies impacting on towns and their residents.[30] The focus of governments across the UK and Ireland has shaped their towns policy; the department or unit with oversight of the brief; and the nature of funding available to support improved outcomes.

23   Ibid

24   Ibid

25   Department of the Environment, *Living Spaces: An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland* Belfast: Department of the Environment 2014 https://www.planningni.gov.uk/livingplaces_-_web.pdf [accessed April 2017]

26   Central Statistics Office (2016) *Census of Population 2016 – Preliminary Results* http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpr/censusofpopulation2016-preliminaryresults/ [accessed April 2017]

27   *Local Government Act, 2001* Dublin: The Oireachtas http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2001/act/37/enacted/en/pdf [accessed April 2017]

28   Central Statistics Office (2014) *Census 2011 Boundary Files* http://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011boundaryfiles/ [accessed April 2017]

29   Ibid

30   Department for Communities and Local Government, Centre for Local Economic Strategies and Association of Town and City Management, *Developing Resilient Town Centres* Manchester: Centre for Local Economic Strategies 2015 https://cles.org.uk/our-work/publications/developing-resilient-town-centres/ [accessed April 2017]

The policy position of towns

Parallel national policies of devolution, decentralisation, regionalisation, and austerity have led some commentators to call for collaboration between towns in a bid to improve place-based outcomes.[31]

To date, efforts to facilitate the sharing of skills, knowledge, and resources have ranged from:

- the international World Towns Framework: A Public-Private-Social Vision for Urban Centres,[32] the United Nations UN-HABITAT 'wheel of urban prosperity' framework,[33] and Carnegie UK Trust Turnaround Towns case studies;[34]
- to the UK cross-border such as the Borderlands Initiative,[35] the Twin Towns UK project from the Carnegie UK Trust,[36] and place-based networks such as Fairtrade Towns,[37] Purple Flag,[38] Social Enterprise Places,[39] and Walkers are Welcome;[40]

- to the more immediately local, including The South of Scotland Alliance[41] and the experimental tri-borough shared services partnership between Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham councils.[42]

Cities and rural policy

The most common policy framework for fostering collaboration between towns through their local authorities in England, Scotland, and Wales is City Deals, a mechanism which, further to the commitment to devolution of decision-making powers in the Localism Act 2011, was introduced in the UK Government's vision for boosting economic growth in England's 'Core Cities' outside of London.[43] City Deals form the basis of agreements between the UK Government and cities to devolve powers to areas across the UK to support economic growth; create jobs; and fund local projects in the city and the broader economic areas surrounding them, supported by significant financial investment from the UK Government.[44] The first wave of eight City Deals in England was announced in 2012, with a further 18 City Deals made in 2013-2014.[45] City Region Deals, partnership deals between the UK Government, Scottish Government,

31   Department for Communities and Local Government, Centre for Local Economic Strategies and Association of Town and City Management, *Developing Resilient Town Centres* Manchester: Centre for Local Economic Strategies 2015 https://cles.org.uk/our-work/publications/developing-resilient-town-centres/ [accessed March 2017]

32   Scotland's Towns Partnership (2017) http://www.scotlandstowns.org/a_world_towns_agreement [accessed July 2017]

33   Coca-Stefaniak, A., *Successful town centres – developing effective strategies: "understanding your high street"* London: ATCM and gfirst 2013 http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/pdf/Successful-Town-Centres.pdf?2 [accessed July 2017]

34   Kelly, J., *Turnaround Towns: International Evidence* Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust 2016 https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/11/LOW-RES-2795-CUKT-Turnaround-Town-Report.pdf [accessed July 2017]

35   Burn-Murdoch, A., *Financial Scrutiny Unit Briefing: City Region Deals* Edinburgh: SPICe, The Scottish Parliament 2017 http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S5/SB_17-19_City_Region_Deals.pdf [accessed July 2017]

36   Carnegie UK Trust (2017) https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/project/twintowns/ [accessed July 2017]

37   Fairtrade Foundation (2017) http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/Get-Involved/In-your-community/Towns [accessed July 2017]

38   Association of Town and City Management (2017) https://www.atcm.org/programmes/purple_flag/WelcometoPurpleFlag [accessed July 2017]

39   Social Enterprise UK (2017) https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/Pages/Category/social-enterprise-places [accessed July 2017]

40   Walkers are Welcome (2017) https://walkersarewelcome.org.uk/ [accessed July 2017]

41   Ibid

42   Financial Times (2013) *London boroughs combine to sign 'radical' outsourcing deal Monday 10 June 2013* Financial Times (online) https://www.ft.com/content/6ab5590a-d0d6-11e2-a3ea-00144feab7de [accessed July 2017]

43   HM Government Cabinet Office, *Unlocking Growth in Cities* London: Cabinet Office 2011 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7523/CO_Unlocking_20GrowthCities_acc.pdf [accessed July 2017]

44   Burn-Murdoch, A., *Financial Scrutiny Unit Briefing: City Region Deals* Edinburgh: SPICe, The Scottish Parliament 2017 http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S5/SB_17-19_City_Region_Deals.pdf [accessed July 2017]

45   Ibid

local authorities and regional partners, were introduced in Scotland in 2014,[46] with Deals in place in Glasgow City Region; Aberdeen City Region; Inverness and Highland City Region;[47] Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region;[48] and discussions on and development of Deals underway in Dundee, Perth and Kinross, Angus and North Fife; and Stirling and Clackmannanshire.[49] The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal was announced in 2016[50] and there have been calls for their introduction in Northern Ireland.[51] These Deals and proposals have largely focused on innovation; employability; skills; digital; transport; infrastructure; housing; energy; tourism; culture; and regeneration projects in the respective cities and regions and leveraged additional funding and support from

local public, private and third sector partners, including universities and colleges.[52] The delivery of these Deals is overseen by a Joint Committee or comparable structure, comprising elected representatives from the relevant local authorities, responsible for strategic decision-making on the Deal.[53] The focus on cities as the drivers of economic growth is supported by organisations and initiatives such as the Centre for Cities;[54] the Scottish Cities Alliance;[55] and the EU Action for Cities portal.[56]

The alternative, indirect way in which towns are addressed collectively and collaboratively at a national level is in connection with their surrounding rural areas. This is a well-developed strategy in Ireland, for example, in which rural development policy asserts the need to consider towns as integral to the economic development of rural areas.[57] The Department of Arts, Heritage,

46   Ibid

47   Scottish Government, *Enterprise and Skills Review: Report on Phase 2 Regional Partnerships* Edinburgh: Scottish Government 2017 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521431.pdf [accessed July 2017]

48   Scottish Government (2017) *21,000 new jobs for Edinburgh and South East Scotland Thursday 20 July 2017* Scottish Government (online) https://news.gov.scot/news/21-000-new-jobs-for-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland [accessed July 2017]

49   Scottish Government, *Enterprise and Skills Review: Report on Phase 2 Regional Partnerships* Edinburgh: Scottish Government 2017 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521431.pdf [accessed July 2017]

50   HM Government et al., *Cardiff Capital Region City Deal* London: HM Government https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508268/Cardiff_Capital_Region_City_Deal.pdf [accessed July 2017]

51   Belfast Telegraph (2017) *Northern Ireland's turn for City Deal, minister says Monday 17 July 2017* Belfast Telegraph (online) http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-irelands-turn-for-city-deal-minister-says-35939639.html [accessed July 2017]

52   See, for example, Scottish Government, *Enterprise and Skills Review: Report on Phase 2 Regional Partnerships* Edinburgh: Scottish Government 2017 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521431.pdf [accessed July 2017]

53   Ibid

54   Centre for Cities (2017) http://www.centreforcities.org/ [accessed July 2017]

55   Scottish Cities Alliance (2017) https://www.scottishcities.org.uk/ [accessed July 2017]

56   European Commission (2017) https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/cities/action-cities_en [accessed July 2017]

57   Commission for the Development of Rural Ireland, *Energising Ireland's Rural Economy* Dublin: Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 2014 http://www.agresearch.teagasc.ie/rerc/CEDRA/CEDRA_Report.pdf [accessed July 2017]

Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs recently launched the €20 million Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2017 for rural towns and villages, further to this commitment in the Action Plan for Rural Development.[58] Up to 300 towns and villages will receive funding from the 2017 scheme, which is targeted at rural towns and villages with populations of less than 10,000 people.[59] Applications for projects designed to regenerate rural towns and villages can range from €20,000 to a maximum of €100,000, with funding of up to €200,000 considered for a limited number of projects which have the potential to deliver exceptionally strong economic outcomes for a town and its outlying areas.[60] The Department also announced that €5 million is being made available through the CLÁR programme for small scale capital funding projects in rural areas which have experienced significant depopulation; for schools or community safety measures; play areas; targeted community infrastructure needs; and First Response Support.[61]

In Scotland, LEADER 2014-2020, a bottom-up, partnership-based approach to rural development,

includes projects on community account management; cultural events; museums; footpaths; landscape initiatives; skills employment and broadband in rural areas.[62] The Rural Development Programme supports towns through initiatives such as the Woods In And Around Towns project in which investment is made in managing woodlands and improving public access to forests close to where people live.[63] In England, the RDPE Growth Programme provides funding for projects in rural tourism infrastructure; food processing; and business development which create jobs and growth in the rural economy.[64] On account of their rurality, businesses based in towns areas such as New Anglia and Oxfordshire can apply for development grants to introduce new processes or develop new products,[65] while applications to create or develop rural market town heritage are welcome in areas such as Buckinghamshire Thames Valley.[66] The Welsh Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 addresses the decline of market towns as having a detrimental effect on rural communities and the local economy, and explores the potential to focus on co-operation and collaboration activities on the theme of 'food tourism' through initiatives

58   Government of Ireland (2017) *Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development* http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/162404-rural-ireland-action-plan-web-2-1.pdf [accessed July 2017]

59   Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (2017) *Minister Humphreys announces €20 million in funding for rural towns and villages – Up to 300 rural towns and villages to benefit over the next 15 months Thursday 13 April 2017* Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (online) http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/minister-humphreys-announces-e20-million-in-funding-for-rural-towns-and-villages-up-to-300-rural-towns-and-villages-to-benefit-over-the-next-15-months/ [accessed July 2017]

60   Ibid

61   Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (2017) M*inister of State Ring launches 2017 CLÁR Programme Friday 31 March 2017* Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (online) http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/minister-of-state-ring-launches-2017-clar-programme/ [accessed July 2017]

62   Scottish Government (2017) https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/leader/ [accessed July 2017]

63   The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (2015) *United Kingdom – Rural Development Programme (Regional) – Scotland* http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00501661.pdf [accessed July 2017]

64   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme [accessed July 2017]

65   Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *RDPE Growth Programme: Business Development Handbook* London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/588395/Growth_-_business_development_handbook_v1.pdf [accessed July 2017]

66   Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *RDPE Growth Programme: Rural Tourism Infrastructure Handbook* London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/588397/Growth_-_tourism_handbook_v1.pdf [accessed July 2017]

such as Taste Towns.[67] In Northern Ireland, the Rural White Paper Action Plan outlines the Northern Ireland Executive's vision for strong, vibrant rural communities achieved through strong connections with urban areas, and market towns which provide economic opportunities and access to services.[68] The interests of rural areas across the UK and Ireland are served by organisations such as the Scottish Rural Parliament;[69] the Wales Rural Network;[70] Action with Communities in Rural England;[71] Irish Rural Link;[72] and the Rural Community Network in Northern Ireland.[73]

Policy and advocacy gap

However, the value of being incorporated within cities and rural policy for towns has been called into question, as *'[a]lthough small and market towns are often 'lost' within broader-brush categorizations of 'rural' and 'urban' areas (especially when these are defined at local authority level), they differ significantly from both.'*[74] Integrating towns into rural policy assumes that supporting rural areas with a range of goods and services is the primary function of rural towns, however, there is very little data available to support this expectation.[75] As such, peripheral rural towns as entities themselves are often neglected in local policy on account on the size of their population and local economy.[76]

Commentators have also raised the fact that City Deals are city-led negotiations and, as such investment is often concentrated on the core city to the detriment of its regional partners.[77] As fundamentally different socio-economic geographies, it cannot be assumed that all towns' performance is closely aligned to that of nearby cities or that investment in cities will inevitably lead to improved outcomes for their surrounding towns.[78] It has been asserted that instead, towns have particular issues which impact on the economic, social, environmental, and democratic outcomes of their citizens, which may require short-term or long-term policy solutions, or both.[79] As the initial City Deal agreements do not provide full details on timescales and the location of all investments, as evident in the new Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal,[80] it has been cautioned that it may take longer for some areas, such as rural geographies, to reap the benefit of City Deals.[81] In this regard, City Deals have been considered by some to be a narrow approach to place-based economic development and founded on the premise that investment will lead to future success,[82] despite UK business confidence currently being at its lowest point for six years.[83] City Deals can also be seen as too formulaic and insufficiently responsive to local conditions, with measures of success often based on metrics from other

67 The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (2017) *United Kingdom – Rural Development Programme (Regional) – Wales* http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/170705-wales-rdp-2014-2020-document.pdf [accessed July 2017]

68 Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, *Rural White Paper Action Plan* Belfast: Department of Agriculture and Rural Development 2012 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/rural-white-paper-action-plan.pdf [accessed July 2017]

69 Scottish Rural Parliament (2017) https://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/rural-parliament/ [accessed July 2017]

70 Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/wales-rural-network/?lang=en [accessed July 2017]

71 Action with Communities in Rural England (2017) http://acre.org.uk/ [accessed July 2017]

72 Irish Rural Link (2017) http://www.irishrurallink.ie/ [accessed July 2017]

73 Rural Community Network (2017) http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/default.aspx [accessed July 2017]

74 Wales Rural Observatory, *Small and Market Towns in Rural Wales and their Hinterlands* Cardiff: Wales Rural Observatory 2007 http://www.walesruralobservatory.org.uk/sites/default/files/Market%2520Towns%2520report%2520final2.pdf [accessed July 2017]

75 Brotchie, J. and J Atterton, *Beyond Boundaries: 'Lifeline' Towns and Rural Exclusion* Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust 2014 https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/beyond-boundaries-lifeline-towns-and-rural-exclusion/ [accessed July 2017]

76 Powe, N. and R. Pringle, *Helping Businesses Thrive in Peripheral Rural Towns* Newcastle: Civitas 2017 http://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/helpingbusinessesthrive.pdf [accessed July 2017]

77 Holyrood (2017) *Edinburgh city deal 'deeply disappointing' for Fife, says Kingdom's Labour leader Wednesday 26 July 2017* Holyrood (online) https://www.holyrood.com/articles/news/edinburgh-city-deal-%E2%80%98deeply-disappointing%E2%80%99-fife-says-kingdom%E2%80%99s-labour-leader [accessed July 2017]

78 Cadywood, G. and A. Paget, *Talk of the Town* London: Demos 2015 https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Talk-of-the-Town-PDF-Final.pdf [accessed July 2017]

79 O'Donoghue, C. et al., 'The economic structure of towns in Ireland', *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland* Vol.43, 114-135, 2013-14 http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/72778/6%20o%27donoghue.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [accessed July 2017]

80 The Southern Reporter (2017) *Mixed reaction to new city region deal Monday 24 July 2017* The Southern Reporter (online) http://www.thesouthernreporter.co.uk/news/business/mixed-reaction-to-new-city-region-deal-1-4512560 [accessed July 2017]

81 Audit Scotland, *Local government in Scotland: Performance and challenges 2017* Edinburgh: Audit Scotland, 2017 http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2017/nr_170307_local_government_performance.pdf [accessed March 2017]

82 Commission for Underperforming Towns and Cities, *A brighter future for our towns and cities* Cheshire: Institute of Economic Development 2015 http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1342242/A%20brighter%20future%20for%20our%20towns%20and%20cities.pdf [accessed July 2017]

83 The Guardian (2017) *UK business confidence at lowest point for six years, say forecasters Monday 17 July 2017* Guardian (online) https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jul/17/uk-business-confidence-britain-economic-growth-brexit-anxiety [accessed July 2017]

Deals or places.[84] The business community in particular has deliberated if City Deals represent any significant policy shift towards boosting the wider city region, and the sector has highlighted the complex governance arrangements and lack of transparency inherent in the decision-making process.[85] Others have raised the fact that with voters electing local councillors to represent their area, who elect a Leader, who appoints a city-region local authority representative, democratic accountability within the governance of City Deal structures is also very weak.[86]

This national agglomeration of towns with their nearest city for the purposes of economic development can also been seen in jurisdictions and areas without City Deals. Across the UK and Ireland, cities are classified as economic powerhouses and the accepted sites for investment, with their surrounding towns expected to receive the benefits by extension. Commentators in Ireland have highlighted the fact that towns in the National Spatial Strategy are addressed only in the context of

their relationship with Dublin, and fail to be acknowledged as the primary geographical basis for economic planning.[87] While in Wales, the focus of Welsh Government economic policy on capturing foreign direct investment through financial incentives, city-region structures, and enterprise zones to the detriment of a strategy to grow and support local economies has been critiqued.[88]

Without towns being recognised as a geographical entity on which to base national policy, civic leaders within towns do not have a comparable platform as that afforded to city leaders[89] and rural representatives, and as a result *'[i]ndividual towns, lacking the heft of numbers, have not had the political cohesion to advance a policy agenda or command attention'.[90]* The lack of a cross-jurisdictional advocacy organisation, in addition to the lack of a common definition of towns, and different structures, policies, and partnerships within and across the jurisdictions, means that cross-town collaboration in a way that improves outcomes, fails to take place.

84   The British Academy, *Where We Live Now: Making the case for place-based policy* London: The British Academy 2017 http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/WWLN%20Making%20the%20case%20for%20place-based%20policy_web.pdf [accessed July 2017]

85   Federation of Small Businesses, *Local Government and Communities Committee City Region Deals Submission from the Federation of Small Businesses* 2017 https://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/cr_cityregiondealsinquiry_fsbresponse_may2017_final.pdf?sfvrsn=0 [accessed July 2017]

86   Sims, S., *City Deals: give and take?* London: Institute for Government 2012 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/city-deals-give-and-take [accessed July 2017]

87   The Heritage Council (2015) *Policy Proposals for Ireland's Towns* http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/policy_proposals_irelands_towns_2015_5mb.pdf [accessed July 2015]

88   Lang, Dr M. and N. McInroy *Welsh Towns – Policy Options: A Discussion Paper* Unpublished 2015

89   Lisa Nandy MP (2017) *The England That Lies Beneath the Surface Tuesday 7 March 2017* IPPR (online) https://www.ippr.org/events/beyond-the-metropolis-who-speaks-for-britains-towns-in-post-brexit-world [accessed July 2017]

90   The Heritage Council, *Policy Proposals for Ireland's Towns* Kilkenny: The Heritage Council 2015 http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/policy_proposals_irelands_towns_2015_5mb.pdf [accessed July 2015]

Towns policy in England

In England, the main policy levers for influencing the outcomes experienced within towns are developed through the UK Government's commitment to addressing town centre and high street decline, and the decentralisation of power.

2009 — The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

2011 — The Localism Act 2011

2012 — National Planning Policy Framework

2017 — The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017

This chapter will outline the main national policies and initiatives designed to develop places across England; the role of legislation; the key players involved; the supporting policies and initiatives at a regional and local level; and a case study of a project designed to improve the attractiveness of a town for investment opportunities led by the private sector.

UK Government towns policy is developed within the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), with responsibility for policy areas which directly impact on towns divided across Ministerial portfolios. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Local Government) administers local government policy; local government finances; adult social care policy; and local government interventions policy and existing interventions.[91] Local growth; coastal communities; community rights; local enterprise partnership policy; enterprise zones; high streets; and greenspace are the responsibility of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for the Northern Powerhouse),[92] while the Minister of State for Housing and Planning oversees housing supply policy; planning policy; and estates regeneration.[93] The Single

Departmental Plan for DCLG has four objectives – driving up housing supply; increasing home ownership; devolving powers and budgets to boost local growth in England; and supporting strong communities with excellent public services.[94]

In a bid to increase housing supply, a tailored support package for the development of new garden towns and cities was launched in 2016, with expressions of interest welcomed from consortiums led by local authorities, with support from the community; private sector developers or landowners; the Local Enterprise Partnership; and, where appropriate, the county council, for the development of at least 10,000 new homes.[95] The support available to local authorities includes limited financial resources; the Department undertaking a brokerage role to overcome difficulties that arise between stakeholders; access to government funding streams on housing; ensuring that there is a fit for purpose consortium in place to deliver the development; and bestowing planning freedoms on local authorities which would allow them to make changes to the planning system in order to

91   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/parliamentary-under-secretary-of-state-minister-for-local-government [accessed May 2017]

92   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/parliamentary-under-secretary-of-state--17 [accessed May 2017]

93   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers/minister-of-state-for-communities-and-local-government [accessed May 2017]

94   Department for Communities and Local Government, *Single departmental plan: 2015 to 2020* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dclg-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020 online 2015 [accessed May 2017]

95   Department for Communities and Local Government, *Locally-led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities* London: Department for Communities and Local Government 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508205/Locally-led_garden_villages__towns_and_cities.pdf [accessed June 2017]

increase the volume of housing in the area.[96] In January 2017, the UK Government announced its support for three new garden towns in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire; Taunton, Somerset; and Harlow and Gilston, Essex and Hertfordshire, with a further £1.4 million to support their delivery.[97]

Contributing to its objective of supporting strong communities with excellent public services, in 2016 DCLG launched The Communities Fund to support partnerships of local authorities and community-led groups to deliver improved, tailored local services.[98] The place-based fund invites bids which deliver solutions to entrenched social issues and relate to themes such as early interventions and high cost individuals; adult social care; children's services; and employment support.[99] Projects must be designed to deliver local solutions in specific neighbourhoods; across a larger area; or across local authority or service delivery boundaries, for which financial support and guidance will be provided until April

2018.[100] Additional resources for the Fund were announced in April 2016, to allow more than 54 community-led projects to receive a share of more than £3.25 million.[101] The Communities Fund follows from the place-based approach to regeneration and social inclusion developed by previous administrations, such as the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.[102] Investment in improving social outcomes is concurrent to other DCLG policies such as the extension of the Coastal Communities Fund, to improve the economic outcomes of coastal communities as part of a UK wide investment of at least £90 million to 2021,[103] and the work of other Government departments such as the Department of Transport's funding to improve the road infrastructure in small towns.[104]

96   Ibid

97   UK Government (2017) *First ever garden villages named with government support Monday 2 January 2017* UK Government (online) https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-ever-garden-villages-named-with-government-support [accessed June 2017]

98   Department for Communities and Local Government, *The Communities Fund Prospectus* London: Department for Communities and Local Government 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576087/Communities_Fund_Prospectus.pdf [accessed June 2017]

99   Ibid

100   Ibid

101   Department for Communities and Local Government (2017) *Multi-million pound boost for community-led services Thursday 6 April 2017* Department for Communities and Local Government (online) https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-boost-for-community-led-services [accessed June 2017]

102   Social Exclusion Unit, *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan* London: Cabinet Office 2001 http://www.bris.ac.uk/poverty/downloads/keyofficialdocuments/Neighbourhood%20Renewal%20National%20Strategy%20Report.pdf [accessed June 2017]

103   Department for Communities and Local Government, *Single departmental plan: 2015 to 2020* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dclg-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020 online 2015 [accessed May 2017]

104   The Guardian (2017) *England's local roads to get boost from government cash pot Wednesday 5 July 2017* Guardian (online) https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jul/05/local-roads-government-cash-councils-motorways [accessed July 2017]

As with other governments across the jurisdictions, the UK Government has developed a set of policies and funding opportunities in England dedicated to the sustainability of town centres and high streets. In 2011, retail consultant and broadcaster Mary Portas was appointed by the then Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to review the status of Britain's high streets and town centres.[105] Portas developed a number of recommendations following this review, such as putting in place cross-sector 'Town Teams', visionary, strategic and strong operational management teams for high streets with a focus on accessibility, safety and aesthetically pleasing high streets; running a high profile campaign to improve community engagement in Neighbourhood Plans; and promoting the inclusion of high streets in Neighbourhood Plans.[106] In response to the review, the UK Government funded 24 Portas Pilots and 330 Town Teams as well as workshops and toolkits to enable other towns to learn from their experiences; invested £500,000 to help Business Improvement Districts to access loans for their set-up costs; established a £10 million High Street Innovation Fund to help bring entrepreneurs back to local communities with a large number of empty shops and recovering from the riots; and invested £1 million in a Future High Street Fund to reward areas delivering the most effective and innovative plans enabling their town centres to thrive.[107]

Policies on improving outcomes in high streets and town centres are currently guided by The Future High Street Forum, chaired by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State. The Future High Street Forum is led by an executive board with representatives from across the retail, property, and business sectors convened to provide joint leadership with the government on better understanding the issues faced by high streets and towns centres; enabling town centres to adapt to changing consumer and social trends; and advising on policies designed to support the economic and social centres of our towns.[108] The Forum focuses on five work streams of restructuring high streets; digital; local partnerships; research; and communications.[109] The Forum is currently helping to further the local mentoring programme established in response to the Portas review; advising the government on how existing town centre buildings can be better used in a bid to increase footfall and support businesses; supporting the expansion of initiatives such as Love Your Local Markets and pop-up shops; researching a toolkit to help improve the sustainability of high streets; and exploring solutions to barriers, such as local parking policy.[110] In 2014, the Forum launched The Great British High Street Awards designed to recognise the improvements made by high streets and the diversity and services provided to the local community.[111] The *Great British High Street* brand has subsequently developed a number of materials designed to support the sustainability of town centres, such as the 100 Ways to Help the High Street guide with case studies;[112] the High Street Pledge for businesses in the leisure and retail sector;[113] a Kick Start Your High Street Action Pack;[114] and a toolkit of physical and digital promotional materials.[115]

Key players

The Department for Communities and Local Government lists 11 agencies and public bodies as its partners – the Planning Inspectorate; Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre; Ebbsfleet Development Corporation; Homes and Communities Agency; Housing Ombudsman; Leasehold Advisory Service; Valuation Tribunal Service; Building Regulations

105   Portas, M., *The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets* London: Department for Communities and Local Government 2011 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf [accessed June 2017]

106   Ibid

107   Department for Communities and Local Government, *High Streets at the Heart of our Communities: the Government's Response to the Mary Portas Review* London: Department for Communities and Local Government 2012 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7525/2120019.pdf [accessed June 2017]

108   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/future-high-streets-forum [accessed June 2017]

109   Ibid

110   The Great British High Street (2017) http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/about [accessed June 2017]

111   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/future-high-streets-forum [accessed June 2017]

112   The Great British High Street (2017) http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/100-ways-to-help-your-highstreet [accessed June 2017]

113   The Great British High Street (2017) http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/high-streets-pledge [accessed June 2017]

114   The Great British High Street (2017) http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/kickstart [accessed June 2017]

115   The Great British High Street (2017) http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/get-involved [accessed June 2017]

Advisory Committee; Valuation Tribunal for England; Architects Registration Board; and Local Government Ombudsman.[116] The Single Departmental Plan also outlines collaborative working with the Cabinet Office; HM Treasury; and other Government Departments.[117]

Outwith formal partnerships with the UK Government, a number of national organisations are working to improve economic, social, environmental and democratic outcomes across England's towns. With regards to membership bodies, the Local Government Association works on behalf of local authorities to ensure that local government is represented effectively to the UK Government, and has identified inclusive growth, jobs and housing; children, education and schools; promoting health and wellbeing; and devolution as their priorities for 2017.[118] The National Association of Councils protects and

advances the rights and interests of member town and parish councils and runs campaigns on issues such as community rights; local councils obtaining a share of business rates; and localising council tax support schemes.[119] The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) supports sustainable and inclusive spatial planning of towns across England and develops policies on issues such as fostering growth; transport infrastructure investment; large scale housing development; and strategic planning.[120] Organised through the RTPI, Planning Aid England offers free planning advice and guidance to individuals and communities; conducts community outreach and capacity building; and supports neighbourhood planning.[121] The Association of Town and City Management provides thought leadership, research, and representation for members with the aim of creating place-based policymaking, and has developed support networks in the East of England; London; North West; South East; South West; Yorkshire and the North East; and

116   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations#department-for-communities-and-local-government [accessed July 2017]

117   Department for Communities and Local Government, *Single departmental plan: 2015 to 2020* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dclg-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020 online 2015 [accessed May 2017]

118   Local Government Association, *Business Plan December 2016/November 2017* London: Local Government Association 2016 https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/business-plan-december-20-d48.pdf [accessed July 2017]

119   National Association of Local Councils (2017) http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work [accessed July 2017]

120   Royal Town Planning Institute (2017) http://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/policy/policy-papers/ [accessed July 2017]

121   Royal Town Planning Institute (2017) http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/what-we-do/ [accessed July 2017]

the Midlands.[122] The Town and Country Planning Association campaigns to empower people and communities across the UK to influence decisions that affect them; secure good quality, well-designed homes; and improve the planning system in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.[123]

Think tanks based in England are increasingly pursuing research agendas on place and the potential of towns. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) takes a place-based approach to its organisational priorities of creating great, resilient places; championing economies for all; community wealth building through anchor institutions; excellent public services; addressing poverty and disadvantage; and identifying and measuring what works.[124] Localis, in making the case for a locally-led industrial strategy, asserts that places need new powers to deliver growth and share its benefits more widely; a shift in policy focus to small towns is needed; and that two typologies of towns in particular require nuanced intervention in industrial strategy – those whose growth is 'restricted' by their boundaries and those who are 'stuck' following industrial decline.[125] Demos is currently exploring the marginalisation of England's towns which surround their larger neighbouring cities and working to understand their local needs in order to identify how they could benefit from targeted support.[126]

Initiatives supporting improved outcomes

There are a number of place-based initiatives currently operating or in development which aim to improve the economic, social, environmental, or democratic outcomes of England's towns. Healthy New Towns is a large-scale programme

from NHS England which is designed to assess how joining up the built environment and local health and care services in ten demonstrator sites can improve the community's health, wellbeing and independence.[127] NHS England will help to shape the development of the sites to test solutions to health and care challenges such as obesity; dementia; and community cohesion.[128]

With a focus on heritage as a vehicle for regeneration, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England are working in partnership on the Great Places Scheme which funds 16 pilot areas to strengthen the role that arts, culture and heritage play in improving local social and economic outcomes, for example, in reimagining the seaside towns of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth.[129] The Heritage Lottery Fund also operates a Townscape Heritage programme which helps communities to regenerate deprived towns and cities across the UK through their built historic environment, with funding between £100,000 and £2 million available.[130] Similarly, through its Heritage Action Zone initiative, Historic England is working with local people and partners in Appleby; Coventry; Elsecar; Hull; King's Lynn; Nottingham; Ramsgate; Sunderland; Sutton; and Weston-super-Mare to restore historic buildings, improve conservation areas, utilise the unique character and heritage of places, and instil a sense of local pride.[131] The Creative People and Places programme from Arts Council England provides funding for people to collaborate and develop art which they would welcome in their local area, with a focus on places in which participation in the arts is considerably below the national average.[132]

The forthcoming Centre for Coastal Communities founded by the New Economics Foundation will create 'Blue New Deal' towns, supporting at least three coastal communities per year to deliver

122   Association of Town and City Management (2017) https://www.atcm. org/policy_practice/publicpolicyintroduction [accessed July 2017]

123   Town and Country Planning Association (2017) https://www.tcpa.org.uk/ our-objectives [accessed July 2017]

124   CLES (2017) https://cles.org.uk/our-work/our-work/ [accessed July 2017]

125   Airey, J. and L Booth-Smith, *The Making of an Industrial Strategy: Taking back control locally* London: Localis 2017 http://www.localis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/004_Localis_IndustrialStrategy_AWK_WEB-1. pdf [accessed July 2017]

126   Cadywould, A. and A Paget, *Talk of the Town* London: Demos 2015 https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Talk-of-the-Town-PDF-Final.pdf [accessed July 2017]

127   NHS England (2017) https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/ healthy-new-towns/ [accessed July 2017]

128   Ibid

129   Heritage Lottery Fund (2016) https://www.greatplacescheme.org.uk/ england [accessed July 2017]

130   Heritage Lottery Fund (2017) https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/ our-grant-programmes/townscape-heritage# [accessed July 2017]

131   Historic England (2017) https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/ heritage-action-zones/breathe-new-life-into-old-places-through-heritage-action-zones/ [accessed July 2017]

132   Arts Council England (2017) http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/ creative-people-and-places-fund#section-2 [accessed July 2017]

Community Marine Economic Development programmes which provide local people with the tools to develop a route map for the future of their town; incubate and support coastal marine projects; coordinate national advocacy on the needs of coastal communities; provide expertise and evidence on sustainable coastal economies; and function as an outreach, networking and matching portal for projects and investors.[133]

With funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government, Planning Aid England has produced a Forum for Neighbourhood Planning for those who wish to share their experiences on neighbourhood planning.[134] The dedicated website hosts resources such as useful documents, links and case studies on neighbourhood planning; news; information on events; open forums; and private place-based groups to provide informal and peer-to-peer support to community groups and individuals.[135]

Towns policy and initiatives at the regional and local level

The first tier of decentralisation in England which impacts on the provision of services within towns is at a regional level through urban clusters and partnership working. In a bid to foster regional economic growth and rebalance the economy away from a London and the South East centric model, the Spending Round 2013 included an ask of all Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), partnerships of local authorities and businesses, to develop multi-year local Strategic Economic Plans[136] which would be used as the basis for negotiations on Growth Deals with the UK Government to fund projects of benefit to the local area.[137] The third round of Local Growth Deals announced in 2017 are clustered in the

North of England; South West; London, South East and East of England; and the Midlands,[138] corresponding to the twelve new Enterprise Zones announced in the Autumn Statement 2015 which offer tax breaks and government support for private investment,[139] and the increasingly formal structures designed to improve regional economic outcomes. The Government is pursuing the construct of a Northern Powerhouse of cities, towns, and rural communities with improved transport links; investment in science and innovation; and devolution of power for the constituent areas.[140] An investment of £3.4 billion in Local Growth Deals and a dedicated £400 million Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund to support the growth of small businesses from the UK Government incentivises such regionalisation.[141] Similarly, the Midlands Engine, focused on the strong manufacturing sector in the Midlands, seeks to improve the regional economy through investment in transport; innovation; skills; finance for business; and regional branding,[142] supported by the UK Government through £392 million from the Local Growth Fund[143] and the High Speed 2 investment.[144]

Such regional economic development strategies are supported by regional and city-level governance structures as the provision of services is increasingly decentralised from Westminster. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gave the UK Government the power to establish combined authorities with the ability to deliver transport, economic development, and regeneration functions customarily provided by individual local

133   New Economics Foundation (forthcoming). For information on a New Blue Deal for coastal communities please see New Economics Foundation, *Blue New Deal: Good jobs for coastal communities through healthy seas* London: New Economics Foundation 2015 http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/2ec4a9d52360c8dd5a_a7m6yt6ik.pdf [accessed July 2017]

134   Forum for Neighbourhood Planning (2017) http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/about [accessed July 2017]

135   Ibid

136   HM Treasury, *Spending Round 2013* London: HM Treasury 2013 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209036/spending-round-2013-complete.pdf [accessed July 2017]

137   Department for Communities and Local Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-growth-deals [accessed July 2017]

138   Ibid

139   HM Government (2017) http://enterprisezones.communities.gov.uk/twelve-enterprise-zones-live-helping-boost-economic-growth-north-east-south-west/ [accessed July 2017]

140   Northern Powerhouse (2017) https://northernpowerhouse.gov.uk/about-us/ [accessed July 2017]

141   Department for Communities and Local Government (2017) *New businesses back the Northern Powerhouse Thursday 30 March 2017* Department for Communities and Local Government (online) https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-businesses-back-the-northern-powerhouse [accessed July 2017]

142   Midlands Engine (2017) https://www.midlandsengine.org/ [accessed July 2017]

143   Department for Communities and Local Government (2017) *Midlands Engine to roar ahead with ambitious new strategy Thursday 9 March 2017* Department for Communities and Local Government (online) https://www.gov.uk/government/news/midlands-engine-to-roar-ahead-with-ambitious-new-strategy [accessed July 2017]

144   UK Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-businesses-back-the-northern-powerhouse [accessed July 2017]

authorities.[145] The Localism Act 2011 provides the legislative framework for further decentralisation of power from central government, bestowing the UK Government with the power to develop devolution deals and trigger referenda in the largest cities outside of London, regarding the opportunity to have an elected mayor; passes greater powers over housing and regeneration to the Mayor of London; and provides local authorities the power to change how they are constituted and offer discounted business rates to help attract firms, investment and jobs.[146]

In the first devolution deal in England, the legislative powers in the Act were used by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to seek greater autonomy and agency over the provision of services within the Greater Manchester area. The Greater Manchester Agreement devolved powers on the GMCA to oversee business support budgets; to control the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers and reform the provision of Further Education within Greater Manchester; to control an extended Working Well pilot; to become a joint commissioner with the Department for Work and Pensions for the next phase of the Work Programme; and to develop a business plan for the integration of health and social care with Greater Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups.[147] The Agreement also bestowed powers and responsibilities to a new, directly elected Mayor of Greater Manchester over transport; planning; housing; and policing.[148] Following the initial Agreement, the Government and NHS England agreed to devolve over £6 billion in health spending to Greater Manchester to enable joint planning of services and to deliver better care for patients and Greater Manchester was awarded the right to retain 100% of growth in business rates.[149] Further to the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 receiving Royal

Assent, which removed the statutory limitation on the functions of combined authorities as economic development, regeneration, and transport exclusively,[150] additional powers in planning; development and regeneration through a Community Infrastructure Levy; preventative services for children and young people; criminal justice; adult education budgets; fire services; and in the development of a Life Chances Investment Fund were bestowed on the GMCA and Mayor.[151] Using this framework, subsequent devolution deals have been agreed in Tees Valley[152]; in Cornwall, with the absence of a Mayor;[153] with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority,[154]

150   *Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/1/pdfs/ukpga_20160001_en.pdf [accessed June 2017]

151   HM Treasury (2016) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/devolution-to-the-greater-manchester-combined-authority-and-transition-to-a-directly-elected-mayor [accessed July 2017]

152   HM Government et al., *Tees Valley Devolution Agreement* London: HM Treasury 2015 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470127/Tees_Valley_Devo_Deal_FINAL_formatted_v3.pdf [accessed July 2017]

153   HM Government et al., *Cornwall Devolution Deal* London: HM Treasury 2015 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447419/20150715_Cornwall_Devolution_Deal_-_FINAL_-_reformatted.pdf [accessed July 2017]

154   HM Treasury and Liverpool City Combined Authority, *Liverpool City Region Devolution Agreement* London: HM Treasury 2015 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/477385/Liverpool_devolution_deal_unsigned.pdf [accessed July 2017]

145   *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/20/pdfs/ukpga_20090020_en.pdf [accessed July 2017]

146   *Localism Act 2011* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/pdfs/ukpga_20110020_en.pdf [accessed June 2017]

147   HM Treasury and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, *Greater Manchester Agreement: devolution to the GMCA & transition to a directly elected mayor* London: HM Treasury 2014 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/369858/Greater_Manchester_Agreement_i.pdf [accessed July 2017]

148   Ibid

149   HM Treasury (2015) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479566/Further_devolution_manchester_nov_2015.pdf [accessed July 2017]

with extended powers and responsibilities;[155] with the West Midlands Combined Authority;[156] in the West of England[157] with a £900 million investment fund over 30 years to foster economic growth;[158] and with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority,[159] with a £600 million investment fund over 30 years to grow the local economy and £170 million to deliver new homes.[160] The Department for Communities and Local Government has produced guides with an overview of the powers being transferred to these regions and the responsibilities and budgets of the respective mayors.[161]

155 HM Treasury and Liverpool City Combined Authority, *Further devolution to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and to the directly elected Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority* London: HM Treasury 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508118/160314_Further_devolution_to_Liverpool_City_Region_-_FINAL.pdf [accessed July 2017]

156 HM Treasury and West Midlands Combined Authority, *West Midlands Combined Authority Devolution Agreement* London: HM Treasury 2015 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/477421/West_Midlands_devolution_deal_unsigned_final_web.pdf [accessed July 2017]

157 HM Government et al., *West of England Devolution Agreement* London: HM Treasury 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508112/160315_West_of_England_Devolution_Agreement_Draft_-_FINAL.pdf [accessed July 2017]

158 HM Treasury (2016) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-of-england-devolution-deal [accessed July 2017]

159 HM Government et al., *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Deal* London: HM Treasury 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/600239/Cambridgeshire_and_Peterborough_Devolution_Deal.pdf [accessed July 2017]

160 HM Treasury (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-devolution-deal [accessed July 2017]

161 Department for Communities and Local Government (2017) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/devolution-and-mayors-what-does-it-mean [accessed July 2017]

Local government in England is the most complex of all the jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland. In some areas, local government is divided into county councils (the upper tier), which provide around 80% of services, such as children's services and adult social care, and district councils (the lower tier), which cover a smaller geographical area within a county, and provide more local services such as housing, planning, waste and leisure services.[162] Single tier unitary authorities which provide all local services are in place in other areas, often called councils; city councils; or borough councils.[163] Each of the London boroughs is a unitary authority, as are metropolitan districts.[164] Of the 353 local authorities in England, 27 are county councils; 201 are district councils; 55 are unitary authorities; 32 are London boroughs; 36 are metropolitan boroughs; and two are the sui generis authorities of the City of London Corporation and the Isles of Scilly.[165] These local authorities, together with the 45 fire and rescue authorities, including the London Fire Commissioner, and the 38 Police and Crime Commissioners, including the Mayor of London, and around 9,000 town or parish councils with responsibilities for services such as the

162 LGiU (2017) http://www.lgiu.org.uk/local-government-facts-and-figures/ [accessed July 2017]

163 Ibid

164 Ibid

165 Ibid

management of town and village centres, litter, parks, and community halls, make up the local government landscape.[166]

A structure of Area Committees is in place in many local authorities across England, such as the five Area Committees in the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council;[167] seven Area Committees in Hull City Council;[168] and six Local Committees in Cumbria County Council[169] to facilitate place-based investment and decision-making. Such Committees and the work of the wider council are supported by neighbourhood and ward forums which focus on the issues and priorities of a local area; provide comment on significant planning applications affecting their area; enable community engagement, debate and action by coordinating the work of councillors with neighbourhood forums, residents associations and neighbourhood, community or parish councils; and work in partnership with other forums to engage with partners such as the police.[170]

The development of local service provision and the involvement of community groups and citizens is increasingly pursued through planning. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Plans developed by the local authority should outline the strategic priorities for an area, including policies to deliver homes and jobs; the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development; the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management and water supply; the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities; conservation; and how to mitigate against and adapt to climate change and enhance the natural and historic environment.[171] Local planning authorities are directed to recognise town centres

as the core of the community and include policies to support their vitality and sustainability; promote competitive town centres which provide a diverse retail offer and reflect the individuality of the town centre; and to allocate sites to a range of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development.[172] The Framework provides a role for all sections of the community to be involved in the development of Local Plans and planning decisions, and to facilitate community planning to deliver places which provide opportunities for members of the community to meet, work, live and socialise.[173]

Under the Localism Act 2011, a parish or town council; neighbourhood forum, consisting of 21 people who live, work, or are elected councillors locally in an area where no parish or town council exists; or community organisation has the right to lead and develop a neighbourhood plan for their area to support the strategic development needs set out in the Local Plan.[174] Neighbourhood planning gives communities the opportunity to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood over the next ten to twenty years and shape the development and growth of their local area. The Act also bestows more rights on communities over the assets in their local area which can contribute to their neighbourhood plans. A Community Right to Build Order can be used to, for example, approve the building of homes; shops; businesses; affordable housing for rent or sale; and community facilities; and where the community organisation wishes to develop the land itself, the resulting assets can only be disposed of, improved or developed in a manner which the organisation considers beneficial to the local community.[175] The Community Right to Challenge dictates that community groups, parish councils, and local authority employees have the right to express an interest in taking over the provision of a local authority service, a challenge to which the local authority must respond, and where accepted, undertake a procurement exercise for delivering the service,

166   Ibid

167   City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (2016) https://bradford.moderngov.co.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1 [accessed July 2017]

168   Hull City Council (2017) http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/portal/page-_pageid=221,76015&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL [accessed July 2017]

169   Cumbria County Council (2017) http://councilportal.cumbria.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1 [accessed July 2017]

170   Birmingham City Council (2017) https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50021/committees/669/ward_forums [accessed July 2017]

171   Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* London: 2012 Department for Communities and Local Government https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed June 2017]

172   Ibid

173   Ibid

174   *Localism Act 2011* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/pdfs/ukpga_20110020_en.pdf [accessed June 2017]

175   Ibid

for which the group can tender.[176] The Act also prescribes that local authorities maintain a list of physical assets of community value which the community have nominated, and when these change ownership or are to be sold, community groups have time to develop a bid and raise funds to buy it on the open market under the Community Right to Bid provision.[177] Subject to a successful independent examination and community referendum, the neighbourhood plan will become part of the statutory development plan along with the Local Plan, when brought into force by the local planning authority.[178]

The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 is designed to strengthen neighbourhood planning by ensuring that decision-makers take into account well-established neighbourhood development plans; bestowing neighbourhood development plans with full legal effect at an earlier stage than previously; improving transparency between local authorities and

planning groups; and improving community involvement in the early stages of the formulation of neighbourhood development plans.[179] An estimated 2,000 communities have produced a Neighbourhood Development Plan or a Neighbourhood Development Order,[180] whereby planning permission is granted for particular developments in a neighbourhood and thereafter permission need not be sought from the local authority.

Case study: Burnley

Business leaders in Burnley, Lancashire, have developed a Bondholder Scheme in which member organisations contribute financially or in-kind to promoting the town as a place to live, work, visit and invest.[181] Members receive invitations to networking events on key themes; opportunities to promote their business; and marketing materials.[182] The Scheme currently has more than 180 members, and for larger businesses, involvement counts towards their corporate social responsibility obligations.[183] The Bondholders Scheme has attracted £10 million of investment; contributed to Burley being awarded Most Enterprising Area 2013; and has been replicated in other areas such as Hull.[184]

176 *Localism Act 2011* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/pdfs/ukpga_20110020_en.pdf [accessed June 2017]

177 Ibid

178 Ibid

179 *Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/20/pdfs/ukpga_20170020_en.pdf [accessed June 2017]

180 UK Government (2016) *Neighbourhood Planning Bill: Explanatory Notes* https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2016-2017/0061/en/17061en.pdf [accessed June 2017]

181 Burnley Council Regeneration and Economic Development (2017) http://burnley.co.uk/business/about-the-bondholder-scheme/ [accessed July 2017]

182 Ibid

183 Innovate UK (2017) https://innovateuk.blog.gov.uk/2017/01/12/innovation-life-in-a-northern-town/ [accessed July 2017]

184 BBC News (2013) *Burnley wins UK's most enterprising Area award Tuesday 27 August 2013* BBC News (online) http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-23849081 [accessed July 2017]

Towns policy in Ireland

The strength of Ireland's heritage sector and the local government reform agenda have afforded opportunities for policymakers to develop networks at national, regional, and local levels to advance Ireland's places.

This chapter will provide an overview of the Irish Government's national policies relating to towns; their partners in the development and delivery of policies; actions being taken at regional and local levels to improve places; and a case study of the approach taken to development in one town which has won national recognition.

Government policies seeking to improve outcomes across Irish towns are pursed through the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, overseen by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government; the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal; and the Minister of State with special responsibility for Local Government and Electoral Reform.[185] The Department is structured into divisions on Housing; Planning; Community; Local Government; Water; Met Éireann (the Irish National Meteorological Service); Local Government Audit Service; and Corporate services.[186] A Secretary General is responsible for the overall management of the Department and Assistant Secretaries oversee the Divisions and work alongside the Directors of Met Éireann and Audit.[187] The strategic goals of the Department are outlined in its Statement of Strategy 2016-2019 as to ensure that planning and building in regions and communities contributes to sustainable and balanced development; to provide for a stable, sustainable supply of good quality housing; to provide a framework for the sustainable management of water resources; to support and enable democratic, responsive and

effective local government, effective electoral management and high quality fire services and emergency management; to promote and support the development of vibrant, inclusive communities and the community and voluntary sector; and to serve society through the production and communication of reliable weather and climate information.[188] The work within the Statement of Strategy is conducted in the context of a number of national strategies and programmes, such as A Programme for Partnership Government;[189] Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal;[190] Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 – 2021;[191] Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness;[192] and forthcoming developments of a new National Planning Framework[193] and Office of the Planning Regulator.[194]

185   Department for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/other/who-we-are [accessed June 2017]

186   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/other/what-we-do [accessed June 2017]

187   Who Does What (2017) http://www.whodoeswhat.gov.ie/root/environment/ [accessed June 2017]

188   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, *Statement of Strategy 2016-2019* Dublin: Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government 2016 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/20170106-statement-of-strategy-eng.pdf [accessed June 2017]

189   Department of the Taoiseach, *A Programme for Partnership Government* http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/Programme_for_Government/A_Programme_for_a_Partnership_Government.pdf Dublin: Department of the Taoiseach 2016 [accessed June 2017]

190   Government of Ireland, *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/BuildingIrelandsSmartEconomy_1_.pdf Dublin: Government of Ireland 2008 [accessed June 2017]

191   Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 – 2021* http://www.per.gov.ie/en/capital-investment-plan-2016-2021/ Dublin: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2015 [accessed July 2017]

192   Government of Ireland, *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and* Dublin: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2016 http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland_Action%20Plan.pdf [accessed June 2017]

193   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/policy/national-planning-framework [accessed June 2017]

194   Houses of the Oirechas (2015) *Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2015* https://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/bills/2015/12715/b12715d.pdf [accessed June 2017]

2000

Planning and Development Act, National Development Plan 2000 – 2006

2002

National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002 – 2020

2014

The Local Government Reform Act
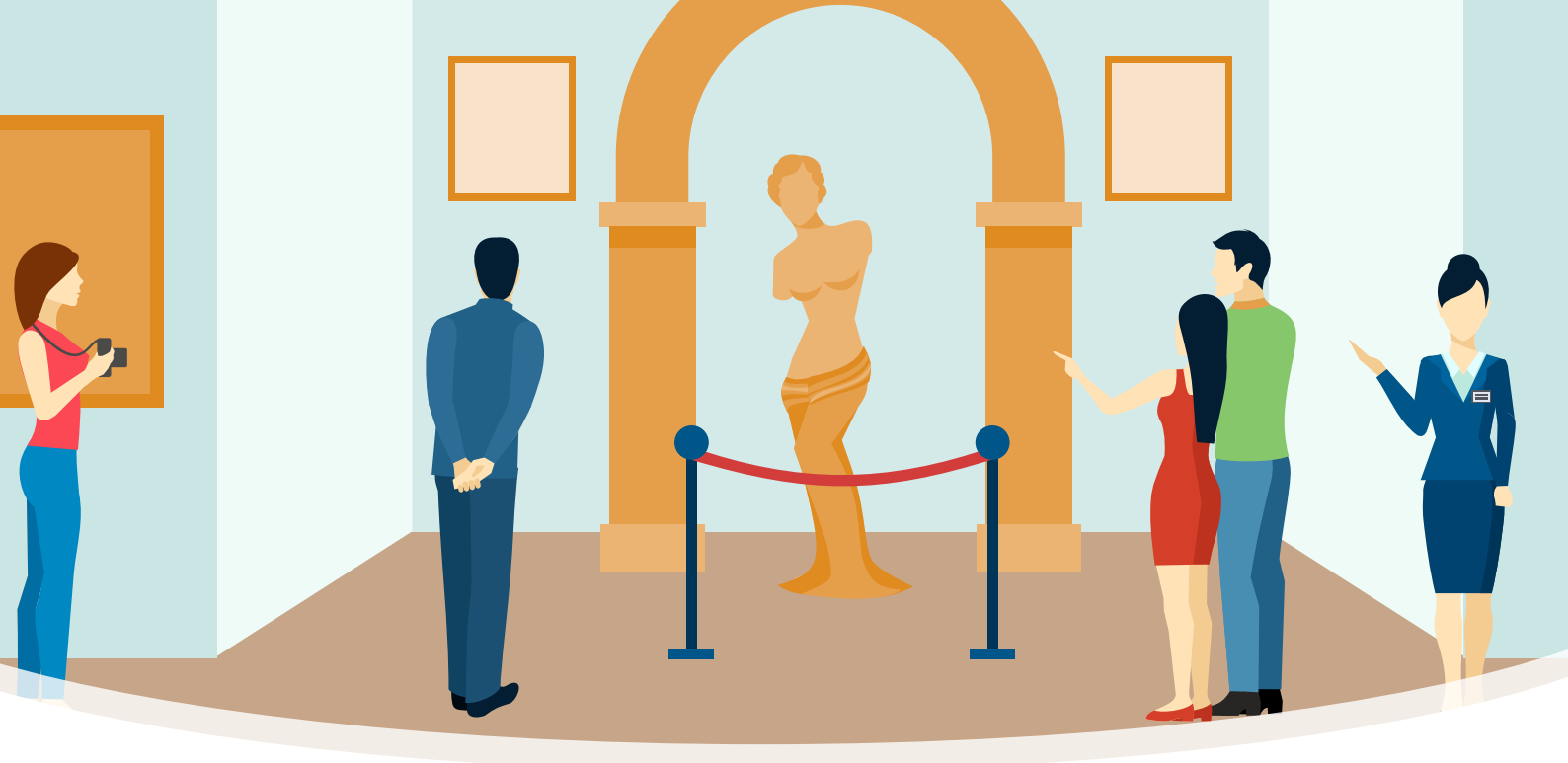
The key policy framework for the Department's Planning Division is the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002 – 2020, a long-term national planning framework which aims to achieve more balanced social, economic, and physical development across Ireland, served by more effective and integrated planning.[195] The Strategy builds on the network of gateways identified by the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 of Dublin; Cork; Limerick/Shannon; Galway; and Waterford, and designates Dundalk; Sligo; the linked gateways of Letterkenny/Derry in Northern Ireland; and the Midland towns of Athlone/Tullamore/Mullingar as additional gateways of large urban populations of around 100,000.[196] In a bid to stimulate regional development, nine strategically-located hubs are identified to support and receive support from the gateways and link to wider rural areas. Cavan; Ennis; Kilkenny; Mallow Monaghan; Tuam; and Wexford, along with the linked hubs of Ballina/Castlebar and Tralee/Killarney are designated as hubs of urban populations around 20,000 to

40,000 people, and tasked to work together to promote regional development in their areas.[197] The gateway and hub model, acting at national and regional level respectively, is designed to work with county towns and larger towns as a focus for business and the delivery of goods and services.[198] The National Spatial Strategy Update and Outlook Report 2010 identifies that since the National Spatial Strategy was published, infrastructure and services in city and town centre locations have become under-utilised, and as a result city and town centre areas will be targeted for investment in housing and employment.[199]

The National Spatial Strategy is supported by national place-based programmes delivered within the Department's Communities Division which focus on areas of disadvantage. The Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment

195   Government of Ireland (2002) *National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020* http://nss.ie/pdfs/Completea.pdf [accessed July 2017]

196   Ibid

197   Ibid

198   Ibid

199   Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, *Implementing the National Spatial Strategy: 2010 Update and Outlook* Dublin: Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2010 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/NationalSpatialStrategy/FileDownLoad%2C24144%2Cen.pdf [accessed July 2017]

and Development (RAPID) Programme aims to improve the wellbeing of and opportunities available to residents in the most disadvantaged communities in Ireland's towns and cities through targeted government resources.[200] The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme aims to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion by engaging with Ireland's most disadvantaged and hardest to reach communities, with a focus on community development; education and training; and employment.[201] The €2 million Communities Facilities Scheme provides small-scale grants to community groups in disadvantaged urban and rural areas of up to €1,000 per project for capital funding, such as office equipment; project resources; research facilities; or equipment to improve energy efficiency.[202] With regards to the provision of services within towns, the Department oversees policy on the development of library services[203] and operation of the Per Cent for Art Scheme through which a percentage of construction budgets are allocated to commission public art.[204]

Key players

The Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government Statement of Strategy 2016-2019 outlines a partnership approach to achieving the objectives of the Department and the wider Programme for Government. The Strategy provides details of collaborative working with other Government Departments; local authorities; An Bord Pleanála; Ervia; the Housing Sustainable Communities Agency; the Housing Finance Agency; Irish Water; Irish Water Safety; the Local Government Management Agency; Pobal; and

the Residential Tenancies Board.[205] Gas Networks Ireland; the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee; the National Oversight and Audit Commission; and the Pyrite Resolution Board are also credited as partner bodies.[206] Libraries Development; the County and City Managers' Association; and the Local Government Management Agency are partner bodies in the development of public libraries policy.[207]

In addition to representatives from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, members of the Retail and Town Centre Renewal Working Group outwith the Government are representatives of Chambers Ireland; DIT School of Retail and Services Management; Dolmen Catering; Donegal County Council; Dublin Town BID; Irish Pharmacy Union; The Irish Small & Medium Enterprises Association; Limerick City and County Council; the Musgrave Group; Retail Excellence Ireland; Retail Ireland; and Retail Grocery Dairy and Allied Trades Association.[208] Membership of the Retail Consultation Forum, established under the Action Plan for Jobs 2014 to provide a vehicle for structured engagement between the retail sector and relevant Government Departments, includes representatives from public bodies; individual firms; and representative bodies in the retail sector, such as The Convenience Stores and Newsagents Association and the Hardware Association of Ireland.[209]

The Heritage Council advises the Government on heritage policies; educates young people and professionals on heritage issues; raises awareness of the value of heritage; works with local communities on heritage tourism and assets; works with partners and local authorities to highlight the importance, management,

200 Pobal (2017) https://www.pobal.ie/FAQ/Pages/RAPID.aspx [accessed July 2017]

201 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/community/local-and-community-development/social-inclusion-and-community-activation-programme-sicap [accessed July 2017]

202 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/community/local-and-community-development/communities-facilities-scheme [accessed July 2017]

203 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/community-services/public-libraries/public-libraries [accessed July 2017]

204 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/community-services/cent-art-scheme/public-art [accessed July 2017]

205 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) Statement of Strategy 2016-2019 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/20170106-statement-of-strategy-eng.pdf [accessed June 2017]

206 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/organisation/partner-bodies/partner-bodies [accessed June 2017]

207 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/community-services/public-libraries/public-libraries [accessed July 2017]

208 Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (2017) https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/A-Framework-for-Town-Centre-Renewal.html [accessed July 2017]

209 Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (2017) https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Retail-Consultation-Forum-Membership-Sept-2014.pdf [accessed July 2017]

and responsibility of heritage; and provides direct support to the sector.[210] The Heritage Council's programmes include the National Town Centre Health Check Training Programme to monitor and develop the town centres of seven towns across Ireland,[211] and working with local communities, local authorities and other stakeholders on developing Community-led Village Design Statements.[212]

The role of the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) is to coordinate the strategic efforts of local authorities involved in the management, conservation and development of historic walled downs in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, of which 28 across Ireland are members.[213] Since 2007, the IWTN has provided €6.35 million for the conservation of Ireland's Medieval Town Walls; €737,000 for community festivals; and training for around 850 volunteers on building conservation, heritage tourism, and town planning.[214]

In academia, a multidisciplinary team at the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change at the National University of Ireland Galway is conducting research into creative, liveable and sustainable communities, and exploring what makes some towns and cities more conducive to improving residents' wellbeing than others in terms of land use; urban design; smarter cities; and the creative economy.[215]

Initiatives supporting improved outcomes

There are a number of place-based initiatives designed to improve outcomes in specific types of towns or at a sub-town level which are currently in development, being implemented, or proposed by public bodies, their agencies, or civil society organisations in Ireland.

The Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government is a paying agency for the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation funded jointly by the European Regional Development Fund, Northern Ireland Executive, and Government of Ireland, to support place-based projects which contribute towards the promotion of greater levels of peace and reconciliation by promoting cross-community relations and understanding.[216]

The Retail and Town Centre Renewal Working Group, in the development of their Framework for Town Centre Renewal for the Retail Consultation Forum chaired by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, developed a toolkit for Irish towns of three stages – undertake stakeholder engagement and a health check; establish a Town Centre Management Partnership or 'Town Team'; and prepare and implement a town centre plan.[217]

The Enterprise Town initiative from the Bank of Ireland seeks to work with local businesses, the local community, and schools, to plan and deliver a range of activities led by the community which will support and generate business in the area.[218] The SuperValu TidyTowns competition involves participating towns being rated on all aspects of their local environment and prizes being awarded under different categories, with the overall winner of 'Ireland's Tidiest Town' announced at a national ceremony each year.[219]

The Historic Towns Initiative was a pilot project undertaken by the Department of Arts, Heritage Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in partnership with The Heritage Council and Fáilte Ireland in three towns in 2013-2014 which aimed to promote the heritage-led regeneration of Ireland's historic towns.[220] An

210   The Heritage Council (2017) http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/about/what-we-do [accessed July 2017'

211   The Heritage Council (2017) http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-training-programme [accessed July 2017]

212   The Heritage Council (2017) http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/community-led-village-design-statements [accessed July 2017]

213   Irish Walled Towns Network (2017) http://irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie/about [accessed July 2017]

214   Ibid

215   Whitaker Institute (2017) http://whitakerinstitute.ie/research-cluster/creative-liveable-sustainable-communities/ [accessed July 2017]

216   European Parliament (2017) http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_5.1.9.html [accessed June 2017] [accessed June 2017]

217   The Retail and Town Centre Renewal Working Group (2017) A Framework for Town Centre Renewal https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/A-Framework-for-Town-Centre-Renewal.pdf [accessed July 2017]

218   Bank of Ireland (2017) https://businessbanking.bankofireland.com/campaigns/enterprise-towns/ [accessed June 2017]

219   Tidy Towns (2017) http://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/ [accessed June]

220   The Heritage Council, Policy Proposals for Ireland's Towns Kilkenny: The Heritage Council 2015 http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/policy_proposals_irelands_towns_2015_5mb.pdf [accessed July 2015]

expansion of the Initiative was pledged in the Programme for Partnership Government.[221] Further to the Initiative, the Heritage Council has proposed the development of a Rural Towns and Villages Network, a partnership and membership organisation which would assist the Heritage Council to restore Ireland's towns and villages and provide guidance on the effective implementation of the Heritage Council's policy proposals for towns, such as ensuring that towns are recognised as a 'critical national infrastructure' in regional planning policy; industrial location policy; and in the provision of state services.[222]

Towns policy and initiatives at regional and local level

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the reconfiguration of local government in Ireland from eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies to three new regional assemblies with effect from 1 January 2015,[223] as outlined in *Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government.*[224] The main function of the new assemblies – the Northern and Western Regional Assembly; the Southern Regional Assembly; and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly – is to develop regional spatial and economic strategies in partnership with enterprise and economic development agencies.[225] The Assemblies have respective Operational Programmes with investments which reflect their regional priorities, such as the development of gateways and hub towns by the Northern and Western Regional

Assembly;[226] strengthening research, technology development and innovation by the Southern Regional Assembly;[227] and to plan and coordinate activities and bodies at a regional level to achieve a better future for all constituents of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.[228]

The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides the legislative framework for planning in Ireland with regards to Regional Planning Guidelines; Development Plans; and Local Area plans. The Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2003 places an obligation on regional authorities to take into account the National Spatial Strategy in developing Regional Planning Guidelines.[229] While working within the national framework of gateways, hubs, other towns, villages and rural areas, the Regional Planning Guidelines

226 Northern and Western Regional Assembly (2017) http://nwra.ie/gateways-hub-towns-development/ [accessed July 2017]

227 Southern Regional Assembly (2017) http://www.southernassembly.ie/eu-programmes/southern-and-eastern-regional-operational-programme-2014-2020 [accessed July 2017]

228 Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, *Corporate Development Plan 2015 – 2020* Dublin: Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly 2015 http://emra.ie/dubh/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/EMRA-Corporate-Plan-2015-20202.pdf [accessed July 2017]

229 *Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2003* Dublin: Houses of the Oireachtas

221 Department of the Taoiseach (2016) *A Programme for Partnership Government* http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/Programme_for_Government/A_Programme_for_a_Partnership_Government.pdf [accessed June 2017]

222 The Heritage Council and the Irish Walled Towns Network, *A proposal for regenerating Ireland's historic towns and villages: Helping Towns Help Themselves* Kilkenny: The Heritage Council, 2015 http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/regenerating_Irelands_historic_towns_2015_1mb.pdf [accessed July 2017]

223 *Local Government Reform Act 2014* Dublin: Irish Statute Book http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/1/enacted/en/print.html [accessed June 2017]

224 Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, *Putting People First- Action Programme for Effective Local Government* Dublin: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government 2012 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/putting_people_first.pdf [accessed June 2017]

225 *Local Government Reform Act 2014* Dublin: Irish Statute Book http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/1/enacted/en/print.html [accessed June 2017]

provide more detailed regional level guidance; assist planning authorities in framing their Development Plans; and are statutorily valid for a period of six years.[230] The current Regional Planning Guidelines, such as those for the Greater Dublin Area;[231] the Mid-West Region;[232] and the South-East Region[233] are operational for 2010 – 2022 and take into account the economic, social and environmental conditions in the region and its component towns.

The Act places a duty on planning authorities to constitute a Development Plan every six years which sets out a strategy and objectives for the planning and sustainable development of the area, such as the provision of infrastructure; policies on the use of land; development proposals for areas in need of regeneration; and the provision of services for the community.[234]

The planning authority must give notice of its intention to review the Development Plan and invite submissions from the public on the development of a new plan.[235] City and County Development Plans form the next tier of spatial frameworks and cover city or county-wide strategies on, for example, housing; transportation; natural heritage, recreation and amenity; enterprise and employment; community and culture; built heritage and urban design; environment and infrastructure; and city centre/area based plans, as demonstrated by the Galway City Development Plan.[236]

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 also reduced the number of local authorities in Ireland to 31, created 95 municipal districts, and enacted the leading role for local government in economic, social and community development; delivery of effective public services; and improving local democracy and accountability as envisioned in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government.[237] The Act also gave legislative effect to the formation of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in all 31 local authorities, which are responsible for coordinating community development at the local

230   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/national-spatial-strategy/national-spatial-strategy [accessed July 2017]

231   The Regional Planning Office, Dublin Regional Authority and Mid-East Regional Authority, *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010 – 2022* Dublin: Dublin Regional Authority and Mid-East Regional Authority 2010 http://emra.ie/dubh/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Greater-Dublin-Area-Regional-Planning-Guidelines-2010-2022-Volume-I.pdf [accessed July 2017]

232   Mid-West Regional Authority (2010) *Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022* Co. Tipperary: Mid-West Regional Authority 2010 http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/http---www.southernassembly_.ie-images-uploads-MW_RPGs_.pdf [accessed July 2017]

233   South East Regional Authority, *Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region 2010 – 2022* Co. Tipperary: South East Regional Authority 2010 http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/http---www.southernassembly_.ie-docs-SE_RPG_10-22_.pdf [accessed July 2017]

234   *Planning and Development Act, 2000* Dublin: Irish Statute Book http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/30/enacted/en/print#partii-chapi [accessed June 2017]

235   Ibid

236   Galway City Council, *Galway City Council Development Plan 2011 – 2017* Galway: Galway City Council 2011 http://geo.galwaycity.ie/devplanflipbook/pdf/DevPlan_20112017.pdf [accessed July 2017]

237   *Local Government Reform Act 2014* Dublin: Irish Statute Book http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/1/enacted/en/print.html [accessed June 2017]

level.[238] Mandatory membership of the LCDCs is prescribed in the Act, and includes local authority elected members and officials; representatives of community and voluntary organisations; and other members of local civil society with sectoral interests such as business or farming.[239] The primary function of the LCDC is to prepare the community elements of a six yearly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), consistent with local, regional and planning processes, and to implement the Plan in partnership with delivery bodies.[240] The LECP aims to improve the wellbeing of communities, and focuses on measures aimed at tackling poverty, inequality and social exclusion; supporting training, up-skilling and job creation; improving the provision of local infrastructure and community facilities; community empowerment; strategies which make the best use of local assets, strengths and opportunities; supporting social enterprise, social capital, volunteering and active citizenship; and enabling community involvement in policy development and decision-making with regards to planning, development, and the delivery of services.[241] The work of the LCDCs complements the Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland,[242] the implementation plan on which the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government is currently inviting submissions.

The Planning and Development Act requires planning authorities to develop a Local Area Plan for an area which was designated as a town in the most recent census; have a population of more than 5,000 people; and is located within the parameters of a county council, on a six yearly cycle.[243] The Act provides the power to develop a Local Area Plan for towns in particular which require economic, physical and social renewal and for areas likely to be subject to large scale development within the lifetime of the plan.[244] For a town or village with a population of between 1,500 and 5,000, the planning authority may develop a Local Area Plan or indicate its objectives on land use zoning within the Development Plan.[245] Local Area Plans focus on identifying and meeting the needs of communities; promoting local economic development and employment opportunities, with issues such as the creation of flourishing town and city centres; address environmental considerations; ensuring adequate provision of schools; facilitating more sustainable and healthier travel patterns; and delivering high-quality urban design which improves wellbeing, while complying with core strategies which have been incorporated into City and County Development Plans.[246] Where the objectives of the Local Area Plan are considered to remain relevant beyond the six yearly cycle, the Local Area Plan can be extended, as in the case of Tallaght City Town Centre[247]; Liffey Valley Town Centre[248]; and Fortunestown.[249] In the development of Local Plans, the planning authority must engage with the local community; those whose interests are instrumental to achieving the objectives in the Plan, such as landowners, developers and local chambers of commerce; elected members; children and young people; and representatives of interested bodies such as the Department of Education and Skills and the National Transport Authority.[250]

On the recommendation of the Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local

238   Ibid

239   Ibid

240   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/community/alignment/alignment-local-government-local-development [accessed July 2017]

241   Ibid

242   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, *Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland* Dublin: Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government 2015 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/our_communities_-_a_framework_policy_for_local_and_community_development_in_ireland_2015.pdf [accessed July 2017]

243   Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, *Local Area Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities* Dublin: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government 2013 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownLoad%2C33557%2Cen.pdf [accessed July 2017]

244   *Planning and Development Act, 2000* Dublin: Irish Statute Book http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/30/enacted/en/print#partii-chapi [accessed June 2017]

245   Ibid

246   Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, *Local Area Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities* Dublin: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government 2013 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownLoad%2C33557%2Cen.pdf [accessed July 2017]

247   South Dublin County Council Planning Department, *Tallaght Town Centre Local Area Plan* online 2006 http://www.sdcc.ie/services/planning/tallaght-city [accessed July 2017]

248   South Dublin County Council Planning Department, *Liffey Valley Town Centre Local Area Plan* online 2008 http://www.sdcc.ie/sites/default/files/publications/liffey-valley-local-area-plan.pdf [accessed July 2017]

249   South Dublin County Council, *Fortunestown Local Area Plan – May 2012* online 2012 http://www.sdcc.ie/sites/default/files/publications/fortunestown-local-area-plan-adopted.pdf [accessed July 2017]

250   Ibid

Government,[251] a structure of Public Participation Networks (PPNs), designed to facilitate greater citizen involvement in local government decision-making, was laid in statute by the Local Government Reform Act 2014.[252] PPNs constitute a formal network of voluntary groups active in the community; local environmental organisations; and groups representing socially excluded or marginalised sections of the community in each of the 31 local authority areas to enable these stakeholders to take a more active role in relevant local authority committees as a source of community and voluntary sector expertise.[253] Each PPN must develop a wellbeing statement on what is required to achieve good economic, social, environmental and democratic outcomes of individuals and communities currently and those of future generations.[254]

251   Working Group on Citizen Engagement, *Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government* Dublin: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government 2013 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/Community/CommunityVoluntarySupports/FileDownLoad%2C36779%2Cen.pdf [accessed July 2017]

252   *Local Government Reform Act 2014* Dublin: Irish Statute Book http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/1/enacted/en/print.html [accessed June 2017]

253   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2016) http://www.housing.gov.ie/community/community-and-voluntary-supports/public-participation-networks/public-participation [accessed July 2017]

254   Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, *Public Participation Networks (PPNS): A User Guide* Dublin: Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government 2017 http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/public_participation_networks_ppns_user_guide_march_2017.pdf [accessed July 2017]

Case study: Conakilty

Clonakilty, West Cork, won one of five prestigious Great Town Awards from The Academy of Urbanism which honours the best, most enduring, or more improved urban environments.[255] The quality of the design and maintenance of the public realm, town centre and natural environment, and the town's pioneering rural community bike rental scheme were upheld by the assessment team as exemplary, and make the town an attractive place to live, work and visit.[256] The 'architect in the community' approach taken by Cork County Council in which an architect works with the community on the town's Development plan has resulted in a strong sense of civic pride and highly democratic decision-making process, and the model being considered by other counties in Ireland.[257] The focus of the Development Plan is on creating a flourishing town centre with twin commercial and social functions; consolidating development in the centre to deter urban sprawl; to repurpose historic buildings; and to invest in high-quality pedestrian-friendly public spaces in which people can gather socially.[258]

255   Conakilty (2017) http://www.clonakilty.ie/news-and-events/clonakilty-named-best-town-in-the-uk-and-ireland-2017/ [accessed July 2017]

256   Ibid

257   The Academy of Urbanism (2017) https://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/clonakilty-2/ [accessed July 2017]

258   Ibid

Towns policy in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Executive's national commitments to urban regeneration and supporting community development, and the reform of local government and community planning at the local level has shaped the approach to place-making in Northern Ireland.

2003	2007	2012	2013	2015
People and Place – A Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	Vital and Viable: A Good Practice Guide for Breathing Life into Cities and Towns	High Street Taskforce Report	Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework	Reform of local government

This chapter will examine the Executive's national policies and partnership working designed to improve outcomes in towns; initiatives undertaken independently of support from the Executive; the increasing responsibilities bestowed on local authorities for improving place-based outcomes following local government reform; and a case study of efforts of one town to develop its unique selling point.

The Minister for Communities has overall responsibility for the Department for Communities within the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department's administration is led by a Permanent Secretary. The Department oversees a wide range of policy areas on physical and social regeneration and assets and services delivered within towns, structured into five groups of Community Cohesion; Working Age; Social Inclusion; Community Regeneration and Housing; and Strategic Policy and Resources, each of which is administered by a Deputy Secretary.[259] The Department's Business Plan 2016/17 outlines the Department's four strategic objectives of a more confident people living their lives to the full; more cohesive communities; lower levels of economic inactivity and unemployment and a high quality benefits service for those in need; and improved

communities and better housing.[260] In meeting its objectives, the Department operates in the context of other Departmental strategies and frameworks such as the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity;[261] the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021;[262] the Regional Development Strategy 2035;[263] and the Executive's Programme for Government.[264]

The Northern Ireland Executive takes a people and place-based approach to tackling multiple disadvantage and regeneration. In June 2013, the Executive launched *People and Place – A Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy,* which outlined targeted support for the most deprived 10% wards

259   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/about-department-communities [accessed June 2017]

260   Department for Communities, *Business Plan 2016/17* Belfast: Department for Communities 2016 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-business-plan-201617.pdf [accessed June 2017]

261   Northern Ireland Executive, *Northern Ireland Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity* https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/nigov/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312_0.pdf Belfast: The Northern Ireland Executive 2012[accessed June 2017]

262   Northern Ireland Executive, *Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21* Belfast: The Northern Ireland Executive 2011https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/drd/investment-strategy-for-northern-ireland-2011-2021.pdf [accessed June 2017]

263   Department for Regional Development, *Regional Development Strategy* https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/rds2035.pdf Belfast: The Northern Ireland Executive 2010 [accessed June 2017]

264   Northern Ireland Executive, *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021* Belfast: The Northern Ireland Executive 2016 https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf [accessed June 2017]

as identified by the Nobel Multiple Deprivation Measure and the most deprived 10% Enumeration Districts as measured by the Economic Deprivation Measure to create Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.[265] The four objectives of the Strategy – community renewal; economic renewal; social renewal; and physical renewal over a seven to ten year period – required the integration of all government departments and agencies to deliver targeted interventions in 15 areas of Belfast, 6 areas in the North West, and 15 other towns and cities across Northern Ireland.[266] Neighbourhood Action Plans involved integrated community, social, economic and physical programmes over a three year timescale, which were overseen by Neighbourhood Partnership Boards, comprising a representative of key political, statutory, community, voluntary and private sectors.[267] The evaluation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy which outlines the success of the Strategy against its objectives; overarching goals; in tackling

key issues; programme effectiveness; model for delivery; lessons learnt; and recommendations was published in 2014 and continues to inform the Department for Communities' place-based work on tackling disadvantage and regeneration.[268]

The Department's current urban regeneration worksteam develops programmes which target social need through economic, social, and physical regeneration of cities, towns and villages, and local government reform. The Department creates masterplans, development plans, and frameworks which outline how physical regeneration should be delivered in different localities. These documents set out a vision, the regeneration objectives, and the actions required to support the strategic physical regeneration of a town or city centre or a site to be developed.[269] The responsibility for urban regeneration and community development plans and reports is devolved on a geographical basis, with a Belfast Regeneration Directorate and Regional Development Offices for the North West; North; South East; South; and West.[270]

265 Northern Ireland Executive, *Neighbourhood Renewal – People and Place* Belfast: The Northern Ireland Executive 2003 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/people_and_place_executive_summary-2.pdf [accessed June 2017]

266 Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/introduction-neighbourhood-renewal#toc-0 [accessed June 2017]

267 Northern Ireland Executive, *Neighbourhood Renewal – People and Place* Belfast: The Northern Ireland Executive 2003 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/people_and_place_executive_summary-2.pdf [accessed June 2017]

268 RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) Limited, *Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy Department for Social Development* online 2014 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/nr-evaluation-report-2015.pdf [accessed June 2017]

269 Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/urban-regeneration-plans-and-frameworks [accessed June 2017]

270 Ibid

The Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework outlines the Department's policy objectives for place-based work until at least 2023 as to tackle area-based deprivation; to strengthen the competitiveness of Northern Ireland's towns and cities; to improve linkages between areas of need and areas of opportunity; and to develop more cohesive and engaged communities.[271] The Framework follows the Department's good practice guide for reinvigorating towns and cities[272] and the High Street Taskforce Report[273] and similarly focuses on town and city centres. Suggested actions designed to regenerate town centres include supporting the diversification of town and city centre uses; undertaking initiatives such as BIDs which convene key stakeholders for the benefit of town and city centres; and ensuring effective planning of town and city centres which brings together planning, investment, regeneration and public realm improvements policies.[274]

In the delivery of the Framework, the Department operates a number of schemes designed to regenerate places across Northern Ireland and improve social, economic, and environmental outcomes. The Department has the power to acquire derelict or under-used land and buildings for the purposes of regeneration through comprehensive development schemes, either by civil servants identifying the assets in an area marked for regeneration, or at the request of communities, elected members, developers, or planners.[275] The comprehensive development scheme takes into account the views of the public, the local authority, and the plans for the area, and, when developed, allows the

assets to be used by the public sector or private sector in a bid to regenerate the locality.[276] The complementary Public Realm and Environmental Improvement schemes are designed to improve public spaces in Neighbourhood Renewal areas, town and city centres, and main traffic routes into these locations through projects such as improving street lighting, recreation facilities and footpaths; installing public art; and planting trees and flowers.[277] The Urban Development Grant scheme aims to promote the economic, physical and social regeneration of disadvantaged urban areas across Northern Ireland by encouraging investment in property, such as retail, commercial and light industrial units, and housing.[278] The aims of the scheme are to enable, where necessary, private investment; to create or retain permanent jobs in town and city centres and disadvantaged urban areas; and to improve the environment of town and city centres and disadvantaged urban areas by improvements to the physical landscape.[279] In exceptional circumstances, the scheme can be supported by the Living Over the Shops (LOTS) grant programme from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is designed to encourage people to live in properties over retail units in certain areas of town centre regeneration.[280] Under the Improving Places work, the Department supports individual projects designed to deliver regeneration and long-lasting improvements across Northern Ireland, such as the Belfast Streets Ahead project.[281] Finally, the Department invites proposals on the regeneration of particular areas by publishing individual development briefs[282] and oversees the sale and maintenance of land previously set aside to develop New Town Lands which is now surplus to requirements.[283]

271   Department for Social Development, *Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework* Belfast: Department for Social Development 2013 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/urcd-policy-framework.pdf [accessed June 2017]

272   Department for Social Development, *Vital and Viable: A Good Practice Guide for Breathing Life into Cities and Towns* Belfast: Department for Social Development 2007 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/urcdg-vital-and-viable.PDF [accessed June 2017]

273   Department for Social Development, *High Street Taskforce Report* Belfast: Department for Social Development 2012 http://www.niirta.com/sites/default/files/policydocuments/dsd-high-street-taskforce-report.pdf [accessed June 2017]

274   Department for Social Development, *Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework* https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/urcd-policy-framework.pdf Belfast: Department for Social Development 2013 [accessed June 2017]

275   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/comprehensive-development-schemes [accessed June 2017]

276   Ibid

277   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-realm-environmental-improvement [accessed June 2017]

278   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/urban-development-grant-scheme [accessed June 2017]

279   Ibid

280   Housing Executive (2017) http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/benefits/home_improvement_grants/grants_available/living_over_the_shop_grant.htm [accessed June 2017]

281   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/improving-places-projects [accessed June 2017]

282   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/development-briefs [accessed June 2017]

283   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/former-new-town-lands [accessed June 2017]

Key players

The Executive's draft Programme for Government emphasises partnership and collaborative working between the public, private, and voluntary sectors in Northern Ireland to improve outcomes for all its citizens. Although structured into five groups internally, the Department for Communities works across these groups and with external organisations to achieve its objectives. To improve community cohesion, the Department works together with Armagh Observatory and Planetarium; Arts Council for Northern Ireland; Historic Buildings Council; Historic Monuments Council; Libraries Northern Ireland; National Museums Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Museums Council; the North/South Language Body; Sport Northern Ireland; the Charity Advisory Committee; the Charity Commission; and the Vaughan Trust.[284] To deliver its priorities on working age, the Department works in partnership with the Office of the Social Fund Commissioner and Ulster Supported Employment Limited, and with the Northern Ireland Commissioners for Older People and Children and Young People on its social inclusion workstream.

Outwith formal partnership with the Executive, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) NI provide comment on consultations on place-making and host events on issues such as local development plans and their delivery.[285] The ATCM Northern Ireland and Eire Network of Town Centre Management assists town centres in Northern Ireland to develop their dual roles of the site of business and investment and focal point for vibrant and inclusive communities.[286] Amplify NI, supported by the Young Foundation and the Big Lottery Fund Northern Ireland, support citizens and groups with ideas to create fairer places to live through workshops; networking; and a structured Accelerator programme to develop their proposals.[287]

PLACE, the Built Environment Centre for Northern Ireland, uses research; design; publishing; new media; training; walking tours; exhibitions; and live events to educate and inform citizens about the places they live, how they can make the most of their cities, towns and neighbourhoods, and improve them.[288] Examples of projects undertaken by PLACE include Capturing Craigavon, a community-based project which aims to explore and document the history of the New Town of Craigavon; hosting a series of workshops, mentoring sessions, and resources to build the capacity of landlords to address vacant town centre properties; and the Greater Monkstown Place Shaping Pilot which sought to understand how local assets could be developed or maximised as part of place-shaping or the community planning process.[289] Development Trusts Northern Ireland support community groups to take ownership of such assets, run facilities, or deliver services in their local area,[290] and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association hosts a library of resources on Community Planning.[291]

Community Places, an independent and not-for-profit organisation, provides free planning advice to citizens and community groups; hosts capacity building workshops to develop community groups' knowledge and skills on Community Planning; provides mentoring and support on the production of Community Plans; and facilitates networking opportunities and sharing of good practice.[292] The organisation also supports local authorities by bringing together cross-sector partners to identify local priorities and outcomes for Community Planning; developing and testing models of community engagement; providing guidance on outcomes, content and structure of plans; and advising on the delivery and governance models of Community Planning.[293] Community Places were commissioned by the Big

284 Department for Communities, *Business Plan 2016/17* Belfast: Department for Communities 2006 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-business-plan-201617.pdf [accessed June 2017]

285 RTPI NI (2017) http://rtpi.org.uk/the-rtpi-near-you/rtpi-northern-ireland/events/local-development-plan-event-11-may-2017/ [accessed June 2017]

286 ATCM (2017) https://www.atcm.org/my_atcm/atcm-UK-networks/ireland-northern-ireland [accessed June 2017]

287 Amplify NI (2017) http://www.amplifyni.org/our_approach [accessed June 2017]

288 PLACE (2017) http://www.placeni.org/ [accessed June 2017]

289 PLACE (2017) http://www.placeni.org/case-studies.html [accessed June 2017]

290 Development Trusts Northern Ireland (2017) https://www.dtni.org.uk/what-we-do [accessed June 2017]

291 Northern Ireland Local Government Association (2017) http://www.nilga.org/Member-Development-Resources-Library.aspx [accessed June 2017]

292 Community Places (2017) https://www.communityplaces.info/community-planning [accessed June 2017]

293 Ibid

Lottery Fund to work with the three pilot projects to identify and report on the learning and lessons for Community Planning in the future; provide access to learning opportunities and resources; and develop a toolkit to support the community and voluntary sectors' involvement in Community Planning.[294] The project 'Community Planning is Here – Get Involved' uses pop up stalls at community events and in public spaces and also engages with local school pupils to design and take part in a Community Planning Participatory Card Game in Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Area;[295] facilitates Community Visioning workshops in the Newry Mourne and Down District Council Area;[296] and holds Public Forums in the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Area[297] to inform the preparation of the Community Plan in the three Council areas.

Initiatives supporting outcomes

In addition to the work of organisations whose

core objective is to improve places across Northern Ireland, a number of organisations deliver programmes, projects, and initiatives designed to improve outcomes within local areas. The aforementioned EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland provides support for place-based projects which contribute to the promotion of peace and resolution. The priorities for the programme in 2012-2020 are shared education; children and young people; shared spaces and services; and building positive relations at a local level.[298] The European Regional Development Fund contributes €229 million to the Programme, and provides up to 85% of funding available to projects, with the remaining 15% funding routinely provided by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government.[299] Examples of community projects and facilities funded under previous rounds of the Programme include sports facilities; community centres; and parks.[300]

Launched in 2017, The Great Place Scheme will invest in between two and four places in Northern Ireland to develop synergies between heritage and place-based initiatives with support

294   Community Planning Toolkit (2012) https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/about-us [accessed July 2017]

295   Community Planning is Here – Get Involved (2017) http://www.communityplanningishere.org/antrim-and-newtownabbey-borough-council.html [accessed July 2017]

296   Community Planning is Here – Get Involved (2017) http://www.communityplanningishere.org/newry-mourne-and-down-district-council.html [accessed July 2017]

297   Community Planning is Here – Get Involved (2017) http://www.communityplanningishere.org/mid-and-east-antrim-borough-council.html [accessed July 2017]

298   European Parliament (2017) http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_5.1.9.html [accessed June 2017]

299   Ibid

300   Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/eu-programmes [accessed June 2017]

of £100,000 to £500,000, provided over a maximum of three years.[301] RTPI Northern Ireland has also launched Northern Ireland Best Places, a competition designed to celebrate attractive and inspiring places, with members of the public given the opportunity to vote on the nominated areas.[302]

Towns policy and initiatives at the regional and local level

The Department for Infrastructure oversees regional planning policy in Northern Ireland. The key policy document, the *Regional Development Strategy 2035*, encourages the clustering of towns and cities to enable cross-town co-operation and sharing, rather than duplicating, of services using a framework of 16 Main Hubs and five Local Hubs.[303] The Strategy prescribes to the European Spatial Development Perspective that:

301   Great Places Scheme (2017) https://www.greatplacescheme.org.uk/northern-ireland [accessed June 2017]

302   RTPI Northern Ireland (2017) http://rtpi.org.uk/the-rtpi-near-you/rtpi-northern-ireland/northern-ireland-best-places/ [accessed June 2017]

303   Department for Regional Development, *Regional Development Strategy 2035* Belfast: Department for Regional Development 2010 https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/rds2035.pdf [accessed June 2017]

'The creation of networks of smaller towns in less densely settled and economically weaker regions is also important. In these areas, co-operation between urban centres to develop functional complementarities may be the only possibility for achieving viable markets and maintaining economic institutions and services which could not be achieved by the towns on their own'.[304]

On 1 April 2015, the reform of local government resulted the creation of 11 local authority areas, with a number of local authority areas amalgamating from the previous configuration of 26 councils.[305] Under the programme of reform, councils were imbued with new responsibilities such as local economic development and new planning powers, in addition to their long-standing responsibilities for the delivery of local services; tourism; and heritage.[306] Under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the 11 local authorities have new powers to develop local planning policy through Local Development Plans, which set the parameters for the use of land; the policy framework against which planning applications will be considered; and support the economic and social needs of the locality in line with the Community Plan and *Regional Development Strategy*.[307] Each council must publish a Statement of Community Involvement which outlines when and how the local authority will consult the community on planning applications and planning policy. The community is invited to participate in the local planning process by engaging with planning applications and planning appeals; participating in the preparation of development plans, strategies and other policy documents or guidance; and reporting breaches of planning control.[308]

By extension, the reform of local government also gave the newly created local authorities the responsibility for leading community planning processes for their respective districts. Community

304   Ibid

305   NI Direct (2017) https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/local-councils [accessed June 2017]

306   Ibid

307   *Planning Act (2011)* Belfast: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/pdfs/nia_20110025_en.pdf

308   NI Direct (2017) https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/community-involvement [accessed June 2017]

plans identify long-term priorities for improving the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of local districts and their residents; community cohesion; and local quality of life.[309] Community Planning Partnerships, comprising representatives from the local authority, statutory bodies, agencies, and community and voluntary sectors, develop and deliver the Community Plan. The statutory Community Planning partners are the Education and Library Boards; the Health and Social Care Trusts; Public Health Agency; Health and Social Care Board; Police Service of Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service; Invest Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Tourist Board; Sports Council for Northern Ireland; Libraries NI; and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.[310] Community planning provides a mechanism for local planning which integrates the work of all local government stakeholders and service providers and reflects and complements the outcomes in the Executive's Programme for Government.[311] While in line with national outcomes, the economic, social, and environmental outcomes sought in the Community Plans reflect the challenges, opportunities, and circumstances in the local authority districts. To date nine Community Planning Partnerships have published their Community Plans, while the remaining two are currently in the development and consultation phases.[312]

The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 places a duty on Executive Departments to promote and encourage community planning

and take account of Community Plans in their functions.[313] The process of Community Planning meets the objective of developing more cohesive and engaged communities in the Department for Communities' Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework, which prescribes supporting the development of networks, partnerships and participation within and between communities to empower local people to contribute to improving their neighbourhoods and town centres; strengthening networks and cross-interface schemes to develop positive community responses to social, economic, and environmental problems; and supporting the ownership and management of assets by local communities.[314]

Case study: Newcastle, Co Down

In June 2017, Autism Initiatives launched a project which would recognise Newcastle in Co Down as Northern Ireland's first Autism-friendly town.[315] Autism Initiatives currently employs 90 people in the town and proposes to open an Autism-friendly holiday home, with the support of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, which seeks to capture the economic and tourism potential in the plans.[316]

309 Department for Communities (2017) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/community-planning [accessed June 2017]

310 Ibid

311 Ibid

312 Ibid

313 *Local Government Act 2014* Belfast: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/8/pdfs/nia_20140008_en.pdf [accessed June 2017]

314 Department for Social Development, *Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework* Belfast: Department for Social Development 2013 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/urcd-policy-framework.pdf [accessed June 2017]

315 Belfast Live (2017) *Plans to open specialist holiday home in Northern Ireland's first autism-friendly town* Belfast Live (online) http://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/plans-open-specialist-autism-holiday-13176781 [accessed June 2017]

316 Ibid

Towns policy in Scotland

Towns are addressed primarily through town centre regeneration in Scotland, as a common, identifiable part of Scotland's places.

SEPTEMBER 2012	JULY 2013	NOVEMBER 2013	JULY 2015
National Review of Town Centres External Advisory Group convened	External Advisory Group report Government response	Town Centre Action Plan – the Scottish Government response	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act receives Royal Assent

This chapter will examine the extent to which this drives national policy on towns; the partnerships in place to address the advocacy gap on the importance of towns; the duties bestowed on local authorities and their delivery partners to plan and develop places across Scotland in line with the Scottish Government's commitment to community empowerment; and the approach taken by one local authority to improving place-based outcomes through a towns lens.

The Scottish Government's regeneration strategy resides in the Housing and Social Justice Directorate within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities.[317] Complementary frameworks and policy statements within the planning and architecture portfolio develop and implement national policy on place-making, such as the National Planning Framework; Scottish Planning Policy; *Creating Places*; and *Designing Streets*.[318] The Scottish Government's support for the regeneration of Scotland's places is categorised under four themes – community-led regeneration; town centre regeneration; capital investment; and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), all of which provide funding designed to improve outcomes at a sub-town level.[319]

The main national policy framework for supporting outcomes in towns is within the town centre regeneration category. This work is driven by an External Advisory Group comprising representatives from small businesses; planning; transport; and the retail sector convened by the Scottish Government in 2012 to undertake a National Review of Town Centres and '*to consider and propose action to help town centres recover their drive*'.[320] The Advisory Group developed actions and recommendations under six themes of Town Centre Living; Vibrant Local Economies; Enterprising Communities; Accessible Public Services; Digital Towns and Proactive Planning, all of which are underpinned by the Town Centres First Principle in which the health of Scotland's town centres is put at the heart of decision-making processes.[321] The Scottish Government's response to the External Advisory Group's report, *Town Centre Action Plan*,[322] outlines the Government's actions to support town centres under the six themes provided by the External Advisory Group and the timescales for completion. The *Town Centre Action Plan* pledges the Scottish Government's support for

317   Scottish Government (2017) https://beta.gov.scot/about/who-runs-government/cabinet-and-ministers/cabinet-secretary-communities-social-security-equalities/ [accessed April 2017]

318   Scottish Government (2017) https://beta.gov.scot/policies/planning-architecture/ [accessed April 2017]

319   Scottish Government (2017) https://beta.gov.scot/policies/regeneration/ [accessed April 2017]

320   National Review of Town Centres External Advisory Group, *Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2013 http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/town-centres/review/EnterpriseinScotlandsTownCentres [accessed April 2017]

321   Ibid

322   Scottish Government, *Town Centre Action Plan – the Scottish Government response* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2013 https://beta.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-scottish-government-response/documents/00437686.pdf?inline=true [accessed April 2017]

the Town Centres First Principle; confirms that all directorates have been engaged with the External Advisory Group's recommendations and have identified policies and strategies to assist with their implementation; and designates the Regeneration Unit as responsible for coordinating activity to support town centres.[323] Key policies within the Plan include committing to a £2.75 million Town Centre Housing Fund; access to fibre infrastructure for Scotland's towns through a Step Change Next Generation Broadband programme; and the development of a Town Centre Toolkit.[324] The Scottish Government published progress reports one[325] and two[326] years after the publication of the Action Plan which provide updates on the progress made towards their policy commitments and information on additional funding; pilot work; events; and partnership working to support town centres within the six themes established by the Expert Advisory

Group. These policies build on the 2009-2010 Town Centre Regeneration Fund, a £60 million funding programme which supported projects in 89 town centres across Scotland and created an estimated 960 jobs.[327]

Key players

There are a number of key players working in partnership with the Scottish Government to deliver national towns policy across the sectors in Scotland. The Action Plan outlines partnership working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA); Business Gateway; Creative Scotland; Historic Scotland; Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) comprising local public service representatives and members of the community; and Architecture and Design Scotland to deliver the actions under the six themes.[328] The year one progress report of the Action Plan also provides details of additional partnerships with the Society of Chief Officers for Transportation for Scotland (SCOTS) and Sustrans on the accessible public

323   Ibid

324   Ibid

325   Scottish Government, *Town Centre Action Plan: year one progress report* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2014 https://beta.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-year-one-report/ [accessed April 2017]

326   Scottish Government, *Town Centre Action Plan: year two progress report* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2016 https://beta.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-year-two-report/ [accessed April 2017]

327   Scottish Government (2016) https://beta.gov.scot/policies/regeneration/town-centre-regeneration/ [accessed April 2017]

328   Scottish Government, *Town Centre Action Plan – the Scottish Government response* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2016 https://beta.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-scottish-government-response/ [accessed April 2017]

services theme; Scottish Futures Trust on Digital Towns; and a consortium led by the Carnegie UK Trust on towns-level data.[329] Details of further partnerships with Building Safer Communities and Inspiring Scotland are provided in the year two progress report within the Town Centre Living category; Development Trust Association of Scotland (DTAS), Scotland's Regeneration Forum (SURF), and NHS Health Scotland to advance Enterprising Communities; the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Scotland on Accessible Public Services; and local authorities to improve Proactive Planning.[330]

As a dedicated resource to support improving outcomes in towns, Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) was launched in 2014 as the primary national body for information, advice, and sharing of expertise regarding the development of towns in Scotland.[331] STP has over 150 members,[332] including local authorities; community trusts; representative bodies; BIDs; and individual businesses,[333] and 39 partners[334] committed to sharing good practice and supporting initiatives designed to improve the economic performance of Scotland's towns. STP currently acts as Secretary to the Cross Party Group on Towns and Town Centres[335] and host of Scotland's Towns Week, a celebration of and week of campaigning events for Scotland's towns.[336] The policy development and advocacy role for towns undertaken by STP appears to be unique across the jurisdictions.

STP member Planning Aid Scotland provides free planning advice and a mentoring service

and tailored training and public engagement events for citizen; planning professionals; local authorities; public bodies; elected members; community groups; young people; volunteers; and those with an interest in how planning shapes their environment.[337]

Initiatives supporting improved outcomes

The Scottish Government has engaged the above key players in Scotland-wide initiatives to improve outcomes in towns. STP is part of a consortium with the Carnegie UK Trust; University of Stirling; and Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop Understanding Scottish Places (USP) – an online tool designed to allow users to understand the similarity of places across Scotland.[338] The tool generates a visualisation of how different towns inter-relate on key employment, public, commercial, and social indicators such as number of jobs; number of hospitals; and diversity of retail offer, and how they depend on others around them for different services and functions. A USP Your Town Audit function is also available which guides users through the process of gathering local data on towns to complement the national data sets used in USP and provides an analysis of more than 50 measures across locality data; accessibility; local services; activity/events; development capacity; tourism and visitor profile; and place/quality impression.[339] USP was updated in early 2017 with new indicators, features and improvements, and the consortium aims to provide another update later in the year.[340]

A further initiative designed to facilitate a subjective assessment of place in Scotland is the Place Standard tool.[341] The tool provides a structure for users to have a conversation about the physical and social features of a place as

329 Scottish Government, *Town Centre Action Plan: year one progress report* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2014 https://beta.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-year-one-report/ [accessed April 2017]

330 Scottish Government, *Town Centre Action Plan: year two progress report* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2016 https://beta.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-year-two-report/ [accessed April 2017]

331 Scotland's Towns Partnership (2014) http://www.scotlandstowns.org/ [accessed March 2017]

332 Scotland's Towns Partnership (2014) https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/stpfiles/company-information/STP+Infographic+2016.jpg [accessed March 2017]

333 Scotland's Towns Partnership (2014) http://www.scotlandstowns.org/our_members [accessed March 2017]

334 Scotland's Towns Partnership (2014) http://www.scotlandstowns.org/partners [accessed March 2017]

335 The Scottish Parliament (2017) http://www.parliament.scot/msps/towns-and-town-centres.aspx [accessed April 2017]

336 Scotland's Towns Partnership (2014) http://www.scotlandstowns.org/scotlands-towns-week [accessed April 2017]

337 Planning Aid Scotland (2017) http://pas.org.uk/about-us/ [accessed April 2017]

338 Understanding Scottish Places (2015) https://www.usp.scot [accessed April 2017]

339 Understanding Scottish Places (2015) https://www.usp.scot/StaticPage/UspAudit [accessed April 2017]

340 Understanding Scottish Places (2015) https://www.usp.scot/StaticPage/AboutContact [accessed April 2017]

341 Place Standard (2015) http://www.placestandard.scot/#/home [accessed April 2017]

it currently exists, covering economic, social, environmental, and democratic outcomes, and also to identify areas for development. By plotting answers to questions such as on the availability and accessibility of public transport; opportunities to access good quality work; and feelings of safety on a scale of 1-7, users are provided with a visual representation of their views on the strengths and weaknesses of an area. The tool is designed to provide a common framework and language across the sectors to confer on the needs of a community before a local project begins or as it develops.

The Scottish Government's aspirations to improve placed-based outcomes have also been pursued through Scotland CAN DO: Becoming a World-leading Entrepreneurial and Innovative Nation, the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Framework for Scotland,[342] followed by the Scotland CAN DO Action Framework a year later.[343] Scotland CAN DO developed from these frameworks, a shared statement of intent by the 51 partners of progressing Scotland towards becoming an internationally renowned entrepreneurial and innovative nation.[344] Further development CAN DO Places is a networking and evidence exchange forum on initiatives designed to improve the entrepreneurial spirit of places across Scotland and assist in overcoming the obstacles encountered in implementing them.[345] Funded by the Scottish Government, Zero Waste Scotland has also developed Zero Waste Towns, a network of towns which have developed innovative approaches to allow residents and businesses to work together to reduce their overall waste, increase recycling, and use resources more efficiently.[346]

Outwith formal partnerships with the Scottish Government, there are a number of initiatives to support towns being explored, implemented, or proposed. The Poverty Alliance, supported by the Carnegie UK Trust, has commissioned research on models whereby a town, city, or region can be officially recognised as a Living Wage Place, further to interest from stakeholders in Fife, Dundee, Perth, Renfrewshire, and the Isle of Arran.[347] The Great Places Scheme from the Big Lottery Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund is aiming to support five to ten places across Scotland with between £100,000 and £1 million for projects which are designed to build on the contribution of the heritage sector to improved economic, social, and environmental outcomes, and to develop partnerships between the sector and place-based initiatives in Scotland.[348] Applicants are encouraged to formulate their own definition of place, such as a neighbourhood ward, individual town, or group of rural towns.[349] Finally, MyParkScotland has recently launched a Crowdfund Resource Kit designed to help groups to crowdfund for the development or regeneration of parks and greenspaces in their local area.[350]

Towns policy and initiatives at the regional and local level

The Scottish Government's commitment to devolution of power to local government and communities has driven their legislative agenda and enabled decision-making structures and policies to be developed at a regional and local level which are designed to improve outcomes in Scotland's places.

Local government in Scotland consists of 32 local authorities which are responsible for the provision of a range of public services which directly impact on Scotland's towns, such as economic development; education; social care; transportation; planning; housing; and cultural and leisure services. The Local Government

342 Scottish Government, *Scotland CAN DO: Becoming A World-Leading Entrepreneurial and Innovative Nation* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2013 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00438045.pdf [accessed April 2017]

343 Scottish Government, *Scotland CAN DO Action Framework: Building on our vision to become a world-leading entrepreneurial and innovative nation* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2014 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00449131.pdf [accessed April 2017]

344 Scotland CAN DO (2015) http://www.cando.scot/about/ [accessed March 2017]

345 CAN DO Places (2016) http://www.candoplaces.org/topics/can-do-places/ [accessed April 2017]

346 Zero Waste Scotland (2016) *Can your town become a zero waste town?* http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/content/can-your-town-become-zero-waste-town-zero-waste-scotland-seeks-candidates-third-trailblazing [accessed April 2017]

347 The Poverty Alliance (2017) *Invitation to Tender, Living Wage Places* http://scottishlivingwage.org/article/invitation_to_tender_living_wage_places [accessed April 2017]

348 Great Places Scheme (2017) https://www.greatplacesscheme.org.uk/scotland [accessed June 2017]

349 Ibid

350 MyParkScotland (2017) https://www.mypark.scot/get-involved/crowdfunding-resource [accessed June 2017]

(Scotland) Act 1973 allows local authorities to delegate the majority of decision-making powers to a Committee structure which covers these themes; to develop plans and strategies for the delivery of these services; and to prioritise outcomes at a local authority level.[351] The Act does not legislate for a specified decision-making or scrutiny structure, and while some local authorities, such as Glasgow, Fife, the Scottish Borders, and most recently, Edinburgh,[352] have Area Committees focused on individual areas or towns, others such as the Orkney Islands do not.[353] Area Committees are often supported by financial and human resources which are used to lever additional funding for place-based projects by Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). Through the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014, local authorities must work in partnership with NHS Boards to deliver health and social outcomes for Scotland's residents.[354]

The involvement and decision-making powers of communities to improve place-based outcomes is particularly strengthened through recent legislation. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on Scottish Ministers to issue guidance for land owners and land managers on engaging communities in decisions relating to land, designed to support mutually-beneficial solutions to land-related issues and secure improved local economic; environmental; social; and cultural outcomes.[355] The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gives statutory purpose to community planning for the first time and places a duty on CPPs to produce and publish a local outcomes improvement plan (LOIP) and a locality plan which identifies the local authority sub-areas which are experiencing the poorest outcomes; outlines the action proposed; and the timescale for improving outcomes at the local area.[356] The Improvement Service, NHS National Services Scotland, and NHS Health Scotland are working with a small number of CPPs to develop their LOIP,[357] which CPPs are required to have in place and approved by 1 October 2017.[358] The LOIPs published to date demonstrate the priority outcomes of different local authorities, with Prosperous Economy; Prosperous People; Prosperous Place; and Enabling Technology being the focus in Aberdeen[359], and Positive Ageing; Healthy and Sustainable Communities; and Vibrant Economic Environment the local strategic priorities in Orkney.[360] The Islands (Scotland)

351 *Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1973/65/pdfs/ukpga_19730065_en.pdf [accessed April 2017]

352 Edinburgh Evening News (2017) *Edinburgh council plans to give power to the people Wednesday 21 June 2017* Edinburgh Evening News (online) http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/politics/edinburgh-council-plans-to-give-power-to-the-people-1-4482156 [accessed June 2017]

353 SPICe (2013) *How Do Local Authorities Make Decisions?* http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_13-85.pdf [accessed April 2017]

354 *Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014* Edinburgh: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/9/pdfs/asp_20140009_en.pdf [accessed April 2017]

355 *Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016* Edinburgh: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/18/pdfs/asp_20160018_en.pdf [accessed April 2017]

356 *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015* Edinburgh: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/pdfs/asp_20150006_en.pdf

357 Improvement Service (2017) http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/support-for-cpps-loip.html [accessed April 2017]

358 Scottish Government, *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Part 2 Community Planning: Consultation on Draft Guidance and Regulation* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2017 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00497123.pdf [accessed April 2017]

359 Community Planning Aberdeen, *Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26* Aberdeen: Community Planning Aberdeen 2017 http://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Final-LOIP-24-April-17.pdf [accessed April 2017]

360 The Orkney Partnership, *Orkney Community Plan* Orkney: The Orkney Partnership 2016 http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Committees-and-Agendas/Council-Meetings/2016/13-12-2016/I09_App01_LOIP_2016-19.pdf [accessed April 2017]

Bill introduced in June 2017 would place a duty on Scottish Ministers to prepare, lay before the Scottish Parliament, and publish a national islands plan which sets out the overarching objectives and strategy for improving the outcomes of island communities across Scotland, and to consult those likely to be affected by proposals within the plan.[361]

An independent review of the Scottish planning system in 2016 similarly recommended that communities should be empowered to devise their own local place plans and enabled to actively deliver them, with community development trusts; community councils; and other community groups playing an increasingly important role.[362] Community development trusts are owned and managed by the local community and aim to address a range of economic; social; environmental; and cultural outcomes within an area.[363] In Scotland, community councils advise, petition, influence and advocate on a number of issues on behalf of local communities and have a statutory right to be consulted on applications for planning permission.[364] Such community organisations can also take part in participatory budgeting, supported by the Scottish Government's £2 million Community Choices Fund.[365] Examples of participatory budgeting across Scotland include community deliberations undertaken in Comhairlie nan Eilean Sair to design and procure public bus services; in Leith by 1,625 people to decide how the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership spends half of its community grant fund; and in North Ayrshire in which 5,000 young people aged 11-25 used Young Scot's online voting platform to allocate a share of over £60,000 to youth projects in their local area.[366]

Case Study: Fife

Local representatives and officers within Fife Council and its partners operate under a number of strategies and plans to improve outcomes within the region. Due to the overarching economic, social, environmental, and democratic outcomes which impact on towns, documents such as the Fife Council Plan;[367] Fife's Economic Strategy 2017-2027;[368] FIFEplan Local Development Plan;[369] Fife's Community Plan 2011-2020;[370] the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership Full Strategic Plan for Fife (2016-2019);[371] Making Fife's Places – Planning Policy *Guidance*;[372] individual area Local Community Plans;[373] and the tailored Town Centre Design and Development Frameworks[374] impact on the wellbeing of residents within Fife's towns.

In addition to a number of key strategies and frameworks which promote a place and people centred approach to regeneration, Fife Council and its partners also have a history of granting permission to be innovative; exploring issues through a towns lens; and seeking external sources of advice in developing or supporting initiatives designed to improve outcomes in Fife's towns. In 2013, with the support of Fife Council, the Carnegie UK Trust

361   Scottish Government (2017) *Islands (Scotland) Bill* http://www.parliament.scot/Islands%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill15S052017.pdf [accessed June 2017]

362   Beveridge, C., et al., *Empowering planning to deliver great places: An independent review of the Scottish planning system* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government 2016 https://beta.gov.scot/publications/empowering-planning-to-deliver-great-places/Empowering%20Planning%20to%20Deliver%20Great%20Places,%2031%20May%202016.pdf?inline=true [accessed April 2017]

363   Development Trusts Association Scotland (2017) http://www.dtascot.org.uk/content/what-is-a-development-trust [accessed May 2017]

364   Community Councils (2017) http://www.communitycouncils.scot/what-is-a-community-council.html [accessed May 2017]

365   Scottish Government (2017) https://beta.gov.scot/policies/regeneration/community-led-regeneration/ [accessed April 2017]

366   Audit Scotland, *Local government in Scotland: Performance and challenges 2017* Edinburgh: Audit Scotland, 2017 http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2017/nr_170307_local_government_performance.pdf [accessed March 2017]

367   Fife Council, *Fife Council Plan 2017* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2013 http://publications.fifedirect.org.uk/c64_FifeCouncilPlan2012-17FINAL.pdf [accessed April 2017]

368   Fife Economy Partnership, *Fife's Economy Strategy 2017-2027* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2016 http://publications.fifedirect.org.uk/c64_FifesEconomicStrategy-ConsultationDraft.pdf [accessed April 2017]

369   Fife Council, *FIFEplan: Fife Local Development Plan* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2017 http://lpconsult.fife.gov.uk/portal/fife_ldp/fifeplan_-_adopted_plan_13/adopted_fifeplan?tab=files [accessed April 2017]

370   Fife Council, *Fife's Community Plan 2011-2020* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2013 https://www.fifedirect.org.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication.pop&pubid=45778BA5-EA1B-D330-48D91223343EEE18 [accessed April 2017]

371   Fife Health and Social Care Partnership, *Full Strategic Plan for Fife (2016-2019)* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2016 http://ihub.scot/media/1130/fife.pdf [accessed April 2017]

372   Fife Council, *Making Fife's Places – Planning Policy Guidance* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2015 https://www.fifedirect.org.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication.pop&pubid=415258E7-C943-C778-C61E3FD3BF6CE3E1 [accessed April 2017]

373   Levenmouth Area Committee, *Levenmouth Area Local Community Plan* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2016 http://publications.fifedirect.org.uk/c64_20160216LevenmouthAreaLocalCommunityPlan.pdf [accessed April 2017]

374   Fife Council, *Kirkcaldy Town Centre Design & Development Framework* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2015 https://www.fifedirect.org.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication.pop&pubid=B37B2602-E95E-1C82-880601EBDE25BA1B [accessed April 2017]

launched TestTown,[375] the UK's biggest high street challenge, in which 11 young entrepreneur teams were chosen to trade at a pop up festival in Dunfermline town centre. During the pilot, the economic outcomes of Dunfermline improved, with footfall on the TestTown trading streets doubling and £10,000 taken by the TestTown teams in 20 hours of trading.[376] In 2015, Fife Council and the Fife Partnership established an independent, external Fairer Fife Commission with a remit to take an overview of the scale, scope and nature of poverty in Fife. The Commission recommended that the Fife Partnership support the development of a Fife 'Towns Deal' network to support towns to attract high potential, job creating businesses to Fife, and establish Digital Hubs across the region to allow residents to work locally more often to capture their spending power; improve social outcomes for families and communities; and render environmental benefits.[377] Fife Council also assisted with representative polling commissioned by the Carnegie UK Trust on how Fife residents worked, travelled, consumed goods and services, and pursued leisure activities during the emergency closure of the Forth Road Bridge in December 2015, which highlighted the potential of improving the

leisure and retail offer within Fife towns for the local economy.[378] Fife Council and its partners also have a strong record of holding charrettes to allow residents to provide input to the development of their town. The recent community consultation in Cupar provided officers with proposals on access and wayfinding; culture and heritage; historic townscape and making the town people friendly; and a becoming a distinctive market town.[379] In 2016, Lochgelly was awarded SURF's Scotland's Most Improved Town for the work undertaken by the public sector and community partners to improve the town's assets; create new housing; and to develop leisure and business opportunities.[380] Fife Council's Town Centre Development Unit also ran a #LoveFifetowns campaign during Scotland's Towns Week which highlights the investment; development work; and public engagement being undertaken by the Unit and its partners in seven towns across the region to improve placed-based outcomes.[381]

375   Carnegie UK Trust (2017) *TestTown* http://www.testtown.org.uk/ [accessed April 2017]

376   Carnegie UK Trust, *TestTown 2013: Learning From Dunfermline: The First TestTown* Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust 2013 http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wpcontent/uploads/sites/64/2013/08/TestTown-Evaluation-2013.pdf [accessed April 2017]

377   Fairer Fife Commission, *Fairness Matters* Glenrothes: Fife Council 2015 http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/fairness-matters/ [accessed April 2017]

378   Carnegie UK Trust, *Breaking the Link: Fife and the Forth Road Bridge closure* Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust 2016 http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/breaking-the-link/ [accessed April 2017]

379   Planning Aid Scotland, *Cupar Could: Report of the Cupar town centre charretteplus* http://pas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/IG-189-Cupar-Charrette-FINAL-REPORT-lo-res.pdf Edinburgh: Planning Aid Scotland 2016 [accessed April 2017]

380   Fife Council (2016) *Lochgelly wins Scotland's most improved town 2016 Wednesday 7 December 2016* Fife Council (online) https://www.fifedirect.org.uk/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.display&objectid=7822CD69-FC56-4125-7DBF400278B0E430&ContactId=715D6FF3-D98D-309A-2C2097B43F8E0911 [accessed May 2017]

381   Fife Council (2015) *Feel the Love for your town? Tuesday 10 November 2015* Fife Council (online) https://fifedirect.org.uk/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.display&objectid=F1D4CF3C-A133-ACC4-24A1D7ABCDB2427F [accessed April 2017]

Towns policy in Wales

Physical, social, and town centre regeneration are at the core of the Welsh Government's approach to restoring Welsh places.

MARCH 2013	APRIL 2014	MAY 2014	JUNE 2014
Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework published	Tackling Poverty Fund announced	Town Centre Partnership Fund announced	Town Centre Loan Fund announced
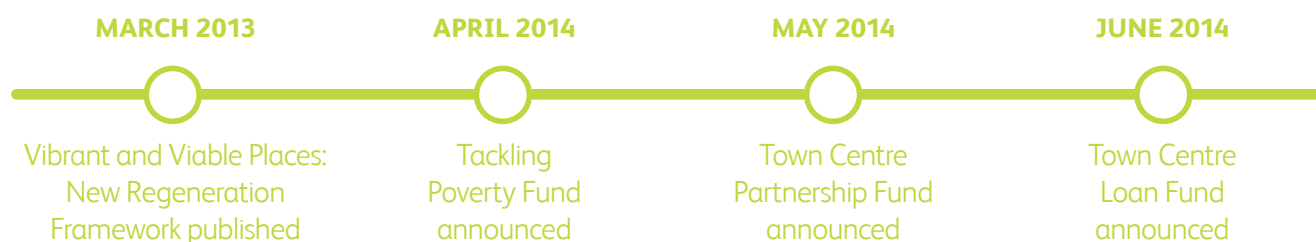
This chapter will provide an overview of the Welsh Government's national regeneration policies and their aims; the organisations involved in Welsh place-making and their work; the move towards both regionalisation and also bestowing responsibilities to local delivery partners for improving place-based wellbeing; and a case study of the business-led approach taken in one area of Wales to develop a brand for their town.

The Welsh Government's policies designed to support towns are developed within the Housing and Regeneration Directorate and currently reside within the wide-ranging portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children.[382] The key policy document, *Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework*, outlines a place and person-based approach to regeneration and the national outcomes of Prosperous Communities; Learning Communities; and Healthier Communities.[383] The Framework commits the Welsh Government to cross-sectoral cooperation and joined up working across government departments and policy areas on Business, Technology and Science; Planning; Procurement and Community Benefits; Transport; Education and Skills; Community Safety; Environment; Health; Communities

First (a community focussed tackling poverty programme); the Tackling Poverty Action Plan; the Strategic Equality Plan; the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan for Growth and Jobs; the Planning Bill; Enterprise Zones; and Local Growth Zones to achieve effective regeneration.[384] Town centres serving 21st century towns; coastal communities; and Community First Clusters are designated as the Government's urgent priorities for targeted investment.[385] The Framework announced the creation of a Ministerial Advisory Group, comprising representatives from private and public organisations, to provide guidance and support on how the impact of the Framework can be maximised.[386]

The £100 million Framework takes a targeted approach in which funding is provided to local authorities to fund regeneration schemes, such as affordable housing; Townscape Heritage Initiatives; the provision of free WiFi; and the development of key tourist attractions, within town centres, coastal communities, and Communities First areas in 2014-2017.[387] In January 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children announced support

382 Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetm/carl-sargeant?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

383 Welsh Government, *Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2013 http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/130311vibrantandviableplacesen.pdf [accessed April 2017]

384 Ibid

385 Ibid

386 Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/advisory-group/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

387 Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/regeneration-areas/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

for an additional 23 regeneration projects across twelve local authorities worth £3.7 million which will create or safeguard jobs; traineeships; and new homes through additional funding and re-directed underspend.[388]

Within the delivery of the Framework, there are funding opportunities exclusively for the development of town centres. The largest fund, the Vibrant and Viable Places Town Centre Loans Fund, provides £20 million to 17 local authorities across Wales to develop empty, under-used sites and premises in their town centres.[389] The loans are recycled upon repayment, and local authorities are permitted to re-invest the funding for other eligible projects over a 15 year period, after which the Welsh Government requires repayment of the loan in full.[390] The complementary Town Centre Partnership Fund is designed to support the vibrancy of town centres across Wales, with 20 partnerships supported to increase footfall; increase private, public and community investment; support businesses and services to establish, develop, and grow; support the diversification of town centres; support innovative approaches to regeneration; and reduce the impact of vacant properties.[391] The

Fund operates at a total cost of over £850,000, with each town centre receiving up to £50,000 with the expectation that match-funding of at least 50% is secured from other sources.[392] The Tackling Poverty Fund has ring fenced £7 million for town centre projects designed to tackle poverty in communities in the top 10% of the Welsh Index for Multiple Deprivation which were unsuccessful in their bid for a share of the Vibrant and Viable Places Fund.[393] Seven local authorities are receiving £1 million to fund regeneration projects designed to improve economic, social, or environmental outcomes in a town or area of a town or city.[394] The Welsh Government has published first and second stage assessment reports of the methodology used to allocate funding within the Framework.[395] The Government has also provided £230,000 to support the development of 10 BIDs across Wales and the support and guidance necessary to maximise their chances of success.[396] Finally, the rates relief schemes for small businesses and retailers; charitable and non-profit organisations; and on empty properties are designed to safeguard the future of Welsh high streets.[397]

388   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/newsroom/housing-and-regeneration/2017/170125-3.7-million-to-regenerate-communities/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

389   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/town-centre-loans-fund/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

390   Ibid

391   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/town-centre-partnership-fund/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

392   Ibid

393   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/tackling-poverty-fund/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

394   Ibid

395   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

396   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/grants-and-funding/business-improvement-districts/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

397   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/supporting-our-high-streets/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

The main programme through which coastal communities are supported in Wales is the aforementioned UK-wide Coastal Communities Fund, established by the UK Treasury and devolved administrations.[398] Public, private, or voluntary sector organisations are invited to apply for grants of between £50,000 and £300,000 to fund projects which are designed to improve the economic outcomes of coastal communities.[399] To date, the programme, delivered by the Welsh Government in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund, has awarded 39 grants worth more than £8.1 million to coastal communities in Wales.[400] Progress reports for the Fund are available from 2014 and 2015.[401]

Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021, the Welsh Government's Programme for Government, contains the high-level ambitions for Wales as Prosperous and Secure; Healthy and Active; Ambitious and Learning; and United and Connected, and actions within these, such as promoting tech hubs, particularly in towns and cities which host colleges and universities; working with communities to protect local assets such as libraries and leisure centres; and improving transport infrastructure, will impact on towns.[402]

Key players

The Welsh Government's *Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework* provides a commitment to align the tiers of government and build partnerships with the private sector; voluntary sector; local authorities; and communities in the delivery of the Framework. In pursuing a place-based approach to regeneration, the Framework engages the Welsh Government's historic environment service and their study of the character of towns across Wales; the Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales; the Design Commission for Wales; Planning Policy Wales; and the National Assembly

for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee and their inquiry into town centre regeneration.[403] In identifying other sources of funding, the Framework recognises European Structural and Investment Funds; the Big Lottery Fund; and the Heritage Lottery Fund as the main additional likely sources of funding for regeneration in Wales.[404]

Outwith formal partnerships outlined in the Framework, a number of organisations are working to improve economic, social, environmental, and democratic outcomes across Welsh towns. RTPI Cymru works with the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales, and stakeholders to provide Wales with an effective strategic framework for planning;[405] National Resources Wales advise the Welsh Government, voluntary sector, and the wider public on issues relating to the environment and its natural resources;[406] Planning Aid Wales help communities across Wales to participate more effectively in the planning system;[407] and Sustrans[408] help local authorities to consult communities and develop a safe network for walking and cycling, a duty enshrined in the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.[409] The ATCM Wales Network of Town and City Centre Management focuses on the creation, development, and management of vibrant and viable town and city centres[410] and the Revive & Thrive Ambassador for Welsh Towns supports place-making across Wales.[411]

Organisations working across Wales on issues which impact on towns and their residents include the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) with a portfolio covering all aspects of service provision in towns, such as housing, welfare reform,

398 Welsh Government (2016) *£3 million available for coastal communities in Wales Tuesday 5 July 2016* Welsh Government (online) http://gov.wales/newsroom/housing-and-regeneration/2016/160705-3-million-available-for-coastal-communities-in-wales/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

399 Ibid

400 Ibid

401 Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/coastal-communitties-fund/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

402 Welsh Government, *Taking Wales Forward 2016-2019* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2016 http://gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

403 Welsh Government, *Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2013 http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/130311vibrantandviableplacesen.pdf [accessed April 2017]

404 Ibid

405 RTPI Cymru (2014) http://www.rtpi.org.uk/the-rtpi-near-you/rtpi-cymru/about-rtpi-cymru/ [accessed April 2017]

406 National Resources for Wales (2017) http://naturalresources.wales/about-us/what-we-do/our-roles-and-responsibilities/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

407 Planning Aid Wales (2017) http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/ [accessed April 2017]

408 Sustrans (2017) http://www.sustrans.org.uk/wales/communities/delivering-active-travel-act-wales [accessed April 2017]

409 *Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/7/pdfs/anaw_20130007_en.pdf

410 Association of Town and City Management (2017) https://www.atcm.org/my_atcm/atcm-UK-networks/wales [accessed April 2017]

411 Revive and Thrive (2017) http://reviveandthrive.co.uk/revive-and-thrive-ambassador-team/ [accessed April 2017]

and social services;[412] the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) which is currently undertaking work on the economy, health and social care, education, and governance;[413] and the Bevan Foundation which is developing policy and practical solutions on the economy and work, health and social care, poverty, equality and human rights, housing, transport and the environment, government and devolution, and learning and skills.[414] The WLGA and One Voice Wales, the national representative body for community and town councils in Wales, are working together at national level to encourage the sharing of best practice between councils and partnership working.[415]

Initiatives supporting improved outcomes

A number of initiatives designed to improve outcomes in towns are currently active across Wales. Shape My Town is an accessible, online toolkit and supporting materials designed to encourage and enable community-led planning developed by Coombs Jones Architects+Makers and the Design Commission for Wales, sponsored by the Welsh Government.[416] The toolkit is intended to be used by individuals or groups wishing to improve their town or community; local business organisations seeking to influence a strategy for their town centre; town councils or local authorities developing a local plan or responding to a planning consultation; or developers seeking to improve their knowledge of a local area prior to investing.[417]

The Welsh Government aims to improve the social and environmental outcomes of towns through support for the Tidy Towns initiative in which funding is provided to community groups; local authorities; and Keep Wales Tidy to help people make their area cleaner, safer, and

tidier.[418] Examples of projects funded through the initiative include those designed to improve local environmental quality; improvements to the accessibility of the local environment; preventative measures; transformative projects; actions to safeguard biodiversity; and education and awareness-raising.[419] Keep Wales Tidy runs the initiative and is supported by the Welsh Government to locate projects officers in every local authority to empower community groups to undertake projects designed to improve local environmental quality.[420] An evaluation of the Tidy Towns initiative was published in 2015.[421]

Outside of formal partnerships with the Welsh Government, the Bevan Foundation is exploring the feasibility of a place-based Living Wage for Merthyr Tydfil.[422] The Foundation engaged local employers, workers' representatives, and community organisations and sought employers', trade unions', and campaigners' experiences and understanding of the Living Wage to develop an action plan to reduce the number of low-paid workers in Merthyr Tydfil.[423] The Great Places Scheme will also support between five to eight places in Wales, including towns, which are committed to embedding heritage and culture as a core part of their local plans and decision making processes with between £100,000 and £500,000 for activities to be delivered over a period of up to three years.[424]

Towns policy and initiatives at the regional and local level

The Welsh Government's White Paper *Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed* states *'[t]here are legitimate roles for local communities (whether through a Community Council and/ or community groups), Local Authorities,*

412   Welsh Government Association (2017) http://wlga.wales/topics [accessed April 2017]

413   Institute of Welsh Affairs (2017) http://www.iwa.wales/our-work/ [accessed April 2017]

414   Bevan Foundation (2017) https://www.bevanfoundation.org/what-we-do/ [accessed April 2017]

415   One Voice Wales (2017) http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWWeb/ Default.aspx [accessed May 2017]

416   Shape My Town (2017) http://www.shapemytown.org/ [accessed April 2017]

417   Shape My Town (2017) http://www.shapemytown.org/about/ [accessed April 2017]

418   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/ environmentcountryside/epq/cleanneighbour/tidy-towns/?lang=en [accessed April 2017]

419   Ibid

420   Keep Wales Tidy (2017) https://www.keepwalestidy.cymru/tidy-towns [accessed 2017]

421   Miller Research, *Evaluation of the Tidy Towns Initiative: Final Report* Miller Research: online 2015 http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/151023-evaluation-of-the-tidy-towns-initiative-en.pdf [accessed April 2017]

422   Bevan Foundation (2017) https://www.bevanfoundation.org/current-projects/will-take-pay-living-wage-merthyr/ [accessed April 2017]

423   Ibid

424   Great Places Scheme (2017) https://www.greatplacesscheme.org.uk/ wales [accessed June 2017]

regional bodies, and national Governments in 'place shaping''.[425] The White Paper proposes regional working to be mandatory on economic development; transport; land use planning and building control; educational improvement; additional learning needs; and public protection, and for regional working on housing; waste; and community safety and youth justice to be explored by local authorities and their partners.[426] The consultation on the White Paper recently closed and the responses to the proposals on increasing regionalisation are currently being considered.

Investment in regional assets have driven the location of the eight Enterprise Zones in Wales which aim to attract investment in the advanced manufacturing; energy and environment; financial and professional services; ICT; aerospace; and construction sectors to foster sustainable economic growth.[427] To date 366 businesses located within the Zones have received financial support from the Welsh Government, attracting more than £115 million public and private sector investment and helping to create or safeguard 7,795 jobs since the Zones were established in 2012.[428] Local Growth Zones, a rural alternative to Enterprise Zones, have also been explored to trial interventions which are sensitive to place-based economic conditions and growth challenges. Local Growth Zones in Powys[429] and the Teifi Valley[430] were assigned a Task and Finish Group which submitted recommendations to the Welsh Government on the appropriateness of the model and specific themes and priorities for each area.

However, the Welsh Government's *Vibrant and Viable Places Framework* recognises that the delivery of regeneration is fundamentally a local issue, and that initiatives and projects will require local management and accountability

structures.[431] Local authorities; town and community councils; and local communities and their partners in the public, private, and voluntary sectors are credited with having a role, and existing partnerships such as Voluntary Council networks; LEADER Local Action Groups; and Fisheries Local Action Groups are signposted as being able to provide assistance with local regeneration and growth plans.[432] Local public services, such as transport; housing; and social and environmental services, are currently provided by 22 unitary authorities in Wales. The Local Government Act 2000 established overview and scrutiny committees as part of Welsh local government,[433] however, does not prescribe the nature of committees, leading many to be organised around general themes rather than locality. There are 735 community and town councils in Wales covering 70% of the population which provide very local services such as the maintenance of public spaces and community facilities.[434] The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 sought to develop and strengthen the role of community councils in Wales; enable them to deliver a wider range of services and actions locally; and to increase the effectiveness of their representational role and their ability to work in partnership with other bodies.[435]

In planning Welsh towns and the provision of local services within them, legislation has been increasingly used to further the influence of individuals and communities. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004[436] and The Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005,[437]

425   Welsh Government (2017) *White Paper Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed* https://consultations.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultation_doc_files/170130-white-paper-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

426   Ibid

427   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/businessandeconomy/growing-the-economy/enterprisezones/?lang=en [accessed May 2017]

428   Welsh Government (2017) https://businesswales.gov.wales/enterprisezones/what-enterprise-zone [accessed May 2017]

429   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/businessandeconomy/growing-the-economy/local-growth-zones/plgzones/?lang=en [accessed May 2017]

430   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/businessandeconomy/growing-the-economy/local-growth-zones/teifi-valley-local-growth-zone/?lang=en [accessed May 2017]

431   Welsh Government, *Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2013 http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/130311vibrantandviableplacesen.pdf [accessed April 2017]

432   Ibid

433   *Local Government Act 2010* London: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/pdfs/ukpga_20000022_en.pdf?view=extent [accessed May 2017]

434   Winterbotham, M. et al, *Community and Town Councils in Wales* Cardiff: Welsh Government Social Research 2014 http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2014/141218-community-town-councils-wales-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

435   *Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011* Cardiff: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/pdfs/mwa_20110004_en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

436   *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* Cardiff: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/pdfs/ukpga_20040005_en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

437   *The Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005* Cardiff: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2005/2839/pdfs/wsi_20052839_mi.pdf [accessed May 2017]

every Local Planning Authority in Wales has a statutory duty to prepare Local Development Plan which includes policies and proposals on the development of the local area over next 15 years.[438] Local Planning Authorities must publish a Delivery Agreement which outlines the key stages of the plan and the opportunities available for the community to become involved.[439] Local Development Plans reflect local issues, such as providing a suitable mix of housing; access to public transport; and supporting community facilities in Carmarthenshire[440], and managing future growth and encouraging high quality, sustainable design; new infrastructure; and sustainable transport solutions in Cardiff,[441] but must also have regard to The Wales Spatial Plan.[442] The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 bestows further rights on residents to provide input into the development of their local area,[443] as Local Planning Authorities in Wales are now required

438   Welsh Government (2017) http://gov.wales/topics/planning/development-plans/localdevelopmentplans/?lang=en# [accessed May 2017]

439   Ibid

440   Carmarthenshire County Council, *Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan* online 2014 http://www.cartogold.co.uk/CarmarthenshireLDP/english/text/03_Key-Issues-and-Drivers.htm [accessed May 2017]

441   Cardiff Council, *Cardiff Development Plan 2006-2026* Cardiff: Cardiff Council 2016 https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Planning/Local-Development-Plan/Documents/Final%20Adopted%20Local%20Development%20Plan%20English.pdf [accessed May 2017]

442   Welsh Government, People, *Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2008 http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/130701wales-spatial-plan-2008-update-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

443   *Planning (Wales) Act 2015* Cardiff: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/4/enacted [accessed May 2017]

to work with communities to draft Place Plans as Supplementary Planning Guidance.[444] Although still in the pilot phase, the premise behind Place Plans is that they provide community input into the development of an area from the local level upwards, and provide more detailed thematic or site specific guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in the Local Development Plan.[445] Planning Aid Wales have organised a series of events for local authorities and communities on Place Plans to showcase innovation; case studies; tools; and techniques in their development.[446] A partnership project is currently underway between Conway Council and OpusMap and OpusPromote to develop an online toolkit which encourages residents to engage directly with the consultation process of the Place Plan via the internet and social media.[447]

Of significance to the wellbeing of those who live in towns in Wales, is the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act places a statutory duty on 44 key public bodies, including local authorities and Local Health Boards, to improve social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing in Wales in pursuit of seven national goals – a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and a globally responsible Wales.[448] Each public body must set wellbeing objectives; publish a wellbeing statement which outlines why these objectives will help them to achieve the national wellbeing goals; and involve people interested in achieving the goals.[449] The Act also establishes Public Services Boards (PSB) for each local authority area, membership of which must include the local authority; the Local Health Board; the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority; and the

444   Welsh Government, *Positive Planning Implementation Plan* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2015 http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160425positive-planning-implementation-plan-december-2015-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

445   Ibid

446   Planning Aid Wales (2017) http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/2017-events/ [accessed April 2017]

447   OpusMap (2017) http://www.opusmap.co.uk/what-are-place-plans/ [accessed May 2017]

448   *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* Cardiff: HMSO http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted [accessed May 2017]

449   Ibid

Natural Resources body for Wales.[450] The PSB must also invite Welsh Ministers; the Chief Constable within the local authority area; the Police and Crime Commissioner for the police area; a representative of Certain Probation Services; and at least one body which represents relevant voluntary organisations in the locality to become a member.[451] PSBs must assess the state of economic, social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing in the area; set objectives which are designed to maximise the PSB's contribution to the wellbeing goals; and publish a Local Wellbeing Plan on the steps it will take to meet their objectives, consulting widely on their assessment of local wellbeing and their Plan.[452] The wellbeing assessments of a number of PSBs are currently available, and outline place-based priority outcomes, such as children have a good start in life; people learn successfully; young people and adults have good jobs; people have a decent standard of living; people are healthy, safe and independent and people have good places to live, work and visit in Swansea,[453] and having a healthy and active future; being part of safe and inclusive communities; maximising opportunities and attainment; and our environment in Vale of Glamorgan.[454]

Case study: Llandrindod Wells

In response to a key recommendation from the Powys Local Growth Zone work, a business-led approach to regeneration is being trialled in Llandrindod Wells. The Business Group for the pilot was charged with developing an action plan to address the economic sustainability of Llandrindod Wells, informed by discussions with key stakeholders within the town.[455] The strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities

of and threats to the town are mapped, and assigned and costed actions are listed under the objectives to invest in the quality of the town centre offer; the business environment and key assets; develop and promote the personality and identity for Llandrindod Wells as a local and visitor destination; coordinate and develop local arts, sporting and transport-related events; and review and improve local infrastructure and facilities.[456] The Lake Park area of the town was identified as a priority project, and a feasibility study was undertaken to identify how to enhance existing resources dedicated to the area; what new resources could be invested at Lake Park; and how to quantify the benefits increased visitor numbers and consumer spend could bring to the whole town.[457] In a bid to develop Llandrindod Wells as a destination town, the Business Group created a brand, Llandrindod Wellness, based on the town's spa town heritage and which reflects the quality of life; work-life balance; and sense of community that residents and visitors can expect.[458] The Business Group have developed brand guidelines for organisations within the town to ensure consistency of language; use of logo; imagery; and brand application to use when communicating about the town and its offer to live, work, and visit.[459] The appointed Llandrindod Wells Town Champion submitted progress reports to the Welsh Government six months[460] and one year[461] after the plan was implemented.

450 Ibid
451 Ibid
452 Ibid
453 Swansea Public Services Board (2017) http://www.swansea.gov.uk/psbassessment [accessed May 2017]
454 Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board, *Vale of Glamorgan Well-being Assessment* online 2017 http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Achieving%20our%20vision/Public-Services-Board/Well-being-Assessment/FINAL-ENGLISH-VERSIONS/Well-being-Assessment-English.pdf
455 Llandrindod Wells Business Group, *Economic Regeneration Plan for Llandrindod Wells* online 2013 http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/131015regenllanen.pdf [accessed May 2017]
456 Ibid
457 Llandrindod Wells Business Group, *Llandrindod Wells Lake Park Feasibility Study* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2015 http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/160329-lake-park-feasibility-study-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]
458 Llandrindod Wells Business Group, *Llandrindod Wells Brand Guidelines* http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/160412-heavenly-brand-guidelines-en.pdf Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2015 [accessed May 2017]
459 Ibid
460 Boutle, J., *Llandrindod Wells Town Champion – 6 Month Progress Report for the Welsh Government* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2015 http://gov.wales/docs/det/report/150825-llandrindod-wells-town-champion-progress-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]
461 Boutle, J., *Llandrindod Wells Town Champion – 12 Month Progress Report for the Welsh Government* Cardiff: The Welsh Government 2015 http://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/160329-llandrindod-wells-town-champion-progress-en.pdf [accessed May 2017]

Conclusion

From our individual streets to our cityscapes, the economic and social opportunities within and design of our communities and provision of public services in places across the UK and Ireland impact on our wellbeing and that of future generations.

The provision of public services such as economic development; health; and transport available in our immediate locality affect not only our individual life chances but connect us to our communities. As such, places are far more than the sum of their policy parts.

Towns across the UK and Ireland are home to millions of citizens; businesses; and service providers. Governments across the jurisdictions have developed their own definitions of what constitutes a town; charged different departments with their sustainability;

implemented their own regional and local structures to shape their future; and invested in towns based on different priorities, such as planning, regeneration, or community empowerment. Government investment in towns operates in parallel to the work of many private and third sector organisations and initiatives which aim to support more prosperous places, driven by their own interests and agendas in supporting, for example, culture, heritage, or the built environment. Cross-sector stakeholders across the jurisdictions are exploring and implementing innovative ways in which to

improve the outcomes of towns and their citizens. As a result, support has been rendered piecemeal within and across the jurisdictions, with governments often focusing on individual policy strands or on the communities and towns experiencing the poorest outcomes, while private and third sector organisations focus on their own place-placed priorities and working with selected partners across the UK and Ireland.

National and local government and private and third sector organisations and their respective funding programmes and initiatives rarely take towns in their entirety as the geographical basis on which to formulate policy. Instead, 'place-blind' thematic policy issues such as housing; physical regeneration; and community cohesion apply to towns, or representatives of communities within towns are invited to apply to funding programmes which operate at a sub-town level, such as town centre regeneration funding or support for participatory budgeting. The theory of change appears to be that improving siloed policy strands; a common, definable point in a town, such as its centre; or an individual community within a town, will improve outcomes within the town boundaries by extension. This concept is also evident in cities and rural policy across the jurisdictions, in which it is expected that on account of investing cities and rural areas and meeting their nuanced needs, the surrounding towns will prosper. However, this twin focus on internal, sub-town communities and external, neighbouring cities and rural hinterlands, leaves a policy gap at the towns level with limited opportunities for government

investment for towns in their entirety and few policy levers available to influence their fortunes.

The Carnegie UK Trust, as one of the largest policy and practice organisations in the UK to be town-based, has committed to Flourishing Towns as a thematic priority within its Strategic Plan 2016-2020. It will build on its previous work supporting enterprising, innovative town centres; improving the availability and use of data at a towns-level; fostering partnership working to enable similar towns to learn from each other; and highlighting international examples of success in revitalising towns. The Trust will continue to assert the need for towns to have more decision-making powers; more and improved data about towns and evidence of what works well in overcoming place-based challenges; local leadership to be cultivated at a towns level; citizens to be engaged in a conversation about the purpose and aspirations of towns and their narrative; models to support mutually beneficial cross-town collaboration; and entrepreneurship to be supported in all towns as part of the economic development strategy, as outlined in its manifesto *Time for Towns*.[462] Addressing the policy space occupied by towns and bringing them into national policy discussions is key to improving their economic, social, environmental, and democratic outcomes, and therefore to improving the wellbeing of millions of people across the UK and Ireland.

462   Carnegie UK Trust, Time for Towns Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust 2016 https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/11/LOW-RES-2795-CUKT-Turnaround-Town-Manifesto-SINGLES.pdf [accessed July 2017]

England partnerships population local public services placemaking policy planning Wales regional communities advocacy towns government Northern Ireland outcomes Scotland funding design place wellbeing national rural Ireland definitions participation initiatives cities

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