

**Garvagh**

Village Plan

March 2024

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# A white background with black dots Description automatically generated1.0 Introduction

An aerial view of a green area

Description automatically generatedThe village of Garvagh is nestled along the serene banks of the Agivey River. A hidden gem located approximately 18 kilometres south of Coleraine along the A29 route. Benefitting from convenient access and transportation options, the village is well-connected with bus routes ensuring efficient travel within the area and beyond, enhancing accessibility. Established in the early 17th Century by George Canning, Garvagh evolved from a modest village into a vibrant community, offering a blend of rich history, natural beauty, and a close-knit social fabric.

Figure 1: Aerial View of Garvagh Village, (Source: Google Earth)

Garvagh is enriched with a multitude of invaluable assets and thriving community groups, fostering a vibrant atmosphere within the village. At the heart of this bustling community lies the Garvagh Community Building. Serving as a central hub, it offers a gathering place for residents, facilitating a wide array of community activities. Whether hosting events, utilising the community garden, or simply socialising in the attached café, the Garvagh Community Building provides a welcoming space for all residents to come together and engage in meaningful interactions.

Other key assets include an active town centre, various cafés and food outlets, primary schools, the Jim Watt Sports Centre, and a library, museum, community garden. Community groups such as. Garvagh Development Trust (GDT), Garvagh Football Club, Garvagh Tennis Club, Garvagh Community Play Group, and others play pivotal roles in fostering a sense of belonging in the community. Rich in historical and cultural heritage, Garvagh also boasts sites like the Garvagh Pyramid and Cenotaph, reflecting its deep-rooted history.

The village has a diverse array of local businesses catering to a wide range of various needs and interests. Additionally, professional services are readily available through local businesses, while convenience is ensured with the presence of essential services like the Post Office and Health Centre.

Alongside several Bed & Breakfast establishments, Air BnB accommodation and a prominent local hotel offers accommodation for visitors exploring the area. The Hotel has a rich history, dating back to its establishment in the 19th Century. It underwent an extensive and meticulous restoration in 2021.

A building with many windows

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Figure 2: Garvagh Community Building

Amidst its bustling economic activity, Garvagh also boasts an array of environmental assets, contributing to its allure. Green spaces dotted with community garden boxes further enhance the village's appeal, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and connection to nature. The majestic Garvagh Forest and the picturesque Agivey River offer tranquil settings for outdoor pursuits and leisurely strolls, while Cornerstone Park provides an oasis for relaxation and community gatherings.

A pyramid in the woods

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Figure 3: Garvagh Forest

In addition to its economic and environmental strengths, Garvagh embraces renewable energy initiatives, setting the stage for a sustainable future. Plans for the UK's pioneering plant for producing sustainable fuels, Craigmore, herald a new era of renewable energy innovation. With a capacity to produce advanced renewable fuels, this ground-breaking facility promises to revolutionise the energy landscape, positioning Garvagh at the forefront of environmental stewardship.

There is excellent scope for tourism and economic development, with Garvagh standing as a vibrant and welcoming village, brimming with potential and community spirit. Its rich tapestry of assets, coupled with a strong sense of social cohesion, makes it a cherished haven for residents and a hidden gem awaiting discovery for visitors.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key Assets** | **Community Groups** |
| Garvagh Forest  Garvagh Community Building  Active town centre with multiple cafés and food outlets  Garvagh Primary Schools  Jim Watts Sports Centre  Garvagh Library  Garvagh Museum  Community Garden  Garvagh Pyramid  Former High School Site  Churches  Agivey River  Health Centre | Garvagh Development Trust (GDT)  Garvagh Tennis Club  Garvagh Cultural Awareness Association  Garvagh Football Club  Garvagh & District Diamond Club  Garvagh Park Run  Garvagh & Aghadowey Great War Society  Garvagh Womens’ Institute  Garvagh Young Farmers’ Club  Garvagh Pipe Band  Harp School  Men’s Shed |

Table 1: Summary of Key Assets and Community Groups Located in Garvagh

# 2.0 Strategic Context

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Description automatically generated2.1 Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council: Community Plan 2017-2030**

At its core, community planning aims to develop a holistic, forward-looking strategy for the area. This involves a thorough examination of its requirements, priorities, and opportunities, integrating social, economic, and environmental considerations. A Community Plan aims to unite stakeholders and encourage collaborative endeavours to realise a collectively envisioned future.

The Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Community Plan serves as the leading vision for steering the area towards a better future. Through the Community Plan, the Council aspires to instigate positive change, foster sustainable development, and elevate community well-being.

Embracing inclusivity, the Community Plan is designed to address the diverse needs and aspirations of the whole community, positioning the area on a trajectory towards a prosperous, harmonious, and resilient future. It facilitates coordinated efforts to achieve improved outcomes in health, education, housing, public safety, communities, the economy, and the environment.

Operating on both a Council-wide scale and within local and neighbourhood contexts, the Plan is a collaborative initiative developed in close partnership with key stakeholders. Extensive engagement with local communities, groups, and individuals ensures the Community Plan is reflective of the community’s diverse perspectives and tailored to address the unique needs of the area.

The Community Plan has three overarching, long-term strategic Population Outcomes, along with 12 Intermediate Outcomes in-line with the proposed Programme for Government, outlined below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A Healthy**  **Safe Community** | **A Sustainable**  **Accessible Environment** | **A Thriving**  **Economy** |
| Individuals will contribute to and benefit from a healthy, connected, and safe community that nurtures resilience, promotes respect, and supports everyone to live well together. | Individuals will value and benefit from a diverse, sustainable, and accessible environment, with an infrastructure that is fit for purpose and that enables connections. | Individuals will contribute to and benefit from a thriving economy, built on a culture of growth, entrepreneurship, innovation, and learning. |

|  |
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| **A Healthy Safe Community** |
| * **Outcome 1:** All people of the Causeway Coast & Glens benefit from improved physical health and mental wellbeing. * **Outcome 2:** Our children and young people will have the very best start in life. * **Outcome 3:** All people of the Causeway Coast & Glens can live independently, as far as possible, and access support services when they need it. * **Outcome 4:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area feels safe. * **Outcome 5:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area promotes and supports positive relationships. |

|  |
| --- |
| **A Sustainable Accessible Environment** |
| * **Outcome 6:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area is widely recognised and celebrated for its unique natural built landscapes. * **Outcome 7:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area has physical structures and facilities that further growth, access, and connections. * **Outcome 8:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area has a sustainably managed natural and built environment. |

|  |
| --- |
| **A Thriving Economy** |
| * **Outcome 9:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area provides opportunities for all to contribute to and engage in a more prosperous and fair economy. * **Outcome 10:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area attracts and grows more profitable businesses. * **Outcome 11:** The Causeway Coast & Glens area drives entrepreneurship & fosters innovation. * **Outcome 12:** All people of the Causeway Coast & Glens area will be knowledgeable and skilled. |

The Community Plan serves as a blueprint for addressing multifaceted needs, ranging from health and education, to housing, public safety, communities, the economy, and the environment. This scope aligns with the objectives of the Village Plan, which is specifically tailored to address the unique characteristics and requirements of the individual villages within the Causeway Coast & Glens area. By strategically aligning these plans, we can create a cohesive and comprehensive approach that maximises resources, ensures efficient coordination, and facilitates targeted interventions at both the regional and local level.

**The Village Plan contributes to each of the three strategic Population Outcomes as follows:**

**A Healthy Safe Community**

The Village Plan is designed to foster a healthy, connected, and safe community that prioritises the well-being of residents. Through initiatives focused on public health, recreational spaces, and community programmes, the Village Plan aims to create an environment that nurtures resilience, promotes respect, and supports everyone in living well together.

Health and safety measures, including accessible healthcare facilities, community policing, and awareness campaigns will be integral components. By emphasising mental and physical health, fostering social connections, and implementing safety measures, the Village Plan contributes to building a community that is not only physically secure but also emotionally and socially supportive.

**A Sustainable Accessible Environment**

The Village Plan places a strong emphasis on creating a sustainable, accessible environment that values and benefits from diversity. This includes careful consideration of environmental conservation, green spaces, and infrastructure that supports accessibility for all residents. Sustainable development practices, such as energy-efficient technologies and waste reduction initiatives, will be incorporated.

The Plan envisions an environment where diverse ecosystems thrive alongside well-planned infrastructure that encourages connectivity. By investing in accessible public spaces, efficient transport systems, and environmentally friendly practices, the Village Plan aims to create an inclusive and sustainable environment that residents can value and benefit from.

**A Thriving Economy**

To contribute to and benefit from a thriving economy, the Village Plan adopts a holistic approach centred on growth, entrepreneurship, innovation, and learning. Economic development strategies will be integrated to support local businesses, encourage entrepreneurship, and attract new investments. Educational programmes and initiatives that foster a culture of innovation and continuous learning will be promoted.

The Plan envisions a community where economic opportunities abound, creating a vibrant and dynamic local economy. By facilitating an environment that encourages business growth, job creation, and skill development, the Village Plan aims to contribute to the development of a thriving community with a robust and sustainable economy.

The Village Plan, being an integral part of the broader Community Plan, inherits the overarching goals and principles, tailoring them to the distinctive nuances of each village. Through collaborative efforts and shared objectives, the implementation of the Village Plan becomes an integral part of the larger narrative outlined in the Community Plan, fostering a sense of unity and purpose.

In conclusion, the strategic alignment of the Village Plan with the Community Plan presents a unique opportunity for collaborative development. By leveraging the strengths of both plans, we not only enhance the overall impact on the community but also create a roadmap that guides sustainable development, fosters community resilience, and promotes a harmonious future for the Causeway Coast & Glens area. This strategic integration will ensure that our efforts are coordinated, targeted, and collectively directed towards a shared vision of prosperity and well-being.

**2.2 Wider Strategic Alignment**

The implementation of the key actions contained within this Village Plan also represents an alignment with wider public sector policy:

| **Theme** | **Policy Alignment** |
| --- | --- |
| **Economic Development** | * Economy 2030 – Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for the Economy) * Circular Economy Strategy (Draft, Department for the Economy) * Skills for a 10X Economy - Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for the Economy) |
| **Community Development &**  **Capacity Building** | * PEACE Plus (Special EU Programmes Body) * Together Building a United Community (The Executive Office) |
| **Collaborative Working** | * PEACE Plus (Special EU Programmes Body) * Together Building a United Community (The Executive Office) |
| **Maximising the Potential of Local Assets** | * Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland: 10 Year Plan (Draft, Department for the Economy) |
| **Community Pride** | * PEACE Plus (Special EU Programmes Body) * Together Building a United Community (The Executive Office) |
| **Health & Wellbeing** | * Mental Health Strategy 2021 – 2031 (Department of Health) |
| **Heritage Awareness** | * PEACE Plus (Special EU Programmes Body) * Together Building a United Community (The Executive Office) |
| **Housing** | * Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Department for Infrastructure) |
| **Transport** | * Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Department for Infrastructure) * Regional Transport Strategy 2025 (Department for Infrastructure) |
| **Enterprise Development** | * Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Department for Infrastructure) |

**2.3 Local Community Groups**

Local community groups will play a pivotal role in supporting the successful delivery of this Village Plan. These grassroots organisations are the heartbeat of the community, possessing an intimate understanding of needs, aspirations, and challenges. By actively engaging with and involving these groups in the planning and execution phases, the Village Plan gains valuable allies in its mission to create positive and lasting change.

First and foremost, local community groups serve as conduits of local knowledge and expertise. They have established trust and connections within the community, making them adept at identifying nuanced issues and opportunities that may not be immediately apparent. This grassroots insight is invaluable in crafting a Village Plan that is not only comprehensive but also tailored to the specific needs of residents.

Moreover, community groups bring a wealth of social capital to the table. Their established networks and relationships within the community facilitate effective communication and outreach. This social fabric enhances the Plan's reach, ensuring it resonates with a broad cross-section of the population. Through collaborative efforts with local community groups, the Village Plan can leverage existing community ties to garner support, participation, and feedback.

Additionally, local community groups often have a proven track record of delivering successful projects and initiatives. Their experience in mobilising resources, organising events, and driving community engagement can significantly contribute to the effective implementation of the Plan. By tapping into this wealth of experience, the Plan can benefit from tried-and-true strategies for fostering community cohesion and achieving shared goals.

By fostering collaboration with these local community groups, the Village Plan gains not only expertise and resources but also the collective energy and commitment of the community itself. Together, they form a powerful alliance dedicated to realising the shared vision for a vibrant, thriving, and inclusive community.

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The statistics referenced in this Village Plan reflect the most current data available, extracted from the 2021 Census, and has been supported by analysis of the 2017 Multiple Deprivation Measures for the area, specifically the ‘Bann F’ Super Data Zone.

**3.1 Population**

At the time of the 2021 Census, the population of Garvagh was 1,252. This represents the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency figure obtained for the Garvagh settlement.

**3.2 Statistical Profile**

This statistical analysis accounts for key characteristics of the five Data Zones population. Data is also included from the September 2022 Business Register & Employment Survey.

It should be noted that the boundaries of these statistical zones vary from the boundaries of the NISRA Settlement area used to calculate the population figure presented at Chapter 3.1.

A map of a city

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Figure 4: Map of ‘Bann F’ Super Data Zone, (Source: Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency)

**3.3 Age Profile**

The population of Garvagh has an age profile that is generally older than the local and regional averages, as evidenced by the composition of the village in terms of its age profile in the below table:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Age 0-14 yrs** | **Age 15-39 yrs** | **Age 40-64 yrs** | **Age 65+ yrs** |
| Garvagh/Bann F | 17% | 18% | 32% | 23% |
| Bann DEA | 19% | 27% | 34% | 19% |
| Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Area | 18% | 29% | 34% | 19% |
| Northern Ireland | 19% | 31% | 32% | 17% |

The 2021 Census indicates Garvagh’s population is majority female (53%).

**Household Size**

The number of usual residents in the household on Census Day 2021 in Garvagh was:

* 1 person - 38%;
* 2 people - 29%;
* 3 people - 13%;
* 4 people - 14%;
* 5 people or more - 6%.

**Household Tenure**

On Census Day in Garvagh, 51% owned their house (includes shared ownership), 27% social rented, 19% private rented and 3% lived rent free.

**3.4 Religion and Ethnicity**

* Approximately 72% of the local population recorded their ‘Religion’ or ‘Religion brought up in’ as Protestant, with 21% of the population recording Roman Catholic.
* 7% of village residents recorded no religious affiliation.
* 99% of village residents reported being from a white ethnic background.
* 91% of those living in the area were born in Northern Ireland.

**3.5 Health**

A higher percentage of Garvagh residents are faced with poor levels of health and wellbeing compared to regional and national averages. 71% of Garvagh residents report having either a ‘Very Good’ or ‘Good’ standard of general health, which is lower than the Bann DEA rate of 81%, the Causeway Coast & Glens rate of 77%, and the Northern Ireland national average of 79%.

Moreover, 68% of citizens note they are not limited by a long-term health problem or disability, a rate which is some way below regional and national averages.

**3.6 Labour Market & Qualifications**

The 2021 Census compiled information relating to the economic status of those living in Garvagh, as well as a profile of skill and qualification level held. Whilst the area boasts an unemployment rate of just 3%, 52% of the population over the age of 16 are economically inactive. Whilst this is high, it may be partially attributed to the higher-than-average number of elderly people residing in the area.

The skills profile of the local population is presented below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **No Qualifications** | **Level 1** | **Level 2** | **Level 3** | **Level 4+** | **Apprenticeship or Other** |
| Garvagh/Bann F | 37% | 6% | 15% | 13% | 19% | 10% |
| Bann DEA | 24% | 6% | 14% | 16% | 30% | 10% |
| Causeway Coast & Glens Council Area | 26% | 6% | 14% | 16% | 29% | 9% |
| Northern Ireland | 24% | 6% | 14% | 16% | 32% | 8% |

Analysis of the skills profile highlights Garvagh’s population has a significantly higher number of residents with no qualifications, and a significantly lower number of residents with a Level 4 and above qualification, when compared with DEA, Council, and national averages.

**Industry of Employment**

In Garvagh on Census Day 2021 the classification of people aged 16 and over in employment by the industry they work in was as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Industry Classification** | **Percentage of Local Population** |
| Agriculture, energy & water | 2% |
| Manufacturing | 12% |
| Construction | 15% |
| Distribution, hotels & restaurants | 25% |
| Transport & communication | 6% |
| Financial, real estate, professional & administration | 10% |
| Public administration, education & health | 24% |
| Other | 6% |

**Number of Employee Jobs Based in Garvagh Ward**

According to the September 2022, Business Register & Employment Survey NI (BRES NI), the number of employee jobs based in the Garvagh ward excluding agriculture was as follows. An employee is defined as anyone aged 16 yrs+ that an organisation directly pays from its payroll.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Number of Employee Jobs Based In Garvagh** |
| 2022 | 898 |
| 2021 | 943 |
| 2020 | Not available due to Covid pandemic |
| 2019 | 910 |
| 2018 | Not available |
| 2017 | 898 |

**Car or Van Availability**

In Garvagh on Census Day the number of cars or vans that were owned, or available for use by members of a household (includes company cars & vans that are available for private use) was:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Car or Van Availability** | **Percentage of Local Population** |
| No cars or vans | 19% |
| 1 car or van | 45% |
| 2 cars or vans | 25% |
| 3 cars or vans | 6% |
| 4 cars of vans | 3% |
| 5 or more cars or vans | 2% |

**3.7 Deprivation Analysis**

In 2017, the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency published its findings in relation to the relative levels of deprivation facing communities across Northern Ireland. This analysis was carried out at a Super Output Area level, enabling detailed analysis of smaller populations to be carried out.

For the purposes of this analysis, the Garvagh population fell under the Garvagh Super Output Area, which covered the village and surrounding areas. Key findings include:

* In 2017, Garvagh was ranked as the 272nd most deprived area in Northern Ireland (out of 890, with 1 being the most deprived and 890 being the least deprived). This represents a decline since 2010, when the area was ranked 347th.
* The area is ranked amongst the 10% most deprived areas in Northern Ireland in terms of Income Deprivation, and amongst the 25% most deprived areas in NI in relation to Access to Services Deprivation.
* Between 2010 and 2017, the area’s relative deprivation improved across most measures, including Income, Employment, Health and Living Environment, Education, Access to Services, and Crime Deprivation. However, the overall relative ranking of the area fell as a result of the scale of the decline in the relative Income Deprivation ranking of the area.

**3.8 Conclusions**

Overall, it can be concluded that a key challenge for Garvagh is to address the increasing deprivation facing local people in the form of Income Deprivation, which has declined sharply over the past decade. Moreover, the community continues to face challenges brought about as a result of its rurality and the overall provision of basic services.

# 4.0 CoA white background with black dots Description automatically generatedmmunity Engagement

**4.1 Consultation Phase 1: Setting Objectives & Gathering Data**

Causeway Coast and Glens Council facilitated the review and development of an updated Village Plan for Garvagh.

Phase 1 consisted of setting out a programme of works to finalise objectives and the consultation process required ensuring feedback from the community could be captured.

A comprehensive socio-economic analysis of the area was conducted to gain insights into the area's demographics, economic dynamics, and social trends. The previous Village Plan from June 2018 was reviewed, which provided valuable insights into lessons learned and opportunities for improvement, ensuring continuity and building upon existing efforts.

Garvagh Development Trust (GDT) were engaged, acting as the lead partner in Garvagh, whose support has been appreciated in this process. A thorough site visit of Garvagh was also conducted to understand the physical environment and infrastructure, further informing decision-making.

**4.2 Consultation Phase 2: Engaging Stakeholders & The Community**

Phase 2 focused on engaging stakeholders through a robust consultation process. To ensure as many local people as possible had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the development of the Village Plan, a range of consultation and engagement activities were undertaken. This included:

* A site visit to the village on Tuesday, 30th January 2024.
* A consultation day, with two sessions (one during the day and one in the evening) held in the Garvagh and District Development Association (GDT) community hub on Monday, 29th February 2024.
* An online survey, facilitated by Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council between Friday, 2nd February and Friday, 1st March 2024.

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Figure 5: Social Media Graphic to Communicate Consultation Events

Two consultation sessions were held, one during the day and one in the evening, to accommodate residents' diverse needs and schedules. Extensive promotion and outreach efforts were made through various communication channels, including direct email outreach, social media campaigns, and via council platforms to encourage broad participation. As a result, members of the local community were engaged in either the afternoon drop-in session or evening focus group.

Consultations were structured to ensure comprehensive engagement and participation from the Ballykelly community. Through this structured approach, consultations fostered inclusive dialogue, ensuring broad community voices and perspectives were incorporated into the Village Plan. Consultations included:

* A presentation on the Village Plan process, offering a brief overview of its significance, key objectives, and strategic context, with a Q&A session for clarifications.
* Engagement activities, including an area profile facilitated discussion, where participants were divided into small groups to discuss specific aspects of the Plan.
* A SWOT analysis activity, allowing participants to move between stations, providing input on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the Village Plan, with facilitators documenting responses on visual boards.
* An action planning session, encouraging participants to provide actionable ideas, with reference to the review of the previous Plan.
* Participants were given the opportunity to complete a survey, which was also made more broadly available for individuals to complete who were unable to attend an in-person consultation.

**4.3 Consultation Phase 3: Data Analysis & Draft Plan Development**

Following the stakeholder and community consultation, Phase 3 included data analysis, identifying key findings, and developing a draft Village Plan. Emphasising a co-design approach, key findings and a proposed Action Plan were shared with community groups for feedback. This approach ensured inclusivity and collaboration. Council was also provided with an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft Plan, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and priorities.

This comprehensive process successfully engaged the Garvagh community, gathered valuable input, and developed a Village Plan that reflects the aspirations and priorities of residents.

# A white background with black dots Description automatically generatedA white background with black dots Description automatically generated5.0 Key Findings

Through consultation, Garvagh was noted by many participants as a ‘hidden gem’, which had a lot of activity that people are often not aware of, as well as excellent potential. The local community was applauded for its vibrancy and welcoming atmosphere.

However, a number of negative concerns were expressed, such as litter, empty properties, and derelict buildings contributing to a poor impression of the village, discouraging visitors.

The following key Community Assets were identified:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Commercial Assets** | **Healthcare Assets** | **Natural Assets** |
| * Cafés and Food Outlets * Site of Former High School * Retail Businesses * Hospitality Businesses | * Dentist * Chemist * GP Surgery * Opticians * Podiatrist * Multi-disciplinary team that operates from the GP Surgery | * Garvagh Forest * Agivey River |
| **Heritage Assets** | **Community Assets** | **Other Assets** |
| * Town Clock * Garvagh Pyramid * Garvagh Museum | * GDT Building * Community Garden * Jim Watt Sports Centre * Library * Local Churches | * Local Primary School * Tennis Club * Post Office * Garvagh Library |

Existing activities, services, and programmes identified by those living in the area include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Recreational Activities** | **Sporting Activities** | **Youth Activities** |
| * Men’s Shed * Village Show * Library Group * Church Group * Walking Groups * Tuber Tuesday’s * Women’s Group * Community Choir | * Tennis Club * Mountain Bike Tracks * Walking Trails * Youth Football Groups * Park Run * Boxing Club * Bowls | * Boys’ Brigade * Young Farmers’ Club |

**5.1 SWOT Analysis**

Consultation participants provided an insight into daily life in Garvagh, before identifying strengths and weaknesses of the local community, and potential opportunities and threats:

| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| --- | --- |
| **Community:** good levels of community cohesion and large number of active voluntary, charitable, and sporting organisations.  **Natural & Heritage Assets:** Garvagh Forest, Garvagh Pyramid, Museum, and Town Clock were cited as being important to the social and cultural fabric of the village.  **Location:** the geographic location of the village was highlighted as a strength, as it is close to several major economic hubs and North Coast.  **Crime & Deprivation:** Overall, crime and anti-social behaviour levels are quite low, and the village is overall a safe place to live.  **Community & Voluntary Organisations:** a wide range of activities and organisations active in the area for local people to get involved with, catering for a variety of interests.  **Facilities:** GDT building recognised as a fantastic community asset, and there is a good provision of sporting amenities in the village. | **Housing:** not enough houses being built in Garvagh, and in particular a lack of affordable ‘starter homes’ to attract young families.  **Tourism & Visitors:** significant tourism potential, which is not being maximised. This could be attributed to a lack of awareness and signage.  **Collaborative Working:** groups in the village have few networking or collaboration opportunities.  **Public Transport:** poor public transport links identified by residents.  **Youth Engagement:** lack of engagement with young people, with few activities aimed at supporting them and improving their access to opportunities.  **Litter & Dog Fouling:** identified as issues that impact overall living environment of Garvagh.  **Parking:** limited provision of parking in the village, which impacts on the levels of visitors that can be accommodated. |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| **Passing Trade:** Garvagh has a main road, which means it experiences passing traffic from those en route to other areas. An opportunity exists to encourage more passing traffic to stop and avail of the local shops and amenities.  **Additional Facilities & Amenities:** there are opportunities to create additional community facilities and assets by developing projects that would, for example, regenerate the former Education Authority Building.  **Seating & Public Realms Works:** there are opportunities to improve amenities for visitors, such as additional seating. Other environmental improvements such as better lighting, more bins, the creation of all-weather play areas, and additional signage were also identified.  **Programming:** capacity for additional arts, education, and good relations programmes to benefit the skills, confidence, and personal development of those living in the area. | **Availability of Funding:** community development could be hindered by a lack of funding. This was particularly relevant in relation to financial support to keep the GDT building open and accessible for public use.  **Income Deprivation:** the area fares poorly in relation to income deprivation, particularly affecting young and elderly people. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that all development activities are inclusive and not cost-prohibitive.  **Threat of Post Office Closure:** identified as a key amenity in Garvagh and reported as being at risk of closure. This would negatively impact the services available for residents, who would be required to travel to other villages or larger towns to avail of basic mail/banking provisions.  **Village Aesthetics:** lack of investment in environmental improvement has left the village looking ‘tatty,’ which could be off-putting those considering moving to the area or for visitors.  **Cost of Living:** ongoing cost of living crisis continues to impact all aspects of social and community life in the village.  **Cultural Displays & Symbols:** it was noted that painted kerbstones and the erection of flags during summer months could be off-putting to those moving to the area or for visitors. |

**5.2 Survey Findings**

To supplement the findings of the consultation exercises, residents were afforded the opportunity to provide their views and highlight priorities to inform the development of the Village Plan via an online survey. The survey was open from Friday, 9th February 2024 and closed on Friday, 1st March 2024.

Questions posed to respondents sought to obtain the following information and insights:

* Demographic profile of respondents, such as age and gender.
* The length of time they have been residents in the village.
* Perceptions of the village, and an assessment of the quality of amenities, including:
  + Overall cleanliness and village aesthetics.
  + Infrastructure and connectivity.
  + Crime and anti-social behaviour.
  + Standard of facilities and public assets.
  + Availability and variety of Commercial Outlets.

Respondents were also asked to provide feedback in relation to their favourable aspects of living in the village, as well as their biggest challenges or concerns.

All questions were mandatory for all survey participants.

**Survey findings, and key emerging themes, are presented below:**

**5.2.1 Demographic Information**

* 45.7% of respondents were aged between 15 and 39.
* 51.4% of respondents were aged between 40 and 64.
* 2.9% of respondents were aged 65 and over.

Most responses (51.4%) were received from male residents, with 42.8% being received from female residents. 5.7% of respondents preferred not to state their gender.

91.4% of respondents were from the village, with 74.3% of these stating they had lived in the village for ten or more years. Those who completed the survey but were not village residents gave addresses in the rural areas surrounding the village. These findings provide survey legitimacy as a representative view of local residents.

**5.2.2 Quality of Life**

Perceptions of respondents were generally mixed:

* 34.3% had either a ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’ perception of the village.
* 34.3% felt life in the village was ‘Acceptable’.
* 31.4% had either a ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’ perception of the village.

Most respondents stated on a Likert scale of 1-10, with 1 being least favourable and 10 being most favourable, they would be likely to recommend the village to others, with an average score of 5.5.

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on a range of aspects relating to life in the village. A summary of responses provided is presented below:

| **Aspect of Everyday Life** | **Commentary** |
| --- | --- |
| **Cleanliness of Streets** | Cleanliness of the village was not considered to be an issue, with 45.7% of respondents stating the current standard is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. A further 45.7% stated the current standard is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Condition of Streets** | Survey respondents also perceived the condition of the streets in a positive light, with 34.3% stating this is ‘Good’ or Very Good’. An additional 42.9% stated this is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Accessibility** | Accessibility of the village was generally viewed as positive, with 34.3% of respondents stating this is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’, and a further 45.7% stating this is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Pedestrian Friendly** | Pedestrian-friendliness within the village was viewed positively by survey respondents, with 42.9% stating this is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’, and a further 51.4% deeming this to be ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Availability of**  **Public Transport** | This was an aspect of village life survey respondents considered to be in greatest need of improvement. Most respondents (71.4%) considered the current availability of public transport to be either ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Traffic Congestion** | Traffic congestion in the village was viewed as being ‘Acceptable’ by 48.6% of survey respondents. However, a further 31.4% considered congestion to be ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Street Lighting** | The quality and quantity of street lighting was viewed positively by survey respondents, with 31.4% stating it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’, and a further 54.3% stating it is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Availability of**  **Car Parking** | Car parking in Garvagh was generally viewed as being plentiful, with the majority of respondents (51.4%) stating it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. |
| **Village Signage** | Signage was considered to be at a good level, with 48.6% of respondents stating it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’, and a further 37.1% stating it is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Open Space** | The quality and availability of open space received mixed views:   * 31.7% stated it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. * 51.4% stated it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. * 11.4% stated it is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Play Park** | The prevailing sentiment amongst survey respondents was that the play park in Garvagh is of a ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’ standard. |
| **Sports Facilities** | The quality of sporting facilities received mixed views:   * 28.6% stated it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. * 31.4% stated it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. * 40.0% stated it is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Community Centre** | The most common response was that the community centre is of a ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’ standard, a view held by 48.6% of respondents. |
| **Anti-Social Behaviour**  **(ASB)** | Anti-social behaviour was a concern amongst survey respondents, 51.4% of whom believe current levels are ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Vandalism** | Vandalism was also considered a key issue in need of addressing, with 54.3% of respondents deeming current levels to be ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Littering** | In terms of the overall aesthetics of Garvagh, 57.1% of survey respondents believe the prevalence of litter in the village to be ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Derelict Buildings** | The levels of building dereliction stood out as the area of highest concern amongst survey respondents, with 80% considering this aspect of village life to be either ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Friendliness of People** | The friendliness of local people was highlighted as one of the strongest aspects of community life in the village, with 65.7% of survey respondents considering this to be ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. |
| **Shops** | The quality and availability of commercial outlets received mixed views amongst survey respondents. A majority (51.4%) believe the quality of shops is ‘Acceptable’. However, the most common opinion (37.1%) was that the variety is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Eateries** | The quality of cafes and takeaways in the village was viewed positively by survey respondents, 48.6% of whom believe it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. |

**5.2.3 Favourite Aspect of Living in Garvagh**

Respondents were given the opportunity to state what they feel is the best thing about living in the area. Some of the most notable responses included:

* The village’s natural assets, such as the forest and rivers.
* The community spirit, friendly atmosphere, and sense of togetherness.
* The rural setting – many respondents enjoyed living in the countryside, outside of larger towns.

**5.2.4 Key Issues To Be Addressed**

Respondents were also asked to provide feedback on what they believe to be the highest priority issues to be addressed in the village. The most salient responses included:

* Village aesthetics such as littering and dog fouling.
* Activities for children and young people.
* Availability of public transport and frequency of local buses.
* Improved quality of sports facilities.
* Tackling anti-social behaviour.

The consultation process included an examination of actions from the previous Village Plan. A range of themes were highlighted as being continually relevant, including:

* Business growth and supporting business development.
* Community development, capacity building, and supporting the work of GDT.
* Enhancing the appeal of the village to residents and visitors.
* Promoting increased participation in physical wellbeing and recreational activities.
* Developing improved public transport links.

# 6.0 Action Plan

Following the completion of all research and consultation activities, the priorities for the Garvagh Village Plan are summarised below:

| **Theme** | **Description** | **Why is it needed?** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Economic Development** | Creation of a local Traders’ Group or Business Forum. | There is an identified need for continued business support and enterprise development. |
| **Community Development &**  **Capacity Building** | Deliver additional training and capacity building programmes for volunteers and committee members. Support community organisations to recruit and retain volunteers. | Need identified to ensure community organisations are supported in terms of their sustainability, and that volunteers have the appropriate skills and confidence to deliver quality community services and activities. |
| **Collaborative Working** | Attain resources to facilitate better working between groups who are active in the village. | Whilst there are a lot of groups who are active in Garvagh, it was identified that many operate in silo and deliver programmes and activities independently of each other. |
| **Maximising the Potential of Local Assets** | Ensure continued viability of local Post Office.  Undertake Public Realm improvements.  Promote the benefits associated with the use of Garvagh Forest.  Increase marketing and promotion of the village’s assets, including enhancement of signage.  Explore the potential for a wild forest play space in Garvagh Forest. | The Post Office has been identified as a key resource, giving local people access to mail and banking resources.  Range of public improvements were identified during consultation, including better lighting, additional seating, better signage, and flower planters.  Programmes that promote the area’s natural assets, including Garvagh Forest, have been delivered in the past and have been successful. Scope to build on this success.  Scope to generate wider awareness of the village’s assets to encourage greater levels of external visitation.  No permanent public play facility in Garvagh. Developing such a feature at the Forest would stand to increase its wider appeal. |
| **Community Pride** | Explore the potential for a play space in Cornerstone Park.  Organise community litter picks. | There is no permanent public play facility in Garvagh.  Frequent litter picks would ensure good level of overall cleanliness in the village, therefore maximising its appeal to wider visitation. |
| **Health & Wellbeing** | Promote increased participation in activities that support improved wellbeing, such as walking, running, cycling, and recreation. | Overall need to promote health and wellbeing by promoting the use of the village’s assets to local people. |
| **Heritage Awareness** | Develop projects linked to the unique heritage associated with the village, including Bram Stoker/Dracula and significance of George Canning. | There is a recognition that many of the most celebrated stories and figures associated with the village are not widely known or appreciated – this is the case within the local population and further afield. |
| **Housing** | Increase the supply of affordable housing in the village. | There is an identified lack of housing in the area, and in particular affordable housing aimed at attracting young families. |
| **Transport** | Improve public transport links with larger towns. | Connectivity with larger towns such as Coleraine, Ballymoney, and Limavady is recognised as being poor and infrequent. |
| **Enterprise Development** | Activities to promote continued viability and growth of local enterprises.  Creation of more employment opportunities for local people.  Explore the feasibility of additional business supports. | There is a need for action to promote and sustain the rural economy, thereby ensuring the continued viability of local businesses and the retention of jobs within the rural population. |

# 7.0 Implementation & Monitoring Plan

To see the range of priority actions addressed for the benefit of those living in Garvagh, the following implementation plan has been developed which sets out further detail in relation to the key responsible owners of each action, and the key milestones which would need to be reached.

| **Theme** | **Action** | **Key Activities & Milestones** | **Timeframes** | **Responsible Owners** | **Supporting Partners** | **Funding Sources** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Economic Development** | Create a local Traders’ Group or Business Forum. | Establish a new Traders’ Group or Business Forum to act as a collective voice for local businesses.  Agree group constitution, committee, policies and procedures, including financial processes and key functions (e.g., lobbying, organisation of commerce-promoting events, etc.).  Create social media profiles for the Group, and potentially a website to promote activities. | Within 12 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Local business owners | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | The National Lottery (TNL) - Awards for All |
| **Community Development & Capacity Building** | Deliver additional training and capacity building programmes for volunteers and committee members.  Support community organisations to recruit and retain volunteers. | Undertake skills audit to determine priority areas for training and capacity building programmes.  Identify suitable facilitators and location to host training sessions.  Promote training and development opportunities.  Deliver capacity building programme. | Within 6 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | GDT | Local community organisations  Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | TNL  Awards for All  Halifax Community Foundation  TBUC: Central Good Relations Fund  Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council |
| **Collaborative Working** | Attain resources to facilitate better working between groups that are active in the village. | Organise regular Community Engagement Forums and events for all local groups.  Host regular community consultation events to ensure all community and voluntary groups continue to meet the needs of those living in the area, | Quarterly from finalisation of Village Plan. | GDT | Other community and voluntary organisations that are active in the area | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council |
| **Maximising the Potential of Local Assets** | Public Realms Improvements. | Agree priorities for public realm improvements e.g., seating, lighting, signage, etc.  Liaise with relevant statutory partners to determine available budget. | Within 3 years of finalisation of Village Plan. | Local community stakeholders | Residents  Local community organisations  Local businesses  Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | Department for Communities |
| Promote the benefits associated with the use of Garvagh Forest. | Evolve and continue programmes that have been delivered successfully. | Ongoing from finalisation of Village Plan. | Forest Service | GDT  Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | N/A |
| Increase marketing and promotion of the village’s assets, including enhanced signage of visitor attractions and historic sites. | Develop promotional material aimed at a wide audience, including:   * Schools * Community Groups * Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts * Mountain Biking Clubs * Walking Groups * Nature Appreciation Societies | Developed within 12 months of finalisation of Village Plan.  Reviewed quarterly to assess effectiveness. | GDT | Forest Service  Tourism NI  Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council  Local Tourism Development Organisations | DfC – for signage only  Potential for the village to benefit from wider marketing efforts, dedicated to attracting visitors to the wider area. |
| Explore the potential for a wild forest play space in Garvagh Forest. | Secure funding to undertake a feasibility study.  Appoint suitably qualified professional to undertake feasibility analysis. | Within 12 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Forest Service  Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council | GDT  Local community organisations and groups that work with young people | Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council |
| **Supporting Young People** | Explore the potential for a play space in Cornerstone Park. | Secure funding to undertake a feasibility study.  Appoint suitably qualified professional to undertake feasibility analysis. | Within 2 years of finalisation of Village Plan. | Trustees of the TBF & KL Thompson Trust (Park Owners) | GDT  Local  community organisations/groups that work with young people.  Local political representatives  EA Youth Services | Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council |
| **Community Pride** | Organise community litter picks. | Organise and promote litter pick days where volunteers come together to clean up rubbish across the village.  Promotion of litter picking days through Social Media Channels | Quarterly from finalisation of Village Plan. | Residents | Residents  Local community organisations  Local businesses (social value) | N/A - though some businesses may be willing to sponsor the event and provide materials and/or litter-picking equipment |
| **Health & Wellbeing** | Promote increased participation in activities that support better wellbeing, such as walking, running, cycling, and outdoor recreation. | Develop targeted communications aimed at promoting participation.  Organise events aimed at increasing participation in exercise and physical wellbeing activities. | Communication developed within 6 months of Village Plan finalisation.  Promotion activities to be undertaken on an ongoing basis.  Success of activities to be reviewed annually. | Local community organisations/ new Community Forum | ~~Local community and voluntary organisations~~  Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council  Forest Service | TNL  Awards for All  Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council  Sport NI |
| **Heritage Awareness** | Develop projects linked to unique heritage associated with the village, including Bram Stoker/Dracula and significance of George Canning. | Develop project, including content, activities, target audiences, and promotion methods.  Secure funding for pilot initiatives and then a more comprehensive programme. | Project to be developed within 12 months of Village Plan finalisation.  Engagement with potential funders to commence at early stages of project development. | Range of local stakeholders | Garvagh Museum  Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council | Heritage Lottery Fund |
| **Housing** | Increase the supply of affordable housing in the village. | Engage with planners, developers, and NI Housing Executive. | Within 60 months of Village Plan finalisation. | Range of local stakeholders | Department for Communities  NI Housing Executive  Housing Associations | N/A |
| **Transport** | Improve public transport links with larger towns. | Engage with DfI to determine feasibility of improved public transport links to and from Garvagh.  Explore the feasibility of developing community transport alternatives. | Within 12 months of Village Plan finalisation. | Range of local stakeholders | Translink  Local community transport providers | N/A |
| **Enterprise Development** | Activities to promote continued viability and growth of local enterprises and exploring the feasibility of additional business support. | Engage with CCG Economic Development Team to ensure businesses are aware of all local support available. | Within 24 months of Village Plan finalisation. | New Traders’ Group | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | N/A |
| Creation of employment opportunities for local people. | Engage with Labour Market Partnership, FE colleges, etc. to broker links between local employers and those seeking employment.  Assess viability of rates holidays and Business Improvement District to support local enterprises. | Within 24 months of Village Plan finalisation. | New Traders’ Group | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | N/A |