

**Kilrea**

Village Plan

March 2024

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

The name of Kilrea village is derived from the Irish ‘Cill Ria’, meaning 'church on the hill', with the village getting its name from an ancient church that once stood near the present location of St. Patrick’s Church of Ireland. Evidence suggests the area has been inhabited since the Stone Age, with remnants of it’s rich history scattered along the riverbanks. Although much of the pre-Christian history remains shrouded in mystery, legend has it that in the 5th Century, St. Patrick himself identified a site for a church during his travels through the village.

A map of a city

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

Located close to the picturesque River Bann, Kilrea benefits from a well-connected road network. Thoroughfares like the A29 provide efficient access to nearby towns and major cities, enhancing connectivity for both residents and visitors. Public transport services, including bus routes, add to Kilrea's accessibility, offering convenient travel options for commuters and travellers.

A building with a large window

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Figure 2: Kilrea Sports Complex

The village contains scenic gems like The Manor House and Golf Club, with Lake Kilrea offering a picturesque setting for leisurely strolls and water-based activities, while Woodhall Residential Centre, owned by the Education Authority, provides a retreat for school groups. Kilrea Sports Complex provide recreational facilities that foster an active lifestyle and community engagement. The village also contains a play park that families can avail of.

These green spaces not only enhance Kilrea's aesthetic appeal but also contribute to biodiversity conservation, providing habitats for various plant and animal species. The village also has a library and Town Hall, which is regularly used by community groups and local schools.

A body of water with a dock and a boat

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Figure 3: The Lake Kilrea

Kilrea is home to a diverse array of community groups, each playing a vital role in fostering social cohesion and enhancing the quality of life for residents:

* The Kilrea Community Fairy Thorn Association celebrates the town's folklore and traditions.
* The Kilrea Community Playgroup provides early childhood education.
* The Kilrea Women’s Institute offers a platform for women to connect, learn, and contribute to their community.
* Sports enthusiasts can join the Kilrea GAC and Kilrea United Football Club, promoting teamwork and healthy competition.
* For seniors, the Kilrea Over 55’s club provides a welcoming environment for socialising and leisure activities.
* The Kilrea Young Farmers and Kilrea and District Angling Club offer opportunities for outdoor recreation and skill-building, enriching the fabric of community life in Kilrea.

The village has several schools catering to students of all ages and stages of learning. St. Columba's Primary School, Crossroads Primary School, and Kilrea Primary School nurture young minds, focusing on academic development and personal growth. St. Connor's College offers secondary education, preparing students for future academic pursuits or entry into the workforce. Additionally, Kilrea Community Playgroup offers early childhood education and development programmes, creating a supportive learning environment for preschool-aged children.

A building with a sign on the side

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Figure 4: Kilrea Town Hall

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key Assets** | **Community Groups** |
| The Manor House and Golf Club  Marian Hall  The Lake Kilrea  Woodhall Residential Centre  Kilrea Golf Club  Kilrea Sports Complex  Kilrea Play Parks  Kilrea Town Hall  Kilrea Library  St Columba’s Primary School  Kilrea Primary School  St Connor’s College  Crossroads Primary School  Craiglea Pitch  Health Centre  Fire Station | Kilrea Community  Fairy Thorn Association  Kilrea Community Playgroup  Kilrea Women’s Institute  Kilrea GAC  Kilrea United Football Club  Kilrea Over 55’s club  Kilrea Young Farmers  Kilrea and District Angling Club |

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

# 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. |

|  |
| --- |
| **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** |
| --- | --- |
| **Development of Natural**  **& Heritage Assets** | * Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Department for Infrastructure) * Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland: 10 Year Plan (Draft, Department for the Economy) |
| **Communication &**  **Awareness Raising** | * PEACE Plus (Special EU Programmes Body) * Together Building a United Community (The Executive Office) |
| **Environmental Improvements** | * Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Department for Infrastructure) |
| **Volunteer Development** | * PEACE Plus (Special EU Programmes Body) * Together Building a United Community (The Executive Office) |
| **Road Safety** | * Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy 2020 (Department for Infrastructure) |
| **Programming** | * PEACE Plus (Special EU Programmes Body) * Together Building a United Community (The Executive Office) |
| **Capital Development** | * Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Department for Infrastructure) * Active Living – The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (Sport NI, Department for Communities) |
| **Tourism & Visitor**  **Attraction** | * Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland: 10 Year Plan (Draft, Department for the Economy) |
| **Housing** | * 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, Kilrea falls under the ‘Bann H’ Super Data Zone. Data is also included from the September 2022 Business Register & Employment Survey NI.

**3.1 Population**

At the time of the 2021 Census, the population of Kilrea was 1,673. This represents the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency figure obtained for the Kilrea settlement.

**3.2 Statistical Profile**

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Figure 5: Map of ‘Bann H’ Super Data Zone, (Source: Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency)

**3.3 Age Profile**

The population of Kilrea has an age profile that is generally more youthful than local and regional averages, as evidenced by the composition of the village’s age profile as seen in the below table:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Age 0-14 yrs** | **Age 16-39 yrs** | **Age 40-64 yrs** | **Age 65+ yrs** |
| Kilrea / Bann H | 23% | 32% | 30% | 15% |
| Bann District Electoral Area | 19% | 27% | 34% | 19% |
| Causeway Coast & Glens Council Area | 18% | 29% | 34% | 19% |
| Northern Ireland | 19% | 31% | 32% | 17% |

The 2021 Census indicates Kilrea’s population was mostly female at 52%.

**Household Size**

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

* 1 person - 32%;
* 2 people - 28%;
* 3 people - 16%;
* 4 people - 13%; and
* 5 people or more - 11%.

**Household Tenure**

On Census Day in Kilrea, 50% owned their house (includes shared ownership), 21% social rented, 26% private rented and 2% lived rent free.

**3.4 Religion and Ethnicity**

* Approximately 75% of the local population recorded their ‘Religion’ or ‘Religion brought up in’ as Roman Catholic, with 18% of the population recording Protestant or another Christian religion.
* 7% of village residents reported no religious affiliation.
* 99% of village residents reported being from a white ethnic background.
* 88% of those living in the area were born in Northern Ireland.
* 8% of the local population reported being born outside of the UK and Ireland.

**3.5 Health**

Kilrea residents experience health and wellbeing levels that are consistent with regional and national averages. 79% of residents report having either a ‘Very Good’ or ‘Good’ standard of general health, compared to the Bann DEA rate of 81%, the Causeway Coast & Glens rate of 77%, and the Northern Ireland national average of 79%.

Moreover, 76% of citizens note they are not limited by a long-term health problem or disability, a rate that is again similar to regional and national averages.

**3.6 Labour Market & Qualifications**

The 2021 Census compiled information relating to the economic status of those living in Kilrea, as well as a profile of skill and qualification level held. Whilst the area boasts an unemployment rate of just 2%, 44% of the population over the age of 16 are economically inactive.

The skills profile of the local population is presented below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **No Qualifications** | **Level 1** | **Level 2** | **Level 3** | **Level 4+** | **Apprenticeship or Other** |
| Kilrea / Bann H | 27% | 7% | 15% | 16% | 24% | 12% |
| 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 Kilrea’s population has a similar level of qualifications to that of the DEA, Council, and Northern Ireland averages. However, a lower number of residents hold Level 4 and higher qualifications, whilst a higher number have participated in an Apprenticeship.

**Industry of Employment**

In Kilrea 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 | 3% |
| Manufacturing | 11% |
| Construction | 15% |
| Distribution, hotels & restaurants | 23% |
| Transport & communication | 5% |
| Financial, real estate, professional & administration | 12% |
| Public administration, education & health | 28% |
| Other | 3% |

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

According to the September 2022, Business Register & Employment Survery NI (BRES NI), the number of employee jobs based in the Kilrea 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 Kilrea** |
| 2022 | 1028 |
| 2021 | 950 |
| 2020 | Not available due to Covid pandemic |
| 2019 | 885 |
| 2018 | Not available |
| 2017 | 854 |

**Car or Van Availability**

In Kilrea 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 | 26% |
| 3 cars or vans | 7% |
| 4 cars of vans | 2% |
| 5 or more cars or vans | 1% |

**3.8 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 Kilrea population fell under the Kilrea Super Output Area, which covered the village and surrounding rural areas. Key findings include:

* In 2017, Kilrea was ranked as the 407th most deprived area in Northern Ireland (out of 890). This ranking was almost the same (409th) in 2010.
* Amongst the various thematic indicators of relative deprivation, the main areas of concern are Income Deprivation (which falls amongst the 25% most deprived communities in Northern Ireland) and Access to Services, where Kilrea is ranked amongst the 30% most disadvantaged.
* Between 2010 and 2017, the area’s relative deprivation improved across all measures with the exception of Income Deprivation. However, the overall relative ranking of the area fell because of the scale of decline in the relative Income Deprivation ranking.

**3.9 Conclusions**

Overall, the socio-economic landscape within Kilrea can be said to be in line with local and national averages. However, challenges were identified through the statistical analysis, which included a need to address comparative educational underachievement, as well as a need to address declining levels of Income Deprivation faced by the local population.

# 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 development of a new Village Plan for Kilrea.

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 carried out to gain insights into the area's demographics, economic characteristics, and social trends. The Kilrea Community and Fairy Thorn Association, acting as the lead partner in Kilrea, was engaged. Their support has been appreciated in this process. A thorough site visit of Kilrea was 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 Kilrea Town Hall on Thursday, 22nd February 2024.
* An online survey, facilitated by Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council between Friday, 9th February and Friday, 1st March 2024.

A white and orange card with a blue and white megaphone

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Figure 6: 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 Kilrea 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 Kilrea 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, Kilrea was viewed as having a range of admirable characteristics and qualities. Amenities in the village are viewed as positive, but with some aspects identified that could be developed and improved upon. In relation to the current community landscape in Kilrea, the Fairythorn Group are recognised as community leaders, and there is enthusiasm for the development of a new Community Hub, which will offer new spaces for the community.

The following key Community Assets were identified:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Commercial Assets** | **Healthcare Assets** | **Natural & Heritage Assets** |
| * Market * Quality and Variety of Local Businesses * Good Availability of Parking * Supermarket | * Health Centre * Defibrillators * Dentist * Optician | * Woods and Walks * Proximity to River Bann * Kilrea Lake * The Bann Bridge * War Memorial |
| **Sporting Assets** | **Community Assets** | **Other Assets** |
| * GAA Club * Snooker Club * 2 x Local Golf Clubs * Fishing Spots | * Community Facilities * Fairythorn Association * Town Hall * Woodhall Centre * Marian Hall | * Credit Union * Post Office * Library * Washing Machine Facilities * Recycling Facilities * Fire Station * 3x Primary Schools * Local High School |

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Recreational Activities** | **Sporting Activities** | **Youth Activities** |
| * History Group * Ulster Scots Events * Walks at Kilrea Lake * Fairy Thorn Festival * Friendship Group * Plough on Group * Women’s Institute * Over 55s Club | * Bowling Club * Sports Complex * Football Pitch * Golf Club * GAA Club * Fishing | * Shared Education Facilities * Young Farmers’ Club * Boys’ Brigade * Rainbows/Brownies * Mums and Tots Group |

**5.1 SWOT Analysis**

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

| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| --- | --- |
| **Natural Assets & Heritage:** Kilrea boasts a range of natural and heritage assets. There is scope to deliver a variety of activities associated with celebrating each.  **Community Capacity:** there are a variety of active community groups in the area, catering to the needs of all ages and a variety of interests.  **Availability of Sports Facilities:** Kilrea boasts a rich variety of sporting options for local people to avail of.  **Diversity of Civic Amenities:** the village is home to a wide range of facilities and services, which local people can avail of without having to travel to larger towns/civic hubs.  **House Prices:** house prices in the area are recognised as being affordable and attractive for young families. | **Public Transport:** it is recognised there is poor public transport connectivity between Kilrea and other towns and villages.  **Public Realms Works:** there is a lack of seating, dog fouling bins, and floral displays in Kilrea, which impacts on the village’s aesthetics and cleanliness.  **Road Safety:** the current position of the zebra crossing at Bridge Street was identified as being inappropriate, and unsafe for the public to use. Footpaths in the village were also identified as needing upgrade and maintenance. |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| **Better use of Natural Assets:** there is scope for natural assets to be more effectively utilised for community use, heritage awareness, and economic benefit, including developing additional walking routes through and around the village.  **Communication:** there are multiple options that could be developed to increase awareness of activities and community events.  **Additional Activities:** there is capacity for the variety of community activities delivered in Kilrea to be broadened. | **Tourism Activities:** it is recognised that nearly all of the efforts made to attract external visitors to the area are concentrated on the North Coast. Kilrea benefits very little from any of these marketing campaigns or tourism development efforts.  **Availability of Funding:** there is an appetite for community development and growth in the village, but ambitions can often be hampered by limited availability of funding.  **Capacity & Availability of Volunteers:** Community and social development in the village can be limited by the time and availability of current volunteers. |

**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.

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

**5.2.1 Demographic Information**

* 1.1% of respondents were aged between 0 and 14.
* 26.1% of respondents were aged between 15 and 39.
* 61.4% of respondents were aged between 40 and 64.
* 11.4% of respondents were aged 65 and over.

Most responses (61.3%) were received from female residents, with 28.4% being received from male residents. Two respondents preferred not to state their gender.

88.6% of respondents who participated in the survey were from the village, with 78.4% of these stating that they had lived in the village for ten or more years. These findings provide survey legitimacy as a representative view of residents.

**5.2.2 Quality of Life**

Perceptions of respondents were generally mixed:

* 27.3% had either a ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’ perception of the village.
* 48.9% felt life in the village was ‘Acceptable’.
* 23.9% had either a ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’ perception of the village.

Moreover, 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 5.7.

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** | Overall, the cleanliness of Kilrea village was not considered a major cause for concern. 39.8% of respondents deemed it to be ‘Acceptable’. However, there was some discontent noted, with 36.4% stating cleanliness is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Condition of Streets** | The overall condition of streets was outlined as an area for improvement, with 58% of survey respondents stating them as being ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Accessibility** | Accessibility was considered ‘Acceptable’ in Kilrea, with exactly half of respondents selecting this option. |
| **Pedestrian Friendly** | There were mixed views about how pedestrian friendly Kilrea is:   * 26.1% stated it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. * 45.5% stated it is ‘Acceptable’. * 28.4% stated it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Availability of**  **Public Transport** | Public transport was highlighted as a key issue in need of addressing, with 54.5% of respondents considering the frequency of buses to be ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Traffic Congestion** | Traffic congestion stood out as one of the single most negative aspects of living in the village. Most respondents (67%) felt it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Street Lighting** | Generally, the levels of street lighting in Kilrea are considered ‘Acceptable’ (58%). This was the most common response to this question by a large margin. |
| **Availability of**  **Car Parking** | Survey respondents were generally satisfied with the availability of parking in the village, with almost half of respondents (47.7%) believing there to be an ‘Acceptable’ level of parking in Kilrea. |
| **Village Signage** | Mixed responses were received in relation to the quality of signage:   * 27.3% stated it is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. * 38.6% stated it is ‘Acceptable’. * 34.1% stated it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Open Space** | The availability of open space in Kilrea was noted as an opportunity for improvement by over half of respondents (52.3%) stating it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Play Park** | Sentiments towards the play park in Kilrea were slightly negative, with 40.9% of respondents stating the current space is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. A minority of 38.6% of respondents stated the current play park is ‘Acceptable’. |
| **Sports Facilities** | The prevailing sentiments expressed were that sports facilities in the village were either ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. This was the feedback provided by 46.6% of respondents. |
| **Community Centre** | The quality of the village’s Community Centre was considered to be low, with most (60.2%) respondents stating it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Anti-Social Behaviour**  **(ASB)** | Anti-social behaviour emerged as one of the aspects of life in Kilrea that needs addressing. 77.3% of respondents considered the current levels of ASB to be either ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Vandalism** | Similarly, levels of vandalism in the village were considered to be unacceptable by most survey respondents, with 62.5% considering current levels to be ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Littering** | The levels of litter were considered to be damaging to the overall aesthetics of Kilrea, with 63.6% of survey respondents considering the current levels of litter to be ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Derelict Buildings** | The levels of building dereliction in the village were also seen to be a negative aspect of the village’s physical environment, with 70.5% of respondents stating it is ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’. |
| **Friendliness of People** | The strongest element of community life in Kilrea was the friendliness of those living in the village. 78.4% of respondents stated this is ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. Moreover, almost half (48.9%) stated the atmosphere in the village is either ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. |
| **Shops** | The quality and variety of shops in the village was a positive aspect of local life, with 42.6% of respondents stating the quality of local shops is either ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’. |
| **Eateries** | The quality and variety of cafes and takeaways in the village was overall considered to be at a good level – only 19.3% of respondents disagreed. |

**5.2.3 Favourite Aspect of Living in Kilrea**

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:

* Strength of the local community, and the positive community spirit in the area.
* The village’s natural assets and scenery.
* Capacity of local groups, such as Churches and the GAA Club.
* Quality of schools and education provision.
* Variety of local services, including pharmacy, supermarket, chemists, and health centre.

**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:

* Regeneration and upgrade of the village’s capital assets.
* Affordable housing provision.
* Investment in the local play park.
* Overall lack of youth provision.
* Levels of Anti-Social Behaviour.
* Village aesthetics.
* Road safety and pedestrian safety issues, e.g., condition of footpaths and better traffic management systems.

# 6.0 Action Plan

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Description** | **Why is it needed?** |
| **Development of Natural**  **& Heritage Assets** | Promote increased awareness and use of Kilrea’s natural assets (e.g., the lake, rivers, wood, etc.).  Develop walking trails at Movanagher Wood.  Link Portna with Portneal by creating a walkway along the edge of the River Bann. | Kilrea boasts a rich array of natural and heritage assets, but they are considered under-appreciated, and little is known about them within the general public or for those living outside the village. |
| **Communication &**  **Awareness Raising** | Actions to generate increased awareness of community events and activities, including the creation of a Community Forum. | There is a need to conduct more promotion of community events, as well as increasing awareness of the village’s assets and history. |
| **Environmental Improvements** | Increase provision of dog fouling bins, flower planters, and upgrade the village’s seating. | Minor environmental issues were identified as causes for concern during consultation. |
| **Volunteer Development** | Develop initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of volunteers to play an active role in community life in the village. | Through consultation, it was identified that volunteer capacity was an issue that could potentially hinder community development in Kilrea, with a need to get more people involved. |
| **Road Safety** | Explore options to improve road safety for pedestrians in the village, and address congestion on Bridge Street. | The location of the zebra crossing at Bridge Street was noted as unsafe. The quality of footpaths were also viewed as being unsafe. |
| **Programming** | Introduce additional community programmes, such as:   * Men’s Shed * Gardening Group * Music and arts sessions | There is a need to address isolation within the local community, particularly amongst elderly/retired men. |
| **Capital Development** | Regeneration of Marian Hall to a standard befitting of modern community centres.  Upgrade and enhance play parks in Craiglea and Lisnagrot.  Enhance the walkway around Craiglea.  Potential to create community gardens or allotments in these areas and also in Larchfield.  Enhance the sports complex and Craiglea Pitch and MUGA in Kilrea. | These buildings/areas within Kilrea have been identified as being either outdated and/or in significant need of upgrade in order to continue to be fit for purpose.  There is also an ongoing need for capital investment in the continual upgrade and renewal of assets within the village to ensure that they remain usable by the local community. |
| **Tourism & Visitor**  **Attraction** | Develop initiatives to attract external visitors to Kilrea. | There is recognition that the village’s assets are under-appreciated, and that greater efforts could be made to attract visitors to Kilrea, many of whom are already visiting the wider North Coast area. |
| **Housing** | Increased provision of affordable housing in the village | This was a need identified through consultation. |

# 7.0 Implementation & Monitoring Plan

To see the range of priority actions addressed for the benefit of those living in Kilrea, 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** | **Potential Funding Sources** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Development of Kilrea’s Natural and Heritage Assets** | Promote increased awareness and use of Kilrea’s natural assets (e.g., lake, rivers, wood, etc.). | Design and install increased signage. | Signage within 12 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Kilrea Community and Fairy Thorn Association | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council  Department for Communities |
| Improvement of walking trails at Movanagher Wood | Undertake surveys and environmental studies to enhance existing walking trails. | Signage within 24 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Forest Service (owners of Movanagher Wood) | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | n/a |
| Link Portna with Portneal by creating a walkway along the edge of the River Bann. | Technical study to be carried out and project plan developed  Finance secured to undertake additional works | Within 36 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Range of Local Community, Commercial and Statutory Stakeholders | Causeway Coast and Glens Council | Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs |
|  | Maximise Kilrea’s potential as a key location along River Bann Blueway | Develop and deliver additional programmes to encourage increased, sustainable use of natural assets. | Within 24 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Range of Local Community, Commercial and Statutory Stakeholders | Causeway Coast and Glens Council | Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs – Kilrea is listed as a significant site in the Lower Bann Corridor Recreational and Tourism Study (2017) |
|  | * Reference Bann Blueway <https://niopa.qub.ac.uk/bitstream/NIOPA/9152/1/Lower%20Bann%20Executive%20Summary%20final%20version%20050517.pdf> | | | | | |
| **Communication and Awareness Raising** | Actions to generate increased awareness of community events and activities, including creation of a Community Forum. | Creation of Kilrea Community Forum.  Appointment of Office Holders and Committee.  Agree Forum’s purpose, remit, and frequency of meetings. | Within 18 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Kilrea Community and Fairy Thorn Association | Women’s Institute  GAA Club  Over 55s Club  History Group  Young Farmers  Walking Group  Angling Club  Friendship Group | N/A |
| **Village Aesthetics** | Increase provision of dog fouling bins, clean street signs, more flower planters, and upgrade seating. | Explore optimal locations to install environmental improvements.  Install additional bins and flower planters.  Upgrade seating within the village.  Ensuring that all existing street signs are kept in a tidy condition. | Within 18 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Kilrea Community and Fairy Thorn Association | Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council | Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council (through budget allocation, rather than competitive funding award) |
| **Volunteer Development** | Develop initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of volunteers to play an active role in community life in the village. | Through a targeted survey, identify skills and capacity gaps in the volunteers base of organisations across the village.  Develop and Implement a Kilrea Village Volunteer Strategy. | Within 24 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Kilrea Community and Fairy Thorn Association | WI  GAA Club  Over 55s Club  History Group  Young Farmers  Walking Group  Angling Club  Friendship Group | TNL Community Fund – Awards for All  Halifax Foundation  TBUC: Central Good Relations Fund |
| **Road Safety** | Explore options to improve road safety for pedestrians in the village, as well as addressing congestion on Bridge Street. | Review effectiveness/  appropriateness of location of Bridge Street zebra crossing.  Upgrade footpaths and walkways. | Within 24 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Local Elected Representatives | Department for Infrastructure  Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council – PCSP  PSNI  NIFRS | N/A |
| **Programming** | Introduce additional community programmes, e.g.:   * Men’s Shed * Gardening Group * Music and art sessions * Youth Engagement Programmes | Explore feasibility of additional programming, including more in-depth community engagement. To include prioritisation of programmes.  Identify suitable location to host priority programmes.  Engage with suitable facilitators.  Deliver additional programming for community benefit.  Continued youth engagement, building on Programme delivered by the Education Authority in the area | Design of programmes – within 6 months of finalisation of Village Plan.  Delivery – ongoing from finalisation of Village Plan, with annual review of programme effectiveness. | Kilrea Community and Fairy Thorn Association | WI  GAA Club  Over 55’s Club  History Group  Young Farmers  Walking Group  Angling Club  Friendship Group | Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council  TNL Community Fund – Awards for All  PEACE Plus  Education Authority |
| **Capital Development** | Regeneration of Marian Hall to a standard that is befitting of modern community centres. | Develop capital development project to regenerate the Marian Hall, including business case, technical drawings, and procurement. | Within 60 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Building Owners | Kilrea Community & Fairy Thorn Association  WI  GAA Club  Over 55’s Club  History Group  Young Farmers  Walking Group  Angling Club  Friendship Group | Development:  Causeway, Coast & Glens  Borough Council  Capital works:  Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council  Department for Infrastructure  Department for Communities  PEACE Plus |
| Upgrade and enhance play parks in Craiglea and Lisnagrot. | Technical feasibility study to outline scale and scope of enhancement works | Within 36 months of Village Plan finalisation | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough  Council | Local Community Stakeholders |
| Enhance the walkway around Craiglea. | Programme to upgrade village’s walkways. | Within 36 months of Village Plan finalisation | Local Community Stakeholders | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough  Council |
| Explore potential of community gardens/ allotments in these areas and also in Larchfield. | Development community gardens at identified suitable locations | Within 24 months of Village Plan finalisation | Local Community Stakeholders | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough  Council |
| Enhance the sports complex and Craiglea Pitch and MUGA in Kilrea. | Deliver capital project to develop and enhance the village’s sporting amenities. | Within 36 months of Village Plan finalisation | Local Community Stakeholders | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough  Council |
| **Tourism and Attracting Visitors** | Develop initiatives to attract external visitors to Kilrea. | Marketing and promotional campaigns to highlight the village’s natural and heritage assets.  Deliver events, activities, programmes, and festivals aimed at attracting external visitors. | Within 12 months of finalisation of Village Plan. | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council  Tourism NI | Kilrea Community & Fairy Thorn Association  WI  GAA Club  Over 55’s Club  History Group  Young Farmers  Walking Group  Angling Club  Friendship Group | Causeway Coast & Glens  Borough Council  Tourism NI |
| **Housing** | Increased provision of affordable housing in the village | Exploration of possibilities to increase the supply of housing in the village to attract young families to the area. | Within 60 months of Village Plan finalisation. | Range of Local Stakeholders | NI Housing Executive  Housing Associations  Dept. for Communities | N/A |