Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision, the future starts here.....

A Vision and Strategy to guide Carrick on Shannon’s Economic, Social and Cultural Development to 2020

A Vibrant Community & Inclusive Society that promotes diversity, enterprise and a quality natural environment
"By 2020 Carrick on Shannon will be recognised as a premier gateway for waterways, adventure, heritage and eco tourism. The town will also serve as a regional cultural hub supported by an attractive and accessible town centre with a high quality offering in hospitality, food and specialty shopping. Carrick on Shannon will promote innovation and nurture entrepreneurship, diversity, creativity and a ‘can do’ attitude"
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October 2012

3
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision is intended to set the scene for the strategic direction of the town over the coming decade. In doing so the 2020 Vision attempts to create a shared ‘story board’ for the future development priorities and objectives for the town rather than a traditional economic development plan. That said a number of strategic projects are identified for action that will shape the development of Carrick on Shannon to the year 2020.

1.2 The 2020 Vision Study was commissioned by Leitrim County Council in June 2011 following an open tender process to a specific study Terms of Reference. The work commenced with public launch event followed by a detailed research and consultation programme to encompass all aspects of local development. While Leitrim County Council has taken the lead on this study and facilitated the process for a 2020 Vision, the strategy ultimately rests in the ownership and the governance of the town.

1.3 This means that both formal and informal structures will need to be brought to bear in the management and implementation of the Strategy over the coming years. In particular, the need for cross agency and voluntary support and partnership around its delivery will be critical. Section 5 of this report elaborates on the best models of governance and management to be deployed in this regard.

1.4 Carrick on Shannon is built upon a long heritage of inland waterways activity and associated tourism. The town has a strong tradition of creative and cultural expression and craft, and has a natural and built environment of an enviable standard. Alongside these assets the development of the town in recent years as an accommodation, hospitality and retail centre must be exploited for long-term economic benefit.

1.5 The 2020 Vision for Carrick on Shannon will draw together these strengths with new opportunities for a revived town centre and a targeted approach to tourism and cultural development through a number specific niche, but growing, attractions and activities. The vision also points to the need to harness the strengths and dynamics of the local community in driving forward with a sense of innovation, collaboration, creativity and entrepreneurship.

1.6 The Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision will be enshrined in the overall objectives and policies for the town in a planning and development context. This will be reflected in the revisions to the County Development Plan 2009 – 2015 and the Local Area Plan 2010 – 2016 when that process begins.

1.7 Finally, the mix of ingredients in this Vision and Strategy has been well refined through a detailed programme of research and consultation (see section 3 of this report). We believe these are the right combination of complimentary priorities and activities for Carrick on Shannon as it goes towards 2020 in a self-confident and sustainable manner. The marrying of existing developments and achievements with future growth opportunities in tourism and leisure along with a strong cultural scene, a beautiful natural and built environment brought together in a bustling town centre, will define Carrick on Shannon from its (2013) 400th celebrations onwards.
A summary SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) is presented below to help contextualise the background to the development of the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>o Good Connectivity by bus, rail, road, air</td>
<td>o Carrick on Shannon 400th and ‘The Gathering’ in 2013</td>
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<td>o Weekend tourism including hen and stag parties</td>
<td>o Coordinated information guide</td>
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<td>o Large range of visitor attractions in town and surrounding area</td>
<td>o Improve signage</td>
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<td>o Quality restaurant and entertainment scene</td>
<td>o Broaden and diversify from existing commercial markets</td>
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<td>o Largest inland boating centre in Ireland and River Shannon and related activity</td>
<td>o All weather leisure facilities for residents and visitors</td>
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<td>o Positive image &amp; environment</td>
<td>o 3rd Level outreach tuition</td>
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<td>o Strong tidy towns committee</td>
<td>o Attractive location with good quality of life and low cost base</td>
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<td>o Strong sense of community</td>
<td>o Regenerate town centre</td>
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<td>o Experience &amp; knowledge in community development</td>
<td>o Attract more visitors from N4 captive market/audience</td>
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<td>o Historical assets / tour of town</td>
<td>o Town centre car &amp; bus parking</td>
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<td>o Small independent retailers</td>
<td>o Town branding and marketing</td>
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<td>o Image of COS as centre for Arts</td>
<td>o Centre of excellence in rowing</td>
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<td>o Small town character</td>
<td>o Tourism – Leitrim Lineage</td>
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<td>o Cultural character</td>
<td>o Literary connections</td>
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<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
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<td>o Lack of good quality and integrated information on services and events</td>
<td>o Perceptions of Carrick can be negative with some visitors due to reputation for stag/hen parties</td>
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<td>o Tourism market is limited and over dependent on domestic niches</td>
<td>o Potential loss of tourist office</td>
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<td>o Lack of tourism promotion funding</td>
<td>o Overdependence on small number of sectors and visitor markets</td>
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<td>o Poor signage</td>
<td>o Price competitiveness or lack of</td>
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<td>o Low level of festival activity</td>
<td>o Declining boat rental market</td>
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<td>o Parking in town centre</td>
<td>o Out of town shopping is diminishing</td>
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<td>o No 3rd level education institution;</td>
<td>o Town centre viability</td>
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<td>o No sector of excellence</td>
<td>o Emigration and loss of talent</td>
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<td>o Lack of critical mass in local population or economy</td>
<td>o Over-dependent on one or two large employers</td>
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<td>o Lack of co-ordinated sports facilities</td>
<td>o Impact of weekend parties</td>
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<td>o Lack of funding for Arts &amp; Culture</td>
<td>o Discontinuity of funding for variety of sectors</td>
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<td>o Lack of social and cultural integration across town</td>
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![Image of Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision](image-url)
2. **VISION IN CONTEXT**

2.1 Setting the vision for Carrick on Shannon to the year 2020 requires a strong degree of reflection on the current position of the town and its hinterland in a socio-economic context. While Carrick on Shannon must be considered in the context of its role as the county town for Co. Leitrim, it must also be assessed in its function in the natural socio-economic setting of South Leitrim and North Roscommon.

2.2 The map below highlights Carrick on Shannon’s travel to work catchment (in pink shading), which clearly demonstrates its central economic function for an area comprising Lough Allen districts to the north, east to the Cavan border and west as far as Boyle and Frenchpark and south past Elphin and almost to Strokestown. The population of this labour catchment is in excess of 7,300 based on 2006 statistics and factoring for an almost 10 percent increase in general population in Leitrim over the 2006 – 2011 period. It is important to note that Longford and Cavan travel to work patterns are not projected in this profile and therefore the overall figure is likely to be understated somewhat.

2.3 Without having reliable shopping catchment data there is a presumption that Carrick on Shannon serves most of this labour catchment area and a significant shopping trip pattern from the Boyle area and Sligo border and to Rooskey on the Longford border.

![Map of Carrick on Shannon](source: WDC Travel to Work & Labour Catchment Town Profiles 2009)

**Socio-Economic Profile**

2.4 Carrick on Shannon has an official population of 3,950 based on 2011 census results which represents a significant increase of 25.8 percent on 2006 figures. This is one of the highest population growth rates in the intervening census period anywhere in the state. However, given the classification of Carrick on Shannon as
an urban area across two local authority borders the figures are somewhat understated in absolute terms. Best estimates would suggest that the true population of the town and its immediate hinterland is marginally in excess of 4,500 persons. (2011 statistics CSO)

2.5 Based on 2011 census data the economic status of the local population above 15 years of age shows a fairly typical profile, and with similar trends in economic activity and inactivity since the 2006 census. In Carrick on Shannon 54.5 percent of the 15+ population are economically active or at work, 15.6 percent unemployed, 10 percent retired and 6.6 percent not in employment but looking after the family home. Alongside this 6.3 percent are students and 2.5 percent are claimants of permanent sickness or disability benefit. (2011 statistics CSO)

2.6 The housing profile of the town points to some interesting divergences from national trends. For example, the profile of the population according to their housing type points to a much higher than average rate of dwelling in apartments and flats at 13.5 percent against a national average of 10 percent and around twice the typical rate for provincial towns. (2006 statistics CSO)

2.7 The housing stock growth over time also highlights an interesting profile for Carrick on Shannon and reflects population growth in very recent years. Almost 33 percent of the entire housing stock of Carrick on Shannon has been added since 2001 compared with 6.2 percent nationally, and if measured since 1996 the percentage of new houses (1996 +) in Carrick on Shannon is 51 percent of the total stock as compared with 22.5 nationally. (2006 statistics CSO)

2.8 This profile demonstrates the dramatic growth and renewal of the town in the past decade and suggests that many of the new residents are younger than average and choosing smaller, and possibly rented, accommodation. It also suggests a vibrant housing market in the run up to the property crash of 2008 fuelled by rising demand for rental accommodation to service the tourism sector and a growing population.

Economic Drivers

2.9 Carrick on Shannon is strategically located on the N4 Dublin to Sligo national primary road network and also along the Sligo to Dublin main rail line. Access to Carrick on Shannon on this major artillery, along with air access via Ireland West Airport Knock places the town in a strong position for regional investment, commuter location choice and tourism. Access to Cavan and into Northern Ireland is hampered somewhat by a lack of strategic road access and this factor is a potential long-term limitation for developing these visitor markets especially for short stay breaks.

2.10 Carrick on Shannon is the regional gateway to the River Shannon and the Shannon – Erne waterway to the north and the Lakelands of Lough Allen and Lough Key. Within this extensive inland waterway system there is up to 41 lakes within a 10km radius of Carrick on Shannon. This waterway system has made Carrick on Shannon what it is today and has allowed the town to become synonymous with traditional river activities including cruising, rowing and angling. However, in more recent years there has been a growing trend in water based adventure activities such as kayaking. This rich environment and the natural facilities have made Carrick on Shannon an inland tourism hub on which the town has thrived.
2.11 In recent years Carrick on Shannon has benefited from quality Infrastructure and image improvements to the riverfront and in strategic road access. New jetty space has been created to accommodate more private cruise boats and access to the river on the town side has been opened up with walkways and boardwalk. The relatively new marina has also expanded the capacity and quality of facilities for the boating community and pleasure trippers. Visitors to the town are instantly greeted with spectacular views of the Shannon bustling with leisure activity and new accommodation overlooking the river.

2.12 Alongside Carrick on Shannon’s water reputation the town has an exciting and diverse architectural heritage including Costello Chapel opposite the town clock and Market Yard and reputed to be the smallest chapel in Europe at 16ft by 12ft. Also the restored Dock Arts Centre, formerly the Courthouse, with a vast plaza overlooking the river and much of the town centre, St Georges Church of Ireland and Heritage Visitor Centre and St Mary’s RC Church and Hatley Manor a spectacular Georgian residence on St George’s Terrace.

2.13 Carrick on Shannon & District Historical Society, Carrick on Shannon Local History Centre and Carrick on Shannon Heritage Group are very active in conservation work and visitor information, lectures and walking trails in and around the town.

2.14 Carrick on Shannon has also witnessed an embryonic Culture & Arts scene develop in recent years due to a strong foundation in music and craft design in particular. This has led to the area becoming more attractive to artists as a location of choice and the creation of a vibrant network of creative ventures and cultural products and services. The opening of the Dock Arts Centre in 2005 which incorporates gallery spaces, artists studios, performance theatre, café bar and Leitrim Design House, at the former Courthouse overlooking the town and river has given Carrick on Shannon a premier facility to excel in hosting Arts and Culture events.

2.15 While the traditional town centre has suffered a decline in trading over the past decade there has been a wider retail draw to the town primarily due to two strategically located retail parks on both, the Dublin road and Sligo road respectively. While these ‘large box’ retail formats have elevated Carrick on Shannon to a regional retail centre it is perceived by some that they have impacted on the vibrancy and viability of the town core. There has been a gradual disimprovement in the occupancy levels and rental rates of premises on Main St, in particular, and a relocation of some prominent businesses to the out of town centres.

2.16 On the upside there is a key opportunity to draw from this bigger pool of shoppers into the town centre for a more atmospheric retail and leisure experience. Meeting this ‘connected’ objective will be key to regenerating the town centre in the coming years.
3 2020 VISION PROCESS

Figure 3.1: Study Methodology Flow Chart

Strategic Review

3.1 The initial starting point for the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision study was a review of all existing policy, strategy and statutory material and reports relating to the town’s development and strategic planning. This included an assessment of priorities and projects identified in the Leitrim County Development Plan and the Carrick on Shannon Local Area Plan 2010 – 2016 among other statutory and planning documents.

3.2 Alongside these spatial planning documents and frameworks there was a review of sectoral policy, strategy and plans such as Tourism and Waterways development including Regional Tourism Development Plan for North West 2008 – 2010 and the joint Failte Ireland and Waterways Ireland thematic strategy for Lakelands & Inland Waterways Development 2010 – 2015.

3.3 In this phase of the study there was also a literature review of secondary information relating to sector development and trends in areas of specific interest to Carrick on Shannon. This element of the desk research examined adventure tourism, cultural and heritage tourism and tourism services and products. In this assessment niche products such as food and hospitality and quality of environment are also considered.
Consultation Programme

Part 1: Agency Consultations

3.4 Initially a set of strategic consultations was conducted with key agencies involved with, or responsible for, the development agenda in Carrick on Shannon and surrounding area. The consultations facilitated the drawing together of current activities and future plans for the area or themes to allow for an integrated approach to formulating the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision and Strategy.

3.5 This set of consultations included senior officers or managers in the following organisations:

- Leitrim County Council
- Leitrim Development Company
- Leitrim County Enterprise Board
- Carrick on Shannon Chamber of commerce
- Leitrim Tourism
- Failte Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- Western Development Commission
- Border, Midlands & West Regional Assembly
- IDA

3.6 The consultations were conducted in both a focus group setting followed by one-to-one interview and meeting with each and focused on planning, policy, strategy and programme activity that would potentially feed into the 2020 Vision.

3.7 At this initial stage some key strategies and projects were identified that would form part of the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision.

Part 2: Thematic Panels

3.8 The consultation programme, which incorporated options appraisal and priority setting, was extensive and multi formatted. The large part of the consultation programme involved the establishment of key sector stakeholder groups or panels. These included a Retail & Economic Panel, Tourism & Hospitality Panel and a Culture & Events Panel. There was also a panel established to address Community and Social priorities.

3.9 The panels were made up of stakeholders and experts from each theme under review and each panel contained between 8 and 12 members. Each panel met in a workshop setting between three and five times to progress from broad discussion around thematic priorities and opportunities to developing project ideas and identifying resources and core activities.

3.10 The panel workshops formed a central part of the engagement with the local business, cultural and social communities in Carrick on Shannon and were a valuable part of the information exchange and analysis that is essential in formulating a strategy with spatial and thematic considerations.

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1 The Culture Panel was made up of individuals from a wide group of organisations representing culture, arts and heritage.
Public Information Events

3.11 Throughout the course of the study there were three open public information evenings to initially launch the study and to create awareness of the process and latterly to provide a flavor of the evolving Vision and Strategy at key points in the study.

3.12 In addition to the public consultation events there was a public exhibition of the draft strategy in January at the council offices and public library in Carrick on Shannon. This exhibition was supported with an online survey and comment box to gather views from the public towards the Vision, themes and priorities contained within the strategy.

Other Research

3.13 The consultants examined data and literature pertaining to growth sectors and particularly in relation to tourism trends to identify opportunities for future growth and where Carrick on Shannon has a natural or comparative advantage. The growth trend towards domestic and activity based tourism and short stay breaks is one encouraging area of opportunity for Carrick on Shannon to exploit through the advancement or development of new products and services.

3.14 Also some best practice research was conducted into successful town development strategies where some of the features common to Carrick on Shannon were present. These case studies highlighted a mix of factors relevant to successful and sustainable local development including:

- A shared vision of the town’s strengths and opportunities;
- A partnership approach towards working together as a community for the realisation of the core objectives;
- An attractive and accessible town centre with a clean image;
- A quality offering in local services including hospitality, retail and leisure;
- A unique set of cultural attractions, activities and facilities;
- A quality and exciting marketing message that is consistent;
- A visitor friendly atmosphere.
4 2020 VISION FOR CARRICK ON SHANNON

"By 2020 Carrick on Shannon will be recognised as a premier gateway for waterways, adventure, heritage and eco tourism. The town will also serve as a regional cultural hub supported by an attractive and accessible town centre with a high quality offering in hospitality, food and specialty shopping. Carrick on Shannon will promote innovation and nurture entrepreneurship, diversity, creativity and a ‘can do’ attitude"

4.1 Vision Drivers
The Vision Drivers are a set of variables either already present or factors in the making that will facilitate the realisation of the vision. These variables are the ‘vision makers’ without which the vision will only be partially fulfilled or unfulfilled.

The key drivers for the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision are as follows:
- River Shannon & Lakelands Gateway
- Town Centre Renaissance
- Culture, Arts & Heritage
- Adventure & Discovery
- Enterprise & Jobs

4.2 Guiding Principles
The guiding principles for the 2020 vision and strategy are the set of values and principles that will act as a barometer for the strategy and its implementation in terms of style and approach. These guiding principles set the tone for how the 2020 vision will be delivered and realised.

The Guiding Principles for the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision are as follows:
- Partnership & Integration
- A Quality Natural & Built Environment
- Vibrant Community Spirit
- Inclusive Society
- Innovation & Creativity

4.3 Strategic Aims & Objectives
The key aims of the vision are the statements of what needs to be achieved if the vision is to be realised. These Strategic Objectives are the cornerstones of the vision and strategy and will act as a measure and compass of how well the strategy is being implemented. The results of the strategy or performance against the vision will ultimately need to be checked against these strategic aims and objectives.
The Strategic Objectives for the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision are as follows:

1. **SO1**: Expanding & Diversifying the Tourism Sector including an extended season and new activities in water and adventure tourism;

2. **SO2**: Develop the Cultural Sector as a strategic social and economic force through increased activity and visitors;

3. **SO3**: Develop a unique retail experience to further develop the town centre and attract 'add-on' footfall from out-of-town Centre’s;

4. **SO4**: Consistently achieve top tier rankings nationally & internationally for Image & Environmental quality;

5. **SO5**: Identify and support entrepreneurial talent and attract dynamic people to expand the enterprise base.

### 4.4 Vision Priorities

#### 4.4.1
The Carrick on Shannon Vision Priorities are the themes under which actions and projects will be delivered to realise the strategic objectives and the 2020 Vision. These key priorities are the pillars of the strategy, and performance against these priorities will be the true measure of success of the vision. The priorities will keep the vision and strategy on track and allow for structured and quality project management of the strategy throughout its implementation.

#### 4.4.2
Priority or thematic groups made up of key stakeholders will need to be formed around these action areas to help drive and manage the process and delivery of projects. These Priority Groups will also plan for new activity and emerging opportunities within these themes to support the evolution of the 2020 Vision over time.

#### 4.4.3
The three key priorities within the 2020 Vision and Strategy are as follows:
4.4.4 Retail & Economic Development – *Quality Before Quantity*

This theme deals with retail and town centre development as well as enterprise creation and promotion through the harnessing of opportunities in new emerging sectors. In particular Main Street and Bridge Street can act as an engine for growth and renaissance of the town centre through streetscape improvements, new access ways and parking and the promotion of specialty retailing along with cultural attractions and quality food offering.

The cornerstones of this theme and priority are as follows:

- A Vibrant, Attractive and Accessible Town Core with quality open space and public realm and opening up of the site known as central park;
- Key Sector Development in Tourism, Creative & Cultural businesses and Specialty Retail leading to new enterprise and job creation and investment;
- Living the Dream – Inward migration to the Carrick on Shannon area as a permanent, or semi-permanent, residence for mobile workers, commuters, creative entrepreneurs, artists and active retired individuals.

4.4.5 Tourism Development – *A Regional Tourism & Leisure Gateway*

This key theme is the centerpiece of the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision. Tourism has always been a function of the town’s economy and community life and will continue to drive investment, employment and spending in the town. However, over the coming years the visitor profile and expectation will place new demands and present new opportunities for Carrick on Shannon. Having well developed products in waterways activities, outdoor adventure, heritage and culture alongside a vibrant and exciting town core with specialty retail and food choice will give Carrick on Shannon the edge in a competitive market.
Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision

The cornerstones of this theme are as follows:

- Carrick on Shannon as a regional discovery base for the west and north west regions and the general Lakelands & Inlands Waterways region;

- Development of niche visitor markets in Heritage, Outdoor Adventure, Water based leisure and Cultural tourism including events and festivals;

- The quality packaging and promotion of all that Carrick on Shannon has to offer the visitor. This will help extend the length of stay, the number of activities and events experienced and spend per visitor.

4.4.6 Culture & Events Development – Creative Carrick 2020

The Culture panel of the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision produced a very exciting portfolio of project ideas and activities to elevate Carrick on Shannon to a true hub for the Arts, Culture and Festivals. This aspect of the strategy is a core area for the town to develop valuable and complimentary products to build upon existing success in this area. Cultural attractions and events will support tourism and inward migration as well as develop strong networks of creative people and enterprises in crafts, music, arts, literature, entertainment, design and other activities. Carrick 2013 is a key launch pad for this strand of the strategy and will help develop the capacity locally to deliver more Culture & Events. Building on the experience of Carrick on Shannon 400 will set a strong tone and direction for the years ahead.

The cornerstones of this theme are as follows:

- The encouragement and development of the Creative Economy including the Crafts & Design sectors, Creative Technology and New Media;

- Development of services and facilities to attract and retain people and businesses in the Visual and Performance Arts sectors. The expansion of these communities and networks will have an exponential effect in making Carrick on Shannon a national centre for the Arts;

- The enhancement of the local Heritage and Historic assets and visitor products including Genealogy, Literary and Historic trails and events;

- Development of a ‘true to character’ programme of events and festivals to help define and consolidate Carrick on Shannon’s unique cultural assets and
personality. This will also imply a very strong commitment to collaboration and integration across all cultural groups and promotion agencies to package and sell the message in a clear and confident way;

- Coordination and partnership across the culture & events theme to incorporate an annual Culture Calendar and events schedule that carries a unique Carrick brand and tone.
# Carrick-on-Shannon

## 2020 Vision

**Vision Overview**

- **Guiding Principles**
  - Quality Natural & Built Environment
  - Innovation & Creativity
  - Inclusive Society
  - Regional Community Spirit

### Strategic Objectives

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### Strategy Themes

- **Culture & Events**
- **Tourism**
- **Real & Economic**
- **Regional, Town Gateway**
- **Packaging & Promotion**

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The plan below presents a simple overview of the 2020 Vision Plan. This presentation of the strategy provides a visual illustration of the 2020 Vision Plan.
4.5 Major Project Areas

Retail & Economic Development

4.5.1 Under the Retail & Economic Development Priority for Carrick on Shannon there are a number of key action areas that must be addressed to realize the strategic objectives and the overall vision for the town. As outlined above the Priorities contain key projects to deliver outcomes consistent with, and targeted towards, the Strategic Objectives and the Vision itself.

4.5.2 For example, if activity around enhancing the environment and viability of the town core is not delivered there is little chance that Strategic Objective 3 “Develop a unique retail experience to further develop the town centre and attract ‘add-on’ footfall from out-of-town centres” will be achieved, or indeed the element of the 2020 Vision relating to the town centre i.e. “an attractive and accessible town centre with a high quality offering in hospitality, food and specialty shopping”

4.5.3 Therefore some of the key ‘vision maker’ projects under the Retail & Economic Development Priority are:

- Bridge Street / Main Street upgrade including streetscape improvements, quality open spaces and shop frontage scheme and addressing premises dereliction and vacancy;
- Central Park access and parking with multiple pedestrian walkways to streets;
- Market Yard development project including partial covering and enhancement of public access and market facilities;
Carrick on Shannon | 2020 | Vision

- Dublin Road landscaping with cycle way and waterway access to Approach Roads;
- ‘Live Carrick’ Marketing campaign selling the town as a permanent, or semi permanent, residence for mobile workers, regional commuters, active retired and artistic entrepreneurs.

4.5.4 Some of the supporting activity and projects towards the Retail & Economic Development Priority are:

- The development of a marketing package and set of incentives to draw shoppers from the two retail parks into the town centre for a specialty retail and leisure experience. The objective here is to get add-on footfall in the town centre from ‘big box’ customers rather than compete head on for their business in convenience and comparison items;
- Developing a suite of supports for expanding and target sectors to attract investment, improve skills and facilitate trading;

Tourism Development

4.5.4 Tourism is an essential part of Ireland’s appeal and places like Carrick on Shannon are responsible for that economic product. The mix of natural beauty, activity and memorable hospitality is a fine art and something that Carrick on Shannon has traditionally delivered to a high standard. While these factors will continue to be fundamental economic drivers for the economy there will be opportunities to expand the season and the reasons for visiting Carrick on Shannon and draw more visitors for both long and short term stays.
4.5.5 Making this transition from a traditional waterways destination to a Gateway for regional adventure and discovery based tourism will require a diversification into new products and niche markets. Many of these are already in development such as heritage festivals and adventure sports breaks but it is early in the lifecycle and Carrick on Shannon has the assets, experience and potential to lead in the development of new lines of tourism.

4.5.6 Some of the key projects and actions necessary to achieve the status of Regional Tourism & Leisure Gateway, and Strategic Objective 1 “Expanding & Diversifying the Tourism Sector including an extended season and new activities in water and adventure tourism” will be:

- Implementation of the Failte Ireland & Waterways Ireland development strategies for waterways upgrading and facilities improvement and promotion of the Lakelands and inland waterways as a holiday product;
- Town centre renaissance to create the right product and environment for visitors to relax, enjoy and experience Carrick on Shannon’s natural charm and hidden treasures including architecture, heritage & history, culture and specialty shopping;
- The development of Carrick on Shannon as a destination for leisure and adventure including mini marathons, triathlons, water adventure and regattas and activity adventure at Lough Key Forest Park and other hinterland locations;
- The development of key festivals and events that draw on the talent and character of the area including the Water Music Festival, Literary events and festivals and other Arts based activity.
Culture, Heritage and the Arts are a growing force in promoting tourism and new enterprise creation as well as having a positive impact on social and community participation. Carrick on Shannon, and County Leitrim in general, has made strides as a cultural centre particularly in the areas of music, theatre, visual art and craft and design. This has enriched the town and fostered a scene around these activities and supporting services. Facilities such as the Dock Arts Centre and events such as the Water Music Festival have boosted the reputation of Carrick on Shannon and the visitor numbers coming to the town. There is however scope to build upon this foundation and coordinate the cultural product of Carrick on Shannon in a marketing context without impacting on the embryonic nature of the sectors’ development.

The projects and activities that are identified for the development and promotion of the Arts, Culture & Events are categorized into distinct themes including:

- Facilities & Spaces
- Enterprise, Education & Development
- Festivals & Events
- Packaging & Promotion
- Creative Networks

Each of these themes contains some key driver projects and also some supporting activities. The projects are also cross-referenced with the key priorities and projects falling under the Retail / Town Centre and Tourism Themes. The major
projects under the Culture & Events theme that will require short to medium term development and implementation are:

- Utilising vacant premises in town centre to incorporate a temporary gallery and studio trail. This will require negotiation between artist groups and landlords to find agreement on terms and obligations of the usage of premises;

- ‘Creative Business’ is a programme of support that will target start-up and micro enterprises in the creative industries sectors specifically to develop business and marketing skills and to help cross sector collaboration to flourish;

- The development of a creative and cultural network to promote collaboration, information sharing and to coordinate promotion efforts to sell the cultural assets of Carrick on Shannon.

4.5.10 Longer-term projects under the Culture & Events theme towards the realisation of the 2020 Vision for Carrick on Shannon will include:

- The development of the ‘Carrick on Shannon Artistic Academy’ to act as a national centre for the development of performance arts and ‘finishing skills’ in arts management and administration;

- Development of the Market Yard and opening up of the Central Park site and access ways to Bridge Street and Main Street. These two spaces have strong potential to accommodate occasional open-air cultural events and draw large numbers of visitors and residents to the town centre.
5 Making the Vision a Reality

5.1 This project profile for the implementation of the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision is outline in nature. The full action plan with detailed project profiles (where appropriate) will emerge from initial and ongoing discussions of the Priority Groups (see below) that will identify the key measurables for implementation of each project along with precise timing and management arrangements for each of the projects.

5.2 In most instances the project concepts are ideally scoped to fit with activity that might happen under a variety of national, regional or local programmes for tourism, economic development or cultural development or promotion. Other projects are by their nature going to be driven by the local business community where their investment and energy will be rewarded with commercial gain. There are also projects that will largely be delivered in a voluntary capacity where specialist knowledge and civic pride matched with local support will be the motivators.

5.3 Each project has an indicative timeline for commencement and completion i.e. short-term (ST) = immediate to 18 months, medium-term (MT) = 18 months to 3 years and long-term (LT) = 3 to 6 years.

5.4 In this section of the report we summarise the action and implementation of the 2020 Vision.

Table 5: Project Portfolio & Rationale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Theme</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail &amp; Economic Quality Before Quantity</td>
<td>Connecting Carrick&lt;br&gt;Retail incentives and promotions to draw customers into town centre as complimentary to retail park shopping trip rather than competing with retail park operator’s head on. Promoting the town centre as a bijoux retail and leisure experience with specialty stores offering something different is the core objective and vision for the town centre.</td>
<td>Differentiating the experience and attraction is the key here to new and more frequent visits to Carrick on Shannon town centre. This scheme would ideally be launched post the town centre renaissance project and when the central park access and parking is completed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Town Centre Renaissance&lt;br&gt;There are a number of interrelated activities grouped under the umbrella of ‘town centre renaissance’ including a streetscape makeover for Bridge St and Main St, opening up of the central park site to parking and access walkways to streets and the Market Yard development. Alongside these infrastructure projects is a set of incentives to enhance the shop frontages and attract specialty retailers.</td>
<td>This project is critical to the future success of the town centre as an economic entity and is about reshaping its function and appeal. The coordination of this project with the Market Yard project and opening up of parking and access ways to the central park site also ensure the best possible impact for a renewed town centre.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Living the Dream: Carrick on Shannon&lt;br&gt;Not unlike the ‘Look West’ campaign from WDC, this project is aimed at attracting people to choose Carrick on Shannon as a permanent or semi permanent location to reside. The campaign will need to target regional commuters, self-employed remote workers, artists, creative entrepreneurs and active retired.</td>
<td>The impact of this activity on the local economy will be similar to a series of micro inward investments to the town but will have an ongoing effect through growth of the population and stimulating local demand for goods and services.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Waterways Gateway</strong></td>
<td>This strategic plan focuses action on Product Development, Marketing, Destination Development &amp; Management and Stakeholder Development. Carrick on Shannon will hold a key position in this strategy as a destination and as a regional gateway for further discovery and adventure.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Outdoor Adventure</strong></td>
<td>The promotion of Carrick on Shannon and its rural catchment as a leisure destination for soft adventure activities and adventure tourism is a market for future short stay visitors. It is also part of the strategy to diversify the traditional tourism product of Carrick on Shannon to include more activity than just waterways holidays and breaks. The Failte Ireland campaign 'get out there' forms part of the rationale and promotion here but more can be done locally also.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Heritage Trail</strong></td>
<td>Promoting what is unique to Carrick on Shannon as part of the visitor experience is critical to SO1 'expanding and diversifying the tourism sector and season'. Carrick on Shannon has a strong heritage product and the structures to achieve growth in visitor numbers in this area.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Gourmet Heaven</strong></td>
<td>The development of a Carrick Food attraction through awareness campaigns and tie in with wider tourism promotion is central to this. A good example of where the food theme has supported visitor appeal is Kinsale in Co. Cork. Carrick on Shannon can learn from Kinsale’s success.</td>
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Carrick on Shannon | 2020 | Vision
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Shannon has the same potential to add food to its list of attractions and create enterprise opportunity in doing so.

### Project Management & Governance

5.5 The management arrangements for implementation of the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision will take the form of a multi agency / partnership approach. Different partners depending on remit and sphere of influence will lead different projects. However, all projects will require the input, support and cooperation of multiple parties.

5.6 The overarching structure for the implementation of the strategy will come from a 2020 Vision Partnership structure comprising each of the key agencies involved in helping to arrive at the strategy, and the project portfolio, as well as a representative ‘champion’ from each of the Priority Groups. See figure 5.1 below for an illustration of the Management & Governance Structure.

### Culture & Events

#### Creative Carrick 2020

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<td>The provision of facilities and spaces to allow for the exhibition and production of creative content and expression is key to developing the reputation for the arts and culture. Carrick on Shannon has a great facility in the Dock Arts Centre but there is much greater potential for bringing small, and large, open-air events and exhibition to the town.</td>
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- **Facilities & Spaces**
  - There are a number of projects in this group including a vacant premises gallery & studio trail in the town centre to the development of an artistic academy for the development of the performing arts and facilities for the accommodation of large open air events at the central park site once completed and accessible.

- **Enterprise & Education**
  - Harnessing Creativity
  - Creative Business (4CNW)
  - Schools Development Programme
  - Artistic Academy

- **Festivals & Events**
  - Priority Group 3 to identify successes and potential for annual festival calendar;
  - Work in partnership towards resourcing, sponsorship, volunteerism and supports;
  - Develop management and promotion capacity and plan

- **Packaging & Promotion**
  - Further discussion and decisions required between key partners and Priority Group 3 to merge the ‘Carrick on Shannon’ message and product. This will involve Leitrim Tourism, Failte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Carrick on Shannon Chamber, and key tourism stakeholders locally.
5.7 An essential element in this 2020 Vision Partnership will be the Priority Group representatives from each of the thematic panels, and other stakeholders, to provide for project level planning and governance. Below this level there will need to be strong connections to each of the agencies and voluntary groups that will be responsible for the delivery of activity in each area.

5.8 It is envisaged that there will be four distinct, but interconnected, Priority Groups each responsible for a project portfolio. These Priority Groups largely mirror the thematic consultation panels assembled to progress the study and generate project concepts and identify priorities for action. However, the Retail & Economic Development panel will be split into two distinct Priority Groups for clarity of purpose and to allow for a manageable project portfolio. The two new Priority Groups from this theme will be Town Centre and Enterprise and Economic Development, PG 1 and PG 4 respectively.

5.9 Another critical element in the structure will be the appointment of an appropriate individual to act as the ‘Champion’ for each of the Priority Groups and their portfolio. This could take the form of the chair of the Priority Group and be rotated with the chair or be a permanent appointment for the lifetime of the Vision. This champion would provide for a strong voice for the vision and ensure all partners are focused on the key delivery commitments inherent in the strategy.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the local community, in its many manifestations, will become a strong driver of the Carrick on Shannon 2020 Vision. This will take the form of local voluntary groups such as Tidy Towns or a local youth group to team up with the Priority Groups in pursuing a specific project of interest to them. Even at an individual level, each person in the town can play a role in promoting and progressing the Vision by becoming aware of its existence and highlighting its importance. This force of weight behind the strategy will help legitimize planned activity and resource allocation as well as provide a local governance factor over the vision itself.