

Revitalising Small Towns on the Island of Ireland: The Role of Local Government

Thursday 27th October 2016 - Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan

Towns and villages across the island of Ireland have in the past decade experienced rapid change and mixed fortunes – from the building of edge-of-town housing estates and retail units to increasing vacancy and the hollowing out of their centres. Streetscapes are losing their economic vitality; their functional value in both economic and social terms is under threat (Heritage Council, 2015).

In August 2013, Patrick Shaffrey, author and architect, noted that “There are dark shadows looming over the economic prospects and cultural qualities of small towns and villages” (Irish Times). Three years on this remains the case across the island of Ireland. There are many reasons behind this persistent trend of decline and decay – edge of town developments, the evolving role of the digital economy, fewer people living along main streets and unsustainable suburban and one-off housing developments, changing demographics including population decline, and the many and varied impacts of the global economic crisis. How to redress these challenges is a major challenge facing local government across the island of Ireland – for while the challenges may be similar, it is increasingly clear that each town and village requires a specific and tailored response.

In considering the general principles of regeneration, and the lessons to be learnt from good practice elsewhere, this event aims to begin an all-island conversation on the role of local government in the revitalisation of our towns and villages. This is not just about economic regeneration. Rather it requires a cross-disciplinary dialogue that has regard to economics, planning, social inclusion, heritage, and environmental management/ protection. This event will consider the broader challenges and opportunities at play, the policy environment in which the revitalisation of towns and the (re)imaging of new futures will need to play out, the key ingredients to the reimagining of small towns and successful place-making, and the synergies that are required to make all of this happen.

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ALL-ISLAND LOCAL AUTHORITY FORUM

The All-Island Local Authority Forum is a strategic partnership comprising Chief Executives from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, NI (SOLACE NI) and Chief Executives from the County and City Management Association (CCMA). The Local Authority Forum is the only cross-border focused Local Authority group operating at a Chief Executive level and comprises ten members. The aim of the Forum is to progress and develop meaningful cross-border relationships within the local government sector. The Forum provides opportunities for cross-border co-operation on a range of issues of mutual interest to both administrations and the work of the Forum is developed through practical joint projects and the sharing of knowledge, expertise and best practice.

The mission statement for the All-Island Local Authority Forum is as follows:

“To advance mutual understanding by promoting practical co-operation between local authorities on the island of Ireland, through maximising shared learning and the production of tangible benefits for services and local communities”

The work of the Forum currently focuses on six key areas as follows: Strategic/Development Planning, Community Planning & Place Shaping, Tourism, Shared Services, Leadership and Housing.

Further information on the work of the Forum is available at www.cooperationireland.org.

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR LOCAL & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is a North-South-U.S. partnership. It was formally established in 2006 to explore and expand the contribution that spatial planning and the development of physical, social and economic infrastructure can make to peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland, and elsewhere. The ICLRd has developed out of a unique collaboration between academics and spatial planning specialists from the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at Maynooth University, the School of the Built Environment at Ulster University and the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

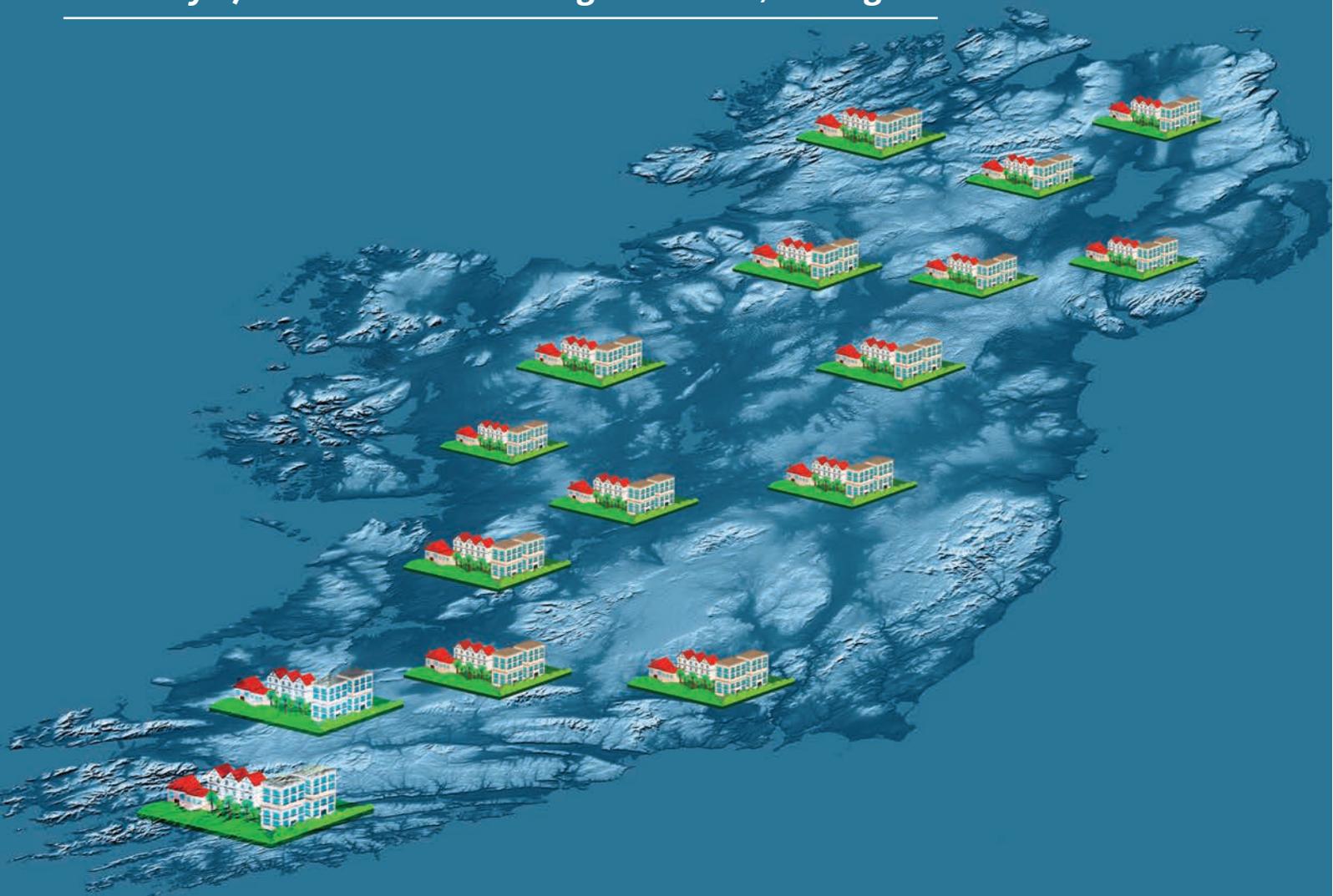
A central objective of the ICLRd is to strengthen the policy and operational linkages between central, regional and local policy-makers and among officials and practitioners involved in spatial planning and social and economic development across the island of Ireland. It does this through research, policy advice and publications; professional education and capacity building programmes that assist local governments and communities to translate policy into ‘on the ground’ action; and active outreach and networking that includes conferences, workshops and international co-operation and exchanges to identify best practices.

The ICLRd continues to expand its collaboration with other institutions and has built up close working relationships with individual faculty and researchers from universities and research institutions - both on the island of Ireland and internationally - and with other organisations involved in cross-border research and activities including Co-operation Ireland.

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SEMINAR PROGRAMME

12.00 - 12.45	Registration, Light Lunch & Refreshments
	SESSION 1: REVITALISING SMALL TOWNS – AN EMERGING FRAMEWORK
12.45 - 13.00	Welcome & Opening Remarks Chair: Dr. Patricia O'Hara, Adjunct Professor, Maynooth University & Chair, National Statistics Board
13.00 - 13.30	Revitalising our Small Towns: Why Now? Mr. Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive, Roscommon County Council Mr. Anthony Tohill, Chief Executive, Mid Ulster District Council
	SESSION 2: REIMAGINING SMALL TOWNS – THE KEY INGREDIENTS
13.30 - 14.00	Keynote Address: The Future of Small Towns: Process, People & Patience Mr. Trevor Hart, Visiting Research Fellow, University of Newcastle
14.00 - 14.20	Small Town Regeneration: Key Factors for Success Dr. Linda McElduff, Lecturer, School of the Built Environment, Ulster University
14.20 - 14.40	Small Town Regeneration: Energising the Community - What is the Recipe? Mr. John Higgins, Managing Director, JH Public Affairs Ltd.
14.40 - 15.00	Q&A
15.00 - 15.20	Networking & Refreshments
	SESSION 3: REGENERATING OUR COMMUNITIES: LEARNING FROM OTHERS
15.20 - 15.25	Introduction by Chair: Dr. Patricia O'Hara
15.25 - 16.45	Case Study 1 - Moira Co. Down (Heritage Led Regeneration) Ms. Suzanne Lutton, Regeneration & Infrastructure Manager, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
	Case Study 2 – Newcastle Co. Down (Tourism Focus) Mr. Liam Hannaway, Chief Executive, Newry Mourne and Down District Council
	Case Study 3 – Roscommon (Balancing Urban/Rural Issues) Ms. Mary Grier, Senior Planner, Roscommon County Council
	Case Study 4 – Cookstown (An Integrated Approach) Mr. Adrian McCreech, Director of Business and Communities, Mid Ulster District Council
16.45 - 17.05	Q&A
	PLENARY SESSION & CLOSE
17.05 - 17.25	Revitalising Our Small Towns – Place-Making in Action Ms. Sinead Carr, Director of Services, Tipperary County Council
17.25 - 17.30	Closing Comments Chair: Dr. Patricia O'Hara
17.30	End Conference

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BIOGRAPHIES:



Dr. Patricia O'Hara

Adjunct Professor,
Maynooth University & Chair,
National Statistics Board

Dr Patricia O'Hara is Chairperson of the National Statistics Board, which is responsible to Government for setting priorities for the compilation and development of official statistics in Ireland, and guiding the strategic direction of the Central Statistics Office. She was appointed to the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), an advisory body to the European Parliament and Council on governance of European statistics, in 2011. Adjunct Professor at the National Institute for Regional Spatial Analysis, Maynooth University, Pat has more than thirty-five years' experience in research, teaching and policy analysis and has published widely on development issues.



Trevor Hart

Visiting Research Fellow,
University of Newcastle

Trevor Hart is Visiting Research Fellow at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University. He has many years experience of practice in planning and economic development, much gained in rural areas. He has also worked as a consultant, mainly involved in the evaluation of government and EU regeneration programmes. He has recently produced, with colleagues at Newcastle, an update of Barry Cullingworth's classic *Town & Country Planning* in the UK. He is also author, with Neil Powe, of two books on development in small towns, *Market towns: roles, challenges and prospects* (2007) and *Planning for small town change* (2017)



Eugene Cummins

Chief Executive,
Roscommon County Council

Eugene Cummins is Chief Executive of Roscommon County Council for the last year, having been Chief Executive of Monaghan County Council for the previous two years and over the years has worked in five Local Authorities at different grades. He has been in Local Government "for a very long time" and is currently Chairman of the CCMA Housing Committee. Eugene has a BE in Civil Engineering and a Masters in Business Administration from Dublin City University.



Dr. Linda McElduff

Lecturer,
Ulster University

Linda McElduff is a lecturer in planning in the School of the Built Environment and an Associate Member of the Built Environment Research Institute at Ulster University. Her doctoral research investigated the regeneration and resilience of small coastal resorts on the island of Ireland. Linda's primary research interests focus on coastal resort degeneration and regeneration; coastal and marine planning; community resilience; social-ecological resilience; governance; and property rights. She is a member of Planning, Law and Property Rights (PLPR), Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) and the Irish Seas Maritime Forum (ISMF).



Anthony Tohill

Chief Executive,
Mid Ulster District Council

Anthony Tohill was appointed as the first Chief Executive of Mid Ulster District Council in April 2014. He has over 20 years public sector experience having worked in a diverse range of positions both in Central and Local Government. He joined the Civil Service as a graduate engineer in 1995 holding positions in road design and traffic management. Anthony worked for Derry City Council from 2005 to March 2014, initially as Head of Design & Project Management before moving on to the post of Chief Building Control Officer. Prior to taking up his current position Anthony was employed as Strategic Director of Corporate Services in Derry City Council.



John Higgins

Managing Director,
JH Public Affairs Ltd.

John Higgins is Managing Director of his own company, JH Public Affairs Ltd. which has as its main focus the regeneration of small towns and villages throughout Ireland. Prior to this he was Manager of IRD (Integrated Resource Development), Kiltimagh, where he planned and executed a development programme which earned many accolades. His book on this period, published by Oak Tree Press, became a template on best practice in community enterprise. Later, John worked in regional development and was CEO of the Western Development Board and Commission. Following this he worked as political advisor and general secretary of the Progressive Democrats.

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Suzanne Lutton

Regeneration & Infrastructure
Manager, Lisburn &
Castlereagh City Council

Suzanne Lutton has worked in the Economic Development sector of local government for 12 years and has vast experience in the field of Regeneration. She has project managed the delivery of a range of regeneration projects including a number of capital projects, environmental improvement schemes and most recently a major public realm scheme in Lisburn City Centre. She has overseen the delivery of a series of Rural Village Renewal projects across a range of settlements and larger towns within the Lisburn Castlereagh area. In her role as Regeneration & Infrastructure Manager, Suzanne is responsible for the delivery of the Lisburn City Centre Management Service, which includes the delivery of a programme of work to support the sustainability and development of the City Centre economy in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders.



Adrian McCreesh

Director of Business & Communities
Mid Ulster District Council

Adrian McCreesh is currently the Director of Business & Communities at Mid Ulster District Council. Prior to this appointment he was the Chief Executive (Acting) of Cookstown District Council from October 2011 to March 2015. He joined Cookstown District Council in 1995 as Development Manager, a post designed to help Council spearhead efforts towards regenerating and developing it's District through: Urban and Rural Regeneration, Economic Development, Arts, Culture, Leisure, Tourism, Community Services and EU Funded Programmes. Adrian was instrumental in the Council's successful bid to secure the £137m NI Community Safety College at Desertcreat Cookstown and has overseen the delivery of numerous Capital Projects throughout the District's towns and villages.



Liam Hannaway

Chief Executive,
Newry, Mourne & Down
District Council

Liam Hannaway was appointed Chief Executive to Newry, Mourne & Down District Council in April 2014. Liam had been Chief Executive of Banbridge District Council since July 2007. Prior to that he had been Director of Development within Banbridge District Council from August 2000 with responsibility for Urban and Rural Regeneration and Economic Development, European Programmes, Policing and Community Safety Partnership. He also had overall management of several EU Funding programmes within the Council area.



Sinead Carr

Director of Services,
Tipperary County Council

Sinead Carr holds a Masters Degree in Regional and Urban Planning and has served as a professional planner in local government for a number of years, including in England, Kildare, Wicklow and Tipperary. Over the last 16 years, Sinead has worked as a Director of Services in a variety of fields, including housing, planning, community and economic development. Sinead currently holds the position of Director of Services in Community and Economic Development for the newly merged Tipperary County Council including responsibility for the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), the newly established Local Community & Development Committee and the more cultural area of the Arts, Heritage and Sport.



Mary Grier

Senior Planner,
Roscommon County Council

Mary Grier is Senior Planner with Roscommon County Council, having taken up the position in June 2013. Mary has worked as a professional planner for over 20 years, gaining experience in the private sector initially, before moving into Local Government in 1997 when she commenced work with Wexford County Council. She progressed from junior to senior planning positions there, until her move to Scotland in 2005 to take up a Senior Planner role with the Cairngorms National Park Authority, where she enjoyed the challenge of balancing environmental considerations alongside the promotion of the development of this unique area until her return to Ireland in 2013.