

Claremorris

Draft for
Consultation Only

Town Centre Rejuvenation Plan

June 2013



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council

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I. Introduction

1.1. The Town Centre Environment

Ireland traditionally has a strong tradition of market towns serving the retail and service needs of their urban and rural hinterlands. Demographic, social and economic changes in the last ten years have created new challenges and problems for town centres. There has been a radical shift in consumer patterns, a much changed retail landscape with the rise of out of town shopping centre, the continued growth of online shopping, and the economic recession.

The problems now faced by many of Irelands high streets and town centres are well known and documented. They have been highlighted in the 2012 Retail Excellence Irelands report which set out a proposed town and city management framework¹. The issues associated with town centre decline have been present for many years in the UK and Continental Europe. While there has been mixed success in addressing them, there is however a wealth of knowledge and initiatives to address them.

While the main issues are relatively easily identified, the solutions required to create a sustainable solution for town centres requires creativity, innovation and a firm commitment to work together from all of the towns stakeholders. The solutions must recognise the changed nature of how consumers shop, how they perceive value and what experience they expect when they visit a town centre. The solution therefore goes far beyond having a clean and pleasant looking town centre.

1.2. Purpose of Claremorris Town Centre Rejuvenation Plan

The purpose is to provide strategic guidance for the regeneration of Claremorris Town Centre, to protect its existing physical, social and economic capital and to enhance the quality of the Town Centre, as a place for business, to live, work and visit. The plan identifies the challenges and the opportunities facing business in Claremorris, and sets out realistic and deliverable recommendations which can deliver short, medium and long-term benefits to the local economy and bring new business into the town centre.

¹ Town and City Management Framework, Retail Excellence Ireland, July 2012

2. About Claremorris

Claremorris is the fourth largest town in County Mayo and is the established administrative, commercial and service centre for a considerable hinterland in the south of the county. It is located 28 km southeast of Castlebar and 61 km North of Galway City. It is strategically located within the county and the West Region, at the junction of two major National Routes, the N17 (Sligo/Galway) and N60 (Castlebar/Roscommon for Athlone and Dublin). It has direct rail links to Dublin and potential future rail links along the Western Rail Corridor. It is 26 km from Ireland West Airport Knock. Two important regional Routes, the R331 from Ballinrobe and the R320 from Kiltimagh also terminate in the town.

Over the last decade the town has experienced an immense population growth (62.5 percent between 2002 and 2011).² Population projections target further population growth to 3,488 persons in 2016 and 3,845 persons in 2022³. The population of Claremorris was 3,412 in 2011.

Under the Mayo County Development Plan, Claremorris has been designated as one of Mayo's key towns within the county along with the towns of Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis, Belmullet, Swinford, Charlestown, Kiltimagh, Killala, Knock, Louisburgh, Newport and Westport. Each 'Key Town' has a complementary role to play with the County's Linked Hub of Ballina/Castlebar. Key towns are towns which have a population of between 1,500-5,000 people. The National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020 stresses the importance of promoting these areas as attractive tourist locations, harnessing their physical and cultural attributes.

Claremorris has an excellent range of sporting and recreational facilities including GAA and soccer pitches, tennis courts, swimming pool, handball alley and athletic track. There are also many clubs and societies catering for a broad range of age groups and interests. There is a large area of natural amenity which is located around Clare and Mayfield Loughs at the southern end of the town. The GAA pitch is located at the outskirts of the town on the Ballyhaunis Road with the swimming pool and leisure facility situated in the centre of the town.

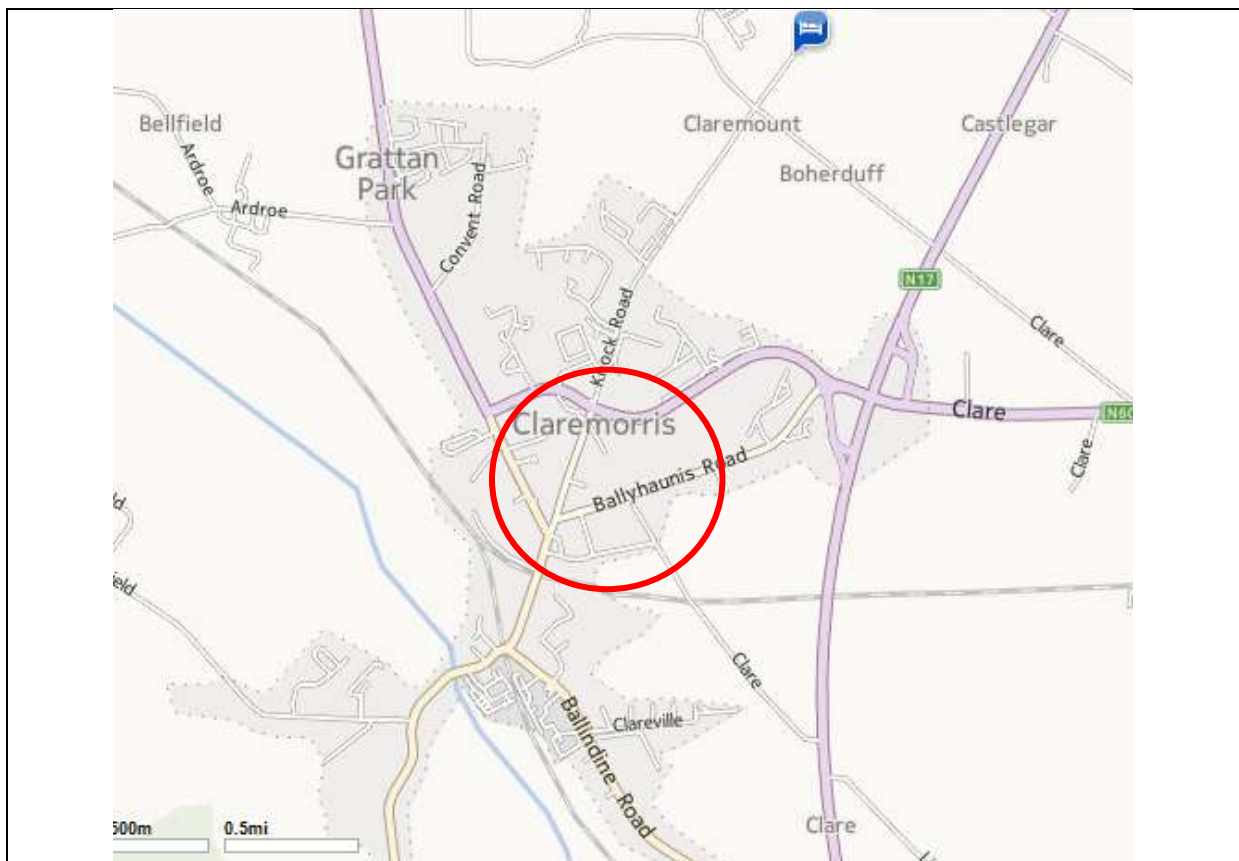
The town centre has evolved over the last decade, with the opening of the Silverbridge Shopping Centre at the northern end of the town centre, a large retail warehousing park south of the town centre and the McWilliam Park Hotel. The town centre has a good range of restaurants catering for Italian, Indian, Chinese and Irish cuisine. Claremorris has four supermarkets located in the town centre which are in competition with Tesco and Aldi stores located on the outskirts. Chapel Lane has been developed from an almost derelict

² Census 2011 CSO website.

³<http://www.mayococo.ie/en/Planning/DevelopmentPlansLocalAreaPlansandStrategies/LocalAreaPlans/Claremorris/Document1,20479,en.pdf>

state to a commercial street. However, Mount Street and Lower James Street have not seen any improvement with many buildings vacant and falling into disrepair. Other notable changes are the increased number of commercial premises on the upper floors of the town centre buildings which has reduced the residential population of the town centre. Signage along the approaches to the town clearly indicates directions to other nearby town, but there is no direction to the town centre. The public swimming pool was redeveloped into a modern leisure complex in 2009 and a new Garda Station was developed in Mount St in 2008.⁴

Figure 1: Map of Claremorris Town Centre



Town Centre area, circled.

⁴ Claremorris Local Area Plan 2012-2018

3. The Status of Town Centres

The Irish economy is going through a very difficult time. It is in deep recession, public finances have deteriorated, unemployment is high and consumer confidence is weak. Getting the economy back on track is challenging and it is important that the business environment is conducive to growth, entrepreneurship and job creation. The retail and services sector is a very important component of the Irish economy in terms of jobs and makes a huge contribution to regional and local economies. That part of the sector that exists in town centres are dominated by family and owner manager businesses who are characterised by their commitment to the local community, their levels of customer service and commitment to developing the local economy in which they reside.

Town centre retail and services sector now faces immense business challenges which include the:

- The competition from large multiples that have proliferated across Ireland in recent years
- Reduced consumer spending and confidence
- Competition from the ever growing presence of online retailers

The business environment of town centres continues to be difficult. In 2009 15.5 percent of all business closures occurred in the retail sector. This was the third highest business casualty sector, just behind construction and non-retail services sector.

Maintaining vibrant and sustainable town centres with a healthy mix of local businesses is central to the maintenance of the communities in which they serve. While business might thrive with a collection of multinational retailers and chains, these businesses take money from the local economy, rather than redistributing it via local spending, sponsorship and support of local causes and therefore embedding the town centre and its businesses into their local community, providing additional employment and spinoffs greater than what the multinational chains can provide.

Collectively town centres provide many benefits including:

- They are major employers in local economies and give many local people their first job or taste of employment
- There is a strong family ownership and business structure
- They are major supporters of local suppliers and local organisations and causes
- They carry a wide range of products and services and are best placed to cater for any unique needs of a local community
- They provide convenience through location, customer service and opening hours
- They provide significant revenue to the national and local exchequers

- They contribute to the aesthetic qualities of towns through the appearance of their premises
- They provide a significant multiplier effect in the local economy
- They tend to employ local services such as accountants, banking, cleaning, repairs and transport thus contributing to employment and business maintenance in the locality

The experience of the United Kingdom is very relevant to Ireland. It has experienced rapid and perhaps irreversible town centre decline in almost all of its towns. Many lessons can be learned from this and action is required in Ireland to avoid the same fate for our town centres.

In the United Kingdom, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) carried out several studies examining the damage that has been done to British towns by the forced closures of local shops due to the growth of the multiples. Their 2002 report called “Ghost Town Britain” showed that over the past couple of decades the development of large out of town shopping centres and waves of high street bank closures have driven many people away from town centre shopping resulting in the loss of thousands of independent traders. The report showed that general stores were closing at the rate of one per day, specialist shops like butchers, bakers at the rate of fifty per week between 1997 and 2002 and twenty traditional non chain pubs per month. Supermarket retailers, fast food chains and global fashion outlets were coming in place of the independent shops.

The Retail Futures Report, published in the United Kingdom in May 2013, painted a bleak picture for high streets and town centres unless intervention was taken. It predicted that that one in five high street stores will disappear by 2018, resulting in 60,000 shop closures and 316,000 job losses. The report points out that store vacancies across the UK have increased by 161% since the onset of the recession in 2008, reaching 14.1% today. The report predicts this figure could rise to 24% by 2018 if no preventative action is taken.

4. What has happened in Claremorris

4.1. Introduction

Claremorris like many other towns have suffered economically from the common issues facing town centres. These include the development of edge of town shopping centres, the decline in consumer spending and changing consumer patterns. The problem facing town centres however cannot be levied on one single issue. It is a culmination of many issues, which will now be examined in a Claremorris context. Without strong strategic intervention, the problem of town centre decline will remain after economic recovery returns.

The introduction of paid parking in 2007 is seen by many businesses as a disincentive for people to visit the town centre. The key issue is the inconvenience of the parking fee, rather than the charge itself. However the extent to which paid parking is responsible for declines in town centre business is probably minimal as comparisons can be drawn with many towns with free parking, which suffer similar town centre problems.

From consultations with town centre businesses and the chamber of commerce there is a common view that the current status quo is not satisfactory, and this plan proposes a series of pilot measures around parking to encourage greater visitation to Claremorris town centre.

4.2. The Significant Challenges for Claremorris Town Centre

Retail Spend

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The recession has seen declines in consumer spending, with a total decline of up to 30% since the peak periods. Reduced consumer confidence and take home pay do not indicate any major increases in consumer spending in the short term

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Retail spending in town centres is falling and this trend is set to continue. Claremorris saw a surge in retail development, with the opening of the Silverbridge Centre, Aldi and new shopping complexes along the old Galway Road. The recession impacted the retail sector quickly as consumer spending declined and exposed many businesses that were never truly sustainable. This led to closures, vacant units and unemployment, which has impacted most strongly on Claremorris town centre. On the positive side, Claremorris has lower than average levels of unemployment and a strong supporting agricultural hinterland.

Changing Retail Habits and Consumer Mobility

Improved road infrastructure, concentration of employment in larger urban centres and growth of car ownership has led to a significant increase in consumer mobility. Consumers are travelling longer to visit shopping destinations predominately in larger towns and spending a greater percentage of income in these locations. There is a direct link between the distance travelled and the consumer spend – the further the distance the greater the spend.

Better infrastructure encourages and makes it easier for consumers to visit larger towns, which have a wider retail choice, this weakening smaller town centres. Employment concentration in larger towns also leads to a leakage of economic spending power from the person's town of residence, again weakening the economic fabric of the town. The primary threats to Claremorris are Galway and Castlebar. It is difficult to estimate the economic leakage, but it is likely to be increasing year on year. Combating this challenge will require the maintenance of choice and a town value proposition and consumer awareness of Claremorris.

Online Shopping

Town centres are not only losing market share to out of town shopping alternatives; but face significant on-line competition. Irish consumer spend online in 2012 was in the region of €3.5 billion. Growth rates of 39% in online spend in Ireland was recorded in 2010.

The growth of online retailing presents a growing competitive challenge to the traditional retail model and one that Claremorris town centre must embrace. Claremorris must challenge the rise in online retailing to stem this trend in a collective manner through cooperation among retailers to offer a pleasant, more affordable and more efficient online experience for their customers. This may include faster delivery or pick up options, price competitiveness, better back up and customer service facilities than that offered by online retailers for example.

Edge of Town Retailing

International multiple retailers and many fashion chains prefer to open stores in new out of town shopping centres that offer a larger and clean retailing space, a controlled environment and free parking for customers

While choice is good for the consumer and increases overall footfall to a town, the location and rise of retailing activities at edge of town shopping centres has had a very negative impact on the town centre retailing environment in Claremorris. The development of the Tesco store and filling station at the Silverbridge shopping centre together with the range of other retail units has created in effect a new town centre, where consumers can practically get almost all their regular requirements, without having to visit the town centre.

The Silverbridge Centre in Claremorris is a new and well-designed centre with a large Tesco store as anchor tenant and a range of smaller shops including pharmacy, clothing, bakery, coffee shop, jewellers, and filling station. Car parking is free with ample spaces available. Aldi have developed a standalone store at the edge of town with ample free car parking. The Galway road shopping complexes provide a range of retail facilities for larger and occasional items like furniture and DIY goods. Such shops are not town centre friendly and are not a major threat to the town centre.

A plus point to be noted is that the existence of the out of town shopping centres bring significant more footfall to the town than before, however the challenge remains to attract this increased footfall to the town centre.

However the presence of these centres, while providing good choice for consumers has impacted and will continue to impact on the fabric of the town centre. Measures are needed to create a compelling town centre value proposition to attract footfall, business and customers.

Paid Parking

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The application of car parking charges in town centres has increased the appeal of out of town centres which offer free car parking with little enforcement.

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The introduction of paid parking following investment by Mayo County Council in new car parks and on street enhancements has created a competitive disadvantage for the town centre vis a vis the edge of town shopping centres on parking. Silverbridge, Aldi and the Galway road shopping complexes offer free parking, while town centre on street and car parks are 30c per hour with a first 10 minutes free period. While the parking charge is minimal, consultations and observations have concluded that the main issues in Claremorris are the inconvenience of the payment versus the ease of the free car parking at edge of town centres and parking enforcement.

This issue is considered by the business community as the main deterrent for people visiting the town centre and driving business to the edge of town shopping centres. The collective

view is that it needs to be addressed in a collaborative way with Mayo County Council that will result in a sustainable outcome for all.

A review of car parking charges in regional towns across Ireland of similar size to Claremorris, show that Claremorris has the cheapest parking of any town with paid parking in Ireland.

Table 1: Car Park Charges Comparison

| Town | Minimum Charge | Hourly Charge |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Claremorris | 20c | 30c |
| Ballybofey | 30c | 50c |
| Buncrana | 30c | 50c |
| Letterkenny | 50c | 1.00 |
| Donegal Town | 30c | 50c |
| Kinsale | -- | 1.20 |
| Longford Town | -- | 1.00 |
| Mullingar Town | 30c | 1.00 |
| Athenry | -- | 1.00 |
| Gort | -- | 1.00 |
| Kells | -- | 80c |
| Fermoy | 50c | 70c |

Weakening Town Centre Retail Mix

Business closures due to competition, lack of business or other issues impacts on the viability of town centres. It also dilutes the town centre value proposition.

The closure of shops and businesses in the Claremorris town centre have weakened the overall retail and service mix leading to declining footfall and spend in the town centre. However Claremorris town centre still has a strong and vibrant mix of retail and services, but these needs to be retained and strengthened so as to provide the blend of choice, quality, value and community feel to the town centre.

For the town centre to grow and prosper it must have a clear vision and value proposition as to what it wants to be. It needs a co-ordinated system of management with the committed involvement of all stakeholders to get there.

Property Management

Out of town shopping centres are commonly managed by a single entity, focussed on rental yield. Town centre properties are owned by a variety of landlords some being highly proactive and others not so

Claremorris is no different in that some property owners are very proactive to find tenants for their premises and maintain them in a good condition, others less so. This failure has led to levels of dereliction mainly on the approaches. Some town centre properties while not derelict are starting to look untidy, bring the entire town centre image and aesthetics down.

Access and Egress

Many out of town shopping centres are serviced by primary road / ring road access and avoid any town centre congestion. This makes them very accessible for a large geographic footprint. In contrast town centres can suffer from access routes which were planned and developed for past times leading to hard access and congestion.

Claremorris is a very accessible town from all directions with a good road infrastructure. Access and egress from the town centre is not generally a problem and traffic congestion is unusual. Therefore the town centre does not suffer to a large degree from access problems. Ideally though planning should provide for clear and easy access and linkages between the town centre and the out of town shopping centres.

Relationships with Neighbouring Towns

Events such as business closures or new shopping centre openings can impact positively or negatively on neighbouring towns.

The footfall to Claremorris town centre has increased due to the closure of the bank branches in nearby Ballyhaunis and Kiltimagh. Claremorris is a large enough town to maintain its role as a banking and service centre. The presence of Tesco at Silverbridge has increased the overall footfall to the town as has the range of public services available such as the swimming pool complex. The challenge for the town centre is to attract these extra visitors to spend time and money in the town centre.

Local Authority Income Base

Business closures will have negative impacts on local authority rates

The current vacancy rates of 34 per cent in the town centre are a severe loss of rates revenue to Mayo County Council. It shows the need for long range strategic intervention to generate businesses for these premises. Car parking revenue has become an important component of the local income base, which funds the traffic and parking management system. This system is necessary to main clear flow and turnover of car parking spaces within the town centre and avoid congestion which was a feature in Claremorris in the past.

5. SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a method used to evaluate the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats of a project or business. It involves specifying and identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable in terms of achieving the specific objectives of the project.

- **S**trengths: characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others
- **W**eaknesses: are characteristics that place the business at a disadvantage relative to others
- **O**pportunities: elements that the project could exploit to its advantage
- **T**hreats: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project

The SWOT Analysis for Claremorris town centre shows:

| | | Helpful (To achieving the Business Objective) | Harmful (To achieving the Business Objective) |
|--|----------------------|--|---|
| Internal Origin (attributes of the town centre) | STRENGTHS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good infrastructure present (Gas, Sewage, Water, Fibre Optics, Roads and Rail) • Good range of retail and service facilities in the town centre and at edge of town • Strong catchment hinterland with strong agricultural community • Strong and committed Chamber of Commerce • Good housing stock and availability, thus room for immediate population growth • High percentage of economically active in population • High standard of education among local population • Ability to attract investment with educated population and local labour base • Good parking facilities in Claremorris • Friendly people and town • Tidy and pleasing town appearance | WEAKNESSES |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirty-four percent of retail units in Claremorris are currently vacant. This leads to a sense of abandonment / loss / and knock on impact on remaining town centre business • Lack of clear vision and unique selling points for the town centre • Need for better orientation and information signage within Claremorris • Customers voting with their feet and using more out of town shopping facilities • Consumers seeking value • Competitive threats from online retailers and out of town centres |
| External Origin (attributes of the external environment) | OPPORTUNITIES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated as a Key Town in the RPGs and Mayo County Development Plan • Alternative and new uses for Town Centre spaces • Bank closures in neighbouring towns (Kiltimagh and Ballyhaunis) bring new consumers into Claremorris | THREATS |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced consumer confidence and consumer spend • Inability to change perception about the town to the general public • Lack of aggressive advertising and promotion • Changing entertainment patterns of consumers |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proximity to two international airports (IWA, Knock and Shannon)• Build on existing natural and cultural heritage of the area• More child-friendly activities and attractions will attract people• Further development of festivals, events, sporting events/competitions using existing facilities/venues (water sports, triathlon, football events, community games)• Enhanced coordination and capacity-building of locals and local community groups• Development of a town value proposition• The opportunity to implement collectively the town centre rejuvenation plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Authority losing rates and income base• Growing popularity of online retailing |
|--|--|---|

6. The Context for Claremorris Town Centre Rejuvenation

6.1. Introduction

Understanding the context and rationale for the rejuvenation of Claremorris Town centre is important so that all stakeholders can see the importance of their input and contribution. The plan aims to provide the various public and private sector stakeholders with the means to undertake a realistic and achievable programme that will enhance the Claremorris Town Centre experience as a place to work, visit, do business and live.

6.2. Economic Context for Rejuvenation

The key economic implications for the development of Claremorris Town Centre Rejuvenation plan are:

- The effect of the current recession is having a negative effect on consumer spending in Claremorris, hence growth in employment, investment and new business developments are stifled.
- Consumer spending is down 30 percent plus, from its peak during the Celtic Tiger years and is impacting on the sustainability of the retail and service sector in the town centre
- The rise of online retailing is creating new levels of competition for the retail sector
- The development of edge of town shopping centres has drawn consumers away from the town centre and radically shifted the economic base to the edge of town.
- The need to widen the potential employment base in the town centre, by looking at new opportunities in commercial, retail and service based sectors. Such opportunities must take account the future needs of emerging economic sectors that could locate in the town centre in the future
- To highlight how competitive advantage can be generated through the use of the fibre optic network that is available in the town centre
- To capitalise on the good public transport linkages in Claremorris, including the rail link, and the primary roads network
- Examine the impact that paid parking charges have had on the economic fortunes of the town centre and its businesses.

6.3. Social Context for Regeneration

The social context for the regeneration of Claremorris Town Centre can be summarised briefly as follows.

The Claremorris Local Area Plan 2011 estimated the population of the town would grow to 3,845 by 2018. Calculations by Mayo County Council show that there is sufficient housing development in the town and its environs to meet projected housing need until 2018. In line

with these projections, a population needs a satisfactory range of commercial and personal services and a sense of belonging to a community that has its own identity. A town centre is an indispensable part of that unique community identity and structure and helps to bind and create a community spirit and ethos.

It is a vital consideration in promoting economic well-being and quality of life that adequate social infrastructure provision is provided and in the right locations. Claremorris is well serviced in this respect with a swimming pool, sports centre, public library, a good range of sporting infrastructure all located at or very close to the town centre. The recent developments such as Clare Lake Loop walk and children's playground are also welcome additions. However some additional items of social infrastructure have been identified that would benefit the town and these are set out in the plan. For future development of public amenities and services, planning policy should in so far as possible promote their development at town centre locations, so as to encourage greater town centre use and diversification.

6.4. Physical Context for Regeneration

The Physical Context for regeneration deals with the physical quality of the town centre and ease of access and egress. This plan does not deal with these issues to any great extent as they are well planned for under the Claremorris Local Area Plan 2011 - 2018 and Mayo County Development Plan. This plan does make some recommendations regarding basic infrastructure and services, seen as desirable by the town centre stakeholders. These items were identified via consultations with the Chamber of Commerce and its members.

The strong, historic street layout of Claremorris with a wide main street and a traditional market square is a major influence on defining the town centre and its character. The impression of the town's physical landscape is still positive with a vibrant colour scheme and well-presented shop and business fronts. At present this masks the high level of vacant commercial units. However some dereliction of buildings on the entrance points to the town are a blot on the landscape and take away from the overall impression of the town. Claremorris has considerable potential to retain and grow its place as an attractive place to invest, live and start a business.

6.5. Access, Egress and Movement

The ease with which people can access and move, is central to the long-term viability of Claremorris Town Centre. An analysis of the movement network identified a number of issues that need to be addressed to make the Town Centre more accessible and pedestrian-friendly. Key issues are:

- The Silverbridge Centre is poorly linked to the town centre, both in terms of perception and physically, especially from a pedestrian point of view. The potential to enhance integration and linkage is a key issue for the future vitality of the town

centre and should be addressed with Mayo County Council through the smarter travel programme and general town enhancements.

- Adequate parking in the town centre is important for access, especially by people living in areas outside the town with no alternative to the car. There is ample car parking space available on street and in the town centre car parks. The usage and management of these spaces is important to give a quality town centre experience. Payment methods need to be convenient, management in place to ensure correct utilisation of the parking spaces and linkages to the business centre. Claremorris has an easy payment system but there is room for improvement with infrastructure to link car parks with the town centre, (for example a pedestrian crossing from the car park to the post office would be a great aid to elderly people, especially on pension day)
- The key issue is how to improve the town centre experience while retaining local authority income streams and therefore increasing the business footfall in the town centre
- There is considerable potential in and around the town for walking for pleasure, especially the new Clare Lake Loop walk.

6.6. Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

The Challenges facing Claremorris Town Centre can be summarised as:

- Thirty-four percent of retail units in Claremorris are currently vacant
- Economic crisis, falling disposable income of consumers contributing to business closures
- Business closures leading to vacant commercial premises and a sense of abandonment / loss / and knock on impact on remaining town centre business
- Customers voting with their feet and using more out of town shopping facilities with free parking and possibly easier access
- Increasing popularity of online retailing
- Consumers seeking value for money and value offers
- Changing entertainment patterns of consumers
- Local Authority income base being eroded due to falling commercial rates and car parking income

Opportunities

The Opportunities facing Claremorris Town Centre can be summarised as:

- Claremorris is designated as a Key Town in the Regional Planning Guidelines and Mayo County Development Plan
- Strong Chamber of Commerce present

- Good infrastructure in Claremorris (Gas, Sewage, Water, Roads, Rail, Fibre Optics)
- Good housing stock and availability
- Good range of retail and service facilities present in the town centre and outside
- Strong catchment hinterland with strong agricultural community
- High economically active population with many working locally
- High standard of education among local population
- Closeness to Ireland West Airport
- Alternative and new uses for Town Centre spaces
- Bank closures in neighbouring towns (Kiltimagh and Ballyhaunis) bringing new consumers into Claremorris

7. Claremorris Town Centre Rejuvenation Plan

7.1. Overview

This plan has been prepared in the context of a very real need for a robust, deliverable action plan that will facilitate the rejuvenation of Claremorris Town Centre. The plan contains actions that will achieve quick wins that will encourage participation and buy in from town centre stakeholders and generate confidence that the town centre can grow and thrive. It also sets out a long term framework for the town centre development over the next 5 – 10 years.

7.2. Plan Structure and Delivery

Setting out an agreed framework of actions and projects is one aspect of the plan. It must be coupled with a proper implementation and management structure and an evaluation and measurement mechanism.

7.3. Town Centre Team

The best results will come from maximum collaboration at the local level to create high streets that people want to use, enjoy and return to.⁵

There is a necessity for a Claremorris town centre team to be established involving all stakeholders who have a role to play in the management of the town centre. For the team to be an “effective partnership” it requires representation and full engagement from all stakeholders that have a role in the Town Centre. Table 2 set out an indicative list of stakeholders

The town centre team must have strong operational capacity and will be responsible for implementing and driving the town rejuvenation plan. The role of the town team is to adopt and agree the town centre plan and delegate the implementation of projects to project groups, review periodically the progress made, propose and adopt amendments to the town plan from time to time and act as the coordinating body for the development of the town centre. It is extremely important that the town team collectively agree to the plan and its actions and are dedicated to its implementation.

Table 2: Potential Town Team Membership

| Public | Private | Voluntary / Community |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mayo County Council | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | Claremorris Tidy Towns |
| An Garda Siochana | An Post | Local Schools |
| Irish Rail | McWilliam Park Hotel | Town Centre Users |
| Fáilte Ireland | E-net – Fibre Optics | Town Hall Committee |

⁵ The Portas Review - An independent review into the future of our high streets, Mary Portas, December 2011

| | | |
|--|-------------|--|
| | Landlords | CLAR IRD |
| | Local Media | Other relevant community groups like sporting bodies |

7.4. Developing the Town Centre Experience

“The most vibrant town centres offer a wide range of locally responsive services that create a comprehensive retail, cultural and community hub. This is crucial for the future of the High Street as it is an offer that its competitors struggle to match. Future Government policy must acknowledge this, not treating retail in isolation, but empowering councils to integrate the shopping offer effectively alongside other cultural and community services.”

Local Government Association response to The Portas Review, UK

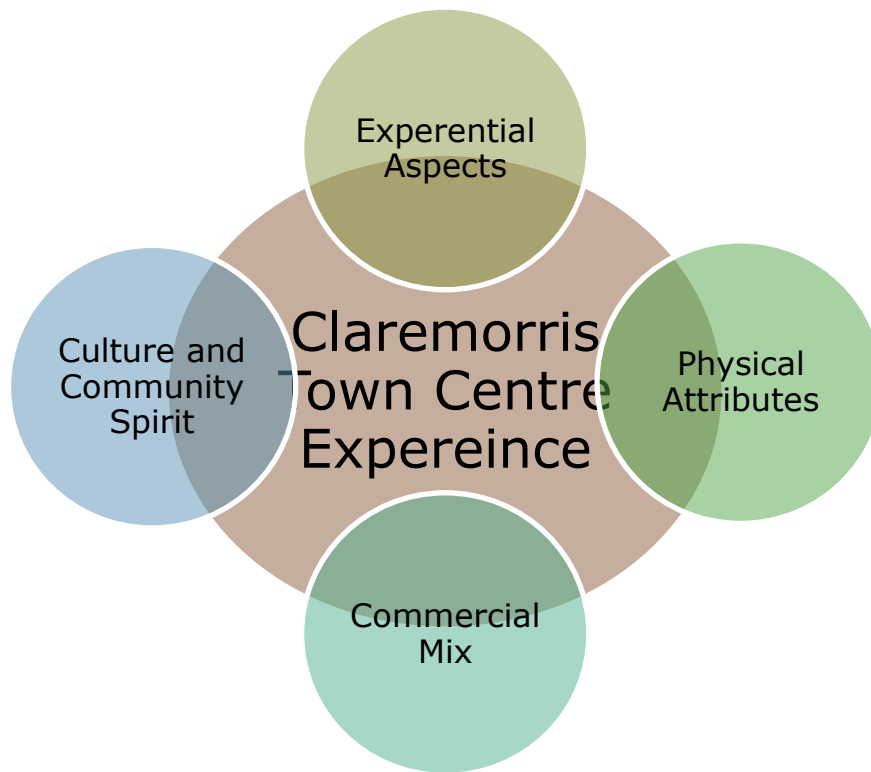
In essence this sums up, what is this plan is trying to achieve for Claremorris, it sets out a map to developing a unique town centre experience for Claremorris, that cannot be matched in the edge of town shopping centres. The town centre experience also needs to be “Claremorris Specific” so that it is not a copycat of another town, one that brings to life the unique community spirit, culture and heritage of the Claremorris.

To visualise this lets think of the town centre as a shopping centre and apply the same business model to it. An effectively managed shopping centre will have a vision, a strategy and direction, it would choose what it wanted in a particular space to fit with that vision and proactively target the businesses and services that were missing. It would have in place a single marketing and promotion strategy to attract the customers it wants. The town centre strategy has to be no different.

Therefore town centres should run more like shopping centres. However we have to recognise that town centres have many stakeholders, property owners, the businesses, the local authorities, the users. What is needed is cohesion and commitment for all stakeholders to works towards achieving the shared vision through the town centre development plan.

Figure 1 sets out what the key elements of a town centre experience are, arguably with the experiential aspect being the most important; as it is here that the town centre can really create sustainable competitive advantage over its edge of town competitors and other competing towns.

Figure 1: Components of the Town Centre Experience



“Wanting to go into town is different from wanting or needing to shop. It is about an experience. It is about sociability and relaxation, creativity and being part of something you cannot get at home or work.” Jan Gehl (2010) Cities for People

There are many smaller components that collectively make the town centre experience. The main ones are represented in Figure 2. It can be seen that these are a combination of infrastructural development, human and personal engagement, the retail and service offering and stakeholder collaboration.

Figure 2: Town Centre Experience Matrix

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Festivals & Events | Food & Accommodation | Culture & History | Sense of Place | Recreational Infrastructure |
| Customer Service | Access & Egress | Traffic Management | Parking Control | Community Involvement |
| Retail Range | Signage & Linkages | Distinctive Town Centre Experience | Streetscapes | Service Range |
| Commercial Range | Social Infrastructure | Litter & Security | Public Realm | Town Welcome |
| Town Brand & Ethos | Value Proposition | Business 2 Business Cooperation | Night Economy | Town Management Team |

Therefore this helps to identify four main themes around which the Claremorris Town Centre Rejuvenation Plan will be built.

Theme 1: Infrastructure, Access and Public Realm

This theme deals with the planning and development of appropriate access and egress from and within the town centre, and public realm works. Provision needs to be included for pedestrian movement and provisions for public transport. It includes the visual aesthetics of the town itself, such as streetscapes, approach roads and all aspects of the public realm.

Theme 2: Human Resource Development and Education

This theme covers the range of relationships that exist among the various town centre stakeholders and measures to ensure that these are working harmoniously, the identification of various up skilling and education needs of the stakeholders and how these can be addressed.

Theme 3: Retail, Service and Commercial Offering

Given the high degree of competition from Silverbridge and edge of town centres, the retail, commercial and service environment of the town centre can only compete by developing a unique and compelling value proposition. This can be specialist retail and cultural attractions for example. It will require a collective and concerted effort by all town centre stakeholders to deliver this appealing proposition that offers the right mix of value and customer service to make people want to come and to return.

Theme 4: Stakeholder Collaboration

The Public sector alone cannot create vibrant town centres however hard they try. The best results will come from collaboration of all town centre stakeholders working in partnership. There must be a collective and agreed vision, followed through with actions from businesses, landlords, the public and all other stakeholders. The focus must be on getting the town centre to act and operate like a business, much like a shopping centre. The starting point is getting the basics right to level the playing field with new and modern out of town centres. It also requires community involvement to engage all stakeholders in the implementation of the plan.

7.5. Underpinning Principles of the Plan

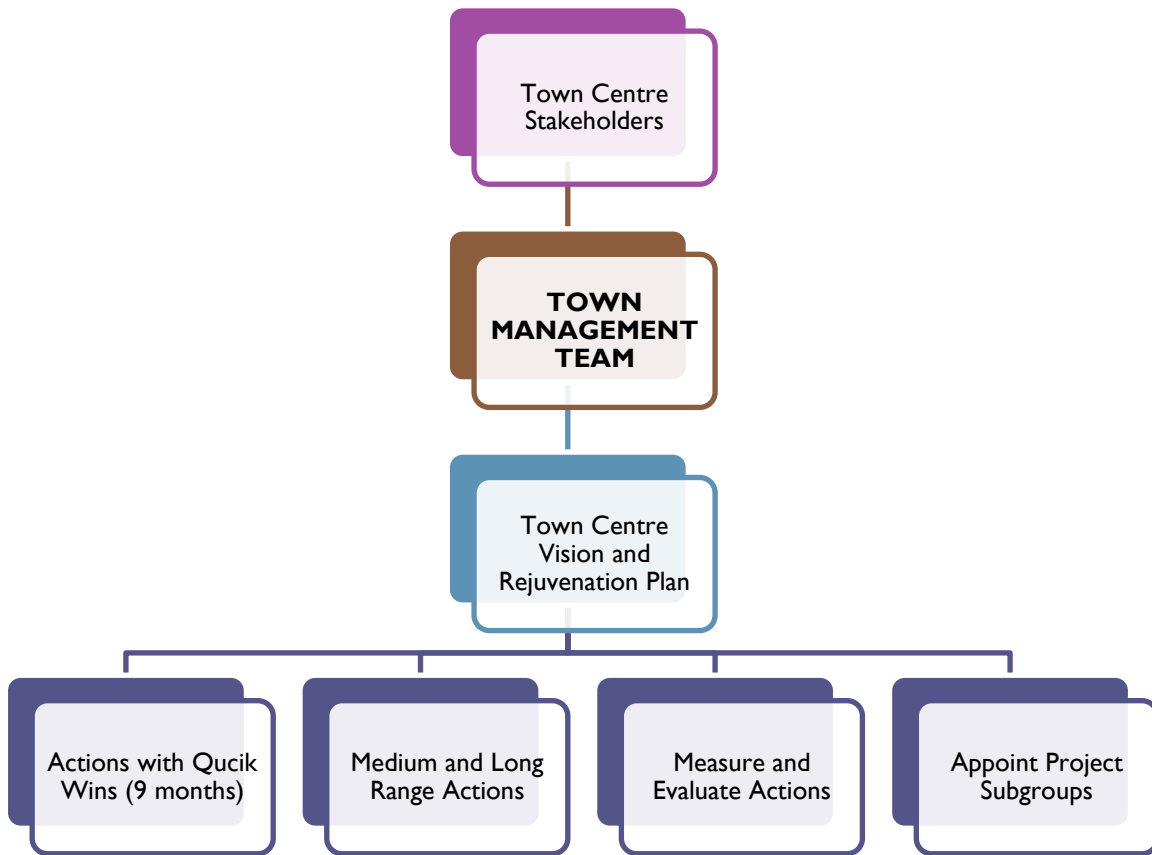
This town centre rejuvenation plan for Claremorris has a number of underpinning principles as follows:

1. The need for **quick wins** and rapid deployment of a number of important actions so as to build credibility for the remainder of the plan and garner additional buy in from stakeholders
2. Setting out a series of **longer range actions** that are achievable and will provide economic and social benefits to the town centre.
3. The development of a **shared vision** for Claremorris Town Centre
4. The putting in place of a “**Town Team**” management structure that will represent all stakeholders and will be committed to the implementation of the plan

7.6. Plan Implementation Process

The plan should be agreed by all stakeholders of the town centre. These stakeholders will appoint a “Town Team” who will be responsible for the overall implementation and management of the town plan. The Town Team should be representative of all stakeholders as outlined in table 2 and consist of a maximum of 15 members. The appointment of small project implementation subgroups by the Town Team helps to share their workload and get other town stakeholders involved in the implementation process. Figure 3 gives an overview of the implementation process

Figure 3: Plan Implementation Process




8. The Action Plan

8.1. *Introduction*

The action plan for Claremorris Town Centre Rejuvenation is structured along the four identified themes. Within this the “Quick Win” actions are placed first, followed by the medium and long range actions.

8.2. Theme 1: Infrastructure, Access and Public Realm

The majority of projects dealing with town infrastructure and access have been identified in the Claremorris LAP, and are not reproduced here, nor are actions identified in this plan meant to replace or supersede the LAP. The actions identified here are those identified through the research and consultation elements of the plan preparation and considered to be important in terms of the town centre rejuvenation.

The “Quick Win” Actions are presented first and colour coded 

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| Pedestrian friendly town centre, | The provision of a pedestrian crossing between the post office and Ballyhaunis Road Car Park | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow easier access to the Post Office and nearby town centre facilities. Encourage greater use of the Car Park To make it easier for pensioners to park and use the Post Office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car count to be taken over a 3 month period to determine increased usage Traders to record evidence of increased turnover and presence of customers in town centre, especially pensioners on Friday | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete by November 2013 |
| Innovative Car Parking Trials | Devise a number of free car parking trials to determine impact on town centre business and activity. Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free Parking Friday morning 09.00 – 13.00 Free after three Town Centre Weekly Happy Hour | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages visitation to the town centre at key times Increased business and turnover for town centre shops Encourages longer town centre stays Measure impacts of trials on car parking revenue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traders to actively measure increase in turnover, footfall and business during pilot periods Car survey to measure any increases in uptake of schemes and activity in town centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Trails to take place between June and October 2013 |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| 2 for the price of 1 parking | Good practice in town centre management encourages long stays to allow visitation to a range of shops and services. This proposal is to introduce a system of “Pay for one hour and get one free”. Town centre users will pay the 30c one hour fee and receive an additional hours free parking thereafter giving a total of 2 hours for the price of one. It will allow longer stays and not involve additional management charges to Mayo Co Co. | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Local Press and Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives consumers long enough time to carry out a range of activities in town centre • Should lead to more businesses being conducted in town centre • Increases sales, turnover and business of town centre businesses • Should have minimal impact on car parking revenue • Encourages longer town centre stays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traders to actively measure increase in turnover, footfall and business during pilot period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trailed November 2013 to January 2014 |
| Small Streetscape Improvements | Consumer surveys constantly mention that improved facades have an instant impact on business. Claremorris has many attractive and appealing shop fronts and is well ahead of towns of its size in this respect. Through a town information and awareness campaign led by the Chamber of Commerce all businesses | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders and Retailers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attractive and appealing town setting making it more enticing to visit and do business | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target of 20 premises to take part and improve facades / window displays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete by September 2013 |


| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| | should agree to maintain clean and inviting shop facades and window displays. | | | | |
| Market Square Enhancements | The market square is a key feature of Claremorris Town Centre; Recent years have seen significant public realm development at the square. Many feel it could benefit from more greenery to add to its appeal. This action will involve planting of flowers / shrubs at the market square | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Claremorris Tidy Towns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves town appearance and aesthetics Makes town centre more appealing for visitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 large flower boxes provided jointly by Mayo Co Co and Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Place by August 2013 |
| Examine Options for alternative car parking payment systems | This is to include the feasibility of new methods of payment to reduce the current inconvenience factor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example – Pay by Text Example – pre purchased discs Example – Pay on exit for car parks Cost / Benefit analysis of any proposed new system will need to be carried out | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better choice and options for payment of parking fee Pay on exit system does encourage longer town stays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car survey to measure increased or other usage of on street and car parks Traders to measure evidence of increased footfall and turnover | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of payment mechanisms complete by Feb 2014 New implementation if needed by March 2014 agreed |
| Implement | In particular to complete | Mayo County Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages more | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed by |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| Claremorris Smarter Travel Programme | the pedestrian link up between the town centre and Silverbridge centre | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | pedestrian use and less car use in town <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages visitors to Silverbridge to link and use the town centre | | March 2014 |
| Create Disincentives/ Incentives to leave units vacant/non vacant | Vacancy levels are a problem in Claremorris. While some building owners are very diligent in maintaining appearances, others are not so. This action involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate information to all landlords and building owners on the importance of building aesthetics in terms of town centre development Investigation of statutory measures to disincentivise vacancy Encourage and promote a scheme for short term uses for vacant premises including allowing next door shop to use window display | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Claremorris Tidy Towns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps eliminate the vacant look and feel of vacant premises and of the town centre streets Increases the chances of leasing the buildings as they look better Encourages new business start ups Improves the town centre streetscapes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 vacant units released to alternative use One information campaign completed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 units with new uses by March 2014 Information campaign completed by October 2013 |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| | space and use windows as town visitor information points and displays, or allow as display points for local arts and crafts persons | | | | |
| Fibre Optic Rollout | Fibre Optic connectivity is available in Claremorris but needs to be rolled out to businesses premises. It will be of great benefit to existing businesses, but also more importantly be a huge advertisement and strength for attracting new businesses to the town centre | Mayo County Council Enet Chamber of Commerce Project subgroup | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better communication infrastructure for new and existing business | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of 2014 |
| Streetscape | In conjunction with Mayo County Council prepare a design guide which highlights the required streetscape look and feel | Town Team Mayo County Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned and agreed street design guide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved and more attractive streetscapes and public realm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2015 |
| Long Range Planning | Working with Mayo County Council, ensure that provision can be made in the town centre to accommodate any new public or private sector developments that will bring new footfall, business | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--------------|--|--------------|---------|------------------------|-----------|
| | or jobs to the town centre. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public health centres• Government offices• Retail chains or stores | | | | |

8.3. Theme 2: Human Resource Development and Education

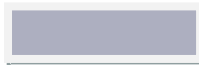
The “Quick Win” Actions are presented first and colour coded 

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| Claremorris Pride of Place Training | A 3 hour information and awareness programme for all management and staff of retail and service businesses in town centre, other town centre stakeholders, local people to show importance of knowing what’s in the area, how to refer and maintain business in the town centre, upsell and cross selling skills | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge of what’s available in town centre by all staff Ability to upsell and cross sell other businesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 attendees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2012 |
| Claremorris Town Ambassador Programme | Change the roles of people working in town centre to be town ambassadors. This includes staff in businesses, town centre stakeholders, local people, to get them promote the town to visitors through being aware of all facilities, services, events etc. to be launched as part of Pride of Place training | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone understands their responsibility and role to develop the town centre Increased awareness and understanding of town centre and its activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each business to have an active town ambassador | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by February 2014 |
| Training in Customer Service | General customer service training skills for staff and persons who deal with the | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better customer service skills in town | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> October and November |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| | public in Claremorris. Three training programmes of three hours each | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More customer satisfaction and retention rates | | 2013 |
| Retail Business Viability Programme and Mentoring | The retail environment is fast paced and fast changing. This action will be the delivery of a three hour programme on retail trends, customer and consumer trends, new business strategies for the retail and service sector | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders and Retailers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge and skills on emerging in retail and consumer practices to equip town centre business with lead edge knowledge and practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirty participating businesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2013 |

8.4. Theme 3: Retail, Service and Commercial Offering

The “Quick Win” Actions are presented first and colour coded



| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| Town Square Events | <p>Create an events schedule and plan for a range of events to be held in the town square. Some can be recurring events such as a farmers market, others one off such as seasonal festivals like open air music or cinema. The objective to increase footfall to the town centre and help in creation of the Claremorris identity and brand. Potential examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers Market • Music events • Open air Cinema • Cooking demonstrations <p>All events to be carefully coordinated and promoted</p> | <p>Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders Project subgroup under auspices of Town Team</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased footfall to town centre and increased business turnover • Creation of identity and competitive advantage for Claremorris town centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two events to for 2013 • Three farmers market events for 2013 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting July 2013 |
| Town Centre Happy Hour | <p>Each week an hour is designated as happy hour, whereby participating businesses present special offers on a small range of goods and / or services to</p> | <p>Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders Project subgroup under auspices of</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased footfall and visitation to the town centre • 15 businesses to participate initially and target to grow | <p>Traders to measure and record the impact through footfall counts and comparisons and sales comparisons.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First happy hour in August 2013 |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|------------------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| | entice customers to the town centre. In conjunction, free parking for that hour should be available. To be widely promoted via all channels and to become a weekly feature of Claremorris town centre | Town Team | to 25 over a 12 month period | | |
| Deal of the Day | To pilot a programme among a small groups of participating businesses. Each day one businesses advertises and offers a “must have” deal at consumers. The idea is to use this loss leader as an attractor of footfall and business to the town. | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders Project subgroup under auspices of Town Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business and footfall to Claremorris | Traders to assess the impacts of the project in generation of other business and decide after one month whether it is a viable project or not | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch in September 2013 |
| Popup shops | These are becoming increasingly popular, especially around seasonal goods. The benefits are it allows traders to capitalise on market conditions without having a permanent presence and is an ideal use for vacant premises. The Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with landlords to advertise | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Project subgroup under auspices of Town Team Landlords | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business and range of goods and service in Claremorris Allows shop operator to assess market conditions and viability of a full time shop in Claremorris Allows landlords to showcase their | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three landlords to agree to participate Two pop up shops secured and trailed in 2013 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> October and December 2013 |

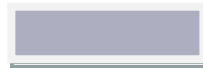
| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| | for suitable pop up shops and services in Claremorris | | premises and the town | | |
| Free Wi-Fi | Simple things make a difference. With the high ownership of smart phones and tablets, businesses that offer free and open Wi-Fi access will get repeat custom. This action will inform all businesses of the hard facts on what it can mean for business, how to install it, how much it will cost and how to manage it. Action is mainly applicable to pubs / restaurants / office environments, but not exclusively | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Project subgroup under auspices of Town Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible increase in levels of customer service from the town centre • Potential to create better customer loyalty, especially among younger customers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty businesses to offer free Wi-Fi | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2013 |
| Claremorris Online Retail Store | To help combat internet retailing, a group of shops and business to collectively create a Claremorris online retailing presence through a combined website. Goods can be ordered and paid for and then delivered or collected by customers at a central collection point | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders Project subgroup under auspices of Town Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New options and services for customers • New market outlets for town centre stores • Increased choice and convenience for customers • Reduces risks of monetary leakage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten stores to collaborate and create the online retail environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online store ready for launch by June 2014 |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--|--|--|---|--|-------------------------------|
| | | | outside of Claremorris | | |
| Town Loyalty Card | Implementation of a collective town centre loyalty card scheme that awards points based on spend to customers. The points can be redeemed at any participating retail outlet for cash or goods or for other special offers like hotel deals. | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders Project subgroup under auspices of Town Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased customer loyalty Increased town centre business | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten participating business to start scheme Grow to thirty participating businesses within 12 months of launch | Scheme launched by March 2014 |
| Development of the Night Time Economy | In conjunction with other actions such as the town loyalty programme, develop a series of events and special offers that will entice more town centre business and visitation at nights. Local restaurants / pubs to participate. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish music nights Come dine with me for special evenings Combined offers like Eat, Drink and Bingo offers Ladies nights | Claremorris Chamber of Commerce Traders Project subgroup under auspices of Town Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business to the town centre at evening and night times Helps create Claremorris town centre identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten participating businesses, growing to twenty after 12 months | Launched by April 2014 |
| Local Crafts Shop | Shared space to be made available for a craft shop | Local craft producers South West Mayo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases retail offering of town | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of customers and new | Open by June 2014 |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--------------|---|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|-----------|
| | for local produce. The idea is that a rota management system will be agreed between the participating craft owners. | LEADER Chamber of Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a new attractive outlet for local produce | business spinoffs | |

8.5. Theme 4: Stakeholder Collaboration

The “Quick Win” Actions are presented first and colour coded



| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| Social Media | Start the development of a strong Claremorris Town Centre Social Media presence through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other relevant media. This will be used collectively to promote the town centre message, events, and all current news | Town Team Traders and businesses Local Community Sector Project sub group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased profile of the town centre and a continuous newsfeed and advertisement of the Claremorris Value Proposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of followers Tracked increase in business due to measured results of specific online campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two social media presences in places by September 2013 |
| Calendar of Events | Initiate new festivals / events with a focus on bringing more people into the town centre. The long term target is to have nine new events per annum spaced throughout the year. A key focus should | Town Team Project Sub group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases footfall and business to the town for a weekend Creates an identity for the town as a place to go and with lots happening Brings in new visitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of visitors to events Increase in turnover and footfall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two events to be organised for 2013, rising to six for 2014 and nine for 2015 |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| | be on children activities Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easter • Halloween • St Valentines • Midsummer • Scarecrow and harvest festival • January blues • Food festival | | to the town from outside the immediate catchment | | |
| Social Media | On-going development and maintenance of the town centre social media campaign | Town Team Traders and businesses Local Community Sector | • | | • Weekly / daily updates on an on-going basis |
| Claremorris Town App | Development of a specific town app for smart phone use that promotes and streams up to date information on the happenings in the town centre | Town Team Traders and businesses Local Community Sector Project sub group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and promotion of Claremorris identity • Promotes the town centre Value Proposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of downloads • Tracking of app specific promotions to gauge impact on town centre business | Launch by December 2014 |
| Promote Local Distinctiveness & Branding | The identity and unique value proposition of Claremorris will become clearer after 12 – 18 months of the implementation of actions of this plan. At that stage it is a good idea to evaluate what the town represents | Town Team Traders and businesses Project sub group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New vibrant Claremorris town centre brand • Agreed town centre market positioning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New brand and logo development and brand integrity and usage guidelines | March 2015 |

| Action Title | Description | Stakeholders | Impacts | Measurement of Impacts | Timescale |
|--------------|---|--------------|---------|------------------------|-----------|
| | and develop a unique branding and positioning proposition for the town centre | | | | |

9. Getting it all Started

The targets and timelines in this plan will require a rapid and fast start up process, but one that is well planned and coordinated. What is required is a start-up implementation guide to ensure that the plan rolls out smoothly. The following steps are proposed.

| Action | Date | Responsible |
|--|---------------------|--|
| Launch of Plan to town centre businesses and presentation of its actions | June 2013 | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce |
| Appoint Town Team Invite selected stakeholders to participate Create and agree a terms of reference | June 2013 | Mayo County Council Claremorris Chamber of Commerce |
| Town team selects projects and implementation plan for next 9 months | July 2013 | Town Team |
| Appoint Project Subgroups to implement the various agreed actions | July 2013 | Town Team |
| Hold monthly review meetings of Town Team and project subgroups | August – March 2014 | Town Team |

APPENDIX I

RESULTS OF CLAREMORRIS TOWN CENTRE SURVEY

Survey Overview

A short 5 question survey was administered online in April 2013 to gather opinions and suggestions from the public about:

- What they would like to see in Claremorris Town Centre in the future
- What are the best features of Claremorris
- What are the issues and problems with Claremorris town centre at present

31 replies were received and a detailed analysis of the results is set. The questions were:

1. Please describe what you would like to see in Claremorris Town Centre, ten years from now?

2. For Claremorris to Prosper in the future, how important are the following actions?
 - More shops and services in the town centre
 - Free car parking
 - More jobs in the town centre
 - More customers in the town centre spending money
 - A brand and image for Claremorris
 - More signage into and out of the town
 - More activities and events to attract people
 - Better use made of market square

3. Do you think any of the following are problems or issues when you wish to visit Claremorris Town Centre?
 - Paid Parking
 - Car Parks too far from Town Centre
 - Poor range of shops and services
 - Traffic Congestion
 - Pedestrian access
 - Look and feel of the Town Centre

4. What are the best features of Claremorris as a town? Please rate 1 to 4 with 4 being the highest rank
 - Town Centre with good range of shops and services
 - Edge of Town Shopping Centres
 - Good road access to Claremorris
 - Easy Parking in Town Centre
 - Friendly staff in shops and businesses
 - Attractive Town and Streetscapes
 - Public Transport
 - Pedestrian Access

5. Have you any ideas of projects that you would like to see developed in Claremorris Town Centre?

Please describe what you would like to see in Claremorris Town Centre, ten years from now?

Analysis of Answers

What is clear from the responses is that there is a clear desire for there to be a greater range of choice for consumers in the town with better activities and facilities available for the town's young people. There is also a clear desire for better value available to consumers from local businesses.

Responses

I would like to see that The Square is being used to its full advantage, (more events taking place, monthly markets), that there is better control on parking i.e. Shops and businesses should not have to have paid parking outside their premises. All premises owned on the main streets are kept up to a certain standard (painted and windows clean!) - Some type of policy in place that in the event of a shop being closed the owner has an onus to maintain the upkeep of the exterior. It's very low cost to do this so it just should become part of the town policy.

A cinema/bowling alley or some game centre for teenagers.

A use for vacant units & upgrade town centre residential units

Busy lively safe town to be enjoyed by all ages

A town that would contain lots of business, small medium and large, all thriving, vibrant and complementing each other in their success. I would like to see a Town Centre that you felt comfortable in shopping in and due to the large range of shops and businesses you had no difficulty in getting the product or service you were looking for without having to look elsewhere. I envisage a Town Centre where you could park your car without the added nuisance of paying for the privilege of shopping there. I would like to see a town where visitors and tourists were welcomed and catered for and the horrible sight of derelict buildings and empty shops were a thing of the past. I would like to see Claremorris as a place which the community from miles around had great pride in and regarded as their own market place and worth supporting.

A few more affordable clothes shops-men and women's. A cinema/bowling alley, something entertaining. Maybe stalls in the square at the weekend-like Castlebar.

Decent clothes shops. I am 24 years old and find I and my friends have to go to Castlebar/Galway to find nice clothes to buy as Claremorris clothes shops are too expensive or do not have enough variety. I would spend a lot more money in town if this was the case. A clean town, more colours on the shops and derelict houses. Flowers around

the street. More of a buzz around the town. A taxi rank/somewhere warm for people to wait for pick-ups. Free car parking to stop everyone going up to Tesco area. A community that knows each other and gets involved together

A bustling inviting friendly place that draws you in.

A vibrant mix of commercial outlets (retail and offices and e commerce) combined with cultural / craft and leisure outlets a town centre with premises and streetscapes that represent the ethos and brand that is Claremorris

A town that is recognised as the true centre of Connaught. Road, Rail and freight network hub. Known for its famous people and places.

Vibrant

A town centre where people come to relax and enjoy themselves e.g. continental style

I hope we have a good place to live and do business, the town badly needs some jobs for our young people to keep them in the area, if we don't have young families we will have no future

I would like to see a vibrant town centre with a good retail mix of specialised small and medium sized shops and restaurants. I would like to see market square developed into an outdoor theatre where outdoor events and markets could be run under cover similar to the Milk Market in Limerick. I would like to see a pedestrian area at the back of the square. I would like to see pedestrian crossing in key areas of the town allowing easy & safe movement into and out of every street and area. I would like to see a one system traffic management system.

Vibrant, community focused, economically secure and a great place to live and work...

A vibrant Town Centre with linkages to Silverbridge and Lakeside Shopping Centres, linkage from the railway station itself and the station car park also to the town centre. A Town centre Management forum consisting of the Mayo County Council, Businesses, IRD, FRC, voluntary groups, sporting associations and independent interested parties. Proper marketing of our current favourable MAN Broadband to entice small or large IT companies to Claremorris this would help to develop small town centre premises. I would like to see a Primary Healthcare centre situated at the Central Hotel in Mount street with exit on Dalton Street vital services that would help to keep the centre vibrant. A designated calendar of events in and around the square to entice consumer spend and create service jobs in small indigenous businesses. Development of our Eco town ethos by exclusion of Gas Peaker Plants and planned Biomass developments. Organised Town Planning going forward that would help to manage the fragmentation that has occurred due to out of centre developments.

Re opening of shops along main Street and James Street, with pedestrian access to a car park serving this area. Parking space at back of station, waste of time. Too far to walk to shops. Areas in front of coffee shops, restaurants with seating in summer time (see Castlebar)

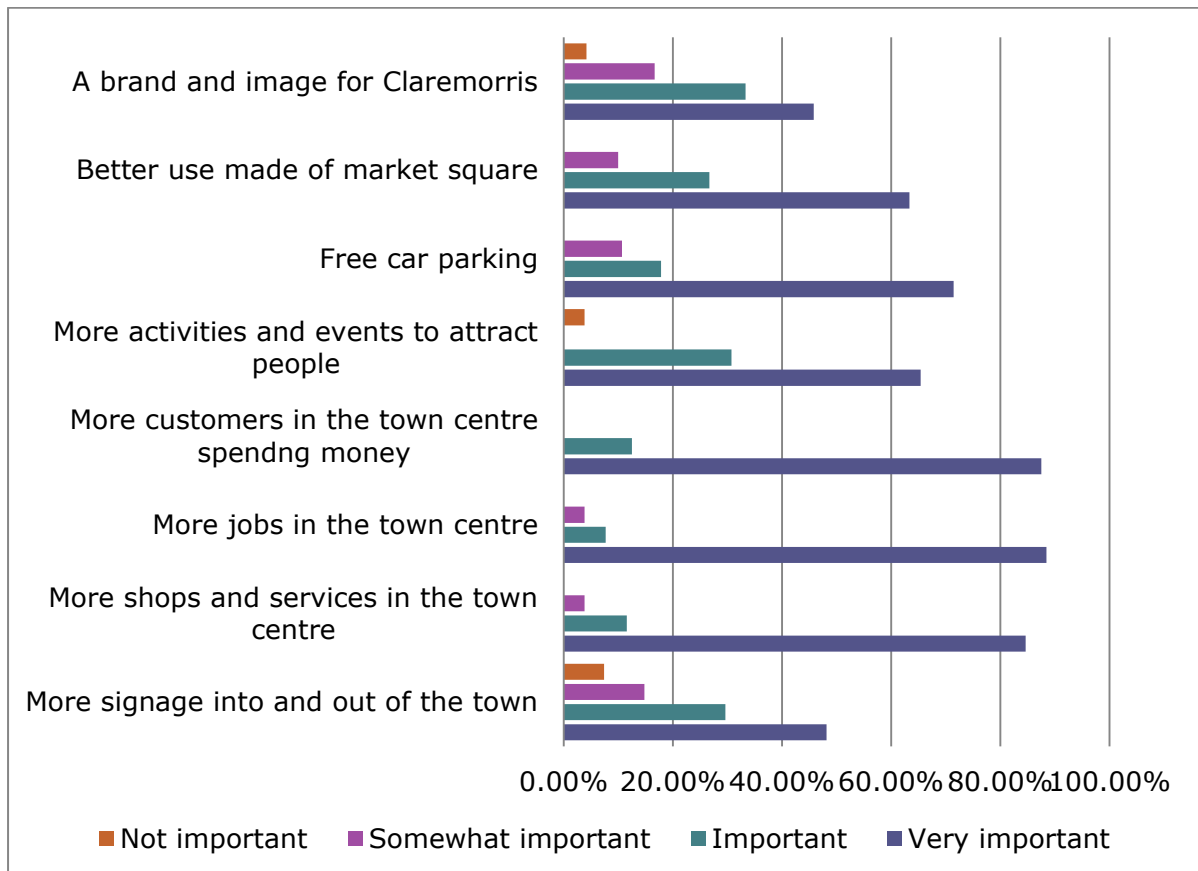
Business activity on shop premises around the square front and back. Recreational promotion.

Dentist surgeries (proper orthodontics) Eye Surgeons Museums Cafe's, restaurants unique shops clean and pretty town Skateboard parks Walks Pool bars

For Claremorris to prosper in the future, how important are the following Actions

Analysis

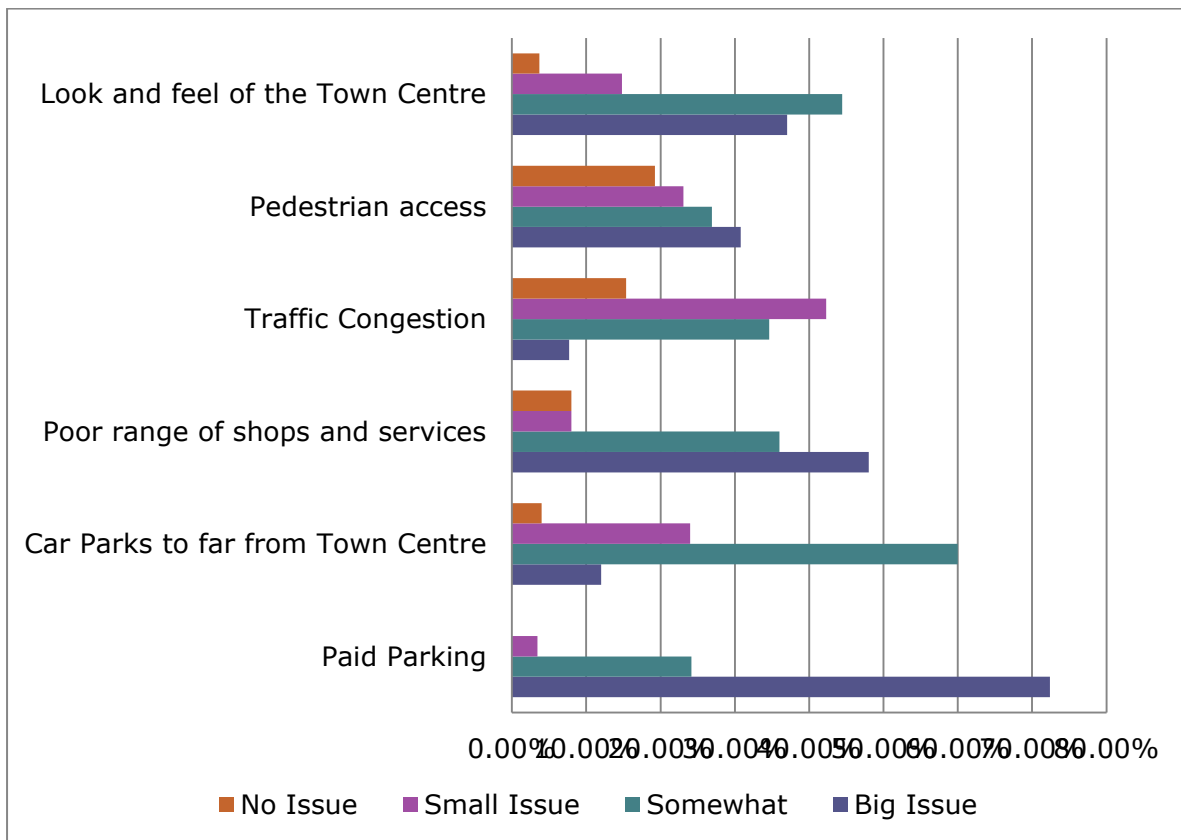
The graph shows us that the people of Claremorris unsurprisingly want to see more jobs and shops in the town centre. This all leads to a vibrant town centre with a better variety of shops. Respondents also made clear that they wish to have some kind of free parking available at convenient locations. The graph also illustrates the wish of inhabitants for better use of the towns square and signage on the routes into and out of Claremorris.



Do you think any of the following are problems or issues when you wish to visit Claremorris Town Centre?

Analysis

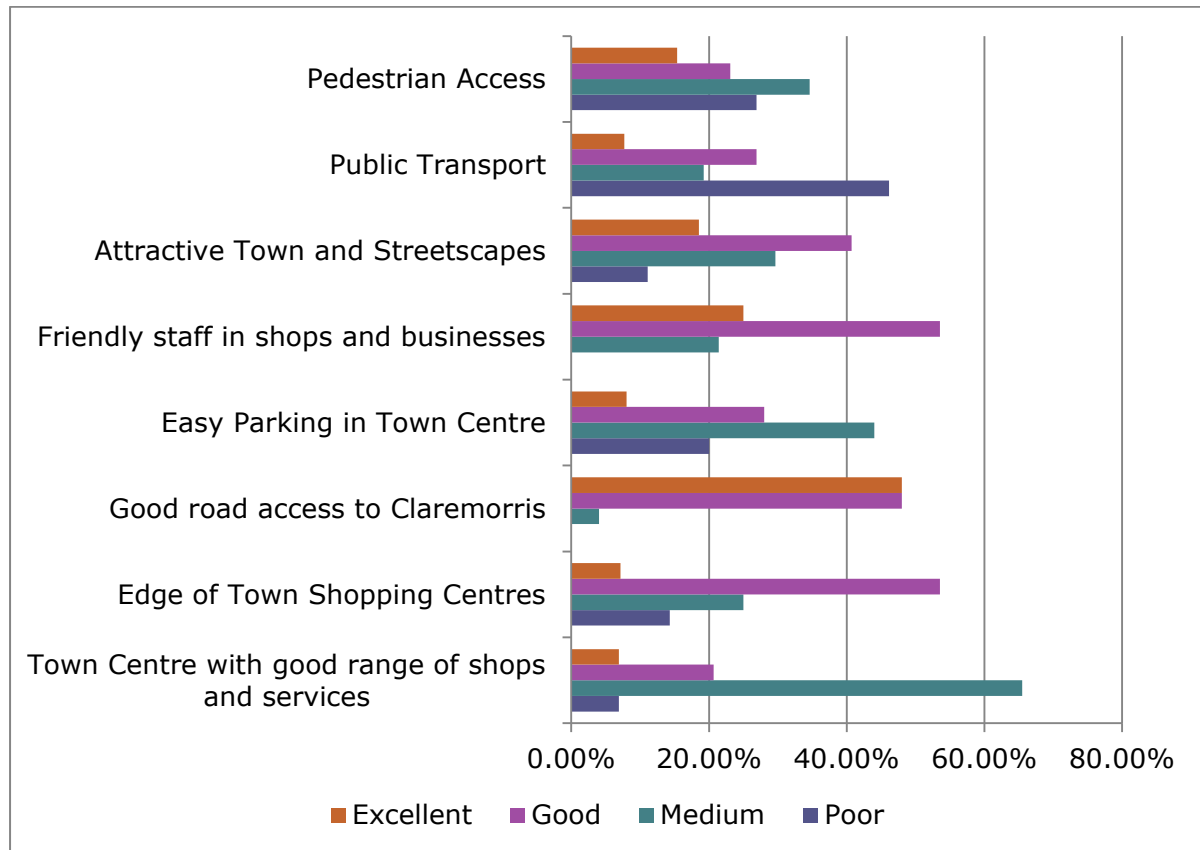
The responses to this question illustrate two of the biggest problems facing Claremorris today. The issue of paid parking is considered to big issue along with the perceived poor range of shops and services available in the town. There is also a clear sense that there is a problem with pedestrian access in the town with many participants unhappy with the look and feel of the town.



What are the best features of Claremorris as a town? Please rate 1 to 4 with 4 being the highest rank

Analysis

From the responses received it is clear that there is a general satisfaction with the quality of access to the town and with the edge of town shopping centres. There is clear dissatisfaction with the standard of pedestrian access and most notably the quality of public transport in the town.



Have you any ideas of projects that you would like to see developed in Claremorris Town Centre?

Analysis of Answers

There is a definite will amongst responders for there to be a more coordinated response from the community to the problems facing Claremorris. These include a coordinated drive to tackle derelict and vacant buildings and actions to allow businesses to survive. The introduction of a customer loyalty scheme or shop local drive would provide consumers with a more reasons to visit the town centre.

Responses

As there are quite a number of fantastic committees in Claremorris there should be more of an emphasis and access to these groups to promote the town. There should be a primary group who could organise these committees and utilise their talents instead of having to pay outsiders to do the work that Claremorris committees could do and would only be happy to participate in. This in itself could be a project going forward so that when events are being organised in the town, there is direct access to these members to help out in events. This spreads the work evenly and allows Claremorris to become more of a community.

Try to keep the shops we have by helping them to keep going red tape costs are driving shops out of business

The building fronts need to be tidied and made look better there is some terrible looking buildings fronts which is a big turn off.

I would like to see a serious effort made to introduce free parking on the streets of the town to help balance the unfair advantage of the edge-of-town shopping centre's free parking. This would have to be limited in time in order to keep the parking bays turning-over regularly. The time limit would need to be at least one hour and preferably two, which would allow the shopper or visitor time to browse and look around as well as the social element of having a coffee with friends. The town centre belongs to the community and all obstacles that deter people from using it should be removed. The loss of revenue to the Mayo County Council would eventually be recovered in the extra revenue from rates generated by new businesses. A clock-parking-disc system, used all over Britain and Europe, would eliminate the need for pay-and-display and would be far more shopper friendly. These would be free, available in all shops and robust enough to last a long time. When parking on the street the time of arrival would be set on the disc and the time allowed would be displayed on the street. A traffic warden would ensure that the scheme was not abused. See the following link: <http://www.eden.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/parking/on-street-parking-and-disc-zones/>

Not just the town centre in general. Something needs to be done to connect the whole town as right now it seems to be divided into three, Main Street, Lakeside and Silverbridge.

Loyalty scheme branched out and extended including all business including taxis, services, dressmakers etc. Customer service. In recessionary times shopkeepers and assistants should be more welcoming! Cleaner paths/shop fronts. Everyone should keep their surroundings cleaner... Core forum to deal with the town centre made up of a rep of every community, business area etc. more communication between groups especially for fundraising as overlap is actually damaging all the groups now!

Yes as outlined above and at meeting in Dalton Inn. Most important would be to run Town centre like a shopping centre by the Town Team

Enhance what we have, promote the various activities and sporting facilities better.

Customer loyalty scheme in each business!!!

Town Centre Management Team, Town App

Cover and seating over the square and the town centre wi/fi enabled

Reasonable council rates for businesses ,rates should reflect the reality of doing business today, rates holidays for new business to help them get established ,

Market Square needs to be developed as the heart of the town and growth and development will follow. Claremorris Chamber of Commerce have submitted plans and drawings to Mayo Co Co to develop the area and I think this a sure fire way to start the rejuvenation plan. I would go one step further and put in a canopy on a steel form (similar to the Milk Market in Limerick) on the front of the square. This would allow an Artisans market develop and outdoor events could be run all year round protected from the elements. I think if there is a good design it will become an architectural feature in the centre of the town thus enhancing the area of Market square and overall streetscape.

Just a note re: survey - it would have been better to be able to give more answers per questions. I would like to see a working group set up of all local agencies and business people in the town to work together to ensure no overlap of services and how community focus and business can work together for the development of the town and make Claremorris a great place to live and visit

I believe that the Central Hotel developed as a Primary Healthcare centre would be the first step to re-invigorating the Town Centre it would also stop the development of another derelict site in the town. Town Square developed to hold events in good and bad weather with a co-ordinated Events calendar. I believe that we also require at least one of the central Car Parks (Food Store or Chapel Lane) with designated 1 Hour free parking, this is required to help the free movement of people within the town centre.

Reduced parking fees (€50 per annum) for section of back of Square car park at railway end for permanent town staff.

Browsing club to attract more residents to create a buzz. Empty shops filled with interesting displays or decals Gorilla planters club so that more flowers can make our town look good All old buildings painted by youth projects More youth projects encouraging youths to get involved in upgrading our town Outside retailers forced to invest in town centre as they will not survive if Claremorris town centre dies Square utilized more by having music and other activities every weekend Bad weather projects encouraging residents to come out anyway

APPENDIX 2

TOWN CENTRE REJUVENATION CASE STUDIES

Retail Development Programme – Cookstown, Tyrone

Fourteen local businesses took part and it involved the delivery of a practical and results focused training and development programme aimed at improving the viability and competitiveness of retail businesses. A baseline assessment was carried out for each participating business along with a mystery shopper visit. This resulted in a customised Action Plan to support business development and growth delivered through intensive one-to-one mentoring.

WiganPlus Loyalty card

Members of the scheme in Wigan, UK get access to great local offers while retailers can personalise offers and rewards directly to who they want to target.

It markets offers to its members through online, email, in-store and PlusPoint channels. Members touch the card on one of the PlusPoints located around the town centre to receive their chosen offers. They then print their offers and redeem them in the local shops.

Newport Shropshire's Town Team

Newport's 'Town Team' was formed by a group of active traders/businesses to help improve the viability and vitality of Newport's traditional market town – sustaining what we have and improving for the future. The concept of town teams emerged from a national review of trading in towns and cities carried out by retail expert Mary Portas. The review report (Dec 2011) made a number of recommendations including the formation of town teams to help town centres like Newport's to evolve to meet changing social and retail needs.

The town team has 5 primary objectives:-

- To provide regular and effective communications with and between local businesses;
- To actively market Newport as a retail, social and tourism destination and to promote its wider offer;
- To encourage business to business support using local knowledge and experience to help support and sustain existing and new businesses;
- To ensure regular maintenance of the physical environment and to promote improvements to heritage buildings for the benefit of local people, shoppers and visitors;
- To ensure good governance of the 'Town Team'.

San Diego, California

A “Retail Runway” type event sponsored by the local chapter of the International Council of Shopping Centres and ran by local real estate agents gave businesses or those with a business idea the chance to pitch for vacant stores with the aim of filling empty spaces. The event was successful in that it brought to the fore many new ideas and uses for vacant retail and commercial space in the city from birthing centres to hip bowling alleys. The key learning was that retailers and business people were not just rolling out the same old formats but were searching for something new in an age when shopping increasingly is taking place online.

The Food Store Claremorris

The Food Store Claremorris was awarded National Store of the Year 2013 at the Retail Excellence Ireland Awards. This is a destination store which goes above and beyond in playing its part to support local produce and supplies a unique blend of fresh products in its butchery, bakery and deli. The Food Store is renowned for their loyalty to local producers and their ambition to continuously exceed standards. It shows how being creative and constantly listening to customer can allow a business to thrive and create its own competitive advantages.

Case Studies on Parking

Car parking is an area in which out-of-town shopping centres have an advantage over town centres. During the consultation with the Businesses and the public in Claremorris the issue of paid parking was highlighted as a consistent problem. There is the perception that paying for parking discourages people from visiting the town centre and when they do reduces the time of overall stay. However there is no evidence to suggest that if paid parking was eliminated, business and footfall would flow back to the town centre. The problems faced by Claremorris are trying to readjust to new consumer patterns and habits.

Mayo County Council have given many concessions on parking in the town and are prepared to work with the Town team to devise more concessions around events and activities in the town. Concession to date include

- Free parking from 8th December to New Year for the last number of years.
- Introduction of 10 minutes grace at start of each parking period.
- Free car park on an on-going basis.
- Parking ticket can be used on any street in town rather than different ticket for different streets.
- Free parking for specific festivals/events at different times during year.
- No increase in charges since 2006.
- Reduction to €20c as the minimum amount the machine will accept.

- Significantly lower charges than any other comparable towns in the region.

A range of options were examined during the consultation phase, research was undertaken on parking initiatives in other towns and cities in Ireland, the UK and Europe to study what has worked well in terms of reinvigorating town centres. A series of case studies are presented.

Table 2 sets out an analysis of some of the main options

Table 2: Car Parking Management Options

| Option | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Two hours for the price of one | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains the existing levels of car park revenue • Encourages longer town stays • Does not require extra management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not solve the overall town centre problem |
| First Hour Free | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garnered most support amongst town centre traders and public • Would encourage longer town centre stays • Would encourage more people to visit town centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of circa 90% of parking revenue • Could require greater enforcement resources • May not be enough time to enjoy all shops of the town centre |
| Universal Free Parking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No enforcement and no paid parking inconvenience • Would encourage more town centre usage and visitation • No limitation on time spent in town centre from a visitor point of view | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total loss of car parking revenue • Problems with congestion and lack of turnover of car parking spaces • Elderly and disabled might have difficulty parking with congestion |
| Pay on Street, free in Car Parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would bring in more people to the town centre • Would avoid parking congestion on the streets • Scheme would give motorists a choice when using the town centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not solve the overall town centre problem • Loss of circa 50% of revenue from car parks |
| Pay by Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash-free system for paying for on-street parking. • There is no need to for users to interact with the parking ticket machines. • The motorist simply parks in any paid parking space and makes the transaction by a short phone call | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System would not be friendly to elderly or those not accustomed with technology • System would require a substantial development cost • Would require a large public information campaign and the |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (local call) or by sending a text message. Reminder sent automatically before paid parking period expires | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> corporation of the local traders to help motorists adapt to new system Will still require parking meters Possible more enforcement costs |
| <p>Free Parking at key periods to encourage trade E.g. Friday Morning, Free after 3</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would encourage the elderly to spend more time in the town centre Would allow for the creation of a busier town centre Would bring in more people to the town centre Easy to enforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would not solve the overall problem Loss of parking revenue during these periods |

Swindon Borough Council reduced rates

In June 2010 Swindon Borough Council took the decision to reduce short stay car parking charges in its three premium rate 'pay on foot' multi-storey car parks and all car parks in Old Town for the one year, to 31st July 2011. The objectives of the reduction were to encourage more people into Swindon town centre and Old Town and increase the length of stay of shoppers (dwell time). The Council undertook detailed monitoring and evaluation of the scheme, using quantitative data relating to car parking usage and footfall (up by 8.17% against a national fall of 2.2%), and qualitative data from retailers on retail performance. General feedback on retail performance gathered through surveys was overwhelmingly positive from both retailers and customers, with many anecdotal comments on increased dwell time and spend, brought about by the revised charging structure which encouraged a 4 hour stay. The Council also reported that interest in letting units increased. The cost implications from a reduction Council of car parking income was estimated at £0.5m in the financial year. Despite this, the Council made the changes permanent, subject to a normal annual review process.⁶

Rotherham Borough Council 'free after 3' parking scheme Rotherham

Rotherham Borough Council (RBC) introduced a pilot 'free after 3pm' parking initiative in May 2009. This enabled people to park in all Council owned off street car parks and on street bays free of charge between 3 and 6pm Monday to Friday. The main purpose of this scheme was to encourage more shoppers into the town centre, and so contribute to regeneration, at a time when the town centre is traditionally not as busy. Feedback from town centre businesses indicated strong support for the initiative with the majority feeling that trade had improved as a consequence. To complement this scheme, RBC also introduced free parking on the six Saturdays prior to Christmas 2009. Almost two thirds (64%) of town centre traders indicated that trade and footfall had increased as a result of

⁶ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2012/regional_dev/9912.pdf

this initiative. These parking initiatives had cost implications for RBC. Their figures indicated that continuing with free parking after 3pm would cost the Council £79,000 in lost parking per year while it was also estimated that to introduce free parking on Saturdays would cost the Council a further £211,500 in lost income for the same period. The council would also face one off costs to amend the existing traffic signs, to make the appropriate traffic regulation orders (estimated at £5,000), and to market the scheme (estimated at £26,500).

Ennis Christmas parking incentive scheme

Ennis Town Council last year introduced free parking applicable to the town's 759 off-street and 783 on-street public car parking spaces between 15 December and January 6, 2013. It was successful in attracting more customers into town during the busiest period of the year.

APPENDIX 3

TOWNS WITH FREE PARKING AND DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

Boyle Co Roscommon

Boyle Co Roscommon has no parking charges. Despite this there are a high number of vacant units in the town centre and a high number of dilapidated buildings blighting their streetscape. According to the local area plan for county Roscommon, the town requires the following key actions:

6. Upgrade existing shop frontages which have become dilapidated.
7. Steer new retail development towards the town centre to consolidate retailing activity.
8. Key sites to encourage new retail development should be on Patrick Street and on a larger scale at the Old Mill Site.

Ballaghaderreen Co Roscommon

Ballaghaderreen has free on street parking. According to the local area plan, Ballaghaderreen suffers from a high level of vacant premises on its 'main street and its environmental quality is reduced by a number of poorly maintained shop fronts and inappropriate and poor quality shop front signage along the primary and secondary streets'.⁷ The town also struggles to keep local people from shopping elsewhere since the town has no major retail outlet. 'The lack of a multiple chain, such as a Dunnes, Tesco Lidl etc. means people tend to go elsewhere to avail of centres with greater diversity'.⁸

Swinford Co Mayo

Swinford is a Key Town in County Mayo and is a local service town for a large rural hinterland. Unlike Claremorris and Ballinrobe, Swinford currently has first hour free parking. The town continues to have problems with dereliction and re-use of existing buildings. The town suffers from stagnant population growth and the leakage of money out to major shopping towns such as Castlebar, Ballina and Claremorris within a short driving distance. Tesco opened a new store there in 2011. This has stopped some of the economic leakage out of the town, while dereliction and retail vacancies continue to be a problem.

7

http://www.roscommoncoco.ie/en/Services/Planning/County_Development_Plan_2014_%E2%80%93_2020/Draft_Roscommon_County_Development_Plan_2014-2020/6_-_Retail_Strategy_2014-2020_pdf.pdf

⁸ Ibid