

THE NAAS TOWN CENTRE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Executive Summary



Developed through the City Centre Doctor Project



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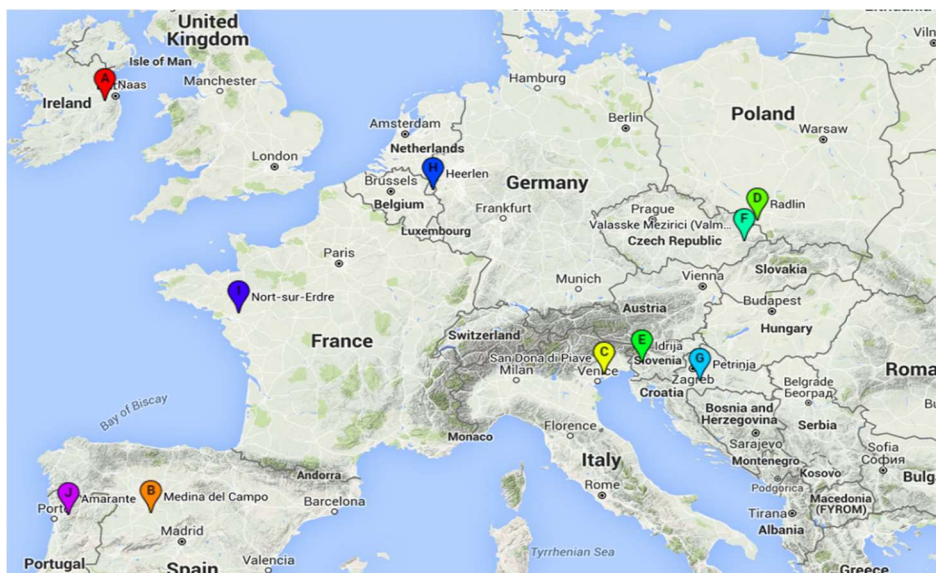
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Chapter 1 - The City Centre Doctor Context

1.1) Introduction

In September 2015, the city of Naas embarked on the City Centre Doctor Project which is a participative and integrated Action Planning Network with the purpose of defining a common and bottom up strategy to revitalize the heart of the cities, i.e. their city centres.

This project is co-funded by Kildare County Council, the Municipality District of Naas and by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The City Centre Doctor Project provided the structure and the learning opportunity for the citizens, the community and sectoral interests to work with Kildare County Council and specifically the Naas Municipal District in making Naas a more vibrant town. This Integrated Action Plan represents their vision, objectives and strategies which will guide and inform the future of Naas 2018 - 2025.



Naas City Centre Doctor project is focused on the revitalization of Naas as a vibrant urban centre, with its own identity, in the East Region of Ireland. The overall objective is to facilitate the commercial/ business sector, local community groups, cultural and heritage interests to integrate and work together in identifying the key economic, social, cultural and community resources which can be developed over time as contributors to the revitalization of Naas. The project has the support of Kildare County Council, North Kildare Chamber, Kildare Lions Club, County Kildare LEADER Partnership, County Kildare Local Enterprise Office and other agencies.

1.2) Naas - The Historic Development of the town

The name Naas appears in three forms in the Irish language: An Nás, meaning 'The Place of Assembly'; Nás Laighean, meaning 'The Place of Assembly of the Leinstermen'; and Nás na Ríogh, meaning 'The Place of Assembly of the Kings'. The last Naas King to be recognised as King of Leinster was Cearbhall who died in 909. After the Norman invasion of Ireland, the Barony of Naas was granted by Richard Strongbow in 1175 to Maurice Fitzgerald. The town grew into a Norman stronghold with castles, walls and gates. These fell into decay and by the end of the 16th century, Naas transformed into a key market town of the region.

1.3) Naas – The County Town

Naas is the administrative capital of County Kildare. Naas is a town characterised by its retail and commercial centre, with robust employment and enterprise opportunities, a strong community spirit and its quality built and natural heritage. Its proximity and connection to the national road network coupled with its strategic location within the Greater Dublin Area creates an attractive location for economic development in the form of significant employers and small/medium enterprise. Naas is also identified at a regional level as a location that can accommodate additional residential development.

1.4) Naas Town Centre

The centre of Naas reflects a great legacy from the past, with a street structure going back hundreds of years, and many of its buildings on Main Street dating from the early part of the 19th Century. The town today, still offers a rich range of shops, services, restaurants and bars. The current situation is that despite a fourfold increase in the overall population, the town centre has not developed in tandem, nor has it benefited to any noticeable extent from the significant surge in new residents, or from the extensive commercial peripheral development. The town centre would appear to have lost its economic vitality over recent decades. The challenge is to consider why the town centre of Naas is under-performing and how its potential can be realised.



1.5) Public Spaces and Urban Structure

In Naas, the central spine is Main St which extends from The Fairgreen to Market Square and continues to include Poplar Square. This forms the backbone of the public realm in terms of the revitalisation process. Another important dimension is the quality of the enclosing streetscape, with many buildings dating from the early to mid-19th Century. In addition, there is the splendid environment of the canal, the amenity lakes by Naas Hospital, and the generously scaled park in Monread.

The focus is to generate a vision for the public realm, underpinned by a public domain strategy, which builds on the legacy of the traditional, incorporates the infrastructure of the canals, and engenders a powerful sense of unity between the heart of Naas and the town's new and emerging neighbourhoods. It will also incorporate the Naas Neighbourhood Greenway - a walking & cycling network linking into the glorious hinterland of Naas - with the purpose of harnessing the visitor and recreational potential.

1.6) Economic Development and Enterprise

While the external perception of Naas may be that of a commuter town serving Dublin, the reality is that Naas has circa 12,000 jobs and has a net-inward flow of 4,000 commuters. However, one third of the Naas workforce commutes daily to Dublin for work. The geographical spread of jobs in Naas has changed over the decades with many of those 12,000 workplaces located on the periphery of Naas, with a low ratio of jobs now located in the central Naas area. While the new workplaces on the periphery constitutes success for Naas (e.g. circa 3000 jobs in Millennium Park with the arrival of the Kerry Group plc) and gives a powerful statement of intent in terms of knowledge economy direction, there appears to be a growing disconnection between the peripheral economy and the economy of the town centre.

It is certain that the employment landscape in Naas will continue to change over the longer term, therefore the challenge for Naas will be to positively respond to the powerful global forces leading to innovation, automation and digitalisation in the economy. Success will be measured by the town's ability to influence national and global investment patterns and resulting in more prospects for continued sustainable jobs.

1.7) Social and Community Infrastructure

Naas has many examples of excellent clubs and organisations supported through volunteers. In Naas there are literally hundreds of groups which come under the umbrella of 'social and community'. Many of these groups respond to a perceived need in the community, for example the Naas Disability Access Group, or they were set up to organize a collective response to sporting or recreational needs, therefore the reputation of Naas as a "community" place is very positive.

Sports facilities in the town include the Naas Golf Club, the Swimming Pool, the G.A.A Centre, Soccer and Rugby pitches and amenities, the Boxing Club, and Naas Athletics. In addition, there are the Community Games, Children's Playgrounds, Scouts and Girl Guides, Youth Clubs and the Kildare Youth Services.



McAuley Place is a great example of a collaborative initiative where residential accommodation for older people co-exists with an arts hub, a community centre and a town café, supported by a team of 80 committed volunteers. It has brought vibrancy and resilience into the heart of Naas.

The key challenge is to continue to nurture these community and social instincts, while create institutional frameworks within which they can prosper.

1.8) Connected Local Neighbourhoods

The Naas Integrated Action Plan proposes to focus on the connection between where people live and how the local neighbourhoods can connect into the centre and contribute in developing the character of the town. The emphasis for the IAP focusses on well-designed open-spaces, which are attractively laid out and supported by services such as schools and local shopping. The local neighbourhood concept also incorporates well designed movement, providing access to the town centre and prioritizing walking, cycling and public transport. Monread and Lakelands represent good examples of local neighbourhood designs from the relatively recent past.

The bigger picture challenge is to integrate the various emerging neighbourhoods into an overall urban structure, which works well for the whole town, and which supports a strong and viable town centre. The Millennium Park peripheral development presents a challenge in linking this edge of town corporate park and particularly all the employees working there, into the centre of Naas. The consolidation of the town centre also provides an opportunity for innovative high quality and denser residential accommodation.

1.9) Movement and Infrastructure

For most of the 20th Century, towns have facilitated access for the automobile and commercial traffic. The Naas URBACT Local Group has had much debate about the relationship of the car to its urban environment. The endless provision of road infrastructure to facilitate the car is proving to be counterproductive. The progressive view is that Naas needs more investment in public transport, there is also the requirement to redesign our streets and public spaces to achieve a better balance in favour of walkers,

cyclists, and thus enhance the quality of life and appeal of our towns. Naas is fortunate to be connected to National Rail, and to enjoy a pivotal position on the motorway network.

In line with our vision for Naas as a progressive and successful urban centre as the County Town, Naas ULG proposes a greater alignment involving public transport, walking and cycling, along with an integrated and attractive public domain that will enable such alignments. Because the complete removal of the car is not a feasible option, Naas requires a well -designed and managed strategy of vehicular access and restriction, supported by a consensus in public attitudes and behaviour towards a balance between different modes of transport.

Chapter 2 - The URBACT Developmental Process and Methodology

2.1) Introduction

The implementation of the URBACT City Centre Doctor Project is divided into 5 stages:

- Stage 1- Place Structure – The URBACT Local Group
- Stage 2- Place Analysis – Questionnaire Survey & Place Observations
- Stage 3- People’s Place Ideas – Problem Identification & Ideas Generation
- Stage 4- Beta Actions – Experimenting & Trial Actions
- Stage 5- The Integrated Action Plan.



2.2) The Naas URBACT Local Group - The Town Centre Team

The AIMS of the URBACT Local Group are:

1. To establish the Naas URBACT Local Group as a structure, representative of the town’s stakeholders, which will prepare an Integrated Action Plan for the revival of the town centre.
2. To address the economic, social and physical regeneration of Naas as a significant city/urban centre in County Kildare and the East Region of Ireland.
3. To reverse the decline in retail and services activity by supporting business and community confidence.

4. To assess what is the appropriate commercial and social investment and to develop promotional packages to attract investors, residents and increase footfall.
5. To provide the right environment for the establishment and support of local business/enterprises.
6. To identify a range of underused/dormant assets, and to explore their development for the benefit of the local community and its economy.
7. To enhance the economic, social and cultural experiences in the town in order to provide a “quality of life” to locals and visitors alike.
8. The Naas ULG, acting as the representative organisation for the revitalisation of Naas, will have a series of Working Groups focussed on developing specific projects. The Working Groups will work autonomously and report to the ULG meetings on project development and progress.

2.3) Members

- ❖ Mayor Robert Power - Mayor of the Naas Municipal District.
- ❖ Sonya Kavanagh – Director of Economic Affairs - Kildare County Council / Naas Municipal District Manager.
- ❖ Kathleen Smith – The Moat Theatre.
- ❖ Celine Garvey – Local & Social Media Communications. (sub for the Moat Theatre).
- ❖ Allan Shine – County Kildare Chamber / Naas Purple Flag Project.
- ❖ Bill Clear – Naas Tidy Towns / The Naas Greenway.
- ❖ Catherine Whelan – The Naas Town Traders / The Naas Christmas Programme.
- ❖ Gerry Prendergast – Millennium Park / County Economic Forum.
- ❖ Garda Gary Coogan – Naas District – An Garda Síochána (community relations).
- ❖ Alice Fennelly – the Naas Lions Club / Naas Retail Development Group.
- ❖ Deborah Callaghan – Naas Engagers / Naas Communications Group / Naas Hotels.
- ❖ Dick Gleeson – Resident and Urbanist.
- ❖ Margharita Solon – McAuley Place.
- ❖ Mary Mulligan – Naas Traders / Naas Bars & Restaurants.
- ❖ Majella O Keefe - Naas Disability Access/ Naas Retail Development Group.
- ❖ Lynn Kinlon - Local Culture & The Arts.
- ❖ Fintan Brett – De Burgh Gardens Project Rep.
- ❖ Alan McGuirk – Local Events & Festivals Rep.
- ❖ Tony Murray – Photographer / Naas Professional Services Rep.
- ❖ Clodagh Judge - Kildare Local Employment Service (Unemployed People).
- ❖ Gerard Mackey – County Kildare Local Enterprise Office.
- ❖ Tom Noone – Naas Young People/ Youth Sector.
- ❖ Aine Mangan – Kildare Fáilte & Naas Tourism.

2.3) The Action Planning Process

The Naas ULG participated in a facilitated process starting in April 2016, which allowed its members to work together and to build a trusting relationship in the delivery of projects for the betterment of Naas. The monthly meetings/workshops supported the team to clarify a vision, set achievable objectives and scope out strategies for the revitalisation of Naas.



The final stage of the development process was to identify and agree on a number of key actions/projects for Naas to be negotiated and agreed as the focus for the revitalisation of Naas over the lifetime of the Integrated Action Plan. The Integrated Action Plan, as endorsed by Kildare County Council, aims to secure funding for the development of the stated projects in response to calls for applications from central government and the European Operational Programmes. KCC in supporting this Integrated Action Plan demonstrates its commitment to the concept of community and urban regeneration.

2.4) The Beta Actions in 2016 and 2017

- ❖ The Christmas Programme (Including the Christmas Lights) 2016 & 2017
- ❖ The Naas Mid-Summer Festival.
- ❖ The Naas Wild Food Festival.
- ❖ The Naas Engagers App & Citizens Platform.
- ❖ The Naas ME2U Gift Card.
- ❖ The Naas Retail Seminars & Mentoring Programme.
- ❖ The Naas Disability & Access Awareness Day.
- ❖ The Temporary Mid-town (old SuperQuinn parking lot) Parking Experiment.

Chapters 3 & 4 - Vision, Objectives & Actions

3.1) A Vision for Naas 2030 (draft)

“Naas is a 21st Century city and the communications capital of County Kildare, with community, inclusion and diversity at its core. A vibrant city with an array of retail opportunities, entertainment, social spaces, and recreational amenities for all its citizens. In keeping with its historic tradition of the seat of “Leadership”, Naas has a generation of energetic creative people who are working together to innovate and shape its future”.

3.2) Objectives and Schedule of Actions/Projects

Objective 1: Public Realm; Placemaking & Physical Environment

To engage residents & local people in decision-making & actions to improve the public spaces, the streetscapes, the buildings and the visual impact of the Town Centre - thereby fostering a pride of place in Naas and develop a vibrant equitable town in which to live, to work and to relax.

Action 1.1	Town Centre Redesign Framework - Shop Fronts & Colour Scheme, Poplar Square and Streetscape Improvements
Aim	To make Naas Town a beautiful place where citizens, shoppers and visitors will meet and spend quality time and contribute to sustaining the town centre economy.

Action 1.2	Naas Town Hall – The Meeting Place - New Library, Information Centre and Ancillary Facilities
Aim	To reposition Naas Town Hall Library as the “Meeting Place” for citizens and visitors to Naas.

Action 1.3	Naas Harbour Development as a new town quarter for Naas – Physical Infrastructure and associated events
Aim	To develop the Naas Harbour as a significant amenity and leisure destination.

Action 1.4	The Naas Green Spaces Project – Mapping, developing and connecting the following green amenities: Luisne Gardens, De Burgh Gardens, the Fair Green and Lakelands Amenity Area, Friary Road Wildlife & Eco Sanctuary and the Naas Town Well Amenity
Aim	To provide green amenities and recreation spaces adjacent to the town centre and local neighbourhoods for the benefit of all the citizens with the ultimate ambition of developing the Naas Gardens Trail with specific emphasis on the De Burgh Gardens as a recreational & heritage amenity under the Irelands Ancient East Brand.

Action 1.5	The Naas Universal Access Gold Star Initiative
Aim	To provide accessibility in Naas for all citizens and particularly people with disabilities, the seriously ill, families with young children, school going children/ young people & the elderly to live, shop and travel safely. To create awareness campaigns for the public, government bodies, the local authority and the business community in Naas.

Action 1.6	Jigginstown Castle Presentation and Interpretation
Aim	To explore options for the optimum physical presentation and interpretation of Jigginstown Castle as a heritage resource for Naas Town.

Objective 2: Business & Commercial Infrastructure

To profile and promote Naas as a “niche” retail & leisure Town with the purpose of attracting inward investment for new, differentiated retail/services opportunities.

Action 2.1	The Naas – Working Together - A Retail & Business Development Initiative focussed on reviving the Heart of Naas - the Naas “Me2U” Gift Card Initiative, Naas Town Brochure & Shopping Directory
Aim	To continue and expand the Naas Gift Card Initiative; to finalise the Naas Town Brochure & Shopping Directory

Action 2.2	The Naas Purple Flag Initiative
Aim	To achieve The Purple Flag accreditation and membership of the network of Purple Flags approved towns in Ireland acknowledging that the town excels in safe evening and late-night entertainment for people of all ages.

Action 2.3	St David's Castle Heritage & Specialist Retail Amenity
Aim	To redevelop St David's Castle and surrounds as a distinctive experiential Retail- Heritage offering located in the heart of Naas.

Action 2.4	The Leinster Mills Food Hub – Brewery & Food Incubation Units as well as a Food Training Kitchen
Aim	To repurpose the old Leinster Mills into a Brewery/ Food Hub with Food Incubator Units and a Food Training Kitchen.

Action 2.5	The Naas Serviced Motor-homes Amenity
Aim	To provide a Motor-homes Amenity in Naas as part of the Ireland's Ancient East Visitor Route – with emphasis on a well-serviced Motorhomes Site.

Action 2.6	The Naas Centre of Excellence for Sports – Specialised Sports Coaching Amenity for rugby, football, equestrian, golf - linked to Maynooth University
Aim	To provide infrastructure and amenities to cater for the sports & recreational needs of the current and future citizens of Naas, taking into consideration the proposed population growth to 30,000 by 2024 and on to 50,000 by 2040.

Objective 3: Community Identity and Integration

To improve the quality of life and encourage better community integration through an annual programme of Activities, Events & Festivals that will attract more people to live in the centre of town thereby enhancing Naas as a resilient dynamic town.

Action 3.1	Naas Town Team (Management & Governance Structure) and the Naas Town Centre Coordinator
Aim	To consolidate the URBACT Local Group into an inclusive sustainable Town Team that will be a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) and that will drive the implementation of this plan and give direction to an employed Town Centre Coordinator with the responsibility to continue the Naas revitalisation remit.

Action 3.2	The McAuley Place – Health through Learning Centre
Aim	To promote, support and enable intergenerational and independent living in the heart of Naas. To support the completion of this community development.

Action 3.3	Naas Engagers Citizen Platform & Mapping Database
Aim	To encourage a broad cross-section of the community to engage in the process of regenerating and revitalising the town of Naas and to have in place a shared resource of available buildings / sites for investment and development.

Action 3.4	The Liveable Naas Project - Living in Town / Living over the Shop
Aim	To increase the accommodation supply in the heart of Naas- thus creating a liveable and vibrant Town Centre.

Action 3.5	The Naas Annual Events Calendar
Aim	To host festivals and events which will attract the local people and visitors to spend time in Naas Town Centre and enjoy the Naas experience through these regular organised events.

Action 3.6	The Naas Youth Performance Factory
Aim	To engage the young people of Naas in telling and interpreting their History and Heritage.

Action 3.7	The Moat Theatre
Aim	To develop the programming of The Moat Theatre to further integrate local groups, enhance social inclusion and transform the foyer/cafe space into a fluid artistic & creative space. The overall aim is to break down barriers and walls in all areas of the artistic realm.

Objective 4: Safety, Mobility & Connectivity

To improve traffic circulation/management and related infrastructure to ensure pedestrian safety & vehicular mobility.

Action 4.1	The Naas Neighbourhood Greenway Network
Aim	To promote the development of a connected walking & cycling network for the greater Naas Area.

Action 4.2	The Naas Traffic & Parking Masterplan
Aim	To collaboratively agree a Masterplan that will set out access and egress routes; guide traffic flow on streets; prioritise pedestrianised areas and connectivity to existing car parks as well as identify and map “back-land” areas with potential for new parking opportunities.

Action 4.3	The Naas Bike-share Pilot Initiative
Aim	To pilot a bike-sharing system with the purpose of improving mobility and ease of access from key outlying locations such as Millennium Park into the centre of Naas.

Action 4.4	The Naas – Sallins Transport Hub linked into the Town Centre Shuttle
Aim	To provide a viable public transport connection from Naas Town Centre via Millennium Park to other urban centres and into the greater Dublin area.

Objective 5: Communications and Information

To disseminate user-friendly, accessible information about shopping, services and events to the local residents and visitors to Naas

Action 5.1	Naas Town Information & Communications Platform: Website, Wi-Fi and Social Media PR
Aim	To create an on-line platform which hosts and promotes community, commercial, visitor and amenity news, events and the social activities for Naas Town and its catchment area.

Action 5.2	Electronic Information Hoardings on access roads and Information Boards in the centre of Naas
Aim	To install hoardings and boards that will provide clear and easily accessible information on directions, parking, events and services.

Chapter 5 - Risk Assessment & Analysis

In the following chapter, the ULG describe the risks that Naas can anticipate when implementing the actions in order to achieve the objectives of the IAP as part of the City Center Doctor project.

5.1) The Political risk

The Municipal District elections will be held in 2019. The result of the elections may change the political reality which could have implications for the implementation of the current plans. Political change is a difficult one as it cannot really be approached with objectivity, you can only speculate. This risk can be tackled by assuring that the plan is communicated to all political parties and groupings and to actively pursue their buy-in.

5.2) The Financial – Funding risk

The ambitious actions in this plan require sufficient financial resources for implementation. If for some reason these funds cannot be sourced, or if they are limited, this presents a risk for the feasibility of the objectives in the plan. The risk can be mitigated by securing commitment for actions from budget holders and by emphasizing the value of collaboration leading to efficiently sharing and leveraging resources.

5.3) The Community Engagement risk

If there is insufficient momentum for the implementation of the IAP, there is a chance that Town Team (ULG) members will drop out. While there is evidence of energy in the creative process with idea formation, drawing up the basic actions and the implementation of the beta actions, there is a chance that this energy may be lost if there is a time lag /insufficient momentum in continuing the process post April 2018. The appointment of a Town Centre Coordinator is one determinant in offsetting this risk.

5.4) The Agency Engagement risk

The administrative pressure on agencies supporting the Project is a risk that can affect the achievement of objectives that the Naas ULG is targeting. Again, this risk can be classified as a scenario with alternatives. It is therefore very important to ensure that the revitalisation of Naas is prominently positioned within Kildare County Council.

5.5) Staff and key Implementers

The ambition and scope of the IAP for the revitalization of the center of Naas is big. As a result, there is a lot of expectation among the stakeholders to achieve the objectives. It's difficult to rule out a situation where the key staff professionals and implementers may choose to change their work circumstances or may be tasked to a different project. This risk can be characterised as high and impactful. In order to deal with this, it is important to continue and consolidate the trust building and to have ongoing dialogue with the

stakeholders in terms of the content and processes that are needed to achieve the best outcome. Also, important here is to keep the existing ULG strong and resilient with continuity into the new Town Team. The ULG is a very valuable linkage with a lot of knowledge and expertise. It is imperative and a worthwhile investment from a business and personal level for the future of Naas.

5.6) The Marketing - Communications Risk

If the financial, man-hours and infrastructural resources are not available, then the ambition to implement a marketing – communications strategy will be rendered more and more difficult. At the moment the Naas ULG is kept up to date via a WhatsApp and e-mail communications. The risk is that the core group of communicators become disconnected. The risk can be mitigated by making it a priority of the Town Centre Coordinator to maintain and encourage communications.

Chapter 6: Monitoring and Communication

6.1) Preamble

This chapter provides the guidelines for monitoring of actions and the publicity and all the information related to the Naas Integrated Action Plan. At a local level and in the interim period, information and publicity actions will be coordinated by the staff of the Kildare County Council, with the support of the Naas ULG. It is proposed that the ULG will continue as an autonomous and self-sustaining entity (The Naas Town Team CLG), supported by a Town Centre Coordinator, after the funding period of City Centre Doctor Project ends. The Naas Town Team CLG when in place, will assume responsibility for monitoring of actions and for the communication of activities and the dissemination of information.

6.2) Communication Objectives

- To ensure transparency of information regarding the execution of the Action Plan and its integral projects.
- To communicate and disseminate the content of the Action Plan and information related to the contribution of the ERDF and other Funds.
- To inform the different target groups about European funding availability.
- To make presentations of the IAP to the Naas Municipal District & to relevant external agencies and political groupings.
- To follow-up with monitoring and control of actions and to communicate new developments.
- To organise meetings to progress the implementation of the IAP.
- To publish the results of the specific actions in the IAP.
- To disseminate in the media relevant information about the progress of the IAP.

6.3) Instruments for communications

In accordance with the established regulatory provisions, the Town Team (ULG) members will assume the organisation of the following actions:

- The organisation of Public Meetings to inform the citizens about the IAP.
- Press conferences and press releases in local and regional newspapers.
- Information brochures about the Town Team and IAP in general and specific information brochures and posters of the actions that are to be developed.
- Continuous updating of developments in and for Naas town centre on the website and on social media platforms.
- Hosting an annual seminar on the revitalisation of the town centre and the sharing of knowledge on the activities and impacts as well as to highlight the progress and achievements of the implementation of the IAP.
- The list of beneficiaries, the names of the operators and the amount of public funds allocated to actions will be available on the website and on bulletin boards of the agencies involved.