

















Sligo CITIES@HEART TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE Integrated Action Plan



Left to right

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1. Welcoming words from Sligo



Cathaoirleach of Sligo - Dónal Gilroy

As Cathaoirleach of Sligo, I see firsthand how a strong city centre underpins civic life, economic confidence, and our identity as a place. European projects like Cities@Heart highlight the importance of learning from one another and recognising that while every city is unique, many of our challenges are shared.

The collegiality amongst the partner cities was so evident to me on the recent Transnational Visit to Paris in November 2025. Festivals, events, tourism, and a well-managed public realm are now central to how people experience a city. Our indigenous retail, food, and hospitality offer, combined with a compelling tourism product, brings life to our streets and creates reasons for people to spend time in the city.

A leading example of this is Sligo's managed night-time economy, which balances vibrancy with safety and inclusivity, benefiting residents, businesses, and visitors alike. Our ambition is clear: a city centre that is welcoming, accessible, family-friendly, and safe for everyone.



Chief Executive of Sligo County Council - Martin Lydon

From a local government perspective, participation in European networks such as the EU-funded URBACT Cities@Heart Project has been invaluable in helping us respond to the rapidly changing landscape of our city centres. We were delighted to host the first transnational visit in December 2023 and have actively engaged in the URBACT journey learning and sharing with our European partners.

We have gained insight into how cities can adapt to new patterns of living, working, shopping, and socialising and increased knowledge and expertise on data gathering that in turn informs an improved decision making protocol. City centres today are no longer defined solely by retail; they are multifunctional places that must support economic vitality, social connection, tourism, and quality of life.

The project has reinforced the importance of a strong partnership approach between local authorities, businesses, communities, and cultural stakeholders. By working together, we can ensure our city centres remain vibrant, sustainable and inclusive places serving residents, businesses and visitors alike, now and into the future.



Chair of Sligo Business Improvement District (BID) - Finbarr Filan

As Chair of the Business Improvement District, the value of being part of a European, city-centre-focused network cannot be overstated. Cities@Heart has allowed us to learn directly from other towns and cities facing similar challenges, from changing consumer behaviour to the need to diversify city centre uses.

This exchange of ideas has strengthened our understanding of how all stakeholders form the backbone of a successful and distinctive city centre, offering authenticity that appeals to residents and domestic and international visitors. A partnership-led approach — particularly the collaboration between the BID and the local authority — has proven essential in driving vitality and sustainability. By aligning our efforts, we are building a stronger city centre that supports business performance, enhances the visitor experience, and fosters community pride.



CEO of Sligo Business Improvement District (BID) - Gail McGibbon

From the perspective of a BID CEO, the Cities@Heart project has demonstrated the real power of partnership and place-based collaboration. Learning and sharing with European partners has helped us better understand how to future-proof our city centre by strengthening its economic sustainability while enhancing its social and cultural role.

A successful city centre depends on a healthy mix of local businesses, a strong tourism offer, and effective place management including a well-regulated and inclusive night-time economy. In Sligo, this approach has shown how careful planning and cooperation can deliver a vibrant yet balanced economy that works for residents and visitors alike. By continuing to work in partnership with local government and stakeholders, we remain committed to creating a city centre that is lively, resilient, inclusive, and reflective of the community it serves.

2. Cities@Heart

This IAP is framed within the URBACT network Cities@Heart, that brings together ten European urban areas with diverse profiles but with one common goal: achieving a balanced and inclusive city centre for all users.

It is led by the Métropole du Grand Paris and is composed of 9 project partners, representing different territorial, demographic and socioeconomic realities: Cesena (Italy), Granada (Spain), Osijek (Croatia), Lamia (represented by Amfiktyonies business development organisation from Greece), Celje (Slovenia), Fleurus (Belgium), Sligo (Ireland), Krakow (represented by Krakow Metropolis Association in Poland) and the intermunicipal area between Guimaraes, Braga, Famalicao and Barcelos (Quadrilátero Urbano Association, Portugal).

The partnership is heterogeneous, including large metropolises, medium-size urban areas and small cities with populations such as Sligo. Despite this disparity, a complex interweaving of historical, economic, cultural, touristic, and symbolic centralities characterises these centres. They face a series of interconnected challenges, starting with the need to manage complexity through coordinated governance and citizen engagement.

At the same time, they must address gentrification and housing shortages, while adapting vulnerable areas to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, revitalising commercial activity and reinforcing city centre identity are crucial to maintaining vibrant urban cores. These efforts must be complemented by reclaiming and redesigning public spaces, as well as promoting a balanced mix of uses to ensure inclusive, resilient, and livable urban environments.

Sligo, Ireland: Active Partner in the URBACT Cities@Heart Project

Sligo, Ireland, is proud to be a participating member of the EU-funded URBACT project Cities@Heart. As the smallest city by population among the ten EU partner cities, Sligo has fully embraced its role in the three-year programme. Throughout the initiative, Sligo has actively engaged in mutual learning and knowledge exchange, collaborating with its European counterparts on a wide range of pressing urban challenges. These include issues that are increasingly relevant to all urban centres today—such community wellbeing, as placemaking, inclusive governance, and sustainable urban development. size, Sligo has made a meaningful contribution, demonstrating that smaller cities have valuable insights and innovations to share on the European stage.

Being part of Cities@Heart positions Sligo as a leader in urban regeneration and policy innovation.

It enables Sligo to:

- Share and learn from European peers.
- · Access EU funding and expertise.
- Develop evidence-based strategies for its town centre.
- Strengthen its role in the Town Centre First national policy.

By gathering relevant indicators and using a common methodology, this network aims to create a holistic policy framework for lasting and meaningful change in the heart of the city. Working hand in hand with local stakeholders and users, Cities@Heart is here to develop tools that foster happy, healthy and harmonious places.



3. Why an Integrated Action Plan?

An URBACT Integrated Action Plan (IAP) is a key element of the URBACT methodology. It is a city-level output that defines actions to be implemented within the city in order to respond to a specific urban policy challenge - reflecting the lessons learned from local stakeholders, transnational partners and the testing of actions at local level.

IAPs thus provide both a focal point and end goal of the action planning journey that cities undertake within their URBACT Action Planning Network (APN). IAPs help to ensure that both local-level discussions (within the URBACT Local Group) and transnational exchange (between the network partners) have a practical focus on planning a coherent set of actions to address the local policy challenge in each participating city, embedding an integrated and participative approach.

IAPs are future oriented – setting out the actions that cities will implement beyond the life cycle of the URBACT network. For this reason, each IAP not only sets out what the city intends to do on its specific topic, but also has a strong implementation focus, for example through the identification of specific funding opportunities, governance structures and timelines for how the actions will be implemented and monitored.

Why an Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Sligo?

At the outset of the Cities@Heart project in Q3 2023, Sligo entered the programme with the advantage of an established and effective public-private partnership model, anchored by Sligo County Council. This foundation was further strengthened by the creation of the Sligo Business Improvement District (BID) in 2016, which itself emerged from the INTERREG IVA SEUPB-funded project (2013). These initiatives provided Sligo with valuable experience in testing and refining different models of local collaboration—experience that proved instrumental during the cities@heart process.

Participation in Cities@Heart offered Sligo a structured yet flexible framework to address key urban challenges through peer exchange and transnational learning. The development of a bespoke Integrated Action Plan (IAP) represents one of the most tangible and enduring outcomes of this collaboration—an actionable, locally owned strategy shaped through knowledge gained from our European partners.

Sligo's IAP focuses on two areas of urban development that have significant implications for the city's economic resilience, social cohesion, and long-term brand identity:



Commercial Vacancy and the Implementation of the Irish Government's Croi Conaithe Scheme

This strand assesses the local uptake and impact of national funding aimed at reactivating vacant properties in urban centres—an issue common to many European cities. By evaluating the effectiveness of Croí Cónaithe in Sligo, the IAP contributes to a broader EU conversation about place-based policy implementation and sustainable housing solutions.

Creation of a City Centre Public Realm Event Space

This initiative focuses on the development of a dedicated, flexible event space in Sligo's urban core, aimed at driving footfall, supporting local businesses, and fostering community identity.

The IAP explores how strategic placemaking can generate measurable economic benefits while enriching public life—an approach aligned with EU objectives for vibrant and inclusive city centres.

Crucially, Sligo's URBACT Local Group (ULG) brings together a diverse mix of stakeholders from across the public, private, civic, and community sectors. This collaborative approach ensures that the IAP is both reflective of local needs and informed by European best practice, enabling Sligo to implement meaningful, scalable, and cotext-sensitive actions.

Through Cities@Heart, Sligo has benefited immensely from shared learning and solidarity with its European peers. As the smallest city in the partnership, Sligo has demonstrated that scale is no barrier to ambition, innovation, or impact.





4. Context, Needs and Vision

4.1. Context

1. Overview of Sligo city

Located along the west coast of Ireland, Sligo has a lake that flows into a river, which in turn flows into the Atlantic Ocean, all within 3 km. Historically, it has been an important commercial port, which is now used mostly by recreational boats. Sligo is the largest city in the northwest of Ireland and has a significant tourism sector.

With a population increase of 7.34% since 2016, Sligo's population now stands at 20,608, which translates to a density of 1,649 habitants/km2. 16.7% of Sligo's population is over 65 years old, while 16.4% of the population is under 14 years old. It has a household median gross income of €34.802, below the national average, with a labour market very focused on the service sector (with more than 50% of the existing jobs in professional services, public administration, commerce & trade, etc.)

Case of Sligo (Town & City Center) Key indicators

Indicator	City Centre	Whole city/Town
Total inhabitants	3,184	20,608
Population density (hab/km2)	3,184	1,649.60
Average income (€/inhabitant or €/family)	N/A at this granularity	€34,802
Annual % of gain of population annually (2016-2022)	2.35%	1.20%
Total workers (as % of total population)	43.53%	42.47%

- Key figures have been provided indicating the granularity at which data has become available
- It was interesting to note that the population density is higher in city centre when compared to the whole city.

Credit - Tuhin Batra PhD Candidate ATU Sligo

The urban centre of Sligo is characterised by a compact urban fabric, minimal elevation differences, and a well-distributed array of services.

The boundaries of the IAP have been established considering the concentration of vacant premises and the economic impact of various festivals, events, and the Night-Time Economy (NTE).

2. The current situation of the city centre

Housing - Ireland compared to other EU countries

Housing costs for people living in Ireland last year were more than double the EU average, with the cost of rent increasing by 98% since 2010. According to the 2024 edition of Housing in Europe, housing costs in Ireland, which include the cost of water, electricity, gas, and other fuels, were 101% above the EU average during 2023, above Luxembourg in second place at 86% higher than the average, and Denmark, which was 80% above. Additionally, Ireland has the highest proportion of people living in houses as opposed to apartments, at 90% compared to 10% across the EU. (Irish Examiner 28 Nov 2024).

Within Sligo, a slowdown in new residential builds, combined with immigration/increase in new communities and single-occupancy dwellings, has resulted in a shortage of supply. Also, the housing price in Sligo city centre is higher than throughout the rest of the county. In recent years, there has been a move to incentivise the owners of vacant / derelict properties to upgrade and refurbishment of vacant/derelict stock through the introduction of the Governments incentivised scheme known as the Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant Scheme¹.

While scheme uptake is positive, its success is confined to the suburbs of Sligo rather than within the city centre where many older buildings, in particular upper floors of city centre buildings, continue to lie vacant/derelict.

¹ The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, provides funding to bring vacant or derelict properties back into residential use. It offers a grant of up to €50,000 for a vacant property and up to €70,000 for a derelict property, subject to certain conditions.

Public Space

While Sligo boasts a number of high-quality parks/public spaces around the periphery of the city centre, unfortunately there is a dearth of high-quality public spaces within the city centre. The parks on the periphery contain children's playgrounds, football pitches, bowls, basketball and tennis courts, running trails etc. and they support the enhancement of the community, serving as spaces of social cohesion. These spaces are also inclusive and accessible, but sustainability has not been a significant feature of public space design over the past decade. Despite moves to reduce the width of city centre streets to improve pedestrian safety, the city is dominated by vehicles. Even so, footfall through the city centre is quite significant.

Whilst the public amenities of parks and recreational activities are within walking distance of the centre, the advent of a new plaza/square in March 2024 will present additional opportunities to build a community gathering hub. Located in the heart of Sligo city, on the banks of the Garavogue River, this €4m investment by Fáilte Ireland, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage and Sligo County Council has transformed a city centre car park into an attractive and flexible multi-purpose performance & events space.

Commerce

While considering Sligo's commercial distribution as appropriate having a good balance of small and larger shops, according to GeoDirectory Sligo has a commercial vacancy rate of 20.5%. This is considered one of the largest commercial vacancy rates in the country.

Coupled with the post-COVID dynamics still under investigation, this scenario suggests that there is potential for improvement in addressing the vacancy rate within Sligo city centre.

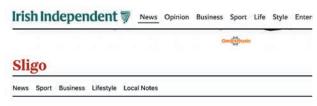
Note: The Sligo ULG intend to review the authenticity of the GeoDirectory vacancy rates as part of their small scale action.

"The highest commercial vacancy rates continue to be found in the west of the country with Sligo, at 20.5%, recording the highest proportion of vacant commercial units in Q2 2024".

(per GeoDirectory Commercial Vacancy Rates Report Q2 2024)

² GeoDirectory has created and now manages a definitive reference dictionary of addresses for all 1.9 million buildings that receive post in the Republic of Ireland, assigning them with precise postal and geographic addresses, ensuring location accuracy of 1 square meter for all.





Sligo hits a new high with biggest commercial vacancy rate in the country



Extract from Irish Independent (independent.ie) 27 Feb 2024

Increasing Dwell Time within the City centre

In recent years, efforts have been made to enhance the economic activity of businesses beyond certain hours. With increased activity in animating the city centre outside traditional business hours, new considerations of residents had to be taken into account.

The frequency and timing of events has to strike a balance between the economic impact to the business community and the quality of life to residents. Sligo is fortunate that currently a PhD candidate is researching the employment and Gross Value Added within the evening and night-time economy of Sligo city and county that will validate, edit or amend the initiates taken to increase dwell time.

Facilities

Whilst the public amenities of parks and recreational activities are within 5 minute walking distance of the city centre, the advent of a new plaza/square in March 2024 has presented new opportunities to build a community gathering hub. Given its size and street layout /connectivity, Sligo centre is reasonably well served in the provision of public facilities.

To increase the quality of services in the city centre, public and private collaboration projects are being developed. One such initiative called "WC Sligo" was rolled out in March 2024.

This pilot scheme sees Sligo County Council and Sligo Business Improvement District collaborate with businesses around the core city centre streets to create a network of toilets which are accessible to the general public from early morning until late evening. The scheme is optional, with businesses deciding for themselves whether to participate or not. However, it is important to note that as is the case, every participating business retains the right to permit or refuse entry.

Work

Overall, Sligo's city centre features an economic mix in terms of the labour market, encompassing specific zones that are specialised in hospitality venues such as pubs, clubs, cafes, and restaurants. Sligo's retail offering surrounds the hospitality cluster across neighbouring streets. Sligo BID works with four key defined sectors within its 758 member businesses.

These include hospitality, retail, service and industry. Larger big box retail sector businesses and industry are located on the periphery of the city centre (Carraroe, Finisklin, Cleveragh and Oakfield – retail and industry parks).

4.2. Relevant existing strategies

Sligo is undergoing a transformative period guided by a series of strategic public policies aimed at fostering sustainable growth, enhancing quality of life, and unlocking its full potential as a regional hub.

From regional planning frameworks such as the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, which positions Sligo as a key Growth Centre, to local initiatives like the Sligo 2030 Local Economic Community Partnership (LECP) that promotes inclusive, green, and smart development, these policies reflect a shared vision for a vibrant and resilient future. Complementary strategies such as the Town Centre First policy, the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, and the Destination and Experience Development Plan work together to revitalise urban spaces, encourage tourism, and promote community-led development, ensuring Sligo evolves as a dynamic place to live, work, and visit.

Governance, policies and decision-making tools

Overarching Strategies & Policies

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 - 2032 (RSES)

Prepared by the Northern & Western Regional Assembly, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) provides the roadmap for effective regional development for the north and western region of Ireland. The plan identifies Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre, with a population growth target of at least 40% between 2016 & 2040.

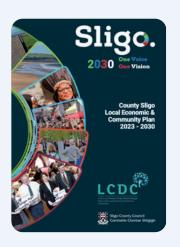
It sets goals for compact growth including development of new housing, improved transport infrastructure, economic, heritage & cultural development and it envisages a vibrant liveable Sligo with rich high quality public realm and civic space.



Sligo 2030 One Voice One Vision - Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)

Sligo 2030, our local economic and community plan, seeks to position Sligo to embrace change, face its challenges head on and transform the city and broader county throughout the life of the plan. The LECP contains the following vision:

"The vision is for a smart, sustainable and social inclusive Sligo; one that cherishes its vibrant communities, protects and cele brate its unique environment and rich culture, and is a champion of innovative growth and development"





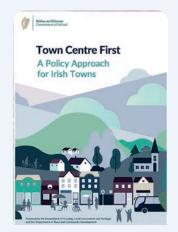
The plan promotes the regeneration of urban centres, development of sustainable & green economy and the use of existing public assets for the deployment of smart technology with the following goals:

- develop a relevant model to achieve sustainable transport setting & using data analytics to assess need & demand;
- reduce the high vacancy rate;
- · identify ownership of empty derelict properties & initiate dialogue with owners;
- repurpose vacant property;
- become a pilot city for the night-time economy task force
- Implement initiatives to protect Sligo's natural habitats, landscape & ecosystems by:
 - Developing a standalone Biodiversity Plan for Sligo;
 - Implementing initiatives around rewilding, urban food growing, allotments & protection and restoration of bogland;
 - Identifying areas that may be at risk & work with the community to monitor & protect them

Town Centre First Policy

"The Town Centre First policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community".

Town Centre First represents a new approach to the development of our towns where communities and businesses can be central to reimagining their own towns and planning their own futures. Every town is different. Each town is unique and requires unique solutions to the challenges and opportunities they face. Town Centre First policy recognises that diversity and acknowledges that a "one size fits all" approach will not deliver the outcomes we all want for our towns. This policy sets out a framework to facilitate and resource each town to chart their own future through a tailored plan, developed by a collaborative Town Team, and supported by their Local Authority. The plan that captures their important economic and social role in our society; a plan that recognises the importance of place making; and a plan which delivers vibrant lived-in spaces in the heart of our towns.



Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

Many cities face the blight of vacant properties, which, if brought back into use, could add real vibrancy and provide new accommodation in those areas. The Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund is a key initiative which underpins these policy objectives set out in Pathway 4 of Housing for All. Administered by Sligo County Council on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties.



The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant was launched on 14 July 2022 and benefits those who wish to turn a formerly vacant house or building into their principal private residence or make it available to rent. A maximum of two grants are available to applicant(s). Only one grant will be available for a vacant property being made available for rent. The grant applies to eligible vacant properties in cities, towns, villages and rural parts of the country that have been vacant for 2 years or more prior to application.

Sligo Destination & Experience Development Plan

The Sligo Destination and Experience Development Plan (Sligo DEDP) is a five year sustainable tourism development plan for County Sligo. It has been developed through a programme of research and consultation guided by the V.I.C.E. (Visitor, Industry, Community, Environment) model for sustainable tourism development. It incorporates the views of visitors, the



tourism industry, local communities in addition to a programme of international benchmarking.

The key objectives of the Sligo Destination and Experience Development Plan are:

- Ensure the Sligo visitor experience is brought to life through the development of a mix of tourism products and experiences that will attract visitors and retain them for longer.
- Unlock the economic potential of tourism in Sligo by progressing a range of key initiatives that will disperse tourists across the wider destination.
- Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing sustainable employment opportunities.
- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development by enhancing and creating strong destination experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike.



- Create the conditions to attract leisure visitors on a year-round basis to Sligo and immerse themselves actively in the community while providing the opportunity to interact with local people as part of the Sligo experience.
- Develop the role of Sligo as a key enabler for regional tourism development and transform how visitors engage with the northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way.

The Sligo DEDP represents an overarching destination development framework linking existing and new projects with new opportunities for consideration. It builds on the ambition of the Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy and will be key to growing the value of tourism in the northern half of the region. This requires a collective stakeholder approach integrating all elements of the visitor experience to develop Sligo as a distinctive visitor destination.

Current approach/model

In Sligo, there is a mixed system, with the administration having competence in certain areas, defined by specific plans such as the Climate Adaptation Strategy, the Disability Inclusion & Access Strategy and others at the national level such as the County Sligo Development Plan or Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland. At the same time, there is a national strategy to support the emergence of town centre management schemes, known as the National Town Centre First Policy. This involves a Town Centre Manager who is responsible for directing proposals to improve the local economic sectors and integrating the commerce and business sectors.

Integration between local and national strategies

The alignment between strategies addressing Sligo's urban centre at both national and local levels results in the emergence of themes that create certain synergies. While national directives support the resolution of certain issues, such as housing, or provide the necessary resources for municipalities to integrate specific schemes, like Town Centre Management (TCM), within their urban centres. In the case of Sligo, this has led to local level support from the existing Business Improvement District (BID).

Existing policies in the city centre

In addition to the existence of the Business Improvement District (BID) in downtown Sligo, several plans have been formulated with a focus on the urban centre's commercial activation. These plans include specific policies and thematic strategies such as the Active Travel Plan, Climate Action Plan, Smart-Digital initiatives, and Housing for All, among others. Moreover, there are more comprehensive strategies like the Sligo 2030 Local Economic & Community Plan, which outlines a vision for a smart, sustainable, and socially inclusive Sligo, emphasising vibrant communities, a rich cultural milieu, and innovative growth and development.

Multiple departments within the municipality are tasked with managing various themes in downtown Sligo. These departments continually complement each other, striving to generate cross-cutting projects. Furthermore, there are six local representatives from the city centre involved in the acceptance of policies, ensuring the inclusion of the community in decision making processes.

Governance model

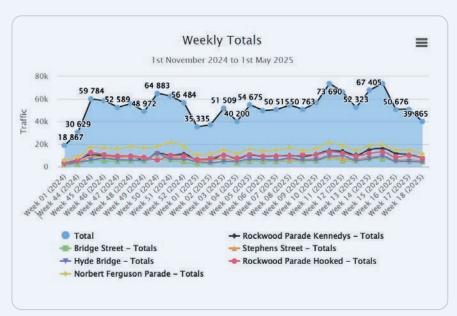
In Sligo, there is an effort underway to enhance project transversality by fostering collaboration among various departments and integrating the Business Improvement District (BID) into the development of diverse strategies. The administration also consistently endeavours to incorporate bottom-up analyses and strategies. Moreover, there is an ongoing interaction with the local commercial sector facilitated by the BID, aiming to ensure the input of its members within municipal policies remains a constant consideration.

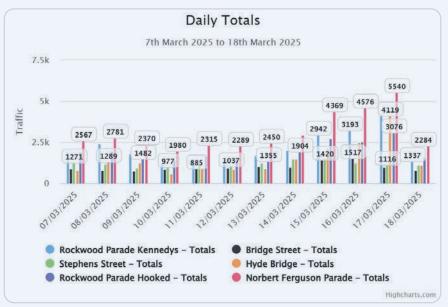
Decision-making tools

Sligo County Council has a data observatory enabling policy formulation and decision making based on data, particularly when the Business Improvement District (BID) is involved in these strategies. Data collection is the maticand of tencentred on the urban centre, encompassing surveys on pedestrian mobility, attendance at various events, traffic data, consumer perception surveys,

business issues, and more.

Various methods are employed for data collection, ranging from automated counting (using footfall counters, for instance) to conducting surveys and interviews.







4.3. Local challenge - Problem Identification

Objective 1 - Commercial Vacancy and the Implementation of the Irish Government's Croí Cónaithe Scheme

The vacancy rate in Sligo city, as of the most recent available data, is influenced by various factors including economic trends, the real estate market, and local policies. Sligo, as a regional urban centre, has experienced some challenges with vacancy rates, particularly in the context of commercial properties.

According to recent reports from GeoDirectory, the vacancy rate in the retail sector in Sligo has been reported to be higher than the national average. This is reflective of broader trends across rural and regional areas in Ireland, where businesses face difficulties adapting to shifting consumer habits, e-commerce growth, and other challenges.

However, the residential vacancy rate in Sligo town has been lower than that of other towns in the northwest of Ireland, with residential properties in demand due to the area's attractiveness as a place to live, with a mix of urban amenities and scenic surroundings.

As mentioned at Section 4.1 Context, the challenge unique to Sligo is the perceived high commercial vacancy rate coupled with a lack of residential accommodation to rent or purchase within the city centre. This is why the Sligo ULG has as a small-scale action the validation of vacant ground floor and over the shop units.

Case of Sligo (County): Employment and Gross Value Added Indicator Average number of workers in Evening and night time economy in Sligo Ireland (2019) Gross Value Added at Factor Cost 2021 for nighttime activities (independent estimates) € 49.4 mm

Credit: Tuhin Batra, PhD candidate, ATU Sligo

Objective 1 - Creation of a City Centre Public Realm Event Space

Our challenge is the identification of the elements of relevant policies that will enable Sligo to be the best version of itself; therefore the selected elements have meaning, measurement and merit to Sligo. For City Partnerships on the ground, it can sometimes appear that policies contradict each other e.g. ENTE solutions recommend nightclubs stay open to 6am, workable maybe in larger population centres in Ireland such as Dublin, Cork and Limerick, but not viable for most smaller towns & cities in Ireland. Recent policy developments call for places to form Town Team Structures with each policy requiring different teams. To be most effective there is a need for consolidation & alignment of teams.

In addition, Sligo needs to have relevant real time data informing current policies either in development or due to go live. We need to revisit KPI's established pre Covid as we recognise engagement with our city is in line with changed/ changing global trends (existing KPIs include consumer, business and citizen perceptions, needs, sentiment and awareness, footfall, spend etc). Our internal equity value has been to date, benchmarked against these KPIs. We have additional KPI's within the evening and nighttime economy (ENTE) where we are also seeing changed/changing trends in this environment and wish to explore a broadening of existing KPIs that will enhance ENTE performance, sustainability and viability of ENTE operators. We are eager to learn from the project partners of existing, new and innovative KPI's that will assist us in future proofing Sligo. Through a more highly and integrated Cities@Heart management tool, Sligo hopes to improve cross pollination of data and accelerated implementation of policy at a local level.

4.4. Problem identification with and by local stakeholders

4.4.1 Sligo's Cities@Heart ULG

Our ULG

ULG Coordinator: Gail McGibbon

The ULG coordinator is the CEO of Sligo BID, leading an organisation with 758 cross-sector businesses and coordinating four different voluntary committees drawn from both business and resident members.

ULG Members

The group is built on a pre-existing partnership involving Sligo Business Improvement District, Sligo County Council, Sligo Summer Festival Committee, and Sligo St. Patrick's Day Festival Committee.





Sligo URBACT Local Group

4.4.2. ULG Methodology - Leveraging Partnership and Expertise for Impactful Urban Change

The Sligo Urban Local Group (ULG) was established on a strong foundation of partnership with Sligo County Council, reflecting the city's ongoing commitment to collaborative and strategic urban regeneration.

Recognising the dual focus of the Cities@Heart project — Vacancy and Festivals & Events — it was decided to form two dedicated ULGs, each aligned to one of the strands. This decision was driven by the need for specific expertise and skills in each area, allowing the project to maximise the human resources available and deliver more targeted, impactful outcomes.

A Cross-Sector Approach

Each ULG was composed of a diverse, crosssector group of stakeholders, including:

- Council departments (Regeneration, Planning, Economic Development, Vacancy)
- Local BID businesses
- Event managers
- Night-time economy representatives
- Voluntary sector organisations

The ULGs utilised several tools from the URBACT toolkits to guide and structure their work.

These resources proved effective in supporting the groups to move systematically through the project's steps and actions, while also fostering strong local engagement.



4.4.3. ULG Key Challenges and Innovative Solutions - Navigating Conflicting Data in the Vacancy ULG

The Vacancy ULG encountered a different challenge: discrepancies between local and national data on town centre vacancy rates. While local data provided by the Council's Vacancy Officer offered one perspective, nationally published datasets often told a different story, leading to confusion and difficulty in establishing a shared evidence base.

This issue sparked a robust and open discussion within the ULG. As a result, a decision was made for Sligo BID to purchase the national commercial vacancy dataset from the relevant agency.

This allowed the group to compare, contrast, and contextualise both data sources more effectively.

This decision — and the clarity it provided — was a direct result of the collaborative nature of the ULG and its commitment to transparency, evidence, and constructive dialogue. It is an excellent example of how local stakeholder structures can enable practical, actionable solutions that may not otherwise have emerged.

Building Meaningful Data in the Festivals & Events ULG

One of the core ambitions of the Festivals & Events ULG was to run a minimum of eight public opinion surveys over 18 months to evaluate the impact of events on the town centre. However, a key challenge arose around achieving sufficient response rates to build reliable and comparative data sets.

To incentivise participation, the ULG introduced the "Local Love Sligo" gift card as a prize for each survey competition — a local incentive sponsored by Sligo BID.

This strategy proved highly effective, resulting in increased response rates and enabling the group to build robust data that could support planning and evaluation.

4.4.4. Conclusion: The ULG as a Catalyst for Local Innovation

The experience in Sligo demonstrates the real value of the ULG model within the Cities@Heart network. By combining technical expertise, stakeholder insight, and collaborative tools, Sligo's dual ULGs have been able to respond dynamically to local challenges — and generate solutions with real, lasting value.

The "Local Love Sligo" survey incentive and the dual-data approach to vacancy analysis stand as replicable practices for other cities in the URBACT network seeking to deepen their understanding of place-based dynamics and improve outcomes through collaboration.



Integration Assessment Grid

Aspects of integration	Descriptions	What is the current situation	Strengths	Areas of improvement	Score (1-5)
------------------------	--------------	-------------------------------------	-----------	----------------------	----------------

		Situation						
OBLIGATORY aspects of integrated approaches								
1. Stakeholder involvement in planning	The full range of stakeholders (considered horizontally and vertically) are engaged in identifying priorities and potential solutions	Local authority BID, Residents & ATU Sligo	Strong public private partnership in existence. Partnership model is operationally driven with embedded KPIs reviewed annually	Expand out the membership of the ULG on the vacancy strand of work to include building contractors and real estate agents Work on strand 2 in accessing digital and credit card spend was hampered at a national level and will be addressed in 2026.	4			
2. Coherence with existing strategies	Actions and objectives are aligned and complementary to existing strategies in place at city, regional, national or European levels	Increased consideration to and review of local and national strategy documents that they are more aligned to the key objectives of each strategy e.g. Town Centre, First County Development Plan, Tourism DEDP, Housing Strategy, Sligo Town Night Time Economy Action Plan, Irish Government NTE Taskforce Strategy, Sligo County Festival & Events Strategy.	Given that Sligo BID holds positions on the government national oversight advisory group for Town Centre First, the Government Retail Roundtable Forum and regularly inputs into the national NTE Taskforce, it is felt that Sligo ULG is operating and making decisions in a very informed and cohesive manner.	The continuation of the informed partnership established at a local level that will bring a better learned experience to the decision making process across both public and private sector engagement.	5			



Integration Assessment Grid

Aspects of integration

Descriptions

What is the current situation

Strengths

Areas of improvement

Score (1-5)

OBLIGATORY aspects of integrated approaches

3. Sustainable urban development (economic, social, environmental) Actions address all three pillars of sustainable development in terms of economic, social and environmental objectives Increasing TC [Town Centre] population

Housing refurbish of
existing stock
Evaluation of
the Government
Refurbishment
Croí Cónaithe
Grant Scheme
and number
of grants
allocated within
the core of the
town centre.

Improving economic activity with both strategies

Improving access to more real time and expanded data sets via credit card and digital transactions. As this did not happen within the expected time frame of Cities@Heart, it is an area of work that the Sligo ULG is keen to continue work on.

Representation on the Irish government's national platform

Learning from our European partners as to their current city centre populations has proved beneficial and informative

Interrogation of nationally published data versus locally sourced data Access resources to repeat all surveys and data collection gathered during the Cities@Heart project on an annual basis.

With ten digital footfall counters installed across, we now have the opportunity to use this data to access pre and post impact of footfall for a more comprehensive impact measurement in the future.

The survey templates can be replicated in other locations across the county/country/ Europe for consistent, comparable findings.

Implementing audience segmentation will allow us to identify underrepresented groups and create inclusion strategies and tailor event offerings based on segment preferences (e.g. family-focused vs nightlife-focused).

4.5

Integration Assessment Grid

Aspects of
integration

Descriptions

What is the current situation

Strengths

Areas of improvement

Score (1-5)

OBLIGATORY aspects of integrated approaches

4. Integration over time

Planning
relevant actions
in the short,
medium and
longer terms and
considering any
necessary order
in implementing
actions

Short term surveys Mid term data analysis Medium-long term data validation

Making a commitment locally that every strategic 3-5 year plan will be underpinned by an annual operational plan that will answer back to a committee /forum/organization that will have the required internal expertise to evaluate success/failure and the need to amend/pivot.

Taking the results of the annual operational plan and finding avenues to feed into national agencies/organisations &/EU Good resources with Phd students

Actions consistent with overall work streams

Addressing many local issues with a faster response time.

Strong and productive stakeholder relationships, having identified relevant personnel within relevant organisations A timeline shared across all organisations and leveraging annual work plans, survey results and data collected to maximise impact for the benefit of the city centre

3

5. Stakeholder involvement in implementation

The full range of relevant stakeholders (horizontally and vertically) are engaged in implementing planned actions Need to get digital info/data

Need to get economic impact business survey

Need to validate both

Whilst stake holder involvement in Sligo is active and productive, we are cognizant that additional actions that we had ambitions to complete, the infrastructure was not in place at a national level to do so, particular in relation to digital data and credit card transactions.

This is something we hope will improve in 2026.

Because of the longevity of the partnership model of Sligo first established in 2014, all stakeholders are known entities.

Relationships in place since 2014 have evolved into additional areas of work further strengthening stakeholder involvement. Given that Sligo is actioning areas of work unique to city centre management within the republic of Ireland, there is an opportunity to leverage our city centre management model into assisting other towns and cities in republic of Ireland

4



Integration Assessment Grid

Aspects of integration	Descriptions	What is the current situation	Strengths	Areas of improvement	Score (1-5)
------------------------	--------------	-------------------------------------	-----------	----------------------	----------------

OBLIGATOR	Y aspects of	fintegrated approache	es		
6. Multi-level governance	Actions are planned coherently at different levels of governance, covering local (district, city) regional and national levels	In advance of the Cities@Heart Project commencing, Sligo was fortunate to have participated in the Irish Government Town Centre First strategy and the Night Time Economy Taskforce. We had an awareness that there was an absence of the horizontal integration of the vertical silos within various government departments, and this was reflected in the various actions and policies from local, regional and national. Sligo ULG members now sit on a number of national government policy structures and advocate strongly for coherent planning across department implementation, streamlined levels of actions and activities.	Maintaining four national government positions and two national town and city management positions.	Maximising the presence of Sligo in these fora to the benefit of not only Sligo but all Irish towns and cities. Sligo feels strongly that the relationships, knowledge, information and learning from the Cities@Heart project should have a pathway into the future.	3
7. Digitisation	Balancing the digitization needs for the implementation of the actions	We have maximised the utilization of digital information gathering, this includes development of bespoke ambassador app for gathering volunteer activity, development of bespoke app for gathering data on commercial vacancy across the core of the city centre, development of a bespoke app to capture in real time anti social behaviour across the retail and hospitality sectors supported by the local police force, design and execution of incentivised digital surveys that gave meaningful information that will inform future actions and decisions, installation of new and improved digital footfall counters which removed four steps of actions and can now be gathered by desktop within 24 hours.	We firmly advocate in Drucker's position of "what gets measured get managed." We have looked in to this project to activate digital access points to provide us with more informed data sets.	It is a disappointment for the Sligo ULG that the access to the digital and credit card transaction information which was so inspiring from the other cities@ heart members who had access to this data won't be available to us until 2026.	5

Integration Assessment Grid

Aspects of integration	Descriptions	What is the current situation	Strengths	Areas of improvement	Score (1-5)
OBLIGATOR	Y aspects o	f integrated appro	aches		
8. Complementary types of investment	Balancing the need for both "hard" (physical/infrastructure) and "soft" human capital investments	If we can prove that changing a car park to a civic space has positive economic impact this can be leveraged to remove & convert more civic space by local authorities With the data we now have on the commercial vacancy and the three sample case studies that will be passed to the Irish government will be able to demonstrate whether the national government's grant scheme (Croí Cónaithe) is having the impact on an urban centre as was intended.	Prior to the Cities@Heart project we were dealing with unknown unknowns, Sligo ULG now feels it has known knowns across the two strands.	Not necessarily an area for improvement but there are two things going forward: 1) Sustaining the energy and commitment of the ULG 2) Being mindful to review the membership that we draw on the right expertise as we move forward.	3
9. Mobilising all available funding	Seeking to use the full range of funds available to support the implementation of planned actions, from EU funds to private local sources.	Sligo County Council has recently secured in excess of 48 million across the city centre, a continuing challenge is the requirement for a match component from the Local Authority.	The relationship between the public and private sector in Sligo is particularly strong and discussions on funding opportunities are repeated.	The partnership model between Sligo Couty Council and Sligo BID (Private Sector) has somewhat addressed financial vacuum on small-medium projects, more exploration is needed in this area if we are to be	4.5

explored.

successful in availing of national and EU funding streams



Key Features of the Integrated Approach:

- Cross-Sectoral Integration: These objectives must be seen as interconnected, requiring a holistic approach that links environmental, social, and economic pillars of sustainability.
- Data and Evidence-Based Decision-Making: Rely on real-time data and predictive modelling to guide planning and implementation.
- Local and Global Learning: Cities can learn from one another by exchanging best practices, allowing for a balance between local context and global trends.
- Long-Term Commitment: Achieving "Cities@Heart" objectives requires ongoing commitment and continuous evaluation of progress.

In summary, achieving "Cities@Heart" goals involves creating sustainable, resilient, and inclusive cities through integrated urban design, technology, and governance models. It requires collaboration, long-term planning, and a focus on equity and well-being for all urban dwellers.

4.5. Potential testing action

As previously above, Sligo's area of work within the project covers two very distinct testing actions.

Objective 1 - Test Action No. 1 & Learnings

In 2019 – 2020, Sligo completed its first land use survey in Sligo city under the supervision of the Heritage Council of Ireland. In 2022, the Irish government launched its national strategy for town centre regeneration – Town Centre First (TCF) with each Local Authority securing a dedicated town centre regeneration officer. From the Heritage Council land use survey, we were able to establish a commercial vacancy rate and now from the TCF policy, we have data on both commercial and residential vacancy in the city centre.

Armed with this information, the Sligo ULG expanded the membership of the ULG in February 2024 to include the following additions of city centre senior executive engineer and the town centre vacant homes officer. Working with the Sligo TRO (town centre regeneration officer) and utilising the URBACT problem tree tool, a survey was designed to ask a series of questions of building owners to establish the following:

- Building owners name, address and contact details
- Vacancy ground floor
- Vacancy second/upper floor
- Reason for vacancy
- If owners were to reclaim for what purpose
- · Level of awareness/knowledge of the Irish Government incentivised scheme to reclaim buildings
- Is the scheme of assistance in applying to the Croí Cónaithe scheme and if not why?

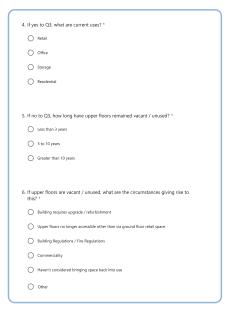
Objective 1 - Test Action No. 1 & Learnings

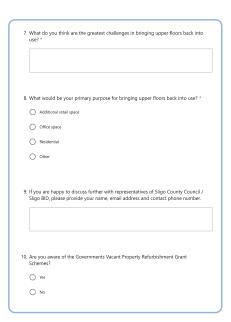
A final action from the survey's part of the work is the selection of three case studies covering three different scenarios as to the challenges/issues/blockages/ scheme results. We have secured permission from 3 businesses on 3 separate streets to participate as a case study.

Summary actions will include an examination of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Scheme.

A second summary action (unknown at the beginning of the Cities@Heart project) is the tracking of applications by the Local Authority for the Croí Cónaithe scheme by building type, current condition, value of grant, location, commencement of works and completion of same. Results will include both residential and commercial.







Objective 1 – Validation of Vacancy rate and assessment of current government supports towards repurposing of vacant stock

One tool by which to tackle commercial vacancy rates in an urban core is to increase footfall. It is our intention to investigate a realistic means by which the redevelopment of upper floors can be incentivised to encourage property owners to bring these buildings into sustainable use. This will have the potential to increase footfall throughout the urban core, improving commercial viability and at the same time creating neighbourhoods and a sense of ownership over the urban core over a 24 hour period.

Sligo, similar to the majority of Irish towns has a history of 'living above the shop', with families occupying the floors above the commercial venture, often using the shop entrance as the main entrance to the residence. Over time the trend for suburban living has reduced the residential rates in Sligo Town, and the lack of dedicated access to the upper floor has sterilised them from future use independent of the commercial venture.



Objective 1 - Test Action No. 1 & Learnings

The first step was to establish the baseline vacancy rate. Based on the Geodirectory information, Sligo continues to have the highest commercial vacancy rate in the country, which has steadily climbed from 16.4 % in 2015 to 20.6 % in late 2024. The GeoDirectory calculate commercial vacancy rates as follows:

- They maintain a national GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Database (jointly managed by An Post and Ordnance Survey Ireland).
- Every building and address point in Ireland is classified (residential, commercial, mixed-use, derelict, etc.).
- A commercial unit is defined as a building or part of a building used (or intended to be used) for business purposes (shops, offices, factories, pubs, etc.).

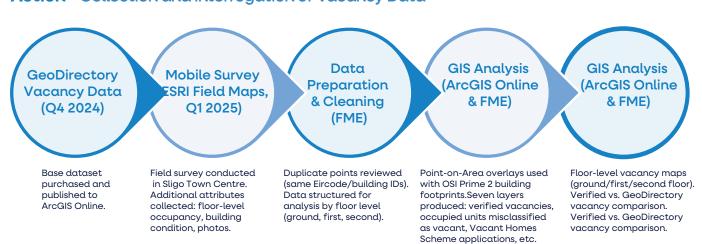
Vacancy calculation:

- 1. Total stock Count all identified commercial address points in a county.
- 2. **Vacant stock** Identify those addresses that are inactive, meaning:
 - No evidence of business activity (no utility connections, postal activity, or operating business),
 - Verified through fieldwork, data cross-checks, and updates from local authorities.
- 3. Rate = (Vacant commercial addresses ÷ Total commercial addresses) × 100

For example:

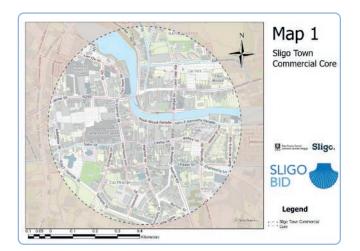
If Sligo has 5,000 commercial units and 1,030 are vacant, then the vacancy rate is $(1,030 \div 5,000) \times 100 = 20.6\%$. Colloquial evidence would suggest that the survey was not a true reflection of the picture on the ground, leading us to evaluate the situation in order to validate the GeoDirectory information.

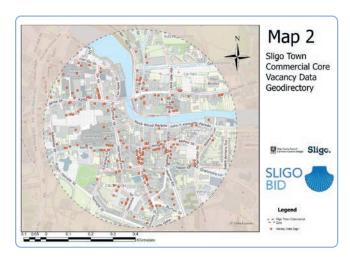
Action - Collection and interrogation of Vacancy Data



Step 1: Data Collection - GeoDirectory Vacany Data

The base dataset for this exercise was purchased GeoDirectory vacancy data, which was published to ArcGIS Online. This dataset provided point locations for each reported vacant commercial unit in Sligo Town. GeoDirectory vacancy data records commercial units identified as vacant at the time of publication. The Commercial Core was identified as the area of study (see Map 1).





Step 2: Data Validation - Mobile Survey

Fieldwork was carried out by a surveyor employed by Sligo BID during the first quarter of 2025. The surveyor, who was familiar with Sligo Town Centre, completed the survey over a four-week period using ESRI Field Maps.

The survey concentrated on the commercial core of Sligo Town, covering just under 50% of the GeoDirectory vacancy points for the wider Sligo urban area. This targeted approach allowed for a focused assessment of the primary retail and commercial district.

A task specific survey form was created in utilising a Mobile Phone App ESRI Field Maps. Additional questions and dropdown fields were added to allow surveyors to capture detailed, up-to-date observations. Table 1 outlines the additional six survey questions. Surveyors were also enabled and encouraged to capture photographs of the units. Data was collected using a mobile phone and ESRI's Field Maps application.

Q#	Question	Answer Options (Drop-down Menu)
Q1	Building type?	Type 1 Type 2 Type 3 Type 4 Type 5 Other If other, describe
Q2	Ground Floor	Occupied Vacant Under reconstruction
Q3	First Floor	Occupied Vacant Under reconstruction
Q4	Second Floor	Occupied Vacant Under reconstruction
Q5	Does the building have separate access to the upper floors?	Yes No
Q6	Building condition (based on visual assessment)	Excellent Good Poor Table 1: ESRI Field Map survey questions.

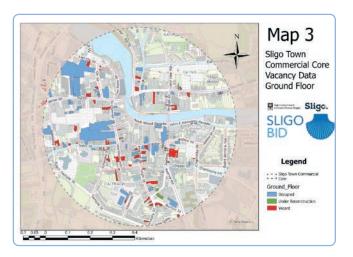
Step 3: Data Preparation and Cleaning

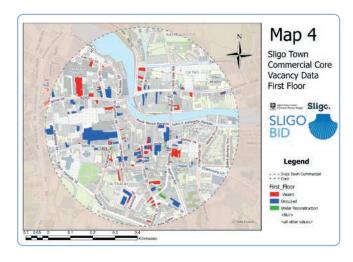
Upon completion of the field survey, Sligo County Council conducted a desktop GIS analysis. Six datasets were produced from the combined GeoDirectory and survey data. These datasets are listed in Table 2.

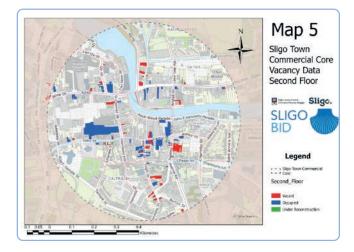
Layer	Description	
Layer 1	Vacancies identified on GeoDirectory (map completed; property info available by clicking points).	
Layer 2	Buildings where the ground floor is vacant.	
Layer 3	Buildings where the first floor is vacant.	
Layer 4	Buildings where the second floor is vacant.	
Layer 5	Buildings that are occupied, but identified on GeoDirectory as vacant.	
Layer 6	Buildings identified on GeoDirectory as vacant but not yet surveyed.	
Layer 7	Buildings with an approved Vacant Homes Scheme application associated	
	with them (map in progress, updated as applications come in).	Output Layers

The analysis was carried out using ArcGIS Online and the Feature Manipulation Engine (FME). In addition to GeoDirectory data, the OSI Prime 2 database was used to extract building footprints for spatial reference.

A standard Point-on-Area overlay was applied in FME to extract survey results by floor level (ground, first, second). This enabled the creation of separate layers representing vacancy at each floor, providing a clearer picture of the actual occupancy state compared to GeoDirectory records alone. (See Maps 3, 4, and 5 for floor-level vacancy analysis).







Step 4: GIS Analysis

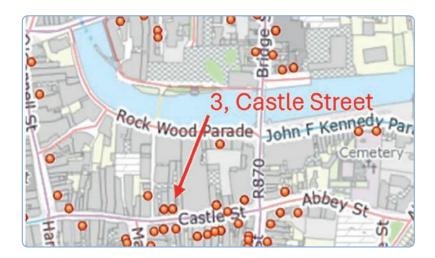
The initial interrogation of the GeoDirectory showed the following:

- 763 entries for Vacant properties
- 94 of these data points are in Co. Leitrim
- 7 of these data points are in Co. Cavan
- That leaves 662Nr. data points for Co. Sligo.



The GeoDirectory vacancy data is not broken down on a floor by floor basis, which is leading to a skewed bias.

- Taking No. 3, Castle Street as an example, GeoDirectory records two vacancy points for the building, which relate to the first and second floors. This is identified on the mapping as this building being vacant.
- Our survey results showed these floors as occupied. Even if they were vacant, the representation is misleading since the ground floor is clearly occupied. This highlights one of the limitations of Geo Directory data, alongside records that are simply incorrect.





- Each point in the dataset carries a unique ID (the address point) but may share an Eircode. In this case, the building appears to have four Eircode points: Kate's Kitchen, Rivercrossing IT Consultancy (upstairs), and other vacancies. However, with two floors occupied, the building as a whole should really be considered "occupied."
- This example demonstrates how GeoDirectory data can present a misleading picture of actual occupancy.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into commercial vacancy in Sligo Town Centre, a number of limitations should be noted:

- GeoDirectory accuracy: GeoDirectory vacancy data may not fully reflect on-the-ground conditions.
 Properties listed as vacant may be occupied, under renovation, or used in ways not captured by the database.
- Duplicate points: Multiple GeoDirectory points can be associated with the same building, often with identical Eircodes and building IDs but different address points. This creates potential duplication and reduces clarity.

Limitations

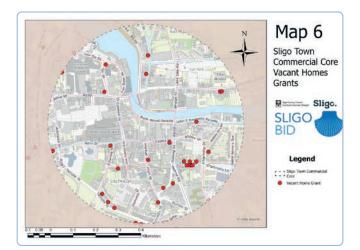
- Survey coverage: The field survey concentrated on the commercial core of Sligo Town and did not include all units in the wider Sligo urban area. Results therefore represent a partial rather than complete picture.
- Temporal changes: Vacancy status can change quickly due to new lettings, closures, or refurbishments. The survey represents a snapshot in time (Q1 2025).
- Subjectivity in assessment: Visual assessments (e.g., building condition) may vary depending on the surveyor's judgement.
- Resource constraints: Time and staff limitations restricted the survey to a four-week period and limited the number of properties assessed.

Conclusions on Data Collection

The methodology outlined above combined official GeoDirectory vacancy data with field-collected survey information to provide a more accurate and detailed assessment of commercial property use in Sligo Town Centre. By integrating GIS tools, mobile data capture, and spatial analysis, the study produced a series of datasets and maps that highlight both verified vacancies and discrepancies in the official records. These outputs, particularly the interrogation of data on a floor by floor basis offers a clearer picture of vacancy patterns and their implications for the town's commercial core.

Step 6:

The applications to the Vacant Homes Grant Scheme within the commercial core were mapped identifying the applications that were made on properties that were fully residential, and properties that had a commercial ground floor and residential upper floors.



Conclusions on distribution of applications to the Vacant Homes Grant scheme

The distribution of applications to the Vacant Homes Grant scheme indicates that there is a lack of uptake of this grant in the commercial core. The next step is to identify the barriers to applying for this grant and investigation means by which meaningful applications can be made.



Objective 2 – Economic Impact of Festivals and Events in a Public Realm Space (Queen Maeve Square)

Test action No. 2 & Learnings

As per the Cities@Heart baseline study, Sligo County Council recently unveiled the first dedicated civic square in the heart of the city centre with a project value to date of €4.5 million. The square, known as Queen Maeve Square, has a dedicated website and will seek to build a brand unique to the space that over time will become a centrepiece of interactions and social engagement. The Sligo ULG wanted to explore the relationship between a physical space, stakeholder usage, resident and visitor engagement that promotes social cohesion and inclusivity. Additionally the Sligo ULG wanted to assess the public realm's multi functional potential and economic impact of activity. We knew that an abundance of data was collectible across a range of areas that would inform the above ambitions.

As we already had mobile footfall data recorders in key locations across the square, the Sligo ULG used the URBACT tool of Problems and Solutions table to clearly define the various surveys that targeted various stakeholder groups.







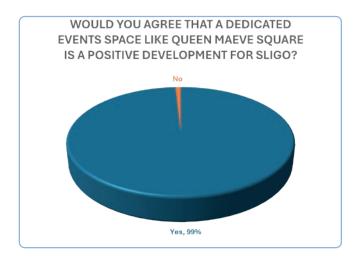


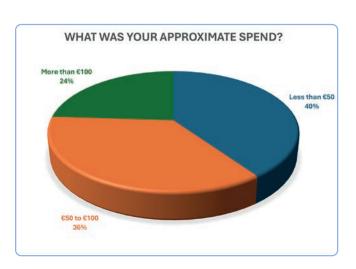
Conclusions on Data Collection

Series of surveys:

Consumer surveys - establishing if the user is a resident or visitor, the visitor country of origin, dwell time at events, number of events/activities/ experiences used, activities (eating, drinking, shopping etc), average spend, average dwell time, perception of event/square/Sligo, perception of family friendliness, safety and value for money. Given that we will run a minimum of six surveys during the life of the project and using the National Tourism Agency (Fáilte Ireland) parameters of visitor spend, we will be able to extrapolate the economic value of festivals and events that take place in Queen Maeve Square.

To date the Sligo ULG have completed 3 consumer surveys and with additional funding secured through the Night-Time Economy programme, we will have a more sophisticated footfall counters live by the end of October giving us real-time data daily.





Conclusions on Data Collection

Series of surveys:

Business Performance Survey – In this area of work, the Sligo ULG decided that 2 types of surveys would deliver a wider depth of information and knowledge. The first is specific to the Evening and Night Time Economy (ENTE). As a Purple Flag award winning city, Sligo will be the first town or city in Ireland to have a PhD level study on the economic value of the ENTE to both Sligo city and the North West region.

We expect to have a comprehensive analysis of the ENTE from the candidate by December 2026 so having a current user and operator series of surveys would augment/enhance the academic study.

We designed a survey bespoke to the ENTE operators querying current operating challenges, wish list for future types of events, their aspirations for the use of Queen Maeve Square, transport and policing issues and perceptions/opinions and current post Covid consumer behavioural changes within their sector.



Learnings from Strand 2 - Impact Analysis of Sligo's Outdoor Festivals:

Survey-Based Evaluation of Economic and Community Benefits

Public Findings

Demographics

- Women made up the majority of attendees across all events (73%–88%).
- Men comprised 10%–25%;
- Non-binary and self-identifying individuals ≤2%.
- Gender profile across all events was predominantly female.

Transportation

- Car travel was most common for most events (38%–70%).
- Walking was the top mode for the Christmas Lights Switch-On (45%) and significant for other events (26%–45%).
- Bus use was low (1%–15%); train and bike use minimal (2%–3%).

Customer Experience

- Town Engagement: 84%–93% of attendees ate, drank, or shopped in Sligo during events.
- Highest at Queen Maeve Festival 2024 and Sligo Summer Fest 2024 (93%).
- Lowest at Sligo on Ice 2024 (84%).

Length of Stay

- Most stayed 2-4 hours.
- St. Patrick's Festival 2024 (45%) and Queen Maeve Festival 2024 (32%).
- Short stays (<2 hrs) peaked at Taste of Sligo 2024 (27%).

Spending Levels

- €50–€100 spend most common, especially at Taste of Sligo (54%) and Sligo Summer Festival (37%).
- Under €50 spend highest at Christmas Lights (48%) and St. Patrick's 2025 (43%).
- Over €100 spend highest at Sligo on Ice 2024 (35%) and Sligo Summer Festival 2024 (32%).

Feeling of Safety

Very high across all events (94%–98%); Queen
 Maeve and Taste of Sligo led (98%).

Event Awareness/Promotion

- Social media was the primary source of event info (76%–91%).
- Word of mouth ranged 7%–17%; other methods like websites and billboards under 7%.

Business Findings

Awareness

 Nearly all businesses were aware of events beforehand.

Staffing

- Temporary hires were most common for Sligo on Ice (6) and Christmas Lights (4).
- Fewer hires for Taste of Sligo and St. Patrick's Festival (2 each).

Footfall Increases

- Sligo on Ice (81%) and Christmas Lights (62%) had the biggest reported boosts.
- Taste of Sligo and St. Patrick's Festival saw lower increases (43%).

Customer Spend (Business View)

- Most businesses reported customer spends under €100.
- Food and beverage providers dominated the under €50 group.
- Only a few noted spend over €100—mainly during Sligo on Ice and Christmas Lights.

Sales Performance

- Sligo on Ice had steady moderate increases; one major (50%–70%) increase.
- Christmas Lights: similar modest gains; one 50% rise.
- St. Patrick's Festival: some up to 60% increases; others more modest.
- Sligo Summer Festival had a mix, including one 60% gain and a few declines.
- Taste of Sligo showed limited data; some gains, one decline.

Event Perception by Businesses

- All events seen as generally well-run and safe.
- Most positive perceptions for Sligo on Ice and Christmas Lights.
- Constructive feedback raised by businesses was shared with event organisers.



Conclusion

The analysis of post-event survey data clearly demonstrates that festivals and events held in Sligo's new outdoor event space deliver significant economic and social value for both the public and local businesses. High levels of engagement—such as food, drink, and retail spending—as well as extended visitor stays, particularly during large-scale events like Sligo on Ice, Queen Maeve Festival, and St. Patrick's Festival, reflect strong visitor satisfaction and meaningful economic activity within the town. From a business perspective, increased footfall, improved customer spend, and reported sales uplifts across multiple events underline the commercial benefits of a robust events calendar.

Importantly, business owners consistently viewed these events as safe, well-managed, and family-friendly, reinforcing their positive impact on the local trading environment. Moreover, the events have shown strong potential for future growth and sustainability.

The dominant role of social media in attracting attendees highlights a clear opportunity for strategic digital marketing to further amplify attendance and economic return.

Overall, these findings validate the value of continued investment in Sligo's outdoor event infrastructure. Well-organised, inclusive, and well-promoted events not only enhance the cultural vibrancy of the town but also serve as key drivers of local economic development. Strategic planning and stakeholder collaboration will be essential to maximising these benefits in future programming.

Future Opportunity and Scaling Up

With ten digital footfall counters installed across, we now have the opportunity to use this data to access pre and post impact of footfall for a more comprehensive impact measurement in the future.

The survey templates can be replicated in other locations across the county for consistent, comparable findings.

Implementing audience segmentation could allow us to identify underrepresented groups and create inclusion strategies and tailor event offerings based on segment preferences (e.g. family-focused vs nightlife-focused).

5. Overall logic and integrated approach

Sligo's vision:

"To deliver a more balanced city centre, improving the life of our citizens and visitors, in a sustainable manner"

As such, our objectives are twofold and have two very distinct and separate strands:

Objective 1: To increase availability of housing stock in the City Centre.

Our focus is on repurposing vacant units and thereby attracting more citizens to live in our city. **Objective 2**: To measure / demonstrate the positive economic impact of festivals and events.

Our focus is on maximising the potential economic and social impacts of Queen Maeve Square



The "Cities@Heart" concept focuses on developing sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban spaces that prioritise the well-being of people, communities, and the environment.

Our overall logic and integrated approach to these objectives can be structured into a series of interconnected principles that guide Sligo city's urban development, governance, and management.



Whilst principles can include a human centred and sustainable approaches, relevant to Sligo are the following:

1. Smart and Technology-Driven Cities

- Objective: Utilize technology and data to enhance urban living, making it smarter, more efficient, and responsive to change.
- Approach: Data-Driven Governance:
 Use real-time data from sensors (footfall counters) and digital platforms (bespoke mobile application) to measure people movement through and around our city.

2. Economic Resilience and Job Creation

- Objective: Build a robust economy that has the potential to future proof against external shocks.
- Approach: Support Local Enterprises:
 Maximise the economic impact of Queen
 Maeve Square

3. Integrated Planning and Long-Term Visioning for re-purposing of vacant buildings

- Objective: Develop and implement city strategies that align with long-term sustainability, growth, and resilience goals.
- Approach: Coherent Planning: Align urban development with environmental, social, and economic goals, integrating land-use, housing, and infrastructure plans.
- Participatory Urban Planning:
 Use multi-stakeholder consultation processes,
 including residents, to shape the city's future.
- Adaptability and Flexibility: Build cities that can adapt to emerging trends, such as demographic shifts, technological advancements, and climate change.







AFTER

Objective 1: Urban Planning and Development

- Measure rate of ground and upper-floor level core streets
- Action: Collect data at both ground and upper-floor levels (e.g., through manual surveys). Analyse how these levels contribute to the vibrancy and activity of urban spaces.
- 2. Measure the impact of VPRS (Vacant Property Refurbishment Scheme) in reducing vacancy and increasing residential stock
- Action: Conduct a before-and-after assessment on the number of vacant properties in areas influenced by the VPRS. This will involve tracking the increase in residential units over time and analysing the effectiveness of this program in revitalizing the city centre and meeting housing demand.

- 3. Ascertain and identify limitations of the current scheme
- Action: Conduct a thorough evaluation of the VPRS, identifying any barriers or inefficiencies. This will involve interviewing stakeholders (e.g., property owners, residents, local authorities) and reviewing data on vacancy rates and property conversions.
- 4. Develop strategic recommendations for improvement
- Action: Based on the evaluation, provide recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the VPRS. These may involve policy changes, introducing more incentives for property owners, or improving outreach and support for potential developers.

Objective 2: Community and Economic Impact

- 1. Consumer + business surveys across five festivals in new public spaces
- Action: Organise and distribute surveys to attendees at five major events held in newly developed public space. Gather data on consumer spending habits, frequency of attendance, and the public's perception of these spaces. Analyse the data to determine the perception of the user and the impact of public spaces on community engagement.
- 2. Football count & consumer survey: approximate € spend
- Action: Design a survey to gather consumer spending information, such as the average expenditure on food, entertainment, and services in the vicinity of Queen Maeve Square.

- 3. Business surveys: Percentage of additional jobs, and percentage increase in tourism
- Action: Conduct surveys with local businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector (hotels, restaurants, retail), to under stand the impact of the events on their revenue. Measure hotel occupancy rates, increase in the number of jobs (temporary & permanent) created, and changes in the number of tourists visiting the area during the event periods.
- 4. Evaluate long-term impact on local businesses and tourism
- Action: Track the economic impact of these events over multiple years by comparing key metrics (e.g., business revenue, tourist arrivals, job creation) before and after the events. This will help assess the sustainability and growth potential of festivals as a tool for economic development and impact.

These actions will enable a comprehensive approach to improving urban spaces and fostering a more inclusive, sustainable, and economically vibrant environment. They focus on clear data collection, evaluation, and the identification of actionable steps to improve public infrastructure, engagement, and sustainability.



6. Action planning detail

6.1. Summary Action Tables

Action No.	Descriptions	Intended Results	Action Lead and Key Partners	Resource Needs	Timeframe
A1.1	Survey of building stock within the urban core	Purchase Geo Directory Vacancy Data and publish to ArcGIS. Survey of building stock with which to compare the Geo-directory statistics	Lead: Sligo County Council Partners: Geo-directory, building owners	To be defined	Q1/Q2 2026
A1.2	Report preparation	Report the levels of vacancy by building use and floor. Compare results with the statistics and figures from the Geo-directory information	Lead: Sligo County Council Partners: building owners	To be defined	Q2-3 2026
A1.3	Stakeholder Engagement	Engage with the three property owners to discuss potential of their buildings. Encourage property owners to upgrade their buildings to allow them to be usable for a use, be this commercial or residential Facilitate collaboration between property owners to encourage the upgrade of entire urban blocks rather that looking at the situation on a building by building basis. Engage with Contractors and Construction Professionals to develop a toolkit for redevelopment of individual buildings and urban blocks.	Lead: Sligo County Council Partners: Sligo County Council, BID, Property Owners, Contractors, Construction Professionals.	To be defined	2026 - 2027
A1.4	Refurbishment and upgrade of building stock	Reintroduce building stock into use	Lead: Sligo County Council Partners: building owners	To be defined	Ongoing

Action Table 2 for Strand 2 – Economic Impact of Festivals & Events in a public realm shared space – Queen Maeve Square

(priority focus of ascertaining if Queen Maeve Square is operating to maximum benefit to both residents, visitors and business owners).

Action No.	Descriptions	Intended Results	Action Lead and Key Partners	Resource Needs	Timeframe
A2.1	Review membership of Festival and Events ULG.	Ensure that the expertise is resident within the group to complete the action.	Lead: ULG Coordinator Sligo BID Sligo CoCo NTE Advisor QMS Manager Local operators	Design of customized surveys – both consumer and business	Q1 2024 to Q3 2025
A2.2	Design customized surveys	Secure ample response to both surveys that will inform performance of Queen Maeve Square	Lead: ULG members ATU Tourism Department Sligo BID NTE Advisor Sligo CoCo	Hard (40 No) and soft copy of surveys	Q1 2024
A2.3	Selection of festivals (6 no) and events over an 18 month period to run surveys - meet with 6 event organizers to enhance response rate. Recruit minimum 15 business owners (hospitality and retail) to participate. Approval of 8 No €100 prizes for random prize	Sligo ULG Coordinator NTE Advisor Build comparative data sets across an extended timeframe to leverage survey results	Lead: Sligo BID Sligo CoCo Sligo BID Members Festivals and Events organizers	€800 x 8 €100 prize vouchers – sponsored by Sligo BID	Q2 2024 Q4 2025
A2.4	Review of Methodology and Survey content and responses (for those festivals running twice within the timeframe)	That the surveys are generating valid and informative responses aligned to the Action.	Lead: Sligo BID Sligo CoCo ATU Sligo ULG Members	Time of NTE advisor	Q4 2024
A2.5	Recruit expert analyst to review both consumer and business surveys.	An overview and collating of survey responses that will begin to build a framework of common responses across a number of key metrics	Lead: Ulg Coordinator Sligo CoCo NTE Advisor	€3000 for expert analysis	Q2 2025

Action No.	Descriptions	Intended Results	Action Lead and Key Partners	Resource Needs	Timeframe
A2.6	Present findings to members of the ULG	Work with the members to select the most cogent and relevant information from the data gathered	ULG Coordinator NTE Advisor	Time of ULG Coordinator, NTE Advisor, ULG Members	Q4 2025
A2.7	Pilot a series of testing structures from stretched canvas, large umbrellas, retractable roof, inverted tulips to demonstrate the impact on attendees, dwell time and economic spend in Queen Maeve Square	Given the challenges of inclement weather conditions on the west coast of Ireland, it is anticipated that a large covering will allow for: Larger audience attendance Increased dwell time Increased frequency of use Appeal to a wider demographic Increased economic impact	Lead: Sligo County Council Partners: building owners	€300,000	Q2 2026 – Q1 2027
A2.8	Consult and meet with key agencies and government representatives in presenting results of both survey findings	Identification of issues, concerns, successes that are impacting / enhancing performance Provision of a covered structure for QMS	Lead: Sligo CoCo Sligo BID ULG Fáilte Ireland DHLGH	€750K to €1million	2025 – ongoing
A2.9	Repeat of surveys on an annual basis	Identification of issues, concerns, successes that are impacting / enhancing performance Provision of a covered structure for QMS Having benchmarked performance, repeating surveys will assist in branding, marketing, sustainability and vitality of a city centre public realm space	Lead: Sligo BID Sligo ULG Business Representives	€2000 per annum	2025 – ongoing

6.2. Risk analysis

Project Details:

Project: Cities@Heart - City Centre Regeneration in Sligo

Duration: 2.5 years (30 months)

Programme: URBACT IV

Partners: Sligo County Council (Public) & Sligo BID (Private)

Scope: Participatory city centre regeneration through a

public-private partnership (PPP), stakeholder engagement, and integrated action planning.

Key Adjustments for 2.5-Year Duration:

Longer duration increases risk exposure to:

Staff turnover

External environmental changes (policy shifts, inflation)

Stakeholder fatigue

Delays in implementation and reporting cycles

More time for meaningful engagement — but also greater need for sustained momentum

1. Financial Risks (30-Month Horizon)

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Adjusted Mitigation (for longer term)
Delays in EU/URBACT reimbursements	Medium	High	Maintain minimum 3–6 months operational reserves; build realistic cash flow forecast covering 30 months.
Cost overruns due to inflation	Medium	Medium - High	Adjust budgets for inflation over 2.5 years; review procurement pricing assumptions every 6–12 months.
Partner co-financing gaps	Medium	High	Monitor co-financing commitments annually; include annual financial health check for Sligo BID and Council.
Non-eligible expenditure across reporting periods	Medium	High	Split budget and expenditure tracking into semi-annual periods aligned with reporting.
Underspending jeopardising funding drawdown	Medium		Regular burn-rate tracking with alerts; contingency plan for reallocation or acceleration in final year.



2. Human Resources Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Adjusted Mitigation (for 2.5 years)
Staff attrition due to project length	Medium	High	Recruit with full 30-month duration in mind; use fixed-term contracts with retention clauses.
Burnout or disengagement in long-term project	Medium	Medium	Build a project rhythm with visible milestones and celebration of short-term wins.
Loss of institutional memory over time	Medium	Medium	Maintain internal documentation and knowledge transfer process for new staff.
Stakeholder fatigue (e.g. LSG burnout)	Medium - High	Medium	Vary meeting formats; stagger involvement levels; refresh LSG membership mid-way.

3. Operational Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Adjusted Mitigation (for 2.5 years)
Planning or implementation delays over longer timeline	Medium	High	Buffer project plan with flex periods; conduct mid-term review and course correction.
Delays in procurement or delivery from suppliers	Medium	Medium	Phase procurement across project lifespan; include performance clauses in contracts.
Local elections or political cycle shifts impacting priorities	Medium	Medium	Secure cross-party political buy-in; involve non-elected officials and departments in core planning.
Disruption to local businesses due to ongoing works	Medium - High	Medium	Communicate clear schedule; use business support liaison; offer mitigation plans.

4. Governance & Management Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Adjusted Mitigation
Weakened partnership over time (BID & Council)	Medium	High	Annual partnership review; refresh MoU; schedule strategic re- alignment sessions every 12 months.
Ineffective project oversight due to duration creep	Medium	Medium	Establish quarterly steering committee meetings with standing agenda and KPIs
Turnover in political or executive leadership	Medium	Medium	Involve multiple levels of staff; document decisions; ensure transparency in roles and governance.
Inconsistent quality of URBACT reporting over time	Medium	Medium	Create internal report tracker; appoint a reporting coordinator; review lessons learned from Year 1 reports.

5. Technical & Strategic Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Adjusted Mitigation
Failure to maintain momentum in co-creation of IAP	Medium	High	Use visual progress tools (e.g. URBACT journey maps); check-in with LSG every 6 months
Change in national or EU policy affecting regeneration strategies	Medium	Medium	Stay informed via URBACT national contact points; adapt IAP responsively.
Digital engagement fatigue	Medium	Medium	Alternate formats (walkshops, pop-ups, offline methods); leverage local festivals or events.
Weak transnational collaboration or exchange	Medium	Medium	Proactively assign roles for international tasks; build partner-to-partner peer mentoring.



7. Implementation Framework

Objective 1 focuses on:

- Urban regeneration through the validation of vacancy rates within the city centre
- An assessment of current government supports aimed at repurposing vacant building stock
- An examination of how existing policy mechanisms are contributing to (or limiting)
 the regeneration of the urban core

A review of the terms and conditions of the current iteration of the Vacant Property Renovation Grant (VPRG) scheme has been undertaken. Findings indicate that while the scheme is being availed of - uptake is predominantly occurring on properties located on the periphery of the city centre, with limited participation within the core urban area. This presents a challenge for meaningful city-centre regeneration, particularly in addressing long-term vacancy and underutilisation of upper floors.

In response, a proposal has been developed for submission to the Department that recommends an amendment to the financial incentives within the VPRG scheme. The objective of this amendment is to more effectively incentivise property owners within the city centre, where development costs, structural complexity and compliance requirements are often higher, thereby directly supporting urban regeneration outcomes.

Sligo County Council has commenced engagement with the Department of Housing and Local Government - who have indicated that the Government would be open to a review (and possible amendments) to the VPRG scheme. Additionally, the Department has expressed interest in the development of a pilot project with the Local Authority to better understand the complexities and nuances associated with bringing vacant and underutilised upper floors back into use in a city-centre context. This pilot approach would support evidence-based policymaking and inform future national regeneration initiatives.

Objective 2 – Economic Impact of Festivals and Events in a Public Realm Space (Queen Maeve Square)

Strand 2 examines the economic sustainability, business performance and social value of festivals and events delivered within a city-centre public realm - with a particular focus on Queen Maeve Square. This strand recognises festivals and events as key tools in activating public spaces, supporting local businesses, and improving the quality of life for citizens.

Analysis arising from the Cities@Heart project has strongly identified the challenge of delivering consistent economic impact and animation of the space, particularly given the inclement weather conditions experienced on the west coast of Ireland. These environmental factors directly affect footfall, dwell time and commercial performance and must be addressed to ensure the long-term viability of the space as a year-round asset.

Sligo County Council will continue its ongoing engagement with the national funder Fáilte Ireland in seeking a sustainable solution that enables Queen Maeve Square to function as a year-round open-air venue. This is critical to maximising return on public investment, enhancing business performance in the surrounding area and ensuring the economic sustainability of festivals and events programming.

Sligo County Council and Sligo BID have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place for the management of the public realm space. This agreement represents a seemingly first-of-its-kind model in the Republic of Ireland and is supported by the national funder Fáilte Ireland. Both signatories have reviewed the terms and conditions of the SLA and have agreed to extend the partnership for a further year, reflecting the success and strategic importance of this collaborative approach.

Festivals and events delivered within Queen Maeve Square play a vital role in improving the lives of the city's citizens by:

- · Enhancing social interaction and civic pride
- Increasing accessibility to cultural and recreational activities
- · Animating the city centre and improving perceptions of safety and vibrancy
- Supporting local enterprise through increased footfall and spend

To further strengthen the evidence base, Sligo BID will continue to run both types of surveys throughout 2026, ensuring a proactive response to changing consumer sentiment and the early identification of emerging trends. It is also hoped to replicate data accessed by a Cities@Heart partner (specifically: anonymised credit card data) which would significantly add to the depth of analysis regarding spend patterns, business performance and the overall economic impact of a multifunctional city-centre public realm.

Conclusion

Together, Strand 1 and Strand 2 demonstrate a joined-up approach to urban regeneration that combines targeted housing and vacancy interventions with strategic investment in public realm animation. By aligning policy reform, economic sustainability and citizen-focused programming, the project supports a more resilient, vibrant and liveable city centre.



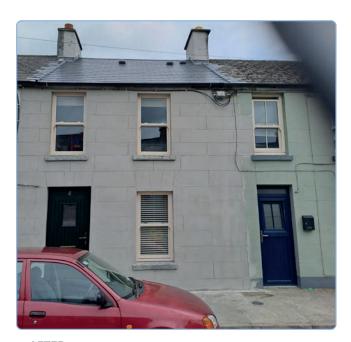
8. Annexes

Objective 1

Annex 1

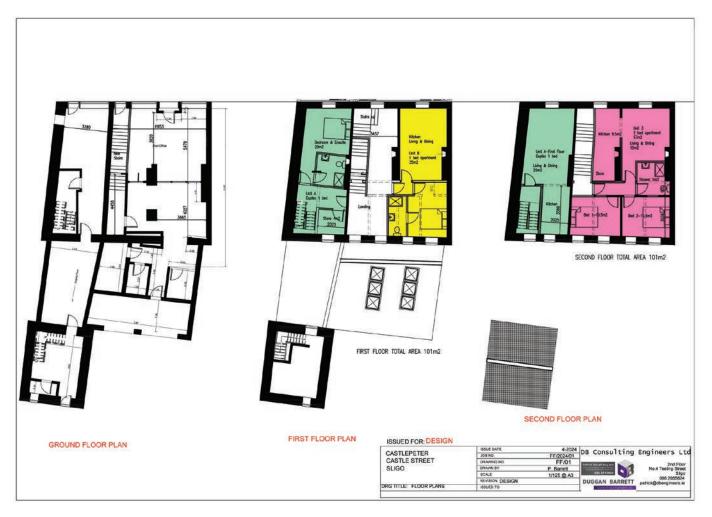
Samples of before and after VPRG buildings





BEFORE AFTER

Sample of floorplan of the renovation of an open the shop business in the city centre







Sample of GeoDirectory finding

According to recent GeoDirectory reports, Sligo (County) has consistently been labelled as having the highest commercial vacancy rates in Ireland, reaching 20.8% in June 2025. The town of Sligo also reportedly had a high vacancy rate of 25.4% in the same period. This less than desired characterisation has been placed on Sligo for several years now, with the county consistently ranking among those with the highest commercial vacancy rates throughout Ireland (according to GeoDirectory).

As part of the Council's collaboration with Sligo Business Improvement District (BID) on the URBACT funded Cities@ Heart network project (and while not intentionally seeking to be critical of GeoDirectory and its processes), we set out to ascertain the validity of the GeoDirectory characterisation for Sligo Town and the accuracy of their associated data. In October 2024, Sligo BID sought the following information from GeoDirectory for the purposes of the Cities@Heart project:

- The methodology used by GeoDirectory in compiling a listing of vacant commercial units in an Irish town or city
- The commercial vacancy % of Sligo town and separately % Sligo County
- · A listing of all current vacant / derelict commercial properties in Sligo town

On 18th November 2024, GeoDirectory supplied Sligo BID with an Excel spreadsheet (at a cost €400 ex VAT), containing a listing of properties within Sligo which GeoDirectory determine to be vacant. Preliminary analysis of the dataset provided was as follows:

- 1. Vacancy spreadsheet contained a total 763nr. data points; of which
- 2. 94nr. data points are for properties within Co. Leitrim
- 3. 7nr. data points are for properties within Co. Cavan
- 4. Balance of 662nr. data points relate to County Sligo but comprise listings of both commercial and residential properties.

For the purposes of analysis of vacancy rates applicable to the Sligo Urban area, we determined that 442nr. data points relate to Sligo Urban Area (taking in areas such as Sligo Town Centre, Cartron, Finisklin, Ballinode, Cleveragh, Carraroe etc.). During Q1 2025, the Council's Digital Transformation Team digitised the 442nr. GeoDirectory data points and developed a mobile app enabling on-site survey / validation of these data points. On-site assessment (combination of visual surveys and building owner/occupier interviews) were conducted on approx. 200 data points during Q2 2025 and general findings can be summarised as follows:

- 1. Dataset contains a combination of commercial and residential data points.
- 2. Multiple data points for same buildings, which may unduly influence commercial vacancy rate; e.g.
 - a. Weston House, Union Street x 4nr. data points
 - b. Sligo Business Centre (now AIM Centre) recorded as having 7nr. vacant units
 - c. Quayside Shopping Centre recorded as containing 35nr. vacant properties
 - d. Old Mill Apartments, Union Street (and all residential) recorded as comprising 17nr. vacant units
- 3. Considerable no. of units marked as vacant but on-site validation confirms otherwise; e.g.
- a. 3nr. data points for 1 unit in The Canopy. On site survey confirmed the unit was/is occupied
- b. 2nr. data points for 25 Castle Street unit is fully occupied
- c. 2nr. data points for units in Tesco Arcade all occupied.
- 4. Multiple development sites which formally contained a combination of commercial and/or residential properties, still recorded as containing vacant units.

Finally, concern is noted around the definition / classification applied to a vacant unit for purposes of GeoDirectory surveys. Definition provided by GeoDirectory is as follows: "A unit is considered vacant, if it can be immediately inhabitated with minimal effort e.g. new paintwork required". Further clarification will be sought from GeoDirectory regarding classification of buildings / properties.

Next steps: In association with Sligo BID, our intention is to develop a more comprehensive report on our findings. The Council and BID will engage directly with GeoDirectory to discuss our findings. Our ultimate aim is that of ensuring reliable and accurate datasets to inform decision making.

Sample of Consumer Survey

Survey Examples

A. Post Event Public Survey

Sligo St Patrick's Festival Post Event Public Survey Please fill this quick survey and let us know your thoughts and you could win a 100€ Love Sligo gift card! 1. How did you arrive at the event? * ☐ Walking ☐ Bus ☐ Bike ☐ Car ☐ Train 2. Gender: How do you identify? * ☐ Man ☐ Woman ☐ Non-Binary ☐ Prefer to self-identify: ☐ Other:___ 3. Which county are you from? * Sligo □ International Visitor □ Antrim □ Armagh □ Carlow □ Cavan □ Clare □ Cork □ Derry □ Donegal □ Down □ Dublin □ Fermanagh □ Galway □ Kerry □ Kildare □ Kilkenny □ Laois □ Leitrim □ Limerick □ Longford □ Louth □ Mayo □ Meath □ Monaghan □ Offaly □ Roscommon ☐ Tipperary ☐ Tyrone ☐ Waterford ☐ Westmeath ☐ Wexford ☐Wicklow 4. How many people attended within your party? * □ 1–3 □ 4–6 □ 6–9 □ 10–30 □ 30+ 5. Did you eat / drink / shop in Sligo town while attending the festival?* ☐ Yes ☐ No 6. Approximately how long did you stay in town the day you visited the festival? * □ Less than 2 hrs □ 2–4 hrs □ 4–6 hrs □ More than 6 hrs 7. What was your approximate spend while in town? * □ Less than €50 □ €50–€100 □ More than €100 8. Did you feel safe at all times in town on the day you visited the festival? * ☐ Yes ☐ No 9. Where did you get most of your information about the event? * ☐ Social Media ☐ Billboard/Banner ☐ Word of Mouth ☐ Website 10. Any additional feedback you would like to include? 11. Email address (optional, if you would like to be entered into the draw for a Love Sligo Gift

Card)



Annex 2

Sample of Business Survey

B. Post Event Business Survey

Sligo On Ice - Post Event Business Survey Please fill this quick survey and let us know your thoughts. 1. What is the name of your business? 2. How would you classify your business? ☐ Retailer ☐ Accommodation Provider ☐ Food/Beverage Provider ☐ Arts/Heritage/Cultural/Tourist Provider ☐ Service Provider ☐ Other 3. Are you a day time business, night time business or both? ☐ Day Time ☐ Night Time ☐ Both Day Time and Night Time 4. Were you aware that the event was happening? ☐ Yes ☐ No 5. What is the primary demographic of your audience? ☐ Local Customers ☐ Domestic Tourists ☐ International Tourists 6. Did you hire extra staff? ☐ Part Time ☐ Full Time ☐ Contract ☐ N/A 7. Did the event increase footfall to your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No 8. Did the event divert footfall from your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No 9. Did you participate in the event (e.g. promos, themed display, connecting activity)? ☐ Yes ☐ No 10. If yes, please describe your promotion/activity/event: 11. On average, what did a customer typically spend in your business during the event? □ Less than €50 □ Less than €100 □ Less than €150 ☐ Less than €200 ☐ Less than €250 ☐ Over €250 Other: __ 12. What percentage increase/decrease was observed in your business during the week of the event?

13. Did you feel the event was well run, safe and family friendly?

Sligo CITIES & HEART TOWN AND A DALANCE OF THE CONTROL OF THE CONT