

# Connecting & Co-Creating An Integrated Action Plan

Ennis Municipal District



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR  
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

URBACT



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*e*CONNECTING  
greener & closer communities



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# Table of Contents

<b>E-CONNECTING MEANS...</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT AND NEEDS</b>	<b>13</b>
1.0. DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT AND NEEDS	14
1.1 OVERALL TOPIC BEING ADDRESSED	16
1.2 CURRENT SITUATION	21
1.3 EXISTING STRATEGIES AND POLICIES	24
<b>CHAPTER 2 URBACT LOCAL GROUP (ULG)</b>	<b>27</b>
2.0 URBACT LOCAL GROUP (ULG)	28
2.1 STAKEHOLDER MAPPING	28
2.2 ORGANISATION OF THE ULG	29
2.3 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND OUTREACH	30
2.4 PLANNING PROCESS	32
<b>CHAPTER 3 IAP SITES AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>33</b>
3.0. IAP SITE AND AREAS OF INTERVENTION	34
3.1 DESCRIPTION OF IAP SITES	35
3.2 SWOT ANALYSIS	38
3.3 EMERGING TOPICS	41
<b>CHAPTER 4 PROJECT VISION, STRATEGY AND GOALS</b>	<b>47</b>
4.0 PROJECT VISION	47
4.1 PROJECT GOALS	50
4.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	51
4.3 INTEGRATION CHALLENGES	54
<b>CHAPTER 5 SMALL-SCALE ACTIONS</b>	<b>61</b>



5.0 TESTING ACTIONS -----	62
<b>CHAPTER 6 INTEGRATED ACTIONS -----</b>	<b>70</b>
6.0 INTEGRATED ACTIONS -----	71
6.1 INTEGRATED ACTION 1: TOWN BUS SERVICE -----	73
6.2 INTEGRATED ACTION 2: WALKING/CYCLING BUSES FOR SCHOOLS -----	74
6.3 INTEGRATED ACTION 3: URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT -----	75
6.4 INTEGRATED ACTION 4: WALKING ROUTES AROUND ENNIS -----	76
6.5 INTEGRATED ACTION 5: ADDITIONAL CYCLE LANES -----	77
6.6 INTEGRATED ACTION 6: INCREASED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING POINTS -----	78
6.7 INTEGRATED ACTION 7: PARKING APP FOR DISABLED DRIVERS -----	79
6.8 INTEGRATED ACTION 8: PUBLIC REALM UPGRADE IN TOWN CENTRE -----	80
6.9 INTEGRATED ACTION 9: FESTIVAL AND EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR -----	81
6.10 INTEGRATED ACTION 10: EXPLOITATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF CIVIC SPACES -----	82
<b>CHAPTER 7 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY -----</b>	<b>84</b>
7.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY -----	84
7.1 DELIVERY CLUSTERS -----	86
7.2 GOVERNANCE & RESPONSIBILITIES -----	88
7.3 PROJECT PRIORITISATION -----	91
7.4 COST ESTIMATION AND FUNDING STRATEGY -----	96
7.5 GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT -----	100
7.6. INDICATORS AND MONITORING STRATEGY -----	102
<b>CHAPTER 8 INDICATORS FRAMEWORK -----</b>	<b>104</b>
8.0 INDICATORS FRAMEWORK -----	105
8.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS -----	106
8.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLKIT -----	106











# E-CONNECTING means...

establishing strategies and actions for rural-urban functional areas, fostering the seamless integration of urban sustainable practices, well-being enhancement, and the cultivation of robust social connections through active citizen participation. This Action Planning Network brings together nine city partners from Italy, Montenegro, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary and Spain to collaborate on shaping their “proximity territories,” characterized by intricate urban-rural linkages.

At the core of E-CONNECTING lies a comprehensive exploration of smart mobility solutions for public transport and mobility, coupled with the revitalization of villages, towns and their hub cities to enhance the overall quality of life for citizens. The initiative embarks on a deep dive into the intricate fabric of these regions, seeking to address key aspects such as mobility, accessibility, and urban regeneration.

By employing a dialogue-oriented planning process and leveraging the proven URBACT methodology, E-CONNECTING aims to harmonize the dynamics between urban and rural areas. The focus is specifically on optimizing mobility and accessibility, while simultaneously fostering vibrant public spaces that cater to the needs and desires of the local populace. All these efforts are grounded in a commitment to environmental consciousness and community engagement, ensuring a sustainable and people-centric approach to development.

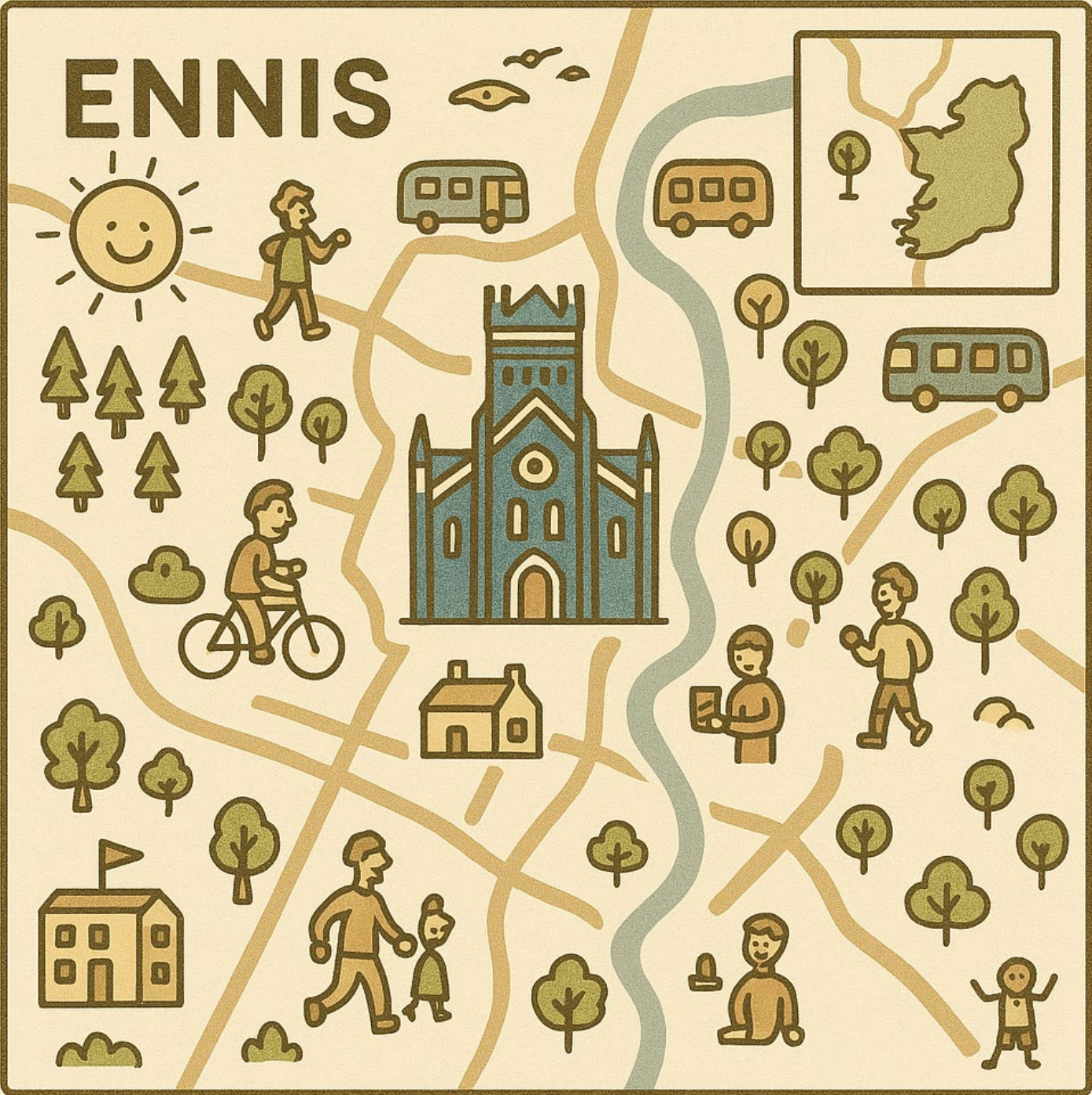
Through collaborative efforts, E-CONNECTING strives to create a model that not only enhances the connectivity between urban and rural spaces but also promotes a holistic and inclusive vision for the well-being of citizens. The initiative serves as a beacon for innovative strategies that prioritize the intersection of environmental sustainability, community vibrancy, and urban-rural harmony. In doing so, E-CONNECTING emerges as a catalyst for positive change, demonstrating the transformative power of collaborative urban planning on a European scale.







# Executive Summary





# Executive Summary

This Integrated Action Plan for Ennis sets out a clear and ambitious pathway for the town's future, communicating a vision with practical measures for implementation. Developed through the URBACT e-Connecting programme, the plan builds on a collaborative knowledge exchange process with project partners from nine different countries across the European Union. This international perspective provided Ennis with new evidence-based learning, with access to potential solutions from towns facing similar mobility, environmental and governance challenges. By adapting these insights to the local context, the plan demonstrates how European cooperation can inspire meaningful local action.

The urbact methodology advocates for the URBACT Local Group (ULG), to play a central role in shaping the direction of the IAP. Bringing together representatives from across the community—business, education, culture, accessibility, environmental groups, and statutory agencies. At the outset the ULG outlined the emerging topics in the town and defined both the Strategic Objectives and the Integrated Actions. Their voice ensured that the plan reflects real needs on the ground and balances technical analysis with the lived experience of residents and stakeholders. This inclusive process created a sense of ownership and collective responsibility that will be critical for successful implementation.

The Strategic Objectives provide the overarching framework for action, setting out clear priorities for Ennis in areas such as sustainable mobility, climate resilience, accessibility, civic space and cultural activation. Under these objectives, the plan lists a set of Integrated Actions—tangible projects that will deliver the desired changes. These include improvements in pedestrian connectivity, civic space activation and transport interventions, each designed to be both impactful as a standalone and mutually reinforcing, when delivered as part of a coordinated programme.



Delivery is underpinned by a structured implementation strategy that sequences actions to achieve early wins while laying the groundwork for more complex projects. Clustering of related initiatives, such as improvements to pedestrian connectivity, civic events and placemaking, or transport measures—ensures efficiency, coherence, and stronger eligibility for funding. This pragmatic approach manages expectations, balances ambition with capacity to deliver, ensuring that progress is measurable, momentum is sustained, and resources are maximised.

In essence, this Integrated Action Plan is a roadmap for Ennis to become a connected, accessible and welcoming town for people of all ages and abilities. Leveraging on international collaboration, robust local participation, strategic alignment with funding schemes, the plan positions Ennis strongly for the years ahead.



# Summary of Activities Over the Past Two Years

Between late 2023 and mid 2025, Ennis Municipal District, delivered an extensive programme of engagement, diagnostics, and planning under the URBACT framework. Key milestones included:

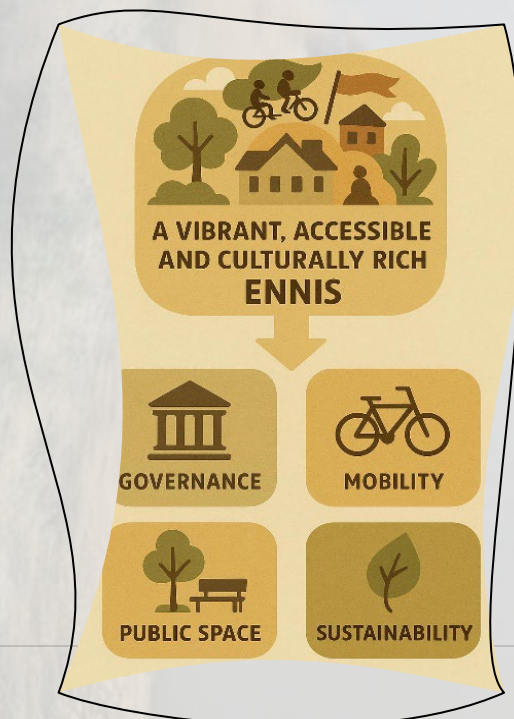
- Establishment of the URBACT Local Group (ULG), comprised of local stakeholders from community, education, transport, and business sectors.
- A series of structured co-creation workshops (2024–25), examining barriers to active travel, spatial connectivity, and inclusive access to the town centre.
- A spatial and thematic SWOT analysis focused on mobility, heritage integration, and green/blue infrastructure potential (e.g. along the River Fergus).
- Implementation of small-scale actions, including the enhancement of an existing active travel corridor through Mill Road, and initial public realm activation in the town centre.
- Alignment of local ambitions with wider strategies including the Clare County Council Development Plan 2023-2029, Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, the Clare Rural Development Strategy, and the County Heritage Plan 2024–2030.



## Main Findings

- There is strong public appetite for safer, more attractive public spaces in Ennis that are accessible by foot and cycle and reflect the town's cultural identity.
- Active travel is underutilised due to legacy road design, limited infrastructure, and perceived safety risks—particularly for children and older people. There is a significant over-reliance on cars.
- Heritage and green infrastructure assets (e.g. River Fergus) are undervalued but hold major potential for spatial and ecological connectivity.
- Ennis's role as a county town is crucial for hinterland communities; enhancing transport access and town centre functionality is essential to equitable development across County Clare.
- Small-scale pilot interventions demonstrated how low-cost, high-visibility placemaking can shift perceptions and build momentum for change.

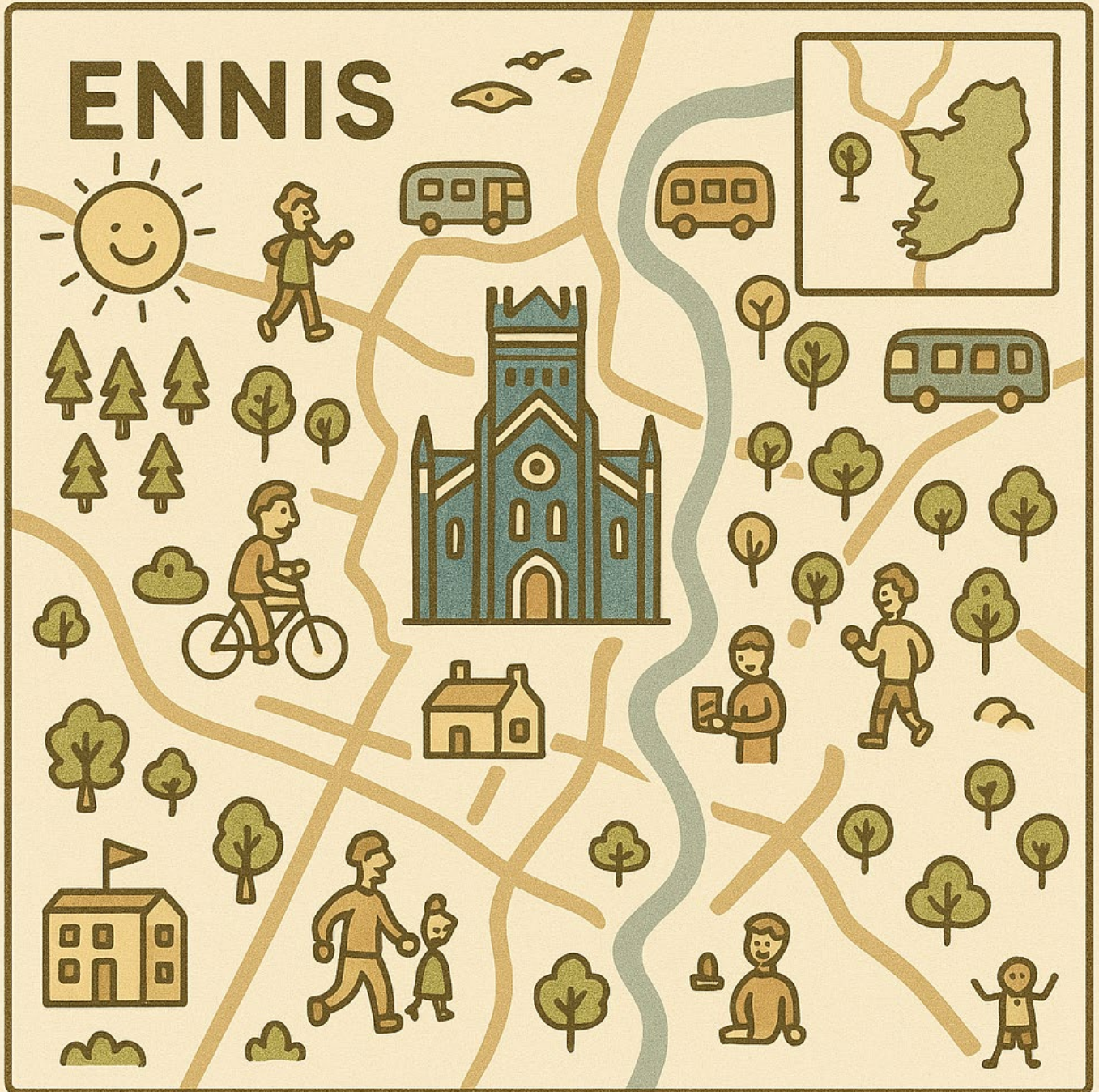
The Ennis Integrated Action Plan draws upon two years of collaborative planning to establish a targeted, locally supported, and future-proofed roadmap for action. It reflects Ennis's dual identity as a historic market town and a growing regional centre, and is explicitly designed to deliver spatial integration, rural-urban connectivity, and climate resilience. By embedding participation, testing ideas in practice, and drawing on shared European learning, the plan lays the foundation for a more liveable, inclusive and sustainable Ennis for all.





# Chapter 1

## Development Context and Needs

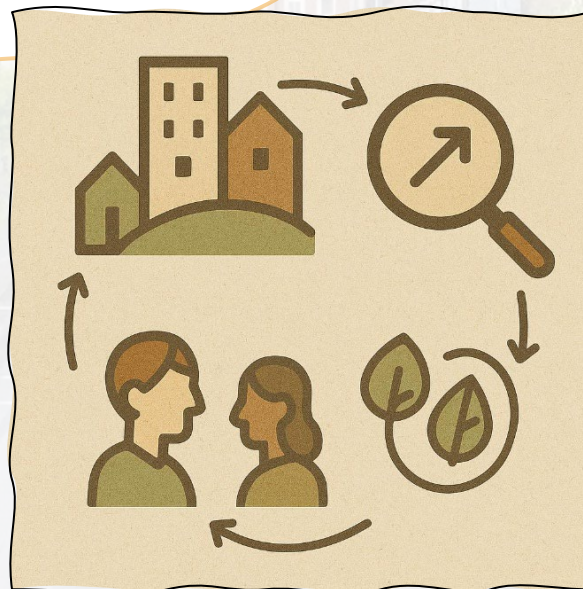




## 1.0. Development Context and Needs

This section outlines the local context in which the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Ennis has been developed. It sets out the strategic challenges currently facing the town and surrounding areas and frames the rationale for the selected interventions. Drawing from the E-CONNECTING network's thematic pillars, this section links Ennis's participation in the URBACT programme to the broader ambitions of national, regional and local policy frameworks. It also presents the key socio-spatial dynamics that have shaped stakeholder engagement and the co-creation process over the past two years.

Through detailed analysis of existing conditions, institutional strategies and lived experiences, the section defines the critical needs that the IAP seeks to address. It highlights the value of integrated, participatory approaches in tackling mobility and environmental issues, while fostering more inclusive, connected and resilient urban spaces. The IAP vision and actions that follow are rooted in this contextual understanding and represent a collective ambition to transition Ennis towards a more adaptive, accessible and sustainable future.









## 1.1 Overall Topic Being Addressed

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Ennis is rooted in the thematic framework of the URBACT E-CONNECTING network, which seeks to promote green civic decision-making for proximity-based urban-rural territories. Within this network, Ennis has positioned itself to respond to a set of interconnected challenges, most notably: car dependency, underutilisation of public space, fragmented green and blue infrastructure, and limited accessibility for vulnerable groups.

The primary topic addressed by the Ennis IAP is the transformation of Ennis into a climate-adaptive, proximity-oriented town — where daily needs, services, amenities, and employment opportunities are reachable within a short distance by sustainable modes of travel, such as walking, cycling, or public transport. This aligns closely with the “10-minute town” concept advanced under national and regional planning policy and responds directly to the compact settlement patterns envisaged by *Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy*.





## Why Proximity Matters in Ennis

Ennis, as a large Irish town with a historic medieval core and a flat topography, presents the conditions for effective implementation of a proximity-based urban model. The town's current development pattern, however, is heavily shaped by car-centric infrastructure, contributing to congestion, severance, and limited pedestrian priority. As of 2023, approximately 77.5% of residents rely on private vehicles for their main mode of transport, while public transport remains limited, and active travel modes are underutilised.

This situation is compounded by the absence of a town-wide bus service (expected to launch in 2026), underdeveloped cycling infrastructure, and a street network that, while walkable in scale, lacks continuity and safety for pedestrians. The historic street layout and narrow rights-of-way present both a barrier and an opportunity: solutions must be context-sensitive, accommodating movement while preserving heritage character and spatial identity.





## Link to E-CONNECTING Pillars

The E-CONNECTING network identifies four key thematic pillars for integrated urban development:

1. 30-Minute Territories (10-minute towns)
2. Green Communities
3. Accessible and Welcoming Cities
4. Good Governance



## Ennis's IAP aligns with all four pillars. The plan seeks to:

- Facilitate modal shift from cars to walking, cycling, and future public transport services.
- Improve connectivity within and across neighbourhoods.
- Activate underutilised public and riverfront spaces through place-making and ecological design.
- Promote a culture of co-creation with local stakeholders, drawing from bottom-up initiatives (e.g. street music in civic spaces, school walking buses, and public realm enhancements).

These approaches contribute directly to the E-CONNECTING objective of strengthening urban-rural linkages and improving quality of life through spatial, ecological, and social integration.



## Urban Challenges Being Addressed

The overall topic also reflects a deliberate response to the following interrelated urban development challenges; each diagnosed through the URBACT Local Group (ULG) process and technical analysis:

- **Sustainable Mobility:** High levels of private car use result in congestion, air pollution, and social inequities in access to services.
- **Infrastructural Fragmentation:** The absence of continuous, accessible walking and cycling routes undermines short-distance travel by active modes.
- **Underutilised Assets:** Significant natural and cultural assets (e.g. River Fergus corridor, civic squares) are not leveraged for public benefit.
- **Resistance to Change:** Past efforts to reshape mobility and space allocation have met with resistance from sections of the community and business sectors, highlighting the importance of co-creation and phased implementation.
- **Accessibility for All:** Mobility, service provision, and public realm accessibility are uneven, especially for children, older adults, and people with disabilities.

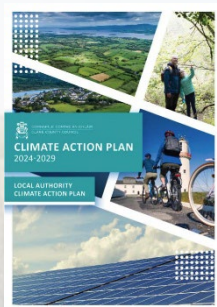
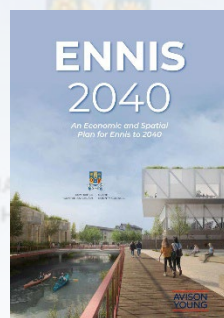
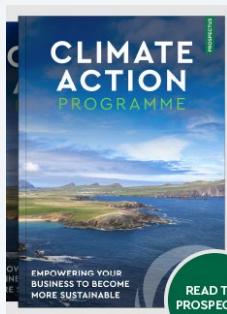




## Strategic Framing in Local and Regional Policy

The Integrated Action Plan does not operate in isolation. Its focus is firmly anchored in strategic policies:

- The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 is a statutory document that guides the development of County Clare over a six-year period. It sets out the strategic vision and future direction for the county, including policies and objectives for various aspects of development such as residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational areas.
- The Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy envisions Ennis as a liveable, accessible, and vibrant town, targeting compact growth and economic transformation.
- The Clare Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 commits to building a climate-neutral, biodiversity-rich county, led by local government innovation in mobility and public realm design.
- At national level, Project Ireland 2040 and the National Climate Action Plan set specific targets for modal shift, compact urban growth, and carbon reduction, all of which are integrated into this IAP's objectives.



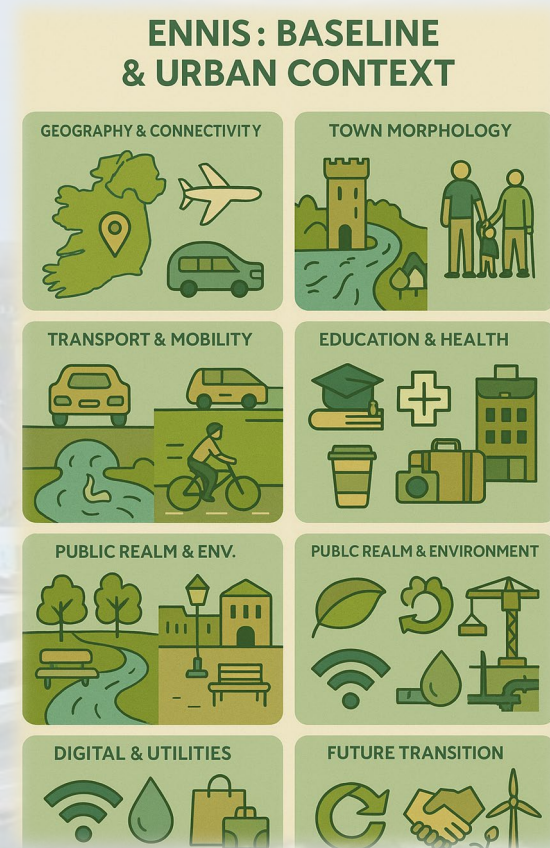


## 1.2 Current Situation

Ennis is the largest town in County Clare and functions as its administrative, commercial, and service centre. It has a population of approximately 27,000 (Census 2021) and is designated as a "Key" town in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES). Its location on the M18 national primary route, midway between Limerick and Galway, positions it strategically within the broader Southern Regional Assembly area and the Atlantic Economic Corridor. Ennis also benefits from proximity to Shannon International Airport and a direct rail connection to Limerick and Galway.

The town's morphology reflects its medieval origins, with a compact urban core structured around the River Fergus. Ennis is characterised by a relatively flat topography, which facilitates walkability and active travel in principle, although current infrastructure provision does not fully support these modes. Outside the core, residential development is more dispersed, extending in various directions along radial road corridors. There is a significant rural hinterland around the town, with many residents commuting into Ennis daily for work, education, and services.

From a demographic perspective, Ennis exhibits moderate growth and an increasingly diverse population. While the town continues to attract young families, its population is gradually ageing, which has implications for accessibility and service delivery. Census and planning data indicate a relatively high level of car ownership, with private vehicle use accounting for approximately 77.5% of all travel to work or school. Public transport usage remains low, largely due to limited service availability within the town itself. While regional bus and rail connections are in place, Ennis currently lacks an internal public bus system. A dedicated town bus service is under development, phased introduction is scheduled to begin in 2026.





Cycling infrastructure is developing through Active Travel funding, but it remains fragmented and limited in reach. Dedicated cycle paths are present in some newer residential areas and are being extended incrementally. However, linkages to the town centre and key amenities are inconsistent, and cycling remains a minority mode of transport. Pedestrian infrastructure in the historic core is constrained by narrow footpaths and a lack of crossing points, while suburban areas often lack continuous footways altogether. A comprehensive walking and cycling network has been included as a priority within both the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy and Clare Active Travel strategies.

In terms of services, Ennis offers a broad range of educational, health, and cultural amenities. It is home to a number of primary and secondary schools, as well as a regional satellite campus of the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS). A modern public library has opened. Healthcare services are available through a combination of HSE and private providers, although access to specialist care requires travel to Limerick or Galway in most cases.

Retail provision in Ennis is anchored by a well-preserved town centre offering independent shops and cafés, as well as several suburban retail parks. There has been a notable increase in food, hospitality, and tourism-related businesses in recent years, reflecting the town's role as a visitor destination within the wider Wild Atlantic Way region. Nevertheless, there are ongoing concerns about town centre vacancy, particularly in upper floors, and the need for revitalisation through compact mixed-use development.

Public realm investment in Ennis has accelerated in recent years, with improvements to streetscapes, lighting, and urban furniture. The *Ennis Public Realm Regeneration Project* identifies key sites for transformation, including civic squares, riverfront areas, and entry points to the town. However, several of these spaces remain underutilised or disconnected from pedestrian and cycling routes. There is growing recognition of the River Fergus as both a natural asset and a development opportunity, with potential for green-blue infrastructure and active recreation.

Utility and digital infrastructure are generally strong. Ennis is connected to the national water and wastewater networks, although capacity constraints exist in certain areas earmarked for development. The town benefits from high-speed broadband coverage, including access to dark fibre, which supports business growth and remote working.

Overall, while Ennis demonstrates many of the structural features necessary to support a more sustainable and integrated urban form, there are key gaps in infrastructure, spatial connectivity, and behavioural readiness. These conditions form the baseline from which this Integrated Action Plan has been developed. The transition to a proximity-based, climate-adaptive urban model will require targeted investment, cross-sector collaboration, and sustained community engagement, all of which are underway through the URBACT E-CONNECTING methodology and complementary initiatives.





## 1.3 Existing Strategies and Policies

The Integrated Action Plan for Ennis is aligned with a range of strategic frameworks across local, regional, national and European levels. These policies provide both direction and justification for the interventions proposed, while also offering access to funding mechanisms, guidance on best practice, and pathways for long-term implementation. Ennis, through its participation in the URBACT E-CONNECTING network, has sought to position this plan not as a standalone document, but as a tool for delivering on already established policy commitments in a more integrated and participatory manner.

At local level, planning and development in Ennis is guided by a set of statutory and non-statutory frameworks, most notably the Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029, the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, and sectoral strategies relating to climate, tourism, and heritage. These are supported by implementation-focused programmes such as the Clare Active Travel Investment Programme and the Ennis Public Realm Regeneration Project.

### EXISTING STRATEGIES & POLICIES



At national level, the plan is consistent with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2021–2030, which together form the basis of Project Ireland 2040. The NPF gives a mandate to accommodate growth in

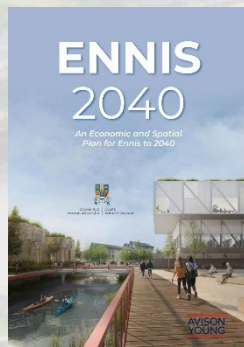
large towns in a sustainable, infrastructure-led manner. It emphasises the role of towns in promoting regional balance, and places strong emphasis on public transport, climate action, and placemaking. The IAP contributes to these national objectives by prioritising integrated transport interventions, regeneration of underused assets, and collaborative governance models.



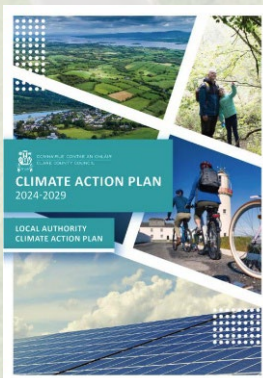
At regional level, the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) provides a framework for spatial planning and investment across the southern region, including County Clare. It promotes strategic growth of key towns such as Ennis and encourages the integration of land use and transport planning, particularly through Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP). The RSES recognises Ennis's role in the Atlantic Economic Corridor and positions the town as a regional driver for employment, housing and infrastructure investment. The IAP aligns with regional objectives by focusing on compact urban growth, integrated mobility solutions, and enhancing town centre resilience.

The Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029, sets out statutory planning policy for the Ennis Municipal District and broader county. It supports the delivery of compact growth, improved transport connectivity, and enhanced resilience to climate change. Specific objectives relevant to the IAP include the promotion of the 10-minute town concept, support for low-carbon transport modes, investment in green and blue infrastructure, and protection of built heritage. The plan also integrates the spatial and economic ambitions of the Ennis 2040 framework into its zoning and infrastructure priorities.

The Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, adopted by Clare County Council, provides the long-term vision for the town as a competitive, liveable, and climate-responsive settlement. It outlines four thematic pillars: Economic & Investment, Environment, Spatial Planning & Lifestyle, and Mobility & Infrastructure. These form the strategic backdrop for the IAP, which prioritises active mobility, compact urban development, adaptive reuse of vacant sites, and enhancement of civic spaces. The plan identifies several key intervention areas within the town, including brownfield redevelopment, green infrastructure integration, and town centre revitalisation, many of which are reflected in the IAP's proposed actions.



The Clare Climate Action Plan 2024–2029 sets out the council's commitment to lead by example in transitioning towards a climate-neutral, resilient, and biodiversity-rich county. It identifies transport, energy, and land use as priority areas for decarbonisation, and emphasises the importance of place-based solutions in achieving targets. Actions in the IAP such as the school walking bus, active travel improvements, and sustainable public realm projects are directly aligned with the climate plan's goals for behavioural change, modal shift, and emissions reduction.



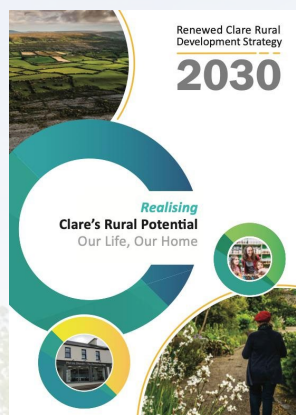


The National Climate Action Plan provides further support for the direction of the IAP, particularly with respect to targets for reduced car usage, increased modal



share for walking and cycling, and development of zero-carbon mobility options. The Plan supports local authorities in developing action plans that integrate transport, energy, and spatial planning objectives—an approach which underpins the Ennis IAP.

Complementary to these are sectoral strategies such as the Clare Tourism



Strategy 2030, which identifies Ennis as a cultural and heritage gateway, and the Clare Heritage Plan, which promotes the conservation and adaptive reuse of the county's historic assets. Both documents acknowledge the role of integrated mobility, high-quality public realm, and storytelling in creating attractive, accessible destinations. These principles are reflected in IAP actions that focus on activating the River Fergus, enhancing the town's civic spaces, and supporting initiatives such as live music in public areas.

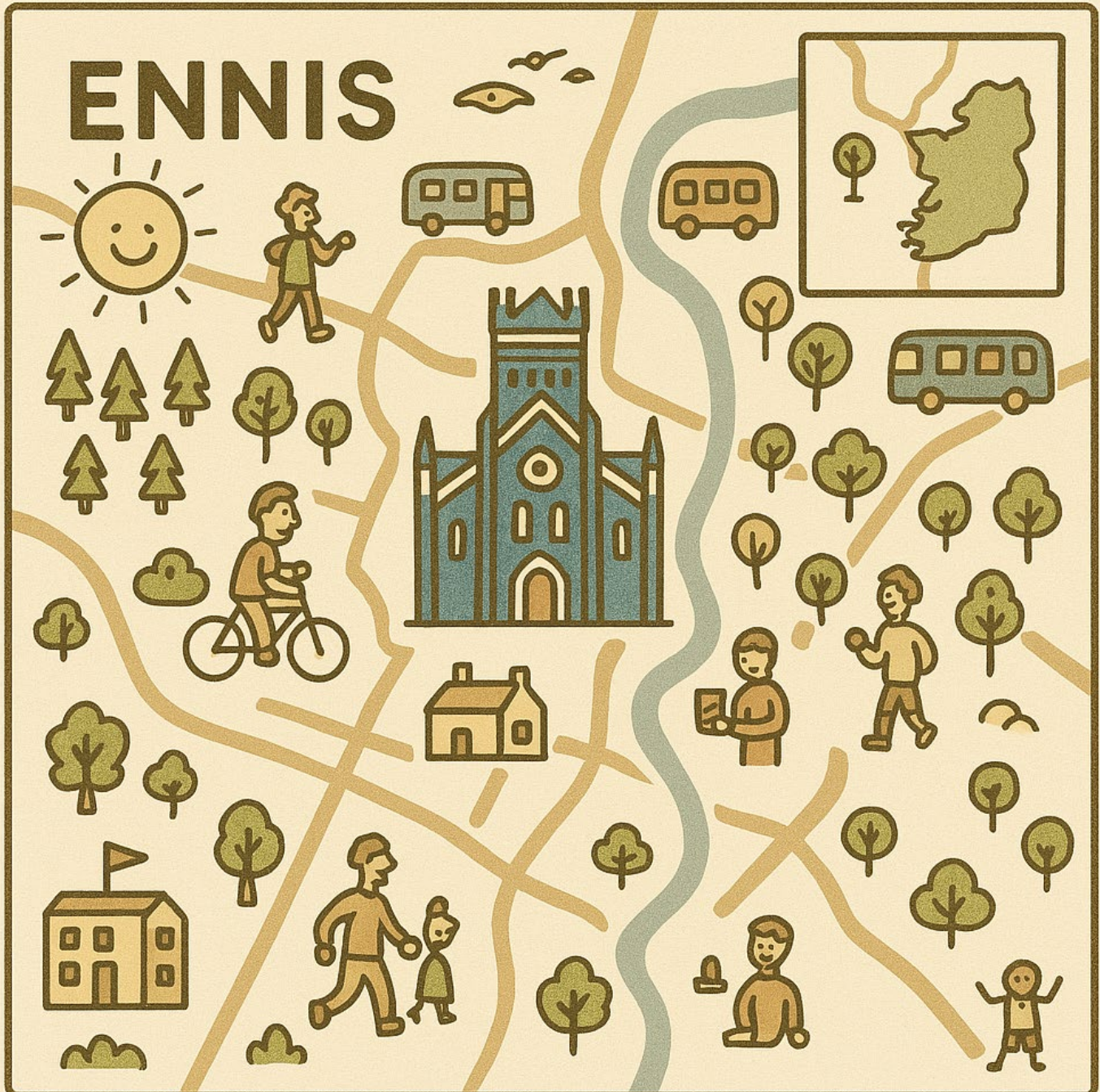
From a funding and policy support perspective, the IAP is aligned with key EU-level frameworks, including the European Green Deal, the New Leipzig Charter on the Transformative Power of Cities, and the EU Urban Mobility Framework. These documents advocate for compact, connected, and climate-resilient cities and towns, and encourage participatory planning processes. Ennis's engagement in the URBACT programme through E-CONNECTING directly reflects these values. Furthermore, EU co-financing streams such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) provide relevant financial instruments to support implementation of the proposed actions.

In summary, the IAP for Ennis is underpinned by a robust and multi-layered policy landscape. The actions proposed are not only consistent with existing strategic direction, but also designed to help realise key objectives across mobility, climate action, public space and inclusive growth. By embedding this plan within current frameworks and aligning it with emerging opportunities, Ennis is well positioned to deliver integrated and place-sensitive urban transformation in the years ahead.



## Chapter 2

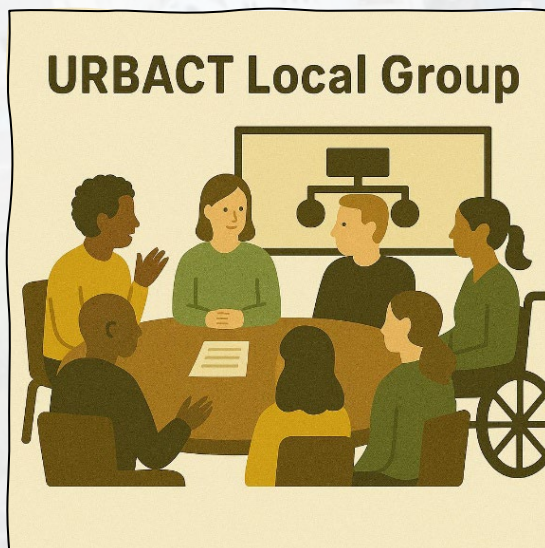
### URBACT Local Group (ULG)



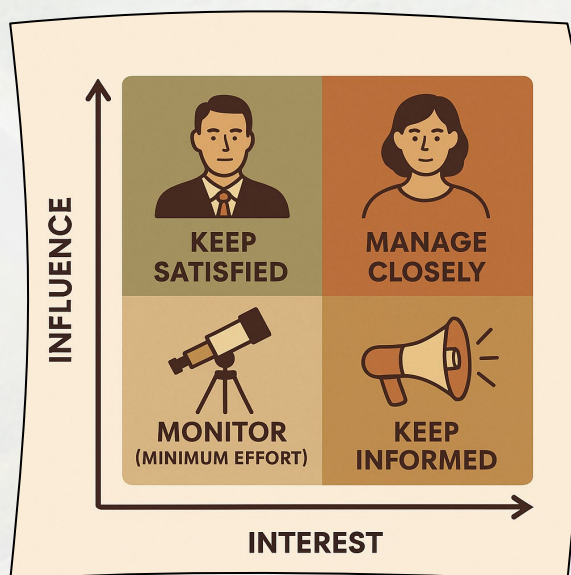


## 2.0 URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) has served as the core participatory mechanism for the preparation of the Integrated Action Plan in Ennis. In line with URBACT's principle of co-creation, the ULG brought together a broad spectrum of stakeholders from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors to collectively shape the future direction of the town. This group played a central role in defining priorities, validating actions, testing ideas, and ensuring that the Integrated Action Plan reflects a realistic and widely supported vision for implementation.



## 2.1 Stakeholder Mapping



At the outset of the E-CONNECTING process, we identified a subset of our current stakeholders in Ennis who have a direct interest or influence in the thematic areas of sustainable mobility, public space and environmental enhancement and inclusive urban development (listed below).

The '*influence-interest matrix*' approach was employed to ensure balanced representation across both strategic decision-makers and grassroots actors.

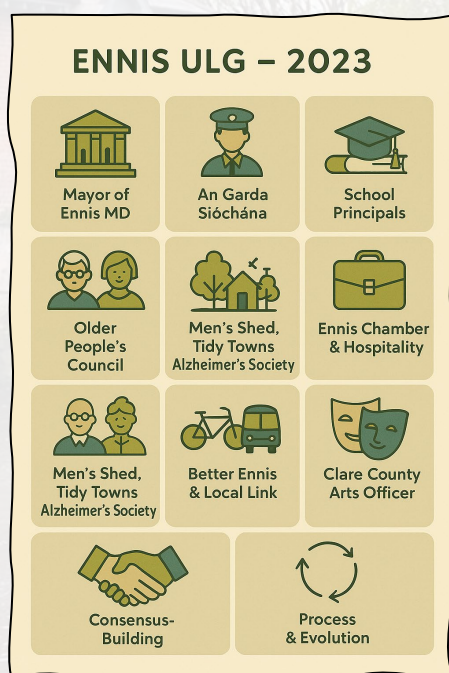
This ensured that both institutional alignment and community legitimacy were embedded in the planning process from an early stage.



## 2.2 Organisation of the ULG

The ULG in Ennis was established in 2023 and has met regularly since, evolving in composition and scope as the action planning process matured. The group is chaired and facilitated by the MD co-ordinator for Ennis Municipal District supported by a planning and community engagement team. The ULG comprises approximately 20 core members, with additional participation from issue-specific stakeholders during themed workshops or site-based consultations.

### Membership includes:



- Elected Mayor of Ennis MD
- Senior officials from Ennis MD and other Council departments (Planning, Active Travel, Environment, Climate)
- Local Police force - An Garda Síochána
- Education sector – primary & post primary school principals
- Business sector – CEO of Ennis Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the Hospitality sector
- Community groups – representatives from the Older People's Council, Ennis Men's Shed, Ennis Tidy Towns, Alzheimer's Society
- Transport groups – representatives from 'Better Ennis' (promote cycling), 'Transport Infrastructure Ireland' and 'Local Link'
- Clare County Arts Officer

The group was intentionally structured to balance technical expertise with lived experience, ensuring that policy direction was grounded in everyday realities. It has operated on a consensus-building model, with members contributing to the review of diagnostics, SWOT analysis, identification of actions, and development of small-scale pilots.



## 2.3 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Outreach

### Roles in the Project

The stakeholder engagement strategy for the Ennis IAP was designed to ensure a wide range of local actors were actively involved throughout the action planning process. Engagement was guided by the URBACT principles of participation, co-creation, and inclusion, with a particular focus on involving those directly affected by urban mobility, public realm, and climate adaptation issues.

### The ULG contributed by:

- Defining local challenges and setting objectives and strategic direction through structured workshops
- Identifying and developing pilot small-scale actions
- Inputting into the integrated actions and prioritisation of same.
- Providing qualitative insights to complement data and technical assessments

Engagement was conducted through structured workshops, site visits, co-creation events, and working group meetings. Outreach also included both formal and informal dialogue with local residents during pop-up events. These methods helped to build trust, surface local knowledge, and generate consensus on proposed actions.



# Chart of Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder Group	Organisation / Role	Involvement in IAP
<b>Municipal Authority</b>	Clare County Council – Physical Development Directorate	IAP coordination, facilitation, funding, project oversight
<b>Security and public order</b>	An Garda Síochána	Insights and advice on traffic management and addressing issues with antisocial behaviour.
<b>Urban Planning, Transport &amp; Environment Units</b>	Clare County Council departments (Planning, Active Travel, Environment)	Action development, technical input, spatial analysis
<b>Cultural Sector</b>	Clare County Arts Officer	Street entertainment pilot, programming of civic space
<b>Community Arts and Heritage</b>	Local artists, heritage groups, Ennis Men's Shed	The <i>Sculpture project</i> at the Mill Wheel, historical interpretation
<b>Educational Institutions</b>	Local primary & post primary schools, Technological University of the Shannon (TUS)	Walking bus initiative, feedback on safer routes to school programme. Active Travel preferences from their student bodies.
<b>Local Businesses and Chamber</b>	Ennis Chamber of Commerce, Representatives from the Hospitality sector	Advise on town centre vibrancy, dwell times, street use, night-time economy, economic impact of public realm enhancements and other initiatives such as pedestrianisation
<b>Accessibility Advocates</b>	Older People's Council, Alzheimer's Society	Advising on universal design, mobility and seating in the town centre
<b>Community Groups</b>	Ennis Tidy Towns Ennis Men's Shed	Advise of greener community & biodiversity initiatives Co-creation of small-scale actions, consultation, advocacy
<b>Environmental Organisations</b>	Local river catchment and biodiversity groups	Guidance on green-blue infrastructure along the Fergus

## 2.4 Planning Process

The planning process followed a phased approach, aligned with the URBACT methodology:

### KEY STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS



**INITIAL IDENTIFICATION OF CHALLENGES**



**MAPPING OF LOCAL INITIATIVES, PREVIOUS PLANS, AND EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES**



**THEMATIC WORKSHOPS**



**ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIONS**



**PILOT DESIGN, TESTING, AND LESSONS LEARNED**



**FINAL DRAFTING AND REFINEMENT OF THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN**

1. Initial identification of mobility, accessibility and public space challenges
2. Mapping of local initiatives, previous plans, and emerging opportunities
3. Thematic workshops focused on mobility, green infrastructure, heritage, and participation
4. Iterative development of the long list of actions, with review loops built into each phase
5. Pilot design, testing, and lessons learned from small-scale actions
6. Final drafting and refinement of the Integrated Action Plan

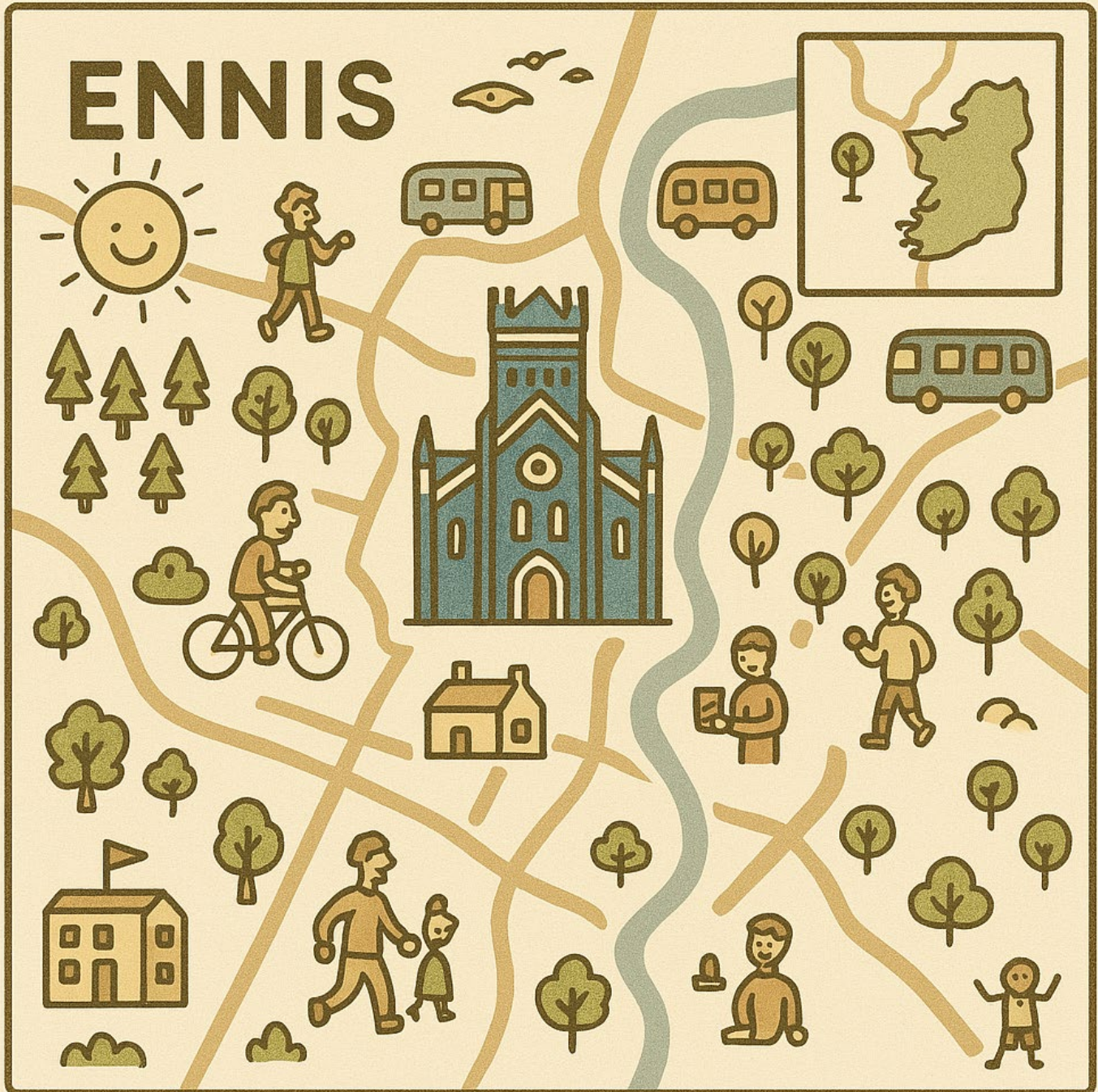
Several key engagement activities were held in local schools, civic buildings, and underused public spaces to increase visibility and accessibility. This planning process was documented through images, workshop outputs and mapping exercises.

The collaborative structure of the ULG contributed significantly to building local ownership of the IAP. It has also helped to create an informal governance network that may support longer-term implementation and monitoring, especially in relation to stakeholder-specific actions (e.g. schools, cultural programming, accessibility audits).



## Chapter 3

### IAP Sites and Analysis





### 3.0. IAP Site and Areas of Intervention

The Integrated Action Plan for Ennis is spatially focused on a defined network of priority areas and projects within and adjacent to the town centre. Projects have been selected based on a combination of spatial analysis, community feedback, heritage value, and alignment with strategic goals outlined in *Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy* and the *Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029*. Individual projects serve as a platform for integrated action — connecting mobility, public realm enhancement, community activation, and environmental resilience.

Rather than focusing on a single flagship site, the Ennis IAP adopts a networked spatial strategy, which concentrates on a series of interconnected locations that together shape the movement, identity and experience of the town. This reflects best practice in contemporary urban planning, where layered, place-based interventions across a network of spaces can achieve greater impact than isolated upgrades.

Together, these interventions and projects form a connected, high-impact spatial network that supports the plan's strategic objectives and demonstrates the principles of integrated urban action. Each site has been selected to maximise spatial efficiency, social relevance, and long-term adaptability.





## 3.1 Description of IAP Sites



The Integrated Action Plan for Ennis focuses on a series of interconnected sites located within and around the historic town centre. These locations form part of a wider functional urban area that serves as the administrative, economic, and service core for County Clare. Ennis is classified as a Key Town in Ireland's National Planning Framework and functions as the principal urban centre in the Mid-West sub-region, situated between Limerick (to the southeast) and Galway (to the northwest).

## Geographic and Spatial Context

The town of Ennis is located approximately 25 minutes from Shannon Airport and



is accessible via the M18 national motorway and a regional railway line, providing direct connections to Limerick, Galway, and national networks. The town benefits from a compact urban form, shaped by its medieval street network and the meandering River Fergus, which runs through its core. The town is situated on predominantly flat terrain, with low-lying topography that contributes to its walkability and facilitates active travel

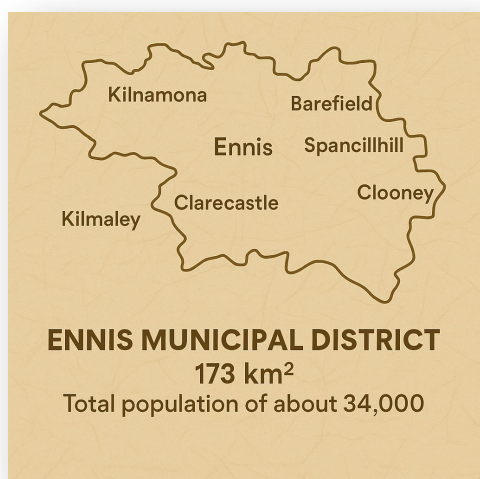
infrastructure.

The physical characteristics of the area make it well-suited to proximity-based planning. Most residential neighbourhoods lie within 1.5–2.5 kilometres of the town centre, allowing for realistic implementation of the “10-minute town” model. However, fragmented pedestrian and cycling infrastructure currently undermines this potential.



## Social Profile of the Area

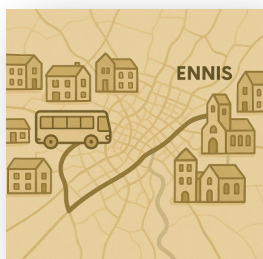
The town has a population of approximately 27,000 and is projected to grow to 40,000 in the coming years, and a broader functional catchment of over 50,000, reflecting its role as a regional service hub. The population is relatively stable and moderately ageing, with a growing number of older adults and young families. Ennis is culturally diverse and includes long-standing community networks as well as newer migrant populations. The town is known nationally and internationally for its traditional music heritage, contributing to a strong cultural identity.



Access to education, health services, and public amenities is concentrated in and around the town core. The Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) maintains a regional campus in Ennis, and a new public library. Despite this service concentration, access is often car-dependent due to gaps in pedestrian connectivity and a lack of public transport within the town itself.

## Accessibility and Integration within Ennis Municipal District

The spatial strategy of the IAP is grounded in the idea of layered accessibility.



While the intervention sites lie within walking or cycling distance for most residents, they also serve users from surrounding towns and villages. Regional bus services, rail links, and road connections support this wider catchment, although the absence of internal public transport within Ennis presents ongoing challenges. The forthcoming town bus service is expected to address this, improving connectivity between residential areas and IAP sites.



## Basic Quantitative Parameters of the IAP Sites

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Ennis targets a defined set of spatial zones within the central urban area, supported by surrounding neighbourhoods. While the IAP does not focus on a single redevelopment site, it operates across all areas of Ennis Municipal District including a network of multifunctional public spaces, mobility corridors, and civic nodes.



The combined catchment area for Ennis MD is 173km<sup>2</sup> and includes approximately 34,000 residents. When daily visitors, workers, students, and regional service users are included, the total number of people directly affected by or interacting with the IAP area exceeds 40,000 on a regular basis.

The scale and distribution of Ennis Municipal District ensure that the IAP's impact is both spatially integrated and socially inclusive. By addressing multiple nodes within the District and linking them through active travel corridors, the plan ensures a balanced distribution of benefits across age groups, mobility profiles, and land uses.





## 3.2 Swot Analysis

This analysis underscores the fact that while Ennis is well positioned geographically and structurally to pursue a proximity-based urban model, there are structural and behavioural barriers that need to be addressed in an integrated manner. These include infrastructural deficits, institutional inertia, resistance to change in public space allocation, and historic underinvestment in active travel systems.

The SWOT analysis provides a clear overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats shaping Ennis, linking the visioning work of the URBACT Local Group with the Integrated Action Plan. Developed through a participatory process, it combines technical studies with insights from workshops, stakeholder input, and exchanges with partners across nine EU countries. This ensured the analysis was grounded in real community experience as well as external best practice.



The aim is twofold: to identify and build on Ennis's distinctive assets—its compact scale, cultural vitality, and natural environment—while also addressing weaknesses such as congestion, limited civic space use, and climate pressures. By setting these against broader opportunities and risks, the SWOT offers a balanced snapshot of the town's position today. Most importantly, it provides a practical foundation for the Integrated Actions, ensuring that strategies and investments are focused on the issues that matter most to the people of Ennis.



Strengths	Weaknesses
Compact urban core with walkable distances	High dependency on private cars (77.5% of trips)
Flat topography well-suited to walking and cycling	Limited internal public transport; town bus service not yet operational
Rich cultural heritage and identity (music, history, built form)	Fragmented active travel and pedestrian networks
Strong civic infrastructure and local governance capacity	Town centre street layout not optimised for accessibility or modal shift
Strategic location between Limerick and Galway on national motorway/railway	Disconnect between peripheral residential areas and central services
Opportunities	Threats
Upcoming public bus service scheduled for launch in 2026	Persistent community resistance to changes in road and street space use
River Fergus corridor as a multifunctional green-blue infrastructure spine	Flood risk in river-adjacent areas, exacerbated by climate impacts
EU, national and regional support for modal shift and low-carbon planning	Limited funding continuity for long-term infrastructure adaptation
Co-creation momentum built through URBACT and stakeholder partnerships	Risk of institutional fragmentation or loss of engagement post-project
Cultural and ecological tourism as a regenerative economic opportunity	Gaps in access to services for older people and those with disabilities



# SWOT Analysis

## Thematic Interlinking of Challenges and Opportunities

A defining feature of the Ennis context is the high degree of interconnection between thematic issues. Mobility cannot be addressed in isolation from public realm quality; climate adaptation depends on rethinking land use and infrastructure; and community engagement is a prerequisite for implementing change in a complex town centre setting.

Key thematic linkages are as follows:

- **Mobility and Climate Resilience:** Promoting walking and cycling in Ennis contributes directly to climate targets but also supports flood mitigation and air quality improvements. Shifting mobility modes reduces pressure on constrained road networks while making space for green infrastructure solutions, especially along the River Fergus.



- **Public Realm and Economic Activity:** High-quality civic spaces improve accessibility and inclusiveness but also support local business by increasing footfall and dwell time. Actions that prioritise street performance, cultural programming, and outdoor seating connect environmental, economic and social objectives.

- **Civic Engagement and Project Delivery:** Many past efforts to change transport or spatial dynamics in Ennis have been met with community resistance. Building consensus through transparent processes and stakeholder involvement is essential for implementation. The groundwork laid through the URBACT Local Group provides a solid base for further inclusive governance models.



- **Accessibility and Social Equity:** While Ennis performs relatively well in terms of access to basic services, mobility barriers persist for people with disabilities, older residents, and those without access to a car. Ensuring all actions are designed with universal accessibility in mind is not only a matter of equity but also a legal and strategic requirement.

- **Tourism and Place Identity:** Cultural and environmental assets have not yet reached their full potential. Projects such as the street music activation and riverfront enhancements represent an intersection of tourism, culture, and wellbeing, while reinforcing Ennis's distinctive identity as a traditional music town with strong heritage values.



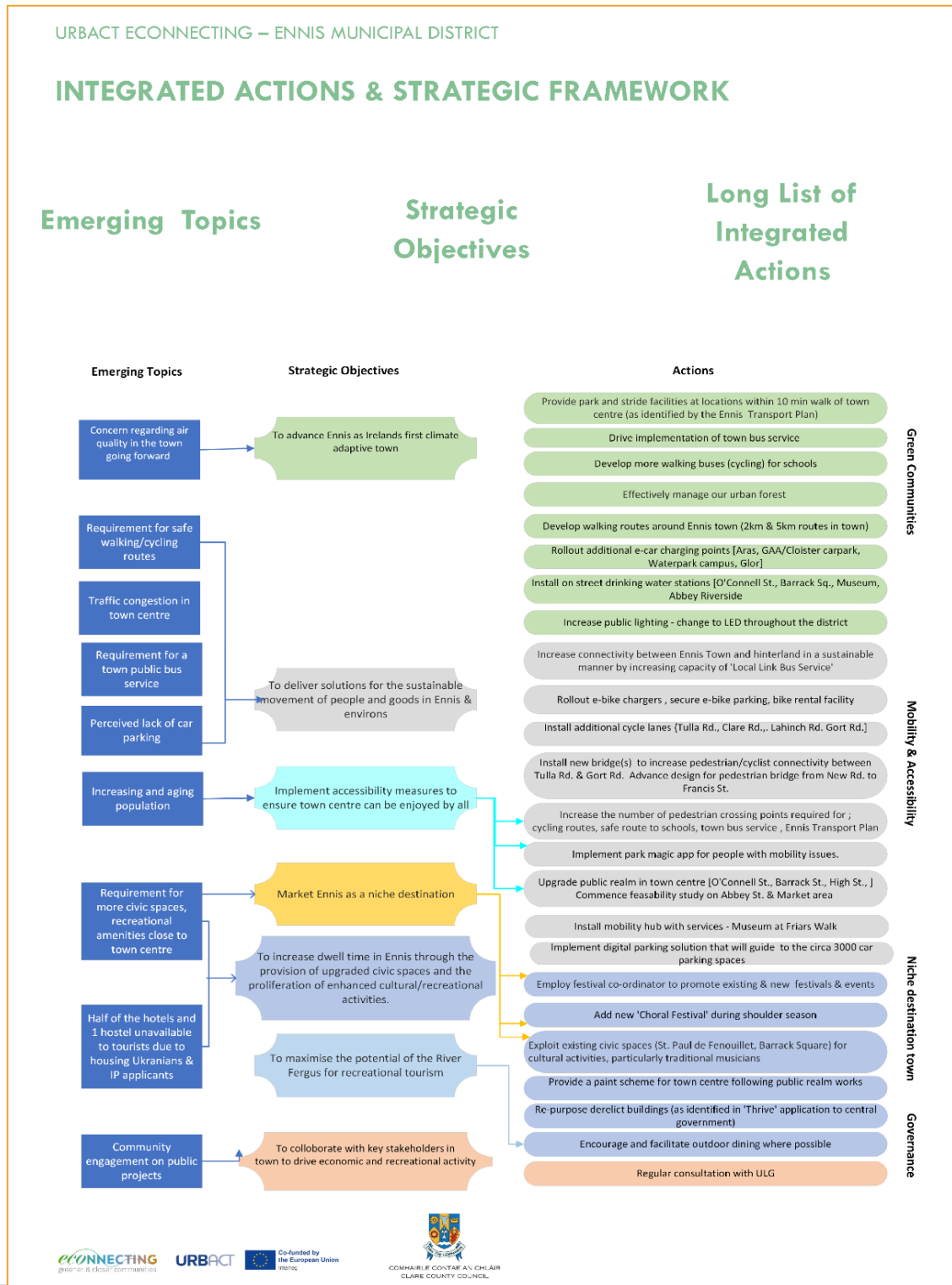
The IAP actions proposed in later sections are structured to respond to these intersections. Rather than treating each issue as a discrete area of intervention, the plan adopts a systems-based approach that recognises how integrated challenges require integrated solutions.

The emerging topics and problem definition laid out here serve as the conceptual foundation for the strategic objectives and detailed actions that follow.



### 3.3 Emerging Topics

The development of this Integrated Action Plan has surfaced several interrelated challenges and emerging priorities that cut across the thematic focus areas of the E-CONNECTING network. These were identified through structured engagement with the URBACT Local Group, technical analysis of local conditions, and alignment with strategic planning documents including the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, the Clare Climate Action Plan, and the Draft County Development Plan. Details of the Emerging Topics for Ennis are highlighted on the image below.









## **Emerging Topic 1: Concerns Regarding Air Quality in the Town Going Forward**



Traffic-related emissions are the primary local air-quality risk, especially at congested junctions and along key corridors. Monitoring coverage is limited and there is no unified low-emission approach for the town centre. The IAP will prioritise cutting short car trips (mode shift to walking, cycling and bus), managing deliveries/servicing, and expanding tree canopy and nature-based filtration along the Fergus corridor and busy streets. Clear baselines and periodic reporting will track impact.

## **Emerging Topic 2: Requirements for Defined Safe Walking and Cycling Routes**



Active-travel infrastructure is fragmented, with narrow footpaths, inconsistent surfaces, and missing links between residential areas and the town centre. Protected cycling on critical links is limited, discouraging children, older adults and less confident cyclists. The IAP delivers continuous, protected routes to schools, services and public spaces; safer junction designs; and lighting, crossings and rest points to support universal access.

## **Emerging Topic 3: Traffic Congestion in the Town Centre**



A high share of short, sub-3 km trips by private car constrains street capacity, slows buses, and reduces space for people-focused uses in the historic core. Peak congestion around O'Connell Square and market areas impacts commercial performance and air quality. The IAP proposes traffic calming, kerbside management, timed access for servicing, and reallocation of street space to improve network efficiency and town-centre experience.



#### **Emerging Topic 4: Requirement for a Town Public Bus Service**



Town-wide public transport is limited, leaving short and medium trips dependent on the car. A reliable, frequent town bus with accessible stops would expand access for older adults, students, and people with reduced mobility while supporting a 10-minute town objective. The IAP backs phased rollout with bus priority at pinch points, high-quality shelters, real-time information, and integration with walking and cycling networks.

#### **Emerging Topic 5: Perceived Lack of Car Parking**



Perceptions of insufficient parking persist near main streets despite periods of unused capacity in the peripheral areas. Wayfinding is inconsistent and short-stay turnover is not always prioritised. The IAP supports better information (dynamic guidance), pricing and time-limit calibration, improved pedestrian links from peripheral car parks, and reprioritisation of prime kerb space for access, loading and disability parking.

#### **Emerging Topic 6: Increasing and Ageing Population**



Demographic trends indicate rising demand for age-friendly, accessible streets and services. Narrow footpaths, limited seating, and inconsistent kerb heights hinder independent mobility. The IAP applies universal design across projects, including step-free routes, more benches and rest areas, improved lighting, accessible toilets and safe crossings—co-designed with Age-Friendly and disability advocacy groups.



### **Emerging Topic 7: Requirement for More Civic Spaces**



Several centrally located sites (e.g., the Mill Wheel pocket park, Barrack Street Plaza, riverside areas) are underused due to limited seating, shade/shelter and event-ready infrastructure. The IAP will deliver flexible, well-serviced public spaces that host small events, markets and cultural programming, supported by coordinated place management for stewardship, maintenance and activation.

### **Emerging Topic 8: Recreational Amenities Close to the Town Centre**



Access to everyday recreation near the core is uneven, with gaps in safe routes to riverside paths and limited family-friendly micro-amenities. The IAP prioritises pocket parks, playable streets, riverside loops, and low-cost sport/recreation fixtures within walking distance of main streets, linked by continuous active-travel corridors and clear wayfinding.

### **Emerging Topic 9: Lack of Available Hotel Rooms**



Tourist bed capacity is temporarily reduced as accommodation supports humanitarian needs, affecting the visitor economy and event hosting. The IAP recognises this constraint in short-term activation plans (focusing on day-visitors and locals) and coordinates with county/regional partners on medium-term strategies for diversified accommodation, while maintaining a strong social-inclusion stance.

### **Emerging Topic 10: Community Engagement on Public Projects**



Projects succeed when local organisations, schools and businesses have defined roles in co-design, programming and upkeep. Pilots show high impact but limited continuity after seed funding. The IAP embeds engagement and stewardship in delivery: clear governance, small grants for community activation, maintenance plans, and feedback loops (monitoring dashboards, on-street QR surveys) to sustain involvement over time.

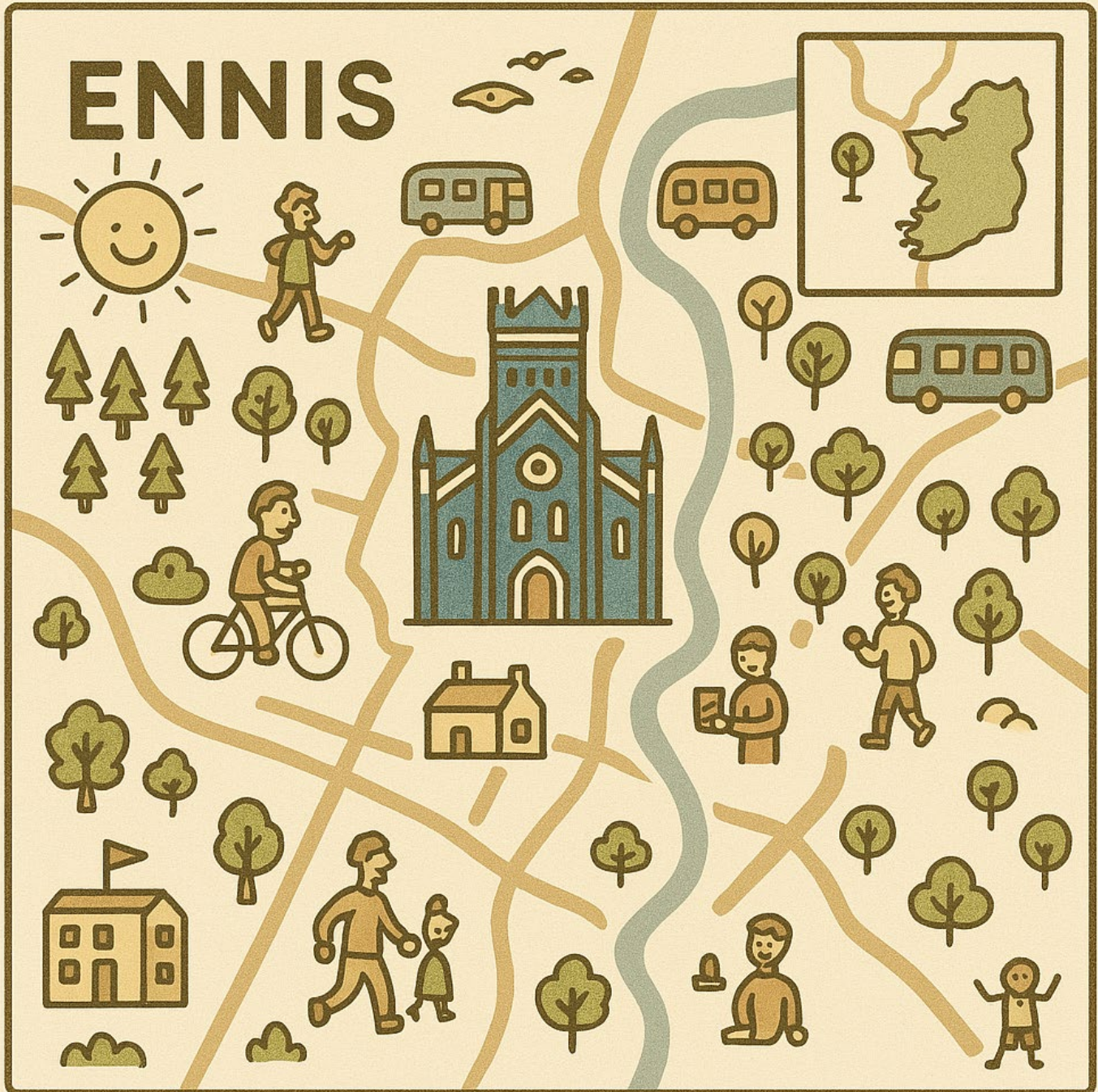






## Chapter 4

### Project Vision, Strategy and Goals





## 4.0 Project Vision

To continue to develop and enhance Ennis as a welcoming and accessible place for both residents, businesses and tourists alike.

At the heart of the vision is the ambition to implement the “10-minute town” concept — a planning model in which daily needs such as schools, shops, healthcare, recreation and employment are reachable within a 10-minute walk or cycle from home. This model reduces reliance on cars, supports local economies, fosters healthier lifestyles, and enhances community cohesion. In the context of Ennis, the town’s compact form, flat topography and cultural vitality make this an achievable and impactful goal, provided that structural gaps in mobility, accessibility and public space design are addressed.

The vision is also underpinned by a strong commitment to climate resilience. Ennis is particularly exposed to the impacts of flooding and biodiversity loss, with the River Fergus corridor serving as both a risk area and an opportunity space. The plan therefore integrates blue-green infrastructure as a core design principle, supporting ecological health, recreational use and adaptive reuse of underutilised land.

Ultimately, this vision represents a shift from fragmented planning to integrated urban transformation — one in which climate action, community wellbeing and economic resilience are advanced together through place-based, people-centred development. By building on its unique assets and aligning with broader policy frameworks, Ennis is well positioned to become a leading example of next-generation urbanism in a small-town Irish context.





## Shaping Ennis into Ireland's first climate- adaptive, proximity- oriented town



Integrated  
and transparent  
urban governance



Accessible and  
inclusive  
public realm



Regenerated  
and activated  
public spaces



Vision



Blue-green  
infrastructure  
and community  
wellbeing



Connected  
10-minute town  
structure

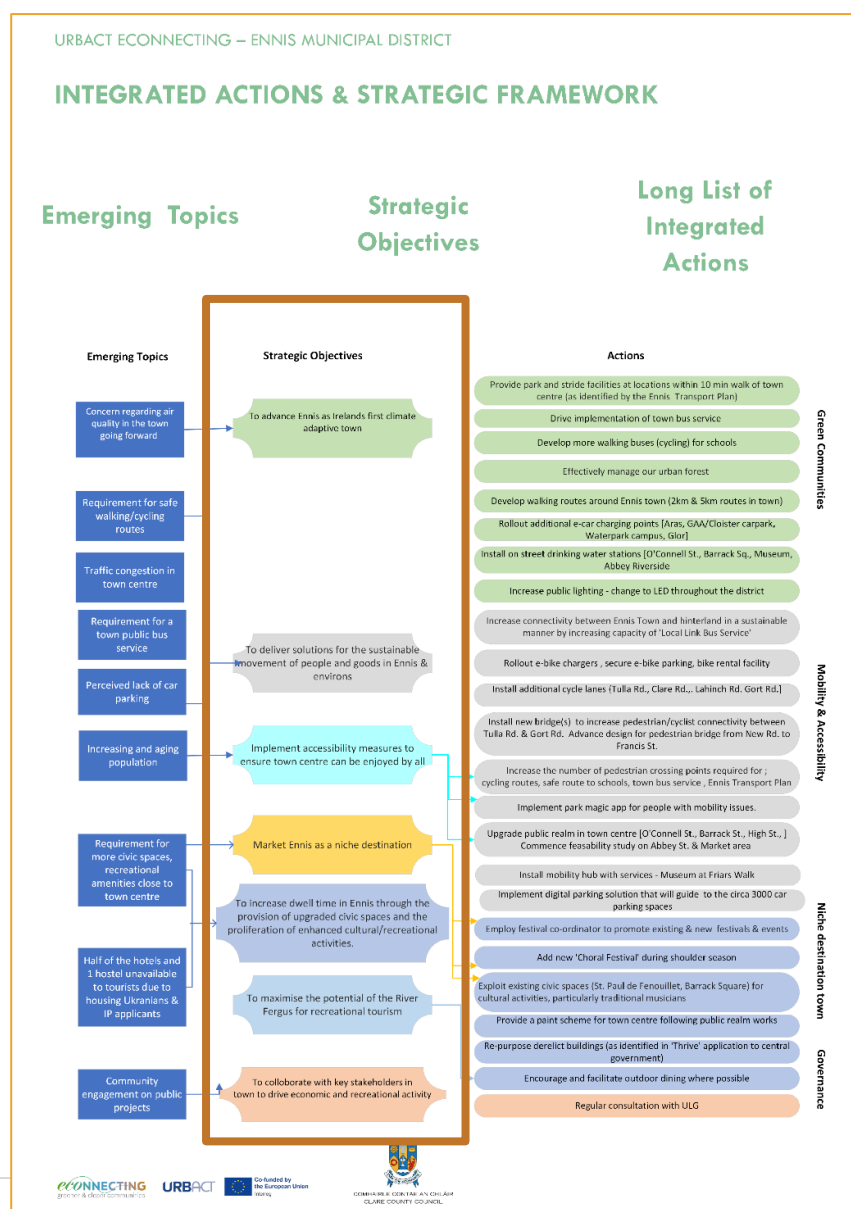




## 4.1 Project Goals

The strategic objectives of the Ennis Integrated Action Plan have been developed in conjunction with the ULG through a structured, evidence-based planning process rooted in best practices for urban transformation. These objectives respond to the specific spatial, environmental, and socio-economic conditions of Ennis, while aligning with broader regional, national, and EU-level frameworks. Each objective functions as a pillar within the wider strategy, guiding the selection, sequencing, and integration of actions that follow. Details of the Strategic Objectives for Ennis are highlighted on the image below.

Drawing on international best practice, these objectives embrace key principles of strategic urban planning: compact and connected development, place-based investment, climate adaptation, and inclusive governance. They are informed by the thematic pillars of the URBACT E-CONNECTING network, the goals of the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, and operational learning derived from local pilot initiatives and stakeholder engagement.





## 4.2 Strategic Objectives

To achieve the vision of transforming Ennis into Ireland's first climate-adaptive, proximity-oriented town, the Integrated Action Plan identifies seven strategic objectives. These objectives reflect the core themes of the URBACT E-CONNECTING network and address local challenges identified in earlier planning stages. Each objective is designed to guide action planning and resource allocation during implementation, ensuring that projects are coherent, participatory, and capable of delivering long-term benefits across multiple sectors.



## **Strategic Objective 1: To advance Ennis as Irelands first climate adaptive town**

Deliver place-based climate adaptation through blue-green infrastructure, flood-resilient design and nature-based solutions. Prioritise riparian restoration along the Fergus, permeable public-realm surfaces, canopy gain, and heat-stress mitigation. Mainstream climate risk screening, maintenance plans and monitoring so adaptation benefits are measurable and durable.

*Key themes: climate adaptation, blue-green infrastructure, resilience.*

## **Strategic Objective 2: To deliver solutions for the sustainable movement of people and goods in Ennis & environs**

Modal shift toward walking, cycling and the town bus while improving servicing and deliveries to reduce congestion. Complete safe links and crossings, integrate RTPI and wayfinding, and manage kerbside space for access, loading and disability parking. Track mode share and network performance to guide iterative improvements.

*Key themes: sustainable mobility, active travel, efficient logistics.*

## **Strategic Objective 3: Implement accessibility measures to ensure town centre can be enjoyed by all**

Embed universal design across streets and civic spaces: continuous footways, step-free crossings, tactile cues, consistent lighting, seating with arm/back supports, and accessible information. Co-design with disability and age-friendly groups and audit delivery regularly.

*Key themes: accessibility, inclusion, universal design.*

## **Strategic Objective 4: Market Ennis as a niche destination**

Position Ennis as the home of traditional music, heritage and riverside assets with coherent branding, wayfinding and programming. Coordinate cultural calendars, visitor information and local business offers to grow day/evening footfall and spend, while protecting character and liveability.

*Key themes: place identity, cultural offer, visitor economy.*



## Strategic Objective 5: To increase dwell time in Ennis through the provision of upgraded civic spaces and the proliferation of enhanced cultural/recreational activities.

Upgrade civic squares, streets and riverside nodes with flexible, event-ready public realm and a year-round activation programme. Pair physical improvements with simple permits, modular equipment and stewardship so spaces are animated, safe and welcoming after dark as well as by day.

*Key themes: public realm quality, activation, evening economy.*

## Strategic Objective 6: To maximise the potential of the River Fergus for recreational tourism

Create a continuous, legible Fergus corridor that blends access, ecology and interpretation. Deliver connected paths, accessible launch/landing points where appropriate, habitat enhancement and a QR-enabled trail to support low-impact recreation and education.

*Key themes: river corridor, recreation, biodiversity.*

## Strategic Objective 7: To collaborate with key stakeholders in town to drive economic and recreational activity

Formalise a collaborative governance model for delivery and stewardship involving community groups, traders, cultural organisations, schools and agencies. Use clear roles, models and regular reviews to coordinate investment, programming and maintenance, and to align economic and recreational outcomes.

*Key themes: partnership governance, stewardship, civic participation.*



These seven objectives are mutually reinforcing: climate adaptation underpins a resilient public realm; sustainable mobility and accessibility make it usable for all; activation and destination marketing increase dwell and spend; the Fergus corridor provides the green/blue spine; and structured collaboration sustains delivery over time.



## 4.3 Integration Challenges

The development and implementation of the Ennis Integrated Action Plan



requires active engagement with a number of cross-cutting challenges identified by URBACT. These challenges reflect the need to move beyond sectoral approaches and instead embrace integrated, participatory, and inclusive modes of urban governance. In the case of Ennis, these issues have emerged not only in the technical dimensions of planning, but also in the social and institutional dynamics that shape decision-making, delivery and long-term sustainability.

## Governance and Institutional Coordination

Governance integration remains a central challenge. While Clare County Council has demonstrated strong leadership in initiating and managing the IAP process, the delivery of actions involves multiple departments and agencies, each with distinct mandates, funding mechanisms, and operational timelines. Transport, planning, architecture, environment, and community development functions all intersect in the scope of this plan, yet coordination between these areas is not always formalised. Clear governance structures and implementation oversight mechanisms will be necessary to avoid duplication, ensure accountability, and align capital investment with policy objectives.

Additionally, actions in the plan such as the town bus service, active travel network, or public space upgrades require collaboration with national bodies including the National Transport Authority and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Integrating national policy direction with local implementation capacity will require structured liaison and flexibility in adapting programme delivery to fit the local context.



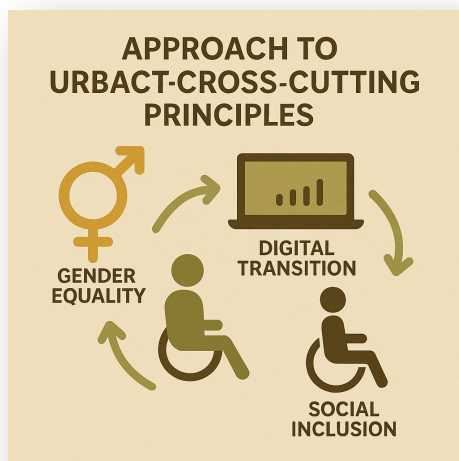
# Stakeholder Participation

While the URBACT Local Group has played an effective role in guiding the development of the IAP, maintaining this participatory structure beyond the planning phase is a recognised challenge. Engagement fatigue, shifting local priorities, and changes in organisational leadership may reduce stakeholder continuity over time. Ensuring that participatory mechanisms are embedded into long-term delivery structures — such as steering groups, neighbourhood forums, or project-specific task forces — will be important in preserving community ownership and legitimacy.



Furthermore, while broad representation was achieved during the IAP process, gaps remain in engaging certain demographic groups, including migrants, renters, young people not in education or training. These groups are often disproportionately affected by spatial and mobility decisions but underrepresented in planning processes. Future implementation work will need to include more targeted outreach and co-design processes.

## Approach to URBACT Cross-Cutting Principles



The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Ennis integrates the URBACT cross-cutting principles—gender equality, digital transition, green transition, and social inclusion—into both the planning methodology and the design of concrete actions. These principles are not treated as standalone goals but as embedded dimensions that influence the content, delivery, and governance of each project within the plan. This approach reflects both URBACT expectations and the stated ambitions of Ennis to become a more inclusive, adaptive and future-ready town.



# Gender Equality and Inclusive Urban Design

Gender has been explicitly considered throughout the IAP development process, both in terms of participation and spatial outcomes. The URBACT Local Group included representation from female-led organisations, care providers, accessibility advocates, and civic groups whose membership is majority female. Consultation feedback highlighted gendered patterns of mobility and public space use in Ennis, particularly relating to perceptions of safety, time-based access to services, and unpaid care responsibilities.

Females can navigate the town in different ways than men, particularly during early mornings and evenings. Routes to schools, care facilities, and civic amenities were identified as areas where improvements in lighting, visibility, and passive surveillance could increase comfort and safety. The lack of sheltered rest areas or consistent seating in public space was also flagged as a barrier to longer dwell time, particularly for older women and those with children. These insights informed the prioritisation of certain actions, such as lighting upgrades, street furniture renewal, and pedestrian network improvements near key services.



Moving forward, gender-sensitive design principles will be applied during detailed design stages of all capital works. This includes consideration of lighting, surface materials, wayfinding, and visibility. Furthermore, performance monitoring of the IAP will seek to include gender-disaggregated data where feasible, particularly in mobility surveys and public space evaluations. The plan recognises that achieving gender equity in urban space is a dynamic process that requires ongoing attention and community engagement, particularly with women and girls who are often underrepresented in formal planning processes.



# Green Transition and Climate Adaptation

Environmental sustainability and climate resilience are core pillars of the Ennis IAP. The town's location along the River Fergus, combined with increased flood risk and urban heat effects, requires a strong focus on ecological planning and nature-based solutions. The IAP embeds green transition principles across multiple layers: blue-green infrastructure, active travel, public realm enhancement, and low-carbon design.

The Fergus corridor is a central site for implementation of climate adaptation measures. Actions in this zone include riverside restoration, biodiversity-friendly planting, ecological connectivity improvements, and interpretive signage to raise public awareness of local environmental systems. Interventions such as permeable paving, rain gardens, and tree planting will also be explored in tandem with mobility and public realm upgrades, creating multifunctional benefits that extend beyond visual improvement.

The small-scale actions already piloted through the IAP process—such as the Mill Wheel regeneration and riverside activation—have shown community interest in locally grounded environmental interventions. Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of building ecological literacy and visible green infrastructure into everyday town life. For example, school-based environmental education programmes could be aligned with the creation of safe active travel routes and local nature trails.

Sustainability is also a consideration in materials specification, maintenance planning, and delivery models. The plan encourages the use of low-carbon and recycled materials in public realm works, prioritising durability, local sourcing, and ecological compatibility. Long-term sustainability will also require behaviour change, particularly in relation to private car use. The plan supports this transition through walking and cycling infrastructure, improved accessibility, and the introduction of new public transport options.



# Social Inclusion and Equity



The principle of inclusion has been fundamental to the IAP methodology, from the composition of the URBACT Local Group to the design of pilot projects. The plan recognises that access to urban benefits—mobility, culture, recreation, safety—is not evenly distributed across all groups. Specific attention has been paid to residents with disabilities, older adults, schoolchildren, and those without access to private transport.

Physical interventions in the plan are informed by universal design standards and include improved kerbing, footpath widening, new seating, and safer crossings. Community actions are also designed to lower barriers to participation—for example, the walking bus initiative ensures that children can access schools safely without needing a car. It is hoped the placement of art and performance in everyday public spaces (e.g. street music, sculpture at the Mill Wheel) has proven successful in drawing in diverse audiences without formal barriers.

Interview feedback also highlighted the need to engage underrepresented groups more proactively in future implementation. Young people not connected to institutions, ethnic minority communities, and renters were identified as less visible in the current process. The implementation strategy includes plans to address these gaps through targeted outreach, creative engagement formats, and partnerships with schools, youth services, and intercultural groups.

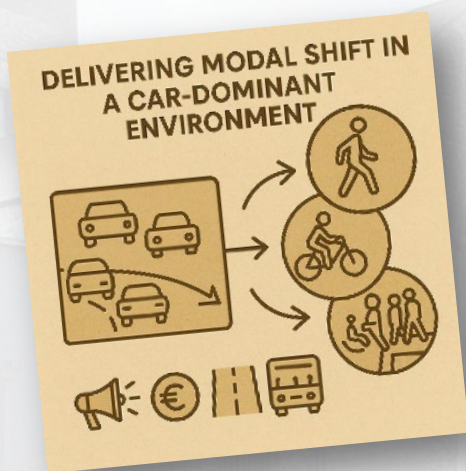
The principle of inclusion is also reflected in the governance of the plan. By embedding co-creation into project delivery and evaluation, the IAP seeks to institutionalise inclusion beyond one-off consultations. Community organisations and residents will be supported to take on long-term roles in programming, maintenance, and place stewardship, ensuring that public investment continues to reflect public values.



# Main Challenges Requiring Strategic Focus

The Ennis Integrated Action Plan has identified five key challenge areas that require sustained, cross-sectoral effort to enable successful implementation. These challenges are not isolated issues, but rather structural constraints that intersect with multiple thematic priorities of the plan. Addressing them will be essential to realising the vision of a climate-adaptive, inclusive and proximity-based town.

## 1. Delivering Modal Shift in a Car-Dominant Environment



Despite favourable topographical conditions for walking and cycling, car use remains deeply embedded in the mobility culture of Ennis. The absence of a functioning town bus service (expected in 2026) continues to limit options for residents without private vehicles. Achieving modal shift will require a coordinated mix of incentives, public communication, infrastructure investment, and street design that makes active and shared modes more attractive and viable.

## 2. Transforming Underused Public Space into Inclusive Civic Assets



The IAP identifies several underperforming public spaces that hold potential for regeneration. The challenge lies in designing these spaces to be multifunctional, inclusive, and regularly used throughout the day and year. Delivering this transformation will depend not only on physical upgrades, but also on programming, stewardship, and long-term maintenance planning.



### 3. Embedding Accessibility and Universal Design Across All Projects



While accessibility has been central to planning discussions, implementation must move beyond compliance to embrace a design approach that anticipates the needs of all users. Public realm interventions, mobility upgrades, and programming should reflect input from accessibility experts and lived experience stakeholders, ensuring that inclusion is a practical outcome, not just a stated principle.

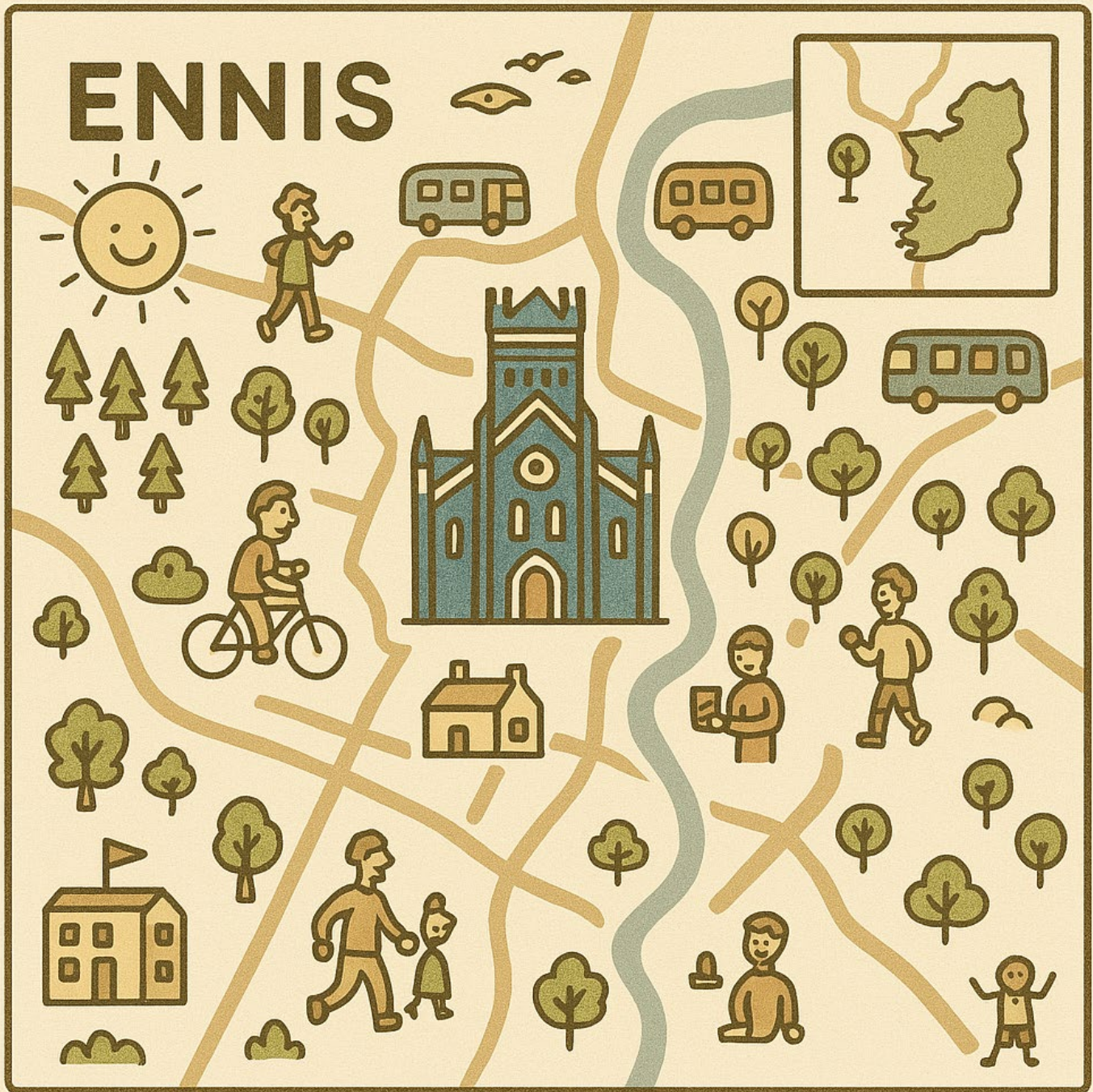
### 4. Scaling Up Community Engagement from Pilot Projects to Long-Term Delivery



Small-scale actions in Ennis have resulted in strong levels of community support and participation. However, transitioning from individual pilots to a systematic, long-term engagement model remains a challenge. Sustaining enthusiasm, building volunteer capacity, and providing support to community-led initiatives will be critical to delivering a truly co-created urban transformation.



## Small-Scale Actions





## 5.0 Testing Actions

Ennis Municipal District, through the URBACT program, implemented three small-scale actions (SSAs) to advance the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) by testing innovative placemaking strategies aimed at revitalizing public spaces, promoting pedestrian activity, and fostering community engagement. The primary objectives of these actions—Seasonal Street Entertainment, Placemaking and Rejuvenation of the Historic Mill Wheel Area, and the "River Fergus Wild at Heart" sculpture—were to enhance underutilised civic spaces, increase dwell time in Ennis town centre, celebrate local culture and history, and strengthen partnerships with community groups. Supported by URBACT funding, these initiatives served as practical experiments to assess the feasibility of low-cost, high-impact interventions, refine approaches for broader implementation, and build momentum toward creating a more vibrant, inclusive, and connected Ennis.



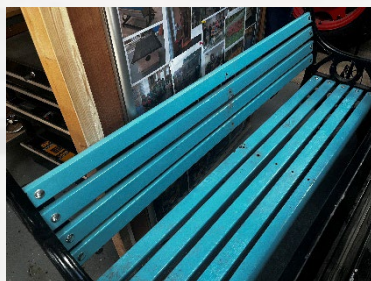


# Small Scale Action 1 - Placemaking and Rejuvenation of the Historic Mill Wheel Area

## Project Details

The Mill Wheel area in Ennis, located along the River Fergus, is a historically significant site featuring a protected wood and iron waterwheel, the last remnant of the Ennis Corn Mill constructed in the 1830s and demolished in 1983. This area, nestled within a scenic yet underutilised riverside park, includes a pedestrian walkway connecting Mill Road to Harvey's Quay, offering a serene route for residents and visitors. To revitalize this space and highlight its historical and natural appeal, Ennis Municipal District partnered with the Ennis Men's Shed, a community group focused on skill-sharing activities such as woodworking and community projects. Ennis MD supplied materials for the Men's Shed to refurbish several disused cast iron benches, originally destined for scrap. These benches were restored, painted in vibrant colours, and installed by Council staff at strategic locations along the pedestrian walkway within the park to create inviting spaces for relaxation and enjoyment of the scenic route.

The project also extended to enhancing the Maid of Erin roundabout, a key entry point to Ennis, through the installation of colourful flower planters. The Ennis Men's Shed constructed the planters, while Ennis Tidy Towns planted flowers and shrubs, with materials and installation support provided by Ennis MD and Clare County Council's Gardening Section. These efforts aimed to improve the visual appeal of both the Mill Wheel area, including its pedestrian walkway, and the roundabout, encouraging greater public engagement with these spaces and showcasing Ennis's commitment to its cultural and historical heritage.





## Results

The rejuvenation of the Mill Wheel area and the Maid of Erin roundabout has significantly enhanced the aesthetic and functional appeal of these public spaces. The refurbished benches, strategically placed along the pedestrian walkway connecting Mill Road to Harvey's Quay, have transformed the riverside park into a more inviting destination, encouraging residents and visitors to linger and enjoy the tranquil, historical setting. The walkway now serves as a more accessible and appealing route, promoting pedestrian activity and connecting key areas of the town. The vibrant flower planters at the Maid of Erin roundabout have revitalised a previously tired entry point, creating a welcoming gateway to Ennis that fosters civic pride. Additionally, the project has strengthened ties between Ennis Municipal District and local community groups, particularly the Ennis Men's Shed and Ennis Tidy Towns. This collaboration has not only leveraged their skills and enthusiasm but also built lasting partnerships, fostering trust and cooperation for future community-driven initiatives. The enhanced pedestrian walkway and surrounding improvements have further solidified these community connections by creating shared spaces that encourage social interaction. Supported by URBACT funding, the project was completed in Summer 2025, with the benches and planters already contributing to a more vibrant, inclusive, and connected town environment.





## Small Scale Action 2 - "River Fergus Wild at Heart" sculpture

### Project Details

As part of the broader rejuvenation efforts for the Mill Wheel area in Ennis, another chosen project was the "River Fergus Wild at Heart" sculpture, designed to enhance the underutilised riverside park along the pedestrian walkway connecting Mill Road to Harvey's Quay. This public art initiative, led by local environmental artist Evelyn Sorohan, was developed in collaboration with Ennis Municipal District, Ennis Men's Shed, Ennis Tidy Towns, the local Nigerian Women's Association, and residents of the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS). The project celebrates the local wildlife of the River Fergus, featuring a four-foot-high triangular structure with three distinct mosaics depicting an otter, a salmon, and an egret. Over thirty community members from across Ennis contributed recycled materials, including old jewellery, coins, and buttons sourced from a local charity shop, while the Men's Shed provided recycled plastic backing boards made from farm plastics. QR codes were placed on the sculpture, linking to information about the local wildlife featured in the mosaics, enhancing the educational value of the artwork. This collaborative effort, funded through the URBACT Small Scale Action program, not only promotes environmental consciousness but also integrates with the Mill Wheel project's goal of revitalizing the area by drawing visitors to the scenic park and its pedestrian walkway. The sculpture, designed to be eye-catching and educational, is strategically positioned for high visibility from the road to attract passersby and encourage exploration of the enhanced public space.



## Results

The "River Fergus Wild at Heart" sculpture, unveiled by Local TD Deputy Joe Cooney in July 2025, has significantly enriched the Mill Wheel area, transforming the riverside park into a vibrant cultural and environmental landmark. The three mosaics, crafted from recycled materials, have not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the pedestrian walkway connecting Mill Road to Harvey's Quay but also increased dwell time by attracting visitors to engage with the area's natural and historical charm. The project's educational focus on local wildlife has fostered greater community awareness of the River Fergus ecosystem, with participants learning about its birds and habitats. The collaboration strengthened ties between Ennis MD and diverse community groups, including the Ennis Men's Shed, Ennis Tidy Towns, the Nigerian Women's Association, and IPAS residents, creating a shared sense of ownership and pride. Through workshops led by Evelyn Sorohan, community members, including the Men's Shed, exchanged skills, with participants gaining expertise in resin use and artistic techniques. This partnership has deepened community connections, fostering mutual respect and laying the groundwork for future collaborative initiatives. The sculpture's high-visibility placement has successfully drawn more foot traffic to the park, complementing the Mill Wheel area's rejuvenation and reinforcing Ennis's commitment to inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven public spaces.





## Small Scale Action 3: Seasonal Street Entertainment

### Project Details

As part of the URBACT Small Scale Action (SSA) program to enhance public spaces and promote community engagement in Ennis, Ennis Municipal District transformed the traditional Christmas lights switch-on event in late November 2024 into a vibrant, inclusive outdoor entertainment experience. Held in the Abbey Street carpark, a central town location, the project aimed to reimagine this underutilised space as a temporary civic hub to attract diverse audiences, increase dwell time, and boost local economic activity. Ennis MD engaged The Circus Ponies, a local 15-piece band known for reimagining 90s dance and R&B hits with unique flair, to perform live. The event was promoted through targeted social media campaigns to maximize attendance and community participation. Supported by URBACT funding, Ennis MD collaborated with Clare County Council's Planning and Physical Development teams including local stakeholders and street performers, to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for an anticipated crowd of approximately 4,000. This initiative aligns with the broader goals of the Ennis Integrated Action Plan (IAP) to activate public spaces, celebrate local culture, and foster community connections through accessible, family-friendly events.



## Results

The Seasonal Street Entertainment event, held in November 2024, successfully transformed the Abbey Street carpark into a lively civic space, drawing a crowd of approximately 4,000 and significantly enhancing the town's festive atmosphere. The live performance by The Circus Ponies attracted a diverse audience, including teenagers and young adults, making the event more inclusive and vibrant. The increased footfall led to extended dwell times in the town centre, with local restaurants and pubs reporting a noticeable boost in business before and after the event. The temporary transformation of the carpark into a performance venue highlighted its potential as a civic space for future events, inspiring new ideas for utilizing underused areas in Ennis. The collaboration between Ennis MD, local musicians and community groups, strengthened partnerships and fostered a sense of shared ownership among stakeholders. Positive feedback from attendees and adjacent businesses underscored the event's success in enhancing the public realm and promoting Ennis as a dynamic, community-focused destination. This SSA, completed with URBACT funding, demonstrated the value of low-cost, high-impact interventions in activating civic spaces, reinforcing the Ennis IAP's objectives of celebrating local culture, increasing pedestrian activity, and building community connections.





## Summary

The URBACT-funded Small Scale Actions have provided Ennis Municipal District with a valuable opportunity to test innovative placemaking strategies, delivering tangible enhancements to the town's public spaces while fostering stronger community partnerships. The Seasonal Street Entertainment event, the rejuvenation of the Historic Mill Wheel Area, and the "River Fergus Wild at Heart" sculpture have collectively revitalised underutilised civic spaces, highlighted key walking routes, and increased dwell time within Ennis. These initiatives have not only improved the aesthetic and functional appeal of the town but also strengthened collaboration with local groups such as the Ennis Men's Shed, Ennis Tidy Towns, and diverse community stakeholders, building trust and a shared sense of ownership. By celebrating local culture and history through artistic and environmental interventions, these actions have reinforced Ennis's identity as a vibrant, inclusive destination. The success of these low-cost, high-impact projects demonstrates the potential for incremental change, providing a replicable model for future IAP implementation and affirming the value of co-creation in rejuvenating public places.





## Chapter 6

### Integrated Actions





## 6.0 Integrated Actions

The Integrated Actions outlined in this chapter represent the bridge between vision and delivery. They are the practical steps through which Ennis will translate ambition into tangible improvements on the ground. Shaped through two years of collaborative planning under the URBACT E-Connecting programme, these actions are rooted in local priorities, informed by lived experience, and aligned with wider strategic objectives at town, county, and national level.

The process of developing these actions was both iterative and inclusive. Workshops, site visits, and pilot projects gave local voices a central role in defining what matters most for Ennis. Rather than planning in isolation, the approach combined technical evidence with the knowledge and insights of the URBACT Local Group and the wider community. This co-creation ensured that the actions respond to real challenges such as congestion, accessibility, and the need to better value the River Fergus and civic spaces, while also reflecting the opportunities for cultural activation, healthier lifestyles, and climate resilience.

Small-scale pilot initiatives provided a vital testing ground. Projects such as the rejuvenation of the Mill Wheel area, the “River Fergus Wild at Heart” sculpture, and the seasonal street entertainment programme demonstrated how modest, low-cost interventions can shift perceptions and build momentum. The lessons drawn from these pilots – particularly around participation, stewardship, and visibility – directly informed the more ambitious integrated actions set out here.

Each action is designed to connect with the broader strategy rather than stand alone. Together, they advance the seven strategic objectives of the Integrated Action Plan: creating a climate-adaptive town, rebalancing everyday mobility, embedding accessibility, marketing Ennis as a cultural destination, enhancing civic spaces, maximising the potential of the River Fergus, and fostering collaborative governance. This alignment ensures that the actions are mutually reinforcing, delivering benefits that are social, environmental, and economic in equal measure.



Above all, the integrated actions reflect a shift in how Ennis approaches change. They signal a move away from piecemeal interventions toward a more connected and participatory model of urban transformation – one where infrastructure, culture, and community are developed together. By embedding integration and co-creation into delivery, the town is well positioned to not only achieve its strategic objectives but also to create a more liveable, resilient, and inclusive future for all.

The following section sets out each Integrated Action in detail, outlining the rationale, objectives, and delivery pathways that will guide implementation and provide a framework for monitoring progress over time.





## 6.1 Integrated Action 1: Town Bus Service

### Current Situation

In 2024, the Department of Transport announced funding to establish a town bus service in Ennis. Significant planning has been completed, with two routes identified and awaiting final approval from the National Transport Authority (NTA). As of the National Government Budget of 2025, funding is secured, and the NTA has confirmed the appointment of a service operator in Q4 2025. Construction of key bus stops, equipped with accessible kerbs, shelters, seating, and associated infrastructure, is scheduled for completion by Q2 2026. The service, which will commence in early 2026, will operate 18 hours per day, enhancing connectivity across key areas of the town. Initial public engagement has highlighted strong community support for improved public transport options.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis Municipal District (MD) will continue close collaboration with the NTA to ensure the timely delivery of the town bus service. This includes leveraging local knowledge to finalize optimal bus stop locations, supporting construction activities, and developing a robust media campaign targeting first-time users, schools, and major trip generators such as shopping centres and healthcare facilities. A feedback mechanism, incorporating on-board and online surveys alongside usage data, will be implemented to refine stop placements and service headways within the first year of operation.

The service aims to achieve 10,000 passengers per month in its first year, reducing reliance on private vehicles, alleviating traffic congestion, and improving accessibility for residents, particularly those without personal transport. This initiative will foster sustainable mobility, support local businesses by improving access, and contribute to a greener, more connected Ennis. Ennis MD will work with the NTA to explore future route expansions and potential additional services based on demand and usage data.

### Timeframe

Fully operational by Q2 2026, with yearly performance reviews thereafter.



## 6.2 Integrated Action 2: Walking/Cycling Buses for Schools

### Current Situation

School-related traffic is a significant contributor to congestion in Ennis, with most parents driving children to school gates. Of the ten primary schools in Ennis Municipal District, only two currently operate walking/cycling buses. For example, Ennis National School runs a successful walking bus, supervised by parents, covering a 1 km route from Éire Óg GAA grounds to the school in approximately 15 minutes. This initiative reduces car dependency, promotes physical activity, enhances road safety awareness, and fosters independence among children. Preliminary audits for additional schools, including Holy Family NS and Barefield NS, have identified infrastructure gaps such as missing crossings and hazardous routes.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD will expand walking and cycling bus initiatives under the "Safe Routes to School" programme, managed by An Taisce, targeting at least two additional schools (Holy Family NS and Barefield NS). This will involve route audits to identify and address hazards, volunteer recruitment and rota management tools. Quick, low-cost infrastructure improvements (e.g., tactiles, kerb repairs, signage) will be prioritized, with larger upgrades integrated into the capital works plan. Ennis MD will coordinate with Gardaí and wardens at high-risk junctions and launch "travel to school" campaigns with school principals and parent associations to drive participation.

Outputs include operational walking/cycling buses at two additional schools, weekly pupil participation tracking, a measurable reduction in car drop-offs, improved safety perceptions on audited routes, and a scalable model with a termly communications pack for further expansion. This will reduce congestion, promote healthier commuting habits, and enhance community well-being.

### Timeframe

Walking/cycling buses at Holy Family NS and Barefield NS operational by Q4 2026, with ongoing expansion thereafter.





## 6.3 Integrated Action 3: Urban Forest Management

### Current Situation

Ennis manages thousands of public trees, but historical planting practices often ignored species suitability and local conditions, leading to risks to public safety and property as trees mature. A recently developed tree management app is in use, enabling staff to conduct digital surveys to assess tree conditions, assign risk ratings, and determine maintenance needs. Twice-yearly arborist engagements address urgent maintenance or removals, but tree planting has not kept pace with removals. Some staff have received training on the app, but further training is needed to ensure consistent use.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD will train additional staff on the tree management app by Q1 2026 to enhance expertise in tree care and data collection. A comprehensive tree management strategy will be developed, ensuring appropriate species selection and placement to minimize risks and enhance biodiversity. This strategy will guide planning applications for new developments, requiring arborist reports for trees in developments considered for taking in charge. A GIS-linked digital inventory will be completed, capturing condition, species, and location data to inform annual maintenance and planting plans prioritizing climate-resilient, pollinator-friendly species. Routine inspection and after-care standards will improve tree survival rates and reduce reactive works. Outputs include a fully trained staff team, a complete public-tree database, an implemented maintenance schedule, an annual planting program targeting low-canopy areas, and monitored increases in canopy cover and biodiversity.

### Timeframe

Increased staff training by Q1 2026; tree management strategy and policy finalized by Q3 2026; survey and database updated by Q1 2026.





## 6.4 Integrated Action 4: Walking Routes Around Ennis

### Current Situation

In 2021 Ennis Municipal District engaged the services of the School of Architecture from the University of Limerick to identify opportunities for safe pedestrian routes around Ennis. This project, titled Connecting & Co-Creating, identified potential 2 km and 5 km walking routes around Ennis which would increase connectivity. Through the project specific routes have been identified, with ongoing improvements to footpaths and crossings as funding permits. Existing routes on Quin Road, Tulla Road to Gort Road, and the Ballybeg area have increased recreational walking opportunities. The Clare Age Friendly Programme is supporting a revised Ennis Walkability Study to further refine route accessibility and safety.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD will finalize two legible walking loops (2 km and 5 km), install wayfinding, distance markers, accessible crossings, remedial footpath/kerb works, and seating at regular intervals. A printed and digital map will complement on-street signage to ensure ease of use for residents and visitors. A revised Ennis Walkability Study, conducted via the Clare Age Friendly Programme, will identify additional infrastructure needs.

Outputs include two safe, signed walking loops promoting active travel, increased everyday walking (measured by before/after counts), enhanced accessibility for all ages, and a maintenance routine for signage and seating. These routes will promote health, reduce car usage, and showcase Ennis's scenic areas, strengthening its identity as a walkable town.

### Timeframe

Routes identified, assessed, and delivered by Q2 2027.



## 6.5 Integrated Action 5: Additional Cycle Lanes

### Current Situation

Major routes like Tulla Road, Clare Road, Lahinch Road, and Gort Road currently lack clearly defined cycle lanes, though the Draft Ennis Local Transport Plan proposes segregated facilities. The NTA has confirmed funding for the Tulla Road Cycle Scheme, set to commence in Q4 2025, while projects for Clare Road, Lahinch Road, and Gort Road are at various design stages. Community feedback highlights strong demand for safer cycling infrastructure to encourage commuting and school travel.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD will deliver high-quality, segregated cycle lanes on Tulla Road, Clare Road, Lahinch Road, and Gort Road, featuring physical protection, safe junction treatments, continuous protection past side roads, and bus-stop bypasses where feasible. Wayfinding to town-centre destinations and secure cycle parking will be included. Ennis MD will continue engaging with the NTA to advance designs and secure additional funding. Outputs include protected cycle links per corridor a doubling of cycling to work/school (+100%), improved perceived safety, and established maintenance standards. These lanes will promote healthier lifestyles, reduce emissions, and support sustainable urban development.

### Timeframe

Tulla Road by Q2 2026; Clare Road by Q3 2027; Lahinch Road by Q3 2028; Gort Road by Q2 2029.



*Tulla Road Active Travel Scheme*



## 6.6 Integrated Action 6: Increased Pedestrian Crossing Points

### Current Situation

While over 20 new pedestrian crossings have been installed across Ennis by August 2025, including on Kilrush Road, Clon Road, Sandfield Road, and Francis Street, several arterial roads still lack safe crossing points. Engagement with An Taisce and the NTA through the Safe Routes to School and Connecting & Co-Creating projects has secured resources, with draft delivery plans and statutory consents in place for approximately 20 additional crossings in urban and rural areas, such as Lifford Road and near Barefield National School.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD will conduct a town-wide crossing review, prioritizing at least five new strategically placed crossings designed to universal access standards (tactiles, kerb heights, refuge widths, signal timings). Locations will be chosen to shorten desire lines and reduce unsafe crossings, with coordination to align with resurfacing or utility works to minimize costs. New developments will be required to install appropriate crossings as a planning condition.

Outputs include five new crossings, improved access to bus stops and schools, reduced near-miss reports, and crossings integrated into the asset register for maintenance. These enhancements will create a safer, more connected urban environment.

### Timeframe

Review completed and priority crossings installed by Q2 2026; ongoing delivery thereafter.



*O'Connell Street before and After Public Realm Enhancement Project*



## 6.7 Integrated Action 7: Parking App for Disabled Drivers

### Current Situation

Ennis town centre provides 73 disabled parking bays, yet Blue Badge holders frequently struggle to find available spaces, often enduring lengthy searches. The absence of wayfinding tools exacerbates this issue, as drivers have no means to locate vacant bays, which are often already occupied.

Representatives and individuals from the disabled community have consistently reported these challenges to Ennis Municipal District staff. The difficulty in securing parking spaces hinders their independence and ability to engage fully in daily activities. Some drivers experience significant distress and frustration, occasionally abandoning their journeys when no spaces are available.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD has actively consulted with the disabled community to address these challenges and has researched potential solutions, drawing on guidance from other local authorities. As a result, Ennis MD will install smart sensors in accessible parking bays across the town centre. These sensors will deliver real-time updates on parking availability through the existing Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland (DDAI) SpaceFinder and ParkMagic apps. This system will enable Blue Badge holders to quickly identify vacant disability parking spaces, making it easier to park near their intended destinations. Upon project completion, Ennis MD will launch an information and media campaign to promote the availability of this service. This initiative will foster greater inclusivity, reduce frustration, and encourage increased participation in community activities for people with disabilities. Additionally, it will raise awareness of disabled parking regulations and the consequences of misusing these spaces.

### Timeframe

System fully operational by Q1 2026.



## 6.8 Integrated Action 8: Public Realm Upgrade in Town Centre

### Current Situation

The €11.6m Ennis Public Realm Regeneration Project is transforming O'Connell Street, High Street, Bank Place, Old Barrack Street, and Barrack Square to address challenges posed by Ennis's medieval layout, including narrow streets and footpaths. Works include shared surfaces, widened/regraded footways, reduced trip risks, improved lighting, inclusive seating, and simplified street clutter, all designed to respect the town's historic character. As of August 2025, the project is nearing completion, with works continuing until Q4 2025 to create safer, more attractive streets.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD will complete upgrades to key town-centre streets, introducing shared surfaces on major shopping streets, rationalizing kerbs, and enhancing public realm spaces to increase dwell time. A construction management plan will ensure minimal disruption for residents and traders, with coordinated utility works. Outputs include a coherent, accessible streetscape (measured in m<sup>2</sup>), reduced pedestrian delays at crossings, increased footfall and dwell time during peak and evening periods, and improved trader satisfaction. These enhancements will boost economic activity, improve accessibility, and strengthen Ennis's appeal as a vibrant destination.

### Timeframe

Principal works completed by Q4 2025; ongoing maintenance thereafter.





## 6.9 Integrated Action 9: Festival and Events Co-ordinator

### Current Situation

Ennis previously employed a part-time Festival and Events Co-ordinator, but the contract has expired. This role supported community groups in organizing established festivals and events while also introducing new events to the town. The co-ordinator handled comprehensive event planning, organization, and execution, ensuring smooth operations and successful outcomes. Responsibilities included managing logistics, collaborating with stakeholders, and overseeing all event phases, from initial planning to post-event evaluation.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis Municipal District (MD) will secure funding through partnerships with the local business community and the Chamber of Commerce to hire a full-time Festival and Events Co-ordinator. This dedicated role will focus on curating an annual events calendar, enhancing existing festivals, launching new events, and managing artist and community partnerships, as well as permitting and logistics. The co-ordinator will collaborate closely with local businesses, schools, and cultural organizations while driving event promotion through targeted media campaigns to maximize community engagement. The initiative will produce a published, year-round events and activation calendar, increase programmed event days to boost local activity, generate positive feedback from audiences and traders to reflect enhanced event quality, strengthen town identity through culturally significant events, and create a comprehensive, reusable operating handbook for recurring festivals and events. These efforts will stimulate the evening economy, elevate Ennis's cultural profile, and foster greater community participation.

### Timeframe

Co-ordinator post funded and in place by Q3 2026; ongoing event expansion thereafter.





## 6.10 Integrated Action 10: Exploitation and Enhancement of Civic Spaces

### Current Situation

Civic spaces like O'Connell Square, Barrack Square, and the Cathedral area are being upgraded as part of the Ennis Public Realm Regeneration Project, with improvements to lighting, seating, and surfaces to support cultural activities. Efforts to secure funding have enabled progress, but additional spaces like St. Paul de Fenouillet and the Mill Wheel area remain underutilised and require enhancements to become event-ready.

### Actions & Outputs

Ennis MD will enhance at least one additional civic space (e.g., St. Paul de Fenouillet or the Mill Wheel area) with accessible footpaths, modest lighting, flexible seating, shade, minor surface fixes, and light planting/greening. Attempts will be made to secure funding in order to support these upgrades. Outputs include one significantly enhanced civic space, increased footfall and usage, improved user satisfaction and safety and stewardship arrangements for routine care. These enhancements will foster cultural vibrancy and community engagement in Ennis.

### Timeframe

First enhanced civic space completed by Q4 2026; ongoing improvements thereafter.



Cathedral Plaza before and after Public Realm Enhancement Project



#	Action Title	SO Links (primary → secondary)	One-line Rationale
6.1	Town bus service	<b>SO2</b> → SO3, SO7	Sustainable town mobility first; accessible stops and info; partnership with NTA/operator.
6.2	Walking/Cycling Buses for Schools	<b>SO2</b> → SO3, SO7	Modal shift for school travel; safer/accessible approaches; collaboration with schools/parents.
6.3	Urban Forest Management	<b>SO1</b> → SO5, SO7	Climate adaptation and resilience; cooler, more comfortable civic spaces; shared stewardship.
6.4	Walking Routes Around Ennis	<b>SO2</b> → SO3, SO5, SO4	Everyday active travel and accessible loops; boosts dwell; supports visitor appeal.
6.5	Additional cycle lanes	<b>SO2</b> → SO3, SO1	Protected cycling network for sustainable trips; accessible junctions; emissions reduction.
6.6	Increased Pedestrian Crossing Points	<b>SO3</b> → SO2, SO7	Universal access and safer crossings; supports walking/bus; co-delivery with agencies.
6.7	Parking App for Disabled Drivers	<b>SO3</b> → SO2, SO7	Real-time accessible parking improves inclusion; reduces circulating traffic; co-design with users.
6.8	Public Realm Upgrade in Town Centre	<b>SO3</b> → SO5, SO4, SO7	Inclusive streets first; increased dwell/evening use; strengthens identity; trader coordination.
6.9	Festival and Events Co-ordinator	<b>SO5</b> → SO4, SO7	Programmed activity to raise dwell; niche destination messaging; partner delivery model.
6.10	Exploitation and Enhancement of Civic Spaces	<b>SO5</b> → SO4, SO3, SO7	Event-ready, welcoming spaces; supports destination offer; accessible design; shared management.

#### Strategic Objective keys (for reference):

- **SO1** – To advance Ennis as Irelands first climate adaptive town
- **SO2** – To deliver solutions for the sustainable movement of people and goods in Ennis & environs
- **SO3** – Implement accessibility measures to ensure town centre can be enjoyed by all
- **SO4** – Market Ennis as a niche destination
- **SO5** – To increase dwell time in Ennis through the provision of upgraded civic spaces and the proliferation of enhanced cultural/recreational activities.
- **SO6** – To maximise the potential of the River Fergus for recreational tourism
- **SO7** – To collaborate with key stakeholders in town to drive economic and recreational activity



## Chapter 7

### Implementation Strategy





## 7.0 Implementation Strategy

### Overview and Strategic Rationale

This chapter sets out how the Integrated Action Plan moves from intent to delivery. It establishes the structures, sequencing, resources and control mechanisms needed to implement ten interrelated actions across Ennis Municipal District, with a focus on inclusion, accessibility and sustainable mobility. The objective is to deliver visible, measurable improvements in streets, civic spaces and mobility by coordinating projects in structured manner.

#### Delivery principles.

- **Phased and prioritised delivery:** Actions are sequenced using clear criteria, enabling early wins while preparing complex works.
- **Integrated governance:** A defined delivery structure with action-level teams providing regular updates to URBACT Local Group.
- **Blended resourcing:** Actions are packaged into coherent delivery clusters to align with national/EU programmes (e.g., mobility, public realm, green infrastructure, culture).
- **Monitoring and learning:** A live tracker and action KPIs (including public-realm area delivered and an annual modal-split baseline) support adaptive management, with scheduled reviews feeding into plan adjustments.
- **Risk-aware implementation:** Programme, project and external risks (finance, capacity, stakeholder acceptance) are documented, with mitigations and escalation triggers defined.
- **Digital and communications layer:** Wayfinding QR, real-time public transport information, micro-surveys and behaviour-change tools (e.g., school-travel challenges) improve user experience and feedback.



## 7.1 Delivery Clusters

The transition from planning to delivery requires a strategy that is both structured and adaptable. The Implementation Strategy sets out how the Integrated Actions will be advanced as a coherent programme rather than a set of isolated projects. Central to this is the use of three delivery clusters—Pedestrian Connectivity, Civic Space Activation, and Transport Interventions—which provide the organising framework for implementation.

These clusters were defined through an assessment of the Integrated Actions, their interdependencies, and the outcomes they are intended to achieve. By grouping related actions together, the approach avoids duplication, creates efficiencies in design and procurement, and positions Ennis to access external funding more effectively. Just as importantly, clustering ensures that combined impact is greater than the sum of individual projects.

- Pedestrian Connectivity links improvements to school routes, walking corridors, pedestrian crossing points, and the wider public realm upgrade in the town centre. Together, these actions will create a continuous and accessible pedestrian network that promotes active travel and inclusion.
- Civic Space Activation combines actions that bring new life to shared places: the enhancement of civic spaces, employment of a Festival and Events Co-ordinator, and management of the urban forest. This cluster ensures that upgraded spaces are lively, well-used, and supported by strong local stewardship.
- Transport Interventions focuses on mobility projects including the introduction of the town bus service, delivery of an additional cycle lane, and development of a parking application for disabled drivers. Grouping these measures strengthens alignment with national sustainable mobility priorities and ensures coordination with key partners.



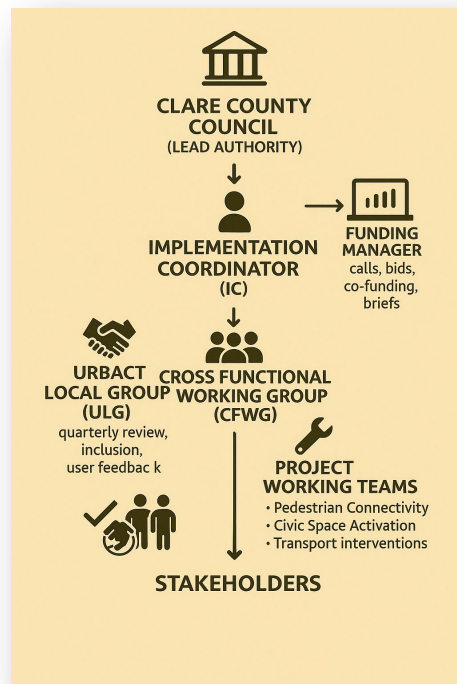
This cluster-based approach maximises impact by allowing projects to be developed in parallel, ensures resources are directed efficiently, and creates clear pathways from concept to delivery. Above all, it reflects the integrated ethos of the plan: connecting infrastructure, activity, and governance so that each action supports the others.

Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3	
Pedestrian Connectivity		Civic Space Activation		Transport Interventions	
<b>IA #2</b>	Walking/Cycling Buses for Schools	<b>IA #10</b>	Exploitation and Enhancement of Civic Spaces	<b>IA #1</b>	Town bus service
<b>IA #4</b>	Walking Routes Around Ennis	<b>IA #9</b>	Festival and Events Co-ordinator	<b>IA #5</b>	Additional cycle lanes
<b>IA #6</b>	Increased Pedestrian Crossing Points	<b>IA #3</b>	Urban Forest Management	<b>IA #7</b>	Parking App for Disabled Drivers
<b>IA #8</b>	Public Realm Upgrade in Town Centre				

The following sections outline how each cluster will be advanced, setting out governance and responsibilities, delivery pathways, funding routes, and monitoring arrangements that will turn the vision for Ennis' into a reality.



## 7.2 Governance & Responsibilities



### 7.2.1 Lead Authority and Implementation Coordinator



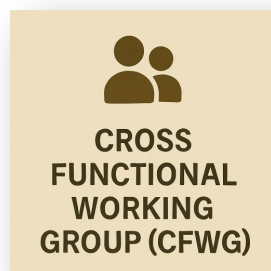
**Lead Authority:** Clare County Council (Planning & Physical Development with Ennis Municipal District).  
**Implementation Coordinator (IC):** a named officer acting as single point of contact for the IAP.

Core duties:

- (i) programme planning and phasing
- (ii) cross-department coordination
- (iii) risk and change control
- (iv) performance tracking and reporting
- (v) stakeholder liaison
- (vi) ensure alignment with wider plans and capital programmes.



## 7.2.2 Cross Functional Working Group (CFWG)



A monthly, officer-level group chaired by the IC to direct day-to-day delivery. Membership of this group will include personnel for several departments of Clare County Council including Planning, Environment & Climate, Active Travel & Roads, Community & Rural Development, Ennis Municipal District and Communications/IT. This group will be responsible for approving work packages, sequencing construction activities, clarifying interdependencies, and validating

data for the programme tracker.

## 7.2.3 Project Working Teams



Project Working Teams will be responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the Integrated Actions. Led by Ennis Municipal District and aligned with the three clusters - Pedestrian Connectivity, Civic Space Activation, and Transport Interventions - they will coordinate design, procurement, and implementation.

The role of the team is to manage projects, engage with partners such as the NTA, schools, cultural groups, and accessibility advocates, and ensure actions meet both technical and community needs. They will also prepare funding submissions, track progress, and communicate achievements to maintain public confidence.

Membership will adapt as projects advance, ensuring the right expertise at each stage while building lasting local capacity. In this way, the Project Working Teams provide a clear and flexible mechanism for turning strategy into visible results for Ennis

## 7.2.4 Funding Manager



A dedicated function within the CFWG to: (i) maintain a rolling calendar of national/EU calls; (ii) prepare standardised bid packs per cluster (need, outputs, sqm public realm, match, KPIs); (iii) coordinate co-funding/MoUs with agencies; and (iv) brief elected members and partners. This role also assembles evidence from pilots and early phases to strengthen subsequent applications.



## 7.2.5 URBACT Local Group (ULG) in Implementation

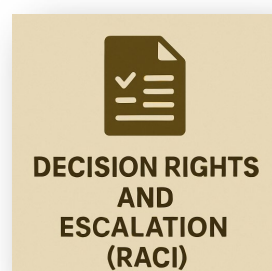


The ULG continues as the representative town group, meeting quarterly.

Functions:

- review progress and risks
- test designs affecting public space
- advise on inclusion/universal design
- channel user feedback

## 7.2.6 Decision Rights and Escalation (RACI)



- **Responsible:** Project Working Teams (design/procurement/delivery).
- **Accountable:** IC (programme), Action Leads (action work packages).
- **Consulted:** ULG, funding bodies, Gardaí/operations.
- **Informed:** elected members, wider stakeholders.

## 7.2.7 Interfaces with National/Regional Stakeholders



Communication channels are to be maintained with funding and sectoral agencies (e.g. National Transport Authority, Department of Transport, various Government Departments, tourism/culture, biodiversity/green infrastructure).



## 7.3 Project Prioritisation

Project start-up will be carefully sequenced rather than commencing all actions at once. Integrated Actions and cluster work packages will be assessed against agreed criteria to produce a clear one-year delivery programme with forward priorities identified through to 2028.

This structured approach balances strategic fit with practical deliverability, ensuring that early projects demonstrate visible impact while laying the groundwork for more complex initiatives. For example, the increased pedestrian crossing points action is well suited to early delivery: it can be implemented quickly, responds directly to community priorities, and provides immediate safety and accessibility benefits. Visible improvements like this help build public confidence while creating momentum for larger projects.

The project prioritisation approach also strengthens alignment with town-centre regeneration and mobility policies, supports efficient use of resources, and enhances eligibility for external funding. By providing a transparent and repeatable framework for annual review, it ensures that priorities remain responsive to changing circumstances while maintaining steady progress toward the overall vision for Ennis.

### Project Prioritisation Method

Each action (or, where relevant, cluster sub-package) is scored 0–5 against seven criteria:

- (1) **Strategic fit** with adopted plans and compact, low-carbon mobility outcomes;
- (2) **Funding opportunity** and eligibility within active call windows;
- (3) **Readiness & capacity** (design maturity, statutory consents, procurement route, team availability).
- (4) **Integration & catalytic value** (dependencies unlocked, contribution to clusters).
- (5) **Inclusion & accessibility**
- (7) **Stakeholder support/feasibility**

The current prioritisation list, informed by the approach outlined above and the opportunity to deliver early quick wins, is set out below.

Priority	Integrated Action #	Title	Cluster
1	IA #1	Town bus service	3
2	IA #4	Walking Routes Around Ennis	1
3	IA #5	Additional cycle lanes	3
4	IA #6	Increased Pedestrian Crossing Points	1
4	IA #8	Public Realm Upgrade in Town Centre	1
6	IA #2	Walking/Cycling Buses for Schools	1
7	IA #7	Parking App for Disabled Drivers	3
8	IA #10	Exploitation and Enhancement of Civic Spaces	2
9	IA #9	Festival and Events Co-ordinator	2
10	IA #3	Urban Forest Management	2



## 7.3.1 Project Timelines and Gantt Chart

The project timelines set out how Integrated Actions will be sequenced from early quick wins to longer-term initiatives. This phased approach ensures visible progress in the short term while building the foundations for more complex projects, maintaining momentum and aligning delivery with the broader strategic objectives for Ennis.

Integrated Action	Title	Delivery Date
IA #1	Town bus service	Delivery 2026
IA #2	Walking/Cycling Buses for Schools	Barefield & Holy Family NS by Q4 2026, others to follow
IA #3	Urban Forest Management	2026
IA #4	Walking Routes Around Ennis	2027
IA #5	Additional cycle lanes	Tulla Road by Q2 2026; Clare Road by Q3 2027; Lahinch Road by Q3 2028; Gort Road by Q2 2029.
IA #6	Increased Pedestrian Crossing Points	First Batch 2026 with further batches thereafter
IA #7	Parking App for Disabled Drivers	Q1 2026
IA #8	Public Realm Upgrade in Town Centre	Current Project - 2026 next project 2030
IA #9	Festival and Events Co-ordinator	Q3 - 2026
IA #10	Exploitation and Enhancement of Civic Spaces	Project 1 – 2026, Project 2 - 2028





## 7.3.2 Project Milestones

The following milestones will apply to each individual Integrated Action and where appropriate each cluster or sub-cluster:

- Preliminary Design
- Detailed Project Costings
- Public Consultation (where applicable)
- Statutory Consents/Planning Permission
- Funding Confirmation
- Final Design
- Tender Award
- Project Completion
- Post Occupancy/First Season Review

Decision gates (used for each project/cluster):

Gate	What it confirms	Typical trigger
<b>G1 Funding confirmation</b>	External award and local match secured; proceed to detailed design	Letter of offer / budget resolution
<b>G2 Design freeze</b>	Scope, drawings/specs, costs and outputs locked for tender	Completed detailed design & approvals
<b>G3 Tender award</b>	Contractor appointed; programme and traffic management agreed	Tender evaluation & council approval
<b>G4 Practical completion</b>	Works complete; handover, snagging and safety file closed	Certificate of completion
<b>G5 Post-occupancy review</b>	Early outcomes vs KPIs; lessons captured for next lots	3–6 months after opening/first season

## 7.4 Cost Estimation and Funding Strategy



### **COST ESTIMATION AND FUNDING STRATEGY**

The cost estimation for the Ennis Integrated Action Plan provides a framework to ensure financial clarity and effective resource allocation for the proposed actions. At this stage, costs are preliminary, encompassing expenses for design, site surveys, contingency provisions, and adjustments for inflation.

These estimates will be refined through detailed design processes and professional quantity surveying in advance of a project proceeding, ensuring accuracy and accountability. Costs will be meticulously tracked against specific outputs, such as enhanced public spaces, extended pedestrian pathways, or improved accessibility features, aligning with funding opportunities from sources like the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), National Transport Authority (NTA) Active Travel, and relevant EU programs.

Prior to project commencement, whole-life costs, including ongoing maintenance, operational expenses, and asset management, will be thoroughly calculated to provide a clear picture of long-term financial commitments. This comprehensive approach supports the phased delivery of the plan from 2025 to 2030, ensuring that financial resources are tied to tangible, measurable outcomes that advance Ennis's vision for a sustainable, accessible and vibrant urban environment, while maintaining flexibility to adapt to funding cycles and local priorities.

The table on the next page estimates the costs associated with each Integrated Action and also outlines a potential funding sources.



Cluster	IA #	Title	Costs	Funding Source
3	IA #1	Town bus service	Fully funded	NTA
1	IA #2	Walking/Cycling Buses for Schools	€150k per school	NTA
2	IA #3	Urban Forest Management	€30,000	Heritage Council/Climate Action Fund/LIFE (EU)
1	IA #4	Walking Routes Around Ennis	€300,000 per route	NTA (Active Travel), Department of Transport, Clare Couty Council own resources
3	IA #5	Additional cycle lanes	Approximately €2,000,000 per route	NTA (Active Travel)
1	IA #6	Increased Pedestrian Crossing Points	€200,000 per year over 3 years	NTA/Clare County Council own resources
3	IA #7	Parking App for Disabled Drivers	€60,000	Community Recognition Fund - Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
1	IA #8	Public Realm Upgrade in Town Centre	€10,000,000 (est.)	Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)/Clare County Council own resources
2	IA #9	Festival and Events Co-ordinator	€40,000 p/a	Creative Ireland/Arts Council/LEADER/Business Community/Chamber of Commerce
2	IA #10	Exploitation and Enhancement of Civic Spaces	€500,000 per project	Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)/ERDF/Clare County Council Own resources

# Funding Strategy

Where appropriate funding is pursued at cluster level to match the logic of funding calls and to package coherent outputs (e.g.,  $m^2$  upgraded public realm, km of route, accessible nodes, activation days). A rolling call calendar is maintained so design freeze dates, approvals and procurement choices are aligned to submission windows; this also supports multi-annual staging and co-funding commitments. Clear demonstration of policy fit—especially National Planning Framework Compact Growth (NSO1)—and of leverage from other sources is integral to all major bids.

## Cluster–source mapping

### 1. Pedestrian Connectivity (IA2, IA4, IA6, IA8)

Primary sources: URDF (public realm/placemaking with compact growth), NTA Active Travel (walking/cycling, crossings, safer routes to school), Department of Transport (infrastructure & connectivity), Clare County Council Own Resources

### 2. Civic Space Activation (IA3, IA9, IA10)

Primary sources: LIFE (nature/biodiversity and climate strands), ERDF/Interreg (green infrastructure, transnational river projects), Creative Ireland and Arts Council (programming, placemaking), LEADER (community stewardship and local activation), Climate Action Fund (flood/climate adaptation).

### 3. Transport Interventions (IA1, IA5, IA7)

Primary Sources: NTA Active Travel (walking/cycling, crossings, safer routes to school), Community Recognition Fund (community infrastructure and facilities).



## Rationale-for-fit

- URDF (national) → compact growth, catalytic public realm and mobility works; requires match funding and evidence of leverage.
- NTA Active Travel (national) → crossings, footways, school routes, bus integration; strong readiness and quantified route outputs needed.
- Climate Action Fund (national) → climate adaptation/mitigation via nature-based and flood resilience measures along the Fergus.
- LIFE (EU) → environment and climate strands covering nature/biodiversity and adaptation, suited to riparian and habitat projects.
- ERDF/Interreg (EU) → green infrastructure, culture/participation and transnational cooperation; supports river corridors, digital/innovation and inclusive activation when outputs are clear.
- Creative Ireland / Arts Council / LEADER (national/community) → cultural programming, placemaking, stewardship MoUs and local capacity building.

## Application materials

Each cluster maintains a standardised bid pack: one-page summary, need and policy fit, quantified outputs, costs and match, delivery plan and procurement route, risk and mitigation, monitoring and KPIs. This template approach shortens bid cycles and ensures consistent evidence across submissions.

## One-page funder brief (content)

A concise, reusable brief accompanies engagement with programme managers: (i) context and objective; (ii) quantified outputs (e.g.,  $m^2$ , km, nodes, activation days) and outcomes; (iii) governance and delivery readiness; (iv) co-funding/match and private-sector leverage where applicable; (v) risk profile; and (vi) timetable to practical completion. This aligns with national expectations for leverage and investor confidence in Ennis.

## Pipeline management

The Funding Team runs the pipeline: tracking multi-annual calls, aligning design milestones to submission dates, and preparing parallel bids across clusters. Where calls are funding-constrained, packages are timed to secure external finance quickly; where readiness-led, near-shovel-ready lots move first, with larger works staged over the next windows. Co-funding requirements (e.g., URDF  $\geq 25\%$ ) and private/in-kind leverage are planned early to keep bids competitive and deliverable.

## 7.5 General Risk Assessment

### A. Programme-Level Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Inconsistent cross-departmental coordination	Medium	High	Operate the monthly Internal Delivery Group with a live tracker, RACI roles and integration checks; route scope changes through formal change control before delivery.
Loss of stakeholder momentum after planning	Medium	Medium	Hold quarterly ULG reviews with refreshed membership (incl. cycling/age-friendly); publish short progress dashboards; agree stewardship MoUs and an activation calendar.
Fragmentation of actions / siloed delivery	Medium	High	Deliver through three clusters with shared specs/KPIs; require an “integration note” at Design Freeze (G2) showing links to other IAs and enabling works (wayfinding/lighting).
Funding misalignment or delays	High	High	Establish a Funding Manager/team; maintain a rolling call calendar; use standard bid packs; apply MCA funding-constrained sequencing; phase works to match awards.
Insufficient internal delivery capacity	Medium	High	Appoint a named Implementation Coordinator; lot procurements to match capacity; use frameworks/panels; apply MCA readiness-led sequencing to avoid overload.
Political shifts or change in local priorities	Low	Medium	Regular briefings to elected members; publish annual scorecards tied to Strategic Objectives; prioritise early visible wins to anchor commitment.
Scope creep from late inputs	Medium	Medium	Enforce G2 Design Freeze; require a mini-MCA and change-control note confirming cost/time impacts and funding fit for any late change.



## B. Project-Level Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Engineering complexity (subsoil, buried utilities)	Medium	High	Early SI/GPR and utility searches; allow relocation time; include contingencies; coordinate with utilities prior to Tender Award (G3).
Access conflicts during construction (businesses/deliveries)	Medium	High	Phase works; agree traffic/access plans at tender; trader liaison calendar; use night/shoulder working where feasible.
Community resistance to modal shift	High	Medium	Run pilots (walking bus, bus launch support); deliver early crossings; targeted behaviour-change comms; publish before/after data.
Vandalism or misuse of new elements	Medium	Medium	Durable specs; passive surveillance via siting; stewardship MoUs; rapid repair SLAs.
Maintenance cost overrun post-implementation	Medium	High	Whole-life cost line in cost table; assign asset owners; specify low-maintenance materials; monitor OPEX in year one.

## C. External Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Inflationary pressure / market volatility	High	High	Include escalation contingencies; value-engineer using standard details; split large contracts into lots; time procurement to favourable windows.
Climate-related impacts (flooding, storms)	Medium	High	Nature-based drainage and flood-resilient detailing; coordinate with drainage planning; seasonally programme works/planting; site emergency plans.
Changes in national policy or funding frameworks	Medium	Medium	Track policy via funding calendar; prepare alternative funder briefs; keep cluster scopes modular for quick re-packaging.
Contractor capacity or delays	Medium	High	Framework agreements and pre-qualified panels; realistic lead times; performance clauses and milestone control between G3–G4.
Utilities company delays	Medium	Medium	Early third-party agreements; joint programmes; utility hold-points in the Gantt; escalate through CFWG if dates slip.
Funding programme pauses or re-profiling	Medium	Medium	Maintain multiple live bids by cluster; keep shovel-ready fallback lots; annual MCA resequencing to move ready packages forward.

## 7.6. Indicators and Monitoring Strategy

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the Ennis Integrated Action Plan (IAP) is designed to ensure accountability, support adaptive delivery, and capture the long-term impact of integrated urban interventions. The framework is both technical and participatory, enabling Clare County Council, stakeholders, and community partners to track progress, identify implementation challenges, and make data-informed decisions.

It reflects URBACT's commitment to integrated, inclusive, and evidence-based urban management, while also being tailored to the specific context, capacity, and delivery mechanisms in Ennis.

### 7.6.1 Objectives of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The M&E Framework serves five primary purposes:

1. Performance Tracking  
To measure whether planned actions are being delivered on time, within scope, and to the expected quality standards.
2. Impact Measurement  
To assess the effects of interventions on mobility, accessibility, cultural vitality, public space use, climate resilience, and inclusion.
3. Accountability  
To ensure transparency in the use of public funds and responsiveness to stakeholder and community priorities.
4. Adaptive Management  
To support evidence-led decision-making, allowing for course correction, reprioritisation, or redesign of actions as needed.
5. Learning and Replication  
To generate insights that can inform future policy, programme design, and spatial interventions within Clare and other towns.



## 7.6.2 Monitoring Structure and Responsibilities

The monitoring process will operate at two levels:

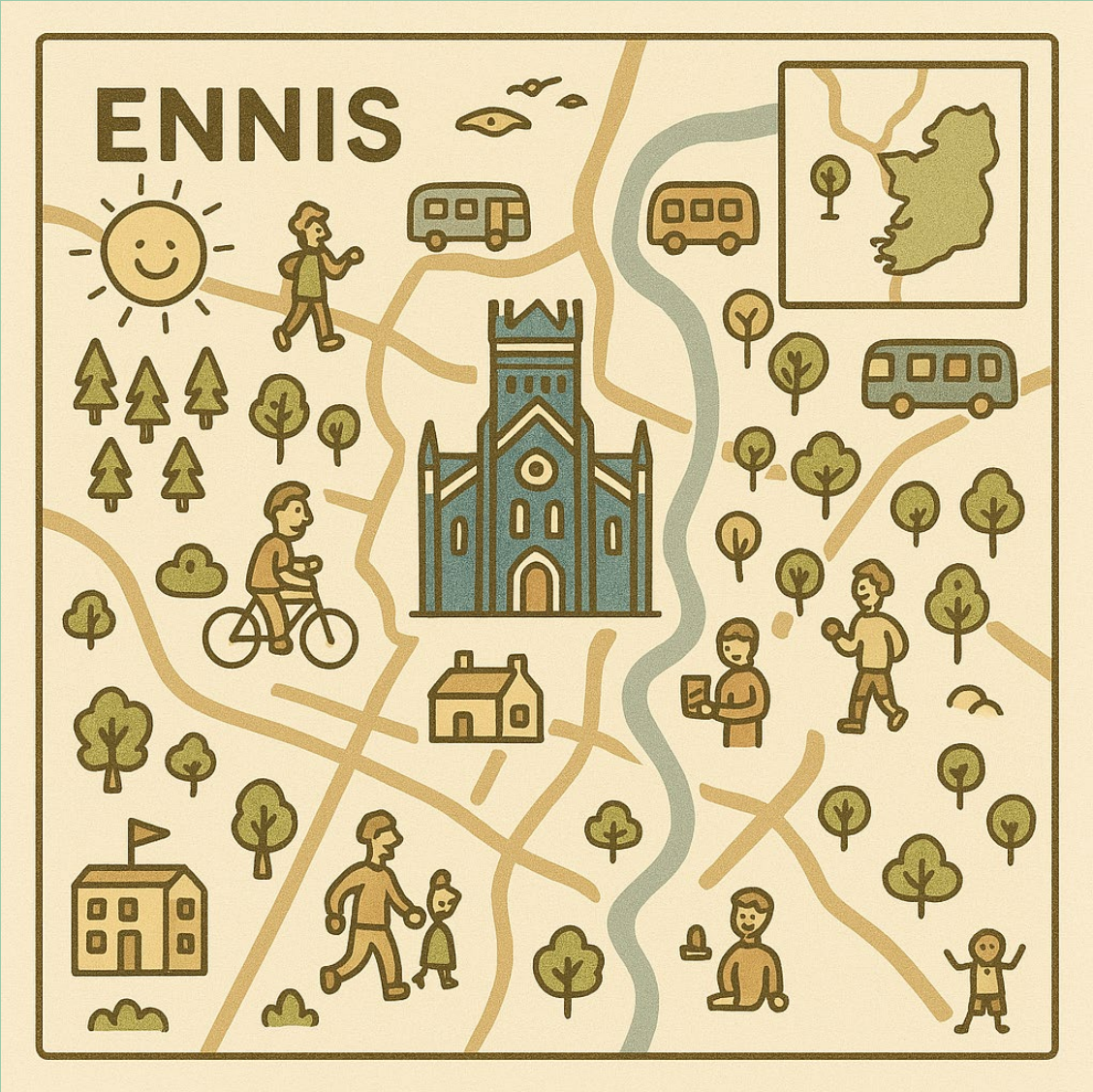
Level	Responsibility	Scope
Action-Level Monitoring	Project-specific teams + CFWS	Delivery milestones, outputs, budget status, risks
Programme-Level Evaluation	IAP Coordinator + CFWS + ULG	Strategic objective alignment, integration, outcomes

A Monitoring Lead will be designated within the IAP Implementation Coordination team. This role will consolidate action reports, maintain a central dashboard, and prepare quarterly M&E briefs for the Internal Delivery Group and the URBACT Local Group (ULG).

The ULG will also support qualitative monitoring through community feedback sessions, walkabouts, interviews, and focus groups.

Chapter 8

Indicators Framework





## 8.0 Indicators Framework

Each integrated action is linked to a specific set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that fall under the IAP's seven strategic objectives. KPIs are grouped by outcome category:

### *A. Mobility and Accessibility*

- % increase in active travel trips (baseline via NTA/school travel surveys)
- Number of accessible crossing upgrades completed
- Walking Bus participation rate per school
- Bus stop accessibility audits completed

### *B. Public Space and Inclusion*

- Number of public spaces upgraded with universal design
- % of residents who feel safer in key public areas (via perception surveys)
- Number of co-designed elements delivered (e.g. benches, signage)
- Footfall data in upgraded civic spaces (manual or sensor counts)

### *C. Culture and Civic Life*

- Number of public music events programmed annually
- Average attendance per cultural activation event
- % of local artists or groups involved in IAP programming
- User satisfaction scores (event feedback, social media sentiment)

### *D. Climate and Environment*

- Increase in tree canopy cover and native planting zones (sqm)
- Number of green infrastructure elements installed (e.g. rain gardens, planters)
- Surface permeability increase in public realm upgrades (% of area treated)
- Reduction in reported flood incidents (where applicable)

### *E. Governance and Participation*

- Number of ULG meetings held and documented per year
- Number of actions with community co-management agreements
- % of actions evaluated using community-generated data
- Number of joint actions involving 3+ Council departments

Each KPI is linked to a data source, collection frequency, and reporting responsibility, to be specified in the IAP's internal implementation tracker.

## 8.1 Data Collection Methods

To ensure robust and meaningful evaluation, a blend of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods will be used:

Method	Use Case
Surveys (online + on-site)	User satisfaction, perception of safety, accessibility feedback
Manual and sensor-based counts	Footfall, mode share, event attendance
GIS mapping	Monitoring greening, accessibility, and signage coverage
Structured interviews/focus groups	Stakeholder insight, stewardship capacity, behavioural outcomes
Photographic documentation	Before/after comparisons, public realm change
Maintenance logs	Ongoing condition tracking for infrastructure elements

A digital dashboard may be developed using existing Council tools to visualise progress across indicators in real time.

## 8.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit

Item	Description
KPI Tracking Template	Standardised action-level monitoring tool with status indicators
Survey Instruments (Residents, Businesses, Schools)	Sample survey forms used for data collection (digital and hard copy formats)
Community Feedback Logbook	Summary of informal input, qualitative insights, and anecdotal narratives gathered through engagement
Mid-Term Review Template	Template for biannual reporting against KPIs and implementation challenges



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