

Community Places



Annual Report
2025

Irish Planning Institute Awards



We are delighted to report that we won a prestigious Irish Planning Institute award for our work on the Tullycarnet Place Shaping Plan 2035 which featured in last year's Annual Report.

The Plan was a community-led Place Shaping Plan setting out the community's vision for Tullycarnet and - focusing on social, economic, community and environmental issues - it looked at the regeneration potential of the area over the next ten years. At the heart of the Place Shaping Plan was the wider community of Tullycarnet - the community and its involvement and ownership of the Place Shaping Plan was a core objective of the process and we undertook extensive public and community engagement to ensure all voices were heard in the preparation of the Plan.

At the IPI awards ceremony held in Dublin in September 2025 the project was recognised as exceptional plan making by an esteemed panel of judges:

“This project exemplifies plan making that goes beyond statutory requirements, placing the community at the heart of every stage. The plan’s extensive and inclusive public participation - reaching young people, older residents, and harder-to-reach groups - ensured that planners can truly reflect local needs and aspirations in the plan making process”

This is a landmark achievement as Community Places was the first organisation from Northern Ireland in the 50-year history of the Irish Planning Institute to win an award. There were 80 entries from all around the island of Ireland – 55 were shortlisted in 12 categories. Competition in the Plan Making Category included entries from Dublin City Council, Kildare and Meath County Councils, Monaghan County Council and others.

If your group is interested in developing a Place Plan for your area, please contact us.

Community Places pictured at the Awards Ceremony with representatives from the Department for Infrastructure, the Irish Planning Institute and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.



Planning Advice



Free, impartial and confidential planning advice



Our Region-wide Planning Advice Service

Demand for our advice service is as high as ever – it is clear that people need considerable help and support to navigate the complexities of the planning system - during 2024-2025 we dealt with enquiries from 45 groups and 108 individuals.

We helped groups from all over the region (Newry, Ballykelly, Derry~Londonderry, Dungannon, Omagh, Lisburn, Portrush, Dungiven, Holywood, Armagh, Cushendall, Newtownabbey) and people from all 11 local council areas with planning issues.



We gave advice to groups on planning requirements relating to their own community facilities (including proposed internal works to an Iqraa School and Mosque; converting a container for community use; developing community gardens and spaces; and proposed works to sports clubs). We also helped groups comment on a wide range of planning applications which would impact on their communities (including proposals for mineral extraction works, waste disposal facilities, a battery energy storage system and wind masts; a proposal which would involve the closure of a significant public coastal amenity; and proposals for housing developments).

People contacted us for advice on enforcement, retrospective planning applications, complaints, change of use, Tree Preservation Orders, HMO applications and HMO legislation, speaking rights at planning committees, Local Development Plans, development in the countryside and residential and householder developments.



The Department for Infrastructure part-funds our advice service and we welcome its continued commitment to support the organisation.



supporting people to have a voice in shaping local places

Place Shaping in Glencairn

We worked the Housing Executive and the community in Glencairn to develop a Place Shaping Plan for this area of north Belfast. The Plan focuses on the social, economic, community and environmental regeneration potential of the area.



Using the innovative Place Standard Tool to help focus and frame discussion on Glencairn's potential we engaged with over 100 community and other stakeholders to identify existing assets and opportunities in the area and how these could be developed and maximised to benefit the local community. A vision for the area emerged where Glencairn would be a welcoming and involved place, with access to community facilities, quality services, homes and green open spaces, and where people would have continued strong sense of pride and hope for the future. Key priorities identified included maximising Glencairn's natural setting within the Belfast Hills; improving connectivity to and from the area; environmental improvements; and progressing the proposal for a community hub.

Community and statutory partners will work together over the next ten years to deliver the Plan and transform Glencairn into a thriving and sustainable community.



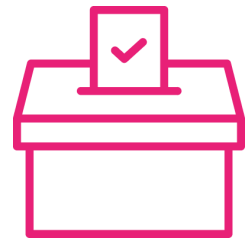
Participatory Budgeting



placing people at the heart of decision making

Supporting Participatory Budgeting

Our work on Participatory Budgeting began some eight years ago and we continue to work towards raising awareness of its potential. Over this past year we facilitated meetings of the PB Works Network to share our knowledge on PB and best practice examples. We are also participating in a newly -established network of Green Participatory Budgeting Organisers (administered by Shared Future CIC). Green PB focuses specifically on environmental and climate-related projects where communities can directly propose and vote on how a portion of public funds should be spent to improve sustainability, environmental justice or climate resilience in their area.



We provided facilitated support to Belfast City Council's **Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing - Your Voice, Your Choice** PB process, working with the Design Team to co-design and shape the planning and delivery of the PB process. Groups across the city submitted project ideas along the theme of 5 Steps to Wellbeing - the five steps being: connect; keep learning; be active; take notice; and give. In total 139 applications were received and over 2,000 votes were cast at four city-wide market stall events. The total PB pot allocated was £184,179 and 78 groups received up to £2,500 to help bring their wellbeing-themed ideas to life (these included walking, hiking, running, cycling, dancing, pickleball, gardening, crafting, martial arts). Groups are to share the success of their projects at a Celebration Event in Belfast City Hall in November 2025.



Community Planning



supporting meaningful engagement to deliver better services

A Co-design Framework for Belfast

Together with Involve we worked with Belfast City Council's Community Planning Partnership to develop a Co-design Framework to support the delivery of the Belfast Agenda and encourage people from all backgrounds to participate in community planning in the city. The Framework was developed in collaboration with the VCSE Panel and other key city stakeholders. It can be drawn on to support an inclusive and participatory process to solve identified city challenges.



The Framework outlines the need for four key principles to underpin and support any co-design process:

- elevating lived or living experience;
- inclusion of minoritised voices;
- diversity of perspectives; and
- sharing of power.



The Co-design Framework guides you through the process of doing co-design - from how to prepare before you start to how to evaluate throughout and at the end of the process. It was published in December 2024 and is available on Belfast City Council's [website](#).



Board 2024-2025

- Michael Graham (Chairperson) - Forward South Partnership
- Murray Watt (Treasurer) - Individual Member
- Brendan Murtagh - Individual Member
- Raymond Jackson - Confederation of Community Groups Newry and District
- Stevie Johnston - EastSide Partnership
- Ann McNickle - Causeway Rural and Urban Network
- Gavan Rafferty - Individual Member
- Nuala Toman - Disability Action



Staff Team 2024-2025

- Paul Roberts (Chief Executive)
- Sinéad McConnell (Planner and Engagement Officer)
- Claire Rea (Planner and Engagement Officer)
- Celine McCart (Administrator)
- Doreen O'Neill (Projects Secretary)



Finance

Income 2024-2025

	£
- Department for Infrastructure	116,000
- NLCF Dormant Accounts Fund NI	21,750
- Project Income	89,115
- Other Income	<u>2,170</u>
	<u>229,035</u>

Expenditure 2024-2025

	£
- Employing Staff	199,175
- Delivering Projects and Services	5,369
- Organisation Costs	<u>29,813</u>
	<u>234,357</u>



Our Planning Advice Service is part-funded by the Department for Infrastructure. A grant from the National Lottery Community Fund's Dormant Accounts Fund NI funded our TASS Project which completed in September 2024. Figures in the table above extracted from Audited Accounts March 2025 prepared by Finegan Gibson, Chartered Accountants.



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