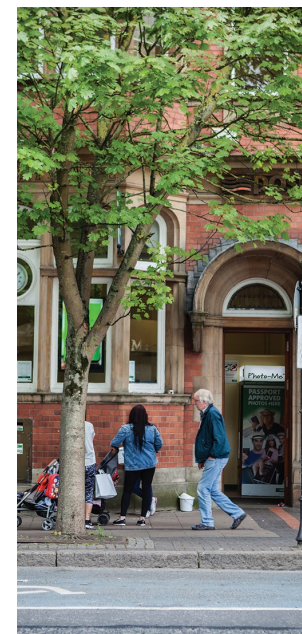


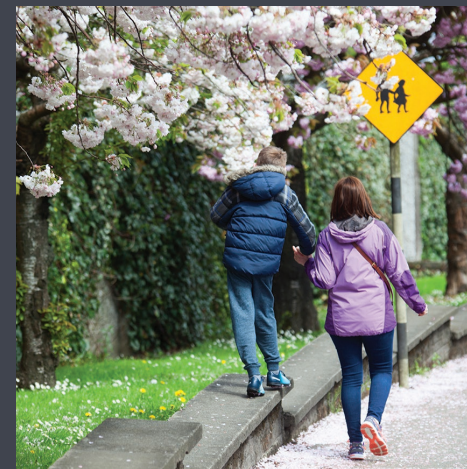
# DUNDALK

## COLLABORATIVE TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK

2019







**Ref |** Map 15. Map of Dundalk, 1853 by James O'Hagan (Louth County Library); original size 75 x 62 cm

Included in Irish Historic Towns Atlas, no. 16, Dundalk by Harold O'Sullivan (Royal Irish Academy, 2006) select contents from the Dundalk atlas are available online <https://www.ria.ie/irish-historic-towns-atlas-online-dundalk>



# Introduction

Dundalk (Dún Dealgan), which is the principal town in the north east of the Republic of Ireland, is a large settlement with a population of circa. 39,000 people (2016 CSO). With a rich industrial legacy, the historic town has a thriving arts and heritage scene, a vibrant leisure and sports culture, plus a growing reputation as a centre of excellence for the pharma industry. Benefiting from a strong economic and employment base, there is a healthy dynamic between resident workers and jobs. Located on the Dublin/ Belfast Economic Corridor, Dundalk and the adjoining Cooley Mountains create a culturally-significant landscape, which has inspired Irish Folklore for centuries.

The key findings from Dundalk's first-ever Collaborative Town Centre Health Check and baseline data will inform plans and strategies in relation to the following:

- Arts, Heritage and Culture
- Climate change adaptation
- Commerce/eCommerce and Enterprise
- Cultural Tourism, e.g. music, food, etc.
- Living in the Town Centre
- Public Realm, e.g. historic streetscapes, parks and public spaces
- Renewable Energy / Energy Harvesting
- Strategic Planning and Place-making



Representatives from Dundalk BIDS, Louth County Council, DkIT, Dundalk Chamber, Dundalk Credit Union, with ongoing support provided by the Heritage Council's National CTCHC Co-ordinator, formed the Dundalk CTCHC steering group and engaged in a collaborative process to achieve the goals set out by the National Collaborative Town Centre Health Check 15-Step assessment process.

**The CTCHC research focused on a number of key areas:**

- Land use in the historic town centre
- Consumers' opinions and attitudes
- Business owners' attitude toward the town centre
- Footfall in the historic town centre
- Movement and Accessibility



L-R Brendan McSherry, Billy Doyle, Angela Dullaghan, Marguerite Quinn, Ali Harvey, Brian Walsh, Martin McElligott, Michael Gaynor, Aideen Morrissey, Geraldine Johnston, Helen Divilly, Frank Pentony, Thomas McEvoy. Missing from photo Mark Dearey, Catherine Duff and Eamon McMahon.

## Survey Methodology

Changing demographics and living/travel to work patterns along with changing consumer preferences and trends are all impacting on the overall vitality and viability of our historic town centres. In addition, some of the available information about our historic town centres is limited in scope.

The summary report presents up-to-date research that will help to inform our response to these issues and to inform existing and future operational programmes that support heritage-led urban and rural regeneration.

Dundalk's CTCHC research was undertaken during September - November 2018. Following the recommended 15-Step Methodology set out in the CTCHC Training Programme. DkIT Students from the Civil

Engineering Course collected survey data on the vitality and vibrancy of the historic town centre – this included a footfall survey, traffic counts and a land-use survey.

The detailed landuse survey examined the use of ground floor space in the core town centre area. This core area covered Clanbrassil Street, Park Street, Church Street, Bridge Street, Earl Street, Francis Street and Dublin Street and included over 500 premises. The survey was conducted in September 2018 and uses were classified, according to their use, using the GOAD Classification of Land Use. The survey also examined the number of vacant units in the town centre. All the land-use findings were validated by Louth County Council's GIS Office.

Red C also undertook consumer surveys in the town centre. The survey questionnaire was based on previous CTCHC research in Ireland and was provided under the CTCHC Training Programme. Red C used non-probability quota sampling to administer 400 questionnaires to consumers in Dundalk Town Centre. Quotes were based on age, gender and social class, as per CSO Data.

80 randomly selected business owners were invited by Dundalk BIDS to participate in a commercial survey and a total of 30 responded.

A car parking survey, covering off-street and on-street parking facilities, was also undertaken by DkIT Students, which fed into the Dundalk CTCHC results.

# Consumers' Opinions of Dundalk Town Centre

Shopping is the primary reason people use Dundalk Town Centre, having more than twice the importance of the next most common reason, which is to visit a café/restaurant. In terms of the main reasons why people use the town centre, 1 in 5 town users say their primary reason is to attend work.

## What do you think about Dundalk Town Centre, what are your first thoughts?



## Why do you shop in Dundalk Town Centre?

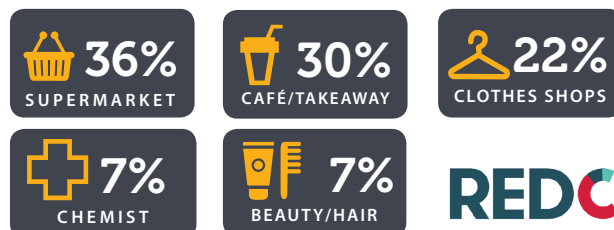


Throughout this section of the report, the answers to a number of questions asked in the RED C survey may add to more than 100%. This is because these were multi-code questions, meaning respondents were able to select more than one answer.

### Top 5 Business Types Visited

The main store types visited by respondents included supermarkets, clothing stores and restaurants.

Clothing shops had the highest average spend with €86.



### Top Online stores



### What type of shop is missing from Dundalk Town Centre?



Younger respondents shop online more frequently and have a higher online spend.

Shopping online at least once per month:

18-24	26%
25-34	27%
35-54	35%
55-64	10%
65+	3%



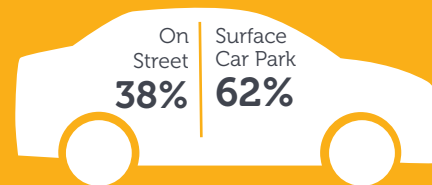


# Consumers' Opinions of Dundalk Town Centre (contd)

Consumers feel the biggest improvements the town centre could benefit from are related to: number of shops, the public realm and accessibility.

More shops	24%
More/better amenities	6%
Jobs	5%
Parking	4%
More Green Spaces	3%

Just over two-thirds of respondents prefer to park in a surface car park vs parking on the street.



## Top 5 Festivals/Events suggested

A significant number of respondents suggested events as a means of improving the town centre and Music and Christmas events were the most frequently-suggested attractions.



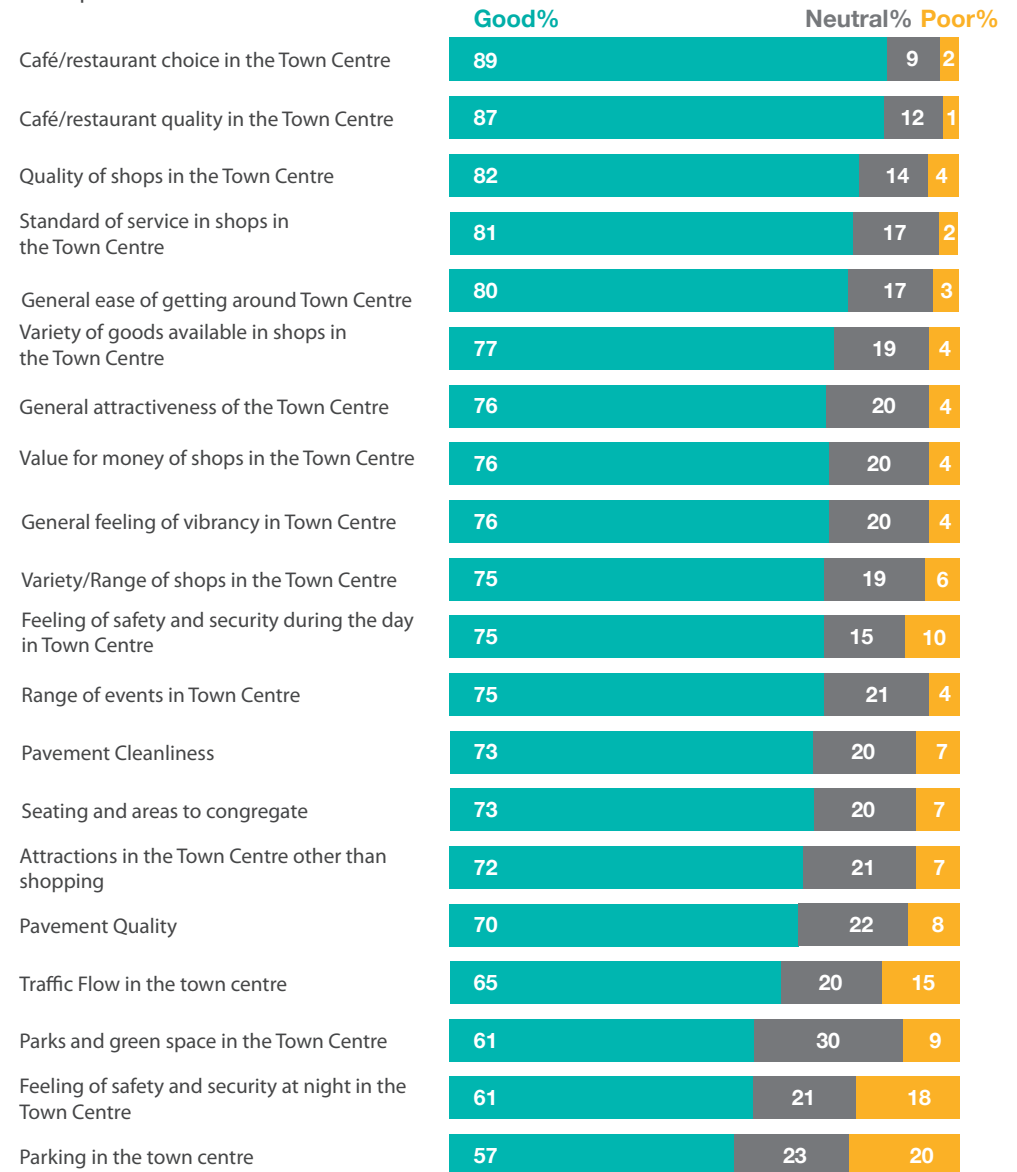
## Preferred Extended Opening Hours



<b>Mon - Fri 9am - 7pm</b> <i>(one extra hour every weekday)</i>	<b>41%</b>
Friday 6pm - 9pm	19%
None	18%
Thursday 6pm - 9pm	14%
Sunday 12 noon - 6pm	8%

Respondents also expressed a demand for extended shopping hours in the town centre with almost one-third of them expressing a preference for late opening on Fridays.

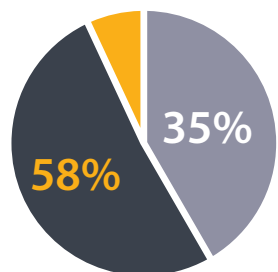
The survey also invited respondents to rate 20 key aspects of the town centre. The most positive rating was achieved by the town's cafés and restaurants and the standard of service in shops.





# Business Owners' Opinion of Dundalk Town Centre

When you are asked what you think of Dundalk Town Centre what are your first thoughts?



Positive	58%
Negative	35%
No Comment	7%

What are your expectations for trading over the two years?



**50%**  
Improve



**38%**  
No Change



**8%**  
Worse



**4%**  
No Comment

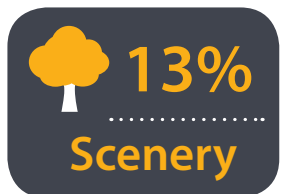
Do you Rent?



**€1025**  
average per month to rent (ex VAT)

**64%** Rent **36%** Own

What do you think is the main thing that attracts customers to Dundalk Town Centre?



Do you think Brexit will have positive or negative impact on your business?



**12%**  
Positive Impact



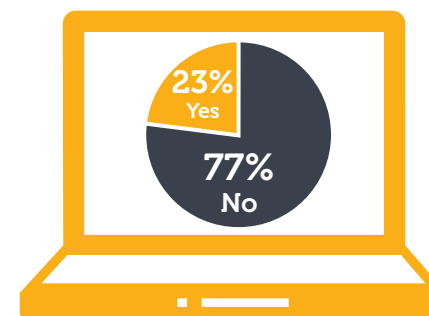
**50%**  
Negative Impact



**38%**  
Not Sure

**92%**  
say **NEWRY** is the **top COMPETITION** to Dundalk

Do you sell online?\*



\*A separate survey was conducted during the first quarter of 2019 on online habits and results are based on the 60 replies received by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Business Owner's Online Presence\*



**57%**  
WEBSITE



**92%**  
FACEBOOK



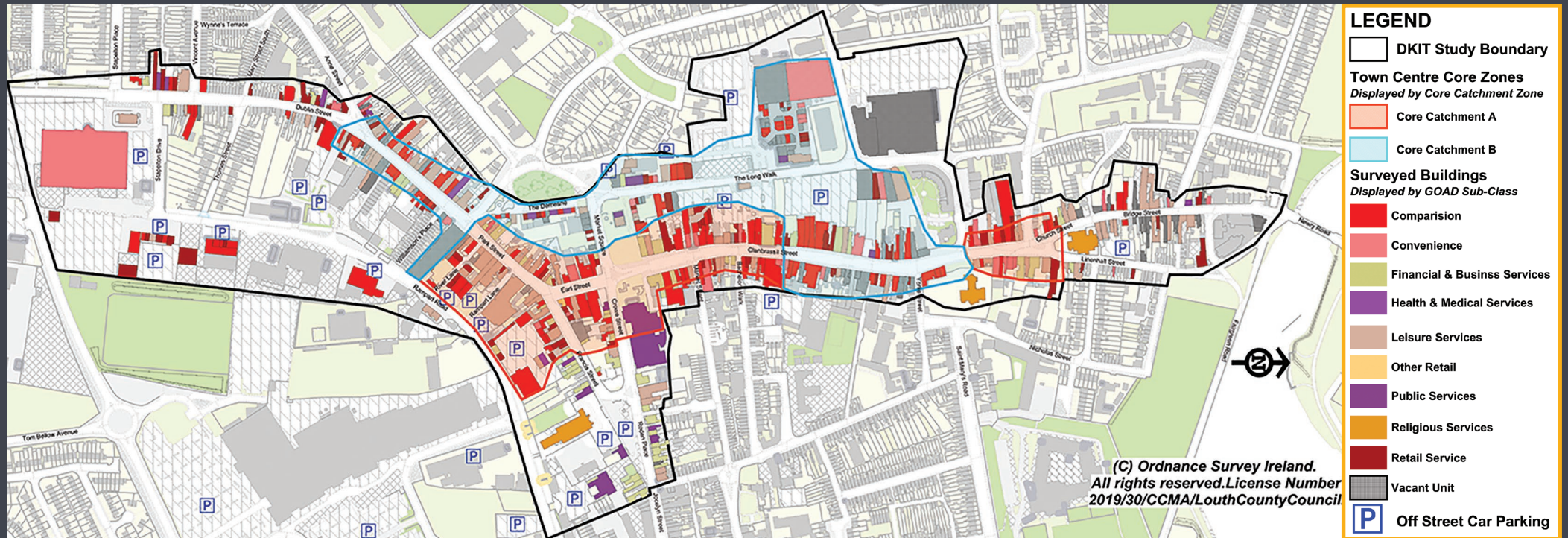
**55%**  
INSTAGRAM



**27%**  
TWITTER



# Survey of Land Use in Dundalk Town Centre



**24%**

COMPLETE  
VACANCY RATE<sup>1</sup>

**76%**

OCCUPANCY RATE  
IN TOWN CENTRE

**57%**

UNITS SURVEYED  
CLASSIFIED AS RETAIL

Retail	57%
Leisure Service	24%
Financial & Business Service	12.5%
Vacant <sup>2</sup>	5%
Public Service	1%
Health & Medical Service	0.5%

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Study Area outlined in black in map above

<sup>2</sup> Taken from combined study areas in red and blue



# Survey of Footfall, Parking and Brexit Opinion in Dundalk Town Centre

## Footfall in Dundalk Town Centre

Pedestrian counts were undertaken at six count points within the town centre, at three different intervals on 16th and 17th November, 2018. The cold but dry weather conditions were favourable for the duration of the survey.

The pedestrian count findings showed the highest footfall count was recorded at Dealz on Earl Street on Friday morning (286 people). It was also the busiest count point in general over the course of the footfall survey. This data will act as a base line for pedestrian counts planned in the future.

## Survey of Parking Spaces

The DkIT survey indicates that there are 3,350 off-street car parking spaces and 495 on-street car parking spaces within the survey area.

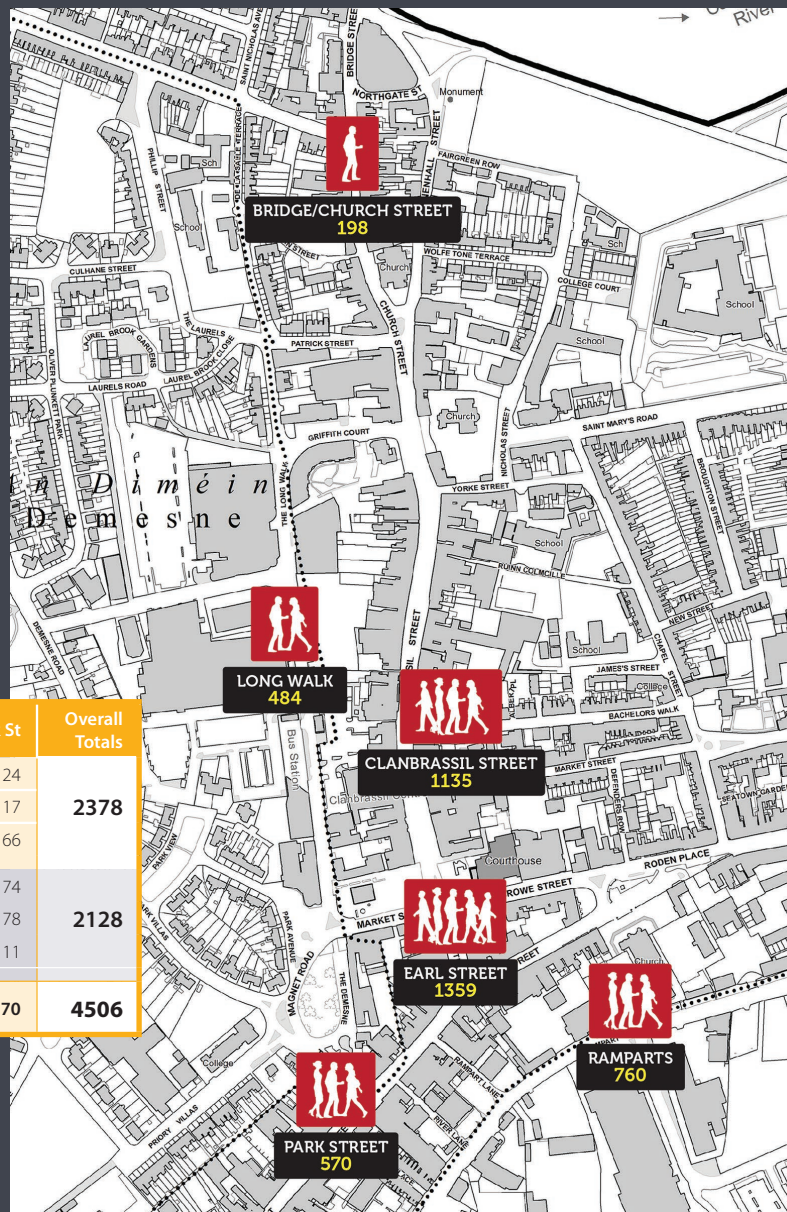
The off-street parking spaces relate to locations available to the general public and do not include further off-street parking spaces within the study area that are exclusively for private use only.

Day	Times	Bridge St	Clanbrassil St	Earl St	Long Walk	Ramparts	Park St	Overall Totals
Fri	1.15 - 1.30	31	212	286	99	144	124	2378
	3.15 - 3.30	60	243	264	74	88	117	
	5.15 - 5.30	57	120	211	85	97	66	
Sat	1.15 - 1.30	14	240	212	69	131	74	2128
	3.15 - 3.30	25	215	186	74	183	78	
	5.15 - 5.30	11	105	200	83	117	111	
Totals		198	1135	1359	484	760	570	4506

Friday was **10% busier** than Saturday

↓ **16% drop** 5.15pm - 5.30pm Friday

↓ **27% drop** 5.15pm - 5.30pm Saturday



## Consumer Reactions to Brexit

UNDER **1/3**

Just under a third of those who currently use Dundalk town centre have **noticed a decline in activity** around the town **since the announcement of Brexit**.

UNDER **2/3**

Under two-thirds of users of Dundalk town centre **believe that Brexit will have a negative impact on the town** if it goes ahead.

**1 OUT OF 8**

**believe** it will have a **positive impact** on the town centre.



# Key Considerations and Opportunities for Dundalk

With large-scale national and European Investment in projects such as the Market Square and Clanbrassil Street and St Nicholas Quarter Rejuvenation Schemes in addition to NDP funded projects such as the Long Walk Quarter, in conjunction with initiatives like Purple Flag and the Heritage Council and Partners' CTCHC study, Dundalk has an abundance of potential to thrive with a collaborative approach to revitalising its town centre. There are also significant opportunities for economic growth and development under the planned NDP Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, Disruptive Industries Fund, Various EC Funds, and the hosting of the 2nd CTCHC Border Towns Training Workshop for the first time in Dundalk in April 2019.

The National Planning Framework (known as Project 2040 NPF and NDP 2018-2027) also supports the revitalisation of the historic county town. The National CTCHC Training Programme has been a catalyst for bringing key stakeholders together to ensure a vibrant future for the historic town centre of Dundalk and to enhance the quality of life for citizens and visitors alike. In order to create a vibrant and innovative town centre – a comprehensive commercial, cultural and community hub – a collaborative effort is required to initiate and implement a **Town Centre Renewal Action Plan**.

## Dundalk Institute of Technology

A key partner in Dundalk's regeneration is Dundalk Institute of Technology. DkIT, a leading Higher Education Provider in North Leinster-South Ulster, is focused on providing flexible, forward-thinking and skills-focused education to learners across our region. DkIT is deeply committed to its core mission of supporting the continued economic, social and cultural development of the North Leinster-South Ulster region on the Belfast-Dublin corridor.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) in particular offers a new opportunity to renew the historic centre of the town and is a statutory planning guide to making this renewal happen. Within 6 months of the adoption of the RSES by the Eastern Midland and Regional Assembly (May 2019) Louth County Council is required to review the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021. On foot of this, it is crucial that the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 (extended under the Electoral Local Government Planning and Development Act 2013) is reviewed. This will ensure compliance with the objectives of the RSES which promotes Dundalk as a Regional Growth Centre and seeks to prioritise regeneration and promote revitalisation and redevelopment of the town centre.

## BREXIT

Dundalk faces significant challenges as a result of the planned exit by the UK from the European Union and, also, in relation to the UN's Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). It is anticipated that the recently formed Border Town Network (BTN), under the Heritage Council and Partners' CTCHC Training Programme, will assist in enabling Ireland's Border Towns to survive and thrive for the benefit of future generations.

# Irish Planning System



## Stakeholders and Project Team

The Dundalk CTCHC Project Team meets on a monthly basis in Dundalk Town Centre and operates a rotating Chairperson.

If you would like to get involved in the renewal of the Dundalk Town Centre please contact:

### Louth County Council

t 1890 202 303 e ctchc@louthcoco.ie

### Martin McElligott *Town Centre Commercial Manager*

t +353 86 8225003 e manager@dundalkbids.com

For information on the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Training Programme please contact:

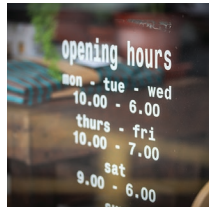
### Ali Harvey MIPI *The Heritage Council*

t +353 87 419 3458 e aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie

A significant number of stakeholders came together in 2018 to form the Dundalk CTCHC Project Team. Their names and organisations are as follows (in alphabetical order):

Fiona Cunningham	Dundalk BIDS
Mark Dearey	Dundalk BIDS and LCC Councillor (until May 2019)
Helen Divilly	Louth County Council
Billy Doyle	Dundalk Credit Union
Catherine Duff	Louth County Council
Angela Dullaghan	Louth County Council
Michael Gaynor	Dundalk Chamber
Ali Harvey	Heritage Council
Geraldine Johnston	Dundalk Credit Union
Aideen Morrissey	Louth County Council
Martin McElligott	Dundalk BIDS
Thomas McEvoy	Louth LEO
Eamon McMahon	Dundalk IT
Brendan McSherry	Louth County Council
Sinead Mullen	Louth County Council
Frank Pentony	Louth County Council
Marguerite Quinn	Louth County Council
Brian Walsh	County Museum Dundalk





Photography kindly provided by **Martin McElligott**





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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
 The Heritage Council

