

Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS)

A National 'Pilot' for
the Heritage Council's
new National Village Design
Statement Programme II

‘PROCESS’ EVALUATION REPORT

JUNE 2011



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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INSTITUTE**





Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS)

A National 'Pilot' for the Heritage Council's new National Village Design Statement Programme II

'Process' Evaluation Report (Draft Final)

June 2011

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Heritage Council's Statutory Role

Since its establishment in 1995, the Heritage Council has endeavoured to fulfil its expansive remit through principles of partnership, social inclusion, and sustainability. There has been a stated commitment towards improving public appreciation of, and access to, Ireland's diverse and unique heritage, as defined by the *Heritage Act 1995*¹. This has been facilitated through a wide range of activities including publications and research, formulation of evidence-based policy proposals to government, support funding, and through programme and project development at local, regional, national, and all-island levels. Council's lead in promoting and supporting Village Design Statements (VDSs) in Ireland since 2000 through the Village Design Statement Programme has been notable. More than 40 VDSs have been completed to date, and this has served to create greater levels of ownership and appreciation of heritage at a community level.

Through this national programme, the Heritage Council has been able to develop a particular proficiency in, and provide support for, community-based heritage planning. The link, which has thus been established at a programme level between heritage and heritage objectives on one hand and local development and decision-making processes on the other, has brought new opportunities and learning outcomes for all stakeholders involved. The ongoing concerns that have been raised in relation to the strategic management of the built and natural environment, sustainable development, planning, and infrastructure lend credence to the need to support such linkages.

The commitment to ensure that communities are active participants and equal stakeholders in planning processes helps strengthen local support for such processes. Through the Heritage Council recognising the importance for communities to express how they wish to view themselves and their heritage, communities have become more effective agents of heritage and environmental management than would otherwise be the case. In addition, fundamental to the VDS Programme, more recently, has been a rebuilding of trust between communities and statutory agencies.

%2 Background to Evaluation of VDS Programme I (2000-2007)

Village Design Statements (VDSs) are a mechanism for 'protecting, celebrating, and enhancing local distinctiveness' (Source: Heritage Council, 2008). VDSs have however, the potential to represent the *de facto* 'constitution' of a village community. The process and mechanism, therefore, for how VDSs are developed and formulated is of critical importance. The overall value of the outcomes reflects directly on the participative nature of the process itself, and in particular, its decision-making processes.

¹ www.irishstatutebook.ie/1995/en/act/pub/0004/index.html

In 2007 the Heritage Council's Planning Officer, who had recently taken over responsibility of the National VDS Programme, established a National VDS Steering Group (NVDSSG) to oversee the evaluation and post-evaluation stages of the Heritage Council's first National VDS Programme (2000-2007). The list of National VDS Steering Group (NVDSSG) Members is provided at *Appendix 1*.

This represented a significant change in focus for the VDS Programme itself. The collaborative and participative nature and integrated approach for a successful VDS process were highlighted and became an essential requirement for all future VDSs undertaken in Ireland. A VDS Programme I (2000-2007) Evaluation Report was published by the Heritage Council in 2008. The National VDS Steering Group was instrumental in ensuring that key issues arising from the programme evaluation report, would be implemented.

These issues included:

- *A multi-agency approach to the delivery of the VDS Programme, including government departments, professions (e.g. the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) and the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI)) and voluntary organisations;*
- *Promotion of a fundamental change in the way in which design, planning, community involvement and heritage and their inter-connectedness are perceived and practised nationally, at a county level and then locally;*
- *Provision of guidance on how a VDS might link in to the evolving planning system, especially with Local Area Plans (LAPs), but also to the many programmes of wider social and economic development in both rural and urban areas, including for example, well-established LEADER or other forms of Integrated Rural Development (IRD) and Urban Development initiatives; and*
- *A programme of training², for professionals, communities and elected representatives about quality design, character and distinctiveness, community engagement and the preparation and use of VDSs.*
(Source: Heritage Council, 2008).

The membership of the National VDS Steering Group has a considerable collective background in heritage management, sustainable community development and spatial planning at both policy and practice levels. This has helped to ensure the development of a more integrated approach within the new National VDS Programme II. The composition of the national steering group has also been instrumental in developing and supporting VDS Programme II and contextualising it within broader operational frameworks at a local, regional, national and European level.

² This training programme could be developed on a multi-disciplinary basis – see Heritage Council's Award winning Multi-Disciplinary Introduction to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), which involves 10 Professional Institutes (north and south).

%3 Background to Community-Led ‘Pilot’ VDS in Julianstown, County Meath

As part of the commitment to the new National VDS Programme (VDS PII), the Heritage Council actively sought to design, develop and implement a national community-led ‘Pilot’ VDS process, and to externally evaluate the new collaborative and participative ‘process’. Julianstown in County Meath was selected as the location for this community-led ‘Pilot’ VDS process.

It is important to highlight that the project in Julianstown has only been possible due to the efforts of the NVDSSG in supporting the overall aims and objectives of the VDS Programme II. The Heritage Council also worked closely with the then Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) in the development of the new VDS Programme.

In addition, the process of implementation of the Julianstown VDS will be instrumental in creating a more informed view of the overall VDS Programme II and its key aims and objectives. Ultimately, the Julianstown VDS will be regarded as much for its potential to enable and empower the community to live up to, and build upon its constitution, as to the resulting VDS itself.

The brief for consultants in relation to the National ‘Pilot’ VDS for the Heritage Council’s new National VDS Programme II is provided at *Appendix 2*. The Heritage Council, Julianstown and District Community Association (formerly Julianstown and District Residents Association/JDRA) and Meath County Council (the project partners) prepared the brief collaboratively over a three-month period in early 2009 and the VDS project went out to tender in June 2009. It should be highlighted that the cover page of the brief stressed that the ‘Pilot’ VDS project was seeking consultants *‘to provide services to assist and support the community in the preparation and delivery of the Julianstown VDS – A ‘Pilot’ for the new National Village Design Statement Programme II.* This statement aimed to highlight the important role of the community in the ‘pilot’ process.

The completed Julianstown ‘Pilot’ VDS Report, which included an Agreed VDS Action Plan, was launched by former Minister Ciaran Cuffe (T.D.) and the project partners at a community event in Julianstown in October 2010³.

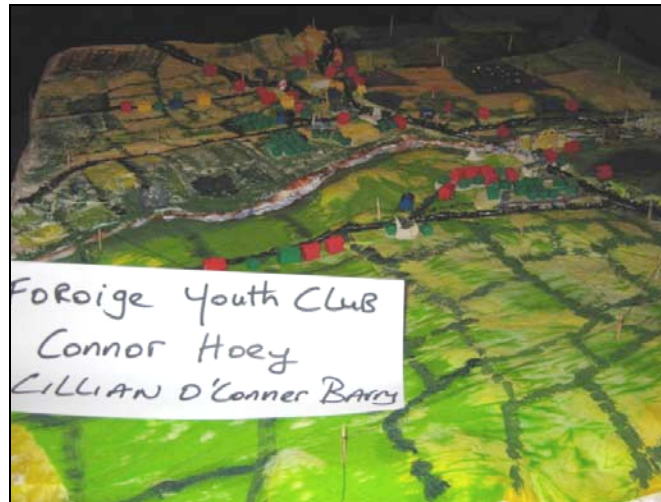
3

www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Planning/village_design_statements/Julianstown_VDS.pdf and

www.meath.ie/LocalAuthorities/Publications/HeritagePublications/File.44006.en.pdf

³ www.unece.org/env/pp/

Photograph 1: Model of Julianstown Village created by Foroige Youth Club



This current report evaluates the *process* including structures and relationships developed in the preparation of the 'Pilot' VDS. The Heritage Council intends to commission a follow up external output/summative evaluation of the *implementation* phase of the 'Pilot' VDS in 2013.

2. Village Design Statement Programme II - Philosophy

2.1 Background to the Emergence of VDS Programme II⁴

The philosophy of the new National Village Design Statement (VDS) Programme II in Ireland emerged from the integration, by the Heritage Council, of two separate planning approaches at an international level:

- 1 The EU emphasis on collaborative and participative planning, in accordance with the key tenets of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Aarhus Convention⁵ and the European Landscape Convention (ELC)⁶; and
- 2 The UK's Village Design Statement process introduced in the early 1990s.

2.2 UNECE Aarhus Convention and the European Landscape Convention

UNECE Aarhus Convention

The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters was adopted on the 25th June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus at the 4th Ministerial Conference in the Environment for Europe Process.

The Aarhus Convention is a new kind of environmental agreement which:

- *Links environmental rights and human rights;*
- *Acknowledges that we owe an obligation to future generations;*
- *Establishes that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders;*
- *Links government accountability to environmental protection; and*
- *Focuses on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context.*⁷

The Aarhus Convention came into force on the 30th October 2001. At the time of writing this evaluation report, Ireland had not ratified the Aarhus Convention⁸.

European Union (EU)

Significant changes have taken place in recent times at EU level in relation to the sustainable planning and management of the environment. Measures have been adopted across a wide range of activities including: farming, forestry, infrastructural development, and services provision. Central to such measures has been an emphasis on education, participation, and ownership. A focus on the character and concept of landscape, whereby the local and cultural resonances of all landscapes are valued and effectively planned, managed and protected in all relevant plans and strategies, has been inherent to the overall approach, as advocated by the European Landscape Convention (ELC⁹).

⁴ Information provided in this chapter has been sourced from www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/

⁵ www.unece.org/env/pp/

⁶ www.unece.org/env/pp/

⁷ www.unece.org/env/pp/

⁸ Ireland signed the Aarhus Convention in 1998.

⁹ www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/landscape/

Any plan therefore which is being undertaken should integrate procedural measures for ensuring that:

'all action taken to define, implement and monitor landscape policies should be preceded and accompanied by procedures for participation by members of the public and other relevant stakeholders, with the aim of enabling them to play an active role in formulating, implementing and monitoring landscape quality objectives... It implies recognition of the rights and responsibilities of populations to play an active role in the processes of acquiring knowledge, taking decisions and managing the quality of the places where they live. Public involvement in decisions to take action and in the implementation and management of such decisions over time is regarded not as a formal act but as an integral part of management, protection and planning procedures'¹⁰.

Thus the ELC effectively seeks to place people, irrespective of their backgrounds or age group, qualifications or affiliations, at the centre of all decisions being made in relation to their landscape. This can best be realised through a collaborative planning framework, which is designed and built upon a consensus-based approach to decision-making. In essence, the means of arriving at agreed outcomes are based upon principles and practices of participation, inclusion, and equality.

These principles lie at the very heart of the approach being championed by the Heritage Council in the development of the new Village Design Statement Programme II in Ireland.

2.3 United Kingdom's VDS Process introduced in the 1990s

Considerable experience with Village Design Statements (VDSs) had been gained in the UK since the early 1990s through the work of Jeff Bishop and Ian Davison (BDOR Ltd., UK) and Steve Owen on behalf of the Countryside Commission (now Natural England).

Much of this work had arisen out of a need to address community concerns in relation to poor design quality; overly prescriptive and excessively professionalised design criteria developed by planning authorities and others; poor integration of building design into landscape quality objectives; and insufficient localisation of design elements into many schemes.

Following discussions with the Heritage Council about their proposed collaborative and participative VDS Programme (PII), it was recognised that a new framework would have to be developed in Ireland and the UK, which would address some key concerns including the need for communities to be at the heart of local planning initiatives: 'The new approach should, in most circumstances, be community-initiated and community-led'¹¹.

¹⁰ Source: Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)3 of the Committee of Members to member states on the guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, Strasbourg.

¹¹ Bishop, J (2010): *Village Design Statements (VDSs) in the UK: Background and Context*, Unpublished Information Note.

2.4 Ireland and VDS

As noted above, the Heritage Council has been actively engaged in raising public awareness of the wide-ranging benefits of effective heritage planning and management in Ireland in all its forms. The Council has supported a wide range of programmes in education (at primary and post-primary levels); in natural heritage (including water/marine and inland waterways) and built/cultural heritage and urban landscapes such as the all-island Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) Initiative; in archaeology (including publication/research and the INSTAR Programme); and in wildlife conservation and management, e.g. High Nature Value Farming (HNV Farming). The Heritage Council also organises the National Heritage Week on an annual basis. In 2010, this involved over 700 events promoting and celebrating Ireland's unique and valuable national heritage.

The Heritage Council has also promoted and funded a broad range of grant-based heritage programmes and initiatives at community, county (including the Local Authority Heritage Officer Programme), and at national levels (e.g. the Heritage Council's recent submission to the DoEHLG on the emerging National Landscape Strategy (NLS) in December 2010).

As the national major stakeholder in ensuring the appropriateness of planning and related policies in promoting best practice heritage management, the Heritage Council has contributed to the formulation of evidence-based policy at all levels and has funded a wide range of research initiatives to inform policy formulation and delivery. The Heritage Council, in furthering its strategic aims and objectives, as provided for by the *Heritage Act 1995*, effectively became the 'champion' of Village Design Statements (VDSs) in Ireland.

2.5 The Heritage's Council VDS Programme

The Heritage Council introduced the first National Village Design Statement (VDS) Programme in 2000, to promote the management and enhancement of local distinctiveness and character within Irish villages with a particular emphasis on heritage features and assets. As mentioned previously, the National VDS Programme (VDS PI) was externally evaluated in 2008. The evaluation noted that amongst the ongoing challenges being faced by the VDS Programme I, greater community involvement was required, as was a need to embed the VDS process within the statutory planning system.

The Heritage Council, working in partnership with a number of key stakeholders including the then DoEHLG, Third Level Institutions (NUI Maynooth, Tipperary Institute and University of Limerick) and BDOR Ltd., UK, decided to maintain a commitment to the VDS Programme in Ireland. This commitment has been directed at ensuring optimum collaboration and effective public participation in the new VDS Programme II.

In Ireland, the Heritage Council's new community-led National VDS Programme II has been shaped and informed by a number of previous projects including the:

- Publication of the Heritage Council's booklet *Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages – Village Design Statements in Ireland – The Way Forward?* (2009)¹².
- Julianstown Community Play DVD launch in March 2009 (see Chapter 4);
- VDS Programme I Evaluation (2000-2007, published in 2008);
- Heritage Council's Slane Castle VDS Conference (2008); and
- Design and implementation by the Heritage Council of a participative process for the Lucan VDS (2007)¹³;

The Heritage Council's VDS Booklet, the first Irish-based publication on Village Design Statements, highlighted that a VDS has wide-ranging and multiple benefits including the enhancement of overall 'sense of place' and 'sense of belonging'. For example, a good VDS can:

- *Raise awareness about surrounding landscape, environment and heritage assets;*
- *Provide the community with a useful tool to ensure that future developments and changes add to local distinctiveness and character;*
- *Link into the planning system so that planners can use it to raise local distinctiveness of design proposals;*
- *Assist local authority planners, architects, developers and others by giving them local guidance up-front; and*
- *Generate and develop overall community confidence and capacity building.*

The key findings of the VDS Programme I evaluation (see Section 1) are also included in the Heritage Council VDS Booklet.

The Heritage Council's Chairman, Conor Newman, formally launched the VDS Booklet¹⁴ at the Slane Castle Conference (October 2008). In addition, the Slane Castle VDS Conference, which was organised by the Heritage Council's Planning Officer, allowed the opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders (including representatives from the Julianstown Community) to make presentations and to reflect upon the VDS process to date in Ireland.

¹² www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Planning/VDS_Final_Web.pdf

¹³ http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Planning/village_design_statements/Lucan_VDS.pdf. This VDS, which was undertaken by the Heritage Council in partnership with South Dublin County Council and Lucan 2000, was conferred with an IPI Planning Award (Commendation in Participative Planning) in 2008.

¹⁴ A draft version of the Heritage Council's VDS Booklet was launched at the Slane Castle Conference and a final version was published in January 2009.

The Julianstown & District Community Association (JDCA, formerly Julianstown and District Residents Association/JDRA) presented a lively community play at the event, which had been written by members of the JDCA, and which reflected upon life in their village¹⁵.

The play helped focus attention on the challenges faced by village communities such as the Julianstown Community, but more importantly underlined the significant commitment to, and capacity for, engagement by the community. This commitment was instrumental at a later date in establishing the Julianstown VDS Sub-group, which had a specific responsibility in relation to the overall VDS 'Pilot', as discussed later in the report. The active involvement of the Julianstown community in the Slane VDS Conference in 2008 also helped to strengthen levels of *trust* between the community and the Heritage Council, which was an important factor once the VDS 'Pilot' was announced and commenced.

The hosting of the VDS Conference at Slane Castle was of significance importance on a number of levels – the conference was an all-island event with representatives attending from Northern Ireland, which provided a participative forum (in the form of workshops) for discussion in relation to local and community planning methodologies; it launched a revised collaborative approach to village planning; and it brought together a range of key stakeholders and practitioners so that best practice could be examined, promoted and disseminated.

All-island events such as the Slane Conference continue to play a vital role in ensuring that more sustainable, effective, and efficient approaches to local area planning, including best practice heritage management, can be continually developed and evaluated in Ireland.

Thus, the Slane Conference provided an opportunity and springboard for the Heritage Council to update and to revise its existing National Village Design Statement Programme and to move forward from VDS Programme I to VDS Programme II.

In summary, the philosophical basis of VDS the new Programme II has been stated by the Heritage Council, as aiming to produce Village Design Statements which include specific *Design Principles* and *Agreed VDS Action Plans*, which enhance and promote unique village settlements in Ireland through:

- 1 Best practice heritage management, e.g. preparation of conservation and management plans;**
- 2 Sustainable community development, e.g. development of social capital; and**
- 3 Sustainable spatial planning, e.g. formulation of design principles¹⁶.**

¹⁵ The Heritage Council provided funding in late 2008 to record/produce the Julianstown community play into a DVD. Copies of the DVD are available from the JDCA and/or the Heritage Council.

¹⁶ www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/

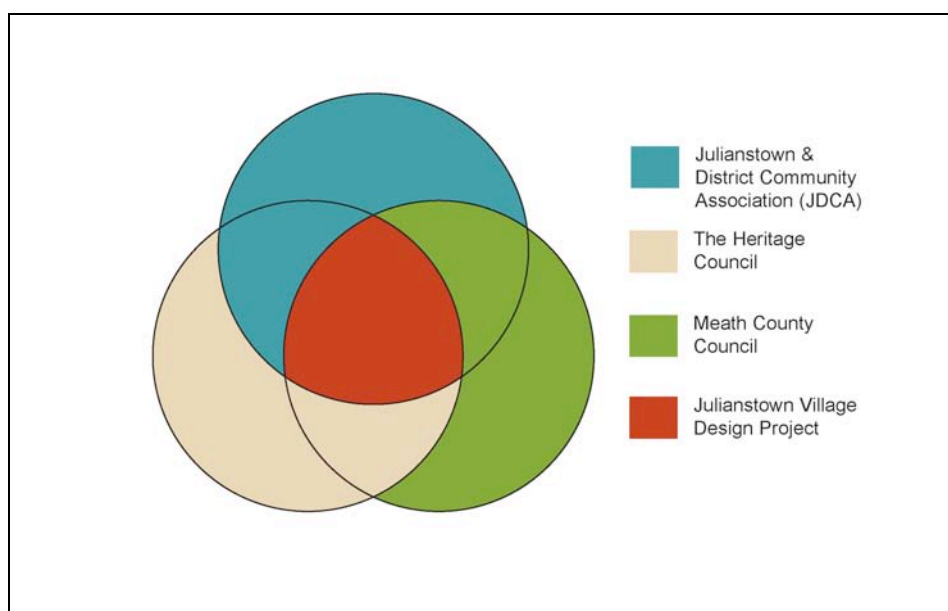
2.6 Julianstown – A National ‘Pilot’ for the Heritage Council’s new National VDS Programme II

The selection by the Heritage Council of Julianstown as the national ‘Pilot’ in March 2009 was based upon an application made to the Heritage Council by the community of Julianstown for a Village Design Statement in 2007 (around the time that VDS Programme I was commencing).

The application referred to the range of challenges and issues facing the village community, amongst which was the potential loss of local character and distinctiveness due to the large traffic volume passing through the village (avoiding the M1 Toll), the loss of facilities such as a shop and a post office, and increasing dereliction of protected structures.

Julianstown’s ‘Pilot’ VDS provided an excellent opportunity for a dynamic, small rural community to engage proactively in planning, to look and plan forward, to establish benchmarks for *how* the community wishes its village to be managed and developed, and to optimise all local resources. In doing so, the ‘Pilot’ VDS brought a range of stakeholders together for a common purpose in the context of renewed recognition of the right of local communities to have a core role and ‘voice’ in plan formulation, development management policy, and policy implementation. The Julianstown Village Design Statement¹⁷ (VDS), developed in partnership by the Heritage Council, Meath County Council, and the Julianstown Community, has been undertaken at a time of significant change and uncertainty in Irish economic and social development.

Diagram 1: Venn Diagram illustrating collaborative nature of ‘Pilot’ VDS Project



¹⁷

www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Planning/village_design_statements/Julianstown_VDS.pdf and www.meath.ie/LocalAuthorities/Publications/HeritagePublications/File,44006,en.pdf

Recently there has been much debate concerning any shortcomings of existing Irish planning legislation to effectively enhance and protect local character and distinctiveness for smaller settlements and villages (rural and urban).

The outlook for the national economy and government finances, and the concomitant reduction in available resources, places considerable challenges on planning authorities and statutory agencies alike. The new VDS Programme II and its national pilot in Julianstown seeks to demonstrate how planning and sustainable development might best be undertaken at community level, to ensure the best use of available resources and value for money (VFM).

3. Purpose and Methodology of the ‘Pilot’ VDS Process Evaluation

3.1 Introduction

The process involved in the design and preparation of a collaborative and participative Village Design Statement is complex and multilayered as it involved the community, statutory agencies, professional advisors, academics and the private sector.

Ensuring the agreement and co-ordination of all these groups as the process moved forward to the production of a VDS, which everyone could sign up to, requires an enormous commitment of time and effort by everyone involved. Many meetings involving different permutations of the participants have to be organised and held, as had various meetings with third parties. Much preparation and follow up work also has to be done.

Critically important in the new VDS process are the organisational structures put in place and the identification of the people who would work effectively and collaboratively together within these structures to produce an agreed VDS.

The success of these structures and relationships, will be determined by the extent to which the VDS produced involves the community and reflects their needs but also by its acceptance and use by the statutory bodies.

This report seeks to evaluate how successful the process for the Julianstown ‘Pilot’ VDS has been.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology adopted for this process evaluation was based on the Consultants’ Brief as part of the tender for the ‘Pilot’ VDS (June 2009, provided at Appendix 2¹⁸) and the *Evaluation Framework for the Julianstown ‘Pilot’ VDS Process*¹⁹.

The evaluation focused on the ‘process’ applied in the preparation of the Village Design Statement in Julianstown rather than the Village Design Statement ‘outcomes’, i.e. The focus of the evaluation was on the **process used to bring about the Village Design Statement in Julianstown and not on the Statement outcomes**. [As noted in Section 1, an external output/summative evaluation of the ‘Pilot’ VDS will be undertaken in 2013]. It is intended that the evaluation of the pilot process will help inform the roll out of the new VDS PII in Ireland.

¹⁸ Prepared by the Heritage Council, JDCA (formerly JCRA) and Meath County Council, June 2009.

¹⁹ Prepared by the Heritage Council and Tipperary Institute, November 2009.

What is critical from the process point of view relates to the perceptions and impact on the stakeholders. The evaluation framework sets out the broad parameters and criteria against which the 'Pilot' VDS process would be analysed and assessed, as follows:

1. Perceived involvement of stakeholders

The perceptions of the key stakeholders and future stakeholders (i.e. project partners and community including young people) – the people who will finally make use of the VDS outcomes – of the extent that they were involved in production of the VDS and the extent to which they feel their views are reflected;

2. Overall community awareness and participation

The breadth of knowledge of, and engagement in, the process by the community;

3. Confidence of stakeholders that outcomes will be used

The confidence of key stakeholders in the outcome, and the extent to which they would be likely to use the outcomes to guide their decision-making in the future;

4. Perceived clarity of outcome

The extent to which the various stakeholders feel that the outcome is clear, unambiguous, and usable;

5. Extent of enhanced relationships

The extent to which stakeholders consider that enhanced relationships have been created between different groups involved in the development management process;

6. Experience of participation in workshops, meetings, etc

The opportunities that stakeholders feel they have had to participate actively in community workshops, meetings and the extent to which they consider they were facilitated and heard;

7. Perception of stakeholders regarding their skill enhancement

The extent to which key stakeholders feel their skills have been enhanced and the evidence of that enhancement; and

8. Extent of perceived influence on statutory process amongst local authority decision-makers

The extent to which local authority decision-takers feel that the outcome will impact on the statutory Local Area Plan (LAP);

In order to fulfil the primary expressed requirements of the process evaluation, the following elements were considered to be of importance:

- Benchmarking of key stakeholders regarding their current status, understanding of the VDS project, expectations and concerns
- A community questionnaire
- Observation of a number of events
- An end of project review with key stakeholders using group discussions and one-to one interviews

The principal **elements** of the evaluation process, as carried out, included the following:

- Background reading and research related to the VDS project
- Attendance at VDS steering group meetings
- Attendance at VDS sub-group meetings
- Attendance at public workshops and meetings
- Consultation with stakeholders
- Community Surveys and analyses

The evaluation involved considerable observation and listening in relation to the functioning of the decision-making groups within the process. Many of the discussions and debates were assessed as issues emerged, particularly in relation to how such issues were dealt with collectively by the groups involved. The evaluation also sought to determine how general community concerns were appraised and the extent to which integration occurred between relevant stakeholders.

The evaluation notes the manner in which the community was involved in the overall project management structure, the mechanisms by which community consensus was achieved around various topics and issues, the nature and role of the appointed consultant within the process, and the extent to which the VDS process was supported externally.

The next chapter outlines the Process, including structures and relationships developed in the preparation of the 'Pilot' VDS, and indicates the extent to which the Process met the evaluation criteria.

4. The 'Pilot' VDS Process

The process including structures and relationships developed in the preparation of the 'Pilot' VDS are discussed in detail under the following headings:

1. **Design of a Collaborative and Participative VDS Process;**
2. **Statutory Agencies - The Heritage Council and Meath County Council;**
3. **The 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group;**
4. **The VDS Sub-Group;**
5. **Participation of the Local Community;**
6. **Engagement with Young People**
7. **The VDS Consultant;**
8. **VDS Support and Training;**
9. **Communication Structures;**
10. **Project Timeframe;**
11. **Ministerial Launch of the VDS report – moving into the 'implementation phase'**

4.1 Design of a Collaborative and Participative VDS Process

A collaborative and participative process was designed and developed for the VDS Programme II. This was found to be fundamental to the successful implementation of the 'Pilot'. Unlike many other similar type planning projects, as noted in the Introduction, the terms of reference for this initiative were effectively developed by the Julianstown and District Community Association (JDCA) in partnership with the Heritage Council and Meath County Council. **(Criteria 1, 2, 3 and 5)**

This collaborative approach to setting up the 'Pilot' brought a greater level of participation, engagement and indeed certainty in relation to the anticipated outcomes of the VDS than might otherwise have been the case. It also established a new approach to spatial planning and helped build a significant level of trust, from the outset, between the key stakeholders.

The key elements of the collaborative process for the 'Pilot' VDS, as initially designed and prepared by the three partners (Heritage Council, JDCA, and Meath County Council) and contained in the project brief for consultants (Heritage Council. June 2009), consists of four main objectives, which were to:

- 1 *Assess and describe what is distinctive and unique about Julianstown village and to ensure that these features are enhanced through the local planning system (and other relevant socio-economic development programmes);*
- 2 *Draw up design principles to guide the future development within and surrounding the village in accordance with published national planning guidelines and the European Landscape Convention (ELC);*
- 3 *Effectively manage new development (including infill) and to provide advice to all decision-makers, developers and their agents;*

4 *Act as a focus for local communities to participate and collaborate effectively in the local planning process (and other relevant socio-economic development programmes).*

The collaborative process therefore gave the local community effective ownership of the overall VDS project as they were involved in the scoping and preparation of the VDS Brief (June 2009). The process also established a vehicle for the delivery of the VDS by the setting up of a management structure, which consisted of a *VDS Steering Group* (to be chaired by a local community representative) and the *VDS Sub-group (the community)*, which worked in partnership. The strength and confidence of the community's involvement in the collaborative process is further illustrated by the VDS Steering Group being 'chaired' by a person from the local community - Emer Dolphin. Through these structures, the VDS process sought to establish effective two-way links and working relationships between all layers of the partnership. The community benefited in that its views were clearly articulated and would be taken into consideration at County planning level. Meath County Council benefited in that it now has a mechanism for taking into consideration the community's views in Julianstown when deciding on planning decisions thus building trust and leading to more sustainable development. **(Criteria 1, 2, and 5)**

The collaborative and participative process as set out in the brief (June 2009) also set out the key steps involved in preparing the 'Pilot' VDS for the consultant, as follows:

- Briefing meeting / walk and talk session
- Desktop research
- Site appraisal and training session
- Initial stakeholder consultation workshop
- Public workshop and children's competition
- Analysis report
- 'Pilot' VDS steering group and VDS sub-group meetings
- Weekend workshop
- First draft VDS production
- 'Pilot' VDS steering group and VDS sub-group review meetings
- Stakeholder consultation workshop
- LAP review
- Public feedback workshops
- Steering group review meeting
- Final draft VDS production
- Steering group review and sign off
- Final VDS
- Ministerial launch

The elements of this structure effectively contributed to and were co-dependent with the evolving strategy as it emerged through the VDS Sub-group and the VDS Steering Group.

The constant element of review, which was contained within this strategy, helped to ensure that outcomes were clear and agreed by all participants on an ongoing basis. **(Criterion 4)**

A further key and innovative feature of the entire VDS project in Julianstown was the agreed role of the VDS Sub-group in appraising tenders for the 'Pilot' VDS project and in selecting the consultant to support them in the process. This highlighted a significant investment of trust by the Statutory Agencies in the community and by the community in the Statutory Agencies.

In summary, the Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS process involved the following meetings, workshops and activities:

- **1 Ministerial launch of VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan;**
- **2 National VDS Steering Group meetings;**
- **12 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group meetings (plus 2 VDS Steering Group teleconference calls);**
- **10 VDS Sub-Group meetings (mostly early on Sunday mornings);**
- **4 village appraisal site visits by all project partners;**
- **3 community/public workshops (including AGM in March 2009);**
- **2 consultation meetings with local landowners and Foroige Youth Club;**
- **2 schools' workshops;**
- **Local children creating a 3D model of Julianstown village; and**
- **1 Post-Graduate Student Design Project including multiple site visits and Presentation of Ideas to community by Queen's University Belfast (QUB).**

4.2 Statutory Agencies - The Heritage Council and Meath County Council

On-going institutional support to the process was effectively and enthusiastically provided by the Heritage Council by its Planning Officer and VDS Programme II Manager, Alison Harvey and by Meath County Council through its Senior Planner, Wendy Bagnall. At County level, support was also crucially given by the Meath County Manager – Tom Dowling. It is important to stress that without on-going institutional support, the 'Pilot' VDS process could not have been successfully undertaken – the rapport and mutual support between these two planners was also notable throughout the process and will be a significant benefit during the implementation phase. The nature of the above support included the following:

Process support: The development of a Village Design Statement (VDS) contains many different elements, a key one being awareness-raising of important environmental, heritage and landscape management issues.

General support for the overall VDS process, including guidance on policy in relation to the European Landscape Convention (ELC), various Planning & Development Acts and Regulations etc., was critical in ensuring that the VDS had an appropriate focus and had due regard to the existing and emerging statutory planning and landscape management processes within Ireland and the EU.

This support also included a commitment by Meath County Council to use the Julianstown VDS to inform the review of the *East Meath Local Area Plan (LAP)*. **(Criteria 3 and 8)**

The communication framework within which such support was provided is referenced below. The continuing nature of this support is to be commended, as it provided guidance through the greater planning/development context within which the community was engaged. The entire process was established on principles of trust and mutual respect, and this helped to establish an important foundation upon which all other aspects were built.

Funding: A grant to the value of €20,000 was provided by the Heritage Council to fund the 'Pilot' VDS project. Further funding was also provided by the Heritage Council and Meath County Council to cover advertising, room booking, refreshments, video-recording of public workshops, and other associated costs. The commitment of participating agencies to the VDS process was manifest through the appointment of senior staff as well as an ongoing commitment to funding. Ultimately the VDS will be judged not only on its ability to create community consensus and cohesiveness, but also on its outputs.

The commitment of Meath County Council to co-fund along with the Heritage Council activities/projects arising from the 'Pilot' VDS process marks a significant milestone for community-based planning and is to be commended. It is recognition of the legitimacy of the VDS process and of the sustainability of the outcomes.

Photograph 2: Project Partners from the Heritage Council and Meath County Council



Coordination of stakeholders: The VDS process involved many stakeholders, the coordination of which formed an important part of the overall process. While much of this was achieved through the VDS Steering Group (see *Appendix 1* for list of members), additional coordination work was required, especially with external bodies. **(Evaluation Criteria 1, 5, and 6)**

Validity and recognition: A more subtle element, but of significance, was the recognition that the community achieved through the continuous support being received from the Heritage Council and Meath County Council.

There was a noted optimism throughout the 'Pilot' VDS process from participants, given that the support being received was physical (personnel in attendance), financial, mentoring, and directional. This facilitated members of the VDS Sub-group in contacting key personnel outside of Julianstown when they were conducting research for the VDS. This enhanced the confidence of the community in the overall process. **(Evaluation Criteria 2 and 3)**

In addition, during the course of the VDS, students undertaking the MSc in Urban and Rural Design at the School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering at Queens University, Belfast, were invited by the Heritage Council to undertake a 'village design project' in Julianstown²⁰. There were many benefits for all stakeholders and a number of learning outcomes for the students related to communication skills and community dynamics, as well as to a greater appreciation of the built and natural environment.

The integration of the student project within the overall timeframe of the VDS programme, although separate from it, was facilitated by the community as well as the Heritage Council. While this integration was not anticipated at the commencement of the process in June 2009, all stakeholders worked well together to ensure positive outcomes for the community in terms of informing the ongoing VDS process, as well as for the post-graduate students.

4.3 The 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group

The 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group (*Appendix 4*) was established by the Heritage Council's Planning Officer to support the overall VDS process and provide guidance in relation to emerging issues such as planning, environmental, and infrastructural matters. The Steering Group, which was chaired by a local community representative – Emer Dolphin, also acted as an informative and professional point of reference for the consultant and for the Chairperson of the VDS Sub-group. The forum thus provided a space and an external point of reference for the chairperson and other members of the VDS Sub-group, which allowed additional perspectives on emerging issues to be considered. It greatly facilitated a high-level strategic debate, and ensured continuous communication and the strengthening of links between the national, county and local levels. **(Evaluation Criteria 1, 5 and 7)**

Critical to the success of the VDS in Julianstown was the commitment and competence of the membership of the 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group. The statutory and voluntary nature of the necessary commitment, the mixture of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, etc., of participants to such a process merits greater consideration and support.

²⁰ Their tutor and Head of Department, Dr Ken Sterrett, had attended the Heritage Council's Slane Castle VDS Conference in October 2008.

This was manifest in a variety of ways including active participation at meetings, provision of guidance, site location visits, and consultation with other agencies in relation to specific elements of the statement.

The 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group was the main structure that fostered relationship-building between community and statutory representatives, which resulted in a very high level of trust and partnership. The level of trust was an essential ingredient in dissolving the mistrust, fear, and cynicism that can often exist between community and statutory bodies. The positive relationships were a function of the *new paradigm* leadership culture espoused by all members of the 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group. This leadership culture values flexibility, openness, collaboration, transparency, and a focus on what is 'best for all', i.e. the project community. It facilitates improved process elements including meetings and consultations. **(Evaluation Criteria 2 and 3)**

Technical support: The Heritage Council's Planning Officer secured the valuable services of Jeff Bishop from the UK as an external advisor to the 'Pilot' VDS process through his involvement with the 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group. His extensive expertise and his level of engagement with participants to the process were valuable and greatly contributed to the cohesiveness of the overall project. The securing of his services as a mentor increased greatly the value of the VDS process itself and of the resulting Village Design Statement. **(Evaluation Criteria 5 and 7)**

Though the VDS project requires a significant level of time commitment from individuals, there was a noteworthy positive energy associated with virtually all meetings throughout the process, whether at steering group, sub-group or at community level.

The importance of a committed and effectively-led VDS Steering Group to the success of the overall VDS process cannot be over-estimated.

4.4 The VDS Sub-group

In March 2009, the JDCA organised a well-attended public event, where the community play, first performed at the Slane Conference, was performed live for a local audience and its DVD, which had been sponsored by the Heritage Council, was formally launched by Tom Dowling, Meath County Manager. Alison Harvey from the Heritage Council gave a presentation on the Vision for the National Village Design Programme II to officially mark the start of the national 'Pilot' VDS project in Julianstown. **(Evaluation Criteria 3, 5 and 8)**

The evening also included a participative exercise, which revealed a common range of concerns about the village, which fed into the project brief (June 2009) and also resulted in seventeen people volunteering to form a VDS Sub-group made up of local residents and County Councillors. **(Evaluation Criteria 2 and 6)**

The commitment to, and work of, the Julianstown VDS Sub-group in relation to the process was a critical factor in the overall success of the VDS. The list of members is provided in *Appendix 3*.

The composition of the group included members who mostly lived within the village but which also had members from its hinterland (c.6 km radius). Once the group was formed, it invited two county councillor representatives to join from the local area committee.

Members of the VDS Sub-group were questioned at the commencement of the 'Pilot' VDS project in relation to the process itself and how it differed from other planning processes in which they were involved or had been involved.

Of the sixteen members of the group who attended the initial workshop meeting on 22nd November 2009, 50% indicated that they had never participated in a local planning process previously, while the remaining 50% indicated that the VDS process was very participative. There was clear recognition that it involved the community from the beginning of the project and that the initiative essentially came from the community itself from 2007 onwards including the community play performed at the Heritage Council's Slane Conference.

One of the strengths of the VDS is seen to be the involvement at a local decision-making level of people who would not otherwise become involved, thus increasing the outreach potential of the VDS. It is also worth noting the responses received from members of the VDS sub-group when asked for the basis on which they would consider whether the process had been successful or not. The responses are presented below in random order:

"When all community and developers get together and overall process is adopted by Meath County Council

Whether at the end of the day we change Julianstown into a village/community rather than a busy main road

If we secure funding from external parties willing to invest in the future of the village; to create jobs and excellent community spirit, people with some ideals for future.

That the local authority will take into account the findings of the group and use it in future development plans

I think this VDS process has given a new sense of ownership and commitment by the local residents

When village regains a focal point and sense of community/belonging

In 20 years if my children wish to remain here

Community management enduring; appearance of Julianstown being constantly enhanced; some early deliverables"

It is clear from the responses recorded that a key priority was to help in the regeneration and enhancement of Julianstown as a village having a renewed **sense of place** and **sense of identity**.

One of key issues for the local community throughout the VDS process was the village's ongoing traffic problem in part due to toll avoidance on the M1 Motorway²¹ and recent residential development in East Meath. The local community estimate that approx 20,000 cars/trucks travel through the village per day (approx 5 million cars/trucks per year). This physical blight and psychological severance of the historic village core detracts from key attributes such as the community's overall sense of identity and sense of place.

It is also clear that members believed that a renewed 'sense of identity' could only be achieved for Julianstown when all participants (community, Heritage Council, Meath County Council, developers) worked effectively together, during and subsequent to the completion of the VDS report.

In terms of skill enhancement for members of the VDS Sub-group, a number of responses were given when participants were asked about what they hoped to learn from their involvement with the VDS process:

*"How the VDS process works from a to z; get to know more people in Julianstown
How to plan and deliver changes for the benefit of the village and community
Work as a community; meet neighbours; better quality of life for my children
More historical knowledge of Julianstown and help with implementing a plan for the future
To have a say in the development of Julianstown; more involvement with the local authority
Historical landmarks; needs of local people – diversity within the local community
How others feel about the future of Julianstown
The value of training and management processes of community workshops
How to meet more people's needs in the planning process, from the 'ground up'"*

The essential capacity and willingness of the VDS Sub-group Chairperson (Emer Dolphin) and Deputy chairperson (Paddy Prendergast) to engage with the demands of the overall VDS process and to adopt a flexible approach to its requirements, resulted in a more robust and sustainable process than would otherwise have been the case. The volume of work associated with these positions, and also that of the secretary of the VDS Sub-group was substantial. Emer and Paddy also attended all the VDS Steering Group meetings and acted as an effective conduit between the different layers of the process. **(Evaluation Criteria 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7)**

The importance of a committed and effectively-led VDS Sub-group to the success of the overall VDS process cannot be over-estimated.

²¹ The National Roads Authority (NRA) was invited to all the community workshops but declined to take part in the 'Pilot' VDS process.

The range of competencies displayed by the group members included: community development, strategic and project planning and management, administration, communications and information dissemination, computing, personal development, PR skills, and environmental awareness. The VDS Sub-group members were drawn from a variety of occupational backgrounds including community development, teaching, business, IT, and farming. The critical ability of the group to effectively engage with the wider community, rather than simply present information relating to the work being carried out, paid valuable dividends.

The VDS Sub-group displayed a remarkable ability to act as a coherent conduit for information exchange and to assess the findings from the process as they were being presented. The ability of the group to maturely debate many of the findings and to act in the exclusive interests of the village was noticeable throughout the VDS process.

While some members presented particular perspectives on issues, the open nature of the group ensured that the process was not dominated by any one individual, sectional interest, or indeed by any single issue. The overall process was greatly strengthened by the VDS Sub-group's ability to engage with sectional interests in a neutral manner, while affording representatives the space and time to present their particular concerns and perspectives, including any difficulties being experienced. The provision of an opportunity for local developers, land-owners, and builders to present any plans for future development was well organised and supported.

This resulted in enhanced relationships between different groups involved in the community. **(Evaluation Criterion 5)**

The open nature of the meetings, along with the comprehensive fashion in which most issues were discussed and developed, meant that the VDS emerged in an informed and participative manner. Given that the 'Pilot' VDS process offered an opportunity for community members to work together and participate actively within an overall coherent process, the long-term value within the community of the learning and capacity-building from the process will remain as an important resource/skill and outcome, i.e. the creation of social capital. **(Evaluation Criterion 7)**

The VDS process represented something of a journey for the membership, where many of the important learning outcomes were discovered as the VDS process developed. The demands of any such a process are not inconsiderable. The VDS Sub-group convened on ten occasions and while it was not possible for all members to be in attendance throughout the process, a core group of members consistently attended all meetings.

All the work of the VDS Sub-group was of a voluntary nature and meetings were frequently convened early on Sunday mornings or late on weekday evenings to ensure that as many people as possible could attend. Sunday meetings typically lasted for 4-5 hours while evening meetings were typically of 2½ hours duration.

The nature of the responses confirm that all members of the VDS Sub-group wanted to learn, whether the learning was in relation to landscape features, historical and archaeological elements, community development or about the VDS process itself.

Skill enhancement was seen to be key to involvement and the VDS process itself is considered to have substantially met the skill enhancement requirements. Throughout the VDS process, participants received participative training in important aspects of mapping, landuse analysis, landscape character assessment and management (theory and practice), group-work, spatial planning, national heritage, and infrastructural development.

The increased level of community awareness and knowledge (which was generated as a result of the training received), ensured that participants were better able to assess potential options for the future planning, management and development of Julianstown and to feed into these ideas. **(Evaluation Criteria 2 and 7)**

It is clear that all of the VDS Sub-group members had the well-being of the community at heart and that they accepted that the VDS process involved learning about the environmental, social and cultural aspects of the village.

As stated earlier there is also a great sense, from the responses of members, of wishing to revitalise a community that had been substantially fractured and blighted by heavy traffic volumes passing through on a daily basis. The need to revitalise the physical, social and cultural heart of Julianstown Village was seen as key to ensuring that the village had a dynamic and sustainable future.

4.5 Participation of the Local Community

The local community was involved in the 'Pilot' VDS process from its inception as indicated above. The Julianstown VDS project was announced at a well-attended public event in the village in March 2009. Subsequently, three community workshops, two consultation meetings with local landowners and Foroige Youth Club and two school workshops were held to ensure the active participation of the widest sections of the local community at all stages of the process. **(Evaluation Criteria 1, 2, 5 and 6)**

The Julianstown community responded well to the VDS process and this is borne out by levels of attendance and participation at public/community workshops and meetings, e.g. 80 people came to the JDRA AGM in March 2009 (now known as the JDCA). Numbers at subsequent public/community workshops averaged 80-90 people in attendance. In addition, the community expressed willingness to participate in the ongoing development of the village through the VDS process and by efforts made by existing groups to address outstanding priorities.

The presentation at one of the community workshops by the VDS Sub-group of a range of scenarios for the future of Julianstown, which the community discussed and voted on, was proved a particularly useful 'tool' for engagement.

Photograph 3: Public Notice erected at Julianstown for Community VDS Workshop



Community Survey (May 2010)

The issues concerning the community and their response to the 'Pilot' VDS process were collected in a *Community Survey* undertaken in May 2010. A random sample of 28 households was chosen within Julianstown. Householders were interviewed and asked to respond to seven questions in relation to the 'Pilot' VDS project and process. The full findings of the community survey are provided at *Appendix 5* and a summary is set out below.

At the time of the survey, 25% of respondents indicated that they had participated in community-based voluntary initiatives within the previous six months, whilst 64% of respondents indicated a willingness *to become involved* in the VDS implementation programme (see Figures 3 and 7 in *Appendix 5*). This presents a significant opportunity for support structures to be put in place so that the collective energy of the community can be harnessed for the benefit of all.

Community Survey Questions:

- 1: Awareness of Village Design Statement Process;
- 2: Main purpose of Village Design Statement Process;
- 3: Participation in Community/Voluntary Activities within the previous 6 months;
- 4: Principal challenges facing Julianstown village;
- 5: Duration of Residence of Respondents;
- 6: How relationships between Meath County Council and residents can be improved; and
- 7: Willingness to participate in future community development activities.

The key findings of the Julianstown community survey are as follows:

Question 1:

According to the survey findings, there was a general awareness of the 'Pilot' VDS project within Julianstown, with 57% of respondents claiming that they had become aware of it through the local media, community newsletter, meetings, etc. This is healthy level of general community awareness for a community planning project given that only 25% had participated in community voluntary activities in the previous six months (see Question 3 also).

Question 2:

Of those who had heard of the 'Pilot' VDS process, the majority believed that its main purpose was to enhance the village. Common responses under this category included *"tidy it up, how to keep local character of the village, how to sustainably grow the village, to influence design of village bearing in mind wishes of villagers..."* A small number of respondents associated the VDS with the Community Garden. It was clear also that a number of residents associated the VDS process with one of enhancing community participation and development and associated expressions included *"try to tie the place together as a community"*.

Question 3:

The survey revealed that most respondents (75%) had not participated in community/voluntary activities within the previous six months. Reasons given for this included: transport constraints, lifestyle/family commitments, and community dynamics/conflict. The level of active community engagement is considered to be relatively low and includes those who participated in school-based activities such as local parents' council etc. Increasing participation levels in community-based activities is seen as essential for the ongoing community development of Julianstown and the VDS has had a positive influence on these levels.

Question 4:

Respondents were asked what they considered the three main challenges facing Julianstown. They emerged as traffic problems (38%), lack of amenities (social, educational, commercial) (26%) and dereliction (13%). It is interesting that the *perceived* purpose of the VDS process recorded only 15% of respondents saying that it was about traffic problems and 50% of respondents saying that it was primarily about overall village enhancement.

Question 5:

The key finding here was the duality of the structure of residence duration: the duration of residence was predominantly 0-10 years with the second category greater than 20 years.

Question 6:

There were four main issues identified in relation to how relationships with Meath County Council (MCC) could be improved: there were infrastructural improvements (28%), improved communication with MCC (21%), increased visibility (14%) and working together more (11%).

Question 7:

Despite not having participated in community or voluntary activities within the previous six months, there was a significant willingness by respondents (64%) to become involved in community development activities associated with the Julianstown VDS.

One of the more significant and remarkable achievements of the VDS process was its capacity to generate enthusiasm and support for the ongoing management and development of the village. All participants (100%) at the March 2010 public/community workshop stated that, as a result of the VDS process, they were now more hopeful for the future of their village.

Photograph 4: Community workshop held in Julianstown as part of 'Pilot' VDS Process



4.6 Engagement with Young People

The level of engagement with young people in particular, as well as the inter-generational nature of the 'Pilot' VDS process, is considered as remarkable. The Julianstown VDS is distinguished by the participation of the youth of the area in the overall process. This very high level of participation was facilitated through the local Whitecross Primary School and through the Julianstown Foroige Youth Club. **(Evaluation Criteria 1 and 2)**

The extraordinary effort made by the young people in the area, was manifest on a number of occasions, but gained considerable support at the first public workshop. A lot of work related to the VDS was put on display and exhibits included drawings, paintings, and three-dimensional models. Essays on how the young people of the village would like to see Julianstown in 2020 were also prepared.

The active participation of younger age groups helped in the appreciation of a sense of place concerning Julianstown. It also served to help bring parents and other family members into the VDS process and again added value to the overall process. The specific inclusion of the youth from the area reflected on the inter-generational nature of the project, but also on the commitment that exists within Julianstown to securing an improved future within the community. It also reflected well on the link between Julianstown and the wider hinterland, as many young people from the school resided outside of the village core itself.

Photograph 5: Children at Foroige youth meeting participating in the 'Pilot' VDS process



4.7 The VDS Consultant

The role and characteristics of the consultant in assisting and supporting the community were seen as an important contributory factor in the overall success of the VDS process.

The company, selected by the VDS Steering Group and VDS Sub-group to support and assist them through the VDS process, the Paul Hogarth Company, had been involved in a wide range of planning, landscape and design projects throughout Ireland (north and south), including the preparation of several Public Realm Plans (PRPs) as part of Heritage Council's National Public Realm Plan Programme for Historic Towns/Cities²².

The Julianstown VDS, the first VDS that the company has worked on, is considered to be the most community-orientated process which the company had engaged to date. The company was represented throughout the VDS process by James Hennessy who attended all the VDS Steering Group and VDS Sub-Group meetings.

The consultant is considered to have exhibited an extraordinary rapport with the community through the VDS Sub-group and an innate understanding of the importance of overall process to a community development-type programme.

Expertise was thus used to promote discussion and debate rather than to identify definitive solutions and the overall work programme was based on collaborative identification of key issues, rather than on an inflexible objective-setting approach.

²² The Paul Hogarth Company, Belfast has undertaken the Cashel Public Realm Plan/PRP (2008), Wicklow PRP (2008), Birr (2009) and Fethard PRP (2009) on behalf of the Heritage Council. The Public Realm Plan Programme (est in 2007) is managed by the Heritage Council's Planning Officer.

The process demanded a totally flexible approach to the development of the VDS and meetings were mostly held at times, which might be considered to be unsociable. This flexibility was also manifest in the consultant's ability to recognise that any agenda as might be set was subject to an element of 'change without notice' during any meeting.

The overall professionalism of the consultant as well as the capacity of the VDS Sub-group ensured that the final VDS document output from the process was representative of the entire collaborative process and was very well-honed.
(Evaluation Criteria 1, 3 and 6)

It is considered as essential, given the importance of the consultant (whose role must essentially be that of a 'facilitator'), that any such consultants should have as a core element of their *modus operandi* the building of community capacity. Given the intense nature of the process and the nature of the consultant's role, it is considered appropriate that the level of remuneration should adequately reflect the demands of the overall process.

While this evaluation was not commissioned to evaluate the VDS document or its constituent elements, it is important to state that the quality of the mapping and visual elements, as they emerged, contributed greatly to an improved understanding of the physical and social environment of Julianstown. They also provided participants with a more informed view of their surroundings, and this resulted in an improved level of knowledge and interpretation of landscape and heritage as well as acting as a stimulus for other projects related to the VDS.
(Evaluation Criteria 2 and 7)

4.8 VDS Support and Training

The VDS Steering Group and Consultant provided guidance and mentoring support to the VDS Sub-group throughout the process. A considerable amount of training took place throughout the process, in areas such as planning policy, landscape evaluation, and characterisation, principles of landscape and village design, principles of heritage conservation and management and so on.
(Evaluation Criteria 5 and 7)

Much of what might ordinarily be considered an important part of a training programme for such processes (including community development, consensus building, and communication structures) was assumed. The competence of the VDS Sub-group and of the Chairperson (Emer Dolphin), in particular, resulted in these areas being effectively addressed throughout the process. It is considered appropriate for any further work that an appropriate training framework must be provided for all participants to the process.

Due to the successful first stage of the VDS project being completed (the VDS report), the implementation phase is already actively underway. It is seen as critical that sufficient training is provided to all those involved in implementation in areas such as environmental planning and management, financial management, community development, and project management.

It is also seen as critical that effective ongoing working relationships between the community and the Heritage Council and Meath County Council are further strengthened and deepened throughout the VDS implementation phase.

4.9 Communication Structures

Overall communication structures were considered as being good for the duration of the process. It should be borne in mind that communication structures are often an assumption rather than a deliberate design feature of such programmes. Most communication in relation to the VDS project was undertaken through a variety of media, including email, personal direct communications, meetings, and workshops, recorded minutes, draft emerging strategy statement/plan, parish newsletter and web-sites. The statutory agencies were on hand to provide financial support to aid communication at a local level. Given the range and location of stakeholders involved in the process, it is notable that little misunderstandings in relation to information content/dissemination were observed during the programme. **(Evaluation Criteria 2, 4 and 5)**

The communication structures were mostly concentrated around three of the main stakeholders (the VDS Sub-group through the Chairperson, the VDS Steering Group through the Heritage Council's Planning Officer and the emerging outcomes through the consultant). Most of the email-based communication was concerned with information dissemination (meeting arrangements, etc). Most of the decision-making communications took place through various meeting fora, including lively teleconferencing calls at critical junctures when face-to-face meetings were not possible.

Given the extensive and detailed nature of these communications, it is considered essential that all participants be facilitated to attend the fora. While not ideal, this report considers that broadcast-based technology (teleconferencing and video conferencing) should be used to help ensure that as many participants as possible engage with/at the meeting fora, and that budgetary and time provision be made available for such circumstances, where possible.

Given the extensive communications, which occurred throughout the VDS process amongst participants, community based organisations, inter-agency (Heritage Council, Meath County Council, Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, NRA), and inter-departmental (Meath County Council), it is considered that the overall success has been fostered through a willingness and openness to discuss and debate all relevant issues.

It was noted however that communications with the National Roads Authority from a community perspective proved disappointing as they refused to meet with the JDCA, despite several approaches, and this contributed to some uncertainty in relation to future roads/traffic management measures within the village.

4.10 Project Timeframe

Timeframes for community-led programmes need to be realistic. A key consideration should always be that sufficient time is given for active participation and consultation throughout any such programme. Another important consideration is that it is a new process for all participants in which new learning takes place.

In all such processes, a balance has to be struck between the time requirements and associated personal commitments on one hand and achieving reasonable outcomes on the other. Achieving a sense of ownership is a critical element of any such process, especially if an associated implementation plan is to be drawn up and fulfilled. **(Evaluation Criteria 1 and 2)**

The timeframe has also financial implications in relation to external facilitation and general support requirements. It is of credit to the Heritage Council that it allowed sufficient timescale (i.e. from March 2009–October 2010) for a collaborative VDS to be drawn-up and to the VDS Sub-group and VDS Steering Group that its members gave up a proportion of their time to the process.

4.11 VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan

The new collaborative and participative VDS process culminated in the production of a *VDS Report*, which included design concept, principles and an *Agreed VDS Action Plan* (page 39 of the VDS Report) with specific and prioritised projects (30 projects in total) for the village based around eight core themes: **(Evaluation Criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

1. The Welcome to the Village, e.g. enhancement of entrances to the village;
2. The Street, e.g. implement footpaths and traffic calming in village centre
3. The Heart of the Village, e.g. prepare Conservation and Management Plan for Old Mill and birdge;
4. Our Heritage, e.g. develop design brief for the Old Mill;
5. The Village, e.g. develop tourism potential to support the viability of the village;
6. The River Nanny, e.g. develop new footbridge to community centre
7. Landscape, e.g. develop Tidy Towns and Pride of Place projects; and
8. Community, e.g. establish annual village event of festival.

An A2 poster for local schools is also provided at the rear of the Julianstown VDS, which details the ‘Shared Vision’ for the village along with the 30 VDS Projects.

It is envisaged that the *design principles* (34 in total, e.g. *prioritise new development within a close walking distance to the village centre*) set out in the VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan will be implemented in partnership with numerous partners including, but not limited to, Meath County Council, Heritage Council, LEADER, Failte Ireland and the County Enterprise Board. **(Evaluation Criterion 8)**

In order to assist the implementation of these projects in collaboration with existing partners and future partners, Julianstown and District Community Association (formerly Julianstown and District Residents Association) was formed as a legal company in 2010.

In addition, as part of the *VDS Action Plan* (Project No. 28), a project management structure was established for the implementation stage of the VDS, which included the integration of the VDS Sub-Group into the main JDCA Committee and the establishment of local *VDS Project Teams* within Julianstown. These teams consist of members from the existing VDS Sub-Group and the wider community who have become involved in the implementation of the VDS Action Plan. A Heritage Council Planning Intern, who is a recent graduate from University College Dublin (UCD), assists the Chair of the VDS Sub-group in the setting up and project management of these local VDS Project Teams.

The VDS Steering Group continues to meet every two months to assist in the implementation of the VDS Action Plan, e.g. The Heritage Council provided funding in early 2011 to produce a Conservation and Management Plan for the Old Mill and bridge (Protected Structures), *VDS Project No. 13*.

It is envisaged that the *Agreed VDS Action Plan* will be the basis for the external output/summative evaluation to be undertaken in 2013.

4.12 Ministerial Launch of the VDS report – moving into the implementation phase

Julianstown VDS Report including the Agreed VDS Action Plan was formally launched by former Minister Ciaran Cuffe on the 7th October 2010. Over 120 people attended the launch including people from the local community along with members from the National VDS Steering Group, the VDS Steering Group and the VDS Sub-group. As part of the launch, the VDS Sub-Group members gave a presentation on the various themes and proposed projects identified in the VDS Report and Agreed Action Plan. The VDS Steering Group and the VDS Sub-group organised the Ministerial launch. **(Evaluation Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8)**

This official launch, which included guest speakers Fiona Lawless, Area Manager from Meath County Council²³ and the CEO of the Heritage Council, Michael Starrett, signalled the official sign off of the VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan to the satisfaction of the project partners. It also signalled the start of the VDS *implementation* phase and commencement of VDS Action Plan projects.

²³ Unfortunately, the Meath County Manager Tom Dowling was unable to attend the Ministerial launch of the Julianstown VDS as he was out of the country.

4.13 Summary of Julianstown ‘Pilot’ VDS Process against Process Evaluation Criteria

VDS Brief (June 2009)

There were four requirements, which the VDS had to meet (June 2009, see Appendix 2). These are listed below:

- *The VDS will provide the spatial principles that are the basis for the development of Julianstown as a sustainable village community and will provide an enhanced quality of life for its people;*
- *The VDS must be practical and delivered in a format that facilitates implementation within the Irish planning system;*
- *It must be a statement that has the agreement and confidence of the local community in Julianstown; and*
- *The VDS must raise awareness through training and there must be evidence of capacity-building in the local community in all age-groups that will be a sustainable asset in the long-term.*

In summary, these programme and project requirements have all been met.

The Julianstown ‘Pilot’ VDS process, as described in the above sections, can be summarised against the process evaluation criteria set out in Section 3.2. The summary is provided in *Table 1* below.

Table 1: Summary of Julianstown VDS Process against Process Evaluation Criteria

VDS Process Structures and Relationships	Process Evaluation Criteria Met
1. Design of a Collaborative and Participative VDS Process	1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
2. Statutory Agencies - The Heritage Council and Meath County Council	1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8
3. The ‘Pilot’ VDS Steering Group	1, 2, 3, 5 and 7
4. The VDS Sub-Group	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8
5. Participation of the Local Community	1, 2, 5 and 6
6. Engagement with Young People	1 and 2
7. The Consultant	1, 2, 3, 6 and 7
8. VDS Support and Training	5 and 7
9. Communication Structures	2, 4 and 5
10. Project Timeframe	1 and 2
11. VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan	1, 2, 3, 4 and 8
12. Ministerial Launch of the VDS: moving into the ‘implementation phase’	1, 2, 3, 4 and 8

The above summary shows that the evaluation criteria have all been met through the ‘Pilot’ VDS Process.

5. ‘Pilot’ VDS Process Evaluation – Conclusions

5.1 Overview

The philosophy of the new National Village Design Statement (VDS) Programme II in Ireland emerged from the integration, by the Heritage Council, of two separate planning approaches at an international level: the EU emphasis on collaborative and participative planning, in accordance with the key tenets of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Aarhus Convention²⁴ and the European Landscape Convention (ELC)²⁵; and the UK’s Village Design Statement process introduced in the early 1990s.

The Aarhus Convention and the ELC effectively seeks to place people, irrespective of their backgrounds or age group, qualifications or affiliations, at the centre of all decisions being made in relation to their environment and landscape. This can best be realised through a collaborative planning framework, which is designed and built upon a consensus-based approach to decision-making. In essence, the means of arriving at agreed outcomes are based upon principles and practices of participation, inclusion, and equality.

These principles lie at the very heart of the approach being championed by the Heritage Council in the development of the new Village Design Statement Programme II in Ireland, the underlying philosophy of which has been encapsulated as:

1. **Best practice heritage management, e.g. preparation of conservation and management plans;**
2. **Sustainable community development, e.g. development of social capital; and**
3. **Sustainable spatial planning, e.g. formulation of design principles²⁶.**

The growing localisation and democratisation of the environment/landscape, and the need to develop appropriate strategies for its effective strategic planning, management and protection, can be significantly strengthened through the adoption and mainstreaming of innovative collaborative and participative processes such as the ‘Pilot’ VDS process applied in Julianstown.

The natural and man-made influences on the environment/ landscape and heritage that are readily identifiable, valued, and owned at local level, can only be successfully integrated into policy formulation and delivery when sufficient consideration and resources are given by policy makers to the strengthening of emerging local and community planning initiatives such as the Heritage Council’s new community-led VDS Programme II.

²⁴ www.unece.org/env/pp/

²⁵ www.unece.org/env/pp/

²⁶ www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/

This process evaluation has focused on the extensive collaboration that ensured the development of a national 'Pilot' Village Design Statement (VDS) for Julianstown. The evaluation acknowledges the enormous work and effort that took place at numerous levels including: the National VDS Steering Group, within the Heritage Council during the last four years in terms of promoting a new community-led VDS Programme, the fostering by Meath County Council of complementary community-based initiatives (such as the Pride of Place initiative), the external advisor's extensive experience of the British VDS process, and the 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group and VDS Sub-Group's unwavering commitment to the overall 'Pilot' VDS process.

The evaluation also acknowledges the extensive commitment generated over many years by the residents of Julianstown, towards improving their village and its services. The VDS Programme II and its pilot therefore, may be seen as a *convergence of like-mindedness* whereby fundamental elements of sustainable development at community level are integrated into a collaborative and participative planning process at various levels. The process evaluation itself has concluded that there needs to be a collective receptiveness and openness by all stakeholders to such collaborative processes, and that this approach is fully acknowledged through policy, as well as in practice.

This cannot be automatically assumed, and the capacity to engage in collaborative processes should be enabled and nurtured, prior to commitment and funding being provided.

The level of commitment shown by Meath County Council to many elements of the 'Pilot' VDS deserves to be noted, including the allocation of the time and expertise of a senior planning official to the process.

A similar level of commitment should be a *sine qua non* requirement by other local authorities wishing to participate in such programmes, in partnership with the Heritage Council and other relevant partners.

5.2 The Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS Process

This evaluation has clearly shown that the Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS process has been a success both in meeting the process evaluation criteria and in producing outcomes agreed by all the partners, which are currently in the process of implementation.

The success of this 'Pilot' VDS can be critically attributed to the new structures and relationships, which were set up and developed for the 'Pilot' process - these are summarised in *Table 1* in Chapter 4 above. **These structures and relationships are therefore the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) of a VDS project under VDS PII.**

It is evident from *Table 1* that the setting up of the community-based VDS Sub-group (*Appendix 3*), through the June 2009 collaborative Project Brief (prepared by the Heritage Council, JDCA and Meath County Council), was crucial to the overall success of the 'Pilot' project, along with the parallel setting up of the 'Pilot' VDS Steering Group (*Appendix 4*) and the commissioning of an effective VDS consultant. Working within a collaborative and participative process, these three elements ensured that the 'Pilot' process was successful. These are the most critical CSFs in the overall 'Pilot' VDS process.

The capacity and cohesiveness of the membership of the VDS Sub-group, and also of the VDS Steering Group, under strong leadership were manifest throughout the 'Pilot' process. All participants had a background in community development and a commitment to working for the greater or public good.

It should be highlighted that had this committed, effective and well-led VDS Sub-group not existed, it would have been almost impossible to have undertaken a community-led VDS under VDS Programme II. This key finding would apply to all future VDSs under PII.

The evaluation acknowledges that the 'Pilot' VDS process itself constituted training and that such training was valuable in developing capacity in participants. This evaluation has concluded that, notwithstanding the above, a formal and accredited training programme interwoven with the overall VDS process would be of significant benefit during and subsequent to the development of further community-led VDSs under VDS PII.

This evaluation has also concluded that a contributing factor to the success of the VDS pilot was that the process allowed a range of issues to be discussed and debated within the community; many of which might be seen to be peripheral to a more design-focused document. The value in including many social, cultural, and environmental concerns in the context of the VDS allowed for a greater engagement in relation to the main issues than would otherwise have been the case.

While this occasionally extended the length of meetings etc., it had the manifest benefit of ensuring that all stakeholders continued to feel a part of, and enthusiastic about, the overall 'Pilot' VDS process.

The experience of the Julianstown community in the 'Pilot' VDS process has led to an:

- Enhancement of social capital and sustainable development in the village and surrounding area through community capacity-building;
- Enhanced spatial and community awareness including '*sense of place*', '*sense of identity*' and '*sense of civic pride*', as expressed by all ages of the community throughout the 'Pilot' VDS process; and
- Increased awareness and appreciation at a community level of the key elements of our national heritage and its Irish and European context.

In concrete terms and in terms of output, the 'Pilot' VDS produced an *Agreed VDS Action Plan* for the village community and its partners. This agreed action plan (as detailed in Chapter 4, Section 4.11), which comprises of 34 design principles and 30 projects within eight core themes, will enhance and promote the long-term sustainability and viability of the village and its community.

For the statutory bodies, the 'Pilot' VDS process has provided a vehicle to deliver effective community planning with the added potential to inform statutory and non-statutory plans. This collaborative approach builds trust and leads to enhanced sustainable development in the short, medium and long-term.

The funding of the 'Pilot' VDS by the Heritage Council and Meath County Council was critical in terms of enabling a collaborative and participative process to be undertaken. As this approach is relatively labour-intensive, it will be important that funding at a programme level is secured to ensure the roll-out of the new community-led VDS PII.

The Heritage Council acted as an exemplary lead agency in the overall 'Pilot' VDS process. The value of a community such as Julianstown being able to access the expertise and support of the Heritage Council's Planning Officer and VDS Programme II Manager, was of benefit in a number of ways: first, it allowed the community to present itself to external stakeholders within a framework that would not otherwise have been possible; second, it provided a focus for the innovative 'Pilot' VDS exercise and ensured that best practice aspects were integrated; third, it provided a valuable point of reference external to the community and, finally, it brought a greater sense of weight to the work undertaken.

5.3 Summary

Overall, there is significant scope for the new community-led VDS Programme II to be expanded upon and to be rolled out throughout the country in partnership with local authorities, Tidy Towns Groups, LEADER, Fáilte Ireland, etc. This can only be achieved through a coordinated approach to the planning, funding and delivery of VDS services. It can best be achieved with those local authorities that are predisposed towards embracing collaborative and participative planning and who have also exhibited a strong degree of commitment towards the promotion and development of sustainable communities, in accordance with the requirements of the UNECE Aarhus Convention and the ELC.

6. Key Recommendations

Key Recommendations are discussed below under two headings:

1. Recommendations at a Programme level; and
2. Recommendations for the Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS Project.

6.1 Key Recommendations - Programme level

Five key recommendations are discussed below under the following headings:

1. **Community-Led/Initiated VDS Programme II**
2. **VDS Clustering, Integration and Networking**
3. **VDS Training and IT**
4. **VDS Programme II – Introduction of a 'Project Charter'**
5. **VDS Programme II – Funding**

6.1.1 Community-Led/Initiated and VDS Programme II

Given the findings of the Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS process evaluation, it is recommended that future VDSs in Ireland should be prepared within an overall collaborative and participative framework, thereby facilitating and enabling communities to work in partnership with statutory agencies to ensure a sustainable future for their local environments and landscapes. This integrated and inclusive approach increases social capital and strengthens democracy.

Fundamental to this collaborative approach, is the underlying principle that VDSs should be initiated at a community level, i.e. VDSs should be community-led. This new approach, as demonstrated through the process applied for the national 'Pilot' for VDS PII, would meet the key requirements of both the Aarhus and ELC Conventions.

Communities should already be advanced enough as a collective group before undertaking a VDS under VDS PII– i.e. village communities and village groups should be "good to go" to ensure optimum use of limited resources (i.e. time, money and personnel). Indicators of robust community activity at a local level could include an enthusiastic Tidy Towns Committee, which has been successful in delivering a clearly defined and scoped out project(s) within a set budget and timeframe, and/or a community's active participation in the National Pride of Place Initiative.

Preparatory work should be undertaken to ensure that key personnel in the statutory agencies are involved from an early stage in the process. This would include planners, heritage and community development officers (see also paragraph below on VDS Project Charter).

In addition, the Critical Success Factors identified in the Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS should be applied to all future VDSs, including the setting up of a VDS Steering Group with a background and experience in collaborative planning processes, an enthusiastic and informed VDS Sub-group, and the involvement of a VDS consultant with expertise in facilitating and supporting a community through the collaborative and participative VDS process, as advocated under VDS PII.

6.1.2 VDS Clustering, Integration and Networking

Clustering and Integration

It is strongly recommended that the new community-led VDS Programme II should continue to be supported and developed by relevant government departments, statutory agencies and community-based EU Programmes, e.g. LEADER, especially in areas where there is manifest community capacity and institutional support provision.

Ideally, this should allow for a '*clustering*' of communities/villages within the functional areas of a number of local authorities, which are willing to commit themselves to the requirements of the new community-led VDS Programme II, preferably in tandem with statutory planning processes. It is envisaged that significant economies of scale would be accrued for all project partners as a result of this further deepening and strengthening in collaboration, partnership and integration.

Such clustering could be supported by a county-level VDS Steering Group, which would allow for strategic support at both county and local level. In accordance with recent changes to Irish planning legislation, it is further recommended that an explicit requirement of all such processes should be the inclusion of young people, with detailed outcomes associated with their inclusion, including having a youth representative on the VDS Steering Group and/or VDS Sub-group. Specific provision should also be made for other age cohorts, most notably the elderly, so that the VDS process is manifestly designed around principles of inclusiveness.

Networking

As noted above, the new community-led VDS Programme II provides significant opportunities for collaboration and networking across various sectors and agencies.

This includes local authorities, rural/urban development and regeneration organisations, and educational institutions as well as for North-South collaboration. There is considerable scope to develop a coherent strategy across many agencies and communities, which would result in greater capacity building and optimisation of resources.

The concept of an '*All-island VDS Network*' was first promoted by the Heritage Council's Planning Officer at the Slane Castle National VDS Conference in October 2008. The Planning Officer highlighted that such a VDS Network could be based on the Heritage Council's successful all-island Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) founded in April 2005.

As with the IWTN's day-to-day operations, which include sharing and exchange of project briefs/tenders, regular 'lessons learned' reports from Members, etc., it is envisaged that the VDS Network would link into village design and community development networks within the EU and further afield. It is also recommended that a specific interactive VDS Network Website be established and managed to act as a key point of communication for all stakeholders involved in the new VDS Programme II.

The new programme therefore has considerable scope to effectively '*mainstream*' community-led planning, heritage and landscape management and to foster greater appreciation amongst all stakeholders of the significant values (tangible and intangible) attached to best practice community planning and landscape and heritage planning and management, in accordance with international and EU Conventions. This mainstreaming could be reasonably and efficiently facilitated and enabled through an *Annual VDS Network Conference (including participative workshops)*, based on the Heritage Council's National Village Design Conference held in Slane Castle in October 2008.

6.1.3 VDS Training and IT

Given the developmental nature of the 'Pilot' VDS process, the particular focus areas and the collaborative approach required of all stakeholders, it is recommended that a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary *National VDS Training Programme* be developed and delivered to **all future participants**. Amongst the main elements of such a programme, areas such as International Conventions and EU Directives and Conventions, Planning and Development Law, Approaches to Planning, Community Development, Environmental and Heritage Management (e.g. Conservation and Management Best Practice), GIS and Mapping, Web design, Project Management, Leadership. Landscape Management (including Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)) and Fund Raising should be particularly included.

The needs will, nonetheless, vary from one village community to another and from one local authority to another. It is similarly recommended that ongoing training/mentoring of participants be built into any ongoing VDS programme.

There is also scope to integrate the new VDS Programme II with graduate and post-graduate students (north and south) undertaking courses in environmental planning and management, rural development, landscape and built architecture, heritage management, etc. In addition, the VDS Programme II lends itself to the development of a complementary research element, which could also be designed as part of future proposals.

It is further recommended that a *National VDS Internship Programme* be set up in partnership with the relevant government departments and accredited planning schools (north and south) to assist and support future VDS training and implementation of the new VDS PII.

It is envisaged that the above recommendations will result in significant economies of scale and repetition being accrued for the new VDS Programme II and will also enhance the mainstreaming of community and participative planning in Ireland.

6.1.4 VDS Project Charter

Given the collaborative and participative nature of the new VDS PII, it is recommended that a memorandum of understanding or 'Project Charter' be developed and signed by all project partners for VDS projects undertaken, as part of the new VDS Programme II. This Charter, which would include project objectives and planned outcomes, would confirm proposed arrangements for the future use of the VDS in relation to informing statutory and non-statutory plans and environmental decision-making.

This Charter would be drawn up and signed by all project partners at the outset of the VDS project, i.e. for project partners involved in VDSs at a 'clustered' level and for partners involved at a individual village level. It is further recommended that greater participation of members of the executive from relevant local authorities be a *sine qua non* for the new VDS Programme II.

6.1.5 VDS Programme II Funding

It is recommended that the new National VDS Programme II be supported by a three-year funding programme of approx **€320,000 per annum**, from national government, i.e. €0.96m over three years, based on the terms of the annual spending review. It is envisaged that this programme funding would be predominantly current spend to support the setting up of the VDS Network, implementation of an multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary VDS training, VDS Internship Programme, and the preparation of VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan for 'clustered' villages.

Table 2: Proposed VDS Programme II Annual Costs (over a 3 year period)

VDS Programme II:	Cost €
1. Setting up of VDS Network – one paid F/T VDS PII Co-ordinator post	60,000
2. Establish and deliver National VDS Training Programme	40,000
3. Scoping and Preparation of community-led VDS Reports and Action Plans based on clustered villages (approx 5 villages per 'cluster' = 20 villages per year)	200,000
4. Establish VDS Internship Programme (4 interns – 1 intern per 'cluster')	20,000
Total	320,000

It is envisaged that capital spend to deliver/implement the agreed VDS projects in the short, medium and long-term, as set out in Agreed VDS Action Plans could be secured from a number of existing sources of funding including Heritage Council, Arts Council, LEADER, Urban Regeneration Programmes, Fáilte Ireland and the EU Life + Programme.

It is envisaged that significant private sector funding could also be leveraged from the new collaborative VDS Process aiding the overall cost/benefit and value for money (VFM) of the new VDS programme.

6.2 Key Recommendations for the Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS Project

Four key recommendations in relation to the Julianstown VDS 'Pilot' project are discussed below under the following headings:

- 1. Monitoring and Review of 'Pilot'**
- 2. Submission of VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan to Elected Members in County Meath**
- 3. Continuation of Strategic Support for VDS Implementation Phase**
- 4. Further VDS Training in Julianstown**

6.2.1 Monitoring and review of 'Pilot'

Given the 'Pilot' nature of the Julianstown VDS, it is recommended that the Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS project be further reviewed one year from the launch-date (i.e. October 2011) and that as noted earlier, overall 'outcomes' from the VDS process, VDS Report and VDS action plan be externally reviewed/evaluated in 2013. It is further recommended that a monitoring and reporting forum be established locally through the JDCA, as part of the overall VDS implementation process (post-VDS report process).

6.2.2 Submission to elected members in County Meath

It is recommended that the Julianstown VDS Report and Agreed VDS Action Plan be submitted to the elected members of Meath County Council by the Julianstown VDS Sub-group/JDCA. Given the commitment at the outset from Meath County Council in relation to linking the VDS to forward planning and development management structures, it is further recommended that the VDS be used to inform the pending review of the *East Meath Local Area Plan (LAP)* and current review of the existing County Development Plan.

6.2.3 Continuation of Strategic Support for VDS Implementation Phase

Strategic support for the implementation of the Julianstown VDS should continue up until 2013, through the mechanism of the VDS Steering Group (*Appendix 4*). It is recommended that the VDS Steering Group should continue to focus on the building/strengthening of strategic relationships to support a multi-agency approach to the implementation of agreed VDS projects, e.g. LEADER and EU funding. Key lessons learned in relation to the 'Pilot' VDS implementation phase can then be documented and highlighted in the external output evaluation in 2013.

6.2.4 Further VDS Training in Julianstown

Pending the proposed development of a national VDS training programme, it is recommended that the current VDS consultant be asked to carry out an interim workshop (budget permitting) with the Julianstown VDS sub-group (within 12 months of the launch date) to help address/clarify any emerging issues.

Finally, it is recommended that the results of the above would feed back into the overall management of the new community-led VDS Programme II.

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Appendix 1

Membership of National Village Design Statement Programme II Steering Group (2007 to date)

Wendy Bagnall*	Meath County Council
Jeff Bishop	BDOR Consulting, UK (until early 2010)
Deirdre Burns	Heritage Officer, Wicklow County Council (until early 2009)
Caroline Creamer	NIRSA, NUI Maynooth
Niall Cussen	Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government ²⁷
Emer Dolphin*	Julianstown and District Community Association
Kevin Giles*	Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Alison Harvey	Heritage Council (Chair)
Dara Larkin	Senior Executive Planner, South Dublin County Council (until early 2009)
Kieran Leddy*	Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)
Ciaran Lynch	Tipperary Institute
Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe	Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick
Emer Sexton*	Planning Intern, Heritage Council
Grainne Shaffrey*	Shaffrey & Associates, Dublin, and Heritage Council Board Member
Simon Wall*	Town Architect, Westport Town Council

Note: * joined in 2010

²⁷ Following the general election in 2011, this Department is now known as the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Appendix 2

Consultants' Brief and Invitation to Tender

To provide services to assist and support the community in the preparation and delivery of the Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS)

A 'Pilot' for the National Village Design Statement Programme II

June 2009

1. BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL VILLAGE DESIGN PROGRAMME II AND 'NATIONAL PILOT' PROJECT

Irish small towns and villages “are a central component of the history of this island”²⁸ and have for a long time created a sense of regional and often very local ‘character’ and sense of place, based on the natural, built and cultural heritage. Put simply, each Irish village is ‘distinctive’ in its own way. The Heritage Council introduced the National Village Design Statement Programme in 2000 to promote the management and enhancement of village distinctiveness and character, with a particular emphasis on ‘local heritage’.

In 2006, the Heritage Council updated the national programme by designing and introducing a more participative process that was first adopted by the Lucan (*Leamhcáin*) Village Design Statement²⁹. The Lucan VDS was awarded the *Certificate of Merit for Participatory Planning* from the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) in February 2008.

1.1 National Village Design Programme II and Evolution of National Planning Policy

Following an in-depth national evaluation of the National Village Design Programme in 2008 and publication of the booklet – *Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages – Village Design Statements – The Way Forward?*³⁰ in January 2009, the Heritage Council continues to be committed to the delivery of a collaborative and participative national village design programme, which is community-led, and enhances local character and distinctiveness in Irish villages in the short, medium and long-term. The Heritage Council has worked closely with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in this regard (DoEHLG).

The Heritage Council’s booklet *Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages – Village Design Statements – The Way Forward?* states that Village Design Statements (VDSs) are a way of enhancing, celebrating and managing local character and distinctiveness in a village. A VDS includes an expression and description of what a local community believes to be the key factors and local features that make their particular village or small town unique. VDSs use this cultural base/asset to outline the spatial principles and planning and design guidelines that should be used by all parties when considering development within a village.

A useful VDS focuses not just on whether or where a development might or should take place, but specifically on *how* development might best happen in terms of design to achieve the stated goals of the community.

²⁸ Source: Atlas of the Rural Irish Landscape, Cork University Press 1997 as cited in the booklet - *Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages – Village Design Statements – The Way Forward?*²⁸,

²⁹ www.sdcc.ie/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=214&Itemid=54

³⁰ www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/publications/

The booklet stresses that good Village Design Statements can:

- *Raise community awareness about their surrounding landscape, environment and heritage assets;*
- *Provide the community with a useful 'tool' to ensure that future developments and changes add to the local distinctiveness and character;*
- *Link into the planning system so that planners can use it to improve the local distinctiveness of design proposals;*
- *Assist developers, local authority planners, architects and others by giving them local guidance up-front; and*
- *Generate and develop overall community confidence and capacity building.*

The Heritage Council announced at its National Village Design Conference in Slane Castle in October 2008, that the National Village Design Programme II (2009 onwards) would have a collaborative and participative approach at its core and that a 'pilot' village design statement would be undertaken in 2009, which would be community-led.

1.2 Evolution of National Planning Policy

It should be noted that the national policy context for village planning and design has also evolved in recent years. For example, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) published the *Guidelines for Sustainable Development in Urban Areas* in December 2008 (with accompanying Urban Design Manual). The Guidelines make specific reference to the preparation of village design statements and the importance of involving the local community. For example, paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5 of the Guidelines for Sustainable Development in Urban Areas (pages 43/44) state the following:

Paragraph 6.4: 'Smaller towns and villages, particularly heritage towns and villages in coastal or other attractive inland locations often find themselves under considerable pressure for tourism driven and/or second home type development. The unique urban design and built heritage attributes of such locations suggest the need to put in place mechanisms such as Village Design Statements (see below), that either elaborate LAPs or act as supplementary local development frameworks and that accurately profile the key attributes of the town or village concerns, offering advice on how to successfully integrate new development....'

Paragraph 6.5... 'Village Design Statements are an example of non-statutory local development frameworks. Such statements are a useful non-statutory innovation in:

- ***Describing what is distinctive*** about the character of the small town or village in terms of its shape and buildings and its setting in the surrounding countryside;
- ***Drawing up design principles*** based on conserving distinctive local character and adapting it to, and integrating it within new development;
- ***Ensuring the new development is effectively managed not prevented,*** including innovative building and design solutions; and

- ***Acting as a focus for local communities to research and analyse their town or village and input into statutory development plans and local area plans.***

Village Design Statements and other supplementary local development frameworks are usually best progressed by way of a partnership between technical resources of the relevant planning authority and the local knowledge of local communities and elected members and use of external facilitators.'

It should be noted that the DoEHLG intends to publish further national guidance on LAPs, which will address the issue of supplementary local development frameworks and their relationship to city and county development plans and local area plans in the autumn of 2009. It is intended that this 'pilot' project will inform the formulation of these draft guidelines.

1.3 'National Pilot' for Village Design Programme II

In late March 2009 The Heritage Council announced that Julianstown, a former estate village located in East Meath, had been chosen as the national pilot for the National Village Design Programme II.

The 'Pilot' VDS for Julianstown will be the first to be prepared under the post-evaluation programme, i.e. National Village Design Programme II. The Heritage Council, in partnership with Julianstown and District Resident's Association (JDRA), Meath County Council and the Urban Forum, is now seeking to engage consultants/facilitators to assist and support the community in the preparation and delivery of a Village Design Statement (VDS) for Julianstown Village.

1.4 Background

Julianstown Village

Julianstown is a village in County Meath located in the east of Ireland near the town of Drogheda. Julianstown is situated on the River Nanny, which flows into the sea at Laytown, about 3 km to the east. The village has a strong community with both Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland churches, a National Primary school and a public house.

Although the village can trace its history back at least four centuries, Julianstown in its present form was established in the 19th century by Colonel Charles Pepper of the nearby Ballygarth Estate, who owned the land on which the village stands.

After completing a grand tour of Europe at the end of the 19th century, Colonel Pepper was so impressed by the continental villages that he built seven houses in Julianstown in the Swiss Cottage style accompanied by a police barracks and courthouse. Up until the 1980s the village catered for a diversity of uses: residential, administrative and commercial. However, although the centre of the village remains virtually unchanged to this day the buildings are now primarily residential.

Since the turn of the century Julianstown has seen the development of suburban type housing at the outskirts of the village while at the same time opportunities to shop and socialise in the village have diminished with the closing of the village shop and post office as well as the closure and dereliction of the local hotel.

Julianstown suffers from a severe and unplanned volume of through-traffic³¹ due to being located on the main access route to the M1 motorway for the population of Drogheda and East Meath, a population, which is planned to be in the region of 90,000 by 2024^{32, 33}. JDRA was established in 1974 and has a long and distinguished record of advocacy on behalf of villagers and secured such benefits as a municipal sewerage connection, public lighting and a reduction in the speed limit. More recently JDRA has funded and developed a community garden and has participated in several programmes such as Pride of Place and Tidy Towns.

JDRA

JDRA engaged with the Heritage Council initially in 2007, when it submitted a request for funding to carry out a VDS for the village. The Association was subsequently invited to take part in the Heritage Council's National Village Design Conference in Slane Castle in October 2008. The Group developed a creative presentation for the National Conference, which was subsequently made into a DVD with the Heritage Council's support. The DVD, which is entitled 'Designing Our Future' is available to view on the Heritage Council's planning webpage. As noted above, in early 2009, Julianstown was selected as a national pilot for the new Village Design Programme II.

The selection of the 'pilot' was announced at the JDRA AGM on the 30th March 2009, when the Julianstown Village DVD was formally launched by Meath County Manager, Tom Dowling and an initial community consultation exercise took place to set up a local Village Design Sub-group.

The AGM also included a presentation by the Heritage Council on the aims and objectives of the VDS 'pilot' (Alison Harvey, Planning and Development Officer).

Urban Forum

The Urban Forum was established in 2005 and consists of representatives of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI), the Irish Planning Institute (IPI), Engineers Ireland (EI), The Society of Chartered Surveyors (SCS) and the Irish Landscape Institute (ILI). The four primary aims of the Forum are to:

- Promote the discipline of urban design in the public and private sectors;
- Develop continuing education courses for their members to improve the level of Urban Design knowledge and skills within the professions;
- Promote the benefits of good urban design to the public; and
- Strengthen the Forum's credentials as a "think tank".

Proposals are now sought from suitably qualified professionals to assist and support the community in the preparation and delivery of a Village Design

³¹ See www.nra.ie/NetworkManagement/TrafficCounts/TrafficCounterData/html/R132-1.htm

³² Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area 2007

³³ Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013

Statement for Julianstown. The person(s) selected for the project will be expected to co-ordinate the relevant expertise to assist in fulfilling the brief as outlined in the sections below.

2. KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE JULIANSTOWN VDS

The Objectives of the VDS for Julianstown village are to:

1. Assess and describe what is distinctive and unique about Julianstown village and to ensure that these features are enhanced through the local planning system (and other relevant socio-economic development programmes);
2. Draw up design principles to guide for the future development within and surrounding of the village in accordance with published national planning guidelines and the European Landscape Convention (ELC);
3. Effectively manage new development (including infill) and to provide advice to all decision makers, developers and their agents; and
4. Act as a focus for local communities to participate and collaborate effectively in the local planning process (and other relevant socio-economic development programmes).

The Julianstown Village Design Statement will inform the review of the Local Area Plan, which is due to commence in 2010.

The VDS for Julianstown must fulfil four key requirements, namely:

1. The VDS will provide the spatial principles that are the basis for the development of Julianstown as a sustainable village community and which will deliver an enhanced quality of life for the people who live in Julianstown. These principles will include parameters such as: design, density, rural/urban distinction, settlement size and historic morphology/shape, character and local distinctiveness, transport, implementation, etc;
2. The VDS must be practical and delivered in a format that facilitates implementation within the Irish planning system. The statement must elaborate and inform the relevant statutory plans and socio-economic development programmes for Julianstown and act as a supplementary local development framework that accurately profiles the distinctiveness and key attributes of the village and guides the design of future development;
3. It must be a statement that has the agreement and confidence of the local community in Julianstown. It is essential that the local community believes and trusts in the ability of the statement to deliver a sustainable settlement/community moving forward; and
4. The VDS must raise awareness through training and there must be evidence of capacity building in the local community (within all age groups), which will remain long after the consultants/facilitators have departed.

Spatial Principles

These principles should be such that we ensure that Julianstown develops in a socially and economically sustainable manner. The VDS should also address issues of the size and settlement pattern of Julianstown and should allow for its sustainable development.

Diversity

How can we ensure that there is true diversity in Julianstown through spatial principles and design? For a socially sustainable community we need to have a diversity of young and old, families, single people who want to and are able to make their home in Julianstown. We also need to have diversity in the use of buildings in Julianstown so that there are people in Julianstown throughout the day to ensure security and economic sustainability.

Energy

The plan should be accompanied by a carbon impact assessment and should be designed to be carbon neutral. Issues such as transport patterns, commuting patterns, building design and location, and other major energy issues need to be considered. The spatial design principles should seek to minimize private car usage and maximise walking and cycling.

Climate Change

There is a requirement to consider the impact of climate change, e.g. the need for quality design of housing that deals adequately with the anticipated effects of climate change.

Urban Design

The design and layout pattern of Julianstown should be based around streets and public spaces and activity should flow from these areas as key starting points. We should aim to create truly rewarding spaces that people want to visit and explore. The relationships between new/old and urban/rural are also important – please refer to the Urban Design Manual (Parts 1 & 2) that accompany the Department of the Environment's December Guidelines³⁴. A boundary should be established for Julianstown.

Capacity Building

An objective of the VDS process is that the knowledge generated will be harnessed in a form by which it can be used effectively by the local community in the future. The knowledge is not only a product of the VDS since much of it is already present in the community.

Following the completion of the VDS, the local community will be better able to seek to ensure implementation and achieve their needs through consultation, lobbying, direct action, etc.

3. METHODOLOGY

³⁴ <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/>

To be effective, the VDS will require the extensive participation of relevant interested parties and organisations, and in particular, the local community in Julianstown (engaging all age groups). The strength, long-term relevance and effectiveness of the VDS will be directly related to the amount of support this process has generated and embraced from the initial conception phase through to the implementation and monitoring phase.

It is therefore envisaged that the methodology used will be as follows:

- Be widely inclusive of the community and key stakeholders;
- Promote the principles and practice of collaborative and participative planning; and
- Have an action-learning or action-research approach, which incorporates training and capacity-building into the process and prioritises implementation and monitoring (engaging all age groups).

It is envisaged that the Heritage Council, JDRA, Meath County Council and the Urban Form will work in partnership, based on the structures and processes outlined below:

Process and timescale

Milestones, Time-scale and Role of Consultant(s)/Facilitators are set out below. Key milestones in the process that have been delivered during 2009 are as follows:

- March 2009 - Planning meeting with Heritage Council, Urban Forum and JDRA
- March 2009 - Planning meeting with Heritage Council, JDRA and Meath County Council
- March 2009 - JDRA AGM including public consultation and information evening on VDS, presentation by Heritage Council, launch of DVD by County Manager and selection of Local VDS Sub-group.
- April 2009 - First meeting of local VDS sub-group
- May 2009 - Second meeting of local VDS sub-group

The following are key elements envisaged in the process and a draft timescale from July 2009 – April 2010:

Task	Timescale
Regular monthly meetings or conference calls of Project Steering Group	Ongoing
2-3 Meetings of Local VDS Sub- Group to develop vision and analysis and build capacity and start planning for public consultation during Heritage Week in late August	July – August 2009
Ongoing research and analysis of issues, and consultative meetings with specific stakeholder	July – December 2009

groups, including youth club, sports clubs, businesses, developers etc.	
Organise good communications, web-site and media/PR re. process in partnership with Local VDS Sub-group and Project Steering Group	Ongoing
Public VDS Consultation workshops	September 2009
Update and planning meetings of Local VDS sub-group in preparation for weekend Workshop to develop draft VDS	September / October 2009
Weekend workshop with core members of Local VDS sub-group run by HC, Urban Forum and Consultants to produce draft VDS	October / November 2009
Prepare draft VDS	November/ December 2009
Feed draft VDS into Review of LAP to ensure integration into new LAP	Oct 2009– Feb 2010
Feedback of draft to Local VDS Sub-group / JDRA and plan for a public feedback workshops	December 2009
Public feedback workshops on draft VDS	January / February 2010
Local VDS sub-group and Project Steering Group to finalise and sign off on draft VDS and plan implementation and evaluation structures	March 2010
Final editing of VDS	April 2010
High Profile Launch of VDS. (Should be a minister, ideally Minister for Environment) Set up implementation and evaluation structure	May 2010

4. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ROLE OF CONSULTANTS/ FACILITATORS

There will be two structures for the overall management and direction of the process:

1. Julianstown VDS Pilot Project Steering group made up of representatives from:

- JDRA
- Heritage Council (HC)
- Meath County Council (MCC)
- Urban Forum

The role of this group is to ensure and oversee the effective management of the project. The consultants/facilitators will report to the Project Steering Group on a regular basis, e.g. Monthly Progress Reports will be required. In addition, a second group has been established to support the Project Steering Group:

2. Local VDS Sub-group made up of representatives from:

- JDRA Committee Members
- Other community members
- Key stakeholders e.g. local businesses and developers
- Meath County Council – Local Councillors

This sub-group will be co-ordinated by JDRA and facilitated, as required by the project Steering Group. The role of this group is to co-ordinate the project at local level. It will have access to specialist expertise that can be invited for special meetings e.g. MCC planning staff and engineers, Heritage Officer, Transport engineers, etc.

Roles of Consultants/Facilitators

The consultant's role will be to guide and facilitate the local community in producing a VDS that meets the objectives set out above.

The consultant should have demonstrable expertise in the relevant area and should indicate where he/she would envisage engaging other experts etc.

It is envisaged that the consultant will have responsibility for at least the following;

- Meeting facilitation;
- Research and training;
- Ensuring stakeholder buy-in and implementation; and
- Project management and documentation.

The consultants will undertake the following tasks:

- Facilitate meetings of the Local VDS sub-group as required and build their capacity to engage and take leadership in the process of collaborative and participative planning;
- Facilitate all public consultation exercises including workshops, etc;
- Conduct research and stakeholder interviews and undertake analysis of responses;
- Provide expertise in key areas such as urban design, participative planning, traffic and transport, green energy, climate change, etc;
- Liaise with the Heritage Council and Meath County Council to encourage integration of VDS process and plan into review of LAP in a way that promotes collaborative and participative planning;
- Prepare notes / reports of all workshops and meetings that they facilitate;
- Write up draft VDS and finalise;
- Work closely at local level with the Co-ordinators of the Local VDS group; and
- Report regularly to the Project Steering Group.

At this stage, it is envisaged that the village design statement (VDS) will include relevant sections addressing the evolution of Julianstown Village, information on Forces for Change/Key Issues including Climate Change, Proposed Design Principles and Guidelines, Implementation Plan and Monitoring – Measuring Indicators, etc.

It is expected that the consultants/facilitator will prepare feedback reports for all meetings that they facilitate during the VDS process. The reports will be available to download on the website.

5. RESPONSE TO THE BRIEF

The consultant(s) should provide a written proposal submission in response to this brief (20 pages maximum including appendices), setting out how the Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS) will be approached, scope of study, method of working, study team members/project director and manager, proposed timescale, and any matters not covered by the brief, which are considered relevant. The submission for the Village Design Statement should include:

- How the consultant will respond to the brief, including method statement, timetable and phasing of the proposal;
- Details on how the participation and consultation process would be designed and managed;
- The range of professional skills which would be brought to bear including CVs for proposed team members;
- A resource plan showing the breakdown of person hours between professions and stages i.e. detailed costings;
- Previous experience of the key personnel proposed;
- Extent of professional indemnity cover; and
- A current tax clearance certificate will be required.

Consultant Skills/Expertise

The consultant will ensure that the relevant expertise and project management skills are available within the proposed Study Team.

Project Budget, Expenses and Fees

No consultant making a submission will be remunerated for any costs incurred in preparing a submission. The budget available for the Julianstown Village Design Statement is **€15,000. This figure excludes VAT but includes expenses.** All materials for the public consultations, room hire and advertising events will be covered by Meath County Council.

Pre-Tender Communication

To ensure equality between applicants, there will not be any correspondence or discussions with the applicants or their agents during the preparation period for submissions and/or prior to a decision on the award of the contract/tender.

Tender Timescale

Submissions must be received in hardcopy (6 no. hardcopies) **not later than 5.00P.M. on July 20th 2009.** Submissions made by email will not be accepted. Submissions should be clearly marked in the top right hand corner '**Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS) Tender**' and posted/delivered to:

The Heritage Council

**Áras na hOidhreachta
Church Lane
Kilkenny
Ireland**

Please note that submissions received after the deadline will not be considered.

Selection Interview

Interviews may be held with short-listed candidates in **late July 2009** prior to a final decision and subsequent appointment. The appointment will be made in early August with the completed *Village Design Statement* due within 18 months of the commencement date.

6. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF CONSULTANTS/FACILITATORS

The criteria for selecting the consultants/facilitators will be as follows:

- Proposed methodology; (50%)
- Expertise of team and track record (30%);
- Use of resources (20%)

The most economically advantageous tender will be selected according to the above criteria.

Proposed methodology (50%)

Evidence in statement of methodology in submission for:

- Understanding and overall aim and objectives of the assignment
- Any additional insight into issues, which might affect the project
- General approach and overall project management
- Process to be adopted and implemented to achieve aims of the project
- Methods for reporting
- Systems for controlling and monitoring the project
- Communications Plan
- Innovation which will increase quality of output and/or accelerate delivery of outputs.

Expertise and track record (30%)

Please provide CVs for all project team member along with summary paragraphs detailing the expertise in the following areas:

- Commissioning of Village Design Statements
- Participative planning and community training
- Urban design
- Any other relevant areas of expertise

Please indicate the anticipated input of each project team member. Also, please indicate areas of expertise, which it is anticipated will be delegated to third parties.

Use of resources (20%)

Contract award will be based on most economically advantageous tender.

A Schedule of Rates and Inputs (exclusive of VAT) must be provided with the names and input of individual personnel involved in the project costed against the relevant key activities. Please also provide a full breakdown of all expenses and incidentals, which will be incurred in delivering this assignment. Interim Payments can be made in accordance with agreed work stages.

7. GENERAL ISSUES**Draft and Final Reports**

The consultant(s) will be responsible for the process of the adoption of a Draft and Final Village Design Statement by the Steering Group and the Local Village Design Sub-group, including the attendance at meetings and re-working needed to achieve this, etc. All reports must adhere to the Meath County Council's requirement for documents, which is attached as *Appendix B*.

Output Format, number of copies, appendices, circulation

The following should be produced by the consultants/facilitators:

- 10 no. bound copies of the Village Design Statements in A4 format;
- One unbound colour copy, capable of being photocopied;
- Text of Village Design Statements on disk in Microsoft Word for PC; and
- One set of original prints and negatives of any photographs taken during the study
- Short article for Heritage Outlook.

Intellectual Property and Confidentiality

The consultant appointed will be required to assign their copyright in the Village Design Statement and any rights to any other intellectual property including design rights which arise during to course of the project to the project partners: JDRA, Meath County Council and The Heritage Council. Copyright for any illustrations or other material used should be cleared by the consultant. The Village Design Statement will be made available for public use by the project partners.

The consultant shall keep confidential all confidential information and information that would reasonably be considered to be confidential and shall only be entitled to use such information for the purpose of the VDS project and for no other purpose.

All communications regarding the project shall be approved by the Steering Group.

Freedom of Information (Fol)

The Heritage Council and Meath County Council operate under the *Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003*, and all information held by it may be subject to requests under these Acts.

Project Management and Monitoring

As stated above, the VDS project will be managed by a Steering Group consisting of representatives from the Heritage Council, JDRA and Meath County Council.

The Steering Group will meet regularly to review the project, and will meet with the consultant(s) on appointment to agree the work programme and dates for review points and production of monthly progress reports. These project management meetings will take place in Julianstown.

Appendix A: Useful Reference Material and Information

The following would prove useful reference material prior to submission of proposal:

- <http://www.julianstown.com/>
- DVD *Designing Our Future* available from The Heritage Council
- www.meath.ie for Meath County Development Plan, 2007-2013 & East Meath Local Area Plan 2005
- Planning Strategy for Greater Drogheda Area
- NRA traffic statistics
- Sustainable development guidelines:
- <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload,19164,en.pdf>
- Urban Design Manual :
- <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentandHousing/PlanningDevelopment/Planning/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,19216,en.pdf>
- <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentandHousing/PlanningDevelopment/Planning/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,19217,en.pdf>
- *Village Design-Making Local Character Count in New Development*, Countryside Commission 1996
- *Guidance Notes for the Appraisal of Historic Gardens, Demesnes, Estates and their Settings*, Cork County Council

Appendix B: Format of Documents for Meath County Council

Meath County Council require that any documents produced by Consultants for use in any Plan or for any in house research, be produced in a digital format which is compatible to both our editable software and also suitable for immediate publication on the Meath County Council Web site www.meath.ie. These formats will be required at each individual stage of the process including all Drafts, Amendments and Final Documents. Below is a summary of the formats to be submitted at each stage of the project.

Written Documents:

- All written documents including Drafts, Amendments and Final Documents will be supplied in two formats.
- The completed document is to be supplied in Microsoft Word 2003 or later. There are no file size restrictions and the document should be formatted for A4 layout.
- A copy of the document must also be supplied in PDF (Portable Document Format). The PDF format must have each page bookmarked and also must be broken down so as no individual file should exceed 2mb. This may mean splitting a single document into more than one file.
- It shall be the duty of the consultant to supply all the information in the above formats. The data should be supplied either via e-mail or by disc and additional copies should be made available on request.
- It shall be the duty of the consultant to provide proof of Ordnance Survey Ireland Copyright licence if producing maps using Ordnance survey Ireland base data. This shall be in keeping with the County Councils obligations under the CCMA agreement.
- The Consultant will be obliged to make all alterations to a plan either by Senior Planning staff or by the Members of Meath County Council, and produce a working document fit for publication in a timely manner.

Meath County Council Technicians will make available all logos, title blocks, and other relevant digital data that maybe required to bring a project to fruition. This excludes software and Ordnance Survey Ireland Data, which it is the duty of the Consultant to supply. Meath County Council will not be responsible for, nor will it engage in substantial works on behalf of the Consultant. It is the duty of the consultant to appoint an employee who is competent in IT issues to meet the needs of the County Council. County Council Staff will be available to answer any queries in relation to IT matters, which may arise from time to time.

Appendix 3

Membership of Julianstown VDS Sub-group

Emer Dolphin (Chair)
Paddy Prendergast
Paul Berrill
Clare Burke
Serena Campbell (Councillor)
James Carey
Sean Crosson (Balbriggan)
Madeline Darby
Miriam Doyle
Nicola Hanratty
Eoin Holmes (Councillor)
Barry James
Alma Jordan
Fred Logue
Mary Logue
Peter Madden
Jenny Markey
Gavan Mc Cullough
Daragh Mc Cullough
Mary Pat Molloy
Leo Monaghan
Niamh Ni Loinsigh
Andrew Pufield
Martina Relehan

Appendix 4

Membership of ‘Pilot’ VDS Steering Group for Julianstown

Wendy Bagnall	Meath County Council
Jeff Bishop	BDOR Consulting
Emer Dolphin	Julianstown VDS Sub-group (Chair)
Pam Harty	Planning Intern, Heritage Council (June 2009-December 2009)
Alison Harvey	Heritage Council
James Hennessy	The Paul Hogarth Company
Aoife McGrath	Planning Intern, Heritage Council
Paddy Prendergast	Julianstown VDS Sub-group

Appendix 5

Julianstown Community Survey

Question 1: Awareness of Village Design Statement (VDS) Process

According to the survey findings, there was a general awareness of the 'Pilot' VDS project within Julianstown, with 57% of respondents claiming that they had become aware of it through the local media, community newsletter, meetings, etc. This is healthy level of general community awareness for a community planning project given that only 25% had participated in community voluntary activities in the previous six months (see Question 3 below).

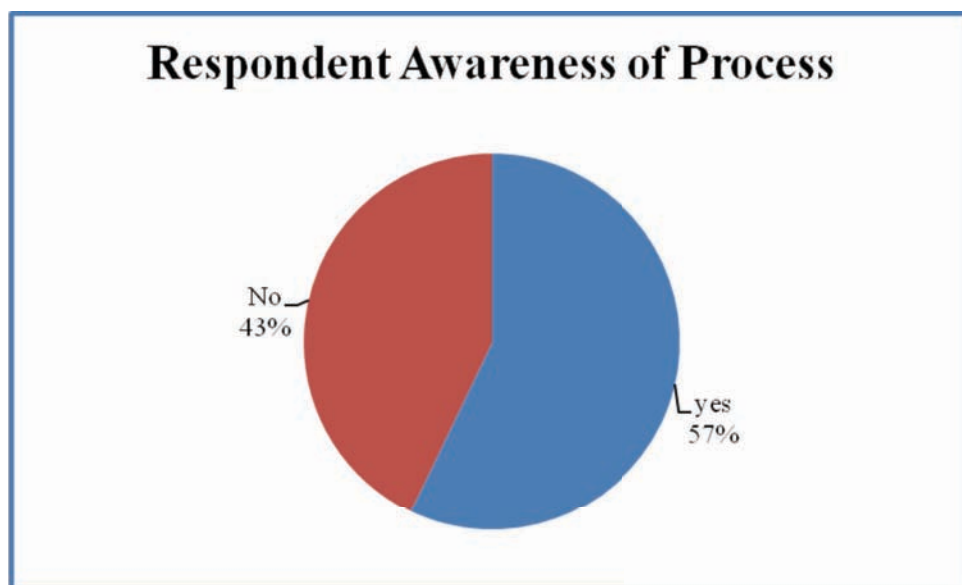


Figure 1: Awareness of Village Design Statement (VDS) process

Question 2: Main purpose of Village Design Statement process

Of those who had heard of the 'Pilot' VDS process, the majority believed that its main purpose was to enhance the village. Common responses under this category included *"tidy it up, how to keep local character of the village, how to sustainably grow the village, to influence design of village bearing in mind wishes of villagers..."* A small number of respondents associated the VDS with the Community Garden. It was clear also that a number of residents associated the VDS process with one of enhancing community participation and development and associated expressions included *"try to tie the place together as a community"*.

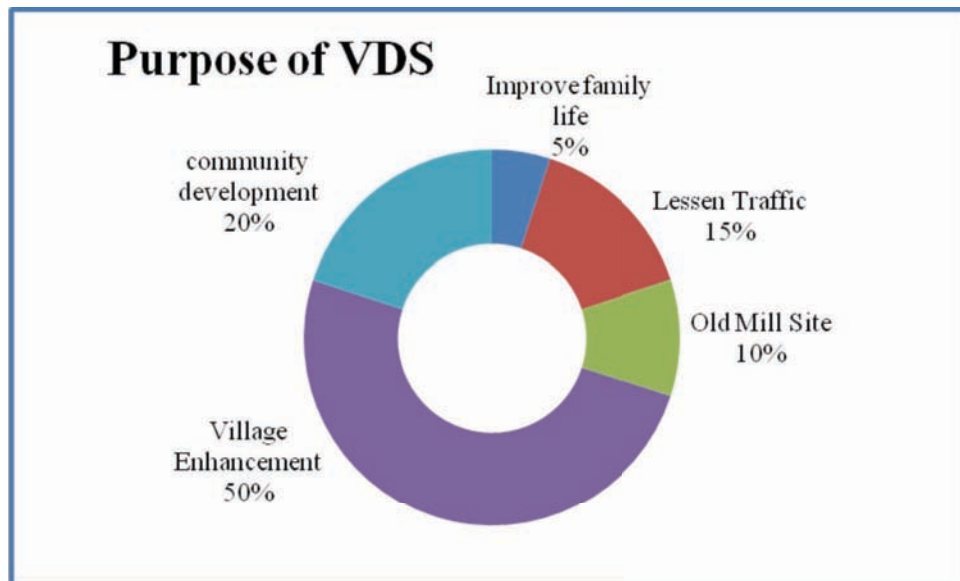


Figure 2: Main purpose of Village Design Statement (VDS) process

Given the dominant traffic management problem associated with Julianstown, it is interesting to note that addressing the traffic problem was not considered by the community as the main focus for the VDS. There was a general recognition that, while traffic management was a major problem, other issues were also important including general village enhancement, management, and development.

Question 3: Participation in Community/Voluntary Activities within the previous six months

The survey revealed that most respondents (75%) had not participated in community/voluntary activities within the previous six months. Reasons given for this included: transport constraints, lifestyle/family commitments, and community dynamics/conflict. The level of active community engagement is considered to be relatively low and includes those who participated in school-based activities such as local parents' council etc. Increasing participation levels in community-based activities is seen as essential for the ongoing community development of Julianstown and the VDS has had a positive influence on these levels.

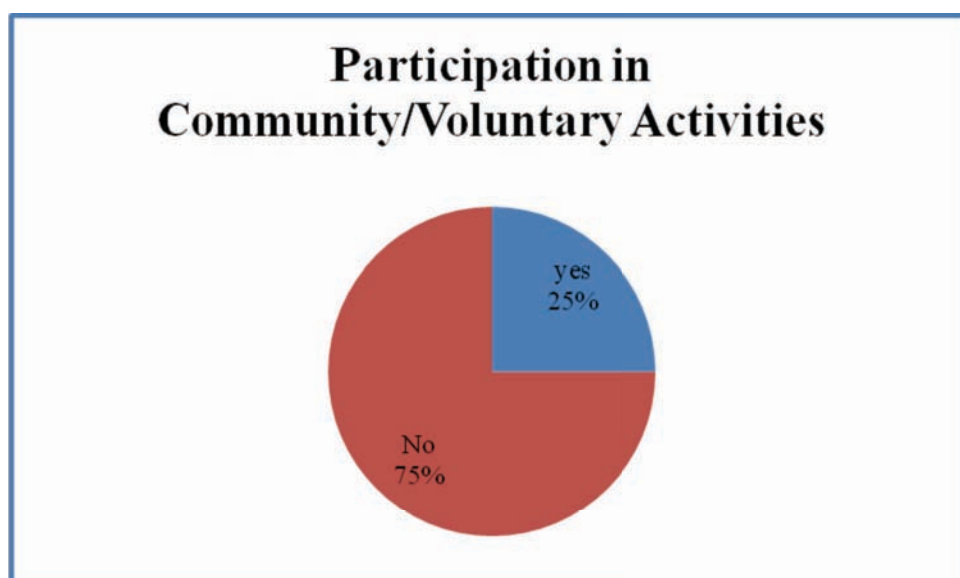


Figure 3: Participation in community/voluntary activities within the previous six months

Question 4: Principal challenges facing Julianstown

Insofar as the main challenges facing Julianstown are concerned, respondents principally highlighted traffic/road safety concerns along the main road and also at the primary school, which some respondents considered to be especially vulnerable. A distinction was also made by respondents between traffic volumes and pedestrian requirements (mainly footpaths).

Respondents were asked what they considered the three main challenges facing Julianstown. There was a broad range of responses as presented in the categories listed in *Figure 4* below.

The amenities stated as required ranged from: shop/post office to social recreational, including youth club, bingo hall, etc. A number of respondents associated the current state of the local wooded area as a derelict site insofar as it was reported as being used for anti-social purposes. Apart from traffic issues, the next most significant issue recorded was that of lack of amenities.

As noted earlier, given the reported significance of these issues, it is interesting to note that the *perceived* purpose of the VDS process recorded only 15% of respondents saying that it was about traffic problems and 50% of respondents saying that it was primarily about village enhancement. The challenge of dereliction as recorded in *Figure 4* principally related to the Old Mill site at the centre of the village.

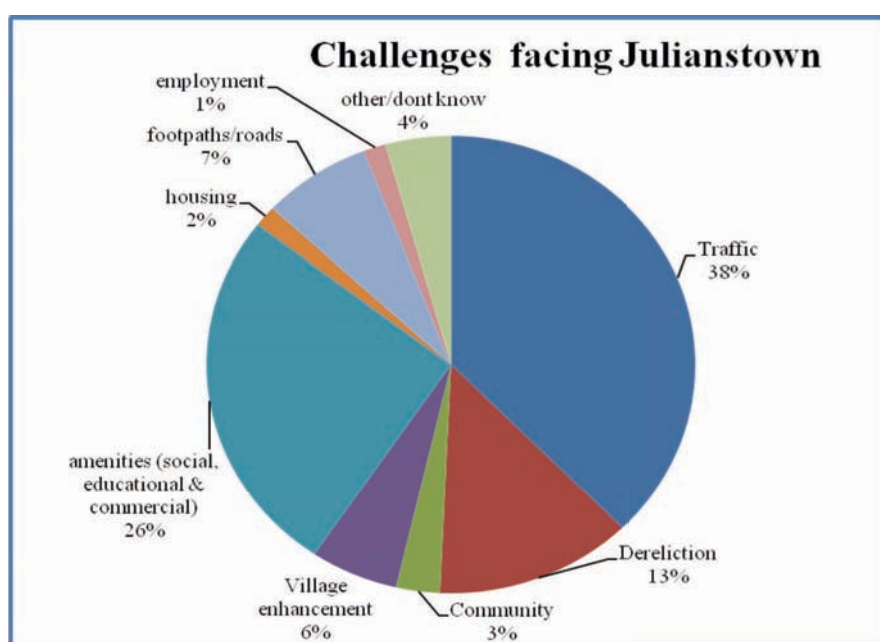


Figure 4: Principal challenges facing Julianstown

Question 5: Duration of residence of respondents

The majority of respondents had been resident within Julianstown for up to 10 years, with the greatest cohort having been resident between 5 years and 10 years. The third largest cohort have been resident for more than 20 years.

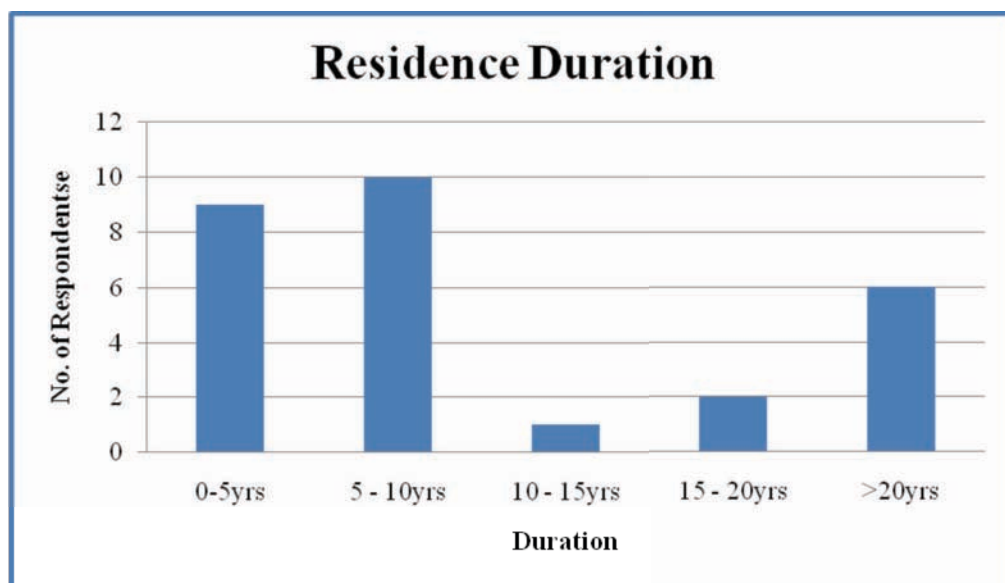


Figure 5: Duration of residence of respondents

The above chart reflects the recent demographic profile of Julianstown and the survey attempted to include respondents from the main housing areas, whether well established or recently built. The overall village is characterised by a number of discrete housing clusters having limited inter-connections and linkages. Some of the challenges facing the village, as recorded, reflected respondent location (poor/insufficient drainage along the main road through the village; dereliction/school issues). In general, those respondents who were long-term residents had grown-up families, whilst those in residence within the recent past had younger families.

Question 6: How the relationships between Meath County Council and residents can be improved

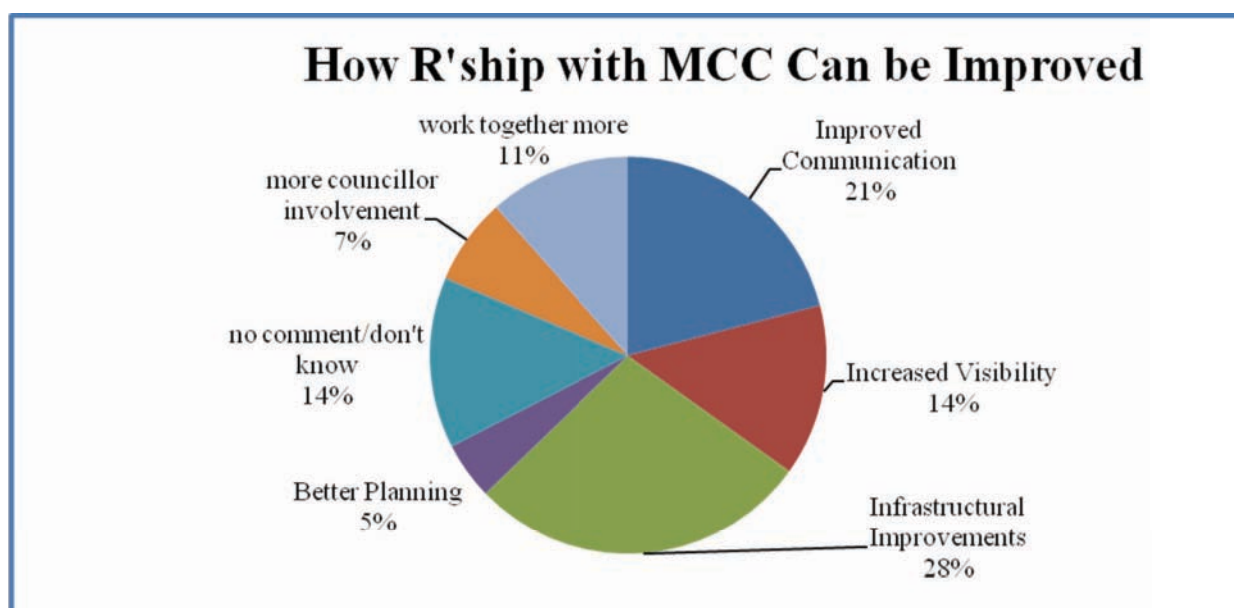


Figure 6: How the relationship between Meath Co. Council and residents can be improved

Respondents were asked about how the relationship between Meath County Council and the Julianstown community could be improved. While physical infrastructural

improvements (mostly roads/footpaths/lighting) were recorded as being an important issue (28%), the greater collective issue concerned communications/visibility, with 46% of responses associated with poor communications, low visibility, and lack of a good working relationship. The responses included: the need for County Council employees to inform community members concerning the *purpose* of local works being undertaken prior to commencement; poor communications through the planning process; and a willingness by the community members to work with the Council on projects etc.

To help improve communications, one respondent recommended that an interactive website be developed so that residents could liaise directly with County Council officials and vice versa.

Question 7: Willingness to participate in future community development activities

Despite not having participated in community or voluntary activities within the previous six months, there was a significant willingness by respondents (64%) to become involved in community development activities associated with the Julianstown VDS.

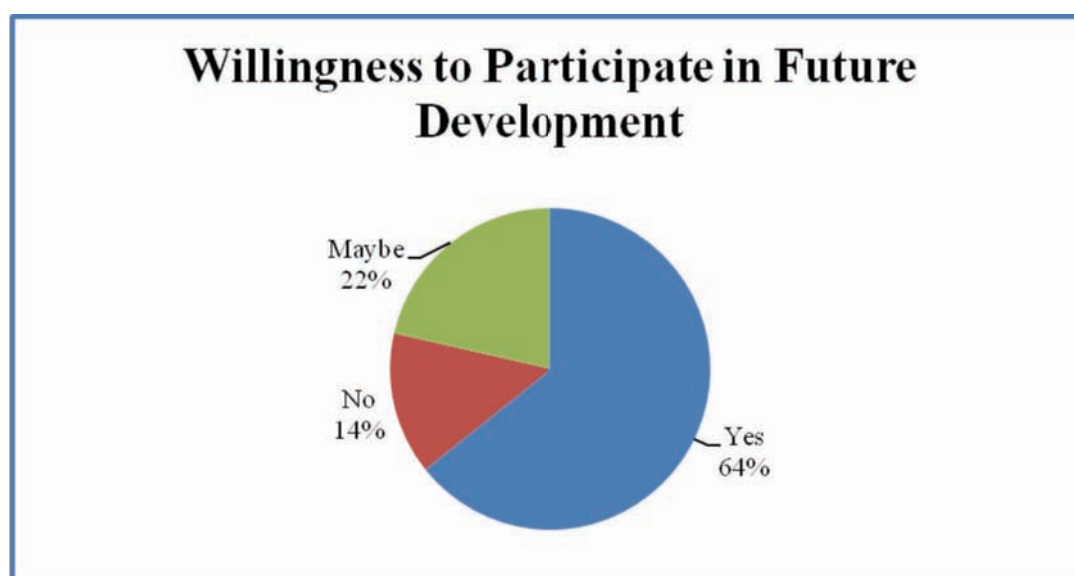


Figure 7: Willingness to participate in future community development activities

Only 14% of respondents indicated that they would be unwilling to participate mostly for health, moving away from locality, or lifestyle reasons. The potential for the VDS process to act as a catalyst for greater community cohesion and as a means of meaningful partnership with Meath County Council is seen as significant.

At the time of the survey, 25% of respondents indicated that they had participated in community-based voluntary initiatives within the previous six months, whilst 64% of respondents indicated a willingness *to become involved* in the VDS implementation programme (see Figures 3 and 7 above). This presents a significant opportunity for support structures to be put in place so that the collective energy of the community can be harnessed for the benefit of all.

There was substantial support for the VDS process in general and the inclusion of all sectors of society within the 'Pilot' VDS process was best exemplified at the VDS

public workshop held on 25th March 2010. The range of contributing work on display, particularly from the youth of the area, including primary and post-primary children was exceptional. The displays, in addition to the presentations, which were made by the project partners and QUB post-graduate students helped to invigorate and to consolidate the overall VDS process.

Ongoing recognition of the community's efforts in engaging with the process as well as support for project and initiatives arising from the VDS will be critical in ensuring the sustainability of the concept within Julianstown and in other areas where a similar VDS process might be undertaken.

One of the more significant and remarkable achievements of the VDS process was its capacity to generate enthusiasm and support for the ongoing management and development of the village. All participants (100%) at the March 2010 public/community workshop stated that, as a result of the VDS process, they were now more hopeful for the future of their village.

Of those who attended the public/community workshop in March 2010, 54% stated that they had no involvement with any groups within the area, while 68% had no previous involvement with the VDS process up to the time of the public meeting. This indicates that the potential of the VDS process to substantially enhance community participation levels.



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Áras na hOidhreachta
Church Lane, Kilkenny, Ireland

T +353 (0)56 777 0 777

F +353 (0)56 777 0 788

E mail@heritagecouncil.ie

www www.heritagecouncil.ie