

# Ballinakill Community Plan 2018-2022



## Ballinakill Community Development Committee



***This Community Plan is funded by Laois Partnership and Laois Local Community Development Committee under the LEADER Rural Development Programme***

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction: Background &amp; Context .....</b>	<b>3</b>
i) Plan Context .....	3
ii) Ballinakill Community Development Committee .....	3
iii) Community Participation .....	3
<b>Chapter 1: Community Profile – A Unique Village.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 The Uniqueness of Ballinakill .....	5
1.2 Village or Town.....	6
1.3 Location.....	6
1.4 Total Area & Population Profile .....	9
<b>Chapter 2: Community Consultation – Process and Findings .....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Community Consultation Process .....	13
2.2 Local Resource Audit.....	14
2.3 Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, Opportunities Analysis (SWOT).....	15
<b>Chapter 3: Analysis of Resource Audit &amp; SWOT Analysis.....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 Community Development Structure .....	16
3.2 Employment & Zoning Objectives.....	16
3.3 Vital Community Services.....	18
<b>Chapter 4 Project Programme .....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1 Focus Areas & Objectives:.....	22
4.2 Primary Focus Area 1: Community Participation & Community Infrastructure .....	24
4.3 Primary Focus Area 2: Community Culture, Expression & Identity.....	25
4.4 Primary Focus Area 3: Enterprise in the Community .....	26
4.5 Funding.....	27
4.6 Summary Planned Initiatives.....	28

## **Introduction: Background & Context**

### *i) Plan Context*

The Need to Develop Community Structures in Ballinakill is documented in the 2016 Laois Rural Development Programme Strategy (Strategic Action 5.1, P56). This plan identified six towns and villages, including Ballinakill, that had not accessed community funding under the last LEADER Programme. This is also reference to the absence of representation from the area in county wide community structures and business networks which the plan describes as an indication that this community is significantly marginalised from main stream decision making structures thus making it less likely that these areas will avail of funding opportunities and other services. However, the recent establishment of an umbrella group for the village is a welcome development and the groups first task was the preparation of a five year community plan to assist with local social and economic planning.

### *ii) Ballinakill Community Development Committee*

Ballinakill Community Development Committee are a recently established umbrella community development group for the village. The membership of the group is drawn from individuals who have long experience supporting community and social activities in the area. The group are now the lead representative group for the village. In 2017, the group successfully applied for assistance under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 for support to develop a five year Sustainable Communities Plan. They engaged a Community Planner to assist them with this work.

The purpose of the plan is to prepare a medium term strategy for the village that will assist with the social and economic development of the area.

The key objective of this project is to secure a “shared vision” for the future of Ballinakill village. This is to be achieved by:

1. Working intensively with the community to strengthen and enhance community structures.
2. Producing a comprehensive Sustainable Community Plan which will inform actions for future community development of the area
3. Identifying project proposals and prepare specifications for future funding applications

### *iii) Community Participation*

Since the mid-2000s, a significant shift in the need to secure meaningful public participation has taken place at an international, European and national level. The more people involved in decision making, the more accurate and broad ranging the information base, the higher the chances of reaching genuine agreement on key issues become. Therefore, participation by local people in the process of developing the plan becomes as important as the plan itself (Tipperary Institute). A successful plan for Ballinakill cannot deal with spatial aspects in

isolation from the social, economic and environmental context. Of particular importance is the process by which decisions are made and who makes them.

The guiding principles used to assist with this community planning process included:

1. The plan was developed using an action planning model
2. A commitment to working in an inclusive way
3. Adopting an integrated approach to sustainable planning
4. The Plan needed to be clear and accessible
5. The Plan should devise structures to support its implementation

It is envisaged that this Community Plan will provide significant assistance to the newly formed umbrella development group and decision makers and a context for future community planning.

## Chapter 1: Community Profile – A Unique Village

### 1.1 The Uniqueness of Ballinakill

According to the Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape (1997), each village is distinctive and unique, they create a significant sense of regional and local character based on the natural, built and cultural heritage. All villages, such as Ballinakill, have a unique character created by the interplay of architecture, streetscape, boundaries, views, landscape features and cultural elements (Dargan, 2013).



**Figure 1: Aerial View of Ballinakill**

## *1.2 Village or Town*

Ballinakill is a planned estate village laid out by Michael Trench who was an amateur architect. Historians have documented that in 1612 a charter of James I incorporated the settlement as a town. The year 2012 marked the 400th anniversary of the granting of this charter. The original maps of the town in the 1840's show a well laid out village connecting the area to the local landlords –Trench, Domville and Poe. The settlement hierarchy however in the Laois County Development Plan (2016-2022) sets the village within the over 400 person's category and describes the area as having special architectural character. The main architectural character of the village is the Main Street which runs from the approach road from Abbeyleix to the Castlecomer Road.



**Figure 2: Church Street Ballinakill**

Ballinakill was a very important industrial town and evidence today exists in the names of the streets like Brewery Lane. A small water-powered brewery operated in the village during the late 1700s and early 1800s.

For the purposes, of this Community Plan, Ballinakill will be described as a village for consistency with the current statutory development plan for the county.

## *1.3 Location*

Ballinakill is in the Electoral Division of Ballinakill, in the Civil Parish of Dysartgallen, in the Barony of Cullenagh in South County Laois. The village of Ballinakill or in Irish “Baile-na-Coille”, “the town of the woods”, derives its name from the extensive woods which formerly existed here.

The village is served by local roads and the Abbeyleix to Ballyraggett section of the R432. The Square boasts a fine Market House and a 1798 monument. It is unique in ecclesiastical history due to the two churches located side by side on Church Street.

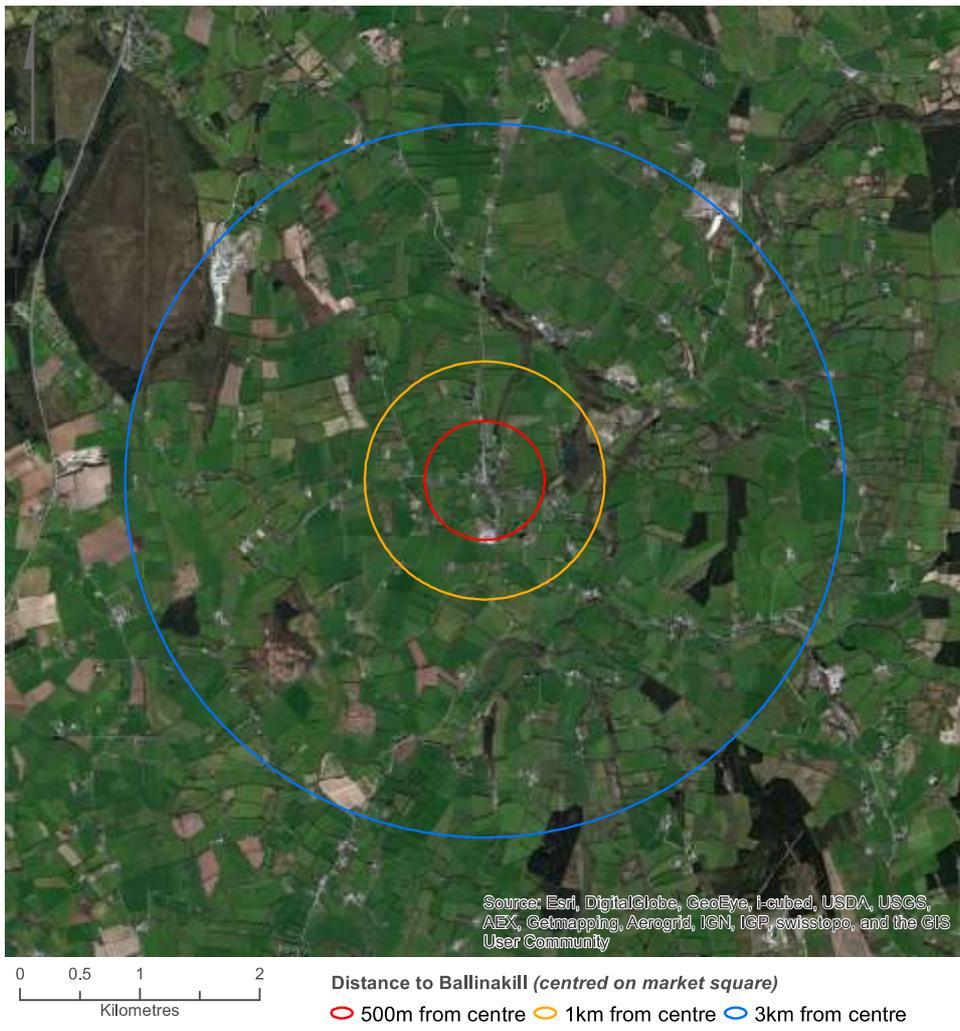
This impressive entrance to the town from the north is through the ‘toll trees’ which have stood the test of time. The streetscape has since changed to include the Durrow Road and the Castlecomer Road at the bottom of Stanhope Street. The village is currently a designated Architectural Conservation Area (Laois County Development Plan 2016-2022). This settlement now provides retail, commercial and community services to its residents and wider community.

Ballinakill village and the lakes in the area is given special mention as high value heritage assets of the county within the county development plan.



**Figure 3: High Quality Signage on the Durrow Road**

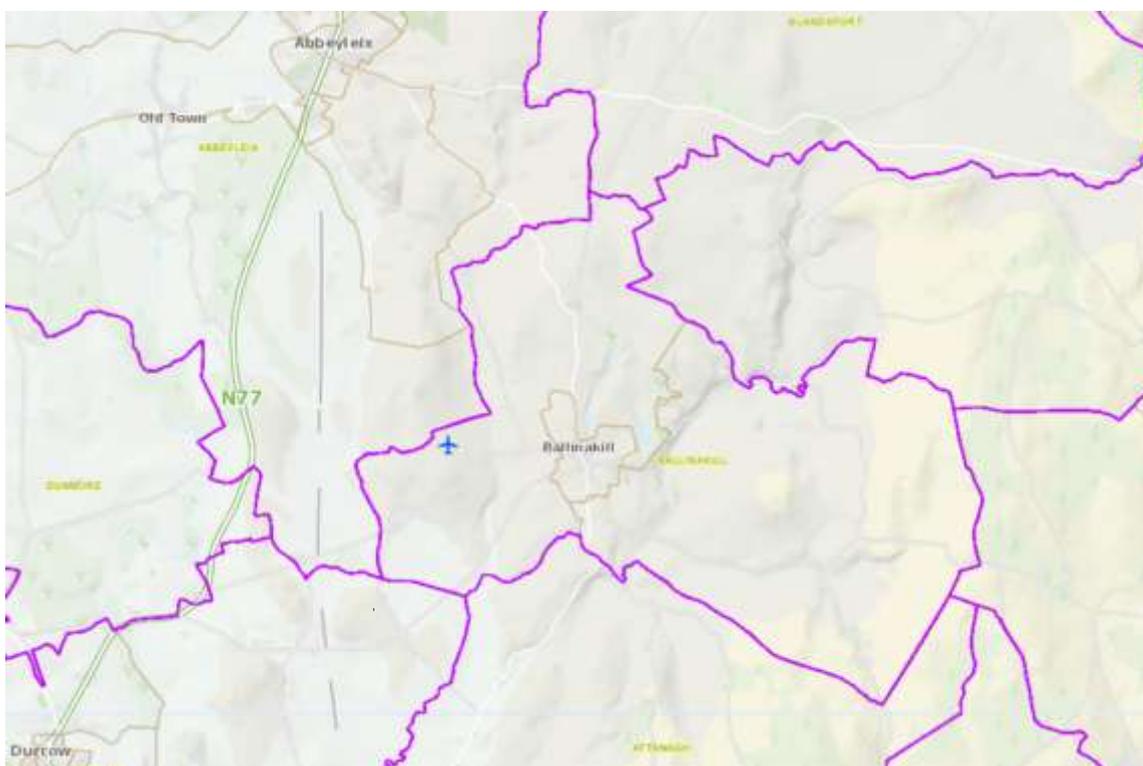
The aerial image (Figure 4) shows the prominence of agriculture as the predominant land use type. The Laois Landscape Character Assessment (2011-2017) sets the village is located in the Hills and Uplands area.



**Figure 4: Wider Aerial View of Ballinakill Showing Significant Lands under pasture**

#### 1.4 Total Area & Population Profile

A total of 29 townlands are within the Electoral Division (ED) of Ballinakill which comes to a total land area of number of 63.55 km<sup>2</sup>. This ED, outlined in pink below, has three small areas units which make up the full ED. See areas outlined in brown which identify the small unit areas, each comprising about 90 households.



**Figure 5: Ballinakill Electoral Division (ED) (Pobal Maps, 2018)**

The population was recorded at 4,014 in 1831 and of these 2,087 lived in rural districts. The present population of the village is 260 but excludes the new housing estates. A total of 826 persons are in the wider Electoral Division of Ballinakill (CSO, 2016). Of the 289 households, 81.3% are owner occupied households, while the 2016 census showed a vacancy rate of 12.2% recoded at the 2016 Census.

Small Area Identification Number (ID)	Small Area	No. of Households	2006 Census	2011 Census	2016 Census
107007001	Ballinakill	98	206	282	312
107007002	Ballinakill	109	303	292	260
107007003	Ballinakill	82	273	218	254
<b>Total for Ballinakill Electoral Division</b>		<b>289</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>826</b>

**Table 1: Number of Households & Population of Small Area Units making up Ballinakill ED (CSO, 2018)**

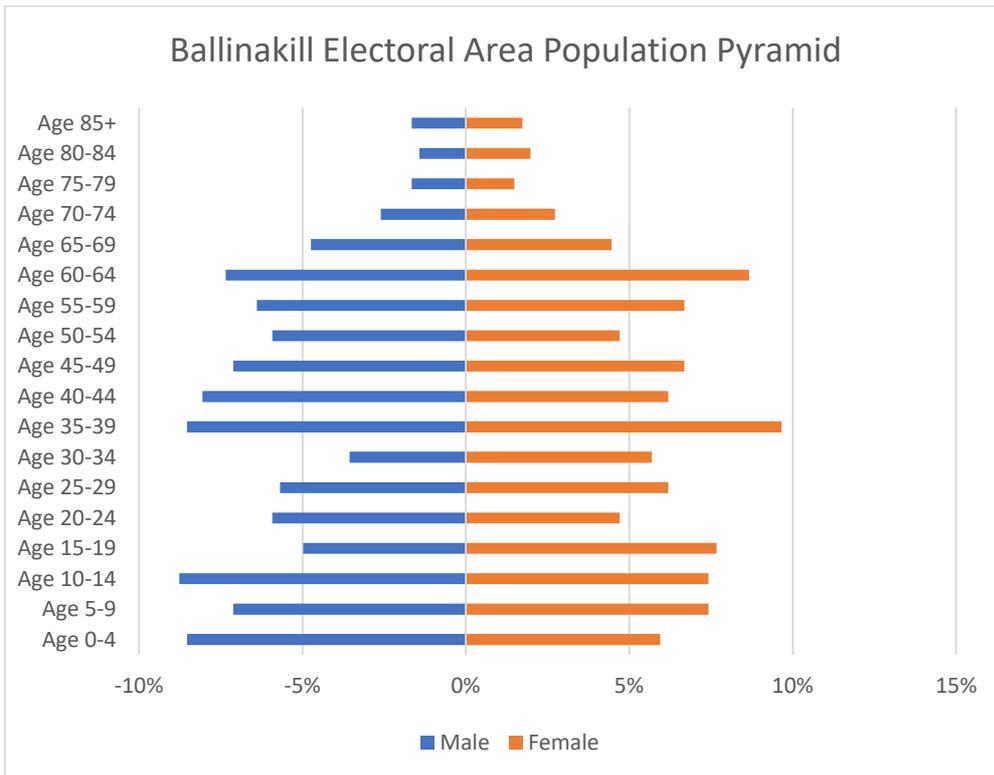
The following table (Table 2) provides an overview of the distribution of persons within the ED broken down by age band and sex. It is noted that the number of people in the 65-69 age

category is particularly high and point to a requirement to plan for the of Older Person in the area.

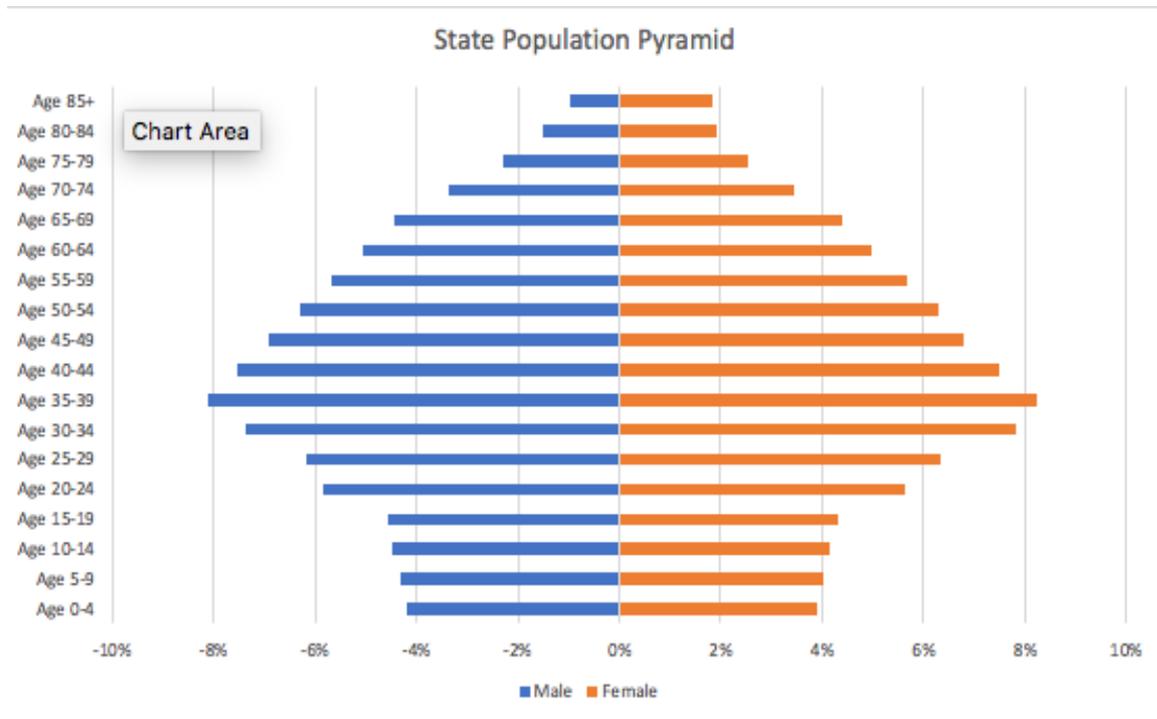
	Male	Female	Total
Age 85+	7	7	14
Age 80-84	6	8	14
Age 75-79	7	6	13
Age 70-74	11	11	22
Age 65-69	20	18	38
Age 60-64	31	35	66
Age 55-59	27	27	54
Age 50-54	25	19	44
Age 45-49	30	27	57
Age 40-44	34	25	59
Age 35-39	36	39	75
Age 30-34	15	23	38
Age 25-29	24	25	49
Age 20-24	25	19	44
Age 15-19	21	31	52
Age 10-14	37	30	67
Age 5-9	30	30	60
Age 0-4	36	24	60
	<b>422</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>826</b>

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Ballinakill by Age Band, Sex**

A review of the population pyramid for Ballinakill shows the percentage of people in different age ranges of both males and females living in the Electoral Division (Figure 6). Comparing Ballinakill's population pyramid with the State's pyramid (Figure 7), shows a similar age pattern for some age groups and it is noteworthy that there are high figures recorded for the 60-64 age range in Ballinakill as seen in following figures (6 & 7).



**Figure 6: Ballinakill Population Pyramid Census 2016**



**Figure 7: State Population Pyramid Census 2016**

## Socio Economic Data

The Pobal Deprivation/Affluence rate for the ED was -2.42 which is marginally below average. Laois County had a similar rate of -2.53. 24.32% in the ED have a third level qualification. The profile of occupations in the locality (Table 3 below) demonstrate that people with skilled trades constitute a significant portion of the total occupations in the area, with professional occupations close behind. Male unemployment was 14.36% in while Female unemployment stood at 8.89% in the 2016 Census.

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	14	7	21
Professional Occupations	22	40	62
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	17	11	28
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	5	23	28
Skilled Trades Occupations	69	10	79
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	4	19	23
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	12	11	23
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	31	2	33
Elementary Occupations	25	14	39
Not stated	26	12	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>374</b>

***Table 3, Census 2016, Ballinakill Electoral Division Breakdown of Occupations***

## Chapter 2: Community Consultation – Process and Findings

This chapter summarises the community consultation process, and outlines the findings from the two public meetings. Section 2.1 looks at local resources that participants viewed as key assets of the area. Section 2.2 is a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

### 2.1 Community Consultation Process

Extensive preplanning took place to ensure appropriate representative views were captured and collated at a public consultation meeting which was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018. The key aim was to recruit broad representation from community groups, businesses and elected representatives. The workshop covered the preparation of a local resource audit, a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and an indicative priority Programme Action Plan.



**Figure 8: Participants of a Public Consultation Workshop, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018**

Recruitment for the event was undertaken with the assistance of local social media, the local parish newsletter, local newspapers and telephone contact with stakeholders. Open invitation leaflets were left in a number of public offices in the village in addition to personal visits to a large number of households so as to recruit the fullest possible participation at the first public meeting. This extensive work proved fruitful as over 55 people were in attendance at the initial meeting.

A follow up Public consultation workshop was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018. A number of follow up telephone interviews were held with individuals who expressed an interest in elaborating their views on the future of the area.

Further consultations were carried out with the Senior Planner for the County, Angela McEvoy, the County Heritage Officer, Catherine Casey and Pamela Tynan, all of Laois Co. Co. In addition, a consultation meeting took place with Mark Clancy of Laois Partnership.

## 2.2 Local Resource Audit

During the public consultation workshops, participants identified a series of local resources that were considered as key assets of the area. Table 4 below summarised under economic, social capital, community and natural and built heritage. The availability of local resources which will support and inform future community planning of the area.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Resource</b>
<b>Economic</b>	Agricultural is prominent Employment Opportunity Weekly Mart meeting every Saturday Quality of well-established Local Businesses Heywood Secondary School Range of local pubs Central Location Residential homes are affordable Numerous points of interest No ghost estates Good Broadband Service in some areas Recent residential development at Heywood Village, Monaclear and Masslough Meadow
<b>Social Capital</b>	Capacity & potential of Individuals and Groups that make up the wider community Community Ethos & high level of Volunteerism Strong Local Social Media Platform Range & Quality of Sporting & Community Clubs such as the GAA & Youth Club & Squash Club
<b>Community</b>	The Square is the heart of the village Local Designated Cycling Routes Good quality primary schools & playschool Accessible High Quality Walks & Woodlands Heywood Secondary School Heywood Gardens Bingo & Snooker Hall Community Centre Squash Courts Good bus connectivity
<b>Natural &amp; Built Heritage</b>	Natural Landscape ( <i>e.g. Rivers, Walks, Woods</i> ) High Quality Built Heritage Heritage ( <i>Tangible &amp; Intangible</i> ) Heywood Gardens Fishing

**Table 4: Ballinakill Resource Audit**

### 2.3 Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, Opportunities Analysis (SWOT)

The summary SWOT analysis as expressed by attendees at the public meeting is shown in Table 5 below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
The People, Good Community Spirit Primary School Central Rural Location [Convenience to local shops/Church/Schools] Remote rural location The Physical Environment & Layout of the Town [Walkways & Community Halls] Heywood Community School Strong Clubs & Societies [E.g. GAA Club/Pastoral Group/Tidy Towns/Active Retirement] Beauty [Heywood for Scenery] Well Established Local Businesses Community Employment Programme 3 New Housing Estates in the Village 3 G Pitch Christmas Fare Fundraiser Christmas Lights Festival Good Bus Connectivity	Lack of amenities [Elderly & Non Sporting Teenagers and Older Persons] No dedicated play area for kids Poor or Lack of quality broadband Poor Quality Mobile Phone Signal Derelict buildings Lack of affordable Housing Few indoor facilities Population Decline More volunteers required Lack of catering facilities in the village Littering & Dog Fowling No enterprise or incubation space Not making greater use of the village square Shortage of rental properties Reduction in support for the village under the Community Employment Programme Road safety at the school Lack of footpaths in some areas
Opportunities	Threats
Getting a coordinating community group together Redevelopment/consolidation of existing amenities [Start walkways in the town] Playground / Community Park / Swimming Pool Find more uses for the Squash Courts Re-developed of the swimming pool & adjoining lands for outdoor activities/sports/lakes Coffee Shop 'Hot Desking' point to support people working from home Re use Derelict Buildings Community Employment Programme Proximity of Secondary School Opportunities for increased social interaction Make greater use of our history & heritage [Better Interpretation of our Heritage] Men's Shed Upgrade of recycling area [Surface in particular] Exploit economic opportunities from fishing and energy	Loss of local Post Office (2018) & Garda Station (2013) and Credit Union Sub Office Risk of more local services closing [Shops/Schools/Pubs] Squash Court Closing Litter Lack of Local Employment Population Decline & Associated Loss of critical mass Out Migration Dwindling Population of working age Bigger Shopping Centres New National Planning Framework Few local properties for sale Inertia [If lack of progress & loss of enthusiasm] Empty Houses Lack of people to drive projects

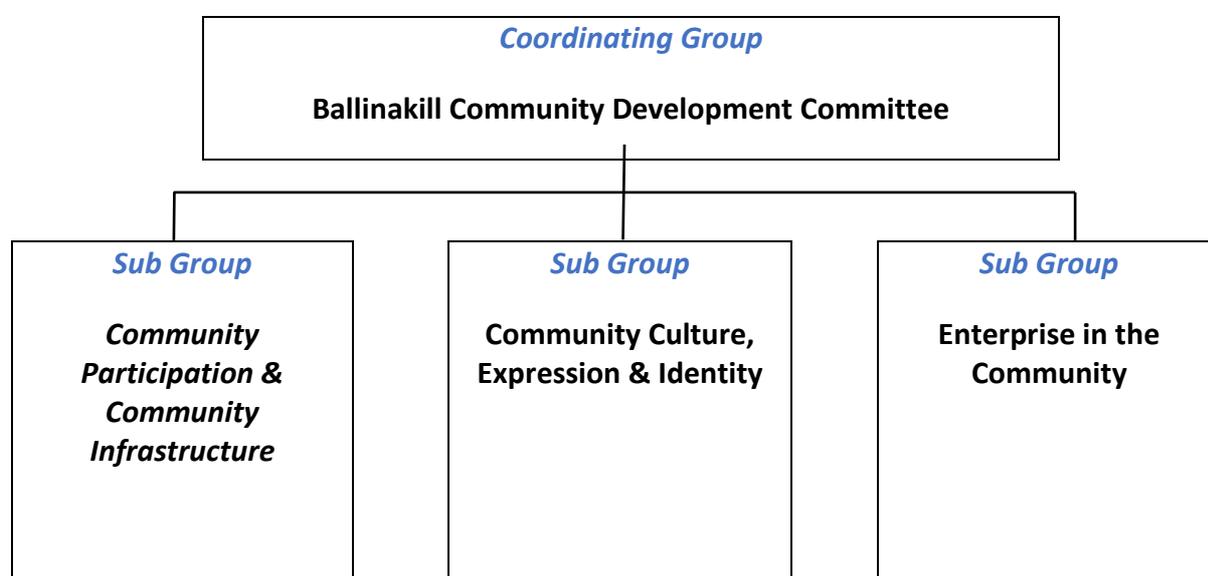
**Table 5: SWOT Analysis Summary**

### Chapter 3: Analysis of Resource Audit & SWOT Analysis

This section will analysis a number of the re-occurring themes from the community consultation period.

#### 3.1 Community Development Structure

It is recognised that the area of Ballinakill has not benefitted from resources to the fullest extent possible under the key rural regeneration initiatives such as the Rural Development Programme (LEADER). A Community Development structure has now been established and should now draw on any available supports within county structures such as Laois Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and Laois Partnership, amongst other, to enable it to achieve its full potential. The following structure (Figure 9) and working group arrangement have been recommended as the way forward. New volunteers need to be given leadership opportunities initially at subgroup level so as to support future succession planning.



**Figure 9: Recommended Community Development Structure**

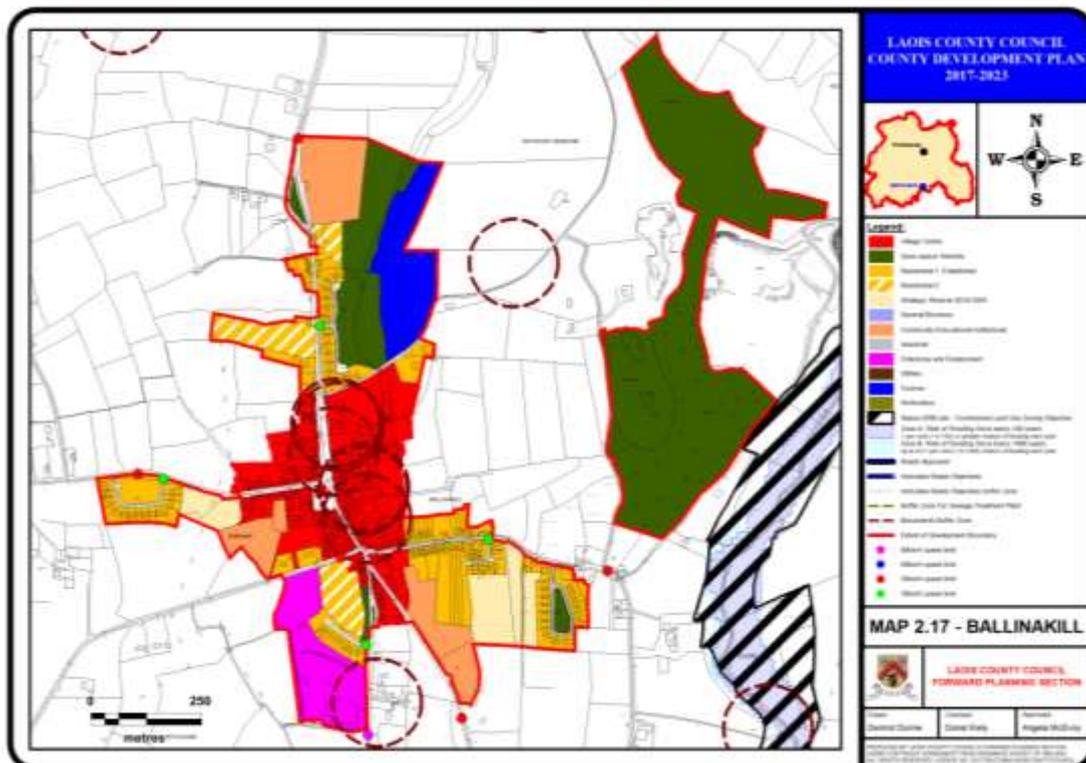
#### 3.2 Employment & Zoning Objectives

Agriculture in Ballinakill remains a significant part of the local economy. Over 48% of the county is regarded as good agricultural land. The aerial photographs of Ballinakill evidences the importance of this sector. The mart on the Kilkenny Road is a hugely important local resource and it is noted within the current County Development Plan (2017-2023) that additional employment opportunities should be encouraged at the Mart site.



**Figure 10: Location of Mart as additional employment opportunity site as referenced in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 (P48)**

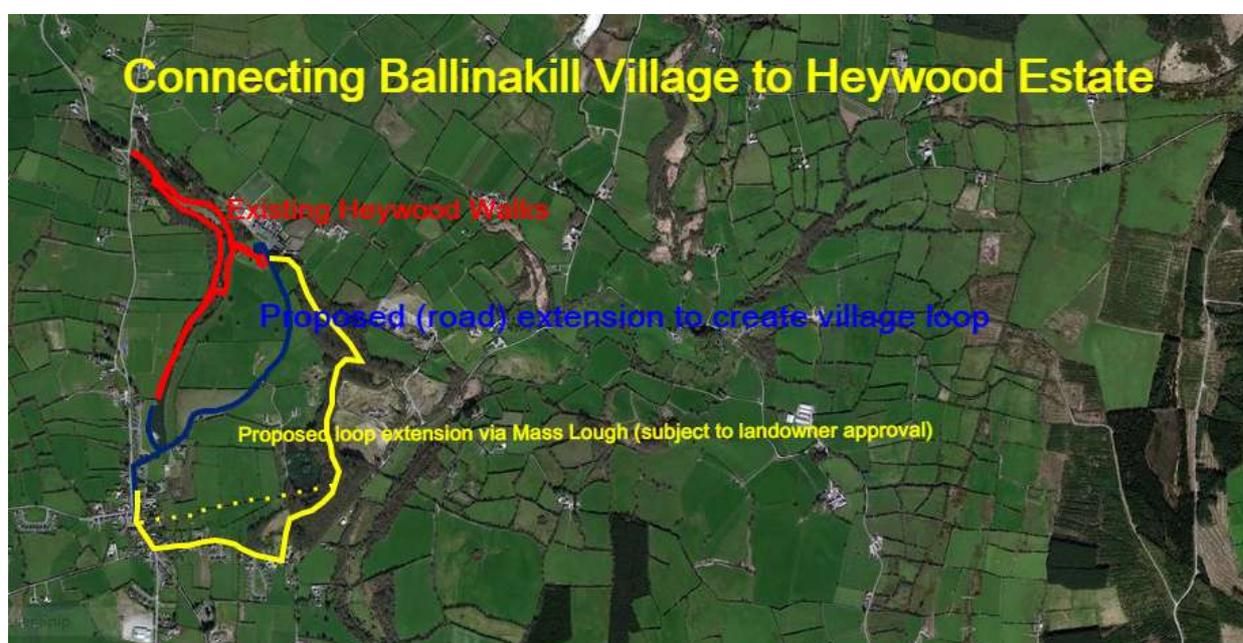
Any future development should be cognisant of the zoning objectives as set out in the County Development Plan. This is shown below is Figure 11.



**Figure 11: Zoning Objectives Map, Laois County Development Plan 2017-20**

### 3.3 Vital Community Services

The closure of key businesses and services in the village is consistent with many communities across Ireland due to changing retail patterns, electronic banking and restructuring of government services. The closure of the local Garda station in 2013 and more recently (2018), the local Post Office has contributed to an erosion of vital community services. While there are no immediate solutions to re-establishing such services, the challenge for the local community will be to respond to new employment opportunities in areas such as energy reduction and energy generation and in rural tourism, particularly to meet to ever increasing demand for outdoor recreational services (*e.g. the extension of the Heywood Walk to the village, see Figure 12*). The group must consider community solutions to creating a stronger more vibrant enterprise culture. The community consultations pointed to the need to develop local hospitality services which should be first assessed for viability. One such idea was the development of a community café.



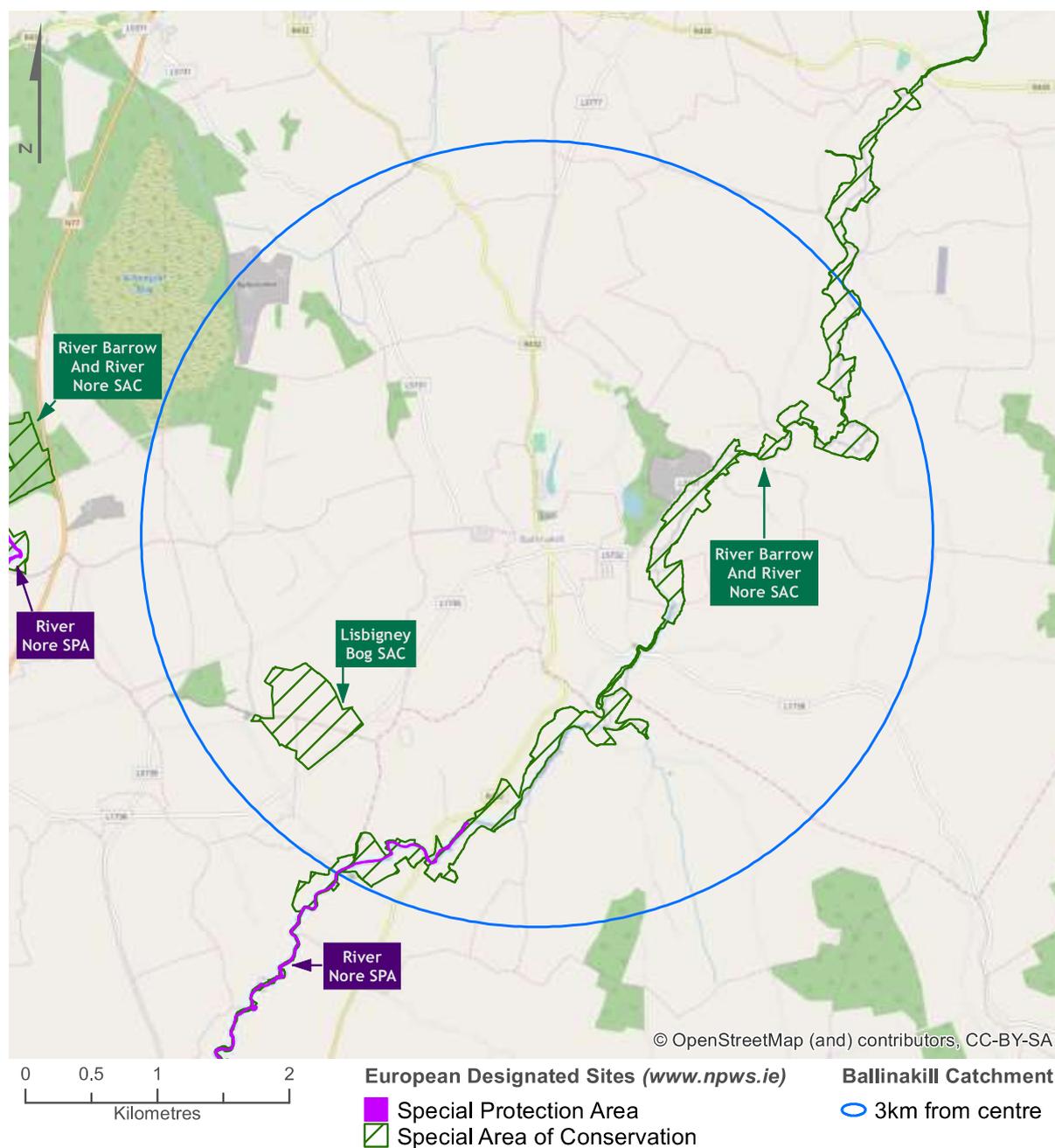
**Figure 12: Extension of the existing Heywood Walk to create Village Loop Walk**

### 3.4 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and preserved for the benefit of future generations. Cultural heritage includes tangible culture, intangible culture, and natural heritage.

A key contribution to documenting the local heritage has been made by Christy O'Shea and Ger Dunphy through two publications namely, *Ballinakill, A Journey through Time* (2002) and *Ballinakill, Celebrating 400 Years as a Charter Town 1612-2012*. The themes explored within these publications could form the basis for the development of a local event to celebrate National Heritage Week which is held every August. The local area has a rich natural heritage with the River Nore and Barrow and Lisbigney Bog all having protection through European designations as special protected areas (SPA's) or special areas of

conservation (SAC's). Figure 13 provides an overview of the rich natural heritage within three km of the village centre.



**Figure 13: European Designated Sites in Ballinakill**

### 3.5 Community Facilities

With many smaller communities facing decline in population and services, the strengthening of such communities is vital to their sustainability. Investment in community facilities is more about people as much as is about bricks and mortar. In many ways, the well-being of a community is mirrored in the appearance of and usage of its physical structures. High quality community facilities which are designed and managed by the community themselves leads to increased activity in sports, community arts and community education.

Community facilities represent the physical space where community members:

- Deepen their civic relationship with and commitment to their community
- Meet other community members socially, both formally and as part of a defined group
- Participate in sports, drama or other interests, actively or as a spectator
- Conduct voluntary activities that are of benefit to the whole community
- Accept the services offered by the community

Over the years, some community facilities in Ballinakill have fallen into disrepair while other facilities such as the Bingo and Snooker Hall in the Market Square have received significant investment to bring them up to modern standards. The need for a structured programme of reinvestment is required to support in particular facilities such as the swimming pool, the Squash Courts and the Community Centre (old national School). These was consensus at the public meetings of the need to give considerable attention to these facilities in particular.



**Figure 14: The existing Community Centre. The Squash Courts are located to the rear of this building**

The establishment of the community group has recently come to the attention of the Parish who will consider transferring Parish lands (See Figure 15 below) for the purpose of

developing facilities for the benefit of the community which is a sign of significant confidence in the new group. Initially, this will entail the preparation of a feasibility report to scope out the best possible uses of land. It is recommended that the group seek funding to carry out a feasibility funding to consider and assess the viability of maximising use of the above lands. The re-opening of the swimming pool was a key initiative sought by many stakeholders and this should be a priority objective within this study.

The group should ensure appropriate feedback is gleaned from the community during the course of the study to maximum number of people that are involved in deciding on the future uses of this very valuable centrally located site. Possible uses may include a bespoke Older Persons Housing Development, multipurpose sports and outdoor recreational area in addition to a critical need to carrying out modifications to the existing swimming pool.



**Figure 15: Parish Lands including the existing swimming pool**

A key finding within the community consultation was an overwhelming need to address the need for facilities for young people with a specific desire to develop play and recreational facilities for children. This project proposal is currently being examined by the umbrella group with the key challenge the identification of the preferred site for the project.

The need for new housing development within the village is important for the socio economic well being of the area. It should be noted that the Housing Agency (September 2018) have sought expressions of interest from Approved Housing Bodies to consider the development of two sites, one at Bride Street (0.92 hectares / 2.77 acres) that could potentially deliver up to 20 units and a second site on the Kilkenny Road (1.25 hectares / 3.09 acres), adjacent to the cemetery. The latter site similarly could deliver up to 20 units. However zoning for both sites is designated Community, Education, and Institutional. The new umbrella group should advocate for the needs of Older Persons by ensuring that universal design features prominently within these plans.

## **Chapter 4 Project Programme**

This chapter sets out the Programme Plan across three focus areas, namely Community Projects, Cultural Heritage Projects and Community Enterprise Projects.

The rationale and objectives for each focus area is set out below:

### *4.1 Focus Areas & Objectives:*

#### **1. Community Participation & Community Infrastructure [Community Projects]**

##### *Rationale*

- a. Invest in community based actions which promote the meaningful participation of individuals and groups in economic and social activity
- b. Invest in community based initiatives, both physical and social that enhances the capacity of individuals, groups and communities to participate actively or as spectators in sports, drama or special interest programmes

##### *Objectives*

- Develop play facilities for children
- Improve community amenity facilities
- Increase facilities for teenagers
- Develop an Older Persons Housing Scheme

#### **2. Community Culture, Expression & Identity [Cultural Heritage Projects]**

##### *Rationale*

- a. Invest in community initiatives that will engage individuals and groups in actions that will celebrate their personal and cultural identity
- b. Build the capacity of individuals and groups to advocate and represent the cultural needs of their community

##### *Objectives*

- To promote awareness of local heritage
- Celebrate local creativity & uniqueness
- Consolidate & Develop New Community Information Sharing Forums

#### **3. Enterprise in the Community [Community Enterprise Projects]**

##### *Rationale*

- a. Create a positive contribution to the economic wellbeing of Ballinakill by investing in enterprise in the community to create networking and income opportunities for individuals, community groups and private businesses

## *Objectives*

- To increase tourism activity
- To develop social enterprise

Each focus area has a list of planned initiatives in response to the community consultation and several follow up committee meetings. It must be recognised that a number of the actions can be delivered by the local group, however extensive collaboration with partner entities will be required to make progress on others. There are other planned activities that will be the responsibility of third parties to implement. However, the members of the new umbrella group have a vital role to play by participating in county decision making structure and advocating for resources and supports so as to effect local change.

Table 10 provides a useful one page summary of all planned initiatives over the five-year period of the programme.

#### 4.2 Primary Focus Area 1: Community Participation & Community Infrastructure

<b><u>Community Projects</u></b>		
<b>Rationale for Focus</b>		
<p>a. Invest in community based actions which promote the meaningful participation of individuals and groups in economic and social activity</p> <p>b. Invest in community based initiatives, both physical and social that enhance the capacity of individuals, groups and communities to participate actively or as spectators in sports, drama or special interest programmes</p>		
<b>Partners</b>		
Laois Co. Co., Arts Office, Laois LCDC, Laois Partnership		
<b>Sub-Committee / Working Group</b>		
Develop a Sub Committee of Ballinakill Community Development Committee to drive and coordinate the actions within the Community Participation Focus Area		
<b>Planned Initiatives</b>	<b>Funding/Support</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<p>1. Undertake Feasibility Study of Parish Lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To incorporate upgrade of swimming pool</li> <li>- The development of a Children’s Playground</li> <li>- Older Persons Housing</li> <li>- Multi-purpose sports &amp; recreational areas</li> </ul>	RDP Programme/ LEADER	1
<p>2. Planned Programme of Community Facilities &amp; Surface Structural Upgrades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Hall</li> <li>- Squash Courts</li> <li>- Swimming Pool</li> <li>- Bingo Hall</li> <li>- Enhance the Recycling Centre Area</li> </ul>	Depart. Rural & Community Affairs / Sports Capital Programme	1
<p>3. Assist Ballinakill Tidy Towns Group to identify a minor award category within the National Tidy Towns Awards &amp; Other Built Environment Award Schemes &amp; aim to attain by 2021</p>	Local Sources	2
<p>4. Development of Older Persons Housing Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stage 1: Research the need for an Older Persons Housing development within the village and build a business case</li> <li>- Stage 2: Select an Approved Housing Body to implement the development of a bespoke supported Older Persons Housing development for Ballinakill with the assistance of a local working group</li> </ul>	Depart of Housing / Laois Co. Co.	2
<p>5. Advocate for a) Improved Traffic Calming &amp; b) Address Dereliction</p>	Local Sources	2

**Table 6 Proposed Community Initiatives**

#### 4.3 Primary Focus Area 2: Community Culture, Expression & Identity

<b><u>Cultural Heritage Projects</u></b>		
<b>Rationale for Focus</b>		
a. Invest in community initiatives that will engage individuals and groups in actions that will celebrate their personal and cultural identity  b. Build the capacity of individuals and groups to advocate and represent the cultural needs of their community		
<b>Partners</b>		
Arts & Heritage Offices, Laois Co. Co., Failte Ireland, Laois LCDC, Laois Partnership		
<b>Sub-Committee / Working Group</b>		
Develop a Sub Committee of Ballinakill Community Development Committee to drive and coordinate the actions within the Community Culture, Expression & Identity Focus Area		
<b>Planned Initiatives</b>	<b>Funding/Support</b>	<b>Priority</b>
1. Consolidate information sharing in the community by maximising social media platforms and creating greater synergies with the parish newsletter [Community Website & Ballinakill Community Develop Committee Facebook Page]	Local Sources	1
2. Identify & Implement new Community Festival & Events - Establish a Village Festival [e.g. Celebration of Lutyens 150 <sup>th</sup> Birthday] - Develop a Pilot Ballinakill Community Radio Weekend Festival	Arts Office & Heritage Office of Laois Co. Co. Failte Ireland Arts Council Heritage Council	2
3. Develop a Ballinakill Men's Shed Project and a Community Allotment or Community Garden Project	Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme	2

**Table 7: Proposed Cultural Heritage Initiatives**

#### 4.4 Primary Focus Area 3: Enterprise in the Community

<b><u>Community Enterprise Projects</u></b>		
<b>Rationale for Focus</b>		
Create a positive contribution to the economic wellbeing of Ballinakill by investing in enterprise in the community to create networking and income opportunities for individuals, community groups and private businesses		
<b>Partners</b>		
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Local Energy Agency, Rural Recreation Office of Laois Partnership, Private and Community Based Businesses, Local Enterprise Office, Tourism Office, Laois Co. Co., Failte Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland		
<b>Sub-Committee / Working Group</b>		
Develop a working group of Ballinakill Community Development Committee to drive and coordinate the actions within the Enterprise in the Community Focus Area		
<b>Planned Initiatives</b>	<b>Funding/Support</b>	<b>Priority</b>
1. Develop a Community Energy Team at a local/sub-regional level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research existing successful community energy teams</li> <li>- Establish energy consumption in area &amp; develop a local home retrofitting plan</li> </ul>	SEAI	1
2. Research the need for a local 'hot desking' work stations initiative and where deemed feasible, incorporate as part of planned community facilities development	Local Enterprise Office	2
3. Support/Advocate for the ongoing development of Fisheries Sector	Inland Fisheries Ireland	2
4. Carry out research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To establish opportunities for outdoor activities</li> <li>- Establish the feasibility of a community coffee shop</li> </ul>	Local Sources Local Enterprise Office	2
5. Extension Heywood Loop Walk to the Village & Development of Guided Walking Tours	Rural Recreation Office of Laois Partnership	1
6. Advocate for improved broadband & Mobile Phone Reception	Local Sources	1

**Table 8: Proposed Community Enterprise Initiatives**

#### 4.5 Funding

There are six key funding programmes that can support the realisation of the named initiatives. These include:

<b>Funding Programme</b>	<b>Fund Manager</b>
The Rural Development Programme	Laois LCDC & Laois Partnership
Community Enhancement Programme	Department of Rural and Community Development
Town & Village Renewal Programme	Department of Rural and Community Development
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme	Department of Rural and Community Development
Rural Regeneration & Development Fund	Department of Rural and Community Development
Laois Local Enterprise Office (LEO)	Laois County Council

## 4.6 Summary Planned Initiatives

*Coordination Group*  
**Ballinakill Development Group**

### *Community Initiatives* *Sub Group*

**Community Participation & Community Infrastructure**

*Objectives:*

- *Develop play facilities for children*
- *Improve community amenity facilities*
- *Increase facilities for teenagers*
- *Develop an Older Persons Housing Scheme*

*Action List Proposals*

**1. Undertake Feasibility Study of Parish Lands**

- To incorporate upgrade of swimming pool
- The development of a Children's Playground
- Older Persons Housing
- Multi-purpose sports & recreational areas

**2. Planned Programme of Community Facilities & Surface Structural Upgrades**

- *Community Hall*
- *Bingo Hall*
- *Squash Courts*
- *Swimming Pool*

*Enhance Recycling Centre Area*

**3. Support Tidy Towns Group to attain a National Minor Award**

**4. Older Persons Housing Scheme**

**5. Advocate for improved traffic calming & Address Dereliction**

### *Cultural Heritage* *Sub Group*

**Community Culture, Expression & Identity**

*Objectives:*

- *To promote awareness of local heritage*
- *Celebrate local creativity & uniqueness*
- *Consolidate & Develop New Community Information Sharing Forums*

*Action List Proposals*

**1. Develop a Ballinakill Development Group Community Social Media Profile e.g. Facebook Page**

**2. Ballinakill Men's Shed Project**

**3. Community Allotment/Community Garden Project**

**4. Hold Annual Summer Garden Party**

**5. Celebrate local Cultural Heritage by Developing local event for Heritage Week 2019**

**6. Pilot a Community Radio Weekend**

### *Community Enterprise* *Sub Group*

**Enterprise in the Community**

*Objectives:*

- *To increase tourism activity*
- *To develop social enterprise*

*Action List Proposals*

**1. Establish a Community Energy Team**

**2. Establish need for local 'hot desk' point**

**3. Research feasibility of using disused sandpits**

**4. Support ongoing Development of fishing**

**5. Extension Heywood Loop Walk to the Village**

**6. Development of Walking Tours**

**7. Assess viability of community coffee shop**

**8. Advocate for improved broadband & mobile telephone reception**



**Figure16: Ballinakilla Community Development Committee members**

Community Plan prepared by Sean Crowley, Sayal Consultancy Services Ltd  
Email: [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#)

Photography: Sean Crowley  
Aerial Photography: Pat Farrell  
GIS Mapping: Tadgh Hurley