

# **CASTLEREAGH VISIONING PROJECT**

## **EVALUATION REPORT**

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**October 2006**



This project is supported by the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland and administered by Castlereagh Local Strategy Partnership.

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*We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who participated in an interview or focus group during the evaluation process. Particular thanks are due to Tara Haughian and Jonathan Hodge, who were the Castlereagh Visioning Project facilitators. Their input has directly contributed to this Evaluation Report.*

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*October 2006*

**INTRODUCTION**

The Castlereagh Visioning Project was funded by the Castlereagh Local Strategy Partnership. The original funding period was for a year, starting in October 2004; the contract was extended on two occasions, terminating in October 2006. The Project was managed by Sustainable Northern Ireland.

The overall aim of the Project was to work with for five areas within the Castlereagh Borough to support each community in developing a community vision. The five communities that participated in the Project were Ballybeen, Belvoir, Cregagh, Dundonald and Castlereagh.

This Evaluation Report focuses on the processes employed to develop community visions, good practice and constraints, and the transferability of the model in terms of contributing to future community planning, particularly within the context of the Review of Public Administration.

It is recommended that, in addition to being forwarded to the funding body (Castlereagh LSP), this Report be circulated to those who had a stake in the Project. Alongside the Evaluation Report a brief document highlighting some of the issues pertaining to community visioning and community planning has been written. It is understood that this will be circulated to Councils and others across Northern Ireland with an interest in community consultation and community planning.

## **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The focus of the evaluation has been to:

- Look at the work the project has carried out with the five communities - Ballybeen, Belvoir, Cregagh, Dundonald and Moneyreagh.
- Identify good practice and factors that contributed to success – what worked well / not so well and why?
- Draw out the explicit lessons that can be learned from the process and results; identifying those which are likely to be most transferable to future initiatives.
- Address and make recommendations and suggestions for how the this model can support the development of 'community planning' within local government review.

The evaluation methodologies used have included:

- Talking with those involved in the development and delivery of the Project.
- Carrying out focus groups and interviews (face-to-face and by telephone) with people from the five community groups involved in the work.
- Undertaking interviews with representatives from the statutory agencies and other stakeholders.
- Reviewing the model in the light of community planning and local government review.
- Documentation review (including reports and relevant policy documents).

The interviews focused on:

- The model adopted for the project.
- Good practice and successes; and what did not go so well.
- Implications and impact for communities.
- Impact on working relationships, links and partnerships between communities and statutory agencies.
- Potential developments and spin-offs from the Project.

The evaluation was undertaken during the period August to October 2006.

## CONTEXT

The community visioning process is an approach using participation methods that enable people to identify their own social, economic, and environmental needs. It uses a range of tools and techniques – from developing mind-maps to creating community models.

Participants will engage in capacity building workshops that will provide them with the skills and confidence to participate in information sharing, discussions, story telling and working towards the development of an action plan with short, medium and long term priorities and time scales built in.

After the initial planning and preparation the community visioning process comprises three main steps:

1. Creating a shared vision of the future.
2. Developing an action plan.
3. Celebrating the success.

The aim of the action plan is to help the community turn the shared vision into a reality. It outlines what the group wants to do, why and how. The action plan will describe the resources and help they might need from different agencies, and set time scales by which they aim to achieve each objective. During the community visioning process the community will understand more about the roles and responsibilities of different statutory and public sector agencies, and the process through which they must work in order to achieve their objectives.

Community Visioning is a participative process, the stages of which include:

- Engagement and preparation.
- Information and opinion gathering.
- Reflection and discussion.
- Wider strategic analysis.
- Developing the vision.
- Agreeing the action plan.

These principles were adopted by Sustainable NI in the delivery of the Castlereagh Visioning Project.

## **THE CASTLEREAGH VISIONING PROJECT**

### **Project Aim**

The aim of the Castlereagh Visioning Project, as outlined in the Castlereagh LSP Letter of Offer, as “To support communities from seven areas in the Castlereagh Borough Council area to develop a community planning framework for each of the areas using the community visioning process, and so move closer to becoming sustainable communities. This can only happen by looking at communities individually and their inter-dependence upon others across the board and not as isolated islands in a sea of service deliverers. Participatory planning methods such as community visioning and participatory learning in action (participatory appraisal) will be used as methodologies along with associated approaches throughout the project”.

### **Project Performance Indicators**

Ten performance indicators were specified in the Castlereagh LSP Letter of Offer:

1. A shared vision for each of the areas.
2. Seven community action plan frameworks.
3. Enhanced communication between the statutory bodies, other support organisations and the widest range of groups locally in the community, involving community activists and leaders.
4. Three newsletters.
5. Three networking events.
6. Three good practice visits.
7. Better relationships within communities, between communities and between communities and statutory bodies and other support organisations.
8. Technical support for local projects.
9. Information for communities on funding sources and alternative income generating sources.
10. A celebration event for all participating groups towards the end of the project.

### **The Project Approach**

The aim of the Castlereagh Visioning Project was to support five communities in the Borough to develop a community plan framework using the community visioning process, thus enabling them to move towards becoming sustainable communities. Within this aim was the expectation that greater two-way communication and linkages would develop between the community and statutory sectors.

Through looking back on how the community was in the past, and then looking at the community today, communities would be supported in identifying what they liked about living in the neighbourhood. When looking at the present day community participants were encouraged to identify successes and highlighting issues and difficulties to which they would like to find solutions. Through this process they would then start to identify a vision for the future of their community, and in so doing be better able to take ownership of the plans and vision for their own community in the future.

The intention was that each community would develop a community action plan framework which would identify objectives, those who would need to be involved in working towards achieving this objective and the timescale that was envisaged in working towards the objective.

Sustainable Northern Ireland employed two facilitators to work directly with the communities. Representatives from statutory agencies and other community support organisations were also involved with the visioning process.

## **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

### **The First Phase**

The initial starting point for the Project was a mapping exercise, organised by Sustainable NI, involving representatives from organisations with a stakehold in Community Visioning, including the LSP, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the South and East Belfast Trust. Having mapped out what was happening across Castlereagh, and looking at those areas where there was little activity or gaps in delivery, the group looked towards identifying those communities who they felt would most benefit from the project. Various areas were identified, including Ballybeen, Belvoir, Braniel, Carryduff, Clonduff, Cregagh, Dundonald Village and Moneyreagh.

The next step was to engage communities in the Castlereagh Visioning Project. This proved to be more difficult than initially envisaged, possibly due to the number of community based projects that were taking place across Castlereagh at the same time. In some areas (for example Braniel and Clonduff) meetings and discussions took place, but then interest dwindled and the initial work came to nothing. The Carryduff community became engaged in a separate project (Carryduff: Thinking Outside the Box), which included looking at issues and need and how best to develop the community for the future.

The decision was taken that five communities (rather than the originally stated seven) should engage in the Project. Three areas engaged in the Community Visioning process, leading to the development of a Community Action Plan; namely, Belvoir, Cregagh and Dundonald. In the other two areas, Ballybeen and Moneyreagh, two youth projects were identified, developed and delivered. In addition to the facilitation provided through Sustainable NI, the South East Education and Library Board's Creative Youth Partnership provided additional funding and support from community artists for the two area's youth projects. In each of these youth focussed projects two different youth groups within each community worked together; Tiny's Diner and the local SEELB Youth Club in Moneyreagh, and YT4, Ballyoran and the Dundonald High School Xcel group in Ballybeen.

### **Developing the Visioning Process: Belvoir, Cregagh and Dundonald Village**

Having identified interested communities, the next challenge was to further engage existing community groups and volunteers in the process. However, it was also recognised that in order to be effective, there would be a need to engage other members of the community in order to achieve greater representation of community views and needs, and a broader base of local opinion and interests.

In Belvoir a range of community groups was engaged, including church groups, youth groups, older people, young mothers and a flute band. The Dundonald Community Visioning process was led by the Dundonald Village Regeneration Group. In Cregagh the Community Forum, which was an umbrella group with representation from community groups across Cregagh, led the process.

Public meetings were organised to which people from the community and other stakeholders - for example representatives from statutory agencies, councillors, and community support organisations - were invited. This allowed the opportunity to expand on the concept and process of Community Visioning and for information sharing.

Having become more aware of the Project, residents engaged in capacity building and discussion workshops; either by going on a residential (in the case of Cregagh), or through half-day workshops organised at local hotels (which was the preferred option of those living in Belvoir and Dundonald). During these meetings the community discussed what their neighbourhood was like in the past, current positive aspects about living in their

community and issues that they would like to see addressed, and then moved on to the vision of their community in the future. The facilitators used a range of facilitation techniques and games to move the process forward, at all times ensuring that activities were participative and appropriate to the interests, needs and capacity levels of the community.

Following these activities, the communities then began to look towards a shared vision of their future and the development of their Community Action Plan. Through the process of examining the past and present, participants were able to imagine how they would like to see their community in the future. The information and opinion gathering sessions allowed the three communities to (individually) identify issues, problems and possible solutions.

The communities then took their thoughts and ideas out to a wider audience for further reflection and discussion. The most ambitious community within this element of the Visioning process was Cregagh. The community designed and constructed a model of the estate (involving local young people in the building of the model), and displayed this model at the Cregagh VE Celebration Day and the Community Fun Day. These events were attended by in excess of 1500 people who were invited to add their thoughts and comments onto cards and post-its and attach these to the model (in the appropriate location) or onto flip-charts, thus actively participating in giving their views about the future vision for Cregagh.

Following additional input from the wider community the active Project participants then met to consider each issue raised with a view to producing a Community Action Plan. This led to developing Key Priority Themes in each of the three communities under different core themes. The groups then took into account the action needed, the lead partner/s and the timescale (6 months, 1 – 2 years or 2 – 3 years).

The Community Action Plans were developed, written up and agreed. Sustainable NI produced a document that summarised all three Community Action Plans “The Community Vision Process in Castlereagh Borough – Community Visioning: Inspiring Actions for Change”.

Key issues identified in Belvoir were:

- Leisure and Recreation: seating for older people, youth activities, a play area, community festivals
- Housing: new houses needed, sites for new houses;
- Crime and Safety: community policing, vandalism, estate safety, young people;
- Community Facilities: community centre, youth facilities, communication, networking;
- Image: the forest park, local amenities, facilities for the elderly;
- Community Capacity: intergenerational work, open and welcoming community, environment, pride;
- Transport: public transport links, safe crossings, community transport;
- Education: parental involvement, training courses.

Key issues identified in Cregagh were:

- Community Safety: vandalism, policing, secure housing, lighting, older people;
- Community House: information, networking, awareness raising, administration;
- Physical Environment: streets and pavements, waste management, dog fouling, bus shelters;
- Leisure and Recreation: football, adventure park and playground, activities, jobs;
- Education and Training: school leavers and adults, computers, retraining;
- Housing: availability, consultation, maintenance, new build.

Key issues identified in Dundonald Village were:

- Transport: traffic signalling, public transportation;
- Building Relationships, Identity and Image: bringing Ballybeen and Dundonald together, Community House;
- Environment: landscaping, waterways, networks, young people, branding as a village, memorial, preservation of built heritage, planning;
- Community Safety: CCTV, crime prevention, education, waste, art and the environment, pollution, street bollards, shrubs and trees;
- Economy: budget hotel, manufacturing and service industries, Ulster Hospital;
- Education and Lifelong Learning: adult education, training, schools support, nursery provision;
- Community Services: community planning, community forum, cleansing, local amenities;
- Leisure and Recreation: grand village hall / multi-purpose centre, football, walking.

### **Developing the Visioning Process: Ballybeen and Moneyreagh**

In Ballybeen and Moneyreagh the community visioning projects were youth focussed. Through additional funding from Creative Youth Partnership young people engaged in the visioning process with community artists and their youth group leaders. In each of these youth focussed projects two different youth groups within each community worked together: Tiny's Diner and the local SEELB Youth Club in Moneyreagh, and YT4, Ballyoran and the Dundonald High School Xcel group in Ballybeen.

Creative Youth Partnerships aims to increase opportunities for children and young people in every locality across Northern Ireland to access and participate in the arts, and is supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards. The scheme aims to ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to participate in programmes of creative arts activities, in contexts of their own choosing, and across all art forms, with support from community artists.

Working in their own communities, the young people met with the community artists, initially to talk about their vision of the future of their community. The young people looked at where they feel they had been, where they are now and how they would like their community to be in the future. They then looked at ways in which they could show their vision through using art.

The young people also took photographs of places around the Ballybeen area that interested them, portraying both good and bad aspects. They discussed the things they would like to see changed and issues that they felt were important for young people living in the community. Issues identified by the young people included a lack of provision of opportunities for young people. The young people thought there was a need for play areas and parks, a sports centre or area, the provision of a computer suite on the estate (such as that provided by Bytes), a 'chill-out' centre (for example in the square), and discos for the under 18s. They felt that if there were more facilities there would be fewer problems such as under-age drinking. They also thought that it would be good to have an arts centre in Ballybeen, combining dance, music, design and more murals such as the ones they designed and produced during the Project. Other issues identified as being important for young people included the environment, drugs, health, education and paramilitaries.

The young people in Ballybeen wanted to tidy up the estate by getting rid of two of the paramilitary style murals. Discussions took place across the estate and it was agreed that two of the existing murals – one in Orsay Walk and the other on the edge of the estate on a pensioner's wall - would be handed over to the young people involved in the Project. The

young people came up with ideas as to what would be feasible, and went away for a weekend to the Folk Museum.

The young people wanted the murals to be inspiring and to depict their preferred future through colourful and positive images. Having planned the design with the artist, a week in July was set aside to paint the murals (a significant time of the year). The artist drew the outlines of both murals and the young people painted them.

The mural in Orsay Walk, on the wall of the restored community offices, includes the words 'friendship', 'peace', 'trust', 'respect' and 'faith' with bright emblems representing these words. The other shows a futuristic car coming out of a wall with emblems signifying hope, creativity, equality, respect and fun integrated into the design of the car.

The young people in Moneyreagh followed a similar process. Issues identified focussed a lot on people; they felt Moneyreagh is restricted due to the small population and would like to see more houses built in the village of various sizes to encourage a cross section of people to move into the area. Were a building programme approved they felt that it would also require shops (including a chemist, and a fast food take away outlet), a children's playground, a community centre, a doctor's surgery (open at least part-time), a cash machine and other facilities to attract people into the area. One of their major concerns was that they wanted more sense of community in the village. They felt that a lot of adults living in Moneyreagh go to work elsewhere everyday, come home and don't seem to want to contribute to improving the community they live in.

The young people felt that music, arts, sacred space, shops, education, homes and leisure are all important elements of community life, and they would like a space for young people to go after school and in the evenings. They also emphasised the more rural aspects of living in Moneyreagh. The young people decided that they would like to produce a sculpture. They designed a series of images, which were developed onto bronze plaques representing a river and the flow of life in Moneyreagh. The images represent their visions, and include bridges, the water tower, the environment, local wildlife, sports and having fun. The bronze plaques were embedded into granite and the sculpture has been placed in the centre of the village opposite the primary school. Recently a plaque was installed next to the sculpture explaining the title 'Visions' and what it represents.

In both communities the young people shared their photographs and ideas with adults in the community. As well as the photographs they produced a DVD in collaboration with a video artist showing aspects of the lives of young people in the area, reflecting their views and opinions, and introducing those who watch the DVD to their local area. The DVD has a music soundtrack and proved a good vehicle through which to encourage discussion.

## **Publications**

Originally the intention had been to produce three newsletters. However, given that the Project involved working across five communities, it was felt that a newsletter would not be the most appropriate way in which to promote and inform people about the Castlereagh Visioning Project. Instead during the lifetime of the Project a number of publications were produced along with leaflets, posters and flyers about different events taking place in the five communities. The Project also gained publicity through articles in the local newspapers.

The main publications included:

- The Community Vision Process in Castlereagh Borough: Community visioning, inspiring actions for change
- The Action Plans for each of the five communities

- Putting the Community into Community Planning – a document prepared to aid discussion on the basis of ideas emerging from the Castlereagh Community Visioning Project presented at the Seminar in September 2006
- Conference and Seminar Reports (May 2006 and September 2006 available on the SNI website).

## Networking events

### *Mapping activity in communities across Castlereagh*

This event took place in November 2004 at the start, involving representatives from the LSP, SNI, NIHE and other stakeholders to map the different community groups, projects and activities across the Borough in order to identify possible communities for engagement in the Castlereagh Visioning Project.

### *Residentials and workshops*

Members from two of the communities involved, Cregagh and Dundonald Village, went on separate residentials. These involved people from different groups across the community and those with an interest in working with the community (including for example the Community Police and a Librarian). Residents from Belvoir attended half-day workshops. The young people went from Ballybeen and Moneyreagh to the Cultra Folk Museum for a weekend, seeking ideas and inspiration for their projects.

### *Youth Event*

The young people, the community artists and the youth group leaders joined together at Moneyreagh Primary School to share their work. Some stakeholders also attended the event, including representatives from the Local Strategy Partnership, Sustainable Northern Ireland, Creative Youth Partnership, and the South East Education and Library Board. Everyone was given a copy of the DVD that the young people had produced.

### *Conference May 2006*

The Conference in May brought together those who had been involved in the Castlereagh Community Visioning Project. It provided the opportunity to review the experiences gained by the community groups that had been involved in the Community Visioning Project and looked ahead, asking what have we learned and where can we go from here?

### *Seminar September 2006*

**Putting the Community into Community Planning: Community consultation is about more than 'ticking boxes'** looked at how the new process of community planning can build on existing good practice and develop a process through which Northern Ireland truly involves all its citizens in the decisions which affect their lives. The seminar targeted politicians, government officers, and community and voluntary sector representatives with an interest in Community Planning, Reform of Public Administration, Sustainable Development and local community action. Over 70 delegates attended the Seminar.

The Project facilitators also attended two networking events organised and hosted by the LSP, which aimed to showcase the range of projects happening across the Borough. These were well attended by people from the communities.

Other networking events were planned, but due to lack of interest by the communities these did not take place. Cancelled networking activities included two best practice visits looking at social enterprise within communities and seminars addressing social economy and social enterprise. Although these did not take place, representatives from Castlereagh Enterprises did attend some of the public and working meetings during the development of the action plans.

## **Celebratory Event**

Following the development of the Community Action Plans many of those directly involved attended a Celebration Event at the Ivanhoe Hotel in October 2005. This was a variation on a 'Stew-Dance'; with a meal of stew, apple tart and ice cream being served, followed by line dancing. Musicians and a caller led the dancing, and were successful in getting everyone up and dancing. One of the most positive aspects of the evening was that both adults and young people who had participated in the Castlereagh Visioning Project were present, and that there were many representatives from all five communities. In addition to the community residents a number of people from statutory organisations also came to take part in the Celebration Event, including the Community Police. The event was enjoyed by everyone who attended, and reinforced the achievements that each community had made in terms of looking forward and working towards their vision of their community in the future.

## **KEY FINDINGS FROM THE COMMUNITY**

Representatives from all five communities were interviewed during the evaluation. The community groups heard about the Castlereagh Community Visioning Project from a variety of sources. These included Castlereagh Borough Council, Sustainable NI and from a community development worker (who was not directly involved in this Project).

Those who became involved with the Project from the outset were already involved with community activities; for example they were committee members of a community group or belonged to a youth group. This put them in a good position to support the Project facilitators, for example in the coordination of community meetings and engaging other people.

This chapter provides feedback from people in the community; addressing each of the key elements of the community visioning process.

### **Engagement and preparation**

The exercise of getting everyone together has worked well in all the communities. Everyone recognised that, having decided to participate in the Project, there was a need to get people in the community on board and gain their commitment from the very earliest stage. Some said that it was nice to see all the different groups coming together and that they were pleased that something was happening.

“I helped to coordinate the initial Belvoir meeting, which involved about sixty people. It helped because I knew the people to contact and arranged transport to The Ramada Hotel”.

One community representative said, “when we first met with the facilitators we had an open discussion about what the process would involve. Rather than jumping into a prefabricated consultation process we developed our own ideas about what we wanted to achieve and how to go about achieving this”. The approach that from the outset the facilitators would work with the community groups to meet their needs and ways of working was acknowledged and appreciated by the communities.

The young people involved in the Project and their youth group leaders met with the community artists to talk about their lives in the community (past, present and future). Whilst the community artists facilitated the discussions the topics and issues were very much those chosen by the young people themselves. “One of the questions that worked really well and led to a lot of input was ‘what way do you want people to think about you and Ballybeen?’”

“The difference in focus between young people living in Ballybeen and Moneyreagh was quite noticeable. Those living in Ballybeen seemed to feel that they are more frontline, that they have a lot to think about and consequently the discussions tended to be very issue based. In contrast, the young people from Moneyreagh focussed more on what they would like to be able to do and see; they seemed to have had a more cosseted life.

“We looked at the skills and attributes of Forum members and looked at ways of best deploying these.

One community felt that there had been problems in engaging people. “There is a history of ‘time wasting meetings’ and doubling up of people and committees. So to have yet another group with new tentacles touching the same people was a problem. Added to this is that many people are reluctant to become involved in yet another time consuming group; so some of groups who could have contributed did not attend.

## **Gathering information, and opinions and developing the vision**

Those from the community felt that information was generally well exchanged. The residential workshops in particular seemed to work well for “as there were no distractions.

“We took time out for reflection and discussion about the past and present and then moved onto how we would like our community to be in the future.

“We had a series of meetings and two well planned residentials to set clear targets and tasks and make sure we were focussed on the right outcomes.

Cregagh were particularly pleased with being able to get two opportunities to show their ‘model’. “We were able to involve young people and adults in the community to build this model. Sustainable NI showed us how to put the model of the estate together and it worked very well as a way of getting a lot more people to give their ideas about the future for Cregagh. We showed the model at the Fun Day Community Festival, which about five hundred people came to, and on the VE Celebrations day, when about two thousand people were there.

“The Cregagh model was very good because it was visual. It was an impressive approach because people saw a small version of their community and could pinpoint places where there were issues or problems. They also used flip charts on the wall showing problems and issues and inviting solutions. It was a very inclusive process.

“We put together a questionnaire and gave it out to the community at the ‘fun day festival’. This proved invaluable in showing the needs and wishes of the community.

Other successfully transferred ideas identified by the community were ‘spider mapping’ and using coloured cards.

“About 24 people came together; mostly from the community with a couple of representatives from NIHE. We were trying to draw everything together. We looked at the main themes that the community had identified and then focussed on problems and possible solutions. The facilitator used small pieces of card in different colours. The red cards represented problems, a green card showed what people wanted and a further card looked at solutions and who could be involved. It was a good process, and engaged people in the activity. The only difficulty was trying to avoid getting a wish list about facilities that are needed; but it was motivating for the community people who attended.

## **Agreeing the action plan**

Through the preparation and capacity building that took place and the way in which further consultation took place formally and informally across the communities the groups felt that they were well placed to be able to move onto developing the Community Action Plan.

“The whole action plan ethos was well understood and used”.

“The action plan looked great – but people hadn’t really been consulted about responsibilities – and what expectations does this raise in the community?”

“We believe that the Action Plan is a very important document. It is important to the local community in that it represents an expression of needs and aspirations and that through the Community Association, the local community has ownership of it. We believe that it is

achievable, realistic, tangible and measurable and it has the support of local people and stakeholders.

“Doing this seemed to have created an air of positive expectation. We have a workable and substantial action plan, and a range of possible paths and potential avenues to explore. It’s a way of identifying and then achieving goals.

### **What could have been done differently?**

One community felt that there was too large a gap between some of the activities, and that this made the process somewhat disjointed. Conversely, others noted that “you cannot put too much of a burden onto volunteers” and that on a couple of occasions they had to ask for a little more time in between the different phases of the process.

“There could have been more feedback on the ideas and suggestions raised.

“It was one thing having the support to develop an action plan, but there is no longer-term support to work with the community to move it forward. Surely someone should have thought of that?”

### **Lessons learned as identified by the community**

It came across very strongly during the interviews that it is important that the right people are involved in the facilitation of community planning. “You need to have people involved who understand the community issues and know how to guide people through the process”.

“To keep people motivated we need regular contact.

“The targets for each community should be achievable for them with realistic costs and targets.

“Someone from a statutory body needs to stay in touch with the process and continually liaise and follow through with the leadership that is shown in the earlier stages of the initiative.

Inclusivity was identified as a key to success by several of those interviewed. This was done in Cregagh through taking the model to large community events where many residents would be present. In Ballybeen it was achieved through opening up the activity to anyone who was interested. “The project to paint the murals on two prominent walls in Ballybeen (replacing old murals, having previously sought agreement from those who had put up the paramilitary style murals) initially involved two groups of young people. They met with the artist to discuss the designs prior to the first week in July when we began to paint the murals. Other young people came along and watched. We invited them to pick up a paintbrush and join in – which they did. Adult residents passing by would stop and talk and ask us about what we were doing; in one way or another everyone living in the locality got involved.

### **The Impact of Participating in the Castlereagh Visioning Project**

The longer term impact of the Castlereagh Visioning Project varied among the communities. Some of those interviewed felt that they had personally gained from the experience, as well as having a wider impact on the community as a whole. They have

become involved with further training courses and opportunities to learn. Others have become more involved and active within their own communities and pursued community development programmes.

For one community there is a continued feeling of disillusionment. "We were led up to the top of a hill with help and support. Then we were left to fend for ourselves. The result is that we've moved no further forward. Part of the problem is that there are too many factions in the community disagreeing or not agreeing and there is a problem over not having any effective leadership.

"The murals that went up in Ballybeen are still as good as they were the day we finished them. They have not been vandalised or graffiti-ed in any way. People are still talking about them, and the young people would love the opportunity to do something more like this.

"We have moved into a community house which we got through the NIHE. This is a drop-in centre, a meeting place, a place for administration and a place where help may be sought on a range of problems including drugs, alcohol, abuse, anti-social behaviour, whatever. It is a neutral source of advice and aid for anyone living in Cregagh.

"The sculpture has gone up in a very focal place in Moneyreagh. People would call into the Primary School and ask for more information about it, which is why a plaque was put up recently to explain what it is, who did it and why it's there.

"We've completed the football pitch and have the plans for a play park approved.

"During this process we were encouraged to look at the community infrastructure and it was felt that the Forum as it was would probably not be the best form of organisation to implement this strategy. We concluded that we needed to breathe new life into the form of the community organisation and at the start of this year the Community Forum was dissolved and the Community Association was formed to take the strategy forward.

"We've got a lasting image from the work done by the young people – which is positive and improves the environment we're living in.

"Having been shown the way we are now trying and, in almost all cases, succeeding in putting into practice what goals were discussed.

"We have achieved a new way of communication through the murals. They are in very visible places, one is on the bus route for example. Residents saw the young people getting involved in the community. This has encouraged people. At the time they stopped and talked and asked what we were doing; now there just seems to be a bit more communication between young people and adults.

## CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICE

This chapter has been drawn from the interviews with the Project facilitators, stakeholders from statutory sector and community workers as well as feedback from the community sector and observation.

### Challenges

One of the greatest challenges was engaging communities in the first instance. At the time there were a number of projects happening across Castlereagh, the concept of community visioning was a new idea and something that required sustained commitment from people over a period of time. As one of the Project Facilitators said, “Sometimes I felt like I was a salesman selling people a concept about which they seemed very sceptical. However, those communities that did get involved with the Castlereagh Visioning Project became very animated and motivated during the visioning process.

This was further reiterated by another stakeholder who said “there was a huge lack of understanding about the concept of community visioning at the outset – this was something new that people hadn’t heard about.

“There was a feeling at first that communities were being trailed along into another exercise and to some place they didn’t feel they wanted to go. However, those who did engage started to realise that they had some control of the process and that they could shape things for themselves as the process was very amenable to community input and community needs.

It was suggested by one person that communities could have signed up to participating in the Project prior to the application for funding being submitted. This would have allowed more Project-time to have been spent on the Visioning Process, rather than having to engage with the communities from the start.

Deciding to undertake two youth projects “may have seemed a bit ad-hoc”, but in fact both the youth focussed Visioning projects went very well and had the added benefit of taking the outcomes into the wider community, with the added value of building bridges between young people and adults.

Personality clashes in the community were mentioned by two people interviewed. “One of the groups had some big differences of opinion between themselves, with what seemed like a lot of hidden agendas. You can’t mitigate for that. Fortunately things sorted themselves out and they remained enthusiastic about the process”.

Another problem was that at times the Facilitators seemed to have very high expectations as to what volunteers in the community could and should be doing. “Luckily there was support from community workers who had previously worked in these communities”. “We had both worked with the community in Cregagh before, and knew the people and personalities involved. During the Visioning process we were able to explain some of the process in more detail and also acted as ‘middle-men’ between those working to develop the vision and the community, for example ensuring that they did not overburden volunteers.

There was also a feeling expressed by several people interviewed that the statutory agencies could have been more involved. “It may have been the case that the Project should have spent more time engaging the statutory agencies at appropriate levels, and tried to gain real support, rather than lip-service to the idea”. In Cregagh there was an advantage in that an Inter-Agency group was already established. “The Inter-Agency

Group in Cregagh had been set up some time ago. It meets quarterly and involves representatives from community, statutory, voluntary and public sectors. It enables everyone with a stakehold in the community to discuss and share information and future plans, and was therefore a good vehicle through which to move the Visioning Action Plan forward.

## **Good Practice**

The good practice developed and demonstrated during the Project is presented in four categories:

- Structures and People,
- Building on Local Knowledge,
- The Process,
- The Next Steps.

### *Structures and People*

- Having effective structures in place – for example the Inter-Agency Group, which provided a platform for discussion and moving the Action Plan forward.
- Support from NITAP and Council - helped the community through the process, through providing general support and impartiality.
- Using other community events to draw in further discussion and viewpoints.
- Bringing in new people with skills and an interest.
- People being willing to take on responsibility.
- Working at a human level; “not bringing in people in suits who are dictating from above”.
- A recognition that the community has a right to raise issues and that people are entitled to their views and opinions.

### *Building on Local Knowledge*

- Gaining knowledge and information about the communities – ie “getting the ground work done”.
- The Visioning process is easier when there is some element of trust and inter-dependence built up across the community.
- Through taking time to talk with others who had worked in the communities the facilitators became aware of the nature and characteristics of people and had the sensitivity to ensure that the exercises would fit in well with those involved.

### *Process*

- Clarity of the policies and procedures adopted.
- Adapting the facilitation tools and process to meet the needs and interests of the different communities and people involved.
- Capacity building during the first phase so that people in the community were confident, willing and able to express themselves.
- Allowing the community to discuss how the process will be developed.
- Agreeing realistic time scales – allowing sufficient time for engaging the community and sharing information.
- Having taken the preparation steps people are realistic about the future – rather than developing impractical or impossible wish lists.
- Holding a Stakeholders Open Meeting for everyone on the estate, with additional people invited to attend. The community set up different tables (for example housing and policing) and the relevant stakeholders could identify what comes within their remit. The process also enabled two-way information sharing.
- The community gained greater understanding through an awareness of the process and the way in which statutory agencies work, and why things do or don't happen.

- The residents worked well as alongside the capacity building people in the community got to know, trust and understand each other better and gained through the team building element and building on personal relationships.
- Building up the model of the Cregagh estate and inviting further input and opinions from residents
- Using cards for people to say what they'd like to see happening, identifying problems, looking at solutions and thinking who needs to be involved.
- Getting the young people to identify something that they wanted to work on to improve the area they live in.
- The additional funding sought from Creative Youth Partnership enabled more extensive projects to be carried out with young people in Ballybeen and Moneyreagh.
- Developing the Action Plan and then presenting it to the Inter-Agency Group, who are now working with the community to "make the Action Plan happen".
- Taking a realistic approach from the start; an Action Plan must be realistic and there needs to be an understanding that some things take time, there may be some visions that can't happen, but above all seek to avoid a wish list mentality
- Being inclusive, so that people across the community know what is happening and opening doors so that they may become involved.
- Communities taking ownership of the process.

#### *The next steps*

Ongoing consultation with the community following the development of an action plan is essential. The aim should be that the community is able to participate in the review and evaluation of how the Action Plan has been moved forward in practice, and to ensure that it is responding to community interests and the decisions made during the planning process. Thus, having developed an Action Plan, it is important that ways to move the plan forward have been considered, or morale can drop and communities can become disinclined to participate in future initiatives. There is also a need to beware of 'hi-jacking'; an individual, group or organisation taking over and claiming the credit.

"Some years ago the residents in Belvoir were invited to produce an action plan for their community. People got involved and spent time to produce an action plan. However, nothing happened with the plan. This led to apathy and disillusionment and people are then reluctant to become involved in future initiatives".

In this Project the two youth Visioning Projects saw their Action Plan through in terms of developing a tangible outcome through the murals or the sculpture and there are still issues that the young people intend to work through within their own youth groups. In Cregagh the Action Plan is under regular review through the previously established Inter-Agency Group.

## IMPACT

The Castlereagh Visioning Project resulted in several tangible outcomes, namely

- The Action Plans
- The two murals in Ballybeen
- The Visions sculpture in Moneyreagh
- The document produced to be circulated to Councils and other agencies drawing on good practice from the Castlereagh Visioning Project and further discussion arising from the Project concerning community visioning and community planning.

In addition to these tangible outcomes that are likely to continue to have an impact for some time, there were benefits gained for communities and individuals through:

- Experiencing the process of Community Visioning;
- Networking;
- Capacity building;
- Discussions at community meetings, conferences and events;
- Raising awareness of the concept and actuality of Community Visioning.

Additional comments about the impact included:

“The positive attitudes that grew during the Project. We were in the process of painting the car mural and it rained very heavily one night. The paint ran and it looked terrible the next morning. But all of the children, one by one, started off again. They just got stuck in saying things like ‘we’ll get it fixed’ and ‘when we give it a wee touch up again it’ll be fine’; they were so positive.

“People in the community have taken ownership and responsibility for the future of their community. They are developing and sustaining working relationships and have a better understanding of the processes that need to be worked through to achieve their goals.

“New people have got involved in their community and can see a rationale in doing this.

“People have gained new skills and increased their personal capacity such that they want to continue to pursue their involvement.

“Renewed enthusiasm in some of the communities that participated in the Project.

“Communities have identified goals to work towards.

“A feeling that there is value in ‘doing’ and collective action.

## THE EXTENT TO WHICH PERFORMANCE INDICATORS WERE MET

The aim of the Castlereagh Visioning Project is outlined in the Castlereagh LSP Letter of Offer as being “To support communities from seven areas in the Castlereagh Borough Council area to develop a community planning framework for each of the areas using the community visioning process, and so move closer to becoming sustainable communities. This can only happen by looking at communities individually and their inter-dependence upon others across the board and not as isolated islands in a sea of service deliverers. Participatory planning methods such as community visioning and participatory learning in action (participatory appraisal) will be used as methodologies along with associated approaches throughout the project.

### Project Performance Indicators

The Project Performance Indicators as outlined in the table below have each been reviewed in the light of feedback, observation and a review of the Project.

<b>Project Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Extent to which the Performance Indicator was met</b>
A shared vision for each of the areas	Three of the communities undertook the development of a Community Action Plan, presenting the shared vision across the community. The projects in Ballybeen and Moneyreagh worked on a shared future vision of young people in the community.
Seven community action plan frameworks	Action plan frameworks were produced for Belvoir, Cregagh and Dundonald Village. In Ballybeen and Moneyreagh the young people developed an action plan, worked with the artists and delivered the planned for outcomes.
Enhanced communication between the statutory bodies, other support organisations and the widest range of groups locally in the community, involving community activists and leaders	In the five communities involved with the Project communication between the community with statutory bodies and other support organisations increased. The community gained a greater understanding of the role of different statutory organisations and also an awareness of the processes leading towards community change and service delivery.
Three newsletters	As noted earlier in the Report; the Project did not produce a newsletter, but instead published a range of other documents promoting and explaining the Community Visioning process, targeted at the five participating communities and further afield.
Three networking events	A number of networking events were held throughout the Project involving those living in the five participating communities and opportunities for wider networking and dissemination.
Three good practice visits	The good practice visits did not take place – but a greater number of networking events took place than initially envisaged.

<b>Project Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Extent to which the Performance Indicator was met</b>
Better relationships within communities, between communities and between communities and statutory bodies and other support organisations	As above, communities felt that they benefited from developing working relationships with representatives from the statutory and public sector and have greater confidence in knowing where to seek information or support.
Technical support for local projects	The Project facilitators provided technical support for the communities through arranging workshops and residentials, maintaining communication and assisting with the Action Plans
Information for communities on funding sources and alternative income generating sources	During the process the communities gained information about funding opportunities from a range of different sources and also gained an awareness about social economy opportunities.
A celebration event for all participating groups towards the end of the project	The Celebration Event took place at the Ivanhoe Hotel.

When looking at the Performance Indicators it is evident that the Castlereagh Visioning Project achieved the majority of the targets set – and exceeding some targets (for example the Networking events). Although the best Practice visits did not take place as planned. Rather than producing a newsletter – which did not seem appropriate at the time, a number of other publications were produced, some of which will have a longer lifetime than the Project, and disseminate the experiences to a wider audience. In the light of the Review of Public Administration and community planning this is commendable and provides added value.

## TRANSFERABILITY

Feedback from the community and stakeholders and further discussion at the September seminar were unanimous in the view that the experiences of the Castlereagh Visioning Project can be transferred in whole or in part to other communities and that the experiences and lessons learnt can contribute to the development of the 'community planning' aspect of local government review.

The key proposals from the DoE Local Government Reform Unit Community Planning Subgroup are that Northern Ireland will:

- Adopt a modified Scottish model, adapted to Northern Ireland's needs, with regeneration moving to local government (although health and education will remain separate from local government, unlike the Scottish model),
- Place a duty on local government to participate and deliver local Community Plans,
- Place a statutory duty on other key players and central government departments to be involved and play a role in delivering the process and provide statutory guidance,
- Provide structures for representation,
- Develop local area partnerships, cross boundary/border,
- Implement the Power of well-being
- Pilot capacity building and pilot projects – a number of different approaches to community planning will be piloted, testing different ways of working in different areas. (It is likely that more than one model will be available, learning the lessons from and evaluating the pilot projects, for community planning in the future).

The Castlereagh Visioning Project has highlighted the advantages of involving the community in community planning. It has shown that some of the factors which can encourage local people to get involved in community planning include:

- Residents have local knowledge – which leads to better decision making meeting needs and working towards the community getting what the community wants,
- The potential to access additional resources,
- Building community ownership, which in turn creates a sense of community,
- Building individual and community capacity and developing new skills,
- People feel more attached to an environment they have helped create.

For statutory agencies, the public sector and professionals the advantages of involving the community include:

- People in the community bring local knowledge,
- It meets future legislative requirements,
- The community is aware of what the plans for their community are, which reduces or removes conflict and may help development taking place more quickly,
- Building a community understanding of what is and is not possible (and the reasons why).

Key lessons learnt for community planning include:

- The need to develop and sustain relationships.
- The importance of developing agreed terms of reference and knowledge of duties and limitations.
- Building capacity – both for the community; but also within statutory and public sector, such that they are able to work effectively with the community.

- Having or building the structures such that a Community Action plan can be moved forward and developed (for example the Inter-Agency Group). “Putting the money and effort into an Inter-Agency Groups can save so much time and money in the medium and long-term”.
- The need for localised Community Plans and taking into account community and neighbourhood characteristics.
- What works well for one community may not work in another. As such it is essential that Community Planning facilitators gain local knowledge and an understanding of the community characteristics, interests and attitudes prior to starting the process. Facilitation tools and approaches should reflect the needs, capacity and capability of the community.
- Commitment to engagement in the delivery of the action plan through involvement from the appropriate agencies; both to the process and to producing results; and clearly defining responsibilities for the statutory sector and good interagency working.
- To identify ways in which to involve young people – the community is their future and many young people want to be involved and have their say. Using creative arts is one way in which young people can become effectively engaged and enthusiastic.
- Developing good channels of communication and communication strategies – and feeding back information and developments (both good news and bad).
- The ability to seek for and accommodate differing opinions; seeking for inclusivity across the community aiming to involve people of all ages, genders, cultures, and religions. Community Visioning is about people having a voice.

The one element missing from the Action Plans developed within the Castlereagh Community Visioning Project is looking at the opportunities offered through the social economy and social entrepreneurship which can support the vision for a sustainable community. Social economy includes the creation of flexible employment, active citizenship, services to people, decentred welfare, safeguarding of human rights, supporting local development policies, and social cooperation. The core common denominator is that social economy businesses are not-for-profit; rather they are employee or community led economic development organisations that use trading activities to achieve their goals and financial self-sufficiency. Profits made are usually ‘ploughed back’ into the community.

During the Project the facilitators organised and promoted workshops and best practice visits related to the social economy. Neither the best practice visits nor the workshops took place due to insufficient interest by community members. During the same period of time that the Castlereagh Visioning Project was operational the LSP had also funded the Developing the Local Social Economy Project. All the communities that participated in the Castlereagh Visioning Project have participated in best practice visits to London, Liverpool and Manchester, went on the Community Action Network Online training course (social economy virtual networking) and received CAN-Online licences offered through this Project. They are also participating in informal social economy networking. The concept of the social economy is complex and the fact that communities failed to take up opportunities to find out more through the Castlereagh Visioning Project offers a justification for the need for a Project focusing specifically on developing the social economy.

It is essential that Community Visioning addresses issues of community sustainability – such that communities access and develop ways in which to develop opportunities towards self-sustainability. It can be a long process to develop and establish a social economy project whereby the profits are ploughed back into the community, thus contributing towards sustaining local initiatives without relying solely on external funding. Community visioning should include these issues in Community Action Plans.

The Castlereagh Visioning Project was funded to develop Community Action Plans within the participating communities. Resources were not, and have not subsequently been made available to provide the support to sustain the activity. In Cregagh, through the Inter-Agency Group which includes community representation, the structures are in place to maintain the momentum generated through the Castlereagh Visioning Project and to regularly review the Action Plan.

Having developed an action plan it is essential that the process continues to move forward: if people's hopes and expectations are raised and nothing happens there is the possibility that morale will drop and that people in the community will become reluctant and cynical about participating in a similar future process.

- Communities should be aware of the processes to move plans forward and who can help with the next steps,
- The Community Planning process should use existing structures or develop new ones to maintain communication between statutory, public, community and voluntary sectors,
- Ongoing consultation is a must so that the action plan can be reviewed in order to continue to meet community needs – eg focus groups, citizens' juries,
- Consider the resources and support required to maintain momentum from the outset.

## COMMENT

The summative evaluation of the Castlereagh Visioning Project presented in this Evaluation Report has presented the Project activities provided, feedback from the community and other stakeholders, been additionally informed through a documentation review and taken into account feedback from the Project's Conference held in September 2006.

All five communities have identified some benefits from participating in the projects, although the extent of the benefits and impact in the longer term have varied from community to community. In part this has been due to the structures in place, both those supporting and those constraining the ongoing development of the Community Action Plans.

This pilot Project has generated a process from which lessons can be derived and which can contribute towards future Community Planning within local government – an obligation following the Review of Public Administration. However, whilst there are many elements that can be transferred from this Project to other communities, there is a need to be flexible and adaptable towards the needs, characteristics and make up of each individual community. The facilitation tools that may work in one community may not work in another, and the need to gain local knowledge and an awareness of the local community conditions is imperative prior to the development of a Community Action Plan.

The performance Indicators have been effectively met, with the added value of a published document outlining the process, the advantages, the challenges, and the opportunities of Community Planning. The intention is to circulate this document across Northern Ireland. Whilst the focus of the Project has been on Castlereagh, the lessons learned from this pilot have been disseminated through the Seminar held in September and will continue to be more widely disseminated through this document.

The Castlereagh Community Visioning Project was both innovative and timely. It has shown that engaging communities in the first instance can be difficult and that the concept needs to be effectively 'sold' to communities. It also demonstrates that there is a need to have supporting structures in place in order that the process can be supported at the time and effectively followed through. Community Visioning is not about a 'quick fix'; it requires preparation, information gathering, capacity building, sharing the past, present and future; and following on from this process moving on to the development of a Community Action Plan.

Community Action Plans are just the beginning. The next challenge is how to sustain the momentum developed from the Visioning Process towards the achievement of the priorities and goals identified in the Community Action Plans. The involvement of statutory and public sectors, working alongside communities and maintaining open and real consultation and review will be crucial to the success of Community Planning.

**APPENDIX ONE**  
**THOSE INVOLVED IN THE EVALUATION INTERVIEWS**

Paulene Beattie	Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Castlereagh
Paul Carland	Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Castlereagh
Sue Christie	Sustainable Northern Ireland
Darren Curtis	Castlereagh Community Safety Partnership
Marlene Dodds	Cregagh Community Association
Sara Duncan	Councillor, Castlereagh Borough Council
Brian Dunwoody	Belvoir Community Association
Gwen Ferguson	Cregagh Community Association
Lydia Gamble	Castlereagh Enterprises
Kirk Graham	Belvoir Community Association
Tara Haughian	Project Facilitator (now Second Nature)
Jonathan Hodge	Project Facilitator (now South Belfast Partnership)
Tommy Jeffers	Dundonald Village Regeneration Group
John Lavery	Youth Worker
Anne McLoughlin	Moneyreagh Youth Group
Margaret Montgomery	Cregagh Community Association
Alberta Park	Creative Youth Partnership, SEELB
Murray Watt	Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project
Irene Williamson	Cregagh Community Association
Lisa Wilson	Castlereagh Borough Council