



# **Ballinode Community Plan 2022-2027**







**St Dymphna's Church in Ballinode village**  
**Photo by Malcolm Totten**

**Cover Image: Mill Wheel in Ballinode**  
**Photo by Malcolm Totten**



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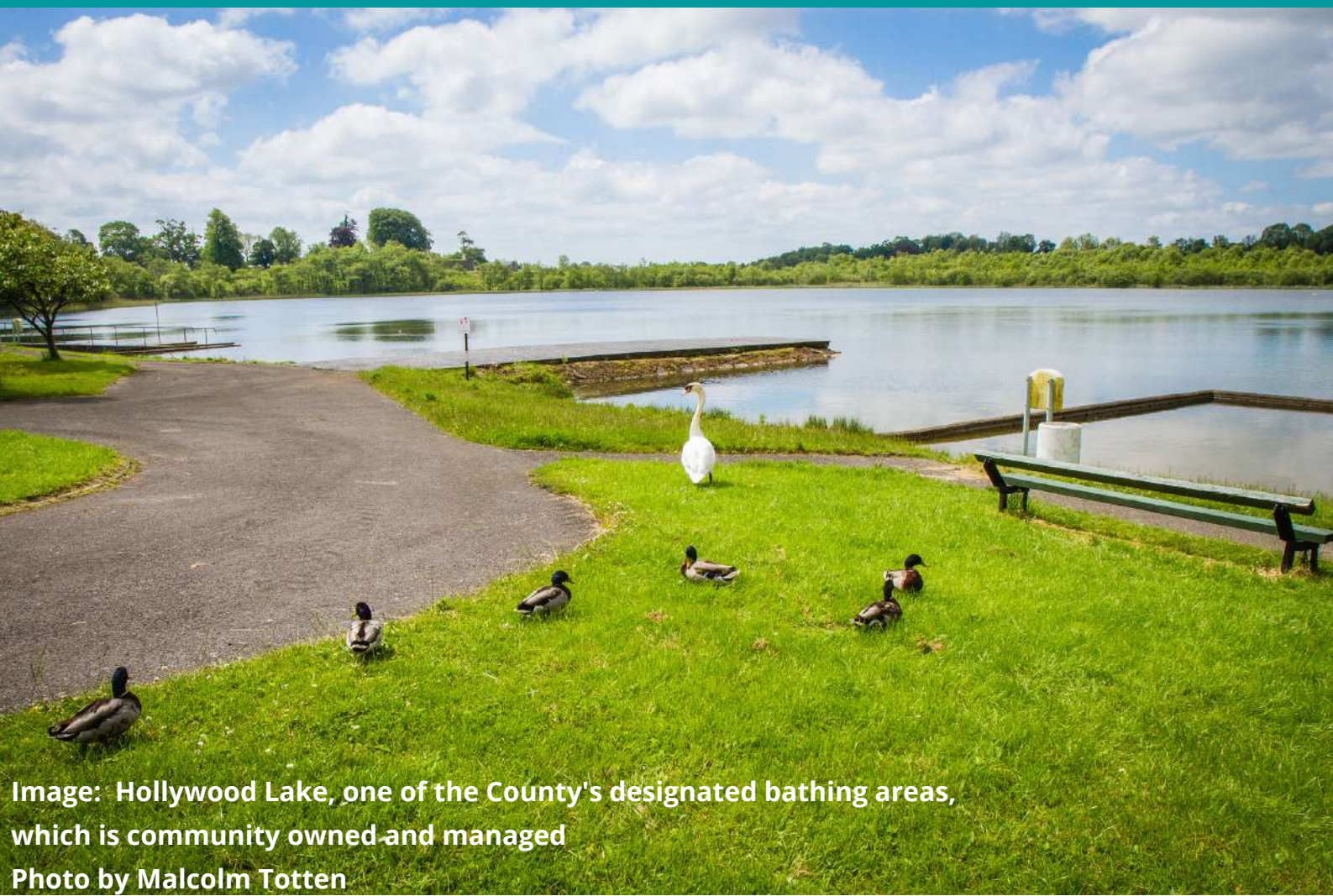


Image: Hollywood Lake, one of the County's designated bathing areas, which is community owned and managed

Photo by Malcolm Totten

# Welcome



## We are Ballinode!

We are the people who live here, whose lives are enriched by the relationships we have with our neighbours, by the opportunities that living here provides, and by the amenities that we are lucky to enjoy.

Over the years, this community has achieved much together, but we can do more. A while ago, Monaghan County Council offered us the opportunity to take a look at our community's needs and to make a plan which would improve life for everyone living in Ballinode. This is that Plan.

It is the result of over two years of research and thought and discussion, and we are happy to recommend the Plan to you as a combination of projects and activities which we feel are achievable and which will improve life for everyone living in the village, from the youngest to the oldest, for those only recently arrived, and people who have lived here for generations.

Please take the time to become familiar with the Plan, as it will become the focus for all the work in the village for the next five years. As you read through, we ask you to ask yourself an important question: "how can I help?" It will take the efforts and talents of everyone to bring the Plan to life, and your help is both needed and wanted. Please consider lending a few minutes a month to help push one of the projects in this Plan forward. You will find details of how you can volunteer at the back of the Plan.

We wish to thank the Community Dept. of Monaghan County Council for assisting us to put together this Plan. We are the groups listed hereunder, and we have all pledged to play our part in bringing this Plan to fruition. We urge you to give your full support to this endeavour, for the benefit of all who live in Ballinode, today and in the future.

Ballinode Community Projects  
Cross Border Wood Turners  
Scotstown GAA - Kilmore training grounds  
St Dymphna's Church Select Vestry  
Tydavnet Historical Society  
Hollywood Lake Committee

Ballinode Foroige  
Ballinode Bridge Club  
Ballinode Lunch Club  
Ballinode Tidy Towns  
Ballinode ICA

# Welcome

Cllr Aidan Campbell  
Cathaoirleach  
Monaghan County Council



It gives me great pleasure to present this draft Plan to the people of Ballinode. It has been prepared by the very dedicated and knowledgeable staff from the Council's Community Department, with input from members of the Ballinode community.

It presents a blueprint for strengthening the community and making Ballinode a better place to live by acting together across a number of areas.

The Plan had a somewhat interrupted preparation, the process of identifying local needs having been started just before the Covid pandemic made community meetings impossible for almost two years. However, as we have come to expect from the community of Ballinode, you dug deep and persevered, and in the end you prevailed, and to a very high standard.

You have identified quite rightly in your Plan that what makes a community is all the little 'bits and pieces of everyday', as Kavanagh would say, that cause people to rub off one another and build up relationships which become the glue that hold the community together when times get tough. You also identify that in Ballinode, many of the daily opportunities for people to 'rub together' are not present, such as growing up together in school, or playing together on the village football team. I believe you are on the right track in setting out to create the social connections between people so that they feel the sense of belonging to the village and feel that they have a stake in the local community and want to contribute and give back. I don't think I'll be the only one watching to see how successful your strategy to create a strong community spirit is, and I wish you the best of luck.

I wish you every success in the construction of your new community centre, which will be a very important resource to the village once completed.

Monaghan County Council will be glad to play its part in supporting the village's ambitions, and will not be found wanting in supporting the people of Ballinode in realising their goals.

Ní neart go cur le chéile!

Aidan Campbell



# Introduction

## 1.

This journey started in December 2018 with a public meeting. At that meeting, staff from Monaghan County Council shared information about the benefits of having a community plan with the people of Ballinode, and the those attending the meeting agreed that Ballinode would benefit from having a Community Plan prepared for it and committed to working with the Council to work through the various stages needed to prepare the Plan.

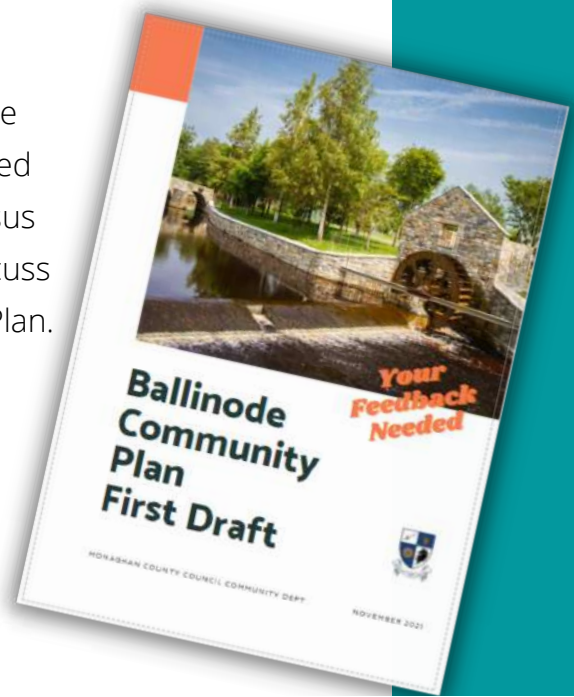
Shortly afterwards, a Community Needs Survey was circulated around the community, and received a very high return rate, which was very helpful in identifying what people liked and didn't like about living in Ballinode, and what they thought would improve the village.

Work came to a halt on the Plan with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, as lockdown restrictions made it impossible to hold focus group sessions, or meet with the various groups which are active in the community.

However, work continued where it could, with the Council accessing funding for upgrades to the community park, and Ballinode Community Projects commencing work on identifying the landowners along the route for a possible off-road walking link between the village and the Kilmore training pitch.

The Council also produced an analysis of the Census data of the village, and used this data as the basis of a survey of the local groups, to get their thoughts on the future development of the village.

A draft Plan was then put together, presenting a mix of the projects proposed by the groups and some ideas proposed by Council staff based on the community needs and Census data. Meetings were held in March and April 2022 to discuss the draft Plan and finalise it into this agreed Community Plan.



## What does having a Community Plan do for us?

It's very easy to drift along aimlessly if you don't have a plan. Days, months, and even years can pass without anything much changing or getting done. That's fine if everything is perfect. But what if it's not? What if there are people in our community that need a little help to get by? Or what if we don't have the facilities we need in order to provide the services that our most vulnerable community members need to make it through another day?

By and large, nothing worthwhile happens by accident; someone needs to start out by putting shape to their idea, and then putting a budget to that, and then looking for the funding, and so on. And that's when a Plan comes into its own: when it comes time to explain to a funder, who doesn't know you or your community, what you want to do and why.

A plan shows that you mean business. That you have thought things through, know exactly how your proposed project fits into the wider picture of the needs of your community and how you are taking a strategic approach to addressing those needs. A group like this is more likely to follow through on its promises, and is more likely to succeed in making an impact in its community.

By making a plan, a group is more likely to attract support from funding organisations, especially for large capital projects. Because those organisations know from experience what it takes to get a major capital project over the line, and have seen all too often the truth in the adage, 'Fail to plan, plan to fail'. We do not want that for Ballinode, hence we have put our plan on paper.

***“Most people don’t plan to fail...  
They simply fail to plan!”***



## Why Bother with this Community thing?

That's an easy one. Because there's something in it for you!  
Yes, YOU!

At various points in your life, your needs will change. For many years, you may be in a position to put more in to community life than you take out, but there may be times when you are more vulnerable, such as during bouts of illness, and need more support. A person who is lucky to live in a strong community will find their needs met throughout their lifetime.

Strong communities know about caring for each other, and they pass this on to the younger members. They know about life's set-backs and how to pick oneself back up and get back on the horse, and this too gets passed on. And most of all, they know the value of people, the time spent in the company of friends and neighbours, and that everyone has a worth and is deserving of respect. These values soak in through the skin as our young people attend activities in our community, and are carried with them wherever life takes them, helping to steer them through rough waters to land on safe shores and contribute to the building of a strong community wherever they may choose to make their home.

People who grow up in strong, supportive, positive communities grow up to be more positive, and more likely to succeed in life. One day they might be sitting in a primary school in Tydavnet with dreams of becoming an actor and a few short years later find themselves on the Jimmy Kimmel Show watching a video of children from their former primary school wishing them good luck for the Oscar nominations!

### How to build a strong community

1. Start with strong foundations:
  - A strong identity
  - Shared values
  - A sense of pride and belonging
  - Knowing that people are more important than things
2. Build amenities:
  - To bring services to those who need them
  - To provide social and recreational facilities
3. Come together often:
  - Celebrate
  - Remember
  - Support one another
4. Build People
  - Lead by example
  - Create relationships
  - Pass the spirit of caring on
  - Raise the next generation of leaders

We want this kind of a community in Ballinode - the kind that produces strong, positive, resilient people who look after each other and know the value of giving back to the community, returning the 'social investment' that was once made in them.

*A strong community enables  
its members to SHINE!*



## 2.

# Ballinode - A Profile

In order to know what supports are needed to improve life in Ballinode, we first of all needed to know who is living in the village, and what their needs are.

There were two ways of finding this information out:

- From the Census small area population statistics. The most recent data is from 2016. We have reproduced some of the most interesting data for your information in this section
- By asking the people who live here. We carried out a house-to-house survey in July 2019, to which we received 91 responses. Thank you to all who took the time to complete the survey, as your feedback provided invaluable information which threw up some issues which would not have come up otherwise.

We present a summary of the data collected, particularly the facts which have influenced the direction of this Plan, in this Section.



The oldest photograph of Ballinode village c.1900 by James Kerr

## 3.

# Ballinode - Who We Are

In the last Census (2016):



470 people lived in the village  
in 184 households



50 people lived alone  
(27% of all households)



50 people had a disability  
(over 10% of all people)

The number of people living alone is quite high. It suggests that there may be potential for these to become isolated more easily from the community. They may also be users of services such as ready meals for one, as people who live alone are less likely to cook just for themselves every day. They may also feel more vulnerable to crime.

The large number of people with a disability in the village makes accessibility of buildings, footpaths, parks etc very important. If people can't get around the village easily, they will be trapped in their own home.



15% of villagers are over 65



26% of villagers are under 20



The age profile data suggests that there may actually be two communities living in Ballinode:

- -Those who belong to the 'older' village, and are now in the upper age profile. 15% of the village's residents are over the age of 65.
- -Those who moved to the village with the housing boom in the 2000's. Many of these were purchasing a home for the first time, and are now rearing families. Consequently, there is a bubble of children under 12 years of age living in the village.

The needs of retired people are likely to be very different to the needs of families with small children. This should be taken into account when planning facilities and activities.

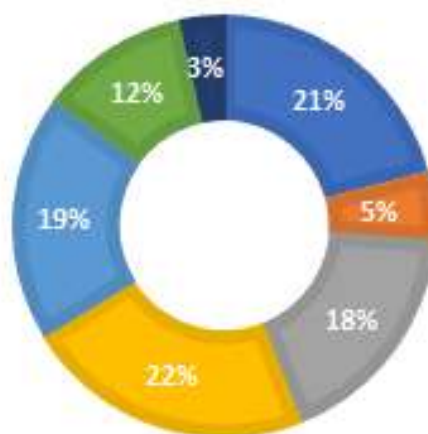
For example, if planning a bus service from Ballinode to Monaghan town:

- -What days and times would older people wish to travel?
- -When would parents with small children wish to travel?
- -When would teenagers wish to travel?

The needs of these three groups are likely to be very different, and therefore knowing your community's needs is crucial to providing the right service in the right place, at the right time.

### AGE PROFILE BALLINODE

■ 0-12 ■ 13-19 ■ 20-34 ■ 35-49 ■ 50-64 ■ 65-79 ■ 80+



## Housing:



There are 184 Houses in the village

74.5% are owner occupied



55.5% of those are mortgage free

109 people are renting, from either private landlords or the local authority



51% of all housing stock was built before 1990 - it's likely to be energy inefficient



83% of all homes rely on oil for heating

## Connectivity:



15 homes (8%) have no motor car



75% of homes have a computer



83% of homes have broadband





## New Communities:



21 people say they don't speak English well, or 'not at all'

Ballinode is home to a growing number of non-Irish nationals, many of whom are working in local businesses and contributing to the local economy. However, the extent to which they and their families are integrating into community life might be questioned.

Language certainly would appear to be a barrier for many, and there are no local services being run in the community which would help to break down this barrier.

As we will see in the community surveys which were returned, there seems to be a divide developing in the village between those who have lived in Ballinode all their lives, and those who have moved to the area with the construction of new housing developments, with the newcomers reporting that they sometimes feel at a remove from local groups and local decisions.

Communities usually grow their own organic network of communicating, which can be difficult for newcomers to navigate without the help of someone from 'the inside'.

Think about it: if you didn't know the opening times of the community hall, that anyone is free to join the activities which are organised in the hall each evening, or that anyone in the community can book the hall and organise their own activities, how would you go about finding out about what happens in the community hall?

The unintentional impact of this is that new people don't know where to find information about what is on in the local area, or don't know what groups are active in the area and how to get involved, and therefore are left on the outside unable to participate, when oftentimes the local groups would have been only too delighted to have seen new faces coming through the door!



## A Note of Caution on the Data

We all know that statistical data has limitations, and that it should be used always as an indicator rather than relied upon exclusively for evidence.

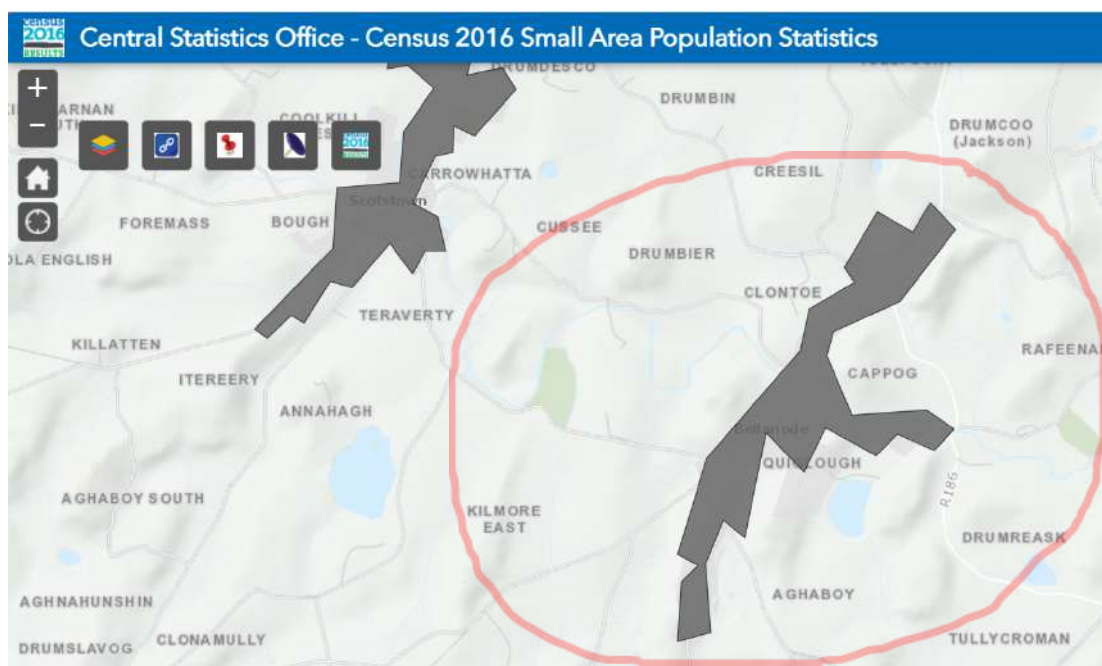
There is also a concern that the Census data we are working with is six years old, the 2021 Census having been cancelled due to the Covid crisis. Data relating to age profiles in particular will be out of date.

However, we can get a general sense of the issues in Ballinode from the data, and when combined with the opinions of local people which we have gathered through direct surveys, we can form a fuller, more reliable picture of the position as it is today..

When local data from the next Census is available, which will be in mid 2023, we will download the Small Area Population Statistics from the SAPMAP tool on the CSO website, and compare the new Census figures with the 2016 data.

We will take note of any changes since the last Census, taking particular note of any deviation from national and county trends. We will consider the reasons for these differences, and should consider if action is needed to resolve any negative trends.

The Action Plan will then be updated accordingly.



Statistics for the 'Settlement' of Bellanode are available on the CSO's SAPMAP tool

## 4.

# Ballinode - What You Said

A needs survey was distributed to the general public throughout the village. 91 responses were received. The age profile of respondents was:

	UNDER 14 YEARS	14 - 19 YEARS	20 - 34 YEARS	35 - 49 YEARS	50 - 64 YEARS	65 + YEARS	TOTAL
Your age range	0.00% 0	3.49% 3	16.28% 14	32.56% 28	24.42% 21	23.26% 20	86

## We Asked You:

If you were to give life in Ballinode a score out of 10 (with 1 star being the minimum and 10 stars being the maximum you could award), what would you give it?

Answered: 89 Skipped: 2

7.9★  
average rating



You like living in Ballinode - an 8/10 rating is strong



This is what you liked best - the bigger the text, the more often you mentioned it



Here are the things you said you didn't enjoy about life in Ballinode

When we talked about the village in general, people commented on it being peaceful, well kept, with friendly people and a strong community spirit.

These attributes are being spoiled by fast traffic through the village, poor road safety due to inadequate lighting and footpaths, dog fouling, and the lack of some basic amenities, such as toilets, shop and community centre (the latter two are being resolved).

We moved on to ask people how they felt about the local community spirit. 70% felt it was strong. When asked how it could be further improved, people pointed to various activities and events. The need for a good community centre was very clearly articulated.



In order to see what was truly important to people, we asked what you would hate to lose. Again, the community centre was important to people, as were the playground and football pitch. The new shop featured strongly, as did the new bus service to Monaghan town.





When asked what amenities you would love to see in the village, people's needs centred on a safe walking route, and somewhere/ occasions to meet up socially.

What facilities/ amenities would you love to have in the village?

Cafe WALK KILMORE young group Local facilities Better nature walk club  
digital notice board Safe new village road footpath  
Connolly Corner shop lighting walk music weekend pub  
Coffee shop walkway area tea community centre music  
bus stop walking track park amenity river

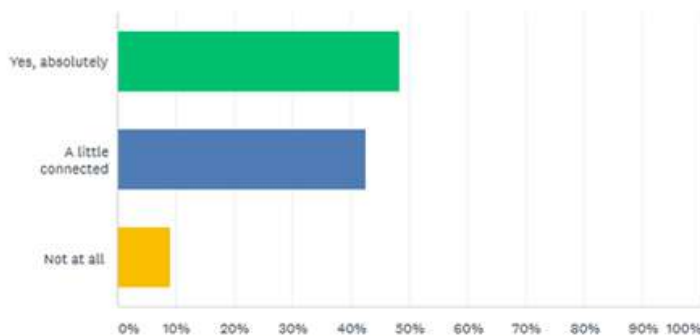
Are there any MISSING services/ facilities, or local assets which offer an opportunity to create something special for the people of Ballinode to enjoy?

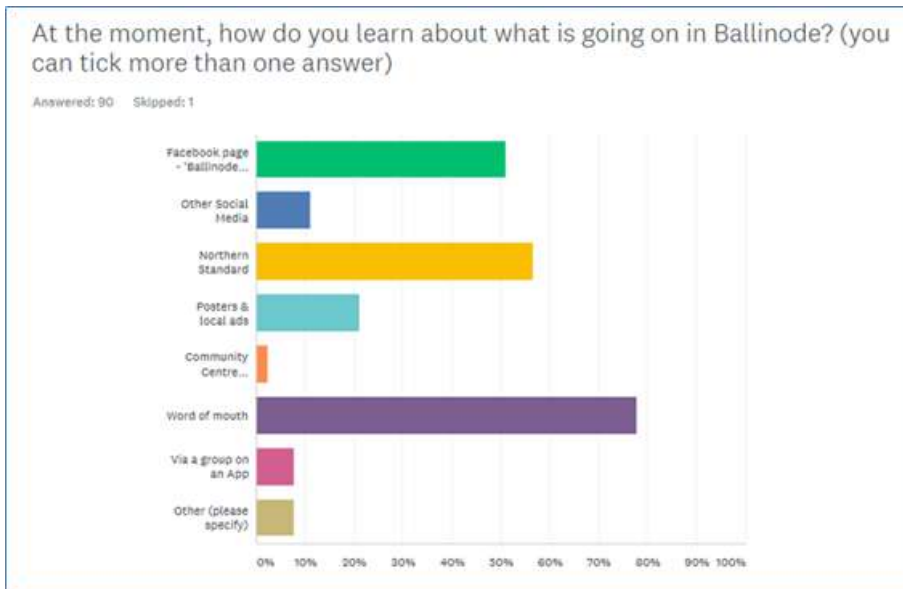
things bus place good nature walk walkway safe around ring  
village Post office walk think people back shop Bingo week  
meeting Bingo service ballinode

We asked if you felt connected to community life. While almost 50% replied that you did, over 40% felt only a little connected, and almost 10% didn't feel connected at all. There's room for improvement. You will see that the Community Plan focuses on providing opportunities for people to get out and participate in a range of activities and events, which we hope will help you to feel more connected again. We also will be ramping up our communications, so you are better informed about what is going on in the community, and making our volunteering needs more widely known, so that you might find it easier to step forward and connect that way.

Do you feel connected to local community life?

Answered: 89    Skipped: 2





This information was very important to us, as it told us that it's quite likely that newcomers are missing out on what's happening around the village, as most people are receiving their news by word of mouth or the Facebook page. If you're not 'in the know', you simply won't know what's going on! All of the local groups will be keeping this in mind going forward.

With this in mind, Ballinode Community Projects have prioritised their digital noticeboard project. Community News can now be found on the new digital board outside the village shop.



## A Quick Summary of Findings:

Older people, families and families with children appear to be happy with what Ballinode has to offer. Young people are less happy. People living alone are also less content. People do not agree that there is lots to do in the village. They are also not happy with the broadband service, or the other services in the village. Some people also have trouble getting to school/work.

These all must be addressed in order to improve life in Ballinode.

## 5.

## SWOT

We have identified the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats presented to the community over the next five years.

- Knowing the community's strengths can identify areas which we can build upon;
- Identifying the weaknesses shows us where we may need to take action;
- The 'opportunities' box can identify resources we are not using to their fullest
- The 'threats' box looks at areas which have the potential to de-rail any progress we make unless we take the time to address them.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to the county town</li> <li>• Strong local employers</li> <li>• Picturesque village centre</li> <li>• Strong local groups</li> <li>• Hollywood lake amenity</li> <li>• Multi-denominational community</li> <li>• Walking track at Kilmore</li> <li>• A new community centre is being constructed in the village</li> <li>• The village competes in Tidy Towns</li> <li>• Local link route to Monaghan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing population</li> <li>• New community centre being constructed</li> <li>• Many well-educated people with skills to share</li> <li>• Older housing stock presents opportunity for community energy initiative to address the energy efficiency of the building stock and their reliance on oil fired central heating systems</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of integration of newcomers to the village into community life</li> <li>• Poor public lighting from Connolly's cross to village</li> <li>• Vacant dwellings in village</li> <li>• Poor public access to local lakes, which could be great amenities</li> <li>• No local festivals</li> <li>• 51% of housing stock likely to be energy inefficient</li> <li>• Over 80% of housing stock reliant on oil for heating needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast moving traffic through village centre</li> <li>• A lot of HGV traffic through village, making pedestrians feel unsafe on the narrow paths</li> <li>• Climate change: more extreme weather incidents leading to high water levels and flooding in the village</li> <li>• Flood plain in centre of village, associated with the river</li> </ul>



# Audit of Local Groups

The groups listed below participated in an in-depth survey in summer 2020. They reviewed the data from the community needs survey and Census 2016, and then completed their own survey which looked at their group's work in the village, the resources they currently have and the plans they have for future development.

**Ballinode Community Projects**

**Foroige**

**Cross Border Wood Turners**

**Scotstown GAA - Kilmore training grounds**

**St Dymphna's Church Select Vestry**

**Tydavnet Historical Society**

**Ballinode Bridge Club**

**Ballinode Lunch Club**

**Monaghan U3A**

**Ballinode Tidy Towns**

**Ballinode ICA**

**Monaghan Joggners**

**Hollywood Lake Committee**

With the exceptions of Ballinode Community Projects, St Dymphna's Church, Hollywood Lake Committee and Scotstown GAA, none of the other groups have their own facilities, and are reliant on the facilities in Ballinode community centre for their needs.

This means that the quality of the facilities in the new centre, and how easy they are to access, will play a big part in how active and successful community activity is in the years ahead.

## Projects in the pipeline

We asked groups to tell us of any projects they were working on, or intended to undertake in the near future, so that we could get a fuller picture of what is going on in the village, and where there might be gaps which need to be addressed.

Activities planned include:

Group	Project
Ballinode Community Projects	Focusing on getting the new Community Centre finished
Ballinode ICA	We would like to start a cycling group, but the roads aren't safe
Ballinode Lunch Club	We would like to continue providing the meals on wheels service that we started during Covid
Ballinode Tidy Towns	We would like to do more biodiversity work, including develop a nature garden, possibly behind Cappog.
Foroige	We plan to get our members more involved in the local community
Hollywood Lake Cttee	Developing the amenities along the shore, including changing facilities, upgraded walks
St Dymphna's Church Select Vestry	We wish to improve access to the grounds from the Scotstown road & restore the boundary wall. We'd also like to restore the church clock, which is a very rare type dating from 1880
Scotstown GAA - Kilmore Training Grounds	Developing pedestrian access to the training grounds from Ballinode and Scotstown
Tydavnet Historical Society	Projects on Gola House & the listed buildings in the parish

## Barriers to Progress

Groups were asked to identify issues that were making it difficult for them to make progress on their plans. The most commonly cited barriers to progress were:

- For young people, lack of access to nearby facilities was the biggest obstacle to organising more activities, getting together more often etc.
- For groups with a focus on organising activities with a focus on wellbeing, the lack of safe places to exercise in the village was an issue
- Groups which focus on indoor activities are struggling at the moment to find a suitable venue
- Access to funding was an issue for some groups
- Groups such as Tidy Towns and the Lunch Club would welcome more volunteers

## The Groups as Community Resources

The groups did more than tell us what they needed, however. They also told us what they had to offer the community, in addition to the activities they already are known for running. They would like to remind everyone that they are available:

- Foroige's members are available to help during community events
- Cross Border Wood Turners are always delighted to teach new members a new skill
- Shed a Load in Ballinode love to see new people come along and take a positive step towards looking after their wellbeing
- St Dymphna's Select Vestry would like to remind people that their hall is available for community use, and that they are very interested in running events which involve the whole community
- Ballinode Bridge Club is interested in starting a beginners bridge session in the afternoons for older people
- Ballinode ICA is open to any suggestions for talks or training courses it might organise





# Audit of Local Amenities

## 7.

The amenities and facilities of a community provide the spaces in which the people which make up that community come together. The more often people get together, the more connections they form with each other. It is these connections which help hold a community together through the tough times, and which ensure that support is there for the most vulnerable members of the community when they need it.

Community doesn't happen without places to meet. Some of these will be social, some will be related to sport, religion or education, and some will be recreational. Some will be indoors; some outdoors. Some will provide opportunities for formal interaction, while others will provide quick, casual contacts such as whilst queuing to be served in the village shop.

All community interaction is important, as it helps us to build a sense of belonging, and helps to connect us to our community.

Some of the important meeting points in Ballinode are:

Facility/ Amenity	Details
Hollywood Park	One of 5 designated bathing areas in Co. Monaghan. Includes walk, play area, changing facilities. Due to be upgraded in 2022
St Dymphna's Church	Church at top of village, Church of Ireland. Hall available for meetings & events
Quig Lough angling	20 pegs along lakeside maintained by Rossmore Anglers
Quig Lough Picnic area	Dedicated to the memory of Vincie & Tessie McAree
Ballinode Playground	Constructed by the community, insured and maintained by Monaghan County Council

Facility/ Amenity	Details
Multi-use games area (MUGA)	Community-owned pitch, suitable for 5-a-side football, basketball
Riverside Park	Small park in village centre along the river front, overlooking reconstruction of mill wheel
Village Shop & post office	There is one convenience store in the village. This reopened recently after having been closed for a time, leaving villagers with a journey to Scotstown or Monaghan for a litre of milk or to collect their pension.
Scotstown GAA's training grounds at Kilmore	The facility is used by many in the community, especially the new walking track

The village is unusual in that it is only one village in a larger parish; it does not host the local Catholic Church, the primary school or the GAA club grounds. These can be strong focal points for a community's sense of identity, and the large number of events which are organised around the activities generated by these amenities assist in bringing the community together regularly, which provides the basis for establishing community connections. Without these amenities being active in the village, the community has to make a conscious effort to create and maintain the sense of identity and belonging that is needed for a community to thrive.



**One of the angling pegs at Quiglough developed & maintained by Rossmore Anglers**

## Gaps in Local Amenities & Facilities

The village does not have any educational facilities within the community.

This means that the children of Ballinode, from a very early age, leave the village each morning and may be heading in many directions for their day care and educational needs.

They may not be attending the same facilities as other children in their neighbourhood, and their best friends from school may not live in Ballinode.

This presents a special challenge to the community; if we wish our children to feel a sense of belonging to the village, and to know their neighbours as well as we knew the kids living near us as we were growing up, we will need to find ways and reasons for the children of Ballinode to come together outside of the formal educational setting, so that they are given the chance to find out what it means to be from Ballinode.

## The Need for a new Community Centre

The community is very fortunate to have a community-minded local business in McAree Engineering, which when approached twenty years ago with a proposal by the community around moving the community centre down to the centre of the village, facilitated the project by purchasing the site of the former creamery at a time that the community was not in a position to act.

Today, McAree Engineering is facilitating the community's ambitions to provide the village with a modern, well-appointed community centre by undertaking the construction of the new centre on the creamery site, and forgoing the construction of new offices for the company in favour of transferring its office accommodations into the old community centre, which sits in front of its existing premises.

The move of the community centre from the outlying edge of the village into the heart of the village will be a tremendous bonus to community life. The new building will be finished to a very high standard, offering significantly superior levels of comfort over the old building. Additionally, extra space inside will facilitate more activities, and off street parking will improve the safety of patrons compared to the busy roadside parking at the old centre.

The new building will have enough space to facilitate people to come in to hang out socially, which will bring huge benefits for social interactions, and will enable services such as wifi, community library, and citizens information to be provided, bringing untold benefits to the people of Ballinode on a personal and community level.



# The new Community Centre



Despite the difficulties presented by Brexit, Covid and the recent shortage of building materials, progress continues on the new Community Centre. The building is designed to fit in with the rural aesthetic of the village, with the 'wagon' style roof mimicking the vernacular shape of the hay sheds of the area, as well as echoing the rolling drumlin landscape. The hall section will be the exact same size as the old hall up at McAree's. The lowest block will contain kitchen and toilets, while the two storey block to the left of the picture will have room for additional meeting space, etc. The river bank to the rear of the site has been squared off and reinforced, which has enlarged the site to the rear. This will be developed into an outside seating area, which will no doubt give many hours of pleasure to us all. The foundations are now laid, and construction will begin shortly on the main building shell.



**Reps from McAree Engineering and Ballinode Community Projects standing on the foundations of the new Community Centre in January 2022**



## 8.

# Community Needs

We asked groups to help us to build a picture of the community's needs under three key headings, and to help to identify how these might be addressed. Here is what you said:

Social Needs	Facilities/ Amenities	Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities for children with special needs, eg ASD or poor communication due to overuse of technology</li> <li>Need for social contact outside the home for those who are living alone</li> <li>Fear of Crime – a need to feel safer in the home, and on the streets</li> <li>Need for better communication channels than 'word of mouth', so that those who are less linked-in to the community do not get left behind</li> <li>Need for us all to live more sustainably and to respond to the challenge of climate change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Netball/ basketball court</li> <li>Badminton/ table tennis facilities</li> <li>A safe looped walking route around the village</li> <li>Walking/ cycling links to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kilmore training grounds</li> <li>- Hollywood park</li> <li>- Monaghan town</li> </ul> </li> <li>A community park &amp; Allotments</li> <li>Somewhere for young people to hang out</li> <li>Upgraded facilities at Hollywood park</li> <li>Improved public lighting, footpath and spaces</li> <li>Claim back the street for the village rather than fast-moving through-traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited local services for older people living in the village               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- meals</li> <li>- drop-in social centre</li> <li>- health services</li> </ul> </li> <li>Need for support in wellbeing: eating well, stress &amp; mental health, family support</li> <li>Need for integration support for foreign nationals living in Ballinode, eg english language classes</li> <li>Need for improved local transport links to Monaghan town</li> <li>Need for faster, more reliable broadband &amp; public access to a broadband hub</li> <li>Need for a welcome/ befriending service for newcomers to the village, to help them to find their feet and join in with community life</li> </ul>

## How groups suggested these needs might be addressed:

- Awareness training for leaders of existing groups, so that children with special needs can be accommodated

- Awareness training for children attending activities so they can sensitively deal with children who are having difficulty during an activity

- Re-activate Community Alert.

- Build a list of vulnerable households and develop a rota to ensure all on the list are visited or phoned regularly to ensure they are ok

- Carry out projects aimed at helping people to feel safer, eg locks & bolts initiative, smoke alarms, crime prevention advice, property marking

- Creation of a 'drop in' culture in the new community centre, where people feel welcome to come in and pass time having a coffee and meeting friends, even if they're not attending an activity that evening**

- Provision of a space in the new community centre to facilitate people to hang out, relax, meet friends, have coffee and passively build a tighter connection to their community**

- Contact details for all local groups on display in lobby of community centre and in newsletter**

- Calendar of activities published seasonally, and 'how to book' information for each activity and for the centre and St Dymphna's Hall listed**

- A 'Welcome to Ballinode' committee to be put in place, and welcome pack to be delivered to new arrivals

- Digital community noticeboard in the village centre, so that all may find out what is happening without having to have any local knowledge

- Community newsletter, distributed door-to-door

- Start a community café in the community centre,

- Serve lunches at subsidised rates on certain days

- Host coffee mornings, along with book club, bridge, heritage club and other activities, to encourage people living alone to get out of the house

- Visiting service to people living alone

- Community-led energy saving projects

- Weekly social club during the afternoon in the community centre for older people

- Monthly social dancing for all ages, with older people teaching younger people how to dance and an opportunity for newcomers to the village to get to know neighbours

- Develop outdoor sports facilities adjacent to the new community centre

- Develop a community park and allotments in the village

- Young people should be made welcome in public spaces, and encouraged to come inside and hang out. Can a dedicated space be found for a youth area in the new Centre?

- Run family events, festivals etc to get everyone out on the street



## Priorities

We asked groups what should be prioritised in this Community Plan.

By far the most popular answer was **improvements to the footpaths and street lighting around the village.**

We are interpreting this as a desire to see an overall upgrade of the village's 'public realm' spaces, to enhance the appearance of the village, while at the same time improving road safety and making the village a more pleasant place to live.

Monaghan County Council has advised that the best way to approach this type of work is to begin by commissioning a "Public Realm Plan", which looks at all the spaces which are in the public realm, including the approaches to the village, the streets, any parks or parklets, etc. The plan considers whether these spaces make sense as they are, or are they disjointed? Perhaps they look very different from each other. It then lays out a design for the place, and a plan for each street/ estate etc. to transform them all to follow the new vision for the area. The ideal is when a place has a strong identity or brand, which is stated at the boundaries and echoed throughout the area in various ways. A palette of materials and colours is selected and used repeatedly throughout the area to bring a sense of 'flow' and connectedness to the area. How each corner of the area is used by the community is considered, and each is enhanced to make each space even more suited to its use, or even create new uses not imagined before.

A public realm plan can be a very powerful tool, as it can pull in a lot of funding behind it through schemes such as the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, to carry out the works set out in the plan.



The Big Tom Memorial Garden in Oram, which opened in summer 2021, started life as an idea which came out of Oram's community planning process.

Funding of over €60,000 was secured from the Town & Village Fund to turn the idea into a wonderful tribute to Oram's most famous son.

The next priority which is evident from the comments submitted by groups is the need for the new **community centre** to be completed as soon as possible.

It is clear from the needs shown earlier in this document that a place to meet is critical to ensuring that essential services are available locally, and in providing opportunities for strengthening community bonds.

As we have had cause to be thankful for in recent times, strong community bonds are something that Irish communities are good at. However, we have seen in our survey that there is a danger in Ballinode that the bonds of community could start to slip, with so many people not feeling connected to the community. It is therefore crucial that this is addressed immediately.

The opening of a new community centre provides an opportunity for a fresh beginning for everyone. As the building will be new to everyone, those who are new to the village will not feel so much 'outside' when they set foot inside for the first time. But care must be taken by all to provide a warm welcome to everyone, and to provide many opportunities to participate at all levels.

The new centre will have a welcoming vibe which encourages people to drop in for a chat and to meet friends. There will be a comfortable reception area where people will be encouraged to hang out. It will provide a range of services such as public information, a library and coffee facilities. We hope that every member of the community will form the habit of dropping in at least once a week, so that the Centre truly becomes the heart of the community.

Some of the things you have told us you would like to see in the new Centre are:

- safe off-road parking, so that vulnerable members of the community can attend activities in safety
- a dedicated space for young people, so they can drop in and hang out at any time without disturbing any organised activities
- a broadband connection with free wifi
- a consulting room, so that services such as counselling, farm advice, health clinics can be held locally
- a kitchen up to commercial standard, so that food can be prepared for serving to the public
- comfortable seating and a high standard of comfort throughout
- a bar for functions, as this would help to pay the bills

The most popular outdoor amenities which were requested were **a walking/ cycling link to the walking track at the Kilmore training grounds** and a **community garden**.

Some initial work has been done to investigate the feasibility of developing an off-road route from the village to Kilmore. Ballinode Community Projects is working in partnership with Monaghan County Council to progress this project.

The village of Ballinode has very little public space available where the community can gather outdoors, or where a person can go for a little relaxation. For a rural village, there is little opportunity for residents to enjoy the rural idyll. Many villages are built around a 'green', or have a community park. The only area available like this in Ballinode is the park along the river, which while lovely, is small and is somewhat encroached upon by the noise of the passing traffic.

The provision of a community park in the village is an ambition of this Plan. People indicated that they would like to see more recreational amenities in the village. A community park or garden could greatly add to the variety of available amenities, with different areas managed differently to provide an array of amenities, such as a wildlife area, a quiet area for reflection, a kickabout area, an area for barbecues and even an outdoor theatre complete with a pavilion.



*Artist's impression of the planned upgrades to Scotstown GAA's training facility at Kilmore. The walking track around the perimeter is already in place, and is very popular with our community. Monaghan County Council produced a County Walking & Cycling Strategy in 2021, in which it is an objective to develop more off-road recreational routes. One planned route is to develop an off-road walking link from the village to connect to Kilmore, and eventually to go onwards to Hollywood and Scotstown.*

# Action Plan

In this section, we lay out the actions we will take together as a community to make Ballinode a fantastic place to live. To start, we will imagine how Ballinode will look and feel once we have completed our work. This 'vision' is important, as it gives us a picture of what we're working towards:

## Vision

Ballinode is a picturesque village with a strong sense of community. There is lots to do for people of all ages, and the amenities, which are of the highest quality, support people to live well and sustainably. You will always find a warm welcome in Ballinode.

The vision breaks down into the following themes:

1. **Village Appearance** - the creation of a 'brand' for the village and the enhancement of the public realm are actions under this theme.
2. **Community Spirit** - ensuring everyone feels a sense of connection to the community, and building community spirit are the focus here
3. **Things to do** - a programme of activities and events will be the focus of this theme
4. **Quality Amenities** - the development of new amenities and enhancement of existing amenities falls into this theme
5. **Living Well and Sustainably** - actions under this theme address issues such as health and wellbeing, and also climate action
6. **Belonging in Ballinode** - the focus of the actions under this theme are on ensuring everyone is included in community life, from the youngest to the oldest, being sensitive to issues such as levels of ability, length of residence, religious belief, nationality and gender identity.
7. **Organising the Work** - the actions under this theme focus on providing a structure for everyone to work within and ensuring that progress is made. This theme happens in the background, and doesn't appear in the vision statement.



## Theme 1: Village Appearance

No.	Action	Who will do it?	Resources needed?
1.1	Commission a Public Realm Plan for the village	Monaghan Co Co - Monaghan MD Office	Funding to engage consultants required
1.2	Develop an identity/brand for the village	Monaghan MD Office & Ballinode Community	Competition to identify a theme. Funding to develop it
1.3	Create welcome features at entry points to make strong statement	Monaghan Co Co - Monaghan MD Office	Funding either as solo project, or as part of larger village enhancement scheme
1.4	Upgrade footpaths and lighting throughout the village	Monaghan Co Co - Monaghan MD Office	Funding for a village enhancement scheme
1.5	Commission a road safety audit for the village & implement its recommendations	Monaghan Co Co - Monaghan MD Office	Funding to implement the recommendations
1.6	Carry out an audit of derelict properties	Monaghan Co Co - Economic Dev Section	Staff resources
1.7	Identify any available areas to transform into 'pocket gardens'	Ballinode Tidy Towns	Access to land registry maps via Monaghan Co Co
1.8	Soften the hard landscaping throughout Ballinode by 'greening' the village	Ballinode Tidy Towns	Co-operation of property owners required to replace walls with hedges etc
1.9	Enhance Christmas/occasion lighting throughout the village	Ballinode Tidy Towns, in co-operation with property owners	Funding may be available for ambitious scheme through Town & Village Scheme

## Theme 2: Community Spirit

No.	Action	Who will do it?	Resources needed?
2.1	Ensure information on local events & activities includes messages of encouragement to newcomers & contact information	All parties organising activities and events	None - just to remember that what may seem simple to some people may be a giant step for others
2.2	Revive the 'On the Road in Ballinode' festival	Festival Committee to be set up for the purpose	Funding, insurance. Both can be addressed with forward planning
2.3	Run a Summer Community Barbecue	St Dymphna's Select Vestry	St Dymphna's have recently received funding to purchase BBQ equipment
2.4	Continue to run outdoor Christmas carol recital tradition in village centre	Ballinode Tidy Towns	
2.5	Start a 'Ten Minutes a Month' volunteering campaign, with tasks posted on a special board in the community centre	Ballinode Community Projects	Groups needing help compose their 'job adverts' & post on the board, asking for help with filling forms, painting walls, supervising summer camp etc
2.6	Run a 'Celebrate our Achievements' end of year event, make it a fun review of the year's highlights	Ballinode Community Projects	Awards - some serious, some fun, music, refreshments
2.7	Erect a digital Community Notice Board in village & in community centre	Ballinode Community Projects, Monaghan PPN	Funding

## Theme 3: Things to Do

No.	Action	Who will do it?	Resources needed?
3.1	Run a series of 'Come & Try It' taster events in the Community Hall	Hall Committee	Funding for tutors, equipment etc.
3.2	Run two events annually which are designed to bring the community together 1: Connect with your Community (spring) 2: Community Celebrates (winter)	Community Council (see details in next section)	Volunteers to organise, some facilitation to get the best ideas from people at the 'Connects' event, some prizes and awards to give out at the 'Celebrates' event
3.3	Start a monthly social dance in the community hall. Each dance to start with an hour's tuition	Hall Committee	Funding for dance tutor, music. This can be addressed with forward planning
3.4	Run a Children's Camp in the village during school holidays, to enable local children to get to know each other better	Hall Committee, Foroige	Funding, volunteers
3.5	Provide a dedicated, safe space for young people to hang out	Ballinode Community Projects, Foroige	Funding, volunteers
3.6	Put together a 'We are Ballinode' project.	Heritage group	Funding, volunteers
3.7	Research & publish a heritage guide to the village	Heritage Group, Tidy Towns	Funding, volunteers
3.8	Organise english conversation classes to support new employees of local businesses	Community Centre	Local people to volunteer time to chat with people who need to practice their english

## Theme 4: Quality Amenities

No.	Action	Who will do it?	Resources needed?
4.1	Complete the construction of the new Community Centre on the site of the old Creamery	Ballinode Community Projects, McAree Engineering	Funding to complete the internal fit out of parts of the building
4.2	Provide a community park in the village	Ballinode Tidy Towns, Monaghan County Council	Site required, design for park, funding
4.3	Upgrade the amenities at Hollywood Lake	Hollywood Park Committee, Monaghan County Council	Funding has been secured from Rural Recreation Fund
4.4	Provide a cycle track linking Ballinode to Monaghan town	Monaghan County Council	Funding from the Active Travel programme
4.5	Provide free public wifi hub in the new community centre	Monaghan County Council	National Rural Broadband Plan/ Wifi4U
4.6	Connect the village to Kilmore walking track - provide a safe walking link	Monaghan County Council, Ballinode Community Projects, Scotstown GAA	Co-operation of landowners required, funding for design, funding for construction
4.7	Restore the historic clock in St Dymphna's Church	St Dymphna's Select Vestry, Ballinode Heritage Cttee	Funding - investigate historic structures fund through Monaghan Co Co



## Theme 5: Living Well & Sustainably

No.	Action	Who will do it?	Resources needed?
5.1	Support people to maintain healthy lifestyles through a 'Healthy Ballinode' initiative	a new 'Healthy Ballinode' committee to be set up	Access to facilities such as the community hall, Kilmore walking track etc
5.2	Include some mindfulness messages in the riverside park to support mental wellbeing	Healthy Ballinode Committee	Some meaningful quotations, an artist, a little funding
5.3	Extend Lunch Club to provide additional social services to older people living alone	Lunch Club Committee	Volunteers
5.4	Plan for future flooding events due to climate change	Monaghan County Council	Funding to engage consultants
5.5	Develop links to the Healthy Monaghan & Age Friendly Monaghan and to Monaghan Sports Partnership	New Healthy Ballinode Group	Volunteers
5.6	Start a Sustainable Energy Community group in Ballinode	Ballinode Tidy Towns, with support from county Energy Action Group	Volunteers
5.7	Deliver projects to assist homeowners to upgrade energy inefficient homes, and reduce their reliance on oil for central heating	New Sustainable Energy Community Group	SEAI has a programme which will mentor and fund the community through the journey

## Theme 6: Belonging in Ballinode

No.	Action	Who will do it?	Resources needed?
6.1	Develop a 'drop in' culture in the community centre, by providing a reception space where people can meet up, hang out, make coffee, independently of organised activities	Community Centre Committee	A suitable space, comfortable seating, coffee dock, volunteers to manage the area
6.2	Develop a 'Welcome to Ballinode' pack, containing information about local services and activities, and contact details for local groups. Distribute to all homes. Keep in reception of Community Centre for newcomers	Ballinode Community Projects, with input from each group	Funding for design & publishing
6.3	Focus on finding ways to connect children of all ages outside of school, to give them an opportunity to build a sense of community, to make up for a lack of contact within school	All groups, led by Foroige	Youth Engagement Plan to be developed, in consultation with the children and young people of the village
6.4	Develop a seasonal calendar of events, aimed at creating reasons for bringing the community together to socialise	Community Centre Committee, with input from all groups	Seasonal decorations, volunteers, imagination
6.5	Publish a spring & autumn newsletter & drop to every home	Ballinode Community Projects, with articles from all groups	Funding for publishing, volunteers to write & edit

## Theme 7: Organising the Work

No.	Action	Who will do it?	Resources needed?
7.1	Encourage people to sign up to the Ballinode Alerts group on Monaghan Community Alerts & use the service to push information out	One person in each group to be given admin rights to Ballinode Alerts so they can post messages	Commitment from groups to use the service. Groups need to push people to join it.
7.2	Set up a Community Council, with a seat awarded to each group which is active in the village, plus Monaghan County Council.	Monaghan County Council will call the first meeting	buy-in from the local groups
7.3	Organise training courses in committee skills, writing funding applications, charities regulator etc, to help groups grow their capacity	new Community Centre, Monaghan PPN	suitable room, internet connection, training equipment
7.4	Improve communication between the groups and the public: set up one email address, to be linked to all groups so that information circulates quickly to all	Community Council	Internet
7.5	Put together an 'Information Team', to gather info for use in newsletter, social media, notice boards etc	Community Council	Skills in copywriting, social media and photography an advantage
7.6	Revive Ballinode Community Alert	Community Council	volunteers

# Spotlight on Key Actions

## 10.

### Action 2.5 Start a Volunteering Campaign

This action involves setting up a notice board in the reception area of the community centre dedicated entirely to 'volunteers wanted'. Groups will post up any tasks they need help with, stating where and when the help is needed. Some tasks will be one-off, eg 'help to set up the hall before the Christmas party', while others might be more regular in nature, eg 'come join us on the village litter pick, meet at Maggies every Saturday at 10am'.

The community needs more volunteers and leaders. The number of helping hands determines the amount of services that can be provided and the number of activities that can be run.

For example, activities involving children may need two adults to be present, to comply with child protection guidelines. Perhaps you could read a book in a comfy seat in a corner of a room in the community centre for a couple of hours a week, to enable the youth club to meet?

Maybe the centre could do with a hand to set out chairs and tables for the whist after yoga finishes?

There are a lot of tasks which help groups immensely that don't involve being there in person, or even a huge commitment of time. For example, most groups could do with a hand when it comes to completing funding applications. Another area that groups would really appreciate support in is generating publicity for their activities. This can be done from your desk, at a time that suits you - perhaps during a tea break.

The point is that everyone has some skill that the community can use. It can be as simple as you being present, or being willing to learn how to set up the PA equipment so that inexperienced people don't blow out the speakers.

Playing a part in your community not only helps the community, but it will give you a sense of belonging. It feels good to help out, too.

So get into the habit of checking for 'jobs' on the community notice board, and get involved. You'll be glad you did, and so will everyone else.



## Actions 2.3, 3.2 and 3.8 A Focus on Community Events

The community of Ballinode doesn't have enough occasions to get together socially. Coming together in happy times is important, as it helps to create the bonds that can get us through the not-so-good times.

We would like to set up two **new** annual events that everyone will know will happen, that they can plan for, and that they can look forward to going to.

One will in late spring, and will be focused on getting people together to talk about what they would like to see happen in the community this year. It will be called '**Connect with your Community**'

- What activities would they like to see in the Community Centre?
- What would they like to see planned for children over the summer holidays?
- Are there any issues which have come up recently that need to be taken on board? Does anyone have any suggestions for how they might be addressed?

This will help all the local groups to plan their activities for the year, to allocate their resources and to adjust their priorities.

It will also help to build a sense of 'we're in this together', and 'we all have a stake in this community', which will help to build community spirit.

The second event will take place towards the end of the year. There will be a celebratory feel about this event. It will focus on reviewing all that has been achieved during the year, congratulating those who have brought success to the village, and thanking everyone for their efforts to make Ballinode better.

This event will be themed '**The Community Celebrates**'.

These new events will feature alongside two established community events:

- St Dymphna's Church will host an annual **community picnic** during the summer and have recently availed of funding to purchase BBQ equipment and tables with this in mind. The Church is an important part of the village's heritage, and such an event will make a great focus for the village's intercultural activities.
- The 'On the Road in Ballinode' festival is to be revived, bringing family fun to the village. This festival was a groundbreaker in the 1990's and provided the blueprint for many of the local festivals which now thrive around the county. It's time to bring it back to Ballinode.

### Action 3.1 'Come & Try It' Taster Activities

Getting things up and going in the new Community Centre will take a lot of work. To take some of the financial risk out of putting on new activities which might not find an audience, we will be running a series of one-off taster sessions. It can take the risk out of signing up to something you won't like for the participant too, as the activity changes each week.

The concept is very simple: the person signs up for a course of 6 or 8 weeks. Each night they arrive, a different activity is on offer; perhaps line dancing one week, zumba another, bowling the following week, etc.

This format gives people the opportunity to try out a number of activities that they would otherwise not have come across. At the end of the course, participants are asked to complete a short survey to say which classes they enjoyed the most, and which they would be interested in seeing being offered regularly in the Centre.

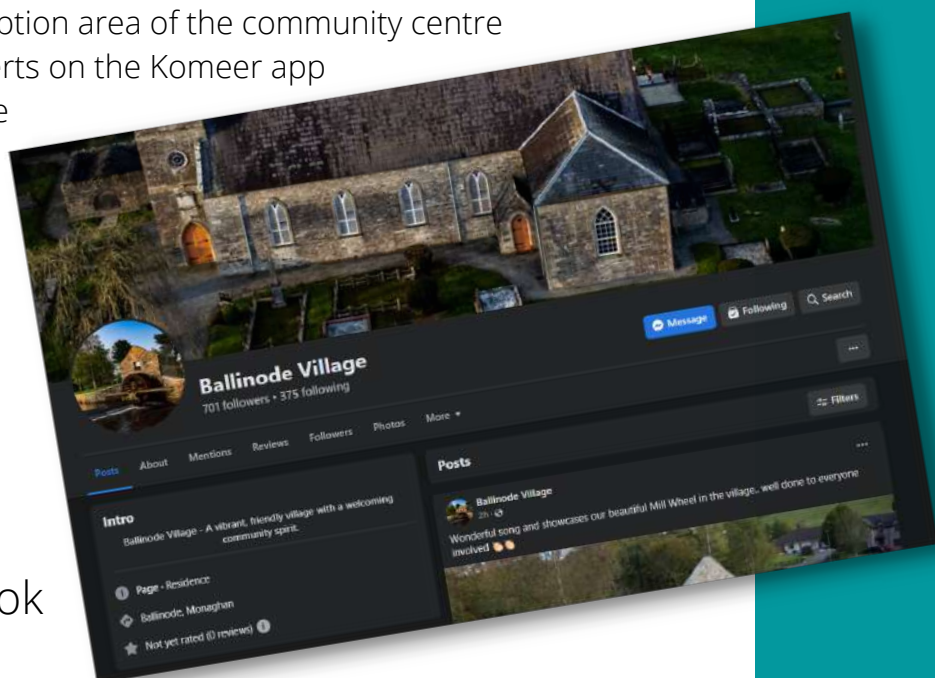
The most popular courses can then be offered on an ongoing basis.

Further taster sessions can be organised by the centre, perhaps focusing on activities for particular age groups, or activities which are suitable to fill a certain time slot or to take place in a particular room within the building.

A suggestion board will be erected in the reception area to invite ideas from the community for the next taster sessions. Members of the community with particular skills or knowledge might even offer their time to fill a slot.

Local promotion of activities will be done by way of:

- the digital community notice board
- the notice board in the reception area of the community centre
- via Ballinode Community Alerts on the Komeer app
- the Ballinode Facebook page



Find us on Facebook

### Action 3.5 'We are Ballinode' project

One of the issues which emerged from the survey which was circulated last year was that over half the people who live in Ballinode either feel only a little connected to the community, or don't feel connected at all. We think this feeling of disconnectedness is being fueled by two things:

1. the fact that people have to leave the village for some of the activities which are central to their lives, such as church services, school and GAA
2. there are many new houses in the village, and people living in rented accommodation. These residents' connection to the area is young and the relatively low level of activities in the village has given them few opportunities to get involved.

This situation will not change unless we take action. What we are proposing is a project which will take a snapshot of everyone living in Ballinode at a moment in time. The idea is to take photos of each household outside their home. In addition to the photo, the names of each person, and some information about them - where they're originally from (if they're new to the area) and how they came to be living in Ballinode, what they're passionate about, what they love about living in Ballinode, and their hopes for the future - will be recorded.

The information will be used in a number of ways:

- Firstly, it will form a 'folk history' of the area, which will be submitted to Monaghan County Museum for safekeeping.
- An exhibition will be developed and displayed in the new Community Centre. This will give everyone in the community a presence in the Centre and help to boost a sense of ownership of the new building, and enhance the spirit of belonging at every event held there.
- A book and website for the project will also be developed (funds allowing)

By promoting the heading 'We are Ballinode', we will be reminding everyone daily that it takes all of us to make a community, and that we all have a responsibility to put in the effort if we wish to get out the reward.



## Action 5.6 Start a Sustainable Energy Community Group

Remember the data we gave you at the start of the plan about the age of the housing stock in Ballinode, and the high reliance on oil for heating our homes? The impact of this data is that our homes are energy inefficient, and expensive to heat.

There is a real focus on Climate Action at international and national level, and we must all play our part in taking steps to reduce our energy consumption where we can. In the case of improving the energy performance of our houses, taking action can vastly improve the comfort of our homes as well as reduce the heating costs dramatically.

There are a range of subsidies and grants available to individual homeowners from the SEAI (sustainable energy association of Ireland) to assist people to upgrade their homes. For some, facing undertaking a renovation project on their own can be a daunting task, so we are proposing to go a different route, by approaching this on a community-wide basis, so that we can all learn about the process of home upgrades together, and get support through the process from start to finish.

Usually, community projects qualify for a higher rate of grant than private projects, which on its own is a very good reason for the community to collaborate .

The Sustainable Energy Communities process starts with registering our community as an SEC. A mentor is then appointed to the group to guide us along the process of auditing the community's current energy consumption and identifying where potential savings can be made. Then the group puts together projects aimed at addressing the areas where savings are to be found, and sets about securing funding for each project and then delivering the projects in their community.

We expect that after the preliminary planning has concluded, projects which emerge might include:

- carrying out energy audits on each home and business
- fitting heating controls to all domestic boilers
- carrying out cavity wall insulation to older housing stock in the village
- installing electric car charging points in the village



## Keeping Everyone Connected: Actions 2.7, 6.1, 7.1, 7.4 & 7.5

A critical factor in determining whether this Plan will succeed or fail in enhancing the sense of community spirit in Ballinode, and in generating more activity, will be information. We plan to create channels of communication which manage to get information out to every home quickly and reliably, so that everyone knows what is going on, and feels welcome and invited to come along and get involved.

No one communication mode will reach everyone, and so we have built a few different methods of getting information out into the Plan.

**6.1** A comfortable, welcoming reception space is to be provided in the new Community Centre, and people will be encouraged to use it as a drop-in space to pop in regularly and see what is going on, meet friends, have a coffee, etc.

A community notice board will be erected in this area. It will carry notices about any activity happening in the community. A separate notice board will be provided for activities in the Community Centre, so that people can easily differentiate between the two.

A third board for volunteering tasks will also be provided, to normalise asking for help and make it easy for people to offer their skills to the community.

Other types of information, such as citizens information and youth information will also be provided on stands in the reception area.

Another project which will be run from the reception area is a community library, where people bring along books, toys, clothes etc. that they are finished with, and other members of the community take what they need.

**7.4** All the groups and individuals offering activities and services in the community need to have one central place to send that information to. From there, it can be posted to notice boards, used in the Welcome pack, featured in the community newsletters and posted to social media, to keep everyone informed of what is going on and encourage them to join in or to give a hand where it is needed.

- Some of this information will be fairly static, in that it does not change often, eg the contact details for a club, or the arrangements for when and where a group meets.
- For other information, eg an event, the information will be relevant for a short time, and then will need to be taken down.
- Other information might include public notices reminding people of a national campaign, such as Fire Safety Week, or looking for information about a missing pet.

We will operate one email address, which is connected to all the groups so that all are circulated with any items of news which is sent in. In this way, what one group knows, all know, and the information will get to the most appropriate group in a timely way.

**2.7** Ballinode Community Projects has already put in place a digital noticeboard outside the village shop. Anyone can have news posted onto the board. The idea of placing it outside is to engage with people as they are passing by, thus perhaps connecting with people who we may not have been reaching with Facebook, or the Northern Standard, or posters in the community centre previously.

We'd love to hear what you think of the noticeboard, and any ideas you have for improving the service.



**Our new digital community notice board in the village centre**

**7.1** Monaghan Joint Policing Committee initiated an all-county community alert messaging service in 2019. The Gardai send messages about crime out through this service, but it is also available to communities to send community messages out to the service subscribers in their area. We intend to make more use of this service in the future.

To receive messages from this service, you will need a smartphone. Download the app called Komeer to your phone. Open the app and enter your contact details to sign up. Then search for 'Monaghan Community Alerts' and click 'Apply to join'. This will join you up to the all county Garda messaging service. Now search for 'Community Alerts Ballinode' and apply to join this group too. This is the group to which community notices will be posted.

## 11.

# Making it Happen

To transform any Community Plan from a document into reality needs three key ingredients:

## 1: Commitment from the Community

## 2: A Process/ Structure which enables everyone to play their part

## 3: Resources

To help give this new approach the shape and structure it will need, a new Community Council is being put in place to facilitate communication between the many groups in the area. It will operate as a sub-committee of Ballinode Community Projects, with one seat (vote) per active group in the village. The groups will all have equal status on the committee, and will meet every six months to review progress on the Community Plan, and meet with Council staff to discuss projects of mutual interest.

The Community Council's main purpose will be to co-ordinate the efforts of all, for the overall benefit of the area. It will also seek to address gaps, get new activities going, etc, where there is an agreed need.

The following simple steps will help to ensure there is follow-through on this Plan:

### 1. A Community Launch for this Plan

At the launch, we will promote the concept of every person signing up to playing their part in community life. On offer will be volunteering opportunities with existing and new organisations in the community.

### 2. First meeting of Community Council

A date for the first Community Council meeting will be set for three months following the launch date. The business of the meeting will be:

- -to agree a Terms of Reference for the Council
- -to lay out a Workplan for Year 1
- -to formalize the membership

### 3. Agree when the first Community Feedback Event will be

An annual community feedback event has been designed into the Plan. As well as being an opportunity to celebrate together as a community and build community links and raise local morale, the annual event provides an opportunity to update everyone on progress, which is critical to maintaining public support, and to test the waters to see what level of support various potential project ideas under consideration by the Community Council might have amongst the wider community.

### 4. Hold Review Meetings with Monaghan County Council

This meeting will first take place six months after the Community Council is formed, then twice a year after this. The purpose of the meeting will be to review progress on the Plan and discuss how the Council can assist the community.

Monaghan County Council will cover the cost of a Facilitator to organise the first twelve months' set up of the implementation phase of the Plan, to help get the process off to a smooth start. The Facilitator will help the community to set up the Community Council, and to run the first review meeting.

Monaghan County Council's Community Development Department will continue to provide the community of Ballinode with development support and advice as we move from planning into making our plans a reality.

Help will also be available from other Council sections, such as the Municipal District Office, as needed.

Points of contact within the Council are:

#### **Community Dept:**

Carol Lambe 047 73725 [clambe@monaghancoco.ie](mailto:clambe@monaghancoco.ie)

#### **Monaghan Municipal District:**

Donal McElwain 047 30500 [dmcelwain@monaghancoco.ie](mailto:dmcelwain@monaghancoco.ie)



# Appendix:

## Volunteering in Ballinode

Are you as excited about the future of Ballinode as we are?

Would you like to be part of the huge community of volunteers who will be needed to make Ballinode the best it can be?

**Well, you can start right here!**

Tell us a little bit about yourself, and the kind of volunteering you would like to do, and we'll try to put you in touch with a group which can put your skills to good use!



**You can return this form to us at ANY TIME - there is no expiry date on the opportunity to volunteer!**

You can either put your completed form in the box provided in the community centre, or you can complete the form online at **<https://tinyurl.com/ys2vb2rp>**

Your Name

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Phone No.

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Email

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What type of group/ work are you interested in?

Do you have any skills you would like to offer?

Are there any days/ times that suit/ don't suit?

**GDPR stuff:** We are collecting this personal information from you for the purposes of contacting you to offer you opportunities to volunteer with groups/ at activities in Ballinode as and when these arise. We will store your details securely and will not release them to anyone for any other purpose. We will hold your data for no more than two years. Please tick that you consent to our contacting you as outlined if this is ok with you.

**I consent to being contacted, and to my data being held as above**

**Signed**

---

**Date**

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Thank you for volunteering! We'll be in touch

