

Roscrea Town Team reflects on 2023 and plans for the year ahead

The Roscrea Town Team had their first meeting of 2024 last week and reflected on the progress made since the new Town Team was formed early in the New Year of 2023. The purpose of forming a new Town Team was to create a Town Centre First Plan for Roscrea to build on the positive work of the Roscrea Enhancement Plan and its committee over the previous 10 years.

Roscrea is one of 26 towns across the country that received funding to develop a Town Centre First Plan which aims to map out future development, focus on tackling dereliction and vacant properties, and make the town centre a more attractive place to live, work, socialise and run a business. This initiative aims to help re-imagine and revitalise rural communities as part of the National Town Centre First Policy. Town Teams are being established across the country and are akin to the local experts who will come together to make their area a better place to live, work, visit and invest, make a positive impact and deliver positive outcomes.

Roscrea Town Team worked closely with Tipperary County Council to deliver a new Plan assisted by a team of consultants led by O'Mahony Pike Architects. For the Plan to best fit the needs of the town and those who live and work in it, it was important to hear from the people it was designed to help. To facilitate this there were public consultations, workshops in-person and online, focus groups, and surveys arranged to provide the community with an opportunity to input into the Plan in 2023.

The Plan was officially launched in October of last year and reflecting on this milestone at their first meeting for 2024, Brian King, Town Champion noted that "We have through collaboration and consultation, identified a strong vision which provides clear direction towards a future of possibilities"

The vision in the Plan is set out as "A unified Roscrea will use its strengths - its people, buildings, infrastructure and natural environment - to create a vibrant, caring and prosperous market town."

He added that "While some of the projects are aspirational they show the ambition of the town, and what we will strive to achieve working in collaboration with the various stakeholders such as the County Council, OPW, local businesses, retailers, and the local community".

Projects include enhancements to the public realm in areas such as Castle Street, Main Street and the historical laneways unique to Roscrea. These types of enhancements can include new streetscapes, urban greening, widening of footpaths, seating, all of which will make Roscrea more attractive. The Gantly Street Masterplan and the REACH Project (Roscrea Enterprise and Community Hub) are also listed as key projects in the Plan that will support the regeneration of Roscrea.

Following the launch of the Plan in October, the Team in collaboration with Tipperary County Council hosted their first event, an information evening in Damer House for owners of vacant and derelict properties in order to bring a focus on tackling dereliction and utilising existing buildings and unused lands for new development and residential occupancy.

Áine Mc Carthy, Town Regeneration Officer with Tipperary County Council has been working with the team to deliver the projects identified in the Plan. Commenting at the meeting, she acknowledged that the Plan will guide the regeneration of the town and provide the basis for future funding applications by the Local Authority and appreciates that “the hard work begins now in terms of delivery, that is the litmus test, what will be the results on the ground in Roscrea and do we see change. We need to focus on delivering projects in phases, what can we do now, short term, then medium and long term.”

In relation to progress on projects included in the Plan since the launch, the team welcomed the recent RRDF funding announcement for the REACH project that will result in a new enterprise hub in the old Tesco building to the rear of the shopping centre this year. In addition to this, Gantly Street Age Friendly Neighbourhood and Public Realm will progress further in 2024. The River Rooms project has received Outdoor Recreational and Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) Funding to scope out the project further, and finally, the Town Team have made a submission to the Home Town Architect Initiative Competition to work on a project with Roscrea architect Claire McManus and are awaiting the results of the competition, to be announced shortly.

The Town Team and the Council will continue to work on a series of funding applications in order to progress the projects. Many of the projects listed in the Plan are only at concept stage and will need to be scoped out further in terms of feasibility, viability and community buy in. Community engagement and consultation will be crucial as the projects in the Plan are progressed.

More information on the Plan and the team can be found at <https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/roscreatowncentrefirstPlan>