Smithborough

Community Plan
2025-2030

Prepared with the people of Smithborough by the Community Dept of Monaghan County Council

Draft for Discussion
October 2025

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1.Introduction

1.1 Welcome

This document is a draft version of a new Community Plan for the village and environs of Smithborough village. It has been produced in consultation with the people living and working in the village, young and old.

The Plan draws from hard data such as that contained in the National Census of Population, and also from the views and opinions of people living, working and attending school in the area. We have reviewed other plans and strategies which affect the village, such as the County Development Plan, the National Spatial Strategy, the Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy, and have considered any impact they may have on the village in the choice of actions which have been proposed.

This Plan recommends a total of six Goals and , under which there are a total of fifty actions designed to tackle the deficiencies which are holding the area back and take advantage of the opportunities which are available to it.

The six Goals are:

Goal 1: Improve the Village's Infrastructure
Goal 2: Develop and Improve the Community Amenities
Goal 3: Expand on the Activities which are Available
Goal 4: Nurture Community Spirit
Goal 5: Communicate the Work
Goal 6: Secure the Legacy

Monaghan County Council will support the people of Smithborough in improving the area, however you choose to do so. It is important to get this Plan right, so that the community and the Council are focused on the right things, that will have the biggest impact and deliver the most for the people of Smithborough of the next three to five years.

Here's where we need your help. Please review the proposed Goals, Objectives and Actions, and tell us if anything is missing or needs to be changed.

We have provided a short survey at the back of this document, which you can return to us by one of the methods listed beside the survey.
OR
You can fill it out online on the Council's online portal, **www.consult.monaghancoco.ie**
Please return your comments **before end December 2025**, to be included in the final Plan.

1.2 Overview

The community of Smithborough consists of the village, Magherarney which lies adjacent to the village, and the surrounding rural hinterland which stretches towards Scotstown and Ballinode to the north, Threemilehouse and Monaghan to the east, Aghabog and Newbliss to the south and Clones to the west.

The community lies over three Parishes: Rosslea, Kilmore Drumsnatt, and Killeevan Currin & Aghabog.

The area is split by the N54 national route, which passes through Smithborough village on its way from Monaghan to Clones.

It is difficult to define exactly where Smithborough starts and ends. For example, a family living in Drumsnat may attend church in Threemilehouse yet play their football with Éire Óg - and vice versa. A family living near Analore might gravitate equally towards Smithboro, Newbliss and Clones.

For the purpose of defining an area so that we can look at its characteristics, census data etc, we have selected an area which measures approx 5km across. This includes the village of Smithborough and Magherarney, but the circle is more focused towards Clones than Monaghan.

Living outside the selected area does not mean you have been excluded from this Plan. Think of the circled area as the CORE of the area which identifies as the community of Smithborough.

The actions outlined in this Community Plan apply to the community as a whole, and are aimed at improving the area as a place to live and work for everyone living here.

2.Methodology

This Plan has been prepared by the staff of the Community Development, in close consultation with the people of Smithborough.

The process began with a general meeting to which all local groups were invited by Monaghan County Council, who offered to guide the community through the process of putting together a plan. The purpose of developing a community plan was outlined and the groups present agreed to proceed.

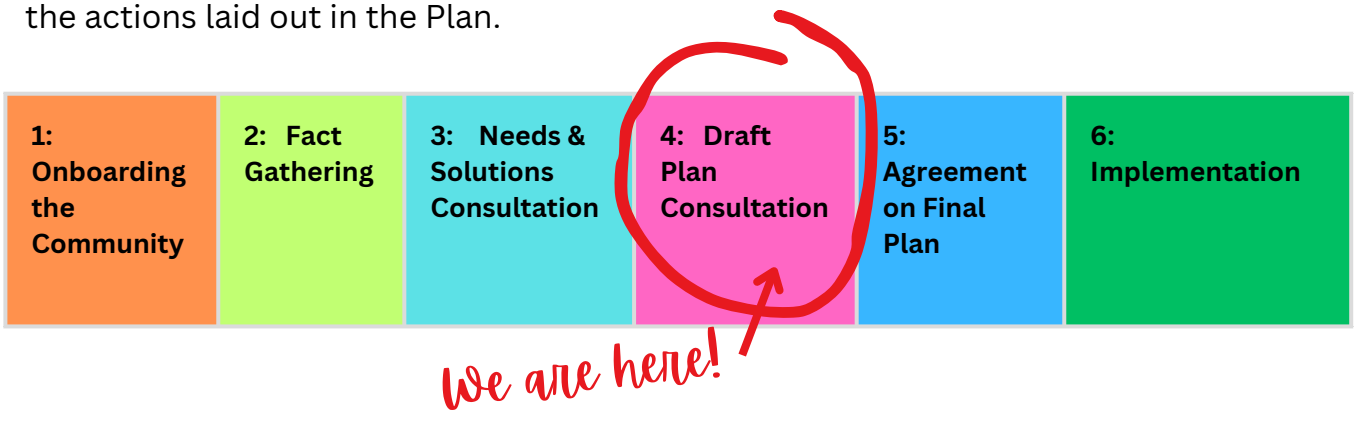
Over the following months, a needs survey was conducted to allow individuals to make their opinions known on the future of the area. Focus group meetings were held with individual groups and local businesses. Workshops were conducted with Smithborough Foroige and the pupils of Magherarney NS.

All the information gathered from the surveys, interviews and workshops were pulled together into a draft set of actions designed to address the issues identified by the people who participated in the consultation.

The set of draft actions was printed onto large posters and displayed at the Mulladuff Family Fun Day at the end of summer 2024. Staff from Monaghan County Council attended the fun day to listen to the views of those present. These were then incorporated into this final Draft Plan.

This Draft will now be circulated to the community for comment before a final meeting of the active community groups in the area will be called, where the Plan will be discussed for a final time, final adjustments made and the Plan signed off.

Once adopted by the community, we move into the Implementation phase of the work, where the Council, the community and the local businesses work together to achieve the actions laid out in the Plan.



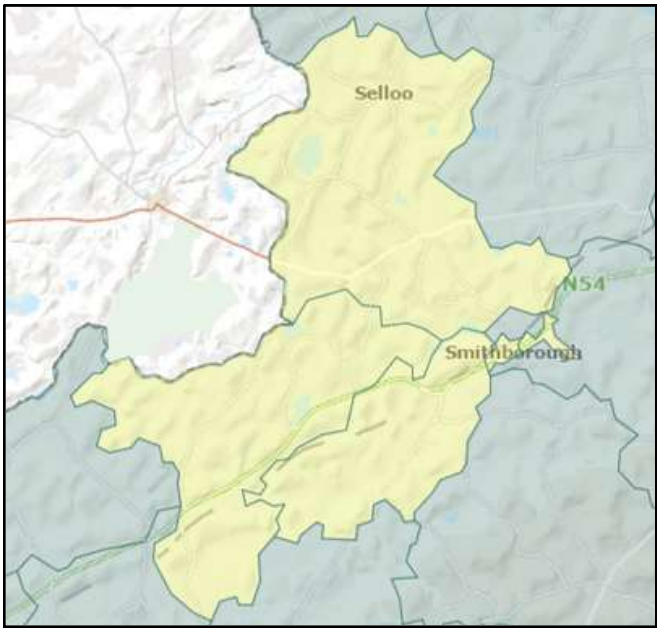
3.Fact Gathering

3.1 Defining the Area

Just as it's a little difficult to draw a circle around 'the community of Smithborough' on a map, it's even more difficult to put data together which doesn't pull in Threemilehouse, Aghabog, Scotstown and half of Clones at the same time!

The Census uses Small Areas to split the country into units which can then be compared. The village is covered by two Small Areas (SA's), but this data excludes Magherarney, part of Carrowbarra island, and even the Eire Óg grounds.

We have therefore included the SA's which incorporate these important areas of the Smithborough community. However, we have had to leave some other SA's out, as they included large swathes of population which would not have considered themselves part of the community of Smithborough. For example, The SA which runs from just beyond the Eire Og grounds northwards also includes Scotstown, and the SA which runs from the Monaghan edge of the village eastwards towards Drumsnatt also includes Threemilehouse. Including data from those SA's would mean we would be taking in a significant amount of non-Smithborough data, which could skew our results.

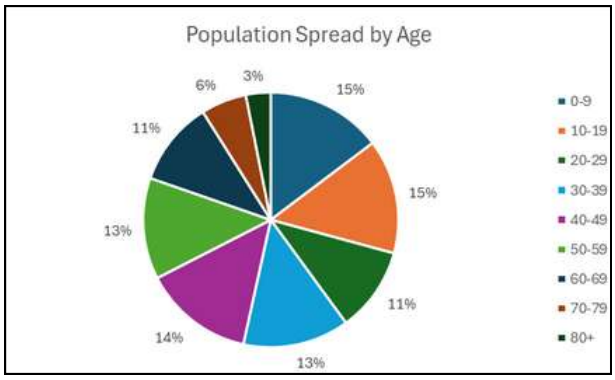


While it doesn't include every area we would like, we feel the most appropriate area for which data is available for the purpose of gathering data on the community of Smithborough is that shown by the above map. This is formed by adding the Small Areas which include Magherarney, Stonebridge and Seloo to the two Small Areas which make up the village. This gives the community a population of roughly 1500 souls, as shown in the table below.

The data presented in the following pages is taken from this population profile.

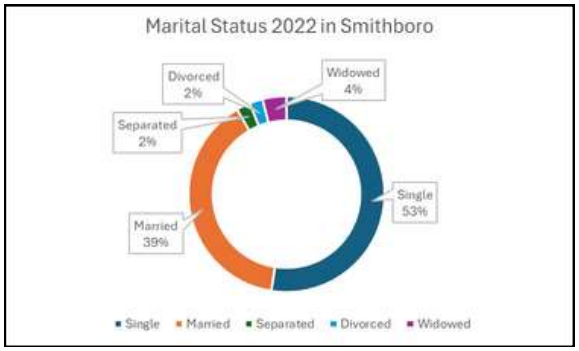
3.2 Key Facts

Population Profile



The population of Smithborough in 2022 - the year of the most recent Census - was around 1,100 persons, with slightly more men than women. The population rises by 300-400 for three weeks in December, when seasonal workers arrive to help with the Christmas rush at Grove Turkeys.

In all, some 30% of the community is under 20 years of age. This is in line with county and national figures. Digging a little deeper into the data, we find that 22% of the population of the village is aged between five and fourteen, making the need for activities for this age group very important. 20% of Smithborough population is over 60 years old, making this also an important group to consider when assessing needs.

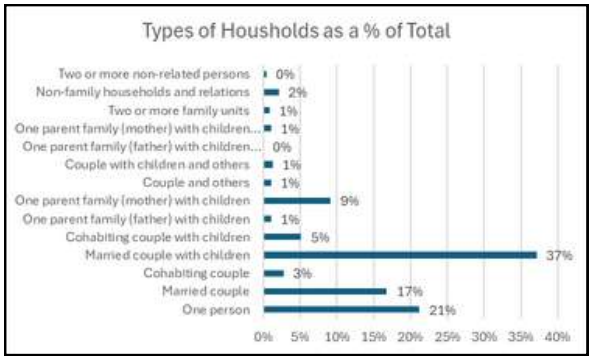


The proportion of people who are married, single etc in Smithborough is in line with county and national figures. The 'single' figure includes childen under 20, who we know make up 30% of the population. This means that 23% (263) of the single people are over 20, indicating a possible market for single meals in the local shops, and a need for social activities to combat isolation in this cohort. The same services may also appeal to the widowed members of the community.

There are 54 Carers in the community, 67% of whom are female.

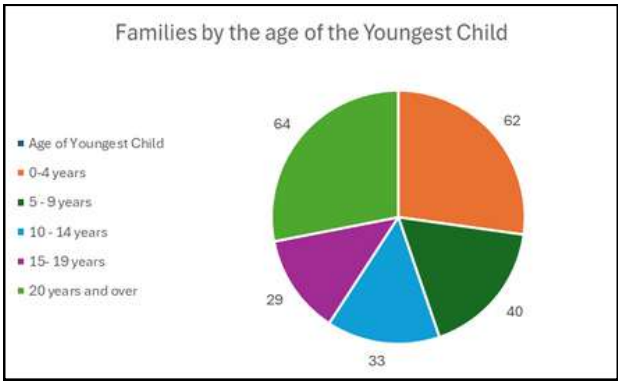
230 people, or 20% of the community, have a disability. 13 people stated that their health is either 'bad' or 'very bad' on the Census form.

People in poor health, with limited mobility, or caring for others often are restricted in their ability to get out and about. Getting a few minutes of normality and a bit of social time outside the home can be a lifeline to them.



21% of the 471 households which make up the community of Smithborough are single person households. Single person households are likely to be under financial pressure as the cost of living rises, as these costs are not shared across multiple incomes.

A further 20% consist of couples without children. 10% of households are headed by one parent - mostly by females. Statistics show that one parent families are more likely to fall into poverty.



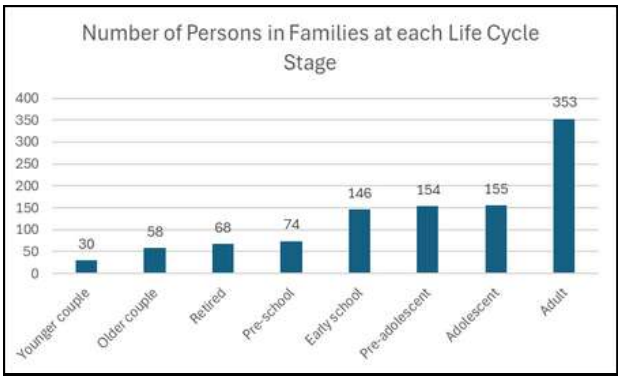
There are 306 families living in Smithborough village and its hinterland. 228 (74.5%) of these have children. In 2022, the year the most recent Census was taken, 62 families had childen aged under 4 (20%) (see chart above).

22 families were classified to be in the 'pre-school' phase, accounting for 74 people (including parents). The lower number of families which fall into the 'younger couple' stage of the family life cycle - it is this cohort we might expect to be moving into the 'pre-school' phase by the time of the next Census - (15 compared to 22) might suggests that the number of pre-school age children is likely to fall in the medium term in Smithborough.

However, a new development of 22 houses which was granted planning in the village in 2025 is likely to attract young families, thus boosting demand for childcare places in the medium term.

Total children under 15 in childcare	117
Children ages 0-4 in childcare	52
Children ages 5-14 in childcare	65

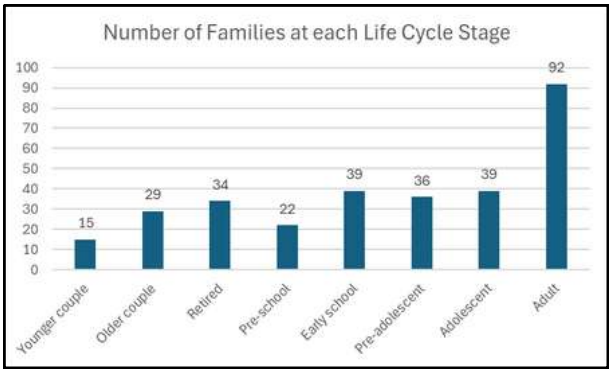
The village's location along a national route also makes it a convenient drop-off point for parents commuting to Monaghan, Clones or Cavan, which has the potential to boost enrolment numbers in both childcare and primary schools.



The number of children between Early School and Adolescent age outnumber the number of adults in the community.

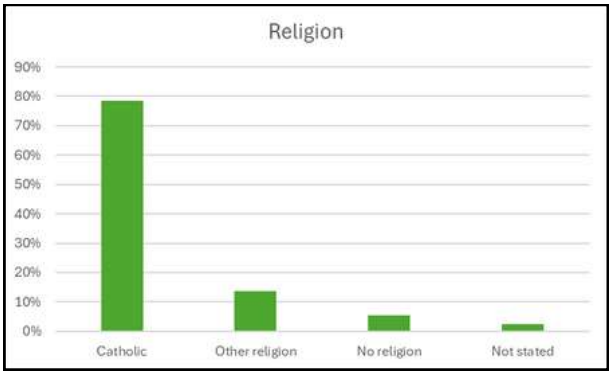
It was therefore very important that the views of young people were taken on board when preparing this Plan.

Special focus group meetings were held with Foróige and all class groups in Scoil Mhuire to capture the views of young people.



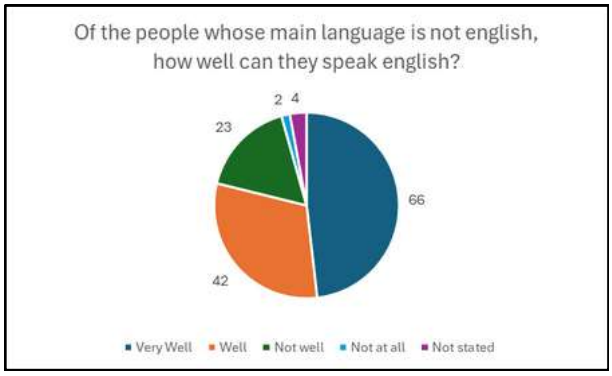
Just over 11% of families are led by retired people, meaning that they may living on the reduced income of a pension, and may be more likely to be suffering from ill health and disability issues than the general population.

This age cohort is also more likely to be living alone, and to be living in older housing stock, which is usually less energy efficient and harder (and more expensive) to heat.



78% of people living in Smithborough stated that they are Roman Catholic. 14% stated their religion to be 'other', which includes the Protestant faiths.

This figure across the county is 11%, indicating that Smithborough is an important cross-community area and ought to be very active in cross community and reconciliation work (the % of Catholics remains at 78% for the county).



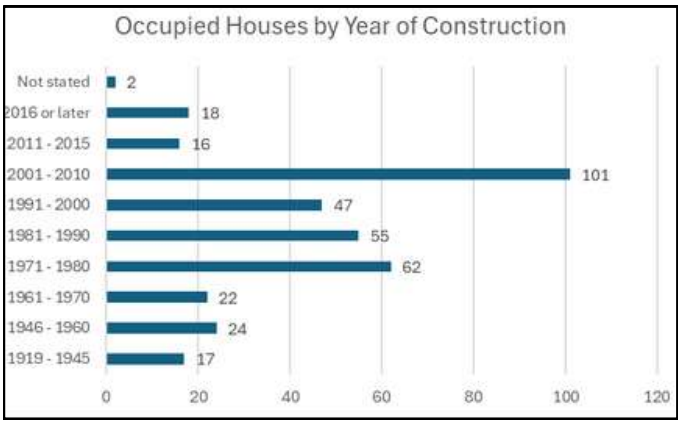
It isn't possible to find data on the exact number of migrants living in Smithborough or their country of origin. However, we do know that in general, the largest population of non-Irish in Monaghan are UK citizens, followed by Lithuanians and Polish, and in the last few years Ukrainians.

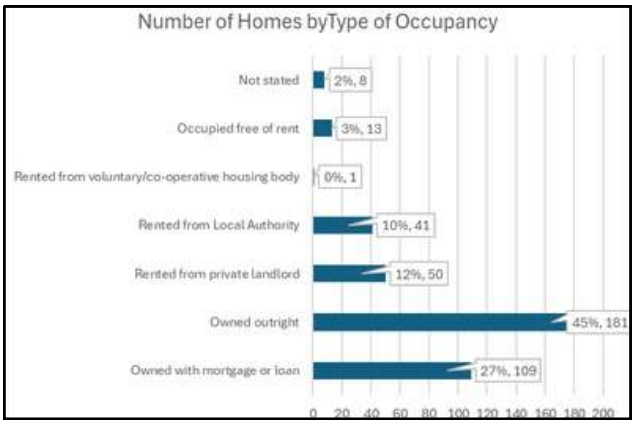
137 people stated in the Census in 2022 that English is not their first language. 25 of these said they don't speak it well, or not at all.

Not speaking a host country's main language can prevent a person from accessing employment opportunities, availing of services, and reaching out for help when they need it. Research shows that people who don't speak the host country's main language are more likely to fall into poverty and to be taken advantage of.

Having good english language skills has been shown to be important to job promotion opportunities. Perhaps those with poor english skills in Smithborough may be interested in conversation classes to help them improve their English.

Housing





Of the 403 homes in the Smithborough area, 91% were constructed before 2010. Homes built since 2010 will have good energy performance, of a B rating or better, due to changes in building regulations in 2010.

Homes built in the 1990's up until 2010 are likely to have an energy rating of C or D. Homes built before the 1980's are likely to have a D or E rating.

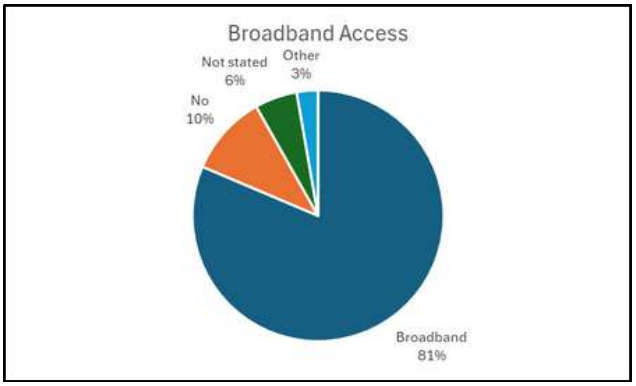
These homes are considered to be energy inefficient by today's standards, and funding is available through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to assist homeowners to carry out home upgrades aimed at reducing the amount of energy needed to keep their homes at a comfortable temperature.

Smithborough is connected! 84% of homes have broadband or another internet service. This compares with 94% nationally. 10% do not have any broadband. This may indicate a need for access to wifi in the community centre, and also support for local people who wish to become more digitally literate.

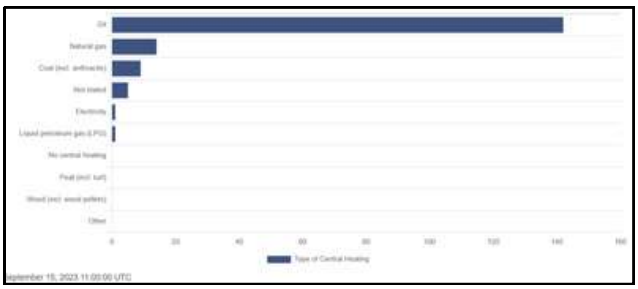
Almost half (45%) of Smithboro's homes are owned free and clear of debt.

22% of homes are rented, which is comparatively high. While Monaghan County Council is an important source of housing in Smithborough, owning 10% of the housing stock, private landlords are providing 12% of the housing stock and are crucial to housing in particular the seasonal workers who are so vital to the continued success of Grove Turkeys.

27% of households in Smithborough are paying off a mortgage. These households may be more vulnerable to changes in bank interest rates, which may eat into the household's monthly disposable income.

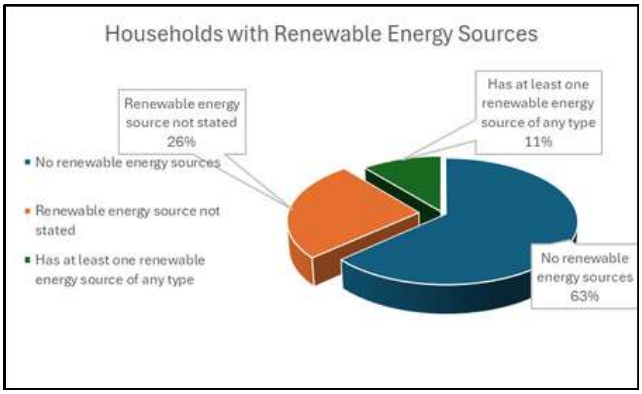


Smithborough people are still heating their homes primarily by oil-fired central heating systems. 85% of homes are heated by oil, with coal accounting for 4% , natural gas for 4% and LPG for another 1%. The reliance on oil across Co. Monaghan is 75%, which is the highest in the country.



Only 3% of homes are heated by carbon neutral sources (wood (2%) and electricity (1%)).

Smithborough homes are beginning to wake up to the potential of renewable energy, with 11% of homes having at least one source of renewable energy installed.



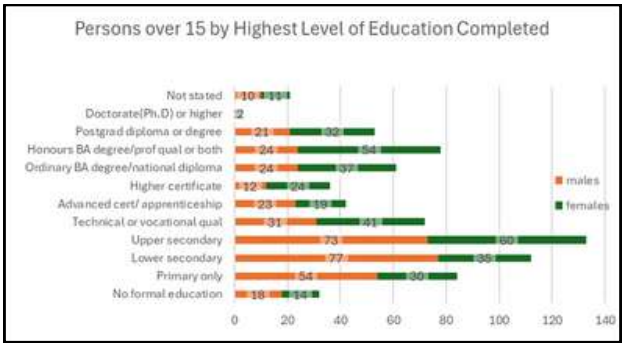
However, this rate is lagging behind the national and county rate of 25%.

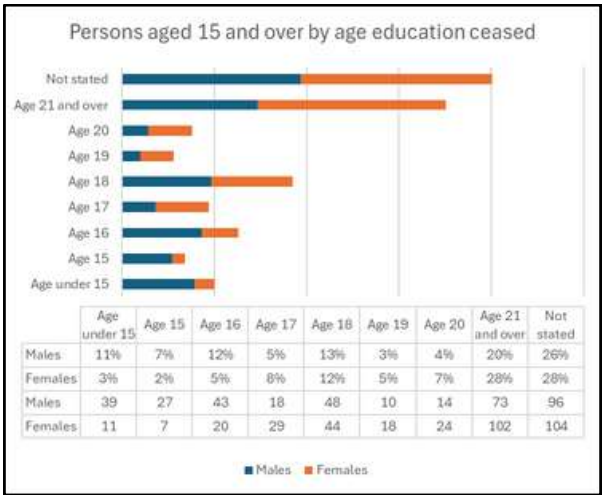
The Census shows that 73% of homes constructed around the country since 2016 are using renewable energy sources.

It is likely that any new homes constructed in Smithborough will follow this trend.

Educational Status

Fifty people in the community left school before they reached the age of fifteen. 39 of these are male. The majority of those who leave school before sitting the Junior Cert are male. This may be due to the local availability of work in unskilled jobs. The majority of those staying in education after Leaving Cert are female.

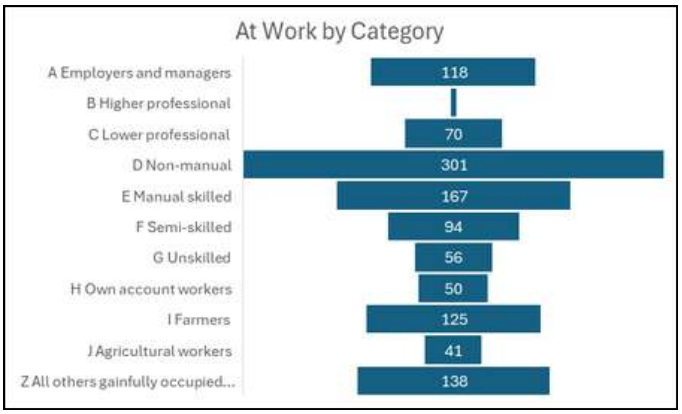




	Age under 15	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17	Age 18	Age 19	Age 20	Age 21 and over	Not stated
Males	11%	7%	12%	5%	13%	3%	4%	20%	26%
Females	3%	2%	5%	8%	12%	5%	7%	28%	28%
Males	39	27	43	18	48	10	14	73	96
Females	11	7	20	29	44	18	24	102	104

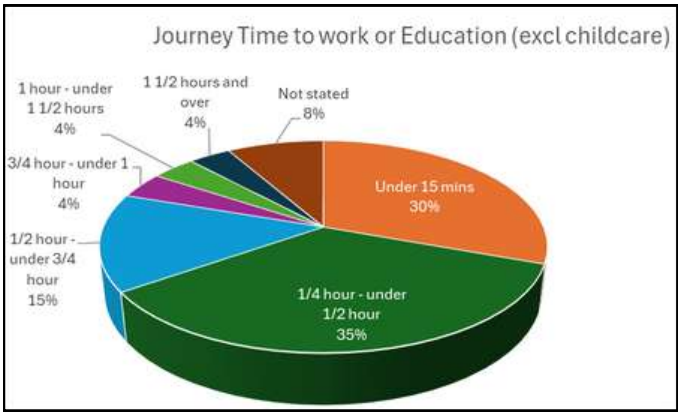
The national figure for leaving school before the age of 16 is 8%. Nationally, 12% of males go no further than Junior Cert. Statistics show that people who go further in education are less likely to fall into poverty and less likely to be long term unemployed. Therefore, serious thought needs to be given to whether the young men of Smithborough are endangering their ability to make a comfortable living by leaving the education system at an early stage.

Working Life



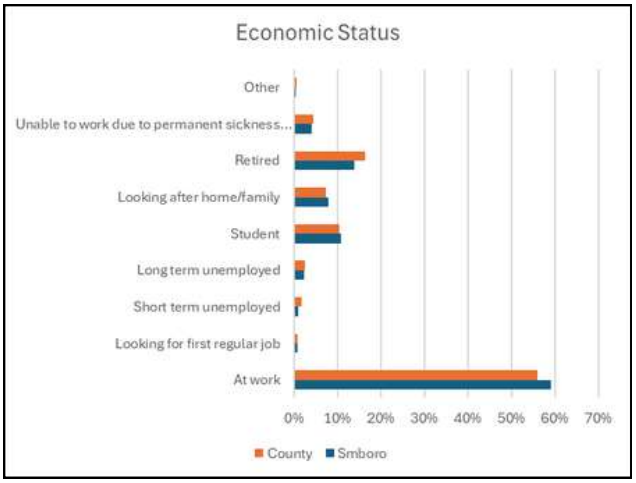
15% (166) of people at work are farming. This includes self employed farmers and those who work on farms as agricultural workers. Another 50 people in the community are self employed at other occupations, and 118 create jobs for others under the 'employers and managers' category. This brings the percentage of those who are out in the community creating jobs for themselves and others to 25% of the working population.

The largest category of worker living in Smithborough is the 'non manual' or white collar worker. This category includes office workers, financial and health workers. Manual skilled workers include tradespeople and construction workers. Most of these jobs are not located in Smithborough. The area performs a 'dormitory' role for nearby towns, providing these workers with an attractive quality of life which blends country living with the convenience of on a national route, making commuting to work simple. However, currently public transport times do not allow for commuting as a viable option.



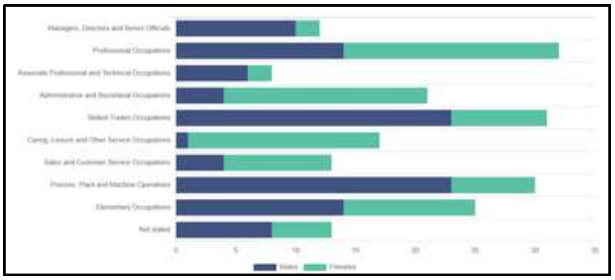
Studies show that those who work in or close to home are most likely to spend locally, and therefore contribute most to the local economy.

Due to the short-term seasonal nature of the work, the 300-400 extra workers who come in to work at Grove Turkeys every December in the run-up to Christmas do not show up in the Census data. They create a unique housing challenge for the community, but also provide a lifeline to Grove and an extra income opportunity to those who provide accommodation to them.



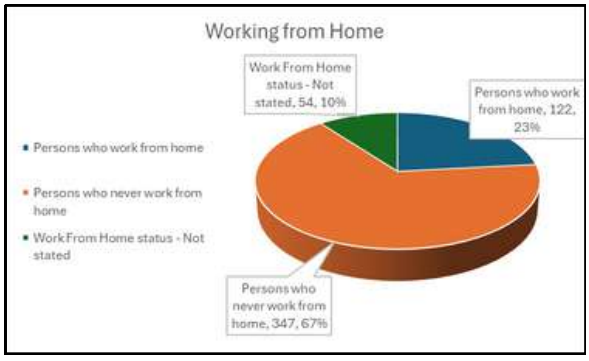
Smithborough has a higher proportion of people working than the county rate, at 59% compared to 56%. The community enjoys a lower long- and short- term unemployment rate and fewer people are out of work due to permanent illness. There are also fewer retired people in Smithborough than the county average.

The majority of people work locally, with 65% having less than half an hour to travel to reach their employment. Only 8% spend an hour or more commuting each day.



There are marked gender differences across some occupations, with women filling most of the roles in the caring industries and men occupying most of the skilled trades and process & machine operatives jobs.

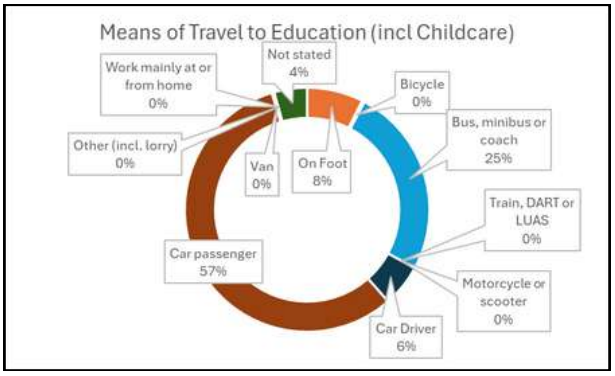
Almost a quarter of workers (23%) in Smithborough work from home, compared to 20% across the county.



67% never work from home, compared to 69% at county level.

People who work from home create opportunities for other local businesses to sell them services, from providing them with somewhere to go for lunch, to providing back office facilities and book-keeping services.

Transport



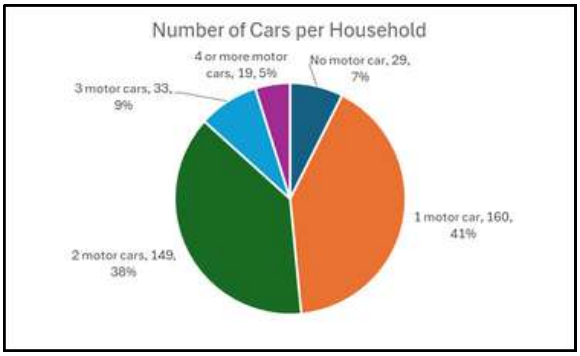
Smithborough, lying on a national route, is dominated by the private motor car for its transportation needs. Despite the primary school and childcare service being located in Magherarney, to which there is a good footpath from the village, most children travel to school by car.

This has required an investment in additional land and the construction of a car park to improve road safety at school start and finish times. No child cycled to school in 2022, and the percentage that walked was low at 8%.

Given that many concerns have been raised regarding road safety throughout the consultation phase of this Plan, it is likely that safety concerns play a role in the lack of children walking and cycling to school.

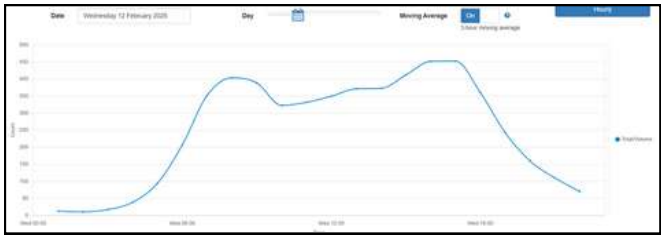
Smithborough was a stop on the Great Northern Railway line between Belfast/Armagh and Clones/Enniskillen until passenger services were ceased in Co. Monaghan in 1957 and the line closed entirely in 1958. The county is now 100% reliant on its road network for the transportation of all people and goods.

The 2022 Census shows that the community's total reliance on roads for its transportation needs has led to a proliferation of cars in the community, with only 7% of households not having at least one car. 38% of households have two cars, indicating a high level of reliance on the car for all family trips.



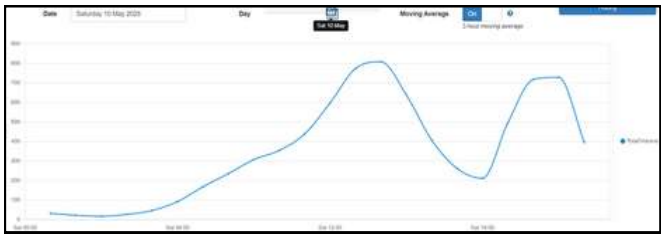
A look at the means of travel that people use to get work reveals again the extent of the reliance on cars/ vans. Only 4% walked to work and nobody cycled, probably due to a lack of cycling infrastructure along a very busy national route. Only 2% were using public transport (bus) at the time of the 2022 Census.

The village copes with large volumes of traffic. According to TII data, around 5,500 vehicles pass through the village daily. Peak times are 8am and between 4pm and 5pm, when between 400 and 450 vehicles pass through each hour.



Around 500 of the vehicles which pass through Smithborough each week day are HGV's. From 6am until 6pm, the hourly average is 25 or more, peaking at around noon at approx 50 lorries. HGV traffic continues throughout the night, with an average of 10 lorries per hour passing through at 4am.

On Ulster Final day 2025, which was played on 10th May, the village experienced a peak of 809 vehicles passing through in the hour around 2pm, and had a busy 2-hour stretch between 8pm and 9pm, seeing 1,447 vehicles pass through over the two hour period.



4. Identifying the Issues

4.1 Community Needs Survey

Not everything about an area can be seen in data. The insights of the people who live there are invaluable to getting to know what makes an area tick, what the needs are and what local businesses and volunteers are working on.

Monaghan County Council put together a Community Needs Survey, which was widely circulated throughout Smithborough in early 2024. The aim of the survey was to capture how people felt about their community, and give them an opportunity to identify issues which needed to be addressed, and things which they felt would significantly improve life in Smithborough.

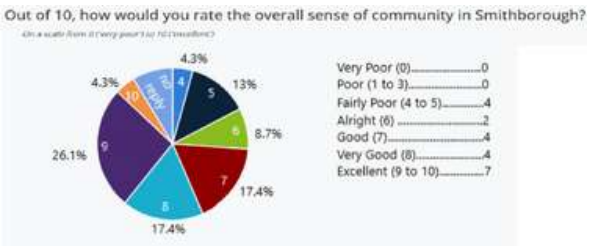
Response to the survey was moderate, with 47 submissions. In a community of some 1100 people, this represents a response rate of just over 4%. This is not high enough to be considered to be a reliable data sample, and therefore whilst the information the survey has provided is very interesting, it would be inadvisable to regard the information as being representative of the views of the community as a whole (in a population of 1,000, the normal recommendation would be to aim for 90 respondents).

However, some general trends do emerge from the survey results, and they are worth taking a brief look at here.

We asked people what they liked about living in Smithborough. Their responses are represented by the word cloud on the next page. The more times a word appeared in their responses, the bigger the word appears in the graphic.

People and community are what it's about in Smithborough. You also told us that you love living in a rural village yet still being convenient to a larger town. You were also very proud of how well the village is looking and very thankful to the CE workers, the Tidy Towns and the people who created the wood carvings.

In general, the majority of people (65.2%) rated the sense of community to be good, very good or excellent. However, for some 21.7% of respondents, Smithborough is a very different place. These respondents still liked the people, but one felt there was a lack of drive. Others cited the lack of a good community centre and road safety as taking away from community life.

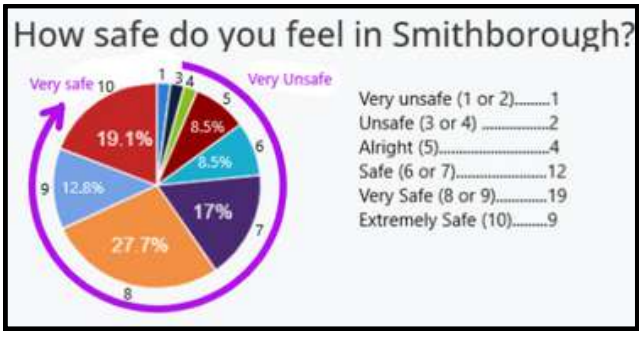


This question below was added after some 25 people had already completed the survey, hence the lower number of respondents

What you said you LIKED about life in Smithborough

When asked what you disliked about life in Smithborough, the number one issue was the speed of traffic through the village, followed by the lack of community facilities and poor public transport links.

Dereliction, the lack of services such as a pharmacy and coffee shop, and the lack of activities especially for young people were also raised.



The number one thing making you feel unsafe in Smithborough is the speed and volume of traffic on the national route passing through the village. Some people are uncomfortable about not knowing many newcomers to the village. Others point to poor public lighting in places.

The general consensus around recreational facilities is 'could do better', with less than 20% saying they were very satisfied or better. When asked how they could be improved, you said that a wider range of activities is needed, as well as more amenities. We have summarised your feedback on the next page.

Groups/ activities that people said they were involved in were:

- Parents association Tidy Towns
- Yoga class Éire Óg
- Foroige Playschool
- Choir Community hall
- Irish dancing class Mulladuff group
- Gun Club Texas holdem

By far the group which was cited by the most people as being involved in was the local GAA club, Éire Óg na Mullaí. Other popular groups were Tidy Towns, Foróige and the school parents' association.

We asked for your suggestions on activities you would like to see run in the community, and facilities that you would like to see provided.

Here are your most popular suggestions:

Your Suggested RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES
A drop in centre for youth and foroiges use
A social place for community to meet and engage with all ages.
Activities such as craft & bring & buy markets, clubs, running track, walking, cycling trails, indoor bowling etc.
Art classes , Badminton
Baby play gym, bingo
Dance classes/ music/ recreational activities
fitness classes
More adult clubs
More classes, either keep fit or arts and crafts
More sports
Running club
Some form of social activity, not social dancing or pub
Something for elderly people to meet each other socially.
something to suit middle age men and women.
Teen events like a soccer and handball club
Variety of activities needed

Your Suggested RECREATIONAL FACILITIES
A basketball court
A bigger hall to hold indoor sports
A fit for purpose community centre
A handball alley
A hub for our young people/teenagers
A safe walk with footpaths
An area for teenagers to hang out
An enclosed playground was enclosed, so children who are 'Flight Risks' can use it
Better parking for our football club
Better parking in village
Coffee shop/ restaurant/ music venue
Community centre needs to offer more variety of sports for all ages
Community complex for all activities
Gym/exercise facilities
Improved play area, outdoor gym
More for young teenagers. Could the remainder of the old railway line and banks be developed for skateboards/bmx skills
More place to play for kids
Something indoor for kids during winter
The village park needs things for younger children
Walking track, open gym
Walkways away from the main road

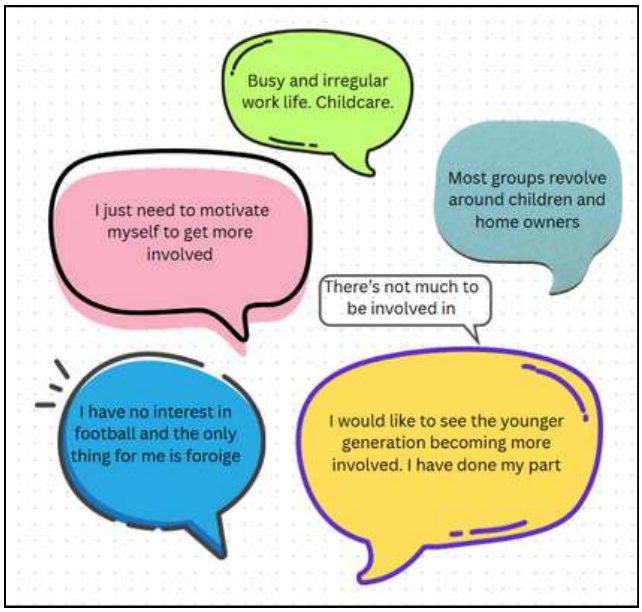
Many of you have spoken of how important a strong community spirit is to you, and we agree: for a community to thrive, it needs people to feel a sense of belonging, and it needs everyone to play their part. As the saying goes, many hands make light work.

So we asked you, at the moment, how involved do you feel in your community? This will give us an idea of where we are starting from, and what type of initiative might be needed tomake sure the foundation remains stsrong as we get into the work.

You told us that while some 40% of you feel strongly involved (or better) in community life, at the other end of the scale, 10% say they are not very active and a further quarter of the population consider that they have only slight or moderate involvement. When asked if they could identify any barriers preventing them from becoming more involved, respondents cited:

- lack of time
- lack of interest
- family commitments - young children
- work commitments

Some comments include:



We asked you for ideas to boost community spirit and help people feel more part of community life. You suggested:

We asked you what would make life better in Smithborough. Here is what you said:

We asked you to identify any projects you would like to see included in the Community Plan. We were looking for bricks and mortar-type projects which could be delivered over the next five years. You didn't let us down.

"There is pre-school starting service from 8-9am, but no after school service from 2.40pm. Scoil Mhuire is losing a lot of kids to Newbliss and Monaghan because there is no all-day childcare service available locally."

Your Project Ideas:

- The walk to school from the village needs improved safety measures
- A full community childcare service
- A modern community centre with meeting rooms, car parking and a safer entrance than the current one, which opens directly onto the street.
    - Suggestion: purchase the Garda station next door to enable a re-modelling of the current hall to be carried out
- Improve car parking in the village centre to accommodate community events such as football matches and activities at the community hall and Presbyterian hall.
    - Suggestion: purchase land adjacent to the GAA grounds & develop for car parking and a new community centre and childcare facility
- Finish the Greenway and provide a link to the village
- Do a streetscape scheme and paint all the buildings.
- Bring unused buildings into community use
    - Suggestion: develop as tourist accommodation to facilitate Greenway users, fishermen and Grove Turkeys seasonal workers
- Give all fences a facelift
- Footpath to Lough Ooney from the village
- Playground in The Meadows estate
- Tidy Towns good work needs to be replicated throughout the village
- Speed measures throughout the village
- Use derelict buildings such as the garda station for the community
- A community enterprise space run as a restaurant/ coffee shop/ music & arts venue with markets and various activities

Finally, we asked you if you had anything you would like to share about living in Smithborough.

Here are a few of your comments:

"The guys on the scheme who work for the Tidy Towns do a fantastic job"

"This is a community full of capable individuals"

"I feel we are being forgotten about, from Local Link to health services. The lack of a post office, pharmacy and parking makes it hard for the village to grow."

"We need to look at traffic calming before there is a serious accident. Lorries especially come thundering through the village throughout the night."

"The people I've come to know since moving to the village have always made me feel part of the community, for which I'll always be grateful"

"Smithborough has a rich history, with the canal, railway and creamery. It's sad to see vacant buildings now. These areas need to be kept to a high standard if new residents and businesses are to be encouraged to invest in our community."

"It's a good place to live, but could be improved with the addition of more amenities for children and young people, and by offering more opportunities for people to interact."

Following on from the Survey, we organised a workshop in the Community Hall in November 2023, which attracted a great turnout. Representatives from many groups, as well as business owners, took the time to come tell us about their future plans and ways in which working together could help everyone achieve more.

The Council attended a family fun day on Mulladuff green in September 2024, and presented a summary of the consultation events carried out so far. Further feedback was received on the day, which again helped to shape the final Plan. A draft Vision and set of Goals and Actions was also displayed for the first time. One of the panels on display at the fun day is shown below.

YOU LIKE	YOU DON'T LIKE	YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE	NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED
• Having a strong community is important to the people of Smithborough	• The speed of the traffic through the village is a big issue, particularly heavy vehicles	• You would like more activities for all age groups, and more events which bring the community together	• You would like to see a full day care service, including after schools, so that working parents can use the childcare facilities in Smithborough instead of having to travel to neighbouring villages
• You are proud of how well the village is looking at the moment	• Dereliction is an issue in the village. There are some prominent buildings and sites which detract from the overall appearance of the village	• You would like to see the park improved, so that all ages can get enjoyment from its amenities	• You would like to have a more modern community centre, with meeting rooms, a space that could be given over to young people, and a safer entrance, set away from the national road
• You love the new amenities at the GAA. Adults love the walking track, and younger people love the astro turf and gym	• There are few activities outside of football	• The village is badly in need of a car park, to serve large community events, football matches, church activities etc	• The transport links to nearby towns need to be improved, to enable people to use public transport for work/ college and to socialise in the evenings
• You see the arrival of the Ulster Canal Greenway as a positive addition to the village, both as an amenity for residents, and as a business opportunity	• Some services are missing in the village, eg Post Office, pharmacy	• You would like village decorations at Christmas	• They playground is good for younger children, but more is needed for older children. Also an upgrade to improve safety - fencing
• You are proud of the success of local businesses and want to support their continued growth	• You don't like not knowing new people in the village. Smithborough is used to being a close community, and you would like newcomers to join in too.	• Speed controls introduced; perhaps the village could pilot 'average speed' cameras?	• Pedestrian safety needs to be improved. Safe crossing points need to be provided throughout the village and the safety of the route to school enhanced

4.2 Listening to Young Voices

Smithborough Foróige

The people of Smithborough told us that there wasn't enough for children and young people to do, and that a place for young people to call their own was badly needed. We went out to listen to what the young people had to say. We spent a couple of very informative hours with the members of Smithborough Foróige, and we visited every class in Scoil Mhuire Magherarney NS. Thank you to the leaders and teachers who facilitated those visits, and to the young people for their time and wonderful ideas, which we've summarised below.

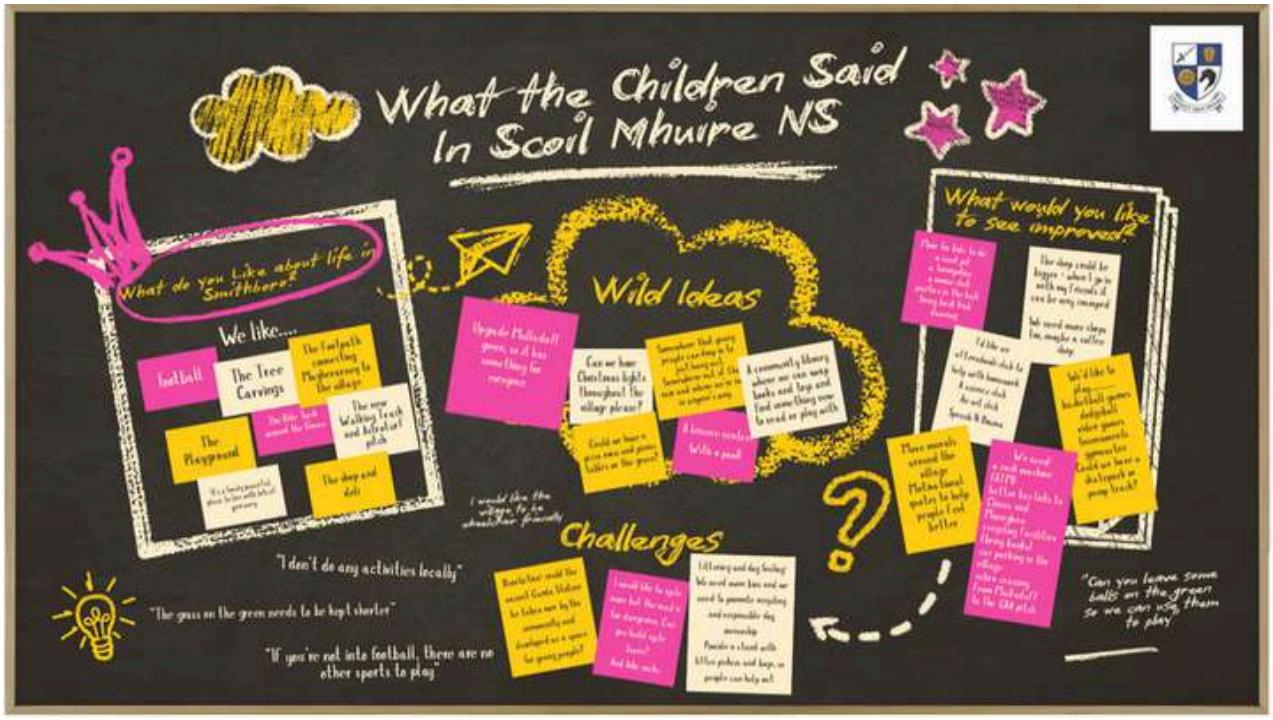
The members of Smithborough Foróige spoke to us about how they have a lot of equipment in their club, but that due to lack of space in the hall, most of it is stored away. Because they only have use of the hall for a short period, setting up and taking down their equipment eats into their time. constantly assembling and breaking up the equipment also shortens its lifespan, which increases the running cost of the club. The club runs one evening a week. The young people have nowhere to hang out together outside of this time. They feel unwanted in the village; they're too old for the playground, and they don't have the money to spend in the shop and are in the way of customers if they hang around in a group.

The young people would like a place to call their own; somewhere sheltered from the weather where they could meet up and hang out with friends. They would also like to have a dedicated youth space in the community hall, so that they could drop in after school, do homework together and spend a few hours hanging out.

The young people also expressed their need for improved public transport links to Monaghan and Clones, so they could socialise in the evenings, and access services such as the library and youth services. They would like to have more activities for teens in the village, and would like to have more of a range of activities which are not football-related.

They were more than happy to help plan and run community events and feel that they have a lot to offer as an untapped resource for the community to call on. They would like to show leadership and be role models for the younger children coming up behind them.

Smithborough's young people are full of energy and love their village. They are willing to take action to make change happen in their community and wish to be viewed by the wider community as a positive force who care about making Smithborough a better place for all.



We spent a whole morning in Scoil Mhuire Magherarney, where class after class impressed us with their knowledge of their community and with the insight they gave into many aspects of life in the village.

The children shared many of the concerns expressed by the wider community, such as road safety, dereliction, littering and the general appearance of the area.

When it came to suggesting ways of improving life in Smithborough, the children were very clear: they wanted more variety in the activities available, and more contact; they enjoy when the community comes together for events, and would love to have amenities which facilitate this to happen all the time.

Children are never limited by 'what's possible' when you ask for ideas, and sometimes you get a gem or two which are actually quite achievable. For instance, how difficult would it be to construct an outdoor pizza oven and BBQ and encourage families to come down and cook together on summer evenings?

A solar-powered music player might enable people to share the playlists on their phones, and a few giant garden games borrowed from Monaghan library might keep families well entertained until bedtime.....

4.3 Spatial Planning Considerations

Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 lists Smithborough as a Tier 4 Village. “Villages are of importance to the rural areas of County Monaghan in sustaining the vitality of rural communities. [They] provide services to rural communities, including housing, neighbourhood level retail and social facilities which are critical to the on-going viability of these rural communities.”

The County Development Plan contains two development objectives for villages such as Smithborough. These are:

Villages Objectives	
SHO 4	To promote and facilitate development that is commensurate with the nature and extent of the existing villages and to support their role as local service centres and locations for housing.
SHO 5	To prepare Tier 4 village plans during the lifetime of this plan, with a focus on housing, amenity, infrastructure, transport and the sustainable reuse and regeneration of existing derelict, vacant, or underutilised sites. At least one village plan will be prepared for a village in each of the three Municipal Districts per annum.

The County Development Plan predicts a growth in population for Smithborough village from the current 495 to 546 by 2031.

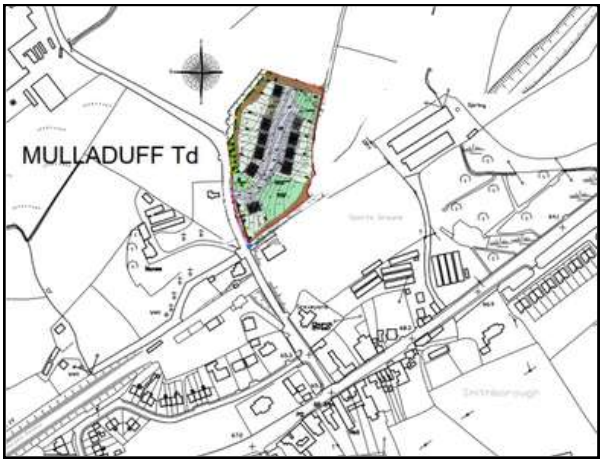
The Village Plan mentioned in SHO 5 will be a document which looks at infrastructural concerns such as the capacity of the sewerage system to cope with the projected growth in population etc. This information will sit on top of our Community Plan to create a comprehensive document which will be linked to the County Development Plan, which is a statutory document.

The County Development Plan aims to meet the National Planning Framework of a 30% growth in housing within the footprint of existing settlements by 2030. Preference is for development of brownfield sites or infilling between already development land, so as to achieve a more efficient overall land use pattern.

The map on the next page shows the ‘development envelope’ which has been set for Smithborough, and the various designations which have been assigned to areas within the village.

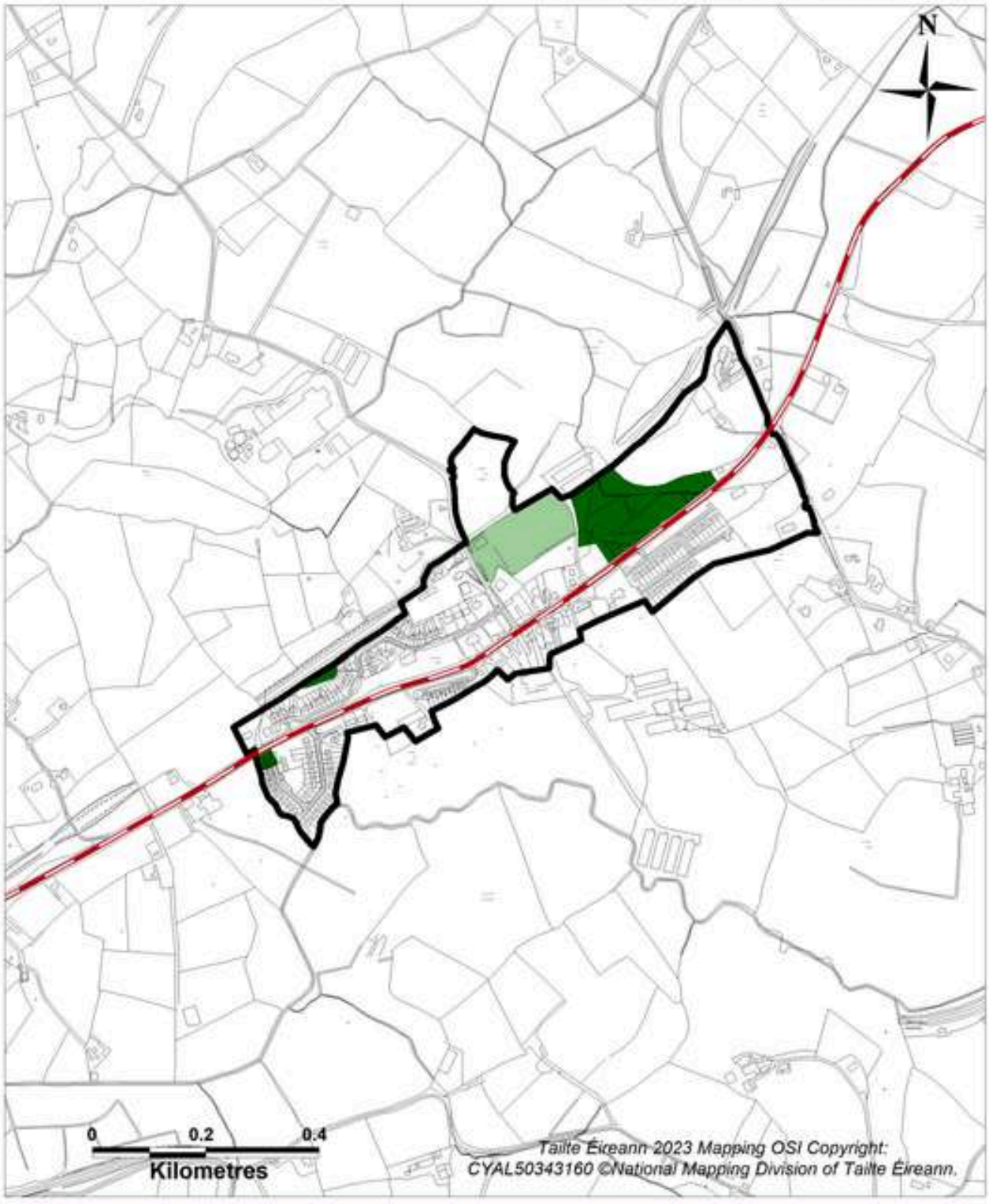
There are two major projects approved for delivery in Smithborough over the next few years.

The first is a housing development featuring 22 houses in Mulladuff, between the Éire Óg grounds and Grove Turkeys. Permission was granted to Boylan Brothers in July 2025 for twenty two-storey semi-detached houses and two single-storey semi-detached houses. Planning is valid until July 2030.



Smithborough

Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031



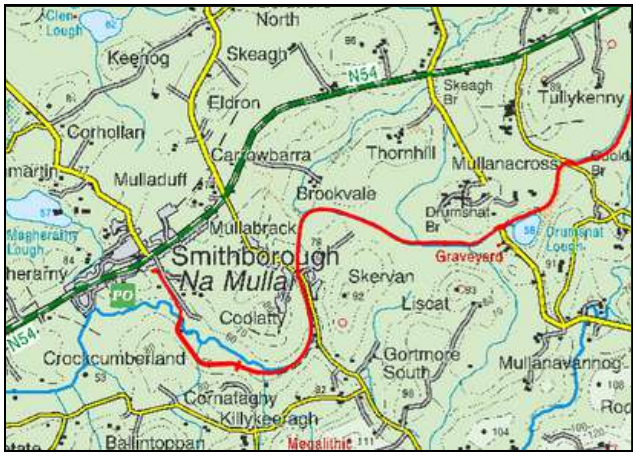
Proposed Development Limit

Sewerage Treatment Works

Landscape Protection/Conservation

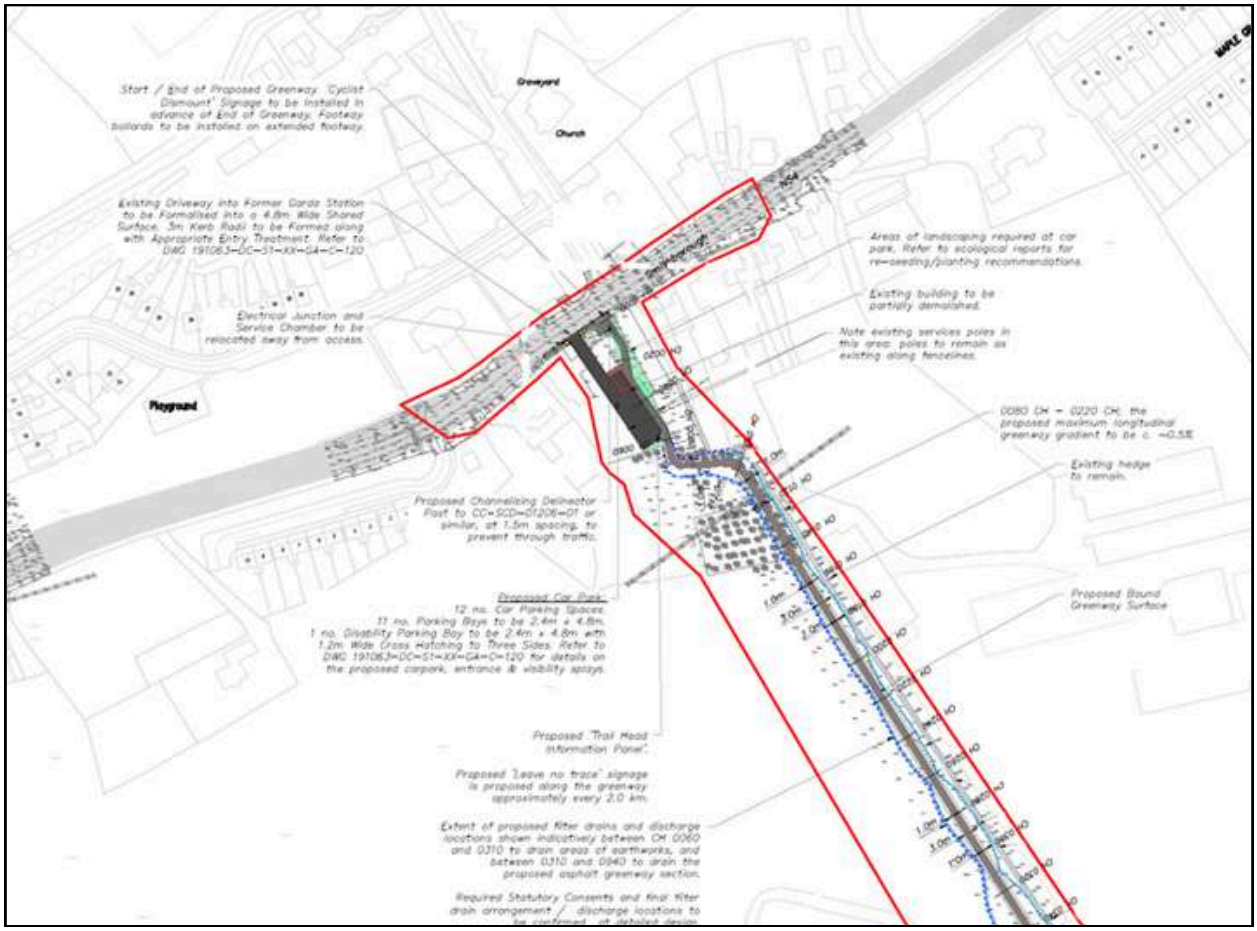
Recreation/Amenity

The second project is a Council-led initiative, which will see the extension of the Ulster Canal Greenway from Monaghan town out to Smithborough village as part of a longer route which will eventually go all the way to Clones. Public consultation on route selection and environmental surveys have been ongoing for a number of years and design is at an advanced stage. It is hoped to progress to Planning in spring 2026, subject to TII approval. The map opposite shows the proposed route of the greenway from Monaghan to Smithborough.



While the Ulster Canal itself didn't pass through the village originally, it is proposed to provide a link into the village so that residents can get the full benefit of this amenity. It is hoped that providing a link to the village will also bring economic opportunities into the village, creating opportunities for local businesses to provide services etc to those travelling along the greenway. The map opposite shows in more detail how that connection with the village will be achieved. A commitment to the next phase of the Greenway - from Smithborough to Clones - has been made by the Council, but a final route has not yet been selected.

Detailed design of greenway link to village at Smithborough Hall



4.4 Audit of Assets

Business & Employment

- Grove Turkeys - will be doubling their throughput over the next 2 years, making an investment of €1.5 million in new plant. All staff are paid above minimum wage and more jobs are on the way. Grove took on an additional 120 staff in 2024 alone, and create income opportunities for local homeowners through providing accommodation for workers year round or to house 300-400 seasonal workers in the run-up to Christmas.
- Greenfield Eggs
- The Skule Inn
- The 1881 - coffee shop and accommodation. Coffee shop not open presently and the business is for sale (Sept 2025)
- Circle K Filling Station & convenience store

Public Buildings and Infrastructure

- Scoil Mhuire National School
- St Mary's Church, Magherarney (Catholic)
- Smithborough Presbyterian Church
- Smithborough Garda Station (currently closed) owned by OPW

Community Resources

Community Groups:

- Smithborough Tidy Towns
- Smithborough Foróige
- Éire Óg Gaelic Football Club
- Éire Óg Ladies Gaelic Football Club
- Mulladuff Residents Committee

Regular Community Events:

- Mulladuff Family Fun Day - August
- Harvest Thanksgiving - September
- Family Fun Day on the Green - September
- Christmas Santa Party - December
- Éire Óg Cúl camp - August
- Éire Óg competes in Scór competition

Regular Fundraisers:

- Éire Óg Lotto - weekly, year round

Community Buildings:

- Parish Hall
- Presbyterian Hall

Community-run Businesses:

- Magherarney Childcare

Amenities

- Mulladuff Green
- Playground on Mulladuff Green
- walking/ cycling track around Mulladuff Green
- Éire Óg football grounds & complex (in village)
- Éire Óg walking track - floodlit
- Éire Óg astroturf pitch - available for hire
- Éire Óg gym
- Éire Óg training grounds (outside village)
- Fishing stands at Lough Ooney and Drumsnatt (outside village)

4.5 Public Transport Needs Survey

Clones Ballybay Municipal District Council conducted a Transportation Needs Survey for Smithborough in spring 2025. Eighty people responded to the survey.

Most rated the current service between Smithborough and Monaghan town as poor to middling or worse, with only 10 people rating the service as very good.

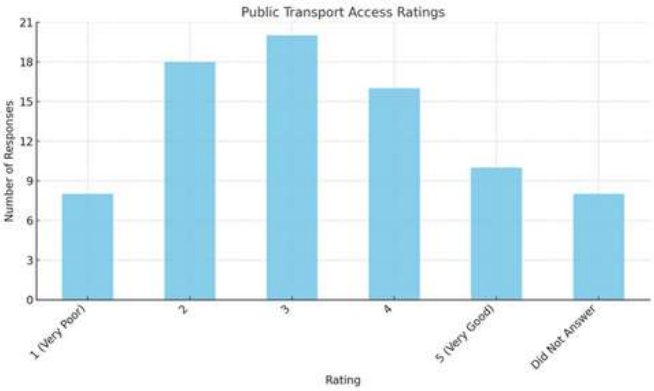
Preferred bus times reflect peak commuter times during the week. There was also a strong demand for a service to the town at weekends. The current services through the village do not facilitate commuters as they pass through during the mid morning and mid afternoon, making them unsuitable for use by those attending work or school.

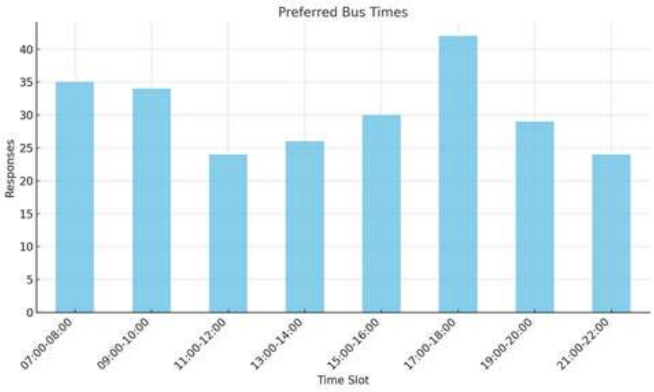
Nearly 30% of respondents reported missing 3 or more appointments due to lack of access to transport during the previous 3 months.

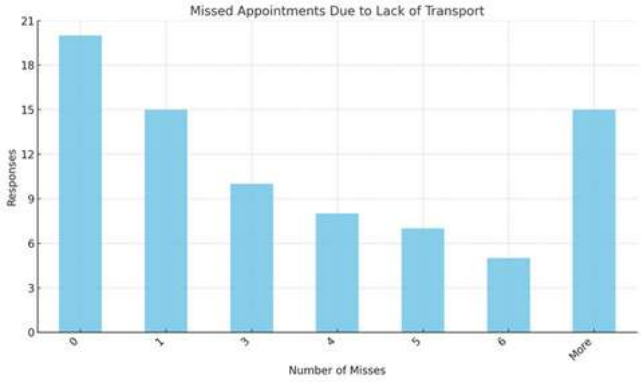
Appointments included medical and non-medical appointments, and long distance journeys.

Five recommendations have been passed on to Local Link and the National Transport Authority for consideration:

1. Introduce Local Link service stops directly in Smithborough.
2. Increase service frequency—especially between 07:00–10:00 and 15:00–18:00.
3. Expand coverage to long-distance destinations like airports, colleges, and Dublin.
4. Pilot weekend services.
5. Promote safety measures on routes connecting with urban areas.







Any additional routes through the village will require an amendment to the current National Rural Mobility Connecting Ireland Plan. All the community can do for now is lobby for the changes and gather data to support their case.

In the meantime, Monaghan County Council is carrying out a programme of upgrades to existing bus stops and shelters, and Smithborough has been included in that.

5.Analysis of Data

5.1 SWOC Analysis

The table below summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges that the community has identified are presented by the village. Harnessing the area's strengths, addressing the weaknesses, acting on the opportunities and facing the challenges will ensure the community succeeds in making Smithborough a great place to live.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
• Accessible location • Well established groups • Strong local businesses • Great ability to fundraise • Strong identity, with many people having a high level of commitment to the area • A youthful population	• Public transport • Limited childcare service • Hall not suited to today's needs & too close to road • Traffic from national route disrupts village life • Young people feel 'in the way' with no place of their own and few activities for them	• Ulster Canal Greenway • Derelict sites & properties in village centre could be repurposed for community benefit • Large number of people working daily in the village - opportunity to provide services, activities to benefit them and those living here	• Finding volunteers • Closure of shops, pubs etc • Car parking for events at hall/ church/ GAA • Finding ways to bring those who have arrived recently in the village into community life • Making everyone feel valued, that they have a part to play in the story of Smithborough

5.2 Key Themes Emerging

The illustration below shows the key themes which are emerging from the data. In summary, people are indicating that addressing these six areas would go a long way to improving life in the village, enhancing community spirit and helping to foster a sense of community to which all feel they belong.

All the above information has been considered and developed into the following Plan, which aims to address the deficits, and maximise the strengths of the community for the benefit of all.

6.The Plan

6.1 A Vision for Smithborough

A vision looks ten to twenty years down the road and imagines what a place looks like after everything we have set out to achieve has been accomplished. It tells us what a place looks like after everything has been done; what life is like; who's living here; what happens here on a day to day basis.

Visioning can help us to figure out the steps we need to take in order to get where we want to be.

Here is the vision we have drafted for Smithborough, drawn from the comments you have made in the consultations over the past year about what is important to you.

"Smithboro is a great place to live. There's a great community spirit, with lots going on for all ages. The village is well kept and it benefits from green public spaces which are used by the community to host a range of events which help to bring people together.

Smithborough benefits from a good range of modern amenities and is growing in popularity as a place to live due to its location along the Ulster Canal Greenway and its excellent bus connections to Monaghan and Cavan.

Strong partnerships between local businesses and community groups ensure that workers new to the community are embraced into community life and the community benefits from the additional skills and cultural diversity they bring."

The Goals, Objectives and Actions outlined below are designed to get us from where we are now to the ideal Smithborough as laid out in the Vision above.

Assigning ownership of each Action to a particular organisation will be done during the consultation on the Draft Plan. Therefore, please consider each Action carefully with a view to whether there is a role for your group/ organisation in either leading or supporting its delivery.

6.2 Goals & Objectives

We have identified six key Goals to drive progress in Smithborough. They are:

Goal 1: Improve the Village's Infrastructure
Addressing dereliction and correcting deficits in the village's infrastructure will provide a solid foundation on which to build. When an area looks well, it speaks of the pride that the people living there take in their area.

Goal 2: Develop and Improve the Community Amenities
It is hard to make things happen in a community if you don't have the facilities to run events, hold meetings, bring people together etc. or if these are not up to scratch. Having a range of facilities caters for people of all ages and interests, and allows everyone to find a niche where they feel they can contribute and where they belong.

Goal 3: Expand on the Activities which are Available
People become isolated if they're not out and about. Vulnerable people get overlooked and left behind. Others never discover talents which might have taken them to places they never would have imagined. And many never develop the confidence to take the chance on themselves and live a shadow of the lives they might have enjoyed.....Strong communities produce strong, confident individuals who realise their full potential in life. This is what we want for the people of Smithborough. The chance to shine!

Goal 4: Nurture Community Spirit
What community does best is create an environment which nurtures and encourages and lifts people up. When people feel they belong, they are happy to give back, and the cycle continues, lifting more and more people down through the generations. Everyone looks out for each other in hard times, and we celebrate the good times together. This creates bonds which see us through whatever challenges life throws at us.

Goal 5: Communicate the Work
Effort can often get wasted if your message isn't clear, or if you assume that people will remember that big launch you held five years ago and will still be clear on what your organisation is about. To build support, you must repeat your message often. To build trust, there are no shortcuts. And when thanking those who came out and supported you, communication is key.

Goal 6: Secure the Legacy
Over time, as people move on or their circumstances change, it can be easy to lose the momentum which has been built up around a Plan. Key skills and critical knowledge can also be lost to the team over time. It is important to guard against this by investing in training and by 'succession planning' - a process by which groups ensure that there are always fresh hands coming along to take up the reins as older team members prepare to step away.

Addressing Climate Change is woven into the whole of the Plan. Where an action has the potential to deliver a particularly strong positive impact on climate change adaptation, we have highlighted it in GREEN.

6.3 The Actions to Get us There

Goal 1: Improve the Village's Infrastructure		
Objective 1.1: To create the conditions for success by enhancing the appearance of the village		
Actions	**How will it be done?**	**Timescale**
1.1.1 Develop an identity for the village & erect welcome features & art to enhance the theme	Schools competition to identify the theme, followed by: Commissioning a designer to develop a brand. **Work with local artists to produce welcome features using the new brand imagery**	Quick action, Low cost 1-2 years, under €20,000 2-3 years, under €50,000
1.1.2 Work with property owners to make an Action Plan for each Derelict Property, laying out how they will be returned to productive use	Compile a list of properties, Identify owner of each property Meet with each owner separately Identify where there is scope for collaboration & possible funding opportunities Develop schemes for each property, with input from Council regeneration team	Quick actions, low cost 2-3 years, cost depending on project size
1.1.3 **Prepare a Biodiversity Plan for the village which connects it to the surrounding countryside.**	Link to Monaghan Tidy Towns to link to their Biodiversity County initiative Develop webpage on the Biodiversity Council space and upload information about existing work Carry out a Habitat Survey of the village Devise a Habitat Management Plan based on the findings of the Survey Commission a full Biodiversity Plan and implement its recommended actions	Quick actions, low cost 2-3 years, approx €20,000

1.1.4 Plant **native trees** throughout the village to soften the landscape	**Participate in National Tree Week every March & avail of free trees through the initiative** **Design a streetscaping scheme and submit for Town & Village funding** **Implement the scheme**	Quick actions, low cost 2-3 years, approx €20,000 Depends on funding
1.1.5 Create a village 'plaza' or 'green' to act as a gathering place for community events, such as Christmas recitals, to erect Christmas tree etc	Run a community consultation to agree the most suitable site Commission a design Secure the funding to make it happen	Quick action, low cost 1-2 years, approx €20,000 2-4 years, cost depends on design
1.1.6 Develop a winter illuminations plan to light our public spaces & provide seasonal atmosphere	**Work with local homes and businesses to devise a solar powered solution to Christmas lighting** Commission a design Purchase and erect the lights & storage	1-2 years, approx €5,000 2-4 years, approx €30,000
1.1.7 Carry out a safety audit, to ensure that the village feels safe for residents, and for the new Greenway users	Carry out the audit Consider the findings of the Report Lobby to have any Recommendations implemented	Quick action, low cost Cost will depend on recommendations
1.1.8 **Help local householders draw down grants to upgrade the energy performance of their homes**	Form a Better Energy Community group Carry out a Community Energy Audit Engage an energy retrofit service to work with the community Facilitate homeowners to have their homes BER -rated and assessed for work which would improve the energy efficiency of their home	Quick action, low cost

Objective 1.2: To improve the connectivity of the village and address issues caused by its location along a national route		
1.2.1 Work with Transport Infrastructure Ireland to address the road safety issues in the village	Source data on: • speeding through village • accidents and near misses • the location of housing estates and community buildings in relation to crossing points and use to build the case for a road safety scheme in the village which incorporates traffic calming solutions and more pedestrian crossing points	1 year, low cost 1-2 years 2-4 years, cost depends on design
1.2.2 **Work with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Cavan Monaghan Local Link to address the need for improved bus connections between Cavan and Monaghan, particularly to serve commuters**	Build on results of survey conducted in 2025 by Monaghan County Council on public transport needs. Determine when Co. Monaghan's Rural Transport Plan is due for review & ensure that Smithborough's needs are put forward in any consultation process	1 year, low cost
1.2.3 Pilot an 'average speed' camera scheme through the village to address speeding lorries at all hours of the night	Lobby TII to select Smithborough as a location to trial an 'average speed' camera scheme, due to the elongated nature of the speed limit through the village	1 year, low cost
1.2.4 **Provide enhanced pedestrian safety at Grove factory, plus cycle lane to village centre**	Grove to make an application to Council under the Community Involvement Scheme to create build-outs to better define the roadway at factory entrance and provide crossing point. Council will then design and construct the scheme, with a 10% contribution towards the cost from Grove.	1 year to process the applicaiton and design a solution Cost dependent on design

Goal 2: Develop and Improve the Community Amenities		
Objective 2.1: To provide the spaces the community needs in order to enable the activities which hold a community together to happen		
Actions	**How will it be done?**	**Timescale**
2.1.1: **Develop a link from the Ulster Canal Greenway into the village & provide a landing point to the village in the village centre**	Council to achieve Planning Permission Land acquisition Funding & Tender process Construction	2026 1-2 years year 3 by 2030
2.1.2: Create a new car park in village centre to service Presbyterian Church, GAA pitch and community hall	Identify and secure a site Design a scheme & secure funding Planning & procurement/ tender process Construction	1 - 2 years Year 2 Year 3 Years 4-5
2.1.3: Develop Mulladuff Green into an Age Friendly space, with areas suited to people at every stage of life: • enhanced playground for children • covered hangout area for teens • BBQ/ Pizza oven & benches to encourage families to mingle • Relaxed seating area with sensory planting for older people	Carry out a consultation on what people would like to see on the Green Commission a designer to work with the community on drawings Put together a Plan which identifies how the drawing will be implemented (eg what is to be kept where it is, what is to be moved etc, how many phases of development will be needed) Access funding to carry out the improvements identified in the Plan Implement the Plan	Year 1 Year 1 Year 2 Year 2-4 Depends on funding

Objective 2.2: To ensure that the community is well served by modern amenities which are fit for purpose and easy to run for many years into the future		
2.2.1: Develop additional space in Smithborough Hall, to provide room for a youth space, training suite and remote working, as well as improved storage	Commission drawings for the renovation Submit for Planning Break the work into projects & target various funding opportunities for each project	Year 1 Year 2 Year 2 - 4
2.2.2: Make more use of the free wifi in Smithborough Hall to support social interaction, remote working and delivery of training	Organise social activities Organise training activities	ongoing, no additional cost
2.2.3: Create a space which can act as a social hub for the community; where people can drop in for a coffee and chat, find out what's going on, sign up for classes, volunteer to help out at upcoming events etc.	Create comfortable 'reception' space, where people can wait for those attending classes etc, view the information boards, borrow books from the community library, make a coffee etc Seek CE/ RSS workers to help run the space	1-2 years
2.2.4: Consider the possibility of constructing a new community centre which would meet all the community's needs, including a purpose built community childcare facility and sports hall with meeting rooms and large function room.	Commission a feasibility study, which would include an analysis of need, identification of sites, overview of likely cost and recommendation for next steps, including to look at alternative uses for Smithborough Hall should the community commit to constructing a new community centre	Short term, less than €20,000
2.2.5: Approach the OPW regarding purchasing the Garda station for community use	Make approach to OPW Investigate 'Building Acquisition Measure' of Town & Village Scheme, which enables Local Authorities to purchase buildings & develop them for community use. Acquire building, consult the community on what is needed from the space, commission a design, secure planning & seek funding	1 year 2 years 3-5 years

Goal 3: Expand on the Activities which are Available		
Objective 3.1: To find ways to help everyone be the best version of themselves		
Actions	**How will it be done?**	**Timescale**
3.1.1: Run a 'taster' programme of activities to encourage people to try new things out. Based on feedback, build up into regular programme of activities	Secure funding at beginning of year to cover cost of taster programme Book venue & tutors at certain day and time for consecutive weeks. Promote the schedule under the heading "Come and Try It" Ask for feedback: "would you do this again if we ran a series of it?" to identify which activities are a hit and will be commercially viable if organised again and identify which activities are popular with: young people, older people, women, men etc	Year 1
3.1.2: Provide a dedicated room for young people, to use as a drop-in space	Linked to Objective 2.2	
3.1.3: Provide afterschools activities to school-age children	Linked to Objective 2.2	
3.1.4: Provide a full range of fitness activities , tailored to different ages at appropriate times of day ◦ eg: young mothers, over 50's, teens	Work with Éire Óg and Monaghan Sports Partnership to offer activities in Smithboro which aim to support people to be healthier	Sports Partnership has a range of programmes on offer - just need to reach out to them
3.1.5: **Work with local transport providers to organise transport to activities and events in neighbouring towns**	Work with Local Link, local hackney services and others to provide a schedule of services to cover cinema times, theatre dates, Clones Film Festival and other prominent social occasions for which there is a stated demand	self funding, although funding could be sought to help reduce the fare to users of the service
3.1.6: **Start a community library** ◦ meet once a month for book club and coffee	Provide shelving in new Reception area in Social Hub, and encourage people to leave books, for others to borrow Organise various groups to meet up for book club and coffee - mothers, older people, teens etc	No cost

Objective 3.2: To support every person in the community to find ways to improve their lives		
3.2.1: Bring adult education classes out to Smithborough, eg: ◦ english language ◦ computer classes	Engage with Monaghan ETB and Monaghan Integrated Development to bring training opportunities out to Smithborough	Short term, low cost
3.2.2: Identify people in the community who are in danger of becoming isolated and build a programme of activities to support them	Work with: • Age Friendly Monaghan • Tusla • Local Authority Integration Team to identify older people, lone parents, and migrants who may be at an increased risk of isolation, and to reach out to them to encourage them to participate in activities	Year 2-3
3.2.3: Start a Men's Shed	Secure start-up funding to kick-start the group Find a suitable premises to facilitate their work	Year 1
3.2.4: Start a Parent & Toddler group	Secure start-up funding to kick-start the group Organise the first few meetings of the group	Year 1

Goal 4: Nurture Community Spirit		
Objective 4.1: To find ways of connecting every person to the wider community, so that nobody is isolated		
Actions	**How will it be done?**	**Timescale**
4.1.1: Create an annual Community Festival/ Fun Day	Form a Festival Committee Consult with existing groups on existing plans for events Settle on a date & theme a year ahead Do training in event management Secure funding towards the cost Organise the details - attractions, traffic management, risk, insurance, parking, stewards, promotion, sponsorship, prizes, thankyou/ reward event for volunteers	2 years to create and plan first event, then annually thereafter
4.1.2: Operate a 'Many Hands Make Light Work' Board, where groups can post tasks they need a hand with, and members of the community can offer their time and skills	Can be done virtually on a website, or on a noticeboard in a community space, or both Needs to be managed/ moderated, and kept up to date	Quick action with an ongoing commitment, low cost
4.1.3: Form an Ideas Committee, to keep the good ideas coming!	This committee's job is to keep an eye out for opportunities, to spot talent as it develops and route it to where it can best be used, and to trawl the internet for good ideas which might work in Smithborough	Quick action, low cost

Objective 4.2: To promote a spirit of giving back		
4.2.1: Develop a volunteer credits scheme, encouraging people to give time to clubs and activities in return for a range of credits which can be redeemed with participating clubs and supportive local businesses	Community Council to agree the community events that the Credits can be redeemed at Print the Credit Tokens & Distribute to each group/ club to give to volunteers who 'earn' them Each Group/ Club to develop a system of credits (ie how many credits each task is worth) and maintain a Log Bog of who Credits are given to, to ensure no abuse of the system. 'Clearing House' system to be operated between the groups/ clubs to compensate each other for tokens redeemed at events	Develop in Year 1, roll out from Year 2
4.2.2 Develop a Shout Out Space, where local good deeds are given a mention and people who go the extra mile can be thanked.	This can take the shape of a Graffiti Wall, a cork notice board for pinning post-its to, or a digital space on the web hub. Or all three. Its purpose is to create an atmosphere of positivity and encouragement.	Constantly, as good deeds are done
4.2.3 Celebrate the community's achievements each year and give thanks to those who helped make good things happen, by running a 'Community Awards' in the run-up to Christmas each year	Review the 'Shout Outs' from across the year Make up fun categories to fit events that ocurred & that you want to mark Promote the awards as a light-hearted way of thanking those who contributed to the community over the year Prepare a montage of funny photos Reveal the winners at Santa Party Post to social media & website & use as encouragement for others to get involved next year	Every year, low cost

Objective 4.3: To encourage people to develop a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves		
4.3.1: Run a local competition to develop a new Smithborough identity and brand. Produce artwork with the brand. Sell t-shirts etc.	Arrange prizes, categories and judges Announce the competition Shortlist finalists Run a public poll to help find the winners Organise an awards ceremony Commission a designer to use the winning artwork to develop a brand for Smithborough Reveal the brand, with limited edition merchandising Seek funding to create artwork for around the village - sculptures etc - to bring the brand to life	Competition: Year 1 Brand development: Year 2 Year 3 Year 3-4
4.3.2: Run a Christmas Event, with an Awards element which celebrates the achievements - big and small - of members of the Smithborough community (young and old, individually and collectively) and to say thanks to those who went above and beyond for their community during the year	All clubs/ groups/ businesses to contribute a little towards the organisation of the event Activities which take place over the year to be showcased - the produce of various clubs, the talents of local people. The event to include the arrival of Santa, the singing of Christmas songs and the sharing of food.	Every year
4.3.3: Take a photographic record of the community. Collect stories about local people and places. Use the images and words to produce books, calendars etc. to help connect former residents back to Smithborough and to build a sense of belonging in those who live here today. Also serves as a great way to raise funds.	Set up a committee to work on this project Reach out to Monaghan Library for training in archiving, preserving collections and displaying material Work out a terms of reference for the project Put out a call for material Start collecting and recording the material, then returning it to its owners Schedule the production of various items, based on the materials collected. eg, a series of postcards of local scenes, a book of stories from local people recalling events in the area, a calendar showing grand houses of the area, the railway station, the canal and other long-gone bits of Smithborough life.	Year 1 Year 2 Year 3

Goal 5: Communicate the Work		
Objective 5.1: To derive maximum value from every effort		
Actions	**How will it be done?**	**Timescale**
5.1.1: Maintain a Community Noticeboard. Encourage everyone to contribute their news to it - all clubs, events, etc, so it becomes the must-check place for local news	Investigate the Digital Noticeboard in Ballinode - could it be a solution in Smithborough? Apply for funding to install three linked digital noticeboards: one in Smithborough Hall, one in the filling station and one in the canteen in Grove Turkeys Run a training course for club PRO's so they can all add news/ events to the Board	Year 1 Year 2 Year 2
5.1.2: Maintain a web presence	Purchase a web domain eg smithborough.ie, to act as a hub for all things Smithborough related. Set up a simple website using free design software (eg wordpress, weebly, etc) and map it to the domain address. Provide links to all local sites and social media pages on the Hub page Create a YouTube channel to add clips from various events & post content to hub	Year 1 & 2, under €1,000
Objective 5.2: To build the team and spread the message		
5.2.1: Start a Community Council. Meet once a year to review progress on this Community Plan, problem solve where needed, encourage each other onwards and plan for the year's work ahead	Invite all active groups to a first meeting. Each group to have two seats on the Community Council CC to look at the Community Plan and identify a workplan for the year ahead which makes progress on the actions, plays to the strengths of each group, and spreads the workload as widely as possible CC to meet every six months to review progress, identify blockages, problem-solve and look for ways to move forward together.	Year 1
5.2.2: Set up Task Forces/ Sub-Committees to work on individual issues/ tasks, such as dereliction	As required by the work of the Community Council	As required

Objective 5.3 To bring as many people along on the journey as possible		
5.3.1: Appoint community ambassadors, whose job will be to reach out and encourage people to get involved	Ask the various groups to find ambassadors, who should be people who are willing to document their adventures as they get more involved Provide Social Media training to the ambassadors so they can record footage on their phones Secure funding for 2 years for a Social Media content producer, to edit the content and post to the village's social media channels and website Hold Ambassador of the Year awards, to incentivise the ambassadors to keep the quality of the content high	Year 1 Year 1, low cost Years 2 & 3, under €5,000 Years 1,2&3, under €500 per annum

Smithborough Raillway Station, 1959, Photo James P O'Dea, from the O'Dea photo Collection, National Library of Ireland

7. Implementation of the Plan

This Plan has been two years in the making. Lots of people have been involved in its development. Schoolchildren, club members, business owners and residents alike all gave their time to ensuring this Plan would be a success.
The final element which is required to ensure that the Plan succeeds is to create the optimum conditions which will set the community off on a strong footing.
This section makes some recommendations which should help to do that.

7.1 Leading the Way

Each Action needs to be driven by someone - either an individual/ business, a group, or a collection of groups. The first task will be to identify who will do what. This will require leadership. People will be asked to step up and deliver for their community.
To assist in this, we recommend:

- That the community put in place Leadership training for the committees of all groups in the community. This will be an investment in the future of the entire community

- That the groups in the community meet as one Community Council twice a year. Many communities have an area development group, which assumes an overall development brief for the area, assessing gaps and weaknesses and putting solutions in place. Smithborough has not had such a group in the past. We are suggesting that rather than setting up a new group, the existing groups should all become involved in this task, giving it their focus twice a year, using this Development Plan as a framework to guide them

- That the Leaders seek training in making funding applications and in project management, so that they can manage projects of scale and develop a reputation with the funders as being a 'safe pair of hands' to invest in.

- That the Community Council maintains a close working relationship with the staff of Monaghan County Council, to the benefit of both parties.
  - An annual meeting with the Municipal District Co-Ordinator will enable both parties to co-ordinate works and minimise duplication
  - Collaboration with the Community Dept will ensure that all upcoming funding opportunities are identified, projects prepared and opportunities maximised
  - Collaboration with Environment, Heritage, Culture, Biodiversity, Tourism and Roads sections will also present many opportunities for development of projects.

This is why Goal 6 of the Plan focuses on ensuring that the work is sustainable - that the community lays good foundations which builds the capacity of the team and the number of people volunteering, so more and more people become involved over time. This is the secret to long lasting success, and the superpower behind successful communities: they achieve a little every year, and over twenty, thirty, fifty and more years build something truly remarkable together.

Goal 6: Secure the Legacy			
Objective 6.1: To ensure that our community is equipped with the skills and leadership necessary to carry out the work			
Action	**How Will it Get Done**	**Timescale**	
6.1.1 Organise Leadership training in the community	Ask CMETB or MID to run a course. If not, seek funding to run ourselves	Run something every year	
6.1.2 Organise funding skills workshops in the community	Ask Monaghan Co Co/ PPN. If not, seek funding to run ourselves	Run something every year	
6.1.3 Encourage Foróige to participate in leadership activities & competitions	Through Foróige	Ongoing	
6.1.4 Develop a workplan for the Community Council	Community Council will review the actions annually. Groups will commit to driving the delivery of various actions Training which may be required in order to help the groups deliver on their commitments will be identified and secured	Year 1	Sort into short, medium and long term actions, and identify steps which can be taken in Years 1,2 and 3

Objective 6.2: To maintain and strengthen the Leadership's links with Monaghan County Council		
6.2.1 Meet Community Dev Support Worker annually to review progress on Plan	Dev Worker to meet Community Council Focus to be on: • blocks to progress • new challenges • new opportunities	Annually
6.2.2 Groups to participate in PPN	All groups to: • sign up to PPN • Like Facebook page to receive posts about funding etc • attend PPN plenaries & training events	
Objective 6.3 To ensure all committees remain strong over time		
6.3.1 Groups to undertake training in succession planning	Training to be organised Mentoring to be organised for each group Annual check-ins	ongoing

7.2 Securing the Resources to Implement the Plan

There are three main types of resource which will be needed in order to see most of the actions delivered:

1. **Capital:** Some projects may require a site, a building, or other physical resource in order to progress
2. **Human:** Most projects will need a time commitment from volunteers
3. **Funds:** While some projects may require very little money to get going - just a good idea and some committed volunteers - others may require a large injection of cash in order to undertake a significant programme of construction, or to hire staff.

It is therefore important that the community familiarises itself with the many sources of funding which are available to the community and voluntary sector, targeting everything from climate change to youth offending, and supporting a range of models such as social enterprise, family resource centres, rural access, and migrant integration.

Monaghan County Council can provide information on the range of schemes which are available, and Monaghan Public Participation Network (PPN) is an excellent source of information on funding opportunities as they are announced over the course of the year. A summary of the funding programmes available to community groups can be found on the Community section of the Council's website, **www.monaghan.ie**.

7.3 Support & Guidance

The specialist staff in the Community Development section of Monaghan County Council can advise and assist groups in making funding applications. The staff are always happy to review draft applications for groups and offer additional information where available, to help strengthen an application.

Staff can also advise on which funding programme a project may be best suited for, and can help to source statistics and images which can add depth to the community's application.

On occasion, a funding programme requires that the project is led not by a voluntary group, but by an entity such as the local authority. In such instance, the Council can support the community by acting as the lead applicant on the application, even to the point of project managing the construction phase and managing the draw down of funding, which can represent a significant saving in professional fees and bank charges to the community group.

As with any private development, it pays to approach the Council as early as possible in the development stage of any new project, so that all options can be explored before a community commits to any one course of action.

The Community Development Team can act as your first port of call in such instances. The team will then bring in staff from any other sections and specialties as the project requires.

8. Your Feedback

So, what do you think?

Are we on the right track?

Has this Plan captured the biggest challenges facing Smithborough, and put forward the best solutions?

Please tell us what you think.

You can complete the survey below and:

- drop it in to any Council public desk or library branch
- post it to us at: **Community Dept, Monaghan Co Co, MTEK II, Knockaconny, Monaghan, H18 YH59**
- take a photo of your responses and email it to **info.communitydevelopment@monaghancoco.ie**
- complete the survey on the Council's online consultation portal, **www.consult.monaghancoco.ie**

Please return your comments **before end December 2025**, to be included in the final Plan.

In the DATA section of the document, are all facts correct? Is anything missing?
Have we overlooked anything important?

Do you agree with the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges we have selected? Should any others be included, and what Action(s) would you recommend be included in the Plan to address them?

What do you think of the Vision we have chosen for Smithborough? Can you suggest any improvements to it? (remember, a Vision is a statement which imagines how a place will be after you have finished the plan and are enjoying the fruits of your hard work)

Do any of the Actions need changing? How?

Are there any areas which have not been addressed? Can you suggest Actions which might be added to the Plan to address them?

General Comments (please use this space for any other comments you may wish to make about the future development of Smithborough)

Thank you for your assistance. Your comments will be reviewed and considered alongside the other submissions received. Any necessary adjustments will then be made to the draft Plan and presented to the community at a public meeting in early 2026.

Published in-house by the Community Development team in Monaghan County Council
Queries can be sent to info.communitydevelopment@monaghancoco.ie

An Irish Language version is available on request
A scanning service available in the public libraries can translate this document into many languages using AI technology. contact your local library for details

Appendix

Smithborough Tidy Towns has been entering the National Tidy Towns competition since 2019. In that time, the community's marks have improved 19%, and the village won the County Endeavour award in 2021 for gaining the biggest % improvement in marks from the previous year of all the entrants in Co. Monaghan.

The village competes in Category B, which is for villages with a population of between 201 and 1,000. Adjudicators visit each community which enters the competition, and inspect the area, visiting projects which the group will have directed them to on their application. As well as awarding marks, which determine the community's placing in the competition at county, regional and national level, the adjudicator provides an in-depth written report which gives the community valuable feedback on their work, and often suggests projects which they might undertake in the future.

We have included the 2025 Adjudicators Report for your information in the following pages.

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Smithborough - Na Mullai**	Ref:	**1038**
County:	**Monaghan**	Mark:	**251**
Category:	**B**	Date(s):	**12/06/2025**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	27	28
Streetscape & Public Places	80	37	38
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	30	31
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	27	28
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	10	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	49	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32	33
TOTAL MARK	**550**	**242**	**251**

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Bhailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2025. Go raibh maith agaibh as bhur iarratas a chur isteach. Maith sibh don obair atá déanta agaibh in bhur cheantar go dtí seo - guímid gach rath oraibh i bhur dtionscadail amach anseo. Ádh mór. Thank you for your entry form, plan, and maps. Your maps are exceptionally well put together, making it very easy for the adjudicator to visit Smithborough and see your projects. Smithborough is a lovely village situated on the busy N54. Being on such a busy route must be challenging. Your work with the county council on this issue is vital. A committee of 8 with up to 20 regular volunteers is excellent for a community of Smithborough size. A Community Employment Scheme also supports your work. Your regular monthly meetings and collaborations with other community organisations have ensured that your projects benefit the whole community.

Best wishes on the development of the community plan; it will provide the community with a vehicle to work together and improve the village. Your Facebook page reflects a community with a highly inclusive attitude that has focused on providing events for everyone.
You have developed a strong working relationship with Scoil Mhuire and have supported the development of a sensory garden by the school. What a great facility to have in the local area. You work with the local Foróige Club and encourage them to get involved in your work. Perhaps they could develop a project related to the Sustainable Development Goals. The young people involved in Eire Og GAA have also become engaged in environmental projects thanks to your work.

Your daffodil planting project was a triumph, and what a great way to bring the community together and demonstrate the power of kindness, as well as what the community can achieve when it works together. It was good to see the picture of yellow and blue spring flowers on the approach road to the GAA club. Have you shared the story of this project with local media?

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

The old Garda barracks dominates the main street; it is good to read that it will soon be occupied again. It has been newly painted and looks good. The shrubs outside the building were well-maintained, and the grass was neatly trimmed. It is positive to see that the provision of accommodation has been bringing new visitors to the area. There are several derelict sites on Main Street, but you have proactively been working with the county council to ensure that the issue is dealt with.

The businesses along the main street have presented themselves well. The garage looks well with its fresh coat of paint. The Skule Inn appeared to be very well cared for and the adjudicator admired their flowers. The chill-out area is a great idea - the needs of teenagers can often be neglected. Have you considered adding access steps from the main street to make the area more accessible? There was a small building with a bike rack in front of it. What is this building? Does the community look after it? Your community hall was well presented, and it was good to see that it was in use.

Planning permission has been granted for three new retail units, which will benefit the community. This adjudicator hopes that the new proposed car park near the GAA club will also be of benefit to the community. It would be positive to include some sustainable features, such as bike parking or e-charging facilities. The walking track is an asset; safe places to walk are so important. The playground and the bus shelter have benefited from the power washing. What kind of mural do you plan to create for the bus shelter? Perhaps you could invite the school to get involved in planning the mural.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The June berry memorial trees were looking very well, thank you for including an image of them in flower. Your photo shows a line of daffodils by the trees. Have you considered interplanting this with some pollinator-friendly bulbs such as snowdrops and crocuses? This would provide food for early-flying pollinators in the springtime, such as bumblebee queens. The adjudicator loved the willow tunnel in this area.

The new paling fence around the community garden looks very good, and the biodiversity hedge is going to give the garden a more finished look once it matures. What is the container for? Does it belong to the community garden? The hubcap flowers helped to brighten up the area. The apple trees looked healthy. Do you have more plans to include edible planting in this area? You could establish a community herb bed, which would enhance the area's appearance, benefit wildlife, and provide local herbs to residents.

The planting you've done around the chill-out area looks like it's filling out well. You used a lovely colour palette of blues and purples. The hanging baskets in this area and Magherarney were looking very good. You obviously have someone on the committee who has talent for planting hanging baskets and containers. There was a lovely use of plants of different heights, which added interest to the hanging baskets. A similar theme was used in the high containers in Magherarney. You have creatively reused the bins along main streets as planters, which has helped to bring some needed colour to the main street. The images that you shared of the school sensory garden were impressive. What a great resource that has been created for local children. Thank you for including the pictures of your spring landscaping. You certainly know how to plant for year-round colour and texture.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

Your ambition to develop a biodiversity plan is a positive one, as it will help to guide your actions across not just this category but all categories in the Tidy Towns competition. When developing the plan, the adjudicator would like to encourage you to ensure it includes some public events that will raise the profile of the plan and encourage residents to take ownership of the plan and activities that it will contain. This would increase buy-in from the general public to the plan, making the implementation easier. The adjudicator loved your sunflower planting workshop with the school. What a great way to encourage children to engage with the joys of gardening. The bird talk that was done in school looked like an excellent introduction for the children to local biodiversity. Have you considered organising one for other community members?

The adjudicator acknowledges your commitment to no mow across the whole community. Are you finding that the number of wildflowers in these areas is increasing? You could conduct some citizen science in these areas to monitor the number of pollinators visiting them. You could do the Flower-Insect Timed Count to observe and count the number of insects visiting an area of flowers over a 10-minute time frame. You can find out more information on this website: https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/. The adjudicator applauds the GAA club's plan to create a wildflower area. They have some advice and support from the County Biodiversity Officer on the project.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

You have applied for funding for a composting unit for the community garden. The adjudicator wishes you the very best of luck with this funding application, as the piles of cut grass looked a little unsightly. If it takes time to get funding for the composting unit, you could use some pallets to make a temporary composting area. You could approach the County Environmental Awareness Officer to organise a community composting event, to highlight this project. Well done to the school for taking part in the Batteries for Barret town programme. What a worthy cause and great way to promote recycling. The school is making great progress in the Green-Schools programme. The gear swap organised by the GAA club is an excellent way to promote reuse. Has the school considered running a similar event focusing on school uniforms? It is the first time the adjudicator has come across the Our Shoes campaign. What an excellent way to promote global citizenship.
Well done on taking the initiative on the issue of single-use cups and promoting the use of reusable mugs. Significant work has been done in promoting sustainability, and the GAA club and national school should be very

proud of the fact that they are leading the way in this area. Have you considered getting involved in a community-wide initiative, such as the Sustainable Energy Community Programme? This SEAI programme can provide benefits, including advice from an SEAI mentor, access to funding for developing an Energy Master Plan, and networking opportunities: https://www.seai.
ie/plan-your-energy-journey/for-your-community/sustainable-energy-communities

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It must be challenging to maintain a high level of tidiness on such a busy route. The adjudicator found very little litter on adjudication day. Your monthly litter picks, along with the support of the Community Employment Scheme, are having a very positive impact on the community. Nor should we forget your volunteers who take care of the approach roads. Well done on your participation in the Spring Clean. Your community clean-up week is a great way to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to get involved in the clean-up. Have you considered having a coffee morning or social event after the clean-up week to celebrate all the work that has been achieved?

You are managing the weeds in an environmentally friendly manner with the support of the council, and you should be applauded for this. The paint on some of the benches on Main Street was a little damaged, and they could do with being retouched. As the adjudicator had previously mentioned, the cut grass by both the community garden and in the wooded area opposite Maple Grove could be composted in a more tidy manner. Your new dog-fouling initiative will successfully solve this issue.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

The adjudicator loved your Pride of Place Campaign, what a great way to encourage everyone to get involved in your work to the best of their ability. Your application mentioned a best-kept garden competition. You could include some pictures of the winner in next year's application. You could expand this competition to include a category for best-kept container or most biodiverse garden.

Maple Grove estate looked very good, and residents' efforts in repainting the fence had a very positive impact on the Monaghan approach road. The Carrowbarra housing estate seemed very good. The wall outside the housing estate had not been fixed yet. This should be done as soon as possible. Well done to residents for taking care of the green spaces at the meadow. The shrubbery needed some work, and you are already taking action here, having spoken to the county horticulturists. Residents in Magherarney also play their part in maintaining their surroundings to a high standard. You have applied for funding for a new multi-use games area at Mulladuff Green. What a great way to enhance the existing play area. The adjudicator enjoyed seeing the images of the family fun day; what a grand celebration of the community spirit in Smithborough. Do you have plans to repeat this?

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

Your wildflower area on the N54 approach from Clones is a delight. It added such a lovely, vivid pop of colour to the roadside. Are you planning to continue or expand this project? The on-street sculptures are a lovely creative touch - the adjudicator loved the woodpecker. On the Monaghan Town approach, the remaining fence in front of Maple Grove looked very good. In next year's application, please indicate where you have planted the clematis and honeysuckle, as the adjudicator could not find it. There are some challenges along the Rosslea approach, but you are liaising proactively with the county council to resolve these issues. The needed remedial work on the railing bridge should be completed soon, as possible. Your efforts to enhance the road with planting are acknowledged by the adjudicator, but the parking issue has made this very challenging. You're actively playing a part in promoting pedestrian safety in the village. This adjudicator appreciated the planting you did at the entrance signs. What a creative display!

Concluding Remarks:

The adjudicator was very impressed by everything that you have achieved in Smithborough. The adjudicator applauds the school and the GAA club's' engagement in community activity. Keep up the good work, and best of luck with developing your community plan.