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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Feenagh-Kilmeedy Community Study

Sinead Kearney and Sinead Kelly

CARL Research Project
in collaboration with
KILMEEDY-FEENAGH Community Development Group

CARL
COMMUNITY - ACADEMIC
RESEARCH LINKS
University College Cork, Ireland

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Date completed:	July 2017

What is Community-Academic Research Links?
Community Academic Research Links (CARL) is a community engagement initiative provided by University College Cork to support the research needs of community and voluntary groups/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These groups can be grass roots groups, single issue temporary groups, but also structured community organisations. Research for the CSO is carried out free of financial cost by student researchers.

CARL seeks to:

- provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education;
- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers (www.livingknowledge.org).

What is a CSO?
We define CSOs as groups who are non-governmental, non-profit, not representing commercial interests, and/or pursuing a common purpose in the public interest. These groups include: trade unions, NGOs, professional associations, charities, grass-roots organisations, organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life, churches and religious committees, and so on.

Why is this report on the UCC website?
The research agreement between the CSO, student and CARL/University states that the results of the study must be made public through the publication of the final research report on the CARL (UCC) website. CARL is committed to open access, and the free and public dissemination of research results.

How do I reference this report?
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How can I find out more about the Community-Academic Research Links and the Living Knowledge Network?
The UCC CARL website has further information on the background and operation of Community-Academic Research Links at University College Cork, Ireland. http://carl.ucc.ie.

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CARL is part of an international network of Science Shops called the Living Knowledge Network. You can read more about this vibrant community and its activities on this website: http://www.scienceshops.org and on Twitter @ScienceShops. CARL is also a contributor to Campus Engage, which is the Irish Universities Association engagement initiative to promote community-based research, community-based learning and volunteering amongst Higher Education students and staff.

Are you a member of a community project and have an idea for a research project? We would love to hear from you! Read the background information here http://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/ap/c&vo/ and contact us by email at carl@ucc.ie.

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Feenagh-Kilmeedy Community Study



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1. Introduction

This research study began with the meeting of community representatives from Feenagh-Kilmeedy with Sinéad Kearney and Sinéad Kelly, two student members of University College Cork's Centre for Planning Education and Research.

During this introductory meeting representatives of the Feenagh-Kilmeedy community expressed their concern regarding the effects of rural depopulation and loss of services on the community and the possible consequences for its future.

Together it was decided to carry out research as part of the Community Academic Research Link (CARL) initiative in UCC under which the students would produce a socio-economic study of Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

This plan essentially provides a scoping study that contextualizes the issues and challenges being faced by Feenagh-Kilmeedy. Key concepts that emerged from the research and consultation process include:

- Community engagement;
- Rural Development;
- Local Service Provision;
- Bottom-up planning; and
- The effects of planning policy on rural areas.

2. Methodology

The study of Feenagh-Kilmeedy began with desk-based research. From here the relevant policy documents at county, regional and national levels were analysed in relation to their applicability to Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

Desk-based research also included the analysing of census data to collect demographic information on the area. Data was collected from the Census 2011 results (cso.ie), as unfortunately, the results of the Census 2016 have not yet been produced to compare with. During the focus groups, attendees were asked to place a sticker on a large-scale map of the two villages in order to give an indication of the areas that should be included in the study (Appendix A). Our total study area of the parish of Feenagh-Kilmeedy consists of 25 townlands, as follows:

Ahaveheen - Ahadagh - Bohard - Ballinruane - Callahow - Cloncrippa - Cloonpasteen - Cloncrew - Clonlara - Cloonroosk - Drominacreen - Feenagh - Garbally - Gurteen - Gornagluggin - Gurtalassa - Gurtmore - Highmount - Kilcolman - Kilmeedy - Kilmurry Archer - Kilmurry Bog - Kilmurry Lane - Liseensheela - Pallas

Together these 25 townlands make up part of, or all of the Electoral Districts of:

- Feenagh
- Kilmeedy
- Ballynoe (20%)
- Dromcolliher (12%)

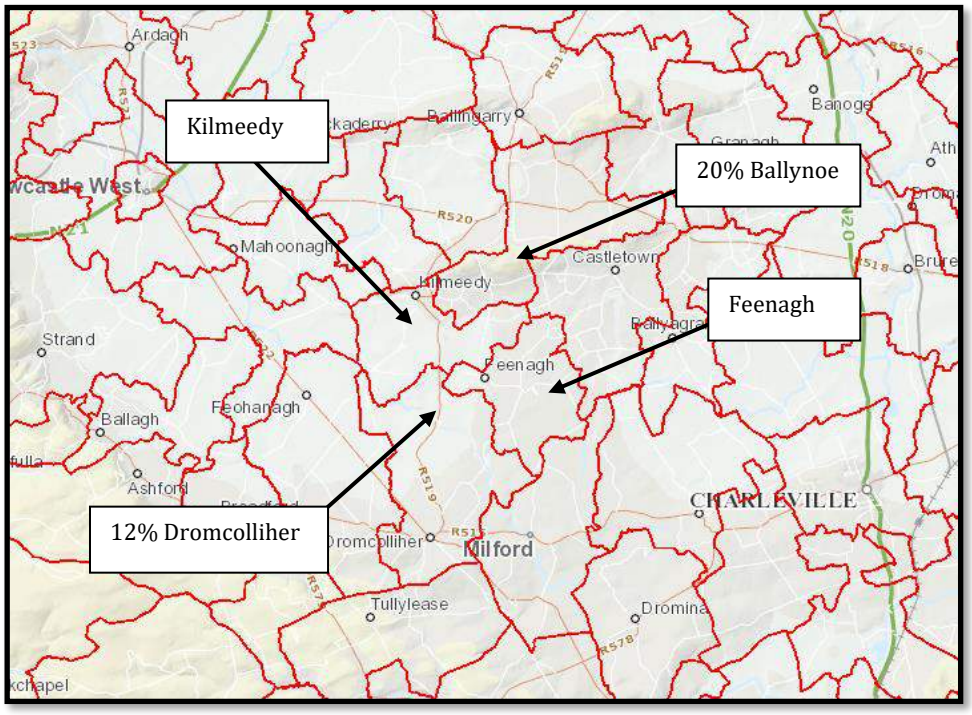


Figure 2.1. Map of the Electoral Divisions used to calculate CSO statistics for the study area.

To establish the community's thoughts and opinions on the parish we used several research methods;

1. Interviews

Face to face interviews were conducted with various members of the community. The organisations and individuals interviewed are as follows;

- Supervisors from the Community Employment Scheme;
- Representatives from the Active Age group;
- Organisers of the Horticulture Course (FÁS);
- Organisers of the Health Care Course (FÁS);
- Preschool Teachers;
- Kilmeedy Vintage Group;
- Representatives for the Feenagh-Kilmeedy Heritage Committee;
- Members of Corran-Deel Voluntary Housing Association;
- Feenagh Oil;
- Gearys Garage;
- Principal of Kilmeedy National School;
- Principal of Feenagh National School;
- Parish Priest – Fr. Bluett;
- Representatives from Feenagh-Kilmeedy GAA club;
- Representatives from Fernview housing estate;
- Representative from Kilmeedy Development Group Ltd.; and
- Local Residents of Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

Each interviewee(s) was asked the same set of eight questions (Appendix B). When issues or observations arose during the interviews, some groups/individuals were asked follow-up questions.

2. Focus Groups

Following interviews, two focus groups were held. These were open to all members of Feenagh-Kilmeedy and were advertised with notices in the *Weekly Observer* and the Feenagh-Kilmeedy Community website.

During these focus groups, we utilised the *Place Standard Tool* as a framework to structure conversation towards seven categories on physical and social aspects of Feenagh-Kilmeedy. These categories were as shown on the wheel below;

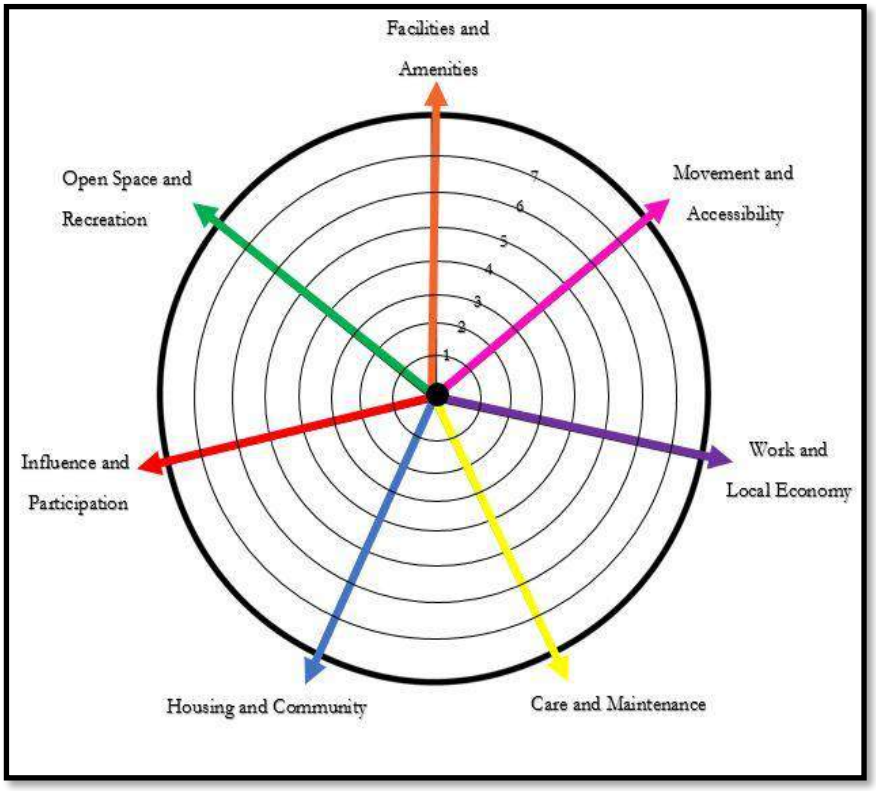


Figure 2.2. showing the Place Standard Tool used on the evening of the focus groups.

Participants of the focus groups were split into groups of four or five and asked to rate each category on a scale of 1 to 7, with a rating of 1 indicating that there was lots of room for improvement and a rating of 7 indicating that there was little room for improvement. Each group had 3-4 minutes to agree on a rating for each category (Appendix D), noting down the reasons they had given the rating (Appendix E). From the mean scores on each category given we were able to judge what areas are doing well and what areas need to be improved as perceived by residents of Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

3. Surveys

Following the focus groups, there were also a number of surveys disseminated into the area (Appendix C). Of 60 sent out, 29 were returned. These surveys asked for opinions in regards to the facilities and amenities, sense of belonging and employment opportunities in the area. As the issue of a village shop for Kilmeedy had arisen multiple times during the interviews and focus groups, we included two questions in regards to how likely participants would be to use a shop and how much they would be likely to spend in the shop. These results were analysed and included in the data for the "Village Appraisal" section of this report.

3. Demographics

The total population of Feenagh-Kilmeedy was taken from the Census 2011 with a result of 956 people (cso.ie). This data was configured into the population pyramid below, which shows the distribution of various age groups in the parish.

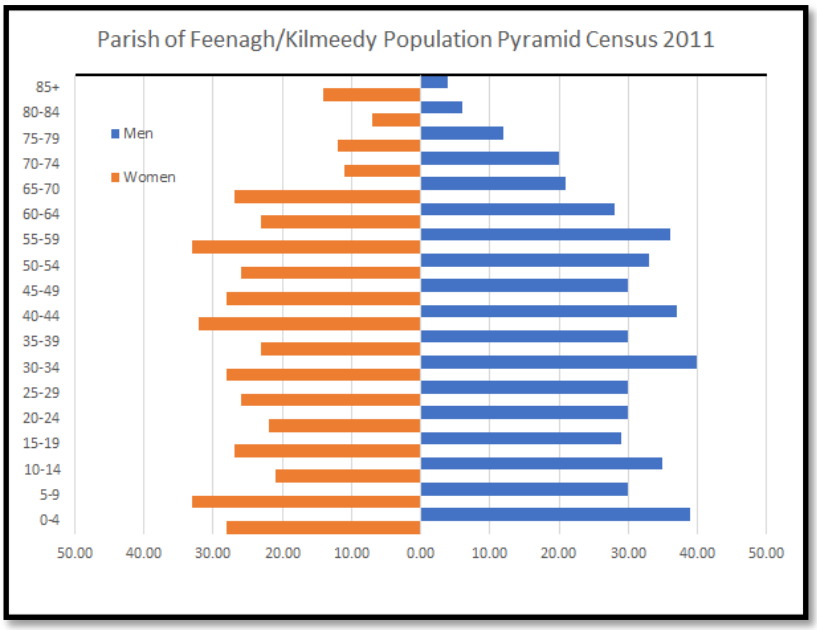


Figure 3.1. showing the population pyramid of Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

The graph shows quite an even distribution of ages until the 65+ age range in the community. There is a minor drop in those aged between 20-34, most likely due to college students and young professionals. Although it is normal for this age range to leave for education and work, it is important that they return to the community in the future. Encouragingly, the age range of those under 9 is quite high.

From the Census 2011 results, the age dependency ratio was also calculated. This calculation measures the percentage of those not of working age against those of working age;

Age Group	Persons
0-14	186
15-64	591
65+	181
Total	956

Figure 3.2. showing the calculations to get the age dependency ratio.

$$\frac{367}{591} = \text{Age dependency ratio: } 62.1\%$$

While the national age dependency ratio was measured at 49.3% (cso.ie), rural areas do tend to have higher rates due to younger migration to urban areas.

The Census 2011 showed that 53% of households counted were made up of one or two people. This does point to 'empty nest' homes, where children have moved out due to further education or work opportunities. The graph can be viewed on the following page;

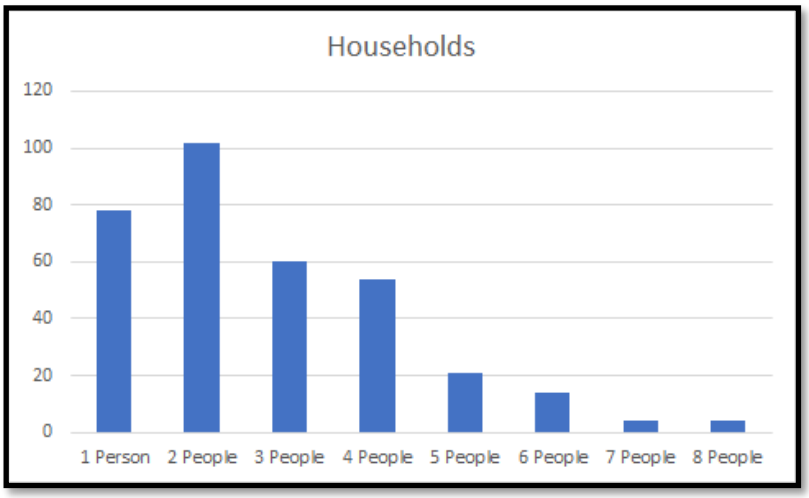


Figure 3.3. Table with the number of people per household recorded on census night 2011.

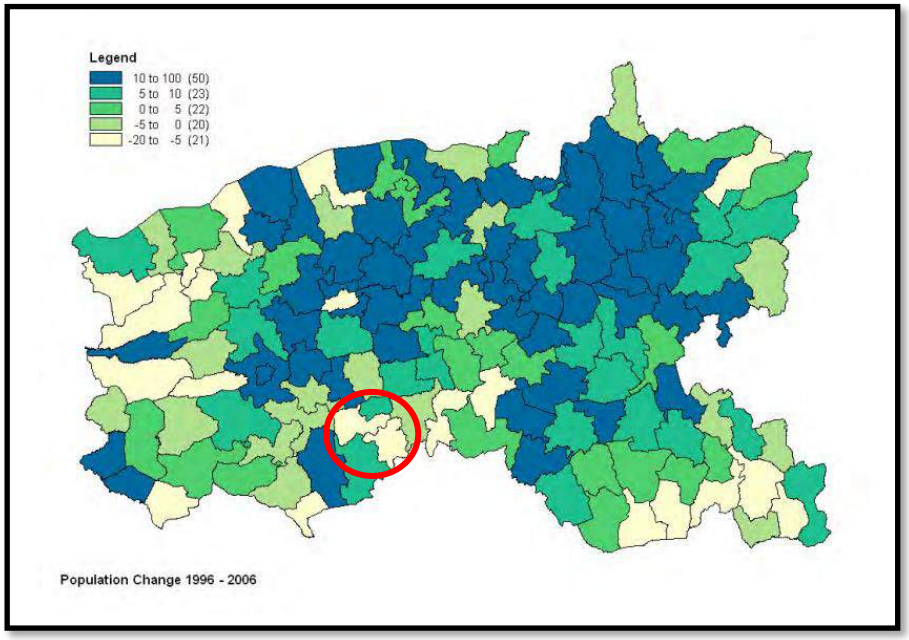


Figure 3.4. Percentage population change by Electoral Division 1996-2006

This map was taken from the Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016. It shows that the population declined by between -20 to -5% from 1996 to 2006 in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. 40 electoral divisions out of a total of 135 in County Limerick experienced a population decline in the ten-year period 1996 – 2006.

From 2006 to 2011 the population of Feenagh-Kilmeedy did increase mainly due to the construction of two new housing estates. The Census 2016 results will show if growth has continued. Most importantly for the parish is that when young people leave for educational or work opportunities that they return so that the age dependency ratio is lowered. Population growth contributes to healthy communities and economic growth.

4. Policy

A policy is a course or a principle of action proposed by an organisation or individual. The government implements policies for the country that set out to achieve certain goals. With or without being aware policy surrounds us all. Policies form rules that guide decisions made for our areas. There are numerous policies at play in the parish of Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

Mid-West Regional Guidelines 2010-2022



Figure 4.1. County map for the Mid-West Regional Guidelines.

These guidelines were produced by the Mid-West Regional Authority and encompass the areas of Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary as shown on the map above. West Limerick is shown as an area of strong employment and a high quality residential location in the region.

Balanced development is shown as a key issue for the region- both locally and nationally. While Limerick city is labelled a 'gateway' to the region in promoting national level balance, the guidelines look to the health of towns such as Newcastle-West and Dromcolliher to provide vibrant hinterland communities such as Feenagh-Kilmeedy. Rural areas are highlighted as possessing the population, skills, resources and knowledge to provide social and economic benefits to the region.

The guidelines list that rural areas can fulfil their full potential through and, amongst other suggestions;

- The promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs);
- The development of alternative agricultural enterprise such as renewable energy and forest farming;
- Support for development of tourism resources- this would include marketing and improved access to nature; and
- High quality affordable broadband.

The responsibility to help reach these goals is placed on the Mid-West Regional Authority, constituent Local Authorities, Limerick Regeneration Agencies and other development agencies.

Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016

The proper planning and sustainable development of county Limerick is the main strategy for the current development plan. The 2017 Plan has not been released yet and until such point the 2010-2016 continues to have effect.

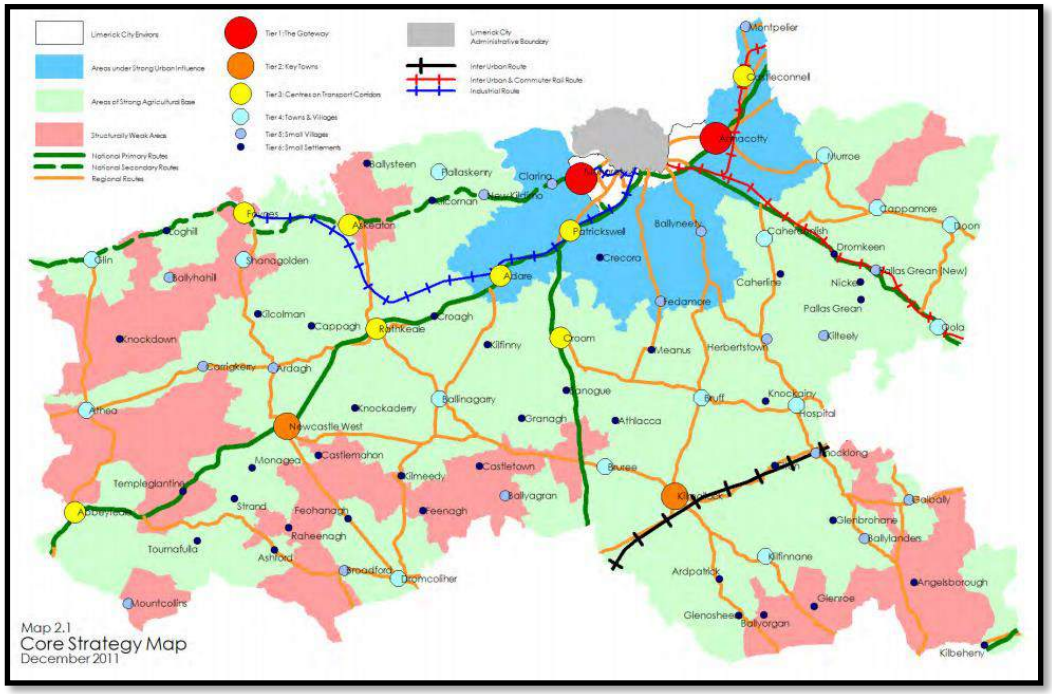


Figure 4.2. Core Strategy Map from the Limerick County Council Development Plan 2010-2016, chapter 2.

Figure 4.2. shows the 'Core Strategy Map' for the county. There are four different types of rural areas marked in the plan:

1. Rural areas under strong urban influences
2. Stronger rural areas
3. Structurally weak areas
4. Areas with predominantly dispersed settlement patterns.

This map highlights Feenagh-Kilmeedy in pink, which indicates an area as 'structurally weak'. This is in reference to the difficulties in maintaining high population and the peripheral location of the parish. There are also patches of green which highlight zones that have a strong agricultural base.

There is a tier system marked on the map by circles that refer to the urban and rural settlement strategy developed by the National Spatial Strategy in 2002. The two villages of Feenagh and Kilmeedy are tier 6 (small settlement). In tier 6 settlements, development is earmarked in the form of single units on infill or brownfield sites within village cores. Building in the core strengthens the established structure of the village and accommodates additional population in a way that supports the viability of services.

Limerick has a strong rural population, reaching about 54%. Strong urban cores provide good access to markets and amenities which facilitate the growth of rural hinterlands and lead to a positive impact on rural development and settlement, creating economic opportunities. Newcastle-West is shown as tier 2 (key town). A stronger role is envisaged for Newcastle-West to support the development of a series of rural economic nodes through improving its services. Dromcolliher is labelled tier 4 (towns and villages), which caters for the daily needs of those in the hinterland and provides some employment.

<u>*Realising Our Rural Potential*: Action Plan for Rural Development</u>

The government published *Realising Our Rural Potential* in January of this year. This sets out an impressive 276 actions across the five pillars;

1. Supporting Sustainable Communities
2. Supporting Enterprise and Employment
3. Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential
4. Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities
5. Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity

If the targets are met it would mean a more sustainable rural area for Feenagh-Kilmeedy. Some of these targets will be mentioned through the study.

Rural Development Programme: Ireland 2014 - 2020

This programme was set up by the Minister of Environment, Community and Local Government. The main aim of the programme is to create balanced territorial development in rural areas. This is achieved through rural development which is a key component under the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The six priorities of rural development, number 6 being the 'promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.'

The LEADER programme was launched in 1991 by the European Commission and provides rural communities in the EU with resources that enable local development through community-led local development (CLLD). LEADER is specifically focused on number 6 of the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020.

In 2016, Limerick county was allocated €9.2 million LEADER programme funding which runs until 2020. At present Kilmeedy is in the selection process of LEADER funding for a community shop.

These policies will be referenced through the study with recommendations. From interviews conducted during the consultation process we found that applying for grants and funding was not a straightforward process and was often quite complex in regards to the level of detail needed. This is a big constraint for Feenagh-Kilmeedy along with the lack of volunteers to help;

"Some of the application forms, you'd want a degree to fill them out."

5. Recent Developments

Feenagh-Kilmeedy has a strong history of bottom-up, community led development initiatives in particular over the past twenty years. The focus of the community's development in recent years has been in the area of community enterprises and voluntary housing. Two community groups; *Kilmeedy Development Group Ltd.* and *Corran-Deel Voluntary Housing Association,* have been the most active in these areas. Smaller scale developments have also taken place in Feenagh National School and Feenagh-Kilmeedy GAA club.

Kilmeedy Development Group Ltd Developments

Garda Barracks
In 2015, Kilmeedy Development Group Ltd. applied for planning permission for a change of use of a former Garda barracks in the village of Kilmeedy into a preschool and office.



Figure 5.1. The old Garda barracks has been transformed into offices and a pre-school in Kilmeedy.

Subsequently a community garden has also been introduced to the rear of the Garda Barracks. The Butterfly Preschool is now located in the refurbished Garda Barracks with the Community Employment Scheme also having offices in the barracks. This is a great example of unlocking the potential of buildings that are not in use.

Áras Íde

In 2003 Kilmeedy Development Group Ltd. applied for planning permission for a change of use of a proposed protected structure in the village of Kilmeedy. This application sought permission for a change of use from a private residence to a resource centre. Furthermore, a new two storey extension was added to the rear of the existing building. The development is now home to the three FÁS courses on offer in the village and used as a community hall for community functions and activities.
The proposed community shop would be located adjacent to this building.



Figure 5.2. Áras Íde, Kilmeedy.

<u>Corran-Deel Voluntary Housing Association</u>

Corran-Deel Voluntary Housing Association constructed two new housing estates, one located in Kilmeedy (Fernview) and the other in Feenagh (The Forge).



Fernview Housing Development, located in Kilmeedy, consisted of the construction of ten new semi-detached, dormer style housing units. The housing estate is located approximately 400m from the centre of the village of Kilmeedy.

Figure 5.3. Fernview Housing Development, Kilmeedy.



Figure 5.4. The Forge, Feenagh.

The Forge housing estate is located in the centre of the village of Feenagh. This development consisted of the construction of eight semi-detached, dormer style family housing units and six single storey sheltered housing units. As part of this development a new sewerage system for the village of Feenagh and its environs was also constructed. A wastewater treatment system with all associated equipment, including new access roads, entrances and internal roads, was also constructed.

Feenagh National School

In 2010, The Board of Management at Feenagh National School applied for planning permission for a new single storey corridor to the front of the school, a new storeroom to the western side of the original school building and a new car park and entranceway to the front of the school.



Figure 5.5. Feenagh National Schoool.

Feenagh-Kilmeedy Gaelic Athletic Association

Between 2006 and 2009, Feenagh-Kilmeedy GAA club applied for a number of different planning permissions. The first was in relation to gaining retention permission for a covered viewing stand with a disabled viewing area and access ramps. Following this, in 2009 the GAA club applied for planning permission for the construction of a ball alley and an extension to the existing club house. The extension was to the western gable of the clubhouse and would be used for toilet facilities and a kitchen at the ground level and an open plan meeting room on the first floor.



Figure 5.6. Feenagh-Kilmeedy GAA club house.

6. Village Appraisal

The following sections address the categories from our consultation evenings as mentioned in the *Methodology* section of the study. This section is broken into the seven sections:

1. Facilities and Amenities
2. Movement and Accessibility
3. Work and Local Economy
4. Care and Maintenance
5. Housing and Community
6. Influence and Participation
7. Open Space and Recreation

Figure 6.1. below illustrates the mean rating of each section during the focus groups;

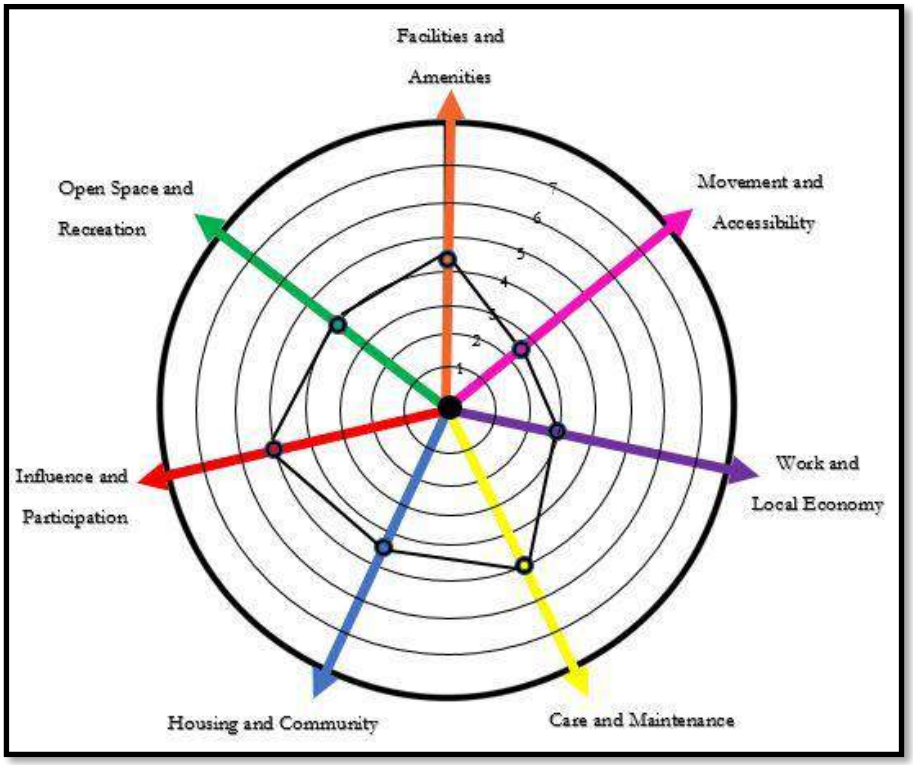


Figure 6.1. Mean ratings on the Place Standard Tool

From the emerging shape, the primary area needing further improvement is "Movement and Accessibility" and the areas needing less improvement are "Care and Maintenance" and "Influence and Participation". These will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

6.1 -Facilities and Amenities

The facilities and amenities in the parish of Feenagh-Kilmeedy made up an important topic of discussion during the face to face interviews, focus groups and surveys. The mean rating of the facilities and amenities section during the focus groups was 4.5 out of 7. This indicates that while there are a number of strengths in the parish, there are a number of areas, in regards to facilities and amenities, which need attention. The main facilities and amenities in Feenagh-Kilmeedy, as identified by the community, are as follows;

- Two Community Halls
- A Community Resource Centre (Áras Íde)
- GAA Club
- Soccer Club
- Community Defibrillators
- Two National Schools
- A Preschool
- An After-School Club
- The Phoenix Project
- Community Garden
- Amenity Walks
- Dispensary
- Coillte Forestry
- 3 pubs
- A Post Office (Feenagh)
- Two Churches





Figure 6.1.1. The Phoenix Project in Kilmeedy is a new addition to the community's Facilities and Amenities.

A specific question was asked in the surveys which allowed us to get an indication of the general consensus of the community's opinion of the standard of facilities and amenities in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. The results can be seen in the table below.

How would you rate the facilities and amenities in Feenagh-Kilmeedy?			
Satisfactory	Average	Unsatisfactory	No opinion
7%	48%	31%	14%

Figure 6.1.2. Table showing the results of the survey (available in appendix).

It is clear from this table that the facilities and amenities in Feenagh-Kilmeedy, in their current state, are not meeting the expectations of the community as almost 80% of respondents stated that they would rate the facilities and amenities as average or unsatisfactory. Furthermore, with 14% of respondents having no opinion on the facilities and amenities of the parish, perhaps more awareness of the existing facilities and amenities on offer may be needed. This would help people engage with the community and help improve the viability of existing and proposed facilities and amenities in the parish.

Firstly, however it is important to note that there are a number of positive attributes of Feenagh-Kilmeedy's facilities and amenities. During the interviews and focus groups, the fact that the existing facilities and amenities in the parish are well maintained arose often, indicating that in general they will be sustainable into the future. Furthermore, there are strong education facilities in the community with two national schools, a preschool, an after-school club and three further education courses available. This indicates that most age groups are catered for in terms of access to education. This is perhaps the greatest strength of this section as these education facilities bring people into the parish every day. These trips should be capitalised on to encourage people to stay and spend time in the village.



Figure 6.1.3. The gardens used by the Horticulture course in Kilmeedy.

The major threat to the facilities and amenities of Feenagh-Kilmeedy is the possible closure of the post office in Feenagh. Plans have been announced this year in regards a restructuring of the entire post office network in Ireland, with over 80 closures planned, many communities in Ireland are at risk of losing their post office. In order to ensure the viability of rural post offices going forward, it will be necessary to diversify the services offered at the post office.



Figure 6.1.4. The shop and post office are a great asset to Feenagh village.

Another threat comes in the form of dropping school numbers in Kilmeedy national school. With falling numbers there is a sense of unease when speaking about what will come for the school. While it is true that there are cycles of bulge and fall in all schools, when one closes, it is gone. It would be a major asset for the community to lose. This is an issue faced by many rural schools in Ireland. It is hoped that the addition of the Butterfly Preschool and Afterschool Club, located across from the school in the renovated Garda Barracks, would help increase numbers attending the school.

Increased cooperation between the school and the preschool and afterschool club is important.



Figure 6.1.5. Kilmeedy National School.

There are a number of issues raised during the consultation process which need to be addressed. The matter of a lack of health care facilities in the community was a genuine concern for many in the parish. The fact that there was no doctor in either village generated feelings of frustration and worry for many. While this is typical of a parish of this size, Feenagh-Kilmeedy have made efforts to restore a sense of safety in regards to health. This can be seen most notably by the fact that there is a defibrillator in each village and members of the community undertake courses on how to utilise it. The introduction of defibrillators can address some of the major concerns relating to the distance from emergency services and an ageing population. Furthermore, the location of the defibrillators outside Áras Íde and Feenagh-Kilmeedy GAA club, means that these well-used venues are now in close proximity to life-saving equipment. As there are amenity walks in the area with hopes to increase their usage in the future, the presence of defibrillators could be used as an opportunity as they could foster a sense of a safer walking or cycle route due to the proximity to a defibrillator should anyone need the life-saving treatment.



Figure 6.1.6. The closing of the health centre in Kilmeedy has been a big loss to the community.

The most frequent issue brought up in relation to facilities and amenities in Feenagh-Kilmeedy was broadband connection and line speeds. The table below shows the internet access statistics for the study area as of the 2011 census:

Number of Households with Internet Access		
Broadband	114	34%
Other	73	22%
No	143	42%
Not Stated	7	2%
Total	337	100%

Figure 6.1.7. Internet access from the Census 2011.

Although changes are likely to have occurred since the last census, only 34% of the study area had access to broadband in 2011. Perhaps more alarmingly, 43% of people did not have broadband access at all. This may be due to the fact that there is no national broadband supplier in the area so members of the community must use suppliers who may be less reliable. Almost everyone who was interviewed indicated that there were issues with broadband provision in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. This is one of the greatest weaknesses of the parish in relation to facilities and amenities. Lack of internet access can be seen as a deterrent for people looking to live in a rural area as we spend an increased amount of time online for entertainment purposes such as the use of streaming services such as Netflix. Therefore, the issues of broadband connectivity should be one which is worked on as a community in order to make Feenagh-Kilmeedy a more attractive place to live and work.

Another issue which came to light was the lack of facilities for the youth of the community, specifically the lack of a meeting place for young people. This is of particular importance as some of the traditional facilities and amenities for young people are not available in the community at present. This includes underage GAA teams for teenagers, as currently the GAA club is without any under 21s or under 16s team's due to not being able to get the numbers for a team. Furthermore, there are no Camogie or Ladies Football teams in the GAA club, meaning that only boys get the opportunity to join teams in the club. This is problematic because it creates gendered facilities whereby approximately half the youth population are not catered for. It was

noted during the consultation process that the community centre in Feenagh, a great asset, is currently underused. This provides an ideal space for a meeting place for the youth. If a youth club was set up in the Feenagh community centre, it would not only increase the usage of the community centre but provide a safe place for the youth of the community to meet. At present a youth club runs from the GAA clubhouse once every three weeks on a Friday evening.



Figure 6.1.8. The soccer pitch (above) and GAA pitch are fantastic amenities for the community.

While the introduction of a youth club one or two nights a week in the Feenagh community hall would help in ensuring youth facilities are available, what the community is really lacking, is an informal meeting place locally.

There are currently efforts being made to create a community café/shop in the village of Kilmeedy. This will provide a place for every age demographic in the community to have a place to meet and socialise. As part of the survey section of our research, we asked two specific questions in relation to the community shop/café. The results of the survey can be seen below:

How likely would you be to buy your lunch/tea/coffee if there was a shop/café in Kilmeedy?			
Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	No Opinion
31%	28%	38%	3%

Figure 6.1.8. Table showing the results of the survey (available in appendix).

How much would you be likely to spend on a daily basis on lunch/tea/coffee?			
€0	Under €2	Under €5	Under €10
21%	10%	35%	34%

Figure 6.1.9. Table showing the results of the survey (available in appendix).

The survey has produced mixed results with just under 60% of respondents responding that they would be likely or very likely to buy their lunch or tea and coffee from a community café/shop if there was one in Kilmeedy. Furthermore, the potential revenue could be quite significant as 35% of respondents said they would likely spend between €2 and €5 on their lunch/tea/coffee on a daily basis, while over 34% of respondents said that they would be likely to spend between €5 and €10. This indicates that there is significant interest in the creation of a community café/shop. Not only would this provide a service to locals in terms of local provision of convenience goods such as milk or bread, it would also allow community members to meet socially outside organised community events, helping to combat isolation.

6.2 -Movement and Accessibility

Movement and accessibility in Feenagh-Kilmeedy was the lowest scoring topic from our place standard tool, achieving a mean rating of 2.5 of 7 during the focus groups. Movement and access in and out of the parish was raised numerous times as one of the crucial issues facing the elderly and those without access to a car.

While the villages of Feenagh and Kilmeedy are compact, with existing facilities and amenities within walking distance, people have to travel outside of the parish to access facilities that are only available in nearby towns. In terms of infrastructure the parish is well situated between the major inter-regional road links of the N20 (Limerick to Cork) and N21 (Limerick to Kerry).

Due to the rural location of Feenagh-Kilmeedy, this has naturally led to high car dependency among locals with only 9% not in ownership of one in the 2011 census results as shown in the below table:

Number of Cars per Household	Percentage (to nearest whole number)
No Car	9%
1 Car	40%
2 Cars	39%
3 Cars	7%
4+ Cars	5%
Total	100%

Figure 6.2.1. Total number of households with cars.

In Ireland, there has been a growing reliance on the private car in the past 20 years. Other modes of transport are also used to travel to work, school and college in Feenagh-Kilmeedy;

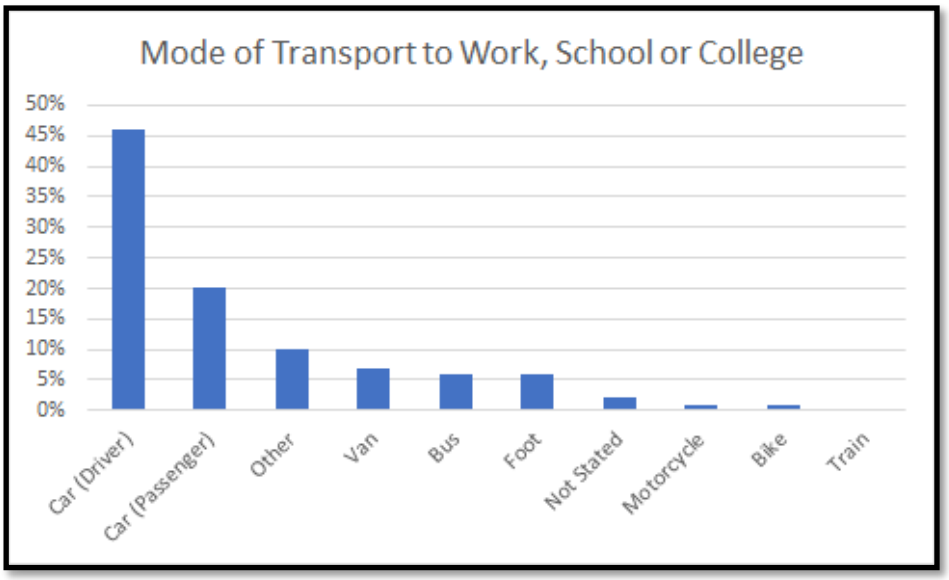


Figure 6.2.2. Graph showing the various modes of transport used by locals to travel to work, school and college.

Mode of transport was highest by car (driver) at 46%. This was lower than the national average of 65% (NationalTransport.ie) in 2011. As can be seen there is minor reliance on public transport in the parish with only 6% relying on buses to get to work, school or college, the majority of which are probably secondary school goers who take private buses.

At present, no public transport serves Feenagh-Kilmeedy. Accessibility to affordable, reliable and well-connected public transport services is important for any community. In the past, the parish was served by two Bus Éireann routes, one going to Cork and another to Limerick. These were phased out over the years with no replacement. Today, one must first travel to Newcastle West to avail of bus service routes.

"If you haven't a car, forget about living here".

In this way, over 65's in the parish can not avail of their free travel, and third level students must either have a car or move out of home whilst in college. Simply, the only way to get around is by car. One lady commented:

"I'm 80 and if I couldn't drive I'd be completely isolated, friends of mine who can't drive are just depressed because they can't get out and do anything. You're completely isolated."

Teenagers also felt that the lack of public transport meant they could not assert independence as they are still dependent on their parents to drive them from A to B.

A rural bus service does however travel once a week from Kilmeedy to Newcastle-West. Locals let the bus driver know in advance that they are going and they are collected from their home. The bus offers access to services that would otherwise be unavailable to many. A future threat comes from falling numbers on this service.

There was a general consensus from interviews and consultations that cars and other traffic takes priority over walkers and cyclists on local roads. This acts as a deterrent for those who would travel by either of these transport modes. On top of this many felt that street lighting and footpaths were not to a high enough standard, in particular during winter months in the villages. This creates a dangerous environment for walkers and cyclists with risks of major accidents. Seeing as obesity is a major threat to Irish society today, with only 40% of Irish people being a 'healthy weight' (Health.gov.ie), appropriate road safety measures must be put in place to encourage walking and cycling.

6.3 -Work and Local Economy

This section deals with the topic of work and the local economy, employers, employment opportunities and businesses in the study area. During the focus groups, the "Work and Local Economy" section received a mean rating of 3. This indicates that while there is a local economy, it may be struggling and that it is unlikely that there are many local employment opportunities or the preconditions for setting up a new business in the area. We also asked survey respondents to rate the local employment prospects and the results can be seen in the table below.

How do you rate local employment prospects?			
Satisfactory	Average	Unsatisfactory	No Opinion
10%	35%	48%	7%

Figure 6.3.1 Table showing the results of the survey (available in appendix).

The results of the survey show that almost half of respondents see the employment prospects in the study area as unsatisfactory. This indicates that there are significant issues in this area in regards to gaining employment locally. Certainly, this was similar to the opinions of those we interviewed and took part in the focus groups.

However, there are a number of strengths in regards to the local economy in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. Firstly, there are a number of long term, family businesses in the area. These include Geary's garage in Kilmeedy and Feenagh Oil and Donegans Garage in Feenagh.



Figure 6.3.2. Photos of some of the businesses in Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

While these businesses employ a number of people from the area, there is still a significant amount of people unemployed in the area. The breakdown of population by principal economic status can be seen in the below table;

Principal Economic Status	Number	Percentage
At work	369	50%
Looking for first regular job	6	1%
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	58	8%
Student	82	11%
Looking after home/family	71	10%
Retired	118	16%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	28	4%
Other	0	0%
Total	732	100%

Figure 6.3.3. This table shows the break-down of the economic status of people in Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

This table indicated that only half of the population of the study area are at work. However, it is important to note that 8% of the population were students and 16% are retired. While it may appear that there are high levels of unemployment, there are programmes in place to tackle these. One such example is the FÁS Community Employment (CE) Scheme.

The aim of this scheme is to help long-term unemployed people to re-enter the workforce through a return to work routine which helps to enhance both their technical and personal skills. Recently there was a merger of schemes to incorporate a much larger area than the parish to include Adare, Ashford, Ballingeery and Castlemaher, as well as Feenagh and Kilmeedy. There's a total of 51 participants in the scheme with 3 supervisors. The converted Garda Barracks in Kilmeedy is the main office for the scheme, where projects are managed and controlled. The broadness of the scheme

geographically divided area mean that supervisors do lose time travelling between the different villages.

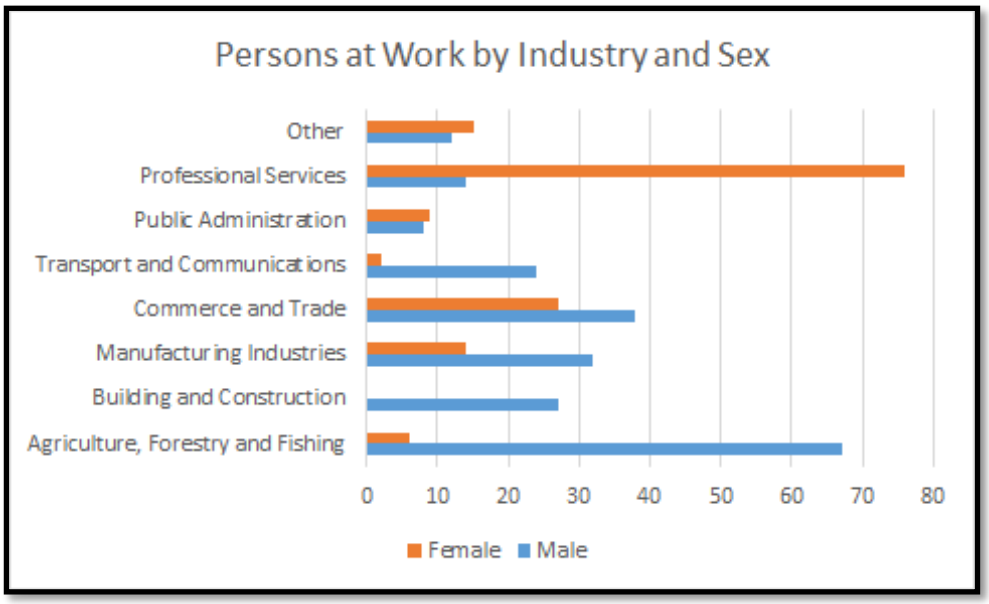


Figure 6.3.4. The break-down of sectors in which people are at work in Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

From this table, we can see that the female and male economic base is significantly different. More males are employed in the traditional physical industries of agriculture, construction, manufacturing and transport. Meanwhile females dominate the service and professional industries. While these graphs show the main industry that the community members are employed in, the vast majority of the population of Feenagh-Kilmeedy are working outside of the study area.

Furthermore, there is a perception among the youth of the community in particular, that the only option after going to university is to move to a larger town or city. This is because the area currently lacks high quality employment in growing employment areas such as ICT and Commerce. It was noted during the focus groups and interviews that the youth of the community see teaching as the only viable employment option that might allow them to work in their local area. Additionally, there is little part-time or summer/winter jobs available for young people in the area. This means the youth have less money to spend in the area which has a knock-on effect on the local economy.

Looking at these graphs, a vast majority of the industries such as professional services, public administration and commerce or trade could, hypothetically, locate in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. Furthermore, it is interesting to see a change from the traditional economic base of the area as being agriculture, to a situation where the majority of the community now works in the professional services industry. However, in order to attract these industries, there needs to be a high-speed broadband service as well as space for small

businesses to set up. This is perhaps Feenagh-Kilmeedy's greatest weakness in attracting new businesses to set up in the area and was specifically mentioned by some of the main business owners in the area during the interview stage of consultation.

6.4 -Care and Maintenance

This section achieved a relatively high mean rating of 5 out of 7 on the Place Standard Tool in the focus groups. Public areas, facilities and properties are well maintained in Feenagh-Kilmeedy which allows people to feel positive about their environment. Of particular importance is the CE scheme which provides the general care and maintenance of the parish. Employees take care of the upkeep of the soccer and GAA pitches, the graveyards, churches, community halls etc.

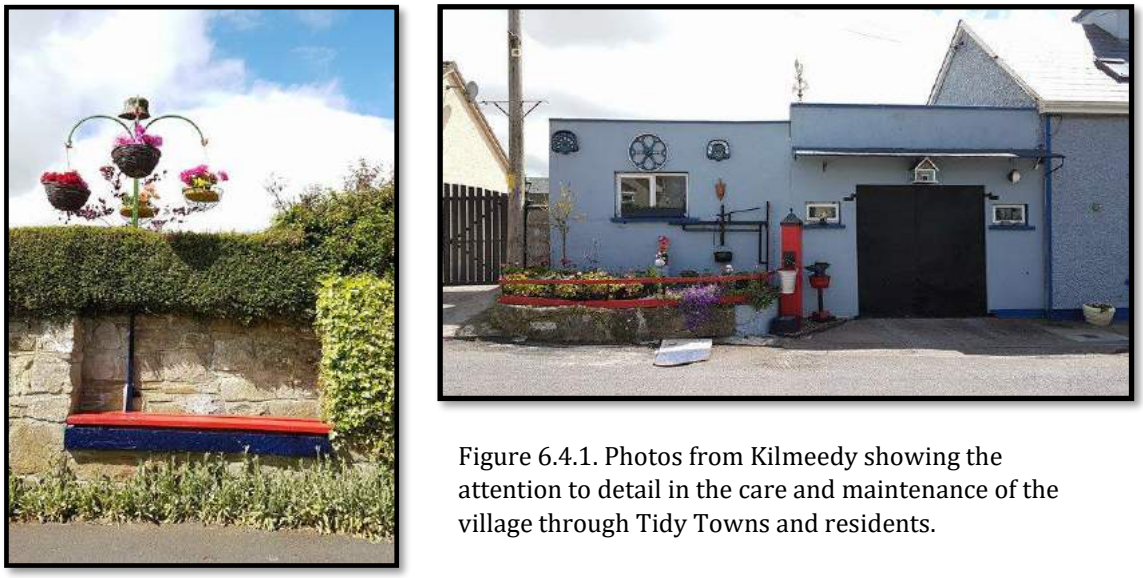


Figure 6.4.1. Photos from Kilmeedy showing the attention to detail in the care and maintenance of the village through Tidy Towns and residents.

The local history, heritage and culture of Feenagh-Kilmeedy is apparent and celebrated outwardly in the monuments and artefacts found in both villages such as the water pump in Feenagh, the renovated St. Ita's cemetery and the plaque to show 'The Boreen' in Kilmeedy to name a few. This makes for a more interesting environment for locals and visitors alike.

Tidy Towns play a significant role in the care and maintenance of the parish also. While Tidy Towns does not necessarily indicate the health of a parish, a vibrant committee and an improving performance suggest that there is, at least, a certain level of community commitment and activity. This year the Feenagh Tidy Towns Committee is under threat due to a lack of volunteers; this would be the first time in 15 years that the village has none. In 2016 Feenagh was awarded a finalist in the *Limerick, Going for Gold*, an improvement grant competition in which it was awarded €1000.

The upkeep of Fernview and the Forge is taken care of by the housing associations who have proper maintenance arrangements in place. Local residents and businesses also play their role in the upkeep of the parish. Houses and operations are in general clean and tidy. This is another indicator of people taking pride in their place.







Figure 6.4.2. Some photos from Feenagh showing the high level of care and maintenance in the village.

By Feenagh community hall there are facilities for recycling too. Some illegal dumping takes place in the hinterlands of the villages but this does not seem to be a major issue and signs have been placed up.



Figure 6.4.3. The recycling facilities in Feenagh.

6.5 -Housing and Community

Housing

The issues of housing and community form an important aspect of any settlement and were discussed at length during the consultation process. During the focus groups, the housing and community section of the exercise received a mean score of 4.5. This score shows that while there are many positives associated with housing and community in Feenagh-Kilmeedy, there are also certain aspects that require attention going forward.

In order to gain a sense of how members of the community felt about the place where they lived, we asked respondents to rate the standard of living in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. The results can be seen in the table below:

How would you rate the standard of living in Feenagh-Kilmeedy			
Satisfactory	Average	Unsatisfactory	No Opinion
24%	52%	17%	7%

Figure 6.5.1. Table showing the results of the survey (available in appendix).

As can be seen in the table above, the majority of respondents stated that the standard of living in the parish was “Average”. This was also the general consensus gained throughout the interview process. Encouragingly, almost a quarter of respondents indicated that the standard of living was satisfactory. However, 17% of respondents indicated that the standard of living in the area was unsatisfactory.

These results correlate with the focus groups mean rating for the housing and community section of the focus groups as the surveys also indicate that while some aspects of living in Feenagh-Kilmeedy are positive, there are also a number aspects that could be improved upon to increase the standard of living within the community as a whole.

In terms of housing, the parish of Feenagh-Kilmeedy has made a lot of progress in recent years. Specifically, the two voluntary housing schemes, Fernview and The Forge, have been well integrated for the most part into the community. Quite unusually for newly built housing estates, most residents have a connection to the parish. It was the general consensus that the developments had made a positive impact on the community as a whole, bringing a reframing of attitudes in the community.

It was noted that Fernview and the Forge have also had a positive effect on the physical environment of both villages through their high-quality design and landscaping.

Issues that came to light during the consultation regarding housing in the community included:

- Dereliction and vacancy in the village cores;
- The housing needs of the elder were not catered for; and
- There was an inadequate amount of housing types and tenures available.

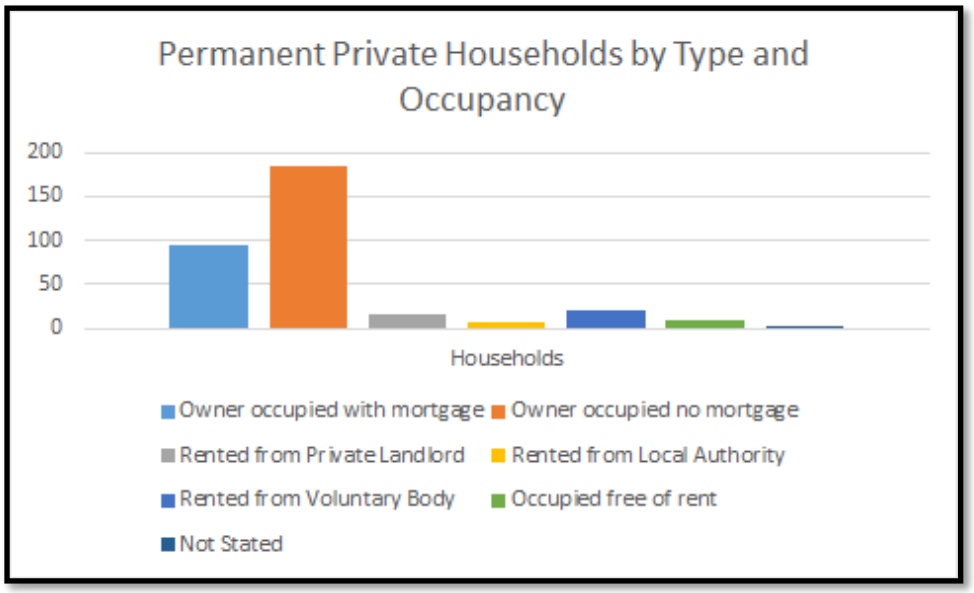


Figure 6.5.2. This graph shows the types of household in Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

As can be seen from graph above, the majority of households (83%) own their own house, only 5% of households in the study area rented from a private landlord.

At present, there are a number of houses in both Feenagh and Kilmeedy village that are derelict and/or vacant. Derelict buildings are among the most visible outward signs of any community's reversing fortunes. Their presence was raised during interviews and consultations as being a problem. The table below shows the number of occupied and vacant houses in the study area in the 2011 census:

Occupied	337
Unoccupied	72
Total	409

Figure 6.5.3. This table shows the breakdown of housing, vacant and occupied in Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

Short-term solution work has been carried out with some of these buildings having been painted and some window displays placed inside, but this 'fake front' solution is not a long-term answer to the problem. Currently, although some of these houses are on the market at relatively cheap prices, they are proving difficult to sell. This has also led to some uncertainty in the local housing market as people do not see building a house in Feenagh-Kilmeedy as an investment due to perceived problems with selling the property in the future. The availability of rental property would increase the population while also increasing the amount of people using the facilities and services of the villages. This would encourage the sustainable growth of the village centres.



Figure 6.5.4. The photo on the left shows one derelict house in Kilmeedy that has been painted. The photo on the right shows a business premises in Feenagh village that is currently unused.

The community understands that these buildings have the opportunity to be re-imagined and re-cycled into new homes for sale or rent. They could also be used for shops and workshops, for advertising and marketing or even storage areas. Whilst this is known however, funding is the inescapable issue.

Of particular interest to the resolution of this issue is the 'Town and Village Renewal Scheme' launched by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under *Realising Our Rural Potential*: Action Plan for Rural Development. It will offer up to €20 million worth of funding for rural towns and villages of less than 10,000 people for projects that will have a positive impact on their area. Applications can range from €20,000 to a maximum of €100,000.

Other important grants and schemes include:

- The Buy and Renewal initiative (supporting councils and housing bodies to purchase housing units to be used for social housing);
- Renovation grants (to restore properties which will attract first time buyers to rural areas);

- The Repair and Leasing initiative (which allows councils to approach owners of derelict buildings with the option to either lease or repair the unit or buy and remediate); and
- The Housing Aid for Older People Scheme (which caters for those over the age of 65 who need alterations or adaptations to their home to allow for the continuance of care in their own home).

As many in the community expressed issues with obtaining planning permission for homes, perhaps the provision of serviced sites in the village would be an opportunity to achieve a mix of housing type to be built while also encouraging people to build in the village centres.

Community

In terms of community, it is clear that the greatest strength of the parish of Feenagh-Kilmeedy is the great sense of community spirit and activism in the area. Almost everyone we interviewed mentioned this as the greatest positive attribute of the area.

"They are great people - when you need something they are all there!"

While having many community groups in a small area may seem to indicate a strong community, many people commented about the ineffectiveness of having so many community groups. Furthermore, it was noted that the same members of the community were committee members on many groups.



Figure 6.5.5. This photo shows a mural painted on the GAA clubhouse to represent the community.

Additionally, there are not many young people on community committees. This could indicate that the youth's voice is not being heard. As one of the weaknesses indicated throughout the focus groups and interviews was that there were too many small committees, an opportunity going forward would be to amalgamate some of these groups. Conversely, a community council which would oversee the groups may be an option to consolidate the efforts of each committee and work towards a common goal for the village.

The distance between Feenagh-Kilmeedy via the quickest route is approximately 4.5 km and the two villages can be seen circled in figure X below. However, it is important to note the vast majority of people interviewed, surveyed and those who participated in the focus groups come from the hinterland. One of the divisive issues that arose during the consultation process was whether people saw Feenagh-Kilmeedy as one place or two places. This may be the basis for the most significant threat to the community's survival into the future, due to conflicts based on the community's self-perception.



Figure 6.5.6. This map shows the two villages and the distance between.

There was many differing, yet strong opinions regarding whether or not Feenagh-Kilmeedy was one or two entities. Although two villages, Feenagh and Kilmeedy form one parish. Many older members of the community noted a strong tradition of the two villages been seen as one through joint organisations such as Machra Na Feirme and the GAA. However, many people believed that Feenagh and Kilmeedy were completely separate places based on a sense of identity;

"Like reluctant neighbours, you don't want to be but you have to borrow milk off each other."

Furthermore, the introduction of community organisations solely for each village, such as Kilmeedy Development Group Ltd., made people feel like they would not be welcome to join the group due to their naming. The greatest opportunity for the community of Feenagh-Kilmeedy is to start seeing themselves as one community. This will help to maintain and retain existing services if both villages are actively using them.

6.6 -Influence and Participation

This section scored an average 5 out of 7 in the consultation evenings. This section examines how people feel about the place in which they live. Places with a positive identity, and where people feel they belong, help to build strong communities.

People in our consultation perceived the parish positively. They felt connected to their neighbours and the community in general. Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation or disability they believe that community is a welcoming place to live.

"You couldn't get better than this village- forward thinking, there's so much going on you wouldn't believe."

There are groups and networks available to help strengthen the sense of community so that locals can be positively engaged if they choose. The differing organisations that serve Feenagh-Kilmeedy include:

- GAA
- Soccor
- Kilmeedy Development Group
- Corran Deel Voluntary Housing Association
- The Heritage Committee
- The Rambling House
- The Easter Camps
- Tidy Towns
- The ICA
- Active Retirement
- The Vintage Club
- The Community Development Group
- Community Games

There are such a wide variety of clubs/organisations to join that there really is something for everyone- no matter what age group. These organisations help in the organisation of numerous events which contribute to the strong sense of belonging in Feenagh-Kilmeedy, for example, the annual Vintage Run, the monthly gathering for the Rambling House (in its 10th year now), or the charity events organised by the GAA.

It was evident that there was a crossover of the same people in many committees from our interviews and consultations. This is a positive fact. However, there is a need for new blood to join organisations and committees to ensure the survival of them. In particular, an equal number of participants from Kilmeedy and Feenagh would have the most positive effects for the whole parish. A lack of younger people involved could point

towards busier lives, or that committees are out of touch with the community. What we found however, was that despite some beliefs, organisations know the importance of listening to new people, and are excited for them to get involved.

In the survey, question 4 read;

How do rate your opportunity to participate in community decision-making?			
Less than expected	As expected	More than expected	Consistently more
45%	42%	10%	3%

Figure 6.6.1. Table showing the results of the survey (available in appendix).

The response showed that 45% of people did not feel that they could participate in decisions and help change things for the better. Having a voice in decision making and feeling empowered to make changes can help to build stronger communities and better places. Having this sense of control can make people feel positive about their lives. Some people in interviews voiced that they were not made *aware* of decisions being made, which could be the real issue.

Presently, the parish has its own website, the *Feenagh-Kilmeedy Community Website* which provides local news and information. Events for the parish are also frequently published in *The Weekly Observer*. The issue may not be that people do not have the chance to participate in decisions, but that they are not aware that they can.



Figure 6.6.2. The community website is updated regularly with news and information.

Participation at local scale was one issue, but participation at a national scale was a different level. Many feel that there is a growing rural/urban divide in the country and it is sensed that due to people's choice to live rural, they are significantly left behind;

"We're a forgotten Parish."

This issue has frequently been in the media in the last number of years in particular. While the government has responded with policies such as *Realising Our Rural Potential*: Action Plan for Rural Development and the Rural Development Programme: Ireland 2014 – 2020 it is yet to be seen if these will have a major positive impact on rural dwellers.

6.7 -Open Space and Recreation

This section was rated 4 out of 7 on the Place Standard Tool in the group consultations. It refers to the natural landscape in the parish and the opportunities for play and recreation for both adults and children, outdoors and indoors. Good open space and recreation amenities improve the quality of our lives and our health.

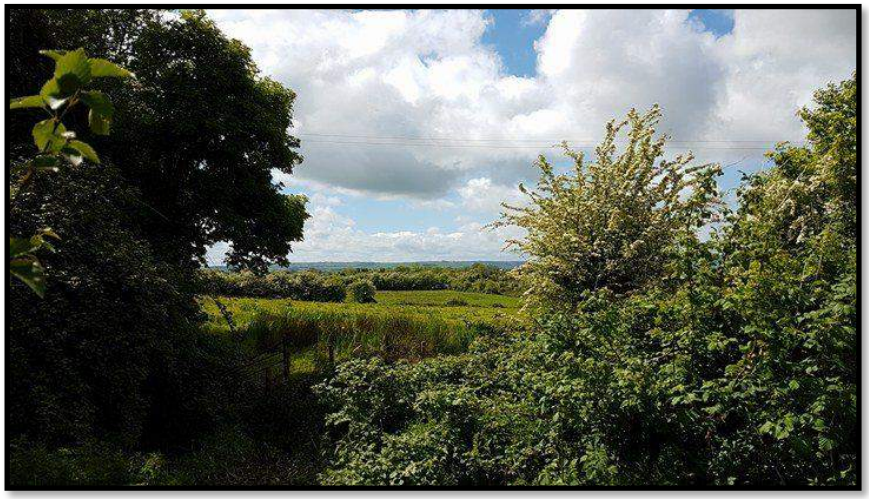


Figure 6.7.1. A photo of one view from Kilmeedy.

The natural landscape, views and greenery in the parish create an attractive and distinctive place that people enjoy being in. The natural landscape is a positive feature of the parish that should not be taken for granted in its beauty and delicateness. Landscape protection should monitor the provision of development on visually vulnerable parts of the landscape in Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

Kilmeedy has three routes which marked out on a useful map by the Glen bar; two in the village itself and one that rises up to the Holy Cross and down the ancient roadway, making a loop back into the village. Ballinruane Woods offer two walking trails; one 5km in length with views of the Golden Vale, and a shorter 2.5km with views looking towards Clare, Limerick and Tipperary.

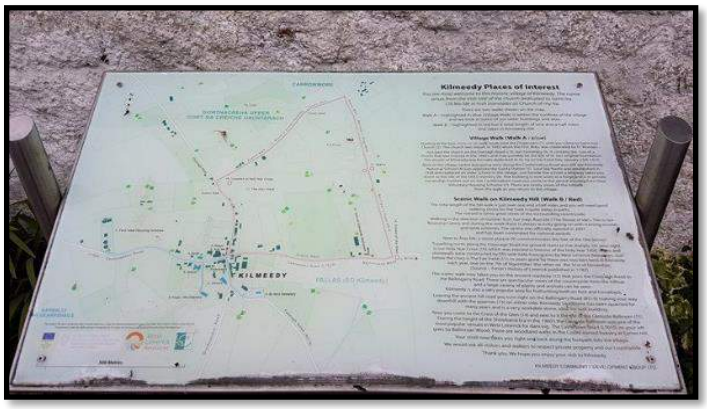


Figure 6.6.2. A photo of the walking route map located in Kilmeedy.

The sublime landscape, forestry and river Deel, not only have the potential to provide for locals, but to attract new people to the Feenagh-Kilmeedy too. The fact that the community is based in a rural area should be used to its advantage. There is potential for long-distance walking routes, looped walkways, cycle trails and indeed, water-based trails also by the River Deel. Coillte forestry and land that could have re-opened rights of access and passage for walkers have the potential to situate these. One potential walkway could run from Kilmeedy Hill to Garbally for example.

Good quality natural spaces in the form of walkways are not always readily available however. At times walkways can be hard to reach and hike, particularly in winter months. This means that they are not always accessible, particularly to the elderly or disabled. Other outdoor space in the parish does come in a variety of different environments including;

- Footpaths which are dotted with seating in both villages;
- The new Phoenix Project;
- The GAA pitch;
- The soccer pitch; and
- The Community Gardens



Figure 6.7.3. A photo of one of the seats that are located in Feenagh and Kilmeedy.

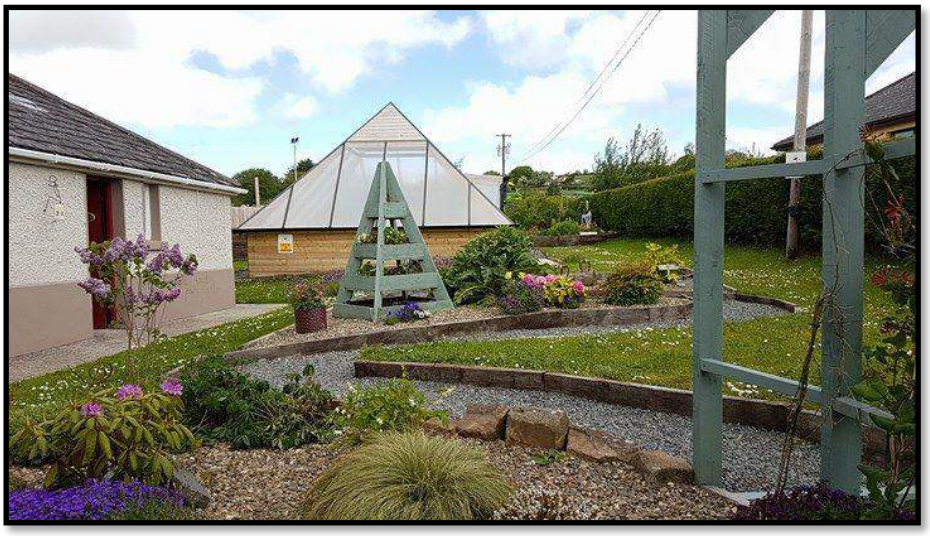


Figure 6.7.4. A photo of the Phoenix Project in Kilmeedy.

These spaces benefit the health and wellbeing of locals. At present Corran Deel/Kilmeedy Development Group are planning the opening of a playground beside Feenagh Community Hall within the next 18 months. At present families travel as far as Newcastle-West and Abbeyfeale for this amenity.

Whilst it is important to experience contact with nature, indoor recreational activities are just as important, especially in an Irish climate. In the parish, there are numerous social and community infrastructures in place for this;

- Áras an Íde and Feenagh Community Hall can be booked for a range of events and activities from dance lessons, to the Ramble House etc. The Development Group are extremely active and if numbers are available for an activity, they will organise these for the community.

- The newly finished Phoenix project at the renovated Garda Barracks in Kilmeedy with garden and Dome will provide another space that can be used for informal hang-outs, book club etc. The Dome will hopefully come into itself through the summer months and be utilised by locals, Kilmeedy primary school, employees on lunch breaks and the attendees of FÁS courses.

- The GAA plays an important role in providing recreational activities for the community. The GAA clubhouse offers a gym inside for members and upstairs events can be held such as movie nights for children. The main constraints appear to be a lack of time and volunteers when it comes to organising events.

- The three pubs in the parish provide meeting places for adults which forms an important part of any community in its own way. Pubs are an integral part of Irish culture, offering great spaces to meet friends.



Figure 6.7.5. Photos of the three pubs in Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

In this way Feenagh-Kilmeedy does offer open spaces and recreation that are affordable and accessible. However, it was brought up frequently that besides from pubs, there were no informal places for locals to meet in unstructured time. This is where a community shop/café would be an asset. A lack of opportunities for people to interact casually could be a deterring factor from new people settling in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. The lack of this social interaction could also be a factor of feelings of isolation in community members. Isolation can be damaging to our health and well-being. In Ireland 1 in 5 people have, or will suffer from depression at some stage in their lives (Lean On Me) and it is important that this is prevented as much as possible. This lost opportunity may also deter new people from settling in the parish.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study involved a comprehensive analysis of Feenagh-Kilmeedy, which was gained through detailed analysis of the villages and their hinterland, combined with an extensive local community consultation process. Many of the issues that have emerged have been identified below and reflect the key themes identified in the study.

A Local Plan for Feenagh-Kilmeedy

This report provides an important evidence base and a useful scoping exercise – which has identified a series of high level priorities for the area. These key themes, described below, reflect a potential set of priorities for advancing action and initiative in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. The findings of this study should be used to create a bespoke, action-oriented, local village plan/strategy for the Feenagh-Kilmeedy community. This type of local plan/strategy would provide a strong framework for local action, create a common sense of local purpose and, in practical terms, provide a basis for funding activities as well as assisting with negotiations with local authorities. It would be important as part of this process to engage formally with the Planning Policy unit in Limerick County and City Council. This plan/strategy would be a unique and innovative example of local initiative in the planning arena.

Perception and Image

Rural communities in Ireland have experienced a wide range of structural changes, including a decline in the role of agriculture, the loss of local services, a 'brain-drain' of local talent and out-migration. These challenges have naturally raised questions about the future viability of settlements like Feenagh-Kilmeedy.



Figure 6.7.6. A photo of one view of the landscape.

- As objective observers, we firmly believe that what makes Feenagh-Kilmeedy different from other places is its people. There are very few communities who have carried out the level of hard work and achieved the success that has been, in particular in the last 10 years, done;

- The local/plan strategy should include measures, such as those suggested below, to address the issue of perception/image;

- While the history and heritage of Feenagh-Kilmeedy is apparent and celebrated locally, this could be used to help attract people to the area through one community festival with alternating venue every year; and

- A recommendation is that next year the community apply for the IPB's 'Pride of Place' competition.

Community Governance

The report has acknowledged that there are a diverse range of very active community organisations in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. While it is fortunate to have so many, we suggest that the community should consider establishing a single 'umbrella' type Community Council (or similar model) that would coordinate action and decision-making for the entire community.

- Historically, Feenagh-Kilmeedy may have been viewed as two distinct and separate places by many. However, this perception, which has already begun to change for some, must change for all. A Community Council would help to achieve this. This does not mean the merging of identities or the loss of historic distinctiveness - it would simply allow the twin villages to operate more closely and more effectively by combining their energy and talents;

- The Community Council could be headed by an elected 'champion' who is willing to bring the community together and push hard for action and the delivery of better governance in general;

- What would be hoped from such a Community Council structure is that new people would be encouraged to participate in decision-making in the community. Engagement alone is not enough and active participation from individuals, businesses and local/central government too is needed; and

- There are numerous forms of communication in forms like the Weekly Observer, the Feenagh-Kilmeedy Community website, and Church newsletters regarding events and meetings. However, this could be improved further through a joint community Facebook page and a community text alert that people could opt for.

Funding and Grants

As the community is very proactive in the arena of local development, there is a continuing need to apply for several different grants to carry out the various development initiatives. These grant application procedures can often be quite laborious and extremely complex.

- As there are currently several different people applying for a variety of grants, it is recommended that a dedicated sub-committee of the Community Council be formed to handle and manage grant and funding applications;

- This team will have the sole responsibility of running the grant and funding system in Feenagh-Kilmeedy and should be run in a democratic manner; and

- There are many overlaps in the material required for grants and funding. Therefore, a system should be formed to gather and save grant and funding information to streamline the application process.

Village Services

The issue of Kilmeedy's lack of a village shop was one that was brought up consistently throughout the consultation process. This was coupled with the need for a meeting place for unstructured activities. The Kilmeedy Development Group is currently undergoing the application process to get funding for a community shop.

- It is recommended that any community enterprise diversify from just replacing like-for-like retail services to looking at an enterprise that can stimulate social and community activity to address issues such as loneliness and social isolation; and

- A community enterprise could also serve to offer teenagers in the community work experience. This may help engage more young people in volunteerism through having the opportunity to play an active role in the community.

Housing Provision

One of the main issues that came to light in regards to increasing the parish population, was the homogenisation of housing type and tenure in the villages.

- Subject to further analysis in the "Village Plan", the issue of dereliction and lack of housing tenure available can be tackled through a number of new housing grants mentioned in the main text body such as:
  - The Repair and Leasing Initiative
  - The Buy and Renewal Scheme
  - The Renovation Grant

- It is important that derelict buildings in the village cores in particular are utilised as opportunities for a higher provision of bought and rented properties, and low-cost spaces for small businesses; and

- The use of serviced sites, especially in Feenagh where a new village sewer system has been developed, should be encouraged.

Broadband and Connectivity

A higher quality broadband service should be one of the priorities for the community's business and domestic customers. High-speed, reliable broadband is an essential asset for any business, while digital connectivity is an increasingly important social asset for residents.

- Business owners in the area have mentioned the slow and unpredictable broadband connectivity as one of the major issues associated with being based in Feenagh-Kilmeedy. The provision of high-speed broadband will play a crucial role in retaining existing businesses in Feenagh-Kilmeedy, as well as attracting new business. One of the goals of the "Realising Our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development" plan is accelerating the rollout of high-speed broadband to all homes and businesses in rural Ireland as early as possible; and

- It needs to be acknowledged that exclusively local-led approaches to development are unlikely to have sufficient resources to sustain themselves in the long-term. Therefore, partnerships through engagement of agencies from local to national level is key to maintaining a sustainable rural community. Agencies such as Limerick County Council play an important role, in particular to the allocation of resources. Early engagement with the County Council could help to reduce waiting time for the high-speed internet to reach the community.

Transport & Mobility

One of the main barriers to achieving a good quality of life for many community members is the lack of transport available to villages, towns and cities for those without access to a car. Realistically, a modal shift from car to public transport is unlikely to happen in Feenagh-Kilmeedy at any meaningful scale. However, there are some opportunities to address the area's mobility issues:

- The Friday rural bus is a reliable and valuable service and should be built upon. Expanding the service to Feenagh, and possibly an even larger geographical area, would enhance user numbers and broaden its appeal. A newly plotted bus route, encompassing both Feenagh and Kilmeedy, should be included as part of the new "Village Plan/Strategy";

- There are many benefits of walking and cycling both for personal health and our environment. It takes 15 minutes to cycle from one village to the other, however the design and layout of the roads joining the villages are not safe enough at present. This should be considered as part of the in the Village plan/strategy;

- The Clonakilty Community Bike Scheme is a model that could be looked at recreating in Feenagh-Kilmeedy at a smaller scale. This bike rental service could be used by locals and/or visitors, with two bike collection points- one in Kilmeedy, one in Feenagh. A 'Donate Your Bike' event could be organised for fundraising for signs for the roads and safety gear such as helmets and reflective jackets.

Rural Amenity Potential

It was noted that Feenagh-Kilmeedy needs to use its rural location and scenery more to its advantage; the area has strong natural assets with an attractive village setting and a high-quality landscape setting. The economic benefits of rural tourism have the potential to revitalise local economies like Feenagh-Kilmeedy.

- As mentioned, small scale rural tourism could be important for the area, perhaps through the development of local amenity walks and historic/heritage assets. In order to expedite the opening of new walkways, through the opening of old access routes and rights of way in particular, it will be necessary to open up dialogue with landowners; and

- Any new walkways introduced in the area should be managed and developed so that their economic and social potential is realised while sustaining, protecting

and enhancing the environmental quality. An example of such a success are the Ballyhoura Heritage Trails in north-east Cork and south-east Limerick along the Ballyhoura Mountains which links a number of towns and villages with walkways both on- and off-road. This should be subject to further scrutiny in the local plan/strategy.

Appendix

Appendix A

Full map of Feenagh-Kilmeedy. The blue dots on the map indicate where an attendee of the Focus Groups lived. Arrows point to specific locations of features of interest in the community.



Appendix B

Set Interview Questions

1. Do you see Feenagh/Kilmeedy as one place?
2. What are the opportunities to build on?
3. What are the biggest constraints?
4. How far do you travel to work?
5. If you have children, where do they live?
6. Are you involved in any other local committees?
7. What would do you feel the parish is missing?
8. How do you see the parish in 10 years time?

These were the questions asked during the interview stage of the consultation process. Subsequently, follow-up questions were asked to interviewee(s) in relation to points that arose during the interviews.

Appendix C

Feenagh/Kilmeedy Village Study

Feenagh/Kilmeedy Village Study

UCC Centre for Planning Education and Research
UCC Community Academic Research Links
Kilmeedy Development Group

Feenagh/Kilmeedy Village Study requests your help. Please complete the following Survey based on your experience living/studying in Kilmeedy.

Name: Location: Age:

Group/Organization Date:

1. How would you rate the facilities and amenities in Feenagh/Kilmeedy?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Average ☐ Unsatisfied ☐ No opinion

2. How do you rate local employment prospects?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Average ☐ Unsatisfactory ☐ No opinion

3. How would you rate the standard of living in Feenagh/Kilmeedy?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Average ☐ Unsatisfactory ☐ No Opinion

4. How would you rate your opportunity to participate in community decision-making?

☐ Less than expected ☐ As expected ☐ More than expected ☐ Consistently more

5. How likely would you be to buy your lunch/tea/coffee if there was a shop/café in Kilmeedy?

☐ Very Likely ☐ Likely ☐ Unlikely ☐ No opinion

6. *How much would you be likely to spend daily on lunch/tea/coffee?*

☐ Under €2 ☐ Under €5 ☐ Under €10 ☐ €0

Additional Comments

☐ Please check this box if you are willing to answer follow up questions?

If so, please provide contact details below

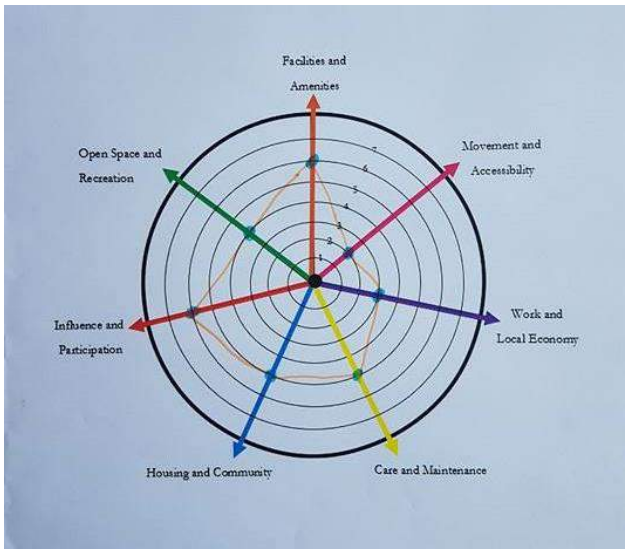
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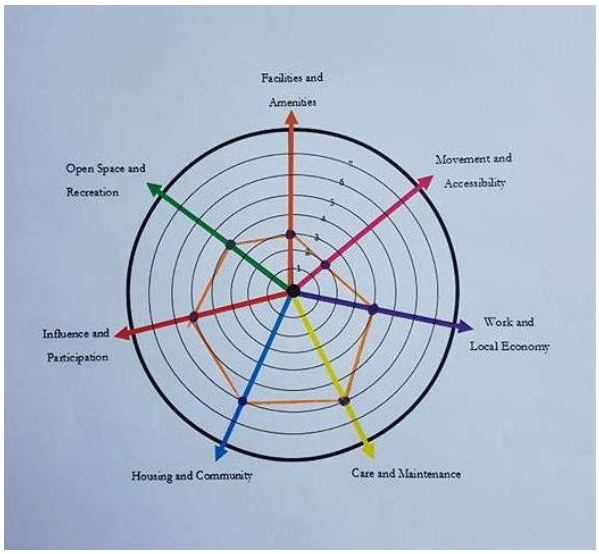
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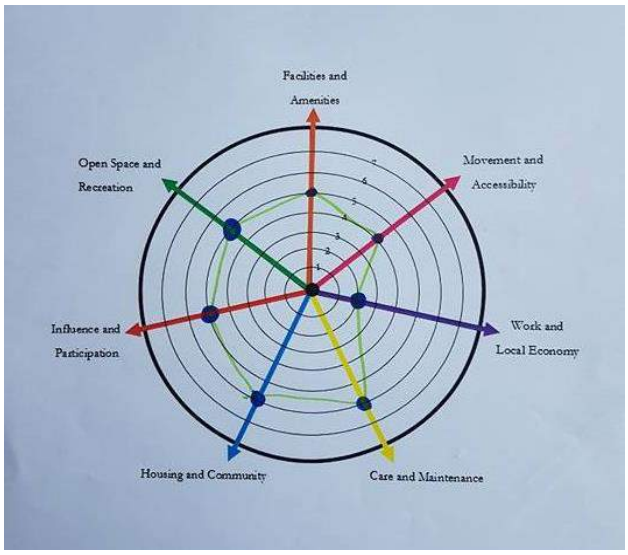
Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is valued and very much appreciated!

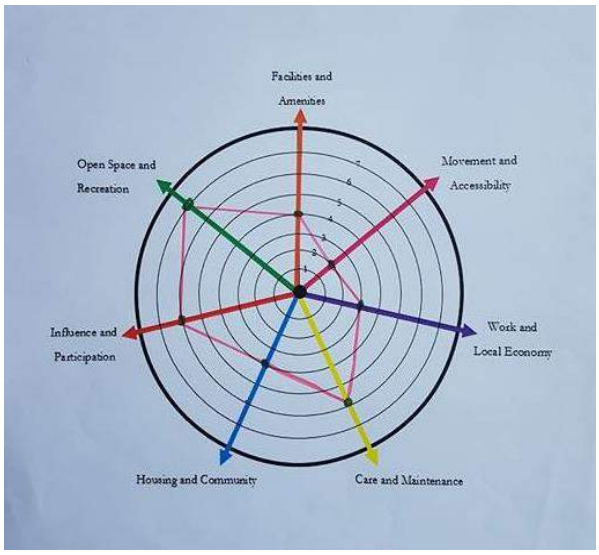
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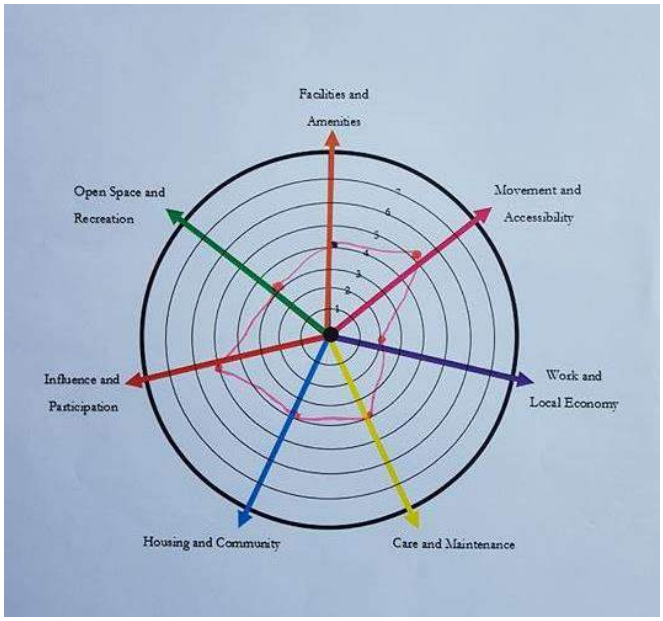
Place Standard Wheels from Focus Group Sessions

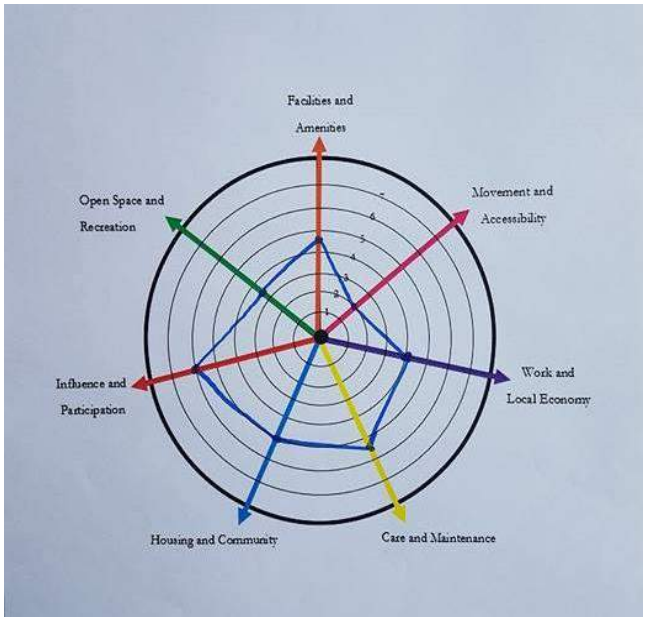


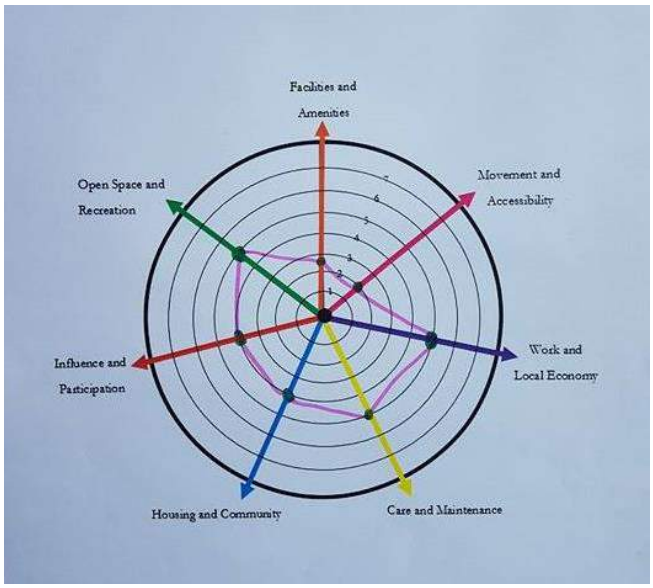


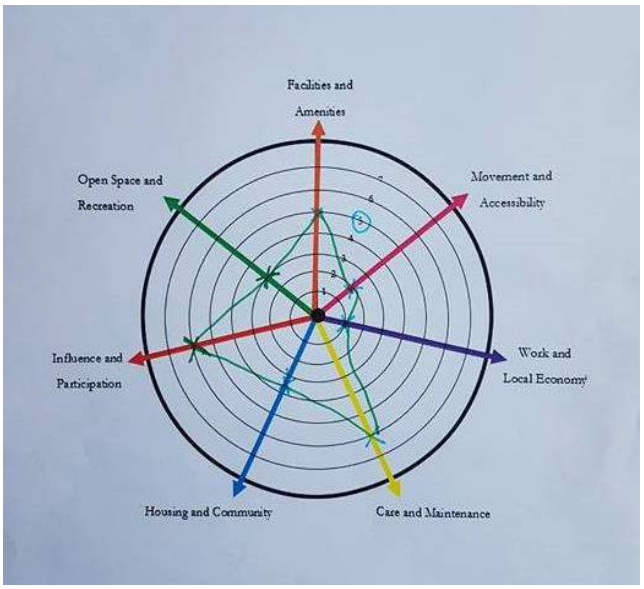





Facilities and Amenities
Movement and Accessibility
Work and Local Economy
Care and Maintenance
Housing and Community
Influence and Participation
Open Space and Recreation


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Appendix E

Compilation of the comments noted by participants of the focus groups, categorised under each section of the Place Standard Tool.






Work and Local Economy
FÁS Scheme 4
No Broadband or enterprise space for start-ups 4
Feenagh Oil 3
Geary's Garage 3
No employment opportunities 3
Donegan's Garage 2
Need to travel outside Parish to work 2
Farming Community (Dairy) 2
Not enough Population to sustain a new small business
CE Scheme
Youth consider teaching as the only option to stay & work in parish
No Summer or part-time work for Youth


Care and Maintenance
Derelict Buildings 4
Excellent refuse & recycling collection services 4
Housing Associations good with responsibilities 3
Little or no litter or vandalism 3
FÁS (CE Scheme) takes good care of - Soccer - GAA - Graveyards 8
Recycling & Clothes Banks in Feenagh 3
Tidy Towns v. important in upkeep 1
Small-scale litter & vandalism 2
No Tidy Towns in Feenagh - No Volunteers 2
GAA & Soccer Pitch taken v. good care of 2
Illegal dumping in hinterland 2
Fear of break-in 1
Need for community alert / Texting systems
Good care of graveyards 1
Boyracers in the area. Need speed-bumps 1


Housing and Community
• Assordable Housing (5)
• Range of housing types + tenures is limited (4)
• Housing contributes to positive environment (3)
• Elderly housing needs not catered for (3)
• Limited supply of good quality housing (2)
• Houses for Sale in the Parish (2)
• Housing is well integrated
• Planning Restrictions
• Some local need for one-off housing
• Large families housing needs not catered for


Influence and Participation
Strong sense of belonging & community (4)
Parish has a positive identity (5)
Not aware of decisions being made (3)
Sports Clubs give a strong sense of community (3)
GAA / Soccer Tidy Towns Devel. Groups Active Retirement = Strengthen Community (3)
Many groups available - something for everyone if want! (3)
People are generally engaged in community (2)
Communication could be improved by decision making forums / meetings (1)
History & Heritage in area apparent & celebrated (2)
Same people in all the committees (2)
Vintage Runs ✓ (1)
Sense of identity if you are part of GAA / Soccer (1)
Opening for Bi-Parish festival (1)


Open Space and Recreation
Does not cater for elderly or people with disabilities
4
Recreation opportunities are very limited
3
Natural Space is Excellent!
3
No Playground currently
2
Recreation only available for youth
2
Only GAA focused -Needs well met for team sports
3
Should be safer places for children to play outside
2
Wheelchair Access to GAA
1
Limited access to available resources
Phoenix Park
1
Need for Seating along Walkways
1
Development of Feenagh playground in future important
1
Corran-hill
1