

Tapping the Well

Vision for a sustainable, inclusive
and thriving future for Lisdoonvarna



Vision Preface

One of the key roles of architecture is to make places which bring people together.

In architecture, time and memory can bind past present and future together building on inherited cultural layers.

In my bag of memories dating from the mid- fifties, Lisdoonvarna still exists as a place, where people of all ages, all walks of life, all corners of the country and beyond, join in a daily routine of dancing, singing, bathing, drinking. Those suffering tired bodies and flagging spirits are renewed by the restorative qualities of the Spa Waters. A sense of excitement, fun, romance, erotic entanglements, combine with health and well being. This ethos was inspired by Spa towns in Europe at the time when the Lisdoonvarna Spa was established and is waiting to be revived and continued into the future.

We live now in a compartmentalised society where social overlap can be difficult. Mechanisms are needed to unlock the latent energy that results from exchange of ideas, skills, experiences.

I have witnessed, the extraordinary impact that a new ingredient can have on a community. I am speaking of Common Knowledge and the inspirational set of values that they have brought to this collaborative table.

I have witnessed ACT architects successfully setting up an open-ended forum of engagement, in a community of which they are not a part and one excited participant heard to say

“We were asked questions we have never been asked before and we were very pleased to answer them”!

The process revealed a confluence of diverse energies within the community. Our combined task was to listen, to translate, to prioritise the wishes of many voices.

The ingredients of a thriving town already exist here and are waiting to be revived.

The tide has turned in our world. Respect for the free gifts of nature are at the core of the human agenda.

Health, well-being, community life, caring for our natural and human resources are acknowledged as the way forward.

The legacy that Lisdoonvarna has inherited is now a resource for the future.

Shelley McNamara
Architect and Lisdoonvarna Native

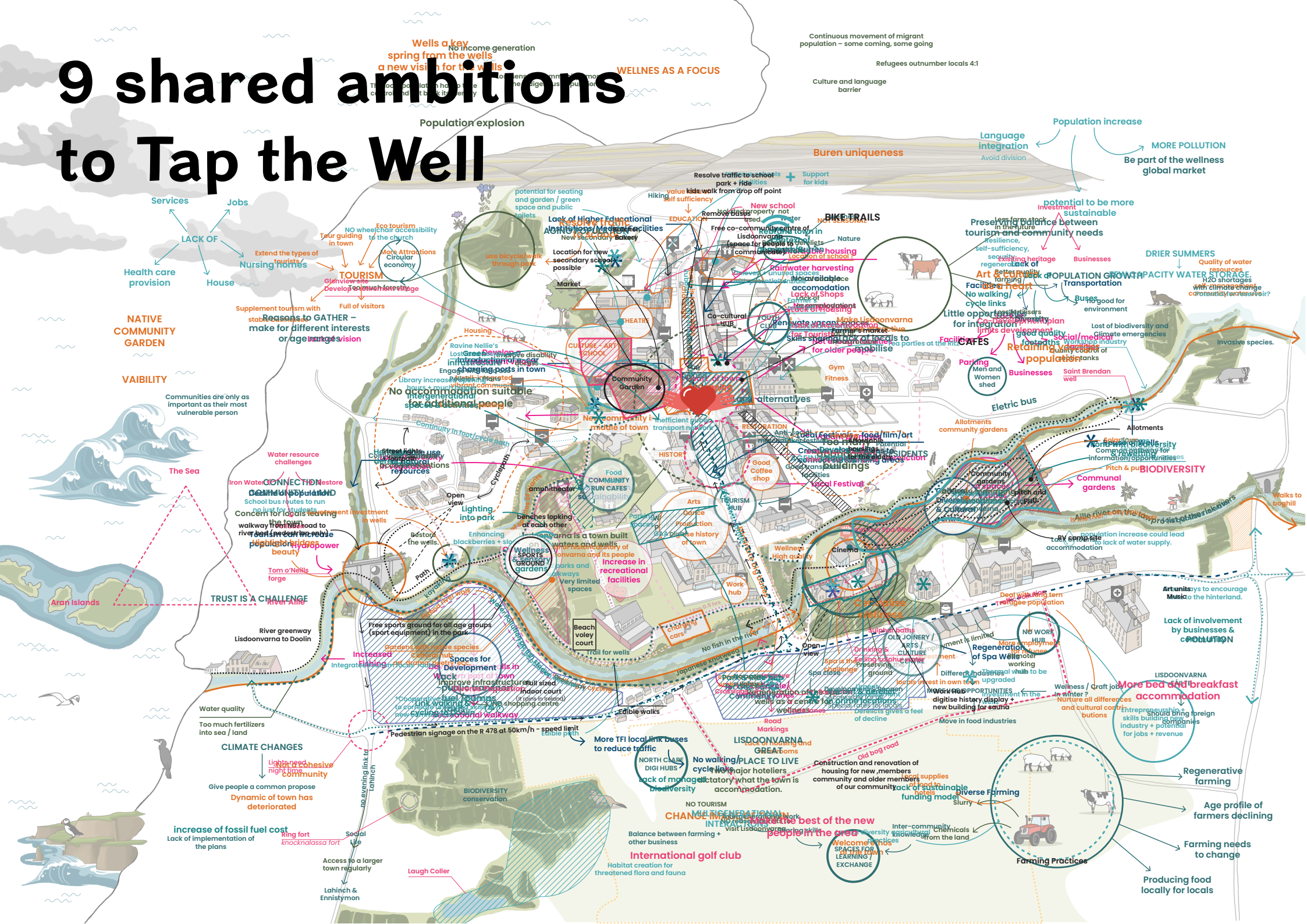
Vision Overview

During 2023, the Lisdoonvarna community came together with the support of a project team including architect Shelley McNamara, native of Lisdoonvarna, Fionn Kidney of local social enterprise Common Knowledge, and architects ACT Studio working in consultation with Lisdoonvarna Failte CLG, to express a future vision for the town rooted in its heritage of wellbeing.

This wellbeing heritage owes its origins to the rich life-giving waters that run beneath the Lisdoonvarna. Now as the town gazes towards the distant future, it's become clear through the participation of young and old, new and established community members, that the wells of community, nature and culture also run deep in this town, and offer a vast source of personal, social, environmental and economic wellbeing.

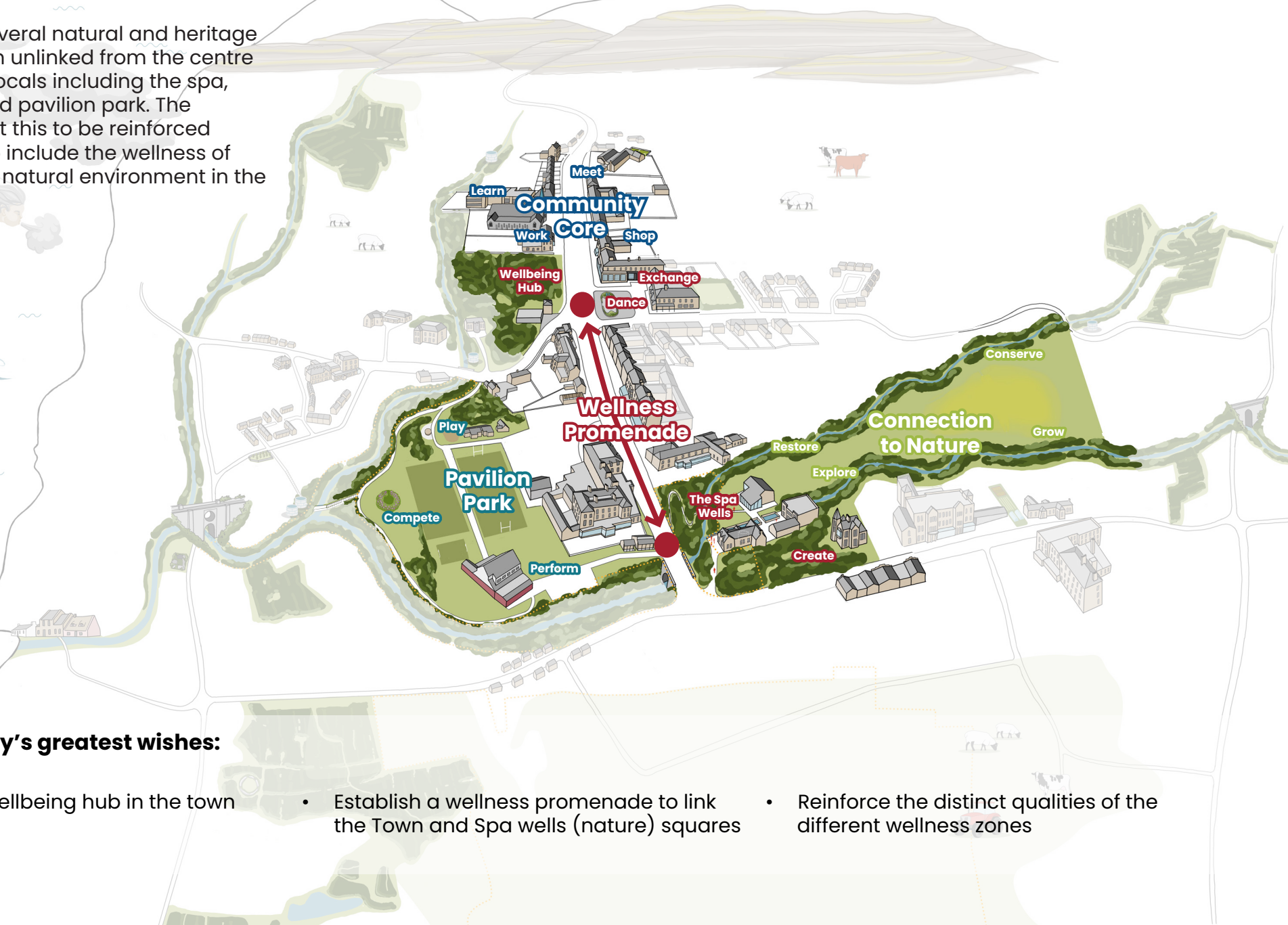
As the culmination of a process involving more than 150 people from the community, rather than a plan, the Tapping the Well vision offers an expression of the community's most widely shared ambitions, and greatest accompanying wishes, to help guide Lisdoonvarna to a thriving, sustainable and inclusive future.

9 shared ambitions to Tap the Well



1. Bring wellbeing to the centre of the town

Our town has several natural and heritage sites that remain unlinked from the centre for visitors and locals including the spa, commonage and pavilion park. The community want this to be reinforced and extended to include the wellness of community and natural environment in the town centre.



The community's greatest wishes:

- Establish a wellbeing hub in the town centre
- Establish a wellness promenade to link the Town and Spa wells (nature) squares
- Reinforce the distinct qualities of the different wellness zones

2. Reestablish The Spa as a social magnet

Our once-thriving Victorian Spa built on the flow of rich sulphur, magnesia and iron wells is the origin of our town and wellbeing industry. Our community's greatest ambition is that the Spa is regenerated to once again become a resource for locals and visitors alike, and a gateway to a newly-accessible commonage.



The community's greatest wishes:

- Reimagine the Spawells site as a contemporary resource for community and visitor wellbeing whilst building on its heritage
- Use our commonage landscape and rivers for saunas, natural remedies and relaxation
- Become once again internationally recognised as a centre for wellbeing

3. Enrich the town square

We are fortunate to have a large town square that offers great potential as a place to meet, to relax, to dance and to welcome.

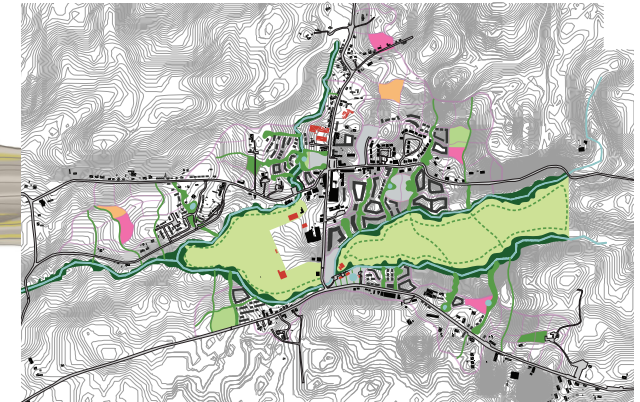


The community's greatest wishes:

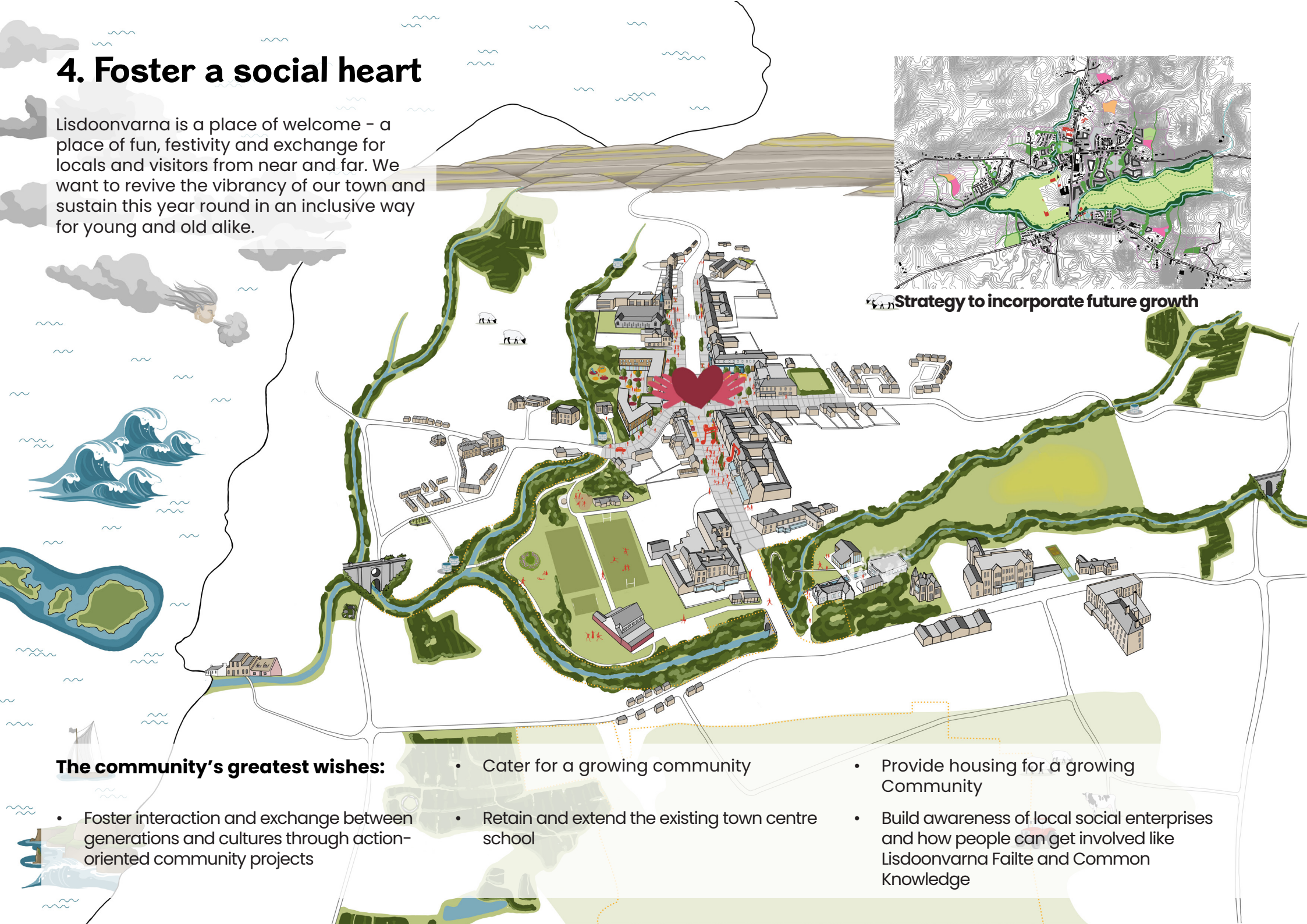
- Extend and upgrade the square, prioritising people and pedestrians in our main permanent public spaces for performances, dancing and events
- Unlock and link the square with the surrounding area
- Use what we have by restoring and reactivating buildings on the square

4. Foster a social heart

Lisdoonvarna is a place of welcome – a place of fun, festivity and exchange for locals and visitors from near and far. We want to revive the vibrancy of our town and sustain this year round in an inclusive way for young and old alike.



Strategy to incorporate future growth



The community's greatest wishes:

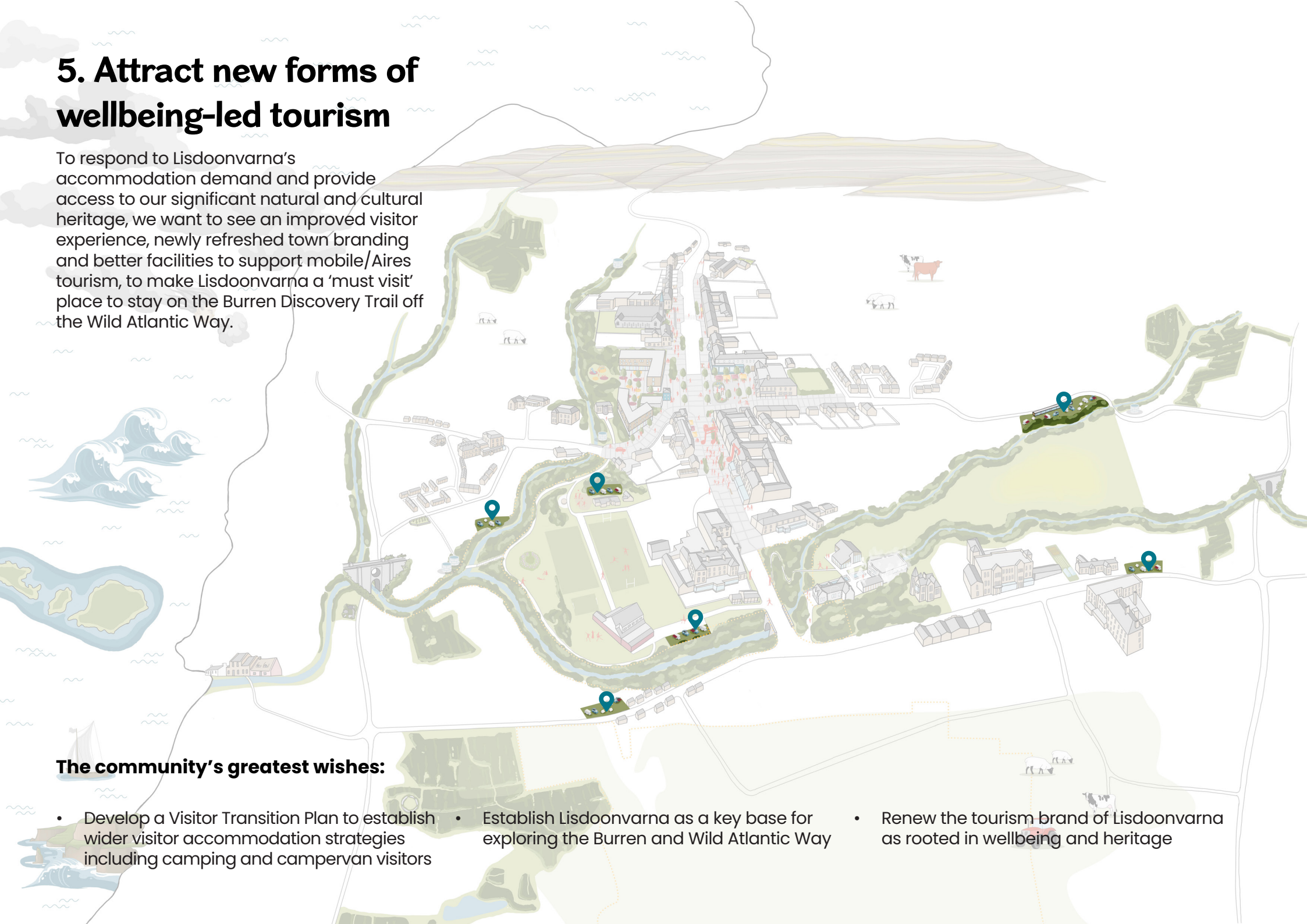
- Foster interaction and exchange between generations and cultures through action-oriented community projects
- Cater for a growing community
- Retain and extend the existing town centre school
- Provide housing for a growing Community
- Build awareness of local social enterprises and how people can get involved like Lisdoonvarna Failte and Common Knowledge

5. Attract new forms of wellbeing-led tourism

To respond to Lisdoonvarna's accommodation demand and provide access to our significant natural and cultural heritage, we want to see an improved visitor experience, newly refreshed town branding and better facilities to support mobile/Aires tourism, to make Lisdoonvarna a 'must visit' place to stay on the Burren Discovery Trail off the Wild Atlantic Way.

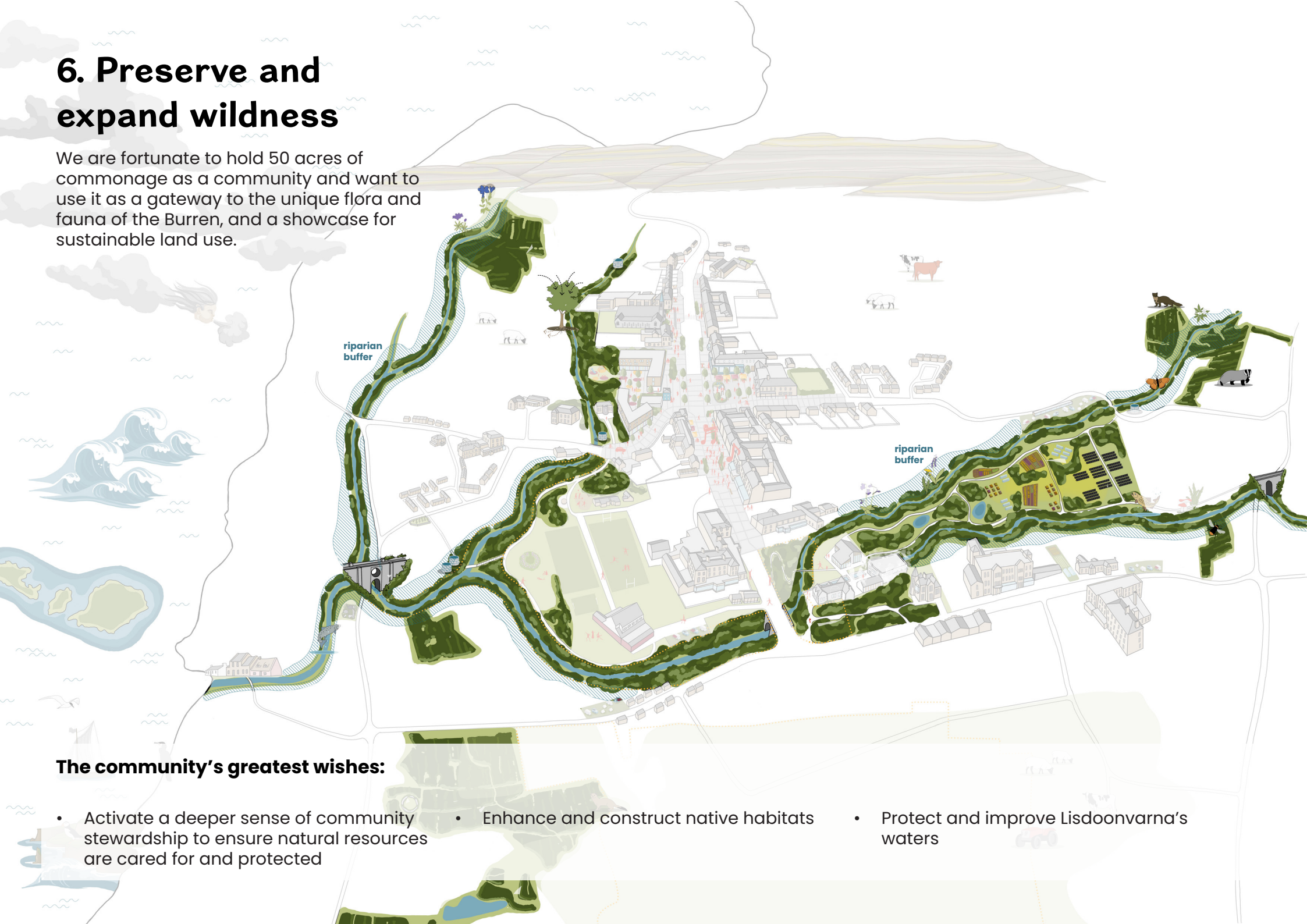
The community's greatest wishes:

- Develop a Visitor Transition Plan to establish wider visitor accommodation strategies including camping and campervan visitors
- Establish Lisdoonvarna as a key base for exploring the Burren and Wild Atlantic Way
- Renew the tourism brand of Lisdoonvarna as rooted in wellbeing and heritage



6. Preserve and expand wildness

We are fortunate to hold 50 acres of commonage as a community and want to use it as a gateway to the unique flora and fauna of the Burren, and a showcase for sustainable land use.



The community's greatest wishes:

- Activate a deeper sense of community stewardship to ensure natural resources are cared for and protected
- Enhance and construct native habitats
- Protect and improve Lisdoonvarna's waters

7. Offer a home for new creative energy

Lisdoonvarna has a deep heritage in creativity and entrepreneurship. Build on the development of the artists studios to encourage other creative industries, activities and events.

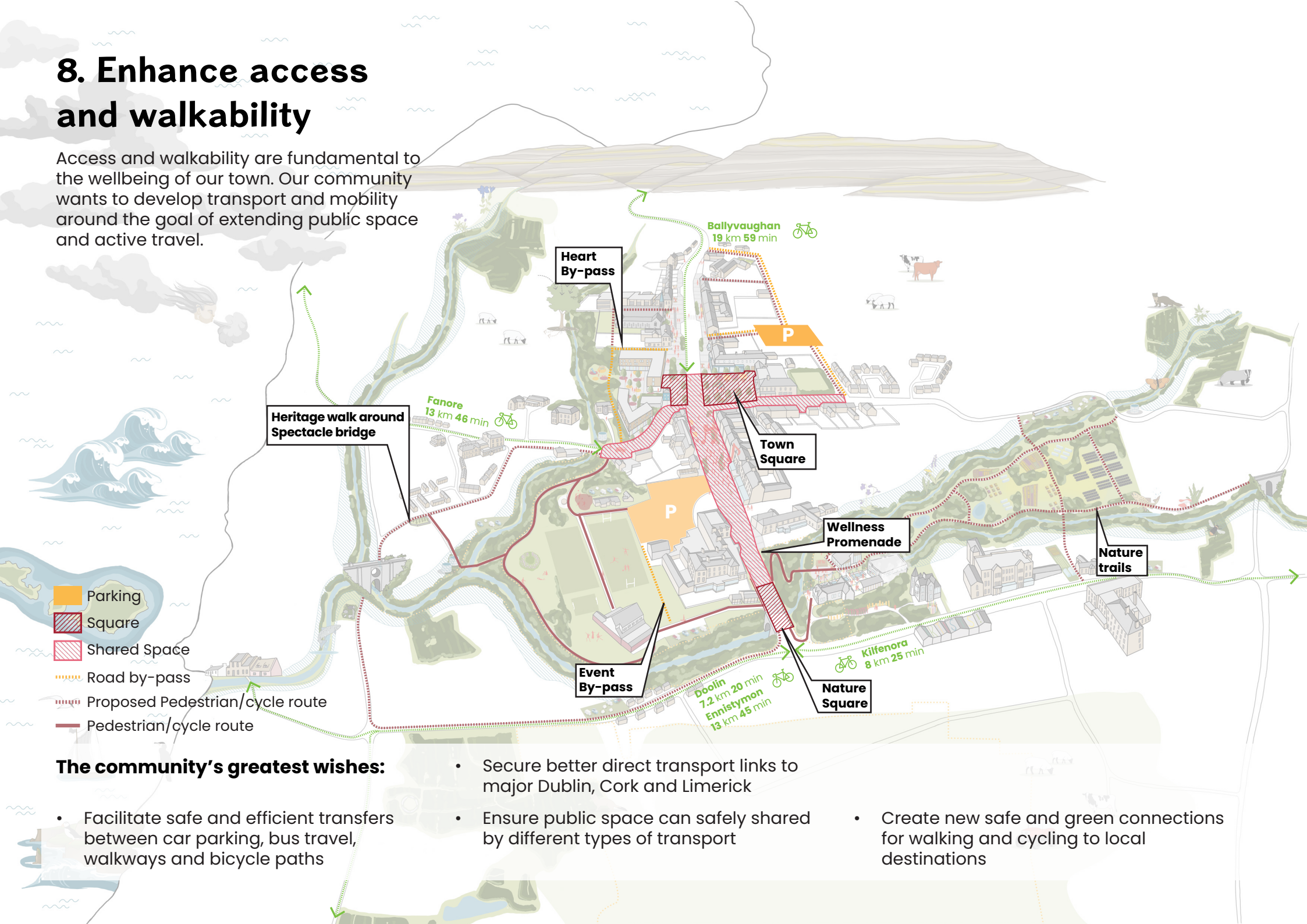


The community's greatest wishes:

- Become a hub for artists – Printers, Writers, Painters, Dancers, Sculptor, Musicians, Composers
- Establish a year-round programme of social activity that builds on our heritage of entertainment, music, story, art, food, dancing, courting
- Establish an artist residency scheme for the town

8. Enhance access and walkability

Access and walkability are fundamental to the wellbeing of our town. Our community wants to develop transport and mobility around the goal of extending public space and active travel.

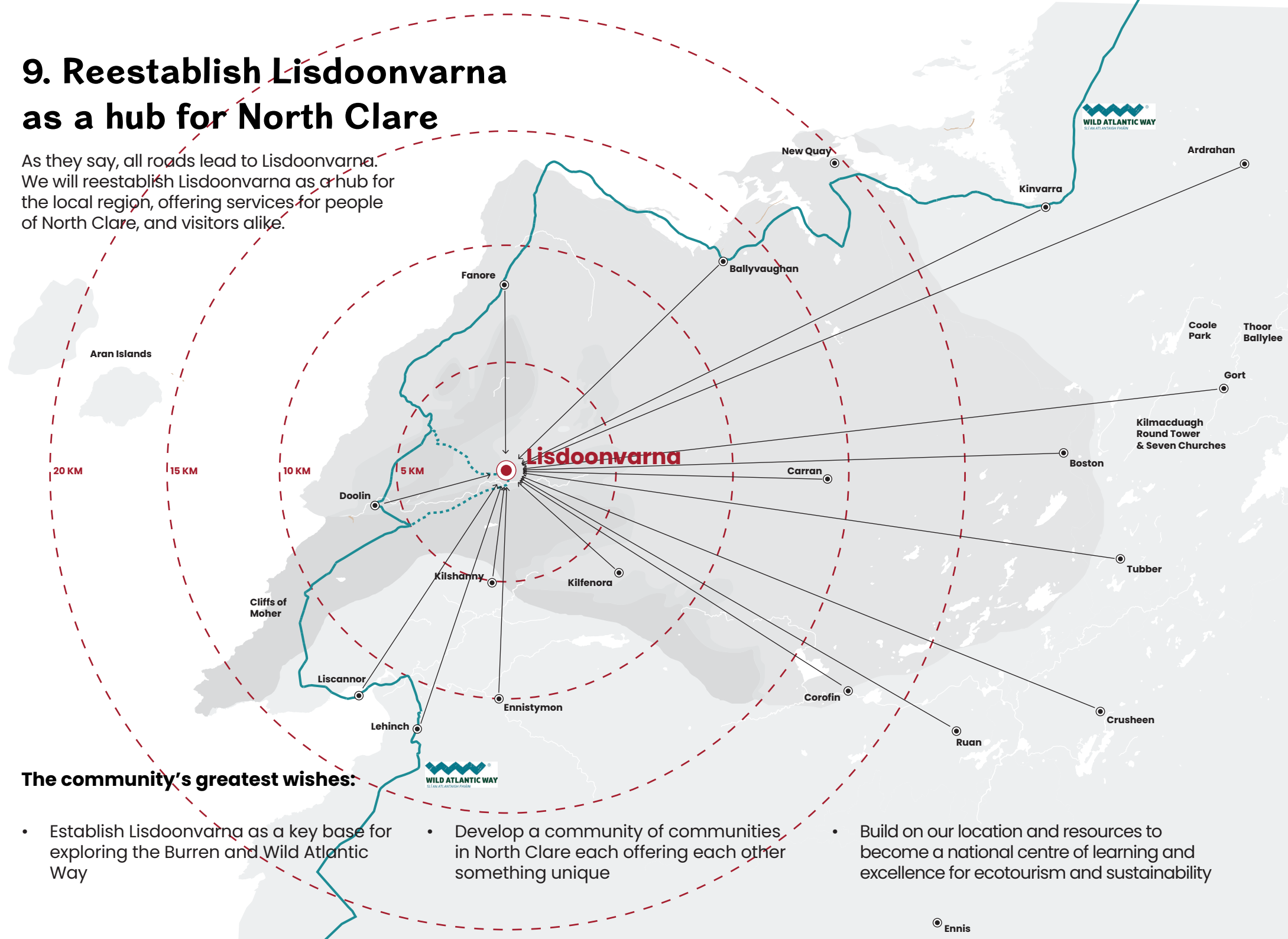


The community's greatest wishes:

- Facilitate safe and efficient transfers between car parking, bus travel, walkways and bicycle paths
- Secure better direct transport links to major Dublin, Cork and Limerick
- Ensure public space can safely shared by different types of transport
- Create new safe and green connections for walking and cycling to local destinations

9. Reestablish Lisdoonvarna as a hub for North Clare

As they say, all roads lead to Lisdoonvarna. We will reestablish Lisdoonvarna as a hub for the local region, offering services for people of North Clare, and visitors alike.



The community's greatest wishes:

- Establish Lisdoonvarna as a key base for exploring the Burren and Wild Atlantic Way
- Develop a community of communities in North Clare each offering each other something unique
- Build on our location and resources to become a national centre of learning and excellence for ecotourism and sustainability

Recommendations

Key recommendation from the project team to make this vision a reality:

Establish a future-focused town team

1. This is now the opportunity to seek expressions of interest in joining a new volunteer-led Town Team – to assemble a diverse group of local champions and representatives that can build on this work, represent the interests of the people of Lisdoonvarna and start to prioritise decisions. We would hope that members would be committed to long-term stewardship and strategic development of Lisdoonvarna's interests. We see the possibility of Involving people, organisations and businesses from the local and catchment area, and integrating representation of key local organisations.
2. New relationships with external stakeholders could now be established – the Local Authority, Fáilte Ireland, Clare Local Development Company and other relevant agencies & departments could be invited to meet with the Town Team to progress the way forward.
3. Work towards generating financial support for the resources necessary 'on the ground' to drive forward regeneration projects, manage community owned assets, and work with external stakeholders between Town Team meetings.
4. Take the opportunity now, to capitalise on current support by working towards key viable capital projects that support this vision.
5. Seek to set up a collaboration with the Local Authority to convert the ambitions in this vision, heritage plan, biodiversity plan, park master plan and sustainable energy community master plan into a viable overall town master plan that can inform long term future development.

Acknowledgements

Hometown Architect is funded by the Irish Architecture Foundation as part of the Reimagine programme. Through fieldwork projects, Reimagine supports communities across Ireland to partner with architects to co-create and co-design solutions to problems or opportunities they have identified in their locality. Hometown Architect is funded by the Arts Council and the Department of Rural and Community Development, with additional support to the Irish Architecture Foundation from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

**Irish
Architecture
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An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaíthe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

**RE—
IMAGINE** IAF

ACT
Accelerating Change Together



Annex

Vision Development

A Community imagining

Over the course of two community engagement workshops and a vision launch and discussion, the vision 2050 Vision for Lisdoonvarna was developed. Stakeholders from throughout the community were invited to participate with radio, newspaper social media and local networks were used to promote the events.

Stakeholders worked in groups and through various exercises established challenges and opportunities as well and proposals for the towns future.

A map was used as the device through which ideas were communicated and recorded with new layers being added at each engagement to build an ever richer image of the future vision.

The final map is the result of this engagement process where the community actively participate in the design for the communities future.



June Workshop 1

"Telling the Story of Lisdoonvarna"
• Presentation
• Workshop

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR
THE COMMUNITY

September Workshop 2

"Visualising Futures"
• Presentation
• Workshop

VISUALIZING THE
COMMUNITY INPUT BACK

November Lisdoonvarna 2050

Report used to:

UNDERSTAND WITH THE
COMMUNITY WHAT THE
NEXT STEP MIGHT BE

Building on existing plans

This vision for Lisdoonvarna has not been developed in isolation as previous plans and strategies for Lisdoonvarna have been produced in recent years. A key aim of this project has been to bring these plan together under an umbrella vision that acts as the shared community ambition and supports in the delivery of these plans in a holistic manner.



Lisdoonvarna Heritage Plan & Design Guide



an Chomhairle Oidhreacht
the Heritage Council



LISDOONVARNA BIODIVERSITY PLAN



2019

M MICHIGAN ROSS



Lisdoonvarna Heritage Site Strategic Plan

Final Presentation Deliverable
April 24th, 2023

at Musgrave, Dalton
hard Wu

Sustainable Energy Lisdoonvarna Community

Our vision is to drive the energy transition in Lisdoonvarna to create a low energy & low carbon community.

Be part of Lisdoonvarna Sustainable Energy Community
(in collaboration with Doolin SEC & Community)

Who can get involved

- Home Owners
- Business Owners
- Schools
- Community Groups

Why be part of Lisdoonvarna SEC

- Information on home & business energy grants
- Information on community energy grants
- Learn about Heat Pumps, retrofitting, Solar-PV, LED lighting and a lot more...
- Opportunities for 100% Community Owned Renewable Energy Projects
- Drive Energy Reduction in your community
- Be part of Lisdoonvarna's energy future
- Create local and Sustainable employment
- Keep money circulating in the local Economy

<https://www.facebook.com/lisdoonvarna.falite>
Sign up to SEAI newsletter <https://www.seai.ie/newsletter/>

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