

Chairperson's Report to AGM 2021

February 2020 – February 2021

Overview

The past year has been a particularly busy year for Imagine Dundrum. From March onwards, all monthly meetings went online, but in spite of Covid the group progressed with many of our projects and saw some 'green shoots' emerge towards the fulfilment of a number of our aspirations for Dundrum Village.

While it hasn't yet been possible to celebrate or mark the fifth year of the work of Imagine Dundrum, and our 50th monthly meeting, we take pride in the sustained and committed work of the members of the group, and their determination to hold on and hold out for the vision that energises the work!

Responding to the new County Development Plan initial consultation

In early 2020, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown (DLR) County Council published its Issues Paper inviting submissions for the first stage of the next County Development Plan, which will span 2022-2028. Imagine Dundrum made a detailed submission with a series of proposals that would advance our vision for the Village as a thriving, inclusive, sustainable place blending the rich past of the Village and its present strengths with its future as a modern urban Village. Among the comprehensive proposals, the submission highlighted the need for a neighbourhood approach to planning, that gives priority to communities over individual apartment developments. We argued for age-friendly, family-friendly, child-friendly and disability friendly urban planning, for housing opportunities for all, including downsizing opportunities. A core focus of our submission was to restate the case for a Civic Centre for Dundrum.

Moving closer to a Civic Centre for Dundrum

A core focus of our work since 2016 has been to make the case for a Civic Centre at the heart of the Village, including a modern library, civic offices and community facilities. So, we were delighted with the news in May that the Council had applied to the Government for funding for the Civic, Community and Cultural Centre for Dundrum, including a modern library. We look forward now to positive news about that funding.

Securing the character and streetscape of Dundrum

A key priority for Imagine Dundrum has been our campaign for the heritage buildings in the Village. We have campaigned strongly for designation of key buildings as part of an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), which will offer a measure of protection. Imagine Dundrum was delighted to see that the draft County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, which has been published for consultation (www.dlrcoco.ie) has designated key buildings on Main Street as a Candidate ACA. These buildings will be assessed now by the Council for full ACA status, but the first important step has been taken.

Imagine Dundrum also offered the new Heritage Officer for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown a heritage tour of Dundrum, and were delighted when she accepted the offer. Imagine Dundrum members highlighted to the Heritage Officer the architectural heritage of the Village and its rich past.

As part of Imagine Dundrum's effort to highlight the value of the heritage buildings on Main Street, Imagine Dundrum commissioned a series of greeting cards showing images of old Dundrum. These cards celebrate the past of the village as well as generating much needed funds for Imagine Dundrum. The history of Main Street, published in 2018 by Imagine Dundrum, continues to sell well.

Busconnects

Imagine Dundrum was seriously concerned about the negative impact that both the first and subsequent set of Busconnects proposals would have on Dundrum Main Street. The Imagine Dundrum team who studied these proposals have met with the National Transport Authority and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to express these concerns, and have made detailed submissions highlighting our concerns and proposing alternatives. NTA has agreed to take on board the Imagine Dundrum proposals when the final plans for bus traffic in Dundrum are being developed.

Reinvigorating Main Street

In mid-year, and as a response to Covid, DLR County Council began work on a series of changes to Main Street, aimed at improving social mobility, pedestrian access and cycling facilities, as well as improvements to the public realm.

Imagine Dundrum made two detailed written proposals to DLR outlining options and opportunities for improvements on Main Street. In addition, members of the group met on two occasions with the DLR engineers, to discuss our proposals, and in particular, to press for attention to be paid to the needs of people with disabilities in the design of the changes to the street. .

Imagine Dundrum members met with DLR architect also and were successful in highlighting a number of measures to assist wheelchair users and people with mobility issues, the need for tables and seating designed with the needs of wheelchair users in mind, and the importance of thinking of children when designing the streetscape. We also made a successful case for the removal of redundant poles and signage. The Village certainly looks more welcoming and cared-for than in the recent past and Imagine Dundrum has welcomed and supported these improvements. We are very happy that in response to our focus on children in the Village, a hopscotch will be set out at the library late this year, and should provide fun for all ages!

Communications

Maintaining connections

Linking with local residents, Residents Associations and the strong base of supporters on our mailing list is an important task for Imagine Dundrum. During the year, notices were sent to our mailing list members of over 1,000 local people, keeping in touch with them with local developments. We encouraged members to engage with the public consultation on the next County Development Plan.

Imagine Dundrum is an enthusiastic member organisation of the County's Public Participation Network, attending its plenary sessions and availing of the training offered (especially useful in devising new ways of working since the start of the pandemic. This active membership helps to raise Imagine Dundrum's profile among the many community and voluntary groups across the County.

Newsletter

Three newsletters were circulated to mailing list members, with news of a range of matters of interest for Dundrum Village.

Press coverage

The Dublin Gazette featured an article about Dundrum Village and its future, and the Three Rock Panorama magazine also included an article updating the community on our work.

The Imagine Dundrum website

An effective and efficient website is essential to communicate with those who have an interest in our work, and to reach out to new people and groups. This year, Imagine Dundrum was successful in securing a grant from DLR County Council to invest in building a new website to enhance our communications. The new and enhanced website will be up and running shortly.

Engaging with decision-makers

Imagine Dundrum has, from the start, looked to engage positively with those who will make the big decisions about the future of the village – Hammerson, owner of the old Shopping Centre site, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council – engineers, architects, conservationists, Councillors.

Hammerson

In the past year, we have continued to keep in touch with Hammerson, with requests for updates on their plans and expected schedules for the redevelopment of the old Shopping Centre site.

A key focus of our engagement has been to request improvements in the premises owned by Hammerson on Main Street Dundrum. Members of Imagine Dundrum met with Hammerson representatives and did a walkabout on the street, highlighting the buildings in need of work. The engagement on this matter is ongoing.

Council officials

The main contact with DLR officials has been in relation to the public realm work on Main Street, and also in relation to the Busconnects proposals, both already noted earlier in this report.

The Land Development Agency

Imagine Dundrum representatives were invited to meet (online) with the Land Development Agency as part of the initial public consultation on the development of the Central Mental Hospital site. The focus of the Imagine Dundrum approach was to highlight the importance of ensuring that the development of the site is congruent with the future development of Dundrum Village, and that there is integrated planning in relation to traffic management, community facilities, provision of housing for the local community.

Imagine Dundrum's first webinar

Imagine Dundrum is committed to sharing ideas about how to create the best possible place for people to live, work, play and do business. Around 150 local people attended Imagine Dundrum's very first webinar in late November. Chaired by author and journalist Frank McDonald, expert speakers offered creative thinking on several fronts: redesigning urban spaces for people rather than

cars; fully including children and their play needs in the future Dundrum; making Main Street disability-friendly; and involving all stakeholders in planning our Village's future together.

Links with the Irish Architecture Foundation

Imagine Dundrum has built strong links with the Irish Architecture Foundation since our work began, providing expert support for our consultation with children and young people as part of our submission to the DLR Local Area Plan process.

In 2020, the Foundation provided us with support and advice for the design of our webinar. Imagine Dundrum Chairperson was also invited to make a presentation at the launch of the AIF's new Placemaking online resource, having been the Foundation's first involvement in a local Placemaking initiative through the Imagine Dundrum children's consultation.

Lighting up the Village in December

Imagine Dundrum secured a Seasonal Fund grant from the Council, and with volunteer energy, plus vital practical help from local businesses, installed Christmas lights on Main Street for the first time.

A flier was distributed to all the businesses on Main Street by Imagine Dundrum members, inviting the businesses to participate in the seasonal effort by decorating their premises. Premises were offered planted window boxes, and this offer was taken up by several businesses. Imagine Dundrum also teamed up with the Dundrum Library to showcase Christmas artwork from local schoolchildren.

Funding

Imagine Dundrum made a number of successful grant applications to DLR County Council for community and business grants to support our work. The grants enabled us to hold our webinar, improve our website, and much more. In addition, group members pay an annual subscription, and there is a modest income stream from sales of the 'Main Street' booklet and the new Dundrum greetings cards.

Acknowledgements

Imagine Dundrum wishes to thank all those who assisted and supported the work of the group in the past year. We are grateful to graphic designer Larry Byrne for his generous help with our newsletters and communications, to the Architecture Foundation for its assistance on a range of aspects of the work, to the Chair and speakers at our webinar for their time and expertise.

Imagine Dundrum would like to acknowledge the strong commitment of local TDs and Ward councillors to the efforts to secure a Civic Centre for Dundrum, and to the improvements on Main Street.

We wish to thank Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council officials for their engagement with us in relation to Dundrum Village and its future, and also to thank the Council for the grant assistance for our various projects.

Anne Colgan, Chairperson, February 2021