

DRAFT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027 – SUBMISSION FROM BLACKROCK TIDY TOWNS

A Chara,

Blackrock Tidy Towns notes that the new Draft Plan again regards the village of Blackrock as part of the greater Dundalk area rather than being a settlement in its own right. We hope that the planned Urban Area Plan / Local Area Plan (ref. Chapter 2, CS10) will afford due recognition to the separate identity of Blackrock and to its unique and specific development requirements to maximise and protect this identity.

We are pleased to see the following included in the new Draft Plan:

- Coastal Greenway from Dundalk to Blackrock to be incorporated into the planned flood defences (Chapter 7 - MOV30)
- Policies on Rights of Way (Chapter 7 - MOV49 and MOV50). However, we note that the existing County Development Plan also includes a policy to map and list public rights of way, and wonder whether this process was begun during the lifetime of the existing Plan?
- Recognition of the value of a range of trees and stands of trees (Chapter 8 and Appendix 5)
- Inclusion of the coastal road through the village as a Scenic Route (Chapter 8, Table 8.19/SR23), and the inclusion of a number of Views and Prospects (Chapter 8 and Appendix 6). We suggest, however, that the description of VP46 in Table 8.15 could be subject to misinterpretation (“Views out to sea from the Cockle Hill Road” – Cockle Hill Road begins only near Ard Shee housing estate and extends westwards to the Greengates). We suggest the description should be modified to “Views over the River Fane Estuary on the R132 from Rock Court to St. Fursey’s Terrace”). Also, it would appear that your identification of VP47 on Map 8.17 is incorrect as it is placed at Haggardstown Old Graveyard on the Old Golf Links Road rather than at St. Fursey’s Church in Haggardstown further to the west.
- Recognition of the special amenity value of Louth Bank Walls (Appendix 8 – GI6)

We propose that the following projects/initiatives relating to Blackrock be added to this Draft Plan. Items 2 - 5 are from Blackrock Tidy Towns’ current Three Year Plan which was produced in early 2020 and which involved significant local public consultation and input. A copy of this Plan was forwarded to Louth County Council.

1. Include Main Street, Blackrock as a Level 3 Retailing Centre in Chapter 5, Table 5.2. Otherwise the retail/commercial centre of the village is not recognised at all in the Draft Plan as far as we can determine.
2. Include a policy to provide additional off-street parking in the vicinity of the village centre. This is necessary to cater for the significant growth of commercial activity in Blackrock, and the growing number of visitors attracted to the village as a result of the work undertaken by ourselves and the increasing retail and hospitality attractions.
3. Include a planned upgrading of Sandy Lane, to include improved footpaths and undergrounding of overhead networks. Sandy Lane is the location of many of the community facilities in the village, and is one of the main access roads to the village centre from the unprecedented number of new housing developments to the west of the village.

4. As part of the longer term plan for the Louth Coastal Way, include the construction of a pedestrian and cycleway bridge over the mouth of the River Fane in the vicinity of the entrance to Fane View housing estate. This would open up the prospect of a coastal greenway route linking Blackrock to Seabank, Castlebellingham, Annagassan and beyond.
5. Include a proposal that the planned flood defences incorporate a restoration of the northern portion of the main beach which has gradually disappeared since the late 1950s. Blackrock Tidy Towns commissioned Aquafact International Services in 2009 to carry out a study and produce a high level design for the restoration of the beach, but the implementation of the recommendations has been on hold pending the design for the flood defences. A copy of the report was forwarded to Louth County Council at the time.

Finally, we would ask that the relevant findings and recommendations from the following two significant reports commissioned by Blackrock Tidy Towns be taken into account where relevant in the new Draft Plan (copies already with Louth County Council):

- “Ecology and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan for Blackrock (2019)
- “The Architecture of Main Street, Blackrock” (2008)