

Village Plan
Upperlands
June 2023
(Final)



“The Next Good Thing”
maximising the long-term
development and
sustainability of
Upperlands



Introduction

This 'village plan' is an initial report of Upperlands village which provides a framework for future development.

The report identifies and recommends social, environmental and economic initiatives which will enable the sustainable development of Upperlands. The village improvements vary between smaller projects achievable in the short term to larger and more ambitious ideas which will involve further feasibility investigations.

The village plan provides a framework for the development of the village over an initial 6 year span. Consultation, research and analysis has been undertaken to ensure ideas suggested in this report relate directly to local needs and aspirations.

The village plan is an outline of community-identified priorities which can be used by developers, statutory authorities and residents to plan for the future of the Upperlands. As a community tool, it helps villagers make informed decisions about, for example, the suitability of development or additions to services etc.

It can also be used to focus efforts onto particular projects when applying for funding.

As part of this project, Youth and Village Services (shops, buses etc.) initiatives are seen as top priorities by the community have been developed to a stage where they can be part of an upcoming funding application.

Other suggested initiatives listed here, need to be developed in more detail, including in depth consultation with landowners, statutory authorities and consultants for technical advice.

Due to the current economic situation in Northern Ireland, funding is becoming increasingly difficult to secure. This has been taken into account when prioritising the initiatives which are most likely to attract funding in the short term. This will probably entail the operation of a number of small micro initiatives designed to maximise engagement, positivity and participation.

The overall plan is designed to be implemented in phases to maximise the long-term development and sustainability of Upperlands.

Garry McIlwaine
Upperlands Community Development



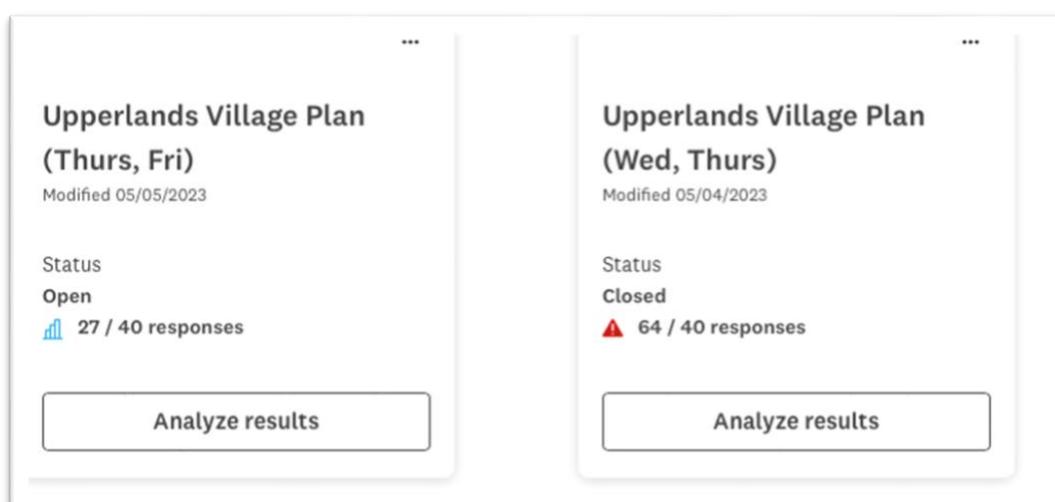
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Baseline Brief: Contextual Recent Research

Two* “Upperlands Village Plan” consultations by ‘SurveyMonkey’ transmit important messages informing Village Plan development...

1. Upperlands best qualities are peacefulness, Scenery and History/Dams/Buildings. Less than one tenth of respondents feel the village is meeting people’s needs.
2. The mill buildings, dams are very important to people 85% - 100%.
3. 100% of respondents want a proper historic trail and access to existing mill walks.
4. Youth has fewest opportunities with all other groups indicating 30% dissatisfaction.
5. 90% wish to see a permanent resolution to provision of an outdoor sports facility.
6. %92+ said it is essential / very important to have shops/businesses in Upperlands.
7. There is a general view that transport in/out of Upperlands is insufficient.
8. UVP’s “5 Areas” were all seen as important.
By far most important to respondents was ‘developing shops’.
Least important (but still 45% + each) were ‘involving the community’ and ‘attracting visitors’.
9. Road Safety, especially in relation for home-school pedestrians and pupils alighting school buses causes concern to 80%+ of respondents.
Speeding traffic is also an ongoing worry.



- Due to a response in excess of our ‘online allowance’ the questionnaire was run under two banners: “Wed/Thurs” and “Thurs/Fri”

Upperlands Community Development: “Profit for Purpose”

What is a “Social Enterprise”?

A Social Enterprise is a business that is run with the main purpose of generating funds that are then used for:

- Reinforcing its community
- Improving people's quality of life
- Working with what is already positive
- Being respectful to the environment.
- NOT harming established community businesses, groups etc.

At UC DL we refer to this as “Profit for Purpose”.

A social mission is at the heart of everything we do and all profits are reinvested towards achieving these goals.

NO INDIVIDUAL, GROUP, OTHER BUSINESS ETC. CAN EVER BENEFIT DIRECTLY FROM MEMBERSHIP, AFFILIATION OR OTHER CONNECTIONS WITH THE GROUP OR ITS BOARD.

One of the benefits of running a social enterprise can be providing employment for local people.

What are the ‘Powers’ of Upperlands Community Group?

Any “Community” needs to be aware of what their Community Group is able to do.

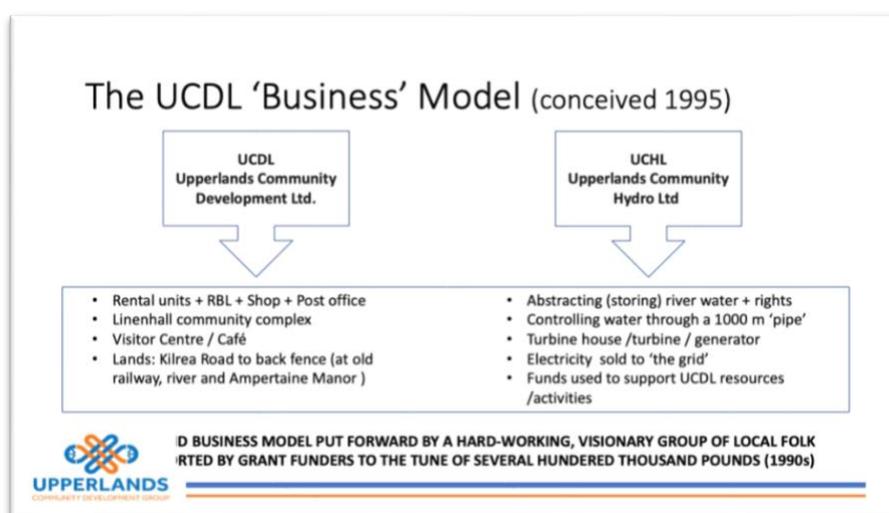
UC DL has got many responsibilities but, actually, very little power other than:

- Making decisions about the community buildings, land and finances
(Major decisions will need to have community support, ideally).

UC DL has no power whatsoever in relation to the property of others. Examples of areas where UC DL has no power are in relation to Clark’s Estate, Village Roads, Planning, Road Gritting etc.

UC DL **CAN**, however, be a representative of ‘the community’ when activities like those mentioned above are undergoing change, are ineffective etc.

“UC DL” has two separate ‘companies’ to its make-up, as illustrated in the diagram below, taken from a recent community consultation presentation.



Upperlands Community Development / Upperlands Community Hydro

For more than 20 years, community activities in Upperlands have been one element in the Community Group's two-pronged social enterprise model.

Company One:

Upperlands Community HYDRO Ltd. (UCHL)

The Community Hydro (UCHL) was provided through agreements with former Clark Mill owners and UCDC which was backed by very significant funding from International Fund for Ireland. Its function was to generate and 'sell' electrical power from river water. This income would be put to community use. It is a separate company with its own Board.

Company Two:

Upperlands Community Development Ltd. (UCDL)

All the funds to support Community Development in Upperlands were attracted through:

- The sale of generated electricity from the community hydro
- The leasing of 9 rental units at the Linenhall (inc. the Royal British Legion premises.)
- A range of small grants from MUDC, Lottery, Community Fund etc.

How the Money is Spent

The first responsibilities for any company are things like rates, insurances, repairs, running costs, staff costs and building up savings for a rainy day.

Here are some quite recent examples of 'running costs' which we hope will give community members an idea of the importance of good management.

- e.g. 1. Insurances are in the region of £3000 every year.
- e.g. 2. Leaking roof repairs of around £4000 (other roofs may also need attention)
- e.g. 3. Ensuring trees are safe using tree surgeons £3000
- e.g. 4. Three years rates on The Men's Shed £2300
- e.g. 5. Electrical survey / updating at village café / bistro £2000

With other planned maintenance / repairs already listed, much care with finances is needed. By way of an example, mentioned frequently as a "major source of income", the community hydro has soaked up many, many hours of Board attention, discussion and ongoing expense. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is little knowledge of / understanding within the community of its existence and the contribution it is said to make.

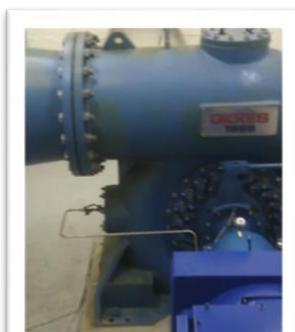
Community Hydro

Unfortunately, the community hydro became incompatible with 21st century environmental, ecological and management practices. The abstracting and storing of water, the resulting depletion of this water from the river and the onward effects in relation to flora and fauna were brought into question by environmentalists (including some Board members).

Maintenance of such massive and sophisticated machinery, breakdown / maintenance costs were becoming more regular and substantial (e.g. £7000 at last estimate).

Obviously unsustainable.

As the result of a major flood in England and resulting stricter controls of 'stored water', sluices, gates and races the Board felt unable to assume the indemnity responsibilities involved.



*The majestic
Gilkes Blue
Turbine and
Upperlands
Turbine House.*



With excellent assistance of NI Environment Agency, Turkington's of Portadown and others, a smaller, more manageable scheme (Road Engines Race) is almost 'oven ready' and we are actively seeking funding opportunities.

Preparing the Village Plan

To ensure the village plan gives an accurate picture of the needs and aspirations of Upperlands, it was compiled following consultation with representatives from Upperlands Community Development Ltd., residents and business owners.

Online statements of relevant agencies contributed to a baseline mapping of the village and surrounding area.

A detailed analysis of the village has been carried out through gathering existing data on the area as well as site visits and photographic records. This has been interpreted onto maps to give a clear representation of the village's assets, land uses, opportunity sites and problem areas.

Links to and a brief overview of relevant statutory agency documents that have a bearing on Upperlands are provided.

A meeting of Upperlands Community Development outlined the scope of the project. Following this it was agreed that a leaflet drop would be carried out to invite residents to participate in an online community consultation. There was also an opportunity to complete and return a comments/ideas/participation slip. The consultation gave residents the opportunity to identify issues and priority areas for development or improvement.

Following the consultation, the results from SurveyMonkey and other information obtained through community mapping exercises were collated and analysed. From this a clear set of aims and objectives were established and draft initiatives presented in the Action Plan table with suggested levels of priority and potential timeframes for delivery.

The main priorities from the consultation were outlined at a consultation event where attendees took part in a guided tour of community facilities under direct ownership / control of the Community Group.

After strong cases for raising the profile of Coles Cottage and Villagers with Additional needs, the plan was adopted at the UC DL Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 1st February 2024.

A further meeting was held with members of Upperlands Community Development to discuss the draft table of priorities to ensure they were in accordance with community needs.

At this stage, levels of priority were agreed for each initiative as well as which potential priority project might be taken forward as part of the village plan.

Following agreement of the initiatives statutory authorities are to be consulted on relevant matters due to the importance of gaining an understanding of the feasibility of each initiative and the processes which would need to be employed in order to take them forward in conjunction with stake holders. Consultations with other agencies and organisations in the area such as the Environment Agency, NI, Inland Fisheries, NI heritage Network have contributed to a holistic view of Upperlands in its wider context.

Section 1

Upperlands: Village Context

In order to gain a strong understanding of the village, a baseline study was carried out which informs the recommendations of this report. This included looking at Upperlands in its wider setting, the history of the village, the people who live there and the quality of its local environment. It also summarises relevant information from existing documents produced by various statutory authorities.

Resident Profile

The information provided on the demographic of Upperlands has been taken from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Upperlands is classified as a small village, hamlet and open countryside.

Demographical statistics taken from the 2011 census (27th March): (source- NISRA)
Referring to “Upperlands” though we see Upperlands as a wider catchment.

- Population: 561
- Total number of households: 221.

- Average Household size: 2.54 Average age: 37 years

With a view to informing village necessities, the table below highlights a number of stark differences to the Northern Ireland averages:

1. Just short of one fifth of homes are occupied by single folk over 65 years of age.
2. 26% of homes have no access to a car or van.
3. 60% of residents have less than level 1 qualifications (NI= 29%)
4. 48% of residents are unemployed
5. 25% have ongoing health issues affecting everyday life.

Further information is included in a census extract which is available as **Appendix E**.

Resident Activities

The residents of Upperlands are generous, community minded and busy. There is a large body of evidence that shows how important contributions are made at participatory, administrative and governance levels by village residents to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 7 local places of worship • 3 Boys’ Brigade groups • Girls’ Brigade / Brownies • School Parent Teacher Groups • Early Years Groups • Child Minding / Creche • Royal British Legion • School Boards • Men’s Shed • Hockey • Rugby • Charity Work • Martial Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for neighbours / relations • Apprentice Boys Activities • Loyal Order Activities • Fishing Club / Darts • Upperlands FC • Other FCs / Youth Academies • Gaelic Games • Village Bowls • Women’s Netball • Ladies Guild / Women’s Institute • Gun Clubs • Keep Fit / Yoga / Mindfulness
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Section 2: Location



Upperlands is located on the important A29 route between Coleraine and Armagh. It is approximately 0.3 miles from Maghera, 7 miles from Kilrea, 15 miles from Magherafelt and 8 miles from Portlengone.

It is also 3.5 miles from the newly upgraded Belfast to L'Derry Glenshane Road.

The closest major settlement with rail transport connections is Ballymoney (18 miles).

Belfast (40 miles) is closest for rail, airports, or passenger ferries.

Upperlands is set in the Bann River valley and within the Sperrins region.

It is an important bridging point on the Clady / Knockoneill River as well as serving the important West – East bridging of the River Bann at Kilrea.

Upperlands is well placed for road network links:

North - South

Donegal - Derry / Londonderry - Magherafelt – Antrim – Belfast

Magherafelt – Cookstown – Dungannon – Armagh – Monaghan - -- Dublin

West – East

Magherafelt – Cookstown - Omagh – Strabane – Donegal---

Kilrea – Ballymoney – Coleraine – North Coast

Kilrea – Ballymena – The Glens – Antrim

The Upperlands settlement boundary is defined by the Department of the Environment (DOE) Planning Service. This village plan is largely focused within this boundary although the surrounding hinterland and its bearing on the village has been considered and some of the initiatives in the report relate to the wider area.

Section 3: History

The development of Upperlands is firmly grounded in its industrial heritage and its essential riverside location. The weaving and beetling mills remain a strong visible feature of the village and their history dating back to 1740s when the Clark brothers acquired land and river rights at the Upper Lands. As business thrived, the larger weaving mill complex known as Clarks, Upperlands developed, eventually employing over 1000 people, running scores of looms and at least 13 different water mills in the production of fine linen cloth for export across the globe.

*Boyne Row Workers' Cottages
Beautifully portrayed by
local primary school
children.*



The original settlement of Upperlands expanded to house mill workers.

Interestingly, there is no dedicated permanent place of worship in the village: its long-term attachment to The Parish of St. Lurak's, Maghera, 3 miles away is a model repeated by other churches involving residents in journeys to Culnady, Swatragh and Maghera for centres of worship. An 'outreach' small hall and a pop-up monthly service in the Community Linenhall are available.

In the early 1900s Ampertaine Primary School was built and 4 – 16 year-olds were educated there. The Clarks company passed through the control of various family members who managed the heady days of maximum wartime production as well as the reality that modern methods, foreign expansion and man-made textiles presented challenges.

The company continued to trade until changing economic conditions forced gradual but persistent selling off of assets and land. Shots in the arm from various employment-boosting schemes failed to regenerate a vibrant business and, after an amalgamation / takeover, Clarks ceased work at their home location in 2023.

They still retain the name and a small high end beetling mill in the village remains in operation with some significant investment.

The larger expanse of mill buildings, waterways, locks, sluices etc. are currently (April 2023) vacant. Several regionally important buildings have fallen into disrepair.



*Clarks, Upperlands:
The Lapping Rooms and Main
Office with its awesome Art Deco
façade.*

*Unrecognisable in the
undergrowth: the original 1740s
thatched Beetling Mill.*

Section 4: Local Environment

The village is located within the wider Sperrins Area of Natural Beauty. The Sperrins, being Ireland's largest upland range, is the source of the Knockoneill River which flows through Upperlands, 'becoming' the Clady River on its route to the River Bann.

The Sperrins Area of Natural Beauty, indicating its most popular visitor walk trails and Upperlands. ★



The river and mills are located in the centre of Upperlands and are surrounded by undulating meadows and damp ground used mainly as grazing.

The village has grown up around this linear riverside area which acts as a floodplain, providing local ecological riches and amenity value.

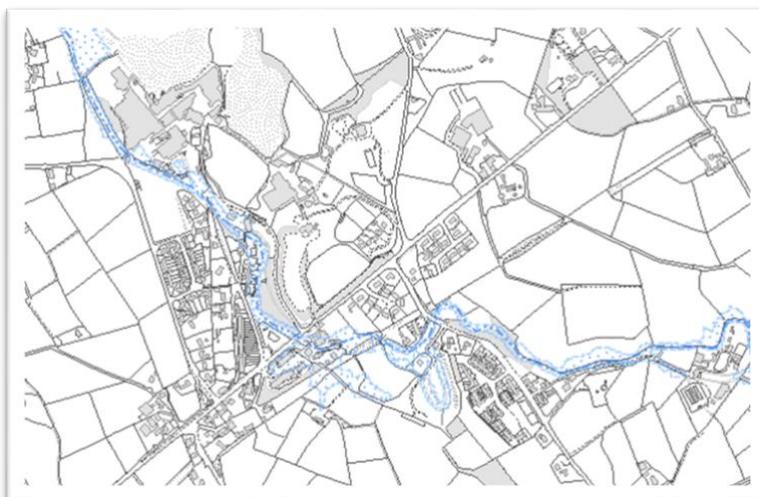
Mature trees are a significant feature throughout the village particularly along the riverside and in the grounds of the many fine old estate residences.

The stone buildings of the former linen and beetling mills and "Boyne Row" workers' cottages define the local character, particularly in/around Upperlands Bridge where the village centre may be identified. This area has attracted a high level of historical protection. The mill chimney is a distinctive local landmark though barely visible to casual passers-by. Quite recently its height was lowered.

There are several listed buildings in the village and areas of the Dams complex are of interest to conservation bodies.

A feasibility report into flooding problems across Northern Ireland was carried out by the Rivers Agency to identify flood risks and suggest mitigation methods. At the time of writing, the report was in draft format and awaiting economic appraisal before being released to the public.

(Anecdotal evidence suggests that water abstraction / storage at the Upperlands Dams complex needs to be managed at lower levels at least while research continues.)



*Flood plain expansion,
Upperlands.*

*Source: Rivers Agency
Website*

Section 5: Transport

There are four approach routes into Upperlands, the main one being the Kilrea Road which is a straight, undulating road. Traffic calming measures through the village include a 40mph limit, calming cushions and long hazard warning lines. The Kilrea Road is an important W/E. E/W route between County Londonderry and County Antrim, via Kilrea bridge on the River Bann. Traffic can be constant particularly in rush hours with the additional complication of very limited width for oncoming large HGV traffic.

Other approach routes include the Macknagh Road to Swatragh and beyond, Tirgarvil Road leading towards Portglenone, Bellaghy.

Limited signage marks the arrival to the village although the sense of place is negated by the lack of visual impact from the signage, the speed of the road and the location of the signs.

Speed restrictions into the village, particularly from the Kilrea direction, are crowded and confusing/contradictory with a mix of 40, 20, 30 mph signs in quick succession. Experiences with the school-directed flashing lights with the 20 mph zone have been mixed with lights occasionally showing on weekends and school holidays.

At the time of writing, the flashing lights are not operational at Little Amps Early Years Group session starts / finishes when there is concentrated road traffic activity around the shared school site.

An attractive 'Welcome to Upperlands' sign surrounded by planting and an emotive Village Linen 'Monument' have been installed by the Upperlands Community Development which complement the village character.

The public transport provision for Upperlands is currently considered by residents to be unreasonable with the majority of services focussed on school run windows. Concerns have been raised by the lack of suitable bus stops and laybys given the narrowness of footpaths where these actually exist.

Section 6: Services and Amenities

Upperlands currently has no shop or post office. People are forced to travel to Maghera, Kilrea or Swatragh for essential services.

There is a visitor centre and café which have limited opening times but provide some semblance of a 'core' for the village.

Upperlands Primary School which has been recently extended with the addition of modern offices and an additional mobile classroom. Its site is home to the thriving Little Amps Early Years Group. 'Pupil Numbers' at small rural schools is a particularly challenging subject for villages like Upperlands. The school currently meets the '105' pupils rule with two year projections (via Little Amps EYG) seemingly sound. Authors appreciate that the 'pupils numbers' guide does not necessarily indicate 'sustainability' give current issues around weak funding / increasing costs issues. The Upperlands Community remain resolute in defence of their two places of learning, especially as our two nearest neighbouring rural schools have closed relatively recently. Local politicians seem keen to push a Department of Education aim is to 'rural proof' small schools. The Primary School (continuous) Review assesses all schools in our area for long-term sustainability and potential paths forward. The 'Sustainable Schools Policy' and related online information provides wider analysis. The Linenhall Centre, which replaced the former building provided by the local mill owners, boasts the following very 'high end' facilities of which many villages would be envious:

Community Office	Manned 2 days (equiv.) per week
Large Recreation Hall	Currently used 5 hours p/w plus birthday parties etc.
Small Recreation Hall	Used twice per week
Kitchen, toilets, storage	
Board Room	Currently home to a youth initiative
"Post Office" unit	Currently leased as an online business hub
Social Club	Home to a vibrant Royal British Legion chapter
Car Parking	25 vehicles
Industrial Rental Units	4 units
Small Business Units	3 Units

At present the local Royal British Legion (RBL) Upperlands manages the social club which has a bar, pool table and seating for events and functions. The addition of a fine sheltered outdoor 'garden' during Covid emergency has greatly added to this facility.

There is huge potential here for the running of classes and activities.

Approach has been made to investigate the running of a Mums and Tots session but leadership needs to be defined...

Other amenities are located in/around the village:

Festival Football Pitch (Macknagh Road) is leased annually to the Upperlands Football Club by The Turkington Group of Companies who purchased large remnants of the Clark business estate. Temporary changing facilities, manager dug outs and remote grass cutting equipment have been added. It has to be stated that pitch condition / changing facilities are in need of upgrading but lack of long-term security by way of ownership or a lease negates any funding opportunity. There is an obvious need for exploration of ways forward.

The Flax Visitor Centre presents interpretations of the village's links to the Linen Industry and a unique collection of Models made by a local man, Dick Clark.

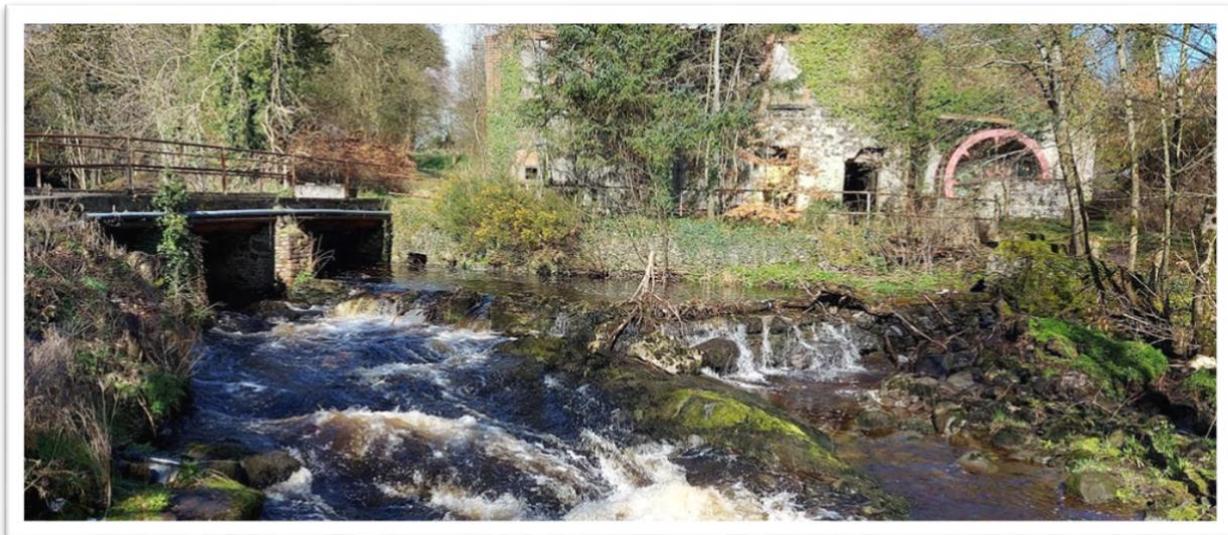
The centre sits with the village café/bistro, "Shanderson's" to make a village visit a complete package.

With huge thanks to our Mid Ulster Area Council, the fabulous village playground has been upgraded to the satisfaction of almost all. Further consideration to the challenges faced by youngsters with additional needs is requested.

Section 7: Key Buildings and Heritage

Upperlands's heritage is characterised by its linear development, river valley location, historic mill buildings, and views of important village centre stone-built buildings. The mills are mainly out of view from the main road and may easily be missed by those passing through the village with many of the buildings in disrepair, vandalised and appear derelict.

The water systems and infrastructure which powered the mills are still visible, predominately the complex of 5 named "Dams", mill races, listed bridge over the river. These elements are integral to the character of the village. A Linen Green, horse drawn railway cart lines, workers' spring/well are three examples of less obvious features of importance.



The original 1740s thatched beetling mill / wheel alongside the historic Road Engines Race intake.

The area in and around the mill site is criss-crossed by a series of old walkways, each with its own name. Senior citizens would wish to see these retained and their names secured through appropriate signage. A quaint record of these is included in the village 'Flax Garden' e.g. Gypsy walk, Puddle Row, White Gates.

Buildings of Interest, Recorded, Noted and Listed B1/ B2 for which UCDL has NO 'POWER' include:

Boyne Row
Ardtara House
Clark Factory Complex
Art Deco Mill Office Frontage
Old Mill (Thatched Middle House)**
Ampertaine House + Garden
"15 Gorteade Road" (Record only)
The Rath, Clarks Site
The Tramway
Upperlands Bridge
Clarks Siding
Macknagh Mill
Macknagh Mill Race / Aquaduct



and... Cole's Cottage (Gate Lodge to Ampertaine House, pictured)

**** UCDL is in negotiations regarding a long term lease on the Thatched Middle House.**



Buildings of Interest, Recorded, Noted and Listed B1/ B2 for which UCDL has important responsibilities include:

Flax Visitor Centre / Café



Section 8: Village Appearance / Planning Overview

The Magherafelt Area Plan 2015 states that:

“The settlement development limit has been designated to include committed development, prevent urban sprawl and ribbon development into the surrounding countryside, and provide limited small-scale development opportunities reflecting the settlements existing scale and role. The limit will also protect visually and historically important local landscapes and contain the settlement’s historic form.”

There are two separate designations in relation to Upperlands, US o2 and US 03 (Appendices) which refer to the overall vista created at the heart of the village’s industrial built heritage.

There are currently three granted multi-unit planning applications to develop land within the village, one of huge significance.

The most significant proposal which will have the greatest impact on village character is the successful application by JHT (Upperlands) Ltd.

Permission has been given for a mix of residential development, leisure and recreational uses and community facilities including museum / exhibition space and works to Listed Buildings.

The retention of the existing employment use relocated to a refurbished and extended listed building was also an important element, but the recent relocation of ‘Clarks’ to the Drennan site may have an effect on this ruling.

The development will create 66 residential units through the subdivision and refurbishment of listed and other buildings of heritage significance together with 144 new build units. partial development. Although the application was lodged in 2007 and was due to expire in September 2012, a series of appeals and a decision at the highest Ministerial level have provided an overall green light and will include landscaped areas and paths through the fields which will be of benefit to the community through the creation of public realm This village plan would promote the careful retention of the existing character of the complex where possible, in particular the landscape value and important ecological habitat gained from the wet meadow, species rich grass land, mature trees and river setting.

A smaller development on the Kilrea Road is almost complete with 8 substantial residences available for those seeking comfortable village living.

Coming soon, a third, mixed site, at Gorteade will see wider choice presented to those seeking a home in the village.

It is hoped that the demands upon existing infrastructure have been suitably assessed and plans put in place for enhancement.

Likewise, the additional population levels will have implications for village amenities, infrastructure etc.

Section 9 Existing Statutory Documents (AN Page 9)

1. Mid Ulster District Council Local Development Plan 2030– Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC 101)

There are broad guiding principles highlighted in the introduction which have real meaning for Upperlands:

- *create a region which is ‘a welcoming place where our people are content, healthy and safe; educated and skilled; where our economy is thriving; our environment and heritage are sustained; and where our public services excel’.*
- *Improving our infrastructure and protecting our environment are also key themes in this Strategy,*
- *We also recognise that we are custodians of some of the world’s most important wetlands, peatlands and mountain landscapes and we have taken measures to try to protect these in the plan development.*
- *...the plan seeks to balance the needs of our urban centres with those of our rural communities, which require vibrant local towns and villages to meet their daily needs.*
- *The Draft Plan therefore facilitates business, employment, housing, community and recreational facilities in our towns, while recognising the needs of people in the countryside, providing opportunities to build a house or start a rural enterprise in a sustainable manner.*

The (MUDC) Sustainable Development Strategy intends to strengthen the framework to address global issues such as climate change and sets out the following six guiding principles:

- living within environmental limits;
- ensuring a strong, healthy, just and equal society;
- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance;
- using sound science responsibly; and,
- promoting opportunity and innovation.

MUDC: “Rural Proofing”

The Northern Ireland Assembly embarked on an exercise to enhance the rural proofing process by placing it on a statutory footing. As a result the Rural Needs Act received Royal Assent on the 9th May 2016 became a requirement for Local Council’s on 1 June 2017. The Act seeks to safeguard the needs of rural communities, to promote a fair and inclusive rural society by introducing a duty on government and Councils to consider the needs of our rural dwellers when they are developing their policies and delivering public services. This new legislation, imposes a statutory duty on Mid Ulster Council to consider rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services.

Designated a “Village”, Upperlands residents can realistically expect to have access to:

	Skills	Health	Social	Environ.	Commercial	Social	Productive	Networks
Villages: Local service centres which provide opportunities for housing, employment and leisure activities appropriate to their scale and character. (SPG4)	Nursery, Primary School	Doctor, Ambulance Outreach Services	Local Halls, Play Areas	Access to clean water Sewage disposal	Shop, Pub, Post Office, Petrol Station	Neighbourhood Watch	Workshop/ Business Unit	Local Roads, Broadband, Urban Street Lighting, Local Bus, Cycle

Various relevant MUDC Policy excerpts are included in Appendix A.

Section 10: Consultation

Community engagement in shaping possible future plans included:

- several “surveymonkey” consultations
- village fliers / return forms,
- facebook (etc.) notices, messaging, emails
- community meetings
- notices added to local primary school / early years group home school links emails
- feedback from events

Screen shots are included in **Appendix C**.

It is clear from anecdotal comment that there is a mismatch between community and the Community Group.

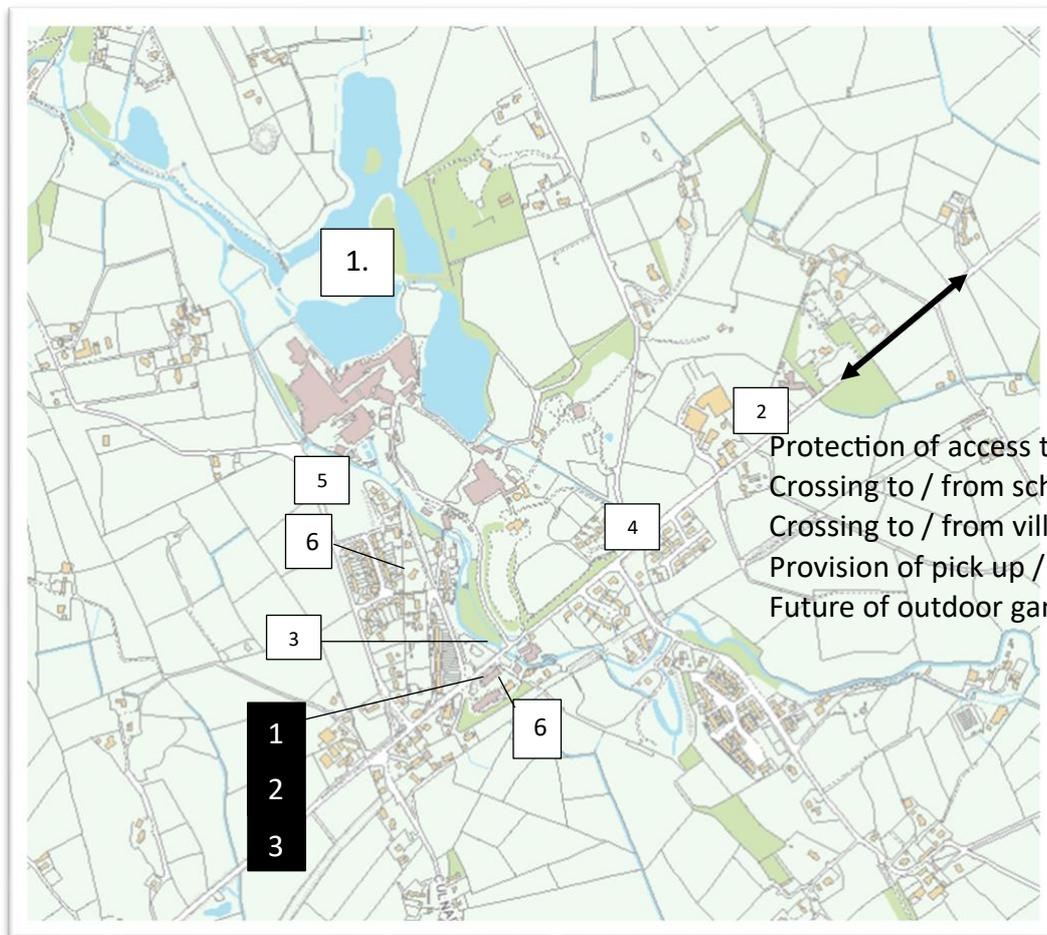
Whole village commitment, trust, understanding and shared goals are crucial if a village plan is to be relevant and actionable.

Informal ‘conversations’ in and around the village have been good ‘sources’ of comment, wish list and... criticism.



Section 11: Village Plan

(Showing issues upon which locals have commented, no priority listed here)



Protection of access to Mill Dam traditional walks / ecology / habitats
 Crossing to / from school at path ends
 Crossing to / from village centre, playpark, café etc.
 Provision of pick up / set down for buses serving Beeches, Gorteade, Alexander Park etc.
 Future of outdoor games: Festival Pitch under threat (Upperlands FC, School Sports etc.)

Physical / Infrastructure

1.	Protection of access to Mill Dam / River traditional walks / ecology / habitats
2.	Crossing to / from school at path ends
3.	Crossing to / from village centre, playpark, café etc.
4.	Provision of pick up / set down for buses serving Beeches, Gorteade, Alexander Park etc.
5.	Future of outdoor games: Festival Pitch under threat (Upperlands FC, School Sports etc.)
6.	Improvement of 'back lane' Carson Villas / Boyne Row
7.	EV Car Charging Facilities
8.	Consideration of overall stress on existing infrastructure as planned building projects come into occupation.

Amenities / Services

1.	Village Shop / Post Office
2.	Mums and Tots
3.	Youth Provision
4.	Additions to bus Timetables
5.	Library Van stop-off (at least on alternate weeks)
6.	Coles Cottage
7.	
8.	

Section 12: Proposed Projects

The following proposed projects are a group of initiatives which have been developed in agreement with the Upperlands Community Development. These initiatives form the strategic vision for Upperlands and are categorised into different levels of priority as well as a short, medium or long term time frame for delivery.

The top priority project agreed by Upperlands Community Development surrounds the Thatched Middle Beetling House, its adjacent Road Engines Race and Replacement Community Turbine Provision. This is being developed to a stage to be included in a funding application or to gain any necessary planning approval.

Details of this can be found in the appendices.

Other essential community issues fall within the following 5 categories:

- Community engagement / development
- Environment and heritage
- Transport and Road Safety
- Tourism
- Business and services (health, post office, education etc.)

It should be recognised that all initiatives in the following section are conceptual and contribute to an overall vision for Upperlands.

These suggested projects should be flexible to allow for any changing circumstances.

Village Signature Project: The Old Thatched Mill, The Island and The Road Engines Mill Race (UVP 6)

Background

Water has been used to generate power of various types on this site since the 1740s. Several elements come into play and threaten to result in Upperlands losing its connection with the harnessing, controlling and use of water to generate power on this site:

- The redevelopment of the former Clark's Mill in preparation
- 21st century requirements in relation to the safe upkeep and acceptable water levels in historic dams
- Improved consideration to the maintenance of the environmental value of Northern Ireland's rivers and waterways
- The high cost of maintaining / staffing the necessary control measures.

(The viability of the village's current hydro-electric scheme is currently under review for these exact reasons.)

There is, currently, no visible demonstration of water being used on this historic site. There is no connection to the expertise, skills, equipment, ingenuity, or vision of those who planned, maintained and utilise the many "mills" which populated this important stretch of water.

The Road Engines Race is the original black stone lined mill race designed to divert and carry water to drive the Road Engines Mill (beetling) where the Upperlands Flax Visitors' centre and Shanderson's Cafe are now located.

After the Road Engines Race was taken out of use, it rapidly fell into disrepair: the wooden deflectors, sluices and other paraphernalia have disappeared with only original stands / footings surviving. The race itself is heavily overgrown and is thick with silt and deposits rubbish built up over the years.

The Project

This rich heritage focus will involve:

- close and co-operative involvement of a wide range of interested parties from the local and wider community
- rebuilding of fractured relationships between those parties
- reconstruction of the deflectors and appropriate sluices on the original footings
- clearing / disposal of undergrowth, silt and fly tipping debris
- necessary (minor) repairs to the mill race
- installation of at least one visual demonstration of waterpower on the race
- re-opening of the impressive brick arched water underpass returning flowing water to the Road Engines Site
- use of a "pipe" in directing the water on the original overflow weir site leading to...
- the powering of a small number of engaging interactive artifacts (see 6 . Interactive Water Activity Park)
- the powering of a beetling representation
- the facilitation of a small hydro engine (18 – 22 kw) in a viewing pod on the river's edge **or** to existing large hydro turbine house (costs will dictate).

See map, photos etc. **Appendix D**

UVP1: Community Engagement / Use of Community Facilities

The Development Group (UCDL)

Upperlands Community Development Limited relies on a small number of older community members to 'lead' at committee or 'Board' level. There is a dedicated, seasoned core of members who have held positions since its inception.

Records show, however, that there has been a significant number of 'past members' whose involvement was short lived. Some of these individuals appeared to have highly usable skills and experience of particular use to the Upperlands community.

Recruitment and retention will be challenging.

The Board is ably supported in its work by a loose group of community volunteers who willingly come together when asked to help with a project. See Appendix G

A planned approach to engagement and recruitment is a matter of urgency and is being approached through the following measures:

- Increased numbers of 'small' more regular community events which identify various age/interest/experience groupings from the community.
It is hoped that the success of these events will lead to more regular attendance at and use of community resources and a building of relationships.
An essential element is to carefully enable a handing over of ownership of these small events so that interest groups will continue to run events/activities that interest them.
The role of the Board and its staff will be to seek funding, provide secretarial and other help to these new 'leaders'.
- With an increase in the number of small activities happening in the village, a central organising group will be needed. Informal in nature, one or two representatives from the various activities will meet as necessary to co-ordinate their activities.
- The resulting **additional use of excellent community** facilities will put greater demand on heating, lighting, cleaning, maintenance etc.
It will be the Board's responsibility to ensure that manpower and finances are available to serve volunteers and attendees.

Youth Provision

Number One in our village online consultation.

Everyone has a view on the 'youth of today'.

Upperlands has been very fortunate to have had several attempts at building a sustainable commitment to catering for the needs of our Youth. Dougy and friends set up a youth club in what is now Shanderson's but initial enthusiasm waned.

Yvette, Anne, Kasandra have made a fantastic effort on their Friday night club.

UCDL have recognised this and have entered into an agreement with Bytes Youth Development for an initial 1 year period, extending, hopefully to 3 years.

Applications for funding of the following are in progress:

- Support from Bytes
- Staff training
- Development of facilities at UCDL to suit the Youth 'vibe'
- Additional resources
- Development of a wide range of activities.

Mums and Tots (MAT)

UCDL was approached by a young mum who felt that there was potential in starting a weekly group for mums and tots.

UCDL has been in contact with small grant funders to see if we can make this happen. The mums, hopefully, will have their own ideas but we can find contacts to help / advise.

With the wishes of the MAT Group in mind we will help them to seek a small initial amount of funding for items they may like to have such as funds for:

- Holding planning meetings
- An outing to a successful Mum and Tots Group
- Costs of facilities use (heat and light) (NO RENT WILL BE SOUGHT)
- Initial soft play materials
- Healthy snacks
- Visiting speakers.

Special Support / Needs etc.

In preparation of this Village Plan, there has been strong representation for recognition of those with additional needs.

Our first attempts to include consideration of this important issue tell us that 'additional needs' can be summarised into four main groups:

- Physical – muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, asthma, epilepsy etc.
- Developmental – down syndrome, autism, dyslexia, processing disorders.
- Behavioural / Emotional – ADD, bi-polar, opposition defiance disorder etc.
- Sensory Impaired: Blind, visually impaired, deaf, limited hearing

And their carers.

Clearly this is a huge (and developing) area which has, through various government departments and charity organisations superb representation and provision across Northern Ireland.

This Village Plan sets out three lines of approach in seeking improved partnerships with existing agencies and progressing the access of all community members at all levels of our community group administration and activity.

These are:

1. Gathering of community information / raising awareness of our intentions.
2. Developing and maintaining avenues for input/feedback and representation in committee/Board discussions etc.
3. A carefully stepped review of existing activities/facilities and adoption of measures enabling increased participation by this important village group.

Sports Ground Facilities / Uncertainty

It is common knowledge that our historic Upperlands FC is unable to make solid long-term plans due to their reliance upon good will / leasing by local landowners.

While they are very glad to have year to year assistance, this means that they cannot become involved in major long term funding applications. Sadly, they watch as other clubs forge ahead and are more attractive for our youngest potential players.

The Village Plan will see UCDL working alongside Upperlands FC and other potential users of a desirable modern playing surface and adjacent changing facilities.

This would be a massive investment.

It would be best said that to move forward with a plan and to take advantage of a hugely expanding housing stock the way forward is through multi-sport, maximum participation by all community members and co-operation with sports fanatics in neighbouring villages of Culnady, Tamlaght and Swatragh.

*Festival Park, Macknagh Road:
Home to Upperlands F.C.*



Upperlands Turbine House and Grounds

Possibly the village's best kept secret, Upperlands Community Turbine House can be found on a superb riverside site between the Flax Visitor Centre and the new homes at Ampertaine manor.



Ampertaine Manor Site

*Turbine House
and community
grounds.*

*Visitor Centre /
Shanderson's*

The turbine house is home to the community hydro which is now obsolete. The building is in a remarkably beautiful riverside setting.

Historic (and somewhat confused?) leasing / ownership documentation means that there are 'right of way' restrictions which will need to be negotiated with two other landowners. Although the Road Engines Race (turbine) project will be accommodated here, there is more than enough space for the addition of a mezzanine structure creating a space that could be used in so many different ways.

Ideas to date include:

- Air B and B
- Men's Shed / Community allotments
- Additional 'craft related' rental unit.

It is, currently, not being used and is in need of a lick of paint.

An excellent opportunity for community use.

Any manageable ideas are promised serious consideration.

UVP2: Leisure, Environment and Heritage

A Two-Way Street

The history of Upperlands, briefly outlined above, flags up the importance of the Mill estate at local, regional and national levels. The existing working beetling mill may, indeed, be worthy of international status.

For clarity, some matters of fact regarding “The Estate” need to be stated at the outset.

The Mill Estate:

- There are several different owners who have a right to manage their own property as they see fit. They also have responsibilities to live up to.
- Community ownership includes one ‘heritage’ building only: the Flax Visitor Centre / Shanderson’s (and some rights of way).
- Regional Planning and Heritage guidance is in place for the ‘protection’ and ‘proper development/maintenance’ of certain buildings (but not all).
- ‘The Dams’ and related sluices, gates, weirs etc., should be loosely regarded as ‘buildings’
- Responsibilities relating to the environment, ecosystems and residents’ wellbeing through walks/tracks etc. are also important.

This situation cannot, however, be one-sided.

Users / members of the community should not overlook / forget their responsibilities when interacting with our heritage. Springing to mind are issues such as:

- Personal safety
- Fly tipping / litter
- Dog mess
- Vandalism (fires, tree felling)

By way of an example, an important water level sensor controlling input to the community hydro was smashed and thrown into a dam. There were real implications for finance, operation of the hydro and potential for flooding.

It is hoped that this village plan will enable frank, realistic and useful discussion about our shared heritage (from all interested parties) and that emergency, medium and long goals can be agreed.

The development of a concept for a **whole village heritage trail** would serve as an excellent vehicle around which engaging, realistic and widely held aims might be ironed out.

Coles Cottage (Ampertaine House Gate Lodge)

The Magherafelt Area Plan allocated the central part of Upperlands as a US 03 Designation: An Area of Townscape Character (ATC)

Key Feature clearly identified are:

- * The late Victorian/early Edwardian Boyne Row and Railway Yard
- * The Beetling Mill on the Kilrea Road
- * The Gate Lodge to Ampertaine House (known locally as Coles Cottage)

An entry in area planning records states importance given to the following:

"Ampertaine House Gate Lodge on the Kilrea Road, a late 18th Century single storey hipped roof building with canted bay windows, and the entrance to the Clark's estate and Ampertaine House; walls, gates, pillars and surrounding vegetation"

Coles Cottage (as locals know it) is in a very, very sad state. It is quite possible that its protected status has frightened off those with aspirations.

Our community project will see a joint scheme which will see Coles Cottage returned to its former glory at the very centre of our village. Once again, a building to be proud of.

EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, we see Coles Cottage as the starting point for a much wider development of hands-on activities related to our linen heritage which will ensure that the skills, stories and buzz that linen once generated are safely passed down through the generations.

“Announcing Arrival” in Upperlands

Where does Upperlands start / finish?

At the school? 30 mph limit? Coles’ Cottage? The Clarks Sign (now gone)? Tomb’s Lane?

What is special about Upperlands?

Why should they stop and have a look?

It is hoped that through discussion and research, suitable Village welcome signs can be agreed and located on sites where visitors will be left in no doubt.

Road Engines Race Riverside Walk

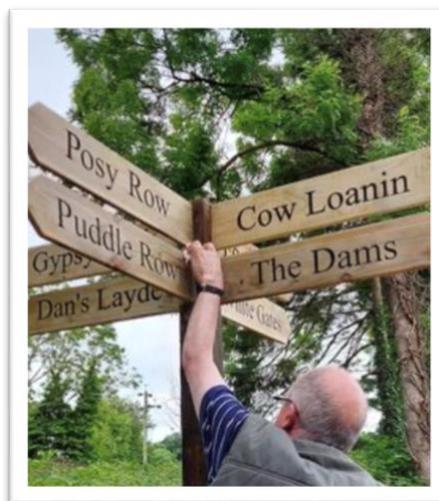
At the time of writing, a lease is eagerly expected to transfer some responsibilities / opportunities to the community for the development / use of The Road Engines Mill Race, Its associated intake and low ground between the race and the river.

It is envisaged that there will be a race-side walk which, hopefully will be an important part of future paths and walks in and around Upperlands.

Part of this scheme will be the mapping of and signage on the ‘traditional historic pathways’ in and around the village such as:

- Gypsy Walk
- Foot Stick
- Cow Loanin
- Dan’s Laid
- Puddle Row
- Posy Row,
- Murder Hole

There is great potential in linking existing walkways, paths etc. along the following lines:



Clarks Site ⇒ 4 Dams ⇒ Carson Villas ⇒ Tramway ⇒ Workers’ Well / Spring ⇒ Ardtara ⇒ Art Deco Office Front ⇒ Thatched 1740s Middle House ⇒ Road Engines ⇒ Flax Visitor Centre ⇒ Turbine House ⇒ Flax Garden ⇒ Garden of Remembrance ⇒ Clarks Sideline Rail Link

Flax Visitor Centre

The Flax Visitor Centre is a gem in the village’s list of assets.

Its central position, expert renovation and link with the café make it a perfect starting / finishing point for any village visit.

For larger groups (schools, clubs etc.) the proximity of the Linenhall complex means that there is almost no limit to numbers to be accommodated.

The unique functioning beetling mill next door is also a must see: it would be of significant importance that access is available for visitors to at least safely see these important machines in operation.



The visitor centre is in need of developing a calendar of events / displays. Its current focus is static displays of 'everything we've got'. It is hoped that with the formation of a wider group of interested folk additional focus on interpretation, interactivity and attractions can be devised.

UVP3: Transport and Road Safety

Villagers would like someone to champion their requests for additional buses on routes to / from the village, especially outside school times.

There are a couple of key places in the village where road safety is an issue, with multiple concerns raised by residents.



*B75 Kilrea Road
Showing the only walking route to
Ampertaine PS and Little Amps EYG.
Pedestrians MUST cross the road
here.
Raised Tarmac 'pads' are specifically
designed NOT to affect HGV traffic.
Pavements frequently become
overgrown and narrower, forcing
walkers nearer to the kerb.
Note: 30 mph ends / 40 mph begins!*

Along with the boarding/disembarking of buses, already mentioned, concerns continue in relation to access / car parking at Ampertaine Primary School / Little Amps Early Years Group on the Kilrea Road and footpaths to/from these settings which are narrow and involve essential crossing without the aid of clearly defined crossing paraphernalia.

To some it is "unbelievable" that a recently installed timed 20 mph school area limit ends just at the point where crossing is essential.

The result is that only about 6% of youngsters walk to school, and zero recorded regular cycling.



*B75 Kilrea Road
Showing the drop off point for school buses, on the left,
on their homeward trip.
The blind summit and narrow road leave little margin
'for error'.*

*B75 Kilrea Road
Showing the nearest crossing point
to access the Dams walks for folk
from the main car park or south
side of the village.
The narrow road, combined with
the pedestrian footbridge
necessitates walking along the
road in a hazardous position.
No signage or traffic calming.*





*B75 Kilrea Road
Showing the nearest crossing point
to access the village centre, play
park etc. from the north side of the
village.*

*There is no visual guidance as to
the safest place to cross which
results, in particular, to children
crossing into the Linenhall
entrance road.*

*Children exiting school buses from
the lay by and crossing the road
are vulnerable.*

*There is a 'playpark' or 'children
crossing sign to guide motorists.*

UVP4: Visitors / Tourism

This section should be read with the previous two sections in mind.

It may be beneficial to consult with an appropriate agency to clarify thinking as to the best approach to utilising the obvious village assets and, perhaps to spot those remaining unidentified.

The local Ardtara House hotel has taken its own steps into guided walks, heritage garden displays, forest walkway etc.

More should be made of the obvious talent and experience of management at this business with a growing national / international reputation.

In addition to the Environment / Heritage / Transport Road Safety points mentioned, the village would benefit greatly through inclusion in:

- Regional
- National
- International

tourism maps, trails, fliers etc.

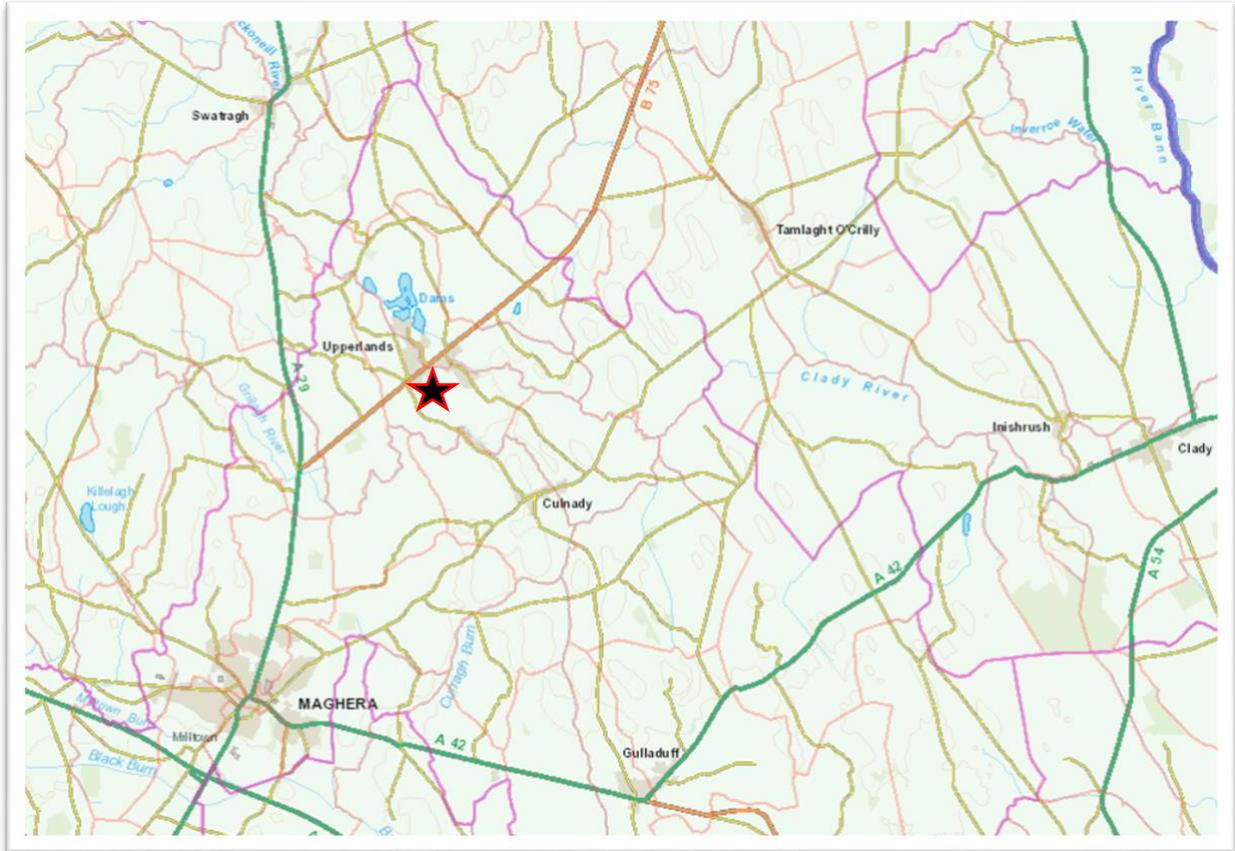
Membership of a focus group would benefit from seeking out relevant tourism information awareness sessions, initially at Mid Ulster Council level.

UVP5: Business and Services

A Village Shop

The map excerpt below indicates the creeping isolation felt by members of the Upperlands Community.

Listed below are the locations of nearest shops / post offices.



Maghera: 3 miles Drumagarner: 4.5 miles. Guladuff: 4 miles
Swatragh: 3.8 miles Tamlaght: 4.5 miles. Kilrea: 7 miles (via B75)

(Nearest shop at present: "Brian's": 1 mile. Rumoured to be closing)

This sense of rural isolation has slowly crept in as local services / business have withered. Covid, economic conditions and overheads have been the given reasons.

It is absolutely essential that conditions are created where some form of village shop can be opened with a level of confidence that it will be able to support itself. If this is to happen, it will be important that the community is involved in the problem solving process, so buying in to the project.

Library, Post Office and Other "Visiting" Services

The Community Group has also been asked how to go about securing some 'visiting' services on a weekly, fortnightly or other **regular** cycle.

This is an interesting concept which, given the planned expansion of the village, should not be seen as permanently addressing feeling of isolation.

On the other hand, it is a model which may well fit well with other business/service providers.

Upperlands Village Plan: Action Plan

Priorities, Timings etc. **Target Group / Funding Possibilities to be augmented.**

Initiative		Priority			Timing			Target Group	Possible Funding
		Top.	Medium.	Low.	Short.	Medium.	Long.		
Signature Project	<p>“The Road Engines Race Turbine” Reinstate the old mill race to power a <u>replacement</u> hydro scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance / preserve river power heritage. Provide community income to support activities Offer ‘cheaper’ power to some rental units Monthly ‘duck race’ for EYG, Youth, etc. 	√				√	√	Whole Community (WC)	Heritage Lottery (HL)
UVP1 Community Development	Increase Community Engagement	√			√	√		WC	
	Increased Use of Linenhall Centre		√		√			WC	
	Youth Provision	√			√			Youth + Leaders	Ed.Auth.
	Mums & Tots Group		√			√			
	Wider Range of Activities		√			√		WC	
	Sports Ground Facilities	√				√		WC	
	Sports Ground Uncertainty	√				√		WC	
	Research opportunities for Land at Turbine House			√			√	WC	
UVP2 Environment & Heritage	Preservation of Mill Buildings	√				√		National Importance	(HL)
	Preservation of Mill Ponds	√				√			(HL)
	Preserve Access to Walks/Paths	√				√		WC / visitors	(HL)
	Heritage Trail Formalised		√	√		√		WC / visitors	(HL)
	“Announce” Arrival at Village with Prominent Themed Signage		√			√		Visitors	
	Riverside Walk Alongside Old Road Engines Race		√			√		WC / visitors	(HL)
	Flax Visitor Centre Program of Events / Activities					√		WC / visitors	(HL)
	Update Flax Visitor Centre Website	√							
	Augment Visual / Interactive FVC elements		√						
	UVP3 Transport & Road Safety	Provision of Bus Drop-offs (2)	√			√			Especially Schools
Provision of Safer Crossings: a. To/From School, EYG b. Near ‘monument’ c. Below Bridge?		√			√			Children & Carers	
		√			√				
				√		√			
Increased Bus Frequency		√			√			WC / visitors	
UVP4 Visitors / Tourism	Investigate ideas to attract visitors		√			√		WC / visitors	
	Ensure Upperlands is included in regional fliers / plans	√			√			WC / visitors	(HL)
UVP5 Business Services	Open a Village Shop / P. Office	√			√			WC / visitors	
	Research Library Van ‘STOP’		√			√		WC	

Conclusion

The compilation of this village plan highlights the extent of the good work already being achieved by the Upperlands Community Group (UCDL) and those villagers who so freely give of their time to ensure that a loose calendar of events takes place.

UCDL has been highly successful in attracting funding, providing facilities and has a good track record in running events for a wide section of the community to enjoy.

They have good relationships with public sector bodies and hold interagency meetings when village issues are in need of addressing.

Unfortunately, the Community Group has lost a very significant income / funding because of cessation of power generation at the village's substantial turbine.

and will cease to be able to build upon the work they have achieved with financial backing.

The group is actively seeking further event to event funding.

Very significant funding is actively being sought for a 'replacement heritage turbine scheme.

This is, understandably seen as an eggs in one basket strategy and is very much hoped that they will be successful as this is key to the future actioning of this Upperlands Village Plan.

The group have built up experience and expertise in applying for and securing funding and therefore are well equipped to tackle and deliver aspects of this plan.

Some of the initiatives are straight forward additions / improvements which can be achieved fairly simply and in a hands-on basis.

Others require much more imagination and effort to progress.

However, if approached proactively and in the spirit of community co-operation, Upperlands could pull together and stand out as a forward-thinking village with a determination to secure itself as a vibrant place for imminent village newcomers and future generations.

APPENDICES

Appendix A.

A. Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) Area Plan 2030

Various Relevant Excerpts

MUDC: POLICY OS 1 - PROTECTION OF “OPEN SPACE “

“Development that results in the loss of open space shall not accord with the Plan irrespective of its physical condition and appearance.

An exception can be made where it is demonstrated that it will bring substantial community benefits that outweigh the loss of the open space and it will have no significant detrimental impact on open space provision, amenity, character or biodiversity of an area.

Where appropriate, adequate compensatory measures to include provision for more intensive recreational use (3G sports pitches) on site or in other locations capable of serving the area will be given consideration. Compensatory measures should be comparable to that which is lost.”

This may have relevance to possible future development of Macknagh Road Pitch etc.

POLICY OS 2 - PROTECTION OF RIVER CORRIDORS

Proposals on sites adjacent to a main river will conflict with the plan unless it has been demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:

- a) a biodiversity strip of at least 10 metres from the edge of the river is provided and accompanied with an appropriate landscaping management proposal;*
- b) public access and recreation provision is provided where appropriate;*
- c) there is no unacceptable adverse impact on nature conservation;*
- d) the proposal will not compromise or impact on the natural flooding regime of the main river and complies with the requirements Flood Risk Policy; and*
- e) any development would not prejudice an existing or future opportunity to provide a riverside walk.*

This may have relevance to the plan for Road Engines Race, its integration into development of the Clarks site and connected walkways.

POLICY OS 3 - OUTDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION

Proposals for outdoor recreation and sports facilities will accord with the plan where they are located in settlements.

Proposals for outdoor recreation and sports facilities in the countryside will accord with the plan provided:

- a) they avoid permanent loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land;*
- b) they remain open in character without large scale buildings such as stadia; and large scale stands and any buildings are ancillary and small in scale;*

- c) it is demonstrated by the applicant that it will not result in unacceptable levels of disturbance to people living nearby; and,
- d) there will not be an unacceptable level of disturbance to farm livestock and agricultural production or to the use of habitats by wildlife.

This will have relevance to provision of suitable open air sports playing areas.

POLICY RE 5 – RETAIL AND RELATED USES IN VILLAGES AND SMALL SETTLEMENTS

New retail development within villages and small settlements will accord with the Plan providing it is of a scale that is appropriate to the settlement and will not have a significant negative impact on the retail provision within nearby town centres or on retail offer available in other nearby villages / small settlements. Similarly, any such new development must not impact negatively upon or lead to the closure of existing retail located within the core of the village / small settlement in question.

All such development will normally be restricted to 100 sq. metres net floor area unless the applicant can demonstrate that a development over this threshold will not have a negative impact on retailing within the village / small settlement or indeed a neighbouring settlement.

This will have relevance to provision of essential village shop / post office outlets.

POLICY HE 9 – CHANGE OF USE, ALTERATION OR EXTENSION OF A LISTED BUILDING

Change of use, alteration or extension of a listed building will only accord with the Plan where the development respects the essential character and architectural or historic interest of the building and its setting and those features of special interest remain intact and unimpaired.

Development affecting the setting of a listed building will only accord with the Plan where it is sympathetic to the listed building in terms of scale, massing and alignment, utilising sympathetic materials and will not result in the loss of key views of the listed building.

This will have relevance to provision of potential schemes relating to important industrial heritage buildings.

POLICY HE 13 – NON-LISTED HISTORIC VERNACULAR BUILDINGS

The preservation and, where possible, enhancement, through retention and appropriate conversion of an existing historic vernacular building or structure will accord with the Plan.

Conversion

Proposals which will deliver the sustainable conversion, active reuse and repair of non-listed vernacular buildings or structures, will accord with the Plan.

Proportionate and appropriate adaptation of such non-designated historic vernacular buildings or structures will be considered, provided that the proposed development for conversion and sustainable active use will:

- maximise the retention of original historic fabric; through repairs, renovation or re-instatement;

- utilise minimum intervention techniques, using traditional craft skills and materials;
- be appropriate and sympathetic to the historic vernacular character and appearance of the existing building, its curtilage and wider historic setting and;
- safeguard retention, maintenance and security for future generations.

Consultation with the appropriate competent body early in the planning process is strongly advised.

This will have relevance to provision of potential schemes relating to important industrial heritage buildings.

POLICY HE 14 – AREAS OF TOWNSCAPE / VILLAGE CHARACTER

Development

Where proposed alterations, extension or new development within an area of townscape or village character maintains or enhances the overall character of the ATC / AVC area and respect its built form will conform to the Plan.

Demolition

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining a historic building or structure which makes a material contribution to the identified an ATC / AVC, will accord with the Plan. Demolition of a historic building or structure within an ATC /AVC will only be considered where it make no contribution to the historic character or appearance or local historic interest. In such cases, demolition consent will only be considered if a full planning application is submitted.

Advertisement and Signage

Consent for the display of an advertisement in an ATC / AVC should only be granted where the overall character and appearance of the identified area will be maintain.

This will have relevance to provision of potential schemes relating to important industrial heritage buildings.

POLICY HE 16 – LOCAL LANDSCAPE POLICY AREAS

Development within LLPAs will accord with the Plan providing it does not harm the intrinsic environmental and heritage values and visual amenity values and historic landscape character, appearance or assets within it.

Local Planning Policy for each LLPA will be a material consideration...

75. 17.76 Across Mid Ulster there is a great deal of local historic industrial infrastructure, including the Great Northern Railway, the Clogher Valley railways and the Ulster Canal. There are a wide variety of other industrial heritage assets within our District which reflect the changing development of our local industries, **these include a number of mills, ponds and races linked to the flax industry, for example, Clarke’s Mill complex in Upperlands.**

POLICY RNW 1 – RENEWABLE ENERGY

Outside of Special Countryside Areas, proposals for development that generate or store energy from renewable resources including solar, hydropower, thermal, geothermal, hydrothermal and biomass, shall accord with the Plan. However, a cautious approach will be adopted towards all renewable energy development proposals within the Sperrin AONB, Slieve Beagh and the along the Clogher Valley ridge line.

The wider environmental, economic and social benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects are material considerations that will be given appropriate weight in determining whether planning permission should be granted.

Where any project would result in unavoidable damage during its installation, operation, or decommissioning, then the application must demonstrate how this shall be minimised and mitigated including details of any proposed compensatory measures such as a habitat management or the creation of a new habitat and applicants will be required to ensure that upon decommissioning, land is adequately restored and planning conditions to this effect will be applied.

Favourable consideration will be given to the re-use, refurbishment, repair and repowering of existing renewable energy development in order to prolong the life span of developments such as wind farms and solar farms providing that these do not result in unacceptable impacts on the environment or residential / visual amenity.

Hydro

22.39 In Northern Ireland, the potential for hydro power schemes is generally limited to sites with capacity of less than 1MW. IN September of 2017, hydro power contributed less to the total NI renewable consumption than all other forms of renewable energy apart from CHP. In Mid Ulster, we have very little hydro power schemes but that is not to say that it should be ignored by planning policy.

22.40 In all cases involving proposals for hydro power schemes, siting will be a key consideration.

Hydro schemes should be sited so as to minimise their visual impact

on watercourses which are often areas of character and scenic quality. Where watercourses are tree lined, then use should be made of this existing vegetation to aid integration and minimise the visual impact.

22.41 Attention will also be paid to the impact of such development on conservation and wildlife. Impacts can include fish being killed or injured by hydro power schemes as well as damage to the riverine ecology by water abstraction or construction related pollution. We will consult with the relevant authorities (NIEA, Loughs Agency, and Water Management Unit) in this regard to ensure avoidance of significant impacts.

22.42 Noise impacts from such infrastructure is likely to be limited to a few metres from the turbine house. This coupled with the location of hydro power schemes being such that they are usually located away from residential areas, mean that impacts on residential areas are likely to be minimal. However, where development is proposed to take place is close proximity to residential areas, we will consider the potential for noise from the facility and the developer may be required to submit a noise impact assessment.

POLICY TRAN 2 – DISUSED TRANSPORT ROUTES

Until such time as the Local Policies Plan is adopted there will be a presumption against development on disused transport routes (railway line, canals etc.) for uses other than recreational, nature conservation or tourism use, unless there is no reasonable prospect of reuse for future transport purposes and/or recreation purposes.

This will have relevance to provision of potential schemes relating to the Derry Central Line at Upperlands.

Appendix B.

B. Landscape Designations US 02 & US03

Relating to The Historic Village Centre / Boyne Row Area

Designation US 02 Local Landscape Policy Area:

A Local Landscape Policy Area is designated as identified on Map No. 1 - Countryside and Map No. 30 - Upperlands.

Those features or combination of features that contribute to the environmental quality, integrity or character of the area are listed below:

- Mature vegetation, including substantial areas of designed landscape, along the Knockoneill/Clady River, defines the character of the settlement and enhances its setting, and is also valuable for nature conservation;
- Several streams, with associated mature trees and scrub, contribute to the landscape character and natural heritage of the area;
- Extensive industrial complex, Clark's Mill, with associated dams, races, and buildings (including a listed 1736 thatched beetling mill and water wheel) in a designed landscape which complements those of associated large houses;
- A series of substantial residences in designed inter-related landscape settings are associated with the owners and managers of the local industry. Ampertaine House (listed building) adjoins the main mill building complex. It with its gate-lodge (listed building), within a designed landscape setting which includes the river corridor, dominates the Kilrea road through the settlement. This landscape combines with a series of locally significant buildings – Ardtara (listed building), Rockwood, Gortead, Carnbane and Upperlands Houses, and their designed settings, to define the north-eastern approaches to the settlement. The mature woodland contributes to the distinctive character of the settlement and its setting;
- The extensive landscaped grounds of Benbragagh House, a locally significant building, define the south-eastern limits of the settlement and enhance the approach from Culnady;
- Boyne Row (listed buildings), and its riverside setting, represents workers housing, provided by the mill-owners;

The extensive woodland, including estate planting and parkland, which is such an impressive part of the landscape is also of value for nature conservation.

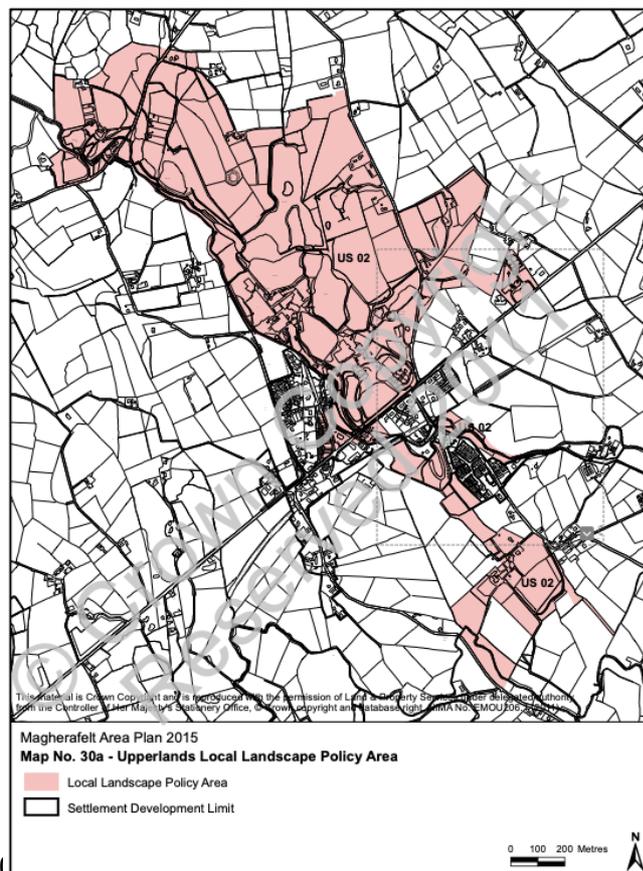
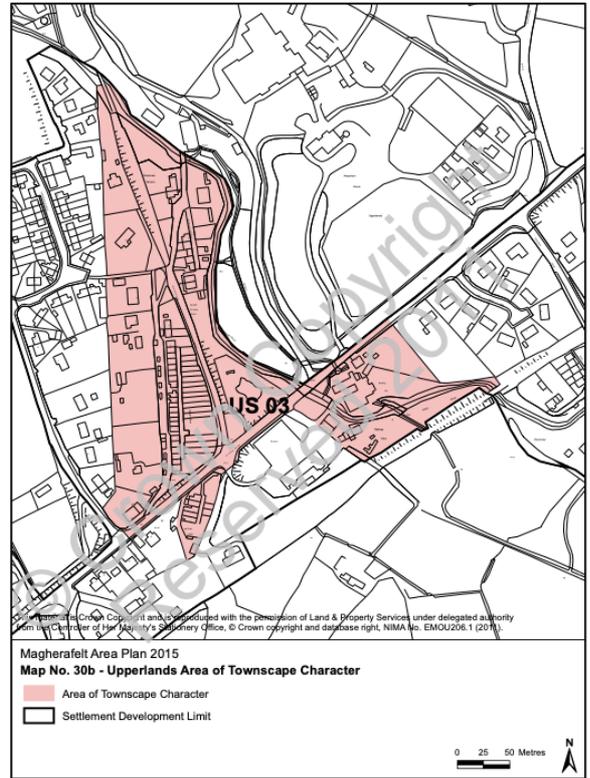
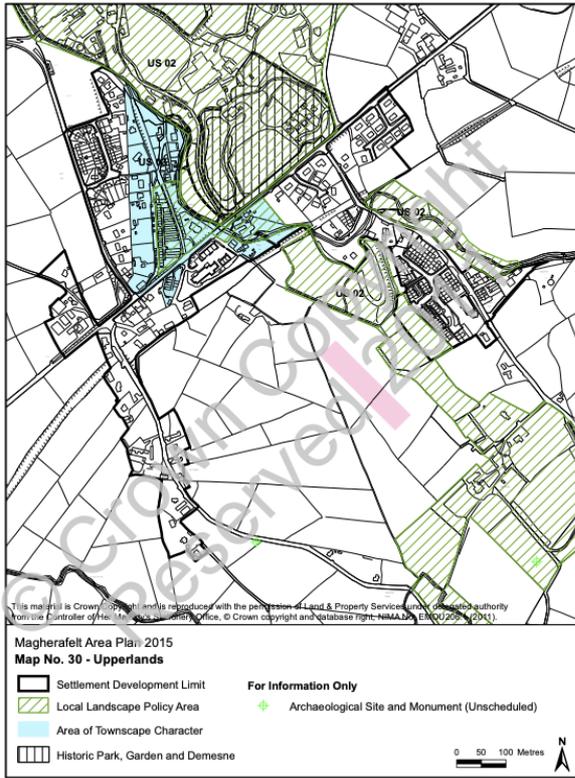
Designation US 03 Area of Townscape Character

An Area of Townscape Character (ATC) is designated as identified on Map No. 30 - Upperlands.

Key Features of the area which will be taken into account when assessing development proposals are as follows:

- The late Victorian/early Edwardian Boyne Row - red brick and black stone built terraces with pitched slate roofs, which retain their original form and proportions, and much original detailing;
- The visually prominent setting of Boyne Row on high ground overlooking the river and the surrounding area of the settlement;
- The long front gardens to Boyne Row emphasise and enhance the form of the terrace, and their physical and visual link to the industrial complex on the Kilrea Road;
- Boyne Row has an historical and physical relationship with the Knockoneill River, Kilrea Road beetling mill buildings, Ampertaine House Gate Lodge and the former railway yard;
- The designed open space between Boyne Row and the river is critical for maintaining the elements of industrial heritage and townscape;

- Mature trees and woodland along the Knockoneill River, the line of the former railway, and Kilrea Road;
- The beetling mill building on the Kilrea Road, a solid Victorian stone-built industrial building, and the adjacent mill race and weir represent the history of industrial use;
- Ampertaine House Gate Lodge on the Kilrea Road, a late 18th Century single storey hipped roof building with canted bay windows, and the entrance to the Clark's estate and Ampertaine House; walls, gates, pillars and surrounding vegetation;
- Built form is everywhere part of a designed planted landscape/townscape.



Appendix C.

C. “Upperlands: The Next Good Thing” Community Survey Community Consultation

Upperlands: The Next Good Thing

An online community questionnaire using
“Survey Monkey”
February / March 2023

(Please note: due to limitations on “free” responses, three identical versions of the survey were made available to maximise the number of responses we could analyse free of charge)



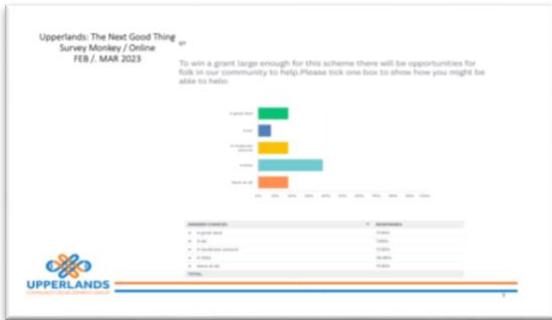
Upperlands: The Next Good Thing
Survey Monkey / Online
FEB / MAR 2023

Aim:
To initiate community discussion in relation to future possible community development pathways.

Mode:
By online survey requiring YES / NO responses to 10 broad questions so questionnaire was :

- Accessible
- Unambiguous
- Rapidly completed
- Low cost



Upperlands: The Next Good Thing
Survey Monkey / Online
FEB / MAR 2023

Possible Deductions

It is probably fair to say that folk in Upperlands...

- are willing to give opinions when asked
- know that their community needs a 'core'
- are crying out for the most basic services
- see 'youth' (100%) as a priority
- in principle, see how generating power is a positive
- want their community (group) to succeed
- can offer help at different levels

UPPERLANDS

Appendix D.

D. "Road Engines Race" Illustrations



Original RER Intake Structures



RER to the left of the path and Knockoneill River to the right. Community lease will include ground between RER and River for community use.

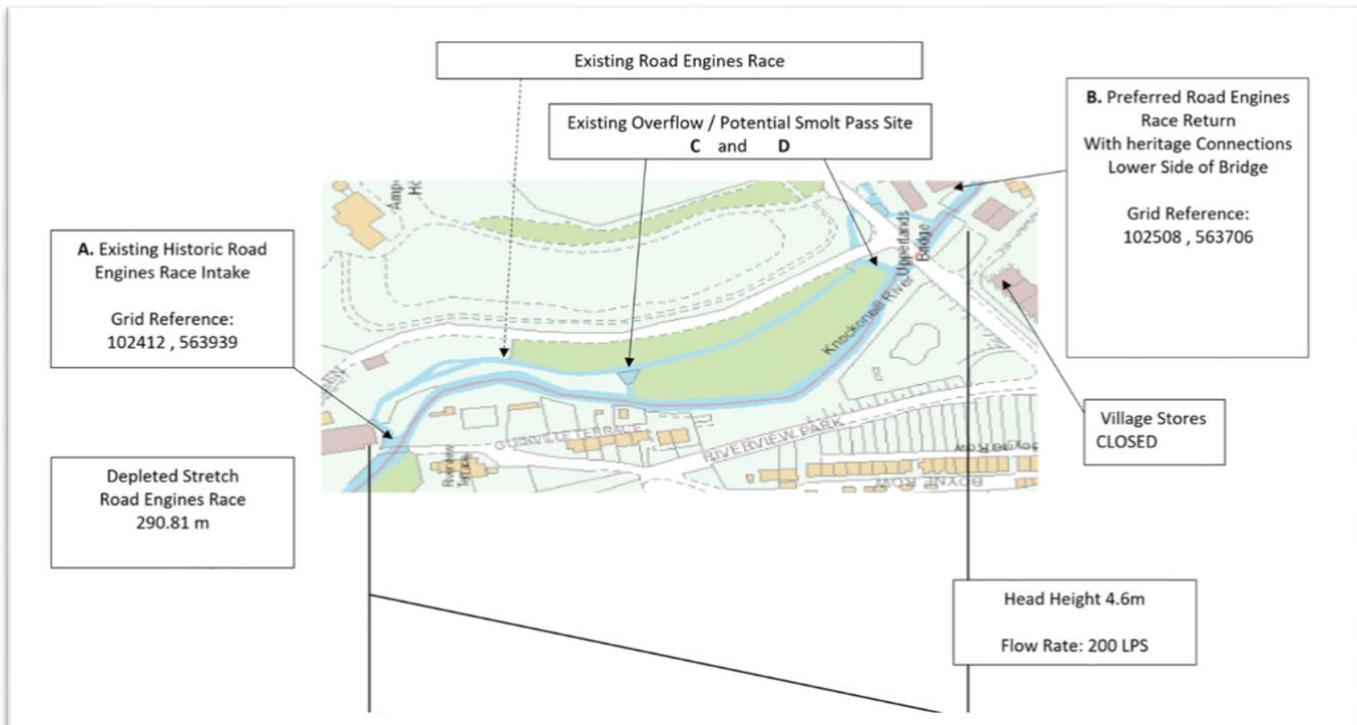


Upperlands Turbine House

The Turbine House will comfortably accommodate the new, smaller turbine resulting in 'vacant' community space for other activities e.g. allotments, men's shed etc.



Water returning above the historic weir at Smiths' yard.



Generating Potential Implications

Road Engines Race						
A						
1	Production		Value £	Value £	Value £	Value £
2						NI Ave
3	Estimated Unconstrained KW/hr per year	126,244				01/01/2023
4	Cost of Electricity per Unit		£0.10	£0.20	£0.30	£0.40
5			£12,624.40	£25,248.80	£37,873.20	£50,497.60
6						£34,338.37
B						
7	Usage	KW/Hr	Value £	Value £	Value £	Value £
8	Upperrlands Community Development					
9	Cost of electricity per unit		£0.10	£0.20	£0.30	£0.40
10	Sept 19 - March 2021 (Post Covid)					£0.27
11	per month	2,351	£235	£470	£705	£940
12	per annum	28,212	£2,821	£5,642	£8,464	£11,285
13						£7,674
14						
C						
17	Excess Electricity Not Used by UC DL	98,032				
18						
19	Sold back to grid @ 8p per kw/hr	£7,843	"Real" money to use in whatever way community wishes			
20	Used for the benefit of the Community	£26,469	"Value" of electricity if used BY the community			
21						
24						
25	Please Note: there WILL be dry periods when our river needs to be protected and the turbine will not run.					
26						

Village Plan: for illustration only

Appendix E.

E. Selected 2020 Census Figures

[All figures are %]	Upperlands	Classification Band	Northern Ireland
Under 16 years	22.1	✓	19
17 - 64	61.5		64
Over 65	16.4		17
Ethnicity (white)	99.47		98.2
Catholic (community background)	9.45		45
Protestant (community background)	85.83		48
Nationality: British*	78.79		40
Irish*	8.73		25
N. Irish*	21.93		21
Health: ill/disability	24.9	✓	21
good / v. good	73.8		
unpaid carers	9.98		20
Owner occupied households	65.61		
Rented house	29.41		29
Single 65 or older	16.74	W	25
No access to car/van	25.7	U	22.7
Degree level or higher	8.92		23.7
No or Low GCSE / equiv.	60.41	U	29
Unemployed	48.7	U	5 ‘

- NI Census allows indication of more than one nationality

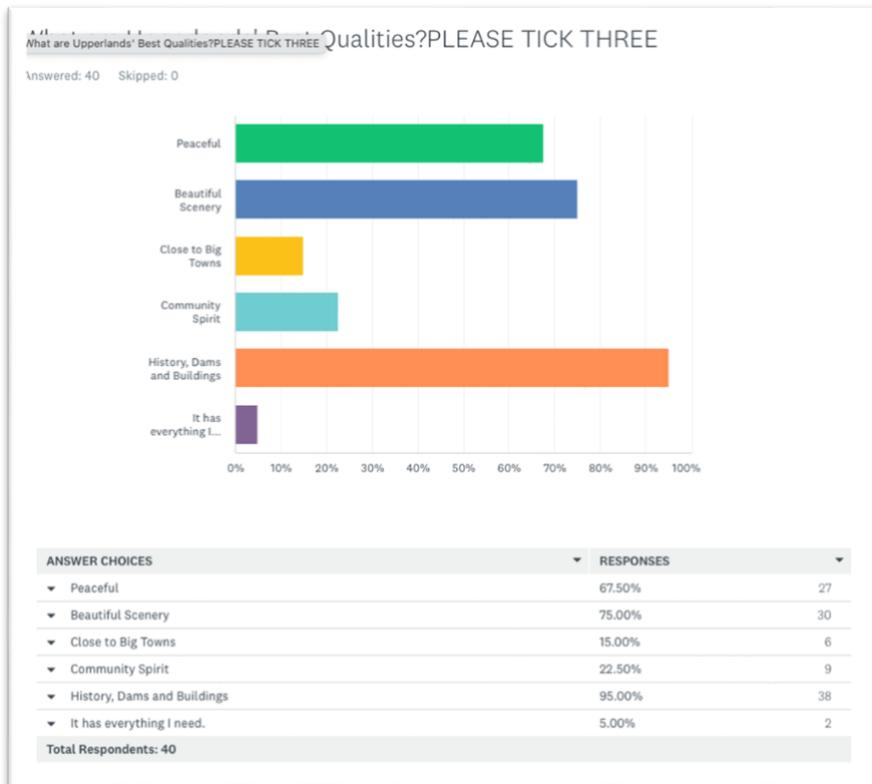
Appendix F.

F. Upperlands Draft Village Plan (Wed/Thurs) Community Survey

Announcement of a Draft Village Plan Community Meeting generated a fair number of online comments. Some members of the community had ‘missed out’ on previous surveys. The authors decided to construct a further questionnaire by way of a safety net, so that all views were considered.

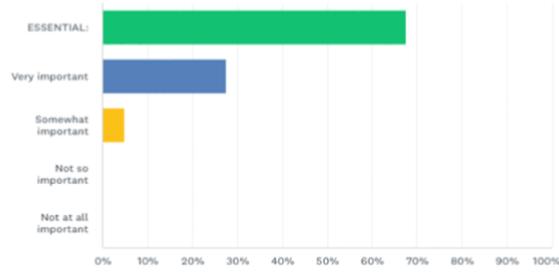
For the first time, the community were made aware of the 5 main areas of consultation (the Village Plan (VP) headings 1-5.

Withing 24 hours the survey (Wed/Thurs) was oversubscribed due the constraints of “SurveyMonkey” used in the research. This survey was ‘closed’ and a copy (Thurs/Fri) made ‘live’. Below are the results of the 40+ responders to (Wed/Thurs):



How important is it to have village shops and businesses in Uppertlands?
CLICK ONE

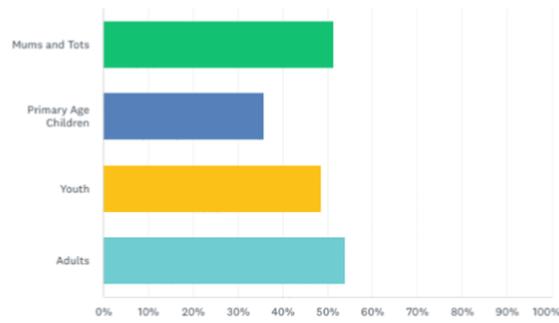
Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ ESSENTIAL:	67.50%	27
▼ Very important	27.50%	11
▼ Somewhat important	5.00%	2
▼ Not so important	0.00%	0
▼ Not at all important	0.00%	0
TOTAL		40

Which village group of people has the LEAST facilities in Uppertlands? Pick TWO.

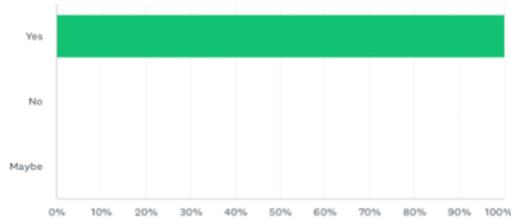
Answered: 39 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Mums and Tots	51.28%	20
▼ Primary Age Children	35.90%	14
▼ Youth	48.72%	19
▼ Adults	53.85%	21
Total Respondents: 39		

Is it important for villagers to be able to use the paths / walks at The Dams?

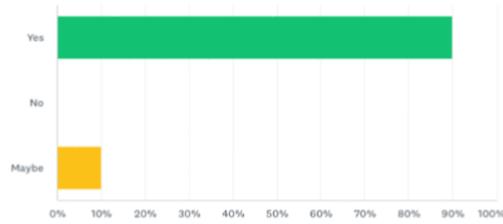
Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	100.00%	40
▼ No	0.00%	0
▼ Maybe	0.00%	0
TOTAL		40

Should Upperlands have a proper Historic Village Trail?

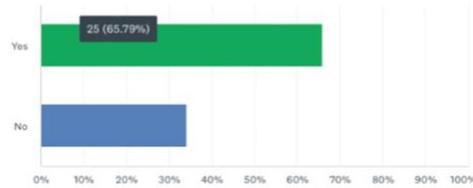
Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	90.00%	36
▼ No	0.00%	0
▼ Maybe	10.00%	4
TOTAL		40

Is a proper future-proof Outdoor Sports Centre needed in Upperlands?

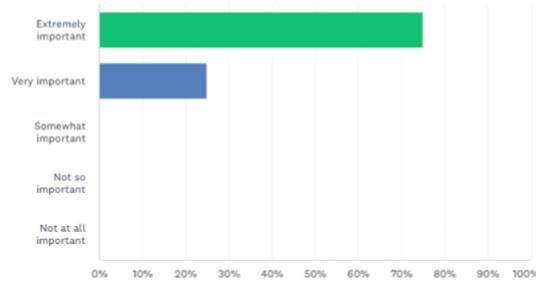
Answered: 38 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	65.79%	25
▼ No	34.21%	13
TOTAL		38

How important are The Dams and Mill Buildings?TICK ONE

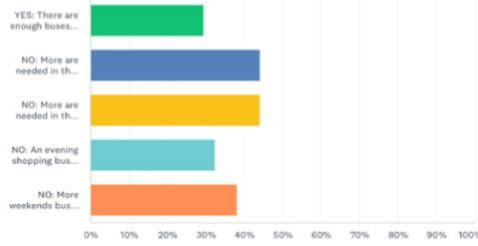
Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Extremely important	75.00%	30
▼ Very important	25.00%	10
▼ Somewhat important	0.00%	0
▼ Not so important	0.00%	0
▼ Not at all important	0.00%	0
TOTAL		40

Are there enough buses into / out of Upperlands? I click 1 WO answers.

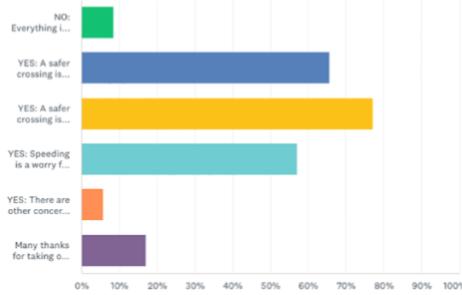
Unanswered: 34 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
YES: There are enough buses for my needs.	29.41% 10
NO: More are needed in the mornings.	44.12% 15
NO: More are needed in the afternoons.	44.12% 15
NO: An evening shopping bus would be good.	32.35% 11
NO: More weekends buses are needed.	38.24% 13
Total Respondents: 34	

Joes Road Safety in Upperlands need to be improved? Click as many as you like.

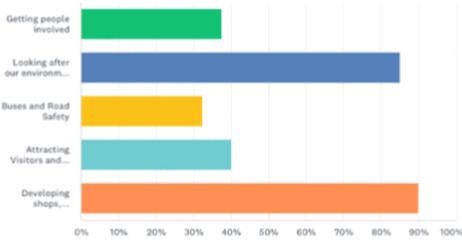
Unanswered: 35 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
NO: Everything is safe as it is.	8.57% 3
YES: A safer crossing is needed from the Linen Monument to the Bus Stop / Lincenhall	65.71% 23
YES: A safer crossing is needed where the footpaths end on the way to School / Little Amps.	77.14% 27
YES: Speeding is a worry for me.	57.14% 20
YES: There are other concerns that I'll pass on to the Community Office	5.71% 2
Many thanks for taking our survey which will help to build our Village Plan.	17.14% 6
Total Respondents: 35	

Upperlands Village Plan will have 5 main points designed to improve UPPERLANDS. Which are the THREE most important?

Unanswered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Getting people involved	37.50% 15
Looking after our environment and history/heritage	85.00% 34
Buses and Road Safety	32.50% 13
Attracting Visitors and Tourists	40.00% 16
Developing shops, businesses and services for the community	90.00% 36
Total Respondents: 40	

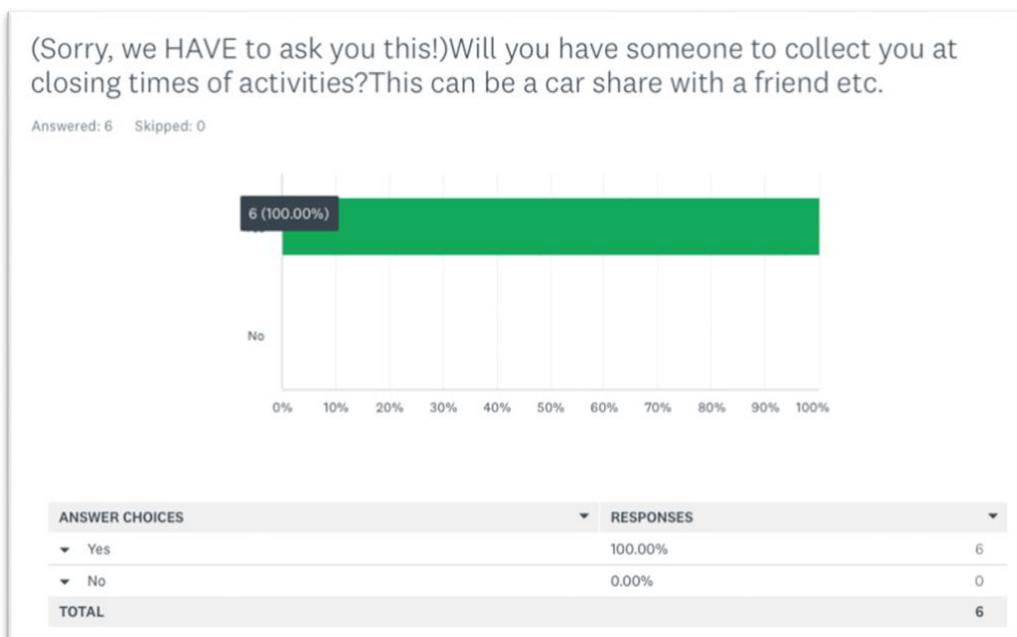
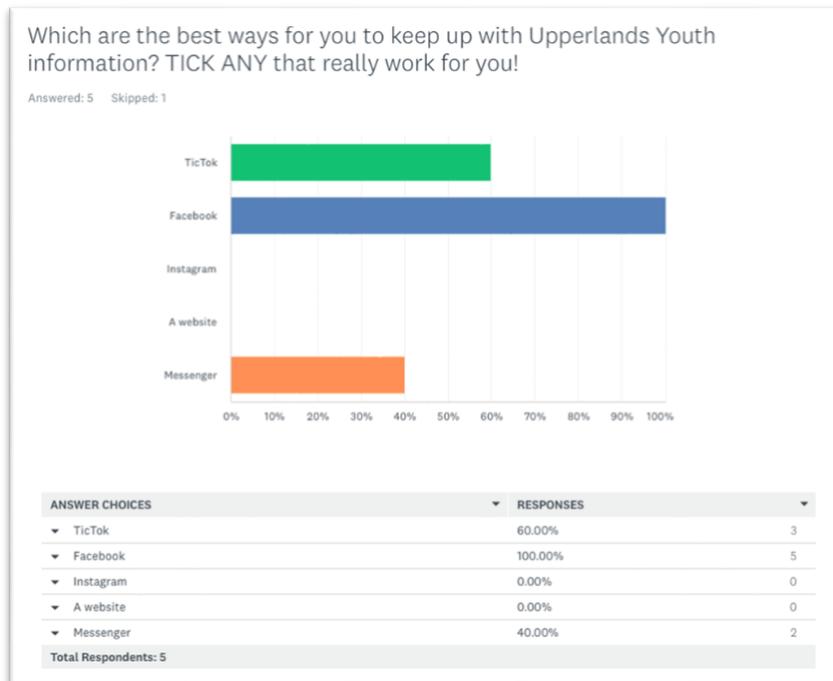
Appendix G.

G. Youth Survey: April 2023

A short, accessible survey of Upperlands ‘Youth’ was conducted online using the ‘SurveyMonkey’ tool.

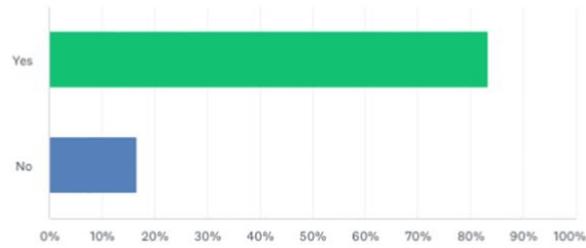
Although it attracted limited numbers of responses, very broad conclusions were drawn from the data in order that a direction of travel be chosen.

Screenshots of responses:

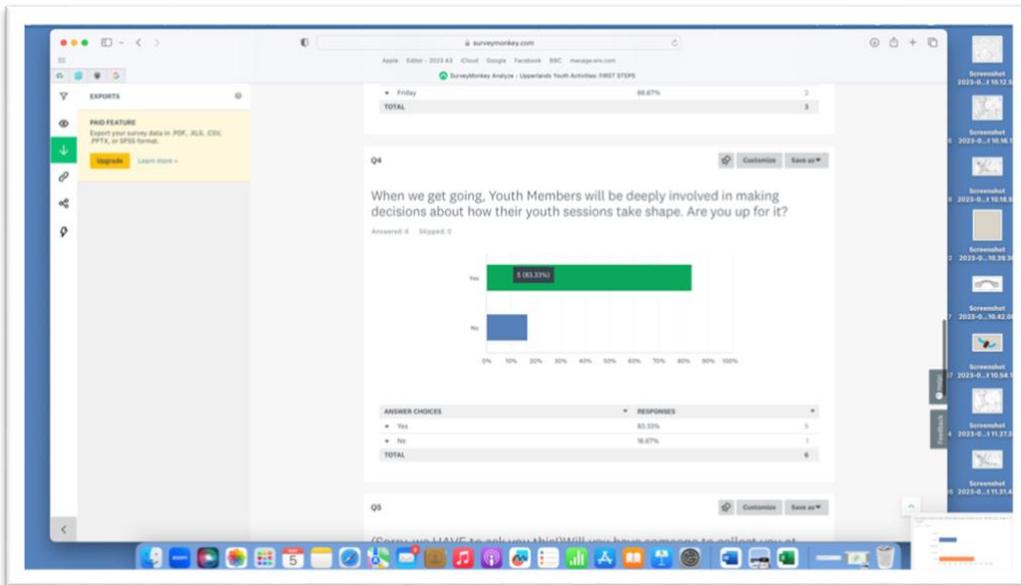


When we get going, Youth Members will be deeply involved in making decisions about how their youth sessions take shape. Are you up for it?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

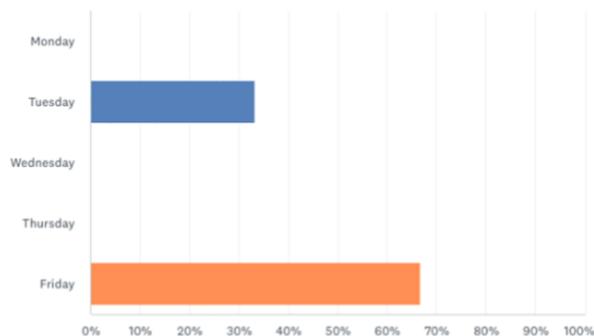


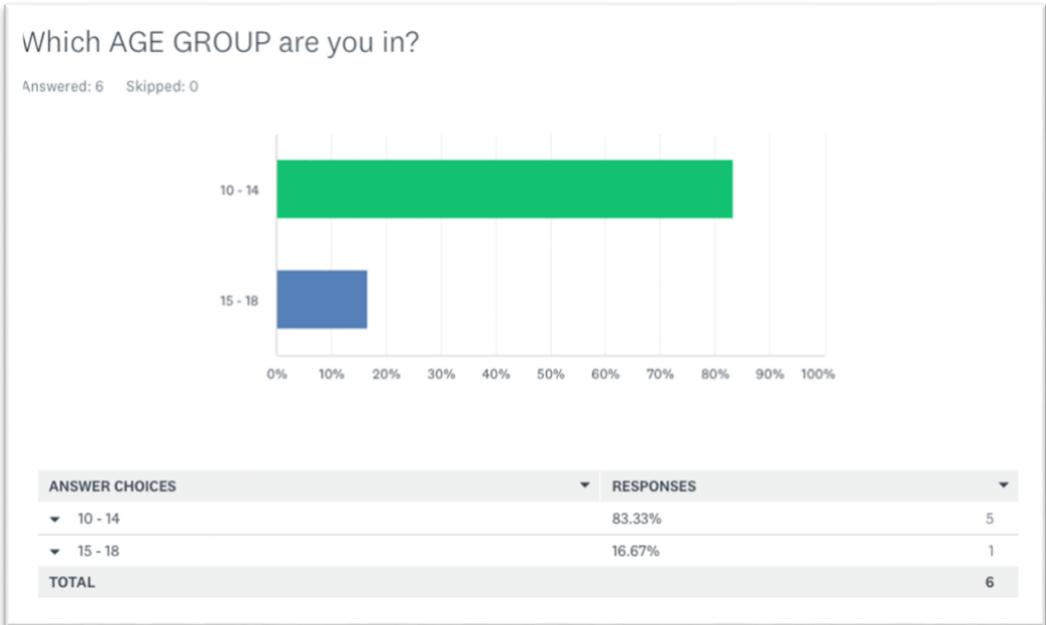
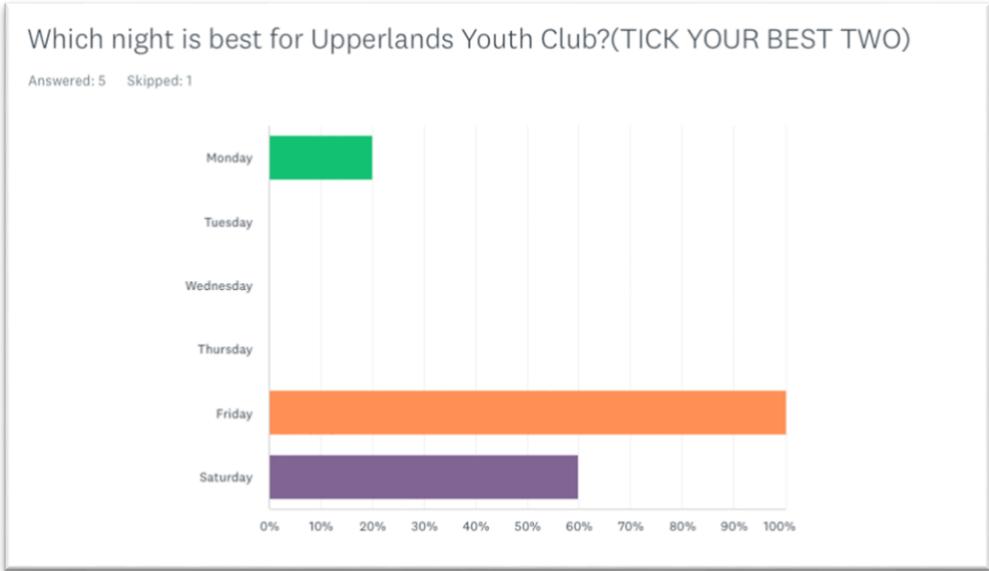
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	83.33%	5
No	16.67%	1
TOTAL		6



Secondary School only: Which afternoon is best for an "off-the-bus" drop-in 4 - 6 pm?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 3





Appendix H.

H. ‘Community’: Where Does Everyone Fit In?

Upperlands Community Development Group is working towards a model which will see all members of the community as links in a chain.

These links will:

- Be of equal value
- Work together to deliver activities, projects, services for the community.

Here are *some examples* of links inside our community.

Fishing Club	Footballer	School Pupils
Mums and Tots	Community Board	Men’s Shed
Volunteer	Child Minders	Grant Funder
Royal British Legion	Elderly Living Alone	With Additional Needs
Community Admin.	Sponsors	Youth

A person will probably belong to more than one link.
Not every link will be involved in every activity.

Here is an example:

The ‘chain’ for our recent Easter Bunny event included ALL of these links:

This chain needed ALL these links in order for it to be a success.

