



Ennis Age Friendly Town Plan 2021

Making Clare a great place in which to grow old





Contents:

Foreword from Pat Dowling	4
Message from the Mayor of Ennis	5
Message from the Chair of Clare Older People's Council	6
Age Friendly Ireland	7
World Health Organisation - definition of an Age-Friendly Town/City	7
Age Friendly Structures in County Clare	8
Introduction	9
What is an Age Friendly Town?	9
Why become an Age Friendly Town?	10
Why be Age Friendly in the Public Realm?	11
The need for an Age Friendly Town Plan	12
Our Age Friendly Town Objectives	13
Accessibility to the town	13
Transport	16
Safety and Security	17
Identification of Ennis for the purpose of Age Friendly	19
Key Age Friendly services in Ennis	20
Sport and Recreation in Ennis for Active Adults	25
Ennis Age Friendly Town Survey	27
How Walkable is your town?	27
Ennis Walkability Study	28
Ennis Age Friendly Town Action Plan	30
How will the implementation of the plan be managed?	30
Ennis Age Friendly Town Working Group	30
Conclusion	31
Appendices:	32
Appendix 1: Clare Age-Friendly Alliance Board	32
Appendix 2: Ennis Town Survey	33
Appendix 3: Ennis Walkability Study Report	49

Foreword from Pat Dowling

**Chief Executive of Clare County Council and
Chair of Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board**



As Chief Executive of Clare County Council and Chairperson of the Clare Age Friendly Alliance, it gives me great pleasure to present the first Age Friendly Town Plan for our county town of Ennis.

An Age Friendly Town should cater for all people. Age Friendly Ireland believes that if you design for older people you will, in the main, design for all of society and it has pioneered the walkability audit tool to capture the experiences of people using their own towns. Collaboration with the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design and the National Disability Authority has led to an even greater understanding of how towns cater for a range of people with differing abilities. People with visual impairments, mobility issues, wheelchair users, as well as older people participated in the walkability audits of Ennis.

Consultation is at the heart of the Age Friendly Programme and listening to the 'voice' of older people is key to the programme's success. A representative of the Clare Older People's Council who took part in the walkability studies of Ennis is also a member of the Age Friendly Town Team to allow the 'voice' of older people to be heard and bring a greater understanding of the issues facing older people in Ennis.

The information generated has been very useful in informing our town planners' and future development plans for Ennis by understanding what works well and the issues and barriers that people face every day. The study also provided a valuable learning experience for participants and our own council staff. Seeing their town from other people's perspectives, for example for people with mobility issues, led to an increased general consciousness of the different issues facing people as they move around the town. Many worthwhile changes have been identified in Ennis and examples of some of the actions resulting from the walkability studies can be seen throughout this report.

The next steps will include further implementation of the Age Friendly Town actions with local authority staff, planners, engineers and other key stakeholders involved in the Age Friendly Town Team. It is through this kind of collaborative working and planning that we will be better placed to meet the challenges that lie ahead, in a positive way that will improve the lives of our older citizens into the future.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Pat Dowling".

Pat Dowling

Chief Executive, Clare County Council & Chair of Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board

Message from the Mayor of Ennis

I am delighted to endorse the new Age Friendly Town Plan for Ennis. An Age Friendly Town is a place where older people have a say in how their town develops. What's more, we believe that an Age Friendly Town will benefit everyone in the community, not just older people. Safe, friendly communities with good facilities are good places for children, young people and families of all ages.



The Ennis Age Friendly Town Plan is underpinned by an approach where the agencies involved are working together and consulting older people at local level. As such it has already proved to be successful in achieving its aim of improving the lives of older people in Ennis.

It is clear that the percentage of Clare's population aged 55 years and over will continue to increase over time and therefore, we must be ready to face the challenges that such an eventuality will bring to society.

The design of a community's built environment can often become the determining factor between a healthy and active lifestyle or one characterised by limited mobility and high levels of social isolation. In areas where the built environment is adapted, such as through the provision of safe footpaths, older people can be supported to be more physically active and to make more regular use of the public spaces, services and facilities provided.

Our aim is to improve the lives of our older citizens in Ennis through the Town Plan and make Ennis a great place to live, work and visit.

Councillor Ann Norton
Mayor of Ennis

Message from the Chair of Clare Older People's Council

The Clare Older People's Council (OPC) represents the voice of the older people throughout Clare. This voluntary group gives the opportunity for older people to share their concerns as older people living in their community and to work with key agencies and service providers to resolve these issues. The aim of the OPC is to ensure that Clare is a great place in which to grow old.

The OPC does this through participation in the decisions with key agencies in the Clare Age Friendly Programme and there is a representative on the Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board. It represents the views of older people at local, regional and national level.

As life expectancy increases the onus is on society to adapt in a manner that provides older people with the physical, economic and cultural opportunities to ensure they enjoy the best quality of life. The development of Clare's first Age Friendly Town is both urgent and timely. Such a society benefits all of us whether 'young', 'yet to age' or 'actively ageing' and challenges the stereotype of ageing as a process of growing 'frail' and 'dependent'.

We hope you enjoy reading the Ennis Age Friendly Town Plan and would love to hear from you with your suggestions and ideas for improving life in our county. Contact: clareolderpeoplescouncil@gmail.com Tel: **065 6846240**



Patricia Anne Moore



Age Friendly Ireland

Who are we and what does Age Friendly mean?

“Making cities and counties age-friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to demographic ageing”

Age Friendly Ireland is the home of Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme. The Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme aims to make Ireland a truly great place in which to grow old. The programme is built on the recognition of the valuable role that older people can and should play in shaping their communities for the better. The voice of the older person is at the heart of the programme.

In the past, policy relating to older people dealt almost exclusively with health and social care issues, focusing on burden and costs. In recent years, there has been a trend towards seeking to change the world view of ageing and older people. Instead of seeing older people from the point of view of their care and health needs, people are increasingly seeing the potential of the diversity of older people, and highlighting their social, economic and cultural contributions to the community.

The concept of an Age-Friendly City and County comes from an initiative started in 2006 by the World Health Organisation (WHO), called the Global Age-friendly Cities project. This project began by recognising the fact that the world was gradually becoming older and more urbanised. The WHO brought together representatives of 33 cities in 22 countries, including Ireland. It highlighted the need to maximise the health and well-being of the older population in urban environments.

World Health Organisation - definition of an Age-Friendly Town/City

“a society in which service providers, public officials, community leaders, faith leaders, business people and citizens recognise the great diversity among older persons, promote their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life, respect their decisions and lifestyle choices, and anticipate and respond flexibly to ageing-related needs and preferences”

Age Friendly Structures in County Clare

Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board

The Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board is a voluntary partnership of Clare Older People's Council and senior decision makers from the following agencies:-

- Clare County Council
- Health Service Executive
- An Garda Síochána
- University of Limerick
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- Limerick Clare Education Training Board
- Ennis Mental Health Association
- Clare Local Development Company
- Clarecare
- Limerick Clare Local Link
- Family Carers Ireland

The Clare Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2022 was developed by the Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board in consultation and co-operation with older people in Clare. This strategy is laid out under the 8 World Health Organisation themes for an Age Friendly Community. Each theme includes the findings from the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI) research survey conducted by the Department of Health in 2016, as well as consultation with older people. For more information see:

<https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/community/age-friendly/>

In response to the Clare Age Friendly Strategy, the development of Ennis as an Age Friendly Town will ensure that Clare becomes a leading Age-Friendly County.

Clare Older People's Council



The Clare Older People's Council represents the voice of older people in County Clare. It is a key stakeholder group of the Clare Age Friendly County Programme and aims to ensure consistency of services, supports and outcomes of the Clare Age-Friendly Strategy. Its members attend the Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board and Implementation Meetings of the Clare Age Friendly Programme.

Introduction

Ennis Age Friendly Town initiative is part of the wider Clare Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2022, and part of the development of Age Friendly Communities within the Clare Rural Development Strategy 2017. The programme's vision is to make County Clare a great place in which to grow old. Many of the key determinants of quality of life are decided at local level, and quite often it is the smaller things that make the difference.

The creation of Age Friendly Towns and communities should facilitate the following:

- Older people exercising autonomy in relation to the systems, services and decisions which affect them.
- A real respect for older people, their contribution to society and to the communities in which they live.

Older people feeling positive, and in control of their own lives.

- Older people participating fully in community life, and reducing social isolation.
- The elimination of prejudice and discrimination against older people.
- Older people supported to live independently for as long as they wish to.
- Older people experiencing an excellent quality of life.
- Better integration of services to reduce dependency and avoid duplication of costs.
- People of all ages feeling part of an inclusive, equitable society.



What is an Age Friendly Town?

An Age Friendly Town is a town where the community understands and responds to the needs of older adults. It is a town in which older people are actively involved in social, economic and cultural life and in creating a better local environment, to everybody's benefit.

By prioritising the participation of older people, Age Friendly Towns improve life for everyone in the community. It brings the methodologies of the Age Friendly Cities & Counties programme to the selected town in a concentrated way to significantly improve the quality of life of older adults and to engage them in shaping and enhancing their own community.

Age Friendly Towns respond to what the older community needs. They come about when older people get together and work with other groups in the community, such as local authorities, health services, the Gardaí, transport companies and local businesses to transform where they live to benefit both themselves and the wider community.

Why become an Age Friendly Town?

“If you design for the young you exclude the old, but if you design for the old you include everyone”

Glenn Miller, Director of Education and Research, Canadian Urban Development Institute

The list below includes some of the simple changes that have come about as part of our Ennis Age Friendly Town Programme and which are really helping to improve everyone's quality of life.

- Age friendly services, such as libraries, restaurants, hotels, post offices, banks, hairdressers and supermarkets, that feature good signage, reasonable noise levels, adequate seating and managed queuing.
- Community spaces for people to meet and socialise.
- Intergenerational activities, where younger and older people can spend time together doing something worthwhile.
- Use of community noticeboards, websites and information leaflets to provide appropriate information about local services and events happening in the area.
- Plenty of benches in the streets for people to rest on and chat to friends.
- Level pavements, free from obstruction, reducing the fear of tripping and falling and enabling more people to feel safe when out and about.
- Traffic lights giving sufficient time to cross, and pedestrian crossings where they are needed.
- Befriending Services such as those being delivered by Clarecare.
- Connected public transport routes, linking people to where they need to go.
- Universally designed shared priority public realm works throughout the town.

The national Age Friendly Towns Programme supports local, community-driven projects. The local focus means that everyone can experience real change and impact on their lives.



Members of the Clare Older People's Council with staff from Ennis Municipal District office and the Clare Age Friendly programme.

Why be Age Friendly in the Public Realm?

“By making our outdoor spaces and public realm pleasant, clean, accessible and safe for older people we can create inclusive communities and age-friendly spaces for everyone in the town to enjoy”

Eamon O'Dea - Ennis Town Engineer

The way an area looks and how safe it feels has a big impact on older people's confidence and motivation. When the environment of a town is attractive and accessible, people of all ages can be supported to enjoy more active and connected lives.

Being age friendly in the public realm generally does not bring with it additional cost, but deliberate design changes made with the needs and wants of older people in mind can greatly improve older people's lives, keep older people active and help older people to get out and about. Small design considerations can greatly improve an area for older people.

It is our aim to make the public realm of Ennis town and its environs pleasant, clean, accessible and safe for older people to enjoy.

The need for an Age Friendly Town Plan

Ireland's population has been getting steadily older since the 1980's. Life expectancy in Ireland is now above the EU average. By 2026 the 65+ age group will have doubled and by 2041 it will have more than trebled what it was in 2006.

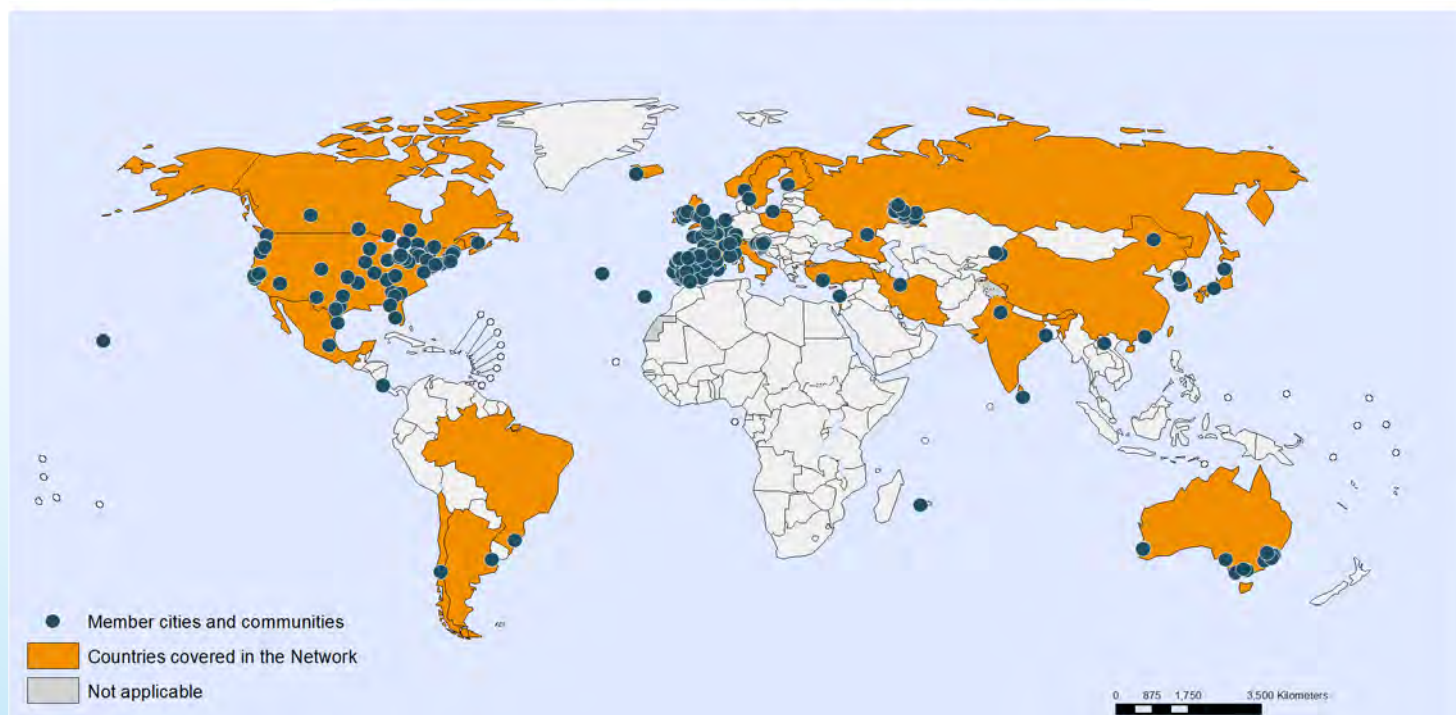
Population projections by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) suggest that the percentage of the population in Clare over 55 will increase from 27% (2016) to approx. 34% (2031).

Making both towns and rural communities age-friendly is an effective local policy approach for responding to population ageing. The physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age. It is appropriate therefore that we plan now to enable the population of Ennis to grow old safely, with dignity and respect and with a good quality of life.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has included County Clare in its Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. As a member, County Clare is part of a growing global movement of communities, cities and other sub-national levels of government that have pledged to meet the needs of their older residents. For more information see:

<https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/>

WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities



Our Age Friendly Town Objectives

The overall objective of the Ennis Age Friendly Town Committee is to significantly improve the quality of life of older adults living in the Ennis area and to engage them in shaping and enhancing their own communities.

The objectives of the Ennis Age Friendly Town initiative are to:

- Make Ennis a great place in which to grow old - measured by the outcomes in the Age Friendly Town Survey, before and after the project and measured through the implementation of the actions outlined in the Action Plan.
- Improve overall accessibility of the town's public realm – measured by the outcomes in the Walkability Study of Ennis and measured through the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Walkability Study Report (see appendix 3).
- Engage older adults in shaping and enhancing their communities for the benefit of everyone – members of the Clare Older People's Council have been involved in the decision making process of the Age Friendly Town initiative and have a member on the Age Friendly Town Committee.

Accessibility to the town

There is increased recognition that our outdoor spaces and buildings impact on our physical and mental health. If we can move around safely, easily and without hindrance, parents with pushchairs, persons with disabilities, older people and children who need to play, are all facilitated. 'Ageing-in-place' implies that older people continue living in their communities and homes, for as long as possible.

Without proper planning, the physical environment and many essential public services e.g. transport, health centres, and Gardaí, as well as private services e.g. shops, postal services and banking, can act as a barrier to older people remaining active in their community.

The Ennis Age Friendly Town Plan takes into account the strategic aims and objectives of the Local Area Plan for Ennis. This is combined into the County Development Plan as shown in the link below:

<https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/planning/publications/clare-county-development-plan-2017-2023-volume-3a-ennis-municipal-district-written-statement-and-maps-24146.pdf>



New Pedestrian Crossing on Mill Road allows for easier walking access to the town centre.

Public realm works & future urban regeneration of Ennis

Ennis was among the successful applicants under the Government's Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, which is intended to drive regeneration and rejuvenation of strategic and underutilised areas within Ireland's cities and large towns. The successful projects were as follows:

- Parnell Street, the Laneways and Bow-ways: Currently under construction.
- O'Connell Square, O'Connell Street, High Street, Bank Place, Barrack Street and Old Barrack Square: Planning permission secured for elements of the scheme. Part 8 for O'Connell Street to be lodged in August 2021.

These have an overall cost of €10.5M with 75% of the cost being grant funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, and the remaining 25% being financed by Clare County Council.

The projects have a purpose of regenerating the public realm, significantly improving accessibility for pedestrians, providing an enhanced streetscape, and delivering expanded, high quality civic spaces with the overall aim of making the Town Centre experience more appealing and conducive for both retail and social purposes.

The key features of the project include:-

- full accessibility
- shared surface treatment
- widened footpaths
- high quality surface materials with improved street furniture, lighting and signage, street trees, canopy structures, and an interactive pavement fountain

The Ennis Public Realm Works Project in Parnell Street and adjoining Laneways and Bow-ways, is being delivered with full accessibility, shared surfaces, table top crossing points, dropped kerbs and seating areas.

The design development for the project has been informed through a process of public consultation, stakeholder engagement and technical design studies.

The planned works to be undertaken by Ennis MD are pre-assessed by an established group of "Age-Friendly" representatives, whose individual and unique perspectives are taken into consideration before design stage of any project. This public realm project has benefited from the Age-Friendly audit carried out at design stage. The feedback on completed works in Parnell Street has been very positive. The results from a follow up Age-Friendly audit is being used to inform future public realm enhancement works.

The result of this investment will be a safer and more attractive pedestrian

environment which is universally accessible, with spaces that can also have a civic function, facilitating the Town Centre as a destination, improving its vitality and enabling Ennis to capitalise on its existing assets.



Wheelchair accessible picnic tables at Ballyalla amenity.

Improving Pedestrian Connectivity

Ennis Municipal District (MD) are undertaking a public consultation process to amend disabled parking spaces and improve accessibility in the Friary and Abbey Street Car Parks as well as Lower Market Street, following items raised during the Walkability Audit undertaken by the Older People's Council.

Ennis MD are also looking to improve pedestrian connectivity at various areas throughout the town.

Design works are being undertaken for the river crossing at Club Bridge and Drehidnagower Road. There is also funding provided to join up areas of missing footpaths such as Roslevan, Ballybeg and Old Mill Street in 2021 with further design being undertaken for funding submissions for 2022.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has provided funding under 'Connecting and Co-Creating Ennis' to provide improvements to footpaths and walkways, drop kerbs and seating areas on walking routes around and through the town.

There are further phases of this project that will require more detailed design and public consultation processes and may dovetail with proposals identified in the Mobility Plan.

Connecting and Co-Creating Ennis is an overlay of the Earthroutes Ennis Recreational Trails that expand Ennis into the immediate countryside. The Limerick University Architectural School 'Connecting and Co-Creating Report' and the NTA 10-Minute Town Report, references 2km and 5km walks which are within the town and highlight the River Fergus as a key feature.

This will provide improved accessible pedestrian connections within Ennis and its environs.

Transport

Owning and being able to use one's own transport or having access to affordable public transport, are key contributors to successful active ageing. Being able to move around influences social and civic participation in society and allows for improved access to community and health services.



Ennis Town Bus Service

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is involved in the supply and contracting out of public transport services. Clare County Council and the Ennis MD have worked with the Planning Section of the NTA Public Transport Services Section with the intention of completing the network design for a Town Public Bus Service.

This work is ongoing at present and the selection of the next towns to be provided with a public bus service is a matter for the NTA and the public funding provided to the NTA Public Transport Services.



Bus Shelter with seating in Woodquay

Accessible lift at Ennis Train Station

Iarnród Éireann have invested in the installation of an accessible lift and cross track bridge at Ennis Train Station to make public transport easier for wheelchair users, individuals with mobility issues and those using buggies.

Mobility Plan for Ennis 2021/2022

Ennis MD secured funding under the National Transport Authority's 'Active Travel' grants for the development of a mobility plan for Ennis and its environs.

The plan will examine the existing and future mobility needs of the town for all transport modes, and the infrastructure requirements to meet same.

Ennis MD is working with the Transport and Economic Development Forward Planning Section to finalise a draft brief for engagement of Consultants. The formulation of the mobility plan will require an extensive information gathering and consultation process.

There is a specific requirement in the brief that the Older People's Council are consulted during this process. It is expected that the funding of future Active Travel Projects in Ennis Town and environs will be based on the priorities identified in the Mobility Plan.

Cycle Lanes installed

Cycle lane facilities were provided as part of a previous Active Travel programme and further cycle lanes were provided at St Flannan's Drive under the Low Cost Safety Scheme. There is significant design work being undertaken as part of the present NTA Active Travel Funding to provide cycle ways on the main access routes to the town.

Safety and Security

The Gardaí have an Older Person's Strategy with 'Community Policing' featuring very high on the agenda. There is a big focus on 'Urban Community Policing' in Ennis with the continued promotion of Crime prevention.

During the Covid pandemic Gardaí were focused on assisting vulnerable people and saw there is a real need for this to continue post-Covid. Prior to Covid, the Gardaí held an annual Christmas party for older people which was always well attended.



‘Message in a Bottle’ initiative

‘Message in a bottle’ is a simple idea that encourages people to keep their basic personal and medical details in a common place where in case of emergency, the emergency teams can easily access them. The information required is very basic but necessary.



How does it work?

- You are given a bottle (plastic container), complete with personal information form and three self adhesive green crosses.
- In the event of an accident or incident in the home, the first responder emergency services will be alerted to the location of the bottle by the label on the door.
- Attach one self adhesive green cross to the outside of your refrigerator door.
- Attach one green cross to the inside of your front and back doors.
- All green crosses should be clearly visible to the emergency services entering your home.

Who will benefit from Message in a bottle?

- Older people
- People in poor health
- People living alone
- People with life threatening conditions/allergies
- People with disabilities
- Gardaí
- Paramedics
- Fire-fighters
- Hospital Accident and Emergency
- Social Services

The ‘Message in a Bottle’ is now available to golfers. A metal disc/tag is placed on the golf bag to indicate that a bottle is located in the top pocket of the golf bag.

The ‘Message in a Bottle’ Project is being delivered by Ennis Lions Club and supported by the following emergency services:-

Ambulance, Fire Brigade, Gardaí, Medical Professionals, HSE, Pharmacists and the local authority.

Purple Flag Status

Ennis was the first town in Ireland to achieve Purple Flag designation in 2012 and has successfully retained its prestigious Purple Flag status. This follows a rigorous overnight assessment conducted by assessors representing the UK governing body, the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM).



The Purple Flag Award is in recognition of the towns' thriving evening and night-time economy. Purple Flag – similar to the Blue Flag for beaches – is an international award to raise the standards and broaden the appeal of town and city centres from early evening until late (5pm to 5am). Purple Flag is regarded as the benchmark for good night-time destinations in the UK and Ireland.

Areas awarded with a Purple Flag are recognised for providing a diverse and vibrant mix of dining, entertainment and culture while promoting the safety and well-being of visitors and local residents. The Purple Flag status indicates that Ennis is a safe place to go for a good night out, not just for pubs and clubs, but for a wide range of activities including arts and culture, leisure, eating out and events.

There are a number of local agencies involved in the Ennis Purple Flag working group, led by Ennis Chamber, including members of Ennis Garda Station, Ennis Municipal District (both elected members and staff), Civil Defence, Active Ennis, taxi organisations, Queens Night Club, glór plus other representatives from the business, community and voluntary sector. This working group meets throughout the year with the aim to ensure the town continues to provide great entertainment, exceptional hospitality and a safe night out for its residents and visitors.

Identification of Ennis for the purpose of Age Friendly

Ennis has a rich heritage tradition with some of the finest monuments, buildings and waterways in the country. The town has held a strong presence every year in the All Ireland Tidiest Town Awards and won Ireland's Tidiest Town in 2005. Since then it has won Ireland's Tidiest Large Urban Centre in 2006, 2008, 2013, 2016 and 2017. In 2019, Ennis Tidy Towns accepted Large Urban Centre, Gold Medal, County Winner, Regional Winner, Pollinator, Climate Action and Schools Awards.

Visitors to Ennis can expect to experience unique and diverse boutiques, shops, cafes, and restaurants. It is a tourist centre of major importance for County Clare as well as accommodating a population of over 25,000 residents in the town and its environs.

The capital town of Ennis accounts for approximately 23% of the county's population and based on projected CSO growth this population will increase by a further 25% by the year 2040.

The development of Ennis as an Age Friendly town will facilitate an increase in the older generation both living in the town or visiting as tourists. It is therefore timely that Ennis becomes the first Age Friendly Town in Clare and will serve as an example with initiatives being replicated in other towns throughout Clare.

Key Age Friendly Services in Ennis

The town's key services to older people were identified and will be shown on a map being developed for the Ennis Age Friendly Town's dedicated webpage.

Ennis Age Friendly Businesses and Services

There are more than 1 million older (60+) people living and shopping in Ireland. The National Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme is a growing brand, supported by Chambers Ireland and the Age Friendly Programme.

This recognition allows customers to identify an Age Friendly Business, and often older customers will talk to their friends and family about good service they receive.

The Ennis Age Friendly businesses and services listed below, have received special training by an Age Friendly Ireland Consultant and committed to making 3 simple changes to provide a better service to their older customers. This ensures that older people know that their custom is valued.

- Clare County Council head office
- Woodstock Hotel
- The Old Ground Hotel
- Templegate Hotel
- De Valera Library
- Ennis Leisure Centre
- Vodafone
- O'Connor's Bakery (O'Connell St., Parnell St. & Tesco Shopping Centre)
- County Boutique
- Sweet n Green café
- Bank of Ireland
- Lucas Bar
- Nozomi Shoe Boutique
- Ennis Book Shop
- glór



New Age Friendly Library

Clare County Council are building a new Age Friendly Library in Ennis due for completion in early 2023. The new library will be positioned next to glór and include the following Age Friendly features:-

- Age Friendly Parking spaces
- Fully accessible building with lift
- Fully accessible disability toilet facility with shower and hoist
- Activities for older people
- Multi-function room with programming for Age Friendly activities
- 80 metre art gallery



Artist's impression of the new Clare Library in Ennis next to glór

Age Friendly Priority Parking

Age Friendly Parking provides dedicated parking for older persons, providing convenient parking spaces near older people's desired destinations. This increases accessibility and usage of public and other essential services, for those whose mobility and walking speed has reduced. Age Friendly Parking supports older people of reduced mobility to get out and about and lead fuller lives.

Age Friendly Parking has been installed in the following locations frequented by older people and identified by attractive age friendly parking signs.

- Abbey Street Car Park – 4 spaces allocated
- Friars Walk Car Park - 4 spaces allocated
- Parnell Street Car Park - 4 spaces allocated
- O'Connell Street Upper - 3 spaces allocated
- Market Place - 2 spaces allocated
- Francis Street - 3 spaces allocated

They operate by the user's honesty, and the public are urged to leave them vacant for older people. These spaces are subject to parking charges and should not replace universal access spaces but rather complement them.

Ennis MD are currently undertaking a review of disabled parking in the town due to change in standards. Disabled parking will be upgraded to meet new standards.

Some examples of new Age Friendly Parking installed around Ennis are below:-



Age Friendly Parking outside the Post Office on Bank Place.



Age Friendly Parking outside the Tesco Shopping Centre on Francis Street.



Age Friendly Parking in the Templegate Car Park.



Council HQ Age Friendly Parking near the door, to facilitate improved service to older customers.

Age Friendly Seating

The Age Friendly Towns programme has shown that the provision of public seating in appropriate strategic locations can greatly enhance the quality of life experienced by older people and can support them to enjoy more active and connected lives.



This seat in Ballyalla overlooking the lake gives older people a place to stop and rest. Whilst also providing an interesting view that invites older people to stay and enjoy the aspect.



This seating in the market area of the town has a backrest and arms for support which will contribute to comfort if people want to stay for a while or for older people who need support while sitting and getting up again.



New seating with a nice planting area at the bottom of Parnell Street creates a great social space with good accessibility.

Public Toilets

Availability of public toilets can be a very significant issue for older people, restricting their access to the public realm. Improvements in walkability can be nullified by a lack of availability of toilet facilities. Clare County Council provide 2 main accessible public toilets in the town which is welcomed by older people.



Toilet in Abbey St. Car Park.



Toilet beside the Market Building in the centre of town.

Toilets in public buildings such as glór, the Museum and Council HQ buildings that are accessible from inside are also very convenient for older people.

glór

glór is a thriving arts centre located in Ennis, which serves the people of Clare and the mid-west with a vibrant programme of theatre, music, dance, visual arts, film and workshops.



Since 2018, glór in conjunction with the Clare Arts Office has introduced regular Dementia Friendly tours to accompany glór's visual arts programme.

glór offers guided exhibition tours specifically designed to support people living with dementia and their family, friends or professional carers, to engage with the artwork on show and enjoy a social gallery experience.

Clare Cultural Companions

The Clare Cultural Companions programme is a social network of older people who enjoy going to arts and cultural events together. It is facilitated through the Rural & Community Development Department of Clare County Council. As part of the programme, events are often hosted in glór which has a good accessible meeting space to allow for important social interaction as well as seating outside.

Sport and Recreation in Ennis for Active Adults

Active Ennis Leisure Centre



Ennis Leisure Centre provides a universally accessible space for older people to exercise and maintain their physical health.

The 'My Time' program includes the follow exercise programmes for adults age 50+

- Thai Chi, yoga and low intensity exercises include a social element with tea, scones and a chat.
- Aqua Aerobics – water-based exercise class which is very popular with older people.
- Chair aerobics – gentle exercise with resistance training for people with limited mobility and balance challenges. This improves mobility, stability and overall balance in a gentle way.



John O'Sullivan Park (Lees Road)

- Woodland Walk with seating with an active trail
- Walking area at perimeter of running track for level walking for those with stability/balance challenges

Tim Smyth Park

- Level walking track
- Wheelchair accessible tables with inlaid chess board
- Outdoor gym equipment
- Seating
- Tarmac perimeter walk



Tarmac footpaths around the perimeter of Tim Smyth Park allow greater accessibility for all users.



Wheelchair accessible picnic tables with chess/draughts board creates a good social space.

Clare Sports Partnership Programs for Active Adults

The aim of these programs is to encourage older adults to participate in sport and physical activity within their community, while also providing access to competitive sports which are fulfilling and inclusive for interested participants.

Their older adults' programmes assist in broadening the range of sport and physical activity opportunities within local communities, increasing awareness, access, and choice.



Clare Sports Partnership currently offer:-

- Go For Life Games
- Men on the Move
- Fitness For Fun
- Heart, health & fitness gentle exercise

Ennis Age Friendly Town Survey

An Ennis Age Friendly Survey was conducted in February 2020 using the On Street Survey template. The results were collated and presented in the form of a pie-chart report. (See Appendix 2)

How Walkable is your town?

This report contains analysis of the walkability study carried out in Ennis as part of the Age Friendly Programme. The objective of this programme is to significantly improve the quality of life of older adults living in the area and to engage them in shaping and enhancing their own communities to make sure that as we age, we can all:

- have a real say in what happens in our own lives and what happens in the areas where we live
- enjoy good health, excellent services and a safe and inclusive environment
- engage and participate fully in everything that is going on in our communities, cities and counties

Consultation with the people who live in and use the services of Ennis, was central to the Age Friendly Town Programme. One strand of this consultation involves groups of people, accompanied by Ennis Municipal District Engineers, walking the streets of the town to understand how easy and accessible the town is for people to get around in.



The Walkability Audit highlighted how the behaviour of people using the town can really impact on how walkable the town is. Drivers parking their cars on footpaths, blocking dropped kerbs or parking in accessible parking spaces all have a negative impact on people's ability to get around safely. Other behavioural issues that arose were dog owners not cleaning up after their dogs and hedges overhanging footpaths and not being maintained.

Ennis Walkability Study

“The independence to walk, even short distances, is paramount to feeling involved in a community”

Walkability in the context of Age Friendly design, refers to the ease at which older people can move around an area, building or space. Regardless of age, the walkability of an area affects all persons, however older people tend to be more aware of and may be challenged by the barriers to walkability.

However the Age Friendly Towns Programme showed that while areas may be technically accessible, design elements such as proximity of bins to seats (at least 10 metres), appropriate distance between seats (every 100 metres), more appropriate age friendly seat design (with handles to assist in both sitting and rising from a seated position), longer pedestrian crossing times at larger road junctions or the pleasant microclimate of an area all contribute to the positive walkability of an area and generally don't negatively impact the accessibility of an area.

A Walkability Study is a series of short walks undertaken by a representative group of persons. Details of the walk are logged and issues that arise are noted and photographed.

Three days of Walkability Studies were carried out in Ennis during January and February 2019. After each walk, a short questionnaire developed by Age Friendly Ireland (AFI) in collaboration with the Centre for Universal Design (CEUD) was completed. All participants including the facilitators and note-takers completed the questionnaire. The results from all the different routes studied have been analysed and are included in the Ennis Walkability Study Report in Appendix 3.

The emphasis of the Walkability Study is to engage and listen to the perceptions of the participants and to encourage active positive discussion on issues and topics relating to the accessibility of the town. Approximately 15 people contributed or took part in the audit. The participants consisted of mostly older people, people with reduced mobility and two wheelchair users.



The walkability study consisted of 6 routes covering much of the centre of the town

Route 1

Abbey Street & Abbey Street Car Park to Friary Car Park

Route 2

O'Connell Street to Friar's Walk

Route 3

Station Road to Bóthar na Trócaire

Route 4

Francis Street to the Causeway Link

Route 5

Bindon Street/Bank Place to Summerhill & Market Square

Route 6

Parnell Street Car Park and Cornmarket

The main issues identified during the walkability study are included in Appendix 3.

Ennis Age Friendly Town Action Plan

1. Improve accessibility of Ennis through a walkability audit conducted by older people. Areas to be looked at are:-
 - Installation of seating in key locations around Ennis.
 - Provision of Age Friendly designated parking spaces in Ennis.
 - Improvement in pavement surfacing within the town for improved access and mobility.
2. Foster Age Friendly Business within Ennis – looking at accessibility of shops, seating in shops, customer service and discounts for older people.
3. Expand ‘Urban Community Policing’ and ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ schemes. Continued promotion of Crime prevention.
4. Delivery of training on Age Friendly principles to Local Authority staff on Universal Design Housing & Public Realm.
5. Development of Age Friendly Parks incorporating Bowls, Outdoor Chess/ Draughts Area located in Lees Road and Tim Smythe Park, to encourage social participation and facilitate good physical and mental health.

How will the implementation of the plan be managed?

It is intended that the Age Friendly Town Working Group will have overall responsibility for managing the implementation of the plan. The Clare Age Friendly Programme through the overarching Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board will play a leading part in overseeing the implementation of many of the actions outlined in the plan (subject to available resources) and will use its good office to influence other key partners, as necessary. It may be necessary to increase the membership of the Town Group to assist the implementation of the action plan.

The Ennis Age Friendly Town Plan will be a living document that will be under constant review and actions will evolve to respond to older people’s needs.

Ennis Age Friendly Town Working Group

- Leonore O’Neill (Ennis Municipal District & Chair)
- Eamon O’Dea (Town Engineer - Clare County Council)
- Larry Hally (Clare Older People’s Council)
- Karen Fennessy (Age Friendly Development Officer)
- Fiona Barry (Town Planner - Clare County Council)
- Fiona Staunton (Alzheimer’s Society)

- Irene O’Flynn (Community Garda)
- Tim Forde (Social & Recreation, Clare County Council)
- Sharon Maxwell (Ennis Mental Health Association)
- Margaret O’Brien (Ennis Chamber of Commerce)

Conclusion

Successful Age Friendly Towns aim to create communities in which older people live independent and valued lives. They do this by undertaking focused, and often very practical activities, to achieve the goals of each of the WHO age friendly themes.

Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of depression and mental health difficulties, as well as cognitive decline in older people. In Age Friendly Towns, older people are supported by an age friendly public realm that can help people of all ages participate more fully in the social, economic, cultural and public life of their communities.

It is often the simple things such as the ability to safely cross the road in confidence that can provide older people with enhanced access to critical services in their communities. The Ennis Age Friendly Town programme aims to play an important role in supporting older people to stay more independent for longer and enjoy an enhanced quality of life.

Whilst clearly not exhaustive all the ideas and actions set out within this document are united by one principle: the voice of older people as the driving force of age friendly change at local level.

Committed Age Friendly partner agencies have developed localised solutions and practical changes in the area of the public realm which will help people of all ages to experience a better quality of life in Ennis.

Appendices:

Appendix 1

1. Clare Age-Friendly Alliance Board Membership

- Pat Dowling (Chief Executive of Clare County Council and Chair of Clare Age Friendly Alliance Board)
- Patricia Anne Moore (Chair, Older People's Council)
- Stella O'Gorman (Older People's Council)
- Dóirín Graham (Chief Executive, Clare Local Development Company)
- Caitriona Lavelle (Manager, Clarecare)
- Sean Collieran (Chief Superintendent, An Garda Síochána)
- Ethna McTeague (Manager of Community Services for Older People, HSE)
- Anne Gaughan (Limerick Clare Local Link)
- Victoria Ward (Senior Administrator, Family Carers)
- Jennifer Moran Stritch (Lecturer, Limerick Institute of Technology)
- Dr. Rose Galvin (Ageing Research Centre, University of Limerick)
- Breda O'Driscoll (Community Education Facilitator, Limerick & Clare Education and Training Board)
- Maria Molloy (Ennis Mental Health Association)
- Karen Fennessy (Age Friendly Development Officer)



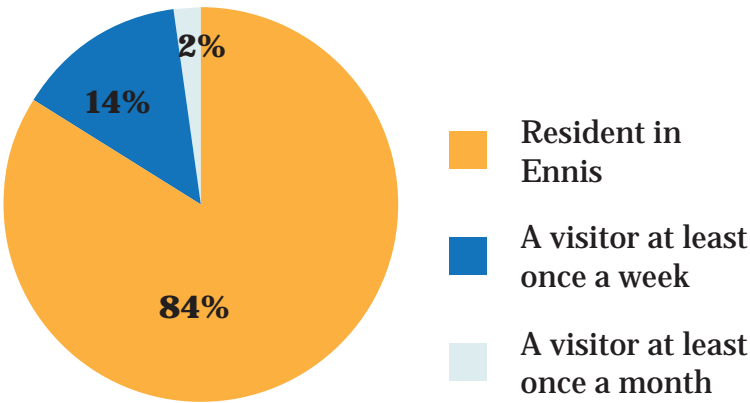


Ennis Town Survey

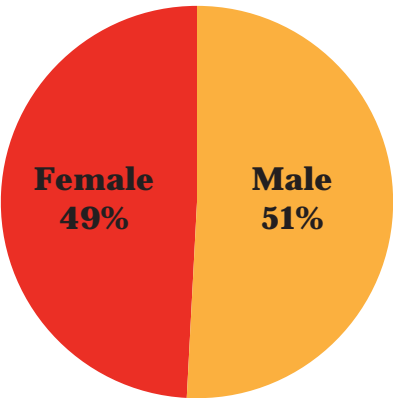
March 2020

Ennis Age Friendly Survey Results

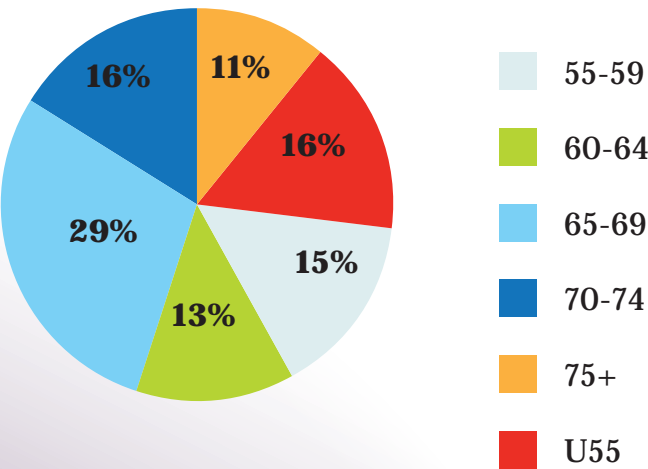
Are you?



Gender



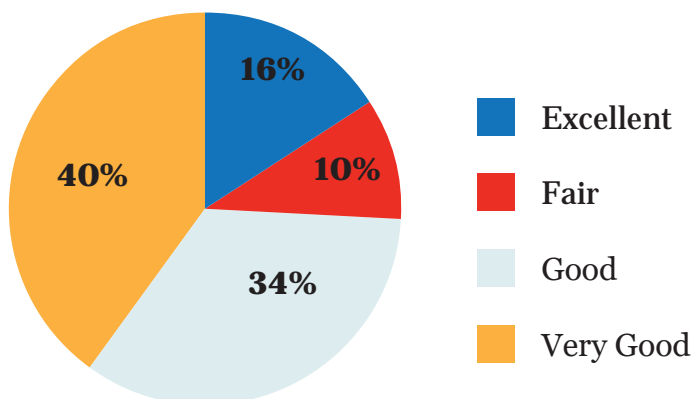
Age Group



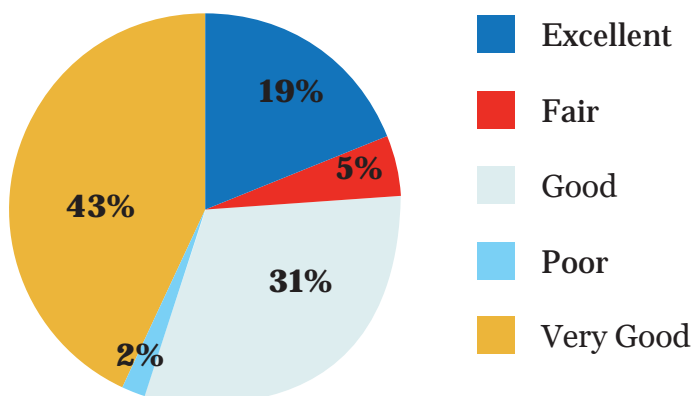
Health and Quality of Life



How is your general Health?



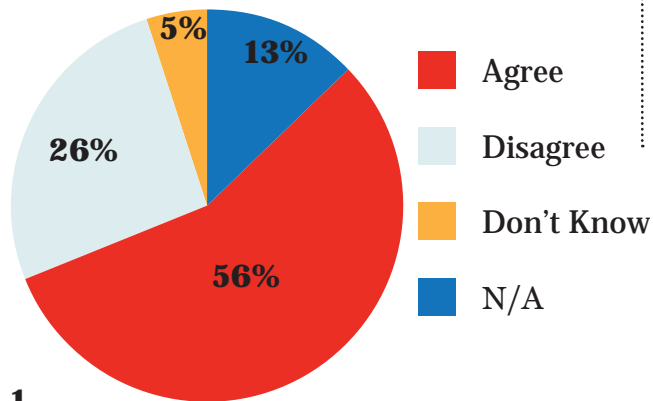
How is your Quality of Life?



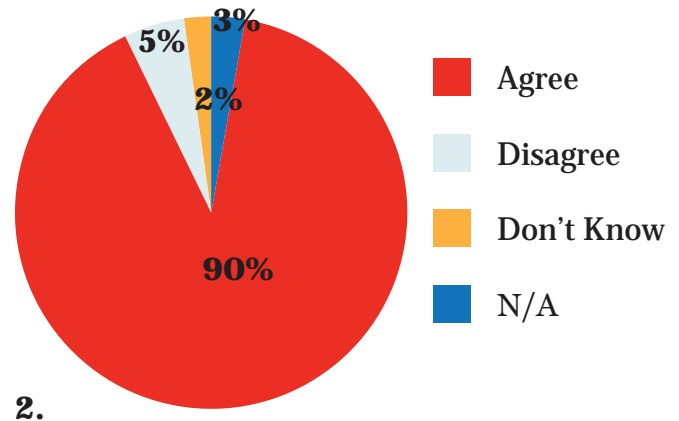
Health Services



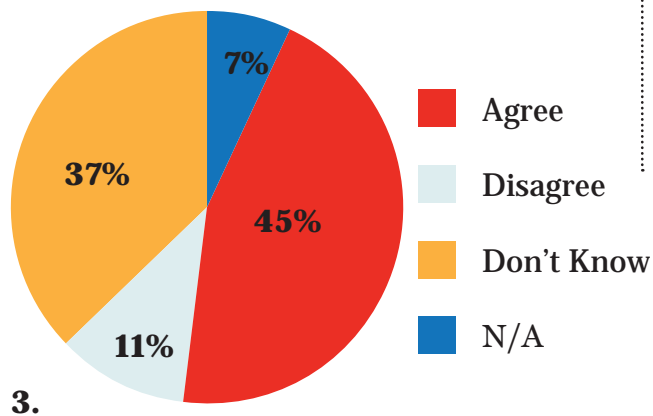
Is the cost of health care a problem?



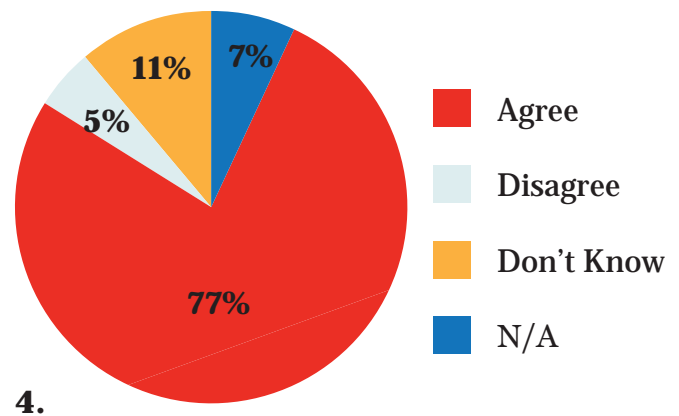
Have you access to good GP services?



Are there sufficient fitness classes in Ennis?



Do you find it easy to get sufficient exercise in Ennis?



Health Service Comments

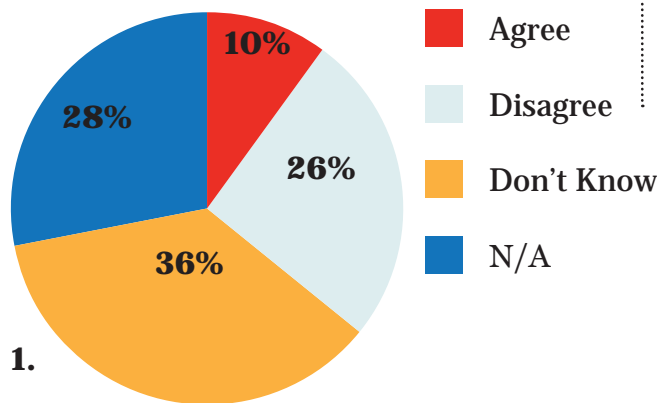
Pie chart 3: Walking can be difficult if someone is housebound or is a wheelchair user. It would be helpful to improve and develop paths and areas to walk safely. It is difficult to find a group to be part of and the main exercise is walking so weather can impact on it.

Pie chart 4: Lots of classes, pilates, running pitches, and plenty of nice areas to walk or cycle in and places to swim. Classes are oversubscribed, can be expensive, making time is a factor and more exercise classes needed at Cuan an Chláir. There is outside exercise equipment and it is free.

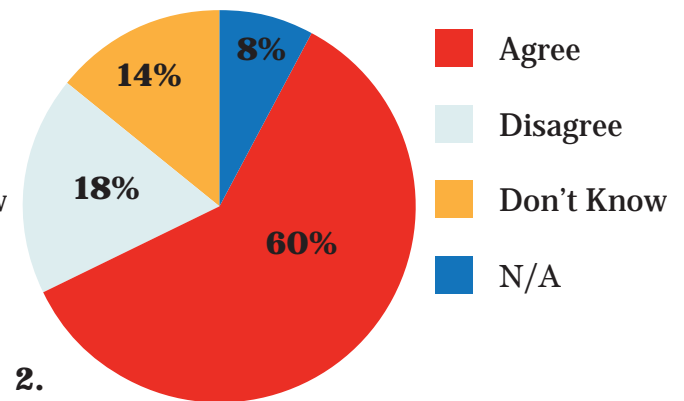
Housing



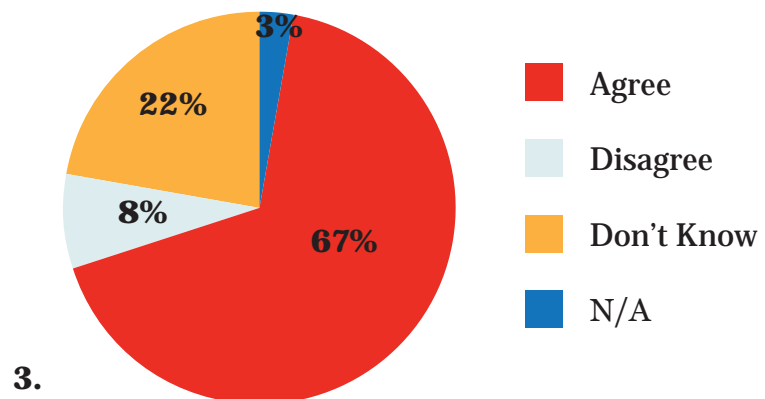
Are you confident of getting housing support in Ennis as you grow older?



Can your home be easily adapted as you grow older?



Is there a good sense of community in Ennis?



Housing Comments

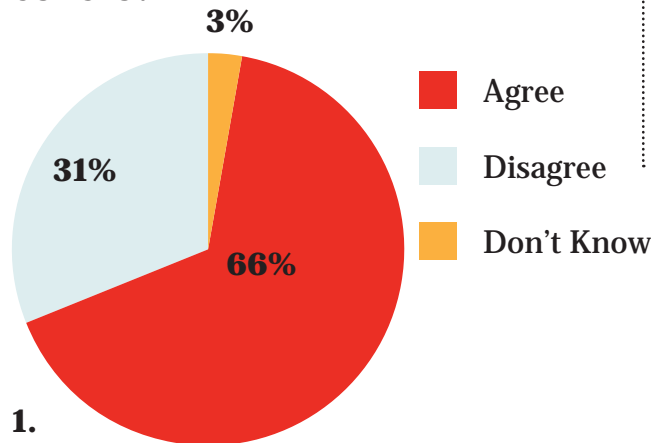
Pie chart 2: One respondent stated that their home is a council house, all rooms on top, toilet ground floor, kitchen tiny, sitting room average, huge steps to the back an 18-inch step to front door.

Pie chart 3: Ennis is a great town to shop and enjoy. It is an enchanting big village with loads of support groups. There is a good sense of community and respondents have attended many events and courses. GAA clubs and many other clubs are excellent and cater for various interests.

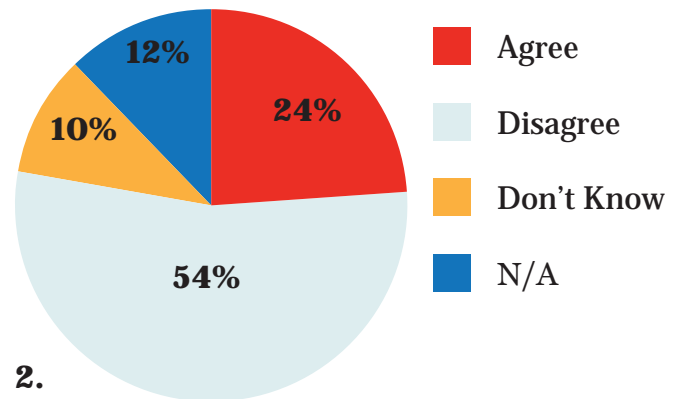
Transport



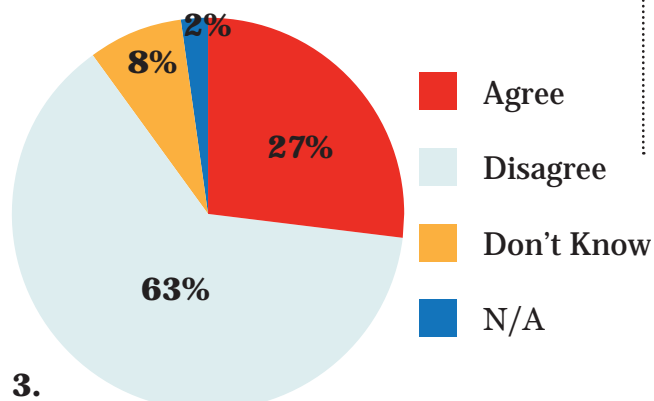
Is it easy to get to the town centre?



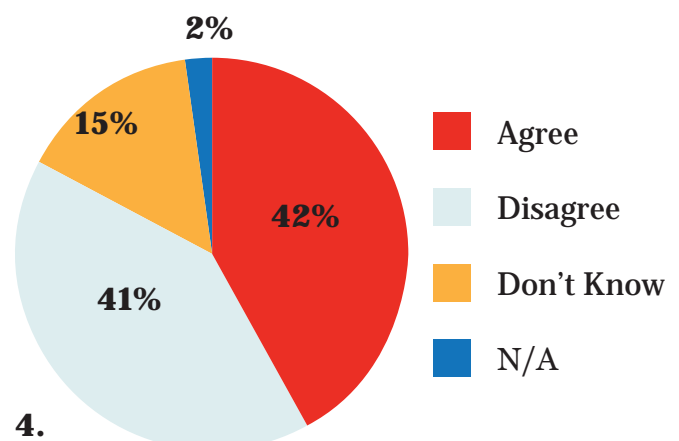
Does public transport get you where you want to go?



Are there sufficient parking in the town centre?



Is the parking properly priced?



Transport Comments

Pie Chart 2: There is no public transport system. Not enough public transport in the town itself.

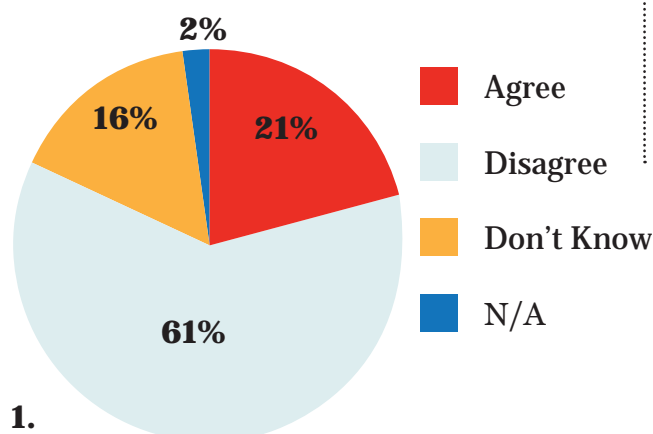
Pie chart 3: There are not enough parking spaces. The parking between the Post Office and the Bank is very bad.

Pie Chart 4: Parking too expensive and can be difficult to find parking in the Town Centre. It is a very big problem on Saturdays and at Christmas. Payment at different seasons should be abolished. One or two hours of free parking in the mornings would be beneficial and €1.00 per hour is enough. It is better to have a lower price base as people would be more inclined to pay the parking fee. Payment in one area does not transfer to another, if you want to move around.

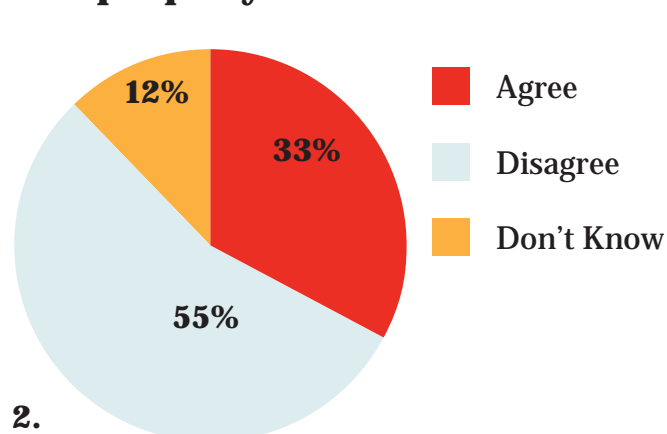
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings



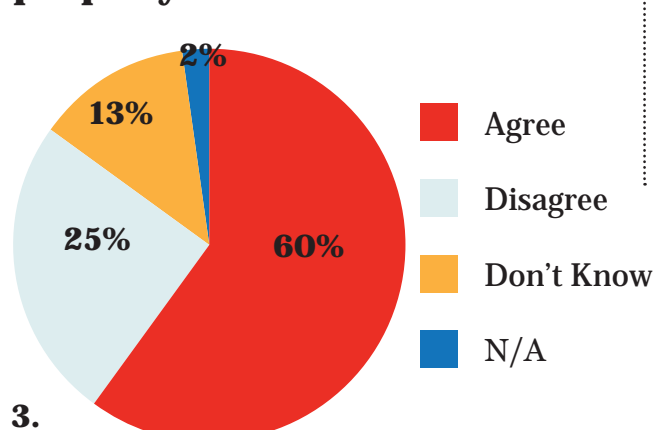
Are there sufficient benches and rest areas?



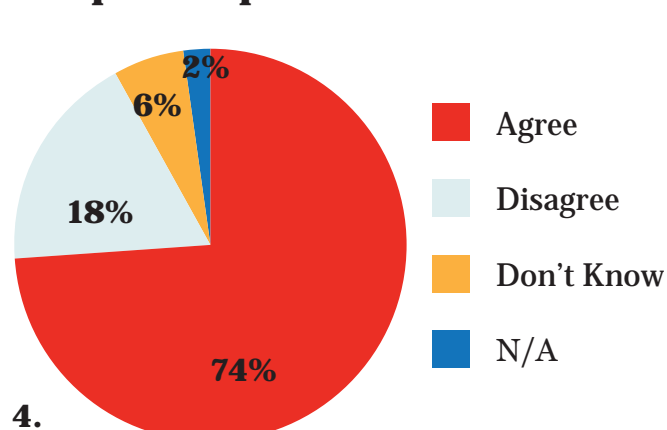
Is footpath maintenance timely and properly carried out?



Is street lighting sufficient and properly maintained?



Are vehicles parked on footpaths a problem?



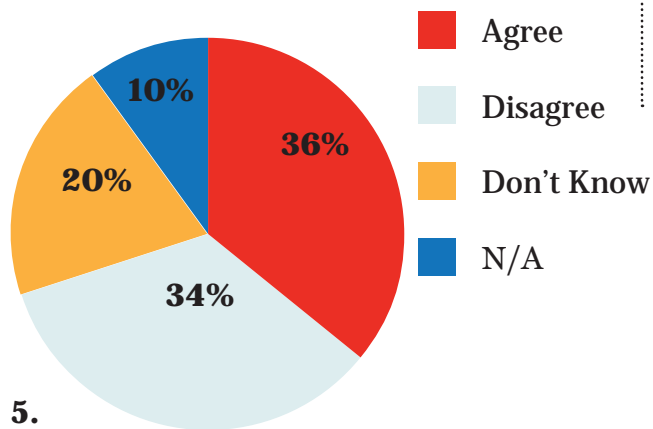
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Comments:

Pie chart 1: Not enough benches for older adults – no space for them in the town centre. Benches could be provided at Tim Smythe Park and Temple Gate Car Park towards glór. Lack of picnic areas i.e. benches available but no tables to read/write/eat.

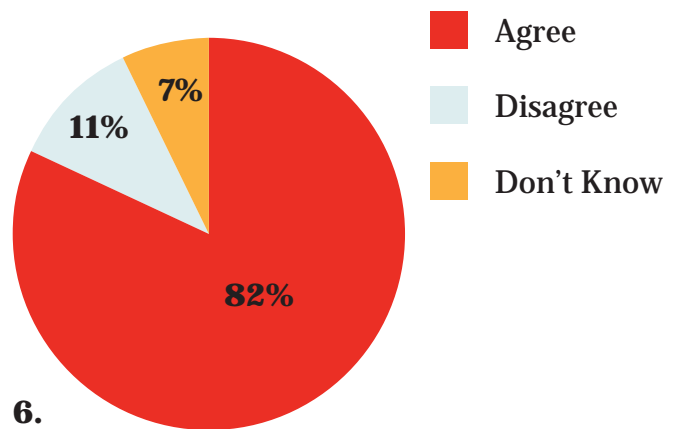
Pie chart 2: Cobble stones although nice to look at are difficult to walk on. Wider and better maintained footpaths needed in the town centre. Paths are not even and level and kerbs can be high. Sandwich boards on footpaths and dog fouling are a problem. Pedestrian care needed at Cahercalla Hill.

Pie chart 4: Vehicles parked on footpaths are a problem for disabled people and wheelchair users.

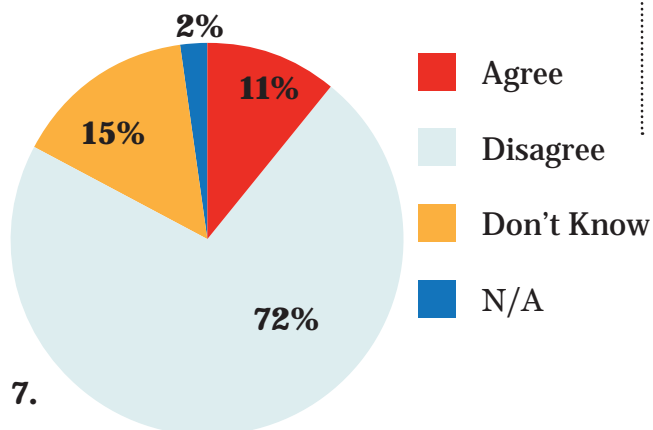
Are there sufficient bicycle paths and bicycle parking provided?



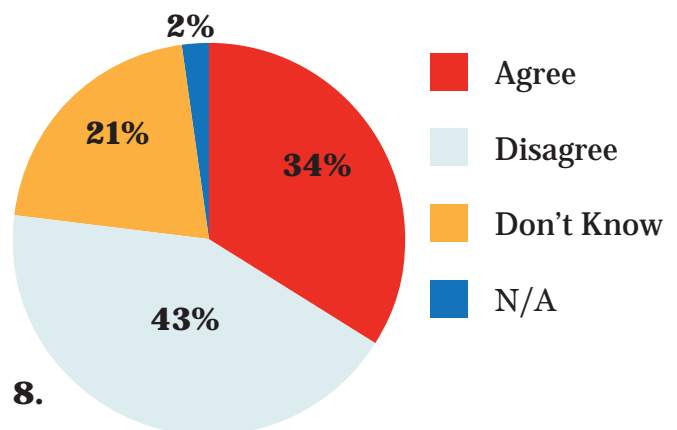
Has Ennis got well maintained green spaces?



Has Ennis got a sufficient number of public accessible toilets?



Are the walks in Ennis suitable for older persons and are there enough?



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Comments:

Pie chart 5: Roundabouts are very dangerous for cyclists, some roundabouts do not have bicycle markings e.g. Sheils on the Gort Road. Way too many bicycle paths provided and no respect shown to car drivers. There is no infrastructure for proper cycle lanes in town nor is there adequate parking areas for bicycles. Signage re. cyclists needs to be put up around town to jog motorists' memories.

Pie chart 6: Post Office field should be turned into a park, a bridge from Parnell Street Car Park to the Post Office field – you could have a car park at the side of the Post Office.

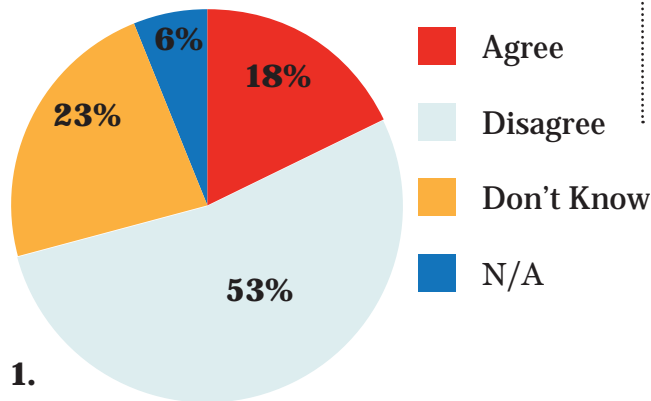
Pie chart 7: Not enough public toilets, people depend on the shopping centres.

Pie chart 8: There are good places to walk in Ennis and there are some lovely green spaces but could do with more in the town as you have to drive to a lot of the walking areas. Very few walks not alongside roadways and therefore vehicles/fumes are present. Not enough suitable or interesting walks for older people. O'Sullivan Park, Lees Road, Fair Green and Ballybeg are excellent.

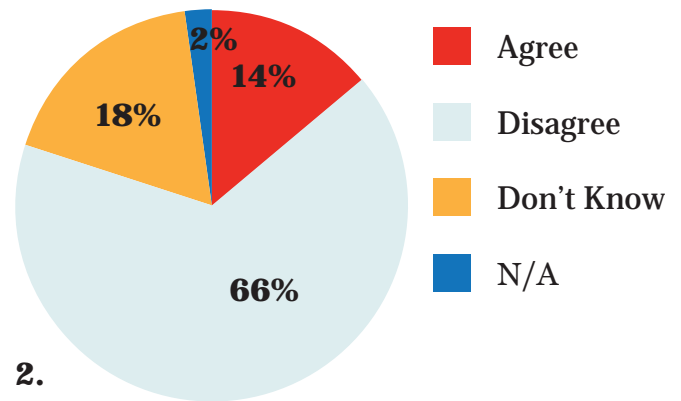
Safety and Security



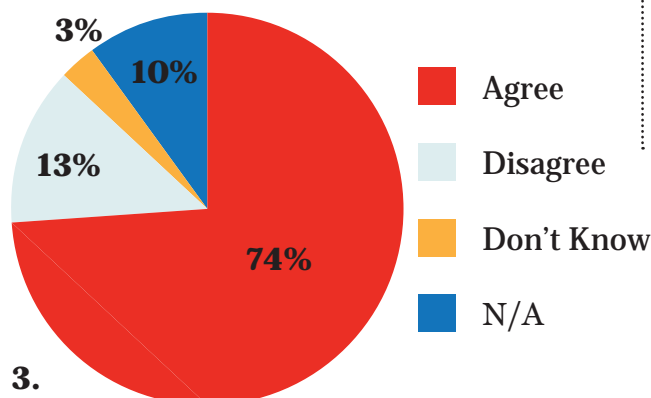
Is it safe to walk after dark in Ennis?



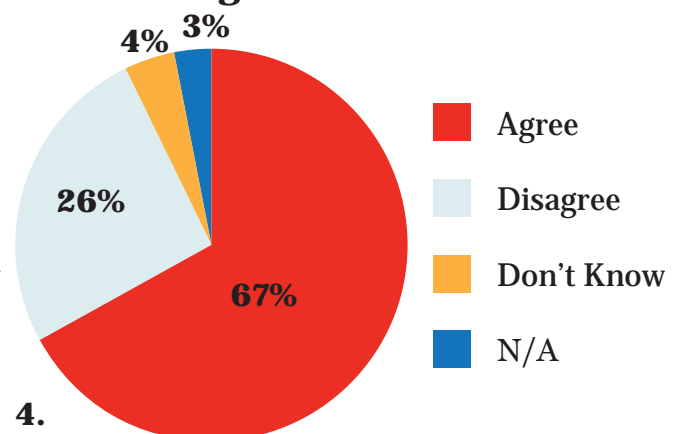
Is there sufficient visible Garda presence in Ennis?



Do you feel safe in your home in Ennis?



Do you feel safe alone in your home at night?



Safety and Security Comments

Pie chart 1: Walking at night is a no go, very dark around glór and Clare Rd etc. Respondents avoid downtown at night particularly at weekends. Some parts of Ennis are safer than others.

Pie chart 2: No garda patrol in the area. There should be an ongoing and regular system of guards on the beat all over town.

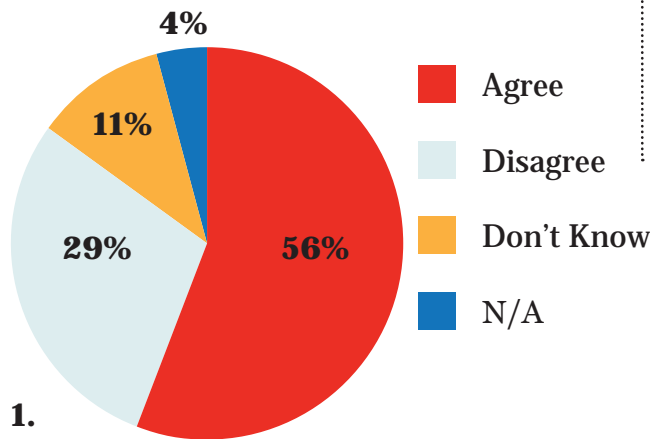
Pie chart 3: Feeling safe at home is not as likely as it used to be. A lot of respondents have a monitored alarm and a dog as a safety measure. One respondent has a camera so that they can see who is at the door. One respondent is in an apartment on the 1st floor over a shop and therefore not easily accessible.

Pie chart 4: Taking suitable precautions ensures safety. Being alone at night is a worry due to all the break-ins and attacks on innocent people.

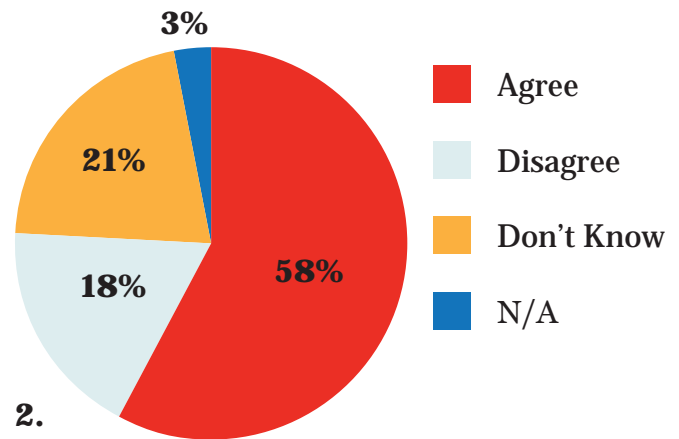
Communication and Information



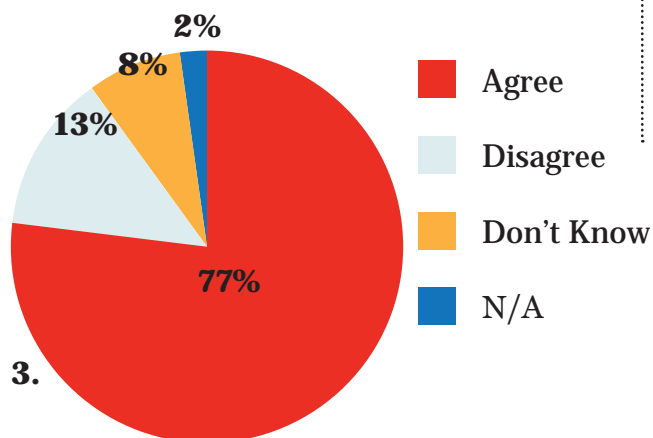
Are you happy with notifications of local events?



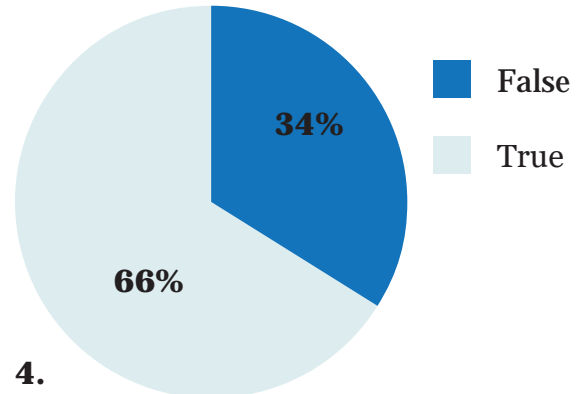
Do you know where to obtain these notifications?



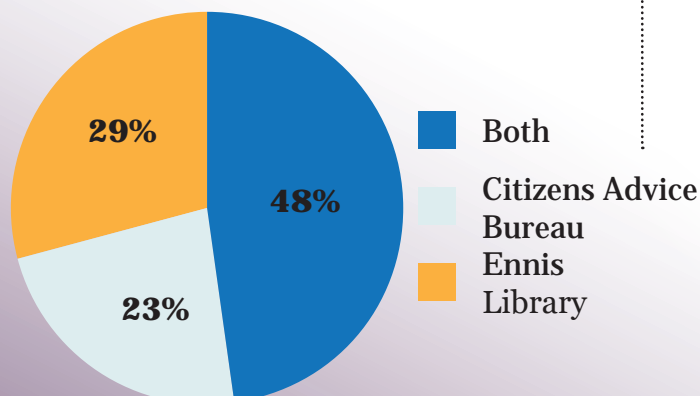
Do you know where to find information on your entitlements?



Do you use Ennis library or Citizens Advice Bureau?



If yes, which?



Communication and Information Comments

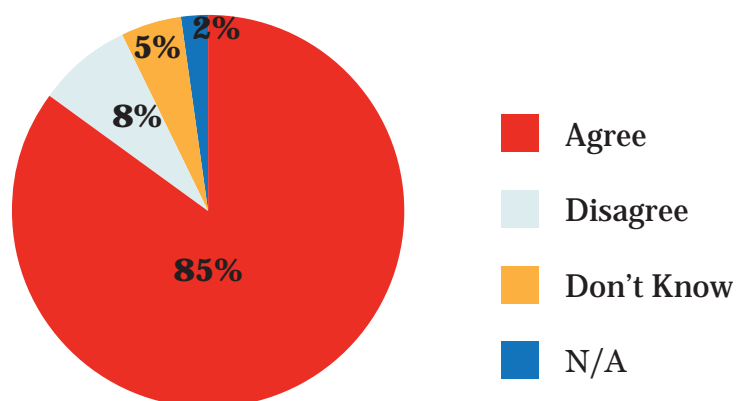
Pie chart 2: Notifications are available on Facebook, newsletters and notice boards.

Pie chart 4: DeValera Library is a social necessity in the town. All the facilities are fantastic - a great place for all the community. The libraries are used for photocopying and using the computer. Ennis Library is an excellent public facility with an excellent noticeboard and staff are very helpful. The Library can be a lonesome place and it is a chat and company people would prefer.

Respect & Social Inclusion



Do businesses in Ennis make you feel welcome?



1.

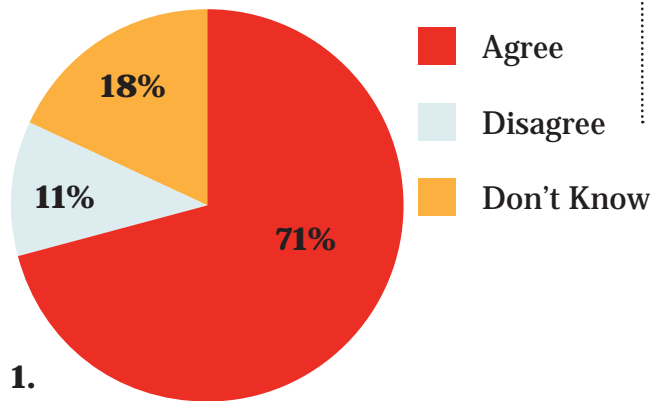
Respect & Social Inclusion Comments

Pie chart 1: Tesco and Dunnes are very helpful. Some shops are very friendly and others are not. Some shop assistants' manners can be cold and unserving – awareness needs to be raised. Ennis is one of the top places to shop. There is great sponsorship of local clubs. They should give 10% discount to older people.

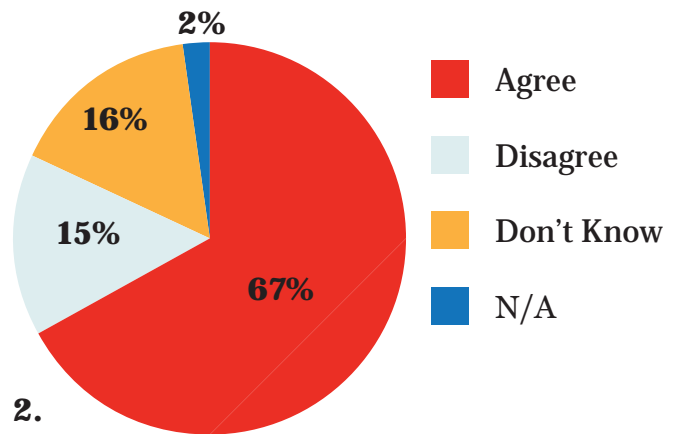
Social Participation



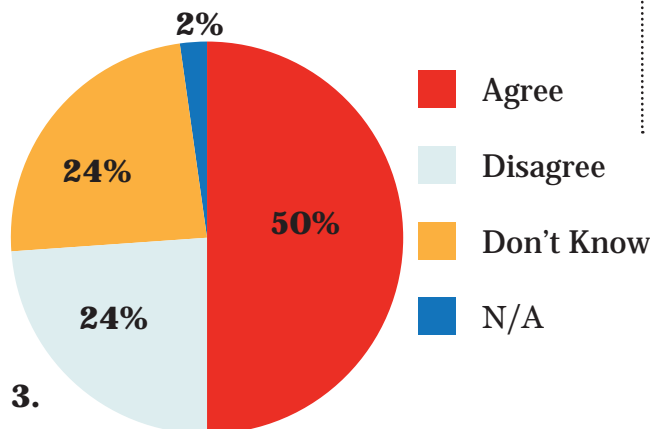
Can older people participate in the community?



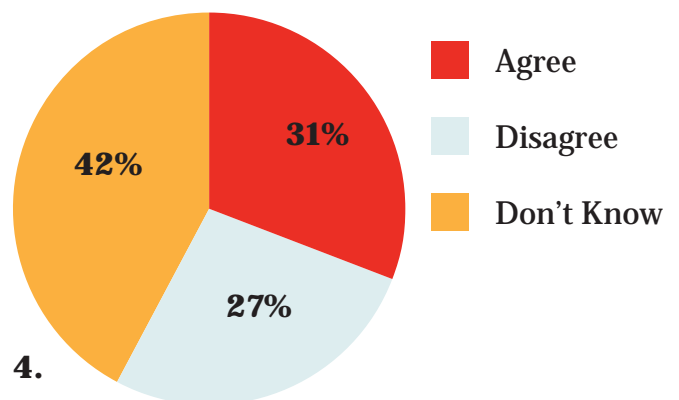
Have older people got opportunities to volunteer?



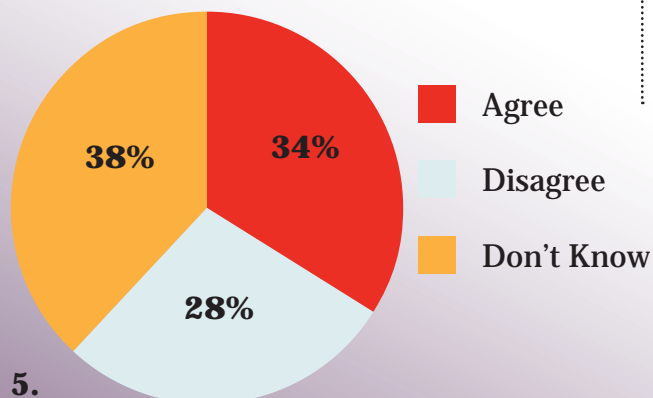
Has Ennis the shops and services needed by older people?



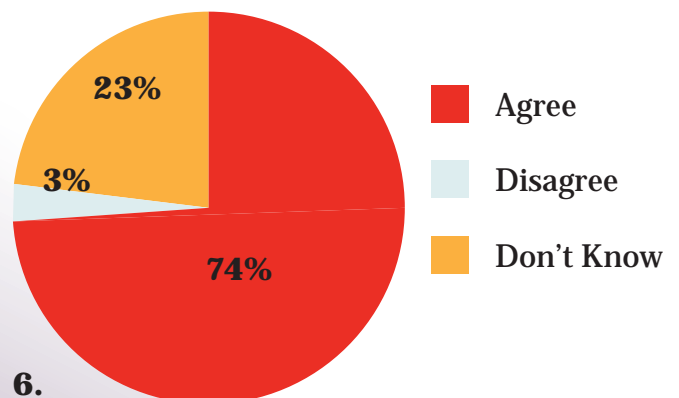
Has Ennis enough clubs and societies for older people?



Are there enough opportunities for older people to mix?



Does Ennis need a drop-centre for older people?



Social Participation Comments

Pie chart 3: The main service lacking is a place to live, at an affordable rent for those who are just above the limit to avail of social housing.

Pie chart 4: More lectures and films should be made available at libraries. Senior Citizens Club and Clarecare are good.

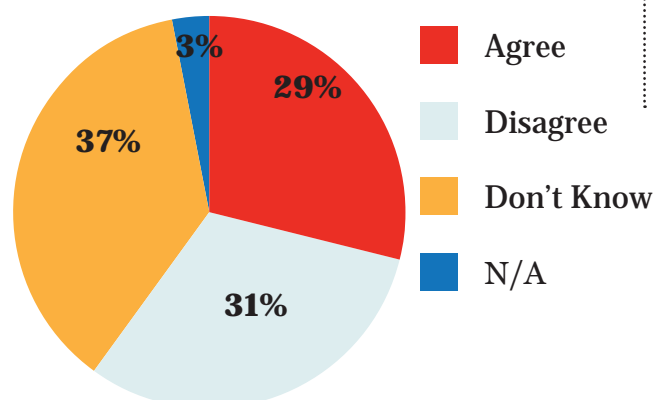
Pie chart 5: The issue is the co-ordination of services plus transport. Many older people need transport to access all services personal and social. It would help to have a minibus pick people up from local surrounding areas.

Pie chart 6: There should be a drop-in-centre for people who do not want to be a member of a group but would like to sit and talk and have a cup of tea and make them feel wanted. A drop-in centre may not be used as it is a bit ageist segregating older people.

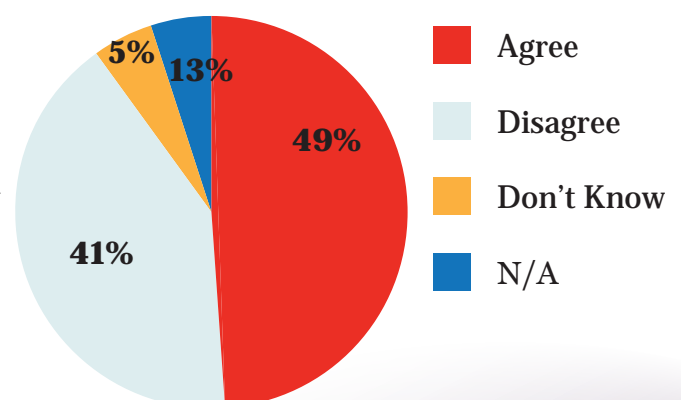
Civic Participation and Education/ Employment



Are there enough learning courses available for older people in Ennis?



Are there employment opportunities available for older people in Ennis?



Civic Participation and Education/Employment Comments

Pie chart 1: Courses needed to update older people on the use of Windows 10. There are some learning courses, but the type of courses could be widened e.g. writing classes, painting, public speaking etc. Courses in the Library and in Mental Health Services in Ennis are so reliant on the funds being available - more often than not funds are not available. Wonderful yoga course in Mental Health Day Hospital three years ago - this hasn't continued - was funding an issue? The creative writing course in the Library has not happened in 2019/20.

Pie chart 2: It was felt that once one passes a certain age, age is frowned upon, instead of embracing all the experience one has achieved during their life. It was noted that not a lot of older people work in shops or garages or restaurants.

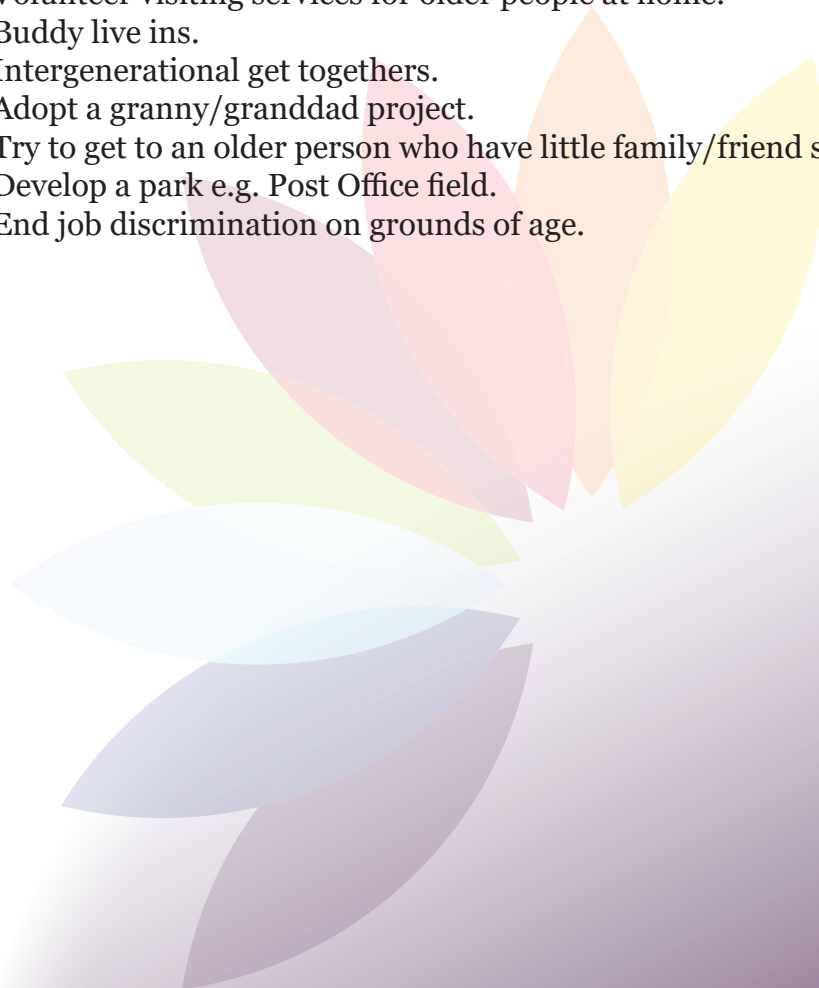
What do you think the town of Ennis does best for older people?

- Good community spirit.
- Day centres e.g. Cuan an Chláir Clarecastle and Kilmaley, some with transport.
- The junction would be a good drop-in centre.
- Clarecare.
- Feeling of being included in most things.
- Good priests.
- Improvements to parking, footpaths and events.
- Christmas events.
- It is an old country town.
- Town centre is small.
- Clare Cultural Companions.
- Medical, library and shopping in the town centre.
- Accessible shopping.
- A shopping centre i.e. Dunnes opening on to a main street.
- Helpful and friendly staff in shops.
- Tidy Towns.
- Theatre and Library.
- Community Centre.
- Lots of clubs.
- Garda liaison person.
- Training courses.
- Volunteering in 2nd hand shops.
- Bingo.
- Aerobics, carols, music, dancing and drama.
- Gym classes.
- Library events.

What do you think the town of Ennis could do better for older people?

- Website to promote events.
- More communication needed.
- Create an app for communication.
- Advertise clubs.
- Bingo, bowling days or coffee mornings.
- Organise walks/days out/social events.
- More classes/talks.
- Transport.
- Use transport in Day Care Centre more effectively.
- A shuttle bus around the town with sheltered bus stops.
- Hop on hop off bus around town.
- Evening busses.
- Better public transport on outskirts of town.
- More accessible public transport.
- Seating needs improvement.

- More seating in public areas and shops.
- More accessible shops.
- Review of pavements and shop floors.
- Removal of signs on pavements.
- Maintain footpaths in housing estates.
- Dropped kerbs at junctions.
- Age awareness workshops for businesses/community groups.
- Wider paths for walkers/wheelchair users.
- More pedestrianised streets.
- More toilet facilities.
- Re-instate seating in Motor Tax.
- More Gardai on the streets.
- Drug using to be addressed.
- A hospital is needed in Ennis.
- Better health care e.g. A&E.
- More contact through a consistent source e.g. PHN/GP
- Lack of mental health services in the community.
- Inclusion of older people.
- A local monthly newspaper.
- Safe, well-lit walking areas.
- A plaza style indoor and outdoor seating area in a safe location near the town centre.
- Issues with cars/trucks on double yellow lines and footpaths.
- More days with no traffic in town centre.
- Younger people to visit Nursing Homes.
- People living alone should be visited more often.
- Volunteer visiting services for older people at home.
- Buddy live ins.
- Intergenerational get togethers.
- Adopt a granny/granddad project.
- Try to get to an older person who have little family/friend support.
- Develop a park e.g. Post Office field.
- End job discrimination on grounds of age.







Ennis Walkability Study Report

January 2019

by Karen Fennessy
Age Friendly Development Officer





**“If you design for the
young you exclude the old,
but if you design for the
old you include everyone”**

Glenn Miller, Director of Education and Research, Canadian Urban
Development Institute

Introduction

As life expectancy increases, the population projections by the Central Statistics Office (CSO 2016 data) have shown that the percentage of the population in Clare over 55 will increase from 27% (32,080) to approximately 34% (48,000) by 2031.

The capital town of Ennis accounts for approximately 23% (27,327) of the county's population and based on projected growth, the town's population will increase by a further 25% (6,832) by the year 2040. The development of Ennis as an Age Friendly town will facilitate an increase in the older generation living and visiting the town.

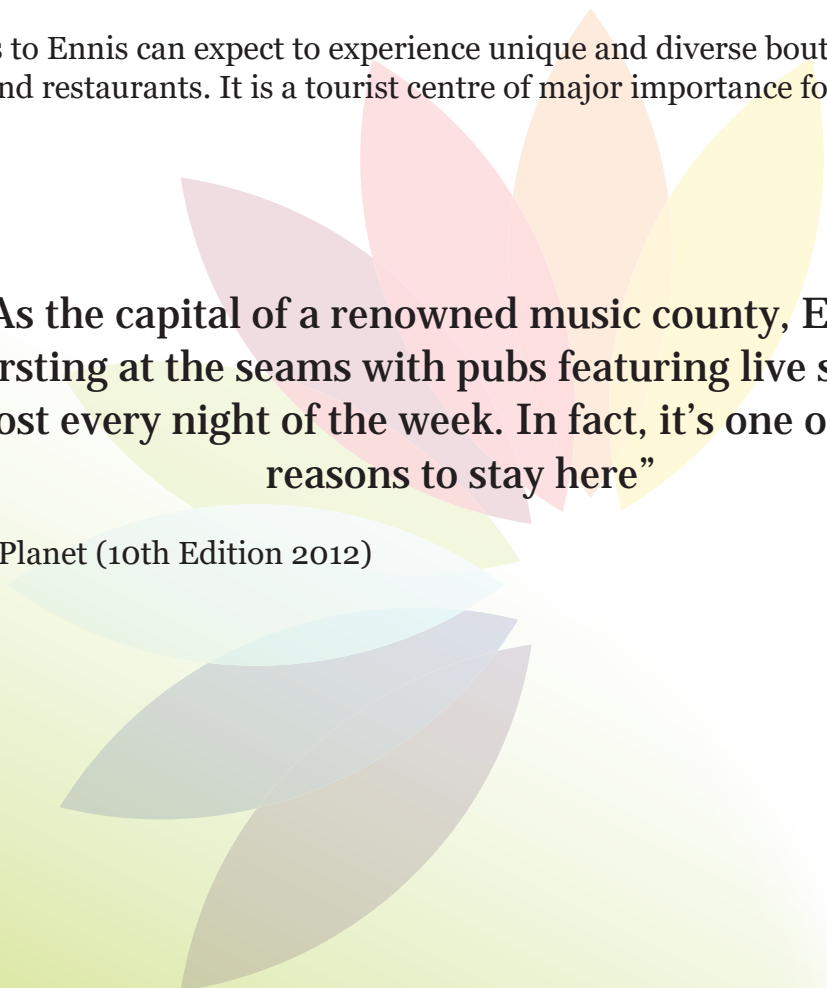
Aim

The aim of the walkability study is to assess how easy or difficult it is to get around Ennis, and how easy or difficult it is to access the services of the town. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this walkability study will allow Clare County Council and other key organisations to instigate actions to improve the accessibility of the town of Ennis which will benefit all users.

Ennis - Background Information

Ennis has a rich heritage tradition with some of the finest monuments, buildings and waterways in the country. The town has held a strong presence every year in the All Ireland Tidiest Town Awards and won Ireland's Tidiest Large Urban Centre in 2012.

Visitors to Ennis can expect to experience unique and diverse boutiques, shops, cafes, and restaurants. It is a tourist centre of major importance for County Clare.



“As the capital of a renowned music county, Ennis is bursting at the seams with pubs featuring live sessions almost every night of the week. In fact, it’s one of the best reasons to stay here”

Lonely Planet (10th Edition 2012)

What is a Walkability Study?

A walkability study is a series of short walks undertaken by a representative group of persons. Details of the walk are logged and issues that arise are noted and photographed.

Three days of Walkability Studies were carried out in Ennis during January and February 2019. After each walk, a short questionnaire developed by Age Friendly Ireland (AFI) in collaboration with the Centre for Universal Design (CEUD) was completed. All participants including the facilitators and note-takers completed the questionnaire. The results from all the different routes studied have been analysed with the results presented in this report.

The emphasis of the Walkability Study is to engage and listen to the perceptions of the participants and to encourage active positive discussion on issues and topics relating to the accessibility of the town.

Walkability Routes

The walkability study consisted of 6 routes covering much of the centre of the town (See Appendix 1 – Maps).

Route 1

Abbey Street and Abbey Street Car Park to Friary Car Park

Route 2

O'Connell Street to Friar's Walk

Route 3

Station Road to Bóthar na Trócaire

Route 4

Francis Street to the Causeway Link

Route 5

Bindon Street/Bank Place to Summerhill and Market Square

Route 6

Parnell Street Car Park and Cornmarket

Participants

Approximately 15 people contributed or took part in the study. The participants consisted of mostly older persons, people with reduced mobility and two wheelchair users. Facilitators and note takers were provided by Clare County Council.

Notes and photographs were taken by the facilitators of the issues raised.



Results

Common Issues

The issues raised throughout all the walked routes had similarities, which is not uncommon for a Walkability Study in a set defined area. A summary of the issues are as follows:

1. Crossings and Junctions

1.1 Pedestrian Crossings

The walkability study included a review of the safety of pedestrian crossings as well as dishd curbed crossings. In particular the difficulties and challenges that people might encounter when trying to cross the road were examined.

Crossings overall need to be better marked e.g. more zebra crossing markings on the roads makes the crossing more visible to motorists. The group felt that lights for pedestrian crossings are also essential. The lights at Club Bridge are too fast for slower walkers. During the study, traffic did yield to pedestrians crossing the road.

Traffic lights changed very fast at Maddens Furniture, Mill Road and particularly the crossing at Carmody Street, where there was not enough time

for pedestrians. They all need slowing down to allow older people to cross the road safely.

A lot of the crossing areas were not marked with black and white stripes and therefore traffic does not have to stop and pedestrians do not have the right of way. Unofficial crossings are confusing to pedestrians who may think they have right of way.



The group felt that the crossing point at the Tesco roundabout was difficult for pedestrians to negotiate and highlighted the need for an official Pedestrian Crossing.



1.2 Junctions

There was an issue highlighted at the top of O'Connell Street which is probably one of the busiest junctions in the town. There is currently no crossing there for access to the Cathedral at this busy junction.



There are no stop signs as cars come out of Francis Street by the Queen's Hotel. Continuous path crossings at Lower Abbey Street (beside the Queens Hotel) across the road at the entrance to the Abbey Street Car Park would be beneficial.



The group also recommended having a continuous path from Francis Street crossing the entrance to the Friary Car Park.

The lack of dropped kerbs does not allow wheelchair users access to cross the road. Very often it was too steep at the other side of the road or the dished curbing was not opposite each other. The wheelchair user in the study had to go back a long way at the roundabout out from Bóthar na Trócaire and Dunnes.

Most of the crossings could be updated with ramps and tactile pavings as they are not level with the road. The participants acknowledged that the recent Pelican crossings that have been constructed in Ennis are very good i.e. they are raised up with good tactile surfacing and lighting, like the one beside Dunnes.



The lack of quick crossings on the Mill Road really separates out the residential area in Cornmarket and the shops on the far side. The Parnell Street car park road with lack of crossings also very much separates out the alleyways and lanes from the river which has nice views.

1.3 Accessibility

Overall there are not enough tactile ramps for wheelchair users, the visually impaired or disability users. Those that are there need repairing and realigning in places. There is a need for 'zones' of continuous pavements across junctions so that cars give way to pedestrians. There is little or no provision for areas given over to cyclists. More signage is required alerting motorists that pedestrians may be crossing.



Example of unofficial crossing on Abbey St.
Pedestrians rely on cars to give way

There were a lack of access points for wheelchair users. The Station Road roundabout was particularly difficult to cross for pedestrians and wheelchairs. Crossing areas should be wide enough to facilitate wide wheelchairs or buggies and be quite obvious from a distance. In some areas the height of the crossings varied greatly.



2. Accessibility to Public Spaces, Parking and Buildings

2.1 Access to shops and buildings

The Queen's Hotel and Friary Church had steps at the front entrance which could be converted to a ramp.



Most shops were very good with street-level access but there were some exceptions e.g. access to the Cathedral. Some access ramps are needed particularly on Francis Street near Tesco/Aldi.

The group felt the Tesco entrance onto Francis Street should be looked at due to uneven paving and flooding.



On Bank Place there was no wheelchair access to Bank of Ireland and the Citizens Advice Bureau, also there is a difficult entrance to the Post Office. It would be hard for a wheelchair user or a person with reduced mobility to access them.

There were shops in Wood Quay with steps leading onto narrow paths restricting access for wheelchair users and the visually impaired.

2.2 Accessible Car-Parking Spaces

There was only one in the Friary Car Park. There were no disabled parking spaces on O'Connell Street which are the nearest spaces to the shops.

The wheelchair parking spot outside of Cusack Park was an example where there was no access to footpath due to high curbing.



Overall there were good parking facilities around the Tesco end of Francis Street. Around Cornmarket and Parnell Street Carpark some disabled parking spaces were inaccessible due to the fact they had no wheelchair ramps or wide enough pavements to reach them.

There is a recommendation for Age Friendly parking in accordance with national Age Friendly guidelines. These spaces are courtesy spaces and motorists enter into the spirit of this initiative and leave them free for older persons who need them. Parking fees are payable where they apply. (See below example of parking in Gort).



Enforcement of Parking Bye Laws are a necessity in the town to address the various issues regarding the dangers caused by illegally parked cars.

2.3 Bicycle Parking Facilities

There was only one stand beside the Tourist Office. More covered bicycle parking facilities needed as there were very few beside any shops. Bicycles are chained to random posts - causes obstruction to wheelchairs etc.



There were some facilities at Tesco however the group found a bike chained to the lamppost beside the bike stands.

2.4 Public Toilets

No public toilets on most of the routes walked and there was no toilet accessible to the wheelchair user in the study group.

Toilets are provided in the Shopping Centre beside Tesco.

2.5 Public Benches and Resting Places

Participants sat on electrical boxes as a resting place on the Abbey Street/Car Park route as there was no other obvious seating.

There was no public seating on Francis Street. On the Causeway Link seats are placed in the grass on raised plinths which reduces their accessibility. These seats were concrete benches with no back or arm rests and not in accordance with Age Friendly guidelines.



Consider
Age Friendly Seating with
back and arm support



Overall the group felt that a few more seats around the town would be beneficial although O'Connell Street is too narrow for any seating to be installed. In particular they mentioned Friar's walk as a nice area that would benefit from more seating.

There was only one bench outside the Museum. More seating outside the Temple Gate Hotel in the Plaza area would be good, particularly for tourists. There is currently no seating on the walking route from the train/bus station to the centre of town. A seat on Station Road would be beneficial. The group felt the footpath is wide enough on one side.

A good example of Age Friendly seating is outside the Market building (see below). However providing seating is just one part of the jigsaw, it would also be necessary to consider the spatial location of the seat, the micro climate of the area, and the style of the seats in any future seating planning, as these issues are critical to the success of seat usage.



There was seating at the shelter beside the taxi rank which could be improved upon. While the Taxi rank shelter was very good, it would benefit from a stop sign as it was not clear to someone who was visually impaired that it was a taxi rank.

2.6 Other Comments

There is no town public transport system however Clare Bus operate a local link rural bus service that connects to the town of Ennis. Most of these buses stop at the Temple Gate car park where there is a good bus shelter.

A review of the location of outdoor seating throughout the town should be undertaken, with the input of older people, as resting places are vital to encourage walkability in the town.

There are opportunities for seating and leaning options to be responded to by community groups and partnership organisations e.g. Business groups installing pull-down seating on shop windowsills. All of the responsibility for seating does not have to lie with the Local Authority.

Electrical charging points for mobility scooters and wheelchairs would be beneficial for users.

The study group suggested Braille signage or obvious “zoned” areas should be considered in future street design to make routes/hazards/transport points/crossing points more obvious to people with visual impairment.

Where possible wheelchair access should be located alongside regular access points to a building.

3. Aesthetics Look and Feel

3.1 Signage

The group felt it would be helpful to have signs (incorporating braille) indicating where the Town Centre was. Signs for the laneways were too high and should be lowered to eye level to make them more relevant. The group felt the tourist amenity signage was good.

3.2 Dog Fouling

There were no dog fouling bins in or around the town. There were a lot of bird droppings along by the river.

During the walkability study the wheelchair was fouled on the Station Road/ Bóthar na Trócaire route and needed to be hosed down.

Suggestion of more dog bags and bins available (like Lees Road).



3.3 Street Planting

There was a lack of trees and planters in Parnell Street car park. Suggestion made to use verges/hedges to separate zones which would add greenery.

There were particularly good examples of street planting from Glór to Templegate. There is potential for Age Friendly seating beside good planting areas.

A few winter plants in the planters would enhance the streetscape (like in the photo of the market area above). The Causeway Link opposite Glór was described as excellent and a credit to the Council.

3.4 Litter

Other than gum litter and cigarette butts, the streets were fairly clean. There was litter around the footpaths of Market Square.

Overall the group felt that lack of litter in the town was excellent due to a good street cleaning service in operation.



3.5 Abandoned Buildings

Parnell Street Car Park had numerous abandoned buildings in very poor condition (one opposite the taxi rank in the car park). There is a lovely river walk here which seems mostly neglected. The group suggested false fronts could be erected to hide the buildings.

The Post Office field is currently wasteland but could be developed into an area for wildlife. The site beside Ciaran's Bar also looks abandoned with fencing falling down.

3.6 Other Comments

For an area beside the river with a lovely view of Church spires and bank buildings, it feels isolated and unpleasant due to the thoroughfare of cars. There is huge potential to attract people in from the car park through Bow's Lane into the Market if it was more inviting and signposted better.

There are quite a few derelict sites that could be greatly improved. There are few trees along the routes walked however there is space for more trees and planting.

There is a lot of traffic heading in the direction of the town centre. A suggestion would be to encourage more shops/pedestrians/cyclists/tourists to areas of Ennis (including the environs). The group felt that while Cornmarket and Parnell Street car park was mostly commercial, Wood Quay by the river was very pleasant. There could be more seating installed there to take in the views beside the river. Another tourist information board could be placed at the High Street end of Parnell Street Car Park.

From the Queen's Hotel to Cusack Park the streetscape needs upgrading, The Causeway Link was good, but Francis Street was not so good. Francis Street had no seating at all and the paving/surfacing was very poor. The group felt it would be nice to see more winter and native planting.



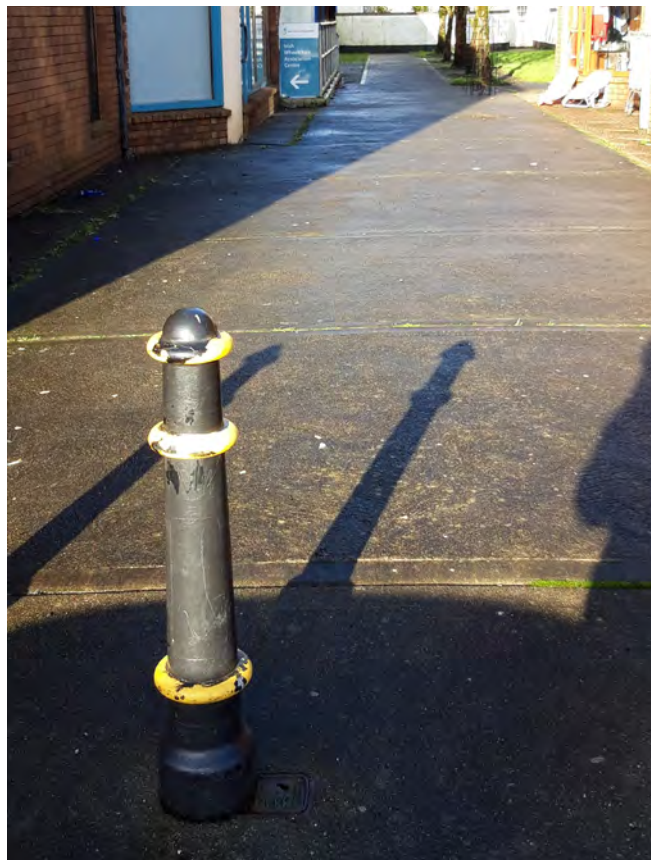
Seating opportunity beside good planting on Francis St

O'Connell Street and Arthurs Row were mainly clean and tidy. The whole area needs tidying up with a coat of paint and some weeding along the footpaths. Cigarette butts were a problem especially outside the Museum, where there was a broken receptacle.

Some areas would benefit from power washing i.e. 1916 Monument near Club Bridge.

4. Footpaths

Over the years pavement schemes have been replaced and upgraded and there are excellent examples of top quality kerbing and paving schemes in the town – the top of Francis Street and along the side street to the Wheelchair Association.



Good tactile paving example
along to Wheelchair Association

Other areas of the town would benefit from the installation of a uniformed pavement scheme including O'Connell Street, Bank Place and Francis Street. A standardised scheme would eliminate many of the issues identified with the pavements on the day including cracked pavements, subsidence, and uneven surfaces.

4.1 Maintenance

There were a lot of poorly maintained utility grates e.g. Telecom manhole covers were found to be an issue on most of the streets walked and need to be better maintained.



There was also an issue with edging around the trees on Bank Place, where a square has been cut into the footpath around each tree with a large lip (see photo).

Some paving stones were loose and cracked with uneven footpaths.



At the Queen's Hotel paving slabs were uneven all along the footpath. The entrance to Tesco is high with no ramp. Not all kerbs on O'Connell Street are wheelchair friendly and some need levelling out.

O'Connell Street overall was well maintained with some cracks easily fixed (highlighted with photos). There are some drain/inspection covers that need attention.

Surface points on Abbey Street are broken/cracked e.g. ramped crossing on Abbey Street, also there are utility grates depressed into footpaths. Generally the footpaths are in good condition.

The group acknowledged that it is quite awkward for people in wheelchairs around the entrance to Abbey Street Car Park and Club Bridge. Certain sections need to be levelled out to ease access crossing the streets. Where ramps are provided they are not always at the correct gradient.

4.2 Surfacing and drainage

Cracks and trip hazards have real safety implications for older people. The group identified lots of cracks on pavements in Bindon Street, Bank Place and around the market area.

Flag stones in Bindon Street were very smooth so could be slippery when wet. There were flooded areas along the footpath on Francis Street. Some parts of the path near Aldi were flooded and there were large puddles of water around the entrance to Tesco.

Some places on O'Connell Street and Francis Street were slippery as drains on the buildings had no ground drain underneath them therefore rainwater is currently being discharged onto the footpaths.



On Abbey Street, certain paving is very slippery due to nature of materials and finishing used. There were sections of footpaths with water pools.

4.3 Width

Negotiating hilly streets, often with steep and narrow footpaths, by a person with limited mobility, a wheelchair user or someone with a pushchair is an everyday challenge.

While there were some nice wide areas there were also many bad pinch points where paths became very narrow. The group identified numerous obstacles along Wood Quay where the paths were narrow, especially down the side of AIB bank and also at the corner opposite Roughans. Overall there were very few footpaths that were wide enough, especially for a wheelchair user.

At the Queen's Hotel the bollards have narrowed the footpath. From the Queens Hotel down to Daly's funeral home was too narrow for the wheelchair user and people walking side by side. Very often members of the group had to step onto the road to let people pass. It was also narrow on the Friary side of Francis Street.



During the walkability study an older lady had to take her walker on the road to pass the group on O'Connell Street as it is too narrow in places. There is a distinct narrowing of pavements where parking bays are that doesn't allow someone coming from the opposite direction to pass.

It is also very narrow near Molloy's Butchers. The existing width of the street is predominantly given over to car parking and road usage for cars.

4.4 Obstructions

In a number of places there were cars parked with bumpers over footpaths which narrowed the path even more. This was identified in Cornmarket and Mill Road where cars were overhanging paths in the car park. Also in some cases the black and yellow bollards are placed too far into the path which is restricting wheelchair access.

Some paths have entrance steps to shops protruding which the group felt was a trip hazard.

There were briars overhanging paths from vacant plots on Clonroad.

Street bins were also causing problems in a number of places. While litter bins are a necessity in every town, the general consensus of opinion was that the bins are too large and dominate the street-scape. It would be preferable to replace the larger bins with smaller bins with integrated butt receptor instead.

In the lane next to AIB there were too many wheelie bins and sandwich boards were an issue in Wood Quay. On O'Connell Street posts with signage, flower poles and parking metres were presenting obstacles and could be placed nearer the road. Shop signs and artificial trees also made the paths narrow.



However the group suggested that some footpaths could do with more street furniture e.g. seating and greenery.

There is an issue with cars parking on footpaths particularly on Clonroad and around Churches and on match days. This impedes pedestrians with buggies and wheelchair users.



While there is not an issue in the centre of town because bollards are in place to prevent illegal parking, delivery vans parking beside crossings are an issue.

Sandwich boards outside shops and street lamps in the middle of footpaths were found on O'Connell Street, Abbey Street and the market area. Sandwich boards are particularly difficult to negotiate for wheelchair users and the visually impaired. In places there is room for improvement by moving existing street furniture and banning sandwich boards, wheelie bins etc.



In the interim period, outside furniture, street signs and promotional items placed on pavements need to be kept neat and tidy and close to either side of the pavement so as to ensure that wheelchair users and people with pushchairs have the space they need to pass through and that in general pedestrian traffic is not obstructed.

Street furniture randomly placed on footpaths disrupts movement and can be a challenge for people going about their daily business. There is an opportunity to reduce street furniture by combining signage with lamp-posts which would give a less cluttered look to streets.

4.5 Additional Comments

Car parks could be redesigned to make the best/more efficient use of space and give more access to pedestrians. This would make entrances into the town centre more obvious and inviting. Also more could be done to encourage cycling around the town and help to reduce car traffic. Car parks would benefit from stoppers as a large amount of pavement is lost due to inconsiderate parking.

There were very little ramps for wheelchairs to access footpaths e.g. no access to Bank of Ireland.

The newer paths are excellent. In most cases the older footpaths are the problem i.e. too narrow, cracked pavements. Paving slabs need replacing or resurfacing along the entire route of Francis Street. Flooding is also a big issue on Francis Street.

ESB poles were also found to be obstructing footpaths in certain areas. Some shops have un-maintained access and entrances to some shops are in need of repair.

While footpaths were good in places there were a lot of sunken drains causing issues of unevenness and trip hazards.

The footpath condition on Abbey Street is generally good but improvements are needed i.e. more maintenance required, correct dishing at crossing points, surfacing needs to be less slippery, gradients cross/longitudinal to be altered, existing cracks, dips, defective manhole covers to be fixed.

5. Safety and Comfort

5.1 Daytime Safety

There were a number of areas identified by the river's edge that were not very well lit.

Derelict buildings and poor maintenance create areas that people look to avoid. There was barbed wire around the Cornmarket area that looked unsightly.

The group felt safe and comfortable on their routes as it was daytime and there were lots of people around. The market area, Summerhill and Francis Street were all identified as areas where people felt safe.

5.2 Street Lighting

Group members said some areas have poor lighting at night. The Cornmarket doesn't appear to have any except for the alleyway between AIB and the river.

While the main Abbey Street route to the car park was well lit, Bow Lane's was highlighted as needing some lighting. Overall the group felt that all alleyways should be lit up.

All members of the group felt that new LED lighting would be preferable as it is brighter and would thereby increase the feeling of safety along all routes.

5.3 Vandalism

The group found a small amount of graffiti on some walls at the start of the river walk and in the Cornmarket area.

5.4 Car Speeds

During the study the group found that cars were speeding around Parnell Street car park and also at the junction from Abbey Street to O'Connell Street.

The group suggested rumble/textured areas to slow down cars approaching car parks around the town.

5.5 Cyclists

While the group felt that the footpaths were too narrow for cyclists to cycle on overall they felt that cyclists should not be on the footpaths at all.

There is currently a lack of provision for cyclists to cycle on the road along the routes examined. Other areas of the town have benefited from cycle lanes e.g. Roslevan.

5.6 Other Comments

A number of members of the group said they would not feel safe walking alone in the dark in the area between AIB and the river unless more street lighting was provided. This also applies along Friars Walk leading to the Temple Gate Hotel.

In Parnell Street car park and around the Cornmarket area there were very few people walking. The group felt that the lack of planting, seating and nice areas to shop and enjoy the river makes it feel “unfriendly”.

Members of the group said they feel safer when the road and kerb are at the same level. The railing as you go up the steps to Ulster Bank and Fennell’s Pharmacy was highlighted as a good safety feature.

The wheelchair users in the study group highlighted the fact that potentially they can block up the whole street causing pedestrians to move around them onto the road. Overall the study group said they would feel safer if O’Connell Street was pedestrianised.

6. Suggested Improvements

These suggested improvements come from the comments by the participants of the study themselves.

6.1 Route 1 - Abbey Street/Abbey Street Car Park and Friary Car Park

- Street names should be lowered, they are currently too high
- Signage to indicate direction to the Post Office, toilets, car parks etc.
- Change lighting to LED for improved safety during winter months
- The route would benefit from continuous footpaths or ramped crossings
- Increase Age Friendly seating availability and green planting areas
- Wheelchair parking bays, accessible surfaces, crossings, electrical charge points
- Creation of a mobility centre to charge wheelchair and mobility scooters, hire mobility aids i.e. for visitors or people recovering from hip/knee surgeries. Could also act as a drop in centre for all
- Slower speed - reduce speed limits
- Widen the footpaths - remove parking spaces along the streets
- Level the crossing points - roads and footpaths level surface
- Evening out of footpaths for ease of access especially for wheelchair users and people with reduced mobility
- Dropped kerbs opposite each other, adjustment of existing crossing points
- Provision of more clearly identified and controlled crossing points
- Levelling of footpaths

- More bike storage areas - covered and secured to encourage more cyclists
- More public toilets in the town
- Removal of car parking on O'Connell Street and Abbey Street allowing for drive-through rather than pedestrianisation
- O'Connell Square should be landscaped, there is an ideal area for seating and raised flower beds
- Top of Abbey Street and Friary Car Park have great potential for public spaces with native planting, age friendly seating, designated parking for disabled/age friendly spaces – it would be an enjoyable place to sit and interact for all ages
- Information sign should be placed at O'Connell's Monument for tourists and locals
- Current Pedestrian crossing outside Ulster Bank should be clearly indicated
- Footpath outside "Euroshop" in O'Connell Square is too steep and should be levelled out
- Edge of footpaths should be outlined to indicate the edge for visually impaired or elderly
- Stop sign needed at Francis Street outside Queen's Hotel

6.2 Route 2 - O'Connell Street to Friar's Walk

- Signals on pedestrian crossings should be altered to allow more time to cross the road
- Fix paving stones especially manhole covers for utility companies e.g. Eircom
- Areas with loose slabs should be replaced with tactile paving
- Clearer marking of pedestrian crossings
- Handrail needed on slope in Temple Gate car park
- Remove cobblestones from O'Connell Street and replace with tactile paving
- Remove obstacles from the narrow areas on O'Connell Street
- Improve the slippery areas of the paths
- Additional crossing point needed in Friar's Walk
- Pedestrianisation of O'Connell Street
- Widening of pavements - dispensing of car parking in O'Connell Street
- Removal of some street furniture
- Reallocate the space on O'Connell Street fairly between pedestrian and car e.g. More pedestrian space
- Pedestrian crossing needed for access from Glór across to Dunnes
- Hanging basket poles should be moved out nearer to the road on O'Connell Street. They are currently causing obstruction
- Drainpipes on O'Connell Street don't feed into drains therefore drainage of water should be looked at
- The area is the busiest in the town (O'Connell Street). I think it should be pedestrianised. It was noticeable over Christmas that a lot of people with mobilised wheelchairs came to town and used the street instead of the footpath.

- Charging stations for wheelchairs/mobility scooters (like for electric cars) this would encourage people with mobility issues to come into town
- Pedestrian crossing points should be marked on the road so they are clearly visible to both drivers and pedestrians

6.3 Route 3 - Station Road to Bóthar na Trócaire

- More dishd curbing and pedestrian crossing points for improved wheelchair access
- Bollards required to prevent cars from parking on footpaths
- Age Friendly seating around the Cathedral
- Improvements required in footpaths surfaces
- Change to LED lighting for winter safety
- The route would benefit from a number of Age Friendly seating places along the route – currently there are none.
- The Station Road roundabout was particularly difficult for members of the group crossing the road as well as the cars. There should be four Pedestrian crossings points when currently there is only one.
- The group expressed a need to have a shuttle service from bus/train station to the town centre and the Hospital. Currently patients have no way to get to the Hospital from the bus station other than by taxi or to walk.
- The group that walked this route had a wheelchair user with them which highlighted a number of issues mentioned. A lot of time was spent retracing the route than going forward due to cars parking along footpaths and no dishing of curbs to allow the wheelchair to cross the road. Currently the route from the train station to town is both inaccessible and dangerous since the wheelchair user inevitably spends a lot of time travelling on the road.

6.4 Route 4 - Francis Street to the Causeway Link

- Footpaths need to be upgraded to tactile paving all along Francis Street – there were lots of trip hazards found and flooding in a number of places on the day the study was done, indicating that drainage was an issue
- Manhole covers, particularly Eircom/Telecom ones need to be replaced
- Footpaths were too narrow at a number of points for wheelchairs users on the bottom of Francis Street near the Queens Hotel – this was due to bollards placed too far in from the road
- Drainpipes on Francis Street don't feed into drains therefore drainage of water should be looked at
- A new Pedestrian crossing is required at the Tesco roundabout and at the junction of Francis Street and Causeway Link, to allow access for wheelchair users to cross the road
- Francis Street would benefit from the installation of Age Friendly seating and green planting areas.
- The area in front of the shopping centre needs significant upgrading.
- The Causeway link had concrete benches in the grass areas however

these should be replaced by seating with back and arm rests to encourage people to use it.

- The Pedestrian crossing linking Tesco to Aldi was an excellent example
- Overall the group thought the Causeway Link area up to Templegate car park was a joy to walk through and could be replicated elsewhere

6.5 Route 5 - Bindon Street/Bank Place to Summerhill and Market Square

- Pedestrian crossings required near the Banks and Post Office
- Footpaths need to be upgraded to tactile paving all along the route
- The land beside the Post Office field could be converted to a wildlife park
- Need for availability of Age Friendly seating
- Improvements required to existing kerb dishing - most had large lips on them
- Lighting should be replaced with LED lighting
- Trees on Bank Place are currently a trip hazard – they are planted in squares cut into the concrete footpath that have a large lip
- Manhole covers, particularly Eircom need replacing
- Street litter of wheelie bins and sandwich boards obstructing footpaths along these routes should be removed
- Bank Place would benefit from Age Friendly Parking spaces to allow older people to park near to the services they like to use
- There is an excellent area developed around the Market building including Age Friendly seating and good accessibility i.e. raised road at same level as footpath

6.6 Route 6 - Parnell Street Car Park and Cornmarket

- Provision of ramps from footpaths required for disabled access
- Improvement of footpaths to tactile paving
- Improvement of wheelchair parking spaces and inclusion of Age Friendly parking spaces
- This route would benefit from some Age Friendly seating and green planting areas (maximising the potential of the river) e.g. the central area could be redesigned as a public social space with seating and lighting
- Widen the footpaths
- Increase crossing times at traffic lights
- Dished kerbing required at all crossing points
- Use of continuous paths (raised crossings) to encourage easier walking of the area and give priority to pedestrians
- More expanded pedestrian areas
- Improved signage to the town centre e.g. visitors to the town are not aware that Bow's Lane leads into the Market
- Pedestrian crossings required at the various junctions with ramps etc.
- There were a number of examples of car bumpers overhanging footpaths and thereby narrowing footpaths. The installation of a low wall or small bollards would address this
- More dog fouling bins are required

- Slow down the speed of cars near the river by having pedestrian friendly crossings which are raised up to the road
- In Cornmarket the group suggested repositioning car parking spaces (approx. 25 spaces) along outer footpaths with permits
- There were too many poles and sign posts on the route. A lot of these could be disposed of and their signs all put on one or two poles

7. Next Steps and Further Suggestions

This report will be used by the Ennis Town Engineers to determine which areas should be developed as a matter of priority. It will also be used as an input into the design of the future urban regeneration of the town.

The Clare Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2022 has a high level initiative for the development of Ennis as an Age Friendly town and as such, has a working group in place to implement the actions contained within it. This working group is being led by Ennis Municipal District with membership shown below.

Age Friendly Town Working Group Membership:

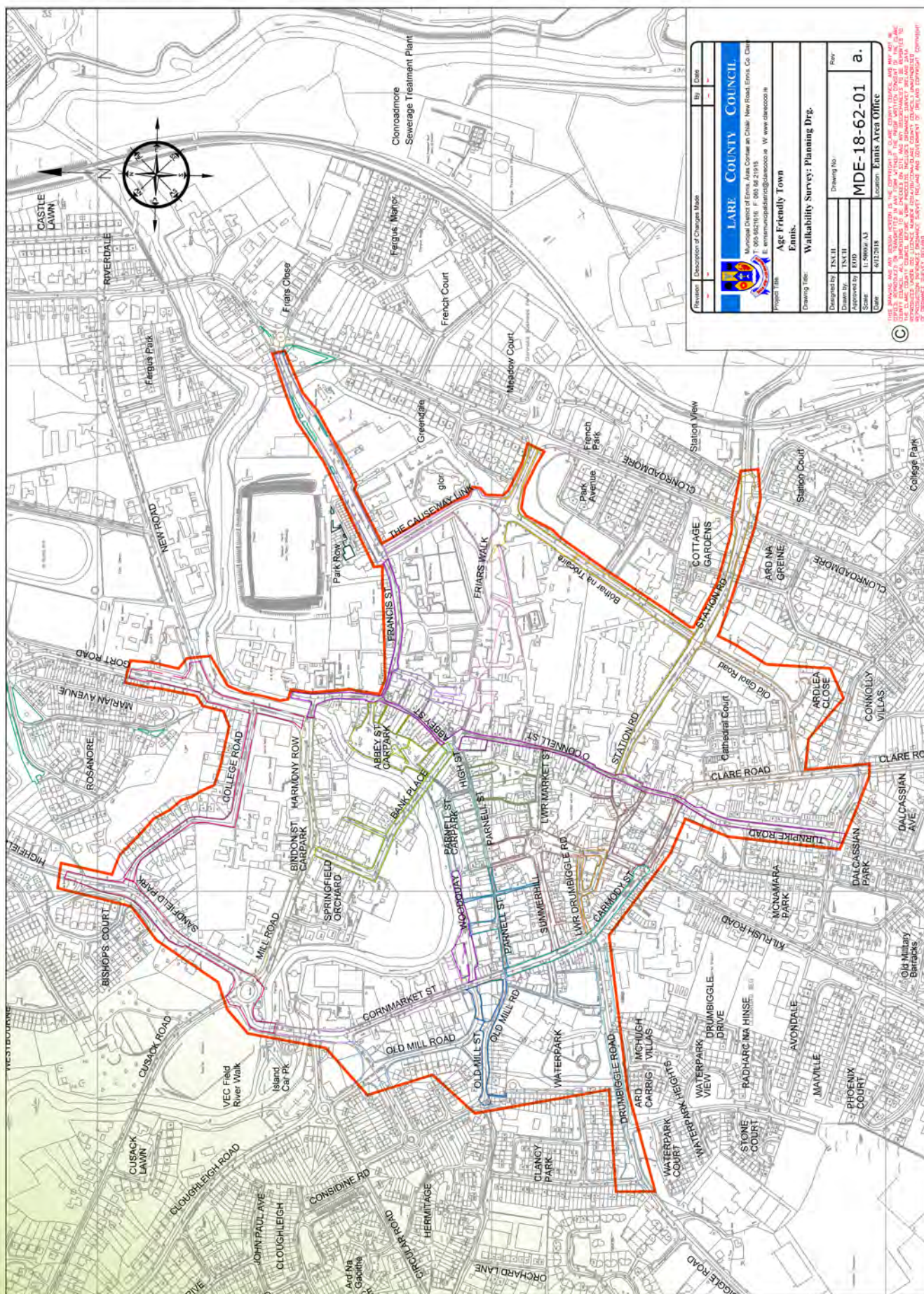
- Members of the Older Persons Council
- Ennis Municipal District Staff
- Ennis Municipal District Engineers
- Active Ennis
- Ennis Chamber of Commerce
- An Garda Síochána

Some further consultation could also take place which would greatly benefit the walkability study of Ennis in the future. Examples would be:

- Present the current walkability findings to the participants who took part in the walkability study with a view to getting agreement that the issues raised on the day of the study are relevant and accurate.
- A walkability study undertaken in the evening time or at a time when external lights are on would be very beneficial, especially in line with Ennis's Purple Flag achievement which would allow the town to monitor progress.
- A full modern engineering access survey should be undertaken as part of any future planned capital works in the town.
- Public Transport
 - A town bus service is needed
 - Improvements at the train station including a lift
- A further walkability study should be undertaken within a two-year period to assess progress.

A huge thank you to all the participants who volunteered for 3 days to walk the routes outlined and gave their time and input into this study of Ennis.

Map of Walkability Routes





Clare Age Friendly County Programme
Tel: **065 6821616**
Email: **info@clarecoco.ie**
Website: **www.clarecoco.ie/community/clare-age-friendly-county**

