

CAUSEWAY COAST DISTRICT

THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2008

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER, COLERAINE

1. What makes your area unique?

- Natural Environment – designated an area of natural beauty
- The balance between coastal, rural and urban areas
- A tourism magnet – particularly the Giant’s Causeway which is a World Heritage Site and the Bushmills Whiskey Distillery
- Historical sites such as Mountsandel
- Inland Waterway links via Lough Neagh and Lower Bann
- Good educational facilities including a University campus and a strong Science and Innovation Centre
- People and lifestyle
- Potential to develop renewable energy
- Proximity to the airport at Eglantine
- Kelvin Project will result in fastest connectivity to North America
- Local theatres

2. How can this be developed to give a competitive edge to your area?

- Develop wind power and solar panels
- Provision of more attractive facilities such as hotels and Visitor Centres to encourage tourist “dwell time” and sustain tourist trail
- Develop a Tourism Strategy which may look at niche markets e.g. an environmental project
- Develop links between education and industry at University and Regional College level to develop business centres particularly in the “high tech” field and build on local skills
- Exploit the science research and innovation being carried out in the University of Ulster
- Develop agriculture skills and provide training to “add value” to rural economy such as Farmers Markets.
- Good life/work balance could help attract investment to the area
- Recognise and develop the creative economy
- Improve public transport including rail
- Co-operate with other areas to form stronger partnerships

3. What skills underpin your area’s businesses and how can these be

improved to attract new business and encourage economic growth?

- Pool of third level graduates available
- Evident spirit of enterprise which needs to be focused and harnessed
- Develop and improve hospitality skills
- Develop IT skills
- Develop closer links with education colleges and University and educate for business
- Improve broadband connections to allow greater choice to work from home if required
- Develop distant learning packages with a modular approach which is better suited to rural lifestyle
- Develop “green collar” skilling

4. What opportunities might exist to co-operate with nearby towns/areas to improve your area?

- Link with Derry City to develop IT skills and jobs
- Options within tourism strategy to develop links with Derry and Larne to expand tourist trail.
- Establish links with ROI and GB Tourist Board and develop Celtic and Ulster Scots links
- Collaborate with other areas to lobby for improved infrastructure and pool political power
- Develop a Port on the coast which would do away with the need for pilot boats as required at Lisnahalley
- Ports and gateways provide the opportunity to develop links with Scotland and ROI
- City Driver approach must share opportunities with rest of the region
- Co-operate on development of Lower Bann waterway. Consider integrated development plan
- Develop an East –West axis
- Reduce duplication of effort, resulting in economies of scale

5. Are there any particular equality or health issues in your area that need to be considered?

- Poor public transport makes accessing health clinics and hospitals very difficult in a predominantly rural area
- Isolation of the elderly due to the high number of unoccupied second homes. Can include disabled residents
- Causeway hospital doesn't offer the specialist services required by an aging population e.g. cancer and renal unit. Residents need to travel to Derry, Belfast or Antrim for specialist care
- Equality of opportunity for economic development not as good in this area due to disproportionate amount of public investment