

## **MID ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER, THE BRAID TOWN HALL, 1-29 BRIDGE STREET, BALLYMENA, COUNTY ANTRIM**

### **1. What makes your area unique?**

- The Port of Larne
- Central location with connections to the International and George Best Airport and Belfast City Centre
- It has a strong retail base and ethos
- ECOS – with a Queen’s University link – NITRABAR Project
- A skilled workforce
- The natural environment - emphasis now on alternative energy – geology – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- The culture – particularly the Ulster-Scots and the link with Scotland
- A good tourist area – St Patrick – Slemish

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

- Need to develop tourist industry and product – more hotel/bed and breakfast accommodation required
- Gobbins Path – the cliff face path needs to be restored
- The potential of the East-West corridor needs to be further developed
- Need to identify potential growth sectors and workforce with stronger links between education and industry/vocational
- A stronger voluntary community to provide support
- De-polarised communities should be fully integrated with an outward looking ethos
- An improved infrastructure especially between Larne and in-land
- Rail link needs to be developed further in order to carry freight
- Joined up and transparent approach and strong local government with more control over own destiny and strong links with central government
- More communication and engagement – empowering people and communities
- Diversification for small holdings
- In order to have a competitive edge more public sector jobs should be based outside of Belfast as per Bain Report - consideration should also go beyond the public sector

**3. What skills underpin your area's businesses and how can these be improved to attract new business and encourage economic growth?**

- A strong manufacturing sector and skill base
- Strong migrant population but skills available for short-term period only
- Work-Life balance good in area and this could attract inward investment
- Good local post-primary schools and further and higher education
- Strengthen vocational training/skills particularly engineering sector
- Linking of growth sectors with education base to allow vocational training
- Greater links with universities for research and development
- Strong established work ethic
- Further development of the energy sector

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

- Connectivity within mid Antrim could be improved
- Tourism – the Causeway Coast and Glens
- Greater cultural/sporting collaboration
- Proximity to Belfast could be beneficial to attract office based jobs into the area
- Improved links with International Airport and Trans-European Network
- Improved rail network within the area

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

- Lack of access to health services with poor public transport to main hospitals at Mid-Antrim and Coleraine
- Natural topography makes access to hospitals difficult resulting in longer response times of ambulances
- Development of more neutral/shared space
- Still exists pockets of deprivation – socio-economic, education, access to services