

# COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING AND NORTHERN IRELAND



The possibilities of place-based Community Wealth Building partnerships  
in Larne and the North-West



COMMUNITIES  
AND PLACE

**DTNI**  
EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES



**LARNE**  
COMMUNITY WEALTH  
BUILDING PARTNERSHIP



**NORTH WEST**  
COMMUNITY WEALTH  
BUILDING PARTNERSHIP

## A NEW APPROACH

**Community Wealth Building offers local places the building blocks to help set the course for the fair and just transformation of our economy. Awareness of, and support for, community wealth building strategies is growing, and impactful examples of community wealth practices already exist in localities across Northern Ireland.**

Although it represents a **new approach to local economic development**, Community Wealth Building has roots globally and has shown to offer **creative solutions and positive local economic impacts** in other UK and international institutional contexts such as Cleveland (USA), Preston (England) and Scotland where the Scottish government are in the process of implementing a dedicated **Community Wealth Building Act**. In Northern Ireland, the concept already forms a central theme of the Department for Communities' new five-year strategy, Building Inclusive Communities, to "grow and scale community wealth building" to support sustainability and inclusive growth.

Since the publication of an independent set of recommendations by the Department for Communities in October 2022, **two pilot partnerships** facilitated by Development Trusts NI **have been developed** to explore the possibility of **place-based working** and to **advance Community Wealth Building practices** locally across Northern Ireland. These pilot partnerships are based in Larne and the North-West respectively and are **led by community anchor organisations** but also include direct input and involvement from institutions in the **public and local private sector**.



*"Community Wealth Building is a fast-emerging new approach to economic development that seeks to transform local economies based on direct community ownership and control of assets and wealth by the people of those communities themselves."*



*“There are high levels of vulnerability and inequality across the North-West and Larne that require significant and often complex support; our economic performance requires improvement to facilitate the social and financial resilience and independence of our residents; both areas have a high proportion of children living in poverty, and both areas have a high dependency on several key sectors. At the same time, resources continue to be scaled back.”*

## PLACE BASED PARTNERSHIPS

Each place-based partnership is led by community anchor organisations who are working collaboratively to bring **economic, social and environmental improvements** that are measurable and sustainable for individuals and communities living across their respective areas.

These anchor organisations are **based or operate close to the most deprived neighbourhoods** so have the capacity to build community wealth in terms of recycling their income locally by creating new jobs or building local supply chains with other business—both social and private.

The formation of each Community Wealth Building partnership has been curated through technical support from Development Trusts NI and members of each respective partnership are now in regular contact with each other. A local action plan has also been developed outlining a programme of strategic and project focussed work for Larne and the North-West. Although the membership profiles in each place are different, **many of the economic and social challenges affecting local communities remain the same.**

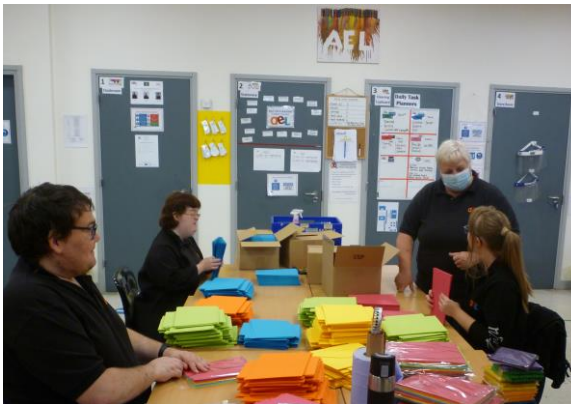
A more detailed research data profile on each partnership area (North-West and Larne) has also been completed in partnership with QCAP (Queen’s Communities and Place). These profiles help to better understand these locational economic and social challenges, but also share existing examples of impactful community wealth building practices already embedded in each respective area.

DTNI is also supporting CWB approaches in Newry Mourne and Down Council and Mid-Ulster Council as part of a wider programme of work.

## PLACE-BASED POTENTIAL OF CWB

Both in Larne and the North-West as well as other places across Northern Ireland there is a **well-developed community infrastructure**, a thriving social enterprise sector, the credit union sector is one of the largest in Europe, and social finance has grown in response to local demand.

Furthermore, **the size and strength of the public sector in Northern Ireland is a key building block for coordinating community wealth building** approaches and offers a baseline of economic stability and means of resilience in a period of crisis.



*"There are many locational benefits of a Community Wealth Building approach which include making financial power (investment, loan finance, grant aid) work better for local communities, creating fair and just labour markets as well as promoting the progressive procurement of goods and services."*

Both place-based partnerships are eager to harness these wider conditions as well as **make use of existing local assets** to develop a more **sustainable and inclusive model of economic development** that provides measurable benefits for local people that live and work there.

## WIDER OPPORTUNITIES AND COMMON PURPOSE

Both partnerships clearly have a lot to learn from each other and they are prepared to work together to share knowledge, skills and experience. The **geographic configuration** of each partnership is also important in that it has potential to **promote cross-sectoral** but critically **cross-community working** as well as **strengthen East-West connectivity** and support the leverage of **North-South** investment or programmatic opportunities.

Each place-based partnership also wants to **build on the strong identities** associated with their respective areas and learn how the other partnership is responding to similar economic challenges and place-based issues. Again, this heightens the scope for **cross-community collaboration** and represents how **community wealth building can help communities transition effectively from building the peace to building an economy where peace can be experienced by all.**

## MOVING FORWARD

The recommendations published by the Department for Communities in October 2022 stressed how Community Wealth Building must be properly supported and scaled—redirecting resources that have been allocated towards failing and insufficient economic development and regeneration efforts. This will require **a whole-of-government approach** and a **political commitment to driving real change**.

In addition to identifying a sustainable approach to community wealth building through **26 recommendations**, this report shared potential actions which could be taken forward as part of the next Executive and its Programme for Government. These actions along with the *'The next steps for community wealth building report'* (published through input from DTNI and QCAP) were broadly organised within the 5 pillars of community wealth building and consider the potential for **improved social and economic outcomes** by making policy, legislative and practical changes in several areas including *social value and procurement, technical support for social enterprises, social finance, community rights, real living wage and workers' rights*.

The establishment of these place-based partnerships represent a **tangible effort to advance the concept of Community Wealth Building** in ways that can respond to local economic challenges and social issues across Northern Ireland. It also represents a collaborative effort to ground its five pillars in ways that can create lasting benefits for individuals, cross-sectoral businesses and communities across Larne and the North-West.

Driven by a local network of community-based anchor organisations and well served by input from several cross-sectoral partners, the **needs and strategic objectives of each partnership** vary. Despite these differences and the place-based challenges they aim to address, both partnerships are united in their commitment to advance Community Wealth Building as a new approach, which provides lasting form to **local economic democracy, inclusive growth, fairness and equality**.

The place-based potential offered by Community Wealth Building is impressive and the partnerships can help **deliver outcomes of the Programme for Government and the wider aims of the Shared Island, PeacePlus and the Levelling-up funds** to deliver economic regeneration across the region. It can also work to ensure the most deprived communities can develop the skills to connect with a 10x economy.

Both the Larne and the North-West Partnership acknowledge that to grow and scale this local potential and learn from each other, **support will be required as well as buy-in from their respective local authorities, the Northern Ireland government and other funders**. This will catalyse the promising work that has been completed so far and support the delivery of the strategic and operational work outlined in each local action plan.

# CWB PARTNERSHIPS ROAD MAP

The road map below been developed to show how both partnerships are working in collaboration to secure investment support to advance community wealth building approaches across Larne and the North-West.

The road map highlights progress made to date, and anticipated milestones around engaging with government (at all levels), developing business plans, demonstrating the strategic relevance of projects to wider policy areas like the Regional City Deal and the Leveling Up programme as well as drawing down investment to deliver community wealth building projects in each area.



## COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS ROADMAP

Working in partnership to secure investment support to advance community wealth building approaches and projects in Larne and the North-West



### July 2022

Community Anchor organisations begin to come together in Larne and North-West facilitated by DTNI

### April – July 2023

Community anchor organisations in each partnership work collaboratively to develop an area-based action plan

### September 2023 – December 2023

Partnerships work jointly to promote the work of the partnerships and gain support from District Councils, Central Government Departments, British and Irish Governments and other funders to support the implementation of both area-based Action Plans

### January 2024 – December 2024

Begin to leverage funding support for the partnership areas to support full implementation of Action Plans. Strategic Partnerships developed with key statutory agencies in NI as well as cross border projects in partnership with ROI agencies and organisations.



### October 2023

Ministerial Advisory Group Community Wealth Building Recommendations launched by DfC and Minister Hargey

### July – September 2023

Place-based profiles completed with QCAP to understand local need and showcase the potential of existing community wealth building practice

### November 2023 – January 2024

Partnerships develop robust business cases to advance projects outlined in the Action Plan

Find out more about each respective Community Wealth Building Partnership and its community anchor institutions:

DTNi: [info@dtni.org.uk](mailto:info@dtni.org.uk)

Larne: <https://larnecommunitywealth.com/>

North-West: <https://northwestcommunitywealth.com/>

This work (supported by the Department for Communities) has been produced by DTNI and QCAP with input from community anchor institutions that make up each place-based community wealth building partnership