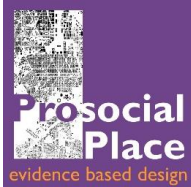
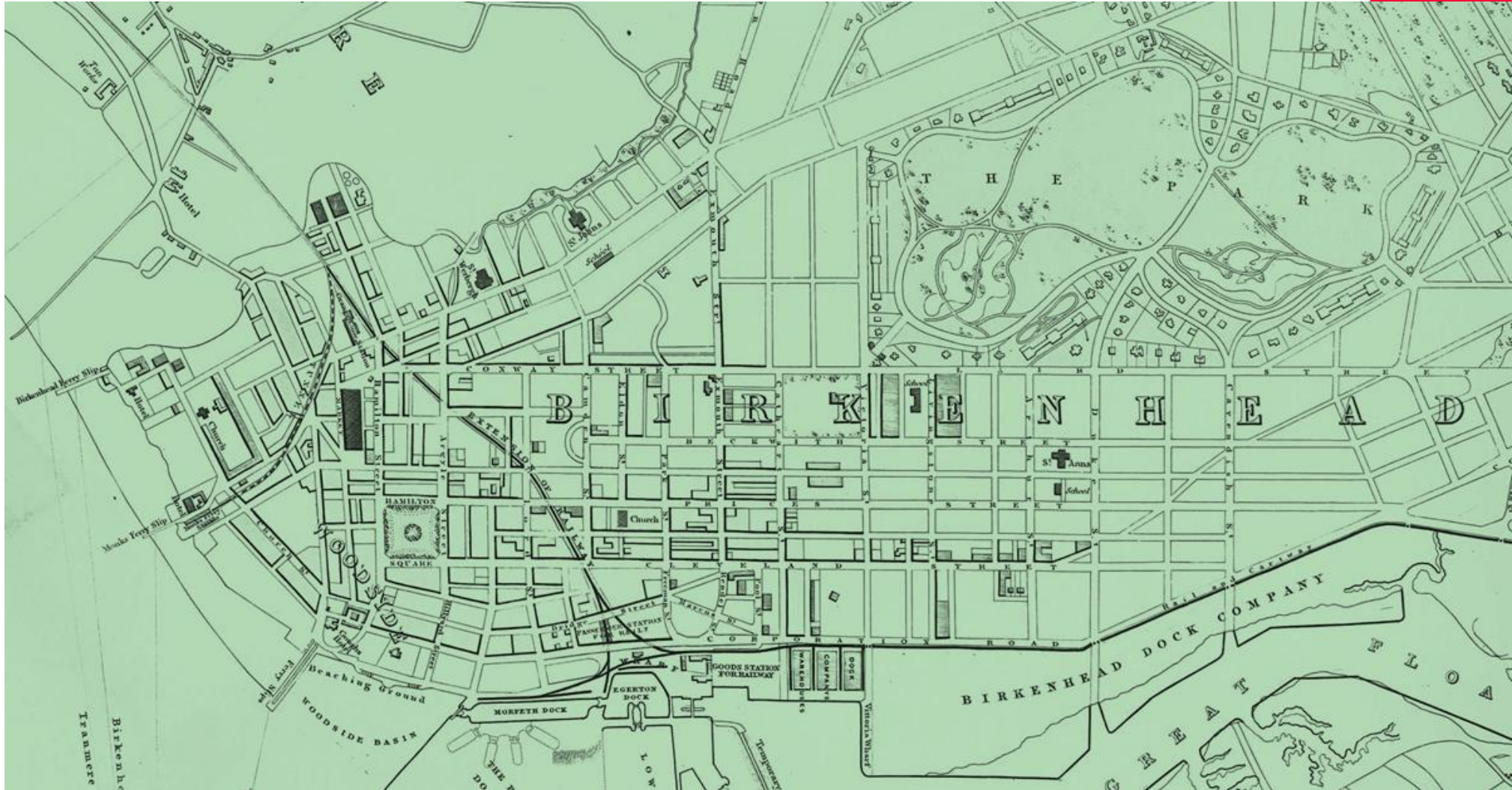


COMMUNITY PLACE PLAN

January 2026



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ITV News Filming the Place Plan at MAKE

"You're going to need sustained impatience... In regeneration, you get told 'there's a master plan' and it will take 10 years, and then it gets put aside for 5 years. We shouldn't accept that because if my child is five now..."

Jess Steele – [Jericho Road](#)

"...and it will be sorted in ten years, what are we supposed to do in the meantime. We need to be impatient to get community benefits now as well as longer term. But you have to sustain that impatience because it takes a long time."

Chair's Reflections...



Most of us do not think about how the towns we live in are shaped, or how they shape us. Politics, planning, competing priorities can feel distant from everyday life, yet urban regeneration touches us all. It influences how we feel about where we live, how we connect with others, and how hopeful we are about the future. That is why genuine community leadership matters.

Real change does not come from top down; it grows from honest conversations and shared experiences. This conversation about Birkenhead's future was supported by Wirral Council and the GroundsWell Consortium, but it was not driven by any funding bid. That independence makes the outcomes truly authentic, created by local people, for local people.

We began with a simple question during a group walk through Birkenhead: **"what does Birkenhead feel like to you?"** From that came conversations about what makes a good town and what creates a sense of belonging. We asked: **"what could we do here, in Birkenhead, to make that happen?"**

Over the past year, hundreds of people from all walks of life have shared their ideas. Those chats in cafés, on park benches, in meeting rooms and online have built something special: trust, connection, and shared purpose.

As ideas emerged, the bigger picture became clear. Threads of economic growth with social wellbeing; creativity with culture; old with new; big landscapes with the close-knit streets, wove together into a single tapestry: **the Birkenhead Place Plan.**

This plan is a living expression of community hopes and imagination. Mentoring this process has been absorbing, demanding, and deeply rewarding. The **Backin' Birkenhead movement** has shown the passion and creativity already alive in this community. To everyone who shared their stories, ideas, and encouragement: thank you. Your voices have created something powerful. Now, the next step is yours.

Keep the conversations going.

Keep leading together.

Keep the aspiration high.

Keep shaping the Birkenhead you want to see.

Graham Marshall - Chair Mentor

Prosocial Place



graham@prosocialplace.co.uk

Chair's Reflections...



Introduction - a practical tool for change...



This Place Plan presents a co-designed framework that coordinates purposeful, collective action. Built on hundreds of conversations, it puts local voices at the centre of change, aligning priorities and guiding projects that will deliver real impact.

Backin' Birkenhead represents more than regeneration. It is about care, belonging, identity, and hope. This community movement embodies local values, needs, and aspirations through an approach designed to stimulate 'Pride in Place'. The framework will:



Maintain focus on improving community wellbeing: addressing what matters most.



Direct action toward shared goals: clear priorities, not vague aspirations.



Enable collaboration across sectors and communities: breaking silos and building partnerships.



Turn ideas into impact through coordinated projects: from concept to delivery.

The Place Plan marks the start of a shared journey, with regeneration powered by local people. It protects Birkenhead's social and cultural fabric while driving a successful and inclusive future. This is about doing things with purpose. Not waiting for change but making it happen.

Only the community, will put the heart back in Birkenhead. You can get involved by:

- Joining or creating an Action Group.
- Contributing ideas at community discussion.
- Volunteering for projects.
- Helping shape the Birkenhead you want to see.
- Or just spreading a positive word or two for now.

This is your town, your plan, your opportunity to act. All you need is enthusiasm and a love for Birkenhead.



Introduction - a practical tool for change...



Community wellbeing sits at the heart of the government's place-based policy agenda. Our Place Plan responds with twenty-one threads that reflect community priorities and aspirations. These cluster into five thematic levers that together represent the 'Determinants of Community Wellbeing' here in Birkenhead.



Supporting Socio-Economic Progress

- Promoting circular and social economies so that resources and skills stay in the community.
- Creating good jobs, local businesses, and remaining affordable.



Encouraging Creativity, Culture & Identity

- Celebrating Birkenhead's character and creative talent through festivals, public art, and new cultural spaces.
- Supporting local artists and makers.



Levering a Healthy Town

- Promoting wellbeing through active design, healthy environments, and supportive community spaces.
- Making space for children's play, sports, community gardening, and safe recreation.



Promoting Quality Townscape & Architecture

- Using the town's heritage as a foundation for coherent, characterful development.
- Creating high-quality homes, streetscapes, and spaces.



Enabling Social Stewardship & Development

- Building a caring town where everyone has a role in looking after community facilities, public spaces, and each other.
- Tackling loneliness, improving safety, and creating intergenerational connections.

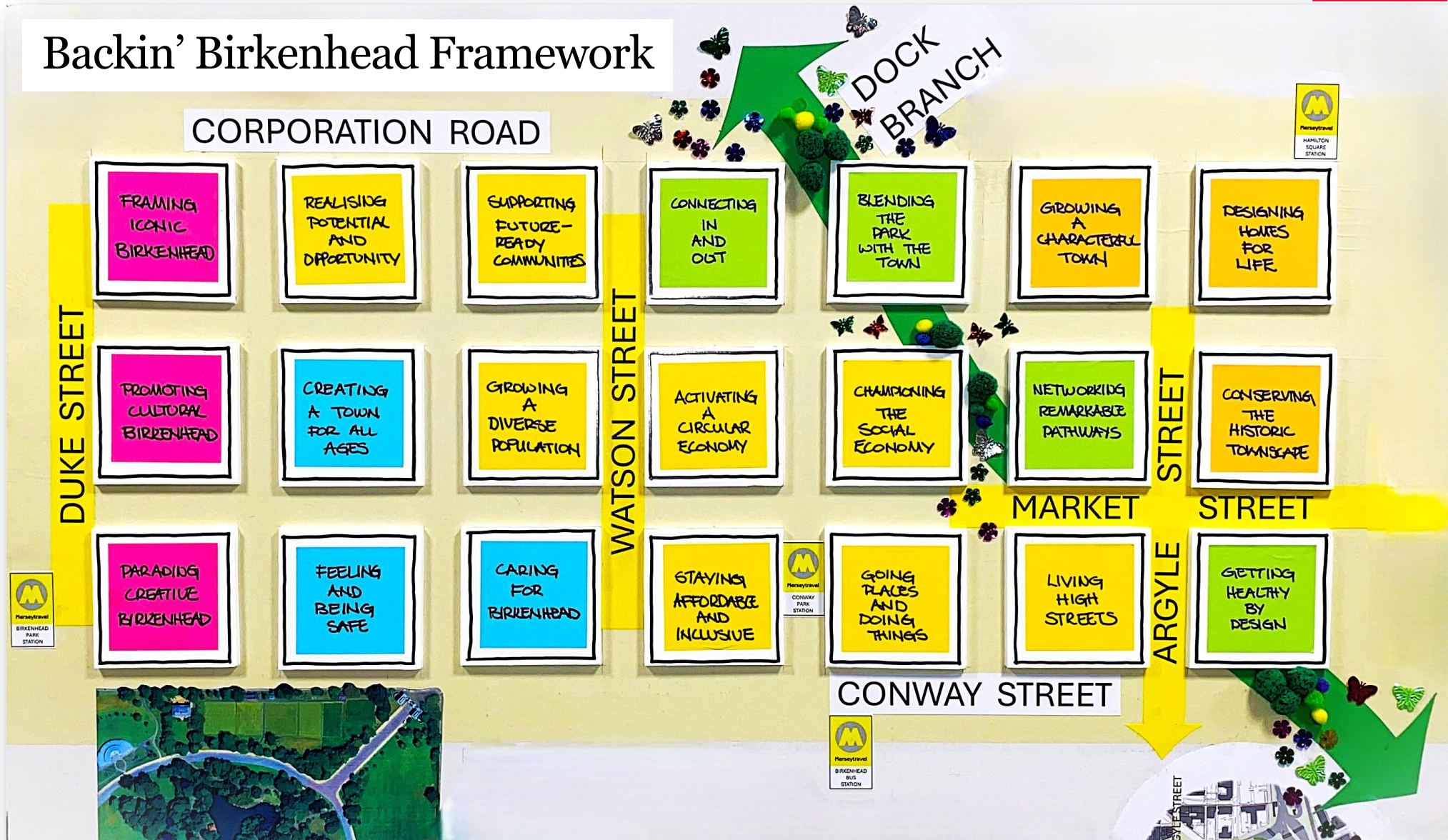
To deliver meaningful change, these levers and threads must work in combination, not in isolation. Projects should be assessed against these determinants of community wellbeing to ensure they contribute to the big picture. Together, they form a practical framework that reflects real community needs and aspirations.

Lasting regeneration will only succeed if everyone works collaboratively, maintaining wellbeing as the golden thread running through every **priority** and **next step**. This integrated approach will drive a **programme of projects** delivered by many hands, turning ideas into action.

Central Birkenhead's unique urban fabric provides the foundation for this transformation, supported by its strategic location, natural assets, and transport links. Woven together, these efforts will create a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable future, anchored in a shared sense of place and purpose.

Framework – Levers and Threads...

Backin' Birkenhead Framework



Our focus is on building a sustainable social economy that supports a diverse community across all stages of life. This includes access to meaningful jobs, continuous learning and skills development, affordable living, essential goods and services, and a thriving business environment.

Realising Potential & Opportunity

Birkenhead's Georgian New Town grid has remained remarkably intact for over two hundred years, providing a valuable and adaptable foundation that will support the regeneration of surrounding areas today. Its quality makes it rich with potential, offering a unique opportunity to re-establish this as a contemporary 'New Town'.

This potential will be realised through the implementation of a comprehensive strategy that does not settle for second-best or short-term "quick wins" that undervalue Birkenhead's prized assets.

We can learn from other places, but we cannot copy them. Change is a process unique to each place and all new projects should build on the town's inherent strengths to grow a sustainable investment environment, while safeguarding opportunities for the future.

Championing the Social Economy

There are many well connected organisations supporting communities of significant need here. However, these organisations can be fragile, with regeneration presenting both opportunity and threat. If 'gentrification' follows, they may be priced out of the area. Securely anchoring them in Birkenhead, while maintaining their adaptability, is essential.

Traditionally, social infrastructure has been viewed primarily in terms of facilities, often individual buildings. In reality, the entire town functions as social infrastructure. To reflect this broader perspective, we could establish a **Community Improvement District (CID)** to coordinate investment across the whole area. This approach would also create a structured way to channel Social Value contributions effectively.

Activating a Circular Economy

Birkenhead has the potential to support a circular economy that can deliver meaningful employment. This will reduce waste, increase values, grow local wealth, and strengthen bonds in the local community. Connecting to the [360 Degree Society](#) should be considered to encourage joined-up learning with other [Well North](#) initiatives.

A substantial volume of the built fabric is in underused 'employment uses' which would benefit from being intensified and re-imagined through the **creation of mixed-use and live-work neighbourhoods**. [Doughnut Economics](#) offers a model for Backin' Birkenhead to consider.

Supporting Future-Ready Communities

Circular economy principles include **education, training, and mentoring**, which will respond to Birkenhead's emerging opportunities, and provide life opportunities to existing communities, especially the young.

[C-Change Schools](#) already support young people on the Wirral and [Wirral Met College](#) oversees the transition to adulthood in Birkenhead. [Wirral Chamber of Commerce](#) offers business support and training to new and existing businesses and communities. Backin' Birkenhead could consider a visit to [Morecambe Bay Curriculum - Lancaster University](#) and to learn from the community wealth building approach of the [Preston Model](#).

Growing Diverse & Stable Communities

Wirral Council aims to grow Birkenhead's **residential population** through sensitive intensification of existing neighbourhoods and the redevelopment of former industrial sites like the Borough Yard gas works and the Wirral Waters docklands. There is scope for residential intensification within the grid too.

Growing a diverse and stable community in central Birkenhead is a critical goal and, seamlessly connecting these neighbourhoods and sites, will maximise the choice of homes, facilities, services, and amenities for all.

This connectivity is vital for projects such as Wirral Waters and Borough Yard because without a thriving town centre, these new communities risk isolation. Over the next decade, all regeneration efforts must work together **to foster a shared identity and a true sense of one town**.

Staying Affordable & Inclusive

To prevent gentrification, Birkenhead must **stay affordable** and strengthen residents' economic capacity through **living wage pledges** and access to better-quality jobs.

Affordability should never mean inferior quality, especially in housing. A supply of affordable, fit-for-purpose homes with mixed tenure is essential, guided by local needs and neighbourhood changes. This opens the door for direct **community-led development** through cooperatives, Community Land Trusts, and Development Trusts.

Learning from *Make it Happen* and *Worn By Us*, affordable food and clothing outlets can spread and diversify. Under-used spaces in central Birkenhead offer opportunities for **community food growing**, which can activate the area and support wellbeing. A **Time Banking** system could enable people to exchange services without financial strain.

Living High Streets

The Northern Ireland [Living High Streets](#) initiative notes that:

“Traditionally, people lived their entire lives in and around high streets as a matter of choice. Evidence continues to show that people benefit from living close to essential amenities and services that only urban centres can offer, including the opportunity to meet easily and connect with others as neighbours. This is especially true for older and more vulnerable residents.”

There are existing and potential **new ‘high streets’** within the Laird Grid that can link and strengthen neighbourhoods and diverse communities: Argyle, Market, Duke, Watson, and Chester Streets. These streets present an opportunity to take a fresh approach to promoting, sustaining, and advancing economic and social activity within neighbourhoods.

MAKE CIC with Power to Change have begun a [High Streets Innovators](#) programme to create a sustainable foundation. The programme emphasises “*different models for community involvement over their high streets....to avoid extractive town centre regeneration.*”

Going Places & Doing Things

Birkenhead already has some great places to go to, but they are poorly connected and there needs to be more of them spread through the Grid. Opportunities to bring the town to life through **experimental and temporary ideas** will strengthen the local economy and enhance community wellbeing.

Pop-up uses of buildings and spaces, festivals like [Art After Dark](#), and diverse themed street markets can all improve Birkenhead’s image, draw people into town life, and create a safe, welcoming environment. These activities can also be powerful first steps in reducing isolation and loneliness.

Encouraging people to walk between key destinations requires plenty of attractions and amenities along the way like benches, gardens, yards, playgrounds, shops, and cafés. These shared spaces help foster intergenerational and cross-cultural connections. Clear, **well-defined walking routes** will naturally guide people through the town, opening new opportunities for improvement and development.



**WELLBEING
ECONOMY
ALLIANCE**

“I’m proud that we are the first governmental body in the world to join the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. I look forward to... making Liverpool City Region a model of how we can make the economy work for people, and not the other way round.”
Steve Rotheram - Metro Mayor LCR.

Next Steps

- Establish an **Action Group** to lead this lever.
- Audit - social economy and its current social value contribution.
- Build relationships with the Metro Mayor and the Wellbeing Economy Alliance.
- Build relationships with developers of Birkenhead's new neighbourhoods (Wirral Waters and Borough Yard).
- Build a relationship with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Build a relationship with Wirral Met.

Initial Action Plan

- Secure Backin' Birkenhead's position as a statutory consultee for the Birkenhead 2040 Framework.
- Consider establishing a Community Improvement District (CID) – see [Power to Change](#).
- Explore becoming a [Transition Town](#), embracing sustainable, community-driven change.
- Look into relevant social and circular economy models and supporting practices – see [360 Degree Society](#)
- Build partnerships within and beyond Wirral to secure the future readiness of Birkenhead's next generation.
- Hold community conversations about appropriate, affordable housing types and tenures through community conversations.
- Develop Living High Street ideas within the grid including Argyle, Market, Duke, Watson, and Chester Streets.

Related Partner Projects

Backin' Birkenhead is supporting:

- Wirral Change - Community Café.
- Wirral Change - Social supermarket.
- Make It Happen - Community Supermarket.
- Make It Happen - Vibrant Village.
- MAKE - High Street Innovator project.
- Future Yard - development plans.
- Open Door Charity – JOY development.
- Wirral Mind - The Fountain Project

"What's in a name? For us, Birkenhead, with its 800+ year history, needs no tinkering - other than in reasserting the place of its handsome town centre in the regional economic hierarchy."

Neil Kirkham - CBRE UK

Framework – Encouraging Creativity, Culture & Identity...



The characteristics, location and accessibility of Birkenhead make it a natural place for a creative economy to flourish, alongside small-scale manufacturing, local commercial businesses, and urban living. From this, a strong creative and cultural community is growing.

Parading Creative Birkenhead

Birkenhead's iconic townscape provides the perfect backdrop for festivals and cultural events to showcase the town's imagination, transforming streets into living urban spectacles. Its rich engineering heritage and creative future can come together through open galleries and public art.

A 'Hidden Birkenhead' programme could reveal lesser-known stories, bringing heritage to life in imaginative spaces. Reimagined yards and underused places could become hubs for markets, performances, and community activity, nurturing the town's creative spirit.

Locally produced signs for businesses and facilities can be bold and sculptural, giving Birkenhead a distinctive identity. Tree planting symbolising the craft of shipbuilding, will value their historic significance in world trade and travel while appreciating their spirit within a contemporary urban habitat.

Promoting Cultural Birkenhead

Birkenhead must embrace culture in its broadest sense, from 'highbrow' to 'everyday', remembering that culture is not just for adults. Supporting what it means to be Birkenhead is about merging creativity and culture into a shared identity.

Currently, ad-hoc cultural activities are fragile and hard-won, often dependent on short-term grants and dwindling opportunities. The [Birkenhead 2040: Culture and Heritage Strategy](#) aims to change this by leveraging the town's cultural assets, growing local talent, encouraging community participation, and partnering with regional and national bodies. Backin' Birkenhead can play a leading role in supporting and enhancing this strategy.



Framing Iconic Birkenhead

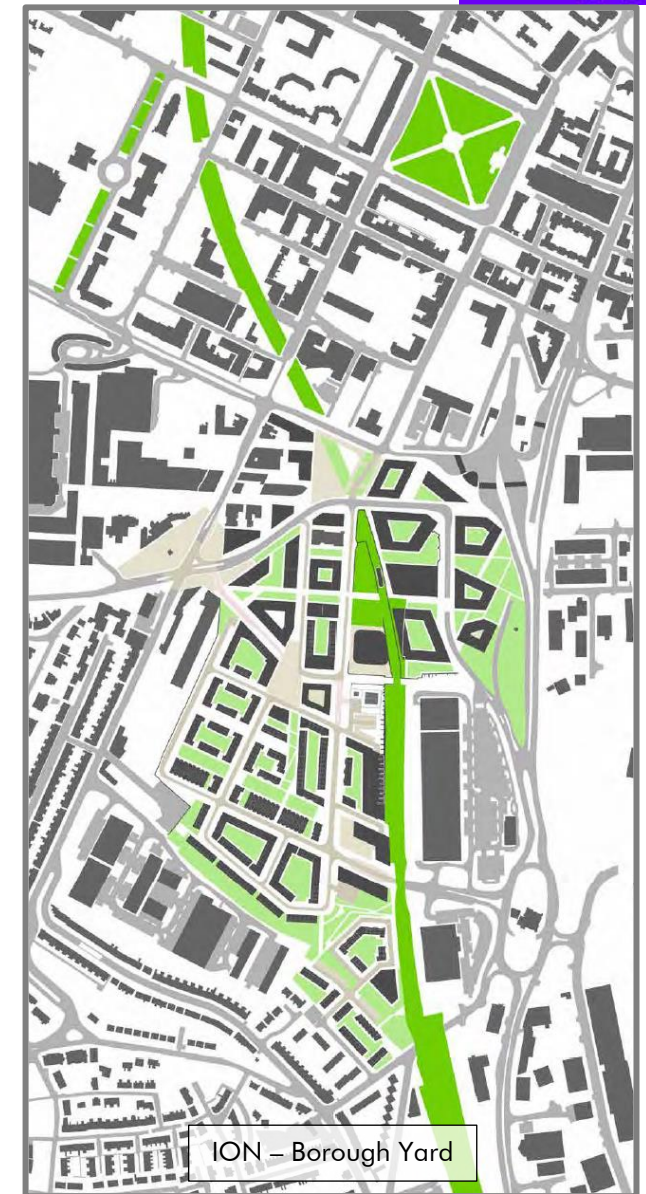
Birkenhead's townscape is defined by the **Laird grid** and its sweeping views across the town and Liverpool's Waterfront. The panoramas of Birkenhead's docks and the Mersey, with visiting ships from around the world, are iconic. This vast scale contrasts with the intimacy of the town's streets and spaces such as Market Street where a human scale creates a sense of homeliness.

These dramatic shifts in scale and perspective are 'surreal', making Birkenhead the perfect stage for **bold new icons**. Linking with the thread of blending park with town, Birkenhead could become a vast **open-air sculpture gallery** creating an unforgettable destination with huge visitor appeal.

The Wirral Waterfront, home to the country's '**longest promenade**', offers an opportunity to create a counterpart to Liverpool's. Complementing this, the unique subterranean Dock Branch Park could 'splash out' into the town, bringing biodiversity upwards, truly 'blending park with town'.

Yards are another defining feature of **Birkenhead**. Future Yard and START-YARD have already embraced this iconography. Beyond shipyards, the grid creates a network of residential, working, public, and private courtyards.

Borough Yard, the urban 'garden' village emerging on the former gasworks, builds on this concept. Extending the grid, blending park and town, and creating a series of private and public yards will weave a new town tapestry, complete with **iconic micro parks and gardens**.



Framework – Encouraging Creativity, Culture & Identity...

Next Steps

- Establish an **Action Group** to lead this lever.
- Celebrate Backin' Birkenhead through displays in public spaces, digital media, and a Backin' Room.
- Take a leadership role in the delivery of Birkenhead's 2040 Cultural Strategy.

Initial Action Plan

- Host community conversations on what 'Birkenhead means' and bring forward a cultural and creative strategy of deliverable initiatives.
- Develop a bespoke 'shopfront' design guide.
- Develop ideas for 'new icons' within the Grid, its Yards and Waterfront.
- Encourage, develop, and support an active community arts and culture group.
- Develop an events and activities programme to showcase culture and creativity.

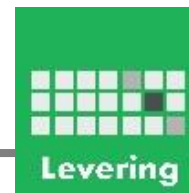
Related Partner Projects

Backin' Birkenhead is supporting:

- Imago studios Birkenhead-based projects.
- The Left Bank Collective.
- Friends of Hamilton Square - ongoing history and heritage activities.
- Future Yard - development plans
- Spider Project - empowering recovery through creative arts
- Birkenhead 2040 Culture and Heritage Strategy – participate in review and refresh of cultural programmes.



Framework – Levering a Healthy Town...



Our focus is to improve Birkenhead in ways that help people live healthy, meaningful lives. This means creating a fair and inclusive place that supports self-care complemented by access to affordable healthy food and an environment that promotes wellbeing through daily use.

Getting Healthy by Design

Birkenhead's compact layout was designed for active movement, naturally supporting walking, cycling, and everyday connections across the town. To make the most of this, public spaces need to feel safe, accessible, attractive, and welcoming. Reducing air and noise pollution will make time outdoors more enjoyable.

We have an opportunity to build a **universal framework** that promotes wellbeing, reduces loneliness, and connects people across generations. Successful models such as [MerseyCare's Life Rooms](#) and [Bromley-by-Bow](#) show how inclusive programmes can engage people throughout life.

Central Birkenhead's market can become a hub for social and community-focused activities, alongside trade. Its regeneration offers space for locally grown produce, potentially from a **community owned urban farm**.

The area is also well placed for a **network of sports hubs**, supported by funding from Sport England. Basketball, the UK's fastest-growing sport, has deep roots here, but local teams need better facilities to reach their potential and provide flexible spaces for community activities.

Success will come through lasting shifts toward sustainable behaviours, supported by environmental change. Creating this supportive environment will take time, so we must encourage and improvise in **meantime ways** while longer-term projects take shape and mature.



Grow-Wellbeing – Bentinck Street Project

Framework – Levering a Healthy Town...



Blending Park with Town

This approach promotes and enhances the natural and designed assets of Birkenhead. The celebrated Birkenhead Park, the Mersey Waterfront, the transecting Dock Branch Park, and Hamilton Square together shape the potential for a truly magical and imaginative “garden town” at the heart of Birkenhead. This complements the planned “urban garden village” at Borough Yard.

A less car-dominated, more people-focused urban landscape can flow through the streets and spaces of the grid, cultivating a distinct Birkenhead character. This landscape would serve as the glue that binds the town’s streets, parks, squares, and waterfront into a coherent whole.

Dock Branch Park presents an ideal opportunity to bring this vision to life. Designed as a linear park, its landscape can flow into the wider fabric of central Birkenhead, drawing people in to explore and enjoy. This distinctive, partly subterranean park, offers a tantalising opportunity to let biodiversity spill upwards and outwards, seamlessly ‘blending park with town’.

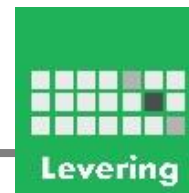
As this concept develops, it will be vital to ensure that trees are allowed to reach maturity, and that the landscape can be properly maintained and cared for. Beyond its visual and social value, such an approach also has the potential to support urban food growing, bringing the benefits of fresh, local food to the heart of the town.

“I worked with a photographer and Wirral Met College to gather images of the Dock Branch cutting. These were exhibited at Open Eye Gallery, boosting my confidence and sense of contribution.”

Cole Small – Young Persons Lead



Framework – Levering a Healthy Town...



Networking Remarkable Pathways

Birkenhead's historic grid was designed for movement at walking pace and remains ideal for high-quality walking and cycling routes. By linking key nodes, landmarks, neighbourhoods, and communities, the foundations of a healthy, connected town can be established.

Using the urban design method of 'Serial Vision', we can create continuity and connection, revealing the town through a sequence of unfolding views. This approach will stitch fragmented areas into a unified, memorable townscape, fostering pride in place through the experience of walking.

For example, Dock Branch Park should connect seamlessly to the Mersey promenade, drawing in the Priory, ferry terminal, and Hamilton Square. The new space replacing the gyratory must have purpose, and Chester Street should be elevated beyond its traffic role to reclaim its place as a vibrant high street.

Connecting In & Out

Birkenhead benefits from strong transport links, including three rail stations, a bus station, and ferries. However, travel can be costly, and for some residents in the wider district, local stations, bus stops, and cycle routes are difficult to access. Ensuring that public transport is affordable and accessible across the Wirral is critical.

People should be encouraged to use public transport rather than private car. To achieve this, a **comprehensive movement audit** is needed to understand how people currently access central Birkenhead.

While the Laird grid offers excellent permeability and connectivity, its streets are often perceived as unsafe and poorly maintained. Addressing these issues is essential for Birkenhead's liveability and for the success of new developments such as Wirral Waters and Borough Yard. **Improving the experience of key walking routes**, including those linking new developments, must be a priority.



Next Steps

- Establish an **Action Group** to lead this lever.
- Audit - how people travel into central Birkenhead, understanding the barriers to public transport and active travel.
- Audit - vacant plots/ left over spaces where community initiatives can begin.
- Audit – accessibility in the public realm.
- Advocate for the development of Dock Branch North into a linear park.
- Develop the vision of Birkenhead as a garden town, including the ‘spirit of trees’ concept.

“Dock Branch Park presents an opportunity to enhance biodiversity throughout the town with unique urban planting that embraces ecology, culture, and the idea of a Garden Town.”
Duane Chong
Grow-Wellbeing, Birkenhead

Initial Action Plan

- Actively support the World Heritage Site bid for Birkenhead Park, demonstrating the strong historic link between the town and its ‘peoples park’.
- Set up an urban growing club focussed on under-used spaces.
- Campaign to reduce traffic dominance and encourage public transport use.
- Develop a priority network of accessible routes linking key nodes and attractions into cohesive walking and wheeling circuits that feels safe and pleasant.
- Look into models from elsewhere that are designed to support health and wellbeing - see [Bromley-by-Bow](#).
- Establish active involvement in the Neighbourhood Health plan so the work of Backin’ Birkenhead links to the 10-year plan and is coproduced with communities.

Related Partner Projects

Backin’ Birkenhead is supporting:

- Wirral Change - Gardening and Horticultural Group.
- Grow-Wellbeing CIC – development of a co-ordinated green 'Healthy Corridor', network.
- Grow-Wellbeing CIC and relevant NHS partners - green social prescribing interventions.
- Hitched Communities - Made On My Patch networks of households learning to grow fruit and veg.
- One Wirral and Make It Happen - Healthy Urban Places peer research project.
- One Wirral - embedding Community Health Checks into day-to-day experience.
- The Hive Youth Zone – Hive outside programme.

Birkenhead is defined by its history, streets, and sweeping views over the Mersey. Preserving its unique character means more than protecting buildings. It requires thoughtful blending of old and new. Every renovation, development and space offers an opportunity to honour the past while creating future heritage.

Growing a Characterful Town

Birkenhead's 19th-century New Town heritage provides a strong foundation for a '**Renaissance New Town**', supported by the Council's brownfield-first policy.

Protecting and enhancing the Laird Grid through sensitive development and incorporating the **concept of yards** will merge historic character with contemporary needs. Introducing light touch [Design Coding](#) will **guide appropriate development** and ensure coherence and quality.

The Queensway Tunnel entrance remains a major barrier to creating a well-functioning town centre. The toll marshalling yards make this area a redundant backland, and with no sense of arrival when leaving the tolls.

Reconfiguring this gateway would reclaim valuable land, improve access, and create a striking sense of arrival. Opportunities here are significant.

Conserving the Historic Townscape

Hamilton Square is one of the UK's most significant heritage assets, boasting the largest collection of Grade I listed buildings outside London. A draft **Conservation Area Regeneration Plan** has been prepared for the area, which includes extending its boundaries to incorporate a fuller historic continuity.

The Plan positions heritage as supporting growth and quality of life. It includes blending heritage with bold town centre renewal including improving shopfronts, restoring upper-floor residential use and rethinking parking and the use of the public places and spaces.

Designing Homes for Life

Open conversations about housing types, co-housing, and live-work options will democratise choice. Guidance such as Greater Manchester Combined Authority's '[Design for Life](#)' can inform this process and to attract the right developers.

The town must develop its own distinctive approach and Backin' Birkenhead can explore with the Council and City Region, university architecture departments, local developers, social housing providers, and Homes England to create a flexible, **future-proof approach to housing and neighbourhood development**.

Quality design, accessibility, and the support of different living arrangements and tenures, while safeguarding affordability, are essential. **Supporting early pioneers** and preventing exploitative development that undermines character and quality will be key.

Next Steps

- Establish an **Action Group** to lead this lever.
- Host open conversations on housing types and live-work arrangements.
- Develop the vision of Birkenhead as a as a Renaissance New Town.
- Take a leadership role in the delivery of the Conservation Area Regeneration Plan.
- Audit – understanding ownership, land uses, and development potential.

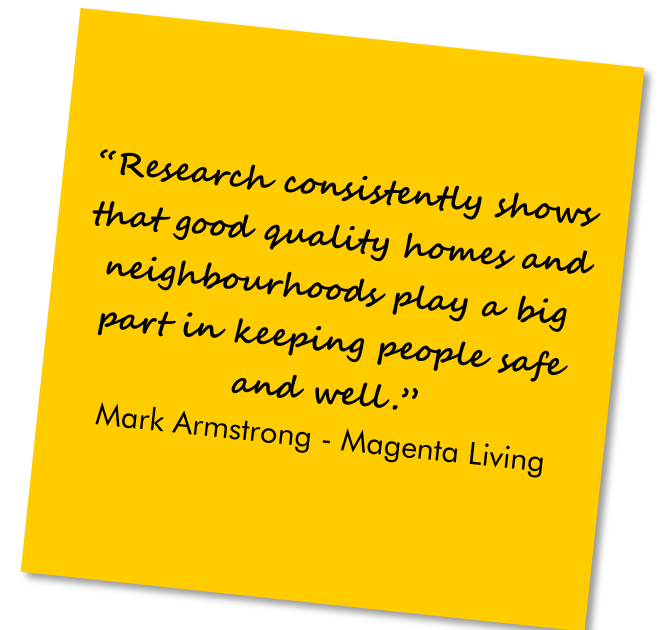
Initial Action Plan

- Preserve and protect the historic form of the Laird Grid through design coding. Promote the Yards concept as part of the characterful fabric of Birkenhead to support aspects of sustainable town life.
- Support the development of public realm design guidance.
- Campaign for the reconfiguration of the Queensway Tunnel to deliver an iconic urban gateway.
- Progress the idea of a 'Design for Life' housing and neighbourhood programme.

Related Partner Projects

Backin' Birkenhead is supporting:

- Friends of Hamilton Square.
- Wirral Council - Conservation Area Regeneration Plan.
- Wired - supporting equality and diversity in the public realm.



Framework – Enabling Social Stewardship & Development...



Birkenhead's future depends on care for its people and its shared spaces. By designing intergenerational places, we create a town that feels safe, alive, and connected. Where loneliness fades and community thrives. With active community leadership, Birkenhead will become a place where everyone belongs.

Caring for Birkenhead

Birkenhead faces challenges of inadequate maintenance and persistent fly-tipping, issues that must be addressed for regeneration to succeed. Community-led initiatives, such as clean-up campaigns, can tackle these issues while fostering a shared sense of purpose.

Proactive measures can include **designated community recycling yards** in areas prone to fly-tipping, encouraging responsible disposal and pride in place. These actions support the circular economy and provide direct benefits to the community. Composting schemes and collecting aluminium cans, batteries, and other scrap metals in exchange for payment, reinforce environmental responsibility and civic engagement, funding activity for the common good.

The “Barcelona, Get Pretty” campaign leading up to the 1992 Olympics successfully mobilised citizens to transform their city. A similar “Beautiful Birkenhead” campaign

could build on the efforts of Make It Happen and other Backin' Birkenhead supporters.

Improving the quality of public spaces will also require removing obstacles and clutter from streets to create a safer, more accessible, and cohesive environment. While planters can add greenery, if they are poorly designed, badly placed, or unmaintained they become clutter and reinforce a sense of neglect.



“Through local engagement and action, involving individuals in shaping their places, spaces, and social connections, a sense of community will be strengthened.”

Amy Butterworth
Make It Happen, Birkenhead

Feeling & Being Safe

Feeling safe and being safe are not the same and improving both in Birkenhead is essential. When design and management fail, the sense of threat creates a downward spiral with fewer people venturing out, antisocial behaviour rising, and closed shutters reinforcing a sense of neglect.

To address this, Backin' Birkenhead can survey perceptions of safety to establish a baseline for future improvements. Actual crime patterns also vary by gender: young men are most likely to experience street violence, while women and girls face higher risks of sexual assault. Violence Against Women and Girls, a priority for Merseyside Police, was highlighted during community sessions, particularly regarding nighttime safety. A dedicated **community conversation on safety** will help clarify concerns.

Local initiatives such as [Weapons Down Wirral](#) and [Street Angels Birkenhead](#) play an important role in tackling street violence. Through Merseyside Police a **record of crime and criminal activity** can be maintained, providing time-sensitive information to inform Place Plan actions.

Creating a Town for all Ages

As Birkenhead grows its population, it must become a town that supports people throughout life from prenatal care to old age. Everyone needs access to everyday essentials, an inclusive public realm, strong social connections, and a sense of belonging.

Loneliness is rising nationally, with peaks in youth and later life. Birkenhead should aim to reverse this trend. Thoughtful design of housing, streets, and public spaces, combined with social and economic initiatives, can reduce isolation and promote wellbeing.

Public spaces must cater for young people: safe streets for children's free play and welcoming places for teenagers to 'hang out' that feel like their own. Older residents benefit from local facilities within walking distance and inviting 'bumping spaces' for informal social encounters.

Intergenerational activities can bridge divides and strengthen community cohesion. Local schools have a vital role in supporting these connections, with resources available through [Intergenerational England](#).



Weapons Down – Argyle Community Fitness



Magenta Living – Extra Care Facilities

Next Steps

- Establish an **Action Group** to lead this lever.
- Establish strong relationships with schools and colleges to build a Young Birkenhead group.
- Explore potential to establish recycling and upcycling yards in under-used spaces (e.g. Dacre Street)
- Initiate a 'Beautiful Birkenhead' campaign.

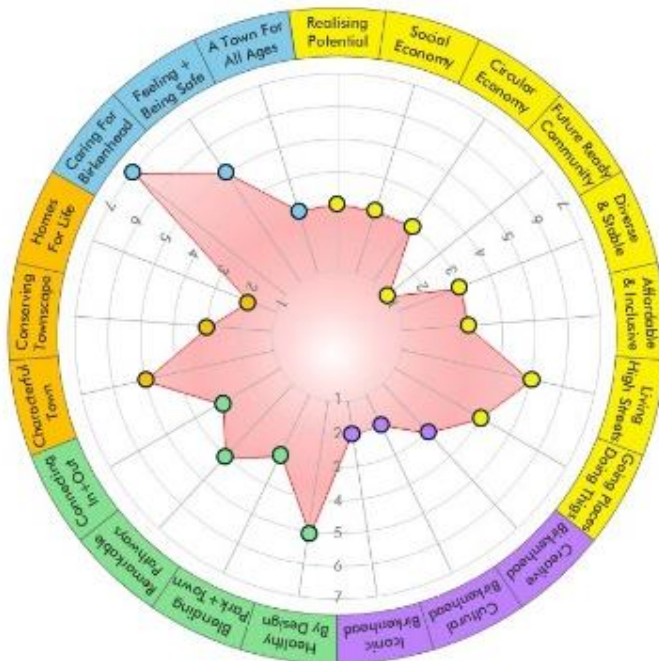
Initial Action Plan

- Work with the Friends of Birkenhead Park and other partners to support landscape stewardship and maintenance opportunities across the town.
- Deliver a community-led 'feelings of safety' survey.
- Arrange community conversations about nighttime safety.
- Arrange with Merseyside Police to provide updates on crime and criminal activity in Birkenhead.
- Look for opportunities to reduce obstacles and clutter in streets and spaces and including an 'eyes on the street' component.
- Support a programme for Birkenhead as a town for all ages with particular emphasis on the needs of children and young people.
- Research initiatives such as Intergenerational England.
- Host bespoke workshops on designing out crime, loneliness, and isolation.

Relevant Partner Projects

Backin' Birkenhead is supporting:

- Hitched Communities - Street Angels wellbeing and safety in the nighttime economy.
- Weapon's Down Wirral CIC - building safer communities by reducing weapons crime.
- Grow-Wellbeing CIC - Green Healthy Corridor volunteering opportunities.
- Merseyside Police – youth programmes and Secure by Design.
- OPTIONS - involving people with learning disabilities in place-based decision-making.
- Make It Happen – community composting initiative.



'Beautiful Birkenhead' Delivering the Framework



By using this community-led framework, Backin' Birkenhead can grow and tend the town like a garden, not develop it like a machine. This framework can turn this historic new town into a leading exemplar of sustainable urban living, showing how the community can be involved in leadership and why this is important.

Community Leadership

“Backin' Birkenhead” evokes the idea of a civic movement of people working together for the future of their town. From the outset, everyone with enthusiasm, knowledge, skills, and an interest in Birkenhead has been welcome. Maintaining this inclusive approach, and encouraging ongoing participation, is essential. **Backin' Birkenhead must continue to involve all residents, local businesses, third sector organisations, developers, and public bodies.**

A flat structure with distributed leadership will help keep Backin' Birkenhead equitable, accountable, and transparent. An independent chair, supported by a steering group, will be responsible for administering the Place Plan, ensuring the initiative remains active and effective.

Community Action Groups leading the development of the key levers, will turn ideas into action through projects, collaborations, and strategies. This stewardship approach will naturally form community project teams that help shape ideas or act as supportive critical friends. The result will be greater respect for local identity, stronger civic involvement, and a deeper sense of belonging.

Critical Elements for Success

The Place Plan must be bold and ambitious. All supporters need to stay positive and focused on shared objectives. Continual refinement as the town changes will sustain momentum, capture new ideas, address emerging issues, and strengthen funding bids. A full review every three to five years will keep the Plan relevant and effective.

Sustaining Backin' Birkenhead for the long term. To support this, we have taken over an existing Community Benefit Society, creating a solid foundation for community-led activity. Wirral Council for Voluntary Services (WCVS) plays a vital role as a governance and resourcing advisor. Securing a dedicated community space, the **Backin' Room**, will provide a central hub for collaboration, innovation, and shared ideas.

Clear communication is essential. To attract participation, build and maintain relationships a strategy is needed to support cooperation across communities and sectors, ensuring effective oversight of recommendations, projects, opportunities, plans, and activities.

Evaluating the impact of change. While some data can come from Wirral Council, primary research is needed to establish baseline community wellbeing levels. Work has already begun on a **community-led Regeneration Evaluation Toolkit** to ensure progress is tracked and outcomes stay meaningful.

Project Development

Developing a series of projects within the Levers and Threads requires answers to the following questions:

- What is the project?
- Which levers and threads does it trigger?
- What are the funding/ delivery sources?
- Who does it impact (RACI Matrix)?
- What is its timeline – Now | Sooner | Later?

Developing each lever and thread requires project development that will need resourcing:

- Understanding the project context - policy reviews; funding programme requirements etc.
- Audits – physical, social, training, economic etc.
- Structured Conversations – housing, high streets, active travel, health, and wellbeing etc.
- Funding programme 'readiness' - Pride in Place, Active Travel, Arts and Culture, Sports, Health etc.

Delivering the programme will generate projects that need resourcing:

- Design and policy review panels.
- Developing evaluation tools.
- Research and bid development.
- Community researchers.
- Management and Communications.
- Dissemination and marketing.

Next Steps

- Finalise the Community Benefit Society governance structure.
- Agree a Memoranda of Understanding between Wirral Council and Backin' Birkenhead.
- Audit - skills and expertise within the Backin' Birkenhead community to identify core strengths and gaps.
- Establish an **Action Group** for communications, exhibition and widening participation in the Place Plan.
- Widen participation in the Backin' Birkenhead movement by communicating opportunities to be involved at diverse levels and for different interests.

Responsibilities: RACI Matrix

There must be a clear sense of ownership and responsibility for the delivery of projects in the Place Plan. To support this, a RACI Matrix should be prepared for each project to clarify who is leading, who is involved, and who needs to be kept informed. These roles may change over time. RACI stands for:

Responsible: individual or organisation leading the project.

Accountable: individual or organisation accountable for the project - give permission to start or approve the results, delivery, and evaluation.

Contributor: individual/ organisation involved in the project - a stakeholder or specialist that supports the process with experience and knowledge.

Informed: individuals and organisations who need to be made aware of the project and consequences for those involved.

Acknowledgements



For Arthur Lindsay Kerr Acheson

3rd Sep 1949 – 25th March 2024

Arthur was an energetic founding member of the Dock Branch Panel.

He left us with these wise words:

“Be flexible; adapt to change; question and challenge authority; have courage; just do things; and care.”

A tribute from the Bard of Birkenhead, Terry Briscoe:

“It’s sad to hear the news that Arthur.

Has sadly passed away.

I only ever got to meet him twice,

An he had nice words to say.

He said he liked my poetry.

When we first got to meet.

Yes Arthur he was amazed,

When I shouted in the street.

So he invited me along one day,

There was a meeting in the yard,

The Dock Branch Committee it was

An they got to hear the bard.

Arthur he was a lovely guy,

And I only got to meet him twice.

An I’ll never forget the twinkle in his eye

Yes Arthur he was lovely and nice.”

Original Dock Branch Panel and contributors to the Place Plan 2023-25

Graham Marshall: Chair-Mentor Backin’ Birkenhead; Place Plan co-author; Prosocial Place

David Roberts: former chair, Dock Branch Panel

Rebecca Crook: GroundsWell Consortium, University of Liverpool; former chair, Dock Branch Panel

Rhiannon Corcoran: Place Plan co-author; GroundsWell Consortium, University of Liverpool; Prosocial Place

Arthur Acheson: Architect

Amy Butterworth: Make it Happen

Anthony Poldervaart: Make it Happen (formerly)

Lionel Bolland: Make it Happen

Cole Small: Young Person Lead

Philip Barton: Planning Consultant

Mark Baker: Retired architect-planner

Joanna Burrell: Wirral MBC

Luke Bithell: Wirral MBC

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Gary Owen: Spider project

Jai Roscoe: Nightingales Recovery Org

Gary Wooten: Hitched Communities

Sally Green: Make it Happen

Kelvin Sharp: Make it Happen

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Honora Barr

Joe Grant: Energise Cycles

Rachel Gilbert: Wirral Mind

Dominic Wilkinson: LJMU Arch Department

Lee Pennington: Open Door Charity

Graham Arnold: Friends of Birkenhead Park

Helen Wilkie

Rebecca Farmer

Linda Beecham

Ruth Toda-Nation

Rita Burns

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Catherine Holmes: Homes England

Shannon Conway: Picture This

Patsy Crocker: Wirral Chamber

John Mason: Irish Community Care

Stuart Brady: Bidston Avenue Primary School

All Year Six 2025: Bidston Avenue Primary School

Anna Hume: Merseyside Police

Kim Poole: Merseyside Police

Laura Howcroft: Merseyside Police

Cllr Paula Basnett: Wirral MBC Leader

Cllr Pat Cleary: Wirral MBC

Cllr Amanda Onwuemene: Wirral MBC

Cllr Ewan Tomeny: Wirral MBC

Cllr Ed Lamb: Wirral MBC

Rebecca Lowry: Wirral MBC

Christopher Han: Wirral MBC

Laura Robinson: Wirral MBC

Sarah Robertson: Wirral MBC

Leonora Aigbokhae: Wirral MBC

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Alison McGovern MP

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Partner Organisations



Friends of Birkenhead Park



Hitched Communities



Spider Project

