

SAINTFIELD TOWN REGENERATION COMMITTEE

The Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee (STRC) was formed and constituted in early 2006. It was the result of an amalgamation of the Saintfield Town Committee, which had been in existence for many years, and the Saintfield Regeneration Committee which had been formed in 2004 for the specific purpose of identifying the issues and producing and implementing a plan for the regeneration of the village. Saintfield is still technically a village as its population numbers below five thousand.

The committee is comprised of around twenty members and is representative of all sectors of the community. It meets ten times each year with an AGM in April/May.

The objects of the committee are simple....to improve the physical and social infrastructure of the village for both residents and visitors. Saintfield, although a relatively prosperous community, has suffered from a lack of investment from Down District Council (DDC) for many years due to more pressing demands on it from more deprived areas of the borough. It is the task of STRC to redress this imbalance and DDC now recognise that Saintfield needs a sustained programme of investment.

What has been achieved to date?

1. Support given for the development of the architecturally compatible Old Mill Village on the site of the disused factory at the western edge of the village.
2. Successful lobbying of politicians and councillors for the complete upgrading of the water treatment plant.
3. Successful objection to development proposal which would have sealed off access to the Town Hill, preventing future use by the community.
4. The installation of Gateway Signs at each of the five entrances to the village.
5. The installation of benches and interpretive display panels throughout the village.
6. The creation of a memorial garden commemorating those who died at the Battle of Saintfield in 1798.
7. The erection of a village centrepiece and floral display.
8. The creation of a professional web-site.

In addition, STRC organises the annual Christmas Fair and provides hanging baskets in summer. It is recognised by DDC as the representative body of the people of Saintfield.

What has not been achieved?

1. The provision of a Community Centre and improved Sports Facility for the village. Negotiations continue on this issue and, despite financial restraints, a successful outcome is envisaged soon.
2. The adoption of an Environmental Improvement Scheme for the dilapidated Main Street. Approval for this important matter is unlikely to be granted for some time due to lack of government funding.
3. The creation of a Village Square. Funding for this project has been reduced and the subsequent revised plan for the area is much less effective than

originally envisaged. Insistence by Road Service to erect traffic lights at the entrance to the proposed area may render the plan unworkable.

4. Protection of the Conservation Area. Lack of funding in the Planning Service and N.I. Environment Agency and the potential difficulties with enforcement issues will severely impede any progress in this regard.
5. The creation of a public park on the Town Hill. DDC continue to negotiate with the various owners of the Town Hill and some progress has been made. However, it could be a few years before our ambitions are realised.
6. The establishment of a summer festival. It is hoped to co-ordinate various initiatives including a fun run and a treasure trail around the anniversary date of the Battle of Saintfield, with a festival atmosphere.

STRC is keen to attract new members. Details of all future meetings will be posted on the website and any interested parties should simply turn up on the evening.