



Councillor
**Cadogan
ENRIGHT**

Alliance

DOWNPATRICK - 2023 NEWSLETTER



MLA
**Patrick
BROWN**

NEW 3rd FORCE IN SOUTH DOWN POLITICS

By Councillor Cadogan Enright

Since my last Newsletter a new force has emerged in the politics of South Down. I ran the campaign to get Patrick Brown elected as our first Alliance MLA in the Downpatrick area. He now leads our team of 3 Councillors in the East Down area.

We have a new Downpatrick office in Market Lane off the Irish Street Car-Park and have been delivering a full-time constituency service for the people of Downpatrick since May '22.

In the last Assembly Election, Alliance ran on a platform of delivery for Downpatrick, promising a bold vision for the town where other parties had failed to see its potential. In October, we launched our 'Restore our County Town' strategy document, a collection of 25 strategic projects over 4 distinct themes which our representatives are committed to deliver at local and national government.

The 25 strategic projects are grouped under four key areas, Economic Development & Regeneration, Environment & public services, Community, the Arts & Tourism and Infrastructure, and was informed by months of engagement with Downpatrick businesses, community groups and residents. This includes ambitious projects such as establishing a Business Improvement District for Downpatrick, a one-way system for the town centre, a new vision for the Quoile area and a bold new plan for tourism in the area.



*Cadogan with Patrick Brown MLA,
Councillors David Lee and Andrew McMurray*

OUR PLAN FOR DOWNPATRICK SCAN QR CODE



FROM INDEPENDENT TO ALLIANCE

Having worked with Alliance Party Councillors for six years on Council, a transition into the party was easy for me as we shared so much in common.

Changes to the D'Hondt system rules in Council has made it nearly impossible for Independents to get access to more than 1 main Council Committee. Since 2019/20 changes championed by the Newry-based SDLP to ban recognition of Independents as a group on Council made effective representation by Independents very difficult.

published by Councillor Cadogan Enright of Alliance, Downpatrick

Alliance's strength in East and South down will enable the fight-back for Downpatrick and against the unplanned decline of our County Town since the merger of our old Down Council with Newry and Mourne.

I am really pleased the Newry area continues to thrive. We can continue to support that without downgrading Downpatrick as our County Town and deliver Alliance's plan for East Down as a growing base for public sector employment in the County and a Mecca for tourism and recreation on the Island of Ireland.

OUR PLAN FOR DOWNPATRICK ROADS

Council prioritises Newry's Southern Relief Road at a cost of £78 million and Narrow Water Bridge at £40 million. Why can't both areas aspire to 21st Century Infrastructure?

FINISHING OUR RING ROAD

This road is to connect the Hospital and our Public Sector Jobs Campus with the Belfast Road. It would allow people in the big estates and villages around Downpatrick to avoid the town centre. It was also aimed at letting the Downshire Campus thrive and attract more jobs. Only one small section at the front of the hospital has been built.



QUOILE BRIDGE UPGRADE

The beautiful old Quoile Bridge is no longer fit for purpose and the scene of dozens of accidents. Supposedly, this will be the route for our long - awaited Downpatrick Ring Road.

It needs to be reduced to a single lane with safe pavements, and a second modern bridge built alongside as a safer North/South lane as is being done with heritage bridges in the Republic.

In the meantime, we have arranged for enhanced warning signs, retro reflective road studs, additional "SLOW" markings, reflective marker posts, and to replenish the high friction road surface as an additional action. These works will be completed by April or May.

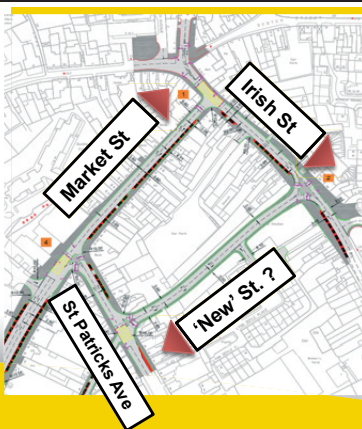


EDWARD STREET ONE-WAY SYSTEM

Like the park-and-ride on the Belfast Road this project was promised for 2016 and has never been delivered.

Since then, Newry infrastructure was agreed as priority. So infrastructural improvements like this in Downpatrick are as rare as snowballs in the Sahara.

Downpatrick Town Centre Development



Under the Downpatrick Masterplan, Old Down Council bought derelict lands around Irish Street and the Police Station to transform our town Centre. Creating easy access to shops. Increased on-street parking. Dealing with traffic congestion by building 'New Street' around the Irish Street car-park.

The SDLP and SF supported this before the merger with Newry including the

£3.5 million needed for 'New Street'. They now want to invest £35 million in Newry Town Centre instead. Why not do both?

Pressure from Alliance on Council Management has generated a "Living High Streets Project" for Downpatrick Town Centre. However, the benefits of this project will be severely limited if 'New Street' project is excluded from any funding application.

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TOURISM & PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS

DOWN COUNTY MUSEUM



Ratepayers and Councillors alike were shocked to discover last year that council senior management had made a number of significant staffing decisions without consulting elected representatives or stakeholders.

This has led to the downgrading of Down County Museum. The lack of consultation and transparency was appalling, as was the council's plan to remove the Museum's full-time curator post, keeping one full curator based in Newry for the whole district!

Alliance Councillors proposed a motion, seconded by Sinn Fein, to do a strategic review of museum services. This reversed a number of these damaging decisions, in particular ensuring there will now be a full time curatorial resource at the Down Museum once again.

We would take this opportunity to thank the Friends of Down Museum, Lecale Historical Society and other key stakeholders for their work in holding council to account and helping make this happen, as well as Sinn Fein for supporting our proposals.

DOWNPATRICK PUBLIC SECTOR CAMPUS & HOSPITAL

This critically important project for Downpatrick was abandoned mid-stream without discussion or debate on the merger of the 2 Councils.

The project was aimed at getting some of our 4,500 public sector workers who commute to Belfast located near their home base on our new Campus between the Hospital and the Council HQ. We had some early successes with several organisations moving their staff to the Campus.

Initially, I was supported by local SDLP and SF Councillors in getting the project re-started, but they were soon 'whipped' into line by their Newry-based leaders.

The revival of this project is critical to establishing Downpatrick as a hub for public sector employment and the need for its revival is wedded to the need to oppose any new Council HQ in Newry.



DOWNPATRICK TOURIST OFFICE FIGHT CONTINUES



My motion for a consultation locally over the loss of the two jobs in our Tourism Centre was voted down in 2022 by local SDLP and SF Councillors.

They suggested that the Saint Patrick's Centre can somehow pick up the work of 2 full-time Council Staff. This is nonsense. The Saint Patricks Centre uses volunteers to help run its services already. It's funding was slashed years ago by Council. There has been no increase in Council funding for the last 10 years.

Downpatrick is the jewel in the Tourism Crown of Newry Mourne and Down District Council.

We will fight for a full time 7-day Tourism Office or boost funding to the Saint Patrick's Centre to ensure they can deliver this service.

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Stormont Reform



Patrick Brown MLA,
Speaking at Stormont

Stormont is stuck in endless cycles of stalemate, failing to deliver for local people whilst public services erode, and the cost of living rises. The only way to end these failures is to properly reform our institutions. Firstly, changing the rules under which a Speaker can be nominated, ensuring no one party has a veto. Secondly, change how First and Deputy First Ministers are nominated. If one party refuses to take their place on the executive, it should be open to the next biggest party to step up and help form a Government.

Alliance is the only party in support of these reforms to end ransom politics. We are actively lobbying the UK and Irish Governments for these simple changes that will still respect the co-consensual approach of the Good Friday Agreement.

Alliance wants functional, normal politics in Northern Ireland - not the politics of chaos and division.

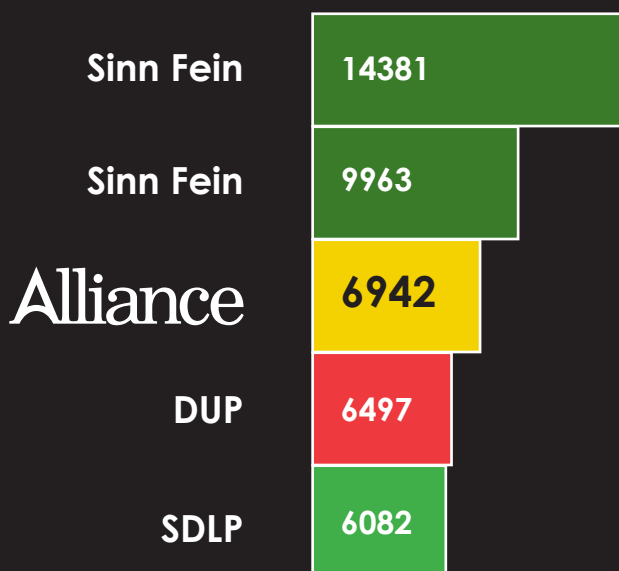
A New Council HQ for Newry **WHY?**

At a time when Council is looking at rates increases of 6% for the next few years, we can ill-afford spending over £30 million on a giant second HQ where staff now work mostly from home anyway.

The big parties are failing to deliver for Downpatrick. For instance, eight years after Council Merger, every estate in Newry City have a weekly rota for street cleaning. Housing estates in Downpatrick are still waiting. This is not good enough.

A strong 3rd force is vital to see that the needs of our area are properly represented both in Council and at Stormont.

ALLIANCE NOW 3RD BIGGEST PARTY LOCALLY



Assembly Election Results May 2022. 1st Preference Votes

NEED HELP?



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