



Submission to the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Transportation, Active Travel and Connectivity

Submission re: right of way at Doonass Clonlara Co Clare

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1. Introduction

Clonlara Development group have developed a heritage trail of fourteen historical sites in the Clonlara area. The heritage trail will be a circular loop (walking, driving /cycling) with the trailhead in the village of Clonlara. The Heritage Trail will consist of a trail head map and 14 lectern type interpretative mounted panels at each site of interest. This trail will be on public roads mainly until it reaches the River Shannon and the heritage sites situated there. The trail follows the river showcasing ‘ The Falls of Doonass’, ‘The Folly House’ and then the natural progression is through the Failte style to the medieval church and graveyard.

The fact that barriers and fences have been erected here is a serious impediment to the natural progression and the development of this trail. The development of this heritage trail is vital for the economic, social and cultural development of this community.

Clonlara Heritage Trail Map Legend

- 1: St Senan's Church
- 2: Kiltenanlea Parish Church
- 3: Shannon Scheme
- 4: Sheela-na-gig
- 5: Coolistigue Castle
- 6: Double Lime Kiln
- 7: Limerick Navigation
- 8: Waterpark House (entrance)
- 9: Linen Bleach Mills
- 10 Footbridge
- 11: Falls of Doonass
- 12: Folly House (Turret)
- 13: Kiltenanlea Medieval Church
- 14: St Senan's Holy Well



2. Location

Clonlara is situated in the south east of County Clare in the civil parish of Kiltenanlea and barony of Tulla Lower. It lies between the River Shannon to the east and south and the Clare hills to the west and north. Clonlara village is a quiet backwater that lies off the R463 road between Killaloe and Limerick. The village uniquely lies between two canals, on the north side the Headrace Canal that deliver water to power the Ardnachrusha Hydro Electric Power Station and to the south a branch of the Shannon Navigation – the Errina Canal.

3. Population Growth

Clonlara's proximity to Limerick city has resulted in a steady population growth in the Electoral District, rising from a total of 950 people in 1981 to 1911 in 2016.

Clonlara's population has further increased since then with the many once off housing projects, the extension of Derryvinna and the integration of Church Fields and Clonlara Village housing estates. There is also a planning application in train for a development of 70 more houses in the village.

This proximity to Limerick city and UL could lead to Clonlara becoming a dormitory village in the future, with no sense of place or belonging to a community. The Heritage Trail makes people aware of their heritage and fosters a sense of belonging.

4. Lack of tourism facilities and infrastructure

Even though Clonlara is located in a very scenic locality, on the banks of the River Shannon and between Killaloe and Limerick and adjacent to the Slieve Bernagh Mountains, there is a complete lack of any tourism structure/facilities in the immediate area. Visitors to the greater Lough Derg region are unaware of the heritage this area has to offer. Clonlara uniquely has no through traffic so it's imperative to draw visitors to the area, that can only be achieved by offering them an interesting reason to visit.

The development of this tourism product in Clonlara would be a major benefit for economic, social and environmental growth for the local community and could direct and enhance community partnerships among the various groups operating within the locality. The imminent development of the UL to Scariff greenway increases the opportunity to attract more tourist and visitors to this area, providing economic opportunities in the service and hospitality sectors. Other communities are actively planning developments that will create interesting spurs from this corridor. Clonlara's heritage trail is critical in ensuring that Clonlara and the wider community avail of the advantages accruing from this Greenway.

The County Clare Heritage Plan 2017-2023 identifies the following actions for tourism development in the County:

- Work to improve access to heritage sites, provide information, interpretation and signage at heritage sites and assist in the further development of heritage trails;
- To further research the development of greenways in the County and promote heritage along recreational routes.

To date no action has occurred in the Clonlara District.

5. Future Vision for Clonlara

Clonlara heritage trail will be a starting point from which the district will be promoted and linkages will be made with other existing tourism projects e.g. The trail will be a vital spur off the proposed Greenway that will attract visitors to the area.

- ✓ The National Trails Office Way-marked walking trails along the Shannon River
- ✓ Shannon Navigation Blue Way
- ✓ O'Brien's Bridge Greenway
- ✓ Proposed Scariff to UL greenway
- ✓ Proposed Pilgrim way of 350 Km cross-border along the inland waterways
- ✓ UL North Campus and Economic Development Zone (Appendix 1)
- ✓ Fáilte Ireland – Hidden Heartlands Tourism Development
- ✓ Local and regional Heritage promotional events

This project was showcased at a public exhibition in Killaloe on February 18, 2020 and was uploaded to the new Clare Community Heritage website. It was also featured for Heritage week as both an online project and a physical project in the local 18th Century Church of Ireland and received very positive feedback. . The project was also serialised on Social Media during covid 19 lockdown and received a large following.

Conclusion

Clonlara is a quiet backwater in East Clare with a rich history dating back to a mention in the Annals of the Four Masters. This history has been hidden or known to only a few residents. The village has two pubs and a small local shop the continued survival of which depends on local support but also on a steady influx of visitors.

It is vital that this trail can follow the natural circular route without hindrance or interference.

Appendix 1 UL North Campus and Economic Development Zone

I wish to update you on major step forward in the development of our campus in the years ahead. Following a vote in Clare County Council yesterday afternoon, the Clare local authority is seeking Government approval to designate the University of Limerick (UL) campus in County Clare (the north Campus) and its hinterland as an economic development zone with the capacity to generate 3,500 jobs. Elected Members and the Clare County Council Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee yesterday backed the South Clare Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) proposal, which has been targeted and zoned in successive Clare County Development Plans.

Clare County Council has announced that the SDZ will be Europe's first 21st Century University Town providing for a full range of living, working, amenity, social, cultural and recreational spaces integrated with a range of university facilities, enhancing our world-class educational and research proposition, cultivating our ongoing relationships with enterprise, industry and community, and further establishing UL as a hub for innovation.

The SDZ will also include the redevelopment and integration of the Errina canal, thereby providing the final inland waterway link between Lough Erne in County Fermanagh and Limerick City as well as the Shannon Estuary.

For UL, this decision offers further momentum to a planned and strategic approach to the development of the northern campus and follows on from the decision in 2016 to support the development of a northern distributor road north of Limerick City.

As the details of the Strategic Development Zone take shape, I will endeavor to ensure that the next phase of our beautiful campus is developed in a sensitive and progressive manner. Our focus will be to ensure such development is aligned with both UL's strategic plan and the principles and standards that arise from the Open Campus Studio project currently working towards completion.

The announcement of the SDZ plan by Clare County Council is another milestone in the story of UL's transformative impact on the economy of the Mid-West and we look forward to the implementation of this over the coming years.

Kind Regards

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