



Clare County  
Development Plan  
**2023-2029**

## **Draft Clare CDP 2023-2029 - Public Consultation Portal**

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### **Volume 1**

Architectural, Archaeological & Cultural Heritage

### **Volume 3(a) Ennis Municipal District Written Statements and Settlement Maps**

### **Volume 3(b) Shannon Municipal District Written Statements and Settlement Maps**

## **Volume 3(c) Killaloe Municipal District Written Statements and Settlement Maps**

## **Volume 3(d) West Clare Municipal District Written Statements and Settlement Maps**

### **Associated Documents**

Volume 4 Record of Protected Structures, Volume 8 Clare Housing Strategy

### **Environmental Reports**

None of the above

### **Your Submission**

See attached document

### **Location Map**



Earthstar Geographics | Esri, FAO, NOAA

Powered by [Esri](#)

## Upload Files

Clare Stone Roofs.docx, 0.02MB

## **Clare Flagstone Roofs**

### **Recommendations**

Buildings are being lost annually, threatened by changes in the rural economy, poor planning, modern expectations in housing and the continued lack of understanding of the value of traditional houses. But there is also a renewed interest in our vernacular heritage. More people are interesting in finding out more about how to live sustainably and reuse our abandoned traditional building stock. Now is the time to take action to ensure the future survival of this unique aspect of the county's heritage, not only at a local level through proactive planning policies but also at a national level through properly funded state support.

### **Survey & Statutory Protection**

The 2006/2007 survey of stone/moher flagstone survey needs to be updated. While these buildings are found from Ballyvaughan to Moneypoint they are clustered around the former quarries near Doolin, Ennistymon and Liscannor. This updated survey can inform future protection policies and objectives. This would also meet objective CDP16.2: b) To review the Record of Protected Structures periodically and add structures of special interest as appropriate, including significant elements of industrial, maritime or vernacular heritage and any twentieth century structures of merit.

### **Architectural Conservation Areas:**

The existing ACA'S for towns which retain flagstone roofs such as Ennistymon need more detailed character appraisals and advice for building owners especially in relation in to the repair of the surviving flagstone roofs, walls and paving. The former late 19<sup>th</sup> century quarry village of Doonagore (located near Ennistymon) should also be considered for Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA). These areas are located near the locations of historic quarries. ACA designation would protect the character of the area through the protection of the exterior of the houses, boundary walls, paving and ensure that any new development was in keeping with the existing traditional character of the area.

### **8.4.4 Development plan policies regarding retention and repair:**

Outside of protected structure status, the proposed Development plan includes policies for the reuse and protection of vernacular heritage through development control policies. These are laid out in the following: *CDP 4.17, CDP 4.18, CDP6.20, CDP8.3, CDP16.1 & CDP16.4*

It is advised that the existing policies in relation to vernacular heritage be further strengthened by incorporating or adopting the following objectives/policies:

1. Any new development on the site of any of surviving flagstone roofed houses should respect the existing nature of the buildings.
2. Adoption of a planning policy to refuse planning permissions where demolition of any flagstone roofed building is proposed. For example 'the reuse of vernacular and historic buildings is a central element to the continued preservation of the county's built heritage and also important to sustainability. In assessing applications to demolish older and vernacular buildings which are not protected, the Planning Authority will seek the retention and reuse of buildings/structures of historic, architectural, cultural, artistic and/or local interest which make a positive contribution

to character and identity of areas including those retaining their locally quarried distinctive roofs’.

3. The sensitive reuse of derelict flagstone roofed dwellings and outbuildings will be supported by specific policies in the development plan to include:
  - a. Any refurbishment will ensure that the distinctive character of the vernacular dwelling is retained.
  - b. The original historic fabric is repaired using appropriate traditional construction methods and materials.
  - c. Measures are taken to support and protect the building from collapse prior to, and during, the construction works.
  - d. Where it is proposed to increase the size of the vernacular dwelling by extending it, the design, scale, footprint and materials used for the extension should be in keeping with or sympathetic to the existing dwelling and its setting. The Council will consider the re-use of vernacular outbuildings in extending vernacular dwellings.
  - e. Detailed measured survey, photographic record and written analysis should be a requirement for developments affecting vernacular buildings.
4. To facilitate and encourage the re-use of derelict farm buildings of vernacular importance (including flagstone roofs) for appropriate agri-tourism enterprises subject to compliance with appropriate planning and services requirements including:
  - a. Where the conversion of an outbuilding to residential or other use is proposed, it must ensure that the distinctive character of the vernacular dwelling is retained and the original historic fabric is repaired using appropriate traditional construction methods and materials.
  - b. The conversion of protected outbuildings must be sensitively designed, respecting the setting, form, scale and materials of the existing structures.
  - c. Measures are taken to support and protect the building from collapse prior to, and during, the construction works.
5. With the proposal of Clare County Council taking over some of the Shannon Heritage sites including Bunratty Castle and Folkpark and Knappogue Castle, it is suggested that any future development of these parks include an investigation of the use of these venues for traditional skills training as was the case at Drimnagh Castle in Dublin under Pat McAfee’s stewardship and in Ferrycarrig National Heritage Park in Wexford where links to local traditional skills practitioners and archaeological training schools have been utilised to provide further insight into the past for locals and visitors.

### ***Raising Awareness***

1. Seek permission from the owners of successfully restored houses for inclusion in Heritage Week tours.
2. Suggestion of collaboration with the Architecture Foundation to organise an event like Open House Dublin in Clare or link in with Architecture on the Edge, which runs in Mayo and Galway in early October which would include a focus on vernacular buildings. Develop a primary and secondary schools specific strand to the event to raise awareness of Clare’s rich vernacular heritage with the next generation.

### ***Roof Repair Training Workshops & Training in Best Practice Repairs***

It is proposed that regular summer school be established (every 2-3 years). This would take part over a week and would showcase best practice conservation repairs, with training provided on the real repair of a flagstone roof. This could be carried out by linking in with an existing reuse/conservation project or identifying an existing community owned building. This would require significant investment, oversight by skilled practitioners, insurance and health and safety protocols.

Other best practice conservation repairs could also be showcased such the traditional use of hot lime; best practice energy efficiency upgrades which are sensitive to the character of the building; joinery repairs (including windows, doors and surviving internal joinery).

A regular summer school should focus on different structure typologies. However, it is recommended that the initial focus concentrate on outbuildings to allow for the exploration of and finely tuning techniques while allowing for future monitoring overtime to see how the repairs perform. Many outbuilding roofs are easily accessible so allow for monitoring without having to navigate difficult to access roof spaces.

Partnerships with SPAB Ireland and Building Limes Forum Ireland (BLFI) could be considered. Organisations like SPAB Ireland and the BLFI have many of the best practice skills required. Funding streams from the Heritage Council and the Built Heritage Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage could be explored.

The work could be highlighted on media outlets and on social media outlets. A video record of the work should also be undertaken which would be accessible on the Clare County Council website similar to the Kilkenny Licketstown thatching project which was documented in 2020. <https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/conservation/thatch/>

Organise a day during the summer school for primary and secondary school's to visit to witness traditional craft skills and hear about the repairs to their county's vernacular heritage.

### ***Targeted Grant Support***

Grant support from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for historic buildings is limited to protected structures and structures in Architectural Conservation Areas, under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS). This scheme was introduced in the year 2000 and was previously called the National Conservation Grant Scheme (NCGS). The funding is also quite limited and has not regained the levels of 2008/2009.

One way to target funding towards vernacular buildings would be to give them an added weighting under the existing marking scheme. While these buildings are generally considered to be of Regional significance, it is suggested that as a grouping they are of National significance to the island of Ireland therefore should be assessed as such under the BHIS marking scheme.

There is a vernacular strand to the Historic Structures Fund which was introduced for the first time this year. To qualify you do not have to be a protected structure. However, the fund for this year was €50,000 for the entire country which is wholly inadequate for the needs of the country let alone County Clare. It is hoped that funds for this strand will increase in the future.

The Heritage Council's GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme is an enlightened annual grant scheme for the conservation and repair of traditional farm buildings for farmers in the Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS). Buildings do not have to be a protected structure.

Other local authorities are leading the way in providing funding for the repair of vernacular buildings. The recent thatch grant scheme by Donegal County Council is a great innovation and is to be welcomed. A similar scheme for thatch and flagstone roofs should be investigated for Clare County Council.

<https://www.donegalcoco.ie/culture/heritage/heritagenews/thatchrepairgrantsscheme/>

The bottom line is that significantly more funding is required to tackle this issue. Planning policies, raising awareness, training etc. is absolutely important but grant support is key to assisting house owners. The repair of these roofs is a specialist job. It costs significantly more money to repair these roofs than to remove and put on a cheap artificial slate roof. The additional costs must be offset by grant support otherwise the continued loss of these roofs will continue apace.

It also should be noted that the myriad of grant schemes can be confusing for building owners, especially the elderly. To reach people, a short brochure should be drawn up to publicise information on Heritage Council and Clare County Council grant schemes with owners of vernacular houses in mind by direct mail, local radio and newspapers, farming organisations and press or notices in public places such as shops and churches.

### ***National Strategy for Vernacular Heritage 2021***

This recently issued document is a welcome intervention from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Several of the actions could be the necessary game changers for the future protection, maintenance and support of our vulnerable cultural asset. The document is built around the following three themes: understanding our built vernacular heritage; minding our built vernacular heritage and handing on our built vernacular heritage.

There are actions around training and building skills which are an important step to ensuring that these buildings survive into the future. In particular Actions 10-12:

- *Action 10: Assess the current and future needs of vernacular building Craftspeople*
- *Action 11: Assess current training in vernacular building conservation and repair and facilitate enhanced training*
- *Action 12: Establish a centre for vernacular building skills, materials and research*

This new strategy hopefully will result in additional funding be made available to support custodians of our built vernacular heritage. Informed advice and skilled crafts people supported by suitable grant funding is the way forward. The following statement from the document outlines a situation for us to aim for: *The ideal, for which we need to strive, is a situation where vernacular buildings are owned, occupied and used by sympathetic owners, and assisted by local authorities, advisors, builders and others, with all parties being well versed in, or at least open to, good vernacular conservation practice and, furthermore, backed*

*up by an appropriate level of grant assistance with flexibility of timescales for completion of works, and the ready availability of vernacular materials and traditional skills (page 61).*

### **Conclusion**

County Clare has a rich inheritance of built vernacular heritage. Many of these buildings are disappearing annually but there is still cause for hope. The stone is still available for conservation and repair work. There are still a high number of surviving houses thus allowing for proactive measures to be undertaken by the Local Authority and the State. However action must be undertaken at a local level and national level to protect this aspect of our unique built vernacular heritage.