

Littleton Bog Experience

Co. Tipperary



Feasibility Study



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary County Council

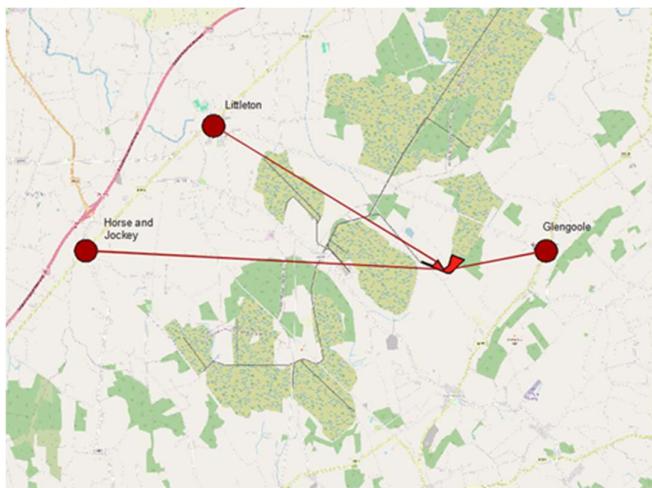
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This executive summary provides an overview of the feasibility study for development of the Littleton Bog Experience in Derryvella, Co. Tipperary. Littleton Bog is situated within the Failte Ireland Ireland's Ancient East regional brand.



The project aims to deliver an outdoor active in nature destination serving both visitors and the local community.

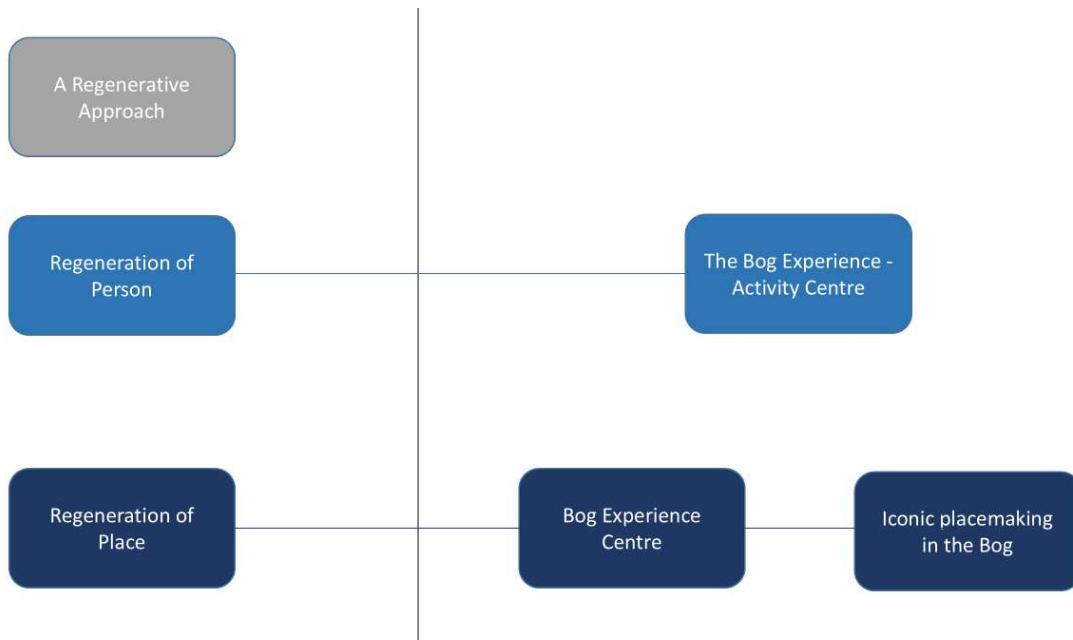
Key features of the proposed development include:

- Bog Experience Visitor Centre incorporating interpretative exhibits, café, facilities for walkers and cyclists, educational programming, connectivity to walking and cycling trails.
- Bog Experience Activity Centre, a commercially operated adventure and outdoor activity site.
- Iconic Placemaking Installation.

The estimated cost for delivery of the Bog Experience is €14.24 million.

In accordance with Bord na Móna's land use strategy and the strategic intent of the company, support for this or any potential project on its lands is facilitated on the basis that the project will coexist with other developments or potential developments both commercial or recreational. Any potential development should be easily incorporated into the wider bog complex and should recognise its co-existence with developments such as the Derryvella lake, the Littleton Labyrinth and the Bruckana windfarm as well as any other potential future developments.

Thematic Approach



The thematic approach for the Littleton Bog Experience is inspired by the theme of regeneration. The project will deliver a low impact experience with community at the heart of the development. Littleton Bog will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of local villages and towns. It will provide opportunities for economic development in tourism business and ancillary services.

Regeneration of the visitor is delivered through participation in outdoor recreation. Opportunities range from wellness programming, walking and cycling trails to high adrenaline activities all delivered in the peatland setting. Regeneration of place is delivered through the repurposing of the bog's peatlands while raising environmental awareness and education to visitors.

Experience Concept

The V.I.C.E. Model of Sustainable Tourism Development has been applied throughout the concept developed. The visitor journey is explained across three distinct aspects to the site:

1. Bog Experience Centre
2. Iconic Placemaking in the Bog
3. Bog Experience Activity Centre

Concept Visuals



Projected Visitor Numbers

Cumulative Visitor Numbers (Years 1-15)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 1-15
Littleton Bog Site	120,000	122,400	124,848	127,345	129,892	2,024,355
Promotable Visitors	79,750	81,702	84,064	86,117	87,839	1,378,430
Local Users	40,250	40,698	40,784	41,228	42,052	645,925
Activity Centre	50,000	51,000	52,020	53,060	54,122	843,566
Visitor Centre	70,000	71,400	72,828	74,285	75,770	1,180,789

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

In the first five years of operation 624,500 visitors are projected to be attracted to the Littleton Bog. This is comprised of 260,200 visitors who will visit the activity centre while the visitor centre is projected to attract 364,300 visitors over the first five years.

Projections show a modest annual increase in visitor numbers over a 15-year period. Provision has been made in year six for an increase in visitor numbers based on product and experience reinvestment at the site.

The Littleton Bog site is projected to attract in excess of 2.0 million visitors over 15 years. In this 15-year period the activity centre is projected to attract 843,000 visitors while the visitor centre is estimated to attract 1.18 million visitors over the same period.

Economic Impact of Promotable Visitors

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 1-15
Total Promotable Visitors	79,750	81,702	84,064	86,117	87,839	1,378,430
Total Domestic Visitors	71,775	73,532	75,658	77,505	79,055	1,238,189
Total International Visitors	7,975	8,170	8,406	8,612	8,784	140,240
Annual Bednights	6,750	7,242	7,387	8,437	9,147	151,302
Direct Promotable Visitor Expenditure	€2,432,500	€2,576,112	€2,712,454	€2,909,010	€3,080,201	€52,382,197

Projected economic impact

Exchequer Returns (based on direct visitor expenditure)	€773,535	€819,204	€862,560	€925,065	€979,504	€16,657,539
Exchequer Returns (based on total expenditure impact)	€1,624,424	€1,720,38	€1,811,377	€1,942,637	€2,056,958	€34,980,831
Annual Direct Employment	29	31	33	35	37	-

In the first year of opening promotable visitors to the Littleton Bog Experience are projected to generate €2.4 million in direct visitor expenditure. Direct expenditure does not include expenditure by visitors on entry to the activity centre. Direct expenditure is projected to directly sustain 29 jobs in the local economy in year one.

Direct expenditure is projected to generate €0.77 million for the Exchequer. Total expenditure impact in year one is projected to generate €1.6 million for the Exchequer when the effects of indirect and induced impacts are considered.

Over a 15-year period there is a projected €52.4 million in direct expenditure by promotable visitors to Littleton Bog. Exchequer Returns based on direct expenditure are projected to be €16.7 million over 15 years. Exchequer Returns based on total expenditure impact are projected to be €35.0 million over the same period.

Outdoor Activity Centre – Outline Revenue Projections

The following potential revenue sources have been identified for the Bog Experience Centre:

Ticket sales

Revenue to the adventure centre generated through annual visitor numbers projected to the activity centre. Assumed ticket prices have been developed based on a review of pricing at similar sites in Ireland. Assumptions used in the estimated include discounted prices for children and group bookings.

Café revenue

Revenue generated through an assumed 80% of adventure centre visitors and 30% of visitor centre visitors going to the café.

Bike Hire

Revenue generated through bike hire by 10% of promotable visitors to the visitor centre.

Educational Courses

Delivery of a programme of one-day courses to corporate groups and interest groups over a period of five months of the year.

	Year 1 (€)	Year 2 (€)	Year 3 (€)	Year 4 (€)	Year 5 (€)
Activity Centre Ticket Revenue	1,358,945	1,386,124	1,413,846	1,442,123	1,470,966
Café Revenue	276,940	282,479	288,128	293,891	299,769
Bike Rental	68,234	70,417	73,496	75,818	77,334
Course Programming	150,000	153,750	157,594	161,534	165,572
TOTAL REVENUE (EX VAT)	1,854,119	1,892,770	1,933,065	1,973,366	2,013,641

Based on projected visitor numbers to the activity centre there is a projected €1.36 million in ticket sales in year one. Café revenue is projected to be €277,000 in year one. Revenue generated through activity centre visitors is projected at €182,000. A further €95,000 in café revenue is generated through visitor centre visitors.

Bike hire by visitors to the visitor centre is projected to generate €68,000 in year one. The programme of educational courses is projected to generate €150,000 in year one of opening. Total projected revenue in year one is €1.85 million. In year two the increase in visitor numbers is projected to generate €1.89 million increasing to €2.01 million in year five.

SECTION 1: Introduction and Overview

This Section of the report presents the general background to the Feasibility Study in terms of:

- 1.1 Overview
- 1.2 Methodology
- 1.3 A Regenerative Approach
- 1.4 Tourism Context
- 1.5 Just Transition



1.1 Overview

This study includes an analysis of the feasibility and associated business plan for the development of a Bog Experience & Activity Centre in Derryvella, Co. Tipperary. The site is in ownership of Bord na Móna.

As part of the process, a site review, a series of local consultations, international benchmarking, national competitive analysis, examination of best practice and global trends, local needs analysis, discussions with industry experts, an assessment of alignment with strategic projects such as the Midlands Trail Network, regional product gap analysis and the testing of the strength of 'Bushcraft' as a motivating experience by itself were all examined. This resulted in a final concept being agreed on, hereby called 'The Littleton Bog Experience'.

In accordance with Bord na Móna's land use strategy and the strategic intent of the company, support for this or any potential project on its lands is facilitated on the basis that the project will coexist with other developments or potential developments both commercial or recreational. Any potential development should be easily incorporated into the wider bog complex and should recognise its co-existence with developments such as the Derryvella lake, the Littleton Labyrinth and the Bruckana windfarm as well as any other potential future developments.

The feasibility analysis finds the site / concept is only viable with the inclusion of a commercial / revenue generating element. This commercial component is required to sustain the overall site operations and the community elements. It will ensure the site realises its socio-economic potential for the community. It is acknowledged the inclusion of commercial operations within the overall operational model will necessitate the normal marketing and disposal process of the site in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This is acknowledged as a disposal process either by sale or lease on the open market as per the code of practice and subject to internal Bord na Móna approval by the senior executive and/or the board depending on valuation. The publication of this feasibility study does not mean by extension that Bord na Móna have approved any development until the full disposals process and internal approvals are completed.

1.2 Methodology

A comprehensive body of work was carried out to analyse the feasibility of developing the Littleton Bog Experience. Following initial consultations with Tipperary County Council, an onsite review of the site and a series of consultations with key stakeholders took place. The methodology included;

- Initial consultations took place with Tipperary County Council and project partners.
- An onsite review of the location was undertaken to understand the geography, potential access points, potential tourism developments and to gain an understanding of the history associated with the bog.
- A consultations phase was then carried out with key stakeholders to determine potential opportunities associated with the Littleton Bog Experience.
- A national competitive analysis study was carried out to understand what competition exists locally and nationally, and to gain insight into their activities.
- International benchmarking was carried out to determine what best practice looked like and to provide inspiration for potential site developments.
- Discussion took place with industry experts including bushcraft experts and outdoor activity experts to determine next steps in terms of potential tourism developments. This included the testing of 'Bushcraft' as a motivating experience by itself, as well as gaining insights into a multi-activity / purpose approach.

1.3 A Regenerative Approach

The concept for the Littleton Bog Experience is inspired by the theme of regeneration. It focuses on the opportunity to leave a regenerative impact on the Littleton site and become a socio-economic stimulus for the surrounding communities.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

Over many generations the bog sustained the local communities. This regenerative focus on the site allows for the regeneration of place and community, central to the site concept. It will tell the bog story and through a variety of experiences that respect the biodiversity of the site and reflect the historical and socio-cultural significance of the boglands.

It adopts two regenerative themes:

- 1) Regeneration of Place
- 2) Regeneration of Person

The telling of the bog story will be through a mix of onsite experiences focused on the theme of the bog. It will provide an outdoor experience hub focused on an innovative delivery of wellbeing activity and regenerative experiences. It will combine outdoor activities with a location for learning and historical interpretation of the bog story.

The site will play a significant role in the socio-economic regeneration of local communities. It will have an immediate community triangle impact on Littleton, the Horse & Jockey, and Glengoole. The broader tourism impacts will be spread across the rest of the county ensuring the Littleton Bog Experience achieves its tourism transformative objective.



Settlement triangle



Littleton Bog Experience Concept Proposals

- 1. Gateway Type 4 (MTN-T)
- 2. Iconic Placemaking Installation
- 3. Bog Experience Activity Centre
- 4. Bog Experience Visitor Centre
- 5. Bog Experience Visitor Centre Parking
- 6. Existing Shared Walkway/Cycleway (Littleton) Labyrinth
- 7. Shared Walkway/Cycleway (MTN-T)
- 8. Lough Dhoire Bhille Car Park & Loop
- 9. Gateway & Car Park Type 2 (MTN-T)
- 10. Bog Wetlands
- 11. Minor Local Road

Proposals shown within this report are indicative only. They are intended to demonstrate the general aspirations for the Littleton Bog Experience site and the components expected to achieve the vision and should not be taken as part of any detailed design. All proposals will be dependent on further engineering, environmental and traffic/transport assessments.

1.4 Tourism Context

Tipperary is a centrally located county that is easily accessible from all main access ports and centres of population. It is home to a number of iconic attractions such as the Rock of Cashel and Cahir Castle. Further notable attractions include Ormond Castle, Swiss Cottage and Hore Abbey. The county possesses a strong outdoors portfolio with well-established walking trails, accredited Blueways including the Suir Blueway and Lough Derg Blueway and water sports facility such as the Slalom Course in Clonmel. The heritage and outdoor product base are key drivers for existing visitor demand. They also represent the basis for future tourism development through their ability to grow the value of tourism and disperse visitors across the county. Despite this diverse product base, the county is largely considered a transient destination with day trips dominating the current tourism performance of the county.

The southern area of Tipperary generates the highest levels of visitor footfall with the Rock of Cashel attracting 357,273 visitors in 2023. Cahir Castle welcomed 85,014 visitors in 2023 with other heritage sites such as Hore Abbey (63,738 visitors), and Swiss Cottage (30,126 visitors) also generating significant levels of footfall. The development of the Suir Blueway has added considerably to the destination's ability to attract a new mix of audiences i.e. families, outdoor enthusiast.

An assessment of accommodation within an approximate 30km radius of the Littleton site suggests an available bed stock of almost 600 beds and 262 bedrooms.

Accommodation Availability with 30km of the site

Name	Rating*	Rooms	Bedspace	Location
Anner Hotel	4	93	237	Thurles
Hayes Hotel	3	26	54	Thurles
Horse & Jockey Hotel	4	66	148	Horse & Jockey
Cashel Palace	5	42	88	Cashel
Bailey's Hotel	4	20	42	Cashel
Templemore Arms	3	15	28	Templemore
		262	597	

Failte Ireland¹ lists five hotels located within approximately 30km reach of the proposed Littleton site. There is limited other registered accommodation in the area. Failte Ireland lists five Bed and Breakfast properties in areas around Cashel and Thurles providing 20 rooms. There are three Welcome Standards properties between the two towns providing seven rooms. There is one camping and caravan site in Cashel with 24 pitches.

The Littleton Bog Experience will be in Derryvella, Co. Tipperary with the Ireland's Ancient East regional brand. The site is located on the doorstep of the Horse & Jockey Hotel, a 67-bedroom hotel approximately 8.3km outside Thurles. It is within close proximity (less than a 20-minute drive) to the Rock of Cashel. Holycross Abbey is a key driver of tourism traffic to the area while Lough Derg, Nenagh and Roscrea are easily accessible by visitors to the area. Roscrea Castle has recently undergone a significant investment programme further supporting the tourism offering. While Lough Derg is located in Failte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands regional brand it provides a comparable 'active in nature' experience to what is proposed for the Littleton Bog Experience.

¹ Failte Ireland Accommodation Supply Dashboard (as of Jan 2024) – accessed 20.11.2024

Visitor attractions performance (2019-2023) (source: *Failte Ireland*)

Attraction	County	Region	2019	2022	2023
Rock of Cashel	Tipperary	Ireland's Ancient East	362,657	278,803	357,273
Cahir Castle	Tipperary	Ireland's Ancient East	87,333	70,692	85,014
Hore Abbey	Tipperary	Ireland's Ancient East	75,380	59,017	63,738
Swiss Cottage	Tipperary	Ireland's Ancient East	26,447	31,353	30,126
Ormond Castle	Tipperary	Ireland's Ancient East	7,364	4,791	5,124
Roscrea Castle	Tipperary	Ireland's Hidden Heartlands	16,900	9,712	7,596

According to Fáilte Ireland data (2023) domestic visitors to Tipperary made 326,000 trips to the county accounting for 606,000 nights, spending €54.2 million². The most recent county-level Fáilte Ireland data for overseas data (2019) shows Tipperary attracted 194,000 overseas visitors, spending €52 million³. Fáilte Ireland visitor attraction data for 2023 suggest visitor numbers to Tipperary have returned to close to pre-Covid performance levels (see table 1.1), with visitor numbers returning to similar results seen in 2019. In that period, there has been continued investment in the county's outdoor product and supporting experiences. Notable projects include accredited Blueways, Trails, the Lough Derg Visitor Experience Development Plan, Carrick-on-Suir Rural Regeneration and Cashel Destination Development have been contributing factors in growing the appeal of Tipperary in the domestic and international market.

Walking and outdoor adventure are key drivers in attracting visitors to Tipperary. In 2023, 54% of domestic holidaymakers in Ireland took part in walking activities⁴. A further 12% took part in hiking activities, while 8% went cycling. More than 1.7 million overseas visitors to Ireland took part in hiking or cross-country walking, equating to approximately 26% of overseas visitors. Approximately 4% of all overseas visitors took part in cycling while in Ireland.

Fáilte Ireland has developed the Travel Motivations Framework to categorise domestic travel motivations in Ireland. Ireland's Ancient East region spans several motivations and travel occasions, capturing almost a third of domestic travel. While Exploration is the main motivator, Adventure, Time Out, Bonding and Social Energy are also reasons for travelling in the region.

² *Irish Resident Travel by County, 2023, Fáilte Ireland*

³ *Fáilte Ireland Survey of Overseas Travellers (2019)*

⁴ *Failte Ireland Key Tourism Facts 2023 (Version 1 – Oct 2024)*

1.5 Just Transition

Fáilte Ireland has been tasked with the administration of a €68 million EU Just Transition Fund for Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme over the period of 2023-2026. The objective of the scheme is to invest in sustainable tourism development in the Midlands with the aim of diversifying the regional economy by creating jobs, sustaining communities, supporting habitats and biodiversity. The Trail Network Development Scheme in particular supports outdoor recreation development and Littleton's close proximity to the midlands can leverage from the trail development network there. The Just Transition Fund's investment will enhance existing product development and entice start-up businesses to come into the tourism market.

The two main elements of the overall scheme are;

- €38m towards the diversification of the regional economy through the sustainable development of tourism;
- €30m towards the regeneration and repurposing of peatlands through the development of a network of trails.

The overall scheme will be delivered through a range of funding programmes, which will run in parallel between now and the end of 2026, as follows:

A: Trail Network Development Scheme (delivered primarily through Bord na Móna)

B: Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for SMEs

C & D: Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Local Authorities and certain State Agencies

E: Appointment of County Tourism Activators to Local Authorities

F: Enterprise Supports Scheme⁵

The Trail Network Development Scheme supporting development and enhancement of outdoor recreation is of particular relevance to the project. This scheme seeks to develop and repurpose former industrial peatlands to support a fully accessible network of walking and cycling trails. The ambition of the scheme is to establish the Midlands as a compelling destination for outdoor activities. In turn this is anticipated to support new job through new tourism start-up businesses and ancillary services. Littleton Bog's proximity to the trail network will enable the site to leverage from the network while enhancing the wider trails tourism product.

The Midlands Trails Network comprises a regenerative tourism project which proposes to:

- Deliver a network of connected walking and cycling trails across the Midlands.
- Provide trails which will interconnect with the existing and emerging arterial Greenway network, including the repurposing of former narrow gauge rail track beds, culverts and underpasses.
- Include related infrastructure and enhancing the experience e.g., reimagine industrial bridges formerly used to transport peat to factories across the Just Transition Fund (JTF) place-making and art installations; signage and interpretation to create a sense of connectivity across the towns and villages, bogs and waterways of the JTF region.
- Include for the construction of appropriate car and / or bicycle parking at Gateways for the proposed recreational development, and the installation of surface water drainage, signage, fencing and all associated site works and relevant ancillary services.

The Midlands Trail Network will consist of a serviced network of inclusive off-road trails that enables local people and visitors to explore the Midlands region by bike, e-bike and on foot. The network will connect rural settlements to open spaces, traversing peatlands, waterways and other habitats and linking to heritage sites and visitor attractions

⁵ About the EU Just Transition Fund, Fáilte Ireland

SECTION 2: Site Appraisal

This Section of the Report provides an overview and appraisal of the key influences on development of the Littleton Bog site in relation to:

- 2.1 Landscape Context
- 2.2 Peatland Restoration
- 2.3 Human Influences
- 2.4 Cultural & Heritage Context
- 2.5 Transport and Access
- 2.6 Planning Context
- 2.7 Environmental Considerations

The appraisals provide the basis for assessing the Environmental, Access, Engineering and Archaeological constraints and the Planning requirements in relation to required infrastructure works and any other statutory considerations relating to the feasibility of the proposals.



2.1 Landscape Context

County Tipperary lies to the south of the Irish Midlands within an area characterized by a range of distinct landscape types, shaped by both natural processes and human activity. The Plains of Tipperary extend across most of the central part of the county and are working landscapes where the main settlements and services are located, as well as large continuous areas used for pasture, tillage and peat harvesting. This landscape also contains major tributaries of the River Shannon, creating fertile floodplains and valleys, as well as numerous historic sites.

The Peatlands and Wet Mixed Farmland landscape type occurs in separate compartments within the plains. Within these areas there is a lower intensity of farming, resulting in fewer houses and roads, and extensive tracts of peatlands. The landscape is generally flat or undulating and open, strongly influenced by peat extraction and interspersed with raised bogs, pockets of arable land, rough grazing, commercial coniferous forestry and developing scrub vegetation. The open character and natural vegetation of raised bogs contrast markedly with the surrounding farmed lands.

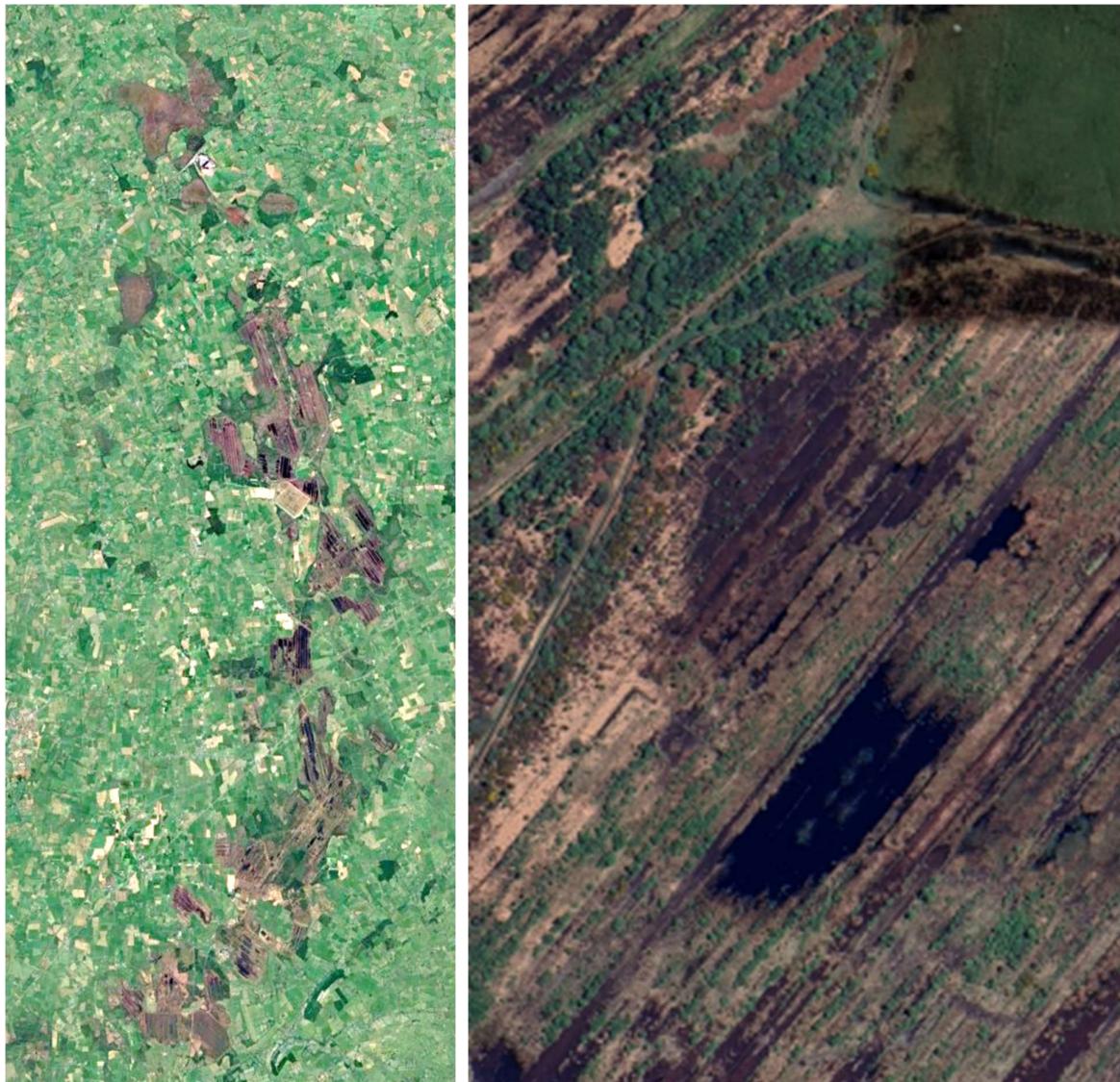
The bogs are also part of a larger network of wetlands across the region, contributing to the ecological diversity and supporting a range of rare plant and animal species. To the north and south of the bogs the land rises abruptly, including the limestone hills of the Galtee Mountains and the Slievenamon range, offering dramatic vistas and often utilized for forestry, recreation, and conservation.

The peatlands cover a significant extent of the Tipperary plains, predominantly consisting of raised bogs and cutover areas. However, much of this has been altered by peat extraction, agriculture, forestry, and drainage, leaving only a small fraction of peatlands in their natural state. Raised Bogs are the dominant type, forming over thousands of years in lowland areas. Partially decomposed vegetation sank into marshland within the wide plain, forming layers of fibrous peat which eventually decayed into amorphous organic material, gradually covering the area in a dome-shaped, 'raised' bog. Raised bogs in their natural state perform an important role in biodiversity, water management, and carbon sequestration. Cutover peatlands occur in large areas where peat has been harvested, mainly for fuel and horticulture. Many cutover areas are now being rehabilitated or repurposed for conservation, wind farms, or rewilding projects.

The raised bogs are some of Ireland's most important habitats. Formed over millennia by plants decomposing without oxygen, healthy raised bogs provide a home for unique plants and wildlife. They also deliver a range of ecosystem services that benefit people, such as regulating carbon sequestration, water filtration and flood mitigation, as well as cultural services such as providing wilderness landscapes of distinctive visual quality and with unique opportunities for outdoor leisure and recreation.

Where commercial turf extraction has taken place, the landscape is largely devoid of vegetation and presents a uniform exposed surface of peat with an industrial character. The prospect of a potentially transformative solution for these degraded, complex landscapes, offer significant opportunities for emissions reduction, peat stabilisation and biodiversity and recreation enhancement at a significant landscape scale.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

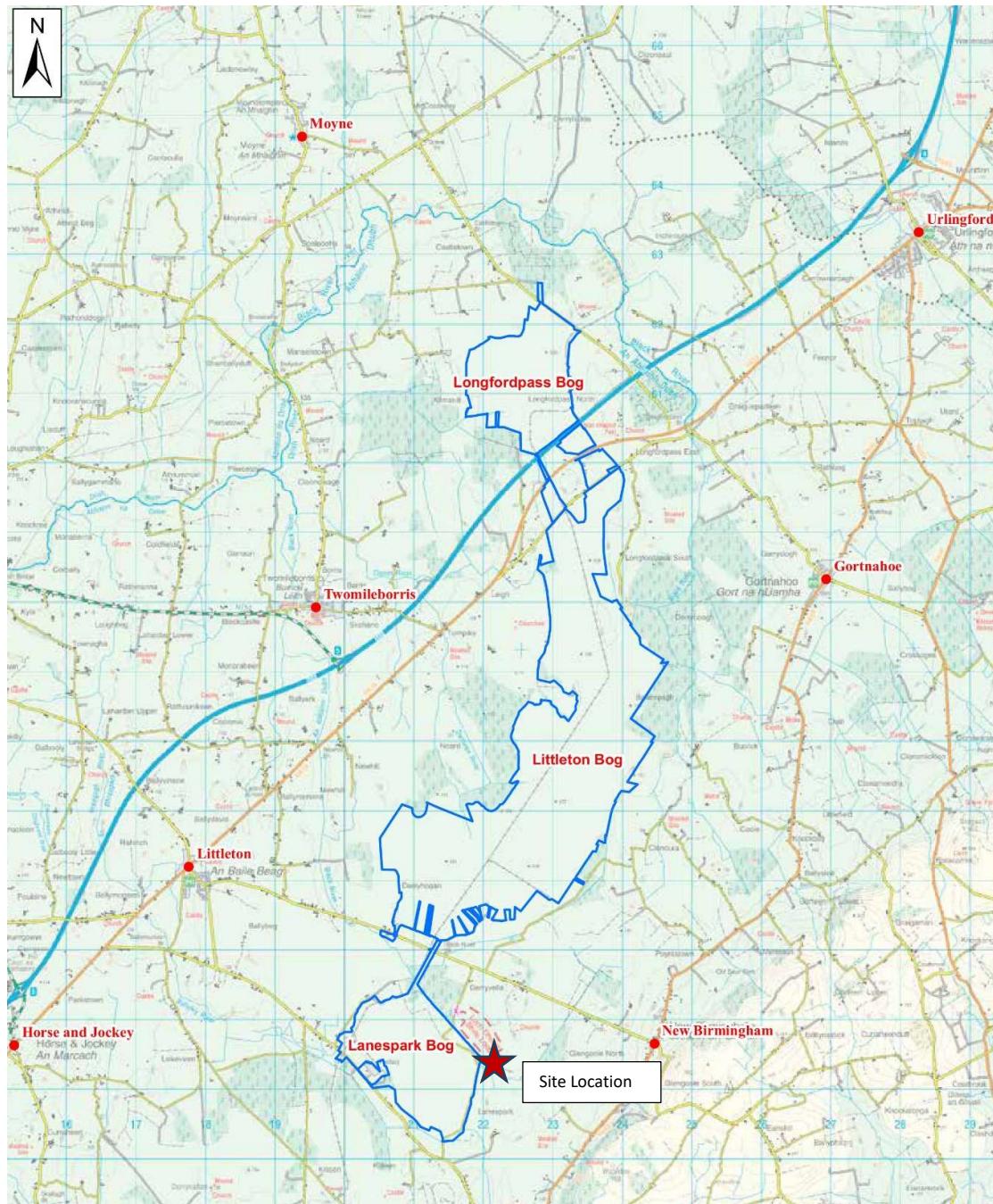


Distinctive landscape pattern of the Tipperary boglands

Littleton Bog

Littleton Bog forms part of the substantial complex of peatlands located to the south of the Midlands, stretching from Longfordpass Bog north of the M8 to Lanespark Bog in the south. The site of the Littleton Bog Experience bog as allocated by Bord na Móna lies at the southern end of this peatlands complex, in an expansive plain to the north-west of the Slieve Ardagh Hills. The northern slopes of Slieve Ardagh form a steep escarpment that overlooks the area, providing an impressive backdrop to the Littleton peatlands.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary



Regional location of the Littleton Bog Experience site

The Littleton peatlands originally comprised bog, marsh, quicksand and ponds formed over thousands of years. Traditionally, these areas supported species such as sphagnum mosses, heathers, and sedges, essential for the natural peat-forming process, as well as contributing to the unique ecological system of the area. The site retains a varied mix of vegetation, primarily associated with raised bogs and cutaway bog habitats, including a variety of wetland plant species which thrive in the wet, acidic conditions. Over time, the bog has experienced extensive disturbance from human activity, including industrial-scale peat cutting and commercial forestry, which has altered most of the natural plant communities and the appearance of the landscape.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

Today the area comprises a mosaic of peatland habitats including both naturally colonised areas and some rehabilitated wetlands. While some small sections of production-related cutaway are already re-vegetating with typical pioneer cutaway habitats, large areas remain unvegetated bare peat. Other areas are relatively dry due to higher ground and lesser-disturbed site conditions.



View from the Slieve Ardagh Hills towards Littleton Bog

Since the 1950s, Littleton Bog had been commercially worked by Bórd na Móna as an industrial peatland. A briquette factory was developed in 1981, and other infrastructure associated with the extraction of the peat includes several trackways and narrow-gauge railways.

Littleton Bog now contains a range of bogs at various stages of cutaway and rehabilitation. The extensive areas of cutover bog combined with remnants of raised bog supporting dense tracts of birch scrub, gorse and heather, form a distinctive wilderness landscape of regenerating character. The linear patterns of worked bogland strips separated by narrow drainage channels and remnant trackways present a highly managed landscape contrasting with the surviving areas of raised bog and the surrounding farmlands.





Vegetation pattern of Littleton Bog in vicinity of the Bog Experience Site

Derryvella Lake

Approximately 1km to the west of the Littleton Bog Experience site, Derryvella Lake (Loch Doire Mheille) has recently been transformed by Slievardagh Rural Development in conjunction with Bórd na Móna into an area for amenity and nature conservation. An artificial lake for angling was created in 1999, and two fishing huts and wheel-chair accessible fishing bays were installed, as well as picnic tables and a car park. There are also two walks, one around the lake shore and a longer Loop Walk incorporating parts of the former peat workings.

The changed management of the site has encouraged a variety of grasses and native wildflowers to develop, enhancing habitat for insects, mammals, birds and the general bio-diversity and recreational value of the area.





Derryvella Lake (Loch Doire Mheille)

2.2 Peatland Restoration

Peatlands are specialised ecosystems, that comprise a range of habitats and species that provide complex and unique areas of high biodiversity. Over the past centuries peatlands have been drained extensively. The traditional use has been to produce domestic turf, with large scale afforestation and drainage for agriculture in the 1900s. From the 1960s, technological advances led to industrial scale milling of the bogs, with peat harvested annually for energy (peat-fired electricity and domestic briquette production), horticulture (compost and growing media), and small amounts for animal bedding.

Loss of peatland diversity is a major issue and continues through the destruction and fragmentation of habitats. Activities that threaten peatland biodiversity include development, overgrazing, afforestation, private and industrial peat extraction, horticultural peat extraction, illegal dumping, heavy recreational use by mountain bikers and quad bikes, and the spread of invasive species.

With the cessation of industrial peat extraction in the Littleton Bog Group, there has been an important shift toward rewetting and biodiversity restoration. Much of the Littleton Bog is wetland, although it includes a significant portion of dry, cutover land. The drier areas that have been subjected to peat extraction over the decades, and the cutover areas where peat has been removed and the land has dried, are now a key component in various restoration projects.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary



Cutaway bog re-wetting

Since the 1990s, large areas of bog have been emerging as cutaway and several organizations, such as Bord na Móna, Coillte, and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), are involved in significant restoration projects. With the shift from peat harvesting to rehabilitation, Bord na Móna are restoring these cutaway bogs by developing replacement wet peatland systems (wetlands and wet woodland systems) that provide a range of habitats, other than the traditional use for peat production or reclaimed land for agriculture and forestry.

Comprehensive rehabilitation programme of the Littleton Bog complex is part of the Just Transition programme, which focuses on transforming former peat extraction sites into environmentally sustainable landscapes. This programme is part of a broader €108 million national initiative aimed at restoring thousands of hectares of bogland across Ireland. The rehabilitation project for Littleton Bog aims to promote native woodland growth on the drier cutaway areas of Littleton Bog while rewetting other sections. A Native Woodland Project has also been developed in collaboration with Coillte to enhance biodiversity in areas unsuitable for rewetting. The project involves planting species suited to peatland edges, such as birch, willow, and alder, creating a habitat mosaic that balances forested and boggy areas. Approximately 200 hectares of the Littleton Bog will be managed to establish native woodlands as part of a long-term strategy to turn cutaway bogs into biodiversity-rich landscapes.



Templetuohy and Littleton bog

This will result in an extensive network of replacement peatland habitats, wetland and woodland systems, that will provide an expansive landscape for species and habitats that have been otherwise marginalised by agriculture, forestry and peat production. The new landscape will also provide a range of other environmental benefits such as water filtration/attenuation and reduction of carbon emissions from the formerly drained peat production lands.

Such projects aim to enhance biodiversity, reduce carbon emissions, and transform the bog into a natural reserve offering major ecological and recreational benefits.

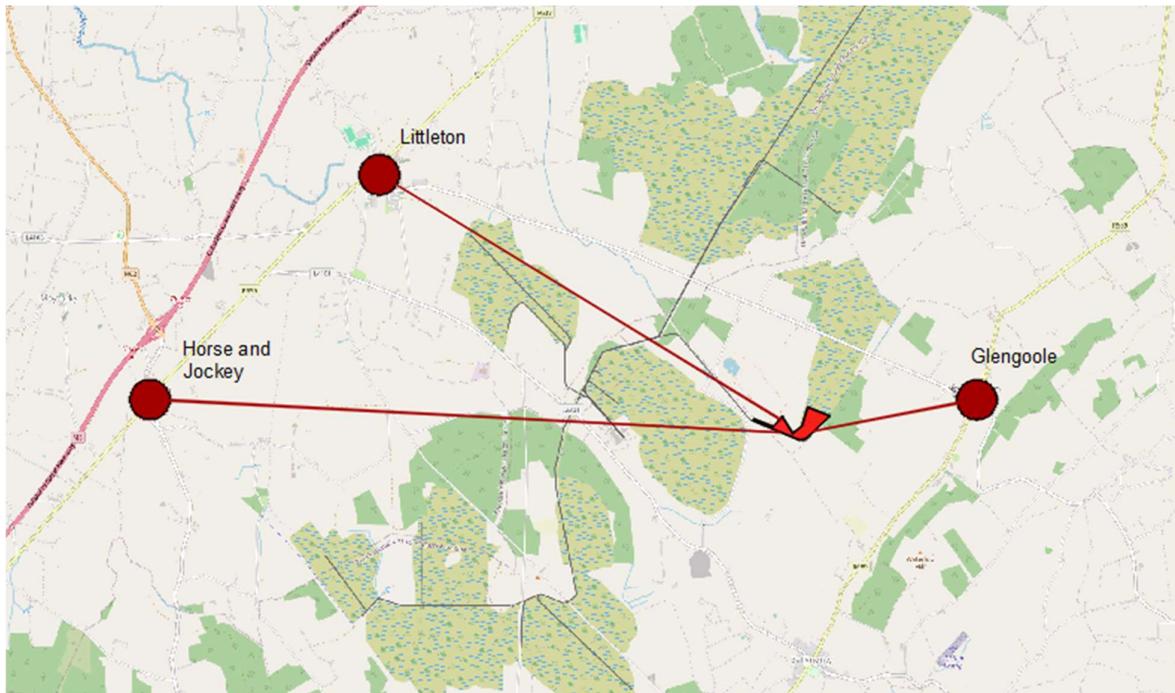
2.3 Human Influences

Settlement Pattern

The remote character of the Littleton Bog landscape remains intact today due to the limited road access around and through the bogland and the lack of rural based dwellings. The peatlands have historically shaped the settlement patterns, often acting as natural boundaries or barriers. Littleton Bog, as a significant natural feature, would have been less densely populated historically due to its less hospitable terrain.

The settlement pattern around the bog is predominantly rural and typical of the region, comprising compact villages on the main road network serving as local hubs, and houses in isolated settings dispersed along local roads on mostly large plots. The pattern is heavily influenced by agriculture, with many households involved in farming. Beyond the peatlands, the farmsteads are spread across the landscape, defined by irregular fields and hedgerows and often located relatively far apart and connected by narrow local roads. There are no grand mansions or 'big houses' in the immediate area.

The site of the Littleton Bog Experience extends to around 9.75ha and is located to the south of the Littleton to Glengoole road in the townland of Derryvella, approximately 5km south-east of Littleton, 1.5km west of Glengoole, and 6.7km east of Horse and Jockey. The three small settlements are mostly residential in function with some services providing for local need.



Settlement location plan

Littleton

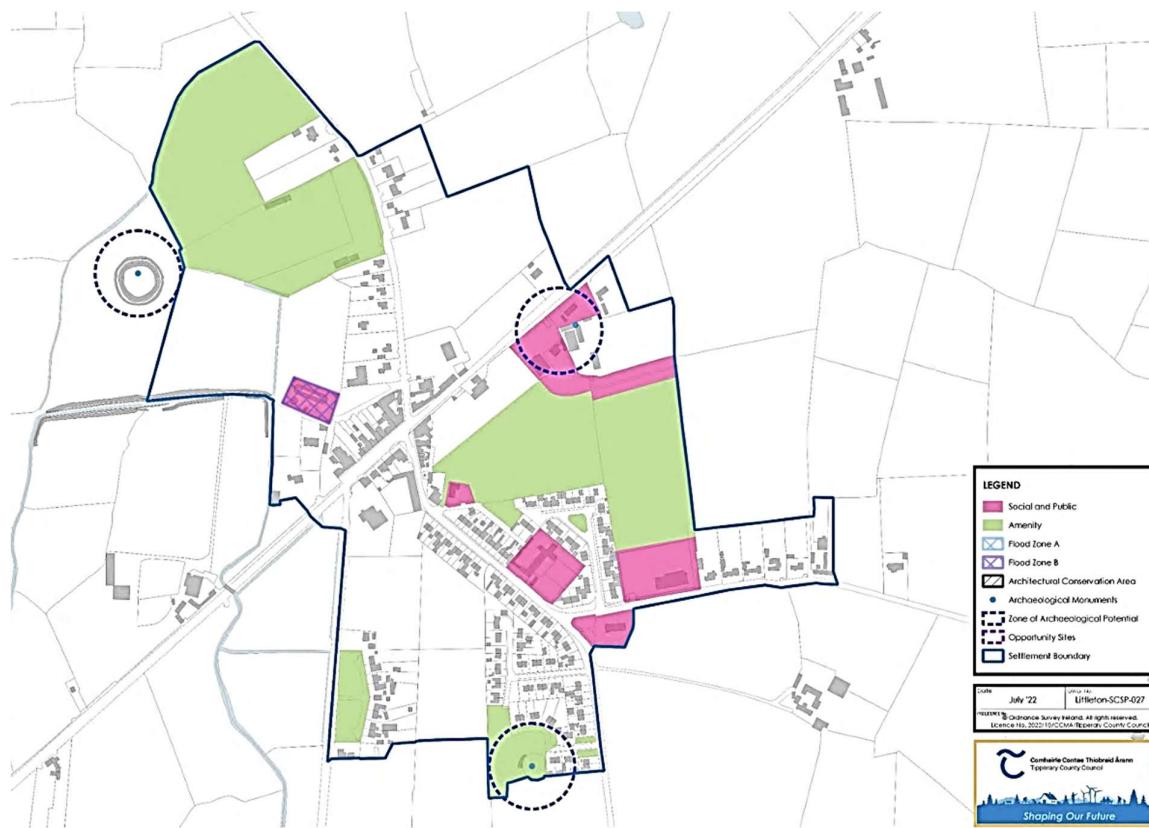
The village of Littleton (An Baile Beag), situated on the Regional Road, R639 between Cashel and Urlingford, is a Service Centre for the local agricultural hinterland, providing a range of social/community and commercial needs for its population, including a number of pubs and shops, a garda station, post office and a creamery/hardware and tractor/machinery parts/servicing, as well as the Moycarkey-Borris Community Centre, a Catholic Church and Church of Ireland, and a Jehovah Witness place of worship. Much of the more recent village housing is located to the south-east of the crossroads. Although close to larger towns such as Thurles, which offers more extensive facilities, Littleton retains a sense of rural self-sufficiency.



Littleton main street and village centre

The main street is broad and defined by traditional 2-storey residential and commercial buildings. It is dominated by traffic, with wide expanses of on-street parking and limited pedestrian appeal or amenity spaces. The ruins of the old Castle/Tower (recorded monument) are located to the rear of the Garda Station. The GAA complex, which includes two large pitches, lies to the north of the village, while the newly built community centre occupies a large site to the south, close to St. Kevin's National School and the Church of Ireland (dating from 1786 and a good example of the 'Board of First Fruits' Gothic Revival style).

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary



Littleton Land Zoning Map, Tipperary County Council

Littleton has a rich cultural heritage. It has always retained strong connections with the workings of Littleton Bog and much of the heritage of the village is associated with the peatlands. Closure of the Lanespark Peat Briquette factory in 2017 had significant effect on the local community, but the village maintains a strong sense of local identity, with events often taking place, including sports events, church activities, and local festivals. It is home to local sporting clubs, and the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) club is central to the social fabric of the village and organizes local sports competitions and social gatherings.

Situated beside a minor road to the south of Littleton is a small 4-storey Ormond tower, noted on Six-Inch First edition maps as 'Ballybeg Castle (in ruins)', together with a nearby ringfort. A gable-mark on the east side of the tower indicates that a 2-storey 17th-century house once adjoined the imposing rectangular structure.



Since 1996 the population of the village has continued to decline, from 544 to 414 persons in 2022 (Census, Small Areas), and during this period there has been very little development within the settlement boundary.

The aim of the Council is to facilitate development to improve the vitality and vibrancy of the village centre, including employment generating developments. It is also recognised that Littleton would benefit from an enhancement scheme to strengthen definition and interest through improved paving, landscaping and street furniture as appropriate (subject to the availability of funding).

Glengoole

To the east of Littleton lies **Glengoole** (*Gleann an Ghuaile*, valley of coal), also known as New Birmingham, a small linear settlement on the R689 Urlingford-Fethard road between Ballynony and Ballysloe, approximately 9km east of Horse and Jockey. The village is in a scenic location at the base of the Slieve Ardagh Hills and has a school, church, public house and community hall. Its Millennium Family Resource Centre delivers a wide range of services to the community reaching all abilities, ages and stages of life. The village has a peaceful, close-knit community with a strong connection to the surrounding agricultural landscape.



Glengoole main street

The village has an interesting social history, as described by Samuel Lewis, in 'A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland' 1837:

"Birmingham (NEW), a village and post-town, in the parish of KILCOOLEY, barony of SLIEVEARDAGH, county of TIPPERARY, and province of MUNSTER, 11 1/2 miles (E. N. E.) from Cashel, and 82 (S. W. by S.) from Dublin; containing 298 inhabitants. This place which is situated at the termination of the mail coach road branching from Littleton, contains about so houses, and is indebted to its origin and name to the late Sir Vere Hunt, Bart., who, struck with its favourable situation contiguous to the coal mines of the Killenaule district, used every effort to raise it into manufacturing importance. For this purpose he obtained patents for one or two weekly markets and twelve fairs, which are now discontinued; and the town, which was the residence of its founder, and is now the property of his son, Sir Aubrey de Vere, Bart., is at present comparatively deserted. It is a constabulary police station; and there is a small prison, to which offenders are committed occasionally by the county magistrates. The parochial R. C. chapel, a large and handsome structure in the later English style, and recently erected, is situated in the village; and there is a school of about 80 or so children."

The 2022 Census (Small Areas) records the population of Glengoole North and Derryvella as 171 persons.

Objectives of the Council for Glengoole include facilitating low density development proposals to meet local housing demands together with the provision of local and community services/facilities and local employment opportunities within the village/settlement boundary; supporting the preparation of an Enhancement Scheme which focuses on entry points to the village and improved definition of the core area by way of paving, street lighting, parking provision, street furniture etc.; and supporting the development of tourism based uses to facilitate the development of Lough Derryvella and the Littleton Bog Complex.



Glengoole Land Zoning Map, Tipperary County Council



Church of St. Patrick & St. Oliver



Houlihan's Bar

Horse and Jockey

The small settlement of Horse and Jockey (*An Marcach*, horseman) is strategically located at one of the traditional crossroads in the heartland of County Tipperary. It lies around 3.5km south-west of Littleton on the R639 road, where it meets the N62 road to Thurles, mid-way between Cork and Dublin and a short distance from Junction 6 of the M8 motorway, which by-passed the village in December 2008.

The village has a more commercial, transient character compared to Littleton and Glengoole due to its strategic location which serves as a key stopover point for travellers. The name 'Horse and Jockey' is likely related to the village's history as a stopping point for travellers and horse-drawn transport.

Within the village there is a hotel, a shop with post office facilities and a garage, tyre centre and car sales. A national school is located 2km beyond the village boundary. It is located on the Dublin-Cork bus corridor and there is a bus stop in the centre of the village.

The Horse & Jockey Hotel is the most significant venue in the village and recognised as one of Ireland's great meeting places for over 250 years. The hotel has recently been extended facilities now include 67 bedrooms, an award-winning restaurant, traditional Irish Bar, two coffee bars, in-house bakery, Conference Centre with 10 meeting rooms and an auditorium for up to 200 delegates, as well as a Leisure Centre that includes a swimming pool, steam room, sauna, jacuzzi, hydro-therapy area and gymnasium. The Horse and Jockey claimed the Gold Medal Awards 'Best 4* Hotel in Ireland' 2024 and the Georgina Campbell 'Best Business Hotel' 2024.

Given its strategic location adjacent to Junction 6 of the M8, and its proximity to the Littleton Bog complex, the Horse and Jockey is ideally located to attract further enterprise and potential employment development.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

In 1980, the 'Derrynaflan Hoard' was discovered about 3km east of Horse and Jockey, on an island of dry land in Liskeveen bog, known locally as 'the Gobán Saor's island'. The hoard of 8th- or 9th-century religious objects is believed to have been secreted during the Viking raids of the 10th and 11th centuries and the site is a significant visitor attraction.

The Objectives of the Council for Horse and Jockey include facilitating low density development proposals to meet local housing demands together with the provision of local and community services/facilities and local employment opportunities within the village/settlement boundary, and the expansion of existing local services and businesses where appropriate and to facilitate the provision of further local employment opportunities. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has identified that some lands within the village are prone to flooding, and that any proposed developments on such lands will need to comply with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DEHLG, 2009).



2.4 Cultural & Historic Context

The peatlands of Tipperary have both cultural and historical significance, particularly in the context of Ireland's rich heritage of bogs and associated rural traditions. The rural economy, settlement patterns and cultural life have been much influenced by the evolution and spread of the peatlands. Peat has provided the main fuel of the rural population for generations, and local communities have continuously harvested the bogs for heating and cooking purposes. Peat cutting was a significant part of local community identity, providing not only fuel but also livelihoods. 'Saving' turf from the edge of bogs by hand-cutting, using the traditional peat spade, or 'sleán', had become a feature of the rural economy by the medieval period. This practice is deeply embedded in rural life and a symbol of traditional, sustainable resource use.

Littleton Bog

Knowledge of the historical significance of Littleton Bog has increased through research and surveys undertaken as part of the peat-milling process. A borehole completed through the peat in Leigh Townland in 1954 showed that the peat was over 7m thick, and sealed by a layer of peat formed after 1700 AD. The pollen counted from the peat in this core provided a continuous record of the vegetation of the vicinity since the end of the last Ice Age. The pollen analysis indicated an expansion of prehistoric settlement and intensification of agriculture around 1800BC, followed by further intensification around 1400BC through active forestry clearance of elm and hazel. Late Bronze Age activity is also revealed through the discovery of two bronze swords. This is the only place in Ireland where such a continuous record has been found. Consequently, the post-glacial stage in Ireland, since the last Ice Age, is termed the 'Littletonian Warm Stage'.

Littleton Bog is an area of significant archaeological interest, particularly due to its role in preserving wooden structures dating back to pre-historic times. Excavations between 2006 and 2008 uncovered over 30 archaeological features, including plank paths, timber and stone tracks, and brushwood trackways, which reflect early human activity in the region. The ancient timber trackways once connected areas of higher, dry ground, but have since become over-whelmed by bog growth. Most of these features date between 3500 and 1600 BC, providing valuable insights into prehistoric settlement and transport in Ireland.



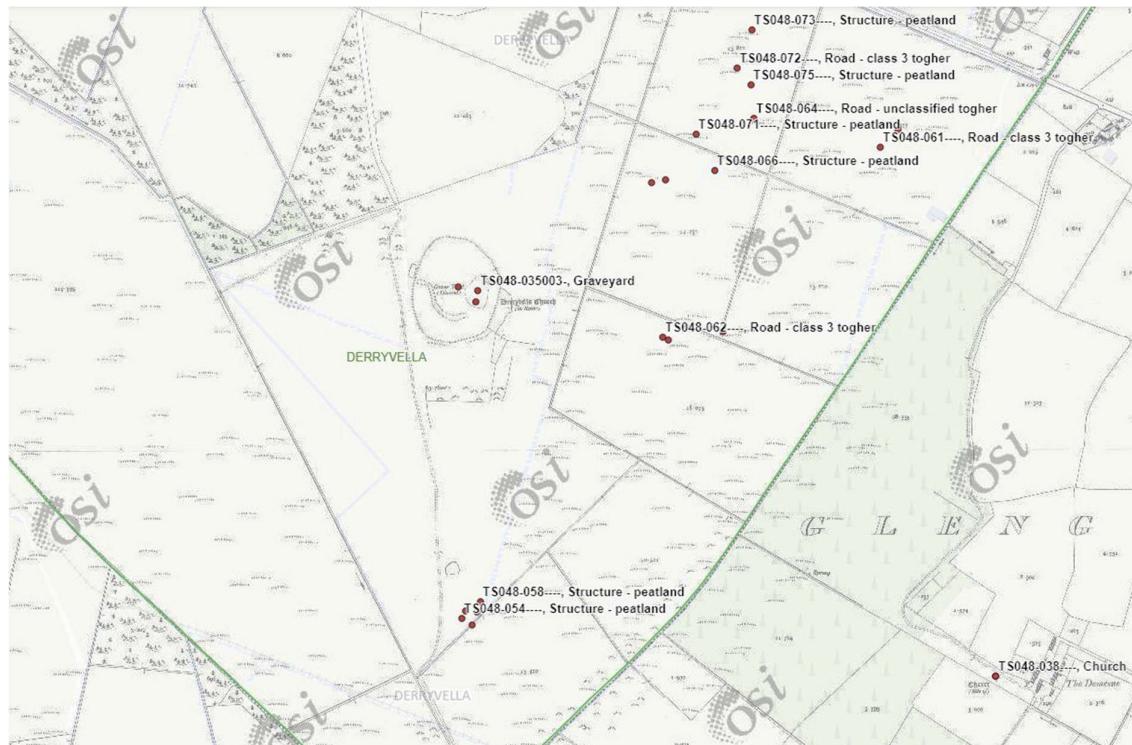
Typical timber trackways

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

Near to the Littleton Bog Experience site lies Derryvella Church. As recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record (TS048-035001-) – *'In grassland on top of a natural rise of ground surrounded on three sides by Derryvella Bog with good views in all directions'. The site has been associated with the monastery of Doire Meille, 'founded by St Tigernach whose feast day was on the 4th November and was regarded as the second oldest churchyard in Ireland and one which the pope is obliged to mention once a year (O'Flanagan 1930, vol.1, 159). Church is enclosed by an ecclesiastical enclosure (TS048-035003-). All that remains of the church are some grass-covered stones barely protruding above the surface of the ground, no visible remains of any grave markers or headstones inside enclosure'.*

Other SMR features in the vicinity of Littleton Bog comprise:

Ref.:	Description:
TS048-058---- : Structure - peatland	In Derryvella, part of the Littleton Bog complex. This consists of substantial longitudinal roundwoods
TS048-057---- : Structure - peatland	In Derryvella, part of the Littleton Bog complex. This consists of transversely laid oak timbers overlying irregularly laid roundwoods. Natural wood appears to lie in and around the timbers
TS048-056---- : Structure - peatland	In Derryvella, part of the Littleton Bog complex. This consists of closely laid transverse oak timbers (L 2m min.; Wth 0.15-0.25m) overlying irregularly laid roundwoods. Natural wood appears to lie in and around the timbers.
TS048-055---- : Structure - peatland	In Derryvella, part of the Littleton Bog complex. Possible archaeological timbers in close proximity to TS048-056----, TS048-057---- and TS048-058----.
TS048-054---- : Structure - peatland	In Derryvella, part of the Littleton Bog complex. Possible archaeological timbers in close proximity to TS048-056----, TS048-057---- and TS048-058----.



Sites and Monuments Record, Derryvella

Derrynaflan

The most significant archaeological discovery in the vicinity has been the 'Derrynaflan Hoard', located on an island of raised bog towards the southern end of the Littleton peatlands. The site of the hoard is also known as Gobán Saor's Island, derived from the 'Oak Wood of the Two Flanns', a reference to two prominent clerics who lived there during the ninth century. Three graveslabs on the eastern side of the island are said to mark the burial place of Goban and his family. The site has over a thousand years of history as an ecclesiastical settlement – from as far back as the early medieval period to the 1700s.

The Derrynaflan Hoard, which was uncovered in 2007, is significant due to its unusual and diverse mix of Viking and Irish objects, including an ornate chalice, silver coins, jewelry and silver ingots, many of which are intricately crafted in a style blending both Irish and Norse artistic traditions. The artefacts are of special cultural significance as they provide important insight to the nature of local trade and wealth and the Viking influence during the early medieval period. The entire hoard is now on permanent display at the National Museum of Ireland: Archaeology in Dublin.

In recent years, Derrynaflan Island has become a place of pilgrimage and dawn mass on Easter Sunday morning is an annual event. Derrynaflan can be accessed on foot from Liskeveen townland in the north or from Lurgoe in the south.



Derrynaflan Church and part of the Hoard

The Derrynaflan Trail, a driving route through the southern parts of Littleton Bog, links Derrynaflan Island to other significant historical and religious sites in Tipperary around the Slieveardagh Hills and Holycross, emphasising the connection between the local landscape and Ireland's rich ecclesiastical past. The trail encourages visitors to explore places imbued with legend, such as ancient churches, monasteries, and holy wells, offering a glimpse into the deep spiritual and cultural ties of the region.



Derrynaflan Island in the southern part of Littleton Bog

Myths and Legends

In Irish folklore, bogs often feature prominently as places of mystery and legend. They were sometimes seen as supernatural landscapes, associated with fairies, spirits, and the ancient past. The very act of cutting peat is often imbued with ritual significance. The bogs of County Tipperary, including Littleton, are part of the wider Irish cultural landscape that blends history, folklore and legends that date back centuries. These unique landscapes have been seen as mysterious and mystical places, often linked to the otherworld and ancient deities.

Throughout Ireland, bogs have long been associated with the idea of crossing into the 'Otherworld' in mythology. Since ancient times, it was believed that bogs were portals to this mystical realm, where the souls of the dead could pass through. The mysterious fogs and eerie landscapes contributed to the belief that these areas were liminal spaces between life and death. According to legend, anyone who disturbed the bog, whether by cutting peat or by trying to reclaim the land for farming, would suffer misfortune or even death.

Other Irish myths suggest that the bogs were places of ritual sacrifice, where offerings were made to the gods or to the spirits of the dead. According to legend, the ancient kings would sometimes sacrifice people to ensure the fertility of the land. The bogs, with their association to death and the spirit world, were thought to be ideal places for such offerings, and it was believed that the peat would preserve the body and help it to transition into the next world.

This connection with the dead is reflected in the discovery of ancient bog bodies, such as Old Croghan Man and Clonycavan Man, which appear to have been deliberately placed in the bog, often with signs of violent death.

The decaying material of the bogland produces another phenomenon, called 'Will o' the wisp', or sometimes more graphically 'the dreadful fairy lights' and only seen on the darkest nights away in the distance. These, it was widely accepted at one time, were spirits of the dead luring travellers into treacherous marshes.

Irish fairies (the Aos Sí) are often associated with bogs. In some stories, bogs were considered to be the homes of mischievous and sometimes malevolent fairies, living under the surface and emerging at night to play tricks on

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

humans, especially travellers or those who wander too far into the bog, only to be captured by the fairies and never to return. Bogs were seen as places where the fairies might offer gifts or cause harm, depending on whether they were treated with respect. Others believed that fairies would protect the bogs and punish those who attempted to drain or destroy them. The bogs' often foreboding atmosphere, combined with local superstitions, made them ideal settings for tales of fairy mischief.

Close to Littleton Bog, the hill known as Bealach Buidhe is associated with a frightening female spirit called Petticoat Loose who was said to attack anyone who crossed her path at night. In one story, a local man walking home encountered Petticoat Loose and tried to ward her off with a hazel stick (hazel wood being thought to repel evil). Such tales were often used to scare children into good behaviour, and in the Littleton area became embedded in oral tradition.

Numerous ringforts in the vicinity of Littleton Bog have legendary reputations as fairy dwellings, such as 'Blake's Fort' on the road from Littleton to Thurles. Local lore insists this fort was long 'supposed to be haunted', and it served as a cautionary tale about disturbing fairy-haunted sites.

The decaying material of the bogland produces a phenomenon, known as 'Will o' the wisp'. Littleton Bog has tales of these flickering ghost-lights seen in the distance on dark nights and widely accepted as spirits of the dead luring travellers into the treacherous marshes. In years past, peat-cutters returning home after dusk would tell of these dancing lights appearing in Littleton Bog, interpreted as souls of the dead or fairy guardians of the marsh.

Another enduring local legend links Littleton Bog to Gobán Saor, the master builder of Irish lore. The medieval Derrynaflan monastery site, an island of dry ground in the southern part of Littleton Bog, is reputedly the final resting place of Gobán Saor, a fabled 6th-century craftsman said to have built many churches and round towers across Ireland. Local tradition holds that he was buried at Derrynaflan after a lifetime of miraculous building feats and three ancient slab stones on the island mark Gobán Saor's grave. Derrynaflan is also where the priceless Derrynaflan Hoard of gold and silver altar vessels was discovered in 1980, showing that the bog hid great treasures and reinforcing folklore about the famous craftsman's presence there.



Stone carving of the Gobán Saor



Grave of Gobán Saor, Derrynaflan

From legendary builders and bog witches, to fairy-haunted forts and hidden gold, Littleton Bog remains a liminal place where the natural and supernatural meet. The tales are of fascination to both local people and visitors and ensure that the mystical heritage of the bog endures as an integral part of Tipperary's cultural landscape.

Bord na Móna

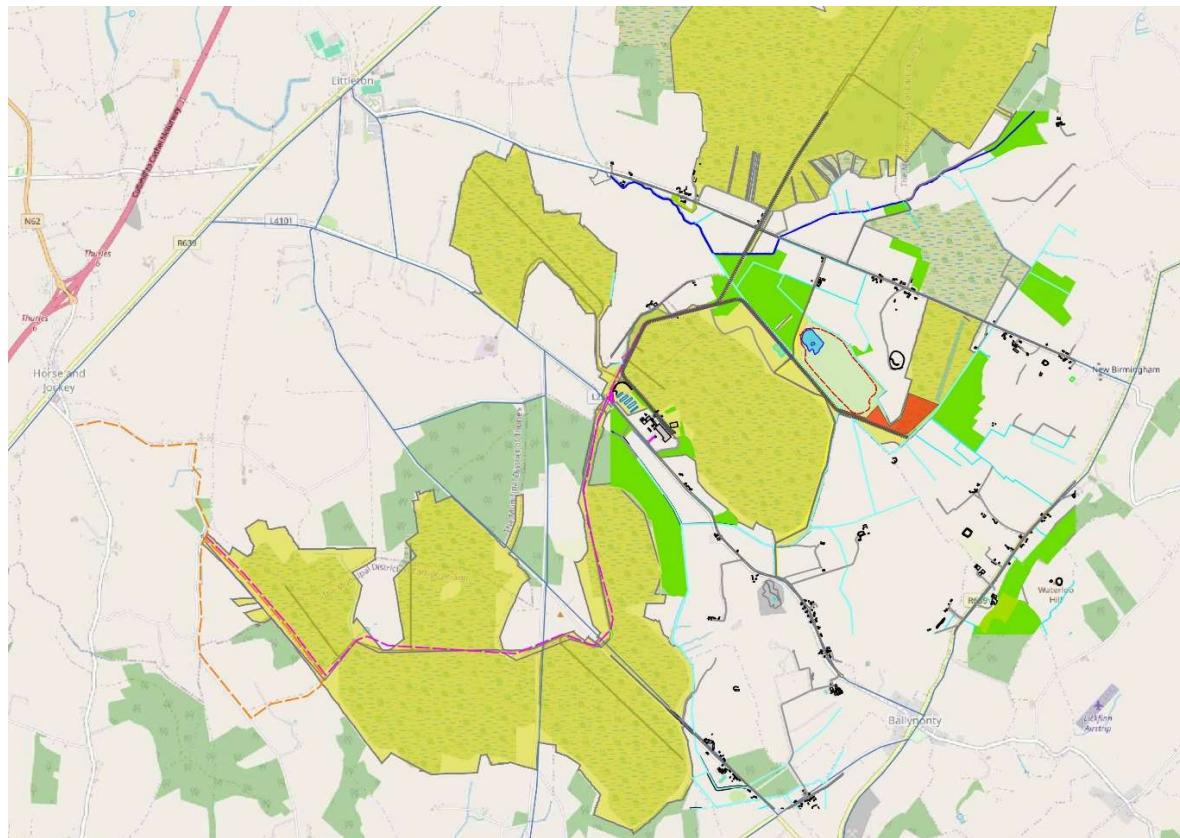
Bord na Móna has been an integral part of the social fabric of the area for decades. Following the gradual cessation of peat extraction activities, the associated Lanespark Peat Briquette factory closed in 2017, resulting in the loss of numerous direct and indirect local jobs. This has had a significant economic and cultural impact on the local communities and the wider region. As well as the direct economic consequences, the closure has had the effect of isolating rural communities which were once closely integrated through a common interest. It is now the vision to deliver a flagship rural regeneration project to conserve employment and develop tourism in the region.

The former peat briquette factory has since been repurposed as a plastic recycling facility by Bord na Móna in partnership with Sabrina Integrated Services (SIS), a specialist recycling company. The high-tech facility will process 24,000 tonnes of waste plastic annually, that would otherwise end up in landfill and is expected to provide 40 Green jobs and a significant boost to the local economy.



Former Lanespark Peat Briquette Factory

Also, as part of their Brown to Green Strategy, Bord na Móna in partnership with SSE Renewables have identified the Littleton Bog Group as having the potential for the development of a wind farm. The Littleton Wind Farm is intended to generate renewable electricity for the domestic electricity market. The proposed development will have strong commitments to community investment, delivering new public amenities where possible, and contributing to biodiversity net gain across the site. Once operational, the wind farm will also have an associated Community Benefit Fund to invest in local communities across the area.



The Littleton Bog site in relation to Bord na Mona Lands

2.5 Transport and Access

As described in Section 1.4 Tourism Context, Tipperary is a centrally located county that is easily accessible from all main access ports and centres of population. The region possesses a number of iconic attractions such as the Rock of Cashel and Cahir Castle, as well as well-established walking trails, Greenways, Blueways and water amenities such as Lough Derg. The existing heritage and outdoor recreation destinations are key drivers for existing visitor demand and provide the basis for future tourism development through their ability to grow the value of tourism and disperse visitors across the county.

The southern part of Tipperary generates the highest levels of visitor footfall with the Rock of Cashel followed by Cahir Castle and other heritage sites such as Hore Abbey and Swiss Cottage attracting most tourist. The development of the Suir Blueway and the Waterford Greenway have added considerably to the region's ability to attract both domestic and overseas visitors.

The assessment of accommodation within an approximate 30km radius of the Littleton site suggests an available provision of almost 600 beds and 262 bedrooms.

Public Transport

County Tipperary is well-connected to the national rail and bus networks, and the proposed Littleton site is in easy access of the main InterCity routes:

InterCity Lines	Closest Stations
Waterford - Limerick	Carrick-on-Suir, Clonmel, Cahir
Cork – Dublin	Thurles, Templemore
Waterford – Dublin	Thomastown, Kilkenny

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There are currently three regional bus services in proximity to the Littleton site, stopping at Littleton and Horse and Jockey on the R639:

Route	Frequency (daily)	Operator
396 Thurles - Clonmel	2	BK & Sons
828 Cashel - Portlaoise	4	TFI Local Link
896 Thurles – LIT Tipperary	4	TFI Local Link

Several private tour companies also provide coach services to the main visitor attractions.

A Local Link bus travels along the Glengoole-Littleton Road around four times a day.

Roads

The road network surrounding Littleton Bog is well-developed, with a mix of regional and local routes facilitating access. The bog lies near several key villages, including Littleton, Horse and Jockey, and Two-Mile-Borris, all of which are connected by local and regional roads. The N75 and M8 motorway provide primary access to the area, offering connectivity to larger towns such as Thurles, approximately 14km from Lough Doire, and other parts of the region.

The site lies within 2 hours driving distance of the main tourist entry points, and less than 1 hour from major tourist destinations:

Location	Travel Time (Hrs)	Distance (Km)
Rosslare Europort	2.00	132
Cork Airport	1.50	122
Dublin Airport	1.75	160
Shannon Airport	1.50	120
Kilkenny	0.75	35
Cashel	0.30	25
Cahir	0.50	41
Killaloe (Lough Derg)	1.00	70



Littleton Bog Access Routes

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

The M8 motorway runs to the west of Littleton Bog, with Junction 6 providing access at Horse and Jockey and Junction 5 at Two-Mile-Borris, around mid-way between Dublin and Cork. The N62 and N75 Regional roads connect Thurles to the motorway junctions. Cashel lies approximately 25km to the south-west, at motorway Junctions 8 and 9. The R639 Regional road runs parallel to the motorway between Urlingford and Cashel, passing through Littleton and Horse and Jockey. To the east of Littleton Bog, the R689 Regional road connects the villages of Gortnahoe, Ballysloe, Glengoole and Killenaule.

Connecting the Regional roads are three Local Roads, extending from Littleton to Glengoole (L2111), to Ballinunty (L4101 via the former Lanespark Peat Briquette factory) and to Killenaule.

Additionally, the Derrynaflan Trail, a heritage driving route, traverses Littleton Bog, enhancing its accessibility while promoting the region's ecclesiastical and historical landmarks. This combination of road types supports both local traffic and tourism, contributing to the area's development and cultural significance.

The proposed Littleton Bog Experience site can be accessed from the Littleton to Glengoole road to the north, via a minor Other road passing Lough Dhoire, and from the Littleton to Ballinunty road to the south, via the Other road from Lanespark. Both access roads are narrow, and currently discontinuous due to a barrier recently installed to the south of Lough Dhoire.



Littleton to Glengoole Local Road



Barrier on Lough Dhoire to Lanespark Other road

There is a small car park (around 18 un-marked spaces) at Lough Dhoire, and another recently constructed car park (25 spaces and 2 bus spaces) serving the Littleton Labyrinth adjacent to the former Lanespark Peat Briquette factory.



Lough Dhoire car park and access road



Littleton Labyrinth car park

Bog Railways

Although historically not providing public transport, the Littleton Bog is associated with a narrow-gauge rail system with routes that are an important means of access to the Bog Experience site. Being one of the larger peat bogs in the region, Littleton was served by a network of railways that were traditionally used for the extraction and transportation of peat.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

Much of the infrastructure has been dismantled, but the Littleton bog railway, like many other small industrial railways, plays a role in the industrial heritage and visitor attraction of the region. The recently opened first phase of the Littleton Labyrinth follows one of the routes of the former bog railway.



Former narrow-gauge railway on Littleton Bog



Railway line approaching the Littleton Bog site

Littleton Labyrinth

Tipperary County Council and Bord na Móna have recently collaborated on a new tourism and recreational product entitled 'Littleton Labyrinth', comprising a series of linked recreational trails at Littleton Bog. The first phase is the delivery of a 7.8km walking and cycling trail linking Lough Doire Bhile and Derrynaflan, together with a visitor car park adjacent to the former Lanespark Peat Briquette factory, thereby greatly enhancing recreation, amenity, tourism and rural connectivity within the area.

The route is from the end of the existing Horse and Jockey Derrynaflan Greenway and follows the disused rail line through the peatlands and up to the existing walking loops around Lough Doire Bhile.



Phase 1 of the Littleton Labyrinth

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

Littleton Labyrinth is intended to become a major visitor destination within Tipperary and Irelands Ancient East, based on the strong heritage and 'Hidden Treasures' of the local area, including the famous Derrynaflan Hoard. When fully delivered the project will include six self-contained loops, each 10-20km in length, linking to at least one village and each having its own distinctive theme. The six loops will be connected by a linear trail extending north to south through the bog, showcasing the emerging landscapes and biodiversity of the post-industrial rehabilitated peatland.

Delivery of the project is expected to open this currently isolated area to new visitors and stimulate the local tourism economy. It is expected that demand for related services such as cycle hire and hospitality will continue to increase as the new product becomes established through planned marketing initiatives supported by Tipperary Tourism and Fáilte Ireland.



Route of the Littleton Labyrinth heading into Derrynaflan bog

2.5 Planning Context

The Littleton Bog Experience project is aligned with key policy documents and strategic plans aimed at supporting the development of tourism nationally, regionally and locally, whilst ensuring that the natural environment and built heritage are suitably protected and enhanced.

Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040. It is a development strategy to guide national, regional and local spatial development in economic, environmental and social terms.

The vision for Ireland in 2040 is:

- For the highest possible quality of life for people and communities, underpinned by high quality, well managed built and natural environments.
- Sustainable self-reliance based on a strong circular economy and significant progress towards a low carbon, climate-resilient society while remaining an open, competitive and trading economy.

The relevant National Policy Objectives in support of this project are broadly set out as:

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- Objective 16 - Target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.
- Objective 17 - Enhance, integrate and protect the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive use now and for future generations.
- Objective 18a - Support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.
- Objective 21 - Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the sustainable diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and in particular those with a low or zero carbon output.
- Objective 22 - Facilitate the development of a National Greenways/Blueways and Peatways. Strategy which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.
- Objective 27 - Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments; and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

Specific Rural Development Actions to ensure that the countryside remains a living and working community include:

- Implementation of the actions outlined in the Action Plan for Rural Development.
- Implementation of a targeted smart growth initiative to enable opportunities to secure the regeneration and re-purposing of rural towns and villages weakened by the structural changes in rural economies and settlement patterns.
- Investment in Greenways and Blueway's as part of a nationally coordinated strategy.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

This Act sets out national targets for the reduction of carbon emissions by 51% by 2030, paving the way for Ireland to achieve 'net-zero' emissions by 2050. The cessation of peat extraction and use for energy regeneration and the rehabilitation and restoration of peatlands play a significant part of the solution to achieving these targets.

National Tourism Policy Framework 2025–2030

Published in November 2024, this policy document aims to embed environmental, economic and societal sustainability across the tourism sector. Key policy objectives include enhancing careers in tourism, fostering innovation, advancing product development, addressing regionality/seasonality and ensuring the broader impacts of government decisions on tourism are fully considered. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting sustainable tourism growth, particularly in less developed areas, to ensure balanced regional development and equitable distribution of benefits. This approach aligns with the Framework's commitment to fostering sustainable practices that strengthen the sector's contribution to Ireland's economy and communities

Tourism Policy 'People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025'

This policy document was published in 2015 and recognises the importance of investing in the visitor experience in order to continue to grow tourism including investment in facilities for visitor activities such as Greenways and other outdoor recreational activities.

Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

Published in April 2021, Our Rural Future provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland over the next five years. The policy contains a portfolio of objectives set out across a number of chapters including enhancing participation and resilience in rural communities and supporting employment and careers in rural areas. The role of culture, heritage and history is recognised, noting that heritage is one of the keys to sustaining and regenerating rural areas.

Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (2018)

The objective of the Greenway strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenway users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over a 10 year period with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.

Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Healthy Ireland

The aim of this Plan is to increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland, where everybody will be physically active and where everybody lives, works and plays in a society that facilitates, promotes and supports physical activity and an active way of life with less time spent being sedentary.

The focus of the plan is:

- Creating increased opportunities for people to be active in ways which fit in to everyday lives and which suits individual needs, circumstances and interests.
- Removing the barriers which people face to being active and encouraging people to recognise how to overcome those barriers.
- Enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation at national, local and community level to encourage physical activity at every level.
- Encouraging a supportive environment where physical activity becomes normal.
- Promoting good practice and finding new models of participation which get more people active.

National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to the ways in which we value and protect nature.

The aim of the NBAP is – *'to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to "act for nature"'*.

There are also many initiatives to support community engagement, including through Community Foundation Ireland, Local Agenda 21 and the Peatland Engagement Fund.

Peatlands Climate Action Scheme

This Scheme (also known as the Enhanced Decommissioning Restoration and Rehabilitation Scheme, or EDRSS) encompasses the restoration and rehabilitation of approximately 33,000 hectares of Bord na Móna peatlands that were previously harvested to generate electricity. Through the project, Bord Na Móna is reassigning employees from harvesting operations into rehabilitation in order to support the natural environment and biodiversity of the peatlands. To date, approximately 14,344 hectares have been rehabilitated across 30 bogs with plans approved for a further five sites, with four undergoing approval. Works are expected to be completed by mid-2026. The Scheme is funded with €108 million from the EU National Recovery and Resilience Plan, administered by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, regulated by the NPWS and operated by Bord na Móna.

LIFE Programme

The LIFE Programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. Its streams co-fund, among others, nature conservation projects with national governments to support biodiversity, habitats and species. Under the programme, the LIFE Nature/Integrated project is enabling Bord na Móna's LIFE IP Peatlands and People, for the restoration and rehabilitation of raised bogs in the Midlands.

South Tipperary Biodiversity Action Plan 2010-2015

A new Biodiversity Action Plan is currently being prepared for County Tipperary in partnership with the Heritage Council. The Plan will set out Tipperary County Council's statement of intent in relation to biodiversity of the

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County. It will include a number of actions and objectives to enhance biodiversity conservation along with raising awareness of biodiversity in partnership with local communities over the next five years.

Tipperary County Development Plan 2022–2028

The Tipperary County Development Plan (TCDP) was adopted in July 2022 and provides the framework for protecting the environment of the County, reducing energy demands, maintaining the viability of towns, villages and rural communities and supporting job creation.

TCDP Objectives and Policies of particular relevance to the Littleton Bog Experience and against which proposals will be assessed at consent stage (Objectives in blue and Policies in white) include:

Ref.	Objectives & Policies
	Volume 1 Written Statement
3.0	Low-Carbon Society
3 - 1	<i>Support projects which assist the transition of industrial cut-over peatlands to sustainable after uses.</i>
9.0	Tourism
9 - 1	<i>Encourage and support tourism development, including accommodation and related facilities, to locate within existing settlements, subject to normal planning and environmental considerations, where they can support compact growth and regeneration, provision of services and the general economic vitality of settlements. New development will be required to relate sympathetically to the scale, capacity and level of development and facilities in the settlement.</i>
9 - 2	<i>In assessing proposals for tourism development, including accommodation, at locations outside of settlement centres, to consider proposals on a case-by-case basis, having regard to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The nature and scale of the proposal in the context of its setting,</i> <i>The specific need for the development to locate in the rural area and not within a settlement,</i> <i>Demonstration that the development is compatible with the protection of the environment, including lakeshore and riparian habitats.</i> <i>The environmental conditions and sensitivities, scenic amenity, availability of services and the cumulative impact of such developments on the environment.</i>
9 - 3	<i>Encourage all new tourism related development proposals to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Maximise energy efficiency through siting, layout, design and incorporate best practice in energy technologies, conservation and smart technology.</i> <i>Support best-practice environmental management including energy efficiency, waste management, biodiversity and sustainable transport.</i>
9 - D	<i>Develop a 'Greenway and Trails Strategy', and to support and seek funding opportunities for the development of green and blue ways, incorporating walking, cycling and equine trails and supporting the tourism economy.</i>
9 - H	<i>To support, encourage and promote sports tourism within the county.</i>
11.0	Environment & Natural Assets
11.1	<i>In assessing proposals for new development to balance the need for new development with the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and human health. In line with the provisions of Article 6(3) and Article 6 (4) of the Habitats Directive, no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc.).</i>

Ref.	Objectives & Policies
11.2	<p><i>Ensure the protection, integrity and conservation of European Sites and Annex I and II species listed in EU Directives. Where it is determined that a development may individually, or cumulatively, impact on the integrity of European sites, the Council will require planning applications to be accompanied by a NIS in accordance with the Habitats Directive and transposing Regulations, 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects, Guidelines for Planning Authorities', (DEHLG 2009) or any amendment thereof and relevant Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and European Commission guidance documents.</i></p>
11-4	<p>(a) <i>Conserve, protect and enhance areas of local biodiversity value, habitats, ecosystems and ecological corridors, in both urban and rural areas, including rivers, lakes, streams and ponds, peatland and other wetland habitats, woodlands, hedgerows, tree lines, veteran trees, natural and semi-natural grasslands in accordance with the objectives of the National Biodiversity Plan (DCHG 2017) and any review thereof.</i></p> <p>(b) <i>Safeguard, enhance and protect water bodies (rivers/canals/lakes) and river walks and to provide links, where possible, to wider green infrastructure networks as an essential part of the design process.</i></p> <p>(c) <i>Require an 'Ecosystems Services' approach for new development to incorporate nature-based solutions to SUDS, in so far as practical, as part of water management systems, public realm design and landscaping, in line with best practice.</i></p> <p>(d) <i>Where trees or hedgerows are of particular local value, the Council may seek their retention, or where retention is not feasible, their replacement and will seek a proactive focus on new tree-planting as part of new development.</i></p>
11 - 9	<p><i>Assess all new developments (both within and without designated Flood Risk Zones) in line with the 'Staged Approach' and pre-cautionary principle set out in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DEHLG, 2009) and any amendment thereof, and the following:</i></p> <p>(a) <i>Require the submission of site-specific Flood Risk Assessments for developments undertaken within Flood Zones A & B and on lands subject to the mid-range future scenario floods extents, as published by the OPW. These Flood Risk Assessments shall consider climate change impacts and adaptation measures including details of structural and non-structural flood risk management measures, such as those relating to floor levels, internal layout, flood-resistant construction, flood-resilient construction, emergency response planning and access and egress during flood events.</i></p> <p>(b) <i>SFRAs and site-specific flood risk assessments shall provide information on the implications of climate change with regard to flood risk in relevant locations. The 2009 OPW Draft Guidance on Assessment of Potential Future Scenarios for Flood Risk Management (or any superseding document) shall be consulted with to this effect.</i></p> <p>(c) <i>Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.</i></p> <p>(d) <i>Applications for development on land identified as 'benefiting land' may be prone to flooding, and as such site-specific flood risk assessments may be required in these areas.</i></p> <p>(e) <i>Require applications for new development, or for an extension to an existing development on land zoned for 'Social and Public' or 'Amenity' use and where a potential flood risk is identified, and where the proposed use might be vulnerable, to be subject to site-specific flood risk assessment to the satisfaction of the Council.</i></p>
11-10	<p>(a) <i>Flood risk assessments shall incorporate consideration of climate change impacts and adaptation measures with regard to flood risk, and,</i></p> <p>(b) <i>Flood risk management planning shall determine actions to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW 'Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management' applicable at the time.</i></p>
11 -15	<p><i>Support the diversification of peatlands, whilst ensuring the protection of their ecological, archaeological, cultural and educational significance in line with the National Peatlands Strategy (DAHG 2015). The Council may request landowners to prepare a 'Peatland Master Plan', especially for areas of industrial cut-over peatland, and will work with all stakeholders involved in the process in this</i></p>

Ref.	Objectives & Policies
	<i>regard. Any Masterplan should identify any significant tourism, amenity and recreation potential of these lands.</i>
13.0	Built Heritage
13- 4	<p><i>Safeguard sites, features and objects of archaeological interest, including Recorded Monuments, National Monuments and Monuments on the Register of Historic Monuments, and archaeological remains found within Zones of Archaeological Potential located in historic towns and other urban and rural areas. In safeguarding such features of archaeological interest, the Council will seek to secure their preservation (i.e. in situ or in exceptional circumstances preservation by record) and will have regard to the advice and recommendation of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</i></p> <p><i>Where developments, due to their location, size or nature, may have implications for archaeological heritage, the Council may require an archaeological assessment to be carried out. This may include for a requirement for a detailed Visual Impact Assessment of the proposal and how it will impact on the character or setting of adjoining archaeological features. Such developments include those that are located at, or close to an archaeological monument or site, those that are extensive in terms of area (1/2 ha or more) or length (1 kilometre or more), those that may impact on the underwater environment and developments requiring EIA.</i></p>
14.0	Green & Blue Infrastructure
14 - 1	<p>(a) <i>Require new development proposals to incorporate a 'Green Infrastructure' approach to the planning, design and management of built form/public realm and green and blue spaces, (where feasible), and to consider all opportunities for synergies and linkages with existing blue and green infrastructure in both urban and rural areas, in line with the Development Management Standards set out in Volume 3.</i></p> <p>(b) <i>Ensure that proposals for greenway/blueway development contribute towards the protection or enhancement of existing green infrastructure and have regard to the "Connecting with nature for health and wellbeing" EPA Research Report 2020 and the Development Management Standards 1.1 Habitats Directive Assessment and 1.2 Environmental Assessment</i></p> <p>(c) <i>Where new development is required to prepare a 'Sustainability Statement', they must demonstrate compliance with this policy to the satisfaction of the Council.</i></p>
14 - D	<i>Strategically consider the development of new green and blue assets as part of tourism, regeneration and ecological initiatives and actions of the Government, and key stakeholders such as Coillte, Fáilte Ireland, Bord na Mona, etc.</i>
14 - E	<i>Support investment in the on-going development, maintenance and enhancement of trails and recreational infrastructure in Tipperary.</i>
15.0	Water & Energy facilities
15 - 7	<p><i>Require all new development to provide a separate foul and surface water management system and to incorporate nature-based water sensitive urban design, where appropriate, in new development and the public realm. New developments, or retrofit/upgrading works, including those contributing to combined drainage systems where streetscape enhancement programmes or resurfacing programmes are planned, will incorporate measures to reduce the generation of storm water run-off, and to ensure that all storm water generated is managed on-site, or is attenuated and treated prior to discharge to an approved storm water system, with consideration to the following:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Nature-Based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas (water sensitive urban design) Best Practice Interim Guidance Document (DHLGH, 2001) and any review thereof,</i> <i>The infiltration into the ground through the development of porous pavement such as permeable paving, swales and detention basis,</i> <i>The holding of water in storage areas through the construction of green roofs, rainwater harvesting, detention basis, ponds and wetlands etc.</i>

Ref.	Objectives & Policies
	<p><i>d. The slow-down in the movement of water.</i></p>
	Volume 3 Appendix 6 Development Management Standards
5.9	<p>Tourism and Recreation</p> <p><i>Proposals for tourism related developments shall be accompanied with a 'Development Impact Assessment' where indicated to include the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• An overview of the proposal setting out how the concept for the project was initiated and why it is suited for the location chosen;</i> <i>• Projected growth of the facility in the short, medium, and long term;</i> <i>• How the design and scale of the development will integrate into the landscape;</i> <i>• How the proposal would complement the natural and cultural heritage of the area;</i> <i>• The potential impacts of the proposal on local infrastructure in particular roads and water services;</i> <i>• Connectivity with surrounding amenities for pedestrians and cyclists; and</i> <i>• Any planned signage</i> <p><i>Proposals for caravan and camping developments shall be supported by plans and details to address:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• A high standard of design and integration with its surrounding area.</i> <i>• Permeability and sustainable transport links to surrounding amenities.</i> <i>• A detailed landscaping plan.</i> <i>• A wastewater treatment plan.</i> <p><i>Compliance with the Regulations for Caravan and Camping Parks (Board Fáilte, 2009).</i></p>

The TCDP recognises the role of non-designated sites, such as Littleton Bog, for the maintenance and enhancement of European Sites due to the connectivity and accessibility of ecological resources. The Plan provides Policies and Objectives to minimise potential fragmentation and to facilitate the enhancement of ecological corridors such as riparian zones and hedgerows.

'Wetlands and water bodies as well as other habitat types such as marshes, fens, reed beds, bogs and wet woodlands, tend to have high biodiversity value, as well as serving other essential services relating to the protection of water quality, flood protection, carbon capture and climate mitigation. While many protected areas include wetlands, most wetland areas occur outside protected sites. Work or development which involves the drainage or reclamation of a wetland requires planning permission where the wetland is greater than 0.1ha and is subject to mandatory EIA where the wetland is greater than 2ha'.

The protection of peatlands within the Plan area are specifically provided for through Policy 11-6:

Support the diversification of peatlands, whilst ensuring the protection of their ecological, archaeological, cultural and educational significance in line with the National Peatlands Strategy (DAHG 2015). Where new development is proposed on areas of peatland, the Council may request the landowner to prepare a 'Peatland Master Plan' for the entire peatland area in their ownership.

Peatlands, as identified in the County Landscape Character Assessment, are identified as unique habitats in a European context, and there are a number of sites in Tipperary which have been designated SACs, although not the Littleton Bog complex.

'Peatlands have a significant role to play in carbon storage, biodiversity, and in some cases may offer synergies with tourism and amenity projects, for example the proposed 'Tipperary Bush Craft Survival and Activity Park' (A tourism objective of 'Transforming Tipperary', see Chapter 9). The National Peatlands Strategy (DAHG, 2015) sets out objectives for bogs and peatlands so that they may be managed responsibly in order to optimise their social, environmental and economic contribution to society.'

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In line with the provisions of Chapter 3 Low Carbon Society and Climate Action, the Council will support the diversification of peatlands, for example the sustainable development of renewable energy, and or tourism related facilities, whilst ensuring the conservation of their ecological, archaeological, cultural and educational significance in line with the National Peatlands Strategy (DAHG 2015) and any review thereof. The Council will support projects which assist the transition of the industrial peatlands to sustainable after uses. Where new development is proposed on areas of peatland, the Council may request the landowner to support a Master Plan for the entire peatland area in their ownership'.

Chapter 9.3 Tipperary Tourism Strategy describes the 'Tipperary Transforming – Tourism Product Development Plan 2020 – 2030' (Tipperary Tourism and Tipperary County Council), as providing a 10-year vision statement for tourism development. These promote Tipperary as national leader in 'Responsible Tourism' and lists 19 concepts be further developed, subject to feasibility, to transform Tipperary as a tourism destination. It is an objective of the Plan to support and protect the growth and development of the concepts and projects as identified.

The TCDP refers to the 'Tipperary Transforming' document which includes Littleton Bog Labyrinth as a special themed recreational project of walkways and cycleways.

The following objectives are also particularly relevant to the Littleton Bog Experience plan:

SO-7: To protect, enhance and connect areas of natural heritage, blue and green infrastructure and waterbodies, for quality of life, biodiversity, species and habitats, while having regard to climate change adaptation and flood risk management measures.

SO-09: To enhance connectivity and promote sustainable transport, through the integration of land use and transport planning and promotion of and prioritisation of public transport and walking and cycling.

Tipperary Transforming – Tourism Product Development Plan 2020-2030

The purpose of this plan is to assist the Local Authority to significantly improve the visitor experience in the County developed through the three overarching themes of Heritage, Landscape and Water. The Plan is underpinned by the principles of responsible sustainable tourism. Targets for the plan include:

- An increase of 50% in people employed (full-time or part-time) in the county tourism economy;
- An increase of 100% of overnighting visitors to the County;
- Growth of 75% in the number of international visitors; and
- €150 million investment in tourism and related offerings in the county over the next ten years.

The Littleton Bog Labyrinth is identified in the plan as a special themed recreational project of walkways and cycleways across a network of raised bogland linking Twomileborris, Gortnahoo, Urlingford, Templetouhy and Littleton, offering potential to both enhance the visitor experience and linkage to wider national networks, such as Suir Blueway Tipperary, Lough Derg Blueway and the Beara Breifne Way.



Category 2:
Creating Clusters

8 (8.1-8.4) **Blueways, Greenways and Future Trail Development**

Location Countywide

Timeline 3-5 years

Landscapes

Creating Clusters

Description

A walking and cycling holiday experience is a mainstream part of most Irish holidays. The societal benefits from recreational investment by the state is well documented. Investment and awareness of our new Blueways has opened up slow travel on our inland waterways. Tipperary is primed to capitalise on this exponential growth but new facilities, route infrastructure with enhanced co-ordination and promotion are required.

A recreational strategy for the whole of Tipperary would be a wise next step to help open up much of the county's dormant world-class recreational assets for future generations. A number of projects are identified below which stand out as having significant potential, but these are far from the only assets in the county that should be considered for priority co-ordinated support. The roles and insights from the two LEADER companies, South Tipperary Development Company and North Tipperary Development Company, in realising the provision of recreational excellence is important.

Embedding Best Practice

Two standout greenways to date, see: the Great Western Greenway (Mayo), www.greenway.ie/, and the Waterford Greenway, www.waterfordcouncil.ie/images/GIS/Greenways/WaterfordGreenway2017Map.pdf

Next Steps

- ✓ A Tipperary Recreational Strategy is required.

A number of special themed recreational projects stand out which offer both potential to enhance the visitor experience and linkage to wider national networks e.g. Suir Blueway Tipperary, Lough Derg Blueway and the Beara Brefne Way. All projects below need to be fully aligned with the Green and Blue Infrastructure Masterplan Roadmap for Tipperary Waterways.

- ✓ **8.1** Suir Blueway Tipperary - support further development.
- ✓ **8.2** Tipperary Town to Sliebh na Muc - support the examination of the concept for a linear walk from the town to the iconic summit.
- ✓ **8.3** Birr to Roscrea Greenway - support this project linking Birr, Roscrea and Portumna.
- ✓ **8.4** Littleton Bog Labyrinth - creating walkways and cycleways across a network of raised bogland linking Tullymore, Gortnahoo, Uringford, Templetoohy and Littleton.

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Ireland's Ancient East, Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027

Fáilte Ireland

The Strategy provides a roadmap for the tourism industry and all stakeholders involved in tourism in the region to navigate the current challenges and steer a course towards a sustainable recovery and continued success. It sets out a strategic approach to unlocking the commercial potential of Ireland's Ancient East. It ensures that the focus on tourism development is sustainable and regenerative and that the benefits accrue to local communities and to nature.

The ambition is to drive recovery and growth of the visitor economy in Ireland's Ancient East to create sustainable, high-quality jobs that will support and strengthen local communities while protecting the natural environment. This will be achieved by raising awareness and consideration of the region as a visitor destination and increasing the average length of stay.

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2.7 Key Environmental Considerations

Landscape Significance

Littleton Bog is recognised as being one of the largest extant areas of cut-over bog surface in all the Irish Midlands. Although there are no sites designated for nature conservation, the best examples of raised bog in Ireland are protected as a habitat of international importance under the EU Habitats Directive due to their increasing rarity.

The raised bogs of the Midlands are generally recognised as:

- The finest example of their type in Europe, and probably the world.
- A unique repository of information of past climates, vegetation and human activity.
- A valuable genetic resource of potential use to humanity.
- Important outdoor laboratories in which plants, animals and natural processes in an extremely inhospitable environment can be studied.
- Of national and international importance as part of the biosphere in which they are inextricably linked to other ecosystems.
- A unique feature of the Irish landscape of considerable tourist value.
- A priority habitat under the EU Habitats Directive because of their scarcity in Europe.
- An important store of carbon, helping to control greenhouse gases.
- An important store of water within river catchments.

The Tipperary Landscape Character Assessment (Tipperary County Development Plan 2022–2028, Volume 3) classifies the Sensitivity and Capacity of the Littleton bogland landscape type as:

'In the context of the County Landscape Capacity classes, this is a Sensitive landscape i.e. Class 3 having a high sensitivity to change and limited capacity to accommodate change without detriment. Such landscapes require significant additional care during design and assessment of alternatives to determine how established patterns of use and settlement can be accommodated'.

The Principles for Landscape Management included within the Assessment consider that the sensitive siting and design of individual buildings and groups of buildings as well as site treatment appropriate to the area will be of importance in this landscape, and that specific design guidance should be provided to facilitate these outcomes. The untouched raised bog habitat is recognised as a valuable asset, and all land use management needs to consider the protection and enhancement of same.

In line with Ireland's National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, 'Embracing Ireland's Outdoors', respect for the environment will be at the centre of developing the Littleton Bog Experience, with an ambition to protect the landscape, habitats, and built heritage through sustainable development and best management practices.

A review of the Tipperary County Council Planning GIS Viewer undertaken for the Midlands Trail Network - Tipperary showed that the proposed route does not pass through either Class 1 or Class 2 Scenic Areas. Given the nature of the proposed shared cycle and walkway being placed along existing rail network, it was determined that the nature of the development would not impact on the landscape.

Environmental Assessment

All development must comply with relevant statutory planning and environmental legislation at both European and National level. This will include the requirement to undertake various types of environmental assessments.

Appropriate Assessment screening will be necessary, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and article 250(1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, if the proposed development would be likely to give rise to significant or indeterminate impacts on any Natura 2000 site.

Where it is confirmed that Appropriate Assessment is required, Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will need to be prepared, having regard to all relevant National and European guidance including; DoEHLG's (2010) "Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities"; all relevant legislation including:

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Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, Regulation 42 of the Habitats Regulations 2011, Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and all relevant case law. Consultation with NPWS, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), OPW, GSI and other relevant bodies will also be required.

Having regard to the information specified under Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and based on an examination of the nature, size and location of the development, if it is determined that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will not be required.

The Screening for AA & Natura Impact Statement prepared in order to evaluate the significance of potential effects on European sites from the proposed Tipperary Midlands Trail Network, alone and in-combination with other developments, identified within the Zone of Influence of the proposed works that the potential for significant effects on the Special Conservation Interests or Qualifying Interests of four European Sites could not be excluded. In particular, the potential for indirect effects via a deterioration in water quality, and from potential ex-situ disturbance and displacement to fauna and avifauna. Thus, the respective elements were brought forward for further critical examination in the Natura Impact Statement Report to inform the Appropriate Assessment process.

Following examination and analysis, and taking account of the protective measures proposed, it was concluded that, given the application of prescribed protective measures for the avoidance of impacts and the implementation of the required mitigation measures, the proposed Midlands Trail Network – Tipperary (MTN-T) development will not give rise to adverse effects on the integrity of any of the identified European sites evaluated.

Similarly, the conclusion of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening report for the Midlands Trail Network was that sub-threshold EIA is not required as there is no real likelihood that there will be any significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development either alone or in cumulation of other projects.

Geological Interest

The Tipperary County Geological Site Report indicates that Littleton Bog is situated within an area dominated by bedrock of Lower Carboniferous limestone. The bog peat is Quaternary in age, having formed in marshy conditions as an extensive envelope of the landscape in the area since deglaciation, and mostly approximately 7,000-10,000 years ago.

As Littleton Bog exists due to the geological and hydrogeological process of peat growth, the locality is ranked as a County Geological Site and may also be designated as a Geological NHA owing to the importance of the vegetation record held within the pollen in the peat.

In terms of management/promotion issues, the report suggests damaging activities associated with land use across Littleton Bog include drainage throughout the site and associated loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site. A signboard in Littleton Village, describing the borehole drilled nearby in 1954, and its importance, would be a worthy addition to the locality.

Archaeological Interest

As part of the 2006 Peatland Survey, no archaeological features were recorded in the Lanespark Bog immediately north of the briquette factory, but at Ballybeg Bog to the east of the factory seventeen sites were recorded, consisting of six ancient trackways, five possible trackways and six archaeological wood sightings, dated from 1880–1620 BC to AD 550–710. Within the smaller Derryvella Bog, to the north of Lanespark Bog, five trackways were recorded, including a substantial gravel and plank trackway 255m in length, together with two other possible trackways, a platform and fifteen sightings of archaeological wood. The dates of four of the sites ranged from 1940–1630 BC to 770–390 BC.

In addition to the site of Derryvella Church and ecclesiastical enclosure, approximately 400m north of the Bog Experience site, there are five other SMR listed features in proximity, mostly consisting of possible archaeological timbers. There are also numerous other archaeological features in the wider area.

Development in proximity to historic buildings, archaeological sites and monuments, will need to be addressed in the development approval process ('Part 8', 'Section 177AE', or Environmental Impact Assessment), and all

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

necessary notifications made to both the planning authority and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. For development in proximity to a national monument, Ministerial Consents (Section 14) will be required, and Section 12 notifications required in proximity to any sites published on the RMP/SMR.

The Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) prepared as part of the planning application for the MTN-T states that: "The proposal will have no impact on any known items of archaeological heritage in the application site or vicinity".

Section 4 of the AIA also states that the shared cycle and walkway on the in-situ rail line will only affect the depth of the existing bed and will have no impact on any unknown archaeological heritage. The Gateway locations have the potential to impact previously unknown subsurface archaeological heritage.

The AIA sets out recommendations including monitoring by a professional archaeologist under license from the National Monuments Service for points 1 and 7 of the Ballybeg Bog, 13 and 24 of the Derryvella Bog, and the proposed Gateways TY-02-01 , TY-03-02, and TY03-03 (Gateway TY04-04 is a bicycle stand on the in situ rail line).

Development Generally

Key Constraints

The main environmental constraints to development at Littleton Bog in County Tipperary arise from its ecological sensitivity, legal protections, and the area's role in climate mitigation.

The Littleton Bog Experience must be developed in line with 'Do No Significant Harm', incorporating the following principles:

- Implement practices that minimise environmental impact, such as using eco-friendly materials for construction.
- Preserve and protect local ecosystems and biodiversity by maintaining natural habitats, planting native species, and avoiding the use of harmful chemicals or pesticides.
- Practice sustainable resource management by responsibly managing water resources, conserving natural landscapes and minimising pollution and habitat destruction.
- Engage with local communities and stakeholders to raise awareness about sustainable development goals, involve them in decision-making processes, and encourage participation in conservation efforts.
- Offer educational programs and interpretive materials that inform visitors about the importance of sustainable practices.
- Compliance with relevant environmental regulations and standards as set out by the EU to uphold principles of Sustainable Development.

Site constraints include:

- Biodiversity Protection - Littleton Bog is a significant habitat for various plant and animal species, including protected flora and fauna. Development must avoid disturbing these ecosystems, with particular emphasis on maintaining the balance between rewetting areas and promoting native woodland growth.
- Hydrological Sensitivity - the bog's hydrology is critical for its ecological function, especially in carbon sequestration and water filtration. Altering water levels could negatively impact both local ecosystems and climate mitigation efforts. Development must be carefully planned to avoid disrupting the natural water flow, the natural water table and peatland hydrology.
- Archaeological Heritage - Littleton Bog contains significant archaeological features, such as ancient trackways and other wooden structures. Any development would need to assess the potential for disturbing these sites, requiring detailed archaeological surveys and formulation of appropriate mitigation measures where necessary.
- Carbon Sequestration and Climate Action - as part of Ireland's broader climate strategy, Littleton Bog is being rehabilitated to transition from a carbon emitter to a carbon sink. Development that increases carbon emissions or disturbs peatland rewetting efforts could conflict with national climate goals.

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- Geology - Littleton Bog is of geological significance, with historical and environmental records embedded in its peat deposits, and development must consider potential impacts and mitigation measures.
- Drainage and Flood Risk - the potential for flooding or changes to local watercourses due to drainage activities associated with development must be considered, as bogs are highly sensitive to changes in water levels.
- Ground Conditions - the soft, waterlogged nature of bogland means that standard foundations may not be feasible. Specialised engineering techniques, such as deep piling or stilted structures, may be required to ensure stability without compromising the land's ecological significance.
- Construction in a peatland environment can be challenging and costly due to the variable, wet, and ecologically sensitive nature of peatland environments. Utilising existing railway beds and former bog headlands provides an opportunity to reduce the constraint presented by variable ground conditions.
- Peat Extraction - areas where peat has been extracted are typically drier but may still be subject to further degradation or instability, requiring site ground investigation to ensure the optimum construction methods.
- Access and Transport - the area is relatively remote, and developing infrastructure (roads, utilities) may be costly and logistically challenging. The construction of access roads and utilities must consider the environmental impact of increased traffic and disturbances to the bog's ecology and hydrology.
- Community Impact - Development could affect the local community's cultural and historical connection to the bog, especially considering its role in local employment, folklore and heritage. Local stakeholders and interest groups are likely to have concerns about any development that may harm the bog's environmental or cultural value. Public consultations and engagement with the community will be an essential part of addressing concerns and fostering support.

Sustainable Approach to Building

The main development approach is aimed at harmonising with the environment, according to the principles of:

- Sustainable Design
- Durability
- Energy Efficiency
- Waste Reduction
- Air Quality
- Water Conservation
- Sustainable Building Materials

The following sustainable practices will be essential:

- The use of recyclable and renewable materials which minimise energy consumption and waste production.
- Circular economy principles which prioritise the local sourcing of sustainable materials, which are preferably recycled or repurposed.
- Timber for use in construction, not only for aesthetic reasons but primarily for its role in promoting green construction and low-carbon methods.
- Use of renewable energies where required.
- Use of energy-efficient lighting which seeks to minimise light pollution, yet provides the required need for personal safety.
- Use of non-herbicultural and fungicidal weed and pest control.
- Sensitive design in relation to vehicular access and parking.
- Use of appropriate materials, specifically in relation to surfacing.
- All-inclusive, child and age-friendly design principles to be incorporated.

Planning standards for visitor centres are governed by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001–2024. These regulations outline the process for obtaining planning permission and ensure developments align with national and regional policies on sustainable development, environmental protection, and local community enhancement. In particular:

- Buildings will be designed to be compliant and exceed current Building Regulations and Standards. They will have a minimum design life of 50 years.
- Part L Conservation of Energy - all new buildings must be nearly zero-energy buildings (NZEBs), meaning a building with very high energy performance, and for which the remaining low energy needs are sourced

primarily from renewable energy sources (RES). Buildings will comply with full NZEB standards and have Net Zero Energy Requirements. A Part L performance report will be necessary demonstrating that the level of provision being achieved in the context of Part L Technical Guidance Document including the following will also be taken into consideration:

- All appliances that use Energy shall be on the SEAI Triple E register or equivalent.
- All lighting components shall be low energy (e.g. LED).
- Storm water management to include appropriate SUDs design where possible.
- Site foul sewer design to be approved by Uisce Eireann.
- All insulation works to be in accordance with Part L of the current Building Regulations.
- Provision of renewal energy technologies within the building.
- A report detailing effective mitigation/restoration measures will be prepared, which can be technically employed to minimise residual impacts for all/any areas affected the scheme.
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be required, together with an Environmental Operational Plan to determine potential operational impacts, for inclusion within the environmental evaluation documentation to identify how construction practice commitments and operational requirements will be met. This will include consideration of construction compounds, drainage measures required during construction (e.g. silt control, dust, or noise control, etc) and outline design mitigation measures identified during project development.
- Environmental evaluation may identify the need to obtain permits and licences to facilitate project construction or operation. Permits and licences may be required, e.g. effluent discharge, from the following:
 - Environmental Protection Agency (and/or relevant Waste Authority)
 - Bord na Móna
 - Inland Fisheries Ireland
 - Uisce Eireann
 - National Monuments Service
 - National Parks and Wildlife Service, including Derogation Licences
 - Office of Public Works

SECTION 3: Opportunity Assessment

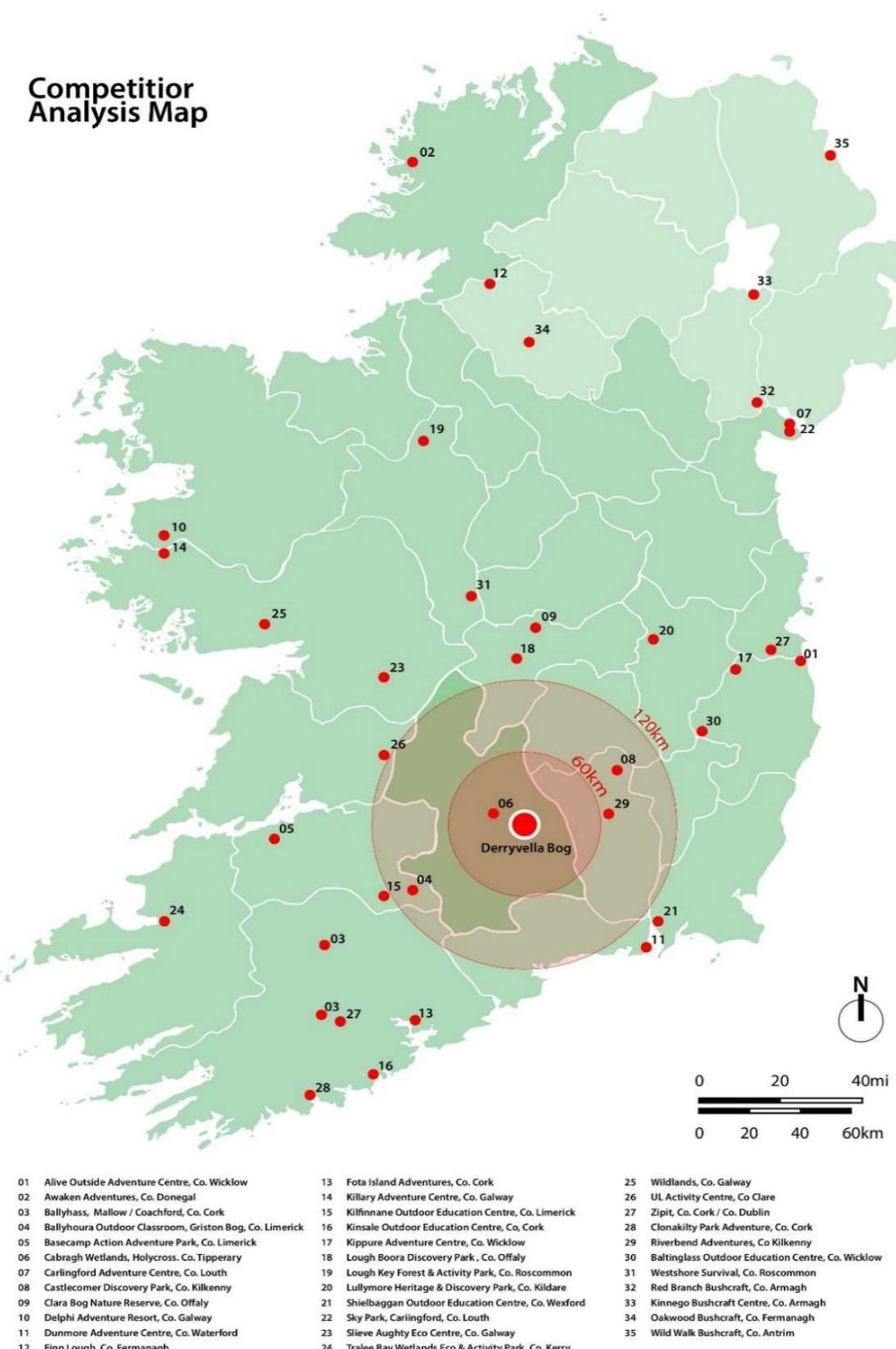
This Section of the report provides an assessment of the overall market and the market potential for the proposed development. It considers the national and international/global outlook for tourism and the visitor attractions sector in relation to:

- 3.1 Competitor Analysis
- 3.2 International Benchmarking
- 3.3 Global Trends
- 3.4 Opportunity Assessment
- 3.5 Initial Development Concepts



3.1 Competitor Analysis

A competitor analysis examined the current activity centre landscape in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The criteria analysed as part of the competitor analysis includes - the core offering available, the onsite activities, pricing, ownership, length of season and range of events and programmes hosted onsite. A total of 35 sites were analysed.



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The analysis focuses on outdoor activity centres of scale but also highlights the Cabragh Wetlands in Thurles, which offers outdoor recreation, conservation and educational offerings. No direct competitor in terms of an activity centre of scale currently exists in Tipperary. The subsequent analysis is mindful of not creating any displacement of existing attractions and activity centres in the area.

Castlecomer Discovery Park and UL Activity Centre in Lough Derg, Killaloe, Co. Clare represent the closest competitors of scale with a permanent year round location.

The remaining competitors are located more than 120km from the site. Amongst the biggest activity centres in the country are Wildlands in Co. Galway, Killary Adventure Centre in Co. Mayo, and Carlingford Adventure Centre, Co. Louth. Central to the success of these sites is the multi-activity focus offered to visitors, combining land and water activities with iconic and transformational elements such as high rope activities, zip line experiences etc. Other key success factors include the ability to host programmes and events, offer year-round activities and have a diverse range of accommodation either onsite or in the vicinity.

3.2 International Benchmarking

A programme of international benchmarking was undertaken to review best practice, market trends and identify market opportunities that would contribute to the concept development for the Bog Experience.

- 1. The Kelpies, Scotland:** The Kelpies are the largest equine sculptures in the world. Since their unveiling in 2014, the Kelpies have become one of Scotland's leading tourist attractions. The iconic placemaking structures essentially serve as a gateway to a network of trails and are part of The Helix, a 350-hectare park that connects visitors to nature, recreation, and cultural experiences. The visitor centre at the Kelpies is used as the visitors starting point for exploring the Helix. It features a gift shop, café and an information centre including more information on the Kelpies themselves. Visitor numbers to the visitor centre alone reached 436,912 in 2022. Visiting the Kelpies is free, but there is a parking fee for visitors which varies depending on the length of their stay. Daytime car parking ranges from £2.50 - £4.50. Overnight parking for motorhomes costs £15.00. Visitors also have the option of a paid guided tour of the Kelpies, with tickets starting from £7.00.

The Helix has an adventure play park, splash play water fountains, parklands, woodlands, wetlands, boardwalks and a lagoon, all accessible from the Kelpies visitor centre. The local communities and economy benefit hugely from the Kelpies, and it is estimated that £1.5 million in direct tourism spending was generated in 2022.

The Kelpies also incorporate a community integrated and sustainability approach. They host community events that often showcase local street performers, have community stalls, local producer's markets, and folk tales and songs from storytellers. The Helix Park was developed on previously unused and degraded land, transforming it into a vibrant green space.

The Kelpies target both domestic and international visitors, cultural and heritage groups, families, outdoor and recreation enthusiasts, mythology enthusiasts, eco conscious travellers, and tour groups.



2. **The Flow Country, Scotland:** The Flow Country is one of the most outstanding examples of a blanket bog system in the world and is the first peatland bog in the world to gain world heritage status. It also became Scotland's first UNESCO recognised world heritage site in 2024, joining the likes of the Grand Canyon and the Great Barrier Reef. It will be the seventh Scottish site, joining St Kilda and the Forth Bridge, which attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to Scotland.

The key points of interest that have been developed at the Flow Country include three museums, three visitor centres, and five viewing points. Visitors can learn about the history of the peatlands and the stories of the people who lived there. Museum exhibitions include a focus on local heritage, archaeology and crofting. The visitor centres also focus on sustainability and the importance of preservation and restoration. The viewing platforms have become iconic features of the site, drawing a large number of visitors to see the spectacular views. Visitors can get to these viewing points by walking along raised boardwalks through the peatlands.

The Flow Country target eco-conscious travellers, wildlife enthusiasts, outdoor adventure enthusiasts, educational and research groups, cultural and heritage interested groups, and international visitors.



3. **Limburg Cycling Infrastructure, Belgium:** Limburg is one of Europe's leading cycling trails destinations. There has been a steady increase in the number of visitors coming to Limburg for cycling since the early 2000's, and in 2022 the region welcomed 3.7 million cyclists.

Limburg has developed a number of 'iconic' trail features that have been transformational in how locals and visitors alike engage year-round with the local trails. These are referred to as 'XL Experiences' and include infrastructures enabling visitors to cycle through water, cycle through trees, cycling through heathland, and cycle underground.

A relevant example for the Littleton site is the 'Cycling through Heathland' project, which included the development of a 294m long wooden bridge through heathland. The 4km trail has welcomed 320,207 visitors since 2021.

Limburg has also developed cycling trails through their 'Cycling through Trees' initiatives. This initiative followed a sustainable and regenerative approach, through construction developments that respected nature and the surrounding environment. The project has also been beneficial for the larger area acting as an economic hub for the local community. The trail has welcomed 776,912 visitors since 2019.

Limburg targets experienced cyclists, recreational cyclists, families, outdoor enthusiasts, mountain bikers, and international event cyclists.



4. **The Eden Project, UK:** The Eden Project, located in Cornwall, officially opened in 2001, but has undergone significant developments since. It is now home to 30 acres of biomes and gardens serving as one of the leading eco visitor attractions in the UK. 713,255 visitors visited the Eden Project in 2023. The Eden Project has won numerous awards for sustainability initiatives throughout the years i.e. Sustainability Brand Licensed Range Award for their range of compostable coffee cups at the Brand & Lifestyle Licensing Awards 2022.

It is a transformational project for the sustainable tourism sector and is also home to the World's largest indoor rainforest. Visitors to the Eden Project are orientated from point to point through an iconic placemaking approach. This includes using iconic placemaking installations to tell a variety of stories. The Eden Project has a visitor centre where visitors can scan tickets, use toilets, and buy food and drink before exploring the 30 acres of biomes. The site also runs a number of community events and visitor events e.g. Christmas at the Eden.

The Eden Project targets eco-conscious travellers, families, school and educational groups, event attendees, community groups, mythology enthusiasts, and researchers.



5. **Zip World Fforest, Wales:** Zip World Fforest is a best practice example of outdoor activity developments in an area of environmental sensitivity. Its activities were designed in a way that minimises their disruption to the existing eco system. The site welcome approximately 400,000 adventure seekers annually.

The activities themselves are transformational, and this acts as the main draw in attracting visitors. Iconic features such as 'Velocity', the world's fastest and Europe's longest zip line, attracts a large number of domestic and international visitors alike. Other iconic activities include the forest coaster and tree top high ropes courses.

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Zip World Fforest has a visitor centre that serves as a hub for visitors. It has a reception and check-in area, a café, toilets and information boards.

Zip World target both domestic and international visitors, as well as corporate groups, school groups, outdoor enthusiasts, nature enthusiasts and family groups.



6. **Carrowmena Activity Centre, Northern Ireland:** Carrowmena Activity Centre in Limavady offers a comprehensive bushcraft experience that caters for all ages. The centre is a multi-purpose centre with numerous activities available including a zip line, canoeing, kayaking, abseiling, hill walking, high ropes and orienteering. These activities support the bushcraft offering.

The bushcraft experience at Carrowmena Activity Centre includes building shelters, tracking and foraging. It can be booked as part of a day or residential package or birthday party. Carrowmena also offers survival-focused workshops where attendees are taught practical skills such as navigation, knot tying, and how to assess risks in the wild. Carrowmena Activity Centre is set in an ideal natural environment for bushcraft training, with access to woodlands, fields, and streams. The Centre also hosts community events which include cultural storytelling experiences, drawing on traditional skills and stories that have been passed down through generations.

Carrowmena Activity Centre target families, school groups, local community groups, corporate groups, special interest groups, and adventure enthusiasts.



3.3 Global Trends

Trends in Outdoor Activities & Attractions

1. **Innovative Storytelling:** Visitors are seeking experiences where they can learn about the stories of a site through innovative activities e.g. hands-on workshops, storytelling trails, orientation through art, science and technology features.
2. **Authentic Experiences:** Visitors are more and more appreciative of the origin of the sites they are visiting and are seeking authentic experiences unique to the site they are seeing / activity they are taking part in.
3. **Multi-generational Activities:** Multi-generational travel is growing and makes up between 33% and 40% of the total travel market looking for outdoor experiences to do together, and activity providers are increasingly marketing for multi-generational groups.
4. **Sustainable / Regenerative Experiences:** Slow adventure tourism experiences are now incorporating sustainable / regenerative features. This includes experiences that allow visitors to leave a positive impact on the environment and on local communities. Visitors like to see activity providers making sustainable choices, conservation efforts etc.
5. **Health & Wellness:** Health and wellness travel is on the rise with more and more consumers seeking opportunities to recharge, self-develop, improve fitness and escape. The outdoors is increasingly the backdrop for the most sought-after wellness experiences.
6. **Back to Basics:** Nearly half (44%) of global travellers want their travel experiences to have a more back-to-basics feel to experience life with only the bare necessities. This presents opportunities around bushcraft and other boglands activities.
7. **Detour Destinations:** Growing number of visitors seeking less crowded and less well-known tourist destinations. Expedia found 63% of travellers seeking these types of trips. International Destinations include Reims, Brescia, Girona, Waikato, Krabi and Cammore.
8. **Immersing in Local Culture:** Visitors are seeking local cultural experiences in the form of 'art-venture', horticulture, food and drink experiences, and natural attractions. Skyscanner found the top experiences determining travellers' choice of destination are food (54%), the natural landscape (49%) and culture (44%).
9. **Nature-Based Adventure Tourism:** Post Covid, visitors have continued to seek nature-based experiences, commonly in the form of hiking, walking and biking, as well as an increased demand for e-bike offers so visitors can access activities sustainably.
10. **Community and Education:** Outdoor activity providers and visitor attractions are increasingly incorporating local community and educational elements into their offerings. These include outdoor / activity skills workshops, STEM Programmes and volunteer programmes.

(Sources: Skift, TNI, Global News, Expedia, Hotels.com, Vrbo, Skyscanner, Skift, Globetrender, Lemongrass, Travel & Leisure)

3.4 Opportunity Assessment

Opportunities

- The history of the bogs provides the platform for blending the heritage story with activities and different ways of telling the Bog story.
- Development of surrounding communities to benefit economically from the development of the Bog Experience.
- The growing demand for regenerative tourism experiences.
- Connectivity to the Littleton Labyrinth and planned Midlands Trail, as well as other off-road cycling and walking projects.
- Ability to create a unique outdoor activity centre addressing a current destination product gap.
- Development of a hybrid model that combines community amenities and commercial activities on one site.
- Provides a showcase to interpret local heritage of national significance e.g. Derrynaflan Chalice
- Growing demand amongst corporate markets taking part in outdoor and regenerative experiences.
- Sustainability training and initiatives and ESG courses are growing in popularity particularly within the corporate sector.

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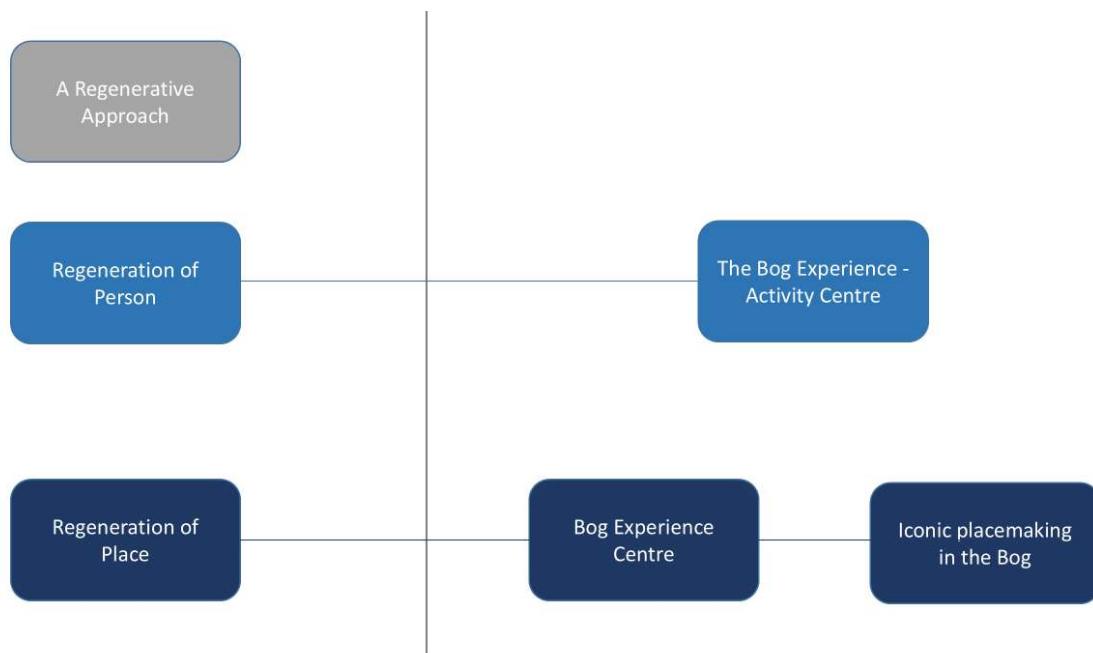
- Site capacity to accommodate on water and on land activities and development of an innovation
- Ability to deliver a multi-generational and multi audience approach through the blend of activities e.g. walking and cycling trails, water activities etc.

Challenges

- Current road access to the site and implications for catering for large volumes of car and coach traffic
- Existing levels of accommodation in the surrounding area and county as a whole.
- Environmental sensitivities of the site and the impact this may have on future product and trails development.
- Addressing the transient nature of Tipperary as a tourism destination.
- The ability to attract investors and funders.
- Ensuring local communities are engaged with throughout the development process.

3.5 Initial Development Concepts

The site concept is based on combining community access to the natural resource with a commercial bog visitor experience component designed to be motivational for domestic and international visitors. The overarching concept reflects the views of the community. This includes ensuring the success of the Littleton Labyrinth is the catalyst for further outdoor experiences and maximises the community investment to date in the amenity. The site concept is structured around the ethos of regenerative tourism and ensuring a regenerative impact focus, delivering an environmentally sensitive experience approach for the site and with the local community being key beneficiaries from the site. It puts Place and Person at the centre of the concept as the inspiration for the site and concept development.



The Littleton Bog Experience is focused on three core elements plus linkages to existing trails. The main elements include the development of a Bog Experience Centre, Activity Centre and Iconic Placemaking Installations leveraging the theme of legends of the Bog. The Bog Experience Centre will serve a range of purposes. These include visitor services for walkers and cyclists, and café space combined with an interpretive area dedicated to the bog and unique stories such as the Derrynaflan Chalice. This centre will provide community space that will

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double up to deliver education and training for corporate groups (such as ESG courses), special interest groups, and community groups.

The Bog Experience Centre will operate as the access point to the commercially operated outdoor activity centre. Bookable and programmed outdoor activities will be based from this centre. These include bookable activities for groups and individuals focused on the themes of wellbeing, outdoor education and 'active in the bog' experiences.



1. Bog Experience Centre

The Bog Experience Centre will be the focal point of the site for both the local community and visitors. It will be the link between community access areas and the commercially operated activity centre and bog experiences. The Bog Experience Centre will include community use space, small scale interpretation of the local association with the Bog and the local legends of the Bog. It will contain a cafe and rooms that will facilitate training, classes or community meetings. The centre will act as a hub for walkers and cyclists, from local recreational walkers to trail users looking to access services, e.g. cafe, toilets.

The importance of the visitor centre is underlined by its capacity to attract a mix of audiences to the site on a year round basis. It will provide a motivation for visitors to explore the wider trail network, including the Littleton Labyrinth and Midlands Trail Network - Tipperary, and be a significant economic stimulus for the local communities surrounding the Bog including Littleton, Glengoole and the Horse and Jockey.

The core features of the Bog Experience Centre are;

Local Bog Story interpretation space – Derrynaflan Story – The centre will include a free to access interpretation of the local Littleton Bog Story. It will focus on unique local stories and folklore such as the discovery of the Derrynaflan Chalice from the monastic site; the legend of Goban Mor, a master craftsman said to have built many churches and round towers in the sixth century in addition to the numerous fairy and ghost lore stories of the bog.

Visitor amenities – A range of amenities to enhance the visitor experience will include a cafe to reinforce its appeal for walkers and to strengthen the site's role as a social hub for local communities. Bike hire facilities will be provided to encourage and enable visitors to explore on to the wider trail network in the area. The provision of

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changing facilities, showers and toilets will further encourage walkers and cyclists to engage with trails throughout the year. These facilities will also service the needs of the users of the activity centre space.

Education and Training Area - A multipurpose education and training centre that will also be used as a community space. This area will specialise in the delivery of sustainability and ESG training for corporate groups and educational groups set in an indoor and outdoor classroom context.

The area will also be used for community training and courses and a meeting space. A varied programme of events will serve to address social inclusion across all ages in the community. The reputation of the site as a community focal point maybe further enhanced by exploring the potential for the Local Link bus network to service the centre.

Access point to the activity site – The Bog Experience Centre will act as the access point to the commercial activities on the site i.e. Activity Centre e.g. high ropes, bog experiences. All commercial activities will be programmed from the centre. It will operate as the visitor hub for all fee-paying activities.

The structure will be nestled within the landscape and inspired by the bog story. It will incorporate sustainable materials to ensure efficient and low-carbon development. External spaces and landscaping will link the venue sensitively to its location. Additional considerations will include features such as access to the activity area via elevated walkways and zip wires.



Sustainable Structure



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Access to the Bog and Activities

Among the distinguishing elements of the activity park is the inclusion of placemaking activity installations. Future considerations include a stroller coaster i.e. walking roller coaster with views at height over the site. It will attract visitors to the area and act as a gateway to the surrounding and planned network of trails e.g. Littleton Labyrinth, Midlands Trail Network - Tipperary. An example of this is in Duisburg, Germany. The Tiger & Turtle Walking Coaster is located on a site that was previously a coal and zinc smelting plant. Its location provides access to local walking paths and recreational areas surrounding the hill.



Tiger & Turtle Walking Coaster

There are numerous international examples of 'iconic' site features that have been transformational in how locals and visitors engage year-round with the local trails. In Limburg these are referred to as 'XL Experiences' and include infrastructures enabling visitors to cycle through water, cycle through trees, cycling through heathland, and cycle underground.



Limburg Cycling Infrastructure

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The Kelpies in Scotland have become one of Scotland's leading tourist attractions since their unveiling in 2014. They serve as a gateway to a network of trails and are part of The Helix, a 350-hectare park that connects visitors to nature, recreation, and cultural experiences.



The Kelpies

Phase One – V.I.C.E Model Approach

Visitor	Industry	Community	Environment
Visitor orientation hub and education centre and interpretation of the local bog story through a mix of activities and bog experiences. Strategic opportunity to link with existing trails, Midlands Trail and possible Wind farm off road trails.	Creation of saleable experience, education, learning hub for schools, visitors, corporate groups.	Provide locals with access to elevated quality of community amenities and a social engagement site promoting outdoor activities.	Develop the site as a learning centre for regenerative practices, sustainable tourism and working with corporates on their ESG planning.

2. Iconic Placemaking Installation

A dedicated space will be home to an iconic placemaking installation. This will include open air art or outdoor sculpture installations linked to the stories and legend's theme introduced to the visitor in the Bog Experience Visitor Centre. They will provide a platform for potential extension of the Bog Experience story into the local communities linking the three communities of Littleton, Glengole and Horse and Jockey. It also provides an additional opportunity to link the site thematically with the regional trails and create a unique local experience linked to the Bog story.

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The effectiveness of this outdoor installation approach is best illustrated by the Eden Project, Cornwall, that guides visitors from point to point using iconic placemaking installations to tell a variety of stories. This includes sculptures depicting the myths of Dionysus, Greek God of the vines, and his followers, the Maenads, who dance and writhe through the vines beating drums and sounding trumpets.



It is also used to good effect in the development of the Sperrins Sculpture Trail in Northern Ireland. This innovative tourism project was created to showcase the epic stories associated with the Sperrins. The sculptures, as well as acting as storytelling tools, also act as wayfinding points for visitors walking and cycling through the Sperrin Mountains.



Phase Two – V.I.C.E Model Approach

Visitor	Industry	Community	Environment
Placemaking assets animation and ability to tell the local bog story in a different way.	Event development / festivals and events based on the bog legends theme.	Provide opportunities for local community groups to engage with the activity centre through storytelling, folklore and cultural elements.	Sensitive bog art installations with no impact on the environment.

3. Bog Experience – Activity Centre

The Bog Experience will see the inclusion of a best in class outdoor activity centre featuring inclusions such as 'high ropes' adventure course.



The 'iconic' high ropes course will vary in terms of difficulty and height to ensure it is suitable for most visitors.

The bog will also offer soft adventure activities in the form of hiking, obstacle courses and mud runs, as well as self-guided activity packages that include treasure hunts, geocaching and orienteering experiences.

Bushcraft related activities will include raft and catapult building, survival skills, summer camps and seasonal events. Additional activities will focus on adventure and challenge, with the aim of attracting outdoor enthusiasts, corporate and school groups, families, special interest domestic and international visitors.



The theme of the bog and its unique biodiversity and heritage will be carried through all activities and experiences e.g. Derryflan, myths and legends of the area, working in the bog, nature-based experiences i.e. birdwatching, photography and educational themed activities.

The 'regeneration of person' theme and wellbeing will be delivered through a programme of saleable experiences for groups and individuals. Examples include:

- Bushcraft – survival skills.
- Bog baths and plunge pool.
- Bog Shoeing.
- Peat Saunas.
- Yoga and breathwork sessions.

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- Nutrition workshops.
- Environmental awareness events.
- Dark Sky night-time tours and interpretive centre with VR experience.



Phase Three – V.I.C.E Model Approach

Visitor	Industry	Community	Environment
Appeal to range of visitors i.e. domestic, international, families based on unique bog wellness themed experiences.	Job creation opportunities linked to outdoor activities, e.g. high ropes course operators, zip line assistants etc.	Significant employment opportunity for local community.	Sustainable tourism product ethos as the 'totem' activity for the site.

SECTION 4: Littleton Bog Experience

This Section of the report provides an overview of the concept development and main themes associated with the Visitor Journey. It describes the key assets, components and characteristics that differentiate the proposed development from others.

- 4.1 Vision for the Littleton Bog Experience
- 4.2 Concept Development
- 4.3 Main Components
- 4.4 Order of Magnitude Costs

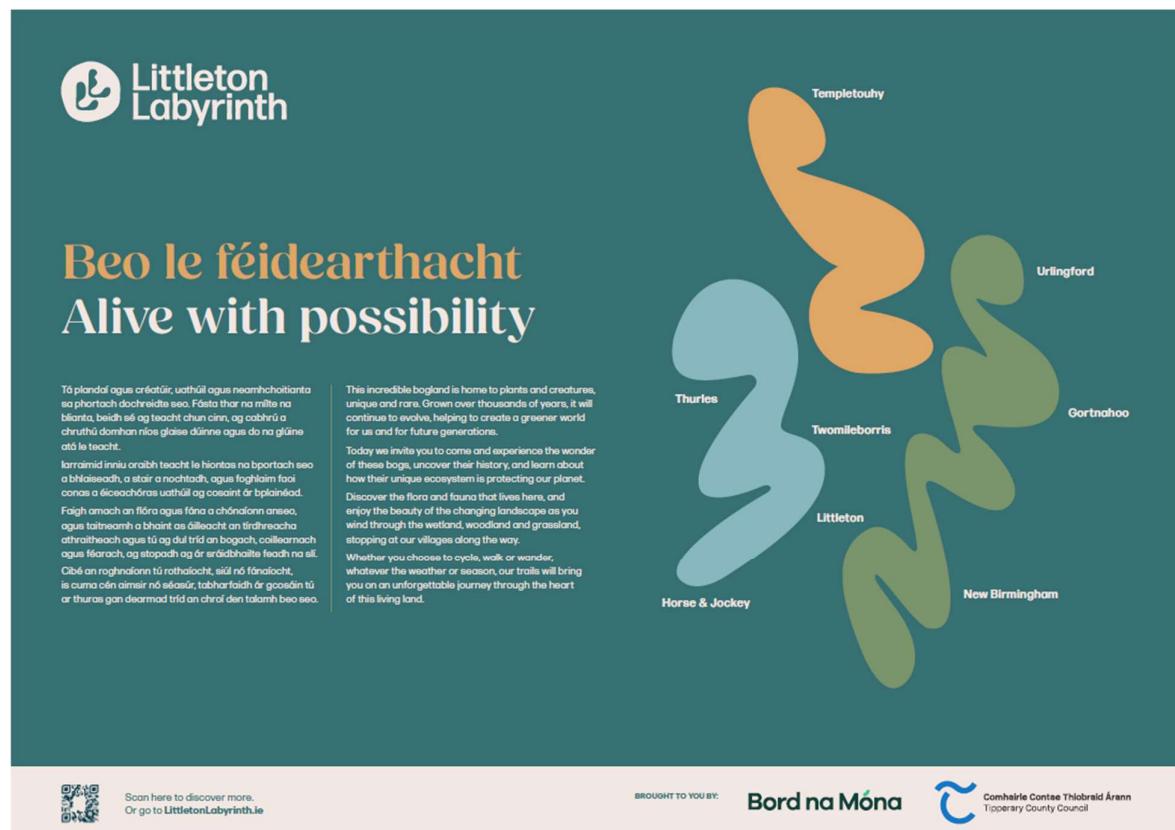


4.1 Vision for the Littleton Bog Experience

Project Potential

The Littleton Bog site allocated by Bord na Móna for the development of a Bog Experience Centre presents a unique opportunity for creating a specialised outdoor ‘active in nature’ visitor destination to attract domestic and international visitors. The site concept is based on promoting community access combined with a commercial bog experience that will benefit both the environment and the local economy.

The Littleton Bog Experience project builds upon the Littleton Labyrinth and the Midlands Trail Network which will see the delivery of an intricate network of themed walking and cycling trails that link settlements and enable immersion in the stories of the landscape. The projects primary aim is to support the development of existing and the creation of new commercial enterprise in the tourism, recreation and cultural sectors by providing a visitor experience that will attract more visitors and/or prolong their stay within the region. Rural tourism associated with the Littleton Bog Experience will play a vital role in fostering economic and societal development by promoting local businesses, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing community well-being.



The vision for the Littleton Bog Experience also builds upon the ‘Tipperary Transforming - Tourism Product Development Plan’ 2020-2030 by recognising the important opportunity that tourism provides in terms of economic impact, job creation and sustainability for the county, and complements Fáilte Ireland’s programme for creating successful tourism development through the Ireland’s Ancient East brand proposition.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

The Transforming Tipperary document identifies the 'Tipperary Bushcraft Survival and Activity Park' as one of several main tourism product themes and concepts that will make up the next generation of tourism offerings in Tipperary. This Landscape 'Hero' project is described as:

"A specialised outdoor 'active in nature' destination created to attract domestic or international groups who want to experience real survival techniques and have fun in the wilds of Tipperary. It is directed at adventurous couples, groups or families and involves camping/glamping for multi-day stays. Group leaders set a range of survival challenges for the groups which will require all of their ingenuity to overcome".

Additionally, under 'Creating Clusters', Transforming Tipperary reinforces the important role of Blueways, Greenways and Future Trail Development for the walking and cycling holiday experience as a mainstream part of most Irish holidays. A number of projects are identified which stand out as having significant potential, including the Littleton Bog Labyrinth which entails creating walkways and cycleways across the network of raised bogland linking Two Mile Borris, Gortnahoo, Urlingford, Templetouhy and Littleton.

To help inform the approach to developing the Littleton Bog site, a national competitive analysis was carried out as part of this study to understand what competition exists locally and nationally, and to gain insight into their activities, together with international benchmarking to determine best practice in outdoor recreation provision and to provide inspiration for potential site developments. This included the testing of 'Bushcraft' as a motivating experience by itself, as well as gaining insights into a multi-activity/purpose approach. Discussions also took place with industry experts, including bushcraft and outdoor activity specialists, to help identify potential tourism developments at Littleton Bog.

Following initial consultations with Tipperary County Council and project partners Bord na Móna, and subsequent consultation with key stakeholders, it is evident that Littleton Bog offers huge potential for becoming a leader in 'Immersive Family Fun Tourism', based on its location in Ireland's Ancient East and the character and accessibility of the local bog landscape. This potential goes beyond the 'Tipperary Bushcraft Survival and Activity Park' concept and offers the opportunity to transform the site into a significant recreational experience, reflecting the views of the community to ensure that investment made to date in the success of the Littleton Labyrinth becomes the catalyst for a major outdoor pursuits centre.

Midlands Trail Network

The EU Just Transition Fund seeks to support the longer-term ambition to develop a Midlands Trail Network, including connecting with established arterial routes such as the Royal and Grand Canal Greenways, The Old Rail Trail and the Dublin-Galway Greenway. The entire proposed network of trail development will connect rural settlements, visitor attraction hubs and peatland bog areas with already established and future routes. The ambition for this connected network is to firmly establish the Midlands as a compelling destination for outdoor recreation that will motivate both domestic and international visitors.

The Tipperary route of the Midlands Trail Network is located on Bord na Móna lands within the townlands of Ballybeg, Derryvella and Lanespark. The proposal will connect into the existing Lough Doire Bhuile shared cycle and walkway and Phase 1 of the Littleton Labyrinth.

The current Planning Application for the proposed Tipperary Cycle Network comprises:

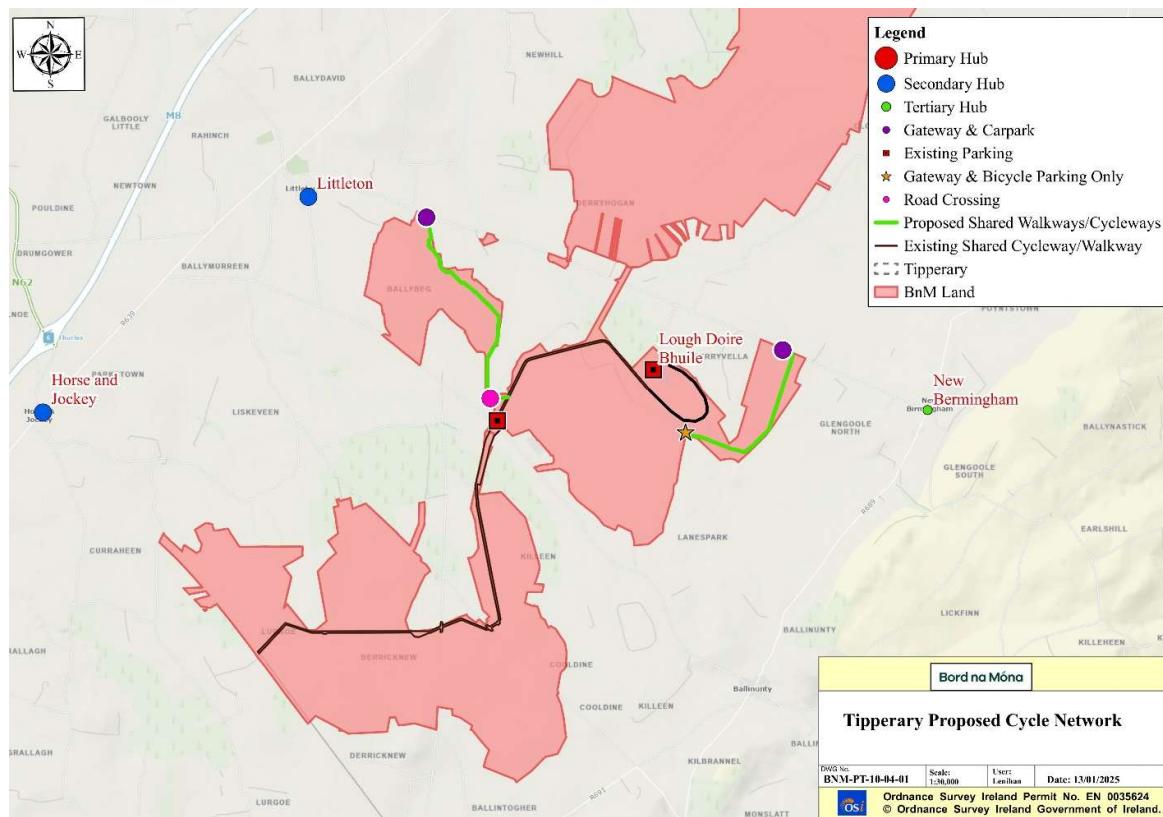
- a) The delivery of a shared cycle and walkway on Bord na Móna lands. This will include the repurposing of 602 meters of existing former rail bed, 2859 meters along existing bog headlands / former high fields, and 721 meters along pre-existing machine access routes.
- b) The construction of car and / or bicycle parking facilities at a number of gateway locations along the proposed route and the provision of EV Charging spaces at the Gateway locations. This will include:
 - i. 2 no. Type 2 Gateways
 - ii. 1 no. Type 4 Gateway

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

iii. 1 no. Minor Rest Points

- c) Upgrade works to 1 no. local access road crossing and 4 no. agricultural access crossings.
- d) The erection of wayfinding and interpretative signage at Gateway locations along the route.
- e) The implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) nature-based drainage proposals at the Gateway locations to cater for surface water drainage at car park locations.
- f) Fencing and screening will be erected where required for health and safety and biodiversity reasons which will include 2250 meters of screening and 1925 meters of boundary treatment fencing.
- g) All other ancillary and associated site work.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR), Natura Impact Statement (NIS), Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Habitat Management and Enhancement Plan (HMEP) and a Construction Management Plan have been prepared as part of the planning application for the MTN-T which all include mitigation measures for ecological and biodiversity protection. The implementation of the mitigation measures will also contribute to the aims and objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan.



Midlands Trail Network – Tipperary (MTN-T)

Littleton Bog Experience Linkages

Although the Tipperary routes of the Midlands Trail Network do not connect directly with the closest surrounding villages of Littleton, Horse and Jockey and Glengoole, they will provide nearby services for the users of the trails. The trails will offer a recreational and tourism use with associated parking facilities, while also directing users to the nearby villages for further services and tourism offerings.

Both Littleton and Horse and Jockey are identified as Secondary Hubs for this connected and expanded trail network, providing essential services that will in turn support the creation of new jobs in ancillary and related activities, such as bike hire, hospitality services, visitor interpretation, transport and other supporting initiatives.

The village of Glengoole is identified as a Tertiary Hub of the trail network, providing a basic local connectivity for local people onto the network, while also serving as a point of access and egress for emergency and maintenance purposes.

As defined in the Midlands Trail Network Toolkit:

Secondary Hubs are nodes throughout the Midlands Trail Network that provide amenity and experience reflective of day-tripping and of visitors passing through. These maybe small to medium-sized towns and villages with local public transit options, or existing/proposed visitor attractions. There may be some limited overnight accommodation across surrounding areas. Secondary Hubs must:

- Have public toilet facilities including Changing Places
- Directly connect with two Type 2 Gateways
- Have continuous step-free and barrier-free access between all components.
- Have appropriately scaled car parking and disabled provision, with e-charging.
- Have bike hire (including e-bike, children's bikes, and trailers).

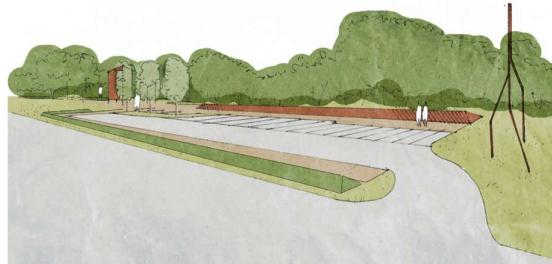
Tertiary Hubs are local access points onto the network with limited services. Key Components – Tertiary Hubs must:

- Have direct connectivity with Type 3 Gateways.
- Consider location-specific car parking, with capacity dependent on assessed local/community need and local road conditions.
- Not be promoted as tourism nodes for access to the Midlands Trail Network.

The MTN-T will provide for a total of 56 no. car parking spaces at new car parks in Ballybeg and Darryvella, and 32 no. bicycle parking spaces at Ballybeg, Darryvella and Lanespark. There is also existing car parking at Lough Doire Bhuile (approx. 18no. spaces) and Littleton Labyrinth Car Park (35no. spaces). The proposed car parks will be open to the public all year round.



Ballybeg

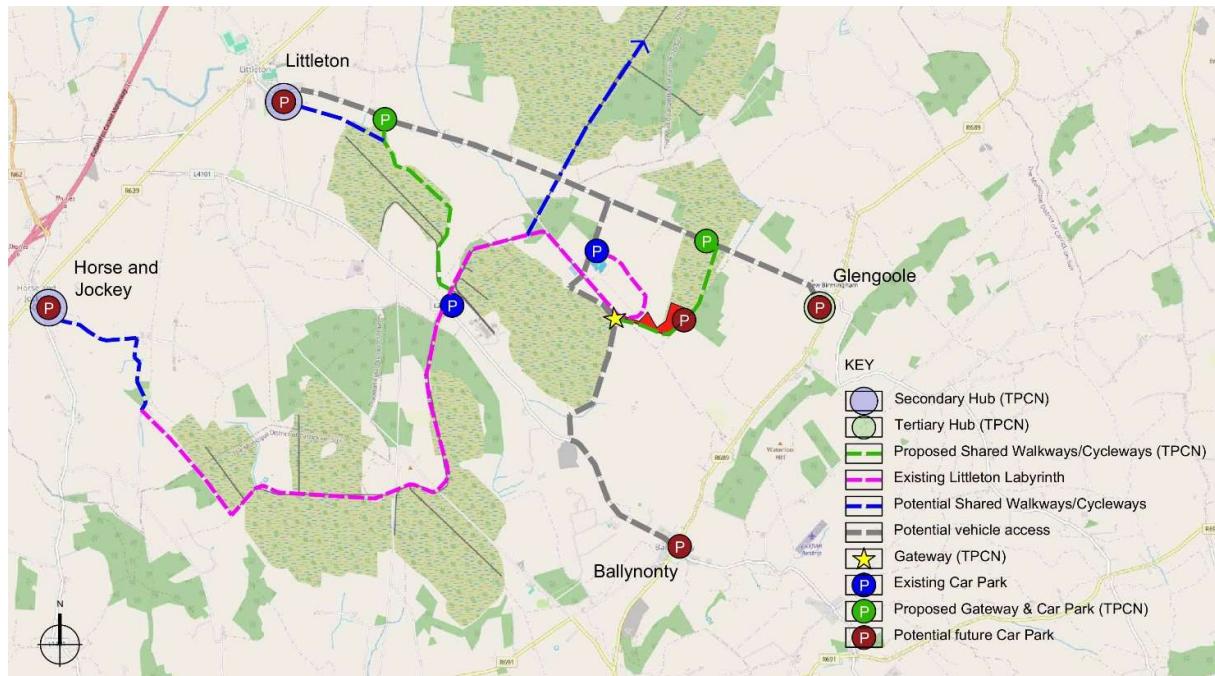


Derryvella

Gateways & Car Parks: MTN-T – Perspective Renders by Feeney Mahon Architects

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

During peak periods, vehicles could be directed towards the surrounding villages and a possible shuttle bus service introduced when necessary to help reduce pressure on the local road network. A bus stop serving the Local Link service along the Glengoole-Littleton road should also be considered close to the proposed MTN-T car parks to increase accessibility of the Bog Experience site for local users. Additional car and coach parking is proposed at the Visitor Centre of the Littleton Bog Experience to cater for community events, schools, clubs and other specific users. General access could be restricted as necessary through suitable signage and controls. Visitor accommodation is not envisaged within the Bog Experience site at this stage due to the planning preference to position this within settlements in the locality.



Midlands Trail Network - Tipperary (MTN-T) and Littleton Bog Experience Linkages Plan

Gateways

Gateways play a key role in visitor orientation and navigation on the Midlands Trail Network. A visitor should not be able to enter or exit the Trail Network without passing through a Gateway acting as a key identifier of the trails experience. Gateways are intended to deliver consistent visual brand identity, be fully accessible with barrier free access, inviting and welcoming spaces.

The MTN-T includes Gateways (Type 2) at the two new Car Parks and a Gateway with Bicycle Parking Only (Type 4) at the interface of the Littleton Labyrinth and the site of the proposed Littleton Bog Experience.



Illustrative view towards Gateway Type 4 at entry to site of proposed Littleton Bog Experience

Rest Points

Rest points are part of the Midlands Trail Network for animating the trails and making a journey both a practical and enjoyable 'slow travel' experience. Minor Rest Points are proposed at a number of locations along the MTN-T at approximate 2km intervals, they are visually consistent with the structures at the gateway locations and are intended to:

- Provide a landmark and point of orientation in the landscape.
- Provide a small place of shelter, complimented by a newly-planted copse of Alder Trees.
- Provide information / signage to visitors.

Visitor Centre

The Bog Experience Visitor Centre will be an essential part of the recreational offering, serving a range of purposes such as refreshment and visitor facilities, exhibition and interpretation spaces, and administrative areas. This Centre will also provide community space for meetings and events, together with facilities to deliver education and training for corporate groups (such as ESG courses), schools and special interest groups.

The Visitor Centre will operate as the access point to the revenue generating elements of the Outdoor Activity Centre, containing a range of activities suitable for all abilities. Programmed activities will be provided here, including bookable events for groups and individuals focused on wellbeing, education and 'active in the bog' experiences.

The anticipated visitor numbers over the first five years of the development are projected as:

Location	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Littleton Bog Experience Site	120,000	122,400	124,848	127,345	129,892
Littleton Bog Activity Centre	50,000	51,000	52,020	53,060	54,122
Bog Experience Visitor Centre	70,000	71,400	72,828	74,285	75,770

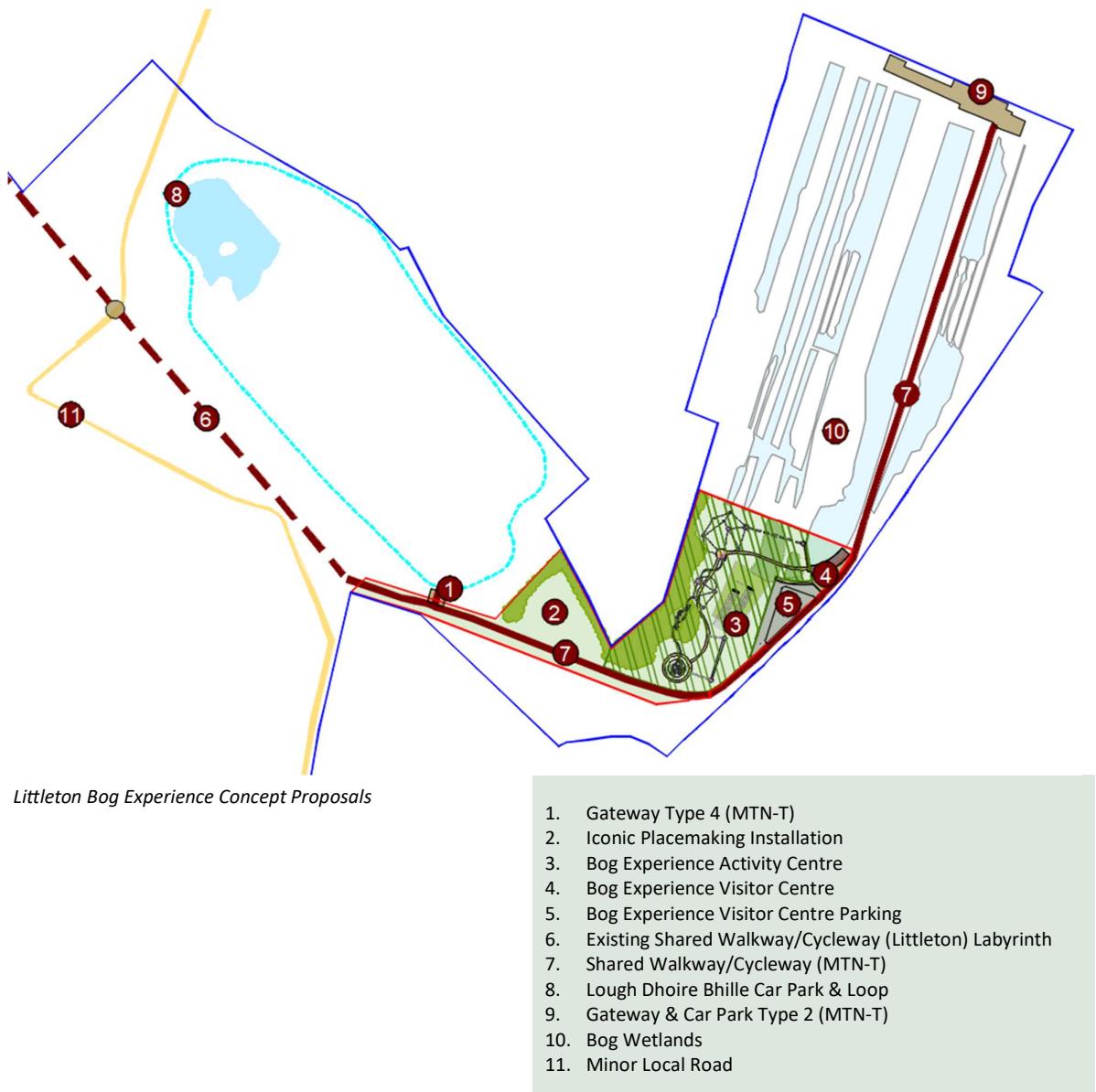


Illustrative view from the proposed Littleton Bog Experience Visitor Centre

Concept Proposals

The overall concept for the development of the Littleton Bog Experience is based around a series of Activity Zones that lie within the allocated site area and immediately around it.

As some of these zones do not form part of the allocated site but contribute importantly to the function or context of the Bog Experience, their delivery will be dependent on related projects, such as Littleton Labyrinth and the Midlands Trail Network. The Old Bog Rail Lines, for example, provide pedestrian and cycle access to the Littleton Bog Experience, although the routes lie outside the site extents. Similarly, vehicle access to the Bog Experience will be through Bord na Móna lands that are outside the allocated site. The proposed Gateway straddles the given site boundary but is an important feature of both the Bog Experience and the existing and proposed cycle network. Additionally, the surrounding boglands do not form part of Bog Experience but strongly influence its use and general context.



Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

Developing the concept of Littleton Bog as a specialised outdoor 'active in nature' destination, combined with links to existing and planned trails, will create an attraction of scale for the growing market of visitors who wish to experience slow tourism combined with adventurous and challenging pursuits, including real survival activities.

The key influences on the development of the concept are summarised as follows.

Proposals shown within this report are indicative only. They are intended to demonstrate the general aspirations for the Littleton Bog Experience site and the components expected to achieve the vision and should not be taken as part of any detailed design. All proposals will be dependent on further engineering, environmental and traffic/transport assessments.

4.2 Concept Development

Landscape Types



- The Bog Experience site comprises Dry Bogland with regenerating native vegetation.
- It is enclosed by Mixed Woodland to the south and a Coniferous Woodland to the east.
- The large-scale Industrial Cutaway Bog extends to the west of the entrance to the Bog Experience.
- Regenerating Woodland and Bogland occur to the west and across the amenity lands of Loch Dhoire Bhille.
- Wet Bogland of high biodiversity and amenity value extends northwards from the site to the Littleton-Glengoole local road.
- The Boglands are fringed by low-lying agricultural land (pasture) interspersed with other raised bogs.

Access



- The western entry to the site is signified by MTN-T Gateway (Type 4) which also provides pedestrian/cycle access to the Littleton Labyrinth and the Loch Dhoire Bhille Loop.
- The site is linked to the existing Car Park at Loch Dhoire, and to another close to the former Briquette Factory at Lanespark to the south.
- The proposed MTN-T Gateway & Car Park (Type 2) lie to the north of the site on the Littleton-Glengoole local road.
- Proposed vehicle access (controlled) to the Bog Experience from the MTN-T Gateway & Car Park, subject to BnM agreement and further studies.
- Proposed Car Park with controlled access at the Bog Experience Visitor Centre.

Activity Zones



1. Gateway, MTN-T (Type 4)
2. Iconic Placemaking Installation
3. Bog Experience Activity Centre
4. Bog Wetlands
5. Littleton Labyrinth
6. Lough Dhoire Bhille
7. Cut-away Bog



Concept Plan

1. Gateway, MTN-T (Type 4)
2. Gateway & Car Park, MTN-T (Type 2)
3. Iconic Placemaking Installation
4. Bog Experience Activity Centre
5. Bog Experience Visitor Centre
6. Bog Experience Parking
7. Bog Rail trails
8. Bog Wetlands
9. Lough Dhoire Bhille
10. Cut-away Bog

4.3 Main Components

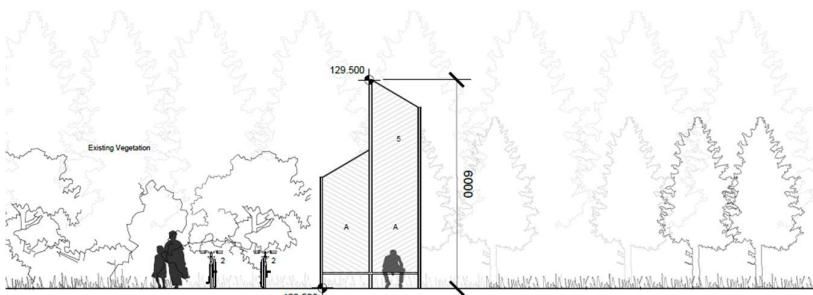
1. Gateway

Typical images:

A Gateway with Bicycle Parking Only (Type 4) is included as part of the MTN-T at the interface of the Littleton Labyrinth and the Littleton Bog Experience site. The Gateway will:

- Provide a landmark and point of orientation in the landscape as well as forming the entrance to the Bog Experience.
- Provide a threshold experience for users entering/leaving the Midlands Trail Network.
- Provide a small place of shelter.
- Provide information / signage to visitors.
- Indicate (by the taller vertical structural bay) the intended access point function.

As envisaged in the MTN-T Planning documents, the structure has a distinctive, modest plan form with a 6m vertical dimension to complement its role as a point of orientation in the landscape.



Proposed Section Gateway Type 4: Feeney McMahon Design

The Gateway will provide a high-quality space that is inviting and welcoming and generates positive first/last impressions for users of the trails. Information on the Bog Experience together with accessible navigation and route planning information for the trails network will be an essential part of the threshold space.

The features will be located within an existing clearing in the regenerating bog woodland, close to the junction with the local access road and linking to the Lough Dhoire Bhille Loop. Shared pedestrian/cycle access to the Bog Experience Centre will continue along the former bog rail line between established and regenerating woodland, passing the proposed Iconic Placemaking Installation.



Gateway Type 04 Pavilion Sketch:
Feeney McMahon Design



Illustrative view of Gateway from Littleton Labyrinth

2. Iconic Placemaking Installation

Typical images:

Located along the entrance trail to the Bog Experience Centre, this triangular area of regenerating land is proposed for an Iconic Placemaking Installation, or series of related Installations, based on the myths and legends associated with Littleton Bog. The area could also provide for Bushcraft related activities focussed on adventure and challenge for attracting outdoor enthusiasts.

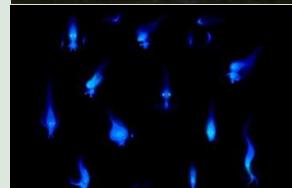
The area would aim to:

- Promote looking at the bog landscape differently.
- Interpret the cultural importance of the landscape and its local history and mythology.
- Be universally accessible and provide the opportunity to rest and to contemplate the surroundings.

The displays could include:

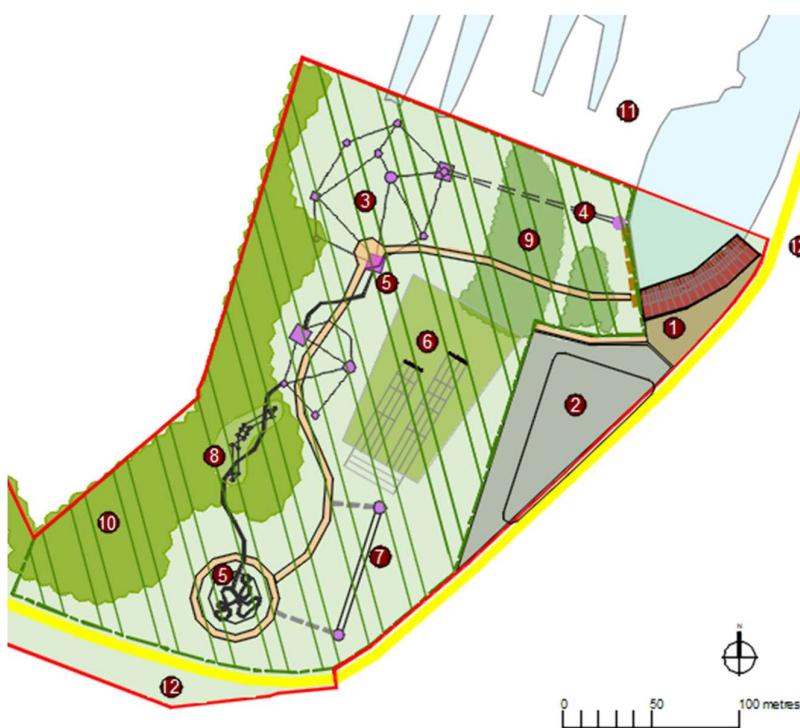
- Features that interpret the myths and legends associated with Littleton Bog, such as the monastery of Doire Meilleb and Saint Tigernach, and the stories of Derry na flan and the 'Petticoat Loose' witch.
- Re-creation of 'Will-o'-the-Wisp' light effects to animate the nighttime experience of the bog landscape.
- Ancient archaeological access features, such plank paths, timber and stone tracks and brushwood trackways, reflecting early human activity in the bog.
- Sculptures related to the bog landscape, such as abstract cut peat stacks and displays of ancient bog wood.

This dry cutaway area of land, approx. 1.5ha in extent, is regenerating with native vegetation and defined by developing woodland along its north-eastern edge. Continued management of native species suited to peatland edges, such as birch, willow, and alder, would help to further enhance biodiversity by creating a habitat mosaic that balances wooded and boggy areas, while also reinforcing the natural setting of the installations.



3. Bog Experience Activity Centre

Main Facilities:



The Activity Centre covers most the Bog Experience site, extending to around 6.0ha. It represents the commercial element of the development with a projected 50,000 visitors in year one from the following sources:

- Family and adult groups
- Corporate events and team building
- Special interest groups
- Schools

The area will be accessed via the Visitor Centre and contained by natural features such as bog channels and native vegetation combined with low fencing of natural materials and raised sleeper ditches.

The Activity Centre will be a specialised outdoor 'active in nature' destination created to attract domestic or international groups who want to experience challenging and adventurous activities in the wilds of the bog, including Bushcraft Survival.

Several different challenge levels will be provided, capable of being enjoyed by families or groups competing against each other or against themselves. Group leaders will set a range of challenges of varying difficulty, requiring ingenuity and commitment to overcome.

Some challenges would have water features, others with trees, logs and ropes. The range of challenges would provide a year-round visitor attraction and include some or all the following, possibly phased according to popularity and different emerging concepts:

- High Ropes Adventure Course, with varying levels of difficulty and challenge to suit different abilities.
- Zip lines connecting the challenges to each other and the Visitor Centre.

1. Bog Experience Visitor Centre
2. Visitor Parking (approx. 80 car + 5 coach spaces)
3. High ropes course
4. Zip wire
5. Stroller-coaster with extensions
6. Field events – archery, clay pigeon, etc.
7. Below ground bog experience
8. Obstacle training course
9. Existing woodland – crafts + sculpture
10. Regenerating woodland – nature trails + Bushcraft
11. Wetlands – nature, sculpture trails, paddle-boarding + Bushcraft
12. MTN-T trail for pedestrian and cycle access

Typical images:



Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

- An iconic 'stroller-coaster' as a stunning visual and challenging feature.
- Assault exercise course with boot camp physical training programmes.
- Laser tag, paintball, archery, and clay pigeon shooting.
- Paddle boarding within the wet bogland adjacent to the Visitor Centre.
- Below ground bog experience through deep slit walkway through the peat.
- Bushcraft related activities focussed on adventure and challenge for attracting outdoor enthusiasts, corporate and school groups, families, special interest domestic and international visitors. Activities to include survival skills, overnight camping and seasonal events.

In addition to high adventure facilities, the Activity Centre will cater for the 'Regeneration of Person' theme, through an innovative delivery of wellbeing activity and regenerative experiences. This will combine outdoor activities with a location for learning and historical interpretation of the bog story, delivered through a programme of saleable experiences for groups and individuals.

Regenerative activities could include:

- Bog baths and plunge pool
- Bog Shoeing
- Peat Saunas
- Yoga and breathwork sessions
- Nutrition workshops
- Environmental awareness events
- Photography and nature-watching
- Dark Sky night-time tours and interpretive centre with VR experience.

Within the wider bog areas adjoining the Activity Centre, in addition to exploring existing foot and cycle trails, activities could include assisted hiking, obstacle courses and mud runs, as well as self-guided packages such as bog treasure hunts, geocaching and orienteering experiences.



Illustrative view towards the Bog Experience Activity Centre



4. Bog Experience Visitor Centre

Typical images:

The Visitor Centre will be the focal point for both the local community and visitors to the Littleton Bog Experience. It will provide the link between the community access areas and the revenue generating Activity Centre and bog experiences.

The Visitor Centre is projected to attract 70,000 visits in year one. There is anticipated to be no charge for visiting the centre and annual footfall is expected to include strong community usage. Projected visitor numbers allow for multiple visits.

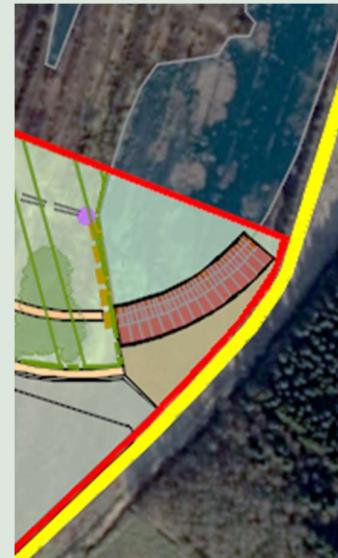
The Visitor Centre has the potential to become a focal point of community activity. A varied programme of events will serve to address social inclusion across all ages in the community. The accessibility of the site to all in the community would be further enhanced by exploring the potential for the Local Link bus network to service the centre.

The location of the Visitor Centre at the northern edge of the site will allow pedestrian/cycle access from the MTN-T trails, extending westwards from the Gateway and northwards to the proposed MTN-T Gateway & Car Park on the Littleton-Glengoole road. Essential vehicle and emergency vehicle access is proposed via a new roadway extending southwards from the Gateway and Car Park, subject to Bord na Móna's agreement and further environmental and engineering studies.

The Visitor Centre will take full advantage of the scenic context and views across the adjacent wetlands. The relationship with the natural environment could be enhanced through localised deepening of the wetland bog, and the provision of boardwalks around the waters' edge. The backdrop of existing coniferous woodland will help absorb the building into the landscape.

The architectural approach needs to prioritise environmental sensitivity, with minimal ecological disruption. Considerations for integrating the Visitor Centre within its sensitive context include:

- Lightweight and elevated structures - to minimize ground impact, preserving the delicate hydrology and vegetation of the bog.
- Natural materials - locally sourced where practicable, with an emphasis on timber and stone.
- Green roofs - using peat-compatible planting that allows the building to blend into the environment and enhance insulation.
- Modular and prefabricated units – to reduce on-site construction activity, minimizing environmental disturbance and enhancing energy-efficiency.
- Traditional vernacular styles - drawing inspiration from traditional rural buildings, with contemporary interpretation that blend cultural heritage with sustainable design.
- Turf walls – adapting traditional bogland methods as part of eco-friendly insulation or landscaping elements.
- Integration of natural light and views – using large windows and natural light to enhance the connection with the surrounding bogland, promoting a sense of place.
- Energy strategies - such as lighting controls, high specification glazing and improved air-tightness to reduce amount of heating, lighting or cooling required, with resultant reduced energy consumption and costs.



Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

- SuDS features – incorporated into hard surfaces and rainwater harvesting from roofs or a surface catchment to help increase water efficiency and reduce environmental impact.
- Local vegetation – using native bog species for landscaping around the building to enhance ecological value and visual coherence of the development.

The Visitor Centre will provide a multitude of functions, including:

- Promotion and interpretation - raising awareness of the location and attraction, incorporating the legends of the bog linked with Iconic Placemaking Installations, Gateways and Rest Points on the adjoining trails.
- Gathering point and orientation of visitors around the location, providing a welcoming and informative reception.
- Filtering of visitor traffic through the building and to the commercial attractions of the Activity Centre.
- Essential visitor services – changing facilities, bike rental, café, toilets etc.
- Education and Training Area – a venue for community meetings, training and events, as well as for the delivery of sustainability and ESG training for corporate and educational groups set in an indoor and outdoor classroom context.
- Information on bookable activities for groups and individuals incorporating the themes of wellbeing, education and ‘active in the bog’ experiences.

Space planning for the Centre needs to create a functional, welcoming and inspiring environment while considering the needs of visitors, staff, and operational activities. The building will be sized for the maximum number of visitors the centre needs to manage during peak periods. Additional functional space will be required, including administration, accommodation, storage and maintenance space and staff facilities.



Illustrative view from proposed Bog Experience Visitor Centre

5. Visitor Parking

Typical images:

The Littleton Bog Experience site is linked to the existing car park at Lough Dhoire and to another close to the former Briquette Factory at Lanespark to the south. The proposed MTN-T Gateway & Car Park (Type 2) lie to the north of the site on the Littleton-Glengoole local road.

A Littleton Bog Experience car park is proposed close to the Visitor Centre, catering for community events, schools, clubs and other specific users. It would accommodate around 80 cars (including 8 disabled spaces) and 5 coaches, to facilitate the peak projected numbers to the Visitor Centre per day within the first 5 years of operation. It is proposed that the car park would be accessed via a new roadway extending southwards from the MTN-T Gateway & Car Park, also providing emergency and service vehicle access, subject to Bord na Móna's agreement and further engineering and environmental studies. General and unauthorised vehicle access could be restricted as necessary through suitable signage and controls at the access point.

As demand increases or during exceptionally busy periods, such as special events, additional parking would be available within the villages of Littleton and Glengoole, with access to the Bog Experience by foot, cycle or possibly shuttle bus and Local Link services.

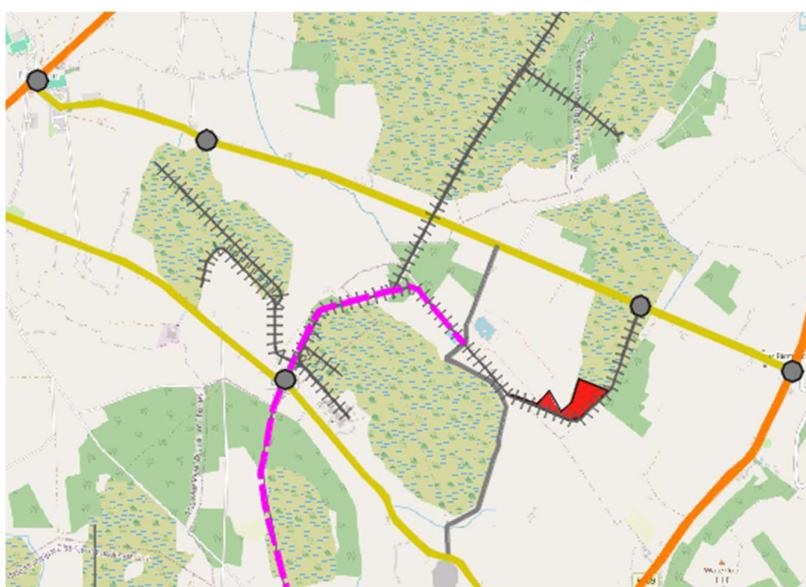
The proposed car park layout follows the distinctive linear vegetation pattern of the regenerating cutaway bog and arranged in a series of bays separated by native planting, to help reduce the impact of parked vehicles on the landscape. Pedestrian access is conveniently direct to the Visitor Centre and reasonably close to the Gateway for visitors not wishing to participate in the Bog Experience Activity Centre.

The car park surface build-up would be in accordance with Midlands Trail Network and TII details, and surface water drainage design based on Technical Guidance Document Part H – Drainage & Wastewater Disposal (TGD Part H), the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Nature Based Solutions (NBS) would be employed through the adoption of wet swales and other appropriate measures.



6. Old Bog Rail Access

Typical images:



The Littleton Bog complex is associated with a narrow-gauge rail network that was traditionally used for the extraction and transportation of peat. For pedestrian and cycle users, the Bog Experience site is directly linked to the old bog lines utilised by the Littleton Labyrinth trail to the west and to the proposed MTN-T Shared Walkway/Cycleway along the southern and eastern edges of the site and extending northwards to the Littleton-Glengoole road.

Subject to Traffic/Transport assessment and engineering and environmental studies, vehicle access to the Bog Experience site for permitted users and service/emergency vehicles is proposed from the MTN-T Gateway & Car Park (Type 2) to the north of the site. Construction of the roadway (approx. 900m long) would be in accordance with MTN and TII details. As the route lies outside the given site boundary, the vehicle access arrangement to the Bog Experience will need to be in agreement with Tipperary County Council and Bord na Móna.

7. Bog Wetlands

The large area of wetland bog to the north of the proposed Littleton Bog Experience site is high in amenity and biodiversity interest. It is bordered by a Coillte plantation of Sitka spruce. The cutaway bog has been recently rewet as part of a Bord na Móna long-term rehabilitation process to bring back natural vegetation that includes reed-beds, grasses, rushes, bog-cotton, sphagnum-moss and native trees such as birch.

The MTN-T Shared Walkway/Cycleway runs alongside the eastern edge of the wetlands, providing pedestrian/cycle access from the Littleton-Glengoole road to the proposed Bog Experience Visitor Centre.

The location of the proposed Visitor Centre takes advantage of the tranquil views across the wetlands and, subject to environmental assessment and Bord na Móna's agreement, parts of the wettest areas could be explored for providing low-key water-based activities such as paddle-boarding and kayaking, thereby contributing significantly to the visitor experience and appreciation of this distinctive bog landscape.

Typical images:



8. Lough Dhoire Bhille

Derryvella Lake, or (Loch Doire Mheille) lies approximately 1km to the west of the Littleton Bog Experience site and has been transformed by Slievardagh Rural Development in conjunction with Bórd na Móna into an area for amenity and nature conservation. An artificial lake for angling was created in 1999, and two fishing huts and wheel-chair accessible fishing bays were installed, as well as picnic tables and a car park.

There are also two walks, one around the lake shore and a longer Loop Walk incorporating parts of the former peat workings. The changed management of the site has encouraged a variety of grasses and native wildflowers to develop, greatly enhancing the general biodiversity and recreational value of the area, and clearly demonstrating the benefits to be gained through rehabilitation of a previously degraded landscape.

The Derryvella site would become an intrinsic part of the Littleton Bog Experience through the MTN-T proposed link between the looped walk and Gateway, thereby increasing the opportunities for visitors to explore the wider area and an evolving landscape type.



9. Cutaway Bog

This is the most expansive area of cutaway bog, clearly visible in long distance views of the degraded landscape that extends westwards from the site of the Littleton Bog Experience towards the Littleton Labyrinth trail and the former Lanespark Peat Briquette factory. Although the slightly elevated bog headlands have areas of regenerating woodland, especially along the old rail lines, natural regeneration in much of the cutaway bog is sparse and it remains an open desolate landscape of low biodiversity and visual interest.

As with other Bord na Móna restoration projects in the Littleton Bog complex, a comprehensive rehabilitation programme is required to enhance the cutaway bog by developing replacement wet peatland systems (wetlands and wet woodland systems) as part of a long-term strategy to transform the area into a biodiversity-rich landscape. The new landscape will also provide a range of other ecosystem goods and services such as water filtration/attenuation and reduction of carbon emissions from the formerly drained peat production lands, thereby offering major ecological and recreational benefits.



4.5 Order of Magnitude Costs

The estimated costs for development of the Littleton Bog Experience are based on the concept proposals and indicative components for each of the identified Activity Zones.

As some of these zones do not form part of the allocated site but contribute importantly to the function or context of the Bog Experience project, the delivery of proposals within the zones outside the project boundary will need to be developed as part of related projects, such as the MTN-T and other Bord na Móna restoration projects, or in conjunction with the Littleton Bog Experience project.

The costs can only be very indicative at this stage due to factors such as site acquisition, unknown ground conditions which could strongly influence structural design and construction constraints, site access and availability of essential services, environmental and engineering assessments, and choice of proprietary Bog Experience activity equipment which is likely to change with further project design and development.

Ref.	Zones/Main Components	Cost Allocation €	Sub-total Cost €
1.	Gateway		
	Midlands Trail Network - Tipperary		NA
	Sub-total:		
2.	Iconic Placemaking Installation		
	Site preparation	20,000	
	Footpath	20,000	
	Installation(s)	150,000	
	Site furniture	30,000	
	Landscaping	150,000	
	Sub-total:		370,000
3.	Bog Experience Activity Centre		
	Site preparation	60,000	
	Hard surfacing – main path + nodes	260,000	
	Footpath	12,000	
	Low walling	130,000	
	Site enclosure	80,000	
	High Ropes equipment	255,000	
	Stroller-coaster	2,000,000	
	Obstacle course	200,000	
	Below the Bog feature	150,000	
	Field events area	100,000	
	Site furniture	120,000	
	Existing woodland	100,000	
	Regenerating woodland	120,000	
	Landscaping	100,000	
	Sub-total:		3,687,000
4.	Bog Experience Visitor Centre		
	Site preparation	5,000	
	Visitor Centre building	5,400,000	
	External works	450,000	
	Sub-total:		5,855,000
5.	Parking		
	Site preparation	6,000	
	Surfacing – car parking	350,000	
	Surfacing – coach parking, service	80,000	
	Landscaping	30,000	
	Sub-total:		466,000
6.	Vehicle Access Route		
	Upgrade of Trail Type 01 & Type 03	300,000	
	Site furniture	60,000	
	Sub-total:		360,000

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

Ref.	Zones/Main Components	Cost Allocation €	Sub-total Cost €
7.	Bog Wetlands Continued re-wetting management		NA
8.	Lough Dhoire Bhille Vegetation management		NA
9.	Industrial Cutaway Bog Long-term rehabilitation		NA
		Sub-total	10,738,000
	Allow for Preliminaries & insurances	1,500,000	
	Allow Contingency for Design Development	2,000,000	
		Total All Zones	14,238,000

	Exclusions:	Notes:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site acquisition • Site Surveys • Environmental Impact Assessments • Planning Conditions • Scope Changes • Inflation beyond the date of this OMC • Professional Fees • Legal & Marketing Fees • Planning Contributions • Utility Contributions • VAT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMC is based on Concept Development Report only. • OMC is purely indicative only and subject to development of the brief, undertaking of surveys and detailed design. • OMC is subject to specialist design input by specialist fixtures contractors; e.g. Stroller Coaster, etc. • OMC is subject to review upon completion of Detailed Design information.

SECTION 5: Marketing Approach – A Multi Audience Approach

This Section of the report provides an assessment of the overall market and the potential for the proposed Littleton Bog Experience, including the marketing aims and objectives, market trends and motivations.

5.1 Domestic and International Target Markets

5.2 Domestic Tourism Motivations Framework

5.3 Six Markets Approach



5.1 Domestic and International Target Markets

The domestic and international target markets have been developed for the Littleton Bog Experience according to the three phases of the experience. The priority markets have been divided into three categories; local community, fully independent travellers (FIT), and group business. Each phase attracts a slightly different target market.

Phase	Priority markets
Phase One: Bog Experience Centre	Local community
	Fully Independent Travellers (FIT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic – Couples, friends, family/multigenerational groups International visitors – Eco-tourists, outdoor adventure travellers
	Group Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic groups – walking groups, cycling groups, corporate groups, school groups, sports clubs, research groups, special interest groups International visitors – walking groups, research groups, special interest groups
Phase Two: Iconic Placemaking Installation	Local community
	Fully Independent Travellers (FIT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic – Couples, friends, family/multigenerational groups, cultural enthusiasts International visitors – Cultural enthusiasts
	Group Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic groups – school groups, special interest groups International visitors – special interest groups
Phase Three: Bog Experience – Activity Centre	Local community
	Fully Independent Travellers (FIT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic – Couples, friends, family/multigenerational groups International visitors – Eco-tourists, outdoor adventure travellers
	Group Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic groups – corporate groups, school groups, sports clubs, special interest groups International visitors – special interest groups

5.2 Domestic Tourism Motivations Framework

In 2019^[1], 62.5% of all visitors to IAE were domestic visitors staying an average of 2.3 nights. In 2023, there were 326,000 domestic trips to the county accounting for €54.2 million in visitor spend. This is an increase from 2019, which saw 276,000 domestic visitors visit Tipperary, spending €40 million, suggesting domestic visitors to Tipperary has returned to and grown beyond pre-Covid figures. In 2019, the Mid-West region attracted almost 60% (1.4 million) of overseas visitors to Ireland's Ancient East.

41% of domestic visitors to Ireland's Ancient East travel as a couple, with 34% travelling as a family. 10% travel with friends and the remaining 7% travel alone. The top activities / attractions for domestic visitors to Ireland's Ancient East include outdoor adventure parks, walking, swimming in a pool, visiting gardens, visiting a historic house / castle, and swimming in a lake, river or the sea.

29% of domestic visitors to IAE are unconstrained adults aged 45+, and the remaining 27% are unconstrained adults under 45.

Fáilte Ireland has developed the Travel Motivations Framework to categorise domestic travel motivations in Ireland. IAE spans several motivations and travel occasions, capturing almost a third of domestic travel. While Exploration is the main motivator, Adventure, Time Out, Bonding and Social Energy are also reasons for travelling in the region.

- **Exploration:** *Reset by exploring new or unfamiliar places and cultural activities.*

Exploration is about experiencing and exploring places, landscapes, and culture. The destination itself is the draw, and visitors are keen to explore local stories and traditions. Project implications for this include being able to provide visitors with a storytelling element. According to summer 2024 data, 35% of Older Unconstrained Adults went on an Exploration holiday in Ireland.

- **Adventure:** *Reset through exciting and personally challenging experiences.*

Adventure is about seeking exciting and personally challenging experiences such as outdoor pursuits. It appeals mostly to young unconstrained adults. This can be achieved through a high ropes or zip line experience being incorporated into the site.

- **Social Energy:** *Reset by embracing vibrant and fun experiences.*

This is sought in a variety of places, but particularly in the outdoors. Social energisers like to explore local history and culture. It appeals mostly to young unconstrained adults but also to unconstrained adults aged 45+ looking for a fun and immersive experience. Project implications for this would be ensuring visitors to the site can experience an immersive day out linked to local culture. In summer 2024, Social Energy became a more significant motivation to travel with 23% of people travelling domestically with this motivation.

- **Time Out:** *Reset by unwinding and treasuring special moments together.*

Time Out is about convenience, ease of journey, and accommodation preferences. Consumers engage in some activities but they are likely to be slow paced and less energetic ones. They are taken by couples of all age groups, whether it be unconstrained adults or parents of young families. Project implications for this cohort include providing easy access to the site, supporting accommodation options, and slow tourism activities e.g. walking trails, regenerative activities etc.

- **Bonding:** *Reset by nurturing and strengthening relationships with those closest to me.*

Bonding is about strengthening relationships, particularly among families with young children. Travel decision revolve around the needs of the children. Activities are central to the trip and a wide range needs to be readily available. Project implications here include ensuring the activity centre has a multi-activity approach i.e. wide range and variety of activities that vary in terms of length and difficulty. In summer 2024, 55% of families domestically went on a bonding holiday.

5.3 Six Markets Approach

Ten key objectives have been developed for the marketing approach to Littleton Bog Experience.

Marketing Objectives

1. Develop a brand profile and marketing programme that is mindful of capacity management and the natural environment at the Littleton Bog Experience.
2. Implement a sustained programme of marketing activity using the six markets model to achieve the projected site user numbers.
3. Ensure that the promotion of the Littleton Bog Experience provides economic value to local communities and businesses.
4. Ensure that the Littleton Bog Experience is packaged with other visitor experiences to increase the value of tourism in Tipperary and surrounding counties.
5. The marketing programme highlights and showcases the Littleton Bog Experience as a key experience in Ireland's Ancient East.
6. The marketing programme attracts high value target markets such as corporate, school and special interest groups.
7. The marketing programme attracts target markets during low season periods.
8. Collaborate with stakeholders, tourism operators, and businesses to build the Littleton Bog Experience brand.
9. Work in partnership with the tourism industry to attract visitors to the bog experience.
10. Build on the capacity of the site to become a leading outdoor education centre working with regional and national schools.

Marketing Channels

The Six Channels Framework is comprehensive and instructive in grouping channels to provide catalysts to harness the potential for the Littleton Bog Experience to attract local, domestic and international visitors. The following represent the core tactical marketing activity to generate demand for the Littleton Bog Experience.



Internal Marketing

	Priority Actions
Marketing Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that the promotion of the Littleton Bog Experience provides economic value to local communities and businesses. 2. Ensure that the Littleton Bog Experience is packaged with other visitor experiences to increase the value of tourism in Tipperary and surrounding counties. 3. The marketing programme highlights and showcases the Littleton Bog Experience as a key experience in Ireland's Ancient East. 4. Collaborate with stakeholders, tourism operators, and businesses to build the Littleton Bog Experience brand. 5. Work in partnership with the tourism industry to attract visitors to the bog experience.
Stakeholder Promise	The Littleton Bog Experience will proactively work with local tourism and trade to share information, stimulate ideas for continuous collaboration and grow visitor numbers to the region.
Key Markets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tipperary Tourism 2. Tipperary tourism industry 3. Tipperary County Council 4. Kilkenny, Clare, Limerick, Waterford, Laois, Offaly tourism industries 5. Fáilte Ireland & Tourism Ireland – Ireland's Ancient East (IAE)
Core Marketing Focus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brand development and industry ownership 2. Industry Education 3. Communications structures 4. Content generation for marketing activity
Marketing Programme Development	<p>Brand Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Littleton Bog Experience brand identity and tourism narrative. • Development of logo and brand visual asset bank and digital assets for industry use. • Development of promotional event marketing collateral to reflect destination ambition. • Development of branded marketing communications collateral for core product areas that adheres to the destination brand. • Communicate the core elements of the Littleton Bog Experience tourism narrative for brand consistency in marketing across all interested tourism trade. <p>Digital Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a website including a booking portal for the Littleton Bog Experience. • Development of a digital marketing strategy focusing on a digital channel mix (e.g. SEM, Email, Social media etc.) that aligns with the target audiences. • Investment in digital marketing channels that are focused on target audience engagement. • Development of a content activity plan based on key marketing messaging, key calendar events, and event milestones. • Development of the Littleton Bog Experience social platforms and content management. • Social media content sharing to collectively promote key events, key marketing messaging and cross promote complementary tourism providers.

	<p>Traditional Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a traditional marketing strategy focusing on a channel mix (e.g. Print, Radio, Outdoor etc.) that aligns with the target audiences. <p>Public Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an in-house consumer PR structure to regularly feed key media outlets across all media platforms. <p>Industry Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Industry Familiarisation Trips to the Littleton Bog Experience – industry education campaign. • Product / Service / Event Information Sharing System with the Tipperary, Ireland's Ancient East and national tourism industries. • Creation of internal monthly online communications for distribution among industry. • Incorporation of the Littleton Bog Experience branding / imagery / content across all local tourism industry media platforms. • Creation of internal marketing campaigns to align targeted visitor information sharing within local accommodation, heritage sites, and attractions with recommendations for other local experiences. <p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a channel for information sharing for event marketing where relevant events are promoted across all member marketing platforms. <p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a monthly email newsletter targeting all local trade and relevant industry. • Provide ongoing content based on past and current PR exposure for the destination. <p>Return on Marketing KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of marketing expenditure KPI's for communication with trade and industry such as social media reach, digital marketing ROI, promotional campaign impacts, PR reach, trade and promotional activity, membership cross promotion.
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External Marketing

	Priority Actions
Marketing Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a brand profile and marketing programme that is mindful of capacity management and the natural environment at the Littleton Bog Experience. 2. Implement a sustained programme of marketing activity using the six markets model to achieve the projected site user numbers. 3. The marketing programme attracts high value target markets such as corporate, school and special interest groups. 4. The marketing programme attracts target markets during low season periods. 5. Build on the capacity of the site to become a leading outdoor education centre working with regional and national schools.

Stakeholder Promise	The Littleton Bog is a leading national bog experience and activity centre through the quality and authenticity of the user experience.
Key Markets & Segments	<p>Key Segments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community – Local community members are individuals who work, live and engage in activities in the surrounding geographic area. Local community members include families, couples, retirees, business owners etc. • Walking groups – Walking groups are local community members, domestic travellers and international visitors who travel specifically to walk together. Data from the summer 2024 Fáilte Ireland consumer insight report reports that 52% of domestic travellers go to IAE for walking. • Corporate groups - Corporate groups consist of employees from small businesses or large multinational companies who are seeking training programmes or team-building activities. • School groups - School groups as a target audience consist of educational institutions, including primary schools and secondary schools. This segment includes teachers and school activity coordinators who are seeking to provide enriching educational and activity experiences for their students. • Research groups - Research groups consist of academic, scientific, and industrial researchers who seek experiences to support their research activities. This segment includes university research departments, independent research institutions, and corporate R&D teams. • Sports clubs - Sports clubs consist of youth clubs, amateur and professional sports teams, community sports organisations, and fitness clubs. • Families / multi-generational groups – Families or multi-generational groups consist of gatherings that typically include grandparents, parents and children. This group is seeking an experience that appeals to a wide age range and will facilitate family bonding. • Special interest groups – Special interest groups consist of people who have specific hobbies, lifestyles and passions relevant to the offering of the Littleton Bog Experience. This segment is seeking an experience that aligns with their hobby / special interest. • Cultural enthusiasts – Typically unconstrained adults over 45, travels alone or as a couple, mainly European or domestic, frequent visitor visiting more than once a year, spends longer at a destination. • Outdoor adventure tourist - Unconstrained adults under or over 45, travels mostly as a couple but sometimes as a family, mainly European or domestic, spends longer at a destination. • Eco-tourists - Unconstrained adults under or over 45, travels alone, as a couple or in a group of friends, mainly European, spends more time at destination. <p>Key Source Markets – Rest of Ireland, Northern Ireland, UK, Germany, France</p> <p>Key Domestic Travel Motivations</p> <p>Exploration, Adventure, Social Energy, Time Out, Bonding</p>
Core Marketing Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand Collateral Development • ROI Based Promotional Activity • Digital Marketing • Traditional Marketing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Relations
Marketing Programme Development	<p>Destination Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding of all materials in line with the destination brands. • Ensuring sales tools are in place to convert all marketing activity. • Positioning of the Littleton Bog Experience as the point of contact for sales. <p>ROI Based Promotional Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core sales & marketing focus to ensure conversion of marketing activity to sales through increased joint promotion with local industry. • Familiarisation trips development based on experience led approach and local packages. • Trade & Consumer Show participation based on agreed sales / destination outputs. <p>Digital Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a suite of digital marketing assets in alignment with the national and local destination brand. • Implementation of the digital marketing strategy focusing on a digital channel mix (e.g. SEM, Email, Social media etc.) that aligns with the target audiences. • Implementation of content activity plan based on key marketing messaging, key calendar events, and event milestones. • Continuous development of the Littleton Bog Experience social platforms and content management. <p>Traditional Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the traditional marketing strategy focusing on a channel mix (e.g. Print, Radio, Outdoor etc.) that aligns with the target audiences. <p>Public Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an annual calendar of consumer public relations based around key marketing and event milestones for the destination. • Develop a PR database of key consumer PR contacts. • Media familiarisation trips development based on experience led approach and local packages. • Devise a public relations structure that will be reactive to ongoing opportunities across each of the product areas e.g. education. • Invest in a structured approach to PR around major events. <p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of event calendar with cross promotion of ancillary tourism service providers around events e.g. accommodation, food & beverage, retail. • Hosting of special events, festivals, cultural activities e.g. Halloween, Christmas, charity events. • PR investment around key events.

Influencer Marketing

	Priority Actions
Marketing Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with stakeholders, tourism operators, and businesses to build the Littleton Bog Experience brand. 2. Work in partnership with the tourism industry to attract visitors to the bog experience.
Stakeholder Promise	A leading outdoor activity destination supported by a wealth of tourism businesses delivering varied experiences.
Key Markets & Segments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incoming Tour Operator Association 2. Overseas Operators 3. Transport & Tour Companies 4. Special Interest Organisations 5. Local Accommodation Providers 6. Journalists 7. Social Media Influencers
Core Marketing Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New experience development options with local industry • Regular communications through industry and product updates • Product / Sales propositions for incoming operators • Content for media and online media platforms
Marketing Programme Development	<p>Brand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an annual content programme to deliver the Littleton bog Experience brand message using product activity news, events, joint trade activity. • Engage with local accommodation providers to influence visitors to visit the Littleton Bog Experience as part of their stay. <p>Digital Marketing Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to the Littleton Bog Experience digital assets and brand collateral. <p>Experience Led Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly update in industry news on new experience development at the Littleton Bog Experience. <p>Digital Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with UGC (user generated content) from visitors to the Littleton Bog Experience (e.g. resharing tagged images, videos etc.) • Development of an influencer social media strategy working with influencers who align with the target markets. • Provision of social media content to target media sources and influencers. <p>Public Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of structured influencer PR milestones in collaboration with industry. • Leverage the citizen journalism (hikers/walkers) opportunity through influencers and professional industry writers. <p>Influencer Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative familiarisation trips with local tourism industry to create an annual marketing milestone in calendar for influencer market. • Targeting of product / target audience specific influencers as part of annual familiarisation trip strategy. • Industry targeting of ITOA members for annual education programme delivered through experience innovation.

Referral Marketing

	Priority Actions
Marketing Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work in partnership with the tourism industry to attract visitors to the bog experience.
Stakeholder Promise	The Littleton Bog Experience will capitalise on the tourism opportunity that Ireland's Ancient East, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland presents.
Key Markets & Segments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fáilte Ireland 2. Tourism Ireland – National and Overseas Offices
Marketing Programme Development	<p>Brand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that wider marketing of IAE includes on brand promotion of the Littleton Bog Experience. <p>Digital Marketing Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to the Littleton Bog Experience digital assets and brand collateral for use by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. <p>Digital Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of regular digital marketing and PR related content that will be used to target media sources in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. <p>Experience Led Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular updates on experience development at the Littleton Bog Experience and supply content to Fáilte Ireland for marketing material. <p>Public Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively seek opportunities to work with the national agencies to facilitate innovative familiarisation trips for trade and media.

Note: The 'interactive market' element of the 6 Markets framework is contained within each of the previously mentioned action plans i.e. online, social media and digital activity are at the core of each tactical approach in the above areas.

¹¹¹ 2019 represents the year (pre Covid19) for benchmarking for tourism recovery. At the time of writing the 2019 visitor data is the recent available full set of tourism performance information.

SECTION 6 – Visitor numbers and projected impact

This Section of the report considers operational capacity, linkages between the attraction's potential capacity and projected visitor numbers and likely tourism impact.

- 6.1 Visitor numbers
- 6.2 Outline Revenue Projections
- 6.3 Tourism Impact Assessment
- 6.4 Social Impact
- 6.5 Cost Benefit Analysis



6.1 Visitor Numbers

Visitor Projections (Years 1-5)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Littleton Bog Site	120,000	122,400	124,848	127,345	129,892
Activity Centre	50,000	51,000	52,020	53,060	54,122
Visitor Centre	70,000	71,400	72,828	74,285	75,770

There are projected to be 50,000 visitors to the Activity Centre in year one. This commercial element of the experience is anticipated to attract visitors from the following sources:

- Family and adult groups
- Corporate events and team building
- Special interest groups
- Schools

The Visitor Centre is projected to attract 70,000 visits in year one. There is anticipated to be no charge for visiting the Visitor Centre. Annual footfall is expected to include strong community usage. Visitor numbers allow for multiple visits during the year.

In developing visitor projections for the Activity Centre a review of visitor numbers to similar sites has been undertaken using publicly available data:

Attraction	Visitor Numbers
Castlecomer Discovery Park & Visitor Centre Co. Kilkenny	190,000 (2023) ⁶
Wildlands Co. Galway	120,000 (2023) ⁷
Lough Key Forest & Activity Park Co. Roscommon	46,000 (2023) ⁸

It is understood that a fourth activity-based site in Ireland also attracted approximately 50,000 visitors in 2023.

⁶ Failte Ireland Visitor Numbers to Attractions 2023

⁷ Local media coverage <https://www.q102.ie/news/buzz/irish-adventure-park-announces-series-of-new-summer-activities/>

⁸ Failte Ireland Visitor Numbers to Attractions 2023

6.2 Outline Revenue Projections

The following potential revenue sources have been identified for the Bog Experience Centre:

Ticket sales

Revenue to the adventure centre generated through annual visitor numbers projected to the activity centre. Assumed ticket prices have been developed based on a review of pricing at similar sites in Ireland. Assumptions used in the estimated include discounted prices for children and group bookings.

Café revenue

Revenue generated through an assumed 80% of adventure centre visitors and 30% of visitor centre visitors going to the café.

Bike Hire

Revenue generated through bike hire by 10% of promotable visitors to the visitor centre.

Educational Courses

Delivery of a programme of one-day courses to corporate groups and interest groups over a period of five months of the year.

Outline Revenue Projections

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Activity Centre Ticket Revenue					
Adults	395,642	403,555	411,626	419,859	428,256
Families (adults & children)	504,587	514,679	524,972	535,472	546,181
Special Interest Groups / Trade	275,229	280,734	286,349	292,076	297,917
Student / OAP	68,807	70,183	71,587	73,019	74,479
Schools	114,679	116,972	119,312	121,698	124,132
Ticket Revenue	1,358,945	1,386,124	1,413,846	1,442,123	1,470,966
Café Revenue					
Café / Retail Revenue (Activity users)	181,600	185,232	188,937	192,715	196,570
Café / Retail Revenue (Trail users)	95,340	97,247	99,192	101,176	103,199
Café Revenue	276,940	282,479	288,128	293,891	299,769
Bike Rental	68,234	70,417	73,496	75,818	77,334
Course Programming	150,000	153,750	157,594	161,534	165,572
TOTAL REVENUE (EX VAT)	1,854,119	1,892,770	1,933,065	1,973,366	2,013,641

Based on projected visitor numbers to the Activity Centre there is a projected €1.36 million in ticket sales in year one. Café revenue is projected to be €277,000 in year one. Revenue generated through Activity Centre visitors is projected at €182,000. A further €95,000 in café revenue is generated through Visitor Centre users.

Bike hire by visitors to the Visitor Centre is projected to generate €68,000 in year one. The programme of educational courses is projected to generate €150,000 in year one of opening.

Total projected revenue in year one is €1.85 million.

In year two the increase in visitor numbers is projected to generate €1.89 million increasing to €2.01 million in year five.

Projections do not take into account any increases in price that may occur as a result of inflationary effects or other operating costs.

6.3 Tourism Impact Assessment

This tourism impact assessment examines the potential impacts associated with the development of the Littleton Bog experience. The analysis considers footfall to the two elements of the proposed site based on projected visitor numbers:

- Littleton Bog Activity Centre: fee-paying element of the attraction
- Littleton Bog Interpretation Centre: free-of-charge Visitor Centre including interpretation centre, strollercoaster and cycle/walking trails

The tourism impact analysis concentrates on the net tourism impact arising over the first 15 years of operation. This is focussed on the level of 'additionality' (additional visitor growth in excess of current performance) that investment will bring to the region as opposed to displacing existing tourism business.

The analysis also considers the Social Return on Investment generated by the development. Social Return on Investment is a methodology to measure intangible goods (services and uses of amenities). The core premise is valuing the use of facilities that contribute to the users' social wellbeing. The measurement value of the Littleton site is based on the local community users' willingness to pay a notional economic amount to gain the benefits they associate with using the Visitor Centre amenity.

Littleton Bog Experience Visitor Projections

Projected Site Footfall (Year One)

	Total Visitors	Promotable Visitors	Domestic Visitors	International Visitors	Local Users
Littleton Bog Site	120,000	79,750	71,775	7,975	40,250
Activity Centre	50,000	50,000	45,000	5,000	-
Visitor Centre	70,000	29,750	26,775	2,975	40,250

Under the scenario developed, the Littleton site is projected to generate 120,000 visitors in year one. This comprises 79,750 promotable visitor⁹ and 40,250 local users¹⁰. Domestic visitors account for 71,775 promotable visitors. International visitors account for 7,975 promotable visitors.

⁹ 'Promotable visitors' are defined as domestic and international tourists attracted to the Bushcraft attraction. They will avail of services at the trail head and take part in activities. Expenditure by promotable visitors includes spend in local amenities or ancillary services during their stay in the locality. It does not include expenditure on activities on site.

¹⁰ Local users are defined as those living within 30km of the centre. For the purpose of analysis the overall tourism impact estimates are measured excluding any expenditure in local facilities⁹ or amenities by local users

The Activity Centre is projected to attract 50,000 promotable visitors in the first year of opening.

There are 70,000 users projected to visit the Visitor Centre in the first year of opening. This comprises 29,750 promotable visitors and 40,250 local users of the amenity.

Cumulative Visitor Numbers (Years 1-15)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 1-15
Littleton Bog Site	120,000	122,400	124,848	127,345	129,892	2,024,355
Promutable Visitors	79,750	81,702	84,064	86,117	87,839	1,378,430
Local Users	40,250	40,698	40,784	41,228	42,052	645,925
Activity Centre	50,000	51,000	52,020	53,060	54,122	843,566
Visitor Centre	70,000	71,400	72,828	74,285	75,770	1,180,789

There are projected to be 624,500 visitors to the Littleton Bog site over the first five years after opening. The Activity Centre is projected to attract 260,000 visitors. The Visitor Centre is projected to attract 364,000 visitors over the first five years.

Projections show a modest annual increase in visitor numbers over a 15-year period. Provision has been made in year six for an increase in visitor numbers attributable to reinvestment at the site.

There are projected to be 2.02 million visitors to the Littleton Bog site over 15 years. The Activity Centre is projected to attract 843,000 visitors in this time. The Visitor Centre is projected to attract 1.18 million visitors over the same period.

Tourism Impact - Promutable Visitors

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 1-15
Total Promutable Visitors	79,750	81,702	84,064	86,117	87,839	1,378,430
Total Bednights	6,750	7,242	7,387	8,437	9,147	151,302
Domestic Visitor Bednights	6,075	6,518	6,648	7,593	8,232	135,891
International Visitor Bednights	675	724	739	844	915	15,411
Total Day Visitors	73,000	74,460	76,677	77,680	78,693	1,227,127
Domestic Day Visitors	65,700	67,014	69,010	69,912	70,824	1,102,298
International Day Visitors	7,300	7,446	7,668	7,768	7,869	124,829

There are a projected 79,750 promotable visitors in year one. Promutable visitors generate an additional 6,750 bednights in the wider destination in the first year of opening. There are 73,000 day visitors to the Littleton Bog experience in the opening year.

Littleton Bog Experience, County Tipperary

There are a projected 1.38 million promotable visitors over the 15 years of assessment. A projected 151,000 bednights are generated by the Littleton Bog experience over this period. There are 1.23 million day visitors over 15 years.

The number of bednights generated is expected to increase confidence with local businesses in the wider area. Such confidence may lead to the opening of new, or expansion of existing accommodation in the locality. Accordingly, the proportion of visitor bednights generated is projected to increase after opening.

Promotable Visitors by Site Element

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 1-15
Total Promotable Visitors	79,750	81,702	84,064	86,117	87,839	1,378,430
Activity Centre	50,000	51,000	52,020	53,060	54,122	843,566
Visitor Bednights	5,000	5,100	5,202	5,837	6,495	107,313
Day Visitors	45,000	45,900	46,818	47,224	47,627	736,253
Visitor Centre	29,750	30,702	32,044	33,057	33,718	534,864
Visitor Bednights	1,750	2,142	2,185	2,600	2,652	43,989
Day Visitors	28,000	28,560	29,859	30,457	31,066	490,875

The Activity Centre is projected to generate a higher proportion of bednights than the Visitor Centre.

This is attributed to a number of factors including:

- the appeal of the Activity Centre
- anticipated longer length of visit to the centre
- appeal of the centre to corporate events and special interest groups

Economic Impact of Promotable Visitors

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 1-15
Total Promotable Visitors	79,750	81,702	84,064	86,117	87,839	1,378,430
Total Domestic Visitors	71,775	73,532	75,658	77,505	79,055	1,238,189
Total International Visitors	7,975	8,170	8,406	8,612	8,784	140,240
Annual Bednights	6,750	7,242	7,387	8,437	9,147	151,302
Direct Promotable Visitor Expenditure	€2,432,500	€2,576,112	€2,712,454	€2,909,010	€3,080,201	€52,382,197
<u>Projected economic impact</u>						
Exchequer Returns (based on direct visitor expenditure)	€773,535	€819,204	€862,560	€925,065	€979,504	€16,657,539
Exchequer Returns (based on total expenditure impact)	€1,624,424	€1,720,38	€1,811,377	€1,942,637	€2,056,958	€34,980,831

Annual Direct Employment	29	31	33	35	37	-
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In the first year of opening. Promotable visitors to the Littleton Bog Experience are projected to generate €2.4 million in direct visitor expenditure. Direct expenditure does not include expenditure by visitors on entry to the Activity Centre. Direct expenditure is projected to directly sustain 29 jobs in the local economy in year one.

Direct expenditure is projected to generate €0.77 million for the Exchequer. Total expenditure impact in year one is projected to generate €1.6 million for the Exchequer when the effects of indirect and induced impacts are considered.

Over a 15-year period there is a projected €52.4 million in direct expenditure by promotable visitors to Littleton Bog. Exchequer Returns based on direct expenditure are projected to be €16.7 million over 15 years. Exchequer Returns based on total expenditure impact are projected to be €35.0 million over the same period.

The preliminary Order of Magnitude cost estimate for associated with developing the Littleton Bog Experience is €14.2million (including preliminaries and contingencies).

6.4 Social Impact

Social Return on investment

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Years 1-15
Total Local Users	40,250	40,698	40,784	41,228	42,052	1,180,789
WTP Valuation (1hr)	€278,530	€281,630	€282,223	€285,297	€291,003	€4,469,804
WTP Valuation (1.5hr)	€417,795	€422,445	€423,335	€427,946	€436,505	€6,704,706

The model examines usage based on adults and children and applies an hourly willingness to pay value¹¹. In year one there are projected to be 40,250 uses of the Visitor Centre by residents from local communities. In year one there is a social return on investment in the range of €278,500 to €418,000. This is based on users from the local community spending between 1 hour to 1.5 hours on each visit.

SROI generated over the 15-year assessment period is projected to be in the range of €4.5 million to €6.7 million.

6.5 Cost Benefit Analysis

The Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) assessed the projected economic benefits that are attributable Littleton Bog Experience over 15 years versus the estimated cost. These include the estimated regional tourism activity attracted to the area through the tourism and site activity of the Littleton Bog (i.e. domestic and international visitors). The tourism 'additionality' is estimated based on the local visitor spend, jobs supported in the area and the associated employment generated by those jobs.

¹¹ Adult and children hourly WTP values are based on authors' primary research conducted for Munster GAA, Clare Sports Partnership and Social Return on Analysis conducted on Operation Transformation Programmes organised by Local Sports Partnership.

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The Test Discount Rate (TDR) used in the cost benefit analysis and cost effectiveness analysis of public sector projects is currently 4%. This is the rate in real terms applied to the project's future costs and benefits expressed in constant prices.

For the purpose of assessment, estimated costs used are those associated with development of the bog experience.

Cost Benefit Analysis (NPV)

Benefits (NPV)	€	Costs	€
Tourism Additionality GVA (NPV) Years 1-15	€70.1million	Order of Magnitude Costs	€14.2million
		Benefits Cost Ratio Year 1-15	4.94:1

The CBA reveals a ratio of 7.01:1 in terms of the benefits versus costs that will accrue over the 15 years of analysis. For each euro of the estimated cost of the development, five euros (€5) of economic benefit will be generated over the initial fifteen-year period.

SECTION 7: Operations

This Section of the report sets out:

- 7.1 Operational context
- 7.2 Operational objectives
- 7.3 Operational considerations



7.1 Operational Context

The operational considerations for the Littleton Bog Experience are based on two inter-related areas of operation. This is the free to access area and public space in the centre and secondly the commercial activity areas i.e. Bog Experience Activity Centre. Further consideration and refinement of an operational model for the site will be required as the project progresses beyond feasibility design stage based on final design and ownership.

The commercial activity and site operations will consider engagement of a third party by means of an operational contract with the Project Implementation Board (e.g. project steering group). The contract holder will pay an annual rental fee for the use of the Bog Experience Centre under a service level agreement. The service level agreement defined by the Project Implementation Board will be structured around the functions of the visitor centre operations, marketing, quality management, visitor experience, site maintenance and revenue growth.

The contract holder will assume full responsibility for the management of the Bog Experience Centre and will be responsible for revenue generation.

It is envisaged there will be no admission charge to the Visitor Centre to encourage community use of the amenity and access to café facilities. This area will also contain a free to access interpretation area for the Bog legends stories featuring the Derrynaflan story. It will also represent a ‘paywall’ for visitors to the site. Access to the activities and onsite programmes will be through the Bog Experience Centre.

Revenue generation for the third-party operator will be from four primary sources:

- All programmed activities in the Bog Experience Activity Centre.
- Bike and e-bike hire for trail users.
- Cafe and retail revenues.
- Delivery of education programmes, courses, workshops and events to groups and corporates in the Bog Experience Centre.

The feasibility analysis finds the site / concept is only viable with the inclusion of a commercial / revenue generating element. This commercial component is required to sustain the overall site operations and the community elements. It will ensure the site realises its socio-economic potential for the community. It is acknowledged the inclusion of commercial operations within the overall operational model will necessitate the normal marketing and disposal process of the site in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This is acknowledged as a disposal process either by sale or lease on the open market as per the code of practice and subject to internal Bord na Móna approval by the senior executive and/or the board depending on valuation. The publication of this feasibility study does not mean by extension that Bord na Móna have approved any development until the full disposals process and internal approvals are completed.

7.2 Operational Objectives

- Establish a Project Implementation Board drawn from the project stakeholder group for project oversight and delivery.
- Develop the governance structures of the Littleton Bog Experience to achieve the strategic and operational goals defined the Board.
- Ensure the skillet and capacity of the Board is aligned with the strategic focus of environmental stewardship and delivering the visitor experience and destination impact Partner.
- Develop a financially sustainable operational approach to support continued operations.
- Maximise ancillary services on the site to contribute to the financial model.
- Support tourism and community stakeholders in the delivery of the best possible Littleton Bog visitor experience.
- Stimulate visitor and community activity that will contribute to the area’s destination daytime and evening time economy, including the settlements of Littleton, Horse and Jockey, and Glengoogle.

- Ensure year-round community access to the Bog Experience Centre to support the activities of local community groups and organisations.

7.3 Operational considerations

A number of areas have been identified for future consideration in the initial establishment and operation of the site. These are designed to enhance the visitor experience, maintain the integrity of the site and present the environmental and regenerative story of Littleton Bog.

When the site becomes operational, the key operations focus will be based on each aspect of the visitor journey i.e. creating the best possible visitor experience onsite, attracting the target market and ensuring operational efficiencies to contribute to the financial viability of the site. Among the key considerations include:

1. Agree and review staffing requirements and management roles and responsibilities.
2. Staffing recruitment, training and scheduling based on the various areas opening times throughout the year.
3. Undertake a risk management assessment of the site to be reviewed annually.
4. Conduct monthly operational reviews using an agreed reporting framework.
5. Prepare annual budgets and cost management reviews.
6. Develop a comprehensive understanding of the level of site footfall through the addition of counters, monitoring bookings and schedule staffing accordingly.
7. Develop a process to accommodate special site usage requests (e.g. television and film, environmental surveys)
8. Create a site event management process and procedures.
9. Develop a Health and Safety plan for all areas of operation i.e. internal and external.
10. Development of a sustainability plan to influence site operations e.g. use of energy efficient systems, water management, protection of unique bio-diversity of the bog
11. Undertake business development and marketing / promotion of the Littleton Bog Experience.
12. Visitor information development – continuous enhancement of online presence and social media channels.
13. Visitor experience development – work in partnership with other stakeholders who will contribute to the Littleton Bog visitor experience and programmes e.g. ESG training.
14. Undertake site contingency planning e.g. power back up, site evacuation, emergency response in case of accidents.

Appendix 1: Tourism Policy Context

National Tourism Policy 2025-2030

The Government of Ireland's Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030 sets out the aims for the tourism industry by 2030. The Policy Framework is based on the three pillars of sustainability, — Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability. It is structured on the following guiding principles for tourism:

- **Protect and enhance Ireland's cultural heritage, natural assets and environmental quality.**
- **Ensure that tourism contributes to meeting national and international policy commitments on climate change.**
- **Support balanced economic development and employment throughout the country.**
- **Prioritise the economic value per visitor over volume of tourists visiting.**
- **Minimise any negative impacts of tourism on host communities and maximise social benefits of tourism.**
- **Encourage innovation within the tourism sector to ensure improved visitor satisfaction.**
- **Ensure Ireland is recognised as an authentic sustainable destination.**

The National Tourism Policy 2025-2030 also indicates its commitment to working closely with other State agencies and private stakeholders to ensure that all projects in receipt of EU Just Transition Funding are delivered by 2026. This is covered under the Social Pillar, strategic objective 3, actions 5.1.4 and 5.1.5:

Strategic Objective 3: Ireland's famous welcome will be maintained through communities who do not feel overburdened by visitors. The tourism sector and local communities will be supported through education and training opportunities to adapt their tourism offerings to respond and adapt to climate change and biodiversity loss.

Action 5.1.4 -

The Department and Fáilte Ireland as the intermediary body, will work closely with other State agencies and private stakeholders to ensure that all projects in receipt of EU Just Transition Funding are delivered by 2026.

Action 5.1.5 -

In terms of delivering a high quality, sustainable tourism offering, all learnings gleaned from the Just Transition Projects will be fully factored into the design of future public funding schemes for tourism projects.

In the context of the Littleton Bog Experience, the following National Tourism Policy actions are extremely relevant from a community development, socio-economic and regenerative perspective:

Action 3.3.2 -

Ireland's biodiversity underpins the overall tourism offering and the quality of life in tourism communities. To enhance Ireland's biodiversity, guidance and supports will be introduced for tourism businesses on nature-positive measures at tourism facilities such as allowing wildflower meadows to develop; protecting wildlife habitats; and restricting use of weedkillers and pesticides, which can harm habitats and non-target species.

Action 4.7.2 -

Nature based tourism represents a significant growth opportunity and accordingly, the tourism agencies will explore other high-potential sustainable themes for development with appropriate support and marketing.

Action 5.2.1 -

To ensure a more sustainable tourism industry that benefits the entire community, the need to extend the tourism season will be a priority consideration for all public investment decisions. The tourism agencies will have an enhanced focus on marketing the off-peak season and will ensure that support for festivals and tourism infrastructure prioritises initiatives that can address seasonality concerns.

Action 5.3.1

To ensure areas grow in a sustainable manner, the tourism agencies will continue to implement DEDPs. Actions to bring social and economic benefits to host communities will be a key consideration in these plans. Local authorities will also monitor the social and environmental impact of high volumes of tourists in popular areas, to ensure there is not an excessive burden on host communities and their local environment. In line with international experience, the potential for introducing appropriate measures to manage visitor numbers at peak times will be kept under review.

Ireland's Ancient East, Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027

Fáilte Ireland's approach to tourism development is to ensure that it becomes increasingly sustainable and can continue to generate incremental revenue to sustain and increase levels of employment in local communities. Against the backdrop of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Government's commitments under the Climate Action Plan 2021, Fáilte Ireland has employed the internationally recognised VICE model to destination development. The approach focuses on the interaction between Visitors (V), the Industry (I) that serves them, the Community and culture that hosts them (C) and their collective impact on and response to the Environment (E) to guide the future sustainable development of tourism.

The approach aligns with UNWTO definition of sustainable tourism as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" and reflects the relationship Fáilte Ireland envisages between the tourism industry partners, local communities and the natural and built environment which makes the Irish tourism product so unique. (*Ireland's Ancient East, Regional Tourism Development Strategy, 2023-2027*).

In order to prepare for the next phase of sustainable tourism development Fáilte Ireland launched their 5-year strategy called 'Ireland's Ancient East, Regional Tourism Development Strategy, 2023-2027'. It is structured around **5 strategic objectives**.

1. Strategic Objective 1: Motivating Visitors

Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Ireland's Ancient East.

2. Strategic Objective 2: Reasons to Stay

Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism.

3. Strategic Objective 3: Easy to Access, Navigate and Consume

Ensure the region is easy to access, navigate and consume.

4. Strategic Objective 4: Grow Capacity and Capability

Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive over the period of this strategy and create sustainable jobs in local communities.

5. Strategic Objective 5: Industry and Stakeholder Partnerships

Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development across the region.

1.4.3 Ireland's Ancient East Tourism Performance –

Ireland's Ancient East was launched in 2015 and since that has generated a value of €1.7 billion and supported 55,200 tourism jobs¹².

2.4 million overseas visitors visited Ireland's Ancient East in 2019, generating €889 million in revenue. Over the same period, 4 million domestic visitors visited the region, generating €663 million in revenue.

56% of overseas visitors were holidaymakers, while 31% were visiting friends / family. 10% were visiting on business trips, and the remaining 4% were visiting for other reasons¹³.

¹² Ireland's Ancient East, RTDS 2023-2027

¹³ Tourism Facts 2019: Ireland's Ancient East, Fáilte Ireland