

Development of Mountshannon Pilgrim Path route recommendations and associated biodiversity actions

Report to Mountshannon Community Council



Author: Alan Lauder BSc | March 2020
alan@alcnature.com | alanlauderconsulting.com



Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Funded by the Department of
Rural & Community
Development



This project has been part-funded by the LEADER programme, through the National Development Plan and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Document Control

Version	Date	Changes	Confidentiality	Prep	Rev	Auth
Draft	18/12/2019		Not confidential	DE	AL	
Final draft to client	05/02/2020	AL	Not confidential	AL		
Final	13/03/2020	AL	Not confidential	AL	Client	AL

Field Investigations and Data

Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work. Where any data supplied by the client or from other sources have been used it has been assumed that the information is correct. No responsibility can be accepted by Alan Lauder Consulting for inaccuracies in the data supplied by any other party.

Declaration of Compliance

"The information which we have prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in a manner consistent with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed within this document are our true and professional *bona fide* opinions."

Copyright

The contents and layout of this report are subject to copyright owned by Alan Lauder and associated trading names "Alan Lauder Consulting" and "ALCnature" (© Alan Lauder 2020).

Third Party Disclaimer

Any disclosure of this report to a third party is subject to this disclaimer. The report was prepared by Alan Lauder Consulting at the instruction of, and for use by, our client named on the front of the report. It does not in any way constitute advice to any third party who is able to access it by any means. No other warranty, expressed or implied is made as to the professional advice included in this report.

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Background & Information	5
2.1 Site location, importance & extent	5
2.2 Land tenure	10
3. Route Options.....	10
3.1 Survey of possible routes	11
3.2 Rationale for selection of favoured route options	12
4. Section by section accounts	19
4.1 Aistear Park to Woodpark via Middleline (Section 1)	19
4.2 Woodpark Loop	21
4.3 Knockaphort loop	24
4.4 Lough Derg Loop.....	27
4.5 Assessment of route feasibility	29
4.6 Linkage to Bohatch Dolmen.....	32
5. Actions for Biodiversity.....	34
5.1 Identification of potential biodiversity actions	34
5.2 Selection and planning of biodiversity actions.....	39
6. Interpretive themes and approach to information provision	41
7. How can this be delivered? – strategic actions	43
7.1 Community Countryside Projects Officer (CCPO).....	43
7.2 Volunteer skills development initiative.....	44
8. Project synthesis.....	44
9. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	47
APPENDIX 1 Trail design elements & reference	49
APPENDIX 2 Example Job Description (CCPO)	62
APPENDIX 3 Fauna recorded during path survey work in November 2019	65

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for the involvement and consultation throughout with Mountshannon Community Council and in particular Peggy Boyle, Kevin Chesser and others on the Pilgrim Path sub-group

This project has been part-funded by the LEADER programme, through the National Development Plan and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and by Mountshannon Community Council

Executive Summary

This report develops a costed plan of action for the delivery of a community led biodiversity project based around the development of sensitive access to biodiverse habitats and sites of cultural heritage significance (Holy Island). It identifies challenges and proposes solutions to modify scoped routes to take account of these.

The Pilgrim Path corridor options were surveyed and assessed and opportunities for practical biodiversity enhancement and community and visitor awareness and enjoyment were explored and identified. A practical and deliverable access and biodiversity project extending over 3 phases of 5 or more years total duration is recommended and this builds on and complements recommendations from previous reports.

Through survey and subsequent analysis of the access route for the “Pilgrim Path” the following key issues are identified:

- *Land ownership needs clarified and MCC should be satisfied that all landowner agreements/permissions are in place*
- *Existing routes from Mountshannon to and through Woodpark are already suitable and need minimal work but will require Local Authority cooperation*
- *The main access route works required are to the south of the main R352 in lough shore woodlands and crossing the R352 will require Local Authority cooperation over a crossing point*
- *Ground conditions are challenging in this section with native semi natural wet woodland throughout.*
- *Much of this section would require boardwalk and two phases of construction of a total of c. 687 metres are proposed which would cost an estimated €240,000*
- *This boardwalk would be potentially the longest in Ireland and would take visitors into a unique wet woodland habitat*
- *Boardwalk would lead on to less formal paths which make their way to Knockaphort, mainly off road through woodland*
- *Access to a raised observation hide overlooking Lough Derg would be a key destination accessed by boardwalk*

Biodiversity actions are proposed which are achievable and require only fairly modest infrastructure other than a focal point development in the installation of a wildlife observation hide.

These actions focus around local area priorities and **contribute at a local level to efforts county-wide and nationally** as well as locally.

Community engagement and awareness of biodiversity is a significant theme and forms the core of the whole project

It has been identified that to achieve the delivery of the actions identified two key strategic actions are required:

- The appointment of a **Community Countryside Projects officer**
- The development of a **volunteer skills development programme**

Both of these actions are potentially **good value for money** and would provide much of the manpower required to **deliver projects on the ground** in light of limited capacity within the community. This additional capacity within the community should assist also with identifying and facilitating funding applications and further project development.

1. Introduction

This report examines the feasibility and design for the development of new access routes within a defined area close to Mountshannon, Co. Clare and sets out recommended prescriptions and actions for the provision of access, including interpretive features which will build and enhance community and visitor experience and engagement with biodiversity along with providing simple and deliverable, community led biodiversity actions to enhance biodiversity within an identified Pilgrim Path area and wider Mountshannon village area.

This plan has been prepared such that any works carried out for the benefit of the local community and visitors shall have a net positive effect for biodiversity in the area. A successful installation of a path will provide access for people to engage with the wildlife of the area, whilst providing experiential learning for all ages and abilities in the natural environment (“lifelong Learning”).

In addition to considering the path route a series of biodiversity actions are explored which will bring significant added value to the path route and provide net biodiversity gain in their own right as well as providing the potential for community engagement.

The work undertaken and outlined in this report includes;

- site survey to determine the route of the path and constraints
- consideration of existing biodiversity value, existing features and amenities
- Consideration of biodiversity potential
- a section by section outline plan of works/design recommendations regarding; surface or path construction types, signage location and potential interpretation
- appraisal of the path options to identify constraints and short list best options
- identification and design/concept recommendations for works of biodiversity value

2. Background & Information

2.1 Site location, importance & extent

The proposed Pilgrim Path starts in Mountshannon and extends west-southwest to the western shore of Lough Derg at Knockaphort, in Co. Clare. Located 0.5 km to the south is *Inis Cealtra*, the Holy Island, on which is situated a monastic settlement dating back to at least the 8th century¹ which includes an intact round tower, church ruins and extraordinary graveyards and structures. The area of interest is outlined in figure 1.

The project area stretches along a wet to dry gradient from the littoral zone of Lough Derg in the south to Woodpark Forest Park in the north and extends east along Middleline (minor road) which provides access to Mountshannon village. The Curragh River runs from north to south through the site. Drains are frequent and wet woodland, marsh and fen is extensive in the southern section.

Between middle line and the lower marsh, the route(s) extend through Woodpark and is likely to use the existing trails.

¹ Available from: https://www.holyisland.ie/store/p1/Holy_Island%3A_Island_of_Churches.html

The approximate corridor for the potential path was identified in collaboration with members of the Mountshannon community council in relation to areas where they had indicative access permissions secured.

Habitats & Biodiversity

The project area in relation to designated sites is illustrated in figure 1 proposed project area is shown in Figure 2. The paths to the south extend onto *Lough Derg (Shannon) Special Protection (SPA)*² protected under the E.U. Birds Directive for its special conservation interest for the following species: Cormorant, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye (all in winter) and Common Tern (breeding).

The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest. Lough Derg is of importance for both breeding and wintering birds. Large numbers of Black-headed Gull have traditionally bred on the many islands in the lough. Lough Derg is also a noted breeding site for Great Crested Grebe. Important wintering bird populations which occur in winter include; Tufted Duck (776) and Goldeneye (157), Mute Swan (164), Whooper Swan (18), Wigeon (249), Teal (301), Mallard (376), Little Grebe (14), Cormorant (90), Coot (173), Lapwing (922), Curlew (66) and Black-headed Gull (732)².

The site is bound to the north by the *Slieve Aughty Mountains Special Protection Area (SPA)*³ protected, under the E.U. Birds Directive, for its special conservation interest for Hen Harrier and Merlin. The Slieve Aughty Mountains are a stronghold for Hen Harrier nationally and support the second largest concentration in the country.

Other designated sites nearby include *Lough Derg, North East Shore Special Area of Conservation (SAC)*⁴ and Loughatorick South Bog SAC⁵



Figure 1 A flock of Goldeneye in Mountshannon bay - these birds form part of the special interest of the SPA

² <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004058>

³ <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004168>

⁴ <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002241>

⁵ <http://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000308>

The Pilgrim Path project area contains several semi-natural habitats. Oak-birch-holly woodland is the predominant natural cover in the Woodpark (northern) section interspersed with mixed broadleaved/conifer woodland and coniferous plantation. From the entrance south of the R352 road the Lough Derg Loop and Knockaphort Loop share a path south towards the lough shore. The shared route contains wet willow-alder-ash woodland grading into riparian woodland, interspersed with dense scrub. Going east through the Lough Derg Loop, reed and large sedge swamp is present. The open swamp area here includes encroaching willow, alder and ash. Reed cover is abundant along the lake shore at the southern section of this route. Following the Knockaphort Loop to the west, the ground dries to support a mixture of oak rich woodland and scrub with some conifers. Several oak saplings are present in this area and should be protected and conserved during the path construction phase. Extensive spreading cover of invasive non-native plant species (INNS) pose a threat to the integrity of many semi-natural habitats in the location. *Rhododendron ponticum*, which is present, is listed on the third schedule of The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2016 as a high priority INNS, subject to restrictions due to its deleterious effects on native flora.

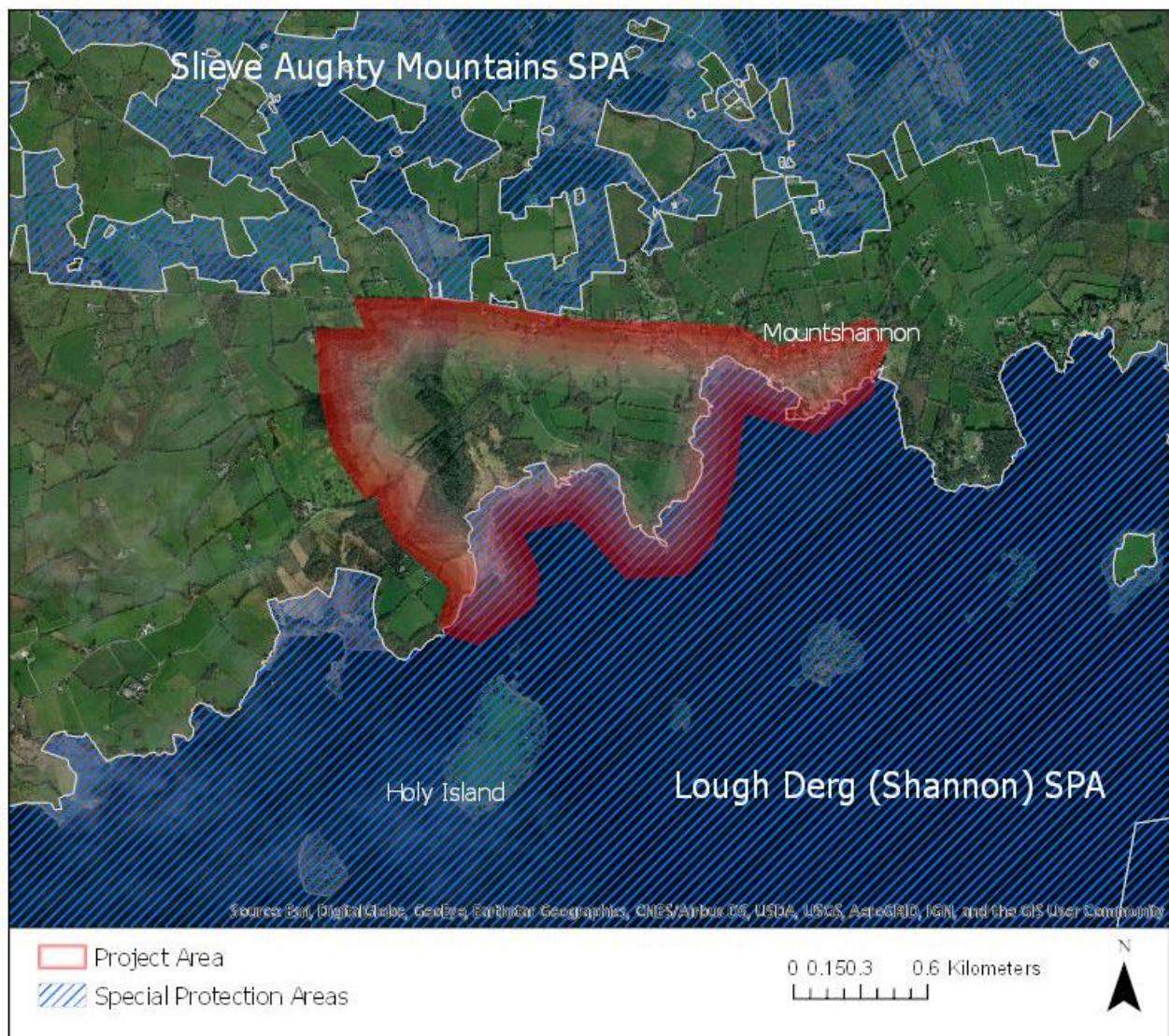


Figure 2 Project area of interest (red outline) in relation to adjacent designated sites

⁶ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/477/made/en/print>

A list of birds identified *ad hoc* during the one of the fieldwork surveys of the path route is provided in Appendix 3 and although not exhaustive it indicates a typically diverse bird fauna of the woodland and wetland during a short winter survey window.

The area is also significant in having supported a pair and continuing to support individual, White-tailed Eagles. These birds are derived from the White-tailed Eagle re-introduction scheme⁷. These formed the basis of a previous feasibility study from which this study derives.

A National Biodiversity Data Centre suitability model shows the study sits within a greater area which is classified as having high suitability for bats⁸. This is likely due to the combination of key factors such as some extensive semi-natural woodland areas, woodland edge and extensive hedgerows, the presence of large trees in places, the presence of water and associated wetland habitats and areas of semi-natural grasslands and heath higher up the hill.



Figure 3 Wet woodland on the lough shore between the R352 and the lough – this habitat is not designated but is one of the best native/semi-natural woodland habitats in the search area, it is difficult to walk through and is waterlogged for much of the year

⁷ http://www.goldeneagle.ie/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=612&Itemid=214

⁸ [http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/metadata/Landscape Conservation for Irish Bats metadata\(v.3\).pdf](http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/metadata/Landscape%20Conservation%20for%20Irish%20Bats%20metadata(v.3).pdf)

Pollinators most commonly recognised are Bumblebees *Bombus* spp., butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera) and Hoverflies (Sylphidae), though a range of other species act as pollinators. The habitats within the local area are dominated in particular by improved grasslands albeit with a range of other habitats including woodland and wetlands etc. Maintaining good populations of pollinators is valuable for agriculture and horticulture etc but they are also intrinsically attractive and good indicators of ecosystem health as are obvious, macro-invertebrate populations generally. Typically, the area may support dragonfly and damselfly species which may be locally or nationally scarce, butterflies may include scarcer species such as cryptic wood white or Brown Hairstreak. Recording of invertebrates should be encouraged locally along with the development of supporting habitats and features, ideally with a strong element of community engagement.

The area, lying so close to Lough Derg and with tributaries running into it is undoubtedly important for freshwater life and notably the brown trout and Atlantic salmon populations among other fish species which use or migrate through the area. The local area is a well-known and well utilised angling venue and works have taken place on the main inflow stream for Brown Trout spawning conditions. This resource offers opportunities for community and visitor engagement.

The area has a range of habitats. Arguably the most significant are the freshwater habitats of the lough but also the wetland habitats such as reedbed and fen adjacent. There is also extensive wet woodland in places. It is likely that these habitats support a range of plant species of interest and further investigation would be warranted.

White-tailed Eagles

Since 2007 White-tailed Eagles have been the subject of a reintroduction project in Ireland. Initially released in Co. Kerry the population dispersed and subsequently took up breeding territories at various locations, including on Lough Derg near Mountshannon. The first successful Irish breeding attempts in over 100 hundred years soon followed but despite their steady increase, White-tailed Eagles remain on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland. Experiencing these magnificent birds in their natural environment has the potential to generate public good will, which can lend itself to their protection. The existing Mountshannon White-tailed Sea Eagle Development Plan⁹ includes initiatives to focus on sensitive development around these birds.

The species, however, has variable responses to the presence of human activity and it is important to acknowledge the risk of additional disturbance which may be caused by any new activity in the vicinity of a nest territory. Suitable assessment of this risk should be carried out prior to the



⁹ Available from: https://alanlauderconsulting.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/mcc_eagles_development-plan_finalreport.pdf

execution of new routes or paths. Recent research has identified the potential for conflict between recreational activities, such as; hiking, cycling, and water sports and the sensitivity of these birds. This must be borne in mind when planning for this or any future developments in the area.

Recent research has identified the potential for conflict between recreational activities, such as; hiking, cycling, and water sports and the sensitivity of these birds. This must be borne in mind when planning for this or any future developments in the area.

2.2 Land tenure

The potential Pilgrim Path route, as identified at this point, may comprise four sections, three loop walks and one linear route giving access to the path via Middleline (minor road) from Mountshannon village.

The four sections are named (for the purposes of this report); section 1. Middleline, 2. Woodpark Forest, 3. Knockaphort Loop and 4. Lough Derg Loop. Section 2 is Woodpark Forest Park, a frequently used and well-maintained local amenity. It is logical to incorporate the Woodpark Forest Park trails and facilities into the Pilgrim Path in their existing format with minor modifications. Knockaphort Loop and Lough Derg Loop represent new areas of development for which the route and outline infrastructure is considered within this report.

A review of existing knowledge of land ownership of the area was undertaken with MCC and cross referenced with land registry mapping.

The lands over which the identified route corridors occur include lands owned by Coillte, the ESB and private landowners as well as including crossing, or access along, local authority- controlled highways. The land ownership boundaries are not indicated within this report as advised by Mountshannon Community Council (MCC).

In order to achieve a suitable access route, it is important to have permissions at a level which allows for the development of an access route and associated infrastructure where necessary, its construction type and associated materials. The assumption in this case, based on information from MCC is that suitable permissions are in place, or can be put in place, subject to feasibility and recommendations identified within this project report but that consideration should be given to future routes and connections should permissions become available.

The same approach will apply to sites for biodiversity actions and in some cases, the locations noted may be indicative only and do not assume permission or control of the land area identified.

3. Route Options

Route options are considered having taken on the ground advice and consultation with members of MCC throughout.

There are significant difficulties in achieving routes and the following key principles and restrictions should be borne in mind throughout;

- Preliminary land ownership investigations by MCC have provided a limited search area (even within the overall project area shown)
- The general principal of avoiding conflict with designated sites is paramount, no direct land take, damage or disturbance to designated sites is intended by any route and re-routing to avoid designated sites may be required at an implementation phase.
- Ground conditions in lough shore woodland is wet in most places throughout most of the year. Introducing large numbers of people to the area on a frequent basis would cause significant path erosion and conditions are unsuitable without surfacing of some form
- A general desired aim to achieve a mainly off-road route to Knockaphort from Mountshannon is priority but taking account of practicality, engagement and interpretation of biodiversity elements and the various permissions required are paramount.
- Consideration of a linkage to a straightforward route to the Bohatch Dolmen is also a consideration

3.1 Survey of possible routes

Potential route corridors were discussed with MCC at a project start up meeting and in advance of and during surveying. Survey of routes for the proposed Pilgrim Path took place on 1st, 7th, 12th and 13th of November 2019, with the purpose of scoping potential route options and determining the most practical or feasible route for a path and identifying potential opportunities for interpretive or biodiversity features of actions along the route.

The most likely indicative routes achievable have been mapped in Figure 7. These do not take account of cost/benefit.

Section 1

Starting at Aistear Park in Mountshannon the path follows the road west from the village towards Woodpark Forest Park. Initially, the path follows pedestrian footpaths through the village and along the main R352 to the point where it is intersected by Middleline. It is clear that various pedestrian crossings and signage in this section would be required and this is within the control of the Local Authority.

The route along Middleline to Woodpark main entrance is comprised solely of secondary, single lane road. Pedestrian access would likely benefit from “traffic calming” and where possible off-road pathway if possible.

This is the most practical means of accessing Woodpark Forest and then subsequently gaining proximity to lough shore and Knockaphort

Section 2

Woodpark Forest Park is an existing local amenity with a range of features including gravel trails, an outdoor classroom and picnic area, interpretative signage and car parking at both north and south aspects. From Woodpark main entrance, two paths, which are joined in the mid-section, travel south towards the main R352 road. The easterly route is contained primarily within woodland and follows the course of the Curragh River. The westerly route follows the “cow path” along a secondary road and onto the R352.

No significant new infrastructure other than waymarking would be needed for routing within Woodpark.

Section 3

The Lough Derg Loop travels south from the Woodpark section (orange) on the southern side of the R352 (having first required a crossing of the busy road - pedestrian crossing will be required here). After a short distance the proposed path could branch out in two directions; going left onto the most easterly transect of the Loop leads through reed and large sedge swamp habitats looping back to the path further west.

Following the river to the right leads through wet woodland. The routes loop around through the littoral zone of the lough and return to the R352 Woodpark car park.

Section 4

The riparian section of Knockaphort Loop (green) shares its path with the Lough Derg Loop. Two paths travel west from this section, continuing through wet woodland in the direction of the Knockaphort road, which leads to the Knockaphort pier. Knockaphort road joins with the R352 to the north, however using the R352 as a link should be avoided as there is no infrastructure to facilitate pedestrians safely here.

There are variations possible or likely on all sections but notably within section 3 & 4 where route finding upon implementation would need to be through detailed on the ground decision making to ensure the most practical route is followed to avoid wet areas, excessive infrastructure or bridging etc.

Noting that should construction be sought then a “design and build” contract approach would be needed where significant infrastructure is required, with micro-siting happening on a section by section basis. For less formal paths with no significant surface or build requirements, community volunteer labour may be feasible and the route determined in advance and accepted “as built” thereafter.

3.2 Rationale for selection of favoured route options

The primary challenge posed to the route of the Pilgrim Path is the location of the R352 main road, which centrally intersects the north and south parts of the search area, introducing road safety considerations at crossing locations. Secondly, a significant consideration is that of land ownership. Express access permissions are only available currently within certain areas and as such the route corridors are investigative and “in principal” only. Based on information gained from stakeholder consultation and the survey, the selection and rationale of favoured options is outlined in this section.

The recommended routes for further consideration are shown in Figure 8.

Likely level and type of usage

To make the pilgrim path of significant benefit to the community it needs to attract and support many people each year from its inception. The exact numbers are unknown but feasibly 2,000- 10,000 visits may be likely considering the size of the local community, the existing level of use of Woodpark and the potential to attract additional visitors.

Section 1 & 2 are able to support large numbers of people already as they are on firm or constructed surfaces throughout and create no additional difficulty of note (other than traffic issues)

Section 3 and 4 however, extend through areas of semi-natural habitats, mainly wet or damp woodland. This habitat is not able to support high numbers of visitors over a fixed route without having significant impacts on ground flora, woodland floor integrity and in turn the ability for people to safely navigate over such wet terrain. While sections of path may require simple surfacing where it is relatively dry, there are drains and streams and large sections of flooded woodland and wetland which would require more intervention to bring people through them.

The most likely options being surfaced, raised, built pathway or a raised boardwalk. These are further considered below

Road Safety considerations

Access via public roads is suggested along Middle line, across the R352 and along the Knockaphort road.

Middleline is a relatively quiet road and walking along it should be feasible safely particularly if some signage and other traffic calming measure can be introduced. There will be a need for local authority involvement to achieve this.

Given the road safety constraints posed by the location of the R352 it is advisable to reduce the number of crossing points to a minimum. This is exhibited here by the removal of the easterly “cow walk” route of the Woodpark section from consideration, which leads onto the R352, in the absence of any safe crossing points. Similarly, to the west on the R352 is the access road for Knockaphort. Although Knockaphort will hold an important position on the Pilgrim Path there is no infrastructure to support the utilisation of the R352 route for pedestrians at the current time.

Knockaphort could however be reached by the proposed Knockaphort and Lough Derg loop as seen in Figure 8.

Pedestrian access along the Knockaphort road is feasible with minor signage requirements (requires advice from local authority).



Figure 4 The R352 close to a potential crossing point from Woodpark into Lough shore woodland - the road is busy and traffic fast, a crossing point decided by Local Authority roads engineers would need to be negotiated and appropriate traffic management put in place

Further detailed road safety advice would require full involvement of local authority roads engineer to ensure road safety and way marking should not be undertaken without express agreement and cooperation.

Use of existing paths and infrastructure

The use of existing paths and parking is identified within Woodpark. This provides a low/no cost opportunity to create linkage to the village. This adds value to the existing facility at Woodpark, potentially seeing higher usage.

There would be some requirement to add signage and branding to ensure consistency with the Pilgrim Path branding.

The existing Woodpark paths also provide a link to the swathe of land with in-principal access permissions between the R352 and the lough shore.

Attempting to find an alternative route, not involving Woodpark, would not provide a simple solution to get pedestrians from Mountshannon to Knockaphort.



Figure 5 Woodpark Forest Park has many well- established high-quality paths – no significant upgrading is required but signage of the Pilgrim Path would be of value



Figure 6 Existing signage and interpretation in Woodpark is already doing a job - waymarking of the Pilgrim Path alone is adequate

New routes within lough side woodland

MCC have had preliminary discussions with landowners between Knockaphort and Woodpark, with a view to this being a desirable section within which to achieve access and utilise the opportunity for biodiversity enhancement. No other indicative permissions exist or are likely and geographically this section makes sense to attempt to navigate. However, there are significant challenges posed by ground conditions, vegetation density, and water courses. With high waterlogging of ground in particular meaning that year-round access would require an artificial surface.

In addition, a significant proportion of this area is contained within a Special Protection area and therefore there must be no significant impact on the integrity or special interest of the site, from any activities or developments and the feasibility of placing a route within this area must take this into account.

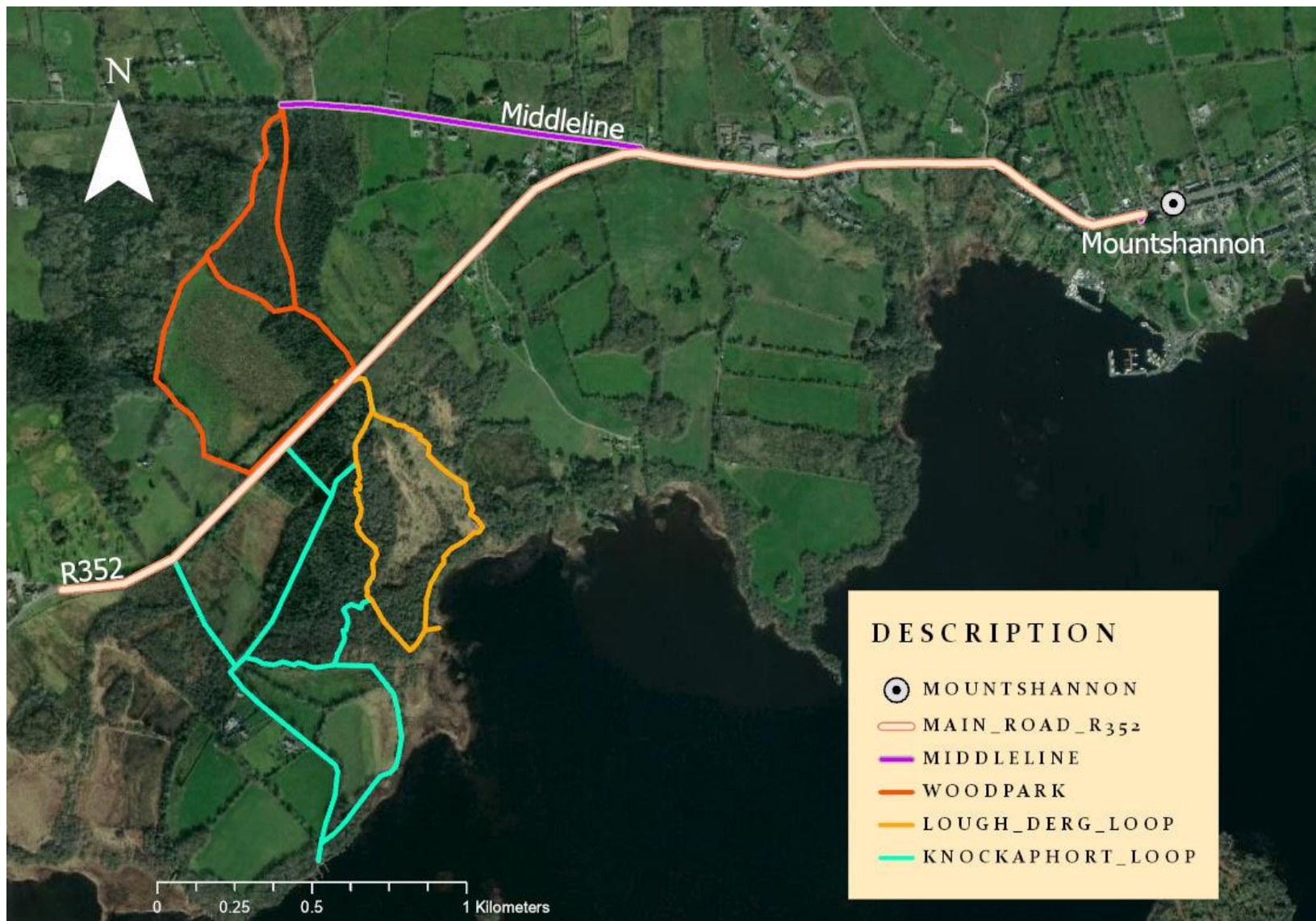


Figure 7 Route corridors proposed by MCC for assessment (main R352 shown)



Figure 8 Favoured route options following survey and field assessment

4. Section by section accounts

4.1 Aistear Park to Woodpark via Middleline (Section 1)

The proposed start point would be Aistear Park. A simple starting point “threshold” sign would be recommended to mark the location and provided basic route outline. From this point, navigation of footpaths along the R352 from Mountshannon village to Middleline represents the most practical route for the Pilgrim Path to reach this point. Pedestrian crossings are recommended along this route, with the potential location of three crossing points (assuming one of the three would be chosen) identified in Figure 9. These would all be subject to local authority advice and installation.

To then gain access to Woodpark main entrance there is a section of road to navigate. This would most likely require installation of traffic calming signage at least to make safer for pedestrians and would require local authority roads department agreement and involvement. Limited but adequate car parking is available at the north and south ends of Woodpark (see figure 10) should visitors wish to avoid section 1.

The need for a Pilgrim Path route map and information point at Aistear Park has been identified in order to facilitate and inform visitors of the path and its features, access routes and amenities. Several directional signposts along the route will inform visitors and keep them on the correct path (see locations in Figure 9 below).

Table 1 Potential infrastructure considerations for section 1

Ref. No.	Feature	No. locations	Notes
1.1	Car Parking (existing)	2	See map fig 9
1.2	Directional signpost	2	See map fig 9
1.3	Route information sign/map	1	See map fig 9
1.4	Pedestrian crossing	3	See map fig 9
1.5	Directional signpost	1	See map fig 9

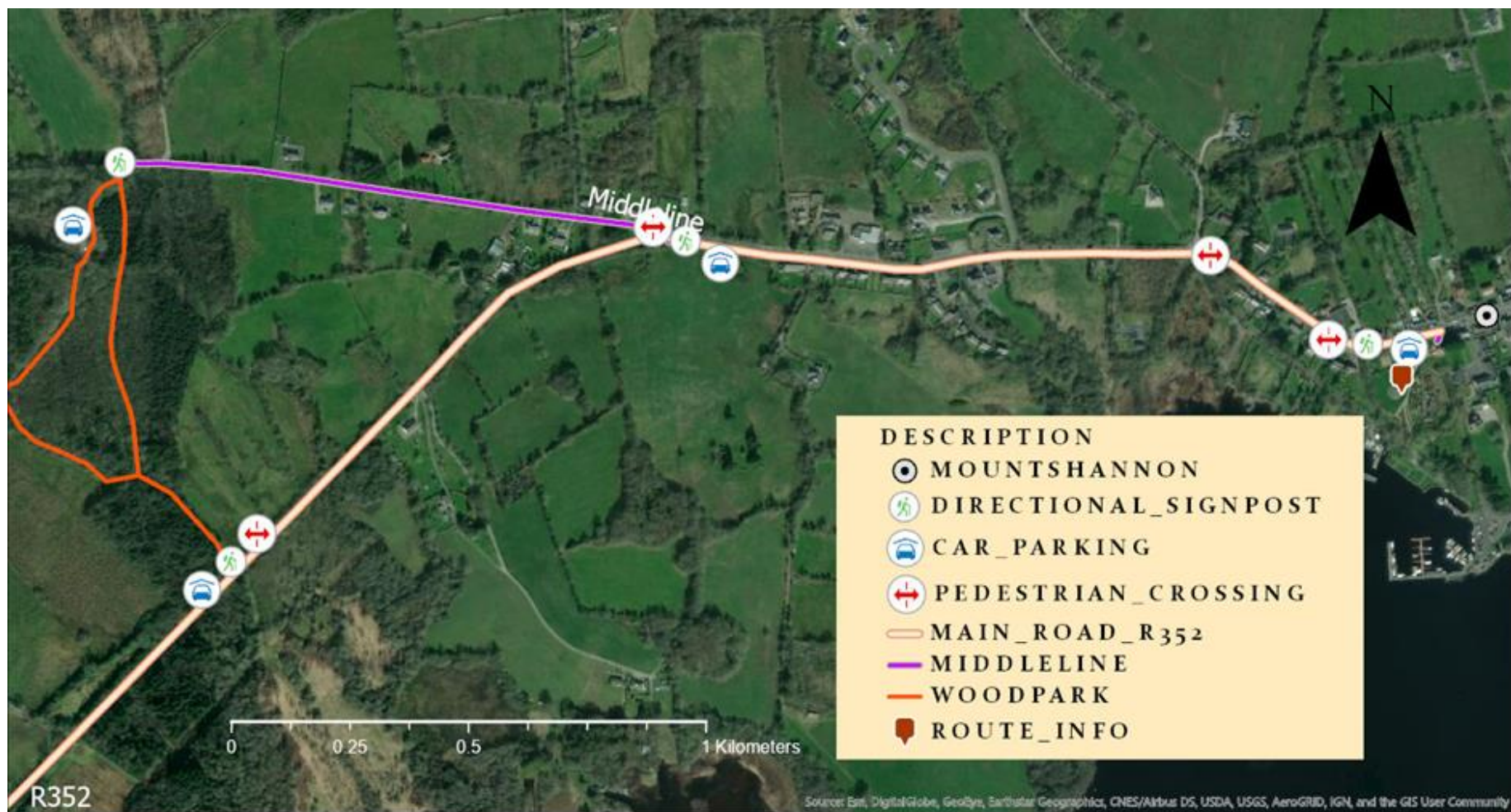


Figure 9 Map of potential features required for the Pilgrim Path from Aistear Park to Woodpark north entrance

4.2 Woodpark Loop

Access to Woodpark Forest park northern section is via Middleline and can be reached on foot or by car. There is also access and car parking at the southern section along the R352. Arriving at the southern section would best be achieved by car as the roadway has no path and is busy, with fast traffic. The location of the Woodpark southern car park also provides potential access to the proposed Knockaphort and Lough Derg Loops (see section 4.3) though access would involve a road crossing from the existing parking area. Infrastructure to facilitate safe crossing is recommended here. Directional sign posting at this location will aid in orientating the visitor and guiding them along the choice of pathways to and from Woodpark.

The pedestrian crossing described here would be proposed as the sole connecting point from the Woodpark Loop to Knockaphort and Lough Derg Loops in the south. It is also the only crossing along this section of the R352. Comparison of Figure 7 and Figure 8 maps indicates various potential routes which arrive at the R352 but have been removed on the basis of minimising road safety risks along the relatively busy and fast R352.

A plan for the incorporation of Woodpark into the Pilgrim Path is presented here. It is worth noting that Woodpark is a well-developed popular local amenity where there are existing the existing features and amenities which may be incorporated but which would ideally receive some level of renewal or modification. Existing features and proposed new features are displayed in Figure 4 and described in the table below.

An “outdoor classroom” exists in the northern section of Woodpark, containing picnic benches and located close to car parking space. The location has potential for upgrading which could include the installation of log ring seating (see examples, Appendix 1) to facilitate outdoor lessons. Installing bird/squirrel feeders and nest boxes at this location will also provide the potential for wildlife encounters and experiential learning.

Tobar na Nolc is a holy well held in high regard by local people. It is located just beyond the north western section of Woodpark along Middleline. There is potential to include this feature on the Pilgrim Path and this could be achieved easily by its inclusion on a directional signpost near to the Woodpark main entrance (acknowledging further need for access along public roadway) .

Table 2 Potential infrastructure considerations for section 2

Ref. No.	Feature	No. locations	Notes
2.1	Car Parking	2	See map fig 10
2.2	Outdoor Classroom	2	See map fig 10
2.3	Pedestrian footpath	1	See map fig 10
2.4	Directional signpost	3	See map fig 10
2.5	Bird feeding station (screened)	1	Interpretive feature/experience See map fig 10
2.6	Bird nest boxes	5-10	Exact siting required
2.7	Bat boxes	5-10	Exact siting required
2.8	Pedestrian crossing - R352	1	See map fig 10
2.9	Tobar na Nolc - include on direction sign	1	See map fig 10

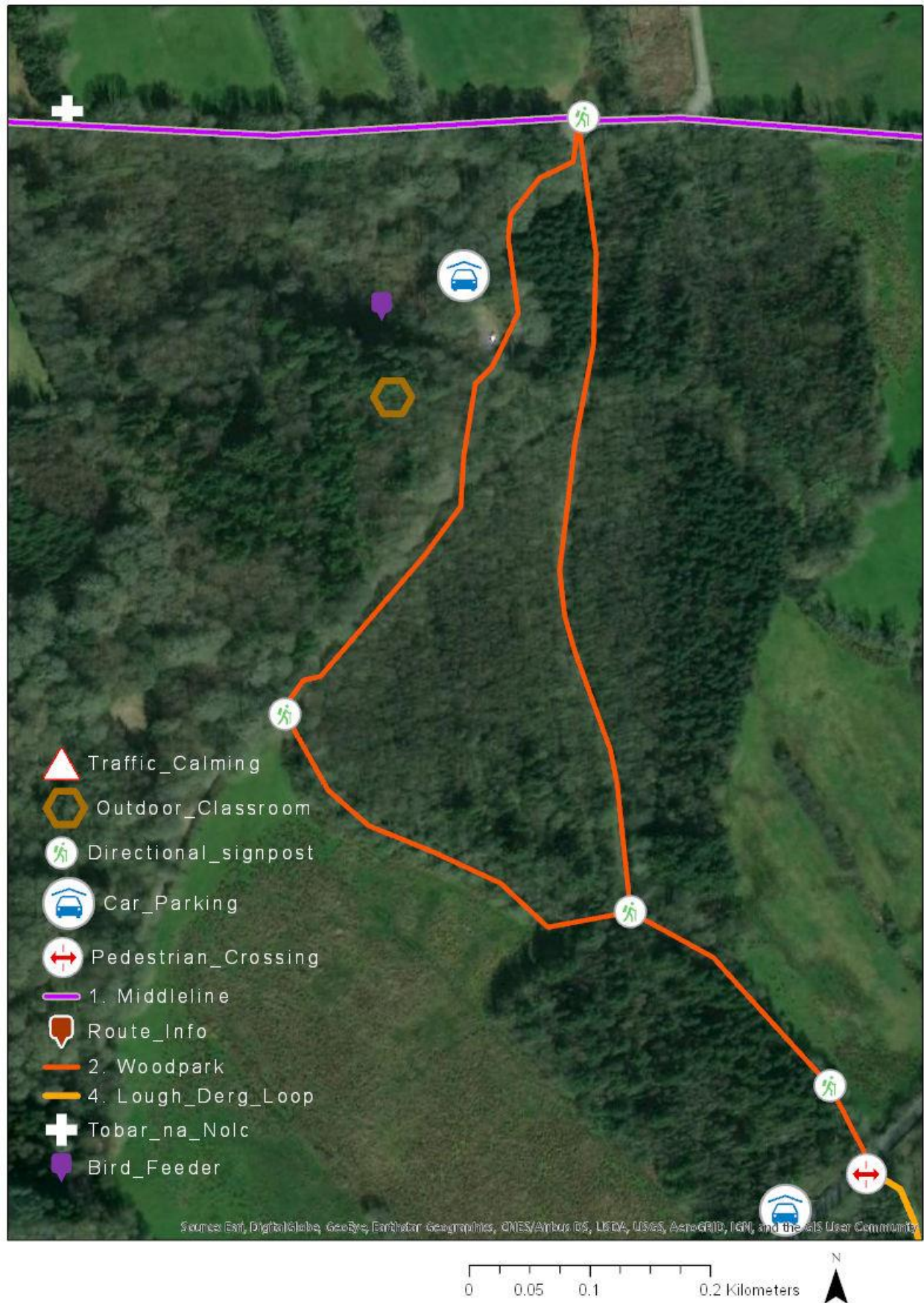


Figure 10 Map of potential or existing features identified for the Pilgrim Path through Woodpark Forest

4.3 Knockaphort loop

The Knockaphort Loop lies to the south of Woodpark and Middleline. Access would be gained by the R352 crossing from Woodpark. The riparian (eastern) path of the Knockaphort Loop will also comprise the western path of the Lough Derg Loop.

At the most southerly point, the Knockaphort Loop terminates at Knockaphort Pier and its main purpose is to provide access to this point. The terrain on route to this focal point is described here with design recommendations for a potential path.

Beyond the shared route, a short section of boardwalk may be required to traverse some waterlogged wet woodland ground – this may be removed or route altered during build.

Moving west from the southern end of the boardwalk sees the terrain become somewhat drier and transition into oak-birch-holly woodland, through which a less formal, terrestrial wood chip path would potentially be adequate with the need for sections of geotextile base or reversed soil path where necessary to create drier conditions. Exact routing through this section to take account of that. This could use found natural materials from the forest floor or from any cleared timber for edging and where the surface requires it wood chips from any required scrub clearance could be utilised as a surface, in combination or not with a geotextile membrane (see Figure 11).

This route leads to a junction on the path, the location of which would be marked by a directional signpost (By turning left, the walker will navigate to the Knockaphort road from which access can be gained to Knockaphort Pier. This utilises an old, vegetated track with what appears to be a good surface and simple vegetation clearance along the line of the path chosen should be enough to delineate and provide a reasonable surface. An additional directional signpost should be located at the Knockaphort road to direct the walker south to Knockaphort Pier or return along the specified loop, avoiding the R352.

Turning right at the path junction would allow the walker to complete a loop and return to the Woodpark car park. Navigating north through mixed conifer/broadleaved woodland, some sections are drained, some are waterlogged and may need bridging to provide access throughout the year. However, **a full assessment of this transect has not been completed due to a severe infestation of the invasive non-native plant *Rhododendron ponticum* (see purple hatching)**. It is recommended that establishing this route will provide the best opportunity to complete the Knockaphort Loop without the need for crossing the R352. To establish this path, treatment and eradication of the *R. ponticum* will be required¹⁰. Treatment of this species requires cutting back and herbicide treatment of the stumps. Management for complete eradication requires follow up visits, usually for up to five years, to ensure the infestation is not growing back. This would, however, be a valuable addition to biodiversity efforts through invasive non-native species removal.

¹⁰ NPWS Irish Wildlife Manual no. 33 *Rhododendron ponticum*: A guide to management on nature conservation sites. Available from: <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/IWM33.pdf>

Table 3 Potential infrastructure considerations for section 3 Knockaphort

Ref. No.	Feature	length	No. locations	Notes
3.1	Total path (approx.)	2076	-	Knockaphort Loop Figure 11
3.2	Boardwalk (approx.)	485	-	
3.3	Wood chip path (informal)	c. 700	-	Knockaphort Loop Figure 11
3.4	Directional signpost	-	4-6	Not shown – at junctions
3.5	Route information sign/map	-	1	Knockaphort Pier
3.6	Bat boxes		10-20	Exact siting required
3.7	Bridge	-	1	See map figure 11
3.8	Rhododendron ponticum (clearance required)	-	> 1	See maps figure 11

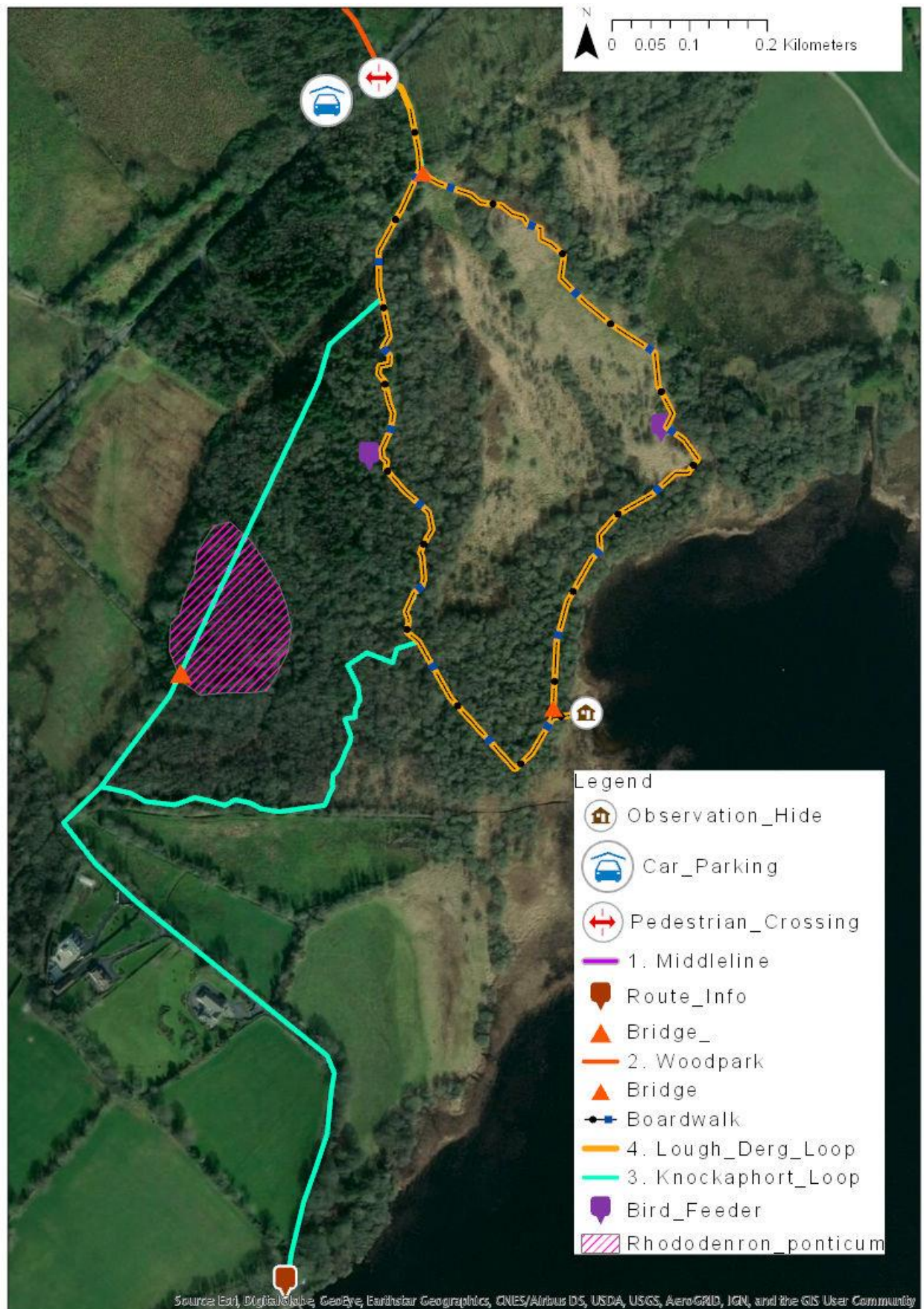


Figure 11 Route and potential features/issues for the proposed Knockaphort & Lough Derg loops Path.

4.4 Lough Derg Loop

The Lough Derg Loop has the same starting point as the Knockaphort Loop and in its western section would share 485 m of (boardwalk) pathway before branching off in a south-easterly direction to provide access to a proposed observation hide on the lough shore. Site survey has indicated that significant portions (almost the entire length) of the route identified for the Lough Derg Loop run through wet woodland and swamp. The issues noted in section 3.2 indicate that a sustainable solution to maintaining path integrity would be required if a path was to be physically feasible within such an area. A raised boardwalk offers the likely only solution which addresses the issues identified in keeping a path passable in the long term for large numbers of people. Given the extent and variable obstacles in this section it is recommended to install boardwalk throughout this loop if it is pursued further (costs are considered later in the report)

Two bridges will be required to cross the stream which runs from north to south through this section. The woodland area in the west and south of the loop has an array of passerines all year round and as such could lend itself well to establishing a bird feeding station which would provide a great way of showing people many species of woodland birds relatively easily. Similarly, the edge of the swamp clearing in the eastern section could provide a useful feeding station, however, the limitations identified for the concept lie in whether it is a feasible distance to travel for refilling bird feeders regularly by voluntary effort.

A proposed observation hide has the potential to offer excellent views of wildlife on Lough Derg and its installation could well prove to be a focal point of the Pilgrim Path. The strategic position of this raised viewing platform could provide views of otter, skulking reedbed bird species such as Water Rail and, subject to position of floating islands could be a viewing point for a constructed, island tern colony (should they return in future) and other important wetland birds.



Figure 12 View of one aspect from the location of the proposed viewing hide (approximately at viewing height)

Continuing the path from the observation hide through a north-east crescent, the route tracks through wet woodland on the littoral zone of Lough Derg. Raised boardwalk would provide some opportunities for semi-screened lake views along this section.

The path then emerges into an area of open canopy where the habitat is swamp dominated by large sedge tussocks. The ground is uneven here and the water table was high at the time of survey. Moving north, there are seasonally inundated pools at the edge of the clearing and at least one permanent large drain which will need bridging to enable access. Willow and alder are encroaching on this area. The ground is a little drier towards the north of this section albeit uneven and wet in patches. Continuing the boardwalk throughout the entire section, would ensure access throughout the year with low impact on the habitats. **Without boardwalk, this section would be unsuitable for access.**

The open-canopy swamp section of the Lough Derg Loop has potential for the creation of some permanent pools in areas of high water-table. These could support a rich biodiversity notably, highly visible, dragonflies and damselflies, of which there are upwards of 13 species likely in the area. Creating on specific dragonfly pools would add significant new biodiversity features to the area.

Table 4 Potential infrastructure considerations for section 4 Lough Derg Loop

Ref. No.	Feature	length	No. locations	Notes
4.1	Total path	1372	-	Knockaphort Loop
4.2	Boardwalk	485	-	
4.3	Observation hide	-	1	Focal point.
4.4	See map figure 6.			
4.5	Freshwater pond	-	1-2	Swamp, various location TBC
4.6	Directional signpost	-	2	Not shown
4.7	Bird Feeders	-	1	See location map figure 11 (second feeder to east not likely)
4.8	Boardwalk bridge	-	2	See location map figure 11



Figure 13 A four-spotted Chaser dragonfly basks on a poolside reed stem – dragonflies could form an attractive feature of the Pilgrim Path and could be enhanced by careful pool creation

4.5 Assessment of route feasibility

This section examines in outline the key factors determining the feasibility of the access routes as defined by the potential routes and key design features noted in the section by section accounts.

There are a limited range of route corridors available to MCC at present. Those potential routes identified in initial scoping were reduced to recommended options and are further assessed here in Table 5.

Table 5 Outline feasibility assessment of route sections

Route section	Key issues	Mitigation	Recommendation
1 Middleline	Access along road crossing points	Council involvement in planning traffic measures	Adopt subject to council involvement (Phase 1)
2 Woodpark	Upgrade/renovation of existing features	Community work parties for upgrades/renovation	Adopt subject to man-power commitments for upgrades/renovation and funding (Phase 1)
3 Knockaphort loop	Wet woodland/waterlogged ground <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> clearance Cost (boardwalk & Rhodo. clearance) Unknown ground conditions in part where access was not possible	None; full loop not feasible without boardwalk and Rhodo. clearance	Adopt subject to costs and funding Assess ground conditions further if possible (reject return loop if further boardwalk required) (Phase 2)
4 Lough Derg Loop	Extensive wetland Hide construction within wetland (SPA) Cost of extensive boardwalk	Construction subject to design and build Not feasible without Boardwalk	Adopt “shared section” to hide (phase 3) Do not proceed with loop.

Section 1 is a low-cost option but is dependent upon local authority involvement in planning and executing suitable signage and crossing points. Agreement with the LA in this regard will be required. **(PHASE 1)**

Section 2 is a low cost and easily deliverable option as it uses existing infrastructure of paths and trails within Woodpark. It would benefit from upgrading and renovation of some aspects and this would be best delivered through co-ordinated community volunteer effort. Additional signage and new biodiversity enhancement efforts will be required and could form part of a biodiversity funding bid. **(PHASE 1)**

Section 3 requires a combination of boardwalk (shared in part with section 4) and the development of low-key routes through drier parts of forest. There is an issue/opportunity in needing to clear rhododendron to gain access and the ground conditions on this potential return loop were not discoverable during survey. Should further waterlogged ground conditions be discovered then it is likely that the costs of additional boardwalk would be prohibitive and an “out and back” option developed instead. **(PHASE 2)**

Section 4 proposes a route through seasonally inundated wetland habitats starting with a spur towards and including a raised observation hide. This is relatively sensitive habitat to erosion and unsafe to walk on. To create a route with limited habitat impact then only a boardwalk would be feasible. To achieve the full route, it requires in excess of 600 metres of additional boardwalk. The

cost of this is high, but the relative benefit is low by comparison and it is recommended that this loop be excluded but the spur to the observation hide (only 202 m) be retained as an extension to the Knockaphort loop and as a key feature of the project. **(PHASE 3)**

Figure 14 shows the recommended final route and indicates the section of boardwalk and a section of unknown ground conditions

Examples of various access and signage infrastructure, materials and design guides as reference elements are provided in the appendix 1 this includes reference costings



Figure 14 Proposed outline Pilgrim Path route for potential development in phases 1-3

4.6 Linkage to Bohatch Dolmen

MCC would also prefer to have the development of the pilgrim path with a clear and straightforward linkage to the Bohatch dolmen. Although this is a significant heritage site in itself, it is relatively low key in terms of its existing promotion and there is no formal parking or other visitor infrastructure at present. There is some low-key signage from the village, however.

The most obvious and cost- effective route development is that currently used by many local people either signed from the village or walking on a mix of metalled and unmetalled roads from Woodpark.

The signing and routing to the Dolmen would be easily achieved through existing signs and through any trail materials developed as part of the Pilgrim Path. Figures 15-16 below show existing routes to the dolmen which could be enhanced and promoted through simple signage. Noting however, that these are routes on roadways and if promoting further, may require advisory or infrastructure input from the local authority subject to negotiation.

The development of these routes is optional and can run in parallel with any development of the main elements of the Pilgrim Path.

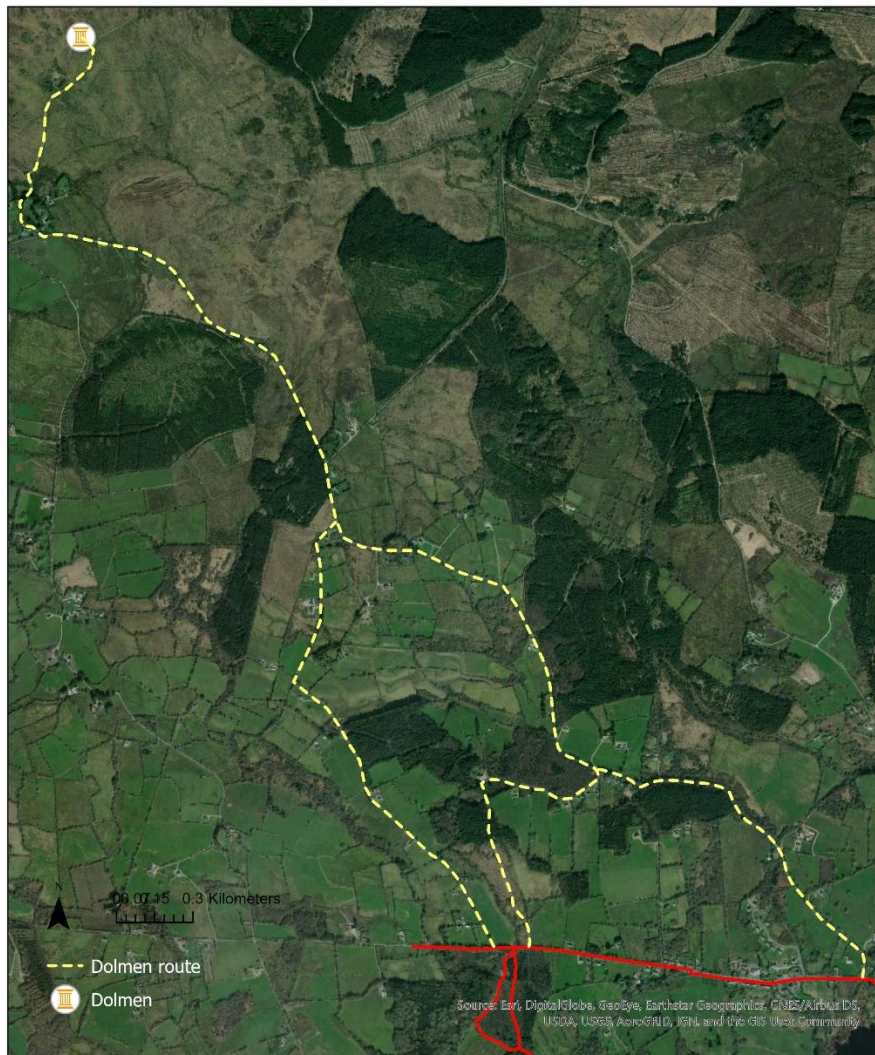


Figure 15 Dolmen routes linking to the proposed Pilgrim Path – the potential to develop off road routes is clear but would require significant investigation of landownership



Figure 16 Potential route access to the dolmen from Woodpark

Referring back to the Mountshannon White-tailed Sea Eagle Development Plan⁹ the dolmen and the area north of Mountshannon is contained within that report as an area for consideration for development of low intensity trails and viewpoints and the routes identified here should form part of the thinking behind that.

5. Actions for Biodiversity

A key element of the project is to tie in the Pilgrim Path with key actions for biodiversity. The main considerations in including elements for biodiversity enhancement to tie in with The Pilgrim Path whilst incorporating the village include:



Figure 17 Logo of Clare Biodiversity as used by Clare County Council

Key considerations in planning community biodiversity actions

- ➔ **People and community engagement** - key to ensuring successful enhancement of biodiversity in the local area.
- ➔ **Complementary actions** - best and most resource effective results will arise from biodiversity actions which complement and enhance existing interest features and habitats and are relevant to the natural heritage of the area.
- ➔ **Relevance to existing plans** – actions should be relevant and contribute to existing local and national biodiversity action plans and where possible to the achievement of favourable conservation condition of designated sites where they overlap.
- ➔ **Achievable actions** – those selected should form a coherent, understandable and achievable program which can be delivered primarily through community action.
- ➔ **Centrally coordinated** – the most likely route to successful achievement of both biodiversity and access developments will be achieved by appointing a key coordinator or small project team to ensure projects are well planned and executed.

5.1 Identification of potential biodiversity actions

The village and the project area hold the following key habitats/biodiversity interest/potential issues or opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. In this section, each is taken in turn and potential actions, and a rationale for selection of recommended actions, is identified.

Biodiversity Interest feature: Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA

Special interest includes wintering waterbirds and breeding Common Terns, Great Crested Grebe and Black-headed Gulls. Most species of the SPA are visible at least at times from the shore or pier at Mountshannon and Knockaphort, around the islands and from shoreline areas nearby

Potential actions

- Interpretation at key sites or as events

- Viewing points (including a hide) overlooking good waterbird areas and potentially shoreline habitats such as reedbed or spits/islands
- Creation of nesting rafts to provide safe nest sites for terns/gulls – also with viewing potential
- Creation of new pools within fen/tall swamp area

Rationale

Waterbirds are usually fairly visible and relatively easy to identify e.g. Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe and Goldeneye and awareness raising through interpretation will contribute to community awareness of the value of the SPA and its birds and to the enjoyment of visitors.

There is a general lack of good nesting sites for Common Terns on the lough and small, floating islands can provide ideal predator free nest sites if carefully designed and sited. These would be placed within sight of viewing areas to provide a valuable wildlife spectacle for people to see. Providing nest sites for Common Tern would be a significant contribution to the conservation condition of the SPA.

The actions identified contribute to both the Clare County Biodiversity Action Plan¹¹ (CCBAP) and The National Biodiversity Action Plan¹² (NBAP) by; providing opportunities for enhanced awareness of biodiversity, bringing biodiversity closer to communities, contributing to the conservation of wetland species and contributing to the conservation condition of a Natura designated site.



Figure 18 A small version of one design of Tern raft (with predator proofing) - anchoring a raft near an observation point could provide new nesting habitat for terns and allow people to watch the colony at a safe distance

Biodiversity opportunity: Pollinator friendly village

¹¹ Available from: <https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/arts-recreation/publications/Clare-Biodiversity-Action-Plan-2017-2023-26799.pdf>

¹² Available from: <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/National%20Biodiversity%20Action%20Plan%20English.pdf>

The national pollinator plan¹³ along with both CCBAP and NBAP identifies the need for pollinator friendly policies and actions in a range of sectors and across all areas of the country. The Pilgrim Path area has a range of options for the inclusion of pollinator friendly practices and projects and more widely to create an awareness of the value of invertebrates to our daily lives.

Simple, small scale but widespread and highly visible actions are ideal for engaging the community and visitors in pollinator and other invertebrate conservation

Potential actions

- Creation of wildflower meadow areas in Aistear park
- Creation of pollinator flower beds in Aistear park
- Identification and management of woodland ground flora areas in key woodlands (Woodpark and lough shore woodland) to encourage key native species such as Bluebells
- Insect hotels and deadwood piles on roadways, public spaces and woodlands
- Insect identification and discovery events

Rationale

National and local BAPs identify pollinators and invertebrates of high priority. The Pilgrim Path area has a range of options for the inclusion of pollinator friendly practices and projects and more widely to create an awareness of the value of invertebrates to our daily lives.

Simple, small scale, widespread and highly visible actions are ideal for engaging the community and visitors in pollinator and other invertebrate conservation and are generally easily achievable

Some expert-led and targeted events will create a “buzz” around the subject and engage the community, either as part of a larger event or as guided walks or field workshops.

Public greenspace is a notable area where community and local authority-based actions can contribute to pollinator conservation by provision of new habitat areas or by enhancing management of existing grasslands and semi-natural habitats.



Figure 19 Some pollinating butterflies like this Small Copper are meadow specialists - creating wildflower meadows in the heart of the village can attract pollinating insects and enable people to enjoy them

¹³ Available from: <https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/All-Ireland%20Pollinator%20Plan%202015-2020.pdf>

Biodiversity opportunity: **Threatened wildlife actions**

There are a range of species present within the area which are assessed to have rare or threatened status at a national level. Many are enigmatic, attractive or of interest to the general public and the provision of actions to help their conservation would be a high profile and effective first step in engaging people to act for biodiversity in their community.

Potential actions

- A Community wide “homes for birds” scheme including the provision of standard and specialist nest boxes and nest platforms or rafts for BoCCI red and Amber listed species, notably; Grey Wagtail, Black-headed Gull (Red), Common Tern, Great Spotted Woodpecker, House Martin, House Sparrow, Kestrel, Spotted Flycatcher, Starling, Swallow, Swift
- Bat box provision in Main woodlands, especially Woodpark and lough shore woodlands.
- Provision of Red Squirrel and bird feeding stations within forest areas, with screened viewing areas to enable people to view them without disturbance

Rationale

Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI)¹⁴ outlines the threatened birds within Ireland. Many are present within the Mountshannon area and could be assisted by simple provision of nest sites. Some simply by provision of boxes to provide nest cavities in e.g. woodlands with still relatively young trees (as most are) and some more complex challenges such as nesting raft provision for Common Tern and Black Headed Gull but with significant potential enhancements for the species concerned

Bat boxes – not all bat species use them but their provision can be of value, particularly as summer roosts. Their presence on trees alerts people to the efforts for these animals and helps to dispel some of the myths by creating familiarity

Red Squirrels come readily to special feeders and are very popular as well as being of importance as part of Irelands diminishing mammal populations.

Biodiversity threat: **Invasive Alien Species – *Rhododendron ponticum***

INNS are becoming widely acknowledged as one of the biggest threats to biodiversity in Ireland. Where high priority species are present, they require management to limit their further spread or eradicate them.

The Pilgrim path route has the potential to interact with a large area of *Rhododendron ponticum*. The opportunity to remove and instigate future controls is present and may assist in preventing its spread through surrounding woodlands¹⁵.

Potential actions

- Rhododendron Clearance from identified infested areas
- Ongoing prevention of recurrence through community volunteering

¹⁴ Colhoun, K. & Cummins, S. 2013. Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2014–2019. Irish Birds 9: 524-544 available from: <https://birdwatchireland.ie/app/uploads/2019/09/BOCCI.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingschemesandpayments/glastraining/RhododendronFinalDraft230616.pdf>

- Mapping of further invasive species presence within the area would be of high value

Rationale

The risk of further spread of *Rhododendron* is clear. There is a large stand within mixed woodland close to semi-natural lough shore woodland with signs of further spread beginning. It is imperative to prevent infestation and loss of further woodland ground flora that the main stand is controlled and re-infestation prevented.

It is impractical to treat large stands using volunteer labour only but once main stands are cleared volunteer groups can be used to identify and tackle regrowth which can also be a valuable community engagement event

Rhododendron is likely to not be the only invasive species present and a concerted effort to map invasive species presence in the area would be of value to identify further high priority works



Figure 20 Rhododendron is spreading from a large stand out into the native wet woodland with resultant loss of ground flora – removal is required before the native woodland floor is over shaded

Biodiversity awareness opportunity: **Community biodiversity events**

A key element of both national and local BAPs is the need to increase awareness of people to the value of biodiversity. This also forms an important element of community well-being, a sense of place and a valuable tourism asset if developed sensitively. The Pilgrim path route provides an opportunity as a locus for further development of biodiversity awareness.

Potential actions

- Community wildlife festival
- Trail cams “wildlife surveillance” project
- Biodiversity recording event – community bioblitz
- Guided community biodiversity walks programme with experts – including exploration of aquatic habitats
- Community tree nursery

Rationale

There is limited expertise within the community on biodiversity but much enthusiasm and expertise enough to run modest scale events, Combining the recruitment of key experts and promoting a series of key events with the right advice could attract new visitors, add to social cohesion and quality of life and significantly increase biodiversity awareness among the community.

A key aspect of this will be to have a project manager to develop, lead, drive and effectively promote events, engendering community uptake and developing new events as opportunities arise (see “Strategic Actions” below) some events may be income generating to assist with project funding.

A native tree nursery has been mentioned by MCC as of interest. There would be a significant challenge in establishing a tree nursery such as finding appropriate land and identifying the usage of the trees upon growing, but this may be possible with the right land available. Native tree species and shrub species for planting within community lands or providing to local people for gardens would be of benefit to biodiversity, particular where non-native species could be replaced.



Figure 21 Field teaching school groups to learn about aquatic life - "pond dipping" is invariably popular with school groups but can be just as fascinating and engaging for adults

5.2 Selection and planning of biodiversity actions

Table 6 below identifies 3 project phases for biodiversity actions.

Phase 1 - small scale projects deliverable with community support in the short term and with modest funding.

Phase 2 - more substantial projects which may be likely to succeed only with substantial external funding support and use of contractors.

Phase 3 - actions which tie into the full development of the Pilgrim Path and may be dependent upon some elements of it

From the potential actions listed in section 5.1 above these are aligned (selected and or summarised where necessary) with the appropriate project phases.

Detailed estimated cost for phase 1 are provided in section 7. Outline costings for phases two and three are also provided.

Table 6 Indicative scheduling of biodiversity actions

Phase 1 (years 1-2)				
#	Project	Description/actions	Scale/quantity	Who?
	Interpretation event of Lough Derg SPA	Develop guided wildlife walks to look at birdlife of the lough shore focussing on the value of the SPA	5x per annum	Contract walk leader or skilled volunteer
	Creation of wildflower meadow areas in Aistear park	Identify areas of Aistear Park grassland for conversion to wildflower meadow	1 - 2 parcels total= 0.2 Ha (c. 2000 m ²)	Community with ecologist advice

		Prepare ground - removal of top improved grass layer, rotavate, cordon off site	as above	Contractor (ecologist advice)
		Re-seed prepared ground with suitable wildflower meadow mix (noting guidance e.g. https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Pollinator-How-to-Guide-4-wildflower-FINAL.pdf)	as above	Contractor (ecologist advice)
		Ensure cutting regime is established with council operatives	as above	Community & Council (ecologist advice)
	Trail cams “wildlife surveillance” project	Establish a trailcam loan scheme whereby a stock of a 10 trailcams is loaned on a periodic basis to individuals and used to discover what wildlife (especially nocturnal wildlife) is on their land. Training provision in trailcam use and placing highlights within community website and social media channels	10 x cameras Memory & batteries Training event	Commercial supplier Ecologist training
	Bat boxes	Bat box provision in Main woodlands, especially Woodpark and lough shore woodlands.	c. 50 bat boxes in total	Ecologist advice on installation, installation by volunteers
	Red Squirrel and bird feeding stations	Establish 1 feeding station in Woodpark with screened viewing areas to enable people to view them without disturbance	Feeders cost Screening Food supply year 1 Built screens	Retail purchase of feeders Contractor & materials for screen OR Voluntary labour & materials for screen Voluntary maintenance/top ups
	Community Biodiversity walks	Guided community Biodiversity walks programme with experts – including exploration of aquatic habitats – targeted at accommodation providers and others in tourism and general community to enhance awareness of wildlife as a tourism offering for visitors	5x 0.5 d and prep time	Walk leaders/experts Community coordination & publicity
	Web development 1	Low cost initial website development, compatible with smartphones to access simple information on wildlife in the area and route maps for existing paths and sites – preparation of wildlife info pdfs, a “where to watch wildlife” pdf and placed within existing website or new site as it emerges	c. 10 days = 7 days ecologist 3 days web content provider	Ecologist and web designer (or volunteer if within community)
Phase 2 (years 3-5)				
#	Project	Brief Description	Other comments	
	Nest site provision – woodland and village	A Community wide “homes for birds” scheme including the provision of standard and specialist nest boxes (and nest platforms or rafts see X below) for BoCCI red and Amber listed species, notably; Grey Wagtail, Black-headed Gull (Red), Common Tern, Great Spotted Woodpecker, House Martin, House Sparrow, Kestrel, Spotted Flycatcher, Starling, Swallow, Swift	Build or cost retail purchase of c. 100 specialist nestboxes Ecologist advice for siting Voluntary labour	
	Community wildlife festival	Weekend event with walks, talks and workshops on biodiversity and wildlife watching in May or June	Potentially establish annually	
	Creation of pollinator flower beds in Aistear park	Conversion of flower beds or selected shrub areas to pollinator beds	Replacement of non-flowering shrubs with native or pollinator friendly shrubs and plants Materials cost, voluntary labour	

Identification and management of woodland ground flora areas in key woodlands	Survey of local woodland habitat to create inventory of high-quality areas and subsequent identification of management prescriptions	Ecologist with community training element
Insect hotels and deadwood piles in public spaces and woodlands	Create invertebrate habitat piles and install insect hotels (can potentially be made by schools or groups)	Standard approaches, community led, voluntary labour, small materials cost
Nesting rafts for terns/gulls	Creation of nesting rafts to provide safe nest sites for terns/gulls close to observation hide – 1 large or 2-4 smaller floating islands of standard design with anti-predator measures	Contractor - design, build Ecologist – advice for siting/installation
INNS mapping	Mapping of further invasive species presence within the area would be of high value.	Ecological contractor to survey all INNS
Phase 3 (5+ years)		
Wetland bird & invertebrate habitat creation	Creation of new pools within fen/tall swamp area	in undesignated area, contractor and ecologist design and supervision
Observation hide	Installation (design and build) observation hide at strategic location on Pilgrim path	1 raised platform hide dependent on access from Pilgrim Path
Web development 2	Potential to develop web-based app for route information and local wildlife watching – possibly integrated into a wider village app	Subject to development of full trail
Rhododendron clearance	Rhododendron clearance from identified infested areas and ongoing prevention of recurrence through community volunteering	Contractor & follow up by community volunteering
Community native tree nursery	Establish after initial investigations to source land, identify eventual application and costings. Tree seed sourced locally	Community and some contractor and materials costs for establishment

Examples of various types of biodiversity infrastructure, materials and design guides as reference elements are provided in the appendix 1. Including reference costings

6. Interpretive themes and approach to information provision

It is recommended to keep interpretation infrastructure to a minimum and instead focus on the following main aspects:

- Simple clear signage and way marking of the Pilgrim Path
- Biodiversity and heritage information kept to the web or in easily re-printed paper materials

- Tie in with themes already identified for the area in the “Mountshannon White-tailed Sea Eagle Development plan” in order that projects are complementary

The WTSE Development Plan already identifies significant suggested themes for the visitor experience, many of which remain extant (see figure 20). The Pilgrim Path project is a clear off shoot of the previous plan and as such need to take cognisance of the messaging already provided within that study.

Notable and complimentary themes are:

Explore the lake

Discover Hidden Wildlife

Science and Research



Figure 22 Extract from Mountshannon White-tailed Sea Eagle Development Plan

Following the recommended actions in this report will deliver consistency with this previous study, even with the relative absence of the eagles.

7. How can this be delivered? – strategic actions

In order to achieve the biodiversity programme outlined above and to take the next steps in delivering a sustainable and effective Pilgrim Path around which to base a number of key developments there is a need for resource to lead, facilitate and project manage this. While there may be capacity to develop and deliver some of the identified activities, from discussion with MCC it is clear that, despite some significant expertise and motivation to see these projects through there is quite limited manpower available.

It is likely to be possible to plan and deliver some of the project tasks initially from within the Community Council itself and that will be a decision which will need careful consideration in planning the next steps. In the medium term at least, there are two strategic actions/activities which are identified as being of primary importance in developing capacity within the community to further develop and deliver the main biodiversity projects and the more technical elements of the access works.

These are;

- 1. Establishment of a Community Countryside Projects Officer**
- 2. Establishment of a volunteer skills development initiative**

7.1 Community Countryside Projects Officer (CCPO)

This would be (initially at least in phase 1) a part-time post developed to create “critical mass” to lead and deliver projects identified by this report and related activities from previous studies. There remains a significant impasse to delivery of projects, in part at least, due to limited community resources.

A bid for funding for Phase 1 (or 1 & 2) should include a dedicated project officer to lead project development and management.

Skills required should include strength in ecology or wildlife management to enable much of the preparatory work to be completed without reference to outside ecological expertise (thus reducing cost where possible) and experience of management of small projects as well as basic communication and IT literacy etc. Educational level should be at NFQ level 8 (lower levels but with equivalent experience are acceptable)

An example job description is provided at Appendix 2

Costs

A 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for a post of this nature including basic office, travel and equipment costs and a modest operating budget would be:

Item	Approx. cost
Staff gross salary	€16,000
Employment costs	€1,700
Office running costs and travel	€ 3,000
TOTAL	€20,700

Income Potential

The officer would require external funding support and a proportion of their time should be funded by unrestricted funding derived from event activities, non-ring-fenced donations etc. It would be likely that running regular public events, appeals to the wider local community and to charitable donors that 10-20% of costs in year 1-3 could be found via those sources.

7.2 Volunteer skills development initiative

Volunteer manpower is extremely valuable and is identified at some level as being involved in many of the individual projects noted. Cognisance should be given to the opportunity for the development of a more formal volunteering programme, with a skills development element.

The development of a volunteer resource would be a key part of the remit of the CCPO but is most likely to develop early in phase 2.

Specific funding for this type of programme should be sought, potentially including approaches to corporate bodies for Corporate Social & environmental Responsibility (CSR) related funding.

8. Project synthesis

This section brings all elements of the project together:

1. Pilgrim Path development
2. Biodiversity actions
3. Strategic actions (for delivery of 1 & 2 above)

The challenge of **relatively limited potential funding sources** and the **need to often raise matched funding** even at 10-20% is **a challenge for a small community** and means the delivery of the project requires a **phased approach** to ensure that such funding challenges remain manageable.

Three phases are recommended and the works recommended are synthesised in three tables (table 7 - 9) below.

Table 7 Project synthesis

Outline action				Specific action	Cost to MCC Approx. €000
	Phase 1 (Years 1 and 2)				
Pilgrim Path actions	1.1	Develop existing access by arranging upgrades required at Middleline and Woodpark including enhanced signage to the Dolmen	Council road traffic works Renovate outdoor classroom Install bird feeding station (see appendix 1)	?	0.5 0.5
	1.2	Mark layout on the ground of the detailed favoured routes to Knockaphort and the lough shore including position of paths and observation hide etc	MCC with ecologist supervision to mark routeway as plotted in this report		0.75
			Sub Total		€1.75K
Biodiversity actions	1.3	Interpretation event of Lough Derg SPA	5x guided walks in year 1 & 2 (10 in total)		2.0
	1.4	Creation of wildflower meadow areas in Aistear park	Identify areas of Aistear Park grassland for conversion to wildflower meadow Prepare ground - removal of top improved grass layer, rotavate, cordon off site Re-seed prepared ground with suitable wildflower meadow mix (by hand) Ensure cutting regime is established with council operatives		0.5 0.8 0.4 0.0
	1.5	Trail cams “wildlife surveillance” project	Establish trailcam loan scheme (staff/vol time) Purchase 10x trailcams (+ memory & batteries) Providing training event Place periodic highlights within community website and social media channels (vol time)		0.0 2.0 1.0 0.0
	1.6	Bat boxes	Purchase 50 bat boxes (see appendix 1) Install (vol/staff time)		1.0 0.0
	(1.1)	Red Squirrel and bird feeding stations	As 1.1. above		n/a
	1.7	Community Biodiversity walks	Guided community Biodiversity walks programme with experts 5x 0.5-day walks Experts cost and support costs		2.0
		Web development (wildlife information 1)	Prepare information sheets x 5 pdfs content Adapt existing website with minor content and downloadable information sheets		0.75 1.0
			Sub Total		€10.45K
Strategic actions	1.8	Employ p/t 7.1 Community Countryside Projects Officer (CCPO)	Staff gross salary x 2 years Employment costs x 2 years Office running costs and travel x 2 years		32.0 3.4 6.0
			Sub Total		€41.4K
PHASE 1 TOTAL (years 1 & 2)					€53.6K

Table 8 Project synthesis phase 2

Outline action			Cost to MCC Approx. €000
	Phase 2 (years 3-4)		
Pilgrim Path actions	2.1	Establish Knockaphort loop with Crossing point development on R352 (Local authority control) Boardwalk construction 485 m (at likely average 350/m) Signs etc	?? 179.8 10.0
		Sub Total	€189.8K
	2.2	Nest site provision – woodland and village	1.0
	2.3	Community wildlife festival	5.0
	2.4	Creation of pollinator flower beds in Aistear park	1.5
	2.5	Identification and management of woodland ground flora areas in key woodlands	1.0
	2.6	Insect hotels and deadwood piles in public spaces and woodlands	0.5
	2.7	Nesting rafts for terns/gulls	5.0
	2.8	INNS mapping	5.0
		Sub Total	€19.0K
Strategic actions	2.9	Volunteer development programme	10.0
	2.10	Continue CCPO (2 years + inflation)	43.5
		Sub Total	€53.5K
PHASE 2 TOTAL (years 3 & 4)			€262.3K

Table 9 Project Synthesis - Phase 3 indicative

Outline action			Cost to MCC Approx. €000
	Phase 3 (years 5+)		
Pilgrim Path actions	3.1	Establish Lough Derg spur 202 m boardwalk & signage	80.0
		Sub Total	€189.8K
Biodiversity actions	3.2	Establish wildlife observation hide	65.0
	3.3	Web development 2 – develop full web app	30.0
	3.4	Rhododendron clearance	20.0
	3.5	Community native tree nursery	5.0
		Sub Total	€120.0K
Strategic actions	3.6	Consider continued existence of CCPO & volunteer programme after review	??
PHASE 3 TOTAL (years 5+)			??

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Pilgrim Path corridor options were surveyed and assessed.

Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement were explored and identified.

Through survey and subsequent analysis, the following key issues were identified:

- Land ownership needs clarified and MCC should be satisfied that all landowner agreements/permissions are in place
- Existing routes from Mountshannon to and through Woodpark are already suitable and need minimal work but will require Local Authority cooperation
- The main access route works required are to the south of the main R352 in lough shore woodlands and crossing the R352 will require Local Authority cooperation over a crossing point
- Ground conditions are challenging in this section with native semi natural wet woodland throughout.
- Much of this section would require boardwalk and two phases of construction of a total of c. 687 metres are proposed
- Boardwalk would lead to less formal paths which make their way to Knockaphort, mainly off road through woodland
- Development of a wider path network leading to the Dolmen is feasible at little cost

Biodiversity actions are proposed which are achievable and require only modest infrastructure

These focus around local area priorities and **contribute to efforts both county-wide and nationally** as well as locally

Community engagement and awareness of biodiversity is a significant theme and forms the core of the whole project

It has been identified that to achieve the delivery of the actions identified two key strategic actions are required and are recommended for future implementation:

- The appointment of a **Community Countryside Projects officer**
- The development of a **volunteer skills development programme**

Both of these actions are potentially very good value for money and can provide much of the manpower required to lead and deliver projects on the ground but not least to raise the capacity within the community which is required for project delivery and further project development.

APPENDIX 1 Trail design elements & reference

BOARDWALK TYPES

Recycled plastic boardwalks come recommended and provide an extremely robust and durable material for the construction of boardwalk.

Estimates from two providers for standard recycled eco-plastic construction models are quoted in the following sections. All prices are quoted as estimates and official costing will require site survey of the contractor. The benefits of recycled plastic boardwalks are listed below:

- Does not rot
- No splinters
- Requires no maintenance
- Has good slip resistance
- Does not leach chemicals into water or ground
- Is not damaged by submersion in water

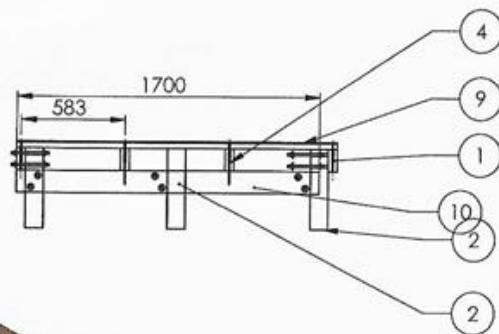
Type 1

Irish Recycled Products recommend using 100 x 100 x 600 mm posts sunk into the ground as base supports. If ground was softer these would be deeper, and this will not be known until tested. Estimated pricing for 1800 mm width boardwalk is outlined in table 5 and on drawing below. A site survey would be required before an official quote can be given.

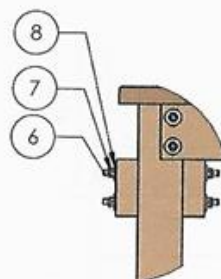
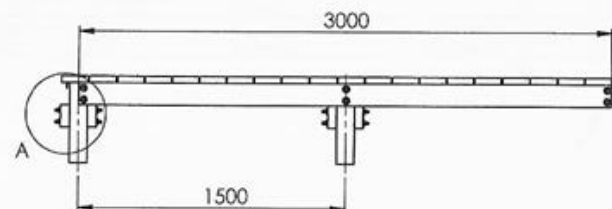
The prices outlined in Table 5 are for a boardwalk width of 1.8 metres including fixtures and fittings.

Table 10. Option 1 - Costing for plastic boardwalk per metre based on three separate specifications of 1800 mm width.

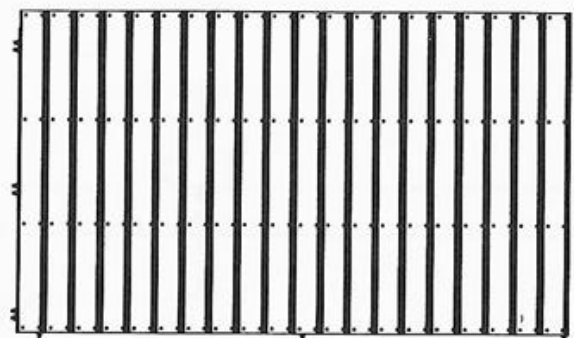
Spec.	Width	Price per metre
Without Handrails	1800 mm	€180
Handrails one side	1800 mm	€220
Handrails both sides	1800 mm	€260



Properties



A (1:10)



10	4	Board 5x12,5x170cm	Hanit Ultra
9	20	Decking Board 3,8x15x180cm	Hanit Ultra
8	48	Washer DIN 9021 - 13	X5CrNi18-10 (1.4301)
7	48	DIN EN ISO 7040 - M12 - N	X5CrNi18-10 (1.4301)
6	12	Threaded Rod M12x260mm	X5CrNi18-10 (1.4301)
5	12	Threaded Rod M12x210mm	X5CrNi18-10 (1.4301)
4	6	Spax Screw TX 6x120mm	X5CrNi18-10 (1.4301)
3	166	Spax Screw TX 6x70mm	X5CrNi18-10 (1.4301)
2	6	Vk 10x10x60cm	Hanit Ultra
1	4	Board 5x12,5x300cm	Hanit Ultra
Pos	Amount	Name	Material

€180.00 Per Linear
MTR.
Without HANDRAILS

€ With HANDRAILS
One Side €220.00
With HANDRAILS
Both Sides €260.00

Verantwortl. ABT. Technik	Gewicht 330.43 kg	Erstellt durch: F. Goergen	gezeichnet für: Lager Fertigteile	Blattgröße: A3
HAHN KUNSTSTOFFE G · M · B · H				Aktuelles Datum: 27.04.2016
Titel: Boardwalk Hanit Ultra B=1,8m L= 3m without rail				Erstelldatum: 15.02.2016
Schutzvermerk nach ISO 16016 beachten				Maßstab: 1:25
				Blatt: 1/2

Type 2

The prices in Table 6 are provided by Eco-plastic. Costings are separated for boardwalk and handrail elements.

Cross-bracing may be required for the structure if the walkway is more than about 450 mm over ground level. The suitability of the piles and their length and other construction considerations would need to be decided in consultation with the engineers and contractors as necessary.

The prices supplied do not include installation, which would need to be done by a competent contractor. Feedback from previous contracts is that the installation price for the boardwalk can be estimated between €90 and €120 per linear metre. This may vary considerably depending on the for example, the level of access, the ground conditions, the site topography and other factors.

Table 11 Option 2 - Costing for recycled plastic boardwalk per metre and prices for handrails included separately.

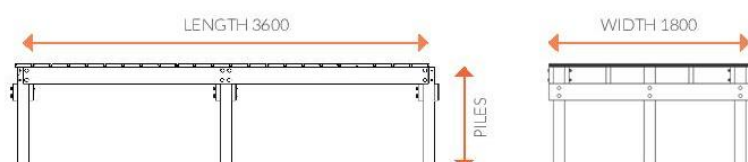
Option	Spec	Cost per metre
Boardwalk	Width 1800 mm	€233.77
Handrails	2x posts 100 x 100 x 1500 mm	-
	3x rails 105 x 35 x 3600 mm	€35.07
	Sub-total	€268.84
Prices are exclusive of fixtures and fittings which can be received upon request		

The price above excludes VAT.

Summary

- Recycled plastic boardwalk appears to offer a range of key features suitable for use in wet conditions
- Costs are approx. **350 Euros per metre** installed
- Labour costs may be higher in wet woodland as relatively poor access

BOARDWALK WITHOUT BALUSTRADE



DESCRIPTION

Boardwalk without balustrade made entirely from 100% recycled plastic. Recycled plastic materials should meet the minimum material property requirements set out in our Material Properties Sheet.

COLOURS



APPLICATIONS

GREENWAYS
WETLANDS
WATERSIDE ACCESS

SPECIFICATION

Piles

100x100x1800mm (up to 3600mm)

Understructure

Runners – 150x40x3600mm
(up to 3600mm)

Cross Beams

150x40x1000mm (up to 3600mm)

Decking

150x30x 1000mm (up to 3600mm)

YOUR PROJECT

- All dimensions are variable as required
- Talk to us for tailored advice and design support with no obligation
- Clients are responsible for ensuring the suitability of design and material for each application, including ground conditions
- We are supply only

TECHNICAL

- Extremely Slip Resistant – Tested to BS 7976-2:2002 81SRV when dry, 68 SRV when wet
- Flame Resistant – Flammability Rating B2
- Climate resistant – UV Stable; resistant in marine environments
- Easy to use – Use standard wood fixings and tools for construction
- Bracing - If raised higher than 600mm above ground level, cross-bracing may be required

GENERAL

- Cost effective – 1/9th the cost of a similar structure in steel
- Inert – Will not leech chemicals into the ground
- Rot Proof – even if flooded
- Vandal Resistant
 - Minimum damage from scoring
 - More fire resistant than timber
 - Paint spray easily removed with solvent

MAINTENANCE

No painting or treating necessary – an occasional power wash will keep it looking new. Remove paints with paint solvent

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Slip Resistance & Load Capability of Decking](#)
[Whole Life Cost Savings of Ecoplastic Boardwalk](#)
[Fixing Information](#)

* dimensions in mm

Path Signage

Away from roads simple signage is adequate. Costs vary radically and simple costs of approx. 1000 – 2000 Euros per installed sign is a conservative figure to allow budgeting. The exact approach to signage will depend upon at-the-time decisions, in light of firm plans to execute.



More complex hand carving below can be expensive but provide a high-quality finish





Bird feeding stations

Bird feeding stations create a focal point for wildlife and in turn provide reliable viewing points for birdwatching. Free-hanging bird feeding stations offer the opportunity to save costs on frames and supports. These can be attached to trees and branches. There are several suppliers to the market of bird feeding equipment. Alternatively, these types of feeders can be handmade potentially through community initiatives or volunteers (e.g. men's shed groups are often willing and happy to take on such a rewarding project)

Situating feeders at a short distance from the pathway is ideal, and with the first view of it screened by simple screening panels (with viewing slots) allows visitors to observe birds or squirrels using the area without disturbing them. A typical layout is shown below, and a similar approach could be used at any feeding station planned on the route.

A feeding station is generally set up to provide multiple feeding options for many species including squirrels.

Feeders can be hung from trees or from simple stand constructions (which can be community made) An example of homemade construction is below.



Bird Feeders

Feeding stations require bird feeders to be filled regularly and many options to suit different bird species. Identifying a budget and working to that is feasible and c. 0.5 Euro is ample for a large station with screening (reed mat screen or panel fencing with viewing slots) in addition being potentially 1-2K.



- Wall feeder where you can hang up multiple treats
- Feeding table under roof
- Hooks for hanging a feeder, coconut or peanut cake

€14.99 (Note that prices shown are taken from a single supplier website in December 2019 and are indicative only)



- Suspension cable for hanging from branches
- Large roof keeps the feed dry
- Drainage holes in the table to keep food dry
- Table has two sections, to offer different feed mixes

€34.99



- Ground feeder appeals to a large number of species
- Concrete structure for extra durability
- Holds a large amount of food
- Used to feed seeds, seed mixes.

€43.75



- Birch wood seed feeder, inexpensive/easy to make
- Roof to cover and keep food dry
- Natural look, blends in with environment
- For seeds only (whole peanuts should only be fed from wire mesh feeders, to avoid choking birds)

€7.99



- Seed feeders come in many different sizes
- Easy to clean (cleaning required regularly)
- Attracts many different species of bird
- Larger feeders need less refilling

€31.99



- Wire mesh peanut feeder
- Durable and robust metal design
- Various sizes available
- Holds large quantity of food
- East to dismantle for cleaning

€9.99

Other considerations

Five or ten feeders in each recommended feeding area will provide ample food and opportunity for birds to feed regularly.

- The more different types of food provided, the more birds that are likely to visit the feeding station.
- Birds will come to rely on a food source, so it is important to refill the feeders regularly, especially in the colder winter months.
- All feeders will **have** to be cleaned regularly. Every 2-4 weeks is optimal to avoid parasites and disease building up on the feeder. (Greenfinches in particular, suffer badly from infection caused by unhygienic feeders¹⁶)
- Remove old food stuff and do not feed peanuts with mould.
- Only feed peanuts in wire mesh feeders, birds can choke on whole peanuts, particularly when feeding to young during spring/summer.

Nest boxes

Nest boxes may be purchased or handmade. Forest sustainable certified (FSC) timber nest boxes can be purchased from many reputable suppliers. These models are usually treated with wood preserve to combat weather erosion. These preserves are specifically **non-toxic** to eliminate harm to birds which will nest in them. This must be borne in mind and a non-toxic preserve must be used (if any) if nest boxes are to be handmade. Different sized and shaped boxes and entrance holes are required for different species¹⁷. Some examples of *safe* nest boxes for sale on the Irish market are below:



- Entrance reinforcement to keep out predators
- 34 mm entrance suitable for sparrows, Great tits, Treecreepers
- Can be opened at the side for cleaning after the breeding season
- Water-based white-wash paint layer

€19.99

¹⁶<https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/surveys-research/research-surveys/irish-garden-bird-survey/trichomoniasis-sick-finches/>

¹⁷ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-families/family-wild-challenge/activities/build-a-birdbox/>



- Natural birch construct
- Blends with natural environment
- 28 mm entrance for Blue tits and Coal tits.
- Can be easily handmade

€8.99



- Wide openings are attractive for Spotted Flycatcher, Robins and Wrens.
- Simple construction can be handmade.

€12.99

In the case of the Pilgrim path project it would be valuable to include a high proportion of species-specific types aimed at those BoCCI listed species listed in the report. Advice on types and proportions at the time of purchase and subsequent guidance on siting the boxes is available from the author as complementary follow up.

Observation Hide

Examples of typical elevated observation hides are shown below



- Use of piles will be required where ground is very soft
- 6 x 4 metre area plan should be sufficient given expected numbers
- 4 metre elevation will allow the viewer to see over reeds at the lough shore
- Screening on approach and entry to hide is important and siting of the hide elements needs careful consideration

Costs vary widely subject to exact specification but it is feasible, based on discussions with market leading suppliers, to achieve a 6 m x 4 m plan area hide and screening for significantly under €50,000 installed. This could require planning permission and careful discussion would be required with the Local Authority.





APPENDIX 2 Example Job Description (CCPO)

DRAFT Job Description

Job Title:	Community Countryside Projects Officer (tbc)	Job ID/ Post ref:	
Reporting to:	Mountshannon Community Council	Date of Issue:	
Nature	The post is a fixed term contract for 1-year period commencing in 2020. The employer for this role is Mountshannon Community Council. Contract renewal beyond 1 year will be subject to project funding		
Salary and conditions	<p>The post is part-time with flexible working hours approximately 0.2-0.4 FTE (Full time equivalent)</p> <p>Salary will be in the range X to X</p> <p>There is a 3-month probationary period with contract confirmation subject to performance</p>		

Job Purpose:
<p>To develop projects relating to biodiversity conservation and awareness within the Mountshannon area in order to develop community awareness and valuable visitor assets including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop trails, viewpoints and access with a heritage and biodiversity focus • Develop biodiversity focussed events and interpretation in a planned and effective way to enhance visitor experience, provide a tourism attraction and to enhance community awareness of biodiversity. • Create networks, engage with partners, stakeholders and the wider community to develop and promote suitable projects. • Manage project funding and independent fundraising to support the role and the linked projects • Create strategic links to wider regional and national biodiversity plans and projects to promote the initiatives and gain wider learning for application locally
Principal duties and responsibilities:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and grow biodiversity initiatives within the Mountshannon area including the further development of plans and concepts identified in the <i>Mountshannon White-tailed Sea Eagle Development report</i> and the <i>Mountshannon Pilgrim Path report</i>. 2. Develop and coordinate a community volunteer network to assist in delivery of biodiversity and access projects as outlined in the reports

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Manage project funding within budget, set timescales, agreed quality standards and manage the safe operation of projects in accordance with funder requirements or other regulations. 4. Management and production of all reporting e.g. periodic activity reports, risk analyses, quality assurance documentation or other reports as needed, and delivery of these reports to the Community Council. 5. Be a visible ‘face’ of community countryside projects, embedded within the community, engaging with partners, stakeholders and the wider community to ensure buy-in and to support and encourage their involvement. 6. Effective communications management to ensure all partners and wider stakeholders are kept up-to-date and involved as appropriate with the development and delivery of the projects 7. Arrangement and management of events and workshops as required – this will involve evening and possibly weekend working. 8. Work with appropriate colleagues to procure and manage sub-contractors to deliver specific outputs and/or funder requirements, e.g. project delivery elements, project evaluation 9. Liaison with the Community Council finance officer, partners and stakeholders as required to ensure robust budget management throughout the contract period. 10. Co-ordinating collection and collating of quantitative and qualitative evidence of the activity, outputs and outcomes. Preparing and presenting reports to various audiences as required, including short annual report. 		
Relationships: Responsibility for People – Supervision/Management:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This post may include line management responsibilities for occasional support staff and volunteers. 		
Relationships: Communication / Nature of Contacts:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Project Manager will engage with wider stakeholders and the general public as required, for example delivering bespoke engagement events from time to time. 		
Job Working Environment:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Office and field environments 2. Nature of work may entail working outside normal office hours, including weekends. 		
Person specification – Qualifications, Knowledge, Experience & Skills:	Essential	Desirable
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A degree or equivalent qualification/background/experience in a related discipline for example ecology, heritage, countryside management. 2. Knowledge/experience of biodiversity and countryside issues. 3. Demonstrable experience in working to deliver projects in a relevant context. 4. Good knowledge and understanding of Information and Communication Technologies, including familiarity with social media. 	<div>✓</div> <div>✓</div> <div>✓</div> <div>✓</div>	<div>✓</div>

5. Be able to work on own initiative, self-motivated with the ability to form partnerships to ensure programmes, activities and events take place.		✓
6. Experience of delivering grant funded projects	✓	
7. Have excellent interpersonal skills, with excellent communication skills, written and verbal.		
8. Must possess a valid driving licence.	✓	
9. Must have a flexible approach to working hours.	✓	✓
10. Staff management experience/knowledge		✓
11. Effective time management skills	✓	
12. Budget management experience/knowledge		
Corporate:		
To actively support and ensure compliance with the Safeguarding Policy, Health & Safety Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Data Protection Policy. You may be required to undertake such other duties as may reasonably be required of you, commensurate with your grade or general level of responsibility within the organisation.		

APPENDIX 3 Fauna recorded during path survey work in November 2019

Mountshannon Pilgrims Trail

BIRD LIST

Blue Tit

Great Tit

Treecreeper

Buzzard

Robin

Wren

Siskin

Kestrel

Bullfinch

Coot

Little Egret

Water Rail

Cormorant

Mute Swan

Blackbird

Long-tailed Tit

Raven

Hooded Crow

Grey Heron

Grey Wagtail

Magpie

Starling

Chaffinch.

Black-headed Gull n=24

OTHER SPP.

Red Squirrel

Brown Trout

Hoverfly unspec. Spp

Common wasp

Red Admiral