



INIS CEALTRA

Volume I
Visitor Management and
Sustainable Tourism Development Plan
July 2017



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Prepared for Clare County Council
by **Solearth Architecture**

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Terminology

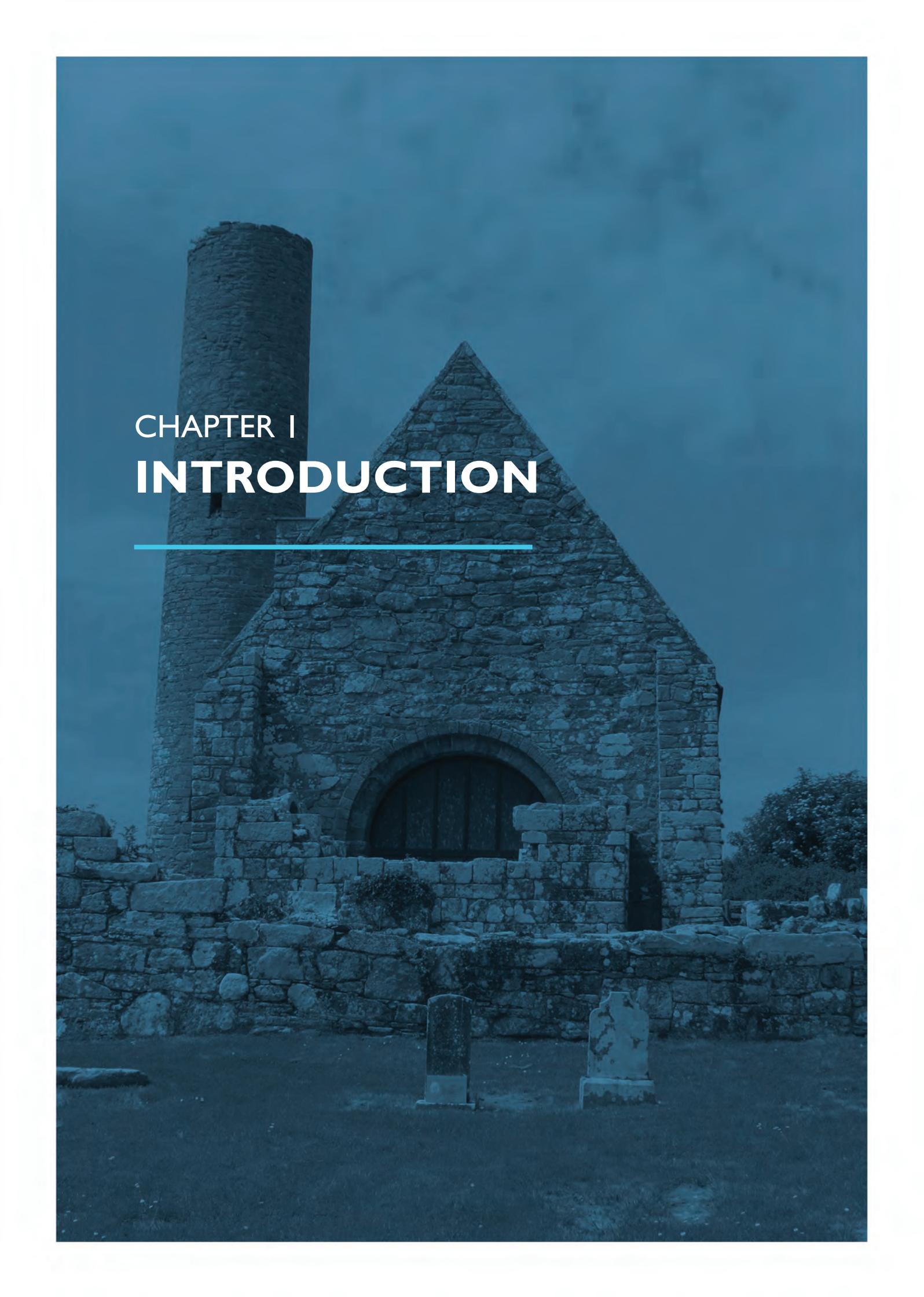
The terms “THE PLAN” and “the Plan” each refer to this (Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan) document.

Inis Cealtra is also known as Iniscealtra and Holy Island, and it is referred to as Inis Cealtra in this document.

‘Early medieval’ refers to the period from c. 400 AD to c. 1200 AD.

‘Late medieval’ refers to the period from c. 1200 AD to c. 1550 AD.

‘Post-medieval’ refers to the period from c. 1550 AD throughout the modern period.



CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background to the Plan

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan was commissioned by Clare County Council, with the remit to seek to ensure the long-term conservation of this significant historical and cultural site, while expanding its attractiveness as a sustainable tourist destination for an increased number of visitors. Solearth Architecture were commissioned to prepare the plan and, with their team of experts, undertook extensive comprehensive research into all aspects of the island, as a heritage, tourism and cultural destination, and to formulate a series of comprehensive recommendations and objectives as to how to realise its potential in the short to medium term.

It is intended that this Plan will be the fundamental tool in bringing together the relevant stakeholders to implement the recommendations and objectives set out, in the pursuit of developing Inis Cealtra into a successful tourism destination in accordance with the vision set out in this Plan.



1.1.1 The study area

The area covered by the Plan comprises Inis Cealtra and the surrounding area. It encompasses areas of the mainland especially Mountshannon as the natural gateway to the island and home to a future visitor centre for those wishing to experience or engage with Inis Cealtra's heritage. It considers the island as an integral part of the local community within the wider Lough Derg context as well as recognising its importance nationally and internationally.

Inis Cealtra is a 20-hectare (50-acre) island located in Scariff Bay in the south-west part of Lough Derg between County Clare and County Galway. The village closest to the island is Mountshannon in Co. Clare, and boat access is available from both the village marina, which lies 2km from the island, and from Knockaphort Pier on the shore near the island (1km away), as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Inis Cealtra context - local

The island is cherished for its spiritual ambience, tranquillity, beauty, ecclesiastical heritage, natural heritage, folklore and cultural traditions as well as its historical links to Brian Boru and the Vikings. It is recognised as significant in the context of Ireland's early medieval churches and, along with Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Monasterboice and Kells, has been included since 2010 on the UNESCO¹ World Heritage Tentative List. The island is part of an area of international biodiversity importance as it is situated within a Special Protection Area, as designated under the European Bird Directive.

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5527/>

1.1.2 Remit of the Plan

The brief, as given by Clare County Council, was to prepare a Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Inis Cealtra which would provide a series of recommendations and objectives in relation to the following:

- Statement of significance of the importance of the island (provided in Chapter 2).
- Proposals for the future sustainable management and protection of Inis Cealtra including consideration of archaeology, landscape, wildlife conservation and cultural heritage, and how they inform visitor management (provided in Chapter 3).
- Proposals on the provision of tourism facilities on or near the island (provided in Chapter 3)
- Proposals in relation to improving access to the island (provided in Chapter 3).
- Proposals on marketing and promotion of the island as a visitor destination (provided in Chapter 4 of this Plan and Chapter 6 of Appendix 2).
- Public and stakeholder consultation in the formulation of the Plan (detailed in Chapter 8 of Appendix 2).
- Implementation strategy for visitor management and sustainable tourism development on Inis Cealtra (set out in in Chapter 5).

The key findings of extensive research across a wide range of focus areas which informed the objectives and recommendations relating to the items set out above, was undertaken as part of the preparation of this Plan and is presented throughout.

1.1.3 The Plan Development Team and their areas of expertise and research

The Plan was carried out by Solearth Architecture, assisted by a multidisciplinary team of consultants each of whom has a specific area of expertise relative to the requirements of the Plan as follows:

- Carrig Conservation (built heritage)
- Dr Pat Wallace, Dr Bernadette McCarthy and Clíodhna O’Leary (archaeology)
- Dr Mary Tubridy and Pat Doherty, Doherty Environmental (ecology and biodiversity)
- Ruth Minogue, Minogue and Associates (impact assessment and mitigation)
- James Chilton, Rethink Tourism (tourism planning and marketing)
- Chris Chapman (community consultation)
- ARUP/JBA (hydrology, vessels/embarkation, flood risk assessment)
- John Spain & Associates (planning)
- Mitchell Associates (landscape architecture)

1.1.4 Format and content of the Plan

The Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Inis Cealtra consists of the following documents:

Volume 1: Inis Cealtra Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan.

Appendix 2: Detailed Support Material (Archaeology, Marketing, Engineering)

Volume 2: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Volume 3: Natura Impact Report.

Volume 4: Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)

The format of the Plan

Chapter 1 (this chapter) provides an introduction and background to the motivation for the preparation of the Plan, its remit, format, significance of the study area and the vision, aim and strategic objectives.

Chapter 2 sets out the physical and strategic context of this plan and comprises an assessment of the significance of Inis Cealtra based on the findings of research. It presents conclusions regarding the significance of the well-preserved network of churches, sculpture, architectural structures, religious monuments, earthworks, enclosures and pathways of the site as a whole in the island landscape that are of exceptional significance and form an outstanding example of a major medieval ecclesiastical complex that is representative of a significant stage in the development of early medieval Christianity in the North Atlantic world. It also addresses the ecology of Inis Cealtra and evaluates its landscape character. It culminates in an assessment of the overall significance of the island, taking into account the archaeology, natural heritage and landscape.

Chapter 3 details the key development principles and limits of acceptable change which inform the proposals and recommendations of the plan. It also sets out guidelines for the tourism development and visitor management measures for Inis Cealtra, both on and off the island.

Chapter 4 comprises detail on visitor data analysis, core target markets, market potential and revenue estimates, and a marketing and communications strategy. Further detail is included in Chapter 6 of Appendix 2.

Chapter 5 focuses on implementation and sets out a recommended management framework for the island, grounded in statutory protections and guidance, international guidelines and standards, and informed by relevant case studies. This chapter covers tourism services and facilities both on Inis Cealtra and on the mainland, providing information on access, interpretation, visitor management, facility and site management and local community. A five-year action plan includes key roles, timelines and the recommended actions to achieve the Plan's objectives.

Chapter 6 provides the main conclusions of the Plan and a summary of all the objectives set out in the Plan.

1.2 A vision for Inis Cealtra

The overarching vision of the Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan (the Plan) for Inis Cealtra is to ensure a balance is struck between attracting an increased number of visitors to the area, protecting the natural and built heritage of the island above and below ground (from negative impacts of visitor activity) and to safeguard the ambience and character of the island.

Thus, the Plan's vision is:

Inis Cealtra will be protected for future generations through exemplary conservation management and interventions and through a balanced and sustainable management approach to providing access for visitors and the local community. The visitor experience, enjoyment and respect for the island's living and built cultural heritage and that of the greater area will be expanded, and the long-term, socio-economic benefits to both the local community and the wider region will be increased.

1.2.1 Aims of the Plan

The over-arching aims of this Plan are supported by a series of objectives and recommendations. It is through the delivery of these that the vision for Inis Cealtra will be realised.

The over-arching aims are:

- to ensure a balance is struck between attracting the maximum number of visitors to Inis Cealtra and protection of the natural and built heritage of the island, above and below ground, which should not negatively be impacted by an unsustainable volume of visitors;
- to ensure that the unique ambience and character of the island is not placed at risk through increased visitor numbers;
- to maximise the socio-economic benefits from increased visitor numbers to the island and the wider Lough Derg area to support a sustainable rural economy.

The above approach is to be implemented through a series of key objectives set out throughout the Plan, all of which:

- have an ethos of minimum intervention on Inis Cealtra,
- repair and stabilise the built heritage of the island, preserve the archaeological heritage, historic areas and cultural heritage of Inis Cealtra,
- safeguard the tangible and intangible values of Inis Cealtra and region,
- ensure the maintenance and preservation of the site and its natural heritage in the short, medium and long term,
- enhance understanding and heighten public awareness of Inis Cealtra,
- provide socio-economic benefit to the local community through increased visitor revenue.

1.2.2 Plan key objectives

A range of strategic options emerged throughout the preparation of this Plan with regard to the future visitor management and tourism development of Inis Cealtra. These were informed by international best practice principles, Limits of Acceptable Change analysis and relevant case studies. On the basis of this research two fundamental conclusions emerged which form the key principles on which this Plan is based which are:

- a) that, in accordance with best international practice, there should be little or no physical intervention on the island itself, this being the most fundamental key objective;
- b) that, in order to attract greater numbers of visitors to Inis Cealtra and the wider area, while also improving access and ensuring a quality and authentic experience at both, it is critical that appropriate new visitor facilities are provided. Failure to provide formal, safe and easy access to the island, coupled with an increase in visitor information, services and facilities, will limit the potential for the sustainable growth in visitor numbers and therefore in realising the full tourism potential to the local economy. Similarly, any potential increase in visitor numbers to the island, without a comprehensive visitor management and development plan in place, addressing visitor access, provision of appropriate modern visitor facilities, etc. is likely to have a detrimental impact on the built heritage and natural environment of Inis Cealtra.



1.2.3 Focus areas

A series of focus areas for the Plan to address have emerged from the above conclusions which are summarised under the following headings:

1. Access to Inis Cealtra

To identify the most suitable primary access option to Inis Cealtra.

Access to the island is one of the biggest challenges to be faced. Currently, the main access is from Mountshannon and Knockaphort, the latter of which is deemed inappropriate for the level of future expansion required due to concerns on embarkation safety, lack of infrastructure (parking, lighting, communications, water, waste facilities) on the shore, and limitations of road access to the quay itself. It is an objective to identify the most suitable primary access option which would accommodate increased visitor numbers, as maintaining the current boat access provisions would not be sufficient to handle the anticipated increase in volume. Recommended strategies in relation to access facilities are provided in Section 3.4.1

2. Visitor facilities on Inis Cealtra

To identify services and facilities required on Inis Cealtra which enhance the visitor experience and have minimal impact on the built and natural environment.

In line with the aim of minimum intervention and international best practice at heritage sites, the proposed facilities on Inis Cealtra will be designed to provide visitors with only the minimum of facilities required for health and safety of visitors and staff and facilities to manage and protect the island, while minimising any potential impacts on the archaeology, natural environment and character of Inis Cealtra. A number of proposed low key structures located at a distance from the monuments are proposed, that will accommodate toilet facilities, staff and shelter facilities and some exhibitions, as well as the provision of a series of pathways to navigate visitors around the island. Further detail is outlined in 3.4.

3. Interpretation

To provide visitor signage and interpretation on Inis Cealtra which has minimal impact on the built heritage and natural environment of the island.

Signage on Inis Cealtra itself will be avoided, except for an orientation panel next to the pier. This conforms to the international best practice of minimal physical intervention, having regard

to minimising impact on the island's archaeology, natural environment and character. Local guides and audio guides will provide on-island interpretation. Interpretative features at the visitor centre on the mainland will be of a high quality and use a range of traditional and modern media.

4. Visitor management

To identify maximum visitor thresholds for Inis Cealtra and appropriate visitor management measures to ensure the sustainable tourism development of the island.

Information is provided in relation to the recommended maximum visitor numbers on a daily and annual basis, in line with Limits of Acceptable Change research undertaken to inform this Plan. Guidelines are provided in relation to limiting visitor numbers, managing visitors on the island, opening hours, accessibility and guide services.

5. Tourism facilities on the mainland shore

To identify the nature of visitor services and facilities to be provided on the mainland shore and to identify an appropriate location for them.

Numerous options for meeting the needs of larger numbers of visitors wishing to experience and engage with Inis Cealtra were considered, including alternatives to a physical or built visitor facility. It became clear that a way had to be found to provide increased visitor numbers with an opportunity to engage with Inis Cealtra without a requirement to cross to the island. It also became clear that it would be undesirable from the point of view of protecting the island, were all potential visitors to the area permitted to make the crossing.

Given that the visitor facility needs to provide information and practical services, as well as providing an acceptable alternative to making the crossing, it is proposed that it take the form of a high-quality flagship attraction. The evolution of such a facility at an appropriate location on the mainland shore will fulfil the twin objectives of minimising intervention on Inis Cealtra and maximising economic benefit for surrounding communities.

6. Local community

To encourage the on-going community involvement in the overall management of the tourism development and management of Inis Cealtra.

Objectives of the plan in relation to the local community build on the clear connection that local people have with the island and their desire for its protection. An appropriate representative forum will help to guide development. This is further detailed in 3.4.7, along with proposals regarding local access and burials.

7. Facility and site management

To identify appropriate management measures in relation to the provision of new visitor services and facilities. An organisation and management model is proposed, both for the operation of the visitor centre and for the island. This includes the management of the island's built and natural heritage, with a low impact meadow management regime proposed.

8. Tourism marketing for Inis Cealtra

To identify key target tourism markets and marketing tools which should be the focus of a marketing strategy for the island. Chapter 4 includes discussion of visitor numbers and targets based on Fáilte Ireland visitor models, and defines a range of objectives in relation to market potential, visitor numbers, principles of admission fees and indicative potential revenues. The marketing and communications strategy includes guidelines in relation to branding (digital, print and social media), promotion and marketing linkages and promotional activities, as well as integration with trail and tour circuit developments, and connections to local, regional and national tourism initiatives such as Ireland's Ancient East.

9. Monitoring

To identify the necessary monitoring measures to be put in place to assess any impacts and change that may occur as a result of the implementation of this Plan.

To ensure any development takes place in line with best practice and the aims of this Plan, a Conservation Management Plan for Inis Cealtra is proposed. This will guide development and will include periodic monitoring measures to ensure impacts and change can be assessed. To ensure the successful monitoring of the implementation of this Plan, a series of key indicators are included within the action plan in Chapter 5.

1.2.4 Environmental assessment

Article 1 of the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) states that its objective is:

'to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.'

This plan has been prepared in accordance with the SEA Directive and the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004), as amended 2011. The plan was subject to screening for SEA in June 2016 in conjunction with screening for appropriate assessment. Following consultation with statutory bodies, it was determined that the Plan could give rise to significant environmental effects, particularly in terms of cultural heritage, ecology and landscape. The SEA scoping report was issued to confirm the scope and extent of, and approach to, the SEA process. Issues raised by statutory consultees at this time helped to inform and refine the SEA Environmental Report and the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process.

The project team worked together for a period of six months, during which time the SEA and AA responded and advised in relation to potential environmental effects associated with issues such as access to the island, visitor management and physical intervention proposals. In particular, the SEA and AA processes highlighted the necessity to avoid impact upon, and to ensure protection of particularly sensitive areas on and around the island, as well as potential access options to and from the island. In turn, locations and types of physical proposals, including pathways, facilities and grassland management were assessed and refined through the SEA and AA processes.

Avoidance of sensitive areas is the preferred option for mitigation measures, though this cannot always be achieved given the overall objective of the Plan. Therefore, detailed and focused mitigation measures across a range of environmental parameters were developed through the SEA and AA processes and have been fully integrated into the Plan (see Volume 2 and 3 of the Plan for the full SEA Environmental Report and the Natura Impact Report).

A Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (DoEHLG 2009) with regard to the identification of an appropriate site location for mainland on-shore visitor facilities. The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 was subject of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and appropriate assessment and any land-use projects should be considered in light of the land-use zoning and environmental assessments set out in it.

1.2.5 Public consultation

In the preparation of this Plan extensive consultation was undertaken with the local community, key agencies, interest groups and other important stakeholders.

Public meetings were held in Mountshannon in November 2015 and in May 2016. These were well-attended and were very informative and positive events. A website and Facebook page were created to disseminate progress and receive comments, and interviews about the process were given on local radio stations. The draft plan was placed on public display for a four week period on the 24th March 2017 following a presentation of the draft plan to the public in Mountshannon on 23rd March 2017. Over 80 people attended this event and eighteen formal written submissions were received on the draft plan. Following consideration of these submissions a final presentation of the plan and how the issues raised through public consultation had been addressed was given in Mountshannon on 6th July 2017.

In parallel, consultation with state and other important agencies/organisations that have a statutory, formal or commercial interest in Inis Cealtra and its heritage was also carried out.

The knowledge shared through this process of consultation was extensive and generated extremely valuable material which has contributed to the formulation of the recommendations and objectives of this Plan. A more detailed account of the consultations and the issues raised are included in Appendix 2, Chapter 8.



1.3 Plan methodology

The Plan was developed under a logical and iterative procedure grounded in the expertise of specialists in relevant disciplines and the knowledge present in the local community (as well as local and state agencies). Through this methodology, it was envisaged that a high quality plan that was both pragmatic and deliverable would emerge which will be welcomed and accepted by all stakeholders and will succeed in protecting the island's heritage while sharing its uniqueness with many new interested parties.

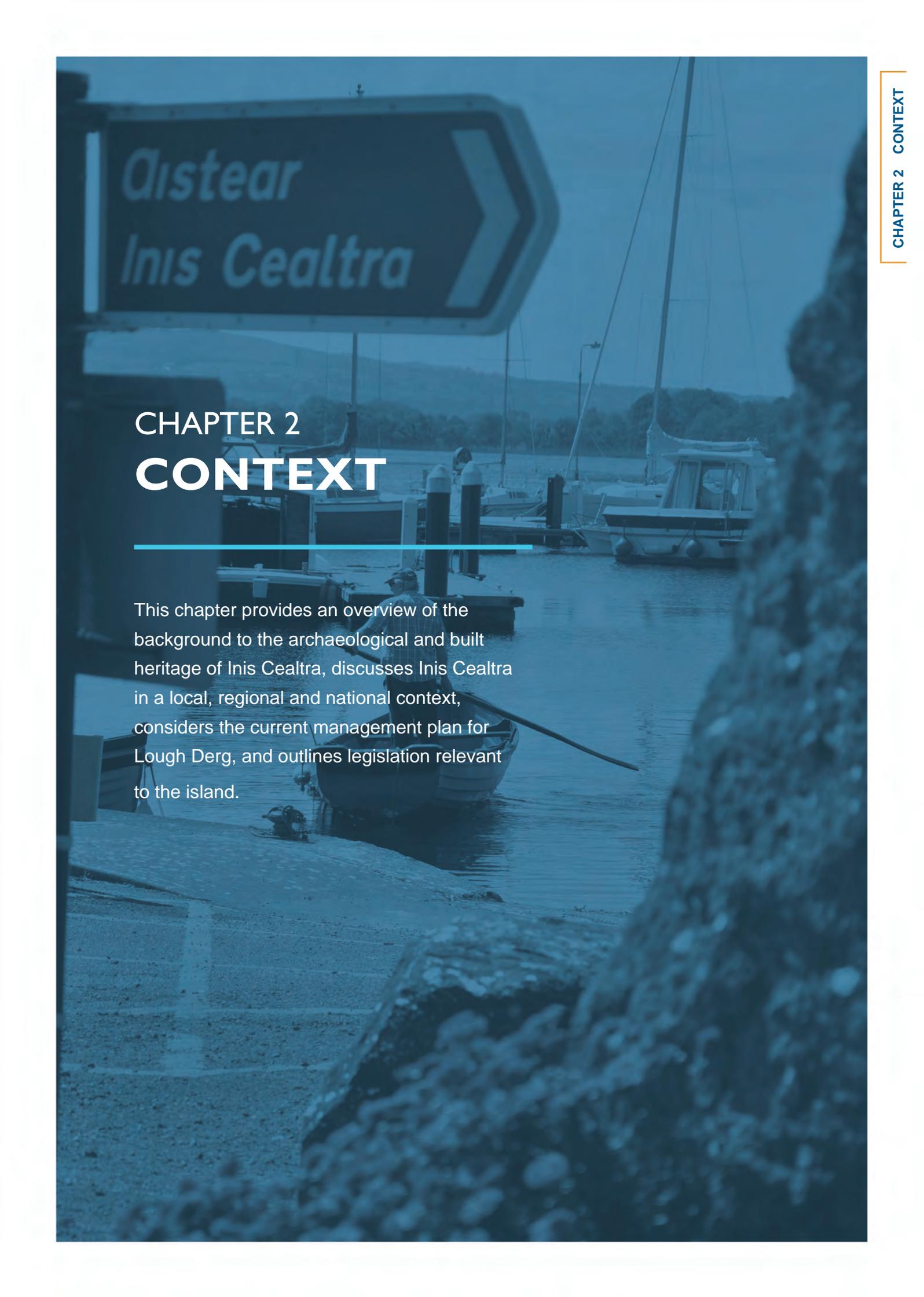
The step-by-step workflow that emanated from the methodology was as follows:

1. establishment of the key questions, constraints and directions,
2. inspections, surveys and audits of the island and its heritage (built and natural),
3. understanding the community (human) dimensions, attachments and practices extant on and due to the island,
4. establishment of the objective significance of the island,
5. evaluation of what the limits are to change that would be acceptable to the island,
6. development of options and testing of same by multiple means,
7. public consultation (at various stages),
8. consultation with scheduled agencies and public bodies,
9. development of a selected option and testing of same for overlaps and synergies, in order to devise formal proposals and recommendations,
10. environmental assessments of the proposals and mitigation of them where necessary,
11. identification of stakeholders, sequences, risks and costs to implement the Plan.

Community consultation was a key source of knowledge and direction and had a major influence on the scoping and options stages of the Plan process. The middle phase was concentrated on refinement of these options into firmer proposals and the conducting of a comprehensive set of environmental (SEA, AA and FRA) assessments of them.

The latter stage focused on documenting the work done, setting out the proposed actions as formal objectives and proofing them against the requirements of statutory agencies and bodies having an interest in the island.





Aistear
Inis Cealtra

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT

This chapter provides an overview of the background to the archaeological and built heritage of Inis Cealtra, discusses Inis Cealtra in a local, regional and national context, considers the current management plan for Lough Derg, and outlines legislation relevant to the island.

2.1 Relevant standards and legislation

2.1.1 International conventions and charters

This Plan is drawn up having regard to the following ICOMOS² charters:

- The Venice Charter 1964³,
- The Granada Convention 1985⁴.
- The Burra Charter 1988⁵.
- The Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage 1990⁶.
- The Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value⁷.

2.1.2 Archaeology and built heritage

The Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs owns the archaeological remains on Inis Cealtra on behalf of the Irish people. The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the management of the archaeological site. As a proposed World Heritage Site which is part of a serial nomination, Inis Cealtra is afforded the highest level of statutory protection in Ireland. It is a National Monument in state ownership, the preservation of which is a matter of national importance due to its historical, architectural, traditional, artistic and archaeological interest. Inis Cealtra is recognised as one of Ireland's foremost national monuments and is of international importance as an archaeological,

historical, spiritual and cultural centre. It is covered by a range of planning, environmental, archaeological, and ecological measures aimed at protecting the qualities of the proposed World Heritage Site. The recommendations and policies for any future works, repairs and maintenance of Inis Cealtra are governed by the National Monuments Acts.

The National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 form the principal medium through which archaeological heritage is protected in Ireland. Under the Acts the term 'monument' is deemed to include all man-made structures of whatever form or date, whether above or below the surface of the ground or water, and whether affixed or not affixed to the ground.

Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930, as substituted by Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004, states that where it is proposed to carry out any work at or in relation to such a monument or place, then notice in writing to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (now Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs) is required, stating the works to be carried out, while no work should commence for a two month period following the application for consent in order to allow the National Monuments Service time to consider the proposed works, and to allow time for the Minister to consult with the Director of the National Museum.

A methodology will have to be drawn up by a conservation consultant stating exactly what works are proposed. The work should be supervised by a conservation consultant and an archaeologist, and be carried out by a specialist heritage contractor.

² ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites, a non-governmental international organisation dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites: <http://www.icomos.org/en/> and <http://www.icomos.ie/>.

³ The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964) is a set of guidelines that provides an international framework for the conservation and restoration of historic buildings: <http://www.icomos.org/venicecharter2004/>.

⁴ The Granada Convention which sets out to reinforce and promote policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe's heritage was adopted on 3rd October 1985 in Granada (Spain) and came into force on 1st December 1987 (Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 121).

⁵ The Burra Charter is a national charter that establishes principles for the management and conservation of cultural sites in Australia, which has been adopted internationally by ICOMOS and is applicable in Ireland: <http://australia.icomos.org/publications/charters2004/>.

⁶ The Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage which sets out guidance to governments, specialists in preservation and related fields, and the general public was adopted in October 1990.

⁷ The Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value, New Zealand 1992, sets out to guide the conservation of places of cultural heritage value by the provision of guidelines for appropriate professional practice that show the greatest respect and involve the least possible loss of material of cultural heritage value.

Other legislation covering the protection of the site includes the following:

- Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended,
- National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004,
- Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023,
- County Clare Heritage Plan 2017-2023,
- Mid-West Area Strategic Plan 2012-2030.

Planning Control Ireland has a comprehensive system of legislation to ensure proper planning. Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), and associated Regulations, a planning authority must refer all planning applications that might affect, or be unduly close to, any archaeological site, monument or feature to the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Inis Cealtra, as a National Monument with numerous Recorded Monuments, is bound by the National Monuments Acts 1930–2004 and as such all developments (involving excavating, digging or ploughing, or works of any kind that would alter the monument, including conservation works or any disturbance of the ground within, around or in proximity to the national monument) and the methodologies they adopt, are subject to the discretion of the Minister.

2.1.3 Natural heritage

The natural heritage of Lough Derg is protected under a number of national and European designations. These include sites proposed to be designated, or designated as:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora),
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds),
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Nature Reserves, and Refuges for Flora or Fauna under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000,
- Bern Convention 1982,
- Bonn Convention 1979, enacted 1983,
- European Landscape Convention 2000,
- European Communities Natural Habitats Directive 1992 (amended 1997).

The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations are the most important of these because they provide for the protection measures and management regimes that apply to SPAs and SACs. Specific to Inis Cealtra is the above regulation that also covers (under Schedule 5) the protection of all bats and their roosts. Although there are no confirmed roosts on the site, three species of bat were recorded in the immediate vicinity. It is unlawful to disturb either bats or their roosts without the appropriate licence.

2.2 Strategic context

Inis Cealtra is one of the most significant ecclesiastical sites in Ireland and has links to other religious sites and heritage attractions in the region, such as Béal Bóru, Killaloe, Tuamgraney and Craggaunowen. Inis Cealtra has enormous potential to evolve from its existing status as a prominent, if less well-known, heritage site to be at the heart of a dynamic centre of cultural tourism. Such a comprehensive approach could be centred on the significant heritage of Inis Cealtra while making links with other early Christian churches in its hinterland.

2.2.1 Inis Cealtra

Inis Cealtra is cherished for its spiritual ambience, tranquillity, beauty, ecclesiastical heritage, natural heritage, folklore and cultural traditions as well as its historical links to Brian Boru and the Vikings. It is recognised as significant in the context of Ireland's early medieval churches and, along with Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Monasterboice and Kells, has been included since 2010 on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List. The island is part of an area of international biodiversity importance as it is situated within a Special Protection Area, as designated under the European Bird Directive.

Inis Cealtra is also known as Iniscealtra or Holy Island. The name Inis Cealtra is thought to be derived from 'inis' (island) and 'cealtair' (church), though other interpretations have been suggested by scholars of place names. The island has a rich history and is associated with a number of early saints and excavation of stone tools, indicating that there was some prehistoric activity there. Excavation and historical evidence suggest that the ecclesiastical site was probably founded in the 6th or 7th century, and is associated with the 6th-century St Colum of Terryglass and the 7th century St Caimín, as well as the earlier St Mac Creiche.

A variety of ecclesiastical architecture can be found on the island (Figure 2), including:

- St Caimín's Church (10th or 11th century) and graveyard (contains medieval and post-medieval gravemarkers),
- Round tower (11/12th century, approximately 22.3m high),
- Saints' Graveyard (contains unique 11th and 12th century gravemarkers as well as late medieval and post-medieval gravemarkers),
- Teampall na bhFear nGonta (church) in the Saints' Graveyard (12th century),
- The Confessional (circa 17th-century shrine structure, probably originally built before the 12th century),
- St Brigid's Church (12th century),
- St Mary's Church (late 12th or early 13th century),
- Pilgrims' paths and an extensive complex of earthworks (formed by low earthen banks, probably originally constructed in the early medieval period),
- St Michael's Church (comprising foundations of what was possibly an early medieval church in a large medieval enclosure that also contains a late medieval, or post-medieval burial ground for young children),
- Other points of interest include the Holy Well (Lady's Well), the 'bargaining stone' near St Mary's Church, the 'kissing stone' in St Michael's Church, several bullaun stones, three island piers, a cottage near the Confessional, and a range of cross-sculpture and architectural fragments located within the churches, as well as around the site.

The island was attacked by the Vikings in 836 and 922. Brian Boru and his sept, the O'Briens (Uí Briain), were intimately connected with Inis Cealtra; Brian's brother Marcán, who died in 1010, was coarb⁸ on the island and the O'Briens are thought to have been responsible for the construction of St Caimín's Church and the round tower, as well as possibly the other Romanesque churches, crosses and early medieval graveslabs. While the island is recorded as a parish centre in the beginning of the 14th century, the late medieval period probably marked the beginning of the demise of Inis Cealtra. From the mid-16th century onwards, many Irish ecclesiastical sites suffered destruction as the Catholic Church gradually collapsed as a result of the Reformation.

In spite of this, by the 17th century, if not earlier, Inis Cealtra was a flourishing pilgrimage destination, one of 12 Irish 'shrines' granted a papal plenary indulgence. Pilgrims visited the site in great numbers, undertaking the 'pattern' or rounds of the island and its monuments as part of their penance as atonement for their sins. By the early-19th century, according to contemporary accounts, the annual pattern had become a major festival and, in the opinion of church officials, had descended into excess, forcing the practice to end in the 1830s due to pressure from the authorities.

The ruins and other monuments came into the care of the state as a result of the Church Disestablishment Act of 1869. The holy well is still visited occasionally by both locals and tourists, and cemeteries remain in use for family burials, with coffins carried to the island by ferry. More in-depth consideration of the archaeology and history of the island is given in Chapters 1--4 of Appendix 2.

Near Inis Cealtra are several, mostly smaller, islands of varying sizes, including:

- Malt Island – a small island close to Inis Cealtra,
- Red Island – 1 acre, densely covered by scrub and not accessible,
- Rabbit Island – grazed by cattle, reached via a causeway and pier,
- Pages Island (Inishparren) – 40 acres, grazed by cattle, accessible by a causeway and private jetty,
- Cribby Island– 4 acres, relatively inaccessible with dense forest,
- Bushy Island – 3 acres, nesting site for a pair of white-tailed sea eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*),
- Young's Island – 3 acres.

Boat access to Inis Cealtra is available from Mountshannon village, which provides visitors with a unique perspective of the island as part of the very scenic environment of Lough Derg. Access from Knockaphort pier on the mainland is also possible but is limited by a narrow road and lack of car or coach parking at the pier. The channel here is also vulnerable to prevailing winds that make it a dangerous crossing for much of the season. On the island itself, the principal existing pier (on the north-western shore) is restricted as it is not suitable to accommodate larger boats. The topography of the Island, with a high point at the centre, offers visitors a variety of viewpoints across Lough Derg and back towards Mountshannon.

⁸A coarb is a superior who controlled an ecclesiastical site's economic resources. The word 'coarb' comes from the Old Irish comarbae

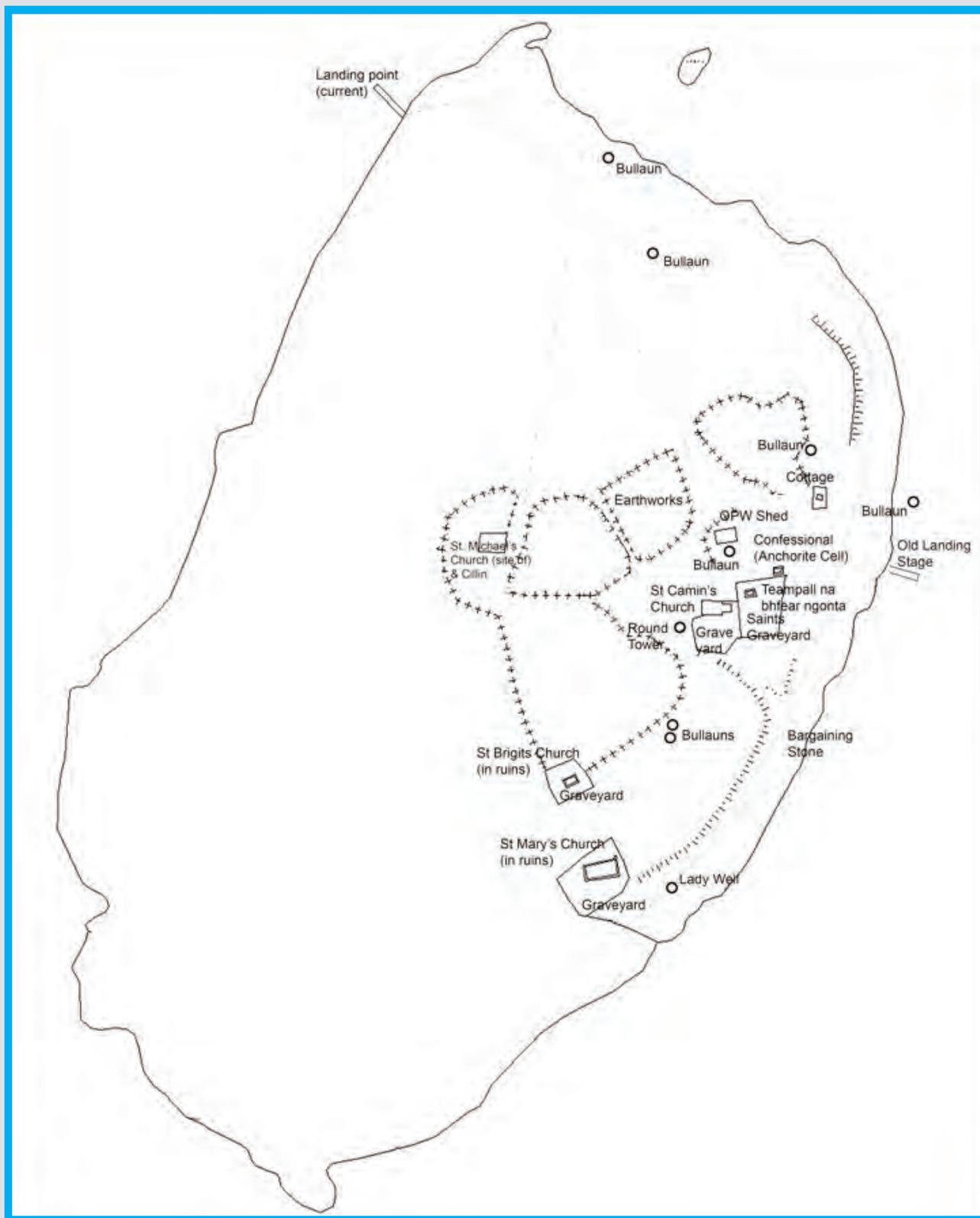


Figure 2: Inis Cealtra, current

Apart from a short stretch near the northwest pier, there are currently no modern pathways on the island which makes pedestrian access difficult in all but fine weather.

2.2.2 Local perspective

Inis Cealtra in the locality

Lough Derg, the third largest lake on the island of Ireland and the second largest in the Republic (130km²/50.2 sq. miles) is one of the most scenic lakes in Ireland, and is set against the Slieve Bernagh Mountains to the west in Co. Clare and the Arra Mountains to the east in Co. Tipperary.

In addition to Portumna, Mountshannon and the twin towns Ballina/Killaloe, the towns around the shores include Garrykennedy, Portroe, Dromineer and Terryglass to the east, and Tuamgraney, Scariff and Whitegate to the west. The lake contains numerous islands, including Inis Cealtra.

A breeding pair of white-tailed sea eagles first nested on one of the islands in 2012 following a reintroduction programme begun in 2007.

Panoramic views of Lough Derg and toward Inis Cealtra can be found at existing picnic areas at Ogonnelloe, 9km north of Killaloe on the western shore, and particularly from the Look Out, 9km from Ballina on the eastern shore (currently the subject of a funding application to Fáilte Ireland by Tipperary County Council for the upgrading of this site), as shown in Figure 3.

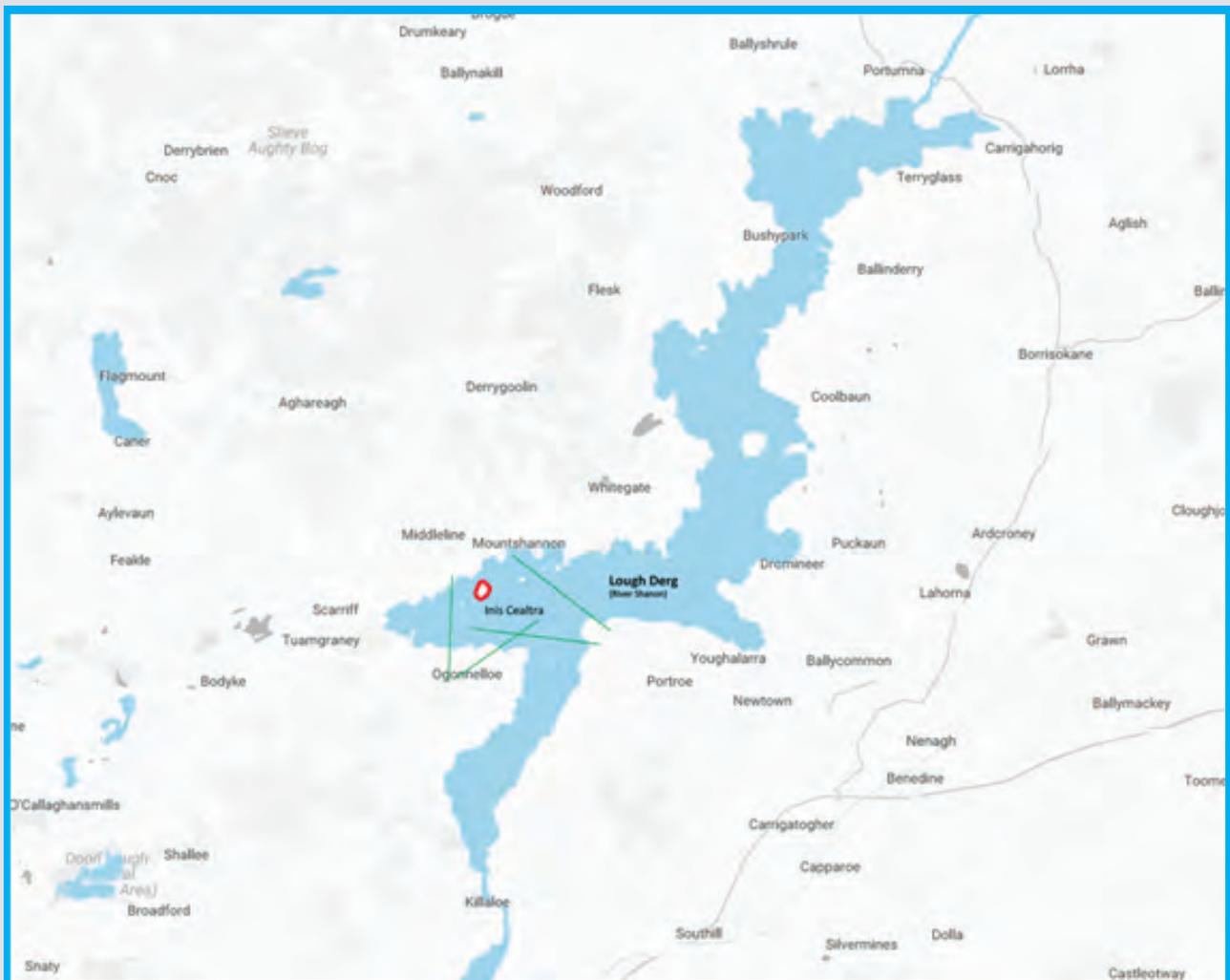


Figure 3. Inis Cealtra and Lough Derg, with viewing points toward the island indicated

Source: Solearth Architecture

a. Portumna

The historic town of Portumna is located almost 40km to the north of Ballina/Killaloe at the northern end of the lake in Co. Galway and 30km to the north-east of Mountshannon. It is a further 38km to the M6 motorway. The town has several visitor attractions, including Portumna Castle and Gardens, which are open to the public, as well as the Irish Workhouse Centre and the 600ha Portumna Forest Park owned by Coillte. The town is also popular with golfers, anglers and boaters with two harbours on the Portumna side of the Shannon.

b. Mountshannon

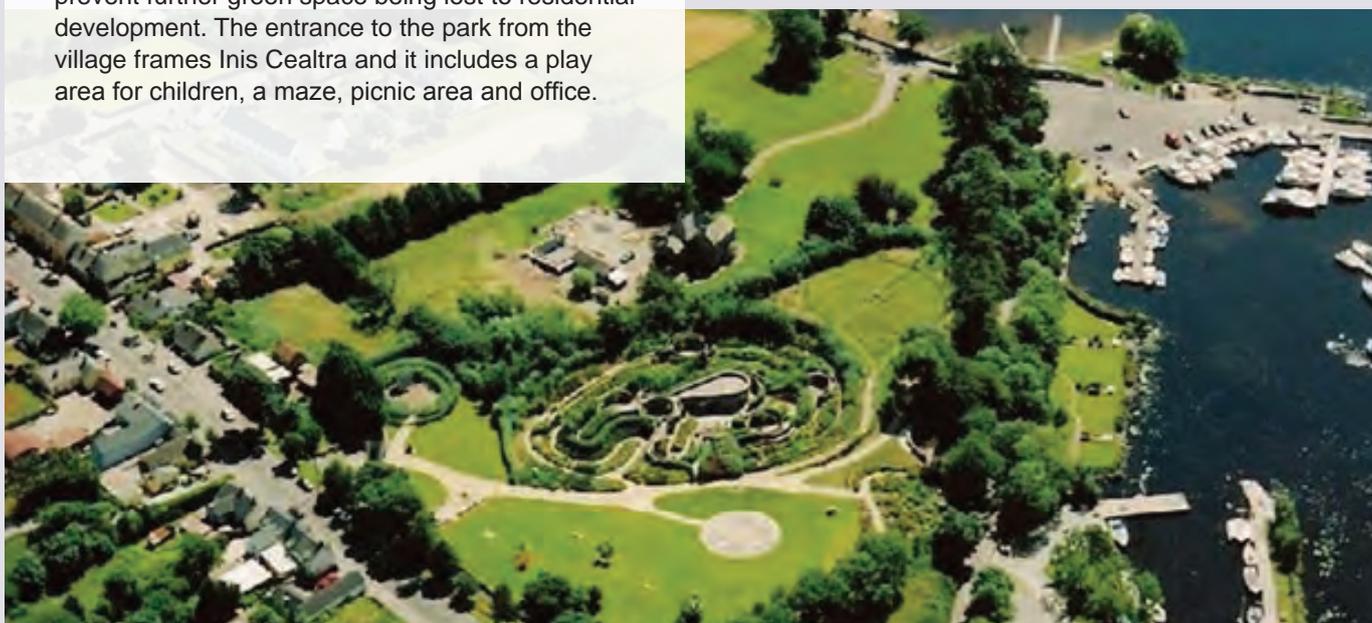
Mountshannon is located 25km to the north-east of Ballina/Killaloe, with the M7 motorway a further 7km from the twin towns via Birdhill. Mountshannon is located on high ground on the west shore of Lough Derg. It has views across the lake, including to Inis Cealtra, and lies close to the Sliabh Aughty Mountains. The village was founded in the mid-18th century by Alexander Woods, a linen merchant, who built a spinning school and houses for craft workers. Following his death and the later impact of the Great Famine, the village declined and continued to do so into the 19th century, though the village's fortunes were revived in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Mountshannon Harbour was built in the early 1970s and since then has developed into one of the largest harbours on the River Shannon. In recent years, significant numbers of holiday homes have been built.

Aistear Park is a 4.5-acre community park, situated in the centre of the village between the main street and the harbour. This park, which was completed in 2000, is the result of a community initiative to prevent further green space being lost to residential development. The entrance to the park from the village frames Inis Cealtra and it includes a play area for children, a maze, picnic area and office.

The concept of the maze is a pathway through time with seven distinct periods:

- Hunter-gatherer societies, c. 6000 BC
- Neolithic period, c. 4000-2500 BC
- Bronze Age, c. 2500-700 BC
- Iron Age, c. 700BC-450 AD
- Arrival of Christianity, 450-1100 AD
- Medieval period, c. 1100-1600 AD (including the growth of popular pilgrimage). Symbols and emblems were associated with each centre and were collected by the pilgrim as proof of their pilgrimage.

The centre of the maze is seen as depicting the culmination of the pilgrimage. A small centre there contains an exhibition space and operates as a tourist information point during peak season. Mountshannon offers visitors several bars and restaurants, as well as accommodation at the Mountshannon Hotel (16 beds), Botchers camp site, Lakeside Holiday Rentals (18 self-catering lakeside holiday rentals) and a number of bed and breakfasts. There are a variety of local activities, including golf, walking, cycling, fishing, swimming and boat hire. Woodland Forest Park is located less than 3km from Mountshannon with car parks, picnic tables and sculpture, as well as art and woodwork workshops during the annual Iniscealtra Festival of Arts. This is one of two festivals held annually in Mountshannon, the other being the Mountshannon Traditional Music Festival held around the last weekend of September.



c. Killaloe/Ballina

Killaloe, Co. Clare, and Ballina, Co. Tipperary, are twin towns on the River Shannon, linked by a thirteen-arch stone bridge at the southern end of Lough Derg. Killaloe is known as the birthplace of Brian Boru, who ruled from his palace complex in Kincora (now the modern-day centre of Killaloe town) when high king of Ireland (1002-1014), though in reality his power was confined largely to areas in Munster. The town has a long history and is a popular visitor destination with a range of visitor services. Killaloe has a religious heritage connection dating back to the 6th century when St Lua is said to have founded a religious community nearby. The twin towns now have a role as a destination for activities such as fishing, cruising, boating, sailing and swimming.

Until recently, the Brian Boru Heritage Centre, housed in the former lock-keeper's cottage, had a range of exhibits, including the story of Brian Boru (940-1014), an audio-visual presentation of the route the canal boat took when making deliveries from Dublin to Limerick and a range of other information about the area. The centre was also home to the tourist information office, which was open from May to September. There is now a locally-run tourist information point in Scarriff.

Killaloe River Cruises depart from the quay on Lakeside Drive in Ballina/Killaloe, providing one-hour tours of the River Shannon and Lough Derg. The tours include commentary on the scenery, wildlife, heritage and legends of Lough Derg (www.killaloerivercruises.com). The University of Limerick Activity Centre is located just to the north of Killaloe, and offers a range of water-based activities including canoeing, kayaking, yachting and windsurfing for groups.

d. Tuamgraney and Lough Derg

The present-day village of Tuamgraney owes its origins to an ecclesiastical settlement that was founded by St Cronán in the 6th century. This church was built before 964AD and is the oldest in Ireland still in use as a church. Along with the long-disappeared round tower, it is recorded as having been repaired and visited by Brian Boru. Adjacent to the church stands Tuamgraney Castle, a medieval tower house of the powerful O'Grady family who also have strong links to Inis Cealtra, which fell within the family's territory. Given Tuamgraney's strategic location on the main route around Lough Derg and its riverside setting, there is an opportunity to stress the historical links between the two ecclesiastical settlements as a way to orientate and direct visitors to Inis Cealtra. St Colum (also known

as Columba), one of the 'Twelve Apostles of Ireland', founded a church site at Terryglass (Tir-da-glasí) in the 6th century. St Colum spent time on Inis Cealtra and was later buried at Terryglass.

The towns around Lough Derg are linked by the Lough Derg Heritage Trail, which has information on over ninety heritage sites around the lake. This project was an initiative of the Galway, Clare and North Tipperary Heritage Officers and the Heritage Council, and was funded by the Heritage Council and the three local authorities. The trail is supported by a map, app and brochures. The Heritage Trail includes the many monastic sites, abbeys, churches and graveyards around the lake – evidence of its long-standing religious importance.

Lough Derg has a vibrant natural heritage and the Lough Derg Nature Trail, launched in 2015, aims to showcase this natural heritage to visitors. The trail was developed by Clare, Galway and Tipperary County Councils and was co-funded by the Heritage Council and Lakelands & Inland Waterways. The 130km trail takes visitors to 24 discovery points from Portumna in County Galway down the western shore of the lake to Killaloe, and on to Terryglass in County Tipperary, which lies on the lake's eastern shore. The trail takes in Inis Cealtra, as well as a variety of walking routes, places to access the lake for bird-watching, woodland parks such as Raheen Wood, and the harbours of Mountshannon and Garrykenny.

Community connection

Inis Cealtra is intimately connected with the local communities of Tuamgraney, Scarriff, Mountshannon and Whitegate. For decades, they have sought to care for, promote and improve its situation in the protection framework of the state. It is due in no small part to their efforts that the entirety of the island is now in public ownership and the initiatives that gave rise to this Plan have come to fruition.

2.2.3 Regional perspective

At a regional level, Inis Cealtra relates to counties Clare, Limerick, Galway and Tipperary. In terms of accessibility for visitors, Mountshannon is located 43km from Limerick via Broadford, 82km from Galway City via Loughrea and 200km from Dublin via the M6/M4. The closest airport is Shannon Airport, 57km to the south-east.

Inis Cealtra is located on the west side of Lough Derg in the east of County Clare (Figure 4). Ennis is 43km to the west while other attractions in County Clare lie further to the west: Kilkee and the Loophead Peninsula (c. 100km to the south-west), Cliffs of Moher and Doolin (c. 90km to the west via Ennis) and the Burren (55km to the west). Limerick, the closest city to Inis Cealtra, has several visitor attractions, including King John's Castle, St Mary's Cathedral, which has strong links to the O'Briens, and Limerick City Museum. The city is a visitor and transport hub on the Wild Atlantic Way with a wide variety of accommodation.

Inis Cealtra lies midway between some of the most significant areas of religious heritage in Ireland. The early ecclesiastical site of Clonmacnoise in County Offaly, founded by St Ciarán in the 6th century, lies to the north/north-east, while Holycross Abbey, the restored Cistercian monastery is situated in Thurles and the historic Rock of Cashel complex lies to the south-east. The latter is the site of the conversion of the King of Munster by St Patrick in the 5th century and the traditional seat of the kings of Munster prior to the Norman invasion. Further detail regarding recent visitor data for these attractions is provided in Chapter 4.



Figure 4. Inis Cealtra - Regional Context

Source: <http://ireland-information.com/irelandmaps.htm>



Figure 5. Route of the East Clare Way

Source: www.eastclarewalkingfestival.com



Heritage hinterland

Inis Cealtra has a rich hinterland of early-ecclesiastical sites in the East Clare region and wider Shannon basin area. Like Inis Cealtra, many of these sites have strong links to the powerful O'Brien kings and the wider Dál Cais sept; they include the nearby early ecclesiastical sites of Tuamgraney, founded by St Cronán and boasting a 10th century church, and Killaloe, associated with the early saints Molua and Flannán, with its impressive cathedral in transitional Romanesque/Gothic style.

There are also several important early church sites in the west of Co. Clare that are associated with the O'Briens and the Dál Cais, such as Kilfenora, Dysert O'Dea and Scattery Island. The O'Briens were also influential at renowned ecclesiastical sites outside Co. Clare, for example, at St Mary's Cathedral in Limerick City, at Holy Cross Abbey and the Rock of Cashel in Co. Tipperary, and on the Aran Islands off the coast of Co. Galway. Closer to Inis Cealtra there are a number of secular or royal sites that are intimately connected with the O'Briens, most notably Béal Boru, also known as Brian Boru's Fort. Indeed, it is the relationship with the O'Brien dynasty that makes these sites so historically and architecturally significant, thus forming the common thread that connects the various ecclesiastical and royal sites in the region.



Furthermore, there are later abbeys, founded by continental orders in the general area, including Quin Franciscan Friary with its incorporated remains of the Anglo-Norman De Clare fortress, as well as Ennis Friary. The surrounding countryside has many later medieval Gaelic tower houses (castles), most of which are in a ruinous state, including that visible in the centre of Tuamgraney village. The archaeological park at Craggaunowen features a renovated 16th-century castle and displays replica medieval monuments and an early medieval lake settlement (or crannóg).

Aside from the medieval monuments, the area also hosts a whole range of post-medieval features such as metalworking sites and blast furnace related to the booming 17th- and 18th-century ironworks industry in the greater Lough Derg area, and historic buildings, such as old courthouses, schools and workers' houses. Furthermore, there are some prehistoric monuments located in the region, including standing stones and wedge tombs, though these are not always easily located.

These sites represent an extraordinary wealth of heritage and while most are relatively easily accessible, many – except perhaps Craggaunowen – are relatively unknown to those from outside the area or those of a non-academic background.



The heritage officers of Clare, Galway and Tipperary County Councils have recently completed publications on three new trail initiatives under the banner 'Lough Derg on the Shannon'. The Lough Derg Heritage Audit 2011 identifies 2,500 heritage sites in the immediate vicinity and comprises a heritage inventory which lists and describes up to 90 heritage sites in the area. The three trails, Heritage, Natural (Go Wild on Lough Derg) and Cultural, were based on this inventory. The philosophy of the three heritage officers has been to work together across county boundaries to create a sense of place for Lough Derg and a whole, cross-county lake experience. Each of these trails has overlaps with Inis Cealtra and will improve awareness of the island and better inform visitors when they arrive.

2.2.4 National context

Fáilte Ireland are now focusing their development and marketing strategy on a series of destinations. The first of these are the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin. The Wild Atlantic Way takes in the west Clare coast but does not extend to east Clare. The Lakelands brand is the fourth major destination brand to be developed by Fáilte Ireland and further detail is anticipated in the near future.

While Ireland's Ancient East (IAE) does not include Co. Clare, and Inis Cealtra and Lough Derg are included within the Lakelands destination brand, Fáilte Ireland have indicated that Inis Cealtra may be incorporated in itineraries for Ireland's Ancient East. Therefore, it is expected that Inis Cealtra and Lough Derg will be promoted as part of both Ireland's Ancient East and the Lakelands brands, as well as through promotional activities undertaken by Clare Tourism.

2.2.5 International perspective

Co. Clare has become increasingly accessible to domestic and international visitors: by road via the M7 and M6/4 from Dublin, and by air via Shannon International Airport, located 57km away, with new routes added regularly. In-depth analysis of potential markets for Inis Cealtra can be found in Chapter 4 of this report and Chapter 7 of Appendix 2.



Figure 6. Inis Cealtra

Source: *the Lawrence Collection*



Figure 7. Inis Cealtra in the context of the south-west of Lough Derg

2.3 Tourism context

2.3.1 Life at the Lake

Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017 is a plan produced to guide the development of Lough Derg as a tourism destination and is a key reference for this Plan. The action-based plan builds on a range of previous strategies, including:

- Lough Derg Tourism Study (2001)
- Lough Derg Design Guide (2003)
- Heritage Council Waterways Corridor Study – South Shannon including Lough Derg (2005)
- Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational and Tourism Development Study (2008)
- Ireland's top 100 tourism waters (2008)
- Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan (2011)
- The Lough Derg Heritage Audit (2011)
- Lough Derg Waterparks Feasibility Assessment (2012)
- Waterways Ireland Masterplan for Portumna

- The Lough Derg Tourism Animation: known projects (2013)
- Waterways Ireland Lakelands and Inland Waterways Strategic Plan (2013-2016)
- Lough Derg Cycle Trails Report (2013)

The collaborative plan, which has significant support at a local (trade) and regional/national level, is focused on developing a sustainable visitor-based economy. Outputs contain both marketing and capital-based development of Lough Derg's tourism infrastructure over the 2014-2017 period. Effectively, the plan provides a work programme for the existing Lough Derg Marketing Group and for the new Lough Derg Tourism Coordinator proposed as part of the plan.

The plan highlights the need for ‘additional provision of key visitor attractions’ to enable Lough Derg to realise its full potential, while recognising that ‘effective management, co-ordination and promotion’ are also required. The plan’s stated vision⁹ is:

‘To develop Lough Derg as a key destination for superb water based activities combined with a range of very high quality walking, cycling, heritage, culture and food experiences that will entice domestic and international visitors to stay longer. This will be achieved through joint co-operation of all tourism stakeholders in the development and marketing of their area under the Lakelands – Lough Derg identity.’

The projects defined in that plan include:

Improving orientation

This is to be achieved through implementation of the Lough Derg Signage Strategy to ensure consistency and clarity of private and public signage. The aim of this project is to enhance visitor orientation. Signage is to be provided under the headings of ‘Finding Lough Derg’, ‘Sense of Arrival’ and ‘Getting around Lough Derg’.

The project refers to the provision of signage and facilities at a number of Discovery Points around the lake as part of an upgraded Lough Derg Drive. While some are yet to be confirmed, others will include:

- Ogonnelloe,
- Gorteeny,
- Portroe Look Out,
- Viewing points south of Woodford at Tullymore and west of Gorteeny.

The plan also recommends an appraisal of the Lough Derg drive to determine whether loops can be added to bring visitors closer to the water. It is envisaged the Discovery Points will offer panoramic views of the lake, a parking/picnicking opportunity, information on the view and further destinations around the lake. The plan also states that ‘Signage at these locations will provide the “stories of the landscape”, and point out features within the view. Information boards will need site-specific design and content and should follow the guidelines contained in the Fáilte Ireland document “Sharing our Stories”¹⁰. The plan provides a table of places to be included

under the ‘Getting around Lough Derg’ signage programme, which includes Inis Cealtra under Heritage Sites, Mountshannon under Recreation Cluster Sites, and Inis Cealtra Boat Trip under Marinas/Public Slipways and Boating Facilities. This table also refers to canoe trails with standardised and internationally recognisable signage to be provided for canoe trail signage, specifically at stop-off and access points, and for water-based beacons.

Improving lakeside experiences

This element builds on the sites identified by the Lough Derg Tourism Study of 2001 and aims to complete the refurbishment of key lakeside sites. The objective is to open up access to the water in a sensitive manner and to increase the variety of lakeside experiences available to visitors. Sites are separated and prioritised by type.

Mountshannon is listed in the highest priority Category A sites with the recommended amenities including parking, toilets, showers, changing facilities, lockers, marina, jetty, slipway, shore, boat hire, waterbus, play area, picnic, barbeque area, open space, walks and information – many of which have already been put in place in Mountshannon.

Inis Cealtra is included in Category D, where the recommended amenities include parking, walks and information. In relation to Inis Cealtra, the plan also indicates: ‘*An Access & Management Plan will be prepared for Inis Cealtra. This will include securing public ownership, improving access, linking with the white-tailed sea eagle project, reviewing information and interpretation provided on the island and onshore, and landscape management recommendations*’.¹¹ This is highlighted as one of four actions in this section and is the subject of this study.

Category E sites include Ogonnelloe lookout, Portroe lookout, Derrypoint lookout, and Coolbawn lookout, for which parking, picnic areas, walks, information and viewpoint/orientation are proposed. Portroe lookout is discussed further in the next section, Experience development.

Experience development

The lack of key visitor attractions is identified as a weakness of Lough Derg and five tourism products are identified in the plan that ‘*will act as game-changers to the visitor economy in the Lough Derg area*’¹².

⁹ Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017, p. 5.

¹⁰ Life at the Lake, p. 13.

¹¹ Life at the Lake, p. 18.

¹² Life at the Lake, p. 21.

The following three key tourism products are proposed:

- **A Discovery Point and Trailhead at the Portroe Lookout** – this envisages an upgrade to the facilities installed at the site under the 2003 Design Guide for Lough Derg, while the plan indicates a range of additional visitor facilities, including parking, landscaping, walks, interpretative signage and commercial space for tea rooms, local crafts and artisan produce. It is envisaged that this will be the ‘must see’ view of Lough Derg.
- **A Lough Derg Canoe/Kayak trail** – the concept of a canoe trail on Lough Derg arises from a 2013 report regarding the development of such a trail and is an agreed product development action in the Lough Derg Marketing Group’s strategy. In order to attract increased numbers of visitors who wish to engage in canoeing, a number of initiatives are envisaged, such as infrastructure (signage, access points, and interpretation), associated canoe-friendly accommodation, marketing and promotion, maps and bundling of accommodation, equipment, guiding, accommodation and food. A canoe trail has been identified in conjunction with extensive consultation, and will be provided along both sides of the lake¹³. The indicative route is shown below (Figure 8).

The plan states that the Lough Derg canoe trail should be seen as part of a more extensive canoe trail network along the Shannon, from Lough Allen to Killaloe/Ballina, with the Lough Derg trail being the first section to be delivered under the Lakelands and Inland Waterways Strategic Plan. The plan also discusses interpretation opportunities, stating ‘*The route could include other stopping points, such as for example Brian fort and Inis Cealtra and would have an interpretation guide to the special interest of the lakeshore and islands*’¹⁴.

The plan also indicates that two short-break routes would form part of the trail with one from Dromineer, which would visit Garrykennedy, Mountshannon, Inis Cealtra and Castlelough.

¹³Life at the Lake, p. 27.

¹⁴Life at the Lake, p. 28.

¹⁵Life at the Lake,p. 30.

- **An enhanced offering and facilities at University of Limerick Activities Centre (ULAC)** – following on from an earlier study this envisages a moored waterpark facility and a re-orientation of the products and services to enable use by the general public, particularly domestic and overseas visitors. This project was selected for inclusion in response to a perceived lack of a ‘defined ‘iconic’ visitor attraction that can act as a motivator for visits’¹⁵.

Two additional tourism products are proposed in this Plan:

- **Portumna eco-park** (master-planning required) – this project envisages a lakeside eco-park that would comprise accommodation, activities (on and off-water), visitor centre, niche interests and ‘learn to’ experiences, catering and retail, hire services (e.g. canoes and bikes), wildlife experience (e.g. observation platforms and discovery walks).
- **Publications to promote and support active enjoyment of Lough Derg and surrounds** – this includes a Lough Derg Activity Map and a guide to the Waters and Wilds of Lough Derg. The aim of this initiative is to provide visitors with comprehensive on and off-water information to aid navigation. The provision of natural heritage information is in response to the perceived lack of such information available to visitors.



Figure 8. Proposed Lough Derg Canoe Trail
Source: Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017



Destination marketing

This section outlines a destination marketing plan for Lough Derg, designed to increase awareness of the lake and associated attractions and activities as a stand-out destination. The destination marketing plan is based on the key target market segments as identified by Fáilte Ireland and in Tourism Ireland's Global Segmentation Strategy (discussed further in Chapter 7 of Appendix 2).

The four key objectives of the strategy are to:

- appoint a Lough Derg Marketing Coordinator,
- work with the Lakeland and Inland Waterways Team to provide content and information and ensure Lough Derg is strongly represented in L&IW initiatives,
- build a stronger on-line presence for Destination Lough Derg,
- heighten the profile of Lough Derg as a destination to attract more domestic and overseas visitors to the area.

A range of actions are outlined to bring these objectives to life. These actions must be implemented in tandem with the development of an enhanced attraction at Inis Cealtra. Examples include publicity campaigns, promotional material, 'Top 10' aspects of the lakelands, and online and digital marketing.

Lough Derg stakeholder engagement

Trade engagement is considered a key part of the study and this section outlines the wide array of actions that were completed under the Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan 2011-2013 in this regard. The plan also highlights the mid-term review of the Lakelands and Inland Waterways Strategic Plan, which identifies key objectives and priorities for the 2013-2016 period with the

central objective to 'develop a higher quality visitor experience of the Lakelands and Inland Waterways region'. The actions proposed in the plan build on both of these documents and aim to support and build capacity in the tourism sector in the Lough Derg area.

The majority of these specific actions must be dovetailed with a marketing development strategy for Inis Cealtra, such as the development of a sales plan for Lough Derg by Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland and the development of a suite of Lough Derg tourism experiences that 'resonate with the key market segments identified'¹⁶.

This section also discusses the use of River Trust's 'Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit' in the area to help mobilise the area's potential.

Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group Implementation Plan for Lough Derg

The plan states that the actions contained within it will be implemented by the existing Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group (LDSMG) with twice yearly implementation review meetings. The members of the LDSMG include:

- Tipperary County Council (Chair)
- Mid-Western Regional Authority (Secretariat)
- Clare County Council
- Galway County Council
- Fáilte Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- LEADER representative – North Tipperary LEADER Partnership
- Tourism Trade representatives

¹⁶ Life at the Lake, p. 42.

2.3.2 Clare Tourism

Clare Tourism Forum, established in 2005, provides a collaborative approach to tourism promotion and development in the county and is representative of all sectors of the tourism industry in County Clare.

This includes website development, marketing campaigns, branding, and funding/sponsorship. Trade representation includes hotels, bed and breakfast operators, heritage and cultural facilities, golf clubs, general activity groups and festival coordinators.

Clare Tourism Forum undertook a review of their role and activities in 2014 which culminated in a renaming to Clare Tourism, clearly setting out their mission statement:

'To create and implement an integrated tourism marketing strategy that will develop a positive and sustainable brand for County Clare and deliver a significant increase in visitor numbers.'

2.4 The significance of Inis Cealtra

This section includes an assessment of the significance of Inis Cealtra in terms of its archaeology, natural heritage and landscape.

2.4.1 Outstanding Universal Value

Inis Cealtra is an important early ecclesiastical settlement and is on Ireland's current World Heritage Tentative List as part of a serial nomination entitled 'Early Medieval Monastic Sites' along with Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Kells and Monasterboice.

It was the opinion of the experts that assessed Ireland's Tentative List in 2009 that, if evaluated on an individual basis none of the sites, including Inis Cealtra, would be successful in demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value. However, taken in combination with other thematically similar sites, together they could reach the level of having

Outstanding Universal Value (i.e. as a serial site). Ireland's two existing World Heritage Sites – Newgrange and Skellig Michael – were inscribed in 1993 and 1996 respectively, and Ireland's original 'World Heritage Tentative List' was created in 1993. Under the World Heritage Convention, which Ireland has signed, a state party should review and update their World Heritage Tentative List every five years; Ireland did not do so until 2009.

Outstanding Universal Value is measured in terms of the following criteria:

- properties that represent a unique artistic achievement, including the masterpieces of internationally renowned architects and builders,
- properties of outstanding importance for the influence they have exercised over the development of world architecture or of human settlements (either over a period of time or within a geographical area),
- properties that are the best or most significant examples of important types or categories representing a high intellectual, social or artistic achievement,
- properties that are unique or extremely rare (including those characteristic of traditional styles of architecture, methods of construction or forms of human settlements that are threatened with abandonment or destruction as a result of irreversible socio-cultural or economic change),
- properties of great antiquity,
- properties associated with and essential to the understanding of globally significant persons, events, religions or philosophies.

Only sites contained in a State Party Tentative List may be put forward for World Heritage Nomination and the state party must then commission an exhaustive body of work to document each site for nomination. This body of work includes a full study of the site, its history, its condition, its significance and, as a key element, its 'Outstanding Universal Value'. Such a study was outside the remit of this Plan, requiring as it does a multi-disciplinary consultancy with experience in world heritage matters and significant resources to fund the work being done to the required level. This is most likely a two-year project for the six sites, and may take up to six years to pass through the World Heritage Committee and to be inscribed as a World Heritage Site.

In order to facilitate the commencement of the nomination, a buffer zone consistent with World Heritage Site standards should be demarcated around the site. The geographical extent of the buffer zone should be determined by the site management team, taking into consideration the island setting (lake and mainland), the visual and aesthetic sensitivities of the site and surrounding area, and hydrological and hydrogeological flows, as well as lake water quality.

Objective 1: To commence the nomination of Inis Cealtra, in combination with the other significant early medieval monastic sites, as a serial World Heritage Site, in the near term.

2.4.2 Archaeology

This section outlines key elements of significance, drawing on the data presented in later chapters and Appendix 2, in order to outline the authenticity and integrity of the site, and then summarises the overall significance of the archaeology of the site. See Chapter 2 of Appendix 2 for a full inventory of the archaeological remains on Inis Cealtra. Reading this section first will aid the reader in understanding the monuments and historical background discussed below.

Inis Cealtra enjoys an excellent level of preservation and integrity due to it being as an island that has escaped development in the modern period, as well as a place of continuing veneration. This contributes to the integrity and authenticity of the site and makes it a place of immense importance. The monuments are set within a semi-natural landscape that emphasises the island's spiritual ambience, as well as adding greatly to its authenticity.

Inis Cealtra is important at different levels, many of which combine to constitute a unique and precious place, both as heritage and lived experience. For the purposes of this Plan, its heritage and experiential assets correspond to what the Burra Charter refers to as its cultural value or significance. 'Cultural significance', as defined by Burra, is its 'aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations and its significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects'. The present statement of cultural significance applies the following hierarchy to assess the site's archaeology, natural heritage/ ecology and landscape character.

Assessment of significance - Archaeology

The monuments may be evaluated against the following levels of significance:

Exceptional significance – elements of the site that are of key national or international significance, containing elements that are outstanding representations of social or cultural phenomena, or are of major regional or local significance.

Considerable significance – elements that are representative examples of an important type of monument, perhaps the only type locally, but which may be relatively common on a national scale. These may be major contributors to the overall significance of the site.



Elements of exceptional significance

The following elements (described in detail in Appendix 2) are of exceptional significance:

An exceptional example of a major medieval ecclesiastical complex of the North Atlantic world

The churches, sculpture, architectural structures, religious monuments, earthworks, enclosure and pathways of the island of Inis Cealtra as a whole are of exceptional significance as an outstanding example of a major medieval ecclesiastical complex that is representative of a significant stage in the development of early medieval Christianity in the North Atlantic world. The excellent level of preservation and integrity has led to a fossilised ecclesiastical landscape that includes superlative examples of early medieval Irish art and architecture.

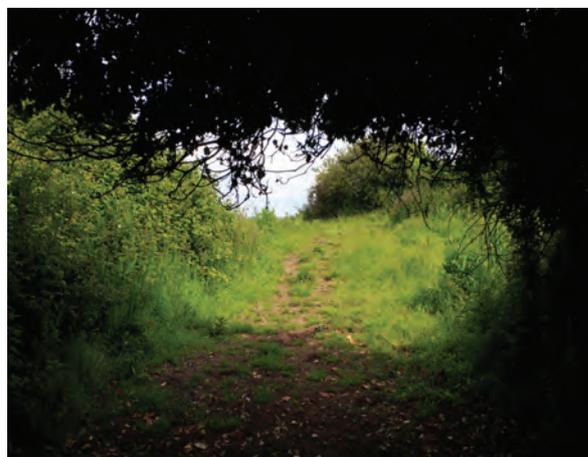
Each of the four medieval churches or the round tower, amongst other monuments, are of considerable significance as individual elements, but as a highly integrated and well-preserved complex of monuments they form a historic cultural entity. The evident connections between their elements and a wider network of early medieval sites, increases Inis Cealtra's cultural significance. This archaeological and architectural importance is supplemented by a valuable documentary record. Moreover, de Paor's excavations have added another level of significance to the site, which is a rare example of an early ecclesiastical site that has undergone large-scale excavation, offering us a more complete picture of the early medieval period in Ireland. After Nendrum, Co. Down, it is the most extensively excavated early ecclesiastical site in Ireland.

An unpublished preliminary report on the excavation, submitted to the National Monuments Service in 1997, was more recently summarised in a posthumous article in the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* (de Paor, 2013). The discoveries of the excavation are currently being analysed as part of a post-excavation project (O'Sullivan and Seaver, 2015), which includes artefact assessment and obtaining radiocarbon dates from a number of the main features uncovered¹⁷. This up-to-date research has helped to more accurately reinterpret the archaeology of Inis Cealtra, and informs much of the discussion in this report. There is also major potential for future discoveries on the island, which has an archaeologically rich subsurface. De Paor's

excavations were extensive by Irish standards but much of the site remains unexcavated, including key features such as the Saints' Graveyard¹⁸.

The excellent level of preservation of this complex site is compounded by the fact that Inis Cealtra was one of the most illustrious of Ireland's early medieval sites. The early importance of the site and its connection to wide networks of influence during the conversion period is attested by finds of 5th–7th-century Bii ware amphorae that originate from the East Mediterranean.

As part of a network of ecclesiastical sites extending along the Shannon from Scatterry Island to Clonmacnoise, the island was well-positioned to benefit from the influx of new ideas as well as to become influential in its own right. It boasted a range of important scholars who interacted with ideas from across the Christian world. Its community traded not only with other Irish communities but also internationally, and the island was a major centre of the arts and industrial activities. The island sustained a diverse and relatively large population, and its strategic and religious importance in the region led to Dál Cais patronage and the support of Ireland's first high king, Brian Bóru, placing it at the heart of the early medieval Irish royal landscape. This in turn made it an important player in Irish church reforms that were introduced from elsewhere in the Christian world.



An exceptionally large and well-preserved corpus of early medieval carved stones, cross-sculpture, and other mortuary monuments are present on the island. This large corpus of early medieval cross-slabs, cross-inscribed and plain grave-slabs, high crosses, and smaller crosses from Inis Cealtra is of exceptional significance, both nationally and internationally, and bears testimony to Inis Cealtra's

¹⁷Thanks are due to Dr Matthew Seaver and Professor Aidan O'Sullivan for allowing access to this unpublished report.

¹⁸ It should be borne in mind that the Plan does not advocate the excavation of this cemetery.

importance as a centre of the arts, major sculptural workshop, coveted place of burial and pilgrimage destination for visitors from Ireland and beyond. This immense, unique collection of early medieval sculpture, a significant portion of which is in its original location (in situ), is unsurpassed in Ireland apart from the collection in Clonmacnoise, much of which, however, is not in its original location. These remarkable works of insular art date from about the 7th to 12th centuries and are products of a time when beliefs and rituals concerning the way Christians should interact with, and remember the dead were changing. This dynamism is made apparent by the various forms, shapes and sizes of the monuments, as well as the decoration and epigraphical evidence.

The earliest dated cross-slab from the island is of exceptional significance in itself, due to its unusual depiction of the rare chi-rho monogram cross, one of only about 15 such representations in stone in Ireland. Three pre-10th century cross-slabs demonstrate distinct parallels with a group of cross-slabs from Clonmacnoise, another illustrious medieval sculptural workshop. Most of the sculpture dating from the 11th and 12th centuries lies in its original location in the Saints' Graveyard, which provides a coherent layout. The survival of the original contexts of so many early medieval sculptures facilitates their interpretation not just as artistic endeavours, but also as parts of a larger complex monumental scheme. The Saints' Graveyard holds important communal commemorative implications as a site to be visited and revered, having formed an integral part of a sacral and royal landscape, and is of exceptional significance.

High crosses are often viewed as some of Ireland's greatest contributions to Western European art. The majority of the high cross sculpture from Inis Cealtra is ex situ (moved from its original location). Nonetheless, the three impressive high crosses, and fragments of others, as well as the numerous cross-bases, especially those that remain in situ, probably reflect the practice of marking out the sacred space of the site's ecclesiastical core. These monumental carved stones played important commemorative, devotional, meditative, ritual, didactic and penitential roles. Undoubtedly, they were commissioned by Dál Cais kings (the later O'Briens) and reflect the complex spiritual and material relationship between secular and ecclesiastical power in early medieval Ireland. The evidence of the posthole beneath the modern cross base, west of the tower (described in Appendix 2) should be interpreted as rare evidence for a wooden cross antecedent and indicates that traditionally there was a cross in that location over a long period.

A reasonable portion of the sculpture displays inscriptions in Irish and this evidence of literacy indicates that Inis Cealtra was an important centre for learning, confirmed by the survival of an illuminated manuscript, the Psalter of Caimín. Clear statements of status and occupation are not usually found in early medieval inscriptions, but, unusually, some of those at Inis Cealtra identify the individuals commemorated as clerics. While we cannot definitely link any of the sculptural pieces with secular individuals, it is significant that Inis Cealtra was viewed as an appropriate location for a royal Uí Briain (or O'Brien) burial, as demonstrated by burial of the queen Gormlaith there.

The quantity of the site's quernstones is remarkable, and the decorated ones in particular may have been central to the symbolic process of the grinding of grain for the Eucharist. Also notable are the two sundials recorded on the site. A relatively rare monument type in early medieval Ireland, sundials facilitated accurate differentiation of time for the observance of canonical hours (the hours of prayer throughout the day), thereby empowering the site as a sacred centre and distinguishing it from the surrounding landscape.

The corpus as a whole is a material testament to the technological skills of the stonemasons and to the wealth and resources of its patrons. Most of the pieces probably date from the 11th and 12th centuries, a period when the Dál Cais, and particularly the Uí Briains (O'Briens), dominated the area, and a time of significant church reforms. The sculpture is therefore part of a sociopolitical discourse showing the success of the Dál Cais in permanently forging, in stone, a relationship with one of the longest established and most revered Christian sites in North Munster. The sculpture is also part of a theological dialogue that expressed a heightened concern with permanently remembering the dead.

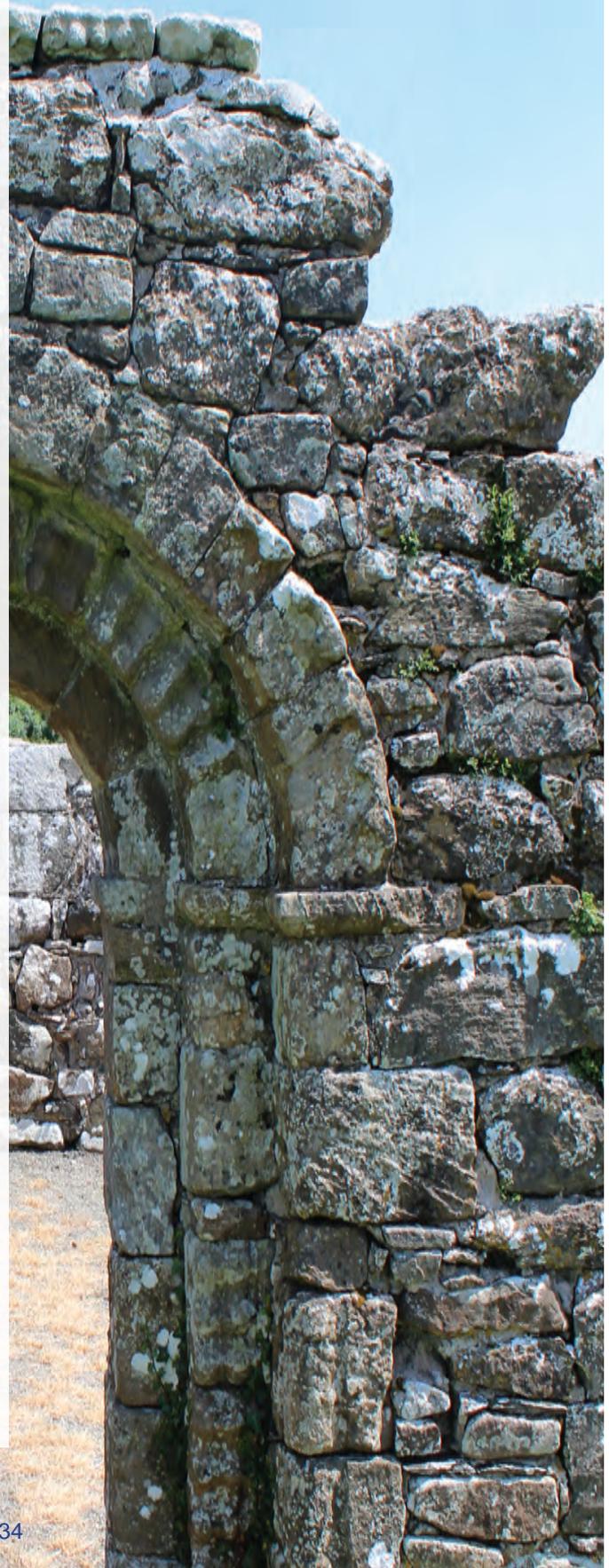


A unique landscape repository of the pilgrimage experience

The interconnected complex of monuments and earthworks can profoundly inform the understanding of the early, late, and post-medieval pilgrimage experience and, taken as a whole, is of exceptional national significance. The site operated as a major pilgrimage destination well into the post-medieval period, adding to its archaeological as well as devotional significance. Its exceptional level of survival and authenticity is not only attributable to its relative remoteness and lack of later development, but also due to a continuing reverence that led to the preservation of venerable structures. In this way, the landscape, with its interconnecting monuments, pathways, and tombs, has assumed a sacral nature. Late and post-medieval activity such as the building of St Michael's Church, the structure around the holy well, and the rebuilding of the Confessional, as well as the construction of significant tombs have added to this landscape, showing that the site was venerated as a holy centre of pilgrimage on a massive scale. As the historical and folkloric evidence indicates, a visit to Inis Cealtra, a resting place of saints and royalty, was seen to guarantee rapid entry from this world to the next due to the intervention of the saints. Even today, the site continues to play an important role locally and continues to be a place of burial.

The Confessional as it exists today is a unique and fascinating monument type that represents a late medieval/post-medieval interpretation of a tradition that stretched back to the early medieval period on the island. Excavation showed how the area had been a focus for special veneration of saints' relics from the early medieval period. The Confessional is a material testament to the experiences of pilgrims engaging with space on the site, as is the general pattern of monuments and route ways on the island, informed by historical accounts such as the Ordnance Survey description of the system of rounds in c. 1838.

The array of earthworks and pathways that exist on the island in their entirety are also informative of the use of space on the island for medieval and post-medieval pilgrimage, as well as being unusual in the level of their survival. The archaeology thus facilitates speculation of the movements and possible routeways established during repeated ritual activities. The penitential stations around the island, generally comprising mounds of probable post-medieval date, and possibly the earlier bullauns, are of considerable significance as focal points in the pilgrimage rounds that took place on the island.



Hiberno-Romanesque sculpture

An array of Romanesque sculpture survives from the site that is of outstanding national significance and reflects the unique character of the 12th-century Irish engagement with wider architectural trends in Europe. St Caimín's Church and St Brigid's Church have elaborately ornamented western doorways, and St Caimín's boasts a chancel arch; these features only occur on a small number of high-status Irish sites. The Romanesque altar in St Caimín's Church is a very rare survival, one of only eight known from the 11th–13th century period. The Romanesque archways in the enclosures around the Saints' Graveyard and St Brigid's Church are also extremely rare in Ireland. Aside from the sculpture, the fabric of St Brigid's Church, built in the Romanesque period, the Romanesque chancel of St Caimín's, and to a lesser extent some Romanesque fragments of Teampall na bhFear nGonta, add to this significance. Teampall na bhFear nGonta, located in the Saints' Graveyard, is of national significance as one of only a small number of possible mortuary chapels identified from early medieval Ireland; its reconstruction in the post-medieval period as a probable mausoleum adds to an understanding of the continuing role of the Saints' Graveyard as a cult focus which attracted high-status burial.

Pre-Romanesque churches

St Caimín's Church is of exceptional national significance as a well-preserved example of one of about 140 extant examples of pre-Romanesque churches surviving in Ireland, and still preserves features unique to this monument type, such as antae, a trabeate-headed window and a round-headed window, while a pair of gable finials, two of only about a dozen surviving in Ireland, have been recovered from the site. The small western aperture is an unusual and unique survival. An earthen church was also excavated on the site; while it is no longer visible it is noteworthy in being one of the earliest churches known from an early Irish ecclesiastical site, only a scattering of which have been identified.

Round tower

The round tower is also of exceptional national and international significance as one of only about 50 surviving and a monument type that is unparalleled anywhere else in the world. It is the only surviving example in East Clare, although one existed nearby in Tuamgraney. Though its cap is missing (and folklore suggests the tower was never completed) it is, relatively speaking, in excellent condition. Relatively few towers have been excavated; excavation of this monument has greatly enhanced the understanding of how the tower was built.

St Mary's Church

St Mary's is an unusual example of a parish church dating to the late 12th century and preserves features typical of pre-Norman churches such as a west doorway. Built on the cusp of the Romanesque and Gothic periods, it is of architectural interest and is significant in being the largest church on the island, designed to serve the whole surrounding parish. It was a central place for locals prior to the Reformation and continued to be a focus of veneration in the centuries that followed, and is therefore of major regional significance.



Elements of considerable significance

The following elements are of considerable significance:

- **St Michael's** is of considerable significance as a post-medieval focus for pilgrimage, as is the enclosed children's burial ground surrounding it. The early medieval enclosure surrounding the whole is also of considerable significance and, combined with the dedication to Michael the Archangel, suggests that this is likely an early medieval church site in origin. St Michael's contributes to the overall exceptional significance of the island as a place of pilgrimage and burial as well as a complex early ecclesiastical site;
- the unusually large collection of bullaun stones is of considerable significance; they are early medieval monuments and good examples of this monument type;
- the penitential stations are of considerable significance as focal points in the system of pilgrimage rounds that took place on the island in the recent past and as monuments that defined certain points or places as special;
- the large, elaborately carved late medieval grave-slab stored in St Caimín's, as well as fragments of another slab of contemporary date are of considerable significance; both date from the early centuries of the late medieval period and are testimony to the continuing production of high-quality stone carving on the island and of the enduring importance of stone mortuary monuments there;
- the remains of two post-medieval grave memorials known as wall monuments are preserved on the site, one in St Caimín's Church dating from 1703 and another dating from the early 17th century in St Mary's. These rare and early examples of 'wall monument' memorials are of considerable significance in themselves and also contribute to the exceptional significance of the site as a burial place for the elite from the early medieval to modern period;
- the 19th- and 20th-century grave memorials are of considerable significance in providing useful historical information in their inscriptions as well as being significant in themselves as material culture;
- the bargaining stone is a unique monument that reflects the wealth of traditions and folklore that surrounds Inis Cealtra. It was a focal point on the island for locals over the past couple of centuries and is therefore of considerable significance, while contributing to the overall significance of the site as a place of pilgrimage and veneration;
- the holy well is of considerable significance as a place of veneration and preserves a fine example of a post-medieval well-house structure. As a focal point for locals conducting the historic rounds, it contributes to the overall significance of the site as a place of pilgrimage and continues to be treated as a holy space today;
- the extant piers and original eastern landing stage are also of considerable significance.



Archaeology – overall significance

The overall significance of Inis Cealtra in terms of archaeological value can be summarised as follows: The well-preserved network of churches, stone sculpture, architectural structures, religious monuments, earthworks, enclosures, and pathways of the site as a whole in the island landscape are of exceptional significance as an outstanding example of a major medieval ecclesiastical complex that is representative of a significant stage in the development of early medieval Christianity in the North Atlantic world.

The large corpus of early medieval carved stones, much of which is in situ, is also of exceptional significance, unparalleled anywhere else in Ireland and arguably Western Europe; it reflects the importance of the site as a centre of craft working and learning as well as a place for high-status and royal burial.

The array of surviving Romanesque sculpture and the early medieval structures of St Caimín's Church, St Brigid's, the round tower, Teampall na bhFear nGonta, and the transitional church of St Mary's, are of exceptional significance on a national level in themselves as well as contributing to the overall significance of the site.

The role of the site as a pilgrimage destination from the early medieval period, which continues today, is of exceptional social and cultural significance, as is the use of the site for burial.

The system of earthworks, routeways, and penitential stations that physically link the various medieval monuments on the island form a sacred multi-period landscape that is of exceptional significance in illustrating how space was used on the site and is informative regarding the importance of pilgrimage on the site into the present. The Confessional is an exceptionally significant site in this regard, while sites of considerable interest such as the burial grounds, the holy well, the bullaun stones, post-medieval memorials, and St Michael's 'Garden' combined contribute to this overall significance of the site as a multi-faceted sacred, social, and historical landscape.

2.4.3 Natural heritage and biodiversity

Inis Cealtra and the surrounding area is rich in natural habitats, both terrestrial and freshwater. The habitat map below (from Volume 3) shows the location of the various habitats associated with the island. Up to ten Level 3 Habitats have been identified within and surrounding the island. An overview of these habitats is provided in the following sub-sections.

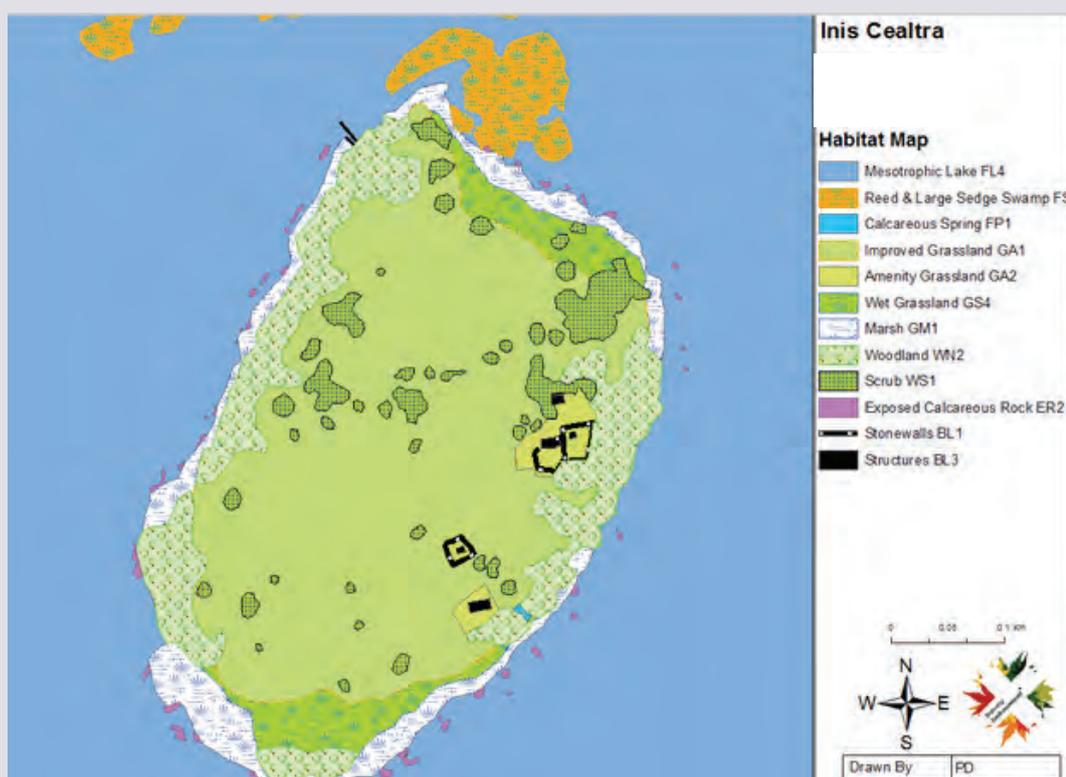


Figure 9. Habitat Map
Source: Doherty Environmental (2016).
Inis Cealtra Ecology Report

Habitats and species

Wetland habitats

While there is no published information on the water quality of the lake at this location, water quality is considered to be moderate. It has improved over the last decade. The water in the Holy Well near the church is fed from a rare type of habitat, a calcareous spring that provides a habitat for wetland species associated with still waters such as *Lemna trisulca* with *Apium nodiflorum* and watercress (*Nasturtium* sp.). Other wetland habitats include reed swamp and tall herb swamps. The reed swamp community is dominated by common club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*). It is found in sheltered shallow locations and provides shelter for wetland birds, particularly coot (*Fulica atra*) and mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). Nearer the shore in shallower water around the island and mainland is marsh habitat supporting a range of tall herbs and grasses.

The flora includes a wide range of perennial wetland species including *Mentha aquatica*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Stachys palustre*, *Iris pseudacorus*, *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Convolvulus arvensis*, *Vicia sepium*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Apium nodiflorum*, *Myosotis scorpioides*, *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, *Lythrum salicaria*, *Achillea ptarmica*, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, *Equisetum palustre*, *Oenanthe crocata*, *Leontodon autumnalis* (on rocks), *Phalaris arundinacea*, *Eleocharis palustris*, *Potentilla anserina*, *Rorippa palustris*, *Ranunculus flammula*, *Angelica sylvestris*, *Rumex crispus*, *Carex otrubea*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Epilobium palustre*, *Succisa pratensis*, and *Lycopus europaeus*. Devil's Bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) is the food plant of the rare marsh fritillery butterfly (*Eurodryas aurinia aurinia*). Wet grassland occurs on sloping ground at the northern and southern sides of the island.

This habitat is influenced by mineral-rich flood water from the lake and seepage of groundwater from the underlying limestone rock. Therefore, species contrast with dry grasslands elsewhere and include *Briza media* as well as the orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, *Iris pseudocorus*, *Juncus acutiflorus* and *Filipendula ulmaria*.

Woodland and scrub habitats

A recent naturally developed (post 1st ed. OS map) broadleaved woodland, dominated by a mix of native and non-native trees, occurs along the western and eastern shores of the island with a smaller isolated example occurring at the southern tip. Tree species are dominated by ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), with very few beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), oak (*Quercus petraea*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). Understorey shrubs include bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Herb flora is generally grassy but also features the typical herbs wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), soft-shield fern (*Polystichum setiferum*) and abundant ivy (*Hedera helix*).

Scrub vegetation (technically <5m high) is found throughout the island. It features bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and much elder (*Sambucus nigra*). The latter is a sign of disturbance, probably due to excavations. An elder plant on top of the Round Tower was probably established there as a result of the germination of a seed transported by a bird.



Productive grasslands and amenity-type grassland habitats

The island's land cover is dominated by this habitat. This is a semi-improved type dominated by *Poa trivialis* with Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), *Dactylus glomerata*, *Festuca rubra*, *Cynosaurus cristatus* and rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), with a low cover of the herbs *Stellaria graminea*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Juncus effusus*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Leontodon autumnalis*, *Rumex acetosa*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Prunella vulgaris*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Trifolium repens*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Cirsium vulgare* and *Cirsium arvense*. Amenity (closely cut) grasslands occur in the vicinity of the OPW hut, churches and associated graveyards.

Stone wall habitat

Mortared stone walls associated with the archaeological features and their boundaries provide a unique habitat for lime-loving species which tolerate dry conditions, such as the ferns *Asplenium trichomanes* and *A. ruta muraria*. These ferns are not found elsewhere on the island.

Birds

Overwintering birds identified by Doherty (see Volume 3 for detail) in 2015/2016 include many species associated with wetlands* as shown below in Table 2-1.

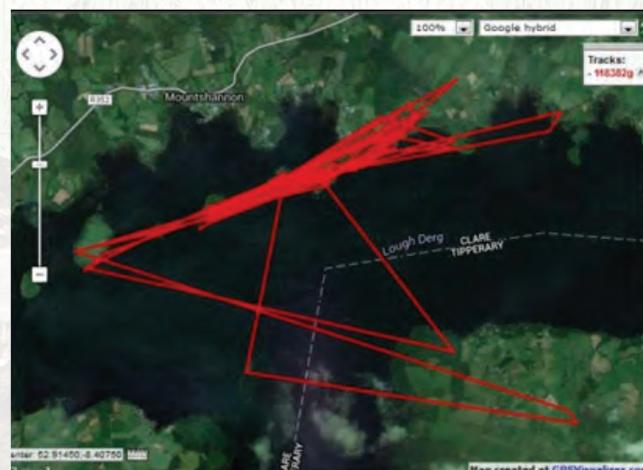
Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	House sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	Snipe (<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>)*
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)*	Jackdaw (<i>Corvus monedula</i>)	Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)
Blue tit (<i>Parus caeruleus</i>)	Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter nisus</i>)
Chaffinch (<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>)	Little egret* (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)	Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)
Coal tit (<i>Parus ater</i>)	Mallard* (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	Stonechat (<i>Saxicola torquata</i>)
Coot* (<i>Fulica atra</i>)	Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	Water rail* (<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>)
Cormorant* (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	Meadow pipit (<i>Anthus pratensis</i>)	Wigeon* (<i>Anas penelope</i>)
Dunnock (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)	Moorhen* (<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>)	Wood pigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)
Fieldfare (<i>Turdus pilaris</i>)	Mute swan* (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)	Wren (<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>)
Grey heron* (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)	Pied wagtail* (<i>Motacilla alba</i>)	
Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>)	Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	
Great tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Redpoll (<i>Carduelis flammea</i>)	
Greenfinch (<i>Carduelis chloris</i>)	Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	
Hooded crow (<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>)	Rook (<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>)	

Table 2-1. The main overwintering birds associated with Inis Cealtra (overwintering 2015/2016)



Though not nesting on the island, the presence of breeding white-tailed sea eagles in the locality since 2011, nesting on nearby Cribby Island, is of interest as this species, which was re-introduced to Ireland, has been known to roost on Inis Cealtra. According to Allen Mee, Golden Eagle Trust (pers. comm. 2015), the island is not used by adults due principally to lack of trees and cover.

Figure 10. Routes explored by young white-tailed sea eagle chick named Cealtra in September 2015
Source: <http://www.mountshannoneagles.ie>



Bats

Seven bat species are present on the island. The Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) is the commonest species (90% of activity), particularly near woodlands and scrub. These bats roost in the walls of St Caimin's Church and the round tower. Other bat species are Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentoni*) which feed on the lake, Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri*), Nathusius's pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*) and brown long eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), all of which are present in lesser numbers. The soprano pipistrelle is not considered to be threatened in Ireland and Europe (Roche et al., 2014). According to Roche et al. (2014) it uses an array of roost types ranging from trees to buildings (modern houses, churches, sheds, etc.) and stone bridges.

Assessment of importance

The assessment of the importance of Inis Cealtra's biodiversity was carried out in the context of IUCN criteria, statutory obligations, national plans and local plans. It is based on criteria defined by conservation authorities in the UK in the 1970s. The most important of these are rarity and representativeness. Of lesser importance are landscape attractiveness, relationship to ecological gradients, accessibility/potential for recreation, information available and management potential. Thus, legislative protection under EU Directives is given to sites and features which rank high on rarity. Inis Cealtra is in a Special Protection Area because Lough Derg supports particular populations of certain wetland birds.

Elements of significance

Elements of Exceptional Significance: Two rare wetland habitats of exceptional significance occur on the island. The fringing marsh habitat of the island corresponds to the EU Habitats Directive Annex 1 Habitat Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of the plains and of the montane to alpine levels. The spring vegetation associated with the well near the church is representative of a calcareous spring, which is relatively rare in Ireland.

Elements of Major Significance: The other semi-natural habitats on the island - woodland, scrub, wet grassland - are of major significance for biodiversity principally because they are not common and they support important bird and bat species. The island supports a diverse community of breeding song-birds with up to five warbler species recorded nesting on the island. The red-listed meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) has also been recorded on the island during the breeding season and is likely to breed there.

The island provides foraging habitat for other birds listed in Annex 1 of the EU Bird Directive. These include little egret (*Egretta garzetta*) and kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*). Wetland bird species such as snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) are known to roost on the island during the winter season and emergent tall sedge habitat to the north of the island also supports breeding coot and mallard. The island has seven of the ten bat species found in Ireland. Bats, together with all native mammals, are protected species under Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive (Conservation of Natural habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive 1992)), the Wildlife Act (1976) and Wildlife [Amendment] Act (2000).

Natural heritage – overall significance

Inis Cealtra supports habitats and species that are typical of the lakeshore around Lough Derg. It is a constituent part of an international network of sites of biodiversity importance, the Natura 2000 network. Biodiversity includes valuable wetlands, woodlands, grasslands and bird and bat species. In contrast to land management practices affecting similar land in the region, farming over the last hundred years has been compatible with biodiversity as it has only involved extensive cattle-grazing.

The character of the island's biodiversity is considerably enhanced by its proximity to significant archaeological remains and the limited accessibility of the site by boat only. It contains rare wetlands of exceptional significance and woodlands /meadow habitat that are of major significance.

There are no direct major threats to the integrity of this biodiversity. Public ownership now offers an opportunity to sustainably manage biodiversity, learn more about its relationship to human settlement and communicate its significance to visitors.

2.4.4 Landscape and setting

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 identifies a number of different landscape types within the county. Inis Cealtra is located in an area designated as a 'Heritage Landscape', indicating that it is an area where sensitive environmental resources – scenic, ecological and historic, are located. Inis Cealtra is included within Heritage Landscape 1: Lough Derg and the Eastern Uplands. Heritage landscapes are areas where natural and cultural heritage are given priority and where development is not precluded but happens more slowly and carefully. They are envisioned as the most valued parts of the county – that are important to the people of Clare as well as the wider community – both nationally and internationally. The principal role of these landscapes is to sustain natural and cultural heritage.



Landscape setting – overall significance

The Landscape Character Assessment describes it succinctly and explains the context of it as a ‘special’ landscape:

‘The Lough Derg Basin and Low Burren are designated as ‘special’ landscapes. In regard to Lough Derg, the scale and dominance of the lough, the long views afforded across it, its high ecological importance, EU designations and valuable features such as Inis Cealtra, make it a special landscape. There are certain features, however, less sensitive that make the area more robust, preventing it from being designated as a unique landscape.’

The site is of historic, ecological and landscape importance, reflecting an intertwining relationship of natural and cultural heritage. The island is isolated and therefore a protected part of the Lough Derg and Shannon ecosystem, giving it ecological status. Again, its location, cut off yet at the same time open to trade routes, has made Inis Cealtra a compelling setting for Christians since the 6th century, while also allowing the island to be visited earlier by prehistoric peoples. The island is also significant as part of a wider network of island landscapes on the River Shannon system and riparian, pastoral and upland settings beyond.

Stripping back the layers, it is useful to consider the site firstly as an island, as a geological or topographical element in the area. It is part of a series of islands in the Shannon or Lough Derg basin composed of till derived from Lower Carboniferous Limestone. The rising ground in the hinterland of the Slieve Aughty and Bernagh mountains and the hills across the lough in Tipperary give scale to the island in the basin. Inis Cealtra also appears as the larger in a set of islands along the northern shore. It is a pastoral island with a fringe of trees and copses, in contrast with Red Island, which appears wooded.

The view of the island from the shore—or boat—is defined by the round tower, which rises above the canopies of the trees and scrub and distinguishes the island from its neighbours. The round tower continues to act as a focal point in the landscape as it can generally be seen from all angles, being tall enough to rise above the domed centre of the island.

The island lies within the ecological designation of ‘Special Protection Area’ (ref 004058) Lough Derg (Shannon), the species of interest of which include cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*), goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) as well as other wetland and waterbirds. There is more detail on the international ecological designation in Volume 3 of this report.

The monuments on the island, as well as the round tower, include five churches and their enclosures of low dry stone walls. There are also numerous bullaun stones, medieval grave slabs, a holy well and a bargaining stone. The landforms of the sites are subtle but can be seen even in the long grass of the rich pasture. These cultural monuments in the lightly managed landscape of pasture scrub and copses suggest a romantic ruined landscape sensibility to the visitor. The reality is, of course, that the site was a lively centre of the community and region, and continues to be used for burials and pilgrimage to some extent.

The ruins representing the cultural heritage are significant in the landscape as they represent the past, but appear to remain culturally significant to people who still use the island in its devotional context. This is similar to sites across the country such as Clonmacnoise, Durrow, and Scattery Island whereby the living cultural experience of the landscape overlays its archaeological remains.

CHAPTER 3

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This chapter outlines the key development principles, Limits of Acceptable Change research and the relevant case studies that have informed the Plan's proposals and recommendations. This is followed by guidelines for the management of Inis Cealtra under the headings of visitor centre, access to Inis Cealtra, tourism facilities on Inis Cealtra, interpretation, visitor management and local community, and concludes with detail on facility and site management. Recommendations are informed by detailed information in Appendix 2.



3.1 Strategy overview

As outlined previously, Inis Cealtra is of exceptional significance due to its entire archaeological landscape, and partly due to its location in an internationally important, protected wetland, and is of major significance due to its other unique characteristics.

By the principles of the Burra Charter, Inis Cealtra is deemed significant not only for one particular element, such as the buildings or the carved stones, but in its entirety. Cultural significance, according to the Charter, 'is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and related objects'. Therefore, any proposed changes to the island potentially threaten the overall cultural significance of Inis Cealtra as an exceptionally well-preserved, diverse and intrinsically culturally valuable place and must be viewed in this light.

The recommendations of the Plan as set out below adhere to principles of the International Cultural Tourism Charter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

- **Principle 1 - Encourage public awareness of heritage:** Since domestic and international tourism is among the foremost vehicles for cultural exchange, conservation should provide responsible and well-managed opportunities for members of the host community and visitors to experience and understand that community's heritage and culture at first hand.
- **Principle 2 - Manage the dynamic relationship:** The relationship between heritage places and tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values. It should be managed in a sustainable way for present and future generations.
- **Principle 3 - Ensure a worthwhile visitor experience:** Conservation and tourism planning for heritage places should ensure that the visitor experience will be worthwhile, satisfying and enjoyable.
- **Principle 4 - Involve host and indigenous communities:** Host communities and indigenous peoples should be involved in planning for conservation and tourism.

- **Principle 5 - Provide benefit for the local community:** Tourism and conservation activities should benefit the host community.
- **Principle 6 - Responsible promotion programmes:** Tourism promotion programmes should protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage characteristics.

3.2 Strategy for the study area

The fundamental vision as set out at Section 1.3 foresees that Inis Cealtra will be managed in a way that protects it for future generations, brings benefit to the local region and offers all those who come to learn about it, whether to the island or the locality, an informative, inspiring and safe experience. In accordance with best international practice, few physical changes are envisaged at the monuments area of the island, with only the minimum interventions necessary provided to ensure safety for visitors and employees elsewhere on the island.

3.2.1 Scale of access and limits of acceptable change

From the outset, it was considered essential to determine and set an upper limit to the quantum of acceptable change, whether increased visitor numbers, more vessel landings or new structures, the island would undergo under the Plan's proposals. As a method of exploring the upper limits of both physical and non-physical change, that the island could absorb without detriment to asset and experience (of visiting), a modified Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) methodology was followed.

The evaluation employed a multidisciplinary approach with defined input from each of the team experts. First it was established how emerging proposed changes would conflict with different aspects of the island's assets and experiences. This encompassed application of each major change category (more people, more vessels, introduction of animals, etc.) to each asset (monuments, habitats, earthworks) and experience (liminal anticipation, approach through the meadow, circumnavigation, contemplation, prayer and more) of the island. By evaluating the potential impact of each proposal on each asset and experience, the individual change that was most impactful and potentially damaging was defined. What emerged from this process was that numbers of people on the island, and around the monuments, at any one time was the most important single metric to represent the aggregate of diverse individual impacts on the island overall.

Table 3-1 Evaluation of impacts on the island's assets

Impact/Risk 0= none or beneficial 1 = low or absorbable 5= high, intolerable	Proposed Change	Increased numbers of visitors (footfall, noise, bustle)	Increased numbers of vessels/ landings	New interpretation approach and visitor management system	New facilities / infrastructure	Intro-duction of grazing animals
Asset/ experience affected						
Island, shallows and foreshore		1	4	1	1	3
Meadow habitats		3	0	3	3	1
Woodlands		2	1	2	3	1
Reedbed habitats		0	3	0	2	0
Upstanding remains and monuments		4	0	2	1	2
Recumbent and submerged remains		4	2	3	1	3
Earth works		4	0	3	1	4
Island experience (crossing) / liminal preparation		4	0	1	1	0
Approaching monument through meadow (anticipation)		3	1	0	0	0
Immersion in nature/ wildness		4	3	2	2	2
Connection to history		3	0	1	2	1
Spiritual/ esoteric/ folkloric experience		3	0	1	2	0
		35	14	19	19	16

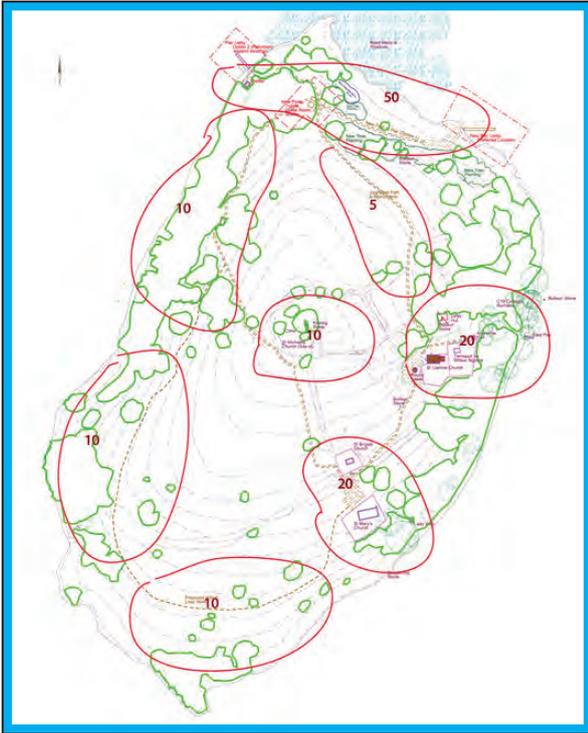


Figure 11. Limits of Acceptable Change: Upper level of visitor numbers related to physical spaces and areas on Inis Cealtra

Subsequently, an appropriate value for the parameter (numbers of people) vis a vis each individual asset and experience (that exists or occurs on the island) was developed. In essence, this part of the process works backwards from the need to protect each element of built and natural heritage, and each experiential element of visiting the island to define a baseline quality of experience that must endure. Each space/area on the island was analysed in this way and an aggregate optimum visitor level was derived for the whole island.

These thresholds, when compared against each other, allow the setting of number of visitors as the overriding limiting parameter and derived the limit for visitor numbers deemed acceptable in any given spatial area, for both specific periods, and in total. Acceptability was defined as how much the current asset/experience (condition of the monument/habitat or quality of the experience) could be intensified without it becoming damaging, hazardous or unpleasant.

The result derived from this LAC methodology is that the maximum number of visitors on the island at any one time is 100 persons (excluding guides and staff). Extrapolating this forward (see Section 4.7) to various periods gives maxima of 400 per day, and 45,000 visitors per year. These figures should be taken as the maximum number of persons arriving on the island for all subsequent studies, projections, models and projects.



Objective 2: To restrict access to the island to a maximum number at any one time of 100 persons (excluding guides and staff), no more than 400 in any day and a maximum of 45,000 over the course of the year. These numbers should be taken as the maximum number of persons arriving on the island for all subsequent studies, projections, models and projects.

The above limits govern the changes that can be imposed on the island and therefore what specific proposals are considered as a way to achieve the Plan's aims. The environmental assessment procedures (SEA, AA, FRA) and considerations of practicality, budget and other inputs then determine how their impacts are negated or mitigated and ultimately which options are recommended.

3.2.2 Control of access

Several options for controlling access to Inis Cealtra such that the limits established above could be implemented were considered. These include:

1. Allowing all visitors and boat traffic to access the island with no charge: this would allow unrestricted numbers of people access to the island and provide opportunities for tours to be established by local businesses. However, uncontrolled access would likely lead to a diminishing of the character of the island and risk negative impacts on its built heritage and ecology. A key issue is that if one boat operator is allowed free access to the island and was successful then other operators would be likely to follow from other places around Lough Derg.
2. Allowing all visitors and boat traffic to access the island with a fee: this would create direct revenue generation opportunities but could have the same negative impacts as the first option.
3. Only allow access to the island via a ferry from a visitor centre on the mainland with the fee being included in the price of the ticket to the interpretation elements of the visitor centre. This would enable control of access, thereby minimising impact on the island's archaeology and habitats. However, a mechanism would have to be found to facilitate the local community who have had free access to the island for generations continuing to do so. A portion of ticket revenue from the visitor centre tickets would obviously be directed toward the ferry operator and toward the upkeep of the island.

After evaluating the above options both in the public consultation meetings and in more detail through exemplar comparison and through the SEA and AA assessment processes, the third option emerged as the most suitable for the future management of Inis Cealtra.

This option would afford control of access and minimise any potential impact on archaeology and built heritage. It could (using the local access provision below) enable the community to continue to access the island, facilitate trips to the island by kayakers (thus linking the island to Lough Derg Canoe Trail), and does not require staff to collect a fee on the ferry or island.

By adopting this approach the limits set by the LAC evaluation could be reliably achieved.

Objective 3: To have primary visitor access to the island via a ferry from a new visitor centre on the mainland with a small access charge, and to allow the local community continue accessing the island free of charge, with established local tourism businesses using a discounted permit system.

3.3 Visitor centre

3.3.1 The requirement for a visitor centre

In pursuit of solutions to broaden access to Inis Cealtra and its heritage, options were explored as to whether the interpretative needs of visitors could be met without a physical visitor centre. Many alternative scenarios and proposals to deliver the heritage, culture and understanding of the island, as well as meet the practical challenges of managing visitors without built facilities, were considered. Alternative options, which ranged from pop-up and temporary facilities to ephemeral solutions like mobile phone apps, were examined and tested against the standards of safety, quality and longevity expected of a professionally run, historic site that is open to the public.

Consideration of the need to place the new initiative on a sound year to year financial footing, providing an income stream, and having a locus for bookings, ticketing and enquires also fed into this. On foot of these evaluations, it was decided that the dual needs of drawing more people to the area, enabling an increase in numbers visiting the island, while simultaneously providing an alternative quality experience to those who chose not to cross to the island (and so reduce the footfall impacts on the physical heritage itself), would require an uplifting full-service interpretative centre type building.

Objective 4. To procure a new visitor centre on the mainland to serve the needs of visitors seeking to learn more about the island.

3.3.2 Visitor centre as a filter

In order to marry the seemingly opposing aims of both applying an upper limit on visitors travelling to the island, and of using the heritage of Inis Cealtra to attract more people into the East Clare area, it was decided that the visitor centre would function as the entry point and filter for all visitors. Study of other similar historic sites with visitor centres at a distance indicate that there is a natural split between the number of people who arrive at a visitor/interpretative centre and those who choose to go on to the historic site itself. In most cases, it is only a minority of people who arrive at the centre that make the journey to the site itself. This reduces pressure on the structures, ambience and ecology of the site itself.

In the case of Inis Cealtra, modelling (see Section 4.6 and 4.7) indicates that most of the people who come to the visitor centre will not have the time to or interest in making the crossing to the island and will be satisfied if a quality interpretative experience or simulation of the island is provided in the visitor centre itself.

As with many other comparable sites such as Brú na Bóinne and Skellig Michael (see Section 4.3 and Appendix 2, Chapter 7), this can be advantageous in that having a visitor centre on the mainland will allow us attract large numbers of visitors to the area, while limiting the numbers who cross to the island to be within the LAC figures set out above. It also provide a year-round service (in the visitor centre) while 'closing' the island to visitors during dangerous periods and when species protection must be provided.

For this approach to be successful, it was deemed critical that there be a strong visual link from the new facility to the island, to provide a tangible experience of the island to non-crossing visitors (from the

visitor centre) and that the interpretative offering at the visitor centre must be of an exceptionally high quality.

3.3.3 Preferred location

As a precursor to these deliberations, evaluation was carried out, as to whether or not a comprehensive visitor facility in the form of a visitor centre could or should be situated on the island itself. However, having assessed this option against environment and heritage protection practice, this option was ruled out. Construction of a visitor centre on Inis Cealtra itself would be inappropriate due to the significant negative impacts on archaeology and the natural environment.

It was decided that a gateway building providing visitor amenities, information and interpretation about the island, and acting as a means to filter visitors to the island, should be created on the mainland.

Having decided i) that such a visitor centre was needed and ii) that it should not be on the island, a number of mainland location were considered. The four potential locations assessed were Knockaphort, Scariff, Tuamgraney and Mountshannon.

In developing a selection methodology, consideration was given to the following overarching objectives:

- increasing numbers of visitors to the town and thus improving business and community life;
- minimising wastewater and traffic impacts;
- reducing impacts on the natural environment (of Lough Derg) due to construction, other development and ongoing operations.

Specific criteria applied in making the location selection were that it should:

1. enable the visitor centre to be an economical boost to the area,
2. have potential to be granted planning permission and be a viable option under environmental and flood risk screening,
3. avoid causing unacceptable increases in traffic stress on the area while facilitating connections to public transport,
4. have a possible site or sites of adequate size and quality to accommodate a visitor centre,
5. reinforce the strategy of having an attractive comprehensive experience at the centre to encourage (a significant cohort of) visitors to forego visiting the island but still have an interpretative experience that increases understanding of Inis Cealtra's heritage, history

and significance, in effect having a view of the island and ideally being adjacent to the lake shore for embarkation,

6. be in a local community with a strong connection to Inis Cealtra.

A composite rating and ranking of the four shortlisted locations resulted in the village of Mountshannon being identified as the most suitable location for the new visitor centre.

Mountshannon scored well on the above criteria (particularly on criteria 4, 5 and 6) and has extensive community links with Inis Cealtra, as evidenced by the Aistear Park and centre, as well as having views directly to the island. It also has the benefit of having a number of underused landholdings adjacent to the lake.

The following principles were defined for the selection of a specific site in Mountshannon to ensure that such a visitor centre would meet the requirements of the Plan.

The specific site should:

- facilitate those visitors, with less interest, mobility or time, who do not wish to visit Inis Cealtra by ferry. The visitor centre should be able to provide them with a fully immersive Inis Cealtra experience,
- enjoy a direct visual connection to Inis Cealtra; the visitor centre requires a direct view of the island. This is central to the visitor impact minimisation strategy whereby offering a significant proportion of visitors a

high quality interpretative experience at the visitor centre (itself centred on having a direct view of the island) would mean reduced numbers of people making the crossing and therefore reducing overall footfall impact on the island and monuments themselves.

- be not only of benefit to not only the waterfront area of the village, but also contribute to revitalising the main street, ensuring that a new influx of visitors will not bypass the village centre,
- be accessible to coach parties and other visitors who would be provided with a range of interpretation and visitor facilities before a trip to the island by ferry.

Given the desirability of leveraging an uplift in community, social and business activity from the development of the visitor centre, consideration was given to locating it on the main street, whether as a new-build or renovation project. A number of unused buildings were nominated and evaluated for suitability. However, considering all previous criteria (especially the desirability of having a view to the island), it was considered that few or none of the on-street properties (with the possible exception of the frontage to the Aistear Park) could be designated as worthy of further study.

In total, 11 sites in the village were identified as having potential and a twelfth site added after public consultation on the draft plan. They were first selected only on the basis of the aforementioned principles without regard to the ownership, value or planning status and were then assessed in detail against more fine-grained criteria.



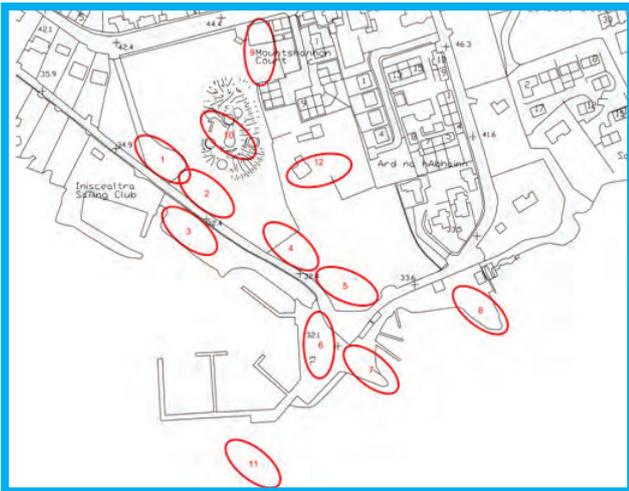


Figure 12. Potential sites for visitor centre identified in Mountshannon

The sites identified for evaluation (see map in Figure 12 above) were:

1. Northwest stretch of southern boundary (lower road) of Aistear Park
2. Middle of southern boundary (lower road) of Aistear Park
3. Public open space to lake side of lower road (southeast of sailing club)
4. Boundary between Aistear Park and the Rectory (along lower road)
5. Southern part of rectory site
6. Car park for marina/harbour area
7. Lake edge park/swimming area near car park
8. Northeastern promontory point to lake shore
9. Vacant site to main street (with boundary onto Aistear Park)
10. Current Aistear centre – assuming the potential for extending upwards
11. Off-shore, south of harbour wall on/over/floating upon the lake.
12. The Rectory (building and adjacent areas)

The sites varied from being on land and on the lake and being in public, community and private ownership. All have some view of Inis Cealtra and all are adjacent to possible embarkation points on the lakeshore.

Following a suggestion raised in public consultation, it became clear that a possibility existed to create a linkage, at least mentally and symbolically (i.e. in the minds of visitors), between the main street and the visitor centre. While the visitor centre could enjoy the necessary view to the island if it was located near the lake edge, it could be approached from the main street (a short walk through the Aistear Park).

Table 3-2 sets out the rating and ranking of the 12 sites in relation to the:

- Location on (or connectable to) main street;
- View of Inis Cealtra;
- Access to, or adjacent to, the lake edge for embarkation;
- Adequate size of the site to accommodate the visitor centre;
- Potential to gain planning permission and/or pose no significant potential environmental impacts or be at flood risk;
- Strong community connection of the Aistear Park.



Site No Criteria	On (or connectable to) main street	View of the island	Access or adjacency to lake edge for embarkation	Adequate size	PP poten- tial and Env / Flood risk	Community connection (Aistear)	Composite score
1	5	7	7	7	7	8	41
2	5	8	7	7	7	8	42
3	3	7	9	8	4	6	37
4	4	7	7	7	5	7	37
5	1	8	7	9	5	6	36
6	1	8	9	6	4	6	34
7	1	7	9	7	4	6	34
8	1	7	9	7	4	6	34
9	9	2	1	6	8	7	33
10	7	7*	3	3	6	9	35
11	0	8	9	3	0	4	24
12	4	6	6	10**	6	7	39

Table 3-2 Site selection for interpretative centre in Mountshannon

**assuming build up significantly*

***assuming incorporation of and additions to existing rectory building*

The sites selected were carefully assessed for AA, SEA and FRA which fed into the rating assessment and ranking of the sites against the six criteria set out above in table 3.2.

The ratings for site 1 and site 2 are similar, both being located at the north west of the southern boundary of the Aistear park and adjoining the lower (lakefront) road. They both enjoy the advantages of potentially excellent views to Inis Cealtra and can, with careful design, negotiate the change in level down to the lake front. A visitor centre in either of these locations would offer both a connection to main street, make available synergies with the Aistear centre and park, could have almost direct access to embarkation on the lake and would enjoy the important visual connection to the island itself. Both sites score highly, with site 2 scoring only one point higher with regard to the view of the island.

Site 3 is located on an area of open space on the lake-side of the lower road, directly opposite site 2 and southeast of the sailing club. This site scores highly regarding accessibility to the lake for embarkation given its lakeside location, also for its view of the island and the size of the site. However, site 3 rates much lower in relation to potential environmental impacts and potential flooding concerns, as well as its accessibility to main street and connectivity with Aistear Park.

Sites 4 and 5 continue on from the southern end of the Aistear park and into the Rectory lands. They enjoy good views, access and more space than other sites, but rate less favourably in relation to connectivity with the main street (especially site 5).

Development of site 6 would involve replacing the current public car-park for the marina/harbour and or building above it. A visitor centre at this location rates highly for the view of the island, accessibility to the lake for embarkation, has an average rating in terms of the size of the site and connection with Aistear Park, but rates very poorly in terms of its connection with main street. The site also rates low against environmental criteria, potentially being more challenging to develop in terms of overcoming environmental impacts given its lakeside location.

Sites 7 and 8 are on two separate small promontories of land on the lakeshore south of the rectory, both sites scoring exactly the same against each of the criteria. The sites rate highly in relation to access to the lake for embarkation and achieve a good rating for their view to the island and in terms of the size of the site for development. As with the previous two sites, the rating is very low with regard to poor connectivity with main street and both will be extremely challenging to develop from an environmental impact perspective.



Site 9 is a parcel of land located on main street adjacent to the entrance to the Aistear park giving it a very high score in relation to connection with the main street. Also, in contrast to many of the previous sites, this location presents significantly less concern in relation to environmental challenges in its development. Its location on the main street has the potential for reinforcing associations with Mountshannons social and business life, coupled with its direct access to Aistear park which could be used as the route to the lakefront. However, the site has a very low score regarding the view of the island and it is quite limited in size.

Site 10 is the current Aistear centre. Preliminary assessments concluded this was too small a footprint (surrounded as it is by the berms and wall of the Aistear maze) to accommodate the scale of building envisaged for the visitor centre. However, if a replacement of the current building were to be considered, with possible re-structuring of part of the Aistear maze and a building design that rises up from the current structure (perhaps to 3 storey), it is possible that an elegant, even iconic solution could emerge. Therefore although a low score in relation to the size of the site, this could be overcome through the design of a taller building on a small footprint as the site has the capacity for this. This would have good views of the island from the higher level of the building and would enjoy direct connection to both main street and to the lake front.

Site 11 is on the lake itself. It would make for a remarkable building but by any standards would present a serious challenge from an environmental impact perspective reflected in a zero score and similarly with connection with main street.

Site 12 would involve the reuse, and probable extension, of the existing Rectory building. It would have the advantage of reusing a fine historic building (a Protected Structure) with strong heritage value, although it would most likely require major adaptation and the addition of new accommodation.

It is not inhibited in terms of site area, reflected by its very high score compared to other possible locations but it has a more restricted view of the island (obscured by trees, the orientation of the main façade of the building and to some extent by the slope of the land) and is further from the main street than some of the other sites assessed.

In conclusion, the most favourable site for the visitor centre based on the above rating and ranking assessment of the sites is the middle site along the southern boundary of the Aistear Park (site 2) with the top overall score of 42. This is closely followed by the adjacent site (site 1) with a score of 41, followed then by the Old Rectory with a score of 39.

In developing the preferred site 2, it is envisaged that the visitor centre will be accessed from the main street which will be the start and end point of the visitor centre experience and that this in turn will encourage increased visitor activity in the village centre by encouraging visitors to stay longer to experience all that the local businesses have to offer. Visitors will then walk through the park past the Aistear centre, reinforcing and developing the close synergies and overlaps between the two facilities. The permanent outdoor exhibition plates on Irish spirituality since pre-history along with the Aistear maze itself are also worthy of incorporation into the interpretive offering of the new visitor centre. These alliances would be mutually beneficial potentially enhancing local community events and festivals. The community council have created an extremely attractive and well-landscaped park at the lake edge and their co-operation in progressing the development of a new visitor centre at this location will be essential.

A number of the sites which have been assessed (sites 1-12 above) are very close in score to that of the preferred option which could present alternative opportunities for development of a visitor centre should the preferred site prove unfeasible.

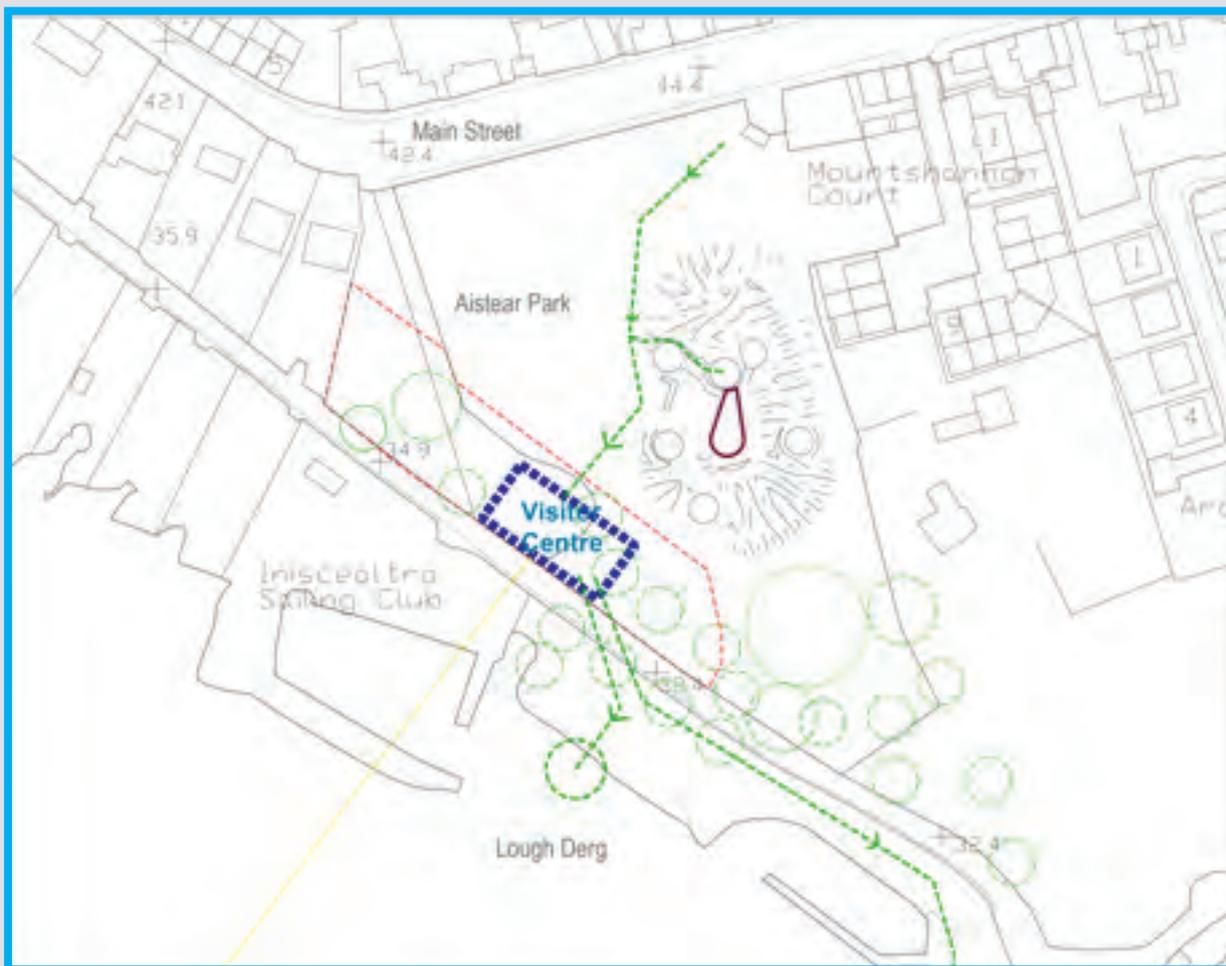


Figure 13. Recommended visitor centre location and access

Objective 5. To develop the new visitor centre for Inis Cealtra at the south end of the community park in Mountshannon (site 2) with views to the island and access from the main street via the Aistear park. Alternative options assessed for the development of a visitor centre, including the Old Rectory and the Aistear Centre, can be explored further should the new-build option prove unfeasible.

3.3.4 The function of the visitor centre

The visitor centre should cater for a variety of visitor categories: scheduled coach tours (commercial tourism), unscheduled tourist visitors (private tourism), other groups such as pilgrims, school groups, interest or age-based groups, and academic groups who may visit by appointment, as well as community groups, local clubs and associations

hosting events and festivals. Pilgrim groups may have arrived after long journeys and require facilities prior to completing their pilgrimage to the island. Dedicated areas to facilitate the white-tailed sea eagle project should also be facilitated.

It should provide formal interpretation and incidental interpretation, which should be both permanent and programmed or themed, reflecting on all aspects of Inis Cealtra, and other regional ecclesiastical sites. It should also provide refreshments and food areas, waiting spaces, toilets, ferry embarkation preparation areas and management facilities, as well as space for contemplation. In addition, the centre should have the ability to be configured to provide space for community events.

It is intended that the visitor centre would also provide facilities for and support the activities around the white-tailed sea eagle project. The design and facilities of the visitor centre should enable universal access for all visitors.

Challenge and ambition

The visitor centre should be of contemporary or modern design and should resolve the inherent conflicts between the site and the brief namely:

- associating the visitor centre to Mountshannon's main street while locating it near the lake edge within view of the island,
- offering an interpretative experience rich enough that many visitors are satisfied with confining their Inis Cealtra visit experience to the centre, thus reducing pressure on the island itself,
- mediating the considerable ground level difference between main street/park level and lake edge/embarkation level,
- making the most of views to lake and island without removal of healthy mature trees.

It should transform such challenges into a successful, iconic and uplifting building that is a draw and an asset for Mountshannon and East Clare. It should be exemplary in its approach to sustainability, ideally meeting the standards of the Living Building Challenge - the world's greenest building standard - and accessibility. It should draw on local references, themes and imagery to inspire in terms of design concept, materiality and form.

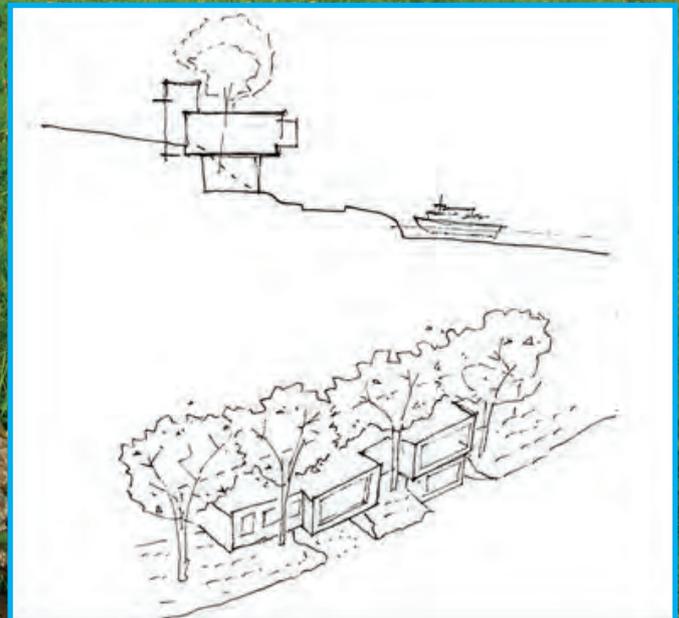


Figure 14. Conceptual approach to site integration of visitor centre



Visitor Centre – Interpretation

The objectives for interpretation in the Inis Cealtra visitor centre comprise:

- ICOMOS Objective 1: Facilitate understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage sites and foster public awareness and engagement in the need for their protection and conservation (video, presentation panels, activity based learning (children) and guides).
- ICOMOS Objective 2: Communicate the meaning of cultural heritage sites to a range of audiences through careful, documented recognition of significance, through accepted scientific and scholarly methods as well as from living cultural traditions (e.g. video, exhibition panels, inclusive languages, storytelling and guides).

Interpretative experience at the visitor centre

The interpretative experience at the visitor centre should inform about and explain the island's heritage, meaning, and value, and should be so comprehensive and of such quality and originality that a proportion of the visitors will be satisfied enough to refrain from visiting the island itself. This experience will comprise both a formal auditorium-based experience and a less formal foyer exhibition feature.

Auditorium/AV-show

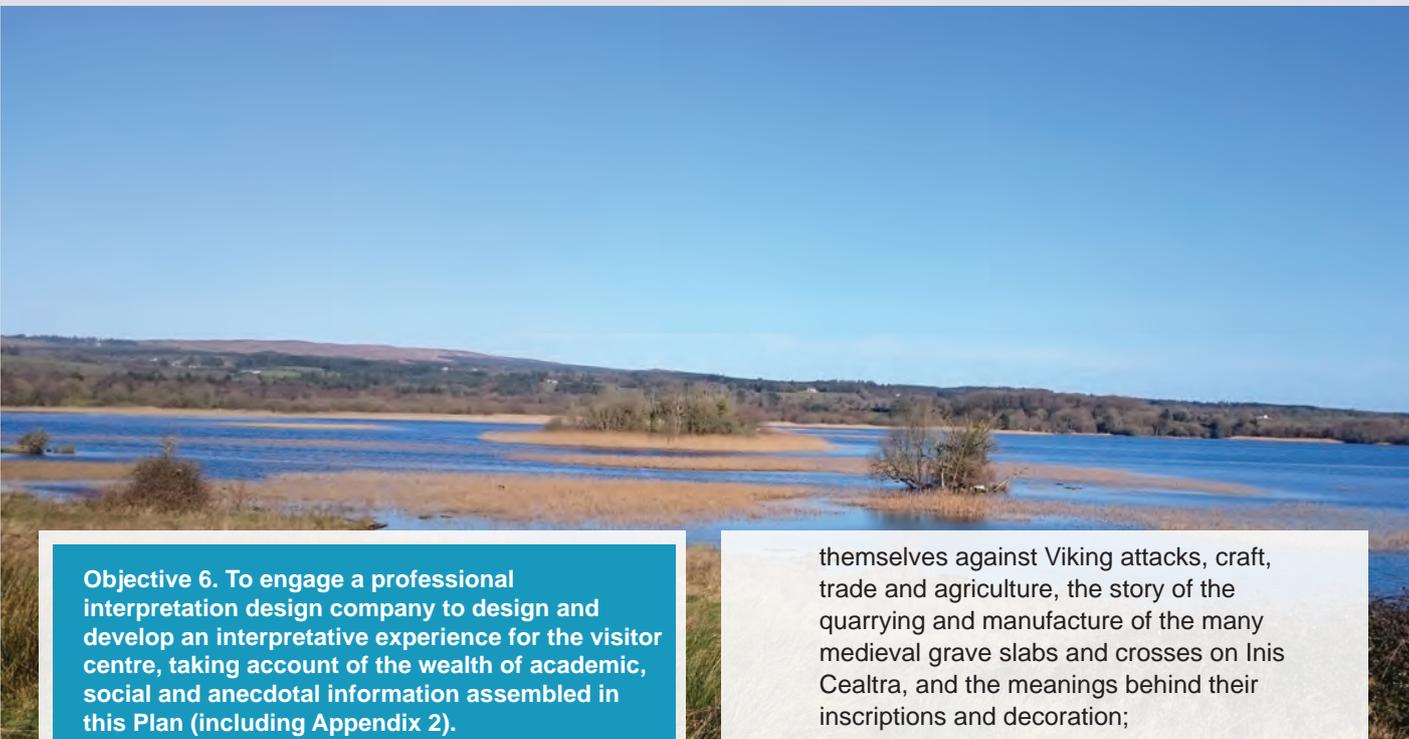
The auditorium experience should be based around a suite of high quality video presentations. This may include a presenter (a guide from the island) who engages with each audience group. The guide would engage with the audience and pause the video to emphasise a point or take a question, thus complementing the video content and elaborating

Figure 15. Views to Inis Cealtra as dominant experience within the visitor Centre (indicative)

on or contextualising it for a particular group, theme, etc. In this way, one can combine the best of high quality videography, CGI simulations, etc., with the best of human communication. The guide should make particular use of the view of the island, which should be clearly visible from the auditorium, as well as from the main spaces of the visitor centre building. In addition, the guide will orient each group as to the trip to the island, and whether to undertake it, the 'do and don'ts', facilities and duration. The video presentations themselves should be structured to be pre-tuned to focus on particular aspects, such as historical, political, in-depth archaeology, spiritual, folklore and esoteric, natural heritage, and with a slant towards different age and interest groups such as children, schools, religious parties, as well as being available in different languages.

Exhibition

The second part of the interpretative experience at the visitor centre is an exhibition comprising a large-scale physical model of the island, themed information panels and other media. These should form the second main interpretative experience and ensure Principles 1, 2 and 3 and Objectives 1 and 2 of the ICOMOS Charter are addressed. Ideally, the scale model should be designed in such a way that it is capable of simulating different historical sequences or other aspects of the island heritage and history, for example, by incorporating projected hologram-type images. Alternatively, a model of such dynamic projection systems might be located in the auditorium with the audience sitting around it in a U shape (the open side being the window wall with the view to the island).



Objective 6. To engage a professional interpretation design company to design and develop an interpretative experience for the visitor centre, taking account of the wealth of academic, social and anecdotal information assembled in this Plan (including Appendix 2).

Specific recommendations for interpretation in the proposed Inis Cealtra visitor centre include:

- high quality suitably trained (human) guides;
- **combination of tradition and modern techniques**, such as interpretative panels combined with a multi-lingual AV show. Interpretation should be contracted to a professional interpretative design company but could be based on/re-use elements of the current Aistear Park exhibition. Archaeologists should be involved in the design of interpretation and AV show content, but the design itself should be tendered to a professional design company. Interpretation drawings should be age and gender aware (i.e. illustrations should not be overly dominated by adult males);
- **no use of expensive interactive computer technology** due to significant capital cost and lack of awareness of which stories are of most interest to visitors at this stage. A future stage could see investment in augmented reality to bring stories to life in a phased approach;
- **chronological use of the stories of the island** from the prehistoric era (flints, arrow heads), to the era of St Caimín, the impact of the Vikings, the connection with Brian Bóru and time of reformation and confiscation. There are a variety of stories to be told from geo-morphology to day-to-day island life to natural heritage and cultural heritage such as the 'rounds of the island', how the islanders protected

themselves against Viking attacks, craft, trade and agriculture, the story of the quarrying and manufacture of the many medieval grave slabs and crosses on Inis Cealtra, and the meanings behind their inscriptions and decoration;

- **replica artefacts** could be used to encourage a tactile approach and for people to view finds they would not be able to see otherwise. The aim should be to enable the visitor centre to be a designated museum to enable loaning of real finds from the island from the National Museum of Ireland;
- **app for children**, hosted as part of the existing Lough Derg app;
- peak season **recreation of island scenes** e.g. craft working and re-enactments courtesy perhaps of the locals/clubs who are skilled at this;
- **stories from the local community** about their experiences of the island told through a mix of media, e.g. speakers and screens. There should also be a facility for the local community to continue to contribute these;
- **genealogy** based on burials on the island;
- natural history/ecology of the island including the white-tailed sea eagles, bats and other natural heritage of the area;
- story of Liam de Paor excavations;
- consideration should be given to seeking the content of the exhibition entitled **Iniscealtra: the Holy Island Exhibition** recently on display in the Aistear park centre, Mountshannon, for use in developing interpretation. The archaeological appendices to this study could also form a useful basis for those designing interpretation (see Chapter 1-4 of Appendix 2).

3.3.5 Visitor centre facilities

The visitor centre must cater for many different needs, both specific to the increased visitor traffic focused on Inis Cealtra (and other ecclesiastical heritage aspects) and more generally to the areas that stimulate local socio-economic benefits and improvements. The list of spaces and functional requirements below was developed based on comparative and exemplar visitor centres studies, augmented with consideration of the specifics of site and the other community activities taking place in the village of Mountshannon.

- Audio Visual auditorium (with large window view to the island).
- Interpretation of the stories and heritage of the island and hinterland, using a mix of modern and traditional techniques, including high quality multi-lingual AV show.
- Exhibition including a physical model of the island, which may be an interactive replica, similar to that at King John's Castle in Limerick.
- Visitor information and ticketing, including for associated ecclesiastical sites (Tuamgraney, Quinn, Killaloe etc.) and for nearby attractions, making the visitor centre a gateway to the Lough Derg and County Clare area.
- Café to cater for 55+ to facilitate coach groups, designed so that future expansion is possible should demand increase. The café should have a view of the island.
- Retail space to sell products to include branded keepsakes and local art, craft and food.
- Toilets that are designed to be able to cater for two coaches arriving simultaneously.
- Meeting rooms to facilitate tours, school groups, education, and community events, and provision of space to facilitate interaction.
- Spiritual and contemplative spaces to reflect the devotional nature and history of the island.
- Pilgrim traveller facilities to provide for pilgrim path groups who arrive after a long hike and may need changing and warming facilities.
- Connection to ferry landing and embarkation point, and re-entry after a return crossing.
- Coach and visitor drop off and limited parking, park and ride, disabled parking, etc.

Objective 7. To provide a new visitor centre which may include a range of services and facilities for visitors, including audio visual auditorium, exhibition, visitor information and ticketing, café, retail, toilets, meeting rooms, spiritual space, pilgrim traveller facilities, connection to ferry point and drop off points with limited parking facilities.

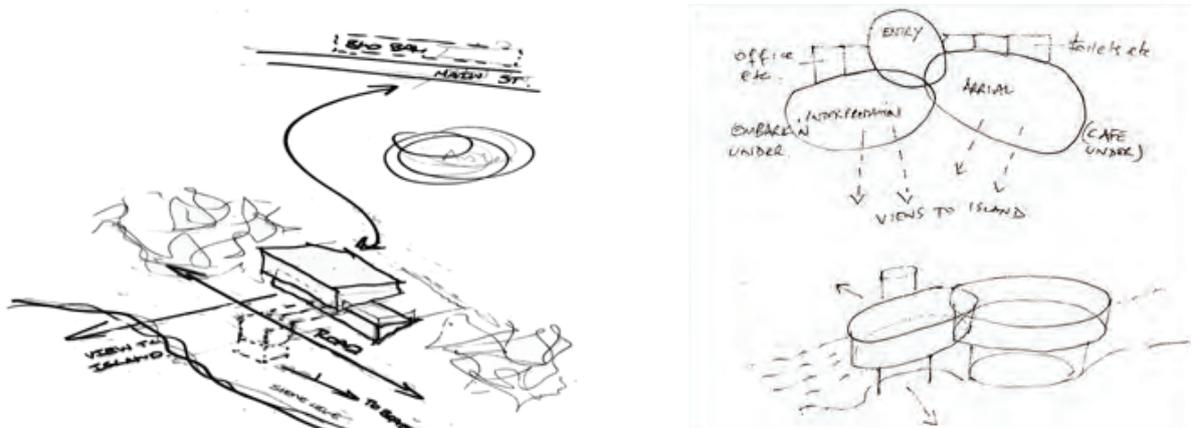


Figure 16. Conceptual design approach for the visitor centre

The visitor centre layout will be designed to facilitate operation by minimal staff in off- or shoulder season, for example, the café and retail spaces could be co-located in a similar way to those of the Lough Key Forest Park Visitor Centre.

Traffic management and parking

It is envisaged that the front entrance of the visitor centre is from the main street of the village with access via the community park. Visitors who arrive by car could first seek parking on the main street in the off-season, while at other times they may be directed to cluster parking at points behind the main street or to suitable and available sites at the village edge that are yet to be defined. Coaches will transport a significant segment of the envisaged visitors, and it is proposed that there will be a drop off (only) point at this main street location.

Drivers or visitors with disabilities will approach the visitor centre using the lower road where designated parking will be provided. This access can also be used for deliveries to the visitor centre. Proposed changes to traffic signage and road marking in the village streets shall support this strategy. Ticketing should also promote this arrangement by allowing, for example, cheaper tickets for those arriving in coach or car pools, or for those parking at a designated parking area and continuing by foot. A park-and-ride shuttle system, and possibly a free bicycle system, should be explored to support this strategy during peak season.

Traffic flows will need to be assessed and thereafter changes necessitated by the arrival of increased visitors will need to be carefully planned (including phasing) and ultimately continuously managed and phased to minimise disruption. On exiting the visitor centre either after returning from the island or completing the interpretation experiences at the centre, visitors would again cross the Aistear Park to arrive on the main street. Here they would hopefully spend time in local businesses and perhaps decide to lengthen their stay in the area. It is on the main street also that they would be collected by coach or be shuttled back to the car parks.

The issue of carparking in terms of both quantum and location will be examined as part of the project level assessment of the visitor centre. The nature of the assessment will assess whether it be car or bus generated traffic which will inform the preparation of any plans for the visitor centre. Similarly the feasibility of potential traffic calming and shared surface along part of the lakefront road will be considered as part of the overall project. The over-riding principle however, will be the development of a sustainable tourism product.



Design brief

Vision and objectives

The Inis Cealtra visitor centre is to be the focal point of Inis Cealtra tourism, visitor and community activity. It will be located in Mountshannon village within view of the island. It will service the needs of visitor, tourist, academic and the local community for activities centring on visiting, understanding, appreciating, protecting and managing Inis Cealtra. It will provide an interpretative experience that communicates the wealth and uniqueness of Inis Cealtra heritage folklore and its local associations to those who visit the centre. The interpretation will be so comprehensive that a significant cohort of visitors will find their appetite met and not opt to visit the island itself. It must also be a benefit to the village itself in terms of its economic contribution, architectural quality and environmental performance. It will be strongly associated with the village's main street and Aistear Park through signage, landscaping and management (ticketing, discounting and parking strategy).

Programme of accommodation of the visitor centre:

Facility	Size (m.sq.)
Entry	25
Foyers/arrival	75
Informal interpretation	70
Inis Cealtra experience	120
Café/ hospitality	135
Pilgrim accommodation (changing/ contemplation)	50
Event room	65
Toilets, rest room, first aid	60
Ticketing and embarkation	150
Office and administration	40
White-tailed sea eagle project	40
Guides / island team facilities	30
Ferry company	25
Kitchens	35
Plan and equipment	50
Storage	30
Total	1000
	Excludes circulation and wall thickness

Table 3-3 Programme of accommodation

Embarkation facilities - Mountshannon

Embarkation at Mountshannon will be from a modified quay wall at a suitable point in the current harbour area, most likely adjacent to and west of the yacht club. Minimal physical upgrades will be required at Mountshannon as follows: queue control barriers, accessibility installations, safety equipment, pump-out, and refuse collection.

For further recommendations see also Chapter 5, Section 5.7: Impact and mitigation measures.



3.4 Proposals for Inis Cealtra

3.4.1 Access to the island

There are two key issues in terms of accessing Inis Cealtra:

means of access in terms of crossing the lake,
means of landing and embarkation.

Means of access (crossing)

A range of options to provide increased access to the island have been considered. These include:

- cable car: while several people suggested this during initial consultations, it is not thought to be practical in terms of cost, nor desirable in terms of ecological, archaeological and visual impact;
- boardwalk from Knockaphort: while this would enable year-round access, it would also enable visitors to access the island 24 hours a day, which could lead to anti-social behaviour on the island, and a difficulty in the managing of visitor numbers that is imperative to the protection of the island. It would also undermine the transformative or liminal experience that is inherent in crossing to the island by boat. The conclusion of the Plan research, including consideration of the contributions from local stakeholders, was that the island should remain unconnected to the shore;
- retention of existing ferry: the current ferry operation lacks the capacity to facilitate growth in visitor numbers that is the objective of this Plan;
- new ferry service: this would involve creation of a commercially licencable service such that the investment in new vessels could be made viable. This licence should be managed by Clare County Council.

Vessels and Crossing

ARUP have identified a vessel type suitable for lake crossings that can carry 50 passengers and dock in the depths of water available (see Chapter 6 of Appendix 2).

The crossing should serve to enhance the liminal transformative experience of crossing water to an island in as much as possible, and so amplified sounds such as a PA or music should be discouraged in favour of human voice for communication (sound is louder and travels greater distance over water) and simplicity.

Safety instructions will be presented by the visitor centre guide before the boat leaves, and before disembarking the guide will reiterate the 'dos and don'ts' while on the island.

Routes to Inis Cealtra

Much consideration was given to the pros and cons of having a short crossing route from Knockaphort versus a longer route from Mountshannon, or indeed other points on the mainland. Issues considered were distance, winds, fisheries and ecology, parking at points of departure, as well as traffic impacts on small roads. The benefits and disadvantages of longer versus shorter journeys as a visitor experience were all evaluated and the route indicated below was chosen.

Based on consideration of all these aspects, the most appropriate crossing route is identified as being from Mountshannon to the north-east shore of the island.

Further detail is outlined in Chapter 6 of Appendix 2, which contains the ARUP engineer's report in full.

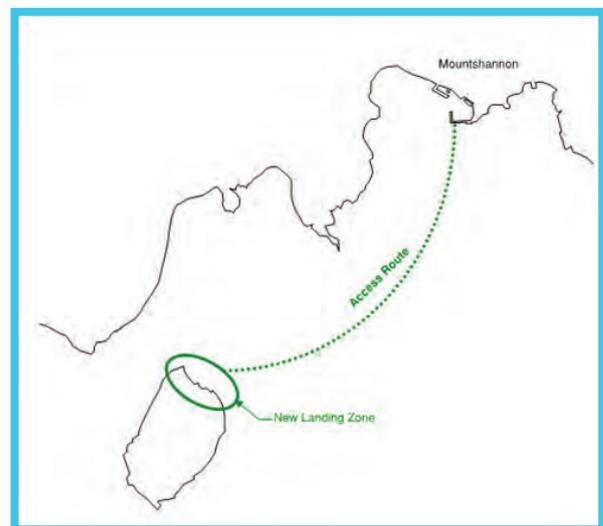


Figure 17. Access routes to Inis Cealtra (green dotted line is the route proposed)

Objective 8. To have access to Inis Cealtra by boat from Mountshannon.

For further recommendations see also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures.

Landing and embarkation

There is a need for a safe landing and embarkation point on Inis Cealtra for visitors to the island. ARUP engineers have conducted reviews of the existing piers and landing points on the island, the water levels and lakebed stability and depth, as well as wind patterns around the island. They have also evaluated potential routes and crossing times from Mountshannon and embarkation safety in relation to the current piers and jetties, wind and currents. Analysis of required facilities is found in Chapter 6 of Appendix 2.

Preferred landing point

Following reviews of current facilities and alternatives, and consideration of all other aspects of the island, it is proposed that an upgraded or new pier be constructed at a location that allows both a safe passage to and safe landing and embarkation on/from the island. This will become the main landing point for visitors to the island.

The existing pier to the northwest of the island is in poor condition; if a pier were to be retained at this location it would require to be comprehensively upgraded, including probably a significant wall to screen the predominant southwest wind. That location has many disadvantages in that it:

- encourages informal access from Knockaphort,
- impacts upon fishing in the channel,
- is exposed to a dangerous combination of wind and accelerated current,
- would channel visitors unnecessarily through important woodland habitat.

Objective 9. To construct a new landing facility at a location that allows both a safe passage to and safe landing and embarkation on/from the island. This will become the main landing point for visitors to the island.



Strategic Environment Assessment and Appropriate Assessment played a critical role in determining the ideal location for the landing point such that it would be as far as possible from the important reed bed habitats at the northern tip of the island.

The new landing facility (pier or jetty) will be constructed on the northeast shore of the island as a preferred option. The reasons for this preferred proposed location for a new pier are as follows:

- this location is sheltered from the prevailing wind, which is particularly influential, i.e. dangerous, in the Knockaphort channel, thus increasing the number of days when the pier is accessible to visitors and the local community;
- it allows the creation of both a gently-sloped path from the shore and an easy connection to the established approach to the monuments, from the northwest. In doing so, it preserves the majority of the historic experience of approaching the monuments through woods, then meadow, as has been the experience for decades, if not centuries;

- the junction offers a suitably unobtrusive location for the new pods that will house emergency and toilet facilities referred to below, allowing them to be shielded by the higher woodland in that area;
- it moves vessel traffic away from the area between the island and Knockaphort, which is a well-used angling zone, particularly in April and May;
- by careful infill planting of the 'copses' of native woodland that are upslope of the northeast shore, a fringe of woodland can be created. This will work as a backdrop to the landing point, thus separating the visitor landing areas from the path to the monuments, and from the monuments themselves, which will ensure tranquillity and visual separation of these activities and areas.



Figure 18. Proposed landing point location options and circulation (north part of island only shown)



While there will be a cost in providing such a pier, this is justified in the context of developing an enhanced and safe visitor facility.

Though this location (Figure 18) is preferred, it is recognised that the construction of a new pier here may negatively affect the lakebed and foreshore of the island, all of which comprise a national monument and which may contain unknown archaeological remains; log-boats have been discovered in the lakebed some 40m northeast of this area. Such a project will require ministerial consent, archaeological monitoring and approval from survey and site investigation stages onward. It will also critically require careful design. It is accepted that such procedures and reviews may result in a determination that a landing point cannot be constructed at this location without unacceptable risk or unavoidable damage to archaeological heritage.

Alternative landing point options

An alternative would be to reconstruct a (long-defunct) pier that is located in shallow waters just east of the northern tip of the island. However, this now finds itself amidst an important on- and off-shore reed bed habitat that has generated itself over the last few decades. Reconstruction of this pier would have unacceptable negative impacts on protected species of overwintering birds there. The existing east pier is located in shallow waters close to the main cluster of monuments, and situated at a

point where steep slopes would necessitate radical re-grading of the ground to allow access from the pier to the monuments. Both of options are thus considered unsuitable as alternatives.

If the preferred approach above cannot be implemented, then it is recommended that the landing point location should revert by default to the current northwest pier where a significant upgrade (including breakwater, raised level, new paths, etc.) will be provided so as to make it safe in all weathers. It is proposed that procedures be put in place to ensure that the new main pier landing place becomes the sole point of landing for the licensed ferry, while other non-commercial and local vessels may use the existing northwest pier if desired.

The design of the main landing point will allow for isolating, immobilising or otherwise curtailing non-local access to the island when it is deemed closed to tourism to prevent unauthorised access and to prevent large cruisers docking during open periods, as this would prevent safe docking of the next ferry.

Discreet access points for kayakers will be provided adjacent to the northwest pier. An initiative suggested by a local kayak tour company, this will make the island of interest to kayakers on the Lough Derg Canoe Trail and Blueway.

The piers and kayak access points are linked to the proposed island walking trail network.

3.4.2 Requirement for facilities on Inis Cealtra

Inis Cealtra is to become a significant new tourism attraction welcoming up to 45,000 persons annually and to be staffed by professional guides and wardens. Research and comparison with international norms dictate that a number of aspects of the island must be sensitively developed so as to ensure the experience of visitors is safe and of a high standard, while simultaneously providing for the protection of the island's heritage.

Through examining the tourism market segments most interested in Inis Cealtra and identifying their expectations, the provision of suitable facilities and infrastructure to attract these visitors and provide them with the optimum experience can be achieved. After inspection of the island and a review of current facilities against good practice, it is considered that new facilities for docking and landing, paths for visitor circulation, shelter for emergencies, facilities for staff and toileting solutions must be provided, at a minimum, on the island.

The Plan's proposed method to meet these needs is set out below.

Necessary facilities

A minimum of new visitor facilities will be required on Inis Cealtra. These comprise the least development necessary to create a safe and fulfilling experience on the island for visitors and staff.

The new facilities include:

- **a pathway to and around the monuments** to enable controlled access but also prevent people going into or on sensitive structures (St Caimín's Church, the Saints' Graveyard). This must be constructed to National Trails Office Multi Access standard. In a small number of areas which are currently subject to occasional ponding and where visitor will gather to hear a guide, improvements of the ground surface (by laying landscape modules above the current ground surface only) should be carried out. This is both to prevent erosion of the surface and to provide for a more comfortable visitor experience and needs to be designed very sensitively and of course be both safe and reversible.
- **looped pathways around the island** to facilitate access and visitor flow, with visitors being requested to keep to the pathways. The main loop must be constructed to National Trails Office Multi Access standard.

- **no interpretative signage** will be installed on the island; interpretation is to be facilitated through guides and audio-guides.
- **orientation and safety signage and codes of conduct** will be provided at the points of landing. This will be placed in a shelter and include signage on flora and fauna. Archaeologists should be involved in the design and placement of signage, working alongside a professional design company.
- relocation or replacement of current OPW shed (see below).
- minimal new visitor facilities in micro structures (see below).
- **toilets** and wastewater, solid waste disposal treatment system (see below).
- **solar (PV) power** to facilitate warden and guide equipment such as pods, heaters, phone chargers, defibrillator and tea station. There will be no power link created from the mainland to the island.
- **benches** to let elderly visitors rest, as opposed to picnic benches which may encourage litter. Benches will not impact visually on the monuments and will avoid archaeological features, including the earthworks.



- **improved kayak access** with two sensitively designed places to enable kayaks to pull up. A code of conduct sign will also be placed at these access points.

See also Chapter 5, Section 5.7: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

Principles of development

In all cases, new developments on Inis Cealtra will be designed and constructed to follow the precepts of the Burra Charter, while adhering to Irish legislation. The following specific principles guided by best national and international practice will be followed:

- Any works to the island must be carried out at project stage with great caution and consideration for all aspects of the island's cultural significance. Not only its archaeological and historical value, but its environmental, ecological and present-day socio-cultural importance for the local people must be considered, as all these factors interlink in giving Inis Cealtra its cultural uniqueness. Its wider lake setting must also be treated as an archaeological and culturally significant landscape.
- In accordance with the principles of the Burra Charter, preservation should solely be aimed at retarding deterioration of the site if deemed absolutely necessary, 'changing as much as necessary but as little as possible' (Burra Charter 3.1).
- Changes should not distort the physical evidence nor be based on conjecture (Burra Charter 3.2). Therefore, no works should be carried out aimed at 'restoring' features that are now lost e.g. conjectural rebuilding, conjectural reconstruction of any feature, or removal of post-medieval material from medieval structures unless deemed absolutely necessary to the structure's survival. Any conservation works should involve further archaeological consultation.
- All archaeological material is of importance, whatever its age. All aspects of the island's archaeology must be deemed to be deserving of preservation, whether prehistoric, medieval or post-medieval. Caution should be exerted that post-medieval features are not damaged or destroyed during any works carried out on the island.
- Any works carried out with the aim of preserving the site will be supervised by experienced archaeologists with a grounding in the relevant policy and legislation described in Section 5.4 as well as the appropriate knowledge and experience.
- In accordance with the Burra Charter (9.1), relocation of material or objects from the island is not advised unless deemed absolutely necessary to their preservation by archaeologists.
- The whole island is a National Monument and is therefore under legal protection. In accordance with Irish legislation, any works to any part of the island require ministerial consent, including any changes that involve removing, demolishing, or changing any aspect of the site. Such works will not be carried out without archaeological consultation.
- Ground disturbance of Inis Cealtra should be avoided as this will destroy archaeological material. Any works that involve ground disturbance require ministerial consent in accordance with Irish legislation and should not be carried out without archaeological consultation.



New structures

A number of approaches to the provision of shelter, toilets, and staff facilities on the island were considered. These comprised structures from the most ephemeral (clothing only) to temporary (tents and marquees) to short life (prefabricated) possibly seasonally removable, to small purpose-built structures. Given the requirements to both avoid any excavation into the ground and to be in marked contrast to the historical structures aesthetically (as enshrined in the Venice Charter), it is proposed that purpose-built cubes or pods - each designed for their specific location and function - would be the most favourable solution.

New pods

It is recommended that four pods be provided as spaces necessary to meet the minimum level of accommodation required of a public facility with employees.

As discussed above, these pods will be designed to be in contrast to the monuments in both location and aesthetic expression. They should be fully removable at any point in the future and upon removal should leave no trace. They may be of new or modular pre-fabricated construction, and must be built or installed atop the current ground level. In order to avoid any disturbance of the ground, they will import additional material to disguise their footings where necessary.

They should be of contemporary and minimalist aesthetic with predominantly glass walls, and be largely transparent. Due consideration should be given to concern for achieving a climate and quality inside the pod that is appropriate to the usage (e.g. tempered in the case of toilets and acclimatised in the case of staff and emergency accommodation).



Figure 20. Example of glass pod

Pods should also be equipped appropriately (furniture, storage) for their envisaged usage.

The proposed pods should comprise:

- **warden hut** and emergency shelter for guides and warden/ranger or ushers, and a niche usable in a medical emergency (for 1 to 3 people);
- **toilet structure**; compost toilets with minimum water usage. Hand hygiene will be by sanitation gels;
- **weather shelter** located reasonably near or within direct view of the main new landing point (pier), containing space for a group of visitors to shelter in during unusually inclement weather;
- **exhibition 'cube'**, if deemed necessary, to be used for protection of small vulnerable finds if moved from anywhere else on the island (glass-walled, ventilated).

Objective 10: To introduce new visitor facilities on Inis Cealtra comprising pathways around monuments and the island, suitable orientation signage, new pods to provide for emergency, toileting and staff facilities, wastewater management, benches and improved landing points for kayaks



Figure 21. Example of a toilet structure

Table 3-4 Proposed pods on Inis Cealtra

	Use	Scope	Size	Kit out
Warden hut and emergency space	Guides and warden/ranger daily work-space	Fully enclosed and acclimatised.	25 sqm	
Glass roof, glass and opaque walls		Desk, seats, lights, storage, defibrillator, stock of drinking water/emergency food, phone charging socket, heater, lamps, blanket, seat reconfigurable as a bed). Electrical appliances powered through solar or battery power only.		
Toilet structure	Visitor and staff toilets	Roofs and intermittent walls/sides (semi external)	25sqm	Compost toilets, dispensers, bins, lights
Weather shelter	Shelter from rain and wind	Glass roof + 2 walls (semi external)	35sqm	Benches
Exhibition cube	Secure storage and display (from outside) of important small finds	Glass roofs and walls, secure.	35sqm	Air movement and solar protection allowed.

See also Chapter 5, Section 5.7: Impact and mitigation measures for further consideration and recommendations.

Removal (or relocation) of the OPW shed

The current OPW shed is unsightly and highly incongruous with the character of the island. It is not in keeping with the guidelines set out by the Venice or Burra Charters and it is located too close to the main cluster of monuments. There are a number of carved stones and pieces of architectural masonry lying nearby, as well as a number stored inside. These stones, some of which are early medieval in date, should be conserved and protected subject to other recommendations and requirements in this Plan and Appendices, including the need for conservation plans, surveys,

and the granting of ministerial consent for moving them. Following the undertaking of the conservation plans, if it is deemed suitable, some of the carved stones may be stored or displayed in the exhibition pod, as described in more detail above.

Objective 11: To remove, or if necessary relocate, the OPW shed and wooden fencing and let the shed's functions be served by one of the new 'pods' which will provide spaces necessary to meet a minimum level of accommodation required of a public facility with employees.



3.4.3 Requirement for infrastructure on Inis Cealtra

Access and paths

Access for all

Having evaluated the island, its topography and remoteness, and having considered its heritage status as well as previous visitor practices, it is considered that a balance can and must be struck between facilitating accessibility and maintaining the ambience of the island experienced on a visit. The context is that anyone visiting is aware of the island and rural character of the setting and will anticipate a challenge. As with any country pursuit, people generally do not visit alone, but bring friends if they think assistance will be needed. Bearing in mind that barriers to access are not always physical, a built solution (to providing access for all) may not be as effective as a management solution.

The principle of universal access may need to be tempered (and any inaccessibility mitigated) in order to avoid unnecessary disturbance of soil, ecology and archaeology. For instance, where a steep or long slope cannot be reduced, the challenge should be mitigated by introducing areas for rest along the route. Primary access to the monuments must be facilitated by surfaces that everyone can use, and yet are in keeping with the island's character, such as a locally quarried, compacted gravel for paths. The main paths also will serve to guide people to the sites of main interest and assist in preventing people from wandering into sensitive areas. However, the secondary paths network, intended for people who are interested in seeing more of the island, is proposed to encompass grass paths, potentially reinforced, to facilitate expanded access, while retaining an element of challenge and achievement and keeping impacts to a minimum.

Technically, the use of geotextiles, meshes and locally sourced gravel should be sufficient to make accessible paths. The gravel paths need to be compacted to achieve a hard, even surface that can be used by wheelchairs and

children's buggies. Using local stone will help ensure a visual fit with the landscape as it will match with the tones and colours of other stone elements on the island. Compacted gravel paths need to be repaired from time to time depending on use, the amount of rain and any mechanical damage that may occur. Being of local stone, it should be easy to repair as the materials are readily available. Heavy machinery, whether for transport of material, construction or compaction, should not be used.

Paths should be generous in width; narrow paths will force people onto grassy edges and will begin to erode these. Sizeable areas of compacted gravel should be provided for groups of people to congregate – for instance, when they are waiting to get on the boat. This work could be considered in phases by reviewing the needs and impacts of the summer visitors and extending paths if necessary in the off-season.

Objective 12. To develop an Accessibility Plan that facilitates accessing the monuments, protecting their condition and preserving the character and ambience of the setting.

The Accessibility Plan should cover the following: achieving accessible primary routes to visit the monuments; maintaining the physical protection of archaeology and monuments; and maintaining the character and ambience of the setting and be a live, continuously updated document.

While recognising the light touch of paved surfaces, it should not belie the possibility that people may not visit if they perceive the site to be inaccessible. Benchmarking sensitive sites and intensity of intervention for accessibility would be an appropriate start to determine the scale of the design solutions.

Pathways

A full network of looped walks is presented in the Plan. The primary pathways or loops, including the leg that connects to the new main pier, are composed of crushed gravel and are 2m wide, narrowing to 1.5m for the back of the loop, and can accommodate all visitors, including those with disabilities. Benches of a sensitive design will be provided at key path junctions, ideally against a backdrop of vegetation and never within approach view of the monuments.

The secondary paths, composed of mown strips in the meadow grass, allow a longer loop traversing much of the more natural parts of the island away from the monuments and allowing a visitor to experience Inis Cealtra's grassland, water edge and scrub woodland habitats.

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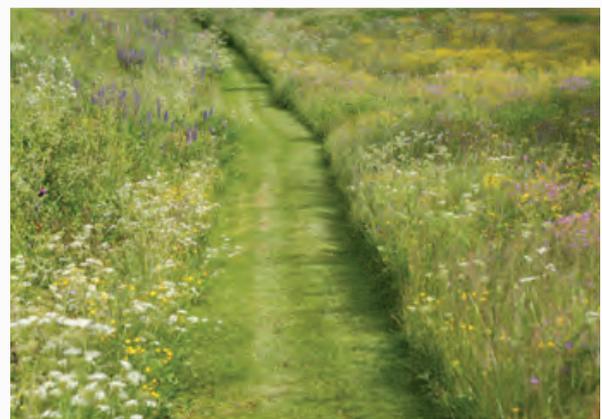


Figure 22. Examples of primary (left) and secondary paths (right) for Inis Cealtra

Source: Mitchell and Associates



Fences

The current wooden fences are to the detriment of the visitor experience on the island. They have served a purpose when cattle grazed the island's meadows but with new recommendations to introduce sheep instead, it is assumed they will be redundant.

As stated in Objective 6, the existing fencing should be carefully removed following best practice procedures for implementing changes on archaeological sites, and with careful observation and trialling of the impacts of this on the sites, monuments and ground that they currently enclose. The process of removing the fences must be carefully monitored for ground disturbance. It is also vital to carefully monitor whether sheep are entering St Caimín's cemetery, the Saints' Graveyard (with its recumbent sculpture) and the churches, or climbing on their walls in the weeks following removal. If this occurs then some form of fencing or other forms of protection (for instance netting – see below) will need to be reinstated under archaeological supervision.

The Cotswolds AONB Partnership and Gloucestershire County Council have controlled the grazing of sheep using moveable electric fencing on archaeological sites, though this can have health and safety implications for the public. The National Board of Antiquities in Finland recommends wire-netting fencing as being '... practical especially with sheep ... inexpensive, quick to build, and neutral as to the landscape. A netting fence is also easy to move, for example as the grazing cycle requires'. This method should be carefully considered and investigated further, and experienced sheep farmers should be consulted.

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

Treating toilet waste

There are currently no toilets on the island. Although this may be a positive in terms of land use impacts and complies with the desire to minimise or avoid infrastructure on the island, visitors currently toilet in the undergrowth and shrubs - something that is untenable with larger numbers as it would set up both pollution and health risks.

Objective 13. To install a sustainable natural toilet system on the island.



A number of toilet solutions have been investigated. Conventional, low flow and chemical toilets were considered as well as ideas about having toilets only on the ferry vessels. However, after SEA and AA evaluations, each of these were deemed sub-optimal due to either risk of pollution (solid or liquid), unreliability, a need for a new water supply and/or the potential for unacceptable ground disturbance on the island.

As a compromise solution that will allow the provision of adequate toilet facilities on the island but in a manner that has as low an impact as possible, the following is proposed (see also Figure 22 below):

- compost toilets for toilet solids (faeces) and water, with separate urinals for men;
- low water regime, comprising rainwater harvesting for pod roofs, or lake water used via a surface covered unobtrusive pipe.
- Hand cleansing is by sanitary gels that produce no waste;
- reed beds for yellow/brown water, treated water disposed of to lake.
- Regular sampling and testing to be done by wardens.

programme of removal of treated compost material and application to land by wardens or subcontractors. The final compost is absolutely benign and identifying an acceptable final destination, possible in nearby Coillte woods, will be achievable.

See also Chapter 5, Section 5.7: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

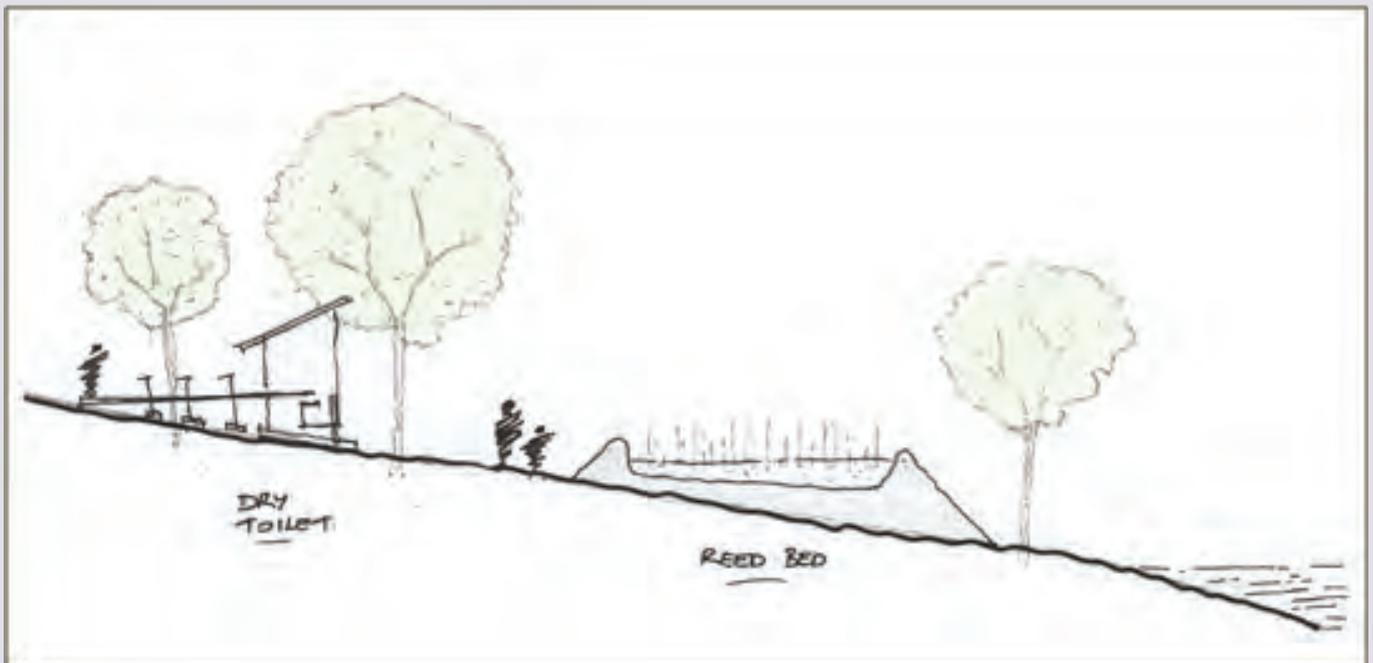


Figure 23. Proposed reed-bed waste system

3.4.4 Control of visitor numbers

Visitor (to island) numbers

In years 1-3 it is considered that the demand is likely to be in the region of 300 visitors per day during July and August, reaching its maximum allowable capacity of 400 per day (peak season) at year 5 (see Section 5.7 for more detail). The volume of visitors to the island can be controlled by the maximum capacity of the ferries, limiting coach tours, consideration of use of a timed ticketing system, and a restricted opening period.

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

Limiting ferry capacity

The maximum capacity and frequency of the ferry operation, two 50-seat ferries, will be restricted to ensure that the maximum capacity of visitors at any one time on Inis Cealtra does not exceed the above maximum (100 visitors at any one time) during peak season, i.e. June-July-August.

Limiting coach tours

The maximum number of coach tours should be limited to four coach arrivals each day at any time of year. This will help to control visitor numbers and reduce negative impacts on the local road network. This is the same approach as followed by Brú na Bóinne.

Online booking system

It is envisaged that visitors and groups will book visitor centre and/or ferry tickets online. This will give certainty to ferry operators of numbers, restrict maximum capacity and could stimulate demand for off-peak times, days and months. For example, visitors may book afternoon or early morning slots if peak slots are filled, or book mid-week if weekend slots are filled or book May/June or Sep/Oct if June, July and August slots are filled. This is a similar system to that employed at Maeshowe (see case study in Chapter 6, Appendix 2).

Consideration will be given to use of a timed ticketing system.

Opening period

Taking account of the Limits of Acceptable Change study and the Natura Impact Report (Appropriate Assessment), and for practical reasons, it is recommended that Inis Cealtra's tourist activities are confined to the period March to October.

In other words, the island is to be closed to all but local access outside that period. This is necessary to allow the island's meadows and other habitats

to recover and to allow overwintering birds that use the island (and are a qualifying interest for the nearby Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation - covered under the Habitats Directive) protection during this critical period. In the closed period, the visitor centre will fulfil the interpretative and hospitality requirements of all visitors by remaining open all year round.

Objective 14. To limit impacts on archaeology, ecology and the character of Inis Cealtra, the island will be closed to visitors during winter and at any other time the maximum numbers of visitors will not be exceeded.

3.4.5 The visitor experience

Interpretation

Focus on the heritage of Inis Cealtra will be developed within the context of the other heritage attractions in the northeast Clare area. These include the archaeological park and castle at Craggaunowen, and the well-preserved friary at Quinn as well as the Dál Cais sites at Béal Bóru and Killaloe, extraordinary sites that should serve as a natural adjunct and onward step from the Mountshannon/Inis Cealtra destination, ideally via the pre-Romanesque church at Tuamgraney.

The essence of the interpretation should be to introduce and explain the unique archaeology, history and ecology of Inis Cealtra and contextualise it within its broader setting. This should include the chronological range of the island's buildings and their relationships to one another, the collection of grave-slabs of early medieval date and the meanings of their inscriptions both for the religious island community and for the wider secular society.

The historical references to the saints, scholars, reformers and holy men who both used and visited the site over the centuries should be engagingly presented, along with explanation of 'pattern-day' pilgrimage practices of more recent centuries. Given the location in Mountshannon, its significance as a planned town in the post-medieval period should be explained within the widest national context. Antiquarians like R.A.S. Macalister and T.J. Westropp, and archaeologists such as Liam de Paor should be celebrated for their work on Inis Cealtra.

Interpretation should comprehensively address the ecology and landscape of the island.

The interpretative approach should seek to broaden awareness of archaeology and ecclesiastical history beyond the island through the core presentation and communication content supported by promotion and informational activities (brochures and maps, website and apps) and ticketing innovations (such as 'passport' and voucher schemes), as well as marketing, branding and road signage.

It should also be remembered that the focus of interpretation on the island has a bearing on the types of people (market segments) that will be attracted to it. Depending on the emphasis placed, this could include family groups, birdwatchers, specialised tour groups, educational groups and tours focusing on specialist academic areas (for instance, archaeology and ecology societies).

Objective 15. To develop an interpretative approach that focuses on the heritage of Inis Cealtra and endeavours to broaden visitor interest to also encompass other important heritage sites in the region, and to have this holistic focus reflected in all interpretative activities of the Plan.

Principles and international best practice

All aspects of interpretation must be grounded in the seven principles of the ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural and Historic Sites as follows:

- **Principle 1 - Access and understanding:** Interpretation and presentation programmes should facilitate physical and intellectual access by the public to cultural heritage sites.
- **Principle 2 - Information sources:** Interpretation and presentation should be based on evidence gathered through accepted scientific and scholarly methods as well as from living cultural traditions.
- **Principle 3 - Context and setting:** The interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites should relate to their wider social, cultural, historical, and natural contexts and settings.
- **Principle 4 - Authenticity:** The interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites must respect the basic tenets of authenticity in the spirit of the Nara Document (1994).
- **Principle 5 - Sustainability:** The interpretation plan for a cultural heritage site must be sensitive to its natural and cultural environment, with social, financial,

and environmental sustainability among its central goals.

- **Principle 6 - Inclusiveness:** The interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites must be the result of meaningful collaboration between heritage professionals, host and associated communities, and other stakeholders.
- **Principle 7 - Research, Training, and Evaluation:** Continuing research, training, and evaluation are essential components of the interpretation of a cultural heritage site.

Furthermore, the following ICOMOS objectives must be pursued:

- **Objective 1:** Facilitate understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage sites and foster public awareness and engagement in the need for their protection and conservation (video, presentation panels, activity based learning (children) and guides).
- **Objective 2:** Communicate the meaning of cultural heritage sites to a range of audiences through careful, documented recognition of significance, through accepted scientific and scholarly methods as well as from living cultural traditions (video, exhibition panels, inclusive languages, storytelling, and guides).
- **Objective 3:** Safeguard the tangible and intangible values of cultural heritage sites in their natural and cultural settings and social contexts (guides, ranger, general management with regular conservation maintenance).
- **Objective 4:** Respect the authenticity of cultural heritage sites by communicating the significance of their historic fabric and cultural values and protecting them from the adverse impact of intrusive interpretive infrastructure, visitor pressure, inaccurate or inappropriate interpretation. Paths and additional structures should be sensitive to the character, setting and the cultural and natural significance of the site, while remaining easily identifiable (guides, ranger, management plan and general management and respect for local tradition)
- **Objective 5:** Contribute to the sustainable conservation of cultural heritage sites, through promoting public understanding of, and participation in, ongoing conservation efforts, ensuring long-term

maintenance of the interpretive infrastructure and regular review of its interpretive contents. (management plan and general management).

- **Objective 6:** Encourage inclusiveness in the interpretation of cultural heritage sites, by facilitating the involvement of stakeholders and associated communities in the development and implementation of interpretative programmes (management plan and general management). The traditional rights, responsibilities, and interests of property owners and host and associated communities should be noted and respected in the planning of site interpretation and presentation programmes.
- **Objective 7:** Develop technical and professional guidelines for heritage interpretation and presentation, including technologies, research, and training. Such guidelines must be appropriate and sustainable in their social contexts (appropriate training for guides, management plan and general management).

For Inis Cealtra, ICOMOS Objectives 1 and 2 are fulfilled in the presentations at the proposed visitor centre; 3 and 4 will happen on the island. Objectives 5, 6 and 7 will spring from management and training based actions.

Inis Cealtra – interpretation

Development of interpretation on Inis Cealtra should be informed by the following ICOMOS objectives:

- **ICOMOS Objective 3:** Safeguard the tangible and intangible values of cultural heritage sites in their natural and cultural settings and social contexts (guides, ranger, general management with regular conservation maintenance) and
- **ICOMOS Objective 4:** Respect the authenticity of cultural heritage sites, by communicating the significance of their historic fabric and cultural values and protecting them from the adverse impact of intrusive interpretive infrastructure, visitor pressure, inaccurate or inappropriate interpretation. Paths and additional structures to be sensitive to the character, setting and the cultural and natural significance of the site, while remaining easily identifiable (guides, ranger, management plan and general management and respect for local tradition).

Other specific recommendations for interpretation and signage on Inis Cealtra include:

Multi-lingual audio guides

Multi-lingual audio-guides will be developed to interpret Inis Cealtra. Archaeologists should be involved in the design of guide content, but production will be tendered to a professional design company.

This will enable self-guiding and minimise the need for interpretative signage. One provider, Abarta Audio Guides, have already visited the island. The website will also promote a downloadable mobile phone app/podcast.

Signage

Signage on the island will be confined to orientation and emergency information and Code of Conduct boards that are based on the 'Leave No Trace' protocol at the main landing point, the canoe and kayak access and the visitor shelter pods. Removal of existing signage must be closely monitored by an archaeologist.

This approach will minimise ground disturbance while providing visitors with essential information. Signage (orientation, directional and interpretative) must accord with the Lough Derg Signage Strategy and the requirements of the NRA when on public roads.

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations and 5.4.2 on road signage.



Guiding

The interpretative experience on Inis Cealtra should be as human and natural as possible with the use of local guides. Guides will take those visitors who wish to have an interpreted visit on a regular tour of the island, and guide them between boat and monuments.

Guides should be high quality, suitably trained and, ideally, local people. They should be selected for their passion, local connection and people skills and should chat informally and answer questions while taking visitors along the routes, delivering a scripted interpretation at each designated location. See also 'Wardens, guides and ushers' below.

They will have a good grounding in archaeology and history (at least a Level 8 Degree in these fields) and parts of their role should relate to monitoring the archaeology. This will:

- provide visitors with an enhanced experience,
- negate the need for signage on the island,
- provide passive surveillance during opening hours,
- provide local employment, provide linkages with local people,
- provide visitors with local recommendations on other things to see and do in the area.

See also Section 5.7 Mitigation, for further recommendations.

Objective 16. To develop a comprehensive presentation and communication strategy grounded in the human interaction of guides rather than signage (on the island) and relying on both traditional and modern means and technologies (at the visitor centre).

Wardens, guides and ushers

Comparison with other sites that have similarities to Inis Cealtra, point to the benefits of continuous curation of the monuments during periods when visitors are arriving. Due to the particularities of Inis Cealtra (the variety of experiences, the terrain and size of the island, and the necessity to board and disembark from boats), a number of different staff roles are envisaged as being necessary. Wardens will have some training in health and safety, as well as an understanding of archaeological protection and agriculture.

Their duties will include:

- opening the pier in the morning and closing in the evening,
- crowd management around embarkation and disembarkation,
- ensuring toilet facilities are clean,
- monitoring of paths,
- monitoring of upstanding monuments,
- management and monitoring of ground condition, with regard to impact of both people and sheep,
- grazing and movement of sheep, in particular watching for over-grazing, incursion into and damage to monuments, and erosion of earthworks,
- vegetation management such as scheduling out-of-hours hand strimming and cutting as necessary,
- monitoring any unexpected after-hours activities and recording landing and activities that occur under the community trust (local access) policy herein,
- assist ushers in co-ordinating any remaining visitors away from the burial site when burials are taking place,
- first aid,
- cleaning facilities at end of day and removal of refuse to the shore,
- periodic testing of water treatment effluent and disposal of completed compost.

Professional guides will provide a guided tour of the monuments, including interpretation of Inis Cealtra's heritage, natural history and folklore. Guides will be steeped in knowledge about all aspects of Inis Cealtra and be recruited for their enthusiasm, passion for the islands heritage and ability to entertain and manage visitors. They will rotate between providing tours of the island and hosting and presenting the interpretation operations at the visitor centre. Ideally, they would be drawn from the local population.

Ushering is deemed necessary as a support to guides and wardens. Ushers will greet boats, orient arriving visitors on the routes and inform them of dos and don'ts on safety and protection of the monuments. They will monitor visitor movement and help to prevent congestion that could diminish the experience. In and around the monument structures they will manage and limit access to vulnerable areas (for example the Saints' Graveyard). They

will encourage quietness, and assist those with disabilities. As with the wardens, they will act as extra sets of eyes and ears, be vigilant for the effect of sheep and pick up signs of after-hours or anti-social behaviour.

Ushers will be volunteers from the community with an interest in tourism, service, archaeology and history, possibly informed by training, and an eagerness to share the island's uniqueness with visitors. They could be drawn from a community social group in the locality, nominated by the new Inis Cealtra Community Forum (see also Community gain below).

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

Objective 17. To provide a warden during the open season with specific responsibility for caretaking of the island from first to last boat and to provide guides and ushers to fulfil other specific functions necessary for the smooth and safe running of visitor operations on the island.

Monument access

In the vicinity of the monuments themselves special provisions to protect the vulnerable structures, especially the Saints' Graveyard as one of the most archaeologically significant yet vulnerable elements of the island, must be introduced.

Guides and wardens can be responsible for monitoring the Saints' Graveyard as well as other monuments while visitors are on the island, and should prevent visitors from touching cross sculpture, climbing walls or earthworks, while simultaneously providing them with an enjoyable experience. See Chapter 2-4 of Appendix 2 and Chapter 5, Section CS for further recommendations. It should be investigated whether a touch prevention system such as seen in art galleries and museums should be installed near some of the more sensitive monuments. This could be a knee- or waist-high tension wire system, or simply a ground surface indication (by laying different material atop the ground, mowing the grass differently or a combination). Any system should clearly be non-invasive and reversible, as well as safe for staff, visitors and animals.

Objective 18. To manage entry into the area known as the Saints' Graveyard so it is supervised and controlled, and so that walking on the medieval grave-slabs is deterred in order to prevent further wear and damage to them.

3.4.6 Facility and site management

Facility management

Inis Cealtra

Clare County Council and the OPW should partner on managing the island and the monuments of Inis Cealtra. This should build on the considerable experience of the OPW on the island and elsewhere and integrate where possible the knowledge of the local community.

The OPW should retain responsibility for managing and maintaining the monuments on the island, with Clare County Council maintaining natural heritage and visitor infrastructure, including pathways, toilets,

Objective 19. To seek the assistance of the OPW in the management of Inis Cealtra.

Visitor centre

A variety of options for the management and operation of the proposed visitor centre at Mountshannon were evaluated:

- construction, maintenance and operation by Clare County Council,
- construction and maintenance by Clare County Council, operation by local community,
- construction and maintenance by Clare County Council, operation under commercial tender,

construction and maintenance by Clare County Council, operation by local community on a 3-year contract, with café operated under commercial tender.

In considering the options for the management and operation of the visitor centre, they will include arrangements which will provide a commercial focus, local employment and make a positive contribution to the local community.

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

Site management - ecology

Reserved areas

It is intended to discourage visitors to the island from straying into certain areas deemed important for wildlife. The network of main and secondary paths has been carefully considered and located so as to subtly coax visitors away from these reserved areas while ensuring that all the typical landscape experiences the island offers can be enjoyed.

New screen planting

The existing vegetation consists of trees, scrub, meadow, fertilised pasture and marsh or wet grassland typically close to the shore. Other than the grazing and localised mowing in the area of the monuments, there is little sign of landscape management. The setting for the monuments is one of a rural pastoral landscape. Being an island, there are no fences to keep animals in; however, there currently are fences and walls to keep livestock away from the monuments.

The mature trees on the island do not appear to have been deliberately planted and may have grown through regeneration and natural succession. However, the wooded areas to the west affords shelter from prevailing winds, and the trees and scrub on the east of the island do provide a visual anchor through which the monuments can be viewed from the shore. Compared to other similar sites such as Clonmacnoise, the site is well vegetated, again possibly by accident rather than design, as archaeological practice is normally reluctant to allow vigorous root growth or for soil to be disturbed by the act of planting in sensitive zones.

The future planting strategy for Inis Cealtra is therefore one of implementing landscape management to manipulate areas for regeneration to best screen any new interventions – in particular upslope of the proposed new (northeast) landing point and its access path. The disadvantage is in the length of time it can take for scrub and young trees to mature, which is probably about 5-10 years. It does, however, have the added benefit of generating from local seed banks and rootstock, meaning any vegetation will be of local provenance and thus minimise the risk of introducing alien or invasive species

A landscape management plan, based on the use of grazing sheep for management of vegetation, should be developed by a group of specialists with expertise in farming, animals and habitat management with the close involvement of archaeologists.

This will ensure:

- vegetated island landscape and setting, including trees as backdrops for the monuments,
- maintenance of wooded areas to act as shelter on the island,
- implementation of sheep grazing cycles through the year,
- the possibility to prevent or limit access to allow grass areas to recover if they start to become eroded by footfall,
- visual analysis of vegetation to select scrub and trees for clearance, while identifying areas that require new vegetation, such as for screening new structures, providing shelter, and guiding sequences of movement through the landscape and its views and prospects,
- habitats are maintained and diversified where possible, with minimal disturbance.

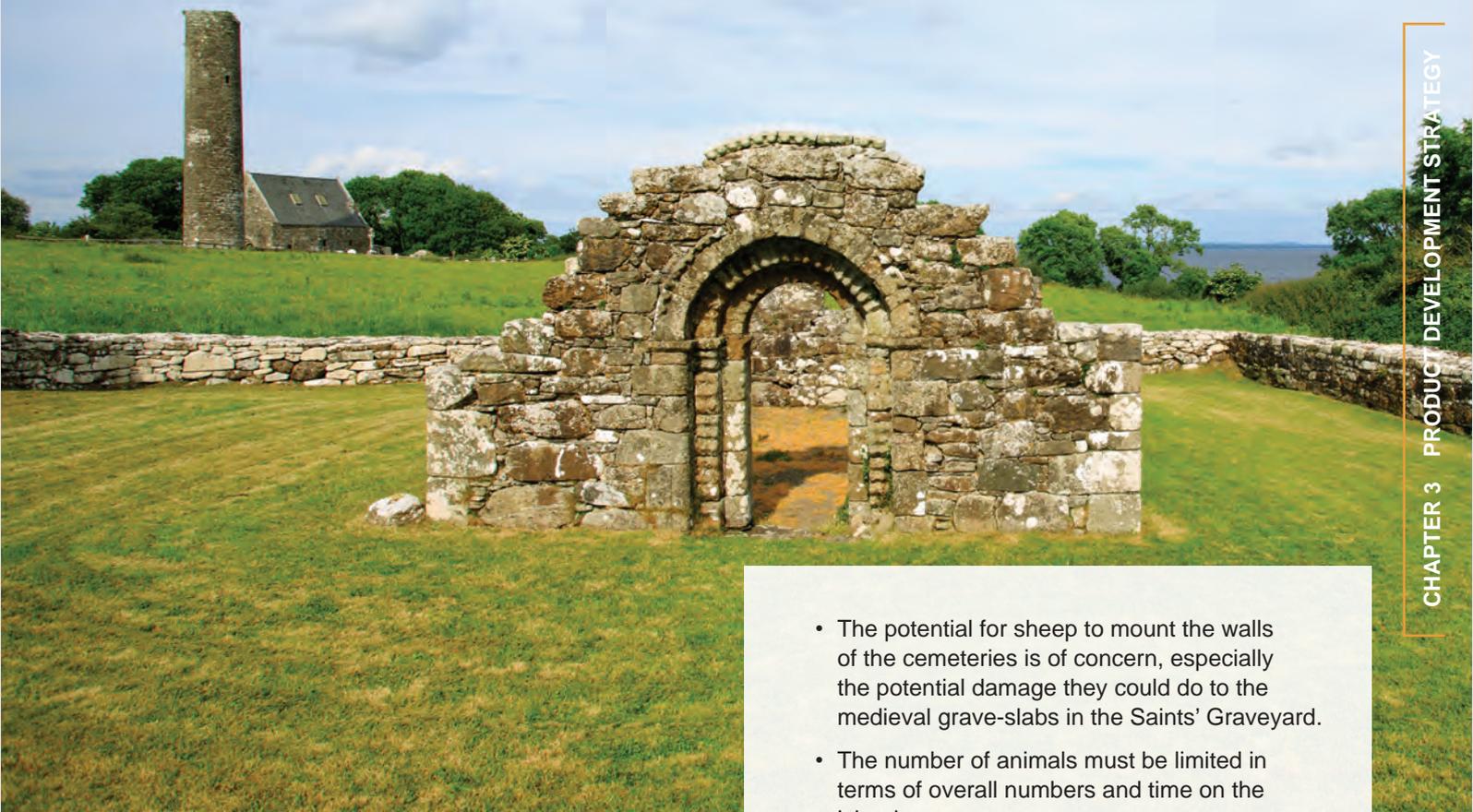
Objective 20. To develop a landscape management plan in consultation with an archaeologist, an ecologist and an agricultural consultant or farmer, and to include active management of vegetation by sheep.

Site management – meadow landscape

Previous meadow management regime

The island has been a managed/cultivated meadow landscape for decades, if not centuries, and this regime has become a vital part of the setting and ambience of the island.

A managed, cultivated meadow landscape can and should be continued, even as Inis Cealtra accommodates a larger number of visitors.



Proposed meadow management regime

Having considered a number of ways to achieve this continuity in landscape management, it is recommended that meadow management will predominantly be by means of grazing sheep.

The following management issues must be considered:

- While sheep may have some positive aspect for managing undergrowth, it is felt their disadvantages (proclivity to disturb stonework, earthworks, etc.) outweigh these. Thus, undergrowth management would best be by manual cutting once a year, out of season.
- The potential for damage to the archaeology by both grazing livestock and wild animals (e.g. burrowing) needs to be considered. At present, the ground shows signs of damage from cattle.
- Animals would ideally be fenced off from monuments; however, no fence can be built without ministerial consent. Monuments that remain unfenced include St Michael's, the earthworks, holy well, bargaining stone, bullaun stones and penitential stations. If permission is granted to erect new fences, it must require archaeologically monitoring and require the avoidance of excavation.

- The potential for sheep to mount the walls of the cemeteries is of concern, especially the potential damage they could do to the medieval grave-slabs in the Saints' Graveyard.
- The number of animals must be limited in terms of overall numbers and time on the island.
- The burrowing activities of animals must be monitored regularly.
- Access for sheep and pens for corralling them prior to embarkation and for their maintenance must be provided. It is proposed that the current northwest pier, and the area adjacent, will be the site of these activities.
- In a few places, overgrowth should be removed for the sake of public access. Such areas include the vicinity of St Michael's Church and the ruins of the post-medieval 'cottage'. However, attempts should not be made to de-turf or clean cross-sculpture, or to remove growth from walls and masonry without consulting an archaeologist or the heritage officer.
- An archaeologically informed programme for such activities as grass-cutting should be put in place.

Other observations in relation to sheep are:

- While the land is ideal, the quantity of brambles must be monitored to ensure sheep do not become entangled (see manual clearing of undergrowth above).
- The island could support 50 sheep (see Volume 3) or up to 100 lambs, plus ewes. Blackface sheep would be ideal but other breeds could also be successfully raised on the island.

- Grazing should take place between June/July and September/November, depending on weather and grass growth.
- The optimum time to take animals to the island is after lambing. The boat used should have high sides to prevent sheep from jumping over the side.
- Animals should be checked for foot rot before crossing and possibly sheared to reduce risk of entanglement in brambles.
- Lambs should be taken off the island as they mature. This will require pens and sheep dogs for separating ewes from lambs. The old enclosure near the northwest pier could be modified to make it safe for sheep or a new pen of post and wire fencing will need to be erected nearby. If lambs are not being produced this pen is not needed.
- Animals should be checked (by the warden) once a week in case sheep become entangled or sick.
- If managed as a productive herd, a ram should be put on the island in October.
- All sheep are to be taken to a more sheltered location with access to a shed on the mainland in November. Lambing will happen on the mainland, as the sheep need to be inspected twice a week at a minimum. Further checks on feet should take place, with a dip for ticks once every two years. Dipping should be done on the mainland to avoid pollution from insecticides.

The following regulations should be observed to protect the archaeological landscape:

- No landscaping that involves smoothing uneven or undulating ground should be carried out,
- Vegetation should be trimmed back but not pulled up as this will disturb the ground, and
- No ground disturbance is permitted without ministerial consent.

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.



3.4.7 Local community

Ideas and submissions offered over the course of the preparation of the Plan, mainly via the community consultation process, have been carefully considered and many have been integrated into the Plan. It is clear that the communities of Mountshannon, Tuamgraney, Scariff, Whitegate and other places in the area have a particular affection for Inis Cealtra. It is a testament to the community that the island has remained in pristine condition through the years despite not being in public ownership, nor having any real restrictions to access. It is recognised that this represents a bond of trust between the island and the community and the management regime proposed in this Plan intends to build on that positivity and to harness that goodwill.

It is proposed that locals with a genuine connection to the island will not be restricted from continuing to access the island privately as before even as changes in the Plan are implemented.

It has been assumed that the ratio of local to new (tourist) visitors would be in the region of 10:90 and this has been built into the Limits of Acceptable Change analysis and capacity data as outlined in Section 4.2.2. The balance of trust is presumed to be with responsible locals who may continue using the island as long as they uphold the principles of this Plan, in particular regarding secular uses, after-hours and overnight landing.

Community Forum and local access

To assist in implementation and ongoing interaction with the local communities, an Inis Cealtra Community Forum will be established. This should be transparently and democratically run with members representing Mountshannon, Tuamgraney, Scariff and Whitegate as well as non-voting representatives from each of OPW and Clare County Council. A process for the management of the Forum and decision making procedures should be elaborated prior to the implementation of the proposals of this Plan.

The Forum's main function will be to monitor access and usage of the island by locals, including under the new local access provision. If deemed suitable and workable, the Community Forum will maintain a register of recognised locals approved to visit the island, including for funerals, on the basis of the Plan, no undue denial being the default position. The ushers discussed elsewhere in the Plan, as well as guides and wardens, may report any concerns to the Forum, who may in turn raise issues with locals, Clare County Council or the OPW (and onward to the franchisees of the visitor centre or ferry service) as relevant.

The Forum should address any problems that may arise, with the presumption that locals may access the island, using a non-confrontational approach. Should problems such as anti-social, damaging or inharmonious activities on the island, or individuals carrying out commercial enterprises, arise during the trial period of 24 months, the Community Forum should try, with the assistance of OPW and Clare County Council, to find solutions in a respectful and fair manner.

If solutions to issues cannot be found within six months of them occurring and problems that threaten the heritage or experience of the island for others persist, locals will then be required to access the island using only the visitor centre's ferry system or by specific permission from the Community Forum on a case by case basis, with prior approval of Clare County Council.

It is hoped this situation never arises. In any case, the forum should carry out a review of this local access provision every 24 months and report findings to Clare County Council. The Forum should represent the local community in the formal consultations procedures of periodic reviews of the management of Inis Cealtra, including visitor centre and ferry services, and be consulted throughout the ongoing preparation of all projects arising from the Plan.

Objective 21. To create a community forum representing the interests of the local communities in the development and management of the island's future, including the local access provision.

Community gain

Local, social and environmental charity groups should be included to maximise the benefit where possible to the community.

One example of this is that local people, including members of voluntary organisations, will be invited to volunteer as ushers on the island. People from all parts of the local community should be invited and encouraged to engage with and work within the entirety of the Inis Cealtra project.

The visitor centre should include minimum local employment figures and source a proportion of food produce from the locality.

Burials

It is recognised that St Caimín's and St Mary's cemeteries on the island are still in use. Under the provision of this Plan, burials may continue for pre-existing plot holders. However, no new plots should be assigned or recognised and no new graves be established.

Notwithstanding the above proposal, it must be recognised that excavating the ground of a National Monument is not allowed, except when following strict, time restricted, procedures, and burials must take cognisance of this. Additionally, the graves and gravestones are an inherent part of the setting of the national monument and it is imperative that they are made of materials that are sensitive to the island's aesthetic.

The cemeteries where burials may still occur are St Caimín's cemetery, in the care of the OPW, and St Mary's cemetery, in the care of Clare County Council. When a burial is scheduled, the visitor centre and or ferry operator will be informed. They will ensure that no visitors access the island during the period the funeral or burial service is taking place.

The following guidelines under the Plan must be followed for new burials, graves and gravestones:

- design of headstones should be sensitive to the historic character of the graveyard so as not to impair the visual integrity of the site, e.g. type, material, dimension, foundations. A style guide must be issued; new headstone foundations are not permitted without an archaeologist being present during digging;
- no new burials will be in areas of plots, dug in the Saints' Graveyard;
- no graves should be dug near archaeological features;
- the policy needs to consider the living religious and spiritual significance of the cemeteries;

- a distinction needs to be made between tourists and locals, while continuing liaison with the local community on how best to manage the cemeteries. The community should not be made feel unwelcome when visiting their loved ones' graves.

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

Secular usages

The island must be treated as both a sacred and a vulnerable place. While it can accommodate some general activities which are compatible with visiting the island to appreciate its heritage, such as walking, picnicking (on a leave-no-trace basis), unrelated activities whether they may have happened on the island before or not, will be increasingly discouraged as time goes on.

Objective 22. To discourage and, if persistent, prohibit camping, unaccompanied tours and fishing on the island and to prohibit dogs except companion/assistance dogs and sheep dogs being used for management purposes.

After-hours/ private landing and anti-social behaviour

Access by non-locals to the island, other than by the visitor centre's ferry, or outside of its hours and season of operation, is to be restricted under the Plan. For locals, the local access provisions should apply.

The following measures will be employed to address anti-social behaviour:

- a ban on overnight camping on the island,
- passive surveillance during opening hours by guides on the island,
- code of conduct signage to be placed at access points, and
- mainland and island piers to be closed to locals and visitors after dusk.



3.4.8 Archaeology and conservation management plan

Respect for the archaeology of Inis Cealtra is the central priority of the Plan. A comprehensive archaeological study has been completed and is provided in great detail in Chapters 1–4 of Appendix 2.

A fundamental objective of the Plan is that a conservation management plan (CMP), prepared by qualified experts with multi-agency advice, will be commissioned for Inis Cealtra. This CMP will guide the protection, conservation and management of the island's archaeology and should be completed prior to any further plans, designs or projects proceeding (with the possible exception of urgent conservation or safety works) for the island.

Please refer to detail in Chapter 4 of Appendix 2 for recommendations in relation to archaeology, including the highlighting of vulnerabilities and pre-development procedures required. Detail for archaeology is also included in Chapter 5 of this document, which discusses mitigation measures. A CMP, as directed by the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2008) for the management of nominated sites, with input from Clare County Council, OPW, NMS, and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs should be commissioned for Inis Cealtra. (See also Appendix 2, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.)

The CMP should ensure the long-term conservation and preservation, to international best practice, of Inis Cealtra with the appropriate guidance from the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre, and advisory bodies such as ICOMOS.

The conservation management plan should detail:

- regular monitoring of the archaeological and cultural heritage of the site,
- periodic reporting of the condition of the archaeological remains,
- improving public awareness and appreciation of Inis Cealtra,
- liaising with community and local interest groups,
- establishing a research framework strategy,
- schedule of reviews of the management plan.

The CMP should not be a finite plan but a living document that will evolve over time and will require regular reviews, with the support of the relevant bodies, experts and local communities.

This should be developed prior to advancing the proposals contained in this Plan and be undertaken as part and parcel of the evolving management of the island, in order to ensure long-term conservation and preservation. As part of this CMP, monuments should be monitored on a continual basis.

See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

Objective 23. To commission a conservation management plan focusing on Inis Cealtra's archaeology and monuments prior to any works being initiated on or for the island.

3.4.9 Monitoring of the plan

The conservation management plan outlined above (and in MS4 of Chapter 5) will contain measures to continually monitor the condition of built heritage on Inis Cealtra. There will be continued monitoring of the potential impacts of sheep on archaeology; if negative impacts are observed then this landscape management method must be reviewed.

Use of an on-line, timed ticketing system, in conjunction with ongoing evaluation of local access, will contribute to an appropriate limit of visitors, to avoid negative impacts on the island's archaeology. Overall visitor numbers will be monitored and assessed on a regular basis (monthly and, in the medium term, eventually weekly) against the capacity limits.

The capacity limits are outlined in Section 4.7. In addition, key indicators are included in the action plan in Chapter 5. Monitoring of these by the management team at periodic intervals will enable the evaluation of progress against this Plan.

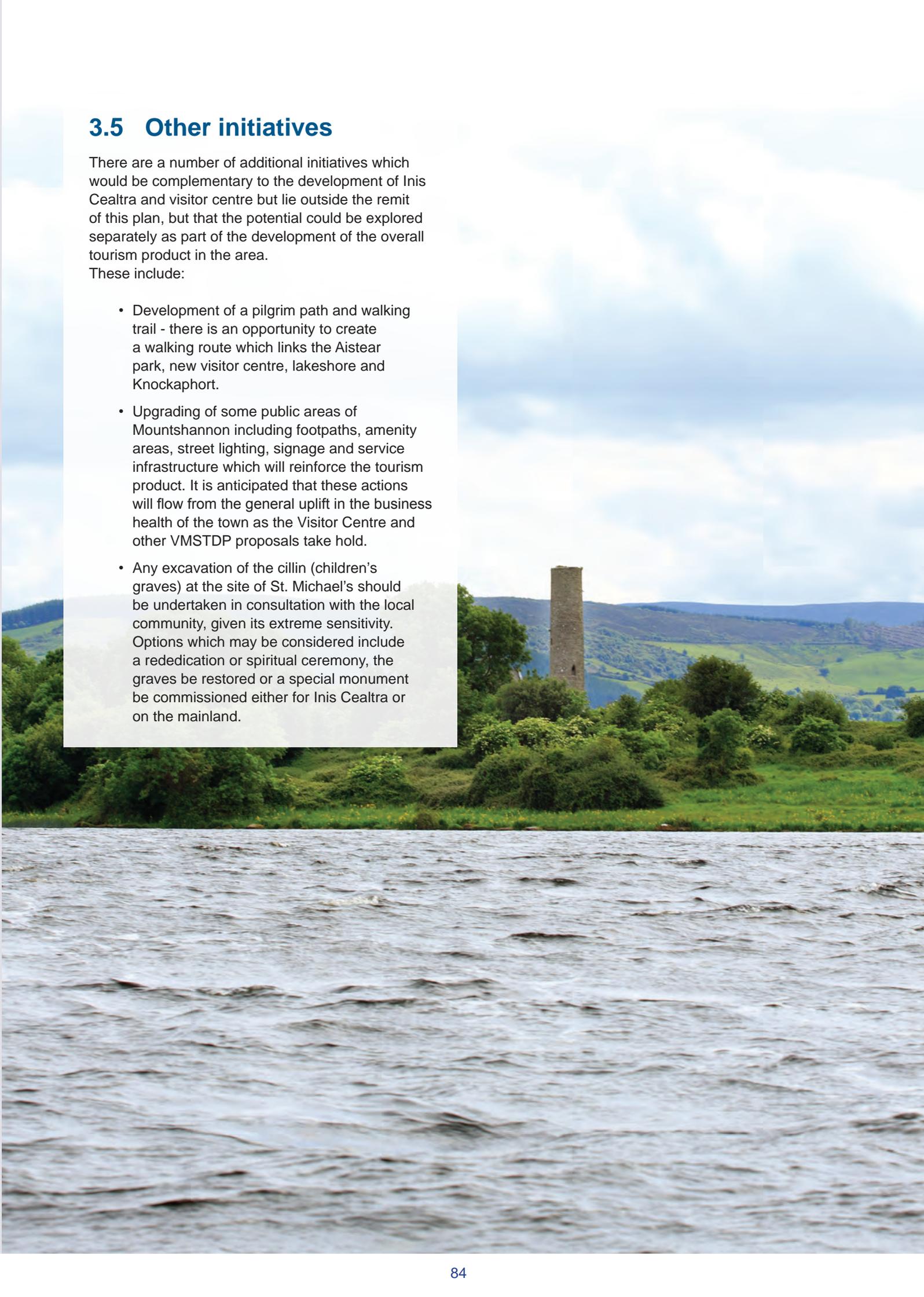
See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

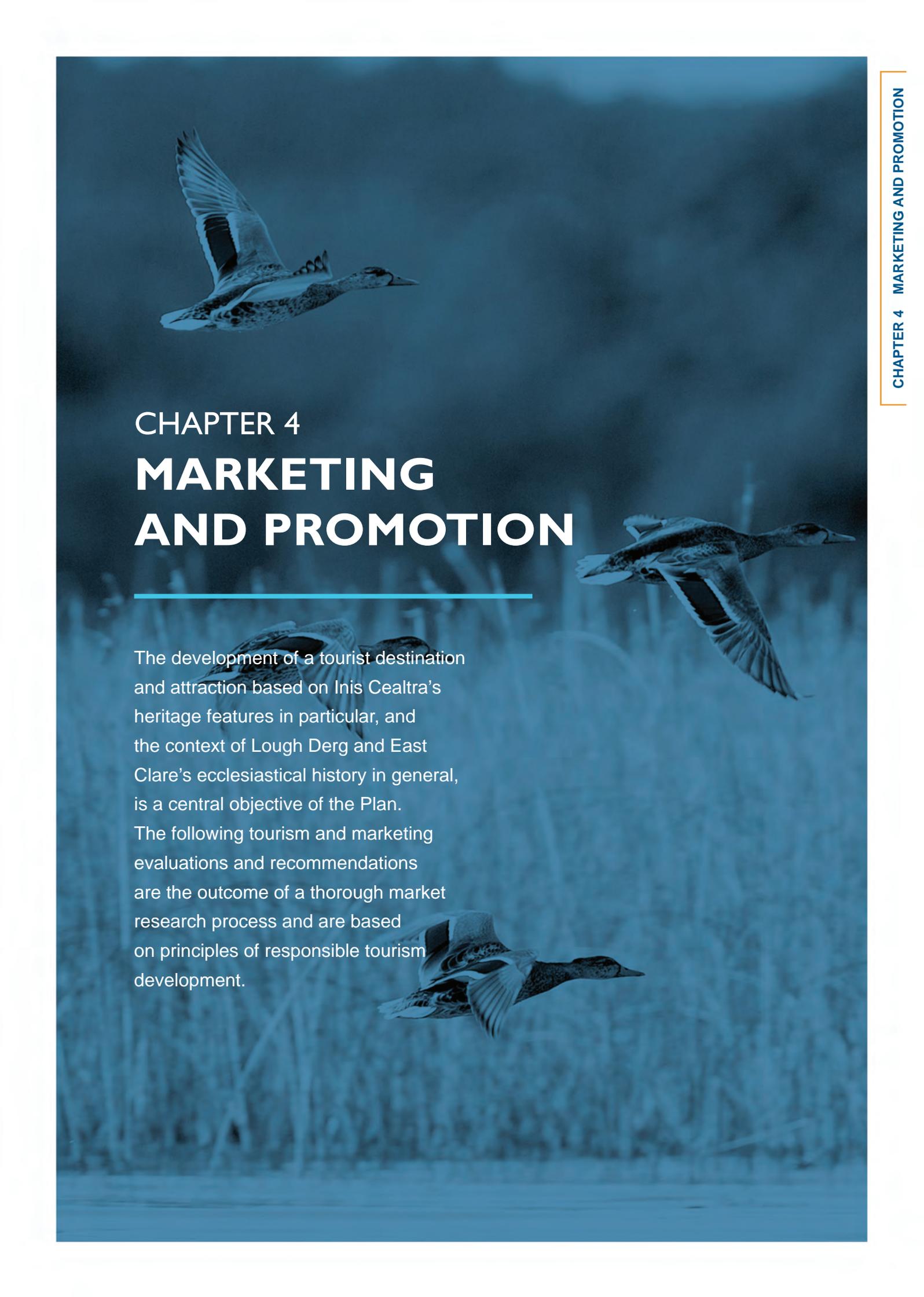
3.5 Other initiatives

There are a number of additional initiatives which would be complementary to the development of Inis Cealtra and visitor centre but lie outside the remit of this plan, but that the potential could be explored separately as part of the development of the overall tourism product in the area.

These include:

- Development of a pilgrim path and walking trail - there is an opportunity to create a walking route which links the Aistear park, new visitor centre, lakeshore and Knockaphort.
- Upgrading of some public areas of Mountshannon including footpaths, amenity areas, street lighting, signage and service infrastructure which will reinforce the tourism product. It is anticipated that these actions will flow from the general uplift in the business health of the town as the Visitor Centre and other VMSTDP proposals take hold.
- Any excavation of the cillin (children's graves) at the site of St. Michael's should be undertaken in consultation with the local community, given its extreme sensitivity. Options which may be considered include a rededication or spiritual ceremony, the graves be restored or a special monument be commissioned either for Inis Cealtra or on the mainland.





CHAPTER 4 MARKETING AND PROMOTION

The development of a tourist destination and attraction based on Inis Cealtra's heritage features in particular, and the context of Lough Derg and East Clare's ecclesiastical history in general, is a central objective of the Plan.

The following tourism and marketing evaluations and recommendations are the outcome of a thorough market research process and are based on principles of responsible tourism development.

This chapter includes detail on visitor data analysis, core target markets, market potential and revenue estimates, and a marketing and communications strategy that includes recommendations on branding and digital and print media.

PART 1

4.1 Visitor data analysis

4.1.1 National profile

Overseas visitors

Revenue to the Irish economy from international visitors is expected to reach €4.1bn for 2015, a rise of 16% on 2014, on the back of a record year for overall volume with almost 8.6m visitors arriving by air and sea. This comprised 7.8m overnight visitors, up 14% on 2014, and 850,000 day visitors. The category of visitors showing the strongest growth was holiday visitors with a rise of 20% on 2014, with those arriving for business up 10% and those visiting friends and relatives increasing by 2%. The favourable exchange rate and growth in visitors from mainland Europe have contributed to a greater growth in revenue (up 16%) than volume (up 14%), reversing a decade-long trend. It should be noted that these figures are estimates from the Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC) drawn from CSO data with the official data from Fáilte Ireland out later in 2016¹⁹.

Domestic visitors

Domestic tourism also shows an upward trend. In 2014, there were 7.4m trips taken by Irish residents within the Republic with an associated revenue of around €1.5bn. This was an increase of 3% on the number of trips taken in 2013 and an increase in expenditure of 7% - echoing the trend for growth of revenue in excess of volume shown by overseas visitor figures²⁰. The figure of 7.4m includes 3,696m who were on a short (1-3 nights) or long (4+ nights) holiday, 2,231m visiting friends and relatives, 350,000 business trips and 891,000 on other trips. Most domestic holidays in 2014 were taken in the Southwest (23%), West (19%), Southeast (16%) or Dublin (14%). Fáilte Ireland estimate 9% of domestic holiday in 2014 were spent in the Shannon Region which includes Clare, Limerick, Offaly (West) and Tipperary (North).

The most popular activities engaged in while on holidays for domestic holidaymakers in 2014 was hiking/hillwalking (22%) followed by visiting houses/castles (20%), visits to a spa (19%), national parks (18%), water-based activities (18%), gardens (16%), heritage/interpretative centres (15%), museums and art galleries (11%), cycling (8%), golf (6%), angling (2%), attending horse racing (2%) and equestrian pursuits (2%)²¹.

¹⁹ ITIC, December 2015

²⁰ Fáilte Ireland 2014

²¹ Fáilte Ireland 2015

Religious attractions

Table 4-1 shows visitor data for Irish religious heritage attractions that have made returns to Fáilte Ireland between 2010 and 2014.

	Attraction	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	St Patrick's Cathedral (Dublin)	300,211	362,000	385,000	410,000	457,277
2	Rock of Cashel (Tipperary)	204,270	233,038	240,406	255,338	372,503
3	Holy Cross Abbey (Tipperary)	230,000	240,000	240,000	150,000	200,000
4	Christ Church Cathedral (Dublin)	153,834	155,944	157,486	165,000	173,265
5	Clonmacnoise (Offaly)	133,015	134,034	138,481	139,413	149,472
6	Ennis Friary (Clare)	closed	closed	15,747	22,272	15,967
7	Sligo Abbey (Sligo)	9,623	10,706	11,802	13,106	15,309
8	Tintern Abbey (Wexford)	6,093	7,169	9,814	13,206	13,433
9	Boyle Abbey (Roscommon)	6,736	6,201	9,164	5,849	6,927
10	Mellifont Abbey	14,315	14,224	12,182	8,253	5,783

Table 4-1: Attendance at Irish religious heritage attractions 2010-2014

Source: Fáilte Ireland

Table 4-1 shows that the majority of religious heritage attractions have experienced a growth in visitor numbers over the last five years. Visitor numbers to two of these, St Patrick's Cathedral and the Rock of Cashel, have increased significantly. Just two of these attractions showed a decline in visitor numbers over the period – Holy Cross Abbey and Mellifont Abbey, the latter having been recently closed for restoration.

4.1.2 Visitors to County Clare and the Shannon Corridor

For the purposes of collation of visitor data, Lough Derg is located within the Fáilte Ireland's Shannon region which includes Clare, Tipperary (North during the latest available statistics), Offaly (West) and Limerick. This section reviews headline data for the Shannon region and County Clare as a component of that region, including Clare-based visitor attractions.

Shannon Region and County Clare

The Shannon region is the 4th most popular region after Dublin, the Southwest and the West. In 2014, the region attracted 1,077m overseas visitors generating €326m of revenue and 686m domestic visitors generating €135m.

Shannon's overseas visitor numbers and associated revenue from 2012-2014 are shown in Table 4-2. This shows that there has been a very significant growth in both visitor numbers (**up 24%**) and visitor revenue (**up 47%**) over the 2012-2014 period – similar to the trend for County Clare. This buoyant trend at both a regional and county level indicates that the potential for further growth could be considered strong.

	2012	2013	2014
Shannon overseas visitor numbers (000s)	867	931	1,077
Shannon overseas visitor revenue (€m)	221.4	250.7	326

Table 4-2: Attendance at Irish religious heritage attractions 2010-2014

Source: Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland's estimate of overseas visitor numbers and expenditure for the Shannon region by market in 2014 are set out below in Table 4-3 below. This indicates that around 34% of visitors came from Britain making it the largest market, around 31.7% of visitors came from North America and 29.1% from mainland Europe, with around 5% from other areas. Visitors from North America were responsible for a higher level of expenditure than visitors from the UK (35.7% vs 31.6%), with 26.9% derived from visitors from mainland Europe.

	Overseas visitors (000's)	Revenue (€m)	Market share (%)	
			Number	€
Britain	366	103.1	34	31.6
Mainland Europe	313	87.6	29.1	26.9
North America	341	116.4	31.7	35.7
Other areas	57	19.1	5.2	5.9
	1,077	326	100	100

Table 4-3: Overseas visitors to Shannon Region 2014

Source: Fáilte Ireland 2015



County Clare's overseas visitor numbers and associated revenue from 2012-2014 are shown in Table 4-4. This shows that there has been a very significant growth in both visitor numbers (up 25%) and visitor revenue (up 49%) over the 2012-2014 period.

	2012	2013	2014
Clare overseas visitor numbers (000's)	445	485	561
Clare overseas visitor revenue (€m)	86	94	128

Table 4-4: Overseas visitor numbers to County Clare and revenue 2012-2014

Source: Fáilte Ireland 2015

Fáilte Ireland's estimate of overseas visitor numbers and expenditure for County Clare by market in 2014 are set out below in Table 4-5. This indicates that the largest market, with around 40% of visitors, came from North America, 28.7% from mainland Europe and 25% from Britain. Almost half of all visitor expenditure in Co. Clare was from visitors from North America (47.6%) with 27.3% derived from visitors from Britain. However, this data, in the context of Lough Derg, should be treated with caution as it includes significant visitor attractions in the west of Clare such as the Cliffs of Moher, which may influence the proportion by market, as well as, for example, the proportion of visitors from North America.

	Overseas visitors (000's)	Revenue (€m)	Market share (%)	
			Number	€
Britain	140	35	25	27.3
Mainland Europe	161	24	28.7	18.8
North America	228	61	40.6	47.6
Other areas	32	8	5.7	6.3
	561	128	100	100

Table 4-5: Overseas visitors to Shannon Region 2014

Source: Fáilte Ireland 2015

Clare visitor attractions

An analysis of County Clare's visitor attractions that provide data to Fáilte Ireland provides some insights regarding the distribution of visitors throughout the county, see Table 4-6 below.

	Attraction	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience	720,574	809,474	873,988	960,134	1,080,501
2	Bunratty Castle & Folk Park	263,336	275,986	286,270	285,013	294,339
3	Aillwee Cave & Burren Birds of Prey Centre	92,123	100,000	103,000	110,000	120,000
4	Burren Perfumery and Floral Centre			20,000	45,000	45,000
5	O'Briens Tower	82,884	77,220	89,747	56,025	30,564
6	Doolin Cave	15,500	20,000	22,000	25,000	26,000
7	Craggaunowen - The Living Past	20,878	21,044	20,737	19,573	21,673
8	Ennis Friary	closed	closed	15,747	22,272	15,967
9	Knappogue Castle	4,076	3,814	3,938	3,637	3,728
10	Scattery Island	1,584	1,344	1,121	2,821	2,491
11	Brian Bóru Heritage Centre	1,723	978	1,048	965	963

Table 4-6 Attendances at Co. Clare visitor attractions 2010-2014

Source: Fáilte Ireland 2015

There was a significant decline in overseas visitor numbers at a national level between 2009 and 2012, from 8.3m to 6.3m, with visitor numbers rising since to 7.1m in 2014. Visitor data for Co. Clare have reflected this and have been steadily increasing since 2012, with the majority of attractions showing an increase over the last three years. The exceptions are O'Brien's Tower, Knappogue Castle and the Brian Bóru Heritage Centre, the latter two attractions having relatively low visitor numbers in general.

The statistical evidence clearly shows that the very high numbers of overseas visitors to Co. Clare represent a significant market opportunity for the development of a high-quality visitor attraction such as the Inis Cealtra proposal.

4.1.3 Shannon holidaymakers

The most recent and relevant survey of visitor attitudes is a study carried out for Fáilte Ireland in 2013 along the Shannon Corridor. This study is of greater relevance than the Clare Holidaymakers study as that study focused on visitors to West Clare. The 2013 Shannon Holidaymakers study, an update to the one discussed in *Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017*, outlines some key findings including:

- the internet was the most popular means for visitors to discover the Shannon Corridor (34%) and to source information before they visited (79%);
- visitors chose to visit the Shannon Corridor for its history/culture (24%) and visiting family and friends (19%);
- when visitors were in the Shannon Corridor they got their information from accommodation providers (43%), internet (39%) and tourist information offices (36%);
- most visitors stayed in hotels (36%), followed by B&Bs (21%) and family/friends (18%) with another 15% staying in cabin cruisers;
- the most popular places to visit were historic houses/castles (50%), interpretative centres (46%), traditional music/dance performances (27%), museums/galleries (21%) and national parks (19%);
- the most popular activities were boat trips (40%), golf (16%), fishing (8%), hiking/walking (7%) and cycling (6%);
- the top reasons for recommending the Shannon Corridor were beautiful scenery/countryside (75%), friendly people (65%), peaceful/relaxing (46%), lot of attractions (38%), location (32%) and history/culture (26%).

4.2 Core target markets

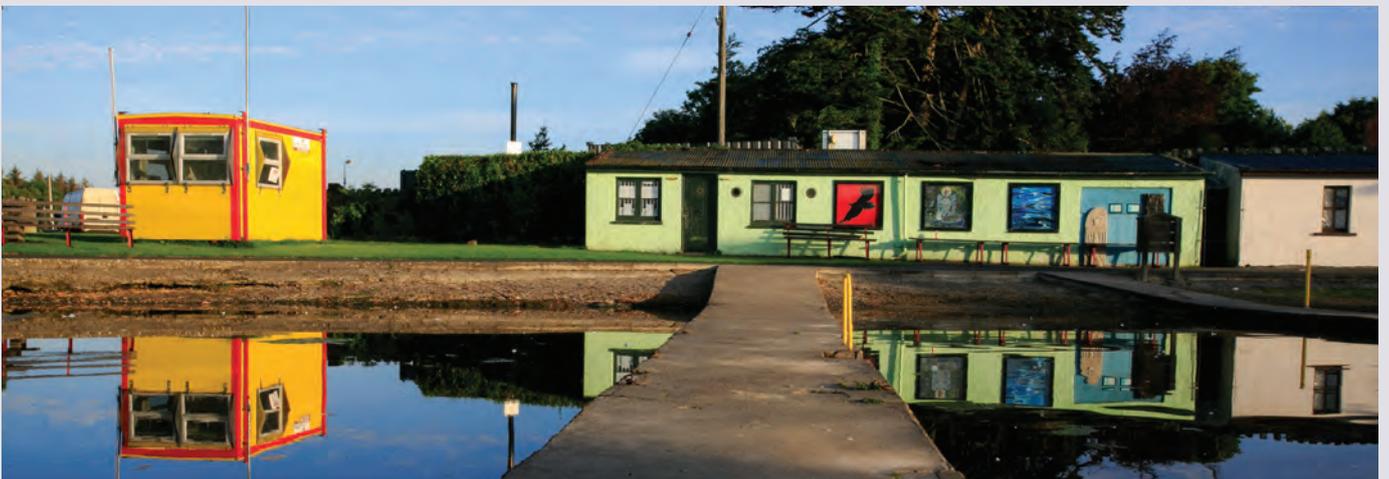
4.2.1 Potential target markets

Inis Cealtra is an island of significance for many people and has the potential to engage many new visitors to the area including those attracted by:

- religious tourism,
- historic/cultural and architectural tourism,
- nature tourism including bird-watching,
- land and water-based recreational activities, including walking, kayaking and angling,
- those for whom the main attraction is solely being able to visit an island in a scenic area.

For many, the overall attraction is likely to be a combination of some or all of these elements with the concept of 'holy' meaning different things to different people. Visitors perceive Ireland as a country with beautiful scenery, friendly people, unique culture and history and opportunities for engaging in active pursuits including walking, kayaking and angling. Inis Cealtra offers visitors all of these and as such is likely to be of interest to a wide range of visitors, both from overseas and from the island of Ireland.

To maximise the visitor opportunity it will be important to consider who are the likely target markets by nationality, and within these markets which are the type of visitors or market segments most likely to be interested in a visit to Inis Cealtra. By identifying these market segments, and their motivations, the focus then becomes the provision of suitable facilities and infrastructure to attract these visitors and provide them with the optimum experience.



4.2.2 International context

Overseas source markets

The four main overseas markets, from which 70% of all overseas arrivals are derived, are identified by Fáilte Ireland as Britain, USA, Germany and France. Table 4-8 below, outlines the principal characteristics of these four markets.

	Great Britain	USA	Germany	France
When do they visit Ireland?	Visit all year 31% Jan-Apr 23% May-June 22% July-Aug 9% Sept 15% Oct-Dec	62% visit outside of July and August 17% Jan-Apr 29% May-June 29% July-Aug 11% Sept 13% Oct-Dec	73% visit outside of July and August 23% Jan-Apr 31% May-June 27% Jul-Aug 8% Sept 12% Oct-Dec	64% visit outside of July and August 22% Jan-Apr 26% May-June 36% July-Aug 6% Sept 9% Oct-Dec
Where do they go in Ireland?	Majority spend their time in one destination Short-breaks, less regional touring 53% Dublin 28% Southwest 19% West 11% Midwest	Most will visit more than one region Dublin is on the majority of itineraries followed by Western seaboard and Southwest 80% Dublin 48% Southwest 35% West 32% Midwest	41% like to tour around 24% visit Dublin only 65% Dublin 50% Southwest 33% West	Most will visit more than one region 6% Dublin 50% West 43% Southwest
How long do they stay in Ireland?	Average 5 nights Average annual leave 28 days	Average 6.8 nights (42% stay 6-8 nights) Average annual leave 12 days	Average 8.3 nights Average annual leave 29 days	Average 8.9 nights 13% short breaks (1-3 nights) Average annual leave 7.5 weeks, min. 5 weeks
What accommodation do they use when in Ireland?	33% hotels 13% rented 9% guesthouses/B&Bs 26% friends and relatives	50% hotels 25% guesthouses and B&Bs 7% rented 8% hostels	34% hotels 25% guesthouses/B&Bs 10% rented	23% guesthouses and B&Bs 20% hotels 13% rented
Where are they from?	21% Southeast 21% Southeast 15% London 11% Southwest 11% Northwest 10% West Midlands 8% Scotland 8% Wales	New York, California, Massachusetts, Florida and Illinois	Bavaria Baden-Württemberg, Nordrhein-Westfalen Rheinland-Pfalz and Hessen	33% Paris 20% Western France 14% Southeast 12% Southwest 11% Mediterranean 6% East 3% North

	Great Britain	USA	Germany	France
What age are they?	A greater portion over 35s 48% are over 45 Mostly couples and a quarter in other adult groups Less child or family focused	Slightly older than European visitors, 25% are over 55 44% are over 45 Almost half visit as part of a couple	22% are under 24 24% are 25-34 16% are 35-44 38% are over 45 39% couple 12% family 23% with other adults	Younger than other markets; just 27% are over 45 36% couple 25% family (more than twice the number of Germans who travel with family) 19% with other adults
How do they get here?	8 out of 10 by air 2 out of 10 hire a car 2 out of 10 bring their car	99% by air 46% hire a car	75% by air 25% by sea 32% hire a car 23% bring their car	80% by air 20% by sea 18% bring their car 37% hire a car
Have they visited Ireland before?	59% previously visited Visiting friends and relations (VFR) is big from the GB market	75% are on first visit	65% are on first visit 25% are repeat visitors	65% are on first visit
Will they return to Ireland?	76% will return	50% will return	54% will return	50% will return
Is the language important to them?	N/A	N/A	Very important if attending consumer shows in Germany. Many like to do their holiday research and planning in their own language, so knowledge of the language is a definite advantage	Being able to speak French is important both for consumer and trade engagement

Table 4-7: Characteristics of principal overseas visitor markets

Source: Fáilte Ireland, *Growing International Sales, Global Segmentation Toolkit*

Overseas market segmentation

Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland have identified three market segments as having the most potential for the development of tourism in Ireland in the four main overseas markets of GB, USA, Germany and France. These segments, i.e. visitors grouped according to values and motivations, are Curiously Cultural, Great Escapers and Social Energisers. These three segments are described in Table 4-8 below.



Culturally Curious

Travellers with a passion for new ‘wow’ experiences who are seeking fun and excitement, immersing themselves in the destination

Tend to be middle aged (35 – 54). Likely to travel as a couple or with other adult friends. Want to broaden their minds and expand their experiences through landscape, history and culture. Curious and keen to learn about the places that they travel to Independent active sightseers. Want to encounter new places and out-of-the-ordinary experiences

Great Escapers

Independent thinkers with a craving for culture and history. They are out to broaden their minds and expand their experiences by exploring new landscapes, history and culture

Tend to be younger (25 – 45) Often couples, some with young children, or travelling with friends and older family members. Need time out from busy lives and careers. Particularly interested in rural holidays.

Social Energisers

Adventurous and committed to spending quality time in a breathtaking place. They are on holiday to take time out, get physical with nature and reconnect with their partner

The youngest target segment, primarily aged under 35. Like to holiday in groups or as couples Look for places that are new, different, and vibrant

Table 4-8: Overseas core target market segments

Source: Fáilte Ireland



There are overlaps between segments and variances in motivations, what desired experiences they will purchase, and the key booking channels they use. There are also variations by segment between the four key markets. The four overseas markets, identified as a priority for the Culturally Curious and Great Escapers segments, also match those visitor markets currently attracted to the Shannon Corridor (see Table 4-8), i.e. Britain, North America (with the priority market being USA) and mainland Europe (with the priority markets being Germany and France).

Two of these three core global market segments, the Culturally Curious and the Great Escapers, have been identified as having the greatest potential for Lough Derg within the Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017, which also recommends a focus on the Nature Lovers segment.²⁴ The Social Energisers segment was not thought to have as much potential as the other two core segments. The motivators and market differentiators for these segments are described in Chapter 6, Appendix 2.

Another significant segment of people who may to be attracted to Inis Cealtra include the ‘Top Tanners’ who are seen as being younger with families who tend to be active on holiday, looking for fun and things to occupy the children. A recent Fáilte Ireland report regarding tourism trends showed that, in the first 6 months of 2013.

The mix of British visitors to Ireland by target segment was:

- 45% Top Tanners
- 19% Social Energisers
- 16% Culturally Curious
- 8% Easy Going Socialisers
- 6% Nature Lovers
- 3% Great Escapers
- 3% Spoil Us²⁵

Given that Inis Cealtra will be promoted as part of the wider Lough Derg destination, it is recommended that the key target segments for the island will correspond to those previously identified for the lake, i.e. Culturally Curious, Great Escapers and Nature Lovers.

In addition, the Top Tanners segment is worth consideration. The destination markets with greatest potential are considered, in line with Fáilte Ireland/ Tourism Ireland’s targeted approach, to be Britain, USA, Germany and France.

Objective 24. To target the market segments previously identified for the lake in the new marketing strategy, i.e. Culturally Curious, Great Escapers and Nature Lovers.



²⁴ Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017, p. 37.

²⁵ Fáilte Ireland ‘Recent Trends & Top Line Performance, February 2014.

4.2.3 Domestic context

As indicated above, domestic tourism within the island of Ireland is growing. Fáilte Ireland has developed a segmentation model for this market to help drive further growth. The prioritised segments are:

- **Connected Families** - made up of families with young children. Their core motivation is to spend quality time together and grow as a family;

- **Footloose Socialisers** - who tend to travel as groups of friends, and for whom holidays are about sharing experiences with people who are of the same mind-set;
- **Indulgent Romantics** - made up of couples seeking a romantic getaway through which they can reconnect while enjoying wonderful surroundings.

Table 4-9 below summarises some of the key characteristics of these three domestic segments.

	Connected Families	Footloose Socialisers	Indulgent Romantics
Who are they?	<p>Connected Families make up 23% of the domestic market, the single largest segment. They are made up of relatively young families, with parents in their 30s and early-40s and children generally under the age of 10.</p> <p>For Connected Families, family holidays are the best weeks of the year and a special opportunity to spend quality time together, creating memories to last a lifetime.</p> <p>They put their heart into planning and finding out everything a destination has to offer, the best places to stay, the hidden gems and all the activities available that can be shared by adults and children. For them it is not about having a plan for every day, rather knowing that there are lots of 'things to do together' nearby and making sure their accommodation and facilities really suit their needs.</p>	<p>Footloose Socialisers make up 15% of the domestic market. On average in their late-40s and well-educated, they are groups of like-minded people - old friends or new acquaintances - who enjoy getting away and spending quality time together.</p> <p>They love the opportunity to get a break from their routines and responsibilities. really relax and enjoy themselves during a weekend with friends.</p> <p>Although value-conscious, they regularly take short breaks - going to rugby matches, hill walking, attending music and cultural festivals or just playing a few rounds of golf.</p>	<p>Indulgent Romantics make up 14% of the domestic market. Although relatively broad in terms of age profile they are more likely than average to be aged between 45 and 64.</p> <p>They are interested in going to different places and enjoy the atmosphere of new cities, particularly if they offer opportunities for shopping, pampering, enjoying great food and the little indulgences in life.</p> <p>They enjoy quick and spontaneous weekend breaks to get away from the stresses and bustle of their daily lives.</p> <p>Savvy trip planners, they are always keen to find a good deal for a particularly nice hotel they've had their eye on. Interested and knowledgeable about quality travel, restaurants, food and wine, they tend to be in-the-know about what's hot and what's not.</p>

	Connected Families	Footloose Socialisers	Indulgent Romantics
What they want from a holiday	<p>Connected Families enjoy a holiday that offers a variety of things to see and do in a place that feels special.</p> <p>Whether it's fun at a petting farm, picnicking, learning to surf, catching crabs on the beach or taking a walk on a local nature trail, as long as they're doing it together, they're happy.</p> <p>For the parents, it's all about their children being happy and enjoying themselves.</p> <p>They want to make the most of the opportunity to really 'be' with their children and love to see them do and enjoy the same simple things they did when they were children themselves.</p> <p>They are seeking to create special memories that they can treasure, sharing experiences that they can fondly look back on in the months and years to come.</p>	<p>Footloose Socialisers are seeking to share experiences with people they can relax and be themselves with – experiences that bring people together and enrich life. They want to do this in authentic and interesting surroundings.</p> <p>They reject the idea of a package holiday.</p> <p>They believe that it's good to go off the beaten track every now and again, try out different places, meet the locals and really get under the skin of a place.</p> <p>They enjoy good food and drink and tend to be interested in the history and culture of the place they are visiting.</p>	<p>They are made up of couples whose ultimate goal is to find the perfect romantic hub for their holiday where they can soak up the luxury, reward themselves, be well looked after and reconnect with one another. Just being together and treating themselves a little really helps them to rebalance.</p> <p>They prefer to spend money on accommodation rather than activities and expect a certain standard of comfort in their accommodation and hospitality.</p>
Holiday behaviour	<p>Connected Families tend to plan and book their holidays well in advance (3-6 months) and do most of their booking online. On average family breaks last for 4-7 days and families are most likely to stay in hotels or holiday homes.</p> <p>They tend to rely heavily on hotel/accommodation websites, review websites, social media and personal recommendations when deciding on where to holiday and their choice of accommodation.</p> <p>After their return, they try to hold on to those special holiday memories for as long as possible, by sharing stories and photos with friends and family on social networks.</p>	<p>Footloose Socialisers tend to book their breaks closer to actually taking them, with one in three trips booked less than a month in advance.</p> <p>They do most of their booking online. On average their breaks are for 1-3 days and they demonstrate a stronger tendency to stay in holiday homes/rentals than other segments, although they are also likely to stay in hotels.</p> <p>They tend to rely heavily on review websites, booking agent sites (OTAs) and personal recommendations when deciding on where to holiday and their choice of accommodation.</p> <p>As active users of social media they share stories and pictures from their breaks online.</p>	<p>Indulgent Romantics are more likely than any other segment to book their accommodation well in advance; however, they may book at short notice if the right offer comes up.</p> <p>They do most of their booking online. On average their breaks are for 1-3 days and they demonstrate very high propensity to stay in hotels. They tend to rely heavily on hotel and booking agent sites (OTAs) when deciding on where to holiday and their choice of accommodation (using a relatively narrow range of information sources when compared to other segments).</p> <p>Although they actively research and review destinations and accommodation online they are not active users of social media.</p>

Table 4-9. Key characteristics of the three prioritised domestic segments

4.2.4 Product/Market matching

A key stage of the development of any promotional strategy is product/market matching, thus ensuring the right product is available for the right audience. Table 4-10 is a product/market matrix prepared for Inis Cealtra and associated shore-based activities set against the key market segments identified earlier for the domestic and overseas visitor markets. This matrix identifies those activities that are likely to be of most interest to the widest range

of visitors. This has been informed by consultation undertaken with key tourism stakeholders, summarised in Chapter 6 of Appendix 2. While a broad-brush exercise, this approach clearly indicates those product areas which are of most importance such as heritage interpretation, walkways and the provision of visitor services and facilities such as a café and toilets.

Market/ Market Segments	Domestic Ireland		Overseas (focus on Britain, USA, France, Germany and other mainland Europe)				All markets		
	Connected Families	Footloose Socialisers	Culturally Curious	Great Escapers	Nature Lovers	Top Tanners	Adventure & Activity	Special interest e.g. pilgrimage	Coach tours
Experience based activities									
Visiting built heritage	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	
Walking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bird watching	✓			✓	✓				
Angling						✓			
Canoe/kayak	✓		✓	✓		✓			
Shore based activities									
Heritage interpretation	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Art gallery		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Café	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4-10: Inis Cealtra product/market matrix

4.3 Case studies

The recommendations have also been informed by consideration of a range of case studies, which were selected to provide examples of best practice and innovation. They demonstrated consideration of key issues of relevance to this project, including, but not limited to, management, product development, ticketing, promotion, and funding. These case studies, outlined in detail in Chapter 6 of Appendix 2, are:

- Clonmacnoise, County Offaly
- Brú na Bóinne, County Meath
- Innisfallen Island, County Kerry
- Scattery Island, County Clare
- Garnish Island, County Cork
- Blasket Centre/Ionad an Bhlascaoid, County Kerry
- Skellig Experience, County Kerry
- Maeshowe, Orkney Islands, Scotland

The case studies listed above contain some common themes and innovative ideas that could be transferable to a visitor attraction developed at Inis Cealtra and Mountshannon. A summary of lessons learned from these case studies, along with key visitor data, is outlined below:

- In the majority of the case studies, the visitor centre and the provision of boat hire are separate commercial enterprises. The majority of visitor centres are operated by the OPW, with ferry boats operated as private enterprises.
- In many cases, OPW Heritage Services provide guiding services.
- Cafés are mostly operated as concessions.
- Most of the attractions are generally open from March/April to October/November.
- The management model for The Skellig Experience, while the result of historical ownership, is of interest. The building is in public ownership but operated by a private sector company under contract.
- Coach tours are important to drive visitor numbers, with Abbey Tours and CIE Tours being instrumental businesses.
- Table 4-11 below shows the visitor numbers for each of the case studies from 2010-2015.

- The domestic market is important, as are the British, mainland European (particularly Germany and France), and North American markets.
- Most case studies are promoted on multiple websites and all have Facebook profiles.
- The visitor centre can act as a gateway to the local area, providing information on local attractions and activities.
- The timed booking system operating on Maeshowe enables control of the maximum permissible numbers at a sensitive attraction.
- A summary of fees for visitor centres and boats and of the management agencies is provided in Table 4-21 (pg.118).

Deductions garnered from examination of the case studies above include:

- Improved signage will be required to indicate the location of the attraction.
- Clear lines of responsibility will be required, e.g. division between Clare County Council, OPW and ferry operator.
- Multiple ferry operators from multiple departure points would be favourable commercially.



Attraction	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
Clonmacnoise	133,015	134,034	138,481	139,413	149,472	153,000
Brú na Bóinne	209,270	228,542	229,482	229,744	246,791	263,838
Scattery Island	1,584	1,344	1,121	2,821	2,491	
Garnish Island	53,945	53,102	47,834	49,706	55,088	
Blasket Centre/ Ionad an Bhlascaoid	42,896	41,717	47,003	42,362	44,074	
The Skellig Experience	27,500	35,500	32,750	37,800	39,825	
Maeshowe	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	c.24,000
Skellig Michael (island)	12,343	9,750	11,577	13,221	15,315	

Table 4-11: Summary of visitor numbers for case study attractions 2010-2015 (where available)

Source: Fáilte Ireland



4.4 SWOT analysis

The Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017 plan included a SWOT for the whole of the Lough Derg area'.²⁶ Those which are of particular relevance to Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) and the

Mountshannon area from this document are highlighted below with others identified specifically in relation to Inis Cealtra also included under each heading.

Strengths

- **Visitor markets** – physical location in Ireland, e.g. easy motorway access, proximity to established tourism destinations.
- **Visitor activities** – existing and proposed short trails which are popular with visitors.
- **Key visitor attractions** – Scenic value and natural resource of the lake in conjunction with character and services of towns such as Mountshannon.
- **Visitor accommodation** – Mountshannon Holiday Village (42 holiday-homes) identified as one of the largest accommodation providers in the Lough Derg area.
- **Wider area** – strong visitor accommodation base in Limerick City with 3,750+ bed spaces.
- Unique and nationally significant built heritage, e.g. the only recumbent early medieval gravestones in place in Ireland.
- Scenic character of Inis Cealtra.
- Proximity to Mountshannon

Weaknesses

- **Visitor markets** – Lough Derg not reaching its full potential in terms of attracting visitors.
- **Visitor activities** – Underutilisation of potential of the lake for water-sports and lack of walking trail around the lake.
- **Key visitor attractions** - Lack of defined 'iconic' visitor attraction to act as a motivator for visits.
- **Wider area** – motorway and rail network bypass Lough Derg.
- Lack of capacity of existing ferry boat for visitors.
- Lack of disabled access.
- Lack of visitor toilets on the island.
- Lack of formed pathway on the island.
- Poor quality interpretation on the island.

Opportunities

- **Visitor markets** – Shannon and West regions attract 2m+ visitors p.a.; main overseas market is Britain plus mainland Europe and North America; main visitor type is holiday-makers plus VFR among UK visitors.
- **Visitor activities** – potential for canoe/kayak trail.
- **Wider area** – range of significant tourism attractions and destinations in the Shannon and West regions, including Cliffs of Moher, Bunratty Castle, the Burren National Park, the Rock of Cashel and King John's Castle (Limerick City).
- Development of linkages with existing religious built heritage sites including Clonmacnoise, Rock of Cashel and Holy Cross.
- Inclusion on existing coach tour itineraries.
- Development of a visitor centre at Mountshannon to capture visitor market and increase revenue to the local economy.
- Use of local guides for employment.

Threats

- **Visitor markets** – Seasonality issues with high proportion of visits during June-August.
- **Key visitor attractions** – lack of a well-known visitor attraction in the Lough Derg area.
- **Wider area** – lack of awareness of Lough Derg and its location hamper leveraging visitors from wider area.
- Lack of capacity to transport visitors to the island.
- Impact of weather on ability of visitors to access the island.
- Flooding and climate change.
- Impact of increased numbers of visitors on the built heritage and ambience of Inis Cealtra.
- Impact of coach traffic on Ballina/Killaloe and Mountshannon.

²⁶ Life at the Lake, p. 7.

4.5 Tour operator survey

Targeted consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders during March and April 2016 discussing market potential, visitor facilities on the island and shore, access, facility management, interpretation, marketing and promotion, and linkages and collaboration. This section outlines some key, unattributed, findings from consultation with local businesses that operate tours in the region.

'The island is pretty much inaccessible at the moment and many visitors to the area leave disappointed that they can't visit'

'Project long overdue and should be a flagship attraction'

'Keep it unspoilt'

4.5.1 Market metrics

When asked what they thought could be the market potential of an enhanced Inis Cealtra attraction, most thought that the island had significant potential.

Some comments included:

- 30-40,000 in year 1 and up to 70-80,000 in years 2-3
- Similar to Loop Head (80,000 p.a.)
- 30-40,000 p.a. as a flagship attraction for Lough Derg
- 30-50,000+
- More attractive than Clonmacnoise and closer to key feeder markets so has potential for higher numbers than Clonmacnoise (130,000 p.a.)
- Could reach 250,000 if done well and focusing on coach and individual travellers
- Has potential to reach 20-30,000 as a stand-alone attraction and 80-90,000 p.a. as part of a heritage trail

- Numbers need to be controlled to avoid negative impacts
- Should be a cap on coach tour numbers – limiting coaches
- Focus on quality not quantity
- Max. numbers should be a factor of carrying capacity
- Whites Hotels now bring over 7,000 p.a. to the area on Wild Atlantic Way walking tours. This was 4,500 last year and will be 10,000+ next year, 5 coaches a week from March to September. This is an example of the demand and opportunity.

4.5.2 Access

When asked about the optimum approach to enabling greater numbers of visitors to access the island there was a variety of opinions. Some common themes were:

- **Access to the island needs to be improved** – making it easy for visitors to come to the island is fundamental to improving the visitor experience and is the most important issue.
- **If access to the island was restricted** to a ferry from the visitor centre then locals would not be happy as many use small boats to access the island. Restriction on access would reduce the appeal of businesses such as Lakeside Holiday Park in Mountshannon which leases motorboats from which guests (families mainly) visit Holy Island (Inis Cealtra) for picnics.
- **A licence or permit** could be put in place; however, how far should this licence reach, e.g. just Mountshannon/Scarriff or Ballina-Portumna? Must also include anglers.
- **Current access not fit for purpose** – most thought that while the current boat had charm, it lacked capacity and quality to cater for a rise in visitor volume.

- **New ferry needed** – most thought that there should be a new ferry service, with most thinking this should run from Mountshannon and some from Knockaphort or Scarriff. Boat(s) should be solar powered and silent.
- **Tender** – most thought the ferry should be a privately operated commercial venture operated through a tender and linked to the visitor centre. It was thought this could be a subsidised operation.
- **Free access** - Most thought access to the island itself should be free with visitors charged for access to the visitor centre and use of the ferry service. This includes kayakers whose numbers would not be significant.
- **Timing** – the stretch of water between Knockaphort and Inis Cealtra is a very good trout run and can see up to 100 boats fishing there in April and May, these anglers bring good revenue to the area.
- **Chairlift/gondola/boardwalk** - while one person thought that a chairlift/gondola from Knockaphort to the island could be an attraction or a boardwalk, most thought the capital cost of these would be prohibitive; they would be inappropriate as the island should remain an island; and a boardwalk would encourage anti-social behaviour. Another mentioned that a boardwalk would be very unpopular as the infrastructure would interfere with a valued trout drift on the west of the island.
- **Free entry for locals** – one said locals should be allowed free access to the island via a ferry service for visitors using a locals' card.
- **Overnight camping** – a few said that allowing any overnight camping would encourage fires (using vegetation from the island), and would encourage anti-social behaviour.

- **A range of service could be provided** with a scheduled service in summer months and an ad-hoc service in winter months. A raft or pontoon style ferry could be provided between Knockaphort and the island.

A ferry operator suggested that, if a new access pier was developed, visitors could be brought on coach tours on a new tour to the island from Killaloe: 11am Killaloe – 1hr to Inis Cealtra, 45mins on the island, 1pm to 1.30pm in the visitor centre followed by coach pick up from Mountshannon. A new group of visitors could be then taken from the visitor centre to Inis Cealtra at 1.30pm, 45mins on the island and then back to Killaloe by 3.30pm. This service could expect to do this service for 6 days a week in high season. Currently it would not be possible to put a cost on this type of trip. There should be bulk rate on a visitor centre ferry for coach trips.

However, consultees made the valid point that **control over access means control over the visitor experience** – a unified story rather than multiple stories. If one boat owner was allowed access to the island without going via the visitor centre and this business was a success, many others could then start similar ferry trips from other places on the lake and within a few years there could be multiple boats arriving at the pier at the time, all wanting guides and not all going to the visitor centre. Boats bringing visitors from elsewhere on the lake should go to a visitor centre at Mountshannon first and then a second boat should bring them, and visitors who have come to the visitor centre directly, to the island. This enables control of visitor numbers and avoids the need for multiple guides which would be the case if multiple boats were allowed access to the pier on the island.

The consultees included:

- Áine McCarthy – Tourism Marketing Coordinator, Lough Derg Marketing & Strategy Group,
- James Whelan – Spirit of Killaloe, Ballina/Killaloe,
- Cahill Quinn – Flanagans on the Lake, Ballina/Killaloe,
- Mike Jones – My Next Adventure,
- Maureen Cleary – Clare Tourism Forum,
- Katrina McGirr – Waterways Ireland,
- Eoin O’Hagan – Clare Virtually & East Clare Tourism,
- Mark C. O’Dwyer - Secret Ireland,
- Owen Little – Lakeside Hotel, Ballina/Killaloe,
- Thomas Bottcher – Lakeside Holiday Park, Mounshannon,
- Ruairi Deane – Programme Manager, Irelands Ancient East, Fáilte Ireland,
- Monica Meehan – Clare County Council,
- Pdraig Gilbin,
- Niamh Wiley – Scarriff Tourist Officer/ councillor.



4.5.3 Facilities and services

Inis Cealtra

Consultees were asked what facilities and services should be located on Inis Cealtra. There were some facilities that most thought essential including:

- **Upgraded landing access.** Some said this should be based on floating pontoons that rise up and down with buffers, using a standard Waterways Ireland design. The best location was thought to be mainly the existing pier location at the northwest with a secondary one at the northeast to enable access in different weather conditions. One suggested that this should be able to facilitate two 15-20m boats at a time, one on NW pier and one on NE pier to cater for both wind directions. A breakwater would improve year-round access. Important that access was safe. Fishermen don't necessarily need a pier for access as they have small boats.
- **Better interpretation** – with some suggesting signage on flora and fauna as well as the stories of the island and the architecture. Coillte signage at Portumna Forest Park was cited as a best practice example. One suggested this should include a map board at access points. Some said there should be no signage.
- **Better pathways** - most recommended a circular/loop path around the island as a key feature, recreating the pilgrims' path. One suggested that the original pilgrims' path may have been identified in the 1970s research. Good pathways were also thought to be an aid to ensure visitors were self-guided and didn't have free access. Most said these should be multi-access trails (National Trails Office standards). One suggested this should be grasstrack which would have less of a visual impact.
- **Toilets** – particular to stop use of bushes by visitors which is what is seen to happen currently.
- **Shelter** - against inclement weather, with one suggesting this could include glass walls with the stories of the island etched onto the glass, some said this should be of simple materials and non-obtrusive. One suggested the shelter could include laminated maps for use by visitors to avoid need for signage.
- Lough Derg Anglers want to see the existing fisherman's hut retained which is used by them in bad weather.
- **Benches** – one said not to include picnic benches due to associated litter.
- **Guiding services**, with some saying visitors should be self-guided through use of audio-guides and that visitors didn't necessarily need a guide. These could be multi-lingual.
- **Power** to the island to be supplied through underwater cable.
- Several said the **tower should be lit at night** with one saying it should be green on St Patricks Day – this was a very popular idea. It was suggested this should be done subtly and that, if it could be seen all over the lake, it would be a great way to raise awareness.
- **Canoe and kayak access** should be facilitated through improved landing access, e.g. 2-3 places for kayaks to pull up with pathways linking to a perimeter path, doesn't need to be formed landing point, just a dry pathway. Waterways Ireland indicated that there is a design in place for a 2m long step for low freeboard access. This includes an adjacent cage that enables the whole kayak and bags etc. to be safely stored.
- **Replica dwelling** – one suggested that a dwelling place could be recreated using traditional materials and techniques and this would be hugely popular with school tours.
- One other suggestion was for a **wild camping zone**. However, others thought this was inappropriate and would lead to anti-social behaviour.

Visitor centre

Consultees were asked whether a visitor centre was necessary and if so what facilities and services should be included.

There was a strong feeling that a visitor centre would be desirable and that this should be located off the island. One consultee thought that the current Aistear Park centre and the associated interpretation was sufficient; however, most thought a new centre was justified.

The ideal place was thought to be Mountshannon with one saying Mountshannon had an emotional connection to the island. Many thought the visitor centre should have a view of Inis Cealtra. One suggested that this should be located at the existing and disused Rectory which has four acres of grounds and views to Inis Cealtra.

Suggested facilities included:

- Interpretation of the stories of the island using a mix of modern and traditional techniques.
- Meeting rooms - to facilitate tours, school groups, education, community events – space to facilitate interaction and discussion after a visit to the island.
- Replica of the heyday of the island - similar to King John's Castle in Limerick.
- Animation - some suggested there should be animation in the high season, e.g. craft workers – others said don't turn it into Bunratty, although it could have occasional events.
- Café – most said this should cater for 55+ to facilitate coach groups. Some said to design the building so as to enable expansion of key areas such as the café should future demand require. Should have a view of the island.
- One said the design of the visitor centre should enable it to be run by skeleton staff in the quiet months, e.g. one person for reception, café and shop.
- Retail - e.g. branded keepsakes and local art, craft and food.
- Toilets.
- Coach and visitor parking.



4.5.4 Facility management

When asked who should manage the visitor centre, most thought that this should not be managed by Clare County Council.

Most thought it should be a community facility managed through commercial tender with maintenance by Clare County Council. Some thought it should be managed by the OPW due to their experience of managing similar attractions and with visitor management.

4.5.5 Interpretation

When asked about the approach to interpreting the history of Inis Cealtra, consultees had the following comments:

- **Use the stories of the island** - including the history, people and how they lived their lives, monastic settlements, how the islanders protected themselves against Vikings, craft and trade, agriculture, e.g. how they fed 400+ people, pilgrimage, use of the bargaining stone;
 - **Traditional vs technology** - Most thought the interpretation should include a mix of modern and traditional techniques, e.g. interpretative panels with multilingual AV. Some suggested augmented reality and holograms with Titanic Experience cited as a good example. The Michael Cusack Centre was thought to be a good example of interpretation;
 - **AV shows** are a good idea and should be multilingual – one from Cliffs of Moher is cited as a good example. This could include 3D reconstruction of how the island used to look at different periods;
 - **Audio guides** were thought to be an option for the island and could offer an opportunity for self-guiding and minimise need for signage – these could be multi-lingual. One company Abarta Audio Guides have already visited the island and could even offer guides in Chinese;
 - **Phased approach** – some said investment in high capital technology should wait for a 2nd phase. Keep it simple at the start and invest when more is known about visitors' interests and opinions – different aspects of the story might be of more interest than others;
- Most thought interpretation should be presented in a **logical chronological way**;
 - **Use of existing interpretation** - One said the interpretation from the current Aistear exhibition should be used;
 - **Apps** - some said apps were of value, for example the Waterways Ireland Lough Derg²⁷ app, were the future of tourism and increase dwell time, and make the attraction of interest to children and teens; others felt strongly that they were a waste of money and visitors should be looking up not down. However, several thought Inis Cealtra should be part of a Lough Derg app and that a new app was not needed;
 - Most thought any tech should be on the mainland and traditional interpretation on the island – for example signage;
 - Some thought there could be recreation of island scenes using actors, craft working using stakeholders etc. – others thought Inis Cealtra shouldn't become Bunratty castle. One said there was a tradition of drama locally and local stakeholders could be used to recreate characters in summer months and peak periods, e.g. on the ferry;
 - Replica finds could be used to encourage a tactile approach and for people to view finds they wouldn't otherwise be able to see;
 - One said music was good for building emotions.

²⁷<http://www.failteireland.ie/Footer/Media-Centre/Discover-the-Treasures-of-the-Lakelands-on-your-ph.aspx>

4.5.6 Marketing and promotion

Key visitor markets

When asked about key visitor markets and means of promoting Inis Cealtra consultees had the following comments:

- The Culturally Curious market segment was thought to be the market with the most potential. Some also thought that the Great Escapers segment would be interested, with the lake providing a tranquil and peaceful environment – people ‘getting away from it all’. The lake is the attraction for many and many visitors want to get out onto the lake.
- Families staying in the area and group tours were thought to be key markets. Often families staying in the area in self-catering accommodation are looking for things to do so accommodation providers should be targeted with in-room and reception information as well as family trips for staff.
- Some thought there would be greater interest from families in the summer and holiday periods and from older visitors in the shoulder seasons.
- Coach tours don’t bring overnight revenue to the area – aim should be for a mixture of coach and individual travellers with a focus on the latter who bring the most economic benefit to the area. Some thought Inis Cealtra should be an attractor for as many as possible, including coach tours, some thought this would have a negative impact on Mountshannon and it should be more limited.
- Once you have improved access it opens up the island to a range of groups.
- Main market for visitors to the island depends on the focus of interpretation – could include family, birdwatching, specialised tour groups, e.g. spiritual, ecology, University groups and tours, e.g. archaeology and ecology societies.
- Main market would be families and group tours. Also focus on northern Europe – France, Germany and the Netherlands.
- Younger market could be targeted using the Blue Way and kayaking.

Branding

When asked about a vision and branding for the island consultees said:

- Inis Cealtra needs a clear message and identity;
- Main message should be about the untouched, pristine and uncontaminated monastic site – in comparison to so many others that have been turned into theme parks;
- Keep the island unspoilt;
- Should be a focus on tranquillity;
- A logo is needed for the island and visitor centre to unify it as an attraction;
- Several consultees said the branding and logo should focus on the tower as an iconic feature along with St Caimín’s beside it. Pencil line drawing of tower in the Aistear exhibition should be used as a logo.

Websites and social media

All consultees said that as a flagship attraction Inis Cealtra should have its own identity including website, Facebook page and twitter account (which it has already). Other comments were that:

- Inis Cealtra should also continue to be promoted as part of the Lough Derg website, which should be improved in terms of the Lough Derg content – links to the Inis Cealtra site – most consultees thought that Inis Cealtra should have its own identity but also be part of the wider Lough Derg proposition;
- The Inis Cealtra website is the best location to place the many stories about the island;
- Use embedded media such as drone footage;
- Digital strategy should be similar to Portumna Forest Park;
- Links to Discover Ireland and Clare Tourism.

Promotion and awareness

When asked about means of promotion, raising awareness and how to enhance the tourism potential of Inis Cealtra comments were:

- Use social media – Twitter, Facebook;
- Engage a local champion to promote the attraction;
- Use national media articles e.g. Pol O'Conaghaile who has visited the island, TV programmes like Tracks and Trails, Nationwide – appropriate core target market;
- Building interest takes time and engagement – needs a multi-year promotional strategy focusing on events, engaging tour operators and attending trade fairs – talk to Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland;
- Hold a summertime trad music concert on the island using local musicians on a summer's day/evening. One suggested a natural amphitheatre could be identified to facilitate this;
- Fleadh events in 2017 – lots of local musicians;
- Need to talk to tour operators in key source markets;
- Grow slowly;
- Light the tower so it can be seen at night;
- Make access easy and people will come;
- Use drone video and imagery;
- Inis Cealtra Christmas cards.

4.5.7 Linkages and collaborations

When asked about linkages and collaboration consultees had the following range of comments:

Links to Destination Brands

- Destination branding is now likely to be focused on an Ireland's Ancient Highway concept based along the Shannon corridor. This would be part of the IAE proposition as a signature product. This would mean linkages could be made within this such as Devenish Island-Clonmacnoise-Inis Cealtra – the three towers;
- Inis Cealtra should be part of the Lough Derg proposition, linked to the Lough Derg roadmap strategy;

- In terms of branding Lough Derg should be a standalone attraction that is based on history and activity;
- It is not part of IAE as too far west although it could be associated with it;
- Should link to IAE and other national campaigns but also be strong enough to stand alone as a flagship attraction;
- Should be linked with IAE, part of ancient Ireland - Breton laws, old rituals, mass graves – all important;
- Inis Cealtra Island attraction to both WAW and IAE.

Trails and Circuits

- Some thought Inis Cealtra should be part of a triangle monastic trail – Clonmacnoise–Rock of Cashel–Inis Cealtra;
- Others thought it shouldn't be part of a trail – and should be able to stand on its own two feet. However, it was thought the island could be promoted alongside Dromineer, Garrykennedy, Tuamgraney, giving people options;
- Should drive visitors to Lough Derg and be part of Lough Derg Heritage Trail;
- A pilgrimage trail has potential as does a Brian Boru trail and a monastic sites trail;
- Could link with Tuamgraney, Dromoland, Killaloe;
- A visit to the island needs to be seen as part of a visit to the wider Lough Derg area;
- Inis Cealtra needs to link with Canoe trail – going to be promoted from October 2016 with 13 sites with egress and access, an extension of the Shannon Blueway, being led by Waterways Island, map is same as in the Lough Derg Roadmap;
- Should be part of a monastic sites heritage trail including Clonmacnoise and Rock of Cashel. Part of hidden Ireland/undiscovered Ireland;
- Many walkers come along the West Clare Way. Important to slow visitors down – walking slows people down, increases bed nights and people spend more;
- The idea of an Irish Camino was popular with stamps being provided in hotels and B&Bs;
- Camino along the Shannon has potential, Lough Ree has many islands with churches (33);

- Scattery Island – Quin Abbey – Ennis Abbey – Inis Cealtra could be a cross Clare camino;
- Focus on experiential development;
- Heritage tourism is growing as is genealogy, there must be 1000's of people with ancestors on the island;
- Need to embrace locals – working together;
- Packages and itineraries should be developed around monastic sites, Lough Derg and Brian Boru.

4.5.8 Tour operator consultees

- Maloney & Kelly
- CIE Tours
- Irish Welcome Tours
- Abbey Tours
- Custom Ireland
- Go West
- Hello Ireland
- Celtic Footsteps
- Into Ireland

PART 2 MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

4.6 Market Potential

Estimation of market potential for Inis Cealtra is based on:

- an understanding of the heritage on the site and the geographical location;
- a review of similar attractions at a national level;
- analysis of case studies of similar attractions;
- consultation with key stakeholders, including Fáilte Ireland, Clare County Council and the Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group;
- consultation with tour operators;
- potential for linkages at local, regional and national level with similar attractions and with destination strategies.



4.6.1 Assumptions

The following statements are assumptions projected from the analysis of research data:

- Around 10,000 visitors per annum come to Inis Cealtra by paid boat at present, plus an unknown number of additional day-trippers, local community, kayakers and anglers.
- Access to Inis Cealtra, for the majority of visitors, is via the visitor centre, while free access to the island is confined to kayaks and permit holder., Permits are restricted to residents of the Mountshannon-Scariff area, the five boats leased by Lakeside Holiday Park and members of the Lough Derg Anglers.
- Approximately 40% of the visitors only go to the Inis Cealtra visitor centre at Mountshannon and do not go to Inis Cealtra itself. This indicative figure is based on data from Brú na Bóinne (with the volume of free school places reduced) and from data from other similar attractions such as Skellig Experience; it has an upper limit based on the appropriate visitor volume for the island from the Limits of Acceptable Change study that was undertaken as part of this Plan.
- The number of visitors travelling to Inis Cealtra annually is based on the 60% of the total visitor numbers expected to go to both the Inis Cealtra visitor centre and Inis Cealtra itself, plus an annual figure of 2,500 for local community, kayakers and anglers landing on the island and visiting graves.
- **Low estimate** would see the Inis Cealtra attraction promoted as a part of the wider Lough Derg proposition only, rather than as an attraction in itself. The budget for promotion would also be at a lower scale. Tour operators would not be targeted and the linkages with other similar attractions and destination strategies would not be a focus.
- **Medium estimate** would see the Inis Cealtra attraction promoted as part of the wider Lough Derg proposition and as a visitor attraction in its own right; the budget would be at a medium level and some key tour operators would be targeted. Crucially, linkages with other attractions such as Rock of Cashel, Clonmacnoise and Devenish and Scattery Islands would be developed, as would linkages as part of the wider Ireland's Ancient East destination proposition, linking into national marketing campaigns.
- **High estimate** would see the Inis Cealtra attraction promoted as part of the wider Lough Derg proposition and as a visitor attraction in its own right. The budget would be at a high level with all opportunities exploited, including attendance at trade fairs attracting a wide range of coach tour operators and developing linkages with a range of other attractions and destination propositions. Were all of these elements in place, then the estimate of visitor numbers to the visitor centre after five years could be similar to those of Clonmacnoise, i.e. 130-150,000 visitors each year.



4.6.2 Visitor centre

Table 4-12 below gives a low, medium and high estimation of market potential for the Inis Cealtra visitor centre. This is based only on paying visitors with additional non-fee paying visitors expected to use the restaurant, retail and meeting space areas.

The medium estimate should be used as the estimated number of visitors to the Inis Cealtra visitor centre annually. For the purposes of revenue calculation, it is estimated that 40% of these visitors would only go to the visitor centre and would not travel to Inis Cealtra.

Period	Low	Medium	High
Year 1	20-30,000 (25,000)	30-40,000 (35,000)	50-60,000 (55,000)
Year 2-3	40-50,000 (45,000)	50-60,000 (55,000)	70-80,000 (75,000)
Year 4-5	60-70,000 (65,000)	70-80,000 (75,000)	100-130,000 (115,000)

Table 4-12: Indicative market potential spread for Inis Cealtra visitor centre only (per annum)

4.7 Inis Cealtra visitor and ferry capacity and timetable projections

To estimate the number of visitors to Inis Cealtra throughout the year and the required ferry traffic the seasonality data from above have been used to produce monthly estimates of visitor numbers for a five-year period as shown in Table 4-13 below. The annual figures are taken from Table 4-12 above and are for Inis Cealtra only. **The annual total figures in Table 4-13 do not include the estimated 2,500 small craft visitors who are considered to have their own boats.**

The maximum required monthly capacity will be 9,000 ferry passengers by year 5. This should be considered the maximum operating capacity of the island.

	% weighting	Year 1	Years 2-3	Years 4-5
Jan	0	0	0	0
Feb	0	0	0	0
Mar	5	1,050	1,650	2,250
Apr	8	1,680	2,640	3,600
May	12	2,520	3,960	5,400
June	15	3,150	4,950	6,750
July	20	4,200	6,600	9,000
Aug	20	4,200	6,600	9,000
Sep	12	2,520	3,960	5,400
Oct	8	1,680	2,640	3,600
Nov	0	0	0	0
Dec	0	0	0	0
Annual		21,000	33,000	45,000

Table 4-13: Monthly estimate of visitors to Inis Cealtra Year 1-5

Table 4-14 below shows an indicative ferry timetable. This is based on the following assumptions:

- The visitor centre would be open from 10am-6pm for 6 days per week.
- There will be no service in November, December, January and February.
- Boats land and depart on the hour.
- Journey time will be 30 minutes.
- The service could be reduced during the shoulder season depending on demand.
- Two 50-seat ferries will be used, which requires less capital investment per operator than if one large ferry was used, and reduces operational risk.
- If the maximum daily capacity is 400 and ferries were to operate for 6 days a week (27 days/month) it could be estimated that the maximum operating capacity would be 10,800 per month, i.e. with headroom above the envisaged operating requirement.

- However, visitors would be requested to stay for a maximum of two hours and there would be a **maximum of 100 visitors at any one time on the island.**

Details of proposed ferries are outlined in Chapter 6 of Appendix 2.

Subject to available funding and commercial interest, the preferred option for access to the island is two 50-seater ferries which provide visitors with greater flexibility and the visitor centre with reduced risk of interruption of service.

Objective 25. To provide the ferry service to the island using a fleet of two 50-seater ferries.

Dep MS	Arr IC	Dep IC	Arr MS	Dep MS	Arr IC	Dep IC	Arr MS	Nos Arr	Nos Dep	Max on island
0900	0930							50		50
		1000	1030						50	0
				1000	1030			50		100
						1100	1130		50	0
1100	1130							50		50
		1200	1230						50	0
				1200	1230			50		100
						1300	1330		50	0
1300	1330							50		50
		1400	1430						50	0
				1400	1430			50		100
						1500	1530		50	0
1500	1530							50		50
		1600	1630						50	0
				1600	1630			50		100
						1700	1730		50	0
								400	400	

Table 4-14: Indicative ferry timetable, based on two 50-seat ferries

4.7.1 Seasonality

To account for seasonality, visitor data for Clonmacnoise, provided by the OPW, was reviewed. This is shown in the graph in Table 4-15 below. The proportion of visitors that arrived during each month of the year in 2015 are shown below in Table 4-16.

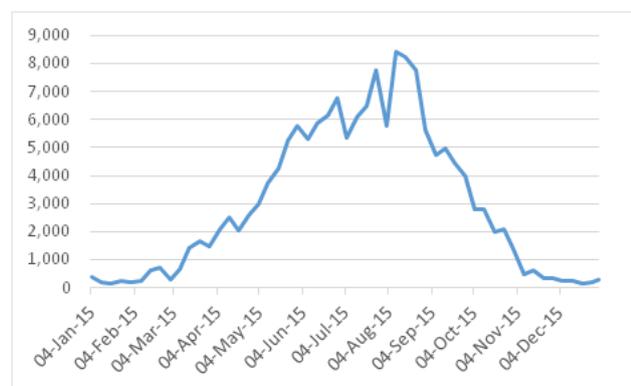


Table 4-15: 2015 visitor data for Clonmacnoise

Source: OPW

Using the data for Clonmacnoise, seasonality projections have been estimated for Inis Cealtra, as shown in Table 4-17 below, with the island considered to be closed to visitor ferry traffic between November and February inclusive.

Month	%
Jan	0.7
Feb	1.2
Mar	3.3
Apr	6.5
May	13.4
June	15.4
July	18.9
Aug	20.3
Sep	11.5
Oct	6.8
Nov	1.3
Dec	0.7
	100

Table 4-16: 2015 monthly visitor arrivals for Clonmacnoise (%)

Source: OPW

Month	%
Jan	0
Feb	0
Mar	5
Apr	8
May	12
June	15
July	20
Aug	20
Sep	12
Oct	8
Nov	0
Dec	0
	100

Table 4-17: Weighting to be used for Inis Cealtra (%)

Source: OPW

4.7.2 Inis Cealtra visitors

Table 4-18 below gives a low, medium and high estimation of visitor numbers for Inis Cealtra. This is based on the midpoint of the market potential estimate from Table 4-12, multiplied by 60%.

Period	Low	Medium	High
Year 1	15,000	21,000 (23,500)	33,000
Year 2-3	27,000	33,000 (35,500)	45,000
Year 4-5	39,000	45,000 (47,500)	69,000

Table 4-18: Indicative market potential spread - Inis Cealtra visitor centre and Inis Cealtra (per year)

The Medium estimate for paying visitors of 21,000 should be used for the estimated number of visitors visiting Inis Cealtra in year 1, 33,000 in years 2-3 and 45,000 in years 4-5.

For the purposes of revenue calculation, it is estimated that 60% of total visitors would go to the visitor centre and travel to Inis Cealtra. For the purposes of impact consideration, an additional 2,500 local community, anglers and kayakers are estimated to travel to the island annually. These are shown in the middle column of Table 4-18 above in brackets.

At all times a balance must be struck between the commercial desire to attract a maximum number of visitors to the area and the requirement to protect and nurture Inis Cealtra's built and natural heritage as well as its ambience.

4.7.3 Visitor revenue

Principles of charging admission fees

The approach regarding charging fees for access to Inis Cealtra and a visitor centre is based on

evaluation of best practice elsewhere, including case studies from Chapter 7, Appendix 2 and consultation undertaken during the course of the project. This is shown in Table 4-19 below.

Option	Approach	Pros	Cons
1	Inis Cealtra: Free Visitor centre exhibition: Free Boat: Paid	Encourages greater use of the island Revenue generation opportunity from ferry manager	Principal source of revenue to manage the island and visitor centre only comes from the café and retail at the visitor centre There could be a risk of uncontrolled access to the island Locals and anglers could require a permit to visit the island
2	Inis Cealtra: Free Visitor centre exhibition: Paid Boat: Paid	Visitor numbers to the island are mostly monitored through the visitor centre Revenue generation from the visitor centre Revenue generation opportunity from ferry manager	Principal source of revenue to manage the island and visitor centre only comes from the café and retail at the visitor centre There could be a risk of uncontrolled access to the island Locals and anglers could require a permit to visit the island
3	Inis Cealtra: Free Visitor centre exhibition: Paid Boat: Paid	Revenue generation from entry to the island Revenue generation opportunity from ferry manager	Requires someone on the island/ferry at all times to check tickets for the island Principal source of revenue to manage the visitor centre only comes from the café and retail at the visitor centre Locals would require permit Difficult to control access to the island, e.g. kayakers; would require fencing of access points
4	Inis Cealtra: Free Visitor centre exhibition: Paid Boat: Paid	Greater revenue generation opportunity from both the island and the visitor centre Enables discounted fee for those wishing to go to the exhibition only Revenue generation opportunity from ferry manager	Fee could deter access Requires someone on the island/ferry to check tickets Locals would require free permit Difficult to control access to the island, e.g. kayakers - could require fencing of access points

Table 4-19: Options for fee approach

The recommendation in relation to fees is as follows:

	Approach	Rationale
Visitor centre	Enable visitors to access the café and retail area without a fee and charge for access to the interpretation	This would follow best practice elsewhere and encourage greater use of the café by the local community
Inis Cealtra	Small fee for access	<p>Most visitors would access the island via the visitor centre and would have an option to pay for the visitor centre exhibition or slightly more for both the exhibition and a visit to the island Local community would not be inconvenienced</p> <p>Ferry fee would go directly to the ferry operator</p>

4.20: Fee Recommendations



Visitor centre fee levels

The approach in relation to the optimum amount to be charged for the proposed Inis Cealtra visitor centre is based on evaluation of best practice elsewhere, including case studies presented in Chapter 7 of Appendix 2 and consultation undertaken during the course of the project. A summary of the evaluation is given below in Table 4-21.

Note: Students are included within different categories depending on the provider/ organisation charging the entrance fee, therefore the entrance fee and category under which they fall varies accordingly in the following tables.

Attraction	Entrance Fee	Boat Fee	Management Agency
Clonmacnoise	Adult €7.00 Group / Senior €5.00 Child / Student €3.00 Family €17.00	N/A	OPW
Brú na Bóinne	Exhibition only Adults €3.00 Sen / Group €2.00 Child / Student €2.00 Family €8.00 Exhibition & Newgrange Adults €6.00 Sen / Group €5.00 Child / Student €3.00 Family €15.00 Exhibition & Knowth Adults €5.00 Sen / Group €3.00 Child / Student €3.00 Family €13.00 Exhibition, Newgrange and Knowth Adults €11.00 Sen / Group €8.00 Child / Student €6.00 Family €28.00	Bus fee included	OPW
Innisfallen Island	0	€10/adult, €25/family of 4, schools & groups €60/boat (capacity 10)	NPWS/OPW
Scattery Island	0	€12 adult, €7 child	OPW

Attraction	Entrance Fee	Boat Fee	Management Agency
Garnish Island	Adults €4 Sen / groups (20+) €3 Family (2+2) €10 Children €2	Harbour Queen Adults €12 Seniors €11 Students €10 Children €6 Children under 5 Free Blue Pool Ferry Adults €10 Children (under 16) €5 Children under 6 Free	OPW
Blasket Centre	Adult €4.00, Sen / Group €3.00, Child / Student €2.00, Family €10.00	€25-40	OPW
The Skellig Experience Visitor Centre Skellig Michael	Adults €5 Child €3 Sen / Student €4 Family (2 adults and up to 4 children) €14	Visitor centre admission fee and cruise around Skellig Michael (2 hours, without landing on the island) Adults €30 Child €17.50 Sen / Student €27.50 Family (2 adults and up to 2 children) €85 Additional child under 12 €10 Exhibition and Mini-Cruise (within Valentia Harbour, 45 minutes) Adults €22 Child €11 Sen / Student €19.50 Family (2 adults and up to 2 children) €60 Additional child under 12 €7 Boat trip with landing €25-40	Private operator (The Skellig Experience Visitor Centre); OPW for Skellig Michael
Maeshowe	Adult £5.50 Child £3.30 Concession £4.40	N/A	Historic Scotland

Table 4-21: Summary of Fees and Management Agencies for case studies

Recommended fees are shown in Table 4-22 below.

- **Adults:** the recommended fee for adults (for the exhibition and Inis Cealtra) at €5.00 is slightly lower than Clonmacnoise (€7) and Brú na Bóinne (€6), slightly higher than Garnish Island and the Blasket Centre (both €4) and comparable to the Skellig Experience (€5). The fee for adults visiting the exhibition only (€4.00) is slightly higher than the fee charged at Brú na Bóinne for exhibition only (€3.00) but enables concessions, including groups for exhibition only to set at €3.00 rather than €2.00,
- **Groups/Seniors:** the fee for groups and seniors follows a similar approach with the recommended fee for both the exhibition and Inis Cealtra at €4.00. This is slightly lower than Clonmacnoise and Brú na Bóinne (both €5.00), slightly higher than Garnish Island and the Blasket Centre (both €3.00) and comparable to the Skellig Experience (€4.00). The fee for groups and seniors visiting the exhibition only (€3.00) is slightly higher than the charged at Brú na Bóinne for exhibition only (€2.00). The rationale includes encouraging groups and seniors to visit while also maximising revenue.
- **Child/Student:** the recommended fee for children and students for both the exhibition and Inis Cealtra is €3.00. This is comparable to Clonmacnoise (€3.00), Brú na Bóinne (€3.00) and the Skellig Experience (€3.00), and slightly higher than Garnish Island and

the Blasket Centre (both €2.00). The fee for children/students visiting the exhibition only (€2.00) is based on the fee charged at Brú na Bóinne for the exhibition only (also €2.00). Children under 3 are free for both visitor centre and boat,

- **Family:** the recommended fee for families (2 adults and up to 4 children) of €14.00 is slightly lower than Clonmacnoise (€17.00) and Brú na Bóinne (€15.00), slightly higher than Garnish Island and the Blasket Centre (both €10.00) and comparable to the Skellig Experience (also €15.00). The fee for families visiting the exhibition only (€10.00) is slightly higher than the fee charged at Brú na Bóinne for exhibition only (€8.00) but takes into account the slightly higher recommended fee for adults visiting the exhibition only.

Ferry

Ferry Fee: if the boat is a commercial tender, then Clare County Council may need to negotiate with the winning tender for the precise fee. The recommendation would be for the return fee to be €10.00 for adults, €7 for children over 5, free for children under 5, €9 for concessions (senior/student/group) and €25 for families (2 adults and up to 4 children). This would be comparable to fees charged for Innisfallen, Scattery and Garnish Islands. Fees for the ferry would be paid at the visitor centre to avoid visitors having to pay twice. This fee for the ferry would be ring-fenced for the ferry operator. A bulk rate would be required for tour operators.

Category	Exhibition Only	Exhibition & Inis Cealtra	Ferry	Total Exhibition, Inis Cealtra & Ferry
Adult	€4.00	€5.00	€10.00	€15.00
Senior / Groups (20+)	€3.00	€4.00	€9.00	€13.00
Child / Student	€2.00	€3.00	€7.00	€10.00
Family (2 adults and up to 4 children)	€10.00	€14.00	€25.00	€39.00
Children under 5	Free	Free	Free	Free

Table 4-22: Recommended admission fees to Inis Cealtra

Source: Fáilte Ireland

Group ticketing and management

One means of managing visitors may be to explore the implementation of a timed ticketing system, similar to that employed at Maeshowe in Scotland (see Chapter 7 of Appendix 2). This would control the number of visitors allowed onto the island at any one time. This could also be seen as a factor of the capacity and timing of the ferry.

Visitor attractions such as Brú na Bóinne aim to reduce the impact of group tours by limiting the number of coach tours to four per day to Newgrange. If Clare County Council wished to reduce or control the impact of coach tours to the island, this means of capacity control could be employed.

Indicative revenue from entrance fees

The indicative revenue from visitor entrance fees is based on the indicative market potential assumptions from above, along with the recommended visitor fees in Table 4-22 above along with the assumptions outlined below. Indicative revenue is outlined in Tables 4-25 and 4-26 below and total indicative revenue is summarised in Table 4-27 below. It should be noted these figures are indicative only.

Detailed profit and loss figures should be obtained from a chartered accountant as part of a full feasibility study for the Inis Cealtra visitor experience.

For further details on the above-mentioned figures, see action 02-06 in the Action Plan.

Revenue

Revenue calculation assumptions:

- Calculations are based on the **midpoint** of the Medium range, i.e. as shown highlighted in blue in Tables 4-12 and 4-18 above. While the total figure could be higher or lower than this mid-point in any given year this is considered that this is a reasonable best-estimate projection.
- As indicated above is assumed that: 40% of visitors will only go to the visitor centre/exhibition and 60% will go to the visitor centre/exhibition and the island; 3.5% of visitors will be students who will not be charged a fee.
- To calculate the indicative revenue, a decision must be made on the expected percentage of total visitors who are either

adults, children, concessions (student, group, senior), family, or free tickets (child under 5, students on study programme, local community pass). This can be difficult to estimate. For the purposes of this exercise an estimate is required and assumptions in this regard are outlined below.

Visitor category split assumptions

- **Overseas vs Domestic:** Based on the earlier visitor data discussed in section 4.1 it is understood that in 2014 the Fáilte Ireland's Shannon Region attracted 1,077m overseas visitors and 686m domestic visitors – a 61.1% overseas vs 38.9% domestic split. It could reasonably be assumed that a similar overseas vs domestic split would apply to visitors to an Inis Cealtra attraction.
- **Overseas markets:** The largest markets for the Shannon Region were Britain (34%), North America (31.7%) and mainland Europe (29.1%). For Co. Clare, the largest overseas market was North America (about 40%), followed by mainland Europe (29.7%) and Britain (25%). The data for Co. Clare may be influenced by the many coach tours that travel from Galway to Limerick via the Cliffs of Moher. For the purposes of this study, it could be suggested that a mid-point between these two figures could be expected for an Inis Cealtra attraction, i.e. 36% from North America, 29% from Britain and 29% from mainland Europe.
- **Overseas market segmentation:** It is expected that the predominant overseas market segment who would be interested in the exhibition and island would be the 'Culturally Curious' market segment (see above). These tend to be middle aged (35-54) and travel as a couple or with friends. However, there would also likely be a smaller proportion of 'Great Escapers' who tend to be younger (24-45), often couples with young children or travelling with friends or family members and 'Nature Lovers' who tend to be typically about 60, retired, on holiday with partner. Given that Fáilte Ireland expect 16% of total visitors to be Culturally Curious, 6% Great Escapers and 3% Nature Lovers, it could be assumed that 64% of overseas visitors will be Culturally Curious (middle-aged adults), 24% Great Escapers (50% families and 50% adults only) and 12% Nature Lovers (adults).

- Domestic market segment:** the main domestic market segment in Fáilte Ireland's domestic market segmentation is 'Connected Families' making up 23% of the total and who are made up generally of young families with children under 10. While there are other segments, it could reasonably be assumed that a high proportion of families staying in accommodation in the area might be interested in an attraction at Inis Cealtra. In addition, there are likely to be walkers and people visiting friends and relatives in the area. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that 65% of the domestic market is made up of families and 25% adults only.
- Applying the proportions of each market segment expected for domestic and overseas markets to the expected split between overseas and domestic markets provides the data in Table 4-23 below.

This would indicate that 67.35% of visitors to Inis Cealtra would be adults (39.1% + 7.35% + 7.3% of overseas visitors and 13.6% of domestic visitors); and 32.65% of visitors to Inis Cealtra would be families (7.35% of overseas visitors and 25.3% of domestic visitors). Given that around half of the family data would include adults, over 80% would be likely to be adults.

Data from the OPW for Clonmacnoise and Bru na Boinne/Newgrange/Knowth seem to back that assessment, see Table 4-24 below

Overseas market (61.1% of total)		Domestic market (38.9% of total)	
64% Culturally Curious (middle aged adults)	39.1% Culturally Curious (middle aged adults);	65% families	25.3% families
24% Great Escapers (50% families and 50% adults only)	14.7% Great Escapers (7.35% families and 7.35% adults only);	35% adults	13.6% adults
12% Nature Lovers (adults)	7.3% Nature Lovers (adults).		
Total	61.1%	Total	38.9%

Table 4-23: Estimated overseas/domestic market share and core target market segments

Category	Clonmacnoise	Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre	Newgrange	Knowth	Brú na Bóinne + Newgrange + Knowth (BNK)
Adult	31,499 (21.97%)	5,902 (34.02% of paid visitors/13.75% of total visitors)	59,253 (40.78%)	25,468 (38.17%)	90,623 (39.51%)
Senior/Group	76,498 (53.35%)	5,801 (33.44%/13.51%)	40,081 (27.58%)	20,356 (30.51%)	66,238 (28.88%)
Child/Student	16,049 (11.19%)	1,529 (8.82%/3.56%)	16,631 (11.45%)	6,652 (9.97%)	24,812 (10.82%)
Family	19,335 (3,867 families @ 5 people per family) (13.49%)	4,115 (823 families) (23.72%/9.58%)	29,335 (5,867 families) (20.19%)	14,245 (2,849 families) (21.35%)	47,695 (20.79%)
Sub-total paid	143,381 (100%)	17,347 (100%/40.4%)	145,300 (100%)	66,721 (100%)	229,368 (100%)
Sub-total of paid visitors as % of total	91.2%	40.4%	3.1%	3.2%	87.6%
Free school	1,154	9,144	0	0	9,144
Ord comps*	5,183	3,929	0	0	3,929
Free Wed**	2,772	1,338	4,670	2,232	8,240
Large***	376	914	0	0	914
Other large****	500	1,759	0	0	1,759
Heritage sales	703	2,905	0	0	2,905
Heritage sales	3,579	7,410	0	0	7,410
Sub-total (% as a proportion of total visitors)	13,766 (8.8%)	25,591 (59.6%)	145,300 (96.9%)	66,721 (96.8%)	32,493 (12.4%)
Total visitors	157,147	42,938	149,970	68,953	261,861

*Ord comp = Ordinary complimentary admission

**Free Wed = free admission on Wednesday to OPW heritage sites

***Large = Large groups

****Other Large = Other large group tours

Table 4-24: 2015 Visitor data for Clonmacnoise, Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, Newgrange and Knowth

Source: OPW Visitor Services

For Clonmacnoise, the proportion of adults (21.97%) and Senior/Group (53.35%) would suggest that 75.32% of visitors are adults. Child/Students make up 11.19% and Families 13.49% - given that children would be expected to be with adults then the proportion of people in the family category (adults and children) might be higher than indicated by the data. Given that 2 adults (mostly) would be in the family category then the overall proportion of adults might be higher still – it could be suggested that over 80% are adults.

For BNK the proportion of adults (39.51%) and Senior/Group (28.88%) would suggest that 68.39% are adults. Child/Students make up 10.82% and Families 20.79% - given that children would be expected to be with adults then the proportion of people in the family category (adults and children) might be higher than indicated by the data. Given that 2 adults (mostly) would be in the family category then the overall proportion of adults might be higher still – again it could be suggested that over 80% are adults.

The data for visitors who only go to the Brú na Bóinne visitor centre would indicate that a slightly higher proportion of adults and child/students only go to the visitor centre than go on to Newgrange or Knowth.

The data for Clonmacnoise and BNK are quite different, with a lower proportion of adults and senior/groups, a similar number of child/students and a lower proportion of families going to Clonmacnoise than to Brú na Bóinne/Newgrange/ Knowth in terms of overall visitor numbers.

The proportions applied to each visitor category for Inis Cealtra in Tables 25 and 26 below are based on: data for Brú na Boinne Visitor Centre for Table 4-25 (with a slightly lower weighting for free schools than Brú na Bóinne and a consequent higher percentage for the other categories – this is due to the location of Inis Cealtra and the fact that Brú na Bóinne is a World Heritage Site so interest is likely to be higher); and data taken at a mid-point between the proportions for Clonmacnoise, Newgrange and Knowth for Table 4-26



Category & fee	Adults (€4)	Senior/ Group (€3)	Child/Student (€2)	Family (€10)	Child under 5 Students on study programme Local community pass Free (0)	Revenue from admission fee (€)
% total visitors	20%	20%	15%	15%	30%	€
Year 1: 35,000 X 40% = 14,000	14,000 x 20% = 2,800 x €4 = €11,200	14,000 x 20% = 2,800 x €3 = €8,400	14,000 x 15% = 2,100 x €2 = €4,200	14,000 x 15% = 2,100 x €10 = €21,000	0	44,800
Year 2-3: 55,000 x 40% = 22,000	22,000 x 20% = 4,400 x €4 = €17,600	22,000 x 20% = 4,400 x €3 =€13,200	22,000 x 15% = 3,300x €2 = €6600	22,000 x 15% = 3,300 x €10 = €33,000	0	73,700
Year 4-5: 75,000 x 40% = 30,000	30,000 x 20% = 6,000 x €4 = €24,000	30,000 x 20% = 6,000 x €3 =18,000	30,000 x 15% = 4,500 x €2 = €13,500	30,000 x 15% = 4,500 x €10 = €45,000	0	100,500

Table 4-25: 40% who will go to the Inis Cealtra visitor centre only

(Calculation based on visitor numbers for the year x % allocation for category x fee for that category)

Category & fee	Adults (€5)	Senior/ Group (€4)	Child/Student (€3)	Family (€14)	Child under 5 Students on study programme	Revenue from admission fee (€)
% total visitors	30%	40%	10%	15%	5%	€
Year 1: 35,000 x 60% = 21,000	21,000 x 30% = 6,300 x 5 = 31,500	21,000 x 40% = 6,400 x 4 = 25,600	21,000 x 10% = 2,100 x 3 = 6,300	21,000 x 15% = 3,150 x 14 = 44,100	0	107,500
Year 3-4: 55,000 x 60% =33000	33,000 x 30% = 9,900 x 5 = 49,500	33,000 x 40% = 12,200 x 4 = 36,600	33,000 x 10% = 3,300x 3 = 9,900	33,000 x 15% = 4,950 x 14 = 69,300	0	165,300
Year 4-5: 75,000 x 60% = 45,000	45,000 x 30% = 13,500 x 5 = 67,500	45,000 x 40% = 18,000 x 4 = 72,000	45,000 x 10% = 4,500 x 3 = 13,500	45,000 x 15% = 6,750 x 14 = 94,500	0	247,500

Table 4-26: 60% who go to visitor centre and Inis Cealtra on a combined ticket

	Adults	Child	Concessions	Family	Child under 5 Students on study programme	Total revenue from admission fees (€)
Year 1: 35,000	11,200 + 31,500 = 42,700	8,400 + 25,600 = 34,000	4,200 + 6,300 = 10,500	21,000 + 44,100 = 65,100	0	152,300
Year 2-3: 55,000	17,600 + 49,500 = 67,100	13,200 + 36,600 = 49,800	6,600 + 9,900 = 16,500	45,000 + 69,300 = 114,300	0	247,700
Year 4-5: 75,000	24,000 + 67,500 = 91,500	18,000 + 72,000 = 90,000	13,500 + 13,500 = 27,000	45,000 + 94,500 = 139,500	0	348,000

Table 4-27: Total indicative revenue for Inis Cealtra visitor centre and island (Table 25 + Table 26)

The above figures in table 4-27 should be taken as indicative revenue from entrance fees for the visitor centre and Inis Cealtra for Years 1-5.

4.8 Marketing and communications strategy

4.8.1 Approach

The launch of a new product in a crowded marketplace requires three key elements:

- a clear identity for the product, e.g. a branded image, website, print and social media;
- dissemination of substantive information about the new offer such as brochure support for tour operators, communicating the brand;
- promotional activities to generate interest in it such as familiarisation visits, trade show attendance and events.

It is important that an enhanced attraction at Inis Cealtra establishes a clear identity and at the same time is to be seen as part of a wider destination-based approach both at a local level, e.g. Lough Derg, and at a wider regional level such as part of the Lakelands destination brand.

The AIDA marketing principle, awareness – interest – desire – action, applies especially to new tourism products. The key tools to achieve the necessary awareness and to commence the process of stimulating interest and desire for the product, leading to action to purchase it, are outlined below in recommendations relating to branding, promotion and linkages.

Branding is further outlined in Section 4.8.2, while digital and print media strategies are detailed in section 4.8.3.

Objective 26. To develop a branding strategy, to include naming, titles, logos, digital and print media initiatives, through a single party services contract with the content (of the appropriate sections of) the Plan forming the brief to tenderers.



4.8.2 Branding strategy

The brand for an enhanced Inis Cealtra visitor centre should:

- be targeted towards key visitor market,
- be informed by the island's heritage,
- link to the wider Lough Derg area.

Name of the island and strapline

One of the first questions examined was the island's names or versions of its name to use going forward. There are three possibilities: Holy Island, Iniscealtra and Inis Cealtra. Surveys during public consultations and among other stakeholders were carried out and the risk of being confused with other Holy Islands (and indeed with the northern Lough Derg itself) was assessed. Issues of language and unfamiliarity (with Irish placenames) and pronunciation was considered. Following these deliberations, it was decided that Inis Cealtra was the most favourable version of the island's names and allowed for a unique branding to be developed because

- more local people use the term 'Inis Cealtra'/'Iniscealtra' than 'Holy Island' to refer to the island and
- Inis Cealtra is deemed likely to have greater resonance in the international market.

Inis Cealtra is the version of the island's names that the Plan recommends to be used from now on.

Title for the visitor centre

The proposed name of the visitor centre is '**Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience**'.

The reasoning for this is as for the use of Inis Cealtra above and

- use of the word experience focuses on the desired impact of the visitor centre – that the visitor experiences all aspects of Inis Cealtra.

The proposed strapline is '**Iniscealtra – the Holy Island**'

Other options that may be considered are 'Inis Cealtra – an island of sanctuary in Lough Derg' and 'Inis Cealtra – an island of tranquillity in Lough Derg'.

Logo

A logo or brand image is important to establish a clear identity for the combined attraction of the proposed Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience and the island itself. The iconic feature of the island is the

Round Tower and St Caimín's Church beside it, as used in the current Aistear Park exhibition.

It is proposed that the image of the Round Tower and St Caimín's Church form the basis for the logo, which could be placed within an outline of a map of Lough Derg. A professional design agency should be commissioned to design a professional logo to the above parameters.

Road signage

To raise awareness of Inis Cealtra and of the proposed Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, a clear hierarchy of road signage is required that will direct people from the motorways, along regional roads and within Mountshannon. This signage must conform to relevant NRA standards and to the Lough Derg Signage Strategy to ensure clarity and be consistent (within Mountshannon) with the drop off (on the main street via the community park) and parking strategy planned for the visitor centre. See also Section 5.7 of Chapter 5: Impact and mitigation measures for further recommendations.

4.8.3 Digital and print media strategy

The aim of the digital and print media strategy is to drive awareness locally, nationally and internationally and must appeal to a variety of target markets.

Website

The website should be professionally designed and include:

- opening times and admission fees,
- visitor centre information,
- ferry information,
- historical, archaeological and natural heritage information,
- photos and embedded drone footage of the island,
- 3D fly-through of the island,
- details of nearby religious sites such as Tuamgraney,
- details on linkages with other sites such as Clonmacnoise and the Rock of Cashel.

This website should be promoted on the Lough Derg website, Clare Tourism site, Visit East Clare site, and Discover Ireland.

Objective 27. To create a dedicated website for Inis Cealtra as well as a social media presence to provide information about the island and the visitor centre, and to promote the use of Inis Cealtra as the island's name.

Social media

The aim of social media is to drive awareness and to inform visitors of local issues and to provide an opportunity to share information and images.

The proposed Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience should have an active presence on social media to promote and raise awareness of the island as a tourist destination.

The following are recommendations for social media outlets to be used to promote the proposed Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience:

- Twitter, with a handle such as @InisCealtraLoughDerg or @InisCealtra,
- Facebook, i.e. an Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience Facebook page to advise of closures and events, and to drive awareness and interest,
- Instagram account for sharing of pictures and video, and to connect to those shared by visitors.

App

The function of the existing Lough Derg mobile app should be enhanced for the purposes of including Inis Cealtra.

This could include interpretative media, games for children and teenagers, 3D content. The reasoning for not recommending the development of a new app for Inis Cealtra is:

- high capital cost,
- high ongoing marketing costs,
- promotion of Lough Derg app will also help drive visitors to other places in the area.

Print media

The traditional media, such as brochures and leaflets incorporating maps, are still important as not all visitors will have or want to use apps or audio-guides.

A high-quality map of the island could be developed as part of a wider Lough Derg map indicating attractions and activities in the area.

Print media, along with other material such as banners, posters and images, could be used to promote Inis Cealtra at various events such as the Holiday World Show, the Adventure Show and Meithal at the RDS in Dublin, as well as international trade fairs such as World Travel Market in London and ITB in Dublin as part of an Ireland stand.

Video

Video content should be produced for use in embedded media on the website, promotional videos on YouTube and for social media advertising on Twitter and Facebook. This should incorporate innovative use of drone footage.

4.9 Promotion and linkages

4.9.1 Target market

In terms of market positioning, as indicated above, it can reasonably be assumed of visitors to the proposed Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience that:

- there would be a 61.1% overseas and 38.9% domestic split,
- 36% of overseas visitors would be from North America, 29% from Britain and 29% from mainland Europe,
- 64% of overseas visitors would be from the Culturally Curious target market segment (middle- aged adults), 24% Great Escapers (50% families and 50% adults only) and 12% Nature Lovers (adults),
- 65% of the domestic market would be made up of families (many staying in local accommodation) and 25% adults only,
- 67.35% of visitors to Inis Cealtra would be adults and 32.65% families, with adults being 80% of the total number of visitors.

Table 4-28 outlines this estimated overseas/ domestic market share and core target market segments. Further details of these target market segments are given in Chapter 7, Appendix 2.

Table 4-10 (p. 98) presents an Inis Cealtra product/ market matrix. The 'Footloose Socialiser' market segment from the domestic market and the 'Top Tanners' segment from the overseas market may have some interest in the proposed Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience but are not thought to be a core target market segment.

It is proposed that the identified overseas and domestic market segments form the key visitor target markets for a Inis Cealtra visitor attraction. These market segments are identified in Tables 4-28 and 4-9.

Overseas market (61.1% of total)	
64% Culturally Curious (middle aged adults)	39.1% Culturally Curious (middle-aged adults);
24% Great Escapers (50% families and 50% adults)	14.7% Great Escapers (7.35% families and 7.35% adults);
12% Nature Lovers (adults)	7.3% Nature Lovers (adults).
Total	61.1%

Domestic market (38.9% of total)	
65% families	25.3% families
35% adults	13.6% adults
Total	38.9%

Table 4-28: Estimated overseas and domestic market shares and core target market segments

The product/market matrix also indicates a range of special interest groups, which are valid for both overseas and domestic markets. These include:

- specialised tour groups, e.g. spiritual, ecology,
- university groups and tours, e.g. archaeology and ecology societies,
- archaeologists,
- walkers,
- kayakers,
- birdwatchers,
- anglers,
- cruising visitors.

The findings above are reinforced by consultation (outlined in Chapter 7 of Appendix 2) where consultees believed:

- Culturally Curious and Great Escapers had the most potential;
- families staying in the area in self-catering accommodation and group tours were key markets;
- there might be greater interest from families in the summer and other holiday periods and from older visitors in the shoulder seasons;
- focus of interpretation could influence the interest markets, e.g. academic focus vs entertainment for children.

In terms of sustainability and impact, coach based group tours require further consideration in terms of limiting numbers and impacts.

4.9.2 Promotional activities

It is proposed that the marketing programme will make provision for the various promotional activities, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group, Clare Tourism, Visit East Clare and other relevant agencies. This may require a multi-staged approach to promotion of the island as a flagship attraction to ensure impacts are monitored and minimised.

Promotional activities include:

- **Media advertising campaign** driven by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, including design of specific advertising material;
- **Trade and consumer promotions**, advertising with key markets, including: day visitors from domestic market; specialist day and overnight visitors – cruising, angling, kayaking, bird-watching in key identified markets;
- **Familiarisation trips** for media and overseas walking and cycling groups;
- Development of brochure detail for inclusion in in-room information and branded brochure racks;
- **Attend trade workshops** in Ireland;
- Representation in overseas market consumer events and shows;
- Content for tour operator and online travel agent web sites;
- Familiarisation trips for tour operators, including local hosting;

- **Increased and coordinated marketing** with the existing festivals and events within the area;
- **Social media advertising** to drive traffic to Facebook page and promotional videos on YouTube;
- Focus on TripAdvisor content and reviews;
- Development of bundled offers for use on www.discoverireland.com;
- Upgraded content for www.discoverireland.ie and www.ireland.com;
- Depending on budget, consider targeted outdoor advertising, radio and TV advertising in key target markets.



4.9.3 Subject and themes

- Areas for the focus of promotion include:
- Those aspects of Inis Cealtra that are unique selling propositions (USPs) such as the only recumbent early medieval gravestones in place in Ireland;
- Pilgrimage to the island;
- The tranquil and undisturbed character of this island location;
- Access to the island and island life;
- Linkages with Brian Bóru and other ecclesiastical monuments in the area;
- Natural heritage such as the flora, fauna and Shannon ecology;
- Impact of the Vikings.

Events to raise awareness of the opening of the attraction include:

- a summertime traditional music concert on the island which is small scale, acoustic and high quality using local musicians, or alternatively an event in the visitor centre;
- Local trade and community open day;
- Relocation of cillin stones with a mass remembrance service.

4.9.4 Linkages and trails

The overall success of Inis Cealtra as a visitor attraction will depend on the degree to which it can tie in with wider destination marketing initiatives as well as ensuring, as a flagship attraction for the area, this initiative helps to promote the wider Lough Derg and East Clare area.

Linkages to drive increased numbers of visitors to the attraction and to other areas can be considered in terms of local, regional and national linkages.

Local linkages include:

- Ensuring a new attraction at Inis Cealtra will be part of the Lough Derg proposition and linked to the Lough Derg roadmap strategy, with a visit to the visitor centre and/or island seen as part of a visit to the wider Lough Derg area. Bundling of tickets for multiple attractions should be considered, including the Brian Boru Heritage Centre, Killaloe River Cruises and the Irish Workhouse Centre at Portumna;
- Key part of the Lough Derg Heritage Trail – which is supported by a map, app and brochures with 90+ heritage sites, including monastic sites, abbeys, churches and graveyards;
- Interpretation and information available on, and visitors encouraged to visit, Tuamgraney: St Cronán's Church at Tuamgraney to the south of Scariff was built before 964AD, and is one of the oldest churches in use in Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. A doorway in the church, through which Brian Bóru entered over 1000 years ago, is still intact; and Terryglass (Tir-da-glasí), where St Columba, one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland, founded a monastery in 549. St Columba spent time at Inis Cealtra and was buried at Terryglass in 552;



- Provision of information on all-family combination experiences will widen the appeal of Lough Derg and tap into the trend towards multi-generational activity;
- Strong link with the Lough Derg Canoe Trail, including egress and access opportunities;
- Visual connection with other parts of Lough Derg with two key lookout points from which the island is visible - Ogonnelloe, 9m north of Killaloe on the western shore, and at the Look Out, 9km from Ballina on the eastern shore, with enhanced visitor discovery points there;
- Focus on linkages with local community as embedded attraction including local staff and guides, local produce for sale, promotion of local accommodation, activities and attractions.



• **Regional linkages include:**

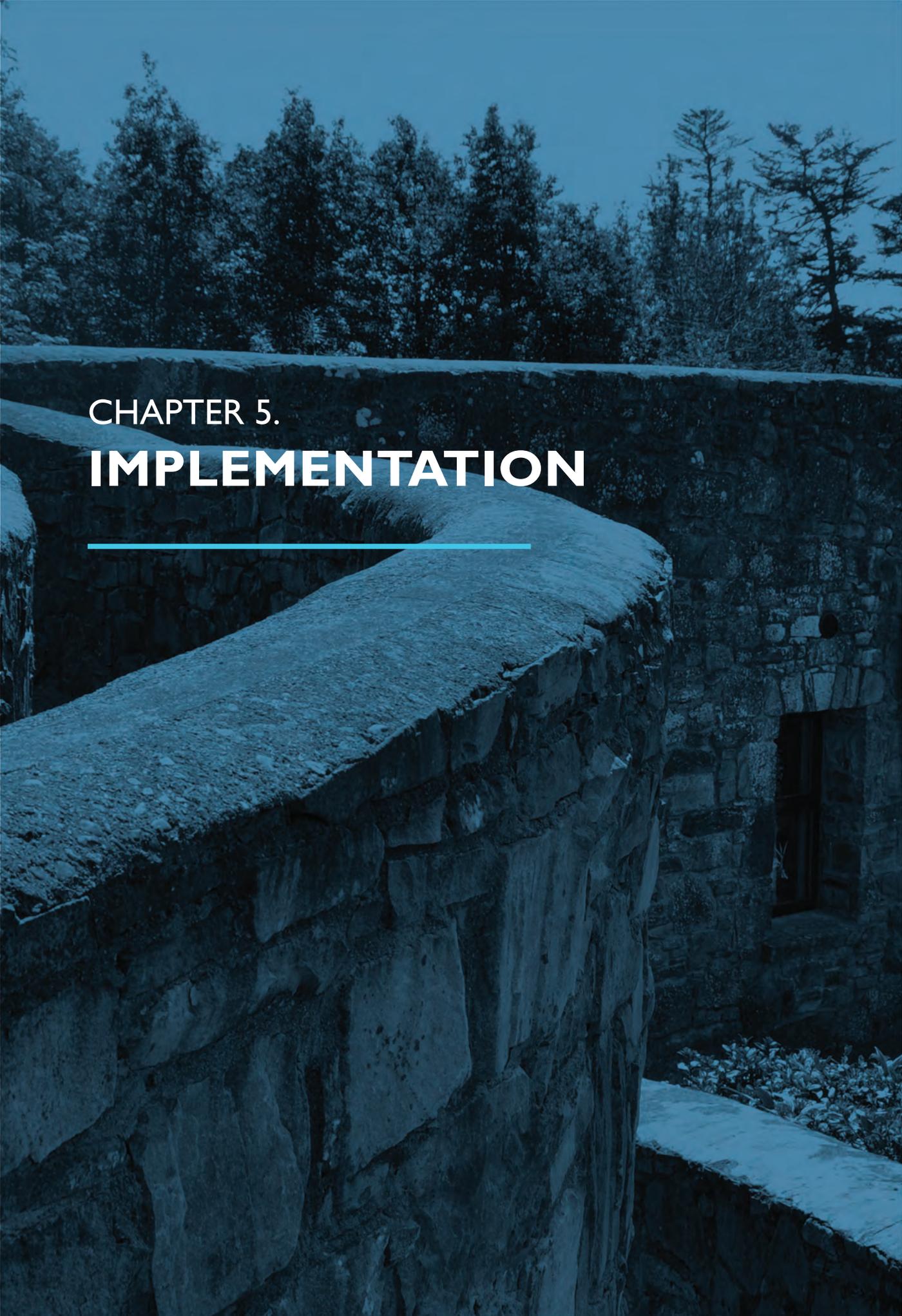
- Linkages with existing religious built heritage sites, including **Clonmacnoise, Rock of Cashel and Holy Cross**;
- Triangle of attractions – Inis Cealtra-Clonmacnoise-Rock of Cashel;
- **Pilgrimage trail** – opportunities include Irish Camino from Scatterry to Inis Cealtra and on to Rock of Cashel and eventually to St Declan’s Way and Waterford; and/or camino along the Shannon, e.g. link with Lough Ree; and link between Scatterry Island, Quin Abbey, Ennis Abbey and Inis Cealtra as a Clare Camino;
- **Pilgrimage stamps** provided in B&Bs and hotels;
- **Brian Bóru Trail** – develop packages and itineraries around ecclesiastical sites and Brian Bóru;
- Link with Dromoland Castle;
- Link with **West Clare Way** – increasing opportunities for dwell time;
- Improve public transport connection with Limerick City which has almost 4,000 bed spaces.
- Of these the most easily realisable is the potential creation of a pilgrim trail with Inis Cealtra as the terminus or a principle stop on the route. The visitor centre will provide facilities for such an activity. It is recommended that such a pilgrim path initiative could be undertaken in parallel with the implementation of the objectives of this plan.

National linkages include:

- Link with **Ireland’s Ancient East** destination proposition and as a side tour from the Wild Atlantic Way where possible;
- Linkage with other relevant brands if developed by Fáilte Ireland;
- Position Inis Cealtra as a discovery centre for primary schools.

International linkages include:

- Genealogical research – there are many people in the diaspora with ancestors on the island;
- Pilgrimage destinations in other destinations;
- Historical and archaeological societies and academic institutions overseas.



CHAPTER 5.
IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Roles and responsibilities

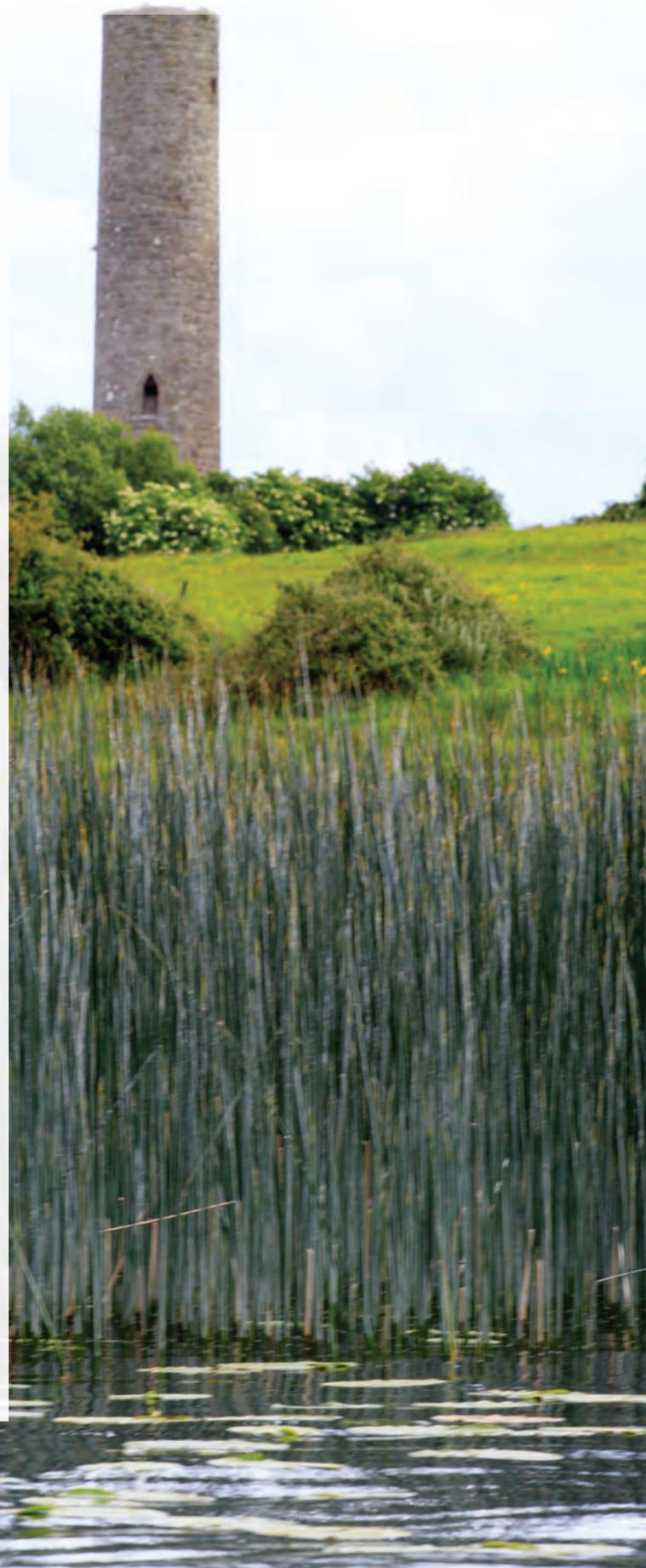
The successful implementation of the Plan will require that many stakeholders work closely together over the next few years.

Clare County Council has taken a leadership role in purchasing the island and commissioning this Plan. That role must continue. Their leadership is crucial in marshalling the efforts of many toward the goal of sharing Inis Cealtra without detriment to the island's heritage. In many cases Clare County Council are charged with executing specific objectives of the Plan directly and in other cases their role is to champion and referee the work of others.

The OPW are also critical to the success of the plans for Inis Cealtra. They have protected the island's monuments for decades and will continue to do so into the future. They will continue to own and care for the monuments, allowing access to them under management structures run by Clare County Council. The OPW possess a wealth of expertise and resources that will need to be made available to advance the vision.

The local community and the Inis Cealtra Community Forum will play an important role in the island's future. As a presence on the ground they will continue to help care for the island. As guardians of it from long before recent initiatives, they will ensure that the principle and vision for a sustainable tourism development of Inis Cealtra are to the forefront through project and implementation stages and on into operation. They will also be the practical conduit for community involvement in the next stages and will manage community usage of the island thereafter.

Other organisations, such as the Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy group, Mountshannon Community Council, adjacent County Councils, the white-tailed sea eagle project, local heritage groups and groups of tourism businesses (not only in Mountshannon but around the lake) will also have a role in contributing to the various projects and processes that are integral to implementing this Plan successfully. It will be important that statutory and formal agencies and organisations work constructively with the community and informal groups who wish to contribute to the future of Inis Cealtra.



5.2 Organisation and management

The following table represents the matrix of operations and stakeholders, their roles, timelines and responsibilities in the development of the Plan's proposals.

	Clare County Council	OPW	Inis Cealtra Management Group (ICMG)	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Dept. for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	White-tailed sea eagle project L. Derg Marketing & Strategy group	Tour operators, local businesses
Prior to implementation of plan							
Implementation group ICMG							
Conservation Management Plan							
Surveys							
Conservation work							
Tests, design, consents							
Project procurement							
Construction							
Training, operating							
Marketing							
Managing							
Reviewing							

Table 5-1: Matrix of operations and stakeholders, their roles, timelines and responsibilities

5.3 Prior to implementation of the Plan

The entire island of Inis Cealtra (and its immediate lake border) is a sensitive archaeological zone and a designated National Monument. Therefore, before any physical works are undertaken or steps to increase numbers of tourists implemented, the procedures set out below must be followed.

- A geophysical survey of the entire island shall be undertaken by an archaeologist to determine the true extent and complexity of the earthworks, as well as other underground features. For the protection of the earthworks and underground archaeology, active management and monitoring of trees, scrub and overgrowth is necessary; an archaeologically informed landscape management plan shall be developed.
- An underwater archaeological survey of the shoreline and in the general vicinity of the island shall be carried out by archaeologists specialising in underwater archaeology, paying particular attention to logboats, piers and bullaun stones located offshore and any other submerged features.
- Any changes that involve removing, demolishing or changing any aspect of Inis Cealtra will require ministerial consent and shall not be carried out without archaeological consultation.
- Each proposed alteration on Inis Cealtra will be subject to a series of procedures that will largely be dictated by the nature of the specific development and by ministerial consent at project stage. It is important that time be built into any project timeline to allow these procedures to be followed assiduously.
- It should also be noted that the designation of Inis Cealtra to be included within a possible serial World Heritage Site would bring with it certain additional obligations in terms of planning and environmental policies.



In the case of future developments, the following may have to be undertaken but the discretionary system is not bound to any rigid guidelines/process:

- Identify the location of known areas of archaeological deposits and other areas of potential interest. Geophysical surveys may be necessary.
- Draft a full pre-works archaeological survey – an archaeological assessment which will include an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) – and a detailed specification for each phase of works in advance of any work commencing on the site.
- Any major developments will be subject to Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) in accordance with the relevant EU directives. This requires a developer to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) setting out details of the project and the likely significant effects on the environment, including archaeology. It will set out any measures to be taken to avoid or moderate any adverse effects.
- Other development may require that a Natura Impact Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) will be carried out.
- Every effort should be made during the planning process (and later during construction) to avoid direct impact on known archaeological features and designated Natura (habitat) sites.
- Planning applications should be accompanied by sufficient plans, drawings, and particulars to show how the proposed development would affect the character of the site.
- The Planning and Licensing Unit of the National Monuments Service can provide general advice on planning applications.
- Apply for Ministerial consent from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as required under National Monuments legislation.

- The National Monuments Service will advise the Minister and the planning authorities on planning developments; the Monument Protection Unit of the NMS deals with notices given of proposed work. In the case of underwater archaeology, the Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU) advises on development applications.
- The Minister can recommend archaeological conditions be attached to grants of planning permission or recommend refusal of permission by the planning authority.
- No work will commence unless and until the Minister has issued consent under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended.
- If consent is granted, all works will be archaeologically monitored by formally licensed archaeologists. For underwater archaeology, a dive and/or detection device licence is required if diving on or surveying for underwater archaeology. The developer will bear the cost of all archaeological investigations.
- Conditions of planning permission requiring a monitoring presence ensure that if remains of archaeological significance are disturbed during the work, they can be recorded and any necessary emergency action taken. The archaeologist will have the authority to suspend or direct work.
- Where avoidance of archaeological features cannot reasonably be achieved, an appropriate programme for archaeological mitigation and/or test trenching and a system for excavations should be drawn up. Excavations are regulated through formal licensing and consent systems. Excavation can only be carried out by licensed archaeologists under Section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended.
- All known monuments and archaeological features, or parts of, which will be affected should be excavated and recorded in accordance with agreed methodologies.
- The Minister should be made aware of any previously unknown monument discovered during works.
- In the case of unforeseen circumstances, plans may need adjustment and further licences may be required.

- The archaeologist should inform the developer of the likely condition of the site at the end of excavation, and about any special requirements for backfilling the excavations so that the developer may plan accordingly. The archaeologist may need to prepare an archaeological appraisal of techniques to be used in construction operations.
- The necessary finance should be available to fulfil the post-excavation requirements of the Minister, including the conservation of archaeological artefacts and the provision of scientific analyses and dating as well as the production of archaeological reports.

Objective 28: To carry out urgent stabilisation, maintenance or conservation work, as set out in this Plan, to monuments on Inis Cealtra, as soon as possible and prior to any increase in visitor numbers or other development work being initiated.



5.4 Risks

The Plan is robust and has a good degree of built-in flexibility. Like any plan, however, its success is dependent on many processes and decisions, many of which cannot be fully guaranteed. The Plan process included consideration of the principle risks and the development of possible mitigation routes as follows:

Risks	Likelihood/ severity	Circumstances/factors	Mitigation
Damage to, neglect of the monuments	2 B	Delay in addressing current condition	Temporary protective measures
Injury to person	1 C	Boating activity risks Inbuilt risks with historic (and high) structures	Curtail/defer visitors to island. Cordon off some/all monuments
Archaeological obstacles to new landing point on island	2 B	Under lake or subterranean finds	Default to existing NW location (but major investment needed)
Delays or obstacles to visitor centre	2 B	Planning or funding risks Would fail to control visitor impacts	Possibly introduce ferry service prior to VC (but at numbers below the island's LAC maxima)
Problems with envisaged new ferry service	1 B	Funding or Licensing issues could open island to uncontrolled crossings and unmonitorable impacts	Continue/temporarily reinstate, engage local boat/ferry operators
Extreme rise in lake level	1 C	Flooding, water abstraction or climate change risks	Ensure pods are above worst case scenario flood level
Failure of local (community) access policies	1 B	Uncontrolled and unmonitored impacts and footfall	Default back to community only accessing island via visitor centre
Financial failure of visitor centre	1 B	Community or local businesses managing needs careful consideration	Robust business and operating plans prior to design
Failure of visitor centre to lift the socio-economic life of the area/village	1 A	Major investment; must be designed to operate at low cost, stretch the season, target audience and leverage the facilities	At a minimum local employees and local purchasing would bring some benefit
Excessive (above upper limits) access to island (and visitor centre)	1 C	If pressure of visitor number excessive, the island will begin to suffer.	Visitor centre should have an expansion scenario built into its design

5-2: Consideration of risks and mitigation

Likelihood: 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high. Severity: A = easily recoverable, B = medium, C = Fatal/Final

5.5 Required works

A number of the upstanding archaeological remains have been deemed in need of repair and conservation, and their vulnerabilities and mitigation of same are discussed in Chapter 5 of Appendix 2. The following section sets out in outline the work required to stabilise and protect the island's monuments in the immediate and medium terms. It is elaborated upon in Chapter 5 of Appendix 2.

5.5.1 Urgent works - summary

The tree/shrub growth to the top of the round tower is of urgent concern, as it is of significant size and is likely to have significant implications for the structure. Also of concern is the complete breakdown of pointing mortar on the tower wall, along with dislodged stone to the northeast. It is strongly advised that the top of the tower is accessed with a view to removing the plants and carrying out reb bedding of the top courses where necessary and re-flaunching the exposed wall top. The structural integrity of the section of wall built up to the south elevation of St Caimín's Church shows a strong lean towards the graveyard, which is a recent condition and should be addressed in the immediate future. Other structural issues noted are a bulge to the south wall of St Mary's Church and some problems with the enclosure walls to St Brigid's and St Mary's Churches.

Significant amounts of repairs were carried out using cementitious mortar in the 1970s, which are now leading to problems in the structures. Cementitious mortar has also been used to secure medieval carved crosses and stones in St Caimín's and St Mary's Churches. To ensure the long-term survival of the structures these inappropriate repairs should be replaced, if possible, using lime-based mortar. The following conditions need immediate attention and require ministerial consent:

- A tree/shrub growth fills the opening to the top of the tower, compromising the wall structure, along with a complete breakdown of pointing mortar and dislodged stone to the northeast. A 2-metre setback should be imposed immediately to ensure members of the public are kept away from the area where stones may fall.
- The structural integrity of parts of St Caimín's Church needs to be examined, along with sections of the east end of St Mary's Church and enclosure walls to St Caimín's, St Brigid's and St Mary's Churches.
- The historic grave marker resting against the wall of St Mary's Church should be re-erected.
- An archaeologically informed decision should be made regarding the loose cross sculpture and architectural fragments in St Mary's Church.
- An archaeologically informed decision should be made regarding the loose cross sculpture and architectural fragments in St Caimín's Church.
- All monuments require active bi-annual management to control the colonisation by vegetation, along with a direct approach of cutting stems and herbicide use to remove ivy as necessary. No plant should be forcibly removed from the upstanding remains or from anywhere on the island.

Works required to monuments

Certain monuments on Inis Cealtra need immediate attention, protection and conservation. Detailed archaeological surveys and photographic records are required and a customised conservation plan should be drawn up by specialist archaeologists and conservationists for each individual monument/group of monuments, prior to conservation work or visitor increases.



Earthworks and pilgrims' paths

An emergency conservation plan for the earthworks, historical paths, and penitential stations should be developed immediately by archaeologists, as some monuments have been eroded by cattle and visitors to the island, as well as by climatic factors. The enclosure surrounding St Michael's and the bank between St Michael's and St Brigid's are problematic, with extensive damage by cattle evident in other areas. Cattle should be removed from the island immediately, and earthworks monitored and reseeded as required.

Medieval carved stones

An emergency conservation plan for the carved stones should be developed, as many of the carved stones are suffering from various types of erosion and dilapidation. All carved stones should be recorded and photographed immediately in their current state. Sculpture which is located in situ should be retained in its original location, while ex-situ stones should be assessed by an archaeological expert to determine what measures are necessary for their preservation. A plan must be put in place for treatment of any potentially removed stones.

Carved stones in and around the OPW hut

Some ex-situ stones near the OPW hut are at risk of being damaged or lost when the OPW hut is removed. Their treatment is to be determined by archaeologists, and no stones will be moved without prior permission from the NMS and OPW. It is preferable to retain them in or near their current location, or locations logged and photographed prior to any changes.

Round tower and walls

Any conservation works involving the round tower, churches, or enclosure walls should be undertaken in consultation with an archaeological expert in care of masonry and historic buildings.

5.5.2 Medium-term works

Upstanding monuments

- **Saints' graveyard:** Entry into the graveyard should be supervised and controlled, and walking on the medieval grave-slabs prevented.
- **St Michael's Church and environs:** The foundations of St Michael's Church and grave-markers from the children's burial ground are vulnerable to overgrowth, which should be reduced. This requires ministerial consent. Identifiable grave-markers could be restored to their original locations while avoiding ground disturbance, and a ceremony of respect convened on the island for those interred there.
- **Cottage:** The remains of the post-medieval 'cottage' are vulnerable to damage by overgrowth, which is to be rectified.
- **Romanesque sculpture:** Conservation measures must be applied to the Romanesque sculpture in the churches, which is suffering due to weathering and possibly human damage.



- **Loose historic headstones:** A historic grave-marker lying loose against the wall of St Mary's cemetery should be re-erected safely. Other loose post-medieval grave-markers or pillars should be assessed and remedial action should be undertaken if deemed to be required.
- **Rising graves:** Some graves in Inis Cealtra's cemeteries have risen above ground level and entry into all of the cemeteries should be restricted. These graves should be continually monitored to ensure that their surfaces do not become worn exposing archaeological material.

Piers

All extant piers are in need of repair. If they are to be altered in any way planning permission, ministerial consent, and archaeological advice are needed.

Fences enclosing/protecting monuments

The protection of monuments is dependent on the replacement of existing rotten wooden fences surrounding them. This requires ministerial consent and archaeological monitoring.

5.6 Inis Cealtra Action Plan 2017-2022

This section comprises a 5-year action plan set out sequentially according to the following chronological activities:

- Preparatory actions
- Pre-development, survey, design and enabling works on Inis Cealtra
- Supporting measures (to projects)
- Marketing and communication
- Monitoring, evaluation and impact management
- Main development projects
- Local access

In the following Action Plan table:

- Actions with shaded colouring are those considered a priority, i.e. to be addressed within the first twelve months.
- Mitigation measures are cross-referenced within the key indicator column.



5.6.1 Preparatory actions

	Action	Lead agency	Partners/stakeholders	Key Indicator
01-01	Establish Inis Cealtra Management Group (ICMG) to coordinate development and assign project co-ordinator role	Clare County Council Office of Public Works (OPW) Waterways Ireland	Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Inis Cealtra Management Group (ICMG) established (MS3)
01-02	Establish Inis Cealtra Community Forum	ICMG	Representatives from Mountshannon, Tuamgraney, Scariff and Whitegate plus a representative from each of OPW and Clare County Council (see Section 3.4.6)	Inis Cealtra Community Forum established
01-03	Secure land required for Mountshannon visitor centre and parking	ICMG	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Relevant experts as required	Required land secured
01-04	Set up communication structures to inform stakeholders and aid promotion	ICMG	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Inis Cealtra development progress communication structure in place
01-05	Remove cattle from Inis Cealtra and replace with a defined number of sheep for grazing during a defined period	ICMG	Local farmers Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Cattle replaced with sheep for grazing purposes (GR13-GR21)
01-06	Apply for ministerial consent from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs as required under National Monuments legislation (prior to any works taking place on Inis Cealtra)	ICMG	NMS Relevant experts as required	Consent granted before each stage of works take place (or rejected which would require a new plan of action moving forward)
01-07	Agree Inis Cealtra Marketing and Development Coordinator function	ICMG	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group (LDSMG)	Inis Cealtra Marketing and Development Coordinator function filled
01-08	Enter discussion with current ferry operators	ICMG	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Agreement of former operators

5.6.2 Survey, design and enabling works on Inis Cealtra actions

	Action	Lead agency	Partners/stakeholders	Key Indicator
02-01	Prepare Inis Cealtra Conservation Management Plan to protect the island and its heritage, and to guide and inform development	ICMG	Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs National Monuments Service (NMS) National Museum World Heritage Committee World Heritage Centre ICOMOS Waterways Ireland Relevant experts as required	Inis Cealtra Conservation Management Plan prepared (MS4)
02-02	Commission geophysical survey of Inis Cealtra if necessary and analysis by archaeological experts	ICMG	Service provider (archaeological GPS experts)	Geophysical survey completed
02-03	Commission underwater archaeological survey if necessary (particularly around site of proposed new pier)	ICMG	Service provider (licensed underwater archaeologists) Underwater Archaeology Unit NMS Waterways Ireland	Underwater archaeological survey completed
02-04	Commission best-practice conservation of built heritage (incl. masonry, earthworks, etc.) on Inis Cealtra	ICMG	Service provider NMS	Built heritage conserved on Inis Cealtra
02-05	Commission best-practice conservation of sculptural heritage (incl. cross-slabs, grave-slabs, crosses, etc.) on Inis Cealtra	ICMG	Service provider (early medieval sculpture conservation expert) NMS	Sculptural heritage conserved on Inis Cealtra
02-06	Prepare detailed business plan for operation of Inis Cealtra Visitor Centre	ICMG	Service provider Project Co-ordinator Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Business plan completed for Inis Cealtra Visitor Centre (including P/E analysis, management, staffing, etc.)
02-07	Commission Landscape Management Strategy for Inis Cealtra	ICMG	Service provider Inis Cealtra Community Forum Project Co-ordinator Archaeologists	Landscape Management Strategy completed (GR1-GR14)

	Action	Lead agency	Partners/stakeholders	Key Indicator
02-08	Design of Inis Cealtra basic infrastructure, including surveys, ministerial consents, planning, etc.	ICMG	Service provider Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Design complete, planning granted, ministerial consent granted, tender carried out, presumed contractor identified
02-09	Design of Inis Cealtra landing point, paths, etc. (including consents as in 02-08)	ICMG	Project Co-ordinator Planners Licensed archaeologists	Design complete, planning granted, ministerial consent granted, tender carried out, presumed contractor identified
02-10	Commission signage and interpretation (design and strategy) for Inis Cealtra visitor centre and Inis Cealtra (conforming to Lough Derg Signage Strategy & Official Languages Act 200, and see section 4.8 for detail and interpretation brief in Chapter 7 of Appendix 2)	ICMG	Service provider Project Co-ordinator Archaeologists Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Interpretation and signage strategy completed
02-11	Design of visitor centre in Mountshannon (including adjacent parking and embarkation point), including surveys, planning, etc.	ICMG	Service provider Inis Cealtra Community Forum Project Co-ordinator Planners	Visitor centre designed, planning permission granted, detail design (FSC and DAC granted) completed, construction tender carried out, presumed contractor identified
02-12	Commission construction of Inis Cealtra landing facilities and basic infrastructure	ICMG	Service provider Inis Cealtra Community Forum Project Co-ordinator Archaeologists	Landing point constructed, pods, paths, etc. constructed

5.6.3 Main development projects

	Action	Lead agency	Partners	Key Indicator
03-01	Commission interpretation and signage installations for Inis Cealtra visitor centre and Inis Cealtra, including multi-media (see section 5.8 for detail and interpretation brief in Chapter 7 of Appendix 2)	ICMG	Service provider Project Co-ordinator Archaeologists (familiar with most up-to-date research on Inis Cealtra) 'Leave No Trace' Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Interpretation and signage produced (I1 and SL1-3)
03-02	Commission construction of Inis Cealtra visitor centre (to be informed by required interpretative content) and on-island facilities including piers, trails, toilets and kayak access points (see Chapter 4 for detail) to be accompanied by an ecological, archaeological impact assessment and Habitats Directive Assessment and with Construction Environmental Management Plan	ICMG	Service provider Inis Cealtra Community Forum Project Co-ordinator Waterways Ireland National Trails Office Archaeologists	Inis Cealtra Visitor Centre completed and on-island facilities including piers completed (PP1-PP13 and SP1-SP11 and P1-P14 and F1-7 and TF1-6 and SH1-6)
03-03	Franchise ferry services from Mountshannon to Inis Cealtra	ICMG	Service providers Inis Cealtra Community Forum Waterways Ireland Project Co-ordinator	Ferry operators awarded contract for 3-year period (AT1-AT4)

5.6.4 Local access

	Action	Lead agency	Partners	Key Indicator
04-01	Non-commercial local access to remain in place	Wardens	ICMG Project Co-ordinator Inis Cealtra Community Forum	No commercial local visitor access allowed
04-02	Camping, unaccompanied tours and fishing on Inis Cealtra will be prohibited	Wardens Community Forum	ICMG Project Co-ordinator Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Camping, unaccompanied tours, fishing monitored
04-03	Access to continue to St Mary's and St Caimín's burial grounds and pre-existing plots to remain in use for plot holders. No new plots shall be assigned and no new graves opened up. The Saints' Graveyard can no longer be used for burial purposes (for further detail see 4.5.5)	ICMG	Project Co-ordinator Inis Cealtra Community Forum Archaeologists (required for monitoring graves and grave-digging)	Access to continue to St. Mary's and St Caimín's burial grounds and pre-existing plots to remain in use (B1-B8)

5.6.5 Supporting measures

	Action	Lead agency	Partners	Key Indicator
05-01	Introduce online timed ticketing system for entry to Inis Cealtra	Clare County Council	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Online timed ticketing system introduced
05-02	Produce Volunteer Management & Training Plan	Clare County Council	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Volunteer Management & Training Plan produced
05-03	Commission accessibility audit and drive increased accessibility where possible	ICMG	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Accessibility audit commissioned and undertaken
05-04	Hire Inis Cealtra wardens/guides (see Section 34.4), select and appoint ushers.	ICMG	Project Co-ordinator Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Inis Cealtra warden/guide positions filled (GS1-GS4)

5.6.6 Communication and marketing

	Action	Lead agency	Partners	Key Indicator
06-01	Issue progress newsletter to local community	Project Co-ordinator	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Progress letter issued and web info regularly updated
06-02	Commission logo for Inis Cealtra (see Section 5.8, Chapter 4 for detail)	ICMG	Serviced provider Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Inis Cealtra logo produced
06-03	Commission a Inis Cealtra digital and print media strategy including implementation to cover: website, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat) and short videos for use at trade fairs and for embedding on websites. Website to include online booking capability (see Chapter 4 for detail)	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Service provider Service provider Inis Cealtra Community Forum National Trails Office Fáilte Ireland Clare Tourism Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG) Archaeologists (to ensure info. is accurate)	Inis Cealtra digital media strategy produced and implemented

	Action	Lead agency	Partners	Key Indicator
06-04	Include and optimise information for Inis Cealtra on www.discoverireland.com	Project Co-ordinator	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Fáilte Ireland Clare Tourism Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG) Archaeologists (to ensure info. is accurate)	www.discoverireland.com updated with content
06-05	Organise familiarisation visits for domestic and overseas tour operators and accommodation providers	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Fáilte Ireland Clare Tourism Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG)	Regular farm visits planned
06-06	Regular attendance at trade shows/fairs and presentations in main centres	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Fáilte Ireland Clare Tourism Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG)	Trade shows/fairs attended and in-market presentations
06-07	Develop bundled offers for transport, accommodation and activities, e.g. rail, accommodation, bike hire for both cycling and walking	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Fáilte Ireland Clare Tourism Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG)	Bundled offers produced
06-08	Engage with domestic and overseas journalists to get favourable online and print articles	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	Fáilte Ireland Clare Tourism Inis Cealtra Community Forum Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG)	Inis Cealtra articles placed in press
06-09	Develop education programme for schools and position Inis Cealtra as a Discovery Centre for primary schools	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	ICMG Inis Cealtra Community Forum Department of Education	Schools programme produced (AR1-3)
06-10	Develop training programme for interpretative guides	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	ICMG Archaeologists (familiar with IC's up-to-date research) Inis Cealtra Community Forum Fáilte Ireland Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG)	Guide training programme produced
06-11	Review nomination of Inis Cealtra as part of a serial nomination World Heritage Site in combination with the early medieval ecclesiastical sites of Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Kells and Monasterboice	ICMG	NMS Archaeologists (familiar with IC's up-to-date research) Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Irish 'Early Medieval Monastic Sites' cluster re-nominated as World Heritage Site

5.6.7 Monitoring, evaluation and impact management

	Action	Lead agency	Partners	Key Indicator
07-01	Commission and implement visitor monitoring strategy for Inis Cealtra to include numeric data through installation of trail counters, visitor satisfaction and carrying capacity	ICMG	Fáilte Ireland	Visitor monitoring strategy produced and implemented (MS6)
07-02	Monitor visitor numbers with a maximum number of 100 on the island at any one time, a maximum of 400 per day	Project Co-ordinator	Guides/wardens	Visitor numbers monitored and maximum numbers used as a ceiling limit (MS6)
07-03	Maximum visitor numbers monitored against visitor impacts (on archaeology, ecology, landscape, etc.) and adjusted on an iterative basis	ICMG	Archaeologists Fáilte Ireland Inis Cealtra Community Forum Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDMSG)	Maximum on-island visitor capacity monitored on an ongoing basis (MS6)
07-04	Maximum number of tour coaches to be capped at 4 arrivals/day should coach tours be permissible	Clare County Council	NTA Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Maximum number of tour coach arrivals monitored
07-05	Inis Cealtra to be closed to visitors between November and February	ICMG	Project Co-ordinator Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Inis Cealtra opening times to be enforced by wardens (MS1)
07-06	Overnight camping to be prohibited on Inis Cealtra	Wardens	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Camping ban to be enforced by wardens (MS2)
07-07	No commercial access allowed to Inis Cealtra (once new ferry service operating)	Wardens	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Access arrangement enforced by wardens

	Action	Lead agency	Partners	Key Indicator
07-08	Access by non-locals to the island other than by the visitor centre/ferry or outside of its hours and season of operation is to be restricted	Wardens	Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Access arrangement enforced by wardens
07-09	Provide code of good practice for kayakers to all kayak hire companies in the Lough Derg area	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG)	Code of good practice for kayakers issued (AR4-4)
07-10	Ask cruiser hire companies to inform visitors renting boats that insurance is not valid on Inis Cealtra	Inis Cealtra Marketing & Development	Inis Cealtra Community Forum Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group (LDSMG) Waterways Ireland Cruiser companies	Cruiser companies contacted

5.7 Impact and mitigation measures

In order to ensure any future development proposed in the Plan will have been assessed for environmental impact, mitigation measures have been included in this section. This Plan replicates key environmental policies in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 which have been subject to SEA, AA and SFRA and will be the framework under which any new proposals associated with the Plan will be assessed. Moreover, this Plan has been subject to consultation with the statutory authorities and reflects their comments on objectives in the Clare CDP 2017-2023.

Where appropriate, key commitments from other relevant plans and projects, including the Lough Derg Canoe Trail (Planning Reference 16-165 for Mountshannon) and part of the environmental management commitments from the Wild Atlantic Way, are also included. However, for specific topics, targeted mitigation and management focuses particularly on the SEA topics of Cultural Heritage and Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna. These measures have been developed from the archaeological and ecological research associated with this plan preparation.

Therefore, this chapter outlines the mitigation measures that will prevent, reduce, and offset as much as possible any significant adverse effects on the environment of the study area resulting from the implementation of this Plan. Section (g) of Schedule 2B of the SEA Regulations (as amended) requires:

‘The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the Plan’.

Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects. Where the environmental assessment identifies significant adverse effects, consideration is given in the first instance to preventing such impacts or, where this is not possible, to lessening or offsetting those effects. Mitigation measures can be generally divided into those that:

- avoid effects,
- reduce the magnitude or extent, probability and/or severity of effect,
- repair effects after they have occurred, and
- compensate for effects, by balancing out negative impacts with positive ones.

This chapter is structured as follows: principal environmental protective policies and objectives from the Clare CDP 2017-2023 are presented, and thereafter, targeted mitigation measures for elements of the Plan. As mitigation measures are taken from the Environmental Report in Volume 2, some detail may duplicate earlier recommendations; however, for clarity it is considered important to include these here as well.

5.7.1 Strategic Environment Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment

Article 1 of the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) states that its objective is:

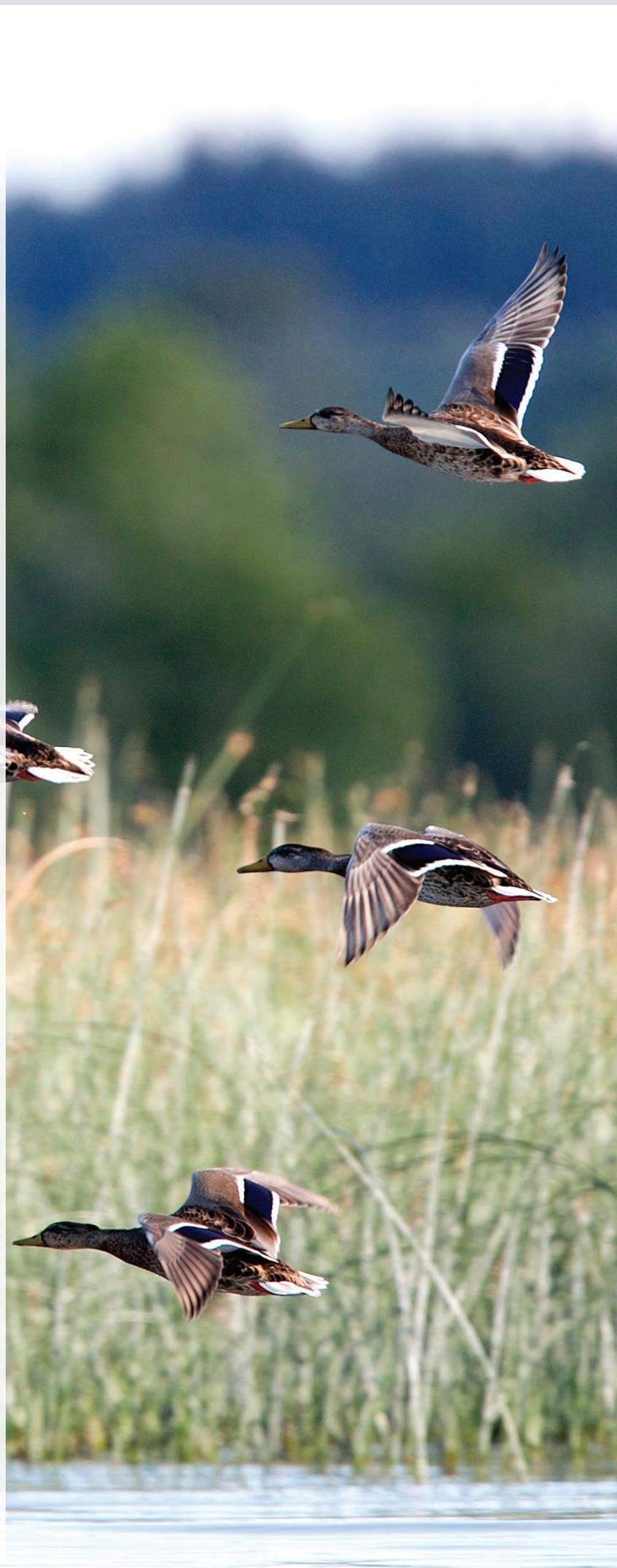
“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.”

This Plan was subject to screening for SEA in June 2016 in conjunction with screening for appropriate assessment. Following consultation with statutory bodies, it was determined that the Plan could give rise to significant environmental effects, particularly in terms of cultural heritage, ecology and landscape. The SEA scoping report was issued to confirm the scope, extent and approach to the SEA process. Issues raised by statutory consultees at this time helped to inform and refine the Environmental Report and the Appropriate Assessment process.

The project team worked together for a period of six months, during which time the SEA and AA responded and advised in relation to potential environmental effects associated with issues such as access to the island, visitor management and physical intervention proposals. In particular, the SEA and AA processes informed the necessity to avoid impact upon, and ensure protection of, particularly sensitive areas around the island, as well as potential access options to and from the island. In turn, locations and types of physical proposals including pathways, facilities and grassland management were assessed and refined through the SEA and AA process.

In the first instance, avoidance of sensitive areas is the preferred option for mitigation measures, though this cannot always be achieved given the overall objective of the Plan. Therefore, detailed and focused mitigation measures across a range of environmental parameters were developed through the SEA and AA processes and have been fully integrated into the Plan. See Volume 2 and 3 of the Plan for the full SEA Environmental Report and the Natura Impact Report.

A Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (DoEHLG 2009) with regard to the identification of an appropriate site location for mainland on-shore visitor facilities. The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 was the subject of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and appropriate assessment and any land-use projects



5.7.2 Protection objectives from Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023

The following protection policies (listed in order of relevance) enshrined in the Clare County Development Plan (2017-2023) have informed the current Plan proposals and recommendations.

CDP9.4	Development Plan Objective: Tourism Developments and Tourism Facilities
CDP9.13	Development Plan Objective: Lakeland and Waterway Tourism
CDP9.17	Development Plan Objective: Sustainable Tourism
CDP14.23	Development Plan Objective: World Heritage Sites Status
CDP14.24	Development Plan Objective: Development Proposals in Designated World Heritage Sites
CDP15.1	Development Plan Objective: Architectural Heritage
CDP15.3	Development Plan Objective: Industrial Heritage
CDP15.4	Development Plan Objective: Vernacular Heritage
CDP15.5	Development Plan Objective: Architectural Conservation Area
CDP15.6	Development Plan Objective: Protected Species and Proposed Works to Buildings
CDP15.8	Development Plan Objective: Sites, Features and Objects of Archaeological Interest
CDP15.10	Development Plan Objective: Zones of Archaeological Protection
CDP15.13	Development Plan Objective: Underwater Archaeology
CDP15.14	Development Plan Objective: Cultural Development
CDP15.15	Development Plan Objective: Museums and Heritage Centres
CDP15.18	Development Plan Objective: Folklore and Oral Cultural Heritage
CDP14.2	Development Plan Objective: European Sites
CDP14.3	Development Plan Objective: Requirement for Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive
CDP14.7	Development Plan Objective: Non-Designated Sites
CDP14.8	Development Plan Objective: Natural Heritage and Infrastructure Schemes
CDP14.11	Development Plan Objective: Habitat Protection
CDP14.13	Development Plan Objective: Habitat Fragmentation
CDP14.14	Development Plan Objective: Inland Waterways and River Corridors
CDP14.17	Development Plan Objective: Woodland Trees and hedgerows
CDP14.19	Development Plan Objective: Wetlands
CDP14.26	Development Plan Objective: Alien and Invasive Species
CDP 8.21	Development Plan Objective: Water Framework Directive
CDP8.22	Development Plan Objective: Protection of Water Resources
CDP 18.6	Development Plan Objective: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
CDP 18.7	Development Plan Objective: CFRAMS
CDP 18.8	Development Plan Objective: Storm Water Management
CDP 13.1	Development Plan Objective: Landscape Character Assessment
CDP 13.5	Development Plan Objective: Heritage Landscapes
CDP 13.7	Development Plan Objective: Scenic Routes
CDP 3.5	Development Plan Objective: Large Villages
CDP 5.6	Development Plan Objective: Accessibility
CDP 7.8	Development Plan Objective: Large Villages
CDP 19.3	Development Plan Objective: Compliance with Zoning
CDP5.24	Development Plan Objective: Burial Grounds/Crematoria
CDP8.24	Development Plan Objective: Water Services
CDP8.25	Development Plan Objective: Water Supply

CDP8.27	Development Plan Objective: Wastewater Treatment and disposal
CDP 8.30	Development Plan Objective: Litter Management
CDP8.31	Development Plan Objective: Construction and Demolition Waste
CDP8.35	Development Plan Objective: Light Pollution
CDP18.2	Development Plan Objective: Climate Change Adaptation
CDP2.1	Development Plan Objective: Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
CDP14.9	Development Plan Objective: Environmental Impact Assessment

5.7.3 Mitigation of plan proposals

The Burra Charter (C.) overall principles for archaeology

The Burra Charter (International Committee for Monuments and Sites) has guided the approach to this plan and key relevant principles are presented below.

C. 1: According to the principles of the Burra Charter, Inis Cealtra can be deemed to be not only significant for one particular element, such as the individual buildings or the carved stones, but in its entirety. Therefore, the island is of exceptional significance as an archaeological landscape as a whole.

Cultural significance, according to the Charter, 'is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and related objects'.

Accordingly, any works to the island must be carried out with extreme caution and consideration for all aspects of the island's cultural significance. Not only its archaeological and historical value but its environmental and present-day cultural meaning for the local inhabitants must be considered, as all these factors interlink to create its cultural significance. Its wider lake setting must also be treated as an archaeological and culturally significant landscape. Therefore, any proposed changes to the island potentially threaten the overall cultural significance of Inis Cealtra as an exceptionally well-preserved, diverse and intrinsically culturally valuable place, and must be viewed in this light.

In accordance with the Burra Charter, which advocates a cautious approach to change, a phased approach to the Plan should be adopted and changes made on an incremental basis in order to accommodate increased numbers of tourists in such a manner that their impact on the archaeology can

be assessed gradually. There is a need to balance the provision of facilities for visitors and guides (e.g. structures, signage, and toilets) with their impact on all aspects of the cultural and archaeological significance of the island.

C. 2: If any works are to be carried out, measured surveys and photographic surveys should be undertaken by archaeologists before any works commence.

C. 3: A geophysical archaeological survey should be carried out particularly in the vicinity of the earthworks in order to reveal their true extent and complexity, as well as in the vicinity of the shore; the results of this survey will inform any decisions regarding management of the island and the provision of facilities for increased visitor numbers.

C. 4: All proposed development and strategies should be in compliance with the National Monuments Acts, 1930–2004, and with the national policy on the protection of archaeological heritage: 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (1999) by the then Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. All proposed changes to the island will be subject to approval by the Planning and Heritage Section of the current Department of the Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

C. 5: The whole island is a National Monument (no. 5) and is therefore under legal protection. Any works to any part of the island require ministerial consent.

C. 6: All archaeological material is of importance, whatever its age. All aspects of the island's archaeology are deemed deserving of preservation, whether prehistoric, medieval, or post-medieval. Post-medieval and vernacular features in particular are vulnerable to being neglected and caution should be exercised not to damage or destroy such features.

C. 7: Any works carried out with the aim of preserving the site should be supervised by experienced archaeologists with a grounding in the relevant policies and legislation described in the Plan as well as the appropriate conservation knowledge and experience.

C. 8: In accordance with the Burra Charter (9.1), relocation of material or objects from the island is not advised unless deemed absolutely necessary for their preservation by archaeologists.

C. 9: In accordance with Irish legislation, any changes that involve removing, demolishing, or changing any aspect of the site require ministerial consent and should not be carried out without archaeological consultation.

C. 10: Ground disturbance on Inis Cealtra should be avoided as this will carry the risk of destroying archaeological material. Any works that involve ground disturbance require ministerial consent in accordance with Irish legislation and moreover should not be carried out without archaeological consultation.

Management structure (MS):

MS 1: The management of the archaeological heritage on the island falls within the remit of the Office of Public Works (OPW). Archaeological input regarding the conservation and recording of the site is also provided by the National Monuments Service (NMS). When required, experts from the private sector should be commissioned to undertake specialist work.

MS 2: The responsibilities of both Clare County Council and the OPW to the archaeology should be clarified in writing to ensure a cohesive strategy for the protection of the whole island, including the less visible archaeology such as the areas containing the earthworks which are utilised by the Council for grazing (see below); each body should be aware not only of their own responsibilities to the island but also those of the other body.

MS 3: It is recommended that a site management team be appointed to efficiently co-ordinate the day-to-day management of Inis Cealtra and to liaise with interest groups.

MS 4: It is recommended that a management plan be drawn up with input from Clare County Council, OPW, NMS, and Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The management plan should ensure the long-term conservation and preservation, to international best practice, of Inis Cealtra with the appropriate guidance from the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage

Centre, and advisory bodies such as ICOMOS. The management plan should detail:

- regular monitoring of the archaeological, cultural and environmental heritage of the site,
- periodic reporting of the condition of the archaeological remains,
- improving public awareness and appreciation of Inis Cealtra,
- liaising with community and local interest groups,
- establishing a research framework strategy, and
- regular reviewing of the management plan.

MS 5: The management plan should not be a finite plan but a living document that will evolve over time and will require regular reviews, with the support of the relevant bodies and experts.

MS 6: It is important to recognise and support cultural tourism insofar as it is compatible with the primary obligation of the conservation, maintenance, protection, and perpetuity of Inis Cealtra. The maximum number of visitors to the island must be actively managed and continually reviewed so that it is compatible with site protection and preservation.

A monitoring regime is proposed for evidence of visitor impacts and corrective action to address same. This would comprise the following:

1. Monuments must be monitored on a continual basis to assess whether larger visitor numbers are sustainable. Efforts should also be made to protect the ground, at least in particularly sensitive areas. The OPW and Clare County Council must continually monitor the archaeology on the island not only to protect it but to ensure sustainable tourism into the future; in order to do so, a management plan needs to be drawn up by the two authorities working together.
2. The role of monitoring ground damage could be combined with that of a tour-guide: impacts on the ground can be lessened by preventing congregation at sensitive points such as the Saints' Graveyard, the round tower and the churches.
3. There should also be a warden on the island, at least seasonally, and in daylight hours, with responsibility for wider supervision of the island as a whole and in order to minimise the risk of unauthorised access, vandalism and theft.
4. Although some monuments are at risk of theft, in line with the Burra Charter (article 9.1),

these should not be moved from their original in-situ locations.

5. Overnight camping on the island should be discouraged and ultimately prohibited.
6. The Saints' Graveyard should be supervised during times of higher visitor numbers at least (i.e. April–September) to prevent visitors walking on the monuments while looking at them.
7. Other historic graveyards on the island should also be monitored by the warden and tour guides to prevent the graves suffering damage. However, locals should not be made to feel unwelcome when visiting the graveyards.
8. The number of visitors to the island will be capped at a maximum of 400 daily by Year 5. Visitor access should be restricted to certain areas to ensure protection of the archaeological remains. In accordance with article 27.1 of the Burra Charter the proposed incremental increase in tourists to the site should be continually assessed with reference to the Statement of Significance, as well as the recommendations made here; if the increase in tourists to the site appears to be impacting the site in a negative way, 'it may be necessary to modify proposed changes to better retain cultural significance'.
9. Visitor statistics should be collected for each season and detailed assessments of visitor impacts and trends should be carried out on a regular basis.
10. Paths should be monitored for ground erosion on a regular basis, especially during periods of very wet or dry weather and during peak visitor periods.
11. Regular monitoring of the effects of weather conditions on the archaeology is also necessary (see CC 1-CC 3 above.)
12. Pre-, mid-, and end of season monitoring of the archaeological remains should be undertaken and the results compared and contrasted. If it was found that the tourist season had a negative impact on the archaeology, the management plan should be amended to prevent this reoccurring.
13. Monitoring should also be undertaken to assess potential visitor impacts on ecological features such as new trails off existing paths, trails into woodland, etc. This should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist.
14. Monitoring of breeding bird populations should be undertaken for the first three years of the plan to investigate any potential disturbance to breeding birds on or around the island.

Visitor management mitigation measures (MM) in response to increasing visitor numbers

Sustainable tourism is dependent on the continued pristine condition of the island and the survival of the archaeological remains, but overcrowding could be detrimental to the conservation of the site. In addition to the management and monitoring mitigation measures outlined above, the following measures are also recommended:

MM 1: Seasonality: It is recommended that the commercial access to the island be limited to March to October to avoid disturbance to overwintering birds and to avoid trampling associated with wetter autumn/winter conditions.

MM 2: Visitor numbers are to be capped at a maximum of 100 at any one time, 400 per day and 45,000 per year. These figures are to be reached on a phased basis and evaluated continuously.

MM 3: Coaches are to be restricted to a maximum of 4 arrivals per day at Mountshannon.

MM 4: The cap on visitor numbers in MM 2 comprises both paid visitors and local community. Clare County Council will work with Inis Cealtra Community Group to enable equitable access for the local community while ensuring the proposed caps are not exceeded.

Awareness raising and education (AR)

AR 1: A primary objective for managing heritage is to communicate its significance and the need for its conservation to the local community and to visitors; sustainable tourism on Inis Cealtra and the island's conservation are dependent on the recognition of the importance of its cultural heritage.

AR 2: Those undertaking care and maintenance of the island should be fully informed of best practice and should also avoid ground disturbance or movement of stones.

AR 3: The visitor centre and boat trip are opportunities to highlight ecological and archaeological sensitivities and inform visitor behaviour. 'Leave No Trace' principles should be communicated and displayed at the visitor centre and on the boat.

AR 4: The code of good practice for canoeists has been prepared as part of the Lough Derg Canoe Trail and will be replicated in the visitor centre. It is recommended that this code also be communicated to businesses that rent kayaks around Lough Derg, particularly around Mountshannon.

AR 5: Information should be provided in the associated interpretative centre on the mainland and by tour guides on the island, advising visitors not to climb or clamber on masonry nor rub or touch carved stones while on the island.

AR 6: Inis Cealtra and the associated visitor centre should be positioned as a Discovery Centre for primary schools to raise awareness amongst children of the island's importance and heritage

Interpretation (I.)

I. 1: Displays, information boards, and signage should be designed with archaeological consultation and informed by up-to-date archaeological and historical scholarship, including the various archaeological and historical sections included in this report. There should be continuous reassessment of displays to ensure that all information provided is accurate and up-to-date while variety and use of fresh approaches will also ensure that the public will continue to find the displays interesting.

I. 2: The staff in the interpretative centre should include at least one qualified archaeologist who can accurately interpret the ongoing research concerning Inis Cealtra and disseminate it appropriately in the centre.

I. 3: Archaeological consultation should be sought to ensure that any artefacts or sculptures displayed in the interpretative centre are treated appropriately when being handled, and located in the appropriate environment for their preservation.

I. 4: If replicas are being created of any objects associated with Inis Cealtra, this should be done with archaeological consultation and the objects should be clearly displayed as 'replica' in the interpretative centre.

I. 5: If replicas of any carved stones on or associated with the island are to be created for display purposes, only 3-D laser scanning should be used to record an image of the stones. While latex rubber skins have been used to create replicas in the past, they can damage the surface of stones, particularly sandstone, and they provide less accurate detail.

I. 6: Any conjectural copies, rather than exact replicas, of objects, monuments or structures should be carried out with archaeological consultation and subsequently clearly displayed as conjectural copies so as not to mislead visitors.

Establishment of a research framework (R.)

R. 1: A research framework should be established for Inis Cealtra, which will identify and prioritise research themes for the future. Previous research, in particular the excavations of the 1970s, but also more recent academic and local publications, will inform the proposed research framework. Increasing knowledge of the island by encouraging research and ensuring research results are disseminated will ultimately enhance visitors' experience.

R. 2: Lectures relating to the history, archaeology and folklore, as well as as natural history and ecology, could be provided in the proposed interpretative centre on the mainland or elsewhere locally, while conferences could also be organised.

Guide service (GS)

General recommendations:

GS 1: It is recommended that a regular, quality guide service operates on the island.

GS 2: The main function of the guide service should be to protect the site, interpret and provide information on the history, archaeology and significance of the site, assist visitors and monitor visitor numbers, the number of boats landing and weather conditions. The guides' principal duty should relate to monitoring the condition of archaeological features on the island.

GS 3: In order to enhance the visitor experience, relevant training programmes should be put in place for the guides. Training should cover best practice in the care of archaeological sites as well as current legislation, e.g. National Monuments Act. Guides should have a good grounding in archaeology and history that is up-to-date; it is recommended that guides are employed with qualifications and experience on a par with OPW guides.

GS 4: The guides should provide the visitors with good pre-visit information in the interpretative centre or when they arrive on the island; they should outline which areas/monuments have limited access or no access, and the level of accessibility to expect in various parts of the island. Visitors should be advised to stay on paths, not to touch any of the carved stones and not to climb on buildings/monuments.

These measures cross reference with AR and MS mitigation measures.

Access and transport (AT)

AT 1: Increased boat traffic in and around the island could negatively impact upon known and unknown underwater archaeology in the area, such as the shipwrecks and prehistoric log-boats, due to increased propeller wash action from repeat boat trips or an increase in boat engine size. It is therefore recommended that the proposed ferry path be restricted to a single route and that the number of daily crossings is capped; a maximum size/ engine limit for the ferry should also be defined. Any proposals that involve the shoreline of the island or the lake itself should account for the fact that these are zones of archaeological potential. An underwater archaeological assessment, by suitably qualified underwater archaeologists, should be carried out to ensure that no wrecks or other archaeological features are located along the ferry route.

AT 2: The proposed ferry path to the island will be restricted to a defined path so as to avoid disturbance to wetland bird species. The ferry path will be buffered from emergent reed and tall sedge habitat to minimise disturbance to breeding wetland birds.

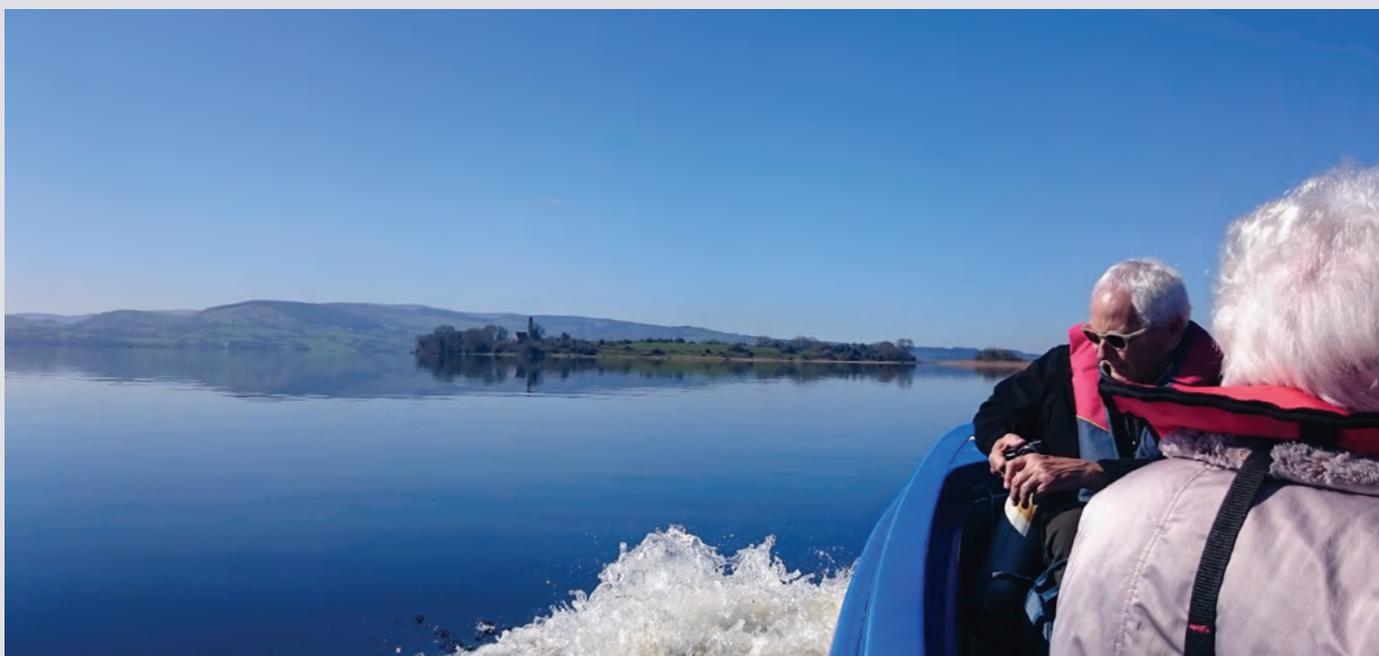
AT 3: It is policy to provide the greatest possible level of visitor access to all built heritage sites in the care of the OPW. An Accessibility Plan will be developed as a live document to be continuously updated, covering the following: achieving accessible primary routes to visit the monuments, maintaining the physical protection of archaeology and monuments, and maintaining the character and ambience of the setting. See mitigation measure MM 1 above.

AT 4: On Skellig Michael, access to the island is controlled by a permit system and its visitor season is dependent on weather conditions and the availability of the guide service. In the interest of its continued protection, to prevent damage to the monuments and for reasons of health and safety, access to Skellig Michael outside of the defined period is not permitted and access by private craft is also discouraged. In addition, an agreement was put in place with local boatmen to limit the daily number of visitors.

A new ferry service should operate between Mountshannon and Inis Cealtra on a tender basis for a rolling 3-year period. Primary access for visitors is to be via a ferry from the visitor centre in Mountshannon with a small access charge. Members of the local community, members of Lough Derg Anglers, and 5 boats from Lakeside Holiday Park at Mountshannon will be able to land for free with a permit-style approach.

This option:

- enables control of access, therefore minimising impact on archaeology and built heritage,
- enables local community to continue to be able to access the island,
- does not impact on Lakeside Holiday Park's existing business,
- enables revenue generation to maintain the island,
- enables access to the island by kayakers – fulfilling the brief to link the island to Lough Derg Canoe Trail, and
- does not require staff to collect a fee on the island.



5.7.4 Mitigation measures for physical proposals

Physical proposals (PP)

PP 1: All physical changes to facilitate and increase numbers of tourists visiting the island should, as directed by the Burra Charter (article 8), retain 'the visual and sensory setting, as well as the retention of spiritual and other cultural relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place'. Inis Cealtra is a complex site that is significant for a variety of reasons, as outlined above in the Statement of Significance. The unique, culturally significant 'unspoiled' character of the island should be preserved as much as possible. This will in turn enhance visitor experience.

PP 2: Any physical changes to the island to facilitate an increase of visitors should be carried out in accordance with section 14 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act (2004) and should only be undertaken with archaeological consultation. ministerial consent must be sought for any works that involve altering a National Monument, disturbing the ground, or restoring any part of a National Monument. This includes archaeological material of all periods, from prehistoric to post-medieval.

PP 3: Modern interventions relating to increased visitor numbers (e.g. toilets, piers, etc.) should be located close to each other and should avoid the main group of upstanding monuments; such new additions should not be visible from the monuments.

PP 4: Areas identified for physical interventions should be subject to archaeological geophysical surveys initially and be informed by the 2015-16 ecological surveys. The findings of same will inform the precise site location.

PP 5: All aspects of Inis Cealtra's archaeological heritage should be protected, including immovable (in-situ) cultural heritage and upstanding remains, e.g., monuments and earthworks; ex-situ cultural heritage, e.g. loose carved stones, and underwater cultural heritage, e.g., shipwrecks and submerged piers. The various aspects will be discussed individually in more detail below.

PP 6: Specialist archaeologists should be consulted throughout the process of developing the island as a tourist attraction from design through to implementation.

PP 7: Detailed archaeological surveys should be carried out throughout the process; these must be of a high standard in order to allow informed decisions to be taken.

PP 8: All impacts that may impinge on the archaeological heritage should be appropriately assessed by a suitably qualified archaeologist, including ground disturbance, impacts on the setting of the monuments and visual impacts; the archaeologist should consider direct, indirect, temporary and cumulative impacts.

PP 9: Mitigation of impacts should be attempted at the earliest possible stage. Various approaches should be considered, such as avoidance, design modification and relocation where appropriate.

PP 10: Where there are apparently no archaeological monuments present, it is recommended that an archaeological assessment should be undertaken as part of an EIA (see section 3.6.6 in 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage', 1999).

PP 11: It is recommended that all proposed works within proximity to any of the archaeological monuments, both on the island and in the surrounding waters, should be subject to appropriate consultation, at the earliest possible stage, with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the OPW and NMS and Clare County Council.

PP 12: The use of construction machinery should be avoided on the island where possible, and should always avoid crossing/landing on archaeologically sensitive zones as identified in the inventory (Appendix 2) and in proposed geophysical surveys.

PP 13: Previously unidentified archaeological monuments may be exposed during the course of operations on the site. The OPW and NMS should be notified immediately, and the monument/site should be left undisturbed. A minimum exclusion zone of 20m must be created until the site has been investigated by an archaeological expert employed by the relevant authorities. Any archaeological object/artefact found during operations must be reported immediately to the National Museum of Ireland. It must also be left undisturbed, as it is important that objects can be related to their surroundings (i.e. archaeological context). A minimum exclusion zone of 20m must be created until the site of the find has been investigated by an archaeological expert employed by the relevant authorities.

PP 14: Any proposed works to built structures on the island should be preceded by ecological assessments to determine the potential effect of such works to roosting bat species or nesting bird species.



PP 15: The Plan will not include any proposals for night-time lighting on the island.

PP 16: The extent of physical infrastructure to be sited on fringing wetland habitat will be restricted to the path leading from the proposed new pier location. No other physical infrastructure will be placed on fringing wetland habitat.

Pp 17: An ecological impact assessment of all physical proposals arising from the Plan will be required.

PP 18: An appropriate assessment will be required for all physical proposals arising from the Plan.

Shoreline and pier proposals (SP)

SP 1: The shoreline should be regarded as an archaeologically sensitive area as not only the monuments noted in the inventory (Chapter 2 of Appendix 2) but other monuments and features now unknown may be located underwater due to the rising of the shoreline in the 20th century in particular.

SP 2: The shoreline should be regarded as an ecologically sensitive area. Tall herb swamp habitat occurs along the majority of the island's shoreline. Sections of this habitat are currently representative of the Annex 1 habitat hydrophilous tall herb fringe community (6430).

SP 3: The selection of the northeast area of the island as a possible location for a new pier has been identified based on ecological, navigational, and safety considerations; the exact siting of the new pier will be subject to required archaeological, ecological, and landscape assessments as outlined in Mitigation Measures C. 1 to C. 11, PP 1 to PP 19, SP 1 –SP 2 and relevant objectives in the Clare CDP 2017-2023.

SP 4: Any plans regarding new landing facilities in the northeast quadrant of the island may be impeded or prevented by logboat discoveries about 40m off the northeast shore and by the potential for further discoveries of historic vessels or submerged features along the shoreline.

SP 5: If new access is being provided for from the northeast shore of the island or from any other new landing place on the island, it should be ensured that any new paths leading from this new pier avoid crossing earthworks and other archaeological features and that any removal of vegetation, which should be kept to a minimum, is carried out with archaeological and ecological consultation.

SP 6: A Mollusc survey of the island's fringing habitat should be undertaken with particular focus given to the suitability of the fringing marsh habitat to support *Vertigo Moulinsiana*.

SP 7: If new access is being provided for from the northeast shore of the island or from any other new landing place on the island, it should be ensured that any new paths leading from this new pier avoid crossing areas of tall herb swamp that are currently representative of Annex 1 habitat hydrophilous tall herb fringe community (6430) in favourable conservation condition. In addition, any removal of vegetation should be kept to a minimum.

SP 8: Proposed construction works associated with the pier should be completed at an appropriate time of year to minimise disturbance to breeding and overwintering bird species. Construction activity for a proposed new pier should commence in the second half of August and be completed in as short a time frame as possible so as to avoid the overwintering season. It would be preferred if all construction works associated with the proposed pier could be completed over a 3-month period between the latter half of August and the first half of October.

SP 9: In general, any proposed works that involve the shoreline of the island or the lake itself should account for the fact that these are zones of archaeological potential. Archaeologists, including underwater archaeologists, should be consulted accordingly in any proposed works involving not only the island, but the lake itself. For works associated with the shoreline or lake, an underwater archaeological assessment should be carried out by archaeologists experienced in both terrestrial and underwater archaeology.

SP 10: The piers to the northwest and east (see Chapters 2-3, Appendix 2) are examples of post-medieval vernacular archaeology. Therefore, any works aimed at upgrading the infrastructure of the island in terms of landing boats must treat these features with respect.

SP 11: The existing east pier is in an especially rich archaeological zone and works here should be avoided. Removal of the northwest and east piers should by no means be considered.

SP 12: A new pier on the northeast has been proposed east of the existing reed-beds to protect birdlife. This will necessitate an underwater archaeological survey, as much of the underwater archaeology is relatively 'unknown' in terms of what is there and its exact location.

SP 13: If the northwest and east piers are to be altered in any way then planning permission, ministerial consent, and archaeological advice must be sought. Ministerial consent must also be sought for any modifications to the north pier or

any construction of a new pier, due to the National Monument status of Inis Cealtra.

SP 14: Section 22 of the Burra Charter advocates that any new work 'should be readily identifiable as such', and should respect and have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the site.

Burial practices (B.)

Vulnerabilities:

- Unsupervised digging of graves can lead to damage to archaeological material.
- Inappropriate styles of grave monuments can visually impact the historic integrity of the site.
- Headstones are of historic value but are vulnerable to damage by people.
- There is a risk of destabilising a ruin by digging graves too close to the walls.
- As noted above, many of the graves in the cemeteries associated with St Caimín's and St Mary's have risen above ground level.

B. 1: The graveyards on Inis Cealtra are in active use, and any future policies need to consider their living religious and spiritual significance; on this basis, a distinction needs to be made between tourists and locals. The community should not be made to feel unwelcome when visiting their own cemeteries.

B. 2: No new graves should be dug in the Saints' Graveyard.

B. 3: St Caimín's Cemetery (in the care of the OPW) and St Mary's Cemetery (in the care of Clare County Council) are still in use. However, no new graves should be dug without being monitored by an archaeologist. There should be strict controls of new areas of plots.

B. 4: Graves should not be dug near known archaeological features or against upstanding remains.

B. 5: New headstones should be sensitive to the historic character of the graveyard so as not to impair the visual integrity of the site. Guidelines in terms of size and style of monuments on the island should be developed and controls should be put in place.

B. 6: Headstones must not be moved or interfered with in any way.

B. 7: Headstones should not be cleaned, nor should chalk/paint be applied.

B. 8: The graves which have risen above ground level should not be walked upon out of respect for archaeological material as well as the deceased. Tourists should be advised in this regard by the tour guides.

Grazing and woodland management (GW)

General recommendations;

GW 1: Active management and monitoring of trees and scrub is necessary. The growth and spread of trees and scrub can disturb and damage buried archaeological deposits and undermine aboveground remains.

GW 2: Where necessary, trees should be cut off at ground level and the stumps treated to prevent re-growth; the stumps should be left to rot rather than dug out.

GW 3: Windblown trees can uproot soil, disturbing and destroying archaeological contexts; if possible, their trunks should be cut and the root-plate eased back into place.

GW 4: Mature trees on the island have potential to function as bat roosts and bird nesting sites. Where trees are to be felled to avoid wind-throw and disturbance to archaeology, then it should be completed at an appropriate time of year between the months of September and November (i.e. outside the bat maternity season and bird nesting season). Any trees to be felled should be inspected and surveyed for roosting bats by and prior to felling.

GW 5: Any tree felling should be undertaken in line with Transport Infrastructure Ireland's Guidelines for the Treatment of Bats during the Construction of National Road Schemes.

GW 6: In some areas (e.g. St Michael's) saplings and woody plants should be removed by cutting off the stems close to the ground and treating them, while scrub and bracken should also be controlled.

GW 7: Some archaeological monuments, for example the bullauns in the northeastern sector of the island, are hidden in overgrowth; any works to manage tree and scrub growth on the island should be cognisant of the possibility of archaeological monuments being located and hidden in the overgrowth.

GW 8: Loose branches should be removed from the site as they can encourage rabbit colonisation.

GW 9: In a few places, overgrowth could be addressed for the sake of public access, such as in the area of St Michael's Church and in the vicinity of the post-medieval 'cottage'. However, attempts should not be made to remove growth without consulting an archaeologist. Potential impacts on sensitive species and habitats must also be considered in relation to overgrowth and scrub removal and an ecologist must be consulted.

GW 10: Even small trees and shrubs can be firmly bound by their roots to material of archaeological interest. Grubbing out roots can cause serious damage, and should only be considered in special circumstances and carried out with archaeological monitoring.

GW11: Particular care should be taken to avoid loss of soil cover in the meadows on the island. Grazing and human footfall will impact this, while weather conditions will also be a factor.

GW 12: Existing grass cover should be maintained to protect the archaeology from erosion damage, especially the earthworks.

GW 13: Where erosion has taken place and the protective cover of soil has been broken, re-seeding may be necessary. Any necessary re-seeding of native grasses and other grassland improvement should not involve soil disturbance of any kind.

GW 14: No landscaping should be undertaken: uneven/undulating ground should not be smoothed out.

GW 15: An archaeologically and ecologically informed programme for such activities as grass-cutting should be put in place.

GW 16: If new trees are being planted, ministerial consent must be sought and if granted, ground disturbance must be archaeologically monitored. In general, planting of trees should be avoided; natural regeneration is preferable and the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 states that sites should avail of existing topography and vegetation. A new small scheme of native hedging is proposed to provide screening around the proposed pods. This will be subject to a geophysical survey in advance of any tree planting.

GW 17: A more sustainable grazing scheme is needed in order to protect the archaeology and enhance the biodiversity value of the island. The Plan provides details on a proposed grazing regime for the island and the number of livestock units on the island (no matter what the breed) should be capped to ensure minimum damage in terms of erosion of archaeological features and grazing pressure to grassland and woodland habitats.

GW 18: The Cotswold AONB Partnership archaeology and farming guide notes that 'the best stocking regime for archaeological sites is sheep ... [as] Sheep rarely cause problems unless they are overstocked'. (Russell 2003, 7) Cattle have a greater weight than sheep and therefore have more impact on archaeological features, both above and below ground. Sheep usually cause less damage than cattle to earthwork banks and other historic pathways.

GW 19: If sheep are introduced to the island, caution must be exercised that they do not enter particularly archaeologically vulnerable locations that cattle

cannot normally access, such as the Saints' Graveyard, where there are a large number of early medieval recumbent grave-slabs with carvings.

GW 20: Livestock (sheep) should be removed or have grazing by them restricted (to be at a distance from earthworks and monuments) during a defined period during the winter months when conditions are wetter. This is to avoid potential for ground disturbance or disturbance to grassland and woodland habitats.

GW 21: Supplementary feeding and badly located water troughs can cause ground damage and should be avoided.

GW 22: The impact of the grazing animals on the visible archaeology, particularly the earthworks, should be monitored on a continual basis.

Pathways (P.)

Note, as part of the plan preparation process, proposed pathways have been modified to avoid going through areas of greater ecological sensitivity, including the alluvial woodlands and close to the existing reed beds on the northern parts of the site. In addition, pathways have been re-routed to avoid the existing 'pilgrims' paths in order to avoid damage to paths, which are in fact medieval earthworks, and to avoid disturbance to the linear earthworks south of St Michaels' Church. However, it should be noted that some of the earthworks in this archaeologically sensitive zone around St Michael's will be affected by the new routes and sheer footfall could have serious implications for the archaeology in terms of erosion. The design of new and existing paths has also been informed by the desire to ensure that visitors to the island enjoy and experience the cultural heritage whilst being directed away from the most vulnerable and sensitive sites, thus reducing potential inappropriate behaviour (e.g. climbing church walls).

It is hoped that the provision of new paths will keep tourists away from the most vulnerable and sensitive archaeological and ecological zones and control their movement in an effort to minimise inappropriate behaviour (e.g. climbing church walls) while providing a good view of all the monuments.

P. 1: While consideration of the intended users of the new paths is crucial, the site-type and landscape through which the paths will pass must also be taken into account when deciding what type of pathways should be developed; there must be a balance between the needs and expectations of users and the archaeological environment in which the paths will be located. According to the National Trails Office (2008, section 1.1), a sustainable

recreational trail must not impact 'negatively on the ability to use this resource [in this case the archaeological site] in the future', and must not impact negatively on the heritage or environment of the site (2012, section 1.7).

P. 2: Ministerial consent must be sought before any new pathways are created (it is acceptable that records may not be available for older routes established in the past); depending on the level of disturbance involved in their provision a detailed Archaeological Impact Assessment may need to be commissioned.

P. 3: A geophysical archaeological survey should be carried out prior to laying down new paths; this is particularly important in the vicinity of the earthworks as the survey will reveal their true extent and complexity. The results of this survey should inform any decisions regarding the precise layout and positioning of new paths which should follow the route which will cause the least amount of impact.

P. 4: The number of new paths created should be kept to a minimum.

P. 5: New pathways should be minimised in fringing tall herb swamp habitat. Only one section of pathway should be placed in this habitat to provide access to the proposed new landing pier.

P. 6: Any new pathways in woodland habitat should minimise disturbance to woodland. Pathways in woodland habitat should follow existing livestock paths within woodland habitat. No mature trees should be removed in woodland habitat to cater for new pathways. These pathways should be designed around existing trees to minimise tree clearance.

P. 7: Older tourist paths already established should be reinstated if deemed suitable, e.g. the path which was laid down c. 2001 leading from the northwest pier - the initial saturated section needs to be addressed; any new pathway in this area should ideally follow the existing track and avoid the earthwork nearby in order to prevent it from being eroded on the slope. This 'road' is a right of way and so should be maintained for legal, social and historical reasons in accordance with the Burra Charter.

P. 8: New paths must respect the aesthetic quality and cultural significance of the island; this can be achieved by limiting the number and size of the paths, through the use of appropriate materials and especially by avoiding archaeologically sensitive areas.

P. 9: In particular, the new paths should not follow,

or be laid down close to any existing pilgrims' paths or earthworks; in addition, they should not enter the historic cemeteries, especially the Saints' Graveyard. Ideally, the earthworks should be avoided completely but in circumstances where the paths cannot avoid the earthworks, they should cross them at an angle (i.e. perpendicular to the line of the earthwork) and ideally at a single point but under no circumstances should they follow the line of the earthworks. Any proposed path through the centre of the island from east to west is problematic due to the complexity of the earthworks in this area, especially in the vicinity of St Michael's Church; the pilgrims' path in this area is an archaeological monument of some complexity and the space between the banks of the pilgrims' path is quite narrow and constricted, and should not be used to accommodate the movement of tourists as this will erode its surface and the associated banks. The existing path leading into St Michael's burial ground/'kissing stone' should not be upgraded or altered as this will involve damage to the probable ruins of the church that have inadvertently been incorporated in the track.

P. 10: Any proposed pathways should be designed with material overlaying the ground so that ground disturbance can be avoided where possible. As indicated by the Burra Charter, section 15.2, 'Changes [in this case the provision of paths] which reduce cultural significance should be reversible'; paved paths should be avoided.

P. 11: The earthworks (incl. banks, ditches, paths, mounds, etc.) are archaeological monuments which are protected RMPs (RMP: CL029-009002-), and should be preserved and treated with the same respect as the more visually impressive stone monuments on the island. This is also true of the penitential stations (see Chapter 3, Appendix 2). New paths should avoid earthworks and penitential stations.

P. 12: Walking on pilgrims' paths and earthworks should be discouraged by tour guides on the island or at the visitor centre.

P. 13: If new paths cross earthworks, they should be monitored regularly, particularly during busy periods or periods of drier or wetter weather.

P. 14: The paths should avoid, where possible, areas of overgrowth. In circumstances where it is not possible to avoid such areas, removal of roots needs archaeological supervision, as the roots are likely to have penetrated into archaeological material. Where practical, this work should take place when the soil is dry.

P. 15: Section 22 of the Burra Charter identifies

that any new work 'should be readily identifiable as such', and so the paths should be visually distinctive from the medieval and post-medieval pilgrims' paths and other earthworks on the island, and it should not be attempted to mimic them.

Signage (SI)

Vulnerabilities:

- Modern signage negatively impacts the visual character of the site and therefore visitor experience.
- Current signage provides out-of-date information that misleads visitors.

More detail on the proposed interpretation is provided in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.4) and Chapter 4 of this Plan and physical interpretation is proposed as part of the visitor centre (off island). Measures for signage on the island are provided below:

SI 1: Overall, new signage should be avoided on the island as its insertion may necessitate ground disturbance. It also imposes visually on the experience of the site. If new signs are to be erected they should sit on the ground, and should not cause ground disturbance.

SI 2: Consideration may be given to removing existing signage, which provides out-of-date information.

SI 3: Information should be provided in the proposed interpretative centre on the mainland, by trained tour guides, and/or via an audio-guide or downloadable app.



Fences (F.)

Vulnerabilities:

- While fencing can help prevent damage to monuments by humans and animals, it causes ground disturbance. It is illegal to disturb the ground on a National Monument without ministerial consent.
- The physical structure of a fence can also have a significant landscape impact on both the setting and appearance of an individual monument and on the wider landscape, and therefore negatively impacts the historical integrity of a site.
- Cattle and other grazing animals tend to follow the line of a fence, which can lead to considerable erosion in its vicinity.
- The ground following the line of a fence tends to suffer from greater footfall and therefore greater ground impact.
- The fencing off of monuments can cause adverse reactions from the community who wish to access the monuments.

F. 1: Erection of new fencing should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

F. 2: In c. 2001, a number of wooden fences were erected in the vicinity of St Caimín's Church; they serve the purpose of keeping the cattle away from that grouping of monuments (including the round tower, base and shaft of high cross, Confessional, etc.). Some of the wood is now beginning to rot and needs to be removed and replaced. Removal of the fencing would require archaeological monitoring as it would involve ground disturbance.

F. 3: Before replacing any of the existing fences, the area surrounding them should be examined for erosion caused by cattle or human footfall. If erosion has taken place, it may be necessary to reposition the new fencing. No new fences can be erected without ministerial consent. If permission is granted, it must be archaeologically monitored and may require excavation. A generous margin should be given to position a fence beyond the known edge of a monument, as buried archaeology generally extends well beyond the visible remains.

F. 4: Many of the sites and monuments on Inis Cealtra are not fenced off (including St Michael's, the earthworks, the holy well, the 'bargaining stone', bullaun stones, penitential stations, etc.) and are susceptible to damage by grazing animals. In general, best practice indicates that fences should not be sited across archaeological sites as they obscure the archaeological landscape.



F. 5: The fencing off of monuments can be largely avoided if the site is adequately monitored by guides and a warden.

F. 6: It is recommended that where existing fences are to be removed, this is to be done on a phased basis. This would be done as a series of progressive iterative monitored trials as follows: first, leaving the fences as they are and examining how the change in species (from cattle to sheep) will inform the need for, or effectiveness of, these fences. Next, it is recommended that a selected area of fencing be removed, and i) the condition of the monuments and ground before and after, and ii) the behaviour of the animals, be monitored. Finally, should the said trial indicate that no unpreventable (by other non-physical means), ongoing damage is being caused by sheep or people, all wooden fences should be removed. Ministerial consent may be required. In any case, it is recommended that no further monuments or sites be fenced off as this is unlikely to enhance the overall condition of the site.

F. 7: Any fenced-off areas or areas where grazing by animals (sheep) is unsuitable or places where the archaeology is at risk – particularly near the monuments and earthworks – will require subsequent vegetation management, i.e. mowing and strimming. A protocol for how and when this is done informed by best archaeological and ecological practice, should be developed.

Toilet facilities (TF)

The development and provision of toilet facilities on Inis Cealtra has the potential to cause damage to the archaeological and cultural significance of the island. It should be noted that other important archaeological sites that function as tourist destinations do not require toilet facilities to operate successfully (e.g. the World Heritage Site of the island of Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry, although this has been raised as a concern in the most recent management plan). Furthermore, the introduction of toilet facilities increases risk to the physical

elements on the island and creates potential hydrological links between the island and Lough Derg. Notwithstanding the above, the current situation of people using bushes for toilets is not sustainable and in light of proposed increase of visitor numbers would give rise to nuisance and potentially nutrient run off to Lough Derg. The following approach is recommended:

TF 1: Toilets will be provided at the visitor centre and on the proposed commercial boats. The provision of toilets on the island should essentially be to cater only for 'emergency' toilet needs. This approach should be part of the communication to visitors prior to visiting the island with the aim being to reduce overall visitor use of these facilities.

TF 2: Toilet facilities will comprise compost toilets with hand sanitisers (to avoid the need for running water for handwashing). Treatment will consist of a low impact constructed wetlands (new reed beds) for black and yellow water management, coupled with periodic removal of the composted solid waste. Chapter 3 shows the ideal relationship between toilets and the new reed-beds, as well as a schematic diagram of the systems. Further mitigation measures are listed below:

Reedbed systems

TF 3: Any plans involving the provision of compost/reed-bed toilet systems on Inis Cealtra needs are to be cognisant of the sensitive landscape setting. The final toilet site should be carefully selected so as to minimise visual impact on the sensitive surroundings; this includes consideration of lines of sight from the monuments that could be affected and negatively impact the historical integrity of the site and visitor experience.

TF 4: The provision of a new compost/reed-bed toilet system on Inis Cealtra may necessitate the removal of overgrowth in the vicinity of the site. This could require ministerial consent and archaeological monitoring if it involves ground disturbance.

TF 5: It is recommended that the toilets be as far from the archaeological core of the site as possible (i.e. not in the eastern sector of the island nor in the vicinity of St Michael's). The area between the existing northwest pier close to the new pods indicated on figure 19 (Section 3.13) is probably most suitable from an archaeological perspective. It is also an area already occupied by existing woodland vegetation which would afford cover.

TF 6: The toilets and reed-bed habitats should be situated outside areas of high nature conservation value. The reed-bed system should include a

species list that is made up of hydrophilous vegetation occurring at the island. Hydrophilous vegetation species not associated with the island should be avoided. This is to ensure that the seed stock of surrounding tall herb swamp vegetation is not altered by the introduction of new vegetation.

Shelters (SH)

Proposal to upgrade Fisherman's Hut: the hut has been vandalised and its door has been detached. Cattle regularly enter the currently open doorway of the hut, which causes damage. Furthermore, one of the hut's rafters has become detached so the roof is at risk of collapse. The structure is in urgent need of repair.

SH 1: Any proposed works involving the fisherman's hut should ensure its preservation as an interesting vernacular structure connected with the post-medieval use of the island for fishing and farming.

SH 2: Any proposed works to the fisherman's hut should be preceded by a bat inspection and where deemed necessary a bat survey. This hut is infrequently used as a night roost by bats. Where upgrades to the fisherman's hut are proposed, measures to enhance its potential to support roosting bats should be incorporated into the upgrade design.

SH 3: Following conservation action, the hut could be re-used as a convenient shelter.

Proposal to provide rain shelters, unobtrusive pod or storm shelter

SH 4: Any proposed shelters constructed on the island should avoid visual imposition and preserve lines of sight from the monuments in order to ensure the historical integrity of the site and visitor experience. The area in the vicinity of the proposed northeast pier or the existing northwest pier is probably most suitable from an archaeological perspective; it is preferable that all modern structures are grouped together.

SH 5: Ground disturbance should be avoided.

SH 6: The use of construction machinery should be avoided on the island where possible, and should always avoid crossing/landing on archaeologically sensitive zones as identified in the inventory (Chapter 3, Appendix 2) and in proposed geophysical surveys.

Lighting

Any external light installations (associated with the visitor centre in Mountshannon - none are proposed for the island), will follow best practice guidance as recommended by Bat Conservation Trust (2009) and Bat Conservation Ireland (2010).

Climate concerns (CC)

Vulnerabilities:

- Inis Cealtra's lake location makes it particularly vulnerable to the damaging effects of storms and strong winds.
- Climate change, temperature changes, and increased wind and rainfall can compromise archaeological monuments.
- Adverse weather conditions also impact on the numbers of tourists visiting the island and on the landing experience of the visitors on the island's piers.

CC 1: With regard for ICOMOS, a framework for monitoring climatic conditions that may affect the island should be developed.

CC 2: The effects of storms and rising water levels on the archaeology must be continually monitored.

CC 3: The site and monuments should be monitored after periods of heavy rainfall and wind for potential damage caused by flooding and ground damage. Similarly, after periods of drought the ground should be monitored for erosion.

5.7.5 Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMPS)

A CEMPS will be prepared in advance of the physical elements proposed as part of this Plan and will be implemented throughout. Such plans will incorporate relevant mitigation measures indicated below.

- Clare County Council (CCC) will be informed in advance of construction activities in sensitive environmental areas.
- CCC will be informed of all construction or maintenance works located within the vicinity of designated European sites, NHAs or pNHAs or in the vicinity of watercourses linked to these designated conservation areas. Monitoring of works in these locations will be undertaken and the results of monitoring will be provided to CCC.
- Where works are undertaken in/adjacent to sensitive environmental receptors all construction/maintenance staff will be inducted by means of a 'Tool-box Talk' which will inform them of environmental sensitivities and the best practice to be implemented to avoid disturbance to these receptors.
- All construction and maintenance works will be undertaken in accordance with the following guidance documents:
 - › Inland Fisheries Ireland's Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works.
 - › CIRIA (Construction Industry Research and Information Association) Guidance Documents
 - › Control of water pollution from construction sites (C532)
 - › Control of water pollution from linear construction projects: Technical Guidance (C648)
 - › Control of water pollution from linear construction projects: Site Guide (C649)
 - › Environmental Good Practice on Site (C692)
 - › NRA Guidance Documents
 - › Guidelines for the Crossing of Watercourses during the Construction of National Road Schemes
 - › Guidelines for the Management of Noxious Weeds and Non-Native Invasive Plant Species on National Roads
 - › Guidelines for the Protection and Preservation of Trees, Hedgerows and Scrub Prior to, during and Post Construction of National Road Schemes

- Any excavations and/or vegetation removal will be minimised during construction and/or maintenance works.
- Excavated material will not be stored immediately adjacent to watercourses.
- Disturbance to natural drainage features should be avoided during the construction and/or maintenance of routes.
- Construction machinery should be restricted to public and or site roads. As a general rule machinery should not be allowed to access, park or travel over areas outside the footprint of proposed walking/cycling routes.
- During route maintenance, no construction activities should be undertaken at watercourse crossing in wet weather conditions.
- Suitable prevention measures should be put in place at all times to prevent the release of sediment to drainage waters associated with construction areas and migration to adjacent watercourses. To reduce erosion and silt-laden runoff, create, where possible, natural vegetation buffers and divert runoff from exposed areas, control the volume and velocity of runoff, and convey that runoff away.
- Where necessary drainage waters from construction areas should be managed through a series of treatment stages that may include swales, check dams and detention ponds along with other pollution control measures such as silt fences and silt mats.
- Where vegetation removal associated with treelines, hedgerows, individual mature trees, scrub or woodland is required, this will only be undertaken outside the breeding bird season, between March and August inclusive.
- Where extensive areas of ground are to be exposed during route construction or maintenance, dust suppression should be undertaken during periods of dry weather.
- All chemical substances required during construction and/or maintenance works will be stored in sealed containers.
- Any refuelling or lubrication of machinery will not be undertaken within 50m of a watercourse.
- Spill kits will be required on site during construction and/or maintenance works.
- Ensure non-native, invasive species do not occur at construction/maintenance areas; if occurring, ensure they are not being spread as a result of the works. The NRA Guidance on invasive species, outlined above will be adhered to.
- Disseminate information on sensitive ecological receptors, such as sensitive habitats, breeding upland birds, etc., occurring adjacent to or in the wider area surrounding routes. This information will aim to educate recreational users on the conservation status and sensitivities of such receptors to encourage responsible usage of routes.



- Provide route facilities, such as trail-heads in areas away from sensitive habitats and species.

CEMPs typically provide details of intended construction practice for the proposed development, including:

- location of the sites and materials compound(s), including area(s) identified for the storage of construction refuse,
- location of areas for construction site offices and staff facilities,
- details of site security fencing and hoardings,
- details of on-site car parking facilities for site workers during the course of construction,
- details of the timing and routing of construction traffic to and from the construction site and associated directional signage,
- measures to obviate queuing of construction traffic on the adjoining road network,
- measures to prevent the spillage or deposit of clay, rubble or other debris,
- alternative arrangements to be put in place for pedestrians and vehicles in the case of the closure of any public right of way during the course of site development works,
- details of appropriate mitigation measures for noise, dust and vibration, and monitoring of such levels,
- containment of all construction-related fuel and oil within specially constructed bunds to ensure that fuel spillages are fully contained; such bunds will be roofed to exclude rainwater,
- disposal of construction/demolition waste and details of how it is proposed to manage excavated soil,
- a water and sediment management plan, providing for means to ensure that surface water runoff is controlled such that no silt or other pollutants enter local water courses or drains,

- details of a water quality monitoring and sampling plan,
- if peat is encountered - a peat storage, handling and reinstatement management plan,
- measures adopted during construction to prevent the spread of invasive species (such as Japanese knotweed),
- appointment of an ecological clerk of works at site investigation, preparation and construction phases.

5.7.6 Biosecurity measures

The following measures to reduce risk of spread of alien and invasive species are recommended:

Any soil or topsoil required within the plan area will be sourced from a stock that has been screened for the presence of any invasive species and where it is confirmed none are present.

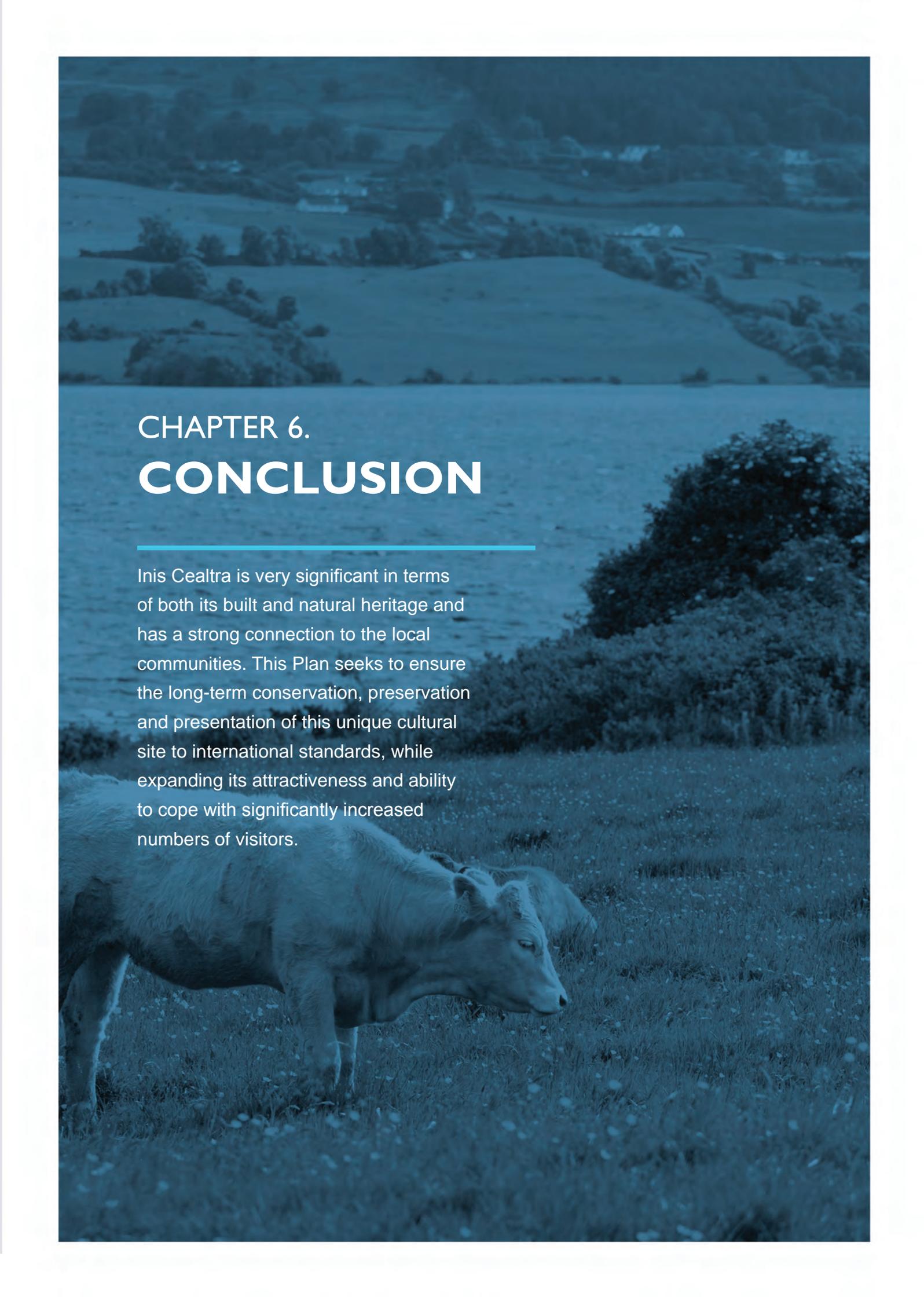
All machinery will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to arrival and departure from the site to prevent colonisation or introduction of invasive species. This process will be detailed in the contractor's method statement.

Inland Fisheries Ireland and Canoeing Ireland have produced guidelines for the disinfection of paddle sport equipment to prevent the spread of invasive species. These should inform awareness raising for recreational users associated with the island.

5.7.7 Flood Risk Assessment

A flood risk assessment report (prepared by JBA consulting engineers) on the proposed visitor centre concluded that the development would fall within the confines of Flood Zone C. This makes the site suitable for a visitor centre such as that proposed here (which does not contain any overnight accommodation). The impacts from climate change are anticipated to be low.

The FRA report by JBA Consulting is set out in full in Volume 4.

The background of the page is a blue-tinted photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a cow stands in a grassy field, looking towards the right. The middle ground shows a line of trees and bushes. The background consists of rolling hills under a clear sky.

CHAPTER 6.

CONCLUSION

Inis Cealtra is very significant in terms of both its built and natural heritage and has a strong connection to the local communities. This Plan seeks to ensure the long-term conservation, preservation and presentation of this unique cultural site to international standards, while expanding its attractiveness and ability to cope with significantly increased numbers of visitors.

The process of preparing this Plan has relied on a wide range of professional expertise and engagement with the local community as well as review by several statutory agencies. This integrated and strategic approach will ensure the development of Inis Cealtra as a high-quality visitor attraction will not result in negative impacts on the island's heritage. The aim is to secure the long-term protection of the island by ensuring it continues to be valued both as an important local facility and as a unique national treasure.

In Chapter 5, section 5.6, the Inis Cealtra Action Plan 2017-2022 sets out a framework for the implementation of the objectives contained within this plan. The action plan is a long-term iterative development plan for Inis Cealtra and Mountshannon that will protect the island's heritage, increase awareness amongst visitors and create economic benefits for the local community. The Plan carries many recommendations and specific objectives, summarised below.

6.1 Recommendations

- Visitor numbers can, and should, be increased to bring more tourism, and socioeconomic benefits, to the local region. There is capacity to increase the numbers of visitors significantly, while ensuring protection of the built and natural heritage of the island within the context of a number of management strategies and new facilities.
- The rich heritage and history of the site is of such importance that it justifies broadening access to it for more visitors. It is important that such a significant example of our cultural heritage will be shared beyond those currently familiar with it.
- In order to increase visitor numbers, specific amenities must be provided to allow effective management of such growth in numbers.
- A visitor facility is required as a gateway to receive, inform and filter access to the island. This should comprise high quality facilities for visitors. Without significant investment in such a facility, the island cannot withstand the impact of increased visitor numbers, nor could the whole experience be considered to be of the quality expected of comparable historical site destinations nationally and internationally.
- Some new facilities to enhance the visitor experience, provide ease of access, safety and information on the island's heritage, will be needed on the island. These will be the minimum facilities necessary to allow the growth of visitor numbers that a site of such cultural value deserves and could absorb. However, to preserve the authenticity and ambience of the island, more elaborate facilities will have to be provided off site. Having considered a number of alternatives, it is regarded that Mountshannon is the most fitting location to receive and manage a new visitor centre; it is the lakeshore village closest to the island, has a deep cultural connection to it and has enough infrastructure potential to accommodate an increase in visitors. The local area would also benefit greatly from increased tourism economy at this location.

6.2 Specific objectives

The objectives set out under the Plan to realise the above recommendations are:

Objective 1

To commence the nomination of Inis Cealtra, in combination with the other significant early medieval monastic sites, as a serial World Heritage Site, in the near term.

Objective 2

To restrict access to the island to a maximum number at any one time of 100 persons (excluding guides and staff), no more than 400 in any day and a maximum of 45,000 over the course of the year. These numbers should be taken as the maximum number of persons arriving on the island for all subsequent studies, projections, models and projects.

Objective 3

To have primary visitor access to the island via a ferry from a new visitor centre on the mainland with a small access charge, and to allow the local community continue accessing the island free of charge with established local tourism businesses using a discounted permit system.

Objective 4

To procure a new visitor centre on the mainland to serve the needs of visitors seeking to learn more about the island.

Objective 5

To develop the new visitor centre for Inis Cealtra at the south end of the community park in Mountshannon (site 2) with views to the island and access from the main street via the Aistear park. Alternative options assessed for the development of a visitor centre, including the Old Rectory and the Aistear Centre, can be explored further should the new-build option prove unfeasible.

Objective 6

To engage a professional interpretation design company to design and develop an interpretative experience for the visitor centre, taking account of the wealth of academic, social and anecdotal information assembled in this Plan (including Appendix 2).

Objective 7

To provide a new visitor centre which may include a range of services and facilities for visitors, including audio visual auditorium, exhibition, visitor information and ticketing, café, retail, toilets, meeting rooms, spiritual space, pilgrim traveller facilities, connection to ferry point and drop off points with limited parking facilities.

Objective 8

To have access across the lake to Inis Cealtra from Mountshannon.

Objective 9

To construct a new landing facility at a location that allows both a safe passage to and safe landing and embarkation on/from the island. This will become the main landing point for visitors to the island.

Objective 10

To introduce new visitor facilities on Inis Cealtra comprising pathways around monuments and the island, suitable orientation signage, new pods to provide for emergency, toileting and staff facilities, wastewater management, benches and improved landing points for kayaks.

Objective 11

To remove, or if necessary relocate, the OPW shed and wooden fencing and let the shed's functions be served by one of the new 'pods' which will provide spaces necessary to meet a minimum level of accommodation required of a public facility with employees.

Objective 12

To develop an Accessibility Plan that facilitates accessing the monuments, protecting their condition and preserving the character and ambience of the setting.

Objective 13

To install a sustainable natural toilet system on the island.

Objective 14

To limit impacts on archaeology, ecology and the character of Inis Cealtra, the island will be closed to visitors during winter and at any other time the maximum numbers of visitors will not be exceeded.

Objective 15

To develop an interpretative approach that focuses on the heritage of Inis Cealtra and endeavours to broaden visitor interest to also encompass other important heritage sites in the region, and to have this holistic focus reflected in all interpretative activities of the Plan.

Objective 16

To develop a comprehensive presentation and communication strategy grounded in the human interaction of guides rather than signage (on the island) and relying on both traditional and modern means and technologies (at the visitor centre).

Objective 17

To provide a warden during the open season with specific responsibility for caretaking of the island from first to last boat and to provide guides and ushers to fulfil other specific functions necessary for the smooth and safe running of visitor operations on the island.

Objective 18

To manage entry into the area known as the Saints' Graveyard so it is supervised and controlled, and so that walking on the medieval grave-slabs is deterred in order to prevent further wear and damage to them.

Objective 19

To seek the assistance of the OPW in the management of Inis Cealtra.

Objective 20

To develop a landscape management plan in consultation with an archaeologist, an ecologist and an agricultural consultant or farmer, and to include active management of vegetation by sheep.

Objective 21

To create a community forum representing the interest of the local communities in the development and managing of the island's future, including a local access provision.

Objective 22

To discourage and, if persistent, prohibit camping, unaccompanied tours and fishing on the island and to prohibit dogs except companion dogs and sheep dogs being used for management purposes.

Objective 23

To commission a conservation management plan focusing on Inis Cealtra's archaeology and monuments prior to any works being initiated on or for the island.

Objective 24

To target the market segments previously identified for the lake in the new marketing strategy, i.e. Culturally Curious, Great Escapers and Nature Lovers.

Objective 25

To provide the ferry service to the island using a fleet of two 50-seater ferries.

Objective 26

To develop a branding strategy, to include naming, titles, logos, digital and print media initiatives, through a single party services contract with the content (of the appropriate sections of) the Plan forming the brief to tenderers.

Objective 27

To create a dedicated website for Inis Cealtra as well as a social media presence to provide information about the island and the visitor centred to promote the use of Inis Cealtra as the island's name.

Objective 28

To carry out urgent stabilisation, maintenance or conservation work, as set out in this Plan, to monuments on Inis Cealtra, as soon as possible and prior to any increase in visitor numbers or other development work being initiated.

6.3 Acknowledgments

This Plan has been developed following extensive consultation and collaboration with people in the local community, local business and tourism operators as well as other relevant experts. One of the things that has been most striking is the profound affection and personal connection that many people feel for Inis Cealtra, how much people care about its protection and feel a sense of responsibility towards the island in different ways. Over 130 people contributed to the local community consultations. The feedback and suggestions received have been critical to shaping the objectives set out in this Plan.

APPENDIX



Appendix 1.

Inis Cealtra Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan Response to public submissions April 2017

Sub No.	Summary of submission	Response to issues raised in submission	Action/amendment proposed to the Plan documents	SEA and AA Response
01	<p>Location of interpretative centre- Consider using the Rectory- unoccupied, visual link to island from 1st floor, adequate land/space for parking, planning not a problem, and likely to be available at a competitive price.</p>	<p>Purchase of the site and building is a good idea IF the views from the Rectory building to the island are not obscured by the large trees to the south end of the Aistear park. However, it entails further investment in purchase of the site and buildings which could well offset any cost savings in repurposing this existing building. It should be noted that substantial alterations to the building (it having been in a domestic use) and extensions would in all probability be required. It was however assessed in the VMSTP and scored low on connection the main street.</p>	<p>Add Rectory as site no.12 (table 3-1), and reassess. Add text to Objective 5 to allow Rectory building, or south part of its site to be considered (at the time of design of the VMSTDP), should the previously identified site be unfeasible.</p>	<p>The SEA will assess the Rectory site as part of updating the Consideration of Alternatives Section of the SEA ER. The site will be assessed in line with the SEOs prepared for the SEA ER. Objective 5 will be assessed as part of the SEA screening process also upon receipt of additional text.</p>
02	<p>a. Wants the Aistear included in visitor experience.</p>	<p>a. See sub 11 below for Aistear Centre. Aistear is intended to be included in the visitor experience by having visitors to the visitor centre approach through the park which will create programming synergies between the visitor centre and the Aistear centre as set out in the VMSTDP.</p>	<p>a. Expand the VMSTDP text to emphasize this and restate in marketing section.</p>	<p>a. Noted. No effects identified for this proposed change.</p>

02	<p>b. Walking Trail/Pilgrim path -include a walking trail/pilgrim path in the plan. Link the Aistear through Woodpark and Knockaphort pier providing forest walks, wetland nature walks and boardwalk viewing points on the lakeshore to the island/wildlife.</p> <p>c. Renovate the Market House and the Community Hall.</p> <p>d. Upgrading works - Upgrading footpaths, street lighting and amenity facilities.</p> <p>e. Branding - Supports the branding of Mountshannon and the Inis Cealtra Centre as an ecotourism destination.</p>	<p>b. VMSTDP already intended to do this e.g. pilgrimage accommodation in visitor centre brief- table 3-2 and inclusion of pilgrim traveller facilities in section 3.3.5. However, the actual development of this element lies outside the scope of this plan. Proposed to address under new section 3.5 'Other initiatives' identifying this as a potential project which possibly could be developed separately, is complementary but outside the remit of this plan.</p> <p>c. d. While these would be positive for the town, given the stated vision and objectives as well as limits on scope and budget these are outside the remit of this plan.</p> <p>d. Noted and will be included in additional section 3.5 'Other initiatives' under which this will be listed.</p> <p>e. Noted and agree with this submission.</p>	<p>b. Add additional section of text 3.5 'Other Initiatives'</p> <p>c. No change as outside the remit of the plan.</p> <p>d. Add text under section 3.5 stating that the actions would be favourable and is anticipated will flow from the general uplift in the business health of the town as the Visitor Centre and other VMSTDP proposals take hold.</p> <p>e. Already catered for in the plan.</p>	<p>b. Support for walking /pilgrim paths are provided for in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 for example through CDP9.22 Tourism in East Clare. New trails would require project level assessment and be subject to detailed design and compliance with existing provisions of the above CDP 2017-2023 as well as those developed for the VMSTP as appropriate. At this stage no significant adverse environmental effects are identified for this proposal.</p> <p>d. No environmental effects identified for support for these actions, as they would be assessed and developed as per item (c).</p>
03	<p>Access to Holy Island for locals – Include residents of East Clare/ or include Scarriff and Tuamgraney in definition of "local". Plan should enhance community life in east Clare</p>	<p>Already implied in VMSTDP. What's intended is local connection as opposed to being local per se. ie having a demonstrable previous and ongoing connection to Inis Cealtra rather than simply being from a given locality was what was envisaged.</p>	<p>This is already provided for in the plan.</p>	<p>No change recommended – no interaction with SEOs.</p>

04	<p>a. Business projections - appear optimistic and calculations should be low risk values rather than medium risk.</p> <p>b. Location of Visitor Centre -The view from proposed site will be obscured by masts of boats at the yacht club. The Old Rectory next to Aistear Park could be used and is for sale.</p>	<p>a. Visitor numbers have been considered in detail. The low range considered that there would be limited promotion of Holy Island as an attraction, tour operators would not be targeted and linkages with other attractions would not be pursued. It is not considered that this will be the desired outcome and the medium projection is considered reasonable.</p> <p>b. See response to submission 11 below.</p>	<p>a. Having reviewed the submission there is no change to the plan.</p> <p>b. See stated action in submission 11 below.</p>	<p>b. Rectory will be assessed in Ch 6 of the SEA ER.</p>
05	<p>Welcomes plan and the proposal for no physical intervention on the island itself, but document repetitive, with generalizations and irrelevant material.</p> <p>a. Ownership of Lands - No details of how much of Holy Island and the foreshore at Knockaport was purchased by Council in 2015 or the OPW in the seventies.</p> <p>b. Location of Visitor Centre/ Embarkement – Knockaport a better site with historical usage. Issues raised are more applicable to Mountshannon and no issues with currents in 30 years. Screening from the “scariff breeze” is only needed at the disembarkation point; upgrading the pier would cost less than creating a new pier and there is no “important woodland habitat” opposite Knockaport.</p>	<p>a. Clare County Council own only a small (510sqm ie 0.12 acres) portion of land at Knockaport.</p> <p>b. We fundamentally disagree and consider that perhaps the writer does not understand the traffic implication, size limitation of the Knockaport property (as owned by the CCC) versus the objectives for the visitor centre. Additionally it is doubtful it would pass PP and SEA screenings. For environmental impact reasons it is also not good practice to site a visitor centre on a rural site or at historical site itself.</p> <p>The Scariff breeze is a significant part of the reason why a new landing point location is proposed</p>	<p>a. No change to the plan.</p> <p>b. No change to the plan.</p>	<p>Noted. No change, no interaction with SEOs.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>NPWS Native Woodlands Survey 2003-2007 (updated 2011) identified native woodland habitat in the shoreline around Knockaport particularly to the west. The fringe marsh habitat and woodland/scrub habitat present on the island also occurs in areas across from Knockaport. See Section 4.3.5 of the SEA ER.</p>

05	<p>c. Right of Way -The "Pilgrim Path" from the pier on the north west to the main monument section is a recognized right of way and restricting access likely to be challenged.</p> <p>d. Bargaining Stone - Little attention given to the Bargaining Stone.</p> <p>e. Children's Grave - Priority should be given to the restoration of this site which was not restored by 'celebrated' archaeologist.</p> <p>f. Cattle – have caused damage on the island.</p> <p>g. No. of Boats allocated – Has been hiring boats from Mountshannon for 27 years and expects the same concession as Lakeside Holiday Village.</p> <p>h. Retirement of current ferry operation -As the ferry operator since 1990, he will only negotiate terms with officials from the Council and his solicitor.</p> <p>i. Loss of business – loss of business since Council takeover</p>	<p>c. The right of way is not intended to be closed or obstructed in any way. What's intended is to curtail the passage of boats from Knockphort to the west landing point.</p> <p>d. In common with many of the monuments, what's envisaged is to leave them as they are. Interpretation/guiding will bring proper attention to them.</p> <p>e. This is a good suggestion. VMSTDP does suggest some kind of a rededication or spiritual ceremony. However it may warrant restoration or a special monument. This requires a dedicated community consultation exercise in due course.</p> <p>f. This is something that must be progressed as a priority in the implementation of the plan.</p> <p>g. Boat allocation are confined to existing accommodation businesses that have historically offered boat hire on a limited basis to their customers. That concession is limited and will not be allowed to expand. Note also there was a miss-print in the draft VMSTDP as to which Lakeside cottage business it was.</p> <p>h. It is not proposed to require the cessation of the ferry operator. On the contrary enhanced access to the island in a sustainable manner with benefits for the local community is proposed. Bringing new day visitors from Mountshannon to Inis Cealtra is an entirely different matter as these visitors are the subject of the VMSTDP, and are expected to grow significantly, need high safety standards, consistency etc.</p> <p>i. Noted. The purpose of the VMSTDP is to set out a way forward to effectively and sustainably develop the tourism product of Inis Cealtra in such a way that will benefit the local economy and the local community.</p>	<p>c. No change to the plan.</p> <p>d. No change to the plan.</p> <p>e. Include additional text in relation to this under new section 3.5 'Other initiatives' in the VMSTDP.</p> <p>f. The plan indicates the management requirement of the land.</p> <p>g. The miss-print to be corrected.</p> <p>h. Having considered the submission there is no change to the plan.</p> <p>i. Already catered for in the plan.</p>	<p>c. Noted, no interaction with SEOs</p> <p>d. Noted, no interaction with SEOs</p> <p>e. Noted, no interaction with SEOs</p> <p>f. noted, no interaction with SEOs.</p> <p>g.h.i. noted, boats and operator structure does not give rise to effects on SEOs.</p>
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06	<p>a. Submission is intended to promote integration of the plan-making and SEA processes as well as promoting compliance with the requirements of the SEA Directive and Regulations. Scoping – Welcomes the inclusion of Table 2 Scoping Submissions Received and SEA Response, and in particular the summary of how all relevant scoping issues raised have been integrated into the Plan.</p> <p>b. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) Welcomes the commitment to prepare a Construction Environmental Management Plan in advance of the physical elements of the Plan being implemented, in particular, the proposed mitigation measures to be included in the CEMP.</p> <p>c. Plan Development Where relevant and appropriate, there is merit in providing a timeframe over which the Plan is to be implemented. In implementing the Plan, in particular in relation to any tourism related development such as the proposed new visitors centre and new/upgraded jetty facilities on Inis Cealtra, the requirements of the Water Framework, Floods, EIA and Habitats Directives should be taken into account.</p> <p>d. Critical Service Infrastructure In implementing the Plan, any proposed development such as the new visitor centre should be supported by the provision of adequate and appropriate critical service infrastructure, in collaboration with Irish Water and any other relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>a. Noted.</p> <p>b. Noted</p> <p>c. Whilst recognising the value of setting timelines, it can also be over-prescriptive removing flexibility in addressing particular actions.</p> <p>d. This has merit.</p>	<p>a. SEA informed the preparation of the plan. No change required.</p> <p>b. Already provided for in the plan.</p> <p>c. Having considered this submission there is no requirement to change the plan.</p> <p>d. Add text about upgrading (roads, paths, pipes, public lighting, water services/capacity etc.) in new section 3.5 'Other initiatives'.</p>	<p>a. Comments noted, no change required. No interaction with SEOs</p> <p>c. No action required.</p> <p>d. Critical Services infrastructure are already addressed in the SEA ER and the Clare CDP 2017-2023, in particular through a number of objectives such as CDP 8.22 Development Plan Objective: Protection of Water Resources and CDP 8.27 Development Plan Objective: Wastewater Treatment and disposal. If it is recommended to include more text about upgrading of paths etc, such measures would be subject to existing provisions of the SEA ER and the Clare CDP 2017-2023.</p>
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06	<p>e. Landscape Management/Conservation Management Plans We note the intention under Objectives 20 and 23 to develop a Landscape Management Plan and commission a Conservation Management Plan for the Plan area. To ensure that these Plans are effective in the context of protecting environmental sensitivities, and in particular, designated sites, there is merit to including a commitment to completing both, and implementing their respective recommendations, prior to implementing any significant development or tourism related aspects of the Plan.</p>	e. The VMSTDP addresses these within its objectives (objectives 20 and 23).	e. Already provided for in the plan.	e. no change, no interaction with SEOs
<p>f. Transportation The National Transport Authority has recently prepared a series of Regional Transportation Models in support of its transport planning remit. There is merit in reviewing the Mid-West Regional Model, which includes the Plan area, in the context of determining traffic related effects which may arise from implementation of the Plan.</p>	f. Detailed transport and traffic modelling may be required at project stage. Reference to the modelling can be included in the Final SEA ER.	f. SEA Environmental Report to be amended to include additional text in this regard.	f. Update Baseline Transport with reference to NTA modelling.	
<p>g. Environmental Sensitivities We welcome the inclusion of an overlay environmental sensitivity map including key ecological and flood risk sensitivities within the Plan area, in the context of ensuring that appropriate mitigation measures are provided to minimise any potential for likely significant effects.</p>	g. Comment noted.	g. Noted. No change to plan required on foot of the submission.	g. No change, no interaction with SEOs	

06	<p>h. Strategic Environmental Objectives We note the inclusion of Table 12 Strategic Environmental Objectives for the Inis Cealtra Plan. There is merit in including an additional column in Table 12 summarising the key related policies and objectives in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 for each SEO identified, as relevant and appropriate.</p>	h. Noted.	h. Noted, no change to plan itself required.	h. Agreed, will update Final SEA ER with additional column.
<p>i. Monitoring We welcome the commitment given in 9.2 Frequency of Monitoring and Reporting, to annual monitoring of the Plan pre and post visitor seasons in years 1-5. Table 24 Monitoring Programme Inis Cealtra Plan, clearly sets out the selected environmental indicators, targets, measurement sources and frequency of monitoring related to the Plan. There is also merit in outlining specific responsibilities in respect of the targets set out in Table 24 and in linking the SEA monitoring and reporting and the Plan implementation monitoring and reporting.</p>	i. This is addressed in detail in Chapter 5 of the plan.	i. Insert additional summary table in the SEA ER to reflect this, but no change to the plan itself.	i. Insert summary table into the SEA ER.	
<p>j. Strategic Objectives The EPA recently published the State of the Environment (SoE) report Ireland's Environment – An Assessment 2016 (EPA, 2016). Chapter 13 of this report identifies the key challenges for Ireland, and the associated key actions required to address them. These key actions are as follows:</p>	j. Noted	j. Noted. No change required to the plan itself.	j. k: Noted, and these actions are embedded within both the Plan and SEA ER.	
<p>1. Environment, Health and Wellbeing - Recognition of the benefits of a good quality environment to health and wellbeing.</p> <p>2. Climate Change - Accelerate mitigation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation measures to increase our resilience in dealing with adverse climate impacts.</p>				

3. Implementation of Legislation – Improve the tracking of plans and policy and the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation to protect the environment.
 4. Restore and Protect Water Quality – Implement measures that achieve ongoing improvement in the environmental status of water bodies from source to the sea.
 5. Sustainable Economic Activities – Integrating re source efficiency and sustainability ideas and performance accounting across all economic sectors.
 6. Nature and Wild Places – Protect pristine and wild places that act as biodiversity hubs, contribute to health and wellbeing and provide sustainable tourism opportunities.
 7. Community Engagement – Inform, engage and support communities in the protection and improvement of the environment.
- k. These actions should be taken into account as relevant and appropriate in finalising, implementing and reviewing the Plan. The supporting baseline information and indicators may also be useful in terms of including the Environmental Baseline in subsequent reviews of the Plan, as appropriate.

k. Noted

k. No change to the plan required.

<p>I. SEA Regulations As a tourism related Plan, the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I No 435 of 2004), are the relevant SEA Regulations which apply. This should be reflected where relevant in the Plan and the SEA ER.</p>	<p>I.SI 435 is referenced in the SEA ER. Sentence can be inserted in Introduction to clarify SEA being prepared under this Regulation.</p>	<p>I. Include reference to SEA being prepared under S.I. 435/2004 in Introduction to Plan</p>	<p>I. Update Final SEA ER with statement regarding preparation of plan under SI.435/2004.</p>
<p>m. Future Modifications to the Plan Clare County Council should determine whether the implementation of any proposed modifications would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. This assessment should take account of the SEA Regulations Schedule 1 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004) and should be subject to the same method of assessment as undertaken in the “environmental assessment” of the Plan.</p>	<p>m. Noted.</p>	<p>m. Any proposed changes to the plan have been subject of SEA and AA.</p>	<p>m. Noted, no change, no interaction with SEOs</p>
<p>n. SEA Statement Following adoption of the Plan, an SEA Statement should be prepared that summarises the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan; • How the Environmental Report, submissions, observations and consultations have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan; • The reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and, • The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan. <p>A copy of the SEA Statement with the above information should be sent to any environmental authority consulted during the SEA process.</p>	<p>n. SEA statement will be prepared upon endorsement of the Plan.</p>	<p>n. SEA statement will be prepared upon endorsement of the Plan.</p>	<p>n. SEA statement will be prepared upon endorsement of the Plan.</p>

07	<p>Commends the work undertaken.</p> <p>a. Scale of the proposed facilities at preferred location no 2- difficult to envisage that site accommodating that size of development.</p> <p>b. Proofing against County Development Plan - Has the project including retail been proofed against the relevant sections of C7 and 6 of Clare County Development Plan? Could the facilities outlined form a more integrated part of the village as per CDP7.19?</p>	<p>a. The visitor centre is envisaged as being 1000 sq metres gross internal floor area. Built over 2 (or possibly partly 3) storeys (1 below ie at lake side level, one at park level and possible some occasional higher parts as well) the site indicated can accommodate this. The VMSTDP as drafted makes clear that the slope/ retaining required and need to mediate between the park, view, and different levels make for a challenging design. This will also however make for an attractive interesting, perhaps unique building.</p> <p>b. The SEA process that accompanied the plan preparation has informed and ensured consistency with the requirements of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023. It is not envisaged that large scale retail would be associated with the visitor centre, nor would detract from the vitality of main street.</p>	<p>a. Already catered for in the plan.</p> <p>b. Already catered for in the plan.</p>	<p>a. Any development arising from the plan implementation will be subject to provisions of the Clare CDP 2017-2023 and the measures specifically developed as part of the SEA ER and AA processes.</p>
08	<p>Commends the work undertaken.</p> <p>a. Kayaks - Welcomes the provision to allow access for kayaks to the island. Suggests permits for same be linked to current Waterways Ireland Operator Permit System. Suggests that permits cost be kept low through scheme of volunteers to carry out cleaning & maintenance.</p> <p>b. Camping – Camping could provide a unique experience and would work if managed by an approved provider.</p>	<p>a. This should be kept under review but initially this should operate without a permit. Clare County Council to keep this under observation and consider introducing a permit approach if needed to kayak hire companies in the Lough Derg area.</p> <p>b. This would be at odds with the central vision of the island as now being a sacred and vulnerable place (preamble to Objective 22)</p>	<p>a. No change to the plan required.</p> <p>b. No change to the plan.</p>	<p>a. No change, no interaction with SEOs</p> <p>b. No change, no interaction with SEOs.</p>

09	<p>Supports the purchase of the island and works undertaken to make Inis Cealtra a central icon of the Lough Derg region providing a snapshot of life in early Christian Ireland.</p> <p>a. Need to take into account the spiritual significance of the island to the local communities, including North Tipperary, which must be prioritised over the interests of tourists</p> <p>b. Preserve the unique character by controlling visitor numbers and by not building on the island, protect the Christian story for future generations, include a contemplative space within the centre for pilgrims and explore the concept of “spiritual capital” to attract spiritual tourists.</p> <p>c. Encourage “visit and stay” tourism, over short visit coach tourism.</p> <p>d. Link Inis Cealtra with other early Christian Churches in the area, e.g. Terryglass in Tipperary, the village of Lorrha and the 6th century monastic foundation of St Ruadhán, the remains of 12th/13th century Dominican and Augustinian Abbeys, St Cronan’s – 6th century foundation in Tuamgraney.</p>	<p>a. It is considered that the VMSTDP strikes a good balance as currently written.</p> <p>b. It is considered that the VMSTDP as currently written does this.</p> <p>c. The development of the visitor centre in itself is a step towards provision of additional attractions and amenities to do in the area which can encourage people to stay for longer and spend more. Provision of information within the centre on things to see and do in the area/places to stay in the area will also help. The cap on coach tourism is also aimed to increase the proportion of FIT travellers as a proportion of total visitors. Beyond that, encouraging overnight visitors is the responsibility of CCC/Clare Tourism and Failte Ireland.</p> <p>d. The VMSTDP as currently written does this.</p>	<p>a. Already catered for in the plan.</p> <p>b. Already catered for in the plan.</p> <p>c. Already provided for in the plan.</p> <p>d. Already provided for in the plan.</p>	<p>a-d: No change, no interaction with SEOs.</p>
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09	<p>e. Appoint a Development Worker to work with local development groups, map tracks, trails, link to significant places, gather local stories, and provide signage/information points.</p> <p>f. Develop a camino style trail and further walkways around the ancient sites. Consider a ferry service from Inis Cealtra to places on the eastern shore of Lough Derg, eg. Inis Cealtra to Terryglass would help link sites.</p>	<p>e. These are initiatives which are complementary to the plan but are outside of its remit and can be considered separately.</p> <p>f. Agree that the initiatives would enhance the tourism product in the area, however they are outside the remit of this plan.</p>	<p>e. Having considered the submission there is no change to the plan.</p> <p>f. Having considered the submission there is no change to the plan.</p>	<p>e, f, these are outside the scope of the Plan currently</p>
10	<p>Commends the project and work done.</p> <p>Local Community - Important to engage with local community especially in relation to the location of the visitor centre.</p>	<p>This was integral to the public consultation in the preparation of the VMSTDP. Any further physical development including that of a visitor centre or pier will be subject to Part 8 procedure and further public consultation.</p>	<p>Having considered the submission there is no change required to the plan.</p>	<p>Noted, no change, no interaction with SEOs</p>
11	<p>a. Existing Park - Concerned that the new visitor centre will do nothing to enhance the local park.</p> <p>b. Location of Visitor Centre - The best view of Holy Island from the park is from the roof top of the existing Aistear Centre which could be renovated.</p> <p>c. Holy Island Grave – Consideration to be given to local ties to graveyard</p>	<p>a. It is considered that in locating the visitor centre in the southern part of the Aistear Park, visitors will approach the entrance to it from main street through the park which will raise its profile and attract more people to it.</p> <p>b. The Aistear centre in its assessment was not considered as suitable for conversion to a visitor centre due i) to its location encircled by the Aistear maze (which would make construction difficult) and ii) due to its domestic type construction (which would make extension upwards in order to get the required view of the island- expensive). Unless total demolition and rebuilding as a 2 -3 story building and probably major reworking of the maze to have the centre be more visible from and accessible to the park was considered.</p> <p>c. This is already in the VMSTDP.</p>	<p>a. Having considered the submission there is no change required to the plan.</p> <p>b. Add text to Objective 5 to provide the opportunity for it to be considered (at the time of design of the VMSTDP), should the previously identified site prove unfeasible.</p> <p>c. Already catered for in the plan.</p>	<p>a, b: these are most appropriately addressed at project level. The mitigation measures of the SEA ER and plan, in addition to objectives and policies contained in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 provide sufficient protection in terms of design at strategic level.</p> <p>c. No change, no interaction with SEOs</p>

12	<p>a. Lack of consultation-Asked to be kept informed 2 years and reiterates request.</p> <p>b. Access to Holy Island – Members of IWAI object to any diminution in rights of access.</p> <p>c. Floating Jetty – Should include a floating remote jetty which could be used with dinghy.</p> <p>d. Bathymetric Survey – IWAI have available a bathymetric survey of the island and most of the environs which would be of use.</p>	<p>a. In a recent phone call to the IWAI a full discussion was held with them as to the proposals, rationale etc.</p> <p>b. Noted, but the island is now in different ownership than before. Going forward it is to be treated as a sacred, vulnerable place and is a National Monument with vulnerable heritage and protected natural heritage/habitat on and near it (including in and under the waters of its foreshore).</p> <p>c. See response to submission 15e. below. As discussed by phone, the only direct access that could be accepted would be via the local access provisions as implemented by the Community Forum. In other words those members of the IWAI who have a demonstrable local connection to Inis Cealtra would continue to enjoy same and could access by boat. Others should access via the visitor centre and official ferry. If that exercise were to identify a need for a floating jetty off shore, it could be looked at then.</p> <p>d. Noted. The team engineers were satisfied with the information sourced and accept the willingness of the IAWA to share data.</p>	<p>a. Having considered the submission no change to the plan is required.</p> <p>b. Having considered the submission no change to the plan is required.</p> <p>c. See actions for submission 15e. below.</p> <p>d. No change to the plan required on foot of this submission</p>	<p>a-d: No changes, no interaction with SEOs.</p>
13	<p>a. Bus/car impact on the Main Street – The planned bus stops would have a big impact on Mountshannon Main Street. Locate instead on the north side of the village with screening so visitors can walk through village into the Aistear.</p>	<p>a. In developing the tourism product of Inis Cealtra and associated visitor centre the focus is on sustainable tourism. This includes ensuring appropriate provision and management of visitor traffic which is generated by the development of Inis Cealtra and visitor centre. In this regard it is envisaged that there will a restriction to a maximum of four coaches per day, starting at the outset with a smaller number, which will be staggered in terms of arrival and departure throughout the day through the visitor centre booking system. An identified drop-off /collection point on main street near the entrance to Aistear park would allow visitors to embark and disembark to access the visitor centre, park and main street. The coach would then relocate to a peripheral parking location for the duration of the visit of the group. Prior to the development of a visitor centre appropriate parking area(s) will be identified and provided as part of the implementation of the overall project.</p>	<p>a. Add text to clarify the requirement for car/bus parking provision to be identified prior to the development of the visitor centre, which will be provided as part of the implementation of the overall project.</p>	<p>a. Identification of a site for peripheral parking if included in the updated plan will require assessment through SEA and AA processes.</p>

13	<p>b. Rectory – Include the rectory grounds in the development/visitor centre.</p> <p>c. Pedestrian – connect the Aistear/rectory grounds and the waters edge by eliminating motorized vehicles using tunnel, bridge, etc.</p> <p>d. Max Boat No's – 25 per boat to restrict large numbers on island.</p> <p>e. Reed Bed – Inappropriate. Consider other options like wooden structure upon a flat boat which can be pumped.</p>	<p>b. See response to submission 11a. re location of development</p> <p>c. This is a good suggestion but the outcome could be achieved (to a large extent and for lessor cost) by landscape creation of shared surface carriageway along part of lake front road.</p> <p>d. Boat numbers have been indicated at 50 to enable a viable franchise for 1-2 boat operators. A full financial feasibility study for the operation of the visitor centre (which is essential and should be carried out by an accountant), should include detailed analysis of the cost of boat operations.</p> <p>e. Solid waste is to be collected in composting chambers and when cycle complete distribute appropriately off-site. Reed beds will be quite adequate for liquid waste only.</p>	<p>b. See action to submissions 11a.</p> <p>c. Add creation of share surface carriageway along part of lake front road (Traffic Management and Parking section).</p> <p>d. Having considered the submission no change is required to the plan.</p> <p>e. Adequately addressed in the plan.</p>	<p>b. Requires assessment as part of the SEA and AA process.</p> <p>d. Visitor numbers have been carefully considered and assessed through SEA process to date.</p> <p>e. no change, no interactions with SEOs</p>
14	<p>f. Walking Routes – Further develop walking routes around the area, e.g. shorter looped walks, heritage trails, pilgrim trails, nature trails for families, food trails, etc which will appeal to visitors to Holy Island and keep visitor in East Clare for longer.</p>	<p>See response to submission 9e. above.</p>	<p>See action to submission 9e. above.</p>	<p>SEA response as per 9e.</p>

<p>15</p>	<p>Welcomes publication of draft and work done by Solearth.</p>	<p>a. Link with Tuamgraney – Welcome the reference to Tuamgraney and St Cronan’s and the potential for links between Tuamgraney and Holy Island.</p>	<p>a. Noted</p>	<p>a. Already addressed in the plan.</p>	<p>a to c; no change, no interaction with SEOs.</p>
<p>b. Location of Visitor Centre - Endorses Mountshannon as the best location for the Visitor Centre.</p>	<p>b. Noted.</p>	<p>b. Noted</p>	<p>b. Already addressed in the plan.</p>	<p>b. Already addressed in the plan.</p>	
<p>c. Access - Welcomes proposals to improve access and managing the island.</p>	<p>c. Noted</p>	<p>c. Noted</p>	<p>c. Already addressed in the plan.</p>	<p>c. Already addressed in the plan.</p>	
<p>d. Monitor Numbers - Welcomes proposals to monitor numbers and suggest cap number of 45K be reviewed when reached rather than setting an immovable figure.</p>	<p>d. The maximum capacity has been carefully evaluated so as not to impact on the character of the site. To increase the capacity in a few years would potentially impact negatively on the qualities of the island which attract visitors to it, thus diminishing its appeal to key tourist markets. It is the opinion that 45k is the maximum.</p>	<p>d. The maximum capacity has been carefully evaluated so as not to impact on the character of the site. To increase the capacity in a few years would potentially impact negatively on the qualities of the island which attract visitors to it, thus diminishing its appeal to key tourist markets. It is the opinion that 45k is the maximum.</p>	<p>d. Having considered the submission no change is required to the plan.</p>	<p>d. visitor numbers have been carefully considered through plan preparation process, SEA would support this number as capacity.</p>	
<p>e. Viewing from water - Recommends inclusion of boat trips to view from the water & passing other points of interest.</p>	<p>e. This could be a future consideration but is outside the remit of the plan.</p>	<p>e. This could be a future consideration but is outside the remit of the plan.</p>	<p>e. The submission relates to issues outside the remit of the plan. No change to the plan.</p>	<p>e. such as location would require additional assessment through the SEA and AA process.</p>	
<p>f. Lakelands brand - Rather than incorporating Holy Island into Ireland’s Ancient East, consider a Lakelands brand which could be promoted with Holy Island as a “signature” attraction like Loop Head and Cliffs of Moher are under “Wild Atlantic Way”.</p>	<p>f. At this point there is no other brand apart from Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East in this area of Ireland. These are the two brands currently being promoted by Failte Ireland and Holy Island fits with the IAE brand. That said Failte Ireland are currently carrying out a review to determine whether a third brand is required, which may or may not include another brand in this area.</p>	<p>f. At this point there is no other brand apart from Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East in this area of Ireland. These are the two brands currently being promoted by Failte Ireland and Holy Island fits with the IAE brand. That said Failte Ireland are currently carrying out a review to determine whether a third brand is required, which may or may not include another brand in this area.</p>	<p>f. Change made to text to make reference to ‘Linkage with other relevant brands if developed by Fáilte Ireland;’</p>	<p>f. no interaction with SEOs</p>	

15	<p>g. Management of Facility - Facility should be managed by Clare County Council or a suitable commercial company.</p> <p>h. Community Element - Proposals regarding community forum, access for funerals and local access are welcome.</p>	<p>g. This is largely what is envisaged. See Visitor Centre Management.</p> <p>h. Noted.</p>	<p>g. Already catered for in the plan.</p> <p>h. No change to the plan necessary</p>	<p>g. and h. no interaction with SEOs</p>
16	<p>Error in Plan - Section 5.7.3 Mitigation of Plan proposals, page 149, Paragraph 3, Line 4 – Lakeside is highlighted in yellow and refers to Lakeside Holiday Village at Mountshannon – this is incorrect. The draft refers to permission being given for 5 boats to access this Island which should refer to “Lakeside Holiday Park” not Lakeside Holiday Village.</p>	<p>Noted and this will be corrected.</p>	<p>The corrections will be made where all references are made.</p>	<p>SEA ER will be updated to reflect correct name.</p>
17	<p>Steering Group - Would like to be considered for steering group for the future planning of Iniscealtra.</p>	<p>Noted. There will be notification of the formation of the Community Forum when it is being set up.</p>	<p>No change to the plan necessary.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

- a. **OPW Site Hut** – OPW would need to discuss the removal of the hut as it is crucial to the maintenance of the National Monument site.
- b. **Running of Centre** – unclear who will run the centre, OPW, Council or Local Management Company. At this time, OPW would not be in position to run it.
- c. **Management by Local Group** – implied on page 11. OPW would not relinquish control of any historic structures, particularly to an entity that might have a profit / enterprise agenda to the fore, as there would be a danger of fabric being compromised.
- d. **Ferry Tender** – Clarification required as there are confusing references to a ferry tender and then to multiple operators (2 boats).
- e. **Power Supply** – Is there a proposed power supply?
- f. **Toilets** – There is a reference to a “natural” toilet. Based on Skellig experience, this will be difficult.

- a. The OPW shed is considered highly unsightly and in the wrong place. If its existence is to be prolonged, even temporarily, it should be moved to near the location of the eventual pods.
- b. The running of the visitor centre is set out in the plan as set out under Visitor Centre Management in chapter 3 in the plan.
- c. Section 3.4.5 and Objective 19 makes clear that it is CCC and OPW.
- d. One operator with two boats of 50 person capacity each is what’s envisaged.
- e. No power connection from the mainland is proposed. Limited PV power generation on the new pods is proposed in the plan.
- f. Skellig Michael is a steep rock with little soil, vegetation or flat areas. Inis Cealtra is a totally different scenario and the limited reed beds proposed here will work with the right design.

- a. Amend text to allow for relocation as well as removal of the shed.
- b. Adequately catered for in the plan.
- c. No change to the plan.
- d. No change to the plan.
- e. Slight change to text to provide greater clarity.
- f. No change to the plan.

Noted.



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