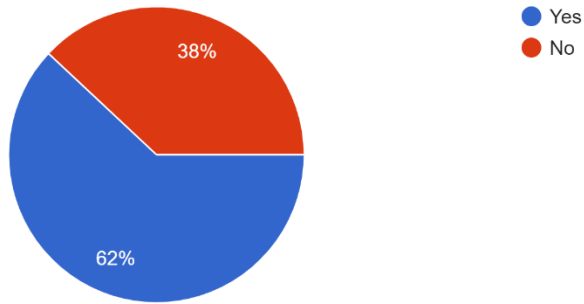


## APPENDIX A

### Summary of Online Submissions received regarding the Visioning Document for Lough Muckno Estate

1. Do you support the principle of this regeneration vision proposal for the Lough Muckno Estate, incorporating Concra Wood and the town as a world-class tourism destination?

71 responses



If no, please outline below the issues/concerns that you have: 31 responses

Certain elements of the vision I have concerns about.

1. The people of Castleblayney were not consulted in advance of the formulation and publication of the plan. This is deeply undemocratic, and is an attempt to offer one vision only for the Lough Muckno estate, when there are many alternative uses for it. This so-called consultation submission is a good example of what is wrong with the whole approach - this is the only plan up for discussion, the only plan we can respond to. 2. The proposed plan will do nothing less than destroy a beautiful natural site with massive over-building. 3. It will also destroy the biodiversity we all know we must save. 4. It will deprive the people of Castleblayney of the simple pleasures of walking in peaceful nature; this will no longer be possible due to the presence of hordes of tourists and the noise and disruption they will cause. 5. It will be utterly unsustainable, despite the vague promises to the contrary; the whole objective is to attract international tourists, with the carbon emissions of air travel this will cause, not to mention the energy needed to run the operation. All of this goes against the government's emissions-reductions targets for 2030. 6. The traffic problems created by this will choke the town, which already suffers from too much traffic.

my main concern is that the area will not be accessible to the local public in the capacity that it has been for many years.

Tourists are only good for their money but it is inevitable that human presence would spoil the resting beautiful nature that is our lake.

We would be in support of Phase 1 of the Vision; we would have serious concerns about the viability of the 2nd Phase. Working in the Irish Adventure Tourism industry for the last 15 years the viability of dreams such as Ice Climbing seem almost laughable. There is a small community of ice-climbing enthusiasts, and with a dedicated climbing facility in the country (Awesome Walls), that struggles with maintaining membership and

viability in the wider climbing market, such a niche experience does bring up financial concerns. As current water and island users, on a daily/weekly basis, we are aware of the changing conditions throughout the year. The dream of having individual accommodation units on the islands seems uninformed as for 4-5 months of the year the water levels are such that many of the islands are underwater and unusable. There would need to be serious investigation into the cost of year round maintenance and upkeep, especially in light of the current consistent problems with vandalism in the park. With the current crucial initiative of getting people out and active, it would seem almost counterproductive to be pushing digital adventure and virtual reality. The whole drive to get people outdoors and using nature and natural spaces for positive mental health and physical well-being would be greatly undermined by taking those useful spaces and knocking them to build futuristic domes.

Somewhat, but not in the large scale scope that is set out here.

My lack of support for the principle of this regeneration vision is based on the fact that, to my knowledge (and I stand to be corrected), there was limited engagement with the public in the formation of the brief for the consultant to work with in the generation of the vision. In other words, as it stands, this may possibly be the vision of a select few as oppose to a vision that is based on a brief which is set organically from the bottom-up at community level.

Not realistic for a small rural town. Would have a negative environmental impact .

I think it would impact too much on the Park. I've no problem with a cruiser on the Lake but wouldn't like to see Domes on old Golf Course. Why is Monaghan Co Co against a Good Hotel at Hope Castle

Traffic, Housing and Amenity issues

Yes and no. My expectation was that the current grounds and estate would be revived and reconstructed rather than bringing in new ideas. For example the tennis court, and hope castle. I believe the project needs to be of a smaller scale, focusing on providing opportunities and facilities to the youth rather than on an international tourism scale. Several housing estates have been erected over the last number of years but a lack of facilities to match the growing population. Lets build outdoor table tennis courts, basket balls courts, tennis courts. As a mother I am afraid our town will invite hens and stags and turn into a commercial field. There needs to be ample reassurance the running of this project wont let that happen and it will respect and maintain local community access.

While I welcome the effort made, by mcc. this proposal is totally over scaled and out of proportion to what is required. I will make a further submission by e mail

It's a takeover of a beauty spot rather than an ehancement

While I totally support the restoration of Hope Castle, Lough Muckno and environs for tourism purposes, (which the region greatly needs and deserves), I am against the proposal in its current form. It is overly commercial and does not plausibly take into account the environmental and heritage aspects that must be protected in the area before anything else is even considered.

Too heavy handed. Includes destruction of parts of existing woodland. Out of step with other great examples of sustainable tourism around Ireland, eg. Camping, glamping, sleeping pods.

Horrifically unsustainable, out of tune with the current trend to sustainable nature-based tourism, and unrealistic in its ambitions.

It's an unsustainable approach that will cause more damage to the environment than good. It needs to be re-planned with attention given to biodiversity and ecology in the area. In particular wild areas and native woodland.

Having considered the report, I am concerned about the direction of travel outlined therein. Option 1, in part, may have some merit in exploring further, but Option 2 is a total non-runner, in my opinion, and I would hope no additional funds are wasted developing same. I don't believe there is support for the creation of a transformational project, rather that we as a community harness the unrivalled natural beauty of Lough Muckno, and the small rural town of Castleblayney. Muckno adventure estate is an unfortunate description for Option 1, and reference to zone 1 only, having free access to the public, suggests the authors of the report have mis-understood their brief.

Yes to the principle but i am not sure about the "world class"

My main concerns are that 1) the vision is far too ambitious for the size of Castleblayney; 2) that it doesn't take into account the recent reports dedicated to the protection of the environment, at both national and local levels; 3) no consultation with the local community was operated before approaching the key thinkers around this plan. Regarding 1) I am particularly concerned that traffic in Castleblayney is already a problem (traffic jams simply at school times - what will it be like when hundreds of tourists drive around main streets?). Currently, there are no traffic or parking wardens, which allows for an unsustainable amount of cars/trucks left on pavements, particularly around York street, Thomas street and Henry street, despite the presence of large car parks in the area. It is complicated enough for pedestrians, including the elderly, women with prams and young children, not to mention the handicapped. Regarding 2) I probably don't need to direct the readers of this form to reports issued by Minister Eamon Ryan, among others, and indeed by Monaghan County Council itself, but I would like to underline that Castleblayney Tidy Towns recently issued its own biodiversity plan (in which I was involved) which doesn't consider the protection and development of the Lough Muckno area as involving massive construction of infrastructures and the necessarily reduced public space that would ensue. Regarding 3) while the local community would be the first benefactor of a regeneration of the town itself, and most certainly would welcome anything that gives it a boost, the natural treasure that is the Lough Muckno area would be affected in a way that would change the community quite profoundly, which would have deserved a prior consultation.

The proposed project will be making significant changes to the current natural landscape of Lough Muckno and surrounds, and its impacts and energy requirements cannot be sustainable - there is just no way that it can be run as a net-zero project. The emphasis should be on protecting current woodlands and other natural resources and bringing the quality of the water in the lake back to acceptable levels - the lake is very polluted and what is being suggested will only add further pressures to the catchment system. This shouldn't be about global recognition, it should be about local recognition of what is important - protecting our natural heritage and safeguarding it for future generations.

This could potentially a good project for Castleblayney but the development should not be on the lake shore. There are lots of unused or underused buildings in Blayney that could be modified and enhanced to fit this project. All proposed developments should be viewed through the lens of the current climate and biodiversity emergency. The potential embodied carbon involved in this project would be enormous. The small lake islands should be completely out of bounds. These islands are among the few remaining relatively undisturbed refuges for nature in the area. The trees and understorey vegetation including lake shore vegetation should not be removed. Wave action from boats should be strictly controlled and only allowed when birds are not nesting (September - February). All activities that might disturb wildlife habitats should be excluded.

- I support the principle of regeneration but Lough Muckno and environs is a degraded ecosystem that needs to be given priority in terms of restoration/regeneration. If it is world class in terms of ecosystem restoration then I would support that interpretation of the regeneration principle.

I feel that we need to keep lough muckno untouched to construction. The beauty of lough muckno is its untouched purity and serenity.

It is too early to definitively support or not support anything. Proceed to the next stage and then come back to the people of Castleblayney. There should have been a third option in the first question!

In the context of climate change, I believe it is a mistake to assume the continuation of cheap international flights that have driven the expansion in tourist numbers over the past 30-40 years. There is likely to be a contraction and greater competition between tourist 'destinations' globally. I also feel that the report is incorrect in its assertion that tourists in the post-Covid world will be lured by an adventure centre, even if it is 'world-class' or that there is room for another 'adventure' centre in an already crowded and expanding market. From personal experience over many decades, I believe that tourists are drawn to Ireland is our cultural and landscape heritage. The Muckno estate and its hinterland provide a wonderful opportunity to develop (at a fraction of the cost in the proposal) a natural, biodiversity rich tourism destination that links into the Sliabh Gullion Centre in Armagh and the Cooley peninsula and, of course, the walking/cycling trails of Monaghan. Finally, I would ask that a full and independent environmental risk assessment be completed before any further resources are expended on the proposal in question.

1. Making significant changes to the current natural landscape of Lough Muckno and surrounds 2. Proposed building works will have huge impact on the ecosystems of Lough Muckno 3. Unsustainable energy requirements cannot be sustainable 4. No emphasis on protecting current woodlands and other natural resources 5. No emphasis on bringing the quality of the water in the lake back to acceptable levels - the lake is currently very polluted 6. Proposed project will add further pressures to the catchment system 7. The project is people based and not nature based

Mass travel and tourism creates pollution and environmental desecration.

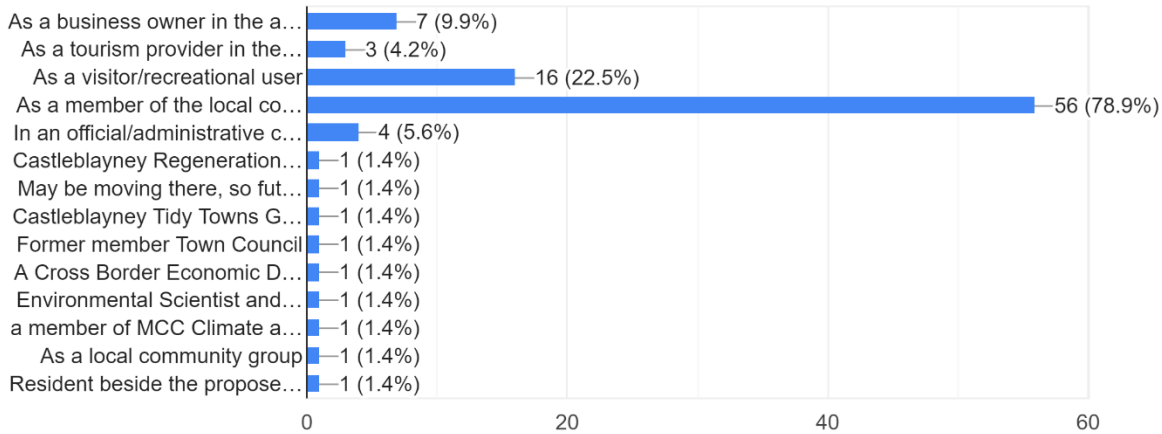
The scale of the project and its environmental impact on Lough Muckno and its surrounding islands and areas are of concern. The project claims to have taken habitat into account yet proposes to develop islands where habitat has been free from human interference. Additionally, the second phase adventure centre claims to potentially carbon neutral. It's hard to see how this could be the case given the activities outlined (a year-round ice wall) nevermind the environmental impact of a construction of this size.

Castle Should become Hotel and no development on Black or White Islands.

Focuses on tourism and money with the exclusion of the local people.

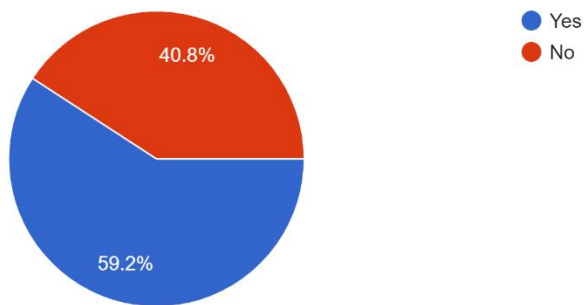
## 2. What would best describe your interest in the Vision Report?

71 responses



## 3. Have we sufficiently outlined the vision for Muckno?

71 responses



## If No, what other information could be provided? 30 responses

More detail could be given

How is the issue of pollution of Lough Muckno to be addressed . What level of engagement has the local community in the development and management of the project. What level of destruction of existing habitats will take place. The Dome concepts has merits but the manner in which they will be developments and dispersed needs greater consultation. The whole development of Angling - its future development has not been sufficiently addressed and how it can be integrated and with the vision as outlined. While th Vision has very much an economic thrust the issue of the impact it will have on the local community in social terms needs further elucidation.

1. The levels of carbon emissions. Bland token statements are inadequate. 2. Why biodiversity considerations were ignored. 3. Why no other possible uses of the estate were considered. 4. Why the Castleblayney community was not consulted. 5. Why Monaghan County Council thinks it acceptable to destroy a natural site when we all know that such sites need to be preserved. 5. Why Monaghan County Council feels free to ignore its own government's recently passed Climate Bill, which demands deep cuts in carbon emissions by 2030 and explicitly demands that we protect and enhance biodiversity.

We feel that there was a serious emphasis put on Phase 2 of the Vision. The second option was very aspirational and almost unbelievable in terms of viability. It would have made more sense to focus on the initial stage, and the logistics of how that would work, and we would have definitely be interested in more information on that. The second stage just left us with a lot of questions in relation to the project. If all funding would have to be in place before any works could be started? And what happens if funding falls through once the initial stages of development are started? What happens to access for the local community?

Very little detail given in terms of locations and layout

There is no mention of the impact of this project on nature and biodiversity in the area. The project encompasses a huge range of activities for humans, but no space for other animals to live and thrive. There will be a huge impact on the lives of animals in the area, including fish in the lough with additional noise from boat traffic. Any project that is to go ahead should build in as much space for biodiversity as possible, with areas that are solely left alone for nature. These actions can add to the enjoyment of human visitors too, and the idea of adventure, knowing that there are wild areas all around them. A large project such as this has the potential for positive actions to help biodiversity thrive. These are missing from the current vision.

How the vision could become an exemplar of sustainability. How the vision fits in to our local and national emission reduction targets and climate action plans and how, if it is truly sustainable, it would not impede on the environment of Muckno, both ecologically and in terms of water quality.

Some detailed biodiversity plan would need to be included

affects to walkway from Dundalk road and surrounding houses

No details of who would run this. Public access issues etc.. Enormous financial expenditure

Difference between options and phases is obscure.

How will the project be carbon neutral (if not 'carbon positive')? There is no detail provided here and I don't see how such an ambitious project could be described as such - a detailed outline of how this could be achieved needs to be provided. How will the castle itself and the annex be tastefully restored, and how will the development be in keeping with the current pNHA designation and county biodiversity and climate plans currently in place?

The area of woodland to be removed.

More photos and drawings of suggested amenities, including existing examples elsewhere.

How biodiversity and conservation will be prioritised

How you are contributing to biodiversity and sustainability in the park land.

I believe the opening segment of the report, saying it's aiming to achieve a credible, achievable and realistic vision, as well as retention of access to the local community, was very accurate, but the body of the report is not achievable, in my opinion, especially in relation to Option 2. The 3 elements chosen at q6 below, need to be incorporated into a plan which also includes further upgrading of the town square/ court house area, with improved streetscape throughout the town. This is a project that will achieve widespread support from the wider community, can be progressed in stages, and the council and community at large have the capability to deliver successfully.

Its world class or nothing? Where is the realistic steps. The vision needs to start with the existing community and serving their needs before it becomes a world class destination hub. There is too much too soon and subsequently too many gaps and questions.

Information on the environmental impact of such a plan and on the consequences for the streets of the town, as highlighted above. On this score, if visitors are supposed to also come by bus, the need to improve the bus area in Castleblayney is also crucial. Also, specific information about the re-use of the castle would be welcome.

There should be more information backing up the claim that the project will carbon neutral or carbon positive - where is the corroborating evidence of this?

The entire concept is too vague. It refers to the project being carbon neutral - how will this be achieved? Will embodied carbon be counted? Has the environmental impact been examined?

a basic but professional preliminary climate resilience and biodiversity assessment is required

Investment is vague, data for numbers, revenue etc weren't backed up as to where the data came from.

A lot more details are needed.

What restrictions will be put on today's users of the park

would like to see more detail specifically on Hope Castle

The basis upon which it makes the assertion that the project will be in line with environmental and climate objectives

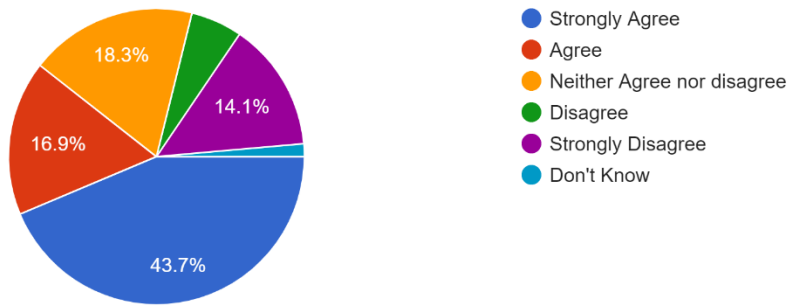
More information required on environmental impacts and energy sustainable - what evidence is the claim that the project will be carbon neutral/positive based on?

There is no mention of how the project will be paid for. There is no mention of how the project will be in line with the UN SDGs. There is mention that the project will be carbon neutral but there is only mention of activities that will increase emissions, no mention of how it will be sequestered. This is very important as realistically this is a long-term project, and all sectors will be subject to the provisions of the recently passed climate bill, meaning emissions must be halved by 2030. Economic and sustainable viability are intrinsically linked and can't be separated. This vision unfortunately falls short in both departments.

How it will benefit the local residents (not business owners), how the town will manage with the overflow of people - parking, traffic etc. how it will affect residents and how they plan to assist residents that are affected.

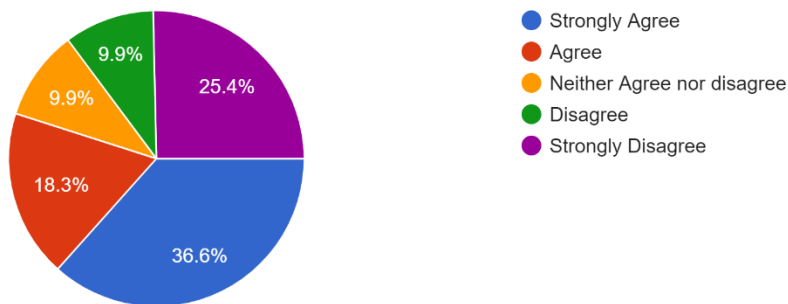
4. Please state your level of agreement with the following statement: "I believe that this vision for Muckno will have a significant positive economic benefit to the local economy & Co Monaghan"

71 responses



5. Please state your level of agreement with the following statement: "I believe that this vision for Muckno will be a sustainable tourism development"

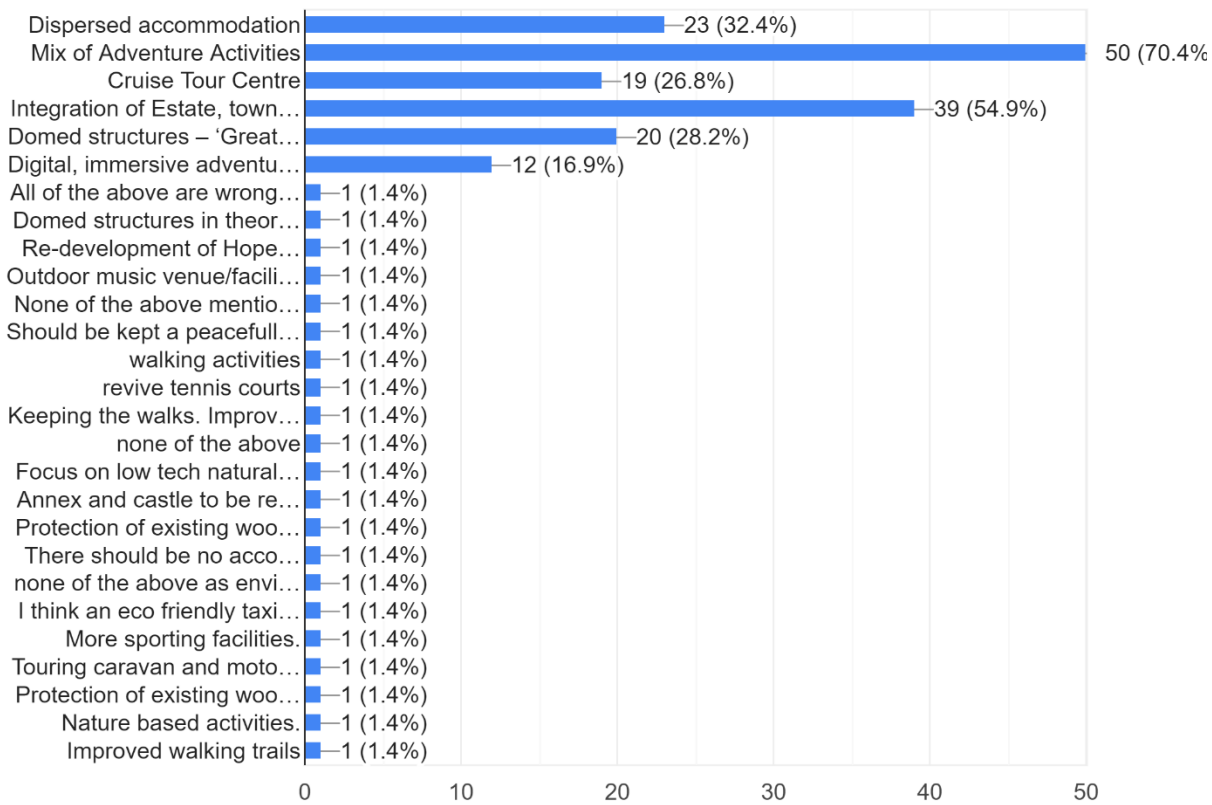
71 responses



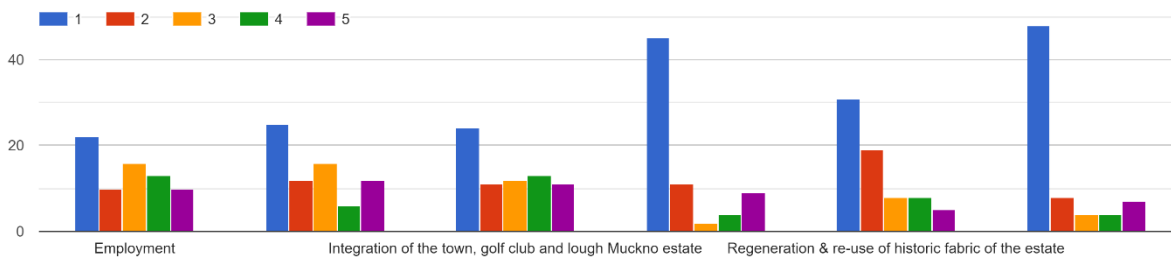


6. The Vision outlines a number of proposed developments. Please tick below the 3 elements you like best in terms of a 'fit' for Muckno:

71 responses



7. In terms of the regeneration of Lough Muckno, please rank in order of importance the below, with 1 being the most important:



If other, please specify: 14 responses

We want to ensure all efforts are made to make the project as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible

need to include out door fresh water swimming area to which everyone has free access

The utter dishonesty of this questionnaire is revealed at every stage. Monaghan County Council has manipulated the survey questions so that it will get the result it wishes. As any first-year student in research-

survey techniques knows, you lead respondents to the answers you want to hear by asking the questions in a particular way. So much for consultation, so much for integrity.

While we wholeheartedly agree with the need for park regeneration; we do feel that there are serious environmental aspects that need to be thoroughly investigated. Presently, Lough Muckno is on record as being one of the most polluted lakes in the country. The water treatment facility does not appear to be meeting the current demand, and adding to it further, along with adding water-taxis and more engine-fueled lake traffic, is only going to add to the current problem of algae blooms. It would be essential to see investment and upgrades to the current treatment facility before even beginning to imagine adding to its workload.

#### Developments sensitive to biodiversity

Much more focus on sensitive restoration of the castle and annex, improvement of water and ecosystem quality, carbon neutral projects and lower level ecotourism activities than the very commercial activities proposed for both 'options' in this vision.

#### Preservation/ restoration of biodiversity and modelling of good practice

Development while retaining the fabric of Lough Muckno and environs. We need to set realistic goals that are achievable and are financially sustainable for generations to come.

The primary focus should be on protecting the natural environment and biodiversity of Lough Muckno and preserving it for future generations.

Ecosystem restoration is needed before all of the above (except for public access). The current ecosystem studies underway into water quality are welcome but there is also need for a wetland /landscape restoration plan. The restoration of Hope Castle and Annexe and some income generating low impact tourism activities could proceed at same time as ecosystem restoration.

Adventure activities are nice but how many times can a local pay to go on a zip line. What facilities are we developing for the youth of Co. Monaghan. We should work with all the sporting bodies in Ireland to select what centre's of excellence can go into Lough Muckno. Sports such as archery, fencing, pentathlon, cross country running, triathlon, open water swimming etc (not exhaustive) should be considered. These centres of excellence (or more modestly called regional infrastructure for national sporting bodies) can serve three functions - a) provide opportunity for children/schools of the area to pursue diverse sports, b) allow for locals of the area to pursue sporting goals through club times and c) act as a tourist attraction for the much of the day. Rather than having activities only suitable for stag parties and families, the infrastructure should double up as competitive level training centres. There should be a greater legacy for the people of Monaghan than an opportunity for some to engage a few times in their life in expensive adventure activity. We want to inspire the children of the region with opportunities to grow, compete and pursue excellence in sport, while building tourism infrastructure. This is the true opposite of Center Parcs. The population of Ireland will grow strongly over the next 50 years. If a significant level of employment is generated, very careful consideration needs to be taken regards to quality and sustainable housing as well as business/industry zones. It is noticeable in the area around Castleblayney that the countryside is becoming dominated by a) one off housing, b) small businesses - builders yards, truck depots, even specialist shops and c) caravans - people living in caravans due to the cost of building a house. If Castleblayney is to become a tourist destination then we need to protect the countryside ASAP. Zones for commercial and industrial activity need to be developed beside towns (similar to housing estates) to protect the countryside. What development happens in the countryside needs to have nature investments as part of the planning permission - trees, shrubs etc designed to hid

unsightly developments for the betterment of everyone. It is not clear the extent of the land available for this project. It would be best to purchase land on the north shore of Lough Muckno and spread the infrastructure over a wider area. It is very important that the town still has nature on its doorstep (black island, the green spaces on front of the castle, quiet walks etc) at its disposal. In other words, there should be an eco zone (an untouched area) between the town and any development. It would be a great loss to the town if this area was overrun with any development. In short, the level of support this project will get will depend on its design.

should incorporate music to concept

Regeneration of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the Muckno area, restoration of wetlands in the area, protection of water quality in the lough and its tributaries.

This shouldn't be about global recognition, it should be about local recognition of what is important - protecting our natural heritage and safeguarding it for future generations.

## 8. Please outline any other ideas, issues, or views on the Muckno Vision Report: 41 responses

We feel it will be important to ensure that the final project links in to the current environment as sympathetically and naturally as possible.

The original facade of Hope Castle needs to be rebuilt / reinstated with whatever internal developments needed to make it a viable business venture. The hotel development referred to in the vision should be relocated within the facade of the original Hope Castle. Needs to be integration of Arts within the vision either by developing an Arts plan for the new library building and integrating the Theatre in Íontas within the vision.

I support the progression of the vision incorporating the elements referred to here. There also needs to be greater inclusion of the local culture and heritage. I have also some concerns about the ecological and environmental sensitivity with which the developments on the islands on Lough Muckno takes place.

This whole process is thoroughly disreputable and raises serious questions about the integrity of Monaghan County Council. If MCC were genuinely interested in consultation, they would have approached community groups in Castleblayney before formulating a plan. They then produce a plan that is truly shocking in its unsuitability for a small town and that will succeed only in destroying a lovely site of nature. If all that were not bad enough, the Council indulges in this farce of a consultation, where respondents are invited to say positive things about the plan. Any research-survey company worth the name would have thrown this questionnaire into the bin on the grounds that it was blatantly leading respondents to give MCC the answers they want in order to justify the approach they have adopted.

My name is Joe McDonnell and I am a teacher from Castleblayney. Throughout my life growing up within a kilometer of all the areas mentioned I was lucky enough to share times with my family and appreciate everything the area had to give. Be it a walk through the old golf course to the black island with my grandparents and extended family or swims out in the old Concra Wood before the time of the golf course. Exploring the temple, swimming at the Belfast steps, etc. This was at a time where the area was relatively untouched for many years not including the hope castle and ski club. This is where my family and I grew up to appreciate nature and the local wildlife and flora and fauna. Going ahead with this project is creating a man-made, artificial countryside. Instead we should be working on conservation efforts to help regenerate,

re-wild and in turn have native wildlife reinhabit the area. Although I feel that there is need for regenerative work around Lough Muckno I feel that this project is effectively going to hand over ownership of the land to a few people instead of leaving it open to the public. There are already many people already making use of Lough Muckno. **Mark and Zoe at** Muckno adventure have worked tirelessly to give people an opportunity to explore the lake and surrounding area in many different ways. Perhaps they should be given more funding to enhance the hard work they have already put in. I began paddleboarding on the lake in 2019 thanks to Muckno adventure at a time when it was just them and fishers who used the lake for recreation. However if you visited this summer you would see the sheer increase in the number of people boating, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding and swimming. It may end up that these people will be discouraged from this due to water taxis or boat tours having mapped routes which can't be crossed. People are able to tour the area already with such amenities. I know from spending a lot of my time locked down in the area that many people used the black island walks as a way to decompress in the serenity of the forest. It was important for peoples mental health to spend time here and meet other locals and still feel a strong sense of community at a very difficult time. I know that having spent years walking around that many people have started to appreciate more and more the natural beauty of the area and will continue to do so having rediscovered this beauty. If we spend time updating areas such as the Annex and Hope castle for accomodation and use the old golf clubs car park as a car park there will not be much need to go much further. Even using the market house as a new age local market. Such things will bring new people to the area with any level of advertisement and strengthen community in the area making more people want to come and visit and live in Castleblayney. I know there is the view that people will come and spend money in the local area but with the level of developments spoken about I fear that the money will only be spent in this small space with accommodations and that the local area will see less customers. Brilliant small local businesses and pubs may not benefit as much as is planned. Places like 2 West Street, Mc Caugheys ice cream, The Cosy Cafe, Grinded Coffee, Dignams bar, The Glencarn, The Old Coach Inn, etc. I urge those in charge of the project to include the local public who are passionate about the area in the conversation. Please take the time to read and consider my points about: 1. Learning about nature and rewilding 2. Using amenities already in the area to help people explore our beautiful landscape 3. Thinking about how much locals already use and take pride in the area 4. Restore areas which have fallen into disrepair which once were massive parts of the community. 5. Put local small businesses at the forefront of planning in order to help the local community. I feel very strongly on the subject and having missed out on the previous webinar on August 13th I hope I can be involved in any future talks on the matter. If there is any way I can be involved in plans or talks I would greatly appreciate it as a local who is passionate about the area and teaching the next generation about it. Thank you.

Lough Muckno is an amazing location that is currently being under-utilized; however, Phase 2 of the vision seems to take away from the current benefits of the park. From speaking to other park users, through our capacity in the Adventure Centre, a lot of what people are looking for is more focused on restoring what has been lost(Tennis courts, Hotel, Annex), rather than turning it into elitist experiences.

RE dispersed accommodation. The islands need to be left alone as many of them have existing long established woodland. Boats would drastically affect the lough, adding noise pollution to the waters and the surrounding landscape. Any boats being used should be without motors to keep the undisturbed atmosphere. The cruise tour centre is likewise unsustainable, adding noise and pollution to the landscape. A floating walkway would have less of an impact on the wildlife in the area, while still allowing people to enjoy the lake close up. Sustainable tourism can only exist in a small scale. Large scale developments such as this add vehicle and foot traffic to an area, having a two fold problem of creating more pollution and affecting wildlife with increased human activity. Tourists want sustainable attractions and wild areas. This vision is way too large in scope for the area. It will turn the town into one that serves tourists rather than one that serves community. Small scale visitor attractions would be better for this spot, and would still bring money into the local economy. The integration of estate, town and golf course should always be done with community needs in mind. The best places to visit as a tourist are areas that community use in their everyday way of life, rather

than something that is outside of the community simply there to serve tourists. "Adventure" does not only entail high octane, high physical activities such as are outlined in this plan. Adventure stems from the unknown and the thrill of exploration. Walkways through wild areas that allow the wildlife to continue living and thriving undisturbed would provide adventure. Hides for bird watching and photography could add to these walks. We need low impact tourist activities, not something on this scale! For example, star gazing could be incorporated, and low/no light activities. Bats are particularly sensitive to light pollution, and something on this scale, with glass ceilings where light will escape, will have a significant negative impact on our bat populations as well as our night insects, who are attracted to light and away from their usual foraging activities. The area is steeped in mythology, and story telling and folklore could play a huge role in guiding the activities. It is important to note that if we are to value our built heritage and folklore, we need to equally value our natural heritage! Our ancestors valued nature, incorporating respected animals into their stories and legends. To create something that praises our history while destroying our current natural heritage is hypocritical and needs to be avoided. Finally, the way that this vision is being proposed is backwards. Locals should have been consulted before a proposal was put together. Instead, the proposal was created and we are being asked what we think about it. This method wastes time and energy when the company has to go back to the drawing board to incorporate the public's ideas and wishes for their locality. I hope that it does indeed go back to the drawing board, as it should, to incorporate proper public consultation.

Central to the vision should be a truly sustainable proposal, which doesn't aim to exploit the local natural amenities, but actually enhances them and then builds a model of tourism which taps into the opportunities which this provides. Think of Lough Key Forest Park but with a far greater range of activities and events in the town itself and an equal (if not larger) amount of passive outdoor recreational activities on the estate.

As a Tidy Town's group our main concern is the environmental impact of any development at Lough Muckno. We would like to see any future developments be sensitive to the surrounding environment and be in keeping with the natural landscape. We fully support the linking of the town, Muckno and Concra and the addition of adventure activities in the park. We would love to see the re-use of the existing buildings as much as possible. Public access to the park is vitally important in order to gain community support and involvement. Any new buildings or structures need to be in keeping with the natural environment, we feel the dome structure may comprise this, perhaps alternative natural structures could be explored. Over the years we have worked with numerous agencies to improve biodiversity and water quality in the park. We would hope that these reports would be taken into consideration as the process evolves.

Outdoor music venue e.g. how Stradbally estate is used for electric picnic

The scale of the existing Lough Muckno estate and associated hinterland is too small to sustainably support the scale of the proposed development as volume of visitors proposed. This will negatively impact the existing environment for both the visitor experience, but also negatively affect ecology and habitat. To counteract this, the plan needs to be visionary in its proposals for sustainability. This will help in overcoming resistance to the proposals, but could also become an attraction in itself if the development can demonstrate how a holistically planned development can be sustainably delivered with positive benefits to the environment. To achieve this there needs to be concrete proposals to increase the size of the Lough Muckno adventure estate. This could follow the model of the dispersed hotel. Dispersed woodlands, meadows and wetlands (either existing or newly developed) should be connected to the Lough Muckno estate via biodiversity corridors suitable for use by wildlife and used as greenways/trails for walking, cycling, horse riding, E-scooter adventures etc. These corridors could connect to the myriad of small lakes in the area around Castleblayney, currently under-utilised and largely inaccessible to the general public, and these lakes should be seen as dispersed lakes expanding the potential of the Muckno proposal. This would greatly increase the geographic area available for development, and could be hugely beneficial in reducing the direct impact of the development. Climate change and the biodiversity crisis needs to be central to all decisions

made and should drive the vision. As the proposed development will bring massive economic and community gain, these gains should be offset by real and measurable climate and environmental gains. Any investment should be matched with funding/incentives for surrounding landowners to change existing agricultural/marginal land by planting native woodlands and meadows and restoring wetlands, with long-term public access a requirement of the funding. Being carbon positive should also be a priority, and surrounding landowners should be incentivised to install innovative renewable energy technologies to provide the energy for the whole area, such as solar farms, anaerobic digesters and taking heat energy from Lough Muckno itself.

If we could get the Castle, Market House and the Annex back up and running within Phase One, try to get this completed asap I think the towns people should be happy enough

Thought a lot of report like car parking ban as stupid. Where are older people going to park

This project has the potential to significantly enhance the visitor experience in Monaghan, but also further afield as it will attract visitors from across the Island, due to the proximity to the Border it will link with other Local Authorities in NI and complement their activity tourism/sustainable tourism goals.

Does not show full proposed use of the land

I will make a submission by e mail

A fabulous vision that is fitting for the extraordinary beauty of the Lough Muckno estate in Castleblayney

I don't believe this plan is a good development for the estate.

Primary actions before any further tourism development are getting the basis right for this beautiful estate and lake... that is, focus on Hope Castle and its history, improving the quality of the currently polluted lake, considering walks and cycling (ecotourism based activities) over extensive adventure sports and building linked hotels across the islands (which are beautiful and naturally occurring in their current state).

Please prioritise sustainability and biodiversity

Looking at it objectively, I would have to say I was disappointed with the report. I don't feel it captured the strategic features / needs of Lough Muckno. Option 2 I feel smacked of a cut and paste from say lake Garda, and it made it difficult to have any confidence in Option 1 which may be worth further investigation and a lot more community participation about same.

It feels like it is not inclusive of the local community.

As a local resident, born and bred, with the Muckno estate my backyard and playground as a child, I am delighted to see positive moves to develop and enhance the area. Having watched the webinar, and speaking to many locals since then, I would fully support option One. This is what the locals desire, mainly reinstate the castle and annex in some form, develop the woodlands, walkways and lakeshore facilities, and most importantly open and free access to all of the park without restrictions. To me, option Two would be overwhelming for the area and would remove the very essence of why people love this park, the nature, the calmness, the sense of peace, and the beauty of the place. To erect those structures as outlined in the images would destroy all of these things in my opinion. The webinar outlined the potential employment and revenue opportunities both option one and two would bring to the area. Again I think the locals would be satisfied with the benefits a full implementation of option one would bring. I just think Option two,

internationally renowned, world class facility as outlined, would turn the park into a corporate animal and overwhelm the town. The feedback I am hearing locally is that we should keep it simple, hotel, restaurant, accommodation, boating and fishing facilities, walled garden, music museum, greenway around Muckno, and I would agree with this view. Thanks for the opportunity to give feedback, and keep up the good work.

Have think about this and come back to you.

The vision ought to include more convincing points as to what the castle will be used for. Ideally, a visitor centre highlighting the history of the domain and its natural treasures. A place that would not only welcome visitors from outside Blayney but also have an educational mission, inviting school trips.

I love the idea of regeneration but in an environmentally friendly way without destroying the fabric of Lough Muckno

I would not like to see the area too commercialised as I believe this would totally destroy the area and impact detrimentally its natural beauty. I would definitely NOT support domed structures over the islands - definitely a step too far for me. Terry was right when he said this step would be contentious! As far as I'm concerned, the Black Island has so much natural beauty just as it is. I believe enhancing/developing the walking/cycling trails there would be great and well appreciated. I think the work to date carried out by the Council is first class and has already enhanced the area and brought much needed footfall to the town - I noticed a huge increase in out of towners all around the estate this year. I think developing the Adventure Centre further would also be great and would attract even more visitors to the area. But really, the over-commercialisation of the area would, I believe, be a sin. I was surprised and disappointed not to hear any reference to environmental issues throughout the presentation.

I would like more information on what the environmental impact of the proposed building works would be on the current ecosystem of Lough Muckno.

The vacant and underused buildings in the town should be sensitively utilised for this project. This would reinvigorate the town and reduce the embodied carbon that would otherwise be used for a project of this scale.

Have it privately built and run, Carrickmross town council will do nothing to help develop this forward looking plan.

- the public consultation process on the estate was not inclusive from the start and only one person's vision (the consultant's) is being put forward - the vision claims that it will be 'carbon neutral if not carbon positive'. This claim is not credible in any basic assessment of what is proposed. Ireland has declared a climate emergency. The scale of infrastructure envisaged in this vision, especially in Option 2 would involve massive greenhouse gas emissions (embodied energy in materials and emissions relating to construction work). Operating the centre and massive visitor travel would also result in emissions. - the statement that 'both options are aligned with relevant policies for nature and heritage conservation' is also not credible. Lough Muckno and the landscape around it are already degraded. The lake is polluted and the landscape around the lake has invasive plant species. There is a pNHA (proposed National Heritage Area) designation for Lough Muckno and environs because of its wildlife. Monaghan County Council's County Development Plan (2019 - 2024) has designated Lough Muckno as an 'Area of Primary Amenity'. This means that development is restricted to sites where it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the proposed development would not threaten the scenic or environmental quality of the area. Given this restriction, it is likely that only some elements of Option 1 would get planning permission. - there is a need to investigate other options (1) a designation of a new National Park for the estate and other nearby areas such

as Mullash Mountain, with title like 'Drumlin and Lake National Park' This would involve ownership / part ownership by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. (2) A designation as a Nature Reserve and management of the estate by the OPW

There is little mention of sustainability to what is there. Restore the castle and Annex. Leave the beauty, calm and peace of Muckno sacred. In a time where we are bombarded with over development, we need to leave Muckno untouched.

I would definitely like to know more about the environmental impact of the proposed development, even going so far as ranking this more important than job creation/economic benefits.

Not remotely enough detail in the visioning report. It's not a report, merely a short powerpoint presentation. Motorhome caravan park and not holiday homes

Rather than consider the development of an hotel at the Golf Club I feel that the former Hope Castle should be the site of an hotel. This would mean the restoration of the building and the use of the annex courtyard building as accommodation.

History and heritage - going right back to the ice age - must be accommodated. I would argue it should even have its own dome. With hologram ancient humanoids explaining about the ice age, and future homo sapiens appealing to us from the future to use our assets wisely, to protect them, and to be wary of the effects of climate change and the melting of the ice.

the Temple on Concra lands should be developed as part of spa mentioned

Protect the biodiversity/ecosystems of the lake and surround, reduce catchment pressures, bring the lake back to good water quality standard.

The Muckno and Hope Castle area has the potential to be a world leader in sustainable development. In real terms the only way we will see a meaningful development that is viable and realistic is if it is just this. So, it isn't advisable to pretend that anything else is a realistic or desirable use of our energy, money and beautiful community. It would be mad to continue with this project without a total overhaul, including an incorporation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, how it is in line with our recently enacted Climate Bill, how it ensure the protection of this beautiful area for the community which cares so much about it, and how it can be funded. This reads more like an architect's dream than something which can actually happen and be a success for our local community, economy and environment.

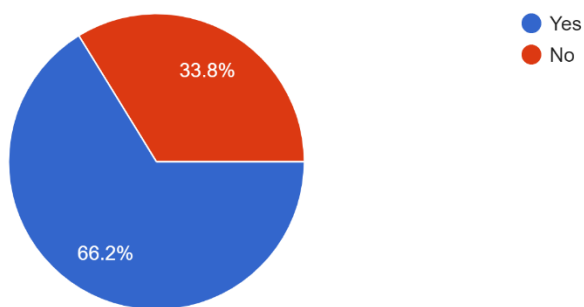
The report and vision were developed within the post-covid context and a deepening awareness in Ireland about the need to protect our environment and to value our natural resources. Lough Muckno is a gem in the heart of the drumlins where local people and visitors benefit from immersion in nature and the peace and quiet it can offer. There are beautiful old buildings that can and should be restored and integrated into community life. There is no need to build something so extravagant and ill fitting with the needs of our community as we respond to the impacts of climate change in the coming years.

The consultation is happening after the plan has been developed and published online with no one making the local community publicly aware in the media etc., not before as it should if the community was really at the heart of the development.



9. This Vision for Muckno report is step 1 in a long process. Do you support the progression of this to the next level which is feasibility stage – (deve...ase, more detailed design & environmental analysis)

71 responses



#### **If No, please outline why: 26 responses**

Along with everything said above, this ignominious plan should be immediately abandoned as it is an attempt to (i) by-pass the local community; (ii) take the Lough Muckno estate away from the people of Castleblayney who have for countless generations enjoyed its quiet pleasures; (iii) turn the estate into a money-making machine; (iv) hand over the estate to the equivalent of vulture capitalists, otherwise known as international investors, whose only interest in Lough Muckno will be to squeeze every cent out of it that they can.

Everything about this 'vision' plan, from its formulation right up to this questionnaire, casts Monaghan County Council in a very poor light. It's a sad day for community involvement in policy making in Co Monaghan.

I feel there needs to be more conversation with the local community.

As per above people will fill the area with rubbish and noise and antisocial behaviour etc

The vision needs to be redrafted with the communities input included, and significant redesign to include low impact tourism, wild areas in the planning, areas that are completely left aside for nature, wildlife corridors ensuring that no habitat is fragmented, and ecologically sensitive plans for increased traffic and foot traffic.

Public deserve input into the brief set for the vision and it should be mandatory that a truly sustainable vision is generated, one that is as close to carbon neutral as possible and in line with local and national climate action plans.

It seems unrealistic in the current climate. Carbon footprints should drastically reduced. We should be living lightly on the planet. This vision being carried to a next stage would likely be a poor use of resources and delay a better alternative vision being implemented.

Don't think it will pass planning

This proposal is not sustainable economically or environmentally public access will be curtailed I think it's a waste of money. The estate could be used for more suitable development

The current vision is too commercial. There is not enough focus on the restoration of Hope Castle and Annex itself and its rich history, nor the improvement in water quality and ecosystems of Lough Muckno and its environs (including the invasive species issue). Proposing so many (150) human recreational activities, plus a dispersed hotel across the islands, on what is already a polluted and degraded system is not acceptable, especially in current times. We are experiencing a biodiversity and climate crisis and any vision needs to support and adapt to that in the first instance. Lough Muckno is a pNHA and has been designated as an 'area of primary amenity' by Monaghan Co Co, meaning activities need to be restricted to development that will not threaten the scenic or environmental integrity of the area. The vision needs to be sensitive to the heritage and biodiversity of the special place that is Lough Muckno and the surrounding drumlin landscape.

Instead of a theme park/adventure centre type development, more ecotourism related activities should be considered first, as well as prioritising locals in terms of access, before paying tourists. How will the current vision be climate neutral or positive? For any development proposed, it needs to be laid out clearly how such a major statement can be supported, especially in contemporary times.

I support the idea of improvements in muckno but believe this project is crass. The motivation to tick an employment and economic development agenda is dominant while environmental and sustainability issues are played lip service.

Not in line with Sustainable Development Goals, not in keeping with the current spirit of return to nature, respect for environment.

It's unsustainable in terms of biodiversity and rewilding initiatives. This a huge opportunity to create a magical amenity, it needs to be looked at again.

I believe the terms of reference given to the authors needs to be made public, to understand how they have arrived at their findings, particularly, but not exclusively in relation to Option 2.

The report has two options, there is no budgeting for step one. It is 65m -100m for option 1+2 but no indication of what option 1 would cost. What is the biggest project ever brought to reality by MonCOCO? Is there any evidence that it is within the capacity of MonCoCo? The accommodation numbers seem ludicrous. Currently there is one hotel holding on by its finger nails. How big is "the region"? Will the money actually be going outside the local area? Monaghan CoCo haven't a great history with respect to Lough Muckno and they are back proposing accommodation. The question has to be answered, can they be trusted? The town really needs a project like this, however, this seems so unrealistic and needs to be scaled back or certainly with more steps over a longer period of time. The scale and management of the project seems far too great for Monaghan CoCo. The assets, across the county, particularly around Blayney are not well maintained. The Council has not demonstrated to me that spending these vast sums would be well managed post construction/works. How does this vision sit within the vision for the county? What is the Councils vision for all of Monaghan? The messaging isnt clear enough. What is it the Council wants for the people of Monaghan? How do you propose to do this without spending 65million? I hope the vision is teased out further before next steps.

I think everything has been covered. But a place and space for everyone to enjoy and feel part of and la place of excellence for all ages and abilities.

I do not support this project as it will have too much of an impact on the natural surroundings of Lough Muckno and it is not sustainable long term as we are trying to reduce emissions and reliance on fossil fuels and I do not see convincing evidence that this project can possibly be carbon neutral/positive.

My answer is yes if the project is confined to building on existing infrastructure in and around the town.  
- a basic but professional climate resilience and biodiversity assessment is required as a prerequisite BEFORE any next step. It is likely that such an assessment would not recommend all of Option 2 and certain elements of Option 1. An alternative plan would need to be developed that focused on ecosystem restoration, the restoration of Hope Castle and Annexe and some income generating low impact tourism activities could proceed at same time as ecosystem restoration. Progressing the recently published vision to feasibility study would result in considerable resistance from those in Ireland who wish to have Ireland comply with climate emissions targets and wish to protect and restore biodiversity.

As above

A full environmental impact assessment of the current proposal should be the next step, as well as the consideration of an alternative development strategy focusing on appreciation and expansion of the natural heritage of this beautiful area of our county. This should precede any expenditure on a business plan or more detailed design proposals.

This is not an environmentally sustainable project and needs to be reviewed at Stage 1 (Visioning)  
Unless it outlines how we clean the lake, how we fund it, how it can be carbon neutral, how it can protect access for locals, then it isn't worth pursuing. We all want to see development here but not for the sake of it.

An adventure estate is possible, with protection and enhancement of local environment rather than destruction. Please make it the former.

See above.

Muckno Park is for Walking and chilling. Build this park somewhere else

No regard for the local community. It is all about money and business. It does not focus on sustainability or protecting and enhancing the local area.