

APPENDIX B

Summary of Email Responses received regarding the Visioning Document for Lough Muckno Estate

Total Email Responses Received (17)

- 1.** John McArdle
- 2.** 5th Class Students, Annyalla National School
- 3.** Joe Brennan
- 4.** Maurice Carolan
- 5.** Castleblayney Community Enterprise CLG
- 6.** Enterprising Monaghan
- 7.** Niamh Brannigan (member of Transition Monaghan)
- 8.** Genesis Planning Consultants (on behalf of Seamus Mallon)
- 9.** Barry Johnston
- 10.** The Friends of Lough Muckno
- 11.** Inland Fisheries Ireland
- 12.** Noel Quinn & Mary Kelly-Quinn
- 13.** Tommy McArdle
- 14.** Coillte
- 15.** North East Regional Enterprise Plan
- 16.** Concra Wood Golf & Country Club
- 17.** Castleblayney Regeneration

Muckno Submission by JohnMc Ardle, Conabury, Castleblayney.

For forty years, Mary and I, almost every day, have walked the hilltops overlooking Lough Muckno, the shore walks of Concra Wood, The Black Island walks and shores, The White Island and the new paths recently laid on the old Golf course. During Covid when the golf-course was closed we re-visited the Concra paths again to discover to our delight that two of the islands adjacent to it are nesting places for the swans which sometimes visit the picnic area at the bridge to The Black Island. I counted twenty-one of them one day. Sometimes I walk past the picnickers at the tables, the families playing games or relaxing on the grass below the castle, my own children and grand-children canoeing, paddle-boarding and gambolling in the water, and I often think how much I love even watching this relaxed activity as I pass by.

Though I love the place as it is, The Council deserves credit for opening our minds to new possibilities for the town and estate. They've done us a service in that this plan should stimulate discussion in the community about what we need to make the town a better place to work in, live in and for people to visit. They've validated so many things that the town has and which can be improved upon with a little financial support: the theatre and the wide range of community activities in Iontas, the hospitality experiences in the town, the conservationists whom I see voluntarily keeping the estate litter-free, the very enterprising fishermen who people every nook and cranny along all the shores, the Council's own children's playground and their renewal of the gate lodges already undertaken, the adventure sports – paddle-boarding, canoeing, kayaking, - the very walks I take every day.

So I look on the plan as a document in which the County Council has drawn attention to these activities and are showing their willingness to support them in any way they can, and to create further innovations that the townspeople might welcome. But I think that this vision as presented would destroy the landscape and habitats with very little benefit for the town. Not only that, but I feel that going ahead with it would, given the past history of the council's relationship with this project, create divisions and resentments that would take years to heal and I myself would be the first to say no to a plan which finds a use for the Castle only when the project is completed.

My ten-year involvement with Iontas has left me wary of "consultant-speak" and the plan is full of buzz-words like "compelling narrative" and "Unprecedented" and it cites every organisation in the town as benefiting from the project. It will hardly create trust among people who know that W.S Gilpin landscaped the estate to look well from the Landlord's Castle, that Peter Rice had only tentative connection with County Monaghan and that expert fisherman Big Tom (I thought Henry Mc Mahon was the composer in the group) would have been happy with the fishing tackle shop not a hundred yards from the castle gates. And is there not a contradiction in building a conservation centre and building hotel accommodation on

the island where the swans nest? Iontas has also taught me that feasibility studies are both expensive and meaningless. I know that, but for the early support of the County Council and a small number of very hard-working volunteers, Iontas would not be there to-day. And indeed I'm sure that The Council did a feasibility study before the last renovation of the Castle and the annex.

But late two evenings ago, I was walking across the hill from the football field on the estate and, as I crossed the hill, I looked down on the lake and its islands. I had just read the plan for Lough Muckno and I thought about the bluebell walks and the mayflowers on the Black Island in May and I set my heart steadfastly against the planned development. I walked on and, at the castle gates two (I'm guessing) fifteen-year-old boys and two fifteen year old girls were sitting on the wall, two of them on their i-phones. "Excuse me," said one of the boys, "Can you think of anything we could do round here that would be fun?" I told them about the swings and playground less than sixty metres away and they went off quite excitedly towards them. As I watched them go I thought "I don't want to do abseiling or high-rope courses and I think canyoning is best left to canyons and big waves to Mullaghmore but these young people own the estate as much as I do and they are members of families too. Should I stand in the way of exciting things if they can be accommodated and paid for?"

So I believe that there are elements in this plan that are well worth looking at and tweaking creatively. Glasshouses imitating the drumlins and "rising dramatically out of the landscape" are not my cup of tea but this is a time for listening, and it is my experience that listening is the heart of any productive creativity. I think that the Council should engage with the stakeholders I've mentioned and with those I haven't, and decide, first the best format to guarantee the restoration of trust and respectful listening and take it from there.

Remembering that Killarney has nothing but natural beauty and a few jarvies to offer, put me down as a "no" for the moment but I wouldn't be beyond persuasion.



Annyalla National School
Annyalla
Castleblayney
Co Monaghan
03/09/21

Dear Monaghan County Council

We are fifth class students in Annyalla National School and we watched your presentation on the Vision for Lough Muckno. First of all we would like to tell you how excited we all were after watching it. We were thrilled to hear that your committee have recognised the potential of Castleblayney as a venue for 'The Great Drumlin Adventur'.

We were excited to learn about all the different hubs that were in your plans. The activities such as grass skiing, canyoning, skateboarding, abseiling and ice climbing walls were a bit hit in our classroom.

However, we do have some concerns about this project that we would like to express. Here are some of them

- Litter Pollution - with approx 350,000 visitors to the town how will we avoid litter pollution?
- Funding - will there enough funding for all of this project?
- Water concerns - flooding risk, water quality (which is a big concern in Lough Muckno) and fish pollution
- Traffic congestion - will the town be able to cope with the extra traffic?
- Negative Effects on our town - will it close some of our smaller shops?
- Air pollution - fumes from cars, boats etc can we be guaranteed that it won't have a negative effect on our air quality?
- Will the trees in Lough Muckno be affected if there are lodges being built there? Can we include the planting of trees in the project too?
- Animals - will the habitats of the animals be destroyed or affected in the building of this project?

We would like if you would take our thoughts into consideration and if possible answer some of our questions.

We would also like if there was some form of public consultation with the younger people of Castleblayney we have a voice and would like to express it too. If this does happen can we be included in it please?

Thank you for listening to our view.

Your sincerely

5th Class Students
Annyalla National School

TO MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL

SUBMISSION ON VISION FOR LOUGH MUCKNO 3 SEPT .2021

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING SUBMISSION ON THE ABOVE,
PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT .

FIRST. I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND MCC FOR THE TIME AND EFFORT PUT INTO SEEKING A
PROPOSAL FOR LOUGH MUCKNO .

HOWEVER, I FEEL THAT THIS VISION REPORT IE “THE GREAT DRUMLIN OF ADVENTURE “
FALLS VERY SHORT OF WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE MUCKNO AREA .

WHILE THE ADVENTURE CENTRE (OPTION 1) HAS SOME GOOD IDEAS LIKE COMBINING
THE TOWN AND CASTLE COMPLEX , THE CENTRAL POINT IS MISSED- IE THE FOCAL POINT
OF THIS MUST BE THE RESTORATION OF THE CASTLE AND ANNEX INTO A VIABLE
OPERATING ENTITY, WHICHEVER TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT OCCURS.
THIS POINT IS NOT MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY IN THIS REPORT AND IS A GLARING
OMMISSION IN MY OPINION.

GIVEN THE PROVEN SUCCESS OF THE GREENWAY PROJECTS IN IRELAND IE WESTPORT/
MAYO ETC THIS IS THE TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT THAT SHOULD BE DEVELOPED IN
MUCKNO –AS AN REGIONAL ATTRACTION WITH HUGE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS
– PLUS IT INCLUDES EVERYBODY . THIS TYPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL LOW IMPACT
TOURISM IS BEING PROMOTED WORLDWIDE AND IS A PROVEN SUCCESS.

OPTION 2 (DRUMLIN OF ADVENTURE)

IN MY OPINION THIS PLAN IS OVER SCALED , TOTALLY OBSTRUSIVE,, ENVIRONMENTALLY
UNSUSTAINALE AND WILL LEAD TO THE PRIVATISATION OF THE ENTIRE MUCKNO AREA

MY MAIN CONERNS ARE AS FOLLOWS

1. FROM LOOKING AT THE VISUALS ,THIS DEVELOPMENT LOOKS LIKE A SCENE FROM
THE DISTANT FUTURE- THE DOMES ARE MORE LIKE NUCLEAR SHELTERS AND ARE
TOTALLY INCONSISTANT WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEY
WOULD BE SITUATED.

THE IMPACT ON THE FLORA ,FAUNA AND FISH BREEDING /FISHING ETC WOULD BE
TOO HIGH A PRICE TO BE PAID.

2.

3. HOUSES/ CHALETS /WOODEN HUTS ON THE MANY ISLANDS ON THE LAKE
ACCESSED BY BRIDGES ETC IS ONE OF THE DAFTEST IDEAS I HAVE EVER HEARD
AND I WOULD SERIOUSLY QUESTION THE THINKING BEHIND THIS PROPOSAL.

THE IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ARE NOT ADDRESSED IN DETAIL BY THIS
PROPOSAL , ALTHOUGH IT IS MENTIONED AT THE START OF THE PRESENTATION . AS A
PRIORITY

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE **45K BED NIGHTS** MENTIONED IN THE ONLINE (PUBLIC)
MEETING

THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE AT LEAST **200 HOLIDAYS HOMES** BUILT .

ASSUMING EACH HAS A 75 % OCCUPANCY P.A.

THIS WILL LEAD TO THE NECESSITY TO PRIVATISE THE ENTIRE AREA IN ORDER TO MAKE IT FINANCIALLY VIABLE.

FURTHERMORE, THERE IS NO INDICATION OF WHO WOULD OPERATE /OWN THIS PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

I AM IN FAVOUR OF SOME ASPECTS OF THE ACTIVITIES PROPOSED BY THE REPORT IE
BOAT CUISE
PADDLEBOARDING
CYCLE PATHS AND WALKWAYS
WATER ACTIVITY HUB

THE PROPOSED EXPENDITURE OF 60 –120 MILLION IS UNSUSTAINABLE AND EXCESSIVE AND IS SIMPLY NOT REQUIRED .

A MUCH MORE ECO –COMPATIBLE, MANAGABLE AND PEOPLE FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT IS WHAT IS REQUIRED TO ATTRACT THOSE NOT JUST WITH MONEY TO SPEND ON AN “ACTIVITY HOLIDAY” BUT THOSE WHO JUST WISH TO ENJOY A VERY SPECIAL NATURAL HABITAT THAT IS MUCKNO.

I ,LIKE MANY OTHERS WHOM I HAVE SPOKEN TO RECENTLY, DO NOT WISH TO SEE LOUGH MUCKNO TURNED INTO A GAUDY THEME PARK – “CENTRE PARCS ON STEROIDS” WAS ONE COMMENT. I WISH TO SEE THE AREA DEVELOPED SENSITIVELY AND IN HARMONY WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR **ALL THE PEOPLE**, BOTH VISITORS AND LOCALS ALIKE .

GIVEN THE TIMES THAT WE LIVE IN WITH THE EMPHASIS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NEED TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AND LOW IMPACT LIVING , THE ERA OF HUGE THEME PARK LIKE DEVELOPMENTS IS NOT WHAT PEOPLE REQUIRE OR DESIRE NOR IS IT COMPATIBLE WITH THE TREND IN ECO FRIENDLY AND SUSTAINABLE LEISURE ACTIVITIES AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED.

I FULLY APPRECIATE THE TIME , EFFORT AND MONEY THAT HAS GONE INTO THIS PLAN AND ALL ARE ACTING IN GOOD FAITH BUT I CAN SEE NO VIABLE WAY THIS PLAN CAN SUCCEED GIVEN THE FACT THAT IT WOULD BE UNSUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTALLY , FINANCIALLY AND WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUCKNO AREA AND REGION .

IF POTENTIAL VISITORS WISH TO GO TO A THEME PARK THERE ARE MANY ALTERNATIVES IN THE REGION ALREADY IE CENTRE PARCS IN WESTMEATH ONLY 100 KMS FROM CASTLEBLAYNEY .

WE SHOULD BE TRYING TO ATTRACT A DIFFERENT TYPE OF VISITOR WHO VALUE THE LANDSCAPE AND PRISTINE CONDITION OF MUCKNO AND WISH TO PARTAKE IN ACTIVITIES THAT ARE IN KEEPING WITH THESE SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES.

YOURS SINCERELY

JOE BRENNAN
CORRACLOUGHAN
CASTLEBLAYNEY

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday 7 September 2021 17:24
To: Muckno Consultation
Subject: The Great Drumlin adventure

Hello,

I was very impressed with the presentation, I work with Inland Fisheries Ireland based in Dundalk and regularly patrol Lough Muckno , my proposal is for a facility that would cater for youth angling and an education centre to inform all visitors of the fish populations and biodiversity of the Lough and park.,

Kind regards
Maurice Carolan



A Community group
continuing to lead the way.

Castleblayney Community Enterprise CLG

Castleblayney Enterprise Centre, Dublin Road, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
Web: www.castleblayney.ie Email: cceitd@castleblayney.ie
Tel: 042 - 9746087 Fax: 042 - 9746645 Charity Reg No: 20021061

6th September 2021

To Whom it may Concern:

On behalf of the above group I wish to record our support for the advancement of a Feasibility Study which will assess the need, nature and viability of proposals for the development of Lough Muckno Park and environs as proposed in the Vision Report for Muckno, which was recently presented.

Since our formation Castleblayney Community Enterprise in 1987 have consistently promoted and advocated for the development of the town and its amenities including Lough Muckno Park and therefore welcome any proposals by Monaghan County Council which will provide a sensitive, balanced and viable economic boost to the town in the interests of all.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Hanratty

Directors: Pete McMahon (Chairperson), Jacqui Hanratty (Secretary), Gary Ogle (Treasurer),
Peter Cairns, Aidan Campbell, Liz Christy, Frankie Gorman, Marese Heavin, Janet Hill,
Sean McDonald, Paul Shortt, Padraig Watters.

[REDACTED]

From: Finbarr Daly [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday 9 September 2021 12:26
To: Muckno Consultation
Subject: Letter of Support for the Lough Muckno Tourism Initiative

Dear All,

This is a fantastic well thought out initiative which will build upon existing resources and encourage new tourist groups into the area. We fully support this project.

Kind Regards

Finbarr

**Finbarr Daly | CEO | Enterprising Monaghan
Head Office | M:TEK Building | Armagh Road | Monaghan**

[REDACTED]

Eircode: H18 K038



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September 4, 2021

**A Vision for Lough Muckno Estate: A Response by Niamh Brannigan
(Member of Transition Monaghan)**

Opening Observations

Tourism Consultants Stevens and Associates, declare in their opening statement for their “Vision” that “it must ensure the retention of access for the local community”.

The concept of **Community** should be at the crux of this project.

I agree with the idea of a holistic approach encompassing all the components of what makes the Lough Muckno Estate so unique and attractive – elements comprising of the historic buildings, the historic parkland, the plantation woodland, the lough and its wildlife rich islands all set against the backdrop of the town and golfclub lands.

I also believe in a holistic approach when considering the elements of the “Vision” and how they are to be delivered.

One of the Plan’s ambitions is to “enhance the competitiveness and appeal of the region whilst making a significant economic impact”. While it is necessary to consider market and financial factors as part of an overall assessment of this Estate and potential plans for its future, I believe it is crucial that economic considerations go hand in hand with other equally valid and important factors such as its amenity and landscape value, its wildlife and biodiversity attributes, as well as its historical and cultural significance for local people and their everyday lives, which are very much embedded in the fabric of Muckno and its environs. A thorough and detailed understanding of **all** of these elements and how they cohere should guide the forging of a truly sustainable and life enhancing plan for the community.

In the light of our global climate and biodiversity emergency, and Ireland’s obligations under the Climate Act 2021 to reduce emissions by 51% within this decade, it is essential to consider the likely carbon footprint of any proposed developments. Enormous amounts of built infrastructure will have a correspondingly large emissions profile. It is important to consider how **much** could be achieved with as **little** carbon output as possible.

Consideration of Elements of the Vision

The plan as laid out in the public document lacks detail, so the specific aspects of each element are to be guessed at. I believe that Option 1 is the part of the “Vision” that contains the only viable proposals for the future of the Muckno Estate and surrounds. The following are my thoughts on some of these:

Historic Estate

I broadly approve of the idea of an **activity hub** – what will it consist of? High wires – canopy walks – orienteering? Forest-based adventure activities? A forest school? There is much potential for schools, clubs, groups, and individual families.

- Locations should be carefully chosen to create this hub. The nature value of the woodland areas earmarked for such projects should be assessed through the correct processes, carrying out essential impact assessments to identify habitats and areas to be protected from disturbance. The presence of red squirrels and woodpeckers are just two of many species within the woodland habitats to be considered.
- Walks and pathways that currently exist should, as far as possible, be protected and preserved for the use of walkers. The character and peacefulness of the woodland walks should not be marred.

Culture hub

It is a great idea to develop the important historic buildings of the castle and courtyard, and create a new purpose for them.

Further ideas

- Courtyard buildings could be developed for several uses such as artisan studios (think of the courtyard buildings at the Tyrone Guthrie centre); these could be used as both studios for local craftworkers/artists to work, as well as workshops for classes, or participatory sessions for the public. For example, a pottery that allows the public to either make or paint simple pieces could bring in revenue (there is an example of a very successful pottery business – Eden Pottery in County Down, which combines public pottery painting sessions with a café serving good food).
- A Grow It Yourself hub, with tuition from organic vegetable experts, potential for development of the walled gardens/veg plots/ orchards within the walled garden, and a space for a farmers’ market.
- Potential for a community café.
- The castle could be restored to a minimum specification, with a sensitively designed extension at the rear, perhaps mirroring the developments taking place at the gatehouse. Innovative uses could be made of such a building: examples – a wellness centre, a place for classes, yoga, exhibitions, or a space for community groups to meet, an education space, such as a centre for nature studies/ecology field studies using the woodland and lough habitats.
- Embrace **inclusivity**. Improve facilities for disability and enable an important cohort of people to be better able to participate in their local area. How to achieve this:
 - Improve existing pathways for wheelchair users.
 - Install some fun infrastructure for disabled users in the activity hubs.
 - Install a **Changing Places** toilet facility, and make a huge difference to many users and their families who struggle to access scenic places. (See changingplaces.ie)
 - Create a unique sensory garden to enhance the outdoors world for those with disabilities.

Such initiatives would feed into a mode of living and commerce that has at its heart an ethos of being circular and sustainable, and community driven. In the context of the global climate emergency, it would be important that many future initiatives should be **self-sustaining ventures**, such as community developed food growing/selling enterprises, to sell locally and further afield; **educationally beneficial** projects relating to local nature, wildlife and ecology, and growing systems (food, plants and trees), for local school and community participation.

Lough Muckno

Lough Muckno and its many islands is the jewel of our region, set within drumlins, and with the backdrop of Mullagh and Slieve Gullion mountains, all resulting in an immensely picturesque landscape.

Water Quality

However, the beauty of the landscape belies the true nature value of the Lough and its environs. Unfortunately, Muckno has a degraded ecosystem, with a polluted lough, and consequent negative consequences for the biodiversity of the whole connected area.

A **healthy lough and woodland environment** are the *backbone* of any future aim for a successful and self-sustaining business model for this Estate and its environs.

Continuing degradation of the water quality would place severe limitations on many potential ventures. For example, ambitions to create an adventure centre with water-based activities, hoping to attract school and youth groups, could be severely hampered by the status of its water quality.

The **key** to resolving this serious current problem is *within reach*.

It requires a number of steps to be carried out consistently to reverse the decline and start to rehabilitate the lough and woodland habitats. Some steps are very simple and require minimal input; others are more complex, but incredibly vital.

Measures such as native tree planting; developing wildflower and native grass meadows; removal of exotic conifers and invasive rhododendron/laurel and encouraging natural regeneration of native tree and shrub species; creating planted-up buffer zones around the lough shore, and where necessary, fencing, to keep back livestock, to prevent

agricultural run-off from seeping into the watercourses. Some measures would entail consultation and planning with other stakeholders and landowners, but essentially, there needs to be a strong resolve to tackle pollution of the Lough at source.

The bottom line is that a degraded ecosystem that is further exploited over time, eventually reaches a point where the social, economic and environmental benefits are severely and negatively impacted; and any business model relying on this environment and its “services” is likely to eventually fail, due to the unsustainable nature of the processes upholding it.

(It would be worthwhile to consider the great changes that have been brought about in a very short space of time by such companies as Bord na Mona, who are carrying out ecosystem restoration in many of their degraded bogs. Carrying out measures such as drain blocking has improved the conditions so much that nature is flooding back in to these bog lands, hugely increasing their biodiversity value and gradually attaining a healthy status, whereby they can provide necessary ecosystem “services” such as flood mitigation and carbon sequestration, as well as the resulting improved nature value for wildlife and people alike).

Consequently, I have huge concerns about the concepts of “river taxis” and a “ferry service” linking islands, and a “dispersed hotel” using these same islands.

An increase in water traffic will have a detrimental effect through an increase in emissions, which is unsustainable in the climate emergency.

The increased footfall of people accessing more areas would mean that nature would have no retreat – wildfowl and their nesting areas would be at risk.

I believe that all small islands should be out of bounds for human traffic, and left for wildlife.

However positive solutions are:

- Picnic areas can be accommodated within areas already being used and designated for such purposes, and further developed within these areas as necessary.
- Where further enhancement of existing facilities and infrastructure could take place:
 1. Water activities already exist in a specific zone at the Water Adventure centre by the White Island; again, further funding could improve these facilities and make them more accessible and more inclusive.
I am very much in favour of water sports taking place in a restricted dedicated zone, and that the Lough does not become an extended waterpark overrun with too many people, boats and equipment.
 2. Similarly, forest-based activities such as abseiling, climbing walls, high ropes courses etc, could be accommodated in a designated part of the forest at Black Island, and not sprawling throughout the whole area.
 3. Regarding hotels and wellness centres: if the mission statement regarding a holistic approach, is sincere, then should not a lot of the proposed accommodation and hotel spaces be found within the built infrastructure of **the town, the golfclub** and their environs? I believe that the merits of proposals for spa facilities, theatres, fitness studios etc, should be examined individually, and consideration given as to where they could be developed within the already existing built landscape of the town, and within a future renovated castle complex. Is there a need for another theatre? Direct more funding towards the fine one that already exists!

Summation

If there is a desire to be truly innovative and ground-breaking in plans for the Muckno Estate, I suggest the best way to do that is to take seriously the need to create properly sustainable resources and infrastructure for the future. There would be a deep irony in erasing aspects of the natural environment to build structures that are designed to be used to enjoy and savour that very environment.

It is laudable that many aspects of the greater Muckno area, which includes the town and its environs, are being considered for improvement. But it is essential that the **footprint of any further development should be appropriate in ambition and scale** to the rural hinterland within which it is to be absorbed.

It should **not** displace important aspects of wildlife or landscape.

It should **not** create unsustainable footfall.

I would further suggest that the natural environment of Muckno as it currently exists already provides that “wellness” element so sought after, through the peace and quiet of its walkways, and the natural habitats with their birdlife, trees and flora. The area has unique features whose fragility and beauty are the very attractions that draw people in. Some of these features are intangible concepts and cannot be defined in stark numerical or economic terms. It is likely that everyone who goes to Muckno estate has their own personal reason for being there and being drawn to it. It would be a travesty if future development served to eradicate or mar the unique character and essence of this place that so many people enjoy and value. It should be a prerequisite that economic and market considerations should **not** be the driving force of any project to develop this unique area.

What remains of the green and natural areas in Muckno should be left as green areas; these could be enhanced with sensitively planned wildlife walks, native woodland tree planting schemes, and wild areas of flora and grasses.

As regards **Option 2**, I am wholeheartedly against these proposals. A giant unsustainable theme park is not what this fragile environment requires. It would be valuable to be provided with some realistic facts and figures. I cannot imagine how the consultants’ claim to be a “truly transformational and **sustainable** visitor attraction” that is “carbon neutral if not carbon positive” could possibly be true or valid. The conception of such a plan, with the likely immense carbon output throughout its development, installation and maintenance; and possible destruction of biodiversity and fragile ecosystems; runs counter to the present urgent need for all sectors in our society to curtail emissions levels, and to have a radical re-think of how we treat the finite resources of our environment.

In all likelihood, our community and our wildlife would be displaced by such a project. Let’s not spoil this, our **real ancient landscape of drumlins** by creating artificial ones in their stead for short term thrills and commercial gain. Since we have a unique drumlin landscape, let’s preserve it.

There is so much of merit within the **Option 1** proposals, and with sensitive and thoughtful consideration and development of these ideas, there is no doubt that there is great potential for a wonderful Vision for this unique place; a Vision that is low impact, that preserves and improves nature, is culturally rich and serves to enhance the lives and experiences of all who frequent this space.

Future generations will thank us for it.



Dympna Condra
Monaghan Co Council
Tourism Section

9th September 2021

By: Email
Re: Vision for Lough Muckno- Public Consultation

Dear Dympna,

On behalf of our client, Seamus Mallon, we take this opportunity to set out key points which we request are taken into consideration for the plan.

Specifically:

- We welcome the action plan and the vision for development of Lough Muckno to become an exemplar tourism development.
- We welcome the vision to facilitate a range of activities on a year-round basis
- We consider option 2 to provide for 'The Great Drumlin Adventure' is appropriate and should be selected as the preferred option.

Going forward we also take this opportunity to highlight that the points of access to Lough Muckno and it's environs need to be developed further, so that over-reliance is not placed on existing entrances.

In this context we refer to our clients lands as per map in Appendix 1, and given they abound the existing access via Condra Wood Golf Club we consider our clients lands provide a strategic opportunity to provide improved access and also shore frontage development for tourists.

We will be engaging further with the Council on the zoning and designation of these lands separately, but we also highlight this for your consultation at this stage so a strategic approach can be developed in a way that provides for improved activation as part of the overall vision for Lough Muckno.

We trust our points will be taken into account by Monaghan Co Council & Failte Ireland in formulation of the plan for development of Lough Muckno.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronan Woods".

Ronan Woods
Director

LOUGH MUCKNO VISION – CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The scope of this vision proposal is far beyond what Castleblayney could ever cater for. The scale is like something that would be found in large derelict sites, such as the old Dublin Docklands. The vision fails to acknowledge any of the pre-existing relationships that already exist in Lough Muckno. The terms of reference that the council set out for this project totally ignores the long standing ecological, cultural and heritage relationships that currently exist in Lough Muckno. The mega size of the vision seeks to wipe the slate clean and overlay 150 outdoor adventure activities onto Lough Muckno. What room would be left for the existing relationships that already exist in Lough Muckno if this project is allowed to go ahead? In short, this plan sees Lough Muckno primarily as an asset to be used by a global conglomerate to deliver revenue. In this respect, the council and Fáilte Ireland are totally out of touch with the people of Castleblayney.

Cultural

Firstly, let us examine some of the cultural references that were mentioned. Patrick Kavanagh was a poet from Inniskeen, not Castleblayney. In a local sense, that is worlds apart. Kavanagh has no meaningful association with Castleblayney that I am aware of. It is tacky to try and claim him as our own. Peter Rice was the brilliant engineer who designed part of the Sydney Opera house and his work should be celebrated, but he was born in Dublin and raised in Dundalk. Once again, no connection to Castleblayney. These are poor examples of cultural appropriation and were clearly suggested by someone who does not know Castleblayney at all.

Some of the other names that were mentioned as being significant cultural figures in Castleblayney's history, such as Robert Woodgate and W.S Gilpin, have significant associations with historic British colonial exploits. It is a fact that the foundation of the wealth that underpins most of these big, landed estates is based upon land clearances, conquest, and colonialism.

Indeed, Gilpin designed the gardens of some landed estates that were predicated upon plunder from the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland. Take the Boyle family estate (Marston Bigot Park). The Boyle hereditary family line was established by Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork. Allegedly, Boyle has been described as the 'first colonial millionaire'. His sons put down rebellions of Irish catholics. Oliver Cromwell is quoted as saying of, 'If there had been an Earl of Cork in every province, it would have been impossible for the Irish to have raised a rebellion'. A short read into the Cromwellian Siege of Limerick will give you a clear insight into the kind of brutality the Boyles were responsible for.

I am highlighting these examples of brutality, conquest, and colonialism, in order to give a background into the wealth that underpins many of these gardens. I have no desire or interest to criticise any names on this list, it is already well documented. I simply have a question: why would we in Castleblayney want to create a revisionist museum/cultural hub which commemorates some of the people associated with this brutal history?

In the case of land clearances, Gilpin designed part of the Oxford Botanical Gardens (arboretum on the grounds of Nuneham house). Several decades prior to Gilpin's work, the estate gardens of Nuneham house were built on the village of Nuneham Courtenay. The village was destroyed, and the impoverished residents were forced to make way for the new Nuneham park that was commissioned by Simon Harcourt, 1st earl of Harcourt. The tragedy was commemorated in a poem by Oliver Goldsmith ...'the Deserted Village'

Where are the Gaelic cultural associations that underpin Castleblayney? Why is there no reference to St. Maeldoid's 7th century monastery and the Black Pig of Muckno in this vision? What about the famed Gaelic

poet, Art Mac Cumhaigh, who is buried in Creggan graveyard? Did the Great Famine not come to Castleblayney?

On a more practical note, Gilpin designed the landscape demesne around Lough Muckno Castle. Are any of his design features remaining in the present day? More to the point, will any of his features remain if this project is given permission

Secondly, Let us look at the idea that has been put forward here in relation to the Drumlins and a 'homage to the Ice age'. What does this truly mean? Does it mean to pay homage to the natural climate phenomenon that happened thousands of years ago? Surely this must be a first, whereby a town in Ireland chooses to arbitrarily pay 'homage' to a pre-historic climate phenomenon! Or is the vision focusing on the glacial deposits known as 'drumlins' that shape our landscape? And what is 'homage'? it is such a disingenuous association that author has applied the term 'homage'. It is clear that the author of the vision has no genuine interest in showing real respect or honour towards Climate science or geology. I will explain why I feel that to be the case.

The vision states that an 'ice-climbing wall' is what we should offer as 'homage' to the ice-age. Firstly, we do not have an alpine nor arctic climate in Ireland, therefore we do not have glaciers. In order to install an ice-wall and 'canyons' for canyoning, we would need to dig up, permanently alter the drumlins, and install these structures in a major landscaping project. The absolute irony in this part of the proposal is that an ice-wall would require the continuous burning of fossil fuels to power a cold unit. Therefore, the practical logistics of our 'homage' to the ice-age would be the destruction of Drumlins, and more significantly, an increased output of atmospheric carbon. In other words, our 'homage' to the ice-age will lead to increasing global temperatures and cause the further melting of glaciers in other parts of the world. This reads like a dystopic joke!

I know we are a small town and our input in global terms is microscopic. Still, the authors of this vision are very concerned with 'global' reach, therefore it is incumbent upon the authors to acknowledge their global responsibilities. The major carbon output dilemmas inherent in this project are dealt with in the form of one single sentence: *'the project will be carbon neutral if not carbon positive'*.

Can anyone read this and with a straight face say to us this project will actually draw down carbon?? this is for the birds! We do not have such infrastructure at the dispose of our county councils. If anyone can clearly explain to me how this project would be carbon positive, please tell me, I am all ears!

As previously mentioned, natural ice structures exist in colder climates, they are not found in Ireland because we have a temperate climate. As well as that, Lough Muckno does not possess natural fast-flowing rivers, nor do we have a coastal habitat. Therefore, how much fossil fuel carbon emissions would it take to create the artificial flows needed for a huge barrelling wave (surfing) and white-water rafting facilities?

The truth is that we cannot have fast flowing rivers, waves, canyons, and ice-walls in Castleblayney, nor can we give homage to the ice-age/drumlins without doing damage to our drumlins and to the climate at large if this project goes ahead. This project has carbon negative written all over it. I believe If the council develop these projects, then we will no longer have Lough Muckno in the way that we currently know it, we will have another Butlins.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Light Pollution

It is my understanding that Lough Muckno was once on a national list of sites earmarked for 'Nature Reserve' status. With lakes and rivers, grasslands, and woodlands, Muckno still holds the basic components to develop a strong, legally protected reserve. However, I believe that Muckno was removed from the nature reserve list during the 1990's. Since then, quality of water and woodland on the site has severely degraded

Light Pollution

One of the proposals put forward in the Lough Muckno vision is to develop a 'Great Drumlin of Adventure centre'. The centre is to be curated in partnership with Ars Electronica Centre, Linz, Austria. Ars Electronica are involved in projects that have been dubbed, 'Museums of the Future'. Digital media technologies and brightly lit, large projection installations feature very heavily in their projects. These installations are very impressive, but only if they are developed at a suitable (urban) site. I have attached a few photos of the Ars Electronica Centre for the reader's consideration



type here to search



15°C Cloudy ENG 20



Based upon the evidence of what Ars Electronica do in other regions, we must conclude that a curative partnership between the Ars Electronic Centre and Lough Muckno would create big issues in terms of light pollution. Most of the installations that Ars Electronica have their foundation in light spectacles

There is no major artificial light pollution at Lough Muckno. At this point, I would like to ask the Council if they have any idea about the negative impacts of light pollution on wildlife. For example, a recent landmark study by the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology found that *'the abundance of moth caterpillars in hedgerows in rural roads in England was 52% lower under LED lights and 41% lower under sodium lights when compared to nearby unlit areas'*. This is the consequence of introducing artificial light into areas/habitats which contain animal species that have adapted survival strategies that depend upon darkness at night-time. In this instance, we can see that if there is too much light, the insects cannot adapt, and they are unable to survive in this area.

We know that LED lights are more energy efficient: LED produces less carbon. However, LED lights are leading to localised collapses in the populations of nocturnal insects. According to the study, *'white light LED lights are more energy efficient, but produce more blue light (...) which is the colour predominantly seen by insects.'* I would argue that we need to be selective about the areas in which we use LED lights. Dark, insect rich, areas such as Lough Muckno are the wrong site for LED lighting.

On the other hand, If the 'Great Drumlin of Adventure' achieves Carbon neutrality (I doubt it will!), then it must use energy efficient LED lighting installations. Once again, we are faced with a Catch 22 situation of having to choose one or the other. If we want an Ars Electronica 'Museum of the Future', then our insect/pollinator populations at Lough Muckno will start to plummet.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/25/led-streetlights-moth-england-eco-friendly-sodium-insect-decline>

In Lough Muckno and along the Clarebane River, annual bat surveys continually reveal the sustained presence of bats, including Daubenton's Bat. In their research, Bat Conservation Ireland (BCI) highlights that Daubenton's Bat in particular 'shies away' from brightly lit areas. There are numerous reasons for this;

'Where there is too much luminance, bats' vision can be reduced resulting in disorientation'. (...) too much luminance at bat roosts may cause bats to desert a roost'

'Lighting can also disturb bats' feeding behaviour. Many night flying insects are attracted to lights especially those lamps that emit UV light. A single source of light in a dark area can cause local insect populations to congregate in concentrations around the light source (...) Bats suffer from insect populations being reduced in traditional feeding areas

https://www.batconservationireland.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/09/BCIrelandGuidelines_Lighting.pdf

In terms of species conservation, this highlights to us the importance of maintaining darkly lit wildlife corridors. However, there is another important aspect in all of this that needs to be considered. Monaghan County Council is actively supporting local initiatives that support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Bats and nocturnal/twilight insects provide vital pollination and pest control services to society. The artificial lighting proposals that are inherent within the Muckno vision would harm local bat and insect/moth populations. The light would colonise their habitats. The installation of Ars Electronica lighting designs at Lough Muckno would represent a major blow to local efforts by Castleblayney Tidy Towns to support Ireland's pollinators.

Water Quality

One part of the Vision states that there is potential for a deep dive/sub aqua facility at Lough Muckno. I would like to ask the writers of this vision if they're aware of the current water quality conditions at Lough Muckno?

It is my understanding that a recent EPA water quality report confirmed that Lough Muckno is among the top ten most polluted lakes in the country. The lake is officially not fit for bathing in!

There are too many nitrates and phosphates entering the Lough Muckno water course as a result of human activities. The lake ecology has major problems with Eutrophication

The vision writers should pay attention to this fact because it rules out any possibility of good quality deep dive/sub aqua activity. Any Castleblayney resident can testify to the fact that during warm periods, algal blooms turn the water at Lough Muckno into a pea-green colour. The water visibility becomes very poor.

On a more serious note, the problem with algal blooms is that once algae die off, too much dissolved oxygen is consumed by decomposers working on the dead algae. Level of dissolved oxygen in the water can fall dramatically. Fish and other marine species suffocate. Algal blooms on the water surface prevent sunlight penetrating into the water. This in turn prevents aquatic plants from photosynthesising, which leads to reduced biodiversity. As well as that, certain algal blooms are toxic to livestock

Who would want to bathe in that, let alone go for a deep dive with no visibility?

The EPA water quality report stated that if action is taken to improve water quality at Lough Muckno, it may take up to 60 years to return the lake to its natural state. Therefore, the necessary task before us is a massive one. We cannot ignore this!

The ecology of Lough Muckno is in a wretched state. And yet, is it not the natural amenities of the lake that provide the potential for good fishing and diving experiences? I would argue that investment in the natural processes is the bedrock for sustainable fishing and diving enterprises.

There simply needs to be financial investment to tackle the sources of water pollution. These sources include agricultural and industrial runoffs, leakage from old landfill sites within the catchment area, and weaknesses in our out-of-date sewage treatment facility. It would be morally wrong to spend millions on a development which is financially dependent upon clean water without taking care of the lake itself. On the contrary, any such development will certainly lead to greater pollution and biodiversity collapse at Lough Muckno.

There is another consequence of this proposal that could, if time allowed, take up the entire focus of my response: How would the vision proposal effect local flora and fauna? This question would require a great deal of study and research, far beyond the scope of this response. Suffice to say, I believe that this report has given no consideration to the long-standing ecological relationships that are currently present at Lough Muckno.

Nowhere in this report are the words 'animal', 'plant', or 'tree' mentioned. In fact, the only word references linked to flora and fauna present in Muckno are 'angling and fishing interest', 'conservation', and 'nature'. For some reason there is a picture of sheep on the title page??

According to Ordinance survey maps, the small Islands in Lough Muckno can be categorised as Long-Established Woodlands (LEW). This means that woodland has been continually present on the islands for at least 200 years. At Longfield Wood, on the shores of Muckno, there is another example of LEW. It should be noted Longfield takes its name from the old Irish placename of '*Leamhchoill*', meaning Elm Wood. This indicates a long historic association of woodland at the site, much older than 200 years. Other examples of LEW in Muckno include sites at Concra, the White Island and Toome Point.

Why am I drawing attention to this? Native woodlands cover only around 2% of the country (Perrin et al, 2008). To quote to P. Gleeson, '*The small patches that remain are incredibly important refuges for biodiversity, and almost like museum pieces, they give a glimpse of the natural vegetation that covered much of Ireland before the forests were cleared. In a biodiversity and climate crisis, holding on to these remnants has never been more important*'.

We know that pine martins are present at Muckno. Badger sets indicate the presences of Badgers. There are Great Crested Grebes. Even a Great Spotted Woodpecker was spotted at the old golf course drumming on a tree post in recent times. These particular woodpeckers have only recolonised Ireland within the last 10 years. The LEW site at Toome point contains a large population of Woodruff; a plant which is quite rare locally. As previously mentioned, it would require more time and research to highlight all of the significant ecological relationships that exist in Lough Muckno. The consultation submission time constraints prevent me from completing this undertaking. However, the aforementioned example provides a brief sample of the richness that currently resides at Muckno.

The Vision proposal believes that the Island woodlands, and parts of the lakeshore, should be turned into a hotel. If the vision was realised, it would eradicate the centuries old woodlands on the Islands. The islands would lose their historical, cultural, and ecological significance and become an enclosed, privatised and ecologically barren site. See below what the vision statement says in this regard:

A new concept of a 'Dispersed Hotel' will be developed using the Lough's islands and linked to a boutique hotel on lough shore and other accommodation on the Estate and in the community; there will be a wellness island retreats, a picnic island and cruise tours. The dispersed hotel lodges on the islands will be serviced by a water taxi service (Lough Muckno Vision statement)

I cannot help but become very angry that the vision writers have the cheek to invoke Patrick Kavanagh in the vision statement as a means of selling their idea to build hotel rooms on the Lough Muckno islands. Wasn't it Kavanagh who paid true homage to the ordinary, eternal aspects of nature known to us in Monaghan.

Now I am back in briary arms

(...)

I do not know what age I am,

I am no mortal age;

I know nothing of women,

I know nothing of cities,

I cannot die

Unless I walk outside these whitethorn hedges (Innocence – P. Kavanagh)

This vision statement goes well beyond the safe boundaries of Kavanagh's 'whitethorn hedges', and in an ecological sense, would lead to the death of the islands. It really is a gross offence to try and include Patrick Kavanagh as a selling point for the Lough Muckno Vision. One can only imagine the destruction involved in converting the Lough Muckno Islands into hotel sites. The islands naturally flood during the winter. Who knows how deep one would need to go before a stable bedrock is reached? Any potential hotel development on the small islands would involve heavy construction machinery, piles drivers and the pouring of concrete. I doubt there would remain any sense of the eternal cycles of nature which Kavanagh wrote about so beautifully.

We are becoming increasingly aware of the ecological services provided by pollinators. At the Old golf course, there is a large meadow site which provides habitats for numerous insects, amphibians, and small mammal species. This small sanctuary provides food and shelter to animals. The Muckno vision proposes to turn the old golf course meadows into a grass skiing site.

Once again, the vision is playing with the notion that a temperate climate habitat can be altered and reinvented to mimic an alpine ski resort. In truth, what it really means is that heavy machinery will bulldoze large sections of the golf course and wipe-out habitats occupied by animal and plant species.

I will conclude my consultation response by asking, how many trees would be cut down to complete this project? How much more degradation and pollution could Lough Muckno take? The vision is proposing 150+ outdoor activities. I really do not see how such a scope is possible without completely changing every relationship that currently exists in Lough Muckno. This proposal would completely change how Castleblayney people relate to Lough Muckno: it will become monetised. Large sections of the park will be controlled and owned by someone. The natural habitats that exist in park will be colonised by human activities. Flora and Fauna will diminish to a point where animals would be forced to move away to survive, or if that is not possible, they will simply die out.

**PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE NATURE, ADVENTURE AND EDUCATION CENTRE
IN THE LOUGH MUCKNO ESTATE, CASTLEBLAYNEY.**

**A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL'S AND FAILTE
IRELAND'S 'VISION FOR LOUGH MUCKNO' PLAN**

The Friends of Lough Muckno, September 2021

PART 1

Who are the Friends of Lough Muckno?

The Friends of Lough Muckno is a group consisting of several Castleblayney people and of others who use the Lough Muckno estate, and that formed in a spontaneous manner upon the publication by Monaghan County Council (MCC) and Fáilte Ireland (FI) of their 'Vision for Lough Muckno' plan in August 2021.

The group formed quickly due to the awareness of the dangers that the MCC/FI plan posed to an environmentally important natural site of park, lake and forest, to its biodiversity, to the historic character and appearance of the estate, and to the manner in which the Lough Muckno estate has been enjoyed by generations of Castleblayney people.

We believe that the MCC/FI plan is, in its vast scale, utterly inappropriate for the size and nature of the estate and, if enacted, would represent nothing less than the destruction of a site that, more than any other feature of Castleblayney, is at the core of the identity of the town and of the sense of place of the people of Castleblayney.

We need an alternative vision for the Lough Muckno estate

It is not enough, however, simply to say 'no' to the MCC/FI plan, and particularly so when it is evident that certain parts of the estate have, for a variety of reasons, fallen into a serious state of disrepair – there is, for example, a pressing need to restore Hope Castle and Annex building on the estate.

The purpose of this submission is to propose an alternative plan for the improvement and development of the estate, which would also address the issue of the regrettable state of the buildings and of some other aspects of the estate.

Our plan is informed by a different set of principles than those that seem to have informed the MCC/FI plan. We believe that any development of the Lough Muckno estate should be governed by the following principles which would have ecosystem restoration as central:

- the natural environment and landscape of the estate must not be disfigured – and, inevitably, destroyed – by increased and unwarranted built infrastructure arising from any development plan.
- the traditional ways that generations of Castleblayney people have enjoyed the natural environment and landscape of the estate – for the most part simply by walking and immersing themselves in the estate's peaceful atmosphere – must be preserved.
- no development of the estate, therefore, should interfere in any significant way – visually, aurally or physically – with these tranquil pleasures.

- the highly polluted state of Lough Muckno must, as a matter of urgency, be addressed seriously and comprehensively.
- the rich biodiversity of the estate must not be damaged; on the contrary, given the extreme nature of the biodiversity crisis in which we find ourselves, we must do everything to protect the site's existing biodiversity and fulfil its potential for increased biodiversity through, for example, the planting of native broadleaf trees and pollinator-friendly plants, and the removal of invasive species.
- it is essential that any development of the estate be genuinely sustainable in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, in keeping with EU and Irish law and with the Irish Government's climate-action policies. We are already long past the point where we must take decisive actions to combat the potentially catastrophic consequences of global heating and climate breakdown due to the accumulation of human-generated greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- any development plan must seek ways to increase the number of visitors to the estate so that the town benefits economically from such tourism, but this must occur only in a manner that is compatible with the nature and size of the site and with the principles outlined above.

Why do we believe that the Monaghan County Council/Fáilte Ireland plan is the wrong one for the Lough Muckno estate?

The Lough Muckno estate has had an unfortunate recent history. Attempts to develop it have left both the townspeople and MCC with unhappy memories. There is no need to rehearse the details of that history here; indeed, it is in the interests of all concerned to avoid renewed discord. Suffice it to say that events in recent decades have left the estate in a neglected condition, which encouraged MCC to find ways to address this situation. This led to their approach to Fáilte Ireland to explore how the estate might be restored and developed. From this, their 'vision' plan for Lough Muckno emerged.

At first sight, this initiative seems reasonable. But there are two aspects of the initiative that are open to question:

- first, there was no open, advertised public consultation with the people of Castleblayney about the future of the estate at the time of the Options Study for the Castle and Annexe in 2017 or in advance of the publication of the Muckno Vision. Given the history of conflict created by a previous plan to develop the estate and given the well-known sensitivities surrounding the issue of developing the Lough Muckno site, it is not unreasonable to expect that MCC would have sought the views of the townspeople *before* publishing any development plan. Not to have done so is all the more mystifying given that MCC recently initiated just such an open, and very successful, pre-plan public consultation on the restoration of the town's Market House.

- second, one has to wonder at the wisdom of the decision by MCC and FI to hand over the formulation of a plan to a consultancy company. No-one questions the competence and professionalism of Stevens and Associates in their specialist field, but one may well doubt that an external consultants who didn't consult local people are best placed to know what is right for the Lough Muckno estate and the people of Castleblayney. Moreover, Stevens and Associates specialise in developing global tourism sites; it does not seem to us that the scale of development consistent with such a global approach is appropriate to the development of a relatively small, natural and environmentally sensitive estate in a small rural Irish town. There is no indication that the study engaged with those with expertise in sustainable tourism or ecotourism in Ireland and across the EU.

But the greater issue is this: it is clear to us that the principles we outline above to ensure the preservation of the essential character of the estate, the protection of its biodiversity, the need for sustainable development and the permanent availability of the estate as a haven of tranquillity for the people of Castleblayney cannot be upheld and respected through the MCC/FI plan.

What does the MCC/FI plan propose?

The MCC/FI plan has at least the merit of being clear in its ambitions: it wants to be 'game-changing' and 'truly transformational' for the Lough Muckno estate. Such objectives, however, should be read as a warning as much as a promise, for it is the very vastness of the plan that would indeed transform the estate, but in ways that would render it unrecognisable from its present peaceful and natural state.

The plan speaks of two 'options' being offered, but a careful reading of the document suggests that the options are in fact *phases*; as the document states, 'Option 2 requires the delivery of Option 1'. In other words, there can be no Option 2 without Option 1, which means that we must speak only of phases of the plan.

Here is some of what is proposed under Phase 1:

- 'over 150 outdoor adventure activities'.
- an 'Activity Hub'.
- a 'Water Activity Hub'.
- a 'Cruise Tour Centre'.
- a 'Dispersed Hotel', meaning a 'boutique hotel on [the] lough shore' and lodges and chalets built on Lough Muckno's islands, as well as 'other accommodations on the Estate'.

- 'lake taxis and a ferry service', which will connect the chalets and lodges on the islands to promised 'Greenways' on the shore and, one supposes, to the boutique hotel, also on the shore. Promised, too, are 'parkland walks' for 'outdoor recreation', which, we should note in passing, we already have in the Lough Muckno estate, and which leads us to wonder why we need a development plan to give us what we already have and treasure above all else.

Phase 2 of the plan, or 'The Great Drumlin of Adventure'

It is not easy to summarise what is promised in this phase, so we will let the plan speak for itself:

'The Great Drumlin of Adventure ... will house a myriad of soft and high-octane activities while also accommodating Ireland's first Deep Space of Adventure', all of which, it is promised, will allow us to enjoy a 'state-of-the-art, digital and immersive adventure experience'. All of this will occur in a large dome to be built, judging by the visual imagery provided, on the lake's shore.

From here onwards in the document's description of Phase 2, the promises become increasingly futuristic and hi-tech, to the point that it is advisable for those interested to look at this section of the document themselves.

The report claims that the entire development will be 'sustainable', will indeed be 'an exemplar of sustainability', and will be 'aligned to the relevant policies for nature and heritage conservation'.

The plan envisages 350,000 day-visitors every year, on top of which (it appears) there will be 50,000 'unique international event attendees'.

Why the MCC/FI 'vision' plan for the Lough Muckno should be rejected

We have stated that it will be impossible for this plan to ensure the preservation of the essential character of the estate, the protection of its biodiversity and to succeed in being a sustainable development. This is so – and surely this should be obvious to anyone who considers the plan – because the sheer vastness of scale of what is planned will destroy the natural environment due to the amount of built infrastructure envisaged and will smother the estate due to the thousands of tourists that the plan is conceived to attract and the enormous range of activities they will be there to undertake.

Below, we highlight some of the obvious and specific negative consequences of the plan:

Loss of a peaceful natural amenity

It will no longer be possible for the people of Castleblayney and its environs to enjoy the quiet pleasures of a walk in nature on the Black and White Islands. With this plan, birdsong will be

replaced by the inevitable clamour and noises of large numbers of tourists engaged in more than 150 outdoor adventure activities.

Equally, the lovely views of the lake, on whose surface one now sees Swans, Ducks, Black Headed Gulls and Great Crested Grebes will be replaced by the disruptive activity of the ferry and lake taxis criss-crossing the lake, and of large numbers of tourists carrying out their water-based activities.

Traffic chaos

If the estate is to be, as claimed, vehicle-free, where will the massively increased numbers of cars and tourist coaches park? In the town itself? The town centre already has traffic problems, as identified by Castleblayney people in an audit carried out earlier this year by Castleblayney Tidy Towns so there would need to be fewer vehicles using it. The results of this audit (soon to be published) show a strong demand to reduce the presence and negative effects (noise, air pollution, difficulties of walking easily through the town) of vehicular traffic in the town centre of Castleblayney.

Loss of biodiversity

What possible hope is there for the estate's biodiversity to survive the presence of the 350,000 tourists envisaged by the plan? Biodiversity is not simply plants and trees; it is all forms of living species, many of which, as we know, are threatened with extinction due to human activities. Visitors to the estate have been thrilled to register the recent return of Red Squirrels and the arrival of Woodpeckers to the estate's forest. Do we imagine that these creatures will not be under threat from the permanent presence of thousands of tourists? And what of the birds that use the lake's shore and its little islands as secure nesting sites, the very locations where the dispersed hotel will be built? MCC and FI should be reminded that, under the terms of the government's recently passed Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021, it is the law of the land that we take measures to ensure that Ireland becomes an increasingly 'biodiversity-rich' country.

Lough Muckno is designated as a 'proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)' These sites are regarded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) as site 'of significance for wildlife and habitats'. Research conducted into the semi-natural woodland on the islands and lake margins and various portions of Long-Established Woodland (LEW) were identified. See Appedix 1. Surveys of bird life indicate that large numbers of Black headed Gulls roost out on Lough Muckno between White Island and Conera in the evenings. More boat disturbance may

impact them. Migratory Whooper Swans have been observed off Toome Point in 2020. More disturbance will likely impact on nesting Great Crested Grebes on the lake.

Monaghan County Council’s Heritage and Biodiversity 2020-2025 refers to the sustainable use of demesnes, including Hope Castle Demesne / Lough Muckno and emphasises the biodiversity aspects as well as heritage. See relevant extract below

9



DEMESNES AND ESTATES

Conscious of the artistic, cultural, ecological and historical values of demesnes and estates, we will encourage appropriate sustainable uses for these assets to enable the retention of the unique relationships between buildings, gardens and designed landscapes and to recommend the adoption of further ACA designations to improve knowledge, understanding and protections.

ACTIVITIES	OUTCOME	IMPACT
Ensure Monaghan County Council engages specialist advice regarding heritage character of properties in its control.	Conservation, use and sensitive re-use of these assets, while allowing access to the public in a sustainable way.	Conservation plans for Rossmore Park and Hope Castle Demesne/Lough Muckno.
Work with landowners to determine the full heritage and biodiversity values of their sites.	Move towards sustainable and holistic management.	Improved knowledge of heritage features and values of these places.
Explore the potential for ACA designations.	Improved understanding and management of demesnes and estates.	Number of ACAs designated under Planning and Development Acts.

Unsustainable development

On what basis are we to accept the claim of the MCC/FI plan that the proposed project will be ‘an exemplar of sustainability’? In fact, there is no basis for such acceptance because the report does not offer one. We are simply asked to believe the claim. But it is impossible to do so, as even a cursory consideration of the plan indicates that it will inevitably lead to an *increase* in Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions, thus aggravating the global heating crisis at the very moment that EU and national law demand that we reduce such emissions.

Under the terms of the Government’s Climate Action Plan 2019 and the Climate and Low Carbon (Amendment) Act 2021, Ireland must reduce its 2018 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and achieve zero carbon by 2030. These reductions are legally binding. Local authorities have been identified by national government as having a critical role to play in

ensuring that these targets are achieved. It is, therefore, incomprehensible that Monaghan County Council could endorse a plan that will increase emissions. This endorsement is all the more incomprehensible given MCC's repeated claims, in a number of its recently published reports, that it will actively combat climate change, as in, for example, its *Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025*, where it commits itself 'to implement measures to reduce the human causes of climate change and to consider its effects when formulating development plan policies'. In the same document Lough Muckno and environs are designated by Monaghan County Council as an 'Area of Primary Amenity'.

The extract from page 115 of the County Development Plan sets out the implications of the designation.

6.11.1 Areas of Primary Amenity

County Monaghan has two principle areas of outstanding landscape quality which require protection from insensitive and inappropriate development. They are as set out in the Table 6.5 Areas of Primary Amenity below. Development in these areas will only be permitted where the integrity and natural beauty of the landscape is not threatened. Any developments which are normally exempt under Article 6 of the Planning and Developments Regulations will require planning permission.

Development proposals in these areas will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that the existing landscape, landform, flora and fauna, scenic or environmental characteristics will not be compromised.

Table 6.5

Constraints Map	Areas of Primary Amenity
PA2	Lough Muckno & Environs

In addition, here is Climate Action Charter signed by local authorities to 'ensure every local authority embeds decarbonisation, sustainable development and climate resilience into every aspect of the work they do'. A copy of the Charter was signed by the Chairperson and Chief Executive of Monaghan County Council. The text of Paragraph 3f is worth noting.

- (f) ensure that policies and practices at local government level lead us towards low carbon pathways and put in place a process for carbon proofing major decisions, programmes and projects on a systematic basis, including investments in transport and energy infrastructure moving over time to a near zero carbon investment strategy

At this point we ask if the commitments in the various plans and document referred above have been ignored.

MCC and FI fail to offer any evidence to support the sustainability claims made for the plan, yet they nonetheless seek approval to proceed to the next stage of progressing the proposal. However, we can identify a couple of obvious ways, offered merely as examples, to show that the plan *cannot* be sustainable:

First, the entire business case of the plan rests on its success in exploiting the international tourist market, which inevitably means more fossil-fuel emissions generated by air travel. It is worth noting that three members of Fáilte Ireland formed part of a Sustainable Tourism Working Group (under the aegis of the then-Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport) that produced a report in 2019, one of the ambitions of which was that Ireland would 'seek to be amongst the world-leaders in sustainable tourism practices'. This ambition seems to have been quickly forgotten. As with MCC's stated commitment to take measures to reduce human causes of climate change, FI deploys the language of sustainability but doesn't appear to act on it.

Second, the plan envisages 'ice climbing walls' as part of its attractions. These will surely be electricity-hungry features, demanding, ultimately, the burning of fossil fuels to maintain the necessary freezing temperatures. It is ironic that Lough Muckno's ice walls would be powered to an extent by fossil fuels that would contribute to the global heating that will then melt glaciers elsewhere on the planet.

CONCLUSION

An objective consideration of the MCC/FI plan leaves one with the inescapable impression that the entire project would have permanent and negative consequences for the Lough Muckno estate and the town and people of Castleblayney:

- It would forever deprive the people of Castleblayney and its environs of the simple pleasures of peaceful walks in the estate that generations of the townspeople have enjoyed.
- The town itself would be over-run and choked with a massive increase in vehicular traffic.
- The estate's biodiversity would be seriously degraded, in direct contravention of the government's legal requirement to improve biodiversity in Ireland.
- The unsustainability of the plan would also be in direct violation of Ireland's legally binding targets to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Any one of the above consequences is sufficient reason to reject the MCC/FI plan. Combined, they argue not only for the immediate abandonment of the plan, but also call seriously into question the supposed commitment of Monaghan County Council to combat climate breakdown and Fáilte Ireland's claim to be interested in truly sustainable tourism. It does seem that climate-

action measures are not embedded in this Vision and that it is a ‘business as usual’ approach, the very approach that climate scientists tell us is preventing us from taking the radical emissions-reductions measures necessary to stave off catastrophe.

It seems clear that MCC and FI are focused almost exclusively on the economic potential of the plan. It seems that the term ‘asset’ is used purely in an economic context.

We have said nothing yet about the economic dimension of the plan. There is a reason for this: the MCC/FI says nothing concrete about it either, beyond proposing a few random figures that seem plucked out of the air. 350,000 visitors per year are promised. No evidence is offered to support this ‘calculation’. Why not 250,000, or 450,000, or 50,000? There is no doubt that a large influx of tourists would spend a lot of money, but where would they spend it and for whose benefit? MCC and FI propose that the project would be funded by international investors. If investors are going to pay out between €65 million and €100 million, they will want a return; they would not be investing for the love of Castleblayney. It should be obvious that the tourist spending will take place essentially within the adventure theme park, and much less so in the town. Big investors want big returns on investments.

But beyond these considerations, the ‘Vision for Lough Muckno’ plan raises the even more fundamental issue. Why would anyone want to transform a natural site as splendid as it is (the lake pollution apart), and that is deeply appreciated by those who use it? And how could anyone, and particularly two public bodies working in partnership, conjure up a plan that would destroy a site of heritage, leisure and biodiversity (albeit a degraded one) and replace it with an absurdly grandiose and wildly inappropriate adventure theme park at a time when the entire public discourse of at least the last two decades demands that we protect and preserve such natural and environmentally sensitive sites? It seems that MCC and FI have not aligned this Vision with the Irish Government’s policies on climate, biodiversity and sustainable development and to the call from every responsible national and international body that we all play our part in saving our planet from catastrophe.

PART 2

What kind of tourism is suitable for the Lough Muckno estate?

Overtourism?

The MCC/FI plan would, if we accept its proposed tourist-number figures, generate the unwelcome phenomenon known as overtourism. Overtourism is defined as a negative effect of mass tourism, where too many tourists visit a destination, leading to negative consequences for host communities and/or natural environments. Overtourism has seriously affected many international tourist sites around the world, leading several of them to crack down on the number

of visitors allowed entry. Overtourism would surely be the consequence of the MCC/FI plan if the numbers envisaged in it descended on the relatively small destinations of Castleblayney and the Lough Muckno estate.

Or another kind of tourism?

Happily, there is an alternative. It goes under different names, with each name emphasising a particular feature or nuance of either the tourist activity or the attitude of the tourists. Here are definitions of four related kinds of tourism:

Nature Tourism: Responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.

Ecotourism: Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.

Sustainable Tourism: Tourism that leads to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.

Responsible Tourism: Tourism that maximises the benefits to local communities, minimises negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species.

It is surely stating the obvious to point out that this is the kind of tourism that is suitable for the Lough Muckno estate and is the kind that MCC and FI should have had in mind when considering how to develop the estate.

It is important to be aware that there is a growing market for such responsible tourism. Booking.com's 2021 Sustainable Travel Report reveals a huge and growing interest in sustainable travel, with a majority of respondents saying that they want to travel more sustainably in the wake of the Covid pandemic. We can truly speak of pre-Covid and post-Covid worlds. There has been a dramatic Covid factor where tourism is concerned, to the point that Booking.com is now including sustainability criteria for hundreds of thousands of properties around the world.

But it is not only tourists who are embracing sustainability; tourist destinations, and particularly those offering nature tourism, are aware that they, too, must be more sustainable, both to appeal to the growing demand from tourists that they be so, but also because they recognise an ethical imperative to be so. An article in the *Guardian* earlier this year reported on the strenuous efforts being made to decarbonise the Lake District's tourism, focusing on transport to the area, bicycle-hire and cycleways, the installation of electric car-charging points and decarbonising food menus by lowering food miles and showing the impact of food choices through indicating the carbon footprint of each item on the menu.

In other words, tourism is changing, sustainable nature tourism is growing, and everything (global heating, biodiversity extinction) points to its continued growth. Which leaves one with the strong conviction that the MCC/FI project for the Lough Muckno nature site is already outdated, is in no way future-proofed and is condemned to be thoroughly anachronistic if it ever, years from now, manages to be realised.

OUR SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE PLAN FOR DEVELOPING THE LOUGH MUCKNO ESTATE

The Lough Muckno Nature, Adventure and Education Centre

We present below a series of activities that would constitute the kind of tourist offering that suits the Lough Muckno estate and that respects the principles we outlined in Part 1, which we deem necessary to protect the site, while at the same time attracting tourists in sustainable numbers.

There would be **five spheres of activity** in our centre, all either environmentally low- or non-impact:

1. **Water-based adventure activities**, for example, sailing, kayaking, canoeing, paddle-boarding and windsurfing. Courses on these water activities could be run to allow visitors to improve their skills. The existing small aquatic centre at Lough Muckno could be expanded to cater for more activities and greater numbers: new activities could include a water park, featuring various inflatable fun obstacles. Motor-boats would not be allowed on the water.
2. **Experiencing nature**: In our plan, visitors would continue to enjoy the traditional and much-loved experience of the estate's walks and trails and of the simple immersion in peaceful nature. But we can develop this to embrace the new appreciation of the value of nature's contribution to well-being and mental health. Research has shown that forest bathing has positive effects on mental and physical health, and that immersion in nature eases depression and reduces stress. Lough Muckno offers both forests and wetlands, which together present an exceptional space for visitors to benefit from the calming and healing powers of nature. There is a further opportunity here to offer courses on well-being, yoga, tai chi, etc, and on activities that help people cope with anxiety. Other activities suitable to the site, upon which courses could also be offered, are foraging and wildlife photography.

3. **Nature and biodiversity education:** The Lough Muckno site is the perfect setting to develop nature/environmental studies including citizen science, for both adults and schoolchildren: for example, how to notice and understand nature (its plants, flowers, trees, insects and animals and habitats); learning about bird and animal habitats; identifying birds and birdsong; field studies for schools; education on the vital role of biodiversity; climate-change education. More generally, it is becoming increasingly important to provide children with nature experiences. As one researcher notes: ‘Children born today, who could be looking at a 3C rise in temperatures in their lifetimes ... will need as many restorative and resilient natural environments as possible to recover from the stresses of an increasingly perilous world.’

4. **Programme to protect and restore biodiversity:** Scientists tell us that we are in the midst of the Sixth Mass Extinction of species due to human activity, affecting all aspects of biodiversity. A nature site like the Lough Muckno estate offers us the opportunity, and imposes on us the ethical obligation, to take measures to counter biodiversity loss through, for example, increased areas of native woodland, small-scale rewilding of parts of the estate (e.g., developing wild-flower meadows), dealing with invasive species (e.g., rhododendrons), planting pollinator-friendly plants and hedgerows. (It would also require engagement with Coillte to convert the Black Island to native woodland over time.)

In addition, it is important to take into account Lough Muckno’s designation by the National Parks and Wildlife Service as a pNHA (Proposed National Heritage Area). Moreover, Monaghan County Council itself, in its current Development Plan, under the heading ‘Natural Heritage’, places the estate in a category requiring special protection: ‘Lough Muckno is a designated Area of Primary Amenity and is also a proposed Natural Heritage Area. It is an invaluable natural resource that has helped shape the development of Castleblayney and should be afforded the highest degree of protection.’ (p. 258)

What is proposed in the Muckno Vision seems at odds with this statement in the context of the plan that MCC is now proposing. That said, it is important that higher degrees of protection be actively considered for the Lough Muckno estate. In passing, it should be noted that there are models in existence through which this could be achieved:

- (i) By designating it as a new National Park, perhaps to be known as Drumlin and Lake National Park. (There are only six national parks in Ireland and none in the Midlands or North East. All are along the Western seaboard, with the exception of Wicklow Mountains National Park.)

- (ii) By creating a Nature Reserve in association with relevant state agencies

(iv) By establishing a Geo Park – perhaps on a cross border basis that would include nearby Lough Ross (in Co Armagh) -it's in the same catchment as Lough Muckno.

5. **Culture and heritage.** The Lough Muckno estate is part of the history of Ireland as a colonised country. The estate and the town have stories to tell. Where the MCC/FI plan would prefer to anaesthetise us with the bland seductions of mass-tourist pleasure-seeking, we believe we could do honour to the estate by reflecting on its place in the history of Castleblayney, the province of Ulster and the divided island we live in. We propose that there should be a permanent local history exhibition that traces the history of the estate and the town, but that also extends outwards to embrace the wider area's cultural past through the exploration of photos, audio and visual recordings, documentary evidence, important events, stories, songs, artists, characters, and architectural and geological features. There can also be arts activities, such as nature painting, t-shirt painting, circus skills, Mod Roc, face painting, balloon modelling, and the teaching of crafts.

One additional point: We believe that the facilities in Castleblayney relating to culture and heritage (including natural heritage) as well as public/community facilities (Hope Castle, the Market House, the Gate Lodges and Iontas) should be viewed holistically and not atomistically, and that any development of the estate (including the castle) should take the inter-related and complementary nature of these facilities into account.

Infrastructure

It is vital that the estate undergo only minimum new built infrastructural development in order to preserve its traditional peaceful natural appearance, character and atmosphere, but also to protect the natural environment and its biodiversity.

In terms of building, therefore, all that is needed is to restore the castle and the annex.

The Castle



We propose that the restored castle should function as a Visitor Welcome Centre, featuring:

- a reception/welcome desk for visitors.
- a visual display of the amenities and different spheres of activity of the estate.
- a tourist information point for the estate and the town, but also for other sites in Co Monaghan.
- a shop selling arts-and-crafts items by Co Monaghan artists.
- a permanent local history exhibition, as outlined above.
- rooms for the wellbeing, educational, arts and crafts and heritage and cultural activities of the centre.
- consideration be given to some accommodation in Hope Castle in addition to that available in the Annex (It may or may not be appropriate)
- consideration should also be given to a low impact building and architecturally appropriate structure to the rear of the Castle. See area indicated on photo. Part of the structure would have a glazed wall facing the lake. There would also be a terrace that would be open-air but have a roof. These type of structures are exceptionally well valued by those people availing of courses etc and it would be an important element to the economic aspects of Lough Muckno Park.



The Annex

The restored annex could function as self-catering accommodation units.

The old tennis courts and parts of the adjoining lands

This could be transformed into a small camping space and glamping site

To complete the redevelopment of the built infrastructure of the estate – and to restore the demesne to its former glory – the walls of the castle’s orchard garden need to be restored and a programme of rehabilitation of old apple trees and planting of young trees (heritage varieties).

The economic aspect

The purpose of this submission is to offer an alternative vision for the Lough Muckno estate to the one presented by MCC and FI. Detailed economic assessments are for another day. We note that the MCC/FI report offers no evidence-supported economic case. But we can say that there would clearly be income generated by our proposed centre, from the activities we outline and the various courses that would be offered.

But there is a wider point that needs to be made here. The MCC/FI plan seeks, exclusively it seems to us, to monetise the entire estate. It is one thing to do this with activities that demand expensive infrastructure; it is quite another to do so with nature. Making money out of nature is the major reason we find ourselves in the current biodiversity crisis. We still seem not to have learned that we cannot live without what nature gives us – fresh water, pollination, seed dispersal, pest control, soil health, medicine, fisheries, and of course biodiversity and all the services it gives us humans. And then there is the indispensable contribution that nature makes to our mental health.

It should be clear, then, that the value of nature cannot be calculated in monetary terms. It doesn’t need to make money for us, and we should not seek to monetise it. For us, and in our plan, the Lough Muckno estate need only continue to exist and to do what beautiful nature does

for human beings. Let it simply be remembered that societies could never afford to pay for everything nature gives us.

Conclusion

The Friends of Lough Muckno are strongly opposed to the 'Vision for Lough Muckno' plan. It will destroy a nature site by blighting it with the built infrastructure necessary to turn it into a theme park; it will take away from the people of Castleblayney a part of their town to which they are deeply attached; it will be environmentally unsustainable; it will further degrade the site's biodiversity; it will overpower the estate and the town of Castleblayney with mass tourism and traffic; and it will be in contravention of the Irish government's legally binding obligations to reduce greenhouse gases and protect biodiversity. As for the supposed economic benefits for the town, nothing but unsupported claims are made.

We reiterate our desire to see the Lough Muckno estate developed, but in a way that is consistent with the urgent need to be genuinely sustainable and biodiversity-friendly, that preserves the traditional use of the amenity for present and future generations of Castleblayney people, and that meets our legal obligations to combat global heating and climate breakdown. Truly sustainable tourism can generate significant income. There is a need to take a closer look at the range of income streams and funding sources. There are many examples that we could learn from at international and national level. Also, it is important that the expertise be sought from people and agencies that can provide useful advice. These areas could include ecology, sustainability, sustainable tourism, and relevant agencies and bodies in Ireland and at EU level.

So now there really are two options.

The people of Castleblayney have the choice between embracing the standardised, homogenised pre-packaged consumer offering of mass tourism, where destinations become interchangeable marketing products, and whose consumers are bussed in and out without the slightest interest in or contact with the place and community they are visiting.

Or they can choose a smaller-scale tourism of manageable and sustainable numbers, where visitors come to a place because they want to enjoy nature and to partake of nature-based activities, but in such a way that the quieter pleasures of others are not disturbed. This is a tourism where the local is not swallowed up by the global, where authentic local culture is not reduced to marketing bullet points, and where the location of the destination is not only respected but is itself an attraction.

Crucially, our alternative plan for the development of the Lough Muckno estate will seek in every possible way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect biodiversity. At the human level, the kind of tourism and activities that we advocate in this submission will stimulate contact and engagement among people, taking place in a setting that will enrich us in the ways we have outlined, and reminding us always that, without wonderful nature, we are lost.

Threatened as we are with truly catastrophic consequences of climate breakdown and the relentless destruction of nature, it is genuinely disappointing does not have due regard to this reality apart from vague articulations. However, it is not too late to change direction and to make Lough Muckno not just a model of ecosystem restoration but also of nature tourism. If this alternative direction that we advocate is chosen by Monaghan County Council it will be done in the knowledge that this is right course to take and that it will be supported by the people of Castleblayney and people further afield. Also, the spirit of the times will help this type of project to be a fruitful one.

Appendix 1. **Semi-natural woodlands at Lough Muckno. Author: Patrick Gleeson**

The natural climax vegetation for much of Ireland is temperate forest (Cross, 2006). Gradual deforestation over thousands of years has left Ireland's native woodland cover at a paltry 2% (Perrin et al, 2008). The potential natural vegetation for most of mid Monaghan including the Lough Muckno area is Sessile Oak forests with bluebells (*Blechno-Quercetum coryletosum*) (Cross, 2006). These woodlands can be classified as Sessile oak – woodrush (*Quercus petraea – Luzula sylvatica*) woodland type, subtype Bramble – Hazel (*Rubus fruticosus agg. – Corylus avellana*) (Perrin et al, 2008). These forests are transition woodlands between acidic oakwood's, and the ash forests found on calcareous soils. These woodlands contain some species associated with acidophilous oakwood's like Wood Rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) (Fig 1), but they differ from these other acidic oakwood's by having broad leaved herbs characteristic of woodlands on calcareous soils, like Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Violet (*Viola spp*), Enchanter's nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), and Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) (Perrin et al, 2008). These woods transition into pedunculate oak-ash forests on base rich soils (Cross, 2006).



Fig 1: Great woodrush (*Luzula sylvatica*) in the woodland field layer at Concra Wood.

There are some small patches of native woodland found around Lough Muckno with ecological value. Some of these patches can be identified as Long-established woodlands using old ordnance survey maps. Long-established woodlands (LEW) are those that have been wooded since the first edition of OS maps of 1830-

44. These can then be subdivided into two categories: LEW (I), where it cannot be determined if the wood is ancient due to lack of historical evidence, and LEW (II), where there is evidence that the site is not ancient (Perrin & Daly, 2010). The Black Island and White Island woodlands likely fall into the LEW (II) category, as accounts from the ordnance survey memoirs indicate that they have been planted. The Black Island was 'thickly planted' and 'a great portion is planted' of the White Island (Day & McWilliams, 1998).

It is highly likely that the other semi-natural woodlands around the lake have been planted. However, placenames would indicate that there is a long history of woodland at the site. The notable example at Lough Muckno is the townland of Longfield, which is Leamhchoill in Irish, meaning Elm wood (logainm.ie).

Below is a description of some of the LEW sites at Lough Muckno:

1) Longfield Wood (Grid ref: H865187)



Fig 2: Longfield Wood on first edition of OS maps



Fig 3: Longfield Wood present day



This small fragment of Longfield Wood floods seasonally and is dominated by Pedunculate Oak, with Downy Birch, Willow, Ash, Hazel, Holly, Hawthorn. The field layer contains Meadowsweet, Bramble, Remote sedge, Marsh Violet, and Royal Fern.

Fig 4: Fragment of Longfield Wood.

2) Longfield Wood (Grid ref: H860184)



Fig 5: Longfield Wood on first edition of OS maps



Fig 6: Longfield Wood present day

This fragment of Longfield Wood contains a fine Sessile oak specimen, likely coppiced in the past (Fig 8). The main tree species are Downy Birch, Hazel, Rowan, and Sessile Oak, which gives way to Pedunculate Oak along the shore. This wood suffers from overgrazing, creating a scant field layer throughout. Species in the field layer include Bluebell, Bramble, Red campion, Slender St John's-wort (Fig 9), Primrose, Dog violet, Wood sorrel, and Greater stitchwort.



Fig 7: Longfield Wood on the shores of Lough Muckno



Fig 8: Multi-trunked Sessile Oak at Longfield Wood



Fig 9: Slender St John's-wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*) in the field layer of Longfield Wood

Fig 10: Evidence of Badgers using Longfield Wood

3) Concra Wood (Grid ref: H856183)



Fig 11: Concra Wood on first edition of OS maps



Fig 12: Concra Wood present day

A small patch of woodland is present at the eastern tip of Concra Wood. A large portion is planted with conifers but most of it is comprised of a stand of native Aspen (*Populus tremula*). Aspen is locally scarce in the area, particularly a stand of this size. Aspen occasionally produces wind dispersed seeds, but it also reproduces vegetatively but suckering. Aspen suckers can dominate an area creating mono-clonal stands made up of hundreds of stems. These stems are genetically identical to each other and form one large organism (Parrott & MacKenzie, 2009). It is possible that some of these Aspen clones are thousands of years old, making the presence of a stand at Lough Muckno much more interesting. Aspen is also very palatable to grazers and its presence on Concra allows suckers to mature without any grazing pressure.



Fig 13: Aspen stand at Concra.



Fig 14: Aspen leaf

4) Lough Muckno Islands (Crane Island grid ref: H859189)



Fig 15: Crane Island on first edition of OS maps



Fig 16: Crane Island present day

All the small islands on Lough Muckno appear to have been wooded since at least the 1830's. The islands are regularly used by Cormorants for roosting. Many of the woodlands on the islands are strikingly different in appearance to those on the mainland. For example, Crane Island has a very dense undergrowth dominated by nettle and elder. The canopy is almost exclusively made up of sycamore. A dominance of these species is an indicator of nutrient enrichment and the cause of the additional nutrients

on the islands is likely due to the cormorant droppings (guano). Cormorants are known to completely alter wooded islands; the guano adding nitrogen to the soil, raising the pH. (Webb & Glanville, 1962). The acid from the guano often kills the trees, allowing light to reach the woodland floor. This can benefit some species as on Crane Island yew is regenerating under canopy gaps (Fig 17).



Fig 17: Dense undergrowth of Elder, nettle, bramble, and young yew trees on Crane Island.



Fig 18: Large oak tree on Whites Island

5) Woodland on the old golf course (Grid ref: H834192)



Fig 19: Old golf course on first edition of OS maps

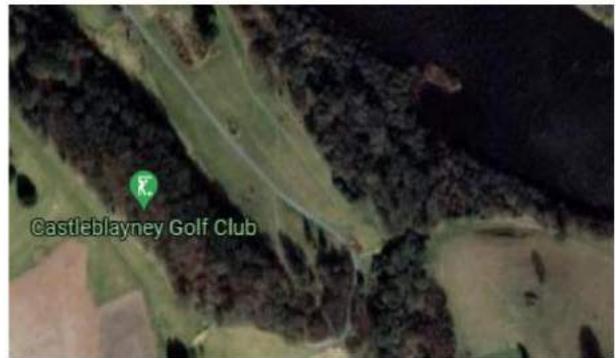


Fig 20: Old golf course present day

The old golf course at Lough Muckno contains LEW's and old veteran trees scattered throughout the old estate grounds. Only the woodlands along the lakeshore can be considered semi-natural, being made up mostly of native species. Pedunculate oak and Downy Birch dominate the canopy. This wood often floods during the winter months. Other areas are dominated by non-native Beech, Sycamore and Horse Chestnut. Most of the woods however are heavily infested with the invasive *Rhododendron ponticum*. There is huge potential for woodland expansion at this site, as areas that are not mown have been colonized by regenerating trees (Fig 21).



Fig 21: LEW on the old golf course in the background. Regenerating woodland expanding in the foreground.

6) Woodland near Toome Point (H861172)

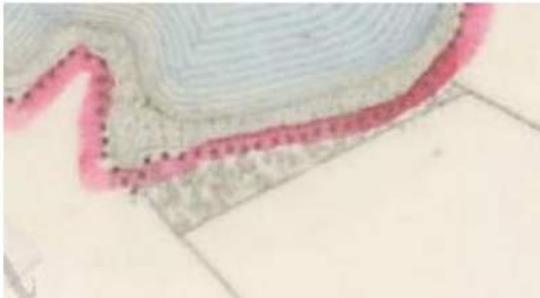


Fig 22: Woodland near Toome Point on first edition of OS maps



Fig 23: Woodland near Toome Point present day

There is a stretch of linear woodland along the roadway at this location. The first OS maps only show a small section wooded but today the wood stretches for several hundred meters along the road. This linear woodland is interesting as it contains a large population of Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), which is quite scarce locally (Fig 25). The main tree species present are Pedunculate oak, Hazel, Ash, Wych Elm, Holly, and some Sycamore. Some planted Scots Pine is also present.



Fig 24: Woodland near Toome Point.



Fig 25: Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) along the roadside.

The value of the woodlands at Lough Muckno

As mentioned previously, native woodlands cover only around 2% of the country (Perrin et al, 2008). The small patches that remain are incredibly important refuges for biodiversity, and almost like museum pieces, they give a glimpse of the natural vegetation that covered much of Ireland before the forests were cleared. In a biodiversity and climate crisis, holding on to these remnants has never been more important. The native woodland type found around Lough Muckno are very valuable, most have been lost as they occur on good agricultural soil (Cross, 2006). Long-established woodlands are particularly important, as veteran trees provide important niches for many species. Fissures and holes in the bark support countless invertebrates and nesting sites for birds. Dead wood is also an incredibly important habitat in the woodland environment. Many Saproxyllic (wood decay) beetles are rare in Ireland, due to the scarcity of ancient woodland and veteran trees. Old demesnes however can be hotspots for these species due to the presence of old trees (Alexander & Anderson, 2012). Old veteran trees, both living, and dead are dotted around the old estate grounds, particularly on the White Island and the old golf course. During the spring and summer of 2021, a Great Spotted Woodpecker was using an old dead tree on the old golf course as a drumming post, to the bemusement of many locals. This species has recently recolonised Ireland from Britain after a long absence (McDevitt et al, 2011). It is important that any future developments at Lough Muckno do not impact negatively on the woodlands present.



Fig 26: A native woodland recently lost by the development of a new roadway at South Lodge

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[REDACTED]

From: Michaela Kirrane [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday 10 September 2021 12:20
To: Muckno Consultation
Subject: Vision for Lough Muckno – Public Consultation

To whom it concerns,

We refer to Monaghan County Council's Vision for Lough Muckno.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is a statutory agency responsible for inland fisheries in Ireland. Under section 7(1) of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010 (No. 10 of 2010) *the principal function of IFI is the protection, management and conservation of the inland fisheries resource.*

Lough Muckno is a well-established and popular fishing amenity and has been developed and promoted by Monaghan County Council, Inland Fisheries Ireland and associated angling clubs, as an important tourist angling destination. Any development associated with the Vision of Lough Muckno needs to ensure the protection and development of this angling amenity and to ensure continued access to this public fishery for both domestic and tourist anglers.

Any development associated with the vision for Lough Muckno needs to be designed, constructed and managed to ensure the protection and enhancement of the existing aquatic environment, including water quality.

Yours faithfully,
Michaela

Michaela Kirrane
Senior Fisheries Environmental Officer
Inland Fisheries Ireland - Dublin

Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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Web www.fisheriesireland.ie

3044 Lake Drive, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24, Ireland, **D24 Y265**.

Help Protect Ireland's Inland Fisheries

Call 1890 34 74 24 to report illegal fishing, water pollution or invasive species.

Vision for Lough Muckno – Public Consultation - Submission

This is a joint submission on behalf of Noel Quinn and Mary Kelly-Quinn. We are both originally from Co. Monaghan and went to school in Castleblayney. We travel home regularly and occasionally visit the Black Island. Noel a registered architect with a master's degree in environmental resource management from University College Dublin. He is also a member of the RIAI's Sustainability Task Force. Mary Kelly-Quinn is a freshwater scientist working in UCD on research projects assessing impact of human activities on water quality and identification of mitigation measures.

The proposed developments for Lough Muckno and the area in and around Castleblayney outlined in Terry Stevens and Associates' *Visioning Report* are certainly ambitious and would greatly benefit Castleblayney if they can be realized in an environmentally sustainable manner. This and all such developments must take on board Ireland's responsibilities in terms of climate change mitigation and efforts to address the biodiversity crisis and significant water quality decline.

Ireland joined with other EU member-states in formally ratifying the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change in 2002. Under the Kyoto Protocol we agreed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by at least 5 per cent compared to 1990 levels by 2012. By the year 2000 our emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases rose by 24 per cent and since then we have failed to meet the 2012 and 2020 targets and we are currently on course to exceed our 2030 targets.

The loss of biodiversity in the last 20 years is truly catastrophic. Birds, for example, are good indicators of the general health of ecosystems. Many bird species, once common in Co. Monaghan including the barn owl, corncrake, kestrel, snipe, curlew, grey partridge, yellowhammer, grey wagtail, meadow pipit, swift, wood warbler, woodcock, goldeneye, shoveler, lapwing and red wing are now Red Listed¹. These species have suffered a population decline of at least 50%, together with a 70%-plus reduction in their distribution across Ireland. The grey wagtail and meadow pipit were Green listed as recently as 2007 and the Redwing was still on the green list in 2013. The kestrel unfortunately moved from the Amber List to the Red List this year (2021). Equally worrying is the loss of freshwater biodiversity with increasing water pollution. The recent EPA Indicators report² highlighted that 44% of our lakes are in unsatisfactory condition. Lough Muckno is among the most polluted lakes in the country and is below the minimum standards for bathing waters³. The proposed development must take account of the additional pollution and other pressures that it could place on the lake and its aquatic biodiversity.

Every major project from now on must be viewed through the prism of Climate Change, the catastrophic loss of biodiversity and water quality decline. According to the authors of the Vision for Lough Muckno the project will be carbon neutral if not carbon positive. Unfortunately, there is no indication of how this will be achieved. All sectors of the economy must decarbonize if we are to meet the ambitions of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Currently, buildings account for 39% of energy related global CO₂ emissions of which 28% comes from operational carbon with 11% arising from embodied carbon. Carbon emissions are released not only during operational life of a building (operational carbon) but also during the manufacturing, transportation, construction, and end of life phases of buildings and infrastructure (embodied carbon). A report from the World Green Building

¹ Gilbert, G., Stanbury, A. and Lewis, L. (2021) Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020 –2026. *Irish Birds* 9, 523–544

² Trodd, W., and O'Boyle, S. (2021) *EPA Water Quality in 2020 An Indicators Report*

³ Environmental Protection Agency (2021) *Bathing Water Quality in Ireland: A report for the year 2020*

Council⁴ states that as operational carbon is reduced, embodied carbon will continue to grow in importance as a proportion of total emissions. Thus, embodied carbon will account for half of the entire carbon footprint of new construction between now and 2050. Therefore, construction of this proposed development should aim to have at least 40% less embodied carbon, and all new and existing buildings that are part of this project should have net zero operational carbon.

There are many unused and underused buildings in Castleblayney that could be refurbished, modified, and repurposed to meet many of the goals of the vision for Lough Muckno. Smaller purpose-built structures constructed *away from the lake* shore could meet remaining goals.

The rehabilitation of the Hope Castle and its environs together with plans for the Market House and town center are very welcome. However, plans for the proposed large infrastructure on the lake shore and surrounding area will undoubtedly have negative environmental impacts. It is important that any new structures are not built on the lake shore so as not to further impact on the integrity of the shore and its littoral habitats which support a variety of freshwater flora and fauna. Indeed, natural landscapes are now recognised as key elements of what people seek and enjoy. Therefore, environmental assessments must take account of large numbers of visitors on the lake's natural habitats. Importantly, access to the lake's small islands should not be permitted if these relatively undisturbed semi-natural woodland habitats are to remain intact. There is little natural or semi-natural woodland left along the lake shore and restoration of this for visitor enjoyment and environmental enhancement should be considered. Furthermore, travel on the lake should be strictly controlled to avoid disturbance to birds during the nesting season.

Lough Muckno is a beautiful lake set in the Monaghan drumlin landscape. High-impact tourism of the sort proposed would destroy this valuable resource. On the other hand, the leisure activities of low-impact tourism are more environmentally sustainable and would ensure that that this beautiful landscape can continued to be enjoyed by future generations.

We are happy to elaborate on any of the points covered in this submission.



Noel Quinn MRIAI, MSc (Environmental Resource Management) - 



Assoc. Prof. Mary Kelly-Quinn - 

⁴ Bringing Embodied Carbon Upfront <https://www.worldgbc.org/embodied-carbon>

THE MUCKNO PLAN Observations on the Terry Stevens proposal

My Credentials:

I have lived all my life three miles from Castleblayney; it has always been my home town. Whenever I entertain visitors or welcome home my family members from abroad, I find it very pleasant to bring them for a walk on the Black Island and to enjoy the tranquillity of the place.

When I worked in RTE as a TV Producer/Director, I made a programme on 'Paddy Cole's Castleblayney'. I also made a documentary piece on the raising of the lake for Dundalk's water supply and the problems foreseen there and have observed with interest developments in that area.

I have always been interested in the history and the development of the town but I have no vested interest there.

I have watched the Webinar associated with this project and have carefully read the proposal from the consultants. I consulted with no one in the preparation of this submission.

Initial Response to the proposal

The most frightening thing about the Report is the main image, with the series of bubbles over the land and the lake. It is obviously intended as a visual representation of innovation, game-changing, and forward-looking ambition but comes across as the work of people who do not understand the intrinsic character of the place and want to enclose the whole town and lake in a bubble. As one person who saw it without reading the whole thing said: 'If they tried to build that, I'd leave the town'.

This is understandable: for the people of the surrounding area, the place is hallowed by treasured memories often going back to childhood and previous generations. The bubbles or domes seem like unsightly exclusion zones blotting the landscape. The promise of free local access immediately evokes not re-assurance but distrust following the activities of an earlier proprietorship who gave promises of access which turned into closed gates once the 'promisers' were in a position to exclude. Distrust has lingered ever since.

One thing that needs to be protected, in my opinion, is the integrity and character of the Black Island and the area around the bridge which should stay basically as it is, with the addition only of a boat jetty or a kiosk for tickets, sweets etc., small-scale improvements. The walks on the island should be sacrosanct; they are the basis of the local experience of the lake and it is to that area that most local sentiment is attached in memories and feelings. Any plan that respects these sentiments will be generously considered; any attempt to interfere with this will naturally be opposed. The plans for the Market House and the Castle in Option 1 don't seem out of line with these perceptions and look like a new phase of works already done in the town and in train on the Estate, such as the Big Tom sculpture, the gable murals, the work on the gate lodges, lontas, etc etc. The idea of locating interesting facilities in the Market House and of finding a viable and innovative use for the castle has a natural appeal. Many of the ideas have a ring of feasibility.

The Castle: names are important. Whatever is planned to be installed or take place in the Castle, I believe that the word 'Castle' should be part of the name of the facility: The Castle of Culture, The Castle of Virtual Adventure, The Castle of Innovation, the Castle of Virtual Terrors The Castle Hub...people love castles. It would be especially teasing if, for example, the Castle housed something like a virtual reality experience: the Victorian exterior of the castle would give an outward impression of staid history while inside all sorts of excitements are waiting.

Virtual reality, as a set of personal immersion experiences, is developing so quickly and becoming so small scale that much thought needs to go into asking how attractive it is any more or will be into the future. Many people enjoy virtual reality experiences in their own small rooms, swimming with a whale using a computer and a 'goggles' type head device. There is a better case for group immersion, like one created by Antony Gormley a few years ago

in London creating a foggy Victorian streetscape, a wonderful coming together of Art and technology. Into the future, this sort of group experience would seem a very viable attraction. A mixture of both personal and group experience could fit nicely into the Castle space and lift it from being a glorified ticket kiosk into an active attraction in itself.

One assumes that the problems of parking will be solved as part of any development. Large numbers of busloads of tourists might not be very welcome in the town or even within the Castle grounds.

But overall, much of the plan for Option 1 would be acceptable to the local community. **However:**

Option 1 reservations and suggestions:

What is more contentious in Option 1 is the proposal for a dispersed hotel, and a water taxi to serve the components of this. There are serious concerns about the dangers of water contamination in an already seriously polluted lake, and some distrust of the waste disposal management system from the town and the delay in rectifying that problem. The links to Irish Water who supervise water quality is critical, but their record is being brought into question by a number of TV programmes. A hotel, dispersed or not, will add to the strain on the water quality.

A lake taxi is also a mixed blessing. The basic question about the water taxi is simple: taxi to where and to what purpose? Jokers can imagine it as a lift home across the lake on a Saturday night, urinating over the side. This is obviously not the intention. But the proposal has to be rigorously examined. We don't want the boat and the hotel to be driving pollution, but on the other hand we can't complain about the lake being underutilised and then complain when someone proposes to increase the use of the lake to spread the footfall .

The idea of a dispersed hotel has its own questions relating to water quality, offshore pollution etc, but the reason for taking to the water need to be examined first: apart from the intake of beautiful images, why would people go on a lake cruise?

It's a big lake relative to the size of the town and has enough nooks and crannies to accommodate more usage around the periphery. Something in addition to dispersed accommodation would be needed to make a boat trip widely attractive to visitors. For example if there were, attached to each accommodation , a specific attraction like a mini-pitch 'n putt , e.g near the golf course, a short pathway to a historic site at another, a perennial garden at another, a water-slide at another, a small fishing stand, a music stand waiting for artists, then there might be a reason to take a boat tour, stop off at any point and enjoy oneself there for a period till the next taxi (or the same taxi!) arrived to take the visitor onwards. All these attractions should be accessible from land also. Co-existing closely with accommodation units would ensure constant supervision and deter vandals. Arson and vandalism take place mostly in ill-attended places. This 'double dispersal' would give impetus to the idea of dispersion not only of accommodation but of visitor enjoyment. This could be done without overcrowding the lake. But naturally habitats should be left as they are.

So: most of Option 1 should be tested not only by a feasibility study but by an imaginative study of possibilities to create something really useful and attractive.

The guiding principle should be: Bring the further reaches of the lake into innovative use without interfering with the core ecology, especially of that part of the lake nearest the town.

Option2:

It's good that Option 2 is not seen as an immediate project, because it has the feel of a white elephant looking up at a pie in the sky.

First Reaction:

The first reaction is 'Blayney's too small for that'. There is something of a disjunction between the scale of the town and the 'Olympic Village' scale of the proposal. This is not helped by the fact that the promotional 'hooks' in the proposal itself do not persuade: for example, the Ice Age has no subconscious meaning for people here and we have no good reason to pay homage to it; The Hope Diamond has no relevance beyond what could be put on a page or a plaque in a library or museum, completely airy fairy and false as a design concept, connection or inspiration. We're looking at drumlins every day, we don't need another. Patrick Kavanagh has his own Centre in Inniskeen, Big Tom his statue. The other 'celebrities' carry little weight. Blayney already has a very good theatre. We are not impressed by Ars Electronica when we're not told clearly what's inside it and are introduced to it by a dull Piece to Camera outside a strange building in a language we don't understand. The whole proposal seems as if it were composed by people (some might say Aliens?) who know about the boxes to be filled in PR but are out of touch with the reality on the ground and the thinking of the real people of the area The illustration of Zone Bubbles is more vague and confusing than clarifying and indicates unfamiliarity with the reality on the ground.

More Considered Reaction:

Viability:

The proposed 'Great Drumlin of Adventure' just might be viable in the way that Tayto Park is in Ashbourne. A good idea can fit anywhere. If it could attract visitors from the same range as the said Tayto Park it would bring people from North and South and could build up a good clientele. Winter time for athletes, summer for tourists and families All this would depend on the attractiveness of the concept and its practical delivery, on which the proposal is sketchy. If there's a brilliant even partly developed concept there we should be allowed to see it clearly.

Looking at it in its most positive light, the dome (Drumlin) need not necessarily have to impact on the town itself. It could be looked on in the same way as a football stadium adjacent to the lake. It might not be that much more intrusive than the existing GAA Stadium which attracts no opposition.

The location would be vital: it would have to be well away from the centre, the 'Home', of the Estate where the hearts of the townspeople reside . For example, it might be built on the site of the old GAA pitch near the Dundalk Road and within reach of the Carrickmacross road, accessible to North and South, close to the Lake but far away from that part of the lake used for leisure by the townspeople and local tourists. A new car park could take unwanted traffic out of the town. Is the acquisition of that field a runner?

Long-term management of the whole project, including the day-to-day running of the completed facility would be critical. The interface between the County Council and private partners would be central. Unfortunately there is a culture in Irish society which regards Council properties as being available to vandalise, to steal from, to asset-strip, to use for illicit activities, in extremes to burn down, all of which have happened at least once in the Castle. Who supervises the security? The fate of public toilets and changing rooms in the town gives pause for thought and the interference of some politicians has caused untold damage, with a perception of cronyism and favouritism in the running of facilities.

And who drives this project? Private operators look after themselves, Councils in general rarely have the sort of practical visionary outlook or the cohesion of purpose to drive and implement a project like this. Their political masters tend towards populism. Past experience is not good, at different times we've had the worst of both politics and profit. Is there one person with the vision and stamina to take up the idea and carry it through? Messiah needed, apply on-line only!

Castleblayney once had the aspiration to be the 'Killarney of the North' but never succeeded. Could people be persuaded to bypass Tayto Park and drive on to Blayney's new adventure centre? It's only when a serious indication of what would be inside that Great Drumlin of Adventure becomes clear that the question could be answered.

Again, words are important and especially so in titles. 'Drumlin' is a geological denomination that has little local currency, since we ourselves refer to our 'hills', not drumlins. (Even Kavanagh calls his poem on these geological phenomena 'Monaghan Hills'; 'Monaghan Drumlins' would sound silly to country people) The basis of the proposed structure of the adventure facility looks rather like a Ring Fort, which would be more evocative of the local idiom than 'Drumlin' Asking directions to the 'Ring Fort' or 'The Big Ring' would sound more natural and appropriate here than 'Where's the Drumlin of X Y Z?'. This may sound petty, but the naming of a 'product' is a very important part of its branding.

What about money? :

This is for others to consider. If the idea is good enough and the plan persuasive and practical, the money will come from somewhere. If not, then that's that.

Desirability?:

The viability of Option 2 can be tested by a Viability Study; the desirability of the project in the longer term is not as easily quantified. In an era of rapid climate change about to send our Atlantic into an Arctic spin, should we be putting more people into cars to travel to Blayney, should we be bussing and flying visitors from other countries into our island, encouraging pollution by global aviation ? Some people who go to Tayto Park remember most the smell from the waste disposal unit. The whole desirability of tourism is under question and will continue to be so.

Local consultation is vital, but wider consultation and research by people with their feet on the ground, their minds open wide and their imaginations flying are also important. The world is full of lovely things that started as crazy dreams. But it is also stuffed with the detritus of grandiose schemes that went to rust.

Finally:

It's hard to dismiss a plan which opens up serious possibilities; but it's also hard to fully support a scheme that is so unconvincing. Option 1 has progressive but manageable ideas that deserve a broadly-based feasibility study. If Option 1 is a runner, the experience of that development might push us towards a more ambitious game-changer and some version of Option 2 might hove into view. But for now it seems a long way off in a world that is changing so deeply.

Tommy McArdle

[REDACTED]

From: Kieran Moloney [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday 10 September 2021 19:00
To: Muckno Consultation
Subject: Submission on vision for Lough Muchno

Dympna,

I have read the report and would like to commend all involved in this visionary document. This area is used by many people currently and has tremendous potential for recreation and educational development linked to our environment. This is a positive step forward for the area and especially the Black island.

I look forward to this project getting to the feasibility stage and liaising with Monaghan CC more about plans for the Black island that Coillte manages.

Kind regards
Kieran

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Kieran Moloney

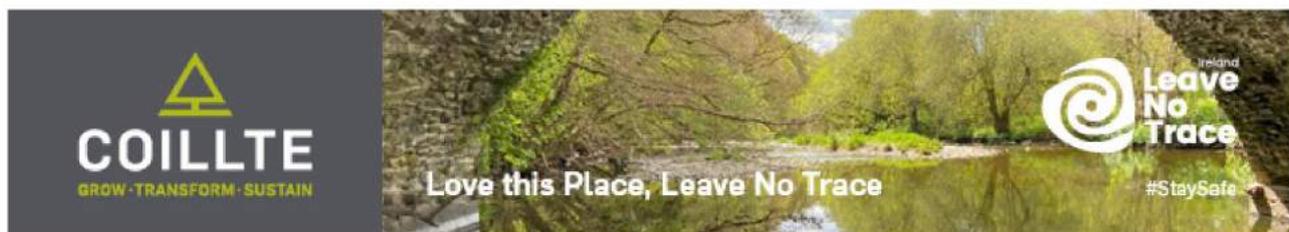
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[REDACTED]

From: Caroline Brady [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday 9 September 2021 12:27
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Submission in respect of Visioning Report for Lough Muckno Estate on behalf of the North East Regional Enterprise Development Office

Good afternoon Dympna,

Thank you for sending me on details in respect of the consultation on the 'Visioning Report for Lough Muckno Estate'. The webinar refers to the fact that the vision for the estate is to create a development of scale, a world class attraction to attract visitors which will put Monaghan and the North-East on the international tourism map. In the context of the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan this is a very welcome ambition for two main reasons:

1. Such a development has the potential to generate considerable economic opportunity and create jobs both within the tourism sector and wider supporting industries. Given the proposed scale of this development the impact of same will extend its reach to much of the North-East Region.
2. The Regional Enterprise Plan also references the wider ecosystem that supports the enterprise environment – this includes the provision of amenities and facilities that make a region an attractive place to live and work. The proposed development at Lough Muckno would certainly add to the attractiveness of Monaghan and the wider region as a place to live and invest in.

I appreciate that proposals are at a very early stage and acknowledge the foresight in preparing a forward looking and ambitious vision for Lough Muckno Estate. Any initiatives that seek to attract and retain people in the region either on a short term or long-term basis are welcome and support our own ambition and the objectives of the North East Regional Enterprise Plan.

Kind Regards
Caroline

Caroline Brady
Programme Manager North East Regional Enterprise Plan
Cavan|Monaghan|Louth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Dundalk Road, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
info@concrowood.ie 042 9749 485 www.concrowood.ie

6th September 2021

Dear Paul,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Concra Wood PLC we would like to put on record our full support for the "Vison for Lough Muckno" project.

As an established tourist destination in County Monaghan we are excited by the potential as outlined in the on-line presentation hosted by MCC.

We are encouraged by the involvement of Failte Ireland who have been supportive of the Concra Wood Project to date.

The redevelopment of Lough Muckno will offer huge social and economic benefits to Castleblayney and the surrounding towns, counties and we look forward to engaging with all concerned.

We acknowledge that the presentation outlined the potential projects and understand that significant public engagement will be required during the feasibility study of the project.

We would like to offer of facilities if they are required for public meetings or information events.

We look forward to future update on the project and will identify key personal who can engage on our behalf.

Darren McQuillan
General Manager
Concra Wood PLC



Carrickmacross Castleblayney MD Office

Riverside Road

Carrickmacross

Co.Monaghan

Feb 4th 2021

To Paul Clifford

Castleblayney Regeneration Committee , as you know, are an active committee comprising of business & community volunteers whose aim is to promote Castleblayney & its environs.

Our committee had a very productive meeting this week where we discussed the Vision for Muckno. Lough Muckno currently attracts a huge number of visitors to our town as well as many townspeople who enjoy it on a daily basis so it is a hugely important part of the fabric of the town.

As a committee we support the Failte Ireland Vision for Muckno and look forward to the establishment of a feasibility study as we feel this initiative will transform the town from a visitor and economic viewpoint, as well as making the most of the Lough Muckno park and its environs.

We support all activity in the delivery of this exciting tourism initiative for the town , the county and the region.

Yours sincerely

Anmarie McHugh

Chairperson Castleblayney Regeneration

castleblayneyregeneration@gmail.com