

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to the public consultation process for the Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan.

This project has been initiated by Monaghan County Council in partnership with Coillte. The masterplan is being produced by landscape architecture consultancy The Paul Hogarth Company.

The Masterplan seeks to identify ways in which Rossmore Forest Park in Monaghan can be managed and improved over the next 5 - 10 years.

These boards present the findings of the research and consultation process. Importantly they also explain the draft proposals, including aims and objectives for the park and a series of projects for delivery over the short, medium and long term.

The Park has a special place in the hearts of local people. Therefore we kindly invite you to review the Draft Masterplan and give your comments and suggestions for its improvement prior to finalisation.



The Draft Masterplan has been developed through a highly collaborative process involving many people and organisations.

A Rossmore Forest Park Stakeholder Group, chaired by Cllr David Maxwell has met regularly through the course of the project. Represented on this group are many organisations with a direct interest in the park.

A well attended public consultation event took place on 15 February. Feedback on the park and its potential has been used to directly inform these proposals.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN ROSSMORE FOREST PARK?

TREES FLOWERS & WILDLIFE 67%
WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT ROSSMORE FOREST PARK?

GENERAL CONDITION 57%
WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE MOST ABOUT ROSSMORE FOREST PARK?

- CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA 22%
- BETTER SIGNAGE & MAPS 21%
- IMPROVE FACILITIES 15%
- IMPROVE PATH & TRAILS 14%
- COFFEE & ICE-CREAM 14%
- IMPROVE BENCHES & PICNIC AREA 14%

YOUR FOREST!

YOUR SAY!

WHAT KIND OF PLACE DO WE WANT ROSSMORE FOREST PARK TO BE?

HELP US TO IMPROVE THIS DRAFT MASTERPLAN WITH YOUR THOUGHTS AND IDEAS BEFORE THE 13TH OF JUNE 2017:

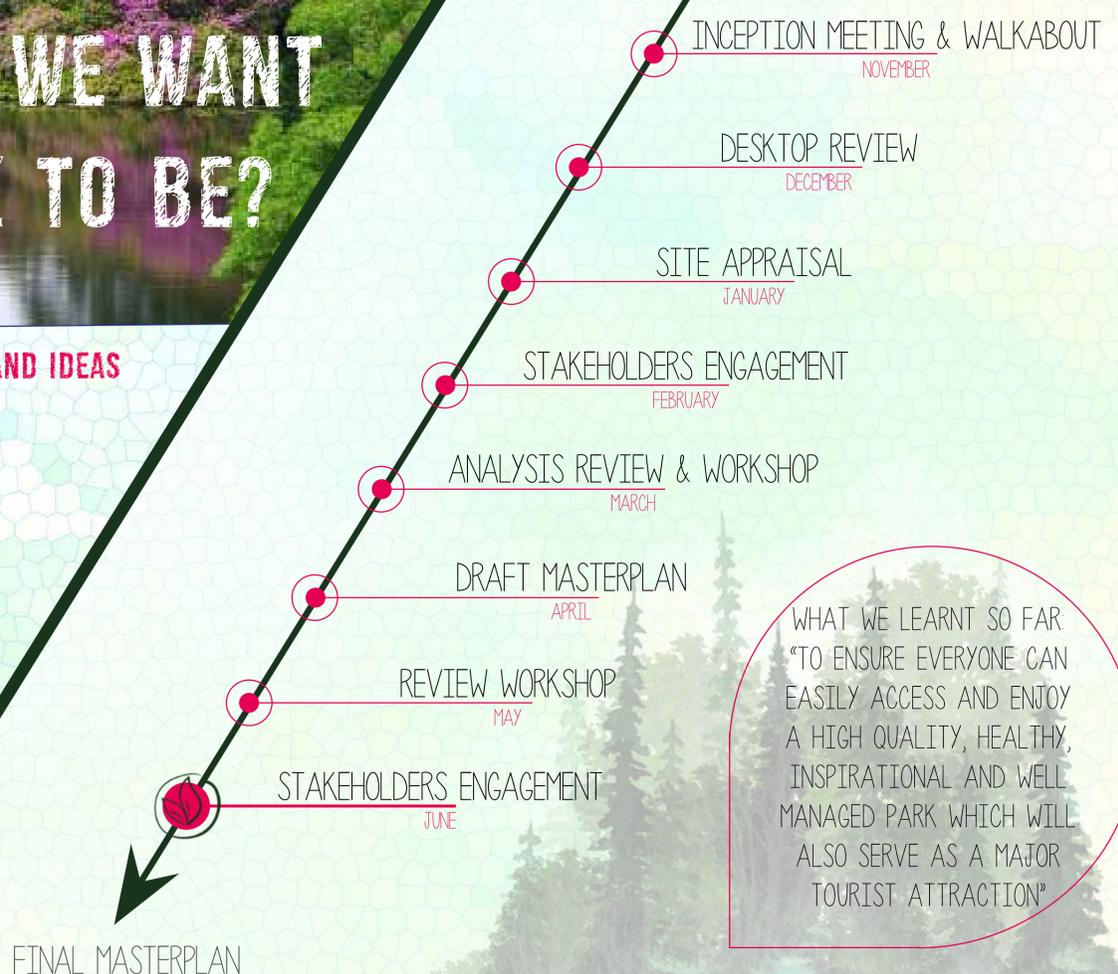
FILL OUT A FORM
Complete our short survey at:
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Rossmore_DRAFT_Masterplan

GIVE US A SHOUT
Come Along and view the consultation material at:
Rossmore Forest Park Public Event on 03.06.2017

DROP US A LINE
Send an email with your feedback and ideas at
rossmore@paulhogarth.com

LEAVE IN THE BOX
Leave your completed form in the box provided at:
**The Municipal District of Monaghan,
Monaghan County Council, County offices
Market House, Monaghan Town**

THE PROCESS



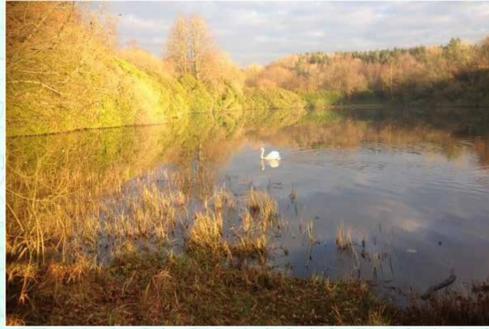
WHAT WE LEARNT SO FAR
"TO ENSURE EVERYONE CAN EASILY ACCESS AND ENJOY A HIGH QUALITY, HEALTHY, INSPIRATIONAL AND WELL MANAGED PARK WHICH WILL ALSO SERVE AS A MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION"

02 ANALYSIS ROSSMORE PARK TODAY

SPECIAL PLACE



Rossmore Forest Park is a special place with its own charm and character. There is wide consensus that the park needs to be improved. It is important therefore, that the qualities of the park are fully understood so that they can be protected and enhanced through delivery of the plan.



PUBLIC PLACE



The Forest Park is freely accessible to members of the public. While it is owned by Coillte and the Rossmore Family, there is a healthy sense of ownership amongst local people. This is an important quality that should be preserved so that current and future generations are encouraged to enjoy and care for the Park.



HISTORIC PLACE



Rossmore Park has many fascinating layers of heritage, from neolithic remains to the castle estate. These are an immensely valuable asset that if not looked after properly could be lost over time. It is essential therefore, that plans are put in place to protect these features, while also sharing their significance and stories.



NATURAL PLACE



The Forest Park is home to an array of plants and wildlife, making it an important natural habitat for many species and an interesting place to visit. This significance needs to be better understood and managed accordingly. Use of the park for commercial forestry has created some areas of plantation woodland with limited wildlife value.



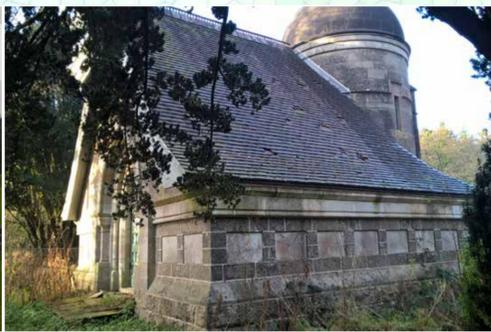
IMPROVING PLACE



Visitor numbers to the park are affected by the quality of its facilities. Since signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Coillte, Monaghan County Council has been working hard to improve the park. Recently upgraded pathways will soon be joined by new signs, improved toilets and a play area. Along with this plan, this demonstrates a clear commitment of the future of the park.



PLACE OF POTENTIAL



Research and consultation for this plan has revealed the massive potential of Rossmore Forest Park not only for local people, but also as a regionally significant visitor attraction. The physical size of the park opens up many opportunities to accommodate a range of uses. However, these must be balanced carefully with one another and with the availability of funding.



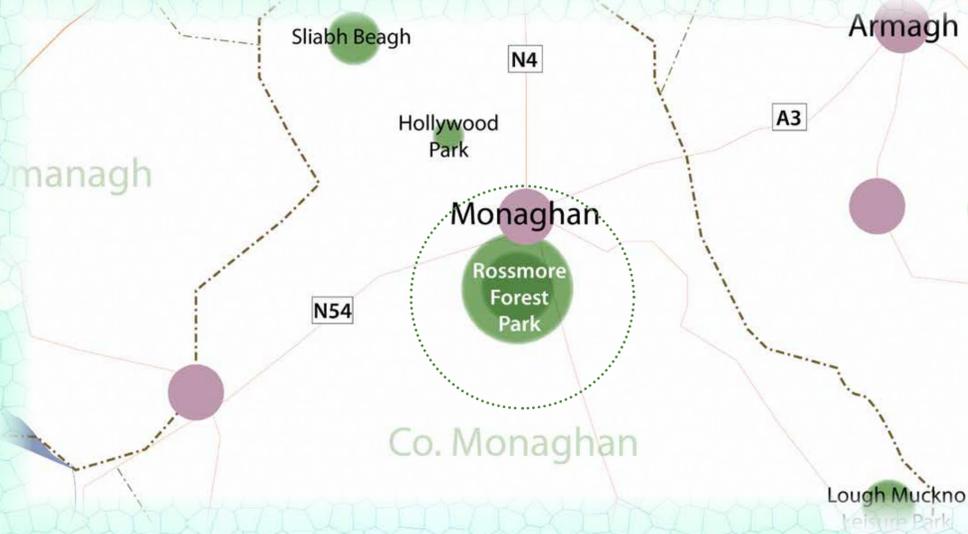
THE BIG PICTURE:

Before developing ideas for Rossmore Park it is important to consider the Park in context and to set out high level objectives.

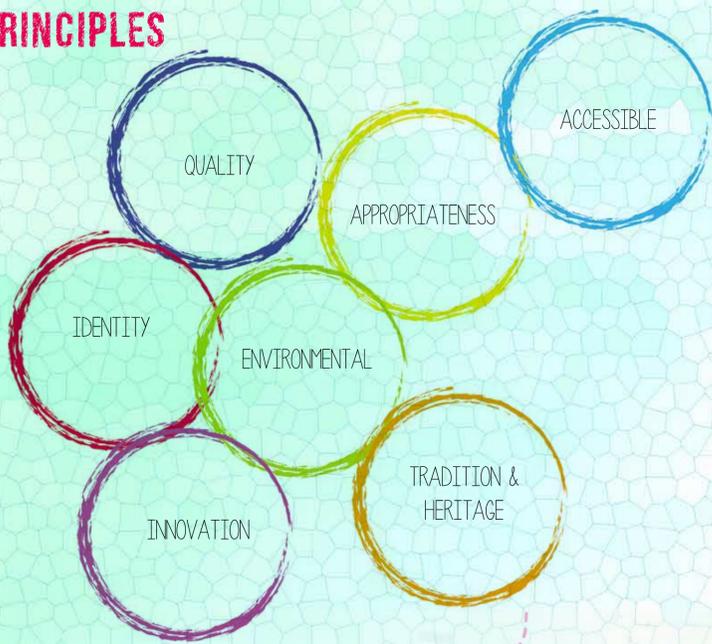
Rossmore Park is one of several large parks in the County and therefore its development must be considered in this context. What role should Rossmore Park play compared to other open spaces?

The proximity of the Park to Monaghan Town is another important attribute. In addition to projects for the park included in this plan, great scope exists for complementary initiatives in the vicinity.

These include further investment in the Ulster Canal Greenway and also potential for improved visitor accommodation. This could involve hotels and B&Bs in the town, as well as the possibility of camp-sites, caravan parks or log cabins within walking or cycling distance of the Park.



PRINCIPLES



PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES

The Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan sets out a series of objectives and design principles. It is proposed that any future management practices, new projects or activities for the Park must be carefully shaped to fulfil these objectives and follow its principles.

The Objectives for the park prioritise the protection of its natural and built heritage. They seek to retain the tranquillity and serenity of the park, while also encouraging new uses to increase its social sustainability. Ways to bring revenue into the park, thereby making it more Economically Sustainable, must be found. While Rossmore Forest Park is first and foremost a valuable local asset, it should also be developed as a regional destination for visitors.

The Design Principles aim to ensure that any physical works in the park are of a high quality and are appropriate to its character and identity. It is proposed that the highest environmental standards are achieved. Through the use of sustainable materials and green technologies (e.g. power supplies), Rossmore Forest Park should aim to be carbon neutral in the future.



OBJECTIVES

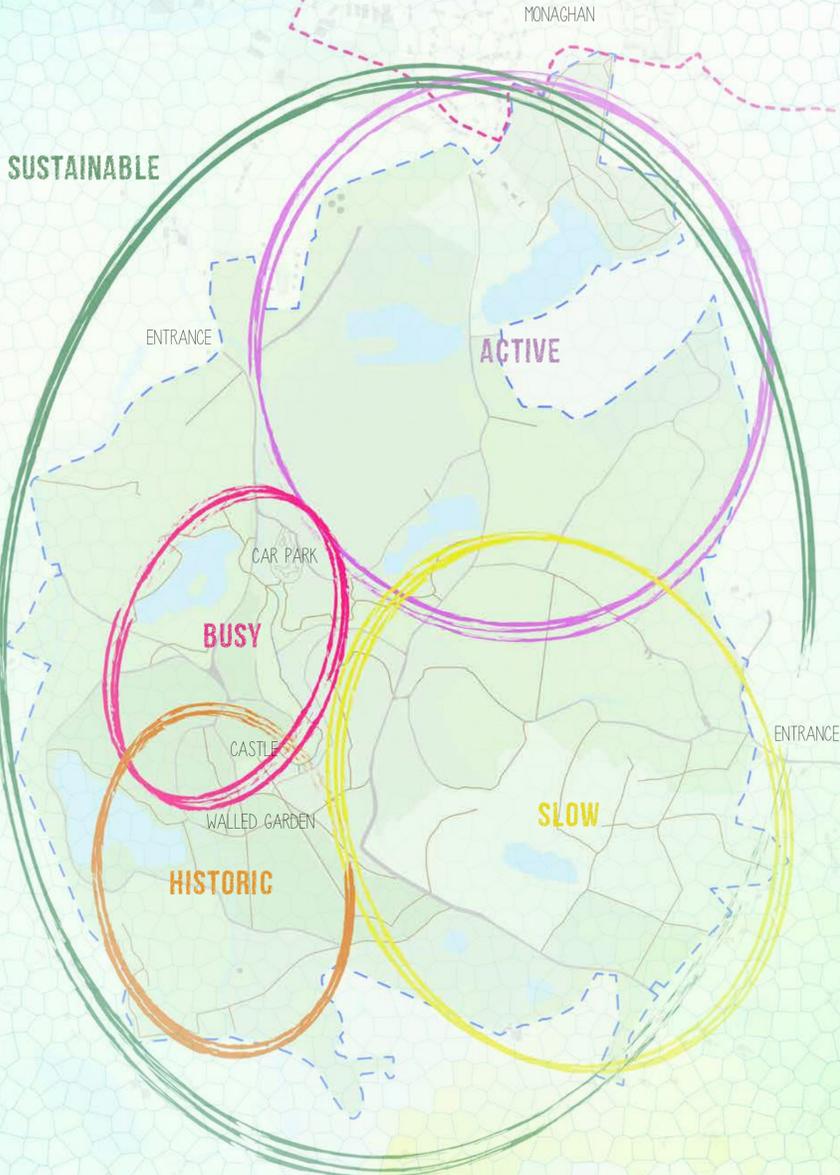
CONCEPT:

In order to fulfil the plan's objectives, Rossmore Forest Park must balance many different types of activity and use. The adjacent diagram shows how the park should be zoned.

This allows for the 'busy' comings and goings of vehicles to be concentrated in the main car park. For the protection of built heritage to be prioritised in the vicinity of the castle. For active, high energy sports and activities to be centred in the northern section of the park.

This would leave a large area the park for 'slow' uses such as walking and nature watching, so retaining the tranquillity and serenity that is so important to the park.

CONCEPT



KEY:

- SMALL LOOP**
(ACCESS FOR ALL WAY)
- CULTURAL LOOP**
(CASTLE TRAIL)
- TRANQUILLITY LOOP**
(NEW)
- LAKES LOOP**
(BARN HILL LAKE & PRIESTFIELD LAKE LOOP)
- LONG LOOP**
(NEW)
- TOWN CONNECTION**
(NEW)
- ULSTER CANAL**
- SIGNAGE**
- FACILITIES**
- VISITOR HUB**
- PLAY AREA**
- WALLED GARDEN**

PROJECTS:

The Draft Masterplan for Rossmore Forest Park contains a total of 17 projects. These are divided into three categories. The first are Management Projects to guide how we look after the park while balancing its various interests. The second types of project are infrastructure projects. These pertain the physical components of the parks (its paths, signs and facilities). Finally the third category of projects are Activities. These revolve how the park is used and enjoyed.

As a strategic masterplan, these projects are identified at a high level. Once the plan is finalised, projects will be prioritised and funding sought accordingly. Each project will require further detailed development, involving for example an expert ecologist or a quantity surveyor.

Monaghan County Council and Coillte will seek to deliver key projects as funding becomes available. However, many proposals contained within the draft plan are suited to being taken forward by others, including community and voluntary groups, as well as the private sector.

MANAGEMENT PROJECTS:

LOOKING AFTER OUR PARK

- A. nature conservation
- B. conservation management
- C. landscape restoration
- D. forestry
- E. park management
- F. promotion & marketing

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:

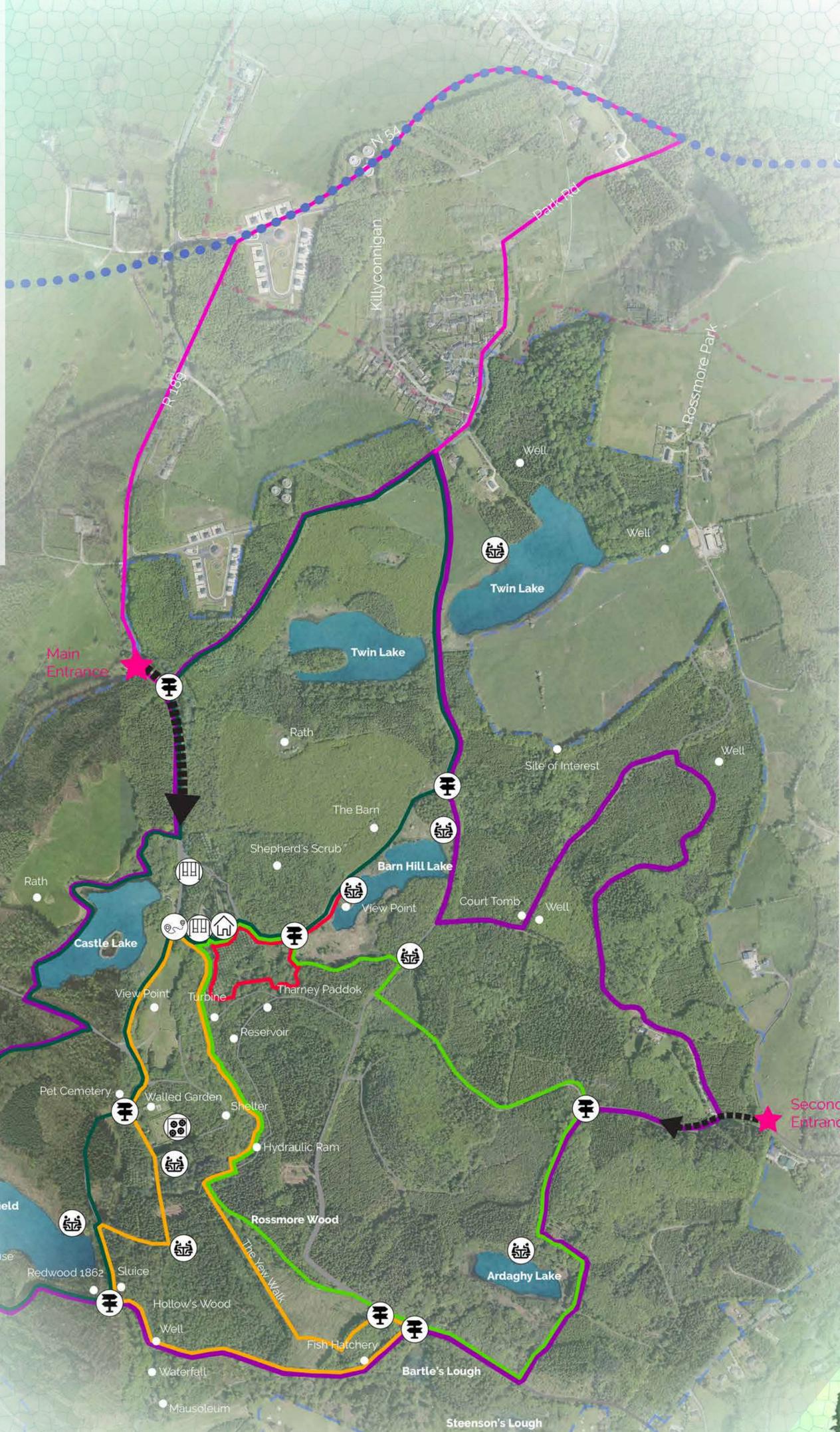
IMPROVING OUR PARK

- G. access & arrival
- H. path network
- I. signage
- J. facilities
- K. visitor hub
- L. play area
- M. walled garden

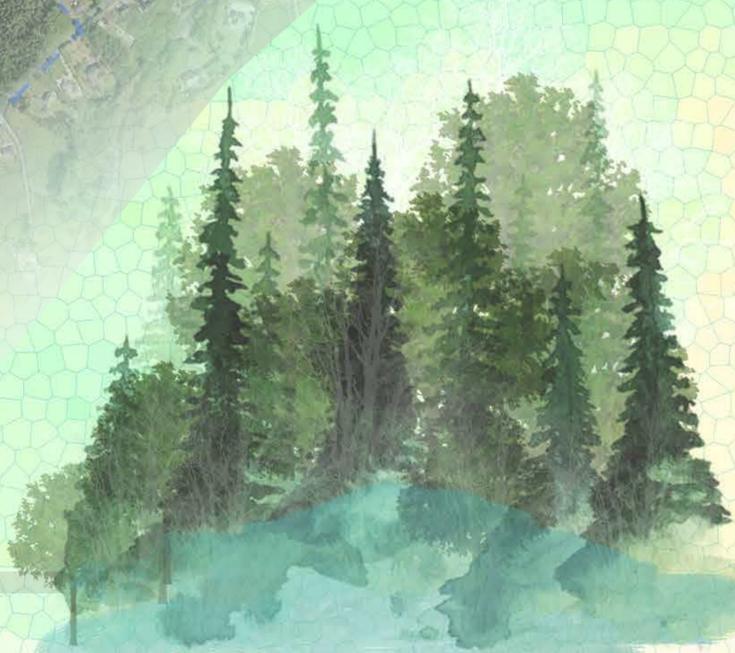
ACTIVITY PROJECTS:

EXPERIENCING OUR PARK

- N. interpretation & education
- O. art & craft
- P. cultural & sports events
- Q. sport & activities



WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR ROSSMORE?



05 LOOKING AFTER OUR PARK

DRAFT

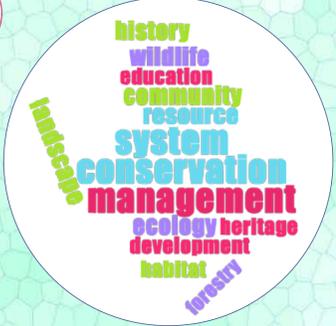
A



NATURE CONSERVATION

Survey work is required to fully understand the ecological make up of Rossmore Park so that it's wildlife habitats can be managed and improved appropriately. This process will identify key species of plant and mammal throughout the park. Once in place, the ecological survey will be used to inform a range of projects, such as the removal of invasive plant species, localised diversification of tree species and creation of improved nesting habitats.

B



Rossmore Park has a wealth of heritage features including hill-top raths, the hydraulic ram, the mausoleum and castle ruins. A professionally produced Conservation Management Plan is needed to assess in detail the condition of each feature so they can be properly protected, conserved and restored over time. This process should involve the public, overseen by qualified archaeologists and other specialists.



CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT



C



While very natural in character, Rossmore Park is a designed landscape, once part of the large castle estate. Through specialist research a more detailed understanding of the park's original design will help inform its future management. This will enable key landscape features of the park to be carefully maintained and restored, including set views (e.g. between the castle and lakes), tree lined avenues (e.g. Yew Tree Walk) and prominent landscape features (e.g. Giant Redwood Trees).



LANDSCAPE RESTORATION



D



The Park remains an important forestry asset operated by Coillte. It will be essential that the park's 5 year Strategic Plan's are closely aligned with this masterplan so that forestry operations are balanced with the park's other objectives. Through good coordination, commercially viable forestry will complement other ecological and recreational roles played by the park. An important aspect of this will be good communication so that everyone understands the rationale for the felling and planting of trees.



FORESTRY



E

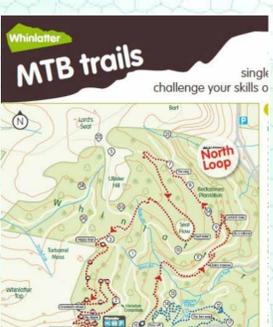
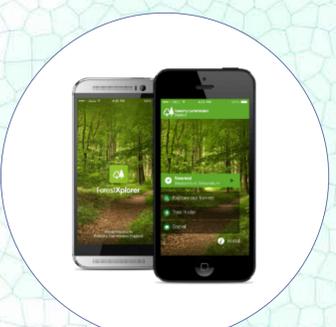


Monaghan County Council, Coillte and Rossmore Park's many stakeholders must continue to work together as closely as possible to manage the park. This will include regular meetings of the stakeholder group and establishment of a "Friends of Rossmore Forest Park" group through which information can be shared and voluntary input coordinated. In the longer term, the position of Park Ranger should be created to help manage the park and engage with the public.

PARK MANAGEMENT



F



How well Rossmore Forest Park is promoted will be key to attracting higher number of visitors. Working closely with the Council and Coillte a brand identity should be developed and a series of marketing resources developed. In time this should include a park website and app.



PROMOTION & MARKETING



06 IMPROVING OUR PARK

DRAFT

coilce the paulhogarth company



G



It is important that the entrances to the park look and function as well as possible for all users. This will include improvements to the main entrance to create a more positive first impression of the park. It should also involve specific enhancements to other entrances and the quality of the car park.

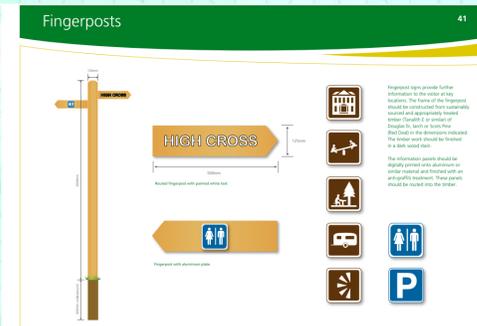


H

The network of paths around Rossmore Park requires improvement and development. This will result in an easy to find series of walking and cycle routes that complement one another. These should vary in length, difficulty and points of interest to so to appeal to the needs of different users.



I



A well designed suite of signs is urgently required for the park. This will include road signage in out-lying areas, orientation maps at key points and a series of directional finger posts throughout the Park. These will be coordinated with the Path Network project clearly marking different routes and distances.



J



Rossmore Park requires improved facilities to be provided over time. This will include timber benches, bollards, picnic / BBQ areas and cycle stands. These should be chosen using the Design Principles to ensure quality and appropriateness. Artists may be commissioned for one-off pieces.



K

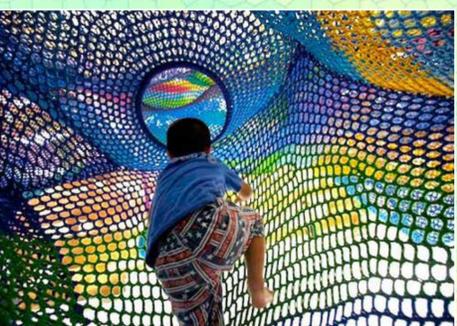


Over time a building is required to provide more visitor facilities. In the short term this may consist of a seasonal coffee cart or converted container. In the longer term a eco-building should be constructed near the car park to provide WCs, changing rooms, exhibition & teaching space, a cafe, shop and office.



L

Play facilities would greatly increase the appeal of Rossmore Forest Park to families. A large play area using timber equipment should be provided near the car park, providing for different age ranges. A Tree Top Walk may also be appropriate. Consideration should be given to a landmark play structure to increase regional appeal.



M



The old walled garden should be restored and brought back into use. Drawing on historic research, this would involve the recreation of planting beds and other features. The garden presents an exciting opportunity to create a valuable resource for public enjoyment and horticultural training.



07 EXPERIENCING OUR PARK

DRAFT

INTERPRETATION & EDUCATION



The many stories of Rossmore Forest Park require to be researched, collated and shared with the public. This would be developed along thematic lines (e.g. Estate History, Aquatic Life, etc.) and be communicated through tours, school programmes, art pieces and high quality interpretation panels placed around the park.



ART & CRAFT



Like a giant canvas, Rossmore Forest Park should be used for a wide range of artistic activities from photography and painting to sculpture and performance. Opportunities to participate in the arts should be encouraged. An annual 'artist in residence' would also create a draw, with scope to purchase works of art in the park.



CULTURAL & SPORTS EVENTS



Rossmore Forest Park should be sensitively developed into a more attractive destination for income generating events. This could include large performances that make use of terraced banks at the castle. It would also involve existing and new sports events and competitions in the park.



SPORT & ACTIVITIES



Monaghan County Council will seek to facilitate and encourage the development of appropriate sports and activities by local groups.

This will involve the sustainable growth of existing activities, including organised walking, running and fishing.

It will also involve the establishment of new uses that complement the Park's objectives and county wide priorities. A wide range of possibilities exist including the development of recreational cycling and use of water bodies for kayaking and rowing. The Council are open to other imaginative ideas that add to the enjoyment of Rossmore Forest Park.



08 IN THE MEANTIME...

H COMPREHENSIVE PATH UPGRADE COMPLETE

L PLAY AREA FUNDING SECURED

J TOILETS FACILITIES TO BE ENHANCED

I NEW SIGNAGE IN DESIGN

D CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN SEED FUNDING SECURED

While this Draft Masterplan has been under development, Monaghan County Council has been working hard to improve the park.

Pathways have been recently upgraded and work continues to improve the toilet block.

The first phase of new signage will also be introduced this year.

Funding has been secured for a play area in the park, as well as the beginnings of a Conservation Management Plan.

Once the Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan has been finalised it will be used by the Council, Coillte and other bodies to prioritise and programme further works in the park as funding becomes available.