

Draft Offaly County Council Development Plan

Submission by Durrow High Cross Committee

7 October 2020

We, Durrow High Cross Committee, welcome the publication of Draft Offaly County Development Plan and acknowledge the great work of Offaly County Council for the heritage of Offaly. We wish to comment on matters relating to the protection and promotion of Durrow Abbey.

Durrow Monastery was founded by Columcille/Columba in the sixth century. A concise history of Durrow Abbey can be found in the publication *Durrow Abbey Co. Offaly Conservation Plan* commissioned by the Office of Public Works (OPW) published in 2005. This followed purchase by the State in 2003 of Durrow Abbey House, land enclosing monastic site, church, graveyard with High Cross and holy well. The book *Durrow In History*, edited by Michael Byrne, is also a good resource and is available at Offaly History, Bury Quay, Tullamore.

Draft Ref: 8.5 Roads

The provision of the N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan link road needs to be progressed as a matter of great urgency. The speed and volume of traffic passing through Durrow is terrifying to residents travelling to and from work, local school and childcare facilities, Church and Community Centre. It is the main reason cited for lack of signage and promotion for Durrow Abbey, High Cross and Monastic Site as a major tourist destination.

Draft Ref: 6.5.1 Monastic Heritage

The below items are required for Durrow Abbey and Monastic Site:

- Signage
- Professional information leaflets
- Toilet facilities
- Site promotion



Draft Ref: 6.5.8 Sport and Leisure

Durrow Abbey Estate has a wide diversity for recreational activity, woodland, wetlands and old pasture. Combined they are all suitable for walking tracks, cycle tracks, bird watching, and wild plant and grass studies.

Draft Ref: 6.5.9 Towns and Villages

Durrow Monastic Site and Durrow Abbey House and lands could be the jewel in the crown to Tullamore as a tourism hub and destination town. Durrow Abbey House, which is crying out to be restored and protected, can boast of many high profile families such as Lord Norburys, Slazengers and Williams.

Draft Ref: 6.5.11 Colmcille Centenary

Colmcille was born 7th of December 521AD. Next year will be the fifteenth centenary of his birth. Preparations are underway in Donegal and Derry, Offaly will need to plan for this event.

Draft Ref: 6.6 Rights of Way

Durrow Monastic Site including Durrow Abbey House and lands are in a unique position in that they are owned by the State, rights of way should be protected without difficulty.

Draft Ref: 6.7 Tourism Policies

Because of the wide and varied attractions within Durrow Estate, Offaly County Council should encourage agencies like Fáilte Ireland, Coillte and National Parks and Wildlife to involve the Estate in tourism Development. The County Council must also put pressure on the OPW to make Durrow available for sensitive development in cooperation with other agencies.

Draft Ref: TRP 13

Enhancement of Durrow Abbey House, farmyard, lands, monastic site, gate lodge and access must get immediate attention. An Taisce has now listed Durrow Abbey House as an endangered structure. We can no longer accept the comment 'as resources allow'. Funding must be assigned in the next budget to develop all aspects of Durrow's heritage.

Below are three photos which indicate the current state of Durrow Abbey House and farmyard which should be compared with the records of Durrow Abbey House in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage records. There has been significant deterioration in recent times.

Durrow Abbey House



Durrow Abbey House Window



Farmyard Building

