

HISTORIC BANAGHER, COUNTY OFFALY



CONSERVATION, INTERPRETATION & MANAGEMENT PLAN

April 2018
(Revised November 2022)





Fig. 1: 'Banagher Stag' by artist Roddy Moynihan. www.oisingallery.com

In 2017, Howley Hayes Architects were commissioned by Banagher Development Group, with the support of Offaly County Council and the Heritage Council to prepare a Conservation, Interpretation and Management Plan for the town of Banagher, Co. Offaly. The surveys on which this plan are based were undertaken in June 2017. Historic survey drawings made available for this report, were photographed by Eoghan Broderick, James Scully and Kieran Keenaghan at the National Archives in the United Kingdom; and at the Waterways Ireland archive in Enniskillen.

We would like to thank: Amanda Pedlow (Heritage Officer; Offaly County Council) for her valuable input in the preparation of this plan and feedback on early drafts, from Dermot Egan (Community and Local Development; Offaly County Council), together with members of Offaly County Council and Banagher Development Group who attended meetings and supported the initiative.

Prior to republication in November 2022, the original report was revised by Eoghan Broderick MRIAI. Eoghan is an RIAI accredited, Conservation Architect G2; a native of Banagher; and a former employee of Howley Hayes Architects, where he worked between June 2016 and May 2018.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Place

Located on the southern point of a sweeping bend on the Middle Shannon. Banagher's Main Street rises from the riverbank to the summit of a low-lying hill, offering views across the wider landscape comprising of the mid-Shannon floodplains, which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SPA) known as the *Shannon Callows* (Caladh na Sionainne). Early maps reveal the town was built upon a significant natural fording point, which was of strategic importance in former times and was hotly contested between the ancient provinces of Southern Uí Néill, Connachta and Munster.

Banagher is situated in the ancient territory of Dealbhna Eathra otherwise called Delvin Mac Coghlan after the ruling chieftains of the territory, and was very celebrated in medieval Ireland for

its many churches and castles. Delvin Eathra had a rich heritage of Early Christian foundations including Clonmacnoise, Gallen, Tisaran, Lemanaghan and Reynagh, and has been referred to by historians as '*a flowering garden of monasteries*'. Banagher is located in the Parish of Reynagh, which takes its name from the sixth-century Saint Rynagh or Rignacia, the reputed sister of Saint Finnian of Clonard and mother of Saint Colman Mac Duagh, who is recorded to have founded a monastery here alongside her sister Rachenna and mother Talacia.

The Mac Coghlan sect claimed descent from Cormac Cas, ancestor of the Dal gCais and are frequently referred to in the annals as '*Mac Coghlan of the Castles*', in reference to their many strongholds. It is recorded that in an effort to prevent the confiscation



Fig. 2: Aerial view of Banagher and surrounding landscape. (www.osi.ie)
OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/Offaly County Council

and plantation of his lands and to escape the oppression of his overlords, in 1582 the local chieftain Sir John Mac Coghlan surrendered his property to the crown under the surrender and regrant system. The seventeenth-century plantation of Banagher and the eventual outright confiscation of Mac Coghlan's land, is largely attributable to a German planter and textile merchant named Mathew De Renzi, who settled in the area in 1612 (the same year Mac Coghlan was granted a licence by the Crown to hold a weekly market and a two-day annual fair at Banagher). Attracted by the informal nature of the West Offaly plantations and the possibility of gaining land for himself, De Renzi began a lengthy petitioning campaign to the then Lord Deputy of Ireland, where he argued the benefits of planting Banagher, describing the area as 'upon a chief highway into Connaught,' and 'a place which may be easily fortified, having been an ancient plantation of the English'.



Fig. 3: Garry Castle (a Mac Coghlan Stronghold), King's County. Engraving after Petrie from T. Cromwell, *Excursions Through Ireland*, vol. iii, 1820

In his many letters, held at the National Archives in the UK, De Renzi argued that Banagher castle and borough were first established by the Anglo-Normans in the twelfth century but were 'unlawfully' seized by Mac Coghlan's ancestors. Despite Mac Coghlan's efforts to conserve his lands, the then Lord Deputy (Sir Henry Carey, Viscount Falkland) ordered a plantation fort to be built on the town side of the ford. The fort was named Fort Falkland after the Lord Deputy and was completed in 1624. By 1628 Banagher was planted and by grant of a charter by King Charles I was incorporated as a borough,

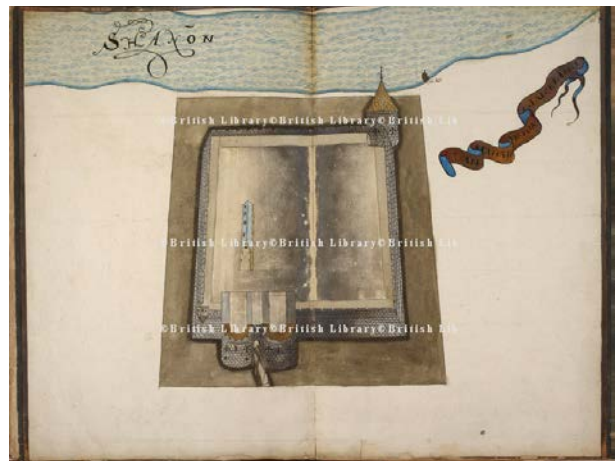


Fig. 4: Survey of Fort Falkland by Nicholas Pynnar (1624), (B.L., Add. MS 24,200)

consisting of a sovereign, twelve burgesses and free commons. The town was known to the English as Fort Falkland and was afforded powers to elect two members to Parliament, hold a weekly market and two annual fairs.

Banagher's strategic position upon the Shannon made it a place of importance and much activity during the civil wars of the seventeenth century. During the Irish Rebellion of 1641 and following a siege of Fort Falkland, the new planters surrendered to the Irish Catholic Confederation forces however, Banagher was retaken by the Cromwellian army in 1650, who reduced the borough to ruin. Under Cromwell, Banagher experienced a second plantation as lands were divided among 'the adventurers and soldiers' of Cromwell's army. In 1660 King Charles II was restored to the throne and ordered the restoration of lands to Mac Coghlan's descendants, but this was not entirely enforced (OHAS).



Fig. 5: Map of Ireland 1665, depicting Banagher in Connacht and evidence of its complex history. (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C)



Fig. 6: Banagher, King's County. Engraving after Petrie from T. Cromwell, *Excursions Through Ireland*, vol. iii, 1820 - depicting the 'Old Bridge'

A seventeen arch stone bridge was standing at the ford at Banagher by 1685, and its many diverse arches suggest it may have been an extension of an older structure. During the Williamite Wars of 1690-91, Banagher sided to the cause of James II and as the Irish Jacobites held the line of the river at Banagher, the bridge became known as Sarsfield's Bridge, for the number of times the Jacobite forces under Patrick Sarsfield traversed it. Following the Battle of Aughrim in 1691, the town was soon re-occupied by the English who remained until 1863 when the town ceased as a garrison town. Banagher's strategic importance as a major river crossing continued into the nineteenth century, when the renewal of the Anglo-French War in 1803, prompted the authorities to upgrade the Middle Shannon defences as a fall back line, should the French invade from Connacht.

During the brief periods of peace in the seventeenth century, Banagher benefitted from a flourishing woollen trade, which declined following the trade embargoes of 1699, but was subsequently revitalized

in 1780 when the British Parliament withdrew all trade restrictions and the town began to improve rapidly (OHAS). The extension of the Grand Canal Network from Dublin to the River Shannon in 1804, just 3km north of the town, established Banagher as a significant inland portal town. With water navigation to Limerick, Athlone and Dublin, Banagher became a chief place of trade in the Midlands and experienced a period of expansion and prosperity that continued until the Great Famine. During this period Banagher's corn market was one of the largest of its kind in Ireland and in 1826, records account 43,000 sheep being offered for sale at the September fair:



Fig. 7: Lithograph commissioned by William Mackenzie depicting the grand opening of the 'New Bridge at Banagher', 1843. (ICE UK)

To improve navigation on the main Shannon and to accommodate improvements in steam navigation, the government funded Shannon Navigation Improvement Works of 1841-1843 saw the removal of the ford at Banagher and the construction of a new stone bridge with a cast iron swivel arch. The works were overseen by the civil engineer Thomas Rhodes and undertaken by the engineering contractor William Mackenzie, who later became the leading railway contractor in Europe.



Fig. 8: View of the fortifications and (old) bridge at Banagher as seen from the Sod Battery. Drawn by Captain Sir William Smith 1819. (T.C.D., MS 942/2/187)



Fig. 9: Historic photograph at Banagher Railway Station (1938) with Banagher military barracks in the right background.

The growth of the railways by the middle of the nineteenth century, saw the decline in importance of water navigation. The coming of the railway to Banagher in 1884, as the terminus for the Clara to Banagher branch of the Great Southern & Western Railway Company, brought some improvement to the town, but was eventually closed in 1963.

Banagher is noted for its connection with the English novelists Anthony Trollope and Charlotte Brontë. Trollope was stationed as a post office inspector at Banagher from 1841-1844 where he wrote his first two novels, which were much inspired by his experiences in the area. Charlotte Brontë visited Cuba Court while honeymooning in Ireland with her husband Arthur Bell Nicholls, who later returned to live in Banagher some years after Charlotte's death.

The town is synonymous with the saying *'That Beats Banagher and Banagher Beats the Devil'*, which is a term of ancient and uncertain origins and is argued to be the inspiration of the widely used modern expression *'to beat the band'*.

Landscape

Banagher hill is a limestone outcrop, which rises to a height of 30m above the Shannon callows. The ancient ford was composed of glacial deposits, which collected at the base of the hill and continued into Connacht as a glacial ridge or esker, forming a natural river crossing. Banagher is located centrally along the Middle Shannon, which extends between Athlone, where the river flows out of Lough Ree, and Portumna, where it enters Lough Derg. The Middle Shannon is approximately 60km in length and historically was impassable, save for these natural fording points, which were few and heavily defended.



Fig. 10: View from 'The Hill' toward Main Street and town centre, with the River Shannon callows in flood in the distance.

Today, the callows is passable by bridge at Athlone, Shannonbridge, Banagher and Portumna. The river at Banagher is approximately 150m in width, but in the flooding season this increases to 1km in places.



Fig. 11: Extract from the British Geological Survey of Ireland (1863). (www.geologicalmaps.net)



Fig. 12: Photograph of Cromwell's Castle and Banagher Bridge. (Photo by E. Broderick)

The habitat surrounding Banagher is primarily grassland which is used for pasture and hay-making. The area is adjoined by boglands, the largest of which is Clonfert bog in the County of Galway, located 2km north of Banagher Bridge, and is among the largest cultivated bogs in Europe. At the northern edge of the bog is the much-celebrated Clonfert Cathedral and Early Christian monastic site of Saint Brendan The Navigator. The Grand Canal enters the River Shannon at Shannon Harbour, 3km north of Banagher and was extended between 1824 and 1828 to Ballinasloe on the Connacht side, which is now abandoned and largely infilled. Today, the river and canal network is used primarily for leisure cruising and fishing and the callows is of international significance for its diverse flora and wintering bird populations.

Aims and Objectives

This conservation plan is drawn up in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the revised Burra Charter published by ICOMOS in 2013, which provides a model for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance. The charter sets out standards of practice for those with responsibility for the guardianship of such places. This group might include owners, managers, tenants and custodians, consultants, statutory advisers, opinion-formers, decision makers and contractors. Places of cultural

significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection: to the community; the landscape; to the past and to lived experiences.

A fundamental principle of the Burra Charter is that places of cultural significance should be conserved for the benefit of both present and future generations. This defines conservation as all of the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.

As such, the general aims of this Conservation Plan are to:

- Provide a record of historic Banagher.
- Understand the significance of the place.
- Identify any threats to its significance.
- Formulate policies to address the threats, and to inform and guide the future preservation, development and management of the built heritage of Banagher.
- Outline proposals for urgent conservation work.
- Assist in managing change by proposing a sustainable vision for the future of the town.

Following publication of the Burra Charter, the Ename Charter was adopted by ICOMOS in 2008 and deals specifically with the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage. This charter provides a framework for the communication of the cultural significance of a place to the public. Its objectives are to facilitate understanding and appreciation of the site; communicate its meaning, safeguard the tangible and intangible values and respect its authenticity. This is particularly relevant for Banagher, as its development history is complex and not well understood in the locality. For this reason, the plan has a particular emphasis on proposals for how the town can be best presented and its significance understood and appreciated by both locals and visitors. The policies outlined include ideas that are intended for implementation through consultation with various stakeholders including public bodies, the local authority and the property owners.

Limitations

Land and buildings within the town in private ownership were not accessed during our surveys. These areas include the rear of properties along Main Street and the area known locally as West End (Lower Main Street). Areas that require special access such as foundations or walls below the water line or obscured by ivy or vegetation were not inspected. Specific limitations are noted within the text.

Nomenclature

As some of the buildings and structures have no formal names or names that have changed over time, in the interests of clarity, in describing the various structures and places in the area, we have used the nomenclature as illustrated on Fig. 13, Fig. 40, Fig. 41, Fig. 51, Fig. 69 and Fig. 107.

Project Team

This conservation plan was prepared by Howley Hayes Architects with funding provided by Banagher Development Group, Offaly County Council and the Heritage Council.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders are represented by the following bodies who have formed a steering group:

Banagher Dev. Group	Kieran Keenaghan
Banagher Dev. Group	James Scully
Banagher Dev. Group	George Smyth
Offaly Local Dev. Co.	Brendan O' Loughlin (Chief Executive Officer)
Offaly County Council	Tom Shanahan (Director)
Offaly County Council	Amanda Pedlow (Heritage Officer)
Offaly County Council	Rachael McKenna (Senior Executive Architect with responsibility for conservation)
Offaly County Council	John Mitchel (County Engineer)
Offaly County Council	Dermot Egan (Community and Local Development)
Offaly County Council	Suzanne O'Toole (Area Planner)
Offaly County Council	Carroll Melia (Forward Planning)

Consultation

During the preparation of this conservation plan, stakeholder representatives were consulted together with local authority representatives. Consultation to date has included the following meetings:

Offaly County Council	Amanda Pedlow (Heritage Officer)
Offaly County Council	Rachel McKenna (Senior Executive Architect with responsibility for conservation)
NMS	Caimin O'Brien
HHA	James Howley
HHA	Eoghan Broderick

(NMS = National Monuments Service, HHA = Howley Hayes Architects)

On 14th of June, the above group met to discuss the scope of the proposed plan. All were in agreement that although Banagher has suffered economic decline in recent years and has many sites in an advanced state of dereliction, it has a rich and varied heritage.

On the 14th of June a subsequent meeting was held with stakeholder representatives. In attendance were:

Offaly County Council	Amanda Pedlow (Heritage Officer)
Offaly County Council	Dermot Egan (Community and Local Development)
Offaly Local Dev. Co.	Brendan O' Loughlin (Chief Executive Officer)
Banagher Dev. Group	Kieran Keenaghan
Banagher Dev. Group	James Scully
HHA	James Howley
HHA	Eoghan Broderick

The local development group representatives echoed many of the key points raised by the local authority representatives. The challenging economic circumstances of the town experienced in the last decade and the large number of heritage sites unoccupied and vulnerable to decay, was of particular concern to the development group, who requested that the plan would place an emphasis on the following areas:

- An assessment of the town's heritage and statement of significance
- Improvements to the public realm and key heritage sites
- Conservation strategies relating to key heritage sites
- Recommendations to improve the development potential and accessibility of key heritage sites
- Plan to inform ways of increasing the tourism potential of the town and locality, to help stimulate economic growth



Fig. 13: Map with Street Names. (map reference: UCD Digital Library CC-BY-SA. Map tiles by Stamen Design, under CC BY 3.0 — Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors). Street names, tributary and town outline added by HHA

2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

Documentary Evidence & Sources

In the Urban Archaeological Survey (UAS) of Co. Offaly by John Bradley of 1986, Banagher was identified as an important archaeological centre. In this report evidence was presented of a settlement dating from medieval times, around an early Christian foundation, which was later granted borough status in the early seventeenth century. In light of this recognition, Banagher was included in the statutory Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as a 'Historic Town' (RMP no. OF021-003----). A survey map demarcating the Area of Archaeological Potential within the town was added to the record, and it was recommended that any proposed future development within this area be supported with a report from a suitably qualified archaeologist. Bradley's recommendation informed the zones of archaeological potential which was adopted into the County Development Plan (Fig. 126). Excavations to date, are posted in summary on the excavations bulletin website (www.excavations.ie) and was consulted to identify excavations carried out in the study area. Since 2013, a number of locals (Eoghan Broderick, James Scully, Kieran Keenaghan) gathered many previously unpublished historical documents from the archives relating to the town. This material was documented in a draft study paper entitled '*Banagher on the Shannon - The Olde English Towne - A Study of the Early Maps of Banagher and the Possibility of an Anglo Norman Heritage*' by Eoghan Broderick. This study paper addresses some of the questions posed by Bradley relating to the town's evolution and highlighted the need for a conservation plan for the town. Much of the material gathered, was made available for this report.

Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological monuments and stray archaeological finds recovered in the vicinity of Banagher indicate that the area was inhabited from the prehistoric period.

A series of burnt mounds or 'fulachtaí fiadh' and pits (RMP OF029-027----) were uncovered to the west of Main Street adjacent to the zone of archaeological potential for the town, when archaeological excavations

DENSITY OF RECORDED ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENTS IN IRELAND

Map showing the relative density of archaeological monuments in the Sites and Monuments Record for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, with a 3D graphic illustrating spikes in recorded monument density.

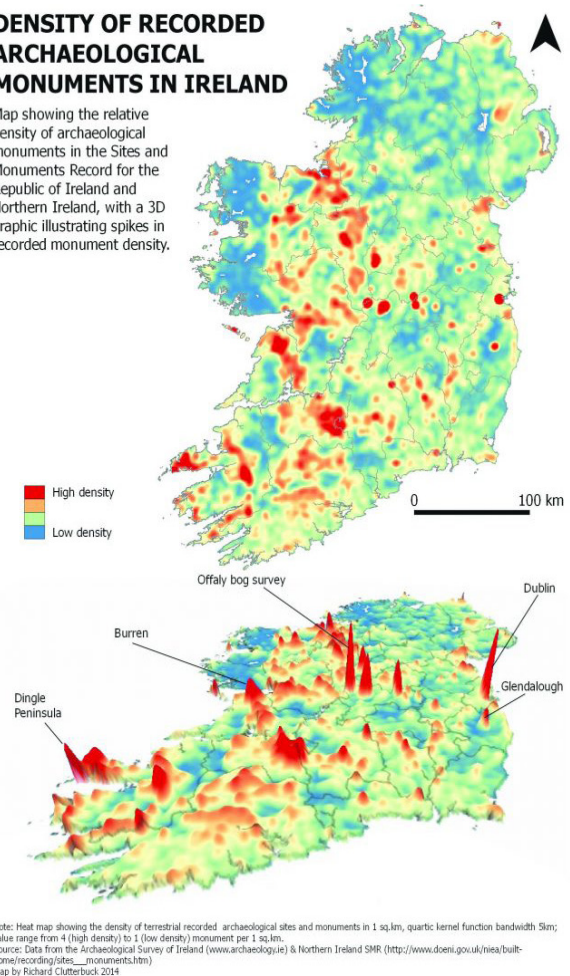


Fig. 14: Density of Recorded Archaeological Monuments in Ireland, showing high concentration of finds in West Offaly; (www.ai.w3.ie)

were undertaken for Offaly County Council as part of the proposed Banagher Relief Road Works (Paul Stevens, The Archaeology Company, April - May 2006). Previous assessment and centreline test-trenching (RMP 05E1436) revealed possible burnt-mound site adjacent to a natural spring. Fulachtaí fiadh are generally accepted to be a means of heating large quantities of water, which could be used for any number of purposes. Other finds relating to early human activity in the area found in close proximity to the river bank, include the remains of a small wooden structure, tentatively identified as a fish trap.



Fig. 15: The Banagher Hoard (National Museum of Ireland)

The Banagher Hoard is evidence of high status Bronze Age activity in the Banagher area and is currently on exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland. The hoard includes a bronze penannular bracelet, a gold dress fastener, a solid bronze ring of rounded cross-section and 125 amber beads that most likely formed a necklace. In 2014 a Bronze-Age sword was recovered from the Shannon river bed at Banagher by a member of the local sub-aqua group which the National Museum of Ireland has dated between 1050 to 1500 BC, and most likely to be 3,500-years old. A further list of Bronze Age artefacts uncovered at Banagher, is included in the appendices, many of which were uncovered during the excavation of Banagher ford as part of the Shannon Navigation Improvement Works 1841-43.



Fig. 16: Banagher Viking Sword Hilt (National Museum of Ireland)

The spread of Christianity in the period around 500 AD marks the transition from the prehistoric to the early medieval period. Ireland at this time was predominantly a rural society with dispersed ringforts as the main centres of population. Ringforts are typically circular or oval enclosures, between 20m and 50m in diameter; formed by a bank and external ditch. The ringfort at Mullaghakaraun (RMP OF021-001001-) is located on a north-facing slope, to the east of the hill of Banagher. It is a large trivallate ringfort measuring approximately 95m in diameter with evidence for a causeway entrance to the east.



Fig. 17: Banagher cross-shaft, 9th century. (National Museum of Ireland)

While the extent of the religious foundation of Kill-Rignaghe or the church of Rignacia has not been determined, it is generally understood to have been located in the vicinity of the now ruined late-medieval chapel and graveyard to the west of Main Street. A sandstone cross-shaft (RMP OF021-003004-), dating from the ninth century was uncovered at this location in the nineteenth century and is now located in the National Museum. The cross-shaft is considered evidence that the religious foundation at Banagher

was one of significance, as high-crosses are generally associated with monasteries of high status (Bradley).

According to legend, the term 'Dealbhna' of Dealbhna Eathra, has its origins in the name of the youngest son of Cas, named Lugh Delbháeth who expanded his father's territory from North Munster into Connacht and founded seven kingdoms of Dealbhna, including Dealdhna Eathra. In the eleventh century the chiefs of the territory took the name of their leader Cochláin, whose death was recorded in the Annals in 1053. The tribes of the Delvin's are recorded to have commanded the fording points of the Shannon above Kincora now Killaloe, County Clare and were slaughtered in the Norse raids in 836 and 837 (Ó Cróinín). Other accounts of Viking raids on the neighbouring Early Christian foundations at Clonfert and Clonmacnoise suggest that the Norse travelled the Shannon to Banagher and beyond. Strong evidence pointing to their presence at Banagher, is the sword artefact which was recovered from the river bed in 2004, and is held at the National Museum of Ireland.



Fig. 18: Ortelius' map of Ireland c.1592 featuring Banagher as Bankjær. (Library of Congress, Washington D.C.)



Fig. 19: Head of a sixteenth-century two-light ogee headed window lintel discovered at Fort Eliza in 2017

Cartographic Evidence & Recorded History

Cartographic representations provide one of the principal sources for the investigation of the development and evolution of the town of Banagher. A number of surveys exist for the town from the period pre-dating the Ordnance Survey including the original Banagher Borough Charter Maps of 1628 (De Renzi Papers, National Archives of the UK) and what are considered to be a series of surveys of the town and area which predate it. A volume of survey drawings entitled 'A Survey of The Town of Banagher and Adjoining Lands Situate in the Barony of Garry Castle and King's County the Estate of The Hon. Frederick Ponsonby' by surveyor John Logan (six volume) is dated 1828 and a copy survives in the University of Limerick map library. Also held in the National Archives of the UK, is the 'Municipal Corporations and Parliamentary Boundaries Commission' map of Banagher 1840, which is contemporary with the First Edition OS.



Fig. 20: Detail of medieval, dressed stone fragment on the facade of the Vine House, Lower Main Street (West End), with floriated tryskel design

Medieval Banagher

The status of Banagher in the medieval period is not yet fully understood. In the Ordnance Survey Letters of King's County, John O'Donovan described the town name 'Beannchair', as the most difficult of explanation. Annalistic references to 'Beannchair' and 'Beannchoir' are many but are challenging to distinguish from other settlements which historically shared the same name, such as: Bangor in Co. Down; Banagher in Co. Derry; Banchory in Scotland; and Bangor in North Wales. Interestingly, many of these sites were Early Christian settlements, suggesting the name may have its origins in an Early Christian foundation spread throughout Britain and Ireland however; this has yet to be confirmed.

In his letters, De Renzi lists 28 castles in the ownership of the Mac Coghlan's, with eleven 'in the hands of Sir John Mac Coghlan'. Among the castles in the vicinity of Banagher are: Streamstown Castle, Garry Castle, Banagher Castle and Beal i Luig (Béal Átha Ludh or Lugh). While Garry Castle survives today in ruin, the general location of Beal i Luig and Streamstown Castle can be determined from the map record, however; the precise location of Banagher Castle has not yet been confirmed but is recorded in the statutory record (RPM OF021-003010) in the location of Fort Falkland, on account of the strategic location of the

site to best protect, control and monitor access to the ford i.e. 'the gate and chief passage over the Shannon into Connacht'.

The disappearance of Banagher Castle is partly explained by a record in the Annals from the year 1544, which states 'The Castle of Beandchor (Banagher) was re-erected by O'Carroll', and a subsequent record from the year 1548, which states the castle was demolished out of 'fear that the English might seize it'. The word 're-erected' suggests an earlier date of construction. In his descriptions of these strongholds, De Renzi claims that Banagher Castle and indeed Banagher borough itself were established by the Anglo Normans in the twelfth century but were subsequently overthrown by Sir John Mac Coghlan's ancestors. While the early survey maps of Banagher do possess some features, which are typical of an Anglo Norman settlement, De Renzi's claims have yet to be confirmed.

In addition to the Banagher cross-shaft, a number of tooled medieval stone fragments have been discovered in the town of late, including a fifteenth-century ogee window lintel, a sixteenth-century two-light ogee window lintel, a floriated tryskel and various other stray finds, which are now ex-situ but would have once adorned high-status buildings such as Banagher Castle, which have long been destroyed.



Fig. 21: Detail from Ortelius' map of Ireland c.1592 showing Banagher as Bankyer (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

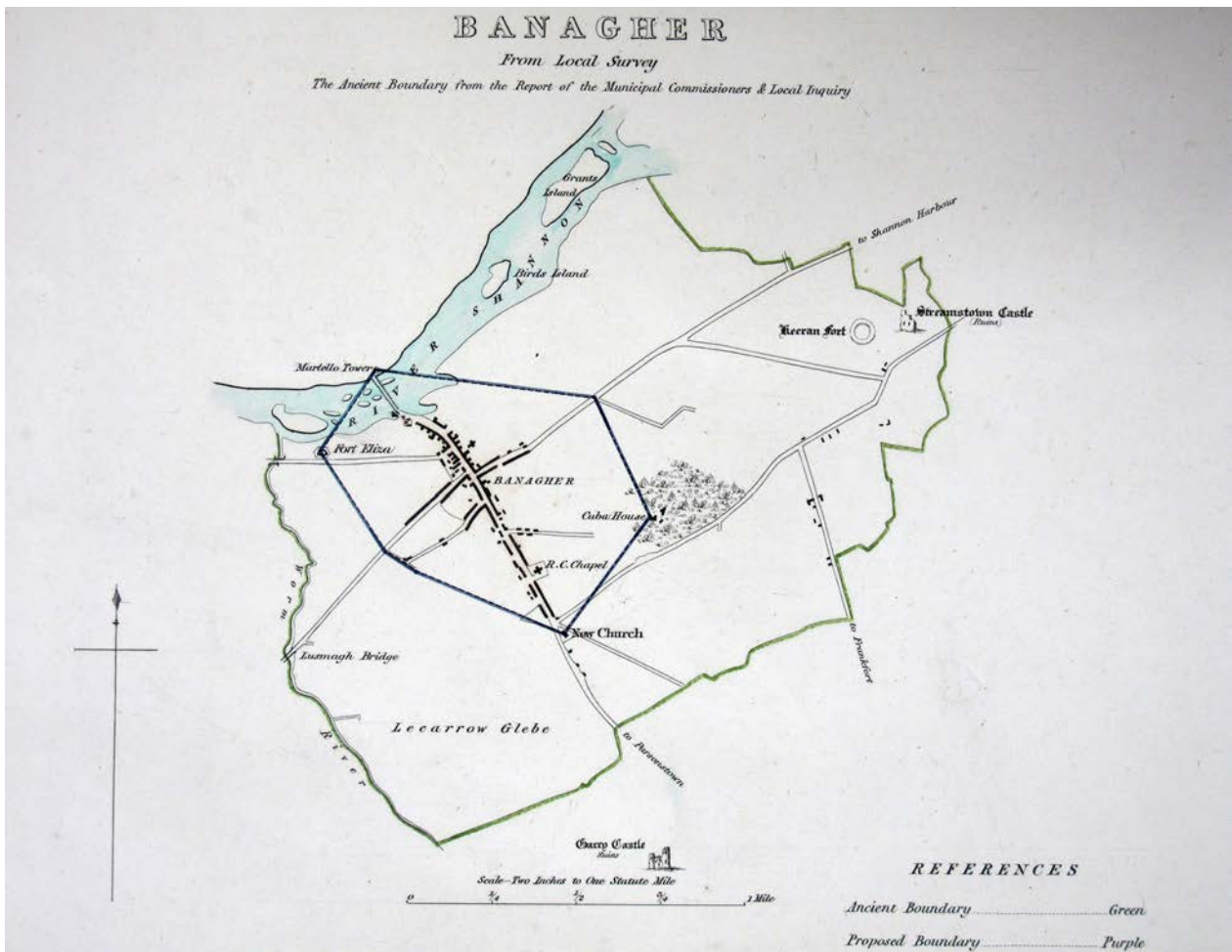


Fig. 22: Extract from the 'Municipal Corporations & Parliamentary Boundaries Commission' map of Banagher c.1840, with reference to an 'Ancient Boundary' in Green, and a 'Proposed Boundary' in Purple. (TNA UK) (Photo by E. Broderick)



Fig. 23: Fifteenth-century ogee window lintel, recycled into the fabric of a rubble stone farmyard wall at Banagher. (Photo by E. Broderick)

Early Survey Maps

The earliest known survey of Banagher (National Archives of the UK, MPF 1/102) is dated 1533-1603 (reign of Queen Elizabeth) and is described as 'County Offaly: Banagher. Map showing the town and surrounding country, field and place-names, footpaths, houses in rough perspective, church and churchyard, confluence of River Shannon and 'the smale River', fords. Scale: 1 inch to 20 perches' and was most likely commissioned by the Crown under Queen Elizabeth c.1570 (refer to Fiants Ire., Eliz.: 1554, 1486). In this survey, Banagher is indicated to consist of 12 dwelling houses flanking a Main Street, which is orientated south-east to north-west toward the river ford, much as it is today. The houses are shown within a defensive enclosure, which is open along the riverfront but is defended by a fort, which appears to be in ruin and is likely the ruins of Banagher Castle demolished in 1548 out of 'fear that the English might seize it'. A tributary of the River

Shannon runs the length of the survey drawing and forms the natural boundary with the neighbouring territory of Luskagh to the west. A ford is indicated close to the mouth of the tributary and is defended on the town side by a large fortification indicated as 'Beal i Luig', which is adjoined by a small wood. There is only one gate to the town defensive enclosure indicated, located where the main street cuts through the southern wall. The town is flanked on its east and west by land indicated as 'Lowe Meddow', suggesting common pasture land, while to the south, beyond the town gate and west of the town approach road lies an independent ecclesiastical enclosure noted as 'Renog', in reference to Saint Rynagh with a chapel indicated within. The town approach road hugs the eastern boundary of this enclosure and continues south toward the hill of Banagher. At the summit of the hill the road is marked by a large cross where the road branches to the north-east and also continues south toward a fortification indicated as 'Garry Castell', which was one of Mac Coghlan's primary strongholds and survives today in ruin.

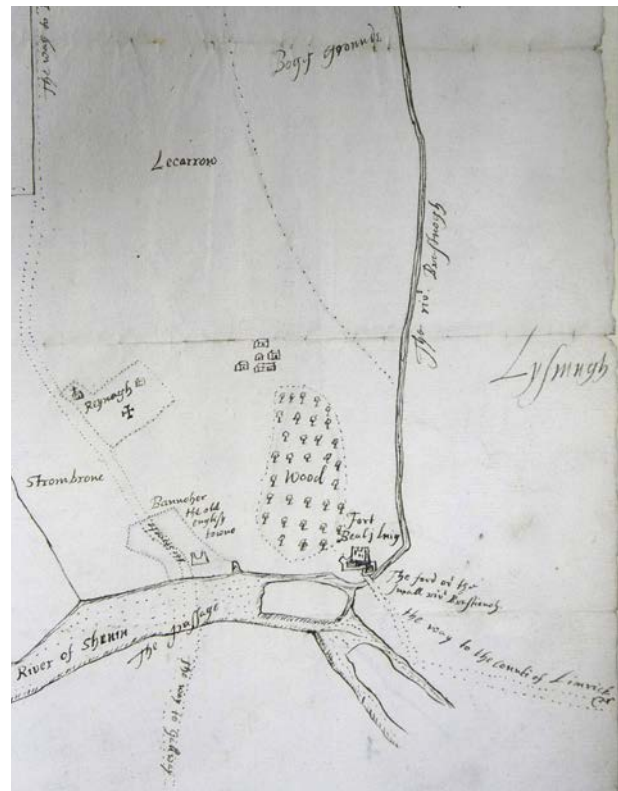


Fig. 25: Early survey of Banagher (MPF 1/209) (TNA UK) (Photo by K. Keenaghan)

Two other survey maps (MPF 1/207 & MPF 1/209) are held at the National Archive UK and appear to



Fig. 24: Earliest known survey of Banagher, 1523-1603. (TNA UK)

be contemporary with the above map. They are archived with the De Renzi papers and are simply described as 'Plan of Banagher on the Shannon and Surrounds'. It should be noted that there is some confusion regarding the date of these maps, as they are dated 1630 in the archive, which would make them later than the 1628 incorporation of Banagher borough, which seems to be incorrect. This may be simply explained by the fact that all material relating to De Renzi in the National Archives UK (De Renzi Papers) are dated 1630, despite many of his letters and drawings in the collection being prepared much earlier. On reviewing the maps in detail, it appears most likely that De Renzi commissioned these maps on his arrival to the area, and are tracings or copies taken from the aforementioned survey. They contain all of the primary landscape features and structures previously noted, however, these maps are extended to show the territory further east of the town and some additional notes have been added. These notes concern information relating to the pathways leading away from the town, which are described as: 'the way to Galway', 'the way to the county of Limerick', 'the way to Ely O'Carroll' and 'the way to Westmeath'. Most

interestingly, the settlement of Banagher is indicated on this map as 'Bannoher the Old English Towne', which is possibly a note made in De Renzi's own hand as it relates to his argument that Banagher was 'Old English' or Anglo Norman in origin and was 'unlawfully' taken by the Mac Coghlan.

The presence of a defensive enclosure and twelve dwellings in a survey of the area, which pre-dates the 1628 incorporation of Banagher borough is strong evidence that Banagher was a walled town and existed as an urban settlement prior to the 1628 plantation development.

The Charter Maps

The official name of the 1628 incorporation of Banagher borough was styled as 'The Sovereign, Burgesses, and Free Commons of the Borough and Town of Bannacher als Bannagher' and consisted of a sovereign and twelve burgesses, to include arable and pasture land, bog, wood and moor. In the

charter one thirteenth of these lands was granted to Sir Arthur Blundell as the first sovereign and one thirteenth to each of the twelve burgesses, which included Mathew De Renzi 'and his heirs'. Through the charter, the corporation was granted permission: to hold a weekly market and two annual fairs; to build a town hall to be known as the 'Tholsell of Bannacher als Bannagher'; to make and sell spirits; to buy and sell wine, ale, beer and all kind of food; and to keep wine taverns and ale houses. Provision was also made for a preaching minister, a schoolmaster, a justice of the peace, a coroner, a clerk of the market and powers to return two members to the Irish parliament.

The official charter map for the 1628 incorporation of Banagher borough is also held at the National Archive in the UK (Fig. 26, MPF I 268 ff249). The drawing is diagrammatic in style and many of the primary urban and landscape elements that appear in the early survey drawings are also present. The newly incorporated borough consists of twelve

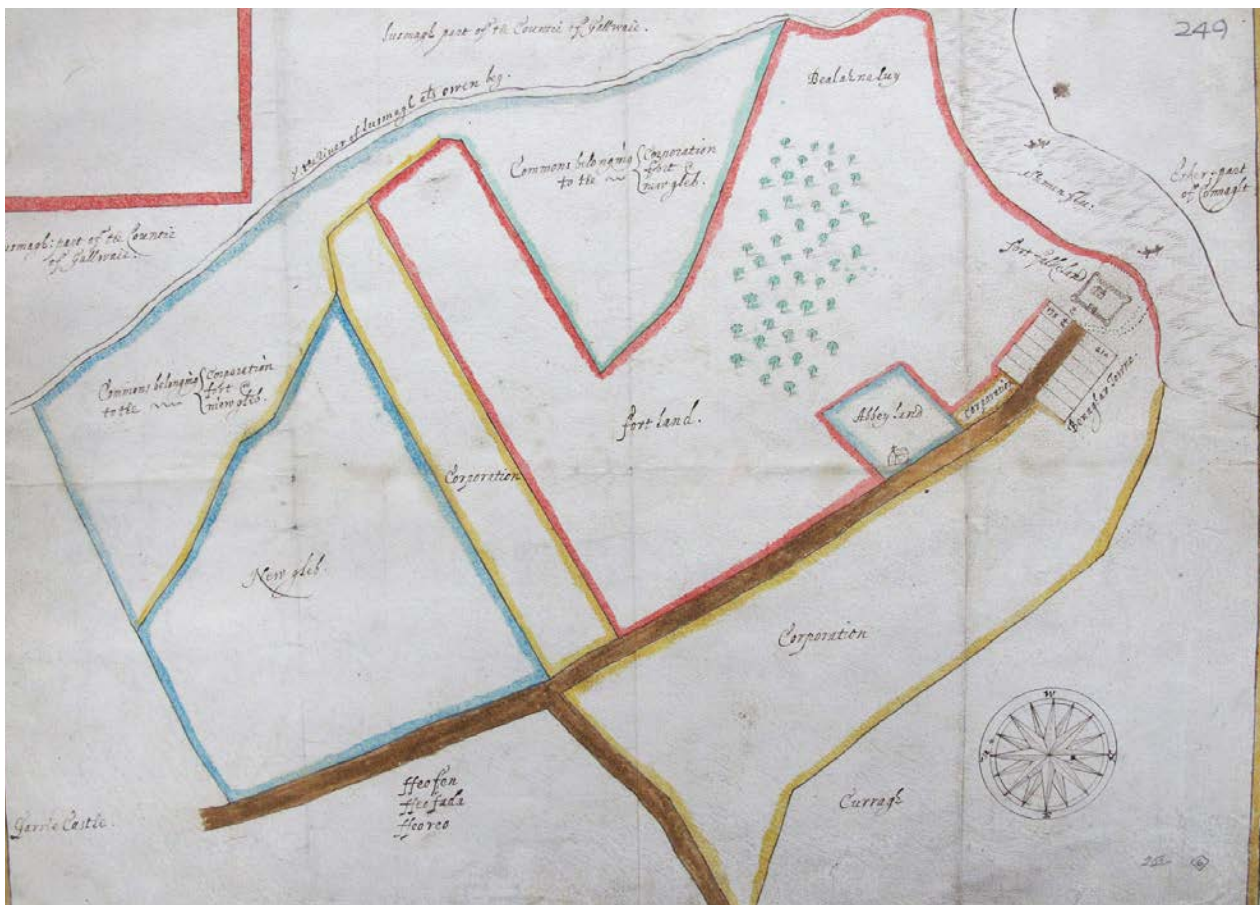


Fig. 26: Official charter map for the incorporation of Banagher borough 1628 (TNA UK) (Photo by E. Broderick)

burgesses flanking a main street, however, there is no defensive enclosure indicated, but rather the borough is defended to the north by the plantation fortification 'Fort Falkland' (Fig. 4). The entrance to Fort Falkland is shown facing Main Street, suggesting that in times of threat or conflict the inhabitants of the borough retreated into the fort for protection. A small lane is shown bypassing the fort, connecting the Main Street to the ford beyond. The ecclesiastical settlement is here referred to as 'Abbeyland'. The fortifications of 'Beal i Luig' and 'Garry Castle' are indicated by name only. The woodland previously described is still indicated, as is the large cross at the summit of The Hill.

The charter map encapsulates a significant territory about the borough, which is parcelled into various plots. A colour coding system with text identifies these plots as 'Fortland', 'Abbeyland', 'Corporation', 'New Glebe' and 'Commons belonging to Corporation, Fort and New Glebe'. The 'Corporation' lands is of particular interest and consists of three separate parcels of land: the first parcel is a small plot of land to the west of main street and is sited between the Abbeyland and the burgesses, the second is a large plot of land to the east of main street, which extends from the riverbank to The Hill and the third parcel consists of a large narrow strip of land, which extends west from The Hill toward the tributary, referred to here as 'The River of Lusmagh'. The neighbouring territory of Lusmagh, now part of County Offaly, is indicated as part of County Galway, signifying the boundary complexities and strategic significance of the place.

The draft research paper and cartographic study previously mentioned, identified that five other maps (MPF I 268 ff245/46/47/48/51) relating to the charter are held at the National Archives in the UK and remain unpublished. In this study, the map archived as MPF I 268 ff245 (Fig.27), is identified as significant, as it includes important additional information, which helps explain the true extent of the plantation development. On the rear of this map the individual names of the sovereign and twelve burgesses, which together formed the 'corporation', are listed and numbered, including the name of Mathew De Renzi. On the map itself, a thirteenth burgess plot is indicated, while the two large plots of corporation

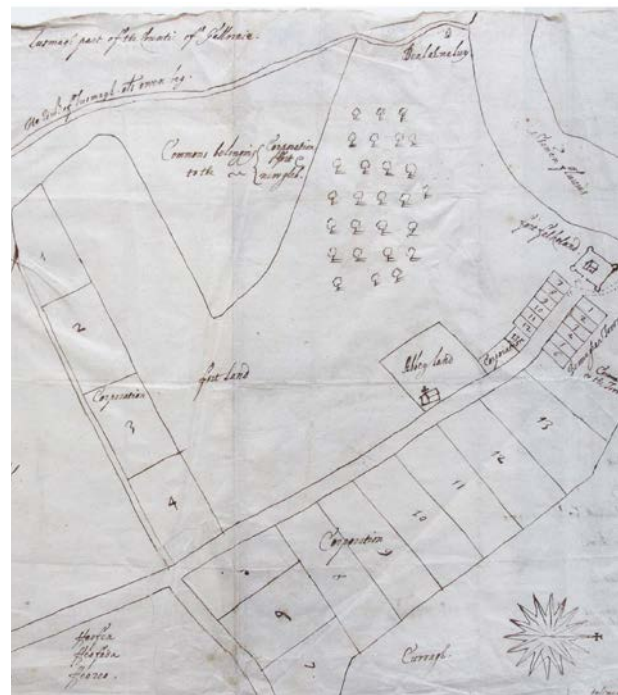


Fig. 27: Land Registry map of the incorporation of Banagher borough 1628 (MPF I 268 ff245) (TNA UK), with the names of the sovereign and twelve burgesses indicated overleaf, including 'Sir Mattheo de Renzi' (Mathew De Renzi) with the words 'The lots weare drawn at Mr. Nelsons in Castle Streete the 21. Feb 1628, Dublin'. (Photo by E. Broderick)

lands are subdivided into thirteen equal parts, each corresponding with one of the thirteen named individuals. The subdivision of the corporation lands in this manner, on what appears to be an official land registry map, is significant because it suggests large tracts of the corporation lands were not intended for civic purposes such as lands for a free school etc., but was rather intended as development land to benefit both the corporation and the Crown.

Regarding the true intention for these corporation / development lands, close examination of De Renzi's letters reveals that De Renzi saw a financial opportunity at Banagher to process wool into fabric to increase its commercial value and had ambitions to establish a corporation sponsored weaving industry in the newly incorporated borough. As an experienced textile merchant, De Renzi had expert knowledge of the cloth industry and had access to a network of trading contacts throughout Britain and Europe. In his letters, De Renzi sees the river Shannon at Banagher as the means to transport goods to Galway and Limerick and he petitions the Lord Deputy to support such an enterprise by banning cloth imports

and to prepare ships at the ports for the export of fabric out of Ireland, arguing the Crown would benefit threefold from such an enterprise at Banagher: firstly by suppressing rebellion by setting 'a great many of idle people at work', secondly by attracting 'English and other civil nations' to settle in the area, and thirdly by generating revenue through increased trade.

While a rural tradition of weaving did exist in Ireland in the early seventeenth century, it was mainly focused on weaving garments for the household, however the establishment of a cottage weaving industry of this scale was rare and is largely attributable to De Renzi's influence on the plantation development, making the 1628 incorporation of Banagher borough a somewhat unique plantation experiment of national interest and explains how this midlands town went on to become the centre of a flourishing woollen trade in the seventeenth century.

Inland Navigation - Phase I

Despite the planned expansion of the old town, the 1628 charter maps do not indicate a bridge over the river Shannon at Banagher; however the historic records confirm a bridge was standing by 1685 (referred to heretofore as the 'Old Bridge'), and its many diverse arches suggest it was possibly an extension to an earlier structure. The Old Bridge is captured in a landscape engraving by George Petrie in 1820 (Fig. 6) and a detailed survey of the structure (Fig. 29) was recorded by the Shannon Commissioners in 1843 prior to and following its demolition. The Old Bridge is described in Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of 1837, as 'one of the oldest across the Shannon: it consists of several small arches with projecting piers, and is very narrow and inconvenient, but of great strength and solidity. Latterly, however, this bridge, which is supposed to have stood between 400 and 500 years, has shown numerous symptoms of decay: it completely obstructs the navigation of the river; to remedy which a canal with a swing-bridge over it has been formed on the Galway side'.

Recognising the importance of inland navigation for trade and the industrialisation of the island of Ireland, from 1715 the Irish parliament introduced legislation to create an inland navigation system in which the river Shannon featured prominently. Through the

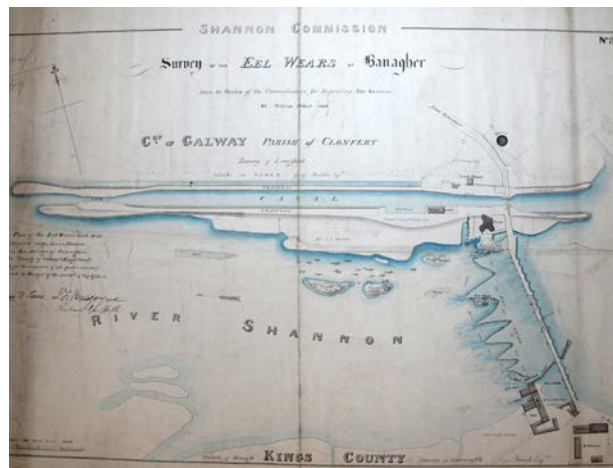


Fig. 28: Shannon Commission 'Survey of the Eel Wears at Banagher' by William Stokes 1836 (Waterways Ireland Archive, Enniskillen)

appointment of Thomas Omer as engineer, canalised sections were deemed necessary to bypass the ancient fording places of Meelick, Banagher, Shannonbridge and Athlone along the Middle Shannon. In the mid-1750s Omer oversaw the first attempt at the navigation of the ford at Banagher; which as the above text describes, involved the design and construction of a 600m long linear bypass canal on the Connacht bank, with a single flash lock and a swing-bridge where the canal intersected the road to Galway. Details of the linear canal are captured in a survey drawing by William Stokes in 1836 entitled 'Survey of the Eel Wears (sic) at Banagher' (Fig. 28, Fig. 109).

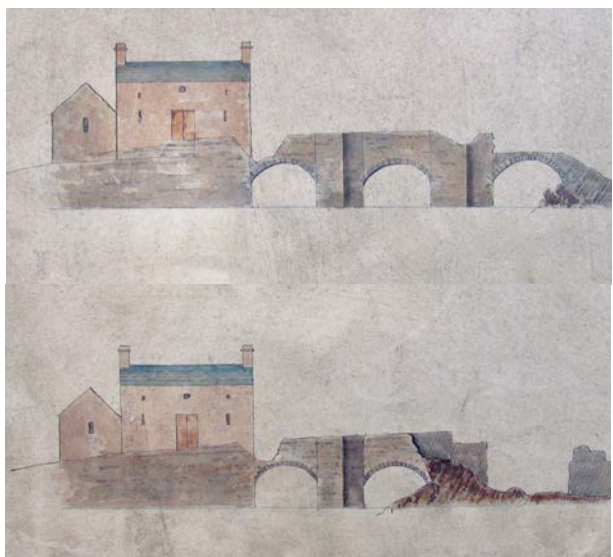


Fig. 29: Extracts from Shannon Commission 'Elevations, Plan, & Section of the Old Bridge Across the Shannon at Banagher; showing the method adopted for its demolition on the 14th August 1843' (Waterways Ireland Archive, Enniskillen) (Photo by E. Broderick)

Napoleonic Fortifications - Phase 1 & 2

The upgrade works to Banagher's defences prompted by the renewal of the Anglo-French War in 1804 occurred in two phases: 1804-1806 and 1810-1815. The first phase of works is illustrated in a military survey drawing entitled 'A Map of the Field Works at Banagher' (1810, B. Gent Fisher, TNA UK). This survey describes the works in three parts. Part A: the upgrade of Banagher Military Barracks to accommodate three 12-pounder guns. Part B: the upgrade of Cromwell's Castle, to accommodate two 12-pounder guns on its roof. Part C: the upgrade of the Sod Battery or Fort Eliza with emplacements for three 12-pounder guns. As noted on the rear of the map, the field works were intended to 'cover the bridge across the Shannon', meaning to defend or destroy the Old Bridge should the French forces land at Galway Bay and advance from the west.

Phase two of the works saw the upgrade of the guns at Banagher from 12 to 24-pounders, including significant renovations of Fort Eliza to accommodate a fourth gun. During this phase an entirely new defensive structure known as Fanesker Tower, designed in the style of a small Martello tower, was built on the Connacht bank, to defend the bridge from the north-east. Although the threat of a French invasion receded following the defeat of Napoleon at



Fig. 30: A map of the fieldworks at Banagher (1810, Grant Fisher, TNA UK)

Waterloo in 1815, the forts at Banagher were manned for another fifty years until they were evacuated in the 1860s, when Banagher ceased functioning as a garrison town.

Logan's Map

Published in 1828, John Logan's 'Survey of The Town of Banagher and Adjoining Lands' (Map Library, University of Limerick) is a fine example of Irish cartography for the period pre-dating the Ordnance Survey. Supported with a directory of lease holds, it offers a valuable insight into the state of the town during this period, which according to records marked a time of economic prosperity that continued until the Great Famine.

One of the most notable features of the Logan map is how the old walled town of Banagher and the ecclesiastical enclosure associated with Saint Rynagh have now merged into one urban settlement, which extends from the river to The Hill. A number of new streets, cul-de-sacs and side lanes are indicated branching out along the Main Street, the most significant of these are noted as Harbour Street (running east), Puckagh Row, Church Lane and Crank Road (running west). Interestingly, a number of these streets are lined with terraces of unusually small dwellings, which are possibly only a single room in plan and is a rare feature of a nineteenth century Irish town. The landholdings to the rear of these properties are not subdivided but appear to be commonage accessible from the street; for example, 'Plot 133' to the north of Puckagh Row consists of approximately 100 cottages constructed in three terraces with a single commonage to the rear. The layout of these properties and the information indicated in the 1628 charter maps suggests this plot of land corresponds to the lands indicated as 'Corporation lands', and the small dwellings are surviving corporation weaver's cottages.

Similar cottages are indicated along Harbour Street and the east side of Upper Main Street toward The Hill and is further evidence that De Renzi's vision for the corporation lands and the establishment of a corporation sponsored, cottage weaving industry was realised. It is worth noting, the charter map had planned for the corporation lands to be developed to

the west of The Hill, extending toward the tributary, however the information on the Logan map suggests this was abandoned in favour of a more central location, resulting in the development of Harbour Street and Puckagh Row. As a consequence, Puckagh Row cuts through the Abbeyland and subdivides the former ecclesiastical enclosure into a number of plots consisting of 'houses & premises' and 'orchard', with the late-medieval chapel and graveyard reduced to a much smaller, obscurely shaped plot to the south, which is heavily encroached to the east by the buildings along Main Street. The site is accessed via a gated entrance just west of Market Square.

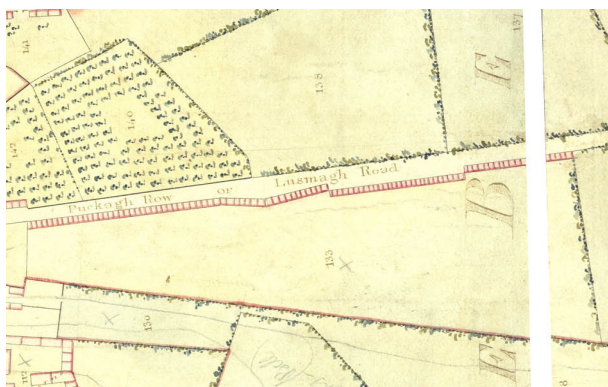


Fig. 31: Detail of John Logan's survey of the town of Banagher, 1828. Indicating Plot 133. (UL map library)

Key structures and civic spaces indicated in the Logan map include Barrack, Old Distillery, Fair Green, Old Market House, Brewery, Distillery, Sod Battery, Market Square, Free School, Chapel and Cuba Court, with an avenue linking Cuba Court to Main Street. At the waterfront, a mill building with mill pond and tail race is shown downstream of the Old Bridge. Just upstream from the bridge, in close proximity to the Fair Green, is a large man-made inlet or harbour, which runs quite a distance into the town and is a significant waterfront development, which encroaches into a number of former burgesses with the effect of 'bringing' the river into the heart of the old town, with a new quay wall defining the street edge along the Lower Main Street. The construction of a harbour of this scale was no doubt a significant undertaking for its time and was most likely developed to exploit the trading potential of the river Shannon and to improve accessibility for loading goods onto river vessels, however, it also had the effect of improving the town's river connection, with one side of Lower Main Street now with waterfront, which must have

created an impressive vista more akin to a coastal settlement such as Kinvara than a midlands town. A detailed survey of this harbour (Fig.85, Fig. 87) was carried out by the Shannon Commissioners in 1840 before it was infilled and indicates an 'Old Quay' where the harbour terminates close to Lower Main Street, suggesting a seventeenth or early eighteenth century date.

The disappearance of Fort Falkland in this area of the town is notable and has been replaced with a military barracks, which is modest in scale by comparison and does not book-end the Main Street in the same manner but is rotated in plan, suggesting it was designed to accommodate a through road from the Main Street to the Old Bridge beyond.

Despite the expansion of the town since the early survey maps, the surviving weavers' cottages and references to 'Old Market House', 'Old Distillery' and the 'Old Quay' provides us with important references concerning the layout of the seventeenth century plantation town, indicating some elements of the plantation settlement likely survived into the early nineteenth century despite the upheaval endured during the latter half of the seventeenth century.

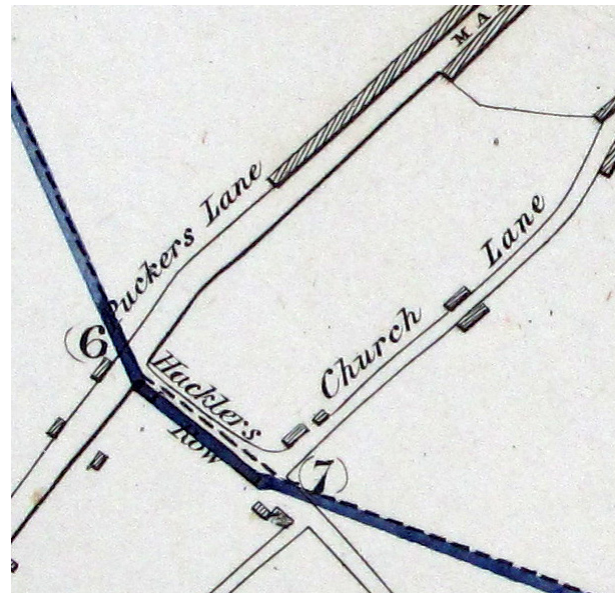


Fig. 32: Extract from the 'Municipal Corporations & Parliamentary Boundaries Commission' map of Banagher c.1840 (TNA UK) with reference to 'Hacklers Row' south of 'Puckers Lane' (formerly Puckagh Row) most likely in reference to the occupation of the former residents. A hackle is described as 'a comb or board with long metal teeth for dressing flax, hemp, or jute' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and was an essential tool in the working of flax in the C17 linen cottage industry.



Fig. 33: Detail of John Logan's survey of the town of Banagher, 1828. (UL map library)



Fig. 34: John Logan's survey of the town of Banagher, 1828. (UL map library)

First Edition Ordnance Survey

The First Edition 6" Ordnance Survey map (published 1838) records significant structures and civic buildings not indicated on the Logan map including: Tan Yards, Police Barracks, R.C. Chapel, Church (COI), Hill House and National School House. Eel weirs are shown extending the width of the river from the mill building, which is now indicated as Haughtons Mill. A series of small islands are illustrated downstream from the eel weirs, indicative of shallow water or rapids often associated with a ford. On the Connacht bank, the dominant feature is the linear bypass canal. In addition to lock houses, the key structures here include: Old Corn Mill with Mill Stream; Cromwell's Castle with Magazine; and Banagher Tower referring to the aforementioned Fanesker Tower.

The island which featured on the early survey maps as 'MacCoghlan's Island' (MPF 1/207) is here referred

to as Clyn's Island. A linear cut is indicated on its upstream section and may represent a man-made channel or early harbour. This cut is also present on the Logan map, suggesting it was a significant landscape feature at the time of survey. A Glebe House is indicated to the west of the Church (COI), which is consistent with 'Glebe lands' as indicated on the charter maps. Beyond the Church (COI) on the road to Garry Castle (now in ruins), are large estate houses with significant industrial developments indicated as: Corn and Threshing Mill; Corn Mill; Flour Mill; and Corn Kiln with Mill Pond and Mill Race.

When read in conjunction with the written description of the town in Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of 1837, the First Edition 6" Ordnance Survey map and Logan's map provide a wealth of information relating to the layout and significant features of the town in the first half of the nineteenth-century.

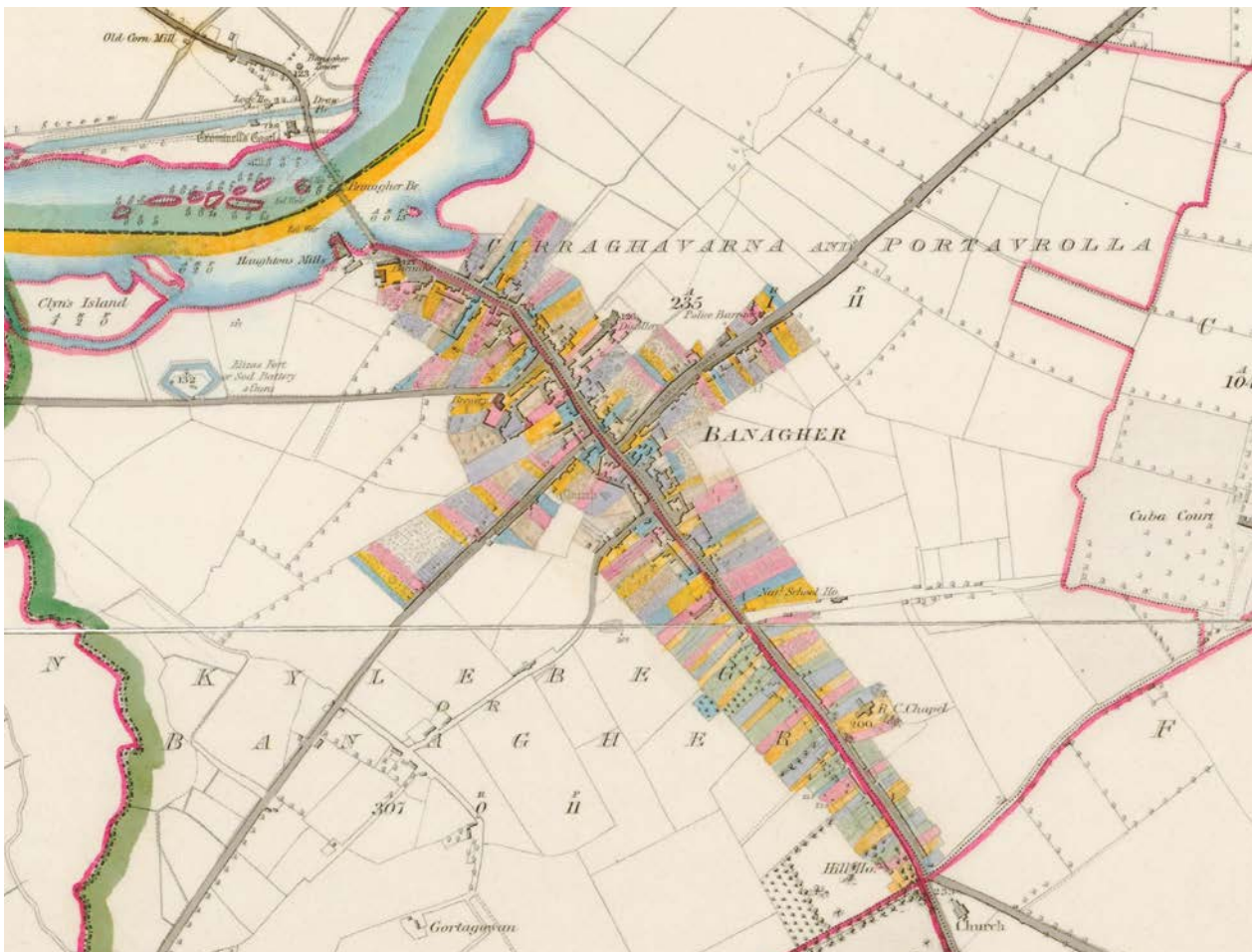


Fig. 35: First Edition 6" to 1 mile OS Map c. 1838 (www.osi.ie). OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/Offaly County Council

Inland Navigation - Phase 02 (1841-1843)

The early 1840s saw the establishment of the Shannon Navigation Commission tasked with undertaking further navigation improvements to the River Shannon, primarily to accommodate river steam traffic between Limerick, Athlone and Dublin. At Banagher this second phase of navigation improvement works brought major landscape alterations and involved the construction of the present day 6-arch masonry bridge designed by chief Commissioner engineer Thomas Rhodes with a cast iron swivel arch on the town side. The works also involved: the excavation and removal of the entire glacial ford and eel weirs; the partial infilling of the old harbour; the demolition of Banagher's Old Bridge; the construction of a new harbour; new quay walls; and the infilling of the mill pond on the town side.

Held at the Waterways Ireland Archive in Enniskillen is an almost complete archive of the Shannon Commissioners survey investigations and design drawings documenting the works at Banagher. When read in conjunction with the site engineer Henry Renton's secretary's diary, held at the archives of the Office of Public Works, this material provides a very detailed and valuable historical account of the Commissioners undertaking from inception to completion.

Second Edition Ordnance Survey (1909)

Large scale 25" Ordnance Survey maps were produced for Banagher in the early twentieth century (Banagher 1909; Offaly (formerly King's County)) and show the completed civil works undertaken by the Shannon Commissioners 1841-1843. The Old Bridge has been demolished and replaced with the current six arch masonry bridge. A bridge ramp is shown extending from the swivel bridge, in the general location of the former harbour wall. The former harbour has been largely infilled and returned to land, and a smaller rectangular shaped harbour is shown east of the bridge ramp. A new quay wall extends from the new harbour enclosing the former mill pond, creating a new area of reclaimed land between the mill and the new bridge ramp. The river channel has been widened and deepened, resulting in the loss of the eel weirs and the removal of the ford. Clyn's island is no longer a feature on the river, but has been reduced in size and reclaimed into the adjacent land bank as a consequence of the river widening.

A new railway line is shown on the east side of the town, close to the riverbank and running parallel with Harbour Street. An engine turning circle is shown at the terminus of this line and located close to the end of Main Street, adjacent to the start of the new bridge ramp. This line represents the Banagher Railway

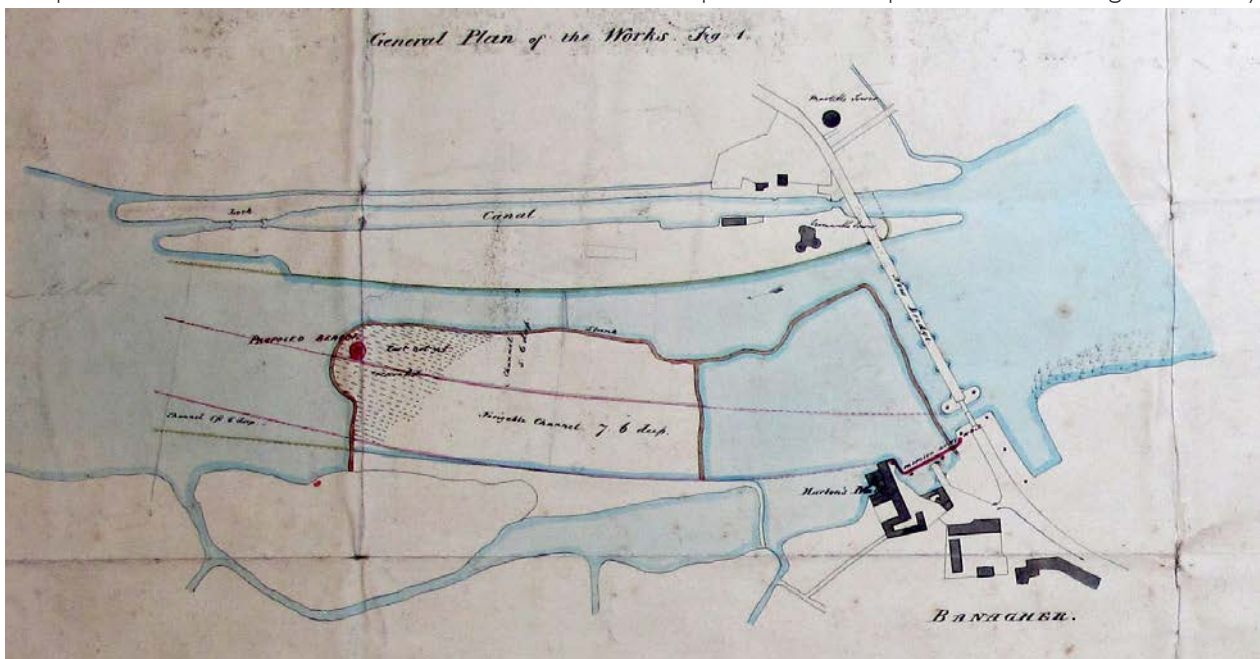


Fig. 36: Extract from Shannon Commissioners drawings (H. Renton, 1843) showing extent of ford to be excavated following construction of the New Bridge (Waterways Ireland Archive, Enniskillen) (Photo by E. Broderick)

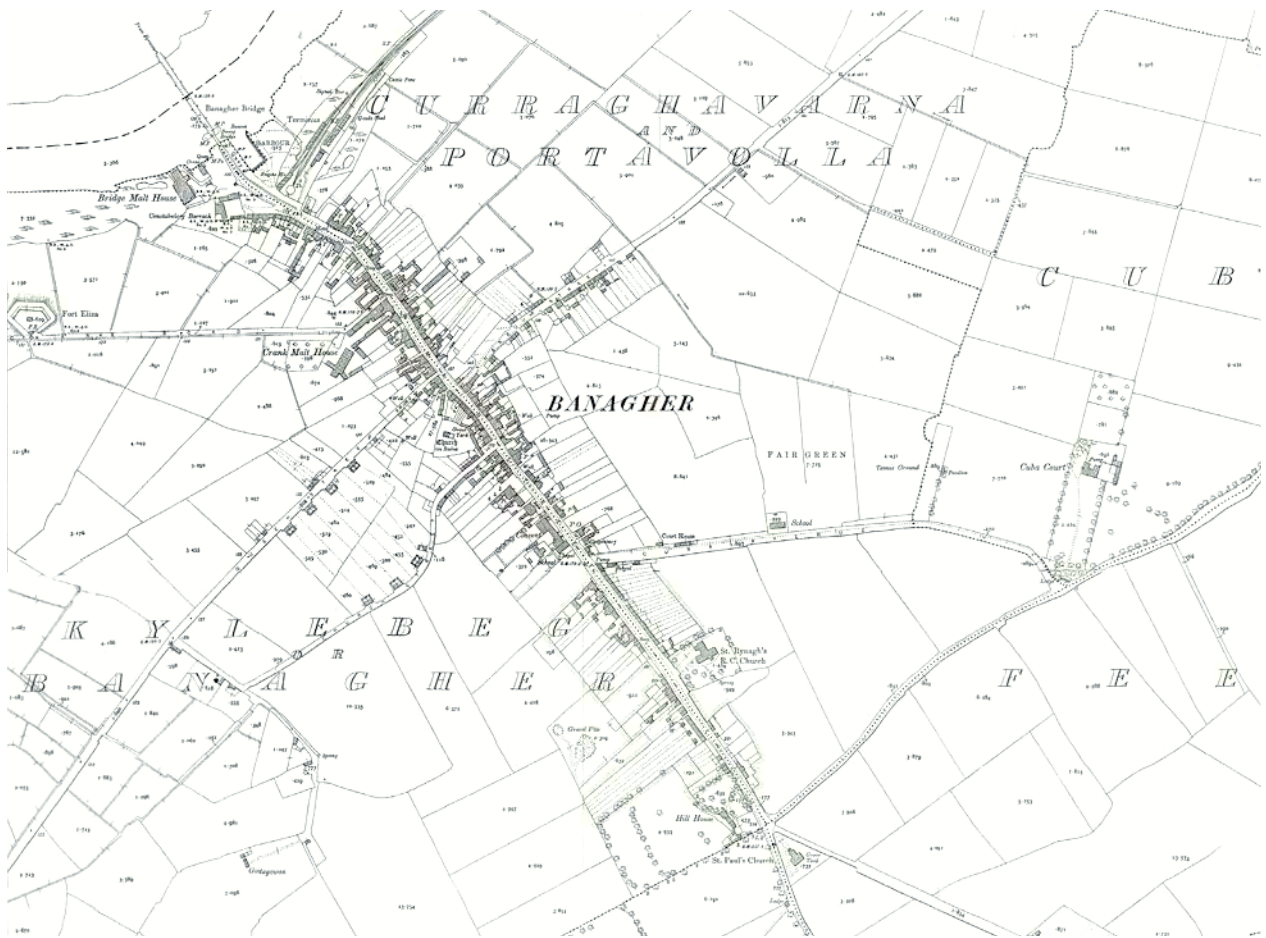


Fig. 37: Second Edition 25" to 1 mile OS map (1909). OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/Offaly County Council

station which opened in 1884, as the terminus of the 29km Clara to Banagher branch of the Great Southern & Western Railway Company. The station is indicated with Engine House, Signal Box, Goods Shed and Cattle Pens. The former Haughton's Mill is now referred to as Bridge Malt House and a second malt house named Crank Malt House is shown at the Crank Road and former Brewery site. The Barracks is now referred to as Constabulary Barracks and along the length of Main Street, three hotels are noted with Dispensary, Forge, Convent, School and Chapel. Cuba Avenue now includes a Court House and School and extends to connect with St. Rynagh's Road leading from the Church of St. Paul's to Streamstown Castle (in ruins). The Fair Green has been relocated away from the town centre, and is now also accessed from Cuba Avenue, with a Tennis Ground and Pavilion noted adjacent. The Glebe House is now noted as Rectory and the industry to the rear of Castle Garden House, is now noted as Malt House.

Regarding the seventeenth century weavers' cottages, these no longer flank the streets as indicated in the Logan Map, suggesting they had largely disappeared by the early twentieth century, either consolidated to form larger residences or demolished to make way for new developments.

Banagher Today

Today, the core area of Banagher from the Market Square to the New Bridge largely retains the same street pattern as indicated in the 1909 OS map.

A new road 'Curraghavarina' follows the east and northern boundary of the relocated Fair Green, connecting Cuba Avenue with Harbour Street. The Fair Green has been developed with public housing, while the remaining land to the west of Curraghavarina, toward the Main Street, is largely infilled with residential developments, consisting of a mix of two-storey, semi-detached and detached bungalows.

Cuba Avenue, Harbour Street and Upper Main Street are now flanked with residential properties, many of which are set-back from the road. Cuba Court is now demolished, and the land to the west of it is occupied by the town's GAA playing fields with spectator stand and changing rooms. The second highest concentration of residential development in the town is located about the summit of The Hill, extending along the Middle Road and Birr Road.

At the river, little alteration has occurred to the properties west of Lower Main Street, which the current OS map indicates as largely unchanged since 1909. To the east of Banagher Bridge Ramp, the former public harbour has been rebuilt and increased in area, with new public toilet and shower facilities, and a children's play area to the south. A significant loss has been the Banagher Railway station which closed in 1963, with no visible remnants of the former turning circle or station buildings remaining. The land and river bank to the east of the public harbour has been reclaimed and now accommodates three private marinas, with associated facilities including jetties, boat yards, sheds and outhouses. A section of the former railway line is now an access road, which leads from Main Street and forms a circuit which encloses the marina buildings and returns along the river bank beside the private and commercial jetties. The former railway line is still visible to the east of the Marina development and continues into the fields beyond. To the north of the marina and accessed from Main Street is a new housing development of holiday homes named Portavolla.

The former Crank Malt House is now occupied by Liffey Mills grain and provender mill and has increased significantly in area and extends west along the Crank Road. Banagher Concrete is the largest employer in the town and specialises in the production of precast concrete structures for civil engineering works. Its offices are located to the north of Queen Street (formerly Puckagh Row), and the concrete production yard to the rear of the offices occupies an area of approximately 16.2 hectares and extends west to the former line of the Lusmagh River (referred to previously as '*the tributary*'). A shopping centre with supermarket, four retail units and car park was developed on the west side of Main Street,

just south of the junction of Queen Street and Main Street and is within the conjectural boundary of the former ecclesiastical settlement.

There are three primary squares within the town: the Market Square, the Library Square and Crank House Square. The Market Square is the only purpose designed square, while the latter are recent developments. Today, the three squares largely consist of off-street carparking, servicing the Main Street.

The most significant civil works in Banagher since 1909 is the new Banagher bypass by Offaly County Council Roads Section, which links the Birr Road to Queen Street and has helped remove HGV's associated with the concrete works from the town. A new link road has also been constructed, and links Queen Street to the Crank Road, running along the former boundary between the Liffey Mills and Banagher Concrete. A new multi denominational school Banagher College, Coláiste Na Sionna, was opened in 2010 and was formed following the amalgamation of the former vocational school and La Sainte Union (LSU) Convent secondary school. The new school building occupies the former grounds of the LSU convent, to the west of Main Street and is accessed from the new bypass, with a secondary entrance from the Main Street.

In recent years, Banagher's Main Street has seen the closure of a number of commercial premises. A study of Banagher by architect Francis Moran, in collaboration with Banagher Tidy Towns group and Banagher College, as part of the 2013 ENGAGE with Architecture programme identified a significant number of vacant premises within the town core, with the highest concentration identified within the conjectural boundary of the old town. The rate of vacancies has been noted under the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 (Volume 2: Banagher Town Plan), as a potential problem, should they fall into dereliction. The upkeep of vacant premises, is critical to protect against dereliction and it is recommended that they are periodically monitored and routine maintenance is undertaken.

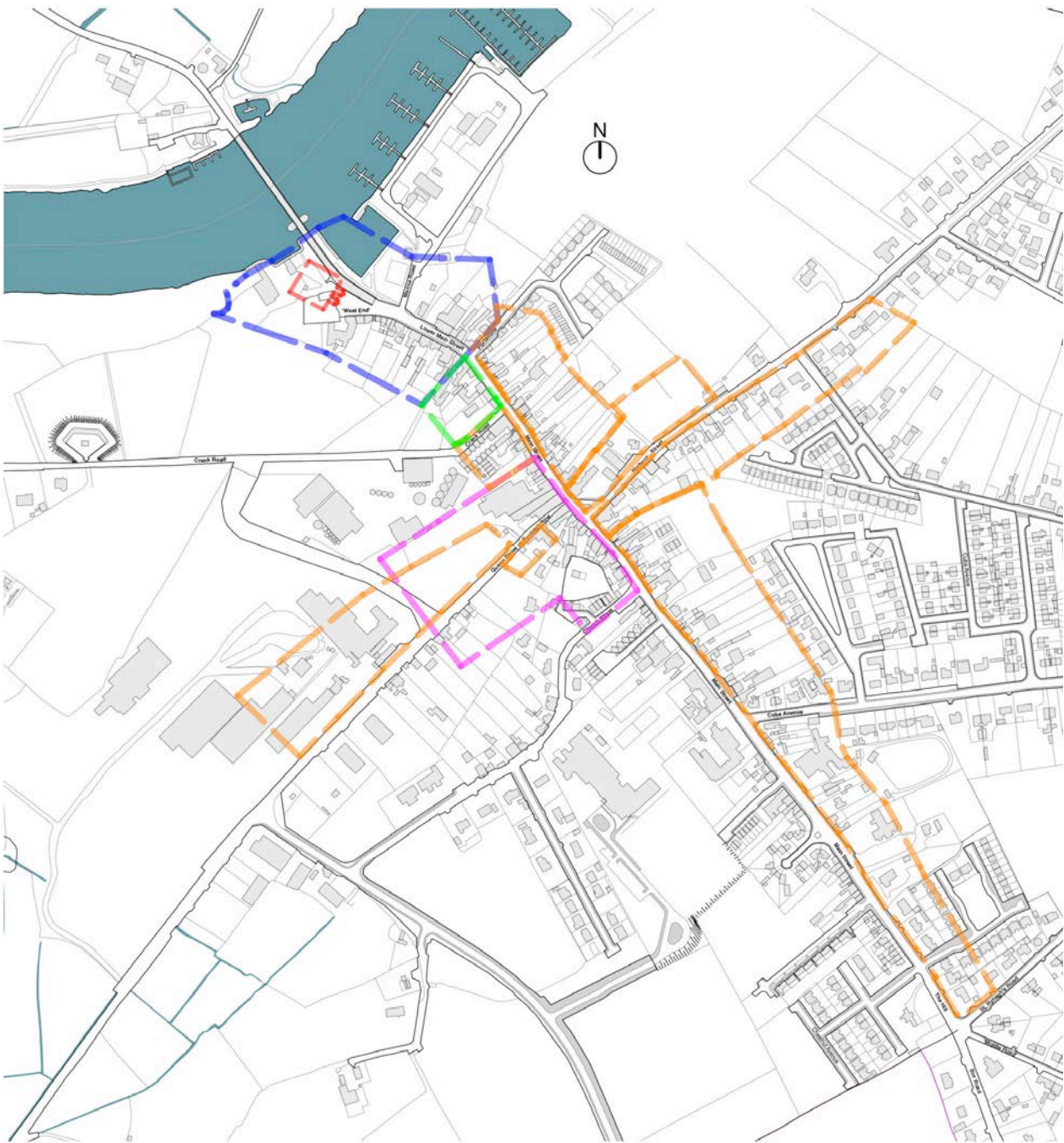


Fig. 38: Conjectural Map of Banagher
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Conjectural Map - Drawing Key

	= Historic Walled Town/ Old Banagher (Pre Tudor Plantation, Possibly Anglo-Norman in Origin)
	= Historic Walled Town Expansion (1628 Tudor Plantation Expansion of Town Defences)
	= Corporation Lands with Workers' Cottages (1628 Tudor Plantation)
	= Fort Falkland (Tudor Plantation Fortification Constructed in 1624. Possibly constructed on the site of an earlier Anglo-Norman fortification)
	= Monastic Enclosure/ Abbeylands (As indicated on Tudor Plantation maps. Possibly Early Christian in origin)

3.0 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE



Fig. 39: Historic photograph of Main Street, c.1900 with possible remnant of historic town wall highlighted at former site of Quigley's Hall. (Trodd,Valentine (1985), *Banagher on the Shannon*, Pg.26)

The historic town of Banagher is not yet fully understood, however the rich cartographic records provide us with significant insight into the town's past. Important observations noted, include the following:

- Banagher existed in the sixteenth century as a walled native Irish settlement and is possibly Anglo-Norman in origin.
- The old walled town of Banagher and the neighbouring ecclesiastical site were consolidated into one urban settlement following the 1628 Incorporation of Banagher Borough.
- Records indicate the 1628 plantation involved the establishment of corporation lands, developed with terraces of corporation weavers' cottages to support an extensive corporation sponsored cottage industry brought about by the influence of the German planter and textile merchant Mathew De Renzi.
- The riverfront at Banagher has gone through a number of extensive landscape alterations as a measure to improve river navigation and promote river trade.

- With the conflict experienced in the seventeenth century, much of the old town appears to have been destroyed, making its former layout difficult to discern.
- Fort Falkland disappeared during the seventeenth or early eighteenth century and a military barracks was constructed in its general location, which survives today in ruin.
- The Napoleonic scare resulted in a chain of defences being erected at Banagher and an increased British military presence, which lasted until the 1860s
- Banagher reached the height of its economic prosperity in the 1840s as a significant inland portal town and market town with trade links to Dublin, Athlone, Limerick and Ballinasloe.

To help document the current heritage sites within the town centre, we have subdivided the town into four zones as follows:

- Zone A** – Upper Main Street and The Hill
- Zone B** – Main Street and Monastic Banagher
- Zone C** – Lower Main Street and the Old Town
- Zone D** – Shannon Bank Park & Fanesker Tower

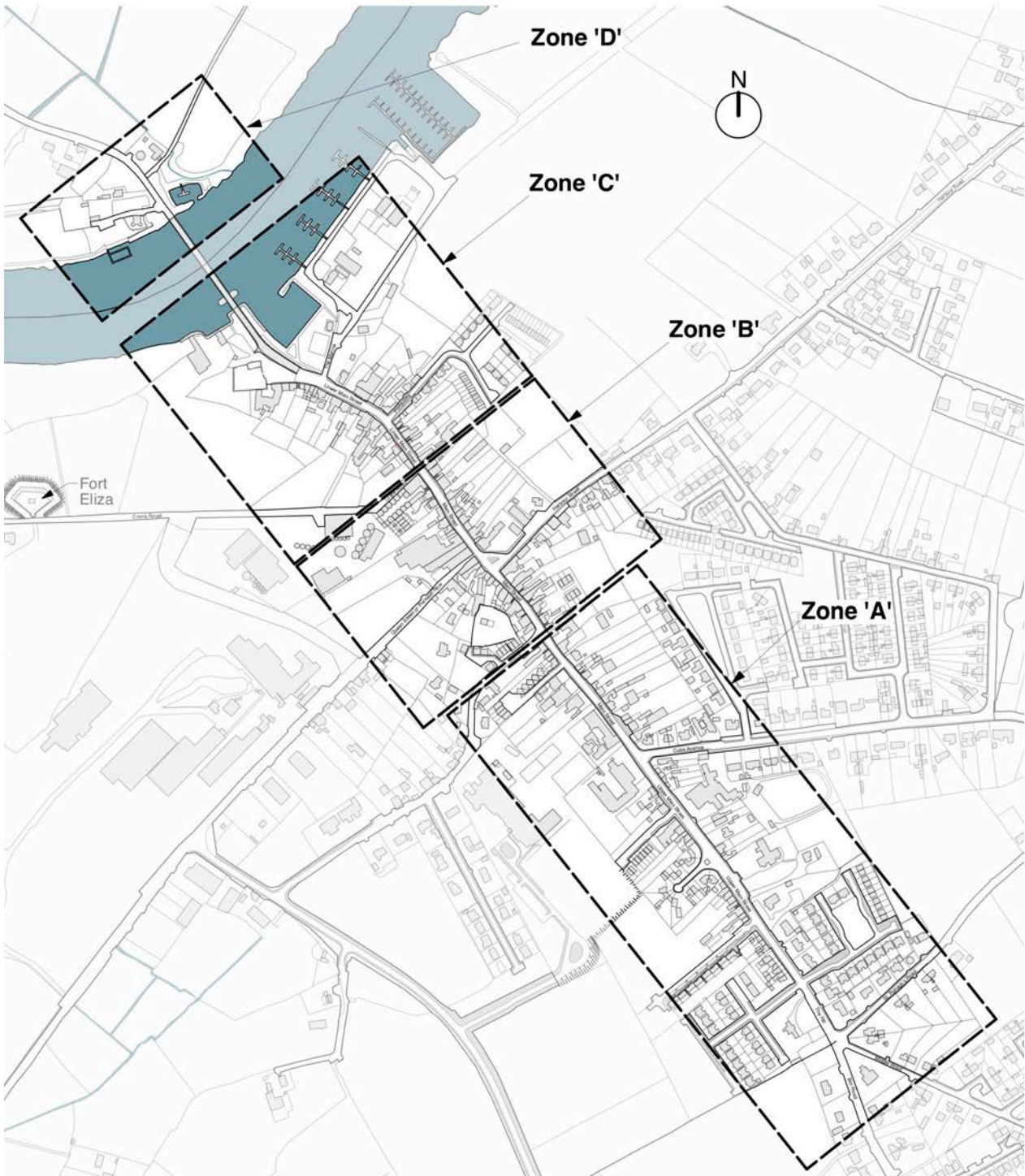


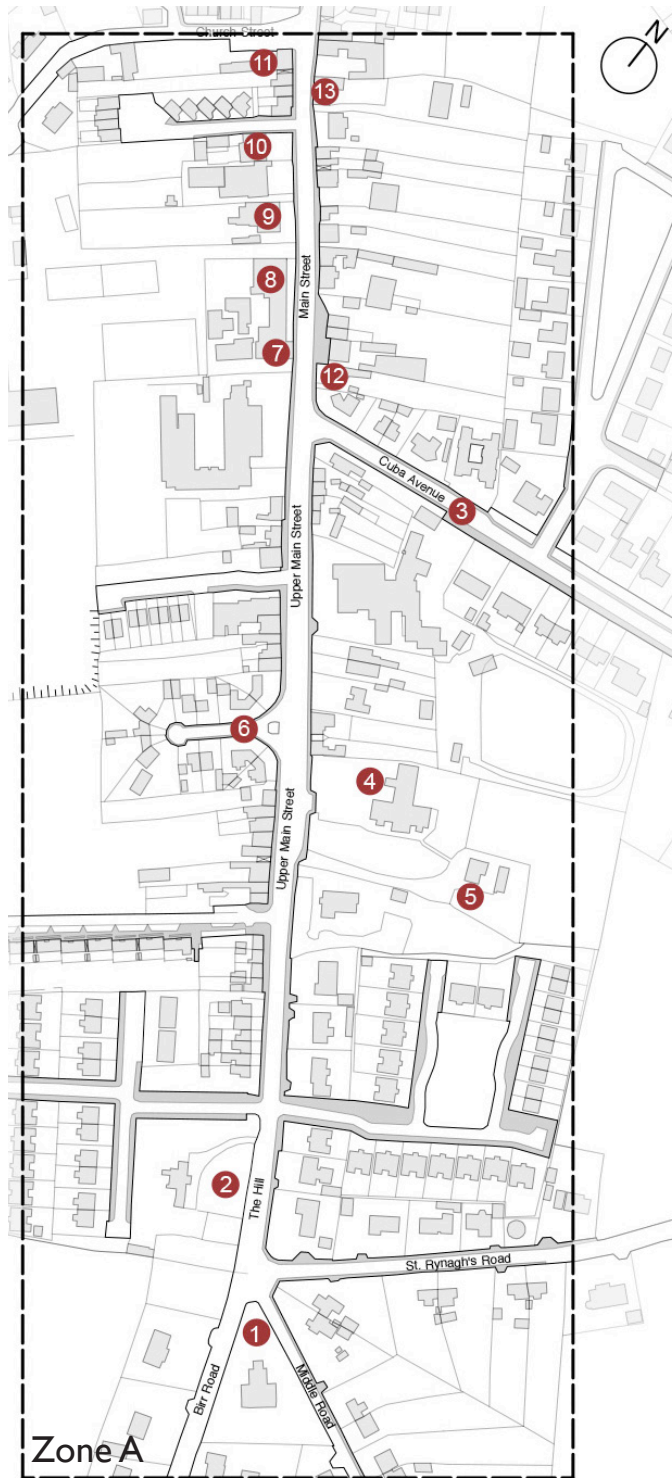
Fig. 40: Town reference map with Zones A, B, C & D. OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/Offaly County Council

Drawing Key

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Zone A | = Upper Main Street and The Hill |
| Zone B | = Main Street and Monastic Banagher |
| Zone C | = Lower Main Street and the Old Town |
| Zone D | = Shannon Bank Park and Fanesker Tower |

Zone A – Upper Main Street & The Hill

Zone A is defined as the area of Main Street, which extends from the Church of St. Paul to the Market Square.



Drawing Key

- A1 = Church of St. Paul (Church of Ireland)
- A2 = Charlotte's Way B&B (Hill House)
- A3 = Cuba Avenue (formerly to Cuba Court)
- A4 = Church of St. Rynagh (Roman Catholic)
- A5 = Church of St. Rynagh Parochial House
- A6 = Barnes-McCormack Memorial
- A7 = La Sainte Union Chapel
- A8 = La Sainte Union Boarding and Day School
- A9 = Bank of Ireland
- A10 = The Yews
- A11 = Horan's Town House
- A12 = Old Post Office Cottage
- A13 = Clonamona Cottage

Fig. 41: Zone A - Upper Main Street and The Hill. OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/
Offaly County Council

A1: Church of St. Paul (Church of Ireland)

Built in 1829 with monies loaned by the Board of First Fruits, the Church of St. Paul replaced the late medieval Chapel of St. Rynagh as a COI place of worship. The chapel is cruciform in plan, and is sited centrally on the wedge-shaped chapel grounds of 0.3hectares, between the Middle Road and Birr Road. The grounds are set behind a tall coursed rubble wall with iron railings on the front section and ashlar gate piers to the site entrance. A graveyard extends along the east section within the chapel grounds. The chapel, constructed of hammered dressed coursed limestone, is enlivened with spire, diagonal buttresses and pinnacles. Possibly designed by architects James and George Richard Pain and resembles examples



Fig. 42: Photograph of Church of St. Paul (COI)

of their work. Interior has plain white painted walls and late Georgian coved ceiling, with original seating, pew doors and high backs intact. Large stained glass window of Resurrection Scene by A.L. Moore to east gable commemorates the Bell family. Finely carved wall memorials, commemorating prominent past parishioners are of particular interest and quality.

A2: Charlotte's Way B&B (The Hill House)

Detached three-bay two-storey house, built in 1753. Formerly known as Hill House, is set within its own grounds and is located in a prominent setting on the hill of Banagher, immediately north-west of the Church of St. Paul (COI) and served as the rectory for a period. The building has been significantly altered and is now flanked by a shallower single and two-bay two-storey wings of later date to south and north respectively. After receiving his education at Cuba Court/ Banagher Royal School where he lived with his uncle and headmaster Alan Bell, Arthur Bell Nicholls took a curacy at Haworth. There he fell in love with Charlotte Brontë, marrying her in 1854 and returning to Cuba Court where they honeymooned. Charlotte died the following year, and Arthur Nicholls subsequently returned to Banagher, where he lived at Hill House and later married his cousin Mary Bell. His body lies in St Paul's graveyard, where he was buried in 1906 (OHAS).

A3: Cuba Court

According to local records, Cuba Court was built c.1734 by Colonel George Fraser, who is said to have made his fortune growing sugar in Cuba. The house was described by Maurice Craig as '*perhaps the most splendidly masculine house in the whole country*' and has been associated with the prominent Irish architect Sir Edward Lovett Pearce. The 1628 Charter of Charles I, granted Banagher a Royal Free School which eventually came to be located in Cuba Court. The main building fell into ruin in the twentieth century and was demolished c.1985. Charlotte Brontë honeymooned here and was impressed to find '*so much English order and repose in the family habits and arrangements*'. While Cuba Court is outside of Zone A, it was a prominent landmark in the neighbourhood and the extension of Cuba Avenue from the Main Street c.1720 had a significant impact on the town's layout and future development. Today, the detached



Fig. 43: Historic photograph of Cuba Court

two-storey L-plan schoolhouse survives in ruin, while the historic entrance gates with limestone gate piers survive in a moderate state of preservation.



Fig. 44: Photograph of the Church of St. Rynagh (RC)

A4: Church of St. Rynagh (Roman Catholic)

T-shaped building with steeply pitched slate roof, plain pebble-dashed exterior with tall paired lancet windows and tall gables, constructed in 1825-26 on land donated by the Armstrong family. Contained within 0.73ha, which is shared by the parochial house. The building is setback approximately 35m from the Main Street and is fronted by a forecourt with tarmacadam carpark. The site is enclosed by a high pebble-dashed wall with pre-cast concrete capping and an evergreen hedging, with metal entrance gates. A limestone tower with spire by architect William Hague was added in 1872 to the west elevation, marking the primary entrance to the nave and is a prominent landmark and striking feature.

The church interior has undergone many alterations: galleries and altars removed, the nave lengthened and sacristy and porches added (NIAH). The latest phase of reordering of the interior was undertaken by conservation architect Michael Tierney in 2013. As part of this works, a stained glass rose window composed of circle and quatrefoil was removed from the west gable of the La Sainte Union School Chapel (A7) and was inserted in the south facing elevation over the altar.

A5: Church of St. Rynagh Parochial House (Roman Catholic)

Handsome detached three-bay two-storey house, built c.1875, with hooded segmental-arched doorway flanked by canted bay windows. Sited on slightly elevated ground to the rear of Saint Rynagh's church, which together form an attractive composition. The property has a separate entrance driveway, with carefully mown lawn and is linked to the church by a sweeping pathway flanked by rosebushes.

A6: The Barnes-McCormack Memorial

'Stone monument, sculpted by Desmond Broe and styled on Early Christian high-cross design. Unveiled in 1963 it commemorates Peter Barnes, Banagher and James McCormack, Mullingar both members of the Irish Republican Army. In a controversial trial they were accused of being involved in the deaths of five people in an explosion in Coventry in 1939' (Madden). They were convicted and subsequently sentenced to death in 1940. The monument faces onto Main Street at the entrance to The Crescent, late 1950s housing development and is set behind low railings, which enclose a plot of approximately 36 sq m.

A7: La Sainte Union Chapel

Detached three-bay two-storey gable-fronted chapel, built in c.1900 as a place of worship for the sisters of La Sainte Union Convent. The chapel is perpendicular to the street and is a prominent landmark. Together with the adjacent convent building, it formed a significant religious complex and place of learning within the town. Many original architectural features of merit remain, including the pointed-arched window openings with leaded glass, stone sills, cast-iron rainwater goods and circular mosaic plaque with cut stone surround. The circular



Fig. 45: Photograph of La Sainte Union Chapel

stained glass rose window to the west-facing gable was removed in 2013 to the Church of St. Rynagh (RC). The replacement uPVC windows on the ground floor detract from its character. The chapel later served as school accommodation for the LSU boarding and day school, which closed following the opening of Banagher College, Coláiste na Sionna in 2010, located to the rear of the property. The building is currently lying idle and offers significant re-use and development potential and is on a site of approximately 0.3hectares which includes the neighbouring thirteen-bay two-storey block. The rear of the site is accessed via a gated entrance from the Main Street along the south end of the site boundary.

A8: La Sainte Union Boarding and Day School

Detached L-plan thirteen-bay two-storey over raised basement convent building, built in 1836, with rear extension. Many original architectural features of merit remain including cut stone cross finial to northern gable elevation. The stepped entrance is of particular interest with cast-iron railings, octagonal gate piers and decorative entrance gate, pannelled entrance door with leaded overhead, surmounted by a statue of Christ. Served as boarding and classroom accommodation as part of the LSU convent boarding and day school. The building has a prominent location on the street front, and its scale and many surviving features elevate it from much of the domestic and commercial architecture within the town. The

decorative cast-iron railings are largely intact and in a good state of repair and are an attractive feature on the street front. The building is currently lying idle.



Fig. 46: La Sainte Union Boarding and Day School - Main Street entrance

A9: Bank of Ireland

Constructed in 1874 as a branch office and agents' house by architect Sandham Symes, who was the appointed architect to the Bank of Ireland from 1854-1879. Handsome, detached five-bay two-storey red brick façade with traditional tuckpointing on high limestone ashlar plinth. Elegantly proportioned in domestic style, formalized by limestone details, segmental headed windows and reset porch. The building is set back from the street with forecourt and iron railings. A universal access ramp has been added along the north boundary, which returns along the front façade.



Fig. 47: Photograph of Banagher Bank of Ireland by Sandham Symes

A10: The Yews

Three-bay two-storey house, constructed c.1830. Rendered façade with limestone sills. Set back from street front behind decorative cast-iron railings. An attractive feature is the later decorative entrance porch, with pediment on fluted Doric columns. The building returns along the south gable and fronts the adjacent residential development access road. Currently vacant.



Fig. 48: Photograph of 'The Yews'

A11: Horan's town house

Three-bay, two-storey late Georgian house c.1840 with roughcast render and smooth rendered plinth with extensions to the rear. Formerly a terraced property but became end-of-terrace following the demolition of the neighbouring building, as part of street widening works c.1990s to accommodate access of articulated vehicles onto Main Street. The gable was strengthened and overlooks the south elevation of the Market Square. There are a number of outbuildings to the rear including stables where Anthony Trollope is alleged to have 'once kept his hunting horses' (Trodd). The site is enclosed along the south boundary by a modern rubble stone, sand and cement wall, which was constructed as part of the road widening works.

A12: Old Post Office cottage

Single storey detached two-bay cottage, formerly located next to the old post office (now demolished), where the eminent author Anthony Trollope was once post office surveyor. Set back from the street behind low boundary wall and metal entrance gate. Altered with sand and cement render, uPVC windows, rainwater goods and entrance door.



Fig. 49: Photograph of Clonamona Cottage

A13: Clonamona Cottage

Detached five-bay two-storey house with attic, built c.1830, with timber shopfront and return to rear. Random coursed limestone walls with evidence of roughcast render. Timber sash windows with modern concrete surrounds and tooled stone sills. Property is currently vacant and was formerly used as a barracks, before being converted to a dwelling house and shop (known locally as Galbrath's). The roughcast render has weathered away and has revealed the framework of the former timber shopfront, which is spanned over with a brick archway.



Fig. 50: Photograph of decorative entrance porch to 'The Yews'

Zone B – Main Street and Monastic Banagher

Zone B is defined as the area of Main Street, which extends from the Market Square to the intersection of the Crank Road and Main Street.



Drawing Key

- B1 = Market Square
- B2 = Killrynagh (Church of Cill Rignaihe)
- B3 = Grave Monument
- B4 = Traditional Shopfronts
- B5 = Library Square
- B6 = Corporation Weavers' Cottage
- B7 = Townhouse
- B8 = Crank House

Fig. 51: Zone B - Main Street & Monastic Banagher. OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/Offaly County Council



Fig. 52: Photograph of Market Square today

B1: Market Square

The square occupies the junction between Main Street and Church Street, along the southern extent of the former ecclesiastical settlement. According to tradition, the Banagher cross-shaft once stood in the Market Square next to a crystal spring (Cooke). The Logan map indicates the square was formed by the widening of the street corners to the north and south of Church Street. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map, indicates the north side of Church Street was later infilled with a townhouse, thus reducing the square size in plan however, the recent demolition of the end-of-terrace house in this location has possibly returned the street to its former layout. The stone bell cote of the late medieval Chapel of Saint Rynagh is partially visible from the Market Square and is accessed by an entrance gate to the rear of a derelict rubble stone building, which defines the west boundary. A historic photograph of the square, identifies that the building along the north boundary of the square was significantly altered, with the window openings widened, timber sash windows replaced, uPVC rainwater goods added to eaves and sand and cement render to external walls.



Fig. 53: Historic photograph of Market Square

B2: Kilrynagh (Church of Cill Rignaihe)

The plane rectangular rubble stone chapel is located in the centre of the graveyard site of approximately 0.24ha and is aligned east-west upon the summit of a grassy hill, which offers commanding views of the Shannon floodplain from the west gable elevation. There is no discernible pathway around the site. The grass to the south of the chapel is crowded with historic gravemarkers, with few to the north along the downward slope of the hill. A nineteenth-century rubble masonry wall encloses the chapel grounds and retains the earth of the chapel site, which is significantly elevated above the surrounding properties, with the fall at its steepest along the western boundary. The drop-in level suggests the site was encroached upon as the town expanded, which is consistent with the cartographic record.



Fig. 54: Photograph of Late Medieval Chapel of St. Rynagh



Fig. 55: Detail of carved limestone headstone in chapel graveyard

The boundary wall varies in width and is generally 1m high on the chapel side. The site is overlooked along its north and eastern boundary by the rear of properties along Main Street, while to the south it is overlooked by a terrace of two storey dwellings. To the west, the chapel site overlooks the rear garden of a single property, which cranks back from the Main Street and is identified in the Logan map as a former cul-de-sac off the Main Street. The buildings in the rear of this property (Hunt's shop) and the neighbouring property to the south are of interest, and are likely to contain historic fabric.

The chapel was divided in the eighteenth century with a rubble wall to ridge height, which divides the single aisled structure into two compartments. The western section is roofed and houses the Armstrong family burial vault, and is accessed on the north elevation. The eastern section and former chancel is unroofed and is accessed via a large pointed window on the east gable. The walls are of random rubble with evidence of roughcast lime render. Many slates are missing and the timber roof joists are rotten and require replacement. There is significant vegetation throughout the structure, and is undermining the building fabric. There are remnants of joist holes on the chancel interior walls, which may be evidence of a former upper floor. The high content of dressed recycled stone in the fabric of the building, suggests that the structure was rebuilt with the stones of a former medieval structure of significance, which was likely part of the larger ecclesiastical settlement.



Fig. 56: Sixteenth-century graveslab of Sir John MacCoghlan (Fitzpatrick & O'Brien, *Medieval Churches of Offaly* (1998), pg.140)

B3: Grave Monument

Stone carved gravestone commemorating the death of local chieftain Sir John Mac Coghlan 1590, which was commissioned by the deceased in 1576, several years before his death. The gravestone, located within the chancel of the late-medieval chapel, is listed as a recorded monument (RMP OF021-003003-).



Fig. 57: Photograph of S. Lyons Pub

B4: Traditional shopfronts

A particular feature along this section of Main Street is the survival of a number of the town's tradition timber shopfronts including S.Lyons Pub, Hunt's shop, Flynn's shop and J.J. Hough's Singing Pub. The traditional timber shopfronts appear to be the earliest surviving shopfronts in the town and are noted by their modest design, straight lines and slender proportions. S. Lyons shopfront is of particular modest design, as it consists of a plane timber shopfront and display window enlivened with sand and cement fluted pilasters and raised corbels and simple cornice. There is no paneling to the fascia, however the name of the pub is built out from the rendered facade in sand and cement lettering.



Fig. 58: Photograph of vacant traditional shopfront on Main Street



Fig. 59: Photograph of JJ. Hough's Singing Pub traditional shopfront



Fig. 60: Photograph of Flynn's traditional shopfront



Fig. 61: Photograph of Hunt's traditional shopfront

B5: Library Square

Spacious square with car park, fronted by Banagher Library to the east, Corrigan's Corner House to the south, and a three-storey unfinished mixed-use property along the north boundary. Historically referred to as 'Moore's Corner' after a prominent figure and former schoolmaster of the town, active in town affairs during the foundation of the state (Trodd). The historic map record, reveals that this area was not historically a square but rather marked the junction between the Harbour Street and Main Street, hence the local reference to the area as 'a corner'. The historic record indicates that the land was acquired by the Irish Land Commission in 1953 from a local estate, and the Banagher Branch Library and off-street parking facility was added in 1981 by Offaly County Council (Trodd). Today, the square is referred to locally as 'Corrigan's Corner' or 'Library Square'. The square is predominantly occupied by a carpark, with a pedestrian paved area fronting the Main Street, with four stone sculptures by Clíodhna Cussen (added 1999), reminiscent of high-cross design with carved panels depicting the River Shannon. These sculptures were commissioned as a set of seven, with three relocated to the public harbour following relandscaping works c2010.

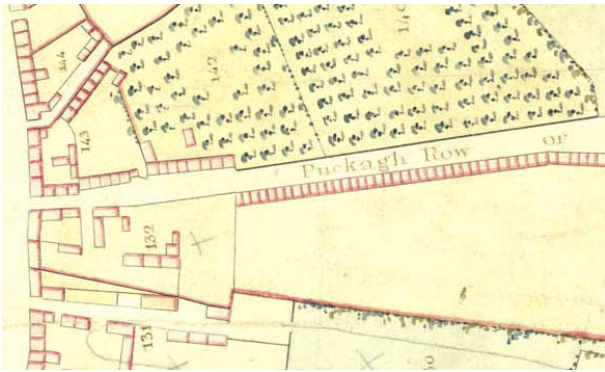


Fig. 62: Extract from Logan's Map c1828 showing Puckagh Row

B6: Corporation Weavers' Cottage

The cartographic study identified that the 'Corporation Lands' indicated in the 1628 charter maps for the Incorporation of Banagher Borough, most likely extended along the eastern side of Main Street from the riverbank to The Hill and along Harbour Street and Puckagh Row, as noted on the conjectural map (Fig. 38). The Logan map and First Edition OS map, when read in conjunction with De Renzi's letters provide evidence that these lands were developed with terraces of corporation weavers' cottages to support a corporation sponsored weaving industry for the benefit of the corporation and the Crown. These properties were indicated as modest in scale, with a shared commonage to the rear of the terraces.



Fig. 63: Photograph of possible surviving corporation weavers' cottage on Queen Street/ Puckagh Row (image taken from Google Streetview)

A possible surviving example of a seventeenth-century weavers' cottage, can be found on the south aspect of Queen Street (Puckagh Row) approximately 80m from Main Street. It is consistent with the Logan map, First and Second Edition OS maps and is situated very close to the roadside. It is a modest single storey cottage structure of random rubble, with traditional half door, and two window openings,

which appear to be original. It stands alone today, however the rubble stonewall of the front elevation is jagged in profile, suggesting it was formerly part of a terrace. The gable wall is of rubble stone to the eaves level, and has been built up in concrete blockwork to enclose the attic gable. The pitched roof is of modern concrete tiles, which the records indicate replaced traditional thatch.



Fig. 64: Photograph of J.J. Hough's Singing Pub historic roof and chimney with doorway (Photo by E. Broderick)

The cartographic record provides evidence that as the town expanded, these cottages were either demolished to make way for larger townhouses or were modified and incorporated into larger structures. One property on Main Street which may retain fabric of original weavers' cottages is J.J. Hough's Singing Pub (Fig. 59, Fig. 64). The unusually wide chimney stacks and asymmetrical 'M-shaped roof' is of particular interest and may have been used as an architectural device to help consolidate a series of older structures under one roof, however, this has yet to be confirmed and further investigation is recommended.

A false chimney stack was constructed on the north gable, which helps support the roof over an archway linking the main street to the rear of the property. There are a number of similar archways along Banagher's Main Street. In the UAS of Co. Offaly, John Bradley identifies these as potentially significant, as such archways are often a feature of seventeenth-century towns. In the case of Banagher, many of these archways would have provided access to the commonage behind the weavers' cottages. Identifying their date is challenging, as many are coated in modern render, which conceals the masonry beneath.



Fig. 65: Photo of Townhouse (B7) on Main Street (Google Streetview)

B7: Townhouse

End of terrace three-bay two-storey house, built c.1900 (NIAH). Many of the original features remain and of particular interest are the segmental-arched window openings to the ground floor with tripartite timber sash windows. Currently vacant.



Fig. 66: Photograph of Crank House

B8: Crank House

Early Georgian, six-bay two-storey building and one of two full-height bow fronted Georgian properties with conical roof, fronting the Main Street. Constructed c.1750, it was formerly a brewery and was converted into a malt house in the nineteenth century. It has been restored and is currently a visitor centre with offices, conference room and coffee shop. An integral carriage arch, leads to a courtyard on the southern end, which is cobbled and overlooked by neighbouring two-storey buildings and provides pedestrian access to a gated residential development in the former malt house beyond. The property returns along the north and fronts onto the Crank Road. The bow front with tooled limestone Gibbsian doorcase and venetian window is of particular interest. The door threshold



Fig. 67: Photograph of Crank House bow fronted entrance

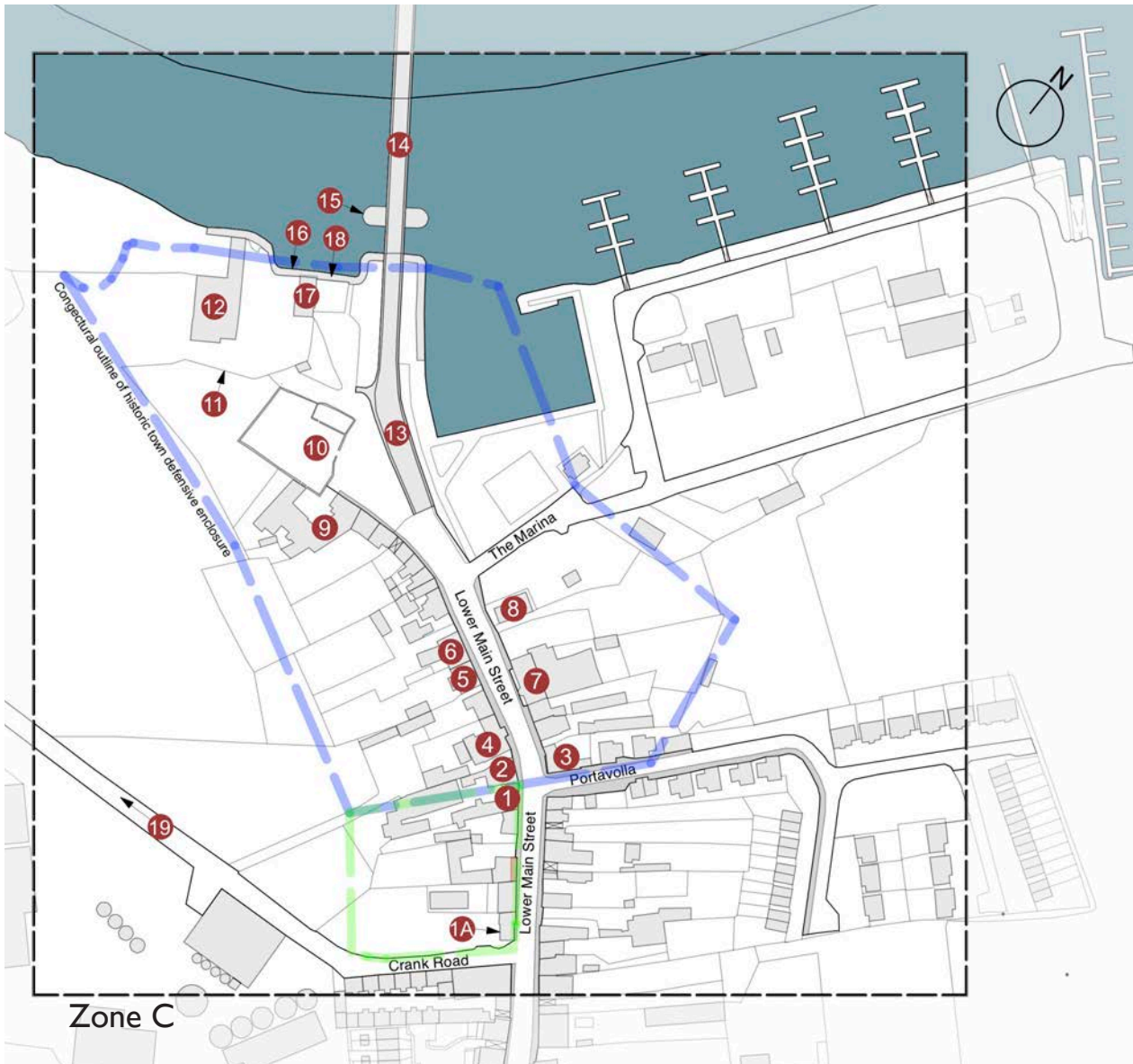
retains an original slab of Clonmacnoise marble, which was a variety of crinoidal limestone quarried locally at Clerhane, south of Clonmacnoise. Like many of the buildings along Main Street, the Crank House may be a composite of earlier structures. Recent renovation works revealed a cut stone arch of significant span in the conference room and former kitchen, which is possibly part of an original open fireplace, which was later infilled.



Fig. 68: Photograph of Crank House conference room fireplace

Zone C – Lower Main Street and the Old Town

Zone C is defined as the area of Main Street which extends from the intersection of the Crank Road and Main Street, to the River Shannon and includes the extent of the historic defensive enclosure of the old town.



Drawing Key

C1A= Donegan's Shop /Old Market Hse	C7 = Royal Shannon Hotel	C14 = Banagher Bridge
C1 = Quigley's Merchant Tailors	C8 = Banagher Billiard Hall	C15 = Swivel Bridge Pier (Banagher Bridge)
C2 = Shannon Ballroom / Quigley's Hall	C9 = Vine House	C16 = Harbour Wall and Quay
C3 = Town House	C10 = Military Barrack and Fort Falkland	C17 = City of Dublin Steam Packet Company Building
C4 = The Railway Bar	C11 = Bridge Malt House Site Boundary Wall	C18 = Hand Wharf Crane
C5 = KP Egan's Shop and Town House	C12 = Bridge Malt House	C19 = Fort Eliza
C6 = Robinson's Town House	C13 = Banagher Bridge Ramp	

Fig. 69: Zone C - Lower Main Street and the Old Town. OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/Offaly County Council



Fig. 70: Photograph of Kieran Donegan's Shop / 'Old Market House'

CIA: Donegan's Shop / 'Old Market House'
 (*Entry added in November 2022)

This property is known locally as 'Kieran Donegan's shop' after the former owner and what was a popular bicycle shop, which also sold children's toys and fishing tackle before closing its doors c.2010. It is located on the corner of Main Street and Crank Road and is composed of a two-bay two-storey element with pitched roof and a flat roofed single storey element to the street corner. The former shop was located on the ground floor, with a store at first floor level. The historic significance of this building was only recently brought to light, when renovation works (early 2020) involving the stripping of modern cement renders and internal plasterwork revealed a pre1700s core and external masonry walls, approx. 800mm thick.

Logan's map (1828) describes this building as 'Old Market House' and is evidence of its former significance. The recent works revealed the elevation onto Main Street contains evidence of three historic arched openings, now infilled. One of these arches, within the two-storey element, appears to be fully intact and is still partially discernible through the modern render (Fig. 70). The scale of the arched opening is impressive and suggests it was part of a historic arcade fronting onto the street, which is a typical feature of a historic Market Building in Ireland.

Local records indicate that there was an integral carriage arch on the western end of the south facing gable, which was recently demolished and also contained pre1700s building fabric. The discovery of a historic market house in this location, just south of

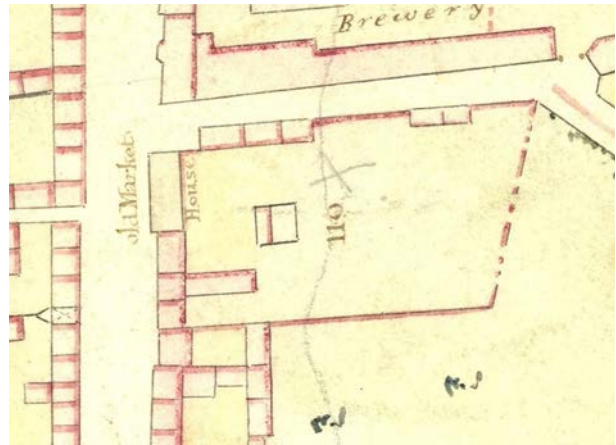


Fig. 71: Extract from Logan's Map c1828 showing 'Old Market House'

the town defences and town gate is significant and is deserving of further investigation, with potential to reveal much about the town's past. Pre1700s buildings in Ireland are rare, and it may be among the oldest standing remains of a market house in Ireland.

The historic records suggest the building is the former 'Tholsel of Banagher' referred to in the 1628 Charter; however, the thick masonry walls and cranked gable elevation is not typical of a building from this period and raises the possibility that the structure might date back to the native Irish sixteenth century town, where Sir John Mac Coghlan was granted a license to hold a weekly market and is possibly older still. The building appears to have been converted into two apartments or bedsits, with own door access from the Main Street.



Fig. 72: Detail of 'Old Market House' south facing gable elevation, which is curiously cranked in plan with demolished integral carriage arch and hacked 'fire escape' opening to west facing elevation.



Fig. 73: Photograph of Quigley's Merchant Tailors

C1: Quigley's Merchant Tailors

Prominent terraced three-bay three-storey house, and former R.I.C. barracks, built c.1800. The building was purchased by 'The Tailor' Thomas A. Quigley c1900, who creatively reinvented the property as a tailoring business with a traditional shopfront on the ground floor. The creative upgrade works included the beautification of the facade, which still survive and include: ruled-and-lined rendered walls with stucco quoins; stucco window and entrance door surrounds; and stucco band to second floor with raised lettering. The shopfront is a fine example of a traditional heritage shopfront design and comprises of large display windows flanking recessed double timber doors, with fluted stucco pilasters supporting a timber fascia with raised lettering and decorative console brackets.



Fig. 74: Photograph of the Shannon Ballroom /Quigley's Hall

C2: Shannon Ballroom/ Quigley's Hall

Former ballroom referred to locally as 'Quigley's Hall'. Constructed c.1930 by Thomas A. Quigley with an auto-repair and radio shop on the ground floor. A historic photograph of the street c.1900 (Fig. 39), which captures the premises before its construction, reveals that the building was previously occupied by two flat roofed single-storey premises. The property straddles the conjectural line of the walled enclosure of the old town of Banagher and the same historic photograph does appear to indicate a large section of the town defences located between the two single storey properties. While this section of wall has not survived, some elements of it may remain to the rear of the premises and further investigation is recommended.



Fig. 75: Detail of Quigley's Merchant Drapery traditional shopfront

C3: Town House

Detached corner house located on the north corner of the intersection of the Portavolla access road and Main Street. Three-bay two-storey with attic, built c.1820 (NIAH), with storey and a half annex to north. Windows to south facing gable at ground, first and attic level and extension to rear returns along the northern boundary of the access road. The facade is pebble dashed with stucco quoins and stucco window surrounds. The property is set behind iron railings along the Main Street and is currently unoccupied. The Logan map reveals that the property was bounded on its southern gable by a laneway leading to the towns Fair Green, prior to its relocation to Cuba Avenue. The adjacent north facing gable, shares an access road with the neighbouring property and is surmounted by an attractive bespoke street lamp which is supported between the building gables.



Fig. 76: Photograph of the Railway Bar

C4: The Railway Bar

End-of-terrace five-bay two-storey Georgian house, with pubfront to ground floor c.1850 and modern extension to the rear. Central projecting bay with round-headed door opening, side lights and limestone threshold, surmounted by Wyatt window. Many original features have survived and the rendered chimney stacks are of particular interest. As the name suggests, this building was once used as the main hotel for locomotive travellers before the Clara to Banagher Railway closed in the early 1960s, the turning circle for which was located adjacent. The traditional heritage pubfront, consists of a timber door with overlight and plane display window to the side, which is married together with a raised sand and cement fascia and hand painted lettering. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) have dated the building c.1820 however, the chimney stacks and surviving first floor timber sash windows appear to be of an earlier date and suggest the building is Early Georgian c.1750.



Fig. 77: Detail of Railway Bar traditional shopfront (www.theguardian.com)



Fig. 78: Photograph of the K.P. Egan traditional shopfront

C5: KP Egan Shop and Town House

Former home of Kieran P. Egan (1918-76) who served in Dáil Éireann as a T.D. until 1965 (Trodd). Semi-detached three-bay three-storey house, built c.1830 (NIAH), with traditional heritage shopfront. Smooth render to ground floor with rendered plinth and pebbledash to upper floors. *The massive chimneystack with its mix of red and yellow brick is an imposing structural feature of this building* (NIAH).



Fig. 79: Photograph of Robinson's Town House

C6: Robinson's Town House

Detached double-pile three-bay two-storey house, built c.1820, with carriage arch to north-west and single-storey return to rear (NIAH). The house is vacant, but retains much of its original fabric. The rusticated limestone carriage arch is of particular interest and once formed the entrance to a large carriage house (Trodd) which was possibly used by the military.

The Logan map labels the rear of the property as 'Old Distillery', suggesting its previous use. The rear gardens and outhouses are extensive and of archaeological interest, as some of the seventeenth-century town may survive in the fabric of the out-buildings. The rear boundary wall (Fig. 81) is also of



Fig. 80: Photograph of former carriage house entrance

interest, and follows the line of the conjectural town wall defences (Fig. 38 & Fig. 69) and possibly retains part of the original walls. It is of random rubble, with remnants of lime plaster, suggesting it was previously incorporated into the Old Distillery, since demolished. The upper section appears to have been crenelated, with the embrasures infilled with mortar and rubble. The wall now forms the rear boundary of a walled garden, now derelict. There is evidence of subsidence, and much of the lime pointing has been washed out. The stone quality is generally of a low-grade limestone, which is vulnerable to decay, if left unrendered and exposed to the elements. At the time of survey, the wall appeared to have been recently stripped of vegetation and ivy growth. With no strategy to conserve the wall, it is particularly vulnerable to root damage when the vegetation becomes re-established.



Fig. 81: Photograph of possible remains of historic town defences with infilled embrasures



Fig. 82: Photograph of the Royal Shannon Hotel

C7: Royal Shannon Hotel

Located on the east side of Lower Main Street, this former Georgian townhouse is at the heart of the historic town and is likely constructed on the site of a former burgess plot. It consists of three bays and is two and a half storeys, with steep pitched slate roof. The walls are ruled and lined render and of particular interest is the proud and ornately detailed bow entrance front, with conical slate roof and many of the original features intact.

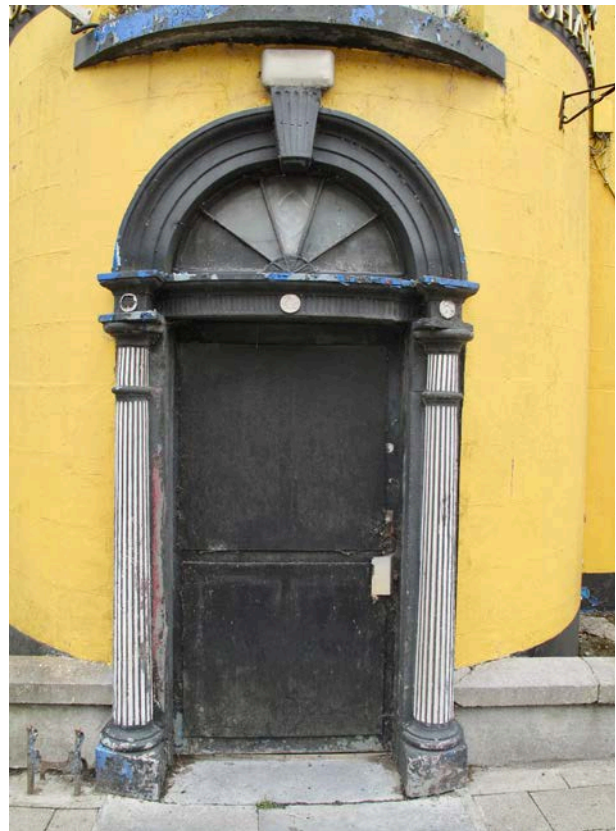


Fig. 83: Detail of Royal Shannon Hotel bow fronted entrance doorway



Fig. 84: Photograph of Royal Shannon Hotel coach house

The hotel is attached to an end-of-terrace two-storey former coach house, which was modified and incorporated into the hotel premises. The render has been removed from the coach house façade to reveal a random coursed limestone construction with limestone carriage arch. The coach house was extended to overlook a garden to the north-west off the Lower Main Street, which is bounded along the street front by a surviving cast iron railing. There is approximately 0.46ha to the rear of the hotel property which is accessible from the Main Street and offers significant development potential.



Fig. 85: Extract from Shannon Commissioners survey 1840 showing 'Old Quay' to the rear of the Royal Shannon Hotel. *Waterways Ireland Archive*

Among the historic drawings held at the Waterways Ireland archive in Enniskillen, is a survey of 'land required to be taken' by the Shannon Commissioners in 1840. The survey reveals that the old harbour extended to the north-west of the hotel premises, where it indicates an 'Old Quay'. This section of the former harbour was reclaimed as part of the Shannon

Commissioners works but would have been a very significant feature in the historic town and emphasises the former significance of the hotel premises.

The rear coursed random rubble boundary wall to the rear of the hotel property is unusually splayed in plan and has been noted in the archaeological survey record as possibly constructed on the line of the former town defences. This section of wall is largely inaccessible and is heavily overgrown with vegetation within the site boundary.

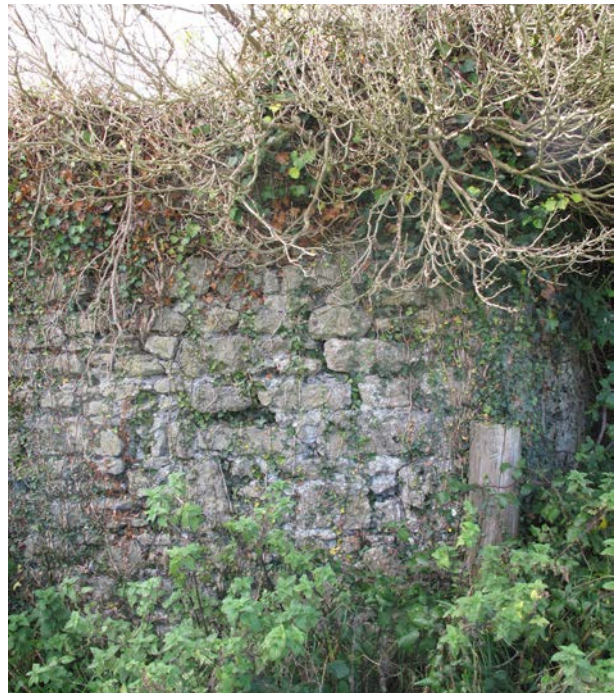


Fig. 86: Detail of rear masonry boundary wall to Royal Shannon Hotel

Today, the hotel is derelict and the rear modern extension has suffered from fire damage. Many sections of historic glass to the Wyatt windows are broken and the timber frames and sashes require repair, which should be undertaken by a specialist joiner with experience in the repair of historic windows. The front facade requires repainting and there are large holes developing in the historic slate roof, which could be repaired by an experienced roofer with relatively small expense.

The hotel conservation works, and measures to improve its development potential are noted later in this report as priority conservation and town improvement works. For details refer to Chapter 8.0, Implementation Recommendations, Project 04.

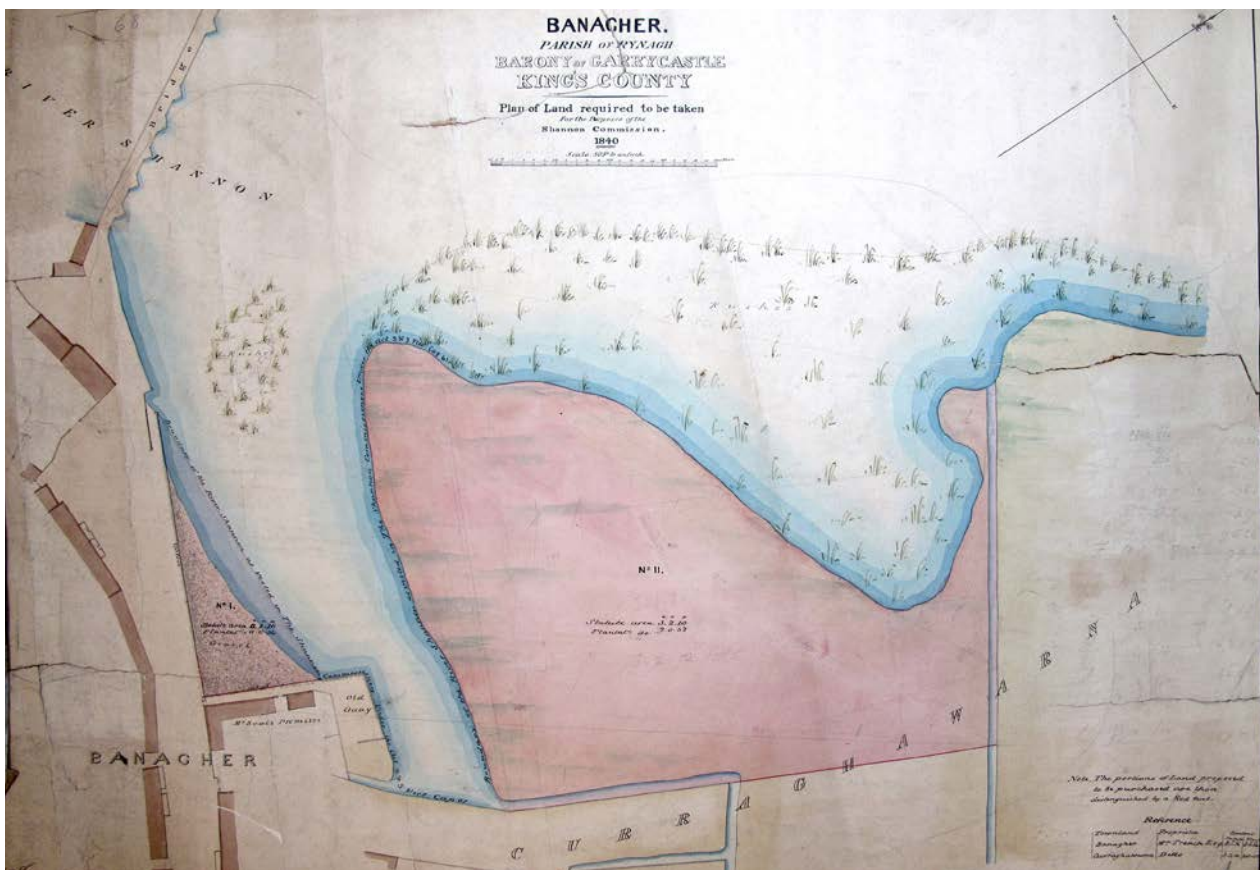


Fig 87: 'Plan of Land required to be taken for the Purposes of the Shannon Commission 1840'. Waterways Ireland Archive. (Photo by E. Broderick)

C8: Banagher Billiard Hall

Detached two-bay single-storey gable-fronted billiard hall, built c.1950 with modern extension to the rear. Roughcast render to walls with smooth rendered panels flanking the front elevation (NIAH). Set behind a low roughcast rendered boundary wall and entrance gate. Historic surveys, indicate the hall is sited west of the former 'Old Quay' and harbour, which was infilled as part of the Shannon Commissioners River Shannon Navigation Improvement Works 1841-1843.



Fig 88: Photograph of Vine House

C9: Vine House

Two-storey house and former Vine House Bar and Restaurant, end-of-terrace dwelling along the south-west end of Main Street, and adjacent to Banagher Military Barracks. The dwelling house is set back from the Barracks with a courtyard to the south-west gable, which is enclosed by a single storey extension and a walled and gated entrance. The metal entrance gate is of particular local interest and is designed and constructed by Dan Edwards, local blacksmith, craftsman and artist from Clonfanlough. The gable of a ruined property stands at the rear of the current dwelling and may relate to the previous seventeenth-century town layout. The elevation of the main building is of coursed rubble stone and brick and is shown with roughcast render in historic photographs. On the front elevation, ground level is the remains of a medieval tooled stone fragment, and floriated tryskel design, one of the few surviving examples in the country and is evidence of the medieval history of the area. The courtyard is of special archaeological interest, due to its proximity to Fort Falkland.



Fig. 89: Photograph of Banagher Military Barracks

C10: Banagher's Military Barracks and Fort Falkland

The barrack's enclosure wall is two-storeys high and is of roughcast rendered rubble limestone with a cut stone segmental-headed entrance to the east, which faces onto the approach road off the Main Street. The majority of internal structures were illegally demolished in the 1990s, however, historic photographs and survey drawings reveal the interior was composed of two buildings in a Georgian domestic style, consisting of the officers' quarters (three-storey) along the west wall and the soldiers' quarters (two-storey) to the north wall (see Fig. 95).



Fig. 90: Photograph of Banagher Military Barrack's entrance

The single-storey powder magazine and gun platform, which represents the Napoleonic upgrade works, survives in ruin and is located on the north-east corner. Early accounts indicate the barracks housed 3 officers and 60 soldiers. The barracks is located on the site of the former seventeenth-century Fort Falkland and is of particular archaeological significance. Evidence of the former fort was confirmed through archaeological testing by Dr. Jim Higgins in 1998, which uncovered 'massive D-shaped bastions' in the

vicinity of the barracks entrance. The bastion design was atypical of a seventeenth-century fort and raises the possibility that Fort Falkland was an extension and upgrade of Banagher Castle, which De Renzi claimed was constructed by the Anglo Normans in the twelfth century and was overthrown by the Mac Coghlan, which remains a subject of debate.



Fig. 91: Photo. of raised gun platform to corner of Barracks enclosure

C11: Bridge Malt House site boundary wall

High roughcast random rubble wall, with original square cut limestone gate piers. The original gate is missing and replaced with corrugated sheet metal. The boundary wall defines the limit of the Bridge Malt House premises along the south and south-east. The wall cranks in plan and ends abruptly. Historic map records held at the Waterways Ireland archive in Enniskillen, show that the mill yard once contained a large mill dam (now infilled) and was bounded along the east by the Old Bridge, since demolished.

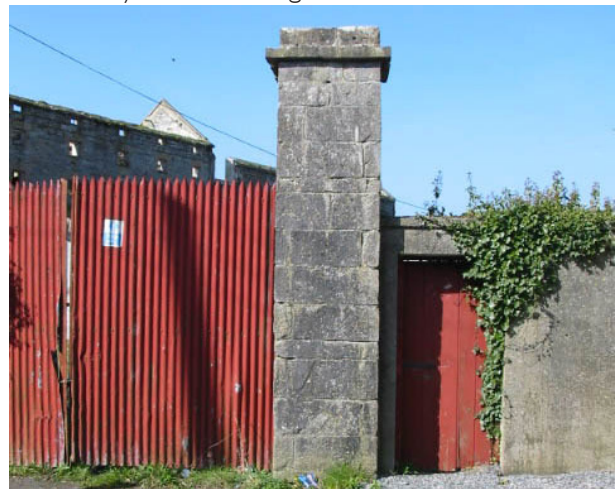


Fig. 92: Photograph of Bridge Malt House cut limestone entrance pier



Fig. 93: Photograph of Bridge Malt House

C12: Bridge Malt House

Five-storey high, 7.48m wide and 47m long rubble masonry shell of former mill building. Aligned north-south, with north facing gable overlooking the river. The shell is constructed in two sections, with the south section a possible later addition to the front eighteenth-century flour mill (Hamond). The structure is unroofed and in an advanced stage of dereliction. The site is an important gateway into Banagher, and enhances the composition of Banagher Bridge, and Cromwell's Castle on the Connacht bank.

The historic map record reveals that a mill dam existed to the east of the malt house and former mill, downstream of the first five arches of the Old Bridge but was later infilled as part of the Shannon Navigation Improvement works and the construction of the harbour wall and quay. The Bridge Malt House site has significant tourism development potential but may be limited by seasonal flooding, as noted in the OCC Development Plan 2014-2020 (Volume 2: Banagher Town Plan).

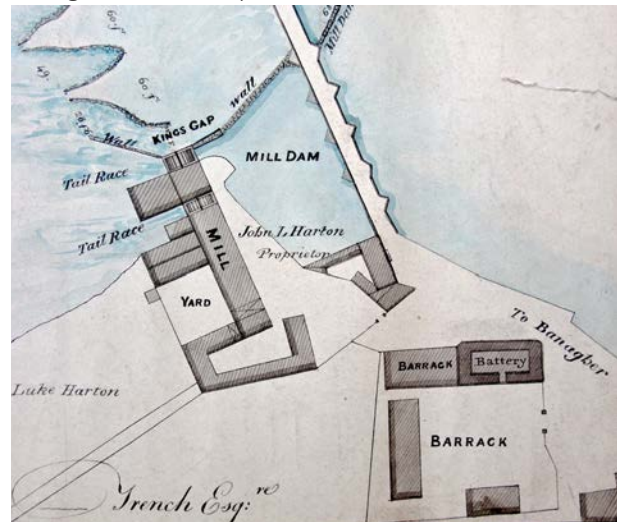


Fig. 94: Detail of Shannon Commission 'Survey of the Eel Weirs at Banagher' by William Stokes 1836 (Waterways Ireland Archive, Enniskillen)

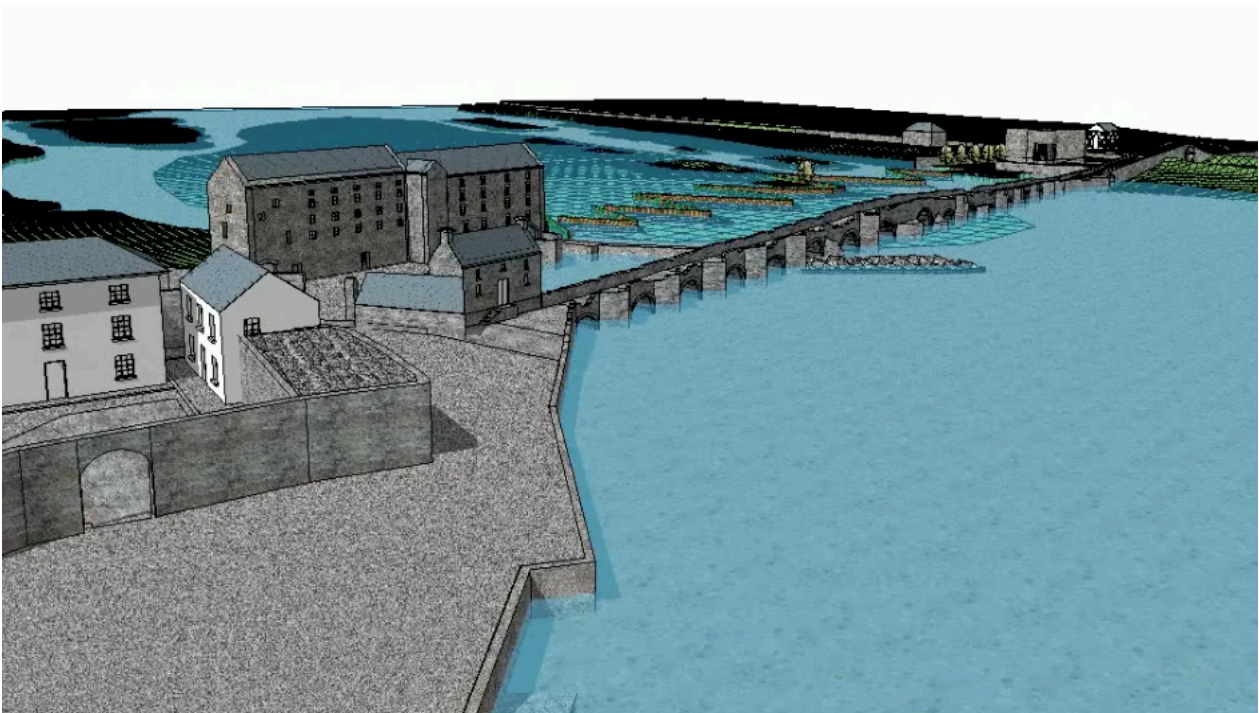


Fig. 95: Computer generated image and recreation of the river Shannon at Banagher with old harbour and 'Old Bridge', prior to the Shannon Navigation Improvement Works 1841-1843. (Image by Eoghan Broderick)

C13: Banagher Bridge Ramp

The bridge ramp was constructed by the Shannon Commissioners in 1843 to compensate for the height differential between the Leinster and Connacht bank. It is approximately 9m wide and rises from Lower Main Street and continues for a distance of approximately 27m where it becomes the bridge proper. The ramp follows the general location of the former harbour wall and is cranked in plan, with a flight of cut stone steps midway along its length on the barracks side.

A negative aspect of the bridge ramp design is how it divides the riverbank, and impedes pedestrian movement between the public harbour to the east, and the quay to the west. There is a narrow walkway under the former swivel arch however, at approximately 700mm in width and with no guarding along the water edge, it is inadequate and unsafe for public use. A large area of public realm land exists to the west of the bridge ramp, which is underutilized and has significant amenity potential and would benefit from being linked to the public harbour to increase footfall to the area. Proposals to improve this area and the towns general connection with the public harbour and river is noted as a priority



Fig. 96: Photograph of the west facing elevation of the bridge ramp

conservation and town improvement project later in this report. For details refer to Chapter 8.0, Project 01 - Riverbank Park.

C14: Banagher Bridge

The new six arch masonry bridge was constructed in 1843 and replaced the seventeen arch Old Bridge of c.1685. A seventh opening on the town side of the bridge had a cast-iron swivel arch which has been replaced with a fixed reinforced concrete single span that is still in place. The masonry arches of dressed limestone span 17.8m and are the 'longest spanning



Fig. 97: Aerial photograph of Banagher Bridge ramp (image by iDrone.ie)



Fig. 98: Photograph of the east facing elevation of Banagher Bridge. (Photo by E. Broderick)

masonry arch of all bridges in County Offaly (Hamond). Each arch is divided by a dressed limestone pilaster with rounded cutwater. A dressed cornice forms a string course which runs the length of the structure and steps out at the pilasters. It was originally capped with a solid stone parapet, which has been removed. At the time of its construction Banagher bridge was significant for its innovative modular design; made up of many components, which were assembled on site in an industrial like manner and is of national heritage significance as a structure *'of high architectural merit and demonstrative of mid 19th century construction work by a government body'* (Hamond, 2005). The setting of the bridge is enhanced by Cromwell's castle on the Connacht bank and the Bridge Malt House on the town side.

Pressed aluminium, box-section railings replaced the original stone parapets which have been set into a concrete ring beam. The parapets above the piers have been rebuilt in concrete and are capped and faced with modern limestone cladding panels on the road side. The central parapet, on the east carriageway side is marked with a decorative cast iron

plaque with details of the bridges construction and marks the county boundary. The original limestone cornice are eroded and cracked in places and are possibly taking rainwater into the main body of the bridge arches, which could serve to undermine its structural integrity over time. A thorough condition survey by a structural engineer with experience with historic bridge structures is recommended as a matter of priority.



Fig. 99: Detail of damage to limestone cornice of Banagher Bridge



Fig. 100: Historic photograph of former swivel arch to Banagher Bridge

C15: Swivel Bridge Pier

This island pier was originally designed to accommodate the former cast iron swivel arch. The walls are vertical and constructed in limestone blocks. While close inspection was not possible, the jointing to the facing stones appears generally good, with little movement or erosion evident. The coping stones have eroded on the town side elevation and the joints are vulnerable to weathering. The ground of the pier within the line of the coping stones is overgrown with vegetation and ivy has established itself on the bridge elevation adjacent. This is unattractive for a historic setting and is neglected in appearance and could be reconsidered as a part of future re-landscaping works to the general area. Plant growth in the crevices of the coping stones should be removed, as the roots will undermine the structure overtime.



Fig. 101: Aerial Photograph of swivel arch pier (image courtesy of idrone.



Fig. 102: Photograph of modified swivel arch, quay & Hand Wharf Crane

C16: Harbour Wall & Quay

Stone built quay constructed as part of the Shannon Commissioners Navigation Improvement works 1841-1843 and was built over the former mill pond. These walls are battered and constructed in limestone blocks, the construction detailing of the backing, ties and foundations is not known, but they appear to have been dry jointed. The stone edges have eroded in places, resulting in the widening of the joints and movement of stones, likely due to the battered profile of the quay wall and the force of the seasonal floodwaters. There is moss, lichen and algae growth on the stone surface, with buddleia established between the joints in places. There is a set of stone steps set into the quay wall leading down to the water. A modern tubular, painted steel guardrail has been fitted around the steps in the harbour coping,

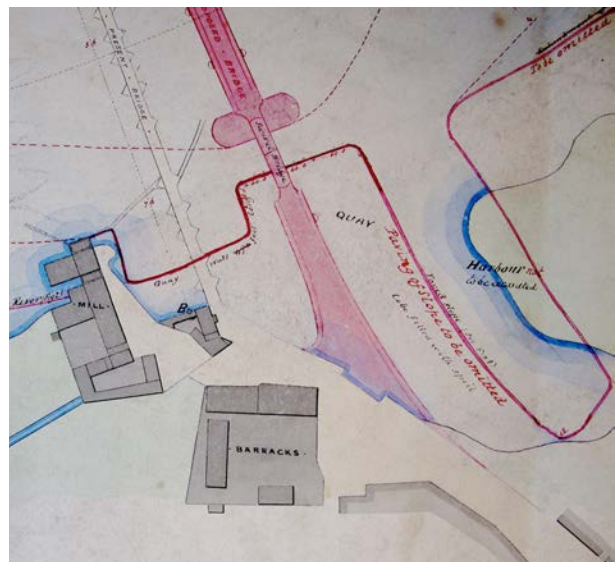


Fig. 103: Detail of Shannon Commissioners survey drawing with proposed new quay, harbour wall, bridge & bridge ramp indicated in red with land 'to be filled with spoil'. (Waterways Ireland Archive, Enniskillen)



Fig. 104: Photograph of the Harbour Wall and Quay, Dublin City Steam Packet Company Building, Hand Wharf Crane and Bridge Malt House

and a handrail is fitted to the harbour wall on the descent. Two surviving stone mooring posts, close to harbour wall coping, are badly weather damaged and in a poor state of preservation. Cast iron painted mooring posts have been bolted to the harbour wall along the length of the harbour and to the top of the harbour coping. Precast concrete bollards have been fitted along the line of the harbour, on the lawn side of the footpath, to prevent vehicles approaching the water edge. They are visually obtrusive and detract from the harbour. Unauthorized vehicles could be kept clear from the harbour area, by introducing demountable bollards further back from the site, and adjacent to the front elevation of the barrack. Should this measure be taken, the concrete bollards could be removed.

C17: City of Dublin Steam Packet Company Building

A two-storey detached masonry building located perpendicular to the harbour wall and midway between the Mill building and bridge ramp, marks the limit of the Mill yard and the public realm. Building altered, with new high level windows inserted to the east facing elevation below the eaves, and new windows to the north gable facing the river. The

chimney was extended and is crudely built up in unfinished blockwork, suggesting that the eaves may also have been raised, thus altering the roof pitch, which appears shallow for a building of this age. Areas of missing render, reveal a rubble masonry construction. A two-storey projecting porch has been added to the west facing elevation and the walls are rendered in sand and cement. Records suggest it is built on the line of the Old Bridge. Currently vacant and in a state of dereliction, with roof slates missing and windows broken. The building later became an office for the adjacent Bridge Malt House, and was retained as part of the mill site complex.

C18: Hand Wharf Crane

Board of Public Works '8 Ton' hand crane, no longer in operation. Possible late nineteenth century date and an important reminder of the areas industrial heritage. Crane arm is approximately 24ft in reach. Records suggest the central post is of cast iron and is buried in a concrete pit below ground level. The main metal body has been painted. Survives in a fair state of preservation, with significant rust to the base and along the crane arm at high level and in need of repair.

C19: Fort Eliza

Freestanding five-sided polygonal battery, surrounded by moat, with guardhouse in ruin on the rear salient angle and single-storey magazine with brick vaulted ceiling to the courtyard interior; which is also in ruin. Referred to locally as the Sal Battery or Salt Battery, possibly located on the site of an earlier earthwork associated with the seventeenth-century plantation.

Fears of a French landing at Galway Bay, prompted the strategic defence of the Middle Shannon as a fall back line. The fort was modified in two phases between 1810-1814. The three sides facing Connacht is formed of a broad rampart, behind which is the terreplein for four 24-pounder guns. The battery is one of four Napoleonic Defences at Banagher, including the gun platform on Banagher Military Barracks, Cromwell's Castle and Fanesker Tower which were designed as a chain of defences to defend the Old Bridge of Banagher from all angles. The Shannon fortifications are of special significance due to their inland location. For further information on the fortification, refer

to Howley Hayes Architects, Fort Eliza Condition Assessment Report January 2018, which was commissioned by Waterways Ireland.



Fig. 105: Photograph of fort entrance and location of former draw-bridge

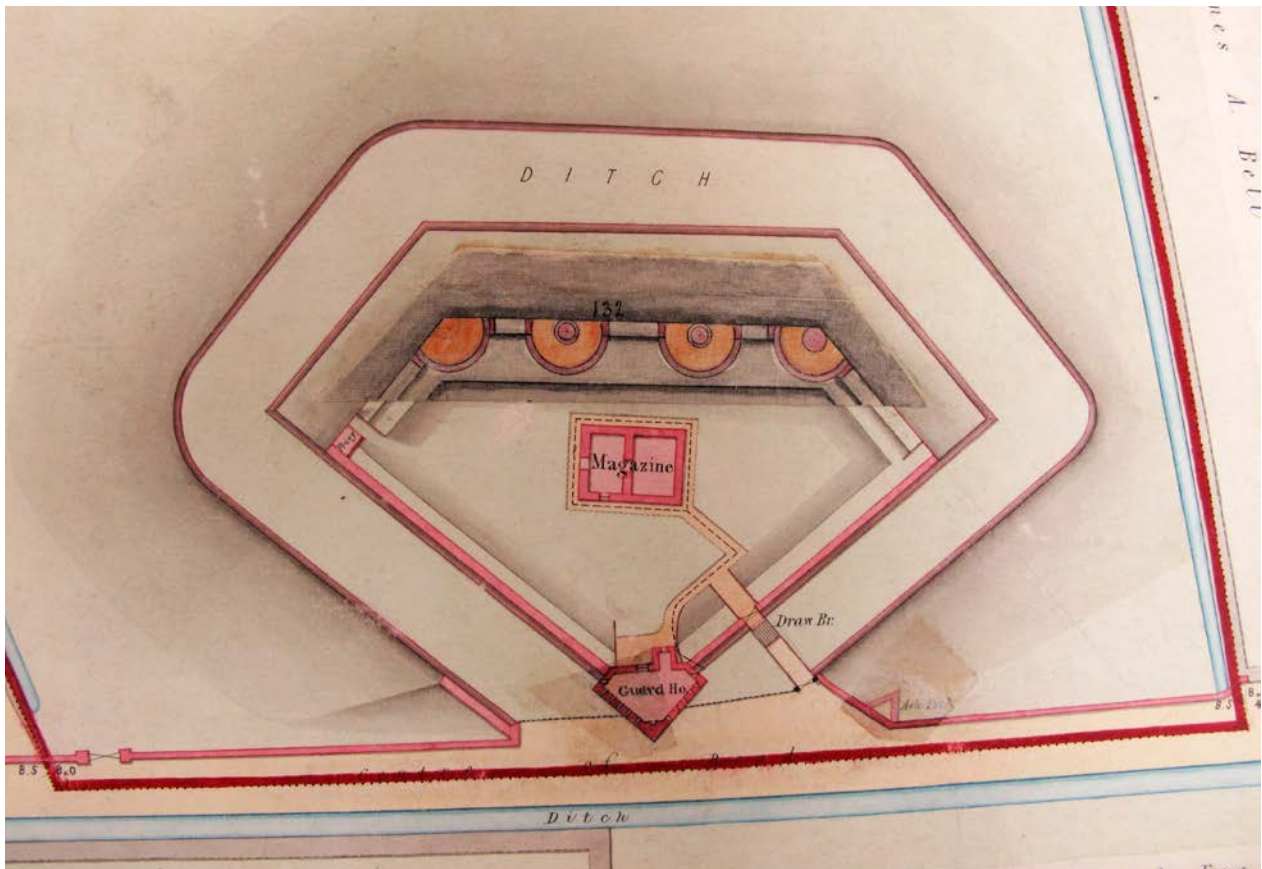


Fig. 106: Military survey drawing of Fort Eliza c1863 (TNA UK). (Photo by E. Broderick)

Zone D – Shannon Bank Park & Fanesker Tower*

Zone D is defined as the area of Banagher, which extends into Fanesker in County Galway and includes Banagher Shannon Bank Park and Fanesker Tower
(*Zone D added in November 2022)

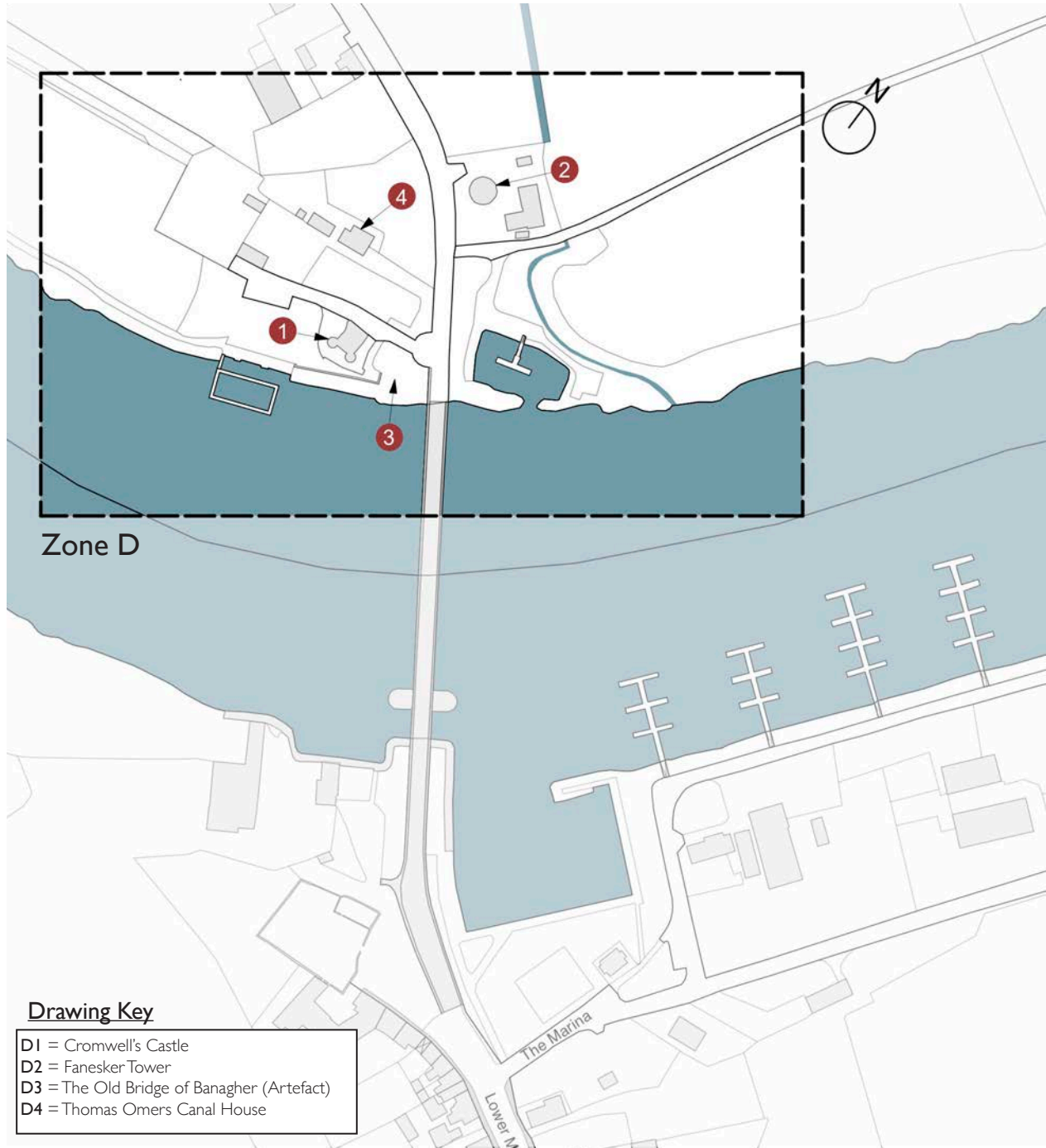


Fig. 107: Zone D - Banagher Shannon Bank Park and Fanesker Tower OSI license 2013/32/CCMA/O'faly

Banagher Shannon Bank Park

The Banagher Shannon Bank Park is the property of the people of Banagher and is held in trust as a public amenity. The drawing 'Survey of the Eel Wears (sic) at Banagher' by William Stokes 1836, captures the layout of the park prior to the Shannon Navigation Improvement Works 1841-3, and indicates its former function as a working by-pass canal and a military barracks with ordnance ground at Cromwell's Castle.

Tasked with improving the navigation of the main channel of the river, a large part of the Shannon Commissioners works involved excavating the river ford, composed of glacial sands and gravel, which they then deposited along the southern edge of the canal towpath, with the effect of significantly widening this stretch of the riverbank.

Today the linear canal is mostly infilled and the reclaimed landbank has been landscaped into a looped walk, a pitch-and-putt course with outdoor swimming pool and concrete terraced seating, just west of the 'dry' harbour wall and under the shadow of Cromwell's Castle. The park is of particular interest for its aspect of Banagher Bridge and numerous waterways and military artefacts including Cromwell's Castle and a Thomas Omer designed Lock House c.1750. The park forms an important part of the inland waterways heritage of the Shannon and is also bounded by a Special Area of Conservation (SPA)

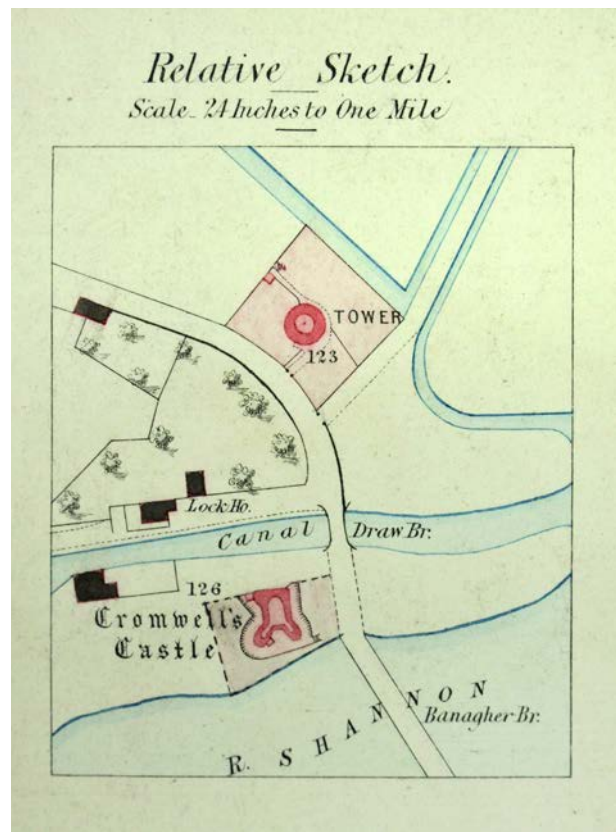


Fig. 108: Detail from military survey drawing entitled 'Fanesker Tower and Cromwell's Castle' c.1863 (TNA UK) (Photo by E. Broderick)

known as the *Shannon Callows* (Caladh na Sionainne), of natural and international significance as a habitat for migratory birds.



Fig. 109: Detail from Shannon Commission 'Survey of the Eel Wears (sic) at Banagher' by William Stokes 1836 (Waterways Ireland Archive, Enniskillen) (Photo by E. Broderick)



Fig. 110: View of Cromwell's Castle with Harbour Wall and remnants of the Old Bridge of Banagher (Photo by E. Broderick)

DI Cromwell's Castle

Cromwell's Castle, together with Fanesker Tower, Banagher Barracks and Fort Eliza is part of the chain of Napoleonic defences at Banagher. The origins of this structure is unknown and its many phases of alteration make it difficult to date with certainty. The castle is roughly rectangular in plan and is fronted on the south facing elevation with two round towers/circular turrets. Some medieval features suggest it was possibly a Mac Coghlan tower house, which was modified in the Cromwellian period, as its name suggests and was again significantly altered in the Napoleonic era.



Fig. 111: Detail view of Cromwell's Castle (south facing elevation)

The first phase of upgrade works in 1804 appears to have been extensive and involved the rebuilding of the earlier structure (which survived in ruin) in the style of a Martello tower. Works involved the reinforcement of the north facing elevation (virtual west) to protect it from enemy fire and the building up of the external walls into roof parapets, while on the interior the internal walls were significantly reinforced to support a vaulted stone roof of sufficient strength to accommodate the artillery on the roof platform. The ground level of the east tower was lined out with brick and the external walls were strengthened locally with earth and rubble to accommodate the powder magazine. The west facing tower appears to have been almost entirely rebuilt to accommodate a stone spiral stair to the new roof platform.

In the second phase of works, the gun was upgraded to a 24-pounder and the land adjacent was landscaped into a barrack yard. A harbour wall was constructed to the south of the castle along the waterfront as part of the Shannon Navigation Improvement works 1841-3. The view from the castle was captured by George Petrie in his topographical drawing of Banagher c.1820 and shows the view of the Old Bridge of Banagher from the foot of the castle, which is now enclosed by the harbour wall. Today, the structure is boarded up and is in a moderate state of preservation, it is managed in a local trust and is a prominent feature in the Banagher Shannon Bank Park and has significant amenity potential if repaired and made accessible, offering commanding views across the wider landscape.

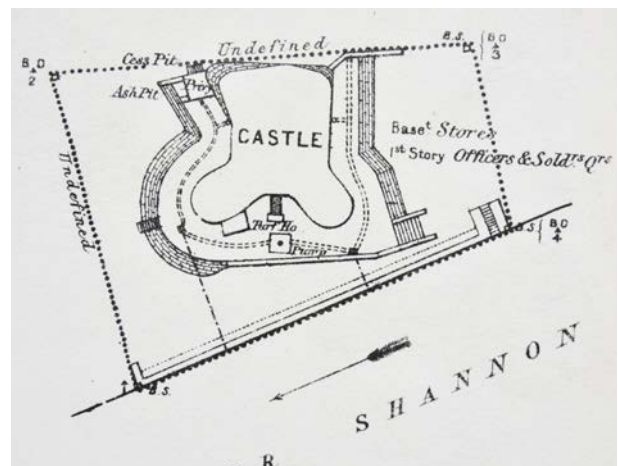


Fig. 112: Detail from military survey drawing entitled 'Fanesker Tower and Cromwell's Castle' c.1863 (TNA UK) (Photo by E. Broderick)



Fig. 113: View of Fanesker Tower

D2 Fanesker Tower

A phase two addition to the Napoleonic defences at Banagher and an entirely new structure, the Fanesker Tower, to the north-east of the Old Bridge and linear canal, was designed in the style of a small Martello tower. The structure is two-storey high and elliptical in plan with tapered walls of solid ashlar limestone which is thickened on the north face (virtual west) to resist enemy fire. The tower accommodated one 24-pounder gun mounted on the roof platform. Today, the structure is in private ownership and in a fair state of preservation but is becoming increasingly encroached upon by embedded vegetation, which is unsightly and will undermine the building fabric and lead to structural issues overtime. The tower is only one of two inland Martello Towers. The second is located at Lusmagh and is part of the Meelick defences, 7km downstream from Banagher.

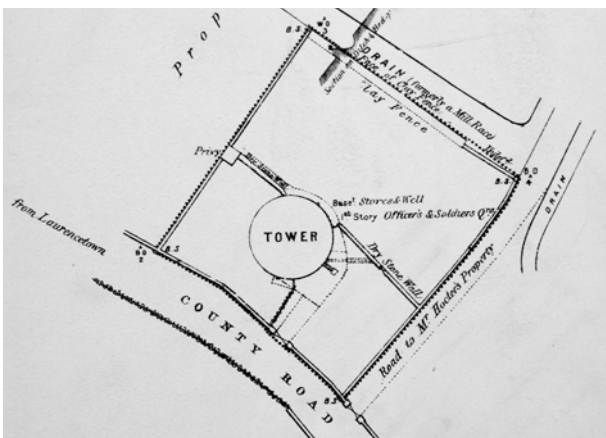


Fig. 114: Detail from military survey drawing (1863) entitled 'Fanesker Tower and Cromwell's Castle' c.1863 (TNA UK) (Photo by E. Broderick)



Fig. 115: View of remnant of the Old Bridge of Banagher

D3 The Old Bridge (artefact)

On the Connacht bank, south-east of Cromwell's Castle is the remains of a section of the Old Bridge of Banagher, which is partially visible above ground. The arch is of rubble masonry and projects from the south facing slope. Historic records show that this section of the Old Bridge was a 'land arch', designed to permit the passage of water through the structure during high floods and access by foot along the riverbank in the dry season. The Old Bridge was of strategic importance during the Williamite Wars of 1690-91 and became known as Sarfield's Bridge for the number of times the Jacobite forces under Patrick Sarsfield traversed it and again in the Napoleonic era, when a chain of defences were erected to defend or destroy the bridge should the French advance from Connacht.

The Old Bridge was depicted in George Petrie's topographical drawing of Banagher c.1820, which captured the unusually large square buttressed cutwaters on the downstream side. The question concerning the origin date of the Old Bridge remains uncertain. It was standing in 1685, however the many diverse arches suggest it was a composite of older structures - rebuilt and extended through the centuries and is speculated among researchers to have been among the oldest and longest medieval stone bridges on the Shannon. A detailed survey of the bridge, prior to and after its demolition, was recorded by the Shannon Commissioners in 1843 (Waterways Ireland archive in Enniskillen (Fig. 29)).

D4 Lock Keeper's House

Designed by Dutch canal engineer Thomas Omer, this handsome two-storey gable-fronted dwelling is the original lock keeper's house for the 1750s bypass canal. Having worked on the canalisation of England, Omer was appointed as the principle engineer for the Commissioners of Inland Navigation, tasked with improving the navigation of Ireland's inland waterways, which in Banagher involved the first serious attempt at making the river navigable i.e. the construction of the bypass canal to circumvent the ford. The lock house is one of a number of similar designs along the Grand Canal and the Shannon (Banagher, Shannonbridge and Cloondra on the Shannon and the 11th and 12th lock-houses on the Grand Canal), which survive in various states of repair and are noted by Waterways Ireland as the 'most impressive' lock houses in Ireland.

The historic documents indicate the property was accessed from the main Galway Road to the east, however, its primary elevation faces south overlooking the canal (now infilled). Classical in style, the four faces of the original structure was symmetrical in design, each face dominated with a centrally positioned blind arch, romantically ornamented with rendered keystone and horizontal platbands at eaves and impost level, resulting in an elegant structure, which stood as a reminder of the importance of the

position of the lock keeper in society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Recent modern additions to the west and south elevations, consisting of multiple-bay lean-to and flat-roofed extensions along with uPVC windows, timber panelling and cement renders, conceal much of the original design, however the east and north elevations, still maintain the original symmetry. The building is currently a private residence.



Fig. 116: View of Lock Keeper's House with modern additions (south facing elevation)



Fig. 117: Computer generated image and recreation of the river Shannon at Banagher (view toward the Connacht bank, including Cromwell's Castle) prior to the Shannon Navigation Improvement Works 1841-1843. (Image by Eoghan Broderick)

4.0 ASSESSMENT & STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Guidelines to the Burra Charter state that:

Cultural Significance is a concept which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations

There are a variety of categories used to evaluate the level of a place's cultural significance: Archaeological, Historic, Architectural, Technical and Artistic interest categories will be used to assess the significance of historic Banagher.

Archaeological Significance

Banagher has been the scene of human activity in the Early Historic, Medieval and Post-Medieval times and was noted by John Bradley in the Urban Archaeology Survey (UAS) of County Offaly c.1986 as important to archaeological research for two reasons:

- As an early [Christian] monastic site and find spot of one of the best-known cross-shafts of Early-Christian date in Ireland
- As an example of a seventeenth century plantation town, 'one of the few established in the midlands'.

A feature of the old town of Banagher, which was acknowledged by Bradley was its walled defences, something he noted as still discernible in the plot grain of the properties at Lower Main Street. Given the importance attributed to walled towns as irreplaceable 'Timestones of History' under the Piran Declaration (1998), Banagher's walled town status should be noted as a third reason for its importance. As to the origins of the defensive walls, Bradley had suggested they were part of the 1628 plantation development, however, it has since come to light that the records indicate Banagher existed as a walled urban settlement prior to the plantation and there is also evidence of medieval fabric, possible standing wall remains and references in the sources that would suggest an Anglo-Norman foundation within a defensive enclosure. While this has yet to

be confirmed and will remain a topic of debate, the question could be answered through future archaeological testing, which will help bridge the gap in our understanding of how the early monastic site evolved into the seventeenth century plantation town and the place it is today.



Fig. 118: Detail of fifteenth-century ogee window lintel, discovered at Banagher in 2016 (Photo by E. Broderick)

In the UAS, Bradley also noted that 'there are no diagnostic buildings of seventeenth century date surviving within the town', however, a number of buildings along the Main Street have since been proven to be composite buildings with modern facades but an early seventeenth-century core. The 'Old Market House' (Kieran Donegan's shop) and likely surviving example of a corporation weavers cottage on Queen Street (Puckagh Row) are particularly significant examples, and evidence that there is much yet to be discovered from the above ground structures.

Excavations of significance undertaken since the UAS include evidence of early human activity to the west of Main Street and at the riverbank, 'massive D-shaped bastions' associated with Fort Falkland (seventeenth century fortification), and a ditch (4m wide and 1.5m deep) close to the junction of Main Street and the Crank Road, which is noted in the record as possibly part of the seventeenth century town earthworks.

Historic Significance

As one of the few seventeenth century plantation towns established in the midlands, the 1628 incorporation of Banagher borough is particularly

significant for its association with the German textile merchant and planter Mathew De Renzi (1577-1634), who heavily influenced the plantation development, with evidence in the primary sources that he brought about the establishment of an extensive cottage weaving industry at Banagher, which was unparalleled at the time for its scale and ambition. The remarkable survival of the De Renzi's papers (TNA UK), which include correspondence with 'influential policy makers' relating to the plantation of Banagher and a broad range of 'relevant issues' (Mac Cuarta), provide a rare account of interactions between the 'settler' and the 'native' Irish from a foreigners perspective during this complex period of Irish history and are of national historic and social interest for their potential to deepen our understanding of the impact of the plantations on Irish society.

Established on a natural bridging point on the Middle Shannon, Banagher was recorded in the seventeenth century as a 'gate and chief passage over the Shannon into Connacht' as a testament to its strategic significance. Today, Banagher's surviving Napoleonic defences provide important physical evidence of how invasion, the threat of invasion and the evolution of martial technologies shaped these strategic locations within the Irish landscape.

As a former inland portal town and once centre of river trade, Banagher is an important example of how the River Shannon served as a vital communication and trading link between Dublin, Limerick, Athlone and Ballinasloe, which was crucial to the growth Ireland's economy. The cartographic record indicates that the river landscape at Banagher underwent many phases of alterations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in an effort to exploit the rivers trading and communication potential. The removal of the river ford and the development of the town's new quay walls, harbour and six-arch masonry bridge by the Shannon Commissioners in 1841-3 was vital to the regions continued growth into the nineteenth century and helped to establish Banagher as one of the largest market towns in the midlands, supporting a significant food production industry namely in brewing, distilling, malting and grain milling.

Architectural Significance

The historic records indicate that Banagher originated as an early Christian settlement and by the 1600s existed as a walled town fronting onto the river Shannon, which the may date back to the Anglo-Norman period of the twelfth century. In 1628 Banagher was planted by the English, which involved the expansion of the old walled town toward 'The Hill', merging with the neighbouring ecclesiastical foundation into one urban settlement. The sources indicate the new streets developed by the planters were aligned with terraces of corporation weavers' cottages and may represent one of the earliest government sponsored housing developments in Ireland and one of the first large scale cottage industries.



Fig. 119: View of the fortifications and Banagher's Old Bridge as seen from the Sod Battery. Drawn by Captain Sir William Smith 1819. (T.C.D., MS 942/2/187)

Sited on one of the few natural bridging points along the Middle Shannon, today Banagher's river landscape makes an important contribution to Ireland's inland waterways heritage and demonstrates the former strategic significance of the place as a 'gate and chief passage over the Shannon into Connacht', which evolved into an inland portal town and market town centred on river trade. The centrepiece of Banagher's river landscape is the elegant six-arch masonry bridge of Banagher 1841-3 by English engineer Thomas Rhodes, which is of national architectural significance for its innovative modular design and the high degree of technical achievement employed in its construction.

The bridge setting is enhanced on the Leinster bank by the imposing five-storey Bridge Malt House, and on the Connacht bank by Cromwell's Castle, which forms part of a network of Napoleonic defences at Banagher and are important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of early nineteenth

century British coastal fortifications employed in an inland location. Collectively, these military artefacts demonstrate a wide array of architectural features associated with military architecture, including elevated roof platforms, magazines, rampart walls, flank walls, glacis, moats, terreplein etc.

While little remains of the former town defences, today the core of the old town of Banagher is populated with a collection of attractive Early Georgian townhouses, which is a rare feature of an Irish country town and is demonstrative of the town's affluence during the 1700s and once thriving economy centred on river trade.

While the Main Street gives the impression of a sráidbhaile of the late eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, a number of buildings along the streetfront have been proven to be composite structures with modern facades but a pre 1700s core. Recently discovered examples include 'Kieran Donegan's Shop', the fabric of which is of architectural and archaeological interest as possibly one of the oldest standing remains of an early Market House in Ireland. Further examples include a likely surviving example of a pre 1700s corporation weavers' cottage, which the records indicate is a unique feature of the 1628 plantation.

Banagher's Main Street is elevated by the well composed five-bay red brick Bank of Ireland building by



Fig. 120: Detail of Chapel of St. Rynagh limestone tower; with the architect William Hague's signature inscribed on the limestone platband.

architect Sandham Symes and a number of attractive traditional shopfronts such as JJ Hough's Singing Pub, Flynn's, Hunt's and The Railway Bar. Dotted among the two-storey vernacular townhouses, are a number of imposing three-storey structures, which the records indicate as former soldiers' quarters, some of which have been creatively reinvented following the end of the military occupation with traditional shopfronts inserted on the ground floor and living accommodation on the upper floors: Quigley's shop being a particularly fine example.

Outside of the old town, Banagher's Main Street rises to the summit of 'The Hill' and is spectacularly sited by two exquisitely crafted and skilfully executed nineteenth-century chapels: the Chapel of St. Paul attributed to the architects James and George Richard Pain, and the Chapel of St. Rynagh with limestone tower and spire by architect William Hague.

Despite the expansion of the old town during the plantation period, the late medieval Chapel of St. Rynagh to the west of main street survives in ruin, while many medieval dressed stone fragments and stray finds have been recorded of late, mostly recycled in the fabric of later buildings, all of which point to a possible medieval origin date and a town which is undoubtedly among the oldest in the midlands and possibly among the oldest in Ireland.

Technical Significance

(Industrial, Scientific & Research Interest)

Textiles - The historic records indicate that Banagher became the centre of a flourishing woollen industry in the seventeenth century. Studies of the seventeenth century charter maps and literature indicate that this enterprise was largely attributable to the German planter and textile merchant Mathew De Renzi, who settled in the area c.1610 and had a strong influence on the plantation development. The cartographic records indicate that De Renzi's ambitions to weave wool into cloth to increase its commercial value and export potential was realised through the development of terraces of corporation weaver's cottages, which lined the new plantation streets in their hundreds and may represent one of the first large scale cottage industries in Ireland. The physical survey of the town identified that a rare

example of a 1628 corporation weavers' cottage likely survives on Puckagh Row (Queen Street), and is of industrial, architectural, archaeological and social interest. Further evidence of the scale and success of Banagher's seventeenth century woollen industry, which extended into the eighteenth century, is also noted by the fine Early Georgian townhouses of Lower Main Street, which are demonstrative of a merchant landlord class, who financially benefited from the textile trade and the rents imposed on the corporation workers.

Food Production - The historic records indicate that Banagher has had a long history of industrial food production, namely in brewing, distilling, malting and grain milling. The Logan Map of 1828 and the First Edition OS map indicate a working brewery, a distillery and a water powered grain mill, all in full production within the town, while also indicating an 'Old Corn Mill' and 'Old Distillery', most likely relating to the seventeenth century plantation development, which included a license to make and sell spirits and to buy and sell wine, ale, beer and all kinds of food.

Records indicate that in the first half of the nineteenth century Banagher had become one of the largest corn market towns in the midlands. By 1840 the expansion of the industry continued with the construction of an entirely new distillery at Garry Castle, which was rebuilt in 1873 on an even larger scale and rebranded as the Banagher Distillery Company (Pevsner).

Today, many of Banagher's former industrial buildings survive in various states of repair, some of which are unrecorded and without statutory protection. The surviving fabric and remnants of structures and artefacts at these industrial sites, when combined with local knowledge, photographic and documentary evidence, have the potential to significantly contribute to our understanding of an important phase in the evolution of Ireland's food production industry, with much to learn from the surviving fabric, concerning technological innovation in food production through the centuries. The Bridge Malt House, Crank House (former brewery), former distillery (East of Main Street), Crank Malt House (Crank Road), and the former Banagher Distillery Company at Gary Castle are of particular interest.

Navigation - The Shannon Navigation Improvement works of 1841-3 at Banagher involving the construction of the new six arch masonry bridge with cast iron swivel arch and the removal of the historic ford to accommodate river steamer traffic, is supported in the archives with an almost complete record of historic material documenting the construction process. This archive of material, has the potential to deepen our understanding of the technological complexities and innovation involved in the nineteenth century engineering works, which brought dramatic changes to the river landscape at Banagher, and helped to open the midlands up to trade by connecting the region with Athlone, Dublin, Ballinasloe and Limerick. At the time of its construction, Banagher Bridge was of technical significance for its innovative modular design (made up of components, assembled on site in an industrial like manner) and is of national heritage significance as a structure 'of high architectural merit and demonstrative of mid 19th century construction work by a government body' (Hamond, 2005).

Innovative technologies employed in the bridges construction included early gantry cranes, industrial steam powered water pumps, dredging machines, horse powered pug mills, earthen dams and cofferdams.



Fig. 121: Detail of 'Banagher Distillery Company Limited 1873' limestone plaque. Located in the Crank House courtyard

Artistic Significance

Stone Masonry - The artistic panels of the ninth century sandstone cross-shaft of Banagher, the town's most notable work of artistic significance, has been the source of inspiration for many artistic works and published academic papers. Since its discovery in the nineteenth century, numerous other medieval dressed stone fragments have been discovered within the town, and are evidence of stone masonry skills employed in the construction of the town's medieval structures such as Banagher Castle and Beal i Luig before their disappearance around the sixteenth century. Despite their disappearance the skill of stone masonry was carried on in the fabrication of headstones and funerary objects into the nineteenth century, of which there are many notable examples in the historic graveyard to the west of Main Street, including the stone carved gravestone of Sir John Mac Coghlan, chief of Dealbhna Eathra, who died in 1590.

Literary Associations - Banagher is noted for its literary associations during the Victorian era. The English novelist Anthony Trollope was stationed in the town between 1841-1845 as post office inspector, and is thought to have inspired his first two novels, both with an Irish setting. One of the most famous Victorian women writers and poet Charlotte Brontë visited Cuba Court in 1854 while honeymooning in Ireland with her husband Arthur Bell Nicholls. Arthur spent most of his youth in Banagher when his uncle Alan Bell, who served as headmaster of the Royal

school at Cuba Court, and his wife Harriette took Arthur into their care, following the death of his parents. After Charlotte's death, Arthur returned again to the Hill House where he resided until his death in 1906.

Surveying & Mapping - The National Archives UK has a repository of early cartographic maps of Banagher dating to the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, which is rare for an Irish settlement of its scale and is a testament to the town's former significance on the frontier with Connacht and having attracted the attention of the British crown to survey it at a time when early surveying techniques was in its infancy. Later cartographic works of Banagher, which predate the Ordnance Survey include the Logan map of 1828, which is of interest for its artistic quality, accuracy and historic information.

Landscapes - Prior to its demolition by the Shannon Commissioners c.1843, the setting of the Old Bridge of Banagher attracted the attention of antiquarians and gifted landscape artists such as George Petrie, who captured the scene in 1820 when Banagher was reaching the height of its economic prosperity. On completion of the New Bridge of Banagher c.1843, two lithographs were commissioned by the contractor William Mackenzie, which portray the bridge during construction and the grand opening ceremony and serve as a valuable record of a landmark period in the history of inland navigation in Ireland.

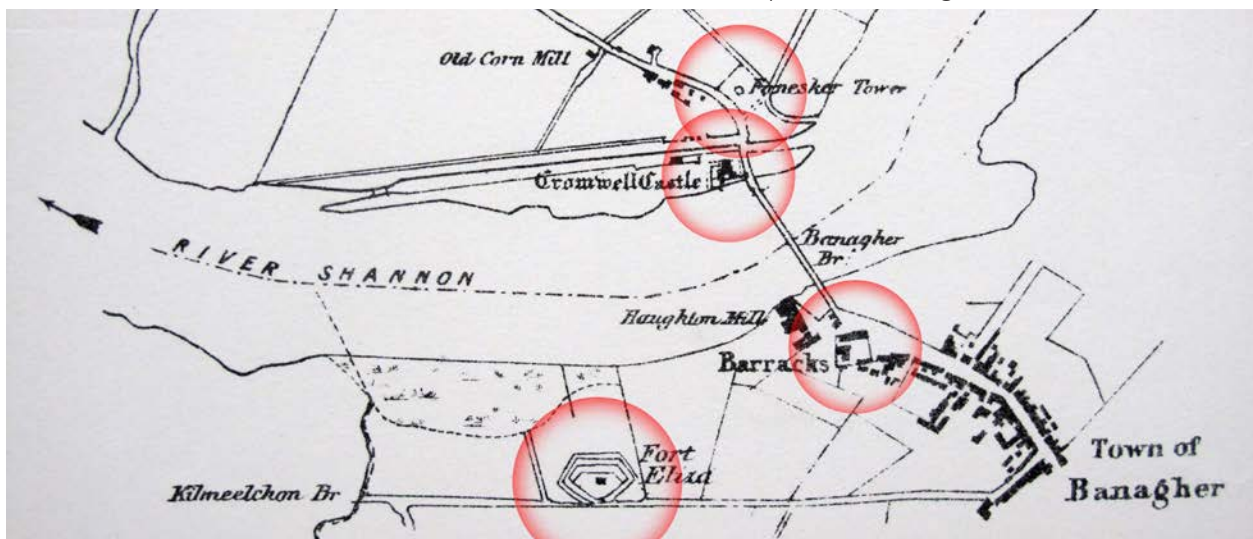


Fig. 122: Detail of military survey drawing entitled 'Banagher Barracks King's County' 1863 (TNA UK) (Photo by E. Broderick) Napoleonic Defensive structures highlighted in Red by HHA

Statement of Significance

Banagher has been the scene of human activity in the Early Historic, Medieval and Post-Medieval times and is important to archaeological research as an early monastic site and find spot of one of the best known cross-shafts of Early-Christian date in Ireland. Documentary and physical evidence gives credence to the possibility that the town's strategic importance on the Shannon was recognized by the Anglo Normans who may have founded a borough on the southern bank within a defensive enclosure, with a significant fortification that was modified and upgraded through the medieval and seventeenth century period.

Banagher is one of the few midland plantation towns of the early seventeenth century and is of particular interest for its association with the German textile merchant and planter Mathew De Renzi (1577-1634). The remarkable survival of De Renzi's handwritten letters to influential policy makers, provides strong evidence he influenced the plantation development, through the establishment of corporation weavers' cottages, which flanked the streets in their hundreds and may represent one of the earliest government sponsored housing developments in Ireland and one of the first large scale cottage industries.

Today, Banagher's river landscape is a place of special heritage interest and is populated with many military, waterways and industrial artefacts, which demonstrate the town's former strategic significance as a '*gate and chief passage over the Shannon into Connacht*',

which evolved into a significant inland portal town and market town with a flourishing woollen trade and food production industry, namely in brewing, malting, distilling and grain milling. The centrepiece of Banagher's river landscape is the elegant six-arch masonry bridge c1841-3 by English engineer Thomas Rhodes, which is of national heritage significance for its innovative design. The bridge setting is enhanced by a chain of Napoleonic defences, which are important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of early nineteenth century British coastal fortifications employed in an inland location.

While little remains of the former town defences, the core of the old town of Banagher is populated with a collection of attractive Early Georgian townhouses, which is an unusual feature of an Irish country town and a reminder of the town's former affluence and once thriving economy centred on river trade. Banagher's Main Street is elevated by the well composed Bank of Ireland building by architect Sandham Symes and is spectacularly sited by two exquisitely crafted nineteenth-century chapels: the Chapel of St. Paul attributed to the architects James and George Richard Pain, and the Chapel of St. Rynagh with limestone tower and spire by architect William Hague.

Banagher is undoubtedly a historic place, with much yet to discover about its ancient past. The town's rich and varied layers of archaeological, historic, architectural, artistic, technical and social interest, make it a place of national heritage significance.



Fig. 123: Detail of lithograph, commissioned by contractor William MacKenzie 1843 depicting the Construction of Banagher Bridge. (*Institute of Civil Engineers in the UK, digital scan courtesy of K. Keenaghan*)

5.0 DEFINING ISSUES AND ASSESSING VULNERABILITY

Statutory Protection

Statutory protection for the heritage structures at Banagher is in place under the following legislation, which is supplemented by policy documents and guidance:

- Planning and Development Acts 2000-2002
- Record of Monuments and Places, established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994
- Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020
- Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC

Currently Banagher has not been designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) such as adopted for Geashill, and it has not been the subject of a Local Area Plan as for larger towns in the county such as Tullamore, Birr and Portarlinton however, there is a comprehensive Town Plan of Banagher in the Settlement Strategy section of the 2014-2020 Offaly County Development Plan.

Offaly County Council is the relevant planning control authority for the area of Banagher within the County Offaly boundary. Galway County Council is the relevant planning control authority for the area of the town beyond the river Shannon and within the County of Galway. As Banagher Shannon Bank Park

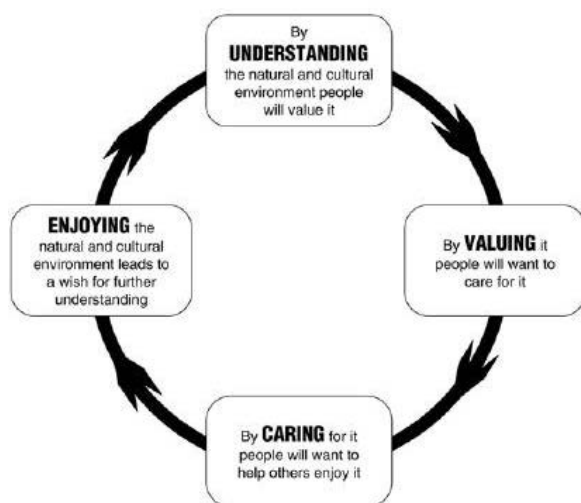


Fig. 124: Diagram by English Heritage illustrating the Virtuous Circle

is located in County Galway, and the town serves as a service town for the surrounding rural hinterland that includes west Offaly and rural east Galway, dialogue between the separate local authorities and collaboration for funding on partnership projects could greatly benefit the town and area.

The hinterland in proximity to Banagher offers a wide diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats, many of which have been legally designated as being of European importance for nature and conservation. To date, the following designations have been attributed to the bogs and callows in the vicinity of the town:

Special Areas of Conservation

- *River Shannon Callows* SAC (Site Code 000216)
- *All Saints Bog and Esker* SAC (000566) – located 2.6km south of Banagher
- *River Little Brosna Callows* (004086) – located 5km south-west of Banagher

National Heritage Area

- *River Little Brosna Callows* NHA (000564) – located 5km south-west of Banagher
- *Kilnaborris Bog* NHA (000284) – located 4km north-east of Banagher

Proposed National Heritage Area

- *River Shannon Callows* (000216)

Special Protection Area

- *Middle Shannon Callows* SPA (Site Code 004096)
- *All Saints Bog* SPA (Site Code 004103) – located 2.6km south of Banagher
- *River Little Brosna Callow* SPA (Site Code 004086) – located 5km south-west of Banagher

Walled Town Designation

The Heritage Council established the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) in April, 2005 to unite and coordinate the strategic efforts of Local Authorities

involved in the management and conservation of historic walled towns in Ireland. It is formally linked to the European Walled Towns for Friendship and Professional Co-Operation (formerly the Walled Town Friendship Circle), which is the international association for the sustainable development of walled towns, walled cities and fortified historic towns.

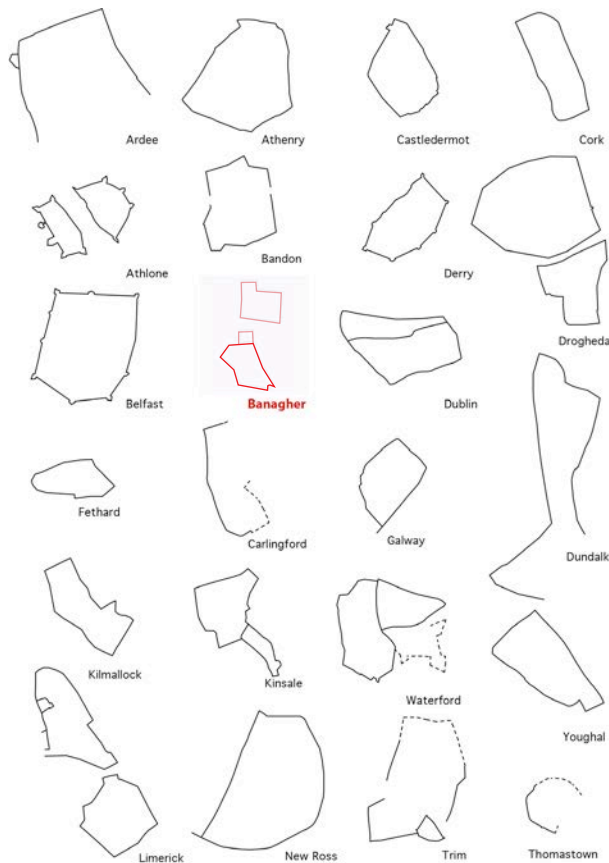


Fig. 125: Comparative plans of Irish Walled Towns (based on Thomas 1992).

At present, Banagher is not recognised as a historic walled town, and there is no Offaly member town of the IWTN. Avril Thomas did not include Banagher on her 'unproven' list of walled towns, but did include Portarlinton and Birr. The national policy for the protection, preservation and conservation of town defences is set out in a document entitled National Policy on Town Defences published in 2008 by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Monuments, such as town defences, where identified and included in the statutory Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) are referred to as recorded monuments and are protected under the provisions of the National Monuments Acts

1930-2004. In addition to being recognised as a historic walled town, it is hoped that in the near future Banagher will also benefit from the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) grant programme or similar Department schemes to rejuvenate town centres.

Interpretation

In places such as Banagher, which have suffered loss to heritage fabric as a consequence of past conflict, evolution of settlement and significant civil engineering works, the proper interpretation of the place can be challenging. This is further complicated by continued use through adaptation over a period of eight hundred years.

However, intangible aspects of the site's heritage can be revealed to the general public for interpretation in many ways - through activities such as research, education programmes and public events as well as providing interpretation panels or online resources to allow visitors to appreciate the cultural heritage of the place. By increasing understanding and appreciation of Banagher and its context, a *virtuous circle* (Fig. 124) can be created where the local community can become more active stakeholders in the preservation of the heritage sites at Banagher, which will in turn become more attractive to visitors for the benefit of all.

Archaeology

Further testing and research, along with presentation and publication of these findings, will be required in order to deepen our understanding of the historic foundations of Banagher, and to allow us to interpret the various items that are suggestive of a medieval settlement.

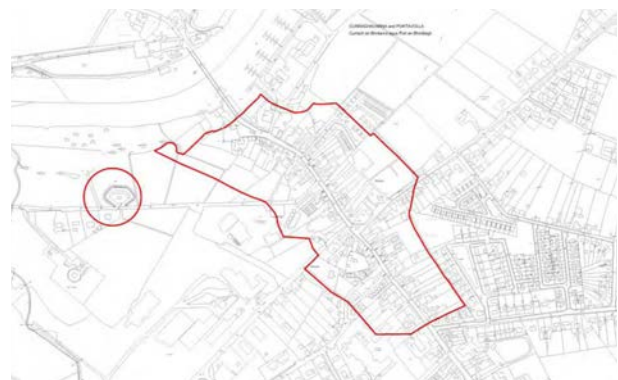


Fig. 126: Extract from Area of Archaeological Potential map (Offaly Co. Development Plan 2014-2020)

The early maps of Banagher illustrate the town as plots ranged along a central main street within a defensive enclosure. Above ground remnants of a defensive wall have tentatively been recorded to the west of Lower Main Street as indicated on the conjectural map. More investigation of the above ground structures, with possible archaeological testing is recommended to help date these structures and to help ascertain the true extent and phasing of the defensive enclosures. In addition, the late medieval Church of St. Rynagh with graveyard, as an Early Christian site was most likely enclosed within defensive walls, however the precise location of these walls has yet to be confirmed, despite the survival of the late medieval chapel and the recovery of a ninth century cross-shaft at the site. The Second Edition OS map (1909) identifies three wells in the vicinity of the site, which may be indicative of the extent of the original monastic enclosure and further investigation is recommended.

Ownership

The streets and green areas are public property, in the care of either Offaly County Council, Waterways Ireland or the National Asset Management Agency. The Inland Fisheries Board has responsibility for the protection of the fisheries. The proposed walking and cycling route (Contents 8.0) passes through and alongside properties in public and private ownership, such as the mill and late medieval chapel, and some



Fig. 127: Photograph of ruined late medieval Chapel of Saint Rynagh with embedded vegetation to rubble walls and eaves

proposals to enhance connections to and from the historic sites may involve negotiation and collaboration with landowners in the public interest. This means that access to the historic sites and responsibility for their care is a process of collaboration between a range of stakeholders with different priorities.

Condition & Use

The historic sites of Banagher generally require significant intervention to allow them to be preserved in their current states. The barracks is overgrown with ivy leading to significant loss of fabric, and the late medieval chapel has lost much of its roof. A decision should be made as to the extent of repair required at these sites, as preservation of stabilised ruins may be the most valid approach. The mill has been a standing ruin for a long period, and being in private ownership is seeking a viable re-use rather than preservation as a ruin. A number of townhouses and shopfronts are well-preserved and are a fine example of Irish townscape worthy of protection, quite a few of which have been included in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). The Royal Shannon Hotel is the most prominent example of a place that requires immediate and strategic intervention to arrest the rate of decay and avoid further loss of historic fabric.



Fig. 128: Photograph of ruined magazine at Banagher Military Barracks with extensive overgrowth to the roof and former gun platform

Access & Settings

Any decision to improve access to the built heritage needs to be balanced with ensuring its preservation. In many cases there are issues of access, health and safety and rights of way. These can be overcome in a number of ways by means of interpretation and presentation and by proper management and consultation. Parking is available around the town, but consideration should be given about parking close to the heritage sites and at the commencement of

the proposed Historic Banagher Walk. Access can be improved for people with disabilities, or those with buggies. This will involve extensive consultation and the cooperation of the various stakeholders, including the owners of the neighboring properties which overlook the churchyard /former monastic site.

Visitor Facilities

The lack of visibility and alterations to their setting make the barracks and former monastic site difficult for visitors to interpret. The buildings that are contained within the historic core have complex development histories that need to be presented in a coherent way. The design of high-quality interpretative material is essential for greater public understanding of historic Banagher. The Crank House Visitor Centre could be used for the display of information panels on the town's heritage that include information on the early modern and medieval heritage. Design of interpretative material could allow it to be displayed in a pop-up venue during the summer months, and carefully stored during the quieter months. It could also be used to enliven vacant properties. Along with



Fig. 129: Promotional poster for That Beats Banagher Festival 2017

access improvements, consideration should be given on how a range of small-scale changes can improve the appearance and amenity value of the town, along with new interpretative infrastructure to bring the history of the place to life for locals and visitors alike.

Vulnerabilities

In relation to the issues outlined above, the vulnerability of the natural and built heritage of Banagher can be summarised as set out below:

Preservation

- Interventions may be necessary to provide improved access, or to repair or stabilise a structure. This work needs to be informed by current best practice, be reversible and should not detract from the setting of the monument.
- Responsibilities for the maintenance of the built heritage and the waterways, as well as obtaining access for their inspection and presentation should be clearly defined.
- Some derelict areas if left in their current state are at risk of collapse and consequent loss of historic fabric, and also pose a health and safety risk to the general public.
- Defects when left unchecked can bring about rapid deterioration, resulting in considerable financial loss that can be avoided by a regime of routine maintenance.

Understanding

- Although the main built heritage sites such as the churchyard and barracks are known by townspeople, their location behind the Main Street means they are less visible to those who visit the area or pass through the town.
- There is a lack of awareness of the value and extent of historic Banagher. This is evident by the lack of signage or visitor facilities, and it not being prominent in tourism resources relating to Co. Offaly.
- Buried or adapted remains are often located in private properties or on boundaries that makes their identification and management challenging.
- The lack of knowledge about the precise extent of historic Banagher is the most significant threat to its preservation.

6.0 CONSERVATION POLICIES

Approach & Objectives

All conservation works are guided by the principle of minimum intervention as set out in the Burra Charter - *as little as possible, but as much as is necessary.*

The conservation objectives for the built heritage of Banagher can be summarised as follows:

- to provide for the effective maintenance of the historic buildings and structures
- to provide guidance on best conservation practice for their repair along with their adaptive re-use

Principle: Protection of Built Heritage

Ensure the protection of the built heritage through its repair and the preservation and improvement of its settings.

Principle: Repair & Maintenance

Provide regular on-going maintenance as the most effective way to preserve historic structures. Repairs are to be carried using conservation methodologies that conform to the guiding principles as set out in the ICOMOS charters, using appropriate details and materials of matching quality. Repair works are to be prioritised in terms of urgency, and informed by regular inspection and expert advice. Support private owners with advice and grant funding as appropriate.

Principle: Intervention

Where interventions are found to be necessary to provide improved access, or to repair or stabilise a structure, these are to be designed to the highest standards of best conservation practice and should not detract from the interpretation of the architectural heritage.

Principle: Reversibility

All interventions should follow the principle of the reversibility, so that a structure can be returned to its former state where possible.

Principle: Expert Advice & Skills

Ensure that all conservation works are carried out under the direction of suitably qualified professionals (specialist conservation architects and structural engineers) and undertaken only by suitably skilled and experienced tradesmen.

Principle: Continued Liaison

Liaise with the different stakeholders (Offaly Co.Co, Galway Co.Co., Waterways Ireland and National Monuments Service) in relation to proposed development works adjacent and within the historic town to share knowledge and ensure that best practice is adhered to in relation to any future proposals for improvements or adjacent developments.

Principle: Settings & Key Views

Protect and enhance the settings of the historic town, the river and associated structures including key views through planning policies and strategic conservation plans.

Principle: Inspections

Set in place procedures for on-going monitoring of the condition of historic fabric in public areas and associated structures to ensure their long-term preservation.

Principle: Monitoring

Review this Plan at agreed intervals (to coincide with Development Plans or Local Area Plans) to benchmark progress in implementation, re-assess priorities, assimilate new information or changes in legislation or methodologies.

Principle: Further Research & Investigation

Multi-disciplinary research into the built and natural heritage of the town and its surrounds should be supported. This will answer many of the questions that remain about its historic development and will serve to enhance local appreciation of the built heritage while improving the visitor experience.

7.0 INTERPRETATION & MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Approach & Objectives

The approach and objectives in relation to the interpretation and presentation of the built heritage of Banagher can be summarised as follows:

- to increase knowledge, awareness and understanding of the town
- identify key messages and themes to be communicated to locals and visitors
- ensure that interpretations of the town's heritage are well-researched
- set out strategies for passive and active learning within the town and on social media in order to facilitate a wide audience
- to provide for the use of the town's heritage as a cultural and educational resource
- set up a permanent exhibition of material in relation to the town
- ensure that the historic sites within the town are accessible to all, but not to the detriment of the built heritage, the safety and health of the public or wishes of owners
- promote Banagher as a heritage asset for west Offaly and identify funding sources for the maintenance of buildings in both public and private ownership
- create links with neighbouring towns and local authorities so as to better promote and enjoy the region and waterways and contribute to its attractiveness to visitors
- provide for the long-term enhancement of the setting of the town and waterways through planning policies and identification of key strategic aims

Principle: Depth in Time

Ensure that the conservation and preservation of Banagher's built heritage requires that all the layers that contribute to its cultural significance be valued.

Principle: Authenticity

Ensure that the importance of continuity and change in the proper understanding of the built heritage is communicated to the general public. This is

particularly important for Banagher where much of the built heritage is derelict or ruined.

Principle: Ownership

Consider rights of private owners in relation to the access, conservation and presentation of the built and natural heritage.

Principle: Stakeholder Consultation

Consult with stakeholders regarding proposed interventions adjacent to historic structures within the town and their conservation. Foster good communication and cooperation in the best interests of the heritage asset.



Fig. 130: Example of map of wall route (Medieval Dublin) as wayfinding street signage, consisting of bronze signplate set in cut granite pillar



Fig. 131: Bronze cast impressions of Viking Dublin artefacts



Fig. 132: Example of illustrated, multi-lingual information panel



Fig. 134: Athlone Castle Keep at night. www.athlonecastle.ie



Fig. 133: Example of discreet illustrated information panel relating to archaeological remains on public display.

Principle: Access for All

Where the integrity and character of the built heritage of Banagher can be maintained, ensure that access is improved for the benefit of people with disabilities.

Principle: Public Safety

Prioritise public safety in relation to access to historic sites, especially due to their riverside location.

Principle: Interpretative Infrastructure

Provide visitor facilities and signage at strategic sites within Banagher and along the river so that the general public can meaningfully interpret the built and natural heritage and enjoy the town amenities. Signage should be well-designed and coordinated and located so as not to detract from their setting.

Principle: Settings After Dark

Install discreet lighting for the effective presentation of the town at night, in particular the barracks and medieval chapel site. The lighting of the bridge, mill, castle and Martello tower should be considered however; priority must be given to wildlife management and the protection of bat species which are protected under the Habitats Directive and have established their habitat in these structures. Carefully considered lighting would assist in improving the appearance and visual interest of the town generally.



Fig. 135: Photograph of Youghal Medieval Festival, at St. Mary's Collegiate Church and Gardens

Principle: Settings for Events

The green spaces either side of the river, together with the public harbour should be better integrated with the town and the barrack site and riverbank park as a setting for cultural events.

Principle: Formal & Informal Learning

Ensure that the presentation of the cultural heritage of the town is aimed at as broad an audience as possible.

Principle: On-Going Interpretation

Ensure that as knowledge and understanding of the town's historic development grows and changes through further research and archaeological investigations, interpretation media are updated accordingly.

Principle: Sustainability

Promote and support development of amenities and marketable products that can raise revenue that can be allocated for the conservation and improved presentation of the town's historic core.



Fig. 136: Athenry Heritage Centre logo. www.athenryheritagecentre.com.

Principle: Branding

Develop the Historic Banagher brand for the promotion of the heritage asset and to protect potential revenues by licensing its use.

Principle: Outreach & Participation

Organise and support events that promote understanding of the archaeological heritage and that communicate its cultural significance.

Principle: Specialist Training

Arrange specialist training programmes where their practitioners might engage with the built heritage as the subject of study.

Principle: School Outreach

Encourage local schools to take advantage of the potential of the proposed walking routes to the historic sites around the town as a teaching resource.

Principle: Local Area Plan

Include the conjectural outline of the town defences in future development plan maps and other local authority publications to reinforce understanding of the extent and location of the medieval town to the general public and to aid forward planning for service providers and building and planning professionals.



Fig. 137: Athlone Castle Visitor Centre logo. www.athlonecastle.ie



Fig. 138: View of conservation open day at Clonmel



Fig. 139: Crowds attending Wall Towns Day at Buttevant

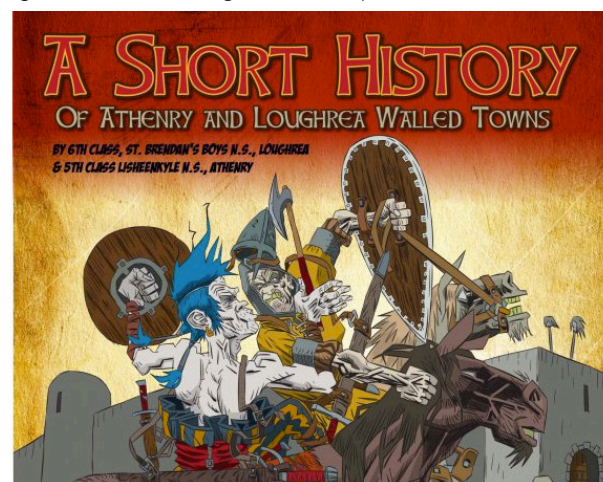


Fig. 140: Cover from comic book entitled 'A Short History of Athenry and Loughrae Walled Towns' prepared with school children. www.athenryheritagecentre.com

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Archaeological investigations have uncovered historical documents and fabric that provides evidence that has improved our understanding of historic Banagher. Aside from its built heritage and picturesque setting, the town has an energetic heritage group that have managed to organise several very successful events. It has also been affected by the economic downturn of the last decade, and several prominent buildings and commercial premises remain boarded up. These sites have great potential to enliven the town for the benefit of its residents, while also making it a more attractive place to visit and stay. This Plan is intended to provide a framework for future initiatives and makes recommendations on how change is to be managed in the best interests of the built heritage of the town. It also outlines some ideas for how the historic sites could better be understood and presented, with descriptions of how these initiatives could be implemented when circumstances allow. Responses to the cultural heritage of Banagher should seek to be inclusive and authentic, while also being imaginative and engaging so that the living heritage of the town can be presented alongside the preserved remnants of the past.



Audiences

The conservation of a complex site that encompasses the entire town involves input from many different sources, with differing interests and objectives. These stakeholders are the intended audience of the Conservation Plan. Their understanding and adoption of the conservation and interpretation policies is crucial to the successful maintenance and promotion of historic Banagher, with its potential to be a valuable tourism asset for the county. However, the initial focus of the improvements should be on its enjoyment or the river setting and the town's built heritage by the local community rather than being overly ambitious. The responsibility for the town's heritage is shared, each group depends on the other to act in their collective interest, to realise its cultural and economic potential.

State Bodies - The local authorities, both Offaly and Galway, and the state have a responsibility to ensure that its heritage is conserved for future generations. Increasing knowledge of historic Banagher among public bodies will help coordinate initiatives or works that impact on the town and direct funding for its protection and enhancement.

Landowners & Leaseholders - While much of the land in the town is in private ownership, there are other important sites that are in the ownership of public bodies. It is acknowledged that the local authority needs to maintain and enhance the amenity value of the public areas and historic buildings in their control, they rely on the co-operation and partnership of private entities and individuals in order to bring initiatives to fruition. Providing access to some of the most important sites require the permission and forbearance of private or institutional owners. Those that own or lease property that contains built heritage should be aware of their responsibilities to safeguard and not damage the historic fabric. They should then seek expert advice and liaise with the local authority in relation to the archaeological and built heritage within the town, especially when proposing building or landscaping works.

Fig. 141 (left): Map of Ireland's Inland Waterway by Delaney

Local Community - Improving understanding and appreciation of historic Banagher among the local community will enhance local pride in its cultural heritage, and make residents more actively involved in their protection and presentation to visitors.



Fig. 142: Banagher heritage trail sign re 'Wildlife by the River'. Banagher Tidy Towns Project, supported by West Offaly Enterprise Fund Ltd.



Fig. 143: Archaeology Workshop for children. Athenry Medieval Walled Town Past & Present booklet

Natural Heritage - Any opportunity to encourage a richer biodiversity along the riverbank should be explored. Natural heritage can thrive along the riverbank where there is less disturbance from development and human contact. Modern farming, landscape and property management methods often use herbicide sprays to clear weeds and these can be detrimental to wildlife where not carefully controlled.

Visitors - Both domestic and foreign visitors should be facilitated when presenting interpretation material. Domestic visitors may include locals who take the opportunity to improve their understanding of their town's heritage or enjoy exercise in beautiful surroundings.

Schools/ Universities - The best way to foster interest and appreciation of the local built and natural heritage among the local community is to include education programmes for schools. Proposed heritage walks will be a valuable teaching aid for students regarding subjects such as archaeology, architecture, engineering, hydrology, ecology, history as well as tourism and heritage protection.

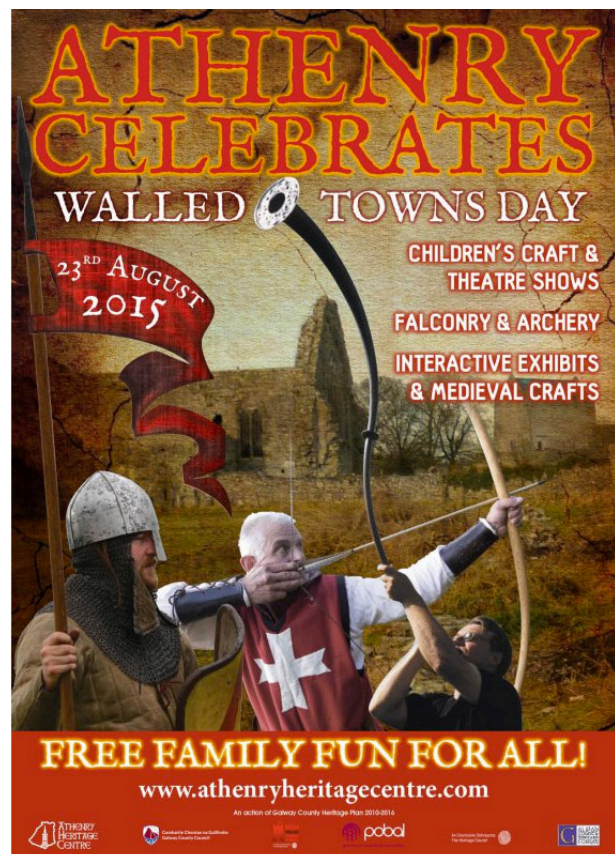


Fig. 144: Flyer to promote Athenry Walled Towns Day in 2015. www.athenryheritagecentre.com

Cultural & Heritage Groups - Local groups with interest in heritage and culture should continue to be encouraged and supported to engage with the built and natural heritage surrounding the town and to communicate with both locals and visitors.

Built Environment Professionals - Those involved with the conservation and development of the town should have access to information that will improve their understanding of historic Banagher; the need for and means of its protection as well as ideas for its enhancement.

Key Messages/ Themes

In order to frame the interpretation of historic Banagher, it is important to set out clearly the messages and themes that are to be communicated to the relevant audiences. As the built heritage is of a wide variety and only partly preserved, it is even more important that an understanding of its importance is communicated clearly to the general public.

Historic Development - The story of the town should commence with its monastic early development, and continue down through the centuries to present its remarkable historical continuum. The numerous research questions regarding its historic foundations should be explored for presentation to locals and visitors. The eighteenth and nineteenth-century developments, being the most visible, are also essential to preserve and present to visitors, contributing in turn to local community pride in their town.

Local Knowledge - In order to understand the context of historical developments, the story of the day-to-day lives of Banagher's inhabitants provides insights that are sometimes more easy to relate than famous historical figures. School children can play a role in obtaining this information from older relatives that when recorded can enrich people's understanding and enjoyment of the place.

Built & Natural Heritage Conservation - The importance of conserving natural and built heritage is also a key theme, acknowledging change while emphasizing the need to preserve these valuable resources.



Fig. 145: View of paving marker in Dublin, depicting a typical Viking house layout

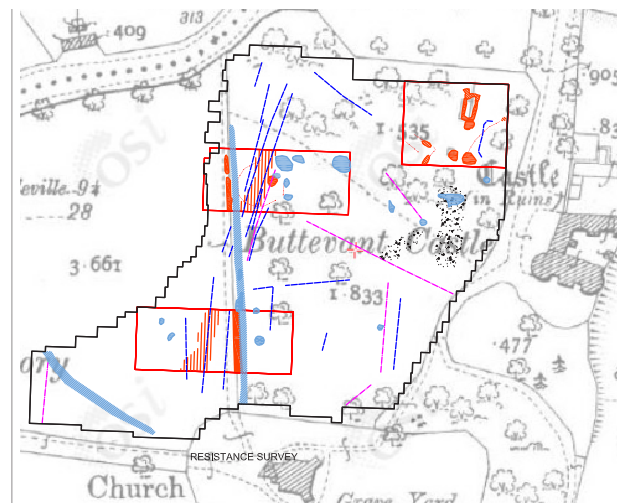


Fig. 146: Example of geo-physical survey undertaken at Buttevant in 2012

Archaeological Finds & Conservation - It is important to communicate our increasing, but as yet incomplete, knowledge of historic Banagher through archaeological investigations. This involves making material intended for an academic audience understandable and interesting to the general public. An excellent example already in place, is the archaeological investigations undertaken in 1998 by Dr. Jim Higgins at Banagher Barracks, which uncovered 'massive D-shaped bastions' in the vicinity of the barracks entrance, which could help further our understandings relating to the origins of the town, and whether Fort Falkland was constructed upon the site of an earlier structure. The presentation of such material, should illustrate how such evidence challenges or corroborates accepted theories.



Fig. 147: Loro Gate monument at Athenry by Howley Hayes Architects, with public display of town wall entrance gate archaeology

General Presentation & Management Recommendations

Improved Linkages - There are a number of websites dedicated to heritage tourism e.g. www.discoverireland.ie, www.visitoffaly.ie, in which Banagher does not feature prominently. In order to better promote the town, these sites should be approached to ensure that they have relevant information in relation to the cultural and amenity value of the town, giving directions, and listing points of interest. It would also be important to have the proposed walks and cycle routes listed on sites such as www.irishtrails.ie, www.alltrails.com or any number of online resources. It is important that information in relation to historic Banagher is available in regional centres and more popular tourist destinations such as Birr Castle or Portumna Castle and at other sites in Offaly. As projects develop, they should be promoted on relevant websites, and active websites with information on the town should be kept up-to-date.

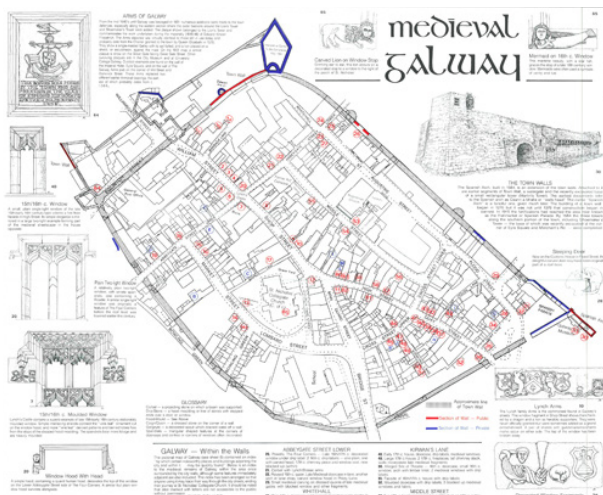


Fig. 148: Example of map of wall route (Medieval Galway) for information and souvenir.

Walking & Cycling Route Map - An updated illustrated map of the proposed walking and cycling routes should be produced to aid interpretation for visitors to Banagher, giving a full impression of all the town has to offer. The map could be an artist's impression of an aerial view that emphasizes the ruined sites as well as highlighting the walk and its immediate catchment. A fold-out map with the walking routes around the town superimposed could be used to facilitate self-guided visits.



Fig. 149: Detail of paving marker indicating line of historic wall circuit in Kilkenny

Interpretative Panels - Purpose-built interpretative centres are rarely justifiable, especially if there are heritage properties in the town that would benefit from refurbishment and being given a new use. Site-specific interpretation is more effective, helping to enliven historic sites while also making connections to other sites around the town and providing information regarding the main themes. While being easy to identify and find, the panels should not detract from their setting and should be capable of being updated. Using a number of different approaches ensures participation by the widest audience available. The panels do not need to be conventional signage, but could be a series of unique installations that provide 'windows' on aspects of the town's heritage through text, film, or images used in imaginative and accessible ways.

On-line Resources - Physical markers such as information signs should also link into online resources using QR (Quick Response) codes so that the wealth of information regarding the town can be appreciated in its entirety. The potential of providing resources online through the use of the websites or social media should be explored. 'That Beats Banagher' website is an excellent example of this type, and while currently used for the festival of the same name, it also provides updates on cultural events in the town. A website should cater for a wide range of audiences in both formal and informal ways - experts seeking references and research material,

tourists planning their itineraries, students researching a school project, building professionals undertaking development proposals. Consideration should be given to providing information on-line in a number of languages. In this way information would not clutter up signage.

Audio Guides - Audio-guides allow visitors to encounter the heritage at their own pace, and could help those with visual impairments have a meaningful engagement with the town's heritage. The guides could also include site-specific reconstructions of historic events in a vivid and interesting way. Smartphone apps could be used to provide such material, and could also include tasks, games or activities that reinforce the learning process. Web-based guides are becoming more available, and would reduce costs significantly and would be more appropriate for historic Banagher.

Conservation Recommendations

Architectural Conservation Area

In order to ensure the long-term preservation of historic Banagher, it is important that adequate statutory protection is put in place. We propose that the historic core of the town, including the riverfront, be included in a designated Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), in order that the totality of the built heritage can be conserved as a place of special interest. 'An architectural conservation area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of a development plan to preserve' (Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011).

Ruins & their Curtilages

It is acknowledged that the ruined or derelict structures- the barracks, mill and late medieval chapel site, are complex sites to access, however their preservation and conservation is in the wider public interest. This is a large undertaking beyond the scope of voluntary organisations or some private

owners. However, a pragmatic approach to access, and strategic repairs allow many similar sites to be opened up to the public to enjoy, even in a restricted way.

Maintenance & Repair

Built heritage requires continued maintenance in order to prevent inevitable loss of valuable historic fabric. Addressing excessive vegetative growth and erosion on a routine basis is more cost effective and can avoid large capital investments for programmes of repair or replacement, which can become a considerable drain on local authority resources. It is important that defects are addressed quickly, and not left to deteriorate further. As regards ivy growth and vegetation, it should first be determined whether its presence is causing damage to the historic fabric. Ivy provides useful shelter for insects and birds, and can insulate masonry from the worst effects of frost. Along with trees, it contributes to the verdant atmosphere of walks in summer time. Occasional saplings sprouting out of stones need not be of concern, but should be removed where there is a risk of undermining masonry.

In terms of priority the following actions should be taken:

- Assessment of ivy and vegetation growth, and a strategy for treatment and removal where necessary.
- Re-setting of loose stonework, re-pointing in lime mortars where necessary.
- Regular maintenance rather than extensive renewal.



Fig. 150: Before and after image of the conservation and repair to a medieval tower at Athenry town wall by Howley Hayes Architects

Amenity & Access Recommendations

New Routes, Signage & Shortcuts

In order to ensure that those visiting the town can remain as close to the areas of interest for as long as possible a built heritage walk should be considered. Directional signs should be erected at key junctions to inform users of the short cuts and their destinations. Information panels containing material on the built and natural heritage should be erected along the walk. Ideally, these should contain a narrative thread leading visitors along the walk, while also providing stand-alone information for those picking up the trail along the way. Readers of the signs should be encouraged to use their senses as well as their imagination, and should appeal to a range of interests and age-groups. Novel ways of encouraging their participation should be considered- such as links to web-based material, representations of historic contexts or short films or recordings.

Watersports & Fishing

Fishing tourism is very important to Co. Offaly and the middle-Shannon region including the Grand Canal. With Banagher's location at an important marina in close proximity to Lough Derg, Lough Ree and the Grand Canal the town appeals to anglers. LEADER funding is available for specific angling projects, these could also be utilised for improving the public realm along the riverbank generally.

Note: For details refer to the following drawings:

- Access and Amenities (Pg. 90-91)
- Built Heritage (Pg. 92-93)
- Signage and Routes (Pg. 94-95)

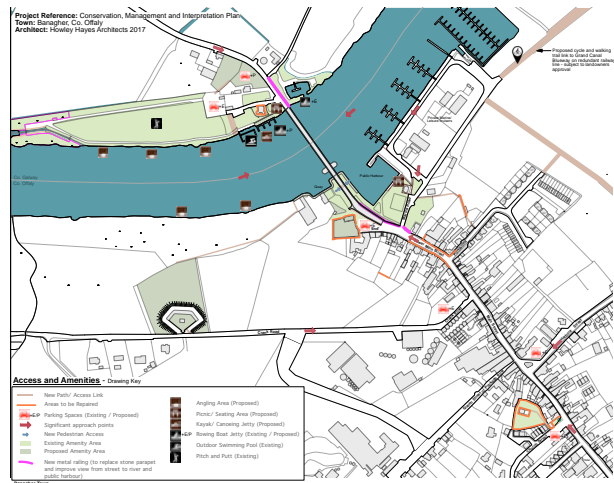


Fig. 151: Access and Amenities Drawing. Refer to A3 drawing to the rear of this report

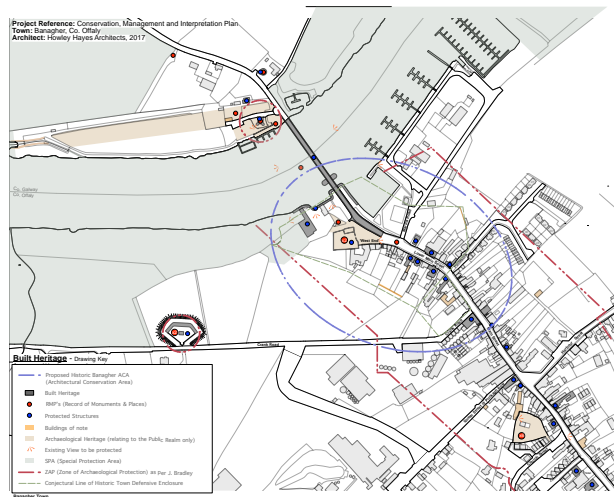


Fig. 152: Built Heritage Drawing. Refer to A3 drawing to the rear of this report

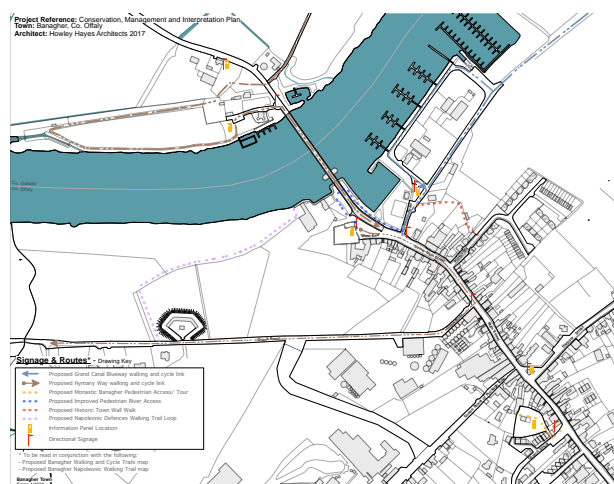


Fig. 153: Signage and Routes. Refer to A3 drawing to the rear of this report

Proposed Walking and Cycle Trails for Banagher

As Banagher is located in the heartland of the *Shannon Callows*, a Special Area of Conservation, the town is particularly well located for walking and cycle trails. In response to the client body's request for ways to improve the tourism potential of the area, HHA propose that the following walking and cycle trails are developed:

Trail 01 - Grand Canal Blueway to Banagher Trail Link

Trail 02 - Hymany Way to Banagher Trail Loop

Trail 03 - Banagher Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail

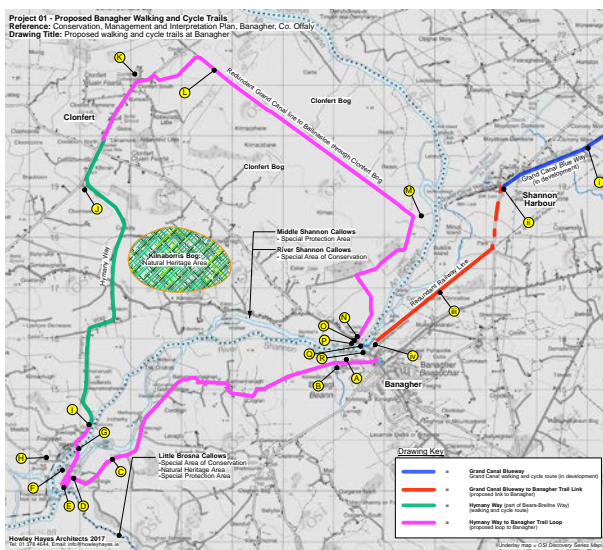


Fig. 154: Proposed Banagher Walking and Cycle Trails

Trail 01 - Grand Canal Blueway to Banagher Trail Link

Waterways Ireland are the lead agency developing Blueway trails in Ireland. 'Blueways are a network of multi-activity recreational trails, based on or alongside idyllic lakes, canals and rivers in Ireland' (bluewaysireland.org). The Grand Canal Blueway is a walking and cycle trail proposed for the towpath of the Grand Canal, part of which has been recently completed and is planned to terminate at Shannon Harbour, where the Grand Canal enters the Shannon, just 3km from Banagher. As the primary service town in the area, a trail link could be developed along the former Banagher to Clara railway line (subject to approval from local landowners), linking the Blueway to Banagher, which would bring significant tourism activity to the town while also providing services such as accommodation for the trail users. In the

Settlement Strategy, Banagher Town Plan section of the 2014-2020 Offaly County Development Plan (ref. 5.4), the potential for reopening the former railway line as an amenity and cycle route was noted.

Trail 02 - Hymany Way to Banagher Trail Loop

The Hymany Way is 50km long and begins in Portumna and ends at the site of the Battle of Aughrim. It is designated as a *National Waymarked Trail* and forms part of the Beara-Breifne Way. The proposed Hymany Way to Banagher trail loop, proposes to link the trail to Banagher forming a loop which begins and ends at Banagher. In order to create the trail loop, it is proposed to create a way-marked trail from the town along the Crank Road into Lusmagh and crossing the River Shannon at Victoria Lock and Meelick rampart. A return link to Banagher is proposed from the Hymany Way at Clonfert via the redundant Ballinasloe Grand Canal line through Clonfert Bog (subject to approval by Bord na Mona). The proposed loop could connect many heritage sites in the area, including Fort Eliza, Fort Falkland, Meelick Abbey and Clonfert Cathedral and could serve to greatly increase visitor number to these sites.

It should be noted that the Hymany Way to Banagher trail loop, is subject to the approval of landowners and dependant on the construction of the proposed new pedestrian walkway at Meelick Rampart by Waterways Ireland which was granted planning permission in 2016 by Galway Co. Co. and is proposed to replace the existing damaged rampart (Planning ref. no. 16/1322).

Note: For details refer to the Proposed Banagher Walking and Cycle Trails map Pg. 96-97

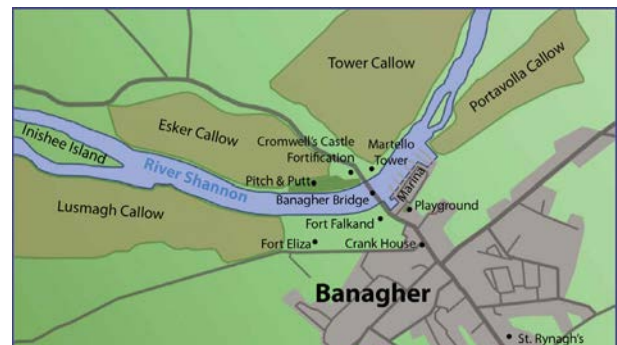


Fig. 155: Map of the Callows at Banagher. Detail, taken from Banagher Heritage Trail Sign (Refer to Fig. 142)

Trail 03 - Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail

The Banagher Napoleonic Defences walking trail, proposes to link the Banagher defence structures with a trail loop. While access to Fanesker Tower, Cromwell's Castle and Banagher Military Barracks is possible along the existing footpaths within the town, Fort Eliza is somewhat isolated to individuals who are not familiar with the area. Improved signage to Fort Eliza from Main Street and improved pedestrian access along the Crank Road could be explored, to enhance accessibility for all and to increase visitor numbers. A secondary pedestrian route to Fort Eliza consisting of a raised timber walkway (or similar), would create a looped trail and link the site back to the barracks site.

It should be noted, that the proposed Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail should be considered alongside proposed conservation works to Banagher's Napoleonic Defensive sites - to improve accessibility to the sites and also to increase their potential and attractiveness as important heritage sites for the area. For further details, refer to Howley Hayes Architects, Fort Eliza Conservation Assessment Report January 2018, which was commissioned by Waterways Ireland.

Note: For details of the proposed trail, refer to the Banagher Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail drawing, Pg. 98-99.

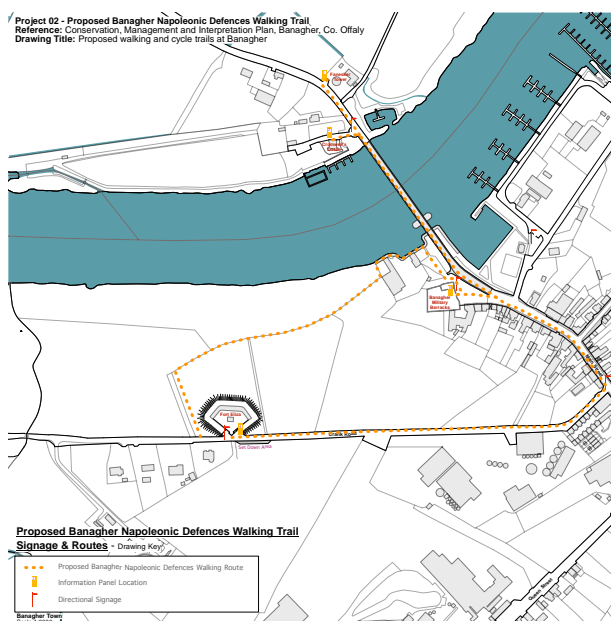


Fig. I56: Proposed Banagher Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail. Refer to A3 drawing to the rear of this report

Proposed Public Realm Improvement Projects

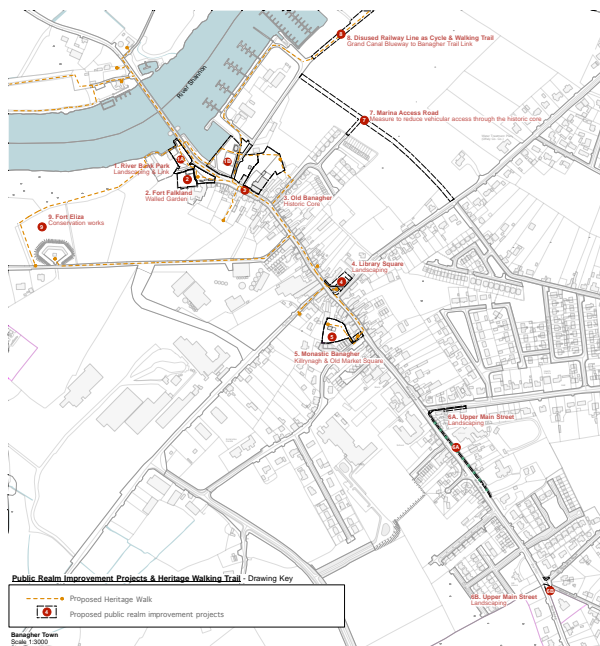


Fig. 157: Proposed Public Realms Improvement Projects at Banagher. Refer to A3 drawing to the rear of this report Pg. 100-101

Project 01 - Riverbank Park (Landscaping & Link)

The cartographic record, revealed that a harbour once existed at the end of Main Street, just north of the Shannon Hotel but was infilled as part of the Shannon Navigation Improvement Works 1841-1843. The former harbour, served to connect the town and Main Street to the river, and must have provided a very attractive vista for the town. This project, proposes to improve the towns connection with the river and the current public harbour, by recreating part of this vista. This could be achieved by removing the rubble stone wall north of the Billiard hall, and part of the north-east parapet of the bridge ramp, thus removing visual barriers between the street and the waterfront. Furthermore, to improve the potential of the public realm in this area, the area could be relandscaped, as one park amenity i.e. a Riverbank Park which could include the public harbour and riverbank west of the bridge ramp, which is very underutilised.

The analysis of the cartographic record in this report, highlighted the somewhat negative impact the bridge ramp has had on the riverbank on the townside, as it serves to divide the riverbank in two and restricts pedestrian movement. It is proposed to address this by forming an opening through the bridge ramp

adjacent to the public harbour. The riverbank west of the bridge ramp, could be developed as a farmers market / artisan food and craft hub and a space for riverside events or the erection of a marquee.

On reviewing the design of the public harbour, it appears to be underutilized. To increase the number of boats mooring in the public harbour, it is proposed that a jetty is introduced centrally within the harbour, which is accessed east of the bridge ramp. By increasing the number of spaces for boats to moor here, it will greatly help to increase visitor numbers and will also help bring more vibrancy and riverside activity to the area. The jetty, should be accessed from the east of the proposed new opening in the bridge ramp, to increase pedestrian traffic, which will help to draw visitors into the adjacent farmers market / artisan food and craft hub just mentioned.

Benefits of the proposed riverbank park include:

- Creating an important first impression of the town to river tourists
- Improving the visual connection with the Public Harbour and the Lower Main Street
- Providing a sheltered space and attractive setting for a farmer's market /artisan food & craft hub to the area west of the bridge ramp and adjacent to the mill site.
- Improved accessibility along the riverbank
- Improved future access to the adjacent vacant Mill site, increasing its re-use and development potential.
- Creating an improved connection between the derelict Royal Shannon Hotel site and the Public Harbour, making it more attractive as a hotel setting and increasing its development potential.
- Increasing the capacity of the Public Harbour for mooring boats, and increasing visitor numbers to the area.

Project 02 - Fort Falkland - Walled Garden (re-use of a vacant premises)

Banagher's eighteenth-century barracks and forecourt is on the site of a former seventeenth-century fortification known as Fort Falkland. An archaeological dig undertaken in the 1990s discovered evidence of gate bastions of significant size and depth close the barracks entrance. It is proposed to consolidate and repair the ruined walls of the former barracks, which

is in a derelict state and to develop the interior into a walled garden with areas of archaeology of the former fort showcased to the public. The barracks was strengthened in the early nineteenth century as part of a network of Napoleonic fortifications at Banagher. A heritage trail linking the barracks with the other fortifications of Fort Eliza, Cromwell's Castle and Martello Tower is proposed under Trail 03 above.

Project 03 - Old Banagher / Historic Core (Landscaping and Streetfront Enhancement)

The north-west end of Lower Main Street is within the former town defensive enclosure of the historical urban settlement of Banagher. Today, the area is endowed with an Early Georgian streetscape which is unusual for a midland town and is of high architectural significance. The most significant building of note in this cluster is the former Royal Shannon Hotel, which is in a vacant, fire damaged and derelict state and requires urgent emergency works to halt its deterioration. Much of the Early Georgian facade remains intact and with moderate cost it is proposed that the external walls, original historic timber windows and roof are repaired. With 0.46ha of premises to the rear of the property, restoring the hotel building facade would greatly increase its future development potential.

As the shell of the structure appears relatively intact, the repainting of the hotel and repair of the roof and windows would greatly improve its appearance on the street front. The careful removal of the fire damaged modern extension to the rear of the property could make the property more attractive for resale. Undertaking this conservation works, should be a matter of priority, in the interest of enhancing the street front and protecting the structure from further decay. The rear of the property has a strategic location, through improvements in the public realm adjacent, the hotels sites connection with the public harbour could be strengthened, which would further increase its attractiveness for resale and development potential.

As the former hotel site is within the historic defensive enclosure, a new pedestrian link from the public harbour to the rear boundary of the hotel site, along the conjectural line of the town defences could

also be developed. This walkway, could be enhanced with attractive stone paving and to provide signage and information panels on the marina approach side, to inform visitors about the towns heritage, with supporting maps of heritage trails and cycle routes.

Project 04 - Library Square relandscaping works

Proposed landscaping improvement works including new signage, new street furniture, attractive stone paving, planting and the re-ordering and landscaping of car parking bays.

Project 05 - Monastic Banagher

The ninth-century cross-shaft of Banagher, currently held at the National Museum of Ireland is evidence of the towns Early Christian monastic past. Associated with the sixth-century saint, St. Rynagh, the remains of the late medieval chapel and graveyard is believed to have been built upon the site of the earlier monastic complex. While the ecclesiastical settlement was encroached upon through the town's expansion in the seventeenth century, the graveyard and late medieval chapel survives and are sited on the summit of a small hill, which provides impressive views west across the Shannon callows. The graveyard has many fine examples of historic carved headstones with some medieval worked stone fragments. It is proposed to make this significant heritage site accessible from the Market Square through the development of an interpretive area and pocketpark, together with the consolidation and repair of the old chapel.

Project 06 - Upper Main Street Landscaping

The upper section of Main Street and The Hill, has fine examples of nineteenth-century ecclesiastical architecture, however the street widens in this area and lacks the intimacy and definition of the lower street. It is proposed to address this, through the careful placement of landscaped carparking bays, interspersed with attractive small flowering trees. As part of the improvement works, it is also proposed to improve the public realm to the front of the Church of St. Paul and along the south side of Cuba Avenue at the junction with Main Street. This section of the Avenue, which is adjacent to the National School, currently has no footpath or designated carparking bays.

Project 07 - Marina Access Road

As part of the Historic Core improvement works and the Riverside park landscaping works, it is proposed to limit vehicular access to the Marina site from the Main Street, by creating a new marina access road from the Harbour Road. This measure would help to improve the proposed park for pedestrian use, increase its amenity value and would also greatly improve the aspect of the Royal Shannon Hotel site and its connection with the public harbour, thus further increasing its development potential. The development of the marina access road, would also serve to increase the number of visitor carparking and busparking bays, which could be located outside the historic core, but close enough for pedestrians to easily access the area.

Project 8 - Disused Railway Line Cycle & Walking Trail

As part of the proposed Grand Canal Blueway to Banagher Trail Link, it is proposed to develop the redundant Banagher to Clara railway line, which enters the town north-east of the marina and once terminated within the historic core, as a primary trail link, to connect the town with the proposed Grand Canal Blueway Trail. This proposal and the development of the railway line, is subject to approval by local landowners.

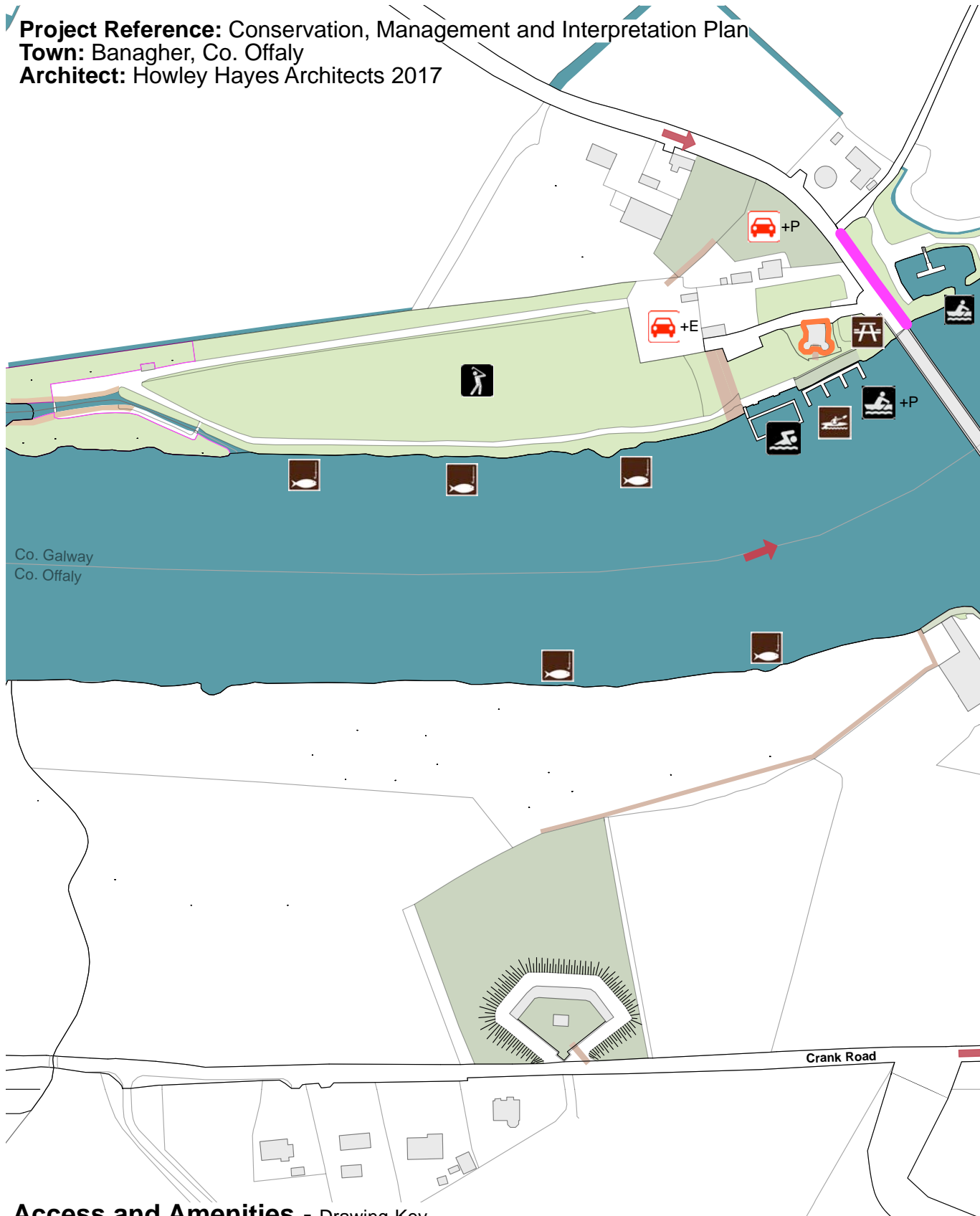
Project 9 - Fort Eliza Conservation and Repair

For details, refer to Fort Eliza, Conservation Assessment Report, January 2018 by Howley Hayes Architects which was commissioned by Waterways Ireland in 2017.

















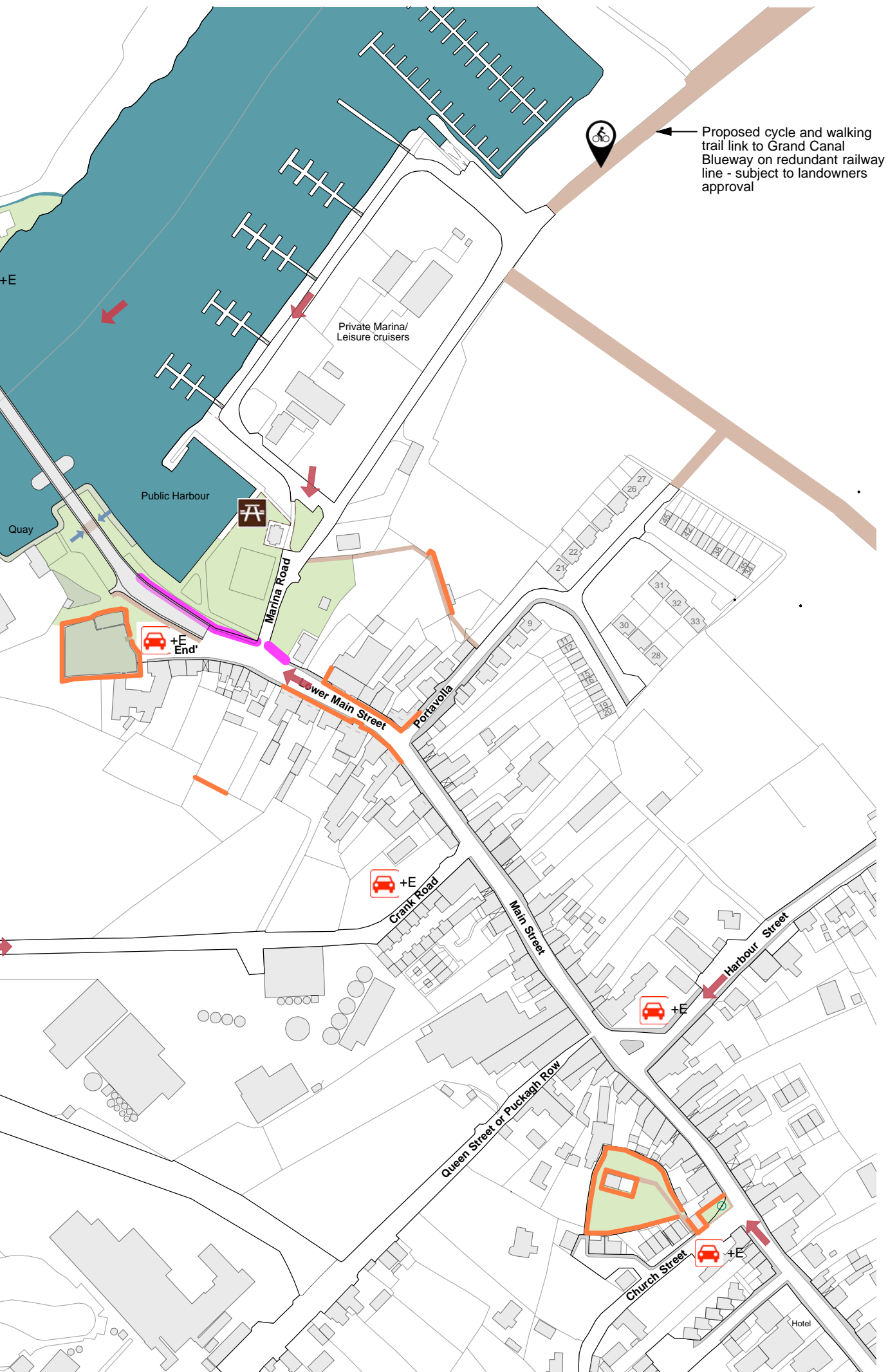
Fig. 158: Sketch described as 'An Abbot on horseback from the Banagher Cross'. Harbison, Peter, *Guide to the National Monuments in the Republic of Ireland*, new revised edition (rear cover)

Project Reference: Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan
Town: Banagher, Co. Offaly
Architect: Howley Hayes Architects 2017



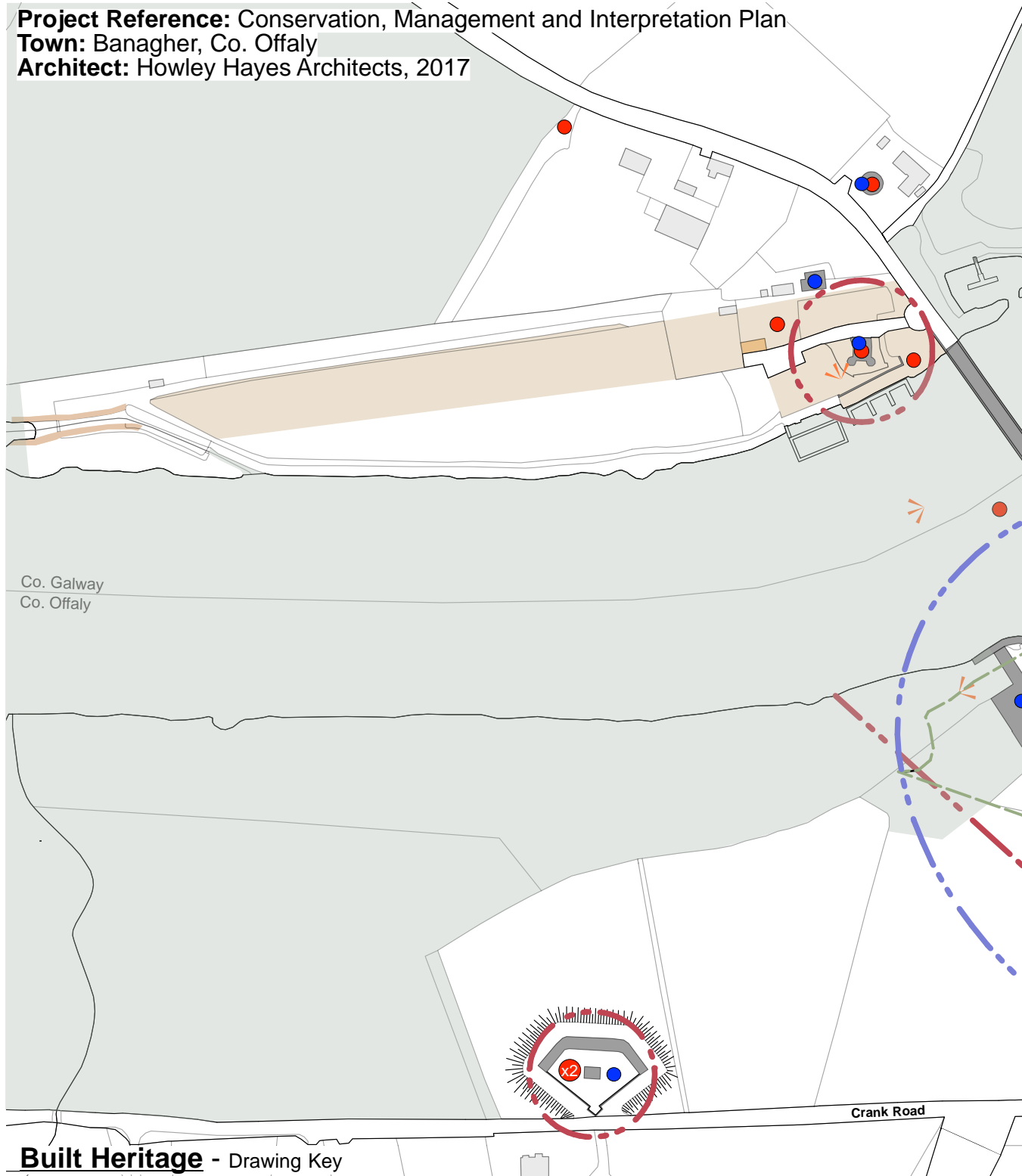
Access and Amenities - Drawing Key

	New Path/ Access Link		Angling Area (Proposed)
	Areas to be Repaired		Picnic/ Seating Area (Proposed)
	Parking Spaces (Existing / Proposed)		Kayak/ Canoeing Jetty (Proposed)
	Significant approach points		Rowing Boat Jetty (Existing / Proposed)
	New Pedestrian Access		Outdoor Swimming Pool (Existing)
	Existing Amenity Area		Pitch and Putt (Existing)
	Proposed Amenity Area		
	New metal railing (to replace stone parapet and improve view from street to river and public harbour)		



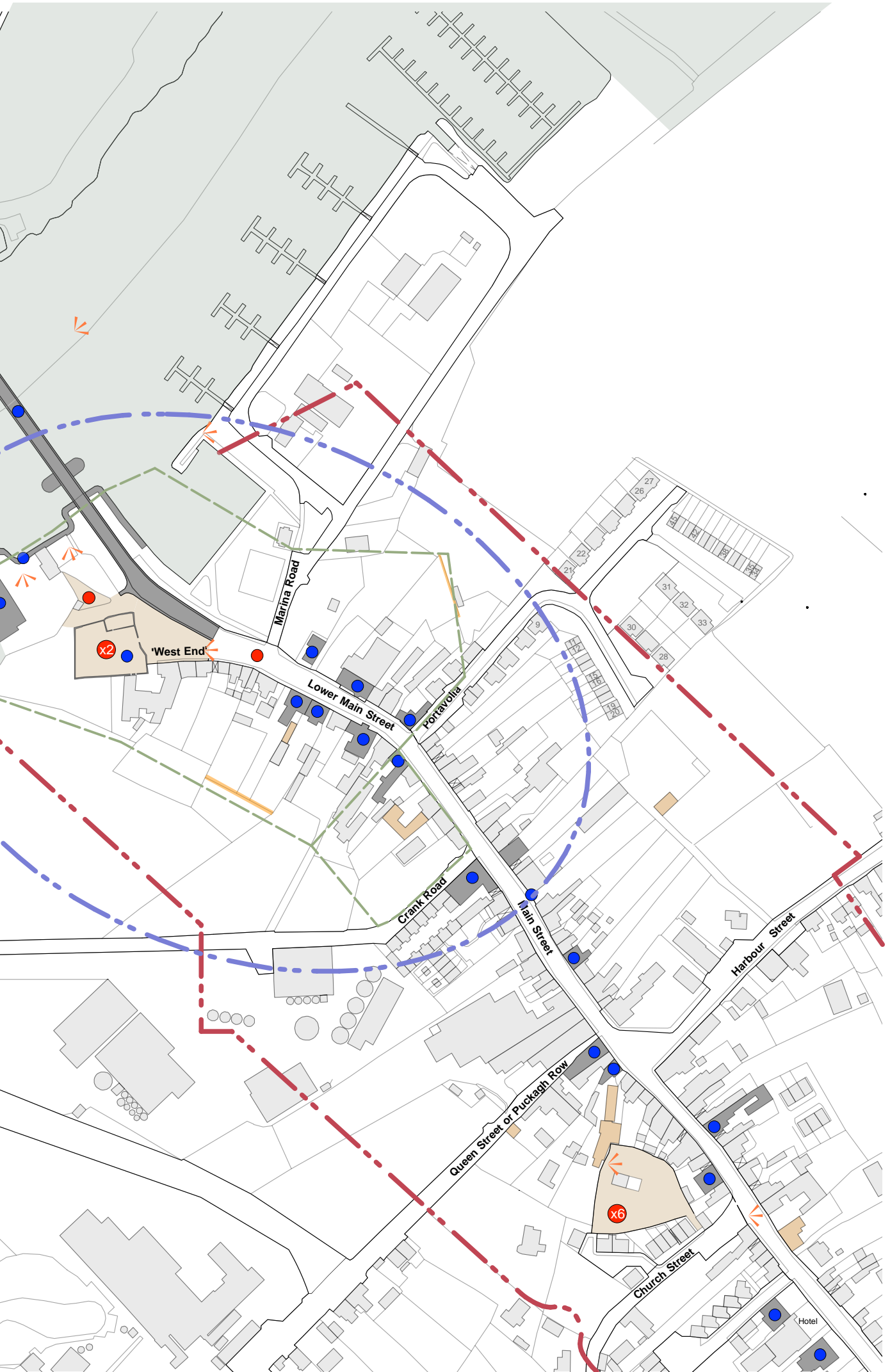
Proposed cycle and walking trail link to Grand Canal Blueway on redundant railway line - subject to landowners approval

Project Reference: Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan
Town: Banagher, Co. Offaly
Architect: Howley Hayes Architects, 2017



Built Heritage - Drawing Key

- — — Proposed Historic Banagher ACA (Architectural Conservation Area)
- Built Heritage
- RMP's (Record of Monuments & Places)
- Protected Structures
- Buildings of note
- Archaeological Heritage (relating to the Public Realm only)
- ∟ Existing View to be protected
- SPA (Special Protection Area)
- — — ZAP (Zone of Archaeological Protection) as per J. Bradley
- — — Conjectural Line of Historic Town Defensive Enclosure



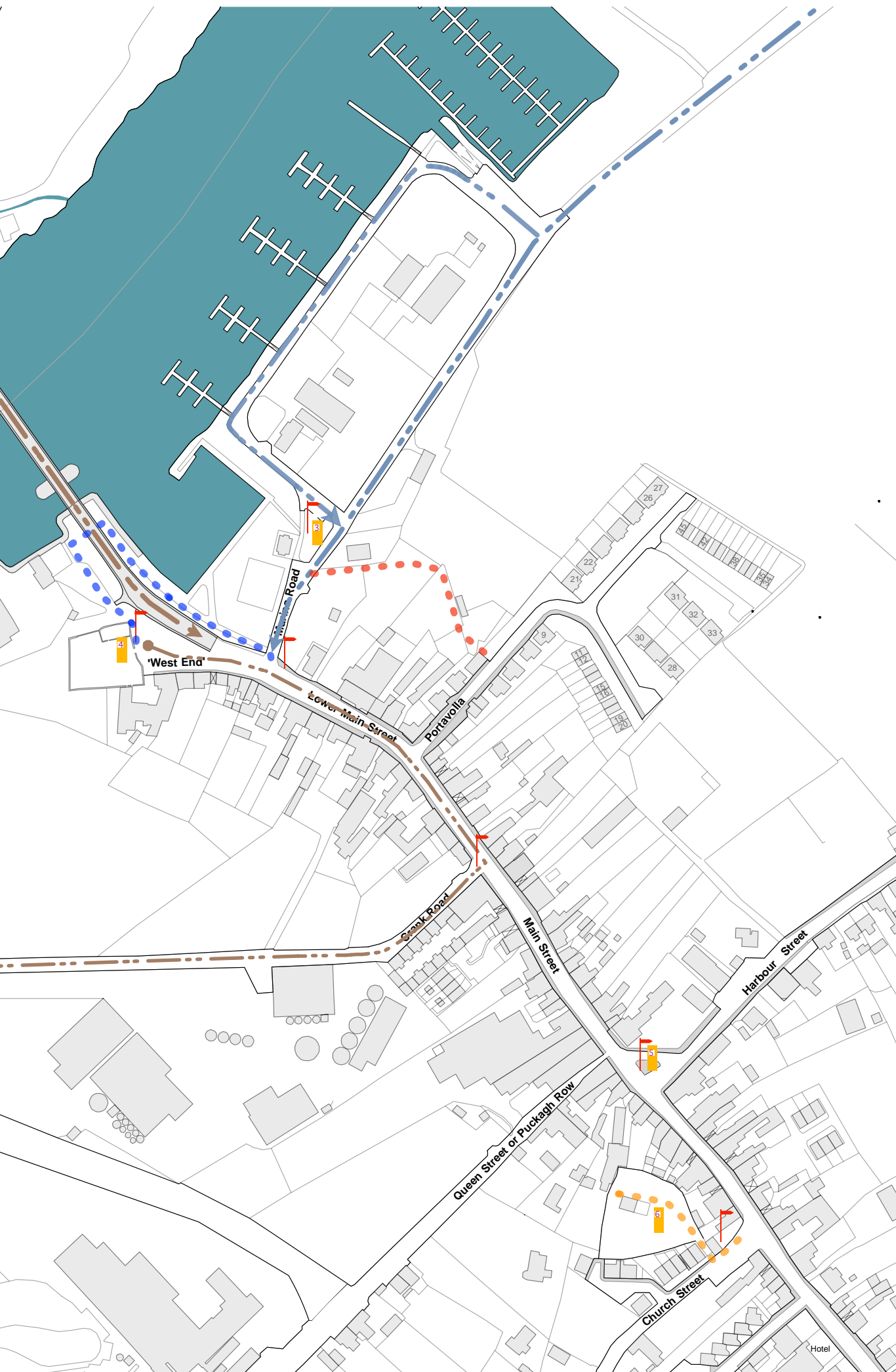
Project Reference: Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan
Town: Banagher, Co. Offaly
Architect: Howley Hayes Architects 2017



Signage & Routes* - Drawing Key

	Proposed Grand Canal Blueway walking and cycle link
	Proposed Hymany Way walking and cycle link
	Proposed Monastic Banagher Pedestrian Access/ Tour
	Proposed Improved Pedestrian River Access
	Proposed Historic Town Wall Walk
	Proposed Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail Loop
	Information Panel Location
	Directional Signage

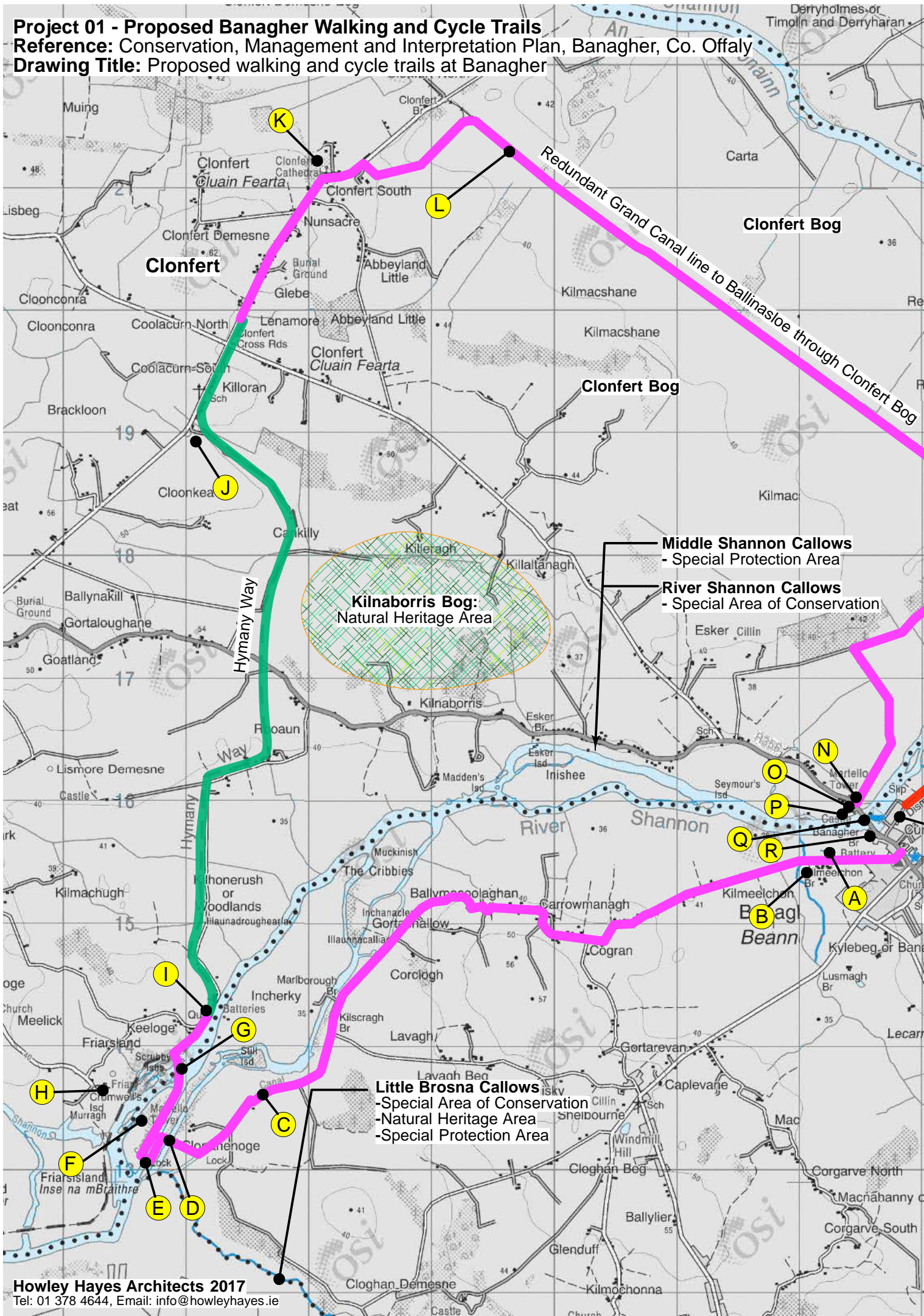
* To be read in conjunction with the following:
 - Proposed Banagher Walking and Cycle Trails map
 - Proposed Banagher Napoleonic Walking Trail map

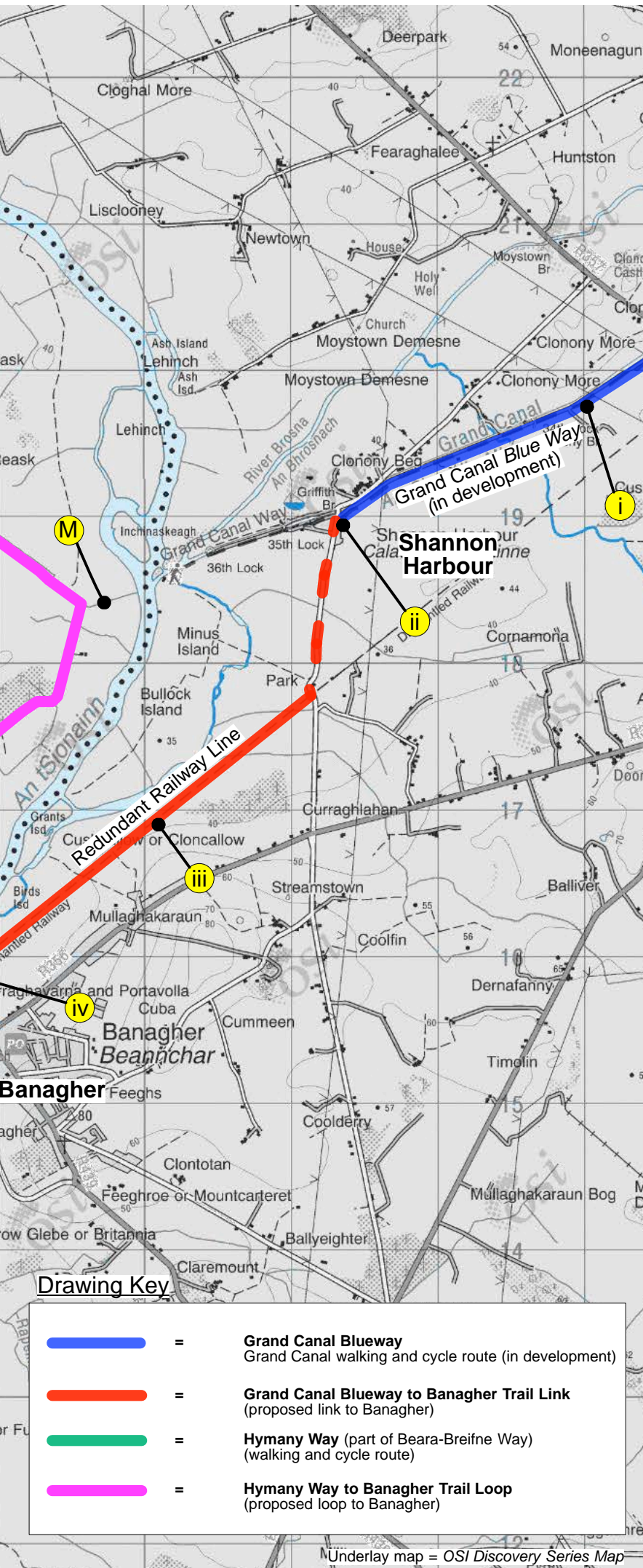


Project 01 - Proposed Banagher Walking and Cycle Trails

Reference: Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan, Banagher, Co. Offaly

Drawing Title: Proposed walking and cycle trails at Banagher





Heritage sites & sites of interest

- A = Fort Eliza (Napoleonic Fort)
 - B = Medieval Castle (site of)
 - C = Road along former canal
 - D = Bridge
 - E = Victoria Lock
 - F = Martello Tower
 - G = Meelick Rampart & Weir
 - H = Meelick Abbey
 - I = Meelick Quay
 - J = Brackloon Castle
 - K = Clonfert Cathedral
 - L = Grand Canal (Ballinasloe line)
 - M = Fanning's Lock
 - N = Martello Tower
 - O = Omer's Canal House
 - P = Cromwell's Castle
 - Q = Banagher Bridge
 - R = Barracks & former C17 Fort
-
- i = Grand Canal
 - ii = Shannon Harbour village
 - iii = Redundant Railway Line
 - iv = Banagher Marina & Bike Rental

Proposed walking and cycle trail links for Banagher

Trail 01 - Grand Canal Blueway to Banagher Trail Link

The **Grand Canal Blueway**, is an existing walking trail along the canal towpaths from Dublin city to its point of entry into the River Shannon, just 3km upriver from Banagher. Offaly County Council in partnership with Waterways Ireland, have plans in progress to upgrade this walking trail to a cycle path, the first phase of which is currently under construction.

The proposed Grand Canal Blueway cycle link, proposes to link the Blueway to Banagher at the village of Shannon Harbour via the redundant Banagher to Clara railway line, which cuts through the scenic Shannon Callows and terminates at the Banagher Marina.

Web Link:
<http://www.irishtrails.ie/trail/Grand-Canal-Way/18/>

Trail 02 - Hymany Way to Banagher Trail Loop

The **Hymany Way** is 50 km long and begins in Portumna and ends at the site of the Battle of Aughrim. It is designated as a National Waymarked Trail and forms part of the **Beara-Breifne Way**, a walking and cycling route from the Beara Peninsula, County Cork to Breifne, County Leitrim following the line of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare's march in the aftermath of the Battle of Kinsale in 1602.




The proposed **Hymany Way link**, proposes to link the **Hymany Way** to Banagher, crossing the river Shannon at the scenic Victoria Lock and the Meelick Weir, which has received planning permission for pedestrian walkway across the main River Shannon (Planning reference no. 16/1322. Approved May 2017, Waterways Ireland). A second link route returns from the **Hymany Way** at Clonfert Cathedral via the redundant Grand Canal line, through Clonfert bog before crossing back to Banagher via Banagher Bridge with many significant heritage sites along the way.

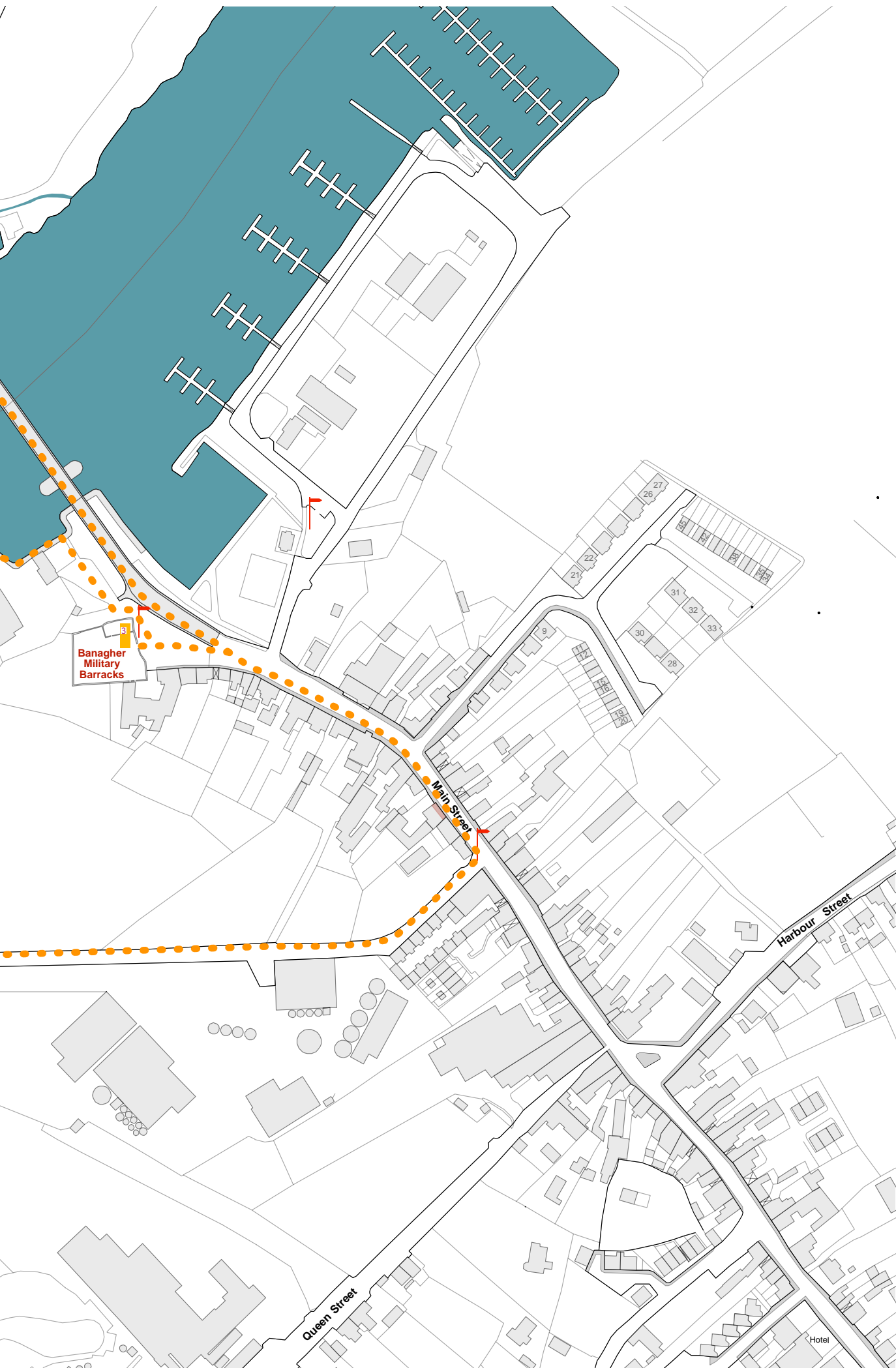
Web links:
<http://www.hymanyway.org>
<http://www.theirelandway.ie/hymany-way.html>

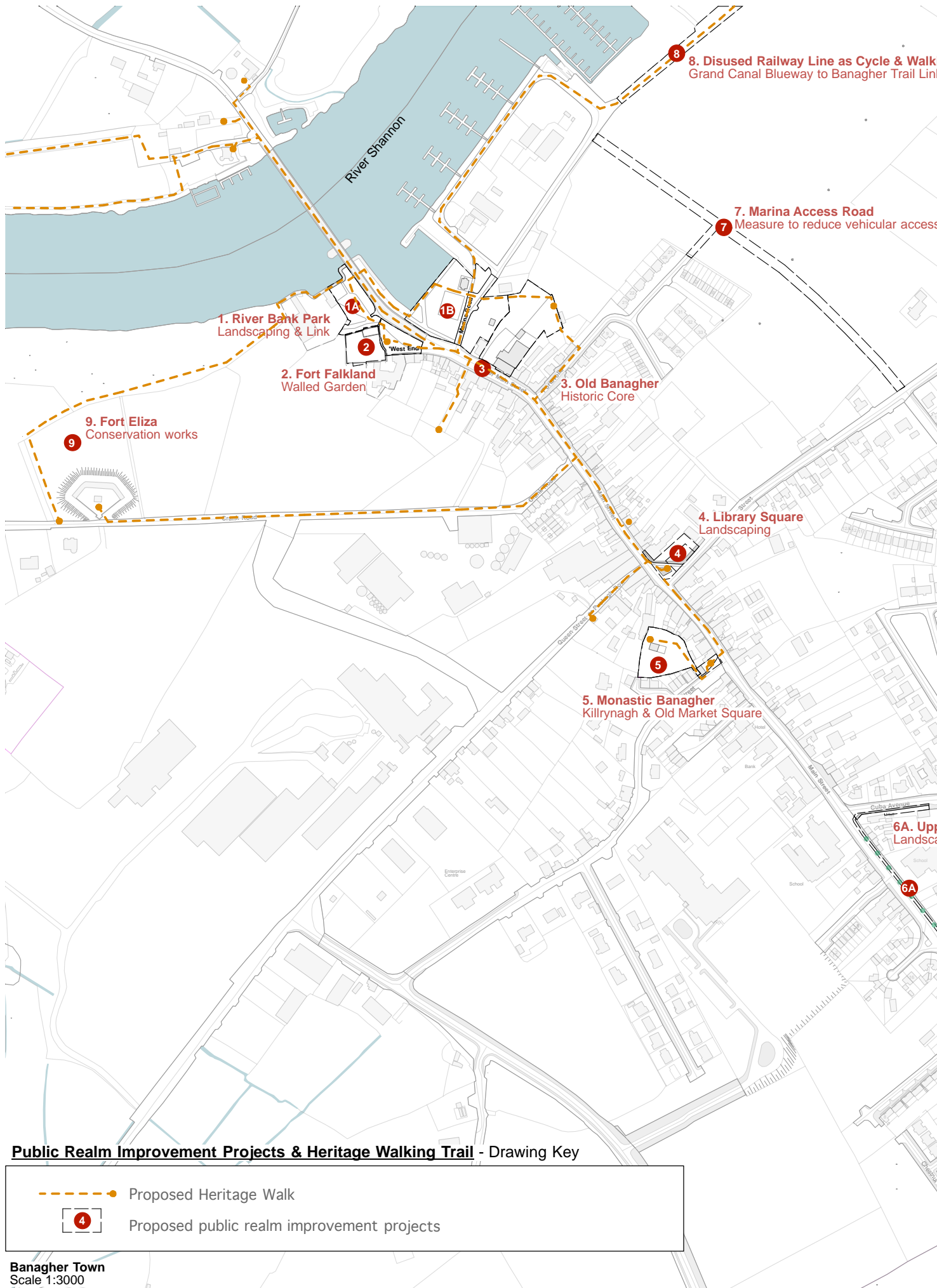
Project 02 - Proposed Banagher Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail
Reference: Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan, Banagher, Co. Offaly
Drawing Title: Proposed walking and cycle trails at Banagher



Proposed Banagher Napoleonic Defences Walking Trail
Signage & Routes - Drawing Key

	Proposed Banagher Napoleonic Defences Walking Route
	Information Panel Location
	Directional Signage







1A & 1B. Riverbank Park - Landscaping and Link

This project proposes to improve the towns connection with the river, through the following measures:

- Enhance the visual connection between Lower Main Street and the public harbour
- Relandscape the public realm to the east and west of the bridge ramp into a Riverbank Park
- Sensitive remove a section of the bridge ramp to create a pedestrian link through the ramp
- Relandscape the public realm west of the bridge ramp as a farmers market /artisan food hub
- Insert a new jetty centrally within the public harbour, to increase the visitor numbers.

Benefits of the proposed Riverbank Park include:

- Creating an important first impression of the town to river tourists
- Improving the visual connection with the public harbour and the Lower Main Street
- Increased riverside amenities for locals and visitors
- Improved accessibility along the riverbank
- Improved access to the vacant Mill site, increasing its re-use and development potential
- Creating an improved connection between the derelict Royal Shannon Hotel site and the public harbour, making it more attractive as a hotel setting and increasing its development potential
- Increasing the capacity of the Public Harbour for mooring boats, and increasing visitor numbers

2. Fort Falkland - Walled Garden (Re-use of a vacant premises)

Banagher's eighteenth-century Military Barrack's is on the site of a former seventeenth-century fortification known as Fort Falkland, the turrets for which were discovered in an archaeological dig undertaken in the 1990s. It is proposed to consolidate and repair the ruined walls of the former barracks, which is in a derelict state, and to develop the interior into a walled garden with areas of archaeology of the former fort showcased to the public. The barracks was strengthened in the early nineteenth century as part of a network of Napoleonic fortifications at Banagher. A heritage trail linking the barracks with the other Napoleonic fortifications of Fort Eliza, Cromwell's Castle and Martello Tower is also envisaged.

3. Old Banagher / Historic Core - Landscaping and Streetfront Enhancement

The northern end of Lower Main Street is within the former defensive enclosure of the historical urban settlement of Banagher. Today, the area is endowed with an Early Georgian streetscape which is unusual for a midland town and is of high architectural significance. The most significant building of note within this cluster, is the former Royal Shannon Hotel, which is in a vacant, fire damaged and derelict state and requires urgent emergency works to halt its deterioration. Much of the Early Georgian facade remains intact and with moderate cost it is proposed that the external walls, historic timber windows and roof are repaired. With 0.46ha of premises to the rear of the property, the careful removal of the fire damaged rear modern extension could make the property more attractive for resale and improve its development potential. Undertaking this conservation works, should be a matter of priority, in the interest of enhancing the street front and protecting the structure from further decay. As the former hotel site is within the historic defensive enclosure, a new pedestrian link from the public harbour to the rear boundary of the hotel site, along the conjectural line of the town defences could also be developed.

4. Library Square - Proposed landscaping works

Proposed landscaping improvement works including new signage, new street furniture, attractive stone paving, planting and the re-ordering and landscaping of car parking bays.

5. Monastic Banagher - Killrynagh and Old Market Square

The ninth-century cross-shaft of Banagher, currently held at the National Museum of Ireland is evidence of the towns Early Christian monastic past. Associated with the sixth-century saint, St. Rynagh, the remains of the late medieval chapel and graveyard is believed to have been built upon the site of the earlier monastic complex. While the ecclesiastical settlement was encroached upon through the town's expansion in the seventeenth century, the graveyard and late medieval chapel survives and are sited on the summit of a small hill, which provides impressive views west across the Shannon callows. The graveyard has many fine examples of historic carved headstones with some medieval worked stone fragments. It is proposed to make this significant heritage site accessible from the Market Square through the development of an interpretive area and pocketpark, together with the consolidation and repair of the old chapel.

6A & 6B. Upper Main Street - Landscaping

The upper section of Main Street has fine examples of nineteenth-century ecclesiastical architecture, however, the street widens in this area and loses the definition of the Main Street. It is proposed to address this, through the careful placement of landscaped carparking bays, interspersed with attractive small flowering trees. As part of the improvement works, it is also proposed to improve the public realm to the front of the Church of St. Paul (7B) and along the south side of Cuba Avenue at the junction with Main Street (7A). This section of the Avenue, which is adjacent to the National School, currently has no footpath or designated carparking bays.

7. Marina Access Road - Proposed Relief Road

As part of the Historic Core improvement works and the Riverside Park landscaping works, it is proposed to limit vehicular access to the Marina site from the Main Street, by creating a new marina access road from the Harbour Road. This measure would help to improve the park for pedestrian use, increase its amenity value and would also greatly improve the aspect of the Royal Shannon Hotel site and its connection with the public harbour, thus further increasing its development potential. Visitor carparking and busparking bays, located outside of the historic core, could also be developed as part of the relief road works.

8. Disused Railway Line Cycle & Walking Trail - Grand Canal Blueway to Banagher Trail Link

As part of the proposed Grand Canal Blueway to Banagher Trail Link, it is proposed to develop the redundant Banagher to Clara railway line, which enters the town north-east of the marina and once terminated within the historic core, as a primary trail link, to connect the town with the proposed Grand Canal Blueway Trail. This proposal and the development of the railway line, is subject to approval by local landowners.

9. Fort Eliza - Conservation Repair Works

In 2017, Howley Hayes Architects were commissioned by Waterways Ireland to prepare a conservation assessment for Fort Eliza. For details, refer to Fort Eliza, Conservation Assessment Report, January 2018 by Howley Hayes Architects.

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APPENDICES

- List of Record of Protected Structures - Offaly County Council Development Plan 2014-2020
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- Site Synopsis, River Little Brosna Callows NHA
- Site Synopsis, All Saints Bog and Esker SAC
- Site Synopsis, All Saints Bog SPA
- Site Synopsis, River Little Brosna Callows SPA
- Site Synopsis, Middle Shannon Callows SPA



Fig. 159: An artists interpretation of a panel of Banagher cross-shaft, at the Celtic Tourist Hostel, Queen Street, Galway City