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Subject: Castleconnell Local Area Plan Submission
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Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to submit the following for consideration for the Castleconnell Local Area Plan. There are four issues we would like the Council to address when reassessing the local area plan for Castleconnell. All four points fall under Climate Adaptation and Mitigation with three of the points falling under Active Travel, Transport and Utilities and under Community, Amenity and Recreation. The main and most important of these being the first one, i.e., a footpath on the R525 and joining up of footpaths on the L1103.

1. Footpath missing on roads R525 and L1103.

We live on road R525 near Nelson's cross (junction with road L1103), very close to the local school that our children attend. However, we were only able to walk our children to school during lockdown, and not due to lack of time (we have both worked in a hybrid mode before the pandemic) but due to safety concerns. It is simply too dangerous to walk this road, especially during times of high traffic. Also, since this road has no footpath and since it has a dashed line along most of its length there is a tendency for cars to speed and to overtake. In addition, the road is narrow and dark with some sections of the road having bright sections (due to light entering the road at gateways) resulting in short blind sections of the road where it is difficult for drivers to see pedestrians. Furthermore, for more than half of this section the level of the field is more than 3 ft below the road making it difficult to step of the road for safety. In short, we do not feel safe walking this road, not to mention letting our children walk it by themselves.

Thus, we bring our children to the village by car, drop them off and they then walk to school from the other direction.

This leads to a situation, which can be presented in a story that happened just 2 weeks ago. While organising the St Patrick's parade I brought one of my children

with me to meet a fellow community member in our community centre in the village (ACM) and it soon turned out that she was a grandmother of my child's friend from school. But imagine the surprise we all had when we established the next fact: we both live beside Nelson's cross (roads R525 and L1103) with only 3 houses between us. If the children could walk to school, they would meet their friends along the way. They could form a walking bus, picking more friends as they go. That would greatly increase the sense of belonging and unity within the community. As things are now, every child on the road, in Gooig etc is dropped off either to school or to the centre of the village. It means that we don't even know our neighbors, not to mention the environmental impact and the safety implications of a large number of cars dropping and collecting children to/from school.

The junction at Nelsons Cross (i.e. the junction of R525 and L1103) is very hazardous for all traffic users – pedestrians, drivers and cyclists. The majority of people living in estates (Scanlon Park, Elvers, Cedarwood Grove, Castle Court, Inis Cloon, and The Commons), along the roads to World's End and in the village avoid using this junction when going to Limerick. We also only use this junction when driving to the village and not when returning from the village to our house (although it is located only 150 metres from the junction). This avoidance is motivated by there being absolutely no line of sight when entering onto the R525 from the L1103 (accidents, including fatal accidents, occur here often). The most likely and shortest route for pedestrians to take to the local school, Daly's cross and the railway station is via Nelson's cross and the R525. Houses situated along the L1103 from the railway crossing to the R525 as well as the 3 (three) houses situated on the R525 (we live in the 3rd house), Forge Road, next to the junction should have long ago been equipped with pavements allowing for safe pedestrian traffic. The road layout, i.e. the positioning of front walls/fences at those sites, offers sufficient space for building of this stretch of a footpath at low cost.

Therefore, we urge the Council to equip the village with a safe walking footpath along the red and green lines in Fig 1 creating three walking loops:

Loop 1: Nelson's Cross - R525 - Skeehan's cross- railway Road - Main Street - The Mall - L1103 – Nelson's Cross;

Loop 2: Nelson's Cross - R525 - Skeehan's cross – Daly's Cross - Dublin Road – Gooig - Nelson's Cross;

Loop 3: Nelson's Cross – L1103 – The Mall – Main Street – Castlerock – Dublin Road – Daly's Cross – Forge Road (R525) - Nelson's Cross;

and , an extension along the R525 to the Scouts Campsite on R525, allowing the Scouts to walk by footpath to

- A. The playing pitches at Scanlon Park,
- B. The all-weather pitch and basketball court at the National School
- C. The Village and the Village Hall
- D. Worlds End to swim in the Shannon and the Kayak / Rowing Club
- E. The Railway Station
- F. Daly's Cross Bus Stop

(A Scout base should be safely connected with the village and the train station both for the sake of scouts but also since the cabin in the campsite is rented for fitness classes and therefore it would mean that people attending such classes could walk there whereas now everybody drives).



Fig 1. Position of proposed footpaths and existing bridleway.

2. Benches or other fixtures suitable for rest missing in the village.

We propose that the council installs simple, small and cost effective mini-benches (low walls that can be sat on) around the village, along the walking routes. Some of the walking routes are very long. Handicapped people or seniors would like to go for strolls, yet they fear that they would not manage the full walk. For example, my mum only goes for a walk when she feels exceptionally well or she asks me to bring a car with me so I can get it and pick her up if she feels too weak to finish. When walking with small children, it is also very useful to have a place where one can stop and rest, give the child a drink, etc.

Simple benches in a shape of 2 or 3 parallel, u-shaped, metal tubes placed in the ground upside down or low level walls, would be cheap and lasting. They should be installed along all walking routes in the village, including the above mentioned loop, once there is a footpath installed on it.

3. Reinstatement of the Bridleway to Montpelier as part of the proposed walkway from UL to Montpelier via Castleconnell

Since Castleconnell is an old village there is a large system of walkways and bridleways many of which have fallen out of heavy use. In particular, there is a bridleway starting from near Nelson's Cross at the boundary between Dereen and Gooig (see Fig.1) which goes towards Montpelier and O'Briensbridge with a connection to Birdhill. Given the proposal for development of a walkway from UL to Montpelier and the general aspiration nationally to increase the number of walkways, it would make sense to do an assessment of the current and disused walkways and bridleways in Castleconnell Ahane Montpelier Parish and to then link these walkways together instead of developing walkways from scratch. The footpaths outlined in point one would also link together many of these walkways and bridleways creating loop walks within the village and possible continuous walkways longer walkways for tourists and locals.

4. Reassessment of flood plains on the far side of the railway to Shannon.

The fields to the East of the Railway (i.e. the far side of the railway to Castleconnell and the Shannon) experience greater water retention than is indicated on the flood plain maps. The area south of the L1103 and West of the R525 has a stream flowing around it that used to flow along the route of the L1103 (see red (current/diverted flow) and blue (original flow) lines in Fig. 2). This seems to result in the fields in this area acting as an important buffer and soakage system during heavy rainfall reducing the flow of water towards the village, resulting East of the railway in

- a. surface water over a much wider area than indicated on the flood plain maps,
- b. retention of water making the fields impassable during late Autumn, Winter and Spring and
- c. the growth of rushes in these fields in the Spring and early Summer

We propose that a new assessment of the flooding and water flow in this area be undertaken.

