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 Adare Heritage Centre

Submission to Limerick County Council

Adare Local Area Plan March 2023

Patricia Houlihan, I am the acting general manager of Adare Heritage Centre. I have worked at the centre since September 2001. The centre gives employment to 30 permanent and a further 15-20 seasonal employees. I am representing the Heritage Centre in highlighting issues concerning development at the Centre.

Adare Heritage Centre is located in the heart of one of the most picturesque villages in Ireland. Located in County Limerick on the Wild Atlantic Way, this heritage village is renowned as a picture postcard where traditional thatched cottages meet ancient stone walls.

Adare Heritage Centre is at the heart of this community, offering locals visitors an exciting range of facilities for over 20 years. Customers can browse some beautiful local craft shops or dine in the onsite café, which serves a selection of fresh homemade produce.

The friendly team are on hand to provide information on what's happening locally or book guided tours of the historic town and the 13th century Desmond Castle. The centre provides employment to 30 permanent staff and another 15-20 in peak season.

The following concerns are outlined as relevant to Adare Heritage Centre. The Centre is a significant resource that can be further developed to ensure the potential of tourism is harnessed in a sustainable manner. Due regard to quality, education, character and distinctiveness of this unique village has been the ethos of the Adare Heritage Trust.

Key issues for Adare Heritage Centre

<u>Concern</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Action</u>
Insufficient Parking	Presently only 100 spaces at the Heritage Centre – Providing parking for Centre visitors / Church / School / Employees in village	Addition of more car and coach spaces on land at rear of Centre, an overflow at peak times especially at peak times
Public Toilets	Currently the toilets require major upgrade and additional spaces	The Centre provides the public toilets for this tourism hub. Additional toilets are required especially as tourism numbers grow with the anticipation of the Ryder cup in 2027 in Adare
Service Area for coaches	At present there are 6 bays for coaches to park at the Heritage Centre	During summer months up to 15 coaches can arrive at the centre by 11am. Going forward with the increased emphasis away from cars to buses, provision must be considered for this valuable business to Adare. Frequently coach drivers will request for a tap to wash windscreens / dump rubbish etc. The Centre is not equipped to offer this service. In order to enhance the appeal of Adare as a destination consideration must be given to provide state of the art facilities to encourage stop overs.
Tourist Information points in the village	Adare Heritage Centre is an information destination point for visitors to Adare and has become the main source of <u>tourist information</u> for the visitor.	QR codes around the village to allow

<u>Concern</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Action</u>
Connectivity to the Greenway	The centre is fully committed to promotion of the newly opened Greenway. It has become a frequent query from visitors how to get on the Greenway. Adare is a tourist hub especially for free independent travellers (FIT's).	Public transport to connect with the greenway is poor. Linking Adare and its walking trails to the Greenway is crucial. Planning walking routes / cycling routes to join with the Greenway needs to be established
Signage	The launch of the Adare brand in February 2023 allows for a unique opportunity to unity the information message to visitors. Clear signage for Parking, walking trails, cycling trails, nature trails, history trails etc is required.	Similar to above point on information. Possibly the development of colour / QR coded signage would great help the visitor navigate the offer in Adare. School groups would have the opportunity to explore the rich offering of the village in a sustainable way.
Improved pedestrian access	In light of improved access to walking and cycling trails in the village, pedestrian access on the footpaths on station road will require consideration.	The proposed link road will <u>increase</u> traffic on station road to the centre car park. Safety of pedestrians is a concern. If future "Green" plans involve opening the Rail Station in Adare to pedestrian usage it would be imperative that the foot path access and quality on Station Road is considered
Pedestrian Bridge on the River Maigue	Currently Adare Heritage Centre works in partnership with OPW to provide Desmond Castle Tours from June to September.	The tour to the Castle requires a mini bus to transfer visitors to the Castle. Currently the traffic is too busy and dangerous to walk over via the bridge hence the bus is used. If a pedestrian

		bridge was available, it would improve access greatly and would allow tours outside of the agreed June to September season.
<u>Concern</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Action</u>
Climate Action at Adare Heritage Centre	The Heritage centre was built in 1994 and no provision has been made for climate change.	Development of the centre for the future is urgently required. Solar panels for heating are essential as well as provision for rainfall harvesting. Considering the volume of water constantly used by the public toilets it would make economic and sustainable sense to develop a strategy for climate change
Plaza for Adare Heritage Centre	In 2013 Adare Destination Plan was launched. Appendix 4 outlined the inclusion of a permanent outdoor area in front of the centre	This area would open up the front of the centre and make it more accessible for the visitor. The area would lend it self to a weekly food market / concert location to enhance the offer to the visitor.
Connectivity of the railway in Adare – Port of Foynes	As part of the Foynes port development, greater Cruise ship traffic will be envisaged to the area.	Connectivity to Adare for passengers is essential. An offer of a regular rail connection would enhance the offer for visitors to Foynes if a stop was provided for Adare and Limerick. It would be a huge contribution to the local economy
Recycling Area	At the rear of Adare Heritage centre the current recycling area for the village is located.	This amenity requires development. There is potential to develop a state-of-the-art recycling area for the village. It has potential to be a flag ship for sustainability in leading by example. Adare has a reputation built up for “Tidy Towns” and this would further enhance the profile.

<u>Concern</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Action</u>
Parking facilities	In Malahide in Co Dublin the local authority took the initiative of providing parking for the aged.	Similar to disabled parking in blue, aged parking is provided in pink for the elderly. With an increased aged population using the car park, it would be a welcome offer to our retired customer.
Development of the visitor offer at Adare Heritage Centre	The centre was built in 1994 and it is under review for development into the future offer to the visitor	<p>The Irish people are custodians of the homeplace. Adare is a tourist hub for the Irish diaspora.</p> <p>While the offer currently is adequate the following would further compliment the local offering to visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Family tree</u>, provision of a workshop / retail area to trace your Irish roots would enhance the experience of the visitor and encourage them to discover the local history and area from which their ancestors emigrated from. • <u>A Film school / theatre</u>, purpose built for visitors to enjoy performance of local Irish music and culture. Possible liaison with UL and the film study group • <u>A Cookery school</u> / workshop for visitor to enjoy making homemade Irish soda bread /scones

In conclusion Adare Heritage Centre is constantly observing the needs and wants of the visitors to the village. It is frequently the first stop for the large volume of coaches, it is a priority that the people of Adare Listen and learn to the requirements of these welcome

visitors. I have been an employee of the centre since 2001 and have learned that the Cead Mile Failte and looking after our visitors is a top priority. Adare is in the unique position to be planning the next phase of its living history. I trust the above comments and recommendations will be considered in the new LAP for Adare. It is critical the Adare LAP addresses these to make it sustainable for the next 20 years and beyond

Signed : Patricia Houlihan

Date. 6/3/23.

Patricia Houlihan

Acting General Manager

Adare Heritage Centre