



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



LONG POINT, LOUGHREA, OUTDOOR AMENITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Part 10 Design Report

HELENA MCELMEEL
ARCHITECTS

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1. Introduction

The following design statement includes details of the site and context, project scope and methodology and the design response to the site which aims to enhance the existing outdoor amenity.

1.1 Project Scope

A multidisciplinary team led by Helena McElmeel Architects was engaged by the Galway County Council to prepare an outdoor amenity enhancement project for Long Point, Loughrea. The scope of the proposed development is as follows:

1. Repair works comprising:
 - a. Repair of the existing pier surfaces.
 - b. Repair of the existing slipway to provide safe launching point for kayaks and stand-up paddle boards.
2. Demolition of an existing changing shelter to facilitate passive surveillance and views of Lough Rea.
3. Alteration to existing toilet and shower building to provide storage, plant, and a changing places toilet (accessible toilet, shower and changing facility) (93 sqm).
4. Provision of new changing, toilet and shower facilities in a single storey building (86 sqm) including sheltered outdoor shower changing area.
5. Provision of a lifeguard station building (16 sqm).
6. Provision of a circular viewing deck to the south of the existing pier.
7. Provision of a totem sign extending to c. 4 metres in height.
8. Alteration to existing beach area and provision of a deck, steps and ramp to water's edge and beach area for access for all to the water.
9. Provision of a shared active travel route along the sites eastern boundary adjacent to the Lake Road (R351) and the provision of designated bicycle parking spaces.
10. Removal of 2 no. existing vehicular access points and alterations and junction upgrade works to the existing central access point, and provision of internal pedestrian crossings.
11. Reconfiguration of and upgrades to the existing car parking areas to provide increased parking provision and to accommodate age friendly and set down spaces and trading bays, and the provision of 1 no. new car parking area which includes EV charging and accessible parking spaces.
12. Provision of hard and soft site landscaping works, SuDS measures, pumping and water stations all connections, public lighting, PV panels at roof level and site services.
13. All ancillary services and associated site development works.

The proposed public realm enhancement works have undergone a design process informed by public consultation, stakeholder engagement, and a multi-disciplinary developed design.

2. Context

2.1 Site

Long Point, Loughrea, is a long-established recreational facility which utilises its natural location on a headland on the eastern shores of Lough Rea (*Baile Locha Riach*, meaning 'town of the grey / speckled lake').

The area has a rich cultural and historical heritage, located in close proximity to the town of Loughrea. The area was historically called *Tríacha Máenmaige*, which under pre-Norman times was under the control of *Uí Fhiachrach Fionn*, and later of the *Uí Maine*. The area contains many examples of Gaelic and Early Christian settlements, with evidence of up to 14 individual crannogs identified on the lake, dating back to the 6th and 7th centuries AD.

The project site comprises of 2.26 hectares of lakeshore area, with existing changing and temporary lifeguards buildings, car parking, swimming piers, and hard and soft landscaped areas, as outlined in the site location map below:



Fig. 1 Site location map

2.2 Existing Facilities

Long Point is a key amenity and recreational area serving the community of Loughrea and surrounding areas. It is situated to the east side of Loughrea Lake, which is a Blue Flag bathing area. The lake is known for its clear waters, scenic setting and is a popular spot for summer fishing, non-motorised water sports and relaxation.



The existing piers at long Point were constructed in the 1970s and the toilet/shower block in the 1980s. A temporary structure lifeguard station is situated close to the main swimming area. The piers and slipway are in a poor state of repair and require refurbishment.

The Long Point nearby area benefits from a woodland backdrop providing a little shelter at times and enhancing the setting and visual amenity of the facility.

The existing toilet/shower block is dated and not in accordance with current best practice in relation to the design and accessibility of facilities provided. Vandalism is a reoccurring issue in the building. The existing changing shelter is located to the west of the site. It is used by early morning swimmers & is subject to damage arising from anti-social behaviour.

The existing carparking areas are not fully delineated and the upper carpark is sometimes subject to dangerous driving activities, given open nature of the parking and lack of aisles.

Existing pedestrian routes vary in quality and surface finish, with limited pedestrian access contributing to anti-social behaviour to the west of the site.

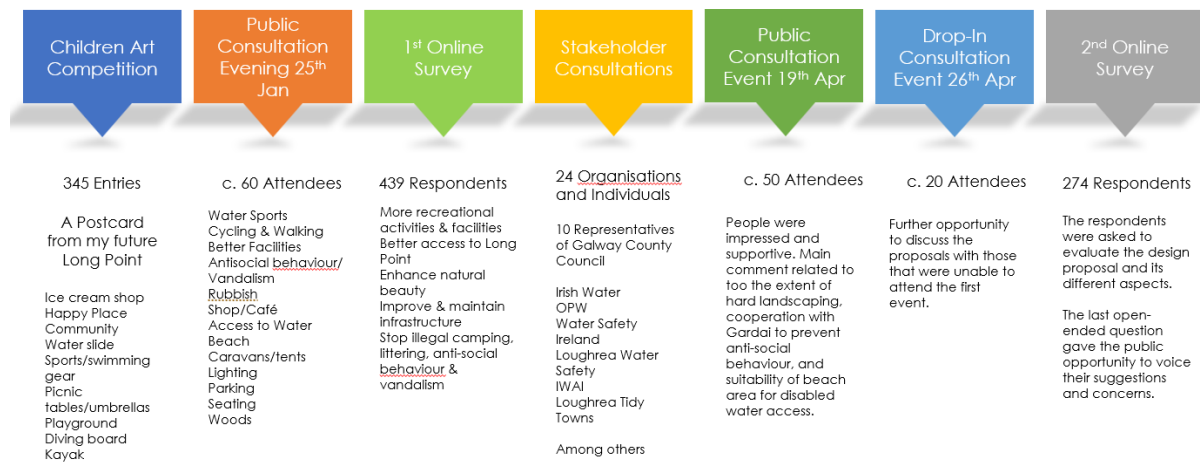
The brief for the proposed enhancement works was developed following engagement with the community through drop-in workshop events and online and hard copy surveys, in addition to engagement with key stakeholders. The concepts for the new enhancement proposals were subject to a second round of public and key stakeholder consultation and reviewed and revised in response to feedback received.

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3. Design Development

3.1 Public Consultation - Process

There was extensive public consultation undertaken as part of the project. Following an initial 'walk and talk' workshop with Galway County Council, a public consultation event was scheduled in Loughrea Library, on 25th January 2023. A children's art competition - 'A Postcard from my future Long Point' was held and exhibited at the public consultation event. 32 attendees registered their attendance and spoke to members of the Design Team at the event, including many key stakeholders.



Summary of consultation and engagement processes

In summary, people communicated that they want a clean, well-maintained, and accessible area with plenty of amenities and activities for all ages. Key findings included:

- Increase the number of recreational activities and facilities, such as water sports, fishing, hiking, and biking.
- Provide better access to the park, including improved roads, parking, and public transportation options.
- Enhance the park's natural beauty and preserve its unique ecosystems, such as crannogs, woodlands, and beaches.
- Develop more educational programmes and interpretive displays to help visitors learn about the lake history, nature, and environment.

- Improve and maintain the amenity's infrastructure, such as new changing rooms, rest rooms, and picnic areas.
- Consideration of the expansion of the amenity's options for tents and RVs.
- Increase the amenity's sustainability efforts, such as reducing waste, promoting conservation, and using renewable energy sources.
- Development of partnerships with local businesses, organisations, and communities to help support the amenity.
- Provide additional visitor services, such as caretakers, information boards, food concessions, and an increased lifeguard presence.
- Implement measures to stop illegal camping, littering, and anti-social behaviour.

A second round of public consultation was held during April 2023 to hear the community's views and ideas on the draft strategy and masterplan, with an online survey questionnaire, one-to-one consultations with key stakeholders, and a public drop-in event in the Loughrea Library on 19th April 2023. An online survey was launched at the event, and 439 responses were received.

A presentation of the strategy and masterplan was made to the Loughrea MD of Galway County Council on 28th March 2023, ahead of the second round of public consultation.

3.2 Public Consultation – Findings

The Galway County Council engaged Helena McElmeel Architects to prepare a design for the enhancement of the outdoor amenity at Long Point, Loughrea, Co Galway. The design was developed with the feedback gathered through extensive public consultation as described in 3.1 above.

There was a genuine affection communicated by users for the amenity, with an admiration of the natural and historical heritage, and a shared memory of experiences at the amenity. It was generally felt that there was potential to further enhance the amenity within the current vein, but with careful consideration given to maintaining the established character of the place. Upgrade to the existing facilities was supported, with practical suggestions made regarding functionality and use. There was strong support for the continuation of the existing community led use.

The amenity is used by a variety of visitors in a number of different ways and for a number of different purposes. The understanding of these uses, and any potential conflicts was raised as being key to the successful development of the amenity.

Coupled with the support for the existing amenity and its development, concerns were raised over existing problems associated with the amenity, namely, litter, parking (at peak periods), anti-social behaviour / vandalism, safety of access, and inadequate lighting.

The strategy prioritized accessibility throughout the amenity, with improved vehicle access and car parking arrangements, new and improved accessible footpaths with traffic calming measures installed to allow for better pedestrian infrastructure throughout, as well as ensuring that access for all was available for the built infrastructures facilities, and for the open-air water and land based facilities.

The protection of the character and natural setting was considered as a high priority, with potential for enhancement of the natural setting and improved bio-diversity.

The discouragement of antisocial behaviour was a strong driver the design development, having been highlighted consistently throughout the consultation process.

3.3 Enhancement Proposals



Proposed Site Layout

The project can sub-divided into a number of defined aims and themes set out below. Please refer to the architectural drawings for additional information.

A. BIODIVERSITY

Proposals for increased biodiversity throughout the site to protect / improve the natural ecosystem, also providing opportunity for nature play for children, and improve ecological connection between wood area to north and south of Long Point.

Additional seating, including accessible picnic tables and age-friendly benches proposed throughout the site, more than doubling the existing provision, with further additional seating

proposed in landscape features adjacent to the childrens' beach area and in the quayside / swimming area.

B. PROPOSED LOOPED WALK AND VIEWING AREA

Extension and improvement of existing path layout to enhance the provision for walkers, dog walkers, and families. The proposed looped walk encompasses the whole site for improved pedestrian amenity, increasing footfall and passive surveillance to the western and southern areas of the site.

Proposed viewing area provides focal point 'Crannog viewing area' including a portion of boardwalk over the water, and a unique looped sensory walk, with potential for sensory elements and educational experience of the nature and heritage of the site and area, including view of crannog islands. Opportunity to create sensory experiences throughout the walk and site for children, individuals or groups with ASD, members of the public with restricted mobility, and other users.

C. PROPOSED BEACH AREA

The existing footpath line is moved back from the water edge to provide an extension to the existing beach to provide a family friendly area and easier access to the existing beach and shallow water. This proposal arose from feedback during initial consultation indicated a need for larger play area / amenity area close to the sand, with a long cranked modified timber / composite timber bench proposed including age friendly seating elements to facilitate relaxation, social interaction and surveillance of children, the primary users of this area of the facility.

D. ACCESSIBILITY

Improved safe pedestrian access throughout the site. All routes are level or gently sloped with firm, reasonably smooth and durable surface finishes to facilitate all users, included ambulant disabled, wheelchair users, and pushchairs.

Improved lighting throughout the site to ensure all routes are well lit and safe, improving sense of safety with lighting specification designed to mitigate against ecological impacts.

Fully accessible and ambulant accessible changing facilities are proposed, including a changing places toilet and shower facility.

Improved access to the lake and the lakeside area proposed through new ramp at the beach area, ambulant access steps with handrails, and additional ladders to swimming areas.

E. REFURBISHMENT OF SLIPWAY

Remedial works to the existing pier and reinstatement of the slipway to provide safe and separate access to the lake for kayak and paddle board users, reducing potential conflict with swimmers, with potential benefits for other user groups, eg. angling and sailing.

F. CAR PARKING AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Two of the three existing vehicular access points will be closed, and the remaining access will be altered to provide improved and safer sight visibility and enhanced pedestrian access, ensuring easier flow at peak and busy periods.

138 landscaped car parking spaces in reconfigured layout, including 8 disabled parking spaces, 8 age-friendly parking spaces, and 8 EV charging spaces. This is an increase on the approximately 120 existing spaces (including estimate of spaces not defined in half of parking area), including 2 disabled parking spaces, and with no age-friendly parking spaces or charging spaces currently provided.

Parking behind the proposed beach area at raised level behind to provide enhanced lake views from parking area.

Additional areas of age-friendly and disabled parking area provided to rear of the main buildings to facilitate easy access to the waterside for all, and designated set-down area and trading area (eg. food / coffee provision).

G. PROPOSED CYCLEWAY CONNECTION

A new shared active travel route is proposed through the site, to provide safe, separate, cycle access along the site boundary with the existing road. This has potential to link to the existing pedestrian and cycle routes to Loughrea town, and to possible extension alongside the road to the south in line with active travel strategies for Loughrea. Generous bicycle parking proposed including electric bike charging infrastructure.

H. PROPOSED QUAYSIDE AND SWIMMING AREA

The proposals re-surface and incorporate the existing roads and hard-surfaced areas into a central hard surfaced meeting area with improved access for all. A space can facilitate existing and new community events, performance, and recreational / sport facilities, whilst providing better access for emergency vehicles.

The proposed paved areas is punctuated with planted feature areas, and feature bench seats. New steps to the main swimming area are provided to assist ambulant disabled users access the water.

Proposed remedial works to existing piers include additional ladder access, repairs to kickboards, and other localised repairs to steps and walls.

Relocated lifeguard position to central position to provide better supervision of the whole of the swimming area in a new permanent structure, in lieu of the existing temporary structure on site.

I. NEW CHANGING ROOM AND STORAGE FACILITIES

The proposed new changing facilities include dedicated accessible changing / shower room and WC for disabled users, family changing room, six individual changing / shower cubicles, and six individual WCs.

The proposed sheltered open air changing area includes bench seating and three open air showers available for year-round use. This shelter replaces the function of the existing shelter to be demolished, which is often impacted by vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Following public consultation, significant consideration was given to retaining the existing shelter. However, it was decided to remove the existing shelter given the better location and proximity to desire lines and parking areas of the new sheltered area, and co-benefits of additional views becoming available from grassed amenity area, increasing the attractiveness for use for picnics and gatherings, and increasing footfall to this area of the site, creating a more inviting and usable space for the public

Storage facilities in the re-modelled existing shower/ toilet building include individual lockers available for public use, and larger storage areas for lifeguard or local club use and a changing places facility.

Robust finishes are proposed to the building, mainly a combination of roughcast render and local stone cladding to walls. Gates are proposed to facilitate energy and maintenance access to the water and paved public space. It is proposed the design of these gates are features co-designed with the young people of Loughrea through a series of creative workshops.

A green roof is proposed to the buildings to increase opportunities for biodiversity and contribute to water management and attenuation. The roof will be designed to accommodate solar panels, the extent will be dependent on the energy demands of the building and adjacent site area.