**Draft County Development Plan Submission for 2022 – 2028**

**Aughrim Community Development Company Limited**

**Organisation and project history**

In 1998, Aughrim Community Development Company Limited (ACD) was established, a few years after the Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre opened.

The Company has flourished ever since. Its stated aim is “to make Aughrim and its environs a better place to live in for all citizens and many visitors’’

To that end, ACD assists in the management of the Community Employment Scheme (CE), supervising 16 people. This is spread over the 4 villages of Cappataggle, Fohenagh, Kilconnell and Aughrim. The function of ACD in these areas is to assist the placements in maintaining and enhancing their respective villages and hinterland. This includes keeping their villages neat and tidy and litter free, keeping the grass cut, planting shrubs and flowers, keeping in the maintenance of their church yards, Cemeteries, Community Centres, and keeping playing pitches in order.

Aside from successfully managing the CE Scheme for a number of years, ACD has also completed a considerable number of tourism, recreation and heritage promotion projects in our area since our establishment. These include, but are not limited to:

* The community replacement of the Information Boards erected in 1990 for the battle of Aughrim, which had become dated. This occurred in 2014 year and required academic research, copywriting, fund acquisition, design to be conducted, in order to produce a new iteration of these signs of the highest quality standards.
* In addition to this, ACD created and signposted a 10km historical walking trail around the battlefield site.
* Furthermore, we created a mobile application which can be downloaded under ‘*Aughrim Tours Galway.’* There is an Information booklet to go with this as well.
* A similar project was also undertaken to take in the heritage value of Aughrim Village more generally, and documentation relating to both can be found as an attachment to this submission.
* The large piece of derelict ground in the centre of the village which we turned into an Historical Park. In this Park we are reminded of the people, places and events that made and shaped our past. Adjacent to the Park and the Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre is a children’s playground which we also developed in 2011.
* ACD has project managed the entire construction and maintenance of the Hymany Way section of the Beara Breifne Way from Portumna to Ballygar, which has is a sizeable undertaking over the past 12 years for a voluntary organisation to be a part of. Aughrim is mentioned as a walking hub for the Beara Breifne Way in 12.2.2 in your Galway Co Co draft Development plan. With the huge investment by Fáilte Ireland through the “Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands” tourism proposal, we must now bring the 94km Hymany Way trail up to European standards. Part of what we need to do is improve the walking surface, get more of the walk rerouted and off the road, improve the signage as in directional and information boards, establish Loop Walks , this being done already in Kellysgrove, Ballinasloe, Aughrim, Killure, Castleffrench.
* We have taken out a licence with Bord na Mona to use 3km of their bog in Garryduff bog and have again applied for a further 2.5 km stretch from Lismany along the now defunct Grand Canal and on through the bog to Kellysgrove, Ballinasloe.

At present, we are also embarking with the farmers in the development of a Climate Action Park on a 4-acre site in the heart of the village. This will be attraction for schools as an Information point and it will have walkways, Information boards explaining what climate action is about and in doing so create a call to action to encourage farmers and home owners to do the same in their home and gardens.

**Nature of this submission**

As outlined above, ACD is a vibrant, active, very competent and positive influence on the communities of Aughrim and the surrounding villages, and many of our project undertakings are now framed within the national plans for tourism development in our region.

In order to build on these many achievements, we wish to place Aughrim and hinterland higher up in the local authority development plans than it currently is. We note that there are very few references to our internationally-significant heritage at Aughrim, centred but not exclusive to the battlefield site, and its tourism potential, in the current iteration of the Galway County Development Plan. Aughrim, and east Galway more generally, possesses a considerable number of underutilised heritage assets which, if scaffolded properly, can be of enormous tourism potential to the region into the future, but if this is not recognised and actioned by the local authority, then the opportunity will be lost.

As ACD, wish to petition Galway County Council to work with us in order to use the Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre as a primary tourism hub in this area, whereby all of our past achievements and our future work can be headquartered in a physical location which in and of itself will drive economic, employment and social benefit into the village via the tourism resource. Exemplars of where community-operated tourism attractions have proven successful in the Hidden Heartlands regions can be readily seen at Arigna Mining Experience in north Roscommon, the Knights and Conquests Centre in Granard, Co. Longford, Rathcroghan Visitor Centre, in mid-Roscommon, and Una Bhán Tourism Co-operative in Boyle, Co. Roscommon. All of the above have a wage contribution supplied for staff from the Pobal Community Services Programme and are year-round operations, and all sites possess attributes that can be compared to the potential offering at Aughrim.

In terms of the value that a reinvigorated Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre, in community hands, can have for the area, one need only look at the latter sites.

There are a broad range of themes that can be centred at Aughrim, if undertaken correctly.

* Interpretive experience and resource hub for the Battle of Aughrim
* Hub of the Hymany Way section of the Beara Breifne Way

Headquarters of the Kelly Clan Association. The Uachtarán is Mr. Joe Kelly, a principal of the Aughrim Remembered Committee, which was set up in Aughrim village. In addition, any possible tourism opportunities arrived at out of the PhD research undertaken by Daniel Curley in the archaeology of the later medieval O’Kelly lordship could be highlighted and promoted from the Aughrim centre or another suitable location in the village, such as the now unused Dispensary in Aughrim Village.

The ACD would seek to work with Galway Co Co into the future in order to bring Aughrim and its hinterland to reaching its potential as a sustainable rural tourism initiative in east Galway, a key destination in Fáilte Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands tourism proposal.

The bloodiest battle in Irish history was fought at Eachdhroim an áir or ‘Aughrim of the slaughter’. It is an event of national importance and had enormous historical and cultural reverberation because it was the decisive defeat for the remnants of Ireland’s native leadership class from which they never recovered. It ushered in the Penal era for the bulk of the population and a golden age for the Protestant ascendency. The memory of this event remains alive in the local community where there is a genuine pride that ‘their’ place was so important on that Sunday long ago. The tangible heritage is an exceptionally intact battlefield where the topography is relatively unchanged as compared to the Boyne. The existing Hy Many way traverses the entire length of the Irish battle lines, all one and a half miles. This was an event of European significance, an important event in the War of the Grand Alliance and here fell Dutchmen, Danes, English, Scots and Huguenots as well as Irish Catholics and Protestants.

Is mise,



**Dr. Pádraig Lenihan**

**National University of Ireland Galway**

