

Lackagh and Turloughmore

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STUDY
JANUARY 2021

An Area Based Community Plan for Lackagh Parish and a
redevelopment Plan for Lackagh Museum and Heritage Centre.



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



Riailas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Lackagh Museum and Community Development
Association wish to acknowledge Galway County
Council's funding under the Community Support
Scheme towards the printing costs of this study

CONTENTS

1. Background and Context	3
2. Lackagh Parish - The Existing Situation	8
3. Opportunities	18
4. Emerging Concepts	20
5. Re-imagining the Museum and Heritage Centre	29
6. The Village – Creating a Better Community Environment	35
7. Findings and Recommendations	37
8. Action Plan	45
9. Conclusions	47



Appendices

49

1. One-to-One Consultations – Outcomes
2. Guidelines on Establishing Community Tourism Partnership

Thank you to Lackagh Museum and Community Development Association for the photography used in the report.

Lackagh Museum and Community Development Association acknowledge the support of Turloughmore Community Council in the production of this Study



1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT





1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Lackagh and Turloughmore is a traditional rural area in east Galway comprised of mainly farming holdings combined with village settlements. The parish is 17 kilometres from Galway city making it a feasible base for commuting to work in the city. Lackagh parish is bounded by the parishes of Athenry, Abbeyknockmoy, Corofin, Annaghdown and Claregalway. The river Clare (Abhainn an Chláir) runs through the village, attracting anglers at certain parts of the river. Lackagh was historically once the Kingdom of the Soghain of Connaught. Cregmore and Turloughmore lie within the Lackagh parish. The area is traditionally rural with farming as a mainstay of the area, but more recently commercial activity has grown, and a small amount of tourism traffic has visited the village due to the relatively recent heritage additions of the Cottage Museum.

The village area has a number of historical sites and archaeological features dotted around the entire area and the famous battle of Knockdoe was fought in the locality in 1504. The Lackagh Museum was developed in the 1990s and tells the stories of the battle along with other historical features of the area.

Turloughmore village sits next to Lackagh and is a small village consisting of two petrol stations, three pubs and was once the base for a bus service company. The village is situated on the R354 national secondary road, formally the N63 national secondary road. The village gets its name from a Turlach Mor meaning ‘the big lake’, a notable feature of the area.

The village was once known for the horse fair held there which can be traced back to 1614, and for the notorious faction fighting that occurred at the fair.

The expansion of Galway city has meant that the villages of Lackagh and Turloughmore are becoming increasingly closer and easier to access, leading inevitably to increasing population in the parish. The population is recorded at 2,190 at the last count and successive censuses indicate an increasing population.

Background to Lackagh Community Development

Community development in Lackagh was formally recognised in 1994 with the formation of the Lackagh Museum and Community Development Association. It was formed to restore and maintain the old cottage which was previously home to the Carrick family. This project was a very successful one and was followed by other developments listed below. The community development association is now well established and has a long track record. The group has proved their commitment and capability by improving the life of the village and general area and by their ability to identify funding and work through a project to completion. Given their background the present group is very well positioned to undertake this next phase of development for the Lackagh area.

Existing Museum and Heritage Centre

The original project involved restoration works and conversion of the old Carrick family cottage into a museum and heritage centre. The cottage was an example of a traditional cottage dwelling with two rooms and loft bedroom, open fire with crane and cooking implements, and thatched roof. It was so centrally located in the village that it was an eyesore until it was renovated, and subsequently created an opportunity to focus on attracting outside visitors.

The initial project to complete the renovation of the cottage was carried out very successfully, with the cottage restored to its former condition and opened to visitors as the Lackagh Museum. The museum and heritage centre were strongly supported by community members who donated old farm machinery, tools and implements which were housed in an outbuilding behind the old cottage and arranged so that visitors could appreciate and enjoy the exhibition and learn about the local farming way of life through the equipment on display. The next stage of the development was the addition of the Knockdoe room, which displays the history of the famous battle in Lackagh and showcases other aspects of culture and heritage within the parish. The community association also oversees the crèche facility, which was created in 2018, and the recent addition of a Men's Shed.



Parish Centre – Carnoneen

The new parish centre was a project undertaken in 2011 jointly by the Lackagh Museum and Community Development Association and the Lackagh Parish Council. The total cost of the project was €277,000 and the community was successful in fully paying off any debt undertaken on the project. The centre is available to groups and individuals for hire and for events and gatherings of all types. The local Lackagh Comhaltas grouping have successfully held practices and classes there for the past number of years.

In 2018 the parish centre was renamed with the old traditional name of the townland, Carnoneen.

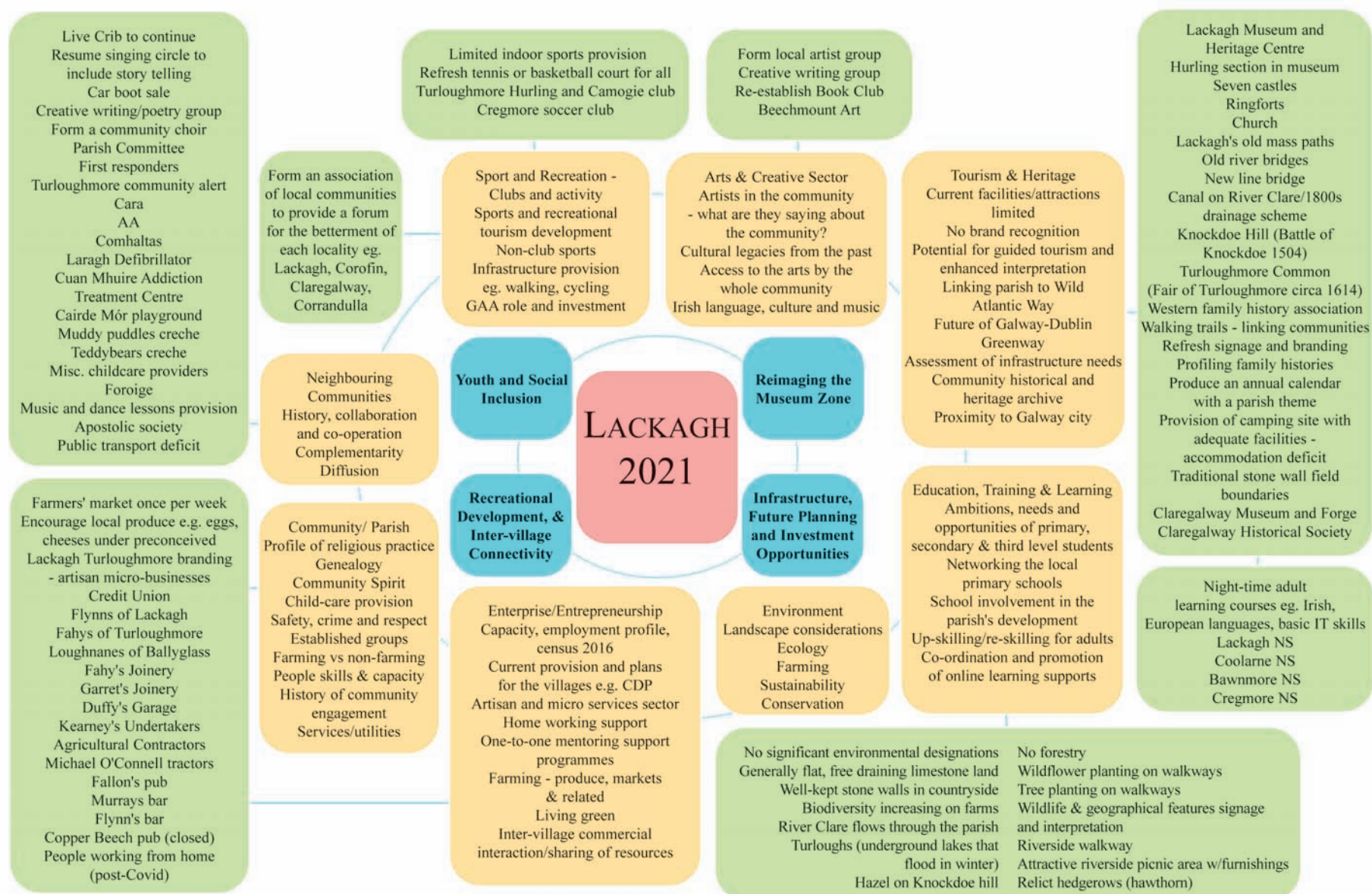
This strong record of commitment and consistency to finish projects successfully bodes very well for this next phase of development. This report includes a number of next stage potential projects, both based at the cottage and heritage centre immediate vicinity but also in the wider village area. These projects would be well within the capacity and capability of the current community development association. The report also includes an action plan which prioritises projects and gives an indication of how the various projects could be tackled, managed, funded and ultimately operated.

Current Community Analysis

During the process of consultation and detailed work on this project, a mind map or 'community photograph' was created, essentially painting a picture of the current circumstances of the Lackagh and Turloughmore parish community. The mind map was divided into the following sections to represent a broad indicator of the total community activity currently underway:

Tourism and Heritage

- Environment
- Community and Parish
- Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
- Sports and Recreation
- Arts and the Creative Sector
- Education, Training and Learning





A Snapshot of the Community

At the outset of this study it was important to get an accurate 'snapshot' of the community in the round. There had never been a community audit of facilities, services, attractions, infrastructure and capacity all presented in a graphical format. The following mind map has come from considerable research and consultations with the inputs of many local people to build up this valuable portrait of the Lackagh parish in the latter part of 2020. For future research this 'map' provides a helpful benchmark to allow future performance of the community to be evaluated. It is not indicating it is a forensic 'A to Z' of what the community has to offer but it is a helpful tool for this study to establish context and therefore make informed recommendations later in the process.

A full community mind map is set out below that includes all of the current community circumstances:

Terms of Reference

This chapter has set out the background to the community of Lackagh and Turloughmore and summarised the background to the current Community Development Group and its work. The following are the terms of reference which summarise the ambitions of the community over the next number of years.

The primary objectives or terms of reference of this study are to:

1. Develop an area-based community development plan for Lackagh parish.
2. Provide proposals on how Lackagh Museum can facilitate the educational, cultural and recreational activities identified in the plan when redeveloping its facilities.
3. Set out the appropriate guidelines for showcasing artefacts and farm machinery displays along with the heritage of the area to best effect in the redeveloped facilities.
4. Provide a strategy as to how Lackagh can optimise its heritage offering through the redevelopment and make the development association more sustainable.
5. Provide a blueprint for the development of a local heritage trail in order to capitalise on the success of the Wild Atlantic Way.
6. Proposed construction – advise on appropriate type of construction design to accommodate the community and tourism facilities.

2. LACKAGH PARISH - THE EXISTING SITUATION



2. LACKAGH PARISH - THE EXISTING SITUATION

The aim of the consultation phase of this community development plan is threefold:

- a) gather relevant information to inform the plan and support benchmarking upstream;
- b) engage thoroughly with the key stakeholders who will play critical roles in the implementation of the strategy, giving them a sense of ownership of the process and outcomes;
- c) the demonstration by the development committee of best-in-class processes and transparency in the delivery of a significant document impacting on all facets of life within the parish and community for decades to come.

In order to get really solid evidence of what the community needs and what its motivations are, a number of different sources of feedback and ideas generation were used during the study period. These included discussion sessions with the steering group, an online survey, community focus groups and one-to-one consultation. The combination of all of these methods working together created a large body of evidence from which the forward planning and recommendations are formed. This piece of the study summarises the work undertaken under each of these methods and gives detailed information on the outcomes for each.

Steering Group

The rapport between the steering group and the consultants, and in particular the point persons on both sides, has been very important to the success of this project. Communication largely falls into the formal and informal with both needing to be clear, transparent and regular. John and Alan are aware that they will not bring all the answers to the project, but they have been learning along with the steering group as the fluid process unfolds. At the outset diary dates were set for formal steering group meetings (x4) and for focus groups (x4) with regular updates and informal communications throughout the process. An interim report was delivered in early December.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used during this study as an important interactive form of working with groups of typical community participants. There were four focus groups held altogether. The first three group sessions were of a general nature and the fourth was specifically on the heritage of the area combined with the reimagining of the museum and heritage centre.



FOCUS GROUPS 1 – 3

These groups were typically made up of 8 to 10 community members. The style of these sessions was that there were three main parts or questions with all of the group feeding back and discussing each point. The results and ideas were captured online during each of the sessions and then summarised and copied after each session. The four areas for the first three focus groups are shown below, and are followed by a summary grid showing the collated and summarised outputs from each of the four sessions.

1. Identify through an open discussion **what is working well** in the parish and **what could be improved** in relation to broad community development, infrastructure and services.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL - OUTCOMES

GAA and Sports generally – *GAA/athletics/soccer/handball*
Church/faith
Parish centre
Museum – *local notes in papers recording activity, more needed from outside parish*
Community cohesion
Strong farming/agricultural base
Business centre to the parish – Flynn's
Modern school not lacking in facilities – National School
Community alert system – *regionalised, safety etc, text alert*
Playground
IFA/gun club group/fishing – *all very active (was an ICA) active retirement, bus disabled at the moment – need a driver with a license*
First responders/ambulance service
Comhaltas – traditional music
Foróige youth club
Heritage group/strong heritage places/stories – very strong
Rehab centre
A number of historians in parish
Community centre at the GAA Club
Childcare facilities catering for approx. 12 pre-school children
Genealogy – *Western Family History Association*
Church porch area
Bingo pre-Covid-19
Card club
Strong cohesive community
Day care facility
Music

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED - OUTCOMES

Co-ordination of the available services *e.g. community bus (if it was known someone may come forward) – communication*
Services for older people – *scope in Lackagh*
Comhaltas – *need more space to practice*
Men's Shed – *do all the men know about it? Could it get better participation?*
Employment opportunities – *need road discipline 50km/h – people don't adhere to it – need pedestrian crossing/traffic calming*
Communication – *need to improve communications as to what is going on etc, activities*
Sport limited to hurling, football opportunity
Extension of walkways – *particularly river, access Lackagh Beg and Lackagh Road*
Footfall to the museum: *is the expense justified vis-à-vis the number of visitors?*
Non GAA sports *e.g. ballet, karate or activities needing larger space.*
e.g. athletics facilities in other communities, coder dojo, Lego.
Not much in village if you are not into GAA.
Need more new business *e.g. retail – no free space available at the moment – is café in Lackagh enough or do we need more facilities?*
Have we enough in the museum – *do we need more to attract visitors e.g. other historical interest in community?*
Accommodation – *do we have enough – could we think about Lackagh as a tourism location? (Claregalway example – progress they have made)*
No gym facilities – indoor – all weather. *Minority sports e.g. bridge games – would like to see one big development*
Elderly facilities
Space for teenagers – *need non-sporting facilities*
Digital technology – *broadband etc.*
Place for single issue updates – drugs, safety, etc.
Enterprise hubs in parish for employment
Hub for emergencies, base for first responders - *e.g. telephone numbers, sand bags*
Local links – *don't come to Turloughmore/Lackagh – outside their funding area*
Men's Shed – *should it be open to women? Need communication around Men's Shed*
Women's club – *traditional craft, book club etc.*
Transport to/from Galway city
Dangerous roads
National School is at its maximum capacity

2. Group Exercise: Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats analysis. The summarised outputs are shown below for focus groups 1-3.

STRENGTHS

Excellent people
Sport
Accessible location M6, Galway city, Tuam, Athenry
Heritage/history
Music - Comhaltas
Tradition, family lineage, understanding of place, community cohesion
Church
Flynn's retail etc.
Retail base – *growing retail facilities*
Pub normally important – *Covid-19 has interrupted this*
Parish
Culture of small employers in Lackagh parish – *example of Women in Business gathering some years back*
Museum – *availability of Tus/CE Scheme (employment) – resource for the museum*
School community – *concerted effort to make children aware of their community*
Walkways
Crèche
Good communal spaces available

WEAKNESSES

Very little for the youth - need youth facilities
Communication – *there are notice boards, Facebook pages*
– but not a one-stop-shop for what is going on in the area
People running facilities etc. are older generation – *need younger people involved*
People are generally reluctant to get involved
Longer-term residents can also be a weakness – *may not move new ideas forward*
Not a great opportunity for integration of new and existing people in the parish –
limited social aspect
Absence of regular bridge building events to Integrate people *(there was years ago but these have ceased)*
Dangerous roads
Lack of parish council
No community leader/co-ordinator
Hurling and soccer pull in different directions
National School is at max and cannot take any more children
Museum too cramped/room to organise better – *editorially good, better presentation needed, enhanced and expanded*

OPPORTUNITIES

How to create better central communication within the parish – *single update point – e.g. single parish website/Facebook etc. (need a 'broad church' here)*
Could be used by new businesses in the parish
Diaspora interest in what is currently happening – *archiving a useful tool here*
Lackagh DNA and ancestry – *diaspora constantly looking at what is happening*
Central Astro turf area
Heritage – *take an opportunity to look at museum display – may need more artefacts*
– make more of the Battle of Knockdoe – opportunity to promote Lackagh
Online/short video promoting Lackagh/YouTube channel
Funding – *many opportunities now available – LEADER, RRDF, Co. Community Enhancement, Towns and Villages*
Opportunity for different people to take on different projects – *spread it around and get people behind projects – this brings people together*
Need a structure to carry these out – *fit for purpose*
Is there an opportunity for a cross-activity development officer?
Youth
Link to school and parents – *much younger audience in this grouping*
– get the children involved
Foróige got many people energised – *but then they get older etc.*
Spaces – parish centre
Study space/hot desk etc.
Courses could be provided in the communal spaces – *computer classes, cookery school*
Upstairs in Community Centre – *huge space*
Group activities
Stay at home mums – *meet and greet – mums and tots*
Employment – *online is the big opportunity – workspace*
Need co-ordination
Communal centre area – *opportunity to make this a better facility, parking, amenity, presentation – benches/picnic tables/meeting spaces/environmental enhancements – opportunities for youth involvement*

THREATS

Areas around us getting what they need – *leaves Lackagh not benefiting from funding*

Need to compete to get the funding – *show a keen interest – needs to come from the community – need a co-ordinated plan*

Museum – *facilities are not fit for purpose (Claregalway ahead of us – need to up our game) – threat that museum not moving with the times may undermine community progress*

Taking on a large project that takes over everyone's time and energy – *need the small wins (examples of good projects already delivered – playground, parish centre etc.)*

Identify the most needed facilities and get various funding streams underway
Everyone pulling in different directions

Not enough opportunities for non-sporting people

Other places developing and leaving Lackagh behind

Standards need to be kept high to keep the spend in the village

Funding – *lethargy around applying – have we the confidence to apply for funding and follow through?*

Community leadership remaining with older generation

Lack of communication between the museum area operation etc. and rest of community

Start-stop nature of activities

- Group exercise: each person identified four potential new uses for expanded facility at the cottage museum, interpretative area, adjoining community facilities and wider underused 'assets' within the parish.

The following summarises each of the outcomes of the group exercises and ranks each of the ideas from 1 to 5 with 1 being a low score and 5 being the high score. Each column represents a focus group member score and therefore the highest scoring projects were the highest priority.

FOCUS GROUP 1 – OUTCOMES

IDEAS	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
1. Services for elderly – day care facility.		3	3	2	3	3	14
2. Additional space for community – youth space – multi-functional.	3	3	2	3			11
3. Family resource centre – information/rights and entitlements etc.	2				3	3	8
4. Accommodation of as many groups as possible in the parish hall – need more space – upstairs needs opened up/brought into use.				3		2	5
5. Enterprise hub.	1		1		2	1	5
6. Sensory room in parish.		1		1	1		3
7. Inter-generational storytelling. Facilitate older members of the community, tell their stories and reminiscences. Will likely be of keen interest to local historians. Snippets of the heritage of the area (museum reference).ide		2					2
8. Crèche needs revamp.				1			1



FOCUS GROUP 2 – OUTCOMES

IDEAS	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1. Youth centre – facility for young, place to base themselves, basic facilities.	5	4	5	5	5	24
2. Parish centre needs to be opened up – barely used now.	5	5	5	4	4	23
3. Revamp story of battle.	4	5	3	5	5	22
4. Open up channels of communications – let people know what is on/happening – new system – let people know there are plans afoot.	4	4	4	5	5	22
5. Coffee facility at museum – saves people going over to community centre, ‘honesty system’ mini shop.	4	5	5	4	3	21
6. Heritage centre start of walks – need a base/benches etc.	4	4	5	4	3	20
7. Museum could open up once a month – person to tell the history.	4	3	4	4	4	19
8. Beautiful garden behind museum – allotments (church ground).	4	4	3	5	3	19
9. Knockdoe Hill facility.	4	5	4	5	2	20
10. Walkway – gravel/stones not great, cars churn it up – need new infrastructure here/lighting out on car park and road not good etc.	2	4	3	3	3	15
11. Basic visitor services at community centre – tarts, scones.	3	3	4	3	2	15
12. Men’s Shed idea good but need new facility/space not great.	1	2	2	3	4	12

FOCUS GROUP 3 – OUTCOMES

IDEAS	1	2	3	4	Total
1. Trail connectivity with interpretation and promotional support as to what is available.	5	5	4	5	19
2. New communication system.	4	5	5	5	19
3. Space for gatherings/communications/people are isolated.	4	5	5	4	18
4. Tourism offering – tours/heritage facilities – different groups working together – Quiet Man station to draw people from – educate people as to what is around them.	5	5	3	3	18
5. Common skills workshop – talented/able people teach others – e.g. cookery, computer skills for elderly, modern technology.	5	3	4	5	17
6. Elderly facilities – weekly/monthly/daily.	5	4	4	4	17
7. Board game hall/card games.	5	3	4	4	16
8. Yoga – teenagers – other group other than Foróige – large group to find your own voice.	4	5	3	4	16
9. Drama group/photography club.	5	3	4	4	16
10. Men’s Shed – What is happening and is there better use?	5	3	3	4	15
11. Cinema hall – pull-down screen/elderly.	5	2	3	4	14
12. Proper interpretation room potential.	3	2	3	4	12



FOCUS GROUP 4 – OUTCOMES

Focus Group 4 was specifically targeted at the heritage offering of Lackagh and had a different focus. The two questions dealt with at that group along with summary outcomes are covered below.

Q1. Is there a cluster of heritage assets in Lackagh parish worth interpreting and promoting?

Q2. Given the outcomes to Q1 how could the existing museum and heritage spaces be reimagined?

What is the cluster of assets and are they worth promoting?

- Knockdoe battle site
- Castles
- Turloughmore fair site
- Collaboration with other villages in the area
- Ask how can we get the community involved?
- Mount Bellew – potential, history, food – there is enough there – trail to Lackagh
- Heritage network region – collaboration with wider region essential
- Ballyglunin – standalone attraction – growing in the arts – keen to link to others
- Discover Galway Diaspora – East Galway diaspora link – good traction with people looking at family links
- Agencies will follow the energy – where communities are self-starting and motivated
- Wild Atlantic way, Hidden Heartlands – good crossover here
- Lackagh – about social history
- Lackagh is not a place that is a ‘must see’ – museum is same offering as other places – needs animation
- Look at new leader objectives
- Lackagh could be better supported by TUS/Pobál/LEADER



How can we best reimagine the current museum and heritage spaces?

- Museum lacks visibility – you would drive by and not know it is there – need signage, prices, opening hours
- Could we get local people to animate?
- Tuam Corrib country
- Community guiding system – community benefit financially as they get a contribution of takings
- ETB training schemes
- How to make Lackagh stand out – locals telling their story
- Need someone selling the product – need to package and communicate the product
- Need regular funding – education and training GMIT/NUIG – if someone is there full-time we are much more likely to reach audiences
- Tourism info point/heritage week/exhibitions bring in new audiences and pay back to locals
- Need resources – longer opening – cannot do it with voluntary funding only
- Security and support are crucial – need resources – Pobál route – source people who are invested in it – education side
- Interpretation needs to be looked at – visitors should be able to inform themselves by self-guiding
- Networking needed between groups with a common goal – co-ordinating visitors

The over-arching things coming out of a very informed discussion with heritage interests were:

- The value of having full time person at museum supported by grant scheme.
- The potential opportunities of wider collaborations with neighbouring villages etc.
- The need to reimagine the Cottage Museum.
- The importance of self-starting and bringing ideas, plans and projects to agencies and promoting them.

ONLINE SURVEY

In a post-Covid-19 environment it made sense to design and widely distribute to relevant databases a crisp survey that was constructed to extract all the necessary primary information required from open questions to do with confidence, ambition and practical suggestions to closed questions gauging attitudes across a wide spectrum of community development related topics in Lackagh and Turloughmore. The survey was conducted on the Google Forms platform and commenced at the end of September running through to mid-November. The target was to secure at least 200 responses and the outcome exceeded that. Internally the results of the survey have fully informed decision making as we examined the emerging concepts and potential projects piece of the strategy.

A summary of the outcome of the Online Survey is set out below

Q1 Are you generally aware of the rich historical heritage of Lackagh?

OBJECTIVE To understand the broad community knowledge of Lackagh parish's rich heritage.

Much of the heritage of Lackagh is 'invisible', buried in fields where there are few existing physical manifestations. In addition, outside of the oral tradition and the formal interpretation in the museum and local schools the heritage of the area is undervalued. This explains the one third of locals who have some or no knowledge of their heritage. This can be addressed through additional focused local heritage education programme particularly through the schools, clubs and museum. Conversely, nearly six out of ten participants in the survey were aware of this valuable heritage. Finally, if you combine those with knowledge with those with some knowledge this amounts to nearly nine out of ten respondents. This would compare favourably across any rural community in Ireland today.

Q2 Would you broadly be in favour of the sustainable tourism development of our rich local heritage?

OBJECTIVE To examine how open the community would be to sensitive tourism development into the future.

This is a resounding endorsement by the community into developing a local tourism economy going forward. Over nine out of ten respondents were in favour.

Q3 How would you rate each of the following reasons to research and develop heritage and recreation within the parish?

OBJECTIVE To examine the community motivations and priorities to invest in local heritage into the future.

There was a common thread coming through all these responses: namely, the more local 'good' that can come from the investment in heritage and recreation the better. Bread and butter issues such as creating local employment and enhancing the quality of life for all were clearly top priorities. Likewise, the linking of neighbouring villages via trail development was also rated highly.

Q4 Could Lackagh's rich heritage play a more important part in the community, cultural, educational and business life of the villages going forward?

OBJECTIVE To examine if there is a perception that local heritage should become a more central pillar to the future development of the parish.

These answers were interesting, illustrating a clear division between the two out of three people who felt heritage could/should play a more important part in the life of the community with the one in three that clearly had reservations. Further questions in this survey will likely throw more light on the reasoning behind these two distinct perceptions. The argument could be made that without providing concrete examples of what is meant by investing in heritage some respondents were uncertain.

Q5 Regarding the redevelopment and facilities at Lackagh Museum today could you rate the attractiveness of what is on offer to the visitor?

OBJECTIVE This question casts the community as 'consumers' of what is on offer in the museum today and extracted from them feedback on the main building blocks for a sustainable heritage tourism attraction today.

The responses can be largely broken down into an 'average' category and the 'could do better' category. Scoring highly were things like friendliness, location and parking while more tourism services issues like events, commercial/retailing and signage could certainly be improved upon. Worthy of comment (and future remedy) was the feedback that 'things for young people to do' in the museum was the lowest scoring offering to the visitor.

Q6 How would you rate the level of community togetherness today?

OBJECTIVE A critical part of any community study and consequently identifying future actions is to understand the degree of community cohesion and culture of joint working. This question sets out to throw some light on this issue.

Immediately noteworthy is that over 50% of respondents felt that community togetherness was modest to poor. Less than one in ten felt it was excellent. If you extract the two extreme answers, one at each end, you have a bell-shaped curve with most replies clustering around the middle point. This gives food for thought for all those involved in any form of community development.

Q7 What community services would you like to see in the parish that are not currently catered for?

OBJECTIVE This was an open question encouraging respondents to submit any thoughts they may have about practically improving community services.

With over one hundred people replying to this question there is a considerable amount of valuable information to be digested. Some of the primary findings are: a) the community wants to see more services and facilities for both the young and the elderly in their community; b) investment in recreational infrastructure such as trails was warmly welcomed; and c) the community wishes to see a more dynamic community centre space providing greater facilities and activities.

Q8 What would you like to see for younger people in the community?

OBJECTIVE This question is explicitly about the needs of younger people in the community.

The first observation is that it is unlikely more than 10% of respondents were 18 years or under. However, many are parents, relatives or people who volunteer in the community working with young people. The following general observations can be made from examining the feedback: a) if you don't play sports or music Lackagh parish can have little to offer you as a young person; b) most of the sporting clubs are outdoors and seasonal; c) there is an absence of acceptable/welcoming youth-orientated community spaces for young people to go and 'hang out'; and d) the Foróige contribution to the parish has been considerable but it has potential to expand e.g. greater linkage between organised youth activity and enhancing the local environment or engaging with the more isolated/marginalised in the community.

Q9 What would you like to see for older people in the community?

OBJECTIVE Like the youth question the term 'older people' is open to a wide interpretation, from 'active retired' to the 'end of life' community. This question aims to identify specific suggestions that will enhance the quality of life for this valuable part of the community.

As with all the previous questions the response rate was high for this question, at about 80%. Feedback should be viewed coming from two distinct quarters: a) those that view themselves as elderly answering from their own experiences; and b) those that are younger and answering from indirect, possibly family/parent, experiences. There are four strong threads coming through in all the feedback: a) there are specific services/facilities needed by the elderly e.g. bus transport to and from organised events; b) a wider variety and more regular events/social activities and services within a community centre space; c) more linkage through activities with younger people; and d) improvements to the infrastructure so more active elderly can take exercise or learn new skills, keeping both mind and body active. Most responses fall into one of these four categories.

Q10 Which of your ideas above (Q7, Q8 and Q9) do you think could be delivered at a redeveloped Lackagh Museum and Heritage Centre?

OBJECTIVE Through examining the specific feedback to the three previous questions light should be cast on what could possibly be staged in the museum and related spaces.

There was a wide variety of answers to this question but they fall into four distinct categories:

- a) One-off projects staged in the space because of its central location, good parking, flexible opening hours, access to a pub/food, ease of access, and relatively inexpensive to hire.
- b) Ongoing heritage and history related events common to the establishing themes of the Museum.
- c) Community meeting space with a traditional atmosphere – a different proposition to hiring/using the Parish Hall and
- d) Enhancing the heritage and historic nature of the Museum for this drop in visitors (including interpretation).

Q11 Are there other locations or facilities within the parish where your ideas could be delivered? Please list.

OBJECTIVE Attempt to map out what other sites could be harnessed for community activity.

This was likely a more difficult question to answer, however there were 93 responses. The accompanying mind map (set out in Chapter 3) has thrown a wide net around existing, underemployed or new community assets.

Q12 What is most important to the parish today?

OBJECTIVE This question attempts to identify the community priorities. Participants again reinforce the importance of enhancing the quality of life and the economic well-being of the community over the development of tourism, preservation of heritage and promotion culture. There is no ambiguity in the findings, with nearly eight times as many people expressing the view that the development of services especially for the youth and elderly was more important than tourism development. In excess of 98% felt that the enhancing of services for the more marginalised in the community were 'important to extremely important'.

Q13 Please rate any possible concerns you may have about tourism, heritage and recreational development in the parish.

OBJECTIVE The aim behind this question was to extract any negativity or concerns participants may have had in relation to tourism, heritage or recreational investment going forward in Lackagh parish.

There is a clear statement that concerns mainly cluster around lack of public funding and possibly lack of tourism demand rather than any perceived future damage to the fabric of the community or damage to the heritage infrastructure. Interestingly there was a significant proportion who felt somewhat concerned that the community would have difficulty arriving at a shared vision for the future – this questioning if there is a 'social consensus' has emerged through a number of the questions previously.

Q14 Are there other services, attractions or festivals that people would come to Lackagh and Turloughmore for e.g. retail, crafts, enterprise centre or any other that you can think of?

OBJECTIVE This question focuses upon identifying future tourism-related services in the broader community.

As with a couple of previous questions relating to the reimagining of the museum space, here we were seeking practical examples of what could be achieved in the wider parish. The accompanying mind map illustrates an imaginative and thought-

provoking selection of ideas ranging from culture/heritage to recreational development, linking the communities both physically but also through social activity. Yet again, supporting the needs of the marginalised in the community were highlighted. The physical enhancement of the built and natural environment came through strongly. Traffic (and traffic speed controls) again featured regularly.

Q15 Have you any other general observations and/or advice to offer the Lackagh Museum and Lackagh Community Development Association and Turloughmore Community Council at this early stage of the project in order to enhance the quality of life for all in the parish?

OBJECTIVE A 'catch all' conclusion piece offering participants an opportunity to insert any additional thoughts, suggests or comments.

The random nature of the final perspectives of respondents can be seen in the word cloud in Appendix 1. With nearly three quarters of participants answering this last question it signifies the commitment many people had in the community to contributing to this online survey. The quality and alignment of the answering has been impressive and will help frame and justify many of the findings and recommendations flowing from this study. This online survey can be employed again in the future to benchmark progress, changing attitudes and evolving priorities.

Consultations

The combination of more formal consultations outlined above was supplemented by one-to-one consultations: the client provided a list of individuals from either the private, community or public sectors who were willing to partake in one-to-one phone session with either John or Alan. As a rough guide to the conversations the online survey template was employed to provide some structure to the session and guide the discussion. This exercise provided an opportunity to engage with people who possibly were not available to take part in the focus group session or preferred the one-to-one nature of the communication.

There were a total of 15 people covered in one-to-one consultations and the detailed output of that process is included in Appendix 1.

3. OPPORTUNITIES





3. OPPORTUNITIES

There now exist a number of significant opportunities for Lackagh parish that can be utilised to give this plan its best chance of success.

These are as follows:

Take advantage of the momentum and positivity now generated towards the plan – the process itself and the multiple interactions have created a type of PR for the project and locals will be energised in its favour. This needs to be harnessed by good communications following on from delivery of the report.

Goodwill of agencies – there is no doubt that there is respect and genuine partnership with the relevant agencies such as GRD, Galway County Council, Fáilte Ireland and others. Their assistance is essential when tackling strategic projects. A comment made from one of the main agencies on a focus group was that what they like to see is energy and initiative emanating from the community themselves. This is a given in Lackagh and these agencies will no doubt assist, but constant drive will be needed to ensure projects actually happen.

Population growth – the population growth trend is unlikely to reverse anytime soon and commuting to Galway city is a very practical option. This provides opportunity as activities and projects will have more chance of sustainability and new blood will be attracted to community development projects.

Funding landscape – the funding landscape for well-thought-out and presented projects has never been better. Rural regeneration has significantly assisted that situation.

County tourism plan – Galway County Council are about to embark on their county tourism plan for the next 10 years (2021 to 2030) and great opportunities exist for Lackagh to play a part, ensuring that the highest priority projects are namechecked in that plan and form part of the overall implementation plan in collaboration with the council.

Successful and well – formed community development group – the success to date of the Lackagh community development group speaks for itself and bodes well for the ability to bring a range of complex projects to successful conclusion.
Community cohesion – the cohesion of the community itself is relatively good and is likely to react positively to a range of improvement projects emerging from this piece of work.

4. EMERGING CONCEPTS



4. EMERGING CONCEPTS

Museum Zone Development

1.1 The Lackagh Roots Project

A dedicated genealogy base in the cottage element of the museum. Designed for those researching family history. There is potential in imaginatively connecting with the diaspora and encouraging greater engagement with community life in 2021 and beyond.

Management/Finance

This project involves a combination of local knowledge/capacity and commitment allied to outside professional support; a managed archive; a distinct offering for the genealogical visitor. Where the message is a combination of professional and local, it could be viewed as a suitable add-on to the enhanced museum not requiring significant space. There are many successful enterprises across rural Ireland to learn from. *Establishment budget (excluding staff costs): 10-12k.*

Commentary

There probably needs to be a degree of innovation in how this would be established. Further develop links with the likes of the Western Family History Association. A community enterprise servicing the needs of the diaspora could be integrated into the telling of the wider Lackagh story. If properly scoped at the outset it could be located in the newly refurbished cottage office (see museum zone regeneration section).

Practical consideration to support this new service also include:

- Low set up cost
- Could be a parish diaspora only service
- Would generate revenue
- Could be an add-on to our current website
- Would require dedicated and trained personnel
- Genealogical expertise within community/development association

1.2 Lackagh Teach Cheol

The concept rotates around delivering a special cultural evening in the cottage. A small group of well experienced musicians and storytellers put on a show attracting outside visitors. The event could initially operate weekly in the high season.

The offering could involve tea by the fireside, glass of wine, canapés and a range of well-animated storytelling/song and craic. All is held together by the Bean an tí. Visitors would be encouraged to actively participate as the night unfolds.

Management/Finance

This concept can be as ambitious as the community wishes it to be, but perhaps start modestly keeping overheads and management input down. Also, perhaps start in year 1 with a show on the last Friday and Saturday of each month to iron out any rough edges. There is undoubtedly a 'market' in Galway city alone during the summer months for an authentic offering like this in a traditional cottage.

Participants are bussed in and out after the 2hr session. Cost per participant (max 25 people) would be 20e. Full house generates 1k over a weekend, or alternatively schedule in time two shows per night – 6pm-8pm and 8:30pm-10:30pm.

Nominal establishing and running costs (including overheads, room hire, promotion and administration): 6K (year 1)

Commentary

The key ingredients to make this work are already in place:

a well located and appointed cottage less than 30 minutes from Galway city capable of hosting 25 guests; little investment required; a wealth of local talent from storytelling to song/music; adjacent pub delivering services/provisions; outlet for young local musicians to be showcased and gain experience week in, week out. There are successful 'models' around the country for how best to do this experience, from Lory Meagher cottage in Tullaroan, Kilkenny to the Teach Cheol, Innishowen. Within the community Bertie O'Rourke has shown how successful the "Singing Circle" can be.

From an implementation perspective the following are worth reflecting upon:

- Low set up cost
- Existing Comhaltas group in Lackagh using the cottage space
- Would generate consistent revenue with modest outlay
- Could be promoted throughout strategic partners across East Galway and the city
- Further promoted through a revamped community website
- Would require careful planning but there are considerable skills imbedded in the community
- Insurance considerations but nothing that should present an obstacle
- Could link in with Flynn's Bar to add value to the experience
- Could use community bus to bring visitors to the cottage (if required)
- Potential to travel with the whole show to other locations in East Galway if it was considered worthwhile.

1.3 The Lackagh Museum of Characters

- the new theme for the refurbished interpretative space

Change and fundamentally rebrand the current Cottage Museum (including the interpretative space shed) to a visitor experience, housing genuine local characters brought to life and telling their stories. Characters talk through what looks like framed pictures on the wall but come alive and are co-ordinated to create a continuous story stretching back a millennium.

There is an interesting sub-story that should be examined - a new storytelling strand (likely guided for insurance reasons) for Flynn's of Lackagh, a 170-year-old story of supplying grain and working with the local community could have a broader appeal than imagined at first. This is a longer run project.

Management/Finance

An ambitious concept and will require great care and planning to deliver a sustainable enterprise. Excellence in interpretative planning (i.e. identifying the characters and their stories) and interpretive design (i.e. how to physically and technically present these to the public) will lie at the heart of its success.

There is likely a market for the popularising and presentation of history and heritage, especially to a family/kids' market; think of the phenomenal success of 'Horrible Histories'.

A project of this scale even viewed as a two or three phased basis would likely cost 700k for the initial launch phase. It is conceivable this offering could generate in excess of 25k visitors per annum upon opening. In a post-Covid-19 tourism economy the community would be wise to tread carefully with this concept but never lose sight of it as a medium to a longer-term deliverable.

Commentary

The management and business model most suited to deliver this project would require considerable thought by the community.

A headline attraction like this embedded in the community opens a considerable number of new doors for supporting enterprises to be developed from retail, catering and merchandising.

An annual events programme could be generated around the proposition which directly/indirectly enriches the lives of the community and expands the season well beyond the summer months.

The tie-in with education should also be investigated.



1.4 Lackagh Viewing Tower

With the agreement of the church authorities examine creating a bolt-on exterior prefabricated glass/steel ascending encased ladder with a 360-viewing platform on the bell tower. This original experience could become the magnet that draws visitors and defines the whole heritage visitor offering for the coming generation. The surrounding landscape would be brought to life through the experience. The tower becomes the hook that the whole Lackagh heritage experience is sold upon going forward.

Management/Finance

There are a considerable number of obstacles to be overcome before this concept could be realised, therefore it should be positioned at the end of the development cycle when all other higher priority projects have been delivered. Likely obstacles include securing permission, designing the one-of-a-kind construction, marrying the needs of the visitor with the practical religious needs of the church e.g. ringing of the church bell and inherent health and safety issues. Notwithstanding the above, the engineering is relatively straightforward and the likely cost relatively modest, given the originality of the experience and visitor reaction could be nationally significant. Projected construction costs (design/construction): 350k



Commentary

This is a sensitive proposition. The prominence of the bell tower at the heart of the village justifies such a radical proposal within the study. The close proximity of the tower to the museum is a considerable bonus, while the views across the landscape offer an extraordinary opportunity to combine all the elements of the emerging Lackagh story - from atop the museum you are seeing the Knockdoe Battle site, the river, the fair green and beyond.

1.5 Reimagining the Museum Zone

A three-part development scenario leading to the reimagining of the cottage/museum space and crèche; the first floor in the parish hall; and the enhancement of the immediate public realm. See the expansion of this concept elsewhere in this study.

Management/Finance

Should be viewed as early 'quick wins' if goodwill prevails. Full engagement with the council is necessary while ensuring where possible these specific initiatives are embedded in the new county development plan.

Opportunities exist for future funding under the Rural Development Investment Programme, including the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, which is being tailored to address the emerging challenges associated with Covid-19 for communities like Lackagh.

Commentary

For a relatively modest investment the whole site adjacent to the museum could be considerably enhanced and future-proofed for follow-on investment over the coming decade. However, the buy-in of the St. Jarlath's Diocesan Trust owners of the parish hall and the local authority in relation to public realm work would be critical to successful delivery.

1.6 Strategic Partnership Development with National Museum of Country Life

A partnership with the National Museum of Country Life (Castlebar) to build an outreach (possibly strong on conservation and/or education and storytelling) as an additional layer of value on some of the above ideas in the museum zone.

Management/Finance

Investigate a) what the National Museum in Castlebar requires that it would be unable on site to deliver; b) examine how Lackagh can supply some of these needs through the reimagined museum space and supporting visitor infrastructure. Practical suggestions would range from live streaming all shows to the transfer of knowledge/skills through local people being offered opportunities to be mentored on site in Castlebar. Storytelling enhancement for community run heritage sites could also be an output from this practical partnership.

Commentary

Longer-term initiative but the credibility afforded to a community heritage venture like Lackagh engaging in a strategic partnership with the National Museum would be considerable.

Not an immediate priority but one to be revisited into the medium term or if opportunities present themselves. For example, as Lackagh upon completing its redevelopment work stages a national one-day conference on a related topic such as the development of a popular narrative to help get across local history to coming generations. The National Museum could well be interested in participating in such a worthy project, thus helping build relationships.

Social Development

2.1 Lackagh's Wildflower Meadows, Sensory and Bog Gardens

Many areas around Lackagh are soft damp ground. These could be developed as pilot public amenity spaces for walks, wild gardens and rewilding-type projects with easy access for all.

There could be a strong learning element to designing, building and maintaining these beautiful boutique gardens. A number of partners from the HSE, ETB, NUIG, LEADER, to specific charities may be interested in developing this concept with the Lackagh parish community. It is worth reminding ourselves that the old name for Lackagh is Carnoneen, 'the village of the daisies'.

Management/Finance

Three immediate challenges: further defining the vision (including locations), securing the necessary suitable partners and funding.

This should be viewed as an active learning space for all, including people with disabilities and challenges. The community would need to identify a 'community champion' to help drive this project forward. An indicative cost for the development of three distinct gardens would be 100k (excluding ongoing staff/maintenance costs). Perhaps the local estates are the perfect venue to develop these open spaces as biodiversity enhancement areas/sensory gardens.

The plan could be funded via LEADER and GRD at 90% funding.



Commentary

This is an innovative concept but needs to be delivered to a high standard.

Green infrastructure, carbon sequestration, wildflower meadows and the national pollinator plan are definitely the buzz words for tidy towns groups.

There is a considerable interest in and demand for standout gardens in Ireland today.

From a community perspective it offers an enhancement in the quality of life for all.

A key question surrounds how to make this financially 'work'. The likely answer is a combination of ongoing public subsidies (cash and in-kind), one-off grants and awards plus some level of income generation through providing special experiences for small groups. It is likely the general public would have free admission. In summary these could make wonderful local amenities and could be maintained by the RSS or CE Scheme participants.

2.2 Trail Connectivity

Enhanced development of the heritage trail(s) through a 'park and ride' message - leave your car in either Claregalway or Lackagh and rent a bike/bike going one way, taking in a boat trip on the river (shuttle bus return if required).

Management/Finance

This involves the delivery of an integrated shuttle bus schedule for key months of the year (e.g. engage with Local Link). It will also involve the creation of a bike rental operation to service visitor needs. The challenge here is about co-ordination of rural transport - increasingly the Local Link companies are open to consider supporting quality community tourism offerings. The bike rental operation will likely require establishment support or alternatively, it could be viewed as a sustainable community enterprise and delivered through the museum committee, and part funded through LEADER and GRD. Projected Costs: 250k (over 2 phases).

Commentary

This could possibly be viewed as not an immediate priority, but in order to increasingly give Lackagh the edge on its competition the more it strives to provide a total experience for the visitor the better, in relation to longer-term sustainability. Having the catchment of Galway city (and surrounds) on the proverbial doorstep should not be underestimated, nor the potential of receiving a considerable boost in numbers off the Wild Atlantic Way. This is not an immediate priority project but one that may present funding opportunities further up the road, as well as being a valuable tool to help physically connect communities.

2.3 Lackagh - Ireland's First Hurling Gaeltacht

Development of Ireland's first hurling Gaeltacht – integrated residential elite/semi-elite training camps with a ready-made night time social dimension (music/dance/craic) - could be with or without the Irish language element after



the offering has established itself. It would be envisaged the all-inclusive package would be for seven days/six nights/full board basis. Employ local homes following the well understood 'model' of Gaeltacht homes during the summer months. Play on the reputation of the parish as a hurling 'Mecca'. The active support of the GAA (Croke Park level) would be essential with this being viewed as a pilot project, working with the likes of Turloughmore Hurling Club.

Management/Finance

This concept required significant investigation, and relationship building from the GAA to the local hosts. The project needs to be scoped with a view to how logistically and commercially it could be made to work in Lackagh.

What skills are required on the ground to operationally manage up to 300 young (12-16 years) visitors per year? Where will these visitors come from and what are their needs? During their stay, how much are they prepared to pay for the learning experience?

This would be a multi-party initiative with the community being one of a number of essential partners. However, the critical question is to who leads this project e.g. is a community enterprise, a club-based enterprise or a private sector initiative working with all of the above?

Initial Cost Feasibility Study – 20k.

Commentary

This should be viewed as the possible next generation of the GAA Cúl Camps for girls and boys, embedded in rural areas with good supporting infrastructure and a strong GAA tradition. Of note is the immediate availability of the Claregalway Hotels as a possible early-stage accommodation base. There is a very high-quality housing stock within both parishes, and it would be relatively easy for a necessary cohort of households to attain the Fáilte Ireland Welcome Standard for B&Bs.

Recreational and Infrastructural Development

3.1 Lackagh Heritage Trail(s) Development

Document and present the primary places and monuments of historical interest in the parish through a growing network of interconnecting recreational trails. These trails are each marked and described employing a common look/feel. They are then linked together by mapping and promotional literature. A historic app would support the physical trail through relevant touch points along the journey. Integrated signage and On-site information panels would complete this historic trail presentation. Into the future a craft and heritage trail could be developed, allowing visitors to engage with heritage craft workers and experience the stories and methods of creating authentic produce, from butter to basket-making.

This aspect would be a commercial offering for the likes of the museum.

In addition, the trail could be expanded to incorporate Athenry and Claregalway, linking sites of Interest. If well branded/promoted/signed it would draw from the Wild Atlantic Way. Note: there should be a price for the literature and app.

This needs to be carefully considered as the alternative for all to be free to visitors may be an easier-to-manage scenario.

Management/Finance

There are three keys stages: research and concept scoping (including securing funding); development and delivery phase; and distribution and mobilisation of the completed trail.

Future enhancement may include a 'river experience' (see 3.4 below).

Indicative cost: research and build (including all design and printing) = 17,500e

Distribution costs (yr 1) = 2000e

Total = 19,500e.

Commentary

The parish is fortunate to have a small number of exceptional and committed local historians. Their further input needs to be nurtured. NUI Galway have done research on a number of these monuments so a connection to NUIG for further research and development could be created. The ongoing updating and distribution of these information outputs (especially literature, maps and the app) will be critical to their success. This concept has plenty of potential, but who will deliver it? This is where a dedicated Lackagh parish rails/walks committee would need to be established in order to take ownership of this and one or two other emerging concepts and drive them forward. Without this leadership a project of this scale and complexity could not be delivered.

3.2 Lackagh Motorhome and Campervan Facility

Develop a quality campervan facility adjacent to the village centre. A popular form of tourism not well serviced in rural Ireland. Other activities and facilities would build up around it. Visitors may be attracted off the Wild Atlantic Way to stay a night/number of nights, taking in the likes of the Lackagh Teach Cheol.

Management/Finance

Identify a suitable promoter and identify site, research the optimum business model, secure planning permission, create the necessary basic physical infrastructure, and manage and promote the facility in tandem with the previously mentioned museum enhancement and trails.

Establishment cost (private sector) = 35k



Commentary

This would be a project ideally driven by the private sector. Is there anyone obvious in the community who could drive this? There is a considerable difference between this offering and a traditional campsite for tents. This project further expands the local accommodation provision which currently includes Airbnb and hotels in Claregalway.

3.3 Lackagh Parish Annual Agricultural Show

Ideally located on the Turloughmore Common organised by community volunteers (show committee) but supported through sponsorship/admissions and assisted by the likes of Flynns. This could recreate the old world of showing horses, sheepdog trials, sheep shearing, cattle judging competitions, heritage tent, show tents with a mini circus/fairground possibly coming to town for a few nights. This event would have both a local regional and international visitor market (independent travelling tourists looking for interesting things to do/places to visit).

Management/Finance

There are two main obstacles to success: insurance and an organising committee. The capacity of an organising committee/chair are critical to success. It is a major undertaking and will, during the summer months, be competing with many well established annual events. So what can give Lackagh Agricultural Show the edge?

The answer may be 'going back to the future', where the show is a piece of living history with anyone coming in traditional costume getting free admission.

The branding and messaging of the event signifies yesteryear with its echoes of the Turloughmore Fair. An event of this scale would require an annual budget of at least 100k with all of this being recouped through income generation, sponsorship and grants.



Commentary

There would be considerable work developing this concept from scratch, but it plays into the heritage themes ever-present in the community. The risks are considerable (e.g. weather and overcoming insurance costs) but the rewards could be considerable for the whole community. This is best considered as a mid- to longer-term project, however there are people in the parish who would make a success of reactivating the traditional agricultural show along the lines suggested.



3.4 Lackagh River Experience

Identify an accessible and suitable 2-3k of the river to offer (in season) a guided traditional boating experience in the company of a local guide. The experience would be on a traditional crafted boat, taking the visitors (all ages with suitable induction and equipment) on a two-thousand-year-old story through Lackagh's rich history and heritage.

The educational market should not be overlooked especially in the shoulder season for group tours.

The offering may involve a flotilla of Curraghs or Coracles (with guides) on safe waters – again, this would be a new micro business opportunity.

Management/Finance

This needs to be viewed as a likely private sector initiative with support through LEADER and GRD. It is essential it is packaged as more than a boat trip - it is a journey through time told through an exceptional storyteller/guide. The establishment costs will be considerable and likely in the region of 80k for two/three craft with a capacity of 12 maximum each.

This experience should be able to command 20e per adult for a 90-minute voyage. On average 100 trips per month is reasonable with a 75% occupancy for 4 months. Projected Costs: 200k (establishment cost – private sector driven)

Commentary

The start/end point to the voyage is important to establish, with secure parking/visitor processing and boat storage.

There are key questions that need to be examined around building the package e.g. paddle power; small outboard engine; insurance costs; identifying a private sector partner who is willing to invest; clear understanding of the core market to sustain this enterprise into the medium term.

The returns for the whole community and its branded innovative heritage offering would be considerable. There are no similar traditional boat offerings on this scale in Ireland today.

3.5 Knockdoe Battlefield Site and Turloughmore Fair Green Site Visitor Experiences

The challenge is to turn two non-descript fields adjacent to Lackagh into memorable and evocative experiences for tomorrow's visitors (without making an unsustainable investment). The answer lies in providing three interconnected elements:

a) well informed/passionate local guides; b) employing accessible palm technologies to bring the stories to life; and c) providing a limited level of on-the-ground visitor facilities (directional signage, safe parking, elementary interpretive panels). These two experiences need to be interwoven with the museum experience above (see 1.3 and 1.5).

Management/Finance

It would be wise to create a panel of well-trained/committed local guides (or hosts). The development of the two specific apps and supporting signage are relatively easy exercises. The physical enhancement of both sites, including trail infrastructure at Knockdoe and Turloughmore Common (opposite Fahy's) should be viewed as non-intrusive and obviously delivered with the backing of all landowners. The co-ordination of this work should rest with the museum committee. The anticipated cost for the new presentations of both sites would be 55k.

Commentary

Done correctly, this investment could dramatically open up both the battlefield and the fair green experiences and dovetail well with the reimagined museum and recreational offering. This initiative, more than any other, demonstrates the integrated nature of this study.

The community is beginning to create a genuine basket of offerings that enable visitors to spend a full day in Lackagh - add the Teach a Cheol and we are beginning to see the potential of multi-day visits, and their escalating economic spin-off for the community.

There is a lot of recent development on 3D static interpretive panels that could suit both sites to tell their stories.

The museum committee are the natural drivers of this concept.

Summary Time Frame and Indicative Costing Profile

Time Frame Colour Coding

Short Term 1-2 years Medium Term 2-5 years Long Term 5-10 years

CONCEPT	INDICATIVE COSTING	TIME FRAME
1.1 Lackagh Roots Project	10-12k (establishment costs only)	Short Term
1.2 Lackagh Teach Cheol	6k (Year 1)	Short Term
1.3 The Lackagh Museum of Characters -new theme for refurbished interpretative space	700k	Long Term
1.4 Lackagh Viewing Tower	350k	Long Term
1.5 Reimagining the Museum Zone	435k (museum zone) 780k (all phases incl parish hall & public realm)	Short Term
1.6 Strategic Partnership Development with National Museum of Country Life	4k (heritage conference costs)	Medium Term
2.1 Lackagh's Wildflower Meadows, Sensory and Bog Gardens	100k	Short Term
2.2 Trail Connectivity	250k	Medium Term
2.3 Lackagh - Ireland's First Hurling Gaeltacht	20k (feasibility study)	Medium Term
3.1 Lackagh Heritage Trail(s) Development	19.5k	Short Term
3.2 Lackagh Motorhome & Campervan Facility	35k (excluding site)	Medium Term
3.3 Lackagh Parish Annual Agricultural Show	100k (p.a. minimal)	Medium Term
3.4 Lackagh River Experience	200k (establishment/excluding land)	Medium Term
3.5 Knockdoe Battlefield Site & Turloughmore Fair Green Site Visitor Experience	55k	Short Term



5. RE-IMAGINING THE MUSEUM AND HERITAGE CENTRE





5. RE-IMAGINING THE MUSEUM AND HERITAGE CENTRE

1. Introduction and Context

This section examines what realistic options exist for the upgrading and heightened integration of the existing elements that make up the Lackagh Museum zone (including cottage, Knockdoe building, and crèche space). It will also pass comment on the reimagining of the underused first floor in the parish centre while suggesting options for enhancing the public realm space within the immediate vicinity. Finally, the section will make some suggestions about mid- to longer-term developments that capture some of the ambition and early ideas suggested by the steering group.

These options are influenced by a number of important factors, including:

- The brief for the study focusing on the redevelopment of the site and visitor experience
- A reimagining of the space that lies within the ambition and anticipated budget of the client
 - Being mindful of neighbours and neighbouring landowners
- In keeping with the character and future planning needs of the village
- Balancing the community/social needs of the community
- The opportunity to develop an enhanced heritage tourism offering
- In line with likely visitor demand over the coming decades

This piece will be supported by the accompanying site map spatially illustrating relevant sections.

2. SWOT Analysis for the Existing Lackagh Museum Zone

STRENGTHS

- Existing heritage offerings suitable for upgrade
- Overwhelming community support for such an investment
- Capable managing committee and staff
- Support of development agencies
- Attractive village location with space to expand
- The cottage offering is an impressive heritage asset given the size of the community
- Proximity to Galway city/ good access
- Experience of hosting key events such as weekly Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
- Two unique stories to tell, namely Battle of Knockdoe and Fair of Turloughmore

WEAKNESSES

- Ill-defined visitor offering
- Perception of it being expensive admission/value for money
- Modest to poor promotional material, online presence and directional signage from outside the parish
- No ongoing festival and events programme
- Interpretation: display and presentation require modernisation
- Display area for agricultural machinery requires remedial work and greater interpretation
- Modest to poor commercialisation of the heritage tourism offering e.g. café/crafts and merchandise
- No medium- to long-term planning

OPPORTUNITIES

- Delivery of a more insightful, attractive and contemporary heritage tourism visitor offering
- Networking with other community heritage tourism visitor offerings in East Galway
- Enhanced online communications
- Develop a relationship with the parish diaspora
- Deliver a number of community orientated events throughout the year as an income generator to fund further investment
- Tailor training for key staff and committee
- The cottage may have untapped commercial potential

THREATS

- Competition from similar community heritage enterprises within a 30 minute radius
- Change in marketplace fashion away from traditional heritage centres
- The fundraising challenge in any community today
- Not delivering on the expressed needs of the community today and tomorrow e.g. youth and seniors support (events and facilities)
- Loss of anchor tenant
- Inadequate conservation policy
- Inability to engage/work with statutory partners
- Too high a debt burden
- Committee burnout

3. The Concepts

The following table breaks down the proposed development options open to the community, beginning with spaces directly under their control and working out to two essential spaces not in the direct ownership of the committee, namely the parish centre and the public realm adjacent spaces.

Redeveloping the Greater Lackagh Museum Zone**1.1 COTTAGE**

Redesign the current reception area into an office/administration space. As activity increases in the immediate area the demands for an administration, storage and staff office will grow. For a modest outlay this future need will have been serviced.

The cottage is a fine example of a professionally restored traditional thatch cottage of its period. It is in a central location in the village and gives credibility/visibility to the heritage quarter, however significant programming and interpretative options are physically limited.

Cost 10k

**1.2 Knockdoe Building/ element #1**

This stand-alone building with attractive cut stone behind the cottage is in urgent need of being repurposed. The display area at the front for agricultural/traditional artefacts is disproportionate to the importance of the objects.

The proposal

Entrance front new main reception and café (including outdoors seating/reorientation/seating for 25).

Cost 175k

1.3 Knockdoe Building/ element #2

The current Knockdoe Room display has many merits and can relatively easily be refreshed to service the expectations of today's/tomorrow's heritage visitors.

The proposal

Interpretative display area - slim down/showcase best artefacts; consider flow; new technology attraction; physically enhance the experience e.g. lighting, sound.

Cost 75k

1.4 Knockdoe Building/ element #3

The opportunity to commercialise this space to help subsidise other elements in the museum zone should not be lost.

The proposal

Glass exhibition space - 4m x 12m traditional Victorian style glass 'greenhouse', new floor, creature comforts for display and possibly small group presentations. Entry both interior and exterior. Landscaped.

Note See 'The Future' section (#6) below for mid- to longer-term enhancements ideas of this space.

Cost 75k

1.5 Crèche Area/element #4

This currently is the only tenant paying a fixed rent. As an income generator it would be wise to help consolidate and grow the business. Certainly, demographic projections would be encouraging in relation to future demand.

The proposal

New bespoke Portakabin to link Men's Shed with existing crèche building; landscaping to create a unified child-oriented space e.g. artificial grass/play area/fencing/lighting and internal refurbishment. Men's Shed to be relocated elsewhere in village.

Cost 90k

Total cost/museum redevelopment and related 435k

2 Parish council responsibility

Parish hall/interior

All of the consultations for this study have highlighted the need and demand for a youth meeting space. Importantly, all parties appear to be on the same page in relation to the 'where and the what'. This project will be sustainable and from the get-go will have a positive impact on the whole community.

The proposal

First floor space - parish hall/youth space - interior fit-out/decoration - learning zone; chill-out zone; coffee dock; meeting space; micro performance space with seating.

Cost 100k

Parish hall/exterior

There is a clear consensus that the youth space should have its own identity and be a distinct entity to the parish hall on the ground floor. This is easily achieved,

however the meaningful input of the eventual users will need to become part of the conversation from here on in.

The proposal

External steps and lift (universal access), landscaping and lighting/rebranding.

The consensus is that the parish centre fire exit should be on the side with the gable window nearest the church/parochial house.

Cost 120k

Total cost/parish hall first floor space and related 220k

3 Galway County Council responsibility

Public realm adjacent to museum site

This aspect of the triangular development scenario involves Galway County Council becoming actively involved in designing and delivering the enhancement of the whole public realm space adjacent to the museum. If possible, this should be written into future village plans as a matter of urgency as it would give greater justification for the funding required for the delivery of the two former development concepts in the parish hall and Cottage Museum space.

The proposal

Car park enhancement/planting trees and flowers/kurbing/reorientation/lighting/resurfacing/car park line painting/directional signage and information board(s)/aligning of entrance to museum with new reception area and crèche. The futureproofing of this space for recharging electric vehicles will be important. This is set out in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Cost 125k

Total cost: public realm 125k

Summary Projected Costings Table

Project	Projected Budget
1 Museum zone/development association responsibility	435k
2 Youth space/parish council responsibility	220k
3 Public realm/Galway County Council responsibility	125k
Total projected cost (Projects 1-3)	780k

4. Risk and Mitigation Measures Analysis

The following analysis aims to identify what potential obstacles could derail the delivery of this redevelopment work for the community. Alongside the identified risk will be commentary on how best to overcome these possible roadblocks.

Risk

1. Failure to secure funds to deliver all three elements

These are three relatively stand-alone projects which can be delivered in different sequences over different time frames depending on available resources. However, in terms of 'need' coming from the consultation phase the first floor youth space is deemed most important followed by the museum zone space followed by the public realm. However, it must be stressed that the most desirable and logical outcome would be for all three to be delivered relatively simultaneously over the next 24 mths.

2. Community or neighbour objections

Considerable effort has gone into talking with and recording the opinions of a large cross-section of local people. There is unlikely to emerge any significant objections to any one of the three core concepts that cannot be solved satisfactorily behind the scenes. The weight of community goodwill towards these investments is overwhelming. If there is a regulatory obstacle in the proverbial long grass, it is unlikely. However early engagement with the GCC Planning Department post-study release would be wise.

3. Key partner objections

The only realistic obstacle could possibly be with immediate neighbours who foresee a major increase in visitor flow resulting in increased noise, congestion and disruption, especially at pinch points of the season. This scenario is highly improbable even in the long run, but out of courtesy and good neighbourliness it would be wise for a representative of the development association to sit down with each and go through the main recommendations of the study before it is formally released.

4. Unforeseen planning/conservation or environmental obstacles

Early engagement with the GCC Planning Department post-study release would be wise.

5. Concern over the debt burden to be shouldered by the community

The degree of realistic borrowing likely required by the community should not deter them from embarking upon this transformative set of projects. Put in the context of the development of a new standard pitch or AstroTurf pitch with 3G and 4G it will deliver a major community dividend.

6. No demand for new services/infrastructure

Highly unlikely given the community feedback. With a close eye kept on the design, planning, procurement and build phases any potential slippages from the desired standards can be eliminated.

5. Comments

The above redevelopment scenarios are both realistic to deliver and will significantly enhance the attractiveness of the whole village centre space for locals and visitors alike, as it: a) represents a long called for enhancement of existing facilities; b) unifies the museum zone more than previously; c) represents value for money especially given the community dividend; and d) may not need to be delivered in one phase but could be scheduled over a number of phases over the coming two to three years, beginning with the youth space and museum and finishing with the public realm.

6. The Future

This study has spent considerable time examining realistic short- to medium-term options for the museum zone. What about the longer term?

What could the space physically and programme-wise look like in 15 to 20 years' time? The answer is rooted in the success of implementing the options above and delivering on their potential socially and commercially.

There are obviously two distinct spaces that offer development potential into the longer term - the heritage building and the crèche area. The heritage building with thoughtful design could expand its presentation/display space by constructing an internal mezzanine floor.



This may also be supported by extending the front of the building to enhance a café/reception/visitor information space. There is also the potential to build another new floor onto the existing building.

The crèche has got potential to develop (dependent on demand) a newly designed and built facility with supporting outdoor play area. This could be a one- or two-storey space (likely under 2500sqft) that may incorporate a stand-alone micro business hub for local business start-ups. Modest car parking on site would be available. Finally, as we see from the Concepts section there is some potential to develop a unique and whimsical viewing tower coupled with the existing bell tower.

These are all conversations to be had formally and informally over the coming years. A cursory costing for the delivery of the heritage building and the new crèche outlined above would be in excess of 1.5m. This study feels this level of debt and risk are unnecessary at this stage when compared with the achievable and less risky development option outlined in this section.



Comments

The above redevelopment scenarios are both realistic to deliver and will significantly enhance the attractiveness of the whole village centre space for locals and visitors alike as it: a) represents a long called-for enhancement of existing facilities; b) unifies the museum zone more than previously; c) represents value for money especially given the community dividend; and d) may not need to be delivered in one phase but could be scheduled over a number of phases over the coming two to three years, beginning with the youth space and museum, finishing with the public realm.

Heritage Tourism Network

The idea of a local or area-based heritage network emerged as an idea coming from this study. The following are some pointers and suggestions if that network is being taken forward.

The development of an 'East Galway Community Heritage Tourism Network', linking multiple heritage attractions facilitating the transfer of good practice in management, operations, training and marketing. Lackagh is keen to play its part in making this possible as it would be of real benefit to all participant communities.



6. THE VILLAGE – CREATING A BETTER COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT



6. THE VILLAGE – CREATING A BETTER COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

The village itself appears on first arrival to be spacious and welcoming, with a large and obvious central area creating a focal point that visitors would naturally veer towards. The location of the church, museum, parish centre, Men's Shed and crèche are all located together in a campus-type arrangement. This is an attractive and practical arrangement and, in many ways, would be exactly how you would plan it out if starting again.

However, the consultations and particularly the focus groups threw up a number of challenges and opportunities within this central area. No one would or did argue that this campus of collective buildings is not a positive thing, but what did come up is the opportunity to significantly improve the recreational and community interaction and general quality of living through improvements to this space.

The issues with the central area are as follows:

The road is wide and traffic speeds past the central village area, which is dangerous and also results in passing visitors missing out on the attractive collection of buildings and activities. The parking is not well arranged and managed resulting in people parking in a haphazard fashion, not using the space to its maximum.

Despite the space available there are no facilities to sit down and watch the world go by and meet other locals. There is nowhere to get a coffee and snack and sit outside and enjoy the open space, particularly in spring and summer season.

The street furniture and fittings need renewal such as kurbings, road marking, lighting, litter bins. There is a project opportunity in this area that could create an attractive square or focal point in the middle of the village to take advantage of the already created campus-style arrangement. The church and bell tower create the obvious focal points and beacons for the village and this project would seriously enhance the local amenity.

The suggested main elements of this project are:

1. Traffic calming measures introduced at both ends of the village to slow traffic down and allow visitors in particular to appreciate the village centre.
2. Undertake a re-orientation of the car parking area, creating a green area with picnic tables and seating areas, pathways and flower beds – an attractive, safe and obvious area for locals to come and enjoy and meet others.
3. A public realm renewal involving new kurbings to the road and central area, new street lighting and additional lighting in this busy area, new litter bins, signage and small trees planted.
4. Create café facility in the heritage centre area to allow people to have a centrally accessible place to meet, and also establish a takeaway facility for the picnic table and seating area. As stated below, there is the potential for collaboration with existing Treat Café.
5. A rearranged car parking area with well-marked spaces and disabled parking facility.
6. Consider a sculpture of some description that marks the village out from others, possibly something that resonates with the history and heritage of the village and parish. This will create another attractive reason to spend time in the newly revamped village centre.
7. As Flynn's have such a solid positive reputation in the village they may be interested in assisting with this project, particularly the café potential in the heritage centre by possibly making a mini coffee bar with snacks out of it and finding ways of linking their retail outlets to the central area better. This might be as simple as safe walkways and cycleways.

7. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



7. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Make sure all groups work together for a common goal.”

Participant response in Lackagh Parish Online Survey (Nov, 2020)

FINDINGS

1.0 The Museum Zone

1.1 The current museum offering is disjointed, dated and unappealing to visitors. A good opportunity now exists to transform the whole heritage space embracing the cottage, Knockdoe Building, the crèche site, the upper floor of the parish centre and a refurbishment of the adjoining public realm spaces. There is an overwhelming desire from all consultees in the community to see this vision happen in the short to medium term.



1.2 Lackagh Museum and Lackagh Museum and Community Development Association need to work with other partners, namely the parish council and Galway County Council to see the integrated redevelopment of the whole village centre site for the betterment of all.

1.3 The possible scale of this set of related projects should not overwhelm the community as public support is likely. In the grand scheme of things this investment will pay handsome dividend for all for generations to come.

1.4 The community do not see themselves as being a potential tourism destination. They see the investment in heritage and recreation as being a win for the quality of life for the whole community.

1.5 Lackagh, even with the delivery of the above museum redevelopment, will likely not have a unique selling point (USP) from a national tourism perspective. There appears a common acceptance of this reality as the majority opinion from the survey suggests that enhancing the quality of life for all in the community takes precedence over the creation of a sustainable tourism economy.

2.0 Facilities and Infrastructural Development

2.1 As with most rural Irish communities today social, sporting and recreational life tends to fall into distinct social ghettos such as clubs, music, and recreational activities. Lackagh parish is no different with obvious fault lines between clubs and between general sports participation and non-participation. There are also minority pursuits like heritage, singing and traditional music with a passionate following. There is a need for more intersection between these silos through developing a common ground though the likes of festival/events, learning something new, creating a joint community owned space remembering that providing for kids enabling the parents to connect on the periphery. The solution over time lies in a small number of co-owned initiatives done consistently well. There is not one magic bullet solution.

2.2 The success over the last number of decades of the GAA clubs (and soccer) in the parish demonstrates the capacity of the community to get behind a common vision and deliver excellent results. This same energy needs to be harnessed for the museum zone and the wider recreational projects of scale if they are to materialise and flourish.

2.3 Many participants believed that the parish hall could have a more welcoming ethos and wider programme of regular events to appeal to a greater cross-section of the community.

2.4 There has been a considerable growth in the number of citizen walkers within the community. They are using back roads and new trail developments for regular exercise throughout the year. This activity should be as practically encouraged as much as possible from supporting community walking groups to completing the ambitious inter-village trails developments into the longer run.

2.5 There is a deficit in relation to public transport provision especially regular route linkage to Galway city (i.e. workers, students, shopping and social). In a tangible way this further increases the carbon footprint of the community; its scattered layout means that people are largely reliant on the private car. Related to this is regular concern about the unsafe local roads for cyclists and pedestrians, with speed and poor surface condition often mentioned in the survey.

2.6 The spectre of renewed local flooding and disruption within the context of climate change has been raised. The engineering solutions proposed would be complicated and expensive.

3.0 Social Inclusion and Quality of Life

3.1 The survey results, plus the feedback of participants in all the focus group sessions (x4), identified the need to engage with and better service the youth of the parish. This is an unambiguous priority.

3.2 The elderly in the parish were identified as not receiving the degree of support from within their community they deserve. Many concrete examples and solutions were aired from retirement homes, enhanced community bus services to more events in a local welcoming community setting.

3.3 There was a surprising lack of tension expressed between the new residents and the established families. Even though there has been considerable growth in population over recent decades there is a strong sense of collective 'pride in place'.

3.4 The positive inputs of the Tidy Towns/Residence Association were acknowledged.

4.0 Working Together

4.1 There was concern that currently and historically there have been few good examples of cross-sectoral co-operation in the parish.

4.2 A number of organisations expressed concern at their inability to source new volunteers to deliver important community cultural and sporting events on a regular basis.

4.3 There was a belief that many more people in the community could benefit from being more familiar with what was on offer in the various clubs, societies and volunteer groups. A knowledge deficit exists that appears to be doing few any favours.

4.4 There is possibly an emerging community heritage tourism network for East Galway. Lackagh Cottage Museum has demonstrated that it is willing and capable of playing an important part in consolidating this initiative. That could have significant benefits in helping sustain the whole heritage offering, not just in the community but across this part of Galway.



5.0 Programming - Existing and New Events

5.1 The resurrection of some traditional events such as St Patrick's Day and the Fair of Turloughmore were highlighted.

5.2 The community currently has a lack of suitable spaces, especially for mid- to large-scale indoor events from concerts to exhibitions. What spaces exist appear to be hard to book and there is no joint booking system for the hiring of up to five facilities the community use.

5.3 There is a clear lack of easily accessible promotional tools for event organisers to reach a community audience, from noticeboards to signage and from social media posts to database contact management.

6.0 Management, Operations and Finance

6.1 There was a strong belief that basic communications needed to be improved. Too many participants felt they did not know what was going on in their own community. Conversely many identified more 'joined up' communications on new and traditional media as being essential to foster greater community cohesion.

6.2 There is a reluctance (likely built upon experience) to choose future development projects carefully. Regularly issues such as project leadership, a suitable volunteer input, insurance and necessary funding are flagged up as obstacles to delivering identified projects, ranging from trails development to an annual agricultural festival.

6.3 There are considerable funding opportunities that exist for the community to deliver on various strands of the proposed programme of work that lies ahead. It takes considerable expertise and capacity to identify what are the most suitable funds and to oversee a process of making a case to draw these down.

6.4 There is a good working relationship between the community and statutory partners like Galway County Council and LEADER/GRD. There is public sector goodwill towards Lackagh parish and an appreciation for the work already completed.

6.5 There is a consensus view emerging that there should be an internal examination post-study of how best to improve/enhance the structures within the parish that are tasked with delivering community development and mobilising volunteer input into sporting, recreational, educational, heritage, social care, environmental enhancement and youth provision in particular.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following set of detailed recommendations come from a wide-reaching set of one-to-one consultations, the online survey, focus group sessions and an ongoing engagement with the Lackagh Museum and development association. The experience of the consultants has also significantly informed the recommendations below.

The recommendations fall into two distinct categories, namely Part A, which includes general operations, resourcing, managerial, capacity building and networking type actions and Part B, specific once-off projects identified in the Concepts section. Each will be broken down to provide a clear roadmap ahead for the delivery of each.

Part A – General Recommendations

A1. Adopt and implement this study

It would be wise to use the study to have a full public engagement resulting in a public meeting where all significant issues and opportunities are discussed.

Resource Implications

No direct financial cost but considerable time will be needed to prepare for the session(s). A clear understanding at the outset as to ‘what do you want to get out of the exercise?’ will be important.

Timeline Immediate Action

A2. Improve the effectiveness of communications

The survey and other consultation feedback are critical of the current communications, whether they be old or new media. Efforts and resources need to begin to address this deficit or else the feeling of disconnection for some in the community will only grow.

Resource Implications

This will not be complicate or costly to fix. A simple plan is required that answers three basic questions: a) What do we need to communicate and when? b) To who do these messages/alerts need to go to? c) Who will take the responsibility to do the necessary work? This should be viewed as an early quick win out of the study process.

Timeline Immediate Action



A3. Improve the effectiveness of local community management structures

Current managing structures and optimising the employment of limited resources within the community needs to be closely examined by all parties in a round table discussion. All parties should enter this openly and positively as any improvements will be for the benefit of the whole community.

Resource Implications

Ask an external facilitator to conduct two sessions with the key representative from the parish council to the LMCDA and from the key clubs to the local special interest groups. External funding may be available for this facilitation work which would draft a report on how to enhance the managing structures. All parties should then be prepared to adopt the recommendations.

Timeline Immediate Action

A4. Address more thoroughly the needs of children and youth within the community

The lack of services for young people in the community (especially those not engaging in sport) is considerable. This frustration needs to be addressed in the short term through specific new offerings and, more significantly, into the medium term with new facilities and outlets.

Resource Implications

This task has to be addressed in partnership with the likes of Foróige, the schools, GRD, GCC and possibly the HSE. Importantly the youth themselves need to part of the conversation. A convenor is required to pull all parties together for an initial session. The probable solutions include: new facilities, attractive programming, recruiting new adult volunteers where necessary, enhancing the current activities that work.

Timeline Short Term

A5. Further enhance the physical environment and village spaces

Lackagh is an attractive village but more improvement can be done.

As the recreation trails develop the role of this volunteer group will grow in importance especially from a maintenance perspective.

See previous chapter on other related project recommendations.

Resource Implications

Form a Tidy Towns group within the greater village that can sister with their counterparts in Turloughmore and Claregalway. The sharing of resources and knowledge can only be a win for all. Support from GCC may be more freely forthcoming if they see this degree of co-operation and fresh thinking.

Timeline Short to Medium Term

A6. Secure more regular all-year-round public transport

The parish is almost completely a private car culture, with no alternatives. With its growing population and a national focus on more sustainable public transport it is logical to examine realistically how new public transport routes can be piloted in the community, especially into Galway city for workers and students in particular.

Resource Implications

Local Link Galway should be approached with the proposal making it easy for them to trial a new route(s) linking Lackagh with the outside world. Local Link supply routes that tend to be off the beaten track where the services are low-cost, flexible, accessible and available to all regardless of mobility.

Timeline Short Term

A7. Remain mindful of recruiting, training and managing the volunteer corps within the community

There is a growing problem with volunteer fatigue – this has to be a concern. Greater regulations and scrutiny are a reality for all community groups. Insurance is an increasing issue. Training and management of the volunteers tends to be a low priority. The reliance on the 'same old faces' is not sustainable into the long run. One of the greatest risks facing the community is that there are not enough volunteers on the ground to help deliver all the events.

Resource Implications

There does not appear to be an inventory of current volunteers. This simple database needs to be developed. An assessment at that stage needs to occur on the needs of this cohort. A bespoke training programme needs to be delivered to better co-ordinate their activity and introduce them to best practice elsewhere. A linked recruitment programme needs to be delivered to identify the next generation of volunteers needed to drive the ambitious programme of work proposed in this study.

This is a common challenge across rural Ireland.

Timeline Short Term

A8. Actively engage with all local primary school children on the history, heritage and environment of Lackagh parish

The Mind Map demonstrates the rich inputs the local NSs play in the community. There has been a tradition of the schools hosting external community events like traditional music. However, there is an opportunity to more formally engage and encourage local children to research and document local traditions, characters, and lore.



Resource Implications

LMCDA have an opportunity to design a modest 'introduction to your community's heritage' type of event to engage throughout the school year with all classes.

A final 'Lackagh Concert' could be staged annually in the run up to Christmas that would profile arts and crafts, music and local lore. This could be viewed as an income generator for future activity. The only technical issue is where to stage such a happening?

Timeline Medium Term

A9. Enhance the social and care programmes for the elder members of the community

There is an opportunity to expand on the programming and care options for the senior members of the community. From regular social get-togethers to learning new skills, and from servicing basic physical care needs to archiving the memories of the elderly in Lackagh parish for future generations. There is a raft of relatively straightforward initiatives that when delivered will make a considerable difference to the quality of life of many.

Resource Implications

The essence of this initiative is co-ordination. There has been a rich history of delivering imaginative programmes. The community bus in particular has made a positive contribution. The spaces are likely available and there are few budget implications for the community as agencies like the HSE or some NGOs may be able to fund/co-fund.

Timeline Short to Medium



A10. Network with other rural communities in East Galway who have a rich heritage they wish to develop

There is a growing conversation between similar community heritage groups in East Galway to examine developing a formal network to support management, administration, training and importantly promotion. LEADER/GRD appeal keen to help in practical ways.

Resource Implications

LMCDA are already familiar with this growing opportunity. LEADER/GRD (the funders of this study) are also aware of the potential of such an alliance that should be a win/win for all the participating partners, however it must be stressed this is only an add-on to the core work delivered by the museum.

Timeline Medium

See Appendix 2 below for more context and suggestions.

A11. Recruitment of a community development manager to drive the implementation of the study

A significant risk exists for the community (structures, capacity and resources) in embarking on the varied and sometimes complex tasks contained in this study. Fear of the tasks ahead could paralyse the group.

A dedicated capable manager role is the optimum solution funded through an agency for a three-year contract with supporting administration budget.

Resource Implications

There needs to be an immediate discussion with potential funders from Pobál to LEADER/GRD to philanthropic partners working in the civic society space about putting a package together to deliver on this vital piece of the jigsaw.

The indicative cost of such a resource would be in the region of 80k per annum for a minimum of three years. The impact of recruiting the correct person with drive and skills could be transformational.

Timeline Short Term



Part B – Specific Concepts

All the individual concepts below have been outlined in greater detail in a previous section. Please refer for greater information.



B1. LACKAGH ROOTS PROJECT

Lackagh Museum is well positioned to capitalise on generating income by servicing the genealogical needs of the diaspora seeking ancestral research. Potential external partners already exist and there are considerable skills that have been built up within the museum. Lackagh parish stands out by having such a rich pool of local historians to call upon. The space management within the museum needs to be carefully looked at.

Resource Implications

Adequate broadband speed is an important requirement to fully engage in this activity. A strategic partnership with the likes of the Western Family History Association should be examined. 10-12k (establishment costs only)

Timeline Short Term

B2. LACKAGH TEACH CHEOL

This would be a unique cultural tourism offering for this part of East Galway. There is a latent market demand that Lackagh can service. The skills and expertise exist within the community. The cottage is the ideal location. The familiarity the Friday night comhaltas gatherings have with the space should make it appealing.

6k (running costs/year 1)

Timeline Short Term



B3. THE LACKAGH MUSEUM OF CHARACTERS – THE NEW THEME FOR THE REFURBISHED INTERPRETATIVE SPACE

This vision is for a fundamental reimagining of the museum space. It would involve the telling of the parish story through a series of local characters down the ages who are brought back to life employing modern technology (VR/AR) and storytelling techniques.

Resource Implications

This project would be complex, expensive and shrouded in risks. It is not for the short term as the community need to firstly build a solid platform of delivering successful projects and move on from there. Indicative cost 700k

Timeline Long Term

B4. LACKAGH VIEWING TOWER

A quirky project that would stand out from the crowd if successfully delivered. There would likely be a significant market for this experience – it would present itself as an 'Instagram moment'.

Resource Implications

This would be an income generating project and likely the most promoted/talked about attraction. There are obvious political, engineering and operational considerations that could provide obstacles but it's worthy to be included on this list as a next-generation project. Indicative Cost 350k

Timeline Long Term



B5. REIMAGINING THE MUSEUM ZONE

This proposal is clearly outlined previously in the study. It involves a five-part integrated approach to enhancing the current heritage and community experience on site.

Resource Implications

The delivery of all these strands in one or multiple phases will stretch the current LMCDA but they have the capacity and experience to deliver on this project, however they will need support (formally and informally) from many other members of the community. It is unfair (and dangerous) for the weight of this project to fall on the shoulders of the few. Indicative costs: 435k (museum zone)

780k (all phases including parish hall and public realm).

Timeline Short to Medium Term

B6. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WITH NATIONAL MUSEUM OF COUNTRY LIFE

The building and managing of a relationship with the Museum of Country Life, Castlebar. The outcome would be the delivery of some programming/events in Lackagh under



the guidance of the National Museum. Lackagh could become a hub for community heritage project across Galway all plugging into a National Museum's outreach programme.

Resource Implications

When the time is correct representatives of LMCDA should approach the National Museum with a realistic outline plan. Indicative costing 5k (heritage conference costs year 1)

Timeline Medium Term

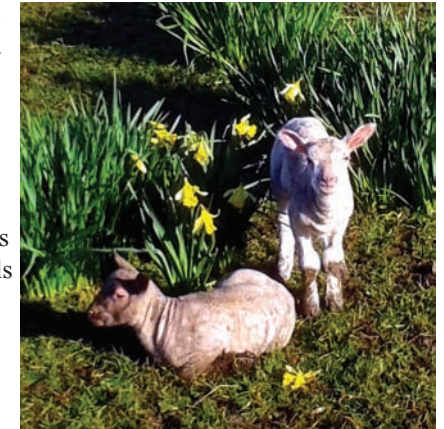
B7. LACKAGH WILDFLOWER MEADOWS, SENSORY AND BOG GARDENS

From the environmental and community health and wellness perspective this project has much to commend it. It dovetails nicely into the evolving recreational trails being developed. There is a strong learning and special sensory needs dimension to this project that could draw in new partners and funding streams.

Resource Implications

An audit of possible sites will be required, followed by a simple document outlining what will be delivered, how this will be achieved and who will fund its creation and ongoing maintenance. Indicative Costs 100k (establishment year 1)

Timeline Short to Medium Term



B8. TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

From a broader community development perspective, the further expansion of the fledgling trails network is likely the greatest dividend viewed by this study. The impact on health, connecting communities and people, offering a heritage overlay that will bring in visitors and directly address climate change mitigation should not be undervalued.

Resource Implications

To drive this opportunity forward the community need to consider establishing a dedicated Lackagh Parish Trails Development Committee. From Dungarven to Mulranny there are many communities willing to offer advice and support. Both LEADER/GRD and GCC could be valuable partners to further cultivate. Indicative costs 250k (next phase of work in a multi-phase initiative)

Timeline Medium Term

B9. LACKAGH - IRELAND'S FIRST HURLING GAELTACHT
A bold and novel idea that will generate a lot of interest nationally. Likely a commercial driven proposition that could have significant income generation/job creation potential within the parish.

Resource Implications

Lackagh has the reputation at county and national level to own this original concept. It is a concept with many internal moving parts from standards, to operational delivery, host families to strategic partners. How seasonal is the proposition, who is it open to, how is it managed and organised? Immediately if the concept gathers any traction with the partners on the ground a thoughtful and imaginative piece of research is required to help with decision making.

Initial indicative cost 20k (feasibility study)

Timeline Medium Term



B10. LACKAGH HERITAGE TRAIL(S) DEVELOPMENT
An offshoot of B7 focused as it is on providing an authentic heritage experience. This experience in turn would be promoted/serviced from the museum through the likes of mapping and the provision of regular guided walks for locals and visitors alike.

Resource Implications

Bike hire/cycling heritage trail needs to be interwoven with the walking offering.

Indicative cost 19.5k

Timeline Short to Medium term



B11. LACKAGH MOTORHOME AND CAMPERVAN FACILITY
A commercial venture that provides some cover for the accommodation deficit in the broader parish (excluding hotels). Needs to be delivered to a high standard and convenient/walking distance to Lackagh village.

Resource Implications

Critical is the identification of a suitably motivated promoter followed by a site with the right characteristics. The initial scale of this project should be modest, servicing up to 20+ vehicles with water, power, pump-out and Wi-Fi.

35k (excluding site)

Timeline Medium Term

B12. LACKAGH PARISH ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL SHOW

An historical event that goes 'back to the future'. The history of fairs and markets is well documented in Turloughmore and Lackagh. The concept is to recreate for today's visitor a traditional market day experience.

Resource Implications

This project will require considerable development/event management work – a dedicated committee under strong leadership will be required. There will be many technical and planning obstacles to be overcome including insurance, securing volunteers and ensuring the event covers all its costs and lays down some income to pump-prime the following year's event. The first year will likely be the most challenging given the unknowns.

Indicative Costs 100k (pa minimal)

Timeline Medium Term



B13. LACKAGH RIVER EXPERIENCE.

A project that further consolidates Lackagh's heritage credentials. The river has considerable potential given its proximity to the trail. It is relatively safe, calm and sheltered waters with a gentle flow ideal for a guided traditional boating experience.

Resource Implications

This needs to be a private sector driven venture with support from public funders to get established. The technical operation and visitor management will need careful planning. There is a market out of Galway city alone to sustain this offering. 200k (establishment/year 1/excluding land)

Timeline Medium Term

B14. KNOCKDOE BATTLEFIELD SITE AND TURLOUGHMORE FAIR GREEN SITE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

This is likely a signature project for the community to deliver as it brings back to life both the battle and fair green experiences for today's visitor. The work can be phased over a number of years as more and more layers of historical value are added to the experience.

Resource Implications

As both sites are in private ownership an important first step is to seek agreement from the landowners. What likely follows is a low impact/non-intrusive field experience where the battlefield and the fair are brought back to life by employing technology and 3D panels strategically positioned.

Indicative costs/year 1 (interpretation and related materials) 55k

Timeline Short to Medium Term

8. ACTION PLAN





8. ACTION PLAN

The following action plan sets out a summary of project options with a timeline.

		YEAR							
ACTION		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A1. Adopt and implement this Study	Immediate								
A2. Improve the effectiveness of communications	Immediate								
A3. Improve the effectiveness of local community management structures	Immediate								
A4. Address more thoroughly the needs of children and youth within the community	Short Term								
A5. Further enhance the physical environment and village spaces	Short to Medium Term								
A6. Secure more regular all-year-round public transport	Short Term								
A7. Remain mindful of recruiting, training and managing the volunteer corps within the community	Short Term								
A8. Actively engage with all local primary school children on the history, heritage and environment of Lackagh parish	Medium Term								
A9. Enhance the social and care programmes for the elder members of the community	Short to Medium Term								
A10. Network with other rural communities in East Galway who have a rich heritage they wish to develop	Medium Term								
A11. Recruitment of a community development manager to drive the implementation of the study	Short Term								
B1. Lackagh Roots Project	Short Term								
B2. Lackagh Teach Cheol	Short Term								
B3. The Lackagh Museum of Characters - the new theme for the refurbished interpretative space	Long Term								
B4. Lackagh Viewing Tower	Long Term								
B5. Reimagining the Museum Zone	Short to Medium								
B6. Strategic Partnership Development with National Museum of Country Life	Medium Term								
B7. Lackagh Wildflower Meadows, Sensory and Bog Gardens	Short to Medium								
B8. Trail Connectivity	Medium Term								
B9. Lackagh - Ireland's First Hurling Gaeltacht	Medium Term								
B10. Lackagh Heritage Trail(s) Development	Short to Medium								
B11. Lackagh Motorhome and Campervan Facility	Medium Term								
B12. Lackagh Parish Annual Agricultural Show	Medium Term								
B13. Lackagh River Experience	Medium Term								
B14. Knockdoe Battlefield Site and Turloughmore Fair Green Site Visitor Experience	Short to Medium								

9. CONCLUSION



9. CONCLUSION

The purpose behind this study was to throw light on how best to refresh the tired Cottage Museum space and, in a wider sense, to examine means by which Lackagh parish can become a healthier, happier and more sustainable community for future generations. The importance of the task was not taken lightly.

In order to be able to make concrete recommendations it's important to firstly listen to as many voices in the community as possible. Much time went into consulting widely through online channels, small focus groups and one-to-one conversations. The steering group appointed to oversee the project were a critical conduit for the flow of information and ideas in both directions. The encouraging participation in the online survey in particular demonstrates the degree of interest in the project and indicates a possibly latent communities' willingness to step up to the plate when required. This goodwill should be nurtured.

The community is in a good place, looking at most established criteria – a clean and safe environment, strong tradition and pride of place, virtually full employment, relatively good infrastructure and the respect of external partners. However, this study has enabled the community and take a first ever objective look at where it is today with a view to indicating where it can go into the future. This introspection and honest reflection have trawled up a mixture of threats and opportunities.

There is no Garden of Eden in rural Ireland today. As with all communities there are some negative forces at play on the social landscape of Lackagh parish from silo mentalities, entrenched thinking, to possibly a certain ambivalence towards the bookends of the community, the young and the elderly. Some of the recommendations in this study make practical suggestions as to how to overcome some of these obstacles.

There is a considerable degree of new and brave thinking embedded in this document – thinking that may frighten some but hopefully will inspire others, especially the younger cohort of the community. The question we constantly asked ourselves was

'where could this community be in fifty years' time?' and we often worked back from this end point in 2070. The likely answers can be summarised in three interconnected ways: a) a community that knows and is proud of its past; b) a community that respects its cultural and built heritage and natural environment and is integrated into the outside world; and c) a community healthy in both body and mind where neighbour takes care of neighbour – to arrive at this place for our children we need to act now on multiple fronts. The choice of doing nothing is not an option. This study hopefully sets some of the co-ordinates for this journey.



No project like this is possible without the support of many people who give tirelessly of their time and knowledge. Hopefully in these pages they can see their 'fingerprints'. Finally, to LEADER/GRD a heartfelt thanks for your ongoing support and encouragement on making this project possible.



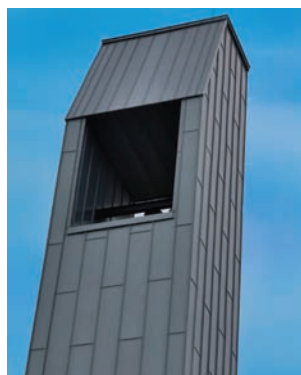


APPENDICES

1. Outcomes of One-to-One Consultation

LACKAGH STUDY – ONE-TO-ONE CONSULTATIONS/OVERVIEW

In this section we will provide an overview of the feedback received through the 15 separate interviews conducted with people who have special perspectives or insights on the development of the community going forward – they tended to be mostly local people with a few welcome inputs from agency or public sector participants. For obvious confidentiality reasons names are not provided. Initially it must be stated that this part of the consultation process proved most valuable. A broad range of perspectives emerged. Concrete ideas were offered. The degree of goodwill was encouraging.



The following table aims to present a summary of the feedback. It is broken down into three distinct questions:

What is working in Lackagh parish?

What is not working?

What big ideas do you have?

These are presented in a random fashion with no priority being suggested. Where a number of participants made similar points some of the inputs have been combined into one concept/statement.

One-to-One Consultation Summary Table

Q1. What is working in Lackagh parish?

- The cottage is quite unique in the area and the work done in recent years to make it as close to the authentic Irish cottage as possible is admirable.
- Input of the Flynn Family to supporting the community, often behind the scenes.
- New recreational trails...it is often worth remembering that less is sometimes more.
- Foróige and Comhaltas excellent for youth.
- No unemployment with related difficulties.
- Great schools and shop.

- Lackagh has three pubs, great places to visit.
- Bring able to go on the laptop and buy cattle at the Headford Mart.
- Church choir and choral music.
- Biodiversity on farms never better.
- Community bus on Fridays picking up 'the old ones'.
- Hurling club – social activities including cards; have their own Credit Union; now walks will bring more into contact with the club – proud hurling tradition.
- Mortuary chapel attached to the church – first in Ireland.
- Broadband is good but mobile phone signal terrible across the whole parish.
- Stonewall construction and maintenance in the countryside (no better image of rural Ireland).

Q2. What is not working in Lackagh parish?

- Loss of the Women's Group.
- Concern about creating a harmonious vision for the museum zone, given different agendas.
- New walking infrastructure needs to be improved e.g. better lighting and surfaces.
- The community centre currently is not fit for purpose. It genuinely needs to be a place you feel comfortable dropping into, not feeling you need to be there by invitation – needs to incorporate a good café facility that is also kid-friendly.
- Perceived conflict between sports clubs on occasions when looking for money/fundraising.
- If you're involved in music and sport you're 'elected', but what happens if you do neither?
- Lackagh needs a public transport link to Galway city,
- No real future in full-time farming as we know it.
- Too much cheap drink in the Off-Licenses/supermarkets.
- A local club bought 11 acres for two new pitches but who is expected to pay for these?
- Threat of more local floods as climate change grows... If any roadway is regularly flooded, then raise it by 2 feet e.g. back road to Athenry at Turlough Ban. This flooding is becoming what outsiders know the community for – bad publicity.
- Lack of community spirit obvious when looking for volunteers – people have a fear of getting sucked into volunteering their time.
- Some additional investment in the footpaths of the area e.g. museum to hurling club, but more are required due to the volume and speed of cars at all times of the day, including the church to the graveyard which is dangerous when walking back after a funeral.

Q3. What big ideas do you have?

- New neutral community space.
- Battle of Knockdoe site – significant potential.
- Redevelopment and refreshed representation of the Knockdoe Room.
- Combine all those participating in traditional music on a Friday night, which would amount to over 300 participants if realised (cottage and NS venue).
- Create a ‘Traditional Music Instruments Scheme’ whereby expensive instruments could be loaned out within the Comhaltas sessions e.g. concertinas, harps and accordions.
- Build up a pool of local vetted volunteers that could be spread across multiple community initiatives.
- Small Greenway between Claregalway and Lackagh.
- Lackagh parish should have a multi-sports campus where all codes are under the one roof – currently not possible.
- Invest in Tidy Towns and Residents Associations as a means to get more improvement work done on the ground e.g. litter, planting, painting etc.
- There are five community halls in Lackagh parish – establish a common online booking system that enables you to see immediately what is available.
- Given the amount of music in the parish the centre could have some sort of new performance space for up to 75 to 100 people in decked movable seating.
- Athenry has an enterprise park, why not Lackagh given how close it is to Galway?
- Improve (cut hedges/fix potholes/signpost etc) the network of local roads so people can walk/cycle without feeling they will be run down by speeding cars.
- Need Irish language classes for adults.
- Purchase three or four acres across the road from the church and turn it into a community garden/park with play area, pop-up catering and meeting spaces.
- Restore the old forge and have it as a community hurling-orientated meeting space.
- Sheltered housing – retirement home in village. Up to 10/12 units. Models in Monivea village as to what a community can achieve. Create new bird sanctuary on Turloughmore Commonage. Currently bad land owned by eight farmers, totally non-productive but with spectacular birdlife.



2. Heritage and tourism network for East Galway: some pointers on how it could be established and operate.

1. Put time and patience into defining your detailed terms of reference (and likely work programme). Take the time to have a series of study sessions involving all the key decision makers. Don't rush this delicate yet critical phase. Build confidences and understanding as to what you are and importantly what you are not.

2. Get to know each other's offerings (warts and all). Do these familiarisation sessions collectively/systematically. Perhaps have these visits result in an audit/mapping/benchmarking exercise as a clear outcome from a follow up workshop(s).

3. Prioritise collectively early on in the process your core objectives – in simple terms the network has to have a positive material impact on the way the group does its business (i.e. professionalisation), helping keep the doors open. Everyone buys into the same shared vision with no ambiguity.

4. Establish clear criteria for the selection of participants. Avoid the concept of a gloating elite club, more a representative self-governing body. The doors remain open for others to join at a later stage. A related point and critical to make – there has to be a degree of pain and sacrifice from being a member; it will cost you in terms of money, time and commitment. It cannot be perceived as a 'hand out' or free additional supports where participants just tick a box. Participants have a strategic choice to make not overly influenced by 'additional money'.

5. Talk to all the relevant partners from LEADER, to GCC, HC, ETB etc when the time is right. Leave them with a prospectus outlining who you are and what you hope to achieve. This should be suitably stylish with good meaty content.

6. Establish a lean/effective organisational structure with an experienced, respected leader to focus on delivering the first establishment phase of work (likely 12 months). I cannot see an organic network like this being established in any less time.

7. Internally each participant should carefully examine the pros and cons of participating. This network honestly may not suit all entities. The prospectus above needs to be circulated and discussed in detail by each participant board/steering group and formally confirmed. Be mindful that some may feel a collective will diminish their status in some regard, or they will lose control.

8. The needs of such a collective will likely be extensive, ranging from professional supports to marketing to training. My strong advice is to carefully identify a small number of early successes and deliver these beyond the expectations of those participating and their partners. Momentum is built.

9. Be very aware of the messaging surrounding this network development both internally and externally from day one. Don't over promise. Control communications as best as possible and present the network in the most attractive manner within the means/capacity available.

10. We all know others in different sectors and in different parts of the country have done this before, so what can be learned from best practice? Organise a set of early site visits to best-in-class networks in the heritage/rural tourism space. Sit down with them and have a mature engagement. An important indirect impact of this will be to build relationships internally and nurture an emerging esprit de corps.

