

# SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

## CASTLEGROVE BARRACKS

### Background:

Kilconly is a vibrant, active and developing community with its own GAA grounds, Soccer Club, Local Industries, state-of-the-art Community Centre and fully equipped Playground.

The trustees of Kilconly Community Development Association write in relation to the possible provision of space at Castlegrove Garda Barracks for the purpose of heritage usage.

### Heritage Facility:

The former Garda Station located in Castlegrove is a building steeped in local history having originally been a base for The Royal Irish Constabulary. The building was subject to attack on several occasions by local companies of The IRA during The War of Independence. Most families living in the parish of Kilconly and adjoining parishes have ancestors who were active locally during this period of Irish history. The people of Kilconly treasure these memories and we would hope to create a living memorial to our Nation's journey to Independence by establishing a Heritage Centre within the historical walls of Castlegrove Garda Station.

The parish of Kilconly hosted an outstandingly successful 1916 Commemoration in April 2016 which was highlighted by RTE Networks and captured by national and provincial newspapers. The event and subsequent commemorations within the parish are recorded by Galway County Council's Decade of Commemorations and this process is ongoing.

During the course of our preparation for the 1916 Commemoration we were astounded and amazed at the historical quality of artefacts from within peoples' home which were made available to us for the event. These artefacts included weapons (guns and bayonets), shells, uniforms, medals, books, newspaper clippings, photographs, letters, rosary beads, maps, ambush details, etc. A very valuable collection of items created by local volunteers interned in The Curragh Prison Camp was also made available to us. Our Committee has been approached by various families who wish to donate these items to a Heritage Centre and we fear that these items may leave our parish unless we acquire a suitable and secure building to house same. It is envisioned that this project would continue to provide an opportunity for tourism and historical research purposes.

Castlegrove Barracks is strategically placed as a potential tourism attraction. In addition to the history associated with the building itself, it is surrounded by large tracts of wood, is

adjacent to Feartagar Castle (15<sup>th</sup> century De Burgo tower house and national monument) and adjacent to the ruins of Castlegrove House/Mansion together with its gardens of different flora and fauna to be redeveloped. Nearby Lake Claureen adds to the potential for tourism and Coillte are currently developing walkways, picnic tables, etc. in the immediate environs.

**Dr. Ryan Summer School:**

Kilconly is the birthplace of Irish Language Activist and Advocate Dr. Mark Ryan. Dr. Ryan also founded the Gaelic Athletic Association in London in the late nineteenth century. At the unveiling of a memorial to The Ryan Family in Kilconly in 2018 it was suggested that an annual Dr. Ryan Summer School, similar to the Macgill Summer School that has been operating in Glenties, Donegal for the last thirty-eight years, would be considered for Kilconly. Discussions with Conradh na Gaeilge are ongoing in relation to same.

**Trustees:** Kilconly Community Development Association is a registered charity and a longstanding and successful Association. The Committee have in the past fundraised and overseen a state-of-the-art Community Centre and a fully equipped playground. Our Community Centre is fully utilised - in use every day - and we now find ourselves short of space for new ventures.

We would request therefore that the Commissioners for The National Parks and Wildlife Service consider accommodating Kilconly Heritage Committee at the former Garda Station at Castlegrove.

Best Regards,

Sean Dunleavy  
Co. Galway  
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