

WORKERS' VILLAGES

IRISH ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

SUPPORTED BY GLOBAL ACTION PLAN



Executive Summary

In the 1950s, the Irish Government funded the construction of a number of workers' villages in locations as planned communities for those who had come to the midlands to work for Bord na Móna. Workers' Villages is a commemoration of their legacy and an exploration of what we can learn from these villages and their designs as we move towards a sustainable future. As we reconsider our relationship with the land and consider new energy alternatives, four architects worked closely with two communities at the heart of Just Transition to ensure their voices are not left out of the conversation.

The Workers' Villages programme involved architect-led teams working in Roscommon and Offaly, weaving in expertise from ecologists, a film-maker and a wealth of community knowledge. Throughout this programme, extensive creative community engagement was undertaken to better understand the current challenges and future opportunities for these communities, resulting in a community vision document and a local heritage trail. It also produced an exhibition, which toured to the National Ploughing Championships and Dublin, as well as an online webinar, small publications and colloquium.

In the short-term, this project provided space and opportunity for deep listening and connection with a community undergoing a massive and difficult transition. In the medium to long term, this project was about helping identify a new pathway, using architecture and industrial heritage as a beacon from the past which could guide a new future. Just as the establishment of Bord na Mona and the creation of the Frank Gibney designed villages required bold and creative ambition, hopefully this project was the start of an ambitious new phase for the midlands.

Introduction/Background

The focus of this project was to deliver a programme of co-design, collaborative research and prototyping with a focus of reimagining a sustainable future for Bord na Móna Villages.

“Worker’s Villages” saw The Irish Architecture Foundation work directly with residents of two Bord na Móna villages in the Midlands while also engaging with wider community stakeholders in these and other peatlands communities. This project was a reflection on the legacy of architect Frank Gibney, who created a new template for rural design and development. As we reconsider our relationship with the land and consider new energy alternatives, Architects worked closely with communities at the heart of Just Transition to ensure their voices are not left out of the conversation.

Bord na Móna Workers Villages and Frank Gibney

Bord na Móna worker villages were designed in the 1950s by Frank Gibney, an Architect not only key to the construction of a new Irish rural design identity during the establishment of the Irish State, but also a forerunner in ideas around sustainable building and urban design practices. The establishment of Bord na Móna was a key part of the drive for self-sufficiency in Ireland, and transformed the Midlands from an economic, social and architectural perspective. For the first time, new rural villages were being planned, designed by Frank Gibney under the instruction of the Government, to provide housing for workers of the many Bord na Móna sites. Through the Bord na Móna housing project, seven schemes were provided at Kilcormac, Rochfortbridge, Lanesboro’, Cloontuskert, Derraghan, Timahoe, and Bracknagh. Gibney’s distinctive designs are from the Beaux Arts tradition, and easily recognisable for their arcing layout and feature houses.

However, Gibney's villages are not only notable for their unique designs and their long lasting use, his concepts of place created highly walkable and liveable communities. Their density and incorporation of community spaces are now recognised as markers of sustainable planning and urban design. He is considered an early proponent of "sustainable" building - with his prototype Clay House a model for rammed earth housing. Bord na Mona villages are within Just Transition communities in the Midlands of Ireland, and are intrinsically linked to the peat industry currently being decommissioned as part of Ireland's Climate Action Plan.

Just Transition

A key consideration for this project is the centering of the communities at the heart of "brown to green" transitions, in line with the aims of Just Transition. These are communities which are shouldering the burden of climate action policies, while being far from the decision making table.

Just Transition Ireland: A Just Transition (Worker and Community Environmental Rights) Bill was passed in 2018 and establish the National Just Transition Commission to oversee the bringing together of communities, workers, employers and the government in an open dialogue to develop required plans, policies and investments for a just transition to a low carbon economy.

Just Transition provides infrastructures that attempt to ensure that no community is left behind, however this does not undo the fact that an entire industry and communal identity is undergoing dramatic changes in the midlands of Ireland.

Team and Key Participants

Project Lead: Irish Architecture Foundation.

The Irish Architecture Foundation is an independent organisation dedicated to the promotion of architecture as culture. The Foundation seeks to champion the power of architecture to transform lives and improve the places where we live, learn, work and play. Through a dynamic programme of activity, inspiring people to understand and shape their world, they see a future where architecture is a civic right, fundamental to the fabric of life, culture and history, and a confident expression of who we are and who we might become.

Partner: Global Action Plan

"Global Action Plan aims to inspire people to become 'change makers'. We equip individuals and communities with knowledge and skills to develop solutions to the environmental and climate crises"

Community Partners:

Cloontuskert Development and Tidy Towns Association, Co Roscommon; Kilcormac Development Association, Co Offaly.

Architect Teams:

Caelan Bristow and Michael Haslam (Kilcormac); Evelyn D'Arcy and David Jameson (Cloontuskert)

Film Documentation:

Pure Designs

Photography:

Pure Designs, Deirdre Power, Ste Murray

Outputs:

1. Architect-led engagement process in Cloontuskert
2. Community vision document for Cloontuskert
3. Architect-led engagement process in Kilcormac
4. Wayfinding intervention and heritage trail for Kilcormac
5. Community workshop with Global Action Plan
6. Community Research visit
7. Film by Pure Designs
8. Webinar on "Communities in Transition"
9. Exhibition at the National Ploughing Championships
10. Set of panel discussions at the National Ploughing Championships
11. Exhibition in the former Science Gallery, Dublin
12. Colloquium in former Science Gallery, Dublin
13. Custom Monitoring and Evaluation tools (Global Action Plan)
14. A talk with Global Action Plan, delivered to students and emerging architects, via SAUL.
15. AR/VR mapping of Cloontuskert village by TUS students
16. In-person information sessions with Global Action Plan, at the Ploughing Championships
17. A social media community page (Facebook)
18. Article in the Irish Times
19. Article in Architecture Ireland

Architect-led engagement process in Cloontuskert

COMMUNITY: Cloontuskert Development and Tidy Towns Association, Co Roscommon

ARCHITECTS: Evelyn D'Arcy and David Jameson



*Photo: Deirdre Power
Cloontuskert Heritage Week, community consultation*

The Irish Architecture Foundation worked closely with members of the Cloontuskert Development and Tidy Towns Association in Co Roscommon to develop a project brief for their community as well as select the architecture team to engage. After shortlisting and interview stages, Evelyn D'Arcy and David Jameson were selected. It was clear from the outset that there was highly competent leadership in this community that had been behind driving a number of fantastic achievements, such as a community energy master-plan, a community orchard and polytunnel and even a sculpture garden. However, like many

communities, much of the work falls on a few people and their unpaid labour. The role of the architecture team would be to bolster these people and help provide the tools to achieve feasible wins within the scope of their community structure and context.

The guidance of the local community was essential in establishing an engagement strategy, given the sense of disillusionment and fatigue due to the nature of transition, and their experiences with polarising messaging. Large meetings or sit-down consultations would not be appealing, and many older people in the community may be overlooked in digital engagement tools. Global Action Plan was engaged at this stage to help develop engagement methodologies, which could be reused in future by the community for tracking sentiment and prompt low-pressure participation. These included a postcard and seeds distributed to each household, inviting residents to share their feelings about where they live. The Cloontuskert Development and Tidy Towns Association installed a post-box and a notice board for the project, and drove interest in the project through their active social media account and interpersonal interactions. A trusted community member visited older residents with Padraig Cunningham from Pure Designs, where oral histories regarding the creation of the village were gathered. These proved valuable in the project, are important for the community, and established familiarity in the village with the guy with the camera. In-person events piggy backed on other community events or Heritage Week, and included community mapping, a biodiversity bog-walk and presentation of a VR rendering of the village.



Still from Cloontuskert oral histories, Pure Designs

While this project initially focused on the Frank Gibney designed village, and in particular on the derelict school house at the heart of the village, it became clear that the village could and should not be considered separately from the surrounding landscape. The personal geographies of residents blended from the domestic space into the workspace of the surrounding peatlands, where generations of families worked together, children played, and if the weather was dry, it formed shortcuts to nearby amenities. As part of their role in bolstering community leadership in their initiatives focused on redefining their future, the architect team were able to review plans and proposals related to greenways and museums that had been previously proposed, and provide relevant documents and guidance regarding future plans.

The final outcome from this project was a set of visions and concepts related to the adaptive reuse of the school house, as well as the reimagining of the now quitted peatlands

surrounding Cloontuskert which used to be a hive of activity. This included proposals on the reuse of old railways which carried milled peat to nearby Lanesboro power station to provide a new greenway connection; the reuse of the tea-huts which were part of community life for the workers, and the creation of shelters for recreational and community use.

This final concept has since evolved into Bog Bothy, a project aimed at creating space and infrastructure for deeper engagement with the bogs .

Architect-led engagement process in Kilcormac

COMMUNITY: Kilcormac Development Association

ARCHITECTS: Caelan Bristow and Michael Haslam

After establishing the project in Cloontuskert, Kilcormac was selected as the next town based on it's significant Frank Gibney village, and it's role within an existing town that is currently working to address economic challenges through the KDA. The Irish Architecture Foundation worked closely with members of the Kilcormac Development Association to develop a project brief for their community as well as select the architecture team to engage. After shortlisting and interview stages, Caelan Bristow and Michael Haslam were selected. Members of the KDA economic development group included former Bord na Mona workers, who were a driving force for initiatives such as the Credit Union in the town and the nearby Lough Boora parklands. While they faced the same challenges of many rural towns in terms of the decline of retail and urban vacancy, and felt similar frustration as in many communities about how the closure of the peat industry delivered, they saw a lot of potential in green tourism and were positioning Kilcormac as the "Gateway to Lough Boora". The role of the

architect is to help explore and underpin the important local story of Ireland's industrial heritage. Looking to this past could help establish a new future for the community.

Initial stages of this project established the close links between the village and the Boora bog, both in its current form as the Lough Boora parklands, but as the space for work and the formation of community identity. The sense of community and culture of craft work in the Boora workshops was a source of pride, yet it is something hard to quantify and even harder to recreate when lost. Where in Cloontuskert the video recording of oral histories focused on the early years of peat milling and the Bord na Mona village, in Kilcormac there was an opportunity to record important information regarding industrial heritage, machinery design and the international aspect of the peat industry. As well as adding to the film, these recordings also informed a set of books that were displayed in the Workers' Villages exhibition.

Having worked previously with some of the members of the KDA before on a project in Lough Boora, Caelan Bristow led the local engagement, building on these relationships. Strategic local meetings were complemented by the strategy of physically placing herself in the middle of the town on busy days, where she spoke to people and captured their stories, memories and ideas. As with Cloontuskert, it was understood that traditional public engagement events may not be very attractive locally, particularly around serious topics such as architecture and climate change. However, a more direct interpersonal approach proved successful and got a sense of priorities, interests and hopes for the future. The sense of community in St Cormac's Park and its importance to the peatlands was very evident in community conversations, however this was not fully represented to outsiders in a tangible way. This formed an approach for the outcomes of this project.

The architect team and the KDA installed a finger post to direct visitors to St Cormac's Park. This simple gesture required a considerable amount of planning, but should have a large impact establishing its value in the town. On the other end of the scale, a multi-panel heritage trail was designed by the architecture team, which will provide education on the history, context and legacy of St Cormac's Park.



*Workshop with Global Action Plan
Photo: Irish Architecture Foundation*

These two projects were connected for one special day, when a bus with community members traveled from Cloontuskert to Kilcormac. The initial stop was to Lough Boora, where the Roscommon visitors could see first hand what a major recreational facility on decommissioned peatlands looks like. It was a chance for Caelan Bristow to present the works she had previously created for the parklands, and to hear about the role of the Bord na Mona workers in creating such a successful attraction. A new sensory area for the parklands,

developed by the KDA, provided a key example. Following this, the Cloontuskert team received a tour of Kicormac and St Cormac's Park.

In the afternoon a public workshop was held for both communities with Global Action Plan, who explored points of solidarity, not just with each other, but with broader climate justice issues. Part of the conversation in this workshop was the recognition of the workers and communities as deeply connected to the landscape, of having unique land knowledge, culture and skill sets, and whose skills and stories should be used more in the current reframing of the peatlands.

Film by Pure Designs

Padraig Cunningham from Pure Designs, a design studio in Roscommon, was commissioned to use film to document the Workers' Villages project. His brief was to integrate into the local creative teams, document key events, and produce a final film document. By becoming a familiar face of the project, he was able to build trust with community members, who would make suggestions on who and where to film. This was a valuable aspect of the project, particularly in documenting aspects of work and community life which were of local significance, such as machinery and work spaces. The films formed rich sources of information regarding the design and development of the villages, both the social impact they had as well as the material aspect of their construction and management. Community members were keenly aware that the only source of this information may be those who witnessed it, and that this is an aging demographic. The film produced from this footage was presented at the two Workers' Villages exhibitions.

“Communities in Transition” Webinar, June 10th 2022

A webinar presenting international and Irish projects was presented by the Irish Architecture Foundation as a side event of the Festival of the New European Bauhaus. This panel explored innovative post-industrial projects which place sustainability, culture, heritage, and aesthetics at their heart, as a way of reimagining a new future for these places.

The Zollverein Foundation presented “the most beautiful coal mine in the world”, a major industrial complex in Germany that is now a World Heritage Site. The event also heard from Urbane Künste Ruhr about the Emscherkunst Weg project, which is both creating an art trail that follows the Emscher river and restoring back to a near-natural state this industrialised channel through a coal-mine region. Finally, members of Ireland’s peatlands communities shared their Workers’ Villages journey so far and their aspirations for the future. This Session was facilitated by Hans Zomer, CEO of Global Action Plan.

Workers’ Villages Colloquium, November 9th 2022

As the Irish Architecture Foundation wound up the Workers’ Village project, we hosted an event that explored some of the themes connected to the project bringing together academics, architects, and community members to think together about the legacy and future story of the Bord na Móna villages.

We invited guest speakers to share short essays and presentations, adding to the research and explorations undertaken through this project over 18 months. Ranging from academics sharing their research to residents speaking about their own experiences, this will be an event threaded together architecture, bogs, culture, climate and community.

Presentations were made by: Sean Craven and Seamus Barron from Kilcormac Development Association, Emma Gilleece, Patrick Bresnihan, David Jameson and Evelyn D'Arcy (Cloontuskert), Creative Rathangan Meitheal, Irish Architectural Archives and Global Action Plan.

This colloquium was followed by the official launch of the the Workers' Villages exhibition with words from guest speakers Tania Banotti from Creative Ireland and Fergal McCabe, author of the book "Ambition and Achievement: The Civic Visions of Frank Gibney"

The Workers' Villages exhibition

The Workers' Villages exhibition was a celebration of the work and legacy of architect Frank Gibney by the Irish Architecture Foundation, and the contribution of the communities that were created through his innovative Bord na Móna villages. The first stage of this exhibition was presented at the National Ploughing Championships with a focus on the social history of the villages, with video interviews and exhibition materials for visitors to look through and get a sense of what life in the villages was like during their time as Bord na Móna estates. We also invited any visitors with a connection to any of Frank Gibney's worker estates across Ireland to share their own stories. The second iteration was presented in conjunction with the Housing Unlocked exhibition in the former Science Gallery, Dublin.

This exhibition was part project documentation, and part museum. It was designed to reflect specific aspects of the tea huts used by the peatland workers, as observed in Cloontuskert, such as handmade benches, desks to display plans, and operational notebooks hung by string. A film by Pure Designs presented the Workers' Villages process, and there were sections on the engagement with the two villages. Photography by Deidre Power was

presented, illustrating the architectural features of Cloontuskert. During the National Ploughing Championships, the space was used as a hub of conversation regarding the villages, with Global Action Plan taking a day to facilitate the space to engage the public around themes of just transition and climate justice. Eight small books were designed and displayed which captured different threads related to the communities, including the milling process and village life. In the expanded Dublin exhibition, items connected to peatland workers' heritage, collected by community members in Kilcormac, were presented. This included the unique and special model of the peat milling process which had been hand-made by a now deceased resident of St Cormac's park and which was used in the education of workers. A section of the exhibition was used by Global Action Plan as an active participation space, inviting public feedback on ideas around Just Transition and climate justice.



WORKERS' VILLAGES
Exhibition Launch

with opening words from Fergal MacCabe

Science Gallery Dublin, Trinity College
9th November
5.30pm
RSVP today

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Climate Action

Global Action Plan

From the outset, Global Action Plan was engaged to support the engagement and impact measurement of this project, with the expectation that they could provide expertise and climate knowledge as an environmental organisation. They supported public engagement throughout the project. They delivered a biodiversity walk with some former Bord na Mona workers on land around Cloontuskert, allowing them to tap into the local land knowledge. They delivered a talk to students and emerging architects, via SAUL and held in-person information sessions at the Ploughing Championships.

Given low public engagement around explicitly environmental engagement projects in this region, particularly in the context of Covid 19, the baseline for engagement was very low. Global Action Plan was able to help frame the project from a climate justice perspective, allowing a third pathway through a very polarised local context and a public narrative which had placed community needs against climate actions. Members of the GAP team held a visible public presence in the projects, becoming informal parts of the creative teams. This was significant in building trust, but also in building their understanding of the sensitive local context and how to engage with it. A key outcome was a positive relationship between GAP and local community groups, whose ideas around just transition were closely aligned with many environmental organisations and provided a new shared narrative. This might have been a surprise for some local residents, who had expressed that they felt unfairly criticised and misunderstood by those involved in climate action. GAP were keen to give due recognition to the positive actions these communities were taking, while intentionally not focusing on individual consumer behavioural change. It was understood that the best impact would be had by focusing on the very real, larger scale collective challenges the communities were facing, and that engaging around individual behaviours like solid fuel burning would be a distraction and could damage trust.

This presented a challenge, however, as individual behaviour and attitudes changes in a fixed and engaged community are easier to measure than changes in broader public sentiment, public policy and long term impact. During the process of the project, it became evident that a key constituent in terms of behaviour and attitudes change may not be the communities directly engaged in the project, but policy and decision makers, public bodies and those who influence and set narratives around climate change who do not fully recognise the importance of these communities.

On a practical level, Global Action Plan helped develop tools such as a postcard campaign in Cloontuskert and a visioning workshop in Kilcormac. They engaged in a “Most Significant Change” interview process with key community members. A vox-pop was held at the Dublin Workers’ Villages exhibition. Online surveys were developed, however these did not prove as useful as discursive impact measurement.

Given the growing awareness during the project that the wider narrative around these communities may need to be changed, Global Action Plan was proactive in taking the Workers’ Villages story to key audiences, including a Just Transition talk as part of the Climate & Nature Summit 2022 and a presentation at the Accelerate Green conference. Global Action Plan were also invited to speak on stage at the Ploughing Championships as part of a panel on Workers’ Villages.

REIMAGINE KILCORMAC

How would you describe
Kilcormac and the people who live
here in 2022?

Write as many words as come to
mind. Go with your gut and your
heart. Write down the first words
you think of. This will help us take
a snapshot of the place and its
people at this moment in time.



Join our Facebook group
for project updates.

Kilcormac is:

Kilcormac people are:

My hopes for Kilcormac are:

This is completely anonymous.
You can post your reply into the postbox in the Community Centre.

Postcards designed by Pure Designs and Global Action Plan

Public Engagement Outcomes

The largest public engagement outcomes for this project were during the National Ploughing Championships and the exhibition as part of the Housing Unlocked exhibition in Dublin.

However, the most meaningful engagements were perhaps on a one-to-one basis between the architect teams and the community members. These resulted in lasting relationships based on solidarity and creativity, with ideas generated which will have an impact for years to come. The print media provided the broadest opportunity to broadcast a nuanced story about Workers' Villages.

20 Local Community Workshops, Walks, Talks: People engaged - 250

National Ploughing Championships. Exhibition, public engaged: 2k+

National Ploughing Championships. Panel Discussions, public engaged: 60

Workers' Villages Exhibition, Dublin. Public engaged: 2k (based on visits to Housing Unlocked)

Communities in Transition, Webinar Viewers: 80. Note: Also available to view [online](#).

Workers' Villages Colloquium. Attendees: 79

Workers Villages Facebook Group (not public). Managed by the IAF to share community events, articles and resources. Members - 59

Workers Villages [Film](#): 958 views

Workers Villages Irish Times Article-

www.irishtimes.com/environment/2022/07/16/bog-villages-after-peat-production-ended-what-grew-afterwards-was-amazing-the-wildlife-the-biodiversity/

A summary of the project evaluation on the impact on attitudes in relation to climate action and associated behaviour change.

Given the nature of the project, and the sensitivities of the communities we were engaging with, it was established from the outset that this project would not focus on individual consumer behavior. Under guidance from Global Action Plan, the aim was to provide scaffolding to those who are leading their communities towards sustainable projects while supporting the change of narrative on a larger scale. We developed a custom engagement and impact measurement strategy, focused on building opportunities for engagement and identifying key moments for discursive feedback.

Being able to provide a space and a forum for sharing feelings, experiences and building relationships seemed to be the most positive outcome from the process for many.

(Workers' Villages exhibition vox pop) *"Does Reimagine: Workers Villages help, inspire or support you to think about how we respond to climate change?"*

Response: *"Yes it does. I think it's a difficult one to answer. I think it does in a very kind of holistic way, rather than a very binary way, which is not something I think works... a yes or a no or a black and white" "Yeah, it does, and I think it's actually healthy, what you're doing, because it brings up people's feelings, ets people talk about what they're feeling, and it's not contentious, as in, it's not bringing people into an argument. I think people expressed strong feelings about things but there was never any argument."*

Our feedback, however, also highlighted one important aspect of concern. Each community voiced a frustration with not having an avenue through which to enact change and develop projects connected to their industrial heritage. The IAF stepped into this role, however faced limits in how much progress could be made on certain projects due to a number of external

factors. This happened in Kilcormac, where the community wished to access and display some of the Bord na Mona machinery, and access archive materials. This repeats the cycle of raising hope and then disappointment, which was deflating for community members, the architect team and the IAF. However, it is the communities who have to live long terms with this loss of hope and may be disengaged regarding engaging in future projects. While the IAF will continue to work on alternative avenues to move this along, for the communities who already feel abandoned we have to take responsibility for this sense of loss.

It highlights the challenge with delivering creative projects aimed at social change, and perhaps the paradox. Artists and creative projects often are at the forefront of addressing social challenges, at leading change and advocating for a more just and equitable society, yet for real lasting change to happen a wider net of organisation, structures and systems need to quickly follow. In the case of climate change, our engagement and feedback indicated that most people want to engage in a brown-to-green, and in fact want ambitious and visionary projects just like the major visions that created the Bord na Mona villages. However, there is a structural and resourcing gap in these communities, meaning they cannot apply for or manage grants, do not have the man-power, and those who operate voluntarily are experiencing burn-out.

Relevant Findings:

A notable finding from this project was the lack of local community structures with the paid capacity to take advantage of the opportunities a “Brown to Green” transition might offer. Many local initiatives depend on volunteers, who are currently experiencing burn-out after Covid-19. They may also be wary about causing local issues due to the sensitive nature of the transition process, where many feel anger towards some proposals such as wind-farms.

There is evidence of consultation fatigue, and disillusionment with consultation processes. This is due in part to the online nature of public consultation during Covid 19, a challenge in engaging with communities that do not fit into typical public engagement models (ie. formalised organisations in towns) but also a sense that they do hear anything back after giving their time and energy into a consultation. What might be needed, instead, is more initiatives with short term turn-arounds and in-person engagement as a way of rebuilding trust.

There is feedback that there would be low engagement around projects which are explicitly “environmental”, however there was positive interest in more tangible aspects such as heritage, recreational amenities and culture.

Conclusion

This project started out with a consideration for the Frank Gibney villages as a way of looking to the past to create a new vision for the future. Quickly, however, it became clear that this project would be bigger than just the architecture of the villages, but about the whole identity of the communities themselves. This, then, is just one chapter in a much longer story of change, resilience and community building, in which architecture continues to play a key role.



WORKERS' VILLAGES

Exhibition Launch

with opening words from Fergal MacCabe

Science Gallery Dublin, Trinity College
9th November
5.30pm
RSVP today

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Heritage Week event, Cloontuskert. Photo: Deirdre Power



Workshop with Global Action Plan. Photo: Irish Architecture Foundation



Community Consultation, Cloontuskert. Photo: Irish Architecture Foundation

Reimagine Cloontuskert NEWSLETTER

December 2022

As our year with the Cloontuskert community draws to a close, the Reimagine team reflect on the experience and consider what's next.

The Reimagine Cloontuskert team have been working closely with the community for the past year, exploring the legacy of Frank Gibney's architectural vision and the community's own heritage and relationship with the peat lands surrounding it.

We found a hard working and resourceful community with a deep knowledge of the peatlands and concern for its future.

The codesign process looked both outwards at the wider landscape and inwards to the heart of the community, considering adaptive reuse of the Bord na Móna infrastructure, to create a vision of how peatland communities can be reimaged in creative ways providing space for nature, the community and a sustainable future.

Time really has flown by since we sent out our introductory postcards in November 2021! Since then, we have had many visits to the village and have met some fantastic people along the way.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the community for their enthusiasm and support.

Working together, we believe we have come up with a strong proposal for the future of the peatlands, and through spreading the word at a national level, the village of Cloontuskert has been well and truly placed on the map.

In this newsletter, we have summarised our work on the project and have come up with a few ways the community can bring this work forward into new ventures.

The power is now in the hands of the people of Cloontuskert to create a sustainable future for both the village and the surrounding peatlands which were formed by the hard work of the people who live here.

It has been a huge privilege to participate in this project. The story does not end here, however - this is just the beginning!

Our project achievements:

1. Development of Reimagine Cloontuskert Community Masterplan
2. Consultation with Roscommon County Council on Mid Shannon Greenway development proposal
3. Presentation of our work to Fáilte Ireland and to Bord na Móna
4. Connecting peatland communities through Kilcormac community workshop and trip to Lough Boora Discovery Park
5. Stage talks and exhibition at the Ploughing Championships
6. Public exhibition and colloquium at the Science Gallery Dublin.

Creative
Climate Action



Clár Eire Iddinach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017-2022



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

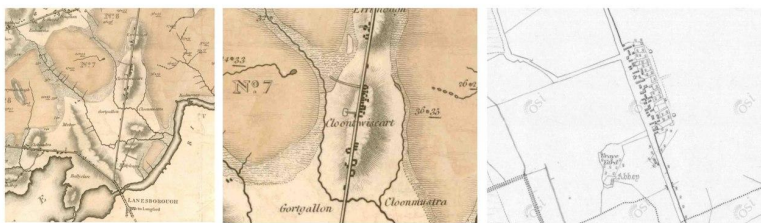


Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Join us to celebrate the launch of the Reimagine Cloontuskert Community Masterplan in early 2023 - more details to be announced soon!

MAPPING THE BOGS



Bog Commission Maps 1809 - 1814

For centuries a major object of Irish public and philanthropic policy was how to go about the reclamation of bogs. From the 17th century there was pressure to develop bogs, seen as wastelands, for agriculture. In 1808, Sir Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, advocated the setting up of a commission to enquire into the possible utilisation of Irish bogs. The five members of the Commission were quickly appointed and began operations on the 19th September 1809.

Working in all weathers, over the most difficult terrain and without any of the transport or communications conveniences of today, the small staff carried out most of the survey work in two years. The four reports set out, in detail, how 1,013,358 acres of bog could be drained, manured and brought into production as agricultural land. The reports were published between 1810 to 1814 and each report contains detailed maps which set out the proposed lines of drainage and the highest and lowest point of each bog.

The comparison OSI map dating from around the same time, gives a useful comparison as to the intricate level of topographical detail employed by the bog map draughtspeople. When the Turf Development Board was founded, an immediate start was made on surveying the bogs to examine their suitability for machine turf production. The survey used as its starting point the reports of the Bog Commissioners to determine the most promising bogs to be surveyed for development. The maps detailed the highest and lowest point of each bog and the drains were aligned to follow this. This information was very useful, especially the fall of the bogs, however Bord na Móna made some changes to the drain patterns because the bogs were to be used for fuel extraction rather than agriculture.

(source: Bord na Móna Living History (adapted))

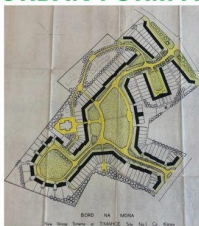


URBAN DESIGN:

At Cloontuskert, 70 single storey bungalows are laid out in a distinctive horseshoe shaped street pattern. A formal tree-lined entrance route arrives at two symmetrical flat roofed buildings, designed to be shops but first used as a boys' and girls' school. The central area of the village was intended for a community centre, which was never built.

The looped road, lined with semi-detached and terraced bungalows with unenclosed, public front gardens, is similar to the scheme at Lanesborough. These orderly, sweeping street patterns were conceived at a time when the motor car was not a major design consideration.

URBAN FORM AND FEATURES



Timahoe



Cloontuskert



Lanesborough

INSPIRATION:

Gibney had a very distinctive style of civil design deriving from the Beaux Arts tradition, the characteristics of which included circular ring-roads, radiating arterial roads, the creation of prominent public buildings, all based on a very structured and hierarchical approach.

His style of planning and architecture also has echoes of the English Garden City Movement and contains references to the folk villages of the Low Countries and Germany of the 1930s.

All of Gibney's designs show very sophisticated handling of space and the use of the various building types to give scale frequently punctuated by landmark buildings of unusual height or form.

A similarity to Irish monastic town settlements is also clear. The central focus of Gibney's schemes is often a community space or a building intended for community use, a less hierarchical design form.

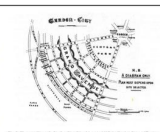
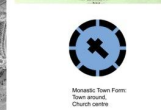
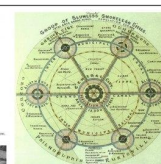


Fig. 1. Ebenezer Howard, Garden City (Oxford Press, 1902), in Garden Cities of To-morrow.





Workers' Villages Colloquium, Dublin .



Biodiversity Walk, Cloontuskert



Workers' Villages Exhibition. Photo: Ste Murray