

Outline proposal for future community use of suitable grounds in Ennistymon to serve The North Clare hinterland

Submission to Stage 1: Pre-Draft

County Development Plan 2022- 2028

**Ennistymon & District Sports and Amenity
Partnership CLG**

North West Clare Family Resource Centre CLG

Ennistymon Town Team



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Introduction

1.1 Overview

The need for multi-generational outdoor recreational facilities has been highlighted for the Ennistymon area for many years. Ennistymon area lags behind comparable and smaller communities. A planned development of 30 houses at Glen North (November 2020) further adds to this fundamental need.

A cross section of enthusiastic community people have come together to research and progress this need.

Facilities proposed will impact the natural hinterland/catchment area, including Lahinch, Moy, Rinneen, Liscannor, Inagh, Kilshanny, Lisdoonvarna, Kilfenora and townlands. Having one outdoor facility that accommodates a variety of sports and activities for all ages will be a great asset to the wider community and to the county. The proposal would also serve the tourist coming to the area.

1.2 Rural Regeneration Aims and Objectives

We have assessed the criteria of the Rural Regeneration Scheme and we feel that the proposal put forward here will meet the schemes overall objectives. We also see with interest the desire for the department to develop sites within towns and villages. Please see guidance note - *“It should be noted that, in general, new build projects outside towns and villages will not be prioritized for funding, with re-purposing, renovating or building upon vacant or derelict sites within towns and villages preferred.”*

The proposed development responds very much to this concept

1.3 Mission Statement

To provide an outdoor recreational area which will serve and enhance the lives of the greater community, young and ageing, now and in the future.

2. Ennistymon Profile

2.1 Summary

Ennistymon is the largest town in North Clare and has a particularly strong urban core. The town has a distinctive character with an attractive architectural style, although large areas are in need of consolidation and renovation in order to realize its true aesthetic value. Traditionally it is seen as the capital of the North Clare Region. Ennistymon has a long tradition of attracting people who wish to live in a vibrant market town set in an undulating landscape with a dramatic coastline within easy reach. The town has many beautiful family-owned shops with an eclectic mix of cafes, bakery, public houses and art galleries which further add to its charm as a place to live.

Ennistymon has a diverse economic base supported by industry, tourism, and agriculture. 'Daktronics' is a key employer in the town. The Enterprise Centre has been provided and is active and productive. The Ennistymon Hub, part of the DIGICLARE initiative was opened in November 2019 and is fully functional.

Ennistymon makes an excellent base for activity holidays in the Burren, and along the Wild Atlantic Way. The town's rich cultural heritage is celebrated. Ennistymon serves a wide hinterland particularly to the west and north. The main approaches to the town are from Ennis, Lahinch and Kilfenora/Lisdoonvarna/Ballyvaughan.

718 students attend second level schools in the town and 180 attend primary schools.

2.2 Lack of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

While Ennistymon is viewed as the capital of North Clare, other towns and villages in the surrounding areas have fared much better with outdoor recreational facilities. The implications of not dealing with the problem are many. According to the CSO, Ennistymon has grown in population by 23% between 2006 and 2017 – with no additional facilities and nothing planned. The planned building of additional houses would increase the population considerably. A €7.7 million investment has been announced to provide 30 houses at Glen North. **Not allowing for a green area / community area would only compound the lack of facilities in the North Clare Town and catchment area.**

2.3 Impact of an Outdoor Recreational Area

An Outdoor Recreational Area, as proposed will have a major impact on families and make a significant contribution to the local economy in attracting users to the town centre. We have gathered over 30 letters of support from local sporting organisations, businesses and members of the public. These can be summarised as follows:

- Current under provision of outdoor play area facilities
- Genuine gap in outdoor activity facilities for older population
- 898 school children in local schools without adequate outdoor facilities
- COVID-19 and Post- COVID-19 facilities are an **urgent priority**

2.4 Current Clare County Development Plan (West Clare District)

We feel that provision of an outdoor multi-generational recreational area would be in keeping with the plan and would meet several objectives of the public and County Council alike. It would also facilitate the regeneration of Ennistymon providing its first outdoor public play/activity area. Please see first point below of Clare County Council's Objectives:

"To facilitate the consolidation and regeneration of Ennistymon/Lahinch to ensure a strong and vibrant community that will allow for its future sustainable growth as the service town in North Clare"

2.5 Benefits to Council/State

While not often discussed, the organisations involved feel, the benefits to the County Council/State would potentially be as follows.

- The County Council and State are currently investing in Ennistymon with a Digital Hub, an amalgamated Community School, a new bridge crossing as well as plans for expanded car parking, a possible retirement village and Primary Care centre and a commissioned Town Plan.
- There is still no outdoor play/activity area within the town. To provide one, would greatly compliment these developments and enhance the social conditions of families living in the area. Lack of such a development lacks social balance
- This would be an ideal opportunity for the County Council/State to show support for a community-based scheme with facilities for all ages.

2.6 Demographics & Special Consideration

The population of Ennistymon Electoral Area is 16,408 .Ennistymon town is now growing rapidly, with people opting to live here fulltime after experiencing short holidays to the area or transplanting from the larger cities (Dublin, Galway, Limerick) and overseas.

The seasonal increase in population in the Ennistymon /Lahinch/ North Clare area is very significant and places additional demands on recreational facilities for all ages.

As already noted, a development of 30 houses is planned for Glen North. It is an area of population stability and growth This can quite easily be seen in the growth of infant classes at Ennistymon National Schools and the gradual change of the streetscape with new businesses opening .13 new businesses have started up in the past 2 years are all are well supported. This clearly demonstrates the growth rate and upward trend. A Steiner primary school under the patronage of LCETB has 110 pupils on roll

3. Organisations

3.1 Ennistymon & District Sports Amenity Partnership CLG (“EDSAP”)

EDSAP was established with the aim of providing outdoor sports and recreation facilities for the town of Ennistymon and surrounding communities. ESDAP incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 21 March 2019. ESDAP CLG is a legal entity with a board of directors. In addition, a committee has been elected and a programme set in place. This has a mixture of personnel including engineers, sports coaches, accountants, local businesspeople, and home makers. A formal Chairman, PRO, Treasurer have been appointed. The committee has been meeting monthly and will continue to do so over the coming months particularly for this submission and fundraising aspects of the project.

In August 2019, EDSAP entered into a license agreement with the Edmund Rice Schools Trust ('ERST') and the Board of Management of the Ennistymon CBS to develop and operate an outdoor sports facility from the school yard of the old CBS national school. With the help of Clare County Council; Riverside Cycle Club; and local clubs: EDSAP has installed two combi-goals and secured the yard with fencing. EDSAP was awarded €28,735 in Clár funding. This funding was used to install a Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA) synthetic surface and upgrade the yard toilet facilities.

3.2 North West Clare Family Resource Centre CLG

NWCFRC is a not-for-profit company (CHY No. 14337) run by a voluntary board of directors. The company has been delivering Family Support; Community Services; and Youth Services for two decades in the North West Clare area. The company operates the community crèche (Little Deers) in Ennistymon. The company is also providing counselling and support services to over 200 people including travellers, Syrian refugees, disadvantaged, disabled and other individuals and groups.

In addition, the company provides the 'Rainbows Programme' for children in 1st to 6th class who have experienced loss by the death of a close family member or whose family has changed because the parents have separated or divorced. NWCFRC also provides arrange of leadership and activities in its youth programme.

3.3 Town Team

Ennistymon possesses a host of voluntary community and enterprise development organisations who work tirelessly to support, promote, and enhance social, cultural, economic development and services in Ennistymon and its surrounding areas. To support a cohesive and dedicated delivery structure, a *Town Team* was established in Ennistymon. The Town Team is made up of volunteers from a variety of backgrounds including business and community interests, voluntary, environmental and other community activities, all of whom share the common goal of improving economic, social and cultural development within the locality.

Future Analytics Consulting (FAC) worked alongside the Town Team in formulating a strategy for Ennistymon. FAC is a planning, economic development, and research consultancy with considerable experience in urban and rural planning, socio-economic data analysis and community engagement. As part of the strategy development process, FAC undertook comprehensive

baseline socio-economic research, site visits to Ennistymon, and stakeholder consultation, with business and retail representatives, community organisations and voluntary groups, and individual community residents. The information obtained from the research and stakeholder consultation process provided the foundations for the formulation of a series of recommendations and actions for future development.

The objective of the Town Team is to work with local businesses, retailers and the wider community to support the successful implementation of the Ennistymon Community Development Plan. The actions identified, which are evidence based and community supported, will contribute significantly to enhanced vitality and viability of Ennistymon and area. Among a range of actions outlined in the plan, two are very strongly aligned with EDSAP goals

Support development of the old Monastery School Yard as a modern and safe all-weather multi-sports

facility.

Seek the transfer of the buildings, lands and play areas currently occupied by the CBS Secondary School to community use.

All three Organisations recognize the proactive initiatives of Clare County Council in the provision of leisure facilities to other similar areas throughout county Clare.

4. Proposal

Please see below an outline of the requirements from the local community which have been gathered by Public meetings and letters.

- Multi -sport/activity all weather area (ground occupied by present pitch area (possibly including a mini golf area)
- Playground/Picnic area
- Running/Walking track/with exercise equipment. The walking area can be linked in with other existing and proposed walks in the area
- Appropriate facilities/activities for disabled/special needs
- Mini-Orienteering
- Outdoor Exercise equipment
- Changing facilities
- Storage areas
- Meeting Room(s)/Local Information Point
- Men's Shed
- Community tea- room/Cafeteria (suitable for public use for light fare etc.)
- A canopied multi use area suitable for a variety of activities: sports, concerts, community outdoor (covered functions) covered gym, bowls etc. (30%-50% of outdoor play time is lost in Ireland because of wet weather) (see attached development in Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo)
- Accessible to the wider community including of course visitors to events.
- Some limited parking and access for vehicles as well as access for elderly/disabled who might find the steep hill too challenging.
- Design to incorporate any building planning relevant to pandemic management in the future

Next step(s)

- Involvement and support of local groups and business
- Appropriate management/ownership structure to be determined.
- Acquisition of site for community use from ERST
- Development of a detailed costed plan and funding.
- Delivery and Management

Inclusion in County Development Plan 2022-2028 will be crucial to realizing the project.

5. Potential Sites

Several sites were identified by the committee over the last number of years. Each were explored and discussed in detail with a wider audience and merits and reservations were assessed. One of the initial possible locations was on the Ennis Rd. but the Local Authority has prioritised housing developments there. The only other available site is the currently proposed one – the CBS grounds. Please see further maps in the appendices. Three possible sites for development are listed here. In our opinion the CBS grounds are the most ideal location for such a Community Development. The location is the most central and is adjacent to the Community Centre and the North West Clare Family Resource Centre. It is also walking distance from the town centre.

5.1 14 Acres on Ennis Rd.

Current Planning Policy for this site in the Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023

Volume 3d: West Clare Municipal District: R4 and R5 Ennis Road

Development proposals for this important gateway site shall include a strong street frontage design onto the Ennis Road and should also make provision for access to lands to the rear. It is not envisaged that this site will be used solely for housing. Development proposals should also include recreational uses and other uses normally permissible under residential zoning

6. Prior to 2011, much of these lands were zoned “Recreation”, but this was changed to Residential in the Clare County Development Plan 2011 – 2017, and despite representations from the Community, this zoning was retained in the current plan.

From 2017, EDSAP had engaged with Clare County Council re the development of 14 acres owned by the Council at Ennis Rd with a view to ensuring that an element of Recreation would return to this site. After a number of meetings and correspondence the Council indicated that they were engaging a consultant to formulate proposals for the site.

We request that at least part of the remainder of the site be re-zoned back to “Recreation” in order to protect the lands for future use by the community

(Referred to as C2 and R7 in map in appendix)

6.1 CBS Secondary School

In the near future the **CBS secondary school** will be incorporated into the new Community School, leaving the school building and grounds (as marked on map) vacant. The old primary school yard has been developed by EDSAP as a small sided multi-use area and has proven very successful used by local groups and the CBS Secondary School.

EDSAP were awarded funding under the Clár scheme to surface the play area and develop ancillary areas. This has been accomplished with close cooperation with the CBS BOM and ERST. The CBS Secondary school and grounds have a central location in the town and development as an outdoor community recreation facility would contribute very significantly to local rural regeneration. While the health benefits for all ages are obvious what is often forgotten is that facilities such as these have a definite economic spin off for the local economy with users using local business to shop etc.

The capacity of such a facility has immense potential to contribute in a major way to the health and wellbeing of all sectors of the community – “Irish children spend less time outdoors than prison inmates” (Dr Carmel Brennan Early Childhood Conference 2016). Such a facility must have at the core of its design access and use for all the community: able bodied, disabled, schoolchildren, and seniors.

The Ennistymon Community are making the strongest case for the retention of the grounds under the control of the CBS Secondary School for local use and development as a recreation and community facility. The alternative of use as commercial would be a huge loss to the community

Current Planning Policy for this site in the Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023
Volume 3d: West Clare Municipal District: Community Lands in Ennistymon C12 CBS Lands
These lands have been zoned community in order to support the continued use of this area for educational purposes. In order to protect water quality in the area, future developments on this site must be connected to a public wastewater treatment plant with adequate capacity for foul water during the operation of the proposed development

The area is currently zoned as Community in the last County Development Plan “ *This is to support to continued use for educational purposes*”

The New Community School **does not include** playing pitches, making this area of crucial importance to the wider community.

The site contains **two distinct areas:**



6.1.1 CBS Secondary School and Field

The map clearly illustrates the centrality of the site in the community. At present it consists of the school building and some pre-fabs and a playing pitch. The area is reached by a steep roadway off the main entrance road to the former secondary (prior to the present location) and old primary school.

6.1.2 Old Primary School Building and grounds

This building and grounds provide great possibilities for community activity such as Men's Shed; Youth Group; and Active Retired activities etc



$\frac{3}{4}$ Acre of ground to rear



Consultation

This section outlines the consultations to date

Several public meetings were held at the start of 2017 to assess the requirements for an Outdoor Recreational Area in Ennistymon. Each person, who attended these meetings gave their opinion and suggested different ideas on how an outdoor play area could be developed and how funding could be raised. Currently, the closest all-weather outdoor play facility is in Lisdoonvarna and in Inagh.

Letters of support were received from business and members of the public listed:

Ennistymon Football Club
Ennistymon Hurling Club
Clare Cascaders Basketball
Riverside Cycling Club
Cullinan and Sons
Unglerts
Barry's Menswear
Mikie's Barber Shop
Foodies
Hayes Print
Cooley's
Cullinan and Sons
Currans Pharmacy
Murphy's Pharmacy
Daktronics
Roughan's Butchers
Markethouse Butchers and Deli
Supervalu Fitzpatrick's
Evolvetech
Carroll Electric
Gilna Opticians
Sporting Ennistymon Soccer Club
Lahinch Montessori
Falls Hotel
EDCO Ennistymon
Liscannor Field Committee
Lahinch Seaworld and Sports Hub

7. Financials

The costs of the overall project are considerable allowing potentially, for a site purchase, development of playing pitches and the provision of an all-weather playing surface is considerable and outside the budget of a local population. To this end, considerable state support would be required to deliver the project.

Further were a facility such as proposed be developed it could only thrive with full-time management and suitable staffing levels combined with a continuing community involvement.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: CBS Secondary School Grounds





8.3 APPENDIX 4 Canopied Example at Ballyhaunis Co Mayo



<http://creativeplay.ie/ballyhaunis-muga/>