

Portumna Forest Park 5-10 year Sustainable Strategy & Masterplan

Public Consultation October 2023



Introduction

Coillte, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, has appointed a cross functional team led by Roughan O'Donovan to develop a 5-10-year Sustainable Strategy and Masterplan for Portumna Forest Park.

Working closely with the local community, Galway County Council and other partners, Coillte is developing a new vision for Portumna Forest Park to enhance the recreational benefits to the local community and beyond, in a sensitive and environmentally conscious way.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to advise Coillte and the Portumna local community, along with stakeholders Galway County Council and Fáilte Ireland, on the optimum usage of Portumna Forest Park, going forward as a treasured recreational and environmental resource.



Why Portumna and Why Now?

- Investment in Portumna Forest Park is required to create a more comprehensive, rewarding and enjoyable experience for both the local community and visitor alike.
- To help ensure the town, with its catchment area forest and lakeside park, will realise its full potential as an attractive and thriving hub within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Portumna is classified as a 'Small Growth Town' in the Galway County Development Plan.
- Along with the existing Shannon Blueway, the proposed Galway to Athlone Cycleway will pass through the Forest Park and its lakeside setting, bringing additional visitor numbers.
- Fáilte Ireland and Coillte believe that Portumna has transformative tourism and recreational potential.
- This transformation could be achieved by the implementation of the Portumna Public Realm Plan and the Forest Park Masterplan.
- Key stakeholders of the Portumna Forest Park Masterplan include Coillte, the local community, Galway County Council, Office of Public Works, Waterways Ireland and Inland Fisheries Ireland.



Key Reports informing proposals for Portumna Forest Park

- Shannon Masterplan 2020 – 2030 (Source: Waterways Ireland / Fáilte Ireland)
- Lough Derg Visitor Experience Development Plan 2020-2024 (Source: Lough Derg Marketing Group, with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and Tipperary, Galway and Clare County Councils)
- Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 - 2027 (Source: Fáilte Ireland)

Project Team:



CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS
LAND PLANNING & DESIGN



Scan here to submit feedback

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Public Consultation Process

This Public Consultation is seeking the thoughts and opinions of the Portumna local community and other stakeholders on this exciting and potentially transformative recreational initiative for Portumna.

As Public Consultation forms an important and central element of the planning and design process, your thoughts and opinions matter and are greatly welcome - they will help shape and inform the final Masterplan over the coming months.

NB. Closing date for feedback is 8th November 2023, See QR code below for link to consultation web-site



What we considered: the Challenges & Opportunities



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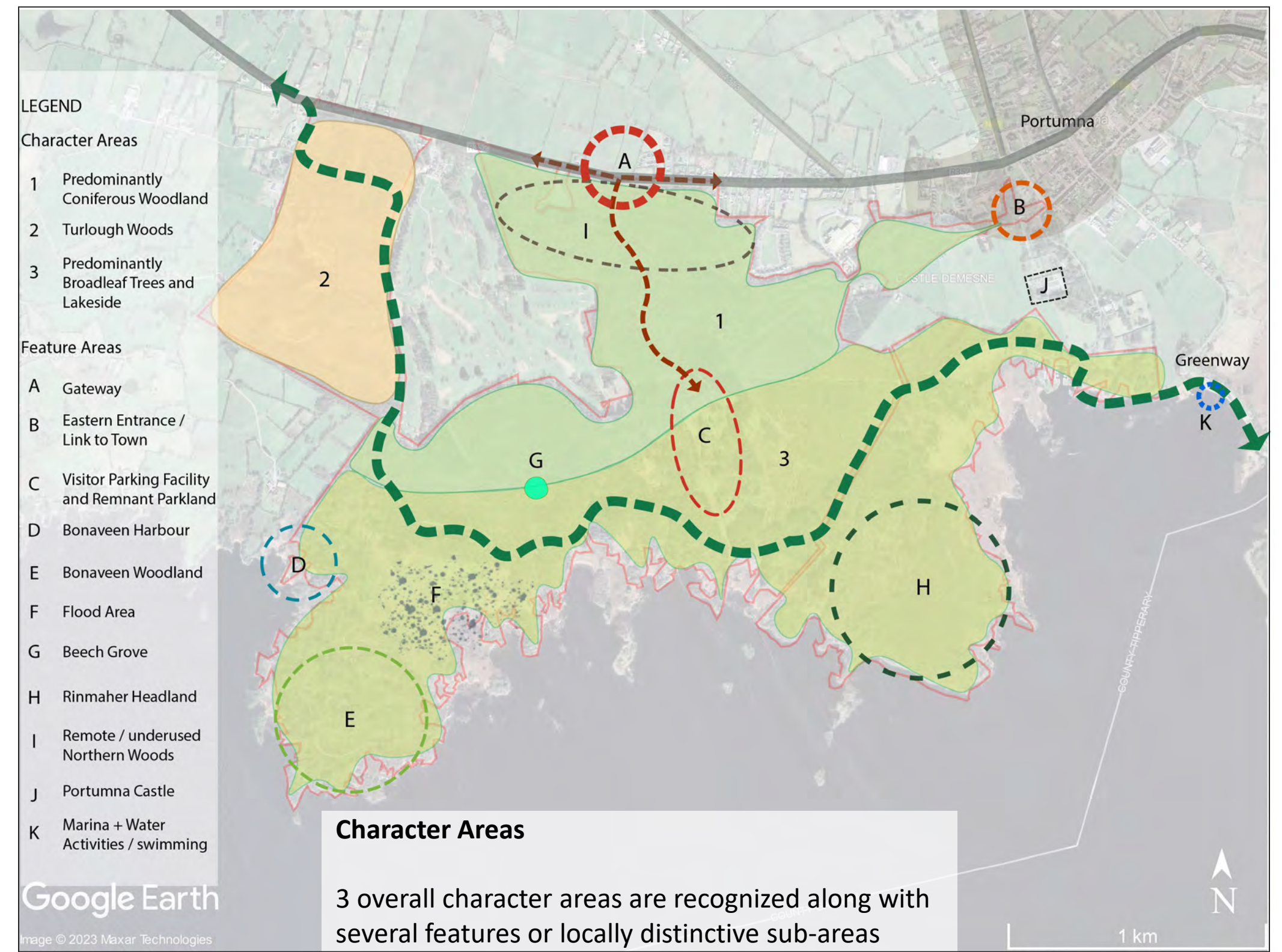
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Park's Character Areas

Our analysis of the park identifies three overall character areas, along with several features or locally distinctive sub-areas.

Area 1 Predominantly Coniferous Woodland

- Characterised by robust, mature conifer forest.
- A robust setting for potential visitor infrastructure, activities and/or accommodation to be located.



Area 2 Turlough Woods

- Unique scenic turlough forms central feature. Fewer visitors.
- Potential for scenic & recreational amenity and to 'open up' this area from the public road on the park's western boundary.



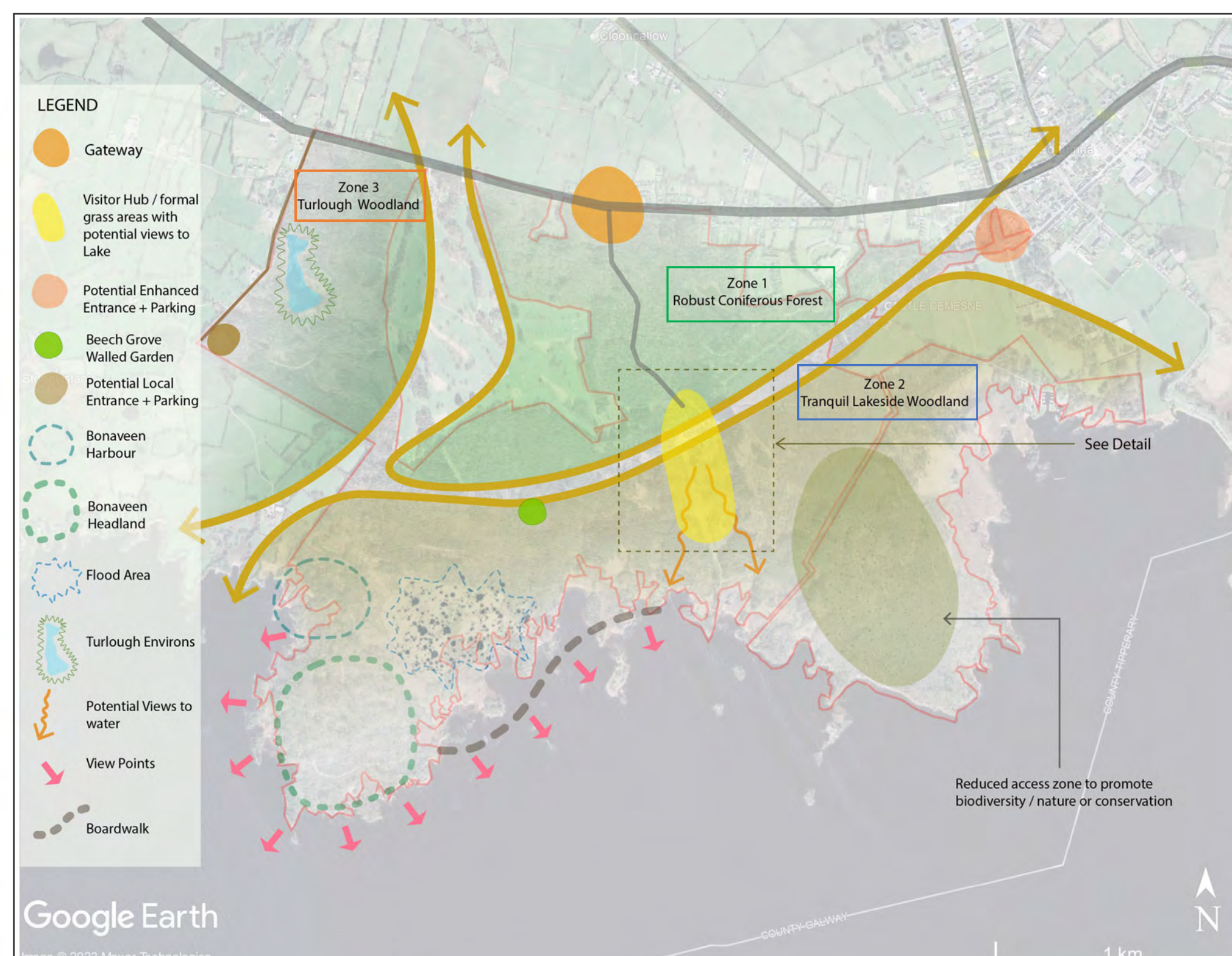
Area 3 Predominantly Broadleaved Woods Lakeside

- Characterised by deciduous trees, wetland and lakeside habitats.
- Visual and physical lakeside access is poor.
- Potential for slow, tranquil uses, with enhanced lakeside access.

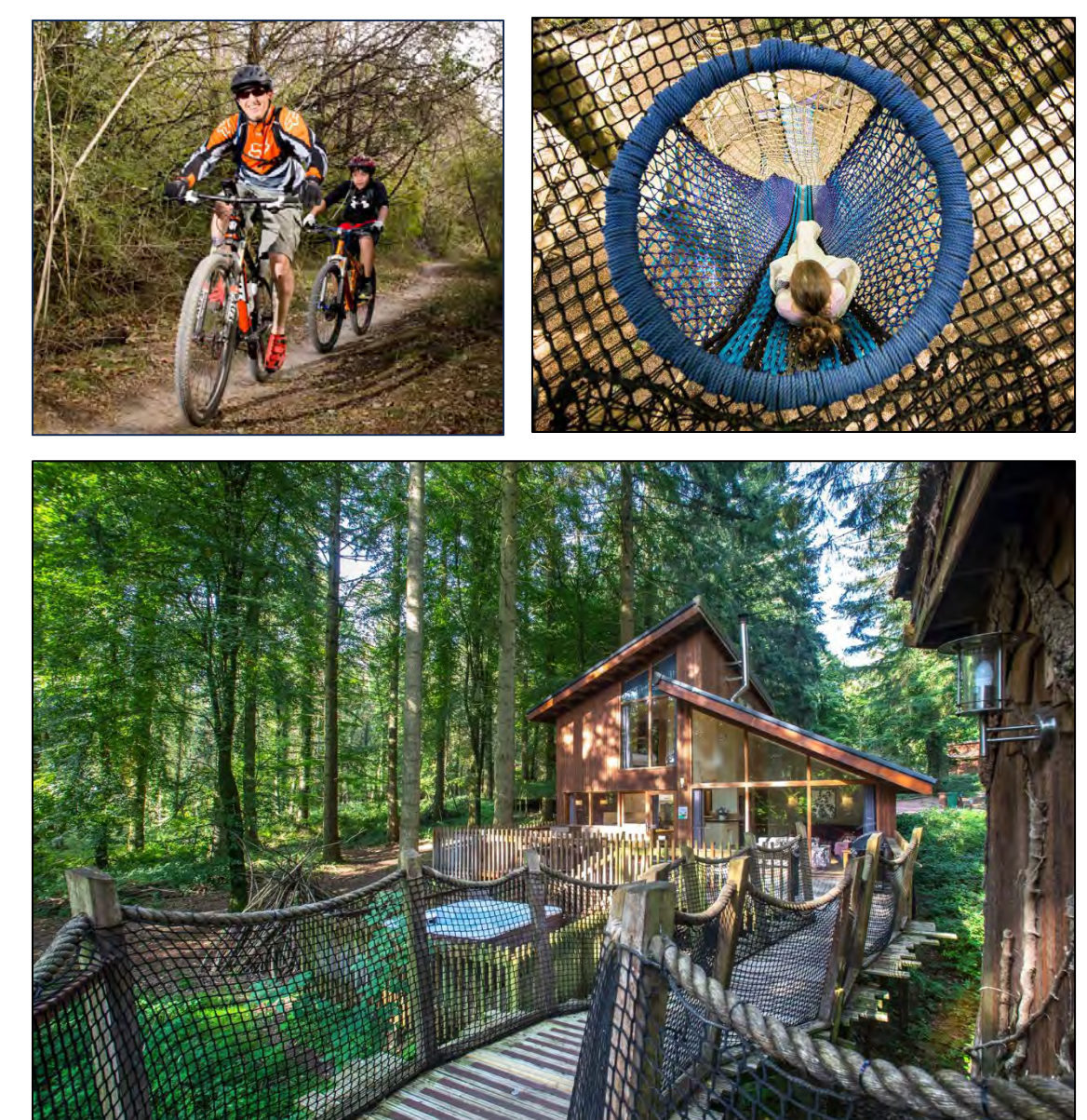


What is being proposed?

Zone 3 – Observation, Education / Wild Camping



Zone 1 – Robust activities and/or capacity for specialist visitor accommodation



Zone 2 – Tranquillity, relaxed slow adventure

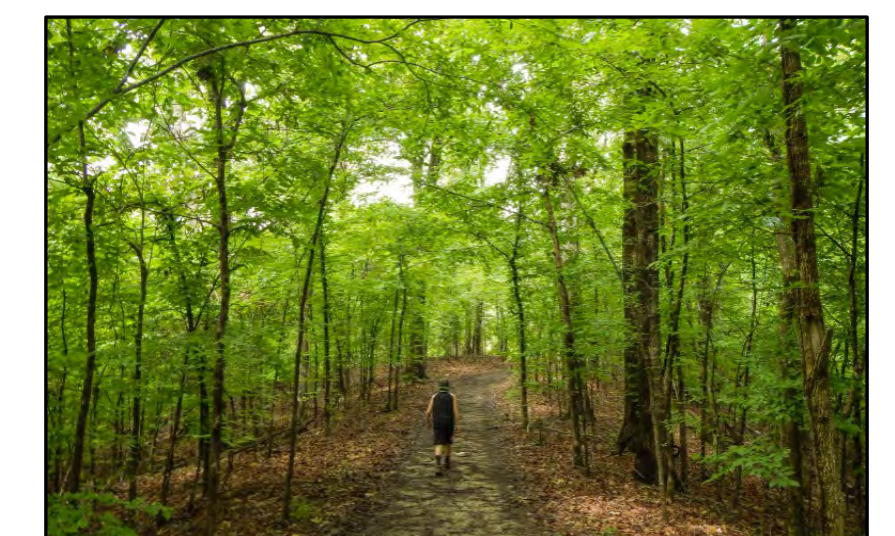
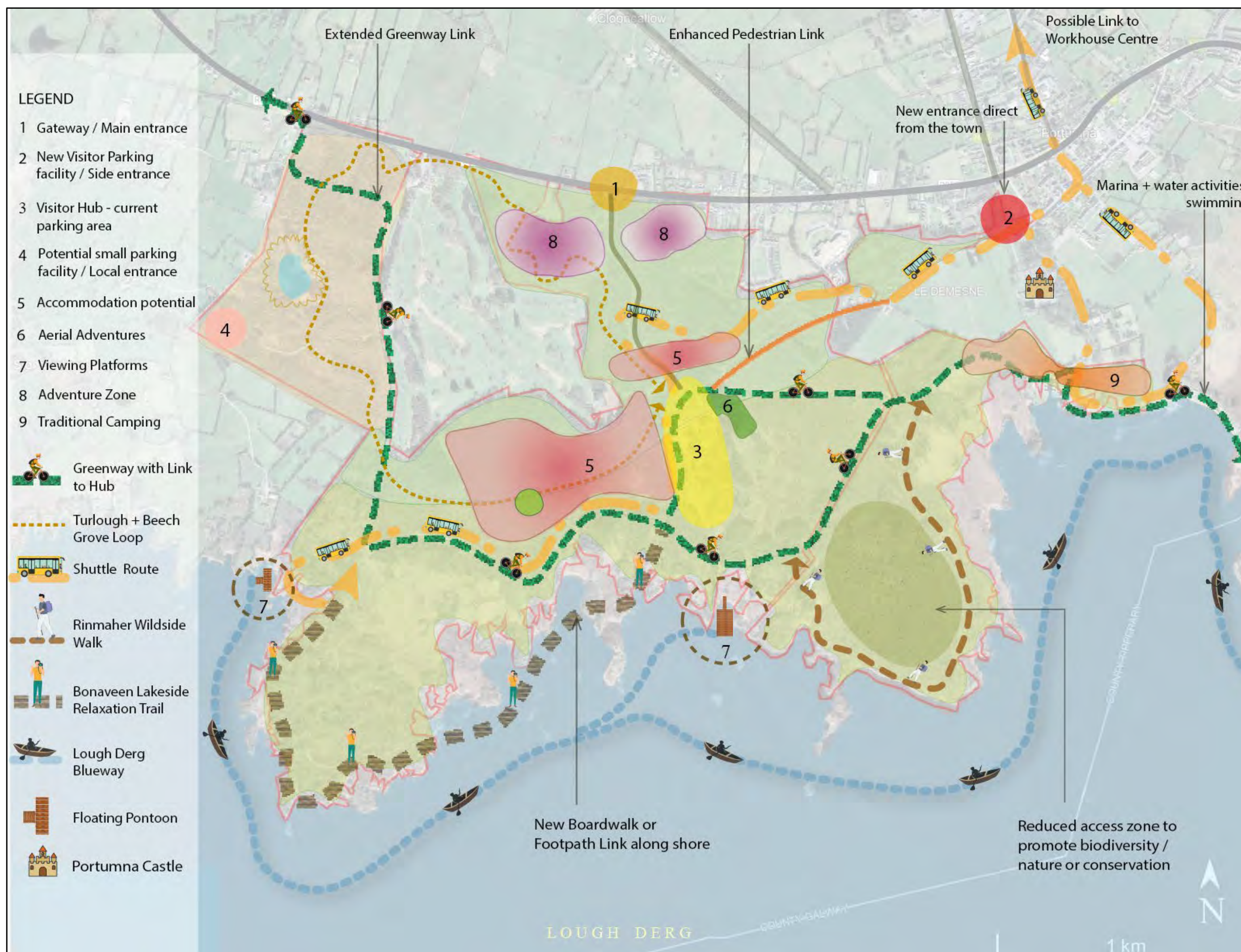


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Public Consultation October 2023

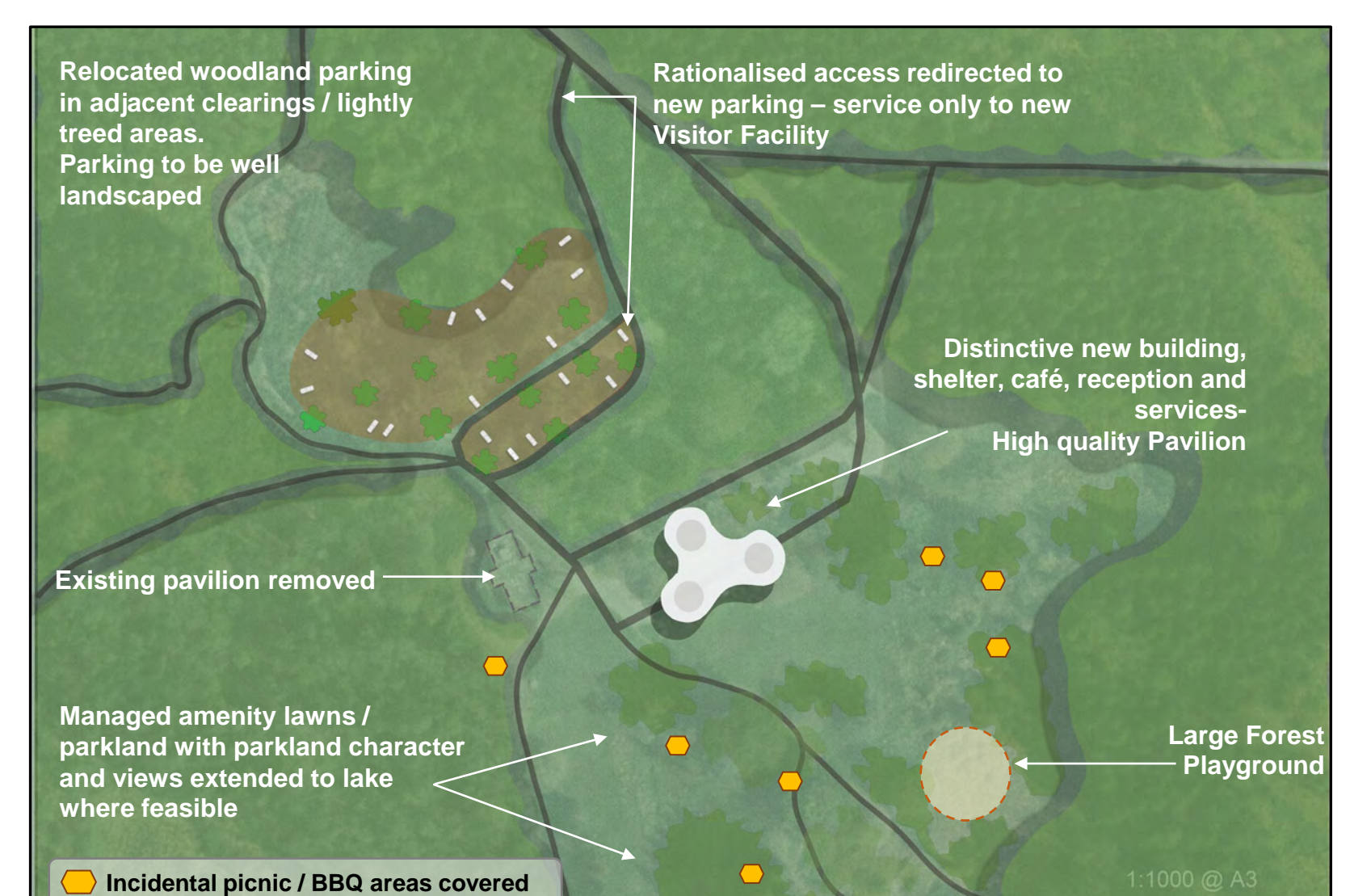
Draft Masterplan

- Portumna Forest Park will serve as a catalyst for transforming Portumna from a day-only tourism destination into an outstanding forest and lakeside destination.
- A fresh suite of contemporary, outdoor-orientated facilities and activities to be enjoyed, year-round, by all age groups.
- Managed and improved vehicular access/parking, including a new small carpark on the western boundary (see '4' on below map).
- A shuttle linking through the park and its lakeside amenities to the town centre, with a possible extension to the Workhouse Centre.
- A selection of thematic walking or movement experiences through the most distinctive parts of the site.
- Consistent with Portumna Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, an improved access point on the fringe of Portumna town will be created (see '2' on the map below), which will improve connectivity between the Town Centre, Portumna Castle and the Forest Park.



Visitor Hub

- Relocation of the current Coillte main car park to a less visible location, to accommodate a new visitor facility on the site of the current carpark.
- Distinctive new visitor centre building with a meet & greet area, indoor & outdoor spaces, café / restaurant, Forest Park interpretation, toilets, showers, performance spaces & activity/games areas, with some focused retail.
- Former demesne landscape surrounding hub to provide formal lawns, sitting / picnic / BBQ areas, play areas and events space.
- High-quality architecture and landscape design at the visitor hub will set a pleasant welcome to the park.



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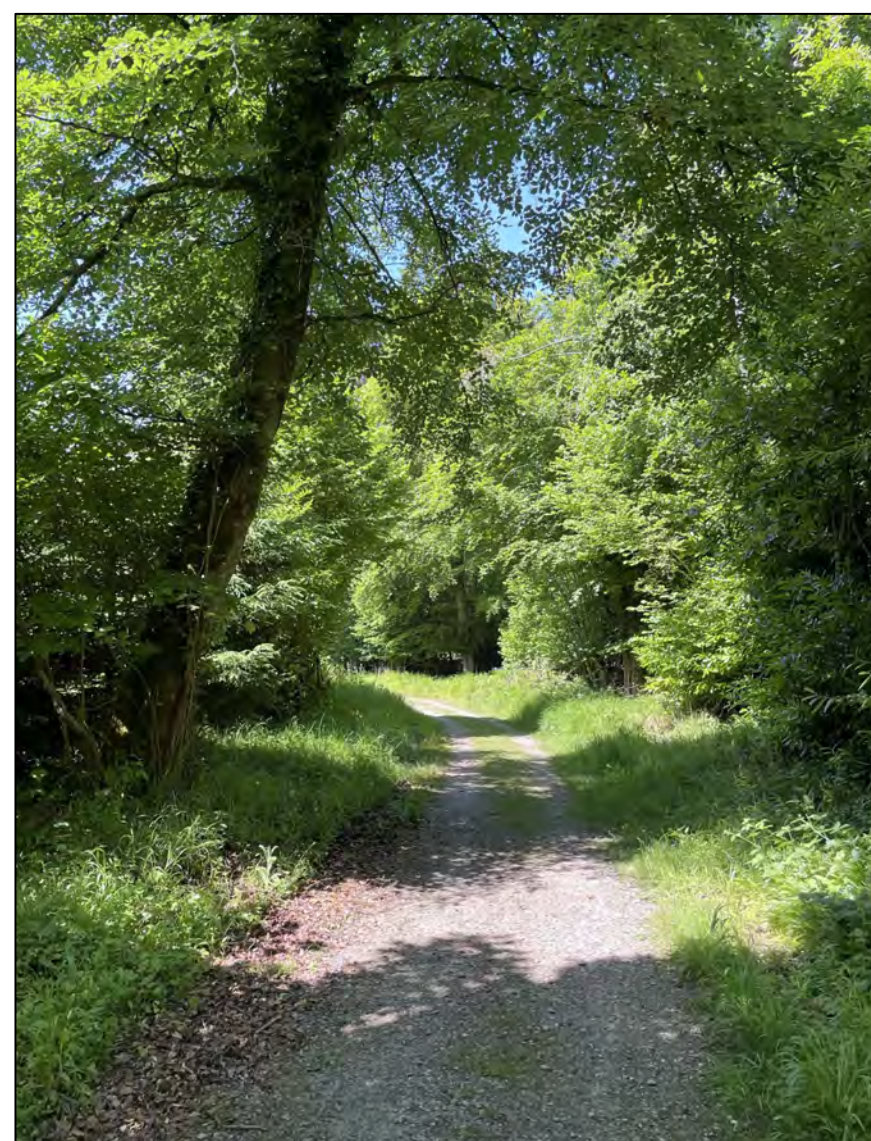
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Benefits to Portumna

- Economic – additional visitors overnighing and staying longer spending in local economy.
- Job creation – additional staff in Forest Park; highly experienced management and staff for the proposed new accommodation, and secondary jobs in suppliers and tourism businesses within Portumna Town and the wider locality.
- Tourism – additional spin-off for local visitor/tourism providers e.g., restaurants, cafés, activity providers, equipment hire, retail business.
- Community – social and environmental.
- Conservation – sustainability policies and investing in local conservation projects.
- Education Programmes – for local community as well as visitors/tourists.



Next steps and funding

- Refine and finalise the masterplan and action plan.
- Prioritise infrastructure improvements, such as trails, parking and central facilities.
- Seek experienced Private Sector Partners, where appropriate, to deliver specialist services or facilities.
- Identify sources of Public Sector Funding, such as the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, European Regional Development Fund, Fáilte Ireland and other project partners, as well as Coillte's own resources.
- Build partnerships with Galway County Council and the Portumna local community to ensure complementary actions create a synergy for local benefits to emerge from the sustainable development and management of this unique resource.
- For further information, please visit www.portumnaforestpark.com

