

Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience

VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN



COMHAIRLE | CLARE
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Executive Summary

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is a sustainable tourism initiative by Clare County Council, focusing on the long-term conservation of Inis Cealtra, an island of significant cultural, spiritual, and historical importance on Lough Derg in East Clare. Known as Holy Island, this site features early medieval monastic ruins, cemeteries, and archaeological assets linked to figures such as Brian Boru.

The aims of this project are threefold:

1. To conserve and manage the built and natural heritage of the site with an ethos of minimal intervention.
2. To enhance the user experience and tourist attractiveness of one of Ireland's most significant ecclesiastical heritage sites
3. To monitor and mitigate the in-combination effects of visitors on the heritage assets at Inis Cealtra.

Clare County Council's rationale for this project is to support rural renewal, strengthen and build resilience in the local rural community in East Clare and for this project to assist in the economic regeneration of towns and villages in the region.

Unmanaged tourist visitation may lead to the degradation of Inis Cealtra's fragile ecology and heritage. Therefore, Clare County Council seeks to formalise both visitor management and conservation efforts. This Visitor Management Plan aims to protect Inis Cealtra while facilitating carefully managed visitation.

The core objectives are to:

- Manage visitor access within defined acceptable levels of change to preserve the island's archaeological and natural heritage.
- Promote responsible tourism, ensuring visitors engage with the island's history while minimising environmental impacts.

- Enhance the visitor experience by linking it to the committed development of the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre in Mountshannon. As the gateway to the island, this centre will offer educational exhibits, retail options, and guided boat tours to the island.
- Integrate the visitor experience with the local community by supporting local businesses and fostering economic development in the region.

Projected visitor numbers are based on two phases of development. Phase 1 is anticipated to bring in up to 53,757 annually to the Mountshannon based visitor centre. Phase 2, which includes further development of visitor infrastructure to meet rising demand, anticipates up to 75,000 annual visitors. The interpretive experience at the Visitor Centre is crucial in delivering an experience that meets the needs of many visitors, ensuring demand for guided boat tours remains at or below acceptable levels of change.

Conservation strategies are central to this plan, with strong monitoring systems in place to ensure that visitor impact remains within manageable levels at all times. A suite of visitor management and mitigation measures is outlined in this report. Its implementation will be managed by Clare County Council, via Clare Tourism Development DAC, in partnership with relevant stakeholders. This visitor management plan is an iterative document. The effectiveness of the visitor management and mitigation measures it recommends will be continuously assessed, and it will be updated over time as needed.

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience aligns with the broader goals of Clare County's tourism strategy, promoting slow, sustainable tourism that will enhance the economic vitality of East Clare without compromising the natural and cultural assets on Inis Cealtra. The plan also incorporates international best practices in conservation and tourism management, drawing on lessons from other notable heritage sites in Ireland.

In conclusion, this project seeks to position Inis Cealtra as a leading example of heritage preservation through sustainable tourism, balancing the needs of conservation with responsible visitor engagement, while contributing to local economic development.



1. Introduction

Inis Cealtra, also known as Holy Island, is a 20 hectare island located in Scarriff Bay off the western shore of Lough Derg. Considered to be one of the most important historical and ecclesiastical sites in Ireland, Inis Cealtra has historical links to Brian Ború and is known locally as the 'Jewel of the Lough'.

The island has deep roots in both Christian and pre-Christian times. Founded by St. Caimin in the 7th century, the island's monastery was burned by Vikings in 836 and 922. Despite numerous attacks, it remained active until the 13th century. Inis Cealtra is associated with several Irish saints and the famous chieftain Brian Boru. Pilgrims have travelled here for centuries.

Today, the island continues to hold allure for visitors, who follow in the footsteps of the island's earliest pilgrim visitors, travelling to discover the remains of five churches, monastic cells, a cemetery with graves dating before the 12th century, and an 80-foot round tower. Ruins, dating from before 1000 AD, including Romanesque arches from the 12th century are easily accessible to visitors to the island. The site, revered as a holy place, also has bullaun stones, grave slabs, a holy well, and bargaining stones.

Access to the island is by boat from Mountshannon, the closest village, and from Knockaphort Pier, located on the shore near the island. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 visitors currently visit Inis Cealtra on paid boat trips, with a further unknown number visiting by private means.¹ There are 2 functioning cemeteries on the island, and locals travel by private boat for burials and memorials.

Figure 1: Map of Lough Derg



¹ The Financial Business Case for purchase of the old Rectory at Mountshannon to accommodate a Visitor Centre for Inis Cealtra/Holy Island, Artemis Consulting Ltd (2021).

Inis Cealtra is recognised as one of Ireland's most important national monuments, of international importance as an archaeological, historical, spiritual and cultural centre. The significance of the ecclesiastical heritage on Inis Cealtra has seen it included on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List in 2010.² Its monuments are registered on the National Monuments List and are managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW).

The island is also part of the Lough Derg Special Protection Area (SPA), designated as a site of interest for the conservation of the Tufted Duck Cormorant, Goldeneye and Common Tern species.³

The Local Authority has a duty to balance the needs of visitors with the sustainable management of important heritage assets and quality of life for the people who live and work within the East Clare and Mountshannon area, as well as responsibilities to maintain the safety and integrity of the public and public infrastructure in the locality.

Clare County Council purchased Inis Cealtra in 2015 with the objective of ensuring the long-term conservation of the island while expanding its attractiveness as a sustainable tourism destination for an increased number of visitors.

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan (2017) presents a comprehensive framework for the development of Inis Cealtra, and articulates a vision that:

Inis Cealtra will be protected for future generations through exemplary conservation management and interventions and through a balanced and sustainable management approach to providing access for visitors and the local community.

The visitor experience, enjoyment and respect for the island's living and built cultural heritage and that of the greater area will be expanded, and the long-term, socio-economic benefits to both the local community and the wider region will be increased.⁴

² <https://www.worldheritageireland.ie/the-tentative-list/2010-tentative-list/>

³ <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004058>

The flagship Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will engage visitors with the heritage and culture of the island and East Clare. In providing a high-quality experience of scale in Mountshannon, it allows the local area to maximise the economic benefits from increased visitors to the region, while serving a dual purpose in limiting and managing visitors to the island to support its conservation objectives. Designed as a slow tourism experience aligned to Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand for the region, it will serve as a hook to draw visitors from busier areas such as West Clare and Galway, and encourage longer dwell times in the region.

The core objectives of the project are:

- **To conserve and manage the built and natural heritage of the site with an ethos of minimal intervention.**
- **To enhance the user experience and tourist attractiveness of one of Ireland's most significant ecclesiastical heritage sites**
- **To monitor and mitigate the in-combination effects of visitors on the heritage assets at Inis Cealtra.**

Clare County Council's rationale for this project is to support rural renewal, strengthen and build resilience in the local rural community in East Clare and for this project to assist in the economic regeneration of towns and villages in the region.

Clare County Council proposes to develop the visitor experience in two phases, with Phase 1 opening Q1 of 2028. The development is futureproofed, in that Phase 2 will provide an expanded visitor experience in Mountshannon, enhancing interpretation of Inis Cealtra and its environs. This approach mitigates visitor growth on the island while maximising benefits for the wider East Clare region.

These developments build on the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre in Mountshannon, which comprises an interpretive centre and associated facilities.

⁴ Inis Cealtra (Vol 1) - Visitor Management & Sustainable Tourism Development Plan, Solearth Architecture (2017)

This is a committed development already underway, expected to open to visitors in spring 2025.

The Old Rectory will offer interpretation for visitors, focused on the island's cultural and natural heritage, as well as that of the Mountshannon and east Clare area. Retail and café facilities are provided at the Interpretive Centre. To provide for an enhanced tourist offering, visitors will be provided the option to purchase admission to the Interpretive Centre in the Old Rectory only or combine with the guided island tour. Admission includes car parking in the new car park located off Main Street.

Phase 1

Following improvement works at the jetty on Inis Cealtra and the building of necessary visitor facilities on the island, it is proposed to introduce licenced boat tours to Inis Cealtra. Clare County Council plans to licence 2-3 small boat operators (25-seater boats) to take passengers to the island for guided tours.

Additional parking facilities for visitors to the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience are also planned, located off Main Street in Mountshannon and open full time. This car parking facility will guide visitors through the Aistear Park to the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre. The new car parking facility (which includes an overflow parking area) is sufficiently sized to cater for anticipated visitor numbers for the life of the project (Phases 1 and 2).

The above developments are subject to planning permission.

Phase 2

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be future-proofed with medium-long term plans to enhance the Mountshannon-based interpretive experience for visitors, suitable in scale to meet the needs of increasing visitor numbers, reflecting an increased awareness and appeal amongst prospective visitor markets.

The Old Rectory Interpretive Centre has a maximum annual visitor capacity of 54,436.⁵ Section 3 below outlines projected visitor numbers for the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience over time. It is understood that Phase 2 will need a 3-5 year lead time to secure funding and for construction, so the threshold of 50,000 visitors will trigger work commencing to deliver Phase 2 of the visitor experience.

Both the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre and the new visitor centre will work in synchronisation, in that elements of the interpretation can be enhanced and expanded to cover both buildings, to include interpretation of the surroundings of the environment to include more of Lough Derg and the surrounding towns and villages of East Clare, as well as the people and stories of the local landscape.

Phase 2 also involves harbour improvement and public realm works that include reconfiguration of the harbour car park.

Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will provide visitors with the opportunity to enjoy a thoughtful interpretation of the remarkable cultural and natural heritage through existing signage and a guided tour on the island. This approach will foster an understanding and appreciation of the island's rich history and its connections to the surrounding landscape and communities, in what will be an exemplar sustainable visitor experience.

Key messaging will emphasize the importance of conservation and promote environmental stewardship among visitors and locals by encouraging responsible behaviour.

A main goal of the visitor offering on Inis Cealtra is to better manage visitors through effective site access management, targeted information, and clear signage. These efforts aim to ensure that every visitor, including those who access the island independently and outside of the tour experience, is well-informed about what to expect before and during their visit.

⁵ The Old Rectory Interpretive Centre's capacity is 31 visitors at any one time, with a dwell time of 45 minutes. Based on its proposed operating hours (detailed in Section 3 below), this

implies a daily capacity of 341 visitors in low season and 372 in high season and an annual total of 54,436.

The visitor journey starts from their initial point of contact with Inis Cealtra, typically online, during the trip planning stage. Here, they will find advance information and essential details about the visitor offering and accessibility.

Throughout the visitor journey, conservation themes will be highlighted in all visitor messaging and interpretation. This will help visitors understand the island's unique allure, the challenges they may face, and the expectations of them in supporting the conservation measures on Inis Cealtra. The key messages that will be communicated are:

1. **Inis Cealtra is a site of heritage and environmental importance. We all have a role to play in protecting this sensitive landscape.**
2. **This is a Leave No Trace site. Follow the 7 principles of Leave No Trace during your time in the area and on the island.**
3. **Visitor communications, including pre-booking messaging, signage at the visitor centre and guides on site all give key messages to promote responsible visitor behaviour and should be followed at all times.**
4. **Lough Derg and Inis Cealtra is a sustainable tourism destination. Consider public transport or sustainable travel for your visit.**
5. **The lake and island are part of a wider network of high quality tourism experiences to enjoy, connected via public transport networks. We encourage our visitors to stay longer and enjoy more of our area and what it has to offer.**

Figure 2: 7 Principles of Leave No Trace



The visitor experience will be supported by robust visitor management & conservation practices:

- A range of admission options for visitors.
- Visitors will be strongly encouraged to pre-book online, where a timed entry system will stagger visitor arrivals on site.
- The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will include visitor facilities such as an interpretive experience, a café, gift counter and toilets.
- Optional guided boat tours to Inis Cealtra, subject to weather conditions.
- On Inis Cealtra, a newly built jetty will provide a landing point for licenced boat tour operators to alight. The jetty will also include kayak facilities so as to encourage all visitors to use the main jetty facilities for their visit.
- Guided tours will include tour guide commentary on the boat journey to the island, and a guided tour on the island, where visitors will have a short period of free time after their tour experience before returning by boat to the mainland.
- Interpretation points and visitor information on the island will supplement the guided experience. It is proposed that this include new informational and safety signage at the jetty and updating content on existing interpretation signage at key heritage sites.
- A range of measures will be in place to mitigate against trail degradation and habitat disturbance. This will include mown walking trails to guide visitors around the island. Trails may be diverted, or paths closed to allow for nesting birds or to avoid trail degradation.
- Enhanced car parking facilities for visitors in Mountshannon.
- Regular monitoring programmes and visitor survey.
- Future forecasting for Phase 2 of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience to accommodate visitor demand and provide an enhanced visitor experience

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience and the aligned destination development work locally brings a tourism development approach that balances tourism development with environmental, social, community and visitor needs in the wider local area.

Future site management structures are detailed in full in Section 4 of this report.

2. Purpose of this Plan

Having brought Inis Cealtra into public ownership, Clare Co Council's principal objective is to ensure the long-term conservation of the island, a site of exceptional significance due to its built heritage and natural landscape and its location in an internationally important, protected wetland, whilst simultaneously developing the site as an exemplar sustainable tourism destination of economic significance to the local area.

The development of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is informed by a series of commissioned expert reports:

- Inis Cealtra Visitor Management & Sustainable Tourism Development Plan (Solearth Architecture, 2017)
- Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience – A Report (Amion Consulting, 2021)
- The Financial Business Case for purchase of the Old Rectory at Mountshannon to accommodate a Visitor Centre for Inis Cealtra/Holy Island (Artemis Consulting, 2021).

In developing a visitor experience and attracting an increased number of visitors to this sensitive site, Clare County Council recognised a need to formalise both a visitor journey for visitors to Inis Cealtra, and also to formalise structures and mechanisms that would allow for enhanced visitor management. It is recognised that any proposed changes to the island may potentially threaten its overall cultural significance, and that it is imperative to balance visitation with conservation priorities on site.

‘Do Nothing’ or ‘Do Something’

Sustainable visitor management at Inis Cealtra is identified as essential by Clare County Council. The options for the management of Inis Cealtra as a visitor experience can be categorised in two ways - do nothing or do something.

By doing nothing, the consequential impact of unmanaged visitors will lead to increased vulnerability and risk for the island's heritage sites, alongside further

degradation and landscape erosion along the island's coastline due to unmanaged access and potentially increased damage to vulnerable underwater sites of archaeological significance.

By doing something, the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience can integrate robust visitor management strategies to responsibly manage visitors on the island, while simultaneously encouraging increased visitation to the area. Using interpretation, visitor education and conservation measures, and in promoting and supporting responsible visitor behaviour as a key mitigation measure, this development can make a net positive contribution to local economic development and the conservation of Inis Cealtra's significant heritage assets.

This plan sets out a roadmap for Clare County Council in relation to the development of a high-quality, managed visitor experience on Inis Cealtra with minimal intervention, addressing current and future potential issues with a delicate balance and managing visitors to Inis Cealtra sustainably.

Community and stakeholder consultation has played an important role in informing the visitor experience, in particular the 2017 Visitor Management & Sustainable Tourism Development Plan. This Visitor Management Plan has been prepared in consultation with the wider Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience project development team to capture and consider their input in devising effective visitor management strategies for Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience.

In creating the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, Clare County Council and its design team have considered a number of relevant case studies - Clonmacnoise, Brú na Bóinne, Spike Island, Garinish Island, the Blasket Centre, Skellig Experience and Scattery Island. Best practice visitor management strategies from these similar visitor experiences and relevant recommendations are reflected in this Visitor Management Plan.

This Visitor Management Plan seeks to support Clare County Council in realising the following objectives:

Site Management Objectives

- To effectively manage visitor access to Inis Cealtra within acceptable levels of change.
- To ensure sufficient staff & budget resources are employed.
- To create a high quality visitor experience, enhancing the tourist attractiveness of Inis Cealtra and East Clare.
- To become an exemplar certified sustainable tourism visitor experience.
- To manage responsible visitor behaviour on Inis Cealtra.

Conservation Objectives

- To manage Inis Cealtra as a place that is sacred and vulnerable
- That stakeholders are active participants in ensuring the conservation objectives for Inis Cealtra are met
- To conserve and foster an appreciation of the natural and built heritage assets of Inis Cealtra by visitors.
- To monitor ecological and heritage interests at Inis Cealtra and mitigate visitor impacts by avoidance.
- To develop & implement a conservation management plan for Inis Cealtra
- To develop & implement a landscape management plan for Inis Cealtra

Socio Economic Objectives

- To create a sustainable tourism destination experience that brings economic and social benefit for the local community.
- To retain and manage local community access to Inis Cealtra
- To proactively and positively engage with the local communities as part of the Inis Cealtra Community Forum

Cultural Objectives

- To instil in visitors to Inis Cealtra a heightened appreciation of the unique and compelling local heritage and history
- To promote and conserve the sites of historical and cultural heritage value on Inis Cealtra
- To support the promotion and conservation of cultural heritage of Inis Cealtra and the East Clare region



3. Projected Visitor Numbers

The 2017 Inis Cealtra Visitor Management & Sustainable Tourism Development Plan uses an Acceptable Levels of Change methodology to assess potential visitor impacts on the island's heritage. This methodology identifies a maximum threshold of visitors on the island at any one time as 100 persons, 400 per day and 45,000 per year. Importantly, it recommends these figures be taken as the maximum number of persons arriving on the island for all subsequent studies, models and projections.

This section considers visitor numbers forecasts presented in a series of visitor experience development reports in the planning phase of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience.

The experience is considered here according to the most up to date proposals, now to be delivered over 2 distinct phases. Visitor modelling here considers trends over time and seasonality in addition to the expected visitor journeys at the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. Included are certain assumptions:

- The visitor experience is seasonal, operating March to September. On opening, operating hours will be seven days a week from 9:00AM until 5:00PM March to June, extending to 6:00pm July to September. Outside of these times, the visitor centre may open for groups, school tours or private bookings, according to demand, although no boat tours will be offered. The season may expand to meet future demand in years ahead.
- The Old Rectory Interpretive Centre's capacity is 31 visitors at any one time, with an expected dwell time of 45 minutes.⁶ This implies a daily capacity of 341 visitors in low season and 372 in high season.
- The boat service will be tendered by Clare County Council, and the successful tender will operate 25-seater boats, to include wheelchair accessibility.⁷ The service will scale over time to reflect visitor demands,

with Phase 2 expected to have sufficient demand for a number of boat tour operators to operate the service.

- An estimated 60% of visitors will take a boat tour to the island.
- The boat service will be seasonal, ranging from two per day during the off peak season up to 8 per day in peak season.
- The number of island guided tours will range from 2 per day in the off-season up to 8 per day during peak season.
- The island guided tour will last approximately 45 minutes, allowing for some self-exploration for visitors. Visitors are likely to remain on the island for one hour, but will be requested to stay no longer than two hours.
- The maximum daily capacity on the island will be 400, with no more than 100 people permitted on the island at any one time.
- An estimated 2,500 visitors to the island annually presently fall outside the scope of this Visitor Management Plan.⁸

Old Rectory Interpretive Centre

A limited visitor experience and visitor facilities will be provided in Mountshannon's Old Rectory, a committed development scheduled to open 2025, with the addition of new car parking facilities located off Main Street in Mountshannon. It is projected to attract 15,000 visitors per annum, open seasonally 7 days a week (Mar-June 9:00AM to 5:00PM and extended to 6:00pm July-Sept).

Phase 1

Phase 1 comprises the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre combined with an optional boat and guided island tour at Inis Cealtra. Improvement works at the island's jetty, new welfare facilities and paths on the island, together with the new public car park at Main Street will be delivered in Phase 1, opening to the public Q1 2028.

⁶ The Financial Business Case for purchase of the old Rectory at Mountshannon to accommodate a Visitor Centre for Inis Cealtra/Holy Island, Artemis Consulting Ltd (2021).

⁷ While the boat will be wheelchair accessible, it is understood that the island terrain means the guided tour will not be accessible to wheelchair users. In this case, wheelchair users will be offered the boat crossing only, and access the island at their own risk.

⁸ Includes kayakers, local community, anglers and burials.

Here, visitor number growth is modelled to Year 5 of Phase 1 operations.⁹ After that time, visitor numbers are projected to plateau to an average 3% growth per annum. The projected visitor numbers associated with the committed Interpretive Centre are included in the modelling for Phase 1 of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, as they will directly impact baseline visitor numbers and further, this approach has been adopted in response to the visitor management strategy set out herein.

Table 1: Phase 1 Visitor Number Modelling

	% of weighting	Year 1-2		Year 3		Year 4-5		Year 15	
		All visitors	Boat Tour	All visitors	Boat Tour	All visitors	Boat Tour	All visitors	Boat Tour
Jan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Feb	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mar	7	1,400	840	2,100	1,260	2,800	1,680	3,763	2,258
Apr	7	1,400	840	2,100	1,260	2,800	1,680	3,763	2,258
May	10	2,000	1,200	3,000	1,800	4,000	2,400	5,376	3,225
Jun	15	3,000	1,800	4,500	2,700	6,000	3,600	8,064	4,838
Jul	20	4,000	2,400	6,000	3,600	8,000	4,800	10,751	6,451
Aug	20	4,000	2,400	6,000	3,600	8,000	4,800	10,751	6,451
Sep	13	2,600	1,560	3,900	2,340	5,200	3,120	6,988	4,193
Oct	8	1,600	960	2,400	1,440	3,200	1,920	4,301	2,580
Nov	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dec	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annual		20,000	12,000	30,000	18,000	40,000	24,000	53,757	32,254

⁹ Modelling is based on sensitivity analysis undertaken by Artemis Consulting in their 2021 report.

Table 2 looks ahead to Year 15 of full Phase 1 operations and extrapolates daily, monthly and annual visitor numbers, both at the Interpretive Centre and on guided boat and island visit tours.

This modelling exercise demonstrates that, up to a maximum of 54,436 visitors per annum, the Phase 1 Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is capable of operating within the maximum daily and at any one time capacities at the visitor centre, car park, boat tour and on the island within acceptable levels of change.

While in reality, at peak periods, it is quite likely that visitor numbers will not be spread evenly each day, managing visitors via timed access allows for a more even visitor distribution over time, ensuring that visitor numbers remain under 100 visitors on the island at any one time.



Table 2: Phase 1: Monthly split in visitors & boat trips Y15

<i>% split</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Season</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Peak</i>	<i>Peak</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Closed</i>	
<i>No of days VE operating</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>245</i>
Visitor % split by month	0%	0%	7%	7%	10%	15%	20%	20%	13%	8%	0%	0%	100%

<i>Numbers</i>													
Interpretive Centre only	0	0	1,505	1,505	2,150	3,225	4,301	4,301	2,796	1,720	0	0	21,503
Interpretive Centre & boat/island tour	0	0	2,258	2,258	3,225	4,838	6,451	6,451	4,193	2,580	0	0	32,254
Totals	0	0	3,763	3,763	5,375	8,063	10,752	10,752	6,989	4,300	0	0	53,757
As a % of annual total	0%	0%	7%	7%	10%	15%	20%	20%	13%	8%	0%	0%	100%
Total in Interpretive Centre	0	0	3,763	3,763	5,375	8,063	10,752	10,752	6,989	4,300	0	0	53,757
<i>Average per day in Interpretive Centre</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>347</i>	<i>347</i>	<i>233</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	
Total taking a boat/island tour	0	0	2,258	2,258	3,225	4,838	6,451	6,451	4,193	2,580	0	0	32,254
<i>Average per day taking boat/island tour</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	

Number of boat/island tours per day	0	0	4	4	6	8	10	10	8	4	0	0
Max capacity per day on boats/island	0	0	100	100	150	200	250	250	200	100	0	0
<i>Average capacity achieved per boat/tour</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>69%</i>	<i>81%</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

Phase 2

The second phase of development in this project considers the enhanced visitor experience provided with the addition of a new visitor centre to augment the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre, meeting projected future visitor number demand. In addition, infrastructural works are required at Mountshannon harbour as part of this phase.

In considering potential visitor demand for Phase 2 of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, both the 2017 Visitor Management Plan and the 2021 Artemis report¹⁰ agree that the estimate of 75,000 visitors per annum is an optimal maximum number to plan towards for the full visitor experience in a stable year once fully established. That figure is used in this modelling exercise on that basis, building on the visitor number growth modelled from Year 15 of Phase 1 operations to Year 5 of Phase 2, at which time optimal visitor numbers are expected to be realised (Table 3).

Table 3: Phase 2 Visitor Number Modelling

	% of weighting	Year 1		Year 2-3		Year 4-5	
		All visitors	Boat Tour	All visitors	Boat Tour	All visitors	Boat Tour
Jan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Feb	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mar	7	3,850	2,310	4,550	2,730	5,250	3,150
Apr	7	3,850	2,310	4,550	2,730	5,250	3,150
May	10	5,500	3,300	6,500	3,900	7,500	4,500
Jun	15	8,250	4,950	9,750	5,850	11,250	6,750
Jul	20	11,000	6,600	13,000	7,800	15,000	9,000
Aug	20	11,000	6,600	13,000	7,800	15,000	9,000
Sep	13	7,150	4,290	8,450	5,070	9,750	5,850
Oct	8	4,400	2,640	5,200	3,120	6,000	3,600
Nov	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dec	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annual		55,000	33,000	65,000	39,000	75,000	45,000

¹⁰ Artemis Consulting was engaged by CCC in 2021 to consider the business case for purchase of the old Rectory at Mounshannon to accommodate an interpretive centre for Inis Cealtra. This report contained updated visitor number projections that consider the

Old Rectory Interpretive Centre, and those projections are used within this VMP alongside the visitor number projections from the 2017 Visitor Management & Sustainable Tourism Development Plan by Solearth Architecture for the enhanced visitor experience.

In modelling visitor patterns for Year 5 of Phase 2 operations at optimal visitor numbers, Table 4 models daily, monthly and annual visitor numbers, both at the enhanced visitor centre and on guided boat and island visit tours.

This table illustrates that, even with growth in visitor numbers to 75,000 per annum, the number of visitors interested in visiting the island remains well below the daily threshold of 400 visitors per day. While daily fluctuations can be expected, strategies such as timed access, encouraging pre-booking, and offering additional tours outside of peak hours, such as twilight or dawn tours, allows for increased visitation within the 400 visitors per day limit, also remaining within the limit of 100 visitors at any one time.

This modelling exercise demonstrates that, at the medium estimation of 75,000 visitors per annum in a stable year of operations, Phase 2 of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience has capacity to handle this volume of visitor traffic within acceptable levels of change.

Table 4: Phase 2: Monthly split in visitors & boat trips Y5

<i>% split</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Season</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Peak</i>	<i>Peak</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Closed</i>	
<i>No of days VE operating</i>	0	0	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	0	0	245
<i>Visitor % split by month</i>	0%	0%	7%	7%	10%	15%	20%	20%	13%	8%	0%	0%	100%

<i>Numbers</i>													
Visitor Centre only	0	0	2,100	2,100	3,000	4,500	6,000	6,000	3,900	2,400	0	0	30,000
Visitor Centre & boat/island tour	0	0	3,150	3,150	4,500	6,750	9,000	9,000	5,850	3,600	0	0	45,000
Totals	0	0	5,250	5,250	7,500	11,250	15,000	15,000	9,750	6,000	0	0	75,000
As a % of annual total	0%	0%	7%	7%	10%	15%	20%	20%	13%	8%	0%	0%	100%
Total in visitor Centre	0	0	5,250	5,250	7,500	11,250	15,000	15,000	9,750	6,000	0	0	75,000
<i>Average per day in visitor Centre</i>	0	0	169	175	242	375	484	484	325	194	0	0	
Total taking a boat/island tour	0	0	3,150	3,150	4,500	6,750	9,000	9,000	5,850	3,600	0	0	45,000
<i>Average per day taking boat/island tour</i>	0	0	102	105	145	225	290	290	195	116	0	0	

Number of boat/island tours per day	0	0	6	6	10	12	14	14	12	6	0	0
Max capacity per day on boats/island	0	0	150	150	250	300	350	350	300	150	0	0
<i>Average capacity achieved per boat/tour</i>	0	0	68%	70%	58%	75%	83%	83%	65%	77%	0	0

4. Visitor Management & Mitigation Measures

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be significant in the conservation of heritage assets on Inis Cealtra and in regional distribution of visitors from West Clare and the Dublin-Galway axis to the East Clare area. It allows for managed access to be utilised as a key conservation measure on the island while supporting the local region in realising a positive socio-economic impact from increased visitation.

This visitor management plan ensures balanced visitor number distribution over time and employs conservation and mitigation measures to avoid or minimise adverse visitor impacts. Its holistic approach to visitor management is a key motivation for Clare County Council in developing the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience as a gateway visitor attraction for East Clare.

Linking the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre in Mountshannon, with its interpretation and full suite of visitor facilities, to boat tours of the island is the principal visitor management strategy for Phase 1 of this development. This allows visitor access to the island to be restricted to licenced tour operators, with admission via combined ticketing. Based on data from similar visitor experiences, while the enhanced visitor offering will draw additional visitors to the region, it is assumed that just 60% of visitors will make the journey to the island.¹¹ For the remainder, the high-quality experience at the Interpretive Centre, with visible links to the island, will suffice.

Phase 2 of this development futureproofs the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, meeting visitor demand and the needs of future visitors with enhanced interpretation at the Mountshannon Visitor Centre. This facility will enhance visitor access to and the appeal of the towns and villages of the wider East Clare region for visitors.

¹¹ Based on assumptions and data presented in Inis Cealtra (Vol 1) - Visitor Management & Sustainable Tourism Development Plan, Solearth Architecture (2017)

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience supports Clare County Council's slow tourism objectives, engaging visitors in the authentic stories of East Clare and its people, as well as the rich and diverse heritage of the island. Done well, this can foster a heightened appreciation within visitors for the place they visit, encouraging greater local exploration, local artisan retail opportunities and longer dwell times. Coupled with strong messaging on the conservation objectives of Inis Cealtra and Leave No Trace principles can encourage visitors towards responsible behaviour during their visit.

This visitor management plan is an iterative document that will be updated over time as needed. Reliable data on tourism pressures over time and across different sites in the experience is crucial for the delivery of an adaptive and responsive visitor management plan, and therefore data collection and surveying are integrated in this management plan.

The introduction of certain of the recommended monitoring measures will allow Clare County Council to ensure the effectiveness of visitor management and mitigation prior to implementation of Phase 2.

Adaptive Management & Monitoring

The visitor management strategies outlined in this plan will be integrated into operational plans for Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience and implemented accordingly. They will then be reviewed on an ongoing basis, shaped by adaptive dialogue and monitoring, and revised as required over time, recognising that the visitor management strategies employed must always protect the balance between visitor activity and heritage and environmental conservation. Additionally, all proposed operational stage mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report are deemed adopted and will be implemented in full, except as otherwise required by any planning conditions

Furthermore, adaptive management and monitoring will be integrated into sustainable tourism destination certification indicators for Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. This ensures all stakeholders are committed to and actively involved in the overall sustainable management of the destination on an ongoing basis. This visitor experience seeks to be a world-class example of sustainable tourism and will strive constantly to achieve that.

This section outlines the monitoring and review activity that will be implemented by Clare County Council at the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, and is itself subject to change to meet any necessary additional monitoring requirements.

Guides working on the island will be trained in basic monitoring techniques (such as ensuring counters are working, help with surveys and noting the impacts of the mitigation measures) so that the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience can provide ongoing practical supports to external monitoring expertise. It is important that any surveys be carried out or supervised by a competent and suitably qualified professional, and that all data gathered be retained for Clare County Council and other stakeholders' site management use in the future.

Monitoring survey results and any other relevant research, monitoring and consultations on Inis Cealtra will be reviewed by Clare County Council and other stakeholders, and incorporated into the Visitor Management Plan as necessary.

Clare County Council is committed to continuing monitoring for as long as is necessary to ensure tourism at Inis Cealtra is managed in an environmentally sustainable manner. Recognising the unique characteristics of the island, Clare County Council will consider the possibility of partnering with universities, research institutions or other interested parties for some or all of this monitoring programme.

4.1 Site & Attraction Management

Current Ownership & Stakeholder Involvement

Inis Cealtra is a 50 acre island, owned by Clare County Council, while the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage is responsible for the protection of the archaeological remains on Inis Cealtra. The local authority also has responsibility for municipal burial grounds located on the island.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the management of the national monuments on Inis Cealtra. The National Monuments Service (NMS) is responsible for the conservation and recording of the site. National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) has a role in management and environmental conservation on Inis Cealtra, given the area's SAC and SPA designations. Waterways Ireland has responsibility for the management, development and promotion of Lough Derg and the Shannon Navigation, including Mountshannon Harbour and the jetty on Inis Cealtra.

Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group represents the wider tourism industry stakeholders in the development and promotion of Lough Derg and its attractions. The wider community living and working in the region also form part of the stakeholder group in the form of Mountshannon Community Council.

Fáilte Ireland, as the National Tourism Development Authority, also has a stakeholder role at Inis Cealtra in its responsibility for tourism development, domestic tourism marketing and supporting the local tourism industry.

East Clare, Inis Cealtra and Lough Derg sit within Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand, and so forms part of a slow tourism offering designed to draw visitors from busier tourist regions such as West Clare and the Dublin-Galway tourist axis. It is promoted to both domestic and international audiences by Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Clare Tourism and the Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy as an opportunity to slow down and engage more deeply with Ireland's culture and heritage.

Presently, visitors to the island access it via private boats and guided boat tours or rentals provided by local accommodation and activity providers. The local community access burial grounds and religious sites via local private boats. It is understood that most visitors are day-trippers only, with a minimal number of overnight campers.

Future Site Management Structures

Clare County Council, via Clare Tourism Development DAC, will manage and operate the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. This includes the Interpretive Centre and facilities at the Old Rectory at Mountshannon, which is owned by Clare County Council, new car park facilities off Main Street, Mountshannon and toilet facilities on Inis Cealtra. Clare Tourism Development DAC will also manage the enhanced Visitor Centre to be developed at Phase 2 of this project. The visitor centre café will be operated by lease.

Visitors will walk from the Main Street car parking facilities to the through Aistear Park, which is owned and managed by Mountshannon Community Council.

There will be no change to the role of the statutory bodies responsible for the national monuments and conservation measures on Inis Cealtra nor the role of Waterways Ireland.

Primary access to Inis Cealtra will be via guided boat tours operated by licenced boat operators. Licences will be awarded by tender by Clare County Council on a 3-year basis. Subject to demand, licences will be awarded to a single or multiple operators. A concessionary rate will be available to existing boat hire companies such as the 5 boats from Lakeside Holiday Park in Mountshannon.

Members of the local community and members of Lough Derg Anglers will be able to land for free with a permit-style approach. Overnight camping will be discouraged.

Guided tours on the island will be operated by Clare Tourism Development DAC, staffed by Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. Their role will also include monitoring and surveying of visitor impacts.

Key stakeholders involved in the management of Inis Cealtra established the Inis Cealtra Project Delivery Team in 2020 to have oversight both in terms of the strategic management of the island and the operational management of the island. This group, led by Clare County Council, will include OPW, NMS, Waterways Ireland and Dept Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

Inis Cealtra Community Forum will be established to represent the voice of the local community in the management of Inis Cealtra and the delivery of the new visitor experience. Its role will be to facilitate local community input and linkages as the project develops, ensuring the socio-economic benefits of this project are reflected across East Clare. It will also serve as liaison with Clare County Council in managing local access to Inis Cealtra. The forum will be transparently and democratically run with members representing Mountshannon, Tuamgraney, Scariff and Whitegate as well as non-voting representatives from each of OPW and Clare County Council.

The new Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience provides for a flagship visitor experience and high-quality visitor facilities that will be a strong draw for visitors and serve as a gateway to the wider East Clare region. Focusing on slow travel, it will be an exemplar sustainable visitor experience, supporting the conservation and protection of Inis Cealtra, while fostering visitor appreciation of the site's unique attraction.

The structured visitor experience allows visitor impacts to be managed and mitigated. A focus on responsible tourism will encourage visitor behaviour change. Through sustainability messaging, the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience strives to increase sustainable travel in accessing the region, to extend visitor dwell times and foster a strong appreciation among visitors and locals of the significance of Inis Cealtra, its heritage, and the wildlife and habitats of Lough Derg, along with their conservation.

Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience – the Visitor Journey

Many visitors to Inis Cealtra will begin their visitor journey in advance of their physical arrival at Mountshannon. The visitor experience and destination marketing online presences (website and social media), as well as local tourist information points will include key information to support visitors in planning their visit, understanding the experience on offer and pre-booking admission.

Visitors arrive to the region largely by car, with a lesser number arriving by small group tours, cycling or public transport.

Independent visitors to Inis Cealtra will typically begin their experience by road, approaching Mountshannon on the R352, which links Mountshannon to Scarriff to the South and Whitegate to the North. Here, they will be guided by visitor informational signage to the Visitor Experience Car Park, located off Main Street in Mountshannon.

Car Parking Facilities

The new car park provides parking facilities for cars and bicycles, and also has provision for coach and minibus parking. These vehicles may choose to drop passengers at the Visitor Centre before parking. Those arriving by public bus will disembark at bus stops, located nearby on Main Street. Cycle parking will be available at the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre as part of the approved development there.

This marks the beginning of the physical visitor experience as proposed in this Visitor Management Plan. Visitor messaging at the car park will guide visitors through Aistear Park (approx. 300m) to a pedestrian access point at Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, encouraging visitors to arrive via the intended approach.

Associated with the Interpretive Centre, the Old Rectory grounds will provide drop off facilities for coach and minibus passengers and those with limited mobility, with a small number (2) of accessible parking bays on site.

Additional parking facilities will also be provided as part of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. The new car park in Main Street comprises 169 car parking spaces (inclusive of 11 no. accessible car parking spaces and 6 coach parking spaces. It also includes parking provision for 24 bicycles. The car park will be open full time.

Daily access capacity at the new car park will be 1,352 visitors in low season and 1,944 in high season. Access capacity is calculated using the maximum number of vehicles car parking facilities can accommodate per hour and average length of stay, extrapolated by day, month and year based on proposed opening hours, using the following assumptions:

- Visitor car parking is available in the new Mountshannon car park only.
- Car parking facilities here include 6 coach parking spaces and 169 car parking spaces, 11 of which offer accessible parking. Of these parking spaces, 34 are EV parking spaces (2 of which are accessible). Ducting is also provided to allow for 18 additional EV parking spaces (to include 2 no. accessible).
- The average number of passengers per vehicle is 2.5 (private vehicles only), giving 450 visitors (Phase 1) and 573 visitors (Phase 2) when the car park is full.
- Average length of stay at Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be 2.5 hours.
- Based on planned opening hours, that allows for the car park capacity to turn over 3.2 times per day in low season and 4.6 times per day in peak season.

Staff parking is provided in the visitor car park, while limited service vehicle set down and parking (including 2 no. accessible parking spaces) is available to the East of the Old Rectory.

The existing car park in Mountshannon Harbour will be reconfigured as part of Phase 2 of this project, increasing from the existing 46 spaces (2 no. accessible) to 49 spaces (3 no. accessible).

Admission

Measures to manage visitor access involve restricting the maximum number of visitors per hour, day and month, and extending opening hours in peak season so as to reduce visitor density on the island, ensuring the impact of increasing visitor numbers can be effectively mitigated.

Table 5: Low and high season opening hours

Season	Opening hours
Low season (Mar-June)	09:00-17:00
High season (July-Sept)	09:00-18:00

Visitors to the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be offered two admission options, admission to the visitor experience only, or a combined boat trip and visitor experience ticket, with concessions for children, seniors and groups.

Tickets can be pre-booked online and on arrival. Online pre-booking will be encouraged, and those booking online will be able to pre-book on a timed basis, so as to allow for managed visitor access, particularly for boat tours.

Visitor Facilities at the Phase 1 Visitor Centre

Facilities for visitors provided at the Phase 1 Visitor Experience encompassing the Old Rectory will include:

- Visitor interpretation of themes relevant to East Clare, Lough Derg and Inis Cealtra, its built and natural heritage, local environs and people, conservation and responsible visitor messaging, including Leave No Trace
- Visitor facilities will include a café, operated by lease, with indoor (32 no. seats) and seasonal outdoor seating provision (36 no. seats), retail and toilet facilities.
- Visitor services will include foods and crafts for sale will be locally sourced to enhance local business.

Visitor Facilities at the Phase 2 Visitor Centre

Facilities for visitors provided at the enhanced visitor experience will include:

- The visitor centre experience here will be presented through a compelling and highly engaging series of displays, offering enhanced interpretation on themes relating to Lough Derg, Inis Cealtra and the culture and heritage of its environs. messaging, including Leave No Trace
- Visitor facilities will include a café, operated by lease, with seating provision for 60 covers, including seasonal outdoor seating, retail and toilet facilities.
- Visitor services will include foods and crafts for sale will be locally sourced to enhance local business.

It is estimated that typical visitor dwell times at the Visitor Centre will be 45 minutes.

Visiting Inis Cealtra – Guided Boat Tour Experience

An estimated 60% of all visitors to the visitor centre will opt to include a guided boat trip and tour of Inis Cealtra in their visit.

The island will be accessible to the general public via a combination visitor centre and boat tour ticket. After visiting the visitor centre, visitors will be guided to walk to the pier, from where boat trips to the island will depart. Additional public toilet facilities are available at the pier.

Tour to Inis Cealtra will be operated by a licenced boat tour operator, who will operate, supply and maintain 25-seater vessels to an agreed standard with agreed facilities, to include wheelchair accessibility. The service will be licenced to a single operator in Phase 1, with scope to expand to a number of operators in Phase 2, when additional demand will arise.

The boat journey will be estimated 30 minutes duration, and include a guided commentary, developed in partnership with Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. Boats will land at the redeveloped pier on the North-West coast of Inis Cealtra.

Island Walking Tour

On arrival at Inis Cealtra, visitors will be greeted by a guide and enjoy a 45-minute guided walking tour, followed by some free time to explore. Guides will direct walkers along established trails on Inis Cealtra, providing a guided experience along the way that unlocks the heritage and history of the island for visitors.

The path network on the island will comprise mown grass paths, so as to provide balance between accessibility and wayfinding for visitors to facilitate heritage interpretation and protection of archaeology and natural assets on the island.

The proposed path network focuses on existing paths to facilitate visitation of the island's monuments and heritage sites along with additional paths to be created to create a series of looped walks on the island of varying lengths for visitors to enjoy the island's natural beauty (see Figure 3 below).

Guides will play a particularly important role on busy days and times and when trails require rest and repair, managing the visitor journey around the island to mitigate congestion and trail damage. Their communications will include clear asks that:

- Visitors walk alternative trails to avoid busy walking trails
- Visitors move on from scenic spots or points of interest on trails if they become congested
- Visitors do not climb or walk on built heritage
- Use clear information to help visitors understand why congregation at points of interest should be avoided and get their support in respecting heritage assets
- Leave no trace by gathering any waste or rubbish they generate and disposing of it appropriately on the mainland.

Guided island tours will be approximately 45 minutes' duration, and visitors will be encouraged to explore further. It is estimated that most visitors will spend c. 1 hour on Inis Cealtra, with visitors asked to stay no longer than 2 hours on the island.

Specific visitor offerings will be utilised to encourage off peak visitation at busy times, including dawn and twilight tours. In quieter times, themed tours and special interest groups will be an important factor in encouraging visitation by those with a real interest and appreciation of the island, lake and relevant themes.

Visitor surveys and counters will establish the number of visitors, locals and other access to Inis Cealtra over time to understand usage patterns and to implement management measures if deemed necessary as part of the site overall mitigation measures.

Enhancements works at the island's jetty include a jetty upgrade, canoe facilities, pods for shelter and basic visitor service facilities.

Operational Model

Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be operated by Clare Tourism Development DAC. It will operate effectively as a satellite centre to another attraction, so operational roles such as finance, marketing and HR are within the parent operator. The visitor centre café will be operated by lease. Locally, Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will employ core operational staff as well as flexible seasonal staff, in addition to seasonal tour guides who will work on the island. Staffing resources required to meet the seasonal needs of the visitor experience are outlined below here.

Table 6: Phase 1 Staffing Model Y5

	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Peak</i>
No. of days	120	92	91	62
Staff required in each area:				
Interpretive Centre Manager	1	1	1	1
Bookings/Admin	0.5	0.5	0.5	1
Shop/Tickets	0	0.5	1	1.5
Galleries	0	1	1	1.5
Break Cover	0	0.3	0.5	0.5
Café (leased)	1	1	1.5	2
Total staff on site daily	2.5	4.3	5.5	7.5

Island Tours

Staff required in each area:				
Per day	0	1	1	1
Break cover	0	0.3	0.3	0.3
Total staff on island daily	0	1.3	1.3	1.3

During Phase 2 of operations, the operational team increases in size to meet rising visitor numbers, with the addition of a peak season twilight tour staff resource, outlined below here.

Table 7: Phase 2 Staffing Model Y5

Phase 2 staffing model	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Shoulder</i>	<i>Peak</i>
No. of days	120	92	91	62
Staff required in each area:				
Visitor Experience Manager	1	1	1	1
Duty Manager	1	1	1	1
Bookings/Admin	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Shop/Tickets	0	1.5	2	3
Galleries	0	1.5	2	3
Break Cover	0	0.5	1	1
Café (leased)	1	1.5	2.3	3.7
Total staff on site daily	4.5	8.5	10.8	14.2

Twilight Tours

Staff required in each area:				
Twilight Tour	0	0	3	3
Break cover	0	0	0	0
Total staff on twilight tours	0	0	3	3

Island Tours

Staff required in each area:				
Per tour	0	1	2	2
Break cover	0	0.3	0.3	0.3
Total staff on island daily	0	1.3	2.3	2.3

Conservation & Sustainability Measures

A comprehensive suite of visitor management measures, as outlined in this Visitor Management Plan and in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, will be implemented in full, except as otherwise required by any planning conditions

Visitor education will play a central role at the redeveloped Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience in supporting the facility in achieving its objectives and in promoting responsible visitor behaviour. Education is key at all stages of the visitor experience from pre-booking research to post departure, and must be part of all visitor interactions – online, in person and via visual communications onsite.

Guides will be stationed on the island to facilitate guided tours during opening hours (arriving on the island with the first boat, returning with the last). Their role will be offer guided tours and to support responsible visitor behaviour by educating and encouraging visitors to stay on walking trails, avoiding congestion at key points, as well as safety, conservation and educational messaging.

In addition, their role entails monitoring wildlife such as nesting birds, trail and monument conditions, and supporting the overall conservation objectives of the island. This is a vital strand of visitor education and supporting responsible visitor behaviour.

Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will subscribe to Leave No Trace, and so will actively promote the principles and practices of Leave No Trace to all visitors.

Evidence is clear that friendly informative approaches by guides on site, positive reinforcement, educational messaging to promote responsible behaviour are all effective educational tools to support conservation objectives. To meet multilingual requirements, visual, image rich messaging is important, giving clear behavioural expectation that facilitates pro-conservation behaviour.

Points of interest on the island have interpretation and visitor informational signage boards which will be updated to reinforce responsible visitor behaviour. There is potential also for guides to manage and restrict access on walking trails if there are nesting birds alongside trails, guiding visitors along alternative pathways where necessary.

Regular and formalised monitoring, visitor surveys and adaptive measures will be employed as required to ensure the development meets its objectives, particularly in terms of conservation management.

In support of Clare County Council's objective to be an exemplar sustainable tourism visitor, Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will work to achieve Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification from Sustainable Tourism Network.

This certification recognises the facility's commitment to sustainable practices and that it meets the minimum global requirements set out by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), a United Nations initiated council which sets the baseline standards for sustainable tourism and travel.

Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future environmental, social and economic impacts, addressing the needs of the

environment, host communities, visitors and the industry. Certification guarantees a balance between a business, the society it operates in and the environment we all depend on.

The site will operate under Leave No Trace principles, which are:

- 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare**
- 2. Be Considerate of Others**
- 3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife**
- 4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground**
- 5. Leave What You Find**
- 6. Dispose of Waste Properly**
- 7. Minimise the Effects of Fire.**



Site/Attraction Management			
Site Management Objectives	Monitoring & Management Systems	Timescales	Indicators
Future Site Management			
Inis Cealtra is managed by Clare County Council as a place that is sacred and vulnerable	<p>Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is developed by Clare County Council as a measure to facilitate robust visitor management. The development is futureproofed, in two phases.</p> <p>Phase 1 sees managed visitor access to the island by boat tour as part of a broader visitor experience from the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre. The visitor experience is a gateway experience for East Clare, encouraging slow tourism and deeper visitor engagement with the region.</p> <p>Phase 2 involves an enhanced visitor experience that meets the demands of increased visitor numbers within robust visitor management practices</p>	<p>2028</p> <p>c. 2042</p>	<p>Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is operational. Visitor access to the island is via a guided boat/island tour, managed by Clare Tourism Development DAC</p> <p>Enhanced visitor experience attracts additional visitation & socio-economic benefit to the region within levels of acceptable change</p>
Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be an exemplar sustainable tourism visitor destination	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will work to achieve UN GSTC Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification from Sustainable Tourism Network	Within 5 years of opening	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience achieves UN GSTC Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification

Site Management Objectives	Monitoring & Management Systems	Timescales	Indicators
Stakeholder engagement			
All stakeholders are active participants in ensuring the conservation objectives for Inis Cealtra are met	<p>Inis Cealtra Project Delivery Team¹³ continues as a site management group, tasked with the day-to-day management of the site and liaison with interest groups.</p> <p>Inis Cealtra Community Forum is established to represent the interests of local communities in the management of the island, including local access provision.</p>	Prior to opening & ongoing	<p>Inis Cealtra Project Delivery Team and Community Forum are operational, giving all stakeholders an appropriate forum for ongoing engagement</p> <p>Stakeholder group meetings take place at regular intervals</p>

¹³ As outlined in Inis Cealtra (Vol 1) - Visitor Management & Sustainable Tourism Development Plan, Solearth Architecture (2017), to include Clare County Council, OPW, NMS, Waterways Ireland, Dept Housing, Local Government & Heritage

Site Management Objectives	Monitoring & Management Systems	Timescales	Indicators
Visitor Access Management			
To restrict access to the island to a maximum number at any one time of 100 persons, no more than 400 in any day and a maximum of 45,000 over the course of the year.	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clare County Council will develop a gateway experience for East Clare will be developed as the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, building on the Old Rectory Interpretive Centre by adding licenced boat and island guided tours. This facility will include audio visual displays, interpretation, visitor information, café, retail and toilet facilities. In engaging visitors with the region and using high quality interpretation to present the themes of the island and the local area, visitors can get a greater appreciation of Inis Cealtra without feeling the need to visit the island. Their visit will also encourage exploration of the wider East Clare region. Primary access to the island will be by licenced boat and island guided tours only. Access will be seasonal. The jetty to the North-West of the island will be upgraded as the primary access point for the island, accommodating 25-seater tour boats and provide safe access to the island. The maximum numbers outlined here to be taken as the maximum number of persons arriving on the island for all subsequent studies, projections, models and projects. 	2025	<p>The Old Rectory Interpretive Centre opens to visitors.</p> <p>Visitors to the experience who then visit the island is approx. 60% of all visitors.</p> <p>Visitor access to the island can be measured and managed.</p> <p>Visitor impact on Inis Cealtra is managed within acceptable levels of change.</p>
	Online booking system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be by prebooked ticket only, using an online booking system that will show real time availability. Strategies such as timed entry, extended opening hours in peak season and sunrise/twilight tours allow for enhanced visitor management. 	2025	<p>Visitor numbers remain within the island's carrying capacity.</p> <p>Visitor impact on Inis Cealtra is managed within acceptable levels of change.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking options include the visitor centre only or a combined ticket to include a guided boat & island tour. • The booking system will be dynamic and capable of reflecting any changes such as closure/restricted numbers due to bad weather or special events. 		
To retain and manage local community access to Inis Cealtra	<p>Local Access</p> <p>Members of the local community and members of Lough Derg Anglers will be able to land for free with a permit-style approach. A register of those with a local connection and members of the Anglers will be retained by Clare County Council.</p> <p>A discounted permit system will be available to established local tourism businesses for island access, managed by Clare County Council.</p> <p>Access will remain to St Mary's and St Caiman's burial grounds and pre-existing plots for burial purposes. Access for visitors will be restricted during burials.</p> <p>Overnight camping, fishing and unaccompanied tours will be discouraged.</p> <p>Local access protocols will be reviewed and managed by the Inis Cealtra Community Forum every 2 years, and more regularly if any concerns arise.</p> <p>Guides and wardens on the island will report any local access issues that arise to management for resolution via the Inis Cealtra Community Forum.</p>	2025	<p>Local community retains access to Inis Cealtra.</p> <p>Established local businesses will retain discounted access to Inis Cealtra for their visitors.</p> <p>Online bookings for island access during burial times will be cancelled and refunded when a burial is confirmed.¹⁴ Prospective visitors will be encouraged to rebook a later available time or day.</p> <p>Camping, fishing and unaccompanied tours to be monitored.</p> <p>Visitor impact on Inis Cealtra is managed within acceptable levels of change.</p>

¹⁴ This follows Clare County Council's established procedures for closure at other visitor sites such as the Cliffs of Moher and Loop Head.

To manage kayak access to Inis Cealtra	Kayak Access A canoe step will be included in the enhanced jetty facilities to the North-West of the island, improving access for kayakers, linking the island to the Lough Derg Canoe Trail and encouraging kayakers to come ashore at the jetty only.	2025	Visitor impact on Inis Cealtra is managed within acceptable levels of change.
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Site Management Objectives	Monitoring & Management Systems	Timescales	Indicators
Visitor Management On Site			
Visitors gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Inis Cealtra and its natural and heritage attractions	Guided boat & island tours All visitors to Inis Cealtra will arrive on a guided boat & island tour, prebooked at the Visitor Centre. The guided boat tour (30 mins duration) includes agreed interpretive commentary. All boats will be met on arrival by an island tour guide, who leads visitors around the island on a 45 mins duration guided tour. Visitors have free time on the island for self-exploration before returning by boat to Mountshannon.	2028	Guided boat and island tours are operational daily.
	Visitor interpretation & signage Site interpretation is an important communication and safety tool. Key visitor education messaging should be central to visitor engagement throughout the visitor journey - online, at the visitor centre ahead of visiting the island, on the island and in the wider region, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital communications - own and third party websites and downloaded maps, etc, social media and digital marketing (such as Discover Lough Derg, Visit Clare, etc) • Printed marketing and informational materials - brochures, visitor guides, tourist maps 	From opening onwards	Site interpretation is in place prior to opening Signage is in place prior to opening Staff onsite are trained in communicating the site's key messages

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage and branding throughout the visitor experience, on the approach roads and on the wider Inis Cealtra peninsula • On-site visitor experience, including guided tours and updated content on existing informational and interpretation signage at key points on the visitor journey. <p>The cultural and natural heritage assets of Inis Cealtra are highlighted in the visitor experience, which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the unique story of Inis Cealtra's history and significance • The island and lake's natural environment • An audio-visual presentation augmenting the interpretation • Conservation measures and their importance. <p>All visitor interpretation and signage will meet best practice guidelines for accessibility and reflect consistent branding and messaging throughout.</p>		<p>Key messages about the island's assets and conservation are highlighted in the exhibition</p> <p>Visitor interpretation & signage meet accessibility guidelines & reflect consistent messaging & brand</p>
To promote responsible visitor behaviour	<p>Island tour guides</p> <p>Guides, hired and trained by the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, will be stationed on the island throughout the day. Their role is to provide guided tours, monitor conditions on the island, support wayfinding, responsible visitor behaviour and support visitors during their time on the island.</p>	2025	<p>Guided tours are available daily</p> <p>Staff roles are operation and fulfilled as per job descriptions</p>
	<p>Formalised walking trails</p> <p>Guided tours along the established walking trail with interpretation and messaging will encourage visitors to keep to established trails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides, signage and interpretation at points of interest will guide visitors around the island • Tour guides will promote responsible visitor behaviour, avoid congestion at key points on trails and ensure visitors stay on trails. Conservation messaging will be reinforced by staff in their interactions with visitors 	Prior to opening & ongoing	<p>Visitors do not leave established walking trails.</p> <p>Degradation and erosion of decommissioned trail network is reversed.</p> <p>Staff roles are operational and fulfilled as per job descriptions</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing trail maintenance (informed by monitoring inspections) should ensure that operational impacts will be mitigated by avoidance • Digital maps, apps and informational material may be introduced as an additional mitigation if required 		
	<p>Visitor education</p> <p>Visitor education begins at the planning stage of their visit. It is integrated into every touchpoint of the visitor journey, playing a vital role in helping the visitor understand the island's heritage and ecological significance, and the role visitors play in supporting its conservation.</p> <p>The key messages conveyed are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inis Cealtra is a site of heritage and environmental importance. We all have a role to play in protecting this sensitive landscape. 2. This is a Leave No Trace site. Follow the 7 principles of Leave No Trace during your time in the area and on the island. 3. Visitor communications, including pre-booking messaging, signage and guides on site all give key messages to promote responsible visitor behaviour and should be followed at all times. 4. Lough Derg and Inis Cealtra is a sustainable tourism destination. Consider public transport or sustainable travel for your visit. 5. The lake and island are part of a wider network of high quality tourism experiences to enjoy, connected via public transport networks. We encourage our visitors to stay longer and enjoy more of our area and what it has to offer. <p>Visitor information about the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be accurate, consistent and timely. It will include the practical advance information that people need to know to plan ahead and visit responsibly and safely, including information on accessibility, and that activities such as camping and fishing are prohibited, as are dogs.</p>	<p>Prior to opening & ongoing</p>	<p>Key visitor education messages are reflected throughout the visitor experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation • Visitor information guides • In guided tours • In staff interactions • On signage and branding • In digital & marketing communications

Management of waste and emissions	<p>Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be operated under Leave No Trace principles</p> <p>Leave No Trace messaging is included in the site's key visitor education messages and reflected throughout the site's interpretation</p>	Prior to opening and ongoing	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is a Leave No Trace member, operating under Leave No Trace principles
	<p>Waste Management</p> <p>A waste management strategy will be implemented at the Visitor Centre in accordance with waste hierarchy (avoid > reduce > reuse > recycle > recover > dispose)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy will target a 30% reduction in general waste by 2030 • Signage at appropriate locations at the Visitor Centre promotes reuse, advises on correct waste disposal and discourages littering • Staff to be trained in the correct waste segregation and support visitors in identifying the correct bin to use • Additional measures such as composting, water conservation and renewable energy to be implemented where possible • Sustainability and waste management will be central to purchasing policies and a condition of any lease/licence granted to third party operators (e.g., café, boat tours, etc) 	<p>2025</p> <p>Baseline of general waste measured in Year 1</p> <p>Target met by 2030</p>	<p>A waste management strategy is in place and implemented throughout the site</p> <p>General waste produced on site reduced by 30% by 2030</p> <p>Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience and its licensees/lease holders have purchasing policies that promote sustainability & good waste management practices</p>
	<p>Reducing single use items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ban on single use disposable coffee cups at the visitor centre, using only reusables or by implementing a deposit return scheme • Encouraging the use of refill water bottles, adding a water refill station at the Visitor Centre. Join the Refill Ireland campaign • Single use items supplied in the café must be compostable • A ban on single use plastics in the café and visitor facility • Phasing out printed tourism material (maps, brochures, etc), replaced instead with digital 	<p>Prior to opening & ongoing</p> <p>By 2028</p>	<p>No disposable coffee cups are available</p> <p>Water refill facilities are in place</p> <p>All single use consumables in the café can be composted</p> <p>No single use plastics are in use</p> <p>No single use printed tourism materials are in use by 2028</p>

Site Management Objectives	Monitoring & Management Systems	Timescales	Indicators
Transport & Accessibility			
<p>Visitor access to Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is managed to minimise traffic and car parking pressures</p>	<p>Visitors to the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will largely arrive by car to Mountshannon on the R352, where they will be guided by visitor informational signage to the visitor experience car park on Main Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking is free for visitors to the Visitor Experience, included in the admission fee • Limited drop off facilities only are available at the Visitor Centre • Visitor messaging at the car park and on Main Street will guide visitors through Aistear Park (approx. 300m) to a pedestrian access point at Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, encouraging visitors to arrive via the intended approach. • Visitors arriving by public transport or private coach/minibus will arrive to Main Street and approach the visitor experience through the Aistear Park. <p>Measures including no parking signage or parking by-laws can be considered if required to manage traffic.</p> <p>An education campaign promoting sustainable travel alternatives will be boosted</p>	2028	Visitor access is managed to minimise traffic disruption in Mountshannon
<p>Additional car parking facilities are provided for visitors to Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience</p>	<p>Parking</p> <p>Additional car parking facilities are provided as part of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience, located on Main Street, opposite the entrance to Aistear Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 includes 169 car parking spaces (11 no. accessible) and 6 coach parking spaces. • Phase 2 includes 49 car parking spaces (3 no. accessible) at Mountshannon Harbour. 	<p>Phase 1 – 2028</p> <p>Phase 2 - 2042</p>	Visitors park at the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience car parking facilities

	Access to the car park is included in the visitor experience admission fee.		
Access to Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience for minibus operators is managed	<p>Important in retaining a sustainable focus at Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is the management of tourists arriving by coach/minibus. Given the nature of the experience on offer and the boat capacity at 25 visitors, access for groups will be by advance booking only and for groups of a maximum 25 visitors.</p> <p>On arrival, minibuses will set down for passengers to alight and park in the Main Street visitor car park, returning to collect passengers at the end of their visit.</p>	2028	Access to Inis Cealtra for minibuses and tour groups is managed.
Access to Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience by sustainable travel and transport options is promoted	<p>Sustainable Travel</p> <p>Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will encourage a greater percentage of visitors to arrive by sustainable means by 2030. This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with Clare Local Link to explore how to include Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience in its Mountshannon service, running timetables to suit visitors. Provision of bicycle parking facilities in the Main Street visitor car park 	2030	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience can set targets for numbers of visitors to arrive by sustainable travel and transport options
Inis Cealtra visitor experience promotes accessibility and inclusion	<p>Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will be as accessible as possible, recognising the island's natural limitations Accessible parking facilities at the Old Rectory and Visitor Centre give visitors with restricted mobility an alternative to walking from the car park on approach Universal access is a priority for the visitor experience where feasible. Visitor information, including website, booking system, signage and marketing materials consider universal access and on site visitor facilities support universal access While the walking trail on the island will not be classed as universally accessible due to terrain limitations, mown trails and gates that open make the walking experience easier for those with restricted mobility Access will be reviewed regularly and enhanced to meet new standards or opportunities as they arise 	Ongoing from opening	<p>Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience welcomes visitors of all abilities and has something to offer all visitors</p> <p>Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will work towards providing enhanced accessibility on the island for visitors with limited mobility on an ongoing basis, within the natural limitations of the island and its terrain</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills training for Inis Cealtra staff and guides in accessibility awareness • Collaboration with local representative groups of people with disabilities to support Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience in enhancing accessibility and inclusion over time 		
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Site Management Objectives	Monitoring & Management Systems	Timescales	Indicators
Annual monitoring & survey programme			
To monitor & manage in combination visitor impacts within acceptable levels of change	Ongoing Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring by our guides will take place monthly, increasing to bi-weekly during peak times, to undertake ecological/habitat walkover review and managed access to sensitive areas to facilitate protection, reinstatement and conservation where need has been identified. Trails may be adjusted along agreed paths when breeding birds are detected, or to allow trail restoration. Ongoing trail monitoring will identify any new safety issues and adverse impacts on trails arising from visitor behaviour Staff required to keep a record of accidents and near misses Annual risk assessment will evaluate level of risks and decide whether more precautions are needed. 	Ongoing	<p>Visitor impact on Inis Cealtra is managed within acceptable levels of change.</p> <p>Safety risks from visitor behaviour are identified and addressed if required (with signage, education or trail changes) No. of accidents/near misses occurring annually Written records are maintained for accidents/near misses occurring</p>
	Counters will be installed at the jetty and at strategic points around the island to monitor visitor numbers and visitor flow (including local and independent visitor access). Any variance in visitor number is then addressed either, via the booking system and/or the Inis Cealtra Community Forum.		Visitor numbers on the island will be monitored
Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience enjoys a high level of visitor satisfaction	<p>Annual visitor survey will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record visitor numbers and relevant data such as group size, dwell time at the visitor experience and on the island Record the number of local visitors to Inis Cealtra and their usage patterns Record visitors' means of travel to Mountshannon and progress towards sustainable travel targets 	Annually from opening	<p>Visitor numbers are recorded by month & year and any trends can be monitored and mitigated via the online booking system and managed access as required</p> <p>Progress towards sustainable travel targets is monitored</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record visitor satisfaction levels at Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience Measure visitors' appreciation of Inis Cealtra's historic and natural heritage assets 		<p>Additional measures employed as required to reach targets, e.g. additional bicycle parking and facilities in Mountshannon, enhanced Local Link service</p> <p>Visitor satisfaction post-visit is at 80%+ by Y3 and 90%+ by Y5</p> <p>Visitors to Inis Cealtra leave with a heightened appreciation of its natural heritage assets – target 80%+ by Y3 and 90%+ by Y5</p>
	A risk assessment and safety plan are developed annually for Inis Cealtra. Any new measures arising from this exercise are actioned immediately and reviewed as required.	Annually at beginning of the year	Risks assessment and safety plan are in place
	Regular inspection and timely maintenance of all infrastructure (signs, seats, lights, etc.)	Annually at beginning of the year	All site infrastructure remains well maintained and safe
	Extended visitor research undertaken in partnership with Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group to assess the true socio-economic impact of Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience	Within 2 years of opening & every 2 years thereafter	The socio-economic impact of visitors to the East Clare region is measured over time

4.2 Environmental Impact Management

Current conservation status & sensitivities

Inis Cealtra is part of the Lough Derg (Shannon) EU Special Protection Area (SPA 004058).¹⁵ The lake is designated as a site of interest for the conservation of the Tufted Duck, Cormorant, Goldeneye and Common Tern species.

Conservation objective for the Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA [004058]: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA – Cormorant (A017, *Phalacrocorax carbo*), Tufted Duck (A061, *Aythya fuligula*), Goldeneye (A067, *Bucephala clangula*) and Common Tern (A193, *Sterna hirundo*).

The Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience seeks to support the conservation of these bird species and the ecology of the island by promoting responsible visitor behaviour and through a landscape management plan.

The environmental impact measures outlined below are additionally supported by all proposed operational stage mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, to be implemented in full, except as otherwise required by any planning conditions

Conservation Objectives	Conservation Actions	Timescale	Indicator
Monitoring of ecological Interests at Inis Cealtra	Implement in full the monitoring programme outlined in Section 3.1 under Annual Monitoring & Survey Programme	Prior to opening and ongoing	Monitoring programme in place & fully resourced
Management of waste and emissions	Limited dry toilet system exists on Inis Cealtra island. Waste will be brought to the mainland by agreement with Uisce Éireann Toilet handwashing facilities will be antibacterial gel, rather than water	2028	Waste on Inis Cealtra is minimised to within acceptable levels of change.

¹⁵ National Parks & Wildlife Service - <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004058>.

To develop & implement a landscape management plan for Inis Cealtra	Clare County Council will manage the landscape on Inis Cealtra according to an agreed landscape management plan Vegetation management will be by sheep, rather than cattle	Ongoing	Landscape management plan is developed and implemented
Conserve the natural heritage assets of Inis Cealtra	Maintain close co-operation with OPW and National Monuments Service personnel in order to identify and address emergent biodiversity and conservation threats	Ongoing	Regular meetings with OPW and National Monuments Service are held

4.3 Socio-Economic Impact Management

Current socio-economic considerations

Clare County Council's development of a gateway high quality Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience at Mountshannon responds to the need to create expand the attractiveness of the island and the region as a sustainable tourism destination for an increased number of visitors.

It provides a holistic, environmentally friendly and community-focused investment in East Clare that recognises that rural development and tourism can be powerful economic stimuli for such rural regions as identified in Our Rural Future Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, while serving the dual function of ensuring the long term conservation of the island's significant heritage. In doing so, the tourism product developed will encourage longer visitor dwell times in the local area that can support local communities, helping those towns and villages to achieve their potential to act as catalysts for and/or partners in the regeneration of their more rural hinterland.¹⁶

Clare County Councils tourism strategy 'Guiding our Journey to a Vibrant New Future in Tourism' sets out clear objectives for the future development and management of tourism, recognised as a key economic pillar for the county. The strategy reflects Clare County Council's commitment to sustainable tourism destination management and sets the protection of the environmental resources that tourism relies upon as a key objective.¹⁷

The creation of the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience and its corresponding conservation management efforts on Inis Cealtra has the potential to set the 'gold standard' in Ireland for a cross-sectoral approach to sustainable development. This project aims to balance tourism growth with the environmental, social, community, and visitor needs of East Clare. As a slow, sustainable tourism product, it is strongly aligned to Failte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and complements Clare County Council's established track record of sustainable destination management at sites including the Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Geopark, the Burren Ecotourism Network and the GeoparkLIFE project.

Importantly, this development, intended as a gateway to drive visitation from more congested tourist areas in West Clare, along the Wild Atlantic Way and from the Dublin-Galway axis, can play a key role in encouraging better regional distribution of tourists. Its potential to engage visitors in an exceptional heritage and history, and an island that has had centuries-long visitor appeal, capable of realising the economic potential of the East Clare region as a developing tourism area.

Integrating this development into the community is at the core of this project, incorporating Aistear Park and the village of Mountshannon into the base-level visitor experience. This reflects the local authority's commitment to community-led policy delivery and county-wide development as part of a county-wide tourism strategy that promotes environmentally sustainable practices, as well as social and cultural activities, underpinned by necessary infrastructure.

¹⁶ Clare Local Economic and Community Plan 2024-2030, Clare County Council

¹⁷ Guiding Our Journey To A Vibrant New Future In Tourism – County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030, Clare County Council

Socio-economic Objectives	Socio-economic Actions	Timescale	Indicator
Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will provide quality full-time local employment	<p>Staff roles are identified and recruited</p> <p>A staff training programme is implemented, in particular for staff monitoring and surveying requirements, and in preparing staff to lead guided tours on the island</p>	Prior to opening & ongoing	Staff roles are operation and fulfilled as per job descriptions
Visitors to Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will spend longer in East Clare, bringing economic benefit to the area	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is a gateway experience to the wider East Clare region, showcasing local foods and crafts and encouraging visitors to discover more of the region.	Prior to opening & ongoing	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience supports local artisan and craft producers, encourages wider local visitation
Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will support local businesses	The sustainable procurement policies at Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience will prioritise local suppliers and producers, bringing socio-economic benefit to the wider Mountshannon and East Clare environs	Prior to opening & ongoing	Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience supports local businesses and producers
Clare County Council proactively and positively engage with the local community as part of the Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Regular stakeholder meetings take place, ensuring the local community are fully informed and engaged with activities and plans for Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience	Ongoing	Regular stakeholder meetings take place

4.4 Cultural Impact Management

Current cultural considerations

Inis Cealtra is recognised as one of Ireland's most important national monuments, of international importance as an archaeological, historical, spiritual and cultural centre. The significance of the ecclesiastical heritage on Inis Cealtra has seen it included on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List in 2010.¹⁸ Its monuments are registered on the National Monuments List and are managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW).

Clare County Council has as its objective to conserve and protect the island for future generations, using best practice conservation measures and a sustainable approach to visitor management on site. This dual approach allows for an enhanced visitor experience that showcases the island's significant assets to increased visitor numbers, while simultaneously managing visitor numbers within acceptable levels of change on the island.

It will do this by:

- **Interpretation** – Engaging interpretation at the visitor centre and on the island will convey to visitors the story of the area, its ecclesiastical heritage and the cultural significance of the island, and in doing so, support the conservation of its cultural heritage for the future
- **Architectural & Archaeological Heritage** – Conservation of the key heritage assets on Inis Cealtra will be managed via the Inis Cealtra Project Delivery Team, delivered as part of the Inis Cealtra Conservation Management Plan. In managing visitor access, the Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience further supports the conservation and management of the island's assets through visitor education and responsible tourism practices.
- **Visitor Management** – Managing visitor access to the island allows Clare County Council to take a proactive approach to visitor management, ensuring that visitor numbers are managed and their potential impacts remain within acceptable levels of change.

This project primarily aims to support rural regeneration and bolster the socio-economic vitality of the communities around Lough Derg and Inis Cealtra. By sustaining local employment and fostering economic growth, the initiative will significantly contribute to preserving the cultural fabric of rural life in East Clare.

¹⁸ <https://www.worldheritageireland.ie/the-tentative-list/2010-tentative-list/>

Cultural Objectives	Cultural Actions	Timescale	Indicator
To commence the nomination of Inis Cealtra, in combination with the other significant early medieval monastic sites, as a serial World Heritage Site	Inis Cealtra, in combination with early medieval ecclesiastical sites incl Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Kells and Monasterboice to be considered for nomination as a serial UNESCO World Heritage Site	2028	Irish 'Early Medieval Monastic Sites' cluster re-nominated as a World Heritage Site
Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience is rich, engaging and enticing	<p>The visitor centre and on island interpretation for Inis Cealtra will fulfil the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mixed media to engage audiences, to range from technology to interpersonal storytelling by guides • Engages visitors with the unique stories of Inis Cealtra and other important heritage sites in the region • Fosters a sense of connection for visitors to the region and its rich history and culture, encouraging longer dwell times • Appeals to a broad range of audiences, special interests, languages and ages • The interpretation plan is comprehensive, reflected in all visitor touch points, both online and in person at the Visitor Experience 	Phase 1 – 2028 Phase 2 - 2042	Visitor satisfaction surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction (80% +) post visit
Visitors to Inis Cealtra have a heightened appreciation of the area's unique and compelling heritage and history	The high quality visitor interpretation and visitor experience at the visitor centre gives visitors a real appreciation of the island's appeal, thereby alleviating demand for guided boat and island tours	Phase 1 – 2028 Phase 2 – 2042	The percentage of all visitors opting for boat and island tours remains 60% or less.
To develop & implement a conservation management plan for Inis Cealtra	Clare County Council and stakeholders will engage in ongoing maintenance, stabilisation and conservation work for monuments on Inis Cealtra as required	Ongoing	Conservation management plan is developed and implemented

5. Roles & Responsibilities of Stakeholders

This visitor management plan is intended as a living document, evolving over time as a result of regular reviews, any measures introduced in response to reviews and updates to the visitor offering at Inis Cealtra Visitor Experience. These updates should be in consultation with the wider stakeholder group and the support of relevant bodies and experts as required.

Table 8: Inis Cealtra Stakeholders

STAKEHOLDER	PRIORITY	ROLES & RESPONSIBILITY
Clare County Council	High	Day to day management & operation of the visitor centre and island Ongoing ecological & heritage conservation monitoring Road infrastructure & car park maintenance
Office of Public Works	High	Day to day conservation management of monuments on the island
National Monuments Service	High	Day to day conservation management of monuments on the island

National Parks and Wildlife Service	High	Advisory role Training provider
Dept of Housing, Heritage & Local Government	High	Conservation & management of the island's heritage assets
Inis Cealtra Community Forum	Medium	Community engagement
Fáilte Ireland	Medium	Funding & marketing support Training provider
Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group	Medium	Marketing support Development of support of businesses
Dept of Rural & Community Development	Medium	Funding agency Training provider
Clare Local Development Company	Low	Funding agency Training provider
Birdwatch Ireland	Low	Advisory role Volunteering support
General public	Low	Visitors and future ambassadors Volunteering support

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