



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications

13. Umeras Peatlands Park - Design Study Introduction

Introduction

- The objective of this presentation by Umeras Community Development is to provide an update on the studies for Umeras Peatlands Park Design Study
- The JTF is funding the Design & Biodiversity Studies while Kildare Leader is funding the Strategic Planning/Feasibility Studies with an objective of developing a new peatlands nature park on the Kildare/Offaly border.
- The design & biodiversity studies were contracted in June 2021 following a formal e-tenders process and will run until the end of May 2022
- Dermot Foley Landscape Architects are undertaking the design study while FERS ecological consultants are undertaking the Biodiversity study



Umeras Community Development

- **Local community group** formed in 2019 to promote Umeras Bog as a nature tourism project – registered as a CLG (<https://umeraspeatlandspark.ie/>).
- **Note 2 spellings: Umeras/Ummeras – local spelling is Umeras**
- **Core committee of local people:** Bernie Duffy (Farmer), Liam Murphy (chartered accountant), Kate Scully (Business) & Eddie Smyth (ecologist/community development expert)
- **Huge local support:** gofundme (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/umeraspeatlandspark>) raised 8,800 euros + 6,000 euros from local councillors (Anne Connolly, Noel Connolly & Kevin Duffy), TDs & senators +1,000 active followers on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/umeraspeatlands>)
- Extensive consultations through 500 leaflets, Facebook & visits by key stakeholders to the bog

Umeras Peatlands Park

County Kildare
LEADER PARTNERSHIP

EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in your future
European Social Fund

Riadas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

€8,810 raised of...

78 donors 466 shares 118 follow

Kevin & Siobh
€125 7 mos

Pat Grattan U
€100 8 mos

LizNed Fitzp
€100 9 mos

Umeras Peatlands Park

Umeras Community Development

Creating a tranquil amenity for local people and tourists

What you can do to support Umeras Peatlands Park?

Spread the word! Check out Umeras Peatlands Park on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Our not-for-profit group aims to raise €5,000 to co-fund a feasibility design study. Can you help? Please contribute to our GoFundMe page, it will make a big difference.

This is a collaborative community project, so please share your ideas for the park.
Email umerascomdev@gmail.com | Visit www.umeraspeatlandspark.ie

gofundme



Umeras Community Development secured funding (approx. €100K) from Just Transition Fund & Kildare Leader for three studies:

- **Tourism Development International (TDI)** to develop a Strategic Plan/Feasibility Study
- **Dermot Foley Ltd.** to complete the Design Study
- **FERS** to develop a biodiversity assessment & plan for the park



County Kildare
LEADER PARTNERSHIP



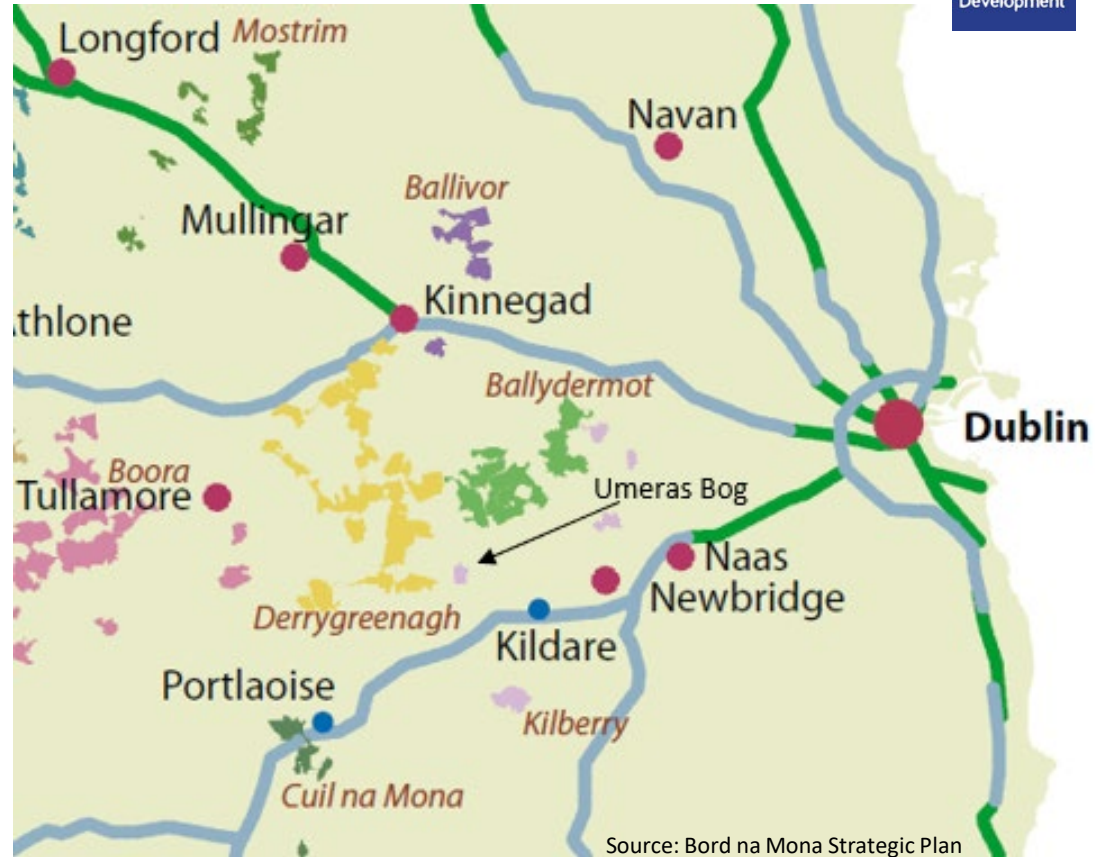
National Just Transition Fund



- Isolated Bord na Móna bog – 300ha out of 80,000ha (0.4%)
- Bord na Móna ceased industrial peat harvesting in 2019 – no fixed strategic use – opportunity to develop bog for a nature tourism project
- Infrastructure includes industrial shed, bog-train station/peat tipper, short railway, wide & safe entrance to public road, parking, electricity & sewage

Umeras Bog

Umeras
Community
Development





Location



- Umeras Bog is part in County Kildare and County Offaly and 1km from County Laois
- Approximately 1km from Barrow Blueway at Umeras Bridge
- In a car: 7 minutes Monasterevin train station, 12 minutes M7 Motorway Junction 14 & 18 Minutes Kildare Village Outlet.
- Located between the Grand Canal NHA and Barrow SAC Floodplain
- Coillte forest on boundary with good roads which could expand attraction

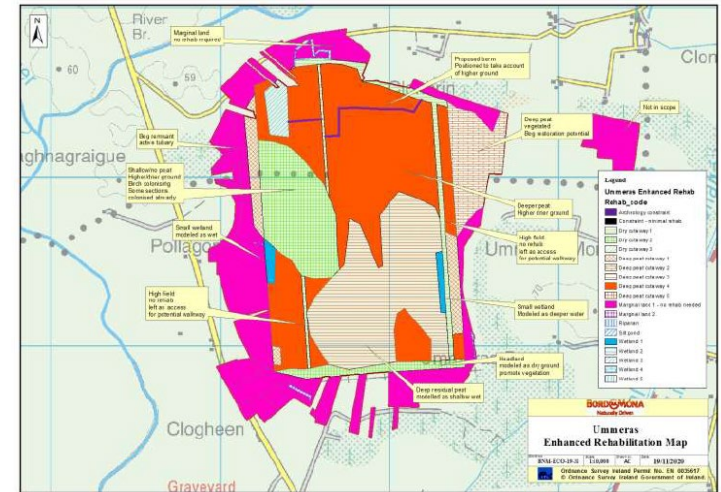


Bord na Móna Rehabilitation

Bord na Móna is currently implementing a Rehabilitation Plan for Umeras Bog

Bord na Móna has recognised the proposal for Umeras Peatlands Park and stated in the Rehabilitation Plan for Umeras Bog that the “long-term amenity aspects **could** include walk and cycleways on the bog as well as lakes, a bog railway and a visitor centre.

The amenity aspect could link to the adjacent Grand Canal. “it is likely that the rehabilitation measures proposed in this plan will be compatible with the potential future development of a peatlands park that has key objectives of amenity and biodiversity. Amenity could be integrated with the post-rehabilitated peatland landscape”.



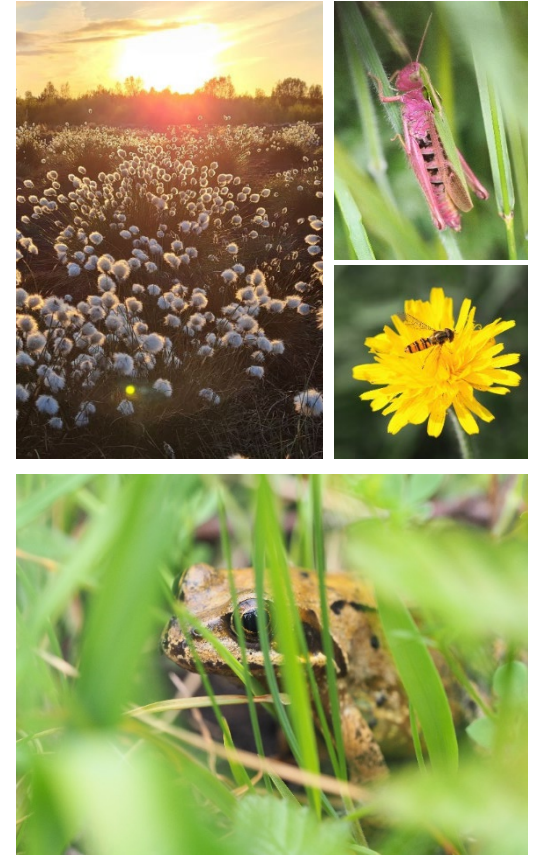
Source: Bord na Mona Rehabilitation Plan for Umeras Bog





Key Findings & Recommendations – FERS Ltd.

- Umeras Bog is adjacent to Barrow SAC floodplain (West & North) and Grand Canal NHA with nationally threatened bird species found on and around bog – curlew, lapwing, hen harrier, whooper swans, golden plover, etc.
- Bord na Mona rewetting of bog will create important new habitat areas and support a diverse range of birds, insects, plants and mammals.
- Site can be designed to maximize biodiversity potential & carbon storage while allowing public to sensitively interact and connect with nature.
- Umeras Bog has huge potential as an educational resource, facilitating people to experience and learn about past, present and future uses of peatlands in Ireland.
- These learning experiences often lead into more active involvement with peatland landscapes for recreation, conservation and restoration e.g. Abbeyleix Bog Project resulting in significant social and environmental benefits.





TDI Outline Recommendations – Phased Approach to Project

• Phase 1 – Initial Creation Phase	Creation of public access, car parking, walking and cycling infrastructure, and visitor information
• Phase 2 – Extension Phase	Extension and intensification of facilities on site + direct link to Blueway
• Phase 3 – Project Maturation Phase	Significant move into visitor welcome and visitor servicing

Key considerations:-

- **Demand Impacts** – Barrow Blueway & “Church of Oak”
- **Funding Availability and Partnership Cooperation**
- **Sustainable approach** – Taking into account site and management capacity

Dermot Foley Recommendation – Phase 1 - Initial Creation Phase

Overall Site & Access



Blueway Connection Options

- A potential connection to the Blueway is via the Umeras Bog Road
Legal advice has confirmed that the road is owned by Waterways Ireland and owners of Land Commission turf banks. There is a Land Commission right-of-way over the Umeras bog road for 'every purpose'.
All the community, including turfcutters, landowners and walkers/cyclists have an equal right to use the road.



Bernard Duffy
Committee Member
Ummeras Community Development
Mountrice
Monasterevin
Co Kildare

Our Ref: PD/AK/SM004-016

Date: 15th October 2021

Re: Issues in relation to Peatlands Park

Dear Bernard,

I am writing further to the above matter.

I confirm the following :-

1. The section of the Ummeras Bog Road nearest the Ummeras bridge is Registry of Deeds Title that appears to be clearly part of the Title of the canal and as such would appear to be owned by Inland Waterways.
2. The part of the Ummeras Bog Road that is within the pink coloured land on the attached map is Land Registry Title and is marked yellow in the Land Registry showing a right of way over it.
3. The part of the Ummeras Bog Road that is over the narrow strips of bog is also marked in yellow showing that a right of way exists over it. I confirm that this is a Land Commission right of way.
4. Therefore, there is a clear and registered Land Commission right of way. I have obtained a copy of an example of the right of way from the Department of Agriculture (copy attached). As can be seen, the wording of the Grant, grants a full right of way "for every purpose". As is often the case with such Land Commission rights of way, the public have been using the Bog Road for a number of years.

Yours sincerely,

Paul D'Arcy
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D'Arcy & Co

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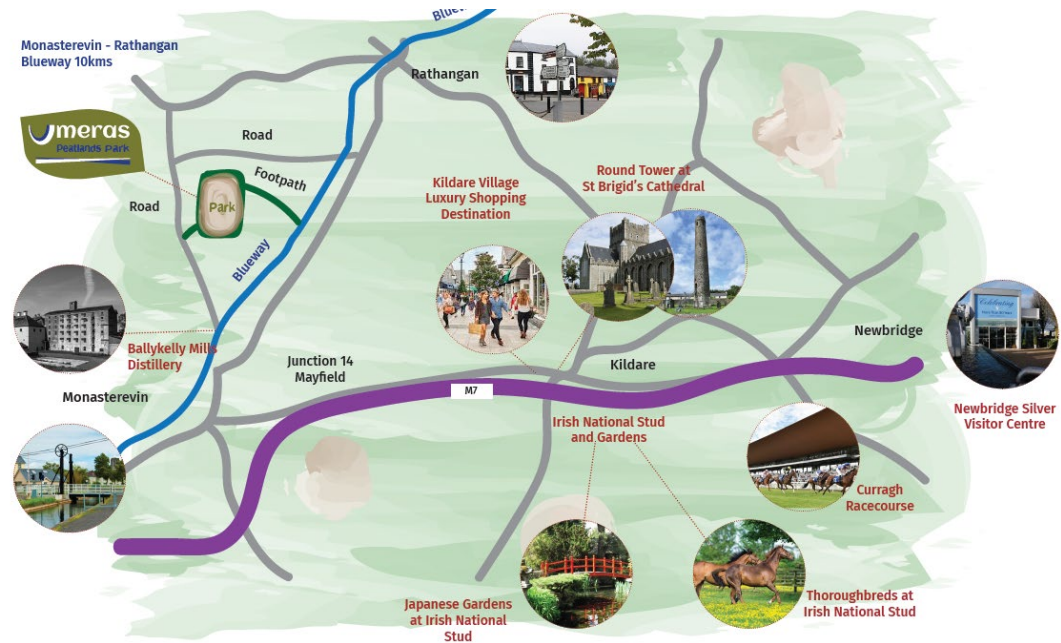


TDI Recommendation – Cluster Development

The full potential of Umeras Peatlands Park will be realised through its positioning as a **core component of a tourism cluster.**

Components of the new Monasterevin- Rathangan tourism cluster:

- Umeras Peatlands Park
- Barrow Blueway
- ‘Church of Oak’ Distillery
- Monasterevin town
- Rathangan town



Tourism Cluster Definition

A cluster development can be a grouping of attractions and activities in a geographic area that is on a readily accessible route or a grouping of attractions and activities that are linked through a common theme or interest.

* Source: ETC/WTO Handbook on Tourism Product Development



Project Consultations

- Umeras Community Development undertook the following consultations activities:
- Printed 500 leaflets in Q3&4 2020 outlining concept of Umeras Peatlands Park and met with local people outside their houses to explain the project
- Established a website and Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/umeraspeatlands> (>1,000 followers)
- TDI has consulted with a wide group of project stakeholders as outlined in their draft Strategic Plan
- Facilitated site visits to Umeras Bog in partnership with Bord na Mona for key stakeholders including Kildare/Offaly/Laois Heritage Officers, IPCC, Birdwatch, political representatives, Kildare Failte, etc.
- **TDI held a community online zoom workshop** on December 13th 2021 where 71 people registered to participate. View at this link:
<https://1drv.ms/v/s!AjB6FgEkYAowjfU49rg2JVL1tIVutQ?e=6G30DA>



TDI Strategic Plan

Funding landscape currently very positive for this project

- **Phased approach** allows for growth and **linked to funding availability**
- Requirements for project **capital funding** and **operational funding**
- Potential project funding sources – to include **infrastructure creation** for activities, interpretation, orientation, Interpretation.
 - Sources – **Just Transition Fund, Fáilte Ireland, LEADER, Rural Regeneration funds, European funds** –Community, Rural.
- Operational funding sources – employment schemes – **TUS, Pobál, CE**
- Funding for training and mentoring - **LEO, Fáilte Ireland, ETB**
- Other - **Volunteering**





TDI – Overall Conclusion

Evidence, conditions and opportunity to create a **successful & sustainable project** at Umeras Peatlands Park

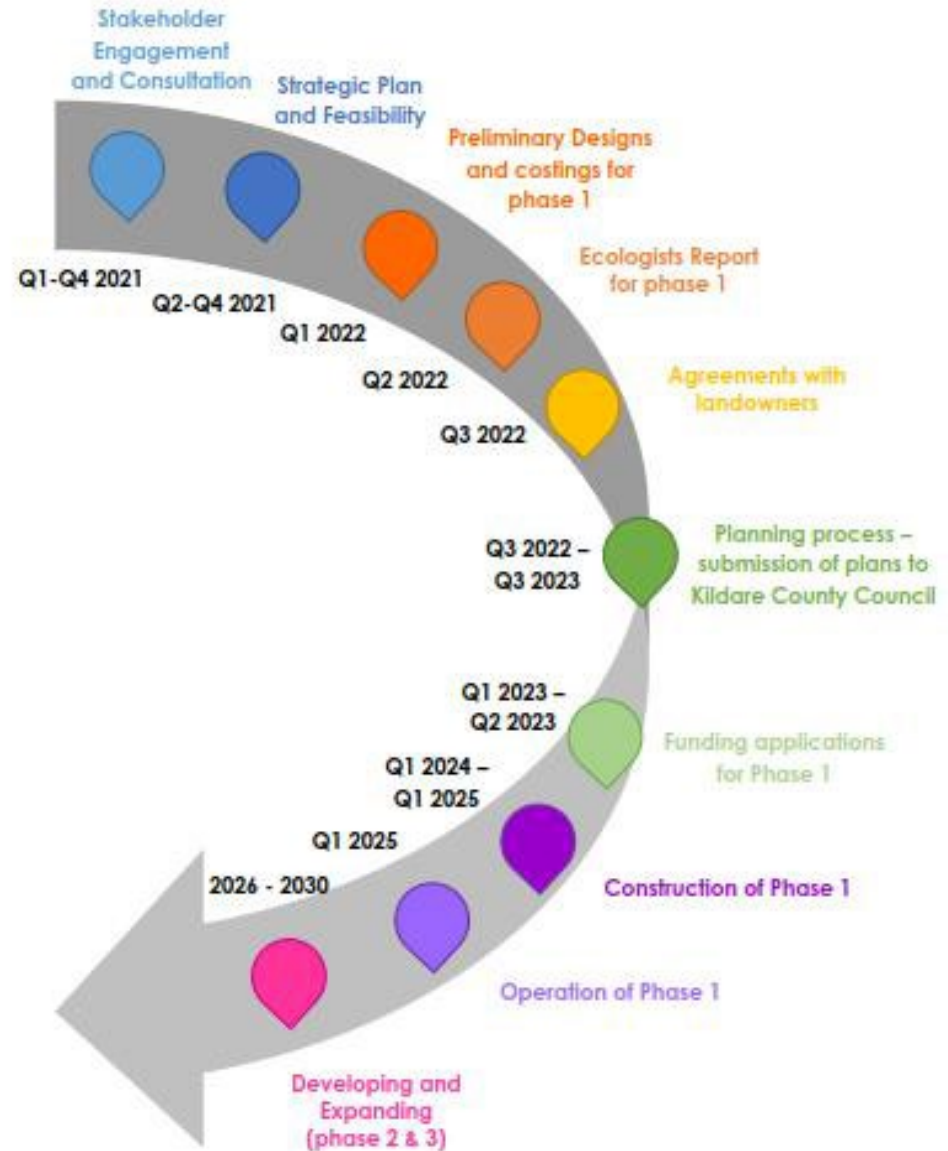
Key Factors

- **Barrow Blueway**
- Post COVID-19 desire for **outdoor experiences, open spaces, nature & environment**
- Increase in demand for **walking & cycling** – national planning to support **activity tourism**
- **Demographics** – ageing & active population and proximity to population centres
- **Just transition** and **Peatlands** initiatives nationally

Strong stakeholder support and strategic approach to project

Next Steps

- TDI to finalize Strategic Planning Study in Q1 2022 – Project Development Map
- Dermot Foley Landscape Architects to complete design study in Q2 2022
- FERS Ecological Consultants to complete biodiversity study in Q2 2022
- Engage with Bord na Mona, County Councils, Coillte & Waterways Ireland on Development of Umeras Peatlands Park



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Just Transition Fund