Strategic Development Plan

Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Project
Ballyglunin Train Station
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A new life for an icon of our past

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Executive Summary

A recent study carried out by the Heritage Council has found that Ireland’s built heritage supports over 30,000 jobs and contributes in excess of €1 billion to the economy. Heritage is not traditionally recognised as a job creator nor as a productive sector. However the research shows unequivocally that the heritage sector is a fundamental contributor to our identity and economy supporting employment across a range of sectors including tourism, agriculture, forestry, and culture.

The reality is that the range and quality of Ireland’s built heritage is a powerful motivating factor for wider tourism and related visitor expenditure, with 1/5 of total visitor expenditure attributable to our historic environment.

The Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Project is now regarded as an essential flagship project for the West of Ireland and has enormous potential to attract large volumes of visitors on an annual basis. This development plan focuses on in a detailed conservation report on the station, architect John Yates describes the station, ancillary buildings and the site surrounding them as “an outstanding example of a typical late 19th Century Railway Station...”. The report states that “efforts should be made to preserve this character for the future.” The project is supported by an energetic team of individuals who have professional expertise in conservation, rural tourism, project management, marketing, engineering, quantity surveying and accounting. Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Project is a registered charity.

Figure 1 The strategic vision for Ballyglunin Train Station focuses on a number of key elements.
The primary objective of the Ballyglunin Community Development Company is to enhance the local environment and conserve the unique natural and built heritage of Ballyglunin whilst developing the local economy through heritage tourism.

This vision builds on the strong linkages that the station has with the international community through both ‘The Quiet Man’ and as an important departure point for many Irish emigrants during the 19th and 20th Centuries. The restoration project has already received important endorsements from Maureen O’Hara and Duncan Stewart.

The waiting area which is most closely associated with ‘The Quiet Man’ and associated rooms in the northern part of the building will be restored to their original state providing interpretation, a genealogical service and gifts to visitors. Guided tours will also be provided to visitors and a highly interactive experience for visitors.

The residential component of the building will become home to a community centre providing a much needed resource for local groups such as the active-elderly, youth club, drama society, mothers and toddlers and musical society.

The goods store will be developed as a regional arts centre providing a venue that can be hired for drama productions, art exhibitions, and music performances. The project will partner with local artists to provide workshops for young people in the area.

The conservation programme proposed in this development plan amounts to a total spend of €240,000. An application is being made to Galway Rural Development for grant aid of 75% of the cost of the project which amounts to €225,000.

It comprises two main elements:

**Restoration/Modernisation Works**

1. Re-slating the natural slate roof of the station building by specialist roofer.
2. Restoration of the internal fabric of the building using conservation building techniques.
3. Plumbing the building to provide modern facilities
4. Rewiring the building to modern standards
5. Installation of sewage treatment plant and associated ground works
6. Restoration of sash windows and existing doors.

**Interpretation**

1. Development of a vision for the station as a visitor attraction.
2. Design of interpretation.

All of the above will be overseen by the project board as well as professionals qualified in conservation architecture, interpretive planning and engineering.
Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide details of the strategic development plan that the Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Committee has developed for the Ballyglunin Train Station. The document provides details of the:

- Current structure of the committee
- Key stakeholders
- Historical and cultural importance of the station
- Proposed end use of the building
- Conservation/modernisation plan

One of the key components required to achieve the goals outlined in this document will be a long-term lease agreement between the Ballyglunin Community Development Company Limited and Coras Iompar Eireann. This document sets out the vision the local community have developed for the Ballyglunin Railway Station.

Background

The Ballyglunin Railway Station is situated 10 kilometres south of Tuam, Co. Galway on the Athenry to Tuam railway line. The station, ancillary buildings and the site surrounding them represent an outstanding example of a typical late 19th Century Railway Station. The platform follows a standard pattern of station buildings used on the Sligo to Limerick line by the Great Southern and Western Railways engineers and builders.

In 1976, the last train past through Ballyglunin Railway Station. Since 2007 the Railway Station has remained uninhabited.

In addition to this historic railway station, Ballyglunin is also home to a number of important heritage sites. The Ballyglunin station and its historic surrounds has the potential to become a catalyst for tourism development in the area.

In 2004 the local community came together to form the Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Project. The objective was to restore the station and its environs to its former glory so that it can be enjoyed by visitors and the local community.
Achievements of the Committee to date

The committee has had many successes since its establishment.

Signal Cabin

The first of these was the restoration of the signal cabin. The signal cabin was overgrown with ivy. The roof was in a poor state while the windows required full restoration. Following a fund raiser and cooperation from the Rural Social Scheme a project to restore the signal cabin started. The results of this restoration project are evident from the following photos which were taken before and after the works took place.

![Before Restoration](image1.jpg) ![Following Restoration](image2.jpg)

The Signal Cabin at Ballyglunin Railway Station before and after restoration by the Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Committee.

Goods Store

The next phase of the restoration programme was the roofing of the Goods Store. This project was crucial to the protection of the beautifully crafted stone walls of the store. The roofing of the Goods Store has given the building an extend life. Otherwise damp ingress and freezing would unquestionably have resulted in the destruction of the building over time.

The committee would like to acknowledge the funding of these projects which came from the Heritage Council, Galway Rural Development and the Rural Social Scheme with matching funding coming from the community following several fund raising events.
Ballyglunin Community Development Company

The Ballyglunin Community Development Company Limited was formed in March 2012. The primary objective of the Company is to enhance the local environment and conserve the unique natural and built heritage of Ballyglunin whilst developing community resources for the area of Ballyglunin.

Mission Statement

To develop the Ballyglunin Train Station as an internationally recognised heritage site that will provide a high quality visitor experience. To promote events at the station that embrace the cultural diversity of the surrounding area.

Core Values of the Ballyglunin Community Development Company

- Community and heritage
- Any works must be carried out in a archaeologically and environmentally sensitive manner
- Minimum intervention and maximum retention
- Work closely with key stakeholders
- Sustainability will be at the core of all activities

Members of the Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Project pictured with supporters in July 2013
Members of the Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Committee

- Micheal Finn (Chairman) - Farmer
- Mark Gibson (Treasurer) – Teagasc Specialist
- Maria Heneghan (Secretary) – Rural Tourism Consultant
- Padraic Mannion - Postmaster
- Peter Cooke (Assistant Treasurer) – Retired publican
- Seamus Nally - CIE
- Martin Delaney – Dept. Agriculture
- David Roche - Museologist
- Joseph Boyle – Conservation Craftsman
- Kathleen Boyle – Nursing Manager
- Maura Flannery – Homemaker
- Peter Roche - Councillor
- Valerie Jackson – Chartered Accountant
- Jerry Quirke – Chartered Engineer
- Mike Flannery – Marketing Executive

Significance of Ballyglunin Railway Station

Ballyglunin, also known as Ballyglooneen, was opened in November 1860 as a station for passenger traffic with a single 225 ft. platform on the east side of the track. It owes its existence undoubtedly to its proximity to Ballyglunin Park, residence of the Blakes, as well as Skerritt’s Brooklodge House and Bodkin’s Annagh House. For customers such as these, a first class service was provided. Around the turn of the century, Robert Blake would regularly have his evening meal cooked in the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin and delivered to Ballyglunin station packed in special ‘hay boxes’, the thermal food containers of the day. A special extra delivery would arrive on the evening mail train if there were guests in residence or a county gathering planned. The station holds special meaning for many of our diaspora. The station was the departure point for many emigrants during the 19th and 20th century.
The Quiet Man

In 1951, the Ballyglunin Railway Station formed part of the setting for the John Forde film, 'The Quiet Man'.

The film opens with the arrival of a returning emigrant by train. The station was named "Castletown" for the film. A special old steam train with two 1920 type carriages left from Tuam railway station each day. The second scene that was shot at Ballyglunin was with Maureen O'Hara. This film has gained iconic status on a global stage and is visited on a daily basis by tourists from all parts of the world.

Conservation Status of the Station Building

The station, site and ancillary buildings have considerable heritage value in both a local and national context. The station building in particular requires immediate conservation and in order to restore its special character. There is now an urgent need for intervention as the building is falling in to a state of dilapidation due to water ingress from the roof.

With the support of Galway Rural Development, in 2006 the Committee commissioned Mr. John Yates, Conservation Architect, to carry out a detailed conservation report on the Railway Station. In his report, Mr. Yates states that “The station, ancillary buildings and the site surrounding them represent an outstanding example of a typical late 19th Century Railway Station..”. The report states that “efforts should be made to preserve this character for the future.”

Objectives for the Ballyglunin Railway Station

Consultation

The Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Committee wants to reignite the charm of this iconic building so that future generations can enjoy it and importantly what it represents.

So far the Committee has successfully carried out conservation works on the Signal Cabin and the Goods Store at Ballyglunin Railway Station. It has become apparent in recent years that unless the station receives urgent attention, there is a significant risk that the building will lose its character forever. Acts of vandalism have resulted in windows being broken on the signal cabin and on the station building. Natural
weathering and aging are also taking their toll. It is widely accepted in the building conservation literature that redundancy is the greatest enemy of any historic building.

**A New Life for the Station**

In the context of the issues outlined above, the Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Committee would like to propose a number of new uses for the Ballyglunin Railway Station. The proposals in this section are the result of detailed consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders. Consultation has taken place through a number of public meetings with the local community, meetings with the heritage department in:

- Galway County Council;
- Galway Rural Development and;
- National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Waterford Institute of Technology have facilitated a focus session with members of the committee and other members of the locality with the aim of developing a consensus on the future use of the station.

**Linkages and Partnerships Developed**
Future Uses

Following this extensive consultation process the Committee would like to propose a multifunctional role for the Ballyglunin Railway Station.

1. **A Community Resource Centre** for the people of Ballyglunin and surrounding areas.
2. **A Tourist Attraction** based on the Station’s previous life as:
   a. a place where hundreds of emigrants left Ireland to seek their fortune
   b. a place where the film ‘The Quiet Man’ was shot in 1951
3. **An Learning facility** to provide interpretation of the past
4. A unique **Events Venue for** Irish and International musicians, theatre companies and other performers.

**Community Resource Centre**

There is a now a definite consensus amongst the community of Ballyglunin that the area is in serious need of a community focal point. At present there is no suitable location nearby for local groups such as the elderly, young mothers, the unemployed, drama groups, music groups. All of these groups have requested use of the station when the restoration programme is complete.
The residential component of the Ballyglunin Railway Station is divided into four rooms with a modern red brick annex adjoining, which houses a small kitchen and bathroom. The red brick annex leads to an open yard with a small store.

In order to make a useable space for the community it is proposed that the residential section of the station building be converted to a community resource centre. This will involve conservation accompanied by some modernisation works. The committee has carried out intensive options analysis on this part of the proposal. As a result of this analysis it is proposed that two internal walls be removed from the residential part of the station. The rationale for this decision is centred upon creating a functional space within the building for a Community Resource Centre. If the restored building fails to meet the functional requirements of the community it will not be used thus negating efforts to ensure the building’s survival.

Visitor Attraction

Tourism is critically important to the west, with the accommodation and food services sector being one of the main employers. Visitor expenditure indirectly supports retail, food producers, transport and other service sectors.

In 2010 over one million overseas tourists visited the West of Ireland. The tourist industry is worth over €2m annually to the region and is particularly popular amongst European tourists who make up 37% of the total visitors. British visitors are in second place with 34% while the USA delivered 22% of our tourists in 2010. 62% of our European visitors were on their first trip and aged between 25 and 45 years in 2010. (West encompasses Galway, Mayo and Roscommon).

Our British tourists are either Irish born (28%), or repeat visitors to Ireland (61%). More than half were over 45 years of age and the majority were white collar worker and more than a quarter were professionals/ managers. 33% of USA tourists who visited the West were on coach tours.

The Ballyglunin Railway Station is an official stop on the Atlantic Film Trail.

It is worth noting that the 10 top visitor attractions in the West in 2010 are heritage based:
- Dún Aonghasa Galway had 109,361 visitors
- Céide Fields, Mayo 26,196 visitors
- Aughnanure Castle, Galway 23,976 visitors
- Ballintubber Abbey, Mayo 20,000 visitors
- Arigna Mining Experience Roscommon 18,444, visitors
- Brigit’s Garden Galway 17,000 visitors
- Portumna Castle Galway 15,428, visitors
- Knock Museum, Mayo 15,231, visitors
- Athenry Castle, Galway 11,504, visitors
- King House, Roscommon 10,104, visitors

Ballyglunin has been bestowed with a wealth of heritage and history. The area received international attention following the filming of the famous John Forde film ‘The Quiet man’ in 1951. Since the film was released, the Ballyglunin Railway Station has been beamed across the global.

In a recent interview with RTE, actor Maureen O’Hara said "You have no idea what the film means in the whole world… You can go to China, you go to Japan, you go to South America, you go to Argentina in particular - where everybody thinks they’re Irish - and all they talk about it..

The Yates Report states that the “building and surrounding site are sufficiently extant to be considered of interest to rail heritage groups and also to film heritage groups and tourists who value its historic connection to the Hollywood greats of John Wayne and Maureen O’Hara in its use as a location for the movie ‘The Quiet Man’”.

The Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Project would like to build on the international linkages that the station has with film enthusiasts, Irish Diaspora and those wishing to experience the heritage of the area. The station will offer a unique experience to visitors allowing them to retrace the footsteps of the cast of the Quiet Man. The visitor centre will also offer a genealogical service which will allow visitors retrace their connections with the area. A detailed plan is being devised for this aspect of the building.

Learning facility

The Ballyglunin Railway Station is unique due to the fact that it has been inhabited and maintained until recent years. This has ensured that the building and most of its...
original features have been preserved for the current generation to appreciate and understand.

The station offers enormous potential as an educational activity for all levels of education in Ireland and Europe. It has tremendous importance as a location where many emigrants first set out on the journey to leave Ireland. This will be a key component of the interpretation plan for the station. The Community Resource Centre will act as a training hub for the locality providing a venue which will host essential courses for local business and the community.

**Event Venue**

Ballyglunin Railway Restoration project has already hosted a stage play at the station. Maurice Walsh’s The Quiet Man was kindly donated to the restoration project by playwright Frank Mahon. The event was a complete success and attracted over 600 people from all over the world to Galway over one weekend in July 2013. Staging this play has opened up endless possibilities for the hosting of multiple events on an annual basis.

**Film Location**

Over the past 20 years Ireland has played host to a number of very successful international productions such as Braveheart, Saving Private Ryan, Michael Collins and more recently Harry Potter. The images of Ireland portrayed in these films are screened all over the world and are a huge contributing factor to tourists visiting Ireland. Following the filming of The Quiet Man in 1951, images of Ireland were beamed all over the world attracting thousands of visitors.

The Committee believe that when the restoration programme has been completed, the Ballyglunin Railway Station will be a strong contender as a top film location in Ireland. This will boost the appeal of the station to potential visitors and increase tourism numbers.

**Rural Social Scheme**

Galway Rural Development also manages the Rural Social Scheme (RSS). We have met on site with representatives from the RSS who have given a strong commitment to support the project. This commitment will come in the form of labour. The committee has developed a work schedule for the RSS. It is expected that there will be significant
input by the RSS into the restoration of the station. An additional advantage to working with the RSS is that all participants of the Scheme are fully insured while on site.

**Conservation proposals for the Station Building**

As stated in its core values, the Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Committee is committed to the conservation philosophy of ‘minimum intervention and maximum retention’. The station building is in urgent need of restoration. Otherwise there is significant risk that the character of the building will be committed to history.

The Committee is working closely with Mr. Jerry Quirke, a Consulting Civil & Structural Engineer who lives in the Ballyglunin area. Mr. Quirke has extensive experience in working with listed buildings. In conjunction with the conservation report produced by Mr. John Yates, Mr. Quirke has developed a detailed list of conservation and modernisation works to be carried out on the station building. Mr. Quirke has also met with Ms. Mairin Doddy, Conservation Officer with Galway County to discuss these plans.

The Yates Report clearly states that “Carrying out a schedule of repairs for the building is both justified and could be implemented with sufficiently low impact upon the building fabric which has been kept in a relatively well maintained state by the current owners, the CIE Group of Companies”

The current layout of the main station building is well suited to two separate uses. The building is separated by a main dividing wall. To the South of the dividing wall is the residential part of the building. To the North of the dividing wall is the waiting room and associated offices and store rooms. (Plan drawing on page 9). It is proposed that the residential component of the station building be restored to act as a multifunctional community resource centre. It is also proposed that the waiting room and associated rooms to the north of the dividing wall be restored to their original splendour. This will facilitate this part of the building being used for interpretation for educational and tourism purposes.

The station offers huge potential as an educational activity for all levels of education
Summary of Structural Plan

The main structural changes being proposed:

1. Restoration of new window back to its original state as a double door.
2. Deconstruction of the red brick annex and replace with flat roof over entire yard area. The red brick annex is a relatively recent addition to the station building and has little conservation value. It is proposed that this area is roofed below exterior wall level thus providing space for a utility area, kitchen and toilets.
4. Re-wire the building.
5. Upgrade plumbing where required.
6. Insulate roof.
7. Install treatment plant.

Summary of Conservation Measures

The main conservation aspects being proposed:

1. Repair roof timbers and slates.
2. Restore sash windows throughout.
3. Reinstate fascias and soffits.
4. Repair gutters.
5. Repair ceilings with lath and lime plaster where required.
6. Strip unstable paint from interior and exterior walls and repaint.
7. Repair interior walls with lime plaster where required.
8. Restore floor boards where required.
9. Repair under floor ventilation.
10. Install heating system.