

Visitor Management Proposal

An Rath - Cahermore



GeoparkLIFE:
Tourism for Conservation

INTRODUCTION

Pressures on heritage attractions are increased through visitor promotion in tourism destinations.

Changes occur in visitor numbers, popularity of sites and pressures on attractions over time.

Good management must be able to recognise and measure these changes and adapt appropriately to implement effective conservation practice while ensuring visitor satisfaction.

Only through understanding all the pressures that impact on an attraction can effective management actions be designed and implemented.

Initial management decisions are often made with a degree of uncertainty as to the future impact of the action proposed. Adaptive management is a structured process which can reduce this uncertainty over time through continuous monitoring, reviewing of the changes and adaptation of actions where required. Through the implementation of this process the management team become very familiar with all the integrated aspects of the site and can adapt their actions quickly to address negative changes.

The Burren & Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE programme developed a set of guides, toolkits and case studies to facilitate tourism destination managers to reconcile tourism development with the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. Included in the toolkits are a Heritage Site Visitor Management Plan Template and a Heritage Site Monitoring app and portal website.

<http://www.burrengeopark.ie/geopark-life/guides-and-toolkits/>

The Heritage Site Visitor Management toolkit development was based on practical application at seven demonstration sites within the Burren region. This document has been compiled to illustrate the practical use of the toolkit for the An Rath-Cahermore demonstration site and to provide a Visitor Management Planning Proposal for the attractions located within this site.

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GeoparkLIFE Sites and Monuments Co-Ordinator

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SECTION ONE: SITE IDENTIFICATION

1.1. Name and Location

Site Name An Rath-Cahermore

Townland Ballyallaban

An Rath

ITM E 522382

ITM N 705019

Cahermore

ITM E 521980

ITM N 704499

OS Discovery Series Sheet No. 51

OS 6 - inch Series Sheet No. CL005

Site location map.



Map 1: Location of An Rath and Cahermore sites marked in red

SECTION TWO: SITE SIGNIFICANCE

2.1. Site type and features

An Rath, a medieval earthen ringfort and Cahermore, a medieval stone fort, are two separate archaeological monuments located in the townland of Ballyallaban. The distance between the monuments is approximately 0.6km. Both monuments are located on the west side of the regional road R480 and are separated by two pasture fields. An Rath, the most northerly monument is located approximately 3km south of Ballyvaughan.

An Rath is considered to be a medieval earthen ringfort, although no excavation has taken place on this site. Ringforts, which are single protected homesteads, are the most common class of archaeological monument in Ireland. They can date from the Bronze Age to the late Medieval, with the majority belonging to the Early Medieval Period. There may be as many as 450 ringforts throughout the Burren (Jones, C. 2004) although the majority are surrounded by circular stone walls as opposed to earthen banks and are referred to as *cahers*.

An Rath is a well-preserved ringfort, enclosed by a large single steep earthen bank of approximately 2m internally and up to 4.7m externally to the South-west. Situated on a slightly raised area it has commanding views except to the south and southwest. A gap in the north-east section of the bank, of approximately 1m in width, provides access to the central area (lios). A second gap in the bank occurs in the North-west. A mature stand of Beech trees grow on top of the bank. A flat bottomed deep outer ditch (fosse) surrounds the bank. The fosse can become waterlogged during the wetter seasons of the year. The central lios is approximately 37m in diameter and there are the foundations of a rectangular structure in the south-west quadrant. There is no historical data available for this site and without archaeological excavation it is impossible to date it accurately or know anything of its occupation.



Photo 1: Lintelled medieval gateway at Cahermore

It is located at a slightly higher elevation than An Rath and is enclosed by two concentric walls approximately 30-45m apart with radial walls extending from the inner to the outer wall at the north-west, west and south-west. The inner wall is up to 2-3m in thickness and is built of two faces of fitted blocks with rubble stone centre. It encloses the lios which is approximately 50m in diameter. Within the inner lios are the foundations of several structures. In the south, close to the inner wall, are the remains of a sub rectangular building. A possible hut site, consisting of a number of grass covered stones, is located in the north of the lios. The collapsed remains of a possible two rectangular enclosures are located against the wall in the north-west. The outer concentric walls of the caher are less substantial and hidden by hazel scrub.

A lintelled stone and mortared gateway (width 1.6m), with a single small chamber at each side, provides entrance to the interior of the Caher from the east. This gateway was excavated in June 1999 following the collapse of the lintel <https://www.excavations.ie/report/1999/Clare/0003919/>. The excavation revealed that the structures around the entrance were a 14th/15th century addition to the pre-existing fort. A scallop shell from below the foundations was radiocarbon dated to AD 1308. The lintel was replaced and the entranceway consolidated in 2001. In recent years the OPW installed a wooden viewing platform in the west section of the fort which provides a view over the Ballyvaughan valley.

An Rath ringfort is surrounded by agricultural fields of improved grassland which are grazed by cattle and enclosed by low stone walls and hedgerows of hawthorn and briar. A treeline of hawthorn, briar, ash and hazel separates the fields from the R480 road. The interior of the ringfort contains an irregular covering of grass which is maintained short by cutting. The fosse contains water at certain times of the year and it supports some wetland species including locally abundant reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and willow herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). The outer banks of the ringfort which slope into the fosse support a damp habitat inhabited by ferns, mosses and several woodland flowers.

A treeline of mature Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees grows on the top of the earthen enclosing bank of the ringfort. The trees are approximately 150 years old. It is likely that these were planted by a local landowner creating a landscape feature of the ringfort.

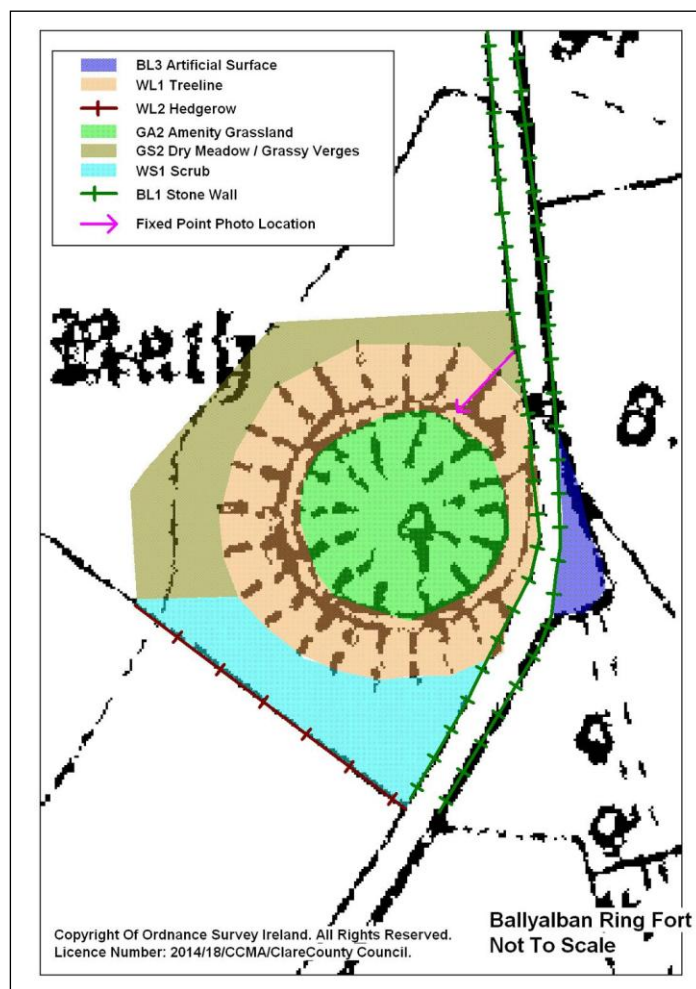


Figure 1: Habitat Map of An Rath, Ballyalban (EirEco Ecological Consultants 2014) produced for GeoparkLIFE



Cahermore is located on limestone pavement with a shallow soil covering. The site is surrounded by hazel scrub interspersed with ash and holly and rock outcrops. The interior of the monument supports dry calcareous grassland, briars and hazel scrub. The grass is regularly cut and the hazel scrub has been cut back in recent years.

Photo 2: Vegetation cover in the interior of Cahermore

2.2. Specific Features of Visitor Interest

The medieval monuments of An Rath and Cahermore are located adjacent to the busy tourism route, the R480 road, which passes through the centre of the Burren. Attractions along this route include Aillwee Cave Visitor Centre, Poul nabrone Portal Tomb, Caherconnell Visitor Centre and Carran Medieval Church. The route is used by coach tours and individual travellers, mainly travelling by car.

An Rath is of visitor interest as it consists of an earthen medieval ringfort with a well preserved bank and fosse plan. Cahermore is of interest due to its well preserved inner walls, the remains of hut sites within the lios, the reconstructed medieval gateway and the viewing platform. The easy and free accessibility of both sites adjacent to a main tourism route (with several other attractions along its length) attract visitors and this is especially true at An Rath where this has led to it being included in several daytrip coach companies' itineraries.

2.3. Regional Context of the Site

An Rath and Cahermore are two of the early medieval settlement sites which occur in the Burren region. It is estimated that there may be as many as 450 ringforts in the region (Jones, 2004). They are generally known as 'forts' but this is a misleading term as their main function was as a defended farmstead. Because of the rocky terrain of the Burren, most of these structures are built of stone and known as 'cahers'. An Rath is unusual in being an earthen structure. Although this type of monument is given a general date of Early Medieval, without excavation the date of construction is uncertain. It is believed in some areas, such as the Burren, where Gaelic rule survived well into the Late Medieval, this type of structure may well have a much later date. This is the case at Cahermore where the gateway dates to the 14th-15th century and indicates that this caher was in use into a very late time period.

2.4. Associated local Folklore and /or Traditions

There is no published folklore or traditions associated with either of these sites.

2.5. Associated Placenames and their meanings

Ballyallaban (Baile Albóin) is the townland within which both An Rath and Cahermore are located. Bally (Baile) refers to the town or homestead - but the origin of the term 'Allaban' is unknown (Source: www.logainm.ie – the Placenames Commission of Ireland). Locally it has been translated as the 'town of the Scots man' but there is no validated basis for this translation.

2.6. Reports/Research

CAAS Ltd. 2015 '*Pilot Visitor Observation Studies of Environmental Impacts at the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Co. Clare*'. GeoparkLIFE project, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Clare County Council.

Fitzpatrick, M. 1999 'Cathair Mór, Ballylabban Clare'
<https://www.excavations.ie/report/1999/Clare/0003919/>

Frost, James, 1893 '*The History and Topography of County Clare*'

Hector, Z. (2015) '*An Rath- Cahermore Site Assessment Report*' GeoparkLIFE, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Clare County Council. <http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/An-Rath-Cahermore-Site-Assessment-Report.pdf>

Jones C. 2004 '*The Burren and the Aran Islands – Exploring the Archaeology*' Collins Press, Cork

Lewis, S. 1837 '*County Clare: A History and Topography*'

Millward Brown 2015 '*Burren & Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE Programme Visitor Survey*' Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Clare County Council.
<http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Milward-Brown-Visitor-Survey.pdf>

O'Donovan J., Curry, E. 1839 '*Ordnance Survey Letters*'

Saunders, J. 2015 '*Buses in the Burren 2014 – A study of the Impacts and Issues*' Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark <http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Burren-Coach-Tourism-Study-Final-Report.pdf>

Westropp T.J. 1916 '*Archaeology of the Burren – Prehistoric Forts and Dolmens in North Clare*'

SECTION THREE: BASELINE SITE CONDITION ASSESSMENT (2014)

The site condition data presented in this section has been compiled through the GeoparkLIFE baseline survey of An Rath-Cahermore in 2014. <http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/An-Rath-Cahermore-Site-Assessment-Report.pdf> and is presented in the format developed for the GeoparkLIFE Heritage Site Visitor Management Plan template.

3.1. Approach to the Site

Both monuments (An Rath and Cahermore) are located on the west side of the regional road R480 and are separated by two pasture fields. The northerly start of the R480 is located approximately 1.5km south of Ballyvaughan, as a branch off the N67. An Rath is located approximately 1km south of this point and Cahermore is a further 0.6km south.



Figure 2: Aerial view of An Rath-Cahermore site

Is there directional road signage to the site?

If yes, enter the ITM co-ordinates for its location

What is the condition of the signage?

Timescale for action required

Yes ☐ No ☒

Click here to enter text.

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

Is there a roadside site name sign present?

If yes, enter the ITM co-ordinates for its location

What is the condition of the signage?

Is the sign damaged?

If yes, describe the damage and its cause

Timescale for action required

Yes ☐ No ☒

Click here to enter text.

Click here to enter text.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Choose an item.

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Are there parking facilities available at the site?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, is it

Official ☐ Unauthorised ☒

How many spaces are currently available?

Approx. 3 car spaces at each site

How many spaces are reserved for disabled visitors?

0

Enter the number of spaces available for

Coaches 0

Cars 3

Motor Bikes 0

Push bicycles 0

There is no official parking area for either monument. Visitors to An Rath generally park on the hard shoulder of the road opposite the site, in an area which is part of a private gateway entrance to a residential house. Approximately three cars or one coach can park in this area at any one time, but may cause obstruction to the house entrance gateway.



Figure 3: Aerial view of An Rath with coach parked opposite the site, on hard shoulder in front of private entrance.



Photo 3: Unofficial parking space on hard shoulder outside private entrance gate opposite An Rath.

The entrance to the Cahermore monument is located on a sharp bend in the road. There is a small gravelled hard shoulder area directly outside the entrance stile to the site. This area can accommodate up to three cars or one coach.



Figure 4: Aerial view of Cahermore with vehicle parked on hard shoulder of sharp road bend adjacent to stile entrance to site.



Photo 4: Unofficial hard shoulder parking area outside roadside entrance to Cahermore.

Are the current parking facilities adequate?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If no, what is the estimated number of spaces required for

[Coaches](#) [Click here to enter text.](#)

[Cars](#) 10

[Motor Bikes](#) [Click here to enter text.](#)

[Push bicycles](#) [Click here to enter text.](#)

3.2. Site Entry

Select the site entrance type

| Gate | Stile | Gap in wall | Other |
|------|-------|-------------|--------------------------|
| | ✓ | ✓ | If other, please specify |

Is there an access Path?

Yes ✓ No ☐

If yes, specify

the surface covering

Gravel

the incline

Medium

Are there steps present?

Yes ✓ No ☐

If yes, specify how many

Visitors access An Rath by climbing over a two-step wooden stile into the north-east of the site. They then can pass through the gap in the earthen bank to the interior of the fort.

Access to Cahermore from the roadway is via a narrow gap in the surrounding stone wall. The visitor then walks along a medium incline gravel path to the medieval entrance gate into the interior



Photo 5: Two-step stile entrance from R480 into An Rath



Photo 6: Narrow gap in wall entrance to Cahermore

Are there resting points along the path?

Yes ☐ No ✓

If yes, specify the type and number

Click here to enter text.

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Are there areas of erosion along the path/trail?

Yes ☒ No ☐



Photo



Due to visitor footfall the entrance to the interior of An Rath and the top of the surrounding bank of the ringfort have been badly eroded and are generally devoid of vegetation. The roots of the trees are exposed along the enclosure bank due to this visitor pressure.

Additional Comments re Site Entry

The roadside entrance to both monuments, An Rath and Cahermore, is a serious safety issue.

An Rath is located on a winding corner and visibility is limited for visitors crossing the road.

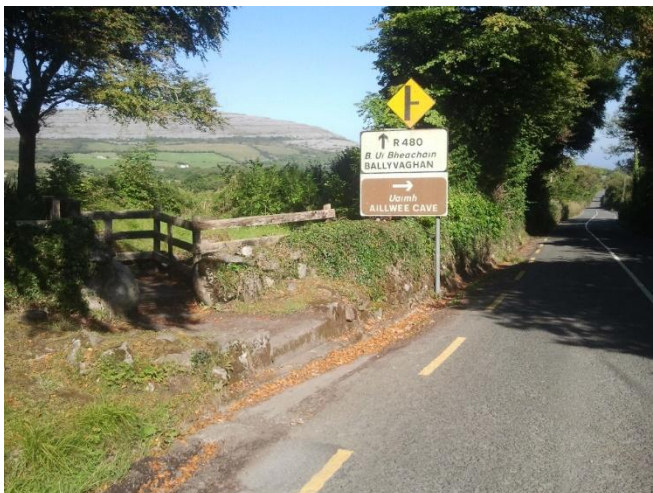


Photo 9: Entrance to An Rath from the R480

The entrance to Cahermore is located on a very sharp almost 90° bend in the road. Traffic approaching from the north must cross the road to the hard shoulder to park. As they do this they are not visible to approaching traffic from the



south as the sightlines are too tight.

Photo 10: Sightline looking south on R470 from hard shoulder at Cahermore

Photo 11: Narrow gap entrance from hard shoulder to Cahermore site

3.3. Way Finding

3.3.1. Site Signage

Specify the type of **on-site signage** present

| Directional | Interpretive | Health & Safety | Fógra | Private Property | Environmental Information | Other |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| | ✓ | | ✓ | | | If other, please specify |

The only signage provided at An Rath is a standard Fógra notice stating that the site is a National Monument under State Care.

In addition to the standard Fógra notice at Cahermore, a standard OPW lectern style interpretive panel is located close to the medieval entrance gateway into the interior of the Caher. The text is bilingual (Irish and English) and provides a brief account of the date, function and structure of the monument with line illustrations of the original gateway and an aerial plan of the site. The text and illustrations are faded and the panel needs updating.

Note any damaged signs and fill in the following table

| Type of sign | Location (ITM E; ITM N) | Damage description | Source of Damage | Action Required | Timescale for Action required |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Interpretive | | Text is faded and sign is discoloured | Natural | Replacement of sign with updated interpretation | 2-6 months |



Photo 12: Interpretive panel at Cahermore (2014)

Additional Comments re on-site signage

There is no on-site information with regard to An Rath. On-site interpretation, similar to that provided for Cahermore should be installed. This interpretation should also provide information to the visitor with regard to erosive damage being caused to the bank of the ringfort from footfall and requesting the visitor to refrain from walking along the top of the bank.

3.3.2. Restrictions to Visitor Access

Note any **restrictions on access** that may cause difficulty for the visitor as they move around the site filling the detail into the following table.

| Description of restriction on access | Location (ITM E; ITM N) | Difficulty caused | Action Required | Timescale for Action |
|--|-------------------------|--|---|----------------------|
| Narrow entrance gap at road entrance to Cahermore | 522009 704550 | Difficult for less abled bodied to enter due to narrow nature of gap in stone wall | Review entrance style and replace with more universally accessible design | 6-12 months |
| Dangerous location of entry way to An Rath – located on corner with limited sightlines | 522416 705022 | Safety issue in terms of visitors crossing the road at this point and gathering on edge of roadway waiting to enter over the wooden stile in single file | Review entrance location and determine safer option | Immediate |

3.3.3. On Site Visitor Facilities

Note any on-site visitor facilities

| Guides | Site Warden | Toilets | Coffee Shop | Viewing Platform | Other |
|--------|-------------|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | ✓ | If other, please specify |



A viewing platform is provided within the main enclosure at Cahermore. This provides the visitor with a view across the Ballyvaughan valley.

Photo 13: Viewing Platform at Cahermore

Note any damage to any facilities and take photographs. Provide written detail in the table below.

| Facility type | Location (ITM E; ITM N) | Description of damage | Action Required | Timescale for Action |
|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | | | | |

The viewing platform is in good condition (2014).

3.4. Structural Condition

As previously mentioned in Section 3.2 the top of the embankment at An Rath has been badly eroded by visitor footfall. There are also two breaches in the embankment – one of which may be an original entry way.

The outer stone walls at Cahermore are not discernible due to hazel scrub growth. The inner wall is collapsed in sections and can come under pressure due to visitors climbing onto the structure. However the monument is visited and inspected on a regular basis by OPW staff and the interior vegetation is maintained mown.

3.5. Visitor Numbers

3.5.1. Bus Survey

As part of the GeoparkLIFE '*Buses in the Burren 2014 – A study of the Impacts and Issues*' (Saunders, J. 2015), the access routes and direction of travel of buses in the Burren was determined for July 17, 2014 by undertaking a driver/guide survey at the Cliffs of Moher and combining the results with data from a Clare County Council Road Traffic Census carried out on the same day. The results showed that 48 buses travelled along the R480 on this day (10 public day trips, 38 private tours). The study indicated that an estimated 45,000 visitors were brought to An Rath by coach in 2014 and 5,000 to Cahermore. This estimate is based on (a) 3 days of counting across seasons for this study and (b) analysis of day trip bus figures.

<http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Burren-Coach-Tourism-Study-Final-Report.pdf>

3.5.2. Footfall Counters

The GeoparkLIFE project installed a footfall counter inside the road entry stile to An Rath and inside the stile entrance from the road at Cahermore, on September 11, 2014 to measure visitor numbers and times of visit. Data is collected and analysed on a regular basis by GeoparkLIFE staff and shared with relevant site managers. Between September 2014 and August 2015, the number of people recorded as entering An Rath was 18,209 while during the same period 5,697 entered the Cahermore site. (Detailed numbers in Table 2 page 25)

3.6. Visitor Attitudes

A Visitor Attitudes Survey was conducted at An Rath and Cahermore between 5th September and 11th October 2014 as part of a wider survey of all seven GeoparkLIFE project demonstration sites. <http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Milward-Brown-Visitor-Survey.pdf> 42 people were interviewed at An Rath and 34 at Cahermore. The purpose of this survey was to record visitor's attitudes to the infrastructure at both sites and to the wider Burren.

The results for An Rath indicate that:

- 2% of visitors interviewed gave a rating of between 8-10 for signposting to the site (1 being poor and 10 high):
- 50% rated physical entry between 8 and 10
- 43% rated parking facilities between 8 and 10
- 57% arrived by car to the site; 26% on coach day tour; 5% on a guided coach tour and 7% on a private chauffeur tour.
- 21% noticed the information; 67% read them entirely and 11% partially; of those that read the boards 14% felt that they added to their understanding of the Burren.
- 19% were very satisfied with the site and 76% were satisfied.

The results for Cahermore indicate that:

- 6% of visitors interviewed gave a rating of between 8-10 for signposting to the site (1 being poor and 10 high):
- 83% rated physical entry between 8 and 10
- 47% rated parking facilities between 8 and 10

- 54% arrived by car to the site; 15% on coach day tour; 6% on a guided coach tour and 6% on a private chauffeur tour.
- 97% noticed the information; 64% read them entirely and 6% partially; of those that read the boards 94% felt that they added to their understanding of the Burren.
- 62% were very satisfied with the site and 35% were satisfied

(Full results: Appendix I)

3.7. Visitor Behaviour and Impacts

3.7.1. Visitor Behaviour Observations

Two sets of Visitor observations were carried out at Cahermore in September 2014 under the GeoparkLIFE project to determine visitor movement around the site and how visitor behaviour is impacting on the site.

- On the 6 September 2014 visitor observations were undertaken as part of the CAAS Ltd.¹ study to assist GeoparkLIFE to develop a survey methodology for assessing environmental impacts at Burren visitor sites. Seven visitors were observed during this exercise at Cahermore. The results indicate that
 - 100% of visitors arrived by car
 - Low level activities² were undertaken by all visitors (resting, reading, picnicking, sightseeing)
 - No impacts on the site were observed

<http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CAAS-Monitoring-Report.pdf>

- On 9 September 2014, visitor observations were carried out by GeoparkLIFE using the methodology employed by CAAS Ltd. Observations were made from 9.30am to 4.30pm. Ten visitors were observed at Cahermore during this time. The results indicate that:
 - Mode of transport used was Car 64%; Push bike 27%; Motorbike: 9%
 - Average time spent at the site was 19 minutes
 - Average time reading information boards – 1 minute 25 seconds
 - Low level activities undertaken were walking (35%) photography (27%) viewing landscape (18%) picnicking (9%)
 - Observed Impacts were 1 Car parked on grass verge; 1 couple went off designated trail to sit on rock (approx. distance 20m); 2 Walking on walls; 1 using site as toilet stop.

(Full results: Appendix II)

¹ CAAS Ltd. 2015 'Pilot Visitor Observation Studies of Environmental Impacts at the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Co. Clare'.

² Activities categorisation: Low Level – activity for which the site was intended; Medium Level – activities, often incidental, depending on site management whereby the visitor engages in behaviour that may result in an effect; High Level – Activity where visitors engage in behaviour that is likely to have an effect on the site but may not be directly linked to a high impact.

3.7.2. Ecological Impacts of Visitor Movement

Baseline habitat mapping was carried out in May and September 2014 as part of the *'Buses in the Burren 2014 – A study of the Impacts and Issues'* (Saunders, J. 2015) to determine the impact or vulnerability of the impact of bus stop-over activity on the ecological environment. An Rath was one of the locations assessed. The An Rath site was rated as *'Localised degree of negative impact, but slight and capable of rapid recovery (Fair condition)'*

As part of the CAAS Visitor Observation Study, EirEco Environmental Consultants were commissioned to carry out vegetation monitoring at the GeoparkLIFE demonstrations sites between October 21, 2014 and December 2, 2014. Vegetation was analysed in 1m² quadrats at pre-selected locations identified by CAAS in each site. Four quadrat surveys were conducted at the Cahermore site as illustrated in Figure 5 below. A quadrat survey was not conducted at An Rath.



Figure 5: Ecological survey quadrat locations Cahermore

The following is an extract from the ecological survey report for Cahermore and An Rath (EirEco 2014):

'The habitat surrounding Cahermore is primarily hazel scrub while within the ringfort is open grassland habitat. The grassland is maintained by strimming and was cut shortly before the survey was undertaken. There is a well compacted desire line from the entrance in the eastern side of the ringfort towards the wooden viewing platform which is located on the opposite side of the fort. Because of the ringfort walls and the surrounding hazel scrub, few visitors appear to move outside of the enclosure and there is no evidence of impact on the surrounding vegetation.'

At An Rath there is a well-defined pathway around the top of the earthen mound which is devoid of vegetation but is being contained by the exposed roots of the mature beech trees that line the ringfort. While the roots are showing some signs of surface damage, this is superficial and will not impact on the longevity of the trees. The vegetation within the ringfort is of low species diversity due to the heavy shade and is also mown regularly by the OPW. The vegetation surrounding the ringfort consists of a wetland community in the peripheral ditch with scrub adjacent scrub. These show no evidence of impact.'

SECTION FOUR: SITE MANAGEMENT

4.1. Ownership

Name of Site Owner(s)

Office of Public Works

Name of Site Manager(s)

Office of Public Works

4.2. Legal Properties

Are there any Rights of Way on the site?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Provide detail

Both archaeological monuments of An Rath and Cahermore are designated National Monuments in State Care and are managed by the Office of Public Works, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. As such, these monuments are accessible to the general public.

Are there any Legal Burdens on the site?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Provide detail

[Click here to enter text.](#)

4.3. Protective Designations

Is the site a designated National Monument?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, what is its status?

National Monument in State Care
National Monument Number: 648

Are any feature(s) of your site recorded in the:

(a) Record of Monument and Places (RMP)

Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, insert its Registration Number

CL005-094002- (Cahermore),
CL005-040----(An Rath)

(b) Record of Protected Structure (RPS)

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, insert its Registration Number

[Click here to enter text.](#)

(c) National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, insert its Registration Number

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Is the site located within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, insert the name of the ACA

[Click here to enter text.](#)

If the site contains natural heritage features are they within the following designated areas?

(a) Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, insert the Site Name and Code

Cahermore is located within Moneen Mountain SAC (Site Code: 000054).
The land surrounding and including An Rath is not designated.

(b) Special Protection Area (SPA)

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, insert the Site Name and Code

[Click here to enter text.](#)

(c) Natural Heritage Area (NHA or pNHA)

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, insert the Site Name and Code

[Click here to enter text.](#)

4.4. Current Visitor Management Structure

Both An Rath and Cahermore are owned and managed by the Office of Public Works as National Monuments in State Care.

The R480 is a designated Regional Road and as such has speed limit of 80km per hour. Clare County Council is responsible for the management of this road.

4.5. Potential Future Visitor Management Issues

For the future management of both An Rath and Cahermore as publically accessible National Monument sites, the following issues will need to be addressed:

- Due to the lack of parking facilities at both sites visitor's vehicles are parked along the hard shoulder of the R480 road at Cahermore and in the entrance gateway to a private residence at An Rath. This is a serious health and safety issue due to the limited sightlines available at each site. Dangers arise where visitors cross the road to enter An Rath and vehicles from the north must cross the road to park on the hard shoulder at Cahermore.
- Both sites present restrictions to access for the less able bodied visitor, due to the two step stile entry to An Rath and the very narrow stone gap entrance to Cahermore.
- Visitor footfall pressure is creating erosion of the earthen bank at An Rath resulting in removal of vegetation and exposure of tree roots.
- There is no directional signage at either site. Visitor numbers to An Rath would appear to have increased in recent years due to increased coach tourism along this touring route but Cahermore receives a relatively low volume of visitors.

The issue of access and parking to both sites must be addressed as a priority. Any actions undertaken need to be carefully monitored in terms of their future impact and to inform any adaptive management adjustments which may be necessary to alleviate negative impacts.

SECTION FIVE: SUMMARY OF SITE VISITOR MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Through the GeoparkLIFE project baseline studies (2014) and working group consultation, the following issues for visitor management at An Rath and Cahermore were identified in 2015.

| | Issue | Detail |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Lack of safe and adequate Parking Facilities | The current unofficial roadside parking at both An Rath and Cahermore is inadequate and dangerous. Due to the lack of an official parking area, the hard shoulder area outside both site entrances is in use and due to the locations on sharp bend with lack of adequate sightlines it poses a serious Health and Safety issue. |
| 2 | Visitors crossing road to gain access to An Rath | There is a serious health and safety issue with regard to visitors crossing the road to enter the An Rath site from unofficial parking on the opposite hard shoulder of the road, as sightlines are inadequate and up to 45 people can be crossing at any one time if a coach tour is visiting the site. As the site is on a very busy tour route a number of coaches can visit this site in any one day. |
| 3 | Restrictions to visitor access | Access to both sites causes difficulty for less abled bodied persons. This is due to the narrow entrance gap in the stone wall at Cahermore and the two step stile entrance at An Rath. |
| 4 | Lack of directional road signage | At present there is no directional road signage to either of the monuments. |
| 5 | Outdated and damaged on-site interpretation at Cahermore. Lack of information at An Rath. | The current interpretive panel located at Cahermore is faded and outdated. It carries the 'Dúchas' symbol for a state agency which is no longer in operation. There is no on-site interpretation provided at present for An Rath. |
| 6 | Increasing visitor numbers through coach tourism at An Rath. Small number of visitors to Cahermore – imbalance between sites | Monitoring of visitor numbers to An Rath has indicated that a large number of coaches stop at this site in the morning period between 10am and 12 noon, as part of their planned day itinerary around the Burren sites. |
| 7 | Erosion of embankment at An Rath due to visitor footfall | The erosion of the embankment enclosing the interior of An Rath due to footfall appears to have increased in recent years. Damage is being caused to the ecology of the site due to this visitor pressure. |

From the results of the assessment of An Rath and Cahermore carried out through the GeoparkLIFE programme, the issue of visitor safety and the large number of coaches stopping at An Rath on a daily basis was highlighted to OPW management. The OPW Senior Architect subsequently carried out a site inspection and observed the numbers and behaviour of visitors to the site over a weekend in August 2015. A Risk assessment was prepared and access to the site was deemed to be at an unacceptable level of risk. The decision was taken to close off visitor access to An Rath immediately until such time as an alternative access can be agreed. The site still remains closed as of now (May 2018)

SECTION SIX: ACTION AGREEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following section details the actions agreed through the GeoparkLIFE project to address the issues identified in the 2014 baseline assessment of An Rath and Cahermore; how and when those actions were implemented through GeoparkLIFE between 2015 and 2017 and who was responsible for their implementation.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Issues 1-7 | Lack of Parking Facilities Visitors crossing road to gain access to An Rath Restrictions to visitor access Lack of directional road signage Lack of on-site interpretation Increasing visitor numbers through coach tourism at An Rath. Small number of visitors to Cahermore – imbalance between sites Erosion of embankment at An Rath due to visitor footfall |
| Agreed Action | <p>To pursue the development of Car/coach park between the two sites with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved off-road access, pathway access from car park to both sites, controlled access to viewing platform at An Rath to prevent erosion of bank, road signage and interpretative panels to both sites. <p>The GeoparkLIFE programme will prepare documents and agreements with landowners to the level which are required to apply for Part 8 planning permission. Clare County Council and OPW will then take responsibility for further development of the project.</p> <p>Under the GeoparkLIFE programme the preparation of the required plans and documentation is eligible but site purchase and development of the infrastructural components of the proposed development are not. The future physical development of the project including land purchase must be decided upon by Clare County Council and the OPW.</p> |
| Tasks | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate required conditions for voluntary acquisition of land through landowners land agents Commission site plans and cost estimates for development to planning application requirements Commission required Ecological Appropriate Assessment Screening survey Commission required Archaeological surveys and plans Prepare documents required for Ministerial Consent application to carry out works within archaeological zones. |
| Responsible person/group | OPW, Clare County Council planning department and GeoparkLIFE project |
| Date Action Completed | December 2017 |
| Results | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Laser archaeological survey completed by OPW August 2015 Appropriate Assessment Screening report completed by EirEco Environmental Consultants May 2016. Detailed drawings of access paths into each monument and proposed viewing platform in An Rath prepared by the OPW June 2016 Site plans including drawings for carpark and connecting path, boundary specifications completed by P. Coleman & Associates, Consulting Engineers July 2016. Cost estimate for development completed July 2017 Conditions to proceed to Part 8 Planning application agreed with landowners December 2017. All documentation and requirements to proceed to Part 8 planning application have been prepared and agreed with landowner as part of the GeoparkLIFE programme. (completed December 2017) |
| Future steps | Negotiations are now required between Clare County Council and the |

Visitor Management Proposal

| | |
|--|---|
| | OPW with regard to proceeding with the project and agreeing who will be responsible for the proposed purchase of the land required for the car park and its development. Future management agreements for the site must also be formulated and agreed. Ministerial consent must be obtained to proceed with the work within the archaeological zones. |
|--|---|

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Issue 2 | Damaged and outdated interpretive panel |
| Agreed Action | The interpretive panel located at Cahermore should be removed and an updated version installed to provide information in the interim period while the new proposed car park and associated interpretation is under development |
| Tasks | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compile text and illustrations for new panel with agreement on content with OPW. 2. Agree panel design to GeoparkLIFE universal design template for Burren heritage sites with OPW. 3. Commission graphic design 4. Commission sign manufacturer 5. Complete sign and install on site |
| Responsible person/group | GeoparkLIFE |
| Date Action Completed | October 2017 |
| Results | New updated GeoparkLIFE/OPW branded panel installed on existing supports to minimise ground disturbance to archaeological site. Installing the panel on existing posts did not require ministerial consent to be obtained. Advice was sought through the OPW. |



Photograph 13: Dúchas Interpretive Panel at Cahermore September 2017



Photograph 14: Replacement GeoparkLIFE Interpretive panel at Cahermore October 2017

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Issue 6 | Increasing visitor numbers through coach tourism at An Rath. Small number of visitors to Cahermore – imbalance between sites |
| Agreed Action | Collect baseline data with regard to visitor numbers and monitor increase/decrease. Develop a site monitoring app for collection and analysis of data with regard to the condition of the monuments, visitor behavioural impacts and access path. |
| Tasks | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect and analyse data from footfall counter (installed September 2014) at regular intervals. 2. Agree specification for app development to allow collection of data from three sources and to operate in both online and offline scenarios with technology company MAC Ltd. Limerick 3. Identify and supply functional requirements for the app 4. Field test prototype 5. Refine as required 6. Field test and refine 7. Develop web portal for viewing of uploaded data to agreed specification |
| Responsible person/group | GeoparkLIFE project and MAC Ltd. Limerick |
| Date Action Completed | <p>Footfall counters were installed at both sites in September 2014 and data was collected on regular basis up to December 2017 at Cahermore (see table below). The Footfall counter installed at An Rath was removed in August 2015 after the site was closed by the OPW for Health and Safety reasons relating to access (see Section 5). It is not known when this site will be open to the public again. Numbers were collected for the site from September 2014 to August 2015.</p> <p>Site monitoring app and web portal completed November 2017.</p> |
| Results | <p>Between September 2014 and August 2015 the counter recorded a visitor number of 18,209 for An Rath. During the same time period a total of 5,697 visitors were recorded at Cahermore.</p> <p>Between 2015 and 2017 Cahermore has had an average annual visitor number of 4,950.</p> <p>The working app and portal were completed to the agreed specification for the GeoparkLIFE project and demonstrated at the end of project Conference in November 2017. Data collected during the testing phase for Cahermore is uploaded to the portal. It was not possible to collect data for An Rath as it was closed before the app was developed.</p> <p>Agreements are now required as to the future management of this tool in terms of users and storage of data.</p> |

Table 1: Visitor Numbers to An Rath recorded by the GeoparkLIFE footfall counter (2014 to

| Month | Total monthly record |
|----------------|----------------------|
| September 2014 | 1623 |
| October 2014 | 1893 |
| November 2014 | 683 |
| December 2014 | 548 |
| January 2015 | 520 |
| February 2015 | 1066 |
| March 2015 | 2150 |
| April 2015 | 1638 |
| May 2015 | 1947 |
| June 2015 | 2423 |
| July 2015 | 2516 |
| August 2015 | 1202 |
| Totals | 18,209 |

Table 2: Visitor Numbers to Cahermore recorded by the GeoparkLIFE footfall counter (September 2014 to December 2017)

| | Year | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Month | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
| January | | 483 | 418 | 256 |
| February | | 390 | 116 | 374 |
| March | | 741 | 0 | 374 |
| April | | 597 | 255 | 301 |
| May | | 797 | 503 | 508 |
| June | | 6 | 516 | 738 |
| July | | 7 | 654 | 542 |
| August | | 907 | 521 | 654 |
| September | 421 | 483 | 551 | 459 |
| October | 574 | 227 | 521 | 608 |
| November | 325 | 260 | 219 | 155 |
| December | 449 | 451 | 205 | 53 |
| Yearly Totals | 1769 | 5349 | 4479 | 5020 |

SECTION SEVEN: MONITORING PLAN

The following plan details where future monitoring is required to inform the ongoing adaptive visitor management of the An Rath-Cahermore site.

| Issue | Action taken | Monitoring data to be collected | Monitoring tool to be used | Frequency of monitoring | Responsibility for monitoring |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Lack of safe and adequate parking facilities and visitor access routes to monuments | Proposal to develop new car/coach park, off road access paths to monuments and viewing platform at An Rath | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visitor numbers to site 2. Visitor impacts; access infrastructure; structural condition of monuments; access trail condition 3. Ecological assessment of condition of An Rath embankment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Footfall counters (the counter at An Rath will need to be reinstated) 2. GeoparkLIFE site monitoring app 3. Fixed point photography at quadrat sites defined in GeoparkLIFE 2014 monitoring | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every three months 2. Annually 3. Every 2 years over next 6 years | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CCC/OPW 2. OPW/CCC 3. OPW |
| Damaged and outdated interpretation | New updated panel installed on existing supports to minimise disturbance to archaeological site. | Condition of signage | GeoparkLIFE site monitoring app | Annually | OPW |

SECTION EIGHT: ADAPTIVE VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Visitor Management Proposal

To ensure that the visitor management process is 'adaptive' the results of site assessments and monitoring sessions must be evaluated and management actions adjusted on the basis of what is learnt.

| ACTION | METHODOLOGY | RESPONSIBILITY |
|--|--|---|
| Analysis and Evaluation of Data collected | All data with regard to the condition of the site can be stored on the GeoparkLIFE monitoring app web portal | Clare County Council |
| Data Storage | It is recommended that data collected be stored on the GeoparkLIFE monitoring app web portal. Management agreements should be made with the OPW with regard to access to this data and its future management | Clare County Council and OPW to be agreed |
| Feedback to Management Group | It is recommended that site details and monitoring activity be made available through the GeoparkLIFE Burren Map Viewer created in conjunction with and hosted by the Heritage Council. Data to be updated must be forwarded to the Heritage Council for upload. | Clare County Council/OPW and Heritage Council |
| Review of effect of actions taken by Management Group | It is recommended that Clare County Council and OPW staff involved in the maintenance of the proposed development at An Rath-Cahermore meet on an annual basis for review of actions taken, monitoring results and future planning. | Clare County Council and OPW |
| Agree strategy for adjustment of actions when and where required | A strategy to be agreed between OPW and CCC if the proposed development proceeds | Clare County Council and OPW |

APPENDIX I

VISITOR ATTITUDES SURVEY An Rath 2014 (MWB)

1. How long do you intend visiting this site?

| Less than 1 hour | 1-2 hours | 3-4 hours | 5-6 hours | Full day |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| 98 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

2. How would you rate the signposting for directions to this site on a scale of 1-10 (1=poor; 10=very good)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|----|----|---|----|----|---|----|---|---|----|
| 38 | 12 | 2 | 12 | 19 | 5 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

3. How would you rate the physical entry to this site (including stiles and footpaths)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|----|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| 2 | 2 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 26 | 21 | 19 | 10 |

4. How would you rate the parking facilities at this site? (Scale 1-10)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| 7 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 10 | 26 | 26 | 10 | 7 |

5. Have you noticed any information boards at this site/location?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| 21 | 79 |

6. Have you read the information on them?

| Yes | Partially | No |
|-----|-----------|----|
| 67 | 11 | 22 |

7. Did the information add to your understanding of the Burren?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| 14 | 86 |

8. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your visit to this site?

| Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | Satisfied | Very satisfied |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 2 | 0 | 2 | 76 | 19 |

9. What is the main type of transport you are using to travel within the Burren?

| Own car | Hired/rented | Public transport | Motorbike | Coach day tour | Coach guided tour | Private chauffeur tour | Bicycle | Other |
|---------|--------------|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------|-------|
| 36 | 21 | 5 | 0 | 26 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 2 |

VISITOR ATTITUDES SURVEY Cahermore 2014 (MWB)

1. How long do you intend visiting this site?

| Less than 1 hour | 1-2 hours | 3-4 hours | 5-6 hours | Full day |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| 94 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

2. How would you rate the signposting for directions to this site on a scale of 1-10 (1=poor; 10=very good)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|----|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|----|
| 47 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 18 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

3. How would you rate the physical entry to this site (including stiles and footpaths)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 18 | 44 | 21 |

4. How would you rate the parking facilities at this site? (Scale 1-10)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|----|---|----|
| 3 | 6 | 21 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 44 | 3 | 0 |

5. Have you noticed any information boards at this site/location?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| 97 | 3 |

6. Have you read the information on them?

| Yes | Partially | No |
|-----|-----------|----|
| 94 | 6 | 0 |

7. Did the information add to your understanding of the Burren?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| 94 | 6 |

8. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your visit to this site?

| Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | Satisfied | Very satisfied |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 0 | 0 | 3 | 35 | 62 |

9. What is the main type of transport you are using to travel within the Burren?

| Own car | Hired/rented | Public transport | Motorbike | Coach day tour | Coach guided tour | Private chauffeur tour | Bicycle | Other |
|---------|--------------|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------|-------|
| 26 | 38 | 6 | 3 | 15 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 3 |

APPENDIX II

Visitor observations findings at Cahermore (ZH)

SITE: CAHERMORE

1. Survey Detail

| Site Id : CM | Date Of Survey | Day of Week | Duration of Survey | Weather | No of people observed |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| | 9-9-14 | Tuesday | 9.30am-4.30pm (7 hours) | Hot and Sunny | 10 |

2. Number of Observations, gender and group breakdown

| Number of people observed | Total number of females | Total number of males | Number of groups | Average group size |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 10 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2-3 |

Comment: Group size did not exceed 3

3. Mode of transport, Time Spent on Site and Main activity, group and age demographic

| Date of observation | Obs group id | Time spent on site (hours:minutes) | Group type | Age demographic | Mode of transport | Main activity | Observed impacts |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 9-9-14 | CM1 | 00:21 | 1M:2F | 50-60 | Car | Viewing site | None |
| 9-9-14 | CM2 | 00:11 | 1M:1F | 70-75 | Car | Viewing from platform | None |
| 9-9-14 | CM3 | 00:02 | 2M:1F | 25-30 | Push Bike | Pit stop on cycle | Possible toilet stop |
| 9-9-14 | CM4 | 00:43 | 2F | 20-25 | Car | Picnicking and sunbathing | Climbing on walls |

Average time spent on site: 19 minutes

Summary

Main Activities undertaken by observed visitors:

- Walking (35%)
- Photography (27%)
- Viewing landscape (18%)
- Picnicking (9%)

Mode of transport:

Car 64%

Push bike 27%

Motorbike: 9%

Average time spent on site: 1 hour 60 mins.

Observed Impacts:

1 Car parked on grass verge (14% of car owners)

1 couple went off designated trail to sit on rock (approx. distance 20m) – (2 out of six walkers: 33%)

4. Time spent reading Information Boards

| Observation group Id | Time spent reading information boards (mins:secs) |
|----------------------|---|
| CM1 | 00:30 |
| CM2 | 01:00 |
| CM3 | 01:30 |
| CM4 | 02:00 |

Average time spent reading panel: 1 minute 25 seconds

5. Impacts Observed

Walking on walls

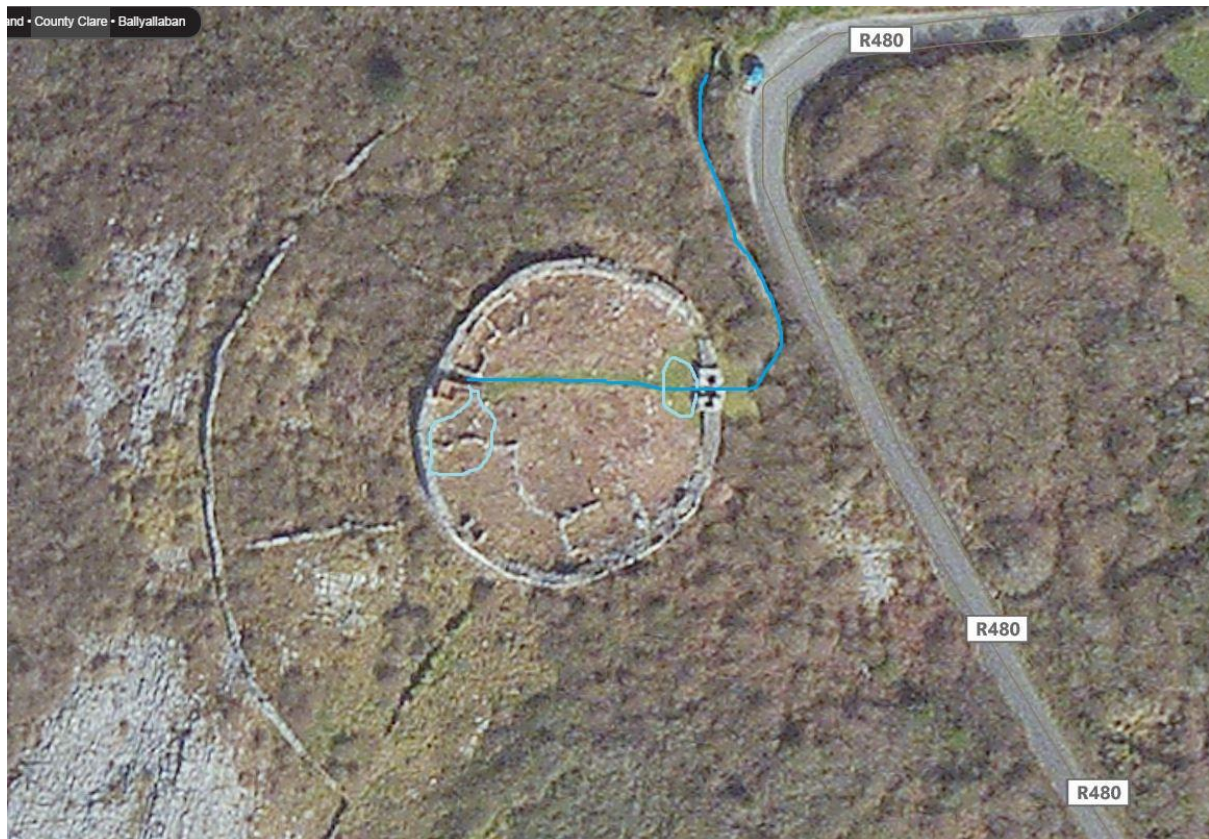
Using site as toilet stop

Comment: Sample size is too small to use percentage as reliable result.

6. Time of day of arrival at site (observation study duration: 11.00-16.00 hours)

| Observer Group ID | Time of Arrival at site |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| CM1 | 10.38am |
| CM2 | 12.23pm |
| CM3 | 12.42pm |
| CM4 | 14.11pm |

7. Visitor Movement Pattern



Observed movement patterns – dark blue line show core movement area; lighter blue peripheral