

**Senior Planner,  
Planning Section,  
Laois County Council,  
Aras an Chontae  
Portlaoise, Co Laois**



**DESIGNATE DURROW AS A  
COMMUNITY/FAMILY CYCLE HUB**

Proposer:  
"Pedal Vintage"  
Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme  
February 26<sup>th</sup> 2020

Pre-Draft Public  
Consultation on  
the Preparation of  
Laois County  
Development Plan  
2021-2027

Proposal

## **About Durrow:**

**Durrow** is located in South County Laois in a rural landscape of gently undulating hills and surrounded by seven wooded areas.

The river Erkina skirts the northern boundary of the village and joins The River Nore some six hundred meters downstream.

It's original design and layout was meticulously planned by William Flower, Earl of Ashbrook in 1708. It was handed down through the Ashbrook lineage and subsequently to the local community on the departure of the Flower family from Durrow in 1922.

Once described by renowned travel writer and cycling enthusiast, William Bulfin as "*A Gem in the Basin of the Nore*", Durrow is now a town of unique character, heritage and beauty for all to admire. With its village greens, forests and limestone buildings, Durrow is a place that stirs the minds and hearts of the local community and visitors alike.

Much admired for its community spirit, the people of Durrow are passionate about their locality, supportive of their volunteers and proud of their achievements on behalf of their town.

## **Project Information**

### **Name of Project**

The provision of a "Community/Family Cycle Hub" at Durrow Co. Laois.

### **Proposers/ Promoters**

"Pedal Vintage" -- Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme

### **Project Description**

This proposal is for a series of loop trails, namely "A Community/Family Cycle Hub", with a Start and Finish point at The Square in Durrow, Co Laois.

Surrounded by seven woodland areas, riverbank trails and a suitable road network, Durrow is rich in the natural resources and infrastructure required, to facilitate a series of short cycle trails, suitable for safe, family leisure cycling.

This proposal, does not seek to identify individual trails, but rather, to promote a development concept for at least three trails, which have been identified locally, in terms of their suitability for the project proposal, as described above.

To achieve this objective, the committee of Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme seeks to engage in meaningful discussion with relative stakeholders, in a genuine effort to advance this proposal.

**Proposer:**

Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme is a not-for-profit community bike hire business, founded in 2019 with a view to promoting safe leisure cycling and healthy lifestyle activity, within the local community of Durrow.

With financial assistance from Laois Partnership, Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme have, to date purchased ten new, leisure style bicycles, wicker baskets and vintage-style helmets. these create a unique “Pedal Vintage” atmosphere to our bike hire offering.

This package is offered for hire to the local community, in addition to visitors to our town.

Members of “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme, have a strong cross-community and club representation. Individual members of this committee have been innovators and promoters of several outstanding voluntary projects, which have enhanced and enriched the lives of the local community in Durrow, and beyond.

Contact Name: Hugh Sheppard

Name of Group: “Pedal Vintage” Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme.

Email: 

**Benefits:**

- A “Community/Family Cycle Hub” would highlight an imaginative use of natural resources, promote family engagement in outdoor activity, encourage the local community to participate in leisure cycling and showcase the rich sources of biodiversity within the locality.
- The development of this “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will make Durrow an attractive destination for safe family cycling, and likewise appeal, to those who wish to engage in outdoor recreation as part of their leisure activity.
- Natural amenities coupled with recreation opportunities, contribute significantly to a community’s quality of life, making the Durrow area a desirable place to live and work.
- Creating this “Community/ Family Cycle Hub” will offer a recreational opportunity for young people, helping to provide an important activity outlet for children.  
*“Only a small minority of children in Ireland are active enough to meet recommended physical activity guidelines, according to a study from sporting authorities North and South” (Irish Times Newspapers. February 2020)*
- This “Community/ Family Cycle Hub”, as proposed, will deliver social and environmental benefits for the local community and the wider hinterland.
- The proposed “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will complement the ambitious plans of Durrow Tidy Towns Committee, as they strive to establish and support, local biodiversity and sustainable outdoor projects.
- A “Community/Family Cycle Hub” will support the ongoing work of not-for-profit group, Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme, in the promotion of leisure cycling and outdoor activity in the local community.
- The designation of Durrow as a “Community/Family Cycle Hub” would play a significant role in the development of sustainable local tourism, in addition to providing a valued recreational amenity for local residents.
- The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 should contain a commitment to establish a series of short, family cycle trails in the Durrow area, leading to its designation as a Community/Family Cycle Hub.

### **Stakeholders**

- Coillte Management.
- Durrow Tidy Towns.
- Durrow Community Council.
- Durrow Development Forum
- Department of the Environment.
- Department of Transport.
- Department of Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- Department of Social & Family Affairs.
- Elected Representatives.
- Irish Wildlife Trust.
- Local Community Employment Scheme.
- Laois County Council.
- Laois Partnership Ltd.
- Laois Sports Partnership.
- Laois Tourism.
- “Pedal Vintage” - Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme.

## Support

The Government's recently published Action Plan for Rural Development "Realising our Rural Potential" highlights the potential of activity tourism as a vehicle for promoting economic growth in rural areas. *"Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas, by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking"*.

<https://assets.gov.ie/2715/131118093828-a9da81a7a12b4f85aad3260c4f4bd80c.pdf>

The Draft "National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040 Our Plan" highlights a need to create *"an attractive environment to encourage businesses and inward investment; more places for people to access nature, outdoor recreation, social interaction or physical activity by providing quality, linked green or 'blue' (water-related) spaces for walking, cycling and other physical activity and creating a sense of place and local distinctiveness."* <http://npl.ie/>

**BIG GROWTH IN APPEAL OF CYCLING • 2018 - 2nd largest activity (after walking) • 450,000 overseas visitors participating in cycling while on holiday • Threefold increase since 2009 • Projected annual growth of 4% p.a. to 2028**

(Cycling Tourism in Ireland – Orla Carroll Director of Product Development, Fáilte Ireland)

[https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/Carroll.O\\_Cycling\\_Tourism\\_in\\_Ireland.pdf](https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/Carroll.O_Cycling_Tourism_in_Ireland.pdf)

*"The aim of this Plan is to increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland, where everybody will be physically active and where everybody lives, works and plays in a society that facilitates, promotes and supports physical activity and an active way of life with less time spent being sedentary"*.

(Get Ireland Active! National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland – Mission Statement 2019)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland/>