

BUSINESS CASE

Meehan Tully And Associates

Proposal

Both the Cliff Baths and the Pavilion buildings are in poor condition and along with the general condition of the cliff walk area present an overall sense of decay and neglect detracting from the amenity value of Enniscrone. With recent improvements in the area of the Pier, its designation as a Discovery Point, and the awarding of funding to transform the Main Street/Cliff Road area, the need to address the neglected appearance of the promenade area is a priority.

Tourism Offering

Enniscrone's most distinctive feature is its 5km beach, one of the region's safest and most popular with excellent conditions for swimming and surfing. A wide variety of tourism and recreational activities are available locally including the popular coastal promenade/cliffside trail connecting the beach (the Hollows area) with the iconic Cliff Baths house (c.1890) and the Pier (WAW Discovery Point).

The Hollows / Pavilion

Located at the northern end of the beach adjacent to Cliff Road and the coastal promenade, the Hollows area is used primarily for parking and beach access, and as the trailhead for the 5km Enniscrone Beach Walk. Here is located the Pavilion, a derelict 1950s-era structure held in trust for the community. Empty for several decades, it is a prominent beachfront eyesore. The Enniscrone Local Area Plan (LAP) identifies the Pavilion as a potential site for a "flagship tourism/ retail product" that would help extend the tourist season. The stated Council policy is to:

- Promote the development of a tourism/retail flagship project incorporating uses such as a cafe/ restaurant, luxury home wares and craft shop, artists' studios/workshops
- Support the redevelopment/replacement of the Pavilion building in the Hollows

Promenade/ Cliff Baths

Located midway along the promenade between the Hollows and the Pier is the former Cliff Baths house, an iconic local landmark. A protected structure, the privately-owned Victorian-era bath house (c.1890) has not been operational for many years and has been offered to the local community for public use.

Strategic Context

Sligo County Development Plan (CDP) identifies Enniscrone as a Key Support Town, one with an important tourism function, and a need to "strengthen and improve (the town's) tourism product". The CDP recognises the importance of attractive public spaces "Making an area appealing to visitors may also bring significant economic benefits by increasing commercial activity." The Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) identifies the "under developed" potential of the county's tourism assets and the "need for improved accessibility and interpretation in relation to tourism attractions". The plan identifies a County-wide necessity "to improve the physical fabric and appearance of towns and villages for residents, businesses and visitors".

Local impact

Local demographics

A detailed review was carried out on the demographics of the local catchment area, focusing on the number of people living within a 5 and 10-minute drive of the project. In very brief summary, it was shown that the project has the potential to positively impact upon 5,039 local people in terms of the recreational and social benefits that can be generated.



Feedback

As part of this review, an online public survey was carried out in late 2020 to invite comments and suggestions from the local community regarding the potential re-development of the Pavilion and Old Cliff Baths. The relatively high response rate of 289 people experienced indicates the importance of the proposal to the local community. The remainder of this section provides a summary of the main points raised by respondents to the public survey.

The graph at below illustrates a summary of the feedback received from the local community, which identified the most popular options for the re-development of the two buildings. As can be seen, the most popular recommendation was for accessible public toilets, followed by a community space and a café.

In terms of community space, it is worth noting that the feedback regularly mentioned the need for a bright, multi-functional studio-type space, as opposed to a more traditional 'community centre'-type venue.



Recommendations

Based upon a review of the needs of the area, the feedback from the public survey, potential impact upon the tourism market, and a review of case studies in Ireland and internationally, the following is a summary of the recommendations for the Pavilion and Old Cliff Baths.

Pavilion

Many of the local community view the existing building as an eyesore and a "new start" can be justified with the construction of a new building in its place. If re-constructed, it is recommended that the building be used to accommodate both community-based and privately-operated facilities, provisionally allocated below for two options – a three-storey and a two-storey building.

Three-storey building

- Second floor – Café leased to a private provider
- First floor – Flexible studio space, for use by the local community
- Ground floor – Watersports Outlet to be leased to a private provider, and accessible public toilets
- Surrounding area – showers, seating and viewing area

Two-storey building

- First floor – Café, leased to a private provider
 - Ground floor – Flexible studio space, for use by the local community
 - Surrounding area – showers, seating and viewing area, with accessible public toilets
- If the building is to comprise two storeys, it will be important to maximise the space available to the local community eg flexible/ multi-purpose studio space suitable for a range of functions and uses.

Old Cliff Baths

Preserve and maintain the Old Cliff Baths as an iconic heritage feature reflecting Enniscrone's historical and cultural associations with the sea. It may be possible to allow limited access to the building to demonstrate how it looked in its heyday or, at a minimum, provide interpretive elements to tell its story. Re-purposing the building for new uses was generally not favoured.