

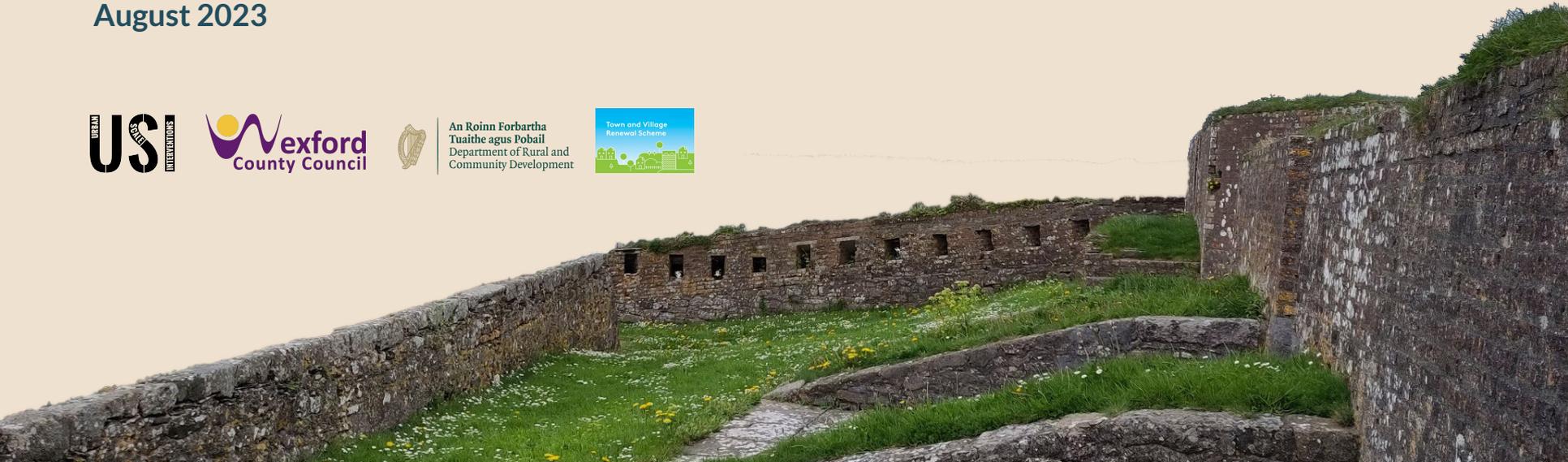
DUNCANNON FORT

DRAFT - Tourism Benchmarking

August 2023



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



TOURISM - BENCHMARKING

This is an extensive review of local, regional and international exemplary case studies for the future use of Duncannon Fort.

Destinations assessed range from luxurious accommodation providers to community spaces and innovative visitor centres and attractions.

The sites and experiences considered vary in size, purpose and target markets. Also included are destinations with similar physical constraints and challenges, as well as the reuse of heritage assets, and includes details of funding and operating models.

Assessing these examples can aid in imagining what is possible for the future use of Duncannon Fort. It also provides an opportunity to learn what has worked and been a success and what has not worked and why not. Looking at case studies on a local and global scale can aid to create an ambitious, impactful and realistic vision for the future potential of Duncannon Fort.

The following methodology has been used to assess appropriate benchmarks for consideration.

Each potential benchmark is considered through each of the following lenses:

- **Concept:** What is the purpose of the project/ experience/ product?
- **Funding Model:** How was the project funded and what is the current operating model?
- **Target Market:** Who is the target visitor audience and who is served through the project?
- **Location:** Is the benchmark in a similar location to Duncannon Fort i.e. in terms of proximity to a town/village and access?

Solent Fort



Concept: Spitbank Fort is an unusual and historic sea fortress in the Solent, off the Portsmouth coast. Now a luxury exclusive venue and hotel, the fort was formerly home to hundreds of soldiers guarding the approaches to Portsmouth. The arms and ammunition have long been removed, making way for nine luxuriously furnished bedroom suites, three bars, three restaurant areas, and spa facilities, with accommodation for 18 and function space for up to 60 people.

Funding Model: Solent Fort is owned and operated by a private organisation called AmaZing Venues. The 3 forts are currently for sale and have not reopened following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Target Market: With prices ranging from £700 per night, Solent Fort is marketed as the most exclusive venue on the south coast, and is its own private island for hire, available for exclusive use, special events, private parties, wedding receptions, music videos and corporate hire.

Location: Portsmouth, England.

Guests are ferried to the destination or can arrive by helicopter if preferred. Just a 1.5 hour train journey from Central London and with proximity to the Isle of Wight, the Fort has also been promoted as luxury accommodation for festival attendees.

Fort Pampus



Concept: Fort Pampus is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Netherlands which hosts dining experiences, provides camping facilities and has an onsite B&B. Pampus is striving to become a source of inspiration and knowledge for making heritage more sustainable. With a sustainable self-sufficient system, the protection of the site is guaranteed by structural improvement of the facilities and a permanent focus on innovation in the field of sustainability. On the island, innovative sustainable solutions and cultural history go hand in hand, reinforcing the educational character of the island and increasing the need for a visit to Pampus.

Funding Model: Funding and investment information is not publicly available but is owned by the municipality of Goosse Meren.

Target Market: Pampus has an extensive events calendar: a 'Pirate Week' in May and a kite festival in June, the whole of August is dedicated to culture, and in October there is a Light Festival, attracting locals and international visitors.

Location: Fort Pampus is reachable by ferry from Muiden and from Amsterdam IJburg. Visitors are also welcome to come by their own boat. It is open to visitors from April to November.

Kilkenny Design Centre



Concept: Kilkenny was originally set up as Kilkenny Design Workshops in 1963 by the Government to help develop novice Irish craft makers into self-sufficient entrepreneurs and to create sustainable design jobs in Ireland. Today the centre invites guests to explore their extensive selection of Irish handcrafted gifts, with a supplier list drawn from Ireland's most eminent craftspeople and designers.

Funding Model: Kilkenny Design Centre was sold by the Government in the 1980s and is now owned by Kilkenny Group.

Target Market: As well as providing an impressive showcase for high quality Irish and contemporary gifts and crafts, Kilkenny Design Centre is also home to an award winning food hall and restaurant which serves delicious homemade fare daily, enticing both locals and tourists to visit the centre.

Location: Based in the medieval city of Kilkenny the creative heart of Ireland, the Kilkenny Design Centre is situated in what was once the stables of historic Kilkenny Castle and is fittingly located adjacent to the National Design and Craft Gallery, one of Ireland's most exciting artistic venues where visitors can watch crafts being made.

Piece Hall



Concept: Built in 1779 for the trading of cloth, the Piece Hall is a Grade I listed building and is the world's only remaining Georgian cloth hall. The hall now hosts independent shops, bars and restaurants, and a unique live music venue hosting Sting, Paloma Faith, George Ezra and many more. The hall had fallen into such a state of disrepair that it was nearly condemned more than once and has now become one of Yorkshire's greatest tourist attractions.

Funding Model: The Piece Hall Trust was established as an independent body in 2013 and following completion of works (a £19m refurbishment), is now responsible for the operation of the historic site as a place where trade, culture and heritage mix. As a charity, The Piece Hall Trust exists to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment by preserving The Piece Hall, and by advancing the public's engagement in and understanding of history, the arts and cultural activities.

Target Market: The hall has welcomed over 13.25 million visitors in the last 6 years for anything from a heritage tour, a school trip, running a community activity, getting married here, or seeing an international rock legend.

Location: Halifax Town Centre, Yorkshire

Spike Island



Concept: Used as an Island prison, fortress, monastery and home, today visitors can meet captains and convicts and sinners and saints as you uncover 1300 years of Irish history. It has prison cells, deep tunnels, island walks and multiple museums, and visitors can explore via a guided tour or using the free map and app.

Funding Model: Spike Island is owned by Cork County Council. Major investment in recent years from the Council and Failte Ireland has seen the site develop into a major international tourist attraction, employing up to 50 staff. In 2020, funding was received to extend and upgrade the existing coastal walkway which runs around Spike Island Fortress.

Target Market: After Dark tours appeal to those looking for a more thrilling experience. Literary events attract visitors from all over Ireland including book lovers and budding writers. School tours attract a large number of visitors throughout the school year.

Location: A 15 minute ferry ride from the heritage town of Cobh, the experience begins on the journey to the island.

Mont- Saint- Michel



Concept: Mont-Saint-Michel is a renowned island commune located in Normandy, France. It is known for its picturesque medieval architecture and its distinctive location on a rocky island. Mont-Saint-Michel is home to a historic abbey, which has been a significant pilgrimage site for centuries. The abbey, along with the surrounding village, is perched atop the island and is accessible via a causeway during low tide. Mont-Saint-Michel is not only a symbol of architectural beauty but also holds cultural and historical importance in France.

Funding Model: It is free to visit the general Mont Saint Michel area, including the town on the island. But there is a cost to visit the Mont Saint Michel Abbey. Admission to the abbey is €8/€10.

Target Market: Designated a World Heritage site by Unesco, Mont-Saint-Michel has between 2.4 and 2.8 million visitors per year.

Location: 'Le Passeur' shuttle operates daily at no charge for visitors. Visitors can also get to the fort by bike, similar to Duncannon Fort, Mont-Saint-Michel is located along the Eurovelo cycling route.

Fort Dunree



Concept: Fort Dunree Military Museum was first opened to the public in 1986 and has attracted tourists from all over the world ever since. The underground bunkers house a collection of artefacts that give meaning and insight into the day to day operation of the Fort. Fort Dunree has also built up a relationship with local nature organisation Wild Inishowen to help develop awareness of the rich natural heritage on offer at the site.

Funding Model: Failte Ireland has awarded €9.3m towards an overall €12.5m (£10.7m) investment to develop a world-class tourist attraction at Fort Dunree. The project will physically link the 3 unique elements of Fort Dunree: Lough Swilly below the Fort; the Promontory Fort and the 'High Guns' Fort; providing immersive heritage and cultural touch points with a new route that opens up the site, with viewing points via modern interventions such as the proposed Funicular (the only one in Ireland) and interpretive installations, including the development of the Dunree Lighthouse.

Target Market: Provides a social medium and recreational amenity for both tourists and the local community.

Location: Buncrana, Donegal. Potential for partnership opportunities with Duncannon Fort given the similarities and proximity.

Fort Jefferson



Concept: Built to patrol the Gulf of Mexico and the Straits of Florida. Today, it's part of the 100-square mile Dry Tortugas National Park, home to incredible coral reefs and marine life, and the vast assortment of bird life that frequent the area. Once an abandoned heritage asset, the Fort has now been transformed into a tourism destination with accommodation facilities, an onsite museum and range of activities available for visitors.

Funding Model: Dry Tortugas is managed by the staff of Everglades National Park. The park was established to protect the island and marine ecosystems of the Dry Tortugas, to preserve Fort Jefferson and submerged cultural resources such as shipwrecks, and to allow for public access in a regulated manner. The park has entered into a cooperative relationship with the Fort Jefferson Preservation Trust and the National Park Foundation to raise private and corporate funds to allow major stabilisation work to proceed.

Target Market: Dry Tortugas is one of the least visited national parks in the US, averaging 66,000 visitors a year, this is the perfect escape for nature lovers, history enthusiasts, and adventure seekers.

Location: Guests travel 70 miles due west of Key West, Florida by boat or seaplane to get to Fort Jefferson at a cost of \$190.

Exeter Cathedral & Fougères Castle

Concept: Led by the University of Exeter, VISTA AR, will help tourist destinations use virtual reality headsets, tablets and smartphones to bring history to life, meet characters from the past and explore artefacts that are otherwise inaccessible.



Funding Model: The €7.8m project will allow for smaller sites who would otherwise not have been able to afford to use expensive equipment to increase dwell times at the historic attractions. This project is co-financed by European Regional Development Fund from the France (Channel) Interreg Programme.

Target Market: It is hoped that the project will lead to a 20% increase in visitor numbers at heritage sites taking part, enticing younger people to the visit and encouraging local people to engage with the history on their doorstep.

Location: The first places to test the technology will be Exeter Cathedral and Fougères Castle in Brittany. They will be followed by the National Trust Tin Coast in Cornwall, the South West Coastal Path and the Lorient Submarine Museum and the Gardens of Valloires in France.

The Eden Project

Concept: The Eden Project is a visitor attraction and educational charity located in a reclaimed china clay pit in Cornwall. Its assemblage of biomes and ecosystems aim to educate and reconnect people with the natural world. This project is a prime example of how disused landscapes can be revitalised as environmentally sustainable tourism/community spaces and has been hugely successful for the local community.



Funding Model: Eden demonstrates that it is possible to bring together a commercially viable and environmentally sustainable proposition through a range of exhibits, activities, and educational packages. Operationally, the business model and content together with their strategic approach and marketing support seems to have delivered strong footfall with an annual turnover of circa. £20-25 million and a contribution of £2bn to local economy. Funding sources include the Lottery Funding (£37.5m), the EU Development Agency (£50m), the Commercial loans (£20m) and Eden Funds (£8m).

Target Market: From families to solo visitors, everyone is welcome to explore, learn and stay.

Location: Cornwall, England.

Zero Island

Concept: Zero Island is a project that sees Lidö, Sweden produce net zero CO2 emissions from accommodation to transportation and waste management - one of the first of its kind to achieve this. Zero Island demonstrates how tourism, economy, and ecology can be thought of in tandem to create socially and environmentally beneficial outcomes.



Funding Model: The development and delivery of Zero Island was facilitated by the private companies Neste and Fortum, who specialise in clean energy and biofuels, working in close collaboration with local nature and community groups. Revenue streams are also supported by 'Zero Vacation' offerings that host visitors in clean-energy pods across the island.

Target Market: This immersive accommodation experience targets environmentally conscious consumers, This segment is growing rapidly, Booking.com research found that 53% of global travellers wanted to travel more sustainably as we consider our impact on the environment.

Location: Zero Island is located on Lidö, which is an island in the Stockholm Archipelago, outside Norrtälje. Guests can wander through the woods and walk along the beautiful trails and coast.

Ballymacarbry Hostel & Community Centre



Concept: The idea for this came from the results of a community wide questionnaire which indicated that a Hostel was needed as a way to attract tourists and visitors to the local area, while also providing an income to maintain the community centre. The Hostel which sleeps 25 guests, also has large kitchen facilities, meeting rooms, a sports hall, gym, astro turf indoor pitch and theatre.

Funding Model: The community raised funds in addition to funding received from Waterford Leader Partnership Ltd under the Rural Development Programme.

Target Market: The centre serves all in the community and welcomes visitors from near and far with a range of activities nearby including fishing, cycling, and hiking. Ballymacarbry is at the mouth to the Nire Valley in the Comeragh Mountains and there is also a rich heritage offering in the surrounding area including the Lismore Castle and the Rock of Cashel.

Location: Ballymacarbry Village, Co. Waterford, approximately 17 km from Clonmel and 24 km from Dungarvan.

VAC Library

Concept: VAC Library by Farming Architects is a large wooden climbing frame that combines solar-powered aquaponics with food production, animal rearing, and community education. This library and city farm was designed as a way for children to learn about self-sustaining ecosystems while improving cross species wellbeing and interaction.



Funding Model: Funding and investment of this project is not publicly available. However, the project itself was inspired by self-made interventions of local people that they had created for their homes for cultivation and waste management.

Target Market: This was created as an urban space for the local community to learn about education, conservation, and food systems, and to contribute to the health and wellbeing of society, through the inspiration of local craft and tradition. Due to the success of the library, visitors have been attracted to experience the tranquility of the site and witness the multiple species (from fish to chickens) work collaboratively.

Location: Haino, Vietnam

Granbery Winter Garden

Concept: Previously derelict terraced houses have been converted into a new shared garden, freely accessible to local residents and the wider neighbourhood. The design strategy for the Winter Garden sought to transform the typically private space of the terraced home into a focus for neighbourhood activity; an unexpected indoor garden and unique resource for creative community action, cultural production and exchange.



Funding Model: This was made possible by the support of Arts Council England, The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation, PH Holt Foundation, The Granada Foundation, The People's Health Trust, Veolia Environmental Trust, The Elizabeth Rathbone Charitable Trust and the Co-operative Foundation.

Target Market: The Granby Winter Garden sits at the heart of the Granby neighbourhood, housing a communal indoor garden, a meeting and events space and accommodation for artist residencies.

Location: 37 and 39 Cairns Street in Granby, Liverpool

Common Knowledge



Concept: A non-profit social enterprise that focuses on forgotten skills that can bring communities together to tackle problems facing society today - from climate change to mental health - through festivals, workshops and courses. Common Knowledge is harnessing community spirit to bring more affordable, sustainable and joyful homes into all of our lives. Courses range from stone walling to organic growing, welding, rendering, plastering, introduction to furniture design, and many more.

Funding Model: Common Knowledge has received support from Rethink Ireland's Start Up Fund, in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund, and support from The Community Foundation for Ireland Older Person's Fund.

Target Market: Everyone is welcome to get involved and consideration is given to ensure LGBTQ+ people and those from ethnic minorities feel safe and welcome in the space.

Location: The Burren & Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark, County Clare, just a few minutes from the Wild Atlantic Way.

Outdoor Education & Training Centre



Concept: Provides outdoor education courses for school, youth, further education and training and adult groups, on residential and non-residential bases. Courses strive to use the outdoors and adventure experiences as a medium for personal development, introducing participants to a range of Adventure Sports and challenging situations, and helping them to develop skills such as responsibility, teamwork and trust. Accommodation is provided in comfortable dorm rooms, attracting Gaisce and Scout groups and encouraging visitors to increase the time spent in the area.

Funding Model: Kilfinane OETC is administered by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and approved by the Department of Education & Skills.

Target Market: The centre caters for all age groups from 7 years upwards. From summer camps, adventure sports skills to employability skills courses, there is a vast range on offer catering to the local community and visitors.

Location: Kilfinane, County Limerick

Slane Castle

Concept: In a castle with over 300 years of history, guests can enjoy tours, afternoon tea, a visit to the onsite distillery, and stay in the luxurious rooms or on the organic farm on the estate. With a wide offering including concerts up to an audience of 80,000 there is plenty to do and see. The castle courtyard also offers visitors a more casual dining experience with a selection of food trucks. The site can also host weddings, events and filming projects to diversify income streams.



Funding Model: The present owner of the castle is Henry Conyngham, who styles himself as The 8th Marquess Conyngham. The eldest son of Lord Conyngham is Alex, Earl of Mount Charles who manages the castle and has committed €2.75 million of personal funds to the new €12-million craft whiskey distillery and visitor centre. Further to this Slane Castle is to receive funding of €91,000 for urgent repairs to the roof and repair works to the staircase through the Historic Structures Fund.

Target Market: There is something on offer for everyone from walking trails to historic tours.

Location: Slane Village within the Boyne Valley of County Meath, 50 km from Dublin city centre.

Crumlin Road Gaol

Concept: Crumlin Road Gaol first opened its gates to prisoners in 1846 and for 150 years was a fully operational prison. During this time the Gaol has housed murderers, suffragettes and loyalist and republican prisoners. It has witnessed births, deaths and marriages and has been the home to executions, escapes, hunger-strikes and riots. Today it is a multi-use venue hosting conferences, concerts, exhibitions, events and daily tours. The Historic Education Programme “A Day in the life of a Victorian Child Prisoner” received the Sandford Award for excellence in the provision of heritage education and it the venue was also awarded the Tourism Heritage Property of the Year 2018.



Funding Model: Since 2003 Government has invested over £17 million to repair, remediate, restore, and re-establish the historic Crumlin Road Gaol. Visitors pay £14 for a self-guided tour.

Target Market: Something on offer for everyone, from locals to visitors through tours and experiences such as a Halloween Extravaganza and concerts. Businesses also hire the venue to host office parties and corporate events.

Location: 20 minute walk from Belfast City Centre.

Subterranean Sessions



Concept: Mitchelstown Cave was the first show cave in Ireland, developed for the public following works to allow for safe access in the mid 1960's. During development great care was taken to retain the character and natural beauty of the cave and environs. Today, the cave hosts a range of events and experiences including supper clubs with Michelin star chefs to musical concerts, and pop-up cinema nights.

Funding Model: The cave is privately owned and is financially viable through a range of funding streams including filming projects, tours, and brand partnerships.

Target Market: The Mitchelstown Caves have successfully diversified the offering enticing visitors to explore the caves but also business opportunities and scientific partnerships. Mitchelstown Cave is part of the Irish National Seismic Network who installed a permanent seismograph 200 feet underground in the cave, the first underground station in Ireland. The Seismograph in the Mitchelstown Cave has recorded earthquakes as far away as Southern Peru and Fiji.

Location: County Tipperary, 40 minutes from Cork City.

Derry Craft Village



Concept: A reconstruction of an 18th Century Street and 19th Century Square, the Craft Village provides an eclectic mix of artisan craft shops, balconied apartments, licensed restaurant and coffee shops.

Funding Model: The businesses within the craft village are privately owned and operated. When establishing the craft village, Tourism Northern Ireland and Visit Derry supported the local businesses in creating a bustling centre of creative enterprises.

Target Market: The Canopy in the Village Square and the Thatched Cottage are ideal venues for corporate, cultural and community entertainment. This unique shopping district offers a vast variety of unique gifts and experiences. With over seventy local crafters operating out of the village, there is something to suit everyone. The village also hosts 'The Cottage Sessions', an exciting initiative set up to showcase the local and national talent, supported by Inner City Trust and Derry Creatives.

Location: Derry City Centre.