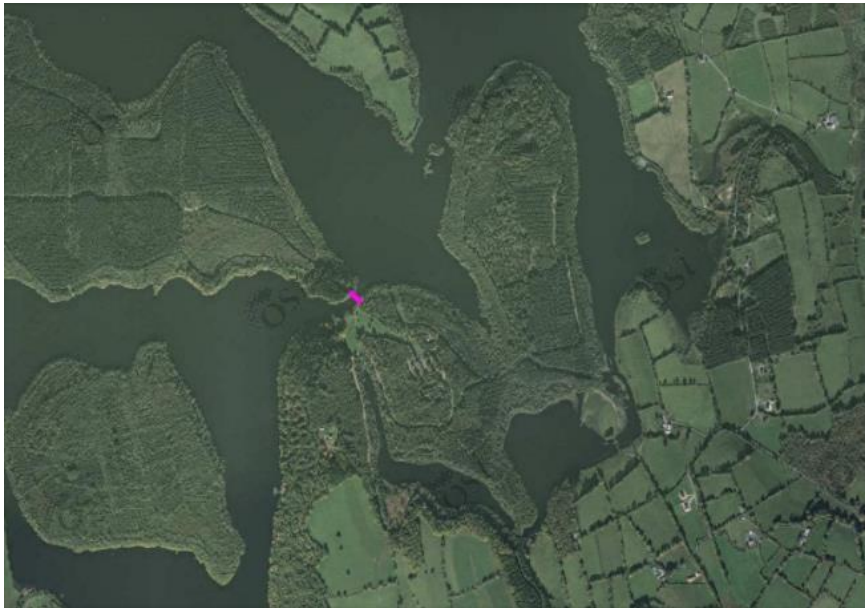


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**Killykeen Forest Park - Gartanoul and Derinish Beg, Killykeen, Co Cavan**  
Design Strategy Statement





Aerial Photo of the crossing at Gartnoul Point

## Introduction

Killykeen Forest Park is owned and managed by Coillte. Located on the picturesque banks of Lough Oughter, it is a large forest park with a number of beautiful, mapped walks and trails. One of these trails' crosses over Lough Oughter at Gartnoul Point between Derinish and Gartnoul. Access is provided over the lake here by an existing timber footbridge.

In recent years visitor numbers to Killykeen Forest Park have increased significantly. The park is regularly used for walking, cycling swimming and associated amenities. To enhance the visitor experience, Cavan County Council have carried out considerable upgrade works to existing pedestrian and cycle paths in the area. A proposed programme of improvements now includes upgrading works to the existing footbridge. This work involves replacing the existing timber footpath deck with a safer elevated footpath more appropriate for its surroundings. Also included is the installation of a temporary modular unit including toilet facilities and retail space.

Craftstudio Architecture have been appointed by Cavan County Council for the design of the proposals.



Existing Bridge



## Background

Constructed in the early 90's, the bridge was originally envisaged as a vehicular crossing. 3 metre concrete support pads were constructed to either side of the waterway and 2no. steel support structures constructed instream. Due to various constraints at the time, the upper crossing was only constructed to facilitate pedestrians. It is limited to 1100mm in width and composed of a timber deck with timber balustrade and handrails.

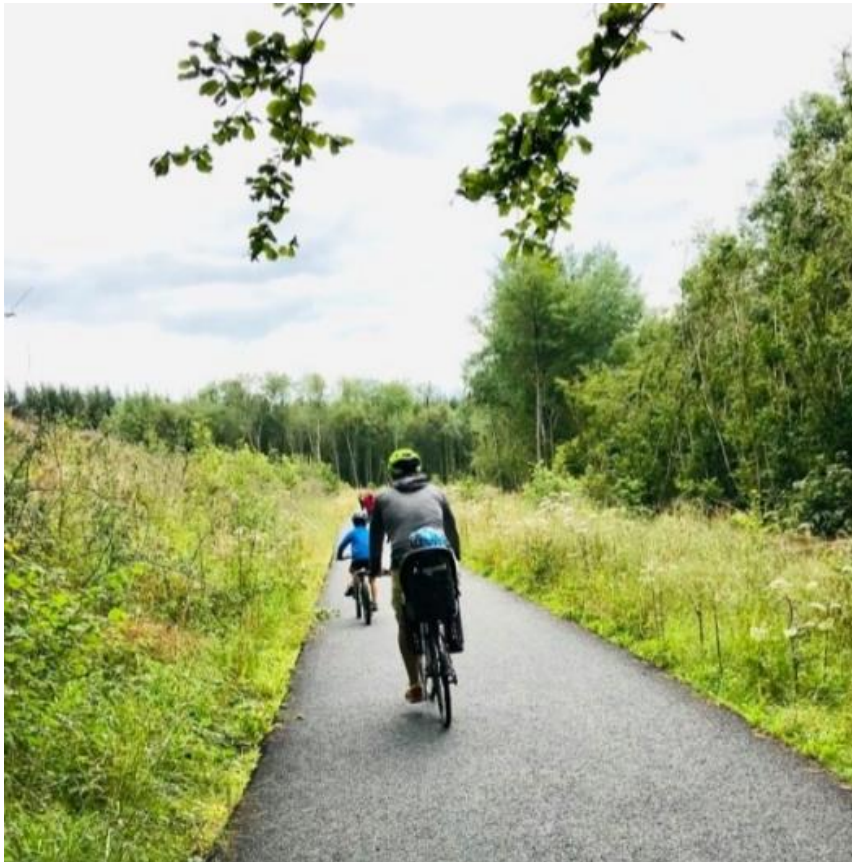
Cavan County Council's investment in Killykeen Forest Park has been a huge success. Upgraded pedestrian and cycle paths on either side of the bridge carry large numbers of people to the crossing point. In the context of the ever-increasing visitor numbers, the narrow foot bridge now struggles to accommodate the volume of pedestrian traffic. Numbers peak considerably at the weekends. The condition of the upper timber footbridge has deteriorated, partially due to the number of people using it but also due to the passage of time. The bridge merits an upgrade so that it can serve the public of Cavan for years to come.



In upgrading the bridge, Cavan County Council, with the support of Coillte, wish to provide a more accessible bridge with an increased width to allow comfortable pedestrian and cyclist passage and enhanced connectivity across Lough Oughter, connecting Killykeen, Garanoul Loop Trail and Killeshandra. This project seeks to build on the works undertaken on the Killeshandra side in 2018/9 which created an off-road cycle and walking link between Killykeen and the village.

Cavan County Council conceived this project with the intention of achieving the following:

1. Improve the path from the trailhead in the main carpark (on the Cavan town side) in Killykeen to the start of the 'Killykeen Way' trail (developed in 2018/9) on the Killeshandra side. This 300m section of trail will be tarmacked to a high standard and safety measures will be installed to reduce speed of cyclists on this part of the trail. We will also install new trailhead signage here in collaboration with Coillte.

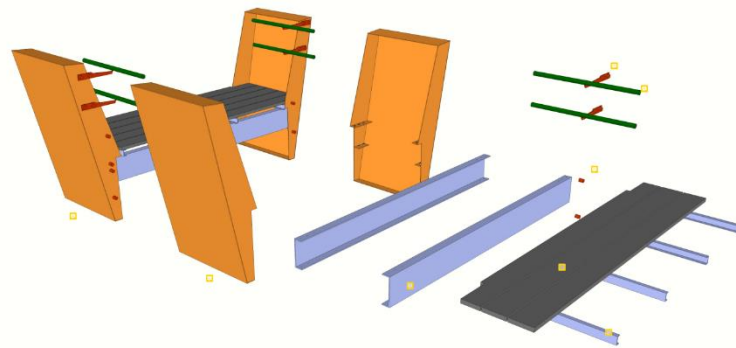


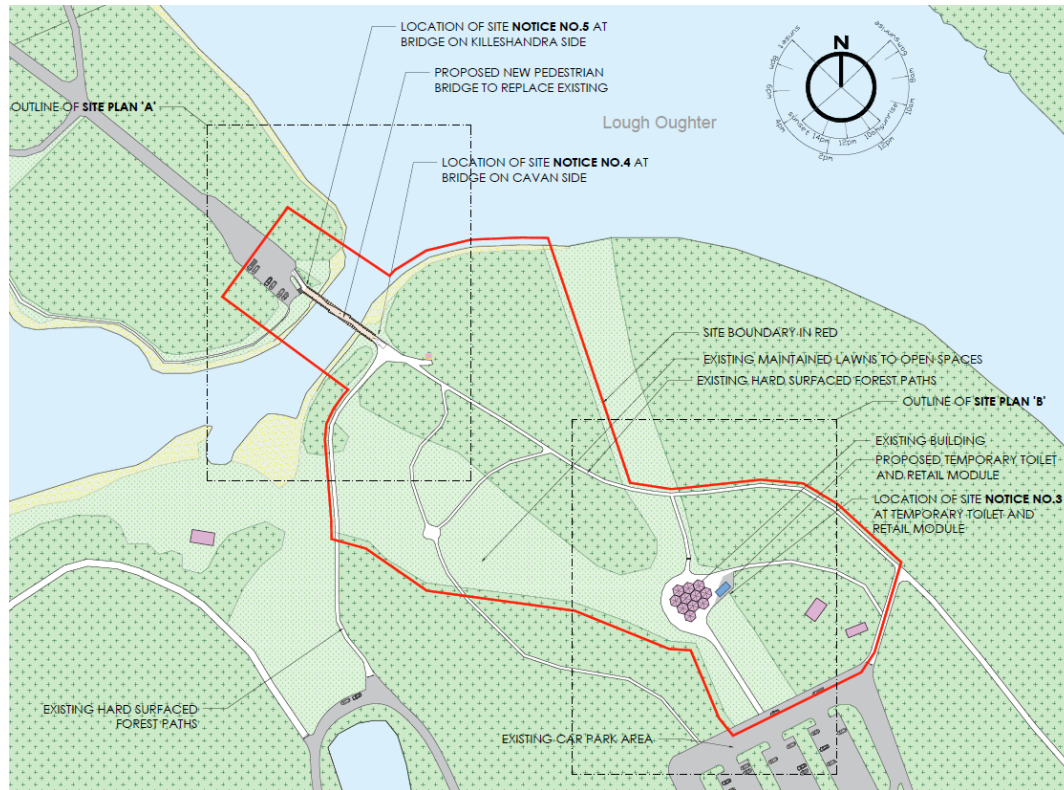
2. Undertake improvements on an iconic footbridge in the forest park. Cyclists and walkers parking in the main car park on the Cavan town side must access the 'Killykeen Way' by crossing the footbridge. The existing bridge is narrow and due to the volumes of people using the new trail, the bridge has become a bottleneck with users waiting up to five minutes to cross. In addition, with the increased numbers of bicycles crossing the bridge to access the new trail on the other side, a health and safety hazard has been created. We propose, through this application, to widen the bridge to allow for easier access for users, and allow for adequate social distancing and to raise it to allow for more boats/ kayaks/ canoes to pass under the bridge in high water levels. We also want to ensure, through good architectural design, that the bridge remains an iconic feature of the park, something that will become an attraction in its own right.



The existing bridge comprises 2no. steel support structures, photographed to the left, constructed instream. Secondary 'I' beams brace the structure. All of these elements will remain in place. 2no. complimentary structural beams will also be lifted into place and bolted to this existing structure to facilitate the widening of the bridge.

It is envisaged that the construction of the bridge and the modular unit would take place off-site. This is to limit on-site works in the sensitive environment and to limit disruption to users of the Forest Park. As the foundations and the steel structures of the bridge already exist no instream works are proposed. It is proposed to install two beams to the outer most extent of the existing steel support structures. Each 1.2m steel module would be prefabricated off-site and then lifted into place and mechanically fixed. Each element would also be secured to the adjacent piece. The diagram to the left outlines the composition of each element.





In addition to the works to the bridge, Cavan County Council are also proposing a temporary modular unit including toilet facilities to further enhance the visitor experience to Killykeen. This will be located adjacent to the former restaurant building and within close proximity to the large carpark approached from the Cavan Town side access road.

This facility will provide high quality sanitary facilities, a coffee dock and ice cream parlour for patrons of the Forest Park. The temporary unit will be serviced by the installation of an 8000 litre waste holding tank as per the details provided.



## Design

Coilte are also working in strategic partnership with Cavan County Council to enhance the tourism provision in the region. The proposed bridge structure has been designed as a sculptural focal point amidst the rugged forestry and pristine lakes of Killykeen Forest Park. Key to the design concept is the presentation of differing perspectives and views across the waterways. The undulating structure will provide bridge users unique snapshots of the local environment. Openness and connection to nature are achieved through the use of frameless structural glazing. For the more daring visitors, a glass floor accentuates a unique relationship with the water. Built-in benches encourage visitors to stop, rest and contemplate the beauty of these waterways.





The form of the sculptural bridge takes reference from Gartanoul, a megalithic court tomb located in Killykeen. On approach, the bridge's angular shape resembles the large stone slabs forming the threshold to the court tomb.

Whilst unashamedly modern, the design of the bridge is respectful of its environment, nestling comfortably at the break in the woodland fabric at the edge of the waterway. Particular consideration was given to the structure's proximity to Killykeen Cottage, (RPS 40402025), an excellent example of a cottage ornee, constructed in the picturesque style. This structure was originally built by Lady Farnham as a pleasure retreat from Farmham House.

The proposed temporary modular unit including toilet facilities and retail space is cedar clad, reflective of its woodland setting.

## Summary

Killykeen Forest Park is an important site in the Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark, which is a regional with geological heritage of international significance. In 2020 a new complex of 30 high-end self-catering lodges called CABU opened in Killykeen. This project creates a cycling and walking option for these visitors to the county and creates an economic opportunity for businesses in Killeshandra.

The proposed project supports countryside recreation by proposing to continue to develop walking and cycling facilities in the 600 acres of outdoor space that encompasses Killykeen Forest Park. The park is scenically wrapped around the shores of Lough Oughter which forms part of the River Erne system. The proposed development forms part of Cavan County Councils strategy via the Local Economic and Community Plan and the County Tourism Strategy 2017 - 2021 which has an objective the development of an integrated network of walks, trails and greenways for local communities and to enhance the tourism product in Cavan.