

The Lower Shore Resident's Association is a community of the fifteen shoreline homes along the Lower Shore Road, spanning either side of the Cornamuckla river in the townlands of Drummullagh and Lislea, Omeath. While not all are inclusive in our association, there are eighty-two residents and children spanning the entirety of the Lower Shore Rd.

In consultation, the following is our submission for the development plans considerations.

NATURA IMPACT REPORT

● **Proposed Upgrading for local area of SAC to SPA**

The area along our shoreline is covered under Carlingford Shore Special area of conservation (SAC 002306). This has failed to deter the destruction and removal of native mussel beds between Narrow Water and Warrenpoint. The loss of these beds would be generational to restore and the loss of this natural filtration system stands as a failure in the fight for better water quality. To us concerned residents it does not seem to be held in high regard by local and port authorities north of the border. The upgrading of this Newry river to Carlingford lough interchange to a Special Protected Area (SPA) would not only prevent continued exploitation but would stand to safeguard an area adjacent to an ever-expanding industrial and commercial environmental risk.

● **Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA)**

With the Proposed inclusion of wooded areas around Omeath Park we would also ask you to consider the wooded areas adjacent to Narrow Water known locally as Ferry Woods. A rare and unspoilt native species forest rich in native fauna and flora - foxes, badgers and indeed red squirrels and an extensive annual bluebell carpet. This wooded area is also rich in archaeological history.

SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Given the abundance of local Fauna found in our given area and given the continued damage and exploitation of this important Newry River/Carlingford lough interchange we would like to see a real focus not just on its current state but also on its defence. Below are only some of the protected fauna that call this small area home:

- Brent Geese
- Curlew (threatened)
- King Fishers
- Sea Otters
- Seals
- Atlantic Salmon
- Eels (critically endangered)
- Red Squirrels

Of course, the list of other species and indeed flora is also indicative of this vibrant and delicate ecosystem.

PROTECTED STRUCTURES & ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

ZONES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

The village of Omeath according to the report has no areas of archaeological potential, nor is there mention of any zones adjacent to it. We would like to bring to your attention a zone of archaeological potential almost wholly unexplored by Archaeological study. Situated at the strategic and narrowest point of the lough it was known to Gaels, English, Normans, Viking and all before. In the townland of Cornamucklagh, the wooded area is known locally as ferry woods. Inside these native woodlands lies the remains of a large ecclesiastical settlement known as Killansnamh (LH002-001002), destroyed by a Viking raid in 841 A.D. The Vikings established two bases in Louth – in Annagassan and in Carlingford Lough. At both sites they destroyed the standing monasteries before settling. Evidence of this monastery while no longer standing can still be seen in stone and linear features. It was used in later years for the burial of unbaptised children and souls lost at sea.

It is reported that the Vikings established a permanent naval base in Omeath around 851 A.D. Indeed, local lore would suggest Omeaths original development was not at its current centre but rather perhaps closer to this more strategic location. For more than 70 years these Vikings ruled the area from this local seat. The annals of the four masters records a raid by foreigners from the area and in many references Gaelic names for Narrow-Water *Caol Uisce* (narrow water) and *Cuan Snámh Aighneacht* (swift sea-channel or ford' or 'swift swimming-place') are used. The later name being the old name prior to Carlingford Lough. Up until the loss of Omeaths native tongue the Louth field name project records these woods as *Coille Chnoc an Phoirt* – the wood of port hill so again in every name it always points to the importance of this narrow crossing.

In 928 A.D. Muirchertach of the Leather Cloaks, drove the Vikings from the area in a large battle that stories record happened along the narrow part of the lough. Given the strategic location, a recently vacated community, pre-established infrastructure, a fresh water source, earthwork features, inland and open sea access along with coastal protection I believe this area could well have been heavily used by Vikings as Carlingford Loughs missing Longphort. With many other possible occupations before and after. The only archaeological excavations carried out in this vicinity were conducted as part of the Narrow Water Bridge project*. The dig uncovered dating evidence coinciding with early Christian and known Viking periods and indeed evidence of settlement going back to Neolithic times.

If this isn't at least acknowledged as an area of archaeological potential, then it's a loss to not just us locally but nationally.

<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/argus/localnotes/archaeologists-uncover-ancient-finds-in-omeath-30209870.html>

***Archaeological dig report:** Walsh, Fintan. "Archaeological Excavations at Cornamucklagh, Omeath, County Louth." *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2015, pp. 297–308. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44508596.

PRESERVATION OF REMAINS OF THE RUNDALE FIELD SYSTEM

Policy Objective OTH 19 is to protect the Area of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ) in the landscape setting of Omeath. As experience has shown us sadly the boundaries of Omeath don't always stretch far past the village centre and its shades of grey thereafter. The surrounding townlands especially in Cornamucklagh show the evident remains of the old Rundale field system of agriculture and land ownership in its small and narrow walled fields. It is a field system that has long defined our unique rural landscape. Given the communities relatively recent Irish language use it retained many Gaelic field and place names. A history lost to most communities but recorded here. Sadly, these are reserved only to academia now and the walls and boundaries of our landscape are at future risk. Will future developments or planning considerations protect it or will another unique piece of Omeath history lose way to modernity?

PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO PROTECTED STRUCTURES LIST

Our road once had its own imposing granite bridge, a visual link to the railway's past. Sadly, it was destroyed when its granite was better seen for the construction of a home in Carlingford. There are however two remaining bridges locally, both of which have no protection that we can find. The near-sighted destruction of our railway heritage is apparent, now more than ever as greenway plans progress. With this reviewed focus these remaining gems should be safely protected.



1. Granite railway bridge built circa 1890's Located at the entrance to Narrow Water Wood which may span the proposed greenway addition (- 54.1094322, -6.2860522)
2. Granite railway bridge built circa 1890's Located on private land (54.1066721, -6.2785925)
3. The old park hotel while it lies in ruin waiting development has a folly well known to locals among the forest area surrounding it. It is a stone observation tower built circa 1800-1860 that at one point would have afforded views above the trees and across the area. While its timber stairs and platform have long gone its beautiful structure remains intact. It would be worth protection.
4. From looking at the archaeological register we note that there is no reference to two earth works situated ether side of the road in upper Lislea. They may have been overlooked previously and are due consideration. (54.09682076, -6.28916859) (54.09739014, -6.28787577)



4. Earthwork locations



3. Omeath Park Folly

OMEATH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

While there are clear focuses and plans for the village of Omeath again what of us, its community who live outside the village centred map lines? There is a lot of recent talk on the resurrection of the long shelved Narrow Water bridge project but no talk of it in the plans. Given the plans scope until 2027 what are the contingencies for the total change it would bring? While it may be looked at by many as only positive news there are those of us closer that have unaddressed concerns and fears.

Should the proposed bridge go over at Narrow-Water I fear that land historically held in close view yet distanced, would be seen as prime development for the populous and expanding Warrenpoint community and industry. History, landlords and poverty left us our green fields while the opposite side flourished and expanded but with industry, schools and communities no more than minutes apart it would be only natural to fear the sudden race to develop us not as a satellite community of Omeath but one of Warrenpoint. What considerations are in the future development plan to protect that?

STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

We as an association comprise of 15 shoreline properties with direct contact to the shore or adjacent river. From OPW flood risk mapping it seems that no risk assessment has been conducted in this locality. We would like to submit for inclusion in assessment given the very real threat and history of flood events.

- **Risk** - The area along the shoreline of our association is at the mercy of high tidal events and stream surge caused by mountain water runoff. Sea levels are projected to rise and so too does the amount of rainwater that flows down our local stream.
- **Probability of flooding** - High tide events are an annual occurrence and always have been. Unfortunately, with tidal heights and extreme weather events increasing so too does the damage and risk to our homes and property.
- **Consequences of flooding** - Recent events this year include shoreline properties having to move vehicles to escape tidal encroachment, Sandbag placement, impassable road conditions due to stream surge breaching and the erosion of road surfaces. The last few years have seen accelerated deterioration of riverbank and shoreline defences.

While we have been able to undertake basic remedial work in the past, we need the assistance and expertise of the council to provide a real solution moving forward. Sandbags and gravel only get us so far. We need the council to not just listen to us unobjectively but to help us. We need a solution and if funding is only in part, we are willing to contribute our part to ensure the future viability of our road surface and homes.

The following images are only some of the flooding events captured by residents this year.

LOWER SHORE

Residents Association
Omeath Co Louth



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