

An aerial photograph of a peatland landscape. A train with several white and grey carriages is moving along a track that cuts through the landscape. To the right of the train, there is a small, white, rectangular building with a flat roof. The landscape is a mix of green grass, brown peat soil, and dense green trees. The sky is not visible.

Umeras Community Development

umeras
Peatlands Park

Creating a tranquil amenity for local people and tourists

What you can do to support Umeras Peatlands Park?

Spread the word! Check out **Umeras Peatlands Park** on **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **Twitter**. Our not-for-profit group aims to raise €5,000 to co-fund a feasibility design study. **Can you help?** Please contribute to our **GoFundMe** page, it will make a big difference.

This is a **collaborative** community project, so please share your ideas for the park.
Email umerascomdev@gmail.com | Visit www.umeraspeatlandspark.ie



gofundme

Umeras Community Development

We are a not-for-profit community group formed by local people to design, fund and promote Umeras Peatlands Park.

We are inspired by Lough Boora Discovery Park in Offaly which attracts 100,000 visitors per year to experience the rural tranquility of the bog and forest landscape. We aim to highlight peatland heritage and the unique nature of Umeras bog.

The committee members all live near Umeras Bog and are:

Eddie Smyth (ecologist/rural development)

Kate Scully (business)

Liam Murphy (accountant)

Bernie Duffy (farmer)

We visited Umeras Bog with the Irish Peatlands Conservation Council (IPCC) in July 2019 when we heard that Bord na Móna were stopping peat production. The IPCC facilitated contact with Bord na Móna and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

We have submitted a proposal for funding to the Just Transition Fund to develop Umeras Peatlands Park. Bord na Móna has stated that "we are willing to work with Umeras Community Development to explore this opportunity further, and in principle we consider a peatland park to be an appropriate future use for the site."

We have support from Kildare Leader, Kildare Fáilte, Kildare County Council Heritage and Biodiversity, the IPCC and all our local politicians.

Our Objective

Our objective is to transform Umeras Bog into a peatlands park as a local and tourist amenity. We are seeking to support Bord na Móna to transform the cut-away bog into unique nature areas while preserving the small area of community turf cutting so tourists can experience our peatland heritage.

Our funding proposal includes money to improve the bog road from Umeras Bridge as a cycle and walking track, and to widen and improve the Quinnsboro road from Ballykelly Locks.

We believe that a Peatlands Park will bring tourists to Monasterevin and Rathangan, which combined with the Blueway and Ballykelly Mills Distillery will rejuvenate the local economy. It will provide a great new amenity for our families to enjoy the rural tranquillity of the bogs and canal.

The Peatlands Park would create direct employment in building and managing the park, and also indirectly, by creating demand for cafés, shops, bike hire, accommodation, etc. in Monasterevin and Rathangan.

intoKildare

Concept Map (this initial map illustrates the possibilities of Umeras Peatlands Park)



Umeras Peatlands Park

The aim is to rehabilitate Umeras bog as part of a tourism initiative, and to continue the tradition of turf-cutting.

Umeras bog is approximately 600 acres, comprised of 500 acres of cut-away bog, 40 acres of raised bog and 60 acres of birch woodland, drains, bog railway and a works yard. The site is currently drained, but when the internal drains are blocked some areas will become wetlands while drier areas will become semi-natural grassland and scrubland.

The site is very much a blank canvas in terms of how the biodiversity and amenity value of the site can be developed. Bord na Móna has the contract to re-wet the decommissioned peatlands to maximize carbon capture and this work would be complementary to the development of a peatland park.

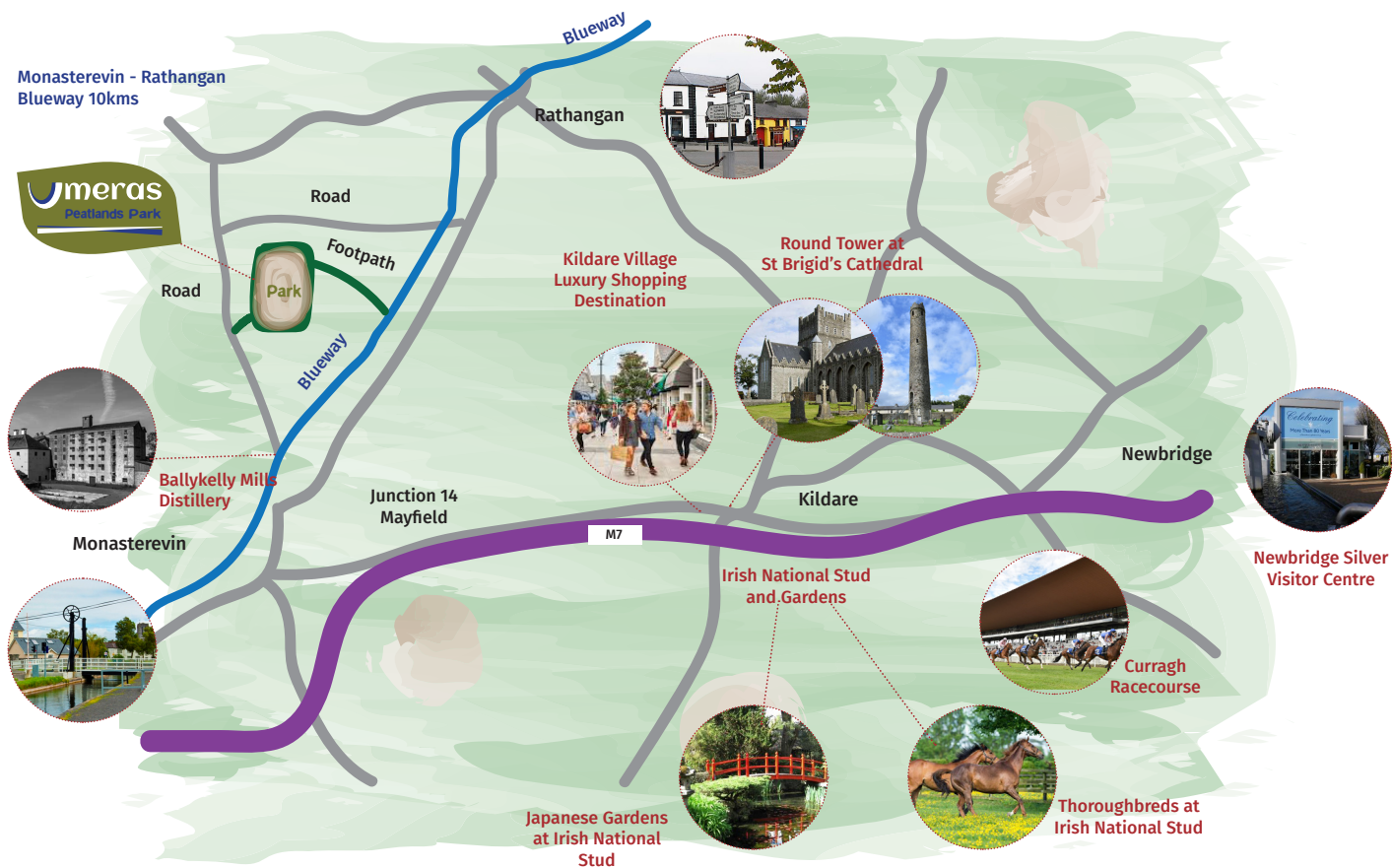
The key is to connect the Monasterevin/Rathangan tourist hub to the Kildare Town Tourist Hub.

The Kildare Town Tourist Hub includes Kildare Village (4 million visitors+), National Stud/Japanese Gardens, Curragh Racecourse, Kildare Heritage Town, St. Brigid's Cathedral & Round Tower.



The proposed peatland park would bring a significant new tourist attraction into the area which would create a tourist hub linking the towns of Monasterevin and Rathangan, via the Barrow Way Blueway, and also rural cycling routes. This would directly boost the tourist potential of Monasterevin and Rathangan to provide tourist facilities such as accommodation, food and drinks, shopping, bike hire, transport & tours and other services. Monasterevin is beside the M7 motorway and has a train station on the Umeras side of the town. People could arrive by car, bus or train and hire a bicycle to explore the area, potentially staying in either Monasterevin or Rathangan.

Nearby Places of Interest Map



Tourist Categories

Premium Tourists

South Kildare Day-Trippers

Kildare Village Outlet
Ballykelly Distillery
Umeras Peatland Park - Bog Train
Shuttle to Umeras Bridge
Barge to Ballykelly Locks

Chinese/Japanese tourists are visiting the Kildare Village Outlet in large numbers and Ballykelly Distillery will also attract these tourists with their premium whiskey brand.

A special tour could be organized to suit their interests in seeing some Irish heritage and nature.

For example, they could be taken by bus to Umeras Peatland Park visitor centre to visit a small exhibition on the heritage of the area in their language. They could then take the bog train to the raised bog and visit the sculpture park. After that, they could be taken by bus to Umeras Bridge and ride a barge along the canal back to Ballykelly Locks and the end of their tour.

This premium offering would also be attractive to American tourists exploring the local heritage.

Continental Tourists

Blueway Explorers

Cycle/walking routes from
Monasterevin to Rathangan

Overnight stay optional

Cyclists and walkers, particularly from the German market, are attracted to blueways offering a chance to experience rural tranquillity, heritage and nature.

The Umeras Peatland Park would give them a reason to stop in the area for a night. They can walk or cycle the park and contribute to the local economy.



Irish Tourists

Base for Domestic Tourists

Added amenity for Locals

Domestic Tourists:

Cyclists and walkers coming down from Dublin could base themselves around Umeras Peatland Park and explore the area. This would put the tourist hub on the Blueway route map and also attract day-trippers from other parts of the region.

Local People:

The Umeras Peatland Park would represent a great local amenity to encourage more people to walk and cycle, to promote healthy lifestyles and an appreciation for their heritage and nature.

Heritage & History

Gerard Manley Hopkins

The famous poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote some of his poetry beside the bog, and of Monasterevin he wrote that he spent "pleasant days down in Co. Kildare".

Hopkins visited Monasterevin seven times, staying with the Cassidy family. Writing to his mother and his friend, English Poet Laureate Robert Bridges, he mentioned the town and surrounding area often, once fondly saying that he was staying with 'kind people at a nice place.'

"I should have felt better for the delicious bog air of Monasterevin."

Hopkins,
writing in 1887



Gerard Manley Hopkins,
leading Victorian poet

St Brigid's Birthplace

St. Brigid symbolizes both a saint and a Celtic goddess. One of the three patron saints of Ireland, much has been written about Brigid, her performance of many miracles and her gentle treatment of the poor and sick.

Inextricably linked with Kildare, Brigid's mother was Broicseach, a member of a working class sept located in the Mountrice-Umeras district. Her father Dubtoc resided in Knocknagalla, just outside Kildare.

"Authentic Tradition states that near this place Brigid, Mary of the Gael was born."



Shrine to St Brigid at
Mountrice Cross,
erected in 1982 by
Lackagh Memorial Committee

Turf Cutting Tradition

Protecting traditional peatcutting at Umeras Bog is one of our aims. The third national turfcutting championship was held here in May 1936 and attended by Eamon De Valera. This was the same year that the Turf (Use and Development) Act was passed.

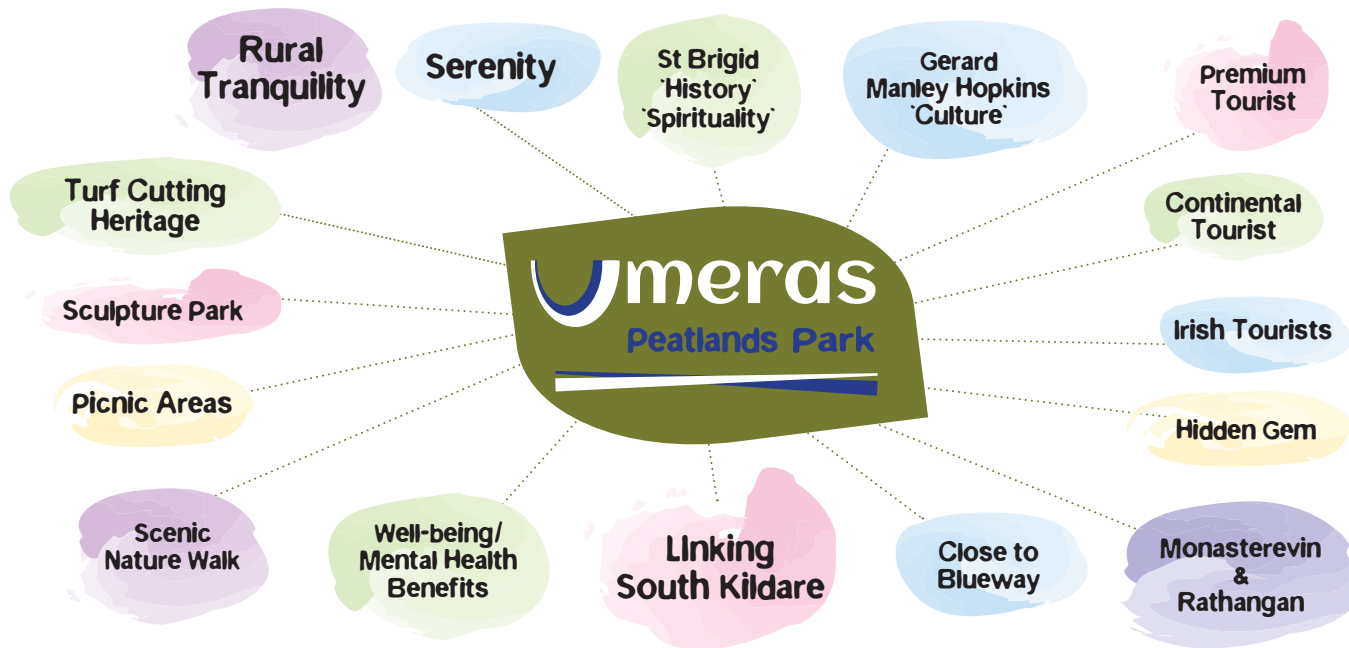
The Umeras Moss Peat Company, was founded in 1890, supplying moss peat litter, and also making firelighters from hand-won turf.



Newsclipping 'Irish Press' 18 May 1936
De Valera with Major De Courcy Wheeler

What's great about our proposed park?

- Link between Monasterevin and Rathangan, close to the Blueway
- Broad appeal: to Premium, Continental and Irish tourists
- Can offer tourists and locals a quiet serene place to visit
- Local links with St Brigid and Gerard Manley Hopkins



Here to help

If you have any comments, suggestions or need help to understand anything to do with the proposed park, please contact us

Umeras Community Development | Call: Eddie Smyth 085 703 6042 | Email: umerascomdev@gmail.com