



# Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

<b>Who are you:</b>	Group
<b>Name:</b>	Blessington AFC
<b>Email Address:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Reference:</b>	BLESSLAP-003155
<b>Submission Made</b>	April 3, 2024 12:35 AM

## File

Blessington LAP Submission 03.04.24.pdf, 3.41MB



Blessington AFC,  
Blessington Rugby Football Club,  
Lake Shore Striders &  
Community Pool for West Wicklow.

Wicklow County Council  
Planning Department,  
County Buildings, Wicklow Town,  
Co. Wicklow  
467 FW96

FAO Planning Department in Wicklow County Council.

## 1.0 Introduction

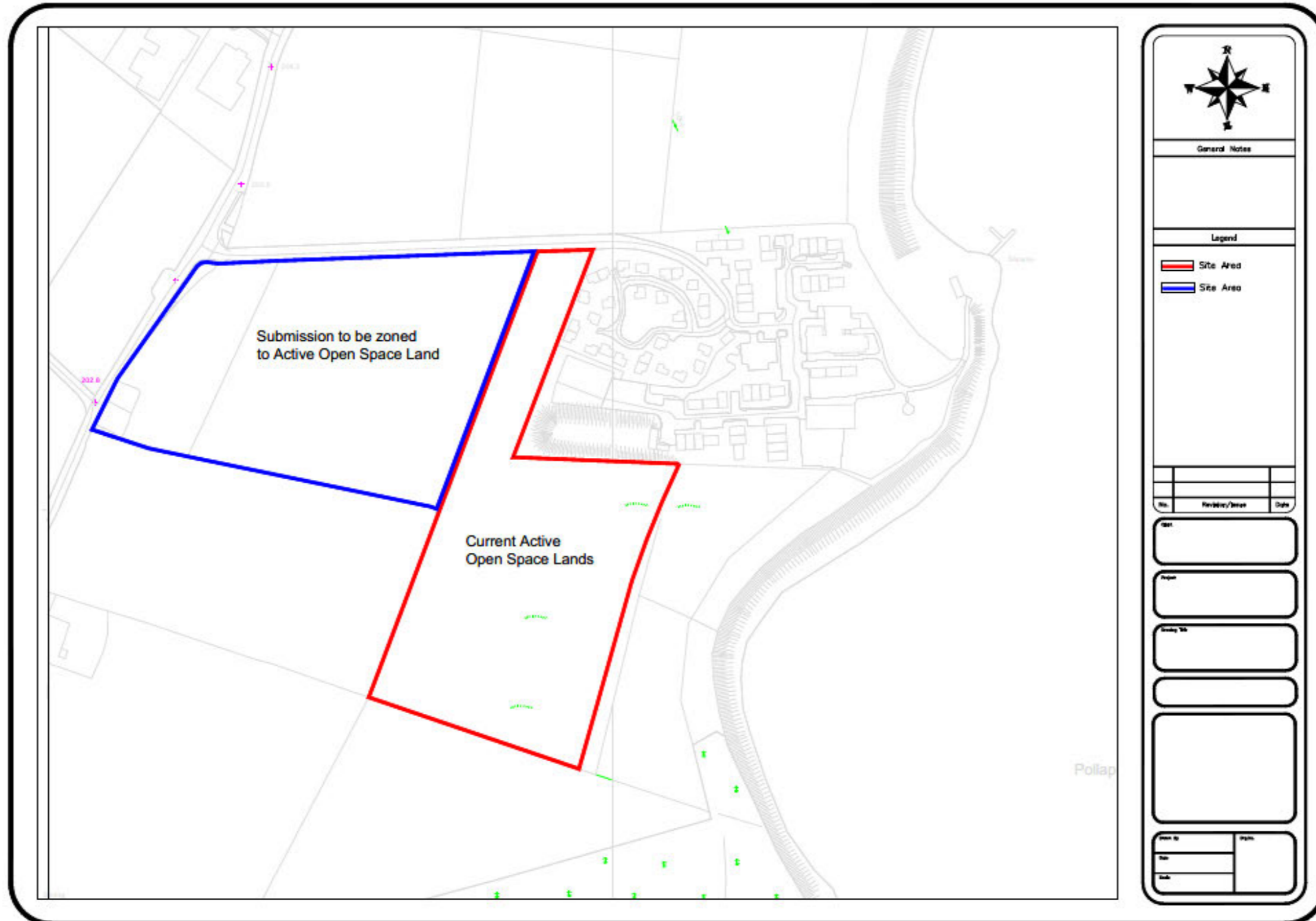
I am writing to you on behalf of the above clubs and community groups within the town of Blessington – Blessington AFC, Blessington Rugby Football Club, Lake Shore Striders & Community Pool for West Wicklow. These groups have come together to generate this submission, in the hope to improve the current infrastructure of these clubs for the benefit of the people and surrounding areas of Blessington and the clubs themselves.

Each club have limited facilities within the town of Blessington and are looking to retain the current Active Open Space lands owned by Wicklow County Council and to propose the rezoning of further lands owned by Wicklow County Council to Active Open Space. The below will outline the exact areas of lands, a similar proposal in a neighbouring county completed by the County Council, a possible example layout of existing lands zoned active open space, information outlining the need for further facilities for each club and letters of support for these much needed facilities.

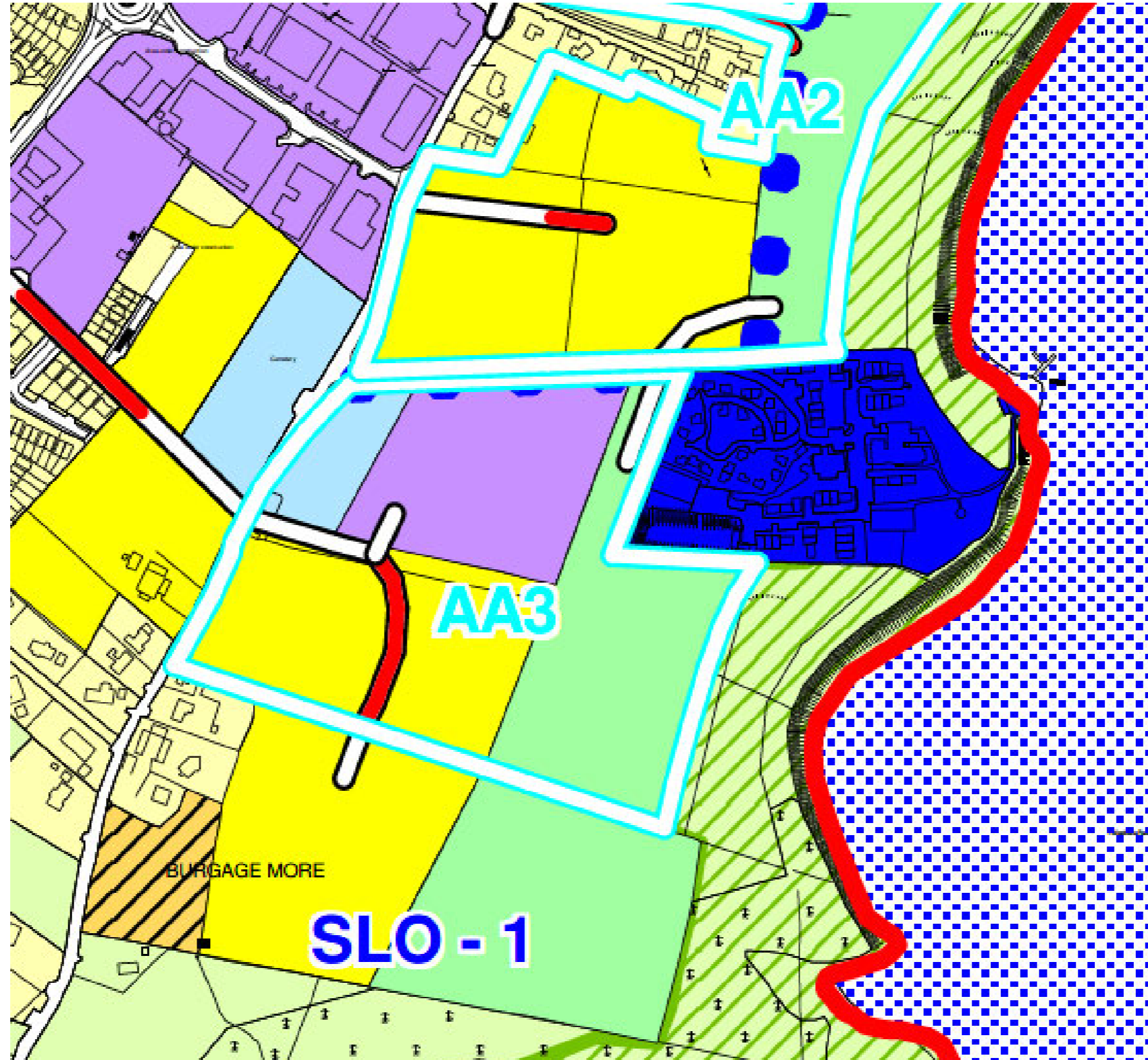
## 2.0 Submission

### 2.1 To retain existing Active Open Space & Change Zoning of further lands to Active Open Space

The above clubs need further infrastructure and have all come together to submit the proposal to retain the existing lands as Active open Space and to propose the further lands to the east of the existing to be rezoned as active open space also.



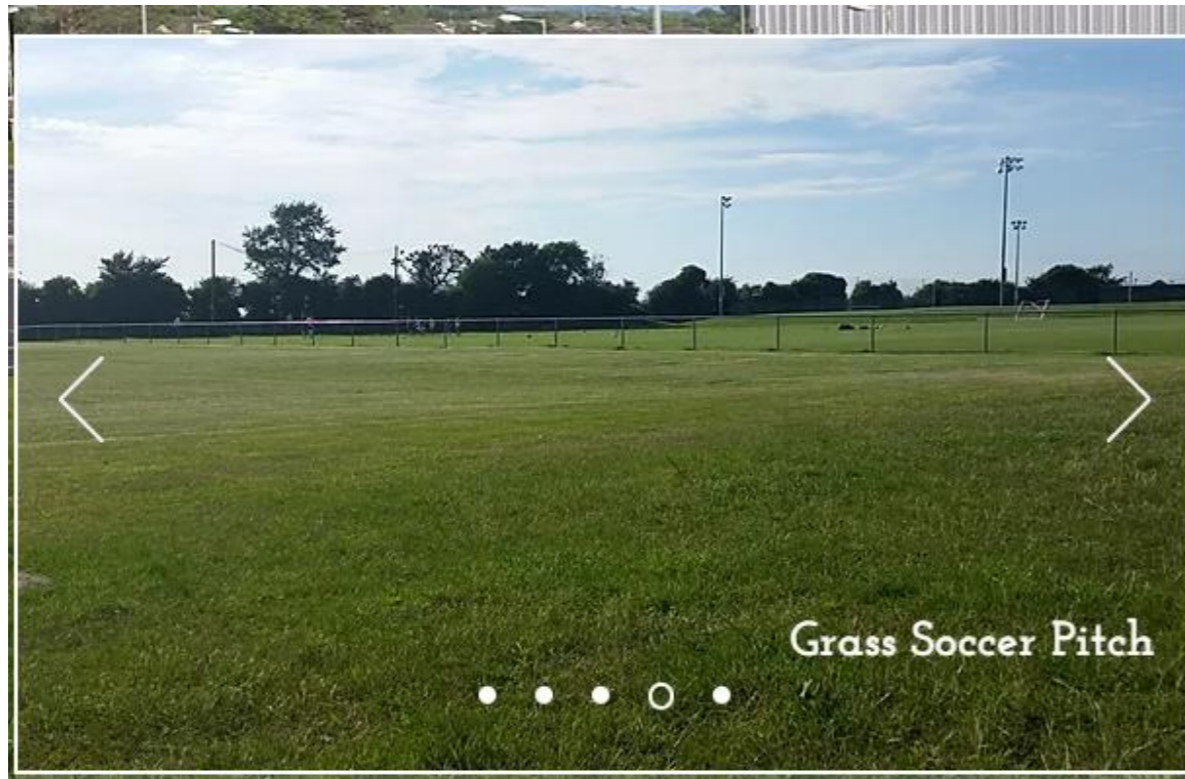
2.2 Existing Zoning as per current Blessington LAP 2013 - 2019



### 3.0 Example Developments in Kildare County Council

The below example is a similar development in Kildare County Council which has created facilities and infrastructure in 2009 for multiple clubs utilising council land.





Grass Soccer Pitch

## Other Facilities

Along with the sportshall and all weather pitches we have:

6 changing rooms

A small meeting room

A grass athletics track with a 100mtr six lane all weather tartan strip

Grass soccer pitches: 11 aside and 7 aside



# EXPLORE OUR FACILITIES

K Leisure operates three facilities in Co. Kildare, in Athy, Naas and Newbridge. The Athy and Naas sites offer 25m swimming pools, fitness classes, state of the art gyms, sauna and steam rooms. Newbridge is a dry site with a full gym and a dedicated strength and conditioning arena. Other facilities include an indoor hall, astro pitches and coffee dock.

Our ultra-modern, multi-award-winning clubs have activities for every level of ability and age.

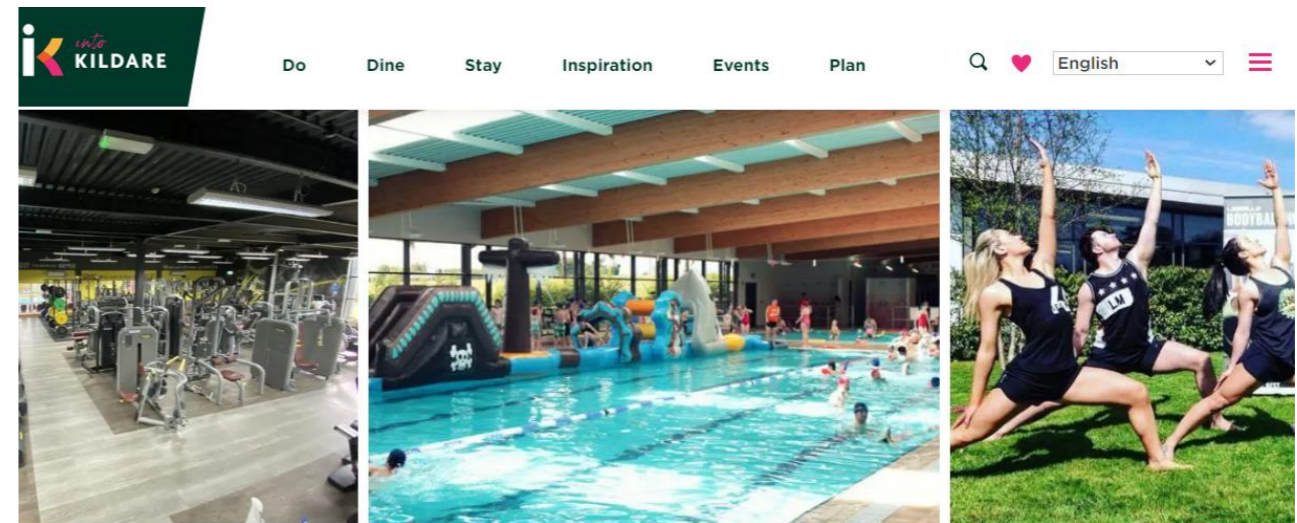
# Kildare leisure centres officially opened



By Pete Hayman 19 Oct 2009

Two new swimming pool facilities in Athy and Naas, County Kildare, Ireland, have been officially opened by Martin Cullen, the Irish minister for arts, sport and tourism.

The K Leisure Swimming Pool complexes in both towns will be operated by Kildare Sports and Leisure Limited, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kildare County Council. K-Leisure Athy boasts a 25m swimming pool with moveable floor, a family changing area, a spectator area, sauna and steamrooms, an aerobics studio and a fitness suite equipped by Technogym. The Naas facility also includes a learner pool.



Into Kildare > Kildare Listings > Adventure & Activities > K Leisure Naas

[Add to favourites](#)

## K Leisure Naas

Naas

**With top class gyms, swimming pools, spas, fitness classes and astro pitches available for everybody, K Leisure is the number one choice for fitness and leisure.**

This ultra-modern, multi-award-winning club has activities for every level of ability and age with a 25m swimming pool, fitness classes, state of the art gym, sauna and steam rooms. Other facilities include an indoor hall, astro-pitches and coffee dock.

Family Swim sessions mean parents and kids can enjoy swimming together, and the Swim Academy provides a valuable life skill to young kids. You can take the stress of planning your child's next birthday party by booking an activity packed party session at K Leisure.

See More

ADVENTURE & ACTIVITIES, FAMILY FUN, RAINY DAYS, NAAS

Share This



### Contact Details

+353 045 881655

[Send Email](#)

[Visit Website](#)

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New Caragh Court, Naas, County Kildare,  
W91 VP27, Ireland.

### Social Channels

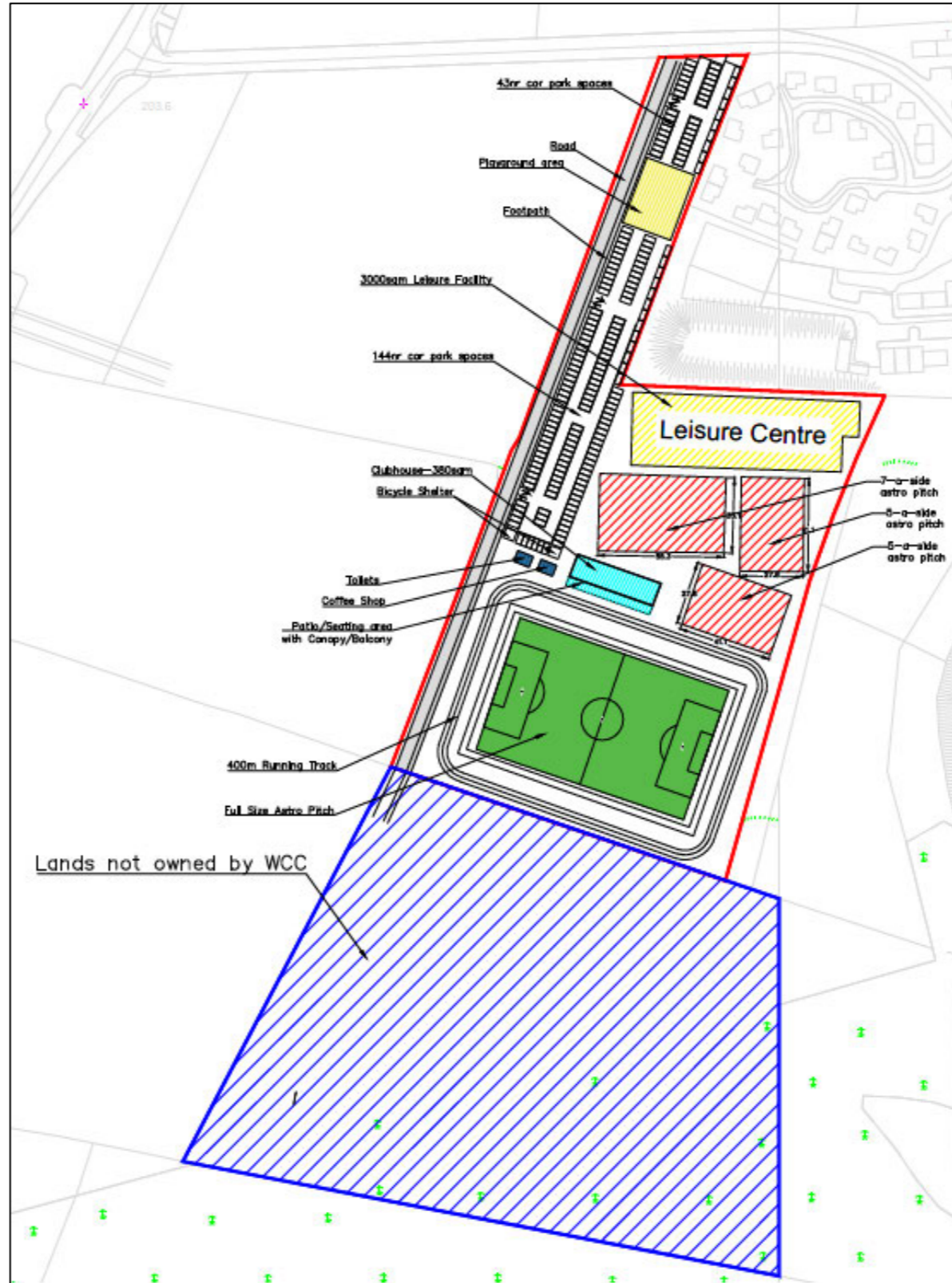


### Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: 6am to 9.30pm  
Saturday & Sunday: 9am (gym), 10am (pool) to 5.30pm

These facilities were all developed in one location to the west of Naas on land owned by Kildare County Council. This facility has given top class facilities and infrastructure for Naas AFC, Naas Athletic Club and Naas Hockey Club and has allowed these clubs to grow and prosper all while having a full equipped Leisure facility for the Naas and surrounding areas.

#### 4.0 Example of possible layout for existing Active Open Space lands





## 5.0 Club Information

### 5.1 Blessington AFC



#### HISTORY

Founded in 1968, Blessington AFC started their journey with a single senior team competing in the (AUL) Athletic Union League in Dublin. Over the course of more than a half a century since, the club has grown and evolved to become the largest football club in West Wicklow. We now have over 650 members from Blessington and the surrounding townlands generating twenty-five teams that compete in all age groups, both boys and girls, in the Dublin and District Schoolboys League (DDSL - the biggest schoolboys league in Europe), the Metropolitan Girls League, and the Leinster Senior League. We are very proud to say we recently welcomed 3rd generation members to play for our community club.

#### HISTORY

As part of Sport Irelands 20x20 initiative (an all-inclusive movement to shift Ireland's cultural perception of women's sport) Blessington AFC has been working hard over the past few years to promote girls' football in our community. We are now delighted that we have 3 girls' team within the club. The stag that features on our club crest comes from our original grounds which were located in between Glending and Deerpark on the Naas Road in the townland of Deerpark.

The club played just off the Naas Road until after the 2007-08 season, before our partnership with Roadstone and our move to our new home at Crosschapel.

Turning old quarry grounds into a place where children can enjoy football was no easy feat but after heavy investment, we are proud to say that...



*The original Blessington AFC senior team.*



### OUR VISION

Blessington AFC is a community-based volunteer organisation which aims to create a suitable and safe environment for players of all ages and ability to take part and thrive in football. Our aim is to instil in all our players a sense of identity and belonging in our community, while enjoying the benefits a team sport brings, especially to our younger members as they develop friendships and skills that will benefit them later in life.

### CURRENT CLUB DETAILS

656 members

25 teams in total

2 Senior teams

3 Girls teams

Active academy with 40 members

### FACILITIES

2 Fully drained 11v11 pitches

1 11v11 training pitch

2 x changing rooms

Toilet block

2 x old containers

### FACILITIES

Over the past two seasons it has become apparent that Blessington AFC has outgrown its current facilities. Our training pitch is the only pitch we have with some form of lighting, meaning across the winter months, this pitch is used heavily. The heavy wear and tear from training frequently leads to this pitch being closed to allow the surface to recover. Teams have resorted to hiring other all-weather pitches within the town to train during the winter months. Furthermore, on match days we are starting to struggle with capacity as the rewards of our productive academy led to more teams needing matches scheduled.

S.W.O.T ANALYSIS	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 50 years of history and tradition within the community</li> <li>Large and growing junior membership</li> <li>Volunteer/mentorship very strong within the club's ethos.</li> <li>Affiliate club to Shamrock Rovers F.C.</li> <li>Club has developed Ireland internationals</li> <li>Good governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No facilities in Wicklow, the club's county</li> <li>Pitches in use are not club owned</li> <li>3 pitches located 4km away with no safe route other than by car</li> <li>Lack of space/playing pitches</li> <li>Lack of training facilities/floodlights/all-weather pitch</li> <li>Waiting lists for some age groups</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth of girl's football</li> <li>Growth in membership due to population increase</li> <li>Development/increase of pitches located in Crosschapel Co. Kildare</li> <li>Land/A place to call our home in Co. Wicklow</li> <li>Development of players &amp; coaches with FAI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No land/pitches or connection with Co. Wicklow, our home</li> <li>Inadequate number of pitches in Crosschapel Co. Kildare.</li> <li>Inability to meet demands of population growth</li> <li>Pitches in use are not club owned, security of tenure</li> <li>Other sports strength in facilities a deciding factor in members leaving the club</li> </ul>

GROWTH POTENTIAL
The Town of Blessington currently has a population of 5,520 [2016] – Census.
With current approved planning applications, and submitted applications, this can be expected to grow to approximately 8,000 – 9,000 by 2027.
With this influx of youth to the area we anticipate our current club membership increasing by 40% to 50% by 2030.

CLUB AIMS	
Aim 1	Gain access to land in Co. Wicklow through collaboration with local authorities and representatives. Blessington AFC is a Wicklow club that has no connection to Wicklow. 2022 has been targeted for development/highlighting of facilities and lack thereof.
Aim 2	Development and expansion of existing pitches and facilities in Crosschapel Co. Kildare as they are inadequate to meet current needs. Addition of pitch 4. Agreement with landlord (Roadstone) to retrofit existing structure for a shop.
Aim 3	Achieve the FAI Club Mark, awarded to clubs based on best practice in the governance, management, and administration of a football club.
Aim 4	Secure the future of our pitches located in Crosschapel Co. Kildare with our landlord by extending the agreement to 2037.

## 5.2 Lakeshore Striders



### Introduction:

The Lakeshore Striders Athletic Club is a long-standing community organisation in Blessington, promoting health, fitness, and social connection for residents of all ages and abilities. While we currently lack dedicated facilities, we rely on access to the local community school's track. We kindly request the Wicklow County Council to consider our club's needs within the Blessington Amenity Zone plan, particularly the potential of a smaller zoned area.

### History of Lakeshore Striders:

Established in 2011, Lakeshore Striders has been a cornerstone of Blessington's athletic scene for 13 years. The club has over 100 members. It strives to maintain an intergenerational ethos, where older members support and mentor newer and younger members. We attract members from the broader West Wicklow corridor. We offer a welcoming environment for individuals and families to participate in running and walking activities, despite limitations in dedicated facilities.

We boast a proud history of supporting the local environment and community:

- We organise an annual Couch to 5K
- We organise and provide volunteers for the Russborough Park Run;
- We support the Tidy Towns organisation; we run an annual collection for the Capuchin Centre;
- We participate and support the annual Goal Mile event;
- We organise the Lakes 10K - one of the most popular races on the 10K circuit;
- We work with the Sanctuary Runners and Trail Criú organisations to support refugees and people seeking international protection.

### Benefits of Lakeshore Striders:

- **Health and Wellbeing:** Our club promotes physical activity, a critical factor in combating obesity, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.
- **Accessibility:** Running and walking require minimal equipment and cater to a wide range of fitness levels, making our club inclusive for all residents.

### Current Limitations:

While we are grateful for access to the school track, our ability to serve the community is restricted by:

- **Limited Availability:** We can only utilise the track and its floodlights two nights a week, significantly limiting training opportunities.
- **Lack of Dedicated Space:** The track's primary function serves the school, and availability can be unpredictable, hindering consistent scheduling and growth.
- **Lack of Services:** We do not have toilet facilities. This severely reduces how attractive the club is to women in particular.

5.3 Community Pool for West Wicklow



# Introduction & History of West Wicklow Pool Campaign



- The Community Pool for West Wicklow committee are a voluntary community group who have been campaigning for the development of a swimming pool in the Baltinglass MD (West Wicklow) since July 2018.
- During this time we have worked with Wicklow County Council, local Councillors, TDs, community groups, sports clubs, businesses, schools, Water Safety Ireland and Swim Ireland to demonstrate the many benefits that the development of a swimming pool in West Wicklow would have for the local community.
- Wicklow County Council have previously identified a 30 acre site of Council owned land in Blessington beside the Avon as the most suitable location for the development of a swimming pool and community sports facilities in West Wicklow.
- The prioritisation of the development of a swimming pool facility and sports complex in West Wicklow was included in the most recent Wicklow County Development Plan.
- In 2022 Community Pool for West Wicklow and Swim Ireland, in collaboration with Wicklow County Council, brought a temporary Pop-Up Pool to Blessington for a 12 week period. 600 children a week had the opportunity to learn how to swim during this period.

## **CPO 7.43**

To prioritise, facilitate and support the development of a community swimming pool facility and a sports complex within the western region of the County, so located to achieve maximum accessibility to the residents of West Wicklow.

# Why does West Wicklow need a swimming pool?



- The Baltinglass MD (West Wicklow) is the only district in Wicklow without a swimming pool (public or private).
- The Baltinglass MD has a population size comparable with Arklow. Blessington is the largest town in the MD with a population of approx. 6,000 but this is closer to 7,000 when the surrounding villages are included.
- Residents of West Wicklow and schools within the district must travel outside of Wicklow to Naas, Tallaght, Athy, Carlow, and as far as Wexford to go swimming.
- At present the average travel time West Wicklow residents must travel to access swimming facilities in other counties is 30 minutes.

- The closest Wicklow County Council operated swimming pool to the majority of West Wicklow residents is in Bray and has a minimum travel time of 45 minutes with no public transport links from West Wicklow.

LEVEL 2 – SETTLEMENTS WITH POPULATION RANGE 7,000 – 15,000	
Multi-purpose Community Resource Centre Sport & Recreation Centre Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre Youth Resource Centre Local Multi-Purpose Community Space/Meeting Rooms Outdoor Water Sports Facilities (where applicable) Neighbourhood and Local Parks	Outdoor Multi-Use Games Areas – Synthetic/ Hardcourt Playground(s) Playing Pitches Alternative/Minority Sports Facilities Open Space/Urban Woodlands/Nature Areas Library Arts and Cultural Centre
Acceptable rural catchment time by car: 15 mins	

*Community Facilities Hierarchy Model from Section 7.2 Community Development & Land Use Planning, Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028*



# Educational Benefits of a Swimming Pool

- Drowning is the second leading cause of death in children in Ireland.
- Swimming is part of the national curriculum in schools but Principals in West Wicklow are finding it increasingly more difficult to incorporate it into their school day.
- Blessington school children currently travel to Naas and Tallaght to access swimming facilities. Primary school children in Donard have to travel as far as Athy or Carlow to go swimming.
- A 40 minute swim lesson can take three hours out of the school day due to long travel times – loss of potential teaching time for other subjects.
- Long journeys to access swimming facilities have a direct impact on our environment and carbon emissions.
- The arrival of the Pop-Up Pool in Blessington in 2022 gave some local schools an opportunity to access swimming facilities for their students for the first time.



# Benefits of a Swimming Pool for Local Sports



- West Wicklow has an abundance of local sports clubs which would benefit from the use of local swimming facilities.
- Everyone should have the opportunity to be involved and develop their skills at their chosen sport.
- Swimming is an inclusive sport which people of all ages and abilities can take part in.
- Studies have shown that girls are more likely to stop engaging and participating in sport as they grow up than their male counterparts.
- Women tend to swim more than men, especially as young adults (ESRI 2013).



# Health Benefits of a Swimming Pool

- The health benefits of swimming are boundless.
- It has been proven to aid good mental health, help in the recovery of heart patients and the rehabilitation of patients with limited or weakened mobility.
- Swimming is a low impact sport which all members of the community regardless of age, sex, mental or physical capability can take part in.
- Currently four out of five Irish children are not meeting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per a day (HSE 2019).
- With obesity levels rising, inclusive sports like swimming should be encouraged and swimming facilities should be readily available.





# Water Safety Benefits of a Swimming Pool

- On average, over the past 10 years there have been 130 drownings per year in Ireland. (WSI 2019)
- 62% of drowning fatalities occur inland - on rivers and lakes, a total of approximately 81 people / year. (WSI 2019)
- Between 2010 and 2015, HSE figures reveal 22 children died in drowning incidents.
- In general, males are at higher risk of drowning across all age groups with peak incidence seen in boys aged one to four, with deaths occurring predominantly in swimming pools and adolescent males predominantly in freshwater. Lack of swimming ability and substance misuse in adolescents also poses an increased risk. (Davey M, et al. Cureus. 2019.)
- Blessington Lake is the biggest Fresh Water Lake closest to the largest population centre in the country.

*"...if kids don't know how to swim they might drown and die."*

Stiofan [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



# Blessington Pop-Up Swimming Pool

In September 2022 the Community Pool for West Wicklow campaign, in partnership with Swim Ireland and Wicklow County Council brought a temporary swimming pool to Blessington for a twelve week period.

The following slides demonstrate the scale of this project and the positive impact it had on the community here in Blessington and across West Wicklow.



# Pop-Up Pool Project Timeline



- Summer 2021
  - Community Pool for West Wicklow: opportunities to West Wicklow and other projects.
- November 2021
  - Swim Ireland approached CPWW about working together on the Pop-Up Pool Project with the aim of bringing a 12 metre by 3.44 metre portable swimming pool to Blessington 1'1 SE in November 2021
  - Following a presentation by SWIM Ireland's Head of Participation, Ashley Hunter, CPWW and Swim Ireland officially started working together to bring a Pop-Up Pool to West Wicklow.
- January 2022
  - A list of specifications for a suitable site for the Pop-Up Pool was agreed upon. CPWW put our local knowledge and contacts to use to find a suitable site. CPWW began to formally contact local TDs, Councillors and Wicklow County Council about this project and possible funding streams. The estimated cost to bring the Pop-Up Pool to West Wicklow is approximately €20k.
- February 2022
  - A suitable site for the Pop-Up Pool is identified and negotiations begin with the Chairperson of St Kevin's Community Hall-
  - Swim Ireland and CPWW made a presentation to the Wicklow County Council Baltinglass Municipal District meeting about the Pop-Up Pool project and formally requesting financial support for the project.
  - The question of the need for planning permission for the Pop-Up Pool and Marquee was raised at this meeting. Planning Permission had not been required by other Local Authorities at other proposed Pop-Up Pool sites but CPWW agreed to investigate this further.
  - Members of the Baltinglass MD voiced their support for the project **but** more details regarding the site, planning permission requirements and other possible funding streams would be needed before a decision regarding financial support for the project could be made.
  - CPWW publicly announce that we are working with Swim Ireland to bring a Pop-Up Pool to West Wicklow in September 2022. This is welcomed with huge support from the local community-
- March 2022
  - CPWW apply for Lottery Funding for the project
- April 2022
  - The Head of Planning at Wicklow County Council confirms that Swim Ireland will need to apply for planning permission for the Pop-Up Pool and Marquee for the period of time that it will be in West Wicklow.

- May 2022
  - The first Pop-Up Pool in Ireland opens in Donabate in Co Dublin. CPWW visit the pool and support Swim Ireland in this exciting event.
  - Neffoss Road, St. (from Tully Fall successful) CPWW and Swim Ireland receive permission to locate the Pop-Up Pool in the car park of St Kevin's Hall from September 2022 to December 2022 subject to planning permission\_
  - A local architect is identified who will complete the planning application process on behalf of Swim Ireland.
  - Following support from local TDs Wicklow County Council agree to fund the project subject to planning permission.
  - CPWW host a number of Information Meetings for local schools, community groups and sports clubs with Swim Ireland about the Pop-Up Pool and how they will be able to avail of it.
- June 2022
  - Planning permission application is submitted to Wicklow County Council for the Pop-Up Pool.
  - CPWW learn that we have not received Lottery funding for this project.
- July 2022
  - Planning permission is formally granted by Wicklow County Council.
  - Work is done by local contractors to help prepare the site for the arrival of the Pop-Up Pool.
  - CPWW publicise the Pop-Up Pool in local newsletters and newspapers, online **and on** local radio station East Coast FM and encourage local Community Groups and Sports Clubs to contact Swim Ireland directly to book classes and swim sessions.
- August 2022
  - CPWW secure sponsorship from Hudson Brothers & Sons in the form of gravel to create a level surface for the pool to sit on.
  - The Wicklow County Council District Engineer assists in the surveying of the pool site to create a level surface.
  - Hugh C. Keefe, local contractor, agrees to create the level surface for the Pop-Up Pool free of charge.
  - A local electrician does the preparatory work and cabling at the site to enable the pool to use the three phase power from the local community pool.
  - Preparations for the Grand Opening of the Community Pool in Blessington are underway.
  - An other 'Round of formal meetings held in Blessington. Our sincere thanks to the Community Groups and Sponsors: Lbs. 105.1eC Ireland.
  - Swimming classes for the public and schools go on sale.
  - August 30th 2022 the Pop-Up Pool arrives in Blessington.
  - August 31st 2022 the Pop-Up Pool is filled.

- September 2022
  - The Pop-Up Pool is officially opened by Minister Jack Chambers at a ceremony: is well attended by the local community, Councillors, TDs and the press.
  - Swimming lessons begin at the pool which include public classes, school classes, club classes, adult swim lessons with the local Women's Shed, an evening class for local Transition Year Students and Afterschool classes which are run by the local Physiotherapist practice, Method Physio\_
- \* October - November 2022
  - Over 600 children a week are attending swimming lessons at the Pop-Up Pool and weekend public swim slots are popular.
  - East Coast FM host their Morning Show live from outside the Pop-Up Pool.
  - During the midterm break a swim camp for Neurodivergent children is run in association with Wicklow Local Sports Partnership and is very well attended. Following this camp CPWW are contacted by local parents to request more weekly autism friendly, inclusive swimming lessons. Two new classes are added to the schedule and both are very popular.
- \* December 2022
  - The pool closes and is very much missed by the community\_
- January 2023
  - The pool and marquee leave West Wicklow for their next location. CPWW arrange to donate the gravel surface which was created for the pool to sit on to the local football club, Blessington FC, to help surface their driveway and car park to their football pitches.



18 months from start to successful completion of project

# Diverse Community Use of the Pop-Up Pool



- 6 local schools
- Blessington Women's Shed
- Method Physio Aquafit Classes
- TY Rookie Lifeguard Classes
- Blessington Forum Autism Group
- Wicklow Local Sports Partnership Inclusive Halloween Camp
- Adult Learn to Swim Classes
- Child Learn to Swim Classes
- Public Swims
- Private Hires e.g. Birthday Parties

**BLESSINGTON POP-UP POOL PUBLIC SWIM SCHEDULE**

Saturday Oct 22nd	Sunday Oct 23rd
9am-10am	9:30am-10:30am
10am-11am	10:30am-11:30am
11:15am-12:15pm	4pm-5pm
12:15pm-1:15pm	
2pm-3pm	
3pm-4pm	

Community Pool For West Wicklow SWIM IRELAND

**EVENING SWIMS NOW AVAILABLE**  
6pm - 7pm  
BOOK ONLINE NOW

Community Pool For West Wicklow SWIM IRELAND

**MIDTERM BREAK BLESSINGTON POP-UP POOL SCHEDULE**

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10am	Public Swim				
11am	Public Swim	Public Swim		Public Swim	Public Swim
12pm		Public Swim	Public Swim	Public Swim	Public Swim
1pm		Level 1 Swim Lesson	Level 1 Swim Lesson	Level 1 Swim Lesson	Level 1 Swim Lesson
1:30pm	Public Swim Lesson	Level 2 Swim Lesson	Level 2 Swim Lesson	Level 2 Swim Lesson	Level 2 Swim Lesson
2pm	Swim	Level 3 Swim Lesson	Level 3 Swim Lesson	Level 3 Swim Lesson	Level 3 Swim Lesson
2:30pm		Public Swim	Public Swim	Public Swim	Public Swim
3:30pm		Public Swim	Public Swim	Public Swim	Public Swim

Community Pool For West Wicklow SWIM IRELAND

**IT'S THE POP-UP POOL'S LAST WEEKEND!**



# Pool Usage from Sept – Dec 2022

- School Swim Classes 448 children
- Public Swim Classes 135 people
- Blessington Forum Autism Group 16 children
- Aquafit classes twice a week 16 adults
- TY Rookie Lifeguard Classes 13 teenagers
- Wicklow Local Sports Partnership Inclusive Halloween Camp 8 children
- Public Swims 453 people

**TOTAL SWIMS OVER 12 WEEKS: 7,449**





# Community Reaction

*I was one of those people who used the pop up pool on a weekly basis, as a retired lady I found this facility a huge benefit. I would love to have a local pool and would definitely use it regularly as would the rest of my family. Thanks again for all those involved with the pop up pool... Lorraine Fallon*

*My 3 children had great use of the pop up pool while it was in Blessington and miss it a lot, as do I now having to drive a long distance to bring them swimming elsewhere since it has left Blessington. Olivia Ryall*



Shane with pupils at Gaelscoil Na Lochanna.

## Olympic swimmer Shane Ryan gives school talks

THE Community Pool for West Wicklow committee helped organise for Irish Olympic swimmer Shane Ryan to visit three local Blessington Primary Schools during the week as part of the Swim Ireland Athlete Ambassador Programme.

On Wednesday, October 12, the children from Blessington Educate Together, St Mary's Junior School and Gaelscoil Na Lochanna had the opportunity to meet the two-time Olympian and ask him what it was like to go to the Olympics.

They also asked other important questions such as what does he eat for breakfast, how much does he train and if he likes being a swimmer?

Many of the children who met Shane are attending the Swim Ireland Pop-Up Pool in Blessington for swimming classes, or with their parents during the public swim slots. Shane was more than happy to share some swimming tips with the children and encouraged them all to learn the important life skill that is swimming.

The Swim Ireland Athlete Ambassador Programme is made possible by grant funding by the International Federation FINA.

The visits have been taking place since 2021 and Olympic athletes have visited clubs and schools across the island of Ireland.

The Pop-Up Pool is located in the car park at St Kevin's Hall in Blessington and will be



Shane Ryan visits Blessington Educate Together.

there until Christmas. For information on the timetable and how to book, visit [www.westwicklowpool.ie](http://www.westwicklowpool.ie).

*We had demand for extra classes to be introduced however the demand for the pool was too great to accommodate us.*

*Ever since the pool has left our community we have a drop off in exercise participation in certain client cohorts. We had very positive feedback about our classes and many have expressed their disappointment at not being able to continue with this service. Unfortunately similar services are not accessible for many due to the distance needed to travel. Method Physio*

*The pop up pool was such a wonderful facility in Blessington and can't wait for the construction of a pool in the town. I really miss the AquaFit classes. My sons attended swimming lessons there also with their local school Manor Kilbride ... highlight of all the kids week. Jennifer Fitzsimons*







# In Conclusion

600 children a week attended swimming lessons for the three months that the Pop-Up Pool was in Blessington. Many of these children had not had this opportunity before and will not have the chance to continue learning how to swim until there is a local swimming pool developed for our community.

We have outlined the many advantages and health benefits of swimming as well as the safety importance of this life skill. We have also demonstrated that there is a demand for access to local swimming facilities in Blessington.

It is imperative that any plan for the development of Blessington must include and make reference to the development of a swimming pool for our community.

# Recommendations for the Blessington Local Area Plan



- The inclusion of the development of a swimming pool and multi-use sports complex in the Blessington Local Area Plan. With the aim for development of the swimming pool to have started within the lifetime of the LAP.
- The Blessington community is expanding and local sports clubs in Blessington such as Blessington AFC, Blessington Rugby Club, the Lakeshore Striders Running Club and other clubs are growing in popularity but do not currently have adequate facilities for their members. With this in mind we see the new Blessington LAP as an opportunity to plan for the towns future and locate facilities for all of these sports together at the same site as the swimming pool and sports complex. This will allow for a sharing of facilities such as changing rooms, car park facilities and training areas.
- The zoning of land for the development of a swimming pool and multi-use sports complex including football pitches, rugby pitches and a running track located at the Council owned land beside the Avon in Blessington.
- A general increase in the amount of land around Blessington zoned as “open space” and available to the community and local sports clubs for recreational purposes.





# Contact Details

Community Pool for West Wicklow can be contacted via email at

[REDACTED]

or by phone

c/o the Chairperson, Deirdre McCormack on

[REDACTED]

## 5.4 Blessington Rugby Football Club

### Blessington Rugby Football Club



April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024

Dear Sirs,

Blessington RFC was formed in 2016 and are affiliated to the Leinster Branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union.

We cater for both boys and girls from the age of 6 upwards on an all-inclusive basis, and have approximately 250 active members in addition to over 30 coaches, administrative staff and committee members.

The ethos of the club is that everybody gets to play, the emphasis being on participation in a team sport environment.

At present we play and train at Russborough House, with the kind permission of the trustees and chief executive of the Alfred Beit Foundation, without whose support the club could not function.

However, due to the healthy appetite for rugby, and our increasing membership, the facilities which we enjoy at Russborough are barely sufficient for our current needs but will not be so in the near future (at the current rate of expansion) given the new residential developments under construction in the Blessington area.

At present, there are no public playing facilities for any field sports in Blessington. This is a regrettable state of affairs and one which should be rectified by the Local Authority as soon as possible.

Within the past few years, major housing developments have been approved by the Local Authority without the provision of any areas for the playing of field sports and similar organised activities.

This is an appalling omission and may have a major impact on the young people in the area for years to come. It is surely time for the Local Authority to address this situation by making lands available to all of the field sports and athletics organisations within the Blessington area.

We at Blessington RFC support the submissions of our fellow sporting bodies in this regard, specifically Blessington Soccer Club and Lakeside Striders. We also support the submission in respect the provision of a swimming pool in the area.

Yours faithfully,

Trevor Burns  
President  
Blessington RFC

## 6.0 Letters of Support



27 March 24

Wicklow County Council Planning Department

**Re: Blessington Local Area Plan Blessington AFC Letter of Support**

Dear Members of the Wicklow County Council Planning Department,

I am writing to you in support of Blessington AFC's submission to the Blessington Local Area Plan and their continued search for a home in Co Wicklow. I have been engaging with the club and their committee for almost four years now and recognise the real need for them to find an accessible site close to town in Blessington.

Blessington AFC currently play their "home" games in Crosschapel, Co. Kildare as tenants to Roadstone. I have visited their pitches in Crosschapel and members of the Blessington AFC committee have explained to me how the club has outgrown this site. Their current location is unsuitable for many reasons, such as the fact that the club cannot apply for Sports Capital Grants for capital development of the site such as installation of an all-weather pitch, and erection of floodlighting etc. It is also unsuitable given its location 4km outside of Blessington town with the only access being via the busy N81 which makes the location inaccessible by foot or bicycle for the vast majority of their young players and families. The club has outgrown these pitches and need more space to cater for their growing numbers, which I believe are now in excess of 700.

The Blessington LAP is an opportunity to plan for the future of the town and its growing community. I believe that an important part of this is ensuring that there are spaces for sports clubs and community groups to grow whilst also being accessible and inclusive for all members of the community.

I fully support the development of a multi-use sports complex with a swimming pool, football and rugby pitches and a running track at a shared location in Blessington. This sharing of resources and facilities will help to promote participation in sport and support community groups within Blessington and surrounding areas. I hope that these facilities will be included in the upcoming Blessington Local Area Plan so that local sports clubs like Blessington AFC can continue to grow and future generations can develop a love for sport.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Whitmore".

Deputy Jennifer Whitmore





Dublin District Schoolboys'/Girls' League



28<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

Att: Wicklow County Council Planning Department

**Re: Blessington Local Area Plan Blessington AFC Letter of Support**

Dear Members of the Wicklow County Council Planning Department,

I am writing to you in support of Blessington AFC's submission to the Blessington Local Area Plan and their continued search for a home in Co Wicklow. Blessington FC currently have 21 underage teams playing in the DDSL League for both boys and are girls.

Blessington AFC currently play their "home" games in Crosschapel, Co. Kildare as tenants to Roadstone. The club has outgrown these pitches and need more space to cater for their growing numbers, which I believe are now in excess of 700.

The Blessington LAP is an opportunity to plan for the future of the town and its growing community. I believe that an important part of this is ensuring that there are spaces for sports clubs like Blessington FC so they can continue to grow and future generations can develop a love for the sport.

Yours in Sport

Mick Kennedy  
Operations Manager