

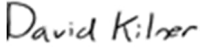


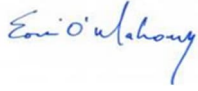
Blessington eGreenway

Briefing Note on Archaeological Mitigation

Wicklow County Council

January 2024

Quality information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
V1.0	January 2024	Update to impacts and mitigation	Yes	Eoin O'Mahoney	Regional Director - Transportation

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1. Introduction and Requirement for the Briefing Note

- 1.1 This Briefing Note has been prepared by AECOM on behalf of Wicklow County Council (the Client) to support the application for a proposed looped greenway along the shores of the Poulaphouca Reservoir and towns, villages and local amenities (referred to as the 'Proposed Development' (Figure 1). The Proposed Development will also involve the refurbishment of existing car parks adjacent to the Proposed Development while some temporary accesses and compounds will be required during construction.
- 1.2 AECOM are designers of the Proposed Development, also providing environmental and planning support to an application to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). This support included the preparation of an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) (AECOM, 2021). An application was submitted on the 14 January 2022. ABP subsequently responded with requests for further information on the 16 March 2023 under Case Number ABP-312479-22. These requests related to submissions from the Development Applications Unit (DAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage as well as three local residents.
- 1.3 Documentation forwarded to the DAU for review only provided a summary of the AIA within an EIA Screening rather than the full AIA itself. This lack of provision of the full information led the DAU to request that an AIA be completed for the Proposed Development by a competently qualified professional archaeologist. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) are the Approving Authority for National and Regional Greenway projects, and consequently these projects are subject to the Code of Practice for Archaeology agreed between the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (2017).
- 1.4 A TII Project Archaeologist, Lynda McCormick, has been appointed to the Proposed Development who will oversee the completion of archaeological mitigation. A consultation meeting was held on the 11 May 2023 between the DAU, TII, AECOM and the Client to discuss archaeological requirements and agree a way forward regarding the request for further information.
- 1.5 This Briefing Note has been prepared in response to the consultation meeting which clarified the issues raised by the DAU. The purpose of the Briefing Note is to set out the mitigation strategy for the cultural heritage which will be affected by construction of the Blessington Greenway addressing the requests for further information received by ABP.

2. Proposed Development Design

- 2.1 The County Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2009-2013, as part of its objectives, called for the exploration of the potential for new trails in West Wicklow and specifically for the development and promotion of walking and cycling trails. The 2010 Feasibility Study on Recreation Opportunities at Poulaphouca Reservoir identified a potential “Flagship Project”. It recommended the provision of a surfaced multipurpose walking and cycling trail circling the main reservoir adjacent to the shoreline. It also identified a proposed first phase from Blessington to Russborough. This phase has been completed though it will also be upgraded under the current proposals.
- 2.2 The Proposed Development consists of a 3m wide shared use path (width varies along the path) which will be used by both pedestrians and cyclists. The path will be largely segregated from traffic where the greenway is adjacent to the public road. The Proposed Development will have a total length of c.33km.
- 2.3 The greenway route will follow the predominantly planted conifer plantation around the lakeshore and for some sections utilise an existing trail. Macadam will be used as a surface treatment. This will be laid on a 40 mm to 55 mm base course on 150 mm Clause 804 subbase on a geotextile layer as required. Construction works will require shallow excavation (maximum depth of 200 mm – 300 mm), tree trunk removal, placement of culverts, single span bridges over larger streams, fencing and minor landscaping.
- 2.4 The Proposed Development includes existing public car parks that will undergo refurbishments, that will include the provision of bike parking stands, information boards, waste collection, seating areas, drinking water stations and electric vehicle charging points (note: the level of refurbishment differs at each car park). In addition, the car parks at Knockieran and Russelltown will be extended with provision for 50 additional car parking spaces at each location and three off-site areas of tree planting will be added at Knockieran Car Park, The Burgage Area and The Avon Area to screen the Proposed Development and replace trees removed by the greenway.
- 2.5 The Proposed Development is divided into six sections comprising the following:

- Blessington – The Blessington section of the Proposed Development extends from the Wicklow County Council boundary at Russellstown to Blessington. The section comprises 9.2km in length. This section is proposed to consist of new greenway and the upgrade of existing sections along the route with a connection to Russborough House via an existing underpass of the N81. It is proposed to extend the capacity of the Russellstown car park with an additional 50 car spaces. Works to both the Russellstown Car Park and the Blessington eGreenway Hub and Car Park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations and CCTV. There is one new watercourse crossing included in this section while several existing crossings are to be retained. Two areas of off-site planting, The Avon Area and The Burgage Area will provide screening and replace trees lost through construction of the Proposed Development. The estimated maximum area of the Burgage Area is 6000m² while that of The Avon Area is 5900m². It is likely that only part of these areas will be required for tree planting.

The proposals will also include the realignment of the existing kerb line in Blessington Town on the southeastern side of Main Street and the southern side of Kilbride Road over a distance of approx. 350m. This will provide approximately 0.25 -0.5m additional shared use space for pedestrians and cyclists on that side of the road. The centre of Blessington has been designated an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) containing a number of structures recorded as Protected Structures and on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Groundworks will be approximately 300mm in depth and, while the footway will get resurfaced right up to the edges of buildings, this will not impact potential cellars associated with buildings dating to the 18th century located on the northwestern side on Main Street.

- Baltyboys – The Baltyboys section of the Proposed Development extends from the Blessington section to the Vallemount section. This section is 5.3km in length. Works to the Vallemount West Car Park and Baltyboys Car Park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bike parking, bins, seating, drinking water stations and CCTV. Precast box culverts and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section to construct the Proposed Development. There are approximately five new small watercourses/ditches crossings along this section. Rock armouring is also proposed along the shoreline of the northern part of this section and also at the extreme southern end of the section at Baltyboys Lower / Boystown.
- Tulfarris Loop -The Tulfarris Loop section of the Proposed Development connects the Baltyboys section to Tulfarris via the R758. This section is 3.7km in length. This section will consist of new greenway and share

the existing road to connect with the Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort. There are approximately two new small watercourses/ditches crossings along this section.

- Vallemount – The Vallemount section of the Proposed Development extends from Baltyboys to Ballyknockan. This section is 4.9km in length commencing at the Blessington Lake car park, which is located adjacent to Vallemount GAA club. Works to the two car parks in Vallemount East and West will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations and CCTV. Precast box culverts and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. There are approximately three new small watercourses/ditches crossed by the Proposed Development in this section as well as a crossing of the Annacarney Stream.
 - Ballyknockan – The Ballyknockan section of the Proposed Development extends from Ballyknockan to Lacken. This section is 4.3km in length. Gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. Due to the high ground to the east, there are a few small tributaries on this section with approximately 13 small watercourses/ditches to be accommodated by the Proposed Development. Rock armouring is also proposed along the shoreline at two locations of this section.
 - Lacken – The Lacken section of the Proposed Development extends from Lacken to Knockiernan Bridge. This section is 5.6km in length. The section involves new greenway construction. Precast box culverts, concrete underpasses, and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. It is proposed to extend the capacity of the Knockiernan Car Park with an additional 50 car spaces. Works to both Knockiernan and Lacken car parks will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations and CCTV. Off-site planting will also take place at the car park. The maximum size of this area for tree planting is 4500m² although it is likely that only part of this will be required. The eastern side of the lakes has many small tributaries resulting in the Proposed Development having to accommodate approximately seven. small watercourses/ditches. Rock armouring is also proposed along the shoreline of this section.
- 2.6 Signage will incorporate visitor information, way-finding information, heritage information and advisory/regulatory information in proximity to road/agricultural crossings. All signage will be subject to full specification at detailed design in accordance with national technical standards and guidance.
- 2.7 Indicative locations of potential construction compounds for the Greenway are also marked. These will be subject to further assessments to determine exact location and size. The majority of the proposed locations are within areas with existing hard surfaces The proposed locations are as follows:
- Blessington Hub (Existing building with paved surfaces).
 - Knockieran Car Park (Existing car park constructed of hard-core).
 - Existing Farmers Yard (part of) – Lacken (Access to this yard via farm lane constructed with hard-core).
 - Existing Farmers Yard (part of) – Ballyknockan (Access to this yard via farm lane constructed with hard-core).
 - Existing ESB access point – Annacarney (Hard-core).
 - Valley mount – Proposed to be located on Greenway within ESB Lands (access via a temp haul road to be constructed on adjoining farmers field).
 - Use part of existing ESB Car Park – Vallemount (Paved surface).
 - Use part of existing ESB Car Park – Humphrystown/Vallemount (Paved surface).
 - Use part of existing ESB Car Park – Baltyboys (Paved surface).
 - Use part of existing ESB Car Park – Russellstown (Paved surface).
- 2.8 The majority of the proposed locations are within areas with existing hard surfaces that have undergone previous ground disturbance. These areas will require little modification. The exception to this is the proposed compound at Vallemount which will be located on Greenway within ESB Lands and accessed via a temporary haul road to be constructed on an adjoining farmer's field. Ground disturbance will be required at this location.

3. Requests for Further Information

3.1 The following requests for further information have been submitted to ABP regarding the Proposed Development. Of these, the most pertinent are those from the DAU which are outlined below:

- The AECOM AIA was not provided for review but was summarised in the EIA Screening Document.
 - *Unclear whether the document was prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist*
 - *No reference made to the high potential for underwater/reservoir foreshore archaeological remains to survive along the shore and in the area of the proposed bridge crossings.*
 - *No detailed archaeological strategy and programme of archaeological mitigation measures is provided to ensure the protection of archaeological heritage (both terrestrial and underwater archaeological features). A detailed archaeological strategy should be developed and submitted to the National Monuments Service for agreement well in advance of any site preparation and/or construction works and preferably in advance of any planning decision.*
 - *DAU recommend that WCC engage a suitably qualified archaeologist to prepare an AIA and detailed archaeological strategy.*
 - *References Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022*
 - *BH1 No development in the vicinity of an RMP feature which seriously detracts from the setting or is seriously injurious to its cultural or educational value.*
 - *BH2 requirement for archaeological assessment with the Planning Authority requiring the developer to have the site works supervised by a competent archaeologist.*

3.2 The consultation meeting with the DAU held on the 11 May 2023 revealed that the key issue with the original application documentation was that the full AIA report was not included. Therefore, the concerns raised by the DAU in their original observations largely derive from this. The DAU has confirmed that they have now received a copy of the AIA and is content that an AIA was prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist to support the original application documentation. The mitigation measures outlined within this Briefing Note address the other concerns which were reiterated during the consultation meeting.

3.3 Additional submissions were made by three members of the public- Ann Dalton, Denis Halpin and Christopher Darby. Ann Dalton's and Denis Halpin's submissions are similar stating that while the Archaeology study on the greenway identified many of the archaeology sites and locations it also ignored other major sites which are on public record; a lot of these sites don't show up in greenway study. Both Ann Dalton and Denis Halpin call for further archaeological study. The archaeological sites recorded on the SMR are marked on figure 2 and have been taken into consideration regarding mitigation measures for the Proposed Development.

3.4 Christopher Darby's submission relates to specific areas of the Proposed Development at Baltyboys where he has encountered unrecorded archaeological remains as a keen amateur archaeologist. Mr Darby feels that insufficient care is being taken to identify and preserve the local archaeological heritage especially regarding the two locations which comprise:

Site 1. Large saddle quern scatter at Baltyboys. Also beehive quern and Late Bronze Age spear mould in the same approximate location.

Site 2. Baltyboys – flint knapping site and three polished stone axes. It should be noted that this location is completely outside the Proposed Development and some distance away from the proposed works.

4. Mitigation

- 4.1 The current Proposed Development was previously subject to a Cultural Heritage report prepared in 2015 by the Moore Group - archaeological and environmental services. This report was prepared on behalf of the Blessington Community Forum and sought to determine the archaeological potential of the area, how this archaeological potential would be affected by the Proposed Development and propose appropriate further action (Moore Group, 2015). The previous report was used to inform the baseline of the AIA.
- 4.2 The previous assessment in 2015 recommended that, given the limited impacts required for the track and the previous ground disturbance within the forested margin, archaeological monitoring rather than testing should take place. This archaeological monitoring should take place at areas of high archaeological potential due to the significance of the archaeology and the potential for further finds. These areas of high archaeological potential relate to the recorded archaeological assets within the immediate proximity of the Proposed Development.
- 4.3 The AIA concurred with these recommendations and proposed that mitigation should take the form of constant archaeological monitoring within the vicinity of recorded archaeological assets adjacent to the Proposed Development. This was augmented by proposals to undertake archaeological testing of greenfield areas, recording of previously unrecorded cultural heritage features noted during the site walkover for the AIA and recommendations for the protection of recorded heritage assets during the construction works. These proposals are taken forward as proposed measures for mitigation.
- 4.4 Additionally, the potential impacts to heritage submitted in the RFIs to the ABP are noted. Appropriate measures are outlined to mitigate potential impacts to heritage. The following mitigation of cultural heritage impacts is proposed for the Blessington Greenway:
- A. Licensed pre-construction archaeological test excavation:
- It is recommended that pre-construction archaeological test excavations are carried out in greenfield areas in advance of tree planting in the Knockieran car park area (estimated aggregate area is 4500m²; see figure 3.1), the Burgage Area (estimated aggregate area is 6000m²) and the Avon Area (estimated aggregate area is 5900m²; see Figure 3.1).
- B. Licensed archaeological monitoring of topsoil strip and excavation works is recommended during the period of construction, within the vicinity of the following recorded archaeological assets (Figure 3.1 and 3.2):
- The medieval borough of Burgage More (WI005-07001-016) extending to the north of the area which has been recommended for monitoring in the AIA to take account of the underwater archaeology (WI005-128 & WI005-129) within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.
 - Wedge tomb (WI010-062) at Carrigacurra.
 - Enclosure (WI010-019) at Ballyknockan.
 - Ringfort (WI010-018) at Ballyknockan.
 - Within the vicinity of the Childrens Burial Ground (WI010-024) in Ballyknockan.
 - Between the moated site (WI005-078) at Carrig and the and the Church site in Lackan (WI010-011001).
 - Mill site (WI005-078) at Burgage More.
 - Neolithic house (WI010-058) at Boystown/Baltyboys Upper.
 - Adjacent to the finds location of the large saddle quern scatter, beehive quern and Late Bronze Age spear mould at Baltyboys.
 - Archaeological monitoring of works within the vicinity of the Cross Inscribed Stone (WI010-048) at Valleymount.
 - Archaeological monitoring of works within the Greenfield section between the Blessington Bridge and the Kilbride Road in order to take account of the Holy Well (WI005-026) located within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

Licensed archaeological monitoring of topsoil strip is also recommended during works associated with the following:

- Groundworks associated with the extension of Knockieran car park.
- Groundworks associated with the extension of Russborough car park.

- Groundworks associated with the creation of the works compound at Vallemount including the temporary haul road.
 - Creation of rock armouring at Baltyboys.
 - Creation of rock armouring at Ballyknockan.
 - Creation of rock armouring at Lacken.
 - Creation of rock armouring at Vallemount and Ballyknockan.
 - Installation of 16 culverts at 16 locations around the Proposed Development.
 - Installation of new bridge at Vallemount.
- C. Recording of architectural and cultural heritage features:
- An undesignated structure of local architectural heritage significance has been identified and merits pre-construction recording.
 - I. The existing stone walls, steps and paths in Vallemount townland (Plate 1)
 - A designated structure of local architectural heritage significance has been identified and merits pre-construction recording.
 - II. The tunnel to Russborough House (4256) (Plate 2).
- D. During the construction phase procedures would be adopted, as described in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP), to ensure no impacts occur to heritage assets located within or adjacent to the Proposed Development. Toolbox talks would be undertaken when necessary to inform construction supervision staff and site operatives of the requirements which are:
- Biddy Mulvey's Cottage (RPS ref 10-5) (Plate 3) should be noted to all contractor staff. Care should be taken to avoid accidental impact during adjacent works.
 - Consideration should be given to removing the Cross Inscribed Stone (WI010-024) during construction works (Plate 4).
 - Consideration should be given to adding the Cross Inscribed Stone (WI010-024) to the risk register for the project.
 - The memorial erected post February 2018 (Plate 5) should remain in situ with care taken to ensure no accidental impact during the works.
 - It recommended that measures are adopted to reduce noise, dust and vibration during construction works within Blessington ACA to reduce impact on the setting of this designated heritage asset and the historic structures contained within it.
- 4.5 Any recommendations contained in this report are subject to the ratification of the National Monuments Section, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

5. References

AECOM (2021) Blessington Lakes eGreenway. Archaeological Impact Assessment.

Moore Group – archaeological and environmental services (2015) Blessington Greenway Cultural Heritage Report County Wicklow. Prepared for Blessington Community Forum.

6. Plates



Plate 1: The existing stone walls, steps and paths in Valleymount townland.



Plate 2: The tunnel to Russborough House (4256).



Plate 3: Biddy Mulvey's Cottage (RPS ref 10-5).



Plate 4: Cross Inscribed Stone (WI010-024).



Plate 5: Valleymount memorial erected post February 2018.

7. Figures




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LEGEND
 Red Line Boundary

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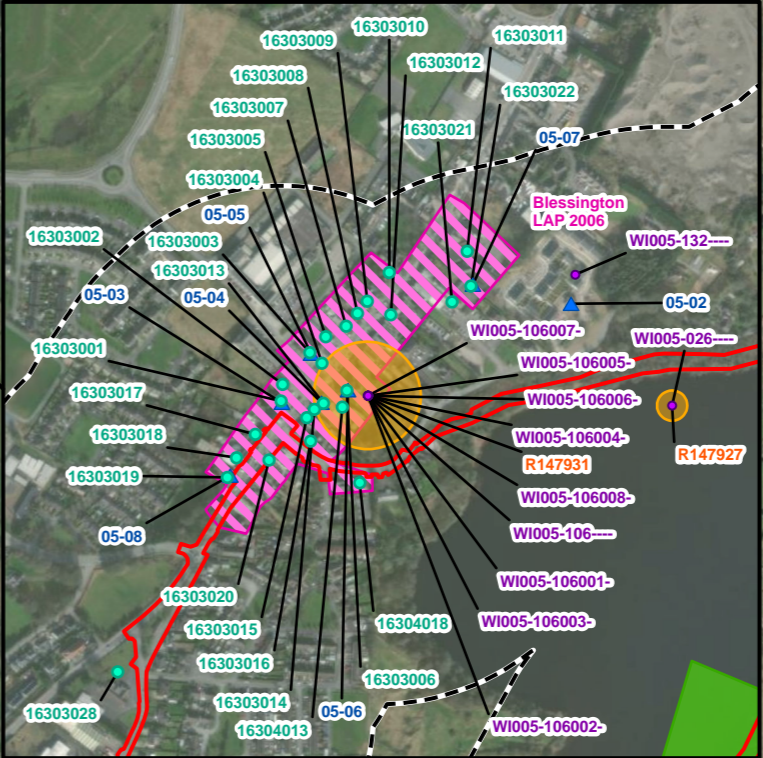
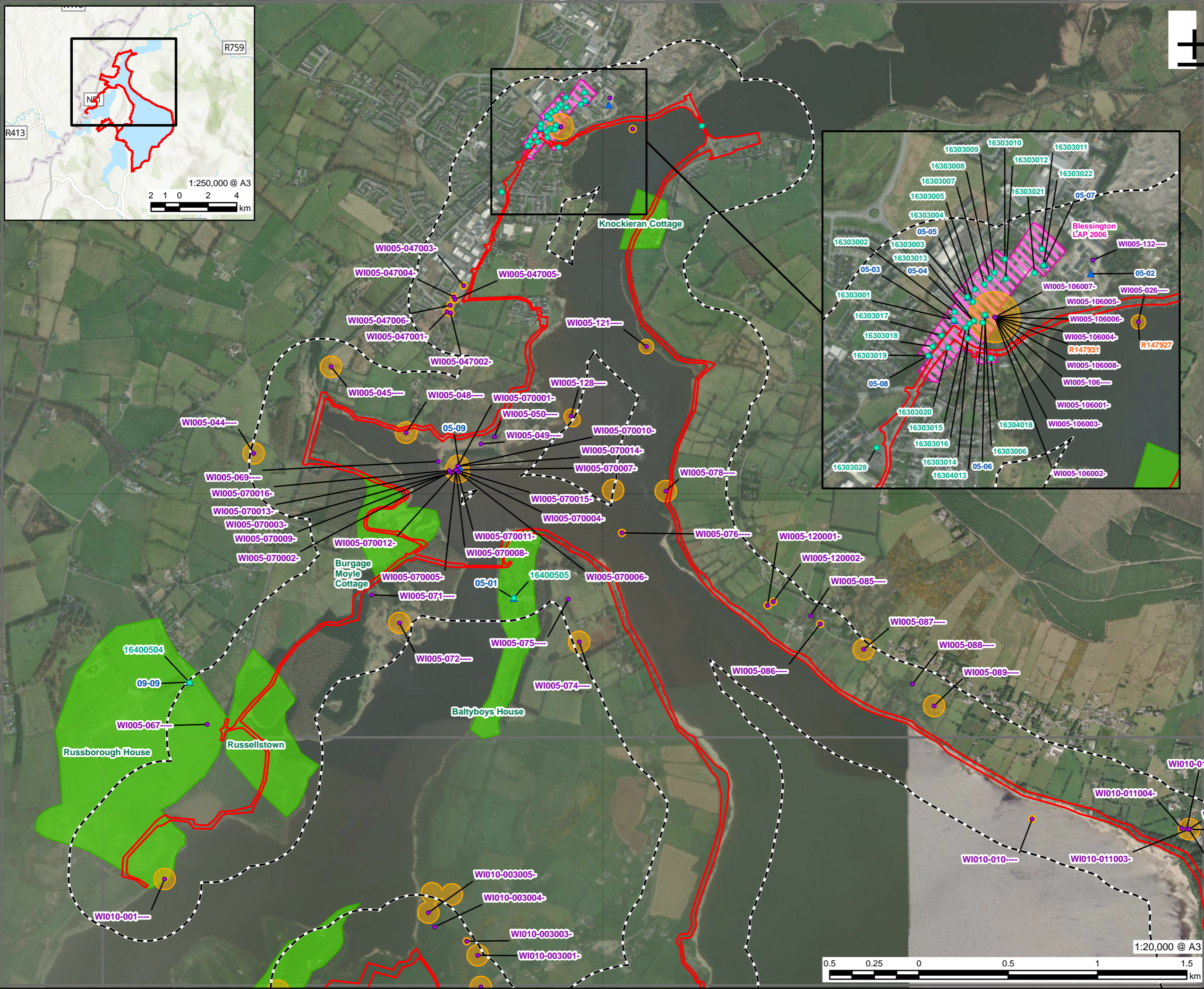
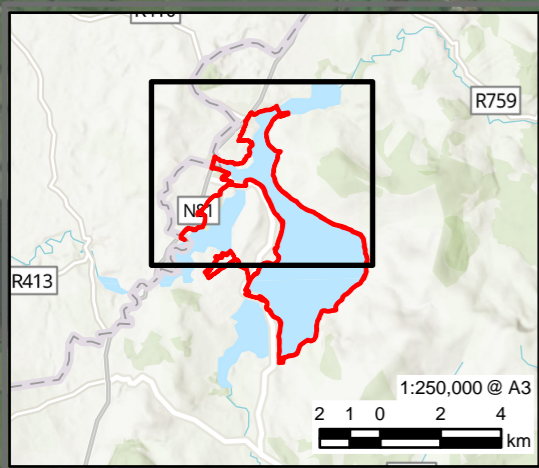
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FIGURE TITLE
 Location of the Proposed Development

FIGURE NUMBER
 Figure 1.1

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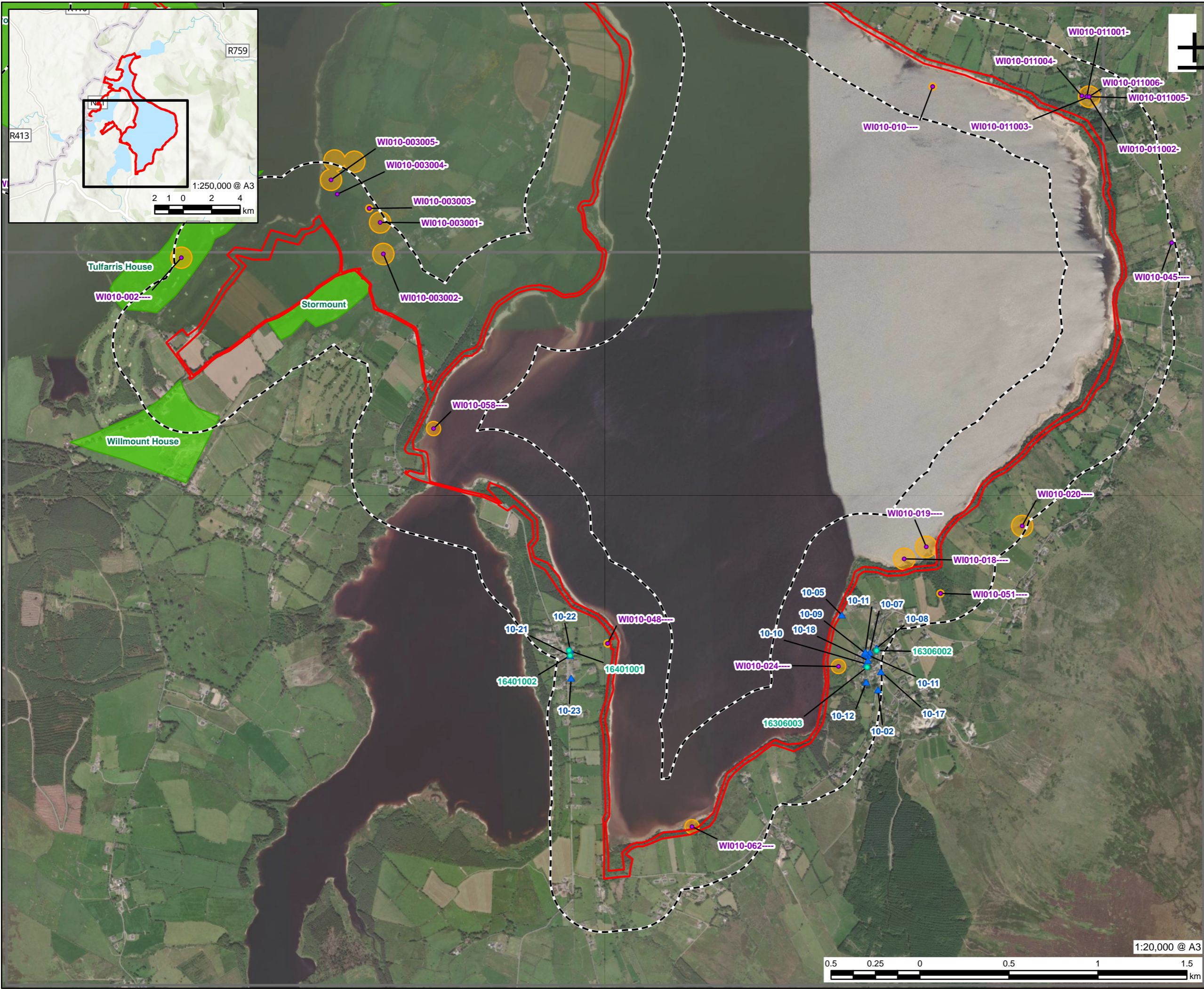


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- LEGEND**
- Red Line Boundary
 - 300m Study Area
 - Zone of Notification
 - Planned Landscapes
 - Wicklow County Council - Architectural Conservation Areas
 - National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)
 - Site and Monuments Record (SMR)
 - ▲ Wicklow County Council - Protected Structures

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FIGURE TITLE
Recorded Heritage Assets
FIGURE NUMBER
Figure 2.1



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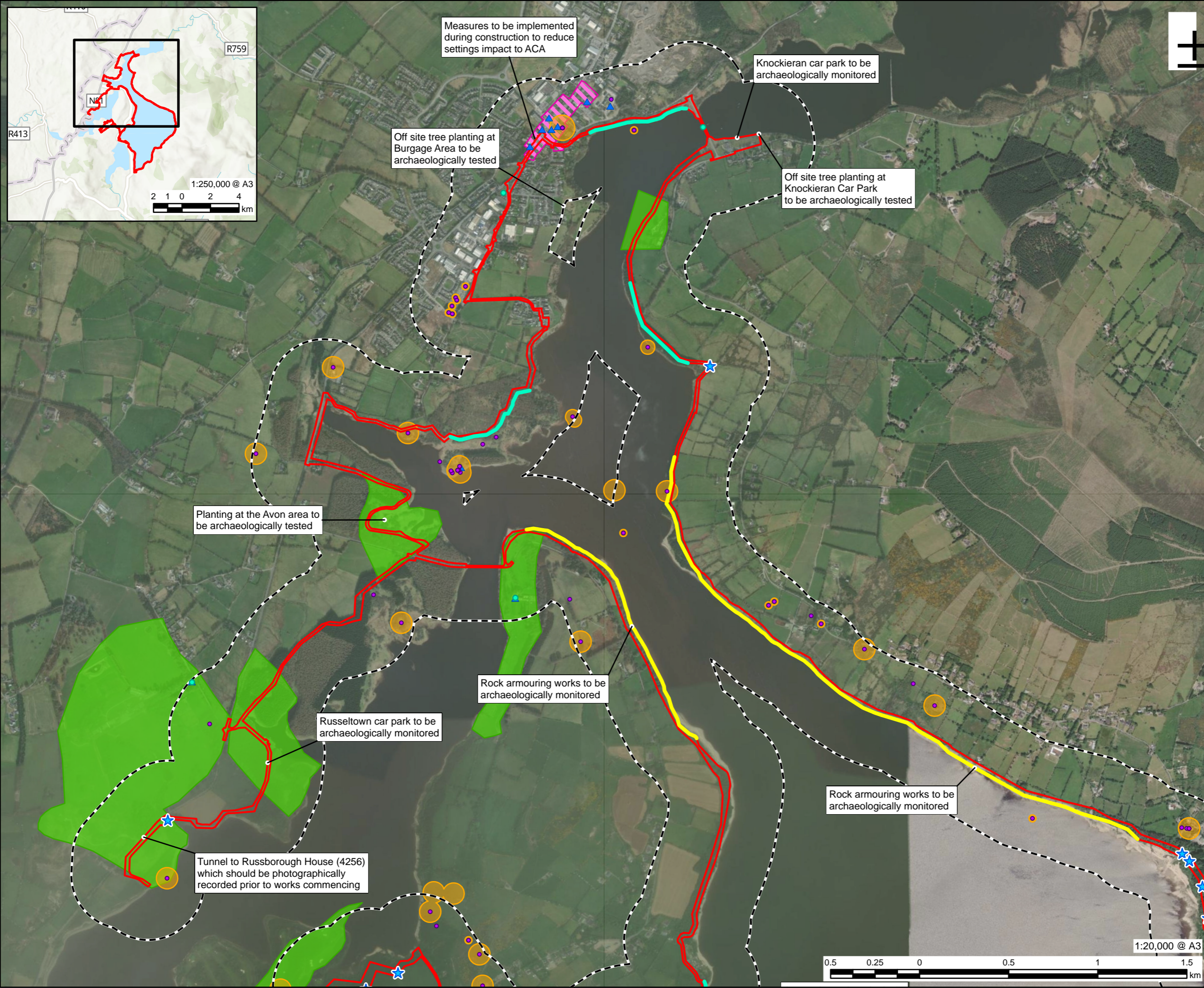
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 Recorded Heritage Assets

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LEGEND

- Red Line Boundary
- ★ Proposed Culvert Location (to be constructed under archaeological supervision)
- 300m Study Area
- Area of Archaeological Monitoring
- Area of Archaeological Monitoring (Rock Armouring)
- Heritage Assets**
- Zone of Notification
- Planned Landscapes
- Wicklow County Council - Architectural Conservation Areas
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FIGURE TITLE

Proposed Mitigation Measures

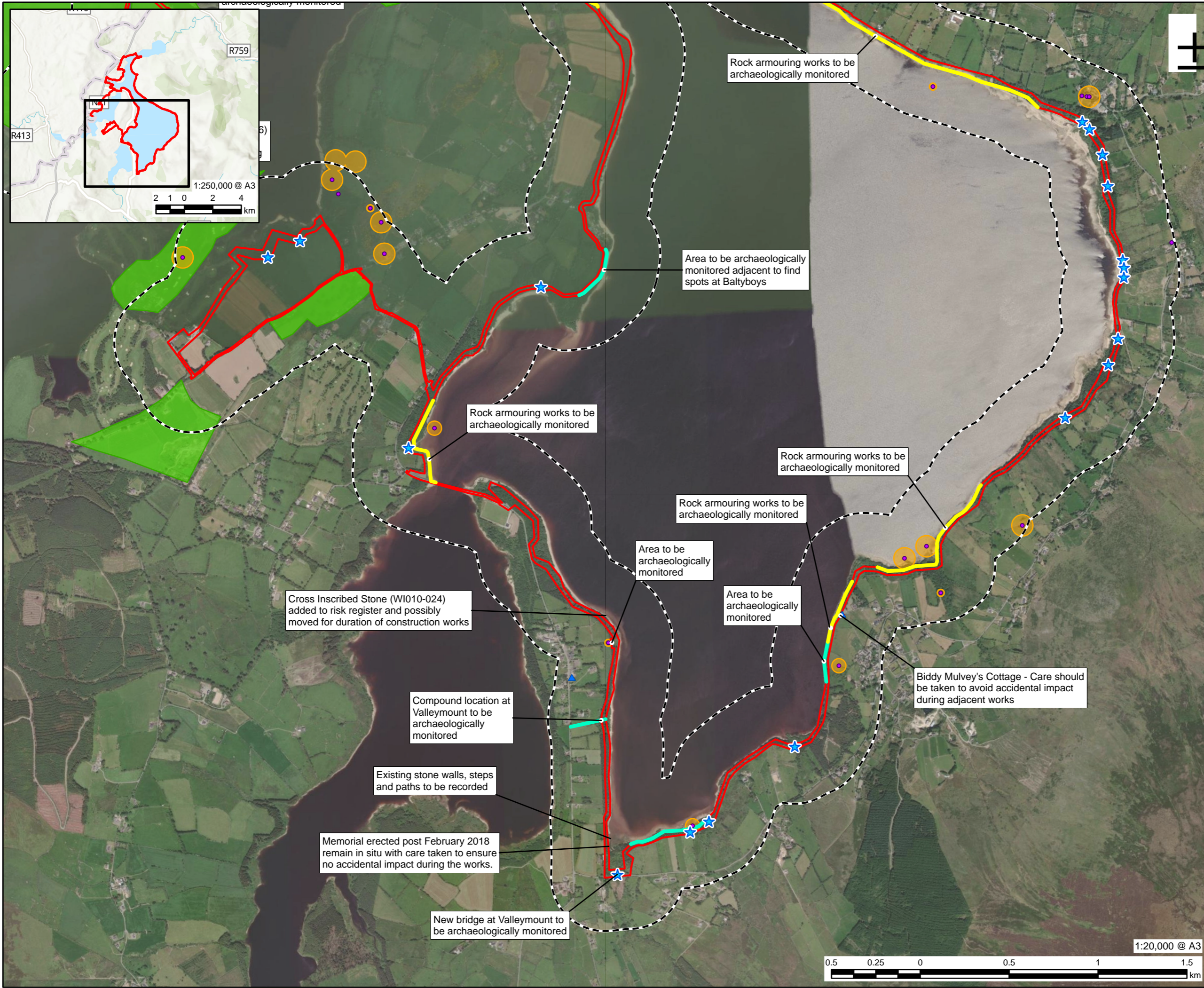
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Figure 3.1

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1:20,000 @ A3
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LEGEND

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Heritage Assets

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FIGURE TITLE
 Proposed Mitigation Measures

FIGURE NUMBER
 Figure 3.2

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