Historic Kilmallock to embrace new era

Town walls to be made centrepiece in bid to boost tourism

KILMALLOCK, one of Ireland's most intact walled towns, is on the move.

New initiatives include the possible reopening of Kilmallock railway station, the establishment of walking loops and interpretation facilities, improvements to the existing streetscape and open spaces, and the erection of signage and visitor orientation (including artwork) at strategic locations within and on the approaches to the town

Ambitious conservation and management strategies have been unveiled

Initiated by Limerick County Council, under the Irish Walled Towns Network Action Plan 2006-08, the strategies are geared towards developing a greater appreciation of and access to the historic town walls, and boosting local tourism. .

Kilmallock was once regarded as one of the most strategically important towns in Ireland due to its medieval wall defences, castles, gatehouses and magnificent churches. The town walls, 70% of which remain standing today, have contributed greatly to Kilmallock's direct involvement in almost every Irish conflict since medieval times. The fortress town was burned during the Desmond Rebellion and the local Dominican Priory was attacked and destroyed during the Irish Confederate Wars.

Sarah McCutcheon, executive archaeologist, Limerick County Council, said, "Kilmallock was a town of considerable importance in the late medieval period, ranking as one of the main urban areas in Ireland at the time. Today it is unique in County Limerick for its range of standing medieval monuments and it is foremost among an exclusive group of Irish towns and cities, which retain their medieval defences. The Town Walls are of national significance, but their potential as a major heritage asset for the town has not been fully exploited up until now".

She noted that the Town Walls were a finite resource requiring conservation and management so as to enhance the public's appreciation of and access to them.

"The plans seek to provide Kilmallock with a greater sense of identity through the preservation of the Town Walls and the improvement of the local infrastructure. Once you achieve this you have a viable tourism product that will reap benefits for the people who live and work in Kilmallock, as well as the thousands of people who visit the Walled Town each year", added Ms. McCutcheon.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government funded the plans through the Irish Walled Town Network and The Heritage Council. Engineering consultancy firm Gifford Ltd. carried out the Conservation & Management Plan, in conjunction with PLB, while Nicholas De Jong Associates compiled the Public Realm Plan.

The Kilmallock Town Walls Conservation & Management Plan and Kilmallock Walled Town Public Realm Plan may be viewed on Limerick County Council's website, www.lcc.ie.