

National Tourism and Environmental Monitoring Programme

Banagher 2025



**Fáilte
Ireland**

Turasóireacht Náisiúnta
An tÚdara Eorbartha
National Tourism
Development Authority

National Tourism and Environmental Monitoring Programme

Report for Banagher 2025

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APPENDIX A Fáilte Ireland Visitor Characterisation Surveys

BANAGHER– INTERESTING FINDS

Interesting Finds

Cromwell's Castle is located in Banagher Park. It was built in the 17th century, and was later converted for use as a battery, and used for defence against the threat of a Napoleonic invasion.



Features of the Site

- Parking is available at the marina and park.
- A marina and outdoor pool are on the site.
- Shower and toilet facilities and a playground are available at the marina.
- A number of water sports and recreation businesses are located at the marina.
- Benches and rubbish bins are present at the marina and the park.
- Life rings are present along the river.
- Informative signage is available throughout the site.
- Food trucks and coffee vans are present at the site.

Habitats

- Depositing/lowland rivers (FW2)
- Reed and Large Sedge Swamps (FS1)
- Scattered Trees and Parkland (WD5)
- Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
- (Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland (WD1)
- Amenity Grassland (Improved) (GA2)
- Hedgerows (WL1)
- Treelines (WL2)
- Sea walls, piers and jetties (CC1)
- Stonewalls and other stonework (BL1)
- Spoil and bare ground (ED2)
- Scrub (WS1)
- Wet Grassland (GS4)
- Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2)

Key Recommendations

- The provision of additional parking at the marina should be considered, along with bollards to prevent parking on the footpaths.
- Traffic calming measures and a signalised pedestrian crossing at Banagher Bridge should be considered.
- The creation of areas of meadows should be considered. This should be undertaken with reference to NBDC's guidance 'Councils: actions to help pollinators' (NBDC, 2016).
- The provision of categorised rubbish bins, including dog waste bins should be considered.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) was appointed by Fáilte Ireland to conduct Visitor and Environmental Surveys as part of the National Environmental Surveying & Monitoring Programme. Fáilte Ireland regularly engages with environmental research that is used to make informed management decisions and produce robust guidelines to facilitate the protection of the environment. From its inception in 2014, the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Operational Monitoring Programme has been conducting research into the impacts of tourism on the receiving environment.

Building on the success of the WAW environmental monitoring programme which ran from 2015-2019, Fáilte Ireland expanded the programme to a national level. From 2021 to 2022 the programme monitored 19 individual sites located in all of Fáilte Ireland's regional areas: The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East, and Dublin. This 2025 National Monitoring report builds on environmental surveying and monitoring undertaken on behalf of Fáilte Ireland as far back as 2015 and to date (excluding the 2025 data), the surveys have monitored a total of 70 sites and recorded the activities and effects of over 31,000 visitors at a range of popular sites, including inland, urban, coastal and WAW discovery points.

The environmental surveys and monitoring in 2023 followed the methodologies used in previous years. Following the completion of the 2023 surveys, a review of the methodology was undertaken. In developing the survey methodology used in 2024 and 2025, ROD considered the methodology for gathering the data, the presentation of the data, and the usefulness of the data gathered. The review also considered the time required to gather the data.

Eight sites were surveyed in 2025. Figure 1.1 below shows the locations of these sites. This report is for Banagher, County Offaly.



Figure 1.1 Environmental Monitoring Programme 2025 locations. Basemap provided by Google.

1.2 Aim of the Report

The purpose of the monitoring programme is as follows:

- To gain insight from an environmental perspective at amenity and recreation sites across Ireland;
- To obtain data on path and trail conditions etc. for each site;
- To obtain data relating to habitats, flora, and fauna for each site;
- To identify observable trends or variations among the sites;
- To make recommendations where appropriate for site management for the benefit of the site, the visitor, and the natural environment.

1.3 Site Description

Banagher is a small town on the banks of the River Shannon in Co. Offaly. The town is 11km North of Birr and is accessible via the R356 or the R439. The area being surveyed for this report ("the site") consists of Banagher Park, located on the west bank of the Shannon in Co. Galway, and the marina, located on the east bank of the Shannon in Co. Offaly. The site boundary is presented in Figure 1.2 below.

Banagher is a picturesque town known for its riverside views, fishing spots and access to the Shannon by boat. Banagher Marina is specifically mentioned as a key tourist destination along the Shannon in the Offaly County Development Plan and the Offaly County Council named it as part of the tourist draw to Birr in policy objective TRP-25.

Banagher is situated within two European designated sites; the River Shannon Callows SAC (Special Area of Conservation) [Site Code: 000216] and the Middle Shannon Callows SPA (Special Protection Area) [Site Code: 004096].



Figure 1.2 Site boundary outlined in red. Basemap provided by Google.

1.4 Critical Infrastructure

Tables 1.1 - 1.3 below provides information on the infrastructure at Banagher. Uisce Éireann's website was used to access information on the Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment Capacity Registers for County Offaly and County Galway (Uisce Éireann 2025a, b).

Table 1.1 Banagher Wastewater Infrastructure

Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)	Uisce Éireann Indication of Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilet and shower facilities are available at the Marina. The nearest settlements with a WWTP in Co. Offaly are located in Banagher (WWTP Reg #D0141), Cloghan (WWTP Reg #D0369) and Birr (WWTP Reg #D0109). The nearest settlements with a WWTP in Co. Galway are located in Portumna (WWTP Reg #D0196) and Ballinasloe (WWTP Reg #D0032). 	There is spare capacity available at Banagher, Birr Cloghan, Portumna and Ballinasloe WWTP's.

Table 1.2 Summary of Drinking Water Infrastructure at Banagher

Drinking Water	Water Resource Name (WRZ)	Uisce Éireann Indication of Capacity
Nearest serviced settlement to the site is Banagher.	Banagher Public Water Supply (PWS)	Capacity Available

Table 1.3 Summary of Transport Infrastructure at Banagher

Nearest Settlement	Current Transport Infrastructure	Comment
Banagher	Banagher is located at the intersection of the R356 and the R439. There are carparks located at both the Marina and Banagher Park, immediately at their entrances.	The TFI Local Link Bus Routes No. 840 (Banagher to Tullamore Station) and No. 850 (Athlone Station to Roscrea Abbey Street) stop in Banagher. The 847 Kearns bus service (Portumna to Dublin) also stops in Banagher.

2. METHODOLOGY

The following surveys were undertaken:

- Habitat survey
- Pathway condition survey
- Survey of the features, signage and hazards

The survey at Banagher was undertaken on the 5th of August 2025. The weather conditions were sunny, with little wind. The sub-sections below present the methodology used.

2.1 Habitat Conditions Assessment Methodology

The habitats within the site were classified and mapped in accordance with *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000) and *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Surveying and Mapping* (Smith et al. 2011). Notes were taken on species composition and habitat condition. Fossitt habitats corresponding to Annex I habitats were noted using the *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats* (EC, 2013). A desktop study was also undertaken to identify designated sites and rare and protected species in the vicinity of each site. Incidental sightings of birds, mammals, reptiles, etc. were also recorded during the site surveys.

The condition of the habitat in each polygon or line were noted, including any damage and the likely cause of the damage. The areas along pathways are outlined by the pathway condition assessment in Section 2.2 below. The following criteria were used to assess habitat condition:

- Extent of habitat degradation;
- Impact of habitat degradation (localised or widespread);
- Potential for the habitat to recover; and
- Whether or not intervention is required.

2.2 Pathway Condition Assessment Methodology

The main pathways were defined during the site visit and a desk study which included a review of the Strava heat maps (www.strava.com/heatmap), and a review of the previous site monitoring reports, if available. Typically, the main paths are formalised waymarked trails or heavily trafficked pathways that are not formalised. These paths usually link the site entry points and car parks to a destination or feature of interest. The pathways were categorised into sections by type and composition. The different types of pathways are described in Table 2.1 below. Visitor Characterisation Surveys were undertaken by Fáilte Ireland and are presented in Appendix A. Each path section is described as 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' based on the condition of the path and whether or not it could accommodate the current levels of use. Indicators that a path was not suitable for the current levels of use included the presence of wet areas, erosion, trip hazards, damaged pavement, braiding, path widening and habitat loss along the path. Paths that generally facilitated unobstructed movement between locations were deemed as 'satisfactory'. It should be noted that the methodology outlined here is independent of and not linked to the trail registration and management process run by Sport Ireland Outdoors.

Table 2.1 Pathway Types

Pathway Type	Description
Paved Car Park	An area used for parking, wider than the road, that is paved, usually with tarmacadam.
Gravel Car Park	An area used for parking, wider than the road, that is gravel or crushed stone.
Paved Road	A road that is paved with tarmacadam or similar hard material.
Gravel Road	A road consisting of gravel or crushed stone, with no grass in the middle.
Gravel Track	A single vehicle pathway used by small numbers of vehicles. Tracks are normally paved with gravel and can have grass in the middle
Grassy Track	A single vehicle pathway used by small numbers of vehicles. These tracks are not paved and are used primarily by tractors, quads or small numbers of private vehicles.
Paved Path	A path is primarily for foot traffic. Paved paths are found in more developed areas, to cater for higher levels of traffic.
Gravel Path	A path is primarily for foot traffic and can be a single track or a track wide enough for several people to walk abreast. Gravel paths are found in more developed areas, to cater for higher levels of traffic.
Grassy Path	A path is primarily for foot traffic and can be a single track or a track wide enough for several people to walk abreast. Grassy paths are found in less developed areas, often beyond feature of interest, and are used less frequently.
Bare Ground Path	These paths occur where the vegetation had been eroded by foot traffic and is bare ground, or damaged vegetation. These paths are often widespread on sites where formal waymarked trails are not provided.

2.3 Features, Signage and Hazards

Signage, features of interest, and hazards were recorded, photographed and mapped. Features include built heritage, sculptures as well as the temporary toilets and bins. Hazards including unstable walls, broken fences or unprotected cliff tops.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Habitat Condition Assessment

Habitats were surveyed during the optimum habitat survey season i.e., April to September (Smith et al., 2011). Habitats were classified according to *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000). Table 3.1 lists the habitats identified in Banagher along with their corresponding Annex I habitats. Plates 3.1 – 3.4 display examples of the habitats found at Banagher. A habitat map is presented in Figure 3.1. It should be noted that having a corresponding Annex I habitat does not mean the Annex I habitat is automatically present.

Table 3.1 Fossitt (2000) habitats and links to Annex I habitats.

Fossitt 2000 Habitat	Corresponding Annex I habitats (Natura 2000 code)
Depositing/lowland rivers (FW2)	Watercourses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation (3260) Rivers with muddy banks with <i>Chenopodion rubri p.p.</i> and <i>Bidention p.p.</i> vegetation (3270)
Reed and Large Sedge Swamps (FS1)	None
Scattered Trees and Parkland (WD5)	None
Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)	None
(Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland (WD1)	None
Amenity Grassland (Improved) (GA2)	None
Hedgerows (WL1)	None
Treelines (WL2)	None
Sea walls, piers and jetties (CC1)	None
Stonewalls and other stonework (BL1)	None
Spoil and bare ground (ED2)	None
Scrub (WS1)	None
Wet Grassland (GS4)	<i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) (6410)
Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2)	Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) (6510)

Depositing/lowland rivers (FW2)

The River Shannon runs through the study area, separating counties Galway and Offaly. The site is used by visitors for boating, swimming, walking and fishing. Banagher Outdoor Pool at Banagher Park is segregated from the main river channel. Some litter is noted in the water at the marina, however it is unclear whether this originated locally or from upstream. Mallard ducks were common around the marina, and appeared habituated to the human activity in the area. In the outdoor pool, an adult

mute swan with two cygnets were present, and displayed signs of stress when approached by visitors. Plant species recorded along the river verges are discussed further below. Photos of the River Shannon at Banagher are presented in Plate 3.1 below.

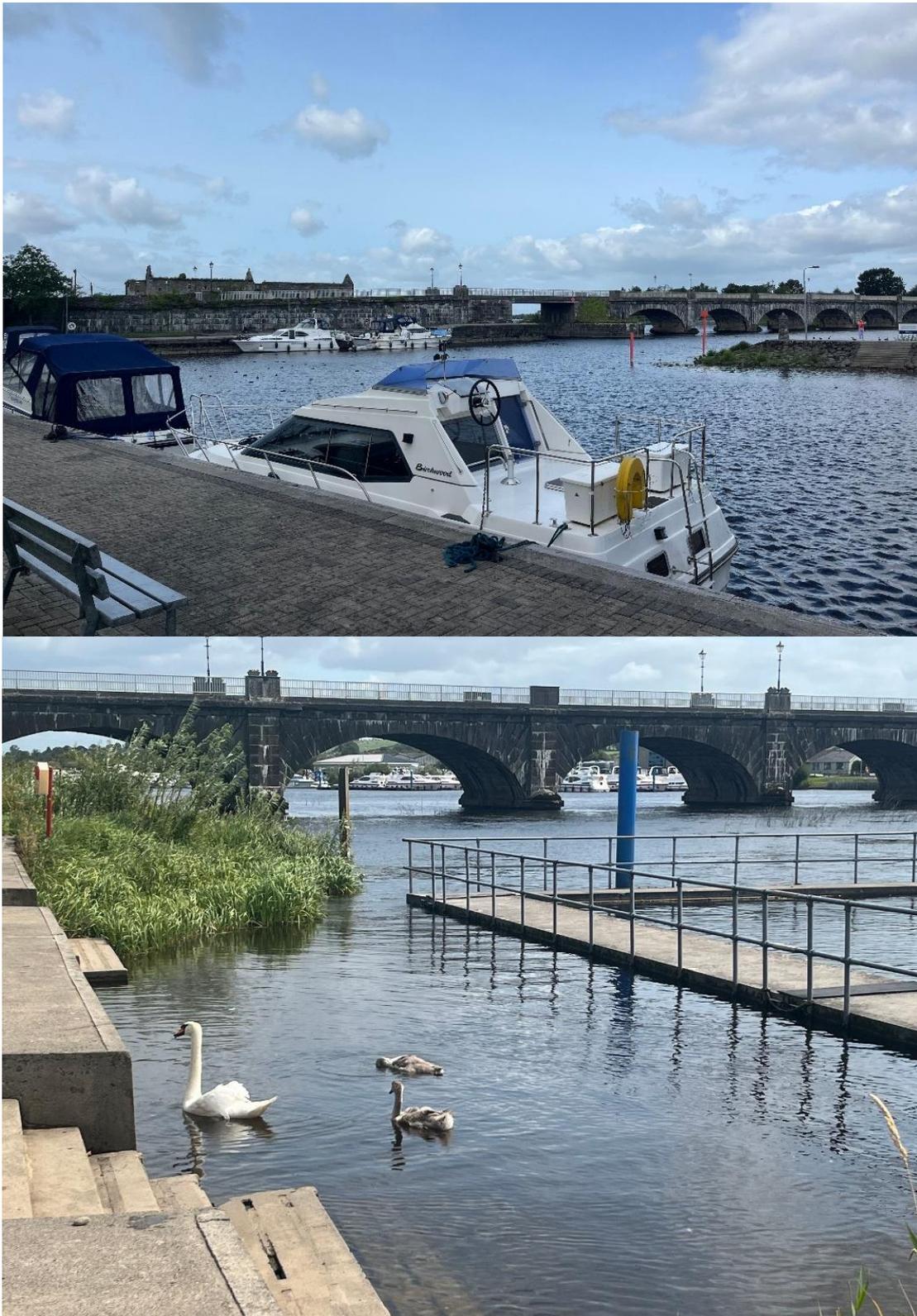


Plate 3.1 Banagher Marina (top) and the outdoor pool at Banagher park with reed habitat in the background and mute swans (bottom).

Reed and Large Sedge Swamps (FS1)

This habitat type is present along the river throughout most of the study area. At the marina reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinaceae*) dominates in most areas, Burr reed (*Sparganium sp.*) in localised areas. Other species recorded were rushes (*Juncus spp.*), cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), willows (*Salix spp.*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*), and water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*). Waterlilies are also noted in the water, however the exact species is not confirmed. At Banagher park, reed canary grass was the most common species in the riparian zone, with marsh woundwort (*Stachys palustris*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), water mint, bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), and mature willows also recorded. No impacts to these habitat were recorded.

Scattered Trees and Parkland (WD5)

This habitat is present at both the marina and the park. In the marina, the species recorded were alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), maples (*Acer spp.*), cherry (*Prunus sp.*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), rowan (*Sorbus subg. Sorbus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), and other ornamental species. In the park, the species recorded were lime (*Tilia x europaea*), alders (*Alnus spp.*), birch (*Betula sp.*), oak (*Quercus petraea*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), ash, other ornamental species.

The lawn areas of this habitat throughout the site contain dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), common plantain (*Plantago major*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), and silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*). This habitat is used for amenity purposes, and is managed by regular mowing. This habitat is shown in Plate 3.2 below.



Plate 3.2 Amenity parkland at Banagher park.

Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)

This habitat is found throughout the marina and park in the form of roads, pathways, parking areas, and buildings. This habitat is not of biodiversity value.

(Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland (WD1)

At the western end of the park, a small island is present, which is connected to the main park by two wooden pedestrian bridges. This island contains a small woodland dominated by birch, with willows dominating along the river. The understory is dominated by bramble with willow, ash saplings, perennial sow-thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*), nettles (*Urtica dioica*), hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*), cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*), and ivy (*Hedera hibernica*). A gravel path runs through the woodland. No impacts to the woodland were noted. This woodland is displayed in Plate 3.3 below.



Plate 3.3 Birch dominated woodland west of Banagher park.

Amenity Grassland (Improved) (GA2)

Amenity grassland was found throughout the site and was mown to be very short in all areas. The species recorded in the amenity grass areas were dandelion, narrow-leaved hawkweed (*Hieracium umbellatum*), red clover, daisy, common plantain, ribwort plantain, selfheal, silverweed.

Hedgerows (WL1) and Treelines (WL2)

Small, ornamental hedgerows are present in both the marina and park. Given their size, location, and uniformity, they provide very little biodiversity value. A small treeline is also present at the hedgerow in the marina which consists of willow, alder, and bramble.

Sea walls, piers and jetties (CC1)

This habitat is present throughout the site, particularly at the marina. It provides roosting areas for birds. Gulls and mallards were seen around these structures frequently.

Stonewalls and other stonework (BL1)

This habitat is present throughout Banagher park in the form of low stone walls, and Cromwell's Castle. The tower provides potential nesting and roosting habitat for birds, and may also provide roosting habitat for bats. Cromwell's Castle in Banagher park is displayed in Plate 3.4 below.



Plate 3.4 Cromwell's Castle in Banagher park.

Spoil and bare ground (ED2)

This habitat is present in a boat storage area. It consists of gravel, and contains the narrow dock (*Rumex hydrolapathum*), willowherbs (*Epilobium spp.*), mayweed (*Matricaria chamomilla*), mare's-tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*), and black medic (*Medicago lupulina*). Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), a medium-impact invasive species, is also recorded here.

Scrub (WS1)

This habitat is present north of the car park and Banagher park, behind the Banagher Aqua Club. This habitat is dominated by nettle, Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), sycamore saplings, willowherbs, cleavers (*Galium aparine*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion, and perennial sow-thistle.

Wet Grassland (GS4)

A small area of this habitat is present on a raised bank at the marina. The species present here are reed canary grass, water mint, tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), purple loosestrife, and willow, with rushes present at the water's edge.

Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2)

This is present in a small, unmown area of grass at the marina. The species present are nettle, cock's foot, tufted vetch, dandelion, red clover, meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), bindweed, cat's ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Yorkshire fog, and creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). This habitat is also present as a buffer between the reed habitat and the amenity grassland at the park.



Figure 3.1 Habitat map of Banagher. Basemap provided by Google.

3.2 Pathway Condition Assessment

Figure 3.2 presents a Strava heat map for the site. Strava aggregates data from users on its app who opt-in to share their activities and locations. The pathway condition assessment map is presented in Figure 3.3 below.



Plate 3.5 Gravel pathways in Banagher park.

In Banagher Park, a paved road leads from the R356 into a gravel car park. A gravel path then leads from the car park around the park in a loop, and is connected to the small island in the west of the site by two small wooden pedestrian bridges. This gravel path is displayed in Plate 3.5 below. A paved path leads from the park area to Cromwell's Castle and the outdoor pool.

A paved road leads from the R356 towards the marina, looping around the various cruise business establishments. A pedestrian walkway is associated with the paved road along the marina, as displayed in Plate 3.6 below. Paved and gravel parking areas are located at the southeastern border of the site by the cruise business establishments. A paved path leads from the entrance of the marina towards the playground and towards Banagher Bridge and the marina area. It is also not considered necessary to map the paved areas along the marina, as it is associated with the general marina / jetty area. Examples of a paved road and pathway are presented in Plate 3.6 below.



Plate 3.6 Paved road with a pedestrian walkway (top) and paved path (bottom) at Banagher marina.

All of the pathways are in good condition, and are well-maintained. The pedestrian walking areas on the paved roads at the marina were at times used for vehicle parking – this is discussed further in Section 3.3.1 below.

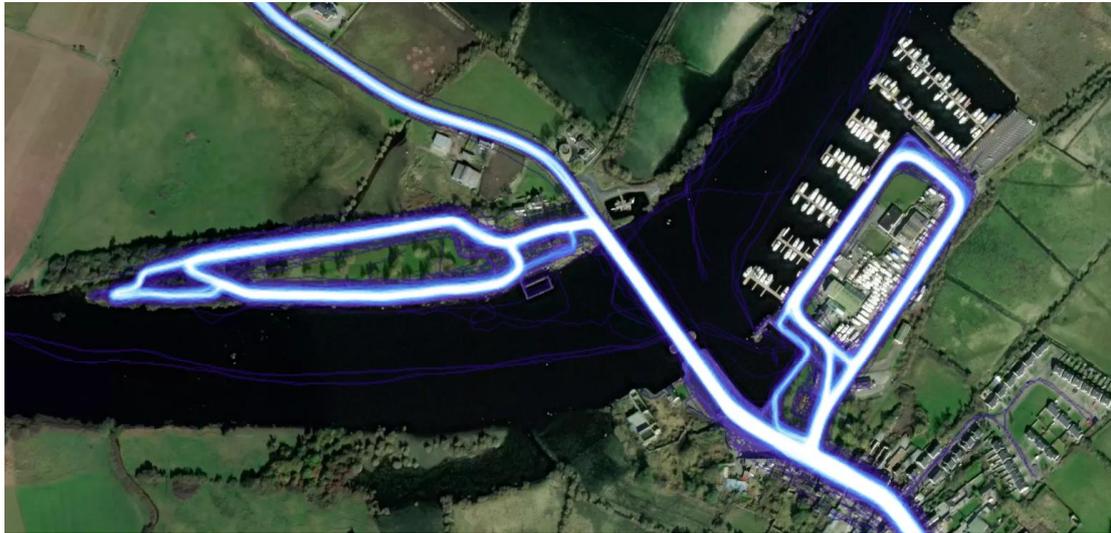


Figure 3.2 Heat map of visitor movements in Banagher (Strava, 2025)



Figure 3.3 Pathway types and conditions present at Banagher.

3.3 Features Signage and Hazards

Parking is available at both the park and marina of the site. Lifebuoys are also present throughout the site. The marina, which is accessed via Main Street, has a parking area, and a playground. Toilet and shower facilities are also present at the marina, however they can only be accessed with a Waterways Ireland smart card. A number of businesses are located within the site, including Silverline Cruisers, Shannon Cruises, and Mid Ireland Adventure, which has a reception area, associated amenity seating, and equipment storage near the playground and toilets. Silverstone Marina is located in the northeastern-most area of the site, and has a large parking area, however it was not open at the time of the survey. Benches are present around the jetties throughout the site, and picnic benches are located near the playground. In this area, one bin was recorded on a formal path behind the reception area, and another was recorded in the playground. Directional and informational signage is present in this area, and includes information relating to history, local heritage, and biodiversity. Moving northeast along the marina, more benches and an additional bin were recorded in an amenity grass area, as well as additional parking areas. A food truck is also present adjacent to the Silverline Cruisers building.

In Banagher Park, on the northern side of the River Shannon, there is a gravel car park close to the sub aqua clubhouse and canal clubhouse. Cromwell's Castle is present immediately east of the car park. Directional and informative signage regarding local history is present, as well as some seating areas. Works to upgrade the outdoor pool began in September 2025, which include new features such as wheelchair access, enhanced seating, and wider pontoons (O'Reilly, 2025). The steps down to the outdoor pool are also used as seating. A coffee van, which was closed at the time of the survey, with a sheltered seating area is also present immediately west of the Cromwell's Castle. A donation station with a 'tap' feature is present near the castle and pool. West of the parking area and Cromwell's Castle, a number of benches are located along the path. Two sheltered benches are available at the northern boundary of the site. A small bridge structure is also present in the amenity grass in the centre of the park. No path leads to this structure from the main pathway. No bins are present in this area, though littering is not a problem in this area.

Signage and features at Banagher are presented in Plates 3.7-3.9 below.

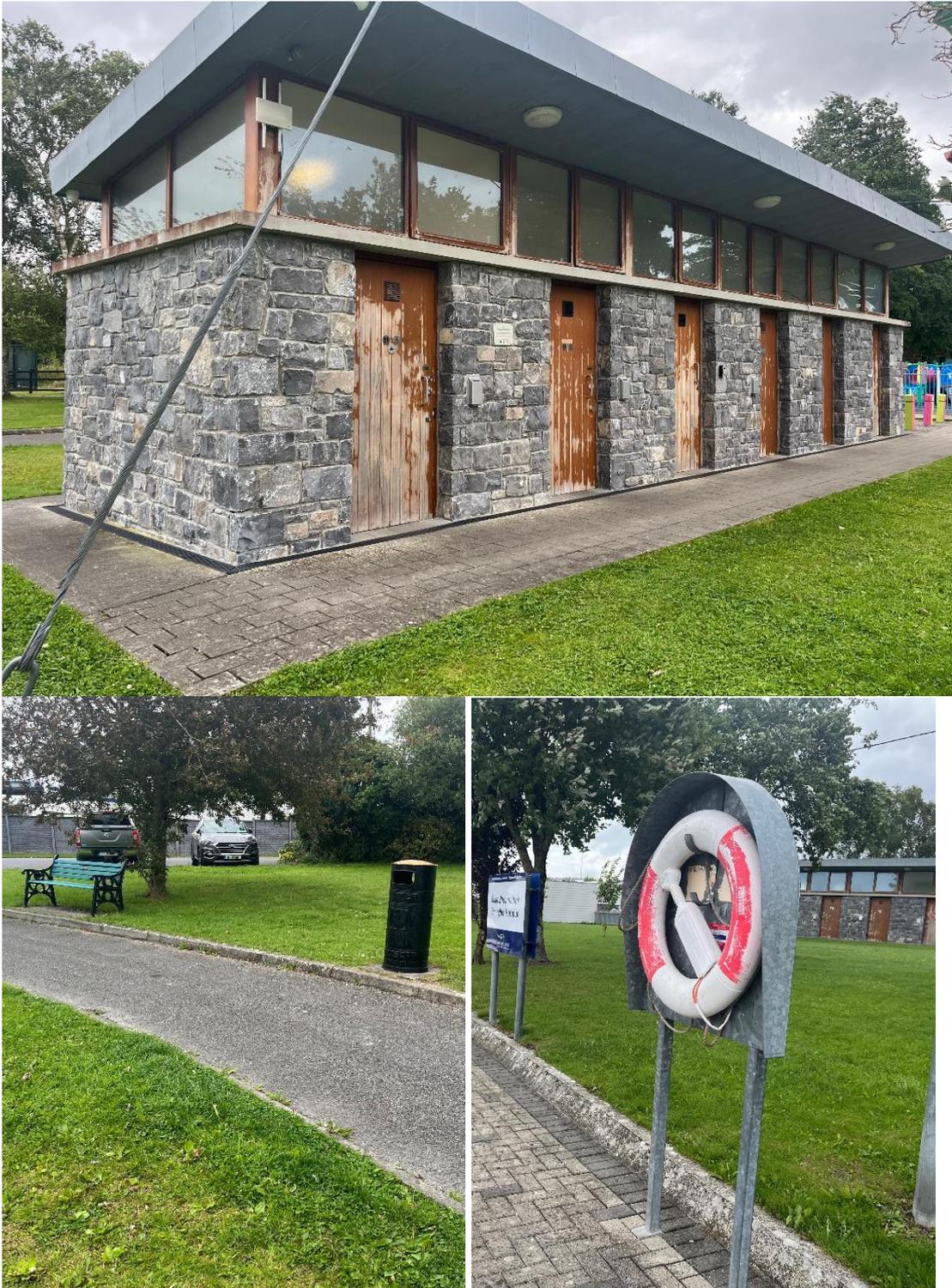


Plate 3.7 Toilet facilities (top), a rubbish bin and bench (bottom left), and a lifebuoy (bottom right) in Banagher Marina.



Plate 3.8 Signage on biodiversity in the marina (top left), informative signage in Banagher park (top right and bottom left), and a donation station in Banagher park (bottom right).



Plate 3.9 Sheltered bench in Banagher park.

3.3.1 Hazards

Given the nature of the site, the River Shannon itself could be considered a hazard, particularly in the Marina and outdoor pool where there is no barrier between the amenity areas and the water. However, life buoys are present throughout the site.

Banagher Bridge crosses the river Shannon and links the marina and Banagher Park. The bridge carries the R356 and has footpaths on both sides. There is no signalised pedestrian crossing point to allow visitors to go from one site to the other. The speed limit on this road is 50kmph, however vehicles were observed travelling significantly faster. The actual speed of vehicles on the road means that the sight lines at the entrance/ exit to Banagher park are most likely not adequate.

At the entrance to the marina off the R356, there is no pedestrian access. In order to gain access to the marina, pedestrians must walk on the roadway. There are pedestrian paths within the marina. Along main street, a section of the pedestrian path is painted onto the edge of the road. Cars were observed parked in this area during the survey. Cars parking on the pedestrian walkway is presented below in Plate 3.10.

A number of benches are present throughout the site, however in the park, some benches adjacent to the path are on a raised concrete slab, with a stone kerb creating a trip-hazard for visitors, particularly people with disabilities, or the elderly . An example of this is presented below in Plate 3.11.



Plate 3.10 Cars parking on the pedestrian walkway in Banagher marina.



Plate 3.11 Bench and a high kerb in Banagher park.

3.4 Ecological Constraints

3.4.1 Protected Sites

A desktop study was undertaken to identify designated sites and rare and protected species in the vicinity of the site. There are two European designated sites (SACs and SPAs) and one nationally designated site (NHAs and pNHAs) within the boundary. Information on these sites was obtained from the NPWS website and their respective Natura 2000 Standard Data Forms. These sites are described in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Designated sites within 2 km of the Banagher site

Site Name [Site Code]	Qualifying Interests	Distance (km) from the Site	Pressures and Threats (those related to recreation are in bold)
European Sites			
River Shannon Callows SAC [000216]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] • Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] • Alkaline fens [7230] • Limestone pavements [8240] • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] • Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355] 	Within site boundary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abandonment / lack of mowing (H) • Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing (H) • Flooding (H) • Use of biocides, hormones and chemicals (H) • Fertilisation (M) • Forestry clearance (M) • Intensive grazing (M) • Modifying structures of inland water courses (M) • Predation (M) • Siltation rate changes, dumping, depositing of dredged deposits (M) • Grazing in forests/woodland (L) • Hunting (L) • Landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general (L) • Mechanical removal of peat (L) • Modification of hydrographic functioning, general (L) • Non intensive mixed animal grazing (L) • Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities (L) • Paths, tracks, cycling tracks (L) • Removal of hedges and copses or scrub (L) • Trampling, overuse (L)

Site Name [Site Code]	Qualifying Interests	Distance (km) from the Site	Pressures and Threats (those related to recreation are in bold)
Middle Shannon Callows SPA [004096]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] 	Within site boundary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridge viaduct (H) Grazing (H) Nautical Sports (H) Urbanised areas, human habitation (H) Fertilisation (M+L) Leisure Fishing (M) Walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles (M) Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing (L) Hunting (L) Paths, tracks, cycling tracks (L)
Nationally Designated Sites			
River Shannon Callows pNHA [000216]	No site description available. Refer to River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA above.	Within site boundary.	No site description available. Refer to River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA above.

3.4.2 Incidental Species Recorded

Table 3.3 below presents the bird species recorded during the ecological surveys at Banagher, along with their Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCCI) status (2020–2026) (Gilbert et al., 2021).

Table 3.3 Incidental Species Records & BoCCI Status

Scientific Name	Common Name
Amber List	
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Mute swan
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sand martin
Green List	
<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Jackdaw
<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Raven
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon

The only invasive species recorded during the field survey is a small butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), which is growing in a gravel parking area at the marina.

3.4.3 Records of Rare, Protected and Invasive Species

Records of rare, protected, and invasive species from the past ten years within 2km of the site were obtained the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) online database (Grid References: N0015 and N0016). These records are presented in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 Rare, protected, and invasive species recorded in the past decade from Hectads N0015 and N0016 from NBDC database.

Scientific name	Common Name	Date of last Record	Status*
Terrestrial Mammals			
<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	Daubenton's Bat	26/08/2021	Annex IV HD; WA
Birds			
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	21/07/2018	Annex II, III BD; WA
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Mute Swan	07/05/2024	WA; Amber List
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Redshank	23/03/2022	WA; Red List
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sand Martin	11/05/2018	WA; Amber List
<i>Apus apus</i>	Swift	07/05/2024	WA; Amber List
<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Skylark	20/04/2018	WA; Amber List
Molluscs			
<i>Dreissena polymorpha</i>	Zebra Mussel	05/10/2023	High Impact Invasive Species; S.I. 477/2011
<i>Corbicula fluminea</i>	Asian Clam	18/07/2022	High Impact Invasive Species; S.I. 477/2011
Invasive Species			
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Butterfly-bush	14/01/2018	Medium Impact Invasive Species
<i>Conyza canadensis</i>	Canadian Fleabane	14/01/2018	Medium Impact Invasive Species
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	Wall Cotoneaster	14/01/2018	Medium Impact Invasive Species

* Abbreviations: Annex II/IV/V (non-avian species) = Habitats Directive (HD); Annex I, II, III = Birds Directive (BD); Red/Amber List = Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026 (BOCCI) (Gilbert et al., 2021); Wildlife Act, 1976 (WA).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information collected during the field survey and desk study, the following recommendations are made:

- A number of cars were recorded parking on pedestrian walkways at the marina. The provision of additional parking at the marina should be considered to ensure adequate parking is available on the site during busy periods. This could be accompanied by bollards and signage to prevent and discourage parking on pedestrian walkways.
- The sight lines for vehicles and pedestrians exiting Banagher park should be reviewed. Engagement with local authorities (Offaly and Galway County Councils) should be considered for the implementation of traffic calming measures and a signalised pedestrian crossing at Banagher Bridge to facilitate a safe link between the marina and Banagher park.
- While a footpath is present along the R356, there is no pedestrian access from the footpath into the marina, and pedestrians must walk on the roadway to access the footpaths within the marina grounds. A pedestrian connection should be considered.
- A number of benches in Banagher Park are located on high kerbs. The removal or adjustment of these kerbs should be considered to make this seating more accessible, particularly for less able-bodied visitors.
- Visitors utilising the outdoor pool in Banagher park were observed approaching a swan with signets, which caused it to exhibit stress behaviour. The implementation of signage at key locations on the site should be considered to discourage people from approaching wildlife. Where signage is being implemented, teleological signage (signage with instruction and justification for the instruction) should be used.
- The amenity grasslands in the marina and park are maintained as a very short sward. The creation of areas of meadows should be considered. This would require that these areas are mown infrequently. Additionally, the meadows should be allowed to populate naturally with local species or by using locally sourced seed, rather than with the use of seed mixes, which may contain species not naturally present in the local area. The creation of areas of meadows should be undertaken with reference to NBDC's guidance 'Councils: actions to help pollinators' (NBDC, 2016), and should be accompanied by teleological signage.
- While little litter was encountered during the field survey, the provision of categorised rubbish bins, including dog waste bins should be considered.

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APPENDIX A

FÁILTE IRELAND VISITOR CHARACTERISATION SURVEYS



Banagher, Co. Offaly – Visitor Monitoring Assessment

June 2025

Contents

- **1.0 Introduction:**
- **2.0 Visitor Characterisation Survey Methodology:**
- **3.0 Results:**
 - **Prevalence of Group Type**
 - **Prevalence of Transport Type**
 - **Activity Levels**
- **4.0 Observations**

Appendix 1 – Activity & Impact Codes

1.0 Introduction:

Background

Fáilte Ireland regularly engages with environmental research that is used to make informed management decisions and produce robust guidelines to facilitate the protection of the environment. From its inception in 2014, the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Operational Monitoring Programme has been conducting research into the impacts of tourism on the receiving environment.

Building on the success of the WAW environmental monitoring programme which ran from 2015-2019, Fáilte Ireland expanded the programme to a national level. From 2021 to 2022 the programme monitored 19 individual sites located in all of Fáilte Ireland's regional areas: The Wild Atlantic Way, Irelands Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East, and Dublin. The environmental monitoring builds on environmental surveying and monitoring undertaken on behalf of Fáilte Ireland as far back as 2015, and to date (excluding the 2025 data), the surveys have monitored a total of 70 sites and recorded the activities and effects of over 31,000 visitors at a range of tourism sites (including inland, urban, coastal and WAW discovery points).

2.0 Visitor Characterisation Survey Methodology:

- Visitor Characterisation Surveys

The visitor characterisation survey was undertaken by the Fáilte Ireland Planning and Environmental team at Banagher, Co. Offaly to supplement and be appended to the National Environmental Monitoring Programme 2025 Report undertaken by Roughan O'Donovan Consulting Engineers. The survey was undertaken on the 24th of June 2025 from 09.40-11.40am on a dull, cloudy morning. The survey was undertaken at Banagher outdoor pool and park for the first hour followed by a second hour of surveying across the River Shannon at the Marina area.

For the purposes of this assessment a 'visitor' refers to an individual, couple or group who arrive together. The following variables were recorded for each visitor:

- Activity Type
- Group Type
- Transport Type
- Activity Levels; and
- Impact Severity Levels.

3.0 Results:

3.1 Visitor Characterization Survey:

The visitor monitoring survey undertaken on the 24th of June 2025 from 09.40-11.40am from 13.30-15.30pm on a dull, dry and cloudy Tuesday morning. A total of 26 No. visitor groups comprising 60 No. Individuals were recorded. This site during the survey period was most popular amongst the 'individual adult' group followed by some distance by the 'family' and 'small adult' group'. Activities undertaken by groups during the survey comprised predominantly 'walking on paths, hard trails or marked surfaces'.

3.2 Prevalence of Group Type

Figure 1 presents the prevalence of group types observed visiting the site. 'Individual Adult' made up the largest proportion of group type with 65% of visitor groups observed. The second largest group type was 'couple' at 12% with 'family' and 'small adult group' both 8%. The remaining group types observed in order of prevalence were 'Mixed Small Group' and 'Mixed Large Group'. The largest group observed with dogs were the 'Individual Adult' and 'Couple' groups with a total of 50% of groups with dogs observed having them 'off lead'.

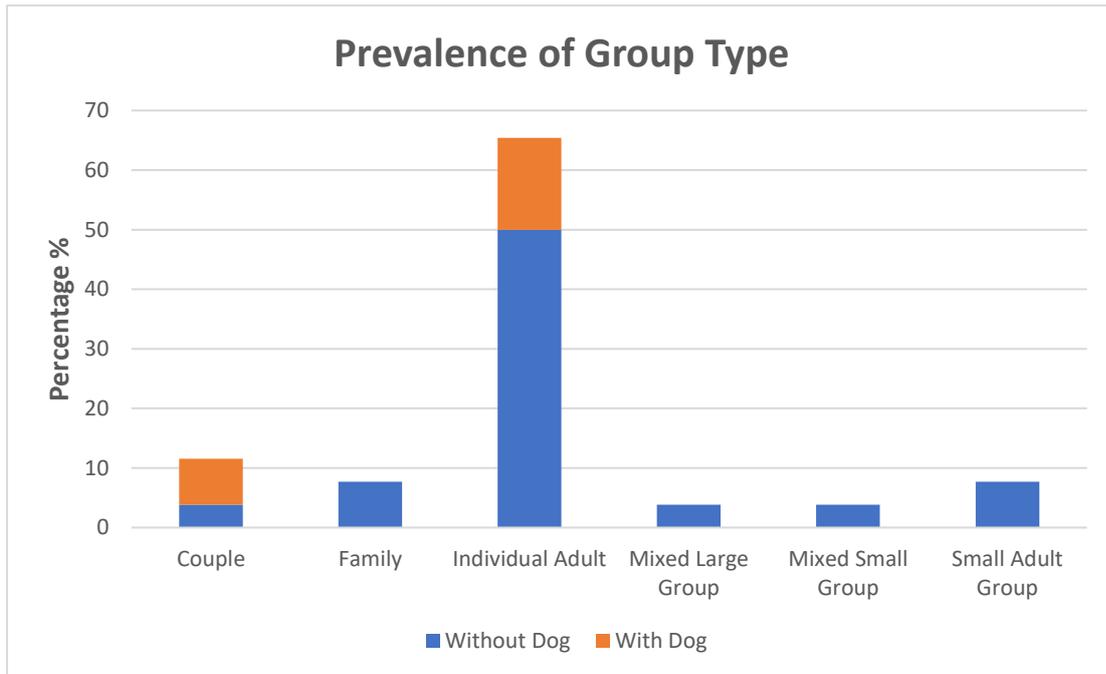


Figure 1: Prevalence of Group Type

3.3 Prevalence of Transport Type

As detailed below in Figure 2, 'By foot' was the main mode of transport observed, accounting for 54% of visitor groups observed visiting the site or exercising at the site. This was followed by car with 31% (who then generally proceeded to walk). It is noted that 3 number boats were observed cruising the River Shannon and 1 No. group was observed arriving by Motorhome.

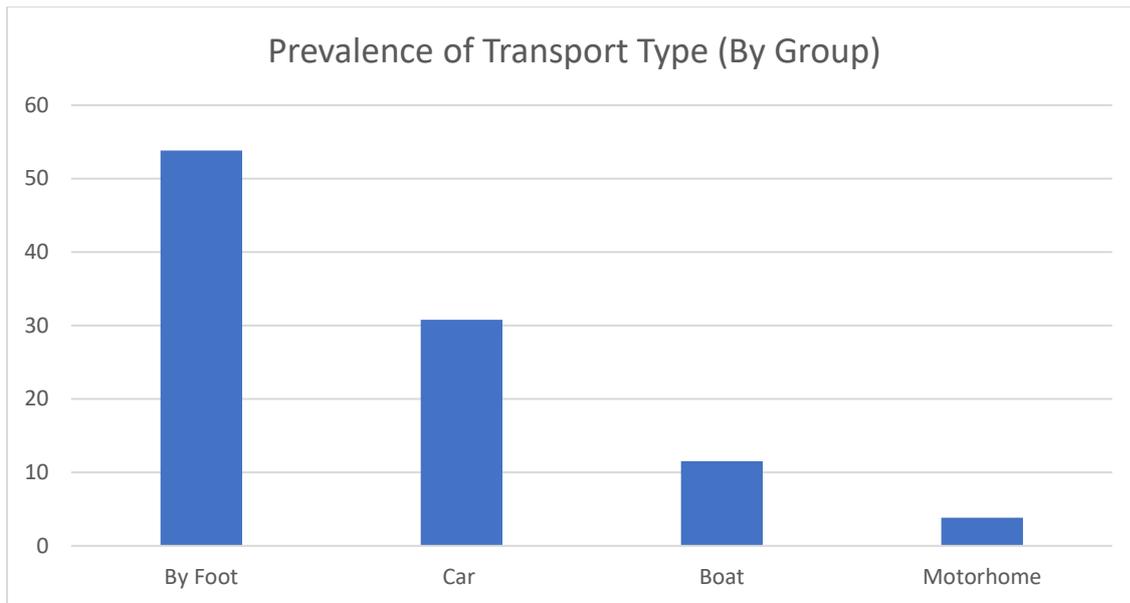


Figure 2: Prevalence of Transport Type (By Group)

3.4 Activity Levels

Figure 3 below presents the activity levels at Banagher. A sample of 26 visitor groups' activities were observed. The results from this are shown below in Figure 3. Activity categories are detailed in Appendix I. Activities such as Walking, running or playing on level sands is a low-level activity, whereas disturbing wildlife and picking herbaceous vegetation are considered high level activities. 88% of the activities observed at Banagher were considered low level activities with the remaining 12% (medium impact activity levels) comprising powered movement through water.

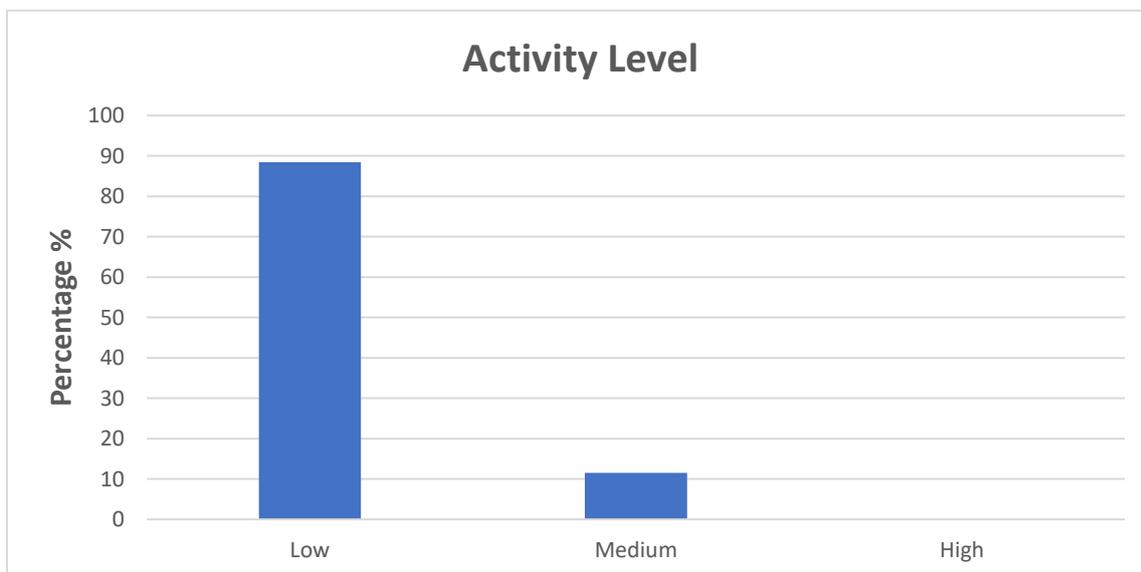


Figure 3: Activity Level

3.5 Impact Severity Levels

Figure 4 presents the impact severity level observed at the site. A sample of 26 visitor groups' activities were observed. Impact severity level relates to the damage of an activity on the site. The levels of impact severity are detailed in Appendix I. Similar to the impact type above, the survey found that 100% of the activities observed had low level impact severity on the site. Low level includes no effects, desire lines on grassy and leafy vegetation and temporary disturbance of wildlife.

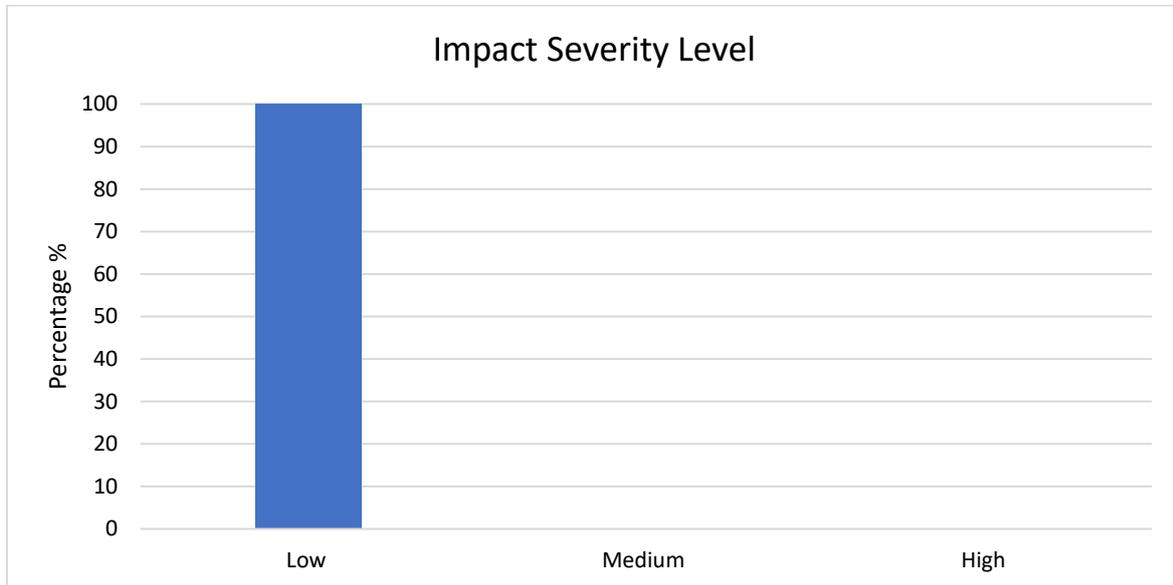


Figure 4: Impact Severity Levels

4.0 Observations

Illegal car parking was observed on the walking / cycling path immediately adjacent to the marina.

Toilets are accessible in Banagher Marina via a Waterways Ireland smartcard. Visitors not arriving to Banagher Marina by boat may not be aware of this and find toilet facilities lacking.

Appendix 1 – Activity & Impact Codes

Activities		
Category 1 Low Level		
Walking, running or cycling on paths, marked trails or hard surfaces		LA 1
Walking, running, cycling or playing in mown grass, managed grassland or level sand		LA 2
Sitting on benches, walls, mown grass, sand		LA 3
Swimming, sailing, surfing, kayaking in water		LA 4
Resting, reading, looking, picnicking, sightseeing, painting, photographing		LA 5
Vehicular movement on roads and parking areas		LA 6
Watching nature in hedges, woods, streams, pools and intertidal areas		LA 7
Category 2 Medium Level		
Powered movement through water		MA 1
Any movement leaving an existing trail or marked path		MA 2
Any movement leaving a trail through leafy vegetation		MA 3
Any movement leaving a trail through woody vegetation		MA 4
Climbing on walls, loose stones, sand, soil etc.		MA 5
Fishing		MA 6
Category 3 High Level		
Walking through wet/muddy soil		HA 1
Scrambling on steep or loose slopes		HA 2
Off road vehicular movement		HA 3
Disturbance of wildlife		HA 4
Deliberate building or moving or knocking site materials - parts of monuments, walls, stones, sand etc.		HA 5
Picking herbaceous vegetation		HA 6

Impacts		
Category 1 Low Impact		
No identifiable effect		LIE 1
Desire lines or trails visible on grass and leafy vegetation		LIE 2
Temporary disturbance (including chasing and feeding) of insects, fish, amphibian, reptiles, insects, birds and mammals		LIE 3
Temporary change of character - due to the appearance or nature of activities (noise, crowds, etc.)		LIE 4
General/light littering		LIE 5
Category 2 Medium Impact		
Desire lines or tracks visible outside of existing trail or marked path		MIE 1
Trampling of herbaceous vegetation		MIE 2
Damage to woody vegetation		MIE 3
Incidentally moving or knocking site materials - parts of monuments, walls, stones, sand, rooted vegetation, flora, fauna etc.		MIE 4
Addition/alteration of site features, transient emissions, noise		MIE 5
Transient disturbance, emissions, noise		MIE 6
Disturbance of wildlife		MIE 7
Category 3 Severe Impact		
Direct interference with site material - parts of monuments, walls, stones, sand, rooted vegetation, flora, fauna etc.		SIE 1
Removal of material - parts of monuments, walls, stones, sand, rooted vegetation, flora, fauna etc.		SIE 2
Vandalism or graffiti		SIE 3
Destruction of structures, vegetation or fauna		SIE 4
Heavy littering or dumping quantities of waste		SIE 5
Burning materials or lighting a fire		SIE 6
Injuring, killing or taking wildlife		SIE 7



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