



Sligo County Council

Artist Brief

Public Art Commission: Collooney & Castlebaldwin as part of "Living Landscapes/ Tírdhreacha Beo 2026 - 2028"

Budget: €157,000, inclusive of all fees, expenses and VAT where applicable.

Closing Date for Submissions: Thursday 19 November 2026 at 4pm: arts@sligococo.ie

Deadline for Queries: Thursday 5 November 2026 at 5pm: rayneboothprojects@gmail.com

Up to five artists or artist collectives will be shortlisted for Stage 2.
Each shortlisted applicant will receive a proposal development fee of €1,000

1. Introduction

Living Landscapes / Tírdhreacha Beo is a programme that will bring major new public art commissions to locations across County Sligo. Funded through the Per Cent for Art Scheme, Sligo County Council is now inviting professional artists and artist collectives working in all artforms submit proposals for Commission 1 in the Collooney and Castlebaldwin areas.

Artists and artist collectives are invited to propose ideas for a two-phase artwork, incorporating a piece of public art (Phase A) with an integrated public engagement programme (Phase B).

This commission invites artists to imagine creative and innovative ways of connecting the two communities through an expanded public artwork that builds a strong sense of place, celebrates the unique character of the area, and supports meaningful engagement with local communities.

Collooney and Castlebaldwin are two communities situated at either end of the 14 km-long N4 dual carriageway, which was built in 2021. As well as being connected by the road, the towns are linked by a shared landscape, rich cultural heritage and a strong sense of pride in place.

This brief has been informed by public consultations undertaken in both Collooney and Castlebaldwin. A summary of the consultation findings is included in the appendix. Artists are encouraged to use the themes and reflections within it as points of inspiration and to bring their own ideas, practices and creative approaches to the development of the commission.

2. Invitation

This commission will be awarded through a two-stage open competition.

This brief relates to Stage 1 and is open to professional artists and artist collectives working in all artistic disciplines, based in Ireland and internationally. Sligo County Council welcomes applications from artists at all points of their careers whose practice demonstrates artistic excellence and the capacity to realise an ambitious public art commission to the highest level.

Stage 1 submissions will be assessed by a panel comprised of independent artists, curators, public representatives from the Sligo Public Participation Network (PPN), Sligo County Council members and staff. A shortlist of no more than five artists or artist collectives will be selected and invited to develop their proposals further (Stage 2).

Following the development of the shortlist, an updated brief will be issued for stage 2 of the commissioning process. Each shortlisted artist or artist collective will receive a proposal development fee of €1000 to prepare their detailed Stage 2 submission. Shortlisted applicants will have the opportunity to visit the commission area, meet with representatives of Sligo County Council Arts Service and the Project Manager, and receive further contextual information to support the development of their proposals.

The final Stage 2 proposals will be assessed by a selection panel comprised of independent artists, curators, public representatives from the Sligo Public Participation Network (PPN), Sligo County Council members and staff. One artist or artist collective will be awarded the commission based on the quality of their proposal and its response to the assessment criteria outlined in this brief.

3. Context of the Commission/ Community Priorities

Collooney and Castlebaldwin are closely linked communities with distinctive identities. Because of its proximity to Sligo town, Collooney has become a gateway to County Sligo and is fast becoming a 'commuter' town. It is located at the meeting point of the N4 and N17 bypasses, and it has rail links to Dublin and Sligo. It has a rich history of industry, agriculture and commerce and the ruins of the old mill are still to be found on the banks of the Owenmore river that runs through the town. In contrast, Castlebaldwin retains a quieter rural character with strong connections to the landscape and the internationally significant archaeological heritage of the surrounding area. It has experienced a falling back of resources in recent years, with closures of shared spaces such as pubs and a lack of through traffic due to the opening of the new N4 dual carriageway.

The relationship between the two communities has been shaped by the N4 road and the grassroots campaign that precipitated its upgrade. For many years, the section of road between Collooney and Castlebaldwin was regarded as one of the most dangerous stretches of road in the country, prompting a community campaign, which became nationally recognised for the installation of a series of white roadside crosses commemorating those who had lost their lives in traffic accidents. Following many years of campaigning, the new N4 dual carriageway opened in 2021, fundamentally changing how the two communities relate to one another.

Themes:

A number of shared themes emerged across the two communities during the consultation process. Artists should consider some of these themes as possible starting points for research. The commission is intended to support original artistic responses that engage thoughtfully with the place, its people and its history.

- **Spirit of the Northwest:** the people's connection with the rivers, woods, lakes, mountains and farmlands. The natural environment as well as the cultural history of poetry, music and song combined with landscape to influence local identity, belonging and sense of place. Walking trails and access to nature.
- **History and Heritage:** the area's archaeology, in particular Carrowkeel passage tomb and more broadly the Sligo/Cúil Irra passage tomb complex and its connection to Irish heritage. This is seen as often overlooked. The area's connection to the 1798 rebellion was also highlighted, including the history of the Union, Markree and Teeling estates.
- **Music and Cultural Legacy:** the rich musical traditions and cultural life; some of the earliest recorded Irish traditional musicians came from the area.
- **Movement and Connection:** journeys, transport, migration and the physical and social connections between places and people. The changes in local communities precipitated by modernisation.
- **Community:** opportunities for participation and collaboration across generations. Supporting creativity amongst the community. The need for infrastructure, places to gather and to support a sense of connection in both communities and between communities.

A summary of the consultation process and the themes that emerged is included in more detail in Appendix 1: Community Consultation Summary.

4. Artform and Scope of the Commission

Sligo County Council Arts Service welcomes proposals from professional artists and artist collectives working across all art disciplines and media.

There is no prescribed form for the commission. Artists are encouraged to propose the approach they feel is most appropriate in response to the brief, the context of the commission and their own practice.

To reflect the aspirations identified through the consultation process, the commission has been divided into two complementary phases:

Phase A – Public Artwork

- The development and delivery of a public artwork or other significant tangible artistic outcome in response to the brief.
- Proposals may result in a permanent or temporary artwork, a site-responsive installation, a participatory project or an interdisciplinary approach that combines a number of artistic disciplines.
- It is envisaged that any eventual artwork will not be singularly located in one or other community but will include elements of work in both communities. The work should reflect and connect the two communities either physically or conceptually.

Phase B – Public Engagement Programme

- A programme of engagement that enables the artist to spend time in the locality, develop relationships with the communities of Collooney and Castlebaldwin, and create opportunities for participation throughout the commissioning process.
- Could include workshops, participatory work, community projects, schools programmes etc. We are looking for ideas about how artists would engage with community, how this would relate to Phase A of the work.
- If successful, the artist or artist collective would work with Sligo Arts Service and the Project Manager to access spaces, communities and local collaborators. (NB. For Stage 1 of this open call, artists making proposals should **not** contact any community groups or contacts in the area. This can be undertaken if the proposal is successful.)
- Applicants should propose an indicative programme of activity and a structure of how they would carry this out, including engaging any supporting artists, curators, producers, collaborators, etc to be included in the budget.

Artists responding to this open call should demonstrate how both phases A and B of the commission will work together to create a coherent artistic proposal that can be delivered within the available budget and timeframe. Proposals should not be political in nature or convey a political message.

Phases can be addressed concurrently or consecutively depending on the nature of the work. For example, public engagement can form part of the development of the work if desired. For some artists, community engagement may form an integral part of the research and development of the artwork, while others may choose to develop the artwork first and deliver a programme of engagement alongside or following its completion. Artists can work alone or suggest other artists or teams who will be engaged to develop Phase B in collaboration with them.

The inclusion of a dedicated engagement programme reflects the ambition of the “Living Landscapes / Tírdhreacha Beo” Public Art Programme to create meaningful connections between artists and communities, supporting opportunities for dialogue, participation and

exchange while recognising that artists will adopt different approaches to working in the public realm. It is hoped that Phase B will help to embed the eventual artwork in the two communities, and that the artwork will serve to enrich and support activities of local communities.

5. Location

- Artists are encouraged to consider the relationship between the two communities and the surrounding environment when developing their proposals.
- No final site has been predetermined.
- The eventual location of the artwork will be agreed in consultation with Sligo County Council Arts Service, the appointed Project Manager and relevant stakeholders following the artist's appointment.
- Artists are not expected to have identified locations for their stage one proposals. This can be developed for stage two shortlisted proposals.
- Any eventual artwork should not prioritise one community over another but serve to connect both communities either physically or conceptually
- Phase B – the public engagement programme has no prescribed location and can take place in community spaces, outdoors, in schools, or in other spaces identified by the artist and in collaboration with Sligo Arts Service.

6. Service Requirements

The appointed artist or artist collective will work in collaboration with Sligo County Council Arts Service and the appointed Project Manager to develop and deliver the commission from concept through to completion. The successful artist will be expected to:

- Develop the artistic concept and detailed design for the commission.
- With the support of Sligo County Council Arts Service, identify locations for the artwork if necessary.
- Develop and deliver both phases of the commission, including the artwork and public engagement programme
- Attend meetings with Sligo County Council Arts Service, the Project Manager and other stakeholders as required.
- Undertake any necessary site visits, research and consultation to inform the development of the work.
- Prepare a project programme and identify key milestones for delivery.
- Manage all aspects of fabrication, production and installation where applicable.
- Appoint and manage any specialist fabricators, contractors or consultants required to realise the commission.
- Ensure that all works comply with relevant health and safety, planning, accessibility and environmental requirements.
- Liaise with Sligo County Council regarding technical approvals, permissions and installation requirements where necessary.
- Provide maintenance recommendations for the completed work, where applicable.
- Provide documentation of the project in full, in agreement with Sligo Arts Service

- Participate in publicity and evaluation activities associated with the commission.
- Deliver the commission within the agreed budget and timeframe.
- Collaborate with Sligo Arts Service on the development of a launch event.

7. Finance / Budget

The total budget available for this commission is **€157,000** (inclusive of all fees, expenses and VAT where applicable).

The budget is intended to support both phases of the commission and should be allocated accordingly.

The Phase A budget should cover all costs associated with the development, production and delivery of the artistic outcome, including (where applicable) artist fees, design development, specialist consultants, fabrication, materials, engineering, transport, installation, insurance, permissions, documentation and any other costs required to complete the commission.

A portion of the overall budget is intended to support the planning and delivery of Phase B; a high-quality public engagement programme. This should include artist fees, materials, venue hire (where required), documentation, accessibility measures, insurance and any other costs associated with delivering the programme.

Artists and collectives are expected to submit a realistic budget that demonstrates how both phases of the commission can be delivered within the available funding. Artist fees should be calculated based on roughly 20% of the overall budget.

Please note: any costs associated with the preparation of Stage 1 submissions are the responsibility of the applicant. Shortlisted artists invited to Stage 2 will receive a proposal development fee of €1000.

8. Form of Response

Artists should submit their proposal in one PDF containing the following:

- Outline of the concept of the proposal; the artistic ideas and themes behind the work, what form will it take, ideal locations, how this relates to the themes and community engagement
- Sketches/drawings/visualisations of the proposed artwork
- Overview of materials, detailing the resilience and permanence of the work, including how it will be fixed in place.
- Detailed overview of Phase B of the project; outlining how you are thinking about public engagement, who will you work with on this phase, what will you do, how it will support the communities in question (NB. please do not contact any community groups at this stage, we are looking for ideas, local connections can be developed upon successful completion of the selection process.)

- An outline budget for both phases (A and B) of the project, detailing a breakdown of the commission, including but not limited to artist's fee, production budget, collaborators' fees, any other fees including engineers, designers etc, cost of materials fabrication, documentation and insurance.
- Up to three examples of relevant previous work. Applicants may include images or hyperlinks to examples of music, film, performance only. Please do not include links to websites, social media etc.
- a CV of no more than three pages.

(Total page limit 12 pages)

Applications must be submitted as one PDF document not exceeding 10MB. The following subject line should be used on submission emails: "Commission 1 – Stage 1 Application".

9. Selection Process

The commission will be awarded through a two-stage open competition.

Following the closing date, eligible Stage 1 applications will be assessed by a panel which will comprise of independent artists, curators; public representatives from the Sligo Public Participation Network (PPN); Sligo County Council members and staff. The type of commission will determine the selectors on the assessment panel based on: experience, professional practice, creative discipline and artistic expertise.

Eligible Stage 1 applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Artistic quality, originality and ambition, including consideration of the Phase B public engagement and community programme. (40%)
- The strength of the proposed response to the commission brief and its relationship to the themes laid out in this brief and to the communities of Collooney and Castlebaldwin. (30%)
- Feasibility, including demonstrated experience, skills and capacity to deliver a commission of this scale, and the ability to manage the project within the available budget and timeframe. (20%)
- Consideration of environmental sustainability, durability and future maintenance/legacy, where applicable. (10%)

The highest-scoring applicants will be shortlisted and invited to progress to Stage 2.

Shortlisted artists or collectives will receive a Stage 2 Brief containing stage 2 criteria and any additional information required to develop their proposals. Each shortlisted artist or artist team will receive a proposal development fee of €1000 (inclusive of VAT where applicable). During the development phase for stage 2, shortlisted artists will have the opportunity to submit queries and a briefing site visit will be arranged for all shortlisted artists.

Stage 2 assessment process will be undertaken by the Selection Panel, who will recommend one artist or collective for appointment. Shortlisted artists may be called for interview at this stage. Sligo County Council reserves the right not to appoint if no submission is considered to meet the required standard.

10. Timescale

The deadline for Stage 1: **Thursday 19th November 2026** at 4pm.

All applications will be assessed a shortlist of no more than five artists or collectives will be confirmed by mid **December 2026**.

Shortlisted artists will then be invited to develop and submit a Stage 2 proposal. Deadline for stage 2 will be set for mid-February 2027. Shortlisted Artists/collectives may be called for interview in mid-March 2027, and the commission will be awarded to the selected artist or artist team in late March 2027.

Following appointment, the successful artist /team will work with Sligo County Council Arts Service and the appointed Project Manager to develop the commission. The development of the work will take place throughout 2027, with fabrication, installation and launch anticipated to take place in Spring 2028.

Please note that this timetable is indicative and may be subject to change.

11. Submissions

- Closing date for Stage 1 applications is **Thursday 19th November 2026 at 4pm**
 - Applications should be submitted by email to arts@sligococo.ie
 - Applications received after the closing date and time will not be considered.
 - Applications must be submitted as one PDF document not exceeding 10MB. The following subject line should be used on submission emails: **"Commission 1 – Stage 1 Application"**.
 - Applicants will receive an acknowledgement confirming receipt of their submission.
 - Queries can be addressed to rayneboothprojects@gmail.com before Thursday 5th November 2026 at 5pm.
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12. Terms and Conditions

Data Protection:

Personal data submitted as part of this competition will be processed by Sligo County Council for the purposes of administering and assessing the competition and, where applicable, managing the resulting commission. Personal data will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and Sligo County Council's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statements.

Insurance:

The successful artist/artist team will be required to have appropriate insurance cover in place prior to commencement of the commission. The specific insurance requirements will be confirmed by Sligo County Council and set out in the contract with the successful artist.

Contract:

The successful artist/artist team will be required to enter into a formal contract with Sligo County Council prior to commencement of the commission. The contract will set out the agreed scope of work, programme, payment schedule and relevant terms and conditions.

Tax Clearance:

The successful artist/artist team will be required to hold valid Tax Clearance Certification prior to entering into the contract.

Freedom of Information:

Information submitted may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. Applicants should clearly identify any information they consider confidential or commercially sensitive.

Retention of Submissions:

Stage 1 applications will be accepted by email only. Posted applications will not be accepted. Late applications will not be accepted. Stage 1 applications will be kept for six months for the purpose of documenting the selection process and ensuring transparency of the selection process. Stage 1 proposals, including designs, will be deleted after six months.

Appendices

A. Community Consultation Report

Living Landscapes / Tírdhreacha Beo

Community Consultation Report, Commission 1: Collooney and Castlebaldwin Areas

The consultation meetings in Collooney and Castlebaldwin revealed two different communities with their own distinct set of concerns and identities, but with many shared ideas for the commission. Participants in both communities spoke about the relationship between landscape, history and community, and expressed a desire for a commission that is ambitious, locally focused and capable of leaving a lasting legacy. Participants imagined a project that will support their community activities, help people to connect and to appreciate their locality and environment.

Each meeting inevitably began with questions from participants. Some of the things that were on the minds of participants in Collooney and Castlebaldwin include:

- contributors were concerned that the two communities are situated 14km apart, and are in two different electoral areas. They wanted to know if there would be an artwork in both communities or just one artwork. Some ideas were raised about how to make this fair and ensure that in particular Castlebaldwin, which is the smaller of the two communities, is not overlooked.
- Some people wanted to know if the artwork is required to be physical or if it could be something intangible, such as a play, a festival, a gathering or a piece of music. There was no agreement as to whether a physical work or an intangible work would be preferred, with some highlighting that a large physical artwork would create a sense of place for the area.
- Participants asked if all of the funding would need to be used on one commission, and if some of it could be used to support existing community projects. They were informed that this would not be possible but that there would be scope for the funding to be divided up into more than one commission. There was discussion around the idea of reserving part of the money for a community focused project that would act as an education or community development piece alongside a more site specific or sculptural commission.

Spirit of the Northwest

One of the strongest themes across both consultations was the importance of the landscape itself, its unique beauty and character was seen as the main source of the area's identity.

In Collooney, discussion centred on what participants described as the "spirit of the northwest". This was seen as an intangible quality connected with the rivers, woods, lakes, mountains and farmlands. The group mentioned W.B. Yeats and other writers associated with the region as evidence that the landscape continues to inspire creative thought and imagination. The importance of nature and biodiversity in the landscape was seen as a key theme for the brief to consider.

Castlebaldwin participants also spoke about landscape as something living and deeply connected to community identity. Lough Arrow, local biodiversity, wildlife, and the surrounding countryside were identified as important but often overlooked aspects of the area's heritage. Photography, wildlife recording and environmental groups were identified as valuable community resources that could contribute to the commission.

History and Heritage

In Collooney, participants referred to the Battle of Collooney, the Teeling Monument, the Union and Markree Estates, and the area's role during the 1798 Rebellion. Collooney's position as both a historic railway junction and the principal gateway into County Sligo from the N4 was seen as central to its identity. Themes of arrival, movement and connection could provide a compelling framework for the commission.

Castle Baldwin discussions focused on the internationally significant archaeological landscape surrounding the Carrowkeel passage tomb. It was seen as a place that is as significant as Newgrange due to its summer solstice alignment. However it was noted that as with much of Sligo's heritage, it is something of a 'hidden gem' which does not enjoy the fame of the sites of the Boyne Valley. The wider network of passage tombs connecting Carrowkeel, Carrowmore and the Hill of Uisneach was mentioned as something as significant as the heritage of the Boyne valley. The image of ancient fires being lit across a chain of hills leading to the Hill of Uisnach captured the imagination as a metaphor for connection across landscape and time.

The potential UNESCO designation of this archaeological landscape was noted and it was felt that there was scope for artists to help make this heritage more visible and accessible for contemporary audiences.

Music, Recording History and Cultural Legacy

Music was a strong theme to emerge from the Castlebaldwin consultation. Participants felt it represented one of the area's greatest cultural assets. Discussion centred on James Morrison, Michael Conlon and other early Irish traditional musicians who emigrated to the United States during the 1920s and became among the first people to record Irish traditional music, and indeed to record any type of music. These musicians were described as the "content creators and celebrities of their day". This remarkable recording history remains relatively unknown outside of the area. Morrison and Conlon were also mentioned during the Collooney consultation as important figures in the area.

It should be noted that these musicians are already honoured in Sligo through the work of The James Morrison Festival and the Coleman Music Centre. However, participants felt that this commission could help to connect these infrastructures and raise awareness of the area's wider musical legacy. Suggestions for community-based activities included performances, workshops, recording projects, music sessions and educational programmes. The fact that the session took place at Taylors art Gallery, a place where music is celebrated, taught and enjoyed is also significant. Taylor's Art Gallery is a key resource in the area and a place where any commissioned artists could undertake aspects of community engagement. Its owner Alec also holds a large archive of instruments at the gallery, as well as gramophones and a collection of old vinyl recordings from local musicians.

Journeys, Gateways, Connectivity, Movement

Collooney was described as the gateway to County Sligo, and as a symbolic place of arrival and departure, as it is the first town in Sligo when you arrive on the Dublin road. It is also a place where important historical transport routes converge, such as the old train station that connected Ballymote, Boyle and Sligo. This was also put forward as a possible location for an artwork. The influx of newly arrived residents and families to Collooney was referenced as it has become something of a 'dormitory town' for Sligo in recent years. It was felt that these new residents are not so interested in the community life of the town as they are more likely to have young families and be more focused on their work in Sligo. A community project that might address this disconnect between new and old communities in the town would be welcomed by the group.

The N4 continues to define Collooney's contemporary identity, both in its current form and in people's imagination as a source of pride as to what the community was able to achieve through a grassroots campaign to upgrade the road.

Castlebaldwin participants also strongly highlighted the N4, in particular the white cross campaign, which became nationally known and ultimately led to the construction of the new N4. It was pointed out that this initiative was community driven and was made possible through the "perseverance and determination" of a group of local people who had lost loved ones on the dangerous road.

The Castlebaldwin group also approached the idea of movement through walking routes, heritage trails and cultural journeys. Popular walking trails, routes to Carrowkeel and ideas to develop linked or trail-based artworks were discussed. The Plein Air Painting Festival in Kinvara was mentioned as an example of how creative activity can encourage visitors to explore a place more deeply.

Both consultations thought about the idea of trails and journeys as a possible framework for public art, suggesting opportunities to think beyond a single object or location. This would lend itself well to addressing the issue around the two communities existing at two ends of the N4 dual carriageway, physically distanced, but ready to be connected through artistic projects and concepts.

Legacy, Visibility and Community Pride

Throughout the consultation there were differing opinions on the idea of a permanent versus an intangible artwork. Some Castlebaldwin participants expressed the desire for a permanent landmark or gathering place that could become part of everyday community life. The Chieftain on the Hill sculpture was cited as an example of ambitious public art that has become both a destination and a source of local pride, however it was noted that the budget may not stretch to something so ambitious since costs for materials have gone up in recent years. One participant described the aspiration as "adding life to legacy"; creating something that highlights the past while supporting the future of the village by creating a focal point for visitors.

This discussion was closely connected to the impact of the N4 bypass. While participants acknowledged the improvements to road safety, they also reflected on the reduced visibility of the village and the need to create reasons for people to stop, visit and spend time there.

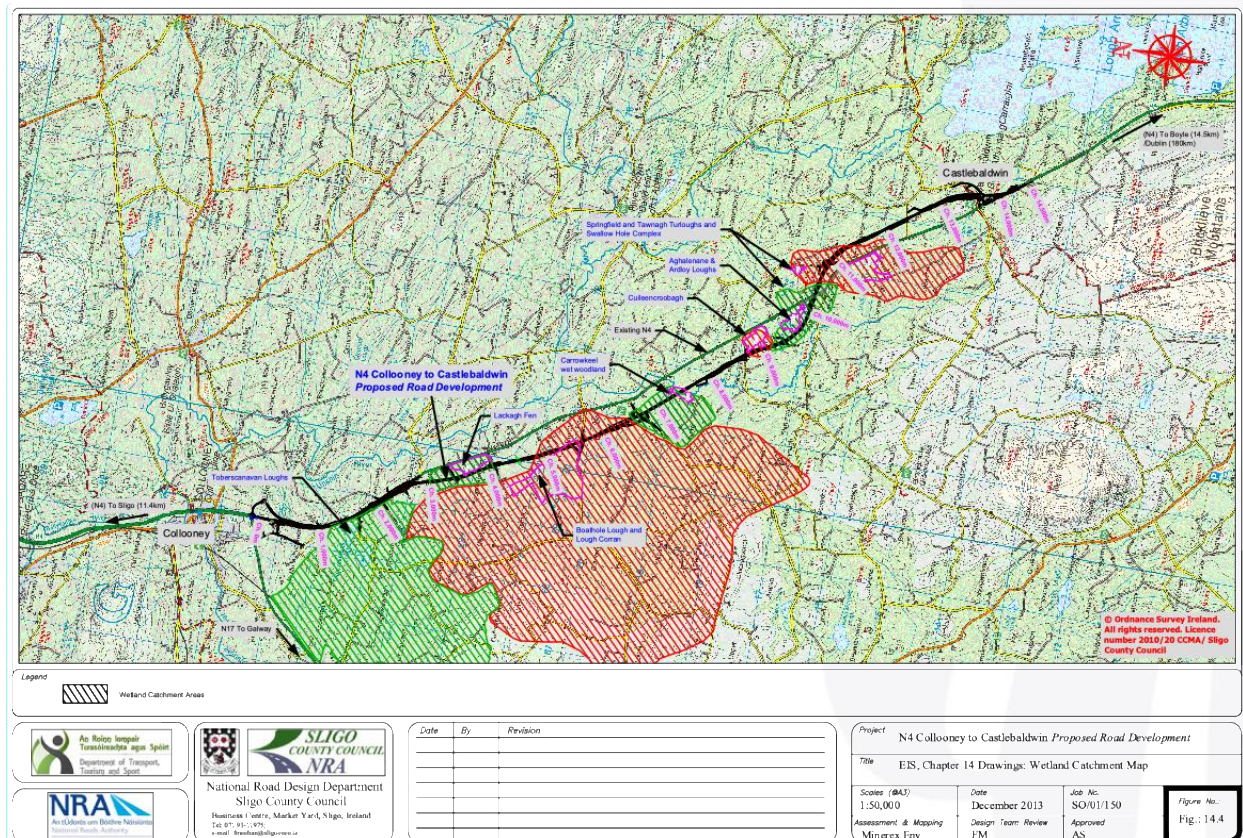
In Collooney, some participants similarly emphasised that public investment should create something with lasting value rather than a temporary intervention. Other participants believed

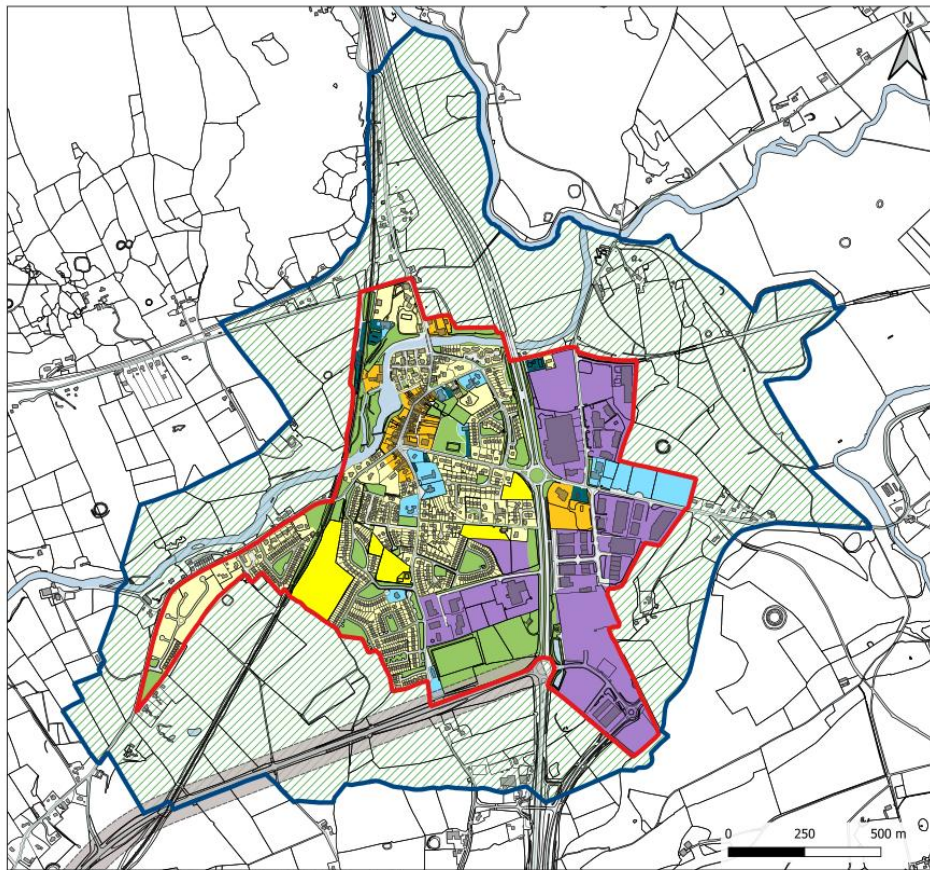
strongly that the commission should support local artists and communities, and create a sustainable way for them to connect together. Collooney residents also felt that there were not many things for young people to do in the area and that any commission should address this need.

Community Participation

Participants advocated for artists who are willing to spend time in the community, listen to local knowledge and develop work collaboratively. An artist residency model was suggested, allowing relationships and understanding to develop between the selected artist and the community. In Castlebaldwin in particular it was highlighted that there is a lack of places that bring the community together and that since the closure of the pub during COVID-19 this has been an ongoing issue. The idea of music workshops and get-togethers was highlighted as important for this more rural community. Participants in both locations suggested that the project could incorporate classes, workshops, music programmes, digital initiatives and opportunities for young people to engage creatively within the communities.

B. Maps

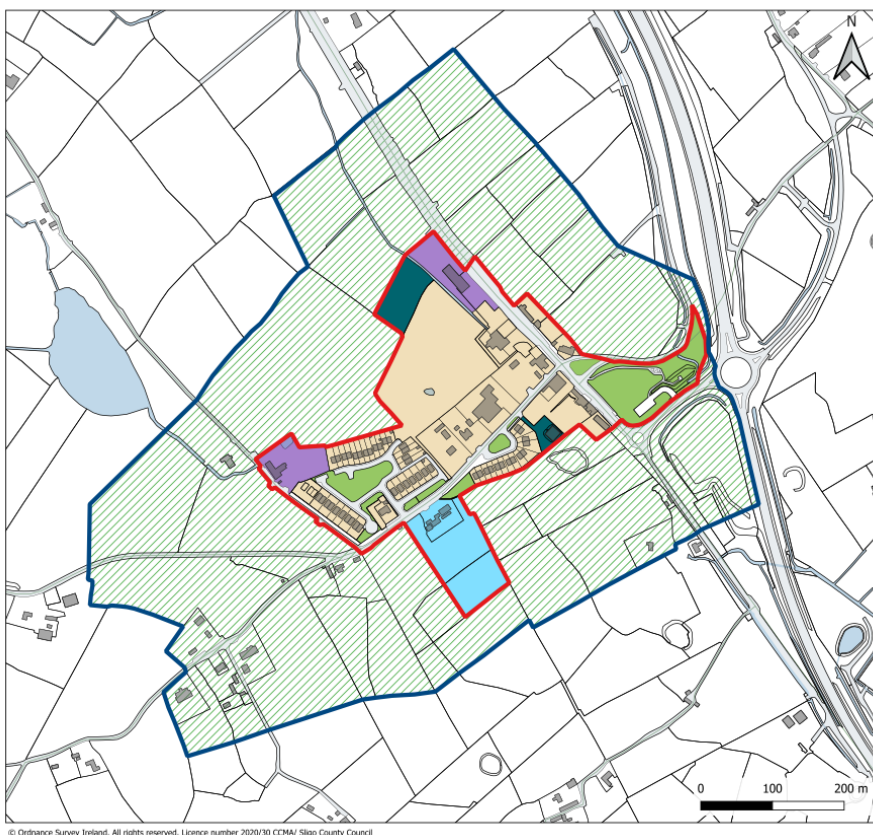




Collooney Draft Zoning Map

- Plan Limit
- Development Limit
- MIX - mixed uses
- eRES - existing residential areas
- nRES - new residential uses
- CF - community facilities
- BIE - business, industrial, enterprise
- OS - open space and recreational amenities
- TU - transport and utilities infrastructure
- GB - Green Belt

13 October 2023



Castlebaldwin Draft Zoning Map

- Plan Limit
- Development Limit
- RV - rural village
- CF - community facilities
- BIE - business, industrial, enterprise
- TU - transport and utilities infrastructure
- OS - open space and recreational amenities
- GB - Green Belt

13 October 2023