



Creative
Climate Action

The Irish Architecture Foundation in partnership with Kilcormac Development Association.

Reimagine Kilcormac

Brief for Architect/ Specialist/Team

Proposal Deadline: February 8th, 2022



Images: St Cormac's Park, Kilcormac, www.bordnamonalivinghistory.ie

The Irish Architecture Foundation in partnership with Kilcormac Development Association invites Architects/Architect-led teams, to apply to deliver a programme of co-design, collaborative research and prototyping as part of Reimagine Kilcormac/Worker's Villages.

Reimagine Kilcormac will pair an Architect/Architect-Led Team with Kilcormac's local residents and community to explore future sustainable visions for their village - one of Ireland's seven Bord na Mona villages. It is one of three community focused projects anchored on collaboratively building on the vision of village architect, Mr Frank Gibney.

This project is a recipient of the inaugural Creative Climate Action fund, an initiative from the Creative Ireland Programme in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

We are particularly interested in hearing from applicants who live in, or have close access to, Offaly and the surrounding midlands area.

Timeline: February 2022 - November 2022

Budget: 15k

This Budget is fully inclusive of all costs in relation to this application, including on site workshops, materials, travel, expenses, insurance, inclusive of VAT.

Workers' Villages

Workers' Villages is a recipient of the inaugural Creative Climate Action fund, an initiative from the Creative Ireland Programme in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications that supports creative, cultural and artistic projects that build awareness around climate change and empower citizens to make meaningful behavioural transformations.

This project will see architect/teams work with three Bord na Mona villages in the midlands of Ireland in 2021/2022. The three villages are Cloontuskert (Roscommon), Lanesborough (Longford) and Kilcormac (Offaly). Each community has a shared history closely linked to the peat industry, and a shared experience of a dramatic shift in their economy, culture and identity. The Bord na Mona villages create a strong midlands design identity, and an

opportunity for these communities to explore as they reimagine a new future. However, each has its own priorities and path to create. In the case of Kilcormac, there are opportunities presented by the connection of the Bord na Mona village to the Main Street, in the “green economy”; in the closeness to Lough Boora Discovery Park, and in work already undertaken by local organisations.

Led by the Irish Architecture Foundation, the Workers’ Villages programme is delivered in partnership with Global Action Plan and the School of Architecture, UL (SAUL), who provide key underpinnings in climate change actions, impact measurement and architectural research. The selected Architect/teams for Reimagine Kilcormac will have the opportunity to connect with the Architect/teams from the two other projects, in Lanesborough and Cloontuskert, in order to share knowledge and collaborate on certain project elements, such as research visits.

As part of this wider programme, Roscommon based artist Padraig Cunningham from Pure Designs will be documenting all three projects, and forms part of the broader Workers’ Villages team.

A key consideration for this project is the centering of the communities at the heart of “brown to green” transitions, in line with the aims of **Just Transition**. A just transition (worker and community environmental rights bill) was passed in 2018 to establish the National Just Transition Commission that overlooked the bringing together of communities, workers, employers and the government in an open dialogue to develop required plans, policies and investments for a just transition to a low carbon economy.

Just Transition provides infrastructures that attempt to ensure that no community is left behind, however this does not undo the fact that an entire industry and regional focus is dramatically changing in the midlands of Ireland.

Background Information

About Kilcormac

Kilcormac is a town in Offaly located on the main N52 between Tullamore and Birr and nestled at the foot of the Slieve Bloom mountains. It has a population of roughly 1,800 in the town and surrounding townlands.

Kilcormac was originally settled by St. Cormac who founded a hermitage here. It is the home of the famous Kilcormac Pieta, whose story highlights the connection of the community with the bog, where the community hid the 16th century statue while Cromwell's army reduced the local churches to ruins.

The town is located just a short drive from Lough Boora Discovery Park, a former work site for the many local Bord na Mona village residents and now a popular local recreation and nature amenity. It has 2,000 hectares of cutaway boglands, walking and cycling tracks, angling lakes, outdoor sculpture park, a habitat for countless species of birds and wildlife, flora and fauna, fairy avenue and Visitor Centre.

The land around Kilcormac was key in the peat industry, after the development of Bord na Mona, particularly in the milling stage. Milling is the process of harvesting peat from the surface of a bog in the boglands and using it as a source of energy, through briquettes and electricity.



Bord na Móna Workers Villages/Frank Gibney



Bord na Móna worker villages were designed in the 1950s by Frank Gibney, an Architect not only key to the construction of a new Irish rural design identity during the establishment of the Irish State, but also a forerunner in ideas around sustainable building and urban design practices. The establishment of Bord na Móna was a key part of the drive for self-sufficiency in Ireland, and transformed the Midlands from an economic, social and architectural perspective. For the first time, new rural villages were being planned, designed by Frank Gibney under the instruction of the Government, to provide housing for workers of the many Bord na Móna sites. Through the Bord na Móna housing project, seven schemes were provided at Kilcormac, Rochfortbridge, Lanesboro', Cloontuskert, Derraghan, Timahoe, and Bracknagh. Gibney's distinctive designs are from the Beaux Arts tradition, and easily recognisable for their arcing layout and feature houses.

However Gibney's villages are not only notable for their unique designs and their long lasting use, his concepts of place created highly walkable and liveable communities. Their density and incorporation of community spaces are now recognised as markers of sustainable planning and urban design. He is considered an early proponent of "sustainable" building - with his prototype Clay House a model for rammed earth housing. Bord na Mona villages are within Just Transition communities in the Midlands of Ireland, and are intrinsically linked to the peat industry currently at the centre of Ireland's Climate Action Plan.

The **Kilcormac Development Association** was set up in 1982 to act as an umbrella group and backbone of the community when it comes to the provision of community services and the enhancement of the community both physically and economically.

St. Joseph's Community Centre was built by the Kilcormac Development Association in 1988, and as well as having 5 employees, and supporting over 40 voluntary community groups, it offers services such as: Meals on Wheels; Community Gym; Tea Rooms; Hall Hire; Meeting Room Hire; Bingo; Senior Alert Scheme; First Responders; Parent & Toddler Group; Croi Og – Active Retirement Group; Walking Club; After Funeral Services

Assets, Opportunities, Challenges and Things of Note:

- The large green open spaces in Kilcormac Bord na Mona village provide ample space for community activities.
- The Fiesta Ballroom is being developed as a new Green Hub, in a project led by Green Offaly, which is a not-for-profit countywide Green Regeneration enterprise operating as a Development Trust.
- Kilcormac has been developing its identity as the "Gateway to Lough Boora", highlighting the work already done in building a new "greener" future.
- The Kilcormac Audio Guide - an exciting oral history project co-ordinated by Kilcormac Development Association. www.abartaheritage.ie/product/kilcormac-audio-guide/
- There are a number of walks that start in or go through Kilcormac, including Kilcormac Loop Walks and the Offaly Way.
- Bord na Mona was the primary economic driver in the area, which now creates a particular pressure to identify new economic opportunities.
- There is a sense of loss deeply felt by those who spent their lives working in the peat industry, which is larger than a simple economic loss. A key part of this programme is giving recognition to the value of these hard working communities, and especially their wealth of knowledge regarding the industrial heritage and physical landscape.

Design Brief

The focus of this project is to deliver a programme of co-design, collaborative research and prototyping with a focus of reimagining a sustainable future for Kilcormac, and Bord na Mona Villages. One of the first steps will be to connect with and support the work that Kilcormac Development Association Committee is doing in the development of their town.

As a co-design process, there is an opportunity to include the skills and ideas within the community. Key to this project is community engagement, including supporting local knowledge and expertise. Many in the community will have direct links with the peat industry, as well as a living memory of the development of the village, and therefore are experts in their locality and the subject of their project.

The IAF has set aside a small budget for travel, to allow site visits. which can be done in collaboration with the two other Workers's Villages projects in Cloontuskert and Lanesborough.

The outcome of this project should support the longer term development of Kilcormac. This may be through the development of a new community asset, a collaborative vision, a guide for sustainable development, a temporary installation or design intervention, or an innovative concept developed with the community. The specific nature of this outcome does not have to be proposed in the application, but should emerge through the co-design in collaboration with the community, responding to their needs. A key outcome, however, should include an increased awareness of the importance of Frank Gibey, his villages, and the communities which were formed through their design.

The allocated budget should cover travel, research, designs and installations, as well as community engagement and materials. There is scope for working together to identify funding sources and in-kind support for interventions of a larger scale, if they form part of the outcomes.

Your application will be used as an indicative plan for delivery. Once the successful applicant is selected, it is anticipated that the plan for delivery will change, following a site visit and meeting with the local team. An updated plan for delivery will be agreed following these steps.

SELECTION PROCEDURE:

Limited competition Invitation

Expressions of interest are invited from shortlisted practices.

Your Proposal requires the following:

1. CV (max 3 pages)
2. A Statement of Interest (max 1,000 words)
 - Detail professional experience related to this project
 - Outline of proposed approach you would undertake. This is indicative, as a plan for delivery will be created following initial community consultation.
 - Examples of community engagement approaches you may include.
 - Details of additional skills or subcontractors you may include in your project (conservation, engineering, facilitation etc)
3. Examples of your previous projects, with one separate page clearly listing: Name of Project, context, year, etc. Can include images, website links, publications, pamphlets etc.
4. A budget breakdown

Selection Criteria

- Quality of the proposal, with consideration for the context. (25%)
- Methodology/strategy for engaging in co-production and proposed work programme (20%)
- Project management experience and considerations, including budget oversight. (20%)
- Quality of previous work and experience, including experience of coproduction and co-design, as it related to the proposal. (20%)
- Budget (15%)

The selection panel will include members of the community, community representative organisations, the Irish Architecture Foundation, and external architectural expertise.

Timeline

- Proposal Deadline: February 8th, 2022
- All candidates notified: February 11th 2022
- Work to start: ASAP

Digital applications only: No hard copies accepted

Please email your application to engagement@architecturefoundation.ie