

THE CENTRAL ACCESS SCHEME FOR THE CITY OF KILKENNY, PROVISIONAL DECISION FROM AN BORD PLEANALA

PRESS RELEASE FROM KILKENNY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY 11th JULY 2009

An Bord Pleanala have released a provisional decision on the Central Access Scheme for Kilkenny.

The board has almost entirely rejected the scheme and as things stand there is no approval in place for the project. This is a complex, nuanced and somewhat unusual decision but it is clear from its content that the many objections of the country's heritage organisations have been entirely vindicated.

The Western Environs and Loughmacask section of the scheme has been discarded because it would lead to a major increase in traffic using a new bridge crossing, 'an unduly negative effect on the city centre environment' which would 'lead to increased north-south severance'.

The EIS for the scheme has been shown to have been completely inadequate and a new EIS is now required.

However the board have stated that the Irishtown section of the scheme is 'generally appropriate' but requires major modification. The large cable-stay bridge which was proposed by the local authority has been rejected out of hand and it now requires a major redesign as a low-level urban street which must 'integrate into and enhance its riverside context' and 'take account of its sensitive location in the vista between Green's Bridge and Kilkenny castle'.

Whilst we welcome many aspects of the provisional decision we remain resolutely opposed to a major bridge crossing in Irishtown because of its negative impact on the city's medieval heritage and cultural tourism industry. With An Bord Pleanala effectively telling Kilkenny County Council to go back to the drawing board, we believe a golden opportunity now exists to fundamentally change this redundant scheme. Future transport investment should instead focus on enhancing the medieval quarter by significantly reducing the current levels of urban traffic congestion, noise and emissions through increased walking, cycling and public transport.

We look forward to working with the local authority on this issue

Finally, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society wishes to sincerely thank its council, members and all those individuals and groups who assisted us in what has been a long and challenging campaign.

ENDS

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