



COMHAIRLE | CLARE  
CONTAE AN CHLÁIR | COUNTY COUNCIL

**Registered Post**

**Drumcliffe Union of Parishes  
C/o Karol O'Mahoney M.RIAI  
Grade 2 Conservation Architect  
Third Floor, 121-122 Capel Street  
Dublin  
V01 V3PO**

**24th July 2025**

**Section 5 referral Reference R25-54 – Drumcliffe Union of Parishes**

Are the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, which is a protected structure RPS 124, development and if so, are they exempted development?

A Chara,

I refer to your application received on 30th June 2025 under Section 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) in relation to the above.

The Planning Authority has considered the matter and I attach herewith the Council's findings in this matter.

Where a declaration is issued by the Planning Authority, any person issued with a declaration, may on payment to An Coimisiún Pleanála of the required fee, refer a declaration for review by An Coimisiún Pleanála within 4 weeks of the date of the issuing of the declaration. Details on making such appeal are available on the Board's website at [www.pleanala.ie](http://www.pleanala.ie).

Mise, le meas

**Thomas Hogan  
Senior Staff Officer  
Planning Department  
Economic Development Directorate**

**An Roinn Pleanála  
An Stiúthóireacht Forbairt Gheilleagrach**

Áras Contae an Chláir, Bóthar Nua, Inis, Co. an Chláir, V95 DXP2

**Planning Department  
Economic Development Directorate**

Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95 DXP2



**DECLARATION ISSUED UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)**

Reference No.: R25-54



Comhairle Contae an Chláir  
Clare County Council

**Section 5 referral Reference R25-54**

**Are the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, which is a protected structure RPS 124, development and if so, are they exempted development?**

**AND WHEREAS, Drumcliffe Union of Parishes** has requested a declaration from Clare County Council on the said question.

**AND WHEREAS Clare County Council, in considering this referral, had regard in particular to –**

- (a) Sections 2(1), 3(1), 4(1)(h), and 57(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended,
- (b) The status of the Church as a protected structure in the Record of Protected Structures in the Clare County Development Plan,
- (c) The nature of the works as proposed and as set out in the documentation submitted with the referral.

**And whereas Clare County Council has concluded:**

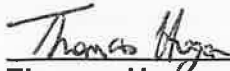
- (a) The conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral constitutes development and is exempted development as the works undertaken would not materially affect the appearance of the Church so as to render its appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures, and would not materially affect the character of the Church, a protected structure, or any element of the protected structure which contributes to its special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

**THEREFORE:** The Planning Authority in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), hereby decides that:

The proposed development consisting of the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, Kilfenora, Co. Clare **constitutes development** which is **exempted development** as defined within the Planning & Development Acts, 2000 (as amended) and associated regulations.

**Advice Note to Applicant**

- Applicants are advised that all works should be overseen by a Conservation Architect and Archaeologist.
- Works must be carried out by suitably qualified building contractors with experience in the use of lime mortars, stone and iron works.
- It is the responsibility of the owner to comply with any other legislative requirements in relation to works on this building.



---

**Thomas Hogan**  
**Senior Staff Officer**  
**Planning Department**  
**Economic Development Directorate**

**24th July 2025**



**CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**SECTION 5 OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 AS AMENDED**

**DECLARATION ON DEVELOPMENT AND/OR EXEMPTED DEVELOPMENT**

Chief Executive's Order No:

85985

Reference Number:

R25-54

Date Referral Received:

30th June 2025

Name of Applicant:

Drumcliffe Union of Parishes

Location of works in question:

Kilfenora Cathedral, Kilfenora, Co. Clare

**Section 5 referral Reference R25-54 – Drumcliffe Union of Parishes**

Are the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, which is a protected structure RPS 124, development and if so, are they exempted development?

**AND WHEREAS Clare County Council, in considering this referral, had regard in particular to –**

- (a) Sections 2(1), 3(1), 4(1)(h), and 57(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended,]
- (b) The status of the Church as a protected structure in the Record of Protected Structures in the Clare County Development Plan,
- (c) The nature of the works as proposed and as set out in the documentation submitted with the referral.

**AND WHEREAS Clare County Council has concluded:**

- (a) The conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral constitutes development and is exempted development as the works undertaken would not materially affect the appearance of the Church so as to render its appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures, and would not materially affect the character of the Church, a protected structure, or any element of the protected structure which contributes to its special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

**ORDER:** Whereas by Chief Executive's Order No. HR 343 dated 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025, Gordon Daly, Chief Executive for Clare County Council, did, pursuant to the powers conferred on him by Section 154 of the Local Government Act 2001, delegate to Garreth Ruane, Senior Executive Planner, the powers, functions and duties as set out herein,



**NOW THEREFORE** pursuant to the delegation of the said powers, functions and duties and under Section 5(2)(a) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) and having considered the various submissions and reports in connection with the referral described above, I, Garreth Ruane, Senior Executive Planner, hereby declare that the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, Kilfenora, Co. Clare is considered development which is exempted development.

Signed:



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**GARRETH RUANE**  
**SENIOR EXECUTIVE PLANNER**

Date:

**24th July 2025**

## SECTION 5 DECLARATION OF EXEMPTION APPLICATION

<b>FILE REF:</b>	R25-54
<b>APPLICANT(S):</b>	Drumcliffe Union of Parishes
<b>REFERENCE:</b>	Are the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral which is a protected structure RPS 124 development and if so are they exempted development?
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Kilfenora Cathedral, Kilfenora, Co. Clare
<b>DUE DATE:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2025

### Site Location

The subject building is located in Kilfenora village and is a protected structure (RPS124) and National Monument. It is also located proximate to a cluster of other national monuments.

They include but are not limited to:

- Cl016-015 Saint Fachnan's Cathedral
- Cl016-015993 Graveyard
- Cl016-015008 High Cross
- Cl016-015005 High Cross
- Cl 01015009 Ritual site/ holy well
- Cl01510 Ritual site/ holy well

The Cathedral is described in the record of Protected Structures as a detached single bay double heighted crowstepped gable fronted medieval Church of Ireland cathedral, built c1180 incorporating fabric of earlier buildings with bellocote over gable having corner finials, reconstructed c 1850 reroofed c 1970 chancel and vestry now ruinous. Partially restored 2006. National Monument Cl016-015.

### Legislation

#### Section 2(1) – Interpretation

The following are relevant to the subject question: protected structure means

– ‘(a) a structure, or (b) a specified part of a structure, which is included in the record of protected structures, and where that record so indicates, includes any specified feature which is within the attendant grounds of the structure and which would not otherwise be included in this definition’.

structure means – ‘any building, structure, excavation, or other thing constructed or made on, in or under any land, or any part of any structure so defined and –

(a) where the context so admits, includes the land on, in or under which the structure is situated and

(b) in relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, includes

i) the interior of the structure,

(ii) the land lying within the curtilage of the structure,

(iii) any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors, and

(iv) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to in subparagraph (i) or (iii).

‘works’ includes any act or operation of construction, excavation, demolition, extension, alteration, repair or renewal and, in relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, includes any act or operation involving the application or removal of plaster, paint, wallpaper, tiles or other material to or from the surfaces of the interior or exterior of a structure’.

Section 3(1) - Development In the Act, ‘development’ means, except where the context otherwise requires, the carrying out of any works on, in, over or under land or the making of any material change in the use of any structures or other land’.

Section 4(1) sets out development that is exempt from requiring planning permission. 4(1)(h) is relevant: ‘development consisting of the carrying out of works for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of any structure, being works which affect only the interior of the structure or which do not materially affect the external appearance of the structure so as to render the appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures’.

Section 57(1) – ‘Notwithstanding section 4(1)(a), (h), (i), (ia), (j), (k), or (l) and any regulations made under section 4(2), the carrying out of works to a protected structure, or a proposed protected structure, shall be exempted development only if those works would not materially affect the character of (a) the structure or (b) any element of the structure which contributes to its special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest’

### **Development Plan Provisions**

The subject structure is a protected structure (RPS 124) in the Development Plan:

<b>RPS No.:</b> 124	<b>Name:</b> Kilfenora Cathedral	<b>ITM:</b> 518293 ; 694017
<b>NIAH No.:</b> 20401605	<b>Area:</b> Kilfenora	<b>Map:</b> Volume 2
<b>Structure:</b> Cathedral	<b>Townland:</b> Kilfenora	<b>Map reference:</b> I3
<b>Date:</b> 1170-1200	<b>Summary description:</b> Detached single-bay double-height crow-stepped gable-fronted medieval Church of Ireland Cathedral, built c.1180, incorporating fabric of earlier buildings with bellcote over gable having corner finials, reconstructed c.1850; reroofed, c.1970; chancel and vestry now ruinous. Partially restored 2006. Recorded Monument CL016-015.	
<b>In use as:</b> Partial Visitor Centre		
<b>Additional Use:</b> N/A		
<b>Historical Use:</b> Cathedral		
<b>Rating:</b> National	<b>Categories of special interest:</b> Architectural, Historical, Interior, Setting, Archaeological Feature	



The subject site is located on lands zoned as ‘Community’ in the Development Plan.

### **Planning History**

DS57-22-04 – Section 57 issued in respect of certain works including replacement of rainwater disposal system, lead flashing, limewashing of external render, repair of timber windows, repair of ironmongery, new heating system, repair of timber pews and pulpit. This issued on the 01/04/2022.



## **Assessment**

The question before the Planning Authority is as follows:

*Are the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, which is a protected structure, RPS 124, exempted development.*

In support of the Section 5 declaration a Conservation Method Statement has been submitted with the application.

It focuses on preserving the architectural and historical integrity of the building through sensitive restoration and repair works, guided by international conservation principles.

The project adheres to the ICOMOS charters and international law, emphasizing minimal intervention, reversibility, and the use of historically accurate materials.

It is stated that all works are to be carried out by skilled craftspeople and monitored by a Grade 2 Conservation Architect and a Licensed Archaeologist.

### **There are a number of aspects proposed:**

#### *Restoration of Timber Windows:*

It is stated that the timber windows date from the 1830's and have suffered from poor-quality repairs and material degradation over time. A detailed restoration plan has been submitted which proposes a detailed survey, careful removal and tagging of fragile elements, and repair using compatible historic pine compatible with the original wood. Historic glass will be preserved wherever possible, and any replacements will match the original. No modern sealing or draught-proofing systems will be added, maintaining the building's traditional ventilation. The windows will be reglazed with single glazing set in putty, and all ironmongery will be retained or refitted.

#### *Chimneys, Flues and Fireplaces:*

The document also addresses issues with the chimneys, flues, and fireplaces. Originally introduced in the 1830s, the chimney stacks were removed and later rebuilt in their current form in 2002. However, moisture ingress and soot migration have caused significant staining and damage. Proposed works include removing incompatible metal flue liners, inspecting masonry flues, and relining them with stainless steel liners suitable for solid fuel use. External repairs involve sealing joints, applying limewash or shelterwash, and replacing inadequate lead flashings and missing roof slates.

#### *Western Gable Water Ingress:*

Another area for attention is the western stepped gable, which has experienced water ingress leading to internal damage and organic growth. It is stated that the gable was previously plastered with a hard lime-based harling, which has hindered moisture evaporation. It is proposed to remove the heavy render, inspecting and recording exposed masonry, and applying soft lime mortar and breathable finishes. Repairs will also be made to the slabbed wall tops to improve water runoff, respecting the historic arrangement.

Internally, the porch area—home to two carved grave slabs designated as national monuments—will be cleaned and limewashed. These works will be carried out with close coordination with the National Monuments Service to ensure protection of the slabs.

The document concludes with a commitment to ongoing monitoring post-restoration. Moisture levels and structural stability will be observed over a 12-month period to assess the effectiveness of the interventions and guide any further necessary actions.

Having regard to the nature and extent of the works as outlined above, I consider that having regard to section 2(1) and section 3(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the works are development within the meaning of the Act.

The development, indicated by the applicant as urgent repair works necessary to prevent further deterioration of the fabric of the building. The works are supported by the Community monuments fund also.

Based on my review of the works as outlined, I am satisfied that the same constitute exempted development under section 4(1)(h) of the Act.

Restrictions on the exemption arise from within section 4(1)(h) and from the additional provision of section 57(1) of the Act as the Church is a protected structure. The former states that maintenance/ improvement works are not exempt if these materially affect the external appearance of the structure so as to render the appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures. The latter states that maintenance/ improvement works to a protected structure are exempted only if these would not materially affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure which contributes to its special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest.

As such, the key consideration for the referral case is whether the change of windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys affects the external appearance and/or the character of the Church.

In my view the works do not materially affect the external appearance of the building:

- Windows – the rationale for their repair and methodology proposed for same is outlined in detail in the referral documentation. The works will not affect the character of the building once the windows have been installed.
- Chimneys, Flues and Fireplaces – it is clear that water ingress and soot is an issue. Again the extent of works have been clearly outlined and are acceptable in terms of ongoing use and maintenance of the building.
- Gable Water Ingress – As water ingress is an issue the works as proposed here are acceptable and necessary for the upkeep of the building.

I consider that these works do not materially affect the external appearance of the Church so as to render its appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures, and that these works do not materially affect the character of the Church, a protected structure, or to materially affect any element of the protected structure which contributes to its special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

#### **Appropriate Assessment Screening**

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, the location of the site within an adequately serviced urban area, the physical separation distances to European Sites, and the absence of ecological and/ or hydrological connections, the potential of likely significant effects on European Sites arising from the proposed development, alone or in combination effects, can be reasonably excluded

## **Recommendation**

I am satisfied that the development as proposed constitutes exempted development and recommend the Order issue as follows:

**WHEREAS** a question has arisen as to whether the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, which is a protected structure, RPS 124, constitute development and/or development which is exempted development.

**AND WHEREAS** Clare County Council, in considering this referral, had regard particularly to

(a) sections 2(1), 3(1), 4(1)(h), and 57(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended,

(b) the status of the Church as a protected structure in the Record of Protected Structures in the Clare County Development Plan,

(c) the nature of the works as proposed and as set out in the documentation submitted with the referral,

**AND WHEREAS** Clare County Council has concluded that the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral constitutes development and is exempted development as the works undertaken would not materially affect the appearance of the Church so as to render its appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures, and would not materially affect the character of the Church, a protected structure, or any element of the protected structure which contributes to its special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

**NOW THEREFORE** Clare County Council, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, hereby decides that the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral constitute development and is exempted development.

Advice note to issue with the declaration:

- Applicants are advised that all works should be overseen by a Conservation Architect and Archaeologist.
- Works must be carried out by suitably qualified building contractors with experience in the use of lime mortars, stone and iron works.
- It is the responsibility of the owner to comply with any other legislative requirements in relation to works on this building.



**Garreth Ruane**

**Senior Executive Planner**

**24/07/2025**





COMHAIRLE | CLARE  
CONTAE AN CHLÁIR | COUNTY COUNCIL

**Drumcliffe Union of Parishes**  
**C/o Karol O'Mahoney M.RIAI**  
**Grade 2 Conservation Architect**  
**Third Floor, 121-122 Capel Street**  
**Dublin**  
**V01 V3PO**

**30/06/2025**

**Section 5 referral Reference R25-54 – Drumcliffe Union of Parishes**

Are the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork and chimneys all at Kilfenora Cathedral, which is a protected structure RPS 124, development and if so, are they exempted development?

A Chara,

I refer to your application received on 30th June 2025 under Section 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) in relation to the above.

Please note that the Planning Authority is considering the matter and a reply will issue to you in due course.

Mise, le meas

**Brian Fahy**  
**Planning Department**  
**Economic Development Directorate**

**An Roinn Pleanála**  
**An Stiúrthóireacht Forbairt Gheilleagrach**

Áras Contae an Chláir, Bóthar Nua, Inis, Co. an Chláir, V95 DXP2

**Planning Department**  
**Economic Development Directorate**

Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95 DXP2





COMHAIRLE  
CONTAE  
AN CHLÁIR

Clare County Council  
Aras Contae an Chlair  
New Road  
Ennis  
Co Clare

30/06/2025 11:37:34

Receipt No. L1CASH/0/380952  
\*\*\*\*\* REPRINT \*\*\*\*\*

Drumcliffe Union of Parishes  
c/o Karol O'Mahoney MRIA  
3rd Floor, 121-122 Capel St, Dublin,  
D01 V3P0  
REF. R25-54



SECTION 5 REFERENCES	80.00
GOODS	80.00
VAT Exempt/Non-vatable	

Total : 80.00 EUR

Tendered :  
CREDIT CARDS 80.00

Change : 0.00

Issued By : L1CASH - Colm Murphy  
From : MAIN CASH OFFICE LODGEMENT AF  
Vat reg No. 0033043E



P07

**CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL  
COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR**

Planning Department,  
Economic Development Directorate,  
Clare County Council,  
New Road, Ennis,  
Co. Clare.  
V95DXP2

Telephone No. (065) 6821616  
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Email: [planoff@clarecoco.ie](mailto:planoff@clarecoco.ie)  
Website: [www.clarecoco.ie](http://www.clarecoco.ie)



R25-54

**REQUEST FOR A DECLARATION ON DEVELOPMENT AND EXEMPTED DEVELOPMENT  
(Section 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended))**

**FEE: €80**

*This following form is a non-statutory form which has been prepared by Clare County Council for the purpose of obtaining the necessary information required for a declaration to be made under Section 5 by the Planning Authority*

**1. CORRESPONDENCE DETAILS.**

(a) Name and Address of person seeking the declaration	Drumcliffe Union of Parishes (Rev. Victoria Lynch)
	Coor East
	Mullagh
	Co. Clare
	V95 VE83
(b) Telephone No.:	
(c) Email Address:	
(d) Agent's Name and address:	Karol O'Mahony M.RIAI, Grade 2 Conservation Architect
	Third Floor,
	121-122 Capel Street,
	D01 V3PO





## 2. DETAILS REGARDING DECLARATION BEING SOUGHT

- (a) PLEASE STATE THE SPECIFIC QUESTION FOR WHICH A DECLARATION IS SOUGHT  
*Note: only works listed and described under this section will be assessed.*

Sample Question: Is the construction of a shed at 1 Main St., Ennis development and if so is it exempted development?

Are the conservation led repairs to windows, masonry, plaster, leadwork, and chimneys all at  
 Kilfenora Cathedral, which is a protected structure RPS 124, exempted development. The works are  
 grant supported through the Community Monuments Fund 2025.

- (b) Provide a full description of the question/matter/subject which arises wherein a declaration of the question is sought.

Urgent conservation led repairs by expert conservation craftspeople are needed to prevent further  
 deterioration of the fabric. Works will be overseen by Grade 2 Conservation Architect and Licensed  
 Archaeologist. As the repairs are to a protected structure RPS 124, this declaration is sought. The  
 specific repairs are outlined further below and expanded in the attached method statement.

Summary of Essential Conservation-led repairs:

- Removal of hard, heavy NHL plaster from back face of Western Gable above roof, renew lead flashings, refinish in lime shelter washes, repair damaged and leaking stone cappings, all to address water ingress
- Reweather two chimneys to stop water ingress
- Remedial works to chimney flues to allow for future use
- Fabric repair and maintenance of 7 No. historic windows including removal of inappropriate, incompatible previous modern repairs.

- (c) List of plans, drawings etc. submitted with this request for a declaration:

*(Note: Please provide a site location map to a scale of not less than 1:2500 based on Ordnance Survey map for the areas, to identify the lands in question)*

Site Location Map @1:1000

Conservation Method Statement for the Repairs

Photographic Report of Existing

3. DETAILS RE: PROPERTY/SITE/BUILDING FOR WHICH DECLARATION IS SOUGHT	
(a) Postal Address of the Property/Site/Building for which the declaration sought:	Saint Fachnan's Cathedral Kilfenora, Co. Clare V95 A786
(b) Do the works in question affect a Protected Structure or are within the curtilage of a Protected Structure? If yes, has a Declaration under Section 57 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) been requested or issued for the property by the Planning Authority?	Yes, RPS 124 No, a section 57 has not been sought
(c) Legal interest in the land or structure in question of the person requesting the declaration (Give Details):	Applicant is the owner, Rev. Victoria Lynch is the designated church body representative
(d) If the person in (c) above is not the owner and/or occupier, state the name and address of the owner of the property in question:  <i>Note: Observations in relation to a referral may be requested from the owner/occupier where appropriate.</i>	N/A
(e) Is the owner aware of the current request for a Declaration under Section 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)?:	Yes
(f) Are you aware of any enforcement proceedings connected to this site? <i>If so please supply details:</i>	No
(g) Were there previous planning application/s on this site? <i>If so please supply details:</i>	No
(h) Date on which 'works' in question were completed/are likely to take place:	July to September 2025

SIGNED: Victoria Lynch

DATE: 25 / 06 / 2025

### **GUIDANCE NOTES**

*This following are non-statutory advice notes prepared by Clare County Council for the purpose of advising people what information is required for a decision to be made under Section 5 by the Planning Authority*

- (i) The request for a declaration under Section 5 must be accompanied by 2 copies of site location map based on the Ordnance Survey map for the area of a scale not less than 1:1000 in urban areas and 1:2500 in rural areas and should clearly identify the site in question.
- (ii) The request for a declaration under Section 5 must be accompanied by the required fee of €80.00.
- (iii) If submitting any additional plans/reports etc. as part of the request for a declaration, please submit 2 copies.
- (iv) The request for a declaration should be sent to the following address:

Planning Department,  
Economic Development Directorate,  
Clare County Council  
Aras Contae an Chlair,  
New Road,  
Ennis,  
Co. Clare  
V95DXP2

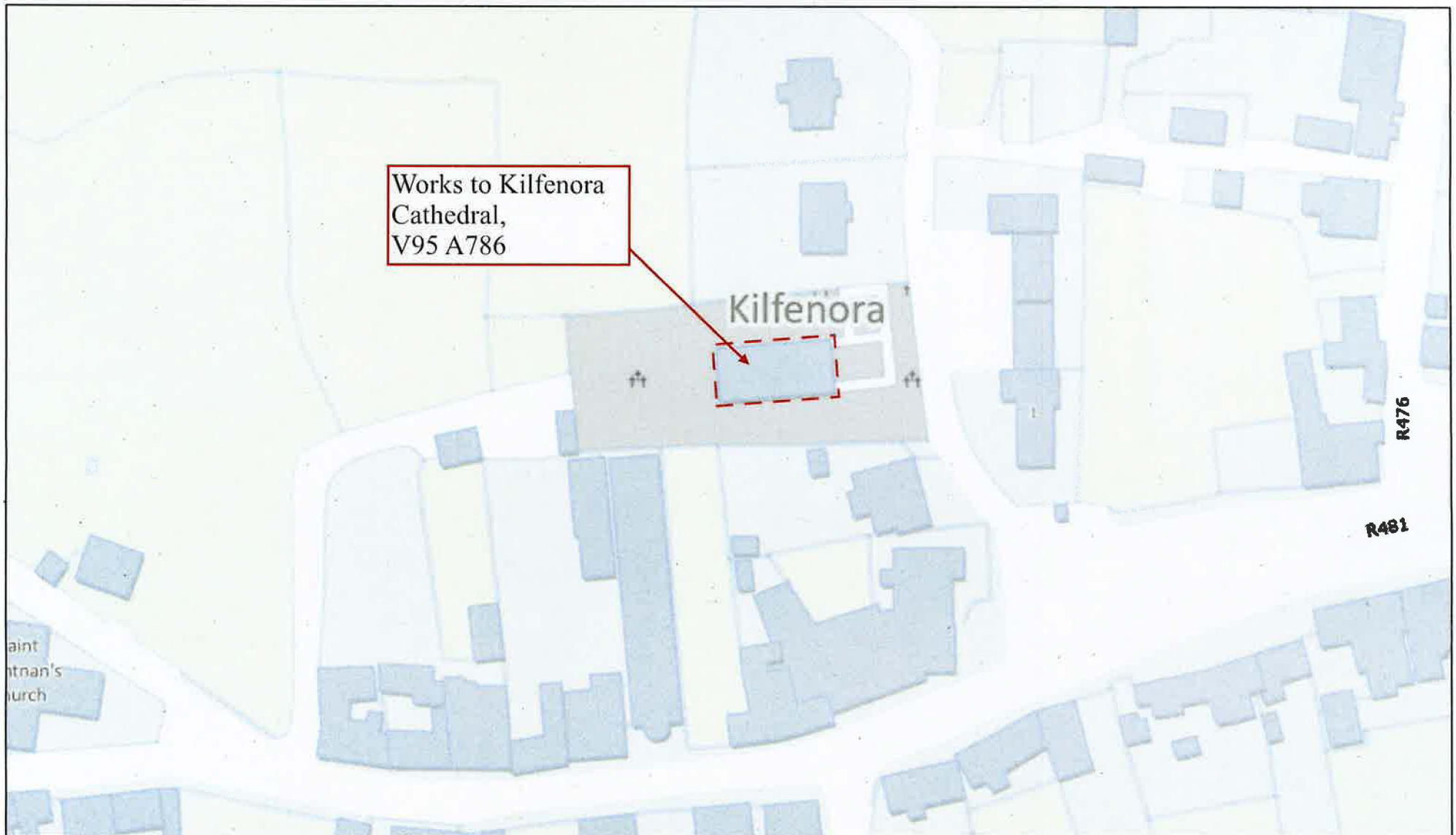
- (v) Notwithstanding the completion of the above form, the Planning Authority may require the submission of further information with regard to the request in order to enable the Authority to issue a declaration on the question.
- (vi) The Planning Authority may also request other persons to submit information on the question which has arisen and on which the declaration is sought

### **FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

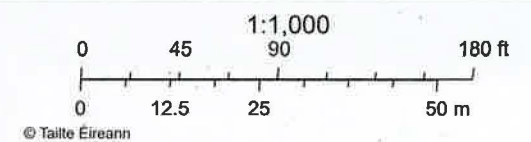
Date Received:	.....	Fee Paid:	.....
Date Acknowledged:	.....	Reference No.:	.....
Date Declaration made:	.....	CEO No.:	.....
Decision: .....			



# GeoHive Map



29/01/2025, 16:45:27



**Kilfenora Cathedral, The Burren, Co. Clare.**



Prepared by: Karol O'Mahony M.RIAI, Grade 2 Conservation Architect.

All contents copyright of KoMA.

This Method Statement is only to be used on works where KoMA are appointed as Conservation Architects.

## **Introduction & Context**

This Method Statement is prepared to inform proposed conservation and repair works. Appropriate programming for repair works has thus far consisted of:

2021 - Conservation Management Plan was prepared by Paul Arnold Architects.

The aim of that report was to identify the issues related to the conservation and use of Kilfenora Cathedral and to outline a plan that identifies the means of addressing those issues. The main issues to be addressed included:

- the deteriorated condition of the fabric of the cathedral, repairs required in the short term, longer term plans for the repair and maintenance of the cathedral
- raising awareness of the cathedral, its history and social value, locally and for a wider audience
- determining a long-lasting, viable, future use for the cathedral, for community use primarily, respecting the cathedral as an element of the cultural heritage of the Burren and Ireland.

2023 - Archaeological Impact Assessment was prepared by Frank Coyne of Aegis Archaeology.

That report identifies and assesses the potential direct and indirect impact(s), if any, on the potential archaeological environment of the subject site arising out of the proposed actions recommended by the Conservation Management Plan.

The CMP and its supporting Impact Assessment thus allow the custodians to proceed on necessary conservation repairs and upgrades, subject to the licencing and statutory requirements appropriate to any works.

In 2024 a priority of the CMP, namely the replacement of failed rainwater goods, was carried out. It is hoped that further works would proceed in 2025, these focussing on stabilising the built fabric where it is visibly suffering from weathering and water ingress.

The works now proposed consist in summary of:

- Restoration of the historic timber multi pane windows on all elevations.
- West Gable(East face over roof) Removal of heavy hard NHL plaster, renew lead flashings, refinish in lime shelter washes.
- Repairs to damaged and leaking stone cappings at Western Gable steps.
- Repair and replastering in lime of damaged areas of porch interior, refinish in lime wash.
- Refinishing in breathable treatment and limewash at NE interior arch to address flue soot staining.
- Repairs and improvements to details of chimney stacks to arrest water ingress.
- Remedial works to the chimney flues to allow for their use.

The current scope of works is informed by the CMP order of priorities (Paul Arnold 2023, p45) where the following items are advised:

3. Provide flashings on tower and lime wash west facade
4. Provide cowl to chimney pots to limit rain entry. If there is no obvious water ingress then carry out remedial works to seal the staining
7. Repair and redecorate windows
11. Redecorate the entrance area after damp has reduced. Colours can be selected to better present the historic grave slabs.

## Description of the Site

St Fachnan's Cathedral, Kilfenora is listed in the RMP, SMR and as National Monument No.8&9. It is a protected structure RPS:124. It is listed in The NIAH at Ref: 20401605 where it is given a National Rating of Significance and described as follows:

*Freestanding crow-stepped gable-fronted Church of Ireland cathedral, built from 1170-1200, incorporating fabric of earlier buildings. Four-bay side elevations with single-bay recessed chancel to rear, having single-bay vestry to left. In ruins in 1840 and reconstructed as church c. 1850. Chancel and vestry now in ruins. Pitched artificial slate roof with bellcote having pyramidal capping and flanking finials. Rubble stone walls with slight batter to gable front. Lancet openings with cut-stone dressings and timber sliding sash and fixed windows. Pointed arch door opening with timber cut-limestone dressings, hood moulding and timber panelled door. Retaining interior features. Graveyard to site with various grave markers. Rubble stone boundary walls.*



'Church Kilfenora Co. Clare 4138 W.L.'

Photographer Robert French, taken c. 1880-1900, William Lawrence Collection, ©National Library of Ireland

The long site history has been expertly described by Frank Coyne in his Archaeological Impact Assessment of 2023 as follows:

The subject site is situated in the townland of Kilfenora (OS Sheet 16), in the barony of Corcomroe and the civil parish of Kilfenora, County Clare (<https://www.logainm.ie/en/6720>). It derives from the Irish Chill Fhionnúrach which is variously translated as 'church of the fertile hillside', 'church of the white brow' or 'church of the white meadow' (Korff 1988).

An early church is said to have been founded here by St. Fachnan in the 6th century (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 58). St Fachtna is attested from earliest times, as shown by its use as the name of the father of Conchubar, son of Cathbhadh (or Fachtna), king of Ulster. It has been suggested that the name is either related to the word fácht meaning hostility or a



derivative of the Indo-European *vakt*, meaning 'voice'. This latter derivation would suit the notion of prophetic powers and wise judgement, both of which are attributed to Conchubar's father. Fachtna of Kilfenora may be the same saint as Fachtna of Ross Carberry in county Cork. There is a tradition that he was born near Lough Hyne in the parish of Tullagh, co. Cork. Fachtna's feast day is celebrated in Ross on the 14th August, which is also the same day remembered in the cathedral parish of Kilfenora. In Kilfenora, Fachtna is also called Fechnan (O'Rian 2012, 300-1).

The church is first mentioned in 1055 when it was burned by Murrough O'Brien. Little is known of its history, but its first bishop dates to 1189, the period in which the church was built (Harbison 1992, 64). The earliest surviving church on the site dates to c. 1200. It is not clear if any of the fabric of that church is incorporated in the present church. A plan by James Pain in the 1830's shows thicker walls at the E end of the nave than the rest of the building which may reflect the incorporation of an older structure (O'Neill 2012-13, 199). The chancel dates to the beginning of the 13th century with some 15th century windows in the S wall. The nave is difficult to date. The chancel arch was blocked up and a window inserted in the c. 1835 when the nave was converted into the parish church of Kilfenora (NIAH date for the nave being reconstructed as church is c. 1850). The chancel arch was modified to incorporate a three-light E window, tall lancets were inserted into each of the bays of the south elevation, a new doorcase replaced the medieval one at southwest and a porch and vestry were created at the western end of the nave. The nave may have been intended to have aisles as pointed-arched bays are present, but the aisles may not have been constructed. James Pain's nineteenth-century drawing of the south elevation shows the form of the windows before refurbishment. These and the south doorway appear to be 13th century in date or slightly later (ibid.).

The east wall of the chancel has a triple-light E window in the Transitional style with three round-headed lights of equal height under a semicircular rear arch with roll-moulding the whole way around the arch, jamb and sill. The deeply splayed mullions have carved capitals, one with foliage and the other with four clerics in a row. This is a fine example of 'school of the west' architecture. This is a name given by Harold Leask to the distinctive group of buildings erected in Connacht and Thomond between c. 1200 and 1240. Surviving examples are primarily high status churches, Cistercian and Augustinian abbeys and cathedrals. An example of this can be seen on the decorated capital, showing a group of choristers, of the east window at Kilfenora cathedral (Moss 2014, 499). The chancel had an oak roof with stars painted onto a blue background until the nineteenth century.

Kilfenora was the main church of Corcu Mruad (Corcomroe), a territory under the control of the Ui Conchobair and Ui Lochlainn dynasties until the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Documentary sources suggest that the monastery grew in importance from the mid-eleventh century when it is first mentioned in the annals, until 1152, when it became the centre of a diocesan see. The crosses were created during this period. (Moss 2014, 157).

'The City of the Crosses' is what Charles Blake Foster titled his historical notes on Kilfenora in the 1870s. There is a local tradition that there were originally seven crosses (Flanagan, J). At least six, and possibly seven crosses once stood adjacent to the monastery at Kilfenora, all hewn from blocks of Burren limestone.

List of recorded archaeological monuments in the vicinity of the subject building. Entries marked in red are in state care.	
Ecclesiastical enclosure Kilfenora Abbey (Franciscan Friary)	CL016-015001
Cathedral	CL016-015002 (lady's chapel in state care)
Graveyard	CL016-015003
Church	CL016-015004
Crosses: High Cross, Churchyard cross*	CL016-015006, CL016-015007, CL016-015008, CL016-015013, CL016-015021, CL016-015023*
Tomb - effigials	CL016-015011, CL016-015012, CL016-015015(cleric)
Font + Wall Monuments	CL016-015019 + CL016-015016, CL016-015017
Tomb-chest tomb + Grave slabs	CL016-015018 + CL016-015020, CL016-015021





Extract from OS first edition 6":1mile, sheet 16, surveyed 1840, published 1842, National Library of Scotland.



Extract from OS second edition 6":1 mile, sheet 16, surveyed 1894-95, published 1899, National Library of Scotland.

## General Principles

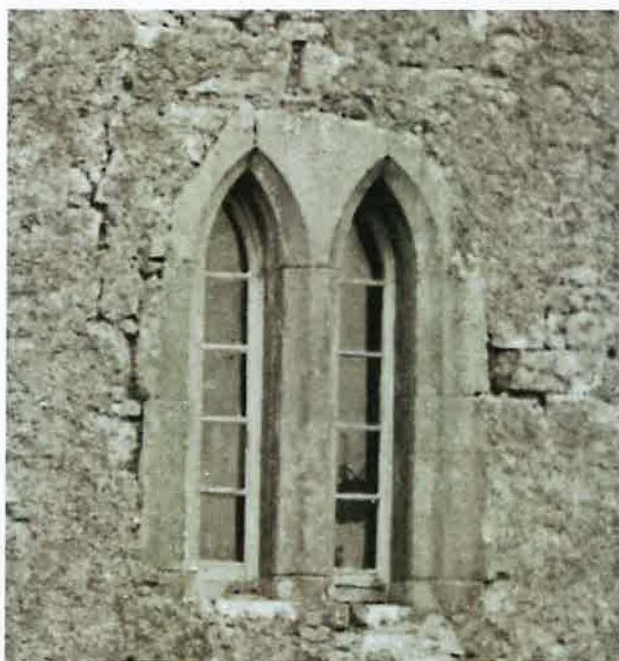
- All works are to be carried out in accordance with ICOMOS charters and international law. The foremost intent of works is to protect and renew the significance of the structure. Analysis of the site, existing fabric, historical documentation, construction techniques, and all other available evidence to be carried out in advance of work to ensure clear understanding of the heritage asset, and its setting.
- Replacements if unescapable should never be based on assumptions, they should match technically and materially existing historic fabric within the building or lastly be as historically accurate as information allows. Additions should be easily identifiable and reversible. Removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided whenever possible. Appropriately skilled craftspeople to carry out all works. All new works to be recorded and a report provided to the custodian at conclusion.



- All works will be monitored by the appointed Grade 2 Conservation Architect and Licensed Archaeologist.
- The project team includes an Ecologist who will advise on any potential impact on birds & bats. The ecologist previously carried out an assessment and ecology report on the site in support of the CMP.
- Final specifications and materials are to be as approved by the Grade 2 Conservation Architect.
- As the cathedral is an active church, ministerial consent is not required for these works, the National Monuments Service will be notified.

## Restoration of timber windows

The timber windows appear to be original to the 1830's alterations but with various repairs and splicing in of portions in the intervening years. Some repairs are of poor quality and materials which detract from the windows. The overall condition and presentation is poor with particular decay visible at the bottom of the windows. Wood is exposed, joints are open and putty is exposed and cracked. The windows need a sensitive and comprehensive restoration in the short term so as to protect their extant historic timber and glass; to stop water ingress at the windows and to allow them feature as a key element of the church's presentation.



WF-05, West Gable, Lawrence Collection, c.early 20th century, Robert French, © National Library of Ireland



WF-05, Irish Tourist Association Photographic Collection, 1942, © National Library of Ireland

West Elevation - WF-05, Two light, each 5 pane, gothic arched window with cut stone dressing and fixed sashes. Note presence of wire grills in later image.

North Elevation - WG-03, Two light, each 5 pane, gothic arched window with cut stone dressing and fixed sashes. Serving the robing room.

Southern Elevation - Window openings WG-02 and WG-03 on the southern elevation were enlarged in the 1830s, and two additional window openings WG-08 and WG-10 were created, with the former window unit WG-03 possibly refitted at high level on the northern elevation. 4 No. matching tall narrow windows with gothic lancet style heads fitted. The entrance door DG-04 was also altered. These openings now house 18 over 12 tall narrow sash windows with pointed (drop) arch heads.



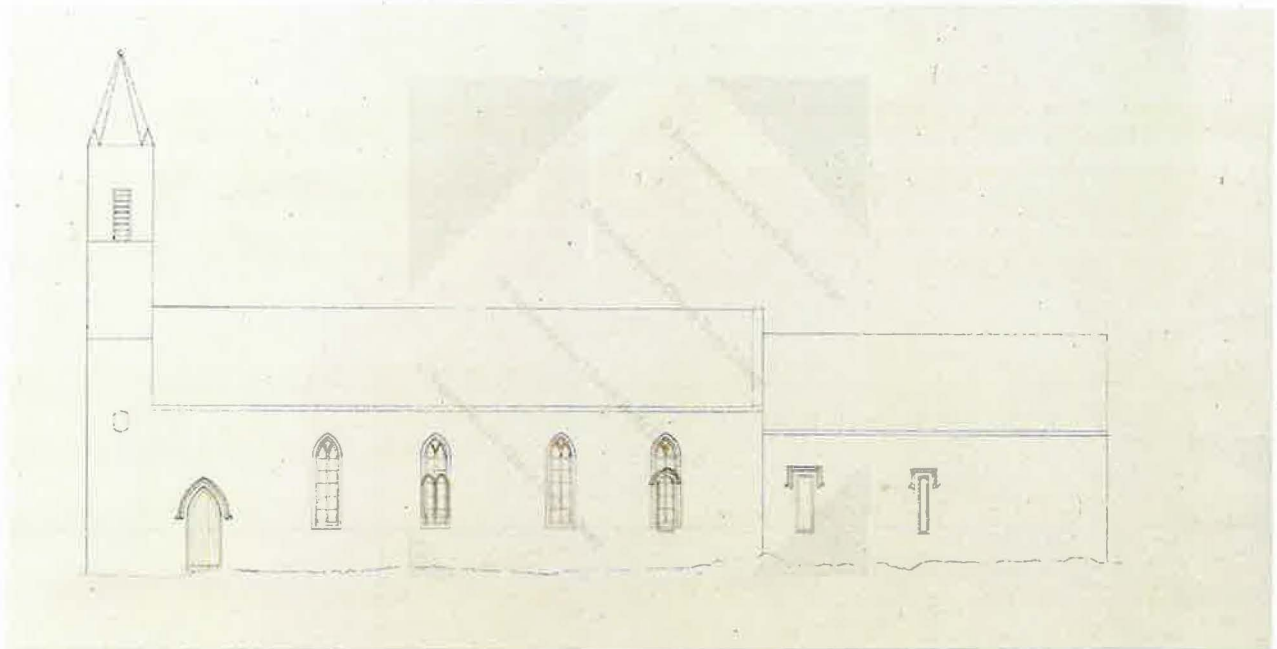
One of the southern sash windows in 1997, Note presence of a wire grill outside the window. Source NBHS



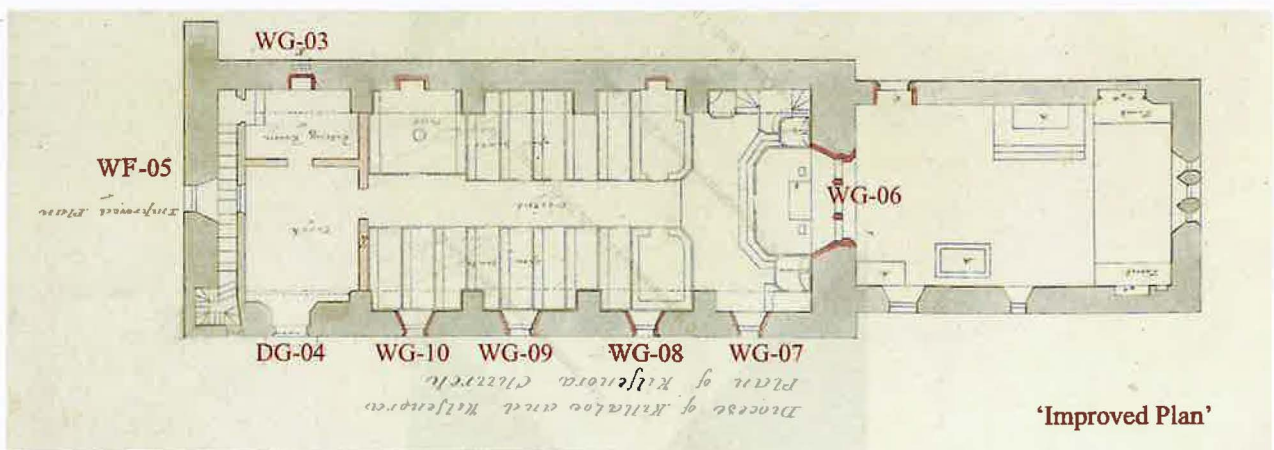
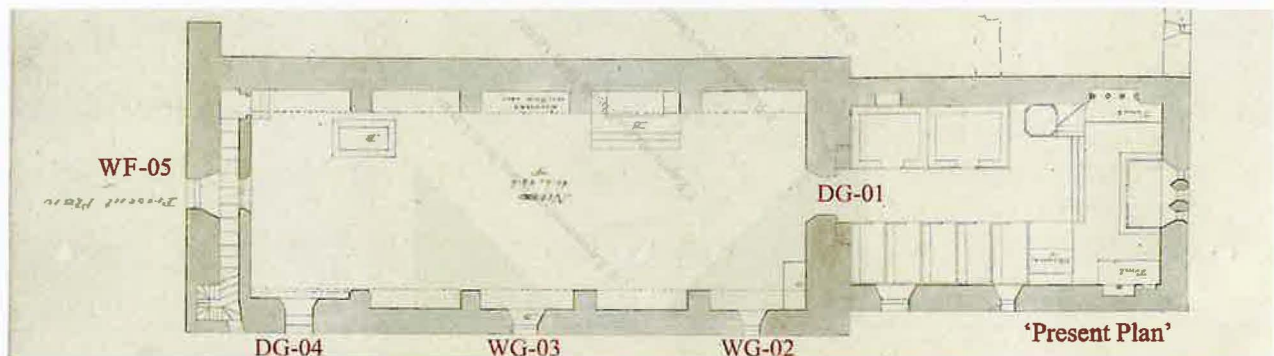
'Church Kilfenora Co. Clare 4139 W.L.' WG-06, William Lawrence Collection © National Library of Ireland

East Elevation - WG-06, Within the chancel, 'is a fine window made up of three narrow lancet lights. This window was inserted around 1835 and replaced an opening DG-01 into the former chancel, now ruined.' (p.15 CMP).





Proposed drawing of improved southern elevation, James Pain, c.1835. Note overlay of former windows. © RCB Library



'Present and Improved Plan' James Pain, 1835, © RCB library. Note Plans rotated and window references added in Red, North is up. The 'present plan' represents the church prior to the 1830s alterations.

#### Proposed Window Works:

- Once access at height is provided and prior to any removal, the conservation architect and conservation joiner will commence a detailed survey of the windows.
- Detail survey should fully record current window condition as well as frame positions and details at edges to inform reinstatement.



- Loose or fragile elements should be firstly removed with each being individually numbered and tagged. These references are to be marked on a large scale printed drawing of each window with this drawing being photographed on completion.
- The same recording method as above to be followed for the removable sashes so that their original location can be easily identified.
- If required for stability, brace the window sashes prior to removal to avoid further damage and stress to joints during removal and transport. Use ties where possible for connecting bracing to the frames rather than fixing into original wood.
- Carefully remove the window from the opening, taking care not to damage the cut stone reveals externally.
- Ensure that the window sashes are securely tied on a flat base for transport. Do not allow movement in the overall frame or individual elements. Remove to joiner's workshop.
- At the workshop under good lighting conditions, the windows are to be thoroughly examined by the conservation architect and conservation joiner for evidence of previous paint layers, their colour and locations. Sample to be taken where available, each to be referenced to location on the frames. Sample to be safely stored for possible paint analysis.
- Mind historic glass, no loss of intact historic glass will be accepted. Broken panes to be replaced with a like for like historic single glaze pane. Replace the modern glass repairs with historic glass.
- Windows to be repaired with minimum loss of original fabric. Only decayed and incompatible modern wood to be removed. Splice in new sections of good compatible wood instead of removing a full element with partial decay.
- Timber for repairs to be of high quality historic pine and compatible with the original wood
- All replacement of missing elements, frames, mouldings and sashes are to be made new to match all original details.
- Where differences occur in detail between the different windows due to historic repair or individual craftsman these are to be respected and not changed.
- Where existing joints need remaking or reinforcing the approach is to be agreed in advance with the conservation architect.
- Do not use any chemical paint strippers nor dipping method to remove residue and paint. Historic paint layers to be left in place where they are stable.
- No draught proofing system to be added to the windows. No Seals to be added. Minor air movement at these windows is seen to be necessary ventilation.
- Windows to be reglazed in single glazing set in putty.
- All existing ironmongery is to be kept in place where it exists. If the host element is being replaced, refit the ironmongery back to its original location.
- A high quality three coat paint system to be used. Specification to be agreed with the conservation architect.
- The window frames are to be restored in-situ on site using the same approach of minimal loss of original/ historic wood and splicing in new sections.
- A temporary means of closing the opes during works to prevent access or vandalism is to be agreed with conservation architect and archaeologist. Such arrangements cannot impact on the masonry and should not be fixed into the window frames.
- The gap between the frame and stone reveal externally should be cleaned of any modern filling. Point it with traditional burnt sand mastic in a colour compatible with the limestone.
- Any requirement for localised screens to allow partially open windows at times for ventilation must be considered and incorporated. An internal arrangement to prevent bird access is preferable.

## Chimneys, Flues and Fireplaces

The alterations of the 1830's as proposed by James Pain introduced three fireplaces into the north wall, one in the robing room and two in the nave. These were served, apparently by two chimney stacks on the roof above. The stacks were removed above the roofline at some point in the 20th century. As part of renovations c.2002 they were rebuilt in their current form.

Since that time moisture movement in the wall under the easternmost stack has caused migration of soot which now badly stains the wall. There is water ingress at the chimney causing moisture lower down. The flues are not covered and the chimney-heads of local stone slabs have open joints. The fireplaces have not been in use for some time and despite their height, an open chimney can take in considerable rainfall in our current climate.

The chimney flues have also been lined with narrow metal flues, liners which are incompatible with any future pending fireplace or stove use.

The proposed works, subject to inspection at height and opening up are:

- Provide access at height around both Northern wall chimneys.
- Allow for inspection by conservation architect and archaeologist, allow for localised opening up if required.
- Remove existing metal flue liners
- During the works, screen and protect the stone surround and hearth/upstand to the internal fireplaces.
- Allow for specialist camera inspection of both masonry flues.
- Re-line the flues with a high quality stainless steel twin wall liner suitable for solid fuel fireplace or solid fuel stove . Do not fill the void between flue and masonry. All work to be reversible.
- Re lime wash the wall under NE arch, where soot staining is extensive.
- Externally, seal the joints of the slabbed chimney caps. Non breathable products can be considered here given the exposure and vulnerability of the joints.
- Provide new weathering coat to the chimney plaster; ideally if it is lime plaster this should be several coats of limewash or shelterwash. It appears that a modern sealant has been applied in places. This may not be removable and a balanced decision on appearance and longevity of the plaster will need to be taken once closer inspection can take place.
- Tops of flues are to have rainguards, the type and the specification of which is to be agreed with the conservation architect. Selected rainguard to be compatible with future fitting of freestanding stoves the fitting of which shall be subject to necessary agreements and statutory approvals.
- Replace inadequate lead flashings to surrounds of chimney stacks, all in Code 5 lead.
- Replace missing slates on the roof slopes.



Looking at the North Wall, August 1997. Note the lack of chimney stacks above the roofline. Source: NBHS



Detail of the North side showing chimney stacks, circa early 20th century, Note the unusual wind/rain cowling solution. Source: Lawrence Collection NLI.

## Western Gable Water Ingress

The landmark and distinctive western stepped gable is in most parts a double gable due to the stair void being contained within its bulk. Water ingress, resultant damage to plaster finishes as well as organic growth and staining are plainly evident within the church at the west end porch and robing room.

Inspection has taken place including by an experienced conservation mason. The dampness locations and dripping from the head of an opening between the porch and stairs point clearly to water moving down through the eastern wall of the double gable. Water is entering masonry at and above roof level as well as at the slabbed cappings.

Despite renovations circa 2002, each element of weathering at the gable eastern face is problematic. At the pitched roof abutment to the inner gable, the lead upstand is thought not to be cut into the wall, instead only standing up behind the plaster. Thus, water in the plaster and masonry is flowing down behind the lead.

The gable was plastered in a lime based harling. It is appropriate that this was lime based but it appears too hard with an NHL 3.5 or 5 likely used at the time. Current knowledge would encourage keeping the render soft, noting that it will harden over time and facilitating better breathability and drying out. In addition it is noted that the mix seems to have been applied using

a spray gun. This facilitated easy application (resulting in some unfortunate patterns on elevations) but also resulted in excessively heavy layers.

In this exposed, wet but breezy location, facilitating fast moisture movement from the masonry is essential. Instead the current situation of heavy semi-hard plaster appears to be keeping the gable wall wet. Rainwater goes in but its drying outwards is hampered, instead softer mortars within the wall core facilitate its transfer downwards.

In addition, it is obvious that the detail of metal straps holding the capping slabs on the upper flat surfaces have damaged those local stone slabs. Therefore there are points where significant water ingress will be continuously occurring. The joints between these slabs must be inspected also.

Damage and deterioration internally and lower within this end of the church is directly related to failings in the weathering above. Conservation and repair works will start at the source of the problems. Any repairs internally will go only so far as to stabilise and maintain plaster while also improving the presentation of the walls to be at an acceptable level.

Proposed works are as follows:

- Provide access at height and facilitate inspection at height by conservation architect and archaeologist. Allow for localised opening up as required to check details and materials.
- Carefully remove heavy render from the eastern face of the stepped gable.
- Allow for inspection and recording of exposed masonry before pointing or plastering.
- Allow for mortar sampling subject to project archaeologist guidance.
- Replace all leadwork at roof/gable junction to include a turn-in detail to the wall held with lead wedges. All leadwork to be code 5 and in line with the Lead Association Manual.
- Plaster locally above the leadwork in a soft lime mix.
- Point the gable stonework where voids or loose mortar exists, all with a soft lime mortar.
- Limewash or Shelterwash (limework with some sand) the eastern face of the gable in several coats to provide a very breathable weathering.
- Alternatively, subject to appropriate weathering being agreed after opening up and inspection, plaster the Eastern face of the gable in a soft Hot Lime mix.
- Carry out repairs at slabbed wall tops on gable in order to improve water runoff. Respect the historic, if not original arrangement and maximise retention of the current stone slabs. Where new slabs are required they must be as per the original detailing, informed by local mason knowledge and by historic photos.
- Internally in the porch, clean down all walls of staining and growth. Apply limewash to all walls to provide a breathable, unified and clean finish.
- Note that work on the porch is around two carved grave slabs which are national monuments. Close coordination with NMS and robust boxing of the monuments will be required.
- On completion of these works, re-weathering at height and repair/presentation internally, close monitoring is essential over the following 12 months and longer. It will take time for moisture in the wall to balance and patterns to stabilise. The project team both professional and contractor must be tasked with monitoring to evaluate the works and to inform any further requirements.



## Appendices

- Photographic Survey
- Site Location Map



Kilfenora High Cross & cathedral gable in distance  
Photo: George Unthank Macnamara



## Kilfenora Cathedral - Windows General





## Kilfenora Cathedral - Window Condition





## Kilfenora Cathedral - Chimneys Flues & Fireplaces





# Kilfenora Cathedral - Water Ingress

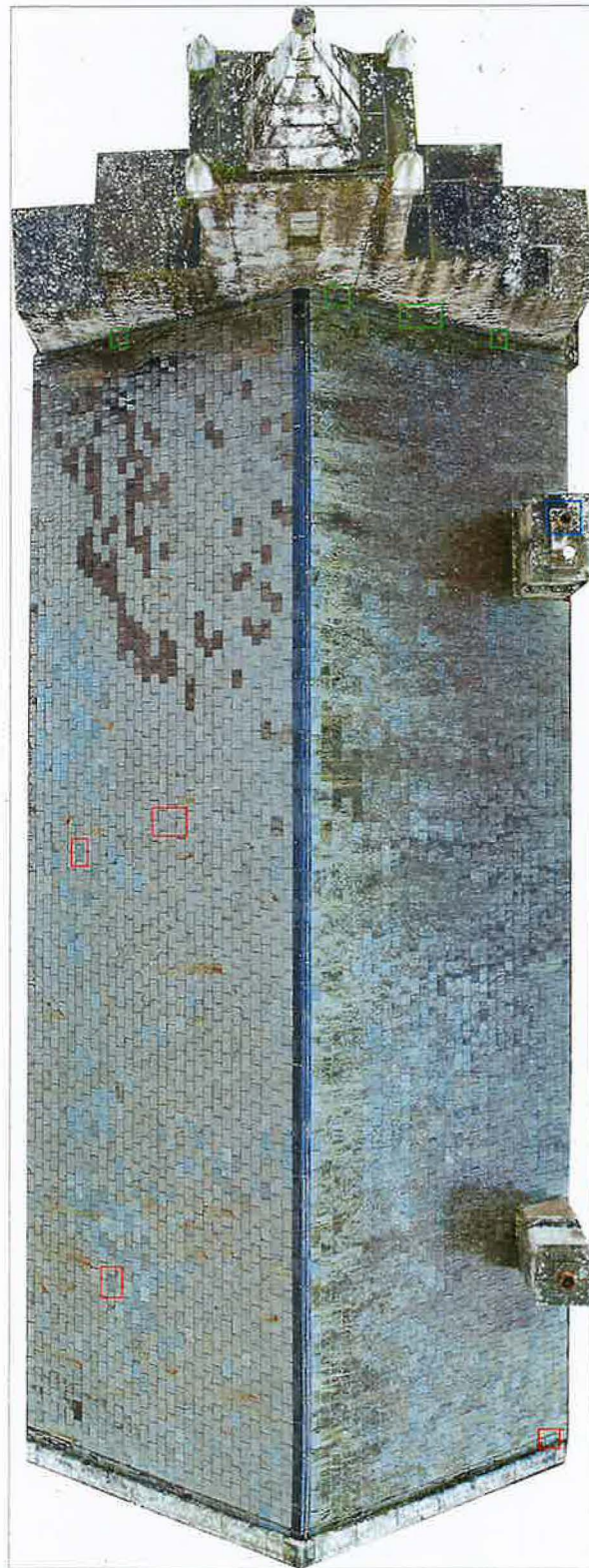




# Kilfenora Cathedral - Water Ingress







**Plate 19. Photo of roof of the cathedral. Red=broken or missing slates; Blue=missing cowl on chimney pot; Green=vegetation along flashing suggestive of water issues. North to right.**