

Architectural Conservation Area

KILRUSH

Kilrush takes its name from a small Early Christian church (Cill Rois – Chapel on the Headland), Kilrush had been a small fishing village with a good harbour, a church and a dozen houses when visited by Thomas Moland in 1703, but grew rapidly under the patronage of the Vandeleurs. The Early Christian Church is located in the Churchyard beside the Terret Lodge, of the Vandeleur Estate. In 1813, the churchyard was extended northwards and construction commenced on a replacement building, now used as the Teach Ceoil. The Creek provided access to the Shannon Estuary, eventually giving Kilrush a reputation as the "portico to the highways of the Western World" (Belfast Telegraph, 29 Oct. 1851).

In essence, the estuary was the motorway of that era, and today Kilrush remains Ireland's premier deepwater port protected from Atlantic storms by Scatterry Island, Kilrush Creek and the new Marina Tidal Lock. It is the only major safe harbour on the Irish West Coast from Dingle to Galway City and as such has had a very eventful maritime and mercantile history. The survival of its ancient monuments, public buildings, military installations, corn stores and commercial premises over three centuries makes it a unique Irish maritime town.

Kilrush House, the home of the Vandeleur family, burned in 1897 and the ruin was finally demolished in 1973, so that the surviving lodges, walled garden and stable block have taken on added significance as links to the town's past heritage.

Kilrush is one of only two towns in County Clare designated a Heritage Town by Fáilte Ireland, along with Killaloe/Ballina. It has not suffered significantly from inappropriate development and retains its special character as a West of Ireland, maritime, market town, which makes it a popular tourist venue. In 2005, Kilrush town was designated an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), due to the quality of its built heritage fabric, the survival of its high quality traditional shopfronts and its numerous historic structures. The town and its environs contain thirty eight protected structures, including such fine private and public buildings as Broomhill House (1680), Bonnie Doon House (1770), the Market House (1808), the Vandeleur Walled Garden (1808), St. Senan's former Church of Ireland (1813), the Courthouse (1830), St. Senan's Catholic Church (1839-40) and the Convent of Mercy (1860).

What works might alter the character of ACAs and so require planning permission?

- a) Altering the design of roofs e.g., pitches, barges.
- b) Changing the type of slate on a roof.
- c) Installing fascia or soffit boards.
- d) Removing or altering chimneys.
- e) Changing design and materials of windows, doors and cills.
- f) Erecting signage.
- g) Changing the finish of external walls, e.g. stone cladding, plaster.
- h) Erecting or altering existing shopfronts.

Map of the Architectural Conservation Area in Kilrush

