

ELEVATION.

MAIN BUILDING OF THE NEW WORKHOUSES AT CASTLETOWN AND DINGLE.

Proposal for the re-development of the former
Dingle Hospital and Workhouse

October 2017



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Proposal for the re-development of the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse

Proposal

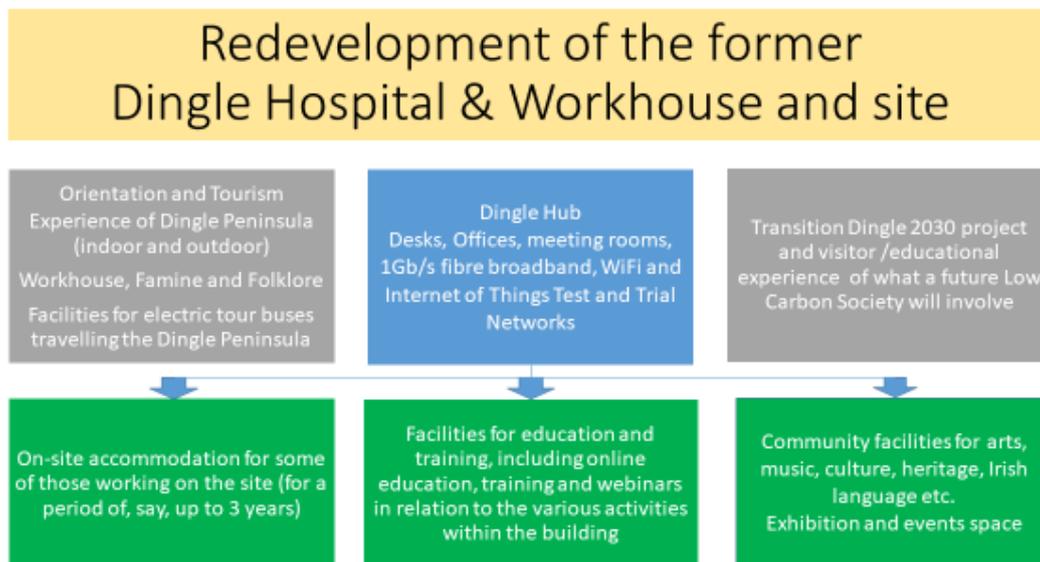
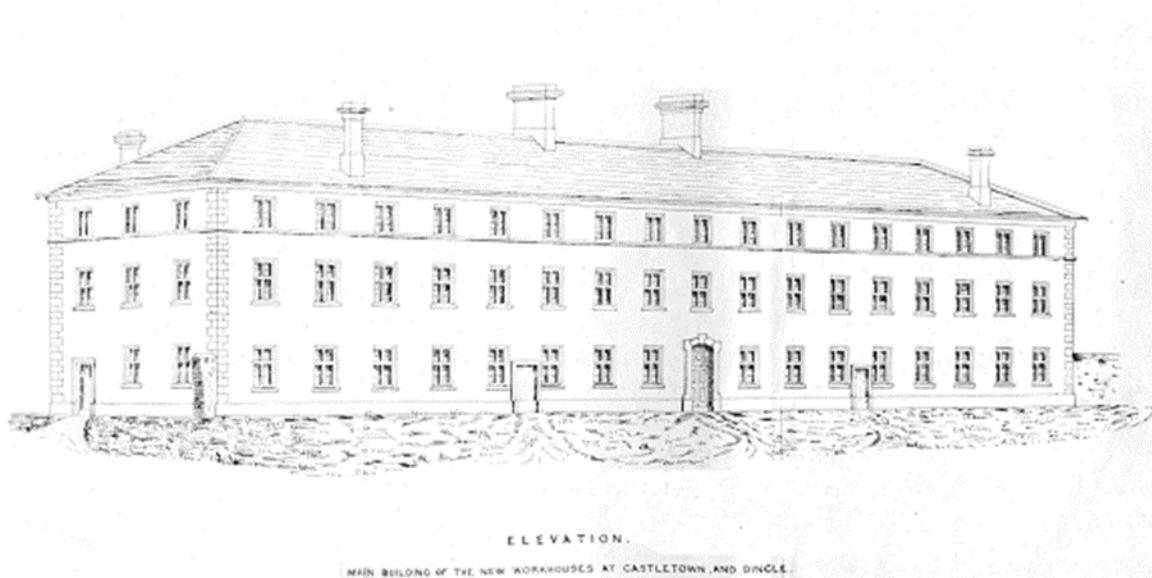
It is proposed that the Health Services Executive (HSE) transfer the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse building and adjoining lands into the ownership of Udaras na Gaeltachta (UnG), subject to the agreement between both parties, the finalisation of an investment and development plan and the identification of funding sources (public, community and private funds). UnG would then lease the building and site to a local company limited by guarantee (CLG) or a Designated Activity Company (DAC), re-develop the building as a multi-use community building which would include the following elements:

- **Dingle Creativity and innovation Hub**, based on extending the existing successful MolTeic. (Dingle Hub) and providing offices (in addition to single desks) for companies wishing to base themselves in Dingle, along with facilities for education, training, online education and webcasting;
- **Visitor Experience** which would include an orientation and overview of the visitor experience on the Dingle Peninsula and specific indoor and outdoor visitor experiences, including one drawing upon the [Dingle/Corca Dhuibhne Timeline](#), the maritime story of Dingle, the former Dingle Workhouse, the diaspora and a National Folklore Collection;
- **Community facilities** for education and training (including online facilities), for arts, theatre, music and community events, particularly the use of the large former chapel and adjoining area in the building;
- **Transition Dingle Peninsula/Corca Dhuibhne 2030** – an unique experience of what might be involved in the Transition of the Dingle Peninsula to a Low Carbon Society by 2030;
- **Other possible uses** that would be in harmony with the overall plan for the building and the site and, in an effort to enhance the attractiveness of the location for people to work in the Dingle Hub, possibly including some accommodation for those working on site. .

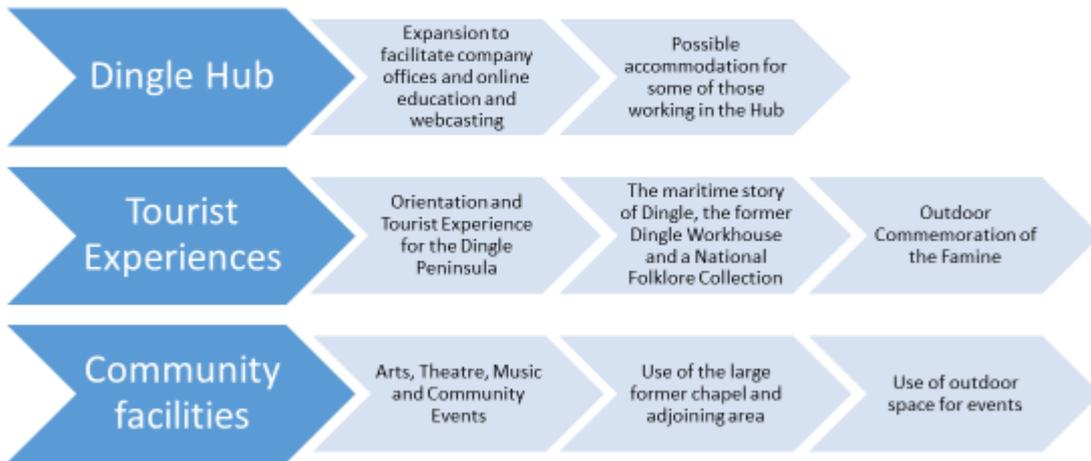
The stages in the process would include the following:

- Udaras na Gaeltachta to apply to HSE for the transfer of the building and site to UnG, subject to the conditions set out above ;
- A **Steering Committee** to be established under the aegis of MolTeic (at least initially) and to include Udaras na Gaeltachta and Kerry County Council. The Steering Committee would draw upon the expertise within UnG, KCC and MolTeic and any other people or bodies with relevant expertise;
- The **Steering Committee**, in conjunction with its partners, would commission:
 - o a building and site survey;
 - o a Master Plan for the building and the site; and
 - o a Business Plan for the operation of the re-developed building and site.
- Separately, a number of **Working Groups** would be established, under the Steering Committee, to make recommendations on the various elements of the project, such as:
 - o Fundraising and partnerships
 - o Arts, Culture, Heritage, History and Music
 - o Tourism Experiences
 - o The experience of Transition of Dingle Peninsula 2030

- When the Master Plan and Business Plan are finalised, consultations would take place with the relevant public bodies and the public and the final Master Plan and Business Plan would be amended, as required and then go through the normal planning and other processes so that all relevant approvals are received.

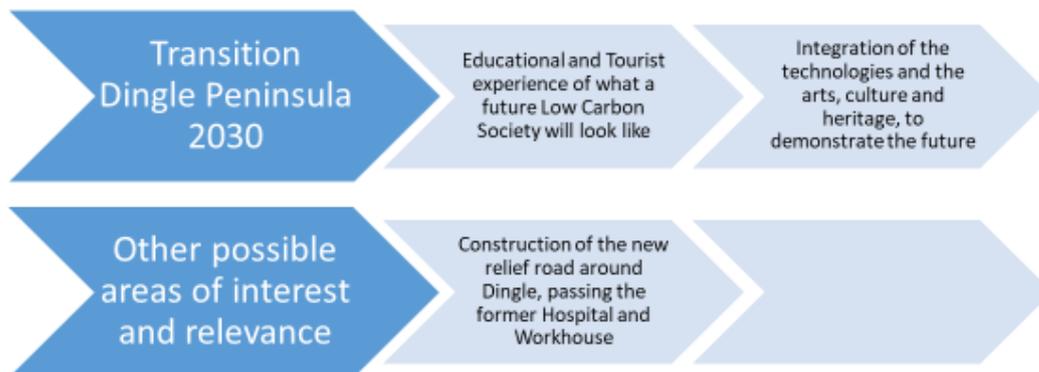


Former Dingle Hospital & Workhouse Project



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Former Dingle Hospital & Workhouse Project



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1. Background

In 1848, Lord Ventry offered a free site for a temporary Workhouse in the town and the Dingle Union was formed. In June 1851, there were 4,760 housed or helped, and, by 1852, a new building (the current one) was erected there were 6,068 helped or housed on site. By 1889, the Dingle Workhouse had just 189 inmates, of whom 69 were in the Hospital. In 1922, the Board of Guardians was abolished and its functions were transferred to County Home in Killarney. In 1971, the Southern Health Board took over its management and, in 2010 the Hospital closed.

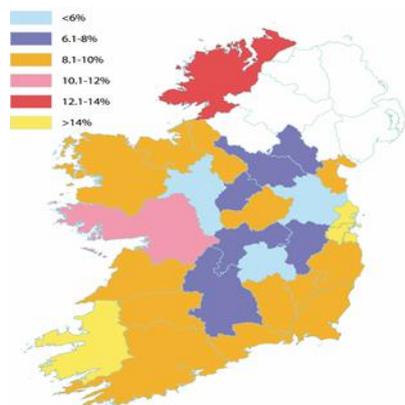
The building and the 21.53 acre site currently in the ownership of the Health Services Executive, is a protected structure and there are also restrictions on the surrounding site, thereby limiting the types of future uses for the building and the economics of any development. The quality of the building is deteriorating and work is required to maintain the building and to provide security. Unless something is done, the building will become an eyesore.

Alternatively, there are opportunities to develop the building and site in a manner that supports the efforts of the local community to position Dingle and the Dingle Peninsula as an attractive place in which to live and work. There is currently no community building in Dingle and there is an imminent shortage of space for small companies that are being encouraged to operate in the community and also for cultural, artistic and community events. There will be costs involved in this project but, because of the historical significance of the ‘Dingle Workhouse’ and the limitations on its use for commercial purposes, it is suggested that a cost benefit analysis (if undertaken) would show the significant benefits to the community would outweigh the costs.

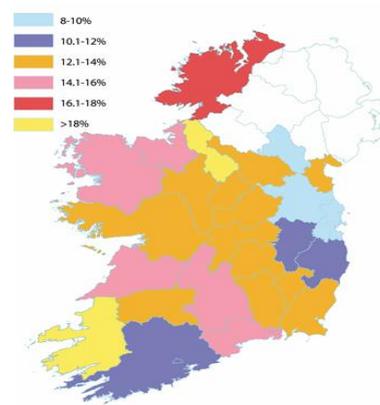
2. Why undertake a project of this scale at this time?

According to the CSO Census of Population 2016, the population of the Dingle Peninsula, like many other areas in rural Ireland, is both declining and ageing. Dingle is now the oldest town in Munster and fourth oldest town in Ireland. Young people are being well educated and then going to third level, but most do not return to live and work on the Dingle Peninsula, due to the low level of the average wage and other more attractive employment opportunities. This is also affecting the decline in the Irish language, particularly, if our young well-educated Irish speakers cannot find good employment opportunities locally.

Tourism is a significant source of full-time and part-time employment on the Dingle Peninsula. On average, over 20% of all employment across Kerry is dependent on tourism and the figure is, clearly, higher for the Dingle Peninsula, where more than 1 million tourists visit each year.



Employment dependency on tourism



Percentage of enterprises engaged in tourism

(Source: McFeely & Delaney, 2013, IBEC)

While this number of visitors is helpful to sustain the local tourist industry, it carries a significant downside in that:

- (i) it does not address the underlying challenges of diversifying the job base on the Dingle Peninsula and attracting and growing the number of individuals and companies who wish to establish companies locally;
- (ii) The availability of housing in Dingle is quite limited and the cost of housing on much of the west of the Peninsula is prohibitive; and
- (iii) the financial attraction of providing accommodation for tourists is far greater than providing rental accommodation for local workers, thereby making the cost of rental accommodation prohibitive for those wishing to work and live locally.

Therefore, the challenges of addressing the future of sustainable tourism on the Dingle Peninsula, (particularly in a Low Carbon Society) while also addressing the diversification of the jobs base and the availability of suitable, reasonably-priced housing for those interested in working and living in Dingle, together with the provision of suitable community facilities for arts, heritage, music and culture, are interlinked and the proposed re-development of the former Dingle Workhouse, along the lines outlined above, could assist in meeting those challenges.

3. Why transfer the building and site to Udaras na Gaeltachta?

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations.

The authority endeavours to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community based activities.

Dingle is in the Gaeltacht area and, as a public body, UnG has the authority and responsibility to sponsor and support a project such as this. It would require some funding and the details would be required to be agreed by the various Government Departments. UnG should also be willing to provide access to its own personnel/resources and that of other public bodies (such as Kerry County Council and Failte Ireland). It is suggested that the transfer of the property take place at a notional cost, as the property would still stay in public ownership and the details to be agreed between the relevant State bodies.

4. Why involve Kerry County Council?

Kerry County Council (KCC) is the local authority and, as such, has responsibility for housing and community, roads and transportation, urban planning and development, amenity and culture, economic development and environment.

Working closely with UnG and MolTeic, KCC could play a significant role in relation to the re-development of the building and site by providing access to its in-house expertise (particularly in relation to planning, re-development of heritage buildings, culture and the arts, economic development and tourism) and helping to establish a sustainable business model for the completed project.

5. Why involve MolTeic?

MolTeic Teo. was established in 2016 to develop the Dingle Creativity and Innovation Hub (Dingle Hub) and that development is now operational and is well on target to meet its initial targets of 20 jobs in the Hub. From the experience to date, it is clear that there is a need to go beyond the provision of 20 desks and 1GB/s fibre broadband to the provision of suitable offices for companies, as they expand and develop. This will require more enterprise space and the most significant unused building in the town is the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse.

MolTeic is also partnering with ESB Networks to develop the Dingle Peninsula as an exemplar of a Low Carbon Society and this will be a significant national project.

So, by some creative thinking, it should be possible to redevelop the building and site and provide:

- enterprise space for the expanded Dingle Hub;
- a significant tourist experience (for the more than 1 million tourists who visit Dingle Peninsula annually);
- an attractive location for education and training (particularly on-line education and training);
- facilities for music, arts, cultural and heritage activities;
- public activities and events; and
- an educational and tourist experience of what a future Low Carbon Society will look like.

To get the project started, it would make sense to utilise an existing company limited by guarantee (non-profit), such as MolTeic, to be the community partner with Udaras an Gaeltachta and Kerry County Council. While MolTeic will be the lead partner, it will engage with others across the community to ensure that there is widespread representation while also keeping a business-like focus on developing the project. As the project develops, there is likely to be a requirement for a new company to operate and run the building and this will require to be either one limited by guarantee (CLG), which is a non-profit or a Designated Activity Company (DAC).

How will this project be governed?

MolTeic would oversee the establishment of the **Dingle Hospital and Workhouse Steering Committee**, which would include Udaras na Gaeltachta and Kerry County Council. The Steering Committee would draw upon the expertise within UnG, KCC and Mol Teic and other people or bodies with relevant expertise, including public bodies such as Failte Ireland;

The Steering Committee would commission:

- a building and site survey,
- a Master Plan for the building and the site and
- a Business Plan for the operation of the re-developed building and site.

Separately, a number of **Working Groups** would be established, under the Steering Committee and drawing on relevant people across the community, to make recommendations on the various elements of the project, such as:

- Fundraising and partnerships
- Arts, Culture, Heritage, History and Music
- Tourism Experience
- Educational and Tourist experience of the Transition of the Dingle Peninsula to a Low Carbon Society Experience

The fact that the Dingle Peninsula plays a significant role in the maintenance of national cultural heritage, Irish language and traditional music, requires that this project be seen as not just a local project but one of significant national importance, with the full backing of Government.

With its statutory remit for the Gaeltacht areas and the fact that it is a public body, Udaras na Gaeltachta is ideally suited to take ownership of the building and site and MolTeic, as a community, non-profit, company limited by guarantee (CLG), with a track record of developing the Dingle Hub, would initially bring together the various local interests and liaise with relevant Government Departments and agencies and others (through Udaras na Gaeltachta and Kerry County Council) to deliver a significant national project that will be located in Dingle. The ultimate governance and ownership structure best suited to develop and operate the building would be addressed as part of the Business Plan.

Current developments on the Dingle Peninsula

There are many current developments involving the Dingle Peninsula and the confluence of these makes the timing of this project very appropriate.

For example, applications have been made in respect of various Government-sponsored schemes, including the following:

- ◇ Application to Kerry County Council under the [Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2017](#) – for the development of the Dingle Hub – successful in this (October 2017).
- ◇ Application to Enterprise Ireland under the [Regional Enterprise Development Fund, 2017-2020](#) - for the development of the Dingle Hub - announcement is due in November 2017.
- ◇ Development of a Plan for Sustainable Tourism on the Dingle Peninsula (similar to what has been done on the [Skellig Coast](#) in Iveragh, Co. Kerry) - due to commence in November 2017.
- ◇ Announcement of [ESB Network's Dingle Electrification Project](#) which will commence in January 2018 and will link in with a wider plan for the Transition of the Dingle Peninsula to a Low Carbon Society.
- ◇ Plans to extend the Dingle relief road so that traffic for Sleah Head can be routed along a new bypass road, on to Goat Street, past the Old Hospital and Workhouse and then on to the Milltown Roundabout, before heading along the Sleah Head Drive.

What are the projected benefits of this project?

Currently, the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse is unused and secured to prevent any access or use. It is reputedly costing the Health Services Executive approx. €13,000 per annum to keep the building maintained (heating, security, maintenance, etc.) Over time, the quality of the building will inevitably deteriorate. The building, as a listed building, has some significant planning restrictions and the site has similar restrictions because of the graveyard, so there are limitations on the commerciality of any re-development. Also, because of the strong family and community linkages between the former Dingle Workhouse and the local community and many of the diaspora, any re-development of the Workhouse will require very sensitive handling and will likely to garner far greater support for a community-led initiative rather than a commercially-led initiative.

As outlined previously, Dingle, as a town, and across the wider Peninsula, is experiencing the twin problems of an ageing and declining population and, if these issues are not addressed, the longer term future for the town and Peninsula are at risk.

The proposed re-development of the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse provides a once in a generation opportunity to not only help address the current problems but to re-position Dingle and the Dingle Peninsula for the future as a successful Low Carbon Community that has a strong, future-looking sustainable tourism industry, allied with a broad enterprise base, that is not only dependent on tourism but includes many working in information and communications technologies, animation, film, education, creative arts, music, heritage and cultural sectors.

What will this project cost?

At this stage, it is very difficult to quantify the cost but is likely to be a number of million euro. Because of the significance of the project, both locally and nationally, and the complementary projects that are currently underway, the re-development of the former Dingle workhouse should be seen as a national project and supported at Government level.

What is the timeline for the project, if it is approved?

If there is overall agreement to the concept of re-developing the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse, along the lines discussed above, and if the Minister for Health and Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform are agreeable to transferring the building and site to Udaras na Gaeltachta for a notional cost and to provide support to the overall project, the process can then get underway to establish the necessary structures (Steering Committee and Working Groups); to develop a Master Plan and Business Plan and to get these approved. Throughout that process, various options for funding and governance will be explored and a final set of proposals will be completed.

Realistically, this process would be likely to take approximately two to three years to get to the stage that there is a Master Plan and Business Plan which have approval. That would then be followed by the development and construction of various projects within the Master Plan, which would take a further two to three years.

Timeline for the re-development of the former Dingle Hospital & Workhouse

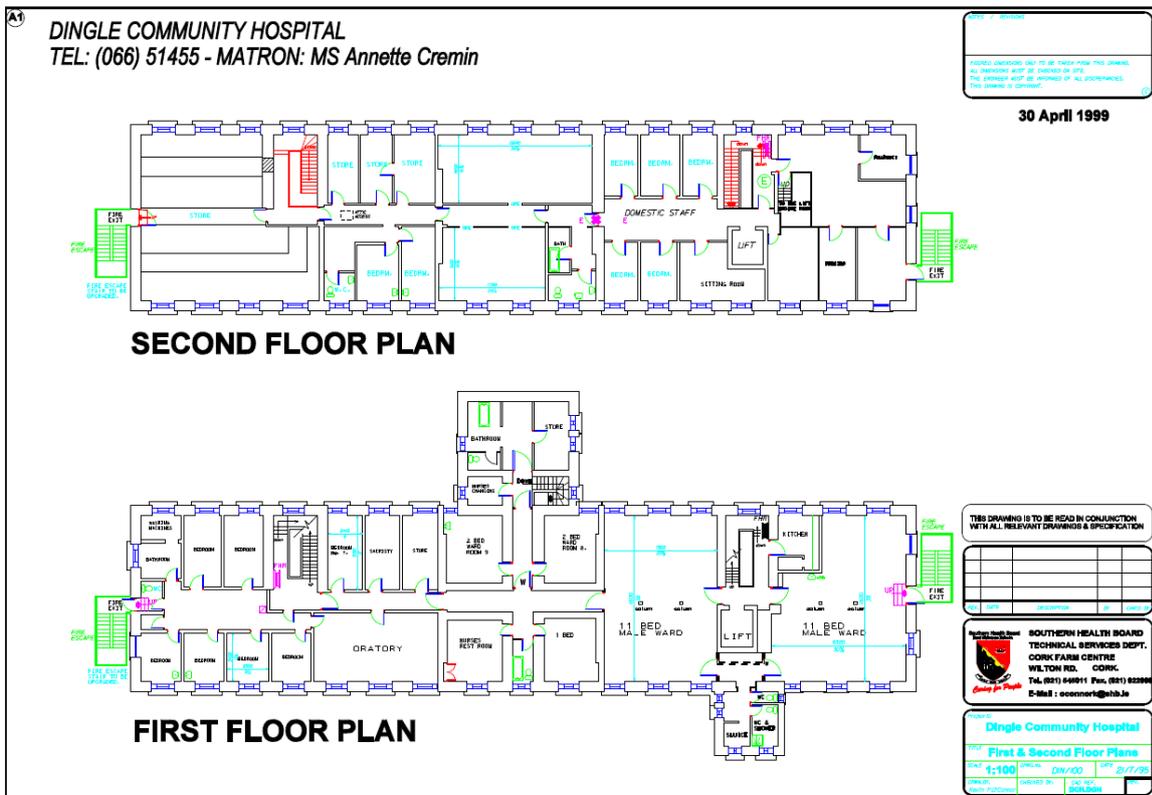
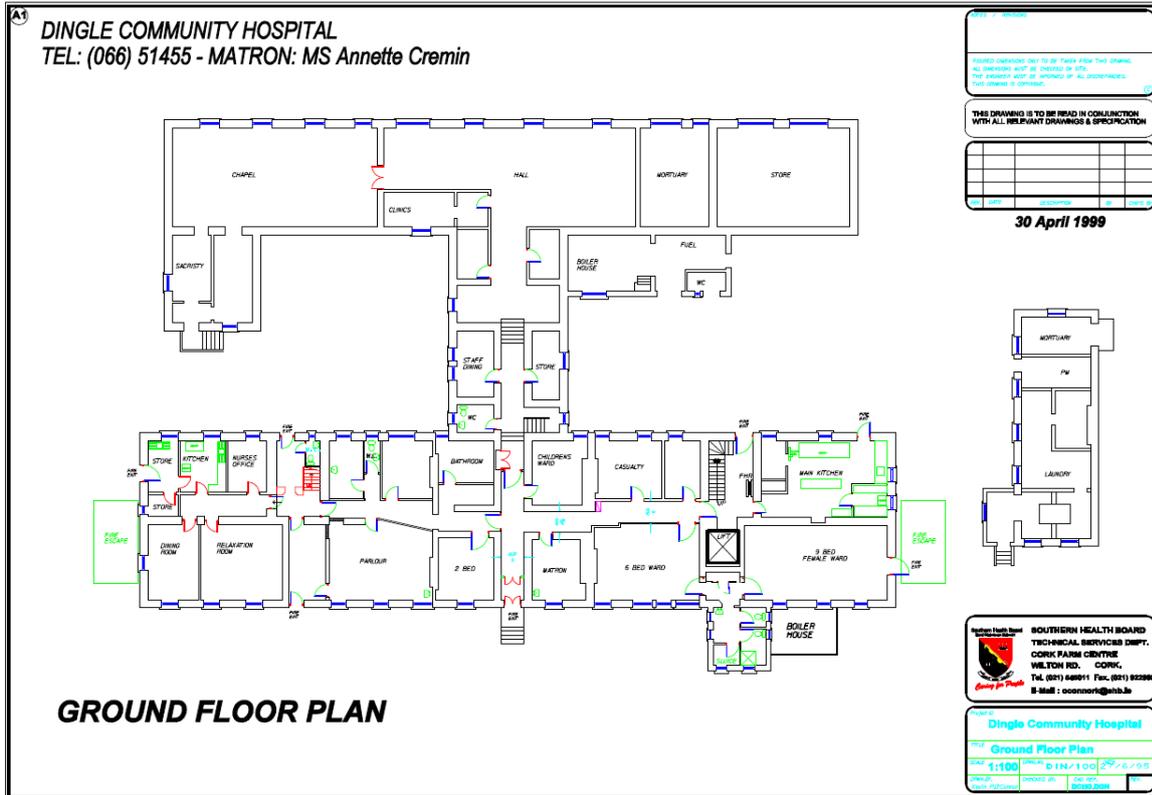




Photograph of the Former Dingle Workhouse



Site location map of the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse



Floor Plans of the former Dingle Hospital and Workhouse