

Proposals for new road signage for Desmond Hall Castle, Newcastle West, County Limerick.

Introduction:

Desmond Hall a 13th Century castle, built by the Fitzgeralds / Earls of Desmond, is the premier heritage / tourist site in West Limerick. Recent years have seen a huge increase in the number of tourists visiting the site from 3,500 visitors in 2012, to 9,700 in 2013: and in 2014 there were over 11,000 visitors to the site. The number of visitors to date in 2015 currently stands at 11,000 , the same as 2014, and it is likely visitor numbers will stagnate at this level unless adequate roadsignage and coach parking are provided.

The castle is a major asset to the town of Newcastle West and local retail businesses and the hospitality industry. Each summer an estimated 16,000 tourists per day pass the castle whilst travelling the N21 but the current lack of appropriate signage means that few of these potential visitors are aware they are passing a unique historical attraction, which is open to the public seven days a week free of charge.

Current lack of signage:

At present the site does not have any signage near the new southern entrance to the castle which was opened by the Office of Public Works (OPW) in 2013 with the assistance of Limerick County Council and the Arra Development Group. Previously signage was erected at the Junction of the N21 and the R521 for the old northern entrance to the castle from the town square. This signage is located a great distance from the site, with no support signage en-route and is very confusing. Tourists / bus groups who followed it were directed up the Gortboy Road, Bishop Street and into the town square where the buses had nowhere to park and their presence caused significant traffic congestion.

Proposed new signs:

The proposed new signs illustrated below are based on existing signs erected by Limerick County Council and follow their design, colour scheme and text font. All the text on these proposed signs has also been translated into Irish to comply with the statues of the Official Languages Act regarding road signage.

The large approach signs (Fig 1.) are based on existing signage erected for heritage sites in Adare, County Limerick. This includes a drawing of Desmond Hall rather than a photograph of the building following the direction of the council official who was consulted in relation to the project. The smaller signs (Fig 2.) are based on existing signs erected for King John's Castle, Limerick and employing the same symbols, format and layout.

Layout:

Please consult the attached maps concerning the proposed erection of the new signs.

Figure 1 – Large approach signs



Quantity: 2. **Size:** Approx 3x6 foot (or larger if possible). **Location:** See map.

Text & graphics: should be as close to the above as practical.

Please note: This design is based on existing signs in Adare, Co. Limerick.

Figure 2: Directional signs.

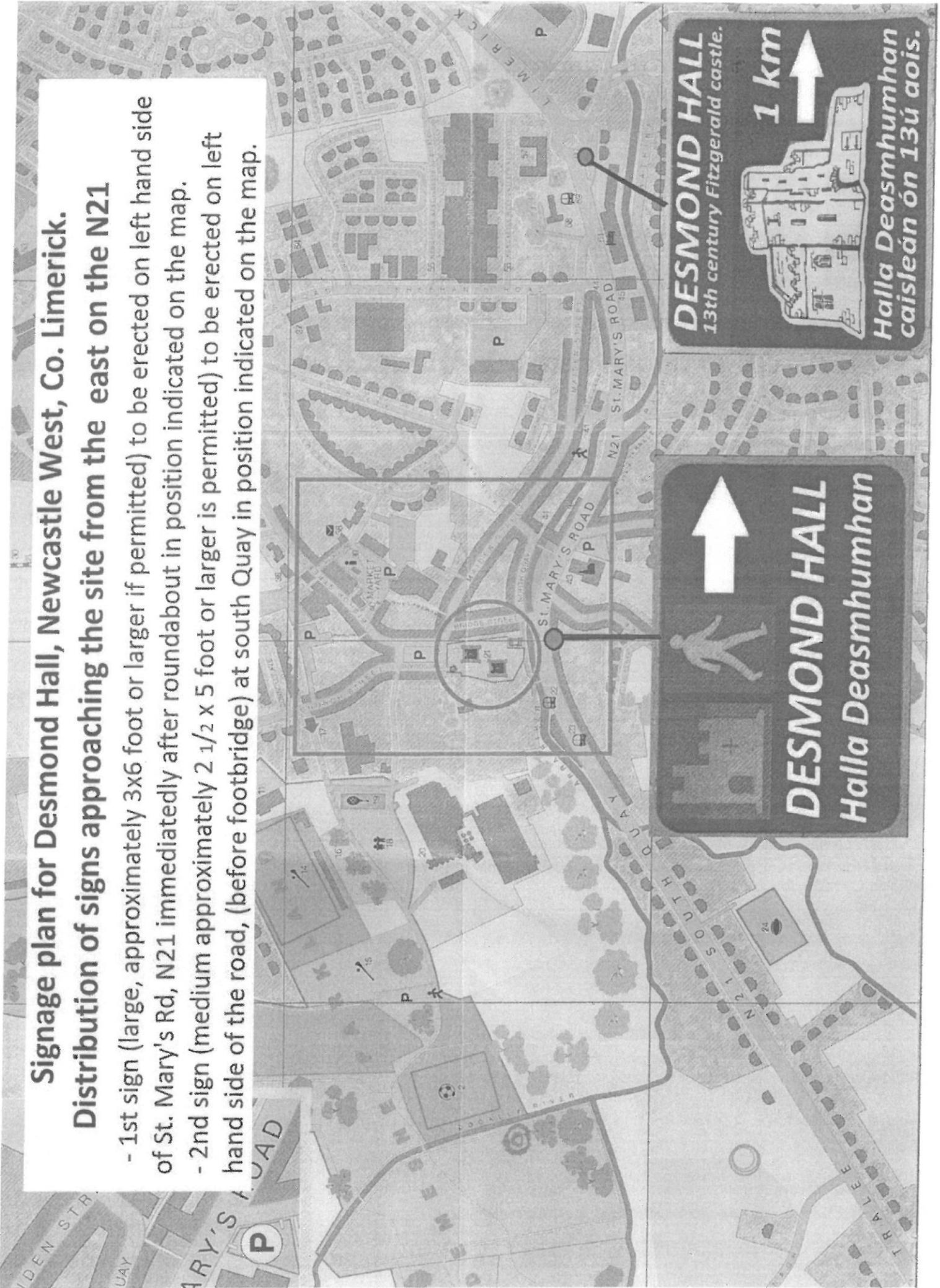


Quantity: 2. **Size:** Approx 2 1/2 x 5 foot (or larger if possible). **Location:** See map. **Text & graphics:** should be as close to the above as practical. **Please note:** This design is based on existing signs for King John's Castle in Limerick.

Signage plan for Desmond Hall, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.

Distribution of signs approaching the site from the east on the N21

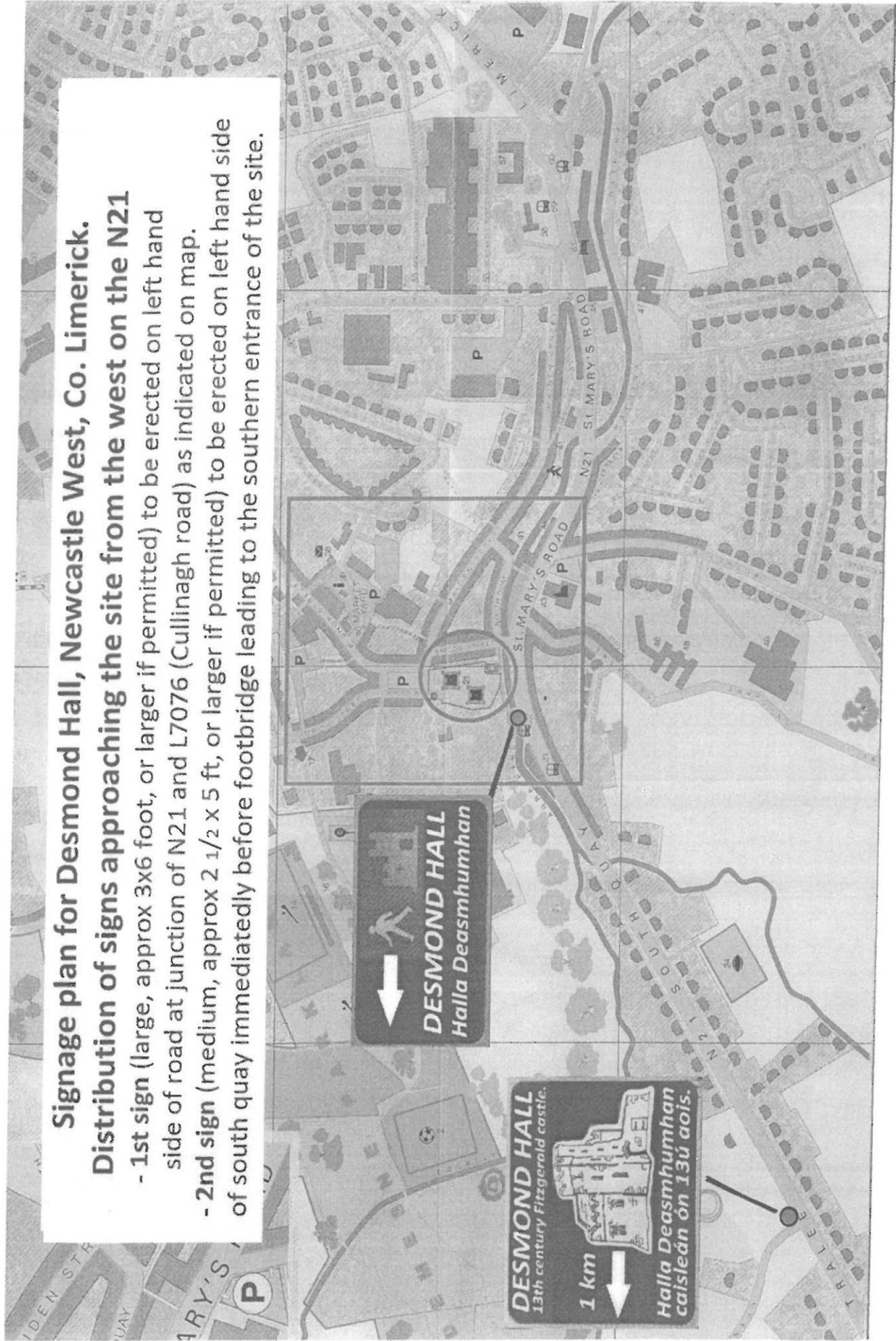
- 1st sign (large, approximately 3x6 foot or larger if permitted) to be erected on left hand side of St. Mary's Rd, N21 immediately after roundabout in position indicated on the map.
- 2nd sign (medium approximately 2 1/2 x 5 foot or larger if permitted) to be erected on left hand side of the road, (before footbridge) at south Quay in position indicated on the map.



Signage plan for Desmond Hall, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.

Distribution of signs approaching the site from the west on the N21

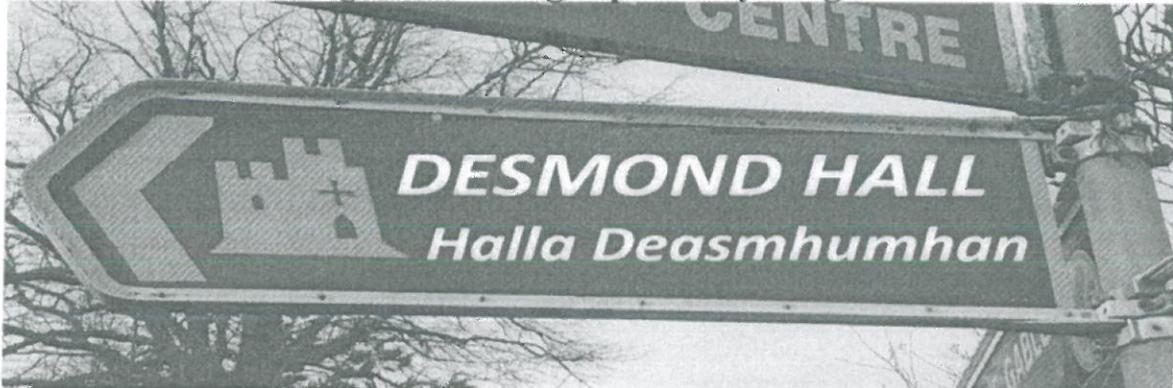
- 1st sign (large, approx 3x6 foot, or larger if permitted) to be erected on left hand side of road at junction of N21 and L7076 (Cullinagh road) as indicated on map.
- 2nd sign (medium, approx 2 1/2 x 5 ft, or larger if permitted) to be erected on left hand side of south quay immediately before footbridge leading to the southern entrance of the site.



Fingerposts:

The scheme should also include the supply of eight “finger post” style signs (see Fig. 3. below) which could be erected on existing poles in the town centre. These would be used to direct visitors to the castle who have entered the town from a different direction: ie from the north on the R521 Ardagh Road, those entering the town on foot from the Castle Demense via Church Street, and pedestrians walking in the town centre.

Figure 3: “Finger post” style signs



Quantity: 6. Size: Standard. Note : All of these signs should be double sided.



Additional works: Demarcation of Bus stops on South Quay.

The new signage scheme will be used by both independent tourists and large bus / coach parties. It is of huge importance that when coach groups arrive that they have space to park their bus. There are currently two bus parking bays on the N21 / South Quay near the new southern entrance to Desmond Hall. However these bus parking spaces are currently poorly marked and as a result are frequently occupied by parked cars which prevent bus groups from stopping. These bus parking bays should be clearly marked in future and a sign should be erected at each one warning motorists that those parked illegally may be subject to penalties (ie: Parking ticket, fine etc...)

Queries:

Queries regarding the above proposal, or requests for additional information, should be addressed to Pádraig Ó Ruairc OPW, Manager of Desmond Hall, Newcastle West (padraig.oruairc@opw.ie or 0879199725)