

CHAPTER 7 NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

7.1 BACKGROUND

Donegal possesses a wealth of Natural Resources which can be utilised for the socio-economic and cultural benefit of the County. Whilst some of these resources such as peat, extractive industry marine resources and forestry have been utilised for many centuries other resources such as wind, and other renewable energy sources have been relatively under-utilised until recently. However in the past the development of the County's natural resources tended to proceed in a largely unsustainable fashion.

Consequently the development of the natural resources sector presents considerable challenges and opportunities. The Council is tasked with allowing the development of such resources in a way which promotes socio-economic growth, whilst at the same time minimising the associated environmental impacts, and safeguarding the resource for future generations. The objectives, policies and criteria contained within the Development Plan are intended to achieve such a balance.

It is considered that each topic area in this chapter merits its own subsection, generally consisting of background, goal, objectives, policies and proposals. In addition to the relevant technical standards contained in Appendix A – Development Guidelines and Technical Standards.

Various trees and woodlands throughout the County are already protected directly and indirectly, through a variety of orders/mechanisms such as Special Areas of Conservation, Natural Heritage Areas, Nature Reserves and National Parks, Section 47 Agreements and through amenity areas/open spaces within the Local Area Plans. In addition the curtilage of all protected structures are also offered a degree of protection including inter alia: existing landscaping, and natural vegetation.

GOAL

To maximise the utilisation of Donegal's considerable natural resource base in a way which contributes to the socio-economic development of the County and which is in keeping with the environmental protection policies outlined in this Plan.

OBJECTIVES

- Facilitate Natural Resource Development as a means of employment generation and socio-economic growth, subject to the policies and criteria outlined in this Plan.
- Ensure that natural resource developments do not hinder the tourism potential of the County.
- Maximise the contribution of natural resource developments to the local community in which they are located.
- Minimise the negative impacts of natural resource developments on the environment, heritage and the physical infrastructure of the County.

7.2 POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

7.3 RENEWABLE ENERGY (GENERAL)

BACKGROUND

The promotion of renewable energy has become very important in recent years for a number of environmental and economic reasons including:

- Ireland's obligations under the Kyoto Treaty, which aims to limit greenhouse gas emissions to 13% above 1990 levels in the period 2008-2012.
- The need to reduce local air pollution sources.
- The need to reduce the threat of environmental damage arising from non-renewable sources.
- The potential of renewable technologies to contribute to local economic growth in terms of construction, operation and servicing and in providing local employment generation.
- The advantages of a robust renewable energy sector in improving economic resilience to energy price fluctuations caused by restrictions in the supply of imported fossil fuels.

Donegal has an enviable range of renewable energy sources, which if developed in a sustainable way have the potential to make a significant contribution to the environmental and economic development of the County. These sources include: Wind, Biomass, Hydro, Solar, Wave and Waste Products.

POLICY NRD1:

The Council will explore and implement the use of renewable energy within the current 2004-2008 housing programme.

POLICY NRD2:

The Council will explore and implement the use of sustainable construction methods/materials in the current 2004-2008 housing programme.

7.4 SOLAR ENERGY

In recent years there has been recognition of the significant role that solar energy technologies can play in providing a sustainable source of heating and electricity, thus reducing the demand on fossil fuels and for electricity supply from the national grid.

POLICY NRD3:

The Council will facilitate initiatives which raise awareness and/or increase the use of Passive, Active, and Photovoltaic Solar Technologies as a means of providing heating and electrical generation.

7.5 BIOENERGY

Bioenergy has many potential benefits as an energy source including:

- It has a neutral greenhouse gas effect.
- Security of supply benefits.
- Rural development benefits.

Bioenergy, utilises a wide range of technologies to convert Biofuels to either heat or electrical power, these technologies include:

- Gasification or combustion of fuels: Such as wood, short-rotation coppice, energy crops, straw, forestry by-products, and solid agricultural wastes.

- Anaerobic digestion of animal slurries, sewerage, abattoir waste, etc.

POLICY NRD4:

The Council will support initiatives, which raise awareness and/or increase the use of this important renewable energy source.

7.6 HYDROELECTRIC POWER

Donegal already has two large-scale hydroelectric generating stations on the Erne and at Clady, which generate 69mw of electrical power in total. However, in recent times the focus of hydropower has shifted to much smaller projects and a number of such schemes have been developed throughout the County in recent years. It has been estimated that Donegal has a potential small hydro resource of 47.1Gwh/Year.

As such, the Council recognises the potential of small hydro projects to contribute to electricity generating capacity and government targets on renewable energy.

POLICY NRD5:

The Council will facilitate the research and sustainable development of small-scale hydro proposals.

7.7 WAVE POWER

Donegal's exposed location on Ireland's North Western seaboard means that it possesses one of the worlds most favourable wave energy resources. Although the technology to harness this abundant renewable resource is still in it's evolving. The Council recognises that in the intermediate and longer term there is potential to utilise this resource.

POLICY NRD6:

The Council will support and promote the research and sustainable development of wave energy proposals. The Council will support the development of hydro-energy projects.

7.8 FORESTRY

BACKGROUND

In recent decades there has been a considerable increase in the planting of forests in the County. By 2002 forestry covered approximately 11.86% of the land area in the County. The Council recognise the importance of forestry in meeting Ireland's obligations under the Kyoto protocol and are committed to help meet the government target of 17% forestry cover by 2035 by working with stakeholders.

In common with other Counties the bulk of forestry is characterised by commercial coniferous plantations with broadleaf only comprising approximately 21% of total forest cover.

The Council recognises that forestry presents a number of opportunities in terms of: providing a supplementary source of farm income, rural diversification, economic activity (in terms of planting, maintenance, and harvesting), a sustainable construction material, the development of value added products and niche markets, research and development, recreation and amenity, tourism, as well as promotion of biodiversity and restoration of natural habitat. In addition the Council recognises the increasing importance, that private forestry has to play in the forestry sector and will ensure that its policies support the development of this sector.

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The possible negative impacts associated with forestry include the following: adverse impacts on landscape, visual amenity, water quality, fish hatcheries, roads, drainage, bio-diversity and fire threats. However, the extent of these impacts can be minimised through good planning and good forestry management practices. In particular, the Council is conscious of the potential impact which forestry activities may have on public roads.

Various trees and woodlands throughout the County are already protected directly and indirectly, through a variety of orders/mechanisms such as Special Areas of Conservation, Natural Heritage Areas, Nature Reserves and National Parks, Section 47 Agreements and through amenity areas/open spaces within the Local Area Plans. In addition the curtilage of all protected structures are also offered a degree of protection including inter alia: existing landscaping, and natural vegetation.

GOAL

The Council seeks to develop forestry in a way which achieves a balance between the benefits of forestry and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

In achieving this goal the Council recognises that forestry planting is currently largely outside the control of the Planning Authority, but it still has a role to play in achieving the sustainable development of forestry in Donegal.

This role includes; the referral of forestry applications to the Council for their observations in certain circumstances, consultation with the forestry industry and local communities on specific developments and on best practice, and encouraging and promoting the adoption of an Indicative Forestry Strategy for the County.

Furthermore in the absence of the need for planning permission the Council seeks to promote the objectives and criteria outlined in this Plan and where planning permission is required now or in the future ensure adherence to them.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

It is Council Policy to:

Planning

POLICY NRD7:

Seek changes in Planning Legislation to reduce the thresholds, which determine the need to seek planning permission for forestation, and introduce a requirement to obtain planning permission for the extraction of timber.

POLICY NRD8:

Adhere to the relevant guidelines published by the Forest Service when assessing forest applications.

POLICY NRD9:

Consider forestry proposals in (EHSA's) where the proposal:

- Consolidates a number of existing plantations which are in close visual proximity.
- Allow for visually unobtrusive extension of existing forested areas.
- Allow for the establishment or re-establishment of the original indigenous vegetation such as a native woodland.

POLICY NRD10:

Oppose forestry proposals which would negatively impact on the views to be had from the following approach roads to Glenveagh National Park:

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- Glendowan to Doochary Road
- Dunlewy to Termon Road
- Churchill to Termon/Dunlewy Road

POLICY NRD11:

Examine the ways in which the Indicative Forestry Strategy by the Forest Service can aid in the assessment of forestry proposals when published.

POLICY NRD12:

Consider identifying designated transportation routes to be used during the extraction of timber.

POLICY NRD13:

Consider the use of Section 17 of the Road Traffic Act 1961 to compensate for road damage incurred by 'extraordinary traffic/excessive weight' associated with forestry activities.

POLICY NRD14:

Attach conditions to the grant of planning permission requiring the developer to; make any necessary improvements to roads infrastructure, lodge a financial bond to ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of any roads infrastructure damaged during planting or harvesting and/or to pay a contribution towards the cost of upgrading or repairing the local road network.

POLICY NRD15:

Seek planning applications for the construction of hardstands and the creation of new entrances onto public roads related to forestry developments.

POLICY NRD16:

Oppose forestry proposals within the designated "Fire Break Corridors".

Economic

POLICY NRD17:

Facilitate the role of forestry in economic development and rural diversification.

POLICY NRD18:

Facilitate the development of indigenous timber processing operations from sustainable forests.

Environmental

POLICY NRD19:

Require applications for proposed forestry developments within NHAs, SACs or SPAs to include environmental/heritage appraisals or Environmental Impact Statements in order to assess how the proposed developments will affect the environment and heritage.

POLICY NRD20:

Ensure that the policies advanced in this Plan are compatible with the active conservation and protection of existing, native and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows. (See also Chapter 8 The Built and Natural Heritage)

POLICY NRD21:

Oppose forestry proposals which materially affect objectives of the Water Quality Management Plans under the Water Pollution Act 1977.

POLICY NRD22:

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Favour native deciduous planting over coniferous planting due to the important role of native deciduous species in providing natural habitats for native flora and fauna and in encouraging bio-diversity and its compatibility with the natural vegetation cover of the County.

POLICY NRD23:

Promote forestry for the production of Bio fuels in accordance with Council policy on Renewable Energy.

Social/Community

POLICY NRD24:

Recognise and encourage the role of forestry in providing recreational amenities and achieving the social objectives laid out in the plan.

POLICY NRD25:

Improve the recreational amenity value of forests already in use as recreational sites and encourage the development of new community forests/Neighbourhood Schemes at strategic locations.

POLICY NRD26:

Encourage developers to set aside a portion of new developments for tree planting appropriate to the area where appropriate.

POLICY NRD27:

Protect access to routes of well-known upland walks and rights of way.

7.9

PEATLANDS

BACKGROUND

The Council recognises that the peatlands of Donegal represent an important Natural Resource. The Council acknowledge the role that the exploitation of peat has had in providing an indigenous fuel source and in aiding the rural economy.

The Council also recognises the ecological and environmental importance of peatlands. The peatlands with the highest ecological value are designated as Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, etc. and will be subject to the requirements of these designations (See Chapter 8, The Built and Natural Heritage). In this regard the Council recognise the shared responsibility that they have in protecting peatlands and are committed to working with relevant bodies and agencies to ensure the preservation of this natural resource for future generations.

POLICIES & PROPOSALS

It is Council policy to:

POLICY NRD28:

Facilitate the conservation and protection of peatlands in such designated areas subject to the policies and criteria outlined in this plan.

POLICY NRD29:

Identify and protect areas of peatlands that are of local ecological importance.

POLICY NRD30:

Require an Environmental Impact Assessment for peat extraction below current thresholds where the Council is satisfied that the proposal is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

POLICY NRD31:

Oppose proposals for peat extraction (where such proposals require planning permission) in Especially High Scenic Amenity Areas (EHSA's) in accordance with landscape conservation policies.

7.10 WIND ENERGY

BACKGROUND

County Donegal's exposed location on the north western seaboard of Ireland and its mountainous terrain ensures an abundant wind energy supply. The Council recognises that this, and other renewable resources, can and should play a major role in fulfilling the future energy and employment needs of the County.

Furthermore it recognises the vital role which wind energy has to play in reducing dependency on fossil fuels and in achieving reductions in Green House Gas Emissions at a national level.

Pressure for wind energy development is likely to occur in upland coastal and offshore locations particularly where access to grid connections can be easily attained.

The environmental and economic benefits of Wind Energy on a National and Global Level are well recognised. The development of wind energy has a number of localised benefits for the County including employment during the construction, operational and maintenance phased and in terms of rural diversification. Notwithstanding these benefits there is only limited community benefit and no apparent local competitive advantage in terms of cheaper electrical energy prices.

Wind Energy developments may have the following impacts: noise, shadow flicker, electromagnetic interference, impacts on visual amenity, natural and built heritage, flora and fauna etc. In order to minimise these impacts the siting, design, layout, construction and maintenance of wind farms all require careful consideration.

In this regard the attention of wind farm developers is directed towards recent government planning guidelines in relation to wind farms and to the specific criteria contained within this Development Plan.

GOAL

The Council seeks to harness the wind energy potential of the County in a way that achieves a balance between responding to government policy on renewable energy and the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

POLICIES & PROPOSALS

It is Council policy to:

POLICY NRD32:

Consider wind energy proposals subject to the specific criteria and policies contained within this section, within Appendix A, Development Guidelines and Technical Standards, 5.3 and to accord with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2006).

POLICY NRD33:

Not favourably consider applications for wind energy developments in the following areas:

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- Glenveagh National Park.
- Areas classified as Especially High Scenic Amenity Areas (EHSA's).
- Areas defined as views and prospects.

In all other areas of the County, the Council will consider applications for wind energy developments on their own merits and in accordance with the Policies and Technical Standards set out in this Development Plan in Appendix A: Development Guidelines and Technical Standards.

Note: The above areas have been identified following an analysis of areas suitable for wind energy development within the County. This analysis utilised a step by step G.I.S. approach and examined a range of factors relating to wind energy development including inter alia: wind energy potential, landscape sensitivity, visual amenity, etc. This analysis was conducted in accordance with Sections 3.4 and 3.5 of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2006).

POLICY NRD34:

Encourage pre-application discussions between wind farm developers and the public (including landowners) and engage in such discussions with developers where feasible.

POLICY NRD35:

Promote County Donegal as a source for renewable energy production and for the research, development and transit of renewable energy technologies.

POLICY NRD36:

Promote widespread local community benefit through such mechanisms as:

- A contribution towards a local community levy or development charge.
- Arrangements for local community investment.

POLICY NRD37:

Seek the developer to, or attach conditions to the grant of planning permission requiring the developer to; make any necessary improvements to roads infrastructure, lodge a financial bond to ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of any roads infrastructure damaged during the above phases of wind energy developments, or to pay a contribution towards the cost of upgrading or repairing the local road network with regard to the construction, operation, or upgrading of wind energy developments, where appropriate.

POLICY NRD38:

Attach conditions, which may provide for the payment of a bond to ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of any roads infrastructure damaged during the decommissioning phase and/or to ensure the satisfaction restoration of the site with regard to the decommissioning phase of wind energy developments.

POLICY NRD39:

Attach conditions to the grant of planning permission regulating routes to be used during such phases with regard to the construction or upgrading of wind energy developments.

POLICY NRD40:

Consider wind energy proposals consisting of a single turbine that are community or small enterprise based (refer to footnote) throughout the County (with the exception of those areas identified in Policy NRD33). The turbine shall not be permitted within 100 metres of occupied dwellings (except where the written consent of the owner/occupier is provided). The turbine shall be of an appropriate

scale to their host environment and commercial scale turbines shall not be permitted. In this respect the hub height of such turbines shall not exceed 25 metres.

Footnote: Applicants will be required to demonstrate how their proposal meets a community or small scale enterprise.

POLICY NRD41:

The Council will discourage proposals for off shore windfarms that would materially impact on the County in relation to shipping movements, landscape degradation, tourism potential as examples.

7.11 EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

BACKGROUND

Donegal has a strong tradition of using local stone as a road and house building material. The contemporary use of local stone in construction is encouraging, as it reflects the labours and traditions of previous generations and because the use of local stone as a construction material is less visually obtrusive within the Donegal landscape (if utilised as a cladding material).

The Council recognises the importance which local quarried stone represents economically and infrastructurally to the County. Demand for construction materials is likely to continue to grow and the Council are committed to sourcing the majority of construction materials locally.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

It is also accepted that extractive industries have the potential to cause significant adverse environmental impacts, and therefore, it is necessary to reach a compromise between operators and the Council to ensure that aggregates can be sourced without significantly damaging the landscape, environment, heritage and/or residential amenities of an area.

The Council are also aware of the potential risk that extractive industries pose to important groundwater and aquifer sources in the County. Although there are no regionally important aquifers, capable of storing large water supplies from wells, there are a number of locally important aquifers, which store large quantities of water and are capable of storing water for small group and village schemes (e.g. Lough Foyle Shores, river gravel deposits at Fanad Head and fluvioglacial sand and gravel deposits in Glenswilly, Lough Swilly Estuary and near the coast at Carndonagh and Buncrana).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The concept of sustainable development propagates the use of sustainable building materials. The extraction of stone and aggregates (non renewable resources) is in principle, unsustainable, however, to offset this, the Council seek to utilise their own natural resources thus providing local employment, to utilise materials which empathise with their associated landscapes and to reduce the numbers of journeys required from source to final destination.

The Council concur with the principles of the Irish Concrete Federations', voluntary Code of Environmental Conduct which was produced for their members in 1996 and was endorsed by the DoEHLG.

REGISTRATION

All quarry owners/operators are obliged to register their activities with the Council by the 27th April 2005 (unless they have received planning permission within the previous 5 years), in accordance with Section 261 of the Planning & Development

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Act 2000. The Council now have the opportunity and authority to introduce new or modified controls on the operation of certain quarries, which hitherto, were operating under the 1964 Planning Act. In addition, certain quarries, which have operated prior to 1st October 1964, may now require both planning permission for their continued operation and submission of an accompanying Environmental Impact Statement.

AGGREGATE POTENTIAL MAP (APM)

The Aggregate Potential Map produced by the Geological Survey of Ireland for the Council indicates all aggregate and mineral resources in the County and grades these resources in terms of those with best and poorest extractive potential for the building and road making industries. The Council are conscious of the need to protect these valuable unworked deposits. Maps are currently being revised to have regard to vulnerable groundwater and aquifer sources and the presence of existing quarries.

GOAL

The Council will actively encourage the sustainable extraction of locally sourced aggregates and/or minerals, to contribute to the local economy and to provide the essential raw materials, necessary for the construction industry.

OBJECTIVES

- To conserve & protect the environment, including in particular, the archaeological and natural heritage and conservation and protection of European designated sites and any other sites which are prescribed.
- To preserve the character of the landscape where and to the extent that, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.
- To identify those sites with highest mineral/aggregate extractive potential (in association with the Geological Survey of Ireland), within the life of the Plan and which do not reside within high amenity areas.
- To produce a 'Groundwater Protection Response Matrix', within the life of the Plan, to assist in deciding upon the appropriateness of various categories of development in areas that have different levels of vulnerability in terms of groundwater contamination and to determine those best sites for waste-water treatment.
- The Council will endeavour to identify the location of groundwater resources, private supply and acquifers, assess their vulnerability and seek to protect them accordingly.
- The Council will seek changes to planning legislation, in order to remove the thresholds, which determine the need to seek Environmental Impact Statements as part of a planning application for an Extractive Industry development.
- The Council will seek to conserve and protect areas adjacent to existing quarries with high mineral/extractive potential for use as building/road making material for the future.

POLICIES & PROPOSALS

It is Council policy to:

POLICY NRD42:

Ensure that all proposed and existing quarry stone and mineral extractive proposals have regard to, 'Quarry and Ancillary Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2004'.

POLICY NRD43:

Not favourably consider development for extractive industries in areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity, European Sites (Natura 2000, i.e. SAC, SPA), Natural Heritage Areas (NHA's), Nature Reserves or other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna, or in areas of significant archaeological potential, unless it can be demonstrated that such proposals would not have significant adverse impacts on amenities, heritage or the environment.

POLICY NRD44:

The Council are cautious of the need to protect valuable unworked deposits for future extractive use, where they do not pose a significant threat upon visual amenities. Proposed developments within the vicinity of extractive industries, will have to demonstrate how their proposal would not significantly impact upon the natural resource or the ability to extract the resource.

POLICY NRD45:

The Council will require that extractive industry proposals do not adversely impact upon the water environment, including surface water and groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands.

POLICY NRD46:

Require all extractive industry proposals to submit a detailed and progressive restoration/rehabilitation plan for the aftercare/re-use of the site. The phased development of the site is, in many instances more desirable. An ecological study should be carried out for every new extraction site. Ecologists should be involved in recommending appropriate mitigation measures for all phases of development, including restoration and aftercare.

POLICY NRD47:

Require the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for; (a) Quarries and open cast mining where the surface of the site exceeds 25 ha, (b) the extraction of stone, gravel, sand or clay, where the extraction would be greater than 5 ha, (c) all extraction of minerals within the meaning of the Minerals Development Acts, 1940 to 1999, (d) all installations for the manufacture of cement. The Council may also request a sub-threshold EIA where it is considered that the proposed development by virtue of its scale, location and/or impact would impose significant adverse effects upon environmental and/or residential amenities.

POLICY NRD48:

Require that, where a proposed development falls within the vicinity (300m) of a recorded monument/archaeological site, the developers engage the services of an archaeologist or suitably qualified person to carry out and submit an archaeological assessment of the site.

POLICY NRD49:

Require that, where a proposed development resides within the vicinity of protected structures (RPS), their curtilages and zones of visual and blasting influence shall be referred to the Council's Conservation and Heritage Officers and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

POLICY NRD50:

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Consider the use of Section 17 of the Road Traffic Act 1961 to compensate for road damage incurred by 'extraordinary traffic/excess weight', associated with extractive operations.

POLICY NRD51:

Require, in addition to the terms of its development contribution scheme, the payment of a special contribution/bond in respect of a particular development where specific exceptional costs, not covered by the scheme are incurred by the Council in respect of roads infrastructure and facilities which benefit the proposal or to ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site following the completion of extraction.

POLICY NRD52:

Identify, as part of the planning process for proposed future road schemes, 'borrow pits', adjacent to such road schemes in order to minimise the haulage of material over longer distances.

7.12 THE MARINE RESOURCE

BACKGROUND

Donegal's marine resource represents one of the County's most valuable natural resources. Donegal's long and beautiful coastline is of major importance to tourism and leisure activities, its deep harbours and rich seas have helped the fisheries industry to thrive, whilst the inhabited Islands and Coastal communities are a critical part of Donegal's cultural heritage. Indeed the Marine sector has been identified as a key sector for the County in *An Stratéis*, the County strategy for economic, social and cultural development.

If properly managed, the development potential of this resource remains strong. However, no single body has sole responsibility for policy formulation or implementation in relation to Marine issues. Therefore, the realisation of this potential is dependent on a focused and integrated approach amongst all interested stakeholders.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management

The purpose of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is to create a planning and management framework for a particular coastal zone. It brings together all of the relevant stakeholders (Fishermen, Environmental groups, Marine Leisure groups, Local Authorities etc) to create agreed solutions which allow for the sustainable development of the coastal environment.

Accordingly, the Council are committed to identifying appropriate strategies for the implementation of ICZM frameworks, and the piloting of such strategies in a test area. In addition, the Council intends to establish a centre for ICZM education and research in the County.

Coastal Erosion/Rising Sea Levels

The management of coastal erosion is an integral part of ICZM. Whilst the Council plays a significant role in the mitigation of coastal erosion through engineering works, the Council recognises that such works are best implemented as part of wider ICZM strategies and not in isolation. However, the Council will continue to deliver its Coastal Erosion Protection Programme as adopted by the members until such time as funding and other resources become available to enable a countywide ICZM Programme to be implemented. In addition, the Council will consider implementing development controls in areas subject to coastal erosion and vulnerable to rising sea levels to ensure that new developments are not threatened

by virtue of their location. Additionally the Council will support the use of innovative and cost-effective solutions taken by landowners to alleviate coastal erosion.

Aquaculture

In accordance with Government policy, the Council will support and promote the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector in order to maximise its contribution to jobs and growth in coastal communities and the economic well being of the County. Furthermore, it is recognised that aquaculture harvesting and associated processing have the potential to provide an economically viable alternative to commercial fishing and aid sustainable rural diversification.

However, the Council recognises that whilst the licensing of aquaculture is outside the control of the Council, there is a need to integrate aquaculture into Integrated Coastal Zone management strategies and for operators to engage in consultations with relevant bodies and local communities with regard to best practice and management strategies. Consequently it is envisaged that aquaculture operators will play an important role in any future Integrated Coastal Zone Management structures.

Marine/Water-based Leisure and Tourism

Recent years have seen a growing recognition of the opportunities that Donegal's unique coastal environment has to offer in terms of Marine Leisure and Tourism. The County has the longest coastline in the country, sheltered bays and harbours, a long maritime tradition and a rich biodiversity of aquatic wildlife. Donegal has all of the natural resources necessary to develop a vibrant and successful marine leisure and tourism sector. The development of such a sector, however, depends on the careful management of these resources and the implementation of successful strategies on a cross-sectoral basis. In response to this challenge, the Marine/Water-based Leisure and Tourism Programme was initiated in 2001. The work of the programme centres on researching and developing marine and water leisure initiatives within the County. Various projects are underway with the aim of ensuring a strategic, integrated and sustainable approach to coastal zone management.

(1) Sea Angling

The Council recognises the role that sea angling has to play in supporting rural communities and expanding the tourism product. In support of this developing industry and following detailed research, the Council has short-listed the following locations as having the potential to develop as centres for sea angling/boat stations.

- Ballyhoorisky.
- Bunagee.
- Burtonport.
- Fahan
- Killybegs.
- Tory Island.

The Council intend to prioritise infrastructural investment in sea angling/boat stations at these locations.

In addition the Council also recognise the importance of **Rathmullan** and **Downings** as existing sea angling centres and the potential of **Portsalon** to develop such a role. Consequently and without prejudice to the above strategy

the Council will support the development of Sea Angling at these additional centres.

(2) Angling

The Council recognise that Donegal, having some of the best salmon fisheries in Ireland, hundreds of kilometres of coastline and innumerable rivers and lakes, is favoured with a considerable angling resource. However, the full realisation of this resource continues to be threatened by water pollution and over fishing.

In order to fully develop this sector, the Council is firstly committed to working with all stakeholders to, maintain high levels of water quality, develop ancillary infrastructure, manage/maintain fish-stocks and facilitate both local and visiting anglers. Thereafter the Council is committed to marketing the County as a prime-angling destination.

(3) Development of a Sea-Life Centre

Research has indicated that Donegal lacks major one-day venues capable of attracting over 100,000 visitors per year. Furthermore, the operational programme for the Border, Midlands, and Western region cites the need to develop major tourism attractions in the area, as does *An Stratéis* the County Development Strategy. The research has also highlighted the potential for a commercially viable Sea-Life Centre to be established in the County. As a consequence, the Council will actively encourage the establishment of such a centre, which besides providing a major visitor attraction for the County, would help provide a valuable centre for education, entertainment and conservation.

(4) Beach Management

Beach Management aims to achieve a sustainable balance between conflicting human activities and the conservation of the coastal environment. It involves the management of human activities in a way, which allows for a range of uses to safely coexist whilst simultaneously protecting the environment on which such uses depend. In order to achieve such a balance, beach management may employ such mechanisms as:

- The provision of extra beach staff, information and signage relating to the beach environment and sustainable human interaction with it.
- The restriction of certain human activities on or adjacent to the beach, for example: vehicular access, quad biking, jet skiing etc.
- The zoning of portions of the beach for particular uses, for example: car free zones, water sports etc.
- The protection of fragile dune environments through the provision of board walks, restricting human access to certain areas and the planting of protective vegetative covers.

Furthermore, as each coastal environment differs in terms of the environment and the range of human activities, which they can sustain, so the Management Strategy employed in each location will accordingly differ.

In 2003, Donegal County Council initiated a Beach Management Project for Rosstown. This pilot project aims to develop a successful Beach Management Strategy for Rosstown and to use the expertise gained from the project to develop and implement relevant Beach Management Strategies at other locations.

(5) Marina Development

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The establishment of a necklace of Marinas, located at Strategic Points around Ireland's coastline, is essential for the development of marine tourism. In response to this need, the County Donegal Marina Development Strategy identified that Donegal could viably sustain 450 berths and that to utilise the following six locations (each varying in size and functionality) would best suit this strategy:

- Ballyhoorisky.
- Bunagee.
- Burtonport.
- Fahan
- Killybegs.
- Tory Island.

The Strategy Report also recommended the integration of sea angling facilities at these centres where demand exists or develops. Such developments would undoubtedly act as economic catalysts in their immediate areas and therefore, the Council will require an integrated approach for the development of these sites and their hinterlands. In addition, the Council recognises the importance of smaller anchorages and dedicated moorings in developing the Cruising Market.

(6) Coastal Walks

The Marine/Water-based Leisure and Tourism Programme will identify existing and/or potential coastal walking routes, which can be developed and marketed as a tourism product. These routes will ideally be permanent, of high quality and adequately managed, whilst simultaneously addressing local needs within sport, recreation and community development. The routes should allow for future expansion and integration, and provide links to other activities and facilities.

Fisheries and Fisheries Infrastructure Development

The Fishing industry has faced significant pressures and undergone significant changes in recent years. However, the contribution of the Marine sector to the economy of Donegal remains strong and therefore it is essential to implement strategies, which aid the continued growth and diversification of the sector. Accordingly, the County Development Board has conducted research, which has identified a number of strategies for the development of the Donegal seafish industry. Consequently, the policies and objectives outlined below complement this strategy.

(1) Development of Clusters

The Council recognises the importance of clusters of fishing related socio-economic activity, centred on Killybegs, Greencastle and Burtonport. It considers that such centres act as vital economic catalysts for their respective local economies and the maintenance of the critical mass achieved at these locations is essential for future development. Consequently, the Council is committed to safeguarding and enhancing the role of such locations as centres of fleet activity, processing and ancillary services.

(2) Sustainable Coastal Communities

The Council acknowledges the importance of fisheries and marine related income in developing sustainable coastal communities. Accordingly, the Council envisages a heightened role for seasonal small-scale fishermen in the management of inshore water fisheries through comprehensive Integrated Coastal Zone Management strategies. In addition, the Council will promote the development of tourism and fisheries related products specific to this sector.

and will continue to support the necessary ancillary infrastructure on which the sector relies.

(3) Resource Management

The sustainable growth of Donegal's Marine Sector is dependent upon the implementation of efficient Management and Conservation regimes. Whilst the Council has a limited role to play in marine resource management, it is the Council's view that those involved in the marine sector in Donegal should be encouraged and supported to play a pro-active part in such management structures. Such an approach, in turn, feeds into the logic underpinning the Council's policy regarding Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

(4) Capture of Added Value

It is widely acknowledged that marine resources harvested or farmed in Donegal are of the highest quality and this is a direct consequence of the unspoilt natural environment from which they originate. The Council consider it essential that this quality is reinforced in the consumers mind by the adoption of higher codes of practice, certification and traceability. The Council are therefore committed to further enhancing the value of such products by assisting in marketing and through the provision of infrastructure.

(5) Market Orientation

In a world of rapidly changing markets, the Council recognises that marketing and market orientation are of vital importance to the fisheries industry in the County. Accordingly, the Council will promote research and innovation in niche products and brands, which facilitate emerging market opportunities. In addition, the Council will encourage the natural links that exist between the fisheries sector, seafood and tourism in developing new products and diversifying into new areas of growth.

Island Development

The geographical position of Donegal's offshore Islands, combined with Donegal's climate, create special difficulties with regard to access, communications and economic development of our island communities. Particular elements of this Development Plan refer specifically to aspects of island development, such as, culture, tourism, access and communications etc. However, marine infrastructure remains of prime importance to island development and the Council is committed to an ongoing programme for the maintenance and improvement of such infrastructure. Moreover, during the life of the Plan the Council will prepare an 'Islands Strategy', setting out in detail, specific policies and programmes for the continuing development of the Islands.

Access

Recent years have seen the successful completion of key marine access projects in the County. The introduction of car ferries on the Greencastle-Magilligan and Rathmullan-Buncrana routes demonstrate the potential of such projects in advancing socio-economic regeneration and tourism promotion. With this logic in mind the Council, in association with the European Partnership MAYA 2 programme, has commissioned research into the connection of the Shannon Erne Waterway (and the Irish Canal Network) with Donegal Bay. This link would have the potential to create new sailing routes and develop new tourism opportunities. In view of Donegal's historical maritime links with Scotland, it is the Council's intention to investigate and if feasible, support the introduction of a ferry link between Inishowen and Scotland.

County Donegal Development Plan 2006-2012 (As varied)

GOAL

To support Marine resource developments in a way which contribute to the socio-economic and sustainable development of the County.

OBJECTIVES

- To achieve sustainable Island communities through strengthening of their socio-economic and cultural fabric and implementing further infrastructural improvements.
- To develop strong Integrated Coastal Zone Management strategies, which have the support of all relevant stakeholders and are capable of ensuring the sustainable development of the County's marine resource.
- To maintain a strong and prosperous fishing industry capable of adapting to changing markets and supporting the communities which depend on it.
- To create a vibrant Marine/Water-Based Leisure and Tourism base within the County focused on developing distinctive marine tourism products and improving leisure facilities.
- To develop the Aquaculture sector in a manner that is sensitive to the marine environment and in line with Integrated Coastal Zone Management strategies.
- To further enhance Marine access into Donegal through the maintenance of existing Marine infrastructure and development of new infrastructural projects.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

It is Council policy to:

POLICY NRD53:

Identify appropriate strategies for Integrated Coastal Zone Management frameworks and implement these frameworks at selected locations.

POLICY NRD54:

Ensure the inclusion of aquaculture as an integral part of such ICZM frameworks.

POLICY NRD55:

Facilitate the development of a centre for coastal zone education and research in the County.

POLICY NRD56:

Facilitate the development of a Sea-Life centre capable of acting as a major tourism attraction for the County.

POLICY NRD57:

Facilitate the development of marina, boat stations and/or sea angling facilities at the following locations:

- Ballyhoorisky.
- Bunagee.
- Burtonport.
- Fahan
- Killybegs.
- Tory Island.

POLICY NRD58:

Implement Beach Management Projects at suitable locations based on the experience gained from the Rosstown Beach Management Project.

POLICY NRD59:

County Donegal Development Plan 2006-2012 (As varied)

Safeguard and enhance the roles of Killybegs, Greencastle and Burtonport as centres of fleet activity, processing, and ancillary services and promote the diversification of such locations into new areas of marine related economic activity.

POLICY NRD60:

Maintain and enhance marine infrastructure throughout the County and on the offshore islands.

POLICY NRD61:

Investigate and if feasible support the development of a canal connection between the Shannon-Erne Waterway and Donegal Bay.

POLICY NRD62:

Investigate and if feasible facilitate the development of a seasonal ferry link between Donegal and Scotland.

POLICY NRD63:

Facilitate the continued operation of both the Greencastle-Magilligan ferry route and the Buncrana-Rathmullan ferry route.

POLICY NRD64:

Facilitate full development of the County's angling resource.

POLICY NRD65:

Continue to co-ordinate the development and marketing of marine water-based tourism products as per the Framework Report prepared for the County by the Marine Institute in 1999.

POLICY NRD66:

Consider the use of By-laws, which restrict certain activities at coastal locations in order to protect public health and safety and/or vulnerable coastal environments.

POLICY NRD67:

Identify existing and/or potential coastal walking routes, which can be developed and marketed as a tourism product and as a local amenity.

POLICY NRD68:

Not favourably consider development proposals, which adversely compromises the recreational and environmental amenity of designated and proposed Blue Flag Beaches.

POLICY NRD69:

Support the National Fisheries College, Greencastle in the provision of marine education and safety training in the north west.