

CHAPTER 2 SPATIAL STRATEGY

2.1 BACKGROUND

Introduction

This section sets out a Spatial Strategy for both the urban and rural parts of the County. The strategy draws on the provisions of the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region in providing a detailed County level Spatial Strategy, which charts the future development and regeneration of the County.

In doing so the Council is eager to proceed on a pro-active rather than a re-active basis, to “plan–monitor–manage” rather than to merely “predict and provide”. Furthermore in formulating a Spatial Strategy, the Council is mindful of the following guiding principles:

- Driving forward economic and social development in the County.
- Enhancing the quality of life of the inhabitants of Donegal and its visitors.
- Promoting and protecting an environment and heritage of high and distinctive quality.
- Promoting the varying strengths of different parts of the County and addressing their weaknesses through various initiatives, policy responses, infrastructural investment and fiscal measures.
- Setting out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- Responding positively to national and regional policy, including the National Spatial Strategy, the Regional Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region, and the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Spatial Trends

The County Development Plan 2000 predicted a modest population growth to between 130,000 and 135,000 by 2006. These projections have already been exceeded with the 2002 Census showing a population of 137,575. However this population growth has not been evenly spread.

The majority of this growth has occurred in or close to the major urban centres of Derry, and Letterkenny. In particular Letterkenny has established itself as the principal centre for retail, commercial and service activities in the County and has seen considerable population growth.

However the urban structure beyond such centres remains relatively weak, illustrated by the fact that Buncrana, (the only town after Letterkenny, to have a population in excess of 5,000 persons), is situated in relatively close proximity to both Derry and Letterkenny. Meanwhile the towns of Bundoran, Ballyshannon, Donegal and Ballybofey-Stranorlar, lying along the N15 transport axis, have populations that generally lie between 2,000 and 3,600.

Urban centres in the west of the County, being more distant from major urban centres in the region and being more peripherally located, tend to have much smaller populations that generally don't exceed much above 1,000 in population. Indeed more peripheral rural areas have continued to show population decline in the period 1996-2002

Strategic Planning Framework

Since the publication of the current County Development Plan a number of important documents have been published which help to create a framework for the Spatial Development of County Donegal.

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) sets out, on a broad national level, a spatial structure on the basis of which more balanced regional development can be achieved. With regard to Donegal the NSS:

- Identifies Donegal as a distinct sub-region with the Border region.
- Identifies Letterkenny/Derry as a linked Gateway, an urban centre with a strengthened role, which would drive development in the region through enhanced critical mass, accessibility and capacity for development.
- Stresses the importance of other settlements in playing a complementary role to the Gateway so as to ensure that the wider area will benefit from the critical mass in region provided by the Gateways.
- Provides a framework by which the spatial planning of towns, villages and rural areas could be achieved. In particular the NSS states that small towns and villages will play an important role in providing local services/supporting employment whilst high quality development and landscape protection should be prioritised in such instances.
- Promotes the concept of a Strategic Transport Corridor that links Letterkenny both with Derry across the Border and with Sligo to the south. It also indicated that a similar transport Corridor would link Omagh, Monaghan and key urban centres on the east coast namely Dundalk, Drogheda and Dublin.

The Regional Planning Guidelines builds on the provision of the NSS described above. Importantly it also details a multi-level sub regional settlement strategy involving:

- Development of a Linked Letterkenny- Derry Gateway.
- Urban strengthening of identified medium and small sized towns.
- Urban support for towns and villages in proximity to Gateways.
- Support for smaller towns and villages.
- Urban support for towns and villages within the Gaeltacht.
- Identification of towns with special functions, e.g. Lifford.

In addition the County Donegal Retail Strategy 2006-2012 (**See Appendix D**) provides a clear strategy for the development of the retail function throughout the urban/rural hierarchy. In particular it sets out Council policy in regard to:

- The retail hierarchy for County Donegal.
- A sequential approach towards the location of new retail developments.
- The spatial distribution of new retail developments.
- The consolidation and enhancement of new centres.

The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland not only identifies Derry as a major Regional City for the North West but also highlights the importance and potential of cross-border linkages both in the growth of the city and of the region as a whole.

Future Trends And Analysis

Donegal's expected share of the future population growth of the Border Region, as reflected in Sub-Region 1, is expected to be approximately 27%, or approximately 145,000 by 2020. However, bearing in mind Donegal's current County population of around 137,575 (2002) and the inter-census growth of the County between 1996 and 2002, it is quite possible that this growth could be reached by around 2008, if current trends continue. Indeed recent figures (see Chapter 1.9) from the Central Statistics Office indicate that growth at 14,956 has outstripped this target.

Looking more closely at the population of the Gateway, it is anticipated that Letterkenny could increase its population from a base of circa 15,000 to 35,000 by the NSS target of 2020+. Such an expansion is very likely given its rate of population growth since the 1950's. It is also possible that its rate of growth could outpace that of Sligo, the nearest other Gateway and competitor for inward investment in the Republic, as its rate of growth has been exceeding that of Sligo over the past few decades.

In strategic terms the northern end of the Atlantic Corridor (N15/N13), which connects the most populous towns in the County, represents a strategic transport corridor, capable of providing important transportation linkages, funnelling development into the County and driving growth along its axis. Similarly the N56 'Atlantic Arc', connecting the more peripheral parts of the County, also acts as a strategic transport corridor and will play a pivotal role in the economic regeneration of many coastal and Gaeltacht areas of the County.

The evolving political, social, and economic situation in Northern Ireland in tandem with the identified strategic planning framework presents considerable opportunities and challenges for the entire North West region. Consequently improved cross border linkages in terms of transportation, education, health, planning and economic development, waste management, tourism, etc will play a pivotal role in the advancement of Donegal and of the region. In this regard close co-operation with agencies such as the Planning Service of Northern Ireland, Derry City Council, Strabane District Council, Fermanagh District Council, ICBAN (Irish Central Border Area Network), NWRCEG (North West Regional Cross Border Group), and the DOE NI, will be essential.

In light of these spatial trends, strategic planning framework, future trends and analysis the following Spatial Strategy for the County has emerged.

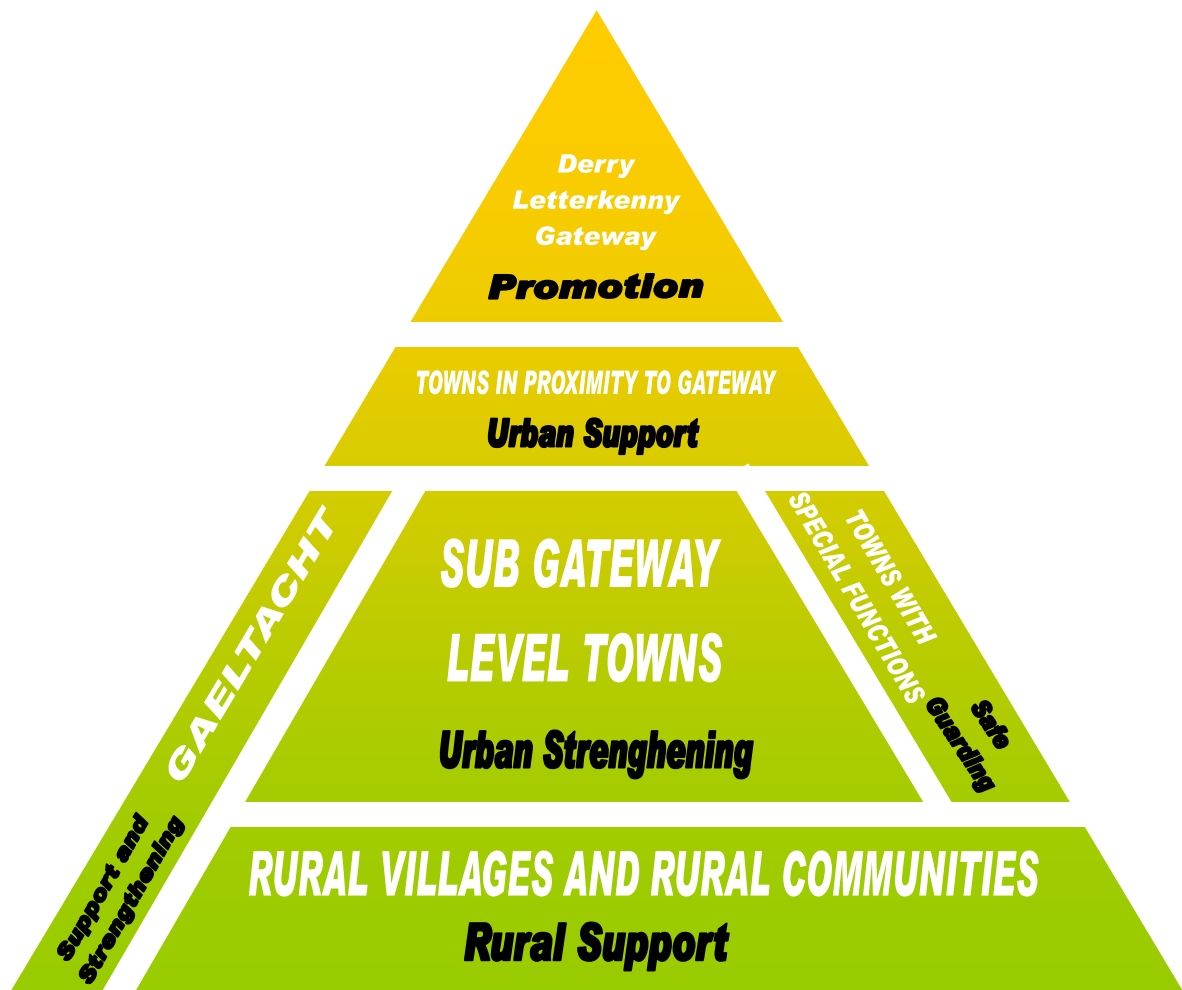
GOAL

The overall aim of the Spatial Strategy is to create a prosperous County with an improved quality of life by providing the focus and support necessary to create strong urban structures and sustainable rural areas.

OBJECTIVES

1. The creation of a **vibrant and fully functioning Letterkenny – Derry linked Gateway** as the principal driver for the development of the region.
2. The creation, through urban strengthening measures, of a **strong urban structure at the sub-gateway level**, which would consolidate the development of the Gateway as well as ensuring that the benefits of the spatial policy are spread evenly throughout the County.
3. The **management of growth** in close proximity to the linked gateway, through urban support measures.
4. The creation or **vibrant rural areas**, which are key drivers of a changing rural economy, by providing support for rural villages and rural communities.
5. The **protection and enhancement** of the unique cultural and linguistic resource of the **Gaeltacht** through a process of urban strengthening, urban support and rural support.
6. **Safeguarding** the role of **centres with special functions**: such as Lifford, Moville, Greencastle, Burtonport, Rossnowlagh, Downings, Rathmullan, Gaoth Dobhair, Glencolumbkille, and Gortahork.

Implementing The Spatial Strategy



2.2 POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

2.3 PROMOTION OF THE LETTERKENNY-DERRY LINKED GATEWAY

The Council considers that the identification of the Letterkenny-Derry Gateway represents an opportunity to channel investment into the area and create benefits for the entire County. A vibrant and fully functioning linked Gateway will in turn create the momentum to drive the development of the entire County with spin offs and advantages that will flow throughout the County and filter down through the Urban-Rural hierarchy to positively impact on all areas. From this economic, social and cultural regeneration and with the necessary investment in infrastructure, transportation and the public realm there will evolve a more prosperous County providing an improved quality of life. In planning terms the creation of an urban complex with such critical mass will provide for:

- A centre, which will be able to compete at the regional level.
- A focal point for investment and employment in the County.
- An efficient public transport system.
- Viable educational, health and social services of regional importance.
- A well-developed retail environment.
- A vibrant and regionally important entertainment and cultural sector.
- Strategic links with Northern Ireland.

The Gateway will have to sell itself on matters of 'quality of life', local amenities, environmental quality and image. The management of growth, particularly urban sprawl, will be critical to its long-term success. Poorly designed and poorly located development will detract from its image and environmental quality. Urban design improvements and the quality of the built environment will therefore be a strong determining factor in the successful development of Letterkenny to Gateway status, in addition to an efficient urban land use structure with appropriate zonings and sufficient infrastructure provision. Ultimately, the area will need to be attractive to both inward investments from national and international sources and to future employees and their families.

The idea of a linked Gateway implies important strategic connections between Letterkenny and Derry. Such connections need to be both physical (i.e., transport and telecommunications) and virtual, i.e., through business relationships, cultural events, cross border initiatives and joint promotion and marketing campaigns.

Implementation

The above strategy can be implemented through the following measures:

- Promoting and managing growth in the Letterkenny-Derry corridor in accordance with the strategy outlined in this Plan.
- Improvement of intra-Gateway and intra-County public transport links, **(See Chapter 3, Transportation and Communications)**.
- Improvement of specific transport links (road, air, rail etc):
 - To the Gateway from Belfast, Dublin and Sligo.
 - Between Letterkenny and Derry.
 - Between the Gateway and the rest of the County.
- Working closely with all relevant government organisations and NGO's in attracting inward investment.
- Work in partnership with County Development Board substructures to assist in the implementation of proposals included in An Stratéis, the County Development Board Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2012 to assist in economic, social and cultural development of the County.

- Marketing Letterkenny – Derry as a place to live, work, visit, and do business.
- Continuing support for new business start-ups such as training, financial assistance, and the provision of low cost business units, **(See Chapter 4, Employment Generation and Enterprise Development Strategies)**.
- Developing the innovative capacity of business by means of: improving the capacity of educational institutions, matching training to business needs, and improving cross border co-operation in education provision.
- Improvement in the quality of the built environment in the linked Gateway.
- Upgrading of Infrastructure (Sewerage, Water Supply, Broadband, Road network etc), to the necessary standard to allow for increased development.
- Enhancing the role of Letterkenny as a public service centre.
- Ensuring the affordability of housing through the strategic land use planning policies and the provision of social and affordable housing.
- Developing the cultural and recreational amenities of the Gateway.
- Improving cross border access to health services.
- Managing Growth in the immediate hinterland of the Gateway in accordance with:
 - The strategy of growth management/urban support for towns and villages in proximity to the linked Gateway.
 - The development strategy prepared for the Letterkenny – Derry corridor (Including working in partnership with the Planning Service NI and Derry City Council in developing a coherent cross border planning framework).
- Expansion of the Business and Technology Park, Letterkenny, **(See Chapter 4, Employment Generation and Enterprise Development Strategies)**.
- Co-ordinated development of the town centre expansion in Letterkenny.

2.4 URBAN STRENGTHENING OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE AT THE SUB-GATEWAY LEVEL

A strong urban structure at the sub-Gateway level is essential not only to consolidate the Letterkenny-Derry Gateway but also to ensure that a network exists to filter and funnel the benefits of the Gateway to all parts of the County.

The strengthening of such an urban structure therefore represents an essential element of the overall Spatial Strategy for the County and has the following important functions:

- **Driving development** throughout the immediate spatial reach of the individual urban areas within the structure.
- Providing important **retail, commercial and public service** functions at the sub-Gateway level.
- Assisting in promoting, sustaining and diversifying the **rural economy**.
- Developing a **strong urban structure** at the sub-Gateway level, which would complement and consolidate the linked Letterkenny-Derry Gateway.
- Aiding in the implementation of the **County Donegal Retail Strategy 2006-2012 (See Appendix D)**.

Based on an analysis of the National Spatial Strategy, the Regional Planning Guidelines as well as the size, functionality, scale, and location of various towns throughout the County, the following centres have been identified as capable of providing a strong urban structure at the sub-Gateway level.

(Shown in alphabetical Order)

- Ardara
- Ballybofey-Stranorlar
- Ballyshannon
- Bridgend
- Buncrana
- Bundoran
- Carndonagh
- Castlefinn
- Convoy
- Donegal Town
- Dungloe/Bunbeg/Derrybeg (Linked Centre)
- Falcarragh
- Glenties
- Killybegs
- Kilmacrennan
- Milford
- Newtowncunningham
- Ramelton
- Raphoe

Implementation

The above strategy can be implemented through the following measures:

- Improving the quality of the built environment and the regeneration of obsolete areas, **(See Chapter 8, The Built and Natural Heritage)**, through such mechanisms as:
 - The town and village renewal programme.
 - A positive system of fiscal incentives for the redevelopment of derelict buildings.
 - The acquisition of derelict property where it can provide infill sites for housing in towns and villages.
- Improvement of public transport and road linkages between the urban centres identified, **(See Chapter 3, Transportation and Communications)**.
- Support and promote the development of retail activity in the County in accordance with the objectives, strategic framework and policies set out in the County Donegal Retail Strategy 2006-2012. **(See Appendix D)**.
- Work in partnership with County Development Board substructures to assist in the implementation of proposals included in *An Stratéis*, the County Development Board Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2012 to assist in economic, social and cultural development of the County.
- The identification and development of Key Interest Centres in specified towns in accordance with policy EED3 **(See Chapter 4, Employment Generation and Enterprise Development Strategies)**.
- Enhancement of the public service function offered at existing locations and the completion of the Council's decentralisation programme to provide for a Public Service Centre with 'one stop shop facility' in Ballybofey/Stranorlar.
- Development of the Tourism Product offered by such centres as a key part of their economic development, **(See Chapter 9, Tourism)**.
- Development of the cultural and recreational resources offered at such locations.
- Upgrading of Infrastructure (Sewerage, Water Supply, Broadband, Road network etc), to facilitate the growth of such centres.
- Guiding development in a sustainable manner through the preparation of

Local Area Plans, the use of Strategic Development Zones etc. In particular developing more compact urban forms able to sustain a range of services through the following measures:

- Careful land use planning.
- Focusing future development on infill sites, derelict sites, vacant plots and back lands.
- Implementing Green Belts and Buffer Zones.
- Constraining ribbon development.
- Implementation of the rural housing policy.

2.5 URBAN SUPPORT FOR TOWNS AND VILLAGES WITHIN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE GATEWAYS

In the immediate hinterland of the Gateway there exists both an opportunity to contribute to the critical mass of the Gateway and a need to manage such growth in a sustainable way.

However in recent years, areas within the commuter belt of Letterkenny and Derry have come under pressure for housing and in particular, one-off rural housing. This pattern of development, if left unchecked or unmanaged, not only erodes the quality and character of rural areas but also hinders the creation of critical mass thereby impeding the provision of services.

Accordingly there is a necessity to guide development into a number of predefined urban centres. The effect of such a policy would be to add to the critical mass of both Letterkenny and Derry whilst simultaneously lessening the necessity for dispersed rural development.

Consequently it is the policy of the Council to provide urban support to the following urban areas in close proximity to the Letterkenny-Derry linked Gateway.

- Burnfoot
- Fahan
- Killea
- Manorcunningham
- Muff
- Carrigans
- St. Johnston

Implementation

The above strategy can be implemented through the following measures:

- Improving the quality of the built environment and the regeneration of obsolete areas, **(See Chapter 8, The Built and Natural Heritage)** through such mechanisms as:
 - The town and village renewal programme.
 - A positive system of fiscal incentives for the redevelopment of derelict buildings.
 - The acquisition of derelict property where it can provide infill sites for housing in towns and villages.
- Guiding development in a sustainable manner through the preparation of Development Plans, Local Area Plans, the use of Strategic Development Zones etc. In particular developing more compact urban forms able to sustain a range of services through:

- Careful land use planning.
- Focusing future development on infill sites, derelict sites, vacant plots and back lands.
- Implementing Green Belts and Buffer Zones.
- Constraining ribbon development.
- Implementation of the rural housing policy.
- Implementation of the Development Strategy for the Letterkenny-Derry corridor.
- Improving the functionality available at these locations in terms of education, telecommunications, information technology, public transport, social/recreational and retail functions.
- Upgrading of Infrastructure (Sewerage, Water Supply, Broadband, Road network etc), to the necessary standard to allow for increased development and improved linkages between the above locations and the Letterkenny-Derry Gateway.
- Work in partnership with County Development Board substructures to assist in the implementation of proposals included in An Stratéis, the County Development Board Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2012 to assist in economic, social and cultural development of the County.

2.6 RURAL SUPPORT FOR RURAL VILLAGES AND SUSTAINING RURAL COMMUNITIES

This policy is aimed at enhancing rural villages and supporting the rural communities, with which they co-exist.

The Council views rural villages as lying at the heart of sustainable rural communities. Such villages represent key nodes for the provision of local services such as education, retail services, health, communication and rural transport to rural communities. Focusing rural housing growth in close proximity to these villages will serve to maintain the level of service offered at such locations.

Strong Rural villages in turn depend on the dynamic rural communities. Therefore sustaining and promoting a vibrant living countryside is key to the success of any rural policy. Rural areas have undergone significant structural changes in recent years and as a consequence face many new challenges and opportunities. Whilst some rural areas continue to face population decline whilst others have seen significant population growth. Changes in agriculture require diversification into new areas of enterprise. Such rural communities also face deficiencies in terms of transport and telecommunications and other physical infrastructure.

Consequently the Council believes that the following rural support measures are essential to provide for vibrant rural villages and sustainable rural areas.

Implementation

The above strategy can be implemented through the following measures:

- Accommodate rural generated housing need through the implementation of the Rural Housing Policy outlined in this Plan, **(See Chapter 5, Housing)**.
- Improving the quality of the built environment and the regeneration of obsolete areas through such mechanisms as, **(See Chapter 8, The Built and Natural Heritage)**:
 - The town and village renewal programme.
 - A positive system of fiscal incentives for the redevelopment of derelict buildings.

- The acquisition of derelict property where it can provide infill sites for housing in towns and villages.
- The elimination of derelict sites/buildings adjoining scenic routes and tourist routes in rural areas.
- A rehabilitation programme in rural areas and areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA), where significant visual and ecological damage has been caused by the activities of man.
- Guiding development in a more sustainable manner. In particular developing more compact urban forms able to sustain a range of services through:
 - Careful land use planning.
 - Focusing future development on infill sites, derelict sites, vacant plots and back lands.
 - Constraining ribbon development.
 - Implementation of the rural housing policy.
- Improving the services available to rural communities in terms of education, communications, information technology, rural transport and retail functions.
- Promoting rural diversification and developing new sources of income and enterprise for rural areas through agricultural diversification and support mechanisms for new business.
- Working in partnership with local community and development groups in developing sustainable rural communities and building on the unique assets and indigenous strengths of particular areas.
- Work in partnership with County Development Board substructures to assist in the implementation of proposals included in *An Stratéis*, the County Development Board Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2012 to assist in economic, social and cultural development of the County.

2.7 SUPPORT FOR GAELTACHT AREAS

In recognising the unique cultural and linguistic resource of Gaeltacht areas the Council acknowledge the need for specific land-use planning policies, which act to strengthen and protect that same resource.

In common with non-Gaeltacht areas, Gaeltacht areas will require measures, which provide for both strong urban structures and vibrant and sustainable rural areas. The energy and success of such areas will in turn ensure that the Language and Culture of the Gaeltacht prospers at all levels of the Urban-Rural Hierarchy.

In addition, in the Gaeltacht specific measures will be required which not only afford greater protection to but also actively promote the linguistic and cultural aspects of the Gaeltacht.

Amongst the specific measures, which will be required in Gaeltacht areas, to ensure the success of this policy will be:

Implementation

The above strategy can be implemented through the following measures:

- Upgrading of Physical Infrastructure (Sewerage, Water Supply, Broadband, Road network, Electricity etc), to the necessary standard to allow for continued economic growth thereby strengthening Gaeltacht areas.
- Working closely with all relevant government organisations and Non Governmental Organisations in attracting inward investment.

- The provision of social and cultural infrastructure such as: Leisure facilities, Arts Centres etc, **(See Chapter 10, The Gaeltacht, Culture, Sport and Recreation)**.
- The active promotion of the Irish Language and Culture through implementing the policies laid out in this Plan and working closely with relevant agencies and organisations, **(See Chapter 10, The Gaeltacht, Culture, Sport and Recreation)**.
- Improving the quality of the built environment and the regeneration of obsolete areas through such mechanisms as:
 - The town and village renewal programme.
 - A positive system of fiscal incentives for the redevelopment of derelict buildings.
 - The acquisition of derelict property where it can provide infill sites for housing in towns and villages.
 - The elimination of derelict sites/buildings adjoining scenic routes and tourist routes in rural areas.
 - A rehabilitation programme in rural areas and areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA), where significant visual and ecological damage has been caused by the activities of man.
- Improvements in public transport so as to ensure that those working outside of Gaeltacht areas can remain living in Gaeltacht areas, **(See Chapter 3, Transportation and Communications)**.
- Developing and improving access to the regional airport at Carrickfinn as a key means or improving overall access to the Gaeltacht, **(See Chapter 3, Transportation and Communications)**.
- Guiding development in a more sustainable manner. In particular developing more compact urban forms able to sustain a range of services through:
 - Careful land use planning.
 - Focusing future development on infill sites, derelict sites, vacant plots and back lands.
 - Constraining ribbon development.
- Accommodation of Rural Generated Housing needs as per the Rural Housing Policy set out in this Plan, **(See Chapter 5, Housing)**.
- Ensuring the affordability of housing through the strategic land use planning policies and the provision of social and affordable housing in accordance with **(See Policy UB2, Chapter 5, Housing)**.
- Restrictions on the proliferation of holiday homes where such developments would lead to the considerable influx of a non-Irish speaking population.
- Work in partnership with County Development Board substructures to assist in the implementation of proposals included in *An Stratéis*, the County Development Board Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2012 to assist in economic, social and cultural development of the County.

2.8 CENTRES WITH SPECIAL FUNCTIONS

A number of centres throughout the County fulfil such specialised functions in such areas as: coastal tourism, culture, and specialised services. Such functionality is not only of importance to these towns and their immediate hinterlands but is a critical element of the development of the County and of the region as a whole.

In this regard the Council recognise the importance of Lifford as a centre of local governance and in the administration/delivery of public services. It acknowledges the role of Downings, Rathmullan, and Rossnowlagh as regionally important centres

of coastal tourism. The Council also recognises Glencolumbkille as a centre of both heritage and culture and the culturally important role, which Gortahork plays.

The Council acknowledges the importance of Greencastle, Merville, Killybegs and Burtonport as specialised service centres for the marine sector. The Council also recognises the future role of Gaoth Dobhair as a centre for 3rd Level education. Finally the Council acknowledge that Gaoth Dobhair, Donegal Town and Bunrana will, in the future, provide important public service functionality as part of the Governments Decentralisation programme.

Consequently the maintenance and enhancement of such functionality is a key objective of this Spatial Strategy. The achievement of this objective will require specific implementation measures, which are detailed below.

Implementation

The above strategy can be implemented through the following measures:

- Safeguarding the role of Lifford as centre of local governance and in the administration/delivery of public services.
- Protecting and enhancing the coastal environment and the marine resource of Rathmullan, Downings and Rossnowlagh and developing the tourism product offered as such centres.
- Marketing Glencolumbkille as a centre of heritage and cultural activities and promoting Gortahork's cultural role.
- Safeguarding/enhancing the role of Greencastle, Merville, and Burtonport as centres of fisheries, fleet activity, processing, and ancillary services.
- Facilitating the development of a centre for 3rd Level Education in the Gaoth Dobhair area.
- Supporting the decentralisation of government services to Gaoth Dobhair, Donegal Town, and Bunrana.
- Guiding development in a more sustainable manner. In particular developing more compact urban forms able to sustain a range of services through:
 - Careful land use planning.
 - Focusing future development on infill sites, derelict sites, vacant plots and back lands.
 - Constraining ribbon development.
 - Implementation of the rural housing policy.
- Upgrading of Physical Infrastructure (Sewerage, Water Supply, Broadband, Road network, Electricity etc), to the necessary standard to protect the environment and allow for growth.
- Improving the quality of the built environment and the regeneration of obsolete areas.

2.9 LETTERKENNY-DERRY CORRIDOR: LIMITED NODAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

The identification of Letterkenny – Derry as a linked Gateway presents considerable development opportunities and challenges. It is recognised that as both centres grow and benefit from inward investment in the coming years the corridor between Letterkenny and Derry will also come under considerable development pressures. If managed in a planned and sustainable way this corridor has the opportunity to strengthen the links between the two centres, provide important functionality, contribute to the building of critical mass, and filter the benefits accrued by the Gateway down through the urban/rural hierarchy.

Therefore from a forward planning perspective it is imperative that the Council prepare a detailed strategy involving urban strengthening, and urban support/growth management which both reinforces the development of the Gateway and is in accordance with the wider Spatial Strategy identified in this Development Plan.

Aims

To guide the development of the corridor in a way which aids the growth of the linked Gateway and filters the benefits of the Gateway down the urban/rural hierarchy.

Specific Objectives

To implement the sub-strategies of the Countywide Spatial Strategy in the context of the corridor namely:

1. **Promotion of the Gateway:** By adding to the critical mass of the Gateway and providing important functionality.
2. **The creation of a strong urban structure at the sub-Gateway level:** Through such urban strengthening measures as improving the quality of the built environment, improving public transport, the provision of physical infrastructure, and the upgrading of residential and social amenities etc.
3. **Growth Management of towns in proximity of the Gateway through Urban Support:** By means of land use planning, concentrating and consolidating development and thus building critical mass at the micro scale.

Methodology

A number of possible strategies including: Bi-Polar Growth, Organic Linear Growth, Multi Nodal Development, and Limited Nodal Development were assessed in relation to their capacity to achieve the aim and realise the objectives detailed above. This evaluation demonstrated that a strategy of limited nodal development was the most appropriate strategy for the corridor. The strategy envisages focusing development in the corridor at a number of pre-defined locations. Whilst the Council recognise that there are other towns and villages, which will also aid in the realisation of such aims and objectives, this section focuses exclusively on locations along the corridor. **Additionally the Council will review the use of the Council lands situated at the Big Isle Letterkenny in the context of the Letterkenny/Derry corridor.**

Given the capacities and attributes of each centre it is envisaged that development of the various centres will help fulfil the objectives detailed above in different ways. For instance whilst some will help mainly in the managing growth in proximity to the Gateway, others will act to strengthen the urban structure at the sub-Gateway level. Collectively the centres will act to promote the Gateway by building critical mass. Consequently each centre will vary in function and scale in the fashion

described below. Thus the strategy recognises the strengths, which the various centres along the corridor possess, whilst seeking to utilise these strengths as part of the overall solution.

Urban Strengthening

The following centres will fulfil the objective of urban strengthening at the sub-Gateway level, thus providing a strong urban structure through which to filter the benefits of the gateway as well as contributing to the critical mass of the Gateway.

Buncrana

Functions
Residential, Retail, Commercial, Recreational, Educational, Public Transport and Community/Religious.
Description
Buncrana is a significant town performing important functions in it's own right. Although it is not located directly along the Letterkenny – Derry axis its proximity to the Gateway, and its linkages with Inishowen, Derry, and Letterkenny respectively mean that Buncrana will play an important role in the development of the corridor. Strengthening Buncrana will help build a strong urban structure at the sub-Gateway level and thus contribute to the critical mass of the Gateway whilst retaining and developing the towns existing functionality.

Newtowncunningham

Functions
Residential, Retail, Education, Transport, Recreational, Commercial and Community/Religious.
Description
Newtowncunningham sits roughly equidistant between Letterkenny and Derry. Consequently it is ideally placed to execute a range of functions in the context of the corridor. Its location is ideally suited to offer commercial and retail services to the catchments of both Letterkenny and Derry. Furthermore as it grows it will offer the critical mass necessary to sustain a range of retail and commercial services, recreational facilities and residential amenities based on the existing urban form. Its compact form also aids in the delivery of physical infrastructure such as roads, sewerage, water and in the future natural gas.

Bridgend

Functions
Retail, Commercial, Transport
Description
Bridgend's proximity to Derry means that it performs important cross border retail and commercial functions. The agglomeration of such activities at Bridgend has served to create a significant retail and commercial centre. Furthermore as Derry expands towards the border it seems logical that it's commercial reach extend seamlessly across the border to include Bridgend. Urban Strengthening is therefore required in order to sustain such functions, which will in turn build a robust urban structure and contribute to the critical mass of the Gateway.

Growth Management Of Towns In Proximity Of The Gateway Through Urban Support

The following centres will perform the role of Growth Management in close proximity to the Gateway, thus lessening the need for dispersed rural development whilst contributing to the critical mass of the Gateway. The provision of urban support measures at such centres will be essential if they are to play a full part in the strategy identified above.

Manorcunningham

Functions
Residential, Retail, Commercial, Recreational.
Description
Located in close proximity to Letterkenny on the N13 leading to Derry, Manorcunningham is likely to experience development pressures in the coming years. Its relatively small size, relative closeness to Letterkenny, and physical location mean that a strategy of growth management would best suit the town and facilitate the orderly development of the corridor. Consequently urban support will be required in order that Manorcunningham can successfully perform such a role.

Burnfoot

Functions
Residential, Retail, Commercial, Recreational.
Description
Located in close proximity to Derry, Burnfoot is likely to experience development pressures in the coming years. Its relatively small size, and closeness to Derry mean Burnfoot is most optimally suited to facilitating growth management in proximity to the Gateway. In order to carry out this role urban support measures will be required.

Fahan

Functions:
Residential, Recreational/Tourism.
Description:
Fahan plays an important role in recreational boating and the recent development of a marina will serve to strengthen this function in the future. In addition Fahan has seen considerable residential development in recent years. However the village continues to lack any definable centre and any appropriate retail services for a village of this size. Accordingly a strategy of urban support, growth management and development of its recreational role is best suited to the village and to achieving the stated objectives of the corridor.

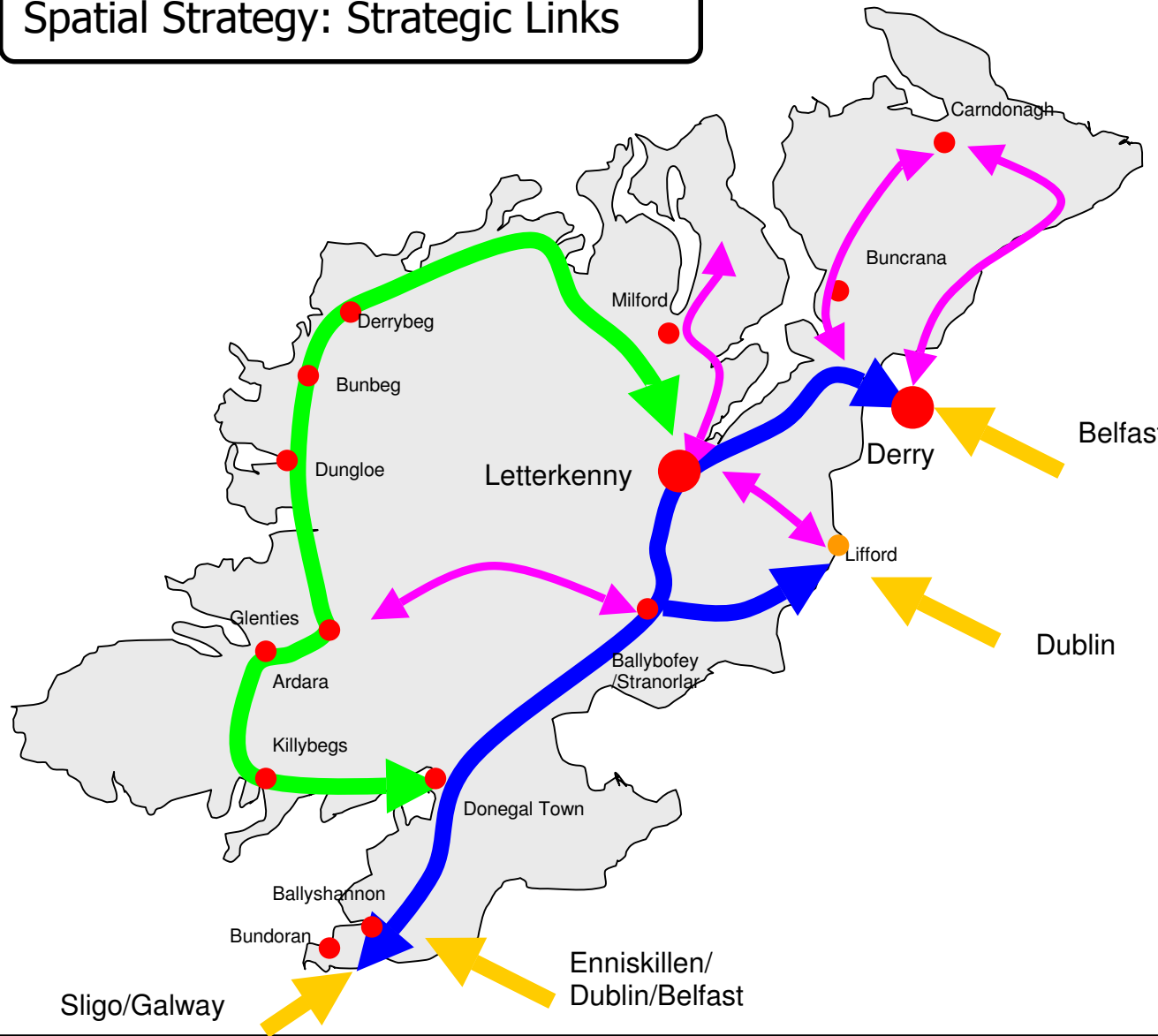
Burt

Functions
Heritage/Tourism, Community/Religious.
Description
Burt performs a locally important community/religious function through St Aengus's church and a nationally important heritage/tourism function through Grianan Aileach. Its location presents an obvious first stopping off point for tourists entering the County from across the border. Recent one off residential development in the area has shown the necessity to manage growth in the area in a way, which is sensitive to and protects the setting of these important assets. As such a strategy of limited growth and protection of these assets is most appropriate in the context of the village and in managing growth along the corridor.

Implementation
If the corridor is to grow in the manner described above and the aims and objectives of the scenario are to be realised it is imperative that a detailed operational programme be prepared. In turn the implementation of this programme will require a multisectoral approach involving close co-operation between a range of agencies. However it is possible to detail some of the measures, which will be necessary if the scenario is to be successfully progressed. These include:

- A package of social and community projects which will help to regenerate and sustain the communities along the corridor.
- A detailed assessment of the projected growth of the corridor in relation to the future water and environmental infrastructural needs and the provision of funding to address these demands.
- An upgrading of the road infrastructure along the corridor from both a carrying capacity and a road safety perspective. This may require improvements in access junctions, as well as the dualing of certain sections of the road, **(See Chapter 3, Transportation and Communications)**.
- Investment in a reliable and efficient public transport network linking the corridor.
- Completion of an adequate broadband link between the two centres capable of serving the nodes along the corridor. This will be imperative to improve competition and attract inward investment.
- Extension of the natural gas network along the axis of the corridor. The provision of a Gas pipeline in tandem with the development of limited and compact urban nodes would enable the cost effective delivery of this important and competitive energy source.
- An adequate planning framework will be crucial for the development of the corridor. This will be based on cross-border co-operation between Donegal Council, the Regional Planning Authority, the Planning Service of Northern Ireland, and Derry City Council. It may utilise such forward planning mechanisms as Strategic Developments Zones, Integrated Areas Plans and Local Area Plans. Controls on the proliferation of rural housing along the development corridor as part of the Development Plan will also be necessary. Such planning mechanisms are essential in order to:
 - Create critical mass and allow for the development of viable services at the nodes identified.
 - Protect the functionality offered at certain nodes. (E.G. Recreation at Fahan and Heritage at Burt)
 - Improve the quality of the built environment, thus improving the attractiveness of the nodes as places to both live and work.
 - Guide development within the nodes in an orderly fashion thus creating compact urban forms.
- Collective marketing of locations along the corridor (along with locations in both Derry and Letterkenny) as a location for new business.
- Continuing support for new business start-ups such as training, financial assistance, and the provision of low cost business units, **(See Chapter 4, Employment Generation and Enterprise Development Strategies)**.
- Developing the innovative capacity of business by means of: improving the capacity of educational institutions, matching training to business needs, and improving cross border co-operation in education provision.
- Work in partnership with County Development Board substructures to assist in the implementation of proposals included in An Stratéis, the County Development Board Strategic Plan for the period 2002-2012 to assist in economic, social and cultural development of the County.

Spatial Strategy: Strategic Links



Legend:

-  N15/N13 'Atlantic Corridor' Strategic Transport Corridor
-  N15/N13 'Atlantic Arc' Strategic Transport Corridor
-  Other Strategic Links
-  External Strategic Links

