

# **COUNTY DONEGAL HERITAGE PLAN**

**(DRAFT)**

*A strategic plan for County Donegal's heritage prepared by the  
County Donegal Heritage Forum*

**OCTOBER 2007**

## **FOREWORD**

[INSERT] **MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON,  
COUNTY DONEGAL HERITAGE FORUM**

[INSERT] **MESSAGE FROM MAYOR, DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL**

[INSERT] **MESSAGE FROM DONEGAL COUNTY MANAGER**

[INSERT] **INTRODUCTION**

## **WHAT IS HERITAGE?**

The term ‘heritage’ means different things to different people. The Heritage Act (1995) identifies heritage as comprising: archaeological objects, architectural heritage, fauna, flora, geology, heritage gardens & parks, heritage objects, inland waterways, landscapes, monuments, seascapes, wildlife habitats and wrecks. This concept of heritage is based on our material heritage, a visible expression of our culture. As such, it forms part of the setting of our everyday lives and provides us with a tangible connection with our home place, townland, village, town, parish and county.

This heritage around us is shaped by the past and by past generations. Each place has a unique heritage and contributes to our sense of place and our sense of belonging. It tells part of the story of County Donegal and the ways of life of its residents. It provides an insight into the attitudes, values, beliefs, traditions and aspirations of past and present Donegal residents. The natural, built and cultural heritage we enjoy today is an inheritance from past generations and a legacy that we will pass on to future generations. Our stewardship of the natural, built and cultural heritage of County Donegal will influence the richness and diversity of heritage that is available to future generations to learn from and to enjoy.

## **MANAGING OUR HERITAGE**

Our natural, built and cultural heritage is not self-preserving and we must share the challenge to manage our heritage. Each of us has a role to play in the preservation,

conservation, management, promotion and enhancement of heritage. Heritage management is a shared responsibility between national government, local authorities, communities, heritage groups and individuals. Whether we are aware of it or not, each of us make decisions about what aspects of our heritage will be retained and what aspects are expendable. Raising awareness and appreciation of our heritage is one of the greatest challenges facing us. The individual or collective decisions we make about our heritage are based on our understanding, knowledge and appreciation of heritage.

We often think of heritage as something that is static and constant. Heritage is a dynamic concept and our heritage resources reflect that. It is neither possible nor desirable to conserve everything. This makes our management of heritage all the more important. We cannot predict what aspects of heritage that future generations will value but we can ensure that our informed decisions regarding our heritage faithfully reflect our attitudes, values, beliefs, traditions and aspirations. Like many things in our changing world, our natural, built and cultural heritage plays an important role in making people's lives better by helping to create places where people want to live, work and visit. Managing our heritage in an informed and responsible way contributes to sustainable development. The principle of sustainable development states that the needs of the present generation must be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## **THE HERITAGE PLAN IN CONTEXT**

The importance of the natural, built and cultural heritage was recognised by the Government with the publication of the National Heritage Plan (2002). The objective of the National Heritage Plan is “to ensure the protection of our heritage and to ensure its enjoyment by all.” In order to achieve this objective, the Government recognises four sets of actions that contribute to local heritage protection and management:

- Placing protection and enjoyment of heritage at the heart of public life;
- Promoting the measures required for the protection of our heritage;
- Encouraging the accumulation of knowledge; and
- Promoting awareness and enjoyment of heritage for all.

The National Heritage Plan recognises that heritage is best protected and managed locally with the involvement of local communities. It also recognises that the conservation and management of our heritage plays an essential role in maintaining a high quality of life. The National Heritage Plan requires each local authority to prepare a Local Heritage Plan in consultation with a local heritage forum. In preparing and implementing the County Donegal Heritage Plan, Donegal County Council is responding to government policy and sharing the challenge of managing our natural, built and cultural heritage.

In *An Straitéis* (2002), the Donegal County Development Board recognises the importance of heritage by addressing heritage issues in its stated priority objective areas, objectives, goals and options for development. The preparation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan also fulfils an objective of the Donegal County Development Plan (2006-2012). The County Development Plan sets out the statutory land-use planning framework for the county. The County Donegal Heritage Plan complements the County Development Plan, and other statutory plans, by identifying many of the practical steps we need to take to ensure that heritage policy is effectively implemented.

## **FORMULATING THE HERITAGE PLAN**

Donegal County Council is committed to “placing heritage at the heart of public life” in County Donegal as set out in the National Heritage Plan. The County Donegal Heritage Plan is a five-year strategic plan for natural, built and cultural heritage at the county level. The Heritage Plan was prepared by the County Donegal Heritage Forum, a non-statutory advisory group to advise Donegal County Council on the preparation and implementation of the Heritage Plan. Membership of the Heritage Forum is drawn from a variety of sectors including: local government, local development, state agencies, educational institutions, farming representatives, community groups, and heritage organisations (see Appendix 1). This is the first time that these different interests have come together to develop a plan of action for the county’s natural, built and cultural heritage.

Donegal County Council led the process of developing the County Donegal Heritage Plan (see Appendix 2). The County Donegal Heritage Forum consulted widely in the preparation of the Heritage Plan. As a result of a call for submissions in autumn 2005, 37 submissions were received from interested individuals and organisations in the county and beyond (see Appendix 3). Six public meetings (one in each Electoral Area) were also held as part of the Heritage Plan consultation process (see Appendix 4). The Heritage Forum established three working groups (Natural Heritage Working Group, Built Heritage Working Group & Cultural Heritage Working Group) comprised of members of the Heritage Forum and additional people with appropriate knowledge and expertise (see Appendix 5). In an intensive series of workshops, the three working groups considered submissions received during the consultation process, identified key issues and formulated actions for inclusion in the County Donegal Heritage Plan. These Working Group sessions resulted in the Heritage Plan actions set out in this plan. The County Donegal Heritage Plan seeks to build on, and complement, the work of the many agencies, organisations and individuals already taking place in the county by addressing local heritage issues and needs specifically which are a priority for action.

[INSERT] **SETTING THE SCENE**

## **IMPLEMENTING THE HERITAGE PLAN**

The County Donegal Heritage Plan sets out a vision for the management of heritage in the county over the next five years. The aim of the County Donegal Heritage Plan is “to gather knowledge, raise awareness, encourage appreciation of the natural, built and cultural heritage of our county and to promote best practice in the management of our heritage for the enjoyment of present and future generations.” The County Donegal Heritage Plan is an action plan that sets out ambitious but realistic and attainable actions which we need to take over the next five years (2007-2011) in order to protect, conserve, manage, promote and enhance our heritage.

The actions set out in the first County Donegal Heritage Plan address five main objectives. The first of these is to raise awareness and promote appreciation of County Donegal's natural, built and cultural heritage. Considerable work needs to be done in order to heighten awareness of the natural, built and cultural heritage around us. Promoting appreciation and engendering pride in all aspects of our heritage will produce benefits for the management of heritage. The second objective of the Heritage Plan is to collect, publish and disseminate data and information about County Donegal's heritage. Access to heritage data and information informs individual and collective decision-making processes affecting our natural, built and cultural heritage. The management of heritage through the formulation of effective heritage policy relies on having baseline data on the quality, distribution and condition of heritage resources in the county. A third objective of the Heritage Plan is to promote best practice in the management and care of our natural, built and cultural heritage. Despite the best of intentions, many people can do damage to heritage resources in their enthusiasm to repair, restore, enhance or develop heritage resources. Providing opportunities to explore best practice in the management and care of heritage resources is critical to the 'hands-on' management of our heritage for practitioners and members of the public.

A fourth objective of the Heritage Plan is to develop interest and knowledge in County Donegal's heritage through access, education and training. This objective addresses the issue of physical and intellectual access to heritage. In order for present and future generations to explore and enjoy our rich and varied heritage, people living, working and visiting County Donegal have to be provided with adequate opportunities for access to our natural, built and cultural heritage. The heritage around us poses enormous educational opportunities at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The investigation of natural, built and cultural heritage resources can address education curriculum requirements while providing valuable information and data on heritage at local and regional levels. The final objective of the Heritage Plan is to inform public policy and advocate the strategic and integrated management of heritage. It is hoped that the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan will reinforce a partnership approach to the successful management of our natural, built and cultural heritage. The Heritage Plan will provide decision-makers with

quality heritage data and information which should inform the formulation and implementation of local authority policies.

It is important to note that the County Donegal Heritage Plan is not a statutory plan. Heritage policy is set out in other documents such as the Donegal County Development Plan, which sets out the statutory framework for land-use planning and sustainable development in County Donegal. The County Donegal Heritage Plan does not repeat the policy commitments made by Donegal County Council in the County Development Plan. Rather it sets out a series of proactive measures that need to be undertaken to manage heritage at the local level. The publication of the first County Donegal Heritage Plan represents a beginning, not an end. The County Donegal Heritage Plan sets out a vision and agreed objectives for the management of heritage in the county over the next five years. Local heritage and community groups have been involved in preparation of the Heritage Plan and their support and participation is vital for the successful implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan. It is hoped that local groups and organisations will become active partners in the implementation of the Heritage Plan actions. Cross-border and European links will also be explored in the implementation of the Heritage Plan. The implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan represents a new challenge which will require the continued support and cooperation of all stakeholders if the actions and aspirations set out in this Heritage Plan are to be realised.

## **STATEMENT OF STRATEGY**

The County Donegal Heritage Plan is a strategic countywide plan which sets out a series of 79 actions to be implemented in the period 2007-2011. Crucial to the successful implementation of the Heritage Plan are the support and cooperation of many partners. While Donegal County Council is a key partner, the actions set out in the Heritage plan cannot be realised without practical support from others. The Donegal Heritage Forum will seek the participation of key partners identified in implementing Heritage Plan actions. The Heritage Officer will, in many cases, act as project coordinator and the implementation of the Heritage Plan will be overseen by the Heritage Officer in consultation with the Heritage Forum. Since this is the first

County Donegal Heritage Plan, it is recognised that a degree of flexibility will have to be exercised when it comes to the implementation of the Heritage Plan as the new structure emerges and evolves.

The National Heritage Plan (2002) indicated that €12.7 million would be made available over a five-year period for the implementation of Local Heritage Plans. To date, this funding has not been made available by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. The Heritage Council has agreed, in principle, to consider the Heritage Plan as a five-year strategic funding application. The Heritage Council will consider funding actions in the Heritage Plan which are compatible with its objectives and consistent with normal funding criteria. To qualify for funding from The Heritage Council, the County Donegal Heritage Plan must be agreed and adopted by the Elected Members of Donegal County Council.

A budget of €750,000 is estimated for the delivery of actions over the lifetime of the Heritage Plan, excluding staff costs. This requires an average annual budget of €150,000 over the period 2007-2011. Donegal County Council is committed to the delivery of the actions in the Heritage Plan over the period 2007-2011 in partnership with other organisations and groups. In addition to financial support, Donegal County Council will continue to support the delivery of the actions in the Heritage Plan through the work of its Heritage Officer and other professional staff.

Each year and in the context of available resources and expertise, a work programme of actions in the County Donegal Heritage Plan will be identified, costed and implemented. The actions set out in this Heritage Plan identify key partners in the delivery of these actions. It is proposed that as annual work programmes are agreed, participation will be sought from other relevant partners on a project-by-project basis. Where necessary, small steering groups may be established to assist in the implementation of Heritage Plan actions. Progress reports will be prepared for Donegal County Council and The Heritage Council. Progress in implementing the Heritage Plan will be monitored by the County Donegal Heritage Forum and the public will be kept informed through public meetings and the media.

[INSERT] **APPENDIX 1: MEMBERSHIP OF THE HERITAGE FORUM**

[INSERT] **APPENDIX 2: THE HERITAGE PLAN PROCESS**

[INSERT] **APPENDIX 3: HERITAGE PLAN SUBMISSIONS**

[INSERT] **APPENDIX 4: PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETINGS**

[INSERT] **APPENDIX 5: HERITAGE PLAN WORKING GROUPS**

[INSERT] **APPENDIX 6: HERITAGE LEGISLATION**

## HERITAGE PLAN ACTIONS

**Objective 1: To raise awareness and promote appreciation of County Donegal's natural, built and cultural heritage.**

Number	Key Action
1.1.	Reproduce the 'Archaeological Survey of County Donegal'
1.2.	Undertake Village Design Statements for selected villages in consultation with local communities
1.3.	A project to raise awareness and encourage conservation of the settings of historic buildings and associated structures and traditional landscape character
1.4.	Encourage the formation of 'Civic Trusts' in urban areas to encourage a greater interest and pride in the local built environment
1.5.	Produce a map of all habitats in County Donegal
1.6.	Identify landforms of significance (geological and geomorphological) in County Donegal and promote their natural heritage values
1.7.	Raise awareness of the natural heritage of County Donegal through an annual promotional campaign
1.8.	Establish a 'Golden Mile' competition
1.9.	Create a countywide Heritage Fund to provide capital for heritage projects
1.10.	Establish Local Community Heritage Awareness Days
1.11.	Promote and encourage the development of the Donegal Historical Society's annual schools' competition
1.12.	Publish a newsletter on natural, built and cultural heritage issues in County Donegal
1.13.	Conduct projects to document and raise awareness of the natural, built and cultural heritage in Historic Towns and Heritage Towns
1.14.	A pilot programme to produce a 3D landscape model to increase awareness of existing heritage sites and the impact of landscape change
1.15.	Investigate the 'Island' heritage of County Donegal

**Objective 2: To collect, publish and disseminate data and information about County Donegal's heritage.**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Key Action</b>
2.1.	Conduct an inventory of historic graveyards and establish an interactive map and database
2.2.	Conduct an audit and create accessible databases of archaeological, archival and heritage objects from/in County Donegal in national, regional and local repositories
2.3.	Compile and publish an inventory of buaile/booley huts and sites and raise awareness of the practice of transhumance
2.4.	Conduct an audit and establish a database of photographic collections of cultural heritage and historical significance held in public/private care
2.5.	Establish a system to ensure that the public has access in Donegal to archaeological assessments and reports relating to the county
2.6.	Conduct an audit of museums and heritage centres in the county
2.7.	A project to investigate the cultural migration and material culture of Donegal people abroad
2.8.	Record and photograph roadside grottos and holy wells to inform the cultural heritage of the county
2.9.	A research project to identify heritage objects pertaining to agriculture and fishing in County Donegal
2.10.	A pilot project to collect and map local placenames, fieldnames and townlands
2.11.	A pilot project to examine the impact of the Plantation on the County Donegal landscape
2.12.	Conduct a systematic survey of vernacular architecture in County Donegal
2.13.	Conduct and publish a survey of clachans in County Donegal
2.14.	Identify vernacular architecture in state ownership and establish a management system for its preservation and conservation
2.15.	Establish and expand a video archive of traditional building skills and ways of life
2.16.	Establish a database of, and disseminate information on, industrial heritage in the county
2.17.	Survey and document all known mills and mill sites
2.18.	Survey and promote the maritime built heritage of the county including lighthouses, harbours, piers, coastguard stations and signal towers
2.19.	Explore and encourage the establishment of a local register of historically or architecturally significant buildings and structures (record-only)

2.20.	Undertake a survey of vulnerable/derelict church buildings and ancillary buildings in the county and explore the future of these structures with the relevant ecclesiastical authorities
2.21.	Create and publish a series of civil parish maps demonstrating estate ownership in the 1850s and an accompanying index of sources
2.22.	Selected survey of the distribution and state of conservation of roadside hedges, banks and stone walls
2.23.	Map and record all broadleaf woodland in the county
2.24.	Identify and record individual trees of heritage value in County Donegal
2.25.	Record and register walled gardens and old orchards and their fruit varieties
2.26.	Pilot an ecological study of one of the small inhabited islands off the Donegal coast
2.27.	Map and document all freshwater lakes and their flood margins
2.28.	Create an illustrated map depicting the presence of freshwater species in County Donegal
2.29.	Undertake a pilot oral history and folklore project for primary school children based on the 1930s Bealoideas Eireann/Folklore Commission project
2.30.	Conduct a survey of residents' and visitors' attitudes to the heritage of the county
2.31.	Produce and make accessible a comprehensive heritage bibliography for County Donegal as a research and educational tool
2.32.	Prepare an inventory of established public rights of way in the county

**Objective 3: To promote best practice in the management and care of our natural, built and cultural heritage.**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Key Action</b>
3.1.	Implement a 'best practice' management, conservation and maintenance system for historic graveyards
3.2.	Appoint a Field Monument Advisor for County Donegal
3.3.	Hold seminar(s) to promote best practice in the management and care of archaeological sites and monuments
3.4.	A programme to encourage the retention of traditional building skills and technologies
3.5.	Establish a 'Certificate of Good Practice' awards scheme for the historic built environment
3.6.	A project to promote best practice in the conservation, maintenance and documentation of old stone bridges and viaducts in the county
3.7.	Establish a scheme to encourage retention of: a) local dry-stone walls, gates and pillars, b) wrought-iron gates/railings, and c) street furniture/signage and old shopfronts
3.8.	Prepare a County Donegal Biodiversity Plan as required under the National Biodiversity Plan (2002)
3.9.	Establish best practice for the conservation of flora and fauna associated with stone bridges
3.10.	An annual seminar for 'Tidy Towns' committees on the natural, built and cultural heritage

**Objective 4: To develop interest and knowledge in County Donegal's heritage through access, education and training.**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Key Action</b>
4.1.	Create an education pack (hard copy and CD) on the county's architectural heritage
4.2.	Host a vernacular architecture summer field school
4.3.	Establish a habitat survey project for schools
4.4.	Identify, develop and promote nature walks in urban and rural areas
4.5.	Establish a network of whale/bird-watching stations at key headlands around the coast
4.6.	Produce a DVD/CD-ROM on the evolution of a Donegal landscape
4.7.	Establish, promote and provide interpretation at selected places of natural, built and cultural heritage interest
4.8.	Provide a mobile heritage unit for educational purposes
4.9.	Organise seasonal interactive study days on selected heritage environments
4.10.	Establish an interactive heritage website for the purposes of education and interpretation
4.11.	Identify and establish themed heritage trails in the county
4.12.	Produce educational and information materials to assist in the interpretation of selected heritage sites and topics in the county
4.13.	Establish a third-level (academic and vocational) education working group to undertake theoretical and practical assignments in support of heritage

**Objective 5: To inform public policy and advocate the strategic and integrated management of heritage.**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Key Action</b>
5.1.	Establish the position of County Heritage Officer on a permanent basis to coordinate the implementation of actions proposed in current and future County Heritage Plans
5.2.	Seek the appointment of a County Archaeologist
5.3.	Promote the expansion of the Record of Protected Structures and raise awareness of the positive benefits of inclusion on the list
5.4.	Seek the appointment of a Biodiversity Officer
5.5.	Identify and map floodplains in the county
5.6.	Devise a methodology for integrating heritage issues in the development and management of the coastal zone
5.7.	Produce a series of guidance leaflets on heritage topics
5.8.	Undertake an inventory of heritage assets in the ownership/care of Donegal County Council
5.9.	Secure the position of Architectural Conservation Officer