

# **Draft County Donegal Heritage Plan (2014 – 2019)**

April 2015

Draft for Public Review

**A partnership plan prepared by the  
County Donegal Heritage Forum**



**Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall**  
Donegal County Council

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



[Insert Foreword by Cathaoirleach, Donegal County Council]

[Insert Foreword by Chairperson of the County Donegal Heritage Forum]

[Insert Message from Chief Executive, Donegal County Council]

## **Introduction**

Our heritage defines our sense of place and contributes to our sense of identity in County Donegal. It is acknowledged that the term 'heritage' often means different things to different people. The Heritage Act (1995) does not define the concept of heritage but identifies the following categories of heritage resources: archaeological objects, architectural heritage, landscapes, fauna, flora, geology, heritage gardens and parks, heritage objects, inland waterways, monuments, seascapes, wildlife habitats and wrecks. Our heritage reflects our values, attitudes, beliefs, customs, traditions and aspirations. It enhances the local distinctiveness of our communities, landscapes and culture. These attributes of our heritage engender pride and enhance our quality of life and are some of the reasons our diaspora stay connected with County Donegal. In turn, the diaspora have become an important part of our global heritage. Heritage connects people and place, and gives character to our cultural landscapes. The heritage that future generations in County Donegal inherit from us will reflect the value we place on our heritage.

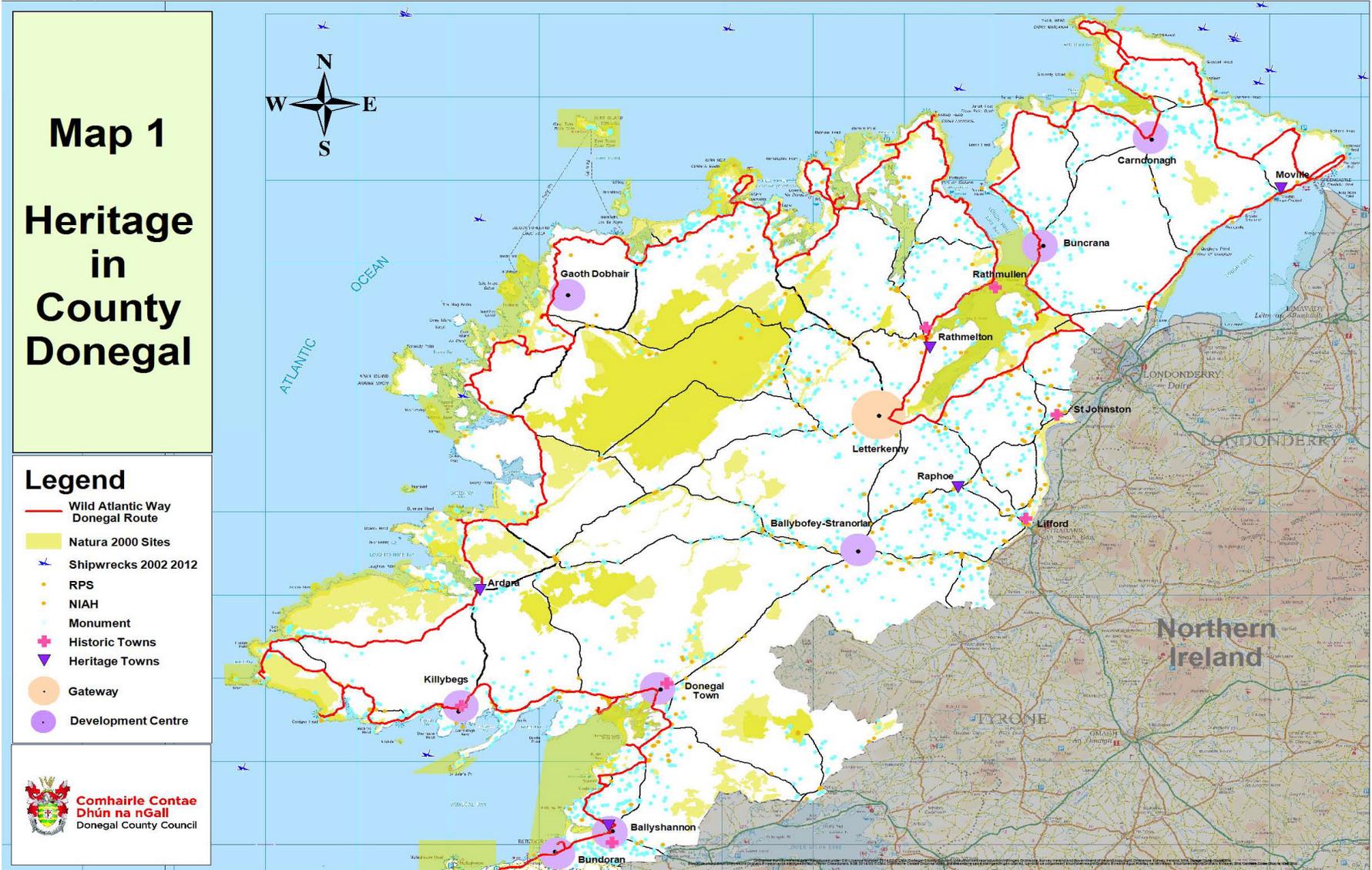
This is the second Heritage Plan for County Donegal, covering the period 2014-2019 and the socio-economic context within which it is set is very different from that of its predecessor. It is widely recognised that heritage is an exceptional asset that provides social, learning, health, recreation and employment opportunities to communities. Our heritage presents opportunities for the growth of cultural, commercial and leisure activities all of which can contribute to the diversity, value and quality of the county's tourism product. The harnessing and development of opportunities arising from our heritage is a significant challenge requiring careful management so that actions and potential projects that aim to conserve and enhance our heritage assets recognize and make 'wise use' of these assets for present and future generations.

County Donegal has a rich and diverse heritage of which we can be proud. The distribution of certain aspects of the heritage of County Donegal is shown on Map 1 in so far as the demarcation of visible and material heritage assets. Map 1 shows the extent of our built heritage through our Protected Structures and buildings listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The map also shows the relationship between the Development Centres and the towns that are identified as Heritage Towns (in relation to the built heritage) and Historic Towns (in relation to archaeology). The networks of our material heritage assets is also exemplified through the networks of Natura 2000 sites, Recorded Monuments and the coastal maritime heritage including heritage sites such as shipwrecks. The connectivity of these types of heritage sites is assisted through the Wild Atlantic Way (shown on Map 1), the route of which discovers not only the material heritage of the county but also the less visible heritage of story, music, language and value of landscape.

The County Donegal Heritage Plan aims to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the diverse heritage of our county and to promote its conservation, enhancement and enjoyment to present and future generations.

**Map 1: Heritage in County Donegal.**

(Note: Map 1 is a demonstration of some of the material heritage of County Donegal. It does not include the less visible and tangible heritage such as story, music, language and value of landscape).



### **The Heritage Plan in Context**

The important role that heritage plays was recognised by government in the National Heritage Plan (2002) which aimed “to ensure the protection of our heritage and to promote its enjoyment by all.” The National Heritage Plan (2002) set out a comprehensive strategy and framework for the protection and management of heritage, a key element of which was heritage management locally through the establishment of County Heritage Forums and preparation of County Heritage Plans. The Heritage Council has also published its Strategic Plan (2012-2016), which highlights the role that heritage plays in contributing to identity, well-being and health; managing and conserving for sustainable development, and facilitating appreciation and enjoyment. It also highlights the need to contribute to national recovery and to demonstrate how heritage can be a resource for social and economic development, as a quality heritage supports employment, offers an outstanding educational resource and supports heritage-based tourism. The major themes of the National Heritage Plan 2002 (placing heritage at the heart of public life, protecting heritage, acquiring knowledge and promoting awareness) have since cascaded through a variety of strategies and plans that helps inform this new County Donegal Heritage Plan.

The County Donegal Development Plan 2012–2018 (as varied) aims ‘to conserve, protect and enhance the County’s built, natural and cultural heritage for future generations and encourage appreciation, access and enjoyment of these resources’. Furthermore, the core strategy of the plan includes an objective to ‘identify and harness the cultural and heritage assets of the County’. The County Development Plan confirms that the built heritage in Donegal is recognised as being a valuable asset reinforcing our sense of identity, promoting regeneration, sustainability and economic development.

Development Centres (which are also Strategic Support Towns) have been identified across the county (Map 1 refers). They benefit from strong heritage characteristics across the themes of social, cultural and built heritage and in the case of Ballyshannon, Killybegs and Donegal Town, the identification as a Development Centre overlaps with the designation as a Historic Town and/or a Heritage Town. Therefore there is a strong interrelationship between the work to advance Development Centres and the opportunities that heritage presents within these centres.

The Donegal Strategy for Social, Cultural and Economic Development (2012-2014) also aims to ensure the continued development and sustainability of County Donegal’s cultural resources. A strategic objective of the Donegal County Council Corporate Plan (2012–2014) is to conserve, manage, support and promote our heritage and Donegal County Council’s Strategic Plan for Cultural Services (2009-2014) is also committed to promoting the importance of culture and heritage, and to preserving cultural inheritance.

The preparation of this Heritage Plan has been delivered through the County Donegal Heritage Forum and the abovementioned policy frameworks have helped shape it.

## Appropriate Assessment

In accordance with the Habitats Directive, a screening exercise in respect of the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2014- 2019) was prepared so as to identify the likely impacts upon the network of Natura 2000 sites as a result of implementation of the Heritage Plan. The screening exercise concluded that the uses, development and effects arising from the draft County Donegal Heritage Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

As Appropriate Assessment is an iterative process, all plans or projects arising from the objectives and actions of the County Heritage Plan that may result in physical changes will be required to comply with the Habitats Directive in any case and in this regard, screening for Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken. At this stage in the preparation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan, the relevant actions identified as potentially resulting in physical change are set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Actions which may result in physical change**

Reference	Action
Objective (1), Action 1.4	Raise awareness and celebrate the heritage of Historic Towns and Heritage Towns and their shared public spaces
Objective (1), Action 1.11	Investigate the establishment of literary and music heritage trails to highlight the material heritage associated these traditions
Objective (2), Action 2.4	Initiate a traditional shopfront and signage conservation, restoration and painting scheme in towns and villages
Objective (2), Action 2.5	A project to encourage the conservation of landmark historical buildings in County Donegal
Objective (2), Action 2.6	Encourage the use and demonstration of traditional skills and traditional materials in the conservation of our towns' streetscapes and public works
Objective (2), Action 2.9	Pilot a management scheme to conserve and manage the natural heritage of traditional roadside verges
Objective (2), Action 2.12	Encourage the re-use of historic buildings and the appropriate contemporary building intervention within the county's historic built fabric
Objective (3), Action 3.5	Encourage the appropriate use of heritage sites for festival programmes and pilot animated visitor experiences at selected heritage sites in County Donegal
Objective (4), Action 4.3	Facilitate information and interpretation at selected heritage sites and embrace new technology
Objective (4), Action 4.8	Explore the 'adoption' of heritage sites by local communities
Objective (4), Action 4.9	Research and promote heritage trails and guided heritage tours
Objective (4), Action 4.11	Identify and promote the fauna of selected coastal areas by encouraging whale/bird watching stations
Objective (4), Action 4.12	Investigate and promote the potential for a heritage 'Greenway'
Objective (5), Action 5.1	Undertake a study of Heritage/Historic town(s) and explore its/ their heritage potential
Objective (5), Action 5.8	Undertake a study of County Donegal's maritime built heritage and explore its/ their heritage potential
Objective (5), Action 5.20	Inform a scheme to establish townland markers using vernacular materials and craftsmanship
Objective (5), Action 5.21	Advocate improved access to heritage sites based on international best practice in association with key partners.

### **Achievements of the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2007 – 2013)**

The County Donegal Heritage Plan (2007-2013) was the first strategic action plan for heritage in County Donegal and was prepared by Donegal County Council with the assistance of the County Donegal Heritage Forum through the County Donegal Heritage Office. The establishment of the County Donegal Heritage Forum represented a new approach to heritage management and consultation in County Donegal. The County Donegal Heritage Forum is a non-statutory advisory group that provides advice to Donegal County Council on the preparation and implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan. Membership of the Forum is drawn from the following sectors: local government, local development, state agencies, educational institutions, landowner/farming representatives, community and voluntary groups, and heritage organisations/groups.

The County Donegal Heritage Plan (2007-2013) set out a strategy for the conservation and promotion of our county's heritage. It contained 79 actions to address five objectives in relation to raising awareness and promoting appreciation of heritage, collecting and disseminating data on heritage, promoting best practice, developing interest and knowledge in heritage and informing public policy. The implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2007-2013) supported activities such as county surveys, audits and studies on various aspects of the heritage of County Donegal, publications, seminars, exhibitions, heritage awareness days, an audio-heritage tour, oral history recordings, booklets, conservation reports, the part-time post of field monument advisor, and heritage education initiatives (see Appendix I for further details). The following examples of Heritage Plan Actions profile some of the ways in which the objectives of the County Donegal Heritage Plan were met:

- **Survey of Dry-Stone Wall Types in County Donegal**

The survey of dry-stone wall types in County Donegal was the first county study of its kind in Ireland. Dry-stone walls contribute to the character of regional cultural landscapes, reflect the underlying geology, exhibit local workmanship and indicate historical patterns of landownership and farming in County Donegal. Following a two-day seminar and workshop, a survey of dry-stone wall types was commissioned. The survey of dry-stone wall types reinforced the Heritage Plan objective to collect, publish and disseminate data and information about County Donegal's heritage. The survey included the identification and establishment of a typology of dry-stone wall types (and their general distribution) in the county as well as selected field survey and recording.
- **Vernacular Architecture Seminars**

County Donegal is home to one of the greatest concentrations of traditional buildings in Ireland. Our vernacular architecture forms an important, but often overlooked, part of our built heritage and cultural landscape. The distinctive vernacular architecture of our county reinforces our sense of place. These 'homes of character, comfort and beauty which vary subtly from one region to another in response to

local climates, conditions and contacts” are one of the iconic images of County Donegal. In order to raise awareness and appreciation of County Donegal’s vernacular architecture and to promote best practice in its care and conservation, several vernacular architecture seminars were organised over the lifetime of the County Donegal Heritage Plan including ‘Vernacular Architecture in West Donegal’ (in conjunction with Cumann Staire Cloich Cheann Fhaola) in Machaire Uí Rabhartaigh / Magheraroarty; ‘Home & Dry: How to Restore Traditional Buildings’ seminar (in partnership with the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society) in Machaire Gathlán / Magheragallan & Gabhla / Gola Island; ‘Traditional Buildings of County Donegal’ seminar in Culdaff; and ‘Hearth & Home’ vernacular architecture seminar (in association with Cumann Staire Chill Chartha) in Cill Charthaigh / Kilcar. The seminars proved very popular with traditional building owners, residents and visitors. All the seminars were fully booked in advance with each seminar accommodating 100-140 people.

- **‘Donegal’s Farming Heritage’ Booklet**

Donegal’s farming heritage is a microcosm of Ireland’s farming heritage. County Donegal has large, wealthy farms but also smallholdings whose main function was to provide subsistence living for farm families. The ‘Donegal’s Farming Heritage’ booklet by Dr. Jonathan Bell & Mr. Mervyn Watson was the first publication in the Donegal Heritage Series published by the County Donegal Heritage Office, Donegal County Council as part of the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan. The booklet is based on an audit of heritage objects associated with farming and fishing in County Donegal also commissioned under the County Donegal Heritage Plan. The booklet highlighted the hand-held implements (such as spades, loys, rakes, sickles and flails) and horse-operated implements (such as swing ploughs, drill ploughs, harrows, seed drills, reaping machines and threshing machines) used in farming in the county. The mechanisation of agriculture and the conservation of Donegal’s farming heritage were also addressed. The booklet proved very popular with requests for copies coming from all over Ireland and abroad. The Donegal Heritage Series seeks to develop interest and knowledge in County Donegal’s heritage and other booklets in the series are planned.
- **Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)**

Donegal’s diverse landscape has been shaped and moulded over millions of years by both natural and human influences, with evidence of human habitation dating back to prehistoric times still evident in the landscape today. Donegal County Council has carried out its first HLC to identify the contribution of the human past to the landscape as it exists in the present and to document the time depth of Donegal’s landscape. This assessment systematically uses GIS datasets to produce a map of the generic historic landscape types together with a final written report.

This assessment was carried out by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) in accordance with guidance published by the Heritage Council 'Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) in Ireland: Policy and Best Practice Guidance'. Although the HLC has a variety of applications and can meet the needs of several different user groups it has been primarily produced in parallel with the county's first Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) in order to complement and contribute to the LCA document (together with a Townscape Assessment and a Seascape Assessment) by adding a thorough understanding of County Donegal's time depth dimension.

**Preparation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2014 – 2019)**

The County Donegal Heritage Plan has been prepared by Donegal County Council with the assistance of the County Donegal Heritage Forum. The Heritage Forum met in June 2013 to agree the Heritage Plan process and in September 2013 to agree the overall aim and strategic objectives for the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2014-2019). Submissions were invited in November and December 2013. The process was advertised in the local media and on the Donegal County Council website and letters were sent to heritage organisations and groups inviting submissions. Over 90 written submissions were received by post, e-mail or through the on-line survey form created. Five public meetings were held in December 2013.

The Heritage Forum established three working groups (Built Heritage, Cultural Heritage & Natural Heritage) to assist with the review of public submissions and to prepare actions for the new County Heritage Plan. The three Heritage Forum working groups met in January 2014 to consider submissions, discuss issues, and formulate actions for inclusion in the Heritage Plan. The County Donegal Heritage Forum met in May 2014 to agree the content and actions to be included in the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2014-2019). The main steps involved in the preparation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan are summarised below:

[INSERT TABLE HERE]

### **Implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan**

The County Donegal Heritage Plan is a five-year strategic action plan for the heritage of County Donegal for the period 2014-2019. The County Donegal Heritage Forum, Donegal County Council and The Heritage Council are key partners in the delivery of the Heritage Plan. Donegal County Council is committed to implementing the County Donegal Heritage Plan in partnership with the County Donegal Heritage Forum and The Heritage Council. Each year a detailed and prioritised work programme will be drawn up for the implementation of Heritage Plan actions and this will be submitted to The Heritage Council for match funding of proposed actions.

The Heritage Council has agreed, in principle, to consider the County Donegal Heritage Plan as a five-year strategic funding application. The Heritage Council will consider funding actions in the County Heritage Plan that are compatible with its objectives and consistent with normal funding criteria. Donegal County Council will consider funding allocation for the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan in accordance with the annual budget. Donegal County Council will also support the implementation of the Heritage Plan through the work of the County Donegal Heritage Office and other professional staff. As the annual work programme is agreed, commitments will be sought from relevant Heritage Forum partners and other additional partners (as appropriate) for implementing key actions. There will be ongoing consultation with other relevant organisations regarding participation in proposed actions.

The County Donegal Heritage Forum and the County Donegal Heritage Office will oversee the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan. The County Donegal Heritage Forum will usually meet four times per year to review and evaluate progress. Heritage Plan steering groups and working groups will be convened as needed for the purposes of achieving specific actions in the County Donegal Heritage Plan.

The plan will also be implemented through other developmental functions undertaken by Donegal County Council, including its Culture, Community and Economic Development functions. Other Heritage Forum partners and funding agencies will be asked to assist with the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan and also heritage objectives contained within the Council's other policy frameworks previously referenced, which provide key strategic objectives that are also appropriate to this plan.

### **Aim**

**The aim of the County Donegal Heritage Plan is to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the rich and diverse heritage of our county; to promote its conservation, enhancement and enjoyment; and to sustainably harness the economic, social and cultural benefits of heritage for current and future generations.**

County Donegal enjoys a rich and unique heritage that represents a crucial element of our everyday life that supports recreation, health, employment, learning and enjoyment and the aim of this plan is to optimise these benefits to the county. The aim of the plan will be delivered through the following key goals of the plan.

### **Goals**

- To encourage awareness, appreciation, access and enjoyment of the county's heritage resources.
- To promote and conserve Donegal's heritage for its diaspora and for present and future generations.
- To conserve and facilitate the appropriate development of heritage in support of tourism activity and to harness opportunities presented through initiatives such as the Wild Atlantic Way.
- To identify, appropriately conserve and harness opportunities presented by heritage assets within the county's settlements in a manner that benefits the social, cultural and economic quality of the county.

These goals will be delivered through actions under the following objectives of the plan.

**Objective 1: To increase knowledge and awareness, and promote appreciation and enjoyment of County Donegal’s heritage to reinforce our sense of place and identity**

1.1.	Establish Local Community Heritage Awareness Days
1.2.	Initiate a local heritage awards scheme
1.3.	Develop an enhanced awareness of our heritage internationally and amongst the Donegal diaspora in particular thus increasing tourism potential
1.4.	Raise awareness and celebrate the heritage of Historic Towns and Heritage Towns and their shared public spaces
1.5.	Establish a Heritage Open House scheme to encourage the conservation, rejuvenation and extension of traditional buildings for contemporary living
1.6.	Organise a traditional building skills/crafts ‘festival’
1.7.	Establish a Donegal ‘Green Plaque’ Scheme to highlight the material heritage associated with historically-significant individuals and heritage sites
1.8.	Undertake a project to raise appreciation of locally-significant species and habitats of flora and fauna
1.9.	Establish a ‘Golden Mile’ competition
1.10.	Identify and record individual trees of heritage value in County Donegal
1.11.	Investigate the establishment of literary and music heritage trails to highlight the material heritage associated with these traditions
1.12.	Use the County Donegal Heritage Office website and social media as a means of making County Donegal Heritage Plan information accessible
1.13.	Promote awareness of historic buildings and structures and their settings listed in the Record of Protected Structures and/or on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
1.14.	Support and enable a research and development project on the Ulster demesne landscape

**Objective 2: To promote and encourage best practice in the conservation and management of our heritage**

2.1.	Continue the programme of vernacular architecture and traditional buildings skills seminars
2.2.	Encourage the conservation of thatch and thatching skills and materials in County Donegal as a distinctive aspect of the county's heritage
2.3.	Develop a 'support pack' for the conservation of heritage sites
2.4.	Initiate a traditional shopfront and signage conservation, restoration and painting scheme in towns and villages
2.5.	A project to encourage the conservation of landmark historical buildings in County Donegal
2.6.	Encourage the use and demonstration of traditional skills and traditional materials in the conservation of our towns' streetscapes and public works
2.7.	Organise a 'Care & Conservation of Historic Graveyards' seminar
2.8.	Support for projects to protect and enhance habitat for rare/threatened breeding birds
2.9.	Pilot a management scheme to conserve and manage the natural heritage of traditional roadside verges
2.10.	Initiate a pilot scheme to control/eradicate selected invasive species
2.11.	Initiate a best practice conservation and recording scheme for historic graveyards in County Donegal
2.12.	Encourage the re-use of historic buildings and the appropriate contemporary building intervention within the county's historic built fabric
2.13.	Facilitate an archaeological excavation enlisting archaeological expertise and using best conservation practice

**Objective 3: To encourage partnership, networking and active engagement with our heritage**

3.1.	Re-establish the Donegal Heritage Network
3.2.	Continue to provide the framework for coordinating, organising and promoting an extensive programme of Heritage Week events in County Donegal
3.3.	Coordinate an annual calendar of heritage events in the county
3.4.	Support research, preservation and promotion of the material heritage related to landmark historic events including the 'Decade of Centenaries'
3.5.	Encourage the appropriate use of heritage sites for festival programmes and pilot animated visitor experiences at selected heritage sites in County Donegal
3.6.	Pilot a social history / genealogy / emigration project in relation to the Donegal diaspora
3.7.	Undertake joint initiatives involving heritage and the arts [traditional music, song, dance, storytelling, folklore, language and contemporary arts] in County Donegal
3.8.	Prepare a support pack for establishing local heritage exhibitions in conjunction with local community groups
3.9.	Establish a Local Heritage Grant Scheme to support local heritage initiatives

**Objective 4: To promote heritage education, training, tourism and outreach activities**

4.1.	Produce educational and information materials to assist in the interpretation of selected aspects of heritage in the county
4.2.	Facilitate training in relation to heritage management and funding for local community groups, museums and heritage centres
4.3.	Facilitate information and interpretation at selected heritage sites and embrace new technology
4.4.	Create an education pack on the county's built heritage
4.5.	Host a vernacular architecture summer field school
4.6.	Support the development of traditional building and craft skills training and apprenticeships
4.7.	Investigate the concept of a Heritage Ambassador scheme
4.8.	Explore the 'adoption' of heritage sites by local communities
4.9.	Research and promote heritage trails and guided heritage tours
4.10.	Undertake an audit of oral history recording and explore training opportunities
4.11.	Identify and promote the fauna of selected coastal areas by encouraging whale/bird watching stations
4.12.	Investigate and promote the potential for a heritage 'Greenway'
4.13.	Establish a third-level (academic and vocational) education working group to undertake theoretical and practical assignments in support of heritage
4.14.	Initiate an annual heritage bursary to sponsor third-level research on an under-studied/overlooked aspect of the county's heritage
4.15.	Compile photographic / audio / film documentary evidence and stories of traditional crafts and skills in County Donegal
4.16.	Work with the Donegal Education Centre to undertake a schools' heritage project
4.17.	Support the annual Donegal Historical Society's Schools' Competition

**Objective 5: To collect data on heritage, inform decision-making and promote economic, cultural and social development**

5.1.	Undertake a study of Heritage/Historic Town(s) and explore opportunities to develop their heritage potential
5.2.	Establish a built heritage project around ‘making history’
5.3.	Survey and record mass rocks and roadside grottos in the county
5.4.	Expand the existing survey of clachans and their composition
5.5.	Undertake a study of rural industrial heritage [such as lime kilns, stone mining, salt works, distilleries, quarries, brick works, forges and cottage industries]
5.6.	Document the heritage of National Schools and educational buildings in County Donegal
5.7.	Survey and catalogue maps, plans and photographic collections in Donegal County Archives collection
5.8.	Undertake a study of County Donegal’s maritime built heritage and explore its heritage potential
5.9.	Pilot an archaeological field survey of monuments and artefacts in a selected parish
5.10.	Undertake a study of field systems and their contribution to the cultural landscape of County Donegal
5.11.	Establish a database of County Donegal objects housed in national repositories
5.12.	Undertake an audit of geological and geomorphological heritage sites in conjunction with the Geological Survey of Ireland
5.13.	Survey of archival sources relating to County Donegal and the ‘Decade of Centenaries’
5.14.	Explore the potential for the appointment of Field Monument Adviser for County Donegal
5.15.	Investigate the potential to appoint a County Archaeologist
5.16.	Explore the opportunity for the appointment of a Biodiversity Officer to prepare a County Donegal Biodiversity Action Plan
5.17.	Support the preservation and development of the Donegal Studies collection
5.18.	Establish a digitisation strategy (with priorities) for conserving archival materials and providing on-line access to key documents
5.19.	Support new research and fieldwork in relation to archaeological heritage and folklore
5.20.	Inform a scheme to establish townland markers using vernacular materials and craftsmanship
5.21.	Advocate improved access to heritage sites based on international best practice in association with key partners
5.22.	Undertake a study of ecclesiastical/spiritual sites within the county and explore opportunities to develop ecclesiastical/spiritual routes, such as Slí Cholmcille.
5.23.	Undertake a project based upon the military maritime heritage of County Donegal and nearby regions as a tourism resource.