

SECTION 1: Introduction to Sustainable Tourism

1.1 What is Sustainable Tourism?

Sustainable Tourism stems from sustainable development, a term which has become increasingly common in our society since the Rio Earth Summit of 1992. Sustainable Development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. With this thinking in mind, sustainable tourism aims to ‘make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while encouraging better income, employment and the conservation of the very landscape upon which our tourism is based.’ (Sense of Place Toolkit, 2006: 3). Thus, sustainable tourism encompasses ‘a level of tourism activity that can be maintained over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place.’ (ICOMOS, ICTC, 2002). This type of tourism benefits both the landscape and those who explore upon it, seeing long term economic benefits for the local economy.

1.2 What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)?

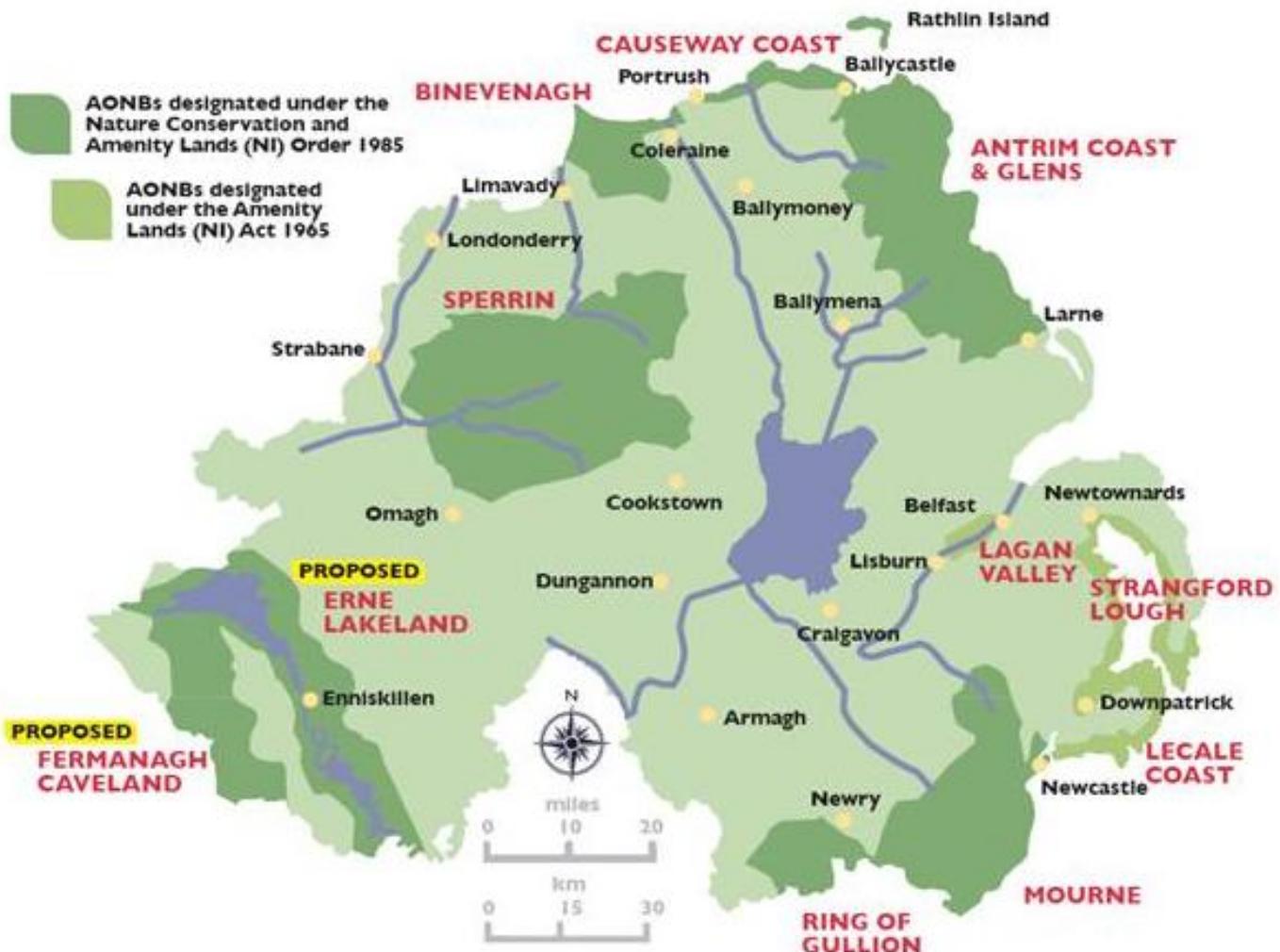
An AONB is an area that possesses unique characteristics and natural beauty so distinctive and outstanding that it is necessary to safeguard it. Northern Ireland contains nine AONBs at present, with two proposed sites at the Fermanagh Cavelands and Erne Lakelands. The rest are as follows:

1. **Causeway Coast**
2. **Antrim Coast and Glens**
3. **Binevenagh**
4. Lecale Coast
5. Lagan Valley
6. Mourne
7. Ring of Gullion
8. Sperrin
9. Strangford Lough

The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (CCHGT) are a partnership body established in May 2002 in order to promote and enhance the unique qualities of the Causeway Coast and Glen’s area. The aim of the trust is to promote environmental management and sustainable tourism which aims to protect and enhance the unique heritage of the Causeway Coast and Glen’s area. The Causeway Coast and Glen’s contains three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); Antrim Glen’s AONB, Causeway Coast and Glen’s AONB and the Binevenagh AONB and the CCGHT promotes these AONB’s while ensuring that the sites are protected and environmentally managed.

Figure 1 illustrates the AONB's together with information on their designation.

Figure 1: Map of AONB sites in Northern Ireland



(Source: Environment and Heritage Service, 2009)

1.3 Why a sustainable approach to tourism development in the Causeway Coast AONB?

The aesthetic beauty of the Causeway Coast landscape provides both opportunities and challenges to the tourism industry. While the natural environment attracts much of the tourists to the Causeway Coast, the coastline, mountains and rivers contained within the Causeway Coast are home to a rich diversity of species of international importance. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that the threat of pressure on these environments is carefully managed, so that future generations can enjoy and benefit from the region as we do today.

Sustainable Tourism will not only safeguard the Causeway Coast environment and maintain the beauty of the landscape, but will encourage sustainable economic development in the communities of the Causeway Coast



SECTION 2: The EU Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

In 1995, EUROPARC together with a funded European project called the EU LIFE Program established the EU Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and was led by the Fédération des Parcs naturels régionaux de France on behalf of EUROPARC. This Charter is a practical management tool for ensuring that tourism contributes to a balanced economic, social and environmental development of protected areas in Europe. The Charter is voluntary and aims to encourage best practice by recognizing protected areas within the landscape. The Charter aims to promote awareness of Europe's protected areas and to promote sustainable tourism and environmental management. There are 10 key principles of the EU Charter. These are as follows:

1. To involve all those implicated by tourism in and around the protected areas
2. To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the protected area
3. To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage
4. To provide visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit
5. To communicate effectively to visitors, tourism businesses and residents about the specific qualities of the area
6. To encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area
7. To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst those involved in tourism
8. To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy
9. To ensure tourism supports and does not reduce quality of life of the local residents
10. To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts

- Europarc Federation, EU Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

There are two parts to the Charter. In Part I, protected areas must firstly register as a candidate Charter protected areas with the EUROPARC Federation and request the necessary documents. Part II involves the registered protected areas communicating their intent to start implementing Charter Part II and request the related documents. This is when tourism businesses can apply whereby these businesses agree to participate in the delivery of the protected area's sustainable tourism strategy as well as agreeing on an action plan to develop the sustainable activities of the business within the protected area. The

Charter defines the shared responsibilities of the protected area authority, the tourist businesses and tour operator. It is divided into three sections:

- Sustainable tourism for the protected area
- Sustainable tourism for tourism businesses in the area
- Sustainable tourism for companies organising tours in or to protected areas

Thus, by way of this, a holistic approach to sustainable tourism within the AONB can be achieved, with a long term vision set out for the future of these sites.



SECTION 3: The Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



The Causeway Coast AONB extends across 30km of a wide variety of landscape from the Giant's Causeway and the Causeway Coast World Heritage Site. The Western area of the AONB is characterized by a dune system, together with white chalk and basalt cliffs. Dunluce Castle forms a spectacular landmark with views of Donegal and the Skerries. In contrast to the wild coastal scenery there are gentle sloping landscapes of Bush Valley with mixed farmland, woodland and the historical village of Bushmills.

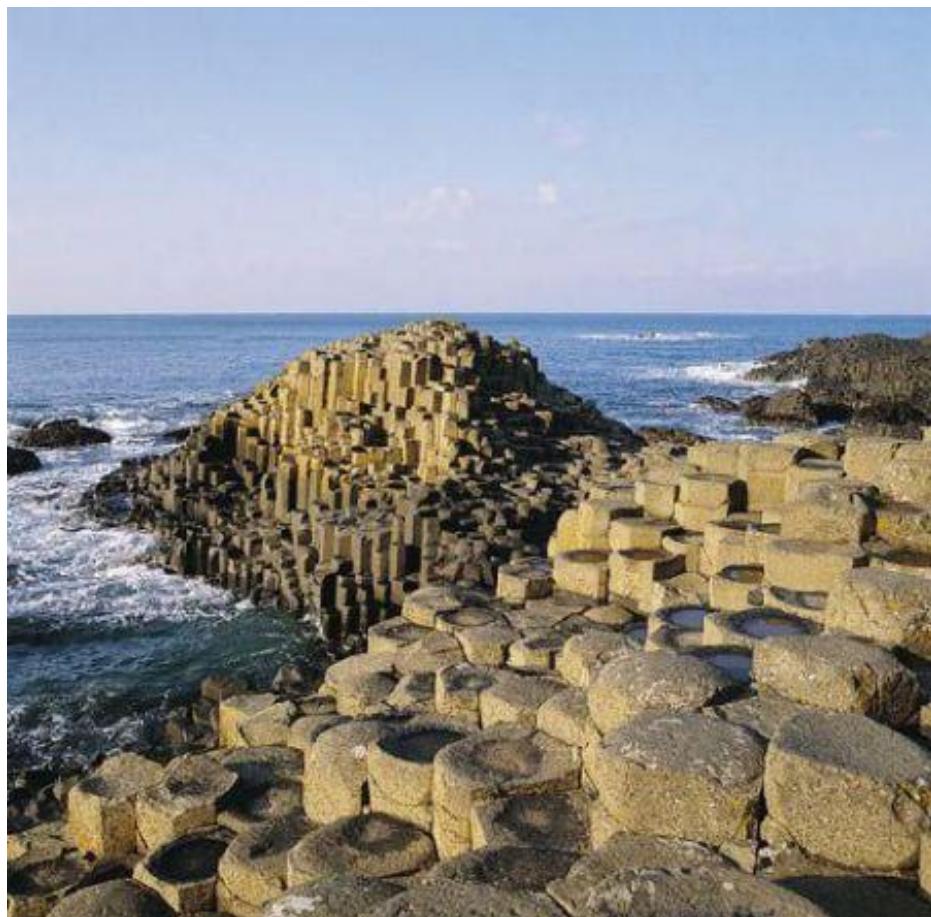
The Causeway Coast and Heritage Trust aims to promote sustainable tourism management that also recognizes growth and innovation, with growth needing to be carefully managed. To achieve this vision, there needs to be a set of stakeholders who need to be engaged, with the key areas of impact needing to be managed.

Key Stakeholders	Key Impact Areas
Tourism Businesses	Local environment
Public Sector	Local society
Local community	Local economy
Visitors	Local environment

The stakeholders that are involved should ensure that they manage tourism's impacts in such a way that tourism:

- Protects and enhances the environment
- Supports local communities
- Benefits the economy of tourism destinations

The distinct groups have been identified yet they cannot all be engaged in the same way. Visitors and local residents do not have a professional or corporate role to manage tourism wisely but do have a personal responsibility to use resources wisely. Both the public sector and tourism businesses have an important role to play in encouraging the participation of the local community and influencing the behavior of tourist visitors that come to the Causeway Coast AONB. For example, if tourist businesses emphasize local food and produce, making things easier for visitors, then visitors will increasingly demand such products.



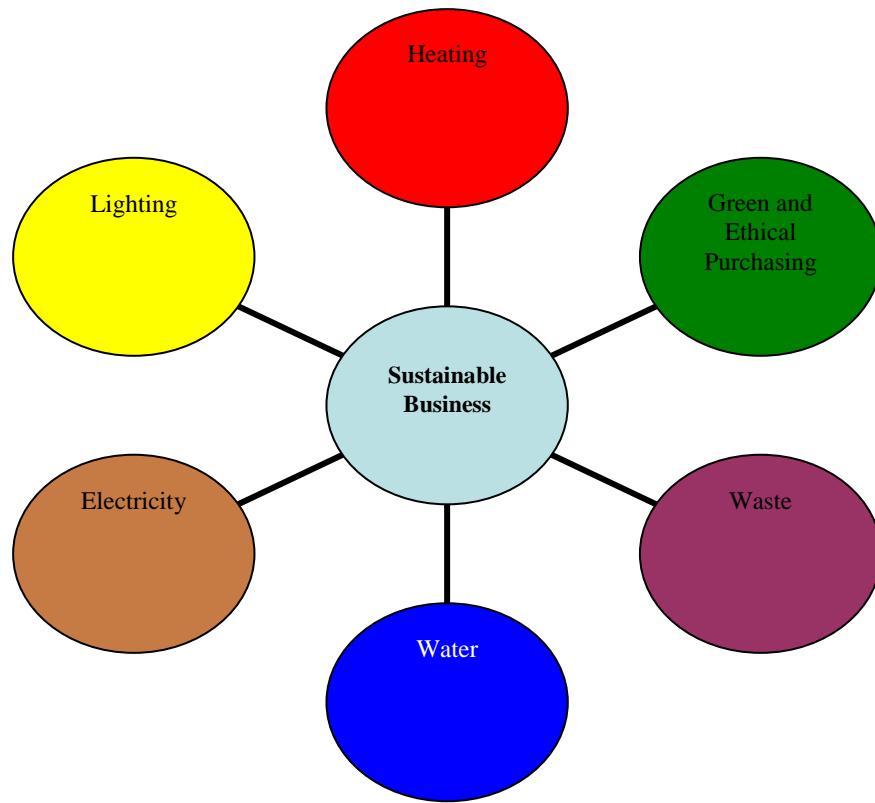
SECTION 4: Environmentally friendly businesses – Sense and Sustainability!

As tourism in the Causeway Coast relies on maintaining the distinct landscape and conserving the diverse habitats that thrive in it, it is in all of our interests to adopt a sustainable approach to tourism. The consumer choice is changing as the current climate dips into a period of economic difficulty. We see more consumers holidaying at home, seeking a new kind of experience which feeds off their existing landscape. Why not offer these consumers a new type of experience through promotion of your business in such a way that is environmentally friendly and sustainable?

There are a number of ways in which your business can contribute to sustainable tourism practices that will benefit not only your business, but your visitors and the Causeway Coast AONB. By doing so, this will:

- ✓ **Provide a positive message where visitors are increasingly looking for environmental commitment**
- ✓ **Ensure that your business is compliant with the tightening legislation on environmental standards**
- ✓ **Increases staff morale!**
- ✓ **Visitors will feel a sense of achievement by ‘doing their bit’ to help the environment**
- ✓ **Minimise the negative impact of tourism development in a fragile landscape**
- ✓ **Ensure the long term sustainability of the local tourism industry**

4.1 A Sustainable Business through Action



The above diagram illustrates the main components that affect how sustainable a business is. By adopting a series of actions with each of these components, your business can move towards becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Below lists a series of actions under each component that your business can strive to adopt.

4.1.1 HEATING

- ⊕ Monitor room temperatures in your premises, lowering your temperature by 1C decreasing your heating bill by up to 10%.
- ⊕ Consider installing heating controls throughout your property, such as thermostats and/or sensors, therefore being able to monitor your heating.
- ⊕ Ventilate your premises by opening windows rather than using air conditioning. However, do not do this while the heating is on as this will simply waste energy.

- ⊕ Consider adopting renewable energy sources for example wind, solar, water and biofuels. For more information visit www.nie.co.uk and go to 'Eco Energy'.

4.1.2 LIGHTING

- ⊕ Replace normal light bulbs with low energy light bulbs (wattage of 5.23W). This will create significant savings to your energy bills, and last longer.
- ⊕ Make the most of the natural light that comes into your premises. In a particularly dark room, consider installing a 'light canal'. This device diffuses daylight into areas with little natural lighting.
- ⊕ Display polite notices to remind staff to turn off lights either when not in the room or when leaving the premises.

4.1.3 ELECTRICITY

- ⊕ Check and clean all appliance on a regular basis
- ⊕ Carefully position appliances so as they don't block any heat sources
- ⊕ Work on efficient staff practices. For example, encouraging staff to reduce the temperature of the washing machine will save energy, as well as switching a television off standby will save energy.
- ⊕ Consider choosing energy efficient appliances. For more information visit www.carbontrust.org

4.1.4 WATER

- ⊕ Check regularly for water leaks and drips
- ⊕ Fill kettle appliances with the needed amount and do not over fill.
- ⊕ Consider installing dual flush systems in toilets to allow for a full or half flush, depending on what is needed.
- ⊕ Staff training and setting clear procedures for saving water should be displayed throughout your premises.

4.1.5 WASTE

- ⊕ Monitor how much waste you have and measure how much you throw away and how often. From this, you could record your findings and plan your actions.
- ⊕ Reduce your consumption, reuse your waste and recycle your waste. These three R's should be remembered at all times.
- ⊕ Monitor your stock control and ensure that you don't order excess material.

- ⊕ Cut down on excess packaging by buying loose rather than individual packaged goods. Also, ask suppliers for reusable packaging such as boxes or crates.
- ⊕ Where possible, repair and reuse equipment rather than buying new items.
- ⊕ Operate strict recycling methods and ensure that all staff understands which bins are for which material. Label or colour code bins to ensure this.
- ⊕ If items cannot be recycled, ensure that your waste is dealt with by a specialized company and that dangerous or toxic waste is taken away by an expert company.

4.1.6 GREEN AND ETHICAL PURCHASING

- ⊕ Aim to purchase sustainable and ethically sourced products and materials, as this will not only benefit your business, but will be good for the environment.
- ⊕ Look for labels on products which show they are ethically sourced, for example from the FSC or Fairtrade.
- ⊕ Promote your business as being not only located with the Causeway Coast AONB but also environmentally aware through purchasing ethically sourced goods.

Below illustrates some of the symbols you would expect to see on products which are both ethically sourced and sustainable. Fairtrade symbol is typically located on tea, coffee and cocoa products and the Forest Stewardship Council approved symbol on all products from a sustainable source.



SECTION 5: Causeway Coast Tourism Sector – Together we work better

The Causeway Coast AONB already benefits from the local tourism industry. The potential for this area to benefit the local economy can be achieved through your move towards a sustainable tourism business. By improving your contribution to the Causeway Coast AONB, your business will not only be helping to preserve the environment but also improving a visitors experience as well as improving your business performance. Therefore, we can see a trend developing, a ripple effect through aiming to become a more sustainable business. By working together with your local community, you can start to see positive changes for your business and the surrounding region.

Referring back to the key stakeholders involved in the Causeway Coast AONB from page 6, be it local communities, visitors, tourism businesses and/or the public sector, each of these have a responsibility to their surrounding environment. If we can come together to adopt a more sustainable approach to tourism, we are looking out for the socioeconomic and cultural welfare of the Causeway Coast AONB. This triple bottom line is extremely important in preserving the environment as well as supporting the local economy and maintaining a sense of community and quality.

5.1 CASE STUDY EXAMPLE 1: Forest of Bowland, Lancashire, England.

The Forest of Bowland AONB provides a ‘Sense of Place Toolkit’ for their tourism businesses and local community. This toolkit aims to promote the surrounding area whilst attempting to support the local economy at the same time. The Toolkit is divided into themes, one example being ‘Delicious Food and Drink’. The Toolkit explains how local produce is important to the Forest of Bowland as it supports farmers, improves the freshness of your food, improves the link between consumers and farmers as well as supporting the local economy and reducing food mileage. The region prompted the formation of ‘Bowland Forest Foods’, a farmers co-operative driven to establish a local quality of lamb, beef and pork, produced by environmentally friendly means.

5.2 CASE STUDY EXAMPLE 2: Green Box Scheme, Ireland



The Greenbox is emerging as Irelands' first genuine ecotourism destination with a set of standards based on sound environmental practices highlighting all that the region and its people has to offer. The area of the Greenbox includes Counties Fermanagh, Leitrim, West Cavan, North Sligo, South Donegal and North West Monaghan. It boasts unique ecosystems, an unspoiled landscape, centres of learning such as The Organic Centre, a Geo Park (Marble Arch Caves, Co Fermanagh) and off shore islands of high conservation value such as Inishmurray Island. In such a way, Greenbox is promoting environmental awareness whilst also contributing to the economic development of the region with this innovative scheme.

By working together, the Causeway Coast AONB can promote the local economy as well as protecting the environment – a perfect dichotomy.

5.2 Registering your interest to be part of the ‘Causeway Coast Sustainable Tourism Forum’

As has been shown throughout this Causeway Coast AONB Tourism manual, working together brings many benefits to your individual business as well as in the sustainable development of the Causeway Coast AONB. If you are interested in being a part of this, please refer to the registration form in Appendix 1 to express your interest in promoting your tourism business as sustainable.

Tourism in the Causeway Coast: Useful Contacts and Addresses

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Coleraine Tourist Information Centre
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Coleraine,
Co. Londonderry,
BT51
Tel 02870344723

Moyle District Council
Shesburn House
7 Mary Street,
Ballycastle,
Co. Antrim,
BT54 6QH
Tel 02820762225

Coleraine Borough Council
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Coleraine,
Co. Londonderry,
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Tel 02870347034

SECTION 6: Recommendations

I have devised a draft toolkit for the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, to give to local tourist businesses in the area in order to promote sustainable tourism in the Causeway Coast AONB. Time restraints have meant that completing this manual are outside of my placement duration and so I have devised a list of recommendations for the Trust in ensuring that the manual is an effective guide for tourist businesses and that promotion of sustainable tourism in the area continues.

1. CCGHT should provide tourist businesses with this manual, as well as providing information and leaflets on the Causeway Coast AONB for example, 'Causeway Coast View' and the Causeway Coast leaflet.
2. CCGHT should aim to create not only a sustainable tourism forum, but also a sustainable tourism network whereby all local tourist businesses can become involved in promoting sustainability in the workplace. Like that of the Forest of Bowland, a sustainable tourism working group should also be established, consisting of approximately 12 key individuals who wish to work pragmatically towards sustainable tourism.
3. A useful element to include in a business toolkit would be opportunities for new builds within the Causeway Coast AONB to become more sustainable. This might include information on sustainable construction and/or information on renewable energy sources such as heat pumps and solar panels.
4. CCGHT should monitor collaborative efforts amongst those who will make up the sustainable tourism forum. Encouraging interaction between businesses should be maintained, for example, encouraging local produce businesses to network with a tourist hotel. The sustainable tourism working group could monitor this.
5. CCGHT should aim to have a list of all interested tourist businesses with funding opportunities secured to register as a chartered candidate by no later than September 2009, with a view of adopting the EU Charter before Easter of next year. Initially, funding must be secured for the registration fee as soon as possible to get the momentum going.

SECTION 6: Implications of recommendations if implemented

Adopting the above recommendations will, in time, allow for the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust to progress forward and adopt the EU Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. From this, the interested tourist businesses can continue to promote their business as sustainable as well as advertising their business as being located within an AONB which is dedicated to environmental awareness and conservation. However, as there is a fee associated with not only registering as a Charter candidate but adopting the Charter, the Trust will run into difficulties as funding opportunities are limited within today's current economic climate. Furthermore, local tourist businesses, despite appearing interested in sustainable tourism, may not adopt the 10 principles required by the Charter. Local businesses must work together with the community and the Trust to support sustainable tourism in the Causeway Coast AONB and for this, time is needed. Local Councils also have a responsibility to promote the area. Councils must demonstrate a want for quality and a sense of place, rather than simply vernacular thought. As local revenue and funding opportunities are sparse with the current economic downturn, this will also be a slow process. This has been summed up well within the CCGHT website:

'A sustainable approach will ensure that economic, social and environmental sustainability are reflected in overall policy and objectives, individual business plans, implementation and the day to day management of projects on the ground. The real test of sustainable tourism is the ability to translate theory into practice.'

- CCGHT website

CONCLUSION

This report has aimed to devise a toolkit for tourist businesses with the Causeway Coast AONB, illustrating the main ways in which local businesses can move towards a more sustainable approach to tourism. Background information has been offered on sustainable tourism, AONB's and the EU Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, as well as actions local businesses can take in order to become more environmentally friendly and sustainable. Finally, the importance of working together with the tourism sector was highlighted. Local community, businesses, authorities and visitors all play a key role in ensuring the conservation of the landscape, while also contributing to the local economy. By adopting a socioeconomic and cultural approach to tourism development, the Causeway Coast AONB can progress as a protected area to one which is sustainable and rich in heritage, while contributing to the local economy.