



Your Place Your Plan

Summary of the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB Management Plan

Special Issue

Summer '08



Ossian's Grave - Rosheen McDonnell (Glenann Primary School)

The Chairman's View



Ald Harry Connolly
Chairman of the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Group
and Deputy Mayor of Ballymoney Borough Council

Through the years the Glens have been a great tourist attraction. People have always come here for the peace and beauty, from all over the world.

It's a lovely spot, the scenery is wonderful, and we want to preserve it.

We're hoping that with stability and money coming into the country this plan will be a great benefit to us. It's a good document for generations to come, a first for the area, and something to put on the table. If we didn't have it we'd miss an opportunity to really look ahead.

I hope it will have a good effect on our future. It addresses all the most important things about the place, and was written after workshops with many stakeholders, from local farmers to tourist board representatives. The plan is mostly made up of what was recommended by people on the ground.

Now's a time of opportunity for us all – and the plan shows that.

In these four pages we can't cover everything that's in the plan; instead we've tried to sum up for you what it means, and why we have spent so much time and effort putting it together.

If you've queries or would like to know more, please get in touch.

Harry Connolly

After over a year of hard work, the very first Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan is ready.

The 54-page strategy and action plan is founded on the wishes of people, groups and organisations of the area, expressed at eight community workshops and through a web survey and questionnaire, which revealed that:

You value the remoteness, landscapes, people, community feeling and quality of the area's light;

You are concerned about increasing house prices, amounts of money and people coming into the area, and decreasing affordable housing and jobs; and

You want better tourism facilities, community venues, protection for the landscape, festivals, planning and public transport.

From the consultation and extensive research, key ideas of how and why we can care for this special place - a 'vision for the future' - developed. So all the many parts of the plan, including its action plan, will come together to:

Look after the beautiful, dramatic, tranquil landscape of the Antrim Coast and Glens, with its rolling plateau cut by deep glens, rugged coastline, and remote Rathlin Island;

Protect old stone walls and field patterns, traditional farming, rich wildlife on land and sea, historic remains and living music, folklore and sports;

Develop a healthy rural economy including tourism, so communities have access to jobs, services and housing; and above all, to

Help organisations and people work together to conserve and enjoy this special place.

VISION

The dramatic landscape of the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB, with its characteristic rolling plateau cut by deeply incised glens, its rugged coastline, and the remote 'jewel' of Rathlin Island, is protected and treasured for its beauty and tranquillity. The old stone walls and field patterns are maintained by traditional farming practices and the land and marine habitats are rich in wildlife. The diverse fabric of archeological remains and historic settlements are conserved and made more accessible, while the distinctive cultural heritage of music, folklore and sports are kept alive for all to enjoy.

It is a place where a diversified rural economy is supported by a sustainable farming sector, varied business activity and low impact tourism based on its landscape, tranquillity and culture. Vibrant communities have access to jobs, services and housing, working together to conserve and enjoy the AONB's unique features.

FACT BOX

Just what is the management plan?

Who wrote it?

People who live in and work for the area, with help from experts brought in by the Antrim Coast and Glens Management Group

When does it run until?

Ten years, from 2008 to 2018

What's in it?

54 pages explaining what's special about the area – and how to keep it that way, with a 5 year action plan.

Where do I get one?

Contact Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust
web: www.ccght.org
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Why is it needed?

To look after the area, and make sure it stays special.





Worth protecting



Glenariff Waterfall - Jack McAlister (Glenann Primary School)

The new plan sets down in one place for the first time just what's so special about the Antrim Coast and Glens. There are hundreds of reasons to look after it, but here are ten for starters...



Ballan Wrasse

1. Magical marine life

From the remains of sea creatures to sea urchins, sea cucumbers and sea potatoes, the shoreline is full of interest. Like the internationally rare maerl beds of Garron Point and Ballygally Head, made up of seaweed skeletons, which can be up to 6,000 years old; or Red Bay's seagrass beds, home to a wide range of flora and fauna including snails and jellyfish, which provide a nursery ground for fish and crustaceans - and help protect the coast.

2. A heart-stopping coastline

Land meets sea in dramatic ways here, from Fair Head cliffs and the cliff head coast road with its world-famous long views to Islay, Jura and the Mull of Kintyre, to the more gentle bays at the foot of each Glen.

3. Rugged, rocky Rathlin

Northern Ireland's only inhabited offshore island, this outcrop is the breeding ground of hundreds of thousand of sea birds like

guillemots, razor bills and puffins. A huge variety of creatures live and take refuge in its sea caves – from sponges, sea anemones and starfish, to lobsters, crabs, fish and seals.

Over 130 species have been recorded in Rathlin waters, including about one third of the total sponge fauna recorded in Britain and Ireland.

4. Geological wonderland

The high ground of the Antrim plateau is a huge block of volcanic basalt, cut by glaciers in the last ice age to make the series of glens running to the sea, revealing layers of different coloured rocks, from red sandstone to white limestone. This unique geology isolated the region from the rest of Ireland, separated the communities of the glens and provided important resources for building and industry including porcellanite, limestone, coal, peat, iron ore and bauxite.

5. Wild country

From Moyle's wide open moorlands cut by small rocky burns and valleys, to its blanket bogs; from wind-blown beech trees and stone walls silhouetted against moorland to Garron, the most extensive area of intact upland blanket bogs in Northern Ireland, the countryside is uniquely rich. The central areas of Ballymena and Ballymoney have stunning upland moorlands with imposing summits.

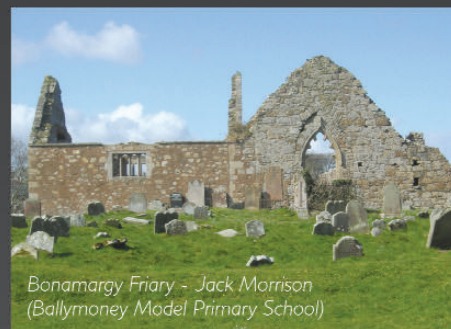
6. Glorious Glens

It's said that each glen has its own personality and there are so many things

to treasure in these romantic valleys. The glens in the Larne area provide long views along the valleys and out to sea; Moyle's are varied, with cliffs in the southern glens and the northern glens have scenic river valleys and attractive rocky rivers surrounded by smooth rounded hills.

7. A long history

There's proof of at least 9,000 years of human occupation throughout the area, with archeological evidence from all of the ages since the Neolithic period, when the porcellanite mines at Tievebullagh and Rathlin gave rise to a European trade in polished stone implements. Fascinating insights to the past are all around, including earthworks and tombs, churches, castles, mottes, crosses, raths and standing stones.



Bonamargy Friary - Jack Morrison (Ballymoney Model Primary School)

8. A living landscape

Farming has shaped the area in interesting ways, from the distinctive, traditional 'ladder farms' where the land is divided running up the slopes, giving each farmer land for cultivation, summer grazing, timber, peat and water, to stone walls, hedgebanks, 'clachans' and whitewashed farmhouses.

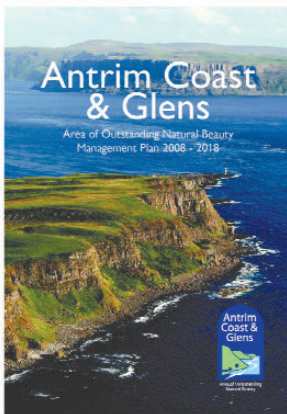
9. Tradition and culture

The area is home today to 22,500 people, grouped in settlements mostly along the coastline, or scattered in farms throughout the area. These thriving and dynamic communities, with their traditions of arts, music and sports, and their strong connections with the land, are part of its magic.

10. Something special

There's something special about the Coast and Glens. Remote yet rich, wild yet long-settled, every person who sees them has their own reason to love them, from the special light to the whin hedgerows. What's yours?





How it works – your questions answered

Why has the Antrim Coast and Glens got a management plan? It was designated an area of outstanding natural beauty in 1988, joining eight others in Northern Ireland and 40 in England and Wales, which with national parks are recognised as national assets, worthy of special protection. Protected areas need careful managing to balance their many uses, and so special plans are necessary.

What are the threats, and how will the plan help?

The area is changing – old farmhouses, barns and other historic features are disappearing from the landscape, wildlife habitats are threatened or already lost, house prices are increasing rapidly and new development is altering the character of settlements. Producing a management plan is an important step, recognising what is valued in the area, devising objectives for the future and finding mechanisms to make sure that change helps to maintain the intrinsic character of the countryside.

What's the legal background?

The area was designated under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (Northern Ireland) 1985, providing it with formal statutory recognition as a landscape of national importance. It allows the Department of the Environment to formulate proposals for conserving its natural beauty, wildlife, historic objects and natural phenomena, for promoting its enjoyment by the public and for providing or maintaining public access to it. The Planning Service may include the area within Countryside Policy Areas and set policies that help to control damaging development.

Is the plan law?

No, it's not a statutory document – it provides guidance for organisations and individuals who have an interest in the protection and management of the area, and presents an evidence base and vision that can help in the formulation of planning policy.

Which places are covered?

The area includes the nine glens from Glenarm to Glenties, the coastline from Larne to Ballycastle and Rathlin Island, and an undefined area of sea. It covers part of four Borough and District Councils, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Larne and Moyle. This plan considers marine issues out to 3km from the coast, but some will be relevant out to the 12 nautical miles limit of territorial waters.

Who is the plan for?

Everyone who lives and works in the area, visits it, or who has an interest in its wellbeing for the future. It has been compiled through discussions with a wide range of organisations and individuals including consultation with the community, and by using studies and strategies relevant to the area.

Is it part of a framework of policies?

It recognises, and is informed by, other plans and strategies that may have an impact on the area, for example for conservation, economic development and tourism provision. It sits alongside the Regional Development Strategy, Planning Policy Statements and Area Plans.

What's in the plan?

The first part, the strategy, provides background information, identifies resources and recommends a vision and objectives for the future. The second part, the action plan, tackles how to make the visions and objectives happen, suggests lead and partner agencies to take things forward and a priority rating.

How is the strategy structured?

It follows a progression from presenting the background and overall vision of the plan in Chapter 1: Setting the scene, through a series of themes that tackle the important issues of the area in Chapter 2: Themes, to recommending mechanisms for the plan's delivery in Chapter 3: Making it happen. Chapter 4: The contexts summarises the legislative and organisational contexts into which the area and this plan fit and describes the process used for its preparation.

What are its themes?

Each theme summarises the main issues and presents long-term management aims. It then identifies the current resources which were identified during consultation, their condition and the trends that are affecting them, the current action that is helping with their management or protection, and objectives for management in the future. The themes are: land, coast and sea - biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape; built heritage - the built and historic environments; and sustainable communities - community, planning, the economy and tourism.

What does the plan say about a management body?

It recommends setting up a dedicated team, and says management is substantially under-resourced, as the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust has three staff and responsibility for three AONBs. By contrast, most AONBs in England and Wales have a dedicated staff unit each, with upwards of five staff.

Did you know? the Coast and Glens in numbers

0.8%

0.8% of the area was under crop in 2006, a slight decrease since 2000.

50%

Coastal land and inshore waters contain about 50% of the region's biodiversity.

1%

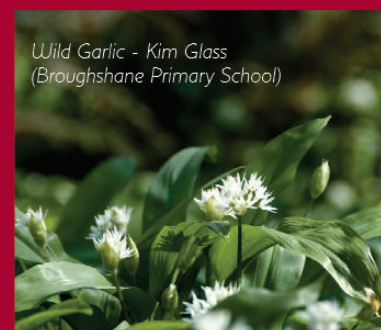
There are 22,475 people usually resident within the area, just over 1% of the total NI population of 1,685,267.

80%

Over 80% of the area's farms are categorised as 'small' (1-2 person businesses) or 'very small' (too small to provide full-time employment for one person).

£108m

The Causeway Coast and Glens area attracts 850,000 visitors a year, spending £108m. There are over 200 visiting boat journeys to the coast. Over half of visitors go walking in the area, a third visit historic buildings.





Carnlough Harbour - Evelyn McCormick (Carnlough Integrated Primary School)

its value, and sustainable tourism initiatives will bring greater prosperity to those living here."

Alison McFaul, visitor and community officer, RSPB Rathlin Island Seabird Centre

For the people

"The point of the plan is to bring people together for the area. Everybody has to buy into this – from the environmentalists to those who live and breathe here.

There is an opportunity for people to be involved with making it happen. It's not just a plan, and it's not something I want to see sitting on a shelf. It needs to be out there with everybody."

Cllr Roy Craig, Larne Borough Council, vice chair of Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust

One-stop shop

"We need to have structures in place to guide us all in looking after this very special area. This should be a one-stop shop – a guide to preserving its special qualities.

If it didn't exist, haphazard and disjointed attempts at protection would be made, but what this gives is a coherent method. Tourism is going to be a major growth area, people come to see this place because it's special and we want to make sure it remains so."

Kevin McGarry, tourism manager, Moyle District Council

Perspectives on the plan

We asked some of the key players what they're hoping the management plan will achieve...

Common goal

"I hope the management plan will provide an agreed focus for activity to ensure this outstandingly beautiful area remains a vibrant place in which to live, and that people recognise and acknowledge the role we all have to play in maintaining landscape quality.

This will only be realised if all parties actively implement it. It is a common resource and in multiple ownership, so no one agency or party alone can 'make it happen'."

Sandi Howie, senior scientific officer, Environment and Heritage Service

Natural riches

"I hope it brings greater appreciation of the area's special qualities. That people will feel enriched, find enjoyment and experience the value that comes from taking care of the area's natural and traditional resources. Investing in preserving what is unique, rare, traditional and beautiful in the area will increase

The 16 objectives for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB:

- Promote greater appreciation and enjoyment of the landscape and wildlife assets of the AONB, and their need for protection and management
- Undertake survey and research to fill the gaps in the information base needed for wildlife conservation
- Ensure all designated sites are in good condition by the end of the Vision period 2028
- Restore degraded habitats and rebuild the wildlife value of the wider countryside, coast and marine environments
- Protect the character of the landscape and seascape, restoring key areas of visual prominence where their character has become degraded
- Promote an increased level of public and visitor awareness, use and enjoyment of the historic fabric of the AONB
- Ensure the conservation of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings
- Protect and conserve the non-designated historic environment of the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB
- Encourage and enhanced sense of ownership and respect for the distinctive character of the area amongst local people and visitors
- Enable vibrant communities to grow sustainably in the Antrim Coast & Glens by stimulating economic prosperity and local culture, and maintaining the distinctive character of the area
- Develop diversity in the rural economy particularly in sectors outside tourism and land management
- Provide enhanced access to, and employment in, essential services in the AONB that are appropriate for people's lifestyles, including the use of new technologies, smart delivery, outreach and innovation
- Encourage and stimulate tourism through entrepreneurship and investment to provide a quality visitor experience and help support the economy of the area
- Establish a mechanism for the effective implementation of the AONB Management Plan
- Raise awareness of and support for the AONB among stakeholder organisations
- Improve funding streams for AONB management structures and projects

Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust provides a secretariat service for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. The Trust is grateful for support from the following organisations:



For more information on the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB please check the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust website.

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