The Causeway Initiative

North East Visitor and Environmental Management Strategy

Action Plan

July 2001

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   *THE STRATEGY*

This strategy has been developed to guide a sustainable approach to visitor and environmental management in the North East area of Northern Ireland (see *Figure 1a*). It has been researched by environmental consultants Environmental Resources Management (ERM) for the Causeway Initiative with technical advice from the Environment and Development Company and the Causeway Initiative Interim Partnership.

The Causeway Initiative is an Interim Partnership funded under the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation with additional support from both the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Environment and Heritage Service [1].

The Causeway Initiative developed from concerns about visitor pressures at key sites in the North East area (particularly the Giant's Causeway and Carrick-a-rede rope bridge). A key aim of the Initiative is to seek sustainable ways of managing those areas under most pressure and encouraging visits to other parts of the area.

Preparation of a visitor and environmental management strategy is a first step in achieving this.

1.2   *STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS*

The development of the strategy has involved a process of review, consultation and field study to identify as much information as possible relevant to developing the strategy (see *Figure 1b*).

A wide range of individuals and organisations were approached for information in the initial stages of the study (see consultation table in *Annex A*) and this helped produce the baseline review presented in *Chapter 2*. Key information about designations, facilities *etc* is presented in *Figure 1a*. Many useful documents were reviewed and these are listed in *Chapter 7*.

It is important that any new strategy sits comfortably within the framework of current sustainability policy and guidance and that its development is guided by experience from similar initiatives elsewhere. Reviews of information which has guided the North East strategy are presented in *Annexes B* and *C* and summarised in *Section 1.3* below.

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(1) The following organisations are represented on the Causeway Initiative Steering Group: Ballymena Borough Council, Ballymoney Borough Council, Carrickfergus Borough Council, Coleraine Borough Council, Larne Borough Council, Limavady Borough Council, Moyle District Council, Newtownabbey Borough Council, Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd, Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Environment and Heritage Service, DoE (NI) EHS, Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and The National Trust.

From the initial consultations, the baseline review and visits to the study area a range of issues relevant to development of the strategy began to emerge. These were explored further at a series of workshops held in February 2001 in Larne, Ballymena and Aghadowey, Coleraine. A summary of the workshop programme and the outcomes from each venue are presented in *Annex D*. A discussion of the issues which were raised is included in *Chapter 3*. Participants at the workshops were also asked to think about possible actions to address issues and again the feedback is included in *Annex D*.

A strategic aim and specific objectives for the strategy evolved through discussions and consideration of what the strategy was trying to achieve (*ie* sound sustainable visitor and environmental management taking account of ongoing initiatives and programmes in the area) (see *Chapter 4*). The strategy itself was evolved to address issues in the context of the strategic aim and to meet the specific objectives. The strategy is included in *Chapter 5* together with suggestions about management structures, delivery of grant assistance, publicity and PR.

The Causeway Initiative would welcome feedback on the strategy by letter to Peter Harper, The Causeway Initiative, 42 Causeway Road, Bushmills, Co Antrim, BT57 8SU, or e-mail to PETER@netep.fsnet.co.uk.

1.3   *SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY*

The need to protect our environment for future generations has led to a widening policy agenda for tourism since the late 1980s. Key international policy was formulated following the Earth Summit in 1992 and the adoption of Agenda 21. Countries are committed to making development sustainable by ensuring that present economic activities including tourism do not prejudice options for long term growth. Characteristics which distinguish sustainable tourism from conventional tourism are that it should:

- enhance the standard of living for host populations in the short term and long term;
- meet the needs of the tourist and continue to attract them, in both the short and long term;
- safeguard the environment in order to achieve both the preceding aims.

Global organisations representing public and private interests have recognised that adopting sustainable tourism principles makes good business sense and a range of initiatives have been developed, including Agenda 21 for the Tourism Industry, The International Hotels Environment Initiative and the Green Globe Programme. Additionally, core indicators of sustainable tourism have been developed and adopted, by a range of agencies, through which the impact of tourism on a destination can be measured.

The European Commission (EC) has been increasingly involved in tourism due to the role of tourism in the European economy. The EC's commitment to Sustainable Development was demonstrated in the Fifth Action Programme of

Policy and Action in Relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development, 1993-2000 'Towards Sustainability' which set out long term objectives within a series of target sectors. The five key target sectors were industry, energy sector, transport, agriculture and *tourism*. Measures were promoted within the tourism sector to ensure that future growth in tourism throughout the EC is sustainable. The recent Sixth Action Plan continues to promote a sustainable approach to tourism.

In 1997 a European Charter was produced for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Those authorities and businesses which sign the Charter commit themselves to 10 principles of sustainable tourism as follows:

1. "*Tourism should be managed in a holistic manner.*
2. *Tourism resources should be preserved.*
3. *Tourism development should be of high quality and should be appropriate to the area.*
4. *New markets should be welcomed.*
5. *Heritage conservation and enhancement should be promoted.*
6. *The local community should be involved.*
7. *The local economy should be supported.*
8. *New types of jobs should be promoted.*
9. *Environmentally friendly behaviour should be promoted.*
10. *The responsible behaviour of tourism operators should spread to other sectors.*"

In February 1999 the UK Government produced a new strategy for tourism (aimed at England) entitled 'Tomorrow's Tourism'. This document encourages '*wise*' growth of tourism and stresses that this growth should be '*economically, socially and environmentally beneficial*'. The strategy recognises that tourism can make a significant contribution to achieving sustainable development objectives and sets out actions to achieve this within the following subject areas:

- establish an effective policy framework;
- maximise tourism's potential to benefit local communities;
- manage visitor flows;
- address the transport issues associated with tourism;
- address the planning issues associated with tourism; and
- build partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors.

The Government has also expressed a commitment to preparing indicators for sustainable tourism in the UK and we understand these are due to be published in 2001.

In Northern Ireland several key policy and review documents have guided sustainable tourism including an in-depth report by NITB in 1992 in which the benefits of sustainable tourism to the environment, the community, the tourism industry and the visitor were examined and practical steps which could be taken to work towards sustainable approach to tourism were set out. A development strategy for tourism in Northern Ireland was published in 1995. The development strategy provided broad policy and operational

guidelines for the further development of tourism in Northern Ireland for the period 1995-2000 and principles of sustainable tourism underpinned the strategy.

NITB has recently drafted the corporate plan for 2001-2004 '*Growing Tourism Together*'. This recognises the importance of moving away from the promotion of major landscape features such as the Giant's Causeway and things to do outdoors towards a marketing strategy based more on the people themselves and the area's unique and valuable aspects such as the landscape, history and culture, creativity *etc*.

More details on these policy documents are included in *Annexes B* and *C* together with information about best practice from elsewhere and other relevant studies in Northern Ireland.

1.4   *CONTENTS OF THE STRATEGY*

The contents of the remainder of the strategy are as follows:

Chapter 2:   a baseline review of the *North East Area*
Chapter 3:   exploration of *Issues*
Chapter 4:   *Strategic Aim and Objectives* for the strategy
Chapter 5:   the *Action Plan*
Chapter 6:   *Immediate Action Plan and PR Programme*
Chapter 7:   *References*

The text is supported by the following annexes:

Annex A: *Consultation Responses*
Annex B: a review of *Sustainable Tourism: Policy, Initiatives and Trends*
Annex C: a *Summary of Sustainable Tourism in Northern Ireland and the North East Area*
Annex D: presents the *Workshops Report*

2 *THE NORTH EAST AREA*

2.1 *INTRODUCTION*

The study area encompasses a large area of the north-east of Northern Ireland, stretching from Limavady in the north west, through Coleraine, Ballymoney, Moyle, Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus to Newtownabbey in the south eastern part of the area (see *Figure 1a*). Inland the area stretches to the River Bann corridor and to the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains. The region offers unspoilt countryside with a variety of attractive scenery and a rich local culture. Key features of the area are introduced in this chapter.

2.2 *NATURAL ENVIRONMENT*

The natural environment is perhaps Northern Ireland's most precious resource, with much of its appeal being in the variety of scenery in a relatively small area. The study area is a varied landscape of remote moorland and forest covered hills, including the Antrim Hills and part of the Sperrins; clay river valleys with glacial features, for example those of the Rivers Roe, Bann, Braid, Bush, Main, and Six Mile Water; dramatic coastal scenery such as the cliffs of the Causeway Coast and the Glens of Antrim which drop to the sea forming sweeping bays; and a mixture of arable and grazed, often rushy pasture. The River Bann itself, which runs from Lough Neagh to the north coast, is recognised for its high quality environment and tourism opportunities such as cruising, coarse and game angling, water sports and walking.

The strategy area includes a number of high quality beaches, most of which meet EU Water Quality Standards. The dramatic Antrim Coast Road starting at Larne is dotted with stretches of golden sand, with European Blue Flag beaches at Ballycastle, Benone, Portrush, Portstewart and Magilligan (Ireland's longest beach).

The area is a predominantly rural with small towns and villages and numerous scattered farms and isolated properties. Many of the older buildings are derelict and have been replaced with modern buildings. There is little local vernacular architecture left. Major road networks follow the corridors of the river valleys or sometimes follow tortuous loops around the coast.

The area of the Sperrin Mountains in the study area and the Antrim Hills, above the Glens of Antrim are wild open hills dissected by distinctive glens. They are predominantly heather, peat and moorland grass covered, but large areas have been planted up with blanket coniferous commercial forestry. In these upland areas there are pressures on the landscape from the expansion of commercial forestry, and the proliferation of masts and windfarms. Caravan

parks in prominent locations, particularly along parts of the North Antrim Coast, are visually intrusive in the rural setting.

The Sperrin Mountains, North Derry (the upland area behind Benone), the Causeway Coast and the Glens of Antrim are all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) [1]. Pressures relate to the removal of characteristic walls and hedges for farming, as well as to the continued degradation of the poorer land, rush infestation, the degradation of dry stone walls fences and hedges, and the building of large farm buildings and other properties which are inappropriate in this small scale landscape.

The Causeway Coast is famous for the Giant's Causeway and the Carrick-a-rede Rope Bridge. Steep basalt cliffs drop to the sea from an exposed coastal plateau dominated by rough grazing, with craggy outcrops. The importance of the Giant's Causeway is recognised in its designation as a World Heritage Site [2].

The many forest parks scattered throughout the North East, such as Garvagh in Coleraine and Glenariffe offer opportunities for a wide variety of pursuits such as walking, picnicking facilities and pony trekking. Walking is a particularly popular activity in the area, with signed walks such as the Ulster Ways, the Moyle Way and the Causeway Coastpath.

The valleys are often used for large scale arable farming. Pressures relate to the loss of biodiversity through the use of chemicals, the draining of lowland bogs and channelling of rivers, the proliferation of houses and bungalows in prominent locations and general degradation of the small scale farmed landscape. Roads, railways and pylons threaten to detract from the landscape. Power stations near Carrickfergus and Islandmagee are visually intrusive in the rural landscape.

Rathlin Islands is some forty five minutes by boat from Ballycastle. The landscape of this small isolated island is open and windswept with high sea cliffs, ruined farmsteads, walls and lanes. The island has a rich archaeological and cultural heritage reflecting its position between Ireland and Scotland. It has a varied fauna and flora and is renowned for its seabird population. The whole island is an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and part of the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB.

A large part of the study area is an attractive patchwork of small fields interspersed with walls and hedgerows. There are a wide variety of habitats and nature conservation interests and these are recognised in the variety of designations which are listed in *Table 2.2*.

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(1) Areas designated by EHS for outstanding natural beauty under the *1965 Amenity Lands Act (Sperrins) and the 1985 Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) (Causeway Coast and Antrim Coast and Glens)*.

(2) Any of various areas or objects inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List. The sites are designated as having 'outstanding universal value' under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

Table 2.2   Nature Designations in the North East Area

Borough	Special Areas of Conservation [1] (SACs)	Special Protection Areas [2] (SPAs)	Areas Special Scientific Interest [3] (ASSIs)	RAMSAR [4]	Nature Reserves
Ballymena	Garron Plateau (c) Main Valley Bogs (p)	Lough Beg	Cleggan Valley Culnafay Frosses Bog Garron Plateau Glen Burn Lough Beg	Garron Plateau	Lough Beg
Ballymoney	Garry Bog (c) Main Valley Bogs (p)		Garry Bog Garry Bog part II Dunloy Bog Caldanagh Bog	Garry Bog	
Carrickfergus		Belfast Lough	North Woodburn Glen Outer Belfast Lough	Belfast Lough	
Coleraine	Bann Estuary (p)		Altikeeragh Bann Estuary Carn/Glenshane Pass Craigahulliar Magilligan Portballintrae Ramore Head and the Skerries White Rocks		Portrush

(1) To protect rare and threatened habitats and species within the European Community. Designated under the European Directive on *The Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna* (The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)) (c) denotes candidate SAC sites which have been submitted to the EC for approval. (p) denotes possible SACs which have yet to be submitted to the EC.

(2) To protect birds that are considered rare or vulnerable within the European Community as well as all regularly occurring migratory birds. Designated under the European Directive on *Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive) (79/409/EEC)*.

(3) Designated under Article 24 of the *Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985* (as Amended 1989).

(4) To protect wetlands of international importance particularly as waterfowl habitat as part of the UK's commitment to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance 1971 (*The Ramsar Convention*).

Borough	Special Areas of Conservation [1] (SACs)	Special Protection Areas [2] (SPAs)	Areas Special Scientific Interest [3] (ASSIs)	RAMSAR [4]	Nature Reserves
Limavady	Magilligan (c) Banagher Glen (p) Carn/Glenshane Pass (p) Binevenagh (p)	Lough Foyle	Altmover Glen Banagher Glen Binevenagh Bovevagh Carn/Glenshane Pass Lough Foyle Magilligan	Lough Foyle	Binevenagh Roe Estuary Magilligan Point Ballymaclary Banagher
Larne	Garron Plateau (c)	Larne Lough	Black Burn Garron Plateau Glenarm Wood Gortnagory Larne Lough Portmuck Scawt Hill Straidkilly Wood Waterloo	Garron Plateau Larne Lough	Straidkilly Swan Island
Moyle	Garron Plateau (c) Rathlin Island - coast (c) Breen Wood (p) North Antrim Coast (p)	Rathlin Island Rathlin Island Cliffs Sheep Island	Ballycastle Coalfield Breen Wood Carrickarede Garron Plateau Giant's Causeway and Dunseverick Glenarriff Rathlin Island - Ballycarry Rathlin Island - Ballygill North Rathlin Island - Coast Rathlin Island - Kinramer South Runkerry Sheep Island Tievebulliagh Tow River Wood White Park Bay	Garron Plateau	Kebble Giant's Causeway National Nature Reserve Breen Oakwood Slieveanorra Glenariffe Glen
Newtownabbey		Belfast Lough	Inner Belfast Lough Outer Belfast Lough	Belfast Lough	

The location of sites listed in the table is shown on *Figure 1a*. Designated sites include bogs and waterbodies, woodlands, grasslands and cliffs.

2.3 *HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE*

The North East area is renowned for its history and there is a wide range of cultural attractions. These include great houses and gardens (*eg* Carnfunnock in Larne, Benvarden Gardens in Ballymoney), properties of special interest, historic monuments and buildings (*eg* Dunluce Castle Portrush, Hezlett House Castlerock, Carrickfergus Castle), archaeological sites (*eg* Mountsandel Fort in Coleraine), churches, cathedrals and interpretative centres (*eg* Ecos Centre, Ballymena). Numerous historic places and cultural establishments such as museums, theatres, art galleries and libraries are an intrinsic part of the area's heritage.

Two of the North East area's most well-known attractions, the Causeway Coast and the nine Glens of Antrim, are renowned for their mythology and folklore and are rich in history and culture. A long history of settlement is marked in the landscape by prehistoric stone tombs, churches and castles, some of which reflect a strong connection with Scotland. The folklore of the Glens is very colourful and romantic. It is filled with stories of fairy folk, ancient heroes such as Ossian and Fionn McCumhall and well known Celtic legends including the Children of Lir. Within the Glens, there are numerous historical sites of interest including caves, ancient castles, towers, bridges and graves. The Giant's Causeway is steeped in legend and mythology, including the story of the giant Finn McCool who lived in the area and was supposed to have built the Causeway in order to visit a lady giant whom he loved in Scotland. Slemish Mountain has long been associated with St Patrick and his time there as a boy-slave.

As well as folklore the whole study area has long established traditions of traditional music, story telling, literature and poetry and many communities have important festivals to celebrate these (see *Section 2.4*).

The history of Northern Ireland agriculture is told in established attractions like the Roe Valley Country Park and is also presented at open farms *eg* Leslie Hill in Ballymoney. The industrial history of the area is interpreted in places such as the Bushmill's Old Distillery. Other important museums are listed in *Section 2.4*.

2.4 *SETTLEMENTS AND KEY ATTRACTIONS*

The strategy area comprises of eight council areas in total. The section below provides a brief overview of some of the towns/villages within each council area, outlining key attractions in each. Where visitor numbers to a particular

attraction are known these are shown in the tables of attractions for each borough or district [1].

2.4.1 Ballymena Borough

Ballymena town, a historic settlement also known as 'city of the seven towers', is home to approximately 51% of the borough's total population . The town is most renowned as a good retail centre claiming exclusive fashion retailers and specialist shops selling locally produced crafts, ceramics and jewellery.

The local shop museum Morrow's stocks a range of local memorabilia. The town hosts a regular programme of arts and entertainment with events including international art exhibitions, theatre productions and major popular and classical music events. Plans are also in train for a proposed regional art centre. There are two large festivals in the borough each year, the Spring Festival in May featuring arts, sports and community events and the Ballymena Arts Festival, held every October.

The village of Broughshane, known as the Garden Village of Ulster, three miles north of Ballymena is rich in historical culture and is close to Slemish Mountain.

The Braid and Main Rivers provide important recreational opportunities including angling and a network of riverside paths.

Table 2.4a   Ballymena Borough Main Attractions

Attraction	Type	1999 Visitor Numbers (where known)
Ancestral home of Sir George White VC	Memorial in the local village churchyard to 'the hero of Ladysmith'	
Ancestral home of Chester Alan Arthur	Restored farmhouse that is the ancestral home of the 21st President of the United States, Chester Alan Arthur	1,658
Ballymena Showground	Major outdoor sports complex	
Braid and Main Rivers	Angling and riverside paths network	
Broughshane	The garden village of Ulster and previous winner of Britain and Europe in Bloom and Entente Florale	
Ecos Millennium Environment Centre	Award winning environmental interpretative centre, park and caravan park	
Galgom Castle	Golf and conference centre	
Glens of Antrim	Scenic and recreational value	
Gracehill	Conservation Area with a Moravian settlement from 1764	
Morrow's Shop Museum	Museum in former drapers store that houses a collection of mid-Antrim memorabilia	5,678
Newferry	Water sports and fishing facilities	
People's Park	2.5 ha of recreational parkland	
Portglenoe Forest	Forest park with beech and oak woods	27,000
Portglenone Marina	Boat launching and berthing	

(1) Source of Information: *Survey of Visitor Attractions Annual Report, 1999*, Northern Ireland Tourist Board Research Department.

Attraction	Type	1999 Visitor Numbers (where known)
Seven Towers Leisure Centre	Leisure and recreation facilities	
Slemish Mountain	Extinct volcano and place of pilgrimage on St Patrick's Day	

Ballymoney Borough

Approximately one third of the borough's population lives in Ballymoney, the largest town in the borough and a Conservation Area. Its prosperity has its origins in the markets and services that it provides for the rural economy of the borough. Notable attractions within the town include the Riada Leisure Centre, the Riverside Park, Drumaheglis Marina and Caravan Park and the Ballymoney Museum. The borough also accommodates other activities such as golfing, horse riding and water skiing. A number of festivals are hosted at various times throughout the year such as the Arts Exhibition held during November and the Drama Festival in March, which is the oldest festival of its kind in Ireland.

Other settlements within the borough include Dervock (with the ancestral home of Kennedy K McArthur, winner of the Marathon at the 1912 Olympics); Dunloy, to the south (a neolithic Court Cairn, called Doey's Cairn is situated south of the town); Stranocum, with a pre-historic underground chamber, a souterrain, located about half a mile to the south west of the village; Rasharkin; Balnamore and Cloughmills. All of these villages hold a population of less than 1,000.

Table 2.4b		*Ballymoney Borough Main Attractions*

Attraction	Type	1999 Visitor Numbers (where known)
Ballymoney Museum	Historical interest	2,758
Benvarden Garden & Grounds	Gardens and walks	4,338
Dooey's Cairn	A Neolithic courtcairn dating from around 2000-4000 BC	
Drumaheglis	Marina and caravan park, riding school	
Gracehill Golf Course	Golfing	
Historical trail 'Roon the toon'	Trail incorporating town's main historical sites	
Leck Game Farm & Sporting Agency	Fishing and shooting facilities	
Leslie Hill Heritage Farm Park	Open farm	14,500
Provincial Towns Indoor Bowling Club	Bowling facilities	
Riada Centre	Leisure facility	27,000
Riverside Park	30 acres of recreational parkland	
The Edge Water Ski School	Water sports	

2.4.3		*Carrickfergus Borough*

The town of Carrickfergus is the main tourist destination for the borough with over 800 years of history. It is a Conservation Area. There are retail, tourist and general services within the historic town walls. The new Waterfront area has a fully serviced 300 berth marina and harbour, housing development and

water sports facilities. There are numerous sporting facilities throughout the borough.

The area is rich in historic interest with St Nicholas Parish Church, the 17th Century Town Wall walk, Carrickfergus Gasworks Museum, the modern Knight Ride Centre with its history themed monorail ride and the Andrew Jackson and US Rangers Centres, highlighting the strong Ulster-American links. Carrickfergus Castle built in the 12th century is the best preserved Anglo-Norman Castle in Ireland.

Whitehead is located on the north shore of Belfast Lough, approximately 5 miles north-east of Carrickfergus. The town has a designated Conservation Area and Nature Reserve. It also features a modern promenade and loughside walk together with the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland steam railway.

Greenisland located to the west of Carrickfergus developed with the building of the railway. The Knockagh monument overlooks the district and the area now serves as a popular dormitory settlement for Belfast.

Table 2.4c   *Carrickfergus Borough Main Attractions*

Attraction	Type	1999 Visitor Numbers (where known)
Andrew Jackson and US Rangers Centres	Historic and USA interest	2,137
Blackhead Path & Lighthouse	Natural heritage	
Carrickfergus Castle	12th Century castle site Heritage interest	61,377
Carrickfergus Gasworks Museum	Victorian Coal Gasworks Museum site	540
Golf courses: Bentra, Carrickfergus Greenisland and Whitehead	Golfing	
Knight Ride Centre	Themed monorail ride telling history of Carrickfergus	23,359
Knockagh Monument	County of Antrim War Memorial scenic site	
Leisure Centre	Leisure facility	
Marina	Yachting, sailing, jet skiing, fishing *etc*	
Marine Gardens	Open park	
Railway Preservation Society of Ireland	Steam railway preservation site	
Shaftesbury Park	Bowling Green and closed park	
St Nicholas Church	Heritage interest : 12th Century church fine architecture	
Town Walls	Heritage interest: 17th century urban walls and walks	
Whitehead Nature Reserve	Ornithological and natural heritage	
Whitehead Recreation Grounds	Recreation, tennis, soccer, bowls and playground	
Woodburn, Copeland & Loughmourne Reservoirs	Leisure, game and coarse fishing	

2.4.4   *Coleraine Borough*

Coleraine is the key town of the borough located on the banks of the River Bann. It is located approximately three miles south of the coastal resort towns of Portstewart and Portrush. Coleraine is a university town and a major retailing centre, with a rich history *eg* the location of Mountsandel Fort which is the area of first known human settlement in Ireland. The coastal resort of Portrush has a Blue Flag beach and a world renowned golf course, the Royal Portrush. It also hosts the Causeway Coast Sea Angling Festival in September each year. Portstewart, which has another blue flag beach, is a coastal resort town located about 2 miles west of Portrush. The town has a golf course and an Arts Centre. Castlerock Strand is also a popular area for holiday and leisure activities.

Portballintrae is situated further east from Portrush and about one mile west of the Giant's Causeway. Garvagh is located about eleven miles south of Coleraine. Garvagh Forest is just outside the town close to the Sperrin Mountains. Sea and game angling and walking are important attractions within the area. Important cultural attractions in the borough include the Hampsey Harp Festival which is held in Garvagh in October. Other towns within the borough include Castlerock, Kilrea and Downhill, located very close to the Blue Flag beach Benone (which itself is located within the Borough of Limavady).

Table 2.4d   *Coleraine Borough Main Attractions*

Attractions	Type	1999 Visitor Numbers (where known)
Causeway Coastpath	Long distance walking route	
Coleraine Leisure Centre	Leisure and recreation	
Countryside Centre, Portrush	Recreation	
Dunluce Castle	Historic site	35,071
Dunluce Centre, Portrush	Leisure and recreation	75,000
Fantasy Island	Recreation	92,000
Garvagh Museum & Heritage Centre	Depicts rural life in 19th and early 20th century	600
Garvagh Forest	Outdoor pursuits	
Garvagh Museum & Heritage Centre	Heritage interest	
Hezlett House, Castlerock	Restored thatched house dating from 1600s	
Mountsandel Fort	Earliest known habitation of man in Ireland	
Mussenden Temple (west of Castlerock)	18th century folly overlooking Downhill Beach	
Playpark, Portrush	Recreation	
Portrush	Quality beach area	
Portstewart Strand	Quality beach area	125,562
Recreation Park, Portrush	Recreation	
Royal Portrush	Golf	
Several equestrian centres	Horse riding activities	
Sperrin Mountains	Outdoor pursuits	
The Warren Portstewart	Small park	
Waterworld, Portrush	Indoor water adventure play area	60,744
Wildgeese Centre, Garvagh	Skydiving centre	

Larne Borough

Northern Ireland's most important ferry port is located at Larne, which has a population of nearly 20,000 and is one of the busiest ports of its type in the UK. It is a modern provincial town, with shopping and leisure facilities, as well as accommodation, caravaning and camping sites. The area has many historic monuments. Larne itself has strong historic links with the USA stemming from a history of emigration from the port.

There are numerous leisure and sporting facilities within the town, including a leisure centre and outdoor sports facility. Carnfunnock Country Park, north of the town, provides a parkland, visitor centre, caravan park, activity centre and golf course and scattered along the coast are numerous unspoilt beaches. A section of the Ulster Way runs from Ballyboley Forest to Carnlough.

The town of Carnlough is situated at the foot of the second of the nine Glens of Antrim. Glencloy has a popular sandy beach and a harbour with fishing and pleasure craft. Also in the Glens are the small villages of Gleno (where the popular feature the Gleno Waterfall is located), Glenarm and Ballygally, all of which are steeped in history and culture. Glenarm is the seat of the Antrim McDonnells, a family who has played a significant part in the local history of the area. Islandmagee is a peninsula south of Larne that contains several churches of historical significance as well as a cemetery that is associated with Viking Settlements in the area. Brown's Bay is very popular with tourists, and there are scenic harbours such as Portmuck. Glenarm and Carnlough are Conservation Areas.

Table 2.4f   ***Larne Borough Main Attractions***

Attraction	Type	No of Visitors in 1999 (where known)
Antrim Coast Road	Scenic value	
Ballygally Castle	Historical interest	
Carnfunnock Country Park	Parkland, visitor centre, caravan park, activity centre, golf course	148,526
Cairndhu Golf Course	Golfing	
Cranny Falls	Waterfall at Carnlough (Nature Reserve)	
Ford; Loughside	Open farms	
Glenarm Castle	Home of the Antrim McDonnells	
Gleno Waterfall	Recreational	
Glens of Antrim	Scenic/recreational value	
Islandmagee	A seven-mile long peninsula with a distinctive history, *eg* the last witch trial in Ireland was held here	
Kilwaughter Castle	Historical interest	
Larne Interpretative Centre	Heritage/historical interest	
The Gobbins	Wild basalt cliffs on the east side of Islandmagee	
The Steensons	Northern Ireland's leading jewellers design and craft unique works	
Swan Island	A bird sanctuary with internationally significant numbers of nesting roseate terns.	

2.4.6 Limavady Borough

Limavady is situated north east of the town of Derry. It has a population of 13,000 and is the administrative centre of the borough. Limavady is best known and mostly visited for its bathing beach at Benone Strand which is renowned for its clean, firm golden sands which stretch from Downhill to Magilligan Point and are free from rock, shingle and seaweed. There are five National Nature Reserves in the borough. The North Derry AONB is also located in this area. Adjacent to Benone Strand lies Benone Tourist Complex in the shadow of Benevenagh Mountain. The complex offers a 9-hole golf course, tennis courts, bowling green, putting green, golf practice range and an adjacent touring caravan park.

The Borough is extensively forested and includes Binevenagh, Cam, Loughermore and Banagher forests. Roe Valley Country Park is a three mile linear park close to Limavady and offers very attractive riverside and woodlands scenery. The park includes a modern visitors' centre housing a historical exhibition, an 18th century mill and a restored 1896 power house. Limavady is also a popular destination for gliding enthusiasts, with one of the finest soaring sites in the British Isles, and a unique sport in the area.

Other settlements within the borough include Dungiven, a small market town situated near to the foot of the Benbradagh Mountain with an Augustinian priory, Dungiven Priory. Three miles west of Dungiven is Banagher Lake and Forest which provides picnic and parking facilities. The small town of Ballykelly is dominated by an 18th century gothic church and a classical style Presbyterian church. Feeny is a typical example of an old Ulster village where original cottages still exist.

Table 2.4g   Limavady Borough Main Attractions

Attractions	Type	1999 Visitor Numbers (where known)
Ballykelly, Binevenagh and Loughermore Forests	Walking	
Banagher Lake and Forest	Scenery and ornithology	
Benone Tourist Complex and Strand	Beach and holiday centre (wide variety of outdoor activities)	
Binevenagh Mountain	Hill walking, picnicking, scenic views	
Bishop's Road	Scenic drive, backdrop of Sperrin Mountains	
Dungiven Sport Pavilion	Sport and recreation	
Glenshane Forest	Walks and recreation	
Jazz and Blues Festival	Cultural interest	
Lough Foyle	Recreation and bird watching	
Martello Tower & Magilligan	Area of scientific and historical study	
Roe Valley Leisure Centre	Recreation	
Roe Angling Association	Salmon and sea trout fishing on River Roe	
Roe Valley Country Park	Woodland area and Power House Museum	125,000
Roe Valley Folk festival	Cultural interest	
Sperrins	Walking and recreation	
The Rough Fort	Prehistoric earthwork fork	
Ulsterway	Walking and recreation	

2.4.7   *Newtownabbey Borough*

Newtownabbey is located within the greater Belfast area. Situated on the shore of Belfast Lough reaching north from the City of Belfast and stretching up towards the Glens of Antrim, it is a tourist gateway to Belfast City and the Glens of Antrim. One of the suburbs of the town, Merville Garden Village, is a Conservation Area. Many of Northern Ireland's top tourist attractions are within easy travelling distance of Newtownabbey. There is a strong retail base in the area.

The borough has a wealth of local history including the United Irishmen; William III's fleet landed at Jordanstown and Mossley Mill. The Ballyclare Mayfair, a traditional horse fair, dates back to 1756. The town has an extensive range of indoor entertainment and leisure facilities and a unique nine mile recreational path is currently being developed which will link many of Newtownabbey's villages. Horse riding is a strong recreational pursuit in the area. Carnmoney Hill links with the Belfast Hills with opportunities for walking.

Newtownabbey is a popular destination for coarse and trout fishing at Sixmilewater River, Tildarg Fishery on the northern outskirts of Ballyclare and at Straid Fishery outside Ballynure.

Great numbers of birds feed along the coast between Belfast and Whiteabbey on mudflats and offshore. The whole area of Belfast Lough has been designated as having special scientific interest.

Table 2.4h   *Newtownabbey Main Attractions*

Attraction	Type	No of Visitors in 1999 (where known)
Ballyearl Golf & Leisure Centre	Golfing and leisure	
Belfast to Whitesabbey Cycleway	Cycling	
Glengormley Park	Leisure and recreation	
Hazelbank Park	Walking and cycling around Belfast Lough	
Loughshore Park	Walking and cycling around Belfast Lough	
Loughshore Park and Hazelbank Park	Shoreline walks and cycles tracks around Belfast Lough	
Mossley Mill	Restored old linen mill houses, museum under development	
Newtownabbey Way (currently being developed)	A 9 mile recreational path that will link many of the Borough's villages	
Sentry Hill	19th Century farmhouse with out buildings	
Sixmile Leisure Centre	Leisure facilities	
Sixmile Park	Leisure facilities	
Sixmilewater River, Tildarg Fishery, Straid Fishery	Fishing	
Threemile Water	Leisure facilities	
Valley Leisure Centre	Leisure and recreation	
Valley Park	Leisure facilities	

The Moyle district, with a of population 15,000, is situated in the north east corner of the area. It includes 42 miles of the North Antrim coastline and includes three of the best known features in Northern Ireland: the Giant's Causeway (World Heritage Site), the Glens of Antrim and Rathlin Island (see *Section 2.2*). There is no major industry in the area due to strict planning policy regulations in the AONBs which cover most of the Moyle district.

There are a number of well known villages in the area including Bushmills which is home to the world's oldest licensed distillery; to the east of the district are the Glens of Antrim, steeped in history and culture. Walking activities are popular in the area and paths include the Moyle Way and the Moyle Coastal Path (part of the Ulster Way).

Ballycastle town, the cultural and administrative centre of the district with a population of about 4500, is at the heart of the district of Moyle. A traditional seaside town bound by forest parks and glens and a coastline with views to the nearby craggy outcrop of Fairhead and the island of Rathlin. The Lammas Fair takes place in Ballycastle in August which is the second biggest fair in Ireland.

The town of Cushendall, sometimes known as the capital of the 'Glens', lies where three of the nine famous glens converge (Glenann, Glencorp and Glenballyemon). Every August the 'Heart of the Glens' festival takes place here, the climax of which is mass participation by residents and visitors in the traditional dance, the 'Waves of Tory'. Popular salmon and sea trout rivers include the Rivers Bush, Margey, Glenshesk and Dun. Located close to Cushendall is the conservation village of Cushendun with the well known Maude cottages and the Cushendun Caves.

Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland's only inhabited island, lies seven miles off Ballycastle, and has a population of less than 100 who are mostly dependent on fishing, farming, and tourism. There is a regular ferry service between the island and Ballycastle.

Other little villages scattered throughout the district include Armoy, Ballintoy (with the famous Carrick-a-rede Rope Bridge) and the small fishing village of Portbraddan, meaning 'Port of the Salmon' close to Whitepark Bay (a long crescent of golden sand bounded by high dunes). The village of Waterfoot, at Red Bay, is at the foot of Glenariffe, the 'Queen of the Glens'. The village straddles a long beach which holds the Seaside Beach Award. The nearby Glenariffe Forest Park covers 1185 ha and contains two rivers with waterfalls, pools and stretches of fast flowing water.

Cushendall, Cushendun, Ballycastle and Bushmills are all Conservation Areas.

Table 2.4i   *Moyle District Main Attractions*

Attraction	Type	1999 Visitor Numbers (where known)
Antrim Coast Road	Scenic route	
Armoy Riverside Park	Recreational	
Armoy Round Tower	Historic interest	
Ballycastle	Water activities - sailing, angling	
Ballycastle Museum	Historical interest	6,000
Ballycastle Forest	Way marked forest walk	
Ballycastle Golf Course	Golfing	
Ballypatrick Forest	Scenic recreational	
Ballintoy Harbour	Recreational	
Bonamargy Friary	Historic interest	
Bushmills Riverside Park	Recreational	
Caravan Parks	Waterfoot (4), Cushendall (3), Ballycastle (6), Cushendun (1), Bushmills (1)	
Carrick-a-rede Rope Bridge	Scenic/recreational	80,709
Causeway Coast	Path walking, rock climbing	
Causeway School Museum	Historic interest	2,206
Curfew Tower, Cushendun	Historic interest	
Cushendall Golf Course	Golfing	
Cushendall Water Activities	Sailing, water skiing, angling	
Dunloughan farm museum	Historic interest	
Dunseverick Castle	Historic interest	
Fairhead	Scenic / walking and rock climbing	
Giant's Causeway	World Heritage site	433,745
Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre		
Glenariffe Forest Park and Waterfalls	Recreational	67,000
Glens of Antrim	Scenic/recreational	
Kinbane Castle	Historic interest	
Loughareema - Vanishing lake	Attraction	
Moyle Way	Recreational	
Murlough Bay	Scenic and recreation	
Old Bushmills Distillery	Historical/industrial interest	103,709
Portbraden	Recreational	
Rathlin Island	Scenic recreational	
Tieveragh - Fairy Mound/Hill	Historic interest	
Torr Head	Scenic drive	
Waterfoot Recreation Park	Recreational	
Watertop Open Farm	Recreational	8,000
Whitepark Bay	Recreational	

3   *ISSUES*

3.1   *INTRODUCTION*

The process which has been followed in developing the strategy has been to
try to understand the North East area including the issues which those with
an interest in the area consider important (through a process of review,
consultation and site visits) and to use this information, together with our
knowledge from other areas of the UK, as the basis for formulating the Action
Plan (see *Figure 1b*). In this chapter the issues which have been identified and
taken into account in developing the strategy are summarised.

The issues have been grouped under a series of sub headings for ease of
presentation. Inevitably this means there are overlaps between sections. The
groupings of issues are presented alphabetically and not in a particular order
with weighting attached to them. Further details of issues raised at each
workshop are included in *Annex D*.

A short discussion of key perceptions of the consultants team is provided at
the end of the chapter.

3.2   *ACCESS FOR VISITORS*

In areas of most attractive scenery the roads are often narrow, with few
passing places or lay-bys to enjoy views. The existing network of footpaths
and cycleways is developing but is quite limited in some of the strategy area
and routes are often poorly signed.

Thus, for example, the coastal road from Larne to Cushendall has wonderful
views but opportunities to stop and get out and explore are relatively limited
which leads to a car dependent experience. Similarly in the Antrim Glens the
footpath network is limited or poorly signed. In the past there have also been
a number of difficulties experienced by promoters to develop better access
due to legislative constraints and concerns by landowners about liability. In
some areas, such as the Sperrins, where walking could be an important draw,
access onto certain lands is becoming more of a problem, primarily due to
difficulties in getting insurance companies to provide adequate cover against
accidents. While walking festivals themselves are covered by insurance,
outside of these periods some landowners are not willing to allow walkers
onto their land. Parts of the Sperrins are considered by some to be unfriendly
to hillwalkers.

All councils in the North East area now have or have had specific Countryside
Access Officers in post who work to create improved relationships between
landowners, walkers and the councils. There are limited tools available such
as access or permissive path agreements which can help to create access by
negotiation.

The 'Ulster Way' is, as yet, incomplete and in some areas the path is obstructed. Landowner issues are again a significant obstacle is securing a completely off-route track. Lengths of the Way are on roads which detracts from the recreational experience. Emphasis is now being placed on developing a series of Ulster Ways. The Way Marked Way project which includes the Moyle Way and the Causeway Coast Path are essentially particular parts of the Ulster Way which are being marketed as manageable and attractive two days walks.

Sustrans is developing a long distance cycle route (the National Cycle Network); a number of local routes stemming from this are also being developed. Brochures will be produced to market these routes. Plans are also in train to market the routes through the area's Regional Tourist Organisation. Consultees considered there was still the need to develop the footpath network more extensively despite the ongoing initiatives. There are a number of areas of extensive forestry which could lend themselves to further development of paths and cycletracks (see *Figure 1a*). Little feedback from consultees on horse riding was received but it is assumed that there must also be opportunities to work with riding stable owners to identify needs and extend routes.

In some areas, provision of adequate signage is an issue and does not do all it could to attract visitors to an area. It is also felt that there should be additional information on the walks available in each area and that available information could be better distributed (for example, made widely available in hotels and other accommodation).

Workshop participants considered that there were real opportunities for enhancing access in alternative locations to the Giant's Causeway such as the Gobbins on Islandmagee, along the coast and inland in woodlands or near rivers. Potential landowner issues were acknowledged but it was felt there might be real opportunities for new developments particularly if knock-on benefits to farmers could be shown (*eg* increased bed and breakfast guests and opportunities to develop refreshment facilities).

Opportunities to enhance public transport provision (hop-on, hop-off bus provision, for example) were considered important as a means of encouraging greater access to the countryside and less dependence on cars.

3.3 ACCOMMODATION

3.3.1 Accommodation: Issues

Views which have been expressed in the consultation exercise on the standard of accommodation provision throughout the area were quite varied. Generally the provision of guest houses and holiday cottages appears to be considered adequate in the area. However, it is widely considered that some areas lack services of a certain standard, for example Coleraine has no four star hotels; there is no hotel 'of modern standard' in Cushendall, 'the Heart of

the Glens'; there may be demand for a five star hotel on the North coast; Larne requires more quality four / five star accommodation in the borough. The need for high standard hotels close to the coast was considered particularly important by many people. Many consultees commented that the standard of catering provision in hotels and restaurants could often be improved and that more emphasis on local products was needed.

It is also felt that tourism can be developed in the area through the education of the local accommodation sector in terms of customer friendly /eco friendly practices. A small group of consultees commented that the accommodation sector needs to be more 'family friendly', and suggested that facilities for children are not widely available and therefore are not very welcoming. It is not known if this view is widely held.

Over development of second homes and apartments was considered by some to be detracting from some areas which had knock on disbenefits on hotels and guest houses. For example, some local shops are closing through lack of custom because visitors to cottages, flats and caravans bring their own provisions rather than use local services. This can have a detrimental effect on the character of towns and villages which then become less attractive as destinations to stay in. Some sensitive areas are particularly vulnerable, for example Cushendun Conservation Area, where an important site close to the river is currently being developed as apartments. Other villages such as Glenarm are also under development pressure and planning authorities should ensure that these areas retain their local character and attraction for visitors.

An issue to be addressed directly or indirectly in the strategy will be to ensure that suitable types of attractive accommodation are available in locations where activities are being promoted. The Partnership will need to work closely with other organisations such as the NITB to encourage this.

3.4   *ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES*

There is quite a variety in the quality of local towns and villages in the area as this relates to visitor destinations. There are poor perceptions of some towns. Others like Ballymena have perhaps become more attractive with the opening of the Ecos Centre and its reputation as a good shopping centre. Areas such as Newtownabbey are considered by some locals to have less potential for development of tourism, although are important retail centres. The waterfront at Carrickfergus is an example of best practice in terms of development. The proliferation of second homes on the north coast is considered by some to detract from the quality of local communities (see *Section 3.3).* There are relatively few built visitor attractions although it was generally agreed by workshop participants that the natural environment was the key attraction of the area.

In some areas, such as the Glens of Antrim, coffee shops, restaurants and pubs are limited and some are considered to be of poor quality. It was

acknowledged by many people that visitors are becoming more sophisticated in their requirements and that if part of the aim of the strategy is to encourage longer stays throughout the area then it was very important that facilities were of a sufficiently high standard to not detract from the experience and this was particularly important for overseas visitors.

The biggest attraction within the area is the natural and cultural environment but too much emphasis has been placed in the past on the high profile attractions such as the Giant's Causeway, the Glens of Antrim and Carrick-a-rede rope bridge. The area offers a lot more in terms of the natural product but much of this is still quite hidden *eg* Mountsandel Fort in Coleraine; Oissin's Grave and the Mass Rock in Moyle; and St Cedmas Church, a Franciscan Friary, in Larne and all these offer marketing opportunities.

It was considered that other natural areas other than the key sites also offered much for visitors such as woodlands and lakes. These areas could offer real opportunities if the resource was developed sustainably. It was suggested by some that opportunities to develop and promote activities such as bird watching or cycling should be taken. It was considered neither was fully developed to their full potential at present.

Alternative type attractions such as open farms are also quite well represented throughout the North East but in some cases the facilities tend to close at the end August which is still quite early in the season. In addition, it was felt by some workshop participants that attractions and facilities could cater better for families.

Visitor servicing issues such as provision of adequate toilets facilities were considered to be important particularly if visitor numbers are being encouraged to increase. Problems from lack of provision at the Giant's Causeway and on Rathlin Island are already acknowledged as being of potential nuisance.

Many consultees and workshop participants considered that better information could be made available about facilities and attractions in the area to promote visitors away from honey pot areas and encourage longer visits to the area. Information points, better signage, and better interpretation throughout the area were considered important ways of achieving this.

Better car park areas at key tourist areas and improvements in public transport to local attractions and provision of park and ride facilities were all considered important environmental issues when accessing attractions.

3.5   *IDENTITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE*

In the international market the Giant's Causeway and Bushmills Distillery are important attractions and favoured destinations and of major importance in the marketing of the area. The Giant's Causeway is often synonymous with this area of Northern Ireland and the "Causeway Coast" is often used in

marketing. Visitor numbers at the Giant's Causeway and the distillery attractions confirm their popularity (see *Table 2.4i*). For the domestic market the beaches of the north coast are a draw and rivers such as the Bann are used for recreation such as fishing.

An individual identity for the area is less well developed despite the evident warmth of local people. This is partly because the concept of a "North East area" is relatively new. There is a rich culture of story telling but this does not appear to be used to its full potential as a draw for tourists. Workshop participants suggested that there is good potential for the development of cultural/heritage trails in many part of the area to draw on the heritage of the North East. This could be important in encouraging visitors away from the well known honey pot areas.

There has been little marketing focus on traditional customs, crafts and food until the Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd (CCAG) initiative now two years into implementation. There appears to be further scope for promotion of some 'local' products such as traditional music and 'craic'.

Workshop participants felt that much more should be done to raise the profile of the whole area and make it distinctive. Suggestions on how this might be achieved suggested making more information on the North East as an area available and developing strong local media links to promote the area (for example on local radio).

The legacy of the troubles is still strong and some communities remain insular and inward looking which may deter the development of tourism. Graffiti and flags can be perceived as threatening by visitors and this was recognised at the workshops. Workshop participants considered that the media coverage of the political situation over past years had led to a poor image of the area.

There is a perception that certain areas are less attractive to visit than others and this is an issue. For example some towns are considered to be quite industrial and do not lend themselves very well to marketing as a tourist attraction. The power stations along the south east coast at Carrickfergus and Islandmagee are very intrusive and detract from the area as a tourist destination.

Workshop participants drew attention to the issue that the built cultural heritage of the area was not always valued and that some local buildings of interest had been lost because of the lack of robust planning control. This was leading to a lack of cultural identity in the built environment. It was suggested that the strategy could provide opportunities to restore remaining old buildings of interest in the area. Lack of awareness of the importance of the build cultural heritage is also an issue and again opportunities to raise awareness should be identified in the strategy.

Numerous festivals take place in the North East area throughout the year, *eg* the Ballymena Arts Festival, the Ould Lammas Fair in Ballycastle, the Ballymoney Festival of Culture in February, the Festival of the Fairy Thorn,

Kilrea, the Festival of the Sea, Portrush, the Larne Alive Festival, the Larne Music Festival in April, the Ballyclare May Fair (one of the oldest horse trading fairs in Ireland), the Carrickfergus Waterfront festival in June and the Heart of the Glens festival in August. These festivals are very much part of what is the experience of Northern Ireland and visitors are attracted by the local culture including music and story telling.

Another resource which does offer some recreational opportunities is the maritime heritage and it was considered by some consultees that this could be further exploited.

The identity of the Initiative was discussed at the workshops and with consultees. It was felt that it has an important role to play in raising the identity of the area together with the Regional Tourist Organisation (CCAG). Relatively little was known about each. An appropriate name and good PR for the Initiative would be important in the future as well as establishing a good working relationship with CCAG.

3.6 *NATURAL HERITAGE*

The varied landscape with small scale hills, important river valleys (some of which are glaciated) and a dramatic coastline has potential for a wide range of activities for a range of abilities. Visitors often explore the area by car with resultant congestion problems in sensitive areas. Car parking is limited and can detract from the visitor experience (*eg* parking on the beach at Portstewart). There are new pressures on sensitive habitats such as on the dunes at Benone from people driving fourtrack vehicles on the beach.

Rathlin Island is an exciting place to visit but may be sensitive to significant increases in visitor numbers because of potential impacts to the nature conservation interests of the island. The island has an important flora and fauna and is renowned for its seabird populations (see *Section 2.2*). Any further development to encourage visits to the island would need to take account of the potential for disturbance to wildlife and the vulnerability of sensitive habitats to increased visitor pressure.

The Rivers Bann, Bush, Main and Roe are important salmon rivers along with other smaller rivers in the Glens. On the Bann, a variety of waterbased sports have been successfully developed through zoning the river to ensure that the fishing interest of the river are not compromised by other activities. Other rivers may have potential to be encouraged for responsible access and recreational use and consultees have suggested that this should be further investigated through appropriate baseline survey and planning.

The issue of fish stocks in rivers such as the Bann and also marine stocks was raised. Considerable research is ongoing elsewhere in the UK into these issues and it is important that the North East taps into relevant findings to help safeguard remaining precious stocks.

It is recognised that the natural environment is a great asset of the area and that this offers opportunities for various recreational pursuits. One which was suggested by some consultees to have real potential is bird watching provided that plans are developed to safeguard the resource and ensure that any increased use is managed sustainably. Belfast Lough and Larne Lough Islandmagee were suggested as having some potential for such activities (see *Section 3.4*).

The North East area has a large number of forested areas, which are a valuable natural heritage resource and one of the richest of all landscapes for wildlife and wild plants. There is much potential for walking activities and some areas such as Glenariffe Forest Park are well used. The importance of the value and appeal of woodland areas to visitors is recognised it is important that the natural resource is not compromised by increased pressures.

There are large areas of commercial forestry in the North East area. Such habitat is generally acknowledged to be of limited nature conservation value although survey of any particular area would be required before it is developed for greater access to ensure that nature conservation interests are not compromised. A Forestry Service Strategy is currently being progressed and may have relevance to the strategy in the future. Limavady Borough Council is currently working with Forest Services to develop further recreational opportunities in the extensive forests in the borough.

Coastal areas offer opportunities for walkers and the coastal paths in the north are well used. However significant numbers of people visit the best known tourist spots each year such as the Causeway Coast and this can have effects on the nature conservation interests of these areas such as through disturbance, erosion and litter. The effects of football at sensitive coastal sites was raised by one consultee. The strategy will need to address existing pressures in these areas as well as to ensure a proactive approach to sustainable management is taken in areas where improved access is to be encouraged. There are extensive areas of moorland and marshy pasture and these may offer some opportunities for access although underground boggy conditions is likely to deter access in the wettest areas. Nature conservation interests such as breeding waders can be important in these areas so again a proactive approach to predicting and mitigating pressures before they arise needs to be adopted.

Large caravan sites on the north coast detract from the landscape quality of the coastline. There are clear views from sites such as those between Portrush and Portstewart to the sea but there is very little screening of the sites themselves for visitors to the area. There may be opportunities to develop appropriate landscape screening of such sites and also of other intrusive developments or properties in areas of high landscape quality as part of the strategy.

Farmers are major players in any environmental strategy and the North East area is no exception with farmers owning much of the land within the catchment. It will be important to involve farmers in developing and

implementing the strategy. There is the perception that in some areas agri-tourism is currently quite untapped in terms of potential development as a tourism product. While this potential exists, there are also concerns relating to environmental practices and the fact that pollution in some areas is becoming a serious problem *eg* slurry leaks into waterways.

Given the *importance of the natural product* in the study area, *environmental awareness raising at all levels* is recognised as important.

3.7   *RECREATION AND COUNTRYSIDE PURSUITS*

A great variety of countryside pursuits are possible in the North East area: walking, cycling, horse riding, golf, gliding, fishing, seafishing, canoeing, sailing, diving, bird watching, absailing, rockclimbing *etc.* Countryside and forest parks such as Carnfunnock in Larne and Glenariffe Forest Park in Waterfoot, offer opportunities for families for picnicking, short walks *etc.* Golf and motorbike championship events of a national scale have taken place. It was suggested by some of the consultees that some of the other activities are at a local scale and may not be of sufficiently high profile at present to attract overseas visitors in their own right and could be made even more attractive.

The improved image of the area since the Peace Initiative provides opportunities for raising the profile of many other activities. Angling and diving are already important and the profile of the area as one in which to enjoy these pursuits is already growing. Measures to promote the growth of activity tourism could be one way of encouraging visitors to enjoy more of the North East area and to extend the length of visits. Any measures to promote countryside access sustainably (see *Section 3.2*) will help raise the profile of the North East area as one where outdoor countryside pursuits can be enjoyed. Workshop participants suggested that access to some rivers for anglers could be improved and this could be part of a general strategy to improve access. Marine based tourism including sailing, diving, exploration of marine heritage, and marine angling was also perceived as an area where considerable growth could be achieved.

While considerable development has taken place in advancing outdoor, activity holidays, it is considered that there are still opportunities to extend the range of facilities - the study area's physical environment is particularly well suited to the further development of the activity sector. The countryside may lend itself to developing some of these activities for family activity based holidays. There already are a number of local suppliers of activity pursuits which could be promoted.

Improved access provision, better available information and increased marketing measures will all help promote activity pursuits.

3.8   *VISITOR MANAGEMENT*

Visitor pressures are focused on the Giant's Causeway and Carrick-a-rede rope bridge. Visitor numbers to the big attractions such as the Causeway are steadily increasing and the majority of visitors continue to arrive by car; currently there is no strategy for encouraging people to access the site by means other than the car. As a result, at key times car parking capacity is often exceeded. Disability access to sites such as the Causeway is also considered poor.

The very large number of visitors can detract from the visitor experience and roads to the site can be very busy particularly in the summer. Large parts of the north coast area are never enjoyed by overseas visitors at all as the focus is often a quick visit to the Giant's Causeway as part of an "all Ireland experience".

It has been assumed that particular measures to manage pressures at the Causeway itself will be identified as part of the Giant's Causeway's visitor management plan which is currently being developed. This strategy will seek to encourage visitors to other areas and also to promote more sustainable access in the area generally so as to indirectly help pressures on the honey pot areas.

Car parking pressures and congested roads can also detract from other popular sites peak seasons. For example, Carnfunnock Country Park can be very busy in the summer and in the Antrim Glens the coastal road can be congested and traffic can also be a problem in Cushendall in the summer. The heavy reliance on the car for transport increases these problems and the strategy should seek to promote sustainable transport where possible.

At present there is parking on the beach in some potentially sensitive locations such as Portstewart and Benone (see *Section 3.6*). Although consultees and workshop participants did not raise concerns there must be the potential for habitat loss, erosion, litter and other pollution and other environmental impacts and these potential impacts could be assessed in the strategy.

Litter is increasingly becoming problem, particularly in some popular visitor locations. Many consultees commented that waste facilities and recycling points could be increased and improved. The awareness of the environmental implications of litter (visual impacts and the degradation of the landscape and tourist experience as well as potential dangers of plastics and other litter to wildlife and farm animals) is generally considered to be low and it was generally felt that a major effort to increase the awareness of the importance of the natural environment is required. The strategy will provide an opportunity to do this.

The northern coast is under pressure from a number of caravan sites and large numbers of properties are being bought for second homes.   This is perceived as changing the character of the area and there are some impacts on local communities (see *Section 3.5*). The concentration of visitors in one area can

also put pressures on natural resources (nature conservation and landscape) (see *Section 3.6*). The strategy cannot address choice for owning a second home but does provide a vehicle to encourage visitors to explore other areas and to implement measures to address existing environmental pressures. Any plans need to recognise the important of conserving the local resource whilst maximising local economic benefits. Another major visitor issue is that many overseas visitors to the area are day visitors or only take short breaks and do not stay in the area for any length of time. The strategy will offer an opportunity for raising the profile of other areas which can be explored and for implementing measures which will promote a range of activities in the area which will encourage people to stay longer (see *Section 3.7*).

3.9 *TAKING THE STRATEGY FORWARD*

There are a variety of ongoing initiatives for economic development in the area including economic strategies, the developing strategy for the Giant's Causeway, various local council initiatives, *etc*.

It will be important that the visitor and environmental management strategy for the area integrates with these and builds on them. It is also important that there is a sound management structure to take the strategy forward and monitor its success once consensus is agreed on its contents.

The strategy should meet the needs of the whole North East area not just the best loved areas and all interests should be represented. If the management team is too large it is difficult to reach agreement and ensure that actions are implemented. It is important that the overall aim and objectives of the strategy are agreed by as wide a forum as possible to ensure a common purpose in implementation.

The importance of co-operation and co-ordination between the management structure at a strategic level was identified as being important.

Other issues which workshop participants raised included how such a large number of councils could work together successfully in such a small area and whether there was a real commitment to tourism by the Government. The strategy will have an important role in raising political awareness and account will need to be taken in defining the management structure of how the various councils can best be involved in taking the strategy forward.

It will be essential that those closely involved in progressing the strategy work with all the councils and other agencies and organisations involved in the area and ensure that work is not duplicated but that relevant actions and plans complement and enhance those being progressed by others.

3.10   *DISCUSSION*

3.10.1   *Introduction*

The research work for the study indicates that there is no one overwhelming issue that should be addressed in the strategy rather a series of concerns, developing pressures or lack of provision of infrastructure and facilities which if addressed in appropriate ways could contribute to sustainable tourism development in the North East.

The legacy of the troubles pre the Peace Initiative has left its mark in visible and more subtle ways and it is important that this is acknowledged sensitively in formulating and implementing the strategy. Northern Ireland as a tourist destination is now growing in popularity and visitor numbers confirm this (see *Table C1.2a*).

3.10.2   *The Giant's Causeway*

The Giant's Causeway is synonymous with the North East area and as a result there is a concentration of visits to the feature and this is having some effects (erosion, disturbance to the natural environment, traffic congestion). A site specific management plan is being worked up which will seek to address these issues in a sustainable way. The Giant's Causeway is, however, **the** draw to Northern Ireland and is thus very important to the economy of the area. The strategy should seek to capitalise on this by seeking to maximise on the experience by encouraging visits to the rest of the area as well.

3.10.3   *The Environment*

The area will rely heavily on its natural and cultural environment for tourism development and progress and development should be planned sustainably to ensure the resources are safeguarded.

Some of the environmental pressures commonly encountered in tourist areas such as erosion of footpaths, agricultural impacts resulting from irresponsible access and disturbance of important species and habitats were not raised as issues by consultees. This may be related to the interests of those who replied to consultation letters or attended the consultation workshops or because environmental issues are not yet a big problem or because environmental awareness is generally low. It is considered that the finding of the consultation process are perhaps related to a combination of all these factors.

Litter and some transport issues were considered to be important. The findings of the consultation process would suggest that general understanding of environment and countryside issues was quite low and there was great opportunity to raise awareness. Parking on important beaches was apparently taken for granted and considered the norm and not worthy of comment.

Overseas visitor numbers have been quite low until recently but as these begin to grow there is increased potential for environmental impact. Honey pot areas such as the Giant's Causeway will come under greater pressure. The natural environment will need to be safeguarded (both nature conservation and landscape). Consideration will need to be given to the effects of increased vehicles on small roads and associated pressures from congestion and car parking. The strategy provides an opportunity to encourage visits elsewhere in the area to try and spread the visitor load and also to direct this to areas which are environmentally robust enough to cope with new or increased pressures.

Potential environmental pressures which have been considered in drawing up the strategy are list in *Box 3a.*

The current lack of strong planning controls leading to inappropriate developments in key locations is detrimental to the environmental quality of the area.

The study review and research has indicated a lack of good baseline information for the area (detailed ecological and cultural survey data) and this will need to be addressed in formulating the strategy in order to monitor progress effectively.

There is a real opportunity to plan and implement a proactive approach to managing increasing visitor pressures and their potential effects on the environment rather than to be reactive as has had to happen in many places elsewhere in the UK such as the Lake District, Peak District or well visited area's of the Scottish Highlands.

3.10.4 *Services*

There is great opportunity to improve the quality and standards of services provided to the tourism industry. As Northern Ireland emerges to a more settled political situation and with this the opportunity to develop tourism is more pronounced it will be essential that lessons are learnt from experiences in the rest of the UK and elsewhere to ensure that money is wisely spent and commitment focused appropriately.

The area is predominantly rural and yet the links between farms and tourism/hospitality are poor. There are opportunities to increase the supply of local produce to accommodation and service providers and to use this as a marketing tool strengthening the identity of the area.

Box 3a   *Examples of Potential Environmental Pressures from Increasing Visitor Numbers which have been taken account of in Development the Strategy*

Natural Heritage
- Negative effects of new developments on landscape character of the area.
- Visual intrusion from increased visitor numbers, new facilities, car parking and congested roads detracting from the natural beauty of the area.
- Carrying capacity of sensitive habitats exceeded resulting in erosion of soils and loss of important flora and fauna.
- Disturbance to protected species or important populations of breeding birds through increased visitor numbers.
- Impacts to areas designated as being of international, national or local nature conservation value.
- Intrusion into previously undisturbed areas resulting in impacts to flora and fauna.
- Inappropriate new planting to screen developments which do not enhance local biodiversity or add to the local landscape character.
- Lack of planting to screen new developments.
- Lack of visitor management plans for key locations which could be used to help monitor effects with result that the opportunity for a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach is lost.
- Increased incursion by vehicles into sensitive habitats through insufficient provision of suitable parking areas.

Built Environment
- Negative impacts (such as visual intrusion or detraction from the setting) of new build on areas designated for built heritage at a local, regional, national or international level.
- Insensitive design of new buildings which do not take account of the local vernacular or the landscape character of the area.
- Impact of increasing numbers of holiday homes on local communities and service providers.

Pollution and Waste
- Increases in harmful emissions from heating buildings.
- Lack of incorporation of energy efficiency or renewable energy opportunities in buildings.
- Increase in waste of all sort requiring disposal.
- Overloading of existing water or sewage facilities with knock-on environmental effects on water courses and/or the marine environment.
- Increased litter.
- Insufficient provision of toilets, litter bins *etc.*
- Increased dust from construction, or from eroded paths.
- Increased noise affecting local communities, important animal species and the general amenity of an area.
- Increased polluted run off to watercourses.

Transport
- Increased traffic leading to congestion, car park problems, safety issues and increases of harmful emissions.
- Insufficient provision of public transport to meet increased demand.
- Insufficient access to the countryside opportunity leading to increased pressures on existing sites.
- Insufficient existing opportunity for cyclists.

Other Sustainability Issues
- Inadequate use of local suppliers or local materials during construction of new facilities.
- Lack of sensitivity to community issues (insufficient commitment to local partnerships *etc*).
- Inadequate provision of paths and access to facilities for disabled, old and very young.
- Inappropriate intrusion into farms with resulting vandalism, damage to walls and fences, increased litter.
- Lack of environmental awareness.
- Lack of commitment to increase environmental awareness and grow interest in environmental issues and environmental good practice.
- Lack of involvement of local schools and youth groups.
- Lack of provision of educational and interpretative materials.
- Opportunities to create local employment.

Research elsewhere [1] indicates that tourists in Scotland do not generally **book** activity holidays rather wish to enjoy a variety of recreational pursuits on arrival at their chosen holiday destination. It will be important to consider whether research findings such as these are appropriate in the North East area.

3.10.5   *Management and Marketing*

Our research has indicated that whilst much good research has been undertaken and strategies produced (seen in the proliferation of background information relevant to this study) relatively few action plans have as yet been successfully implemented. It will be important that this strategy is an action orientated tool rather than a colourful document left on shelves. To achieve this a sound management structure to administer the strategy will be essential, with support from all those with an interest in the area.

The large number of Borough Councils and in addition a District Council has the potential to make any management structure unwealdly given that other interests will also be represented in the management team.

An added complication is that the local marketing tourism function is administered by a different organisation from the visitor and environmental elements. Marketing is the responsibility of the Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd (CCAG) and implementation of this strategy that of the Causeway Initiative (or its successor). A fully sustainable tourism plan contains all three elements under one umbrella (*ie* social, environmental and economic). It will be a challenge for the future to ensure the two groups integrate each others activities wherever possible and maximise the economic potential for the area in the most sustainable way.

It will also be important to ensure that as well as the two organisations communicating well that they also communicate with all the local councils and agencies to ensure they are aware of ongoing sustainable tourism and environmental initiatives which are being progressed (for example, those being worked up by Ballymena and Coleraine Borough Councils) and to integrate plans each are progressing both with those of each other and also with council and agency projects.

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(1) Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 1999 *Activity Holidays in Scotland*.

4 STRATEGIC AIM AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE STRATEGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Key to the successful development of the strategy has been the identification of aims and objectives for it. These have been formulated from current policy and guidance on sustainable tourism drawing on the findings of the research and consultation exercise.

4.2 STRATEGIC AIM FOR THE STRATEGY

We consider it important that the visitor and environmental strategy is an integral part of an evolving sustainable tourism strategy for the area where wider economic and social interests are also represented. Other initiatives are in progress for economic enhancement in the area and also environmental plans for particular areas (see *Annex B*). The ongoing initiatives of the Regional Tourism Organisation, the Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd (CCAG), are of great importance and also the developing plan for the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre and Immediate Environs which is currently being finalised. We consider it is important that the strategy forms part of a wider framework for these which can then be built on to encompass sustainable tourism in its widest sense.

The strategic aim of the visitor and environmental strategy is:

To provide a well managed framework for action for visitor and environmental management which integrates with ongoing local and national initiatives and programmes and which can be developed to form part of a sustainable tourism strategy for the North East area.

4.3 OBJECTIVES FOR THE STRATEGY

Specific objectives are:

1. To promote a sustainable approach to tourism in the North East area (*ie* to ensure that the environment of the area is safeguarded whilst recognising the need to provide local economic and social benefits).
2. To make strategic recommendations for visitor and environmental management in the area.
3. To provide a framework for action which will safeguard important sites of natural and cultural heritage.
4. To identify opportunities for tourism in areas less well known in the North East area.
5. To define how the strategy should be taken forward by identifying a clear management structure, responsibilities *etc*.

5   *THE ACTION PLAN*

5.1   *INTRODUCTION*

The strategy seeks to identify actions to address the issues (or issues which it is suggested may arise in the future) which have been identified in the study process (consultations, workshops, review and site visits and also drawing on experience from elsewhere).

It is appreciated that issues raised at the workshops reflect only those views of attendees and that these may not be representative of the wider community. However, our approach has been to evaluate each issue which has been raised and to make a judgement drawing on our professional knowledge whether that issue may affect the environment and also how visitor pressure in the future might further affect that issue and therefore the environment. The strategy seeks to provide strategic guidance which can be implemented at the local level and hence our decision making has been quite pragmatic and we have sought to avoid formulating too many plans. We have therefore grouped types of issue together and drawn on published best practice and best practice examples from elsewhere (see *Annexes B* and *C*) to formulate action plans to address the issue.

The plan for action is presented in this chapter as a series of tables (*5.1 - 5.2 A-G*). The strategy is divided into a number of *strategic action plans* which establish a framework for a number of *specific action plans* which have been developed to address the issues which have been identified during the study process (see *Chapter 3*).

Action plans to address the following are included:

- *Table 5.1*: Strategic Action Plans addressing management, funding, planning, best practice, publicity and participation issues.
- *Tables 5.2 A-G:* Special Action Plans for:
  - Access (5.2A)
  - Accommodation (5.2B)
  - Attractions and Facilities (5.2C)
  - Identify and Cultural Heritage (5.2D)
  - Natural Heritage (5.2E)
  - Recreation and Countryside Pursuits (5.2F)
  - Visitor Management (5.2G)

In each section of the plan specific aims are given (each contributing to the overall strategic aim of the strategy) and below each specific aim a series of actions to achieve it are presented together with information on who should be responsible for action, how success of the action should be monitored and the broad timescale for its implementation. The aims and actions are all linked back to the specific objectives of the strategy set out in *Chapter 4*.

THE ACTION PLAN

Strategic and Specific Action Plans are set out in the following tables. Each plan has a particular aim and a number of actions to meet the aim. The strategic aim for the plan is:

To promote a well managed framework for action for visitor and environmental management which integrates ongoing local initiatives and programmes and which can be developed to form part of a sustainable tourism strategy for the North East.

Timescales:

Short term   (S)   0-12 months
Medium term   (m)   1-3 years
Long term   (L)   3-5 years

Strategic Action Plans

- SA 1   :   Management
- SA 2   :   Funding
- SA 3   :   Instigating a Programme for Action
- SA 4   :   Developing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy
- SA 5   :   Developing Best Practice Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism
- SA 6   :   Publicity
- SA 7   :   Review and Update of the Strategy
- SA 8   :   Encouraging Community Participation
- SA 9   :   Landowner Incentives

Special Action Plans

- 5.2A   A1 - A4   :   Access
- 5.2B   B1 - B2   :   Accommodation
- 5.2C   C1 - C4   :   Attractions and Facilities
- 5.2D   D1   :   Identity and Cultural Heritage

- 5.2E   E1 - E6   :   Natural Heritage
- 5.2F   F1   :   Recreation and Countryside Pursuits
- 5.2G   G1 - G2   :   Visitor Management (Additional Plans)

Table 5.1 STRATEGIC ACTION PLANS

Action Plan SA1
Aim: To set up a sound management structure to administer the strategy
Contributing to Objective 5

Action	Responsibility [1]	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L) [1]
SA1.1 Form a Partnership Trust on a 5-year trial basis: • explore mechanisms for formation • define and agree membership (consider Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Larne, Newtonabbey and Limavady Borough Councils, Moyle District Council, Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd, Environment, Farming, Community and Tourist industry representatives) • define boundaries within which Partnership will operate • identify responsibilities • appoint Directors (the Partnership Board (PB)) • prepare Business Plan • consider sub groups of representatives of partner organisations with particular task focus (natural heritage, cultural heritage, recreation and access, visitor management, publicity and interpretation, finance, planning, *etc*) to advise Partnership	CI Steering Group with input from CI Project Officer	• Date of formation of Trust	Immediate
SA1.2 Concurrently establish Advisory Board (AB)to the Partnership Trust • define and agree membership (consider Department of the Environment Environment and Heritage Services (EHS), Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Planning Services, NITB, National Trust, Sports Council Northern Ireland and technical experts as defined in SA1.1	CI Steering Group with input from CI Project Officer	• Date of formation of Trust	Immediate
SA1.3 Appoint Project Director (5 year contract)	CI Steering Group with input from CI Project Officer	• Date of formation of Trust	Immediate

(1) Some actions are probably more appropriately led by other organisations, for example marketing and development by CCAG. Councils have a key ongoing role developing access etc. DoE (NI) EHS is a key agency taking forward environmental initiatives. The responsibility for the Causeway Initiative is identified in each case to ensure actions are promoted and effective liaison between organisations takes place.

Action	Responsibility [1]	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L) [1]
• Establish if Causeway Initiative can be absorbed by the new Partnership • Establish if current staff wish to continue • Establish funding • Draw up roles and responsibilities, targets, *etc* • Establish appropriate office space			
SA1.4 Appoint two Project Officers • Establish funding • Draw up roles and responsibilities (suggest one with natural heritage and countryside management focus and second with visitor management, tourism focus) • Advertise and recruit	Management Team (Project Director (PD)	Appointment by Month 2	S
SA1.5 Appoint full time Administrative Assistant to Project Officer • Establish funding • Draw up role and responsibilities • Advertise (if necessary) and recruit	PD	Appointment by Month 1	Immediate
SA1.6 Consider need for part-time Funding Officer/PR Officer to manage applications for funding, PR *etc*			
SA1.7 Investigate potential to second further staff from relevant organisations *eg* BTCV	PD	Feedback progress at second quarter Board meeting	S

Action Plan SA2
Aim: To ensure funding available for managing the plan and a sound mechanism in place for accessing and delivering funding
Contributing to Objective 5

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA2.1 Establish how Government funding will be administered *eg* annual application by Partnership Trust for salary and administrative costs and budget for projects or application for salary and administrative costs with individual applications for projects	CI Steering Group and PD	• Quarterly feedback to Board on progress	Immediate and ongoing
SA2.2 Establish other sources of funding - local authority, private business sources *etc*. (NB Consider if funding sources are adequately "green" and not putting additional pressures on the environment at source)			
SA2.3 Lobby private sector to consider funding environmental improvement projects			
SA2.4 Undertake fundraising activities to involve local communities, interest groups *etc*			

Action Plan SA3
Aim: To instigate an immediate programme for action
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA3.1 Partnership Management Team to draw up annual project target list which will include programme of short term actions to be implemented within the year and also actions will be started but not fully implemented in the 12 month period. Devise reporting format *eg* use of symbols to reflect progress	PD	• Annual review against targets	Immediate and ongoing
SA3.2 Capitalise on launch of Partnership with key actions from first 12 month action plan advertised in media. Ensure variety of projects of different scales are taken forward quickly including identity action	PD	• Annual review of PR success	Immediate and ongoing

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
plans (see *Table 5.2D*)			
SA3.3 Review staff needs regularly to ensure real progress is achievable	PD	• Ongoing	Ongoing

Action Plan SA4
Aim: To develop a sustainable tourism strategy for the North East area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA4.1 Develop sustainable tourism strategy to ensure economic and social plans are fully integrated with environmental plans. Ensure this is a useful working tool	PD in partnership with CCAG	• Production of plan	S-M
SA4.2 Review and monitor implementation of strategy regularly (twice yearly) and update as necessary	PD in partnership with CCAG	• Six monthly against targets	S-M
SA4.3 Consider and define relationship between the Partnership and Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd (CCAG) and potential to run joint projects and initiatives	PD in partnership with CCAG	• Number of successful joint plans	S-M
SA4.4 Investigate the potential to integrate the Partnership with CCAG	PD/CCAG	• Establishment of new organisation	M

Action Plan SA5
Aim: To develop a Best Practice Guide to Sustainable Tourism in the North East area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA5.1 Develop guidance document to help ensure growth of tourism in North East area is developed in an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable manner Include guidance on all key Government indicators (natural environment, built environment, climate change, transport, local air quality and nuisance, water, waste, communication, education, interpretation, employment, health, housing, investment, social exclusion, economic growth, land use, crime *etc*) sources of information, key clients, *etc* and sustainability checklist to guide all proposals in the plan	PD with consultancy help	• Progress towards producing it • Annual review against usefulness	S
SA5.2 Lobby appropriate organisations to provide an information service on sustainable approaches to tourism and work in partnership with them	PD	• Progress towards establishment of service	M

Action Plan SA6
Aim: To publicise the Partnership aims, objectives, plans and progress as widely as possible
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA6.1 Assess and if considered useful host competition to establish new logo for the North East area and use in all promotional information including plans, routes maps, signage *etc*. The name could be used to help establish the identity of the Partnership and divorce from the "Causeway" and North East image. An example could be Ireland's Dalriada or may be more appropriate to complement CCAG. Decision may be to continue use of existing logo or to develop that used by CCAG	PD	• Agreement on name and logo	Immediate
SA6.2 Ensure a co-ordinated approach to all marketing and publicity	PD (CCAG led)	• Number of effective	Immediate and ongoing

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
materials, strategies, plans, leaflets, signage *etc* (see Identity and Cultural Heritage)		materials provided • Publicity coverage given • Establishment and regular update of website	
SA6.3 Publicise the plans and progress of the Partnership through the media (newspapers, radio, tv) and via leaflets, posters, community meetings, schools, youth groups *etc*. Ensure profile is high and publicise that participation is welcome. Publicise all successful projects as much as possible			
SA6.4 Develop Partnership website and publicise. Include all key documents and develop to be interactive documents. Also include monthly newspapers, which include progress reviews and publicise opportunities to be involved in initiatives, meetings *etc*. Web enable visitor and Environmental Management Plan and include case study examples	PD with consultant support	• Establishment of successful and useful website number of hits.	S
SA6.5 Establish feasibility of establishing intranet database of facilities, attractions *etc* for accommodation providers *etc*			
SA6.6 Partnership to produce Annual Report including financial review, progress against targets and forward workload	PD	• Production of informative report	Annual

Action Plan SA7
Aim: To review the visitor and environment management plan and update regularly
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA7.1 Review progress of plan annually and assess achievements and problem areas. Use symbols to represent progress (see SA3.1). Encourage constructive criticism of progress if necessary	PB and PD	• Actions against targets and budgets	Annual
SA7.2 Draw up action plan to address findings and amend plan (actions, staffing, management *etc*) as required. (Consider producing plan as loose leaf documents and on web which can be easily updated)			
SA7.3 Monitor individual projects as defined in their implementation plans and assess success, requirements, potential to promote as best practice *etc*	PD and AB		
SA7.4 Update monitor indicators in light of new Government guidance when available	PD		

Action Plan SA8
Aim: To engage community participation in the delivery of the North East plan
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA8.1 Establish a best practice management and sustainable tourism award for local businesses and environmental initiatives • Identify parameters for the award and grading • Work up administration and assessment criteria • Advertise principles under Partnership logo with leaflet providing information and benefits from participation • Make awards and advertise • Use awards in marketing materials working closely with Causeway Coast and Antrim Glen Ltd	PD and CCAG with consultancy advice	• Successful award scheme established • Number of awards given	S

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA8.2 Establish an accreditation scheme • work up accreditation scheme • advertise	PD and CCAG with consultancy advice	• Number of accredited services	M
SA8.3 Establishing a Partnership award for individuals to be used to fund new projects which benefit the community and local environment (2-5K) • Investigate funding feasibility • Develop leaflets and market	PD and PM	• Creation of award • Number of awards made	S

Action Plan SA9

Aim: To lobby Government to provide incentives to landowners to allow responsible access and to manage the countryside wisely
Contributing to Objective 2

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
SA9.1 Review with Government Departments and Local Authorities potential to increase access, create new routes *etc* on private land	PD with specialist advice from DARD, EHS, *etc*	• Six monthly review against progress made	M
SA9.2 Draw up paper on potential benefits to landowners from allowing increased access to land (*eg* diversification, promotion of local produce *etc*)			
SA9.3 Identify case study and work up plan proposals including costs and benefits to landowner and other interested parties and feasibility of taking forward			
SA9.4 Lobby Government with findings			

Tables 5.2A-G SPECIAL ACTION PLANS

5.2A ACCESS

Action Plan A1
Aim: To raise awareness and improve opportunities for walking, cycling, bridleways etc
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
A1.1 Undertake a baseline audit of current public access routes (footpath, bridleways, cycleways) in the North East area (could divide into Council areas and progress pilot study *eg* for Glens). Planned routes would also be included. The baseline audit would include details of their: • status • condition • signage • publicity • grade (according to difficulty) and length of routes • proximity to public transport facilities • accessibility for wheelchairs *etc* • potential to link to towns and areas of interest • proximity to cycle hire facilities *etc* NB Should maximise use of existing information (*eg* Ballymoney BC cycling feasibility study, proposal for National Cycle Network route along River Bann to link with Lough Neagh circular route *etc*).	PD, AB (Access subgroup), voluntary participation by interest groups. Ensure effective liaison with Councils	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
A1.2 Research potential to improve existing facilities through maintenance, improved signing, branding (see Identity) *etc*. Work up plans and apply for funding	PD, AB (Access sub-group), Council Officers	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
A1.3 Produce an information pack and map for the North East area presenting this information, including leaflets for individual trails, information on the countryside code *etc*	PD, AB (Access sub-group), Council Officers in conjunction with CCAG	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
A1.4 Identify a list of new potential routes throughout the area in partnership with local landowners, local communities, Forest Services *etc*. Check ongoing initiatives Ulster Ways, Waymarked Ways, Sustrans links, developing forest recreational opportunities in Limavady *etc*) and	PD, AB (Access sub-group), Council Officers	• 3 monthly progress reports	S-M

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
integrate with these where possible			
A1.5 Identify three pilot studies in partnership with stakeholders *eg* • long distance cycle path; • medium distance walk; • family walk with potential for interpretation	PD, AB (Access sub-group), Council Countryside Officers	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
A1.6 For each of these pilot studies assess usage, landowner issues, costs of development, opportunities to link with other tourist attractions *etc*			
A1.7 Assess opportunities and benefits to landowners *eg* as a means of promoting local produce, accommodation, stabling facilities *etc*			
A1.8 Work up detailed plans and apply for funding			
A1.9 Implement and monitor use, costs of maintenance *etc*			
A1.10 Consider pilot study for disabled access			
A1.11 Research potential to develop horse riding trail linked to accommodation with stable facilities	PD, AB (Access sub-group), Council Officers	• Monthly progress reports	M
A1.12 Develop access sufficiently in pilot area (*eg* Glens) to consider hosting a Walking Festival	PD, AB (Access sub-group), Council Officers with CCAG	• Monthly progress reports	M

Action Plan A2
Aim: To increase potential to stop on tourist routes
Contributing to Objective 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
A2.1 Undertake audit of current provision and identify key areas where facilities are lacking and there may be opportunities to create new lay-bys, car park facilities *etc* working with Roads Departments	PD to lobby Council Roads Departments	Ongoing with roads maintenance	M-L
A2.2 Draw up a short list and for these undertake a baseline audit of existing access provision (footpaths *etc*), sensitivities of resources, opportunities for interpretation *etc*			
A2.3 Work up detailed plans and apply for funding			

Action Plan A3
Aim: Develop strategies for walking, cycling, horse riding, for North East area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
A3.1 Co-ordinate baseline information, proposals, pilot study feedback *etc* in previous plans to develop sound strategies for walking, cycling and horse riding for North East area to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to development and marketing of access proposals	PD with AB technical input as required and consultancy support	• Six monthly review against progress made	S-M

Action Plan A4
Aim: To increase potential to use Public Transport
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
A4.1 Undertake baseline review of PT provision in relation to visitor attractions, access tracks, cycle hire provision *etc*. Highlight areas of poor provision and potential for improvement. Identify key nodal interchange points	PD with AB (transport sub-group) to lobby other relevant organisations	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
A4.2 Discuss findings of audit with transport providers and identify potential to increase provision; make existing provision more flexible (timetabling, catering for bikes, ticketing incentives *etc*)			
A4.3 Draw up Public Transport Strategy to promote sustainable tourism. (Consider park and ride schemes, hop on and off buses, appropriate interchange points *etc*)			
A5.4 Produce information leaflets on potential to use PT to access sites of interest; to promote recreation in the countryside *etc*			
A5.5 Lobby transport providers to increase provision to link proposals developed by the Partnership			
A5.6 Work with CCAG to encourage local businesses to assist in promoting responsible access, green transport and walking leaflets	PD and CCAG with Councils	• 6 monthly progress reports	S-M

5.2B ACCOMMODATION

Action Plan B1
Aim: To provide a wider choice of accommodation bases and a better quality of service
Contributing to Objectives 2,4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
B1.1 Undertake baseline audit of types of accommodation currently available, their grade, prices, number of rooms, occupancy at weekends, weekdays and through the year, locations *etc*, in relation to visitor attractions, recreational opportunities *etc*	PD with AB (accommodation sub-group) and help from NITB and CCAG	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
B1.2 Prepare brochure providing this type of specific information, with map showing location and types of accommodation - developing the current CCAG Ltd brochure but highlighting visitor attractions, recreational opportunities and local produce (see Identity and Cultural Heritage)	PD with AB (accommodation sub-group)	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
B1.3 In order to fill the existing gaps at either end of the scale in terms of accommodation provision or as identified by the baseline audit: (a) identify potential strategic sites for camping barns in association with local landowners (tie in with access) and (b) market research into development and viability of top end quality hotel accommodation/country house hotel and spa (could existing accommodation be upgraded? *eg* Pines near Ballymena)	PD with AB (accommodation sub-group) with NITB and CCAG	• List of sites • Report on market potential	M
B1.4 Establish advance information service about the North East area through hotel booking schemes	PD with AB (with NITB and CCAG)	• Annual progress report	S
B1.5 Lobby accommodation providers to consider special deals for longer stays	PD with AB (with NITB and CCAG)	• Annual progress report	S-M

Action Plan B2
Aim: To raise awareness by accommodation providers of customer needs, sustainable practices *etc*
Contributing to Objectives 1, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
B2.1 Development of training, including sustainable guidelines for accommodation providers and promotion of green tourism business scheme. Those adopting "green" management to be shown on map in B1.2	PD and AB (with consultancy support)	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
B2.2 Undertake a feasibility study into the potential to establish a national green (sustainable) tourism association and use the North East area as a pilot scheme. Draw on experience of Considerate Hoteliers in London and Hospitable Climates elsewhere in the UK. If feasible develop and use in marketing materials	PD with NITB and CCAG and consultancy support	• Monthly progress reports	S-M

5.2C ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES

Action Plan C1
Aim: To promote attractions and features away from honeypot areas and develop following sustainable guidelines
Contributing to Objectives 1,4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
C1.1 Undertake a detailed baseline audit of all attractions and natural features in North East Area (building on information in this plan) and identify connections to help identify opportunities to develop trails (cultural, crafts, scenic, natural history, *etc*) or to promote the sites through leaflets and interpretation. Use posters on buses *etc*. Identify links with key interchange points (see A4.1)	PD and AB with NITB and CCAG	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
C1.2 Identify opportunities and needs for additional visitor services and facilities including those at interchange points (*eg* cycle hire) new attractions	PD and AB	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
C1.3 Identify a series of case studies to take forward *eg* undertake a feasibility study for the Gobbins and/or Rathlin Island or develop that already begun for the Bann corridor. Produce a baseline review identifying environmental constraints and opportunities in developing as a visitor site, including opportunities to link to other attractions, recreational opportunities *etc*. Identify local economic benefits, costs, management *etc*	PD and AB	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
C1.4 Develop detailed plans. Undertake necessary consultations (*eg* is EIA required) and apply for funding	PD and AB	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
C1.5 Encourage application for Green Tourism Business Award			

Action Plan C2
Aim: To improve local townscapes
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
C2.1 Undertake baseline streetscape audit of all key towns and villages and identify positive and negative features in terms of visitor perception. Start with pilot studies *eg* Ballymoney, Bushmills, Carrickfergus, Larne	PD, Councils, with consultancy support and in liaison with DoE (NI) Planning Service	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
C2.2 Identify case studies for improvements through image raising/improved shop fronts, gateway features, signage, floral displays, new planting, provision of waste bins, improving toilet facilities *etc*)			
C2.3 Develop plans and apply for funding (also seek private sector partner support)			
C2.4 Produce best practice guidance to help other areas improve. Draw on best practice from elsewhere *eg* Broughshane, Hillsborough, Moira *etc*)	PD with consultancy support	• Production of guidance	S

Action Plan C3
Aim: To improve planning control
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
C3.1 Highlight problems in current planning control and grant incentives leading to in appropriate development, proliferation of second homes *etc*. Audit current planning applications	PD and AB and in liaison with DoE (NI) Planning Service	• 6 monthly progress reports	M
C3.2 Lobby Government with findings	PD and AB	• 6 monthly progress reports	M-L
C3.3 Draw up sustainable development practice leaflet to inform developers from sustainable tourism guidance (SA5.1)	PD and AB with consultancy support and in liaison with DoE (NI) Planning Service	• 3 monthly progress reports	S

Action Plan C4
Aim: To research whether there is a market for further wet weather attractions
Contributing to Objectives 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
C4.1 Undertake visitor survey to assess requirements of local, mainland and overseas visitors in the North East area and audit recent visitor attraction statistics	PD and CCAG with consultancy support in conjunction with Councils	• 6 monthly progress reports	S
C4.2 Consider opportunities for new attraction linked to recreational pursuits (adventure centre?) or building on sustainability theme at ECOS Centre (*eg* recycling glass centre near Plymouth where bottles are recycled. This could be expanded to produce crafts, stained glass *etc*)	PD and CCAG with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reports	M
C4.3 Ensure adequate provision of facilities to meet audit requirements (review, assess, rectify)	PD and CCAG with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reports	M

Action Plan C5
Aim: To enhance the quality and sustainability of existing services and facilities
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
C5.1 Undertake strategic review of existing pubs, restaurants, cafes *etc* to include quality, service, opening hours *etc*	PD and CCAG, NITB, Tourism Training Council with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
C5.2 From assessment of findings of review develop a programme to address shortfalls (*eg* develop training, sustainable best practice checklist, accreditation scheme *etc*)	PD and CCAG, NITB, Tourism Training Council with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reports	M-L
C5.3 Consider establishing a formal customer care, training advisory and audit scheme. Establish links with Green Tourism Business Scheme	PD and CCAG, NITB, Tourism Training Council with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reports	M-L

Action Plan C6
Aim: To ensure toilet provision meets visitor demands and sustainable best practice
Contributing to Objectives 2, 3

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
C6.1 Review provision of toilets in proximity to attractions (existence, quality, accessibility *etc*)	PD to lobby Councils	• Annual progress review	M
C6.2 Consider environmental implications of new build/conversion *etc*			
C6.3 Discuss potential for provision with Local Councils			
C6.4 If appropriate develop plans with costings for consideration following principles included in sustainable development guidance (SA5.1). Develop pilot study (*eg* on Rathlin Island or at Whitepark Bay)			

Action Plan C7
Aim: To encourage longer stays in the area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
C7.1 Research potential to promote joint ticketing schemes for attractions (discount books with advertising potential, schemes for hotels or with travel companies *etc*) (see also B1.4/G1.4 and G1.5)	PD, NITB, CCAG with Council and Consultants support	• Annual progress reviews	M
C7.2 Check accommodation provision and facilities meet requirements of scheme (using baseline audits carried out in other parts of the plan)			
C7.3 Work with NITB to promote scheme			
C7.4 Work with interested parties (providers, Councils, agencies, community groups *etc*) to establish a referrals system from one attraction/accommodation base to another.	PD, NITB, CCAG with Council and Consultants support	• Annual progress reviews	M

5.2D IDENTITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Action Plan D1

Aim: To establish a distinctive, individual identity for the North East area drawing on the established identify of the Partnership

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
D1.1 Develop a brochure which identifies local events and festivals	PD, AB and CCAG	• 3 monthly progress reports	S-M
D1.2 Promote using the logo for the area and/or CCAG logo and market 'local' products such as traditional music and 'craic', storytelling, natural and cultural heritage trails, with the aim of establishing and promoting what sets it apart from the rest of Northern Ireland and the UK, why people should come to the area *etc.* Ensure integration and complement recent CCAG initiative	PD and AB with CCAG	• 3 monthly progress reports	S-M
D1.3 Develop leaflet to promote local produce including crafts and food with aim of spreading visitors through area. Complement CCAG work and that ongoing in other areas (*eg* Coleraine).	PD with CCAG in conjunction with Councils	• 3 monthly progress reports	S
D1.4 Maximise the ongoing CCAG marketing initiatives including the 'warmth of the people' and story telling which is distinctive to the area through the provision of training and awareness raising and developing the image through new books, interpretation of local folklore *etc*	PD with CCAG	• 6 monthly progress reports	M
D1.5 Establish community initiatives to deal with the graffiti problems in certain areas, particular those at key tourist attractions. Run pilot initiative in for example, Glenarm or Armoy	PD with Councils	• 6 monthly progress reports	M
D1.6 Following baseline audit of local streetscapes (see C2) seek to incorporate ways of raising local image into actions for improvements	PD with Councils with private sector input	• 6 monthly progress reports	M
D1.7 Consider potential to run major cultural festival in North East area drawing on image, logo *etc* (for example could draw on Ireland's Dalraida and could research feasibility of joint promotion with Islands of Scotland - use viking boats *etc*)	PD with AB with NITB and CCAG	• Annual progress review	M-L

Action Plan D2
Aim: To protect, enhance and promote the cultural heritage of the North East area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
D2.1 Undertake built heritage and archaeological audit to identify cultural heritage resources in North East area	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
D2.2 Undertake audit of vulnerability of resources and identify those like Mountsandel which could be promoted through marketing actions, better interpretation, better information *etc*	PD, AB with consultancy support and help from CCAG	• 6 monthly progress reviews	M
D2.3 Undertake audit of effects of new build, tourism related pressures (car parking, litter *etc*) on Conservation Areas	PD with AB and Councils and DoE (NI) Planning Service and consultancy support as required	• 6 monthly progress reports	M
D2.4 Draw up programme of action to manage resources more sustainably and implement and promote			
D2.5 Work with CCAG to use baseline review findings to assess whether area's industrial heritage offers opportunities for promotion, if so, draw up action plan and implement	PD, AB, Councils and CCAG	• Annual progress report	M-L
D2.6 Develop best management guidance on best practice and establish architectural advice service to assist in renovation and design for built heritage	PD, AB with consultancy support in liaison with DoE (NI) planning Service	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
D2.7 Identify suitable case study to take forward - develop plan, apply for funding, implement and monitor. Use to promote best practice elsewhere. Example could be renovation of clachan or similar to produce bunk house accommodation	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
D2.8 Encourage community involvement in project			
D2.9 Identify potential to use case study in interpretative materials	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M

Action Plan D3
Aim: To promote the maritime heritage of the North East area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
D3.1 Draw up plan of maritime heritage resources and produce leaflet identifying opportunities and location of relevant providers (of equipment, accommodation *etc*). Promote on relevant websites	PD, AB with consultancy support	• Annual progress report	S-M

5.2E NATURAL HERITAGE

Action Plan E1
Aim: To protect, enhance and promote the natural heritage of the North East area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
E1.1 Undertake a baseline audit of the nature conservation assets of the area. To include extended Phase 1 survey and detailed survey of key sites working with DoE (NI) EHS	PD, AB, EHS voluntary input	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
E1.2 Develop constraints and opportunities map for the plan area highlighting designations, sensitive sites, known locations of protected species, ongoing enhancement plans or monitoring schemes *etc*	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
E1.3 Investigate where tourism is putting pressures on the environment or on other landuses (through visitor numbers exceeding carrying capacity; bad practices such as litter *etc*; environmental damage through, for example, erosion, over fishing *etc*	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
E1.4 Draw on developing good practice from Magilligan SAC and ASSI being taken forward by Limavady and Coleraine BCs, DoE (NI) EHS, MoD and the Ulster Wildlife Trust who are meeting to develop more strategic approach to the management of the area. Integrate with and support such ongoing initiatives			
E1.5 Develop management plans for areas under pressure *eg* dunes at Benone and Portstewart; Whitepark Bay where sand is being removed, eroded footpaths *etc*	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
E1.6 Apply for funding and implement plans	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E1.7 Identify indicators and monitor success of management plans against baseline	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
E1.8 Identify areas where management could enhance biodiversity from baseline review	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
E1.9 Draw up plans, apply for funding, implement, identify indicators and monitor	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E1.10 Identify robust areas with tourist potential where nature conservation interests would not be compromised by increased numbers of visitors (*eg* check potential at Rathlin, Newtonabbey, or in Bann corridor)	PD, AB with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
E1.11 Draw up plans, apply for funding, implement, identify indicators and monitor	PD, AB, CCAG with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E1.12 Undertake a baseline review of forested areas and identify case study for development of interpreted nature trail	PD, AB with consultancy support and in liaison with Forest Services	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
E1.13 Assess market potential to promote wildlife holidays drawing on natural history resources on land and at the coast	PD, AB, CCAG with consultancy support	• Annual progress review	M-L
E1.14 Identify opportunities for community participation in projects, voluntary wardening *etc*	PD, AB with rural community networks and consultancy support if necessary	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E1.15 Ensure CI maximises networking with ongoing initiatives to integrate with these (*eg* DoE (NI) EHS hope to establish a coastal forum and produce a management plan for the estuary in the future)	PD, AB	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S

Action Plan E2
Aim: To raise awareness of the natural environment
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2,

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
E2.1 Develop teaching packs for use in schools, with local groups *etc* (including posters) to help raise awareness about the environment. Use logo in all materials. Ensure links with current school curriculum	PD with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E2.2 Web enable the materials including case studies (*eg* management activities)	PD with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E2.3 Encourage and invite community participation in management activities (*eg* scrub clearance, litter picking *etc*)	PD with AB and voluntary groups (*eg* BTCV)	• 3 monthly progress reviews and audit of activities with community participation	S
E2.4 Use natural heritage assets to help market the area	PD with CCAG		Ongoing
E2.5 Produce materials (leaflets, web materials *etc*) to highlight need for respect for countryside to safeguard resource and show potential impacts from litter, intrusion into sensitive habitats through unresponsible access *etc*. Demonstrate balance between unlimited access and need for respect for countryside *etc*	PD with AB voluntary groups and consultancy support if required	• 3 monthly progress reviews and audit of progress of producing materials	S

Action Plan E3

Aim: To protect, enhance and promote the landscape of the North East area
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
E3.1 Review landscape character assessment for area and identify threats to landscape quality	PD and AB	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E3.2 Identify pilot studies and work up plans for landscape and visual improvements (*eg* better screening of caravan parks using native species typical of the area)	PD and AB with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
E3.3 Draw up plans, apply for funding, implement and monitor	PD and AB	• 6 monthly progress reviews	M
E3.4 Identify all key areas where fly tipping and litter detract from the landscape experience. Assess causes and work up solutions (*eg* litter bins, education through community involvement in clean-up schemes, schools competitions - painting for example sponsored by the Partnership using the logo *etc*)	PD, AB, Councils, Voluntary support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S

Action Plan E4

Aim: To research the potential to promote tourist activities on agricultural holdings
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
E4.1 Undertake market appraisal of opportunities to increase sustainable farm experiences for tourists (accommodation, access, recreational pursuits, local crafts, *etc*) drawing on best practice in North East area and elsewhere. Identify opportunities for farm diversification, promotion of local produce *etc*	PD, DARD, AB, CCAG	• 6 monthly progress reviews	M
E4.2 If opportunities are identified work up plans, apply for funding, implement and monitor			

Action Plan E5
Aim: To heighten environmental awareness amongst the farming community
Contributing to Objectives 2, 3

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
E5.1 Work up generic guidance (a leaflet) on good practice in agricultural holdings in relation to tourist activities - pollution of watercourses, landscaping, opportunities to enhance biodiversity, access *etc* and make widely available. Draw on best practice examples and sustainable development best practice guidelines (SA5.1)	PD, SB (Farming sub-group) with consultancy support in liaison with DoE (NI) EHS and DARD	• 6 monthly progress reports	S-M

5.2F RECREATION AND COUNTRYSIDE PURSUITS

Aim: Promote existing facilities and explore opportunities for other areas
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
F1.1 Baseline audit of countryside and recreational pursuits currently available in the North East area such as fishing, walking, horse riding, rockclimbing, sailing, diving, boat trips *etc* including countryside and forest parks (see also Attraction and Facilities plans). Take account of recent and ongoing initiatives (*eg* Antrim Countryside Recreation Strategy)	PD, AB, Councils with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
F1.2 Production of a 'countryside and recreation pursuits' brochure to promote marketing of existing facilities. Categorise facilities *eg* whether or not they are family/children friendly - open farms, countryparks, horse riding *etc*. Stress sustainable approach ("green elements"). Use logo and promote identity of North East area	PD, AB, Councils, CCAG with consultancy support if necessary	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
F1.3 Undertake a review of societies/groups at an international level involved in each of the types of facilities on offer in the North East area with a view to investigating possibility of businesses in the area becoming members - establish links through websites *etc*	PD, AB, Councils, CCAG with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
F1.4 Develop networking opportunities with other areas in Northern Ireland (*eg* Mournes)	PD, AB, NITB, CCAG, Councils with consultancy support		
F1.5 Promote more *local* countryside pursuits events (enjoying the outdoors *etc*) in robust environmental areas	PD, AB, NITB, CCAG, Councils with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
F1.6 Feasibility study and market appraisal to identify new opportunities (*eg* developing more sea based activities such as diving, angling, surfing, sea boat trips, adventure holidays, bird watching *etc*)	PD, AB, Councils with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	M
F1.7 Lobby for research study into why fish stocks at sea and salmonids in rivers (*eg* Bann) are depleting with DoE (NI) EHS. Review situation elsewhere in UK and tap into ongoing research (*eg* that of Tweed Foundation). Explore possible measures which should be implemented to safeguard stocks (*eg* better design of in-river highway structures; artificial reefs; fishing limits, *etc*) and if feasible work to implement	PD, AB, DoE (NI) EHS with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	S-M
F1.8 Audit opportunities for fishing (including sea fishing). Check availability, access, promotion *etc* and assess opportunities for promotion if environmentally sustainable. Maximise reputation of area for coarse fishing (River Bann *etc*) in publicity material	PD, AB, Councils, CCAG, NITB with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	M
F1.9 Audit opportunities for bird watching holidays. Check for suitable areas locations, access *etc* and assess opportunities to promote if environmentally sustainable. Areas which could be included in a bird watching tour are Newtonabbey and Islandmagee mudflats as well as the coastal cliff areas	PD, AB, Councils, CCAG, NITB, with consultancy support	• 6 monthly progress reviews	M

5.2G VISITOR MANAGEMENT (ADDITIONAL PLANS) [1]

Action Plan G1
Aim: To encourage a greater distribution of tourists throughout the area and improve the visitor experience at the popular honey pot sites
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
G1.1 Acknowledge Giant's Causeway is key draw and manage experience in sustainable way (visitor management measures, environmental mitigation *etc*). See Giant's Causeway Visitor and Environmental Plan. Maximise potential of Causeway Coast experience	PD, AB, Causeway Management Team		
G1.2. Develop interpretative materials for use at popular tourist sites, laybys, carparks, garages *etc* which will highlight other attractions including other walks and recreational pursuits and these trails within the North East area and encourage visits to these areas. Use North East logo (see also B1.4)	PD, AB, NITB, CCAG, Councils with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S-M
G1.3 Include all materials on North East website	PD, AB, NITB, Councils with consultancy support	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S-M
G1.4 Develop a pilot scheme linking public transport routes using *eg* 3-day/5-day tickets, which would include discounts into a number of attractions (see also C7.1)	PD, AB, NITB, Councils with consultancy support	• Annual review	M-L

G1.5 Develop suggested itineraries of varying lengths of stay (*eg* what to do for 3/5 days in the North East area). Include wet weather ideas (see also C7.1). Seek to make visit experience "easy"	PD, AB, NITB, CCAG, Councils with consultancy support	• Annual review	M

[1] Many plans in the previous sections are relevant to visitor management but have been included there because of their particular focus.

Action Plan G2
Aim: To encourage a more sustainable approach to tourism which limits environmental pressures
Contributing to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4

Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Timescale (S/M/L)
G2.1 Identify areas where there are environmental pressures from tourism and where issues should be addressed (eroded paths, habitat damage, disturbance, transport issues (overcrowded roads, carparking pressures) pollution, waste and litter *etc*)	PD, AB, Voluntary organisations with consultancy support if necessary	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
G2.2 Work up plans to address pressures for each area and manage areas in a sustainable way in the future (see other parts of this plan), apply for funding, implement and monitor	PD, AB, Voluntary organisations with consultancy support if necessary	• 3 monthly progress reviews	S
G2.3 Collate databases of visitor numbers to all key natural areas where possible (*eg* through implementation of visitor counters). Pilot some forest or woodland areas	PD	• 3 monthly progress reviews	M
G2.4 Use information to assist in identifying areas under pressure or those which could be better promoted through leaflets and other publicity	PD, AB	• 3 monthly progress reviews	M

Primary responsibility for implementation of the action plans to address particular issues may not always be for Causeway Initiative (or its successor) but in some cases will be more appropriately taken by CCAG, the councils or other agencies. We have identified how the new Partnership should interact with these organisations. It may be considered by some that these action plans should not be part of the strategy. We consider, however, that it is important to demonstrate to those who have taken part in the process that all issues raised have been taken seriously and that the Partnership will at least lobby for action for all measures to address issues which have been raised and which can contribute to a successful visitor and environmental strategy.

The strategy should be considered as an organic document which can be easily upgraded as new initiatives or guidance unfold and links to new or ongoing local plans can quickly be added. Issue on the Internet and/or as a loose leaf document would allow changes to be made easily.

In the following sections more detail is provided about some elements of the strategy:

- the organisational structure;
- location of the Partnership;
- funding for the Partnership and programmes;
- delivery of grant assistance;
- an award scheme for best practice and an accreditation scheme;
- Publicity and public relations (PR).

5.2   *ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE*

5.2.1   *Introduction*

Various organisational structures could be implemented to take the strategy forward. These range from informal structures such as the current Causeway Initiative, to Partnership Trusts (with or without charitable status), to Limited Companies.

In making our preferred suggestion for the way ahead we have considered experience from similar initiatives elsewhere such as in the Mountains of Mourne, in Upper Deeside in Scotland (the Upper Deeside Access Trust, UDAT) and in Kerry and we have listened to what has been suggested by consultees.

It would appear that Partnership Trusts have been quite successful in other locations taking forward related initiatives and we propose that a Partnership Trust is established with perhaps charitable status. Further advice on the advantages of this should be sought.

Traditionally there has been significant public sector involvement in plans in North Ireland although recent initiatives are welcoming much greater community involvement (for example recent LEADER programmes). Our recommendation is that this should be a strategy for the area with very much a bottom-up approach with significant input from those living and working in the North East area. Advice and support from agencies will, however, be essential particularly in the early stages.

5.2.2   *Trusts*

The Structure of Trusts

There is no one model for trusts, but there are some common elements to both the legal and management structures of most.

Legal Structure

The legal structure is most frequently that of a company limited by guarantee. That is one which has members instead of shareholders, and which does not distribute any surpluses as profits, but instead re-uses them. Because the activities of trusts are frequently charitable, many trusts apply for charitable status so that they are operating through a charitable company. This provides some tax advantages, a public identity which assures their probity, and also enables the trust to apply to charitable foundations for funding.

However, since trusts also aim to earn income through trading activities, and there may be limits on what they can do as a charity, they frequnetly set up subsidiary trading companies which can covenant profits back to the main charitable company. The constitution of company is known as its memorandum and articles of association, and it is that which sets out the objects, powers and control.

Constitution and Management Structure

A company limited by guarantee has as its management committee a Board of Directors, who must operate under company law. They are usually unpaid, and must certainly derive no personal benefit if the company is also a charity. The members of the company (equivalent to shareholders) will have powers defined by the memorandum and articles. They may be individuals or organisations, and may be given powers to elect or appoint directs - the legal structure is very flexible. The Board are the governing body, responsible for policy, but not day to day management. That is carried out by the paid staff, headed by an executive director or chief executive. The Board can appoint various sub-committees and working groups with delegated authority.

5.2.3   *The North East Partnership*

It is recommended that a trust would be established, directed by a Partnership Board with Member representatives from each Council; a representative from the Regional Tourist Office Board; representatives from farming, environment and tourism; and community representation (19 Board Members in all).

Suggested organisations which may be appropriate for membership on the Board are presented in *Table 5a* for discussion together with the perceived remit of the Board. The structure is summarised in *Figure 5a*. The balance of the Board is in favour of voluntary and community organisations rather than public sector to help engender full support from as wide a range of the local community as possible. We consider that representatives of farming, environment and tourism will ensure the wide range of interests relevant to the strategy are covered. The Board would meet six times a year to formulate policy, endorse plans and review progress.

Partnership Trust Board Members could be elected from the Advisory Group which we propose should support the work of the Partnership. This Group could have unlimited membership and could include representatives from wide ranging interests with a range of technical expertise. The Group should also include representatives from throughout the North East area. In *Table 5a* we suggest representation from Councils (officials), Government Departments [1], the tourism industry, environmental groups, sports and arts organisations, the financial sector *etc*. Such a wide ranging Advisory Group would ensure that technical expertise would be available to support Partnership Management decisions and particular plans.

The Advisory Group would meet twice a year together but sub groups would be set up as required to support, for example, specific action plans or to assist in the delivery of particular grant programmes and these would meet with the Partnership Board and Management Team (see below) as necessary to provide particular expertise (for example an access subgroup or an activity tourism sub group could be formed). The particular sub groups working at any one time could change each year depending on the proposed annual action plan and this would also allow more people to get involved. Active participation in the Advisory Group should be encouraged and community representation should be welcomed along with that from councils and agencies. The RTO Project Officer would have a key role on the Advisory Group working together with the Partnership to ensure that both organisations work together in the most efficient way possible to promote sustainable tourism in the North East area. It will be essential that members of the Trust Board and the Advisory Group advise the Partnership to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication of effort with existing organisations.

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(1) Who would not be eligible for election to the Board.

Table 5a   ***Suggested Organisational Structure for Delivery of the Strategy***

Structure	Representatives	Remit
Partnership Board (19 members) (If considered too large could elect 3 members from Councils to the Board and rest stay on Advisory Board)	• Member representatives from Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Larne, Newtownabbey and Limavady Borough Councils and Moyle District Council • Representative of Causeway and Antrim Glens Ltd Board • 3 community representatives (*eg* Oak Leaf Community Network; North Antrim Community Network; representative from Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey) • 2 farming representatives (Northern Ireland Agricultural Producer's Association (NIAPA); Ulster Farmer's Union (UFU)) • 3 environment representatives (one from the National Trust and two to be chosen from for example the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Arena Network, Woodland Trust, Sustainable Northern Ireland Programme, Bird Watch Northern Ireland, Ulster Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Sustrans, *etc*) • 2 tourism industry representatives (*eg* service providers, attraction managers *etc*)	• Elect Director of Board • Determine policy • Fiscal responsibility • Approve project programmes • Review plan progress against annual targets • Provide direction to Management Team • Meet bimonthly
Advisory Group (unlimited)	• Representatives from DARD, DoE (NI) EHS, Planning Services, Arts Council *etc* • Representatives from Sports Council Northern Ireland, National Trust, Financial Sector, environmental groups (see above) *etc* • Representative Officials from Councils • Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd Project Officer • Representatives from national and local interest groups • Other voluntary help	• Provide a wide variety of technical expertise to support particular initiatives • To ensure maximum interaction between the work of the Partnership and that of other organisations • To meet as specialist sub groups to help progress particular initiatives • Advise on funding sources • Advise on projects • Advise on grant aided projects • Bring experience from elsewhere • Meet biannually at Group and as required in sub groups (*eg* those eligible

		for Board membership and/or Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs, Rural Riders Association, *etc*)
Management Team (to be reviewed)	• Project Director	• Establish indicators for tracking strategy progress • Advise the Board on strategy progress and projects • Administer funding for projects • Monitor projects • Implement some projects • Administer annual budget • Setting up required sub groups to support particular initiatives
	• Natural Heritage and Countryside Management Project Officer	• Assist Project Director in day to day activities • Progressing natural heritage and countryside management projects and working closely with second project officer on environmental programmes • Co-ordinating and progressing natural heritage baseline surveys • Liaising with DoE (NI) EHS and other relevant organisations to ensure no duplication of work and maximum co-ordinated effort • Working with relevant sub groups on particular initiatives • Monitoring success of actions against indicators
	• Visitor Management and Tourism Project Officer	• Assist Project Director in day to day activities • Progressing visitor management and tourism related actions working closely with Natural Heritage and Countryside Management Project Officer on environmental programmes and to draw on relevant baseline information • Close liaison with CCAG Project Officer

	and other relevant organisations
	• Working with relevant sub groups on particular initiatives
	• Monitoring success of actions against indicators
• Administrative Assistant	• Day to day administrative support to Project Team
	• Ensuring information made available to Partnership Board and Advisory Group
	• Liaison with Board and Advisory Group
	• Updating website
	• Support to project as appropriate (publishing activities *etc*)
• Funding Officer (Half time)	• Administer Partnership finances
	• Assist in grant applications
	• Assist in administering grants for projects
• PR Officer (Part time or consultant 3 days/month)	• Set up Website
	• Establish good relationships with the press and media
	• Ensure all opportunities to promote work of Partnership
	• Train Administrative Assistant in updating the Website

Day to day management of the Partnership and its initiatives would be by a Partnership Management Team headed by a Project Director and supported by a team of Project Officers, an Administrative Assistant and other staff with particular expertise (for example, funding, PR, *etc*). The team would also draw on consultancy assistance as required (*eg* to establish the website *etc*). We consider an initial team of three working to implement plans (Project Director and two Officers) with different specialist capabilities (see *Figure 5a*)) would be the minimal possible to ensure implementation of the strategy progresses satisfactorily and to instil confidence to other organisations and groups about the credibility of the Partnership and its roles and goals.

It is inevitable that there will be considerable administration involved in implementing the strategy and so it is essential that the core team is supported by adequate administrative help. At this stage it is not possible to be absolutely sure about what relevant help is required other than an Administrative Assistant who would have a key role in supporting the Project team and also in ensuring effective liaison between the Team and the Board and Advisory Group.

Applying for funding and administering the Partnership finances and the funding of projects will be time consuming and could take the Project Director away from concentrating effort on implementing the strategy and thus it is recommended that at least some part time support is provided by a Funding Officer to assist with this key area which will underpin the success of the Partnership. Adequate publicity will also be fundamental to the success of the Partnership particularly in engendering support from the community and relevant local groups. It may be appropriate to consider a part time post or if this is too expensive at the beginning of the new Partnership some support could be provided by relevant consultants.

The Partnership Management Team will have to elicit support from many outside organisations if the strategy is to be progressed quickly.

The Partnership Management Team would be responsible to the Board and for producing annual plans, and reports of progress against targets. The Management Team would apply for funding and award grants (see *Section 5.5* and *5.6)*. The Management Team would also be responsible for establishing Project Sub groups (see above).

In the medium to longer term it may be possible to better co-ordinate CCAG with the Partnership with more formal joint goals. If this were the case it might be possible to share staff between the two organisations which would be more efficient and save money. This would also give stronger emphasis to a joined up commitment to sustainable tourism in the North East area.

5.3   *LOCATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP OFFICES*

The present location of the Causeway Initiative offices has some advantages being in the key area for visitors and thus providing many opportunities for

publicity *etc*. However, it is not centrally placed in the North East area and the current perception by many from the name and location of the Initiative is that its actions are centred on the Causeway itself.

We would suggest that it may be appropriate to consider offices elsewhere in a more central location as part of the launch of the strategy. Such a location could be in Ballymena at the Ecos Centre. There are obvious links between the philosophies of the Centre and the aim and objectives of the strategy and each could be used to publicise each other. We understand there may be office space available and suggest this should be investigated.

A publicity campaign focusing on the launch of the new Partnership could easily be linked to advertising a new location of the ground management team.

Consultees have also suggested a range of other office locations and the Partnership should consider these further along with the Ecos Centre. These are:

- the Education Centre at Carnfunnock Country Park near Larne;
- offices in Cushendall;
- a location in proximity to CCAG offices in Coleraine;
- leaving the office at the Causeway in the heart of the tourist area of the North East not attached or associated with any one particular local authority.

In making a decision it is essential that it is led by what is best for progressing the strategy in terms of perception by the public, ease of accessing the whole area and opportunities to integrate with other groups and ongoing initiatives as well as cost and suitability of the premises. From initial discussions with the Steering Group the decision is unlikely to be an easy one and we would suggest the most appropriate way to progress the decision is to ask all members for suggestions, to collate a long list and then as a group explore the pros and cons of each before prioritising the choice of preferred option. It may be appropriate to elicit outside facilitator assistance in this process.

5.4   *FUNDING SOURCES FOR THE PARTNERSHIP AND STRATEGY*

5.4.1   *Introduction*

Initial discussions with various Government departments (Department of Agricultural and Rural Development (DARD); Environment and Heritage Services (EHS); Countryside Management) suggest the following sources of money may be appropriate to fund the Partnership and/or specific action plans.

5.4.2   *Government Funding Available*

European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation II, Natural Resource Rural Tourism (NRRT)

Some £10m over 6 years will be made available through the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) for tourism and related projects in environmentally sensitive areas in Northern Ireland which have been traditionally disadvantaged areas. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Environment and Heritage Service (DoE (NI)) will be partners with £2-3m each, to give a total fund of approximately £15m. The Glens of Antrim may be one area which could qualify for assistance. The Partnership would be able to bid for funding to deliver local initiatives. Money may be available from Autumn 2001.

EU Objective 1 Transitional Programme Sectoral Resource

Approximately £5m is available each year through DARD to aid rural regeneration. A partnership could bid to this programme with a proposal to complement NRRT in an area. Funds under this Programme are also administered through the DoE (NI) EHS and cover a wide range of projects including those relating to biodiversity, rural tourism, rescue of monuments (on private land), environmental quality *etc*. Approximately 3m euros is available through the DoE (NI) EHS.

EU Intereg-Cross Border Fund

Approximately £12m is available over 5-6 years through DARD which is split between the north and the south of Ireland for community and economic projects in partnering initiatives. North Antrim could apply for a project with Donegal for example. Key requirements are to demonstrate partnerships and mutual benefits. An infrastructure project is an example of the type of plan which might benefit from funding.

EU LEADER+:

An estimated £16m is delivered through LEADER+ Partnerships in Northern Ireland. This is available over 6 years through DARD for rural micro-businesses. Some of these businesses might have a tourism slant. There are four LEADER partnerships in the North East area each with a current budget of approximately £1M. The number of delivery bodies for the next LEADER programme is still to be decided.

International Fund for Ireland:

Between £0.5m and £1.5m is available annually through DARD for community based economic regeneration projects and the Partnership would apparently be eligible to apply for funding of relevant projects.

Natural Heritage Grants

An allocation of £200,000 a year is made available through the DoE (NI) EHS under the Access Order for Countryside Access Projects, with provisions for projects involving long distance walking routes, signage, car parks *etc*. Normally councils apply to the DoE (NI) EHS for money to ensure ongoing initiatives can be integrated.

Grants for Acquisitions of Open Spaces

Some £140,000 is made available through the DoE (NI) EHS for projects such as the development of country parks.

Grants to Voluntary Bodies

Between £100,000 and £150,000 is made available to voluntary bodies for the acquisition and management of existing properties.

New Opportunities Fund

The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) was created by the National Lottery Act 1998 with responsibility for distributing National Lottery grants for health, education and environment initiatives. The fund works with national, regional and local partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to fund, fairly and efficiently, specified initiatives covering these particular areas across the UK with particular focus upon the needs of those who are most disadvantaged in society. The first three initiatives to be funded by NOF are healthy living centres, out of school hours activities and training for teachers and librarians information and communications technologies.

The NOF is launching a new initiative focusing on "**Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities**" which will be implemented in Northern Ireland later this year. It will be the first of the environment initiatives and will help communities to understand, improve and care for their natural and living environment. Particular focus will be on the creation, acquisition and improvement of green spaces, for children's play or because of their environmental importance. Sustainable community schemes, such as making walking and cycling to school safer or using sustainable technologies such as solar panels, may also be funded.

The Heritage Lottery Fund

The aim of the Heritage Lottery Fund it to safeguard and enhance the heritage of the United Kingdom. Where heritage encompasses buildings, objects and the environment, whether man-made or natural, which have been important in the formation of the character and identity of the United Kingdom and which will be a vital part in its future.

Applicants need to show that their project will help to preserve and enhance, or widen public access to, or understanding and enjoyment of, one or more

aspects of the physical heritage, including natural habitats and countryside of local, regional or national importance.

Support is not confined to designated land areas, with projects welcomed which take a holistic approach to the countryside and urban green spaces; embracing landscape, wildlife, buildings, archaeology and public amenity.

Lottery Sports Fund

The Sports Councils (of which there are four, England Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) aim to help people across the UK enjoy sports of all kinds. 20% of the total amount raised for Good Causes by the National Lottery goes to sports projects. Unlike other sources of public funding, the money from the Lottery can be carried over by the Councils into subsequent years, allowing large sums to accumulate for major facilities.

Currently, the Sports Councils operate programmes which provide funding for both capital projects and revenue schemes. Applicants can apply under the capital programme for building and construction, purchase of land or rights in land, and / or the purchase of capital equipment. Projects must meet defined standards of good design, quality and technical requirements for the relevant sport(s). Buildings must provide access for people with disabilities. Projects must demonstrate benefit to the local community and good levels of support from the public. Applicants must have attracted significant partnership funding to ensure that the project can be completed and sustained.

The Lottery Arts Fund

The four national Arts Councils (covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) are responsible for the distribution of Good Cause money to support the arts in their own areas. The Arts Councils aim to help people across the UK enjoy - and take part in - the broadest possible range of arts activities. Arts Lottery money is being spent on a wide range of capital projects, including the renovation and re-equipping of arts venues.

Awards for All

The Awards for All programme is specifically designed for small community groups throughout the UK and provides grants of between £5,000 and £15,000. It can be for a range of arts, sports, heritage and social projects. In Northern Ireland, it involves the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Community Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland. The main aim of this programme is to fund projects which involve people in their community, bringing them together to enjoy a wide range of arts, sport, heritage, charitable and/or community, educational, environmental and health related activities. High priority is given to activities which are new or which extend what is already been undertaken.

The award scheme aims to:

- bring people together and increase community activity;
- involve more people in a wide range of community activities;
- increase skill and activity;
- improve quality of life.

Landfill Tax

On 1 October 1996 a tax on disposal of waste at landfill sites was introduced throughout the United Kingdom. The scheme forges links between environmental bodies, landfill operators and ENTRUST, which has been appointed as the regulator of Environmental Bodies under the Landfill Regulations.

Site operators are able to claim up to 20 percent of their landfill liability if they make payments to registered environmental body for approved purposes. Up to 90 percent of such a contribution can be claimed back.

The approved purposes of the scheme are as follows;

- reclamation, remediation and restoration;
- any operator intended to prevent or reduce any potential for pollution;
- research and development, education or collection and dissemination of information about waste management practices; and
- for the protection of the environment, the provision, maintenance or improvement of a public place or other public amenity within a ten mile radius of a site.

Grant Giving Trusts

Grant-giving trusts, such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, BT Countryside for All Grants, Henry Ford European Conservation Awards, the Post Office Voluntary Organisation Scheme Award and Shell Better Britain Campaign exist to financially support community development and environmental initiatives. The vast majority have specific criteria regarding the type of work they support. They have often been established by wealthy individuals or companies and do not raise money from the public. With the growth in charities registers, the request for grant donations from individuals are on the increase and they are having to become ever more selective. This source of money is therefore increasingly becoming under pressure. It is normally the case that such trusts make grant decision when the trustees meet, which could be anything from twice to four times a year.

Private Sector Contributions

Discretionary Contributions

Contributions can be sought in a range of forms. Either companies can be approached to provide discretionary cash donations. On the other hand,

companies could be approached to provide in-kind contributions (for example, materials, skills).

5.5 *DELIVERY OF GRANT ASSISTANCE*

The requirements for financial assistance will be two fold:

- funding of the Partnership (staff, office accommodation *etc*);
- financial assistance for the implementation of projects (including the award schemes (see *Section 5.6*))

We recommend application for funding will be made by the Partnership Management Team following approval of annual budgets and plans by the Partnership Board.

Employment of at least a part time Funding Officer as part of the Management Team will greatly assist in the award of financial assistance and ensure that the Management Team Director and Project Officers are able to remain focused on implementation of the strategy rather than administration.

It is recommended that Management Team should have complete responsibility for awarding small grants in conjunction with specialist sub groups from the Advisory Group (up to £5,000) provided these are to fund action plans which have been approved by the Board but larger grants should be considered by the Board. The Management Team should call on technical advice from the Advisory Board as required to aid decision making. It is considered that this will reduce bureaucracy and allow the Trust to respond quickly to smaller applications and so enable the strategy to be implemented without unnecessary delay. The Board will have overall control of the amount of money made available for small projects and inclusion of officials from the councils *etc* in the Advisory Group will ensure necessary advice is readily available. The Partnership Board may wish to consider this further drawing on past experiences.

The Management Team will be able to drawn on experience learnt from the Pilot Sustainable Support Scheme held this year both for grant allotment and for monitoring successful implementation.

5.6 *AWARD SCHEMES*

5.6.1 *Introduction*

In addition to the financial award scheme we recommend consideration is given to an annual award scheme and an accreditation scheme. Our recommendations for the award scheme have drawn on experience elsewhere such as the international Tourism for Tomorrow Awards sponsored by BA, the national Scottish Thistle Awards by the Scottish Tourist Board (STB) and the England for Excellence Awards by English Tourism Council (ETC) and the

local Considerate Hoteliers Annual Awards. The suggestions for the accreditation scheme draw most heavily on the Scottish model - the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) which was developed by the Tourism and the Environment Forum and is operated by STB. We consider this to be more robust than the recently produced (2000) ETC Green Audit Kit which is a guidance brochure encouraging self help and audit to manage environmental performance but includes no formal accreditation. The accreditation scheme would be complete separate from the NITB quality assurance scheme as it would have a completely "green focus". Opportunities to include environmental education for those involved in the tourism sector should be included so that by raising local awareness of the rich natural environment a greater sense of ownership and respect could be created.

5.6.2 *Annual Award Scheme*

We propose an annual award scheme based on the following categories, for example:

- clean and green (external appearance of the property - cleanliness, paintwork, litter, shiny brass, clean windows, tree shrub and floral planting (hanging baskets, window boxes, *etc*));

- energy efficiency and waste management;

- communication and training; and

- environmental awareness and education.

These could be awarded for different categories of tourism business such as hotels, B&B's, attractions, and so on.

5.6.3 *Accreditation Scheme*

An accreditation scheme which follows the GTBS model has the merit of being well tested by the STB and seems to be working effectively with some 300-400 businesses graded.

It is a voluntary scheme based on performance under a number of categories (energy, waste management, water conservation, landscape *etc*) and offering bronze, silver and gold standards. It complements the standards grading and accreditation schemes for accommodation and attractions. For gold and silver standards the STB inspectors make the judgement and for gold environmental consultants (SEA) conduct audits.

It is based on visible actions, such as the installation of energy efficient light bulbs rather than on the consumption of electricity or low flow shower heads rather than the consumption of water, so that it is possible to walk around the building and observe how seriously the business is taking environmental issues. Signing up to Hospitable Climates (a voluntary energy

efficiency scheme funded by the UK Government's Best Practice Programme and operated by the Hotel and Catering International Management Association (HCIMA) can earn 5 bonus points on GTBS. The Hospitable Climates programme (see *Annex B*) was launched in Northern Ireland recently. An accreditation scheme for the North East area can draw on these experiences but we consider the scheme should also be extended to include environmental awareness raising and training as key components.

5.7   *PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)*

Feedback at the consultation workshop indicated that understanding about or knowledge of the present Causeway Initiative was varied. Those involved through work or following applications for grants were very familiar whereas others knew the name but not much about the Initiative on a day to day basis. If the strategy is to be one for the area with close involvement from those living and working there it is essential that the Partnership is well known and well understood.

The name and the branding of the Partnership (logo, publicity materials *etc*) will be important. The launch of the strategy allows the initiative to be renamed if considered appropriate. Involvement of the community in this, through perhaps a competition, could help PR.

We consider that a name which divorces the Partnership from any one part of the area will help wider acceptance. One suggestion could draw on Northern Ireland's cultural heritage "Ireland's Dalraida". Another, if Ballymena was chosen for the office location, could be the Ecos Initiative. There are many alternatives which can be considered.

It is important that whatever name is chosen that this is carried through in publicity and tourism materials, in signing and in any way which raises not only the profile of the Partnership but the identity of the North East area as an area with much to offer in addition to the Causeway Coast. Steering Group members suggested the Coast and Glens Trust and the Causeway Coast and Glens Environmental Initiative.

Following further discussions with the Steering Group we suggest it may be more appropriate to address the naming of the Partnership in a two stage process. In the immediate term we suggest a name which links closely with the Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens Ltd might be most appropriate or even to keep the existing name (Causeway Initiative). We would suggest, however, in the longer term as both organisations work to come closer together and to undertake a more united role that it would be appropriate to reconsider the name of both organisations to capture the spirit of the whole North East area.

It will be important that every event (launch, annual reviews, successful implementation of plans, community involvement in projects, celebrity input to projects *etc*) is given appropriate coverage on television and radio and in the local and national press including community newsheets. It may be

possible to develop close links with a local reporter(s) from the start of the new Partnership and encourage close involvement in ongoing activities.

A website should be launched as soon as a name has been chosen for the Partnership and this should be used to regularly report progress and to publicise key events. Information about the Partnership as well as the strategy itself and the action plan for the year could all be available on the website. If the strategy was web enabled links could be made to case studies in progress or completed. The site could provide useful educational materials for schools and others.

As sustainable guidelines, accreditation and award schemes are established these could all be included on the website for easy use and reference. As the strategy is updated each year the appropriate changes can easily be made without costly reissue of hard copies. The annual report would provide a useful opportunity to report progress for the past year and proposed plans for the following year. The site could also be used to advertise employment opportunities and make requests for voluntary help on the Advisory Board or for project implementation. Grant assistance application forms with guidance on completion could all be available digitally.

It will be essential that one member of the Partnership Management Team is technically able in IT skills and some consultancy help may be required to establish the website.

Public meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops can also be used to raise the profile of the Partnership and share information on progress. Community participation should be encouraged at all levels and it may be that voluntary groups and organisations would be prepared to include updates on work of the Partnership in their regular meetings particularly if their members are participating in projects either voluntary or in grant aided plans.

Some suggestions for particular points where PR opportunities should be considered in the first months of the Partnership are given in *Chapter 6*.

6   *IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN AND PR PROGRAMME*

6.1   *INTRODUCTION*

A suggested immediate action plan for 2001-2002 is presented in *Table 6.1* using information from the Action Plan set out in *Chapter 5*. If the Partnership and strategy are to gain real momentum it will be essential that structures are put in place rapidly and that actions begin to take shape and are publicised as soon as possible. In the table opportunities to publicise progress are also identified.

The focus of the first year plan is very much on getting a sound organisational structure in place before progressing a series of detailed baseline reviews. The purpose of collating the baseline review information is two fold:

- to have sound information to audit future programmes against;
- to underpin decisions about action plans, pilot programmes *etc*.

It will help ensure that actions build on ongoing initiatives and integrate with existing tourist attractions. For example, a new cultural trail could incorporate the local historic trail in Ballymoney. Further hop on-hop off Public Transport provision can build on the existing Antrim Coaster routes *etc*.

Our study has included requests for baseline information from a wide range of organisations and individuals including Government agencies (see *Annex A*). Relatively little environmental baseline information of the level of detail which is needed to take actions forward appears to be readily available. It may be that more suitable baseline information does in fact exist (even though sources of collated information in a useful form have not been brought to our attention). The Causeway Initiative has recently commissioned a baseline review of progress of the Initiative to date and this in part includes an audit of information available. If more comprehensive information is found to be available by this study or if information is made available to the Partnerships in the future than assumed in preparing the example 12 month plan in *Table 6.1* then the first year action plan will be able to focus more on taking forward and implementing pilot studies in each area than is suggested. Ongoing case studies (such as those recently awarded grants by the Initiative) should be built into the 12 month plan.

PR opportunities should be maximised in Year 1 particularly to heighten awareness about the new Partnership. Opportunities to publicise in the media (press, TV, radio), on the Partnership website, at conference, public meetings *etc* should be taken at all stages. Existing relationships with Councillors, Government agencies and interest and community groups should be continued and where necessary enhanced through encouraging involvement in the ongoing programme of events, inviting people to visit the office, to meetings and if appropriate to join the Advisory Board.

Table 6.1   *Example Year 1 Action Plan (September 2001 - August 2002)*

Month	Action Plan	Summary	PR Opportunities
0-1	SA2	Establish immediate funding sources for Partnership	Media when successful
0-1	SA3	Formulate immediate 12 month Action Plan identifying clear targets and responsibilities	Media, Local meeting(s)
0-1	SA6.1	Host competition to establish new identity of the Partnership	Media, Local meeting(s)
1	SA1.1	Establish Partnership Trust and appoint Directors	Media
1	SA1.2	Appoint Advisory Board	Media
1-2	SA1.3-1.6	Appoint Management Team	Media, Launch/Conference (June?)
2-3	SA5, C3.3, C6 and E5.1	Produce Best Practice Sustainable Tourist Guide	Media, Web
0-6	SA6, D1, G1.2 and G1.3	Establish identity of new Partnership (name, logo, publicity materials, website *etc*)	Media, Web, Launch/conference (June?)
1-6	A1.1	Undertake baseline audit of public access routes	Results on Web
1-6	A4.1	Undertake baseline audit of PT provision	Results on Web
1-6	B1.1 and B1.2	Undertake baseline audit of accommodation and produce brochure	Publicise brochure
1-6	C1.1	Undertake baseline audit of attractions and natural features in North East area to identify opportunities to develop new attractions	Results on Web
1-6	C4.1	Commission consultants to undertake visitor survey to identify shortfalls in provision of facilities and attraction as first stage in improving provision	Media, fundings on Web
1-6	E1 and G2.1	Progress baseline review of nature conservation assets, constraints and opportunities	Media, fundings on Web, involve local interest groups
1-6	E6	Progress baseline review of cultural heritage assets to establish potential for development as tourism asset/trail tours *etc*	Media, fundings on Web, involve local heritage groups
1-6	F1.1 and F1.2	Progress baseline audit of countryside and recreational pursuits and produce promotion leaflet	Media, fundings on Web
3.9	A1.2	Research opportunities to improve signage using Partnership logo where appropriate	Media, Involve Community Groups
3-6	A1.5	Identify and progress 3 pilot studies for improving access (*eg* on Rathlin Island, at the Gobbins, on the coastal area between Cushendun and Ballycastle)	Stories in press, updates regularly on Web, involve community in pilot areas
4-6	C2.1	Undertake baseline streetscape audit of key towns (progress pilot studies)	Press, updates on Web
4-6	C2.3	Seek to identify private partners	Press, updates on Web
6-8	C2.4	Produce best practice guidance on streetscape improvements	Media, produce and circulate materials, target suitable conference if possible
6-12	A3	Consider approach to developing series of access strategies and begin in progress	Regular updates on Web
6-12	SA7	Establish Best Practice Award	Media, produce publicity materials

Month	Action Plan	Summary	PR Opportunities
6-12	SA4	Commence discussions with relevant organisations (CCAG, NITB, DoE (NI) *etc*) on production of sustainable tourism strategy	Press, updates on Web
6-12	B2.1	Produce best practice guidelines for accommodation providers	Media, produce and circulate materials, target suitable conference if possible
8-10	E3.2	Work up one or two landscape improvement pilot schemes with consultant support for implementation	Updates on Web, media implement
10-12	B2.2	Commission study into feasibility of establishing a sustainable tourism association	Updates on Web
10-12	SA7	Review Visitor and Environmental Management Strategy - revise, update and publicise (include new Government sustainable tourism indicators if published)	Media, update on Web, circulate updates as paper copy inserts
10-12	SA6	Produce Annual Report and progress review against targets and proposed annual Action Plan for Year 2	Media, Web and conference

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