



**TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
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RATHLIN ISLAND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

JUNE 2005

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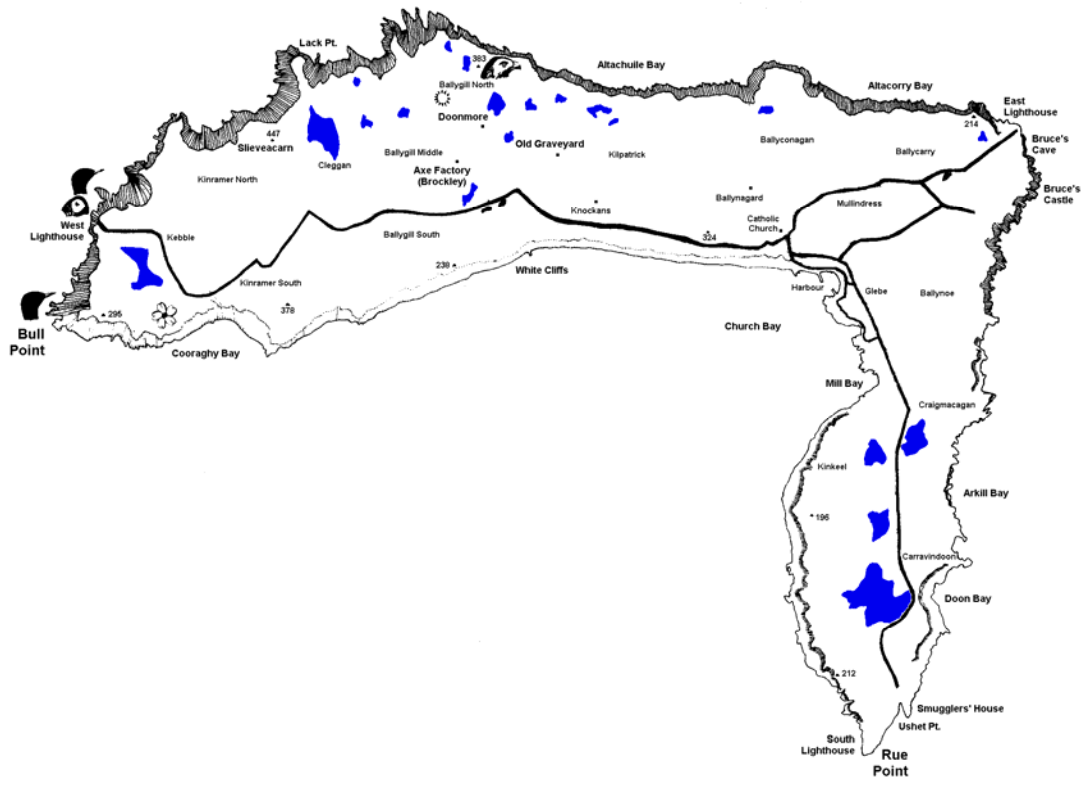
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RATHLIN ISLAND

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RATHLIN ISLAND - A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Rathlin Island lies 6 miles off Ballycastle in County Antrim and 16 miles from the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland. It is L shaped, with the inner corner facing South West, some 8 miles long and less than a mile wide at any point. The island guards the northern approaches to the Irish Sea, has very active tides and is open to Atlantic swells from the west and north-west. There are over 40 shipwrecks in the surrounding waters and three important lighthouses define its headlands.

Rathlin consists of layers of basalt on limestone that form sea cliffs almost 500 ft in height. The higher parts of the island contain heather moorlands whilst the lower sections have been farmed since Neolithic times.

There is evidence of habitation on Rathlin since Mesolithic times. Finds of flints, axes and arrow heads, and the presence of graves, forts, standing stones, monasteries, churches and caves provide evidence of each successive period of occupation. The island has a rich history due to its strategic location between Ireland and Scotland, its place within the ancient kingdom of Dalriada and its important links with the Lords of the Isles.

The community of Rathlin is some 90 strong, with a focal point at Church Bay around the harbour. At its peak in pre-famine days, the island supported 1200 people though, as is still the case, many young people had to leave to find work. The culture and tradition of the island are rich in music and storytelling, with an oral history recalling massacres, triumphs and defeats, and islanders have reinstated a long tradition of model boat racing on one of its inland loughs.

Rathlin Island is of particular importance for its nesting seabirds, its heath land habitats and rare plants. Four areas are designated as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (Kinrammer South, Ballygill North, Ballycarry and the Rathlin coast). In addition, the offshore reefs, vegetated cliffs, sea caves and shallow covered sandbanks have been designated as an EU Special Area of Conservation.

Access to and from Rathlin is reached by a regular vehicle and passenger ferry from Ballycastle, though visitors must travel as pedestrians unless they intend to make an extended stay. Particular attractions are the West Light viewpoint with its important seabird colonies, the many cultural festivals, the walking and the peace and quiet.

Around 16,000 people visited the island last year, mainly during the nesting seabird season.

CHAPTER 1 - BACKGROUND, CONTEXT AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This draft document sets out a 10 year Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Rathlin Island and has been prepared jointly by Tourism Development International and Countryside Consultancy for the Rathlin Islanders and the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust. A steering group has been established to guide the development of the strategy comprising of representatives from Rathlin Development Community Association, the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (the funders), the Environment and Heritage Service, the RSPB and the National Trust (both land and property owners on the island), the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Moyle District Council. The names of the steering group are set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The main personnel who worked on the project are Peter MacNulty, Allan Balnaves, Judith Annett, Dr Bob Brown, Bill Taylor and Ailis Hickey. The project is supported by Moyle District Council as part of its commitment to the Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Masterplan.
- 1.3 The intention of the strategy is to secure sustainable tourism on the island in the long term, in a way that benefits the Rathlin islanders and the region as a whole. It is an aspiration that the island and the whole of the Causeway Coast and Glens will become a recognised as a best practice example of sustainable tourism.
- 1.4 Sustainable tourism planning and delivery in the Causeway Coast and Glens was initiated following the successful, post-ceasefires tourism year of 1995 when there were signs that a return to more normal levels of tourism might lead to conflicts between tourism activity and the protection of landscapes, communities and natural resources in the area. In response, the Causeway Initiative was formed and it brought forward a programme of funding and development measures for sustainable tourism and visitor and environmental management in the Causeway Coast and Glens area. At the same time, eight councils and the private sector joined forces to form a regional tourism marketing organisation for the whole Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens area. The new marketing organisation was known as Causeway Coast and Glens LTD/
- 1.5 Three strategic actions were taken by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:
 - Preparation of a Tourism Masterplan for the Causeway Coast and Glens area to set the overall strategic aims and directions to guide tourism development activity and statutory tourism investment
 - A design competition for a new visitor centre for the Giant's Causeway
 - A World Heritage Site Management Plan for the Giant's Causeway site to achieve UNESCO requirements and best practice management
- 1.6 The first of these, the Tourism Masterplan identified that one of the key objectives must be to ensure that the economic and social benefits of visitor interest in the Giant's Causeway are felt over a wider range of sites throughout the whole Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens area. Rathlin Island was identified as one such location that could benefit more from tourism, however it was recognised that any proposed development should be sensitive/sustainable and fit with the unique natural and cultural heritage of the island. The resultant benefits would be both in

terms of expenditure on the island and in maintaining important infrastructure for island residents.

- 1.7 To succeed, any form of development on Rathlin Island needs the full cooperation and support of the residents and landowners, working with those statutory bodies with an interest in the island, and with technical support and information. Tourism development needs to take into account the small scale of the island, its fragile habitats, its small community and their needs in addition to those of visitors. Any planning needs to have, at its heart, a clear picture of the carrying capacity of the island and the thresholds above which tourism activity would begin to adversely affect either the quality of life enjoyed by both residents or the visitors.
- 1.8 The Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Masterplan recognised the importance of spreading visitors more evenly throughout the area. It recommended the preparation of a Rathlin Island sustainable tourism strategy as one part of the process.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STUDY

- 1.9 The terms of reference* for the strategy development process included the following stages. This document follows these requirements:
 1. Review all relevant research undertaken to date.
 2. Undertake an audit of existing tourism resources on the island that identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
 3. Undertake an audit of the natural, cultural and built heritage of the island.
 4. Advise on visitor carrying capacities for the island and for specific sites of visitor interest on the island. These should be taken into account when considering forward projections of visitor numbers.
 5. Review current marketing activity and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
 6. Review current tourism performance.
 7. Review examples of best practice sustainable tourism within island communities throughout the U.K., Ireland and further afield. To identify best practice that would be most applicable to Rathlin Island.
 8. Provide a market overview and identify priority market segments for Rathlin Island in the context of identified carrying capacities and strategic recommendations within the Tourism Masterplan.

* In March 2005, the project steering group expressed concerns regarding the absence of primary research with visitors to Rathlin Island. To this end, Tourism Development International was commissioned to undertake a Survey of Visitors to the island. The findings from this survey are presented in Section 8.

9. Provide a 10 year costed and prioritised (short, medium and long-term) action plan which aims to establish Rathlin Island as an example of best practise sustainable tourism and which contains recommendations for the following sectors:
 - Access to and within the island
 - Accommodation
 - Activity tourism and recreational opportunities
 - Natural Heritage based attractions
 - Cultural Heritage based attractions (including events)
 - Built heritage based attractions (including archaeology)
 - Visitor amenities (including signing, interpretation, viewing points, picnic areas, seating, toilet provision, etc)
 - Visitor services (food, entertainment, training etc)
10. Provide outline recommendations for a marketing plan in support of these overall objectives.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- 1.10 The study team has adopted a working definition of sustainable tourism for this project acceptable to the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, its funding partners and the Rathlin Island Community. i.e.:

Sustainable tourism is tourism which

- Has a low impact on its surroundings and does not damage critical elements of them
- Is led by a sound knowledge of appropriate target markets and their attitudes
- Is beneficial to the people who live in the receiving area as it is economically viable, provides good jobs, and ensures that a substantial proportion of visitor expenditure remains within the local economy and through supporting infrastructure and services or creating other community and individual gain.
- Is managed so that the benefits outweigh the inconveniences
- Is respectful of the scale and nature of the area.
- Is based on retaining, enhancing and presenting the natural, built and cultural heritage of area
- Presents and protects the distinct culture of the host community as an important component in the quality, authenticity and enjoyment of the offering
- Retains the tourism and natural resource for the benefit of subsequent generations.
- Aligns the needs of visitors, the place and the community.

- 1.10 The study team has also been guided by the World Tourism Organisation's definition of sustainable tourism (2004), which identifies that a suitable balance should be struck between the environmental, economic, social and cultural aspects of tourism.¹ It further suggests that important aspects of sustainable tourism include full participation of all relevant stakeholders, monitoring of impacts and a high level of tourist satisfaction.

¹ The WTO conceptual definition appears in Appendix XX

SOCIO ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RATHLIN ISLAND

- 1.11 In order to protect the confidentiality of individuals on Rathlin, the statistics from the Northern Ireland Census in 2001 include the island in tables for a wider census area that includes part of the mainland. They are included with the 334 people that make up that part of the Bonamargy and Rathlin electoral ward, in the Moyle District Council area. It is not, therefore, possible to provide within the report a detailed profile of Rathlin alone.
- 1.12 Based on the data for 334 people within the census output area, the following summary can be made:
- Average of 3 people per household (circa 48 households on Rathlin)
 - 14% of people are under 16 years compared with a Moyle and NI average of 24%
 - 27% of people are over 60 years compared with 20% in Moyle and 18% in NI
 - 49% are male – the same as in Moyle and NI
 - 70% are from a Catholic Community background compared with 60% in Moyle and 44% in NI
 - 28% are from a Protestant and other Christian community background compared with 38% in the District and 53% in Northern Ireland
 - 22% have a limiting long term illness compared to 21% in Moyle and 20% in Northern Ireland
 - 14% are providing unpaid care compared to 10% in Moyle and 11% in NI
 - 81% of households are owner occupied compared to 68% in Moyle and 70% in NI
 - 88% have access to a car or van compared to 77% in Moyle and 74% in NI
 - 23% are educated to degree level or higher compared to 13% in Moyle and 16% in NI
 - 43% of females are in employment, the same as Moyle as a whole but less than the NI average of 45%
 - 4% are unemployed, the same as the NI average but less than the Moyle average of 5%.
- 1.14 In summary, statistically, Rathlin islanders appear to reverse the normal situation in Northern Ireland where there are more young people under 16 than people over 60. People are more likely to be well educated than the NI average and more likely to own their own homes, own transport and suffer low rates of unemployment. However, this simplifies the real situation on Rathlin, where people without jobs have to leave the island, and young people who have had to attend secondary school on the mainland, find their futures off the island.

PREVIOUS STUDIES AND THEIR RELEVANCE

- 1.15 Probably one of the most relevant recent study of Rathlin is the report of the Countryside Exchange visit in 2003. This study visit brought together expert staff researchers and consultants to look at sustainable community issues on Rathlin and to make recommendations for the future of the island. The work undertaken was detailed, well-informed, engaged well with the islanders, and the conclusions were well accepted locally.
- 1.16 The study addressed Rathlin and its people in a holistic way, identifying issues across a range of aspects from environmental stewardship to demographics and the security of primary education on the island. Key points arising for Rathlin tourism

from the report are as follows:

- The lack of a physical welcome for visitors to the island and of information prior to arrival to help people make the most of the stay
- Difficulties of reaching consensus on the way forward
- The fact that not everyone feels that the island and they themselves benefit from tourism
- Difficulties in getting attention from key agencies with a role to play in the future.

1.17 A set of ‘early win’ projects for early action was identified, including:

- Carry out a community clean-up of rubbish in the Church Bay area
- Tackle litter in other areas such as the road out to Rue
- Develop one website describing all the opportunities on Rathlin for recreation, services, transportation etc. This could be an interactive site that allowed folks to book their transport, accommodation and services easily and efficiently.
- Create an inventory of Rathlin Island assets
- Continue work to preserve the island’s personalities and stories for posterity, through extensive oral history project work including songs, stories, and remembrances of life on Rathlin Island.
- Create a listing of important Rathlin Island contacts for off-island agencies, non-governmental organizations and other concerned parties. Similarly, provide guidebooks to government agencies to help islanders keep in contact with their elected representatives and their staff.
- Obtain assistance to hire a facilitator to help the community to come up with a shared vision and a series of strategies to guide how Rathlin Island responds to change and goes forward to meet the future.

1.18 Some issues and opportunities identified in the report in relation to tourism included:

- walking opportunities on the island are limited
- the birding interest on the island is largely limited to May and June.
- There is no sense of arrival at the ferry slipway and no readily apparent information on where to go and what to do.
- Visitor surveys need to be carried out on the island on a regular basis to track progress
- Tourism approach needs to use leading edge technology
- Focus on cultural, heritage, and eco-tourism
- Tourism theme: People, Place, and Pace
- Target other tourism markets besides birders
- Define the target audiences (day-trippers, divers, families, outdoor types)
- Partner with Giant’s Causeway and North Antrim Causeway Coast
- Develop a “lords of the isles race” (Islay-Gigha-Rathlin)
- Have an Island-owned transit at least in the summer
- Tap the retreat/conference market
- Develop an around-island trail with interpretation
- Build support base for “working vacations” concept
- Interpret folk history of Island
- Arts and crafts represent a good market to go for visitor’s income
- Rathlin could host a ‘festival of islands’.

- 1.19 The study also flagged up the need to solve waste disposal problems alongside tourism development to ensure that the situation remains manageable. This issue relates to the current waste collection and incineration policy where there is no recycling and waste is burned on the island and the ashes dumped in the sea.

The DETI tourism Masterplan

- 1.20 In April 2003 Ian Pearson, MP, Northern Ireland Office Minister for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Angela Smith MP, Northern Ireland Office Minister for the Environment and Heritage Service, announced their proposal to resolve the long outstanding issue of new visitor facilities at the Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland's only World Heritage Site. The proposals centered on a three stranded solution which included the running of an international competition to design the new visitor facilities (competition in progress at April 2005), the development of a Management Plan for the World Heritage Site (draft with UNESCO for approval in April 2005) and finally the production of a Tourism Masterplan for the wider Causeway Coast and Glens Area (published March 2004), stretching from the Borough of Newtown abbey in the South to the Borough of Limavady in the North West.
- 1.21 The Tourism Masterplan has provided a framework for sustainable tourism within the Causeway Coast and Glens regional tourism area, which includes Rathlin Island. It is a key element in delivering the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) Strategic Framework for Action 2004-2007, with targets to increase tourism revenue by 9% every year; visitor numbers by 7%, and Northern Ireland's share of total visitors to the island of Ireland. The approach of the Masterplan seeks to strike a balance between economic growth; care for the natural resource on which tourism to the area is based; and the well being of communities in the area. The Masterplan covers the period 2004 to 2013 and has the following key objectives:
- to increase the number of tourists visiting the area;
 - to achieve a coordinated approach to tourism in the area;
 - to spread the benefits of visits attracted by the Giant's Causeway to a wider geographical area; and
 - to develop strong attractions elsewhere in the area.
- 1.22 The Masterplan vision was to establish the Causeway Coast and Glens area as a 'must-see', world-class tourism destination in Ireland and the North Atlantic area; known for its scenic beauty; its spectacular coastline; and its key jewels, including the Giants Causeway, Rathlin Island and the Glens of Antrim; and celebrated for its Causeway Coastal tourism route, on a par with the Ring of Kerry, the Pacific Drive in California and the Garden route in South Africa. The vision also sees an increased number of tourists from overseas, who stay longer and who are aware of the area setting new standards in environmental management and sustainable tourism. The visitor experience is based on quality and on being helped to encounter the best landscapes, seascapes, hospitality, culture and activity the area can offer.
- 1.23 The two principal objectives of the Masterplan to achieve the vision are:
1. To **spread the benefits** of visits attracted to the Giant's Causeway to a wider geographical area; and
 2. To **develop strong attractions elsewhere** in the area.

- 1.24 Further objectives of the Masterplan are:
3. To **increase the number of overseas staying visitors** to the area.
 4. To promote **sustainable tourism**.
 5. To provide a strategic framework for the **ordered planning** and development of tourism over the short, medium and long terms;
 6. To devise spatial **product and marketing strategies** which reflect the attractions of the region in relation to different segments of the domestic and international markets
 7. To **develop the tourism product** and experience to the best international standards.
 8. To **improve the supporting infrastructure**.
 9. To **increase average length of stay and tourist spending** by creating complementary tourism products of optimum quality;
 10. To **create opportunities for economic development, employment and income generation** throughout the region but especially in the rural Glens;
 11. To establish favourable conditions and create investment opportunities for enterprise
 12. To provide a sustainable level of development which is compatible with the maintenance of the area's environmental and cultural value.
- 1.25 To achieve these objectives eleven principal strategic recommendations were developed
1. To adopt an **area based approach** that sets specific priorities for parts of the area, based on their different needs and stages of development. The areas proposed were:
 - a. **The Giants Causeway Area** – with priority on developing best practice standards of service and visitor and environmental management; on meeting local aspirations for social and economic gain through tourism; on complying with UNESCO guidelines; on becoming a demonstration site for best natural WHS practice; and on dealing effectively with traffic congestion issues.
 - b. **The Coastal Area** – with priority on establishing the area as a major coastal tourism touring trail (working title – North Atlantic Trail) for overseas visitors with loops to key attractions away from the coast e.g. Slemish, Lower Bann; on extending dwell time and overnight stays through the provision of activities, events, heritage information, quality accommodation crafts and services; *on developing the visitor interest and capacity of Rathlin Island in a sustainable way as a key attraction along the trail*; on developing a new attraction at the Gobbins cliff path.
 - c. **The Rural Tourism and Special Interest Area** with priority on developing activity, cultural and special interest packages, and providing activity and special interest tourism infrastructure.
 2. To develop the **Causeway Coastal Route** as a major signature project for attracting and distributing overseas visitors to the area. This would extend from Whitehouse in Newtown abbey to Magilligan near Limavady initially with potential for extension to Donegal and Scotland

3. To focus on the **maritime heritage** of the area as a major interpretation and attraction theme in the coastal area and along the North Atlantic Trail
4. To regenerate the **resorts and gateways** of the area through a programme designed to meet and exceed visitor expectations
5. To invest strategically in **accommodation priorities** in the area including improving the quality offered by village inns, small hotels and hostels; and through seeking to attract or develop full service 4 star hotel accommodation in the area.
6. To improve the standard of **food and beverage** and value for money offered to visitors in restaurant, pubs and hotels
7. To focus investment on those **events and entertainments** likely to be of most appeal to out of state visitors and to adopt a more coordinated and professional approach to events provision.
8. To provide opportunities for visitors to purchase local Northern Ireland and Causeway Coast and Glens **retail and craft specialities**.
9. To **review tourism structures** with the objective of moving towards closer coordination of tourism product development, tourism marketing and visitor and environmental management.
10. To focus attention on the **development of the human resources** in the area and particularly on developing a ‘tourism ethos’, and on ensuring that tourism managers and operators are fully aware of the needs of the overseas market and the standards offered by main competitors.
11. To make a sustained commitment to the **marketing** of the Causeway Coast and Glens based on a substantially increased tourism marketing budget of circa £5 millions over the next three years.

1.26 The action plan within the Masterplan included the development of a sustainable tourism strategy for Rathlin Island to ensure that it could cope with inclusion within the Causeway Coastal Route concept and the development of additional capacity to host staying and day visitors on the island without detriment to the island. At the core of the Masterplan was an increase in the economic benefit to be gained from both existing and increased levels of tourism in parts of the area away from the Giant's Causeway.

Visitor Payback Scheme Feasibility Study

1.27 TTC was appointed in 2000 to investigate the potential of a visitor payback scheme (VPS) for the Causeway Coast and Glen's area. Visitor payback schemes normally involve a voluntary contribution to identified social or environmental management or enhancement schemes to benefit the visited community or landscape. Typically, contributions are collected by tourism businesses, such as accommodation providers, or walking tour companies, on the basis of either an opt-in payment, shown on the bill in the same way as a voluntary service charge on a restaurant bill, or an opt-out system where the charge is included (itemised) in the bill and where the customer has to ask for it to be removed if they do not want to pay. A typical charge within UK schemes would be £1 but some exclusive safari businesses in Africa charge up to \$100 dollars per customer for identified wildlife protection schemes run by interests local to the area they are visiting. The study examined VPS in the UK and concluded that visitor payback schemes work best where the opt-out method is used.

- 1.28 The TTC study looked at visitor attitudes at the Giant's Causeway to being asked to pay in a similar way for projects in the area. Results were inconclusive. Businesses were also asked, with similar results. Significant numbers were willing to pay, however, and if the scheme was voluntary, this would represent a financial gain to the area for spending on the management of tourism impacts. Interestingly, a proportion of the sample was not aware that there were management issues. Thus, there would have to be an effective awareness campaign to encourage visitor participation in such a scheme
- 1.29 Rathlin island was considered in the study to be an area where a clear theme for a payback scheme could be created and where simple mechanisms for payment (e.g. on the ferry) could be devised.

Rathlin Island Maritime Archaeological Survey

- 1.30 The Rathlin Island Maritime Archaeological survey was begun in August 2002. It has documented 200 sites to date representing a remarkably rich archaeological coastal zone. Most sites are post-medieval in date (e.g. kelp kilns and landing places) necessitating test excavation to address earlier sites. This included caves at Oweyberne, which produced evidence of Early Medieval and Bronze Age activity (through pottery, jewellery and flints). Further work will continue this year on Bruce's Castle and another prehistoric site in Craigmacagan. The study is being carried out by the Centre for Maritime Archaeology at the University of Ulster at Coleraine (Wes Forsythe)

CHAPTER 2 – AUDIT OF THE EXISTING TOURISM FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- 2.1 This section reviews the range of facilities and services currently on offer to Rathlin’s visitors.

ACCESS AND TRANSPORT

- 2.2 **The Ferry** runs between Ballycastle and the harbour at Church Bay. The current service was introduced in December 1996 and it has been operated ever since by Caledonian MacBrayne. The operating contract has to be re-tendered every five years, and the current cycle ends on 31st March 2007. The contract includes a 3 month termination clause. The ferry is subsidised by the Department of Regional Development to the extent of £400,000 per year.
- 2.3 The ferry provides a daily service throughout the year, including two return crossings per day from October to the end of May and four from June to the end of September. The sailing time is 45 minutes. The summer schedule means that a visitor can take the 10.00am ferry from Ballycastle in the morning and return on the 15.30 or the 17.30 on that same day. The longest a day trip visitor can spend on the island is around 6 hours.
- 2.4 The current adult return fare is £8.80. Family tickets (£23) and group rates are available.
- 2.5 The ferry’s passenger capacity is up to 140 in the summer months but only 27 in winter (i.e. the capacity of the cabin). However, it also operates as a freight ferry for the island and this tends to restrict its passenger capacity. For example, when a tanker of fuel or other dangerous goods are on board, passenger numbers are restricted to 12. Also, for every vehicle carried, the passenger capacity is reduced by 17. Thus, with three vehicles on board in summer, the actual capacity is under 90.
- 2.6 Vehicle journeys are normally restricted to residents, trade deliveries, or public utility vehicles. Visitors need to obtain a permit from Moyle Council to take a vehicle on to the island and these are only available for extended stays.
- 2.7 In 2004, the Ferry carried 45,378 passengers (counted as single trips), 2,597 cars and 252 commercial vehicles. Figures for single journeys since 1997 are as follows:

Table 2.1 Rathlin Island Ferry Trips 1997 -2004

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
32,307	32,497	35,248	37,852	35,936	39,077	46,562	45,378

- 2.8 Prior to December 1997, the ferry service was provided mainly by two private sector ferries, which were subsidised from 1992 to 1996 by Government (around £27,000 per year) and with grant aid for vessel improvements totalling £300,000 during the period. At the beginning of this period the number of single trips was 21,000 per year.
- 2.9 The cost of new infrastructure at Rathlin and Ballycastle to accommodate the ‘new’

ferry and to meet EU safety regulations was £9.5 million and was assisted through European Economic Area Funding.

- 2.10 ***Evaluation:*** *The Ferry is obviously Rathlin's lifeline and a critical part of its ability to attract visitors. It is attractive as a relatively cheap means of access but it almost certainly fails to meet the expectations of many visitors, in terms of its quality, the amount of shelter provided and diesel fumes in the cabin. In addition, the crossing is frequently rough and this is not a good selling point for potential visits. Limitations to the ferry's capacity also make it more difficult to lengthen the visitor season on Rathlin and to arrange large events.*

Changes to the service are constrained by the difficulty of finding another suitable boat that can provide the service on the type of sea crossing. Current constraints on vessel type and passenger capacity are set by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, for safety reasons.

Rigid Inflatable Boats (Rathlin and Ballycastle Based)

- 2.11 The Rigid Inflatable Boat (the RIB) based on Rathlin is privately owned and operated. It can take up to 12 passengers at a time and operates on a call-out basis. It can be hired out for £40 per day. It has the major advantage of being able to do the mainland trip in less than 15 minutes.
- 2.12 **Sea Treks Ireland** will be operating a RIB from Ballycastle to and around Rathlin in 2005. The RIB is enclosed and designed for comfort.
- 2.13 The Sea Trek trips around the island show the seabirds, seal colony, Bruce's cave and other features of interest. They also offer the opportunity to stop for a picnic at the back of the island. Passengers have the option of stopping off on Rathlin for up to three hours. Sea Treks also offer a wider range of other trips including to Sanda, Islay and Colonsay, as part of their activity programme. A 24 hour on-demand taxi ferry service is also available for £12.50 return, which is more expensive than the ferry but quicker and more flexible.
- 2.14 In July and August, 2004, Sea Trek carried 1,311 passengers in the Rathlin area and 763 travelled on a day return to the island or for a three hour stop. This was using one boat with a maximum capacity for 12 people. This year, the capacity will be up to 36, with three boats operating.
- 2.15 Over half of the excursions are sold to visitors in Ballycastle, either at the seafront or in the company's Ann Street premises. Another 10% are sold on the web.
- 2.16 Also for two days in July 2005, an arrangement has been made with the National Trust whereby trips (with a Trust guide on board) will be sold from a kiosk in Ballycastle. These will stop off for some time in Rathlin.
- 2.17 Two further RIBs, one operated by Johnny Curry and one by Alan Wilson(Unlimited Diving), started operating in February 2005. Each has capacity for 12 passengers.
- 2.18 ***Evaluation:*** *The RIBs are valuable assets for the island's tourism, because they cut down journey times, are flexible and can cater for small parties of special interest visitors. They have the potential to play a significant part in the future development of tourism.*

The Harbour

- 2.19 The Harbour at Church Bay is in good condition, having undergone major improvements in 1996, when a new slipway was built at the back of the Manor

House Pier. Breakwaters were also built on Lacknakilly and Ruenarone Reefs. To complement these improvements, a new slipway and breakwater were built at Ballycastle Harbour, with a total infrastructure cost of £9.5 million.

- 2.20 **A new pontoon**, providing 100 m of berthage, was put in place in the inner basin of the harbour in December 2004. Also, as part of this improvement, under the NRRTI Programme delivered by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, Moyle Council intends to build a new toilet block adjacent to the harbour.
- 2.21 The harbour attracts many visiting boats (yachts and RIBs) over the summer with Moyle Council estimating visits at 450, similar to the number of visiting boats at the marina in Ballycastle. The harbour and pontoon together have capacity for around 25 boats alongside depending on length, with a greater capacity in settled weather by doubling up or forming ‘trots’
- 2.22 ***Evaluation:** The harbour is an important part of the infrastructure for the island’s tourism. If a case can be made for a bigger and better boat, then there will have to be some development work to improve the harbour’s landing capacity. The pontoon berths are a significant new provision and it will be interesting to see how many more craft they attract in their first full season.*

The Roads

- 2.23 **The roads** on the island are mostly in a poor state of repair. The three main ones run out from Church Bay to the three lighthouses. They are single track and carry local vehicles, cyclists and walkers. None of them has a tarmac surface for its whole length. Part of the problem is that they are not all owned and maintained by DRD Roads Service. The extremities are in the ownership of the Irish Lights, EHS and RSPB. In addition, Roads Service has highlighted the difficulties of doing road works on the island and the limitations of having to rely on the ferry to transport equipment and materials.
- 2.24 The Community Association has been in discussion with Sustrans to see if a solution can be found to the problem of the surface of the roads. They have also been offered funding by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust under NRRTI to address this issue and this initiative is now underway. There is also an increasing problem with a dangerous bend overlooking the cliff on the road near the West Lighthouse.
- 2.25 ***Evaluation:** Even if the island is only going to continue to attract its current number of visitors, the road surfaces need to be improved. While every effort must be made to avoid more traffic on these roads, they remain a major constraint to tourism activity in their current condition. They need urgent action.*

Paths

- 2.26 Paths for recreational walkers are mainly these three roads and the Ballyconagan Waymarked Trails on National Trust land on the north of the island. There are also walking opportunities in and around the Church Bay and Mill Bay area for visitors not expecting to stray too far from the harbour. Signage for walkers, on or off the main roads is poor
- 2.27 The waymarking of the Ballyconagan Trail sets out three separate routes: the Blue Coastguard’s Track (0.5 miles to Coastguard Hut); the Green Crocknagh Trails (0.8 miles to the Coastguard Hut); and the Red Heather Trail (0.7 miles). The coastguard hut provides a spectacular view from one of the highest vantage points on the island and has a panorama board to help interpret the Scottish Isles and mainland features. Visitors can shelter and sit in the Hut but it is a cheerless place. The routes are way marked but not in a foolproof way and some markers appear to

be missing. At the time of the study a discouraging barrier closed off the walk access point from the road. The walks are not well used and some parts were fairly overgrown last summer. This initiative, which has been funded by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust under the NRRTI Programme, is now underway.

- 2.28 The Trail features in the NT booklet “Go Enjoy Northern Ireland” and within the Causeway Coast and Glens Rathlin Island leaflet. A map of the paths is available within a special NT leaflet available from the Manor House (in summer 2004 but not during the winter of the study)
- 2.29 There are also some more informal paths (e.g. from just before the entrance to the East Lighthouse grounds down to the sea or up to a cairn) but these may be on private land and walkers may not be encouraged to use them.
- 2.30 **Evaluation:** *A major effort is needed to make walking on Rathlin more of an attraction. The scenery to be viewed is spectacular but signage and interpretation en route is virtually non-existent. There is also a need for more viewpoints with seating. The existing roads are good for walking but, through time, if demand is encouraged to increase, then there will be a need for more off-road paths.*

Transport

- 2.31 Transport throughout the island is provided by Raghery Tours, the licensed operator of the buses. In the winter, this is provided by a small minibus which is available on demand but in the summer there is a 24-seater, with the main business being trips to the West Lighthouse viewpoint. For the busy six weeks in summer, two buses are often in operation. There are proposals to introduce a 30-seater in the summer of 2005. The state of the roads and the precarious bend near the West Light are of growing concern to the operator.
- 2.32 There is also a courtesy car from the ferry run by Soerneog View Hostel and other accommodation providers are more than willing to provide transport for their guests.
- 2.33 **Evaluation:** *As already discussed, any improvements to the transport service really need to be preceded by improvement to the roads. In the longer term, it may be more appropriate to have the two buses running regularly in the busy summer months. This should improve flexibility, which will be essential if visitor numbers continue to increase.*

Bike Hire

- 2.34 Visitors are permitted to bring their own bikes on the ferry. Bike Hire is available from Seorneog View Hostel, which will have about 30 bikes of different sizes available for the new season. People arriving on the Ferry hire them from a trailer at the harbour. Daily hire charges are £7 for adults and £5 for children (with family discounts available). Use levels per day vary considerably but 20 can be hired out in a good day in the summer.
- 2.35 The main markets for bike hire are less likely to be visitors from other parts Ireland but more likely to be from elsewhere in Europe. Some 150 visitors a year bring their own bikes on the Ferry but they present stowage problems and there is a restriction of 10 per trip.
- 2.36 **Evaluation:** *This is a service that needs to be promoted more on the mainland as an attractive way to experience Rathlin. It could also be jointly ticketed with the Ferry fare. There may also be a case for discouraging visitors from bringing their bikes on the Ferry, not least, because it is depriving the island of some income.*

ACCOMMODATION

The Manor House Guesthouse

- 2.37 The Manor House Guesthouse is an 18th century Georgian building which is now owned by the National Trust. It is perfectly located right at the harbour and is a highly visible landmark for the island (even from the mainland on a clear day).
- 2.38 Depending on what information is consulted, it has 10, 11 or 12 bedrooms and 18-20 beds. Five rooms have en suite facilities. In 2004, it achieved room occupancy of 47% (compared with an average of around 60% in Northern Ireland as a whole). It closed in November 2004 and will reopen in May 2005 under National Trust Management with the intention of leasing to an operator in subsequent years.

The Soerneog View Hostel

- 2.39 This Hostel overlooks Mill Bay and is a ten-minute walk from the harbour. It has one double bedroom and two with twin (bunk) beds. The owners provide courtesy transport to and from the harbour. It opened in 1998 and has consistently attracted 500-550 bed-nights per year. It also experienced an increase in the average length of stay from 1.4 in the first two years to 1.7 in the next three but this appears to have dropped slightly in the last two years.

The Rathlin Guest House,

- 2.40 This longstanding and popular guesthouse is close to the harbour, has 1 double bedroom, 2 twins and a single. During the summer, it regularly gets 4-5 guests per night and the owner has observed an increase in business and enquiries during recent winters, especially for the Christmas and New Year period. There has been a drop in the number of guests from Northern Ireland but recent growth in visitors from England and mainland Europe. The Guest House also has a number of regular visitors, especially those interested in bird watching. It is currently closed due to illness.

The Coolnagrock B&B

- 2.41 Coolnagrock B&B is located about a 15 minute walk from the harbour, most of it on a track rather than a road. However, it is in an outstanding location and has first class facilities. It has 3 rooms, including one double and a twin. It is usually only open to guests at weekends. In 2004, after its registration in June, it had 50 entries in its visitor book.

The Kinramer Cottage Camping Barn

- 2.42 This camping barn, one of a network of 5 in North Antrim, has space for 14 people in two rooms, but only for 8 in the summer when one of the rooms is allocated to RSPB volunteers. It opened in 2001 and has achieved bed occupancy of around 1,200 each year (including some camping). The guests are a mixture of international budget back packers, contract workers on the island, birdwatchers, artists/musicians, and event participants.

Self-catering

- 2.43 Self catering provision on Rathlin currently consists of two registered properties. The Pound House (attached to the village hall) is fairly well booked already for the summer (with a long lease from the end of January to the end of June). It has six bed-spaces. Business is not difficult to get and there are a lot of repeat bookings. The owner has experienced evidence of latent demand.
- 2.44 The other property is owned by Loughie McCuaig but is regarded more as a

cottage for the family than one readily available for self-catering tourists. It has no bookings yet for this year (as at February). It has four bed-spaces in two bedrooms, with further fold out space available in the lounge. It is located high above Church Bay and has spectacular views south. The owner is interested in developing a timber chalet on the site of this cottage and possibly more on adjacent land.

- 2.45 **Second Homes** now almost certainly exist on Rathlin, following recent housing development, but it is unknown how many are let out on a self-catering basis directly by the owners.
- 2.46 There are a number of **Static Caravans** (at least 20) scattered about Rathlin, many of which are not in keeping with the attractiveness of the countryside.

Camping

- 2.47 Camping takes place officially at Kinramer but unofficially near the Church Bay toilets and other “fly camping” sites
- 2.48 ***Evaluation:** The quality of accommodation is generally very good but with only around 60 bed spaces (excluding camping and caravans) there is nowhere near enough to support the development of tourism. B&B and self-catering establishments are in particular short supply.*

VISITOR SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Information Services

- 2.49 Tourist information services for Rathlin are the responsibility of Moyle District Council. Its main Tourist Information Centre (TIC) is at the Giant’s Causeway. In its racks in January 2005, it had copies of the Moyle Accommodation Guide which refers to the “rugged beauty of Rathlin Island” in its list of six magnificent attractions of Moyle. The same guide also features the Manor House, the Soerneog View Hostel and the Rathlin Guest House. The racks at the Causeway TIC also had copies of the “Rathlin Island...hidden treasure” fold-out and the winter timetable for the Ferry. Moyle District Council’s TIC in Ballycastle, in January 2005, also had copies available of the fold-out on Rathlin, the Ferry leaflet, Causeway Coast and Glens pocket guide (which features Rathlin) and had two books on Rathlin for sale.
- 2.50 The Calmac office in Ballycastle has a small information rack and the Boat House visitor centre on the island carries a range of information leaflets. Staff at the visitor centre are a mine of information and often have time to provide excellent face-to-face advice.

Signage

- 2.51 Signage on the island is very poor. At the harbour, there are two crude signs, one to “Toilets and the Boat House Information centre” and the other to “St Thomas’s Church of Ireland and St Mary’s Catholic Church”. The wall at the back of the harbour also has an interpretive panel on the island. At the eastern end of the entry to the harbour area, there is a sign indicating that “McCuaig’s Bar Restaurant and Café” are 150 yards away. SUSTRANS is currently working with the Community Association and Roads Services to provide new signs on the island. This initiative which is supported by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust under the NRRTI Programme is now underway.

The Boat House Visitor Centre

- 2.52 The Boat House is an important Rathlin building which has been renovated to form an attractive visitor centre. It opened in 1994 and is now operated by Moyle District Council, in association with a local community steering group. There are attractive permanent displays on the history, folklore and geology of Rathlin and also temporary display space. It provides good guidance for visitors who want to do some more exploring of the island, and also an opportunity to purchase unique gifts.
- 2.53 Moyle Council sees the Boat House as having a dual role as follows:
- (1) *Services to the Visitor:*
- First point of contact on arrival on island
 - Exhibition tells about the social, economic & environmental history of the island
 - The visitor has an opportunity to chat to local people
 - Provides general tourist information on other services & facilities on the island
 - Small retail outlet
- (2) *Services to the Local Community:*
- Provides seasonal employment
 - Provides opportunity for locals to display historical artefacts
 - Provides small retail outlet for locally produced items
 - Gives local people a central point of contact with visitors for research purposes.
- 2.54 The Boathouse opens seven days a week from 1st May until the end of August, from 11am to 4pm and is run by 2 part-time seasonal staff employed by the Council. Depending on the number of people coming to the island, it sometimes opens in September as well and usually during the Easter holidays.
- 2.55 Recent Boathouse visitor numbers have been:
- 2002 (according to NITB survey) = 4,500 visitors.
 - April 2003 – Sept 2003 (includes Easter opening & part of September) = 7435
 - April 2004 – August 2004 (includes Easter opening) = 7601

The West Light Viewpoint

- 2.56 The West Light Viewpoint has been operated by RSPB since 1989. The Lighthouse is owned by the Commission for Irish Lights and RSPB has a 20 year lease of access to the outside viewing platform.
- 2.57 The lighthouse was de-manned in 1984 and fenced off until the RSPB received permission in 1989 to escort birdwatchers on to the viewpoint. The RSPB has now been offered the opportunity of a long-term lease of one large room that it will develop into a space for visitors, with interpretation and more comfort. As part of this, RSPB has budgeted for the provision of a toilet block on the road. RSPB have been offered assistance under NRRTI to progress this initiative.

- 2.58 There are also six bedrooms and a kitchen at the west lighthouse that may become available at some time in the future. As a longer-term improvement, these have great potential as specialist overnight observation accommodation for keen birdwatchers.

McCuaig's Bar and Bruce's Kitchen

- 2.59 McCuaig's bar serves as an important social centre for residents and visitors, but it is not obvious as a bar within the local built environment. Its prominence needs to be improved by some external treatment/signage to make it stand out from other buildings and to give it more of a traditional appearance. **Bruce's Kitchen**, which is part of the bar building, is usually referred to as a Tea Room, rather than a restaurant. This is probably a true reflection of its ability to offer snacks and a small range of main meals. It has a good internal space that is adaptable to a range of uses including functions and events.

Brockley Tea Room

- 2.60 The Brockley Tea Room in the Manor House is also usually open to visitors, but closed at the time of the study. In addition, some tea and snacks were available to visitors last summer, on an informal basis, in one resident's front garden. Other residents have tried out the idea of offering teas and snacks to visitors but are deterred by the hygiene regulations and the need to replace whole kitchens.

Craft Workshops

- 2.61 The two Craft Workshops located adjacent to the Manor House were developed by the Rathlin Co-operative Society with funding assistance from the Rural Development Council. They are performing an important function in the development of arts and crafts amongst the local community, not least in the production of goods for sale. However, due to health and safety regulations, visitors cannot visit these workshops and watch the crafts people at work.

The Village Hall

- 2.62 The Village Hall (or Parochial Hall) has capacity for up to 120 people. It is used for a wide range of community activities, including keep fit, card games, amateur dramatics and film nights. It also serves as a venue for other events that attract visitors (eg. for workshops during the piping festival)

The Richard Branson Activity Centre

- 2.63 Built in 1990, this was used for many years as the headquarters of the diving school. Now that this use has ceased, the Rathlin Community Development Association has obtained funding to convert the ground floor into a day care activity centre. No definite use has been proposed for the former accommodation area upstairs, but suggestions include workshops, studios and self-catering apartments.

Play area for children

- 2.64 A small Play Area is located east of the harbour and is sure to be an attraction to younger visitors. However, it is a fairly standard facility and no better than they might be able to experience elsewhere.

Toilets and Shelter

- 2.65 The existing Toilet Block and Shelter is located on the shore road between Church Bay and Mill Bay. While these are reasonably good quality facilities, their location is not ideal for harbour visitors and users. Moyle District Council has plans to build new toilets nearer the harbour.

The Shop

- 2.66 The Shop serves its purpose in a difficult commercial environment. There are not too many sustainable retail ventures with a permanent catchment population of less than 100. It provides a range of foodstuffs and other goods and its window is the community notice board
- 2.67 The former antiques shop opposite the school is now closed but may be converted in the near future into a crafts retail outlet.
- 2.68 ***Evaluation:** As with the shop, many of the facilities are of a scale and standard that can be supported by such a small local population. Improvements would only be achievable if there is an increase in the resident population all year round and an increase in business from tourism.*

The Island

- 2.69 The Island itself is a major natural resource for tourism because it presents a different way of life to experience. From the mainland, on a good sunny day, it looks inviting and stimulates interest in going to see what is actually out there. Then, there is the thrill of getting there and, once there, the feelings of remoteness, being cut-off and escapism. It offers a very valuable tourism commodity these days - peace and quiet.
- 2.70 ***Evaluation:** There may not be enough effort at the moment to build up curiosity about Rathlin. The foldout “Rathlin Island...a hidden treasure” is good but there is no mention of it in the text of the section on Landscapes and Seascapes in the CCAG Visitor Guide for 2005 (although there is a small photograph). It is, however, referred to later as not to be missed by “dedicated naturalists”. It is, therefore, promoted more as a special interest destination than one of outstanding beauty.*

The Sea

- 2.80 The Sea is also an important natural feature enjoyed by tourists, perhaps quite simply as providing an enjoyable view, a spectacular sunset or a feeling of awe at its power as it smashes into the shoreline. It is also important as the source of activities enjoyed by visitors including boating, angling and diving.
- 2.90 The attractiveness of the **diving waters** is based on the presence of around 40 wrecks, a number of reefs, submerged caves and a richness of underwater life. However, the dive centre that operated from the harbour area is now closed and the main diving activity is organised by Aquaholics, a company operating out of Portstewart. Some divers also come in on their own dinghies.
- 2.91 Aquaholics caters for all levels of divers. RIB trips are organised for experienced divers out into the wrecks and other places of interests in the Rathlin waters. Courses for learners and “discover scuba” sessions are also available. Trips out to the Rathlin area are available on most days, weather permitting, but mainly at weekends in the winter and virtually any day between March and October.
- 2.92 There has been some growth in demand for diving in recent years but not a great deal. Aquaholics’ main markets are Ireland, England and a few Europeans. There is believed to be great potential for growth but pricing is difficult, as is competing with places like the Red Sea. Dutch and German groups would be a major market but they have not really discovered this area yet. The foreigners who do dive are on a general holiday rather than on a specific trip to Rathlin diving.
- 2.93 Most Aquaholics dive groups go ashore at Rathlin because they do two dives a day with a rest/relaxation time in between. Some divers stay overnight on the island.
- 2.94 Sea Trek also does diving trips out of Ballycastle and there is a new experienced

guide for this year. These trips are not publicised a great deal and depend mostly on word-of-mouth. There is a lot of repeat business, which is incremental (e.g. 4 come one year and bring 12 the next year).

- 2.95 There does not appear to be great deal of demand for **sea angling** from Rathlin. There is one 32 ft wooden half-decker available for hire but take-up has not been great in recent years. At one time, it would take out angling groups every two weeks but recently it is less seldom.
- 2.96 The boat is available at weekends most of the time and some weekdays in the summer. It has capacity for 8–10 sea anglers but probably carried fewer than 30 last year (many of whom were regular customers). The charge is £100 per day for six hours. The operator is also finding it less attractive to be involved, due to other work commitments, increasing regulations and the need to do more work on his boat.
- 2.97 Two boats, operating out of Ballycastle, take sea anglers out into the Rathlin waters. They are cheaper to hire than the Rathlin boat. Shore angling is also available on Rathlin but users report competition from seals.
- 2.98 ***Evaluation:** The amount of sea-based activity on offer to visitors is really quite limited on Rathlin. The burdens of insurance and regulations are given as reasons for this. There does not appear to be a great deal of potential for sea angling becoming a more important part of the island’s tourism. Its best prospect is as an add-on activity to other visits (e.g. courses and events).*

The Coast

- 2.99 The Coast is also the source of spectacular views (sea cliffs, views out) and is attractive to visitors as the home of the island’s main population of bird life.
- 2.100 ***Evaluation:** As with the paths, more could be made of specific viewpoints, with some sensitive interpretation and seating. Safety, of course, would have to be a major consideration in any such provision.*

The Landscape

- 2.101 The Landscape of Rathlin is predominantly moorland or heathland and it does much to create the wild and rugged scenery. It presents a feeling of desolation at some times of the year, but is also a source of great interest to botanists
- 2.103 A feature of interest is Rathlin’s “causeway landscape”. Basaltic columns similar to the Giant’s Causeway can be seen on the road to Rue Point and just at the start of the Ballyconagan Trail.
- 2.104 The working farms also contribute to the Rathlin landscape with expanses of improved grasslands for grazing cattle (black and furry) and sheep.
- 2.105 The landscape can be enjoyed by walkers on those paths that are accessible and also by means of **guided walks**. However, these are fairly thin on the ground. Paul Quinn, who is based in Coleraine, leads groups around Rathlin on a spare time basis. He started in 2004, with his own leaflet, and for two weekends met people as they came off the boat. He offered them a guided walk for £3 per person.
- 2.106 The walks on offer avoid rough ground. The first goes from the harbour to Mill Bay to look at the seals, then back up to the Standing Stone and over to the Churches. The second is more off the beaten track and does the Ballyconagan Trails. Other options are also available.
- 2.107 Paul Quinn was not encouraged by take-up last year but is trying a new approach in 2005, whereby the leaflet will be distributed through the two main TICs and the

Calmac office, the webpage will be changed and booking will be in advance rather than having to rely on picking up business as the Ferry arrives.

- 2.108 **Evaluation:** *There is potential for visitors to get more enjoyment out of the landscape of Rathlin but lack of access is a problem. To some extent, the landscape is also blighted by scrap cars and the island's waste disposal. Both are common problems with islands but should not be allowed to detract from the attractiveness of the landscape for locals and visitors.*

The Inland Water Bodies

- 2.109 These consist primarily of a number of small loughs, the most notable being Ushet Lough, the venue for model yacht racing throughout Spring and Summer. Ushet is also a trout lough which is stocked on a five yearly basis and is a private fishery not currently available to visitors. Claggan Lough is not stocked with trout because it has a natural breeding cycle and is also a private fishery. Kebble is another small lough on the island and is managed as part of the National Nature Reserve as a wildlife habitat.
- 2.110 **Evaluation:** *Lack of access restricts the potential of these small loughs for game angling by visitors. In addition, there are better opportunities on the mainland and they are not regarded as main tourism assets, apart from Ushet as the model yacht venue.*

Wildlife

- 2.111 The wildlife on Rathlin is a star attraction, especially the birds, seals and hares. The island is the breeding ground for over 250,000 seabirds, including puffins, guillemots, razorbill, kittiwakes and fulmars. They are of most interest to visitors during their noisiest and active time in the nesting season between April and August. The main viewing point is at the West Lighthouse, four miles from the harbour, where a small visitor centre is run by RSPB. It attracted 8,907 visits in 2004, which is at least 50% of the number of visits to the island.
- 2.112 The experience of the visit is dominated by the birds but complemented by the viewing platform, free access to telescopes and binoculars, discussions with volunteers (1 to 4 at any one time) and a small shed that acts as the visitor centre. There are no toilets for visitors. This deficiency is being addressed with the support of Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust under the NRRTI Programme.
- 2.113 The increase in visits has been influenced by special promotional activity of the RSPB, with specific days highlighted as “events” and extra publicity.
- 2.114 Inland, the heathlands and grasslands are popular habitats for lapwing and the occasional corncrake etc
- 2.115 The seal colonies are also an attraction to visitors, not least because they are there all year round and can be seen close up.
- 2.116 The Irish hare is also abundant on the island and is significant because it is a priority conservation species in N Ireland.
- 2.117 **Evaluation:** *There is considerable potential to attract more visitors to enjoy the wildlife of Rathlin but the current state of the infrastructure inhibits this to a significant extent.*

The Three Lighthouses

- 2.118 The three lighthouses have an important role in the island's tourism because they are destinations for excursions (in the minivan, bus, on foot, by bike). They present the challenge “to do the three lighthouses” as part of the visit and they offer excellent

photo opportunities.

- 2.119 **The East Lighthouse** started operating on 1st November 1856. It will be 150 years old next year. The path to it provides spectacular views out over to the Mull of Kintyre. Unfortunately, visitors are currently not allowed to enter its grounds. One of its outbuildings is being refurbished at the moment. There is also a substantial residential block that is no longer in use. It has been suggested that it might be handed over for a form of community use.
- 2.120 The East Lighthouse is also the site of a significant event in history: the first commercial radio transmission. Marconi's assistant George Kemp transmitted from there over to Ballycastle on 6th July 1898. The Community Association marked this in 1998 with a plaque on one of the walls in the lighthouse grounds, but this has disappeared.
- 2.121 **The West Lighthouse** was brought into operation on 10th March 1919. It is distinctive as the “upside-down” lighthouse and the vast area of concrete that had to be laid for its construction make it a spectacle of engineering in its own right. It is also significant as providing the main viewpoint for the seabird colonies.
- 2.122 Visitors have access to the viewpoint and small visitor centre by way of steps down from the road. This means that it is not accessible to people with mobility difficulties.
- 2.123 The Commissioners of Irish Lights have offered to lease space in the lighthouse building to RSPB and, as described earlier, there are current plans to provide a much better visitor centre inside. There are also plans to build a toilet block up at the roadside.
- 2.124 **The Rue Lighthouse**, in its current form, started operating in 1917. No visitor arrangements can be made to the lighthouse, as waves tend to break over the structure during storms.
- 2.125 ***Evaluation:** The lighthouses have the potential to play a greater role in the island's tourism, especially if some of the redundant space/buildings can be converted into self-catering accommodation. The West Lighthouse, in particular offers great potential as an overnight spot for bird-watching visitors. The East Light has space that could be converted for tourism-related uses and there is a local interest in providing guided tours there. All three present merchandising opportunities as images of the visit to Rathlin.*

Events

- 2.126 For a settlement of fewer than 100 people the island supports a remarkable number of events which must take considerable time and energy to organise. Events on Rathlin formed a substantial part of the Moyle District Council's “Events Guide 2004”. Those featuring in the publication are marked by (*) below:
- **Aren't Birds Brilliant – Plenty of Puffins** (*) is billed as a summer-long event staged by RSPB, starting in the first week of April. It is primarily aimed at getting more people to visit and it has been successful in doing so. Good promotional activity at certain times has also helped (e.g. this is the last weekend to see the birds before they leave)
 - **Rathlin Viewpoint Open Day** (*) is a day at the beginning of May for family-friendly visits run by RSPB. On that weekend in 2004, the number of ferry passengers was 422, compared with 151 on the previous weekend in April and 266 on the next weekend in May.

- **Wilds N Wonders of Rathlin Island** (*) was a May weekend at the Manor House to discover the nature and wildlife of Rathlin and to take part in Raku Firing, Japanese pottery techniques.
- **Model Boat Racing** on Ushet Lough started around a hundred years ago and, after a 30-year gap, has started up again in recent years. The participants are local but the event is of unique interest to visitors.
- **Birds, Rocks and Flowers: Rathlin Island** (*) is another special RSPB event but it is run by the Lisburn members group (and is not for general visitors). However, it demonstrates the potential to attract more special interest groups of this type.
- **“Rathlin Past”** was a historical exhibition set up by the Public Records Office in the Boat House Visitor Centre for 3 months from June 2004
- **“An Leabhar Mor”** was a visual arts exhibition staged at about the same time in 2004.
- **Rathlin Festival Week** (*) takes place in mid July. It includes model yacht races at either end of the week, angling competitions (senior and junior), ceilis and amateur dramatics. It attracts family members back home.
- **The Jig in the Rigs Music Festival** is staged on farmland on the western part of the island over the last weekend of July/early August every year. It attracts an audience of around 1,000, most of whom camp at the site. The artists play for nothing and there is no entry charge although run more as a private event. However, the local community benefits from increased trade.
- **Rathlin Airs – A Centenary of Piping** (*) ran between 29 July and 2 August 2004. The main activity took place in a marquee in front of McCuaig’s Pub. Evening performances attracted 80 -120 per night. This is known to have the potential to be a much larger event but the ferry capacity and limited accommodation are constraints.
- **West Light Open Weekend on Rathlin Island** (*) is another RSPB event at the end of July
- **Rathlin Sports Day** (*) takes place in the first week of August
- **Around Rathlin Boat Challenge** (*) was a mid August event that was held in 2003. The intention was to have timed events around the island for RIBS and yachts, treasure hunt by sea and other fun activities. However, problems with insurance meant that it turned out to be a cruise rather than a race. In spite of the poor weather, it attracted 60 participants in 6-7 yachts and 12-14 RIBS. It has the potential to become a good annual event but the issue of insurance has to be resolved.
- **A Sculpture Symposium** was held on the island for 13 days in August 2003. It had 13 guest artists and attracted 8-10 community members. There were 20-30 public demonstrations during the 13 days.
- **Run Rathlin Run** (*) is an August/early September 10 mile road and cross-country run that has been held for the past three years. It gets about 250 applicants a year and around 180 eventually turn up. The current organisers, Belfast Activity Centre, have been experiencing increasing difficulty with the inflexibility and capacity of the Ferry.

About 30% of the runners stay overnight on Rathlin (many in tents) and 10 of the main organisers stay 2 or 3 nights. Another 35 organisers come over for the

day and stay overnight, if accommodation is available.

The run has been sponsored by the National Lottery for the past 2 years but there is some doubt as to whether it will be held this year, because no funding is guaranteed.

- **Let Me Take You To the Island** (*) is a 3-day festival of writing held on the second weekend in September every year. It includes poetry, prose, short story, script writing for stage and song writing. It has been organised for the past 7 years by The Ballycastle Writers Group and is offered as a package for up to 85 participants
- **Rathlin Island Writers Residences** involved a 6-week writer in residence placement for two poets last September. They spent 5 hours per week giving tutorials on creative writing. There was great community support and a literary evening at the end in St Thomas' Church. As a result, the Rathlin Writers Group was set up and members are writing pieces for www.cultureni.org website.
- **Rathlin Community Film Club** is involved in monthly film screenings, mainly for the community but visitors are very welcome.
- **The Rathlin Crafts Programme** is an ongoing event that ran for 22 weekends in 2004. The activities are managed by the Rathlin Cooperative Society with workshops, demonstrations etc. facilitated by external tutors. This has the potential to attract special interest tourists. So far, the focus has been on ceramics, silversmithing and jewellery design with continuous community workshops and also craft demonstrations and exhibitions open to the general public.

- 2.127 **Arts on Rathlin** is an initiative launched in 2003 to develop the arts, crafts and culture on the island. It has been involved in most of the arts-related events listed above, including the crafts programme and is committed to assist the Rathlin Island Co-operative Society to promote the regeneration of Rathlin through sustainable development of the arts, crafts and culture. An Arts Development Co-ordinator, Dessima Connolly plays the lead role in pursuing the aims of the initiative, especially in encouraging community involvement and external support.
- 2.128 **Local Tradition** is strong in Rathlin, with much emphasis on music and dance at local ceilis and an active interest in amateur dramatics (two shows per year on the island). There is also a great story telling tradition which could be further developed for tourism.
- 2.129 **Professional crafts** are beginning to develop on the island. There are currently four main practitioners, specialising in pottery, silver jewellery, woodcarving and furniture. In addition, the making of brooches has developed as a leisure activity within the community.
- 2.130 **Associations** (the Children of Lir, Columcille, Sorley Boy McDonnell, Robert the Bruce, Marconi, Richard Branson, Mary and Frances Black, Angela Feeney,)
- 2.131 *Evaluation: Many events already take place on the island over the year. Some have been more successful than others. Also, as shown above, there are other arts-related activities and more traditional local "happenings" that need to be promoted as part of the attractiveness of the island's cultural heritage. It would help if these were co-ordinated into a Rathlin Island Events Programme publication, so that visits can be planned and visitors are aware of what is happening when they are in the region.*

2.132 There are a number of improvements to visitor services and facilities that are needed now to support the development of tourism, including:

- *a permanent display on the mainland giving information about Rathlin (e.g. an information board at the harbour, a dedicated space in the new Causeway Centre, a panel in the Ballycastle TIC)*
- *a serious improvement to signage on the island (and brown signs on the mainland- Now underway)*
- *greater effort to get people to go to the Boat House, as an introductory part of their visit*
- *encouragement of improvements to the West Viewpoint (including the achievement of its longer-term potential- Now underway)*
- *actions to make McCuaig's Bar more of a landmark and an attraction for visitors.*
- *encouragement of a wider choice of eating opportunities (more places where visitors can have tea and snacks and more restaurant services)*
- *provision of new toilets at the harbour, possibly as the first phase of a shelter or waiting space for ferry passengers, which might include retailing and catering outlets*
- *development of more opportunities for the sale of arts and crafts made on the island and also a wider range of branded merchandise*

2.133 The critical requirement, however, for the improvement to visitor services is more customers and more providers. Rathlin tourism needs more people to come and live as residents on the island to support certain basic facilities that serve tourists as well (e.g. the shop, the hall, eating places, etc). In addition, as well as needing a significant increase in visitors, the island needs more people who are prepared to serve tourists (i.e. more individuals, businesses and ventures catering for tourist needs).

CHAPTER 3

AUDIT OF THE NATURAL, BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE – SIGNIFICANCE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- 3.1 This section examines in more detail those natural, built and cultural heritage features of Rathlin, and examines both the role they play or could play in attracting visitors, and their sensitivity to human activities.
- 3.2 For a very small island, Rathlin has an outstanding range of natural, built, and landscape features; in some respects the island packs in more wildlife, scenery, and human history to support sustainable tourism than is normally seen in much larger tracts of countryside. Much of this is because agriculture and human settlement on the island has progressed less rapidly and disastrously compared with other parts of Northern Ireland and further afield. As a result the landscape is diverse and relatively natural in appearance; many areas abound in wildflowers; the island (even without its seabirds) is a fascinating place for birders and this wildlife interest is supplemented by large numbers of hares and seals – the latter offering stunning views in the harbour area. Cetacean watching (whales, dolphins and porpoises etc) is also a key point of interest on the island. There are many archaeological sites although a large proportion is discernable only to experts.
- 3.3. The audit of the islands heritage reveals that there are
- 4 Areas of Special Scientific Interest
 - 1 proposed Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive
 - 1 Special Protection Area for Birds under the EU Birds Directive
 - 1 National Nature Reserve
 - 1 Forest Nature Reserve
 - 3 mesotrophic lakes
 - Around 60 historic monuments
 - 3 listed buildings
 -
- 3.3 Outline details of these important designated sites area as follows:

Designation	Name	Area (ha.)	Main features of interest
ASSI	Ballycarry (NE of the island)	43	Dry Heath. Heath and wetland plant community of considerable interest and at its most northerly known location. Vegetation over much of the area dominated by Heather, Bell Heather and Western Gorse in a dwarf heath community. Also maritime species- Sea pink, Sea plantain and Sea Campion. Poorly drained areas contain Cross leaved heath, Purple Moor Grass and Bog Ashpodel. Small flooded hollows contain interesting wetland plant assemblages.
ASSI	Rathlin Coast	257	Designated for its breeding sea bird assemblage on sea cliffs and vegetated slopes. Internationally important numbers of Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Guillemots. Also Northern Ireland's largest puffin colony and a breeding colony of Manx Shearwater. Important site for Chough. Salt marshes towards south and east Rathlin coast. Important numbers of raptors.

Designation	Name	Area (ha.)	Main features of interest
ASSI	Kinramer South (Upper End)	25	Only site in NI for Pyramidal Bugle Orchid and rare in UK and Ireland. Depends on unimproved acid pasture, at the base of basalt rock outcrops.
ASSI	Ballygill North (Upper End)	78	Complex of heath and associated habitats with Heather, Bell Heather, and Western Gorse on the drier areas and Cross leaved heath, Purple Moor Grass and Mat Grass within depressions with impeded drainage. Wetter slopes dominated by sedges and wetter hollows contain bogbean, Bog pondweed and Marsh Cinquefoil.
Special Protection Area for Birds	Rathlin	3344	Area of coastline and sea supporting internationally important species such as peregrine Falcon, Chough, Kittiwake, Guillemot and Razorbill. Also qualifies on the grounds of supporting a population of over 20,000 breeding sea birds with a complete census in 1985 identifying over 65,000 breeding seabirds. Regularly supports a breeding population of Manx Shearwater.
Special Areas of Conservation (proposed)	Rathlin	3344	Designated for underwater reefs, vegetated sea cliffs and submerged or partially submerged sea caves, all of which support their own particular assemblages of flora and fauna. Of interest on the reefs are sea cucumber, sponges, soft coral and red algae. Vegetated cliffs are of interest for Juniper, Scots Lovage and Red Fescue whilst the sea caves support sponges, anemone and breeding grey seal.
NNR	Kebble		Kebble National Nature Reserve protects the cliffs at the western end of Rathlin and an area of moorland and lake. The cliffs are important for breeding seabirds as documented above in the SPA and SAC designation, with seals hauling out at the foot of the cliffs on the rocky foreshore. The rough grassland and heather support orchids and a range of flowering plants. The wet areas attract nesting waterfowl such as ducks, snipe, grebes and coots and provide grazing for rabbits and hares. The lough at Kebble is managed as a wildlife habitat, and is one of the best sites on the island for breeding lapwing.
Forest Nature Reserve	Kinramer		A state forest plantation without commercial prospects and which is now managed as a forest nature reserve. The mix of coniferous and deciduous woodland provides shelter for small passerines.

- 3.4 Loughnanskan, Ally Lough and Ushet Lough are all mesotrophic lakes, that is characterised by having a middle level of nutrients between nutrient poor (oligotrophic) and nutrient rich (eutrophic). Mesotrophic lakes potentially have the highest plant diversity of any lake type. Furthermore, relative to other lake types, they contain a higher proportion of nationally scarce and rare aquatic plants. This is an increasingly rare type of lake in Northern Ireland because the nutrient status of many is being increased through input of water from agricultural land that has had applications of fertilizers and slurry.
- 3.5 Rathlin provides some of the best sightings in NI for pods of Harbour Porpoise, Bottlenose, Common and Risso's Dolphin and minke whales. Great views on calm seas can be had from the west lighthouse, Ballyconaghan and potentially the East lighthouse, even the boat trip over allows sightings. There are two seal species found on Rathlin, Grey and Harbour. There are only small numbers of grey seals which are said to use sea cliffs to breed, though little evidence of this has been

seen, and Harbour seals which can be seen in good numbers especially at the harbour and church bay.

- 3.6 In the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Study Rathlin was identified within a single landscape character area referred to as the Causeway Coast and Rathlin Island. This area is characterised by the stepped profile and rocky knolls of the Middle Basalt and includes basaltic columns, sea stacks, and needles. Particularly striking is the contrast between the black basalt and white chalk cliffs. Rathlin is an exposed landscape with a rich archaeological heritage.
- 3.7 The 60 + historic monuments on the island have been itemised in the appendix to this report. They fall into three main bands or periods of interest
- Prehistoric sites - the island is very rich in prehistoric finds including a few standing stone in Church Bay, and the porcellanite workings at Brockley. The stone was mined to make axes and the workings can still be seen in the side of the hill.
 - The Medieval - with the main interest being Bruce's Castle which has just a few remaining walls but with a stunning setting on a cliff-top with fine views to Kintyre and Fairhead. The site is associated with the visit of Bruce in 1307 with the famous spider, to the struggles between the Scots / Ulstermen and English in the 16th century (featuring siege, plunder, shipwreck and battles)
 - Later sites - these include sites associated with the kelp industry, with the most notable being the kelp store in Church Bay. There are also around 80 kelp kilns on the island and landing places around Mill Bay (nausts)
 - Caves around Rathlin are also of historic interest having provided places of refuge in various battles and being strongly associated with myths legends and stories about the island.
- 3.8 Rathlin also has more recent historic and listed buildings which include the Manor House, the three lighthouses, the Kelp Store and the Smugglers House at Ushet Port. Full details of the audit appear in the appendices.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE FOR TOURISM

- 3.9 Rathlin's most striking single heritage feature from May to the end of July are the seabirds breeding most notably at the western end of the island, but also along the north cliffs of the island. These are not so much dependent on land use on the island, but on the condition of the seas around the island, the birds being dependent on these areas for feeding and rearing their newly fledged young.
- 3.10 It is important to stress that whilst all the above features present important opportunities for the development of sustainable tourism on Rathlin, many of them are relatively fragile and need monitoring and regular evaluation to avoid the loss of the very resources that could support a growing tourism economy. Moreover, in the case of designated sites, both under Northern Ireland legislation and EU Directives, there is a legal requirement to maintain the conservation features for which the sites were designated. All activities and developments within or affecting such sites are subject to this legislation, even where they are regarded as being of overriding national interest.

- 3.11 In identifying the features which have potential for tourism development on Rathlin Island, several points have been considered:
- The features need to make Rathlin outstanding compared with the many other ‘competitor’ islands around the Scottish and Irish coasts; they need to be unique or better than seen elsewhere
 - Features relevant to tourism need to be sufficiently robust or immune to visitor pressure, in such a way that neither the designated features of the island, nor its wider heritage are endangered.
 - Features need to be amenable to promotion and delivery by the island community (thereby supporting employment), as well as exciting the imagination of those who have yet to visit Rathlin.
 - Features need to either be accessible because of a managing owner/organisation’s policy or preferences, or significantly visible and appreciable without intruding on private property
- 3.12 The number of features is too great to list within the text of the report and has been set out in tables in Appendix IV. Each feature has been assessed for its potential to contribute to sustainable tourism and has been given a grading on a four point scale of
- **unique** – of considerable interest to visitors
 - Capable of providing an **attraction**
 - Of **local** interest
 - Of **esoteric** or limited interest
- 3.13 Only the most important heritage features of the island that have the potential to contribute to tourism are set out here, i.e. those that are considered by the study team to be unique or to be capable of providing an attraction to visitors. Where appropriate, advantages/disadvantages, and management or monitoring requirements are summarised.

Features:

- 3.14 **Breeding seabird cliffs at west light** (Grade: Unique): The seabird cliffs and stacks (owned by EHS) supporting thousands of raucous guillemots, razorbills, kittiwake, fulmars and notably the popular puffin are, from May to end of July, Rathlin’s most compelling selling point; even outside the breeding season the spectacular cliffs astound visitors. There are many cliffs in the British Isles supporting large numbers of seabirds, but it can be argued that nowhere is there such a dramatic place to see them.
- a. The RSPB platform at the west light overlooks these and provides the only really safe and practical way to see the site, and interpretation and RSPB staff ensure that visitors are well briefed on the birds and their lives. RSPB plans to develop this facility in the coming year (2005).
 - b. The success of the seabirds depends on a range of factors, many outside the remit of Rathlin, but those that are relevant to this study include security from pollution and maritime accidents in the busy shipping lanes nearby, freedom from disturbance in the areas immediately adjacent to the cliff bases, and no climbing on the cliffs in the breeding season.
 - c. Access to the area is most normally achieved by walking or bus along the road, but some people obtain boat trips around the base of the cliffs. As the site is the most distant from the harbour, some visitors to see the birds are somewhat frustrated by fears that they will not get back in time to use the

ferry

- d. A further attraction accessible from this site are EHS lands at Kinramer North and South with a rich spring and summer flora and the possibility of guided walks.

3.15 **Seabirds and north cliffs, and other land-based wildlife** (Grade: Attraction): Other cliffs along the north coast of the island (including the RSPB north cliffs) are highly spectacular, but the topography and absence of viewing platforms makes them less visible, although just as easily seen by sea as the west light birds. One of the best viewing areas is from National Trust's Ballyconaghan, which commands outstanding views of the cliffs (this site is discussed further below). The attraction of seeing other wildlife would help to extend the wildlife season beyond the rather restricting three months theoretically imposed by the seabird breeding season. This wildlife includes:

- a. A rich range of wildflowers (e.g. large numbers of the rare pyramidal bugle),
- b. Irish hares in abundance throughout the island, best seen in early morning but present at all times
- c. Birds like buzzard, peregrine, and in time possibly chough and corncrake, both of which are tourist attractions elsewhere.
- d. EHS, RSPB, and the National Trust all provide some interpretation of these features, but it is relatively limited, and there may be opportunity for island-based guides to show people around explaining and pointing out the wildlife.
- e. Access to much of this wildlife is relatively easy, and within close proximity to Church Bay. For those walking or bussing further, there is ample opportunity to see many of these features in the right seasons
- f. For issues affecting the maintenance of these features see *Appendix*

3.16 **Sea mammals and basking sharks** (Grade: Attraction): Most sea mammals will attract visitors if their attention is drawn to them, and there is an increasing interest in seeing seals, porpoises and dolphins. Whale watching has become a feature of some Scottish and Irish tourism businesses. Basking sharks will also, to some extent, though they are less familiar. Their presence is unpredictable though Rathlin is one of the best sites around the coast of Northern Ireland for sightings of pods of harbour porpoise, bottle nose common and rissos dolphin and minke whales. The Grey and common seals which are readily visible from (and within) the harbour, and around many other places in Church Bay are a highly attractive feature of the island, and emerged as an attraction to the island in their own right in the visitor survey.

- a. Information on the seals, on good sites for watching cetaceans and on cetatean recognition, could be provided in the facilities in the Manor House, the Boat House, the West Light and by the different organisations, as well as at the ferry slipway. No other particular access is needed through cetacean and seal watching guided tours could be offered.
- a. If the island is to retain this attraction, considerable effort should be made to avoid disturbance, either from land-based walkers and dogs, as well as from boats; seals are known to be subject to disturbance and this has caused concern in a number of places, e.g. Strangford Lough.

3.16 **Sea caves and reefs, wrecks** (Grade: Attraction): The underwater habitats around the island are exceptionally rich, recognised by biologists as being of international importance for their wildlife, and the relatively clear waters only enhance this. However, the waters are also dangerous with strong surges and powerful tidal

currents and are no place for novice divers. The wrecks are potentially a significant tourism asset, and at least one (the Drake) is sited conveniently near the harbour, marked with a cardinal buoy. Currently diving off Rathlin is based from Ballycastle and Portstewart which affords little opportunity for income generation on the island, but formerly the late Mr Tommy Cecil (author of Harsh Winds of Rathlin – detailing the wrecks, and perfectly describing the challenges to divers) used to run a viable operation from the island.

- 3.17 **Heather moorlands, NT Ballyconaghan, Ballycarry and Kebble** (Grade: Attraction): These three sites, owned and managed by both the National Trust and EHS are wild beautiful places, easily reached by walkers from Church Bay. They have outstanding views of the cliffs, panoramas of the island, and on clear days compelling views of Scotland and County Antrim – indeed many of the places that feature so strongly in Rathlin’s legends and history. Views from the wartime coastguard hut at Ballyconaghan are particularly spectacular. The moorlands are rich in wildlife, being a mixture of western heath and small wetlands and hollows.
- a. Access is easy from Church Bay or as a diversion from the route to west light. The two areas are separated by a privately owned holding, but are relatively close; consideration might be given to linking them with a path to create a circuit.
 - b. Ballycarry is designated an ASSI, carrying its own responsibilities described above, but management of access to both implies the need to monitor the effects of visitor pressure, particularly in respect of erosion and compatibility with livestock requirements. However, currently the Trust considers that visitor pressure is unlikely to cause problems, even with an increase in the near future. Consideration should also be given to grazing levels; there are some signs that the higher areas near the coastguard hut are being overgrazed.
 - c. Information on these areas could be provided by signage at the harbour.
 - d. Ballycarry also is the site for the east light, and there is a road to it. Some consideration has been given to the possibility of using its attached cottages for self catering accommodation.
- 3.18 **Bruce’s castle and cave** (Grade: Attraction): Legendary site of the Scottish rebel’s hideaway and his mythical observations on a hard working spider. The castle is mainly destroyed and lacks safe access, but its remains form a bleak and atmospheric relic with views across to Bruce’s home country, and they can easily be seen from nearby. The cave is accessible by boat, but there is little to see.
- a. Access to views of the castle is good; access to the cave would need care and precaution, probably only suitable for fairly fit people.
 - b. Both sites could form part of a suite of stories and legends about Rathlin’s history
- 3.19 **Brockley Axe Factory** (Grade: Attraction): Possibly Rathlin’s best known prehistoric site, the factory and associated chipping floors are seen from the main road to the west light as a cave, about half a mile away, set in a basalt escarpment. It is on private land, but the owner occasionally takes parties of visitors up to the site. There may be some doubt about whether the above grading is too high for this site, but undoubtedly there is some interest.
- 3.20 **Campbell/McDonnell Battle sites** (Grade: Attraction); Three sites; where the 1642 battle and defeat of the McDonnells took place, where the Rathlin women and children screamed abuse and support respectively at the two sides, and where allegedly all the women and children were herded over the cliff to their deaths. No

physical remains exist apparently, but the sites are well documented and would make a compelling tale amongst the other stories that could be delivered by Rathlin guides.

- 3.21 **The three lighthouses** (each graded: attraction); possibly considered together, and noting the west light, graded: Unique): The lighthouses are listed as industrial heritage and all have outstanding views, and the west and east lights may be amenable to providing self catering accommodation. The light at Rue Point is a much smaller affair. All the lighthouses have interesting histories, and there is scope for delivery of this information by guides. Consideration should be given to discussing the supervised opening of the light platforms themselves with the Commissioners for Irish Lights.

Other heritage sites possibly meriting grading: Attraction:

- 3.22 “Celtic” fort at Doonmore (and its neighbour Doonbeg). There is little of detail to see, but the sites can be seen from the road to the west light. They are on private land.
- 3.23 Sorley Boy McDonnell’s house at Ballynoe. Likely to be mainly of interest to Irish visitors for whom he may have some legendary cachet. The house is apparently used as a barn, is privately owned, but it is reported that it still contains some original features.
- 3.24 Site of Marconi’s first radio transmissions. It is difficult to gauge the interest level of this; undoubtedly however, it was the scene of a fundamental change in world communications technology.
- 3.25 Manor House (NT). Arguably the best known old house on the island, and the most striking feature seen by visitors on the in-coming ferry. The outside probably retains much of its original character, but the interior has lost all its original features. However, it is of easy access, serving food and accommodation.
- 3.26 Rathlin is also rich in small features of curiosity or “curios” for visitors. They are not likely to be major attractions on their own but when supported by good literature, interpretation and paths, they have the potential to form a set of places that visitors want to seek out and experience. Many are part of the folklore of Rathlin. These include the sweat house, the mass rock, the writing stone, the giant cow’s footprint, the giant’s handprint, the giant’s footprint, the port of the Mill (disaster story), Bracken’s Cave (cure for warts) and the spot where St Patrick landed (and where the mark of his footprint is said to remain today).

Summary

- 3.27 Rathlin presents a natural, diverse and well stocked heritage resource. It is a place where lovers of distinctive locations and islands can find fresh air, wildlife, compelling history and legend, tranquillity (despite the turbulent history), and spectacular scenery. Undoubtedly the key selling point is the breeding seabird colony on the western cliffs of the island, but this only ‘operates’ for a quarter of the year although the cliffs are stunning at any time. Combined together, the other wildlife features like the seals, together with the scenery and human heritage, extend the period of interest considerably, and it is arguable that provided the visitor can sustain bleak winter conditions, there is no period of the year when the island cannot present features of interest.
- 3.28 Rathliners know and understand this heritage well, and indeed they are part of it. A number of them are already engaged in presenting it in an interesting way to the visitor; and there is potential for far more in this respect.

CHAPTER 4 - THE CARRYING CAPACITY OF RATHLIN ISLAND FOR TOURISM

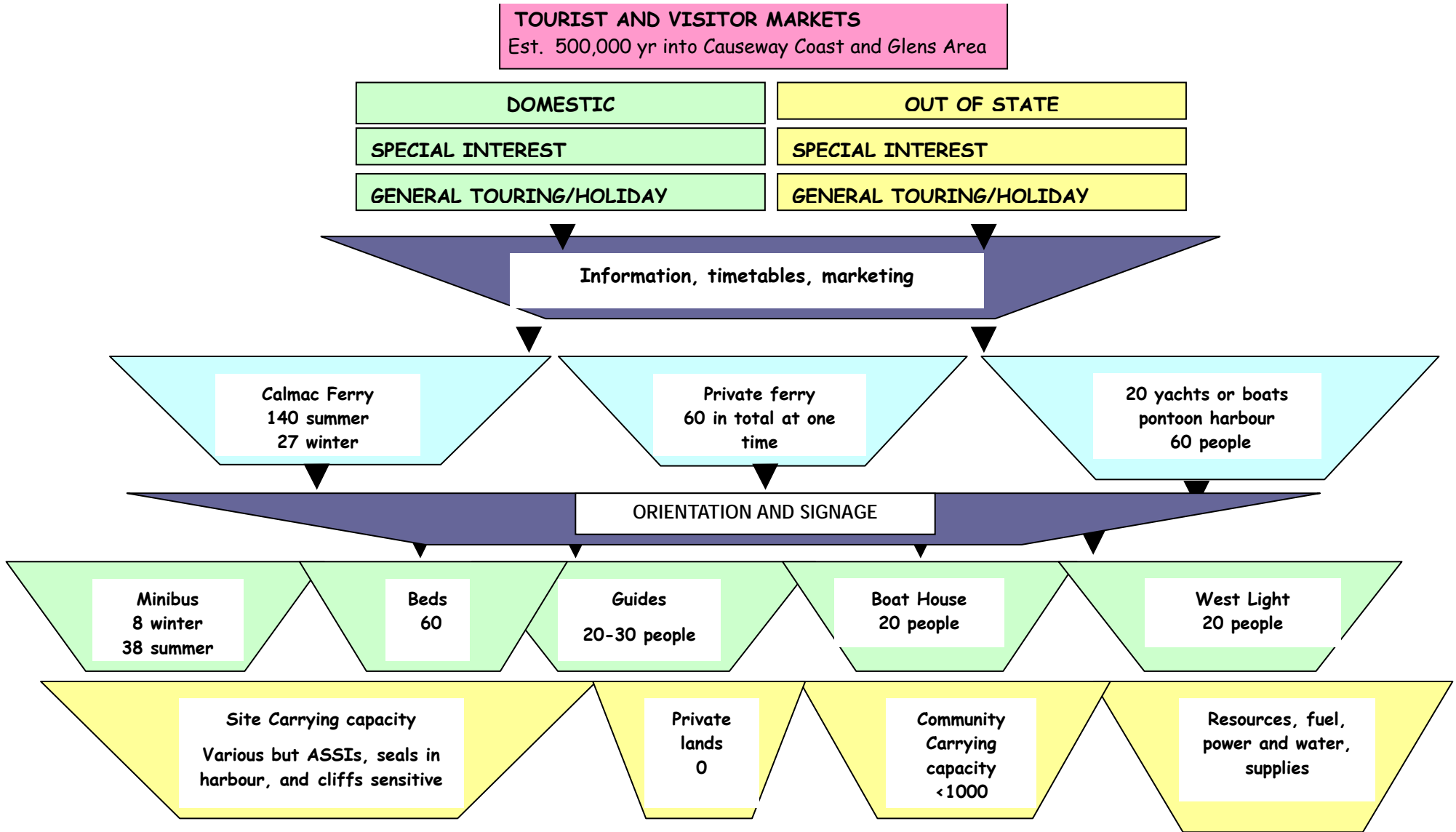
TYPES AND MEASURES OF CARRYING CAPACITY

- 4.1 The carrying capacity of Rathlin Island refers to the number of tourists or visitors and their activities that could be accommodated on the island at any one time or in any one year.
- 4.2 There are three main kinds of carrying capacity considered in relation to tourism areas:
- The physical capacity of infrastructure and services -. e.g. how many people can be transported to and from the island in any one day or year, or how many people can physically sit down in a restaurant and be served in any one day or year?
 - The social capacity: e.g. how many people can the community absorb on Rathlin without feeling swamped or experiencing a loss of privacy. This capacity is also important in judging to what extent the social and community life of the islanders would become affected by increased numbers of visitors attending island events
 - The ecological carrying capacity of the island or more relevantly its special sites, refers to the number of visitors that can visit the sites without loss of the special qualities or designated feature on the site
- 4.3 These types of carrying capacity are all quite different and it is rare that a specific number is derived at the end, but rather a guide range. The value of working through the various capacities is that it illustrates the bottlenecks, the key issues and the key sensitivities of a tourism destination. Carrying capacity also informs forward planning in terms of removal of the bottlenecks, increasing the capacity of infrastructure and services or making areas more robust; and in defining those aspects of carrying capacity that cannot be modified and therefore stand as a constraint within future plans.

The physical carrying capacity of Rathlin.

- 4.4 Rathlin's main physical capacities relate to the ferry, accommodation, meals, and internal transportation within the island
- 4.5 The current capacity of the **ferry** to transport people to the island is 27 passengers per trip in winter and 140 passengers per trip in summer. Some 46,000 '**single**' trips are made each year at present which is around 28% of total annual potential passenger capacity or 41% of capacity taking into account normal car and freight levels which displace passengers at a rate of 17 passengers per vehicle carried (or more depending on the type of vehicle). It is estimated by the team that just over 100,000 single trips are possible each year given similar levels of car and commercial traffic to 2004. Realistically however the vagaries of weather and the seasonality of tourism leads to the estimated 16,000 visitors to Rathlin annually wanting to travel mainly within the summer months, and to travel on the days with best weather and sea conditions. For this reason the boat often travels at capacity and there is anecdotal evidence of people being turned away on a regular basis. The ferry occasionally puts in additional trips when there is a demand but this is the exception and it normally runs to the advertised timetable. The reasons behind this are various and include staffing rotas, operating constraints and contractual arrangements.

TABLE 4.1: RATHLIN ISLAND - ASPECTS OF CARRYING CAPACITY



- 4.6 Two rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) provide alternative additional access to the island. Each is licensed to carry 12 passengers, with most of the boats having dedicated forward facing passenger seating. One of the RIBs is island based and functions as a water taxi. As the trip by RIB takes approximately 15 minutes, this represents a huge capacity to deliver people to and from the island. A variety of arrangements are made in the spring and summer season including regular timetables, the ability to book individual seats and the ability to book the whole boat for a group or special interest trip. The embarkation point for four of the boats is Ballycastle Marina. The boats also offer trips around the coastline of the island in suitable conditions and are a way of viewing seabirds and seals from another angle.
- 4.6 The current capacity of **accommodation** on the island in summer is around 60 bed-spaces (including the Manor House) in different types of accommodation, whilst in winter 2005 it varied from 20-23 beds, mostly in hostel type accommodation (excluding the Manor House). It is expected that from May 2005 the Manor House with its 16 beds will be available and this will boost the winter capacity and range of accommodation and services. At present there are many spring and summer days on Rathlin when there are more visitors wanting to stay than beds for them. Constraints on increasing the number of beds on Rathlin include the lack of land on which to build new accommodation, expenses of building on an island where all materials have to be brought in by boat, limited interest by islanders in becoming an accommodation provider, and limited interest in expanding because of the difficulty of getting part time help with servicing, laundry etc.
- 4.7 **Toilets** on the island are currently a constraint in that there is one set of public toilets at some 400m from the ferry arrival point under NRRTI. Moyle District Council is however hoping to provide new toilet and shower facilities at the harbour to service both ferry visitors and visitors mooring their boats overnight at the new pontoon. Toilets are also being built at the West light viewpoint with the support of Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust under NRRTI, to service visitors there. McCuaig's bar and the Manor House also have toilets but these are for the use of clients.
- 4.8 **Meals** on the island in winter are provided through Bruce's Kitchen, which is a café/restaurant, attached to McCuaig's bar. The dining room is large and can cater for some 50 covers at any one time. In summer Bruce's Kitchen is joined by meals for residents and non-residents at the Manor House (25 covers) and the Manor House tearoom (20 covers). Visitors can cater for themselves in the Soerneog hostel and the Kinramer Camping Barn with food available from the island shop.
- 4.9 **Internal transport** on the island is restricted to one bus operator providing trips in two vehicles to either end of the island. The capacity of the two buses is 24 and 17 people (in the summer) and the capacity 41 people at any one time; in winter bus capacity is 8 people. The buses meet the ferries and operate on demand at other times. At present more than 100 people may disembark from the ferry so less than a third may be transported by this means. A 32 seater may be introduced in 2005 to replace one of the buses. Bike hire is also provided with 30 bikes of different sizes available. Walking is unlimited with 8 miles of roads on the island.
- 4.10 The two main visitor attractions at the Boat House and the West Light Viewpoint are capable of accommodating 20 visitors each. The West Light could fit more people in physically but the experience of having a guided visit diminishes.

4.11 In terms of physical capacity, the island has three main capacity bottlenecks at present:

- The ferry at peak times (though growth is possible through many parts of the year). The RIBS will ease the pressure but do not appeal to many people within the target groups for Rathlin Island.
- The accommodation stock on the island severely constrains the ability of the island to attract overnight stays and hence higher value visitors and stays
- The internal transport system limits the numbers of people reaching the West Light Viewpoint – the most important attraction on the island – within the constraints of a day visit.

4.12 The carrying capacity of Rathlin Island is summarised in 4.1 of this chapter.

Community Carrying capacity:

4.13 Community carrying capacity was tested within the community survey by asking people whether there had ever been occasions where they had felt that there were too many visitors on the island. Whilst most people felt that this point had not been reached, just under a third had experienced days where they felt that there were too many people. The main impact of this had been a loss of privacy and had occurred when the island had in excess of 1000 visitors at a special event. This situation can also occur when not everyone is aware that there is an event taking place. A lack of awareness of the event probably exacerbated this problem.

4.14 Island visitors often seek isolation and remoteness in their experience and too many visitors can affect their sense of enjoyment of an island. There were no opportunities within this winter study to investigate ‘psychological carrying capacity’ or the point where visitors feel that too many other visitor’s impacts on an individual visitor experience. Experience elsewhere would suggest however that this threshold varies considerably by visitor and by season.

Ecological carrying capacity

4.15 Rathlin Island as previous chapters have discussed has a special place for landscape and many areas protected by nature conservation designations. Each designation lists principal designation features including marine habitats, moorland habitats, individual species interest and assemblages of species.

4.16 During the study the team has discussed ecological carrying capacity with landowning bodies where lands are open to the public on some basis (RSPB and National Trust), and visited the majority of the natural heritage sites accessible to visitors on the island.

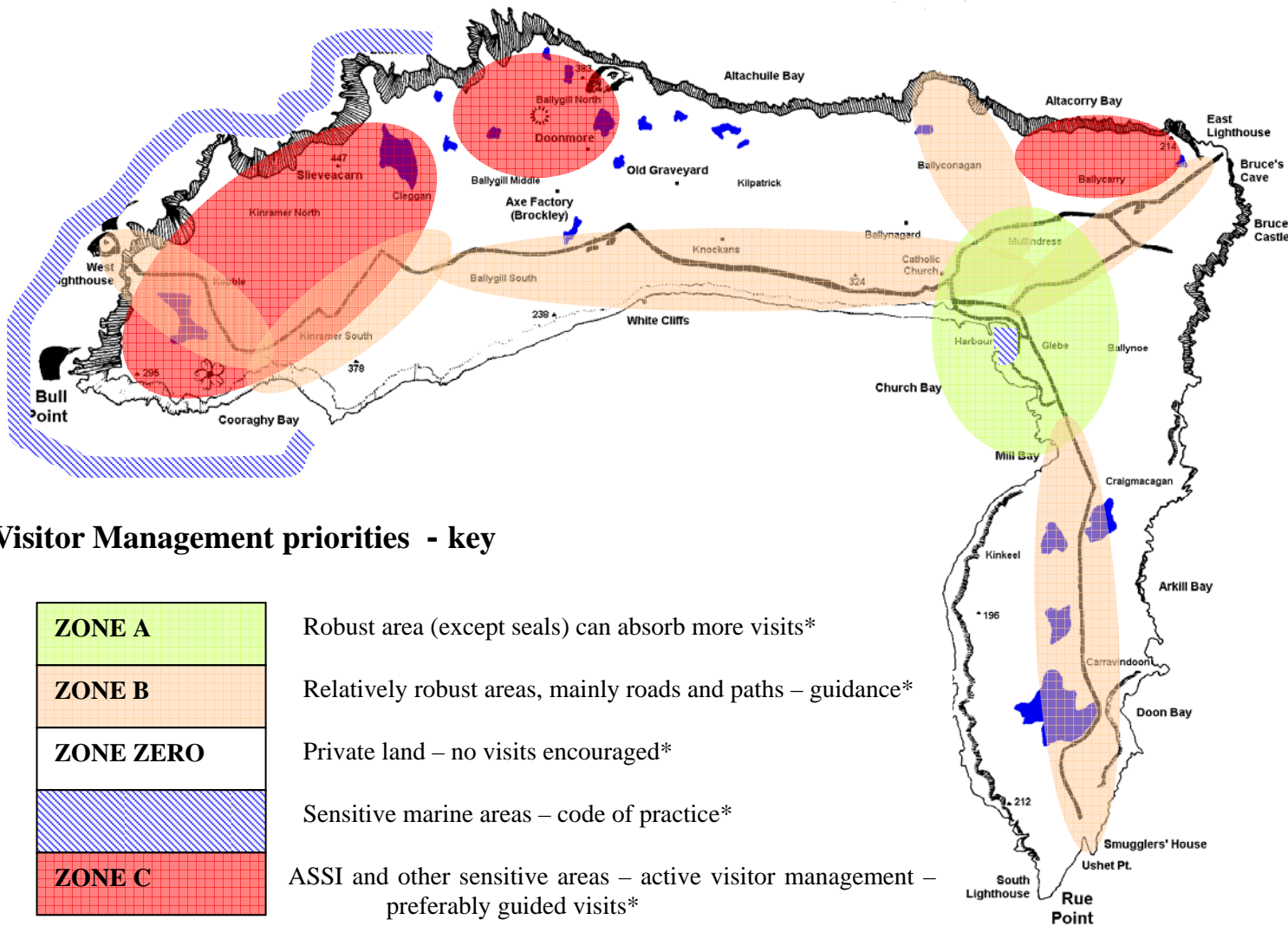
4.17 The first conclusion is that Rathlin Island’s main visitor sites are robust, being reached by tarmac or metalled roads and having fairly robust infrastructure on arrival. This applies to the main visited site at the West Light and to the Church Bay area. The exception to this are the seals in Church Bay which obviously tolerate a great deal of activity as long as it does not approach too closely.

4.18 Secondly one of the main features of interest, the assemblage of breeding and nesting seabirds is protected by being inaccessible to most visitors in most circumstances. Many of the important marine features are also inaccessible to all but experienced divers, and then represent challenging dive conditions due to tides and sea conditions.

4.19 Although some people walk off the roads along cliff tops there is no official access to any private land on the island and no one is encouraged at present to use the island in this way, and by far the majority of walking is along the roads. The

exception is at Ballyconaghan where informal paths lead over heathland to the coastguard hut, and where one of the alternative routes leads close to the cliff edge.

- 4.20 At present it is not considered that visitors place any particular pressures on the ecology of Rathlin, but the island's sensitivity requires careful management and monitoring.
- 4.21 It is considered that the very different nature of different parts of the island lends itself to a zoning approach to the development and management of tourism and the following zoning is proposed for both the land and sea areas of Rathlin.



Visitor Management priorities - key

ZONE A	Robust area (except seals) can absorb more visits*
ZONE B	Relatively robust areas, mainly roads and paths – guidance*
ZONE ZERO	Private land – no visits encouraged*
Sensitive marine areas	Sensitive marine areas – code of practice*
ZONE C	ASSI and other sensitive areas – active visitor management – preferably guided visits*

* The areas are provided as examples of how visitor management priorities could be approached and are not intended to be comprehensive or to represent particular landholdings.

Recommended zoning for Rathlin tourism and access

4.22 It is suggested that tourism and access on the island is managed in four zones of different character and sensitivity (see map) It must be made clear that these are **visitor management zones** and do not have any relevance to building or development of any kind. The first of these is

- **ZONE ZERO** – all private lands on the island where the assumption by tourism managers, promoters and the visitor should be that visiting is **not** permitted unless the owner/manager decides otherwise. This would therefore include all farmland, fenced land, private laneways and other access routes.

4.23 The other zone types (A-C) proposed below are based on their ecological/archaeological sensitivity, physical challenge/opportunity, and social/psychological appropriateness. The precise definition of acceptable visitor levels and the types of pressure (particularly for zones A & B) will need to be set by the owner/managers of the lands in question. Co-ordination will be important with competent Government authorities, responsible for designations and achieving

objectives under the Birds/Habitats Directives, as well as in the Northern Ireland legislation.

Land zones

- **ZONE A** – refers to a set of areas that are very sensitive to physical pressures, disturbance and other types of pressures which would contain risk of damaging the resource. Frequently they will be designated or listed in some way, and the precautionary principle should be applied when preparing and implementing management objectives. Examples include key archaeological sites, ASSIs, the SPA, the pSAC. Intense management and monitoring will be needed, and visitors, where present, would need careful guidance and supervision. It is likely that relative few, and specialised areas would fit this category. Tourism management considerations should include visits only with guides or good briefing information prior to a visit.
- **ZONE B** –refers to areas that are fairly robust, but contain quality scenery, habitat and species, or man-made features likely to be of interest to visitors. Either they are robust enough to withstand current/anticipated visitor numbers, or they have infrastructure like roads/paths/viewing stands that can accommodate visitor pressure without intense visitor management. Appropriate surfacing would be required according to terrain and visitor numbers/activity. More general monitoring would be needed, on a less frequent basis than ‘A’ zones. Tourism management consideration should include good interpretation of the interest, and guidance on sensitivities and seasonal precautions.
- **ZONE C** – refers to the ‘honey pot’ zone. These are zones which are very robust, not designated (or have designations that readily accommodate high visitor levels – e.g. AONB). Nonetheless these are attractive zones, and management should be directed into protecting this attractiveness with clearly set out and implemented development objectives. These would be areas where the majority of tourism services should be considered. The upper limit of visitor numbers in such areas would be defined by services, physical capacity, and the limits of transport to the island, rather than ecological carrying capacity. Tourism management should focus on providing quality service, enjoyment, contact with islanders and cultural entertainment.

Marine zones

- 4.24 Application of these may be considered in the light of the forthcoming Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy currently being prepared by DoE (NI) EPG. The legal status of such zoning is at present both dubious and weak; however, in implementing EU conservation directives, Government may need to consider issues like powers for regulating boat-based access to seabird cliffs, and possibly further offshore (SPA) and to key areas of sensitive marine habitat (e.g. pSAC). International commitments to protect cetaceans and basking sharks may well also necessitate the development and enforcement of codes of conduct further offshore.

- 4.25 It is suggested that a possible zoning system in Rathlin waters might broadly reflect that proposed for land:
- **ZONE A:-** Highly sensitive areas where boating is either prohibited, or licensed to qualified skippers for defined purposes. These would be restricted in extent, but would be needed as a management tool to be applied to protect key species, habitats, or other sensitive features. Their use would reflect the precautionary approach needed in safeguarding designated sites. A particular example would be restricting boat access to cliff bases where disturbance to seals and nesting seabirds was causing changes in breeding success/behaviour.
 - **ZONE B: -**Covering wide areas of Rathlin waters, waters intermittently used by SPA-based feeding/loafing seabirds. Access would be permitted as in all sea areas, but codes of conduct for different boat types would be developed, and consideration is needed as to the degree of enforcement of these that would be required.
 - **ZONE C** Inshore areas of water around Church Bay harbour, and reflecting the honey pot approach on the adjacent land. Boat use here would be unrestricted, but subject to widely agreed codes of seamanship applied elsewhere for harbours and fairways and enforced by the harbourmaster. Particular measures will be required to protect interests of bathers, children and seals in the harbour.

Maritime zoning in context of shipping

- 4.26 Evaluation of protection of Rathlin and its waters should be undertaken in context of the island's position in the busy approaches to the North Channel. Designating the island as a Marine Environment High Risk Area (MEHRA) (this title may change) as proposed for many areas following recent shipping disasters should be considered when the UK eventually passes the relevant legislation.

Monitoring tourism impacts on key habitats and natural features.

- 4.27 Monitoring activity will be essential in order to identify when tourism is impacting the natural and cultural heritage of Rathlin Island. The purpose is to notice and act when the characteristics of key features move outside the limits of acceptable change. Some monitoring is already carried out on Rathlin Island as a result of its various designations and the need to maintain and enhance their key features. However, more needs to be undertaken and the results need to be shared with tourism planners in a way that enables improved visitor management to be put into place. A set of features and qualities for monitoring is suggested in Appendix V. The following are intended as a basic guide to proposed features for monitoring, but need to be subject to the objectives and priorities of the managing landowners, as well as to the ASSI, pSAC, SPA, and ESA prescriptions. Monitoring of species of conservation concern in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy would also be required. An alert mechanism would be needed where any managing body that identifies adverse changes can ensure appropriate investigation and co-operation in mitigation of causes.
- 4.28 **It is recommended that tourism bodies and conservation bodies meet on an annual basis to review visitor impacts on Rathlin Island and that this meeting is convened by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust in its AONB management role.**

CHAPTER 5 - CURRENT MARKETING ACTIVITY

ORGANISATIONS CURRENTLY PROMOTING RATHLIN ISLAND

- 5.1 There is a wide range of organisations involved (to a greater or lesser extent) in promoting Rathlin Island. Some marketing activities have been co-ordinated but in the main, this has not been the case.
- 5.2 The organisations involved are as follows:
- Caledonian MacBrayne (Operators of ferry service)
 - Sea Treks Ireland
 - Island Community
 - Individual businesses via websites, posters and advertisements
 - R.S.P.B.
 - Moyle District Council
 - Causeway Coast & Glens Regional Tourism Organisation
 - National Trust
 - Environment and Heritage Service
 - N.I.T.B.
 - Tourism Ireland

MARKETING ACTIVITIES CURRENTLY UNDERTAKEN

- 5.3 A review of literature, web search and consultations with the organisations in question would indicate that the following promotional activities are being conducted:

Table 5.1 Promotional activities presenting Rathlin Island

ORGANISATION	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	ANNUAL BUDGET
Caledonian Mc Brayne Ltd	Advertising in newspaper/wildlife publications Radio/ T.V. advertising Attend consumer/trade holiday fairs and exhibitions (Utrecht, Birmingham, Belfast, Glasgow) Website (www.calmac.co.uk) Explore 2005 magazine distributed to TICs and Accommodation providers Day sales (visitors) leaflet Calmac company calendar	£ 12,000
SEA TREKS IRELAND (R.I.B. operators)	Brochure (distributed to BBC, ITV, companies (corporate days etc) Local advertising Website (www.seatreks-ireland.com) Joint promotion with National Trust Celebrity endorsement (i.e. Griff Rees Jones, Gerry Anderson, Jackie Stewart, Brian Kennedy) Postcards (in association with RNLI)	£ 6,000

ORGANISATION	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	ANNUAL BUDGET
<p>COMMUNITY - ISLAND NEWS</p>	<p>The Rathlin Community Association prepares a weekly newsletter which goes out to interested parties on the island and to people in USA, Canada, England & Ireland. The newsletter is also displayed in the Moyle TIC in Ballycastle, in the ferry office and in the Boathouse visitor centre on the island. The newsletter performs another function in keeping key agencies informed (e.g. copies are sent to Moyle District Council, DRD roads service, Department of Agriculture, the county library in Ballymena, Ballycastle PSNI, National Trust & RSPB). Annual subscription cost &10.</p>	<p>No dedicated marketing budget</p>
<p>R.S.P.B.</p>	<p>Organise 3 weekend events relating to birds (i.e. Return of the puffins) TV/ Radio coverage/publicity (free!) Website (www.rspb.org.uk/nireland) Articles for wildlife publications PR/Press releases Work with community on road signage Birds magazine distributed to 1.3 million members Produce flyers/brochures which are distributed to visitor attractions, hotels and B&Bs in the region Have own marketing plan for R.S.P.B. Publish a trail guide which is available on arrival on the island.</p>	<p>No dedicated marketing budget</p>
<p>MOYLE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>Support for production of Rathlin brochure Distribution of brochure to T.I.C. network Rathlin featured as part of generic marketing of Moyle District.</p>	<p>£ 2,000</p>
<p>RATHLIN CO OP</p>	<p>“Arts on Rathlin” events and activity marketing including: “Rathlin Airs” music festival Craft Events Marketing activities include: Development of logo, Generic marketing material promoting the cultural initiative. Arts mailing list Quarterly Newsletters</p>	<p>£3,500 – £4,000</p>

ORGANISATION	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	ANNUAL BUDGET
CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS LTD R.T.O.	<p>The Causeway Coast & Glens has recently prepared its Marketing Strategy (April 2005-March 2006) which has been submitted to the NITB. The Marketing Plan for the region envisages a mix of marketing activities many of which feature Rathlin Island including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Rathlin guide • Rathlin Island incorporated into tour operator itineraries as part of the Causeway Coastal Route. • Rathlin featured by RTO in overseas trade and consumer workshops. • Rathlin featured in press advertising for region. (Double page spread in Daily Mirror) and website (www.causewaycoastandglens.com) • Rathlin featured in all main publications including accommodation guide, main visitor guide and pocket guide, and in activity publications (i.e. walking etc). <p>All activities compliment the role out of the Causeway Coast & Glens Masterplan, 2004.</p>	No dedicated budget for Rathlin Island
NATIONAL TRUST	<p>D.L. promotional leaflet Issue press releases to promote events (i.e. Wonders of Rathlin Island) Main promotion relates to Manor House. The property is included in all National Trust literature. Events guide Visitor guide Info on Rathlin would also be contained in National Trust information handbook for membership (3.4 million distributed annually) Have recently commissioned an exhibition which features images of life on Rathlin Island. This exhibition will be on display at the National Maritime Museum (London) and the Lowry Museum (Manchester) www.nationaltrust.org.uk promotes both the island and the Manor House. Manor House included in Northern Ireland Holiday Cottages brochure. Joint marketing activities with R.S.P.B.</p>	£ 5,000
8. E.H.S.	Website information on designations on Rathlin Island and their main features. Walks and talks at Kebble.	General budget

ORGANISATION	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	ANNUAL BUDGET
N.I.T.B.	<p>Rathlin Island, due to its geographical location is marketed through the Causeway Coast & Glens Ltd, Regional Tourism Organisation which is supported by NITB. The island will also feature in marketing activity associated with the recently launched Causeway Coastal Route. This priority, identified within the Causeway Coast & Glens Masterplan will direct visitors along the coast offering them the opportunity to visit Rathlin. The document will guide all tourism product development and marketing actions for the region.</p> <p>In the Masterplan, Rathlin Island has been identified as a key asset within the <u>coastal</u> area, one of three in the area based approach accepted.</p> <p>The <u>Causeway Coast Route</u>, directing visitors through Ballycastle, will offer significant opportunities and benefits for Rathlin Island.</p>	No dedicated budget for Rathlin
TOURISM IRELAND	<p>➔ Rathlin Island listed in places to visit in Northern Ireland on website www.tourismireland.com</p> <p>“Dedicated naturalists should not miss a trip to Rathlin Island whose rugged cliffs are home to the biggest seabird colony in Europe”.</p>	No dedicated budget for Rathlin

THE ISLAND

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT MARKETING ACTIVITIES

5.4 The key findings and conclusions that can be drawn from this overview are:

- A minimum of £ 25,000 is spent annually on promotional activities directly related to Rathlin Island.
- Rathlin Island also benefits from its inclusion in promotional activities of major agencies including NITB, National Trust and RSPB. The value of these activities is likely to match if not surpass the above figure.
- While there is some aligning of promotional/marketing activities, a fully co-ordinated approach to marketing has not been adopted.
- The absence of a branding and positioning strategy has limited the impact of current promotional activities.

CHAPTER 6 - MARKET OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION - TOURISM: THE WORLD'S LARGEST INDUSTRY

- 6.1 This sustainable Tourism Strategy for Rathlin Island has been prepared against a background of growth in tourism, now the world's largest industry. The growth that has taken place in tourism at a global level has been matched (and often surpassed) by the performance of Ireland.
- 6.2 With the establishment of Tourism Ireland under the framework of the Belfast Agreement, and a more stable political environment, tourism to Northern Ireland has also grown in recent years.
- 6.3 This section of the report presents an overview of tourism in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the Causeway Coast and Glen's region. The final section sets out an estimate of the current tourism performance of Rathlin Island.

TOURISM TO IRELAND

- 6.4 In 2003, the island of Ireland attracted an estimated 7.4 million visitors. This represented a 5.3% increase on the number of visitors recorded in 2002.

Table 6.1 Overseas Visitor Numbers to Ireland 1999-2003 (000s)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	% change 2002/2003
Great Britain	4,225	4,255	4,267	4,484	4,274	5%
Mainland Europe	1,356	1,486	1,395	1,434	1,529	7%
France	280	291	285	305	327	7%
Germany	313	334	298	301	311	4%
Italy	166	189	161	160	180	13%
Netherlands	145	183	197	176	156	-11%
Spain	80	89	105	119	138	16%
Nordic Countries*	158	163	135	112	128	14%
North America	995	1,114	948	872	910	4%
United States	891	996	860	779	823	6%
Canada	105	118	87	94	88	-6%
Other Areas	276	299	289	271	272	0%
Australia/ New Zealand	154	168	146	127	121	-4%
Total Overseas (000s)	6,852	7,154	6,899	7,061	7,435	5.3%

* Nordic countries include Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland

- 6.5 Great Britain is Ireland's most important market, accounting for almost two thirds of all overseas (4.7 million). Between 2002 and 2003, the number of visitors from Britain grew by 5%.
- 6.6 Mainland Europe is Ireland's second most important market accounting for an estimated 1.6 million visitors in 2003, while North America yielded an estimated 910,000. These two market areas grew by 7% and 4% respectively between 2002 and 2003.

Table 6.2 Overseas visitor revenue 1999-2003 (£millions)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	% change 2002/2003
	£	£	£	£	£	
Great Britain	786	832	952	993	1,043	5%
Mainland Europe	414	479	533	572	579	1%
France	67	79	105	121	95	-21%
Germany	105	113	128	120	121	1%
Italy	60	60	72	71	78	10%
Netherlands	36	60	54	60	53	-12%
North America	382	479	482	469	510	9%
United States	340	423	436	418	462	11%
Canada	42	56	46	51	53	-7%
Other Areas	111	134	149	155	159	2%
Total Overseas (000s)	1,693	1,925	2,116	2,188	2,290	4.7%

- 6.7 Revenue from tourism in 2003 amounted to £2,290m, up almost 5% on the previous year.
- 6.8 According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), changes in consumer behaviour are likely to have an impact on international travel patterns. Amongst the more significant changes are as follows:
- There has been a shift towards destinations that are more accessible by land, and towards domestic tourism as a result of concerns over safety, the global economic slowdown, and the introduction of the Euro
 - There has been a tendency towards shorter days
 - The number of independent travellers has continued to increase
 - There has been an increase in the number of senior tourists
 - Holidaymaker's resilience to travel has been demonstrated recently. Holidays are now viewed as a necessity rather than a luxury.
 - A 'late-booking' pattern has emerged.

- Consumers are increasingly ‘price sensitive’ a factor which has been fuelled by the growth in low cost customers.
- The Internet has had a major influence on the way in which traveller’s research and book their holidays.

6.9 Tourism Ireland has identified a number of key markets and market segments that are considered to offer the best prospects for the island of Ireland. These are presented below:

Table 6.3 Market overview and priority market segments (Tourism Ireland Ltd)

	Great Britain	USA	Germany	France
TYPE OF HOLIDAY-MAKERS	25-64 years Households without dependent children	25-74 years Bias 45+years High proportion retired couples	Young (18-24) Current 18-54 years	25-50 years
Location	London and South East, North-West, Humberside, Yorkshire, South-West, Cardiff, and Scotland	10 key cities on Western and Eastern seaboard	North-Rhine/ Westphalia, Bavaria, Baden- Wurttemberg	Paris Region West South East
Average Length of Stay (nights*)	5.6	9.4	11.4	12.3
Types of Holidays	1.Fly drive 2.Own car touring 3. City/ Luxury Breaks 4.Product Specialists 5.Irish Related	1. Escorted Tour 2.Independent/ Fly-drive 3. Activity holiday 4.Conference & Incentive 5.Visiting friends and relatives	1. Touring 2. Coach/ Study Tours 3. Conference & Incentive 4. Product Specialists 5. Short Breaks	1. Car Touring 2. Short Breaks 3. Coach Tours 4. Incentive 5. Product Specialists
	Netherlands	Italy	Australia	Canada
TYPE OF HOLIDAY-MAKERS	18-44 years	30-39 years, Empty nesters, 65+, DINKS	18-25 University 40-54 Mature Boomers 55+ mature travellers	
Location	Holidays abroad taken by residents in the West, East and South East of the country.	North and Central Italy	6 main cities in Australia	Metropolitan cities in Ontario, British Columbia & Quebec.
Average Length of Stay (nights*)	6.8	11.7	12.8	11.8
Types of Holiday	1. Fly drive 2. Coach 3.Walking/ Cycling 4.City Breaks 5. Angling	1. Touring 2. English Learning 3. Incentive 4.Short Breaks 5.Product Specialists	1. Fly drive 2.Youth market 3. City Stays 4.Escorted 5. Product Specialists	1. Independent sightseeing 2.Special interest 3. City and Rural Breaks

- 6.10 Tourism Ireland is currently focussing the bulk of its resources on the key markets of Great Britain, USA, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Australia and Canada.

TOURISM TO NORTHERN IRELAND

- 6.11 Northern Ireland attracted almost 2 million visitors in 2003. Tourism to Northern Ireland grew at a faster rate than for Ireland as a whole. Between 2002 and 2003, there was a 12% increase in visitors. Great Britain (Northern Ireland's most important market) grew by 16% over this timeframe resulting in 1.3 million visits from this source in 2003. The Republic of Ireland, the second most important market, grew at a more modest 3% to an estimated 340,000 visits.

Table 6.4 Market overview (NI) and priority market segments

	2003 (000s)	2002(000s)	% change 2002
Great Britain	1,341	1,160	+16
Republic of Ireland	340	330	+3
Europe	115	110	+5
North America	97	97	-
Australia New	38	26	+46
Elsewhere	18	19	-5
TOTAL	1,950	1,741	+12

- 6.12 Tourism revenue in Northern Ireland in 2003 is worth an estimated £291 million.
- 6.13 Holidaymakers account for a 17% share of total visitors to Northern Ireland. Along with business travel, this was the fastest growing segment in 2003.

Table 6.5 Purpose of visit to NI (2002-2003)

	2003(000s)	2002 (000s)	Market Share (%)	% Change 2002
Holiday	340	285	17	+19
VFR*	896	817	46	+10
Business	603	518	31	+16
Other Reasons	110	121	6	-9
TOTAL	1,950	1,741	100	+12

- 6.14 The Northern Ireland Tourist Board estimates that total visits to Northern Ireland in 2004 will have exceeded the 2 million mark (6% up on 2003), while receipts are expected to be of the order of £312 (up 5% in real terms).

TOURISM TO THE CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS REGION

- 6.15 In 2003, the Causeway Coast and Glen's region attracted an estimated 486,000 visitors from outside Northern Ireland spending an estimated £64 million. In addition, there were an estimated 344,000 domestic (NI) visitors who spent of the order of £36 million.

Table 6.6 Causeway Coast and Glens Trips, Nights and Expenditure (Out of state visitors)

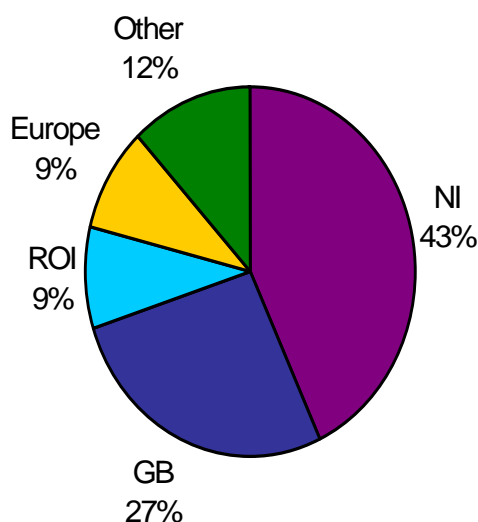
	2003	2002	2001	2000	2000/2002 Change
Trips	486,000	407,000	384,000	386,000	+5
Nights	2,197,000	1,879,000	1,865,000	1,920,000	-2
Spend	£64.4	£56.4m	£51.3m	£54.2m	+4

Table 6.7 Causeway Coast and Glens Domestic visitor trips, nights and expenditure

	Trips	Nights	Spend
2003	344,000	1,274,000	£36.3m
2002	306,000	966,000	£44.4m
2001	325,000	1,136,000	£46.1m
2000	288,000	881,000	£37.2m

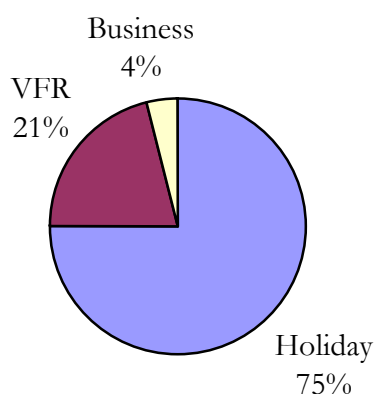
6.16 The profile of staying visitors to the Causeway Coast & Glens region is presented below.

Table 6.8 Causeway Coast and Glens Visitor Profile



6.17 After the domestic market, which accounts for four staying visitors in every ten, Great Britain is the next most important market (one visitor in four) followed by the Republic of Ireland.

6.18 75% of staying visitors in the Causeway Coast and Glen’s region visit for the purpose of taking a holiday.

Table 6.9 Characteristics of visitors to the Causeway Coast and Glens Area- purpose of visit

6.19 On average, visitors to the Causeway Coast & Glens spend 6.2 days in Northern Ireland. Of this time, an average of 3.8 days is spent in the region.

6.20 In terms of visitor motivations, two thirds of staying visitors were influenced to visit the region for the purpose of general sightseeing. A further one in four come specifically to see the Giants Causeway.

RATHLIN CURRENT TOURISM PERFORMANCE

6.21 The table below shows the ferry's monthly figures for passengers carried in the last calendar year (2004).

Table 6.10 Rathlin Ferry monthly passenger figures 2004

Month	Passengers	Cars	Commercial
January	829	158	7
February	955	174	13
March	960	204	20
April	2570	259	17
May	4478	254	20
June	6757	248	22
July	10811	251	31
August	11806	262	26
September	2954	217	42
October	1380	186	9
November	1022	185	20
December	856	199	25
Total	45378	2597	252

6.22 It provides a rough indication of the number of visitors/tourists attracted to the island, as follow:

- If most of the passengers from January to March and from October to December are assumed to be Rathlin residents, then they make an average of 1,000 single trips per month over these six months.
- Over the other six months from April to September, the ferry carried 39,376 passengers.
- If the residents doubled the frequency of trips in these months (i.e. an average of 2000 per month), then the remaining passengers could be assumed to be visitors/tourists.
- This suggests 27,376 passengers that were tourists (39,376 – 12,000)
- If divided by two to allow for returns, the number of tourist trips to the island over the main season is estimated at 13,688.

6.23 However, some people come in other boats and some out of the main season. Thus, the figure may be nearer 16,000. These include visitors who are staying with friends and relations, business visitors as well as people on a holiday trip.

Visits to Attractions

6.24 The most popular visitor attraction on Rathlin is the **West Light Viewpoint**. Although the birds are only there from April until August, it attracts visitors throughout the year, especially as there are spectacular views of the cliffs.

6.25 The table below shows how its popularity has grown:

Table 6.11 Visits to the West Light Viewpoint

Year	Visits (April to August)
1998	5,223
1999	5,189
2000	6,135
2001	3,783
2001	7,207
2001	9,105*
2004	8,907*

*including September

- 6.26 The other main built visitor attraction is the **Boat House Visitor Centre**. It is open from the beginning of May to the end of September, and also at Easter and some times in September. Its visitor numbers have also increased recently:
- In 2002 (according to NITB survey) = 4,500 visitors.
 - April 2003 – Sept 2003 (incl. Easter opening & part of September) = 7435
 - April 2004 – August 2004 (includes Easter opening) = 7601

Accommodation Performance

- 6.27 The audit did not uncover a great deal of information on this aspect. The National Trust provided information on the **Manor House Guest House** showing that it achieved average room occupancy of 47% in 2004, compared with a Northern Ireland average of about 60%. This equates to approximately 1300 bed-nights per year.
- 6.28 The following table also shows the latest available monthly bed occupancy figures from the National Trust (for 2003):

Table 6.12 Manor House Guesthouse Bed Occupancy 2003 (%)

Month	Manor House	Northern Ireland
April	25	36
May	55	39
June	79	41
July	61	40
August	49	48
September	43	44
October	29	39
November	17	34

- 6.29 These figures may not be directly comparable because the Manor House ones relate to bed occupancy and the NITB ones are for bed space occupancy. Nevertheless, they suggest that the Manor House performed well above average in May, June, and July.
- 6.30 As previously described, the **Soerneog View Hostel** has performed well since its opening in 1998, consistently achieving 500-550 bed-nights per year. Similarly, the **Kinramer Cottage Camping Barn** has been a consistent performer, achieving bed occupancy of around 1,200 per year.

CHAPTER 7-VIEWS OF THE ISLANDERS ON TOURISM

SURVEY DETAILS

- 7.1 In order to ascertain the views of Rathlin Island residents regarding tourism on the island, Tourism Development International carried out a survey of 37 adults in the community between Wednesday 28th and Friday 30th January 2005. All interviews were conducted on a personal face-to-face basis in island residents' own homes.

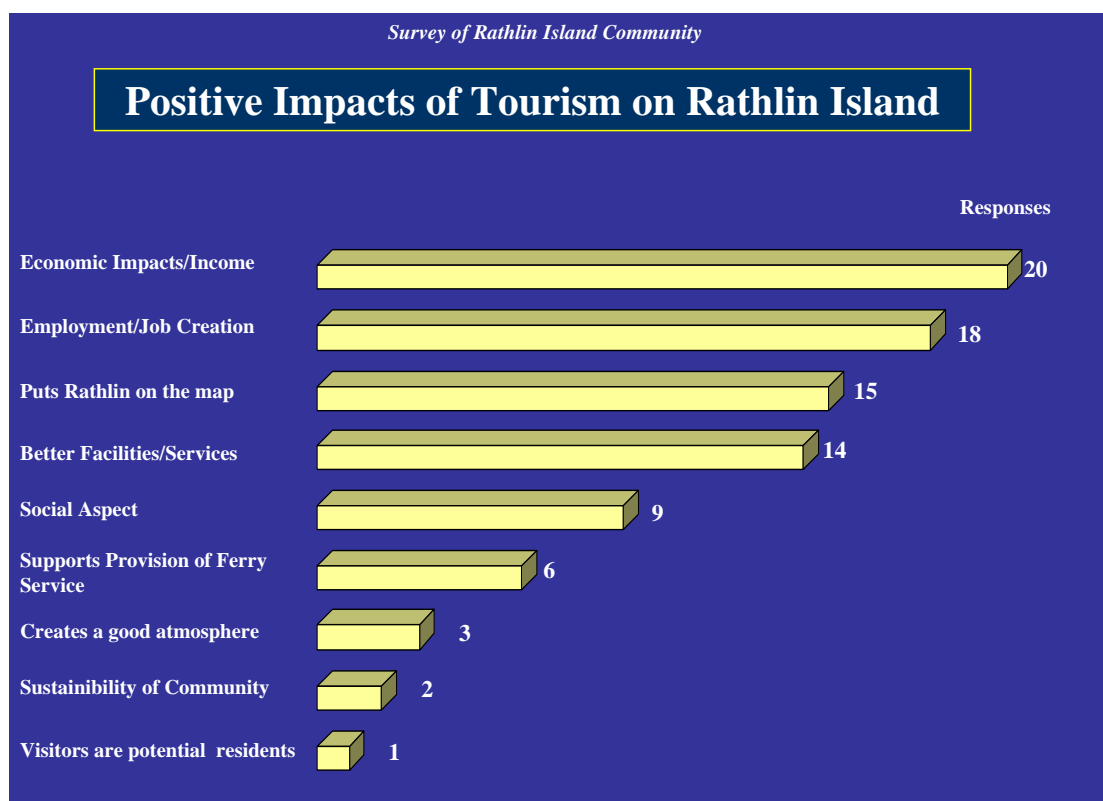
Table 7.1 - Survey Details

<i>Survey of Rathlin Island Community</i>	
Analysis of Sample	
TIME LIVING ON ISLAND	AGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always Lived on the Island 15 • New to the Island (last 3 yrs) 10 • Lived away from the Island, now back 8 • 10 - 20 years on the Island 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 18 - 24 2 • Age 25 - 34 2 • Age 35 - 44 8 • Age 45 - 64 14 • Age 65 + 10 • No Reply 1
SEX	NUMBER IN HOUSEHOLD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male 19 • Female 18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live Alone 15 • Two people in household 14 • Three people in household 3 • Four or More in household 5

CURRENT EXPERIENCE OF TOURISM

7.2 At the outset of the survey, residents were asked what they perceived to be the main positive impact which tourism has had on Rathlin Island. The findings are presented below:

Table 7.2 - Positive Impacts of Tourism on Rathlin Island



7.3 Against a background of decline in traditional economic activities on the island (i.e. fishing, agriculture), tourism is identified as a valuable economic activity which can continue to generate valuable income on the island and as a consequence support employment (see Chapter 13 section 1).

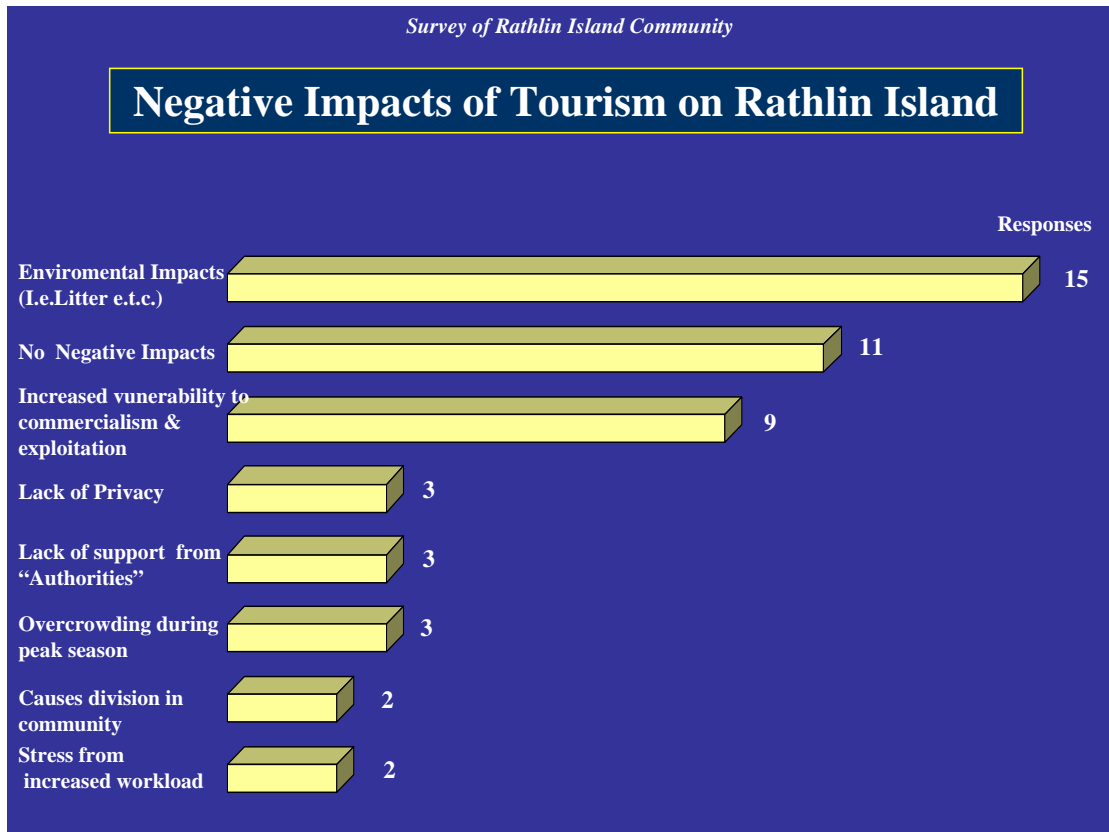
7.4 Apart from the issue of job creation, tourism also benefits the community by helping to sustain and support facilities and services on the island, which might not exist but for tourism.

7.5 Non monetary benefits are also evident, with tourism helping to raise the 'profile' of Rathlin Island and also offering the islanders an opportunity to engage with visitors.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF TOURISM

7.6 While a substantial number of Rathlin Island residents failed to cite any negative impacts associated with tourism, it is clear there are a number of issues which are of concern to islanders.

Table 7.3 -Negative Impacts of Tourism on Rathlin Island

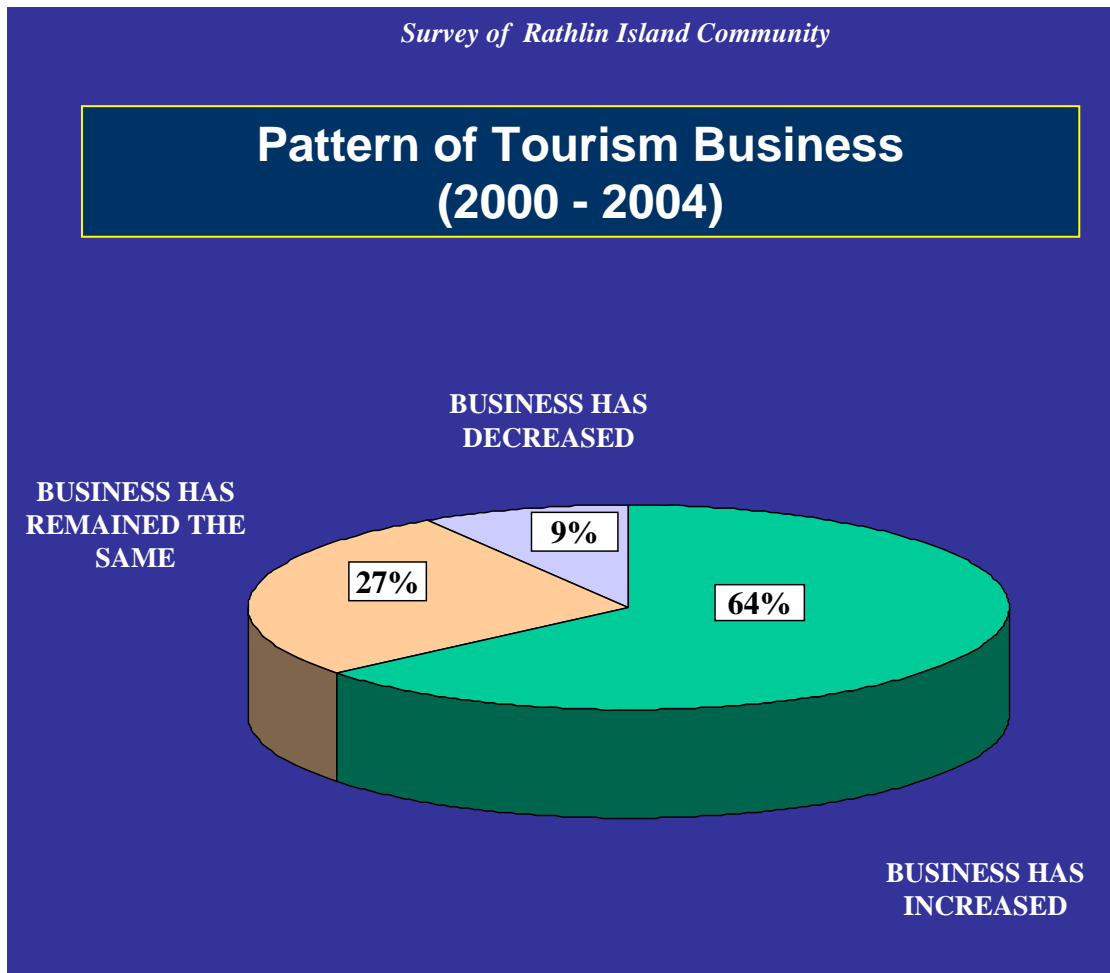


7.7 There is a perception, quite widely held, that tourism has had a detrimental impact on the environment, with littering identified as a particular problem. There are also concerns that tourism could result in the erosion of traditional values through commercialisation.

PATTERN OF TOURISM BUSINESS (2000-2004)

7.8 In overall terms, tourism on Rathlin Island has grown over the last five years.

Table 7.4 -Pattern of Tourism Business (200-2004)



7.9 The growth in tourism can be attributed to an increased awareness of Rathlin Island (due to promotion, marketing and word of mouth) and improvements to access.

7.10 It should be noted that while tourism has grown over the period in question, the growth is not seen to have been as pronounced as that experienced in 1995 when all of Northern Ireland benefited greatly from the emerging peace process at that time.

PROVISION OF SERVICES / EMPLOYMENT

7.11 Service provision to tourists to Rathlin Island falls into three main categories: access transport; accommodation and ground transport.

7.12 The number of product providers and number of individuals employed in each case is presented below.

Table 7.5: Service Provision / Employment

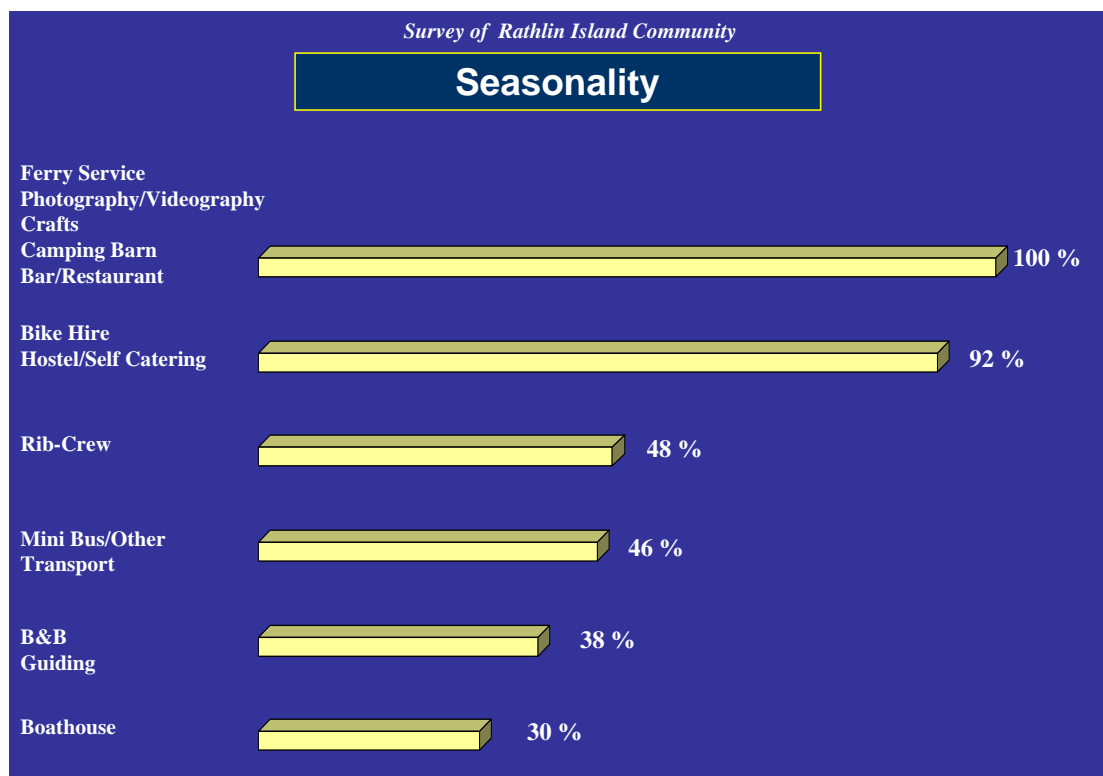
	Providers	Individuals Employed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Transport 		
TM Ferry	1	8
TM Rib	1	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation 		
TM B&B	1	1
TM Camping Barn	1	2
TM Hostel/Self-Catering	1	1
TM Manor House	1	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground Transport 		
TM Minibus	1	1
TM Bicycle Hire	1	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other 		
TM Guiding	2	3
TM Bar/ Restaurant	2	6
TM Crafts	1	2
TM Photography	1	2

*** Jobs are all island based**

SEASONALITY

- 7.13 There is significant variation in the pattern of employment throughout the season according to the aforementioned categories.

Table 7.6: Seasonality



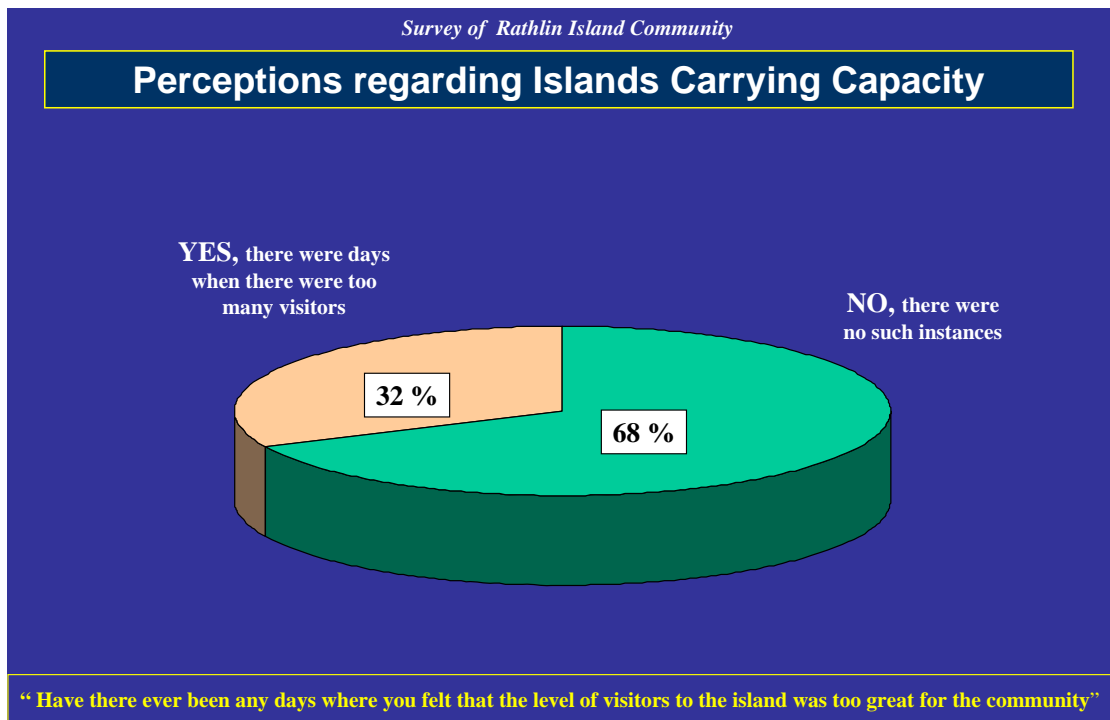
- 7.14 While the ferry service, Mc Cuaig’s Bar/ Restaurant, craft provision, the hostel and the camping barn are open on a year round basis (100% of the year), other services (i.e. guiding, B&B accommodation, boathouse visitor centre) have a much shorter season.

- 7.15 At the mid-way stage in the interview with members of the community, respondents were asked the following question:

"Have there ever been any days when you felt that the level of visitors to the island was too great for the community".

- 7.16 The majority view was that the carrying capacity of the island has not been reached.

Table 7.7: Perceptions regarding Island’s Carrying Capacity

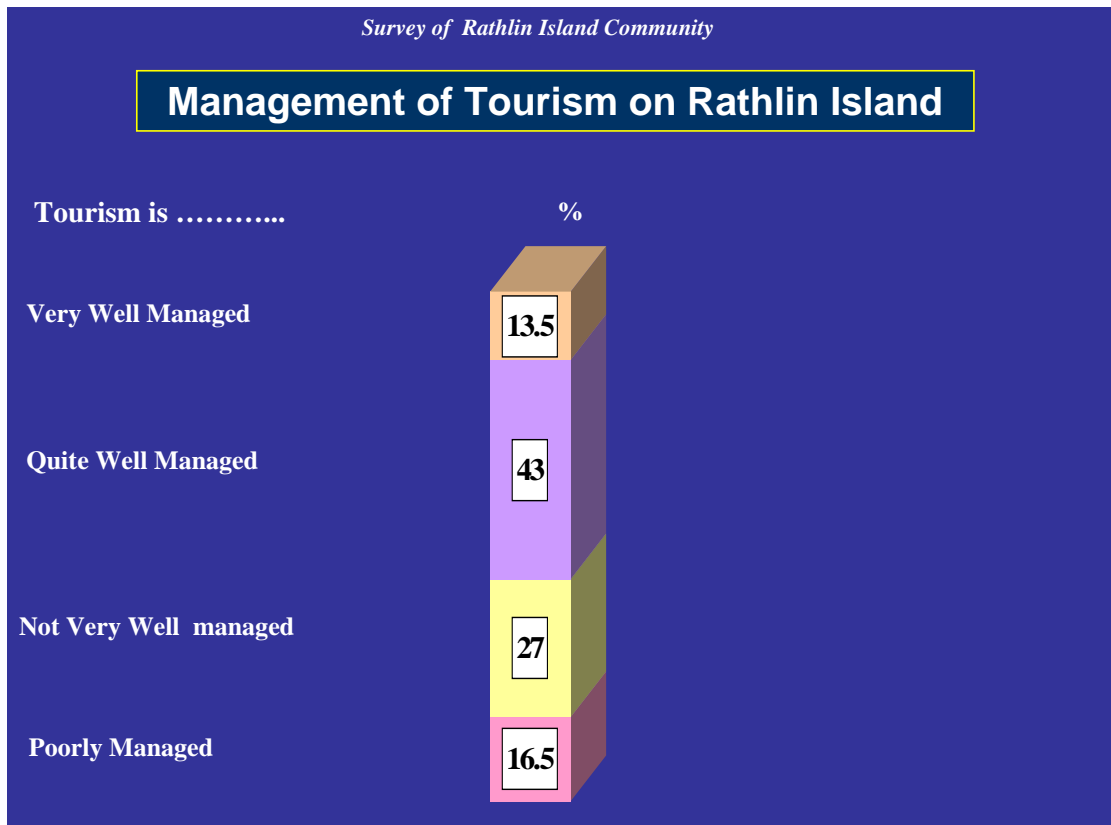


7.17 The instances when islanders felt that carrying capacity was exceeded relate specifically to the Jigs in the Rigs Festival held in 2002 and more generally to instances when visitors arrive on the island unannounced.

MANAGEMENT OF TOURISM ON RATHLIN ISLAND

7.18 On balance, a majority of residents feel that tourism is well managed on the island. The findings suggest, however, that scope exists for improvements.

Table 7.8: Management of Tourism on Rathlin Island



7.19 Even amongst those individuals who are of the view that tourism is 'quite well managed', there is a view that the absence of core facilities and infrastructure for visitors has in turn had an adverse impact on the issue of visitor management. Facilities mentioned in this regard were public toilets, showers, shelter, picnic areas and eating facilities.

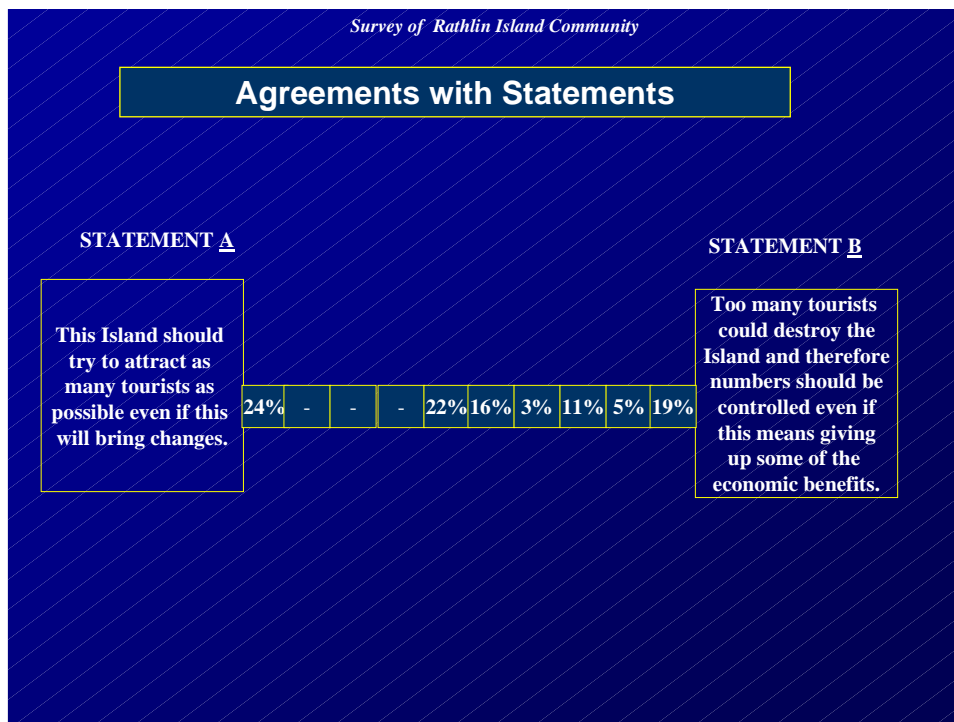
AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS

7.20 In the final part of the interview, respondents were asked a series of questions designed to obtain an insight into future priorities and preferences for tourism on Rathlin Island. They were asked the following question:

"How much do you agree with the following statements".

7.21 The two statements and responses are presented below:

Table 7.9: Agreement with Statements

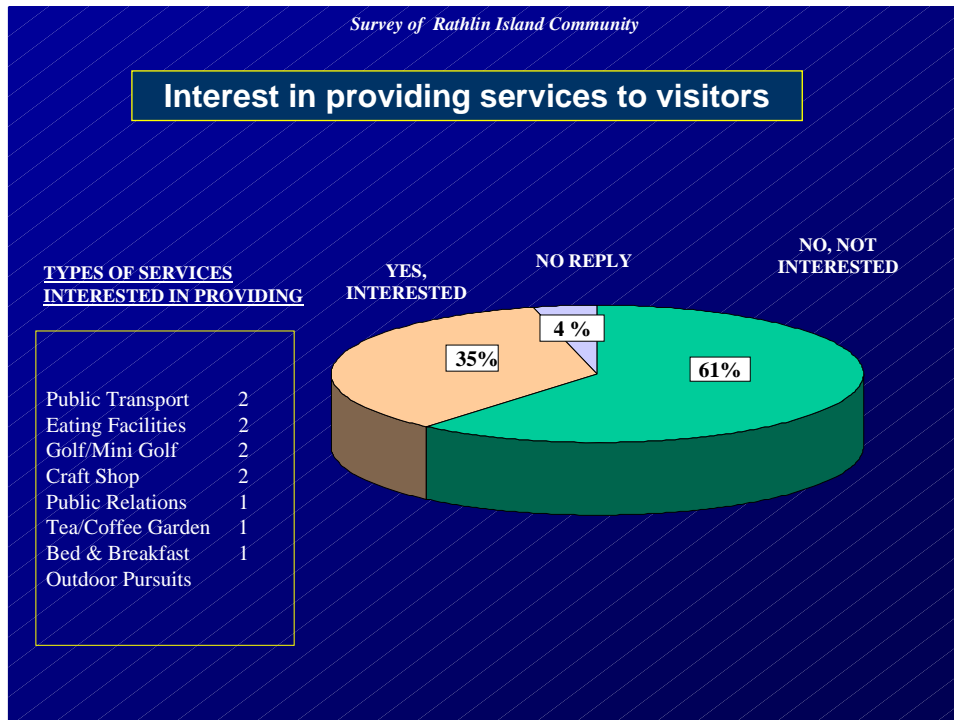


7.22 It is quite clear from the cluster of responses around Statement B that the future of tourism on Rathlin Island will need to be carefully planned and developed at a rate with which the community is comfortable. Clearly, the economic benefits which tourism can bring should not be at any cost.

INTEREST IN PROVIDING SERVICES TO VISITORS

7.23 Individuals not currently involved in providing services to visitors to the island were asked whether they would be interested in doing so in the future.

Table 7.10: Interest in Providing Services to Visitors



7.24 That a majority of residents have no particular interest in engaging with visitors in this manner is not particularly surprising - given the age profile of the islanders. Amongst younger members of the community, interest in providing services to visitors is higher than that shown for all adults above.

7.25 While the community have an interest in providing quite a wide variety of services to visitors, in setting out a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Rathlin Island, care should be taken to match the Rathlin Island product/service offer to market demand (i.e. visitor preferences).

TYPE OF TOURISM MOST FAVOURED

- 7.26 Residents were presented with a list of ten different types of tourism and were asked to indicate which ones they would be in favour of being developed on Rathlin Island.
- 7.27 With the exception of hunting/shooting, there is widespread community support for most types of tourism (subject of course to careful development and management). Special Interest tourism (i.e. Bird-watching), Activity based tourism (ie.Walking), Educational trips, Cultural holidays, Family holidays and General Sightseeing are different types of tourism favoured by the community.

Table 7.11(a): Type of Tourism Most Favoured

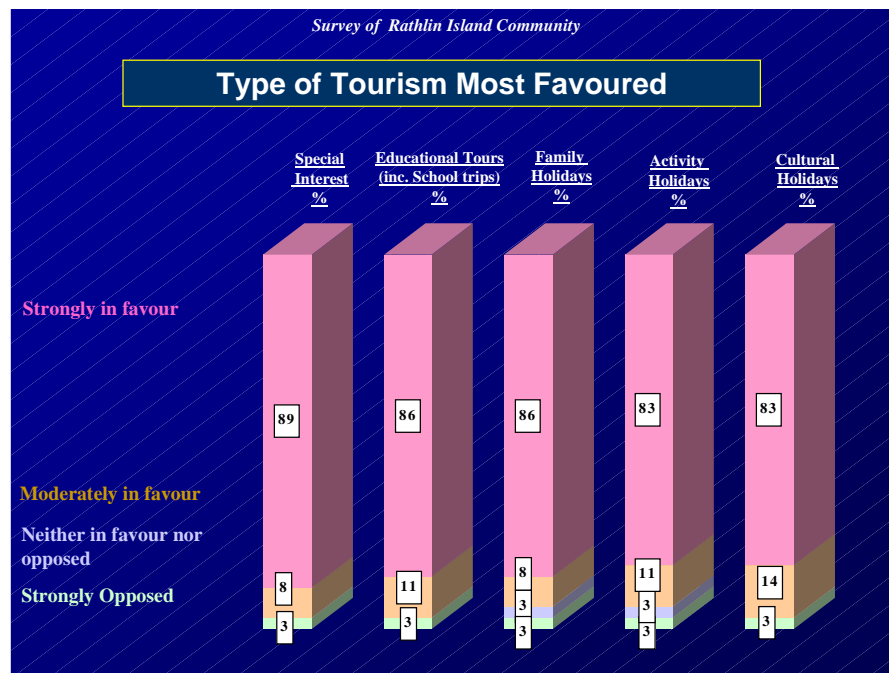
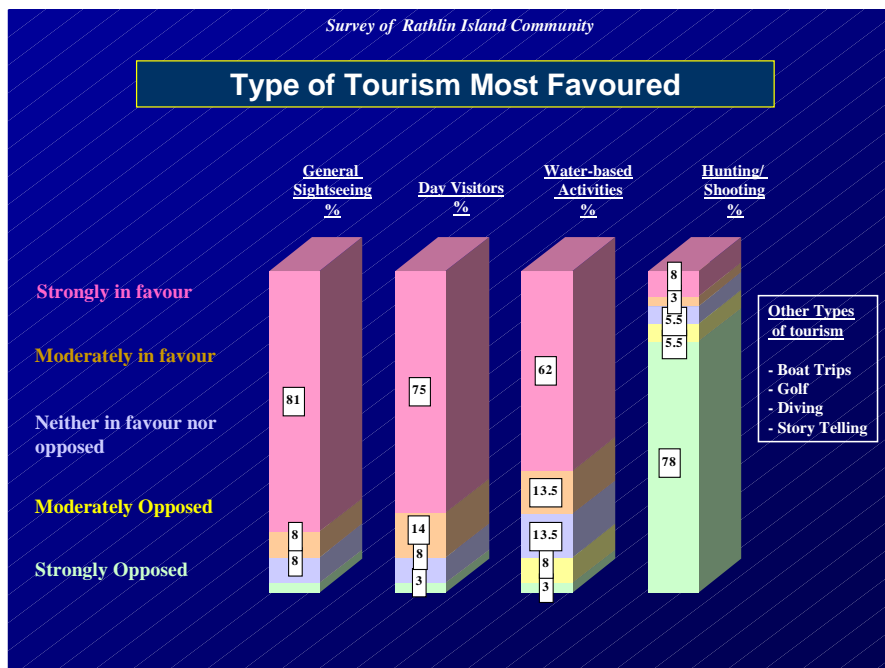


Table 7.11(b): Type of Tourism Most Favoured (continued).



RATHLIN HISTORY AND CULTURE

7.28 Respondents were asked for their opinion on the aspects of history/culture which they would like to see presented. Answers are summarised below.

Table 7.12: Aspects of History/ Culture to be presented to visitors

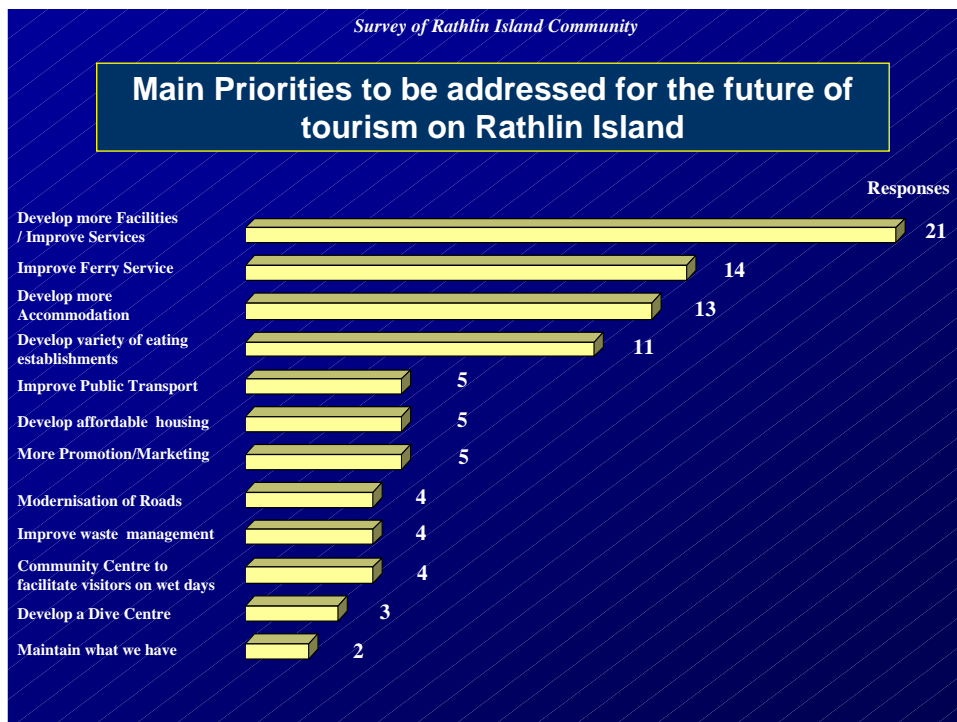


7.29 While no particular aspect of culture/period of history predominates, it is clear from the above suggestions that the community feel that considerably more can be done to provide visitors with a much better understanding of Rathlin Island history and culture.

MAIN PRIORITIES FOR TOURISM ON RATHLIN ISLAND

7.30 In conclusion, residents are of the view that **access** (to and around the island) and **product improvements** (accommodation, food, visitor facilities) are the main priorities that need to be addressed in a strategy for the future of tourism on the island.

Table 7.12: Main Priorities to Be Addressed for the Future of Tourism on Rathlin Island



7.31 Infrastructure improvements, in the form of improved waste management and roads were also identified as issues that need to be addressed.

CHAPTER 8 – TOURISM TRADE AND VISITOR SURVEY

TOURISM TRADE ON RATHLIN TOURISM PRODUCT AND POTENTIAL

SURVEY DETAILS

- 8.1 In order to ensure that a market-led approach is adopted in the preparation of this Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Rathlin Island, Tourism Development International carried out a survey of travel trade representatives over a two week period from mid-January to early February 2005.
- 8.2 25 interviews were conducted in total with the following types of organisation:

Table 8.1: Survey Details

- 8.3 Of the 25 organisations/individuals interviewed, 18 featured Rathlin Island currently, while 7 did not.

<i>Rathlin Island Trade Survey</i>	
Survey Details	
→ Professional Tour Guides	8
→ Tourist Board Executives (NITB/Tourism Ireland)	5
→ Tour Operators	5
→ Tourist Information Office Staff	3
→ Other (RSPB)	4
	<hr/>
	25

RATHLIN ISLAND - STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- 8.4 Respondents were asked to identify, in their own opinion, Rathlin Island's strengths and weaknesses as a tourism destination.
- 8.5 The natural aspects of Rathlin, the island's birdlife in particular, other wildlife (including seals and hares), flora and dramatic landscapes are each identified as assets. The unique atmosphere of island life and culture is also identified as an appealing feature, albeit at a somewhat lower level.

Table 8.2: Rathlin Island - Strengths and Weaknesses

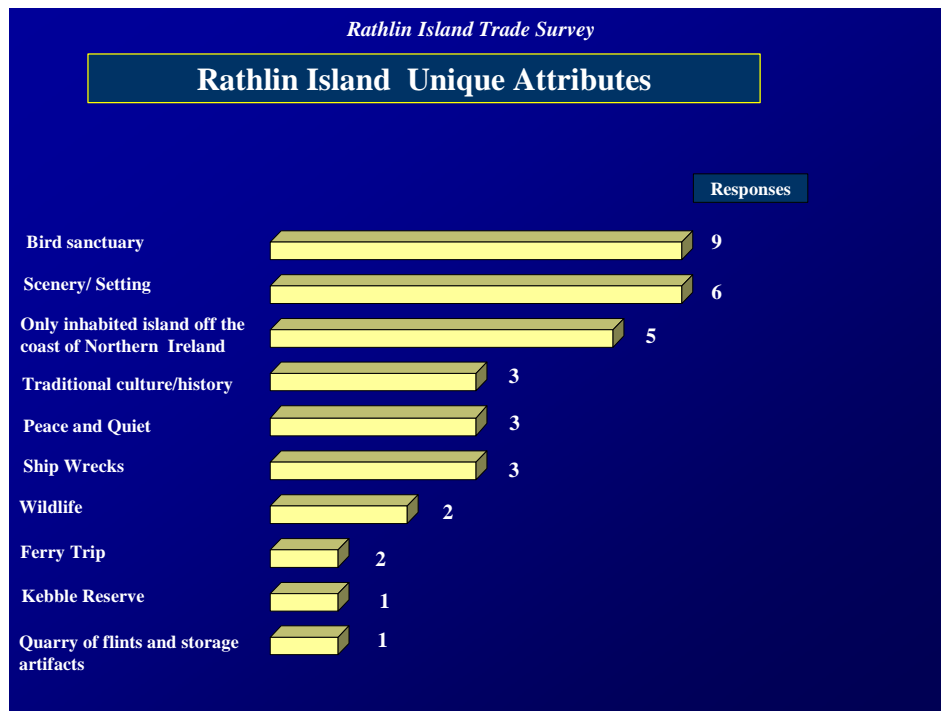
<i>Rathlin Island Trade Survey</i>			
Rathlin Island - Strengths and Weaknesses (as a tourist destination)			
<u>STRENGTHS</u>	<u>Responses</u>	<u>WEAKNESSES</u>	<u>Responses</u>
• Bird sanctuary/ Wildlife	12	• Lack of Facilities (inc. public toilets, eating establishments etc)	8
• Peace and Quiet	6	• Lack of Accommodation	7
• Flora & Fauna	5	• Accessibility	6
• History/ Culture	4	• Lack of info services	3
• Lighthouses	3	• Poor waste management/ Recycling	3
• Unspoiled Landscape	3	• Public transport on island	3
• Friendliness/ Atmosphere	3	• Poor practice of customer service	3
• Accessibility	2	• Seasonal Overcrowding	2
• Shipwrecks	2	• Nothing to do in bad weather	1
• Marine Life	2		
• Walking Trails	1		

- 8.6 Lack of visitor facilities/services, lack of choice of accommodation, poor access, and lack of information are identified as the island's main weaknesses as a tourism destination.

RATHLIN ISLAND UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

- 8.7 The birdlife, which is of international significance, is seen as the aspect of Rathlin Island that sets it apart from other destinations.

Table 8.3: Rathlin Island Unique Attributes

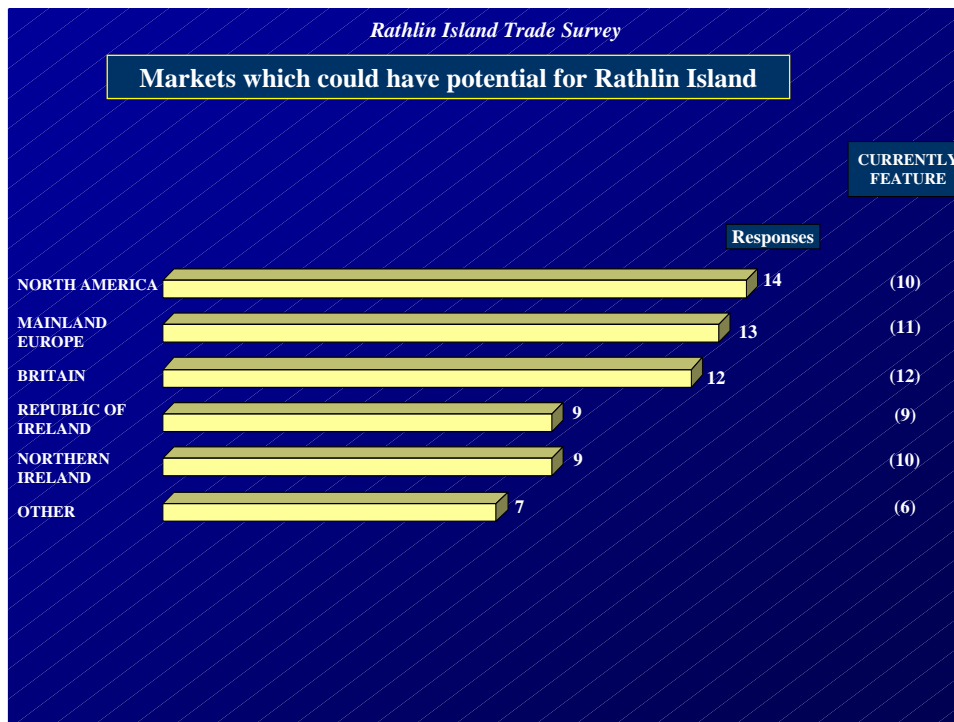


- 8.8 Apart from the birdlife, Rathlin's outstanding scenery, and status as the only inhabited island in Northern Ireland, also has great appeal.

MARKETS CONSIDERED TO HAVE POTENTIAL FOR RATHLIN ISLAND

8.9 Travel trade representatives believe that Rathlin Island has the potential to be developed for each of the main out-of-state markets - North America, Mainland Europe and Britain.

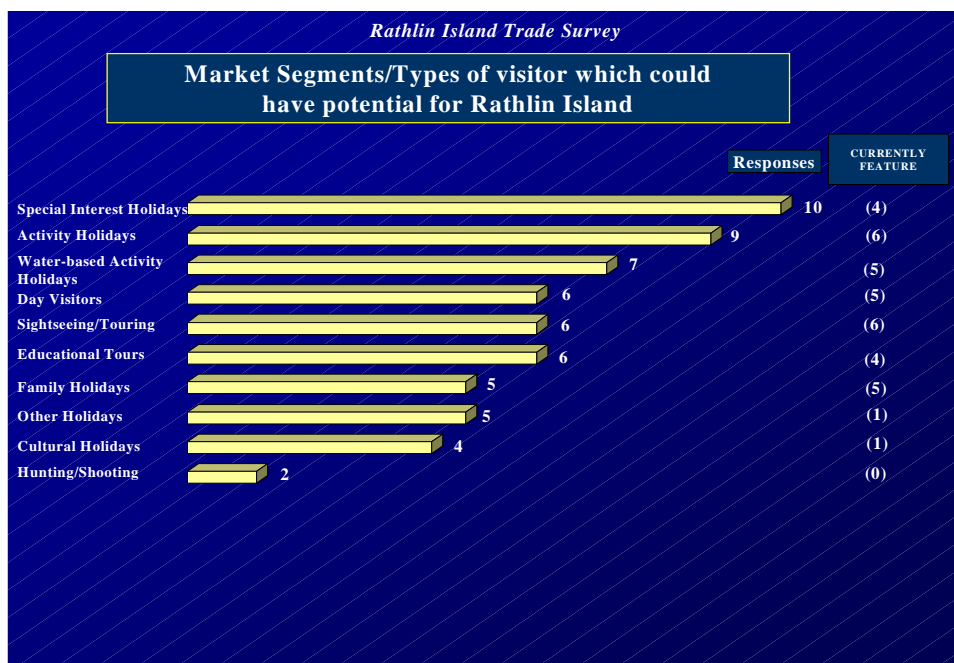
Table 8.4: Markets which have potential for Rathlin Island



MARKET SEGMENTS CONSIDERED TO HAVE POTENTIAL FOR RATHLIN ISLAND

8.10 Special interest holidays (i.e. ornithology) and activity holidays (i.e. walking) are considered to be the market segments/types of visitor with the greatest potential for development for Rathlin Island.

Table 8.5: Market Segments/ Types of Visitor which have potential for Rathlin Island

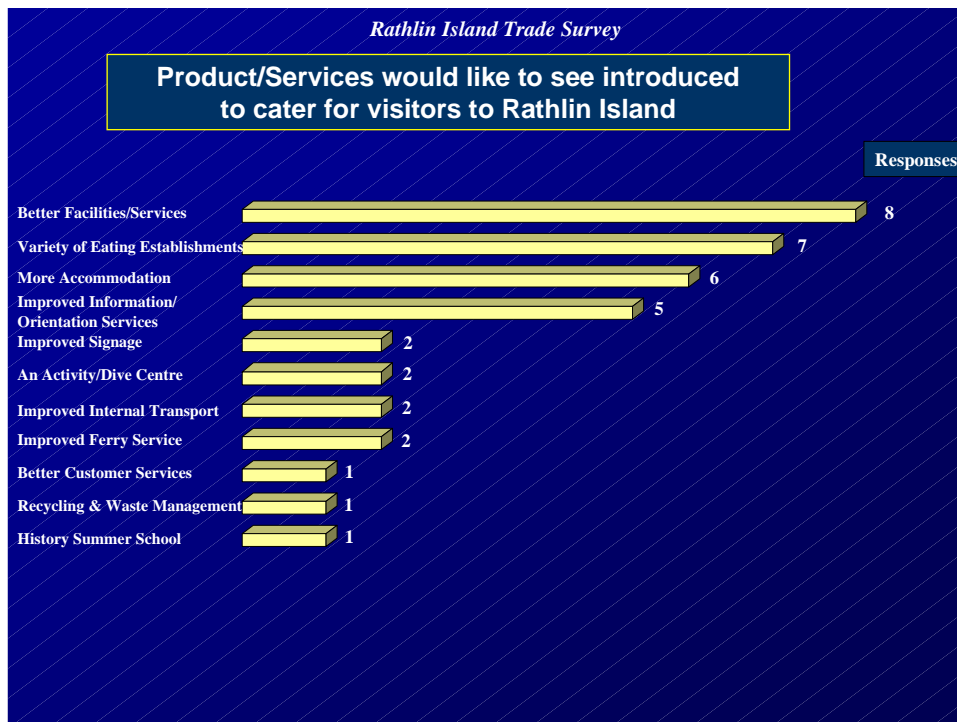


8.11 Rathlin is also considered as likely to appeal to general holidaymakers/day visitors and those interested in seeking a unique 'cultural' experience.

PRODUCTS/ SERVICES WOULD LIKE TO SEE INTRODUCED

8.12 In an open-ended question, where spontaneous responses were sought, representatives of the travel trade were asked for their opinion as to the products/services that should be introduced to cater for visitors to the island.

Table 8.6: Products/ Services would like to see introduced



RATINGS OF ASPECTS OF THE TOURISM PRODUCT AND INFRASTRUCTURE ON RATHLIN ISLAND

8.13 Using a five point rating scale (very good-very poor), travel trade representatives were asked to rate various aspects of the tourism product and infrastructure on Rathlin Island.

8.14 The island’s outstanding environment and scenic appeal are the only aspects of the 'product offer' to have received a very satisfactory 'score'.

Table 8.1.5: Rating of Aspects of Product/Infrastructure on Rathlin Island

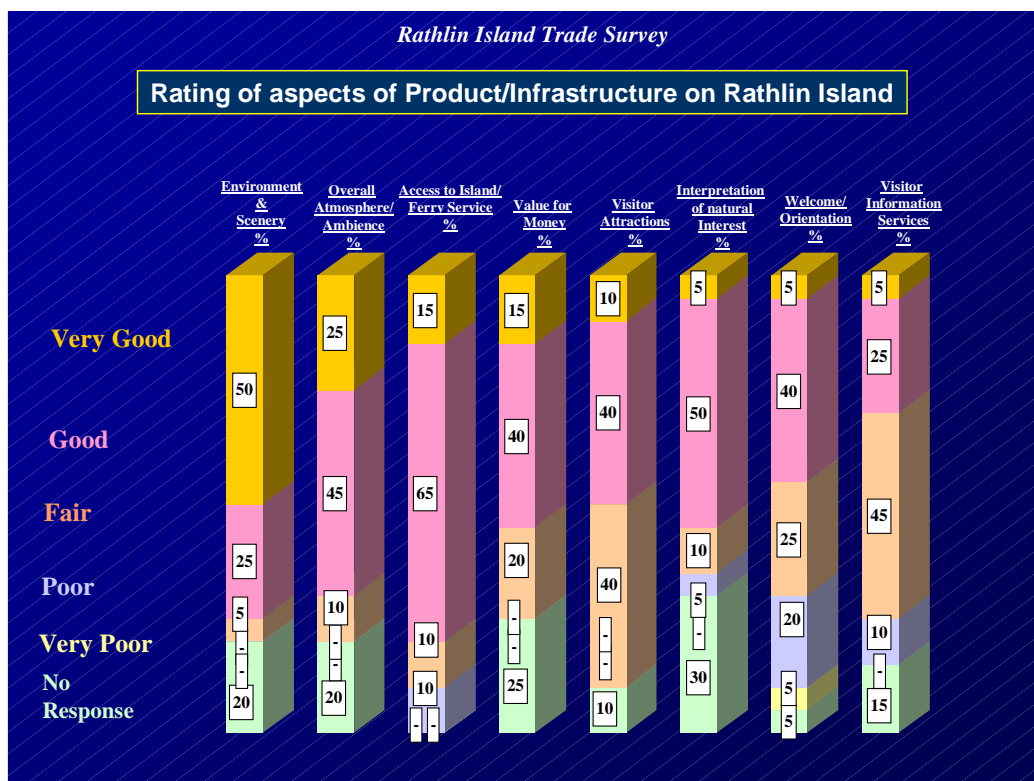
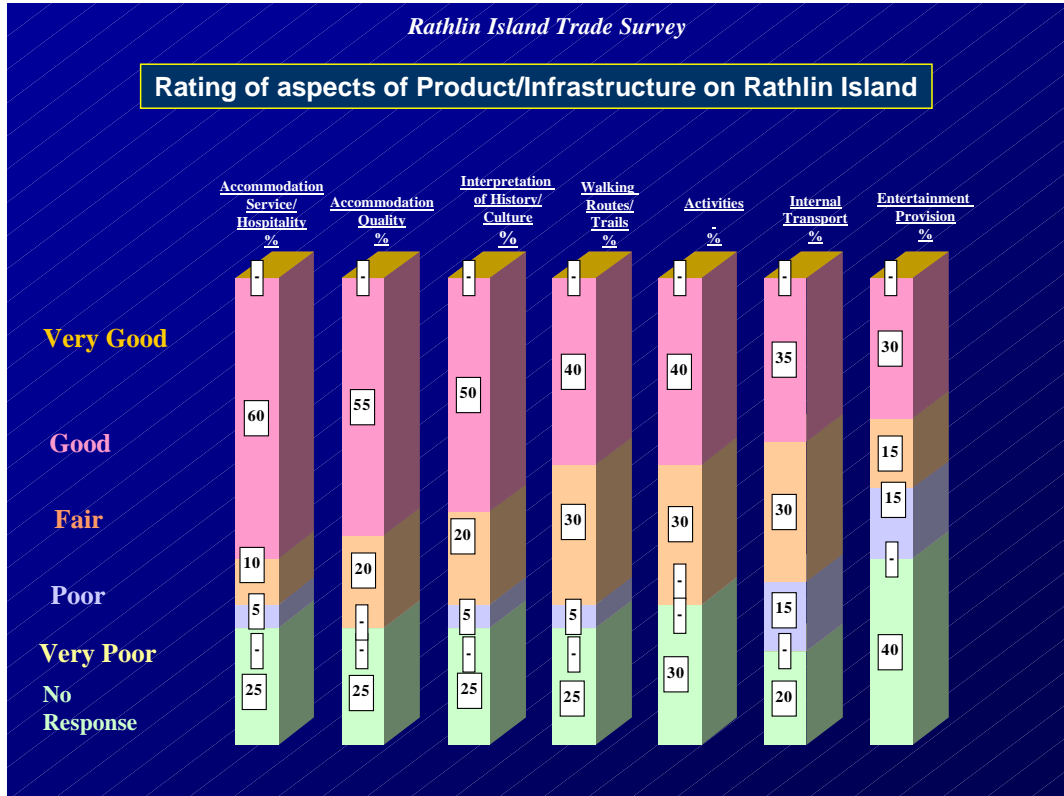


Table (8.7 continued): Rating of Aspects of Product/Infrastructure on Rathlin Island

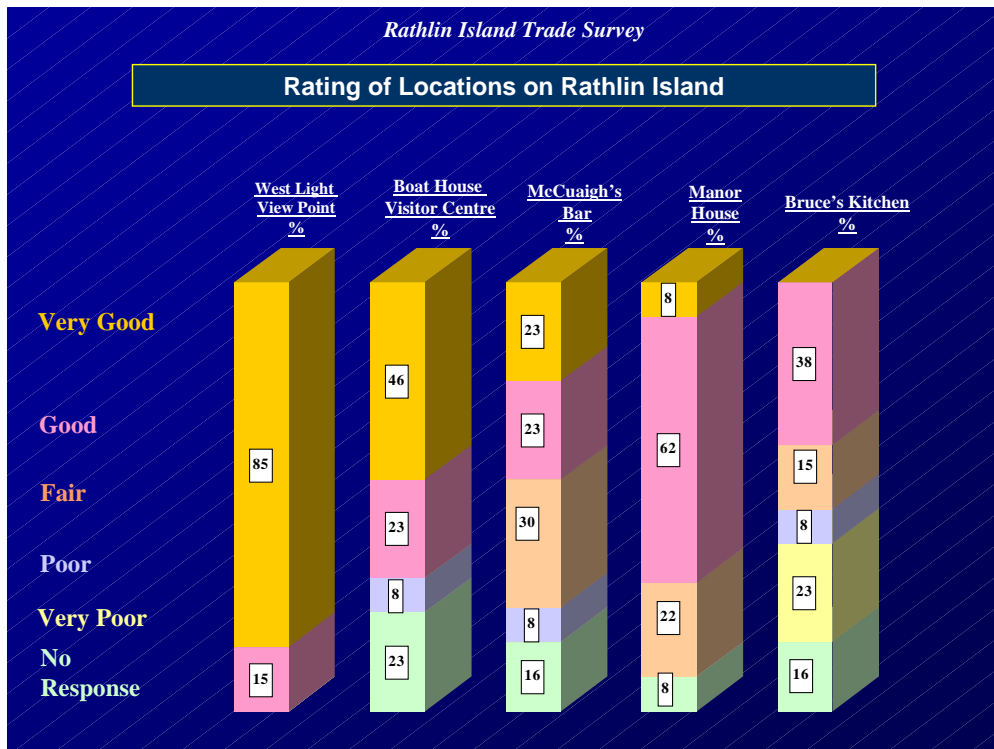


8.15 A number of aspects achieve 'satisfactory' ratings. These include overall atmosphere/ambience; ferry service, visitor attractions; interpretation of natural interest and value for money.

RATINGS OF LOCATIONS ON RATHLIN ISLAND

8.16 Using the same rating scale as in the previous question, respondents were asked to rate five locations on Rathlin Island. Most popular in this regard is the spectacular West Light View Point. The Boat House Visitor Centre was also highly rated.

Table 8.8: Rating of Locations on Rathlin Island



8.17 The National Trust has advertised for lessors for the Manor House as a guesthouse and restaurant for 10 years. Until contracts are finalised the Trust has appointed an interim management team to run the Manor House (2005 season).

OTHER ISSUES/ CONSIDERATIONS RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE ADDRESSED

8.18 Participants in the survey of Travel Trade were asked the following question:

"Are there any other issues or considerations that you would like to see addressed in planning for the future development of sustainable tourism on Rathlin Island."

8.19 The responses, as set out below, confirm the trade’s fairly strong view that the tourism product needs strengthening across the board. This should be done in a manner that does not compromise the unique environment and culture of Rathlin Island.

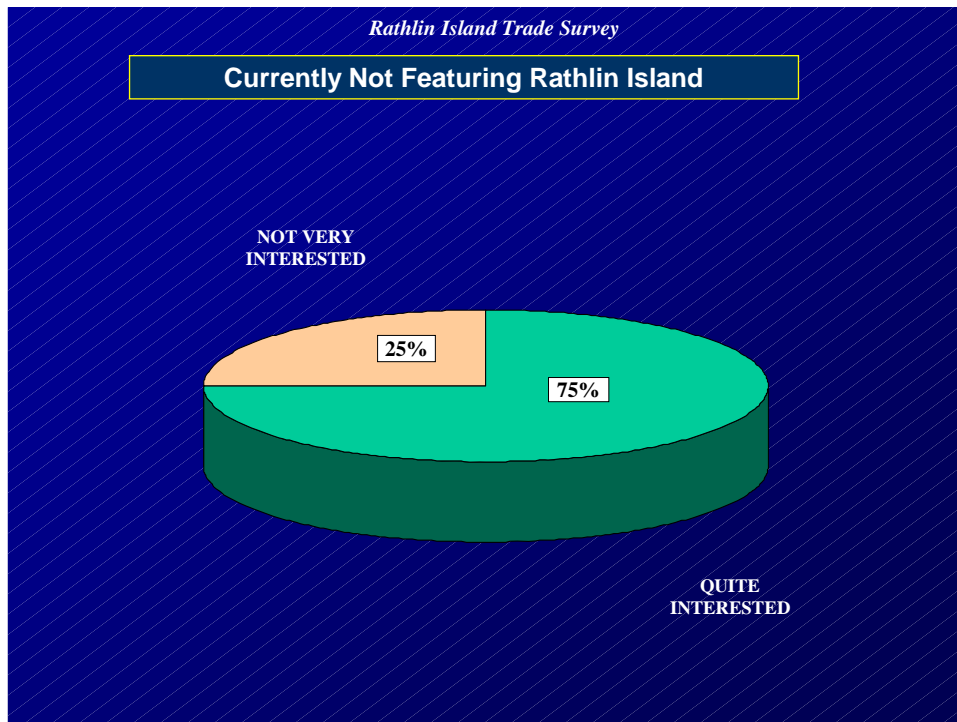
Table 8.9: Other Issues/ Considerations would like to see addressed



INTEREST IN FEATURING RATHLIN ISLAND

- 8.20 Seven of the twenty-five travel trade representatives interviewed do not currently feature Rathlin Island in their programmes. These individuals were asked whether they would be interested in featuring Rathlin Island in their programmes.

Table 8.10: Interest in Featuring Rathlin Island



- 8.21 Apart from the fact that 'new' destinations are always of interest to the travel trade, respondents cited growing market demand for island destinations.

SURVEY OF VISITORS TO RATHLIN ISLAND

8.22 In April 2005, Tourism Development International was appointed to undertake a survey of visitors to Rathlin Island. The overall objective of the survey was to ensure the adoption of a customer/market-led approach to the planning of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Rathlin Island.

8.23 Specific research objectives were as follows:

- To obtain an insight into the profile of visitors to Rathlin Island.
- To identify the means by which visitors become aware of Rathlin Island.
- To identify visitor perceptions of Rathlin Island's strengths, weaknesses and unique attributes.
- To obtain visitor ratings in relation key aspects of Rathlin Island's tourism product and infrastructure.
- To obtain visitor expenditure data.

METHODOLOGY/TIMING

8.24 The survey comprised interviews with visitors to Rathlin Island. Personal face-to-face interviews were conducted with 105 visiting adults over a three week timeframe from Tuesday 26th April to Sunday 15th May 2005.

Interviews were conducted at Mc Cuaig's Bar, Fergus's Tea Rooms, the West Light View Point and on the Ferry.

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE

8.25 Two thirds of the visitors interviewed were from Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland and England each accounted for one in ten.

Survey of Rathlin Island Visitors 1

Analysis of Sample

Country of Residence			Type of Visitor	Responses
Residence	No.	%		
Northern Ireland	66	63	General/	51
Rep. of Ireland	12	11	Sightseeing	
England	11	10	Activity Holidaymaker	12
Scotland	5	5	Special Interest	21
France	1	1	Visiting Friends/Relatives	13
Italy	1	1	Other	8
Other Europe	3	3		
North America	5	5		
Other non Europe	1	1		
TOTAL	105	100		

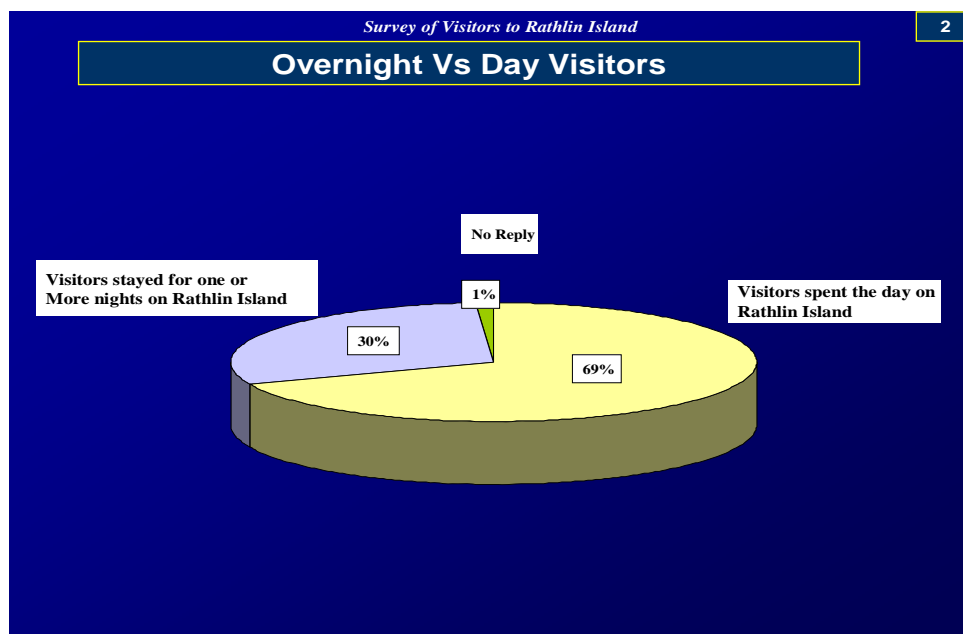
Party Type	
Coach Tour	10
Independent (Family)	41
Independents (other)	50
No Reply	4
Total	105

8.26 In terms of visitor type, half of the respondents interviewed claimed their visit was of a general sightseeing nature. Special interest visitors (most notably ornithology) accounted for one visitor in five, while activity holidaymakers (i.e. walkers) and individuals visiting friends and relatives were significant market segments.

8.27 Nine out of ten visitors interviewed were travelling independently either as part of a family group or other type of party.

VISITOR TYPE ANALYSIS

8.28 Just under one third of visitors interviewed had stayed overnight on Rathlin Island. On average, overnight visitors spent 2.5 days on the island



VISITOR PROFILE

8.29 Northern Ireland is currently the primary source market for Rathlin Island both in respect of overnight visits and day visits.

Survey of Rathlin Island Visitors

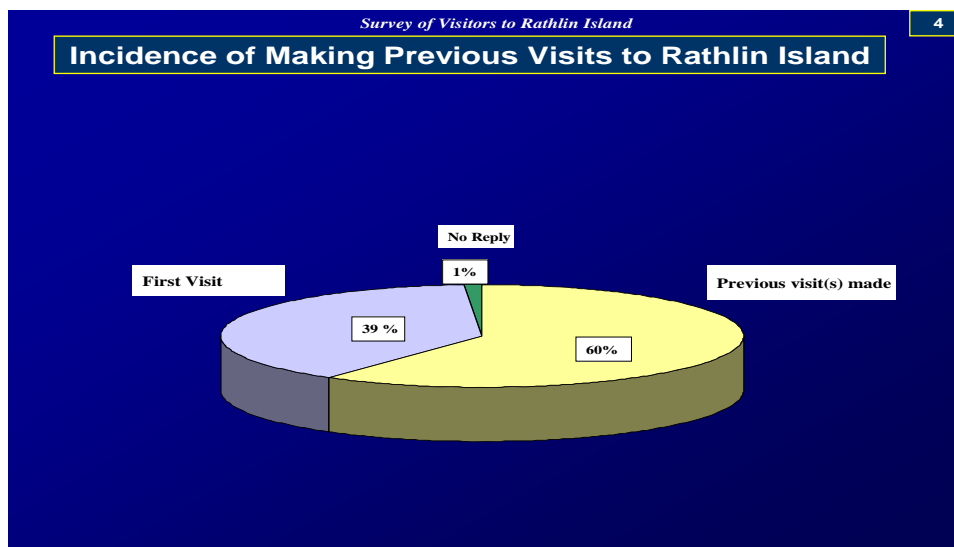
Visitor Profile

	<u>Overnight Visitor</u>	<u>Day Visitor</u>
	%	%
Northern Ireland	56	67
Rep. of Ireland	22	6
England	3	14
Scotland	9	3
Wales	-	-
Europe	3	5
North America	6	4
Other	-	1

8.30 The Republic of Ireland is the second most important market where overnight visits are concerned accounting for one visitor in five, while Great Britain is the second ranked market where day visitors are concerned.

INCIDENCE OF MAKING PREVIOUS VISIT TO RATHLIN ISLAND

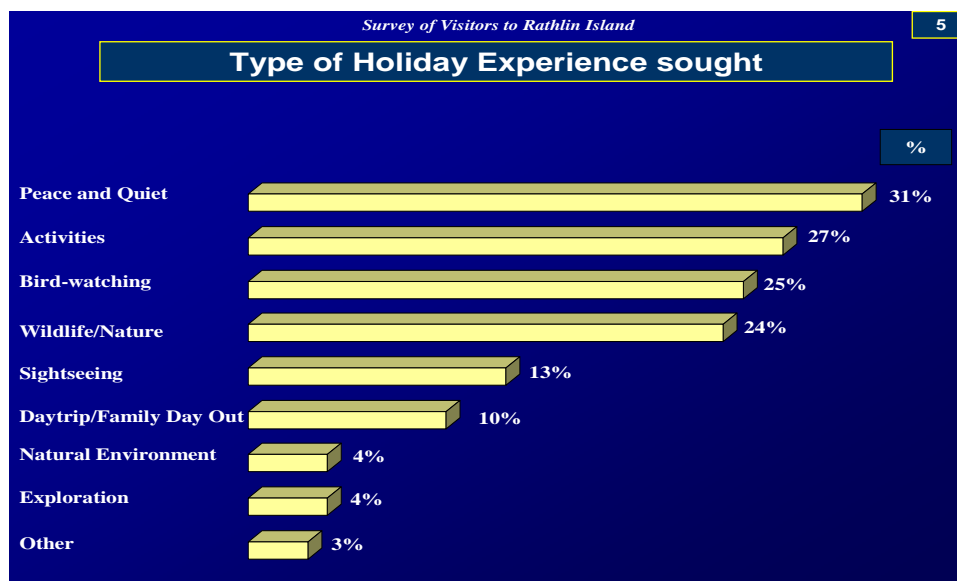
8.31 Four visitors in ten (39%) were making their initial visit to Rathlin Island. An overwhelming majority of visitors from Great Britain and other overseas markets were first time visitors. The opposite is the case where Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland are concerned where 73% and 67% respectively had made previous visits.



8.32 There is evidence that Rathlin Island has a loyal customer base. Half (48%) of those making previous visits had done so on five occasions or more.

TYPE OF HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE SOUGHT

8.33 The opportunity to experience peace and quiet, and specifically the tranquillity offered by an island setting, together with a desire to participate in activities and experience the wildlife and nature, are the primary reasons for visiting Rathlin Island.



8.34 Variations in motivations are evident according to market. For example, the primary motivation of Republic of Ireland visitors is to pursue activities (i.e. walking, cycling, diving etc- mentioned by 50%), while bird-watching and wildlife/nature was cited as the main motivating factor for English visitors.

8.35 The type of holiday experience sought by visitors from each of the main markets were as follows:

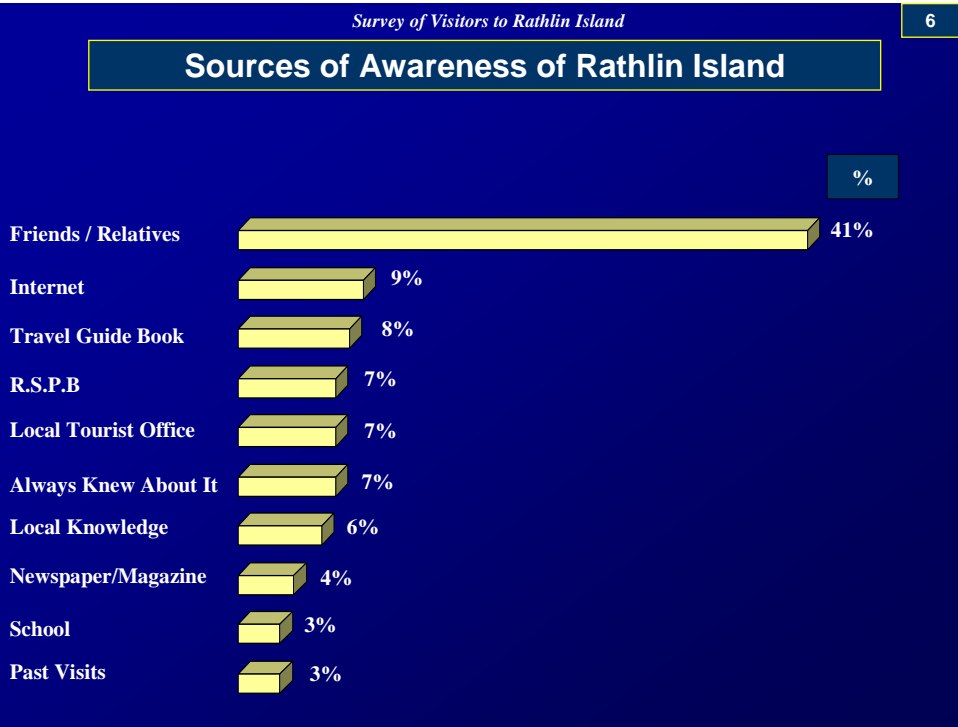
Survey of Rathlin Island Visitors

Holiday Experience Sought x Main Markets

NORTHERN IRELAND	%	REPUBLIC OF IRELAND	%	ENGLAND	%
Peace and Quiet	35			Bird-watching	36
Activities	29	Activities	50	Peace and Quiet	27
Wildlife/Nature	26	Peace and Quiet	25	Activities	18
Bird-watching	26	Bird-watching	17	Wildlife/Nature	18
Sightseeing	12				

SOURCE OF AWARENESS

8.36 While word of mouth is the single most important means by which visitors from all markets became aware of Rathlin Island, it is clear that visitors also availed of a wide range of information sources.

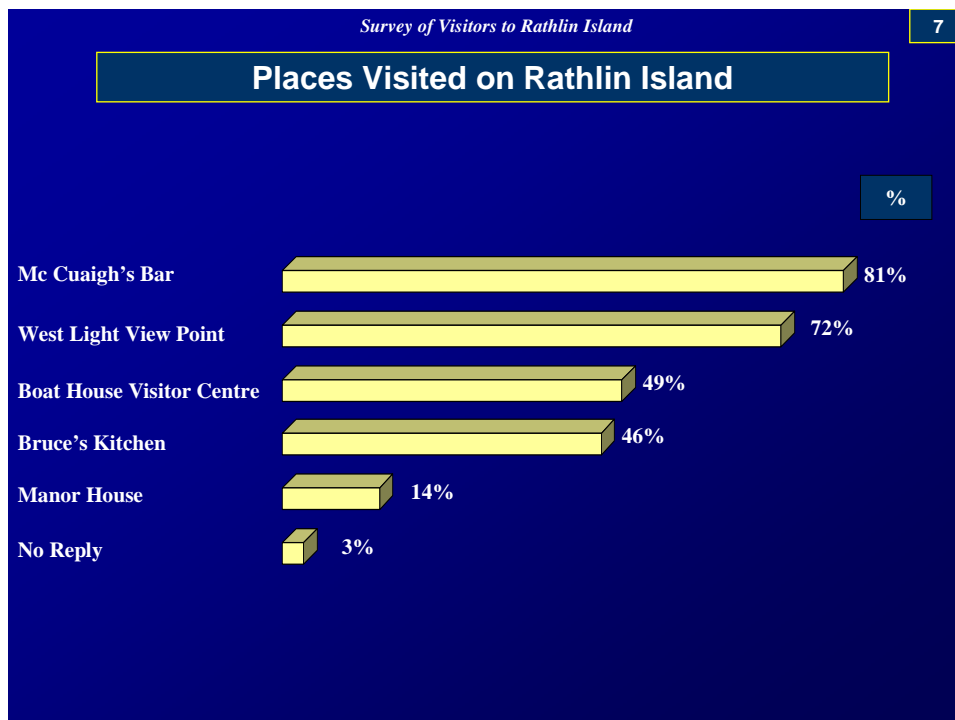


8.37 For international visitors, the internet, local tourist information offices in Northern Ireland, travel guidebooks and the R.S.P.B, each played an important role in communicating awareness and information regarding the island.

8.38 Visitors were also asked to identify sources from which **specific information** on Rathlin Island had been obtained. The main sources mentioned in this regard were friends/relatives (mentioned by 24%), local tourist information offices (12%) and the internet (11%)

PLACES VISITED ON RATHLIN ISLAND

8.39 Apart from Mc Cuaig’s Bar, which is conveniently located for arriving and departing visitors, the West Light View Point and the Boathouse are the island’s most popular attractions (in terms of claimed visitation).



8.40 In excess of 80% of visitors from Great Britain, Ireland and other international

markets had visited the West Light Viewing Point during their stays.

PARTICULAR LIKES REGARDING RATHLIN ISLAND

- 8.41 The appealing aspects of Rathlin Island are those already highlighted in respect of visitor motivations. Central to Rathlin’s appeal is its unique island landscape and environment where visitors are afforded an opportunity to get close to nature. Apart from nature, cultural aspects (i.e. friendliness, slower pace of life, island life etc) are also cited as strengths.

Survey of Visitors to Rathlin Island

8

Likes/Dislikes on Rathlin Island

<u>LIKES</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>DISLIKES</u>	<u>%</u>
Peace and Quiet	42	Untidy/Rubbish/Old Cars	22
Landscape/Scenery	33	Lack of Eating Establishments	15
Wildlife	25	Lack of Toilet/	
Friendliness/Hospitality	24	Shower Facilities	12
Bird Sanctuary	16	Nothing at all	11
Unspoilt/Non Commercialised	10	Many facilities Closed	5
No Traffic/No Crowds	9	Lack of Info/Orientation	5
Slower Pace of Life	7	Lack of Accommodation	4
Accessibility	6	Public Transport Systems	2
New Pontoons	6	Weather	2
Remoteness	5	New Houses/New Pontoons	2
Safe for Children	4	Lack of Shelters	1

PARTICULAR DISLIKES REGARDING RATHLIN ISLAND

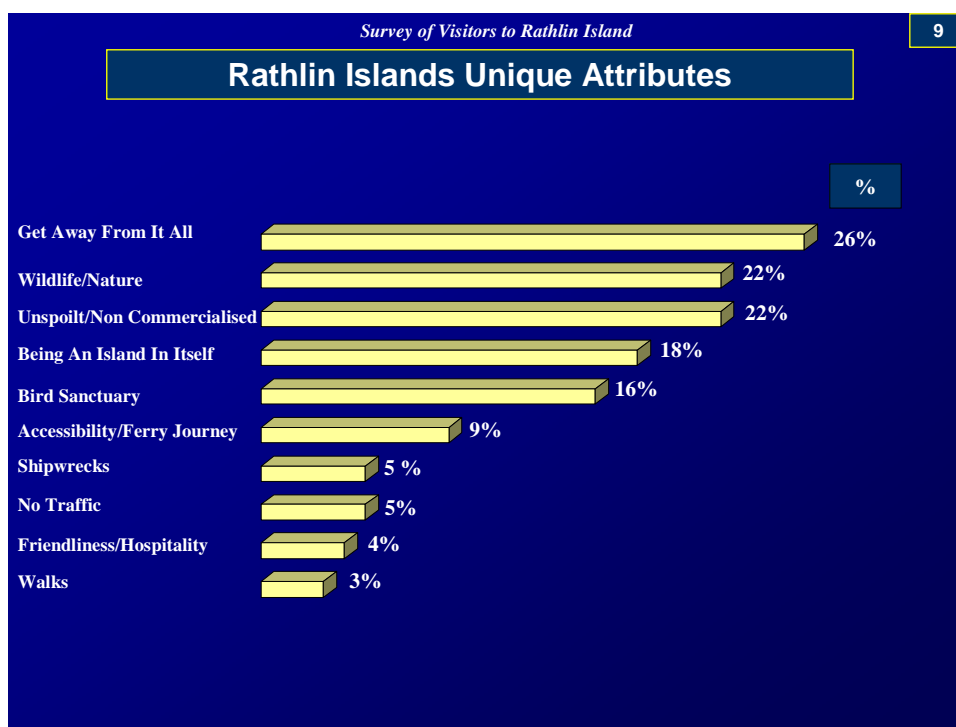
- 8.42 Visitors main concerns relates to the apparent failure to fully protect Rathlin's fragile environment. Dumping and the absence of appropriate waste disposal measures is a concern for a significant number of visitors.
- 8.43 Other weaknesses are presented above and refer primarily to shortcomings in the tourism product offer with the shortage of toilet and shower facilities, lack of dining facilities, absence of adequate visitor orientation and information identified as the areas most in need of attention.

RATHLIN ISLAND'S UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

- 8.44 Visitors were also asked the following question:-

“What in your opinion are Rathlin Island's Unique Attributes? What, if anything, makes it different from other destinations”

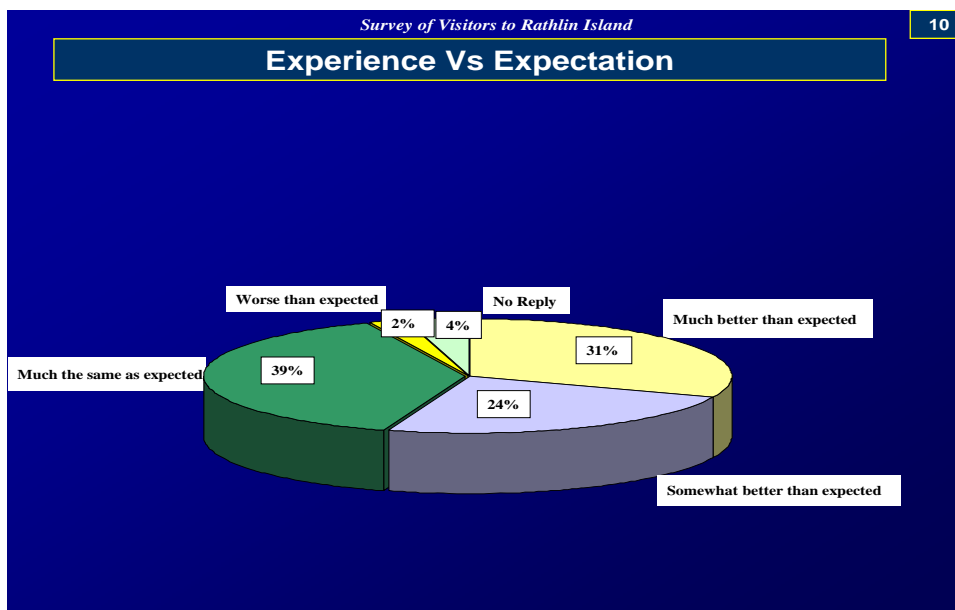
The responses to this question are presented below.



8.45 Rathlin's unique attributes vary according to the main visitor types/market segments. For example, where general/sightseeing visitors are concerned, the unspoilt environment and island experience are seen as the attributes that differentiate Rathlin Island from other locations. For special interest visitors on the other hand, the island's nature/wildlife is seen as its most unique attribute.

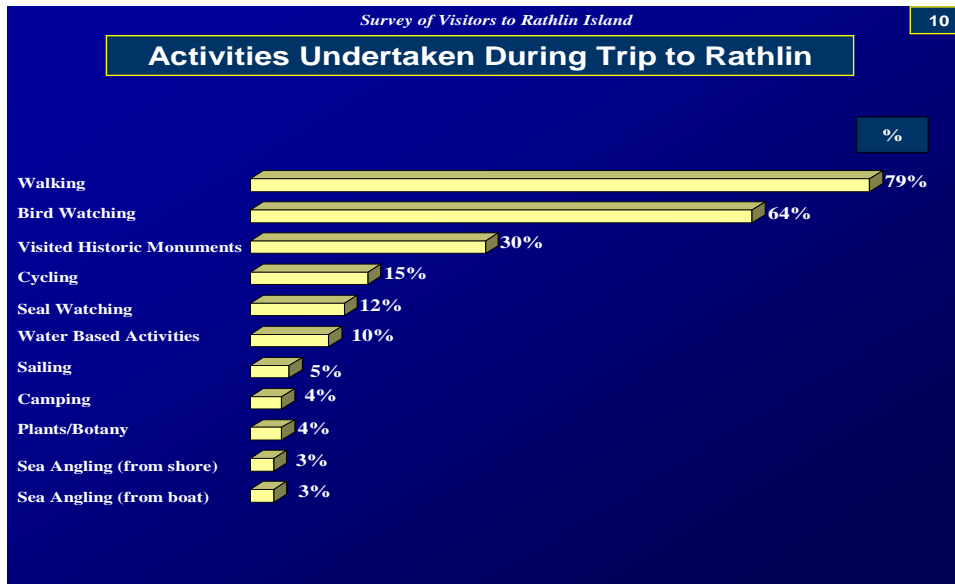
RATING OF VISIT COMPARED TO EXPECTATIONS

8.46 For the majority visitors to Rathlin Island, their experience of the island exceeded their prior expectations



8.47 Highest levels of satisfaction were experienced by activity holidaymakers and independent family holidaymakers. In both instances, in excess of four visitors in ten claimed their visit to Rathlin Island had been much better than expected.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES



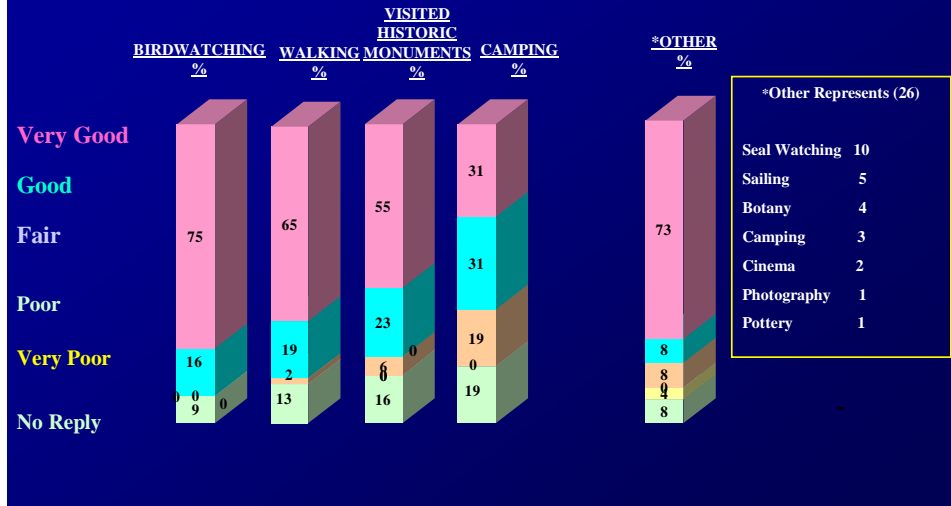
8.48 Walking and bird-watching were the two main activities undertaken by visitors to Rathlin Island. As can be seen from the chart above, Rathlin Island offers a mix of 'active' and 'passive' pursuits.

8.49 A majority of visits from all markets (except from North America) undertook short walks while on Rathlin Island. Bird-watching also enjoys majority participation amongst all markets with the exception of the Republic of Ireland and North America.

RATING OF ACTIVITIES

8.50 In each case, visitors who participated in activities on Rathlin Island were asked to rate those activities using a standard 5 point scale ranging from very good to very poor. The ratings attributable to each activity are presented below.

Rating of Activities on Rathlin Island



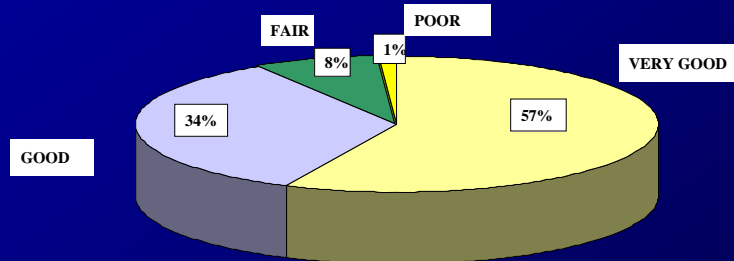
8.51 Bird-watching, walking and ‘other’ are the activities that achieve the highest customer ratings. The latter group includes a variety of different active and passive pursuits.

8.52 In a follow up question visitors identified the following as unsatisfactory aspects of their visits to Rathlin Island-

- Poor choice/standard of places to eat (33%)
- Toilets in poor condition (32%)
- Lack of information on accommodation, activities and transport (15%)
- Poor public transport (11%)
- Ferry being too cramped (9%)

VALUE FOR MONEY

8.53 The overwhelming majority of visitors consider their visit to Rathlin Island to have been good value.

Value for Money

- 8.54 Amongst the minority (9%) who did not believe their visit to Rathlin Island represented good value, the price and quality of food and the cost of the ferry trip were identified as the primary reasons for dissatisfaction.

Visitor Expenditure

- 8.55 Day visitors spent an average of £15(per person) during their visit to Rathlin Island. The main items of expenditure were the ferry tariff and food and beverage.

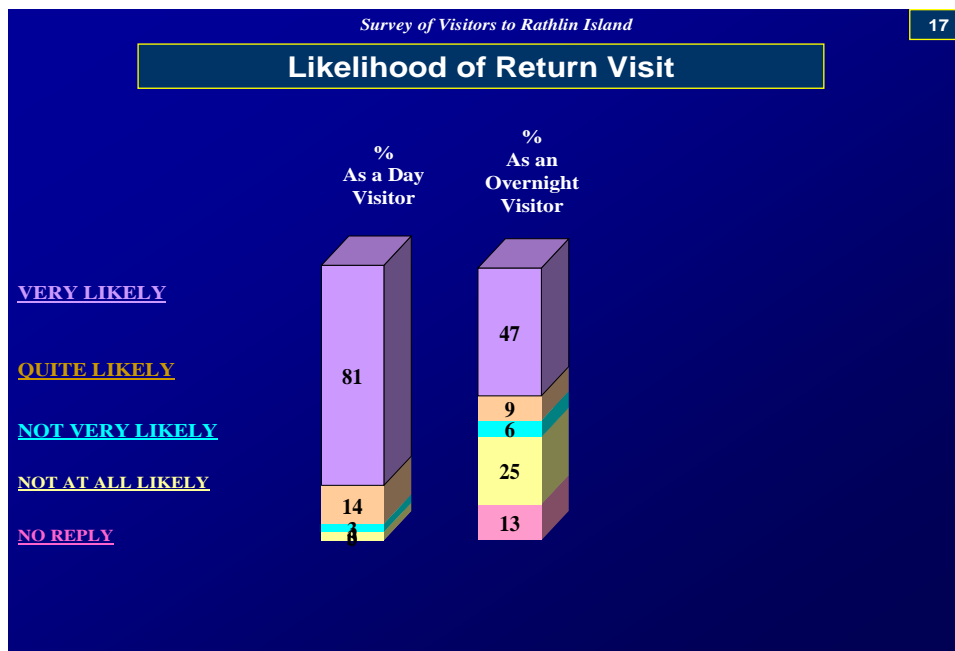
Visitor Expenditure

	<u>Day Visitor</u>	<u>Overnight Visitor</u>
• Ferry	£12.03	£11.22
• Accommodation	£0.00	£29.19
• Food and Beverage	£10.42	£59.38
• Transport (internal)	£3.64	£0.63
• Activity Participation	£0.03	£7.34
• Visiting Attractions	£0.00	£0.31
• Shopping	£2.33	£6.69
• Entertainment	£0.03	£1.31
• Other	£0.77	£0.63
<u>TOTAL</u>	£29.25	£116.70
• The above information is representative spend covering two people.		

- 8.56 Overnight visitors make a much more significant per capita economic contribution to Rathlin Island. Average per capita expenditure for overnight visitors is estimated at £58. In addition to ferry tariffs and food and beverage, overnight visitors also contribute to the accommodation sector, activities and craft sectors of Rathlin Island's economy.

REPEAT VISIT POTENTIAL

- 8.57 The overall high levels of visitor satisfaction with Rathlin island is confirmed by the evidence of buoyant repeat visit potential. Most visitors indicated that they would be very likely to return again as day visitors. Almost half claimed that they would be very likely to return as overnight visitors.

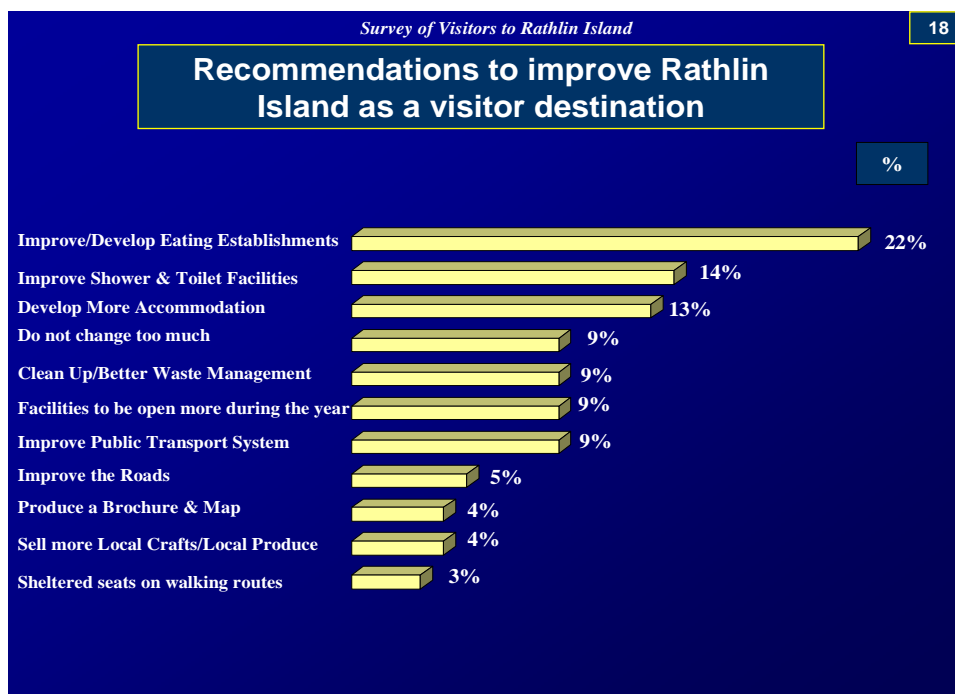


- 8.58 Rathlin Island's ability to capitalise on the encouraging levels of repeat visit potential as highlighted above will depend, to a great extent, on the extent to which the community take on board the recommendations as suggested by visitors (see overleaf).

VISITOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.59 In a final question, visitors were asked for their suggestions as to how Rathlin Island could be improved as a visitor destination. The responses to this question are set out below and are a direct response to the weaknesses and concerns already identified

by visitors.



8.60 In order to address the issues identified in this visitor survey, and also in the audit and trade research, the consultants have prepared a series of action plans as an integral part of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Rathlin Island. The action plans are set out in section 13 of the report.

CHAPTER 9 - EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

CASE STUDY 1 - FAIR ISLE

- 9.1 Fair Isle is Britain's remotest community, famous for its jerseys and its Bird Observatory. It lies about 40 km south-west of Sumburgh Head at the southern tip of Shetland, and is a similar distance north-east of the Orkneys. Just 5km long and 3 km wide, it is mostly surrounded by impressive cliffs, rising to almost 200 metres along the heavily indented west-coast.
- 9.2 The 70 or so islanders mostly live in traditional crofts on the more fertile and low lying southern third of the island. The northern part is largely rough grazing and rocky moorland, rising to the 217 metre Ward Hill. Fair Isle's oceanic climate brings stormy but fairly mild winters, while summer visitors can expect rapid changes in the weather.
- 9.3 The island has been owned by the [National Trust for Scotland](#), since 1954. It is considered to be one of Britain's most successful small communities, pioneering projects in wildlife tourism, wind-power and sustainable management of the environment.
- 9.4 Agriculture is based on low-intensity, subsistence farming, with a combination of modern technology and old-style labour producing hay, silage, oats, kale and turnips as winter fodder for sheep and cattle. Islanders can grow potatoes and a wide range of vegetables outside. Increasingly, crops for household use are raised under glass and poly-tunnels. Always progressive, the crofters of Fair Isle in 1997 got together to produce baled silage rather than the hay traditionally made for winter keep.
- 9.5 The National Trust has encouraged and initiated various improvements, including a renewable energy project using wind power. The famous colourful knitted patterns, which take their name from the island, are sold by the Fair Isle Knitting Co-operative world-wide. Additional crafts now include traditional wooden boat-building, spinning, weaving, dyeing, felting, woodturning and fiddle-making, the manufacture of straw-backed chairs, spinning wheels and stained-glass windows.
- 9.6 For more than 50 years the internationally renowned Fair Isle Bird Observatory has done scientific research on bird migration and the island's magnificent seabird breeding colonies. The birds are also a major tourist attraction.
- 9.7 Many of the visitors who stay at the comfortable Observatory Lodge (sleeps 34) are dedicated birdwatchers that come to see the spring and autumn migrations of songbirds. Lying on the intersection of major flightpaths from Scandinavia, Iceland and Faroe, Fair Isle can produce impressive numbers of common species and also many eastern rarities. Visitors are welcome to accompany the wardens on their early morning rounds of the famous ringing traps, and to help with daily observations.
- 9.8 The island represents an outstanding example of a remote and isolated community with strong cultural traditions that has learned to work with the National Trust (and they have learned to work with the community). The community has a diverse economy which is still based on traditional agricultural operations, but working with significant bird interests to develop a long season for tourists who are drawn to a unique location.

CASE STUDY 2 - GIGHA

- 9.9 For many decades before community ownership Gigha had been in decline. In the early 1970's there were nearly 200 inhabitants by 2002 there were less than 100. Where there had been 30 children in the school there were now 7, where once there were 10 farms 3 remained.
- 9.10 On the 15th March 2002 the islanders of Gigha took the historic step of buying their island ensuring that for all time Gigha would be held in trust for the benefit of all.
- 9.11 Already much has been achieved. With returning islanders and new islanders the population has grown to 121. This school term there will be 13 primary pupils when previously there were 7. New businesses have been created and others are to relocate to new purpose built craft units, a major improvement programme for the island's housing will start this year, new homes to let will be built and a further five households will be building their own homes. Things are changing on Gigha but there is still much to do. Gigha is also now generating two-thirds of its electricity from its own community owned wind turbines. These will generate up to £200k net profit for the island once the initial capital borrowing has been repaid in 7 years.
- 9.12 Gigha people have taken a strategic view of their relationship to tourism, which is seen along with other, often higher, priorities as a part solution to a sustainable future. Repaying the borrowing for the purchase of the island, dealing with the housing problems of the island and rejuvenating the agricultural economy will all have a higher priority, but tourism is seen as a key economic driver. They have looked at tourism in a connected way to other aspects of the island and are intent on addressing the following issues
- Developing a Marketing Strategy (Gigha the brand);
 - Understanding who are our visitors
 - Visitor Accommodation Strategy – improve occupancy levels; improve standards;
 - Increase self catering; bunkhouse accommodation and formalise camping
 - Interpretation/Heritage Centre
 - Oral History Project
 - Upgrade the Gardens
 - Develop an integrated Path network
 - Expand fresh and sea fishing opportunities
 - Develop specialist holiday retreats
 - Expand provision of Boat trips

Lessons for Rathlin

- 9.13 Gigha is an island, which has been at the brink of oblivion and through the brave grasping of a rare opportunity has built a new future for itself. Tourism is part of that future, but as an integrated part of building a sustainable community that will be better equipped to face the future with confidence. The support of key Government agencies has been fundamental to this success so far.**

CASE STUDY 3 - PAPA WESTRAY

- 9.14 Papa Westray, known to locals as Papay, is one of Orkney's smallest isles lying some 35km north of Kirkwall. Just 6kms long by just over 1 wide, Papay is a fascinating and diverse place to visit, steeped in history but with a lively population of around 70.
- 9.15 Papay is green and fertile and because of this has been home to farming activity for at least 5,000 years. There are nearly 60 archaeological sites listed on Papay, an astonishing testimony to the immense period of human habitation. These range from the Knap of Howar the oldest known north European houses, built and occupied a millennium before the pyramids, through a huge chambered tomb on the Holm of Papay, to ancient churches heralding the advent of Christianity.
- 9.16 Today, farming is still one of the main activities of the islanders, especially the production of excellent beef cattle. Local folk are also involved in lobster and crab fishing, market gardening, building, crafts, tourism, writing and computer-based work - and maintaining essential island services.
- 9.17 Papay has a Development Plan which recognises the fundamental importance of the physical environment to the special character of the island. The north end of the island is an RSPB Reserve established in 1976 Conservation and improvement of the environment is given a high priority in all their planning.
- 9.18 Tourism is a key part of the island economy. Visitors come to Papay to experience the unique qualities of the island. The islanders acknowledge its importance and are aware that it must be developed in a sustainable manner, bringing visitors the **highest quality of experience**. They have identified a range of development projects:
- Ensure that the best use is made of the guest house, hostel and self-catering units run by the Community Co-op.
 - Extend camping facilities, and consider additional self-catering accommodation (preferably in traditional buildings).
 - Improve visitor facilities by: developing a Pier Visitor Centre; improving the signposting, marked paths and stiles; ensuring that all visitors are made welcome on arrival, and that refreshments are available; providing more services for visiting yachts.
 - Improving marketing of the island by: enhancing the web site (<http://www.papawestray.co.uk/>) and creating new links; increasing the island profile in Orkney and elsewhere; improving advertising of accommodation and facilities on Papay; developing Package tours and investigating niche tourist markets for e.g. archaeology, birds, crafts, boating, stress management, religious tours etc.
- 9.20 **Papa Westray is an island which has welcomed many new families who have been attracted by the quality of the island life and they and the locals have worked together to develop an attractive destination where co-operative working benefits all. Papay has recognised the need to work with their near neighbour Westray to build their tourism economy together**

CASE STUDY 4 - FAROE ISLANDS - KOLTUR

- 9.20 Situated in the heart of the Gulf Stream in the North Atlantic at 62°00'N, the Faroe Islands lie northwest of Scotland and halfway between Iceland and Norway. The archipelago is composed of 18 islands covering 1399 km² (545.3 sq.miles) and is 113 km (70 miles) long and 75 km (47 miles) wide, roughly in the shape of an arrowhead. There are 1100 km (687 miles) of coastline and at no time is one more than 5 km (3 miles) away from the ocean. The highest mountain is 882 m (2883 ft) above sea level and the average height above sea level for the country is 300 m (982 ft).
- 9.21 The population is 48,407 (1st June 2004). About 18,800 people live in the metropolitan area which comprises Tórshavn, Hoyvík, Argir, Kaldbak and Kollafjørður, while about 5,000 people live in Klaksvík, the second largest town in the Faroe Islands.
- 9.22 Since 1948, the Faroe Islands have been a self-governing region of the Kingdom of Denmark. It has its own parliament and its own flag. It is not, however, a member of the European Union and all trade is governed by special treaties.
- 9.23 Faroese is the national language and is rooted in Old Norse. Nordic languages are readily understood by most Faroese, and English is also widely spoken, especially among the younger people.
- 9.24 The fishing industry is the most important source of income for the Faroes. Fish products account for over 97% of the export volume. Tourism is the second largest industry, followed by woollen and other manufactured products.
- 9.25 Faroese society is undergoing further economic changes, principally due to the continuing decline of agriculture and fishing combined with the search for oil in the North Sea and efforts to substantially increase tourism. The expectation of this shift has resulted in intense debate, mainly related to how to stop oil revenue causing more societal problems than it solves. Nonetheless, Faroese are proud of their rich heritage and strongly seek to preserve it.
- 9.26 The Faroe Islands have significant heritage exposed to numerous, and potentially catastrophic vulnerabilities.
- 9.27 The island of Koltur amply illustrates some of the heritage, vulnerability, and sustainability challenges faced by the Faroes. Koltur, the smallest of the inhabited islands, has an area of 2.5km yet still rises 477 m above the sea level. No commercial ferries travel to the island, but a public helicopter route has two scheduled landings on each Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, weather-permitting. Otherwise, a boat or helicopter must be chartered privately or owned to reach Koltur. The inhabitants are a couple who farm the island, who were selected from a group of applicants to live there, and who are guardians of the unique Faroese heritage on the island.
- 9.28 Koltur has some of the best examples of the old Norse building tradition, in terms of community layout, building design, and architecture. Two clusters of buildings remain, one a few minutes walk south from the inhabitants' house and the harbour and one a few minutes walk north. The old buildings have not been well -maintained, but they are well-preserved.
- 9.29 A superb opportunity exists to turn Koltur into an exceptional heritage site of the traditional Faroese and Nordic building and community styles. More importantly and creatively, one idea is making Koltur a living site where the buildings would be preserved and maintained yet made into a functional farm. They would illustrate how farming has been conducted in the Faroes over the past millennium.

- 9.30 The challenge for Koltur is balancing preservation with tourism. Visitor numbers should not exceed the ability to provide power, water, and appropriate waste management without damaging the island. Nonetheless, visitors would bring in revenue which would be needed to run and maintain the heritage site.
- 9.31 One principal issue is accommodation and facilities for visitors. Bringing the old buildings up to the modern safety and access standards needed for habitation could damage the buildings, either physically or through altering their character. Therefore, camping appears to be most appropriate alternative with the addition of adequate showers and toilets. Similarly, regular transport to and from Koltur would be needed, yet would impact the island's isolation. Visitors could perhaps work on the farm and contribute to the restoration and maintenance work in a similar manner to Earthwatch <http://www.earthwatch.org> projects. With groups arriving and departing irregularly, chartering a boat or helicopter becomes viable with minimal impact on Koltur's remoteness.
- 9.32 The marketing of Koltur, and in many ways the rest of Faroese heritage, requires a delicate balance of encouraging people to sample from and contribute to the uniqueness, beauty, and inspiration while being certain that visitors know what to expect. Earthwatch states on their website "We are not in the package holiday business, so if that's what you want better look elsewhere... if you want cable TV, pina coladas by the pool, and a quick drive by the sites, this is not for you".
- 9.33 For years promoted as an essential bird-watching visit for Faroes' tourists, the Vestmanna Cliffs are reached by a boat tour. In 2003, two main companies were operating two boats each. The tour lasts approximately two hours usually permitting four trips a day per boat for a total of sixteen trips every day. The boats travel within metres of the birds in the water and on the cliffs, are powered by motors and tend to run all summer.
- 9.34 Concern has been expressed that such continued activity disrupts the birds' breeding and feeding, scares the young, and imprints on the birds so that they will nest elsewhere in subsequent years.
- 9.35 Continually travelling extremely close to birds is not necessary to enjoy the trip, part of which involves sailing through spectacular grottoes and around cliff-lined inlets. Some of these areas have been closed due to rock-falls, hence similar restrictions could be imposed for protecting birds. By limiting the number of inlets, which are used and by rotating them each year or by another timeframe - the trip's enjoyment would not be curtailed, but the disturbance of birds would be significantly lessened.
- 9.36 Koltur is a site with significant heritage, which requires increased visitor numbers to sustain it, but not too many or else it will be unsustainable. Vestmanna is a site already experiencing the possibility of too many visitors. These cases provide practical ways forward to manage the vulnerabilities of the heritage.

Relevance to Rathlin

- 9.37 **The idea of creating a living site building preserved and maintained illustrating how farming has been conducted in the Faroes. This is similar to the idea that a "Living Story" should be presented on Rathlin Island, whereby an old cottage might be preserved, in which, wonderful traditions and culture could be shared through the art of storytelling.**
- 9.38 Again, the challenge for this island, as with many other islands is to balance preservation with tourism. The marketing of Koltur and indeed the Faroes seeks to attract a certain type of visitor, the type that would also be desired to visit Rathlin.

- 9.39 The concern of disruption to the Birdlife in Vestmanna was an issue also aired in relation to Rathlin. It is considered by some that many of the 'rare' birds that were once prominent on the island have now become extinct due to changes in land use. Like Rathlin, Koltur is attempting to increase the levels of tourism, without disrupting the local community and environment.

CASE STUDY 5 - LOCAL TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

THE ISLAY WAVE BUS - THE ULTIMATE GREEN BUS

- 9.40 The Islay wave bus is the first electric bus in the world to be powered by wave energy. The LIMPET wave machine that powers it is the only commercially operating wave power station in the UK. Scottish and Southern, the local electricity company, have allocated electricity generated by the LIMPET to the bus operators, to cover the charging needs of the bus. The bus has recently been converted to run on a new AC drive system, and is fitted with new maintenance free lead acid batteries, charging equipment and motor. It has a range of around 40 miles per day, dependent on the gradient of the route, and can reach a maximum speed of about 30mph. The bus weighs 7.5 tonnes and a full recharge of the batteries takes 10 hours.

<http://www.europeanenergyfocus.com/pages/hydropower/janfeb03/063b.htm>

Another example: Bute

- 9.41 The Island of Bute in the Firth of Clyde, through Bute Community Links have purchased a new seven-seater minibus to transport elderly and disabled residents on Bute to access day centres, hospital and shopping facilities. It will also transport disabled visitors who arrive on the island by ferry to their destination. Funding came from a Scottish Executive transport initiative.

Lessons for Rathlin

- 9.42 Whilst this is a highly innovative and unusual approach it demonstrates an inspired approach to sustainable transport, which has received considerable media coverage and exposure for the island itself. Provision of transport that shows a commitment by the community to wear their environmental ethos on their sleeve will be responded to by funders and by the public alike. This type of approach fits well with policy trends at National Government level and would be a bold statement of intent.
- 9.43 Inevitably this is not possible to deliver in the same way as on Islay, but being innovative and indulging in some lateral thought will pay dividends, both for the response by agencies and by visitors

CASE STUDY 6 -GOOD PRACTICE IN MANAGING A MAJOR SITE FOR WILDLIFE VIEWING

The Scottish Seabird Centre

9.44 The Scottish Seabird Centre is an award winning 5 star (visit Scotland grading) visitor centre interpreting seabird life in Scotland and a range of other environmental aspects. The centre is located in North Berwick east of Edinburgh and is run by a charity.

9.45 Key characteristics of the centre that represent good practice for Rathlin are:

- The ability to engage with the centre via its website and the webcams showing sea birds in different parts of Scotland www.seabird.org
- Website games for children themed on seals, puffins and gannets
- The ability to send electronic postcards of wildlife which advertise the centre and Bass Rock area.
- The availability of telescopes and local live action cameras with visitor operated zoom ins etc.
- The high profile achieved by the centre as a 'national' education and visitor resource
- Interpretation of cetaceans and seals as part of the overall presentation
- Hospitality for visitors
- The wildlife film cinema and talks programmes – which could be combined with a facility for islanders
- The Gannet Experience audio visual displays interpreting the Bass Rock

CASE STUDY 7(A) - COMMUNITY AND VISITOR FACILITY

AN TALLA, Tiree

- 9.46 The island of Tiree, population 770, 80km west of Oban covers 78 sqkm. The island's key industry is cattle farming with tourism being increasingly important. The island has very high conservation value with most of the island being SAC and SPA.
- 9.47 The community has recently completed a new community centre called An Talla (www.antalla.co.uk). The key aims are: 1) To develop a new build community facility to meet the needs and aspirations of the people and for visitors to the island of Tiree. 2) Utilise construction techniques and material specification to utilise local contractors existing skills knowledge and expertise and 3) Utilise wind power to assist with heating and hot water requirements

CASE STUDY 7(B) - MORE THAN A MUSEUM - Regeneration Through a Living Heritage

- 9.48 Lismore population 146, 10 Km North West of Oban covers an area of 23 sqkm. This is a fertile island where cattle farming is again important. It has an increasingly elderly population but they have been very successful in developing facilities to help display and conserve their wealth of heritage assets
- 9.49 The community has just been successful in raising funds for a new multi purpose community facility. It is intended to:
- house a collection of artefacts and books that are of local and international importance.
 - interpret the history of Lismore - its natural, cultural and archaeological and industrial heritage, and the lives and achievements of its people on the Island and around the world.
 - But the building will do much more. It will function as a public research centre; public library; IT centre for education purposes; centre for Lifelong Learning; craft outlet; café/restaurant; audio visual interpretation resource; meeting room for the island's clubs and societies and as a social centre and gathering place for the community

<http://www.celm.org.uk/project.htm>

Relevance to Rathlin

- 9.50 Taking a unified and joined up approach to the provision of community and visitor facilities makes sense to the visitor and maximises the costs and benefits to the community. Both examples above took time and effort to deliver the funding package, but they provide a focus for the future, which unites a wide range of needs within the community

CASE STUDY 8 WASTE MANAGEMENT ON FREQUENTLY VISITED ISLANDS

- 9.51 The Mull & Iona Community Trust has established Mull & Iona Environmentally Sensitive Solutions (MESS). This is a community led initiative bringing local Argyll & Bute Council, in partnership with, Mull and Iona Waste Watchers, the local Chamber of Commerce, the Group for Recycling in Argyll and Bute and the Iona Community. It intends to help divert potentially valuable, useful and hazardous items and materials from landfill disposal. The project employs two people to initiate and support measures to reduce, reuse and recycle waste on the islands.
- 9.52 A community swap shop and recycling centre has been opened in the SW of Mull, to raise local awareness of waste issues. The Swap Shop operates on Fridays and Saturdays, involving volunteers, and relying on donations of textiles, furniture and other household goods that are still in reasonable condition and fit for reuse. These items will be available to the general public for exchange or a donation and a proportion of all the funds raised will go to support local good causes. There are also plans for similar facilities, along with community composting operations, on Iona and the Ross of Mull.
- 9.53 During the summer months, on the popular island of Iona, as much as a quarter of a tonne of cooked food waste is exported from the island as commercial refuse and land-filled in North Mull. However, MESS has initiated trials of 'The Rocket' – a prototype composting machine, which can process food into compost in just 2 weeks. If the prototype proves to be successful, a larger capacity model could be introduced to process all of Iona's organic wastes - reducing dependence upon costly refuse services, and producing valuable compost for local use. MESS is currently looking into relevant regulations, hoping to identify suitable sites for operations and seeking to raise additional support for a larger scale pilot scheme next year.
- 9.54 A new Mull & Iona Eco Charter has been launched to recognise individuals, households, businesses and other organisations, which adopt and pursue ecological approaches to their activities. The scheme was set up by the Mull Chamber of Commerce and MESS. Among the first local businesses to sign up to the new charter are the local arts centre, An Tobar, and the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust.
- For more information contact MESS administrator Mairi MacKinnon on 01688 302851 or email messenquiries@mict.co.uk.

Relevance to Rathlin

- 9.55 Mull and Iona are developing a reputation as an ecotourism destination and this approach to waste management demonstrates a commitment by the community to 'clean up their act'. It illustrates what can be done to meet local aspirations and use policy directions that are coming from the UK Government to reduce, reuse and recycle

CASE STUDY 9: EVENING/ DAILY WALKS AND STORYTELLING BRINGING ALIVE THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR VISITORS

- 9.56 Guides have the following responsibilities as providers of tourism experiences:
- a duty of care for the health and safety of the visitor
 - managing the itinerary and logistics of any walk and talk
 - providing courteous and high quality customer service
 - responding to the needs and expectations of visitors from other cultures and those with special needs
 - managing interactions within and between client groups
 - delivering the product cost-effectively
 - providing high quality, informative and entertaining commentary
 - meeting the legal obligations and statutory requirements of various stakeholders
- 9.57 A significant body of research has been undertaken in Australia looking at the most effective way to communicate significant heritage issues through guiding. This work has been undertaken by Professors Sam Ham and Betty Weiler and has revealed factors that are of significance to Rathlin.
1. Guides invariably feel they need to know more about their subject
 2. Visitors invariably consider that their guides know a huge amount about their subject, but could be better at communicating this
 3. Visitors want to connect with people who have a direct link with the place and can engage on a wider front than just the birds; the plants or the archaeology
 4. When structuring walks or talks the guide should have a clear structure and aim for the delivery of something lasting in the mindset of the visitor. They should not just head off and ‘see what we encounter’
 5. Establish what it is that is that you want the visitor to remember about Rathlin that is special and use this as a structure for the product
 6. Do not use this as an excuse for losing spontaneity or passion
 7. The most effective marketing for the place is through creating a memorable experience and leaving lasting messages in the head of the visitor – not just facts and figures that do not last!

Relevance to Rathlin

- 9.58 Rathlin is a special place that can leave lasting memories for visitors who will predominantly come from an urban environment. It presents an opportunity to make strong meanings in the mind of the visitor that will lead to outstanding word of mouth referrals to friend and relatives and many returning visitors. This is the most cost effective form of advertising.
- 9.59 With the correct amount of knowledge and a professional approach to visitor management as absolutes for a basic product the next issue is to place an equal focus

CASE STUDY 10. WILDLIFE BOAT TRIPS - GOOD PRACTICE IN MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT, AND CODES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICE

- 9.60 This issue is currently being addressed by Scottish Natural Heritage who have been instructed by the Scottish Executive to provide a Scottish Marine Wildlife Watchers Code of Conduct by March 2006. At the moment they are scoping the issues with all interested parties. There is a wide range of codes available at the moment, but none of them are universally accepted and all have limitations. It would be illogical to try to come up with a specific code for Rathlin as this would have no external recognition. We would advocate waiting to adopt the Scottish code, as this will address all the issues that are relevant for Rathlin in a directly comparable environment.
- 9.61 Visitors will expect some sort of statement of intent in terms of the environmental and ethical practices provided and this has also been addressed elsewhere. The best established approach, in Europe, to the delivery of environmentally sound nature based tourism is in Sweden where there is a well established organisation called Nature's Best. <http://www.naturesbasta.com>. They have developed working principles that have been endorsed by 63 companies, providing nearly 400 separate products under the banner of Nature's Best:
1. Respect the limitations of the destination – minimise the negative impacts on local nature and culture.
 2. Support the local economy.
 3. Make all the operators activities environmentally sustainable.
 4. Contribute actively to nature and cultural conservation.
 5. Promote knowledge and respect and the joy of discovery.
 6. Quality and safety all the way.
- 9.62 Any nature based developments on Rathlin would do well to take account of these principles from the outset on the communication process as this eventually delivers the greatest returns

CASE STUDY 11. ISLAND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY

9.63 Having discussed the key role of providing a good experience which will lead to repeat visits and referrals the next vital issue is to develop a comprehensive and user friendly website. Travellers to islands will tend to have a higher usage of websites than on average and they will expect to be able to find everything on one site with appropriate linkages to associated sites dealing with issues such as mainland travel arrangements, local genealogy etc. The following sites are good examples of small islands that have got their act together and have provided a one-stop shop for the potential visitor

www.visitbute.com.

9.64 This site provides information on: Places to Visit, Activities, Eating Out, Accommodation, Getting Here, a Photo Gallery, Brochure, and Events

<http://www.westrayandpapawestray.com>

9.65 Similarly this comprehensive and attractive site covers the following vital information: general background information, getting here, a map, sites of interest, eating out, shops & services, the craft trail, serviced accommodation, self catering accommodation.

Relevance for Rathlin

9.66 These islands have recognised that the island is the destination, not any specific part of it and they work together for the mutual benefit of all businesses. This is a process of meeting the needs of the visitor rather than the supply focus that often prevails in individual businesses

CASE STUDY 12

Isle of Eigg

- 9.67 The Isle of Eigg is one of the 4 Small Isles situated just south of the Isle of Skye. It is 12 km by 8km wide with a population of 67 at the last census in 2001. The island was acquired by the community in 1997 after a period of contentious ownership. The Island is administered by the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, which is a unique partnership between the residents of Eigg, The Highland Council, and The Scottish Wildlife Trust. In the eight years since the Trust purchased the island much has been achieved.
- 9.68 The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust is a company limited by guarantee, and a registered Scottish charity. The Trust has three members, Eigg Residents' Association, The Highland Council and The Scottish Wildlife Trust. Each of these members appoints directors to the board of the Trust. Regular meetings of Eigg Residents' Association are held to ensure that the Trust is meeting the expectations of those living on the island. Prior to each Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust Board meeting, Eigg Residents' Association meets to discuss the agenda. The results from this meeting are presented to the Trust as a series of recommendations. The decisions taken by the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust are based on these recommendations. The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust employs two staff, a full-time Development Co-ordinator and part-time Administration Secretary. There are three subsidiary companies of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust; Eigg Trading Limited, Eigg Tearoom Limited and Eigg Construction Limited.

Eigg Trading Limited

- 9.69 Eigg Trading Limited owns and manages An Laimhrig, the centre built with assistance from Highlands and Islands Enterprise to house the island shop and Post Office, a Tearoom, Craft Shop, Waiting area with public toilet and shower facilities. This was the first major project managed by the Trust. The building contract was awarded to an island contractor who employed as much local labour as possible. Despite going on site in the worst of the winter weather, the project was completed by early June 1998 and was officially opened on the first anniversary of the buy-out.
- 9.70 The Shop/P.O. is leased to an island resident and the Craft Shop leased to a group of women who have formed a craft co-operative. Eigg Tearoom is now also leased to 2 individuals, one who is charge a daytime operations & the other the evenings.
- 9.71 Part of the roof space has been converted to house the Trust office. This enables the Trust to operate on a more professional basis. As well as being a base for administration staff, the office is used by a team of volunteers who are responsible for assisting with a number of different projects (e.g. training, tourism, marketing, waste management etc). The office also houses two Open Scotland computers for internet access. It is hoped that this will broaden the skills base and give as many people as possible a better insight into the daily workings of the Trust.

Eigg Tearoom Limited:

- 9.72 Until 2004, Eigg Tearoom Limited ran the island tearoom, which is now leased to local residents. The Tearoom is open daily from April to October, is licensed and also opens for evening meals and/or bar nights regularly throughout the summer. At the height of the season, the tearoom employs two full-time and up to eight part-time staff. During the winter months the tearoom is open to coincide with the arrival of the ferry and some evenings. It provides a warm & comfortable venue for a variety of community events.

Eigg Construction Limited

- 9.73 Eigg Construction Limited is the newest of the three subsidiaries, and was set up to undertake renovation works on the Trust's properties. It employs three men full-time and one part time supervisor. To date four properties have been renovated Millers Cottage, Hill Cottage, Gamekeepers Cottage and Kildonan Farmhouse.
- 9.74 Each of the subsidiary companies has a board of directors appointed from those in the community with a particular interest. At least one of the directors of each company is also a director of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust. The subsidiary boards have responsibility for the day to day management of the companies, but strategic issues, and those with large financial implications are raised at IEHT board meetings. Again, these are presented as a recommendation from the subsidiary board for the Trust to consider.

Encouraging Development

- 9.75 Wherever possible, the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust is encouraging private enterprises on the island. The Trust recognises that, if the community is to develop in a way that is sustainable, there needs to be a wide economic base on the island. The Trust administers a small business start-up grants scheme offering financial support to developing businesses, it is also able to make properties available at low rental to encourage business development. There are two tourism businesses and one craft producer on the island that have been helped in this way. Marketing is also now done on a more inclusive basis with all local business benefiting from the creation of an island website: www.isleofeigg.org and the production of a visitor leaflet.

CASE STUDY 13. ÁRAINN (INIS MÓR)

- 9.76 Arainn (Inis Mór) is situated 16 kilometres off County Galway, on the West Coast of Ireland. It is the largest of three islands collectively referred to as the Aran Islands. The island is 15 kilometres long and 4 kilometres wide. In geological terms, its limestone plateau represents a de facto extension of the neighbouring Burren of County Clare.
- 9.77 There has been an overall decline in the island's population in recent decades. The current population is estimated at 840 persons. Principle economic activities are fishing, farming (both of which have been in decline) and tourism.
- 9.78 In cultural terms, Inis Mór's distinctiveness stems from the fact that it is within the Gaeltacht, (Irish speaking region). It has an impressive literary heritage; John Millington Synge and William Butler Yeats were regular visitors and wrote extensively about life on the island. Inis Mór is also noted for its built heritage. Its archaeology includes a wealth of dramatic ancient sites, with the pre-Christian Dún Aengús fort, in its cliff top setting, representing a 'must see' for all visitors to the islands.
- 9.79 In 2004, Inis Mór attracted 47,000 overnight visitors and 61,000 day visitors. The island is particularly popular with European and North American visitors, but also attracts visitors from Britain and the domestic market. 70% of all visits take place in July/August, a factor which brings its own pressures. There are growing concerns that the island has become over-commercialised. Up until recently, tourism on the island has developed in an unplanned and uncoordinated manner. Through the 1990s, it could be argued that Inis Mór placed too much emphasis on numbers, and not enough emphasis on quality and sustainable development.
- 9.80 In 2000, Galway County Council commissioned Tourism Development International to prepare a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Inis Mór with recommendations that Árainn should aspire to having Dún Aonghasa designated as a World Heritage Site. Dúchas, The Heritage Service within DoE is following this up under the theme of 'Western Stone Forts'.
- 9.81 The designation of Dún Aonghasa as a World Heritage Site on Árainn (Inis Mór) would be of significant benefit for the Island but would require an overall upgrading of the product presentation and quality, in keeping with such an important designation. Ultimately, the objective should be to have Árainn (Inis Mór) designated as a World Heritage Site in its own right. This designation could be supported on the following grounds:
- The large numbers of archaeological sites of extraordinary interest.
 - The unique 'living culture'.
 - The unique historical and cultural landscape.
 - Literary Associations.
 - The Island's location on the western rim of Western Europe.

CASE STUDY 14. BERE ISLAND

- 9.82 Bere Island is situated one mile offshore from the fishing port Castletownbere in West Cork. The island is 7 miles long and 3 miles wide. Consistent with the trend experienced in other islands, Bere Island's population has declined from its peak of 2,000 in the pre-famine years (c. 1840) to 200 currently.
- 9.83 Quite apart from its scenic appeal and proximity to the Beara Peninsula, a popular touring route in South West Ireland, Bere island's historic significance relates to its strategic location and consequent long military involvement dating back to Napoleonic wars. Fortifications from that period is still in evidence but are in a derelict state.
- 9.84 Bere Island is a popular destination of walkers, who can incorporate a visit to the island into the Beara Way. The island's hostels and holiday homes have developed quite a good reputation for quality. The island attracted 5,000 visitors in 2004. 70% of visits take place in the peak months of July and August. In 2004, two thirds of visitors to the island were from the domestic market. The balance comprised visitors from Britain, Germany and the Netherlands.
- 9.85 Extensive market research has highlighted some weaknesses in Bere Island's tourism offer. Of most concern are the absence of children's amenities and traditional music/entertainment. The abandonment of cars and old boats has also had an adverse impact on the environment. Following this research a number of steps have been taken regarding the future marketing of the island.
- There is now a clear recognition that in order to have an impact on the market place, a 'collective' approach to marketing the island will be necessary.
 - In 2005, Bere Island (in partnership with Cape Clear Island) established the West Cork Island Marketing Group.
 - Links have been established with the European Small Islands Network (www.europeansmallisland.net)
- 9.86 The island is currently in the process of developing its own brand.

CASE STUDY 15. CAPE CLEAR

- 9.87 Cape Clear is Ireland's southern most inhabited island. It is 3 miles long by 1 mile wide and is situated 8 miles off the West Cork Coast and three miles west of the Fastnet Rock. It is the southern most inhabited point in Ireland. The island has a population of approximately 140. Tourism is a very important economic activity for the island and currently sustains 8 full-time jobs. A further 40 individuals are involved on a part-time basis, primarily in the shop/retail, accommodation and access transport (ferry) sectors.
- 9.88 The island attracted an estimated 20,000 visitors in 2004. The primary source markets are the domestic market, Northern Europe and Britain.
- 9.89 Like Inis Mór, Cape Clear is a Gaeltacht area (Irish speaking) area. This factor is an essential aspect of its appeal for visitors, which are also drawn to the island to experience the rugged, dramatic scenery and historic/archaeological settlements (i.e. megalithic standing stones, passage grave, 12th century church and 14th century Castle).
- 9.90 Cape Clear is also popular with nature lovers. It is an important location for seabirds, both resident and passing migrants. Subject to conditions, visitors are also afforded the opportunity to observe marine mammal life including whales, dolphins, leatherback turtles and seals.
- 9.91 There are no significant environmental issues. Visitors to the island tend to be discerning outdoor enthusiasts with a love and respect for the environment. A policy of taking deposits for group business has ensured that visitors are generally well behaved and not disruptive.
- 9.92 The island co-operative has its own website www.oilean.chleire.ie and co-ordinates its marketing activity with Cork- Kerry Tourism and the local LEADER company. The LEADER company is the primary agency charged with responsibility for rural development. It has recently established a West Cork Island Marketing group with Bere Island and others.
- 9.93 Cape Clear is a good example of an island that has grown its tourism whilst at the same time protecting and maintaining its rich and unique culture.

CASE STUDY 16 - FERRY SUBSIDIES IN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

9.96 The following islands off the coast of Ireland are inhabited

County	Island(s)	Population
Co. Dhún na nGall	Árainn Mhór*	543
	Inis Bó Finne*	16
	Inis Fraoigh*	7
	Toraigh*	133
	An tOileán Rua*	7
	Gabhla*	5
Co. Shligigh	Cónaí	3
Co. Mhaigh Eo	Cliara	127
	Inis Bigil*	39
	Inis Coitil	4
	Inis Laidhre	7
	Inis Túirc	72
	Claidhínis	5
	Inse Ghoirt	1
	Inis na Cille Eo	5
	An tOileán Mór	1
Co. na Gaillimhe	Inis Bó Finne	178
	Inis Mór*	831
	Inis Oírr*	262
	Inis Meáin*	187
	Inis Bearachain*	1
	Inis Treabhair*	3
	Inse Ghainimh*	3
	Iomaí	4
Co. Chorcaí	An tOileán Mór (Béara)	207
	Cléire*	129
	Oileán Baoi	6
	Inis Uí Dhrisceoil	27
	Oileán Fada	12
	Inis Earcáin	129
	Faoide	29
Co Chiarraí	Fianait	21

* Gaeltacht

9.97 Subsidised ferry and transport services of different kinds are provided to support the residents of the islands as follows:

County	Island	Contractor	Service Type	Term of Contract	Annual fee
Mayo	Inishturk	O'Malley Ferry Services	Passenger & Bus	01/11/02 - 31/10/05	€100,000
Mayo	Clare Island	Clare Island Ferry Company	Passenger & Bus	1/11/02 - 31/10/05	€76,570
Mayo	Inis Bigil	Inis Bigil Ferry Services	Passenger & Bus	11/10/04 – 10/10/05	€14,300
Galway	Gaillimh-Árainn	Lasta Mara Teo	Cargo	1/1/05 - 31/12/06	Year 1 €12,900 Year 2 €16,730 Fuel Price Variation Clause
Galway	Rosamhíl-Árainn	Island Ferries Ltd	Passenger & Bus	1/11/02 - 31/10/05	€240,900
Galway	Árainn	Aer Árann	Air	1/2/03 - 31/7/05	Year 1 €21,866 Year 2 €745,016 Year 3 €867,973 01/02/05 – 31/07/05 €461,000
Galway	Inishbofin	Cleggan & Inishbofin Ferries Ltd	Passenger & Bus	1/11/02 - 31/10/05	€137,000
Donegal	Tóraigh	Turasmara Teo	Passenger	1/02/05 - 31/1/08	Year 1 €142,000 Index linked
Donegal	Árainn Mhór	Maoin na Farraige Teo	Passenger Roll on/off	1/11/01 - 28/2/05	€120,625
Donegal	Tóraigh	Údarás na Gaeltachta	Helicopter	1/9/04 – 31/8/07	€70,000 (max)
Cork	Cléire	Naomh Ciarán 11 Oileán Cléire	Passenger & Cargo	1/6/01 - 31/5/06	€104,118.52

9.98 A review of the ferry services carried out for the Irish Government in 2003 identified the following:

- The annual subsidy for passenger ferries and freight routes ranged between €603,126 for the cargo and passenger service to the Aran islands and €76,570 for the Clare Island Ferry.
- The no of passengers carried per ferry route ranged from 123,371 (single journeys divided by 2) on one of the Aran routes (Island Ferries) to 1625 to Inishturk and 644 to Aran from Galway on the freight ferry route.
- The subsidy per islander ranged from €188 for the busy Aran Ferries route – essentially mainly subsidised by tourism- to €389 per islander for Inishturk.

9.99 Equivalent comparisons for the Rathlin Ferry based on 90 islanders produce an annual

subsidy of approx €60,000, 23,000 return journeys and an average subsidy per islander of €222, considerably above that for other ferries in Ireland.

9.100 Scotland figures are not available to support a direct comparison with these Irish figures are not available. However, in Scotland many of the island ferries also attract a subsidy. Some route are subsidised under Public Service Orders (EU 3577/92) whilst others attract local authority and other support funding. 2000 subsidy details for Scotland were as follows:

		£000	
		1999-2000	2000-2001
CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE:			
Deficit Grant		14,975	20,300
Capital Grant for vessels:			
MV Hebrides		7,590	3,036
MV Lochnevis		1,638	-
PUBLIC TRANSPORT FUND			
Highland Council			
Corran Ferry: Replacement Vessel		265	-
RURAL TRANSPORT FUND			
Argyll and Bute Council:			
Contribution to Kilchoan/Tobermory W	inter Ferry	4	
Easdale Ferry -3 additional sailings		5	
Highland Council			
Sconser to Raasay-additional sailings		9	
Contribution to Kilchoan/Tobermory W	inter Ferry	5	
		Shetland Islands Council	
Additional Community Ferry Runs Covering 9 Routes		48	
PIERS AND HARBOURS GRANT - CALEDONIAN MACBRAYNE			
Kilchoan Slipway		123	-
Castlebay Dolphin		13	13
Colintraive/Rhubodach		12	124
Tobermory Slipway		186	2
Lochaline		20	9
Lochboisdale Dolphin		65	18
Egilsay Dredging		4	-
Tiree walkway		-	23
Fishnish Slipway		-	31
Tarbert(Harris)	Dolphin	-	437
Coll Pier		-	17

PIERS AND HARBOURS GRANT - LOCAL AUTHORITIES		
Orkney Islands Council		
Stromness Harbour	3	52
Stromness Seabed Study	-	6
North Ronaldsay Pier	17	-
Shapinsay Marshalling	-	39
Longhope Pier	-	9
Tingwell Terminal	-	25
Highland Council		
Muck Slipway	250	-
Small Isles Slipway	-	1,849
Bredakirk Link	-	19
Uig Pier	-	106
Shetland Islands Council		
Linkspan Upgrades	-	414

- 9.101 In terms of the significance of this information for Rathlin Island it is clear that the island already attracts a relatively high level of subsidy for its ferry service and that in other jurisdictions operators depend more on revenues from the tourism component of journeys and less on state subsidies. It must be said however that most of the Irish comparisons are with passenger ferries only and where freight services are subsidised the costs are of similar scale.
- 9.102 Solutions therefore to identify quality issues may not lie in higher subsidies but on rigorous value for money approaches to ferry subsidy tenders and contracts and on learning from approaches in Ireland and Scotland.

CHAPTER 10 - STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

10.1 This section draws from all of the previous analysis and research to identify Rathlin tourism's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This type of SWOT analysis is important in helping to identify the priorities for the future. In turn, these guide the tourism strategy and provide input to the action programme, all of which are covered in subsequent sections.

10.2 The strengths and weaknesses mainly refer to aspects of the island and its tourism product

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Facilities and Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing accessibility (mainly through new RIBs) • The flexibility of the RIBs • Served by two good harbours • New pontoon berths • Strong interest in providing transport for visitors • Good bike hire service • Good range and quality of existing accommodation • The quality and orientation role of the Boat House Visitor Centre • The uniqueness of the West Light Viewpoint • The craft workshops (encouraging local production of goods for sale) 	<p>Facilities and Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and capacity of the ferry • Poor road surfaces • Limited number of accessible paths • Poor existing paths (limited signs, interpretation, seating) • Inflexibility of the bus service • Shortage of accommodation (esp. B&B and self-catering) • Poor signing • Inn and boathouse do not stand out as landmarks • Limited eating facilities • Capacity of village hall for large events (use marquee) • Lack of waiting area/shelter/tearoom/retail space at the harbour
<p>Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The island experience • The sea as a source of visitors (boats stopping off) • The sea for divers (wrecks, reefs, wildlife, caves) • Sea cliffs and the views out • Attractive landscape features and wilderness (designated areas) • Seabird colonies – international status • Other birds • The seals • The Irish Hare • The three lighthouses • The wealth of archaeological sites and listed buildings • Other built features (old houses, gates, dry stone walls) • The Arts on Rathlin initiative • Local traditions, folklore, legends and entertainment • Island's fascinating history 	<p>Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The weather and sea conditions • Limited sea-based activity offered from the island • Diving can be dangerous • Cannot compete with sea angling off mainland • Very few formal viewpoints out to sea • Not many guided walks • No access to small loughs for fishing • Seabird spectacle only May to end July • Wildlife sensitive to disturbance • No access to interior of East or Rue Lights • Most archaeological sites of little appeal to average visitor • Access to sites and viewpoints is restricted • Very little interpretation of places/sites of interest • Folktales not presented to visitors

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Resident attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general acceptance that the island can take more visitors • Residents want a responsible approach to the development of tourism • Some residents (and returners) willing to provide more tourism services 	<p>Resident Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all residents want more visitors • Some local concern at environmental impacts of tourism • Instances when the island feels too busy and loses privacy • Lack of a consensus approach to the future of tourism • Becoming disillusioned by the behaviour and attitudes of some visitors
<p>Visitor attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of endorsement/recommendations • Appeal of landscape, environment and nature • Appeal of cultural aspects (island life, slower pace of life) • High levels of visitor participation in activities • High repeat visit potential • Economic contribution through visitor expenditure 	<p>Visitor attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns re: environmental degradation (dumping etc). • Dissatisfaction with visitor facilities and services (toilets, showers, catering) • Concerns regarding lack of information/orientation • Limited choice of accommodation • Visitor profile - over dependence on day visitors.
<p>Tourism Trade Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most see the island's wildlife as its primary strength • The birds and scenery are identified as unique attributes • High ratings are given to the West Light Viewpoint and the Boat House 	<p>Tourism Trade Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade critical of lack of accommodation, poor access and lack of facilities • Some Rathlin businesses not willing (or can't afford to) to advertise in tourist publications
<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events Programme • Attractive traffic free walking opportunities • Good diving opportunities • Lake and sea fishing • Boat trips around island (mainly from Ballycastle) • Good berths and pontoon for yachts • Arts on Rathlin – writing, craft, workshops and demonstrations 	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to cliff tops and off the main roadways • Diving sites mainly suit advanced divers • No beginner water for water sports except within harbour

10.3 Opportunities and threats are mainly external and outside the island's control but none-the-less have an impact and can offer advantages and opportunities, or need to be addressed.

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Changing Markets/Market activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater interest in active holidays, study tours and wildness amongst tourists • Aggressive promotion of Ireland as a country • Coordinated North/South approach • Interest in seafood eating opportunities • Interest in green tourism products • Interest in island visits • Increase in boating and yachting activity around NI and Scottish coastline • Tourism Ireland promotion of Ireland as a whole 	<p>Changing markets/Market activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The possibility of other Scottish/Irish islands providing better services or presenting their points of interest better than Rathlin. • Very attractive scenery and accommodation on the mainland, reducing incentive to travel to Rathlin • Promotion of Ireland as a whole makes Rathlin one of many inhabited offshore islands rather than NI's only.

<p>Changing tourism products and priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causeway Coastal route • Promotion of Causeway Coast and Glens – esp. sites away from Giants Causeway • Tourism trade attitude that Rathlin has the potential to attract more visitors from outside Northern Ireland 75% quite interested in featuring Rathlin in their programmes • Recognised potential for special interest and some types of activity holidays • Increasing craft and writer interest in workshops/residencies on Rathlin 	<p>Tourism products and priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some tour operators write-off Rathlin as a credible part of their programmes and concentrate on other more accessible destinations
<p>External support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing ferry subsidy from DRD • Marketing supports from Causeway Coast and Glens Ltd • Product development support from Local authority, CCGHT and NITB • Heritage funding for restoration, interpretation and information on the special features of Rathlin. • Arts Council funding for Arts officer and events • Moyle Council contributions of harbour, pontoon, toilets etc. 	<p>External Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some external organisations find Rathlin islanders ungrateful for their inputs and have reduced motivation to continue helping. • Declining population makes interventions seem expensive (e.g. £ per person assisted) in comparison to other areas of NI) • Lack of political priority on sustainability of Rathlin community and services

CHAPTER 11- KEY ISSUES:

- 11.1 The study has illuminated and discussed many issues in relation to the provision of sustainable tourism on the island. The key issues that are addressed primarily in the strategy are as follows:

Issue 1 Awareness of Rathlin as a special place

- 11.2 Rathlin Island has been relatively lightly promoted to date within overall Northern Ireland (NI) or in regional promotions, and there has been little tour operator activity. Both the fact of Rathlin being NI's only inhabited offshore island and the full range of special interest of the island are worthy of a higher profile. The new Causeway Coastal Route provides an opportunity to remedy this and to provide the practical details required to reach and make the best of Rathlin. An outline marketing plan is provided in Chapter 14 to provide a focussed look at branding, and at key markets and how they should be reached.

Issue 2 The Ferry Service

- 11.3 Whilst the ferry is provided as a lifeline service to residents as foot or car passengers and to enable deliveries of building materials, foodstuffs, fuel and other essentials it is also a fundamental element within the tourism economy of Rathlin Island. The quality of the ferry is similar to other islands in Scotland (and is indeed provided by the same company.) Many of those islands have thriving tourism economies. The ferry has been widely criticised by visitors and residents with principal criticisms being the uncomfortable passenger cabin, the smell of diesel fumes in the passenger cabin, the low capacity during the winter, spring and autumn seasons and the timetabling. Ferries that serve other islands around Ireland are generally newer, and have been purpose built for the sea conditions. DRD which provides an annual subsidy of £400,000 to an operator to run the service has tried to find alternative vessels capable of operating the route, including a commissioned search at Lloyds without success, and has also worked to keep ferry jobs on Rathlin. Both of these constrain the development of new arrangements to some extent. The capacity and quality of passenger accommodation are a constraint in attracting more people to visit and return to Rathlin, and priority should be placed on finding new quality options for the delivery of foot passengers in particular to the island. The ferry as it is now was not designed to cope with 46,000 passengers journeys a year (rising). Replacement of the ferry needs to take into account that the islander journeys total only 4000 a year and that there is private sector interest elsewhere in ferry service provision.

Issue 3 The lack of tourist accommodation and services

- 11.4 In winter 2004/5 tourist accommodation on Rathlin was very limited and at most, in the 2005 season there will be 60 bed-spaces in operation, with the majority in hostel and camping barn accommodation. Visitor meal opportunities were limited to café style and mainly fried foods in winter 2005 (except by prior arrangement) with some prospect of a reopened Manor House Restaurant from in summer 2005 onwards. Transport on the island is limited to walking, bikes, courtesy cars to accommodation and to one bus, which does not run to a schedule. Visitor attractions numbered two (the Boathouse and the West Light) and there was no shelter or visitors waiting for the return ferry from Rathlin to Ballycastle. The development of further accommodation and services will be an important part of increasing the value of tourism to the Rathlin economy. The lack of good opportunities to eat and drink emerged as a major dislike in the Visitor Survey.

Issue 4 Difficulties in providing a welcome and orientation

- 11.5 The arrival on Rathlin is informal and people who do not know the island receive little orientation towards transport, accommodation, refreshments or interpretation. Signage to the Boathouse visitor centre which can provide good information will be in place for summer 2005 and road signage for visitors is being prepared at the time of this study. There are further opportunities either to provide orientation during the boat trip or to provide an information point at top of the ferry slip. This could be combined with a shelter, also a major issue at present in poor weather.

Issue 5 Organising tourism provision

- 11.6 The Rathlin Cooperative Society has been responsible for organising, festivals, craft initiatives, music, writing and other cultural initiatives on the island. Many individual islanders, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, the National Trust and RSPB have played roles in both promoting tourism on the island and in providing facilities. Moyle District Council promotes Rathlin Island as an important attraction in its district and gives a profile in RTO materials. The Council also provides important tourism facilities on the island. Many such people have full and part time jobs in providing services and have already contributed a great deal. If Rathlin is to develop the packages and additional services such as regular walks, talks, welcome, information, and orientation, additional specialist help and leadership will be required. The value of placing a development officer on the island has been demonstrated in the part-time Arts and Culture officer post which has stimulated a wide range of craft, sculpture and writers initiatives and has provided the capacity to provide a good service. The sustainable tourism strategy will need a considerable amount of drive and follow-up on the island.

Issue 6 Realising the economic benefits of tourism

- 11.7 The economic benefits of tourism to Rathlin include income from accommodation, from sales of crafts, refreshments, bike hire, shop purchases and minibus rides. Income from these sources is currently limited by the small volume of accommodation, the small supply of locally made gifts and crafts, the limited retail space provided for tourism purchases and the lack of additional services and goods to purchase e.g. guided walks, evening talks, local produce, binoculars, bird books, flora and fauna identification guides, jumpers, waterproofs, packed lunches, coffee table book etc. It is important that islanders see the benefits and not just the inconveniences of tourism.

Issue 7 Demonstrating environmental best practice

- 11.8 Many visitors now pay at least some attention to the impact that they have on a community or on the surrounding environment, and the North Antrim and Causeway Coast area has placed an emphasis on promoting green tourism. Kinraver Camping Barn has received tourism accreditation under the Green Tourism Accreditation Scheme. Whilst there is considerable good practice on the island in terms of the scale, quality and responsibility of the tourism it promotes, there is one main area where 'green' practices are not followed. This is the arrangement for dealing with waste produced by both the islanders and by tourists, which are currently collected, without recycling or reuse screening and burned near Rue Point with the residue dumped in the sea. There is wide awareness of this practice amongst visitors, and wide condemnation. Moyle Council is currently developing options for dealing with the issue but a community recycling and reuse scheme together with dry recyclables being taken off the island, a composting initiative and compacting of remaining wastes should be part of the solution. Day visitors should be encouraged to take their waste off the island with them.

- 11.9 Other environmental issues include the growth in RIB traffic to the island which whilst providing a different way to experience Rathlin's coastal waters, also have the potential to disturb wildlife, particularly the seals in Church Bay. They also consume large quantities of fossil fuels. Boat operators are taking part in the WiSe accreditation scheme for wildlife boat operators in May 2005 with assistance from the DoE's integrated coastal zone management initiative.
- 11.10 The island formerly received electricity from three wind turbines, which have been decommissioned and replaced with a diesel-powered generator. The island would benefit from further renewable power initiatives such as individual and group solar energy schemes, energy from waste plants.

Issue 8 Learning from others and combining community facilities with tourism facilities

- 11.11 Other islands and remote areas which have an appeal for their wildlife interest and culture have developed different and innovative approaches to providing for and delighting visitors. Some of these have been highlighted in the case studies. Further examples such as:
- Taigh Chearsabhagh a community based museum and arts centre on the island of North Uist which give a flavour of island life past and present provides a café and archives of photographs and stories of North Uist. The centre was short listed for the Gulbenkian Prize, and is worth studying to establish whether such a combined Arts/tourism venue would fit the needs of Rathlin.
 - Kilchoan tourist information and community centre, in Ardnamurchan which provides a TIC, café home baking, meeting rooms and sports facilities for the community.

Could be studied by the community for their relevance to Rathlin.

Issue 9 Securing support from relevant bodies

- 11.12 Rathlin Island needs support to solve some of the problems it has with the ferry service, the declining population, the expense of tourism marketing, developing further accommodation, maintaining roads and moving forward in developing the harbour and visitor management arrangements. The island needs to develop a unified approach and to ensure that external bodies know that their efforts are appreciated. In particular, the island needs help to remain a sustainable community and needs to gather more political and agency support to make a case for special interventions. There should be opportunities for Rathlin Island within the Government's forthcoming sustainable development and integrated coastal zone arising from management strategies.

Issue 10 The declining population and the continuing capacity of the island to service tourism

- 11.13 The declining population is also a tourism servicing issue in that the age profile is now higher on average than elsewhere in Northern Ireland and there is a limited interest (community survey) in being a tourism provider. This means that new people need to be attracted to the island to work in tourism, as part of a sustainable tourism strategy. New people need affordable housing and at present there are difficulties in supply due to planning constraints, and the interest by developers in producing relatively expensive housing on the island.

Issue 11 the need to provide visitor management and sustainable tourism planning.

- 11.14 Tourism on Rathlin is currently relatively small scale at some 16,000 visits per year and has not created many impact issues to date. However the patterns of tourism with major events attracting up to 1000 people and the focus of visits within a few months and concentrated by ferry arrivals means that visitor management mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that not everyone ends up at a sensitive site all at once.
- 11.15 Aspects of visits that need to be managed include access to designated sites, access to cliff edges and bird nesting sites, proximity of trip boats or walking parties to wildlife, making it clear to visitors which areas of the island are private, and ensuring that visitors are assisted to find the best of the history, the culture, the wildlife and the visitor services. This management will require a coordinated approach between site managers and tourism providers, ferry operators etc. Wildlife trip boat operators have already attended (May 5th 2005) a WiSe scheme accreditation scheme for wildlife boat tour operators that addressed the quality of the experience and good practice in viewing wildlife. This was organised by EHS in NI following a pilot in SW England. Whilst general good practice should be applied on Rathlin a specific code should be developed for wildlife trips on land and sea in Rathlin.

CHAPTER 12 – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY AND ACTION PROGRAMME

THE POSITIONING OF RATHLIN

- 12.1 In planning for tourism it is important to develop a clear understanding of where a location should be positioned within the marketplace and to be clear about the main offer to visitors. This helps with developing target markets, and in ensuring that the right kinds of product are developed.
- 12.2 The positioning of a destination normally reflects its key strengths and what it has to offer that is unique and which differentiates it from any of its competitors. In considering the proposed positioning of Rathlin Island for the future we have considered the strengths of the island's wildlife interest, the survey of the attitudes of current visitors, the island's cultural offering, its history and special events, the views of the tourism trade, and the many proposals taken on board during the consultation
- 12.3 Although Rathlin Island has many strengths, **the one feature that makes Rathlin outstanding and different from anywhere else in tourism terms is the sheer number of nesting seabirds and how closely the visitor can approach.** This makes it unique in Ireland and the UK. Add to this the other wildlife that can so easily be seen in abundance on Rathlin, and which is now so difficult to see elsewhere (e.g Irish Hare, Seals) and there is a very strong reason for people with this interest to visit the island throughout the season.
- 12.4 In support of this, the **cultural offer of the island is very strong**, the number of opportunities and events impressive (possibly second to none) and this should continue to be a second main reason for visitors to cross to the island. Important aspects of this that are different from anywhere else are the model boat races, the history and legends, the ceilidh and the cross-over between the Scottish and Irish cultures. It must be said that many islands in Ireland and Scotland however also offer a cultural experience and have rich histories, and Rathlin needs to emphasise its difference. The Irish/Scottish dimension of Rathlin's culture is however significant and an important aspect of the 'cultural offer'.
- 12.5 We would therefore propose that Rathlin's primary positioning for sustainable tourism is as a:
A unique destination where islanders present visitors with the opportunity to get close to nature (sea birds, seals, hares) and to a living community and its history and culture
- 12.6 An important aspect of this positioning is the personal presentation of opportunities to visitors by islanders.
- 12.7 This is not to say that other aspects of the island should not be developed according to people's enthusiasms, skills and special contributions, but it is important to have a main focus which guides the marketing and main product development effort.

RATHLIN ISLAND - MARKET SEGMENTATION

- 12.8 Looking at the key markets available for Rathlin Island and taking both the current situation, the DETI Masterplan for the Causeway Coast and Glens and the proposed positioning into account, we propose that the following market prioritisation is adopted:

MARKET SEGMENTS	PRIORITISATION
Day Visitors	High Priority
Special Interest* (birds/nature/island/painting/photography)	High Priority
People touring the mainland area/NI/Ireland*	High Priority
Boat / Yacht Visitors from NI and Scotland*	High Priority
Events participants* (mainly cultural or wildlife)	High Priority
Holidaymakers (long stay)	Secondary (but important for some businesses)
Groups (corporate training + retreats)	Secondary (but important for some businesses)
Visiting Friends or Relatives (VFR)	Low priority/not promoted
Activity Holidaymakers	Low priority/not promoted
Holiday Home Owners	Low priority/not promoted
Educational Visits	Low priority/not promoted but an important activity for some organisations and businesses

* Segments include both day and overnight visitors

- 12.9 This market positioning is for the island as a whole and should be reflected in island promotional activity. Promotion by individual businesses, e.g., activities or accommodation can depart from this and pursue their own markets directly but the best outcome would be achieved by a co-ordinated approach.
- 12.10. The rationale for this follows the market positioning and identifies those groups most likely to match the main offering of Rathlin.
- 12.11 Of those groups that are not prioritised the reasoning includes the persistence of VFR visits without marketing effort; the advanced nature of most activity holiday opportunities available on Rathlin and the word of mouth nature of high level activity participation.

THE ISLAND'S FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

- 12.12 Viewed from the mainland, the objective of enhancing tourism on the island may be to increase the number and quality of attractions in the area to create a greater drawing power. Viewed from the island, however, we consider that increasing tourism income and jobs is a lifeline issue for the island and an important component in its objective to increase numbers of people living on the island. Particularly the number of young families.
- 12.13 Whilst this is not a sustainable development strategy for Rathlin Island there are a number of key issues that need to be addressed if the island is not to lose its indigenous population, its cultural richness, local knowledge and skills, and its sense of community and shared history. These are irreplaceable.

12.14 These issues include:

- The declining population
- The related issue of the dwindled primary school roll
- The impossibility of living on the island and working on the mainland
- The limited range of employment options on the island
- The limited access to services on the island

12.15 These are also an issue for tourism, in that they reduce the capacity of islanders to host and service visitors, reduce morale and limit people's (and particularly young people's) opportunities to grow and develop within their own community. If Rathlin were an island in Scotland it would benefit from a range of programmes aimed at sustaining population and services. Similarly if it were under ROI jurisdiction it would have the representation of a minister within Government. **This sustainable tourism strategy should be followed by a fundamental review of the support the island needs to remain as a functioning inhabited island with an indigenous community.**

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRIORITIES

12.16 The main priorities for sustainable tourism on Rathlin are:

- To increase the number of jobs in tourism, and to increase visitor spending on the island, through:
 - Improving visitor access to the island
 - Further developing distinctive and quality products to cater for priority market segments
 - Further developing the island's infrastructure and visitor servicing capability
 - Further developing the capacity of the community to host, inform and delight visitors
- To monitor visitor impacts on the island and provide visitor management effort to reduce impact
- To protect, enhance and raise awareness of the unique natural, built and cultural heritage of the island, the quality of the nature and built environment and its continuing capacity to attract visitors

FLAGSHIP OR KEY PROPOSALS

- 12.17 There are a number of key proposals, which will contribute more than others to these priorities. These relate to the functioning of the ferry in delivering and delighting visitors, the further development of the key attraction, the West Light Bird Observatory, the development of further accommodation in a way that restores some of the derelict vernacular housing and the functioning of Church Bay as a main visitor reception and hospitality area., and the building of capacity to organise further tourism initiatives. Each of these is discussed below:

A dedicated passenger ferry service

- 12.18 As discussed elsewhere in the report, the ferry falls short of providing a quality visitor service and some opportunities are lost to prepare visitors for their stay on the island. The issues identified are difficult to solve within the current contract for ferry provision by Calmac and its funder the Department of Regional Development. This is based on the provision of a lifeline service to islanders rather than on the complete function of the ferry. This issue could be addressed in the medium term through the development and design of a new service agreement taking into account the importance of tourism to the economy of Rathlin and an acceptance that this is also a lifeline issue affecting the ability to sustain a vibrant community on the island. It is recommended that the option of providing a dedicated passenger service to the island and a separate freight contract is considered to enable an increase both in the passenger volumes that can be carried and in the quality of the service provision on the boat. Any new craft should be able to operate within the constraints of the existing infrastructure at Ballycastle and Rathlin. This strategy has taken into account the growth in RIB capacity to transport visitors to Rathlin, but considers that there is only a limited interest in travelling in this type of craft amongst the target market.

The West Light Viewpoint Visitor Centre

- 12.19 The West Light Viewpoint is an important draw for visitors, both to the island and on arrival away from the Church Bay area. Whilst RSPB is developing the site with a new visitor centre, retail and displays and a set of toilets, there is an opportunity to develop the centre into a flagship centre for bird watching and for cliff viewing and to present the history of the lighthouses on Rathlin and elsewhere. This would involve use of further vacant rooms within the lighthouse, and observatory accommodation could be included within the concept.

Vernacular buildings restoration and tourist accommodation scheme

- 12.20 This proposal would combine the restoration of derelict clachans and farm steads on the island and the provision of additional short break self catering accommodation. The community could lead the restoration scheme with heritage and tourism funding. Opportunities include a small number of clachans, the historic East Light cottages and a number of scattered derelict homesteads. This initiative could be facilitated through the establishment of a rolling building preservation fund.

Church Bay Village Development Plan

12.21 Although the forthcoming Northern Area Plan will address development within the settlement of Church Bay, there is a need to look closely at the village's tourism function. Already prime sites for tourism services have been used for second home accommodation development and opportunities may continue to be lost. A dedicated tourism concept plan for the village is therefore proposed and should be prepared with full participation by Church Bay residents and landowners. The plan should address recommendations on appropriate architectural style and priorities for use of remaining lands around the bay area.

Building tourism capacity on the island

12.22 There are several very experienced tourism operators on the island with considerable tourism experience but these people tend to be very busy and there is little spare capacity to address the important activities of running events, walks and talks, developing packages, refining the visitor welcome, preparing marketing materials and other information and making contacts with potential tour operators. For this reason it is recommended that the islanders receive assistance to employ a tourism officer to implement aspects of the sustainable tourism strategy and to help build in quality to existing initiatives.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 12.23 The Rathlin Island Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2005-2015 has the following key objectives:
1. To increase the number of tourism jobs on Rathlin Island by at least 10 by 2010 and by a further 5 by 2015
 2. To double the number of visitor beds on Rathlin by 2015
 3. To improve visitor welcome, orientation and comfort (2005 baseline)
 4. To increase tourism spending on Rathlin Island
 5. To maintain the character, natural capital, built heritage and environmental quality of Rathlin Island
 6. To approach and enhance the unique natural, cultural and built heritage of Rathlin Island
 7. To raise the profile of Rathlin Island in overseas markets predisposed to visiting Ireland and in specialist markets (ornithology, wildlife watching)
 8. To raise the profile of Rathlin as a key destination on the Causeway Coastal Route (benefits to both Ballycastle and Rathlin), for visitors using the Campbelltown-Ballycastle Ferry and in the Causeway Coast area
 9. To develop a Rathlin Code of Good Environmental Practice, develop a brand and seal and encourage tourism operators to adopt its standards within their business practices and service provision.
 10. To co-ordinate provision for visitors on the island and develop packaged opportunities for visitors which add value to the stay
 11. To provide opportunities for visitors to engage with island issues and to contribute financially or practically towards island enhancement projects

CHAPTER 13 - RATHLIN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ACTION PLAN

13.1 The action plan to achieve the above 10 objectives is set out below with further detail and costs presented within the subsequent tables:

1. To increase the number of jobs available on Rathlin Island by 10 by 2015

- 1.1. To improve access to the island by reviewing the function and arrangements of the ferry service at peak times and considering an additional, passenger only craft to supplement the current service.
- 1.2. Employ tourism development, marketing and visitor management officer with support from (visitor payback scheme, Moyle Council, EHS, National Trust, RSPB)
- 1.3. Arrange daily guided evening walks as an incentive to stay on the island (2 part time guides)
- 1.4. Develop methods of interpreting the history of Rathlin for visitors in an oral and personal way
- 1.5. Arrange daily guided walks on different parts of Rathlin to interpret its special features (reserve wardens, farmers)
- 1.6. Develop a regular timetabled bus service on the island from April to October
- 1.7. To introduce a tourism and craft related SME development programme for Rathlin Island including both training and business support
- 1.8. Encourage more crafts people and tourism workers on to the island to live

2. To double the number of visitor beds on Rathlin Island from 60 to 120 beds by 2015 whilst also growing occupancy

- 2.1. Community based Clachan restoration to self catering purpose (2 clachans with two or three cottages) (12 beds) –
- 2.2. Lighthouse keepers cottages E light (2 houses) (8 beds)
- 2.3. Encourage 2 further B&B or one B&B and one extension – (6 beds)
- 2.4. Encourage development of existing hostel businesses (20 additional beds) or of the pub towards guest inn status (10 beds).
- 2.5. Encourage 1 new campsite adjacent to Church Bay
- 2.6. Develop and implement a marketing plan for tourism and events
- 2.7. Observatory accommodation at the West Light
- 2.8. Co-ordinate accommodation marketing with events marketing

- 3. Improve visitor welcome, orientation and comfort on the island:**
 - 3.1. Sign the Boat House Visitor Centre from the ferry slipway
 - 3.2. Provide welcome signage and orientation information
 - 3.3. To consider providing lounge facilities within the bar for types of visitors who enjoy more comfort
 - 3.4. To provide shelter or waiting room facilities on Rathlin beside the ferry embarkation point possibly with a mosaic map floor created by islanders/craftspeople

- 4. To increase tourism related spending on the island through increasing opportunities for added value services on the island**
 - 4.1. Continue Rathlin Arts and Craft project with a productive winter period creating crafts for spring and summer sales – look at ways of creating higher volumes without loss of authenticity – create craftwork based on the wildlife themes of the island
 - 4.2. Reopen tea house in Church bay and assist the creation of two more hospitality points on the busier parts of the island (e.g. E light and Upper End)
 - 4.3. Merchandising Initiative – audit of what could be portrayed on products and how

- 5. To maintain the character, natural capital, built heritage and environmental quality of Rathlin island;**
 - 5.1. To develop a community recycling and reuse scheme on the island and consider solutions to waste disposal other than incineration and dumping at sea to accommodate an increasing number of visitors (and their waste) on the island.
 - 5.2. To consider feasibility of improvements to the Church Bay sewage system to deal with increased accommodation capacity
 - 5.3. To monitor the condition of designated sites on Rathlin in relation to their visitor use and take visitor management action where necessary
 - 5.4. To encourage accreditation of trip boats visiting Rathlin under the WiSe scheme for compliant wildlife boat operators (www.wisescheme.org) or other suitable scheme
 - 5.5. To develop a specific Rathlin Code of Good Environmental Practice, and encourage tourism operators to adopt its standards within their business practices and service provision. covering – boat conduct within Church Bay and around island shores and cliffs – speed, distance from wildlife, noise, frequency; waste management for tourism businesses. Promote the code of practice on boats, booking points, businesses and accommodation- to encourage use of compliant providers only.

- 6. To raise the profile of Rathlin Island in overseas markets predisposed to visiting Ireland and in specialist markets (ornithology, wildlife watching)**
 - 6.1. Direct promotion of Rathlin to special interest market via membership organisations and their magazines and a website
 - 6.2. Increase profile of Rathlin within RTO and TIL marketing materials.

- 7. To raise the profile of Rathlin as a key destination on the Causeway Coastal Route (benefits to both Ballycastle and Rathlin) and in the Causeway Coast and Glens area**
 - 7.1. Integration of 'Rathlin Island Ferry' in the Causeway Coastal Route.
 - 7.2. High profile in marketing literature about the Route
 - 7.3. Special weekends/short breaks on Rathlin as part of the experience of the route
 - 7.4. A permanent display on the mainland giving information about Rathlin (e.g. an information board at the harbour, a dedicated space in the new Causeway Centre, a panel in the Ballycastle TIC)

- 8. To co-ordinate provision for visitors on the island and develop packaged opportunities for visitors which add value to the stay**
 - 8.1. An activity for the tourism officer proposed in 1.2 including formation of a Rathlin Tourism Provider Group to meet to plan joint marketing, ticketing and packaging arrangements and coordination during events.

- 9. To provide opportunities for visitors to engage with island issues and to contribute financially or practically towards island enhancement projects**
 - 9.1. Pilot visitor payback scheme- opt out scheme on ferry ticket (or choice of ferry ticket)
 - 9.2. Friends of Rathlin scheme
 - 9.3. Rathlin Work parties

Rathlin Sustainable Tourism Action Plan

To increase the number of jobs available on Rathlin Island by 10 by 2015						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
1.1	To improve access to the island by reviewing the function and arrangements of the ferry service at peak times and considering an additional, passenger only craft to supplement the current service.	Include in current review	DRD	DoE ICZM	1	Not known
1.2	Employ tourism development, marketing and visitor management officer with assistance from (visitor payback scheme, Moyle Council, NITB, EHS, National Trust, RSPB)	1 officer for initial three years	CCGHT RCDA	EHS NITB Moyle Council; RTO NGOs Visitor Payback scheme	1	£35,000 including NI contributions etc and office
1.3	Arrange daily guided evening walks as an incentive to stay on the island (2 part time guides)	Organised by officer 2 part time guides self employed Available daily May to September	RCDA	CCGHT EHS	1	Subsidy of £5000 first year descending to £1000 by year 3 and unsubsidised thereafter

To increase the number of jobs available on Rathlin Island by 10 by 2015						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
1.4	Develop oral interpretation of history, culture and historic sites for visitors	Formal and informal talks daily 2 part time guides	Rathlin Cooperative Society(RCS)	CCGHT EHS	1	Subsidy of £5000 first year descending to £1000 by year 3 and unsubsidised thereafter
1.5	Coordinate daily guided walks on different parts of Rathlin to interpret its special features (reserve wardens, farmers)	Daily programme available to visitors	Tourism officer	EHS NGOs CCGHT	1	£2000 yr to stimulate additional walks
1.6	Create a timetabled bus service	Liaison with bus operator to identify options and detailed feasibility of a post-bus service	Tourism officer	Translink (Rural Transport)	1	Not known
1.7	To introduce a tourism and craft related SME development programme for Rathlin Island including both training and business support		RCS	Invest NI LEADER	2	£15000
1.8	Encourage more crafts people on to the island to live	Specialist craft workshops and direct contacts	RCS	Arts Council	2	£2000 yr

To double the number of visitor beds on Rathlin Island from 60 to 120 beds by 2015 whilst also growing occupancy						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
2.1	Community based Clachan restoration to provide self catering (2 clachans with two or three cottages) (12 beds)	Create total of 10 self catering units	RCS	HLF IFI NITB	2	£540,000
2.2	Lighthouse keepers cottages E light (2 houses) (8 beds)- self-catering	Restoration and management of two self catering units	RCS	HLF IFI NITB Irish Lights	2	£200,000
2.3	Encourage 2 further B&B or one B&B and one extension – (6 beds)	2 existing homes renovate and offer B&B with support funding.	Private	LEADER	1	£30,000
2.4	Encourage development of existing hostel businesses (20 additional beds) or of the pub towards guest inn status (10 beds).	Existing hostel businesses extend or one new high quality hostel develops Pub adds guest bedrooms in a vernacular building style	Private	LEADER	1	£250,000
2.5	Encourage 1 new campsite adjacent to Church Bay	Formalised campsite with basic facilities on existing farmland	Private	LEADER	2	£70,000

To double the number of visitor beds on Rathlin Island from 60 to 120 beds by 2015 whilst also growing occupancy						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
2.6	Marketing plan including events marketing	Further development/ implementation of strategy outline to fit/complement events in the region	RCS Officer	NITB RTO	1	£
2.7	Observatory accommodation at the West Light	Feasibility study into broadened visitor centre concept at the west light	RSPB RCS		1	£10,000 feasibility study only

To improve visitor welcome, orientation and comfort on the island						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
3.1	Sign Boat House Visitor Centre from the ferry slip. A tasteful sign is required – ‘Welcome to Rathlin’	Already planned and in progress	Moyle DC		1	
3.2	Provide a map of the island with all attractions, features and services marked	Commission and print a tourist map or ask OSNI to provide at 1:25000 scale	RCS	CCGHT	1	£4000
3.3	To provide shelter or waiting room facilities on Rathlin beside the ferry embarkation point possibly with a mosaic map floor created by islanders/craftspeople	One shelter designed as part of Arts and Crafts project	RCS	DRD Calmac Lottery	1	£60,000

To increase tourism related spending on the island through increasing opportunities for added value services on the island						
No	Action	Assumption	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
4.1	Continue successful Rathlin arts and craft project with a productive winter period creating crafts for spring and summer sales – look at ways of creating higher volumes without loss of authenticity – create craftwork based on the wildlife themes of the island		RCS	Arts Council Invest NI	1	
4.3	Reopen tea house in Church bay and assist the creation of two more hospitality points on the busier parts of the island (e.g. E light and Upper End)	3 tea houses during April and May weekends and June, July August Grant aid for kitchen renewal/extension	Private sector	LEADER CCGHT INI	2	3@ £5000
4.4	Merchandising Initiative	Professional consultancy on branding and merchandising Rathlin craft and souvenir products Development of brand and image materials Renewal of retail spaces	RCDA RCS		2	£35000

To maintain the character, natural capital, built heritage and environmental quality of Rathlin island						
No	Action	Assumption	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
5.1	To develop a community recycling and reuse scheme on the island and consider solutions to waste disposal other than incineration and dumping at sea to accommodate an increasing number of visitors (and their waste) on the island. A clean up of old cars and other dumped material is a priority.	1 recycling collection point with removal 1 community reuse scheme 1 compactor for domestic waste 1 composting programme	Moyle DC RCS	EHS EPD Landfill Tax Credits (EHS)	1	£200,000 for capital projects Annual rates implication.
5.2	To consider feasibility of improvements to the Church Bay sewage system to deal with increased accommodation capacity	Feasibility study	Water Service		2	internal
5.3	To monitor the condition of designated sites on Rathlin in relation to their visitor use and take visitor management action where necessary	Site operators as part of routine management	Site operators	RCS CCGHT	1	0
5.4	To introduce a Wildlife accreditation scheme for boat operators to protect seals, cetaceans and nesting birds	Annual course and accreditation renewal 4 –10 operators	WiSe scheme	MCA EHS (organisational)	1	£50 per operator

To maintain the character, natural capital, built heritage and environmental quality of Rathlin island						
No	Action	Assumption	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
5.6	To develop a Rathlin Code of Good Environmental Practice and encourage its adoption by all tourism businesses	1 code developed 1 publication Plaques or badges/logos for participating businesses	RCS	CCGHT Private sector	1	£3000 publication and badging

To raise the profile of Rathlin Island in overseas markets predisposed to visiting Ireland and in specialist markets (ornithology, wildlife watching)						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost (3 Years)
6.1	Rathlin Island Branding	Develop distinctive brand identity for Rathlin Island.	RCS RTO	R.S.P.B	1	£30,000
6.2	Website	Develop new website with online reservations facility.	RCS RTO	LEADER C.C.G.H.T.	1	£30,000

To raise the profile of Rathlin Island in overseas markets predisposed to visiting Ireland and in specialist markets (ornithology, wildlife watching)

No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost (3 Years)
6.3	Visitor Guide/Map	Design new visitor guide/map	RCS	RTO R.S.P.B National Trust	1	£15,000
6.4	Familiarisation Programme	Organise familiarisation visits for travel trade and journalists	RTO	N.I.T.B	1/2	£10,000
6.5	PR/Publicity	Maximise publicity/PR opportunities	RCS RTO	R.S.P.B National Trust	1/2	£4,500
6.6	Events	Prepare calendar of events.	RCS RTO	R.S.P.B RTO	1/2	£45,000
6.7	Cooperative Marketing	Organise marketing agencies joint by	Calmac R.S.P.B National Trust RCS	RTO	1/2	£85,000
6.8	Research	Monitoring visitor satisfaction/marketing effectiveness	RCS RTO	C.C.G.H.T	3	£10,000

To raise the profile of Rathlin as a key destination on the Causeway Coastal Route (benefits to both Ballycastle and Rathlin) and in the Causeway Coast area						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
7.1	Integration of 'Rathlin Island Ferry' signage from Causeway Coastal Route	Sign at appropriate access junctions	NITB DETI Roads Service		1	Part of overall route budget
7.2	High profile in marketing literature about the Route		NITB RTO		1	Part of overall route budget
7.3	Special weekends/short breaks on Rathlin as part of the experience of the route	Tourism businesses design short breaks packages to suit market Promotion	RDCA RTO	Moyle Council	2	Office time and Web space
7.4	A permanent display on the mainland giving information about Rathlin (e.g. an information board at the harbour, a dedicated space in the new Causeway Centre, a panel in the Ballycastle TIC)	2 information panels and design 1 large exterior information board and map	Moyle Council		1	£6000

To co-ordinate provision for visitors on the island and develop packaged opportunities for visitors which add value to the stay						
No	Action	Assumption	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
8.1	An activity for the tourism officer proposed in 1.2 including formation of a Rathlin Tourism Provider Group to meet to plan joint marketing, ticketing and packaging arrangements and coordination during events.	1 tourism provider group 4 new packages of activity, special interest and events with accommodation and ferry Promotion	Tourism officer	Moyle Council RTO	2	£2000

To provide opportunities for visitors to engage with island issues and to contribute financially or practically towards island enhancement projects						
No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
9.1	Develop a pilot visitor payback scheme- opt out scheme on ferry ticket	Feasibility work with ferry operator	CCGHT RCS		2	£1000 for ticketing changes
9.2	Friends of Rathlin scheme	Develop scheme and provide administrative support	RCS	CCGHT	2	£5000 initial budget then self sustaining

To provide opportunities for visitors to engage with island issues and to contribute financially or practically towards island enhancement projects

No	Action	Assumptions	Lead	Support	Priority	Estimated Cost
9.3	Rathlin Work parties	To coordinate volunteer work opportunities on Rathlin through a Rathlin website	NGOs EHS	RCS	2	0

CHAPTER 14 - MARKETING PLAN

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

- 14.1 In order for Rathlin Island to realise its potential as a sustainable tourism destination, it is essential that a coordinated approach be adopted to marketing. The marketing objectives will be as follows.
- To underpin Rathlin Island's strategic position in the marketplace by developing a distinctive brand identity.
 - To communicate awareness of Rathlin Island (and specifically the sustainable approach to tourism) to potential visitors
 - To increase total visitors from the current level of 16,000 to 20,800 over the next three years with particular emphasis on priority market segments.
 - To fully capitalise on the opportunity presented to Rathlin Island through the roll-out of the Causeway Coast and Glens Masterplan – (The single most significant regional tourism initiative in Northern Ireland).
 - To extend the dwell time of visitors on Rathlin Island with particular emphasis on achieving a better balance between day visitors and overnight visitors.
 - To achieve a more even spread of tourist arrivals throughout the season by attracting visitors during off-peak times.

VISITOR TARGET MARKETS AND MARKET SEGMENTS

- 14.2 Rathlin Island currently attracts an estimated 16,000 visitors, an estimated 80% (12,800) of whom are day visitors. A key objective of the marketing strategy will be to grow both the day visitor market and the overnight market but with higher growth targets to be set in relation to the latter. In terms of future growth projections for tourism on Rathlin Island, we have taken into account the island's capacity to host visitors (and overnight visitors in particular) and also growth projections which have been prepared by the Tourist Boards.
- 14.3 Tourism Ireland, in its Marketing Strategy (2004-2006) has set out annual growth projections of 6% up to 2006. In their recently published targets for growth, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board anticipates that international tourism revenue will grow by 8.5% per annum and domestic tourism will grow by 6.5% per annum. (No growth targets have been prepared for visitor numbers to Northern Ireland).
- 14.4 Assuming the implementation in full of this marketing plan, a realistic target would be to grow tourism numbers on Rathlin Island by at least 30% (from 16,000 to 20,800) over the next three years.
- 14.5 The growth rates likely to be achieved will vary according to market, market segment (type of visitor) and for Day Visitor/Overnight Visitors

TARGET MARKETS

14.6 The domestic market is a key market for Rathlin Island and is projected to grow by 25% over the next three years. A higher rate of growth (34%) is anticipated in respect of the international markets with Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland both set to grow in terms of their importance to the Island.

Table 14.1 Rathlin Island target markets

	Current		Year 3	
	No.	%	No.	%
Northern Ireland	7,200	45	9,000	43
Great Britain	4,000	25	5,260	26
Republic of Ireland	1,600	10	2,200	11
Mainland Europe	1,600	10	2,200	11
N America/Other	1,600	10	2,040	10
TOTAL	16,000	100	20,800	100

MARKET SEGMENTATION

14.7 Table 14.2 below presents a market segmentation analysis for Rathlin Island. The Day Visitor, Special Interest, Touring, Boat/Yacht and Events participants markets will be given priority under the marketing plan.

14.8 Day Visitors are projected to grow by 25% over the next three years while each of the other priority (Overnight) segments can be expected to grow by 50% over this time-frame.

Table 14.2 Rathlin Island Market segmentation (Visitor Types)

	Current		Year 3	
	No.	%	No.	%
Day Visitors	12,800	80	16,000	77
Special Interest	580	4	870	4
Tourers	1,000	6	1,500	7
Boat/Yacht Visitors	200	1	300	1.5
Events Participants	200	1	300	1.5
Holidaymakers	1,000	6	1,500	7
Other Types(Groups,VFR)	220	1	110	1
TOTAL	16,000	100	20,800	100

DAY VISITORS VS OVERNIGHT VISITORS.

- 14.9 The day visitor market will continue to be the mainstay of tourism on Rathlin Island, however a key objective will be to increase overnight stays on the island thereby significantly increasing the revenue to be generated from tourism.

Table 14.3 Rathlin Island Day Visitors Vs Overnight Visitors

	Current		Year 3	
	No.	%	No.	%
Day Visitors	12,800	80	16,000	77
Overnight Visitors	3,200	20	4,800*	23
TOTAL	16,000	100	20,800	100

- 14.10 A growth in accommodation capacity as suggested under the sustainable development proposals for the island, will further enhance Rathlin Islands capacity to develop overnight tourism.

Marketing and Communications Strategy

- 14.11 In order to address the marketing objectives as outlined in section 14.1 of this report, it is recommended that the following marketing and communications strategy be implemented

Rathlin Island Brand

- 14.12 The case studies of the other islands identified the fact that communities had successfully developed branding for use in tourism promotional activities and in the merchandising of local produce and craft items.
- 14.13 As a matter of priority, resources will be allocated to developing a distinctive brand identity for Rathlin Island which will be used to underpin all tourism marketing activities and other economic activities on the island (i.e. agriculture, fishing etc.).
- 14.14 The new brand will be carried on all marketing and promotional collaterals; its use by the community throughout the island will also be encouraged.

Website

- 14.15 A new Website will be developed. The site will be information rich and designed to allow for regular updates (i.e. forthcoming events etc.). The Website will be tailored with the five priority segments in mind as set out in this marketing plan. The Website will incorporate an on-line reservations facility to allow potential overnight visitors to book their accommodation on the island.

Visitor Guide/Map

- 14.16 A new visitor guide/map will be designed. It is anticipated that this could be designed full colour A3 folding down to a convenient DL size. In its A3 format, this publication can also double as a poster. The visitor guide will also incorporate a map highlighting the key attractions and features of Rathlin Island and will be distributed to all T.I.Cs, major visitor attractions and accommodation establishments throughout the Causeway Coast and Glens region.

Familiarisation Programme

- 14.17 The adoption of a pro-active approach and ongoing liaison with the trade will be implemented. Working with Causeway Coast and Glens Regional Tourism Organisation, a programme of familiarisation visits will be organised for travel writers, ground handlers and specialist tour operators. Tourism Information Office staff throughout Northern Ireland will also be invited. The objective of the familiarisation programme will be to ensure that the tourism trade are made fully aware of Rathlin Island and what it has to offer.

PR/Publicity

- 14.18 Ongoing public relations and publicity will represent an important ingredient of the marketing mix for Rathlin Island. The island is already benefiting from free publicity and media exposure of events.

Events

- 14.19 A calendar of events will be developed as a key tool in helping develop tourism in the shoulder and off-peak months of the year. The events calendar will be carried on the website. Events will include those developed for special interest visitors, as well as visitors who are likely to have a more general interest in the island.

Cooperative Marketing

- 14.20 The review of current marketing activity on Rathlin Island identified up to ten different organisations currently involved in the marketing of the Island. The evidence suggests that in most cases, marketing activities undertaken by the organisations involved have not been coordinated.
- 14.21 Cooperative marketing activities for Rathlin Island could extend to shared funding of promotions associated with particular events, the design and print of the visitor guide, the organisation of familiarisation visits, and ongoing research (see below).

MARKETING BUDGET

- 14.22 A total marketing budget of £155, 0000 over three years will be required to ensure the delivery of the marketing activities as set out in this plan (2006 – 2009). (At present, the value of marketing expenditure undertaken by individual organisations related to Rathlin Island is estimated to be a minimum of £25,000 per annum and possibly worth twice this amount).
- 14.23 Much of the marketing expenditure will be front-ended, with expenditure on the brand development, website and visitor guide taking place in Year1.

Budget Allocation by Marketing Mix

- 14.24 The allocation of the marketing budgets by marketing activities over the three years of the plan is set out below: Initial one off expenditure of £70,000 will be required to cover the cost of Brand Development (£30,000), Website Development (£25,000) and the production of a Visitor Guide/Map (£15,000). Thereafter, the annual marketing mix/budget proposed is set out below

Table 14.4 Rathlin Island Marketing Mix (2006 – 2008)

	2006	2007	2008	2006/2008
	£	£	£	£
• Familiarisation Programme	5,000	5,000	-	10,000
• Publicity/PR	1,000	1,500	2,000	4,500
• Cooperative Marketing (including advertising)	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
• Events Promotion	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
• Research/Monitoring	-	-	10,000	10,000
<u>TOTAL</u>	26,000	26,500	32,000	84,500

Marketing Budget Allocation by Market Segment

- 14.25 Table '14.5' below presents an overview of the allocation of the marketing budget by market segment. Certain marketing activities (i.e. Brand development, website etc.) will be universal and will apply to all market segments.
- 14.26 The focus of marketing activities will be on the priority market segments as set out previously in chapter 12 and earlier in this chapter

Table 14.5 Marketing Budget Allocation × Market Segment

	PRIMARY					SECONDARY	
	1 Day Visitors	2 Special Interest	3 Touring	4 Boat/Yacht Visitors	5 Events Participants	6 Holiday makers	7 Groups
				Tourism Trade			
• Brand Development	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
• Website Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Visitor Guide / Map	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
• Familiarisation Programme							
• Publicity/PR	✓	✓					
• Cooperative Marketing (including advertising)		✓			✓	✓	✓
• Events Promotion					✓		
• Research/Monitoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Measurement and Monitoring

- 14.27 A benchmark has now been established through the preparation of this Sustainable tourism strategy for Rathlin Island. Research will be conducted with visitors in year three of the marketing plan. The objective will be to measure visitor satisfaction levels overall, obtain an insight into the characteristics of visitors, and also to track the effectiveness of different marketing activities that have been undertaken.

Funding

14.28 The funding of this marketing plan will come from two sources: as follows:

- Redeployment of existing marketing budgets
- Top up marketing funding

14.29 It would be hoped that existing actors (i.e. agencies and transport) can be encouraged to set aside a portion of their current annual marketing expenditure for Rathlin Island for this marketing plan. As previously stated, considerable scope exist to undertake cooperative marketing activities.

14.30 Additional top-up marketing will also be needed from public sector sources to facilitate the delivery of this marketing plan.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – World Tourism Organisation sustainable Tourism Definition

Appendix II – Attendance at community seminar 9th February 2005

Appendix III - attendance at 1st Strategy Seminar 10th February 2005

Appendix IV – attendance at 2nd Strategy seminar 15th March 2005

Appendix V – Monitoring Recommendations

Appendix VI - Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage Tables

APPENDIX I - WTO CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The study team has also been guided by the World Tourism Organisation's conceptual definition on sustainable tourism (2004), which identifies that a suitable balance should be struck between the environmental, economic, social and cultural aspects of tourism

"Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism should:

- 1) ***Make optimal use of environmental resources*** that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 2) ***Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities***, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) ***Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders*** that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

*Sustainable tourism development requires the **informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership** to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a **continuous process** and it requires **constant monitoring of impacts**, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.*

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them."

APPENDIX II - ATTENDANCE AT COMMUNITY SEMINAR RATHLIN ISLAND 9TH FEBRUARY 2005

(18 attended)

John Mc Curdy

Sadie Mc Faul

Nicki Sebastian

Angela Ilreen

Richard Green

Stephen Caldwell

Kitty Mc Curdy

Anne Mc Quilkin

Kay Mc Curdy

Jennifer Mc Curdy

Judy Mc Curdy

Gusty Mc Curdy

Imelda Mc FAul

Margaret Mc Quilkin

Loughie Mc Quilkin

Liz Withers

Noel Mc Curdy

Teresa Mc Faul

APPENDIX III - ATTENDANCE AT THE 1ST STRATEGY SEMINAR ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2005 ON RATHLIN ISLAND (33 attended)

Gary McClelland	Planning Service
Rosie McMenamin	Planning Service
Kay McCurdy	Rathlin Guesthouse - Islander
Billy Reid	National Trust
John McCurdy	Cooperative Society & RDCA, Steering Group, Islander
Jennifer McCurdy	Cooperative Society/Hostel/Cycle Hire/Islander
Stephen Caldwell	Rathlin Private Ferry
Richard Green	RDCA – (Chairman)
Jonathan Barnes	Calmac Ferries
Anne Mc Quilkin	Islander
Geoff Campbell	DOE/EHS
Fiona Campbell	Moyle District Council
Alison Mc Faul	RSPB/Camping Barn - Islander
Clare Dore	DARD Countryside Management
Darren Roberts	RSPB
Liam Mc Faul	RSPB/EHS - Islander
Joe Breen	EHS
Fergus Wallace	Resident
Imelda McFaul	RDCA, Steering Group/Islander
Peter Harper	Steering Group and CCGHT
Maxime Sizaret	CCGHT
Kathleen Mc Bride	NITB
John McKee	DARD
Gusty McCurdy	Islander
Sadie McCurdy	Islander
Errol Gunning	DRD Policy
Loughie McQuilkin	Islander
Nicki Sebastian	Islander
Ken Bradley	DOE (Environmental Policy Group)
Liz Withers	Co-op Management Community
Sadie McFaul	Islander
Kitty McCurdy	Islander
Teresa McFaul	Islander

APPENDIX IV - ATTENDANCE AT SEMINAR 2 ON RATHLIN ISLAND

(40 attended)

Richard Green	Islander/ RDCA
Judy Mc Curdy	Islander
Gusty Mc Curdy	Islander
Charleen Arnold	Islander
Kevin Mc Curdy	Islander
John Mc Curdy	Islander
Nicki Sebastien	Islander
Jennifer Mc Curdy	Islander
Fergus Wallace	Islander
Liz Withers	Islander
Peggy Mc Faul	Islander
Tim Mc Faul	Islander
Teresa Mc Faul	Islander/ Editor Rathlin Newsletter
Damien Mc Faul	Islander
Noel Mc Curdy	Islander
Sadie Mc Curdy	Islander
Dermot Wilson	Islander
Margaret Mc Quilkin	Islander
Loughie Mc Quilkin	Islander
Kitty Mc Curdy	Islander
Anne Mc Quilkin	Islander
Kay Mc Curdy	Islander
July Anne Mc Callum	Islander
Caroline Hegarty	Moyle District Council
Fiona Campbell	Moyle District Council
Michael Mc Conaghy	Moyle District Council
Catherine Mc Cambridge	Moyle District Council
Gary McClelland	Planning Service
Rosie McMenamin	Planning Service
Ruth Blair	EHS

Jeff Campbell	EHS
Clare Dore	DARD
Ken Bradley	DOE Environmental Policy
Inspector Brian Hume	P.S.N.I.
Peter Harper	CCGHT
Richard Price Stevens	Interested individual
Joan Lamar	Interested individual
Billy Reid	National Trust
Cdr Peter Campbell	Interested individual
Dessima Connolly	Arts Officer RCDA, Steering Group

APPENDIX V – MONITORING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following monitoring programme is recommended for terrestrial, shoreline and maritime habitats and features.

TERRESTRIAL AND UPPER SHORE HABITATS

Freshwater bodies:

- 1 There is a range of small lakes and ponds, the largest being in Kebble, north of Cleggan, and in the south of the island, notably Ushet Lough. These support a characteristic range of marginal vegetation, nesting birds like coot, and small numbers of overwintering wildfowl. Definitions of quality and change should include:
 - Water quality
 - Water level
 - Marginal vegetation
 - No loss of sites
 - Disturbance level
 - Key species stable/increasing

Wetlands:

- 2 Associated with a number of the freshwater bodies, and in numerous areas throughout the island, as peaty depressions, rush pastures, mires and wet heath. Some of these may support breeding waders, e.g. lapwing. Definitions of quality and change:
 - Water quality of any ditches or other standing water
 - Water table
 - Deviations from classic or previously recorded vegetation type
 - Poaching, trampling, tracks
 - Key species of breeding wader or other characteristic birds stable or increasing
 - Presumption against development on wetland sites
 - Grazing levels

Western maritime heath:

- 3 Widely distributed about the island and frequently featured in ASSI citations Often characterised by a rich flora, including lichens, and invertebrates. Definitions of quality and change:
 - Percentage heather cover
 - Sward height
 - Distribution of planned and *ad hoc* paths; extent of lateral erosion
 - Deviations from classic or designated vegetation type
 - Incidents of unapproved burning and other damage

- Walkers vs. livestock relationship
- Key species stable or increasing

Species rich grasslands:

- 4 With one or two exceptions, most Rathlin farms are relatively non-intensive, and a number of fields and more open areas have not been improved. These support a richer assemblage of plants, varying according to physical conditions and the agricultural management and some may be of considerable potential for the recovery of N Ireland's small chough population. A number of areas are in conservation management. Definitions of quality and change:
- Composition of species and vegetation type based on NVC criteria
 - Presence of key species, e.g. species of conservation concern in the N Ireland Biodiversity Strategy
 - Sward height and appropriateness of grazing regime
 - Paths and eroded areas
 - Walkers vs. livestock relationship
 - Quantity of resource
 - Integrity of boundaries

Improved pasture/silage:

- 5 The majority of this resource, which has relatively low value for wildlife, is on private farms and managed commercially. It is therefore presumed to lie outside the terms of a tourism strategy, except where landowner have access arrangements and/or are willing to allow walkers etc on their land. This is covered in other sections of the strategy. However, a key component of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy must be that tourist access is compatible with other legitimate interests on the island

Hay meadow:

- 6 A number of areas are still managed and harvested for their hay crops, and increasingly this method of farming is seen as an important management tool for plant diversity, invertebrates, and (with provision of corners of early cover, e.g. nettles, iris) considerable potential for recovery of corncrake. Definitions of quality and change:
- Cutting times and appropriate grazing out of growth season
 - No access during breeding season (in any case much of this land will be private or subject to management agreement)
 - Integrity of boundaries
 - Presence of early cover (for corncrakes)

Arable/potatoes:

- 7 This is a relatively scarce land use on Rathlin, and where it occurs will be largely on private land, and not relevant to tourism. However, it can have the potential for attracting farmland birds, e.g. tree sparrow, linnets, twite, and this could enhance potential for visitors seeking 'off season' wildlife.

Woodland/scrub:

8 This is a relatively scarce habitat on the island, but where it occurs it provides shelter and diversifies the biodiversity, whilst for tourists it offers interest and contributes to the landscape of the island more significantly than might be suggested by its abundance. Definitions of quality and change:

- Extent of native woodland and scrub
- Regeneration in woodland/scrub units
- Quality of under storey where appropriate, and of ground flora

Dry stone walls:

9 A significant, defining feature of Rathlin, both in landscape and biodiversity terms, and an important management device for both livestock and visitors. Important for lichens and a range of plants including broomrape.

Definitions of quality and change:

- Physical integrity of walls
- Presence and continuity of old wall flora
- Selection of appropriate styles and functions
- Quality of field entries, gateposts, gates
- Opportunities for removal of inappropriate field boundaries
- Quality of hedges (often growing with/over walls)

Cliffs, screes, steep slopes:

10 Arguably the most dramatic feature of Rathlin, and home to internationally important numbers of breeding seabirds (esp auks, kittiwakes, fulmars, shag) whilst the grassed over steep slopes have been free from agricultural improvements and can support breeding buzzard, whilst also holding potential for chough. The inaccessibility of the nesting ledges belies the vulnerability of the birds to habitat changes, disturbance, and the birds' dependence on offshore feeding. Definitions of quality and change:

- Distribution and numbers of breeding seabirds (monitored through projects like Seabird 2000)
- Naturalness and rate of erosion, especially of screes and steep slopes
- Disturbance levels by public access (from boats) to cliff bases
- Disturbance levels from boats accessing inshore waters at cliff base
- Efficacy of agreements focusing climbing/rescue practice into non-bird areas, or to out of breeding season
- Access to cliff-top areas and fencing compatible with chough feeding

Saltmarsh:

11 A relatively scarce resource on the island, found in sheltered pockets at cliff bases, in inlets and gullies, and behind rock outcrops. A distinctive flora and invertebrate fauna, and probably supporting small numbers of waders on passage in spring and autumn. Definitions

of quality and change:

- Distribution and species composition
- Presence/absence of human derived erosion

MARINE HABITATS

12 Rathlin is surrounded by marine life that is outstanding in a European context both in terms of its range of habitats and for its variety of particular species. The area was widely surveyed and reported on by Erwin *et al* 1990, who recommended that protection of the N and E sides of Rathlin (to depth of 50m) and Church Bay could (with Strangford Lough) protect about 90% of N Ireland's sub littoral species and habitats. It is important to consider these in the context of sustainable tourism because of the island's potential for boat based and diving recreation.

Intertidal exposed rocky shores:

13 Widely distributed about Rathlin's rocky coast in the form of either large boulders or bedrock outcrops, and important for its flora and fauna. The most exposed areas are probably quite pristine, and immune to direct human intervention. However, all shores around the island are subject to indirect effects, notably pollution, disturbance of bird and mammal predators, and climate change. Definitions of quality and change:

- Species assemblages and zonation
- Disturbance levels as in cliffs etc above
- Extent and type of tourism-sourced beached debris
- Inshore water quality

Intertidal sheltered rocky shores:

14 This resource covers most of the remainder of the island shores, together with shingle and coarse sand beaches. Most of the factors affecting exposed shores above apply here, with the notable addition of presence of grey seals. Definitions of quality and change:

- As above
- Numbers, distribution, breeding of grey seals

Subtidal caves, cliffs and reefs:

15 See Erwin *et al* 1990 for details. A complex range of habitats spread from the W end of the island, along the N coast, and descending steeply into deep water. Caves in the submerged limestone cliffs support an unusual assemblage of species. Definitions of quality and change:

- Distribution and abundance of recorded fauna, particularly cave communities
- Use by feeding seabirds

Subtidal gravels, sands, boulders, pebble communities:

16 See Erwin *et al* 1990 for details. A rich assemblage of marine life varying according to sediment type, itself varying according to exposure and current strength. Exits in various forms widely in Church Bay, and off the NE of Rathlin. Sponges (many of them very

ancient where not damaged by fishing) support a wide range of other invertebrates. Definitions of quality and change:

- Distribution and abundance of long-lived species, and the whole range of assemblages
- Numbers of commercially important species; extent of removal by divers

Subtidal wrecks:

17 There are a large number of wrecks round Rathlin, but many are inaccessible or whose locations are unknown in detail. However, wrecks provide opportunities for recreational diving e.g. the Drake and support unusually rich assemblages of marine life. Some can be vulnerable to souvenir hunting and uncontrolled collection of lobsters. Definitions of quality and change:

- Condition of wreck (bearing in mind that all wrecks ultimately collapse)
- Levels of 'for the pot' collecting
- Integrity of wreck (where listed or protected)

Offshore waters:

18 The waters off Rathlin and for a considerable way offshore are of importance for cetaceans, basking sharks, seals, and particularly for feeding auks rearing young from the cliff colonies. The extent and intensity of this use remains to be surveyed, but a strong case has been made for extension of the SPA under the Birds Directive to cover these waters. They are largely immune to tourism based activities because of their extent, but any changes in their quality could gravely impact upon the breeding colonies on shore, themselves a key tourist resource. Definitions of quality and change:

- Use by breeding auks from Rathlin
- Numbers of cetaceans and basking sharks
- Long term changes in annual temperature cycle
- Water quality (re pollution incidents)

APPENDIX VI – TABLES SETTING OUT NATURAL, BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE INTEREST ON RATHLIN ISLAND

Each feature has been scored on a grading scheme based on a subjective assessment of potential interest for tourism, including visual impressiveness, movement and activity spectacle (or potential for this), and whether the feature has background interest or explanation of interest. Grades are based on the likely visitor perception of the feature

Please note: in tables, features may be repeated as they are referred to by different sources; moreover one major feature may contain several species or sub-features. Access is only summarised or suggested, and does not confirm that the owner/manager of the feature either provides, or allows visiting. It also does not imply any level or intensity of management.

Classification

- Grade: Esoteric:** Feature is difficult to find and identify, and its explanation is unlikely to arouse interest or excitement except for specialists.
- Grade: Local:** Feature is difficult to find and identify, but carries some public interest in Rathlin. Explanation or guiding would be necessary for all but experts.
- Grade: Attraction:** Feature is interesting, dramatic or beautiful, or carries an exciting explanation or tale linked to wildlife or the island's history.
- Graded: Unique:** An outstanding feature that could compete successfully amongst other world tourist spectacles, and/or which has a tale or explanation that carries UK, Ireland or global resonance
- Grade: Story telling:** When there is no feature of note to be seen, but there is a cracking story

NATURAL, BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AUDIT - BIODIVERSITY, SPECIES AND HABITAT HERITAGE FEATURES

BIODIVERSITY, SPECIES & HABITAT HERITAGE FEATURES				
DATA FROM EHS, RSPB, NATIONAL TRUST	TOWNLAND/LOCATION	TOURIST INTEREST	ACCESSIBILITY	SOURCE
SITES, AREAS AND DESIGNATIONS				
NNR. Acid grasslands and seabird cliffs	Kebble	3, Attraction	By road/boat	EHS
ASSI. Acid grassland with pyramidal bugle and other notable spp	Kinramer South	2, Local	By road	EHS
ASSI. Cliffs, stacks, maritime grassland, shores, plants, seabirds	Rathlin coast	3, Attraction	EHS, RSPB, NT	EHS
ASSI. Heath/wetland vegetation, dwarf heath	Ballycarry - (in ownership of NT)	2, Local	NT road	EHS/NT
ASSI. Dwarf heath, wet heath and wetland communities	Ballygill North	2, Local	?	EHS
SPA. Internationally important seabird colonies	Rathlin cliffs	4, Unique	By road/boat	EHS
Candidate SAC. Sea caves, drift lines, reefs, sandbanks, sea cliffs	Rathlin coast and offshore waters	3, Attraction (divers)	Boat and dive	EHS
RSPB West light. Views over seabird SPA/ASSI	Kebble	4, Unique	Road and stair-path	RSPB
North cliffs, RSPB ownership. Seabird cliffs and stacks	Cleggan - Ballyconaghan, ca 5km	3, Attraction (boat)	No path/access	RSPB
South cliffs and adjacent land. Potential chough recovery	Kinramer S and Ballygill south? <i>CHECK!</i>	2, Local	No access?	RSPB
Hay meadows under ownership/lease/agreement re corncrake	Mainly in Glebe and Desmesne townlands	2/3 Attraction?	View/listen from road	RSPB
Ballyconaghan, w. maritime heath, wetlands, panoramic views	Ballyconaghan, owned by NT	3, Attraction	NT paths	NT
SPECIES				
Razorbill (20.9k), guillemot (95k), puffin (1600), bl guillemots (200)	Seabird cliffs and stacks, ASSI SPA	4, Unique	Boat and RSPB	RSPB
Fulmar (2k), kittiwake (9.9k), M shearwater, shag, small no. gulls	Seabird cliffs and stacks, ASSI SPA	3, Attraction	Boat and RSPB	RSPB
Breeding/wintering dabchick, tufted duck, eider, water rail	Lakes and wetlands	2, Local	View from road	RSPB

BIODIVERSITY, SPECIES & HABITAT HERITAGE FEATURES				
DATA FROM EHS, RSPB, NATIONAL TRUST	TOWNLAND/LOCATION	TOURIST INTEREST	ACCESSIBILITY	SOURCE
Spring/autumn migrating wimbrel, curlew, purple sandpiper	Shores and maritime grasslands, salt marsh	1, Esoteric	View from shore rd.	RSPB
Breeding waders, eg lapwing and snipe	Grasslands and wetlands	1, Esoteric	Various	RSPB
Potential chough (S cliffs) and corncrake recovery (hay meadows)	S shore and lands around Church Bay	2, Local	View/listen from rd.	RSPB
Grey and common seals (ca 130)	Rocky shores, including Church Bay and harbour	3, Attraction	Harbour and shore rd.	Various
Range of plants, see text	W end of island, dry stone walls, wetland areas	1, Esoteric	Various	Various
Cetaceans, basking shark	Location and timing unpredictable	Variable	Boat	Various

NATURAL, BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AUDIT - GEOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

GEOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES				
FROM G McCURDY BOOK AND OTHER SOURCES	LOCATION(S)	TOURIST INTEREST	ACCESSIBILITY	SOURCE
Basalt and chalk/limestone cliffs. Flints used in neolithic.	South coast cliffs. Seen from Harbour	3 Attraction	?	McC 6
Cliffs around Kebble, W light	Kebble	4 Unique	Variable	RAB
North coast cliffs	Kinramer to Ballyconaghan	2, by boat 3	Variable	RAB
Heather moorland	Ballyconaghan	3 Attraction	NT paths	RAB
Rue Point	Rue Pt	2, Local	from road	RAB
Mini causeways	Ushet Point, Doon Point	2, Local	from road & walk	McC 6&7
Geological faults across island	Various locations	1, Esoteric	?	McC 7
Glacial erratics from Scotland. "The two wolves"	Craigmacagan	1-2 Local?	?	McC 8
Raised beaches	Roonivoolin, Manor H to Mill Bay	1, Esoteric	via shore road	McC 8
Lakes	Towards Rue Pt (Ushet etc), and near Bull Pt/W Light	2, Local	Variable	RAB

NATURAL, BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AUDIT- ARCHEOLOGICAL/BUILT/CULTURAL FEATURES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL/BUILT/CULTURAL FEATURES

DATA FROM G McCURDY BOOK	LOCATION(S)	TOURIST INTEREST	ACCESSIBILITY	SOURCE
Mesolithic - no features identified	N/A			McC 9
Buried trees "bog oak" - Neolithic period?	?	1/2 Local	?	McC 11
Porcellanite axe factory and nearby axe chipping floors	Brockley in Ballygill Middle	2/3 Attraction?	?	McC 11
Neolithic house foundations - visible?	Various places, not specified	1, Esoteric	?	McC 12
Neolithic stone circles	?	1, Esoteric	?	McC 13
Neolithic stone cairns	?	1/2 Local	?	McC 13
Bronze age burial site(s)	Ouig, near Harbour	1, Local	?	McC 14
Celtic Rathlin brooch site by standing stone. Chance of a replica?	Brooch in Dublin. Site of standing stone?	1, Esoteric	?	McC 16
Large celtic fort, causeway to smaller fort	Doonmore, Ballygill North	2/3 Attraction?	?	McC 17/18
Stone of Destiny (Scone)	Edinburgh! Carried Ireland - Rathlin - Scotland	?	N/A	McC 19
Whirlpool of Breacan, scene of legendary shipwrecks	Off Rue Point	1, Esoteric	boat and road	McC 20
McDonnell race	Off E/NE end of Rathlin	1/2, Local	boat, road and path	RAB
Various kings and Colmcille - part history, part legend	No specific sites / relics mentioned	Story telling	N/A	McC 19-22
Four monastic sites. One still visible, circular foundations	Kilpatrick	1, Esoteric	?	McC 22/23
Alter stones, mass stones, lookout points re Penal Laws	Various places, not specified	1, Esoteric	?	McC 67
Norman - John de Courcey's castle. Any remains?	?	?	?	McC 23
Bruce's cave of spider fame	East shore?	3, Attraction?	boat and shore	McC 24/25
McDonnells battles with Crown. History.	No sites?	Story telling	N/A	McC 25/26
Sorley Boy McDonnell's house, Ballynoe. Now a barn,	Ballynoe	2/3 Attraction?	?	McC 26-33

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL/BUILT/CULTURAL
FEATURES**

DATA FROM G McCURDY BOOK	LOCATION(S)	TOURIST INTEREST	ACCESSIBILITY	SOURCE
Castle attacked 1575	No site mentioned	Story telling 2/3	?	McC 26-33
1642 Cambell/McDonnell battle sites	"Hollow of the great defeat" "Hill of the screaming" "Chasm of the women"	local/attraction? ditto ditto	? ? ?	McC 28/29 "
Rathlin place names, townlands, and meanings Famine wall built as employment measure 1850's-60's Manor House (NT) late 18thC, and other Gage buildings Kelp kilns and drying walls Potato famine history. No physical relics?	All over Kilpatrick By harbour Various places, not specified N/A	Story telling 1/2 Esoteric/local 2 Local 1, Esoteric Story telling?	Various ? access provided ? N/A	McC McC 32 McC 33 McC 39 McC 42
Lazy beds - "rigs", growing potatos with kelp fertilizer Walled landscape. Walls for townlands, for fields. Gaps= "slaps"	Widespread, but no good sites mentioned Widespread, but no good sites mentioned	1/2 esoteric/local? 1, Esoteric 1, Esoteric	? ? ?	McC 46/47 McC 48/49 McC "
Circular limestone gate posts. Ref folklore, E Evans Lighthouses. Rathlin East 1849, West Light 1912, Rue Pt 1915/21 Coastguards 1823 "The Station", Rocket House Wartime coastguard hut, spectacular views Marconi radio experiments, E Light to Ballycastle. No relics?	As in names ? Cantruan (by Ballyconaghan?) ? Drake - Church Bay, plus wrecks at other sites Cooraghy, Oweyberne (2) Garvagh, Killeaney	3, Attraction 2, Local 2/3 Attraction? 1-4?? 2, local, for divers	Irish Lights, RSPB ? NT paths ? boat and dive	McC 50-52 McC 52 McC 55 McC 56 McC57
Wrecks, inc the Drake, 1916	Cooraghy, Oweyberne (2) Garvagh, Killeaney	1, Esoteric	? Various	McC 62
Former boat ports, mostly for hauling up Slip roads (if visible) Slip = sledge for hauling goods Sweat house = Glaic an Toigh Allais? Churches - St Thomas, C of I 1815, on earliest monastic site	? ? By harbour	1, Esoteric 1, Esoteric 2, Local	? ? access provided	McC 62 McC 62 McC 67

ARCHAEOLOGICAL/BUILT/CULTURAL FEATURES

DATA FROM G McCURDY BOOK	LOCATION(S)	TOURIST INTEREST	ACCESSIBILITY	SOURCE
- RC Church 1865	Churchquarter	2, Local	access provided	McC 67
Churchquarter School, on this site for 270+ years	Churchquarter	1, Esoteric	?	McC 68
Wind turbines, "Children of Lir": Conn, Fiachra, Aedh	Ballynagard?	2, Local	? Widely visible	McC 71
Song, language and tales (see above also for history/legends)	N/A. Suggest separate work needed on this	Story telling	N/A	McC 71-81

NATURAL, BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AUDIT - ARCHAEOLOGICAL, BUILT, CULTURAL HERITAGE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL/BUILT/CULTURAL FEATURE

DATA FROM HILL ST	TOWNLAND	GRID REFERENCE	SMR No	CARE	McC Ref
Cropmark of square enclosure	Kebble	9405175	74		
Hut site?	Kebble	9875175	41		
Hut site?	Kebble	9895189	40		
Possible prehistoric occupation site	Kinramer	10865091	1		
Rock outcrop, Doonbeg (non-antiquity)	Ballygill middle	11365239	2		yes?
Fortified outcrop, Doonmore. ?souterrain	Ballygill north	11875256	4	Scheduled	yes
Non antiquity (unspecified)	Ballygill middle	11665219	39		
Possible enclosure, with another ca 200m to SE	Kebble ?	11675193	75		
Pounding stone	Ballygill south	11725154	70		
Sweat house	Ballygill south	11825140	71		yes?
Prehistoric axe factory	Ballygill middle	11845201	5	Scheduled	yes
Hut sites	Ballygill middle	11895209	72		
Promontory (fort?), Doonnagail	Ballygill north	11755301	3		
Church site, Kilabirda +graveyard	Ballygill middle	12055180	6	Scheduled	
Possible field system	Ballygill north	12305227	38		
Non antiquity (unspecified)	Ballygill middle	12235200	77		
Subrectangular enclosure	Ballygill middle	12345146	7		
Non antiquity (unspecified)	Knockans	12545207	8		
Hut site	Knockans	12675166	37		

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL/BUILT/CULTURAL
FEATURE**

DATA FROM HILL ST	TOWNLAND	GRID REFERENCE	SMR No	CARE	McC Ref
Hut site	Knockans	12755194	10	Scheduled	
Mass site. 'Englishman's hollow - Lag an Sassanach'	Knockans	12815206	69		yes?
Ecclesiastical enclosure, Kilvorvuan	Knockans	12755205	9	Scheduled	
Neolithic settlement site, with bronze age/early christian activity	Knockans	13055155	82		
Mass site	Kilpatrick	13855165	67		yes?
Cairn (round)	Kilpatrick	13895172	81		
Possible monastery	Knockans / Kilpatrick?	13955156	68		yes
Hut site	Ballynagard	14075169	42		
Prehistoric settlement site	Ballynagard	14085207	11		
Unlocated mass site	Ballynagard	141518	65	Scheduled	
Possible cairn	Ballynagard	14295193	12		
Modern church on earlier site, stone lined graves	Churchquarter	14525100	23		
Field wall	Ballyconaghan	14715201	45		
Cairn (round)	Ballyconaghan	14765201	46		
Hut site	Ballyconaghan	14825202	30		
Possible enclosure,	Ballyconaghan	14985208	31		
Find spot of reputed viking longboat	Desmesne	14905101	80		
Find spot of skeletons	Mullindress	15165130	63		
Battle site 1642	Ballycarry, Ballynoe, Mullindress	152511	84		yes
Hut site	Ballycarry	15175220	35		
Castle (site of)	Ballycarry	15321525	52	Scheduled	
Reputed site of massacre 1642	Ballycarry	15605128	51		yes
Hut site?	Ballycarry	16035141	29		
Graveyard, unlocated	Ballycarry	161513	48	State care	
Bruce's cave	Ballycarry	16305198	49		yes
Well	Ballycarry	16275182	62		
Bruce's castle	Ballycarry	16365153	13	Scheduled	

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL/BUILT/CULTURAL
FEATURE**

DATA FROM HILL ST	TOWNLAND	GRID REFERENCE	SMR No	CARE	McC Ref
Bullaun = knock stone	Ballynoe	15455101	53		
Battle site 1551	Churchquarter	149509	83	Scheduled	
Approx find site, two cannons and powder ladle	Ballynoe	15865097	54		
Cave	Ballynoe	16005093	50		
Standing stone	Desmesne	14985197	14	Scheduled	
Cist burial, ring ditch and stone alignment	Desmesne	14965081	44		yes?
Bronze age cist burial	Desmesne	14985073	15		yes?
Enclosure	Craigmacagan	15435055	36		
Possible promontory fort	Craigmacagan	16605060	16		
Possible hut site	Craigmacagan	15284990	32		
Possible holy well	Craigmacagan	155499	55	State care	
Two wolves of Macateery (2 glacial erratics)	Craigmacagan	15464956	56		
Round cairn	Craigmacagan	15374947	47	Scheduled	
Field system, incl huts and field walls	Carravindoon	15634907	18		
Enclosures or hut sites?	Carravindoon	15304936	26		
Graveyard, Kilvoruan	Carravindoon	15264930	17	Scheduled	
D' shaped enclosure	Kinkeel	15124926	27		
Castle/cashel, souterraines, Castle Voodish	Carravindoon	156488	57		
Promontory fort Doon Point	Carravindoon	15774875	58		
Possible crannog	Roonivoolin	14914845	19		
Possible sweat house, unlocated	Roonivoolin	14994831	61	State care	
Round cairn, date uncertain	Carravindoon	15484821	59		
Hut sites	Carravindoon	15234806	20		
Folklore site, traditional site of massacre of women by Essex's	Roonivoolin	14924765	60		yes
Possible hut site	Roonivoolin	15234761	24		
Possible hute site	Roonivoolin	15234764	21		
Find spot of hiberno-norse coin hoard, ca 1040.	?	151476	73	State care	
Hut site	Roonivoolin	15154736	22		
Find spot of dress fastener?	Ballynagard	13955180	66		yes?

NATURAL, BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE - BUILT HERITAGE LISTED BUILDINGS

LISTED BUILDINGS - REF HILL ST.				
NAME AND DESCRIPTION	GRID REFERENCE	HB REFERENCE	STATUS	McC Ref
Brockley House and clachan, pre 1835	118519	HB 5.16.8	B2	
Brockley Cottage	118519	HB 5.16.8	B1	
St Thomas' Church, 1823	145511	HB 5.16.3	B+	yes
Church of Immaculate Conception, 1865	145513	HB 5.16.2	B+	yes
Manor House, ca 1760, occupied by 7 generations. Incl stock yd etc		HB 5.16.1B	B+	yes
Boat house, pre 1832	148508	HB5.16.4	B1	
TCB telephone kiosk, designed 1835	500148	HB 5.16.7	B1	
Kelp store, pre 1832	150505	HB 5.16.5	B1	yes
Mill	151501	HB 5.16.6		
W lighthouse		3704		yes
E lighthouse		3707		yes
Rue Pt lighthouse		3711		yes