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PART ONE

Background
INTRODUCTION

Developing a Management Plan

Landscape Design Associates and PLB Consulting Ltd were commissioned in January 2002 by Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) to prepare a Management Plan for the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

This document (the Management Plan) contains the consultant's recommendations on the future management of the AONB which have been considered by EHS. EHS has subsequently endorsed the broad recommendations contained herein.

Although the Management Plan is not a statutory planning document, its contents will be used to inform the preparation of policy within the emerging Northern Area Plan and the preparation of a Management Plan specifically for the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site (WHS). The Management Plan will also form the starting block for the management of the AONB by a new management body, to be set up in due course. The primary purpose of the Plan is therefore to help guide and inform decision-making and management in the area in relation to the many environmental, economic, development, social and other issues, in a fully integrated way.

What is the Management Plan?

The Management Plan is a plan prepared to guide the future of the special landscape of the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It highlights the unique qualities of the AONB, sets out a long-term holistic vision for the area and includes objectives and actions to help secure that vision. It also provides recommendations on management structures to ensure the implementation of the plan.

Who is the Management Plan for?

The Causeway Coast AONB Management Plan is being produced on behalf of all those who care for the area. As a Management Plan for the area it seeks to provide a common framework for the local authorities, national and regional agencies, amenity bodies as well as landowners and local communities. It is therefore a source document providing a framework for more detailed management of local areas and sites. The Management Plan has been prepared in order to bring about a change in the approach to conservation and enhancement of the Causeway Coast by encouraging structured and integrated management. By adopting and endorsing this Plan individuals and organisations can signal their commitment to the AONB.
How to Use This Document

The Management Plan is divided into three main sections as follows:

**Part One:** Background

**Part Two:** The Landscape Resource: Issues, Analysis, Strategic Objectives and Actions

**Part Three:** Implementing the Plan

- **Key objectives** arising which specify the core goals for the Management Plan.
- **Action points** i.e. how to achieve each objective.

The action points under each theme are not prioritised and the number of actions identified varies. However this should not be interpreted as a reflection of the importance of each theme - all themes have equal value. During the life of the Management Plan it is important that the actions identified under each theme are reviewed, updated and added to.

All three sections of the Management Plan are supported by background information, set out in the appendices, which are fully cross-referenced within the main body of text.

The Vision for the AONB

This is a long-term view of where the AONB is going, perhaps 50 years ahead. The Vision is about creative, optimistic and achievable aspirations for the future of this coastal area, comprising shore, cliffs and rural hinterland.

A vision for the Causeway Coast AONB could be:

A coastal area which is universally recognised as containing world class, spectacular and unspoilt scenery, comprising unique geological features and cultural history and supporting outstanding assemblages of habitats and species.

- A coastal area which houses vibrant communities and is a source of local and national identity and an inspiration to all as an exemplar of sustainable environmental management.

A coastal area which is made accessible for all to enjoy and learn about in ways which are sustainable, thus conserving this fragile environment and giving people an uplifting experience of landscape and a memory for life.
AIMS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The production of the Management Plan will bring a new approach to this area because it will deliver the following three overarching aims:

AIM 1:
Enable a clearer understanding of the unique qualities and sensitivities of the area and thus ensure the appropriate application of sustainable management principles.

There is already an appreciation of 'good practice' and sustainability principles and strong aspirations to achieve these, however there is currently a lack of comprehensive/collated information on what makes the area special and the components of the landscape (features, archaeology, habitats). Equally there is little understanding of landscape value and sensitivity to change.

AIM 2:
Provide a fully integrated approach to all aspects of management across the whole of the AONB by addressing AONB-wide issues (such as transportation) as well as their relationship to specific challenges experienced at key sites.

There is a need to plan and manage conservation and enhancement of the area with development pressures, in order to deliver the purposes of the AONB designation. This will require a sustainable approach to ensure an appropriate long-term vision of protection and use, and the retention of an attractive environment that provides a vibrant tourist economy in the AONB. It will also require an understanding of the relationship of the AONB with adjacent areas outside the designation such as the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB.

Equally, there is a need to understand the relationship between the whole of the AONB and individual sites or areas, such as White Park Bay, Carrick-a-Rede, or ecological designations. In particular the relationship between the WHS and the wider AONB requires greater understanding. This is because:

- The AONB performs a significant role in providing the setting to the coastal scenery and the WHS.
- The AONB adds value to the WHS and the WHS to the AONB - they are mutually supportive.
- Conservation and visitor management issues at the WHS are more acute than elsewhere in the AONB.
- Resolution of visitor management issues at the WHS will contribute to successful consideration of wider management issues within the AONB.
- Management of the wider AONB can contribute positively towards protection of the WHS (both the site and its context/setting).

AIM 3:
Present options for a new management structure and delivery mechanism to implement the vision and identified objectives.

There is a need to develop a coherent approach to management because there are a significant number of stakeholders (local communities, organisations and bodies, both local and throughout Northern Ireland) who are operating in the area. There are also a significant number of existing environmental and tourism strategies and initiatives for the area, and therefore a need for integration (refer Part 3 of this document). Adequate resourcing both in terms of expertise and finance will need to be put in place to create an effective management body which can effectively deliver this Management Plan.
THE CAUSEWAY COAST AONB BACKGROUND

Designation

In Northern Ireland the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965 made provision for the creation of both National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This early legislation aimed to protect special landscapes through the control of development but no provision was made for positive management or promotion.

The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (Northern Ireland) 1985 provided a new impetus for the management of countryside and scenic areas. The status it gave to AONBs was significantly improved by the powers to make proposals for conservation.

On the 22 March 1989, the Department of the Environment (NI) made an Order designating the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This designation gives formal statutory recognition to the quality of the landscape of the North Antrim Coastline between Ballycastle and Portrush, centred upon the Giant's Causeway.

In 1989 the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, Countryside and Wildlife Branch published a document titled 'Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' aimed at raising the profile of the area and awareness of issues affecting the landscape and the need for policy. This Management Plan takes forward and builds upon this publication and the initiatives highlighted within it. However, any management initiative needs to operate within the existing environmental and planning context and this context is summarised below.

Environment

The Causeway Coast AONB stretches from the edge of Portrush in the west to Ballycastle in the east. It encompasses an area of spectacular coastal scenery stretching approximately 18 miles, and is one of the smallest AONBs in Northern
Ireland. Yet, despite its small size, it contains an extraordinary variety of rich landscape reflected in its numerous designations including the Giant’s Causeway World Heritage Site (refer drawing 1).

Special Protection Area: Under the European Union Birds Directive, Sheep Island is designated for its Cormorant population (refer drawing 2).

Special Area of Conservation: Under the European Habitat Directive, these areas are designated to protect some of the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe. The coastline between Runkerry and White Park Bay forms part of the North Antrim Coast SAC. (refer drawing 2).

Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI): There are seven ASSIs within the AONB which cover various stretches of coastline including cliffs, beaches and dune systems. These areas are important for their ecological and geological value (refer drawing 3).

National Nature Reserve: The area of the Giant’s Causeway is designated a National Nature Reserve for its diversity of plant communities from coastal/shore habitats to heath land systems on the cliff tops. (refer drawing 3).

Ancient Monuments: There are a substantial number of ancient monuments in the AONB including passage tombs and raths, earthworks at Dunluce, and the ruins of Dunseverick Castle for example.

State Care Historic Monuments: There are three State Care Historic Monuments within the AONB including Dunluce Castle, Lissanduff Earthworks and Kinbane Castle.

Conservation Areas: The central area of Bushmills is designated a Conservation Area in recognition of its architectural and historic interest giving rise to its particular character and sense of place.
Listed Buildings: The AONB has a substantial number of listed buildings, the majority occurring in settlements such as Bushmills but also including isolated rural farm or fishing associated vernacular structures/buildings.

Long Distance Footpaths: The Causeway Coast Way is a waymarked way which passes through the length of the AONB. The footpath is part of a much larger network of waymarked ways throughout Northern Ireland.

Statutory Planning

Statutory Planning policy and development plan frameworks are concerned primarily with guiding the control of physical development and use of land. They are implemented through the development plan process. Decisions on planning applications are made by Planning Service (through consultation with Local Councils) or by the Planning Appeals Commission (an entirely independent body) when there is an appeal or inquiry.

Planning Policies relating specifically to the environment help to ensure the positive and sustainable use of environmental resources and can include specific policies on AONB designation. This is discussed in relation to the Causeway Coast AONB in Part 2 of this report. Thus the planning system and process can significantly affect change in the landscape and is therefore influential and a relevant backdrop to land management. However, it is less concerned with, and can have little control over, the practical day to day management of land. Thus other processes and initiatives often deal with day to day management issues. In a predominately rural landscapes such as the Causeway Coast, schemes such as the Environmentally Sensitive Area or ESA are particularly significant and this is discussed in more detail under Theme One (page 12).
PART TWO
The Landscape Resource
Issues, Analysis, Strategic Objectives and Actions
THEME ONE: CONSERVING & ENHANCING NATURAL BEAUTY

Introduction

The key purpose of the Causeway Coast AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and amenities of the area and to promote enjoyment of the landscape.

'The Department (of Environment) considers an area (not being an area within a National Park) to be of such outstanding beauty that it is desirable that...the Department may make an order designating it as an area of outstanding natural beauty.'

The Northern Ireland Department of the Environment may formulate proposals for AONBs for

(a) conserving or enhancing the natural beauty or amenities of that area;
(b) conserving wildlife, historic objects or natural phenomena within it;
(c) promoting its enjoyment by the public;
(d) providing or maintaining public access to it.'

In order to achieve the statutory purposes of the AONB designation it is essential that the visual (landscape features and character), ecological, archaeological and cultural value of the AONB is fully recognised by all concerned and is reflected in the area's planning, design and management. As indicated above (Part 1, pages 4-6) many of the special qualities of the area are finite and irreplaceable resources of international and national significance.

Issues

Consultation with organisations and the general public revealed a number of issues that were considered to affect the special qualities of the AONB. These included:

- the absence of a detailed landscape assessment for the AONB and therefore little understanding of landscape characteristics which make the area so special.
- a continuing loss of local vernacular features such as field boundaries, gates and traditional pillars and traditional farm buildings.
- a proliferation of diverse signage throughout the AONB.
- significant development pressures acting on the land (including housing, hotels, radio masts, car parks) and also within coastal/sea areas from potential developments such as windfarms, fish farms and water sports.
- a loss of ecological diversity and in the past ecological management focused on existing designated ecological areas rather than the wider landscape.
- a lack of comprehensive data on the archaeological resource.
- the gradual adverse impact of development on the open/unspoilt views of the coast.
- sand and gravel extraction from some beaches (due to extraction rights).


Analysis

The above issues are explored below in relation to a review of existing initiatives and documentation as well as field assessment which have been undertaken as part of the preparation of this Management Plan.

Review of Planning Policy for AONB's

As set out above, (Part 1, Page 6) the planning system and process can significantly influence change in the landscape. The review of AONB policy set out below therefore provides an overview of the current weight given to the protection of the special qualities of AONB landscapes.
Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland 2025 - Shaping Our Future
Chapter 12 of the RDS sets out policies in relation to Caring for the Environment. Policy ENV 1.4 is to

'protect, enhance and encourage appreciation of the Region's landscapes'

The explanatory text under this policy states that AONB's should be managed

'so as to conserve their distinctive character, their nature conservation and built heritage interest, to enhance employment opportunities for the local community and provide enjoyment for visitors'.

'To require development proposals in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be sensitive to the distinctive character of the area and the quality of their landscape, heritage and wildlife.'

It goes on to state that:

'While the designation policy is one of protection and enhancement of these special landscapes, in applying the planning policy, account will be taken of the needs of local communities and the need to sustain the economic and social well-being of those living in the AONBs'.

And

'Designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty does not necessarily rule out certain forms of development. However the first principle of practice is that the Department will not be prepared to permit schemes that would be detrimental to environmental quality'.

What is clear from these policies is that despite the acknowledgement that development may be necessary from a local perspective, any development, for what ever need or purpose, must not be detrimental to environmental quality. As set out in Policy DES 4 these qualities in the AONB relate to distinctive character, and natural beauty, heritage and wildlife.

The North East Area Plan and Planning Policy Statement 6
The North East Area Plan (up to 2002) includes the following principal objective:

'the conservation of fine landscapes, natural amenities and wildlife habitats.'

The Causeway Coast AONB has received protection in the plan under the Countryside Policy Area. This policy aims to protect areas of landscape from development pressure in order to maintain its rural character and to protect the visual amenity of areas of high landscape value. However, no reference is made to enhancing its local
distinctiveness and the need for design guidance beyond Conservation Areas.

Due to the timing of the designation of the Causeway Coast AONB and the production of the North East Area Plan there was no reference to the overriding principle of protecting the special qualities of AONB landscapes and furthering the purposes of AONB designations within the local plan. Although policy for AONB’s has existed at a regional planning level (see above) the lack of policy at a local level has been a fundamental weakness. Similarly there have been no local policies which recognise specific variations in character of the AONB landscape or issues related to their sensitivity to inappropriate development. This is also reflected in Planning Policy Statement 6, which equally does not refer to the protection of AONB landscapes.

The Emerging Northern Area Plan
The Northern Area Plan is currently being prepared and will replace the North East Area Plan. The Northern Area Plan Issues Paper (April 2002) indicates that this new plan will address these current gaps in local policy and will make specific reference to protecting and enhancing the AONB landscape.

In particular a ‘Countryside Assessment’ will be carried out as part of the Northern Area Plan and will assist in building up a more comprehensive database on landscape features and elements within the AONB.

Understanding Landscape Character within the AONB

Landscape character assessment is recognised as a means of understanding the landscape resource both at a European and National level. It is used as a basis for describing and appraising the variation in landscape and the components that make it special. It can be used in many ways, including as a framework for landscape management, as an indicator of change and as a basis for the development of design guides or interpretation strategies.

The existing landscape character assessment undertaken for the whole of Northern Ireland is broad, and is useful at a regional level. It does not however, demonstrate the variety of local character found within the AONB and thus does not enable the identification of more specific management objectives for the area, which is the concern to this Management Plan. Protecting local distinctiveness in the AONB and providing clear guidance is difficult to achieve without detailed knowledge of the area, and therefore a local detailed assessment of the AONB has been undertaken using standard and recognised

![Image: Landscape Character Areas](image-url)
methodologies as part of the preparation of this Management Plan (refer Appendix 1).

Six Landscape Character Areas have been identified (refer drawing 4) and include:

- The Skerries Coast
- Bush Valley
- Causeway Plateau
- Magpie Coast
- Kinbane Plateau
- Ballycastle Valley

The key characteristics which make these landscapes unique are described in Appendix 2 and include reference to built form whether settlements or individual farmsteads, both of which form an integral part of the landscape and contribute to the character of the area. The sensitivity of these landscapes to change is also explored in relation to existing pressures or forces and aspects such as open or elevated character. Following an understanding of these areas, management guidelines have been developed, some of which are AONB wide, for example maintenance of traditional field boundaries and protection of key views to landmarks. Other management guidelines are more specific and target particular Landscape Character Areas in order to protect their distinctive qualities, for example, the management of peat and raised bogs in the Kinbane Plateau, and the protection of sand dunes and their ecosystems in the Skerries Coast and Magpie Coast. An outline of proposed management guidelines can be found at the end of each character description in Appendix 2.

Review of Existing Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Management Schemes

Problems in the agricultural economy have placed huge financial pressures on farmers and the resulting trend has been the creation of larger farm units and the loss of mixed farming in the Causeway Coast area. The continuing reform of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is likely to result in less grants for production and an increase in funding for environmental improvement works. This coupled with the new Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Vision, which looks at ways of encouraging farm diversification as well as many other issues, will no doubt result in further changes in the agricultural economy and have implications for the character and quality of rural landscapes.

Initiatives to encourage farmers to protect the environment and landscape have been in place for a number of years and include the Environmentally Sensitive Area or ESA schemes. A significant area along the north coast of Northern Ireland, including the whole of the Causeway Coast AONB designation falls within an ESA. Of the farmers who are eligible to take part in the scheme, 78% have participated resulting in 81% of the land area within the ESA falling under the agreement. The Environmentally Sensitive Area and Countryside Management Schemes (CMS) look to protect existing habitats, and local landscape features. Examples of this include the replanting of lost or gappy hedgerows. However, they do not currently seek to extend or create new habitats such as lowland heath and bog and river margins, which would support, and make a positive contribution to, biodiversity within the AONB.
Changes in the ESA scheme have affected the management of landscape features. In 1999 the old ESA scheme stopped providing enhancement grants for hedgerow planting/restoration, traditional gates and pillars and renovation of traditional buildings, due to a lack of funding. More recently the new ESA scheme has been launched and does contain grants for hedge restoration/planting as an integral part of the scheme. However, grants for traditional gates/pillars or stone building restoration are still not available at present and many landowners within the AONB have chosen to remain on the old scheme. As a result there is currently little financial incentive for the management and maintenance of vernacular features, though, when farmers sign up to the ESA scheme they are required to retain vernacular features on their farms.

A further problem in protecting local landscape features is the lack of a local skills base to carry out maintenance work using traditional techniques. Techniques in dry stonewalling and traditional gate construction and traditional pillar repair need to be retained amongst the local population to safeguard and maintain these important landscape features.

**Understanding the Geological and Geomorphological Resource of the AONB**

The outstanding scenic beauty of the Causeway Coast landscape owes much to its geological history. Simplified, the geology of the area comprises white chalk/limestone, black basalt and other notable igneous intrusions (such as dolerite dykes) and clays of red tropical soils. This variety of geology gives rise to unique coastal habitats and many areas of the coast are designated for their unique geology and ecology.

The rocks along the coast have been eroded by the North Atlantic, but their contrasting properties have resulted in different rates of erosion, so that the more resistant rocks remain as headlands and cliffs while zones of weakness, especially due to faults, have been eroded to make bays, which have been infilled by sand dunes and beach deposits.

The coastal fringe is a very dynamic area and is fragile to small changes that can have significant impacts on the coastal erosion or deposition processes as well as the natural beauty of the area. Activities such as the traditional management solutions to coastal erosion (construction of groynes, bulkheads etc), extraction of sand and gravel from beaches, and the provision of access in coastal dune systems, can often have an adverse impact on the quality and character of the coast. Now more resilient solutions to coastal erosion are sought which are more environmentally friendly, protecting the coast whilst retaining or enhancing natural beauty, but there are also trends towards accommodating erosion as part of long-term management.

The challenge, particularly in areas recognised for their natural beauty, is to reduce detrimental impact by devising sensible management strategies where the implication of activities are thought through in advance and are clearly understood by all concerned.

**Understanding the Ecological Resource of the AONB**

The AONB contains a significant number of national and international designations for its ecological value as set out above (refer drawings 2 and 3). Planning Policy Statement 2: Planning and Nature Conservation (June 1997) sets out land-use planning policies for the conservation of natural
heritage. However it focuses mainly on the protection of these designated sites rather than the biodiversity of the wider landscape.

With the publication Biodiversity in Northern Ireland: Recommendations to Government for a Biodiversity Strategy (October 2000), the focus on designated sites has begun to change. A number of new initiatives and biodiversity action plans have enabled the development of more detailed information on species and habitats across Northern Ireland. In addition recent fieldwork within Antrim has identified potential Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest or SLCIs. This data is yet to be published but will provide a much more detailed understanding of the important habitats and species within the AONB beyond existing designated sites. The emerging Northern Area Plan is also likely to address biodiversity issues and should include reference to local sites of importance and priority habitats.

The forthcoming detailed information on the AONB habitats will also assist in management objectives for the area and further develop schemes such as habitat management to encourage the return of the Chough. It will be important to look at how existing grant schemes such as the ESA can support initiatives relating to increasing biodiversity. In particular opportunities to protect some of the priority habitats well represented within the Causeway Coast AONB such as maritime cliff and slopes, coastal sand dunes, sub-littoral and littoral chalk sites as well as the River Bush and associated wetland, lowland raised bogs and native woodlands, should be encouraged.

Biodiversity issues are also relevant to marine areas. Although the AONB designation does not extend into the marine area it is dependent upon its pristine condition which comprises an important element of the AONB's natural beauty. However, there are a number of different bodies responsible for the marine environment resulting in difficulties in co-ordinating policy and practice through the statutory bodies alone. There is a need for a coordinated approach to management and the establishment of a Coastal Forum is being considered.

Understanding the Archaeological and Built Heritage Resource of the AONB

Archaeology
The Environment and Heritage Service has information on Monuments in State Care, and lists of archaeological features cited on the Sites and Monuments Record and Record of Scheduled Historic Monuments. Policy relating to the protection of archaeological sites is set out within PPS 6, however they tend to relate to individual sites (both designated and non-designated) and their settings, rather than archaeological areas or historic landscape patterns. Policy BH2 states

'Development proposals which would adversely affect archaeological sites or monuments which are of local importance or their settings will only be permitted where the Department considers the importance of the proposed development or other material considerations outweigh the value of the remains in question'.

The justification and amplification of this policy goes on to list appearance, quality, historical interest, group value (number of locally important sites) and rarity as important considerations in any planning decision. However, no reference is made to the articulation of sites with other landscape features such as field pattern that collectively may comprise an historic landscape or area.
Historical Landscape Characterisation is a technique for understanding the evolution and present day character/significance of a landscape and is well established in England. There are significant opportunities to undertake this type of assessment in the Causeway Coast AONB and thus improve interpretation or information on the historic features, archaeology and historic evolution of the landscape within the AONB.

**Vernacular Buildings**
PPS6 expresses concern regarding the loss of vernacular buildings from rural areas in Northern Ireland and the importance of these buildings as a part of an area's heritage and regional identity.

Whilst it sets out guidance in Policy BH15 on the re-use of non-listed vernacular buildings there is currently no specific policy which seeks to retain vernacular buildings in protected landscapes such as AONB's.

The loss of, and poor state of repair of many vernacular buildings appears to be further exacerbated by the current lack of financial support to maintain them under the ESA scheme as well as the provision of grants by the Housing Executive for the replacement of dwellings considered to be unfit, isolated dwellings, situated in rural areas.

Further information on the loss of vernacular buildings from the AONB and greater clarity of existing grants and their implications is required if the future of vernacular buildings and their rural settings is to be secured.

**RECOMMENDED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:**

The following objectives and actions have been identified as a result of an assessment of a) the issues affecting the AONB and b) analysis. The objectives indicate the core goals of the Management Plan and the actions indicate ways of achieving each objective.

**Natural Beauty, Landscape Character and Local Distinctiveness**

**Objective A:** To conserve and enhance the Natural Beauty of the AONB

**Action A1:** Ensure that planning policies and development control decisions within the AONB and its setting actively support AONB purposes.

**Action A2:**
Ensure that the forthcoming ‘Countryside Assessment’ feeds into and updates information on the Landscape Character Areas identified as part of this study, and is used to develop specific local policies for the conservation of the environment.

**Action A3:** Ensure the use of the management guidelines for each Landscape Character Area as a framework for environmental enhancement.

**Action A4:** Ensure sufficient funding is available for enhancement works either through existing initiatives such as the ESA schemes or through the reinvestment of revenue generated from key attractions and visitor activity.

**Action A5:**
Ensure the training of local people to retain local craft skills required for the maintenance and building of new vernacular features through the support of the ESA scheme and development of a wider environmental training program.
Action A6: Building on the settlement analysis work undertaken as part of this study, (refer pages 23-28) ensure the areas of distinctive townscape/village character are protected from adverse change and seek opportunities to enhance built areas where appropriate.

Objective B: To ensure that any development which is permitted supports the purposes of the AONB and does not undermine the quality and special distinctiveness of the landscape as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment.

Action B1: Undertake the preparation of a building and landscape design guide for the whole of the AONB to ensure the retention of quality and local distinctiveness.

Action B2: Seek opportunities to reduce the adverse impact, where relevant, of existing development through landscape enhancement grants, mitigation planting using native species where appropriate, or the removal of inappropriate development, which detracts and adversely affects the special qualities and characteristics of the area.

Action B3: Undertake a detailed assessment of the setting of key historic features of the AONB such as Dunluce Castle to ensure the protection of these key landmarks and their settings, including quintessential views.

Action B4: Ensure that planning policies protect areas of open unspoilt and undeveloped coastline from development, particularly along the coast road.

Action B5: Ensure that proposals for replacement dwellings and extensions do not result in the unnecessary loss of local vernacular buildings. New replacement buildings and extensions should not be of a scale and character that result in an adverse impact on the quality of the AONB landscape either individually or cumulatively with other adjacent development.

Action B6: Ensure new street furniture, lighting, signage etc. in settlements in more rural locations reflects the local character of the area and avoids the unnecessary urbanisation of the AONB.

Action B7: Establish a co-ordinated signage policy for the AONB and seek to avoid the accumulation of signage in inappropriate locations that can detract from the natural beauty of the landscape and settlements.

Action B8: Ensure that new development in existing settlements is in keeping, and reinforces the fabric and form of the settlement through the appropriate location, scale and massing of development and the appropriate use of materials.

Action B9: Ensure the implications and potential adverse impacts of activities in dynamic coastal areas (solutions to coastal erosion, access to sand dunes and sand and gravel extraction from beaches) are fully understood and that these activities are regularly monitored.

Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

Objective C: To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the AONB

Action C1: Support the monitoring of habitats and wildlife within the AONB and the identification of potential designated sites through the preparation of a full Phase One habitat survey.
Action C2: Encourage and support the development and implementation of Management Plans for all nature conservation designations within the AONB.

Action C3: Ensure Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP) feed into the development of specific management guidelines under the Landscape Character Areas and ESA/CMS.

Action C4: Ensure existing land management initiatives, such as the ESA, seek to enhance and improve habitats and biodiversity.

Action C5: Ensure involvement on the Coastal Forum in order to ensure effective integrated coastal zone management for the Causeway Coast AONB and the protection of coastal natural beauty as well as biodiversity.

Action C6: In partnership with local landowners draw up and implement a comprehensive strategy for river conservation and catchment management in order to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the River Bush and its valley.

Action C7: Help to develop a strategy to encourage community groups to participate in biodiversity conservation work through voluntary groups and wildlife trusts.

Action C8: Protect, enhance and extend important habitats which are currently not designated such as broad-leaved and mixed woodlands, sand-dunes, wet grassland, river margins, lowland heaths and bogs, coastal heaths and provide incentives for their management (e.g. Woodland Grant Scheme, EHS grants). This should form part of a biodiversity strategy for the whole of the AONB working with Local Council biodiversity offices.

Action C9: Support new legislation to control sand and gravel extraction in coastal and marine areas to ensure that extraction levels are sustainable and are not causing adverse environmental impact.

Action C10: Help to establish and be involved with marine protection and effective management of these areas, ensuring the protection of the coast’s unspoilt and pristine character and biodiversity through the prevention of potentially adverse development such as windfarms, marine aquaculture, intrusive watersports.

Archaeology, Cultural and Built Heritage

Objective D: To protect and increase understanding of the historic environment of the AONB

Action D1: Use the current Sites and Monuments Record as a base to obtain a more accurate record of all archaeological features, now lost, or items held outside the region.

Action D2: Support further research into historic landscapes and undertake an historic landscape assessment in order to develop a greater understanding of the evolution of the landscape and historic areas.

Action D3: Create a record of features, activities and concepts considered by local people to be important to cultural heritage.

Action D4: Document archaeological sites/remains, landscape features, and constructions that are
referred to by local, regional and national myths, legends and works of fiction.

Action D5: Ensure that due importance is placed on the cultural significance of place as highlighted by Actions D3 and D4 above.

Action D6: Ensure that all archaeological features and historic properties\(^1\) are given appropriate statutory protection at a local and national level.

Action D7: Seek opportunities to increase people's understanding of how landscape has been shaped by human activity through appropriate access and interpretation strategies, whilst at the same time ensuring the protection and conservation of fragile features.

Action D8: Create a record of all existing vernacular buildings within the AONB.

Action D9: Undertake research into the rate of loss of vernacular buildings within the AONB and forces acting against their retention and maintenance.

\(^1\)The term 'archaeological' is used to refer to features above and below ground level, underwater and of any historical or pre-historical period, although excluding anything pre-hominoid.

\(^1\)A historical property is theoretically not distinct from an archaeological site, although practically it may be categorised as a Listed Building. The use of the term 'historic' is not intended to invoke any conceptual time boundaries.
THEME TWO: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Introduction

The Causeway Coast AONB and the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site are economically and culturally important to the whole of Northern Ireland. As well as an established agricultural area, the Causeway Coast also has a vibrant tourism industry and a wide range of other businesses.

Experience from protected areas around the world indicates that one of the best ways of conserving the landscape is to foster and promote a local economy that positively supports the purposes of AONB designation. Achieving this requires a real sensitivity to the landscape, and a vision about how the economy and the environment can work together. In the case of the Causeway Coast, this will place particular responsibility on the planning system, as well as farming and tourism which are two of the most important employment sectors in the area and whose activities have the greatest impact (potentially either beneficial or harmful) on the landscape.

Thus the issues of tourism, housing, employment and other forms of development are foremost considerations for many people engaged with the future of the AONB. Development issues are primarily for the planning system to address, but the implications of development on the purposes of the AONB and thus its management are so fundamental that this Management Plan must address land-use planning and development issues also. These issues cut across each of the five themes in this Management Plan, but they are largely driven by economic considerations, for example, the opportunity for leisure-related development stemming from the attractions of the area to visitors. Therefore, the issues associated with development are largely considered here within Theme Two - Sustainable Development and the Local Economy. Issues specifically relating to the Giant's Causeway WHS are discussed separately under Theme Five.

Issues

Consultation with organisations and the general public revealed a number of issues that were considered to affect sustainable development and the local economy of the AONB. These included:

- Unemployment across the area
- The importance of tourism and agriculture to the local economy and the need to protect these employment sectors
- Skills deficiencies amongst certain sectors of the workforce
- Changes to the agricultural economy and pressures on the farming community
- Concerns over past development in rural and built-up areas and continued pressures from development proposals.
- No overall economic (agricultural, tourism or development) strategy for the AONB as distinct from the economic strategies for Moyle District and Coleraine Borough Councils.
- Lack of training and development of local employment base for tourism employment.

Analysis

The above issues are explored in greater detail below in relation to existing initiatives, documentation and field assessment undertaken as part of the preparation of the Management Plan.

Economic and Employment Statistics

Local area employment statistics for the AONB alone are unavailable, and as a result one is obliged to use other, proxy measures and
statistics. The principal source of government information on the labour force is the Labour Force Survey prepared on behalf of the DETI by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The most recent statistics available cover the calendar year 2000:

Three relevant spatial levels of disaggregation are available from these statistics:

- Local authority level (i.e. Coleraine Borough and Moyle District Council)
- Travel to Work Area (TTWA) - Coleraine TTWA, which includes the whole of the AONB coast and which stretches inland towards the Mid Ulster TTWA
- NUTS III level (Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics - an EU designation) - in this instance, the AONB falls within the North of Northern Ireland which includes the following local authority areas; Ballymoney, Coleraine, Derry, Limavady, Moyle, Strabane.

Unemployment within the AONB

The DETI Labour Force Survey does not provide unemployment statistics at the District level - the lowest level of disaggregation is the NUTS III level which indicates an unemployment rate in the North of Northern Ireland in 2000 of 8.5%, a rate that is 25% higher than the Northern Ireland average. Anecdotal evidence supplied by consultees indicated that in parts of the AONB and the surrounding area there are pockets of unemployment with rates much higher even than this. For the Coleraine TTWA, people are slightly more likely than average to be in full-time employment.

Skills

The only measure of skills available from the DETI Labour Force Survey relates to levels of educational attainment. Within the Coleraine TTWA labour market, people are less likely than average to have achieved NVQ level 4 and above (14.8% compared to the average for NI as a whole of 19.1% in 2000). However, there was virtually no difference at all in terms of the proportion of the labour market with no qualifications at all (26.6% for Coleraine TTWA, 26.7% for Northern Ireland). This implies a need for additional investment in education, training and other learning opportunities across all sectors of the economy.

Changes in the Agricultural Economy

The AONB is a predominantly rural community, and thus improving local employment prospects through economic development consistent with AONB purposes within the area is essential.

Government statistics indicate that in June 2001 some 1,640 people were employed in agriculture in Coleraine Borough (around 7% of the workforce) and 1,270 in Moyle (25% of the workforce). Taken together, these jobs represent just over 9% of all employment in agriculture in Northern Ireland.

Structural changes in the agricultural economy and the recent impacts of BSE and Foot & Mouth Disease have had a major impact on the livelihood of many local farmers. Although farm diversification offers the potential to bring benefits to the farming community, it can also create conflicts with other policy objectives and can require considerable initial investment from individual farmers.

Economic activity

One of the key measures of an area’s economic potential is the percentage of the population of working-age who are actually in full or part-time employment, or who are registered as unemployed and who are available for work.

The 2000 average for Northern Ireland is 71%, with Moyle showing the lowest rate of all NI local authorities (57%) whilst Coleraine was slightly higher than the national average, at 73%. In real terms, this allows us to calculate Moyle’s potential workforce at around 5,100 and Coleraine’s potential workforce 24,200.
Across Northern Ireland, farming is increasingly responsive to EU and other grant schemes that direct action towards particular areas and activities. This offers opportunities to integrate traditional land management practices with broader environmental and social policy objectives. The awaited CAP reform is likely to see a change in the balance between grants and incentives for production versus conservation and enhancement of the environment.

It is inevitable that there will be increasing pressure on farmers to diversify and market their produce differently through the use of ‘farmers markets’ for example, and to create stronger links between the agriculture and tourism economies of the area.

**Growth in Tourism**

Although tourism is not currently a major element of the Northern Ireland economy, accounting as it does for only around 1.8% of GDP, within and immediately around the AONB it is enormously important. Tourism is estimated to support more than 3,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs in Coleraine Borough and 950 jobs in Moyle. This is equivalent to around 12% of the whole workforce in Coleraine, and 19% of Moyle’s workforce. Within the AONB the only other economic sector that employs relatively large numbers of people is agriculture, which of course plays a large role in shaping and protecting the landscape that appeals to so many visitors.

The nature of tourism in Northern Ireland is changing, with new markets developing and the traditional seaside resorts such as Portrush and Portstewart finding it more difficult to attract visitors for any length of time. Tourism trends that will impact upon the future economic well being of the AONB include:

- An increasing number of short breaks being taken in Northern Ireland by tourists from other parts of the UK and Northern Europe
- Increasing interest in activity holidays including walking, cycling, golf and fishing
- Growing interest in cultural tourism, an area that covers both the built heritage and also customs and traditions
- Events tourism, which is already evident in the area as a result of the North West 200 and other events

It is therefore essential that the Management Plan for the Causeway Coast provides for the maintenance of a sustainable tourism presence and other employment consistent with AONB objectives, and indeed that is seeks to increase employment prospects in line with Government objectives. Moreover, it should seek to integrate agriculture and land management into the tourism sector wherever possible. Fundamentally, there is significant potential and opportunity to develop the tourism industry in the AONB but in a sensitive and sustainable way.

Given that much of the region’s tourism sector is operating under-capacity, there is a general need to increase the utilisation of existing facilities and particularly tourist accommodation in settlements just outside the AONB such as Portrush and Ballycastle. Future tourism marketing initiatives should promote the role of these two settlements as access points into the AONB.

Both agriculture and tourism are important employers in and around the AONB, with tourism more important around Coleraine and agriculture...
more important within Moyle. There are, however, considerable linkages between the two sectors. Agriculture plays a major role in shaping and protecting the landscape of the North Antrim coast that attracts so many tourists, and for this reason alone it is important to support both sectors through this Management Plan for the Causeway Coast AONB.

Sustainable Tourism

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
As a protected landscape and one which contains the premier visitor attraction of Northern Ireland, the Giant’s Causeway, the Causeway Coast AONB requires careful management to balance conservation with the demands of tourism. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas was produced by Europarc in 1997 and updated in 2000. It is a useful tool in that it encourages tourism businesses and agencies to commit to the following 10 principles of sustainable tourism which assist in the protection of the natural and cultural environment:

- Tourism should be managed in a holistic manner
- Tourism resources should be preserved
- Tourism development should be of high quality and should be appropriate to the area
- New markets should be welcomed
- Heritage conservation and enhancement should be promoted
- The local community should be involved
- The local economy should be supported
- New types of jobs should be promoted
- Environmentally friendly behaviour should be promoted
- The responsible behaviour of tourism operators should spread to other sectors

These policy guidelines are broadly reflected in tourism policies at the UK and Northern Ireland level and are particularly relevant to the Causeway Coast AONB.

Existing Initiatives

Moves to strengthen links between the landscape of the AONB and the local economy are already afoot through the work of the Causeway Initiative Trust. The Causeway Initiative was established in 2000 and aimed to promote sustainable tourism and best practice visitor and environmental management in the Causeway Coast and Glens Area between Limavady, Newtownabbey, and inland along the River Bann corridor to the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains. Under this initiative grant assistance was distributed to 29 sustainable tourism projects in the area. The Causeway Initiative also commissioned a range of research projects notably the North East Visitor and Environmental Management Strategy and other research such as a Sustainability Indicator Study and a baseline audit of the north east area in relation to the Causeway Initiative.

Formed as an interim partnership a central objective for the Causeway Initiative was to establish a more formal tourism and environment partnership for the area. This has been achieved with the establishment of the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust in May 2002. This Body will
have an important role in promoting best practice visitor and environmental management in the Causeway Coast and Glens Area. A key objective will be to demonstrate the close relationship between the quality of the local environment and the local economy, particularly tourism by raising awareness of the need for visitor and environmental management and promoting the same. The trust can hopefully help safeguard and even enhance the special landscapes within its area both for the benefit of local residents and visitors alike.

**Land-use Planning and Development Issues**

Land-use and development planning issues are largely driven by economic pressures. The growth of tourism within the AONB has been particularly noticeable with the increase demand for holiday homes, second homes and tourism-related development. The implication of development on the purposes of the AONB and the management of the landscape are significant. Issues can include the loss of local character, number and scale of replacements dwellings, the re-development of clachans, as well as the provision of tourism facilities and visitor information. It is important that a sustainable balance between necessary growth and redevelopment and the protection of the environment is achieved.

**Northern Area Plan (2016)**
The recent Issues Paper for the emerging Northern Area Plan (up to 2016), which will replace the North East Area Plan (up to 2002), sets out the need for sustainable development and for a Strategic Environmental Appraisal with which new development proposals will be assessed against the availability of supporting infrastructure and the ability of the environment to support the proposal.

Thus the interdependence of the economy and the environment and the fragility of this relationship should increasingly come to the fore in reaching planning decisions concerning development and change within the AONB.

It is essential that the findings of this Management Plan, together with other related landscape and environmental studies should feed into the emerging Northern Area Plan to ensure that the importance of the AONB purposes are fully reflected in planning policies.

**Field Analysis**

Field assessment in relation to the preparation of the Management Plan has included:

- The definition of the setting to the AONB
- A detailed analysis of the key settlements within the AONB (Bushmills, Portballintrae and Ballintoy) to identify their key assets and characteristics, the future opportunities these settlements can offer the wider AONB, and more specific environmental improvements.
- A review of the key settlements adjacent to the AONB namely Portrush and Ballycastle.

A full description of these assessments can be found in Appendices 3 and 4; however a summary of the key findings is provided below:
The Setting of the AONB:
Analysis has demonstrated that the landscape and seascapes surrounding the AONB performs an important function in providing a context to this special area. This setting is defined by both views to and from the AONB and also from key approach routes (refer drawing 5).

Development within the area defined as the setting to the AONB could have an adverse impact on the approach, appreciation and quality of the designation. Care should be taken to avoid development within these areas that causes adverse impact on the quality and natural beauty of the AONB itself; the appropriate mechanism to address this issue is planning policy within the emerging Northern Area Plan.

Settlement Analysis:
The three principal settlements within the AONB, Bushmills, Portballintrae, and Ballintoy all have their own unique character derived from their association with their landscape setting, historical development, architecture and form. However, only Bushmills is designated a Conservation Area, which covers the main historic core of the settlement, within which a design guide and stricter planning controls apply.

The special qualities of settlements are not just derived from their historic core and an analysis of each settlement can reveal areas of distinctive character, landmarks and memorable views. Such analysis assists in future development decisions as well as in identifying future environmental enhancement works that can have a positive benefit for local people, visitors and in strengthening sense of place. Bushmills, Portballintrae, and Ballintoy have been assessed in this way but there are other smaller settlements within the AONB which would also benefit from the same level of analysis, to ensure their conservation, e.g. Port Braddan and Lisnagunagh.
Bushmills (refer drawing 6):
The following key elements were identified during this assessment and define the special characteristics as well as issues relating to Bushmills:

- Bushmills is the largest settlement within the AONB
- There is a strong association between the settlement and the River Bush - historically, economically and geographically
- There is a tendency for built development to have turned its back on the river
- There is limited access to and across the river
- Some areas of existing open space, particularly along the river, are of poor quality
- The historic parkland and river valley are of importance in providing a distinctive setting to the town
- There is a high quality approach to the town from the north and a less distinctive approach from the south
- There is considerable architectural interest within the Conservation Area

- There are a high number and good range of local facilities and shops
- There are a number of derelict buildings within the main street with poor quality signage and shop frontages in some areas.
- There is limited 'countryside' and thus the historical lack of physical separation between Portballintrae and Bushmills
- There are a number of visitor attractions (including Bushmills Distillery, Bushmills Inn, the new Heritage Railway terminus, riverside Millennium Park, new YHA and River Bush Salmon Research Laboratory) and considerable opportunity for more
- Key landmarks include the clock tower, war memorial, churches and the distillery
- There are opportunities to make Bushmills a more welcoming visitor destination

It is essential that any future development and environmental improvements in Bushmills are sympathetic to the objectives of the Management Plan, the special qualities of the settlement (as identified in the settlement analysis), and are of a standard that reflects the town's role as the key settlement within the nationally important AONB.
In order for Bushmills to develop and flourish in a coherent way, offering a high quality visitor experience, it is essential that a design and development framework plan be prepared (perhaps as part of the emerging Northern Area Plan) to guide the future development of the town. New development in the town should consider the sympathetic development on brownfield sites, infill and the conversion of ‘backlands’, as well as the re-use of derelict buildings.

**Portballintrae (refer drawing 7):**
The key elements identified during this assessment included:

- Portballintrae is the second largest settlement within the AONB
- Originally a fishing hamlet it has grown into a village popular with holiday makers and second home owners
- Lack of local facilities (1 cafe, hotel and pub)
- Considerable recent growth of settlement inland to the south and east
- Retention of historic urban form around the bay
- Key visitor attractions include the fishing quay and Bushfoot Strand to the northeast

- Causeway Coast Way (long distance footpath) passes through the village
- Landscape setting defined by parkland and sand dunes to the northeast and wet pasture and rising ridge of basalt to the southwest
- Key landmarks include Seaport Lodge, the bay, the quay and Lissanduff earthworks
- The visibility of this settlement from the surrounding landscape and particularly the Giant’s Causeway is significant
- The limited extent of ‘countryside’ and thus the historical lack of separation between Portballintrae and Bushmills

The future development and environmental improvements within Portballintrae will depend upon identifying key opportunities to develop it as an attraction in its own right rather than an area just for accommodation (hotel, second homes, camping or holiday cottages/apartments). As the only settlement on the coast within the AONB it has a unique character and contribution to make and still retains much of its charm as an early fishing village. Initiatives to enhance the settlement, some of which could be considered in the Northern Area Plan, include:
• environmental improvements to bay and car parking area
• interpretation of fishing history and community
• creation of a broader range of complementary services to Bushmills
• control of peripheral development
• mitigation of urban edges where they are visible from the wider landscape

**Ballintoy (refer drawing 8):**
The key elements identified during this assessment included:

• The village consists of three separate and dispersed components - linear settlement along the main coast road, development associated with church and the harbour
• Key visitor attractions include the church, harbour, youth hostel as well as the Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge and Larrybane located close by
• Some local facilities (pubs, shop)
• A strong association (historical, agricultural and visual) between the settlement and its landscape setting

• Key landmarks include the church and strip fields
• Traffic congestion on the road to the harbour
• The approaches to the settlement from the east are elevated and dramatic, equally the approach to the harbour is memorable and affords some spectacular views of the coast
• Attractive low key visitor facilities and restoration work of historic fabric at Ballintoy Harbour

The future development and environmental improvements within Ballintoy will depend upon improving transportation connections between the various elements of the settlement, which are currently dispersed, as well as connecting it with other attractions such as Carrick-a-Rede and White Park Bay in this area of the AONB. As the only key settlement in the eastern half of the AONB it is well placed to perform a much more significant role as a local service centre.

Initiatives such as the creation of a circular footpath or trail from the harbour to the village, away from the narrow road, would be beneficial to both visitors and local residents. This could provide opportunities to explore the area and
understand more about the landscape setting and historic landscape of the village. In addition providing comprehensive transport links between the village, church and harbour, as well as other sites of interest, would assist in the development of Ballintoy’s role as a service centre and could assist in alleviating the current congestion pressures on the road to the harbour.

**Portrush and Ballycastle:**
These settlements play a fundamental role as gateways service centres to the AONB. Both Portrush and Ballycastle contain a variety of accommodation and local shops and facilities, and act as transport interchanges. They therefore support the economic viability of the AONB despite the fact that they both lie outside the Causeway Coast AONB designation. However, they both fall within the landscape setting of the AONB and therefore their future growth should give consideration to the potential impact of development on the natural beauty of the AONB.

Each settlement was considered as part of the settlement analysis although in less detail than those settlements which fall within the AONB.

**Portrush:**
The key elements identified during this assessment included:

- Located on western end of AONB
- Historic core faces westwards with more recent development to the east
- Curran strand and dunes (within AONB) to east forms distinctive setting to town
- Strong “seaside town” feel
- Important gateway to AONB, as has railway station, harbour and concentration of accommodation, tourist services and entertainment (including the Dunluce Centre)
- Promontory of Ramore Head important in views from within the AONB
- Light pollution from town is significant at night

**Ballycastle:**
The key elements identified during this assessment included:

- Located on eastern end of AONB (within Antrim Coast and Glens AONB)
- Historic harbour town on Margy and Tow Rivers
- Important service centre to surrounding area (shopping, health, education)
- Important gateway to AONB, as has port for ferries from Scotland, and a concentration of accommodation, tourist services and entertainment
- Important link settlement between the Causeway Coast AONB and Antrim Coast and Glens AONB
- Recent development mainly on western side of town onto valley sides
- New development has prolonged approach from AONB into the historic core
- New linear development is extending along coast road within Causeway Coast AONB from Ballycastle

In Part 3 of this Management Plan reference is made to the creation of a management body charged with taking forward and implementing this Management Plan. The proximity and contiguous nature of the Causeway Coast AONB and the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB boundaries should not be undervalued and may present opportunities for joint management of these two AONB areas in the future. If the joint management of the AONBs (or potentially National Park) was considered desirable, Ballycastle would become a natural ‘centre’ to the area and its role and function should, under these circumstances, reflect this.
RECOMMENDED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

The following objectives and actions have been identified as a result of an assessment of a) the issues affecting the AONB and b) analysis. The objectives indicate the core goals of the Management Plan and the actions indicate ways of achieving each objective.

Built Development and Land Use Strategy

Objective E: To ensure land-use planning and development decisions help to protect the landscape resource upon which most economic activity within the AONB is based.

Action E1: To ensure appropriate policies are incorporated in Planning Policy Statements and Area Plans which reinforce and support the purposes of the nationally important AONB designation.

Action E2: Provide training on AONB issues and examples of good practice elsewhere for local authority officers and members as well as officers of Planning Service.

Action E3: Ensure that due weight is given by Planning Service to the importance of protecting the finite and nationally important landscape of the AONB when responding to development pressures, ensuring that developments (including agricultural buildings) are sensitively located and of an appropriate character.

Action E4: Ensure that due weight is given by Planning Service to the importance of protecting the landscape and seascape setting of the AONB, which extends beyond its designated boundary.

Action E5: Ensure appropriate levels of expertise (i.e. in landscape architecture and ecology) are made available to DoE when assessing landscape and other impacts of new development, if appropriate.

Action E6: Ensure that all planning applications within the AONB are assessed in terms of their individual as well as cumulative impact. New development proposals should be considered in the context of existing development to avoid ad-hoc patterns of development, cumulative urbanisation and loss of character.

Action E7: Ensure that signage and frontage modification to existing buildings and shop fronts are compatible with the character of the street.

Action E8: Review impact of night lighting on the AONB and seek ways to reduce impact particularly on individual properties.

Action E9: Ensure appropriate signage at the gateways to key settlements in order to sell the special qualities of the settlement and what it has to offer as well as making it more welcoming to visitors.

Action E10: Ensure any new development (residential or commercial) continues to be located in existing settlements (both within and on the edge of the AONB) and should avoid areas of open countryside, except in exceptional circumstances.

Action E11: Ensure that new development within existing settlements protects and enhances the special qualities of the settlement through the preparation of design guides which build on the settlement analysis undertaken as part of the preparation of this Management Plan.
Action E12: Encourage the development of a design and development framework plan for Bushmills as part of the Northern Area Plan.

Objective F: To ensure that economic activity supports investment in environmental conservation and promotes high quality design.

Action F1: Seek opportunities to enable environmental enhancement works to be delivered as an integral part of any development proposals that may be allowed within the AONB.

Action F2: Ensure that developers and the existing communities understand and support the importance of good quality design through the establishment of design forums, design guidance and seminars.

Action F3: Ensure that tourism businesses and agencies operating in the AONB adhere to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and tourism policies for Northern Ireland.

Action F4: In conjunction with DARD (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development), carry out a Training Needs Analysis of companies and agencies working within the conservation, landscape management and land management sectors within the AONB, and provide new training courses where relevant.

Local Economy and Employment Strategy (Farming and Tourism)

Objective G: To establish a thriving and sustainable economy within the AONB which supports the purposes of the AONB and sustainability principles.

Action G1: Apply the use of Sustainable Tourism Indicators to measure progress towards the establishment of a sustainable economy within the AONB.

Action G2: Ensure that any new visitor and tourism development supports the visitor management and recreation strategies for the AONB and contributes to a high quality visitor experience, whilst protecting the special qualities of the AONB landscape.

Action G3: Ensure that existing local environmental strategies for the area can be used to support the objectives of the AONB Management Plan through their work on recycling, environmental improvement and renewable energy initiatives.

Action G4: Encourage and support the development of niche marketing initiatives (new and existing), led by the Regional Tourism Organisation, that will attract visitors for whom access to the high quality environment of the AONB will be the prime motivator for their visit (i.e. development of ecotourism, geotourism and scientific aspects of cultural tourism).

Action G5: Support and encourage the development of high quality local crafts associated with the landscape such as woollen products from local sheep, paintings of the area, etc.

Action G6: Convene a local tourism forum under the aegis of the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO), to deliver appropriate training in hospitality sector skills including customer care, bookkeeping, marketing, food hygiene and menu planning.
Objective H: To strengthen linkages between the local agricultural economy and the tourism and hospitality sector through diversification but also revaluation of traditional farming practices and fishing culture where appropriate.

Action H1: Encourage appropriate farm diversification (accommodation, access agreements, local produce, local guides etc) that supports the economic viability of farming in line with the purposes of the AONB designation and Statutory Development Plans.

Action H2: Establish a Farm Produce Marketing Initiative as a source of advice and practical assistance on the marketing and development of outlets for local produce (inc. locally based art, crafts and food e.g. fish).

Action H3: Develop a local generic brand for produce (e.g. Causeway Coast Cuisine) that can be quality controlled by a local agency or business.

Action H4: Support initiatives to develop outlets for the sale of local agricultural produce in key settlement centres such as Bushmills.

Action H5: Develop initiatives for the hospitality sector that encourage the use of local produce on restaurant, pub and café menus.

Objective I: To provide alternative employment opportunities for local residents unable or unwilling to work in the tourism and farming sectors.

Action I1: Ensure that public sector grant support schemes for economic sectors other than agriculture and tourism are appropriately resourced, and that their strategic objectives reflect the broader objectives of AONB designation.
THEME THREE: LIVING IN THE AONB

Introduction
Many people live and work within the Causeway Coast AONB. An important challenge is to ensure that the interests of local people are addressed - in addition to those more directly connected with the management of the landscape and tourism. Local residents have a pivotal role to play in understanding, protecting, interpreting and managing the landscape and in return should benefit from conservation activities and tourism initiatives.

There are many social and economic issues that are of concern to the population within the AONB. However, given the nature and purpose of a Management Plan, this section focuses primarily on those issues that have land-use implications or that interrelate with other themes of the Management Plan.

These issues and the corresponding objectives and actions are only the starting point for engaging local people in the management of the AONB. It is believed that through the creation of a suitable management body a 'bottom up' approach to engaging local people and developing practical measures for their involvement can evolve. As a result the content of the Management Plan, over time, should increasingly reflect the involvement of local people.

Issues
Consultation with organisations and the general public revealed a number of issues that were considered to affect the local population of the AONB. These included

- a lack of basic local facilities in some settlements (e.g. shops)
- a need for a more comprehensive bus service
- temporary populations as a result of increasing numbers of second and holiday homes which undermine permanent community cohesion
- a perceived lack of affordable housing
- a lack of local community and cultural expression
- a lack of a sense of 'ownership' of the environment
- a difficulty in building own homes/replacement dwellings

Analysis:
The above issues are explored in greater detail below in relation to existing initiatives, documentation and field assessment undertaken as part of the preparation of the Management Plan.

Review of trends in population, housing and local facilities
Over the last 10 years the Causeway Coast AONB has become an increasingly popular place to live, particularly because of its spectacular coastal scenery and rural character. As a result there has been a proliferation of second home and holiday home developments. The result of this trend has been to change the character of the settlements (either due to increased size or loss of local services), having an adverse impact on the social cohesiveness and sense of identity and vitality of some local communities. Action is required to enable local people and permanent dwellers to live within the AONB and to provide opportunities for local communities to come together and engage in specific initiatives to enhance their environment, community expression and quality of life. This in turn will help to protect the distinctiveness and special qualities of the landscape and settlements.

The increased demand for homes in the area has tended to fuel house price increases, resulting in
concerns that there is a lack of affordable housing for people living permanently in the area. Ongoing work by the Housing Executive has indicated that there is little demand for affordable housing in some areas, however, there is still considerable debate on this issue.

Review of existing public transport provision

There are a number of bus services which pass through the AONB connecting key settlements and in some cases visitor attractions as well. However, these services are not comprehensive, regular or integrated and some small villages within the AONB receive no regular service.

As part of the need to improve public transport services within rural areas the Department of Rural Development through the Rural Transport Funds has supported rural transport initiatives. These schemes (the North Antrim Community Transport Scheme in Moyle, and the Rural Transport Initiative in Coleraine) have now been operational since 1999 and 2001 respectively and supplement other public transport provision.

Both schemes hire out minibuses (for a small charge) to local community groups, e.g. youth clubs, sports clubs and disabled people's groups for outings. They also provide a supervised service for children going to playschool or primary school in areas where there is no school bus service.

North Antrim Community Transport Initiative also co-ordinates a social car scheme to supplement existing bus and taxi services. The scheme is used predominantly by elderly patients to get to healthcare appointments, but there is currently a lack of volunteer drivers for this scheme. Coleraine Rural Transport Initiative intends to implement a similar scheme from September 2002.

Coleraine Rural Transport Initiative also has a summer 'buzz-a-bus' initiative, where buses have a set route around rural areas and towns. People living along the route can phone and request the bus to stop and this is a useful service for people in rural areas who wish to visit the towns.

The regular bus services and rural transport initiatives provide a reasonable service to the AONB although there is scope to improve the provision by integrating services and improving uptake through increased marketing.

Involvement of Local People

Within the towns and villages in the Causeway Coast AONB there are a number of community groups that are members of the North Antrim Community Network. These groups have a variety of aims, including regeneration of settlements, improving local facilities and village environments, and historical research. The North Antrim Community Network supports its members through services such as group training, resources, fundraising advice and as a forum for consultation.

Community groups within the Causeway Coast AONB include The Bushmills Trust and Ballintoy and District Development Association. Existing programmes in the AONB and funding sources include:

Community Audits:
Groups within a village have an opportunity to come together to discuss and define the issues and needs which are specific to their village. Issues raised may cover a variety of topics, including social, environmental and tourism concerns. The completion of a community audit, resulting in the definition of key issues for a settlement, adds weight and legitimacy for subsequent funding applications for community projects to address the issues raised. There is significant opportunity for this scheme to be
developed in the AONB and to establish settlement 'master plans' to guide future development and environmental improvement works.

EU Leader II Programme:
The European Leader Programme is funding targeted at rural development projects, including tourism, agriculture, environmental schemes and community groups.

Despite the existence of formally constituted community groups within the AONB, and various projects and initiatives undertaken to date, many local people have expressed their concerns about feeling left out of decision-making concerning their environment and quality of life. This has lead to the perception of a lack of 'ownership' of the surrounding environment. There is therefore a need to encourage the co-ordination and communication between the community groups within the AONB and the development of joint aspirations and goals to address this perception. Existing programmes and funding can be used to engage local people and help them shape the future of their environment. However, developing new initiatives, such as the Local Heritage Initiative and Village Design Statements, which are supported by the Countryside Agency in England, will also help to engage local people more fully. Ultimately the involvement of local communities in this way will have a significant influence on the successful implementation of this AONB Management Plan.

RECOMMENDED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

The following objectives and actions have been identified as a result of an assessment of a) the issues affecting the AONB and b) analysis. The objectives indicate the core goals of the Management Plan and the actions indicate ways of achieving each objective.

Quality of Life within the AONB

Objective J: To seek opportunities to improve the quality of life for local communities. This should be achieved without encouraging inappropriate development which undermines the special qualities of the AONB.

Action J1: Investigate ways to enable local people to remain within the communities of which they are part and people with local jobs to live locally if they wish.

Action J2: Establish training programmes to enable local people to obtain the necessary skills to work within the tourism and environment-related service industries in the area.

Action J3: Establish a Rural Transport Partnership to bring together all local bus providers in order to rationalise and integrate local bus services within the AONB and to the wider landscape.

Objective K: Support and encourage projects that help communities to enjoy and celebrate their local environment.

Action K1: Encourage key local settlements (Bushmills, Portballintrae and Ballintoy) to take part in initiatives such as Community Audits and Village Design Statements in order to establish the need for key services and facilities. Assist community groups in grant funding
applications to achieve improvements, and to help protect those aspects of their settlement they most value.

**Action K2:** Work with existing community groups and voluntary bodies to set up local events and activities reflecting local culture and sense of community, e.g. lobster festival at Ballintoy Harbour.

**Action K3:** Through partnership with local schools seek opportunities to increase awareness of the AONB and environmental issues. This could be achieved through the launch of an environmental education programme and developing links to Life Long Learning initiatives.

**Action K4:** Assist local communities to realise funding for local environmental improvement works from sources such as EHS Natural Heritage Grants.

**Action L3:** Identify a local representative from each settlement to act as a point of contact on community issues.

**Action L4:** Investigate setting up an AONB newsletter (e.g. twice yearly or quarterly) for residents and visitors, to be delivered to all households and available in TICs, hotels and B&B’s for example.

**Communication and Sense of Belonging**

**Objective L:** Recognise that information and communication is a key to the success of managing the AONB and in encouraging local participation and sense of belonging.

**Action L1:** Use main AONB visitor facilities (orientation facility), TICs in the area and local shops and post offices to distribute information on events and key initiatives being undertaken within the AONB.

**Action L2:** Ensure that Local Authorities act as the main channel of communication to keep local people informed, and feed views on AONB issues back to the AONB management body.
THEME FOUR: APPRECIATING AND ENJOYING THE LANDSCAPE AND INCREASING UNDERSTANDING

Introduction

The dramatic Causeway Coast landscape is appreciated and enjoyed by both its residents and its many visitors. Some areas and sites are well known but are under pressure (the AONB contains three of the better-known Northern Ireland attractions, Giant's Causeway, Carrick-a-Rede and Old Bushmills Distillery), while other sites remain less frequently visited and may have capacity to accommodate further use.

Many people choose to live and visit here because of the beautiful landscape that the AONB offers, but increasing numbers of visitors, coupled with a lack of information and understanding, can result in the overuse or misuse of the very experience people are seeking.

Overall, the diversity and range of individual attractions within the AONB is to be applauded and encouraged. However, the AONB as an entity and its key conservation and visitor management messages need to be made a top priority. The AONB needs to raise its profile so that visitors and residents have a clear understanding of what the AONB consists of, why the landscape is special, and how residents and visitors can help to maintain its special qualities.

The challenge is to provide more sources of information and engaging types of interpretation to help people appreciate, understand, enjoy and care for the landscape.

Issues

Consultation with organisations and the general public revealed a number of issues that were considered to affect the appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the AONB. These included:

- The information available for the area is often inconsistent, reinforcing individual sites rather than whole of the AONB as the context for those sites
- There is little comprehensive information available on the AONB as a whole
- Visitors tend to concentrate at three key sites (the Giant's Causeway, Carrick-a-
Analysis

The above issues are explored in greater detail below in relation to existing initiatives, documentation and field assessment undertaken as part of the preparation of the Management Plan.

Visitor Surveys

A considerable number of existing reports and surveys provide data on visitor patterns for the AONB (refer to bibliography). However, much of this research concerns quantitative information as opposed to qualitative research, providing more in depth responses from various sectors of both residents and visitors to and within the AONB. Surveys also tend to concentrate either specifically on visitors to the Giant's Causeway WHS or to the wider Causeway Coast and Glens area. It is therefore difficult to gain a precise picture of visitors' needs (including residents using the AONB for informal recreation and for business) and aspirations relating specifically to the Causeway Coast AONB. Despite this, a review of the accommodation, attractions and visitor numbers to the AONB has been undertaken and is summarised below. A more detailed analysis can be found in Appendix 5. This research has indicated that a comprehensive programme of AONB-specific research, drawing on existing data, would provide an important baseline from which to measure the effectiveness of any new initiatives.

Accommodation in and around the AONB

The bulk of registered tourist accommodation in and around the Causeway Coast AONB lies within Coleraine Borough, particularly in Portrush and Portstewart, which contain hotels sufficiently large to accommodate coach tours.

Within the AONB itself there are two hotels (the Causeway Hotel and the Bushmills Inn) which have a combined total of 60 rooms (145 bed spaces), a significant number of self-catering properties, a reasonable number of bed and breakfast/guesthouses and three youth hostels (Ballintoy, White Park Bay and Bushmills).

Despite the relatively high number of self-catering properties within the AONB, annual occupancy rates have fallen consistently over the last few years. Tourists staying in self-catering units tend to stay longer in the area than those staying in hotels, guesthouses or B&B. Thus a decline in the number of visitors staying in this accommodation causes a decline in visitor activity to attractions in the area, with the greatest concentration remaining on the 'must see' sights.

Tourist Attractions

There are a number of key honeypot sites within the AONB, notably the Giant's Causeway, Bushmills Distillery, East Strand near Portrush, Larry Bane/Carrick-a-Rede, Port Ballintoy, White Park Bay and White Rocks. All of these sites have infrastructure to cope with visitors including car parking and, in some places, refreshments and toilets.

Secondary attractions include Bushfoot Strand, Portballintrae, Dunluce Castle, Dunsercick Castle, Kirbane Castle and Portbradden.

Visitor numbers indicate that the Giant's Causeway is by far the most popular attraction within the AONB and that numbers have increased steadily since the 1980s.

Visitor Profiles

Statistics indicate that the average length of stay in the area is 3.6 nights. This is considerably longer than tourists travelling with tour operators who have an average stay of 1.5 days.
The largest percentage of visitors to the Giant's Causeway are from Northern Ireland and are day visitors. The next largest groups are Great Britain, Continental Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Research indicates that the Giant's Causeway is the main reason for up to 30% of all visits to the Causeway Coast.

There are real opportunities to enhance the area's appeal to both out-of-state and domestic visitors through encouragement of:

- the short break market (family and friends)
- the activities market (hiking, cycling, surfing)
- the special interest holidays (painting, archaeology, botany or ornithology)

**Existing Marketing of the AONB**

AONB designations in Northern Ireland are not readily recognised by local people or visitors and are rarely used as a marketing tool. There is considerable scope for raising the profile and public awareness of AONB designations in Northern Ireland and their purposes.

More specifically the Causeway Coast AONB boundary is currently expressed on the ground with brown road signs at the key road entry points. However the AONB has a very low profile in the minds of most visitors and local residents. Only the Giant's Causeway, and, to a lesser extent, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, Bushmills Distillery and Dunluce Castle, have high levels of recognition, but this is in their own right rather than as linked places of interest within the AONB as a whole.

This is reinforced by information available on the web. Worldwide access to information can be gained from a number of different websites that tend to provide a brief overview of key sites within Northern Ireland and the AONB and again focus on the Giant's Causeway. There is no provision of information on the AONB as a whole.

Access to information within and about the AONB is therefore fragmentary and lacking in comprehensive coverage. Fundamentally, the AONB is not perceived as a 'product' (as a place with particular qualities or characteristics) or as a destination in its entirety. Different markets for visitors to the AONB need to be identified and then strategies devised accordingly to reach those markets and encourage visitors to explore and enjoy the AONB in a sustainable manner.

There is therefore a need for greater unity and focus required in the delivery of information and marketing, through promotional literature, a website, leaflets, guidebooks and even staff uniforms and the use of tourist information centres to help achieve this. Marketing of the AONB should transcend individual agencies and organisations and should deliver a more seamless experience and understanding of the AONB landscape. The AONB needs to be promoted as an entity in its own right, within which the Giant's Causeway sits as a 'jewel', along with other 'pearls' of the necklace.

Action to improve the image and identity of the AONB needs to take place in the context of existing Northern Ireland tourism initiatives and strategies for marketing, utilising the quality and distinctive character areas of the landscape as a key marketing tool.

**The pressure and focus on the WHS**

Because of the high profile of the Giant's Causeway WHS in Northern Ireland's tourism strategy, the specific visitor management issues at the Giant's Causeway WHS often dominate the AONB as a whole. Despite the beautiful and diverse coastline of the AONB, it is the Causeway itself that forms the focus of the visitors' attention, thus creating an imbalance in the AONB as a destination and, crucially, in the communication of its overall natural
and cultural heritage significance. If the AONB is to be cherished in its own right there is a need to address this issue within this Management Plan.

**Traffic Management**

**Cars**

Previous survey work has suggested that the majority of visitors to the AONB arrive by car (refer appendix 6). Thus at peak visitor periods there is often congestion on many of the narrow roads throughout the AONB and in particular at key visitor attractions. Increased traffic on the narrow roads also causes some conflict of use with cyclists (Sustrans National Network Route 93) and walkers (Causeway Coast Way), where these routes run along the coast road. At busy periods the increased volumes of traffic can also have an adverse impact on the tranquility and character of the AONB landscape.

The 'Quiet Roads' initiative (Countryside Agency) has sought to manage traffic in rural areas in England in order to free up the use of some roads and improve their attractiveness for non-motorised users. There is scope for a similar initiative to be considered within the AONB as part of an AONB wide transport strategy. A pilot study in conjunction with the Roads Service may provide a means of investigating the potential to reduce traffic impact within the AONB and consider options such as reducing traffic on the road to the Giant's Causeway and between Portrush and Portballintrae.

**Buses**

There are a number of bus services which operate throughout the AONB (refer appendix 6), and there are opportunities to improve this service both in terms of frequency, reliability, marketing and in achieving a cohesive and seamless visitor experience, linking places of interest with the main settlements.

**Train**

The nearest train station to the Causeway Coast AONB is at Portrush. Within the AONB a Heritage Railway operates during the summer months between Bushmills and the Giant's Causeway.

**Visitors arriving by coach**

Surveys have indicated (refer appendix 6) that a significant number of visitors arrive at the AONB by coach. Tour operators include the sites of Bushmills Distillery, Giant's Causeway and Carrick-a-Rede on their itineraries and most complete the visit in one day. Coach parking is available at each of these destinations.

Coach tours bring large volumes of people into the AONB every year but the nature of their short visit often prevents them from exploring the wider AONB or from staying overnight. There are, however, opportunities to encourage tour operators to consider varying their tourist package to include an overnight stay in one of the hotels in Portrush, Portstewart or Ballycastle. This would free up time for coach visitors to leave their coaches and explore beyond immediate destinations and possibly take alternative modes of transport between points of interest. It is recognised however, that this may require some investment into existing points of interest to make them more attractive to tour operators and visitors. For example opportunities exist for visitors to consider moving between the Bushmills Distillery and the Giant's Causeway via a number of different modes of transport including walking, cycling and the new Heritage Railway rather than to travel in their coach between destinations. It is recognised that a number of the coach visitors are of limited mobility and there is likely to be a continued need for visitors to be taken to the Giant's Causeway by coach. However, tour operators should be encouraged to consider alternatives to their
existing itineraries, even if it is just to allow visitors more time to explore Bushmills before or after a trip to the distillery for example.

**Developing an AONB wide Transport Strategy**

Providing visitors arriving by car or coach with the opportunity to park their vehicles and explore the AONB via alternative modes of transport would be in keeping with existing national sustainable transport and tourism initiatives. To achieve this will require:

- an assessment of the best location for people to park their cars (associated with the orientation facility for the AONB - refer page 45)
- a review of existing car park provision
- provision of directional signage at key junctions so car borne visitors are directed to car parking and orientation facility
- consultation with coach tour operators to develop alternative itineraries
- dissemination of information on transport alternatives and promotional campaigns such as 'think before you drive'
- marketing and pricing incentives
- Provision of transport choice (cycling, walking, horse riding, horse and carriage and comprehensive bus service - preferably mini-bus in order to cope with the narrow roads particularly to some of the coastal sites such as Ballintoy Harbour)
- Feasibility study for a 'hopper' bus system, which allows visitors to hop on and off the bus at any location along the route and or ticketing which allows the traveller use of a number of transport systems within the AONB

Experience of setting up a comprehensive bus service in similar circumstances has demonstrated that such a strategy will need to:

- build confidence - which can take up to 3-4 years
- have a simple and easily understood pricing structure

- run from year to year with few alterations
- be marketed as part of the visitor experience and
- set out clear channels of communication for visitors to express concerns or issues arising

Whist the driving force for the provision of a comprehensive bus service is fuelled by visitor pressures it is important that any resulting services link into or complement bus services aimed at serving the local population (refer to Theme 3). It is important also that a strategy to encourage visitors to park their cars and take alternative modes of transport does not restrict local resident car movements and through traffic, although the latter tends to take the more direct inland routes between Ballycastle and Bushmills rather than the coast road within the AONB.

Means of achieving a model shift could be assisted with the creation of a central orientation facility (refer page 45), which could inform visitors of alternative modes of transport and thus act as a transport interchange.

**Access, Recreation and Enjoying the Landscape**

The purposes of AONB designation include the need to 'promote its enjoyment by the public and provide or maintain public access to it'. Access, recreation and the enjoyment of the landscape are therefore fundamental areas which the Management Plan for the AONB needs to address.

**Organisations and Initiatives**

The countryside access and activities network
(CAAN) was formed in 1999 to co-ordinate initiatives towards countryside recreation provision and management, and attempts to bring together the main statutory and voluntary bodies with an interest.

Local authorities are empowered to provide for recreation for people in their district however they have tended to provide built facilities for indoor sports, swimming and playing pitches, and have played a very limited role in provision for outdoor recreation interests.

A Countryside Recreation Strategy\(^1\) has recently been prepared on behalf of the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust and has reviewed recreation provision covering the area of the Causeway Coast. It has highlighted that there are three main categories of recreation, which are water-based, land-based and air-based, and these are discussed below.

**Water-Based Recreation**

The north coast is one of the best areas in Ireland for surfing, sea kayaking/canoeing and windsurfing. Other water-based recreation within the AONB includes boat trips, angling, diving and some sailing\(^2\). Boat trips (pleasure and sea angling) tend to operate in the coastal area between Portrush, The Skerries and Giant's Causeway. Fishing occurs on the River Bush, while the main surfing and windsurfing beaches include Bushfoot Strand, Portballintrae, and White Rocks, Portrush, with Portrush being a key centre for surfing on the north coast. Diving points include Portrush, Portballintrae and Ballintoy, while sailing focuses more around Ballycastle which has its own marina.

The Countryside Recreation Strategy has identified that there is limited equipment hire and instruction for water sports in the area.

As with other areas of coastal landscape and marine areas, planning control extends as far as the Mean Low Water Mark, and it is often difficult to control activities out to sea despite the impact they can have when viewed from the land. Opportunities for partnerships with those organisations who regulate marine areas are essential to ensure the careful balance between recreation and conservation of the special qualities of the AONB. A recreational strategy for the AONB that seeks to permit water sports in some areas and not others, thereby retaining areas of coast in a pristine, unspoilt condition, should be considered.

Although water-based activities can provide a unique and spectacular view and perspective of the Causeway Coast, care should also be taken to assess cumulative impact resulting from the provision of additional water-based recreation such as boat trips and landing structures or mooring facilities, which can have an adverse impact on the natural beauty of the AONB and its enjoyment by others. Equally, consideration should be given to the impact of land development on the enjoyment of this coastal area when viewed from the sea, i.e. development along the coast road.

\(^1\) Causeway Coast and Glens Countryside Recreation Strategy (2002) Ferguson McIlveen & Judith Annette

\(^2\) Baseline Report for the Causeway Coast AONB (2002) Landscape Research Unit, School of Geography, Queens University Belfast.

**Land-Based Recreation**

**Rights of Way and Permissive Paths**

The Local Authorities within the AONB (Coleraine Borough Council and Moyle District Council) have Countryside Officers who are charged with developing and implementing an access strategy for their respective areas. The Access and Countryside (NI) Order (1983) legislation enables Local Authorities to establish routes for walking, cycling and horse-riding while EHS has powers to grant aid the creation and maintenance of footpaths within AONB's.

Currently there are few rights of way within the AONB although there are areas of open access along the foreshore and beaches. The Causeway Coast Way (the longest footpath route within the
AONB), runs between Portrush and Ballycastle along beaches, cliff tops and rocky shores, providing access to some of the most wild, rugged and spectacular parts of the AONB. However it is currently a linear route with few connecting footpaths (except at the WHS) that allow the visitor to undertake a circular walk. The recent establishment of the Causeway Rambler bus service has sought to address this issue but there is still scope for the creation of new footpaths within the AONB. The recently upgraded footpath adjacent to the Heritage Railway which runs between Bushmills and the Giant's Causeway is very popular with local residents and visitors alike and Moyle District Council has plans for an additional coastal path from Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle via Kinbane Castle.

Golf
Two golf courses fall within the AONB - the Royal Portrush Golf Club, which is a links course, located on the sand dunes behind Curran Strand, and Bushfoot Golf Course at Portballintrae, which lies between the beach/sand-dunes and the River Bush meadows. Collectively they provide a range of golfing opportunities for visitors and local people. The championship course at Royal Portrush attracts many overseas visitors and is a valuable market for accommodation providers, restaurants and retailers in the area.

Bike Scrambling
There are no allocated sites for scrambling bikes within the AONB. However over recent years scrambling has taken place at White Park Bay adjacent to the sand dunes and Runkerry Strand. This activity has caused considerable damage to the landscape and ecology of the area and is a management concern.

Cycling
Sustrans National Network Route 93 passes through the AONB. Cycle hire is available from Ballycastle and White Park Bay, and cycle parking is available at the Giant's Causeway. There is considerable scope to review existing cycle provision within the AONB and to promote and market it as an enjoyable way to explore the landscape.

Other land-based recreational activity includes game shooting on the Bushmills Estate and horse riding along roads in the area and beaches e.g. White Rocks.

Air-Based Recreation
Although there is currently limited air-based recreational activities operating with the AONB it is possible that this area of activity will grow.

Currently hang gliding and paragliding occurs along the coastal margins at locations such as White Park Bay. This along with parachuting, microlight flying and aeromodelling may increase in popularity and care will be needed to manage any noise and visual intrusion on areas of relative tranquility.

A review of the existing active recreation within the AONB indicates that there are some areas that
have a higher concentration of activity than others. Whilst most of these activities are considered to have no adverse impact on the natural beauty of the AONB and its enjoyment by all, care should be taken to monitor the levels of activity and the impact they potentially can have in terms of visual and noise intrusion, particularly along the dramatic coastal cliffs.

**Existing Interpretation within the AONB**

As indicated above the purposes of the AONB designation specify that proposals for the 'promotion of its enjoyment by the public' should be formulated. Thus the issue of interpretation and making information accessible to a wide and varied audience is of significance to this Management Plan.

**Education Potential**

The richness of the AONB offers enormous potential for education at all levels, both in the National Curriculum and in wider life long learning. Site specific educational programmes and activities at places such as; the National Nature Reserve at Portrush (the Countryside Centre); Dunluce Castle; the Giant's Causeway and the North Eastern Education Library Board Bushmills, would benefit from a pooling of skills and resources to create an integrated service which focuses on increasing environmental awareness under the AONB umbrella. Those programmes which are subsequently identified should be subject to scrutiny to ensure they meet the aim of increasing understanding of the AONB landscape.

**Interpretation**

A key tool for communicating significance and enabling deeper understanding is interpretation. Interpretation is a process or activity - a means to an end - not an end in itself, and provides the guiding framework for the delivery of interpretative media and methods, from guidebook and leaflets to guided walks, audio visual presentation and complementary activities such as education services, community arts programmes and so on. Interpretation assists with the visitor management process by linking in with orientation, the provision of factual information and the encouragement to explore other sites of interest, all of which can help to 'spread' visitor load and alleviate pressure at 'honey pot' sites throughout the AONB.

Interpretation of various aspects of the AONB is delivered in a variety of media at different sites across the AONB. Visitor centres at Portrush, Dunluce Castle and the Giant's Causeway, along with the museum at Ballycastle, are supplemented by a series of external graphic panels located at picnic sites, car parks and viewing points along the coast, as well as printed material such as the Illustrated Guide to the Causeway Coast Way and the more comprehensive book, The Giants Causeway and the North Antrim Coast. The National Trust offers accompanied guided walks and talks from its base at the Causeway, and is currently in the process of producing a series of 7 graphic panels adjacent to footpaths to augment information provided at its centre at the Giant's Causeway WHS.
The Need for a Strategic Approach

It is difficult for visitors to gain a clear overview of the AONB and its special qualities including all aspects of its natural and cultural heritage and how the landscape and its resources have been utilised by mankind over millennia by relating past activities to what can be seen today. There is a tendency to separate geology, marine ecology, wildlife, folklore, archaeology, domestic architecture and industrial heritage for example instead of exploring physical and thematic links AONB wide and at specific sites. When this is coupled with the propensity for people to travel by road (either in the car or a coach) and not to explore on foot or bicycle, it means that interpretative media has to be carefully devised to be lively, innovative and tailored to visitor needs.

In 1998 an Interpretation Strategy was developed for the coast and resulted in the provision of a suite of interpretation panels that provided information on the surrounding coastal scenery and wildlife, history and legends. These panels were erected at key car parks and viewpoints along the coast within the AONB. However they did not link to other sites of interest and this has resulted in a large variety of interpretation provision, varied graphic styles and often duplication of information throughout the AONB.

There is therefore a need for a revised AONB wide Interpretation Strategy that brings together individual organisations and site owners so that there is co-ordination of interpretation across the AONB. This AONB wide strategy would provide a guiding framework that takes an overview of the AONB and its component parts and draws the threads together to ensure complementarily information and avoid duplication. The strategy could provide a thematic framework and a range of delivery mechanisms from guided walks to in-coach / bus audio information and mobile interpretative displays to community initiatives and activities.

Interpretative Media and Messages

Interpretation needs to be flexible and able to respond to new research discoveries and changing visitor and operator needs. Visitor centres with fixed displays and audiovisual programmes are a popular way of providing interpretation but can be expensive to maintain and operate. Interpretative best practice is to seek a variety of tailored solutions targeted to specific markets in order to deliver key messages and accrue attitudinal and behavioural changes towards the AONB. The audiences for the messages should not be confined to tourist visitors alone and need to include tour operators, other attraction operators, hoteliers and local residents, as well as identified 'non visitors' in order to extend audience reach. Interpretation does not have to be delivered in situ - it can be provided when people are pausing for refreshment, on the move, or at their accommodation. For residents it may be delivered via newspaper editorial, local radio, in pubs and teashops, libraries and post offices. It will be imperative that the new AONB management body takes a lead role in facilitating the delivery of comprehensive interpretation throughout the AONB.

The Role of Tourist Information Centres

Tourist Information Centres (TICs) are usually a key component of 'on the ground' information dissemination and provide a broad range of information on sites of local interest, accommodation, transport choice, ticketing prices, local events and so on. They therefore provide a single point at which information on a broader area can be provided and are ideal as the first point of call for visitors. They can provide promotional literature and printed guides as well as more comprehensive books, posters, packs and videos, souvenirs and other retail outlets.
As a result of this important function TICs work most effectively when located in areas which can act as service centres or 'nodes' (i.e. within existing settlements) for arriving visitors to an area, are close to or form part of a transport interchange and thus are easily accessible. They tend to work less well when located at single points of interest or key attractions because they can often confuse or dilute the message and interpretation of the site/attraction.

The Causeway Coast AONB is currently served by a network of TICs. Two are located just outside the AONB boundary at Dunluce Centre, Portrush (seasonal), and within the council offices at Ballycastle. The third TIC is located at the Giant’s Causeway Visitor Centre.

The need for an orientation facility

Orientation facilities are a popular and tried and tested approach to providing a 'first point of call' for visitors to a particular area. Well used in National Parks they can provide a range of functions. These include the provision of information on attractions, accommodation, transport and walks within the area, (which can be provided by locating a TIC within the facility), as well as providing a centre for co-ordinating management, acting as a local facility and providing interpretation for the wider area.

As with TICs, orientation facilities are best located in areas that can act as service centres or 'nodes' (i.e. existing settlements) for arriving visitors to an area. It is essential that they are close to, or form part of, a transport interchange and thus are easily accessible and can offer visitors a choice of sustainable transport to explore the surrounding area. Locating orientation facilities within an existing settlement can have the added advantages of bringing increased revenue to the settlement and local population as well as assisting in integrating built form into a high quality and sensitive landscape.

Currently there is no orientation facility for the AONB and visitors tend to head straight for the Giant’s Causeway WHS (the number one visitor attraction of the AONB) or other key attractions such as Carrick-a-Rede which are signposted with brown road signs. This places particular pressure on these key sites.

The establishment and promotion of an AONB orientation facility within the AONB, but away from the WHS, would have the following advantages:

It would

- make a significant contribution to raising the profile of the AONB
- help to ease pressure at the Giant’s Causeway
- provide valuable orientation information relating to the whole of the AONB and visitor attractions
- assist in the promotion and increasing awareness of the AONB as a single entity
- assist in encouraging visitors to stay longer in the vicinity and thus increase spend
- could provide a key opportunity for local community involvement and could be used as a resource by local communities (venue for events/education)
- provide an opportunity to promote sustainable modes of transport around the AONB by integrating it with bus routes, heritage train, footpaths, cycle routes, etc.
- reduce congestion at key visitor sites
- can bring economic benefits to the settlement in which it is located

It is vitally important that the provision of an orientation facility for the AONB is not seen as something separate from and competitive with
other visitor facilities within the AONB, particularly at the Giant's Causeway. The orientation facility should be complementary to other facilities in the AONB promoting them and supporting their more detailed provision of interpretation.

RECOMMENDED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

The following objectives and actions have been identified as a result of an assessment of a) the issues affecting the AONB and b) analysis. The objectives indicate the core goals of the Management Plan and the actions indicate ways of achieving each objective.

Marketing and Promotion of the AONB

Objective M: To reinforce and raise the profile of the AONB - image and identity

Action M1: Redesign the existing logo of the AONB ensuring that any new design presents a bold and memorable impression about the special qualities of the area.

Action M2: Ensure the Causeway Coast AONB and its designation purposes are clearly portrayed and that its single entity, as a context to specific points of interest including the WHS, is emphasised.

Action M3: Ensure promotional and Interpretative material provides an integrated insight into the distinctiveness of this area of coast - its Landscape Character Areas and communities.

Action M4: Take every opportunity to reinforce the geographical extent of the AONB and it's varied landscape character areas.

Action M5: Ensure a website for the AONB provides a hierarchy of information starting AONB wide before specific points of interest such as historic sites or the WHS are provided for browsers.

Further study will need to be undertaken to identify the best location for the orientation facility and to review opportunities for associated parking. In addition a review of road signage will need to take place to encourage visitors to visit the orientation facility as an ideal first destination point within the AONB.

Equally there will need to be public support for the new orientation facility and it will be imperative to consult with local residents and businesses to ensure that the potential long-term benefits are clearly understood. Elements of the local community are particularly sensitive to the presence of tourists in the area and these sensitivities must be acknowledged and addressed.
Transportation and Access

Objective N: To reduce the number of vehicle movements and congestion at key attractions within the AONB and encourage people to move around using sustainable modes of transport.

Action N1: Undertake a programme of traffic surveys (in partnership with Roads Service) throughout the AONB to ascertain specific congestion and car parking, etc. issues that need to be addressed. This study should consider adjacent areas where appropriate to provide a context for trends within the AONB.

Action N2: Undertake a feasibility study in consultation with local bus providers, the Heritage Railway and other interested parties (boat trips/ferry operators) to assess the various options of providing a comprehensive transport strategy for the AONB.

Action N3: Establish a Rural Transport Partnership to bring together all local bus providers in order to implement the preferred local bus services for the AONB.

Action N4: Promote public transport as an integral part of the overall visitor experience.

Action N5: Actively promote the orientation facility as an ideal first destination point within the AONB through marketing and road signage.

Action O2: Encourage and support local authorities to identify new footpath routes (particularly those that enable the development of circular routes) and work with landowners to establish these new routes.

Action O3: Seek opportunities to take the Causeway Coast Way off-road where possible.

Action O4: Provide warden and financial support to farmers who create and manage new footpaths in the countryside.

Action O5: Complement footpath routes with illustrated trail leaflets that interpret the route and the settlements that they pass through to provide an insight into landscape, cultural and social history.

Action O6: Develop initiatives to encourage local people to walk more as part of a healthier lifestyle.

Action O7: Develop a 'quiet roads' initiative, which seeks to reduce vehicle use on certain roads and improve the experience for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Action O8: Undertake a review of cycling provision within the AONB (cycle hire, parking, routes etc) and make improvements where necessary to provide comprehensive provision and integration with other modes of transport.

Objective O: To encourage people to engage more closely with the landscape by walking, cycling or horse riding

Action O1: Continue to investigate potential legal changes to farmers' liability when permitting public access onto privately owned farmland.

Active Recreation

Objective P: To develop a recreational strategy which promotes active recreation in keeping with the purposes of the AONB and manages the impact of such pursuits.
Action P1: Review the current type distribution and impact of active recreational pursuits within the AONB and assess whether any further provision is appropriate.

Action P2: Ensure the protection of those areas of the AONB and its associated seascapes which are currently free of active recreational pursuits in order to retain the natural beauty, unspoilt character and tranquility of such areas.

Action P3: Take measures to prevent inappropriate recreational pursuits which would have an adverse impact on the AONB environment (e.g. bike scrambling) and liaise with other organisations to find more suitable locations for these activities.

Objective Q: To communicate the significance of the AONB and the need for its continued conservation and enhancement, by providing interpretation that builds an overall cohesive AONB experience for the visitor.

Action Q1: Develop an AONB-wide interpretation strategy which all site owners and organisations adhere to in order to:

- avoid duplication and omissions in information,
- provide a link between AONB wide themes and more detailed information at key sites,
- ensure clarity of information and consistency of quality and
- develop a thematic approach to understanding the landscape and its people utilising the Landscape Character Areas and including references to history, archaeology and folklore of the area.

Action Q2: Establish a newsletter and website for the AONB, detailing forthcoming events and conservation initiatives, and reporting on progress as regards meeting the Management Plan objectives.

Objective R: To ensure that the interpretation provision, choice of media and method of presentation responds to specific audiences.

Action R1: Undertake detailed surveys (quantitative and qualitative) to ascertain audience type, trends and expectations. These surveys should assess the volume and value of tourism in the area, visitor profile, trip patterns, and visitor experience. The findings will be specific to the AONB area and will allow the establishment of relevant, profile information for use in planning interpretation and visitor management initiatives.

Action R2: Ensure the involvement of local communities in research and delivery of local interpretation plans.

Action R3: Development of an integrated educational programme (linked to the Interpretation Strategy) for local residents, schools and special interest groups and in association with existing facilities such as the Countryside Centre, Portrush.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor Management</th>
<th>Objective U: To establish a range of high quality facilities at key attractions throughout the AONB which provide specific information and interpretation about those sites.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective S: To increase visitor stay within the AONB.</td>
<td>Action U1: To provide a new visitor facility at the Giant's Causeway of a quality befitting a WHS and in line with international best practice (refer to WHS Management Plan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action S1: Disperse visitors to other sites and attractions within the AONB and surrounding area (Portrush, Ballycastle and Antrim Coasts and Glens AONB) through marketing, interpretation and transport strategies.</td>
<td>Action U2: Work with existing landowners to review existing interpretation provision at sites of interest and develop a programme of improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action S2: Liaise with existing tour operators to provide alternative itineraries allowing visitors to remain in the area for longer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objective T: To establish a central information and orientation facility within the AONB to act as the heart (or hub) of the AONB and to provide general information to the visitor about the AONB landscape, key attractions, transport options and ticket prices/packages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action T1: Form a partnership between the local authority and local business interests to develop scheme (finance, design, build and operate).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action T2: Undertake an options appraisal/feasibility study to identify the most suitable location for such a facility within one of the key settlements in the AONB, taking into account conservation, access, social, economic and transportation issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action T3: Ensure the involvement of the local community of the settlement in taking this initiative forward.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action T4: Assess and ensure appropriate parking provision associated with the new orientation facility.</td>
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THEME FIVE: THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AONB

Introduction

The Giant's Causeway is one of the only three WHS in Ireland and is the equivalent in status to other World Heritage Sites such as the Pyramids of Giza, Egypt and the Great Barrier Reef, Australia. The safeguarding of the Giant's Causeway is not just the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Government but is also an international responsibility involving organisations such as DCMS, IUCN and UNESCO.

The primary focus of this Management Plan is the whole of the AONB. However the Management Plan has to recognise the single most important site within the AONB namely the World Heritage Site of the Giant's Causeway, from which the Causeway Coast AONB gets its name. There is a need to understand the relationship between the whole of the AONB and the WHS because:

• The AONB performs a significant role in providing the setting to the coastal scenery and the WHS.

• The AONB adds value to the WHS and the WHS to the AONB - they are mutually supportive.

• Conservation and visitor management issues at the WHS are more acute than elsewhere in the AONB.

• Resolution of visitor management issues at the WHS will contribute to successful consideration of wider management issues within the AONB.

• Management of the wider AONB can contribute positively towards protection of the WHS (both the site and its context/setting).

Thus decisions relating to visitor management, development, conservation work etc within the wider AONB have a significant impact on the WHS and vice-a-versa and it is for this reason that the WHS is considered in the context of the AONB here.

The Giant's Causeway was inscribed a WHS at a time when a management plan for the site was not a requirement. However, UNESCO now requires all WHS to have a management plan in place by 2004.

The analysis set out below can therefore provide the starting block for the preparation of the WHS management plan. It can place the WHS site within the context of other designations that apply to it (National Nature Reserve, SSSI and Special Area of Conservation), as well as setting it within its wider landscape context. This approach can assist in drawing together many of the broader and often complex management issues.

Issues

Earlier studies have set out the detailed issues affecting the World Heritage Site and its management. This management Plan verifies many of the issues previously identified and takes forward those issues that are relevant to management within the context of the wider AONB. These issues are considered to be:

• The lack of definition and appreciation of the importance of the wider landscape setting to the WHS

• The threats of existing development and pressures for further development within the WHS and immediate area

• The need to protect and enhance the natural beauty and scenic qualities of the site

• The need to address Health and Safety issues on and around the site
• The issues of vehicular congestion and impacts on the approaches to, and setting of, the WHS, and the need for access to it to be integrated with a wider transportation strategy.


Analysis

The above issues are explored in greater detail below in relation to existing initiatives, documentation and field assessment undertaken as part of the preparation of the Management Plan.

Background to Nomination

The Giant’s Causeway was identified as suitable for inclusion on the list of World Heritage Sites because it met two of the criteria set out in the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) (1972), namely it:

i. (is an) outstanding example representing major stages of earth’s history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.

and

iii. contains superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.

The current Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (March 1999), published by UNESCO, state that sites should also fulfill conditions of integrity, stated in full in Appendix 7.

The criteria for designation demonstrate the importance of protecting the Giant’s Causeway’s outstanding aesthetic value and natural beauty as well as its outstanding geology.

Ownership and Management of the Site

The Giant’s Causeway is owned and managed by the National Trust and Moyle District Council. The National Trust own the majority of the property while Moyle District Council own land around the Causeway Head. Both parties have a responsibility to ensure the management and protection of the site.

The Special Qualities of the WHS:

The unique qualities of the Causeway Coast are created by its combination of spectacular geological features and a magnificent setting. The scenic beauty of the columns, and the inter-relationship between the features and their setting are clearly documented in the Giant’s Causeway Nomination Document, published by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. Key statements include:

The cliff exposures of columnar and massive basalt at the edge of the Antrim Plateau present a spectacle of outstanding natural beauty.

The cliffs to the east of the Causeway are not only magnificent in their grandeur, but also demonstrate most distinctly the geological history of the area.

The coastline... remains virtually unspoilt, and has retained its wild and natural characteristics.

The relationship between the regularity of the geological features and the wildness of their coastal setting has made a deep and lasting influence on those who have observed them:
More than a geological wonder and an outstanding scenic resource, the Causeway Coast is one of the few landscapes that have directly influenced the way men think about art and nature. The "natural architecture" of the Causeway... captured the attention...

It can be seen from the above extracts from the nomination document that the geological features of the Causeway Coast cannot be viewed in isolation from their spectacular, wild and natural setting facing the North Atlantic. The special qualities of the setting are fundamental to the appearance, experience, appreciation and future management of the site. The WHS and the AONB are thus inextricably linked, and the former needs specific consideration within the AONB Management Plan.

The above extracts highlight the importance of the 'natural' and 'wilderness' qualities of the site which were significant in its designation. It is imperative therefore that activity on the site and future management initiatives seek to protect and where necessary restore these special qualities.

The Setting of the World Heritage Site

Within the Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO), there are guidelines on the protection of World Heritage Sites through the careful consideration of site boundaries and the inclusion of "buffer zones":

17 Whenever necessary for the proper conservation of a cultural or natural property nominated, an adequate "buffer zone" around a property should be provided and should afford the necessary protection. A buffer zone can be defined as an area surrounding the property which has restrictions placed on its use to give an added layer of protection; the area constituting the buffer zone should be determined in each case through technical studies. Details on the size, characteristics and authorised uses of a buffer zone, as well as a map indicating its precise boundaries should be provided in the nomination file relating to the property in question.

Review of Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6)

The guidelines set out above have been translated into regional policy within Northern Ireland and can be found in Planning Policy Statement 6 - Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage (March 1999). PPS 6 states that 'development plans (Northern Area Plan) will include local policies relating to the WHS and its setting to safeguard such areas.'

Policy BH 5 states that:

'The Department (of Environment) will operate a presumption in favour of the preservation of the WHS. Development which would adversely affect such sites or the integrity of their settings will not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances.'

It goes on to state that, in the absence of a clearly identified setting to the WHS, and 'as an interim measure until such time as a new development plan is prepared for the area and this matter is addressed, development proposals within a 4km radium of the site will be subject to particular scrutiny by the Department.'

Defining the Setting - methodology

The terms of reference for the production of this Management Plan highlighted the need to review the setting of the WHS in relation to existing policy stated above and to refine the 4km zone. The methodology used for assessing the setting is set out below.

Defining the setting of the WHS involves the identification of the Zone of Visual Influence i.e. where there are views from the site to the surrounding landscape and where there are views from the surrounding landscape to the site. The WHS boundary itself runs close to the top of the cliffs encompassing mainly cliffs and foreshore.
within the designation. However, the edge of the coastline within the WHS sweeps up before dropping almost vertically to the shore. As a result of this topography and the geomorphology of the coastline (characteristic of crinkled cliffs) the WHS is both visible and distinctively recognisable within the surrounding landscape. Equally, the elevated nature of the cliff top walk within the WHS boundary results in extensive views inland. As a result of this, the Zone of Visual influence and thus the landscape which can be shown to fall within the setting of the WHS extends over a considerable distance (refer drawing 9).

The definition of the setting of the WHS has highlighted the following:

- The setting of the WHS comprises much of the AONB landscape from Portrush to Carrick-a-Rede.
- The landscape of the AONB is inextricably linked to the WHS.
- The setting of the WHS extends into the seascape.
- The AONB boundary does not form a good proxy for the setting of the WHS i.e. the setting of the WHS extends beyond the AONB.

Although all the land within the Zone of Visual Influence can be described as forming the setting to the WHS it does not all have equal significance and influence.

Policy BH 5 as indicated above stresses that development which has an adverse impact on the integrity of the setting will not be permitted. The integrity or wholeness of the setting relates closely to the integrity of the landscape character within it and our experience and appreciation of that landscape.

The function of the landscape in providing a setting to the WHS can be divided into three categories; 'distinctive, supportive and connective' and these are described below. These categories represent landscape setting of differing significance in that they influence one's experience and appreciation of the WHS through aspects such as:

- proximity to the WHS,
- unique views or sequence of views,
- approaches,
- inherent landscape characteristics.

This assessment demonstrates that the landscape within the setting of the WHS has an important role to play in forming part of the visitor experience - the visitor experience is not confined to the boundary of the WHS alone. Management of the landscape setting and aspirations to enhance visitor's enjoyment should be developed and
undertaken with this in mind. The three categories are as follows:

**Distinctive**
This comprises land adjacent to the WHS that forms the immediate setting and is significant in views to and from the site. Examples include the middle and foreground views from the cliff top walk within the WHS looking south across coastal heath and rural mixed farming of the Causeway Plateau. It also includes the most spectacular and unique views of the profile of the WHS which are gained from the coastal area to the south west, i.e. Dunluce Castle and hinterland.

There are also areas of land which fall into the ‘distinctive’ category but which do not have continuous views to the WHS. These areas are classified as ‘distinctive’ because they are significant in providing an approach to the WHS and thus in building anticipation and sense of arrival. An example includes the land between Bushmills / Portballintrae and the WHS. Here the sequence of spaces and glimpsed views to the crenulated cliff line and the character of the natural coastal landscape through which one passes (i.e. coastal dunes, beach, mixed farming hinterland) is vital in providing a rural context to the wilderness qualities of the WHS itself.

**Supportive**
This includes land which performs an significant function in bolstering the role of the distinctive setting. It comprises medium distant and elevated views to the WHS and also significant ridgelines, which can form the skyline, when viewed from the WHS cliff top walk. This area provides a geographical context to the WHS comprising a predominately rural unspoilt open hinterland. It is therefore sensitive to the cumulative impact of development as well as development which is visually prominent because of the choice of building materials, scale of development and or location (on a ridgeline or breaking the skyline).

**Connective**
This comprises land which is some distance from the WHS, but within the zone of visual influence. From these areas there is often a substantial foreground of land or sea in views to the WHS. In some areas there are limited views to the WHS due to topography vegetation or built development but these areas form an important landscape context all the same. Here the distance from the WHS means that these landscapes are less influential in providing a context to the visitor experience and development in this landscape, when viewed from the WHS, is often less discernible.

This assessment is significant to the preparation of detailed policies relating to development control and the protection of the setting of the WHS in line with PPS 6 Policy BH5. Currently policy relating to the 4km radius requires ‘particular scrutiny’ of all planning proposals within this area. It is recommended that this policy remains for all categories within the setting of the WHS now defined, i.e. to include distinctive, supportive and connective areas as described above. It is also recommended that special care and/or restrictions should also be applied to the ‘distinctive’ setting to ensure the landscape qualities and sensitivities of the immediate setting are not undermined through the loss of, or detriment to views, approaches or landscape character as described above.

Therefore consideration should be given to the
development of policy beyond that of 'particular scrutiny' that recognises and reflects the nature of the setting. It is also imperative that policy for the setting of the WHS is not confused with policy relating to the AONB designation. This is because the setting of the WHS is defined in relation to the zone of visual influence of the site, the approaches to it, and function of the landscape within this zone, where as the AONB boundary has been defined based on the quality of the landscape. Equally the WHS setting and AONB boundaries do not coincide and it would be inappropriate to have one policy for both.

Policy developed for the setting of the WHS should also meet the requirements of UNESCO Operational Guidelines as set out above under The Setting of the World Heritage Site (page 52). These guidelines refer to a 'buffer zone' to provide a WHS property with 'necessary protection' and 'proper conservation'. Although not explicitly stated 'necessary protection' can be assumed to mean protection from adverse change which undermines the special quality of a WHS property. At the Causeway Coast forces for change include incremental development or land management changes and can include visitor management and tourism development, for example. It has been argued that the 'buffer zone' to the World Heritage Site should include a small area of land adjacent to the WHS site only. However, as explained above, the significance and distinctive qualities of the site can be appreciated from a much wider area than land immediately adjacent to the designation. Indeed the inland, rural setting of the WHS is significant in appreciating the special qualities of the site and the experience from within the designation i.e. the cliff top walk. Therefore, this technical assessment highlights the need for the 'buffer zone' of the WHS as extending beyond the immediate landscape adjacent to the WHS. This area should be subject to 'necessary protection' and 'proper conservation' in line with UNESCO Operational Guidelines.

Once policy has been developed, in response to this assessment in the emerging Northern Area Plan, there will no longer be a need for the interim measure of a 4km buffer around the site as identified in PPS 6.

Review of need for visitor facilities Serving the WHS

As the most popular visitor attraction within Northern Ireland and the Causeway Coast AONB, the management of visitors at the Giant's Causeway is clearly linked to the management of visitors across the wider AONB. Earlier studies identified ways in which the then existing visitor facility and visitor management on the site could be improved, recognising that there were some shortfalls in provision. However a fire in April 2000 at the visitor centre has provided the opportunity to radically review the future provision of facilities at the site and the impact of existing development in the context of the preparation of this Management Plan.

Since the fire there have been a number of development applications within the vicinity of the Causeway Head. This development pressure highlights the importance of having a clear strategy for visitor facilities and the need to appreciate the setting of and approaches to the WHS through the AONB.

More recently the opening of the railway from Bushmills has introduced a new choice of transport to and from the WHS, and highlights the need for the site to be considered in the context of a wider transport strategy for the AONB.

All of these issues point to the need to review the purpose, type and scale of visitor facilities at the WHS and in relation to a wider visitor management strategy for the whole of the AONB. This has been considered as part of the production of this Management Plan. It is recommended that visitor facilities continue to be provided at the site (as opposed to a considerable distance from the site) for the following reasons:

- Precedent
  The WHS nomination included the visitor facilities at the Causeway Head because they formed an integral part of the visitor experience and were existing. There is therefore a precedent for some type of visitor facility/welcome at the Causeway.
Ownership Pattern
The National Trust and Moyle District Council own the site. As an important site to Northern Ireland and the whole of Ireland it is imperative that a pattern of ownership and visitor management is maintained which safeguards the WHS for future generations.

Need for a high quality visitor experience
It provides a definitive destination for visitors, i.e. the facility and the site itself are understood as a single entity.

Nature of site and its unique qualities
The Giant's Causeway is a natural site. Its special qualities relate to wilderness, a challenging environment and weather, vast scale and natural forces of nature. Locating a visitor facility at the Causeway Head provides an opportunity to inform visitors about the character and dangers of the site, provide them with often necessary shelter and refreshments and enables them to view the coast and seascape under cover. The visitor facility must not, however, compromise the special natural qualities of the WHS.

Visitor Movement
It is important to disperse visitors quickly and safely on to the site, and preferably via the coastal path to encourage further use and exploration on foot from different vantage points. This is most effectively achieved from a central hub (visitor facility) enabling easy access and the provision of a choice of routes. It may be necessary to rationalise the existing status of roads and footpaths within and adjacent to the WHS to ensure long-term safe provision. This review of footpaths should also include the Lower Cliff Path which has been closed following substantial cliff collapse, but which formed an important component of the original WHS nomination and could, potentially, form an exceptional part of the WHS experience.

The provision of visitor facilities at the Giant's Causeway should also give consideration to the following:

Existing visual impact of developments
The existing extent of development at and immediately adjacent to the Causeway Head and WHS is significant and has a considerable impact on views from the surrounding AONB as well as on the visitors' approach and sense of arrival. The retention of visitor facilities at the Causeway Head will need to be associated with a reduction of impact of existing development and urbanising influences in order to improve the setting of the WHS, provide a sense of arrival, and prepare the visitor for experiencing a natural site/phenomena. The synergy between the Causeway Hotel, the proposed new visitor facility, Nook pub and the Heritage Railway terminus as a 'group' needs to be fostered, and must be carefully integrated with their landscape surroundings. Opportunities should also be sought to re-landscape areas adjacent to the WHS where appropriate, while all other development/facilities should be located in existing settlements, providing economic and community benefits in the most appropriate locations.

Need to adopt sustainable tourism principles including sustainable transport
The retention of visitor facilities at the Causeway Head will need to consider its association with other visitor facilities such as the proposed orientation facility for the AONB.
and other sites of interest and the means of transport between them. As part of the AONB Management Plan the development of facilities at the WHS will need to link into and support the wider AONB transport strategy and be forward looking in order to deal with predicted increasing visitor numbers. As such, action should be taken to encourage people to arrive at the site using sustainable modes of transport and over time to reduce car-parking requirements at the site. It will also be important for any new visitor facility to provide a logical and seamless connection between modes of transport.

- **Provision of appropriate facilities**
  The content and scale of visitor facility is also important. It is essential that facilities complement and inform a visit to Giant's Causeway (geological features and the coast) and that they provide more detailed information on the WHS than is provided at the proposed orientation facility for the wider AONB. Facilities should be high quality befitting a WHS, and cohesive, avoiding the duplication of facilities such as containing two separate shops. Visitor facilities at the WHS need to serve the needs of the WHS putting the visitor experience before the need for commercialism. A clear long-term strategy for the facilities is also important in order to avoid the gradual accumulation of facilities at the site, as numbers of visitors grow.

- **Access for all and health and safety**
  Locating a visitor facility at the Causeway Head facilitates on-site management of visitors including health and safety, monitoring, access, and security. Information and guidance at the visitor facility should be supported by on-site supervision by guides who can provide reassurance, direction, interpretation and encouragement to explore other areas of the site. In all cases, the introduction of physical safety measures on site needs to be assessed against adverse visual impact and the consideration of alternative options for providing a safe environment for visitors.

**RECOMMENDED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS**

The following objectives and actions have been identified as a result of an assessment of a) the issues affecting the AONB and b) analysis. The objectives set out the core goals of the Management Plan and the actions indicate ways of achieving each objective.

**Objective V:** To ensure the integration of WHS management issues within overall AONB management decisions.

**Action V1:** Liaise with WHS managers to assess the implications of management and planning decisions made at the WHS on wider AONB management and vice versa.

**Action V2:** Ensure and assist in the preparation of a WHS management plan.

**Objective W:** To conserve the geology, geomorphology and biodiversity of the WHS.

**Action W1:** Ensure there is minimal disturbance to natural coastal processes due to human activities.

**Action W2:** Ensure human activities do not significantly reduce the quality of coastal exposures of geology within the site.

**Action W3:** Ensure management conserves the biodiversity of the site and is in keeping with guidance set out in the Giant's Causeway National Nature Reserve Management Plan

**Objective X:** To conserve, and enhance where appropriate, the natural beauty of the WHS landscape, as well as its landscape and seascape setting.

**Action X1:** Ensure the WHS is taken into account in the preparation and
implementation of all planning, regulatory and policy documents that might affect it.

**Action X2**
Ensure the inclusion of adequate policies to protect the values and significance of the WHS in the emerging Northern Area Plan.

**Action X3:**
Ensure the development of local policies in the Northern Area plan relating to the control of development within the setting of the WHS.

**Action X4:**
Ensure that activity at the WHS and future management initiatives seek to protect and where necessary restore the natural and scenic beauty of the site.

**Objective Y:**
To attract local people and visitors to the WHS at levels that it can sustain.

**Action Y1:**
Review the status maintenance and management of the road/path network within and immediately adjacent to the WHS in order to provide safe and integrated movement of visitors in the long term.

**Action Y2:**
Maintain a network of access on foot to the foreshore within the WHS where practical and investigate creative and cost effective solutions to safety and restored access to areas such as the Lower Cliff Path.

**Action Y3:**
Ensure that provision of public access and information helps to match visitor numbers to the capacity of the WHS, and maintains the tranquility of remote areas of the site.

**Action Y4:**
Ensure the safety of visitors to the WHS is a management issue and that the provision of physical safety measures do not adversely affect the quality and character of the site.

**Action Y5:**
Provide for visitor safety through appropriate education initiatives, and management where practicable.

**Action Y6:**
Provide information on the WHS at local, a national and international level that encourages levels of visitors that the WHS can sustain.

**Action Y7:**
Provide high quality information and interpretation about the WHS to both local people and visitors at the visitor facility.

**Action Y8:**
Manage the transport impacts of visitors to the WHS and encourage visitors to take sustainable modes of transport to and from the site.

**Action Y9:**
Take measures to discourage and prevent verge parking at and around the WHS.

**Action Y10:**
Ensure visitor facilities are befitting to WHS status and are of an appropriate scale.

**Action Y11:**
Encourage safe use of the WHS by educational groups of all ages, and to provide a high quality range of educational information and services about the inscribed site.

**Action Y12:**
Foster the gathering and dissemination of scientific information about the WHS.

**Action Y13:**
Ensure that World Heritage Site status is used responsibly in all aspects of publicity in relation to the Causeway Coast AONB and assists wider sustainable development objectives within Northern Ireland.
Objective Z: The boundary of the WHS should be kept under review to ensure that its outstanding universal significance is adequately protected.

Action Z1: Minor changes to the boundary of the WHS should be reviewed once proposals for the re-building of the visitor facilities have been agreed.

Action Z2: Any changes to the boundary should be defined clearly on an OS map and notified to the World Heritage Committee via DCMS.
PART THREE
Implementing The Plan
IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Programme and Action Plan

Every Management Plan should contain a programme of activity and a clear action plan which sets out the priority of each action (set out in Part 2 of this report), the time programme in which it should be achieved, and highlights which organisations should be involved in its implementation. This is essential to assist in the establishment of partnerships and clearly defined responsibility between the future management body and affiliated organisations/stakeholders.

In most situations, where a Management Plan is being prepared, a management body is already in place which makes the prioritisation of actions and delegation of responsibility clear. However, in this case, the Management Plan has been prepared prior to the establishment of an appropriate management body. For this reason a programme and action plan has not been prepared on this occasion. However, it will be imperative that, once a management body is in place, it addresses the need for a programme and action plan as a matter of urgency.

Monitoring

It is equally important that the Management Plan is reviewed and updated on a regular basis (preferably every 5 years) to make sure it responds to changing circumstances and continues to achieve high quality management within the Causeway Coast AONB.

The objectives and action points contained in this document therefore reflect only the beginning of the careful management of this rare and fragile environment.

Delivery Mechanisms and Co-ordination

Introduction

As set out in Aim 3 of this management plan (Part 1, page 3) there is a need to develop a coherent approach to management because there are a significant number of stakeholders (local communities, organisations and bodies, both local and throughout Northern Ireland) who are operating in the area. There are also a significant number of existing environmental and tourism strategies and initiatives for the area, and therefore a need for integration.

The existing management bodies and organisations associated with the AONB are not, in their current arrangements, able to undertake the implementation of the Management Plan and there is therefore a need to identify a suitable ‘delivery mechanism’ for implementing the Plan.

Examples of Management Bodies

Throughout England and Wales there are a number of existing management bodies which have been set up to ensure the successful co-ordination and implementation of management in areas of protected landscape such as AONB’s. Some examples are discussed briefly below and could form a model for the establishment of a management body for the Causeway Coast AONB. It should be remembered, however, that these management structures operate within the English planning system and for that reason any model for application in Northern Ireland will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Joint Advisory Committee

Statutory responsibility for AONB management and management planning normally falls to the local authority or authorities within the AONB. In England the local authorities are the planning authority, however in Northern Ireland the JAC
arrangement would require the involvement of local authorities and Planning Service. A Joint Advisory Committee management structure is particularly effective when there are a number of local authorities involved within the AONB as it can include representatives of each local authority as well as amenity and land use interests. Joint Advisory Committees are increasingly a means of promoting a ‘partnership’ approach to AONB management.

Conservation Board
A Conservation Board differs from a JAC in that the responsibility for AONB management is transferred from local authorities, e.g. Moyle and Coleraine to a Conservation Board. Unlike National Park Authorities, AONB Conservation Boards may not assume responsibility for development planning, which remains with the respective local authority, in the case of Northern Ireland, Planning Service. A Conservation Board is an independent ‘body corporate’. It is responsible and publicly accountable for its own administration and management, able to employ its own staff and equipment, acquire, own, and dispose of land, and to make charges for its services. In practice Conservation Boards must undertake their work by forming close partnerships with local authorities and other bodies.

National Park Authority
A National Park Authority is the body charged with managing a National Park once created. A National Park Authority is a public body and has a two-tier structure comprising members and officers. Members are responsible for making decisions on the policies and priorities of the park. There can be between 20-40 members depending on the size of the National Park. Just over half of these members represent local authorities, approximately a quarter are experts on issues affecting the Park and the remainder represent parish councils. Both the latter groups are appointed directly by the Secretary of State. Officers are employees who work to the policies and carry out the decisions made by members. The officers are responsible for the day to day operating of the authority. Taking the Peak District National Park as an example, their work is broadly divided into four areas: Planning,

Conservation and Land Management, Recreation and Administration, National Park Authorities generally have planning control for the area of the National Park and write their own local plans. They are permanent and so can develop long-term strategies and build up long-lasting partnerships.

Consideration in Selecting a Management Body
Before a Management Structure is identified for the Causeway Coast AONB the following issues will need to be considered in greater detail.

Scale of the area
The Causeway Coast is a small area and it is unlikely to be cost effective to set up a large or complex management structure or body for such small geographical area.

The need for a National Park - is it desirable?
Legislation to create a National Park within Northern Ireland exists. The Department of the Environment can designate a National Park if it deems it ‘desirable’ to do so. Further work on the desirability of a National Park and the geographical area it should cover is required.

Planning
Planning is a significant issue within the AONB. The specific role and involvement of a new management body in planning will need to be given careful consideration.

Interim Steps
It is rarely possible to create a new management structure overnight and it is often more realistic to put an interim management structure in place, in the short term, and work towards a more significant management structure in the longer term.

Funding and Delivery of key components of the Management Plan
A number of initiatives have been identified within this draft management plan and it will be necessary for the new management body to have access to sufficient funding to realise these goals.

Principles for a Successful Management Body
A management body for the implementation of the Causeway Coast AONB Management Plan, if it is to
be 'fit for purpose', will take time to develop and will require the coming together and support of local stakeholders.

It is beyond the scope of this study to set out in detail the structure of such a body. However it is possible, at this stage, to provide guidance on what is likely to comprise a successful management organisation, which can achieve the purposes of AONB designation and hence the protection of this unique and fragile environment.

This guidance has been set out as a series of principles below.

**Vision and Focus**
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated because they reflect an area of landscape with unique and outstanding qualities. It is essential in their management and future protection therefore, that the reasons for designation and thus the special qualities of the area always remain at the forefront of decision-making. Experience in England and elsewhere has demonstrated that the most effective way to achieve this is through the creation of a body whose single goal is to deliver the purposes of the AONB and drive the implementation of the Management Plan. Thus the way to ensure vision and focus on the AONB landscape is to create a specific organisation for that purpose.

Consultation with the Working and Advisory Groups for this study has highlighted concern over the creation of a wholly new management body. This could be seen as unnecessary duplication with the recently established Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (refer page 22), which covers the AONB within its wider study area. Consultation has illustrated support for the Heritage Trust as a suitable organisation to take forward the implementation of the Management Plan for the Causeway Coast AONB.

However, concerns have also been expressed regarding the potential for internal conflict to arise within the Heritage Trust, if it were to be charged, in addition to its existing remit, with the Causeway Coast AONB management, not least because its existing focus is broader than the specific issues experienced within the AONB. There is a risk that such an approach may fail to deliver the focus and vision needed. Equally if a wholly new organisation is created to implement the Management Plan for the AONB, separate from the Trust, it will be essential that the Heritage Trust is not undermined, or seen to be side-lined, as a result.

**Fit for purpose - organisational structure**
The scale and intensity of issues facing the landscape of the Causeway Coast AONB is such that a management body charged with the implementation and development of the Management Plan will need to be influential.
Experience elsewhere has demonstrated that this is most effectively achieved by the creation of an independent body corporate which comprises a board and executive and manages its own funds, equipment and staff. Membership should include an equitable mix of local interest, public servants and technical experts and individuals should undertake to use their best efforts to work together for the good of the area. In this way the developing body has more than just an advisory function but can also make changes on the ground ensuring land management and non-planning recommendations are effectively implemented. It can of course delegate powers to other organisations and bodies that are better placed to carry out certain actions but it can also have responsibilities delegated to it by others. For example local authorities may wish to delegate footpath creation and management within the AONB to the management body.

Employing its own staff can enable the management organisation to have its own specialist skills which respond to some of the acute pressures facing the AONB landscape. For example the employment of a tourism manager, land manager/ecologist, geologist and a planning officer (see below), as well as an on-site ranger service which can deal with day to day management needs and can be the management organisation’s ‘eyes’ and a visible presence on the ground.

As well as employing its own staff, it should also have direct access to a wide range of scientific and technical skills. These ‘support’ personnel should have appropriate academic and professional qualification and experience.

**Role in Planning**

As stated above planning is a significant issue within the AONB. It is hoped that the emergence of the Northern Area Plan could take on board many of the recommendations set out in this Management Plan. In addition, the analysis of the character of the AONB landscape and sensitivity contained within this document can help to support and inform planning policy and the determination of planning applications. In this way it is hoped that some of the development issues currently facing the AONB will be effectively addressed.

However, there is an on going need for planning matters to be reviewed against AONB purposes and it is imperative that the AONB management body has continued involvement in the planning process. Elsewhere in England AONB management bodies, whether JAC or Boards, are non-statutory consultees to the local planning authority and in Northern Ireland the AONB management body will also need to be a non-statutory consultee to Planning Service. However, it is recommended that, in the future, measures are taken to ensure the management body is a statutory consultee in the same way that Local Authorities currently are.

In addition to this it is recommended that the new management body has within its executive a planning officer (as is the case in the Sussex Downs Conservation Board, England). The officer could be an independently employed individual or a seconded member of Planning Service. The role of this individual would be to advise on and influence planning matters within the AONB in the context of AONB purposes.

**Creation and Flexibility**

It is important to continue the existing momentum gained through the preparation of the Management Plan and, due to the intensity of pressure on the AONB, to ensure that a management body is created / put in place as quickly as possible.

However, it is also important to recognise that the quickest and most cost-effective route to setting up a management organisation does not always
ensure effective AONB management in the long term. It is better therefore to thoroughly investigate the various options for a management body and set up an organisation which puts the future protection and management of the area first rather than opt for a 'quick fix'. While this is being undertaken it may be necessary to set up an interim measure for progressing the Management Plan and management decisions, perhaps through the continued involvement of the Working and Advisory Groups established as part of this Management Plan process.

Once established, the body charged with management of the AONB will need to respond to possible future changes whether these involve the amalgamation of the Causeway Coast and Antrim Coast and Glens AONBs, designation of the area as a National Park or the reorganisation of local authority areas.

**Conclusion**

Research to date has indicated that there are four areas of primary concern which will need to be addressed before a suitable management body is established. These are:

- Firstly the need to avoid unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy
- Secondly to ensure that the management body has sufficient focus on the AONB and its core issues and does not have inherent conflicts within its organisational structure
- Thirdly to ensure the management body has the power and authority to make decisions and drive the management of the area and
- Fourthly to ensure the financial and practical resources to deliver management objectives.

It is not possible in this study to fully review the potential of the Heritage Trust as a management body or indeed other alternatives. However it is recommended that a separate paper be prepared embracing and reviewing all possible management structures and organisations and that this is used as a basis to address the four concerns above and for further discussion and consultation on the most suitable way forward.
Our aim is to protect and conserve the natural and built environment and to promote its appreciation for the benefit of present and future generations.

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