

HISTORIC DOWNHILL DEMESNE OUTDOOR RECREATION MASTERPLAN

10 June 2019

Prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI
*on behalf of Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape
Partnership Scheme*

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	BACKGROUND	1
2.1	Site Description	1
2.2	History of Ownership.....	4
2.3	Natural and Built Heritage.....	6
3	CURRENT POSITION.....	9
3.1	Land Ownership and Management	9
3.2	Patterns of Visitor Use.....	12
3.3	Outdoor Recreation Activities	14
3.4	Visitor Services & Facilities	18
3.5	Condition Survey	24
3.6	Connectivity.....	30
4	DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS	36
4.1	Pre-Requisites.....	36
4.2	Context.....	37
4.3	Proposals.....	38
4.4	Considerations.....	46
5	DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS	48
5.1	Option 1 – Do Nothing (Status Quo).....	48
5.2	Option 2 – Do Minimum (Phase 1, 0-3 Years)	49
5.3	Option 3 – Do Everything (Phase 2, 3+ Years)	54
6	COSTS AND FUNDING.....	63
7	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	65

APPENDICES	66
A. DETAILED METHODOLOGY	67
B. BINEVENAGH LPS ORAG – MINUTES FROM 3 RD MEETING.....	75
C. LIST OF CONSULTEES	81
D. PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK	83
E. BUILT HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS	89
F. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	96

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: Map of study area.....	5
Fig. 2: Map of natural heritage designations and considerations.....	7
Fig. 3: Map of built heritage designations and considerations.....	8
Fig. 4: Map showing land ownership.....	11
Fig. 5: Map of current outdoor recreation activities.....	17
Fig. 6: Map showing visitor services and facilities.....	23
Fig. 7: Sawmill (left) and waterfall (right) in Downhill Forest.....	24
Fig. 8: Lake Trail (left) and steps (right) in Downhill Forest.....	25
Fig. 9: Photos showing grass paths at (left) and views (right) from The Moor.....	26
Fig. 10: Photos showing path condition (left) and sense of arrival (right) at The Moor.....	27
Fig. 11: Gravel trails (left) and grass paths (right) at Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins.....	28
Fig. 12: Signage at Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins.....	29
Fig. 13: Map showing connectivity and links to surrounding areas.....	35
Fig. 14: Multi use trails for families and in woodland settings.....	41
Fig. 15: Bespoke benches and seating.....	42
Fig. 16: Log Trail (left) and Badger Sett (right) at Kew Royal Botanic Gardens.....	43
Fig. 17: Photos showing examples of integrated interpretation.....	44
Fig. 18: Photos showing examples of sculptural viewpoints.....	45
Fig. 19: Phase 1 Spatial Masterplan.....	53
Fig. 20: Phase 2 Spatial Masterplan.....	62
Fig. 21: Consultation poster.....	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of landowners/managers within historic Downhill Demesne	10
Table 2: Access points	13
Table 3: Current outdoor recreation activities	16
Table 4: Current visitor services and facilities	22
Table 5: Phase 1 action plan	52
Table 6: Action plan (all proposals)	61
Table 7: Potential funding opportunities.....	64
Table 8: Key milestones in project delivery	74
Table 9: List of project consultees	82
Table 10: Summary of public consultation feedback.....	85

FOREWORD

This Masterplan is an independent assessment and evaluation of historic Downhill Demesne carried out by Outdoor Recreation NI.

Outdoor Recreation NI is not affiliated with or funded¹ by any of the partner organisations involved in this study, including the National Trust, Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council, Forest Service NI and the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme.

The findings in this report are based on information gathered specifically for this project through desktop research, fieldwork and consultation and analysed in the context of leading, best practice models across the UK and Ireland and over 20 years of knowledge and experience working in the outdoor recreation sector in Northern Ireland.

The recommendations made in this report are the independent, professional opinion of Outdoor Recreation NI alone and represent what we deem to be the best way forward for the future development and management of historic Downhill Demesne in the long term.

¹ This Masterplan is funded solely by the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme. Outdoor Recreation NI was awarded the Contract following a successful bid which was assessed in a competitive tender process.

CAVEATS

Concept Design

This Masterplan proposes projects which have been progressed to a concept design stage only, for the purpose of providing sufficient enough detail upon which decisions relating to future development can be made.

Concept design is the broad outline of initial ideas without any technical detail or specifications – this comes after in the detailed design stage – once partners have decided which elements of the project to take forward for capital development. As such there is further work, assessments and surveys to be undertaken before any recommended projects can be delivered on the ground.

In this case the concept design for the Masterplan has been based on the designed visitor flow, experiences (i.e. trails) and interactions between visitors and the Demesne. It takes account of visitor's needs and how these are met through the outdoor recreation product and visitor services and facilities.

Costs

The costs in this Masterplan relate to Phase 1 development only. Costs relating to trail development, infrastructure and other products are based on recent relevant projects of a similar scope and scale carried out by Outdoor Recreation NI, supplemented by a knowledge of current market prices.

1 INTRODUCTION

Outdoor Recreation NI was appointed in November 2018 by the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (also referred to as ‘the LPS’) to prepare a Spatial Masterplan for historic Downhill Demesne, in partnership with the National Trust, Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council (also referred to as ‘the Council’) and Forest Service NI.

The aim of the Masterplan is to present costed actions over a 5-year period which lead to –

“better co-ordination, development and delivery of the outdoor recreation product within and around the historic Downhill Demesne, including better visitor flow, enhanced visitor services and improved connectivity between different parts of the estate and nearby settlements”.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site Description

The study area is defined as the historic Downhill Demesne, as shown in Fig. 1. The historic Demesne is approximately 416 acres (168 hectares) and represents the estate grounds once owned and created by Frederick Hervey, the 4th Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry.

‘The Ossianic setting of the site is what attracted the Bishop to build here. It has all the qualities of sublimity so fashionable in the late 18th century – a feeling of being isolated and dwarfed by a vast untamed wilderness beside the ocean’s infinity’ (Terence Reeves-Smyth, 1992, pp.7).

As outlined in Section 2.2, following Bishop Hervey’s death in 1803 the Estate was altered, the demesne park enlarged and added to, and then spilt by its subsequent owners.

Today the Estate comprises the following unique features² –

- Diversity of landscape including sheltered glens (south) and exposed headland (north)
- Exquisite set of neo-classical ornamental, garden buildings – Bishop’s Gate and gothic lodge, the Lion’s Gate, Drumagully Bridge, the mausoleum and Mussenden Temple
- Other buildings typical of a demesne park – walled garden, dove cote/pigeon house, ice house, belvedere, farm yard complex, saw mill, school house, bridges, gate lodges and estate cottages

² Source: Terence Reeves-Smyth, 1992, Downhill Demesne Volume I

- Ruins of medieval church and graveyard
- Earthworks of an iron age fort (located in Downhill Forest South)
- 2 artificial lakes – Port Vantage to the north of the Black Glen and Downhill Lake in downhill Forest South
- Woodland, arable and pasture land and garden around Black Glen

Today these remnant features, depending on their location, are owned, managed and cared for by different organisations.

As such, the historic Demesne is split into four dominant land areas or ‘compartments’ which are characterised by land owner, namely –

1. Downhill Forest (north and south) – *Forest Service NI*
2. Mussenden Temple and Downhill Ruins – *National Trust*
3. The Moor – *Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council*
4. Agricultural and residential land – *private individuals/companies*

2.1.1 Downhill Forest

Downhill Forest is a small mixed woodland of 202 acres (82 hectares). The Forest is split into two blocks by the Burrenmore Road. The northern portion, referred to in this study as Downhill Forest North, is predominantly commercial conifer plantation and does not fall within the historic Demesne study area.

The southern portion, referred to as Downhill Forest South, does fall within the historic Demesne and represents what would have been the pleasure grounds of the historic estate.

Remnant features of the demesne park are still present today in the woodscape of Downhill Forest South, including but not limited to –

- Dungannon Hill – levelled off and flattened to create an open meadow
- Cascades created to southern end of Forest
- Walk paths and tracks created on the glen sides by blasting through rock, especially obvious at Dick’s Hill
- Bridges, e.g. Ballywoodock Glen

Other heritage features include one of Northern Ireland's largest (by girth) Sitka spruce³, an Early Christian Promontory Fort (also referred to as the 'rath') and an old water powered sawmill with the lade running around the small lake in the middle of the Forest, which was artificially created and originally designed as a fishpond.

2.1.2 Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins

Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins is the name given to the property owned by the National Trust within the historic Demesne. The property also includes Hezlett House. The National Trust manages the property primarily for conservation, but it is also an international visitor attraction which provides access to iconic monuments and access for outdoor recreation facilitated by a number of walking paths across the different property environments.

The property comprises the entire open parkland of the historic Demesne, in addition to the Black Glen and Port Vantage and boasts the majority of the buildings associated with the Earl Bishop's Estate, namely –

- Downhill House ruins
- Mussenden Temple
- Mausoleum
- Walled Garden
- Bishops Gate and Lions Gate
- Others – ice house, dove cote/pigeon house and belvedere, etc.

Mussenden Temple sits perched on the cliff edge above the Atlantic Ocean and, combined with the panoramic views is the iconic visitor attraction in Downhill Demesne.

2.1.3 The Moor

'The Moor' is an area of approximately 27 acres comprising coastal moorland and basalt cliff headland. It is important for its biodiversity, nesting birdlife and provides access for walking along an informal network of grass paths.

³ 6m girth measured in 1962

Although small in area and not containing any obvious remnant features of the historic Demesne, The Moor is strategically important due to its location between Castlerock village and the National Trust property, and therefore its use as an access route to and from the village into the National Trust property.

2.2 History of Ownership

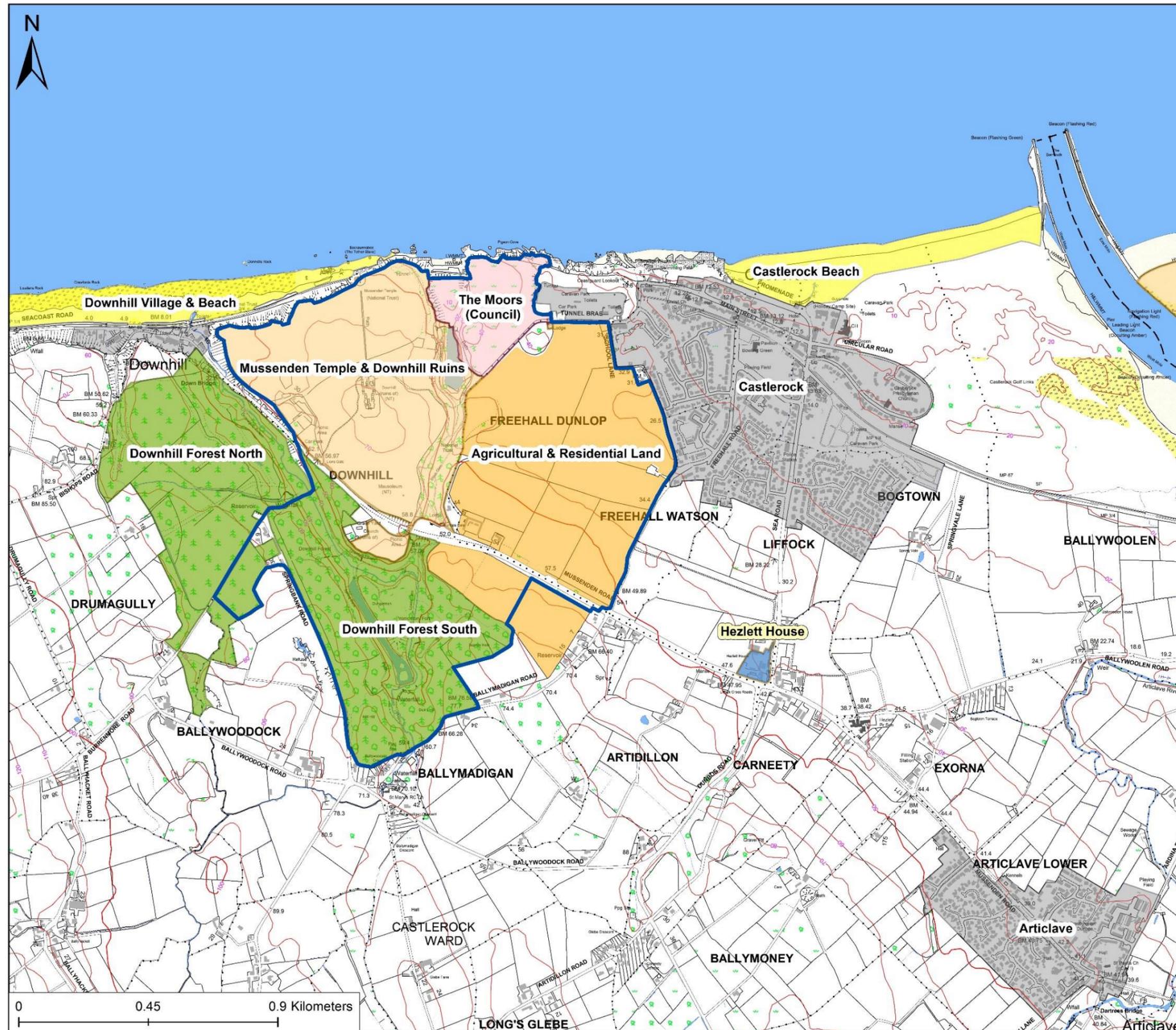
The following is a summary of ownership of Downhill Demesne –

1775-1803	Bishop Hervey, 4th Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry
1803-1948	Bishop died; House and demesne passed to Hervey-Bruce family who subsequently added the two artificial lakes and new plantations extending the demesne park
1851	House destroyed in fire
1870's	House rebuilt by John Lanyon
1939-1945	RAF occupy house and demesne
1948	Downhill Demesne starts to be split up and sold Forest Service NI purchase 210 acres ⁴
1949	National Trust acquire Mussenden Temple along with 13 acres of land along the cliffs
1962	The Trust purchase the Bishop's Gate and 18 acres of the Black Glen to the north
1980	The Trust acquired Downhill House together with the Mausoleum and its accompanying two acres
1983-1987	The National Trust acquired an additional 89 acres of the Demesne, including the land around Downhill House, the walled garden and the Lion's Gate

⁴ Source: Terence Reeves-Smyth, 1992, Downhill Demesne Volume I

Downhill Demesne Masterplan
Study Area

1:12,500



Key
 Historic Downhill Demesne

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Fig. 1: Map of study area

2.3 Natural and Built Heritage

2.3.1 Natural Heritage

Historic Downhill Demesne, in its entirety, falls within the Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown in Fig. 2. The study area also falls over two Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) –

- Eastern Binevenagh Slopes (majority)
- Coleraine Farmland (minority)

The historic Demesne does not contain any statutory environmental designations however it does border two Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI's) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) –

- SAC's - Magilligan and Bann Estuary
- ASSI's – Magilligan and Bann Estuary

As shown on Fig. 2 these designated areas cover the same extent.

Within the historic Demesne, approximately 44 acres is classified as Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). As shown on Fig. 2 this affects a significant portion of Downhill Forest South and the majority of the Black Glen and Lions Gate.

2.3.2 Built Heritage

Approximately half of the historic Demesne is designated on the 'Register for Historic, Parks, Gardens and Demesnes' comprising Downhill Forest South and the National Trust property of Mussenden Temple and Downhill Ruins.

Within the historic Demesne study area, there are also –

- Three scheduled zones (covering an enclosure and the ecclesiastical site of Dunboe)
- 33 listed buildings
- Five scheduled monuments (2 with scheduled protection)

The above is shown in Fig. 3 and listed in Appendix E.

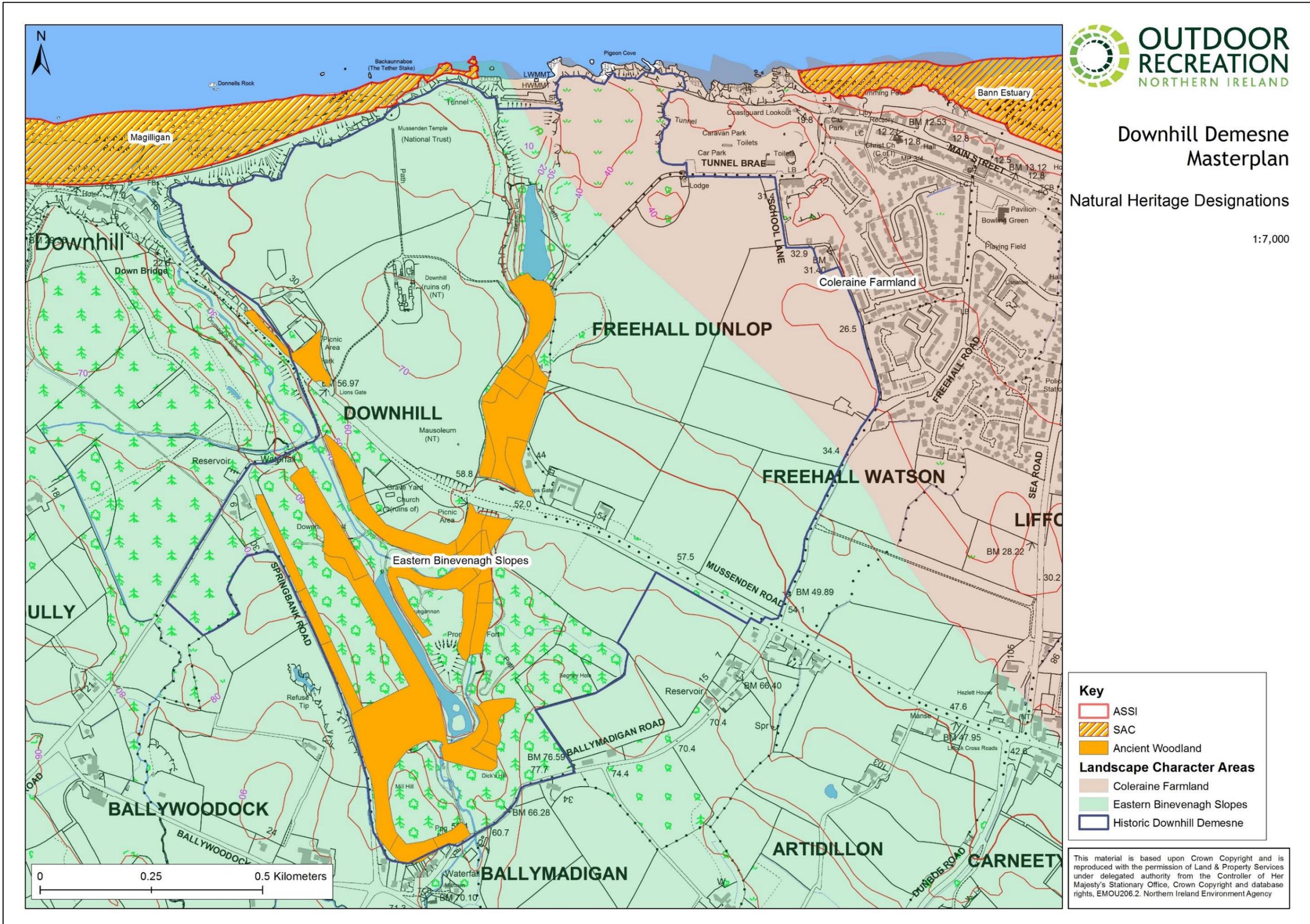


Fig. 2: Map of natural heritage designations and considerations

Downhill Demesne Masterplan

Built Heritage Designations

1:7,000

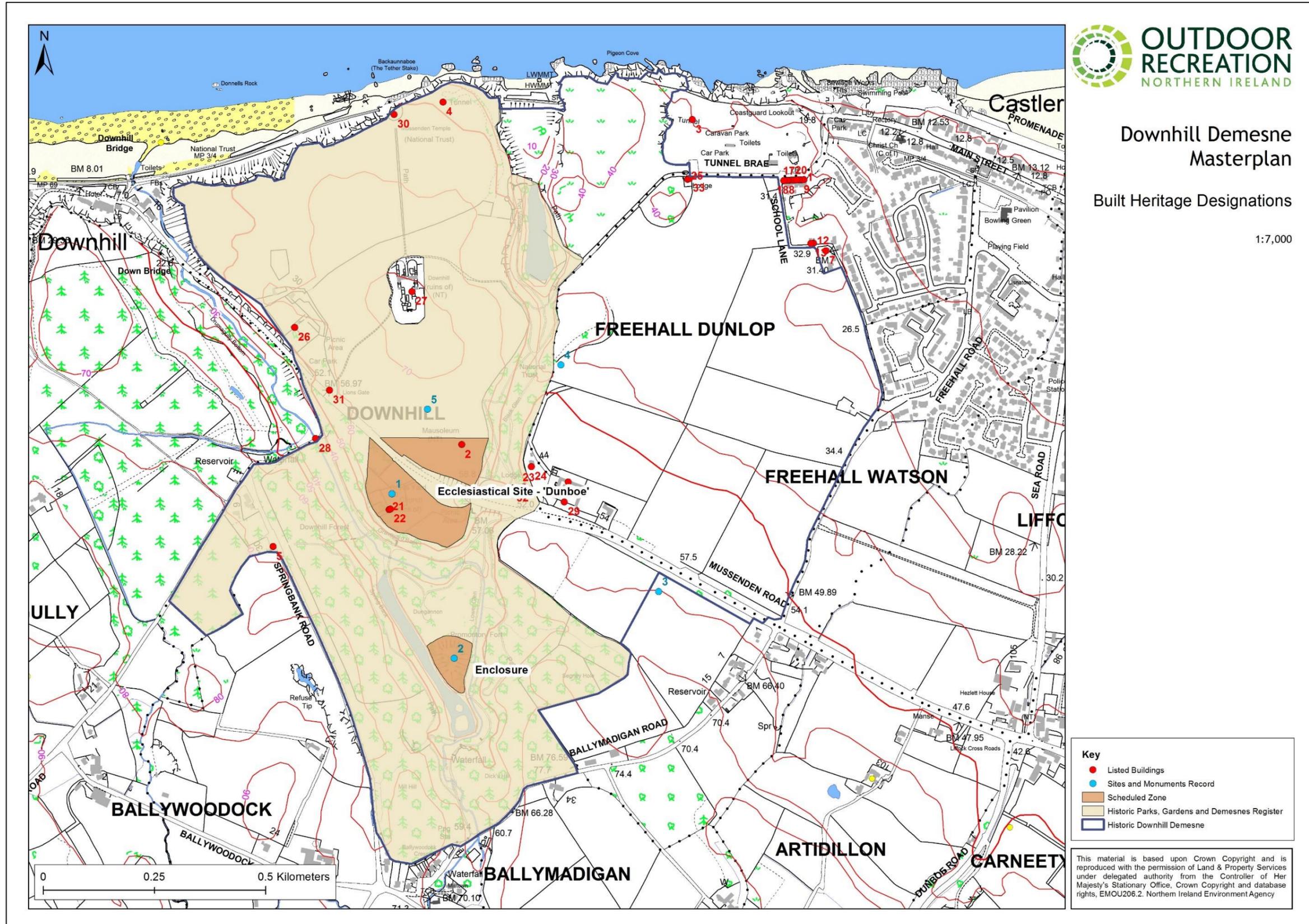


Fig. 3: Map of built heritage designations and considerations

3 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 Land Ownership and Management

The historic Downhill Demesne is comprised of land owned and managed by a variety of organisations and private individuals. The three key land owners who own and manage the majority of land are the National Trust, Forest Service NI and the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.

The remaining land which makes up the historic Demesne is owned by the Department of Infrastructure, the Presbyterian Church, the Hervey Bishop Trust and six private individuals/companies.

Table 1 accompanies Fig. 4 and show the area’s ownership and management.

Landowner/Manager	Land Area	Management Approach/Remit
National Trust	Downhill Demesne (including Mussenden Temple) & Hezlett House	Conservation International Tourist Attraction (Temple, Ruins and Gardens) Outdoor recreation
Forest Service NI	Downhill Forest	Commercial forestry and woodland management (including reservoir)
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council	Castlerock Moors (including Tunnel Brae) Burial Ground	Outdoor recreation Conservation Public amenity (Tunnel Brae car park) Historic burial ground (maintenance of access and grounds)
Dept. for Infrastructure (Dfi)	Old road laybys at Bishop’s Gate (both sides of road)	Grass area adjacent to Bishops Gate maintained by National Trust

Presbyterian Church	Graveyard	Burial ground
Hervey Bishop Trust	Hervey-Bruce Mausoleum (including Dunboe Garden – the area to rear of church ruins and burial ground)	Not currently managed
Private Individuals	Various land folios	Agriculture (arable) Private residence(s) Derelict, listed buildings

Table 1: Summary of landowners/managers within historic Downhill Demesne

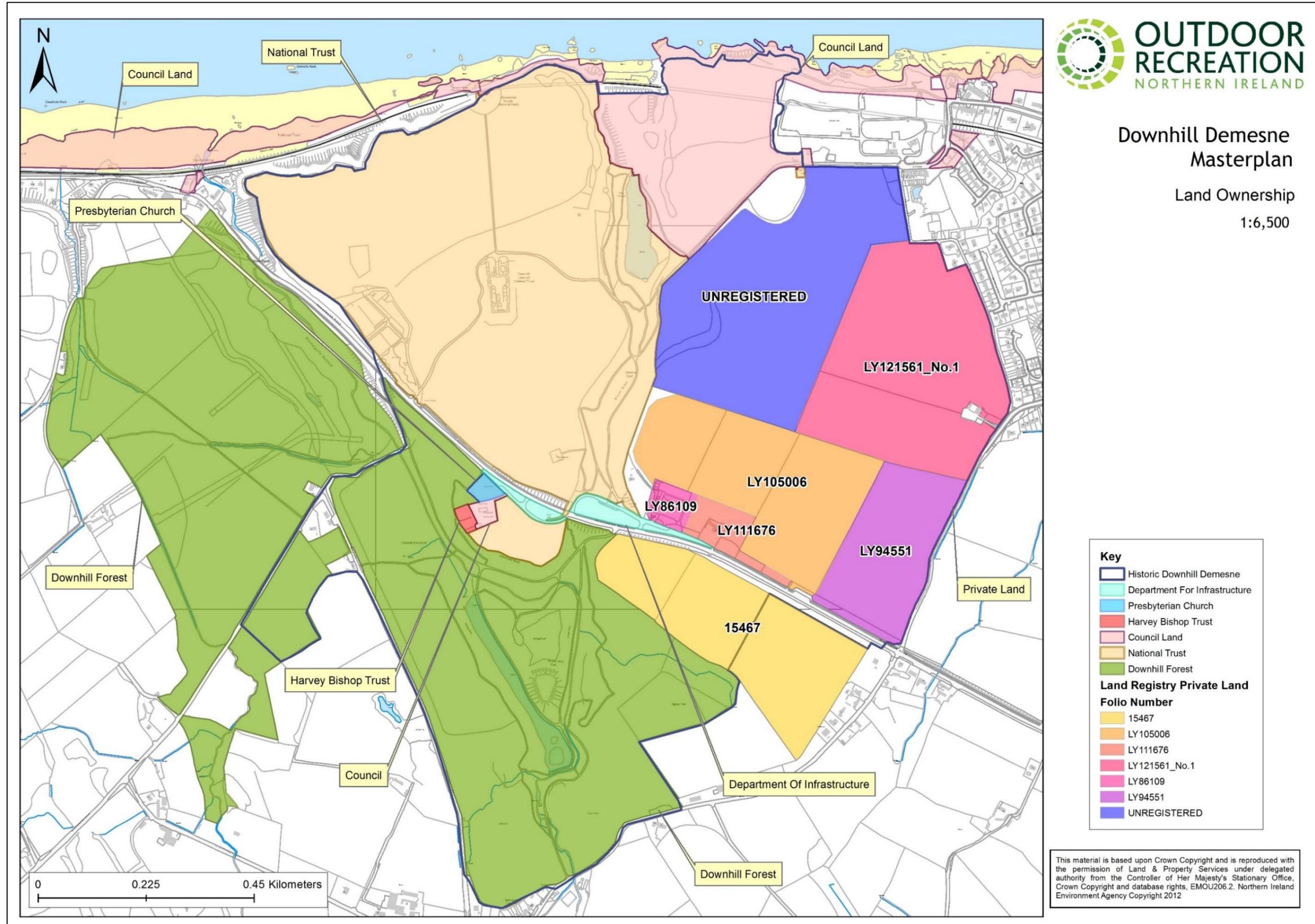


Fig. 4: Map showing land ownership

3.2 Patterns of Visitor Use

This section outlines the ways in which people visiting the historic Demesne access, use and move around the site.

3.2.1 Charging

Access to the Downhill Forest (north and south) and The Moor is free of charge.

Access to Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins, the National Trust property, follows a seasonal charging model from March through to October. Table 2 shows the three entry points into the National Trust property. At Bishop's Gate and Lion's Gate visitors are charged for entry. For the last four years (2014-2018) there was a charging booth erected at the Gate Lodge at Tunnel Brae. This was in response to the visitor management issues resulting from the Lonely Planet promoting this entry point as 'the free way' into the property. National Trust have taken the decision to trial the removal of the charge at Tunnel Brae in 2019.

Charging is also seasonal with visitors charged for entry during the peak visitor season, March to September.

There are concessions for groups. The charge is for a ticket which grants entry to both Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins and Hezlett House.

3.2.2 Access & Parking

The key entry points into the Demesne are shown in Table 2.

Compartment	Entry Point	Parking Available
Downhill Forest North	Burrenmore Road	No – but 2 cars can park informally at the gate
	Bishops Road	No
Downhill Forest South	Mussenden Road – 'main entrance'	Yes – informal layby parking
	Ballymadigan Road – 'back gate'	No – but 2-3 can park informally at the gate

	Springbank Road	No – but 2-3 cars can park informally at the gate
	Burrenmore Road	No – as above
Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins	Tunnel Brae	Yes - formal car park
	Lion's Gate	Yes - formal car park
	Bishop's Gate	Yes - informal layby parking
The Moor	Tunnel Brae	Yes – 3 formal parking areas
	Main Street (along coastal path from promenade)	No

Table 2: Access points

Consultation identified the three most popular places to park are – Lion's Gate, the Forest entrance and the 'back gate' to the Forest.

Aside from the formal entry points, Downhill Forest and Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins are very permeable sites meaning it is easy for visitors to access on foot almost anywhere by jumping over the boundary fences and walls. The Moor is the exception because it is a relatively small site bounded by a cliff on one side.

Another issue is that there is no formal parking area dedicated to Downhill Forest.

In reality there are only two formal car parks serving the historic Downhill Demesne⁵ – at Lion's Gate and Tunnel Brae to the rear of Hayes Caravan Park.

Despite there being only a few areas to formally park, consultation repeatedly identified that parking capacity is not an issue, i.e. there is adequate parking for the current users. The exception to this is National Trust event days when the roads and parking areas are congested, as anecdotal evidence suggests.

⁵ Four if you count the two amenity picnic/parking areas on Tunnel Brae too

Outdoor Recreation NI anticipates that a lack of capacity is not reported as an issue because the current visitor numbers are low enough for the majority of the year that they are adequately served by the current provision. In addition, the purpose of visit dictates where people park, meaning those visiting the National Trust property will park in Lion's Gate or Bishop's Gate and those visiting the Forest will park at the main or back entrance, primarily. The majority of those visiting the Forest tend to be local people (within 10 miles) while the majority to the National Trust property will be visitors to the area and international tourists.

On event days the National Trust does have the ability to provide overflow parking in the field above the Lion's Gate car park however the influx of cars and increased dwell time can lead to severe congestion and traffic management issues along the A2 Mussenden Road and old road laybys. This not only affects people who may wish to visit the Forest and not the event and is worsened by those visitors attending events but parking elsewhere to avoid paying in.

Another issue is coach parking - currently coaches cannot access Lion's Gate car park due to the width of the entrance pillars and so have to park at Bishop's Gate which is a significant walk away from the main features of attraction, Mussenden Temple and Downhill Ruins, particularly for those with limited mobility.

3.2.3 Patterns of Use

The online survey revealed that the majority of respondents (who live within 10 miles of the Demesne) use both the National Trust property and Downhill Forest but rarely on the same occasion.

The majority of people drive to the site and spend between 1 and 3 hours walking.

For the minority who walk to the site, or include it as part of a longer walk, they access the Demesne on foot from Castlerock, i.e. along Tunnel Brae.

3.3 Outdoor Recreation Activities

Table 3 shows the outdoor recreation activities that are known to take place in the different compartments that make up the historic Demesne. The activities identified occur both formally and informally and are shown in Fig. 5.

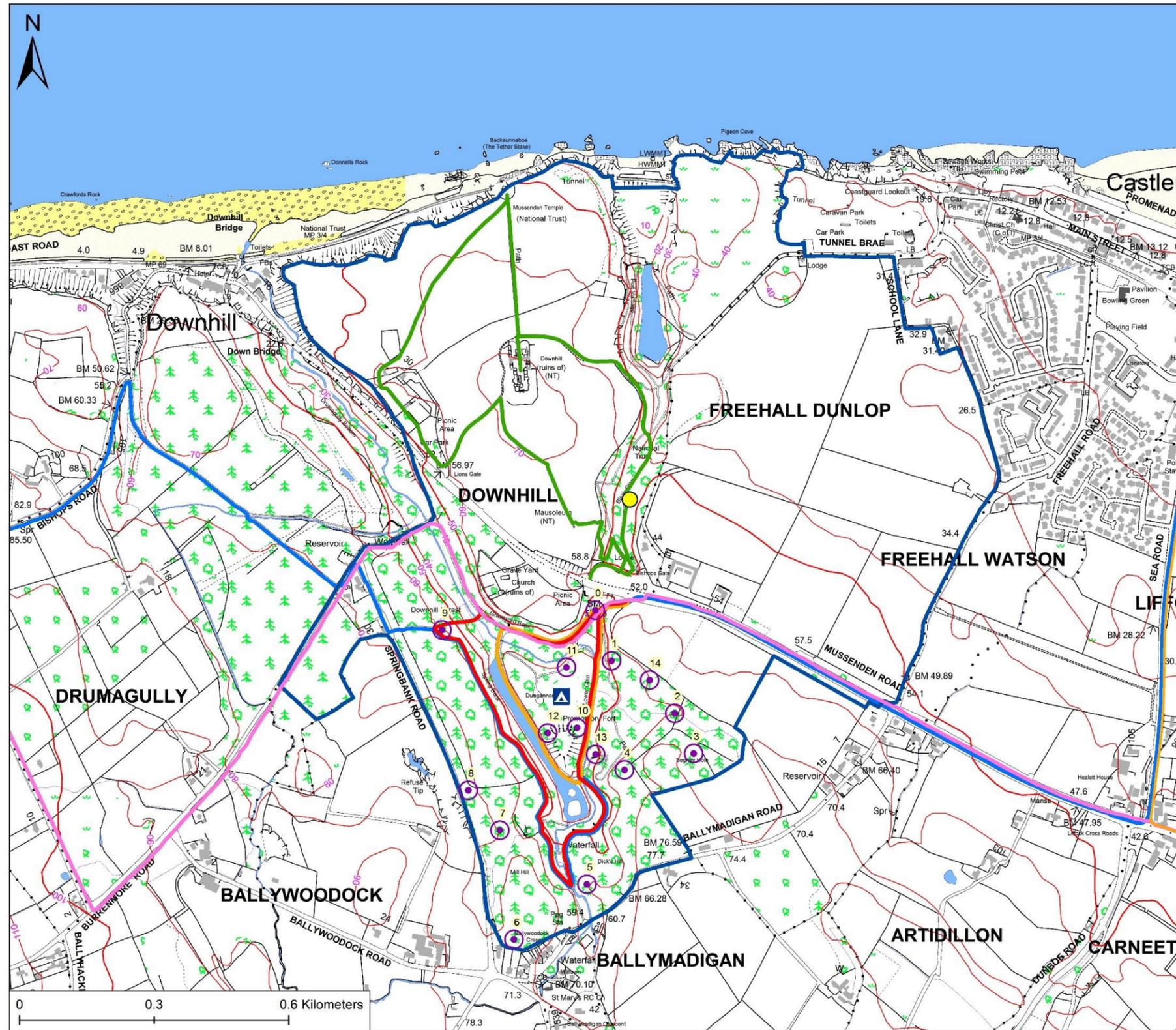
Compartment	Activity	Detail
Downhill Forest North	<i>Formal</i>	
	Walking	Ulster Way
	<i>Informal</i>	
	Walking & Running (Informal)	
	Mountain Biking (Informal)	Individual and organised group use
Downhill Forest South	<i>Formal</i>	
	Orienteering	Permanent Course – white to light green difficulty
	Walking	2 walk trails – Mill Trail (2kms) and Pond Trail (1.2km); quality short walks & Ulster Way
	Camping	Youth Campsite on Dungannon Hill licensed by NI Scout Association
	Cycling	NCN Network Route No 93
	<i>Informal</i>	
	Running	
	Mountain Biking	Individual and organised group use
	Canoeing (on Lake)	Lake used occasionally in the past
	Geocaching	
Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins	<i>Formal</i>	Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins (3kms)
	Walking	– quality short walk
	Natural Play	
	<i>Informal</i>	

	Orienteering Geocaching Running Horse-riding	Before 9am and after 7pm
The Moor	<i>Informal</i> Walking	A network of looped grass paths is maintained (mown) by Council

Table 3: Current outdoor recreation activities

Downhill Demesne Masterplan
Current Outdoor Recreational Activities

1:8,000



Key

- Bishops Gate Natural Play Area
- Downhill Forest Orienteering Course
- Youth Campsite - Dungannon Hill
- Mussenden Temple and Downhill Demesne
- Downhill Forest - Mill Trail
- Downhill Forest - Pond Trail
- Ulster Way
- NCN 93
- Historic Downhill Demesne

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Fig. 5: Map of current outdoor recreation activities

3.4 Visitor Services & Facilities

Table 4 below provides an outline of current Visitor Facilities within the historic Demesne and the immediate settlements of Downhill, Castlerock and Articlave. Numerous additional facilities are available in Coleraine (7 miles) and the tourist hubs of Portstewart (12 miles) and Portrush (14 miles).

Car Parking	
Formal Car Parking	<p>There are five formal car parks within or surrounding Downhill Demesne:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunnel Brae Car Park and Viewpoint, Castlerock • Black Glen Car Park, Castlerock • Promenade Car Park, Castlerock • Lion’s Gate (National Trust Operated) • Downhill Bridge, Downhill Beach <p>Additionally, there are numerous on-street parking sites within Castlerock.</p>
Informal Car Parking	<p>To access Downhill Forest and Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins visitors currently park informally at the roadside, in laybys and picnic areas on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mussenden Road • Springbank Road • Ballymadigan Road • Burrenmore Road (aka the ‘back entrance’ into the Forest)
Public Toilets	
Public Toilets	<p>Public Toilets are available at two sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promenade, Castlerock • Downhill Bridge <p>Additional toilet facilities are available within the National Trust site of Downhill Ruins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lion’s Gate • Bishop’s Gate • Hezlett House

	There are currently no public toilets within, or accessible from, Downhill Forest.
Visitor Information	
Castlerock	<p>Within the study area there is one Visitor Information Centre:</p> <p><i>Community & Visitor Information Centre, 2a Circular Road, Castlerock, BT51 4XA</i></p> <p>The Centre aims to act as a village hub providing information and services for both residents and visitors. Current opening times are Monday – Saturday 10.00am – 4.00pm.</p> <p>The Centre is staffed by volunteers and holds the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus, train and ferry timetables • Leaflets and books about the Causeway Coast and the rest of Northern Ireland • What’s on Guides • Leaflets and books about Castlerock history including C.S.Lewis and Bishop Hervey • Community health, welfare and security leaflets
Downhill	The National Trust holds some visitor literature on-site at Downhill Demesne and Hezlett House. However seasonal opening hours affect access to the service provided.
Public Transport	
Train Network	<p>Castlerock Station is the only train station located within the study area.</p> <p>From Mondays to Saturdays there is an hourly service towards Derry~Londonderry or Belfast Great Victoria Street operated by Northern Ireland Railways.</p> <p>There are six services operated on a Sunday. The station serves the villages of Castlerock, Articlave, Downhill and surrounding hamlets.</p>

<p>Bus Network</p>	<p>Ulsterbus No. 134 / 134a between Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry directly services the Demesne.</p> <p>There are bus stops in Castlerock from which it is easy to access the sites on foot and two bus stops service the entrances to the National Trust Property and the Forest on Mussenden Road:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downhill Demesne Lion’s Gate Stop – X 093484 / Y 595955 • Downhill Demesne Bishop’s Gate Stop – X 093996 / Y 595571 • Castle Walk, Castlerock – X 095178 / Y 595973 • Downhill Bridge – X 093099 / Y 596369 <p>The bus stops listed provide direct access to the study area. In addition, there are bus stops throughout the wider area that link to Castlerock and Coleraine.</p>
<p>Cycle Network</p>	<p>NCN route 93 runs past Downhill Demesne and through Downhill Forest</p>
<p>Accommodation</p>	
<p>Overview</p>	<p>There are no hotels within the study area or within the immediate vicinity.</p> <p>There are multiple hotels available to visitors slightly further afield, predominantly in Portstewart, Portrush, Coleraine and Limavady.</p> <p>Most of the local accommodation is self-catering, of which there are numerous options.</p>
<p>Bed & Breakfast</p>	<p>There are currently three bed and breakfast providers within the local area –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carneety House, 120 Mussenden Rd, Castlerock, BT51 4TX • Hegarty’s Corner, 33 Glebe Rd, Castlerock, BT51 4SW • Keeragh Lodge, 59 Altikeeragh Rd, Castlerock, BT51 4SR <p>There are also many informal AirBnB’s available as well as bed and breakfast options in Portstewart, Portrush and Coleraine.</p>
<p>Caravan Parks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castlerock Holiday Park, 24 Sea Road, Castlerock, BT51 4TN • Hayes Caravan Park, Cliff Top, Castlerock, BT51 4RG

Self-Catering	<p>The self-catering options below are those authenticated by Tripadvisor, Booking.com and HomeAway.co.uk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tara Lodge, 2 Belvedere Ave, Castlerock, BT51 4XW • The Links Apartment, 21 Innis Ct, Castlerock, BT51 4XA • 48 Sea Road, Castlerock, BT51 4TW • Carraig Lodge, 16 Belvedere Park, Castlerock, BT51 4XW • Castleshaw Holiday Home, 30 Liffock Park, Castlerock, BT51 4DG • Oceanview Retreat, Apt 9 Tunnel Brae Court Main Street, Castlerock, BT51 4EW • The Studio Castlerock, 17a Belvedere Park Castlerock, BT51 4XW • Apostle Cottage, 7 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock, BT51 4RU • 13 Oceanview, Castlerock, BT51 4QZ • Railway Cottage, Seacourt Mews, Castlerock, BT51 4LG • Rose Cottage, 45 Belvedere Park, Castlerock, BT51 4XW • Downhill Beachhouse, Mussenden Rd, Castlerock, BT51 4RP • Sandybank Downhill, 864 Sea Coast Rd, Castlerock, BT51 4SD • Seaside Cottage, 4 Downhill Cottages, Castlerock BT51 4RP • Carrick, 786 Seacoast Road, Downhill BT51 4SD • Coastal View House, 52 Burrenmore Road, Castlerock BT51 4SG
Food	
Castlerock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crusoes Coffee Shop, 29 Sea Road, Castlerock, BT51 4TN • Coffee Hut, 42 Main Street, Castlerock, BT51 4RA • The Railway Diner, 26 Sea Road, Castlerock, BT51 4TN • Bertha’s Bar, 6 Sea Rd, Castlerock, Coleraine BT51 4RE • Ruth’s Bakery • Meatbox* –24 Sea Road, Castlerock, BT51 4TN <p>*Meatbox is a seasonal pop-up offering gourmet burgers. Summer only.</p>
Downhill and Surrounding area	<p>Al’s Coffee, Lion’s Gate (NT entrance) 11-15 Mussenden Rd, BT51 4SB – <i>Commercial operator on National Trust site</i></p>

	The Hidden Café, 5 Springbank Rd, Castlerock, Coleraine BT51 4RU – <i>this is currently up for sale</i>
Articlave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Tavern, 24 St Pauls Rd, Articlave, BT51 4UW • Sunshine Chinese Food, 40 Ardina Rd, Articlave, BT51 4UF • Chequers Chip Shop, 1 Sconce Rd, Articlave, BT51 4UR

Table 4: Current visitor services and facilities

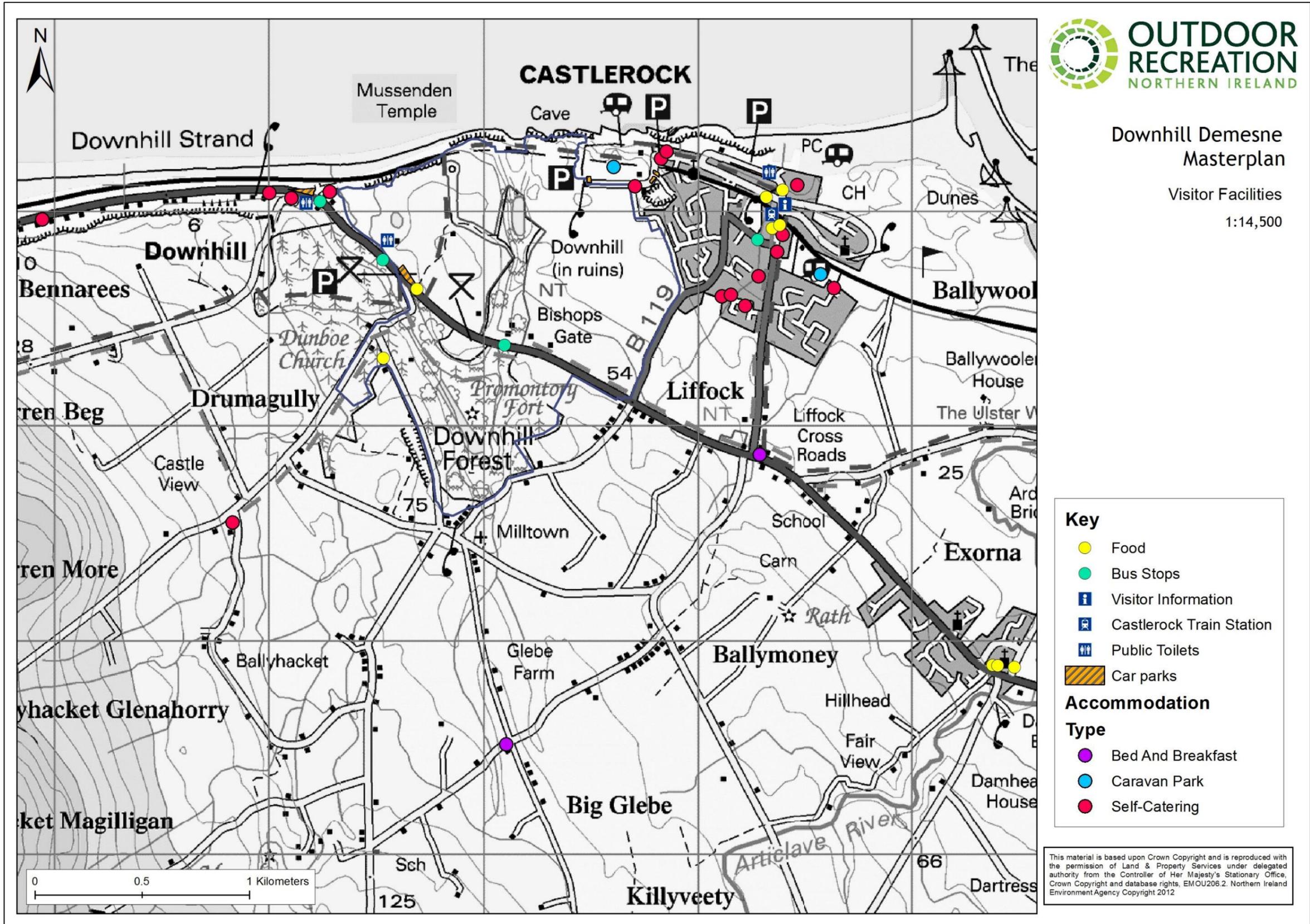


Fig. 6: Map showing visitor services and facilities

3.5 Condition Survey

3.5.1 Downhill Forest

The majority of recreational activity takes place in Downhill Forest South. Except for the Ulster Way which transects Downhill Forest North there are no formal activities that take place. The condition of Downhill Forest North reflects this.

Downhill Forest South is a beautiful woodland, it forms parts of the overall 'pleasure grounds' of the historic Demesne with many of the remnant features relating to habitation still present and visible in the landscape, e.g. sawmill, waterfall, rath, etc. The woodland and lake are also a haven for birds, wildlife and a variety of plant species, rare and protected. All together the Forest is a highly valuable asset and historically important site.

3.5.1.1 Heritage Features

There are a number of key heritage features in Downhill Forest South including but not limited to –

- Sawmill, water wheel and mill race
- Promontory Fort, Dungannon Hill
- Waterfall/Cascade features

As noted above some features are visible while others lie undiscovered. These features are not actively maintained by Forest Service NI. They are in varying states of poor, or deteriorating condition, overgrown with vegetation and inaccessible.



Fig. 7: Sawmill (left) and waterfall (right) in Downhill Forest

3.5.1.2 Trails

Despite two waymarked paths and a myriad of informal paths, the Forest today is primarily managed for its timber, as a commercial tree crop – its condition and maintenance reflect this.

The formal trails are compacted gravel paths which are accessible and for the most part in good condition. At all times of the year however the trails can be wet and muddy.



Fig. 8: Lake Trail (left) and steps (right) in Downhill Forest

The formal trail network is very small in extent, approximately 2.5km in total, despite the portion of forest area available. The informal trails demonstrate the potential trail network the forest can support using a mixture of existing trail and formalisation of informal desire lines developed over historical paths and roads.

3.5.1.3 Infrastructure

The infrastructure along the trails, such as steps and bridges, although accessible are not maintained and would need replaced to significantly improve accessibility and safety.

There is a lack of bins and bench seating for visitors to use and enjoy.

Orienteering posts are present across the Forest and generally are in good condition.

There are pedestrian kissing gates at the main entry points into the forest which are fit for purpose but not universally accessible. The entrance and sense of welcome is poor at all formal and informal entry points which detracts from the visitor experience.

3.5.1.4 Signage

Signage is present in Downhill Forest South in the form of trail waymarking, forest name signs, an orientation map/panel at the main entrance and warning/safety signs. There is no interpretation present.

Wooden waymarker posts with routed coloured arrows are used to denote trail direction. The waymarkers range in present to not present, good condition to poor condition.

The name signs at arrival/entry point are functional and visible but uninspiring.

The orientation panel is contained within wooden housing, and although present and in good condition the information on the panel does not relate easily to the trails on the ground and could be confusing for new visitors.

Although functional, the frequency and style of the warning and safety signage has a negative effect on the visitor experience.

Overall the signage across the site would benefit from an upgrade to improve the aesthetic quality and subsequent visitor experience.

3.5.2 The Moor

The Moor is an area of coastal moorland owned and managed by the Council but with no formal activities or facilities provided. The site is characterised by its dramatic headland and panoramic views of the surrounding area.



Fig. 9: Photos showing grass paths at (left) and views (right) from The Moor

The condition of the site is as expected of an area which is informally used. In its duty to provide public access for recreation the Council maintain the grass paths by mowing several times a year. The area in general is well drained but in winter months the paths can get very muddy and lead to erosion, as shown in Fig. 10.

In 2018 Council applied for £40,000 from the Landscape Partnership Scheme for the 'Moors of Castlerock' project which includes funding for trail upgrade and fencing to facilitate conservation grazing. At the time of writing this report, funding had not been secured. Under this project the majority of the grass trails would be retained but steeper sections of slopes require stone stepping/pitching to alleviate erosion and create a more sustainable, robust trail surface.

The only signage present in The Moor is safety signage warning users of the 'Danger – Cliff Edge' which shows evidence of regular maintenance.

Lastly, there is no sense of arrival or visitor welcome at the Tunnel Brae entrance and car park – see Fig. 10. The pedestrian gate is the physical entry point and would benefit from a name sign, panel or archway to impress on users that they have arrived, this is where their experience starts and they are welcome.



Fig. 10: Photos showing path condition (left) and sense of arrival (right) at The Moor

3.5.3 Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins

The National Trust property is clearly defined from the rest of the compartments within the Demesne by its comparably better condition.

3.5.3.1 Trails

The trails in Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins property are a mixture of compacted gravel, loose stone chip and grass paths. The trails are in excellent condition and change in type to suit the character of the landscape – a defining characteristic of sustainable trails. The condition survey however did reveal the potential to develop more accessible paths at the site, increase the extent to incorporate more of the property and waymark/name the different trails to best fit the characteristic landscape, aiding visitors to discover the landscape and tailor their visit, spending longer onsite.



Fig. 11: Gravel trails (left) and grass paths (right) at Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins

3.5.3.2 Signage

Signage is present at the property, in the form of –

- Entrance/welcome/property name signs
- Interpretation
- Orientation waymarking

A condition survey revealed the following –

- There are too many signs at Lion’s Gate, which are unnecessary and serve to distract the visitor
- Interpretation relates to Causeway Coastal Route signage which is beginning to look old and tired
- There is a lack of interpretation which coherently tells the story of Downhill Demesne in a coordinated and related way
- Lack of signage identifying features of interest in the Demesne, and particularly gardens

- Trails are not waymarked, rather the direction to other areas, features are signed

The online survey revealed that visitors would like to see more historical information and interpretation.



Fig. 12: Signage at Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins

3.5.3.3 Heritage Features & Attractions

Compared to Downhill Forest the fabric of the old buildings and ruins are preserved to an excellent standard, in terms of quality and safety with visitors enjoying access to almost all of the property.

Although maintained to a high standard, some of the features are underplayed in terms of visitor experience, for example the gardens, the belvedere, the walled garden – these features could be developed as attractions in their own right rather than supporting acts to Mussenden Temple. The Walled Garden and the wider ‘pleasure grounds’ are a particularly valuable asset as a major garden destination in the North West is lacking – the closest is Benvardin or Glenarm Castle.

3.5.3.4 Visitor Services & Facilities

National Trust provide the following visitor services –

At Bishop’s Gate –

- Second hand book shop, toilets (and visitor information in the peak season)

At Lion’s Gate –

- Car parking

- Toilets
- Coffee shop, i.e. Al's Coffee (third party provider)
- Visitor information (via payment booth on entry)

While these services are important, they are limited in capacity especially during busy periods and potential for growth within the current footprint is confined. As explained in Section 3.6.2 Downhill Demesne is an important stop and visitor attraction on the Causeway Coastal Route and for visitors spilling over from the Wild Atlantic Way, therefore the importance of this site for future growth cannot be undervalued. Currently, the lack of facilities does not adequately serve visitors to Downhill Demesne or the wider Binevenagh destination.

There is potential to develop a more extensive range of visitor services and facilities with greater capacity that would serve not just the National Trust property but the wider historic Demesne and Binevenagh area. This would significantly improve the visitor experience and potentially provide other sources of income for the site.

The online survey noted the following considerations for development –

- Bigger car park
- Toilets closer to the car park
- More picnic areas
- Better disabled access
- Café/coffee shop/small visitor centre

3.6 Connectivity

3.6.1 *Within Historic Downhill Demesne*

Each compartment within the Demesne is managed by a separate body, each with their own management plan or objectives, priorities and set of available resources, i.e. staff and financial support. Although the priorities of each do not compete, each compartment is managed in isolation with no co-ordination or cross-over. To date there has been no reason, or causal factor, to manage in a holistic way.

This is most clearly evident in the condition of the individual compartments and its facilities, e.g. signage, trails, etc.

In terms of connectivity, other than proximity, the historic Demesne 'Historic Parks' designation and the fact that it was at one time one estate, there is nothing that connects the multiple compartments within the Demesne, management, product or experience related. Nor is there any connection between the Demesne and the surrounding nearby settlements, beaches and public transport network.

That said, fieldwork has shown that there is significant potential for the Demesne to be better connected within itself and with the surrounding area.

3.6.2 Links to the Surrounding Area

Historic Downhill Demesne is a signature stop on the Causeway Coastal Route (CCR) driving trail. The CCR finishes at Magilligan where it meets the Wild Atlantic Way – an international tourism product. As such historic Downhill Demesne is strategically placed to take advantage of visitors exploring both these iconic driving routes.

However, fieldwork and consultation identified that despite its location, nestled amongst Castlerock and Downhill villages and beaches, and directly adjacent to the main A2 Coast Road, historic Downhill Demesne has the potential to be significantly better connected to its surroundings, both physically and psychologically.

There are several factors currently preventing this –

- **Physical disconnection** – caused by roads (A2 and Burrenmore Road transecting parts of the Demesne, and the necessity of having to walk along some roads to link to other parts of the Demesne and surround facilities/villages, e.g. to Downhill Beach and Articlave village)
- **Management** – since the late 1940's the historic Demesne has been split up and owned by different organisations with different management approaches, objectives and resources resulting in a Demesne which is managed in an un-coordinated way
 - One example of this is charging, where entry to one part of the Demesne is charged and the remainder is not
- **Visitor information and site promotion** – there is little or no information which shows or promotes the historic Demesne as one entity and how visitors can access the different areas (resulting from different and management organisations and approaches), either through waymarking, orientation maps, leaflets or information gathered

The above is not a critique of any of the management organisations but simply a statement of observation. To date there has not been a drive to develop and manage the historic Demesne in a more co-ordinated way but the above issues have been identified so that they may be addressed to achieve a more co-ordinated management approach.

3.6.2.1 Charging

One factor affecting connectivity is charging. Entry to most of the historic Demesne free while access to the National Trust property is charged. That said, there are alternative ways to access the National Trust property for free –

- Walk in from the Castlerock side via Tunnel Brae - the National Trust are trialling the removal of the charging booth here in 2019)
- Via Lions Gate in early morning and late afternoon/evening all year round
- All day during outside of peak season
- Volunteering sessions
- For members
- Open days

Although there are various ways to access the National Trust property for free, its location – sandwiched between sites which are all free of charge, all the time throughout the year – could prevent the free flow and movement of visitors throughout the entirety of the historic Demesne in the future (under recommended model that National trust take on management for Downhill Forest).

3.6.2.2 Public Transport

In terms of public transport, the Demesne is relatively well served by the following both train and bus networks. Castlerock Train Station is ideally located in the village with easy access to Tunnel Brae. The issue however is that this is not promoted, nor is it signposted on the ground.

There are a number of bus stops on the A2 Mussenden Road picking up and dropping off directly beside the entry points to the historic Downhill Demesne. Again, communication and promotion of this is poor and for visitors to the area, the car remains the primary mode of transport.

Other than better promotion and communication of public transport links, there is an opportunity to introduce a joint ticket for combining the train/bus journey with the current entry charge into the historic Demesne.

In addition to public transport, visitors have the potential to walk or cycle to the Demesne using the network or walk and cycle paths, which is both established and developing.

3.6.2.3 Walk and Cycle Trails

To and From Villages

Historic Downhill Demesne is on the doorstep of Castlerock village. Visitors have the following options to access the Demesne on foot by –

- Walking from Tunnel Brae
- Walking from the promenade over The Moor and connect to Tunnel Brae
- Walking along Freehall Road (on road) and A2 Mussenden Road (shared foot and cycle path) – the route of the Ulster Way
- Cycling the NCN Route 93

Articlave village is more disconnected simply as a result of its distance from the Demesne, approximately two miles. Direct access is by walking or cycling along the shared foot and cycle path along the A2 Mussenden Road.

To and From Beaches

Castlerock Beach is accessible via the routes described above, meaning it is possible to walk from the Demesne to Castlerock Beach predominantly along a coastal path and promenade.

On the other hand, there is no entirely off-road route between the Demesne and Downhill Beach – access is by walking along the footpath along the A2 Mussenden Road which stops approximately 50m from the beach. Where the path comes to an end, there is a dangerous bend in the road making this a significant safety hazard.

Wider Links to Surrounding Walk & Cycle Trails

Fig. 13 shows how historic Downhill Demesne fits like a jigsaw piece into the network of surrounding walk trails, both short and long distance.

The Ulster Way and International Appalachian Trail (IAT) are existing walk trails which could be developed (by adding 'spurs' in Downhill Demesne) to enhance the existing offer and experience.

At the time of writing this report, there are also plans being led by the LPS to explore the feasibility of the following walk trails –

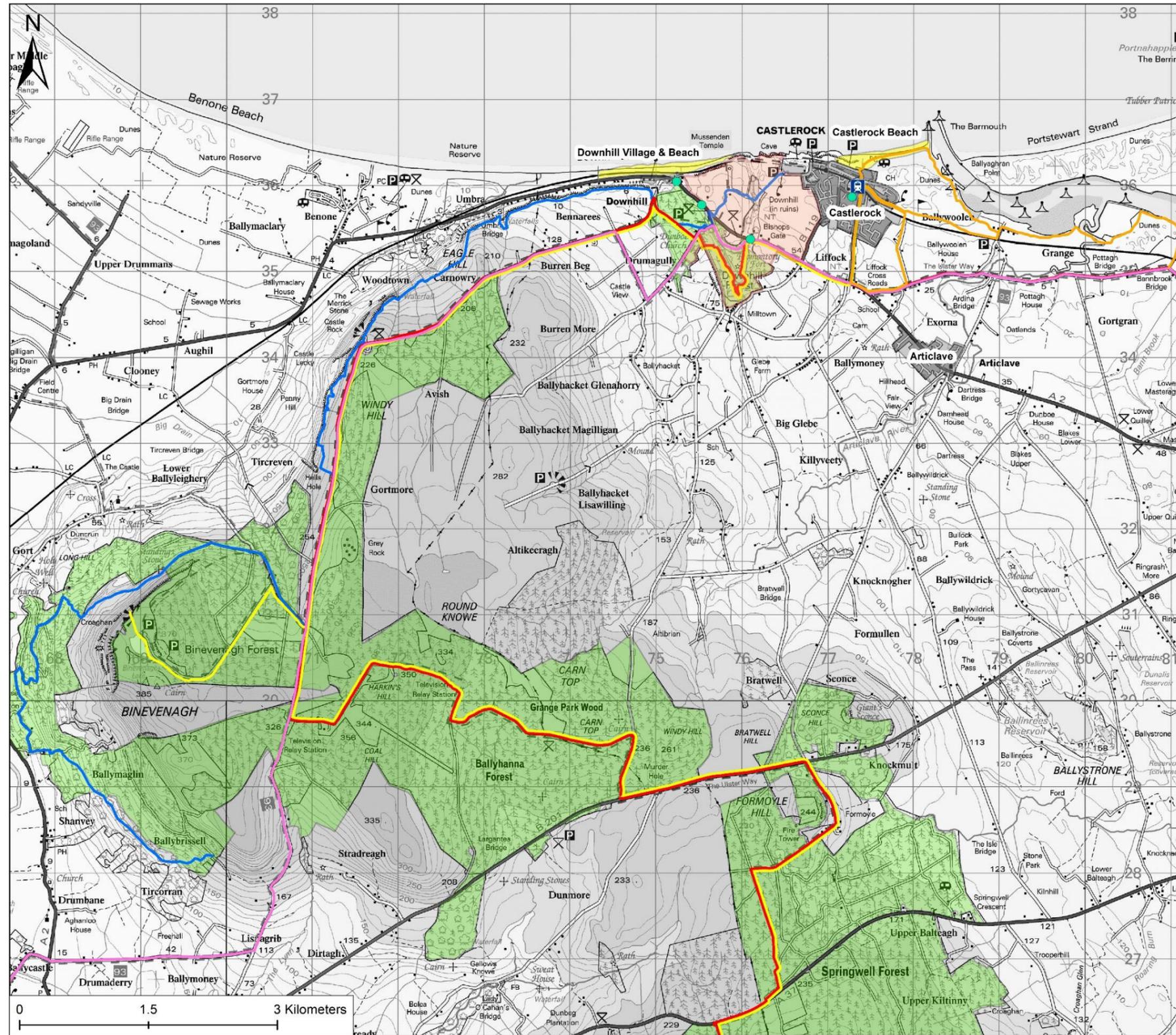
- Castlerock Community Trails
- Aghanloo to Castlerock Trail⁶

If developed, the above trails would directly link to the historic Demesne and create true connectivity between the Demesne and the wider Binevenagh area. In addition, Downhill and Castlerock would have adequate product to be promoted as a quality, short-holiday walking destination on the North Coast, supported by local services and facilities, including accommodation, hospitality, public transport, etc.

⁶ Both of these projects were identified and proposed for development in the 'Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Outdoor Recreation Strategy', 2017, Outdoor Recreation NI

**Downhill Demesne
Masterplan**
Connectivity & Links
To Surrounding Areas

1:42,000



Key

-  Bus Stops
-  Castlerock Train Station
-  Castlerock Community Trail
-  Aghanloo Wood to Castlerock Trail
-  Ulster Way
-  IAT
-  NCN 93
-  Beaches
-  Settlements
-  Forest Service NI
-  Historic Downhill Demesne

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Fig. 13: Map showing connectivity and links to surrounding areas

4 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

4.1 Pre-Requisites

Before any development can take place, a new management structure must be put in place.

Forest Service NI currently own and manage Downhill Forest. Forest Service NI is aware that Downhill Forest delivers significant recreational and social benefits and it acknowledges the potential exists for further development facilitated by working with other recreational and tourism providers. This partnership approach has been successful in delivering many new and improved recreation and tourism facilities in forests right across Northern Ireland. It also has the added benefit that improved developments are consistent with local and regional recreation and tourism priorities, i.e. part of a more strategic development plan for the area.

Forest Service NI will consider proposals for a partnership agreement whereby the licensee develops, manages and maintains the outdoor recreation product and associated facilities within Downhill Forest.

At present this could be Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and/or the National Trust.

Consultation has indicated that the local community and businesses feel strongly that regardless of which organisation takes on the management of outdoor recreation, the current access arrangements to Downhill Forest (north and south) must be maintained.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has indicated that while it has an interest in Downhill Forest and the wider Demesne, it is not part of the Council's strategic tourism or development plans to take over the Forest in its entirety, despite perceived community expectation. Council remains committed however to developing the Ulster Way and IAT. It identifies that Downhill Forest North represents an opportunity to enhance the current Ulster Way offering by creating a circular spur within Downhill Forest North only.

The Council also remains committed to maintaining and securing public access (under its statutory duty) for outdoor recreation, is supportive of the development of the historic Demesne in its entirety and welcomes opportunities to work in partnership with the National Trust and other organisations in the area.

The National Trust has expressed a strong interest in managing outdoor recreation and associated facilities within Downhill Forest South in the future, dependent on resources and a sustainable Development and Management Plan. Sympathetic to concerns raised by the local community throughout the consultation process, National Trust has stated that if it was to take on the

responsibility for managing outdoor recreation within the Forest, the current access arrangements within the Forest would be maintained.

For the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS to invest in, and Forest Service NI to permit the development of outdoor recreation and associated facilities within Downhill Forest (north and south) there must be an organisation in place prepared to lead on the development and subsequently take on the management, maintenance and insurance of the developed product and facilities. Based on consultation to date it is the view of the LPS and Outdoor Recreation NI that –

- The National Trust is best placed at present with the expertise and potential to seek the resources necessary to manage and maintain the outdoor recreation opportunities within Downhill Forest South
- The Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council is best placed at present to develop a circular walk trail within Downhill Forest North as a spur off the Ulster Way which consequently compliments the wider Downhill Forest offering and experience

It is also the view of the LPS and ORNI that the current access arrangements for visitors should be protected in any partnership agreement between Forest Service NI and the relevant licensee. This would not preclude any future management body for charging for additional, commercial services which they may offer within Downhill Forest which are in addition to the basic outdoor recreation product, e.g. retail, catering, guided walks, access to heritage features, etc.

4.2 Context

The proposals recommended in this report are influenced by a number of factors and projects which are happening in the background alongside this Masterplan. As such the following provide a context for the proposals made in this report –

- The Council has applied to the LPS for ‘The Moors of Castlerock’ project. This involves trail upgrade and fencing for conservation grazing (cattle) which will improve the quality of trails and enhance the biodiversity and environmental quality.
- National Trust is undertaking its own, internal Masterplan over the next two years
- **Based on the above, it is strongly recommended that the initial allocation of funding (£100k) is focused on Downhill Forest North and South and match funded with investment from the relevant delivery partners – here the funding will have the greatest impact and is needed to bring the Forest up to at least the same standard as Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins (NT).**

- An application for funding has been made to the LPS for the ‘Lost Gardens of Dunboe’ project which involves the restoration of the ornamental gardens adjacent to the Hervey-Bruce Mausoleum and reinstatement of the trail that links the burial grounds (and the Forest in general) to Lion’s Gate

4.3 Proposals

This section explains and provides further detail on the proposals recommended in this Masterplan which are considered a priority. Proposals which are contained in the Action Plans which contribute to the achievement of the Masterplan aim but are self-explanatory, are not explained in more detail here.

4.3.1 Management

The critical factor that will ultimately influence the development of the historic Demesne is management. The historic Demesne is not fulfilling its potential, some parts of the landscape and environment are undersold and neglected respectively, and the visitor experience is underdeveloped as a result of an uncoordinated approach to management of the historic Demesne.

The following proposals are recommended leading to a new management approach for the historic Demesne –

- **Partnership agreement between Forest Service NI, National Trust and the Council**

This agreement would outline the roles and responsibilities of each organisation responsible for public access and management of the Demesne parts. It would also set out shared management objectives, such as maintaining current access arrangements to the Forest, signage strategy, interpretation framework, etc.

- **National Trust take over management of Downhill Forest (South only)**

This is recommended on the condition that the current access arrangements to the Forest are maintained. If National Trust were to take over management of Downhill Forest South, the permeability of the site would likely lead to more visitor management issues in terms of charging. It is therefore recommended that the National Trust consider alternative means of income generation for the site.

- **Council develop Downhill Forest North as a spur off the Ulster Way**

To improve the walking product and visitor experience it is recommended that Council take on a licence agreement with Forest Service NI to develop, manage and maintain a looped walk trail in Downhill Forest North, as a spur off the existing Ulster Way. This is recommended to ensure the Demesne is developed to its full potential and that any walking product complements development in Downhill Forest South.

- **Creation of a 'Friends of Downhill' group**

This is recommended to provide a platform for open dialogue, partnership working and to improve communications between the local community, National Trust, Council and Forest Service NI. The group would have representation from all land owners and managers, local community, businesses, special interest groups and other deemed relevant persons/groups. It would serve the following functions –

- Mechanism for engaging and communicating with local community
- Contributing to management objectives of the total Demesne
- Resource for local volunteers, e.g. gardens, guided tours, events, etc.
- Collection of oral histories of Demesne, key characters and stories
- Fundraising

4.3.2 Access & Parking

The following recommendations are made in relation to the parking arrangements –

- **Existing car parking areas are redesigned and re-configured to increase capacity and improve connectivity within the Demesne**

If the Demesne is to be developed the problems associated with informal parking could be made worse by two things –

1. The volume of visitors increasing (and the online survey shows 80% of people use their car) and the subsequent rise in demand and informal parking where capacity is reached
2. More things to do means the dwell time will increase meaning there is less capacity for car turnover; people are spending longer meaning even less capacity

In line with future development these anticipated parking issues should be addressed by

–

- Formalising the existing parking areas to –
 - Create more parking space
 - Facilitate more efficient use of the existing space (getting as many cars parked as possible)

The formalisation of car parking may help to alleviate the issue arising from informal car parking at the forest entrances, however further consultation with Transport NI, Forest Service NI, National Trust and Council is needed in the short term to identify possible solutions.

Alongside the formalisation of parking, as a priority it is strongly recommended that public transport is encouraged and facilitated as the primary means of transport to the site. Currently 15% of survey respondents said they walk to the Demesne from local communities. From Castlerock Train Station, the path along Main Street to Tunnel Brae and in to the Demesne is the route that is shortest, most logical, has heritage value (historical route into the Demesne) and is entirely off road.

4.3.3 *Outdoor Recreation*

Downhill Forest (North & South) has significant potential to be developed as a prime outdoor recreation family destination within the North Coast region. Downhill Forest presents a strategic asset to the National Trust as it has the ability to absorb great numbers of people and hold visitors in the area for longer by providing more things to see and do. The critical elements required to achieve this are –

- Walking and family cycling trails
- Signage

The following recommendations are made in relation to trail development –

- **Walking (across whole Demesne)**
 - Downhill Forest North – walking only
 - A Category 2 walk trail – woodland and headland trail with iconic viewpoint to Mussenden Temple
 - Downhill Forest South – walking and family cycling trails
 - Four trails ranging from Category 1 All Ability to Category 2 ranging in challenge and length

- Stacked loop system
 - Upgrade of existing trail and development of new trail based on formalisation of desire lines and historic paths
 - More all ability trails (Category 1)
 - To Mussenden Temple from Lion’s Gate along the headland – this would be an iconic and unique all ability trail
 - Lake Trail in Downhill Forest – this would be suitable for most abilities including those with limited mobility, and all users at one time. These trails must have a maximum slope of 5°
- **Family Cycling (Downhill Forest South only)**
 - All of the trails are designed to be Category 2 multi-use trails and suitable for families, such as that shown in Fig. 14.



Fig. 14: Multi use trails for families and in woodland settings

4.3.4 Benches and Seating

It is recommended that benches and seating are installed across the Demesne at key rest and viewpoints. These should all be designed to be in keeping with both the character and natural environment of Downhill Demesne, such as examples shown in Fig. 15.



Fig. 15: Bespoke benches and seating

4.3.5 Natural Play Trail

Play is a key requirement for the ‘family fun’ market segment which is likely to attract more visitors compared to trails alone. Best practice shows that play is a powerful motivator for people deciding to visit a site, and all year round, but for the play to be a viable attraction in its own right a certain level of investment is required.

A natural play area or trail would have the following benefits –

- Encourage wider exploration of the Forest and Demesne
- Facilitate longer stays at the Demesne and repeat visits
- Distribute visitors out over a wider area, therefore reducing congestion in hotspot areas
- Provide an opportunity for play items/features to be added or changed over time therefore creating a continuous, more viable attraction in the long term

Natural play describes the design of the play items – they should be bespoke and fit with the natural woodland character, similar to that shown in Fig. 16.



Fig. 16: Log Trail (left) and Badger Sett (right) at Kew Royal Botanic Gardens

4.3.6 Signage Strategy

It is recommended that all partners (through a Partnership Agreement) agree a Signage Strategy which sets out the standards and guidelines relating to all signage to be designed, produced and installed across the entire Demesne.

Types of signage would include, as a minimum –

- Welcome signage
- Visitor information and orientation
- Safety signage
- Trail waymarking
- Interpretation, etc.

Standards and guidelines would relate to –

- Brand - recommended that this follows or compliments the National Trust's own branding and current signage guidelines.
- Style – font, sizing, placement, etc.
- Specification – housing, panels, etc.
- Locations
- Design – content and layout of text/images

4.3.7 Interpretation

Interpretation is a communication process that helps people make sense of and understand more about a place. It can –

- Bring meaning to the cultural or environmental resource, enhancing visitor appreciation and promoting better understanding. As a result, visitors are more likely to care for what they identify as a precious resource
- Enhance the visitor experience, resulting in longer stays and repeat visits. This will lead to increased income and create employment opportunities
- Enable communities to better understand their heritage, and to express their own ideas and feelings about their home area

Similar to the Signage Strategy, it is recommended that all partners agree to the development of an Interpretation Framework for the Demesne.

An Interpretation Framework will contain a clear set of aims and objectives for the development of an outstanding holistic visitor experience at Downhill Demesne. It will make recommendations on how the visitor experience could be enhanced through the development of interpretive facilities and set out the processes required to achieve this through various media solutions which are specifically targeted at different audiences, as examples show in Fig. 17.



Fig. 17: Photos showing examples of integrated interpretation

4.3.8 Sculptural Viewpoints

It is strongly recommended that a series of sculptural viewpoints are developed. These would be a new signature experience attracting people to the historic Downhill Demesne and significantly enhance the visitor experience, creating that all-important ‘Instagram Moment’.

The viewpoints would be located in 3 or 4 locations across the Demesne which reveal iconic landscape views and interconnections between different parts of the Estate. In this way, this product would be inspired by Bishop Hervey’s pursuit of showcasing the sublime in nature.

Proposed locations are –

- Downhill Forest North
- Downhill Forest South
- Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins
- The Moor

Examples are shown Fig. 18.

The design should dovetail with the Interpretation Framework and could be designed and built using local stone.



Fig. 18: Photos showing examples of sculptural viewpoints

4.3.9 *Visitor Services & Facilities*

If National Trust was to take over management of Downhill Forest South it is recommended that they develop the following visitor services and facilities to enhance the visitor experience –

- Central orientation and welcome point
- Visitor information service
- Tour/Guide/Experience Bookings/Ticketing point
- Coffee Shop or café if there was sufficient demand
- Toilets
- Formal parking

4.4 *Considerations*

4.4.1 *Sensitive Development*

All development should be sensitive to the character of the Downhill Demesne.

Downhill Ruins represent the momentary nature of mankind. The house and buildings, their location and design represent ‘the sublime’ and are an affirmation of man’s relationship with nature and the landscape. For that reason, the landscape was designed and created by Bishop Hervey to give different experiences to the viewer evoke to the feelings described above and more.

Any and all development should continue in this vein and use this approach as inspiration. Proposals made in this Masterplan are intended to create and enhance the Downhill Demesne’s sense of place, an approach adopted by the National Trust.

4.4.2 *Built Heritage Designations*

Downhill Demesne is designated on the Register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes. One of the principle factors in this designation is the landscape design and intended views which are protected and should be preserved. No development or activities will be permitted that diminish, alter or impact upon the principle reasons for which the Demesne was designated.

4.4.3 Natural Heritage

Although there are no statutory natural heritage designations within the Demesne, the site's ecology, biodiversity and habitat should not be underestimated or undervalued. All of the environments within the Demesne provide important ecological functions and habitat for a variety of flora and fauna species, many protected and rare, e.g. badgers, pine martens, bats, etc.

Downhill Forest South incorporates a significant amount of ancient woodland. Not only is this an idyllic woodland to enjoy but ancient woodland will impact on the Management Plan of the Forest, potentially restricting certain activities and development.

Consultation has identified that tree removal is a highly emotive topic in the study area. Whilst some consultees would like to see the original views of the Demesne restored this would involve tree removal. In this case and other similar cases which involve some tree removal, the ecological impact of tree removal would have to be weighed against the benefit of the proposal(s). It is recognised however that in some cases tree removal can have a positive impact on the environment by creating conditions which allow native and/or rare species and habitats to thrive.

4.4.4 Planning Permission

Planning permission will be required for all proposals which involve physical development of infrastructure. For local applications (those with areas less than 1 Ha) the timeframe is a minimum 12-week period while major applications (those with areas over 1Ha) can take 30 weeks, with 15 of those dedicated to public consultation. In addition to the timeframe, depending on the nature of the project a variety of supporting assessments and surveys are likely to be required which can add significant time and expense. This has been considered in the phasing of options in Section 5 and should be carefully considered going forward with this Masterplan.

4.4.5 Community Relations

Consultation has identified Downhill Demesne to be a highly emotive subject for the local community. It is very close to the hearts of people living in the immediate Castlerock and surrounding area and therefore future development and management must be cognisant and sympathetic to this. For example, it is recommended that current access arrangements to the Forest are maintained if its management is taken over by the National Trust.

5 DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

There are three options to consider for development –

1. Option 1 – Do Nothing
2. Option 2 – Do Minimum (Phase 1, 0-3 Years)
3. Option 3 – Do Everything (Phase 2, 3+ Years)

Option 1 represents do nothing while Options 2 and 3 represent do something alternatives.

Phase 2 contains all the proposals for development and is designed to build on Phase 1.

Phase 1 is comprised to be a stand-alone project with the minimum elements, i.e. the critical mass, required to achieve the basic aims of this Masterplan.

Phase 1 and 2 are designed to be achieved within the 5-year timescale of the LPS project.

Each option is detailed below - for Options 2 and 3 a description, rationale and action plan are presented.

5.1 Option 1 – Do Nothing (Status Quo)

5.1.1 Description

Under the 'Do Nothing' option, no development is proposed, no money would be invested, and the Demesne would continue to be managed in its current state.

5.1.2 Rationale

This is not recommended as an approach as it does not achieve the aims of this project, namely to enhance the outdoor recreation product and improve the connectivity of the Demesne under a more holistic management approach.

No benefits are achieved under this Option and the Demesne and visitor experience would continue to suffer from a lack of investment and uncoordinated management approach. That said, if an alternative management body does not take the lead on the development and future management and maintenance of Downhill Forest the 'Do Nothing' option will be the only viable option.

5.2 Option 2 – Do Minimum (Phase 1, 0-3 Years)

5.2.1 Description

Phase 1 covers the first 3 years of the LPS 5-year timescale and is estimated to cost approximately £106,488, as shown in Table 5.

A summary of the key actions that make up this option are –

Management

- New management body(s) for the Forest, on the condition that the current access arrangements are maintained
- New, co-ordinated management approach to the Demesne (made up of all landowners and representatives of the community) through the creation of a ‘Partnership Agreement’ and ‘Friends of Downhill’ Group

Outdoor Recreation

- Trail development in Downhill Forest South – 6.1km of category 1 and 2 multi-use walking and family cycling trails
- Retention of existing formal activities in the Forest, e.g. orienteering and scout campsite
- Installation of new bench seating throughout the Forest

Signage

- Agreement on a Signage Strategy and Interpretation Framework to set shared guidelines and policy for design, production and installation of all signage and interpretation going forward
- Installation of waymarking and trailhead orientation panel associated with new trail development

Interpretation

- Development of a series of sculptural viewpoints – this would be the iconic, signature experience which physically and metaphorically connects all 4 compartments that make up the Demesne

5.2.2 Rationale

Phase 1 is comprised to be a stand-alone project made up of the minimum elements, i.e. the critical mass, required to achieve the basic aims of this project, which is to improve the outdoor recreation

product within the Forest and better co-ordinate the management of the Demesne, for the benefit of the local community and visitors to the area.

Phase 1 dedicates time to setting up all agreements (legal and partnership working) in the first 3 years and sets the foundation for future development of the wider Demesne. As such Phase 1 is intended to dovetail with the proposals recommended in Phase 2 as well as the actions arising from the National Trust's internal Masterplan which is currently being undertaken and is due for completion in 2021.

In conclusion, Phase 1 is the do minimum approach. It contains only high and medium priority proposals, as shown in Table 5 and illustrated spatially in Fig. 19.

5.2.3 Phase 1 'Do Minimum' Action Plan

No.	Proposal Type	Area	Description	Phase 1		Phase 2		Delivery Partners
				0-3 Years	4-5 Years	Priority	Capital Cost (£)	
1	Management	Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a Partnership Agreement between National Trust, the Council and Forest Service NI outlining respective roles and responsibilities and shared management objectives, e.g. free access to public, shared signage brand and policy, shared interpretative framework, etc. 	✓		High	£0 Staff time	National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI and LPS
2		Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Trust enter into Lease/Licence Agreement for Downhill Forest South to insure, manage and maintain the social and recreational, and associated facilities 	✓		High	TBA	National Trust and Forest Service NI
3		Downhill Forest North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council enter into a Licence Agreement for Downhill Forest North to develop, manage and maintain the existing Ulster Way and create a new spur, in the form of Drumagully Trail 	✓		High	TBA	Council and Forest Service NI
4		Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the creation of a 'Friends of Downhill Demesne' group – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With representation from all land owners and managers, local community, businesses, special interest groups and other deemed relevant persons/groups Mechanism for engaging and communicating with local community Contributing to management objectives of the total Demesne Resource for local volunteers, e.g. gardens, guided tours, events, etc. Collection of oral histories of Demesne, key characters and stories 	✓		Medium	£0 Staff time	National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI, LPS, Private Landowners representatives of local community, local businesses, experience and activity providers
5		Downhill Forest – North & South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain current access arrangements to Downhill Forest (North and South) irrespective of development and lead management organisation 	✓		High	N/A	National Trust, Council and Forest Service NI
6	Trail Development – Walking & Family Cycling	Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade the 'Lake Trail' to improve accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category 1 All Ability Multi-Use Trail – 1km Scrap, level and dress existing trail - £12 per linear metre 	✓		High	£12,000	National Trust, Forest Service NI and LPS
7		<i>Develop new and extend existing trail network, and improve accessibility for family cycling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the 'Mill Trail' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category 2 Multi-Use Trail – 2.3km (incorporating existing trail) New build trail – 1km @ £40 per linear metre Upgrade existing trail – 1.3km @ £8 per linear metre Boardwalk (recycled plastic, steel reinforced) – 2m @ £444 per linear metre Remove wooden steps x2 	✓		High	£51,288	National Trust and LPS
8	Other Recreation Activities	Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain orienteering course and re-map orienteering map to take into account new trails 	✓		High	£1,200	North West Orienteering Club, National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI and LPS

9			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scout Campsite – retain use/licence of Dungannon Hill as youth campsite for Scouts 	✓		High	Lease fee agreed with Scout Association NI	Scout Association NI, Forest Service NI and National Trust	
10	Site Improvements/Maintenance	Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benches/seating - install at key rest and viewpoints along trails, style to be in keeping with woodland setting 	✓		Medium	£2,000	National Trust and LPS	
11	Signage - Strategy	Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All partners (through Partnership Agreement) agree a Signage Strategy for the Demesne, which provides guidelines relating to all signage to be designed, produced and installed in the Demesne, including but not limited to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand – recommended to be National Trust Style – font, sizing, placement, etc. Specification – housing, panels, etc. Locations Design – content and layout of text/images Signage including but not limited to – visitor information and orientation (welcome, etc), safety signage, trail waymarking, interpretation, etc. 	✓		High	£0	Council, Forest Service NI and National Trust	
12	Signage & Interpretation	Downhill Forest (Phase 1 only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, produce and install 1x trailhead orientation panels @ £1,500 each 	✓		High	£40,000 <i>Pc sum</i>	National Trust and LPS	
13		Downhill Forest South (Phase 1 only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and install trail waymarking on all trails in Downhill Forest South, in line with agreed branding and signage guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 waymarker posts and disks @ £60 per wooden post 	✓		High		National Trust and LPS	
14		Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretation Framework – develop a framework for the entire Demesne which executes the telling of the Downhill story through one brand (recommended National Trust) 	✓		High		National Trust, Council and LPS	
TOTAL								£106,488	

Table 5: Phase 1 action plan

5.2.4 Phase 1 'Do Minimum' Masterplan

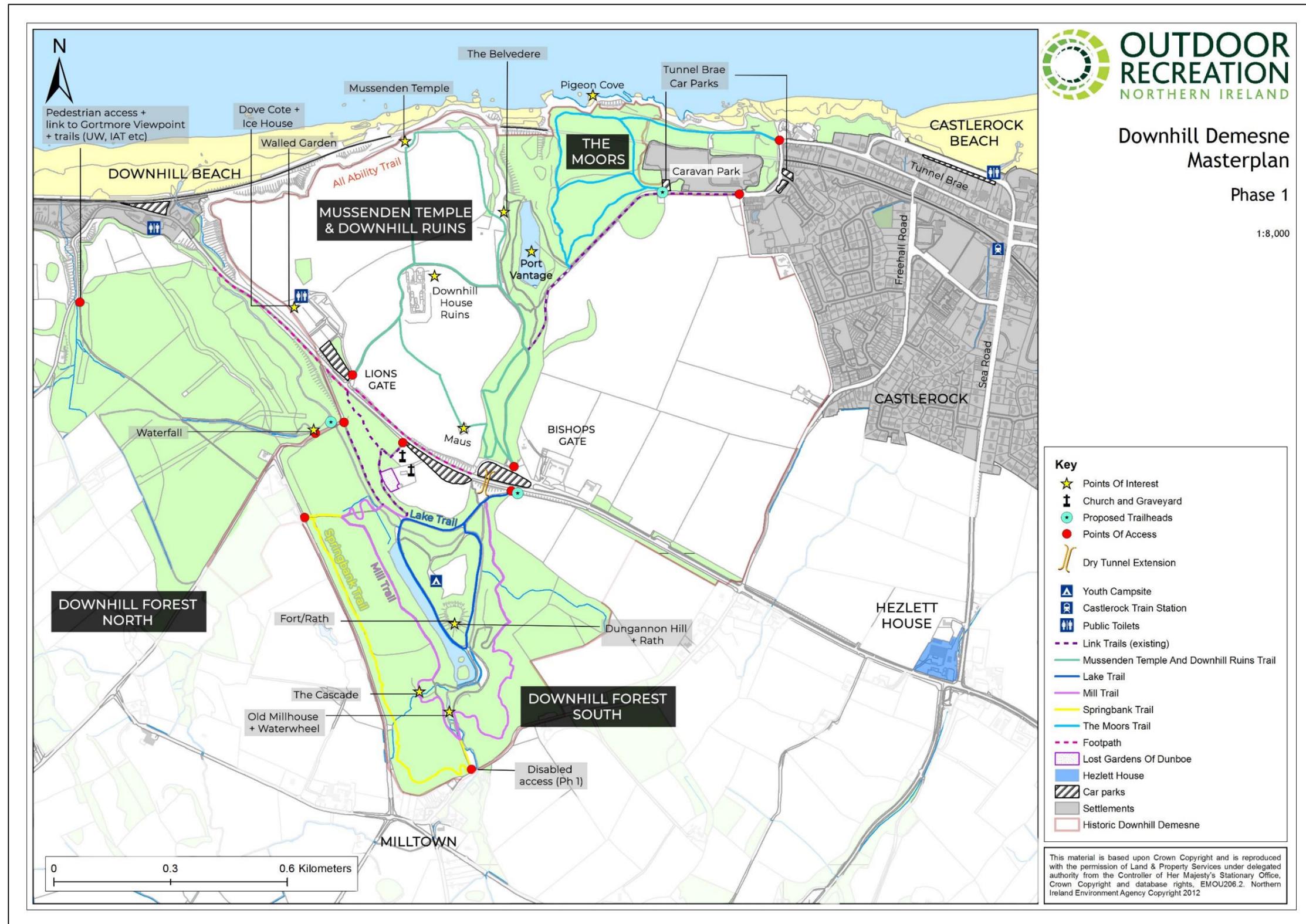


Fig. 19: Phase 1 Spatial Masterplan

5.3 Option 3 – Do Everything (Phase 2, 3+ Years)

5.3.1 Description

Phase 2 covers 3+ years of the LPS 5-year timescale. In addition to Phase 1, the key actions for Phase 2 are –

Outdoor Recreation

- Development of an all-ability link trail from Lion’s Gate joining to The Lake Trail in Downhill Forest South – dependent on disabled parking at Lion’s Gate. There is potential for the Dunboe Gardens Trail to be designed as all-ability
- If found to be feasible, design and build the Rath Trail in Downhill Forest South – feasibility will depend on approval from HED, NED and planning

Play

- Design and develop a Natures Play Trail

Heritage Restoration, Protection & Access

- Restore and make safe for public access the sawmill, water wheel and mill race in Downhill Forest South
- Dungannon Hill Promontory Fort – clear to reveal landform and facilitate public access (Rath Trail is dependent on access to the Fort being approved)

Signage

- Design and develop a suite of welcome signs with consistent style and brand to reinforce Demesne as one entity and enhance the sense of arrival at all key entry points
- Design and develop a suite of orientation panels, so visitors are better informed about the connectivity of the Demesne and the diversity of environments and experiences on offer

Interpretation

- Design and produce a number of interpretation panels at key features of interest to tell the ‘stories’ of the Demesne

Access & Connectivity

- Redesign and reconfigure the current layby (forest side) to create a formal parking area with dedicated spaces – this will formalise the ad-hoc nature of current parking, increase parking capacity, prevent people from having to cross the road if they are visiting the Forest only and

be the means of connection between both sides of the road before a physical link in the form of the Dry Tunnel is built

- Redesign and reconfigure the layby at Bishop's Gate to formalise parking, increase capacity and address the ad-hoc nature of current parking. This will also help to create a sense of arrival rather than the current sense of confusion when visitors arrive.
- Install signage at Castlerock Train Station to sign post pedestrians to access the Demesne on foot

Visitor Services & Facilities

- Develop a shared visitor hub at the Lion's Gate which serves the entire Demesne

5.3.2 Rationale

Phase 2 is intended to build on Phase 1 therefore it is not recommended that any actions in Phase 2 should be undertaken before those proposed in Phase 1. In fact, many of the actions in Phase 1 precede and in doing so, facilitate the development of activities in Phase 2, e.g. signage strategy sets out agreed guidelines for the design, style, specification, etc. of signage.

Many of the actions proposed in Phase 2 are intended to either allow for –

1. The necessary studies/assessments to be undertaken in Phase 1 to determine feasibility and detailed design resulting in delivery in Phase 2; or
2. Sufficient time in Phase 2 for projects to go through planning and be delivered within 3 years.

For example, the Rath Trail and heritage restoration projects will require preparatory assessments and studies to determine feasibility and likelihood of planning permission. Although these projects are proposed to protect the heritage and create access for the public to enjoy, further work will be required to determine the most sympathetic and appropriate way to do this.

A Natures Play Trail is included in Phase 2 to gauge the need and demand for the product in Phase 1 and then allow sufficient time in Phase 2 to develop a concept, involve local children in the design, seek planning permission, etc. It is also placed in Phase 2 to allow for any proposals in the National Trust's internal Masterplan to be considered, i.e. National Trust may wish to enhance the Bishop's Gate Play Trail only or develop play at both sites.

Phase 3 comprises proposals which are aspirational and therefore fall outside the LPS 5-year timescale. These projects are –

Access & Connectivity

- Investigate the feasibility of ‘extending’ the Dry Tunnel under the A2 Mussenden Road and if viable, create a safe, off-road physical link between both sides of the road*
- Investigate the feasibility of extending the footpath along A2 Mussenden Road and if viable, create a safe, off-road link between the Demesne and Castlerock Beach*

Phase 3 comprises proposals which fall outside the LPS 5-year timescale due to project scale and the related high cost, difficulty to achieve and timeframe to deliver. The proposals, although desirable are not critical to achieving the aims of this Masterplan and therefore are not recommended as a priority for development.

5.3.3 Phase 2 'Do Everything' Action Plan

No.	Proposal Type	Area	Description	Phase 1	Phase 2	Priority	Capital Cost (£)	Delivery Partners
				0-3 Years	4-5 Years			
1	Management	Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a Partnership Agreement between National Trust, the Council and Forest Service NI outlining respective roles and responsibilities and shared management objectives, e.g. free access to public, shared signage brand and policy, shared interpretative framework, etc. 	✓		High	£0 Staff time	National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI and LPS
2		Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Trust enter into Lease/Licence Agreement for Downhill Forest South to insure, manage and maintain the social and recreational, and associated facilities 	✓		High	TBA	National Trust and Forest Service NI
3		Downhill Forest North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council enter into a Licence Agreement for Downhill Forest North to develop, manage and maintain the existing Ulster Way and create a new spur, in the form of Drumagully Trail 	✓		High	TBA	Council and Forest Service NI
4		Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the creation of a 'Friends of Downhill Demesne' group – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With representation from all land owners and managers, local community, businesses, special interest groups and other deemed relevant persons/groups Mechanism for engaging and communicating with local community Contributing to management objectives of the total Demesne Resource for local volunteers, e.g. gardens, guided tours, events, etc. Collection of oral histories of Demesne, key characters and stories 	✓		Medium	£0 Staff time	National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI, LPS, Private Landowners representatives of local community, local businesses, experience and activity providers
5		Downhill Forest – North & South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain current access arrangements to Downhill Forest (North and South) irrespective of development and lead management organisation 	✓		High	N/A	National Trust, Council and Forest Service NI
6	Trail Development – Walking & Family Cycling	Downhill Forest South <i>Develop new and extend existing trail network, and improve accessibility for family cycling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade the 'Lake Trail' to improve accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category 1 All Ability Multi-Use Trail – 1km Scrap, level and dress existing trail - £12 per linear metre 	✓		High	£12,000	National Trust, Forest Service NI and LPS
7			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the 'Mill Trail' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category 2 Multi-Use Trail – 2.3km (incorporating existing trail) New build trail – 1km @ £40 per linear metre Upgrade existing trail – 1.3km @ £8 per linear metre Boardwalk (recycled plastic, steel reinforced) – 2m @ £444 per linear metre Remove wooden steps x2 	✓		High	£51,288	National Trust and LPS
8			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the 'Springbank Trail' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category 2 Multi Use Trail – 2.8km loop (incorporating the Mill Trail) New build – 1.4km @ £40 per linear metre Break through wall onto Burrenmore Road to access Downhill Forest North and install pedestrian wooden kissing gate - £460 		✓	Medium	£56,460	National Trust and LPS
9			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Rath Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works to be identified following appropriate assessment and consultation with Historic Monuments, Heritage Environment Division 		✓	Medium	Unknown	National Trust and LPS

10		Downhill Forest North <i>Extend walking only network, open up new areas and viewpoints</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the 'Drumagully Trail' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category 2 Multi Use Trail – 1.8km New Build – 1.8km @ £40 per linear metre Break through boundary wall beside Down Bridge (lower entrance) and install wooden kissing gate to create access Downhill Forest North - £460 1x wooden kissing gate on Burrenmore Road (upper entrance) @ £360 each Bridge across waterfall – 1.2m wide, 10m long recycled plastic with handrails @ £3,100 Bridge across river to facilitate access from Burrenmore Road (upper entrance) – 1.2m wide, 2m long, recycled plastic with hand rails @ £1,000 		✓	High	£76,920	Council and LPS
11		Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins <i>Increase accessibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade existing grass trail to all ability (sealed surface) trail from Lions Gate to Mussenden Temple along headland (iconic experience for wheelchair users) 		✓	Medium	TBC	National Trust
12	Natural Play Trail	Downhill Forest South (and Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and develop a Natural Play Trail, possible themes include – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique natural and built heritage features of the Demesne CS Lewis connection Harvey Bishop inspiration 		✓	Medium	TBC	National Trust and LPS
13	Other Recreation Activities	Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain orienteering course and re-map orienteering map to take into account new trails 	✓		High	£1,200	North West Orienteering Club, National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI and LPS
14			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scout Campsite – retain use/licence of Dungannon Hill as youth campsite for Scouts 	✓		High	Lease fee agreed with Scout Association NI	Scout Association NI, Forest Service NI and National Trust
15	Site Improvements/Maintenance	Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear lake fringe of fallen trees and debris to improve visual amenity of area and walk trails 		✓	Medium	TBC	Forest Service NI
16			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benches/seating - install at key rest and viewpoints along trails, style to be in keeping with woodland setting 	✓		Medium	£2,000	National Trust and LPS
17			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water tap installed 		✓	Medium	TBC	National Trust and Forest Service NI
18	Heritage Restoration, Protection and Access	Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old mill, water wheel and associated mill race - restore and make safe for public access 		✓	Medium	TBC	National Trust (subject to satisfactory lease with Forest Service NI)
19			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dungannon Hill Promontory Fort - clear to facilitate safe, public access 		✓	Medium	TBC	National Trust (subject to satisfactory lease with Forest Service NI)

20		Downhill Forest North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfall – appropriately clear corridor to reveal feature within the landscape 		✓	Medium	TBC	Council
21	Signage - Strategy	Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All partners (through Partnership Agreement) agree a Signage Strategy for the Demesne, which provides guidelines relating to all signage to be designed, produced and installed in the Demesne, including but not limited to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand – recommended to be National Trust Style – font, sizing, placement, etc. Specification – housing, panels, etc. Locations Design – content and layout of text/images Signage including but not limited to – visitor information and orientation (welcome, etc), safety signage, trail waymarking, interpretation, etc. 	✓		High	£0	Council, Forest Service NI and National Trust
22	Signage – Welcome & Arrival	Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, develop and install a suite and hierarchy of welcome signs at key access points throughout Demesne, to emphasise sense of place and arrival and reinforce identity of Demesne as one collective site – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bishops Gate Lions Gate Downhill Forest South – main and ‘back entrance’ Downhill Forest North – Bishops and Burrenmore Road Tunnel Brae Car Park 		✓	Medium	TBC	Council, Forest Service NI, National Trust and LPS
23	Signage – Orientation Panels	Demesne-wide (Phase 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, develop and install a suite or orientation panels at key welcome/arrival points into the Demesne – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a minimum, the above locations plus – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downhill Beach Castlerock Beach Castlerock Train Station <p>The orientation maps should show the product and facilities on offer at the immediate site, set within the context of the wider Demesne and connections to surrounding sites, settlements and trails</p>		✓	High	TBC	Council, LPS and Translink
24	Signage & Interpretation Trail Waymarking	Downhill Forest (Phase 1 only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, produce and install 1x trailhead orientation panels @ £1,500 each 	✓		High	£40,000 PC Sum	National Trust and LPS
25		Downhill Forest South (Phase 1 only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and install trail waymarking on all trails in Downhill Forest South, in line with agreed branding and signage guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 waymarker posts and disks @ £60 per wooden post 	✓		High		National Trust and LPS
26		Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretation Framework – develop a framework for the entire Demesne which executes the telling of the Downhill story through one brand (recommended National Trust) but various mediums and channels tailored and targeted at different audiences, e.g. interpretation panels, augmented reality experiences, leaflets, guided tours, digital interpretation, discovery packs for children, etc. The stories should be based on research and oral histories collected 	✓		High		National Trust, Council and LPS
27	Interpretation	Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sculptural Viewpoints – design and develop a series of sculptural viewpoints in 3/4 locations across the Demesne which reveal iconic landscape views and interconnections between different parts of the Estate, and create magical moments for the visitors, proposed at the following 4 locations – 		✓	Aspirational	TBC	National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI and LPS

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Downhill Forest North ○ Downhill Forest South ○ Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins ○ The Moors 						
28			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In line with the Interpretation Framework, a series of panels could be designed, produced and installed at key interest points to tell the ‘stories’ of the Demesne and to facilitate self-guided learning and discovery of the natural and built fabric of the Demesne as well as its human occupation. Subject to planning, suggested locations include, but not limited to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Old mill, wheelhouse and waterfall ○ Dungannon Hill Fort ○ Dunboe Gardens ○ Mussenden Temple ○ The Moors, overlooking Port Vantage and ‘Lady Erne’s Seat’ ○ The Mausoleum 		✓	High	TBC	National Trust, Council and LPS	
29		Downhill Forest South & Black Glen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install name plaques or something similar to facilitate the discovery of interesting and/or rare species of trees, flora and fungi through creation of a ‘Tree’, ‘Garden’ or ‘Botanics’ Trail. This could be altered depending on season and would not only link the different pleasure garden zones that make/made up the Demesne but also bring the landscape to life for visitors, e.g. Handkerchief Tree in the Black Glen would particularly appeal to families and young children. The two largest Sitka Spruce trees in Downhill could be brought to life through ornamental sculpture 		✓	Medium	TBC	National Trust, Council and LPS	
30	Access & Connectivity	Downhill Forest South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Re-configure the old layby (forest side) at Bishop’s Gate to develop a formal car parking area with dedicated spaces and access to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Main entrance to Forest ○ Graveyard ○ Burial Ground and Church Ruins ○ Forest (pedestrian access) adjacent to graveyard 		✓	Aspirational	TBC	Transport NI, National Trust, Council, Forest Service NI and LPS	
31		Bishops Gate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Re-design layby at Bishops Gate to provide formal parking spaces 		✓	Aspirational	TBC		
32		Bishops Gate & Downhill Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investigate feasibility of extending the ‘Dry Tunnel’ underneath A2 Mussenden Road to improve connectivity of Demesne parts and provide a safe, off-road crossing solutions for visitors and users, and if appropriate develop 		✓	Aspirational	TBC		
33			Downhill Demesne & Castlerock Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investigate feasibility of extending footpath along A2 Mussenden Road by c.50m to provide an off-road, safe link for walkers between Castlerock Beach and Downhill Demesne 		✓	Aspirational	TBC	Transport NI, LPS, National Trust, Forest Service NI and private landowners
34			Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install signage to Demesne from Castlerock Train Station – via Tunnel Brae 		✓	Medium	TBC	Translink, National Trust and LPS
35			Demesne-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce joint ticketing on train journeys to Castlerock incorporating access to Downhill Demesne 		✓	Medium	TBC	National Trust and Translink

36	Visitor Services & Facilities	Demesne wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the provision and diversity of visitor services to serve all visitors to Downhill Demesne – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orientation and welcome point ○ Visitor information ○ Tour/Guide/Experience Bookings/Ticketing ○ Café ○ Toilets ○ Car Parking 		✓	High	TBC	National Trust	
							TOTAL	£239,868	

Table 6: Action plan (all proposals)

5.3.4 Phase 2 'Do Everything' Masterplan

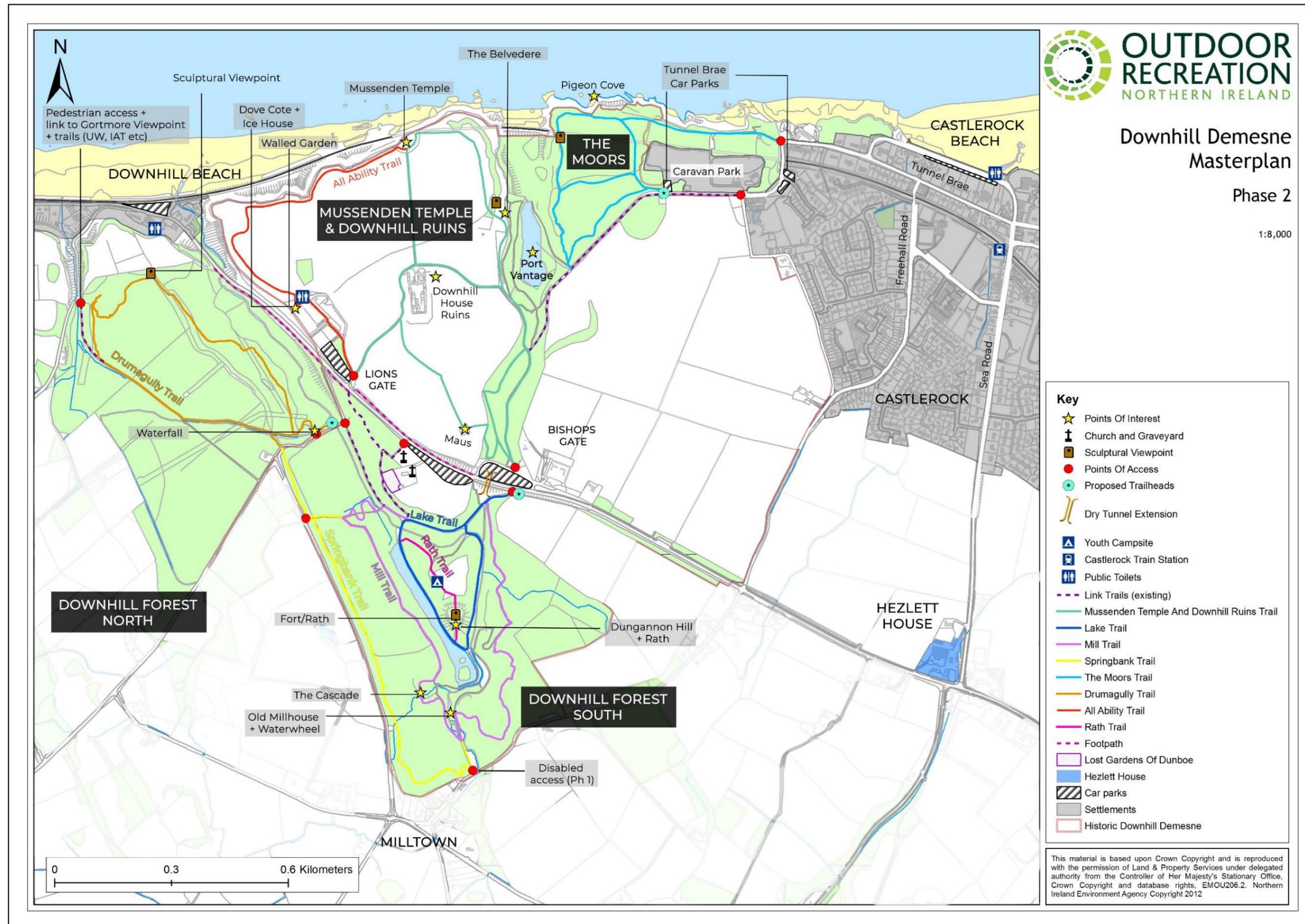


Fig. 20: Phase 2 Spatial Masterplan

6 COSTS AND FUNDING

Phase 1 is estimated to cost approximately £106,488.

It is strongly recommended that the LPS's allocation of £100,000 is match funded with National Trust resources to ensure buy in to the shared vision and products for development.

Other potential sources of funding that this project, either in whole or part, may be eligible for summarised in Table 7 below. Full details of each stream can be found in Appendix F.

Fund / Programme	Grants Available	Applicant	Timeframe
RDP Tourism	Up to £500,000 at 75%	Council (Sole Applicant) Council (Lead) in partnership with local community/voluntary organisations	1 st Call – Closed 2 nd Call – TBC
The National Lottery Community Fund – People and Communities	Up to £100,000 at 100%	Voluntary or community groups	Open all year round
The National Lottery Community Fund – Awards for All	Up to £10,000 at 100%	Voluntary or community organisations, schools and statutory bodies	Open all year round
The National Lottery Heritage Fund	£3,000 to £10,000 at 100%	Not-for-profit organisations, private owners of heritage and partnerships	Open all year round
The National Lottery Heritage Fund	£10,000 to £100,000 at 100%	Not-for-profit organisations, private	Open all year round

		owners of heritage and partnerships	
The National Lottery Heritage Fund	£100,000 to £250,000 at 95%	Not-for-profit organisations and partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations	Set application windows each year
The National Lottery Heritage Fund	£250,000 to £5 million at 90%	Not-for-profit organisations and partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations	Open all year round
Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland - Community Grants Programme	The average grant is currently between £3,000 - 4,000.	Registered charities with an income of less than £1 million	Open all year round
Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme	£500 to £5,000	Voluntary, community organisations, schools & third level education organisations, youth groups & sports clubs Housing Association and Housing Executive residents	Next phase launching 16 th April 2019.

Table 7: Potential funding opportunities

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

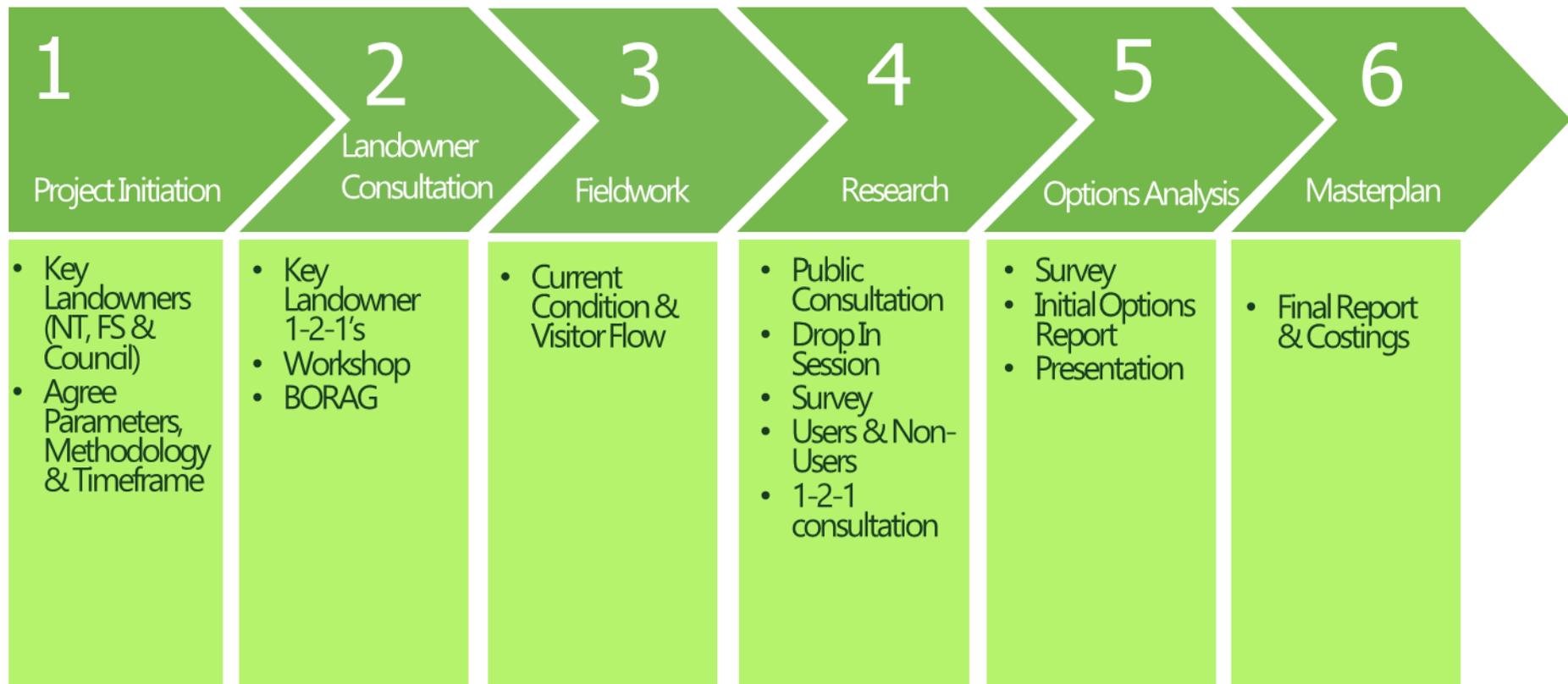
It is recommended that –

- the project partners develop Phase 1 as a priority and as a minimum
- the National Trust and Council enter into either a lease/licence agreement with Forest Service NI for Downhill Forest South and Downhill Forest North, respectively
- the current access arrangements to Downhill Forest are maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of the community
- Downhill Forest North and South are developed simultaneously to maximise the potential trail network and provide the best possible visitor and trail experience

APPENDICES

A. DETAILED METHODOLOGY

The following diagram shows a summary of the methodology steps that were employed to complete this Masterplan. A full explanation of each of the steps is provided below.



The following research methods and tools were employed to successfully deliver a Masterplan for historic Downhill Demesne.

1. Consultation

Project Initiation Meeting

Following appointment, an initiation meeting was held on 6 December 2018 with representatives from the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS Team and key partners to provide the opportunity to introduce key delivery staff, clarify the scope of works, agree finer details of methodology and key milestones for delivery.

Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group Presentation

Immediately following the initiation meeting ORNI gave a presentation to the Binevenagh Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group to outline the proposed methodology for the project and undertake consultation with this stakeholder group to further inform the issues and opportunities associated with Downhill Demesne.

1-2-1 Consultation with Key Landowners

Over the course of three days in January 2019, one-to-one consultation was conducted with the three key landowners on-site to gain information on:

- Landownership – history and current
- Current management arrangements
- Current patterns of visitor use and outdoor recreation
- Visitor flows and connectivity
- Constraints to future development

Key Landowners Workshop

Following a series of individual site visits with each of the key partners (Forest Service NI, Council and the National Trust) ORNI co-ordinated a workshop with all partners to –

- Understand their strategic vision for the site
- Identify areas of agreement and difference
- Identify ideas for improvement and barriers to success

The purpose of this workshop was to allow key partners to gain an understanding of each other's position and build the potential for future collaboration and success.

Public Consultation

A public consultation was held on 18th February 2019 in the Peter Thompson Hall, Castlerock from 7-9pm. The purpose of the consultation was to capture the views of the general public and other interested parties.

A public consultation poster was prepared (below) and promoted through the various channels –

- Local newspapers (poster and press release)
 - The Chronicle papers (Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballycastle and Limavady) for 2 weeks from 4th February 2019, including social media channels
 - The Times papers (Coleraine, Limavady + Ballymoney & Moyle) for 2 weeks from 4th February
- ORNI
 - WalkNI and MountainbikeNI newsletter, social media and databases
- LPS – newsletter and social media channels
- Direct email to stakeholder groups
 - Non-governing bodies and associations
 - Sports Clubs
 - Local Community Association
 - Special Interest Groups
 - Experience Providers
 - Accommodation Providers
 - Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts
- Local services/facilities
 - Shops
 - Cafes
 - Train Station
- Posted around the local area (courtesy of Castlerock Community Association)

54 people attended and ORNI led a workshop style consultation with small groups discussing and communicating their thoughts and feelings in relation to the three topics areas –

- Current Situation
- Future Development

- Challenges/Barriers to Development

Drop-In Session

A drop-in session was held on 21st February 2019 at the Gate Lodge, Bishop's Gate from 10am-6pm. The session was publicised using the same consultation poster and through the same channels as the public consultation. The purpose of this session was to capture the views of users on the day visiting the Downhill Forest and Mussenden Temple & Downhill Ruins. Eight people attended.

Online Survey

An online survey was prepared and approved by all key partners. This was hosted through Survey Monkey from 23rd January 2019 to 5th March 2019 and had 237 respondents in total.

The survey comprised 17 primary questions with additional comment sections providing opportunity for further feedback. The survey established recipient gender, age and geographic location before requesting site specific information:

- Understanding of what comprises the Demesne
- Current usage patterns of various areas of the Demesne
- Levels of satisfaction with current visitor facilities across sites
- Thoughts on potential development and management
- Any other feedback

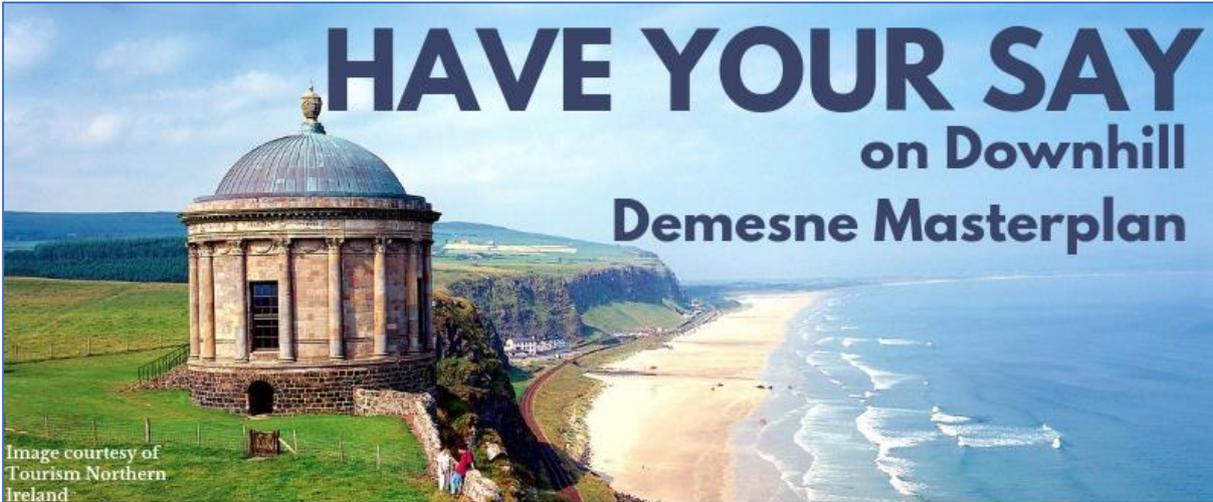


Image courtesy of Tourism Northern Ireland

Outdoor Recreation NI is working on behalf of Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme to look at ways to develop the outdoor recreation product, enhance the visitor experience and improve connectivity between different parts of the historic Demesne and surrounding local area.

Come along to our public consultation:

Monday 18th February | 7 –9pm | Peter Thompson Hall, Castlerock

To confirm your attendance, contact Fiona Milne on 02890 303 930 or email fiona@outdoorrecreationni.com

Or call in to our drop-in session:

Thursday 21st February | Anytime between 10am-6pm | The Gate Lodge at Bishops Gate, Mussenden Temple & Downhill Demesne

Please take a few minutes to complete our online survey for a chance to win a glider experience:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DownhillSurvey



Fig. 21: Consultation poster

2. Fieldwork

Current Condition and Visitor Flow

ORNI undertook extensive fieldwork to understand and evaluate –

- Current condition of the site
- Visitor flow and connectivity
- Specific factors which will influence the spatial masterplan design process, e.g. topography, ground conditions, access to the site, ecological constraints, positive control points, etc.
- Various spatial layout scenarios including traffic and visitor flow arrangements
- Existing trail system and the compatibility of existing trails with any potential new trail system in terms of trail categories, users, sustainability, and accessibility
- Viability of future development opportunities

In addition to consultation, observations from fieldwork identified the deficiencies and opportunities to improve the current situation.

ORNI recorded fieldwork using maps, a site inspection pro-forma, GPS device for trails and infrastructure and photos to document evidence.

Future Development, Viability and Costings

Once initial ideas for development were formed on the basis of fieldwork and consultation with the key partners, the public consultation was held. Following this an Initial Options Report was prepared which served as a discussion document for the Client and key partners to agree priorities for development, phasing and opportunities for collaboration.

Based on the feedback from this discussion ORNI carried out a further 2 days of fieldwork to further explore the viability of priority proposals and collect technical information required to adequately cost development projects and set out a 'roadmap' of what is required to achieve delivery.

3. Desktop Research

Desktop research was carried out at the beginning of the project to collate all existing information held by ORNI. This comprised spatial information on GIS and previous reports and studies relevant to the study area, including but not limited to –

- Review of Off-Road Cycling Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2003, Dafydd Davis

- ‘Outdoor Recreation, Open Space and Access Audit and Recommendations for the Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Area’, 2017, Outdoor Recreation NI

Detailed searches were also carried out on the historic Demesne, including key partner websites and heritage information to form the background and context to the project.

4. GIS Mapping and Analysis

GIS was employed on an ongoing basis to analyse and model various spatial layouts and visitor flows, produce maps to show the spatial information and relationships onsite and to prepare maps for reports and presentations.

5. Initial Options Report & Presentation

Following an extensive period of fieldwork and consultation followed by analysis, ORNI prepared an Initial Options Report outlining options for development for consideration by the Client and project partners⁷.

The purpose of this report was to serve as a discussion document for the Client and key partners to discuss and agree priorities for development, phasing and opportunities for collaboration.

This report and options for development was presented to the Binevenagh Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group on 13 March 2019 and the three key partners on 26th March 2019.

Once the phasing and priority proposals were agreed, ORNI undertook the following steps to progress the Masterplan –

- 2 days further fieldwork to determine detailed designs and locations for proposals
- Analysis to determine viability, scope of works and costs of priority proposals
- Preparation of the final report

⁷ ‘The Partners’ are National Trust, Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council and Forest Service NI

6. Final Report

The final report was produced and presented to the Client on 3 May 2019.

7. Timeframe

Key Milestone	Delivered On
Project Initiation	6 th December 2018
Meeting with Binevenagh Outdoor Advisory Group (OAG)	11 th December 2018
1-2-1 Meetings with Key Partners	10-11 January 2019
Key Landowners Workshop	18 January 2019
Initial Fieldwork Complete	8 th February 2019
Public Consultation	18 th February 2019
Drop-In Session	21 st February 2019
Online Survey Closed	5 th March 2019
Initial Options Report & Presentation to Binevenagh OAG	13 th March 2019
Initial Options Report & Presentation to Key Partners	26 th March 2019
Final Report	3 rd May 2019

Table 8: Key milestones in project delivery

B. BINEVENAGH LPS ORAG – MINUTES FROM 3RD MEETING



Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme – Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group held on



Wednesday 11th December 2018 - 14.00 in the Magilligan Field Centre, Bellarena

In Attendance:

Richard Gillen (Chair)	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Charlie Reid	North West Orienteering
Dan Lavery	Long Line Surf School
Andy Bates	Translink / Cycling
Kieran McCool	Carrowmena Activity Centre
John Shipman Sr.	Bannside Ramblers
Eunan Brown	Long Line Surf School
Andy Sides	Loughs Agency
Mike McClure	Sport NI
Jay Nethercott	Ulster Gliding Club
Andrew Bratton	Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust
Fiona Milne	Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland

Apologies:

Russell Morrison	Local Mountain Biker
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Signed: _____ (Chair)

Date: _____

Ref	Minutes	Action	When
1	<p>Welcome & Apologies</p> <p>R. Gillen welcomed everyone to the meeting and began a series of round table introductions.</p> <p>Apologies were recorded as above.</p> <p>Russell Morrison has notified the project that due to work commitments he will no longer be able to attend Advisory Group meetings but can participate in project activities when required.</p> <p>R. Gillen led a review of the previous minutes. All present agreed they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>		
2	<p>Progress Update</p> <p>A. Bratton provided an update on the project, indicating that since the previous meeting the LPS Staff had been concentrating on one-to-one meetings and community consultations to assist in the preparation of project proposals. The call for proposals closed on Monday 10th December 2018 with the team receiving c.92 project proposals worth a proposed £4.5 million. It was reinforced that the purpose of the current meeting was to review the proposals received for outdoor recreation to ensure that they met the definition of 'outdoor recreation' and were in keeping with Heritage Lottery's Landscape Partnership Scheme. The comments and recommendations from the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group would then be compiled along with those from the Natural Heritage, Historic Environment and Community Consortium and presented to the LPS Board at the next meeting on Monday 17th December 2018.</p> <p>J. Shipman asked if project proposers had indicated available match funding for projects. A. Bratton confirmed that several proposals had indicated match funding would be available, whilst other projects had indicated potential sources of match funding.</p> <p>M. McClure asked if the LPS staff would be developing and adapting project proposals after the 10th December deadline. A. Bratton confirmed that LPS staff would be looking to reduce overlap between various proposals and undertaking a process of condensing proposals to maximise potential outputs.</p>		
3.	<p>Presentation from Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland on Methodology for the Outdoor Recreation Spatial Masterplan for Downhill Demesne</p> <p>R. Gillen welcomed F. Milne from Outdoor Recreation who provided an overview of the methodology and timescale for the delivery of the Outdoor Recreation Spatial Masterplan for Downhill Demesne. The main points covered included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Initiation Meeting – completed with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, National Trust and Forest Service w/c 3rd December 2018 • Landowner meetings and workshop – scheduled for January 2019 • Fieldwork – scheduled in January and February 2019 • Community and stakeholder consultation – one to one and group meetings scheduled in January and February 2019 • First draft – presented to Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group in early March 2019 with two-week period for feedback. • Complete report – end March 2019 	<p>A. Bratton to circulate presentation</p> <p>F. Milne to contact members about one-to-one and group stakeholder consultation</p>	<p>Along with minutes</p> <p>January 2019</p>

	<p>F. Milne initiated discussion about the proposed methodology. The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M. McClure asked who would potentially take on responsibility for licensing of activities within Downhill Forest. R. Gillen indicated that it could potentially be Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CCGBC) or a tripartite agreement between CCGBC, National Trust and Forest Service • M. McClure expressed concern about the barriers to access which differences in paid for and free entry represent. F. Milne confirmed the study would investigate this • C. Reid raised concerns about the potential for a complicated licencing arrangement for activities where three landowners and a licenser are involved. Problems have been created elsewhere in Northern Ireland where an activity can fall between two different authorities with neither prepared to address the issue. F. Milne confirmed the study would investigate this • D. Lavery raised concerns about provision for car parking at Downhill Forest and the National Trust's portion of the Demesne. All agreed that at peak times there is a shortage of car parking. A. Bratton stated that the study would look at public and private transport options to and from the study area, including nearby settlements at Castlerock, Articlave and Downhill • J. Shipman suggested a Post Code system for free access to the National Trust estate could operate for residents, like the scheme at the Giant's Causeway • M. McClure suggested there may be scope to look at a permissive path avoiding the National Trust estate and connecting Castlerock Village with Downhill Forest • M. McClure asked whether the study would conduct an audit of activities which currently take place. F. Milne confirmed the study would look at activities which take place and the capacity and suitability of the site to accommodate new activities • F. Milne indicated a key output of the study would be to make suggestions about how Downhill Demesne could be better utilised and promoted as an 'outdoor recreation product' to a wider market • A. Bratton stated that it was key that the roll of the private sector to provide outdoor recreation experiences was considered. F. Milne confirmed the study would look at this • A. Sides indicated that Loughs Agency had completed work with several private sector-based services to enhance their contribution to the conservation of areas they used • D. Lavery asked who was responsible for licensing or granting permission for use of the waterbodies within Downhill Forest. F. Milne confirmed this was unknown but would be investigated • F. Milne asked members if they had any thoughts about future changes in landownership within the Historic Demesne. Some concern was raised about the potential for new charges to access areas of the estate which are currently free under any potential new regimes. There was agreement that new charges would not be favoured • M. McClure stated that the proposed budget of £100,000 would be quite restrictive and asked was there scope for this to increase. A. Bratton confirmed that the budget would be kept under review and if there were savings elsewhere, there may be scope to increase the budget slightly. It is unlikely the budget would be lowered under any scenario 		
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4.	Prioritisation of Outdoor Recreation Project Proposals		
	<p>R. Gillen reminded members that the roll of the group was to review the received outdoor recreation project proposals and make recommendations to the LPS Board about their suitability for a Heritage Lottery Landscape Partnership Scheme and their fit with the definition of 'Outdoor Recreation'. M. McClure indicated the definition was a minimum of 30 mins exercise as outlined by the Chief Medical Officer.</p> <p>A. Bratton indicated that a summary of the project proposals and outline costs were provided. The advisory group reviewed the proposals noting making the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downhill Spatial Masterplan (and projects flowing from) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to review budget with preference to increase resource • Castlerock Community Heritage Trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to proceed to full project plan, potential for support through Sport NI Funding ○ Recommendation that elements of the Castlerock Village Improvement Scheme could be incorporated into an enhanced proposal • Ballycarton and Binevenagh Forest Spatial Masterplan (and projects flowing from) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to proceed to full project plan • Castlerock to Aghanloo Off-Road Walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to proceed with full project plan, subject to outcome of tender • Ballykelly Bank to Swann's Bridge off-road walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to proceed with full project plan, subject to discussions with Translink. May attract support from Department of Communities 'Active Living, No Limits Fund' • 'Community Outdoor Recreation Information Points' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to proceed with full project plan, with info points located at key service centres • A future for Farlow Wood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation that the project is moved to historic environment theme as it doesn't meet the definition of Outdoor Recreation • LiDAR survey of LPS area to improve orienteering product <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to proceed with full project plan on basis that the output can be used across all project themes ○ M. McClure indicated the Sport NI had secured access to Ordnance Survey NI's digital dataset for orienteers • Castlerock Surf Shack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledgement that current toilet facility is not perfect; however, there are considerable challenges associated with upgrading the facility ○ Concern that budget would not cover works required within footprint of existing facility, concern that there is no demand (existing facilities at other locations are not used for this purpose), concern that it could exacerbate issues with camper vans and camping on promenade and dunes. ○ Recommendation to investigate simple changing shelters c.3 for beach users ○ Recommendation to remove surf shack proposal 	<p>R. Gillen and A. Bratton to present and discuss project recommendations at LPS Board Meeting</p> <p>LPS Staff to prepare full project plans</p>	<p>17th December 2018</p> <p>Subject to LPS Board's direction</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Wiki <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern about overlap with Outmore NI funded by Sport NI. Recommendation to put on hold until online resource for project is clarified • Benone High Ropes Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern about displacement from private operators within 5 miles ○ Concern that site does not lend itself to the type of facility proposed, trees are not mature enough of the right type. Go Ape does not suit a pole-based system ○ Recommendation to remove proposal • ‘Broglasco Bank Walk’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to investigate route further to determine if railway line is a concern or barrier to development • Leave No Trace Training Programme for Outdoor Recreation Groups in Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation that ‘leave no trace’ forms a key training course with a focus on developing trainers within the project area. ○ Significant concern about the proposed cost given that Sport NI suggest £100 per person • Outdoor Recreation Training for Enhanced Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation that LPS team prepare training proposal with assistance from Sport NI • Castlerock Village Centre Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agreement that this project does not meet the Chief Medical Officers definition of Outdoor Recreation and should not be considered ○ Recommendation that CCA apply for Village Renewal • Gortmore and Avish Bothy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendation to proceed to full project plan • Canoe Access at Potters Burn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern about access to the site and suitability of location (open water near the Barmouth), services nearby are limited and distant from nearby settlements ○ Recommendation to remove from project plan <p>R. Gillen led a review of the conclusions. All present agreed with the recommendations to the LPS Board.</p>		
5.	Timescales, Milestones and Targets		
	<p>A. Bratton outlined the following timescales and milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LPS Board Meeting 17th December 2018 – will advise staff which projects to take forward to full project planning. ○ January to April 2019 – LPS Staff will liaise with partners on one-to-one basis to ensure full project plans are developed for review by Heritage Lottery at ‘mid-term project review’. ○ November 2019 final application submitted to Heritage Lottery ○ March 2020, anticipated start of Delivery Phase, subject to successful stage two application 		

6.	AOB		
	No additional business was recorded.		
	R. Gillen thanked members for their participation and the meeting was closed.		
8.	Date of next meeting: Meeting date and time to be confirmed by Doodle Poll early 2019.		

C. LIST OF CONSULTEES

Name	Role	Organisation/Group
Andrew Bratton	LPS Manager	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
Dan Lavery	Long Line Surf School	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
Eunan Brown	Long Line Surf School	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
Andy Bates	Translink	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
Kieran McCool	Carrowmena Activity Centre	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
John Shipman Snr	Bannside Ramblers	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
Andy Sides	Loughs Agency	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
Jay Nethercott	Ulster Gliding Club	Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands LPS
Ben Corr	Chairperson	Castlerock Community Association
Mike Jones	Community Association Member and LPS Board Member	Castlerock Community Association & Binevenagh LPS
Geoff Warke		Castlerock Presbyterian Church
Richard Gillen	Countryside & Coast Manager	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Mark Strong	Countryside & Marine Manager	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
David Jackson	Chief Executive Officer	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Mark Parker	Manager East District	Forest Service NI
Terence Reeves-Smyth	Senior Inspector	Historic Monuments Unit, Heritage Environment Division, Department for Communities

David Mann		Inland Fisheries, DAERA
Heather McLachlan	Regional Director	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Emma Cunningham	General Manager for North Coast	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Frank Devlin	Countryside Manager	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Barry Crawford	Area Ranger	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Michael Allen	Visitor Experience Manager	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Denise Murphy	Visitor Experience Officer	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Lisa Jayne Boal	Visitor Experience Officer	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Laura Laverty	Marketing & Communications Officer	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Janet Blair	Business Support Supervisor	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Lisa McCaughan	Volunteer & Community Involvement Officer	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Shannon Fraser	Curator	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Malachy Conway	Archaeologist	National Trust, Northern Ireland
Charlie Reid		North West Orienteering Association
Mike McClure	Outdoor Recreation Development Officer	Sport NI

Table 9: List of project consultees

D. PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

A public consultation meeting was held on 18th February 2019 in the Peter Thompson Hall, Castlerock. 54 people attended. Outdoor Recreation NI led a workshop style consultation with small groups discussing and communicating their thoughts and feelings in relation to three topics areas –

1. Current Situation
2. Future Development
3. Challenges/Barriers to Development

Table 10 is a summary of feedback that was collected, considered in the analysis of the Masterplan and influenced the Development Options in Section 5.

Current Situation

- Mussenden Temple – international tourists incorrectly directed via Tunnel Brae on Sat Nav
- Access is charged from Castlerock
- Safety issue of people crossing A2 to get to Forest
- Signage is poor in the forest
- No plant/tree signage in Black Glen
- Poor visitor information across entire area
- Accommodation provision is limited
- No guides in Demesne
- OSNI Activity Map excludes Castlerock & Downhill
- Informal mountain biking – site of convenience, too small for future development
- Trails – wet and muddy

Future Development

- Desire for free access to Forest to be maintained
- Continual footpath along A2 to Downhill Beach – last 50-100m needs footpath extension
- Bus service is poor – timing and regularity
- Scout licence for campsite in Forest to continue, no commercial camping
 - Addition of toilets and water in Forest
- Canoeing on Downhill Lake, permitted through licence agreement
 - Potential negative impact on birdlife
- Install interpretation/storyboards in Forest

- Improve the visitor welcome/sense of arrival to Demesne
- Use of positive messaging, e.g. 'dog walkers and muddy boots welcome'
- Fort cleared, and lake cleaned
- Freehall Road – could this be a one-way system and footpath added
- Changing facilities at both beaches
- Drone footage not permitted – this should be better signed
- Development of themed trails
- Access to waterfall
- Reinstatement of historic paths
- Heritage of area explained, and story told
- Promotion of filming locations
- Dedicated parking for the Forest
- NT communicating opening hours of Downhill Demesne and Hezlett House
- Multilingual signage
- Request stop at Downhill Train Station
- Restore the walled garden (Downhill Demesne), wheelhouse and mill race in the Forest
- Need for more accommodation in the area
- Promotion of filming locations
- Development of a 'Downhill Demesne app'
- Visitor Centre needed
- With interpretation centre and clear signage for trails
- Need for dedicated map covering all 3 areas
- Themed sculpture trail
- Local access agreement with National Trust (for partnered youth groups)
- Restore garden/graveyard around Church burial grounds

Challenges/Barriers to Development

- Current management – 3 organisations with different remits and priorities
- Public transport links
- Signage from Train Station is poor
- Budget/funding
- Charging regime is confusing and charging as Tunnel Brae is opposed
- Water quality of Downhill Lake

- Community support, e.g. local resistance to change/development
- Could be improved through better and regular communication
- Planning
- Partnership working & co-ordinated approach
- Changes to access to Forest, i.e. paying to access

Table 10: Summary of public consultation feedback

Online Survey

As part of the wider consultation plan a Downhill Demesne Masterplan Survey was hosted on Survey Monkey between 23 January 2019 and 5 March 2019. The survey was promoted through various channels:

- Consultation poster
- Websites – BCLLPS, ORNI and its product sites (e.g. WalkNI)
- Social Media – BCLLPS, NT, ORNI and its product sites (e.g. WalkNI)
- Press/Newspapers – Consultation advertised in
 - The Chronicle papers (Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballycastle and Limavady) for 2 weeks
 - The Times papers (Coleraine, Limavady & Ballymoney, and Moyle)

The survey comprised 17 primary questions with additional comment sections providing opportunity for further feedback. In total, the survey had 236 respondents.

The survey established respondent gender, age and geographic location before requesting site specific information on –

- Understanding of what comprises the historic Demesne
- Current usage patterns of various areas of the historic Demesne
- Levels of satisfaction with current visitor facilities across sites
- Thoughts on potential development and management
- Any other feedback

Summary findings are detailed below.

Recipient Demographics

- 62 % male, 38% female
- 82% aged 36 and above – largest category being the Over 55's – 31%

- 43% lived within 10 miles of the Demesne

Access and Usage patterns

- 58% understand ‘Downhill Demesne’ relates to the NT area only
- 71% also use the Forest area
- Most visitors access the site by car (80%), although 15% walk from local communities
- Dwell time is mostly between 1 and 3 hours (75%)
- Most popular recreational activity on sites is walking (75%)
- 75% accessed the NT site (Temple & Ruins)
- Car parking would primarily be in laybys by Forest Entrance, or National Trust Car Park (Lion’s Gate)
- The majority of those walking to the site access it from Castlerock
- Whilst both sites are popular, most visitors access the sites on separate visits rather than combined

Satisfaction Levels Downhill Forest

Asked to rate satisfaction levels as ‘Very Satisfied’, ‘Satisfied’, ‘Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied’, ‘Dissatisfied’, the majority of respondents chose –

- Parking - ‘Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied’
- Signage / Visitor Information - ‘Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied’
- Trails - ‘Satisfied’
- Access into the forest - ‘Satisfied’
- Accessibility of trails - ‘Satisfied’

Satisfaction Levels Downhill Ruins / NT area

Asked to rate satisfaction levels as ‘Very Satisfied’, ‘Satisfied’, ‘Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied’, ‘Dissatisfied’, the majority of respondents chose –

- Parking - ‘Satisfied’
- Signage / Visitor Information - ‘Satisfied / Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied’
- Trails - ‘Satisfied’
- Toilets - ‘Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied’
- Café facilities - ‘Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied’
- Access into the site - ‘Satisfied’

- Accessibility around the site – ‘Satisfied’
- The Gardens – ‘Satisfied’

Whilst there are no areas of major dissatisfaction at either site, there are areas where respondents believe there is room for improvement and development.

Potential Development

Most respondents agreed on a need for future development at both sites (46%). Recurring comments regarding the potential development of **Downhill Forest** focussed on the potential for –

- Better maintenance of paths
- Signage, waymarking and heritage interpretation
- Play facilities
- Additional trails and improvement of existing
- Additional bins
- Bench seating for elderly and increased accessibility
- Address access issue across busy road
- Toilets
- MTB trails / Family cycling

Throughout there was a clear desire to retain the character, sense of place and not to over-develop.

Recurring comments regarding the potential development of **Downhill Ruins/ NT area** focussed on the potential for –

- Lower cost / free access as previous
- More historical interpretation / visitor information
- More effort to repair and restore ruins
- Larger car park
- Toilets close to car park
- More picnic areas
- Better disabled access
- Enhanced trail network
- Café/ Coffee shop / small visitor centre
- Better access for public transport users

Potential Management

57% believed the historic Demesne would benefit from being developed and managed by ONE organisation.

Other Comments

Additional comments predominantly focused on National Trust management and community relations, with key points being –

- The National Trust property was previously free and the current payment structure causes some resentment.
- There is a desire for access to the Forest to remain free despite potential changes in management
- It is apparent that relations between the National Trust and the local community have deteriorated in recent years, that said, there is clearly a strong connection between the community and the sites and a desire to see it developed sensitively.

E. BUILT HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS

Scheduled Zones

SM No.	Townland	Edited Type	B File	Area (Ha)
002:006	Downhill	Enclosure	B171/91	0.820451
002:001	Downhill	Ecclesiastical site 'Dunboe'	B331/04	2.724393
002:001	Downhill	Ecclesiastical site. 'Dunboe'	B331/04	1.558589

Scheduled Monuments

No	SMR No	Edited Type	General Type	General Period	Protection	Grid Ref	Located
1	LDY002:001	CHURCH & GRAVEYARD	ECCLESIASTICAL SITE	C17TH	Scheduled	C7582035410	Located
2	LDY002:006	DUNGANNON FORT. PROMONTORY FORT:	PROMONTORY FORT	E.CHRIST.	Scheduled	C7596035040	Located
3	LDY002:011	SOUTERRAIN	SOUTERRAIN	E.CHRIST.		C7642035190	Located
4	LDY002:013	SOUTERRAIN	SOUTERRAIN	E.CHRIST.		C7620035700	Located
5	LDY002:015	BATTLE OF DUNBOE. BATTLE SITE	BATTLE SITE	MEDIEVAL		C7590035600	Unlocated

Listed Buildings

No	Reference	Date of Construction	Building Address	Extent of Listing	Current Building	Current Grade	Date of Listing	Grid Ref
1	HB03/12/007 A	1860 - 1879	1 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76753612
2	HB03/12/015 E	1780 - 1799	Mausoleum, Downhill Demesne	Mausoleum	Mausoleum	B+	22/06/1977	C75983552
3	HB03/12/031		TUNNEL AND ENTRANCE ARCHES, CASTLEROCK		TUNNEL	B	22/06/1977	C76493625
4	HB03/12/031		TUNNEL AND ENTRANCE ARCHES		TUNNEL	B	22/06/1977	C76493625
5	HB03/12/022	1820 - 1839	Woodland Cottage, 30 Springbank Road	House and garden walling	House	B1	22/06/1977	C75563529

6	HB03/12/015 J	1860 - 1879	Outbuildings, Mussenden Road	Outbuildings walling and gates	Estate Related Structures	B2	22/06/1977	C76203540
7	HB03/12/010	1860 - 1879	21 School Lane, Castlerock	Former school	House	B2	22/06/1977	C76803596
8	HB03/12/007 K	1860 - 1879	11 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobble	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76713612
9	HB03/12/007 C	1860 - 1879	3 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobble	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76743612
10	HB03/12/007 B	1860 - 1879	2 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobble	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76753612
11	HB03/12/007 I	1860 - 1879	9 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobble	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76723612
12	HB03/12/009 B	1860 - 1879	14 School Lane, Castlerock	House	House	B2	22/06/1977	C76773598

13	HB03/12/009 A	1860 - 1879	12 School Lane, Castlerock	House	House	B2	22/06/1977	C76763598
14	HB03/12/007 H	1860 - 1879	8 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & Cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76723612
15	HB03/12/007 G	1860 - 1879	7 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76733612
16	HB03/12/007 F	1860 - 1879	6 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76733612
17	HB03/12/007 J	1860 - 1879	10 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76723612
18	HB03/12/007 L	1860 - 1879	12 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76713612
19	HB03/12/007 D	1860 - 1879	4 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76743612

20	HB03/12/007 E	1860 - 1879	5 Cliff Terrace, Castlerock	House & cobbles	House	B1	22/06/1977	C76733612
21	HB03/12/015 H						<Null>	
22	HB03/12/015 H						<Null>	
23	HB03/12/015 F	1780 - 1799	Bishops Gate, 42 Mussenden Road	Arch, lodge, bridge and walling	Gates/ Screens/ Lodges	A	<Null>	C76123543
24	HB03/12/015 I	1880 - 1899	The Keepers Lodge, Mussenden Road	House	House	B2	22/06/1977	C76143548
25	HB03/12/015 G	1860 - 1879	Black Glen Lodge Cottage, Tunnel Brae	House, boundary wall, piers & gates.	House	B2	22/06/1977	C76493612

26	HB03/12/015 C	1780 - 1799	Walled Garden & Dovecote / Ice-house, Downhill Demesne	Walled Garden & Dovecote/Ice-house	Estate Related Structures	B+	10/09/1987	C75543584
27	HB03/12/015 A	1760 - 1779	Downhill Palace, Mussenden Road	House, Upper Yard & Lower Yards and walling	Country House	B1	22/06/1977	C75853590
28	HB03/12/021	1780 - 1799	Drumagully Bridge, Burrenmore Rd	Bridge	Bridge	B+	25/09/1978	C75653553
29	HB03/12/015 J	1860 - 1879	Outbuildings, Mussenden Road	Outbuildings walling and gates	Estate Related Structures	B2	22/06/1977	C76203540
30	HB03/12/015 B	1780 - 1799	Mussenden Temple, Downhill	Former library	Estate Related Structures	A	25/05/1976	C75833627

31	HB03/12/015 D	1780 - 1799	Lion Gate Lodge, Downhill	Pillars, screen walls & gates	Gates/ Screens/ Lodges	B+	14/03/1978	C75683565
32	HB03/12/015 F	1780 - 1799	Bishops Gate, 42 Mussenden Road	Arch, lodge, bridge and walling	Gates/ Screens/ Lodges	A	<Null>	C76123543
33	HB03/12/015 G	1860 - 1879	Black Glen Lodge Cottage, Tunnel Brae	House, boundary wall, piers & gates.	House	B2	22/06/1977	C76493612

F. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Rural Development Programme (2014-20)

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) is jointly funded through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and is administered in Northern Ireland by DAERA. It supports a range of projects with the aim of developing the economic potential of rural areas.

Rural Tourism Scheme

The Rural Tourism Scheme supports capital projects which provide long-term tourism impact for the community in the rural area.

The scheme has a total budget of £10M. Small scale infrastructure is defined as a project receiving a minimum grant of £250,000 and maximum grant up to £500,000 at 75% level of support. The remaining 25% match funding must be at least 5% cash from the applicant's own resources and contribution in kind (not to include buildings and or land) to a maximum of 20%.

Projects will be typically:

- capital infrastructure
- provide increase in out-of-state visitors
- job creating (during capital build and after completion)
- promote / encourage a partnership approach with other statutory organisations sharing a common goal
- flagship unique type / notable / high impact rural tourism focused actions
- align with the aims and objectives of Tourism NI and should as priority target out of state visitors.

The following should be taken into consideration:

- The scheme is open to local authorities and local authorities in partnership with organisations operating within the Community and Voluntary / Third sector or Public sector
- Evidence of match funding commitment must be in place at the time of application. All current match funding rules apply e.g. no other EU funding can be used as match.

Further eligibility information available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/rural-tourism-scheme>. Although this programme has now officially closed to new projects, contact should be made with the Programme's Manager in case there is any slippage funding.

The National Lottery Community Fund

People and Communities

The 'People and Communities' programme is designed to support projects that work with local people to bring about positive changes in a community. Projects must meet the three key themes of:

- **People-led:** local people are meaningfully involved in development, design and delivery
- **Strengths-based:** supports people and communities to build on knowledge, skills and experience they already have to make the changes they want
- **Connected:** projects demonstrate a good understanding of other activities and services in the community and how the project complements these.

Grants range from £10,000 to £500,000 for projects lasting 1-5 years. Grants for small scale capital projects is capped at £100,000 but up to 100% of costs.

Eligible applicants are voluntary or community groups such as a charity, co-operative, social enterprise or community interest company. Partnerships are also eligible where the lead partner is one of the above.

The programme is open for applications all year round.

For more information see - tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/people-and-communities

Awards for All Northern Ireland

Awards for All is an open programme, therefore **there are no closing dates** for applications.

Awards for All provides funding to support work with local people to bring about positive changes in communities.

The programme is open to:

- voluntary or community organisations
- schools
- statutory bodies

The aim is to improve people's lives and strengthen community activity by helping:

- people to participate in their communities
- people to develop their skills and broaden their experience
- people to work towards better and safer communities

- improve people's physical and mental health and well-being.

Eligible projects can apply for grants of between **£500 and £10,000**.

For more information see: tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/awards-for-all-northern-ireland

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

The National Lottery Grants for Heritage: £3,000 – £10,000

Suitable for:

- not-for-profit organisations
- private owners of heritage

Project length: up to one year.

Deadlines: There are no deadlines.

The National Lottery Grants for Heritage: £10,000 - £100,000

Suitable for:

- not-for-profit organisations
- private owners of heritage and partnerships

Deadlines: There are no deadlines.

The National Lottery Grants for Heritage: £100,000-£250,000

Suitable for:

- not-for-profit organisations
- partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations

Deadlines: 2019/20 Deadlines are quarterly and can be found below:

- March 2019 for a decision in June 2019
- 28 May 2019 for a decision in September 2019
- 20 August 2019 for a decision in November 2019

- 19 November 2019 for decision in March 2020

Assessment process: Assessment of applications take 12 weeks and following assessment, is assigned to a quarterly committee meeting. Applicant contribution: At least 5% of the project costs.

The National Lottery Grants for Heritage: £250,000 - £5 million

Suitable for:

- not-for-profit organisations
- partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations

Before applying: Submit an expression of interest form and The National Lottery will let the applicant know if they are invited to apply.

Project length:

- development phase up to two years
- delivery phase up to five years

Deadlines are quarterly and can be found below:

- March 2019 for a decision in June 2019
- 28 May 2019 for a decision in September 2019
- 20 August 2019 for a decision in November 2019
- 19 November 2019 for decision in March 2020

Assessment process: Assessment of applications will take 12 weeks and following assessment, it will be assigned to a quarterly committee meeting.

Contribution: Contribute of at least 5% of project costs for grants up to £1million and at least 10% for grants of £1m or more.

For more information: heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-grant-heritage

Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland

Lloyds Bank Foundation for Northern Ireland which has contributed £34.8m to the Voluntary and Community sector over the past 31 years has been re-named the Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland.

The Community Grants Programme supports charitable organisations within Northern Ireland to enable people, who are disadvantaged or with special needs, to participate actively in their communities

The programme is open to registered charities with an income of less than £1 million. The Average Grant is currently between £3,000-£4,000.

For more information see halifaxfoundationni.org/programmes/community-grant-programme

Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme

Live Here Love Here is an annual Small Grants Scheme delivered by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful in partnership with Local Councils, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Choice Housing, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and McDonald's.

The small grants scheme provides support to volunteer projects that:

- Use innovative ways to reduce littering and dog fouling
- Improve how a local environment is looked after, whether urban, rural or coastal
- Contribute to the development of civic pride within a community with a focus on environmental improvements
- Enhance or attract tourism to a community through environmental improvements

Grants are available from £500 to £5,000 and are open to volunteer and community groups, all school and third level education organisations, youth groups and sports clubs undertaking civic pride projects in supporting Council areas.

The Small Grants Scheme is also open to all Housing Association and Housing Executive residents with support from Choice Housing, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and McDonald's throughout all council areas in Northern Ireland.

Local Councils and businesses have the option to partner with Live Here Love Here as a commitment to enable people to secure tangible benefits and build stronger community spirit. Their support to

Live Here Love Here will help amplify the campaign's efforts to revitalise and reenergise neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland.

The scheme forms part of the wider Live Here Love Here programme, which includes an innovative media campaign and exciting volunteering opportunities to encourage participation all year round.

The next round of the Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme will be launching on 16th April 2019.

For more information see www.livehereandlovehere.org.