

National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040

INPUT FROM FORBAIRT NA ROSANN

DUNGLOE, COUNTY DONEGAL

INTRODUCTION

Forbairt na Rosann is a publicly funded community development organisation for Dungloe in West Donegal. We have developed community facilities such as the Dungloe Rover Walk, the Community Pitch, commercial letting units and oversee Pobal funded projects including the Community Employment Scheme.

APPROACH

Our approach has been to view the NPF and NDP from two perspectives:

- 1) development of existing assets as amenities for local communities for health and wellbeing.
- 2) encourage tourism to Donegal, extending and building upon the very successful Wild Atlantic Way.

We are also of the view that much can be done at relatively low cost per project and per unit of population (Donegal's population in the last Census is 158,755).

PROPOSED INITIATIVES – County Donegal

1. Creation of a **Donegal Greenway** by converting the derelict railway tracks from Letterkenny to Burtonport, c80 km. A recent report by Sustrans in March 2017 believes that this can be converted into an end to end cycle path and walkway for €8m. this walkway will pass numerous lakes, the two iconic mountains of Errigal and Muckish and cross over two major viaducts at Feymore and Owencarrow. Along the 80kms of track are many embankments, cuttings, station buildings and

gate houses which make for an interesting and attractive heritage trail. Roughly 25% of the track is already walkable but parts would need an upgrade for cyclists.

2. Creation of a series of **Coastal and Cliff Paths**, analogous to the very successful and world leading Pembrokeshire Coastal Path in Wales. Donegal is blessed with hundreds of kilometres of spectacular coastline with high sea cliffs and beautiful strands. Very little capital, other than safety fencing signage and where necessary a safe walking surface, is required to transform these coastal assets and headlands into a defined amenity.
3. Creation of a **Maritime Heritage Trail** with viewing points, fixed binocular/telescope positions and signage for islands and coastal features. Alongside 2. Above, there is considerable scope to add maritime heritage trails with signage, viewing points to pick out where naval battles were fought, where Armada vessels foundered, where ships were wrecked and to point out the islands and headlands. This type of project is again relatively inexpensive, requiring community heritage input and a structured approach at county and national level.
4. Creation a series of **Hill Walking Centres** for Donegal, for example below Errigal mountain. Hill walking is becoming more and more popular. There are also smaller hills across the county of Donegal which if properly accessible and well signed would provide a mix of amenities for walkers, including less demanding climbs.
5. Instead of building marinas, provide **shore and inland facilities to enable boats to be taken into and out of the water** more easily and stored on land. We acknowledge that it is very expensive to build marinas and difficult to maintain their

financial viability after they are built. However, it is relatively inexpensive to provide simple boat retrieval and storage facilities. Donegal with its very long coastline, many islands and an interior that was once called 'The Land of Lakes' has a comparative advantage in marine tourism, angling and pleasure boating on lakes and rivers.

6. Creation of **Island Visitor Centres** for **Tory** and **Arranmore** islands. There are two inhabited islands off the Donegal coast are deserving of much more in the way of facilities for tourism. A Visitor Centre cum Tourism Centre would on an ongoing basis help to develop the tourism product on the island while at the same time providing an Interpretative Centre. We have in mind the kind of visitor centre that exists in the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare.
7. Provision of **basic facilities on the smaller, uninhabited islands**, e.g. toilets, drinking water and basic shelters.

PROPOSED INITIATIVE – at the National level

Road access to Donegal is poor, although it has greatly improved in the last 20 years. It would be of benefit to Donegal and the other peripheral areas if Primary Routes were upgraded to dual carriageway standard. There is, excluding the Cork-Limerick road that is going to be upgraded to Motorway standard, at a cost of c€1bn, c1,450 km of Primary Routes. The cost of upgrade of these routes to dual carriageway would be c. €10.8bn. When you add the cost of four bridge crossings on the Shannon (3) and Boyne (1), the overall cost is likely to be c.€12bn. As part of Ireland's post Brexit readjustment, the EU may be willing to contribute 40% of this figure. The net figure of €7.2bn over 12 years would come to c€600m per year. Initially

the routes to the southern ports, e.g. Rosslare, Waterford, Cork and Foynes, should be targeted.

SUMMARY

Forbairt na Rosann has a track record going back over 20 years in developing value for money, cost effective community projects. We believe that with the same approach much can be achieved from developing the pre-existing coastal and inland assets of Donegal.

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