

AN EARAGAIL

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN




DRAFT REPORT

THANK YOU

The Integrated Management Plan is the outcome a four-month, iterative process of gathering, synthesising, and validating information with a range of partners about how best to look after Errigal whilst promoting enjoyment of its special qualities. Building on the outcomes of the three-year ASCENT Project, it followed a deliberative, highly participative process of facilitated engagement with a broad range of interested individuals and organisations.

We thank all those, listed opposite¹, who participated in the process by attending workshops, one-to-one meetings and focus group discussions. Special thanks to Forbairt Dhún Láiche who hosted site visits, meetings, provided information and shared their experience, expertise and ideas with the project team. Thanks also to Donegal County Council and the ASCENT Project Coordinator for their advice and guidance over the course of the study.

¹ NOTE: within the context of GDPR, this listing of consultees will be amended in the final report to remove the names of individuals but retain, where relevant, the names of their respective organisations/associations.

A landscape photograph showing a large lake in the middle ground, surrounded by rolling hills and mountains under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, there's a grassy slope with some small houses. A large green circle is on the left side, containing text. White geometric lines, resembling a wireframe or a map overlay, are drawn across the lower right portion of the image.

“To aim for the highest point is not the only way to climb a mountain, nor is a narrative of siege and assault the only way to write about one.”

Robert Macfarlane, ‘Landmarks’.



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Executive Summary

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‘It has stood for aeons as a bulwark to Atlantic storms, blizzards, deep ice-age cold and grinding ice sheets. Its summit is made of hard stuff; its resistant quartzite is lined and craggy and broken, piling up like a collar around its wide base; it’s certainly the worse for wear but still exhibits real beauty.’²

Value

At 751 metres above sea level, the quartzite peak of Errigal – an Earagail - dominates the landscape of the north west of county Donegal. Located within a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), it comprises a complex geology of schist, quartzite and limestone while its surrounding area supports a range of habitats including blanket bog, wet and dry heaths and exposed rock and scree. It is a place of exceptional botanical and zoological value with a wide range of plant and animal species including many which are rare or under threat. What is particularly significant about the area is the sheer extent of its relatively unmodified habitat,

including within the SAC, the largest area of intact blanket bog in the north-west of Ireland. Its significant natural heritage is complemented by a wealth of cultural assets and attributes which trace the story of settlement from earliest times to the present day. Located within the Donegal Gaeltacht, its place names, folklore, oral traditions and vital communities add immeasurably to the distinctiveness of this area and its unique sense of place.

Purpose and Intent

As its popularity has grown over the years, a key challenge for Errigal has been unregulated access to its summit and associated upland areas which, in combination with natural erosion, has resulted in the degradation of the natural resource and the loss of important habitat. In response to these challenges, the Errigal Stakeholders - a partnership of national, regional and local interests - have been working together to remedy this situation. Hugely enabled and supported by the ASCENT Project, the partners are concerned to find new ways of looking after this special area; develop fresh perspectives on promoting its enjoyment and exploring responsive approaches to sustaining its nearby community of Dunlewey for whom this place is home. This management plan for Errigal provides a strategic framework to guide decision-making and integrate interventions to protect the upland environment, foster public

understanding of its significance and develop its surrounding economy. Built on the principles of accountability, inclusivity and collaboration, the integrated management plan will ensure that policy imperatives, community resources and public investment are marshalled to best effect.

Vision

The plan is a guide for all the partners as they work collaboratively to realise the vision of ‘facilitating the responsible enjoyment of Errigal in a manner that protects the mountain’s special qualities and benefits the local community’. It is the outcome of a four-month, iterative process of gathering, synthesising, and validating information with a range of partners about how best to look after Errigal whilst promoting enjoyment of its special qualities. Building on the outcomes of the three-year ASCENT Project, it followed a purposefully deliberative, highly participative process of facilitated engagement with a broad range of interested individuals and organisations. The resulting plan seeks to balance the economic, social, cultural and environmental values that are critical for the long term health of the area’s ecosystems, economy and community. Key to this is the need to continue to foster a collaborative approach to supporting the decision-making of the Errigal stakeholders for the benefit of those who visit, live in or have a role to play in shaping the future of this area.

² Guilfoyle M. Go walk: Mount Errigal, Co Donegal. The Irish Times. Fri, Aug 15, 2014.

Key Strategies

In realising the vision, **three key strategies** and supporting objectives are recommended. Building on the outcomes of all the conversations had and the work to date, these interconnected and mutually reinforcing strategies and objectives provide overall direction for protecting and strengthening the destination. They are supported by a series of initiatives and detailed actions which are intended to focus efforts and resources towards achieving the vision for Errigal.

The three key strategies are:

01

Restore and Protect

Maintain the ecological integrity of the mountain.

Building on the momentum of the ASCENT Project, this key strategy provides the primary guidance for restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity of Errigal as a first priority in managing the mountain. It works to support and restore the 'favourable condition' of the natural features and ecological processes by restoring the upland habitats; tackling head-on the path to the summit; equipping those charged with looking after the mountain with the skills required to effectively monitor change and responsibly mitigate impacts; and encouraging people – particularly visitors – to connect with the mountain and take responsibility for their role in enabling it to heal itself.

02

Resource and Equip

Achieve success through continued partnership working and collaboration.

A key consideration here was the need to define a formal management structure for the Errigal Stakeholders to enable them to co-ordinate the delivery and monitor the impact of the integrated management plan. Given the protected status of Errigal and much of the surrounding destination and informed by the experience of others in similar situations, a 'collaborative adaptive management' model is recommended. This means that, as the ASCENT project has ably demonstrated, the management regime on the ground needs to continually respond to the learning gleaned from actions taken on the ecosystem being affected. A combination of credible science, collaboration and a focus on outcomes is essential because conservation and resource management issues are characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, complexity and interconnectedness. One of the options being put forward to operationalise this approach would see the transformation over time of the loose affiliation of partners into a more formal arrangement whereby an Errigal Partnership Trust (EPT) - with a clear terms of reference, an independent chair, a project board, a project manager and dedicated time-bound working groups - is charged with taking this integrated management plan forward.

03

Sustain and Grow

Realise Dunlewey's ambition to become a destination hub and gateway to Errigal.

An essential aspect of managing Errigal is to develop nearby Dunlewey to enable the community there not only to provide a key role in orientating visitors to the mountain, but also to derive benefit from those visitors and grow its visitor economy. Within the context of promoting sustainable access to and around the destination – in particular providing visitors with a safe, alternative means of accessing the mountain path – attention is focused on the opportunities to;

- provide visitors with different perspectives on the mountain from key vantage points along an interconnected network of trails and paths
- experience deeper encounters with the history and cultural heritage of the surrounding area through the development of a suite of guided itineraries
- participate in activity tourism, through for example, activating the lakes for water based activities
- celebrate the significance of this place through a curated calendar of events that not only showcase the natural beauty of the area and efforts underway to keep it that way but also invite visitors to stay longer and experience the cultural heritage and contemporary relevance of this special destination.



A New Dynamic

A key aspect of developing the integrated management plan is not only to secure the long term restoration and maintenance of damaged upland habitats but also to facilitate the evolution of a new dynamic – a way of looking after, enjoying and celebrating Errigal - that is;

- strategic – by having a vision for Errigal and its connected habitats that is based on sound science, stakeholder knowledge and local values
- adaptive – by building into the management regime the capacity to respond to new realities over time – whether these are climate-induced or as a result of the arrival of more and more visitors – with the importance of ‘learning by doing’ remaining a hallmark of this initiative
- participatory – by involving all those who need to be involved in ways which will meet their expectations, facilitate their insights and inputs, secure their continued cooperation and promote a shared responsibility through cooperative governance.

Above all it needs to be recognised that while the merits of collaboration have been widely accepted, ‘partnerships’ between stakeholders require a large investment in time and relationship building and, crucially, a commitment on the part of all of the partners to engage consistently, collectively and coherently on this shared agenda for Errigal.





SECTION 1

Introduction



Background

At 751 metres above sea level, the quartzite peak of Errigal – an Earagail - dominates the landscape of the north west of county Donegal. As its popularity has grown over the years, a key challenge for Errigal has been unregulated access to its summit and associated upland areas which, in combination with natural erosion, has resulted in the degradation of the natural resource and the loss of important habitat. In response to this challenge and prompted by the local community in nearby Dunlewey, The Errigal Stakeholders Committee³ was established in 2012 to look at ways to address the deteriorating condition of the mountain. In 2015, following an assessment of the route network, prioritised recommendations for the management, repair and maintenance of the path network were developed and in 2016 Donegal County Council sought European funding to take the initiative forward.

As a result of these efforts, in 2016, five European regions came together as partners to find ways to protect and manage a number of

their much loved – and much visited - upland sites and natural areas. ASCENT⁴ - see www.ascent-project.eu - a transnational initiative funded under the INTERREG VB Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme and the ERDF sought to realise the vision of 'generating sustainable communities through transnational cooperation'. It enabled partners in Finland, Iceland, Norway and Ireland – North and South - to work collaboratively - transnationally and locally - to address the impact of increasing numbers of visitors on fragile upland environments within their respective territories. The initiative was concerned with finding new ways of looking after these special areas; developing fresh perspectives on promoting their enjoyment and exploring, where relevant, responsive approaches to sustaining nearby communities for whom these places are home. Errigal was included as one of the seven participating sites⁵ and Donegal County Council took the lead in managing the ASCENT initiative.

3 The Errigal Stakeholders comprise Donegal County Council, Forbairt Dhún Láíche, National Parks and Wildlife Service, An Taisce, Mountaineering Ireland, Gartán Outdoor Education and Training Centre, Fáilte Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Roinn na Gaeltachta and Donegal Local Development Company (Rural Recreation Officer).

4 ASCENT – an acronym for Apply Skills and Conserve our Environment with New Tools.

5 The other sites include Slieve Donard & Slieve Gullion (Northern Ireland), Eldraun & Ulfarsfell (Iceland), Hossa (Finland) and Trolltunga (Norway).



Why a Management Plan?

It was important for all the partners not only to address immediate concerns relative to restoring the ecological integrity of the respective sites through appropriate path provision, but also to take the longer term management of the wider environment into account. Management planning and the articulation of a bespoke management plan for each location was therefore a key consideration for each of the partners and a fundamental requirement of the initiative overall.

Who is it for?

The management plan is a guide for all the partners as they work collaboratively to realise the vision of

‘facilitating the responsible enjoyment of Errigal in a manner that protects the mountain’s special qualities and benefits the local community’

The plan will be reviewed and updated to reflect changing circumstances, priorities, and market conditions. Results will be tracked and learning outcomes will inform future implementation activities, thereby optimising their effectiveness in restoring the ecological integrity of the mountain, promoting the enjoyment of its special qualities and increasing economic, social and cultural benefits for the entire community.

Key Imperatives

The Integrated Management Plan for Errigal seeks to balance the economic, social, cultural and environmental values that are critical for the long term health of the area’s ecosystems, economy and community. Key to this is the need to continue to foster a collaborative approach to supporting the decision- making of the Errigal stakeholders for the benefit of those who visit, live in or have a role to, play in shaping the future of this area.

The integrated management plan provides a strategic framework to guide decision-making and launch initiatives that will integrate interventions to protect the environment, foster public understanding and develop the visitor economy. Built on the principles of accountability, inclusivity and collaboration, the management plan will ensure that policy imperatives, community resources and public investment are deployed to best effect.

The plan outlines the vision, key strategies, objectives and actions for the area which are designed to:

- Assist Donegal County Council, the Errigal Stakeholders Committee and the local community in its core objective of managing the resource
- Balance tourism, recreation, cultural, social, economic interests with environmental needs and responsibilities
- Ensure that the integrity of the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation, the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains Special Protection Area and the proposed Natural Heritage Area is maintained and taken into account
- Define and propose a formal management structure for the Errigal Stakeholders Committee with membership recommendations, leadership and agency roles to co-ordinate delivery of actions identified in the integrated management plan.
- Adopt a highly participative approach to developing the management plan
- Address the issues and propose solutions through a prioritised set of objectives, actions and recommendations with an indicative timescale and responsibility for implementation
- Steer the work of the Errigal Stakeholders Committee in the medium term
- Generate an ASCENT project legacy in the management capacity or management framework of the Errigal Stakeholders in addressing on-going and meeting future needs and challenges.

At a Glance

Following this introduction;

Section 2. A Distinctive Destination summarises the significance of the area and explores the key challenges it faces as well as the opportunities it presents.

Section 3. Realising The Vision, the vision is introduced along with the three key strategies and supporting objectives which have been developed to deliver on its ambition. Building on the outcomes of all the conversations had and the work to date, these provide overall direction for protecting and strengthening the destination.

Section 4. Gearing Up, informed by an assessment of what happens elsewhere, consideration is given to the particular challenge around the next steps in taking this initiative forward – the articulation of a more formal management structure for the Errigal Stakeholders Committee - one that is equipped to realise the vision for Errigal, share the responsibility of its environmental stewardship and realise benefits for the place, its people and its visitors.

Section 5. Taking Action, the key strategies and objectives are presented along with the supporting actions which are intended to focus efforts and resources towards achieving the vision for Errigal. Each objective and its associated outcome is set out along with indicative timescales and responsibility for achievement.

The three key strategies are:

01

Restore and Protect: maintain the ecological integrity of the mountain.

02

Resource and Equip: achieve success through continued partnership working and collaboration.

03

Sustain and Grow: realise Dunlewey's ambition to become a destination hub and gateway to Errigal.

SECTION 2

A Distinctive Destination



A Special Place

Errigal is the highest point within the Derryveagh mountain range which straddles the central area of north west Donegal. Known locally as the ‘Seven Sisters’, the range extends from Errigal, northeast towards Muckish Mountain. To the south of Errigal stand the ‘fine ice-carved cliffs’⁶ of the Poisoned Glen while, nestled to the south west, the village of Dunlewey sits overlooking Dunlewey Lough and Lough Nacung Upper.

Errigal is located within the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC), an extensive mountainous area, which also includes Slieve Snaght (678 m). With its complex geology of schist, quartzite, granodiorite and limestone, the area around Errigal is home to a range of habitats including blanket bog, North Atlantic wet heaths, European dry heaths, Alpine and Boreal heaths as well as exposed rock and scree. The nearby lakes – Lough Nacung Upper, Dunlewey Lough and Altan Lough to the north east of Errigal are included within the SAC.

Also designated a Special Protection Area – Derryveagh and Glendowan SPA - and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA), it is a place of exceptional botanical and zoological value and interest with a wide range of plant and animal species including many which are rare or under threat. What is particularly significant about the area is the sheer extent of its relatively unmodified habitat, including within the SAC, the largest area of intact blanket bog in the north-west of Ireland.

The SAC and SPA include Glenveagh National Park, the full extent of which includes a portion of land on the southern slopes of Errigal. As such it comes under the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), whilst the remainder of the upland area is held in commonage. NPWS is the authority with responsibility for, amongst other matters, the protection of the habitats and species identified for conservation within SACs, SPAs and NHAs and therefore has a legal obligation to ensure that they are kept in a ‘favourable condition’.

Apart from its significant natural heritage, this area, located within the Donegal Gaeltacht, boasts a wealth of cultural heritage. From prehistoric flint finds on the shores of Dunlewey Lough to the traces of ecclesiastical enclosures and crannógs of the Early Christian period through to the clachans and bothógs of the Post Medieval period and the 19th century architecture of the Dunlewey Estate, the story of settlement can be traced from earliest times to the present day. Many of these recorded sites owe their origin to the natural landscape corridor provided by the Poisoned Glen which, along with Lough Nacung Upper and Lough Nacung Lower, facilitated safe passage between the Derryveagh Mountains to the south, and Errigal, Aghla More, Aghla Beg and Muckish Mountains to the north.⁷ Other aspects of the cultural heritage such as place names⁸, folklore and oral traditions add immeasurably to the distinctiveness of this area and its unique sense of place.

One of the area’s most important assets is its vibrant, motivated and active community. Over many years, Forbairt Dhún Láiche (FDL) has been instrumental in initiating and managing a wide range of projects designed to protect the ecological integrity and natural beauty of the area, generate employment opportunities and promote the Irish language and cultural heritage of the area.

As a member of the Errigal Stakeholders Committee, FDL has played a key role in raising the profile of the area. In addition, the Errigal Stakeholders Committee which brings together partners from FDL, Donegal County Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, An Taisce, Mountaineering Ireland, Gartán Outdoor Education and Training Centre, Fáilte Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Roinn na Gaeltachta and Donegal Local Development Company has been, since 2012, of immense importance in focusing collective attention on the challenges which Errigal faces and the steps needed to find remedies and, more recently, in helping to deliver the ASCENT activities.

⁶ Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, Site Synopsis, Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, 2013. Available at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002047>

⁷ Community Heritage Plan for Dunlewey, Co Donegal, John Cronin & Associates and Dedalus Architecture, 2018

⁸ A comprehensive study of place names from the area has been compiled by Forbairt Dhún Láiche.



Key Challenges

Mountain climbing and hill walking have long been associated with Errigal and its neighbouring upland areas. To measure the level and rate of change, visual and spatial analysis exercises were conducted by the ASCENT project team. Using GIS technology, visible scar lines on the landscape for 1995, 2005 and 2015, based on historical aerial photography, were mapped. This clearly illustrated the extent to which the network of access routes has grown, particularly on the south eastern side of the mountain, with implications for the blanket bog and the ridge to the summit.

Apart from assessing change over time through GIS enabled visual and spatial analysis, other methods of assessing the nature and scale of access included the analysis of footfall data through the installation of counters to quantify pressure on the mountain; an assessment of the current condition of the mountain through on-site condition survey work and the completion of a habitat review as well as visitor monitoring surveys.

Key aspects of the visitor monitoring surveys included determining the level of visitation to the site and gaining insights into visitor perceptions, experiences and opinions of those visiting Errigal. In terms of some of the key findings;

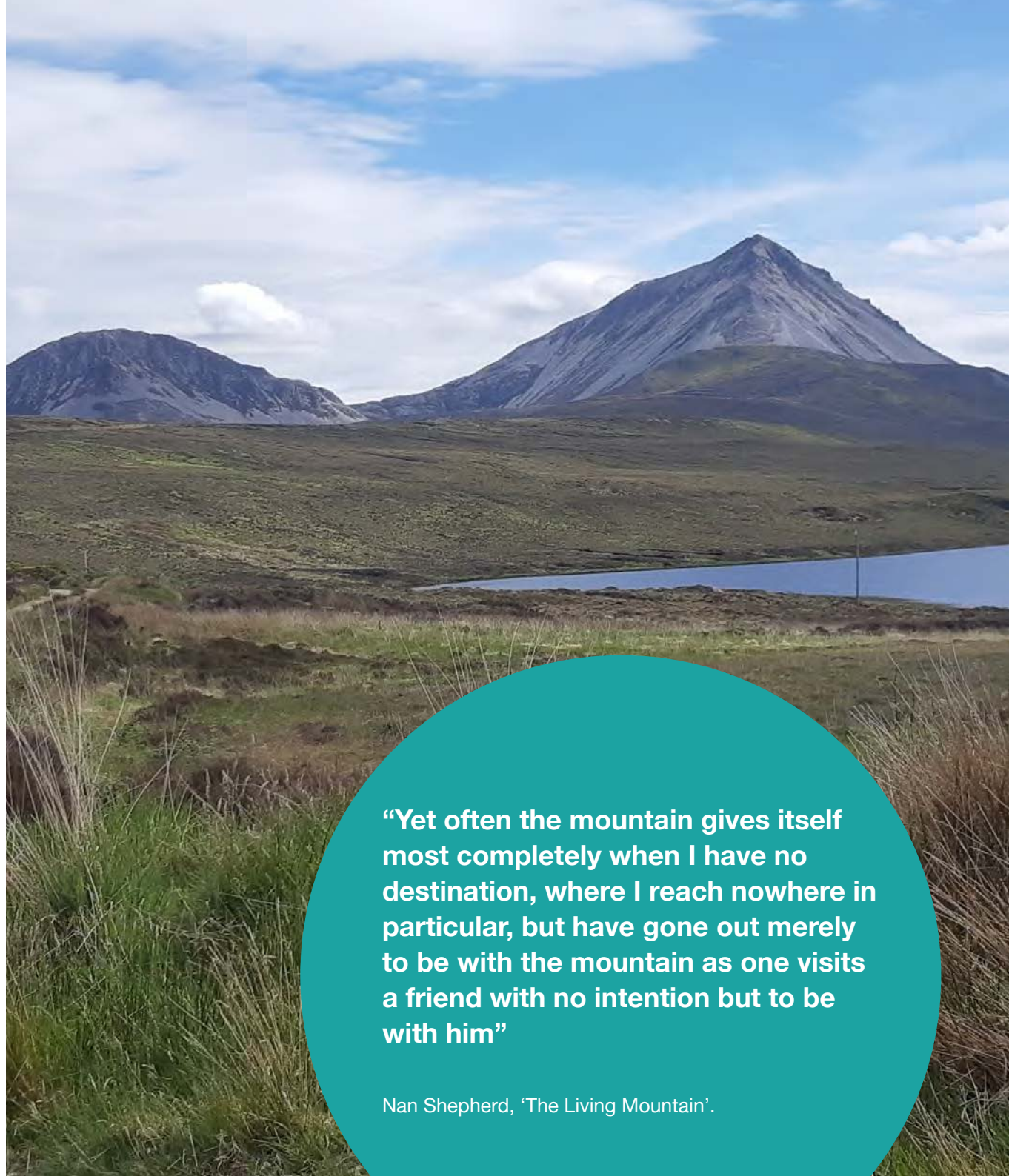
- 80% of visitors originated from the island of Ireland, 16% from the EU and 4% were of international origin
- the primary motivation to climb was related to the scenery and landscape of the area
- awareness of the mountain – ‘first hearing’ about Errigal - was attributed to word of mouth and living locally
- 37% of visitors had little or no hiking experience
- 80% managed to reach the summit of which 47% took the same route on descent.
- a high level of return visits to Errigal Mountain was recorded
- the vast majority of visitors were staying overnight and mostly between 3 to 5 nights
- most were staying with Friends & Relatives, followed by commercial accommodation – a hotel or a holiday home
- the average spend was €59 per person
- top attractions visited were Glenveagh National Park, then Dunlewey Lake and Village and the Wild Atlantic Way Signature & Discovery Points
- visitors participated in many activities, with walking and hiking being the most popular.
- Beyond visitor impact, other key challenges identified during the course of the consultation process included;
- the lack of information/orientation for walkers and more generally
- the impact of events, in particular high volume, single occasion endurance/charity events on the mountain
- the overwhelming reliance on the car for accessing the destination
- the condition, speed, safety and walkability of the main route to/through Dunlewey



Key Opportunities

Key opportunities identified by consultees included;

- the proximity of key demand generators including Glenveagh National Park, Ards Forest Park (Coillte) and Doe Castle (OPW)
- the adjacency of the Wild Atlantic Way and the area's location within its extended scope
- the positive disposition of Fáilte Ireland towards the destination
- existing tourism infrastructure including an accommodation base – a hotel, hostel; self-catering, guest houses
- the overall accessibility of the destination and plans for an Airport link to include a stop at Dunlewey
- a wealth of cultural heritage and a number of already established trails
- a fantastic natural environment – mountains, valleys, woods and water
- scope to activate the lakes and the positive disposition of the ESB plus the prospect of private sector interest
- the positive disposition and track record of collaboration between the Errigal Stakeholders
- an active local community



“Yet often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, where I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him”

Nan Shepherd, 'The Living Mountain'.

SECTION 3

Realising the Vision



A Shared Vision

The vision for Errigal reflects the distinctiveness of the destination and the ambition of the Errigal Stakeholders to;

”

‘facilitate the responsible enjoyment of Errigal in a manner that protects the mountain’s special qualities and benefits the local community’

In realising this vision the following key strategies are proposed.

KEY STRATEGY 1:

RESTORE AND PROTECT:

Maintain the ecological integrity of the mountain.

Errigal’s prominent visibility and distinct physical presence have greatly contributed to the mountain’s symbolic status. It has a unique set of geological, environmental, historical, cultural and, for some, spiritual attributes. It is not surprising then that this iconic mountain continues to lure visitors and residents alike. It is estimated that Errigal attracts over 15,000 visitors a year and its appeal is growing.

One of the key imperatives is to restore the ecological integrity of the mountain, in particular those parts which have been damaged by the tramp of many feet. Critical to this is the long term maintenance and restoration of damaged habitats in the Natura 2000 site. This, in the first instance, will be achieved, by the introduction of the new path which needs to be seen within the wider context of promoting sustainable access to the mountain.

A further consideration relates to developing a responsive environmental management system with the capacity to adapt to new realities over time – whether these changes are climate-induced or as a result of the arrival of more and more visitors. There needs to be a way of safeguarding the resource into the future, perhaps developing limits of acceptable change, or indeed abstaining altogether from certain types of activity such as, for example, the hosting of particular types of endurance events. The

mountain needs to be given time to heal itself, time to recover, whilst still providing people with opportunities to enjoy it whether up close or from a distance.

Collaborative adaptive management merges three essential features required for effective management—science, collaboration, and a focus on outcomes. As the ASCENT programme has ably demonstrated, these features are essential because conservation and resource management issues are characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, complexity and interconnectedness. As a result, many resource management decisions present information challenges, coordination challenges, action challenges, and challenges of understanding and measuring results.

This approach is not new. The ASCENT programme has been invaluable in facilitating access to good practice, robust science, learning from others, engaging the community and finding ways to solve problems with the benefit of local and international expertise. Not only does this learning journey need to continue but it needs to be mainstreamed and supported by governance arrangements – as detailed in section 4 of this report - that will enable the Errigal Stakeholders to realise their vision of ‘facilitating the responsible enjoyment of Errigal in a manner that protects the mountain’s special qualities and benefits the local community’; share in the responsibility of its environmental stewardship and realise benefits for the place, its people and its visitors.

Training, know-how and the transference of



skills will be key to this – not only in terms of the immediate work around path creation but also in relation to on-going path management; monitoring of pressures, and evaluation of the interventions.

Building on the momentum of the ASCENT project, this key strategy provides the primary guidance for restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity of Errigal as a first priority in managing the mountain. It works to support and restore the ‘favourable condition’ of the natural features and ecological processes by tackling head-on the path to the summit; equipping those charged with its care with the skills required to effectively monitor change and responsively mitigate impacts; and encouraging visitors to connect with the mountain and take responsibility for their role in enabling it to heal itself.

Three objectives support this strategy:

- **Objective 1.1:** Promote sustainable access to the mountain.
- **Objective 1.2:** Develop a responsive and adaptive management regime.
- **Objective 1.3:** Facilitate opportunities for training and skills development in path development, management and maintenance.

The **desired outcomes** of this key strategy are:

- A sustainable Errigal ascent.
- Improvements in the functionality, adaptability and resilience of the mountain’s ecosystems.
- Increased community capacity.

KEY STRATEGY 2:

RESOURCE AND EQUIP:

Achieve success through continued partnership working and collaboration.

‘Collaborative approaches to natural resource management are broadly promoted as promising ways to deal with complex and challenging environmental issues’.⁹

It has long been recognised that where environmental issues impact multiple parties with diverse interests, collaboration between the parties facilitates better outcomes. Collaboration promotes increased trust between the partners and the management decisions which result are accepted with greater legitimacy.

A key consideration during the course of the preparation of the management plan was the need to define a formal management structure for the Errigal Stakeholders to enable them, in whatever reconfigured form, to co-ordinate the delivery of its actions. While the outworking of this ambition is further detailed in section 4 of this plan, the merits of collaboration have been widely accepted. It is also recognised that ‘partnerships’ between stakeholders require a large investment in time and relationship building and, crucially, a commitment on the part of all of the partners to engage consistently, collectively and coherently on the matters to hand. As

⁹ Conley, Alex, and Ann Moote. 2003. Evaluating Collaborative Natural Resource Management. Society and Natural Resources 16:371-386.

collaborative efforts become more widespread and start to be incorporated into official policies, apart from reviewing best practice in this regard, it was important to explore with consultees, including the stakeholders themselves, some fundamental questions around:

- the extent to which they really lead to improved resource management
- knowing what can reasonably be expected of them and
- isolating the variables which influence their effectiveness

While the Errigal Stakeholders Committee has been ‘in operation’ since 2012 and much has been achieved, there was a strong sense of a need to alter the dynamic, shift the balance of responsibility and transition from the current arrangement – the ‘where we are now’ - to ‘where we need to be’, with the nature of the collaboration required needing to progress from:

- action collaboration - addressing the particular problem (where we are now) to
- organisational collaboration - influencing priority setting in planning (where we are going) to
- policy collaboration - achieving integrated policy solutions (where we need to be)

A key aspect of this strategy will be the development of an effective internal and external communications plan, with particular attention being paid to maintaining an effective and professional web and social media presence.

A further aspect of communication will be the articulation of a coherent evaluation framework which links the activities of the Partnership with expected outputs and outcomes for all elements of its work.

A further aspect of continued collaboration and partnership working is the need to promote respect for the mountain with issues to do with education, awareness raising, and providing information for users and visitors being highlighted time and time again during the course of the consultation process. Looks can be deceiving – the mountain looks very climbable – but the reality can be very different and people need to understand this. We know, for example, from the Visitor Monitoring Surveys that almost 40% of visitors have little or no hiking experience, yet 80% manage to make it to the top. A key consideration here will be the opportunity to promote Dunlewey as the place of orientation to the mountain – a place to learn about, learn in and learn to engage responsibly not only with Errigal but with the destination more generally.

Key to this will be harnessing local knowledge – providing opportunities for local people to communicate some key messages about the significance and fragility of the uplands to visitors as well as raise their awareness of what else there is to see and do in Dunlewey and the wider area. Champions, ambassadors and advocates – volunteers of all ages and abilities will be a key component in the new governance arrangement going forward.

Three objectives support this strategy:

- **Objective 2.1:** Foster strong, transparent, inclusive and responsive governance.
- **Objective 2.2:** Develop an effective internal and external communications strategy.
- **Objective 2.3:** Promote Dunlewey, the gateway to Errigal as a place to learn about, learn in and learn to engage with protected landscapes.

The **desired outcomes** of this key strategy are:

- The realisation of the vision for Errigal continues to benefit from a broad range of perspectives through the sharing of advice, knowledge, resources and experience.
- Local and national audiences are kept informed about the work of the Partnership – its responsibilities, actions planned and actions completed.
- Best practice in sustainable approaches to environmental management, visitor experience development and community regeneration is developed and communicated.

KEY STRATEGY 3

SUSTAIN AND GROW

Realise Dunlewey's ambition to become a destination hub and gateway to Errigal.

'Iconic mountains are more than destinations or recreation areas, with research demonstrating an intrinsic like between creating a sense of place in adjacent communities, essentially anchoring and connecting a community within a geographic region.'¹⁰

A key aspect of managing Errigal is to develop Dunlewey so that it can be enabled not only to provide a key role in orientating visitors to the mountain, but that it can also derive benefit from those visitors and grow its visitor economy. A key aspect of this will be developing services, facilities, activities and events in Dunlewey that will support memorable experiences for visitors to the destination.

'A cooperative approach to destination development is required to achieve success. Visitors are much more likely to visit an area if they have a clear image of that area and its identity, and if businesses in the area fit with this identity and promote their product accordingly. This approach will help achieve standout for the destination.'¹¹

¹⁰ Erica Wilson, Noah Nielsen, Pascal Scherrer, Rodney W. Caldicott, Brent Moyle & Betty Weiler (2017): To climb or not to climb? Balancing stakeholder priorities at an iconic national park, Journal of Ecotourism, DOI: 10.1080/14724049.2017.1304398

¹¹ See: <http://www.failteireland.ie/Archive-Old-Pages/Develop-Your-Business-oldversion/Work-With-Local-Partners/Step-1-Establish-a-Destination-Development-Group.aspx> -

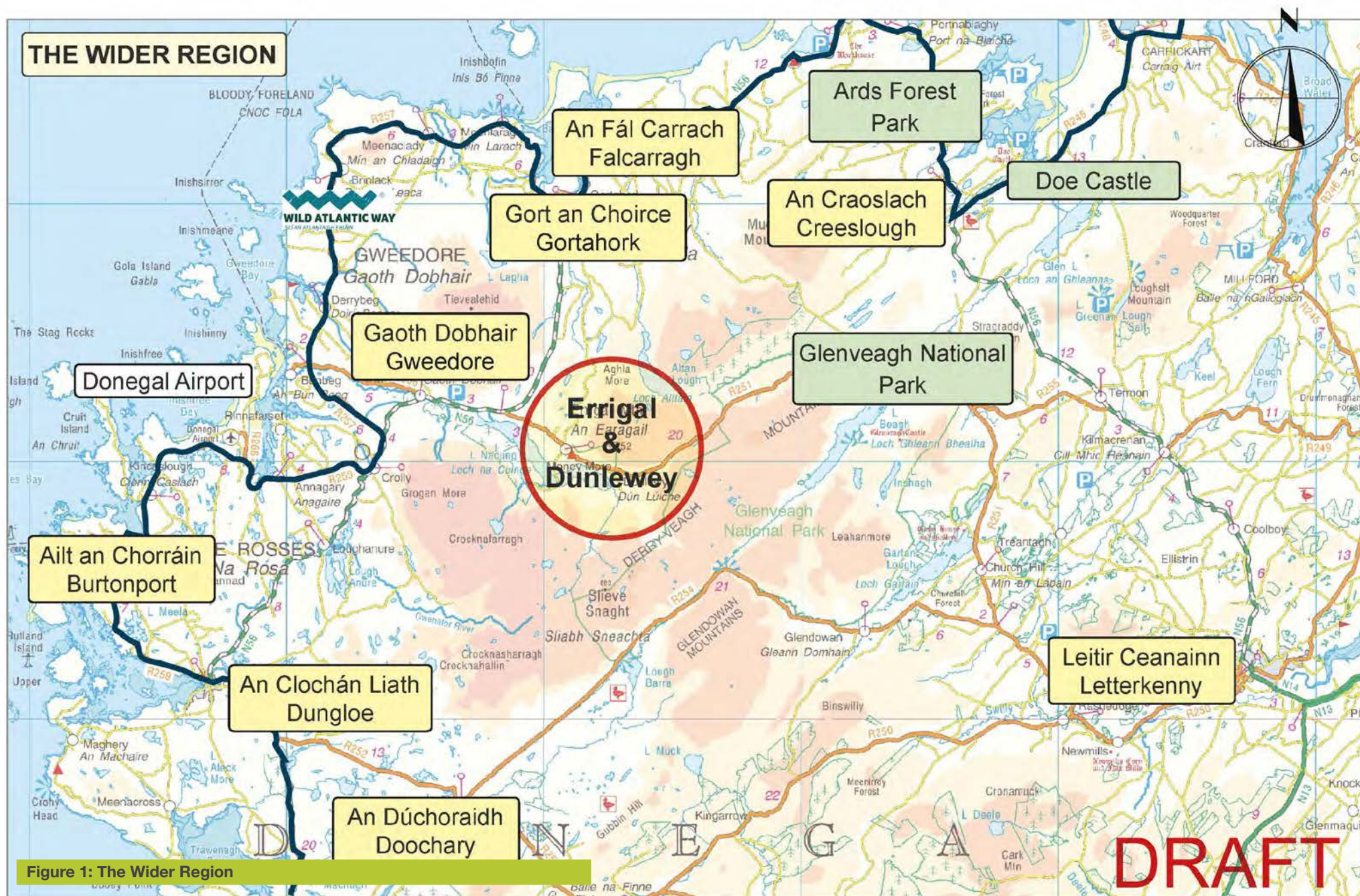


A critical first step in this will be to build the capacity of key players in the local visitor economy to evolve into a 'working destination development group'. A destination development group - which embraces both existing and potential tourism operators - will ensure that providers work together to develop and unify the hub proposition for Dunlewey through a better utilisation of existing tourism infrastructure and product. It will also ensure that opportunities to avail of trade supports, advice, training and capacity building tools and services from the national tourist authority can be accessed to grow business capacity locally in response to emerging opportunities.

Looking at the wider region in terms of visitor movement and circulation, Errigal is regarded by Fáilte Ireland as a critical component in a cluster of sites off the Wild Atlantic Way, which includes Glenveagh National Park, Ards Forest Park and Doe Castle. Working as a cluster, these sites not only have the capacity to 'attract' visitors to this region but, importantly, to hold them for longer within the destination. Dunlewey as the gateway to Errigal needs to respond to this strategic opportunity. **See Figure 1: The Wider Region.**

This will involve promoting sustainable access to and around the destination as well as exploring the feasibility of a low impact, seasonal shuttle service linking Dunlewey with start of the Errigal ascent.







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Car use amongst Holidaymakers in Ireland¹²

58% of holidaymakers rely upon public transport for travel while in Ireland.
42% of holidaymakers have access to a car.

Of these;

- 32% rent a car
- 10% bring their own.

Reliance on public transport across holidaymaker source markets;

- Germany: 47%
- France: 48%
- Great Britain: 56%
- US: 57%

The Snowdon Sherpa

The Snowdon Sherpa is a unique bus service that travels around the foot of Snowdon, creating a valuable link between the six main routes that travel up Snowdon, as well as the main car parks, villages and tourist attractions in the area. It is an ideal service for walkers or climbers who intend to start their journey from one point and finish at another, or indeed for anyone who wishes to travel around Snowdonia and leave the car at home. All journeys are operated by Low Floor buses with wheelchair space and ramp to ensure that the stops provided with raised kerbs are served by accessible vehicles.

A further aspect of this key strategy is the village's location at the core of a sustainable network of paths and trails which will facilitate access to the wider destination as well as opportunities to encounter the natural and cultural heritage of the area at close quarters. **See Figure 2. Making Connections.**

The activation of other aspects of Dunlewey's natural – the lakes and woods – and cultural heritage assets are also key to this strategy. The challenge here will be converting these opportunities into experiences that will not only encourage visitors - of all ages - to stay longer and return but that will also, and importantly, realise real business opportunities for people locally.

Stakeholders expressed a clear desire for increased and better quality nature-based tourism alternatives. They also noted that it will be necessary to build up tourism skills and infrastructure support to develop sustainable alternatives to the summit climb. Without these alternatives, or knowing that alternatives exist, visitors will continue to climb Errigal. In summary, a number of potential alternatives were put forward by consultees such as building up a network of heritage paths and trails; the activation of Lough Nacung Upper and Dunlewey Lough for water based activities; sustainable and guided access to Lough Altan; activity tourism and building up experiences through the interpretation and showcasing – through events and festivals - of the cultural heritage and social history of the area. **See Figure 3. Developing the Experience.**

¹² Tourists include all travellers who stay away from home for one or more nights for either holiday, visiting friends and family, business or other purposes. 'Holidaymakers' are the largest subcategory of overseas tourist. They are a key focus of much of Ireland's developmental and marketing strategies as their choice of destination can be directly influenced.

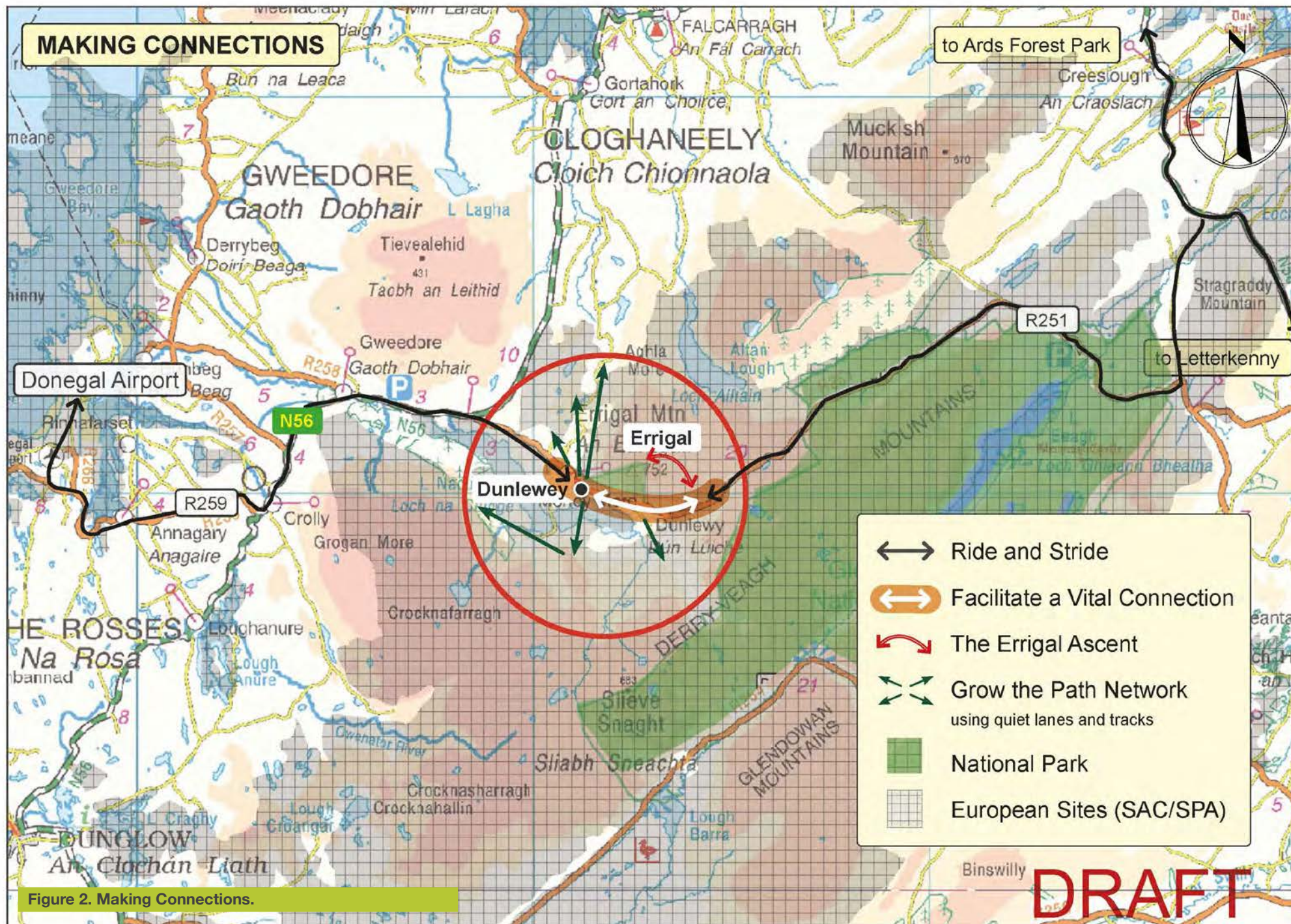
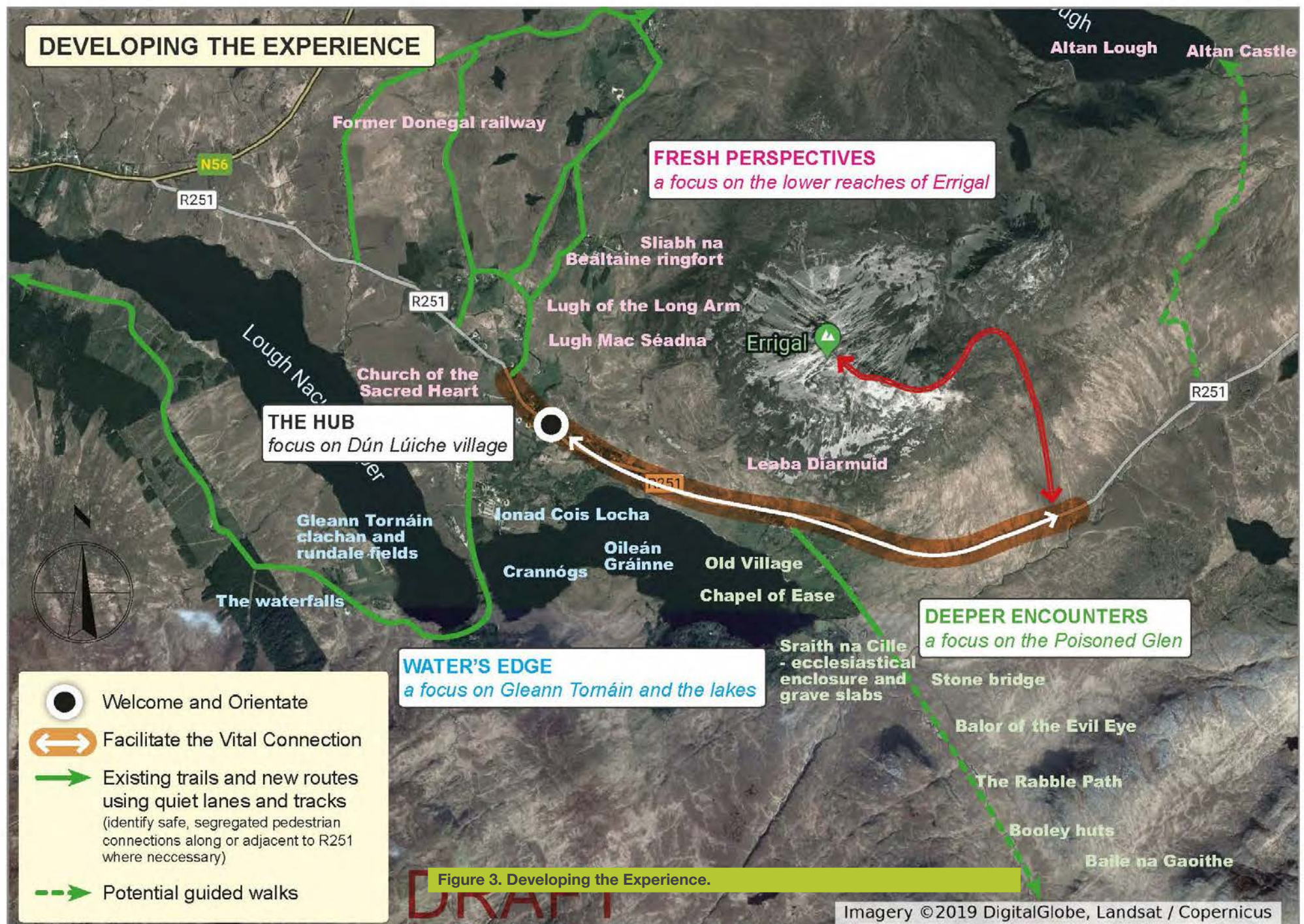


Figure 2. Making Connections.



Dunlewey's Path Network

1. **The 'lower reaches' paths:** These paths are on quieter roads/trails, are readily accessible, feel like you are 'on the mountain' albeit within the lower reaches and afford a range of different perspectives on Errigal. They are on 'made ground' – roads or tracks or the former railway as opposed to natural and more sensitive ground.
2. **Guided treks – off the beaten track:** Given that these longer distance routes cross upland terrain/ 'go around' the mountain and are within the designated landscape / ecologically significant environments, our recommendation is that they will work best as 'guided' routes which will facilitate one-to-one interpretation thereby enabling key messages about the sensitivity of the surrounding landscape to be communicated.
3. **Discovery trails:** These trails/paths will enable walkers to discover the area's largely hidden heritage/points of interest - ideally guided but can be self-guided with information/interpretation.
4. **Longer hikes:** Longer distance trails that provide off-road links to the other key locations of Glenveagh National Park and Gweedore.

Seven objectives support this strategy:

- **Objective 3.1:** Promote sustainable access to/from Dunlewey.
- **Objective 3.2:** Develop a low impact, seasonal shuttle service linking the village with the start of the Errigal ascent.
- **Objective 3.3:** Develop information facilities in Dunlewey to support the orientation and management of visitors arriving in the destination.
- **Objective 3.4:** Promote the development of a sustainable path network to facilitate access to the wider destination.
- **Objective 3.5:** Facilitate sustainable access to the area's natural and cultural heritage assets.
- **Objective 3.6:** Facilitate a programme of events in Dunlewey that profile the significance of the area.
- **Objective 3.7:** Identify and promote business development opportunities in line with the re-positioning of Dunlewey as a destination hub and gateway to Errigal.
- Visitors are provided with a choice of secure, coherent and connected walking routes which facilitate exploration of the wider area and provide a range of 'different perspectives' on Errigal.
- Visitors are provided with opportunities to experience up-close and in-depth encounters with the natural and cultural heritage landscape.
- A calendar of events that can be curated and programmed without undermining the integrity of the natural resource base and in line with the capacity of the community to deliver.
- Dunlewey is recognised for its sustainable tourism activities and services that promote a respectful use of natural heritage and transmit the values of the destination and its identity through its visitor experiences.

The **desired outcomes** of this key strategy are:

- A well-marketed public transport alternative within the destination area aimed at encouraging a modal shift from the car for journeys to and from the area.
- Visitors are provided with a more sustainable way of accessing the Errigal ascent car park from the village.
- Visitors are well informed about the offer of value available in the village and in the surrounding area and, importantly, know how best to access, enjoy and stay safe on the mountain.

SECTION 4

Gearing Up

‘Define and propose a formal management structure for the Errigal Stakeholders Committee with membership recommendations, leadership and agency roles to co-ordinate delivery of actions identified in the integrated management plan’. ¹³

¹³ Terms of Reference for ‘The Development of an Integrated Management Plan for Errigal Mountain, Co Donegal, Ireland’, Donegal County Council, Feb 2019.

A New Dynamic

In response to the challenges and opportunities posed by protected landscapes and in particular the draw associated with ‘iconic’ upland destinations, people have been experimenting with a variety of approaches to achieve landscape conservation, management, development and promotion objectives. Such multi-purpose and multi-stakeholder initiatives can operate with various governance arrangements and at diverse geographical scales. The goal of each approach though is to address issues ‘at a scale that is big enough to surround the problem, but small enough to tailor the solution’.

There appears to be a continuum of approaches—from informal networks, to more formal partnerships, to regional institutions. They also tend to follow a progression from informal to more formal governance and implementation as people begin to think and act regionally. What can be discerned is that all regional efforts, whatever their shape or size, are assemblages of cooperating interests and groups and all have established some type of working arrangement—some more sophisticated than others. What makes them different are;

- the range of issues and concerns that bring them together
- the size and complexity of the geographical area they are focused on
- the history and strength of the structural relationships that have been established
- the type of public, private, voluntary organisations involved and
- their method of assuring (or not) a continuing presence





What happens elsewhere

In looking further afield and given the vast array of arrangements arrived at for the management of special places, it was important for the case studies to hone in on those factors that were key to catalyzing, enabling, constraining, and sustaining protected area partnership working.



CASE STUDY 1: Snowdonia Society, Wales

The Society was formed and first registered as a charity in 1967. In January 2014 it re-registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Its constitution indicates that the charitable objects of the Society are to 'protect and enhance the beauty and special qualities of Snowdonia and to promote their enjoyment in the interests of all who live in, work in or visit the area both now and in the future'. Activities cover the whole of Snowdonia National Park but extend beyond its boundaries on matters concerning the Society. The work of the Society covers two main areas;

- **Practical conservation** - which involves clearing litter, maintaining footpaths, tackling invasive species and improving habitats for wildlife and
- **Campaigning** - to protect Snowdonia's special qualities from threats such as inappropriate development or erosion of its natural and cultural heritage

Much of the Society's work is done in partnership with Snowdonia National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales, National Trust and other conservation bodies and it also relies on the support of volunteers. A conservation volunteering programme enables volunteers to access accredited training in conservation techniques and footpath maintenance. The Society also works with individual farmers and landowners, where such work will be of benefit to the public and to Snowdonia.

The principal decision-making body within the Society is the Executive Committee. The members of the Executive are the Trustees under charity law. The appointment of the Officers and members of the Executive is governed by the Society's constitution. The staff complement includes a Director, a Project Manager, two Project Officers, a Membership & Communications Officer and an Engagement Officer. Officers and staff have delegated authority to make day-to-day decisions in line with agreed policy and to spend money within limits specified by the Executive. There are three sub-committees of the Executive; the Enhancement Sub-Committee, the Policy Sub-Committee and the Finance Sub-Committee.

KEY LEARNING

- Incorporation as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation has enabled the Society, as a separate legal entity, to maintain its independence such that it can enter into contracts in its own right, apply for funding etc.
- Members and trustees are protected from becoming personally liable for any liabilities incurred by the CIO.
- The role of the Society is clearly defined in a written constitution.
- Collaboration with the statutory agencies is critical to success.
- Volunteers are an essential asset, and volunteer training is a key aspect of the initiative.



CASE STUDY 2:

The Black Mountains Land Use Partnership – Wales

‘At 2,660 feet above sea level, Waun Fach, the highest mountain in the Black Mountains in south-eastern Wales, is an area where there is no vehicle access and is viewed as one of the most remote landscapes in the Brecon Beacons National Park. Over time, cumulative impact from walkers, as well as other factors, has contributed to the erosion of the walking route, with regular damage to the surrounding areas of peat bog. A specialist team made up of local contractors, National Park Authority wardens, graziers and volunteers are working to carefully create a footpath with a stable walking surface, which will lessen the impact of trampling in the unique SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and carefully preserve the peat bog. The eroding and exposed areas of peat will be blanketed in heather brash and the gullies will be blocked to stop further erosive damage. The aggregate has been specially selected on advice from Natural Resources Wales because of its durability and compatibility with the existing stone.’¹⁴

¹⁴ See: <https://www.welshcountry.co.uk/new-nature-fund-grant-helps-restore-brecon-beacons-national-park-landscapes/>

The Black Mountains Land Use Partnership is a collaborative venture among local landowners, graziers and relevant regulatory bodies. Established in 2015 through the Welsh Government’s Nature Fund, the Partnership promotes the restoration and sustainable management of the natural resources of the Black Mountains, an area covering over 24,600 hectares of upland and lowland habitat within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The Partnership comprises representatives from each of the common land units covered by the Black Mountains Graziers Association; major landowners including Glanusk Estate, Tregoyd Estate, Bal Mawr/ Bal Bach Estate, Duke of Beaufort Estate, Michaelchurch Estate and Ffwdog Estate; Welsh Water, Natural Resources Wales, Natural England, Young Farmers Club and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority provides the secretariat role and, currently, provides the procurement and human resources to apply for grant funding. It is chaired by a representative from an independent organisation. The objectives of the Partnership are to:

- To improve the quality of habitats including heather regeneration.
- To increase the area and quality of grazing land.
- To control erosion on strategic sites.
- To stabilise peat resources.
- To provide a source of materials to be used for restoration works in eroded peat/mineral soil areas to improve bog condition.

- To improve access at strategic locations particularly around turnout points to increase ease of turning out stock on the hill and improve the visitor experience.
- To promote understanding of traditional and contemporary grazing, conservation works and other upland management practices used on the hill.

The Partnership, by way of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, was awarded a Sustainable Management Scheme grant as part of Welsh Government Rural Communities-Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union. This award has enabled the Partnership to implement a series of landscape-scale projects focused on three key themes: bracken management, peatland management and visitor management.

The Sustainable Management Scheme

The SMS is a grant scheme that delivers under sub-measure 16.5 of the Welsh Government Rural Communities-Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union. The SMS provides financial support for a range of collaborative landscape-scale projects designed to improve the management of the area’s natural resources and in doing so contribute to the well-being of rural communities.



Each theme involves multiple project elements as follows;

Bracken Management

- Bracken control – aerial and ground based bracken control
- Ground truthing and modelling data – to validate and improve existing bracken control models

Peatland Restoration

- Peatland habitat restoration in the Waun Fach area
- Southern erosion scar revegetation trials
- Heather habitat management
- Development of a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) portfolio

Visitor Management

- Telling the Black Mountains hill management story – an education programme delivered to schools within the Black Mountain areas
- Black Mountains Ambassadors – creating a Black Mountains module to complement the National Park Ambassador Scheme. Ambassadors (local businesses) are trained to develop an understanding of farming and upland issues along with highlighting why the Black Mountains are special
- Investing in skills – developing a rural skills programme
- Partnership Rangers – employing two partnership rangers

As the UK primes itself to leave the European Union and Common Agricultural Policy, the partners are actively exploring, within the context of recent Welsh Government policy directives and consultative documents, how a focus on the provision of environmental goods and services – such as food production, clean, consistent water supplies, carbon storage, and healthier ecosystems where people can recreate both mentally and physically- could help to sustain livelihoods. Funding to help realise this ambition has been made available from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government via a Sustainable Management Scheme project. It will enable the partners to better understand what resources and services are available in the area, identify the challenges around making these ecosystem services/public benefits ‘market-ready,’ and investigate the feasibility of bundling services together rather than offering them as individual benefits. The primary aim is to develop a portfolio to attract sponsorship for the management of the ecosystem services provided in the Black Mountains Project Area.

The Partnership currently constitutes an informal arrangement with an independent chair, a project board, three advisory committees and a staff complement of three – a project manager, a project administrator and a part-time communications and outreach officer. Its current status, it finds, is limiting its ability to pursue large scale funds, so the Partnership is actively considering becoming a Community Interest Company. This will have implications for some of the Partnership members as those representing the statutory agencies may have to adopt more of an advisory rather than an executive role relative to the functioning of the new entity.



KEY LEARNING

- The importance of having an independent chair who has the capacity to build momentum and maintain a culture of responsive collaboration is a key consideration.
- A robust evaluation system is a critical element to build into the workings of the partnership from the very beginning as is establishing a baseline from which to measure and report progress, particularly as far as funders are concerned.
- The importance of developing a coherent communications strategy was stressed as was the critical need to be social media savvy.



CASE STUDY 3:

MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum – Republic of Ireland

The MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum was established in May 2014 with the aim of protecting, managing and sustainably developing the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Range. Located immediately west of the Killarney National Park in County Kerry, most of the land in the MacGillycuddy Reeks area is either privately owned by individuals or held in commonage. The Forum comprises elected local landowners (7), elected community representatives (3), elected small business representative (1), elected recreational users (2), South Kerry Development Partnership's Rural Recreation Officer (1), Department of Community and Rural Development (Rural Recreation Section) (1), National Parks & Wildlife Service representative (1), Kerry County Councillor (1), Kerry County Council representative (1) Fáilte Ireland representative (1) and an independent chairperson.

The forum was established by South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) through the INTERREG Rural Alliance project, Fáilte Ireland and the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government. The Forum is administratively supported on a part time basis by the Rural Recreation Officer with South Kerry Development Partnership (SKDP) in Killorglin.

Mountain Access Scheme

The concept of the pilot Mountain Access Scheme (MAS) was devised by Comhairle na Tuaithe, the national countryside council. In 2009, Comhairle nominated two areas for pilot mountain access schemes, Binn Shléibhe (Mount Gable) in Connemara and Carrauntoohil, Co Kerry, with the latter being subsequently extended to incorporate the complete MacGillycuddy Reeks which are Ireland's highest mountains. The aim of the MAS was to formally agree recreational access with landowners on a mountain/mountain range or in selected uplands area, to facilitate recreational access to those uplands. The MAS would map out designated access points, provide indemnity to landowners against specified claims, provide adequate parking and related facilities and any additional infrastructure required to support the specified recreational activities.

The purpose of the Forum is to put in place a long term sustainable integrated management plan for the MacGillycuddy Reeks under a permissive access model that is acceptable to all interested parties. The Forum's objectives are to;

- support the livelihoods of landowners and local enterprises
- provide an excellent experience for recreational users
- build awareness of the value of the area's fragile uplands ecosystems, the need to protect these habitats, educate users and

conserve the 'wilderness' aspect of the mountains

- become the exemplar for sustainable uplands management and permissive recreational access in Ireland, based on an agricultural and environmental sustainability ethos.
- Develop the recreational potential of the area to drive local enterprise and jobs, by building critical partnerships among local SMEs (farmers, guides, restaurants, B&B/ guest houses/ hotels, restaurants, bike hire etc) and other partners.

KEY LEARNING

- The importance of taking a wider view and embracing a geographical extent that is large enough to make it work both in terms of the connectivity of habitats as well as its capacity to be a destination in its own right.
- The livelihoods of landowners and enterprises is clearly profiled within the ambition of the partnership.
- The need for the partnership to move from being a voluntary affiliation of partners to having a legal entity as a charitable body.
- The importance of representatives having to be 'elected' to sit on the Forum.
- The debilitating effect the lack of adequate resourcing can have on the need to build momentum.
- The need to be able to progress in the absence of an enabling environment as highlighted by the lack of progress on the 'indemnity scheme' for greater mountain access.



Key Considerations

Taking all of these considerations into account the key ingredients in fashioning and future-proofing the ideal arrangement for a re-energised approach with a role, remit, relationships and reach (in terms of its area of operation) that is fit for purpose, widely endorsed, is flexible in terms of changing circumstances and can be sustained will include having;

A Coherent Ambition

- a shared vision
- a clear and central focus on maintaining the integrity of the core asset

Clarity of Purpose, Role & Relationships

- a set of common shared purposes and goals
- a strong, well understood constitution or framework outlining roles and responsibilities
- positive (but not necessarily perfect) relationships, organisational and personal
- a willingness to mutually go beyond corporate or individual interest from time to time
- an understanding that external circumstances will challenge the partnership, some foreseeable and some not
- a partnership that does not grow to become a competitor or challenger against internal partners e.g. funding rounds

Core Funding Support & Revenue Raising

- an adequate level of support, from a mix of public funds initially, to get established
- a capacity to raise funds through revenue generating measures such as 'Friends of Errigal' membership schemes, levies on event organisers etc.

A Fit for Purpose Structure

- an independent chairperson to provide strategic leadership and maintain momentum
- a partnership board
- dedicated working groups tasked with taking forward the key initiatives/projects
- experienced project worker with the capacity to identify and work collaboratively to secure future funding

Good Internal Processes

- a robust system for evaluating the performance of the initiative
- an effective internal and external communications strategy
- a growing set of achievements on the ground which assists bidding for funding and resources – a good CV which shows the partnership can deliver

The Direction of Travel

With a shared vision, the overall direction of travel agreed and key strategies and actions recommended now is the time, aided by a dedicated 'Task & Finish' working group drawn

from the membership of the Errigal Stakeholders Committee, to begin the process of securing 'a more formal management structure' for the Errigal stakeholders. As demonstrated by the case studies, while many partnerships start out as voluntary and informal affiliations of partners, over time and as organisational issues become bedded down, developing a legal structure – principally adopting charitable status - seems to become an inevitable next step.

WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL, Memorandum and Articles of Association – Key Features¹⁵ Panel Composition:

The number of members which the panels may nominate for appointment to the Board of Directors, and the maximum number permitted for approval by the general meeting

- (i) the Farming and Property Owning Panel – 7 members;
- (ii) the Economic and Tourism Panel – 3 members;
- (iii) the Community Panel – 4 members; and
- (v) the Recreational and Environmental Panel – 4 members.

Membership Categories:

Category 1: Individuals;
Category 2: Groups or societies – to include any established local groups or societies not affiliated to any national organisations,

¹⁵ As quoted in 'MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Development Assessment', South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd, Dec, 2013

but having a title and established committee structure, whether or not such a group or society is incorporated;

Category 3: Organisations – to include any national organisation or any body having affiliations with a national organisation, whether or not such body or organisation is incorporated.

Membership Subscription:

An annual membership subscription of the Company shall be charged to any member, and the rate of any such subscription shall be set from time to time at the annual general meeting (AGM) of the members of the Company. There may be different rates set for each of the categories or membership, or for any subdivisions thereof.

Key Steps

STAGE 1. INITIAL STRUCTURES

0 to 18 months / 2 years

Form a Shadow Partnership Board (SPB) whose initial job, working to an agreed Terms of Reference will be to establish the new organisation by developing an appropriate constitution and securing initial funding and start-up staffing. This Shadow Partnership will be made up of one representative, with no substitutes, from each of the following organisations: -

- Forbairt Dhún Láiche
- Donegal County Council
- National Parks and Wildlife Service

- Fáilte Ireland
- Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Roinn na Gaeltachta
- Donegal Local Development Company
- Mountaineering Ireland
- An Taisce

This SPB will make the key decisions and will evolve into the permanent Board of the new body when the correct constitution is clearly identified, with perhaps a different/larger range of partners which becomes clearer as the work of the organisation evolves. There is a clear understanding that only those potential partners who commit time and/or resources at this stage will become foundation partners on the permanent Board.

Stage 2. NEW WORK AREAS

4/6 months then continuing

An early next step will be the formation by the SPB of a time-bound working group, tasked with specific objectives.

This working group will be advisory, putting together proposals to the above Board on the content, prioritisation and sequencing of the key strategies/initiatives identified within the integrated management plan including; -

- Partnership Development and Funding – building sustainability
- Mountain Path Delivery, Monitoring & Maintenance - promoting sustainable access
- Habitat Restoration & Maintenance – promoting biodiversity and ecosystem health

- Local Economy Development – promoting tourism, recreation and visitor management
- Communication and PR – focusing on key messages

This stage will require staff or at least a staffing resource to service all of the above. The SPB will re-visit the timeframes for delivery of the Integrated Management Plan biannually.

STAGE 3. PERMANENT STRUCTURES

18 months onwards

This depends on having a well-crafted constitution, sound funding for a minimum of 2-3 years and a healthy balance of effort and commitment across all partners according to their individual strengths. This means avoiding both an over-reliance on the larger partners to do all the work or over-taxing those partners with much less resources and people. A shadow period is key to allowing the organic development of all of the above and also the formal and informal working relationships between key partners. While it is unlikely that the final structures will be exactly as currently envisaged, principles established for the formation of the SPB during the formation, such as, for example, one organisation one representative with no substitutes, will follow through to the permanent Board.

SECTION 5

Taking Action





KEY STRATEGY 1

Restore and Protect

Maintain the ecological
integrity of the mountain.



Objective 1.1

Promote sustainable access to the mountain

OUTCOME

A sustainable Errigal ascent.

KEY INITIATIVE

DELIVER THE UPLAND PATH

Follow through on the remaining phases of the sustainable access project.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
1.1.1	Building on the success of the ASCENT initiative and, more specifically, the outcomes of the on-site trialling works, secure the resources necessary to follow through on the delivery of the remaining phases of the sustainable access project. This will include determining the need for further works.	Critical - immediate	DCC
1.1.2.	Resource the capacity to continue to monitor visitor numbers on the mountain through the maintenance of visitor counters.	Important – short term	DCC/FDL
1.1.3	With the help of community moderators, provide and continually update information both online and on-site for visitors about the status of the path and the restoration initiative underway.		
1.1.4	Post path construction and in line with funders' requirements, continue to raise awareness amongst path users about the importance of restoring the ecological integrity of the upland area and appropriate visitor behaviour in this regard.		
1.1.5	Ensure the long term maintenance and management of the path, as required by Sporting Ireland to gain accreditation for insurance, is addressed and programmed.		DLDC under TUS scheme

DCC: Donegal County Council
 DLDC: Donegal Local Development Company
 FDL: Forbairt Dhún Láíche
 FI: Fáilte Ireland
 EPT: Errigal Partnership Trust
 ESC: Errigal Stakeholders Committee
 NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service
 SPB: Shadow Partnership Board
 UnaG: Údarás na Gaeltachta

Objective 1.2

Develop a responsive and adaptive management regime

OUTCOME

Improvements in the functionality, adaptability and resilience of the mountain's ecosystems.

KEY INITIATIVE

MONITOR AND MITIGATE:

Develop a dynamic, adaptive management regime for restoring and managing the ecosystem health of the uplands.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
1.2.1	Repair and restore the upland habitats.	Critical - immediate	NPWS/ESG
1.2.2	Identify and establish the baseline state of the key parameters related to upland ecosystem health; the indicators that will be used to track change and the monitoring arrangements that will be instituted.	Important – short term	
1.2.3	Adopt an adaptive management approach to determining the need for intervention thereby building the capacity to respond to uncertainty and change into the management regime.	Important – short term	
1.2.4	Scope the potential to improve green infrastructure connectivity between European Sites and to integrate green infrastructure principles into projects and initiatives. See - https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm	Important – medium term	



Objective 1.3

Facilitate opportunities for training and skills development in path development, management and maintenance

OUTCOME

Increased community capacity

KEY INITIATIVE

BUILD CAPACITY

Building on the foundation of the ASCENT programme, a community focused initiative designed to enable those equipped with the necessary skills in path development and maintenance to supplement their training.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
1.3.1	Supplement path development skills with training in path monitoring and maintenance.	Critical – immediate	OLDC/FDL
1.3.2	Identify opportunities to access training in habitat monitoring, restoration and maintenance.		NPWS/FDL
1.3.3	Promote volunteering in the following priority areas: path development, monitoring and maintenance; habitat monitoring, restoration and maintenance and visitor monitoring and outreach.	Important – medium term	DLDC
1.3.4	Pilot a ‘mountain warden’ initiative to enable volunteers to undertake regular patrols to observe, record and report on emerging issues and engage with walkers on-site.	Important – medium term	

KEY STRATEGY 2

Resource and Equip

Achieve success through continued partnership working and collaboration.



Objective 2.1

Foster strong, transparent, inclusive and responsive governance

OUTCOME

The realisation of the vision for Errigal continues to benefit from a broad range of perspectives through the sharing of advice, knowledge, resources and experience.

KEY INITIATIVE

FOCUS ON THE PARTNERSHIP

Formalise partnership working with a focus on accountability, operations and management. Evolve an Errigal Partnership Trust (EPT).

DCC: Donegal County Council
 DLDC: Donegal Local Development Company
 FDL: Forbairt Dhún Láiche
 FI: Fáilte Ireland
 EPT: Errigal Partnership Trust
 ESC: Errigal Stakeholders Committee
 NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service
 SPB: Shadow Partnership Board
 UnaG: Údarás na Gaeltachta



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
2.1.1	Evolve the current partnership arrangement into a more formal structure- a Partnership Trust - relative to its operations, activities, services and initiatives.	Important – short term	ESC/SPB
2.1.2	Adopt a model of responsive governance and representation based on mutually beneficial relationships between land owning representatives, community representatives, statutory bodies and agencies.		
2.1.3	In the first instance establish a Shadow Partnership Board (SPB).	Critical -immediate	
2.1.4	Task the SPB with developing an appropriate constitution and securing initial funding and start-up staffing.		

Objective 2.2

Develop an effective internal and external communications strategy.

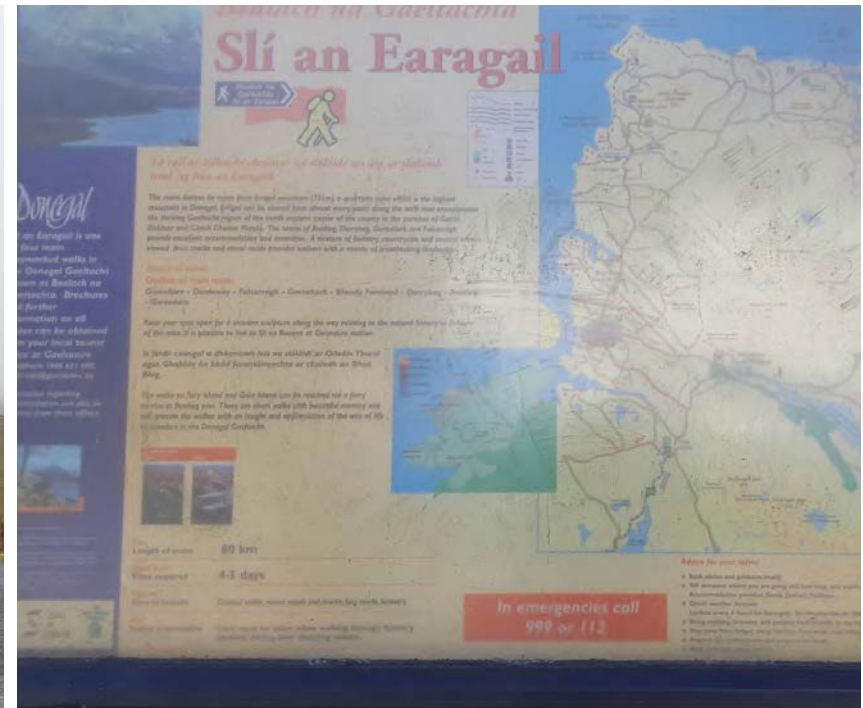
OUTCOME

Local and national audiences are kept informed about the work of the Partnership – its responsibilities, actions planned and actions completed.

KEY INITIATIVE

KEEP ON TRACK

Design and deliver an effective internal and external communications strategy to raise awareness and promote understanding of the Errigal Partnership Trust (EPT).



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
2.2.1	Commission the preparation of a communications plan.	Important-short term	SPB
2.2.2	Building on the ASCENT legacy, focus on the maintenance and further development of the project's web presence		SPB/DCC/FDL
2.2.3	Develop an evaluation framework which links the activities of the EPT with expected outputs and outcomes for all elements of its work.		SPB/EPT
2.2.4	Establish a robust mechanism for determining what data will be collected, how it will be collected and when it will be collected, to track the progress of the initiative's outputs and intended outcomes.		



Objective 2.3

Promote Dunlewey, the gateway to Errigal as a place to learn about, learn in and learn to engage with protected landscapes.

OUTCOME

Best practice in sustainable approaches to environmental management, visitor experience development and community regeneration is developed and communicated.

KEY INITIATIVE

LOOK, LEARN AND RETURN

Within the context of a clear communications strategy, develop a programme of stimulating, interactive and memorable 'learn-to' outdoor activities.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
2.3.1	Develop a 'learn-to' offer for a range of audiences to encompass a range of learning opportunities.	Important-medium term	EPT
2.3.2	Develop a suite of guided and self-guided educational programmes to increase visitors' knowledge and enhance their appreciation of the destination.		

KEY STRATEGY 3

Sustain and Grow

Realise Dunlewey's ambition to become a destination hub and gateway to Errigal.



Objective 3.1

Promote sustainable access to/from Dunlewey

OUTCOME

A well-marketed public transport alternative within the destination area aimed at encouraging a modal shift from the car for journeys to and from the area.

KEY INITIATIVE

RIDE AND STRIDE

In collaboration with Local Link Donegal and other partners, promote the use of public transport within the destination.

DCC: Donegal County Council
DLDC: Donegal Local Development Company
FDL: Forbairt Dhún Lúiche
FI: Fáilte Ireland
EPT: Errigal Partnership Trust
ESC: Errigal Stakeholders Committee
NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service
SPB: Shadow Partnership Board
UnaG: Údarás na Gaeltachta



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.1.1	Ensure that plans to initiate a dedicated Local Link airport connection in 2019 include a Dunlewey stop.	Important-short term	Local Link/SPB
3.1.2	Explore the scope to link with partner destination sites such as Glenveagh National Park and Ards Forest Park to provide a dedicated ramblers service to accommodate visitors travelling without a car.		NPWS/Coillte/SPB

Objective 3.2

Develop a low impact, seasonal shuttle service linking the village with the start of the Errigal ascent.

OUTCOME

Visitors are provided with a more sustainable way of accessing the Errigal ascent car park from the village.

KEY INITIATIVE

A VITAL CONNECTION

In collaboration with partners, provide a low cost, low impact, seasonal shuttle service between the village and the Errigal ascent car park.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.2.1	Audit best practice in the provision of seasonal shuttle/rambler transport in designated landscape settings.	Important - medium term	SPB/EPT
3.2.2	Develop a business case for a community enterprise/private sector led operation.		
3.2.3	Pilot a seasonal trial to test the market.		



Objective 3.3

Develop information facilities in Dunlewey to support the orientation and management of visitors arriving in the destination

OUTCOME

Visitors are well informed about the offer of value available in the village and in the surrounding area and, importantly, know how best to access, enjoy and stay safe on the mountain.

KEY INITIATIVE

WELCOME AND ORIENTATE

Develop a coherent and cohesive visitor orientation, information and welcome point.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.3.1	Develop and assess the viability of a pragmatic concept for providing 24/7 information services and orientation for visitors in the village. This should include consideration of the mapping of the immediate destination – the village, the mountain and the wider area with information on visitor parking locations within the village; travel options for accessing the Errigal ascent and journey times (via different modes) to the starting point. Include information about amenities and services – including transport services - on offer along with information on staying safe on the mountain and responsible path use.	Critical – immediate	FDL/SPB
3.3.2	Audit the existing retail offer relative to the visitor market including the sale of maps, route cards, guide books, prints depicting the history and heritage of the village and its association with Errigal etc. Augment where necessary so as to support visitors in their exploration of the village, the mountain and the wider area.		
3.3.3	Ensure visitor information and orientation is readily available through the face-to-face services that are already provided in the village.		
3.3.4	Over time deliver visitor information digitally – through a dedicated app - thereby aiding the self-guided exploration of the village and wider area.	Important-medium term	

Objective 3.4

Promote the development of a sustainable path network to facilitate access to the wider destination

OUTCOME

Visitors are provided with a choice of secure, coherent and connected walking routes which facilitate exploration of the wider area and provide a range of 'different perspectives' on Errigal.

KEY INITIATIVE

GROW THE PATH NETWORK

Develop a network of themed walking routes geared towards different audiences and abilities.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.4.1	Building on the trail identification work already completed by FDL, and the trails atlas, maps and inventory, audit the existing provision of walking routes and heritage trails which originate in and extend beyond the village and identify the scope for enhancing their accessibility, connectivity, appeal and interpretation.	Important-medium term	FDL
3.4.2	Identify and prioritise those routes which offer the prospect of staging areas – for example to take in a great view of the mountain – and which provide the scope to offer looped routes of varying durations suited to different audiences.	Desirable-longer term	



Objective 3.5

Facilitate sustainable access to the area's natural and cultural heritage assets.

OUTCOME

Visitors are provided with opportunities to experience up-close and in-depth encounters with the natural and cultural heritage landscape.

KEY INITIATIVE 1

TELL OUR STORY

Develop a network of themed itineraries which tell the story of Dunlewey- its history, heritage, culture and associations. Include opportunities to access the lakes.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.5.1	Building on the outcomes of the trails audit at 3.4.1 above and the community heritage plan, and using the existing network of 'made ground' trails, develop a suite of 'encounters with the natural and cultural landscape' in key locations, supported by light touch interpretive wayfinding and first person and digital storytelling.	Important-medium term	FDL/UnaG/FI/ NPWS
3.5.2	Incorporate ecological integrity education into visitor experience activities, interpretive wayfinding, guiding programmes and outreach initiatives, in order to promote responsible enjoyment of the destination.		
3.5.3	Develop guided programmes to increase visitors' knowledge of and enhance the depth of their experience of the destination.		FDL/Local Businesses / Private Sector
3.5.4	Identify options for developing a practical, reasonable and sustainable revenue stream from trail visitors.		

Objective 3.6

Facilitate a programme of events in Dunlewey that profile the significance of the area.

OUTCOME

A calendar of events that can be curated and programmed without undermining the integrity of the natural resource base and in line with the capacity of the community to deliver.

KEY INITIATIVE

CELEBRATE OUR STORY

Curate and programme a calendar of events to showcase the area's cultural, social and environmental significance.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.6.1	Audit the current range, frequency and impact of events in particular those which include the use of the mountain. Identify and nurture those which showcase the area to best effect and are 'on-message' relative to the environmental significance of the destination	Important-short term	FDL
3.6.2	Work with event promoters to raise awareness of the current and potential impact of particular events such as, for example, endurance runs, and agree a protocol for their hosting.	Critical – immediate	NPWS



Objective 3.7

Identify and promote business development opportunities in line with the re-positioning of Dunlewey as a destination hub and gateway to Errigal.

OUTCOME

Dunlewey is recognised for its sustainable tourism activities and services that promote a respectful use of natural heritage and transmit the values of the destination and its identity through its visitor experiences.

KEY INITIATIVE 1

GET ORGANISED

Build the capacity of key players in the local visitor economy to evolve into a 'working destination development group'.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.7.1	Working collaboratively as a destination forum, engage with existing tourism operators to develop and unify the hub proposition for Dunlewey and better utilise existing tourism infrastructure and product to grow business capacity and respond to emerging opportunities.	Important-medium term	FDL/FI
3.7.2	As a first step identify relevant key businesses and organisations and establish a working destination development group. Register the group with Fáilte Ireland's Trade see- https://tradeportal.failteireland.ie/ - to avail of trade supports, advice, training and capacity building tools and services.		
3.7.3	Within the context of the destination development group, initiate the process of developing and agreeing a coherent destination development plan – see http://www.failteireland.ie/Archive-Old-Pages/Develop-Your-Business-oldversion/Work-With-Local-Partners/Step-1-Establish-a-Destination-Development-Group.aspx - for guidance on the key steps.		FDL/FI/UnaG

KEY INITIATIVE 2

GROW THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Encourage the development of a more diverse range of unique product offerings and authentic experiences for visitors incorporating local heritage, cultural encounters and the natural environment.



ACTIONS		PRIORITY	LEAD/SUPPORT
3.7.4	Within the context of the destination development plan, identify the scope for small enterprises to take advantage of particular market opportunities relative to providing sustainable access solutions; hill/trail walking guiding and interpretation; access to and activation of the lakes; the bundling of activities to extend dwell time and other supporting services and facilities for visitors.	Important-long term Important-long term	FDL/FI/UnaG
3.7.5	Audit existing vacant premises and sites to determine their suitability for accommodation provision; their status relative to ownership; the willingness of owners to consider visitor accommodation use and the feasibility of such provision.		
3.7.6	Develop a 'How to Make Walkers Welcome' toolkit for those existing and prospective businesses catering for visitors to the area.		



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INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN

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ASCENT
Promoting Sustainable Access
to Uplands & Natural Environments



Northern Periphery and
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**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council