



● ● ● ● SLIABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN



**Monaghan**  
County Council



Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

**the paulhogarth**company



*Lough Nabul  
(Photo by Rory Sheehan)*

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**Councillor David Maxwell**  
Cathaoirleach of Monaghan County Council



**Councillor Sean Gilliland**  
Cathaoirleach of Ballybay Clones Municipal District

*Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh Council have enjoyed a long-standing and fruitful cross border partnership, known as Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership. This has delivered many practical initiatives across the Ballybay Clones Erne East region over the last ten to fifteen years, benefiting communities in many ways.*

*Two years ago, Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership turned its attention to the Sliabh Beagh region. We saw an area which has experienced great hardship in the past, and continues to face significant challenges going forward, including being isolated physically, being an uplands area with marginal farmland, social isolation issues around rural transport, lack of broadband, and an ageing population. The picture is far from all negative, however; the area has tremendous natural resources, including pristine waters. It is a haven for wildlife, has outstanding natural beauty, a dark night sky, is a walker's paradise and lies within easy reach of Ireland's two largest urban population centres.*

*We saw an opportunity to support the communities across the region to identify what their area has to offer tourists and to help them to develop the region as a sustainable tourist destination. The development of this Masterplan provided us with an opportunity to engage with the communities across the region, and to come to a shared understanding of how the region should be protected and developed going forward.*

*The extensive consultation process which was undertaken during the formation of this Masterplan enabled us to listen to the community and gain a greater understanding of the needs and the aspirations of the people living in the region. This will without doubt be of great benefit to us all as we work together to implement the Masterplan in the coming years.*

*We would like to thank the staff of The Paul Hogarth Company for their work on this project, and I would like to pay particular commendation to the staff of Monaghan and Fermanagh & Omagh Councils, without whose input on a daily basis, the work of the Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership could not happen. Such close collaboration is hugely important, and makes it so much easier to find solutions to the unique issues which living and working in a border region can give rise to.*



**Monaghan  
County Council**



**Councillor Howard Thornton**  
Chairman, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council

*Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and the legacy Fermanagh District Council have enjoyed a strong working relationship with our partners in Clones and Monaghan since 2004, when the original Clones Erne East Partnership was formed. It was subsequently expanded to include Ballybay in 2015, to form the Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership.*

*This partnership has, since its formation, aimed to deliver practical initiatives across this cross border region and also lobby for improved infrastructure and services, bringing benefits to a community that has experienced many challenges in the past.*

*The elected members of Ballybay-Clones Erne East Partnership have long been aware of the needs of the Sliabh Beagh region, but also recognised the opportunities for the development of this unique upland area. Sliabh Beagh, like many other rural border areas, has suffered severely from deprivation in the past and continues to face significant challenges currently and indeed into the future. These include remoteness, being an upland area with marginal farmland, social isolation due to poor infrastructure including rural transport networks and broadband, as well as an ageing population.*

*However, the area has also much to commend it as it has a wealth of natural resources, including beautiful landscapes and pristine waters. The region can be easily reached from major urban population centres, it is a haven for wildlife and a paradise for walkers.*

*As local elected representatives, we recognised that an opportunity presented itself to support the communities across the region to firstly identify what the area had to offer to visitors and secondly, to help them to develop Sliabh Beagh as a sustainable tourism destination and an attractive place in which to live and work. The development of this masterplan provided us with an opportunity to engage with those communities and to come to a shared understanding of how the region should be protected, as well as developed in a sustainable way.*

*Following an extensive consultation process, by Paul Hogarth Associates, who were commissioned to deliver this Masterplan, the elected members of the Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership, together with officers from the Councils and Tourism NI, met with the local community, to gain a greater understanding of their needs and aspirations. This groundwork will be of great benefit to us all as we work together to implement the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan in the coming years.*

*I would like to thank the staff of The Paul Hogarth Company for their work on this project and I would also like to commend the officers of both Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, without whose continuing input the work of the Ballybay-Clones Erne East Partnership could not happen. The cross border collaboration between Councils has always been very important and will become increasingly so, as we seek to find solutions to the unique issues that arise for people living and working in a border region, as well as enhancing experiences for people visiting the unique area that is Sliabh Beagh.*





A shared way of life



Clones  
Erne East

2007

# INTRODUCTION

## 1

*"The wild hare hops across the moor, the beagle cries behind,  
Eishmore looms high above it all, bedecked with spruce and pine,  
On a moss-clad swamp behind the lake, a moorhen shy is wadin',  
While a bumblebee drones through the air with heather honey laden.  
These sights I see, these sounds I hear on the Mountain of Sliabh  
Beagh."*

*-'The Mountain of Sliabh Beagh', by Peter Keenan*

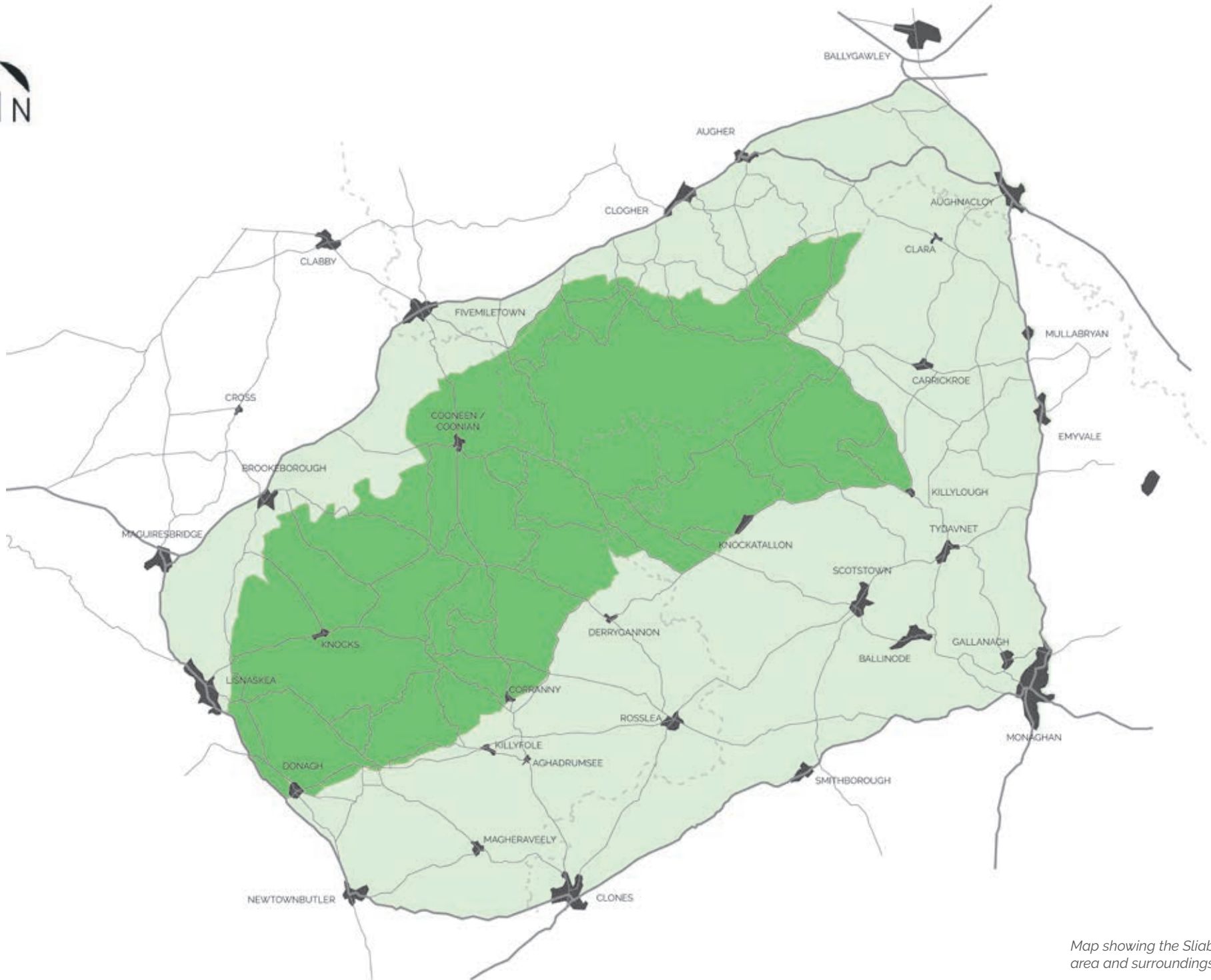
The Sliabh Beagh Masterplan was jointly commissioned by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council in 2017 to establish a strategic vision for the future of this important rural area.

The plan was researched and written by Landscape Architects, The Paul Hogarth Company, working in close consultation with local residents, community organisations and elected members of both Councils.

This report summarises the findings of the research process and sets out aims, objectives and a series of projects for the future of the region. It seeks to set in place a road map for regeneration, helping the area to fulfill its potential as a visitor destination, while contributing to its needs for continued environmental protection, cultural interpretation and economic development.

This report concludes with an action plan of 10 proposed projects for delivery over the short, medium and long term by a range of stakeholders.

*View from Carn Rock viewpoint  
(March 2017)*



Map showing the Slabh Beagh area and surroundings



## THE PLACE ● ● ●

Sliabh Beagh, translated from Irish as the Mountain of Bith, the Irish king, is a special landscape with a wealth of natural and cultural riches. Measuring some 250 square miles, it spans from Monaghan in the south, to the districts of Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster in the north, straddling the traditional county borders of Monaghan, Fermanagh and Tyrone and the national borders of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The landscape is comprised of blanket bog, windswept moors, deep woodlands, tranquil lakes and rolling pastures. Shaped by centuries of cultivation, peat extraction and forestry, they are now home to an abundance of flora and fauna.

Sliabh Beagh is sparsely populated, consisting of a network of small villages and hamlets, connected by narrow winding roads. Yet they travel through a landscape steeped in history, cultural tradition and legends, helping make Sliabh Beagh a special place, cherished by all who live there.

## ROLE OF THIS PLAN ● ● ●

With such a wealth of assets and rich stories, Sliabh Beagh is a place of importance and potential. Yet like many rural areas, it must address challenges and find ways in which its population and local economy can thrive and prosper for future generations.

This plan serves to:

- 1] provide a shared vision for the future
- 2] identify projects through which this potential can be fulfilled. The projects range in scale and ambition, designed for delivery over a 10 year period by a range of parties.

The Sliabh Beagh Masterplan is to be read in conjunction with the plans and policies of both jurisdictions, including the Monaghan County Development Plan and the Fermanagh Area Plan 2007.

## MASTERPLAN PROCESS ● ● ●



*Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (March 2017)*

The Sliabh Beagh masterplan has been the result of a thorough analysis of the area's existing strengths and weaknesses, informed by desktop study and site analysis.

Another valuable source of information was the consultation process carried out through the preparation of the plan. The input of local residents, business owners and elected members, gathered at events held at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel and the Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall, underpins this plan. This demonstrates strong attachment to Sliabh Beagh from local people.





# ANALYSIS

2

Before shaping a vision for Sliabh Beagh, it is essential that we ensure a good understanding of the area. What makes Sliabh Beagh special? This process has been informed by a desktop review of plans and policies, by site visits to the area and by a consultation process with local residents.

Sliabh Beagh has many qualities. Identifying them and articulating their importance helps us protect and sensitively enhance them. These issues and their impact need to be fully understood so that sustainable solutions can be found.

*Our Lady of Banneux, Mulligan Hill,  
Knockatallon  
(March 2017)*



*Open air mass (2015)*

## People

While Sliabh Beagh is visibly defined by its landscape, it is its people, their culture and traditions that give the area its unique character and depth of personality.

Research for this plan revealed a strong community spirit, deep local knowledge and clear sense of pride in the area. By working together over recent years local groups have achieved notable successes, such as the establishment of the Sliabh Beagh Hotel and the restoration of Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall.

Harnessing, growing and sustaining the strong community spirit of Sliabh Beagh will be a driving force behind the fulfillment of its potential.



*View of the Eshbrack Bog (2011)*

## Natural Quality & Beauty

Sliabh Beagh is comprised of a diverse and attractive landscape, largely unspoilt by development. During the consultation and research process, breathtaking views and scenery were resoundingly identified as Sliabh Beagh's most valuable of assets.

Not only is Sliabh Beagh beautiful, but also a high quality environment, recognised through its designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA). These particularly relate to the blanket bog and dystrophic lakes.

Enjoying and accessing this natural beauty, which requires to be carefully managed and maintained to ensure its longevity, must therefore be a central aspect to its plans for the future. This includes underpinning the quality of life for residents and attracting more visitors to the region.



*Nocturnal map*

## Tranquility

In an ever busy, urbanised world, finding getaways from cities and towns is increasingly important to the visitor. The calm and tranquility of Sliabh Beagh, with large areas unaffected by noise and light pollution, makes it another special quality of the area.

Economic development and the sustaining of a local population and businesses must remain a priority for the region as a whole. However, through careful planning and creative proposals, doing so in a manner that preserves this special quality, will greatly underpin its value as a place for wildlife, recreation and tourism.



*Hen Harrier*

## Wildlife & Ecosystems

Sliabh Beagh is home to very important natural habitats supporting protected and endangered species of flora and fauna, native to the area and rarely found in the rest of the island. Sliabh Beagh has designated protected areas (NHA, SAC and SPA).

Ongoing work to protect and enhance wildlife is essential to the sustainability of the region. This includes the breeding grounds of endangered species such as the Hen Harrier and Curlew, with Sliabh Beagh now being one of only 12 sites left in Ireland and the UK for the latter.

These habitats must be regarded in the context of the wider ecosystem and the vital range of ecosystem services Sliabh Beagh has to offer, from agriculture to tourism.

Importantly this work must continue to involve local people, with awareness raised amongst schools and community groups.



*Cooneen/Coonian  
Parish Church (March 2017)*

## Heritage & Culture

Sliabh Beagh is also bestowed with a vibrant culture that reflects the area's personality, history and the communities that live within.

There are some fine examples of built elements with scope to become touristic destinations, such as Cooneen Parish Church, the Mass Rock, Mullaghfad Church and the Ceili Houses.

Art in its varied forms is also deep-rooted in Sliabh Beagh, as shown through the Traditional Music and, more recently, the Modern Arts and the Digital Arts Projects.

Furthermore, interesting historic figures and other stories surround the mountains of Sliabh Beagh, such as Shane Barnagh (the Highway Man), and the Cooneen/ Coonian Ghost.

This plan will look at preserving and promoting these valuable features for future generations of residents and visitors.



*Sliabh Beagh Hotel sign*

## Tourism infrastructure

Sliabh Beagh has modest provisions in place for tourism at present. In many regards this is part of its charm, unspoilt by over development. Furthermore, many of the investments that have taken place, such as walking routes, history programme and the hotel, are of a high quality and to be valued.

Yet to grow as a visitor destination, further investment will be required, helping the visitor to find their way to and around the area, to places of interest, things to do and places in which to eat, drink and stay.

The area has potential, if the investments in this plan are carefully developed, to appeal to core visitor profiles, such as the Culturally Curious and the Great Escaper. Ecotourism, walking and other sports (cycling, horse riding, fishing) will be key attractions in this context.



Map of the Sliabh Beagh  
Way WalkNI brochure

## Accessibility

Sliabh Beagh is strategically well located between Monaghan Town, Enniskillen and Omagh, the largest towns in this part of the island. In addition, it is relatively accessible from the larger cities of Belfast and Dublin, between 1.5 and 2 hours drive away respectively. Potential infrastructure investment in the region, most notably the A5 / N2 road corridor, as well as the Ulster Canal greenway and the A4 and A34 roads, present opportunities to further improve its accessibility.

However, work will be required at local level to facilitate the safe and appropriate access by vehicles and people to more remote locations. For that purpose, providing sustainable transport and rural social transport should be explored.



National Map showing  
Sliabh Beagh's location

## Administration & Brexit

The location of Sliabh Beagh across three county borders and straddling the national borders of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is a unique attribute. However, it also poses practical challenges to managing and promoting the landscape in a cohesive and unified manner. This plan has nonetheless been jointly commissioned, which shows the will for cooperation to take Sliabh Beagh forward. Further provision for cross border administration and formal understandings between councils may be necessary to ensure a holistic approach to its management.

Furthermore, the decision of the UK to leave the European Union in a process known as Brexit, places major uncertainties around the future of border locations such as Sliabh Beagh. It will therefore be vital to monitor ongoing negotiations closely in order to mitigate against problems and respond to opportunities as they arise.

# “WHERE IS SLIABH BEAGH?”



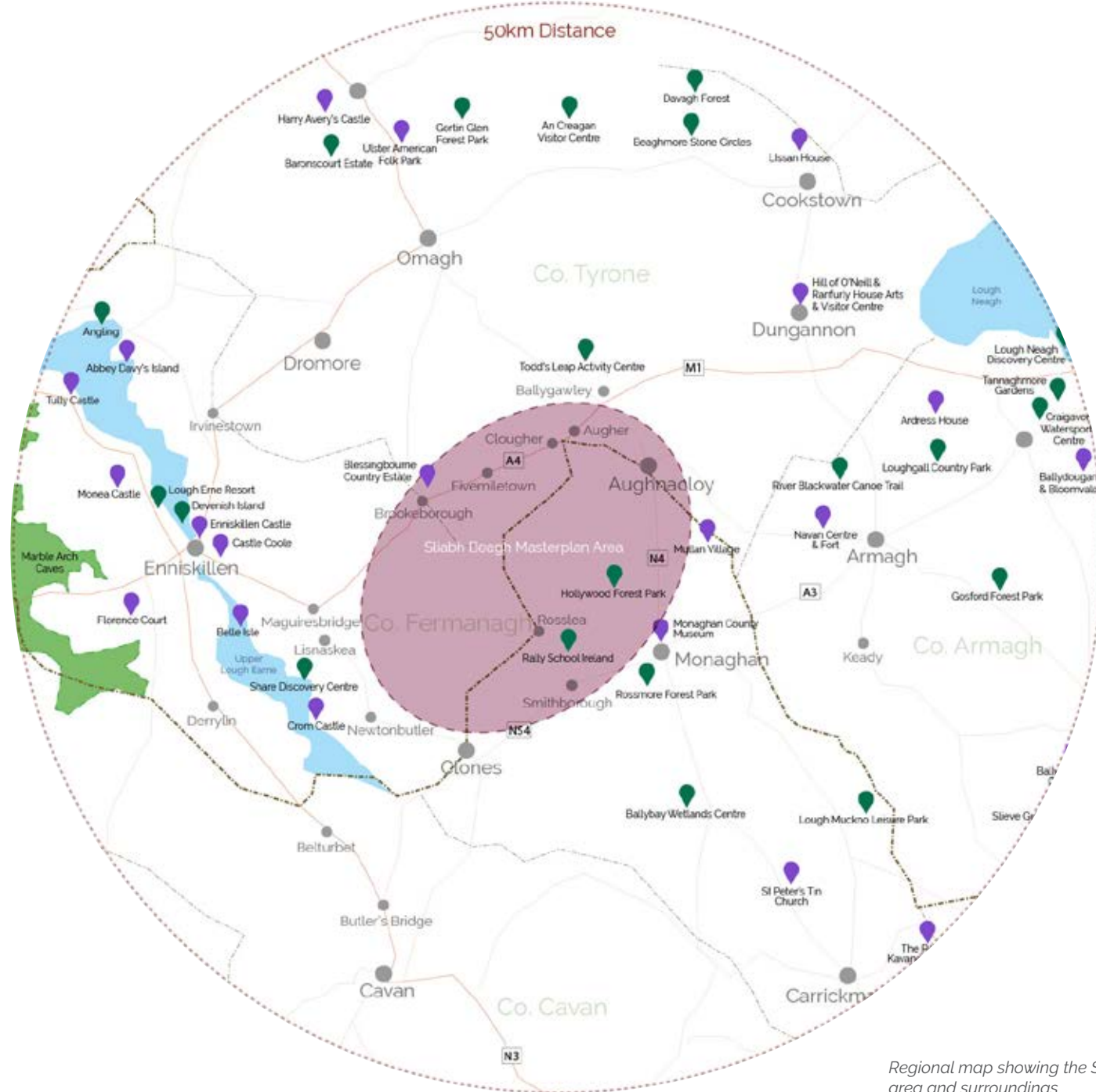
A commonly encountered question during the process to research this plan was “Where exactly is Sliabh Beagh?”

This points to a key issue for the development and promotion of Sliabh Beagh as a destination for tourism and investment more generally.

A number of different names are used to refer to the location by local people, including Bragan, which relates primarily to areas of upland heath. However, Sliabh Beagh is widely agreed to be an appropriate name for region as a whole, with resonance to those living across the area.

Therefore the challenge is to further define Sliabh Beagh, to promote it widely across the island and to ensure that adequate publications, signage and promotions are in place

to increase familiarity with its name.



Regional map showing the Sliabh Beagh area and surroundings



# “WHAT IS SLIABH BEAGH?”

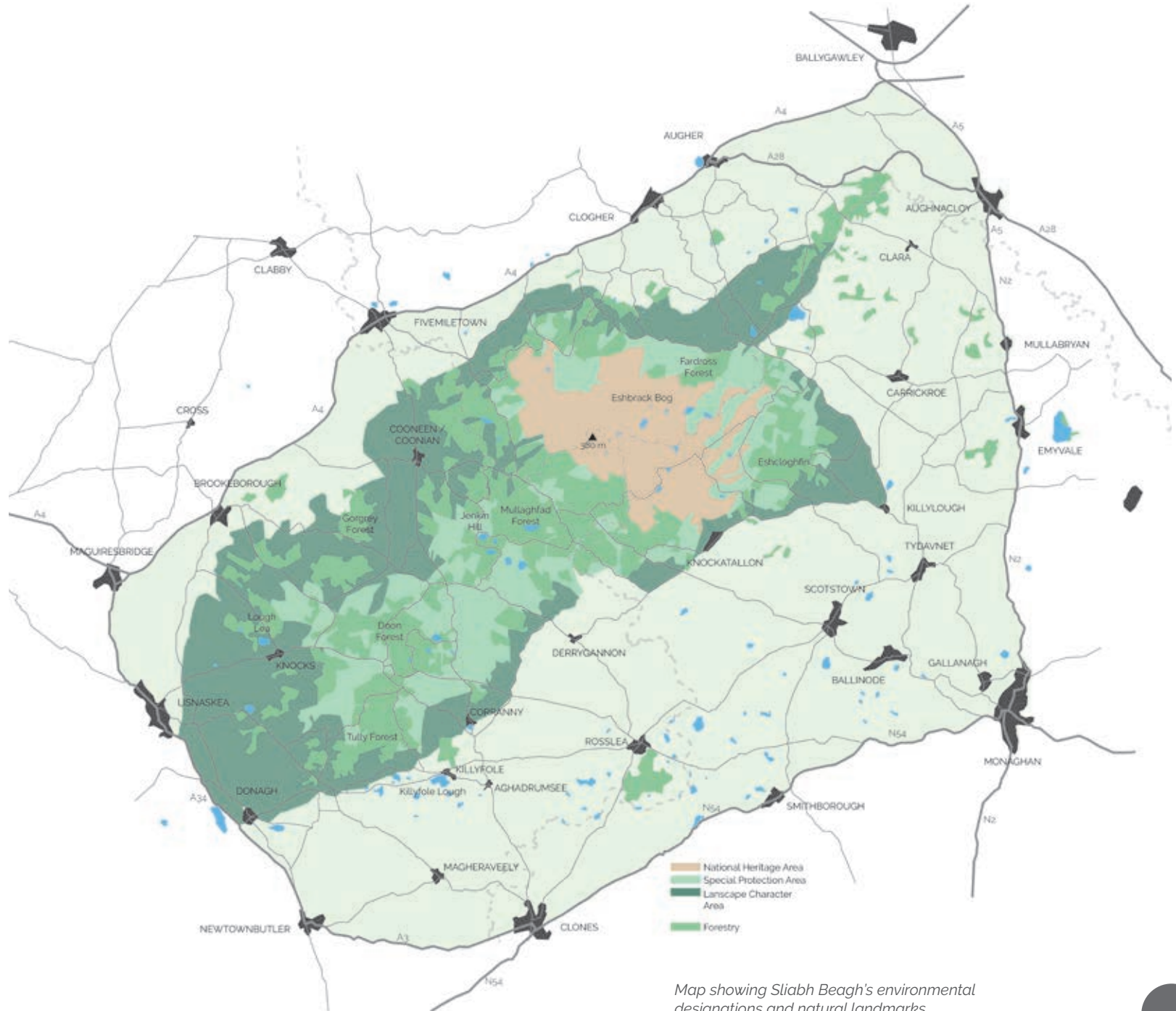


Another key question for this masterplanning process is “What is Sliabh Beagh?”

That is to say, how is Sliabh Beagh physically defined and what role should it play in the context of places to visit across this part of the Island?

A physical definition of Sliabh Beagh is illustrated on the adjacent map, informed by the extents of existing policy designations from both jurisdictions. Importantly, however, Sliabh Beagh should not be characterised solely by its landscape character. The social and cultural definition of the area and the affinity and sense of belonging felt by local communities must also be taken into full account.

Further defining the role of Sliabh Beagh in this context, drawing upon its tangible assets, is a focus of this masterplan.



Map showing Sliabh Beagh's environmental designations and natural landmarks

## POLICY CONTEXT: FERMANAGH & OMAGH DISTRICT



The Fermanagh and Omagh Community Plan 2030 provides the principal policy reference for the District. The Plan is outcomes based, with an overall vision and three themes:

People and Communities Theme:

1. Our people are healthy and well – physically, mentally and emotionally.
2. Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives.
3. Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered .
4. Our people have the best start in life with lifelong opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Theme

5. Our economy is thriving, expanding and outward looking.
6. Our district is a connected place.

Environment Theme

7. Our outstanding natural environment and built and cultural heritage is sustainably managed and, where possible, enhanced.
8. Our district is an attractive and accessible place.

The District's Tourism Strategy aims to grow tourism in the District.

The Objectives are:-

- To establish Fermanagh and Omagh as a 'must visit' destination (Marketing),
- Develop the tourism assets (Tourism Products and Product Development)
- Work with and support tourism businesses (Business Engagement and Development)
- Ensure an exemplary visitor experience (Destination management)
- Ensure best structures are in place to deliver (Organisation and Management)

Finally, in development at the time of writing is a proposition for the Fermanagh Lakelands. This will significantly raise the international profile of Fermanagh and deliver a step change in tourism, by attracting more international visitors, higher spend and an extended season. The proposition will draw on the strengths and assets of the Geopark to which the landscape of Sliabh Beagh relates.



*'Fermanagh and Omagh will generate 5% per annum growth in tourism to 2020 by value and volume, by building on being one of Ireland's leading tourism destinations, with all stakeholders and businesses collaborating to maximise visibility, market appeal, the quality of welcome and experience of visitors and tourism's economic value across the whole district.'*

*Vision, Tourism Development Strategy 2016-2019*

# POLICY CONTEXT: MONAGHAN COUNTY



A key point of reference for Monaghan County is the Monaghan Local Development Strategy, This sets out the following objectives of relevance to Sliabh Beagh.

## Theme 1: Economic/Enterprise Development and Job Creation

### Sub-theme: Rural Tourism

1. Support for development and marketing of tourism accommodation
2. Encourage the development and marketing of rural tourism leisure amenities, adventure tourism product and visitor attractions
3. Develop and support County tourism network
4. Support for utilisation of old buildings for the provision of tourism activities

### Sub-theme: Enterprise Development

1. Support new start-up and expansion of Small to Medium Enterprise's
2. Promote and assist the development of social enterprises
3. Support the development of the artisan foods, handcrafts and farm diversification

### Sub-theme: Rural Towns

1. Pilot a Heritage Towns Initiative in two of the five towns in Co Monaghan
2. Support development of new guesthouses /B&B's /selfcatering / hostels in rural towns
3. Support the development of the arts/community infrastructure in towns

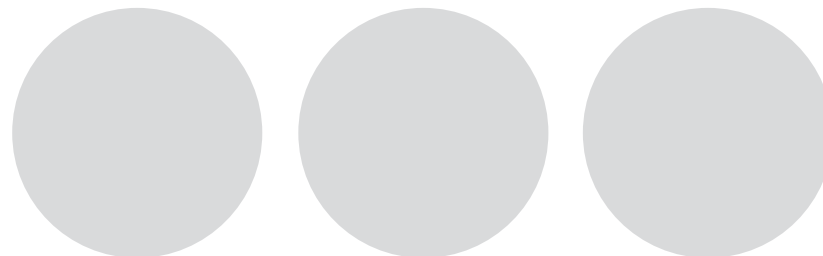
## Theme 3: Rural Environment

### Sub-theme: Protection of Biodiversity

1. Support for programmes and training which raise awareness and public interest in maintaining and protecting biodiversity.
2. Support for the practical implementation of biodiversity projects within rural areas

The County Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2015 - 2020) serves to guide the development, inward investment and marketing of the county during the period outlined. It sets out a series of 10 priorities through which visitors numbers will be increased:

1. Focus on the development of the key Amenity sites and on Walking & Cycling Trails
2. Continue to lobby for and work on the Re Opening of the Ulster Canal
3. Assist Festivals and events to increase numbers and deliver bednights
4. Develop the potential of Heritage Tourism
5. Develop a central border area 'destination' with Monaghan at its centre
6. Increase online presence and engage with Social Media
7. Improve Tourism Signage & Interpretation and Improve Visitor Servicing
8. Develop County Brand
9. Develop networking among trade providers and encourage crossselling
10. Provide information on funding opportunities to existing tourism businesses, community groups or potential startups





# AIMS & OBJECTIVES

## 3

To establish a vision for the future of Sliabh Beagh, it is necessary to identify a series of Aims and Objectives for this masterplan.

These are informed by the research and consultation process and represent key priorities for future investment and development in the region.

Critically they pertain to Sliabh Beagh in its entirety. This take into account administrative boundaries, distinctive localities and communities, while recognising the value and potential of managing, developing and promoting Sliabh Beagh as one destination.

## VISION ● ● ●

*“Sliabh Beagh is a unique cross border region of Ireland whose high quality natural environment provides a haven for wildlife and an opportunity to connect with and explore the natural world. Its natural assets are cherished and protected by the local communities, who work together, supported by Local Authorities, to develop improved access to the region’s many natural and cultural delights. The Sliabh Beagh visitor experience is community-based, sensitively managed and focused on promoting the exploration of the wonderful natural and cultural landscape of this unspoilt uplands area.”*

ANALYSIS  
FINDINGS

AIMS &  
OBJECTIVES

THEMES

PROJECTS

DELIVERY

1

**A Haven for Wildlife**

**Cherish and Enhance our natural environment**

**The primary asset of Sliabh Beagh is our natural landscape of bogs, lakes, woodlands and pastures. We must continue to value and protect these places for future generations, while finding opportunities to enhance them.**



*View of forest in Sliabh Beagh*

2

**A Great Place to Live and Work**

**Support and grow quality of life and economic development**

**To be sustainable, Sliabh Beagh must flourish as a place in which to live, work and prosper. Continued investment is required in facilities and connections, providing for existing and attracting new residents and businesses.**



*Phoenix Song, Corranny (June 2017)*

3

**A wonderful place to visit and explore**

**Grow the visitor economy and establish Sliabh Beagh as a uniquely authentic destination**

**We are proud of Sliabh Beagh and will work to welcome more people to join us in exploring its natural beauty, cultural curiosities, events and adventures. In doing so we will shape an authentic destination and experience.**



*Walking in the hills of Sliabh Beagh*

# OBJECTIVES



I

**Protect, manage  
and enhance  
natural habitats**

The natural habitats of Sliabh Beagh and the wildlife they support are a special feature of this landscape. They must continue to be protected, managed appropriately and enhanced where possible, with the aim of sustaining and increasing populations of key species.



*View of the blanket bog*

II

**Strengthen networks  
and infrastructure**

Improving the movement of people, vehicles and information to, from and around Sliabh Beagh will be an essential component of its increased success as a place to live, work and visit. The infrastructure for transport, communications and communities must be strengthened to sustain and grow residential and business populations.



*Irish National RR Championship*





### Define and develop place identity

Sliabh Beagh has a unique identity and culture, shaped by its landscape and history, which has been expressed through language and the arts. To preserve and enrich the shared place identity of Sliabh Beagh, it must be further understood, defined and developed, increasing meaning to all who live there and visit.



Map showing Sliabh Beagh (2011)



### Increase tourism infrastructure and capacity

Those who visit Sliabh Beagh are met with a warm welcome and a fascinating landscape to explore. As a key part of our economy, we will seek to increase visitor numbers through effective promotion.



The Sliabh Beagh Hotel's main entrance



# THEMES & PROJECTS

## 4

The Sliabh Beagh Masterplan comprises a total of 10 themes and 30 individual projects. These are drawn directly from the findings of the research and consultation process and seek to fulfil the vision, aims and objectives set out for the area.

The projects are diverse in scale and complexity, with some for delivery in the short term, others for the medium to longer terms. They are designed to be led by a range of different parties from the public, private and community sectors. All projects are subject to the availability of funding and where necessary, statutory approvals.



*Bragan sign  
(Photo by Donal Muldoon)*

## 10 THEMES ● ● ●

**A} PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION**

**B} IDENTITY & PROMOTION**

**C} CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT**

**D} DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**E} GATEWAYS**

**F} ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE**

**G} PATHS & SIGNAGE**

**H} DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES**

**I} EVENTS & FESTIVALS**

**J} HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION**



A unique feature of Sliabh Beagh is that it straddles three administrative areas comprised of County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland and Fermanagh and Omagh District and Mid Ulster District in Northern Ireland.

This presents a challenge to the ability to coherently manage, plan and promote one landscape such as Sliabh Beagh, with potential for further complications in the future related to Brexit. It will therefore be essential that excellent levels of partnership and coordination are maintained to progress this plan.

Increased collaboration between communities, businesses and interest groups will be critical to the success of this plan and the ability to advance shared projects of benefit to the entirety of Sliabh Beagh.

### 1) Re-establishment and support of a Sliabh Beagh wide forum

It is proposed to establish a new forum for the entire Sliabh Beagh area, representing the interests of communities, businesses and local authorities.

The role of the group will be to act as a network for sharing ideas and information across Sliabh Beagh, thereby promoting increased levels of partnership and collaboration.

Local authorities and elected members will play a key role in facilitating this group, comprised of representative from across the area.

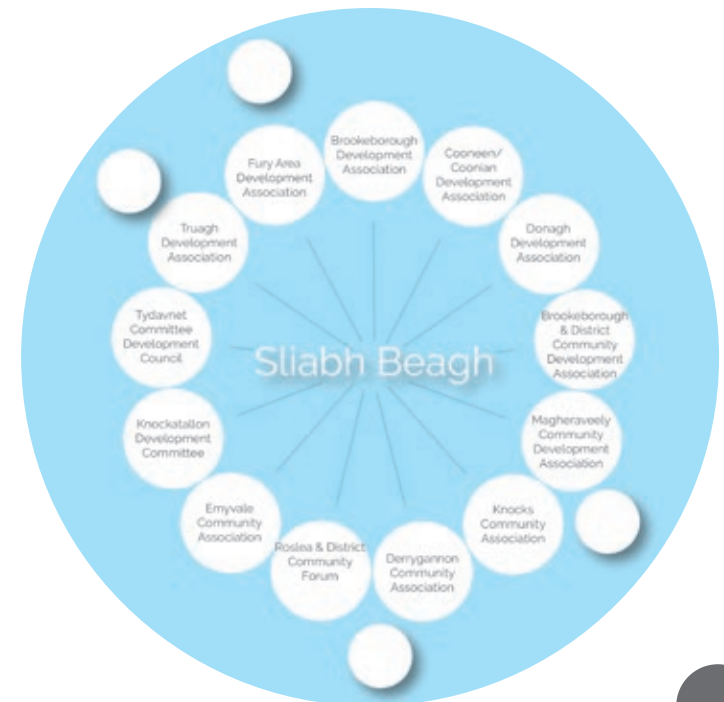
Consideration must be given to guaranteeing this group is adequately skilled and resourced for its day to day administrative needs and able to acquire professional support when required.



**Monaghan  
County Council**



**Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council**  
**Comhairle Ceantair  
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B

## IDENTITY & PROMOTION

A place is not only defined by its natural and built landscape, but also by the stories and culture that develop around it over generations. This 'intangible' heritage must be preserved, understood and shared with everyone in Sliabh Beagh.

Doing so will not only reinforce the identity of Sliabh Beagh as a place in which to live and learn, but also assist in the process of sharing and celebrating its unique culture with visitors.

### 1) Social History collation, digital archiving and communication

In our ever changing times, it can be easy to overlook the importance of memories and stories handed down through the generations. However, these are

critically important pieces of historic information that contribute to our shared understanding of Sliabh Beagh. It is therefore proposed to conduct a social history project across Sliabh Beagh, working with local people to capture those special memories and insights about the area. Older residents in particular would be encouraged to share their recollections, contributing to the creation of an invaluable digital archive of Sliabh Beagh's history and culture. Local schools and libraries have scope to play a useful role in the delivery of this action.

### 2) Interpretation Strategy to research and develop themes

So rich is the heritage and cultural interest in Sliabh Beagh that a specific process is required to research its different strands and to organise them into themes suited for further study, interpretation and promotion. This process will draw upon a wealth of literature, historical records and social histories. to examine topics such as mythology and folklore, neolithic and ancient activity, clans and battles, religion and ecclesiastical significance, traditional music, farming and rural customs, border life in the 20th century and contemporary arts and creativity.

To further increase awareness about some of the features existing in the area, an application may be made to ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) to name them as Cultural Heritage Sites.



Religion

Penal Cross, Eshbrack Bog



Arts

Sliabh Beagh Arts Project, Corranry



History

Cooneen/ Coonian Ghost House



Music

Irish Traditional Session

### 3} Interpretation Signage & Art

Great potential exists to establish heritage trails throughout Sliabh Beagh, accompanied by interpretative signage and art works that share its stories with locals and the visitor alike.

Based on a thorough process of research, this interpretation must be carefully planned along clear themes to encourage the movement of visitors throughout the area.

Signage and graphic design must be of the highest quality and durable to withstand weather conditions. The location of such infrastructure requires careful consideration, so as not to detract from the qualities of the area in question.

Public Art also has a key role to play in creatively communicating with people about Sliabh Beagh. Both permanent and temporary installations should be considered, created with a specific location in mind from the outset.

### 4} Schools Programme

It is important that the future generations of Sliabh Beagh are encouraged to learn about its culture and history. An output of historical research should inform the preparation of educational resources for local schools, around which age appropriate programmes can be developed. These should stimulate increased collaboration between schools across the Sliabh Beagh area and there would also be opportunities to link them in with museums' educational programmes across both jurisdictions.

### 5} Collaborative process to development of 'Sliabh Beagh' identity, brand and marketing material

To effectively promote Sliabh Beagh as a destination, it will be necessary to develop its place identity through branding and marketing materials (eg. websites, literature, logos). This exercise should be grasped as a unique opportunity to engage with the resident population of Sliabh Beagh about their place. Through collaborative techniques, it would enable the attributes of Sliabh Beagh to be discussed and identified, translated into core messages and represented through suitable graphic means. The resultant branding should then be applied consistently across Sliabh Beagh, so as to reinforce its identity, brand awareness and profile.

### 6} Expand existing pilot online community mapping project to include all of Sliabh Beagh area

In 2016 in a unique collaboration between artist Marilyn Lennon and the Knockattalon Ramblers group led the creation of an online map of walking routes called the Waymarkers. Not only does the map show routes and points of interest, but is also used to record stories, experiences and thoughts of those who frequent them.

Using this model, the Waymarkers project has great scope to be extended across Sliabh Beagh, providing an invaluable resource for all who visit.



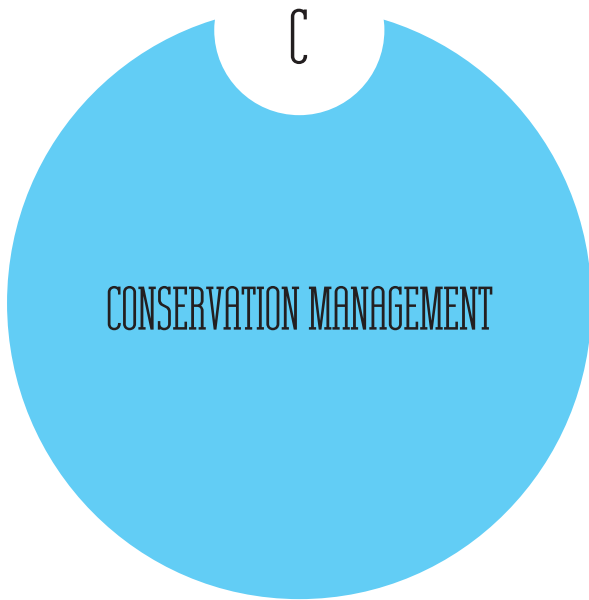
*Old photograph of children at school, Sliabh Beagh*



*Social media app icons*



*Example of interpretation signage*



Sliabh Beagh is home to many key species of bird and animal, including the Hen Harrier, Red Grouse, Pine Marten and Red Squirrel. These along with other species of flora and fauna require to be supported through the management and improvement of natural habitats, including blanket bog, lakes, wetlands, woodland and farmland.

Several important environmental designations from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are contained within Sliabh Beagh: one ASSI (Area of Special Scientific Interest), one SAC (Special Area of Conservation), one NHA (National Heritage Area) and two SPAs (Special Protected Area). These designations are crucial for how this environment is managed.

A Conservation Management Plan was produced in August 2011 and set out a

series of priorities, which remain largely valid for the SAC and NHA contained in the area in question.

Another key initiative is the INTERREG Va Collaborative Action on Natura Network project, which is a project to protect endangered species and restore natural habitats in the uplands of Sliabh Beagh. The resultant initiatives from this project will complement the objectives of this masterplan.

### 1} Biodiversity Action Plan

It is proposed to prepare a Biodiversity Action Plan for the entire Sliabh Beagh area. This will include areas formally designated for protection on both sides of the border. Importantly, it will also be extended to cover remaining areas of Sliabh Beagh, thereby considering a range of habitats beyond protected boglands and lakes, to include farmland and lowland wooded areas, for example.

Biodiversity is a key component of healthy ecosystems, maintaining an interdependent mix of animal and plant species and preserving invaluable genetic material. A global reduction in biodiversity is of ongoing international concern, irreparably affecting ecosystems and affecting our environment and economy.

Biodiversity Action Plans follow a methodical process to set out a strategy for local biodiversity, undertake an audit of existing levels and to develop habitat

and species action plans.

The Sliabh Beagh Biodiversity Action Plan must be coordinated across both jurisdictions and relate to national plans and policies.

Care must also be taken to consider the practicalities of actions, working in partnership with landowners and those who continue to make a living from the land.



*Red Grouse*



*Pine Marten*



*Hen Harrier*



*Red Squirrel*



# D

## DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Digital infrastructure, to include high speed broadband and comprehensive mobile phone coverage, has become an essential component of life in rural areas. They are also critical to the ability of an area to support economic growth, including tourism related businesses.

Like most rural areas, coverages and speeds in Sliabh Beagh area are variable. It is therefore necessary to pursue investment in such infrastructure, as a means of enabling its development.

### 1) National lobbying for improved infrastructure

Falling outside of the direct remit of local authorities, it will be necessary for councils, communities and the business sector to work together in lobbying government and service providers to improve digital infrastructure across Sliabh Beagh. Depending on locations, this will include fixed line and satellite solutions.

In Northern Ireland, new opportunities may emerge from a recent commitment by the UK government to further invest in broadband in rural areas. In the Republic of Ireland, the process would form part of ongoing efforts to increase speeds in the County through a range of measures.

### 2) Pilot community led initiative

Innovative community led means of bringing improved broadband connectivity to Sliabh Beagh area worthy of exploration, potentially through a pilot scheme.

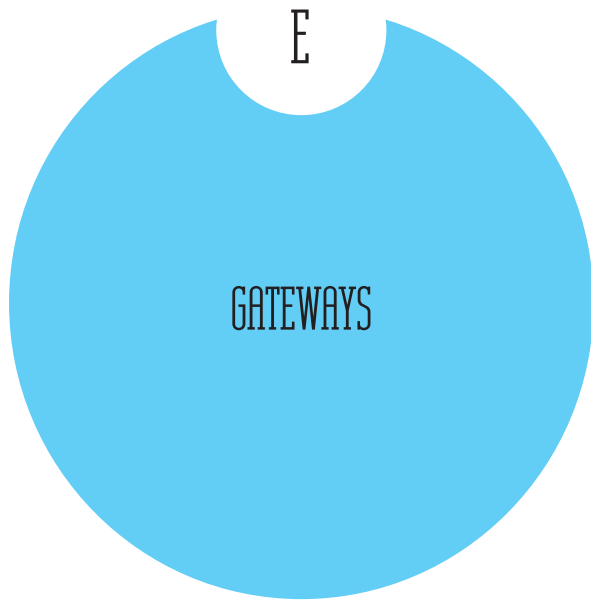
A range of models may be open for communities, from local fundraising to bring improved services to an area, to the actual construction of infrastructure by local means for operation by a supplier or a new start-up organisation.



Mobile coverage



Broadband Internet



A key priority of the masterplan is to improve accessibility of the area for visitors.

The 'OUTER GATEWAYS' are the towns on the outskirts of Sliabh Beagh which will serve as the first contact points for visitors. These towns are well connected by main roads and are therefore easy to access from bigger cities. The outer gateways will play a key role in orientating visitors and directing them to the inner gateways and attractions of Sliabh Beagh.

The 'INNER GATEWAYS' are the villages closest to the heart of the area. These will be the entrance points to the natural landscape and its paths. Tourist information, interpretation of the site and parking will also be provided at these gateway villages.

### **1) Regional Signage**

The promotion of Sliabh Beagh as a destination must include the provision of appropriate road signage across the wider regional network. In liaison with local authorities and national transport bodies, this should involve a strategic approach to identifying key tourist routes and points of access.

### **2) Identification of outer gateways for tourism information & orientation**

A ring or 'necklace' of potential outer gateway locations are identified on the adjacent map. These are located along the 4 four main roads that encircle Sliabh Beagh, namely the N2 and N54 in the South and A4 and A34 in the North.

Specific locations require to be found in the the towns and villages along this route where information about Sliabh Beagh, its attractions and activities can be provided. Visitor centres, libraries, hotels, shops and petrol stations are all key locations in this regard.

In addition, signage and mapping may be appropriately installed in key locations along these routes, helping to encourage visitors to explore the area, while increasing the recognition of its place identity. Such signage must be visually sensitive to its rural setting and in keeping with the sustainability objectives of this plan.

### **3) Identification of inner gateway sites for visitor car parking and orientation facilities**

Inner Gateways are the villages located within the Sliabh Beagh area, identified on the adjacent map.

An important objective of this masterplan is to encourage the body of visitor activity towards existing settlements in the area, as opposed to remote rural locations. The reason for this is to stimulate and sustain economic activity in these villages, through spending in shops, cafes, pubs or visitor attractions.

In order to facilitate such movement, each inner gateway village will require detailed planning to consider how and where best to welcome visitors. Depending on the appropriateness of each location, this may include car and bus parks, laybys, picnic areas, play areas, information points and the creation of new foot and cycle paths to surrounding areas.

### **4) Tourism training and awareness programme**

Sliabh Beagh is well known locally for the warmth of its welcome. Yet further training and tourism and hospitality skills would help local service providers, businesses and tour guides to ensure they are providing the best possible reception for visitors to the area.

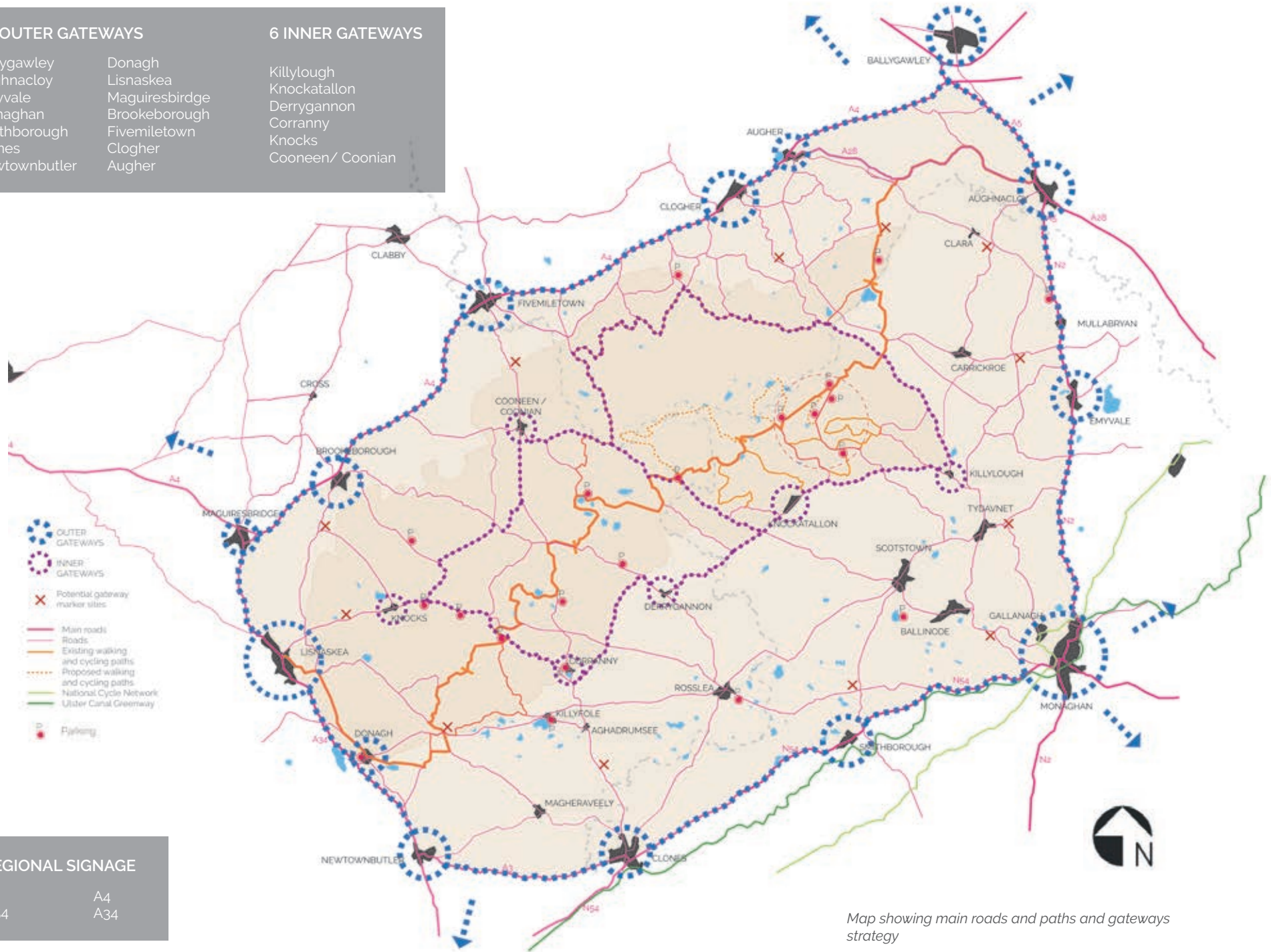
### 14 OUTER GATEWAYS

Ballygawley  
Aughnacloy  
Emyvale  
Monaghan  
Smithborough  
Clones  
Newtownbutler

### 6 INNER GATEWAYS

Donagh  
Lisnaskea  
Maguiresbirdge  
Brookeborough  
Fivemiletown  
Clogher  
Augher

Killylough  
Knockatallon  
Derrygannon  
Corranny  
Knocks  
Cooneen/ Coonian



### REGIONAL SIGNAGE

N2      A4  
N54      A34

Map showing main roads and paths and gateways strategy

## ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Site visits and public consultation revealed road conditions as an area of major concern for Sliabh Beagh. Improvement works and a maintenance plan for their future are required as part of existing roads programmes. Having a network of roads in good condition that simultaneously retain their rural character is vital to ensure connections within Sliabh Beagh and with the surrounding areas, as well as making it easily accessible for visitors.

### 1) Coordination of road improvements as part of ongoing maintenance programme

An assessment of road conditions across Sliabh Beagh should be made as part of wider roads maintenance responsibilities. Particular attention is required to roads that a) form arrival points into the Sliabh Beagh area and b) provide important links between villages within the area. Accessibility for camper vans and coaches on suitable roads will become increasingly important as visitor numbers are raised.

As part of this initiative, it will be necessary to consider the provision of car and coach parking. Visitors should be encouraged where possible to park at gateway towns and villages, where they can join foot and cycle paths. This would help to manage congestion and promote more environmentally forms of transport.

Where car and coach parking is required near attractions outside of gateway towns and villages, this must be extremely sensitively positioned in relation to the surrounding landscape and ecology. Small gravel car parks and short lay-bys interspersed with landscape are preferable over large areas of hard standing.



*View of road between Knockatallon and Cooneen (March 2017)*



*View of access road to the top of the Eshbrack Bog (April 2017)*

## PATHS & SIGNAGE

Walking is a popular reason to visit Sliabh Beagh and has major potential to be supported and grown as a pursuit, along with cycling and horse riding. Importantly the path network needs to be planned and managed strategically. Existing paths require improvements, while potential also exists to create new pathways, increasing the attraction of the area. The network must also be linked up with centres of population,

Along with a strong path network, having good signage to orientate visitors is also essential. This will include direction signage, as well as landmark gateways to help define Sliabh Beagh.

### 1] Detailed condition survey

A thorough survey of all existing paths should be undertaken. This will allow for a detailed assessment to be made of their physical condition, their ease of access for different users and their suitability of design in relation to context. With professional support, this process could be used as a means of positive engagement with local groups who know the paths well.

### 2] Design standard specifications for walking trails

An important way of developing Sliabh Beagh as a destination will be to ensure consistency across the area. It is recommended that this applies to its path network, so that over time, walkers can expect similar standards of paths right across the region.

The beginning of this process will be to develop cross border standard specifications. This will set out different types of paths for Sliabh Beagh appropriate to different locations (mountain passes, bog walks, woodland trails). Where possible, a light touch approach will be adopted, not to undermine the sense of wilderness of the area.

These standards will then provide details on the design, specifications and construction of each path type, so that all new paths and improvements are implemented accordingly.



*Example of orientation signage*



*Example of orientation signage*

### 3} Phased Path Improvement Programme

A long term programme of path improvement should be undertaken across Sliabh Beagh. Based on the condition survey, this process requires strategic coordination across the entire area, allowing for a process of prioritisation and delivery when funding becomes available.

Great care is required to ensure that path upgrades and any new paths are appropriate to their setting. In protected areas, this will require formal processes, such as Appropriate Assessments, to be followed.

Construction of paths may be carried out through appointed contractors and the use of voluntary groups.

### 4} Wayfinding Strategy

In conjunction with the path network, a way finding strategy should be developed to determine the locations of orientation maps and signs across Sliabh Beagh.

This must be based on a detailed understanding of the path network and the locations of points of interest. To help stimulate economic activity, gateway towns and villages in Sliabh Beagh must be fully integrated with the wayfinding strategy.

### 5} Signage & Public Art (inc Sliabh Beagh waymarkers)

The signage system for Sliabh Beagh will be directly informed by the Wayfinding Strategy. Care is required to ensure adequate signs to help visitors explore the area, without an overprovision that in fact spoils the landscape for which they are intended.

Likewise the design of signs should be carefully considered in this context. A consistent 'family' of Sliabh Beagh signs should be developed, using high quality materials and craftsmanship. The inclusion of the Irish language may be required in certain instances.

Not only will signs be used to orientate and direct visitors, but also to interpret the history and culture of Sliabh Beagh. Informed by the Interpretation Strategy, these must also be very well designed, written and positioned. Public Art should also be employed for interpretative purposes.

Finally, gateway markers should be designed and installed along all approach roads to Sliabh Beagh (between the Outer and Inner Gateway Towns). These are to be uniquely designed for Sliabh Beagh by an artist or landscape designer in conjunction with local people and constructed using high quality natural materials. Variations on a theme will enable signs to respond to their chosen location, helping ensure they are appropriate in scale. Branding for Sliabh Beagh should be incorporated.



*Example of orientation signage*



*Example of orientation signage*

## DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES

Developing Sliabh Beagh as a destination will require maintaining and advertising its existing features of interest. These landmarks, many of which have archaeological and ecological significance, will need improvement works. This will be guided in detail through a Conservation Management Plan.

Sliabh Beagh has potential to further develop existing and new activities that would appeal to a wide range of people. These include walking, cycling, birdwatching, angling and horseriding. Such activities will be developed by the private sectors, with support from local councils.

Given the strong interest in astronomy in the area, Sliabh Beagh will seek to be included in the international Dark Skies initiative. This will control light pollution and encourage increased stargazing activities.

### 1) Conservation Management Plan to identify site specific requirements

Sliabh Beagh has a wealth of fascinating monuments, structures and buildings dotted all around the landscape. A carefully coordinated process is required to identify and map the elements that are not currently included in official records on each side of the border. This would lead to the creation of a Conservation Management plan for their preservation, restoration, interpretation and use, which could be incorporated into an area Heritage Plan. Heritagemaps.ie could also then be used as a baseline for this action.

The designations for the discovered points of interest will vary from location to location, with some archaeological sites requiring protection and limited access. However, other places, including ruined buildings in key locations, may be suitable for full restoration and re-use. Ideas may include cafes and restaurants, visitor centres or museums, bunkhouses or rental accommodation.

### 2) Development & Coordination of Activities & Experiences

For Sliabh Beagh to attract more visitors, investment is required in the activities and experiences that take place there. These should be led by the private and community sectors, with support from local and central government. Close attention should be paid to the aims and objectives set out in this masterplan to ensure appropriateness with the vision for Sliabh Beagh. A wide range



*Coonian Ghost House (March 2017)*



*Horse riding*



*Angling*



*Mountain biking*



*Hiking*

of activities have scope for development from nature watching, educational tours to outdoor pursuits and adventure sports, yet at all times ensuring they avoid disturbance of critically endangered and protected breeding birds.

### 3} International Dark Skies Certification

Sliabh Beagh has significant potential to be sensitively developed as a location of astronomy and stargazing. The lack of development and remoteness of the location, yet with relatively good regional transport links, makes it well suited for this increasingly popular pastime.

A goal of this process should be to seek certification from the International Dark Skies Association, with a various potential designations shown on the adjacent rectangle.

### 4} Light pollution control

In line with the certification process, steps are required to manage light pollution from existing locations and future projects. New and affordable lighting technologies will help to ensure this process does not prevent development, rather that it informs decisions around lighting.

### 5} Development of astronomical infrastructure & activities

Working with educational institutes and astronomical organisations, the potential

of developing specific infrastructure and activities should be explored. This will include an extension to existing stargazing trips and may in time warrant the construction of an observatory in Sliabh Beagh. This has exciting potential to become a Unique Selling Point of the visitor experience .



Stargazing



Example of observatory



Possible designations by IDA International Dark-Sky Association ([www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)):

#### *International Dark Sky Communities*

*Communities are legally organized cities and towns that adopt quality outdoor lighting ordinances and undertake efforts to educate residents about the importance of dark skies.*

#### *International Dark Sky Parks*

*Parks are publicly- or privately-owned spaces protected for natural conservation that implement good outdoor lighting and provide dark sky programs for visitors.*

#### *International Dark Sky Reserves*

*Reserves consist of a dark "core" zone surrounded by a populated periphery where policy controls are enacted to protect the darkness of the core.*

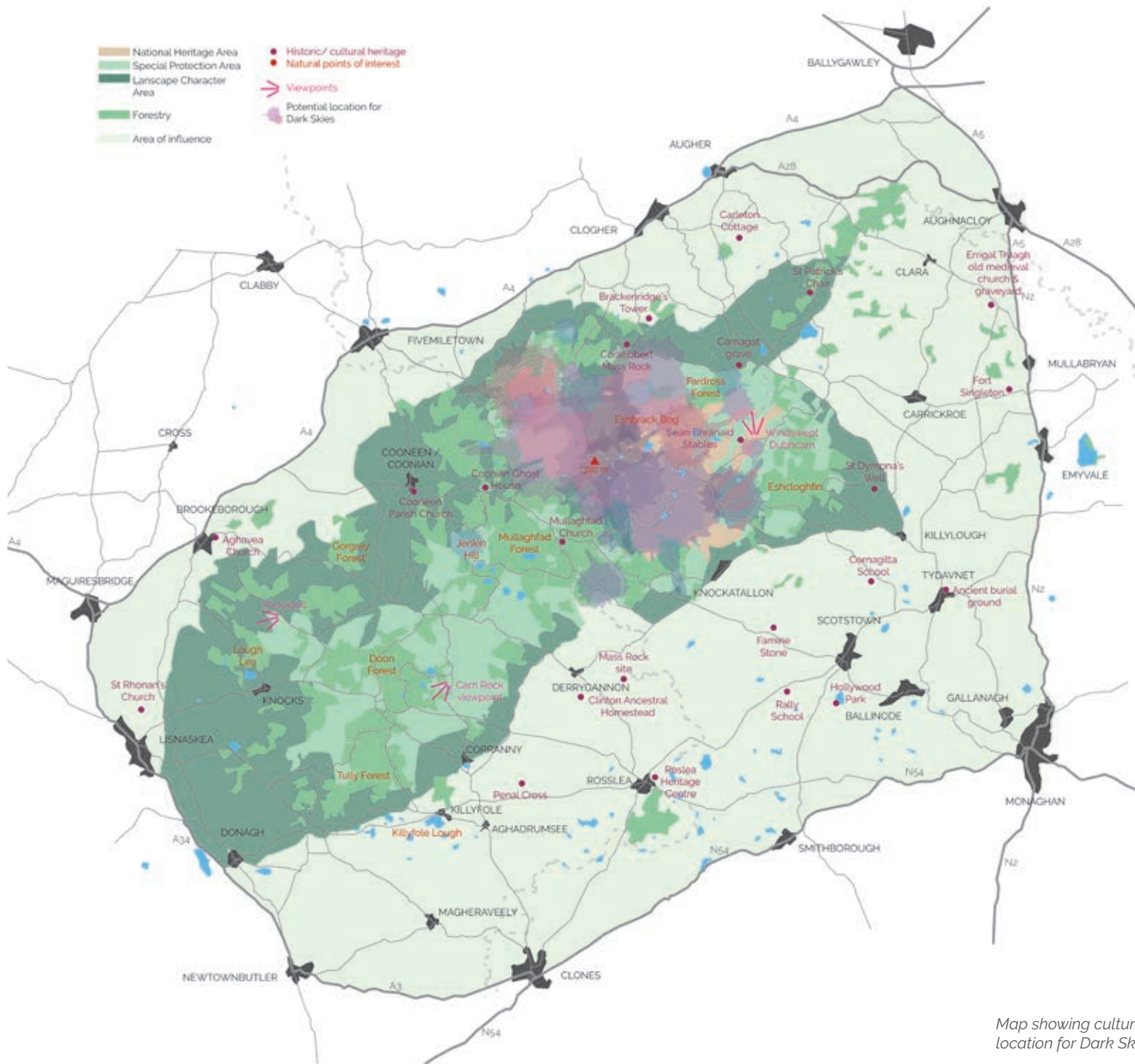
#### *International Dark Sky Sanctuaries*

*Sanctuaries are the most remote (and often darkest) places in the world whose conservation state is most fragile.*

#### *Dark Sky Developments of Distinction*

*Developments of Distinction recognize subdivisions, master planned communities, and unincorporated neighborhoods and townships whose planning actively promotes a more natural night sky but does not qualify them for the International Dark Sky Community designation.*





Map showing cultural and natural destinations, potential location for Dark Skies and viewpoints.

# I

## EVENTS & FESTIVALS

There are several excellent cultural and sporting events and festivals that take place in the Sliabh Beagh area. They make an important contribution to local life, providing opportunities for the local community to socialise, join in shared experiences and celebrations. Events in Sliabh Beagh also have great potential to attract more visitors to the area, ideally involving overnight stays in the immediate vicinity.

These events require coordinated development and promotion to increase their impact. Furthermore, potential exists for new events that reinforce Sliabh Beagh's identity and unique visitor offer.



*Phoenix Song (June 2017)*



*Forgotten Song event,  
Mullaghfad Church (2016)*

### 1} Annual Calendar & Promotion

Work is required to coordinate the promotion of existing events across Sliabh Beagh. This would involve online collation of events and the production of an annual calendar. By encouraging organising groups to plan as early as possible, the scope to help promote their events as part of a comprehensive Sliabh Beagh offer is increased.

### 2} Sliabh Beagh Event Development Initiative

In the context of a review of all existing events, the potential for new events in Sliabh Beagh should be explored.

It is recommended that for consistency, the vision, aims and objectives of this masterplan are used to guide deliberations.

Potential may exist for an annual Sliabh Beagh event that involves all communities and businesses across the entirety of the area.

### 3} Cross-border Walking Festival

An increasing interest in walking and rambling in Sliabh Beagh has led to the successful holding of walking events. Great potential exists to further develop a cross-border walking festival which brings together groups and visitors from across the area and much further afield.



*Walking in Sliabh Beagh*

J

## HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION

Along with the offer of new activities and experiences, providing appropriate accommodation across Sliabh Beagh is of vital importance. These must meet the needs of different interests and should include hotels, hostels, B&Bs and camp sites. Innovative accommodation consistent with the aims of Sliabh Beagh should be encouraged (eg. stargazing bubble tents). Accommodation will continue to be both private or community-led initiatives.

### 1] Community & Private Sector Development Support

Support to help the private and community sectors in developing appropriate visitor accommodation in Sliabh Beagh is required.

This may range from advice and training programmes, to the consideration of more direct assistance through grants and practical support. Working with existing providers will be a key first step, helping them to achieve high standards and to grow their businesses.

New accommodation that underpins the unique visitor offer of Sliabh Beagh should be prioritised. This may include the restoration of heritage buildings, accommodation in support of particular activities (eg. walking or stargazing) and those which involve an emphasis on environmental stewardship.

### 2] Coordination & Networking

Opportunities for local accommodation and hospitality providers to meet and network should be created. This would present the opportunity to establish a coordinated Sliabh Beagh offer and to introduce the area to tour providers and tourism agencies from across the island and beyond.



*Example of rural accommodation house*



*Stargazing bubble tent*



*Camping*





# ACTION PLAN

5

Managing the delivery of improvements to Sliabh Beagh will be made through the use of an Action Plan set out on the following pages.

This 'live' document should be regularly reviewed and updated, so that projects across Sliabh Beagh are prioritised and monitored.

Lead delivery agents and potential stakeholders are listed on the action plan.

New projects and actions will arise in the future. These should be developed in close consultation with this masterplan, so ensuring that they complement other proposals and seek to fulfill the vision, aims and objectives established for Sliabh Beagh.

*View from the Eshbrack Bog  
(Photo by Mary Beagan)*



*Aurora Borealis at Bragan Penal Cross*

***Photo Donal Muldoon***

# PROJECT OUTCOMES

		AIMS			OBJECTIVES			
		1	2	3	I	II	III	IV
REGENERATION PLAN PROJECTS		A Haven for Wildlife  Cherish and Enhance our natural environment	A Great Place to Live and Work  Support and grow quality of life and economic development	A wonderful place to visit and explore  Grow the visitor economy and establish Sliabh Beagh as a uniquely authentic destination	Protect, manage and enhance natural habitats	Strengthen networks and infrastructure	Define and develop place identity	Increase tourism infrastructure and capacity
A	PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B	IDENTITY & PROMOTION		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
C	CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT	✓		✓	✓			✓
D	DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE		✓			✓		✓
E	GATEWAYS			✓		✓	✓	✓
F	ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE		✓	✓		✓		✓
G	PATHS & SIGNAGE	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
H	DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
I	EVENTS & FESTIVALS		✓	✓			✓	✓
J	HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION		✓	✓		✓		✓

	REGENERATION PLAN PROJECTS	PRIORITY	LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	COST BRACKET	
A	<b>PARTNERSHIP &amp; ADMINISTRATION</b>	1} Re-establishment and support of a Sliabh Beagh wide forum	I	Comm	All	€
B	<b>IDENTITY &amp; PROMOTION</b>	1} Social History collation, digital archiving and communication	M	Comm & Hist	LG & CG & Edu & CG & Comm	€
		2} Interpretation Strategy to research and develop themes	H	Comm & LG	Hist & TA & CG & Edu	€€
		3} Interpretation Signage & Art	VH	LG	Hist & TA & CG & Edu & Arts	€€
		4} Schools Programme	M	Edu	Edu	€
		5} Collaborative process to development 'Sliabh Beagh' Identity, brand and marketing material	VH	LG	All	€
		6} Expand existing pilot online community mapping project to include all of Sliabh Beagh area	H	Comm & Sport	LG & TA	€
C	<b>CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT</b>	1} Biodiversity Action Plan	VH	LG	Env & CG	€€
D	<b>DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	1} National lobbying for improved infrastructure	H	LG	LG & LB	€
		2} Pilot community led initiative	M	Comm	LG & CG & LB	€€
E	<b>GATEWAYS</b>	1} Regional Signage	VH	LG & CG	Comm & TA & CG & Arts	€€
		2} Identification of outer gateways for tourism information & orientation	H	LG	TA & CG	€
		3} Identification of inner gateway sites for visitor car parking and orientation facilities	VH	LG	CG & TA & CG	€€€
		4} Tourism training and awareness programme	H	Comm	LG & Comm & Edu	€€
F	<b>ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	1} Coordination of road improvements as part of ongoing maintenance programme	H	LG	CG & LG	€€€

**KEY**

**PRIORITY**

IMMEDIATE = I  
 VERY HIGH = VH  
 HIGH = H  
 MEDIUM = M

**LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS & KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

LG = Local Governments  
 CG = Central Government  
 TA = Tourism Agencies  
 LB = Local Businesses  
 Comm = Community groups

**Env = Environmental groups**

Hist = Historical groups  
 Edu = Education providers  
 Sports = Sport and activity groups  
 Arts = Arts and cultural groups

**COST BRACKET**

€ = 0 - 20,000  
 €€ = 20,000 - 100,000  
 €€€ = 100,000 - 500,000  
 €€€€ = 500,000 +



	REGENERATION PLAN PROJECTS	PRIORITY	LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	COST BRACKET	
G	<b>PATHS &amp; SIGNAGE</b>	1} Detailed condition survey	I	LG	Env & Sports	€€
		2} Path design guide	I	LG	Env & Sports	€
		3} Phased improvement programme	VH	LG	Env & Sports & Comm	€€€€
		4} Wayfinding Strategy	H	Comm	TA & CG	€
		5} Signage & Public Art (inc Sliabh Beagh waymarkers)	H	LB	Comm & TA & CG	€€
H	<b>DESTINATIONS &amp; EXPERIENCES</b>	1} Conservation Management Plan to identify site specific requirements	H	LG	Comm & Hist & Env & Arts & Sports & TA	€€
		2} Development & Coordination of Activities & Experiences	H	Comm	All	€
		3} International Dark Skies Certification	H	TA	Comm & TA & CG & Env	€
		4} Light pollution control	H	LG	TA & CG & Edu	€€
		5} Development of astronomical infrastructure & activities	M	LB / Env	LG & CG	€€€
I	<b>EVENTS &amp; FESTIVALS</b>	1} Annual Calendar & Promotion	VH	Comm & LG	Comm & TA	€
		2} Sliabh Beagh Event Development Initiative	H	Comm	Comm & TA	€
		3} Cross-border Walking Festival	VH	Sport	LG & TA & CG	€€
J	<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; ACCOMMODATION</b>	1} Community & Private Sector Development Support	VH	TA	CG & TA & LB	€€
		2} Coordination & Networking	I	TA	LB & Comm	€

**KEY**

**PRIORITY**

IMMEDIATE = I  
 VERY HIGH = VH  
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 MEDIUM = M

**LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS & KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

LG = Local Governments  
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 Arts = Arts and cultural groups

**COST BRACKET**

€ = 0 - 20,000  
 €€ = 20,000 - 100,000  
 €€€ = 100,000 - 500,000  
 €€€€ = 500,000 +



# APPENDICES

## 6

*Snow on the Eshbrack Bog  
(Photo by Donal Muldoon)*

# INITIAL CONSULTATION



1] Sliabh Beagh Hotel [Knockatallon]  
08.03.2017

2] Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall  
08.03.2017

3] Online at [surveymonkey.co.uk](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk)



*Advertisement sign in Knockatallon for Sliabh Beagh's first consultation (March 2017)*



*Consultation event at Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall (March 2017)*

Central to the development of this masterplan has been the input of local people. A consultation process was conducted in March 2017, based on public drop in events and an online survey.

This section summarises the findings of this process and in doing so, reveals key aspects of the relationship that respondents have with Sliabh Beagh and their aspirations for its future.

It is acknowledged that this consultation process provides a snapshot of local views. It will be important to sustain continued engagement with local residents, community groups and businesses in Sliabh Beagh, so ensuring they have an opportunity to fully contribute to shaping plans for the future of the area.



*Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (March 2017)*

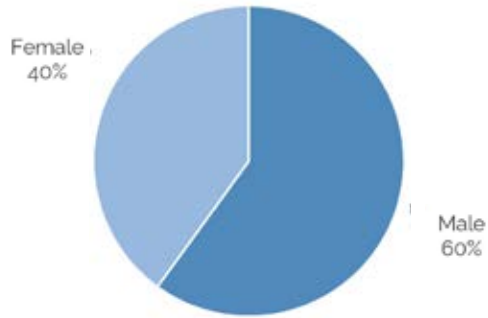


*Map of the area with comments from attendees (March 2017)*

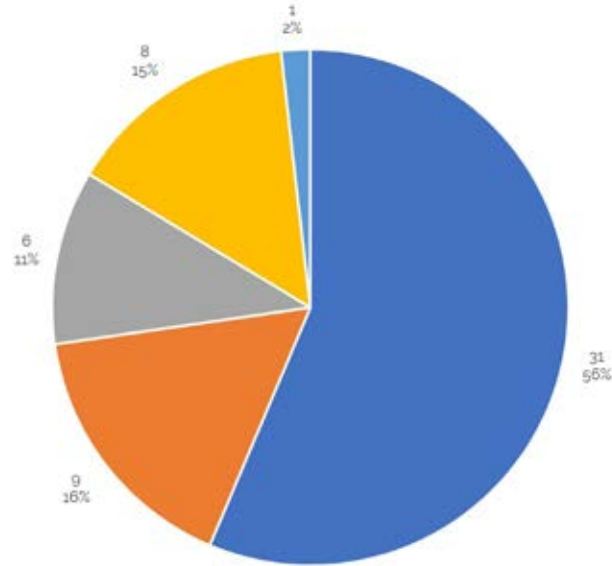
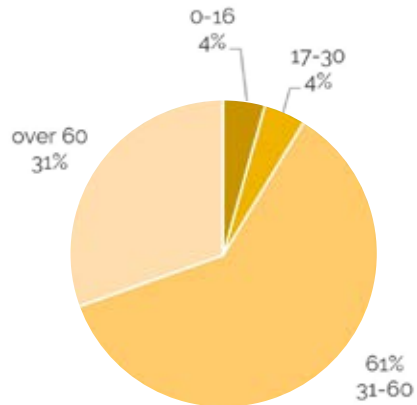
# FEEDBACK

## 57 RESPONSES

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER



PARTICIPATION BY AGE

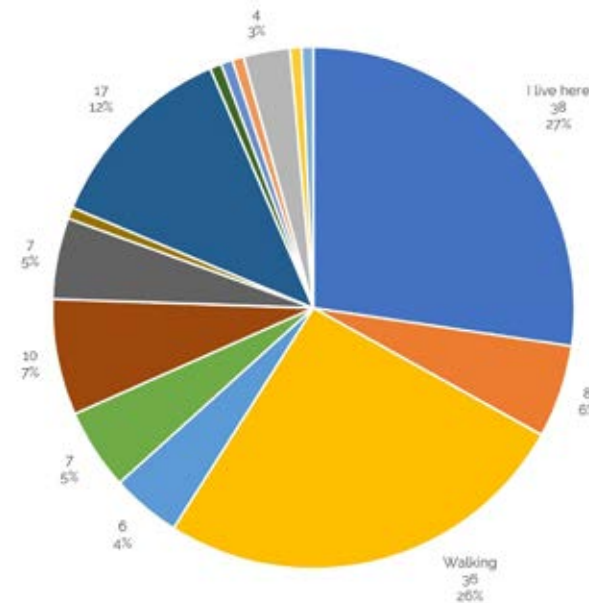


FREQUENCY OF VISITS

- Several times a month
- Every day
- Several times a year
- Several times a week
- Once a year or less

As seen in the graphic, most of the attendees to the area were regular visitors to it. In fact, around half of the enquired came to Sliabh Beagh every day. This is significant to show the vivid interest in the area's improvement for the future.

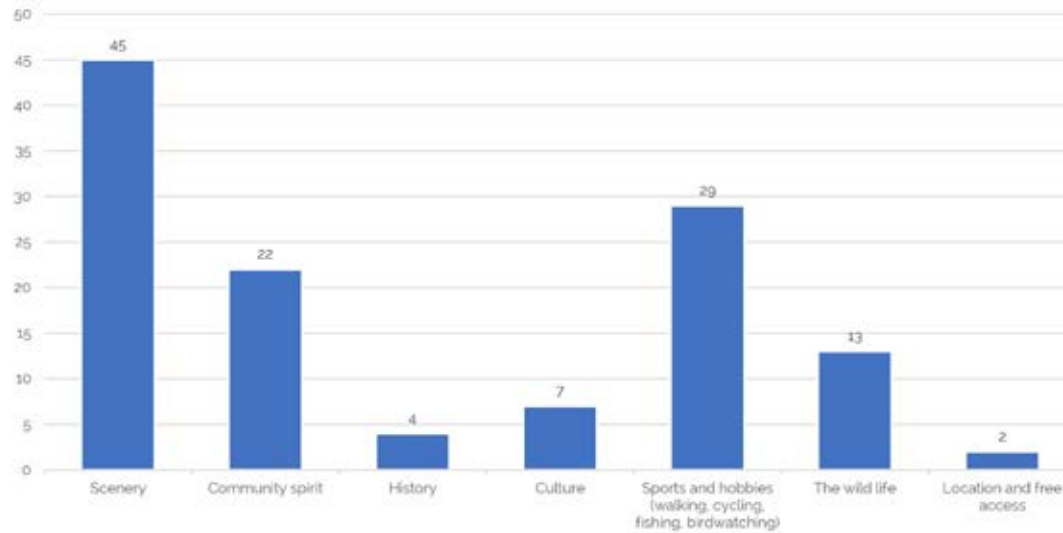
REASONS FOR VISITING SLIABH BEAGH



- I live here
- I work here
- I study here
- Walking
- Dog walking
- Jogging/ Running
- Playing
- Cycling
- Fishing
- Picnicking
- Nature watching
- Farming
- Development of eco-tourism projects
- Star watching
- Horse riding
- Trekking
- Occasionally providing guided tours

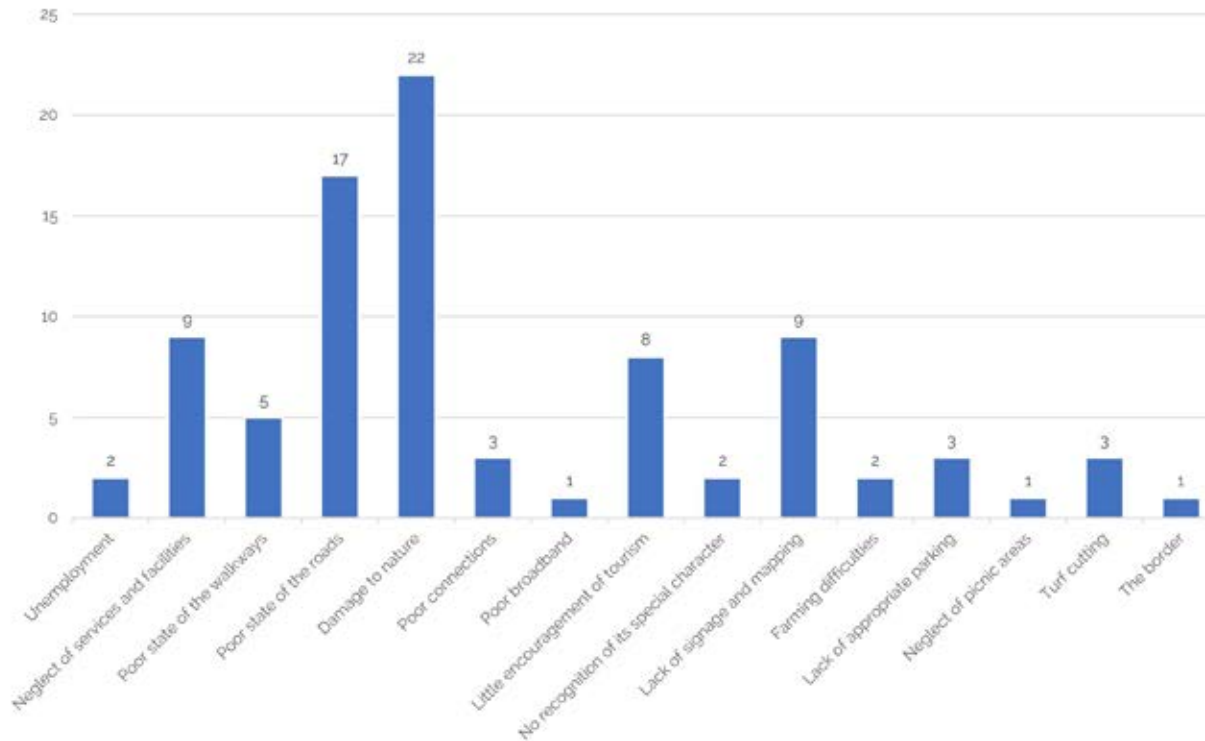
Strikingly, there was a balance between residents of the area and visitors drawn to Sliabh Beagh for its walks. In general, it can be seen that the majority of the consultees visited the area for its nature-related recreational and sports opportunities. Only a small percentage came to the area for work.

### THINGS MOST LIKED



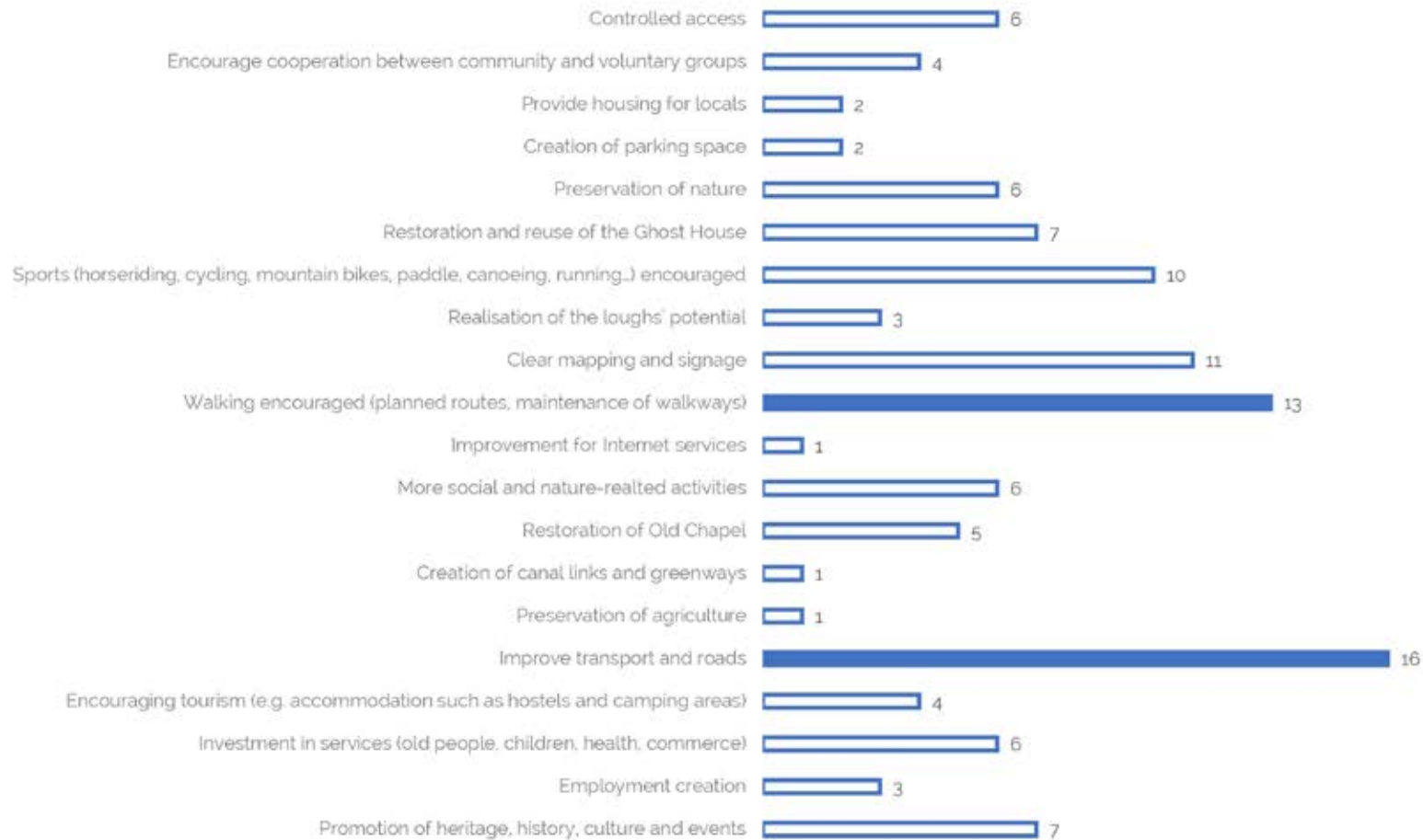
Sliabh Beagh's outstanding scenery was identified as its most attractive feature as a result of the consultation. Sport and hobbies developed in the area were also a great asset along with the close-knit community spirit.

### THINGS MOST DISLIKED



Among the drawbacks that were identified by the consultees, damage caused to nature was the most recurring. The current low quality of the road network and the lack of signage and mapping were also considered some of the area's major issues to deal with.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES



As a result of the poor condition of the roads and paths identified on the previous graphic, their improvement was judged vital as a key priority for the area's future. In addition, As walking proved to be one of the favourite reasons for visiting Sliabh Beagh, consultees suggested further encouragement of it. Some specific suggestions were also made, such as the restoration of the Coneen Ghost House or the Old Chapel at Mullaghfad.

## SECOND CONSULTATION ● ● ●

1] Sliabh Beagh Hotel [Knockatallon]  
28.09.2017

2] Coonian Ghost House [Cooneen/  
Coonian]  
05.10.2017

3] Online at [surveymonkey.co.uk](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk)  
14.09 - 06.10.2017

The Draft Sliabh Beagh Masterplan was presented to the local community during two open days and online. This provided local people and organisations with the opportunity to comment upon proposals and recommend ideas for its improvement.

The Councils and consultants wish to extend their gratitude to everyone who contributed to this important process.



*Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (September 2017)*



*Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (September 2017)*



*Consultation event at Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall  
(October 2017)*



*Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (September 2017)*



## FEEDBACK

In this second consultation, characteristics identified in the first consultation continued to be Sliabh Beagh's most special qualities, such as the area's nature, beautiful sceneries and the close-knit community spirit.

When asked about the priorities for the area, the protection of Sliabh Beagh's flora and fauna was consultee's biggest concern. The development of recreational activities (walking and other sports) and the improvement of the quality of the road network and other infrastructure were also judged very important.

Furthermore, a significant number of responses suggested improving the area's promotion and marketing to play a key role in attracting tourism, along with creating proper signage for orientation of visitors.

Given the importance nature and wildlife has proved to have through both consultation processes, it is not striking that the third theme of this plan, Conservation Management, scored the highest mark in importance for Sliabh Beagh, closely followed by Destinations & Experiences. Overall, response to the proposed themes from the attendees can be considered very positive.

Finally, consultees made valuable suggestions on how to improve Sliabh Beagh in addition to this plan's proposals. Activities such as a kiteflying club, a bogwater-themed spa or a bike hire facility were named, as well as the possibility of developing ecotherapy.

### Q1} WHAT MAKES SLIABH BEAGH SPECIAL?



### OTHER RESPONSES

SPORTS GROUPS

DANCING & SINGING CLASSES

FISHING

### Q2} WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR SLIABH BEAGH?



### OTHER RESPONSES

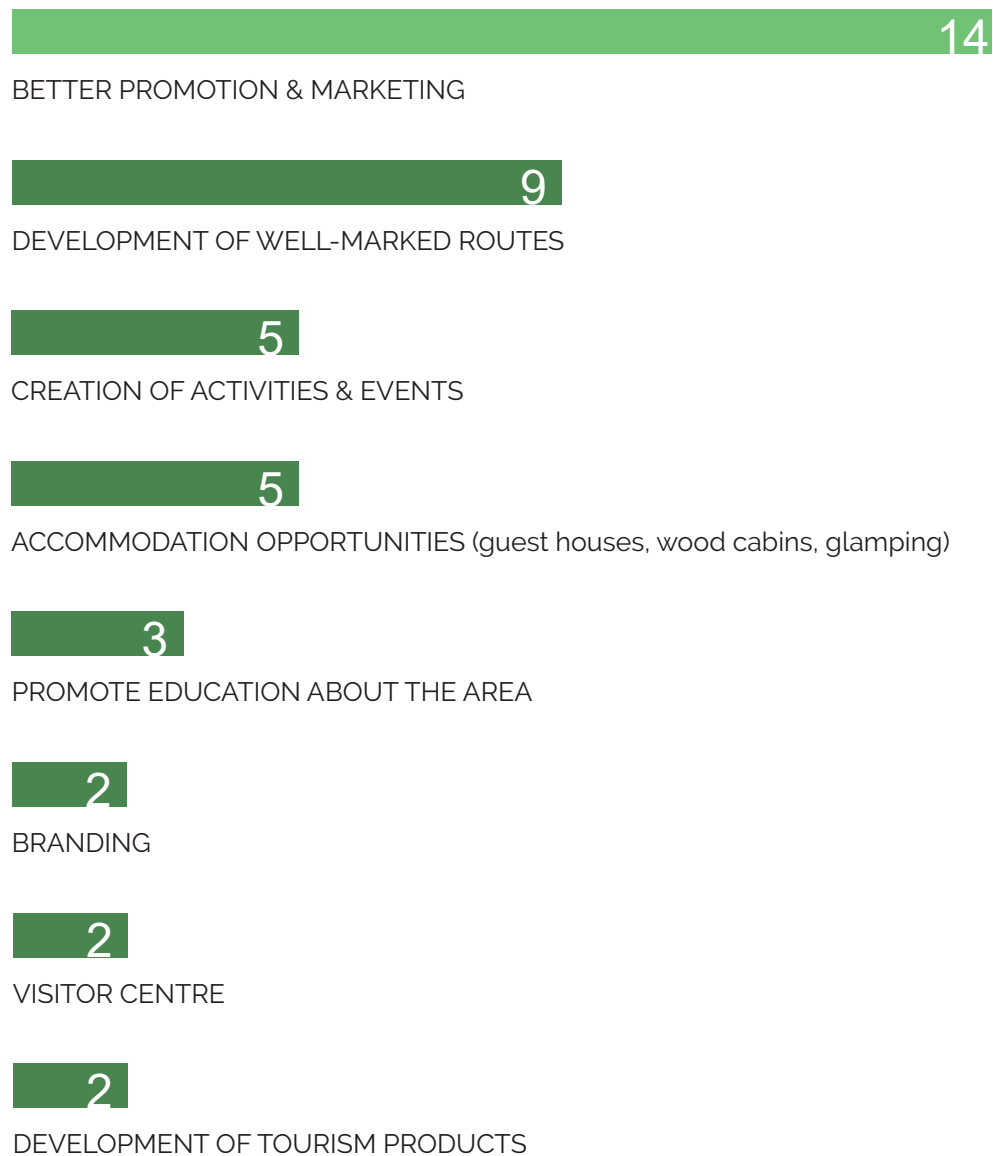
IMPROVE COVERAGE

COOPERATION BETWEEN 3 COUNCILS

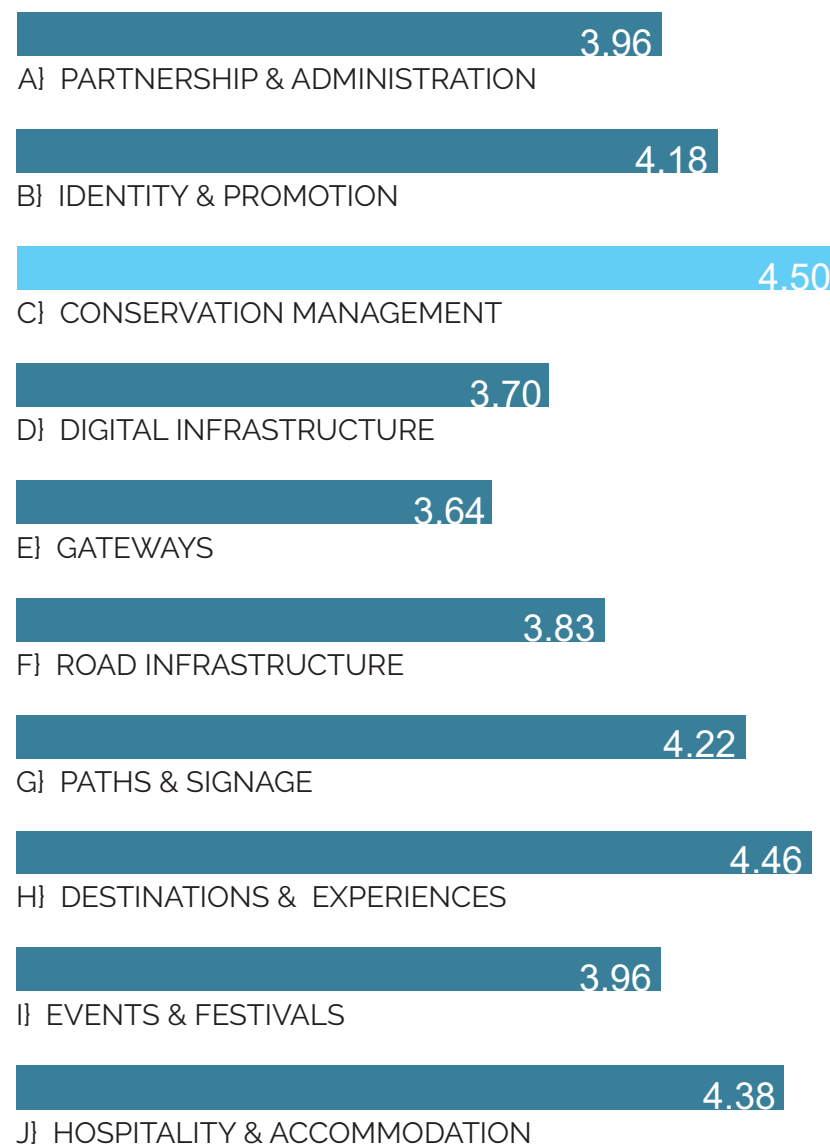
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN ACTIVITIES

CONTROL OVER FORESTRY, TURF CUTTING, HUNTING, SHOOTING & DUMPING

### Q3} HOW CAN WE WELCOME VISITORS TO SLIABH BEAGH?



### Q4} RATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPOSED THEMES [1= not important; 5= very important]



## Q5| WHAT OTHER IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR SLIABH BEAGH?



# Sliabh Beagh Masterplan

PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENT

Share with us your thoughts and  
ideas about Sliabh Beagh

TONIGHT



Monaghan  
County Council



Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hOmaí

the paulhogarth company

# CONSULTATION EVENT



Foranagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓimh

the **paulhogarth** company

# DRAFT SLIABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN

## HAVE YOUR SAY!



Welcome.

This survey is about the Sliabh Beagh Area across the borders of Counties Monaghan, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

The Paul Hogarth Company has been appointed by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to prepare a tourism masterplan for the future of this area.

Please kindly complete the following survey and leave it with a member of our team.

**1. How often do you visit the Sliabh Beagh area?**

- Every day
- Several times a week
- Several times a month
- Several times a year
- Once a year or less

**2. What 3 things do you like most about the Sliabh Beagh area?**

- A .....
- B .....
- C .....

**3. What 3 things do you dislike most about the Sliabh Beagh area?**

- A .....
- B .....
- C .....

**4. Why do you visit Sliabh Beagh area? (Please tick which apply)**

- |                                       |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I live here  | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking         | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I work here  | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog Walking     | <input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I study here | <input type="checkbox"/> Jogging/Running | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature watching |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing         |  |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling         |  |

Other

**5. What improvements and activities would you like to see in the Sliabh Beagh area?**

Suggestions:

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**Optional questions**

**6. Gender**

- Male
- Female

**7. Age Range**

- 0-16
- 17-30
- 31-60
- over 60

**8. Name and Contact details**

.....

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey



Welcome to the public consultation process on the Draft Sliabh Beagh Masterplan. This project has been jointly commissioned by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.

Once finalised, the plan will set in place a shared vision for the future of the Sliabh Beagh area and will identify a range of projects for delivery over the short, medium and longer terms.

You are kindly invited to review the information panels and answer the following questions.

What are your priorities for Sliabh Beagh?

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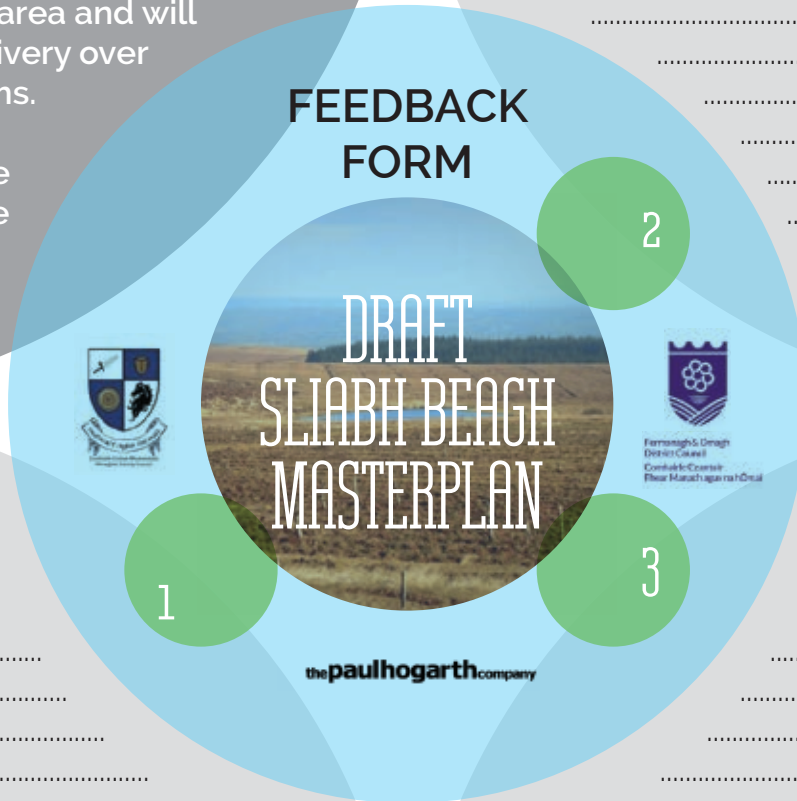
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### FEEDBACK FORM



What makes Sliabh Beagh special to you?

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How can we welcome more visitors to Sliabh Beagh?

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Please rate how important you think the proposed masterplan themes are.  
 [1= not important, 5= very important]

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>A} CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>B} PARTNERSHIP &amp; ADMINISTRATION</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>C} IDENTITY &amp; PROMOTION</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>D} DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>E} GATEWAYS</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>F} ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>G} PATHS &amp; SIGNAGE</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>H} DESTINATIONS &amp; EXPERIENCES</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I} EVENTS &amp; FESTIVALS</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>J} HOSPITALITY &amp; ACCOMMODATION</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4

What other ideas and suggestions do you have for Sliabh Beagh?

.....

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5

**THANK YOU!**

Please submit this feedback form into the returns box provided or, alternatively, you can complete online at:  
[www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/sliabhbeaghmasterplan](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/sliabhbeaghmasterplan)

If you would like to be kept informed about the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan, please provide your contact details below:

NAME .....

EMAIL .....

# CONSULTATION BOARDS



1

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Draft Slabh Beagh Masterplan public consultation process.

The Masterplan has been jointly commissioned by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council to establish a strategic vision for the future of this important rural area. The plan is being produced by Landscape Architects, The Paul Hogarth Company, working in close consultation with local people.

These boards summarise the emerging findings, aims, objectives and projects. You are kindly invited to review these draft proposals and to share with us your feedback, so helping improve the plan.

## MASTERPLAN PROCESS

- Inception Meeting - Jan. 2017
- Desk Top Studies - Feb. 2017
- Site Appraisal - Feb. 2017
- Initial Stakeholder Engagement - Mar. 2017
- Options Appraisal - Apr./May 2017
- Draft Masterplan - Jun./Jul. 2017
- Second Stakeholder Engagement - Aug. 2017
- Final Masterplan Report - Sept./Oct. 2017
- Masterplan Launch - Nov. 2017

## DELIVERY OF THE PLAN

Once finalised, the projects within this plan will be prioritised for funding and delivery by a range of different parties, including council, government bodies and community groups.

In addition, ongoing projects that are compatible with the masterplan are to be supported. These include proposals for pathways at Knockatallon, Knocks and the bog, as well as some other mapping initiatives.

## CONSULTATION PROCESS

Two well attended public consultation events were held at 8 March 2017 in Knockatallon and Cooneen/ Coonian. The feedback given during these events, plus responses to the questionnaire have been used to inform this Draft Masterplan.



*"These sights I see,  
these sounds I hear on the Mountain  
of Slabh Beagh."*

- "The Mountain of Slabh Beagh", by Peter Keenan



*"The wild hare hops across the moor, the beagle dogs behind,  
Eishmore wams high above it all, bedecked with spruce and pine,  
In a moss-dad swamp behind the lake, a murren shy is wadin',  
While a bumblebee dances through the air with heather honey laden."*

## FEEDBACK SO FAR

SCENERY 37%

SPORTS & HOBBIES 24%

18% COMMUNITY SPIRIT

### THINGS MOST LIKED

DAMAGE TO NATURE 25%

POOR STATE OF THE ROADS 19%

10% LACK OF SIGNAGE AND MAPPING

10% NEGLECT OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES

### THINGS MOST DISLIKED

## HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

It is vital that as many local people, groups and businesses have their say on the Draft Plan.

The consultation period will run from 14th September to 6th October 2017.

### FILL OUT A FORM

Complete our short survey online available with these panels.



### GIVE US A SHOUT

Keep an eye out on a public consultation in your area, come along and talk to our team.



### DROP US A LINE

Send an email with your feedback and ideas to [slabhbeagh@paulhogarth.com](mailto:slabhbeagh@paulhogarth.com)





### People

Sliabh Beagh has a strong sense of community and it various communities have worked together on a number of projects. This community spirit is an important strength that will be key to taking the area forward.



### Natural Beauty

Sliabh Beagh is an attractive landscape, which is unspoilt by over-development. Maintaining this quality will key to the future of the area, especially in attracting increased tourism.



### Wildlife

Sliabh Beagh is an important natural habitat and home to several key species of flora and fauna. Coordinated work is required to ensure habitats are protected and enhanced, while increasing awareness.



### Tranquility

Sliabh Beagh is a place of calm and tranquility, unaffected by noise and light pollution. This is another integral quality to the area.



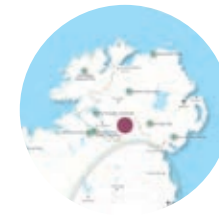
### Tourism Infrastructure

Sliabh Beagh has significant potential as a tourism destination. Existing tourism information and facilities are of good quality, but will need to grow considerably across the entire area.



### Accessibility

Sliabh Beagh is strategically well located and with investment planned in surrounding transport infrastructure (eg A5 / N2, Ulster Canal) it will become more accessible.



### Brexit

Sliabh Beagh is unique as the meeting point of 3 counties. The UK's decision to leave the European Union places uncertainty around the border between North and South and in particular the many crossing points.

## ANALYSIS

Before developing ideas for Sliabh Beagh it is essential that we ensure a good understanding of the area. What makes Sliabh Beagh special? This process has been informed by a desktop review of plans and policies, by site visits to the area and by an initial consultation process with residents from the area. This board sets out some of these key findings.

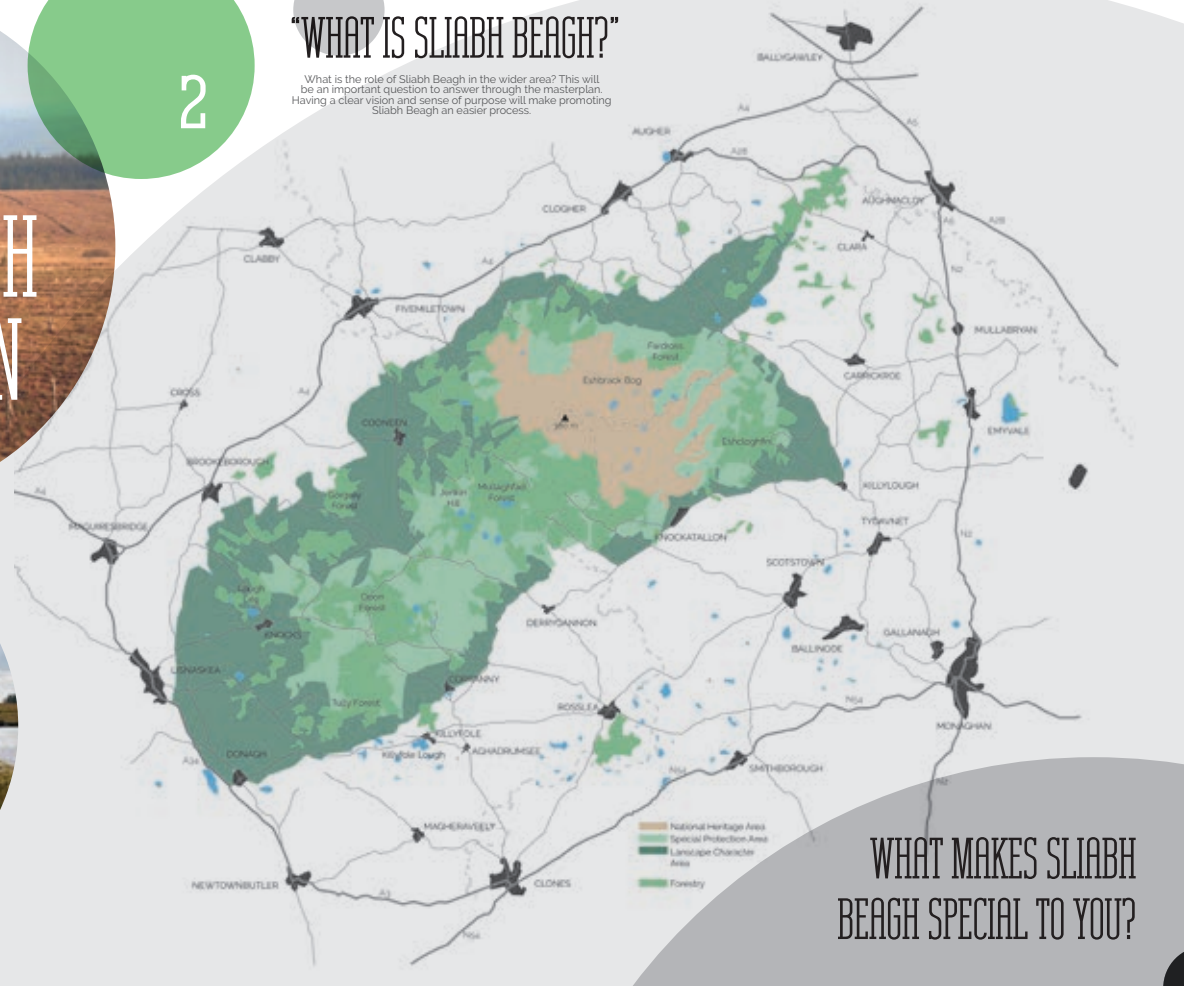
Sliabh Beagh has many qualities. Identifying them and articulating why they are important will help us to protect and sensitively enhance them. Like all places, Sliabh Beagh also has room for improvement. These issues and their impact need fully understood so that viable solutions can be found.

# DRAFT SLIABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN

2

## "WHAT IS SLIABH BEAGH?"

What is the role of Sliabh Beagh in the wider area? This will be an important question to answer through the masterplan. Having a clear vision and sense of purpose will make promoting Sliabh Beagh an easier process.



## "WHERE IS SLIABH BEAGH?"

Not everyone has heard of Sliabh Beagh and there is very little signage advertising the area. This will be a key issue to address should the area be promoted for increased investment and tourism.



## WHAT MAKES SLIABH BEAGH SPECIAL TO YOU?

Maintain and improve the natural environment



The unspoiled melancholic bog, the breathtaking lakes and the deep forest, all the different landscapes in Slabh Beagh need to be looked after and their future ensured.

Continue to grow as a great place to live and work



A place with healthy lifestyles and minds, closely related with nature that also offers employment opportunities.

Develop the tourism potential of the area



Helping visitors discover all of Slabh Beagh's outstanding features would help local economy and connect the area with its surroundings.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Draft Aims and Objectives summarised on this board set out the overarching priorities for Slabh Beagh. Once finalised, these should be used to guide all future policies and projects for the area.

Slabh Beagh is a wonderful natural asset on the doorstep of many people. It is therefore important that we protect and enhance this natural landscape as much as possible. Slabh Beagh is also home to a rural community. It must therefore provide for its people, maintaining a good quality of life and providing opportunities for employment and business growth.

Key to the future of Slabh Beagh will be our ability to carefully balance these requirements.



# DRAFT SLABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN

3

## SUSTAINABILITY

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR SLABH BEAGH?

Ensure Slabh Beagh's future as a natural asset, enhancing biodiversity and preserving the characteristics that make it special.



Protect, manage and enhance the natural environment

I

III

Define and develop place identity



Establishing and celebrating the local identity and brand appeal of Slabh Beagh.

Improve the transport and data network to rebuild connections within the area and its surroundings.



Strengthen networks and infrastructure

II

IV

Extend the welcome and sharing



Welcoming all to Slabh Beagh while building up healthy social relationships and sharing local history and values.

OBJECTIVES

A

## CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

Slabh Beagh is home to the beloved Hen Harrier, the Red Grouse, the Pine Marten and the Red Squirrel, along with some special flora. These features are what make Slabh Beagh distinctive, so the conservation of habitats and key species is a key action for this masterplan. A Conservation Management Plan was produced in August 2011 and set out priorities. It is now proposed to prepare a Biodiversity Action Plan that would identify specific actions to enhance the area's richness of flora and fauna, while balancing the requirements of farmers and other landowners.

1) Biodiversity Action Plan



## THEMES [A-C]

The Draft Slabh Beagh Masterplan consists of 13 separate themes, under which a number of actions are proposed.

These themes and Objectives for Slabh Beagh as listed on the previous board. They range greatly in scale and complexity. Some will require significant funding, while others will require coordination of community and voluntary effort.

Once the masterplan is finalised, the projects will be included in an Action Plan. This will allow for actions to be prioritised and delivered by the Councils, agencies and communities, as and when funding becomes available.

C

## IDENTITY & PROMOTION



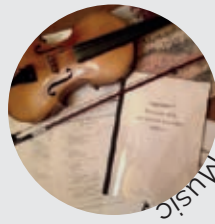
Religion



Arts



History



Music



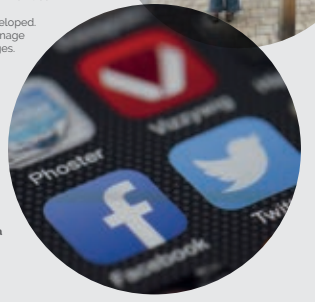
A place is not only defined by its nature and built features, but also by the stories and culture that develops around it. This heritage must be preserved, shared and celebrated in partnership with communities.

To enhance the visitor experience, an interpretation strategy needs to be developed. The natural features as well as historical events will be explained through signage and trails. This would also be an educational resource for schools and colleges.

There is a strong need to translate Slabh Beagh's identity into an appealing brand that can be easily recognizable for visitors. It is proposed that this identity definition is developed through a collaborative process with the residents and businesses, who know Slabh Beagh best.

- 1) Social History collation, digital archiving and communication
- 2) Interpretation Strategy to research and develop themes
- 3) Interpretation Signage & Art
- 4) Schools Programme

- 5) Collaborative process to development 'Slabh Beagh' identity, brand and marketing material
- 6) Expand existing pilot online community mapping project to include all of Slabh Beagh area



B

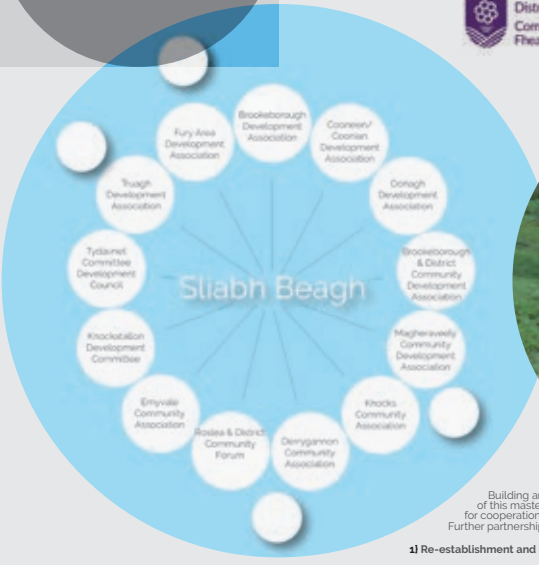
## PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION



Fermanagh & Omagh District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hOrrail



4



Building and sustaining partnership to look after this natural landscape is a vital part of fulfilling the aims of this masterplan. The Ballybay-Clones Erne East Partnership (BCEEP) provides an important forum for cooperation across council areas. Community groups are also working hard to improve their area. Further partnership and collaboration between communities and councils is proposed.

- 1) Re-establishment and support of a Slabh Beagh wide forum

## HOW COULD YOU HELP IMPROVE SLIABH BEAGH?

Sliabh Beagh Masterplan  
My Sliabh Beagh...



Name ..... *Shannon* ..... Age *11* .....

Sliabh Beagh Masterplan  
My Sliabh Beagh...



free  
rucksack

Name senan Age 9



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**the**paulhogarth**company**