

Lough Derg

LIFE AT THE LAKE



A Roadmap for Experience
Development and Destination
Marketing 2014-2017

Foreword

Foreword by the Minister for Public and Commuter Transport, Alan Kelly TD

I am very pleased to present this strategy for the development of Lough Derg as a key tourism destination and experience, "Life at the Lake – A Roadmap for Experience Development and Destination Marketing 2014-2017". Having grown up literally on the lake's edge, I believe that for far too long, Lough Derg and its adjacent reaches of the Shannon have remained Ireland's Hidden Secret. This Roadmap provides a strong framework, to which all the key stakeholders are committed, for both marketing and development. This plan has been an ambition of mine since becoming Minister. I look forward to working with those stakeholders, at national and local levels, to see it implemented and to see the results, which I am sure will bring sustainable and valuable growth in tourism, particularly overseas tourism, to the area.

The plan was developed by a broad-based strategy group including Fáilte Ireland, the local authorities, Waterways Ireland, LEADER and Inland Fisheries Ireland as well as representatives of the local tourism trade. The plan involves both marketing and capital elements - in particular the development of the tourism infrastructure of Lough Derg for sightseeing, walking, cycling, and water-based activities as well as the heritage, culture and food offerings. The plan is the result of extensive stakeholder consultation and has secured buy-in at senior levels.

But it is more than just another strategy or plan – Lough Derg and indeed the whole Shannon Basin has seen too many of those – many of which either resulted in little or no subsequent action, or were indeed counterproductive. This time, that is not the case. I would like to thank my Government colleagues and particularly the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin TD, for recognising the strong case for inclusion of the Lough Derg strategy in the Government stimulus announced on 13 May 2014, providing €2 million so that the relevant bodies are in a position to commence delivery this year.

This plan will help develop the destination brand and visitor experience of Lough Derg, building on its great natural assets, in a similar manner to the investment in the Wild Atlantic Way, and supporting a sustainable regional tourism economy. With the recent establishment of Shannon Airport on a stand-alone basis, there are now real prospects of seeing the tourism potential of the Mid-West realised in coming years. I would like to also acknowledge the work of the Lough Derg marketing group as chaired by the new CEO of the Tipperary local authority, Joe MacGrath. This group understand the potential of the lake and are working tirelessly to see that potential come about.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the strategy group for their hard work and focus on this strategy and I look forward to the fruits of their labour in coming years.

Alan Kelly, TD



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1. Who is this for?

This document will guide those involved in **Experience Development** and **Selling** in the Lough Derg Area during 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

It will specifically form a work programme for a new **Tourism Co-ordinator** as well as the existing cross-agency **Lough Derg Marketing Group** (including tourism industry representatives) which has been very effective in collaboratively working to promote Lough Derg as a Destination.



Graves of the Leinstermen, Arra Mountains Loop

2. Why is this plan needed?

Lough Derg is an important visitor destination in Ireland, but it is one that has **yet to realise its full potential**. The nature and level of existing tourism amenities suggests that there is scope for **additional provision of key visitor attractions**.

A successful Lough Derg Destination also depends on **effective management, co-ordination and promotion** of the things that entice visitors in the first place;

- the **experience** of nature and the beauty of the lake;
- the **activities** that might be possible on land and water; and
- the **food, drink and vibe** of the Lough Derg settlements.

This study sets out a number of projects which have been identified for development, subject to funding, planning and environmental considerations.

Vision

To develop Lough Derg as a key destination for **superb water based activities** combined with a range of **very high quality walking, cycling, heritage, culture and food experiences** that will entice domestic and international visitors to stay longer. This will be achieved through **joint co-operation of all tourism stakeholders** in the development and marketing of their area under the **Lakelands – Lough Derg identity**.

LOUGH DERG AND THE TRAP INTERREG IVC PROGRAMME

Lough Derg is a beneficiary of the European co-financed INTERREG IVC project entitled TRAP (Territories of Rivers Action Plans). TRAP deals with the integrated management of rivers and lakes. It aims to build on and transfer good practices across Europe in aquatic and cultural heritage, landscape management and the Water Framework Directive, working to generate policy improvements in planning for rivers. Project partners are from Finland, UK, Netherlands, Slovenia, Latvia, Greece and Romania. The Irish partners are the Mid-West Regional Authority and the South West Regional Authority. Key work packages are in governance, monitoring, aquatic environment and river tourism.

TRAP has demonstrated a need for a holistic approach to rivers and lakes and Lough Derg was taken as a case study of this issue, with considerable tourism activity and over eight tourism-related organisations. A report commissioned by MWRA, entitled "Tourism Governance in Lough Derg" (October 2013) has found that lake tourism is a growing international sector and lake governance in other countries takes several formats: single umbrella bodies, formal partnerships and structured networks. In terms of the public sector, Lough Derg was found to work effectively as a structured network. However, the private and community sector suffers from fragmentation and fresh initiatives were recommended to strengthen private and community sector capabilities such as to promote lake awareness, animate local action, team-building for established enterprises and advise new entrepreneurs. The report recommended the appointment of a tourism coordinator to progress these initiatives.

This report concluded that European good practices that are showcased through the TRAP project could be transferred to Lough Derg, specifically the River Trusts (UK).

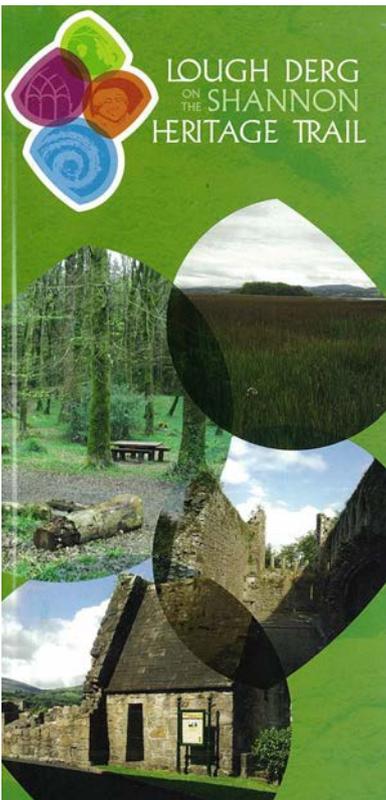
River Trusts are independent environmental organisations, usually registered as charities, established to promote the preservation, protection and improvement of the rivers and streams in their catchment and the wildlife they support and to increase awareness and understanding of the management of water and the wider environment. The main transfer of good practice from the River Trusts will be to promote enhanced stakeholder engagement through their 'Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit' which can be usefully applied to Lough Derg: establish a stakeholder data base, including profiles of organisations, enterprises, community groups and relevant individuals; review the potential roles of different stakeholders, identifying how they can contribute to Lough Derg and how this contribution can best be mobilised; implement a stakeholder consultation programme, through appropriate information dissemination, meetings and discussions.



3. What has been done so far?

Good progress has been made to date including:

- Building governance – The Lough Derg Marketing Group
- Building community capacity – Tourism Animator projects
- The Lough Derg on the Shannon Heritage Trail app, book and audio guide
- The Lough Derg Signage Strategy
- Lough Derg Trails app
- Lough Derg Signage Detailed Design – *Getting to Lough Derg*
- Lakeshore Amenity Site upgrades at Mountshannon, Terryglass, Dromineer, Ballina and Garrykennedy
- Advanced planning of the Lough Derg Canoe Trail
- Nenagh Cycle Loops
- Upgrade to Lough Derg Way
- New Looped Walk - Arra Mountains Loop
- Trade interventions (see Chapter 9)
- Lakelands Trade Networking Workshop (Athlone, November 2012) with 15 European Tour Operators (Angling & Cruising) in attendance meeting up to 50 key trade from the Lakelands region. The event included a Lough Derg familiarisation itinerary.



Studies

In depth studies have been carried out over the last 10 years looking at the best way to progress tourism in the Lough Derg area. These have included careful assessment of the environmental capabilities of the lake and its shoreline. These remain relevant and have fed into the recommendations in this plan.

It is advised that before commencing detailed design of any particular project, the relevant sections of these reports are referenced. Sections relating to environmental sensitivities may need to be updated in light of any recent legislative or policy changes.

The key findings of these studies are contained in Appendix A.

- Lough Derg Tourism Study (2001)
- Lough Derg Design Guide (2003)
- Heritage Council Waterways Corridor Study – South Shannon including Lough Derg (2005)
- Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational and Tourism Development Study (2008)
- Ireland's top 100 tourism waters (2008)
- Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan (2011)
- The Lough Derg Heritage Audit (2011)
- Lough Derg Waterparks Feasibility Assessment (2012)
- Waterways Ireland Masterplan for Portumna
- The Lough Derg Tourism Animation: known projects (2013)
- Waterways Ireland Lakelands and Inland Waterways Strategic Plan (2013-2016)
- Lough Derg Cycle Trails Report (2013)

Other studies are also relevant, including GB 'Paths to Growth' and other Global Segmentation work carried out jointly by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland.

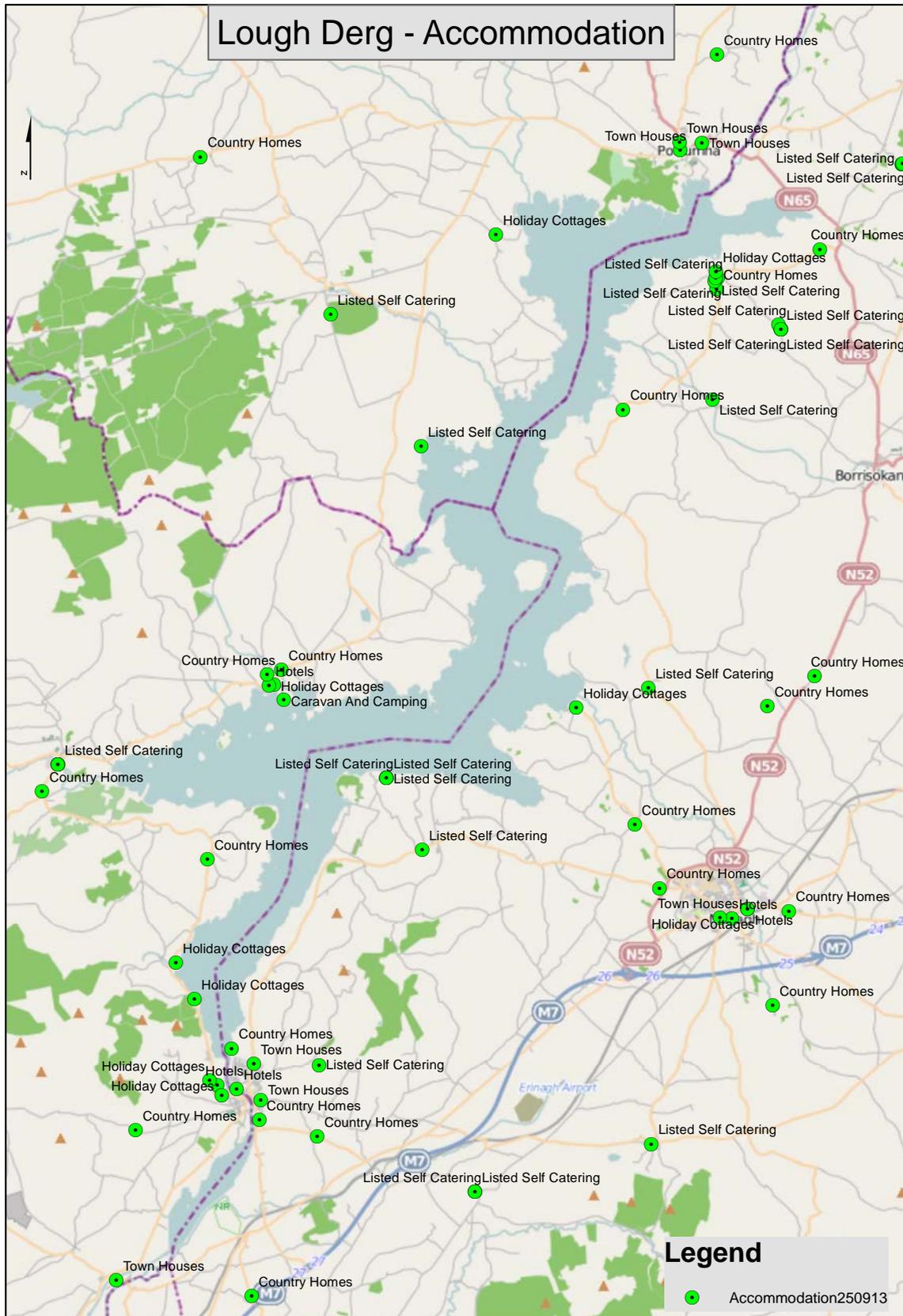
4. A Lough Derg SWOT Analysis

A **Lough Derg Tourism Audit** was carried out in 2012 in order to set the overall context for tourism in the area. The key identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are set out below:

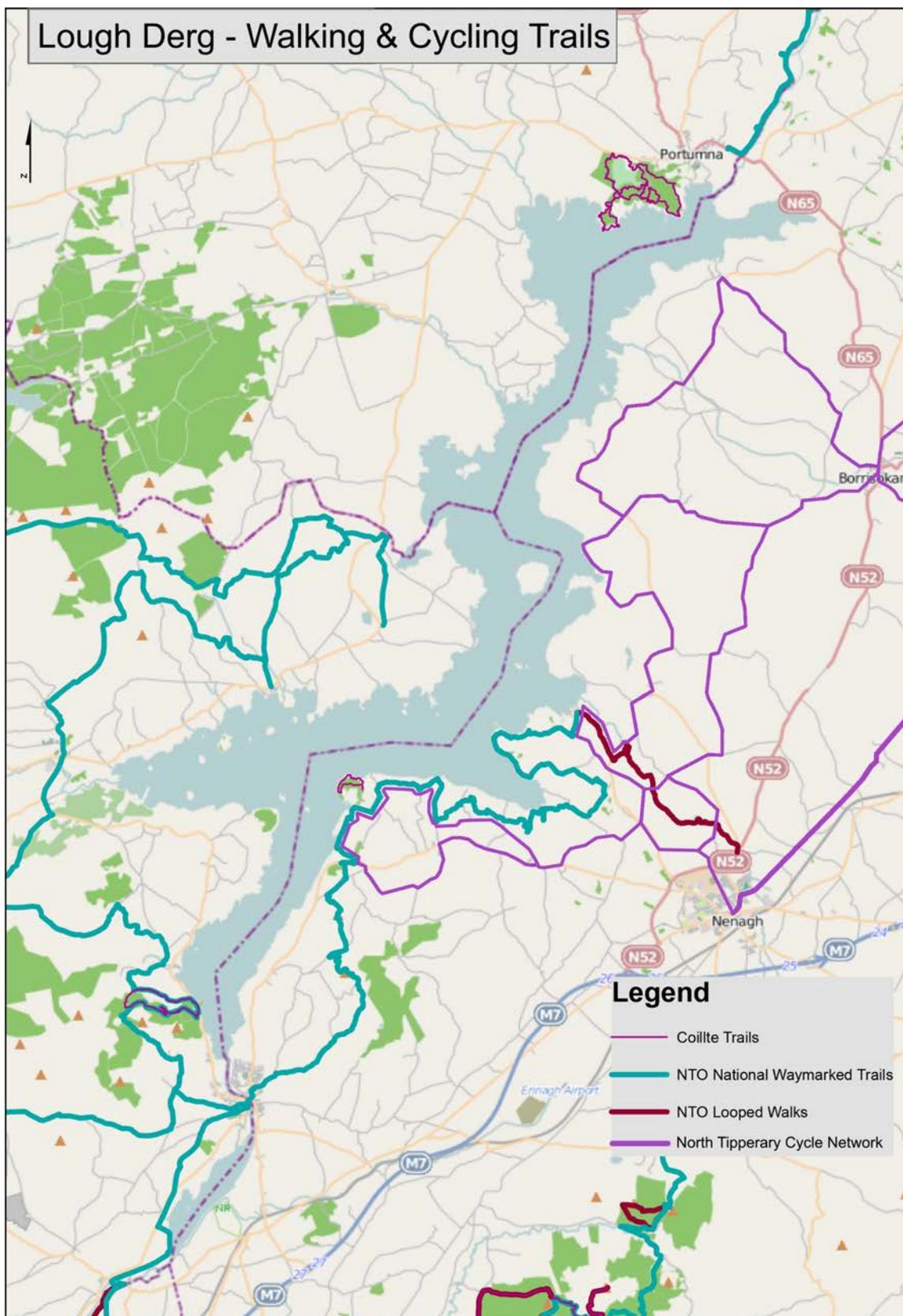
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Visitor Markets	<p>Physical location in Ireland - easy access from the major inter urban motorways, 200km from Dublin (capital city & major international airport) and 65km from Shannon Airport.</p> <p>Proximity to established tourism destinations.</p> <p>There is an approximate 50:50 split between those who have visited previously and those arriving in the regions for the first time.</p>	Lough Derg is not reaching its full potential in terms of attracting visitors.	<p>The Shannon and The West regions, combined, attract around 2 million tourism trips per annum from overseas visitors.</p> <p>The main overseas market is Britain, with Mainland Europe and North America being the other key markets. The main visitor type is holiday-makers, although visiting friends and relatives is also a strong motivation for visitors from Britain.</p> <p>Less than 1 in 7 travel to the regions as a family group. Most (around 4 in 10) travel alone.</p>	Visit patterns demonstrate the usual seasonality challenges, with a high proportion (around 45%) of visits occurring between the months of June and August .
Key Visitor Attractions	<p>The main attractors for Lough Derg are the scenic value and natural resource of the lake and its surrounds in conjunction with the character and services offered by towns such as Killaloe Ballina, Portumna, and Scarriff, and the villages of Mountshannon, Dromineer, Garykennedy and Terryglass.</p> <p>Portumna Forest Park, which is managed by Coillte, is one of the main recreational assets of the area, with the park facilitating safe and secure walking and cycling within an attractive woodland and lakeland setting.</p> <p>Close to the Forest Park are the ruins of Portumna Castle & Gardens and the Portumna Dominican Priory, themselves representing key points of the heritage offering of the area.</p> <p>The recent opening of the Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna has added further critical mass to the attractions of the town.</p> <p>The main attraction in the Killaloe Ballina area is the Brian Ború Heritage Centre.</p>	Lough Derg has no defined 'iconic' visitor attraction that can act as a motivator for visits, with most visitor attractions being formal and relatively low profile in nature (e.g. museums and gardens).	<p>Existing opportunities can be harnessed by prominently featuring current attractions in the development of Lough Derg experiences and marketing.</p> <p>New opportunities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving orientation • Lough Derg cycle trails • Improving lakeside experiences • Portroe lookout development • A Lough Derg canoe/ kayak trail • Enhanced offer and facilities at ULAC • Portumna eco-park • Lough Derg Activity Map & Natural Heritage Guide 	The lack of a well-known visitor attraction.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Visitor Activities</p> <p>Cruise hire is the most popular form of watersport. Other commercial activities include golf and fishing, with 5 golf courses in close proximity to the lake and 4 angling services known to be available, although this figure is likely to be higher for angling.</p> <p>There are a series of walking trails including the Lough Derg Way (which travels from Dromineer to Limerick City via Killaloe Ballina).</p> <p>A series of short trails are available, and it is known that there is an aspiration to develop more trails of this nature. It should be noted that short trails are, by and large, the more popular form of walking trail for visitors.</p> <p>Horse riding appears to be well supported through 7 equestrian centres that reside within the wider area.</p>	<p>The water-setting of Lough Derg has a direct synergy with a variety of watersports, however this potential is largely considered to be under-utilised.</p> <p>There is currently no walking trail that circumnavigates the whole lake.</p> <p>Few horse riding centres ride next to Lough Derg with no identified bridleways in this area.</p>	<p>There is potential for other watersports including a canoe/kayak trail.</p> <p>There is one outdoor activity centre on the lake at present, with the University of Limerick Activity Centre (ULAC) supporting predominantly courses and school groups.</p>	<p>Whilst the Lough Derg cycle trail circumnavigates the lake, this trail is not well utilised and, despite being classified as 'easy riding', is considered to be dangerous in parts due to the narrow lanes with blind bends. The route rarely provides vantage points of the lake along the way.</p>
<p>Visitor Accommodation</p> <p>There are an estimated 64 accommodation establishments within the immediate Lough Derg area, the majority of which are small scale B&Bs and self-catering units. Some of the largest operators are Anna Carriga Estate (33 self-catering units and 50-berth marina), Mountshannon Holiday Village (42 holiday homes). Overall, these establishments provide 1,150 commercial tourism bedspaces. Two hotels identified provide around 3 in every 10 of these bedspaces.</p> <p>Altogether, these bedspaces provide a capacity of 365,000 available bednights for sale annually. Assuming an average occupancy of 40% and an average duration of 2 nights, it can be estimated that over 73,000 tourism trips are made to Lough Derg per annum.</p>	<p>A number of hotels are currently not operational - The Shannon Oaks Lodge, Portumna; the Kincora outside of Killaloe, and the Dromineer Bay Hotel in Dromineer. This suggests that the area has suffered a significant fall in accommodation capacity recently.</p>	<p>Assuming an average spend of €75 per night, visitors contribute over €10.95 million per annum in direct spend to the local economy.</p> <p>The natural resource of the lake and woodlands would suggest that there are opportunities for alternative types of accommodation such as eco-lodges, yurts etc.</p> <p>The "Podumna" project in Portumna is a good example of new alternative accommodation structures being proposed and addresses the challenge of a lack of accommodation capacity.</p>	<p>The lack of accommodation in the Lough Derg area is a threat. The lack of alternative types of accommodation that maximise the potential of the natural setting is also a threat.</p>
<p>Wider Area</p> <p>Limerick City, the Slieve Felim Mountain Range, the Ballyhoura Mountain Range and the Slieve Bloom Mountain Range all contain visitor interest and are within reach of Lough Derg. Limerick City, which is only 30-minutes drivetime from Killaloe Ballina, has a strong accommodation base with an estimated 3,750 bedspaces from hotels alone. Nenagh, which for many represents a gateway to Lough Derg, also has a series of commercial accommodation operators, including the Abbey Court Hotel.</p>	<p>The motorway and rail network tend to "bypass" Lough Derg</p>	<p>The wider area of the Shannon and West regions includes some strong tourism attractions and destinations in their own right. This includes the Cliffs of Moher, Bunratty Castle, the Burren National Park, the Rock of Cashel, and King John's Castle (Limerick City). Each of these attractions and assets are known to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and represent some of Ireland's 'must see' attractions.</p>	<p>Lack of awareness of Lough Derg and its location is a threat to leveraging visitors from the wider area.</p>

Current Accommodation available in the Lough Derg Area



Current Walking and Cycling Trails available in the Lough Derg Area



Source - Fáilte Ireland

5. Improving Orientation

5.1 Implementing the Lough Derg Signage Strategy

The Lough Derg Signage Strategy was an action of the Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan. It forms the blueprint for new tourism signage in the Lough Derg area and ensures that there will be consistency in signage within the region in the future. The Signage Strategy covers private and publicly funded signage.

5.2 What's in the Signage Strategy?

- An **audit** and **analysis** of existing signage in the Lough Derg Area
- A number of **public orientation projects** under the following headings; *Finding Lough Derg*, creating a *Sense of Arrival* and *Getting Around Lough Derg*.
- A clear set of **guidance** for:
 - sign design and locations, including branding recommendations,
 - destinations to be signed,
 - eligibility criteria and ranking of need for private tourist signage,
 - clarification and streamlining of licencing processes,
 - measures for dealing with existing signs, and
 - recommendations for advertising, commercial, pedestrian, canoe trail, safety and regulatory signs
- **Strategic Actions** for various agencies to improve signage in the Lough Derg Destination Area

Note: Branded signs will be designed to be easily replaceable



Why this is worth doing

Orientation to and around Lough Derg can be difficult for visitors. A comprehensive strategy was developed by the Lough Derg Marketing Group in 2013 to improve this situation. The first phase of implementation, “*Getting to Lough Derg*”, has commenced detailed design stage.

A second phase of detailed design; “*Creating a Sense of Arrival*” and “*Getting around Lough Derg*” is yet to start. All stages will need funding to progress to construction.

Some quick-win and publicly fundable aspects of the signage strategy are set out in this chapter. The aspects of the signage strategy related to ongoing licencing and maintenance of signs falls under the remit of the Local Authorities.

All new signs will comply with the standards required of tourism signage in the National Traffic Signs Manual (2010).



Finding Lough Derg	Creating a sense of arrival	Getting Around Lough Derg
<p>Appropriate ‘Lough Derg’ signs will be placed on motorways and continue along all junctions until a Lough Derg town or Lough Derg village is reached.</p> <p>Motorway junctions: M6 J15 Ballinasloe R355 M6 J16 Loughrea N65 M18 Gort R353 M18 Ennis R352 M7 J27 Birdhill R494 M7 J26 Nenagh N52</p>	<p>Taking heed of the specific landscape character of the study area, and the amount of towns and villages in the vicinity of the lake, it is proposed that the sense of arrival will be created in two distinct ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs that welcome visitors to Lough Derg towns and villages Discovery Points that offer views of the lake, a parking/picnicking opportunity, information on the view and further destinations around the lake. 	<p>The Strategy identified private and public destinations in the Lough Derg Destination Area that may be suitable for white on brown signage with standard symbols. Tourism signage will be paid for by the tourist interest involved. Other funding sources may contribute where it is considered that an item is of benefit to tourism generally.</p> <p>The list is not exhaustive and any signage would be licensed by the relevant Local Authority on a case by case basis and require to comply with road safety, quality standards and visitor comfort criteria as laid out in the strategy. Some of these signs are already in place, but may require relocation to comply with Strategy guidelines.</p>

DISCOVERY POINTS AT LAKE-VIEWS AND STOPPING AREAS

While the water is hidden from many vantage points, there are a number of locations around the lake where panoramic views are available. Some of these locations already contain parking, seating and signage. These will be signed with advance direction signs and fingerposts as necessary. The information boards at these locations will be upgraded to maximise the orientation opportunities of the location. Discovery boards would provide information on the features in view and can be enabled for augmented reality. They can also contain information on amenities such as a canoe trail or walking route.



Where views exist, but are screened by vegetation, the feasibility of lowering vegetation and creating pull-in locations and discovery points will be investigated as part of Stage 2 of the Signage Project. Other viewpoints that have not been developed will be signed as they open up to the visitor. Detailed plans for discovery points should allow for visitors to enter the landscape in some respect – perhaps walking a short distance to a high point or getting closer to some aspect of nature.

Signage at these locations will provide the “stories” of the landscape, and point out features within the view. Information boards will need site-specific design and content and should follow the guidelines contained in the Fáilte Ireland document “Sharing our Stories”.

Many information and interpretive boards have been erected by local groups and are of importance locally. No boards would be removed without consultation with the local community. Much of the information gathered could form the basis of the standardised boards.

Lough Derg Towns	Lough Derg Villages		
Killaloe Ballina Scarriff Portumna Borrisokane Nenagh	Garrykennedy Dromineer Terryglass Whitegate Tuamgraney Newtown Portroe Cloonmoylan	Mountshannon Carrigahorig Ardcroney Cloonoon Lorrha O’Brien’s Bridge Williamstown Birdhill	Coolbawn Gorteeny Ballinderry Abbey Village Ogonneloe Puckaun Woodford

Getting around Lough Derg - Types of attraction that will be signed, providing they meet criteria set out in signage strategy		
Recreation Cluster Sites Ballina Killaloe Garrykennedy Dromineer Terryglass Portumna Mountshannon	"Discovery Points" with information boards Ogonnelloe Gorteeny Portroe Lookout Viewing points south of Woodford at Tullymore and west of Gorteeny Others to be confirmed	Heritage sites Important and accessible sites listed in the Lough Derg Heritage Audit, also, Holy Island Graves of the Leinstermen Portumna Castle Irish Workhouse Centre, Portumna Templecheally Graveyard Nenagh Castle
Heritage Centres Brian Ború Heritage Centre Killaloe East Clare Heritage Centre Tuamgraney Nenagh Heritage Centre	Tourist Information Centres Portumna Nenagh Killaloe	Driving Routes Lough Derg Driving Route (following review) Scenic loop off R352 south of Williamstown to Dromaán Harbours returning to R352 at Whitegate (subject to road safety audit)
Walking Routes Lough Derg Way East Clare Way Graves of Leinstermen Loop Ballycuggaran Loop O'Briensbridge Loop Walks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Errinagh Bridge Loop ■ Old Barge Loop ■ Parteen Weir Loop ■ Combination Loop Clare Walking Tours Hymany Way Lough Avalla Farm Loop Ballycroum Loop Errinagh Bridge Loop Old Barge Loop Pollagh Trail, Birdhill Killaloe Historic Town Trail Portumna Forest Park Loops Slí Eala	Marinas/public slipways and boating facilities All existing boating facilities Spirit of Killaloe River Cruises Shannon Castle Line Holy Island Boat Trip The Ku ee tu Spirit of Lough Derg Rodgers Cruse and Lake boat hire	Natural or lakeshore attractions Luska (across from Cameron Island) Skehanagh Carrow, Youghal Bay (swimming) Slaughty Shore Twomilegate Beach Mountshannon Beach Dromineer Beach Other beaches, woodland, nature areas – to be confirmed at stage 2 of the Signage project
Outdoor Pursuits Centres Watermark Ski Club Shannon Sailing Lough Derg Powerboat School Lakeside Water Sports Centre University of Limerick Activity Centre Fishing for Kids Gauntlet	Canoe Trails Standardised and internationally recognisable signs for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Canoe trail stop off/access points - Canoe trail stop-off points will need to be accessible by a van. ■ Beacons visible from water - these will be approximately 2m high and should be designed to be appropriate for location and landscape character. Canoe trail signage will use symbols currently used for canoe trails by Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland. This will ensure consistency on waterways throughout the island. Pedestrian signage will be required at lake access points directing canoeists to camping facilities/toilets/attractions etc.	Arts and Crafts Art @ the Park Callura Pottery McKernan Handweavers BombyxMORI Felt and Silk art Bridge House Studios Puckane Crafts Wilde's Irish Chocolates
General Tourist Attractions Rural Irish Holidays	Eco-Tourism attractions Irish Seedsavers CELT	Picnic Areas (outside of recreation cluster settlements) Gurteeny village Twomilegate Castlelough Portumna More to be confirmed at Stage 2 of the Signage project
Sports Facilities Main Sports pitches	Equestrian Centres An Sibín Riding Centre Lough Derg Equestrian Centre	Hotels Coolbawn Quay Fáilte Ireland approved hotels if required
Parks Aistear Park, Mountshannon	Golf Courses Oldhort Golf Club Portumna Golf Club	B & Bs Fáilte Ireland approved B & Bs if required

5.3 Lough Derg Drive and Discovery points

The Drive will be upgraded and improved by the addition or refurbishment of **laybys, discovery points and viewing points**. These include sites at Portroe, Ogonnelloe, Gorteeny, viewing points south of Woodford at Tullymore and west of Gorteeny and other locations to be confirmed.

The varied Lough Derg Drive signs currently in place will be upgraded to **clear and standardised signs**. At junctions where there are a high number of other signs, just the standard scenic drive symbol will be used.

An appraisal will be carried out to investigate if any **loops** could be added to the drive to bring users closer to the water. An appraisal will also be carried out to see if any further marketing material is required in the form of brochures or website promotion.

Any future **waterbus services** in the lake will be integrated to allow for a seamless on-land and on-water experience of the lake. There will be no signed cycleways sharing roads with the Drive.



Sample sign for Lough Derg Drive



Sample Scenic Drive Symbol for use at noncritical junctions

THE LOUGH DERG MARK

All information boards will contain Lakelands and Inland Waterways Branding. The Lough Derg area is marketed abroad under the Lakelands and Inland Waterways brand and therefore it is appropriate that a visitor should encounter the branding at lake locations.

Lough Derg branding sits within the wider Lakelands and Inland Waterways brand architecture. A separate but visually related mark has been developed for Lough Derg. This will be used on arrival signs and on information boards, as well as on published and digital documents. This branding will be built on and expanded over the course of the lifetime of this document, and as Lough Derg's offer of value changes.

Standard orientation signage will not be branded.



5.4 Getting around by bike - Lough Derg Cycle Trails

The current situation

A report commissioned by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and Galway Rural Development Company addressed the development of cycle routes around Lough Derg.

Lough Derg Cycleway

The report concluded that the Lough Derg Cycleway, a 130km route which encircles the lake, is dated and not well-signed. Overall the route not is well used and traffic is considered too high for a holiday trail. As this type of product does not appeal to key visitor segments, **the Lough Derg Cycleway should be discontinued and the signage removed.**

North Tipperary Cycle Network

The review of the North Tipperary Cycle Network was much more favourable. The Network, with the town of Nenagh at its hub, offers three loops varying in distance from 11km to 67km with numerous shorter alternative loops. Each cycle offers **pleasant views** of the local countryside while Loops 1 and 2 provide **stunning lakeshore panoramas**. The loops offer scope to **link the lakeshore villages** and points of interest on the east shore of Lough Derg. Numerous picnic stops are dotted along the routes as well as a number of award-winning **pubs and restaurants**.

Portumna Forest Park

Portumna Forest Park contains 4 looped trails which are dual use for both cycling and walking. The Forest Friendly Trail is a 1.4km **multi-access trail** suitable for wheelchairs, buggies or prams, children's bicycles and walkers of all abilities. It has sealed surfaces and wide timber boardwalk sections. It forms the core of the trails in the park. The Woodland Trail (2km) has wide and reasonably smooth surfaces, along with one section of narrow trail. It is suitable for walkers and cyclists out for a **short gentle stroll or cycle**. The Rinnmaher and Bonaveen trails are longer loops (10km each approximately), extending to the outer areas of the Park. They have long narrow sections of trail, with variable surfaces and some narrow boardwalks. Although not suitable for young children, these two trails offer an enjoyable, safe, **off-road cycling experience** to visitors. Bike rental is also available in the town.

It is clear that Portumna Forest Park is a very important tourism asset for Lough Derg, as Ireland generally does not offer a wide variety of off-road, family-friendly cycleways.

The best cycling solution for Lough Derg

It is proposed that a hub-based approach be adopted for Lough Derg, with **three hubs** on different sides of the lake offering three different types of cycling experience that would appeal to visitors.

Two of these hubs exist already – Portumna Forest Park offers **safe, family-friendly off-road cycling while the Nenagh Cycle Hub provides a well-signed, road-based cycle route linking the towns, villages and points of interest** on the Tipperary side of the lake.

Although the provision of a **downhill mountain-biking trail** in Ballycuggeran Forest Park has potential, there are many issues around the suitability of the site and the management of such a facility. Coillte have indicated that although this site may be appropriate for a private Club Trail, it is not suitable for a facility that would be open to the wider public. An alternative solution on the Clare side, could be to identify a private estate where off-road cycling facilities could be developed as a fee-paying activity centre. The Blessingbourne Estate Mountain Bike Trails in Co. Tyrone has been highlighted as a good practice example for this type of development.

These actions would hugely improve the tourist cycling offer around Lough Derg:

- Discontinuation of the Lough Derg Cycleway and removal of signage as it is dangerous and does not appeal to target markets
- Continuation and enhancement of the on-road cycling hub at Nenagh (North Tipperary Cycle Network)
- Improvement and stronger marketing and servicing of family cycle trails in Portumna Forest Park
- The identification of a site to provide mountain biking and pump track opportunities
- Packaging and bundling of the different cycling opportunities and experiences around Lough Derg



5.5 A summary of Orientation Improvement Actions

Action	Responsible Partner(s)	Timeline
Initiate Stage 2 of the Signage project to progress detail design of signs and sign locations	LDMSG	Short term
Remove branded signage in consultation with Shannon Development, Fáilte Ireland and replace with TSM standard signage	Sign owners	Medium term
Identify potential locations with views of the lake for development as "Discovery Points"	Fáilte Ireland, Local Authorities, Shannon Development, Waterways Ireland, local landowners	Short term
Remove existing Lough Derg Drive signage, detail design locations and signage and erect new signs	Local Authorities, LDMSG	Short term
Commence a process of removal of unauthorised and redundant signage in co-operation with sign owners (using powers under Litter Pollution Act and Planning Act 2000 and Roads Act 1993)	Local Authorities and NRA	Immediately
Co-ordinate regulation signage	Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Local Authorities	Short term
Conduct an annual review to ensure that only approved signs are erected on roads	Local Authorities	On-going
Formulate a general policy and strategy statement on the provision of tourism signage (this study and the emerging Fáilte Ireland Guidelines could be referenced)	Local Authorities	Short term
Carry out a safety audit of the current Lough Derg Cycleways / decommission route	Local Authorities	Short term
Access the best single website for promotion of the lake as an entire region	LDMSG	Immediate
Lough Derg Drive - It is recommended that an appraisal be carried to investigate if any loops could be added to the drive to bring users closer to the lake in places. It is also recommended that an appraisal be carried out to see if any further marketing material is required in the form of brochures or website promotion.	LDMSG	Short term
Lough Derg Cycle Trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate potential sites for mountain bike opportunities ▪ Packaging and bundling of the existing offering 	LDMSG, Fáilte Ireland, Local Development Companies	Short/Medium Term

6. Improving Lakeside Experiences

6.1 Completing the Lakeside Programme

Some lakeside sites have been upgraded over the past 10 years, but the majority of sites planned for refurbishment have not yet been completed.

The Lough Derg Tourism Study of 2001 identified a number of opportunities for improving the visitor experience at the lakeshore of Lough Derg. These sites were graded into categories of intervention from a simple pull-in point with a lake view to more elaborate recreation sites that provide jetties, play areas, showers, changing, play area, picnic, bbq and information.

The Lough Derg Design Guide provides indicative layouts for each type of site along with a suite of design standards and details for buildings and the environment to ensure a consistency and high quality of amenity area design.

Portumna and Killaloe Ballina are the key visitor gateways to Lough Derg and therefore access to the lakeshore is an important visitor experience. The connections between the built environment of these towns and the lakeshore by means of a discovery walk will be investigated.

6.2 What goes where?

The full list of sites would need to be revisited in light of any relevant environmental, planning or physical changes within the past 12 years. A process of detailed design, tendering and construction is required to complete the public amenity site programme. Some site plans may also have to be adapted to accommodate the planned canoe trail, or may require environmental assessment.

Why this is worth doing

The lake itself and the quality of the lakeside environment is the key visitor attraction in the Lough Derg area. The experience of the lakeshore can be disappointing for visitors, access can be difficult and many lakeshore sites need refurbishment or new facilities.

Much work has already been carried out on identifying the best sites for upgrade, and the types of amenities required at each site.

The implementation of the Lakeside experience programme will open up access to the water in a considered and sensitive manner. It will increase the variety and location of lakeside experiences available to the visitor.

Category A and B sites are a priority, and any new works will underpin the significant investment that has taken place to date. The category E sites are the next priority, followed by Category C and D sites.

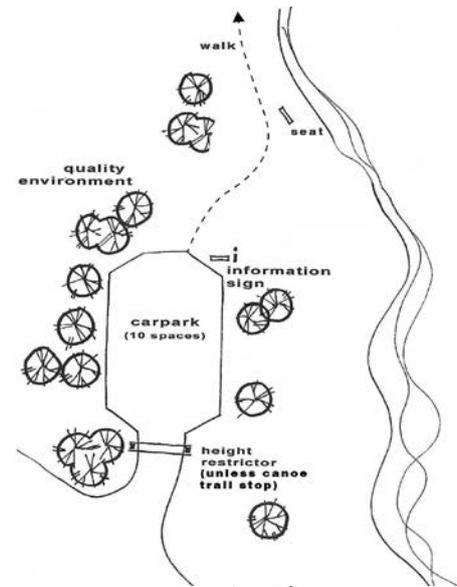
Lakeside Location ¹	Site type	Recommended amenities
Dromineer Mountshannon Ballina Killaloe Portumna Twomilegate	Category A	Parking, toilets, showers, changing, lockers, marina, jetty, slipway, shore, boat hire, waterbus, play area, picnic, bbq, open space, walks, information Discovery walk / interpretation trail at Ballina Killaloe and Portumna - connections between built form & lakeshore Provision of visitor parking at Killaloe
Terryglass Garrykennedy Scarriff/Tuamgraney Castlelough	Category B	Parking, toilets, marina, jetty, slipway, shore, waterbus, play area, picnic, bbq, open space, walks, information
Rossmore Youghal Harbour Kilgarvan Williamstown Harbour Amenity Site facing Cameron Island	Category C	Parking, picnic, walks, information
Coole Luska Mota Quay Old Village Church Bay Tinarna Bay Creagh Point Illanaboe Ringlaughlaun Point Cloonolia Bay Lushing Rocks Holy Island	Category D	Parking, walks, information An Access & Management Plan will be prepared for Holy Island. This will include; securing public ownership, improving access, linking with the White Tailed Eagle project, reviewing information and interpretation provided on the island and onshore, and landscape management recommendations
Ogonnelloe lookout Portroe lookout ² Derrypoint lookout Coolbawn lookout	Category E	Parking, picnic, walks, information, viewpoint/orientation

¹ Site locations will require confirmation in light of environmental and planning considerations

² Portroe lookout has been identified as having potential for future development (further detail in Section 7.1)

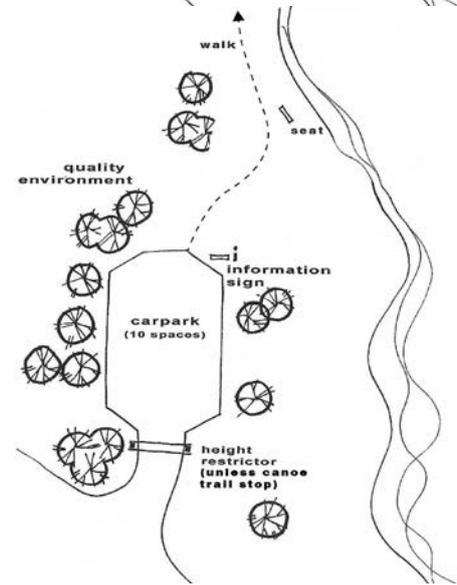
Category C

Rossmore, Youghal Harbour, Kilgarvan, Williamstown Harbour, Amenity Site facing Cameron Island



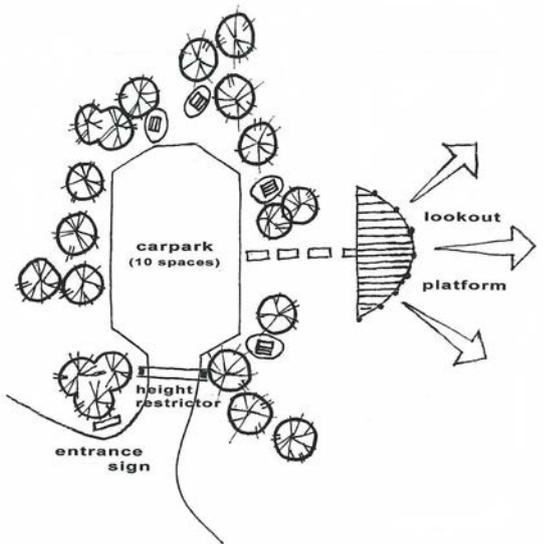
Category D

Coole, Luska, Mota Quay, Old Village, Church Bay, Tinarna Bay, Creagh Point, Illanaboe, Ringlaughlaun Point, Cloonolia Bay, Lushing Rocks, (Holy Island - see Section 6.2)



Category E

Ogonneloe lookout, Portroe lookout, Derrypoint lookout, Coolbawn lookout



Action	Responsible Partner(s)	Timeline
Initiate a consultation process with the local authorities to develop an action plan to complete the Amenity Site Programme	LDMSG, Local Authorities	Short term
Investigate route of Discovery walk / interpretive trail at Killaloe Ballina & Portumna, improve connections between built form and lakeshore, provision of visitor parking at Killaloe	LDMSG, Fáilte Ireland, Local Authorities	Short term
Progress the approved plans for the amenity site at Twomilegate. Align proposals with upgrade to ULAC.	LDMSG, ULAC, Local Authorities	Medium term
Progress an Access & Management Plan for Holy Island	LDMSG, Local Authorities	Short Medium

7. Experience Development

Lough Derg does not have sufficient key attractions that act as a draw to the area.

Five tourism products have been identified that satisfy market and environmental considerations and that are progressed to varying degrees. These will act as game-changers to the visitor economy in the Lough Derg area. They will help fulfil the vision to develop Lough Derg as;

“a key destination for superb water based activities combined with a range of very high quality walking, cycling, heritage, culture and food experiences that will entice the domestic and international visitors to stay longer”.



The following three **key tourism products** are proposed:

- A Discovery Point and Trailhead at the Portroe lookout
- A Lough Derg Canoe/Kayak trail
- An enhanced offering and facilities at University of Limerick Activities Centre (ULAC)

Two **additional tourism products** are proposed:

- Portumna eco-park (masterplanning required)
- Publications to promote and support active enjoyment of Lough Derg and surrounds



The view of Lough Derg from Portroe lookout

7.1 A Discovery Point and Trailhead at the Portree lookout

A Wow! Experience

The lookout is classified as a Category E amenity site in the 2003 Design Guide for Lough Derg. On that basis, some recommended facilities have been installed to basic standards; car parking, picnic area, walks, information and viewpoint/orientation. There is however scope for an upgrade to better serve the view and landscape context, and provide more of an experience of discovery for the visitor.

This upgrade will be done in accordance with the design details set out in the 2003 Lough Derg Design Guide. These guidelines recommend the use of wood as a primary material, with a rustic but streamlined aesthetic. This approach would ensure that the lookout will tie in with other works carried out and planned for amenity sites around the lake.

High standards of design and on-going maintenance are required, with a clear responsibility and funding assigned for on-going maintenance of structures and the environment. Due to the slope of the site, there is great opportunity to create a strong architectural response, possibly including a building or structure, cognisant of landscape character and environmental considerations. **The site design will be all about the celebration of the view.**

A new design for the site would be required, and this would include:

- safe vehicular entrance and exit,
- entrance identification,
- parking,
- surfaces and edges,
- planting,
- picnic tables and seating,
- information and orientation,
- good trailhead information and safe physical links to the Arra Mountains Loop Walk, and upgrades to the walk as necessary
- a possible walk to the lakeshore and Castlough,
- interpretive elements, indoor or outdoor, and
- a commercial space for tea room/local craft and artisan producers



Why this is worth doing

This location has one of the best public views of Lough Derg and provides the visitor with a stunning panoramic view of the water, the islands and the surrounding landscape. The site is along an important route connecting Ballina Killaloe with the lakeside villages along the eastern shore. It currently also forms part of the Lough Derg Drive. There are also opportunities for linking the site with walks to higher ground and to the shoreline.

As the “must-see” view of Lough Derg, the upgrade of the lookout point needs to incorporate a high quality environment, opportunities to get into the landscape with walks as well as opportunities for engaging with the stories of the area.



Telling the stories of Lough Derg

The lookout is a great opportunity for telling the stories of Lough Derg. This would include stories that are compelling and told in a way that is site-specific and innovative. The current interpretation boards are map heavy and do not convey the stories within the landscape. An Interpretation Plan will be required for the site.

New interpretive structures might include a sculptural vista interpretation, pointing out the various parts of the landscape and lake in view, possibly within an architectural setting. Other interpretive elements could include sound installations with local voices telling stories of the landscape (hand or solar powered), communication of the Brian Ború connections, links to the ecclesiastical heritage, ways of getting closer to nature, re-creations of the scene when the lake was a very important transport route, place names and their meaning etc. Real structures such as boats may have a role to play. Orientation can be communicated by pointing out other settlements in view, or just out of view. There is a great opportunity here for highlighting other attractions around the lake.



Upgrade the signage directing to the site

This would be done in accordance with the Lough Derg Signage Strategy. The Signage Strategy has identified the lookout at Portroe as a site requiring tourist signage.

The Signage Strategy aims to point tourists towards the most engaging views of the lake and therefore, in accordance with the strategy, this destination would be signed clearly from the main routes with relevant symbols. An example is shown, but it is likely that the destination signed may be Portroe Lookout, Portroe Discovery Point or even Lough Derg Lookout to convey the importance of the site.



Make connections

The Lookout is also a trailhead for the Arra Mountains Loop, a 16.5km walk to the top of Tountinna and back. It can also potentially connect with the lakeshore at Castlelough. Upgrades may be required to the walk to Millennium Cross.



7.2 A Lough Derg Canoe/Kayak trail (blueway)

What is a Canoe Trail?

Northern Ireland has developed 9 formal canoe trails with signed access points and special arrangements for camping and outfitting. The illustration below shows the Lough Erne Canoe Trail, the first of the trails to be developed and a good example for Lough Derg.

Trails vary on Lough Erne from 20km to 150km. Each has signed access points, map guides, information boards and arrangements for canoe and camping equipment hire, camping and bothying, guiding and transport. Full information on the trails can be accessed via <http://www.canoeni.com/canoe-trails/>.

In Scotland, the Great Glen Canoe Trail has recently been developed leading from Fort William on the west coast to Inverness in the east. This is a formal trail with signage, camping, maps and information on outfitting and services. It follows the waterway and lies close to the Great Glen Cycle Trail. An estimated 4000 people canoe in the Great Glen every year.

Local businesses can start up services for a trail offering, for example, canoe hire, guiding, transport from the airport to the starting point, camping equipment, accommodation booking and arranging or other trips to attractions etc. This approach is attractive to the overseas visitor, who is unlikely to travel with their own kayak and camping equipment.

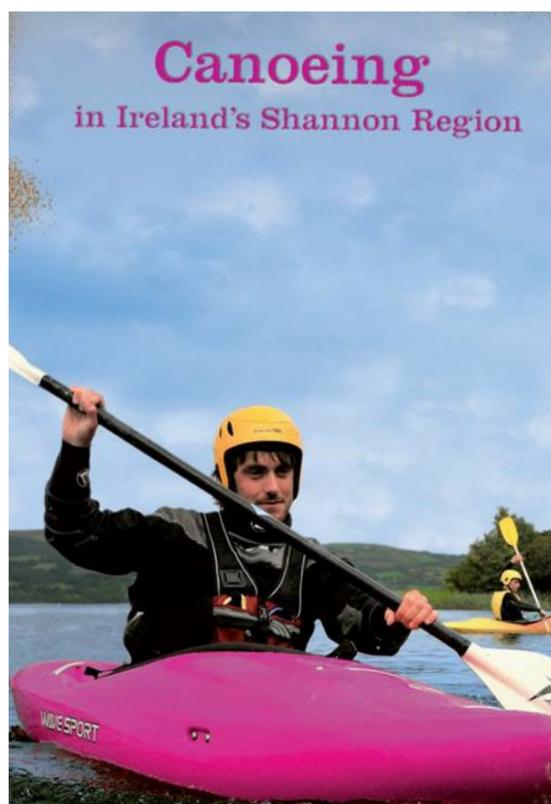
Other businesses can diversify, so that for example an existing outdoor centre or camping and caravan site may decide to provide a new service for canoe trail visitors.

Why this is worth doing

Canoe trails have been a feature of tourism and recreation in Canada and in the Nordic countries for many years with well-developed arrangements for information about rivers and lakes, access and portage points, and companies to hire canoe and camping equipment and to provide guides and transport.

A 2013 report addressed the development of a Canoe Trail for Lough Derg as an economic development measure designed to increase visits to the area. It was commissioned by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and Galway Rural Development Company as part of an agreed Tourism Animation Programme for Lough Derg. The report was prepared by Judith A Annett Countryside Consultancy and URS Ireland. The development of a canoe trail is an agreed tourism product development action within the Lough Derg Marketing Group's strategy.

Tourism intelligence in Scotland has identified canoeists as higher spenders than walkers and cyclists, spending £100 (€118) per day. The services available on a canoe trail are of key importance in turning a recreational opportunity into a product that can attract domestic and overseas visitors.



Canoe Trail Development in Ireland

Waterways Ireland has proposed widespread development of canoe trails throughout the navigable waterways. The most advanced proposals for fully serviced trails are on the River Barrow and on Lough Derg as the first section of a wider Shannon Canoe Trail. A Shannon wide canoe trail has the scale to generate international stand out. The National Trails Office has developed guidance on developing small vessel water trails to guide trail developers.

http://www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/

The Proposed Lough Derg Canoe Trail

Lough Derg is already open to canoeing - information and mapping is available. Users however need to have their own canoes, or research where to hire them, and make their own arrangements to decide on the route, accomodation, eating opportunities and transport. If usage of the trail and services available in the towns and villages is to increase, appeal to GB and other overseas users, and make a greater contribution to the local economy, then a number of arrangements need to be put in place:

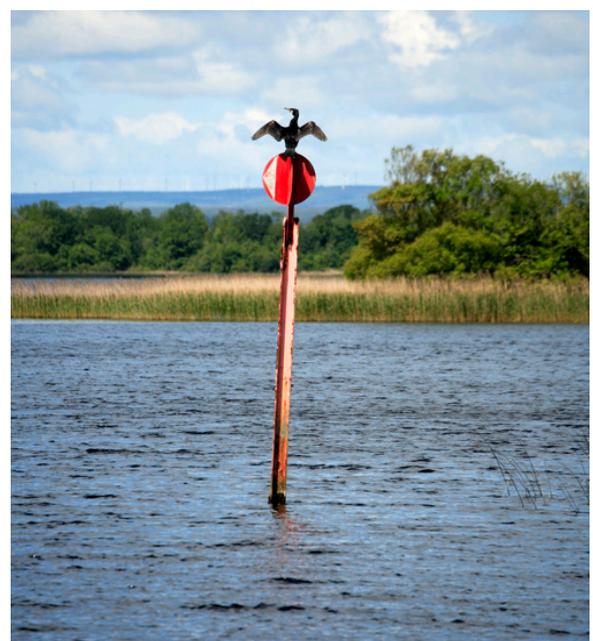
- Development of a formal trail with the support of all agencies,
- Signage of main access and egress points from the nearest road,
- Development of a canoe trail map, suitable for navigation by canoe, showing the route and supporting infrastructure and services,
- Development of waterside camping or budget accommodation or other overnight opportunities,
- Provision of potable water at appropriate intervals,
- Advertising of a wider range of accommodation and hospitality close to the shore that can provide a service to canoe trail users,
- Developing canoe friendly accommodation including secure storage,
- Development of canoe friendly infrastructure at a number of points where there is no current suitable canoe landing,
- A number of interpretation points for the trail including safety advice,
- A joint marketing approach to the trail,
- Development of coherent packages of transport, equipment, guiding, accommodation and food for promotion to the overseas markets, and
- Promoting and enabling DIY use of the trail to competent and equipped paddlers in Ireland and Great Britain.

An extensive local consultation and expert study was undertaken on the potential route and stopping points for the trail. The map overleaf shows the proposed route that emerged. The Canoe trail is offered on both east and west banks of the waterway to take account the variation in wind directions experienced on the lake. Canoeists will be advised to travel along the most sheltered shoreline.

Audit of access points and proposed sites and services for Lough Derg

A detailed audit of potential access points and services around Lough Derg was made as part of the canoe trail development process. Following consultation and discussion with site owners, the following summary of services at each potential site was drawn up. Dark shading indicates the presence of a service or facility at present. This will need to be cross referenced with the plans for upgrading lakeside sites.

Sites	Killaloe	Castletlough	Garrykennedy	Dromineer	Kilgarvan	Terryglass	Portumna (Rec Park)	Portumna Castle Harbour	Rossmore Quay	Williamstown	Dromaon	Mountshannon	Scarriff Harbour	Reddan's Quay	ULAC*
Minibus and trailer parking															
Height barrier															
Current camp site															
Potential camp site															
Toilet															
Shower															
Water															
Hire craft															
Provider close by															
Accommodation close by															
Food close by															
Hospitality close by															
Access to water															
Signage to site															



*ULAC is a private centre providing canoeing experiences by arrangement.

LOUGH DERG TOURISM ANIMATION

Proposals for Lough Derg Canoe Trail

PROPOSED OFFICIAL CANOE TRAIL ACCESS POINTS AND OVERNIGHT STOPS

ROUTE OF PROPOSED LINEAR CANOE TRAIL AND CANOE TRAIL LOOPS



Due to the European Natura 2000 designations on the lake, the project requires an Appropriate Assessment. A draft has been prepared by URS and is in the process of being agreed between the three County Councils and Waterways Ireland.

A wider Shannon Canoe Trail

The trail should be seen as part of a development trail through the Shannon from Lough Allen to Killaloe Ballina. Naming, branding and signage should all be identified for the whole trail at the outset. This is because the length of a whole Shannon trail would be capable of creating international stand-out.

This is an agreed proposal within the Lakelands and Inland Waterways Strategic Plan, with Lough Derg the first section of the trail to be delivered. The adjacent Mid Shannon and Lough Ree Trail will follow on from this and lead north to Athlone.

Other trail features

Interpretation

The route could include other stopping points, such as for example Brian Ború's fort and Holy Island and would have an interpretation guide to the special interest of the lakeshore and islands.

Trail Grading

Based on the draft Waterways and NTO guidance, this trail would be graded as easy from a water point of view with the choice of an east side or west side route and north or south start allowing the canoeist or group leader to choose the most sheltered route according to weather forecast. Users need to be warned in advance about the effect of strong winds on the lake.

Parking

Minibus and trailer parking needs to be available at several points to allow for groups to be collected if an escape route is required.

Short break routes

Two circular trails, one from Dromineer, visiting Garrykennedy, Mountshannon, Holy Island and Castlelough; and one linking Portumna with Kilgarvan and Rossmore should be considered to allow for shorter breaks.

Private sector involvement in the trail

The main purpose of this canoe trail proposal is as a mechanism for stimulating economic development. The trail requires infrastructure which can be provided by either public or private interests, and services that will most sustainably and efficiently provided by the private sector or other bodies such as University of Limerick Activity Centre.

Examples of where the private sector could develop a product to realise the economic potential of a canoe trail lie mainly in the development of:

- Canoe hire fleets,
- Canoe friendly accommodation with storage and drying facilities (campsite, hostel, B&B)
- Guiding and outfitting services (including hire of camping equipment)
- Transport services

Trail Implementation

The development of the trail has involved identifying the best sites to be developed as access and overnight stay locations and an analysis of the infrastructure that is required at each site to provide an attractive trail. Owners of potential sites for overnight stays have been consulted and a set of specifications for each site has been prepared.

In addition to this, it would be advisable to include technical competence and wildlife safe training for people guiding the canoe trail to ensure conduct that does not affect the nature conservation interest of the lake, and to develop a code of conduct for canoe trail users, potentially based on Leave No Trace principles. The total cost of these three items is not expected to exceed €15,000. A workshop should also be arranged with local outdoor centres and businesses to assist people to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the trail.

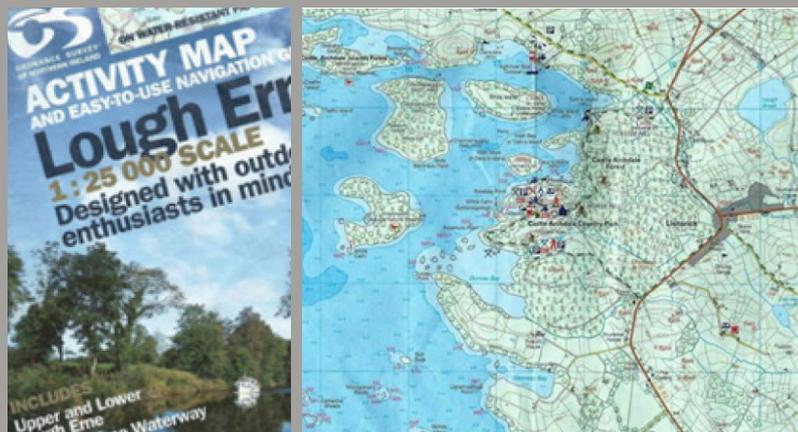
Implementation considerations

An application was being prepared by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership for submission in August 2013. This application was not completed as several sites that had been thought by County Councils to be within their ownership were not and the required procedures would have gone beyond the time of the application period. A proposal for the completion of only the route around the east shore of the lough was put forward requiring mainly sites in North Tipperary. A route including both sides of the lake would be the safer option.

7.3 Lough Derg Activity Map and guide to the Waters and Wilds of Lough Derg

ACTIVITY MAP - AN EXAMPLE FROM LOUGH ERNE

The approach recommended is similar to that of Lough Erne where OSNI produced the map with support from Waterways Ireland and others on recreational infrastructure and services. The map is waterproof and arranged all on one sheet so only one map needs to be purchased to cover the whole area of the canoe trail for example.



A NATURAL HERITAGE GUIDE - THE WATERS AND WILDS OF LOUGH DERG

The Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland studies of the potential for Lough Derg have highlighted the quality of the natural environment. The waterway itself is of interest for its support of birds and wildfowl with a highlight being the successful nesting of a pair of white-tailed Eagles in 2013 close to Mountshannon. This brought visits from all over Ireland. There are lowland raised bogs of European interest close to the lake with a wide range of flora and fauna. The Shannon Callows and the reed beds in many of the bays around the lake provide homes for a range of species whilst native trout have a stronghold in the lakes and tributaries. The rich natural heritage of Lough Derg is reflected in the reasons for the designation of Lough Derg's Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. Some organisations in the area present aspects of the natural heritage such as Celt and Irish Seedsavers - these might be a good place to start accessing information.

The Natural Heritage Guide, which could be both printed and available on a web platform, would cover the following:

- A **map showing different habitats** around the lake and surrounds and identifying places where there is access to **discovery points** - special vistas, or flora and fauna characteristic of the area,
- An account of **typical and special flora and fauna**,
- A listing of **sites and centres** where the best of the Lough Derg natural environment can be seen,
- A listing or link to those who can provide wildlife experiences in the area or who can interpret the special interest - **guides and ghillies** etc.,
- **Events and seasonal details** based on natural heritage,
- **Boat trips and hire boat experiences** that profile natural heritage, and
- An overview of the White Tailed Eagle project and location of look out post.

Why this is worth doing

- Recreational users other than those cruising in motorboats currently need to buy three OSI maps at 1:50,000 scale to achieve coverage of the whole lake.
- There is insufficient detail on the cruising maps and guides, and in maps designed for marketing or car touring purposes, to allow use of the water close to shore or in the bays or to use as a walking and land navigation aid.
- Recreational users need more information about access and egress points to lakes and about services close to walking, canoe and cycle trails.
- 1:40,000 or 1:25,000 scale maps allow more detail of features which are helpful for navigation and these are not currently available.
- Waterproof maps allow for use by small craft on the water
- There are no current maps that provide detail on water and on land at the same time
- OSI already have the information, it just needs to be collated
- Care and management of the Natural Heritage resource must remain a key focus of visitor experience improvement on and around the lake – part of this is provision of information and managing visitor access.
- It is difficult to source visitor orientated information on the natural heritage of Lough Derg
- Fáilte Ireland research has identified the importance of the natural environment to both domestic and overseas visitors. A natural heritage guide would illuminate the special interest of the lake and its shores.
- The development of a Natural Heritage Guide provides opportunities for familiarisation with the wildlife for local accommodation and services and a wildlife guides training programme.

7.4 Enhanced offering and facilities at University of Limerick Activity Centre (ULAC)

A report commissioned by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and Galway Rural Development Company addressed the possibility of an enhanced offering and facilities at ULAC.

Situated approximately 4km from Killaloe, ULAC is owned and managed by the University of Limerick Sports Department. The purpose-built centre offers a range of land and water-based activities including sailing, power boating, windsurfing, kayaking and canoeing, dragon boating, high ropes courses, team challenge, orienteering and archery. Over the last two decades, ULAC has been very successful at targeting the group activities market – attracting schools, sports teams and clubs, as well as the corporate sector.

It is proposed that ULAC could increase its profile as one of Ireland's pre-eminent inland activity centres by

- (a) Expanding its offering to include a moored waterpark facility
- (b) Re-orientating its activity provision more towards the general public, particularly domestic and overseas visitors

What type of waterpark?

An initial scoping report was prepared which identified a series of waterpark types, including; destination waterparks, leisure/aqua parks, theme parks, holiday parks, eco-parks and seasonal/moored waterparks (inflatable waterparks usually associated with an inland beach or publicly accessible waterfront).

Of all these, options, a **moored waterpark** at the ULAC site was considered most appropriate for Lough Derg, with a consideration given to the development of an **eco-park** at Portumna.

Why locate a waterpark at the ULAC site?

The ULAC site is considered more suitable than the other sites considered; Mountshannon, Dromineer, Portumna, and Twomilegate.

ULAC is an existing outdoor activity centre and one that already offers a variety of watersports. In this respect, ULAC has already addressed water accessibility issues; has many facilities and services to support visitors; and has an existing operational structure within which an inflatable waterpark facility would sit. Furthermore, as an activity centre, ULAC is already well known amongst some of the key target markets (i.e. school and youth groups and families with children), which in turn will make the marketing and promotion of the new amenity an easier proposition. The inflatable waterpark would, therefore, represent a new product offering within the overall composition of ULAC's packages.

ULAC is the only site of those evaluated where security from vandalism and unauthorised entry has an identifiable solution, with ULAC offering a gated facility and an anchoring site that is potentially well screened from public view. A downside of this would mean that the site could not be considered an 'open access' site to visitors. However, given the fact that there is a limit to the number of patrons on the waterpark at one time, the public access constraints could actually be considered a positive from an operational and management perspective.

Why this is worth doing

Lough Derg has no defined 'iconic' visitor attraction that can act as a motivator for visits, with most visitor attractions being formal and relatively low profile in nature. The water-setting of Lough Derg has a direct synergy with a variety of watersports, however this potential is largely considered to be under-utilised at present. There is one outdoor activity centre on the lake at present, with the University of Limerick Activity Centre (ULAC) supporting predominantly courses and school groups.

The waterpark concept can deliver a significant 'step-change' in the supply-side tourism infrastructure for Lough Derg.

If the core products and services can be enhanced to attract more individual tourists, this would provide further scope to raise the profile of the lake as major activity hub thereby increasing the appeal of the destination to overseas markets.



A co-ordinated upgrade - ULAC and Twomilegate lakeside

ULAC is in very close proximity to Twomilegate and Ballycurragan Beach and Forest. The beach, which is open access, is already supported by a car park and is a popular ‘honey pot’ site on sunny days. The proximity of ULAC means that a combined offer of an active waterfront area at ULAC and a passive waterfront area at Twomilegate could be presented as a collective offer that draws upon the strengths of both sites.

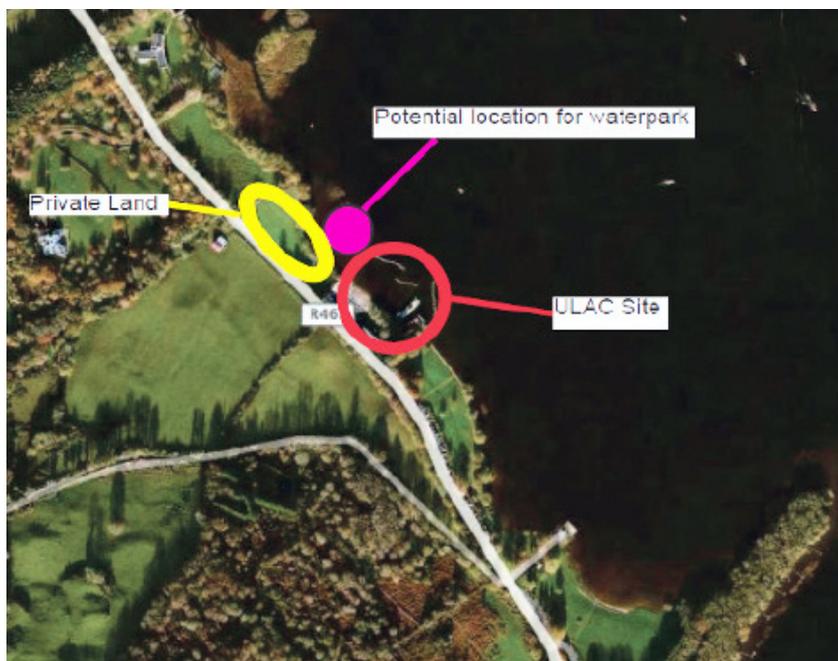
Twomilegate is a Category A site in the Lough Derg Design Guide of 2003. It is considered appropriate for an upgrade to include parking, toilets, showers, changing, lockers, marina, jetty, slipway, shore, boat hire, waterbus, play area, picnic, bbq, open space, walks and information. The waterpark project could also include a co-ordinated upgrade to this site.

Considerations

ULAC operational practice - Generally, ULAC has been primarily orientated toward groups rather than being offered on a ‘pay-and-play’ basis. However, ULAC has indicated that a recent change in its operational practice will allow for more ‘pay-and-play’ services to be supported, particularly during the summer season. ULAC has also suggested that the waterpark concept could ultimately form part of this new service offering.

Lakeside ownership - The potential site for the waterpark is slightly north of the main water edge for ULAC. The waterpark would be well sheltered and screened in this location, however the land immediately adjacent to the water’s edge is privately owned and used occasionally for arable farming. The ideal scenario would be for ULAC to offer direct access from adjacent land however this is currently not possible.

Access - Transport access would need to be managed carefully in relation to the ULAC site. Although ULAC is in relatively close proximity to Killaloe Ballina, being on the western side of the lake means that traffic seeking to reach ULAC from the south and the east, will be funnelled through the town and over the bridge. This junction is already renowned as being a bottleneck for traffic at peak times which could be further exacerbated. Whilst it is anticipated that the inflatable waterpark will generate new visitors to the area, the limits on patrons (i.e. maximum of 60 per session/420 per day) means that the additional traffic created will not be significantly above that which is experienced already on sunny days.



7.5 Portumna eco-park

Why Portumna?

A report commissioned by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and Galway Rural Development Company considered a number of sites for an eco-park at Lough Derg; Portumna, Garrykenny, Dromineer, Twomilegate/ULAC, Scarriff, Mountshannon and Terryglass.

The top three scoring sites in terms of accessibility, public access to the lake, other existing on-site amenities and development scope are Portumna, Mountshannon and Dromineer.

Of these three, Portumna is considered the best location. Its main strength is that it has a combined lakeshore and forest area that cover an extensive area. Both lakeshore and forest are publicly accessible, with the forest being managed and maintained by Coillte and the lakeshore being managed by Galway County Council. Other amenities within the broad area include:

- Portumna Castle, managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW);
- a Waterways Ireland harbour with service block;
- a disused and fire damaged hotel (the Shannon Oaks) with self-catering units; and
- Portumna golf course, which is open to visitors.

Why an eco-park?

An eco-park is sympathetic to the lakeside environment, and would form part of the unique selling point of the destination. In general terms, the eco-park is supported by a series of outdoor and eco-friendly experiences. Different components that are typically incorporated into an eco-park include:

- **Accommodation** – taking a lead from Leaplish at Kielder Water, this would combine seasonal camping and caravanning with year-round log cabins and more unusual structures such as pods and up-cycled vehicles; both within the woodland and lakeside setting. The camping and caravanning engenders a sense of 'being in the great outdoors', while the log-cabin style self-catering units help to expand market horizons and extend the tourism season. The currently closed hotel could also be rebuilt as part of the project.
- **Activities** – a series of family-orientated activities both on-land and on-water, with some of the most popular including boating, canoeing/kayaking, cycling, walking, horse riding, archery, fishing, and so on. Other activities such as high wires, zip wires, water-zorbing, 4x4 off-roading, and so on can also form part of the package.
- **Visitor Centre** - The area around Portumna Castle could feasibly become a multi-purpose visitor centre combining family-friendly activities and learning experiences both on-land and on-water.
- **Niche interests and 'learn to' experiences** – another element of the offer of these types of resort are to offer niche interests and 'learn to' experiences. Options can often include conservation volunteering, arts and crafts, bushcraft experiences, falconry and so on.
- **Catering and retail** – depending upon the nature of the resort, one or several catering options could be provided. Likewise, retail can be provided onsite for grocery items and specialist items (e.g. optics, books, etc.).

Why this is worth doing

This project captures the best that Lough Derg can offer – an active holiday in a natural lakeside setting attracting national and international markets. It would appeal to families by providing walking and cycling routes, accommodation, opportunities for getting on the water and getting into nature. It would harness the heritage attractions of Portumna and feed into the economic vitality of the town.

It would also be a vehicle for combining the lakeside resource currently owned by various agencies and private landowners into a sum that is better than the parts.

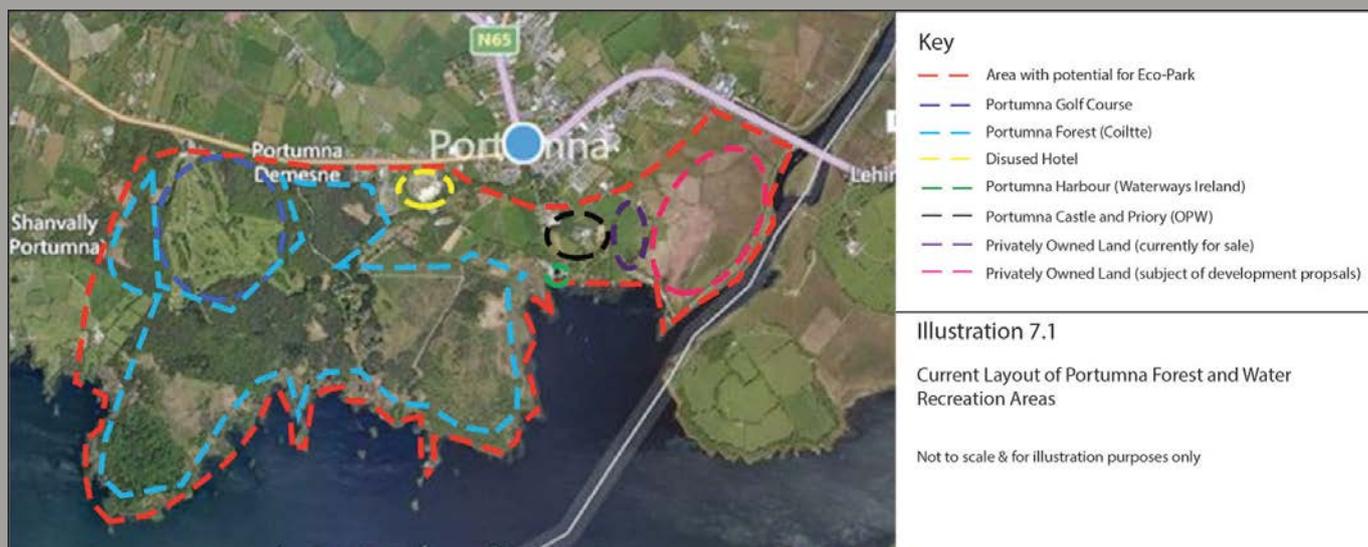
The eco-park is at concept stage, and as it involves various landowners, a multi-agency group would be required to progress a site masterplan and agree financial/management and public/private investment aspects of the project. This group would report to the Lough Derg Marketing Group. A facilitated workshop with key players would be a good start.



- **Hire services** – associated with the activities function, hire services for canoes/kayaks and bikes are often provided.
- **Wildlife** – an important part of the eco-park experience is to get into nature, with wildlife being an important part of the theme. Wildlife conservation practices, observation platforms and discovery walks can all feature within the offering and are often utilised to motivate visits and secure repeat visits in the future. The land to the north of the public lakeside amenity area could conceivably become a wildlife discovery park, with a series of raised walking trails passing across the marshland habitat and offering hides and information boards on the species the area supports. Subject to securing agreement from landowners, a lakeland and forest multi-user trail could be developed that spans the whole of the area.
- **All year round** - as a resort, the facility would be generally be open on a seasonal basis if associated with camping and caravanning, although some elements such as wildlife watching/conservation could attract year-round interest. If self-catering lodge accommodation is included in the composition of the complex, it is possible that visitors could be attracted on a year-round basis.



A PORTUMNA ECO-PARK COLLABORATIVE MASTERPLAN



A full masterplan is required in order to bring the different stakeholders/landowners together and to establish a shared vision and site development plan.

The current position of the disused Shannon Oaks hotel is unclear with no restoration and rebuilding programme in evidence. There are two separate but potentially important parcels of land at the eastern end of the potential eco-park. The area to the north (highlighted in pink) is a marshland area. This area is currently the subject of its own development proposal involving tourism element. This project is being progressed by a private developer, however it is our understanding that the land is not currently owned by the company and no planning application has been submitted. Land immediately to the west of the public lakeside amenity area appears to be farmland. This land, at the time of writing, is currently for sale.

Despite this fairly complex land ownership/stewardship arrangement, in principle at least, the site has all of the ingredients necessary to support the development of the eco-park concept.

7.6 Experience Development Action Plan

Action	Responsible Partner(s)	Timeline
Enhanced offering and facilities at ULAC (development of an inflatable waterpark and support for ULAC to expand its services and facilities). Proposals will align with approved upgrade to Twomilegate amenity site.	ULAC, LDMSG, LEADER Fáilte Ireland	Medium term
Development of at Discovery Point and trailhead at the Portroe Lookout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upgrade directional signage to the site ▪ Develop a site masterplan ▪ Develop an Interpretation Plan ▪ Upgrade to Arra Mountains Loop Walk via Millennium Cross 	North Tipperary County Council, Fáilte Ireland	Medium/Long term
Develop the Lough Derg Canoe Trail (as set out in the 2013 Report)	LDMSG, Local Development Companies, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Local Authorities	Medium/Long term
Portumna Eco-Park Masterplan	Galway County Council, Waterways Ireland, OPW, Coillte, Fáilte Ireland	Medium Term
Publications to Promote Active Enjoyment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activity Map ▪ Natural Heritage Guide to include progression of projects in relation to Mountshannon Eagles eg: Progress formal look out post for which design has been completed, market eagles in conjunction with wider areas, engage with White Tailed Eagle project (national project) to develop an overall development plan to maximise tourism interest at this location ▪ Lough Derg Pack 	LDMSG, Fáilte Ireland, Lakelands and Inland Waterways team, NPWS, Local nature groups, Clare County Council	Short/Medium Term

8. Destination Marketing

Lakelands and Inland Waterways is the overarching leisure tourism proposition encapsulating the catchment of the river Shannon from Belleek in the north to Limerick City in the south. The area includes the principal waterways of the Shannon & Erne catchments, within which four key zones have been identified namely; Lough Erne, Upper Lakelands, Lough Ree & Mid Shannon and Lough Derg.

This section of the plan looks at the following areas:

- Overview of Lakelands & Inland Waterways
- Market Research & Analysis
- Profile of Overseas Market Segments
- Profile of Domestic Market
- Marketing Objectives
- Sales & Marketing Action Plan

8.1 Overview of Lakelands & Inland Waterways

Lakelands & Inland Waterways is a joint initiative between Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Tourism Ireland & the Northern Ireland Tourist Board working in partnership with the Local Authorities along the waterway, Shannon Development¹ and Fermanagh District Council.

Vision for Lakelands & Inland Waterways

“Lakelands & Inland Waterways is the heart of Ireland. Here the visitor discovers the real Ireland, experiencing the genuine warmth of the people and the wealth of things to do every day. As they explore the great waterways and lakes they find a freedom that brings renewal of body & soul”.

The leisure tourism assets and experiences of this geographic region are presented both internationally and domestically under the *Lakelands & Inland Waterways* proposition.

8.2 Market Research and Analysis

Fáilte Ireland conducts an annual Visitor Attitude Survey to gain insight into visitors' perceptions of key destinations in Ireland. This survey is conducted annually from May to October. Traditionally the survey was conducted at airports and ferry ports as visitors were departing but since 2011 the survey has been conducted in key tourism destinations to allow the capture of more meaningful insights that can help inform product and experience development. In 2012, 918 face to face interviews were conducted with domestic and overseas holidaymakers all of whom spent at least one night in the destination.

Why this is worth doing

Lough Derg needs to increase its awareness as a destination. Domestically, this is not helped by the existence of another well-known Lough Derg in Ireland. Internationally, it would appear that visitors might not be aware of the attractions and activities available in the Lough Derg Area. The Destination Marketing Plan sets out ways of increasing awareness of the lake's attractions, founded on an assessment of target key market segments as identified by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland's Global Segmentation Strategy.



¹ Shannon Development was the regional authority for tourism in the Mid West until the transfer of its tourism function to Fáilte Ireland on June 1st, 2013.

Q: Why did they choose the Shannon Corridor as their destination?

Top 3 Answers

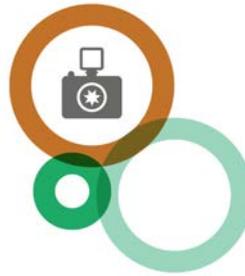
- 30% History / culture
- 10% Visit family / friends
- 8% Easy to get to



Q: What kind of information did they look for?

Top 3 Answers

- 76% Attractions to visit
- 72% Things to do and see
- 36% Accommodation

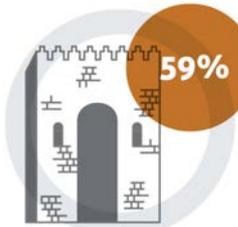


Q: What was their experience of the Shannon Corridor?*

A: Friendliness of local people	4.81
Natural environment eg, landscape	4.71
Cleanliness of locality	4.53
Quality of the buildings/architecture	4.39
Availability of things to see and do	4.30
Overall value for money	4.18

*average score (1=very poor and 5=very good)

Q: Where did they visit in the Shannon Corridor?



Number 1 Answer
59% HISTORIC HOUSE / CASTLE

- 40% Interpretative centre
- 23% Traditional music / dance performance
- 7% Museum / gallery
- 7% Garden
- 3% National park
- 3% Farmers' market

Q: What did they do in the Shannon Corridor?



Number 1 Answer
13% BOAT TRIP

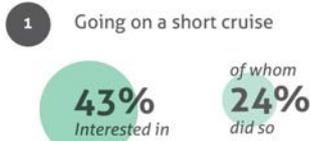
- 7% Hiking / hillwalking
- 4% Fishing
- 2% Water based activity (excluding swimming)
- 4% Golf
- 3% Cycling
- 2% Attending a sporting event
- 1% Equestrian pursuits
- 1% Mountain biking

Q: Would they recommend the Shannon Corridor for a holiday?

A: On a scale of 0-10, % who would highly recommend the Shannon Corridor (score of 9-10) less % those that would not (score of 0-6)



Q: What appealed to holidaymakers in the Shannon Corridor?

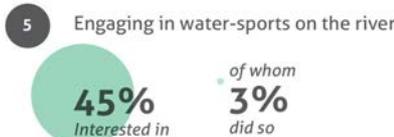
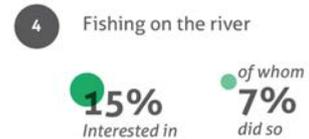
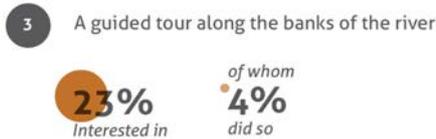


Q: Reasons for recommending the Shannon Corridor (those scoring 9 or 10)?



Number 1 Answer
60% BEAUTIFUL SCENERY, COUNTRYSIDE

- 47% People, nice and friendly
- 42% History, culture
- 35% Peaceful / relaxing
- 27% Lots of attractions
- 19% Lots to do and see
- 16% Traditional Irish culture



8.3 Profile of Overseas Market Segments

The main overseas markets for Lakelands & Inland Waterways, including Lough Derg, are Britain followed by Mainland Europe and North America. The main motivation for visiting is for a holiday, although visiting friends & relatives is a strong motivation for British visitors.

The three market segments identified with the **best potential** for delivering international visitors to Lough Derg have been identified as **Curiously Cultural**, **Great Escapers** and **Nature Lovers**. The holiday motivations of each of these segments are similar across all markets. However, the way we communicate with these segments and the media channels used will vary slightly depending on the market. In the case of the Nature Lovers, we will only be targeting the British market. Nature Lovers in Europe and North America are less likely to travel overseas to fulfil their holiday motivations. Other market segments with less potential for Lough Derg are *Social Energisers*, *Top Tanners*, *Spoil Us* and *Easygoing Socialisers*.

Curiously Cultural

Who are they?

The Curiously Cultural are older – most are over 45 and more than a quarter are over 65. They travel as couples or on their own. If they had children, they have grown up or have left home. Typical Curiously Cultural travellers would be 55 years old, taking a holiday with their partner. They are out to broaden their minds and expand their experience by exploring new landscapes, history and culture. They are curious about everything and are delighted to discover the world for themselves once again.

What they want from a holiday:

They're interested in all that a place has to offer and they want it to be authentic. They won't choose a brand or visit a place just to follow the herd. This is their own exploration and they really want to cover everything, to 'do' a place. The Curiously Cultural love to discover the history, the art, the bookshops, the museums, and always find ways of getting real insight. Independent, 'active' sightseers, they are looking to encounter new places and experiences that are out of the ordinary. The Curiously Cultural like to feel that they have not only broadened their mind but also immersed themselves in a place, giving their senses a holiday too – the sights, the sounds, the smells, the tastes. They enjoy connecting with nature and getting off the beaten track. They like people to show an interest and educate them – to feel they've connected. They really appreciate personal guides.

They do not want:

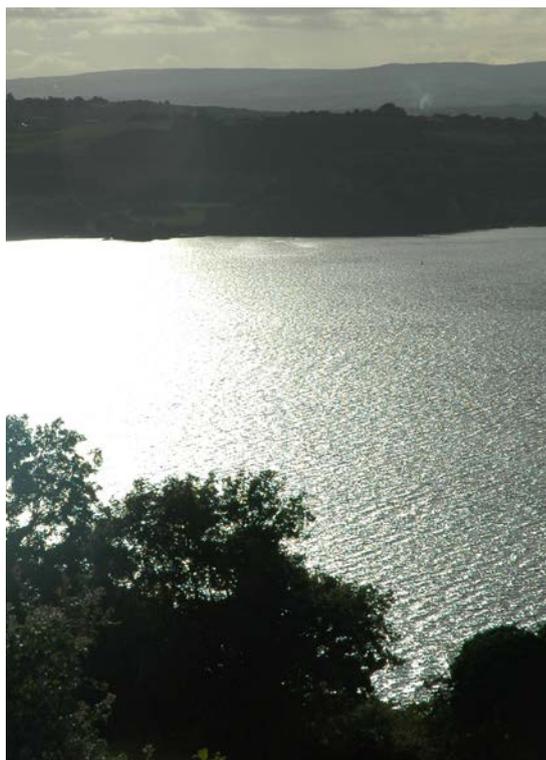
To party, to see things they've seen before, to do packaged or 'laid on' activities.

Most likely to:

- Thoroughly explore a place
- Enjoy breathtaking landscapes
- Soak up stimulating, interesting new places and cultural information
- Enjoy good food and wine, particularly local specialties
- Visit a variety of attractions with interesting histories: castles, gardens, museums, country houses
- Visit local festivals and events

How long and where?

The Curiously Cultural are most likely to stay in a hotel, self-catering accommodation, or a B&B as long as there's a lot to see. They will usually choose somewhere with access to scenery and good walks. The Curiously Cultural take more short breaks than average, mixing short breaks at home with overseas travel. They are three times more likely than the average holidaymaker to stay longer. However, they need to feel that a destination is truly diverse otherwise they are unlikely to return for a while once they've been, preferring to move on to new discoveries.



Great Escapers

Who are they?

Great Escapers tend to be younger, around thirty. They are often couples, some with babies or quite young children. Most are in serious need of time out from busy lives and careers. So they are specifically interested in rural holidays, and travel very much as a couple or family. Great Escapers are on holiday for a break, to get physical with nature, and to reconnect with their partner.

What they want from a holiday:

To connect with the landscape, to feel the earth beneath their feet, to soak up the beauty of it all. A sense of history, of their place in the vastness of nature – they want to feel part of it. Against this kind of backdrop, Great Escapers can spend real quality time with their family, bonding with their partner and children. They can rebalance themselves and take stock of their lives, concentrating on what's important in life. They appreciate peace and quiet between activities, even if those activities are themselves low-key: a visit to a castle or landmark, enjoying a relaxed meal at a local restaurant... the point is the trip itself. It's 'down time', it's being off the beaten track, it's a Great Escape. But it's important that getting away from it all is easy enough – they want to get the 'wow' moment without too much effort. Most importantly, Great Escapers want to come home refreshed and revitalised, their batteries recharged.

They do not want:

To make connections with others on the holiday – locals or other tourists. They don't need to as they're there to be with each other.

How long and where?

Great Escapers are more likely to take short breaks than the average traveller. They are more likely to stay in their home country and less likely to go further afield on holiday. Ireland doesn't really appear on their radar right now, though it offers plenty of what they are looking for.

Nature Lovers

Who are they?

The oldest of the segments, the majority of Nature Lovers are over 55. A typical Nature Spotter would be about 60, retired, and on holiday with their partner. It's all about taking it easy, getting some peace and quiet, and maybe doing a little gentle exploring.

What they want from a holiday:

Simple pleasures make Nature Lovers happy. A quiet rural retreat is perfect, offering natural beauty for miles around, in an environment of peace and tranquillity. They like to explore their surroundings gently, at a relaxed pace and in their own time. Nature Lovers are comfortable with the familiar, so their holiday is about getting away from the house, to somewhere that replenishes their souls.

A desire for peace and quiet is grounded in the need to connect with nature and with those they care about. They are looking for contentment and together-alone time. For this Nature Lovers will go off the beaten track to experience the beauty of a stunning landscape firsthand. They also appreciate a no-hassle, efficient and knowledgeable personal service when they travel. They like being recognised and valued in a local shop or restaurant.

What they do not want:

The out-of-the-ordinary has limited appeal for Nature Lovers, unless it's a surprisingly lovely vista. They also don't tend to go for lots of all-inclusive opportunities. Nature Lovers aren't highly social, preferring to stay away from large groups, noise or laid-on entertainment.



Most likely to be seen doing:

- The gentler pursuits, where beauty is accessible,
- A gentle walk in the countryside,
- Sightseeing around the local country house and gardens,
- Taking advantage of their accommodation and all it offers at no extra cost,
- Browsing in local craft shops, and
- Relaxing, sitting in the garden or in a tea room.

How long and where?

Nature Lovers are more likely to stay in a range of accommodation depending on the kind of holiday they're on. These include hotels, self-catering, camping and B&B's. They are more likely to take longer breaks, as they have the time to do so. In particular they go away for four to seven nights, but also take holidays of eight or more nights. Nature Lovers tend to want to stay closer to their home country. They are less likely to travel overseas and will need a strong reason to travel outside their comfort zone or to take on the hassle of overseas travel.

Action for Industry

It is imperative that tourism providers around Lough Derg work together to develop a series of tourism experiences that can be presented in the international shop window and which will resonate with these segments. This will form a key part of the implementation of this plan.



8.4 Profile of the Irish Domestic Market

The Lakelands & Inland Waterways mid-term strategic review assessed the size and potential of the domestic market based on the latest available figures (2011). This data indicates that just under 9 million overnight trips were taken by Irish residents within the Republic, with an associated expenditure of €1.8 billion – this represents an increase of 4% in trips on 2010 while expenditure declined by 3%.

Beautiful scenery (20%) and visiting family/friends (13%) were the two main drivers for choosing holiday destinations in 2011. Attending a specific event/festival (9%) or having been there previously (8%) were the next most important reasons given. Unlike the overseas markets, history and culture and activities, at 6% and 4% respectively, are low on the list of reasons for domestic visits. Visits based on activity participation are at similar low levels.

The majority of domestic visits are planned with reference to the internet and over half are likely to be two weeks or less in advance. The accommodation sector does a very good job in targeting the domestic market, coupled with a strong calendar of festivals and events.



8.4 Marketing Objectives:

1. Appoint a Lough Derg Marketing Co-Ordinator
2. Work with the Lakeland and Inland Waterways Team to provide content and information and ensure Lough Derg is strongly represented in L&IW initiatives
3. Build a stronger on-line presence for Destination Lough Derg
4. Heighten the profile of Lough Derg as a destination to attract more domestic and overseas visitors to the area

Action	Responsible Partner(s)	Timeline
Continue to market existing attractions and activities; fishing & angling, walking routes, heritage, culture, food and water based activities as they are at present	LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator L&IW team/Fáilte Ireland	2014 - 2017
To develop a trade network/training zone for Lough Derg	LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator L&IW team	2014
Devise and implement a publicity campaign across a variety of media tailored to appropriate target markets	LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator	2014
Branding – work with the L&IW team to build on the emerging ‘Lough Derg on the Shannon’ brand and exploit ways to develop a distinct USP for the destination within the Lakelands umbrella	L&IW team LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator	2014
Promotional Material for Lough Derg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with L&IW Team and local stakeholders to identify gaps in the current provision of printed promotional material for Lough Derg. • Implement design and print of new brochures/print material as required. 	LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator Lough Derg Tourism Stakeholders	2014
Provide Lough Derg specific content as required to L&IW team to communicate the ‘Top 10’ aspects of the Lakelands	LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator L&IW team	2014 – 2017
Initiate a series of local networking and familiarisation events to increase awareness amongst local businesses and exploit cross-selling opportunities	Fáilte Ireland LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator	2014 – 2017
Online and Digital Marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a vibrant Destination Lough Derg website/ reactivate www.discoverloughderg.ie as a means of showcasing the activities and attractions available in the area • Develop and implement a social media marketing plan • Enhance promotion of existing mobile apps (Heritage, Activity Trails) and consider new opportunities in this space 	LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator	2014 – 2017
Brian Ború <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a legacy in cultural and tourism terms from the Brian Ború Millennium Programme 2014 • Encourage large scale festivals and events on the theme of Brian Ború • Upgrade visitor centre in Killaloe, County Clare 	Fáilte Ireland LDMSG/Marketing Co-Ordinator Clare County Council Lough Derg Tourism Stakeholders	2014 - 2017

9. Lough Derg Stakeholder Engagement Plan

9.1 Trade Engagement

One of the pillars of the Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan 2011-2013 was to implement a comprehensive programme of supports to local tourism businesses and communities in the areas of education, training, networking, marketing and sales. The agreed objective of this pillar was to:

“Deliver high quality industry skills among all product and service providers, ensuring throughout the education process that awareness of the benefits and impacts of tourism to all those in the destination is increased”

During the life of the Action Plan to date (2011-2013), the following were delivered in the Lough Derg area:

Trade Supports/Training:

- Experience Bundling Workshop (May 2011)
- Social Media Workshop
- Customer Care - area specific workshops and individual Key Clients in the Destination
- Place on a Plate Training (Food) - North Lough Derg Area and Killaloe specific
- Upselling & Cross-selling (Hotel Reception Staff & restaurants specific)
- Marketing Mentoring, 2012 and 2013
- Bespoke training / mentoring:
 - Housekeeping training and Housekeeping Supervision training
 - Costings training
 - Menu Planning
 - Business Planning Mentoring (2012/2013)
- Networking Events - two launches and when area specific Workshops take place
- Web skills - individual clients and on-going workshops being rolled out
- Fresh Pair of Eyes (Kitchen/food specific)
- Sales Connect
- Walking Guide Training & Leave No Trace Training (LEADER funded)
- Event Management (under supports for the Gathering 2013)
- IRO Training
- Lough Derg trade participated in the Lakelands Sales Connect Overseas Coach Programme

Destination & Product Familiarisation:

- Discover Day - Portumna (Oct 2011)
- Discover Day - Killaloe Ballina (April 2012)
- Lakelands Trade Networking Workshop (Athlone, November 2012) with 15 European Tour Operators (Angling & Cruising) in attendance meeting up to 50 key trade from the Lakelands region. The event included a Lough Derg familiarisation itinerary.
- International Publicity & Trade Marketing Staff Fam trip (2013)
- Overseas Tour Operators Fam Trip (Lakelands) - Lough Derg Destination (September 2013)
- Workshop: ‘How to Effectively Showcase Your Tourism Product to Best Potential’ (Dromineer, North Tipperary, March 2013): A new Lakelands & Inland Waterways Destination workshop providing tourism businesses with an understanding of the importance of bringing

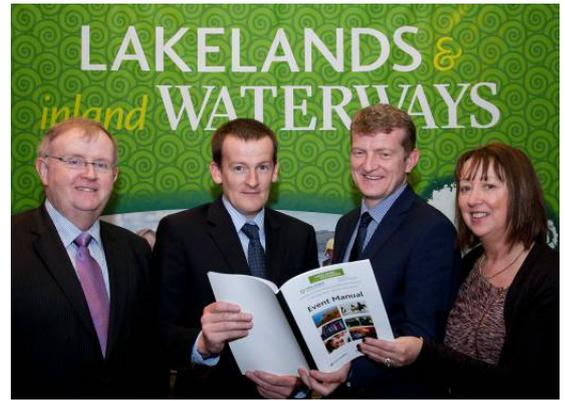
Why this is worth doing

Fáilte Ireland strategy includes jobs and growth at its core - this engagement plan will support tourism businesses. The actions set out in this section will grow revenue and employment in Lough Derg’s tourism economy and will support overseas sales revenues. This is a key part of the overall Lough Derg Destination Development strategy for the next three years.



together products and services in their area in order to attract more customers not only from the domestic marketplace but also from the key overseas markets

- Key Lough Derg trade took part in Meitheal 2013 (Athlone, February 2013)
- The workshop was designed to provide tourism businesses with an overview of the critical issues to consider and actions to undertake in preparation for an attendance at Meitheal. Meitheal is the largest 'In Ireland Event' that Fáilte Ireland hosts annually. Over 300 international buyers from 23 countries attend a two day workshop with pre-arranged scheduled appointments between Irish trade partners and overseas buyers.
- Lough Derg trade participated in the Sales Connect Great Britain Roadshow – (Athlone and Limerick, 2013)
- Ballina Killaloe Street map - Lakelands Destination initiative
- Lough Derg Destination zone map (part of a suite of Lakelands Destination maps)



James Whelan, Spirit of Killaloe Cruises, and Eoin Little, Lakeside Hotel & Leisure Centre pictured with Tony Dawson (Fáilte Ireland) and Bernie Leonard (Shannon Development) at the Lakelands Trade Networking Workshop, Athlone, November 2012.

Lough Derg Trade Engagement 2014-2015

The Mid-Term Review of the Lakelands & Inland Waterways Strategic Plan identified key objectives and priorities for the period 2013-2016. In terms of trade engagement, the central objective identified was to: **“Develop a higher quality visitor experience of the Lakelands and Inland waterways region”**.

Following this strategic direction, the following actions are proposed to support tourism businesses and build capacity in the Lough Derg area.

Action	Responsible Partner(s)	Timeline
To develop a trade network/training zone for Lough Derg and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive quarterly update from the trade • Provide quarterly update to the trade 	Fáilte Ireland, LDMG Co-ordinator	2014
Work with food and hospitality businesses to develop a new food tourism initiative for Lough Derg	Fáilte Ireland Lakelands Team	2014
Support the development of activity friendly accommodation characteristics e.g. drying rooms, cycle, canoe and equipment storage	LEADER Companies	2014 - 2015
Provide training and support to those businesses that wish to add environmental certification to their business	Fáilte Ireland LEADER Companies	2014 - 2015
Work with the trade to arrange familiarisation itineraries around Lough Derg, and to develop offers, for GB and European source markets	Fáilte Ireland Tourism Ireland Lough Derg Marketing Co-Ordinator	2014 - 2017
Develop a sales plan for Lough Derg in line with Lakelands & Inland Waterways - identify sales platforms for Lough Derg both in Ireland and in market and where appropriate targeted sales missions.	Fáilte Ireland Tourism Ireland	2014 - 2017
Encourage and support Lough Derg tourism interests to work together to develop a suite of Lough Derg tourism experiences that resonate with the key segments identified	Fáilte Ireland	2014 - 2017
To provide training and support for improved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer care • Local knowledge • Sustainability 	Fáilte Ireland	2014 - 2017

9.2 Community & Business Stakeholder Engagement

Communities around the lake have a vital contribution to make to the achievement of the goals of this plan: they provide the local support framework and they are the lifeblood from which the trade enterprises arise. Actions for community engagement will seek to mobilise this potential.

A key way to do this will be through a transfer of the experience of the UK River Trusts to Lough Derg. River Trusts are independent environmental organisations established to promote the preservation, protection and improvement of the rivers and the wildlife they support. They also aim to increase awareness and understanding of the management of water and the wider environment. The River Trusts not only help to identify problems and campaign for improvements, but they also work to implement solutions and deliver improvements on the ground, working with local community groups.

From the Lough Derg perspective, River Trusts are an interesting example of how local communities can be involved creatively in the management of water bodies. Specifically, the River Trusts have developed a “stakeholder engagement toolkit”, giving a set of principles and techniques by which stakeholders can be involved. We plan to apply this River Trusts method to the Lough Derg tourism situation: developing the database of stakeholders who could be involved; bringing people together who are interested in tourism in their communities; stimulating opportunities for people to get involved in tourism around their lake and working to enhance the role of these important stakeholders for the benefit of Lough Derg.

Why this is worth doing

Well planned and organised community and business stakeholder engagement will harness the collective ambition of those living and working around Lough Derg.

Action	Responsible Partner(s)	Timeline
Promote enhanced stakeholder engagement through use of River Trusts ‘Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit’ including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing a stakeholder engagement database; • reviewing the potential roles of different stakeholders; • implementing a stakeholder consultation programme. 	LDMSG/ MWRA	2014



10. Lough Derg Implementation Plan

Steering Group for Implementation

The Plan will be implemented by the Lough Derg Marketing and Strategy Group (LDMSG). This group of key stakeholders has already demonstrated its capacity to deliver through the implementation of the Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan 2011-2013. There will be twice yearly implementation review meetings to monitor progress.

The group will initiate a process to identify funding sources, locally, nationally and internationally to implement the plan.

As of February 2014, the members of the LDMSG are:

- North Tipperary County Council (Chair)
- Mid-Western Regional Authority (Secretariat)
- Clare County Council
- Galway County Council
- Fáilte Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- LEADER representative – North Tipperary LEADER Partnership
- Tourism Trade representatives



Appendix A

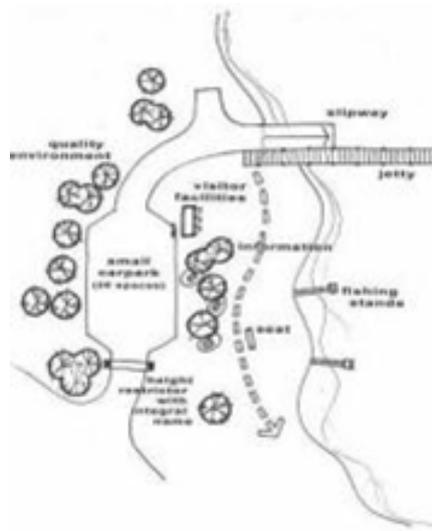
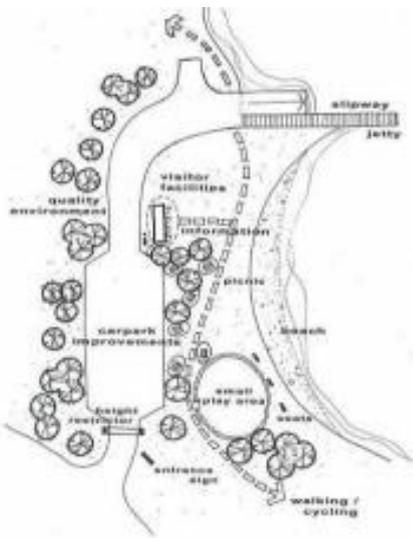
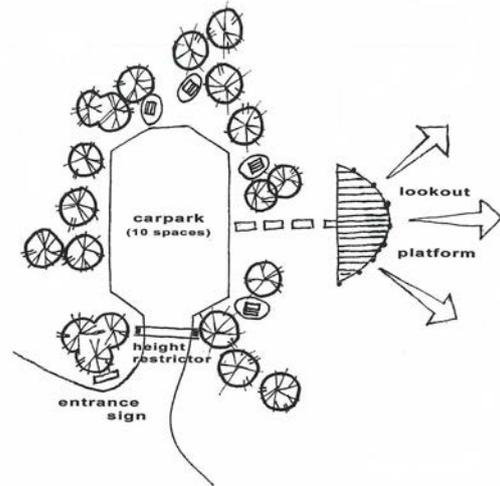
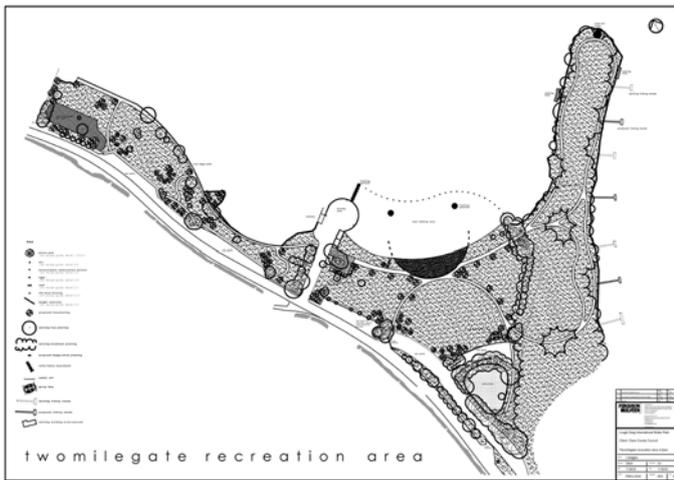
Summary of Previous Tourism Reports on Lough Derg 2001-2013

Lough Derg Tourism Study (2001)

This report set out a masterplan for the future development of visitor infrastructure around the shores of Lough Derg. This was developed following the completion of an environmental audit, a review of market potential and extensive consultation. Accessibility to the Lough was a major consideration in the development of the masterplan. It set out a hierarchal approach to facility provision with a spatial spread that reflects accessibility, environmental quality, existing infrastructure and the settlement patterns.

Lough Derg Design Guide (2003)

The Lough Derg Tourism Study of 2001 identified a number of public amenity sites around the lake. The sites are categorised as A, B, C, D or E. The Lough Derg Design Guide provides indicative layouts for these sites along with a suite of design standards and details for buildings and the environment to ensure a consistency and high quality of amenity area design.



Heritage Council Waterways Corridor Study – South Shannon including Lough Derg (2005)

This study carried out by the Heritage Council made a number of recommendations in relation to heritage, recreation activities and water transport for Lough Derg. It also set out mechanisms for lake management co-operation. The report recommended:

- A Portumna Water Park
- O'Briensbridge Boathouse to complement rowing
- North West Lough Derg Public Mooring Place
- Scheduled Water Bus e.g.: Limerick – Killaloe water bus, Lough Derg water bus
- Support for the Lough Derg area being treated as an entity for planning with South Shannon Corridor guidelines and a cohesive policy – Formal mechanism for cooperation
- Recreation and interpretation development strategies (completed)
- Multiple use management plan for Lough Derg
- A network of walking and cycling 'home bases'
- Completion of the Lough Derg Way walking trail
- Birr – Portumna Greenway along the route of the old Birr-Portumna railway line and potential for linking up with the Beara-Breifne Way.

Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational and Tourism Development Study (2008)

This strategy addresses the development of marinas, recreation and tourism around Lough Derg in a way that is sustainable economically, socially and environmentally.

The strategy is based on a series of expert assessments and a public and user consultation programme carried out during winter 2007/8. As part of this a vulnerable landscape survey was undertaken in order to provide guidance on where development should and should not take place.

The strategy concludes that the lake is underdeveloped for water-based tourism and that whilst there has been considerable development of marina berths and waterside housing, these have not been effective in delivering a strong tourism offering or a vibrant tourism economy in the area. The strategy identifies that the priority for provision in the area should be placed on integrated tourism sites, the provision of more activity and special interest opportunities, and filling in the gaps in accommodation and visitor and boating services.

The vision for Lough Derg developed as part of the strategy is for a **well-managed activity destination with an international reputation for its natural beauty**. Important parts of the vision are also to achieve excellence in providing holiday experiences to a range of markets; to retain the natural qualities of the lake and surrounding wetlands; and for tourism and recreation to make a significant contribution to the local economy.

Specific objectives within the strategy address the need to:

- Enhance Lough Derg's reputation and visibility and capacity to provide active holiday packages;
- Encourage major investments in infrastructure capable of attracting and servicing an increased number of tourists;
- Provide additional visitor boat berths and associated services;
- Improve the function of settlements around the lake as tourism destinations from land or water;
- Increase the opportunities for visitors to engage in activities on land and water;
- Encourage the development of more opportunities for visitors to enjoy and learn more about the natural beauty, wildlife and heritage of the Lough Derg area;
- Assist people resident around Lough Derg to acquire the skills, knowledge and qualifications to be able to provide activity and accommodation services around the lake; and to
- Increase the capacity to manage activity on the lake.

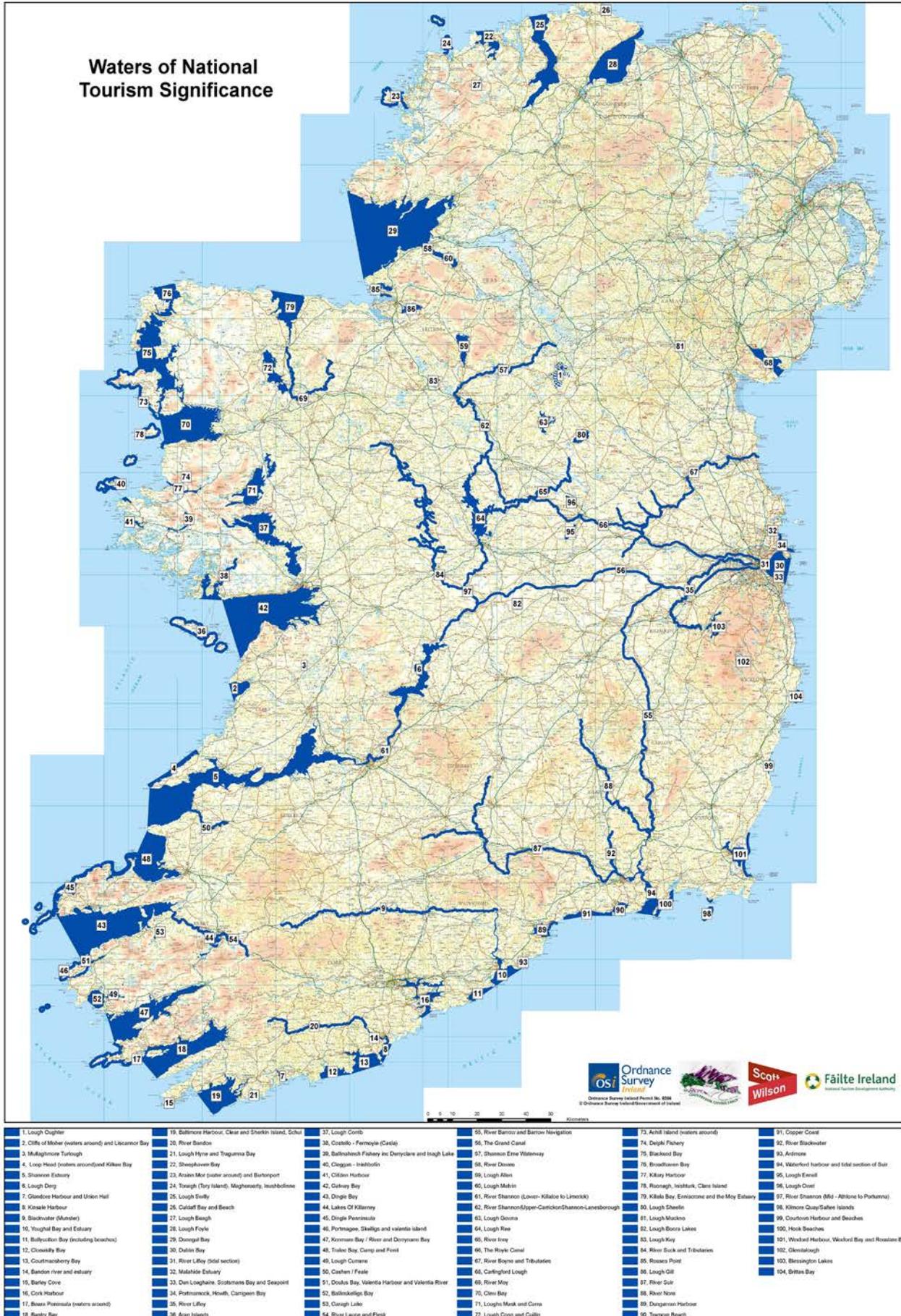
The strategy also provides guidance on the most appropriate locations for development and identifies good practice for provision and for management. Spatial recommendations are based on both the vulnerable landscape survey and an identification of gaps in provision.

The main **recreation cluster** sites (Ballina Killaloe, Garrykennedy, Dromineer, Terryglass, Portumna, Mountshannon,) should be encouraged and facilitated to provide a full complement of services to water recreation and waterside visitors to include at least:

- Pleasant shore or river-side walking pathways or promenades designed to facilitate watching activity on the water or wildlife watching
- Public and private overnight and short-term visitor berthing with access to toilets, showers, boat sewage pump-out facilities
- Ferry/Boat trip jetty with regular boat trips
- Overnight accommodation with lake views
- Opportunities to eat lunch or dinner in the settlement at a reasonable quality and where possible presenting local produce and local recipe dishes
- Opportunities to take part in a range of watersports activities including canoeing, day boat sailing, rowing.
- Opportunities for day cruiser hire
- Opportunities for angling boat hire
- Access to cultural activities
- Signposting to the wider area (cycle routes, walking routes, driving routes and to heritage sites and visitor attractions)
- Management, recording and supervision of fast powered craft launches and on-water behaviour.
- Away from cluster sites there are sites which provide excellence in one or more activities. Whilst these cannot be expected to provide a full service to all types of visitor as with the main recreation cluster, efforts should be made to ensure that there are arrangements for appropriate access for visitors, toilets, showers, accommodation, and eating opportunities. Where possible activities should be available on an on-the-day or same-week booking basis and hire equipment should be available. Instruction in activities should conform to national best practice as defined by recognised Governing Bodies or within the proposed Adventure Activities Licensing Scheme as relevant

Ireland's top 100 tourism waters (2008)

This categorised the most important waters for tourism in Ireland, including Lough Derg.



Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan (2011)

In September 2011, the Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group issued the Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan. The plan was a response to the fact that Lough Derg had been identified as one of three priority hubs for development within the Lakelands destination of Ireland; which itself is one of 10 priority destinations for Fáilte Ireland.

The Action Plan determines that Lough Derg is about **50% along the way** to becoming a top tourism destination, but that it faces some key challenges to realise its full potential. Principal amongst these are that:

- Lough Derg is **lacking a distinct identity**;
- there is **no single agency** responsible for the development and delivery of Lough Derg, with the lake being a shared resource between four Councils and two regional bodies;
- there is **poor access** to Lough Derg, particularly to key vantage points along the lake itself;
- there is no **distinctive or iconic attraction** associated with Lough Derg; and
- there are a **lack of visitor facilities at the lake**.

The overall vision for developing Lough Derg as a destination is as follows:

To develop Lough Derg as a key destination for superb water based activities combined with a range of very high quality walking, cycling, heritage and culture and food experiences that will entice the domestic and international visitors to stay longer. This will be achieved through joint co-operation of all tourism stakeholders in the development and marketing of their area under the Lakelands – Lough Derg identity.

A series of key objectives were identified, with key actions identified. The following summarises some these objectives and actions:

- Objective 1: Infrastructure Development
 - Devise and implement a **signage strategy**.
 - Develop a series of **cycle routes** that link with current walking loops.
 - Undertake desk based audit of **moorings** and their facilities.
 - Develop a **public marina** as a key attraction.
 - Develop a **boardwalk**, similar to a long walking promenade.
 - Support **Tidy Towns Committees**.
 - Examine strengths and weaknesses in terms of attracting major **international water-based events**.
 - Deliver **on-shore services** for boats and other lake users – e.g. showers, water, etc.
- Objective 2: Product Development
 - Develop **clusters of water-based activities** that act as a catalyst for 2/3 night stays.
 - Develop a range of **theme trails and packages** - Cycling, Walking, Canoe/Kayaking, Heritage, Town and Village, Traditional Music.
 - Undertake feasibility work to assess the potential for a **themed water-based activity park and training centre** (with accommodation) using the lake and its activities as the key attractor.
 - Assess the results of the Heritage Audit and implement **development actions**.
 - Develop a range of **learn to experiences** – e.g. sail, cook, play traditional Irish music, etc.
 - Encourage the development of **new SMEs** relevant to the overall development opportunities – e.g. canoe hire, bike hire, tuition, etc.
 - Develop an **events calendar** to avoid event clashing.
 - Provision of a high-quality **caravan and camping amenity** in Portumna with particular emphasis on campervans.
- Objective 3: Education, Training and Networking
 - Implement range of **training and education initiatives** for all tourism providers.
 - Target new opportunities in the foreign market through the delivery of Fáilte Ireland **Sales Connect** programme.
 - Improve the supply of Fáilte Ireland **registered accommodation** in the area.
- Objective 4: Marketing and Sales Connect
 - Create an integrated **soft and hard copy map of the destination** that encompasses all of the product opportunities available.
 - Identify the best **potential overseas markets** for Lough Derg products and experiences.
 - Develop an **optimised web presence** and profile of the destination with enhanced features including new technologies, social media, mobile phone apps, facebook, etc.
 - Support tourism business to develop **packages**, especially with the themes of angling, events, outdoor activities and family experiences.

The key partners identified for the delivery of these initiatives include Fáilte Ireland/Shannon Development/Mid-West Regional Authority, Waterways Ireland, the County Councils, Leader Companies and local communities. Although the plan was originally to cover a 3-year period, many of the objectives and actions are 'long term' and therefore are still pertinent today.

The Lough Derg Heritage Audit (2011)

An audit of the key heritage assets and themes associated with Lough Derg was undertaken in 2011. The purpose of the audit was not only to determine the nature, characteristics and condition of the heritage assets available, but also to understand how the heritage assets could be utilised as visitor assets and built into the visitor experience. The following summarises the key findings:

- A total of 88 heritage sites are featured in the report covering the categories of Castles (15), Religious sites (24), Industrial/Maritime (10), Natural Heritage (14), Archaeological sites (7), Architectural/Historical sites (9), and Other (9).
- Key themes identified include:
 - **Archaeology:** Potential was identified for one or more trails to be established based on the archaeological theme, however access issues present a challenge for some sites.
 - **Folklore:** 'Folklore' is considered a theme with significant potential, but the material supporting the folklore theme is not always readily accessible in that they are locally known and re-told stories
 - **Brian Ború:** There is a strong association between Brian Boru and Lough Derg, with the Brian Boru Heritage Centre (Killaloe) currently providing a museum-based interpretation experience. However, the sites associated with Brian Boru are less identifiable or accessible. Key sites include Tobermurragh Holy Well (002), Beal Boru (001), Greenanlaghna Fort (004), Brian Boru Heritage Centre (010), the Graves of the Leinstermen (069) and the Brian Boru Oak (030).
 - **Industrial/Maritime:** Many elements of Lough Derg's history are either directly or indirectly associated with industrial or maritime infrastructure. It is considered that there are enough Industrial/Maritime sites to form a stand-alone themed trail.
 - **Steam Era:** Steamboats were active on Lough Derg in the 19th Century, with much of the historical maritime infrastructure associated with steamships. It is felt that steamships should be included in some form of heritage trail.
 - **Irish History:** Lough Derg has a series of heritage assets associated with these wider themes of Ireland's Land Wars, Famine, Workhouses and Emigration. The Irish Workhouse Museum at Portumna is an evocative reminder of the hardship that many Irish families faced during these times. Other features could also have 'attraction' development potential, however the principal recommendation was for these themes to play a major role in any heritage trail.
 - **Natural Heritage:** The diverse range of habitats and species of ecological significance is considered a key strength and a theme that could attract significant numbers of visitors. However, the environment is also highly sensitive and is subject to national and European legislation. The use of digital interpretation to support self-guided tours is recommended, however it is also noted that some protected sites may need to be suitably managed or indeed have restricted access.
 - **Angling:** Angling has been any activity enjoyed on Lough Derg for many years and thus this history should be used to help 'sell' the idea of angling on Lough Derg.
 - **Under-water:** It is recommended that more work be undertaken to identify and explain the sensitive ecosystem of Lough Derg and the species that it supports beneath the surface. Freshwater scuba-diving and glass bottomed boat trips are suggested.
 - **On-the-water:** Lough Derg is recognised as being an important destination for boating. The key recommendation is for more low-impact boating (e.g. canoeing/kayaking) to be established at Lough Derg with interpretation on the natural heritage of the site being used to support and enhance visitor experiences.
 - **Ecclesiastical & Pilgrimage:** Holy Island is identified as the 'jewel in the crown' for Lough Derg in terms of pilgrim sites, however the area as a whole is recognised as being rich in other pilgrimage routes and destinations. Some of these are to be included in the proposed Clare Pilgrim Way, a 5-stage 21-day pilgrimage route that will encompass Holy Island and Killaloe as well as holy wells along the way.
- Key site based recommendations include the following:
 - Re-develop and rebrand the **Brian Boru heritage centre** and bring key associated sites to public attention.
 - Improve interpretation and visitor experience at the **East Clare Heritage Centre** (St Cronan's Church).
 - Prospective development options identified for a **Former Mill** site to include a community centre, heritage centre, tourist office, craft centre, and cinema.
 - Key villages such as **Mountshannon** need to maintain their character through the retention of historical materials.
- Other recommendations:
 - Create a unified, comprehensive and easily access **online presence** for the heritage of Lough Derg utilising existing initiatives.
 - Create a unified **online forum** where ideas, concerns and issues relating to the heritage of Lough Derg can be raised.
 - Update and/or maintain **existing interpretive amenities** to create a unified and transparent identity for sites associated with Lough Derg.
 - Use a combination of **guided tours, self-guided tours, and trails** to bring heritage features into the visitor consciousness.
 - Establish **web and mobile technology** platforms to support exploration, education and understanding.
 - Establish a **heritage map** for inclusion on all promotional and information based material, and for display in tourist information and heritage centres.

Lough Derg Waterparks Feasibility Assessment (2012)

The Lough Derg Waterparks Feasibility Assessment was an action of the Lough Derg Destination Development Action Plan, North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and Galway Rural Development Company. The study examined the type of waterparks that would be appropriate for Lough Derg; and the potential locations around the lake that would be able to support each type of waterpark identified. The following summarises the key findings of the report:

- Waterparks are tourism and leisure amenities and have a series of different connotations, with the term being utilised to describe destinations (e.g. the Cotswold Water Park) down to inflatable water-based leisure amenities. As a result, although this is the generic term used, it is advisable that any future water-based developments seek more specific descriptions that are more easily associated with the activities they provide.
- An initial précis of the different types of 'waterpark' identified that the most appropriate types for Lough Derg would be an inflatable waterpark in the short term and, in the longer term, a waterside eco-park. The two developments are mutually exclusive, however they could also form part of one development site.
- **Inflatable waterparks** are temporary/seasonal amenities and consist of a series of modules that can be joined together to create an on-water obstacle course. An example provided by Wibbit Sports is called a Sport Park 60+, with the waterpark capacity being 60 users per session (usually about 1-hour). This is the largest package that Wibbit supplies, although the modules and sizes can be chosen to suit the site available. The Wibbit Sport Park 60+ costs around €65,000 and has a lifespan of around 5-8 years depending upon use and weather conditions.
- **Eco-parks** are destination resorts that have a strength of offer that can support year-round visitor interest. Eco-parks include accommodation – usually covering low to higher end options (i.e. camping and caravan site, yurts, lodges, etc.) – and a variety of onsite land and water-based activities, wildlife/conservation learning, and outdoor 'learn to' experiences. They tend to be family-orientated, but they also support niche interests throughout the year with some of the accommodation (e.g. lodges) being available on a year-round basis. A good example is Leaplish Park as a key resort, hub and gateway to Kielder Water in Northumberland.
- A series of locations around Lough Derg have been evaluated for both forms of waterpark. **The preferred site options for the inflatable waterpark were ULAC followed by Mountshannon and Dromineer.** The advantage of ULAC over the other two sites related to the prospect of using existing operator (i.e. ULAC) who already has a market profile, a secure site, and interest in delivering this type of amenity. Both Dromineer and Mountshannon could also support this type of amenity, but issues of security and unauthorised access would need to be overcome.
- **The preferred location for the eco-park resort was Portumna.** Portumna has an extensive Lakeland site, much of which is accessible via land owned/managed by public bodies such as Waterways Ireland, OPW, and the County Council. In addition, Portumna Forest is managed by Coillte as an outdoor recreation site. The area has definite potential, with prospects for providing a similar multi-faceted amenity to Leaplish at Kielder Water. This would require a co-ordinated approach between these key agencies, possibly through some form of management Trust. Other elements such as the Shannon Oaks hotel and un-developed land adjacent to the existing Waterside Park should also be included. A phased development approach responding to a clear vision and action plan is ideally needed to realise the inherent potential of the site.
- A development option was also suggested for the **Dromineer Bay Hotel**, with the overall site and context conducive to an eco-hotel, with the Scarlet Hotel in Cornwall providing an example of this type of accommodation development. The advantage of these types of hotel is that they require landscapes of high environmental value and then match their offer to the environmental setting. They also seek to generate their own market interest through high-end niche offers such as spa, culinary and outdoor activity (e.g. sailing) experiences. The take-up of this option will ultimately be a business decision by the commercial sector. However, intervention by the public sector may be required to complete some remedial works for the site which is currently an eyesore within this otherwise attractive bay area.
- Support for the **Lakeside Camping and Caravan Park** was also identified as a need. This site, as the only camping and caravan park in Lough Derg at present, has been developed over a 50-year period as a family enterprise. It has a prime location with a mix of woodland and lakeland landscape character. However, the site is in need of significant modernisation, with some pitches, static units and play areas appearing to be dated. Whilst this is ultimately a business decision, the operator is likely to require public sector support and encouragement.

Waterways Ireland Masterplan for Portumna

The existing Castle Harbour at Portumna is subject to an improvement plan being proposed by Waterways Ireland. Key initiatives that would be forthcoming through the plan are as follows:

- New service bollards with alternate bollards to be powered.
- Harbour moorings to be decked in timber.
- Refurbishment of existing service block.
- Area with powered service bollards to be reserved in the car park to support campervans.
- New floating jetties and a slipway to be created.
- New trailer parking area to be created.

The Lough Derg Tourism Animation Projects (2013) - Sample case studies

A key part of the role of Tourism Animator undertaken by URS in 2012 was to determine potential development projects for support by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and Galway Rural Development Company as part of an agreed Tourism Animation Programme for Lough Derg. The report was prepared by Judith A Annett Countryside Consultancy and URS Ireland. Due to changes in the funding provision available to tourism projects during the course of this contract, it will not be possible to bring any identified private sector projects to fruition under the current Leader funding tranche. However, several discussions have been held with potential private sector promoters. The following summarises these discussions:

Case Study 1, Private Landowner with existing self-catering property

This landowner has a property bordering on Lough Derg. The Lough Derg Way walking trail passes through the property. It also includes a small fishing pond and a holy well which has been known to attract pilgrims. A road adjacent to the property leads to a publicly accessible jetty. This jetty is famed for hosting the Christmas Swim whereby local residents and visitors swim in the lake on Christmas Day for charity.

A self-catering business has been established which achieves reasonable occupancy throughout the year, however the owner would like to improve this and also expand the business. He has aspirations for establishing a fishing pond to support both local residents and visitors alike, but would also like potentially to increase revenues through additional accommodation. This could either be through additional self-catering provision through the conversion of some out-buildings or through camping and caravan provision.

The initial focus is to be on the fishing pond, with angling a passion of the owner's. To achieve this, road access would need to be improved and the landscape around the pond being designed to support different ability groups, including those with disabilities. This is being explored with Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Case Study 2

This high-end accommodation operator, with an onsite 'chef' training facility, appeals to niche interest groups, special events and weddings. However, the operator is seeking to broaden their market horizons and would be particularly keen on supporting activity groups. A key issue for the area is a lack of walking and cycling trails, although the local community is keen to address walking trails in particular.

An eco-village has also been established adjacent to the house and they are seeking to develop special interest/eco-breaks.

Case Study 3

This web-based company intends to advertise and promote walking, cycling, paddling and motorbike trails in County Clare and across Ireland. The company is looking to work in conjunction with the IFA, Clare County Council, Clare Local Development Company, Clare Walks, Coillte and Discover Ireland.

The premise is to ensure that the outdoors of County Clare and Ireland is regarded as accessible to visitors through the provision of low cost lean-to sleeping shelters and environmentally friendly toilets. These shelters are suitable for outdoor enthusiasts such as walkers, paddlers, cyclists, and motorcyclists. The company is looking to work with landowners to identify new wild camping sites for investment by the landowner, with the landowner generating an income from the sale of 'bednights' to visitors.

The website will be the co-ordinating mechanism that will bring these together through the one advertising portal. The aim will be to encourage users to plan routes along the trails through the use of the different company sites.

'Podumna', Portumna

Pod Umna is a new concept that is being developed within the heart of Portumna. Using Pods as a new form of accommodation, Podumna is targeted toward adventure enthusiast seeking low-cost yet comfortable accommodation. The pods will be available all year round.

'Pods' are in essence static units usually made of wood and therefore provide an alternative to camping. The benefit to the visitor, particularly international visitors, is that they do not have to bring lots of equipment with them to have a low cost stay within the area.

Due to the pricing strategies, Pods are particularly popular with adventure enthusiasts and young adult groups. Podumna is certainly targeting these markets by suggesting that Portumna is a great place to explore the area with the area being ideal for walking, cycling canoeing and for families.

'Podumna' is due to open in 2014 - the website is www.podumnavillage.ie

Waterways Ireland Lakelands and Inland Waterways Strategic Plan (2013-2016)

This plan, which has been updated to cover the period up to 2016, provides a cohesive strategy for Ireland's lakelands and inland waterways including Lough Derg. It is the overarching Strategy Document for Lough Derg in terms of recreation and tourism.

Lough Derg Cycle Trails Report (2013)

A report commissioned by North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and Galway Rural Development Company addressed the development of cycle routes around Lough Derg. This report identifies that the Lough Derg Cycle Trail around the lake is not well used and traffic is considered too high for a holiday trail.

Alternative proposals are for continuation and enhancement of a cycling hub at Nenagh, improvement and stronger marketing and servicing of family cycle trails in Portumna Forest Park and the potential development of a private estate to provide mountain biking and pump track opportunities.

The Blessingbourne Estate Mountain Bike Trails are highlighted as a good practice example for this type of development and there are suitable estates around Lough Derg.

Appendix B

An Approach to Place Branding

It is a proposed action of the Lough Derg Roadmap 2014-1017 to:

*“Work with the **Lakelands and Inland Waterways** team on the emerging **“Lough Derg on the Shannon”** brand and exploit ways to develop a distinct USP for the destination within the **“Lakelands Umbrella”**”*

The communication of what is special about a destination is based on three key stepping stones:

- **Firstly** – What is the Tourism proposition? What is the visitor experience?
- **Secondly** – What is the Positioning, who is likely to come, who do we want to come?
- **And finally** – How will we communicate with our potential visitors? What is the message and how is this message communicated

Adapting to a changing tourism proposition and visitor experience

The tourism proposition and visitor experience in the Lough Derg Destination Area is undergoing transition. The plans set out in the 2014-1017 roadmap will change the nature of the visitor experience, and therefore the positioning and messaging will need to adapt to the emerging tourism proposition. The marketing carried out in the first years of the lifetime of the roadmap will change as new tourism products come on stream.

Thinking about positioning

The market segments with best potential for Lough Derg at the moment have been identified. Other market segments will open up as visitor facilities and activities broaden in Lough Derg. A summary of the characteristics of the most likely people to visit Lough Derg at the moment is given below:

Curiously Cultural

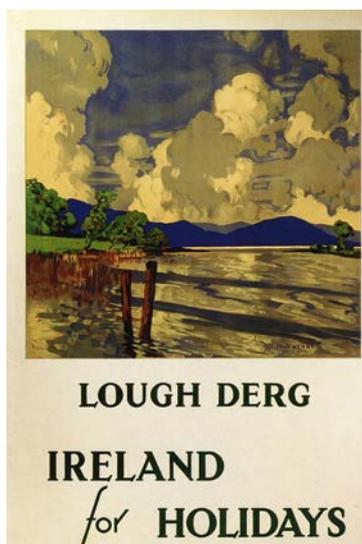
- Like independent active sightseeing, exploration, mind broadening, culture, landscape, beauty, newness
- Most likely to have specific ideas of places they want to go
- Over 45 (most female group 60%)
- Retired couple
- Professional
- Share discovery with partner
- Gentle exploration
- Enjoy beauty, nature, food and drink
- Like to visit sites, man-made and outdoor, exploration, intimate shared experience
- Niche considerations
- Averse to packaged and controlled activities - don't want to be told what to do - want to do their own thing in their own way
- Meet the locals: want to be informed to learn and experience the place through them

Nature Lovers

- Want rural retreat, enjoy beauty, peace and gentle exploration
- Over 55 (40% over 65)
- Retired couples/single/w adult kids
- Broad social class - lots retired
- Spend time alone or with partner, want time together
- Peace and quiet, relax
- Want contentment
- Want landscape, to relax, gentle exploration
- Niche considerations
- Interested in nostalgia, family history

Great Escapers

- Like active exploration of the more remote countryside, experiencing an off the beaten track wow factor...
- Rejuvenate through peace and quiet – landscape
- Under 45
- 40% couples 20% young families
- Professional/sub professional
- Spend quiet time and bonding time with the people they care about. Escape the crowd.
- Connect to nature, landscape and experience the wow of it
- Want to broaden mind, stimulate, refresh, revitalise
- Like an energetic off the beaten track experience
- Are DIY
- Stay with companions
- Physical health is important



1940s Tourist Poster



Lough Derg now - an enduring landscape of lake and hills.

Developing a strong basis for communication and place branding

The best destination branding evolves with the development of the destination and adapts itself to the changing destination character of the area over time. It needs to be rooted in the character of the place, and resonate with the desires of the most likely market segments. There is a danger that branding captures what the destination aspires to be rather than what it is at the moment. It is acknowledged that investment is required into the visitor experiences at Lough Derg and that the visitor experience will be different in 2017 to that of 2014.

In short, there is a risk that branding before completion of upgrades to visitor experiences, raises visitor expectations beyond the reality of the product. The level of research into best potential market segments, however provides a starting point for thinking about sharing what is great about Lough Derg.

A classic form of messaging might include the following steps:

- inspire visitor audiences through relevant images of the place for that market;
- re-enforce the imagery with an equally appropriate strapline;
- get them hooked with the supporting text;
- re-assure them with information about the supporting services; their quality, connectivity, price etc;
- and then seal the deal through easy to use purchasing/packaging

Messaging then needs to be constantly checked to see if it is reaching the key markets to the desired effect.

Some initial thoughts have been put into how place branding might develop, and are set out below. This is very much a starting point for the work that will be continued by the Lough Derg Marketing Strategy Group over the course of this Roadmap lifetime.

	Now?	In the future?
Brand essence	Activate, renew, rest, relax, recuperate, unwind, discover, enrich, inspire	Energizing, challenging, opening minds, collective fun, adventurous, pampering/indulgent
Brand values	Draft to "starting to think about branding" and make it a bit darker so it can't be missed	Inquisitive, holistic/integrated, quality, locally-focused, eco-focused, sustainable
Brand personality	Real-life, open, confident, independent thinker	Creative, fun, adventurous, rooted
Emotional benefits	Restorative, freshness, continuity, cultural	Reassuring, challenging, choice, time with family, cultural, refreshing
Rational benefits	Health, contact with nature, history, good food	Learning new skills, challenging one's self, indulging one's self, health boost
Brand attributes	The open water, the water's edge, the hills and mountains, heritage and history, real Irish life	New experiences, activities, immerse in local culture and heritage, easy access into nature, integrated fun

Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann Thuaidh
North Tipperary County Council



Clare County Council
Comhairle Contae an Chláir

