

# WILD MAYO

## Destination and Experience Development Plan

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National Tourism  
Development  
Authority



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – strategic framework

### VISION

**WILD MAYO:** A place that captivates the soul, Wild Mayo is recognised as a spectacular outdoors destination offering immersive wilderness and adventure for all.

From its stunning coastlines to its rugged boglands, the region offers a landscape that inspires creativity and invites exploration. Rich in history, heritage, and culture, Wild Mayo brings its stories to life through immersive trails, vibrant communities, and celebrated traditions.

The Irish language is protected and proudly spoken, adding depth and authenticity to every experience.

Whether walking ancient paths, connecting with local craftspeople, or simply breathing in the wild Atlantic air, visitors leave with a sense of wonder, and a longing to return.

### CORE OBJECTIVES

- Align with the Regional Development Strategy objectives.
- Leverage existing attractions and create new experiences to encourage year-round exploration.
- Strengthen towns and villages – developing them as animated, well-serviced hubs for all travel modes.
- Celebrate environment and heritage – fostering appreciation for North Mayo’s natural and cultural legacy, and championing sustainable and slow tourism models.
- Elevate the Gaeltacht – positioning it as a cornerstone of cultural heritage.
- Create strong tourism infrastructure and well serviced amenities around the abundant natural assets to meet the demands of visitor and community users

### EXPERIENTIAL THEMES

#### CELEBRATING WILD ADVENTURE

#### UNVEILING OUR SOUL

### DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT THEMES



*Our wild adventure*



*Our heritage of life, land and sea*



*Our vibrant and connected destination*

### CATALYST PROJECTS

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Céide Coastal Path and Downpatrick Head</li> <li>• The Western Way and North Mayo Trails Network</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gaeltacht</li> <li>• Ballina Town</li> <li>• Killala Town</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation</li> <li>• Capacity Building</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|

### SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lough Conn and Lough Cullin</li> <li>• Infrastructure to support water-based activities</li> <li>• Initiatives to support angling</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking storytelling and visitor / interpretive centres</li> <li>• Strengthening emerging sectors               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The creative arts sector</li> <li>○ Agritourism and local foods</li> <li>○ Ecotourism and biodiversity</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|

An aerial photograph of a vast forest landscape. In the foreground, a large, irregularly shaped lake is surrounded by dense evergreen trees. The forest extends to the base of several large, rounded mountains in the background. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds, and the overall lighting suggests a late afternoon or early morning setting. The text 'SECTION 1 Overview and context' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

# SECTION 1 Overview and context



# OVERVIEW: Wild Mayo Destination and Experience Development Plan

## Introduction

The **Wild Mayo Destination and Experience Development Plan** (DEDP) is a five year sustainable tourism development plan for the North Mayo region that stretches from the Mullet Peninsula to Ballina and Foxford. It has been developed through a programme of desk research, on-site appraisals; and extensive consultation incorporating the views of the tourism industry, local communities, local government, state and regional agencies. The plan has been prepared within the context of the wider tourism and sustainability policy environment, and has given consideration to relevant national and international best practices.

Tourism is a significant component of the county's economy. In 2023 the sector generated €261 million from international and domestic visitors<sup>1</sup>. This DEDP aims to provide strategic direction on further developing a sustainable tourism sector within North Mayo and leveraging the area's growing appeal as a destination offering a unique combination of adrenalin and quietude, adventure and wilderness.

It will underpin the anticipated growth in the value of tourism while being focused on maintaining the environmental, social, and cultural integrity of the region. The proposed actions are grounded in the principles and policies of sustainability and the VICE model, thereby ensuring that full consideration is given to a balanced and synergistic approach that delivers on four key pillars: the Visitor experience, Industry growth, Community benefit, and Environmental protection. The model applies to all aspects of tourism planning, destination management, and policy making. (For further detail, see Appendix B).

<sup>1</sup> Fáilte Ireland, Mayo Key Tourism Facts 2023

## ‘Wild Mayo’

‘Wild Mayo’: an area that encompasses vast areas of wilderness and long stretches of rugged coastline, and yet feels intimate and welcoming. This is a destination that truly embodies the ‘wildness’ of the Wild Atlantic Way, where the energy of the wind, the solitude of the landscape, and the grandeur of the coastline are highlighted in the stories that are told and the experiences that await the visitor.

The towns and villages provide accessible hubs for the exploration of *Wild Mayo’s* remoter landscapes, and bring together the legends and tales of the region that date from prehistoric times through to the contemporary issues facing society today. Here, the visitor will find the world’s oldest known agricultural field system with its stone-walled boundaries that lay buried underneath the wild boglands for centuries at the award winning Céide Fields Neolithic Site and Visitor Centre. The ecclesiastical heritage of the Early and Middle Ages encompassing the Monasteries of the Moy; the maritime heritage and the pivotal role of Blacksod Lighthouse in the history of World War 2; the traditions of the Gaeltacht, and current existential themes of climate, nature and social justice all blend as key elements of the cultural heritage offering.

Wild Nephin National Park and the wider Nephin Beg Range provide a rugged backdrop for much of the *Wild Mayo* experience. This is an area of internationally significant blanket bogland that is playing a critical role in rewilding and decarbonisation, while inviting the pursuit of adventure. This vast landscape under an expansive sky in combination with the region’s northern oriented coastline and extensive freshwater ways, work together to create a quality of light and scenery that draws artists from long distances and inspires the contemporary arts. There is a sense of vibrancy and energy, and a tangible feeling of passion for place found throughout the region.



## The policy context

This Destination and Experience Development Plan is firmly aligned to key national, regional and county policies, that in turn reflect the international context. In particular, the following are noted:

### Wild Atlantic Way – Regional Tourism Development Strategy

Regional Tourism Development Strategies – 2023-2027 have been developed for each of Fáilte Ireland’s four Regional Experience Brands (Wild Atlantic Way, Dublin, Ireland’s Ancient East and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands). The *Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy* provides Fáilte Ireland’s strategic context for this Plan, and is based on six strategic objectives.

1. **YEAR ROUND APPEAL**  
Grow the year-round appeal of the Wild Atlantic Way domestically and internationally ensuring we attract and disperse high-value visitors into and throughout the region.
2. **INTERNATIONAL PROFILE**  
Raise the international profile of the northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way to increase visitation and revenue.
3. **REVENUE, DISPERSION & EXTENSION**  
Increase tourism revenue, visitor dispersion and season extension
4. **AUTHENTICITY AND “WILDNESS”**  
Protect the cultural authenticity and “wildness” of the Wild Atlantic Way.
5. **CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY**  
Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability so that it can thrive over the period of this strategy.
6. **INDUSTRY AND STAKEHOLDER**  
Foster strong coalitions of industry and stakeholders with a common purpose in creating flourishing destinations and thriving communities while also building a sustainable model of destination development across the Wild Atlantic Way.

### Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030

The framework, prepared by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media has firmly placed climate change and sustainability at its core. It highlights the need to rethink what success means for tourism, and has built its actions around three pillars – environmental, economic and social – with equal consideration being given to each. The framework cites a wide range of policies that shape its focus, and thereby the focus of this DEDP, including:

- The National Planning Framework and the associated National Development Plan 2021-2030;
- The National Climate Action Plan 2024;
- The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030;
- Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

The guiding principles of the Tourism Policy Framework underlie the Destination and Experience Development Plan:

- Protect and enhance Ireland’s cultural heritage, natural assets and environmental quality.
- Ensure that tourism contributes to meeting national and international commitments on climate change.
- Support balanced economic development and employment throughout the country.
- Prioritise the economic value per visitor over volume of tourists visiting.
- Minimise any negative impacts of tourism on host communities and maximise social benefits of tourism.
- Encourage innovation within the tourism sector to ensure improved visitor satisfaction.
- Ensure Ireland is recognised as an authentic sustainable destination.

These principles are reflected in the vision: *A prospering nationwide tourism sector that embraces action on climate and environmental issues to the long-term benefit of visitors and local communities.*

Similarly, the underlying ethos of the forthcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy is embedded within the DEDP.

## Mayo County Council County Development Plan

The County Development Plan has an emphasis on providing an attractive destination and supporting strong and vibrant sustainable communities, whilst ensuring a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient county characterised by high environmental quality. Its policy statement for tourism is *to develop Mayo as a leading tourism destination through continued sustainable expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating high-quality visitor services and the continued development and enhancement of visitor attractions and activities, capitalising on our natural and cultural heritage assets, whilst safeguarding these resources for future generations.*

While there are many elements of the County Development Plan that will support the DEDP, the strategic aims for the Natural Environment are noteworthy: *Continue to protect and enhance the county's natural heritage and biodiversity and ensure that networks of green and blue infrastructure are identified, created, protected and enhanced to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities; To also improve the knowledge and understanding of the county's landscape and coast, and enhance the overall characteristics, qualities and diversity of landscape character, its sense of place and local distinctiveness in recognition of the amenity potential of the county.*

The strategic focus of the County Development Plan is integral to a range of other county-wide strategies and policy documents that are of relevance to the DEDP.

Examples include:

- Mayo County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029
- County Mayo Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2024-2030
- Mayo Cultural and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027
- The forthcoming Mayo Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Community plans, such as the Killala Town Centre First Plan
- Local biodiversity action plans

## Clew Bay and Inland Mayo

Wild Mayo Destination and Experience Development Plan is one of three for the county. The Clew Bay Destination and Experience Development Plan was launched in November 2021 and work has been initiated on the Inland Mayo plan. All three DEDPs will work together to strengthen the year-round appeal of the county as a sustainable tourism destination.





## SECTION 2 Key insights informing the plan

## The current situation

The assessment of the current situation in North Mayo has highlighted a range of opportunities and related concerns that need to be taken into consideration in developing a 'road map' for the next five years. The following summary highlights key characteristics that have informed the direction of this DEDP.

### Strengths to leverage and opportunities to consider

**Wildness** – core to the county's brand: *Wild Mayo*.

- Nephin Beg range and the northern section of Wild Nephin National Park – Ireland's largest wilderness area; open vistas of wilderness and Dark Skies
- Wind and rugged coastline – Downpatrick Head – key Signature Point
- 'Off the beaten track'; sense of 'aloneness'; variety of ecosystems

#### The Gaeltacht

- Emerging new experiences and attractors (Solas, Blacksod Lighthouse)
- Sports tourism in Geesala; water-based activity tourism (Colaiste U.I.S.C.E)
- Opportunities to engage the visitor with the Irish language and ethos of place
- Potential to leverage myths and legends

**Greenways and trails** – existing infrastructure and strong momentum to develop new trails and connectivity between existing trails, including cross county borders

- Great Western Way, the Bangor Trail
- The proposed Céide Coastal Trail
- Recreational trails – Monasteries of the Moy recreational trail; loops and local trails (e.g. Mullet Peninsula, Erris Head loops, Nephin Mountain trail);
- Ballina/Castlebar/Westport proposed interurban greenway concept

**Outdoor activities** – potential for expansion of operators and growth in activities

- Trails-based activities (day-use and over-night) – development of bothies and accommodation options associated with long-distance trails; wildlife viewing
- Water-based – inland: water trail concept; angling
- Marine-based including diving in Killala Bay (sunken MV Shingle); cliff diving
- Golf – Carne Golf Links a key attractor

#### Existing focus on stewardship and biodiversity

- Variety of ecosystems; rare breeds, endangered species, prime wildlife conservation areas, and international recognition for salmon
- Bog restoration; rewilding; story of wind energy
- One of Europe's largest urban forest
- Local and regional emphasis on stewardship and climate change – potential to play a core role within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation

**A rich legacy of stories** highlighting the profile of north Mayo's heritage, life, land and sea through layers of history

- Mythology – e.g. Children of Lir, St Deirbhile, Táin Bó Flíodhaise Cattle Raid
- Neolithic theme and ancient farming practices
- Famine and emigration
- The story of early Christianity and medieval monastic heritage
- The march of General Humbert; the story of Admiral Brown
- Irish land reform; social enterprise (past and present)
- Urban planning (Belmullet)
- The Second World War

**Creative / visual arts** – increasing recognition of landscape inspired arts

- Art centres (Ballinglen, Ballina, Áras Inis Gluaire); Tír Sáile and Spirit of Place trail; traditional Irish music
- Significant interest in further developing the county's profile in the arts

**Heritage assets** – physical and archival

- Neolithic and monastic sites (highest concentration of monastic sites in Ireland)
- Emigration assets and potential for strong genealogy experience

**Hub towns and active community groups** – high level of engagement in community development and developing towns and villages as visitor hubs

- Strong commitment to local festivals and events that highlight the region's unique propositions – e.g. the Salmon Festival
- Focus on advancing local tourism-related projects
- County Council leadership; regional agencies; strong community groups

#### Transportation

- Proximity to Ireland West Airport, Knock
- Rail access from Dublin to Ballina and between Ballina and Westport – potential to leverage Ballina's 'gateway to Wild Mayo' position and to build linkages between Clew Bay and Inland Mayo
- Bus access from Ballina to Belmullet via Crossmolina

## Challenges and vulnerabilities to address

### Supporting infrastructure

- Considerable concern regarding inadequate access to public toilets and issues of servicing portaloos in heavily used areas such as Downpatrick Head, and generally across the region
- Servicing of piers and suitability of marine infrastructure to support growth in marine and activity-based tourism
- Connecting roads – particularly the state of repair of a select minor roads
- Public transportation gaps – limited connectivity with Ireland West Airport, Knock

### Accommodation

- Insufficient access to accommodation of all types across the region in high season and throughout the year – limiting North Mayo's to achieve full growth potential
- Particular need for additional camping facilities – currently there are few options, no 'aire' facilities, and growing site management issues related to an increase in wild camping

### Hospitality sector

- Limited availability of restaurants and food outlets outside of Ballina, with seasonality and hours of operation contributing to less availability in areas
- Limited ability to access seafood offerings

### Trails and greenways – creating connectivity

- A need for county-wide strategic planning to create networks of trail systems that will raise the profile of signature trails, improve the overall visitor offering through connectivity and enhanced maintenance, connect communities with trails-based experiences and increase opportunities for active travel

### Building Wild Mayo's story

- Potential to connect themes and stories between locations, to strengthen their profile and encourage further distribution of visitors – the region has a range of quality visitor centre/interpretive centre assets that can be leveraged more effectively

### Under-utilised assets and undeveloped entrepreneurial opportunities

- Archaeological sites and assets such as the Tír Sáile require a refreshed or new visitor-centric approach to their development and promotion
- Opportunities to work with local food producers to develop new agritourism experiences need to be assessed
- New approaches to dialogue are required to address existing issues in balancing conservation and tourism and assessing related visitor experience opportunities

### Outdoor activities

- Water-based – the need for infrastructure to support inland activities and angling
- Marine-based – the need to address issues relating to disrepair of piers, insufficient toilets and change facilities;

### Heritage assets

- Significant potential to improve the visitor experience at existing monastic sites

### Evening economy

- Ongoing need to strengthen the evening economy – requires improved evening transportation options

### Networking, coordination, and dialogue

- A strongly expressed desire for effective networking and a greater level of communication between all types of stakeholders

### Mentorship and capacity building

- A need to bring forward unrealised entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly in activities, guiding, agritourism, and food services

# Key planning considerations

## Fragmentation of product offerings and experiences

### CULTURAL HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS

North Mayo has a strong asset base with a number of new cultural heritage attractions entering the market. The redesign of the Céide Visitor Centre, the refurbishment of Blacksod Lighthouse, the development of Solas Visitor Experience and Centre, Oweninny Visitor Centre, and Ballinlen Arts Centre all add an exciting new dimension to the existing base of sites and attractions. The existing Michael Davitt Museum, North Mayo Heritage Centre, Ballina Arts Centre, Jackie Clarke Collection, Father Peyton Centre and Foxford Woollen Mill combine with the new attractions to tell a captivating story of North Mayo's heritage of life, land and sea today and through past centuries. This is an impressive critical mass of indoor experiences, but is not necessarily perceived as such by the visitor. Currently, these sites are not positioned as integral elements of a composite offering that presents the dynamic story of North Mayo. The links between visitor centres, and the thematic connections with other sites on the ground are not being leveraged in a way that would motivate the visitor to stay longer to discover the wider story, or to begin to better appreciate how geography and the environment are key factors in understanding the stories.

### THE TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

Similarly, North Mayo has an extensive list of existing and potential trails and greenways designed to facilitate wilderness adventure, active travel, cultural heritage experiences and coastal exploration. Here again, there is an opportunity to strengthen and leverage existing trails and to improve connectivity through an enhanced approach to strategic planning and development. As new greenway initiatives move forward, such as the interurban greenway from Ballina to Castlebar and Westport, and as off-road options are assessed for the Western Way and other key trails, including the recreational trail between Killala and Ballina and the potential proposals for the Mullet Peninsula, there is need for a strategic region/county wide approach to planning. This would streamline the identification of priorities and will assist local communities in managing expectations regarding potential local initiatives.

It will also complement Fáilte Ireland's focus on creating a framework to guide the wider development of the Wild Atlantic Way Coastal Path through upgrading and enhancing existing coastal trails, as prioritised in the Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023–2027. The Céide Coastal Trail, an exciting new initiative, is at the point where the overall delivery and management of the visitor experience can be looked at holistically and in a way that supports the Wild Atlantic Way Coastal Trails Project.



## Emerging sectors and experiences with development potential

### THE GAELTACHT

The visitor experience within the Gaeltacht in Erris is emerging as a culturally rich and distinctive experience that will drive new market interest and will strengthen the sense of identity. While the new fore-mentioned interpretive facilities at Blacksod Lighthouse and Solas have enhanced the destination offering considerably, there remains significant potential to further augment what is currently available and to work with communities to bring new product to market. The language school initiatives and the development of activity/adventure programmes that are enriched through the integration of the Irish language have given many communities an experience of hosting. Taking the skillsets that have been learned in this form of hosting, and identifying new opportunities to move more strategically into new tourism markets will open up opportunities for growth, but will require mentorship and localised capacity building. A number of communities have a strong interest in raising the profile of localities and generating renewed appreciation for traditional skills, crafts and stories. Local enthusiasm is essential for creating and delivering new experiences, and it will be important to nurture this enthusiasm across the Gaeltacht.

### THE CREATIVE SECTOR

Artists are increasingly being drawn to North Mayo – inspired by its landscape and wilderness, and its distinctive light. The north-facing orientation of much of the coastline creates a particular quality of light that has a unique appeal, and the area has grown recognition within the national and international arts community. Community expressions of this creative spirit are found in formal and informal settings – in street murals and the Tír Sáile and Spirit of Place sculpture trail; in the Ballina Arts Centre, the Ballinglen Museum of Art, Áras Inis Gluaire (Ireland’s only bilingual arts centre) and the Foxford Woollen Mills; and through nationally funded arts programmes within the area, such as Wilderland. The underlying emphasis is on celebrating the landscape and its stories, raising an awareness of climate change, supporting an enhanced understanding of environmental restoration, stimulating dialogue and encouraging community empowerment.

Approaching the creative sector in this way and its role in expressing the bio-cultural identity of North Mayo, offers potential to raise its profile and to attract new audiences. Discussing climate change, biodiversity, rewilding and heritage traditions through a creative engagement process reinforces the leadership role that County Mayo has been taking in using the arts to make a stronger emotional connection with the landscape and the traditions of its people



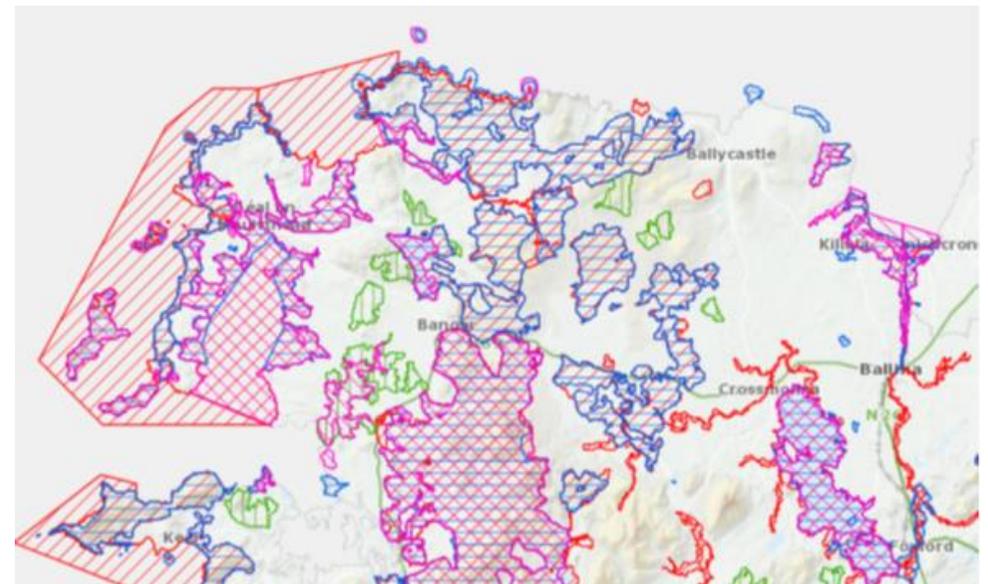
## AGRITOURISM AND LOCAL PRODUCE

The emphasis on local foods, flavours and producers is relatively limited and is a gap in North Mayo that should be addressed. Within the region, accessing local restaurants in off-peak seasons, finding opportunities to sample local fish cuisine, and connecting with producers on site can be difficult at times. Within the Gaeltacht, there is an emerging focus on organic and sustainable farming practices, with the new training centre for green horticulture at Rossport (further supported by the glamping and campervan/ camping initiative), and the organic farming at Elly Bay. Small scale examples of local produce available for purchase are found – such as seaweed soda bread, Dúlra seaweed flakes, in addition to the organic garden produce at North Mayo Heritage Centre and the farmers' markets in Ballina, Ballycastle and Belmullet. However, these opportunities tend to be the exception. Building on this base, and working with producers and suppliers to begin to identify options for diversification and building confidence could be pursued, including the development of farm stays – which, taken together, would strengthen entrepreneurship within the region. Similarly, working with restaurants and chefs to highlight the value of locally sourced menus will add a further dimension to a strategic focus on North Mayo produce.

## ECOTOURISM AND THE REWILDING THEME

Large tracts of North Mayo have been designated for their environmental significance, and there is a high prevalence of Atlantic blanket peat bog and surface water features. In looking at the region, the ecological value of North Mayo and its biodiversity is of international renown and lends itself to the strategic development of environmentally sustainable ecotourism as a niche/special interest visitor offering. The rewilding of Wild Nephin National Park, the appeal of the International Dark Sky Park, and the wide-ranging conservation programmes within North Mayo hold particular interest to the ecotourist, and to international visitors that are motivated by the theme of environmental restoration and rewilding. Bringing this theme forward needs to be handled with care, and offers an opportunity to expand the role of guided experiences in North Mayo.

The diversity of the environment in general – its geology and coastal geomorphology, its ecosystems, its flora and fauna, and its associated cultural heritage within a relatively compact area, are of significant interest to the education field studies market. This is an area where potential growth will assist in creating non-peak season demand.



## ACCOMMODATION

Failte Ireland's accommodation supply and pipeline analysis from April 2025 highlights a requirement for additional bed stock across all accommodation categories to meet the rising demand. The need for additional bedstock is further heightened by the allocation of tourist bedspaces for international protection applicants. The pipeline analysis identifies various development schemes at different stages in the wider county and the surrounding counties of Galway, Roscommon, and Sligo. This additional capacity, if delivered, will support overnight visitation and the conversion of day visitation.

Within North Mayo, however, the analysis shows limited accommodation growth which is restricting the region's capacity to expand overnight stay options. To address the supply gap, developing new bedspaces through incentives or streamlined planning processes could be beneficial. However, it typically takes five to seven years to deliver a new build hotel, and viability remains a challenge. Alternative solutions, such as extensions to business premises, glamping or repurposing existing buildings, may offer more commercially viable options and provide additional capacity aligned with the destination ethos in the medium to long term, albeit on a smaller scale.

## SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

### *Supporting infrastructure*

The development of the visitor experience and the growth of the tourism economy are further constrained by a number of other infrastructural vulnerabilities, including:

- Inadequate access to public toilets and constraints regarding the management of existing toilet facilities; no provision of shower at coastal areas.
- Safety and access concerns associated with many piers, which in turn is constraining the growth of marine-based tourism.
- Signage, issues with minor roads, and limited pull-off viewing areas on N roads reduce the benefits associated with scenic touring.

### *Industry development*

Building capacity and effective communications will strengthen the industry and will generate dialogue and new ways of working together. The value of this approach is clearly highlighted through the success of the Clew Bay Tourism Network as a platform and forum for promoting growth and innovation.



## ASPIRATIONS

Understanding local aspirations is critical in developing a plan that will make a difference in achieving longer-term success. On the basis of consultation, tourism businesses, agencies and community representatives indicated a desire for:

- A destination recognised for its wildness
- A stretch of the Wild Atlantic Way where visitors will experience the adrenalin of adventure
- A place where people feel a deep and immersive connection with the place and an appreciation for the layers of history that continue to shape its personality today
- An invigorated Gaeltacht with a visitor experience that reveals its unique identity
- A vibrant place to visit and a great place to live in with increased hospitality options
- A destination with the ethos of sustainability at its core – where the importance of remaining wild and rugged, and safeguarding the authenticity of its heritage stays paramount
- Where balanced growth that has maintained 6,000 years of rural living continues, keeping all the doors open and all the lights on in the town and village centres, and ensuring young people have opportunities to stay
- A tourism industry that is well networked and able to leverage the benefits of working collaboratively to achieve its vision



A circular skylight with a grid pattern, showing a rainbow-like light effect. The skylight is composed of several concentric rings of glass, with a central circular opening. The light passing through the glass creates a spectrum of colors, including blue, yellow, and red, which are visible as a rainbow-like effect. The text "SECTION 3" and "The strategic framework" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# SECTION 3

## The strategic framework

*WILD MAYO: Where the light is  
always alive*

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## OUR VISION

*WILD MAYO: A place that captivates the soul, Wild Mayo is recognised as a spectacular outdoors destination offering immersive wilderness and adventure for all.*

*From its stunning coastlines to its rugged boglands, the region offers a landscape that inspires creativity and invites exploration. Rich in history, heritage, and culture, Wild Mayo brings its stories to life through immersive trails, vibrant communities, and celebrated traditions.*

*The Irish language is protected and proudly spoken, adding depth and authenticity to every experience. Whether walking ancient paths, connecting with local craftspeople, or simply breathing in the wild Atlantic air, visitors leave with a sense of wonder, and a longing to return.*



## EXPERIENTIAL THEMES

**CELEBRATING WILD ADVENTURE**

**UNVEILING OUR SOUL**



## DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT THEMES



*Our wild adventure*



*Our heritage of life, land and sea*



*Our vibrant and connected destination*



## CATALYST PROJECTS

- The Céide Coastal Path and Downpatrick Head
- The Western Way and North Mayo Trails Network

- The Gaeltacht
- Ballina Town
- Killala Town

- Accommodation
- Capacity Building



## SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Lough Conn and Lough Cullin
- Infrastructure to support water-based activities
- Initiatives to support angling

- Networking storytelling and visitor / interpretive centres
- Strengthening emerging sectors
  - The creative arts sector
  - Agritourism and local foods
  - Ecotourism and biodiversity

- Accessibility



# Wild Mayo – the strategic framework

## WILD MAYO – the essence of place

The exhilarating force of the wind blows across this rugged, untamed landscape. The elemental rawness of its vast wilderness and wild coastline, its traces of ancient civilisations and memories of ecclesiastical eminence blend seamlessly with the intimacy of its contemporary market towns and villages. This is a community where our passion for keeping the light alive<sup>1</sup> – where our commitment to maintaining the integrity of our timeless legacies, our heritage, and our stories prevails throughout.

Whether it is poets dreaming of Neolithic wheat<sup>2</sup>, or artists capturing the ethereal reflections of light;

Whether it is anglers celebrating the circularity of salmon life or wildlife enthusiasts listening for the corncrake's rasping call;

Whether it is adventurers seeking the solitude of wilderness, the adrenalin of cliff diving, the secrets of our bays or the stories of our cycle-routes and laneways;

Or, whether it is our family and friends returning to discover their roots and connections to *Wild Mayo*:

– this is a landscape that inspires a zeal for life.

<sup>1</sup> **Keeping the light alive** – burning bright all the time a phrase used in Blacksod Lighthouse to describe the number one rule; *keep the fire burning* – a phrase used in Solas to describe the tradition of the fire in the hearth passing from generation to generation; keeping the candle in the window lit – relates to the Mary Robinson Centre and the welcome extended to the returning diaspora.

<sup>2</sup> Seamus Heaney, *Belderg*

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK is designed to reflect and leverage the **essence of place** – those attributes of the destination that differentiate it from other stretches of the Wild Atlantic Way. Two **experiential themes** bring this sense of place to the fore and underpin the focus of the plan. They shape the **vision** and are interwoven through three **destination development pillars** that provide structure to the proposed catalyst and supporting initiatives. Together, these strategic elements support the core **objectives** of the plan and provide a critical basis for the realisation of stakeholder aspirations.

## THE EXPERIENTIAL THEMES

### CELEBRATING WILD ADVENTURE

*Live in the sunshine, swim the sea, drink the wild air*  
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

This is the call of Wild Mayo. It is a call to adventure on the land and in the sea – hiking solitary wilderness trails, paddling under towering cliffs, discovering what lies beneath the waves, embracing the wind on the golf links, feeling the thrill of hooking a salmon – this is where adrenalin ignites wild hearts.

### UNVEILING OUR SOUL

*The world of the soul is secret. The secret and the sacred are sisters* (John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara*)

Unveiling our soul to our visitors – the 'soul' of our landscape and our people – is all about unveiling our stories, revealing our identity and memories, and inviting our visitors to share our passions and our 'craic'. Wild Mayo inspires slow travel through time – mindful journeys of deep discovery along our trails, greenways, waterways and minor roads, and through our cultural quarters and heritage sites in our towns and villages. Our extensive network of interpretive and arts-based centres and our Gaeltacht experiences bring our heritage of life, land and sea and our creativity to the fore – revealing the secret and the sacred of our soul.

## OUR VISION

*WILD MAYO: A place that captivates the soul, Wild Mayo is recognised as a spectacular outdoors destination offering immersive wilderness and adventure for all.*

*From its stunning coastlines to its rugged boglands, the region offers a landscape that inspires creativity and invites exploration. Rich in history, heritage, and culture, Wild Mayo brings its stories to life through immersive trails, vibrant communities, and celebrated traditions.*

*The Irish language is protected and proudly spoken, adding depth and authenticity to every experience.*

*Whether walking ancient paths, connecting with local craftspeople, or simply breathing in the wild Atlantic air, visitors leave with a sense of wonder, and a longing to return.*

## DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Three destination development pillars highlight the focus of the catalyst and supporting initiatives. The DEDP will have a strong emphasis on developing and strengthening experiences and infrastructure in North Mayo that elevate the region's outdoor activities and adventure, and its bio-cultural identity. Projects that promote place-making and facilitate a more coordinated response to destination development and industry collaboration will work towards developing a vibrant and connected region within the county.



*Our wild adventure*



*Our heritage of life,  
land and sea*



*Our vibrant and  
connected destination*

## OUR OBJECTIVES

- Align with the Regional Development Strategy objectives: growing year round appeal; raising international profile; increasing revenue, dispersion, and season extension; protecting authenticity and wildness; building capacity and capability; and fostering strong coalitions of industry and stakeholders.
- Leverage existing attractions and create new experiences to encourage year-round exploration.
- Strengthen towns and villages – developing them as animated, well-serviced hubs for all travel modes.
- Celebrate environment and heritage – fostering appreciation for North Mayo's natural and cultural legacy, and championing sustainable and slow tourism models.
- Elevate the Gaeltacht – positioning it as a cornerstone of cultural heritage.
- Create strong tourism infrastructure and well serviced amenities around the abundant natural assets to meet the demands of visitor and community users

## How we achieve our vision

The action plan presented in the following section identifies eight strategic areas of catalytic action and a series of supporting initiatives that are designed to actualise the vision and to ensure that the objectives are met over the duration of this five-year plan. These actions will animate the experiential themes and are presented under the three destination development pillars:

- *Our wild adventure*
- *Our heritage of life, land and sea*
- *Our vibrant and connected destination*

The pillars assist in providing a structure for the recommendations, but they should not be considered as silos of activity. Rather, the initiatives presented in this DEDP are integrated, and actions under one pillar will reinforce and support actions in another.

The **Action Plan** follows the overview of the three destination development pillars. Each pillar is presented within a sub-section of the Action Plan that highlights the key strategic priorities and catalyst projects, followed by a series of supporting initiatives.

# OUR WILD ADVENTURE



The elemental rawness of Wild Mayo, its sense of space and wildness, and the region's ability to generate adrenalin within a land and seascape that offers solitude and solace is distinctive. This is what differentiates 'our wild adventure' from outdoor activities in many other areas. The strategic priorities bring these aspects of wildness to the fore and are designed to strengthen the positioning of North Mayo. The supporting initiatives will further underpin the focus on our wild adventure and will address both vulnerabilities in infrastructure and emerging opportunities in the delivery of adventure activities and experiences.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES – catalyst projects

**THE CÉIDE COASTAL PATH and DOWNPATRICK HEAD**

**THE WESTERN WAY and NORTH MAYO TRAILS NETWORK**

## Supporting initiatives

Infrastructure to support water-based activities

Initiatives to support angling

Lough Conn and Lough Cullin



*'The wildest, loneliest stretch of country to be found in all Ireland' where 'you are thrown at the same time back on yourself and forward against the mystery and majesty of nature'. Robert Lloyd Praeger (1865-1953)*

## OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND THE SEA



Wild Mayo has a story to tell – layers of history that bring ‘*our heritage of life, land and sea*’ to the fore. We seek to share our memories of the past and our passions of today with the visitor. What makes the Gaeltacht in Erris distinctive? Why did the French march across our lands? What inspired the development of so many monasteries in such close proximity? Why are artists instinctively drawn to North Mayo? How has our relationship with the bogs and wild open landscape evolved? What lies at the heart of our grassroots commitment to sustainability? Our visitor experiences reveal the *secret and the sacred* of Wild Mayo and ensure that we *keep the light alive* and that we celebrate our timeless legacies in memorable ways.

Building on existing projects and initiatives, and supporting the implementation of current plans and strategies that will complement this DEDP have been core to the identification of strategic projects. This approach will leverage momentum and will benefit from organisational structures and stakeholder commitment that is already in place, while strengthening the rationale for implementation and funding.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES – catalyst projects

**BALLINA TOWN**

**KILLALA TOWN**

**THE GAELTACHT**

### Supporting initiatives

Networking storytelling and visitor / interpretive centres

Strengthening emerging sectors

- The creative arts sector
- Agritourism and local foods
- Ecotourism and biodiversity



## OUR VIBRANT AND CONNECTED DESTINATION



The welcome that Wild Mayo extends is palpable. We are naturally curious about our visitors, so we engage. We are relaxed – we know that there is a sense of an old-fashioned place and intimacy that is endearing. Our towns and villages are all about our every day life – our deep connection with our wild landscapes, our heritage of life, land and sea – this is our home, and we welcome our visitors to enjoy every aspect of it.

Our strategic priorities are focused on making the experience more compelling, easier to book, with opportunities available year-round. A well-connected industry that supports each other and works together to deliver the vision will be key to our ongoing success. It is about good communication and a commitment to deliver the best-in-class.

This commitment will be significantly enhanced through an increase in accommodation options that reflect the needs of the visitor, and improving access to Wild Mayo and connectivity around the destination. Ensuring that the basics are dealt with – clean and accessible toilets, clear road signage, view points where our outstanding landscapes are revealed, and roads that are well maintained – will further strengthen the visitor experience. Aspirations of this nature require a joined-up approach where all agencies and government departments are working together to create a *vibrant and connected destination*.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES – catalyst projects

ACCOMMODATION

CAPACITY BUILDING

### Supporting initiatives

Accessibility





# SECTION 4

## The action plan

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>The Céide Coast</b>				
<p>The development of the Céide Coast experience will raise the profile of North Mayo considerably in international and national markets. This catalyst project focuses on advancing the development of the Céide Coastal Path and creating a 15 km world class coastal trail that links two key attractors – at one end, the award-winning Céide Fields Neolithic site and Visitor Centre, and at the other end, Downpatrick Head, a Signature Discovery Point on the Wild Atlantic Way and an area of stunning beauty with its legendary Dún Briste Sea Stack and fascinating interplay of geology and legend and folklore. The proposed bridge infrastructure is a key element of the project, and the long span suspension bridge that will be required, will augment the experience substantially. The strategic location of Ballycastle as a service centre and the significance of this project in drawing new attention to the northern stretch of the county’s coastline will play an important role in supporting the strategic objectives of the <i>Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy</i>.</p>				
	<p><b>THE CÉIDE COASTAL PATH:</b> The initiative has been granted Part 8 planning approval and initial funding to begin the development of the trail. It will provide a new opportunity to access a series of key geological sites, including the Glenurla Valley Waterfall, the Polladarky Blow Hole, the Léam Giant Stepping Stones, the Doonfeeney Sea Arch, and Ballynacashlan Castle ruins. Funding is in place to commence the initial phase of development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards securing the necessary capital funding and continue to liaise with the Fáilte Ireland WAW Coastal Trails team on the initiative. Proceed with the installation of the eleven footbridges and the associated trail infrastructure that are required along the route – including the installation of trailheads, trailhead signage, safety and way marker signage, safety fencing, gates and stiles and boardwalks (where required).</li> <li>• Continue to work closely with the land owners to develop the management model for the path.</li> </ul>	Ongoing with a focus on short term for its immediate advancement	MCC / Céide Coast Community Group	FI (See Section 5: Appendices for full list of acroynms – page 55)
<p><b>The Céide Coastal Path and Downpatrick Head</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<p><b>DOWNPATRICK HEAD / BALLYCASTLE MASTERPLAN:</b> The Signature Discovery Point already attracts approximately 50,000 visitors annually. Visitor use management issues have been identified, particularly in relation to the maintenance of the portalooos and the impact of trampling. The Discovery Point is currently accessed by road from Ballycastle – a distance of 6 kms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Masterplan for Downpatrick Head and Ballycastle. This plan should focus on strengthening the visitor experience and site management associated with Downpatrick Head, as a standalone site and as a core experience of the Céide Coast Path. The masterplan must also highlight the strategic relationship between the Discovery Point and Ballycastle, and should identify priorities that ensure the local community further benefits from its location on the Wild Atlantic Way.</li> <li>• In relation to Downpatrick Head and the access route from Ballycastle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Undertake a comprehensive assessment of required parking upgrades and toilet needs at Downpatrick Head. Improving access to toilet facilities in Ballycastle should reduce the infrastructural demand at the visitor site. A cleaning and maintenance plan is essential for fixed or temporary facilities at the headland to address current unsatisfactory conditions.</li> <li>○ Identify required upgrades to the access route from the R314.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Short to medium term	MCC / FI	Céide Coast Community Company (CCCC)

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>The Céide Coastal Path and Downpatrick Head</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop a Masterplan for Downpatrick Head and Ballycastle</b> continued: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Address the trampling issues and the development of informal paths identified in the <i>2024 Fáilte Ireland Downpatrick Head Report</i> undertaken as part of the National Environmental Monitoring programme, through options such as a formal path linking the car park and points of interest across the headland, and the development of marked pathways. Board walk sections may be required in more sensitive habitat zones.</li> <li>○ Conduct an audit of existing signage, and address the current deficiencies in interpretive and safety/instructional signage, including directional signage in from the R314. In addition to the geological features and stunning cliff line, the Signature Discovery Point has the remnants of the ‘Eire 64’ markings, the ruins of a church building and a statue of St. Patrick. The interpretive messaging should support the wider St. Patrick story and ecclesiastical theme.</li> <li>○ Establish a suitable cleaning and maintenance regime for the Spirit of Place installation at the ‘Poll na Seantainne’ blowhole.</li> <li>○ During periods of high visitation, assess the potential to develop a park and ride system from Ballycastle. A proactive approach will reduce site management issues that may well arise as visitor numbers grow, and a shuttle service to Ballycastle will be needed to facilitate transportation back to the Céide Fields car park for those arriving by the Céide Coast Path.</li> <li>○ Complement this through exploring/supporting a cycling hub in Ballycastle with drop off/collection points at Downpatrick Head and Céide Fields car park to allow greater flexibility to explore the area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In relation to <b>Ballycastle</b> and its development as a service centre, use the master-planning process to build on the village’s potential to be a strategic service centre for the Céide Coast and a viable base for outdoor adventure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify a strategy to improve the delivery of visitor information services and the provision of toilet facilities, food and drink, and retail. Continue to work with the Céide Coast Eco Campus and other potential venues to assess suitable location for visitor services, and ways of developing new synergies with existing activities.</li> <li>○ Work with the community to develop a self-guided walk within the village that will highlight its history and areas of cultural significance, such as ‘The Shambles’.</li> <li>○ Work with existing businesses, including the Ballinglen Gallery and local artisans to ensure that the masterplan elevates the importance of the creative arts to Ballycastle and the strong linkages between landscape and the arts.</li> <li>○ Position Ballycastle as a northern access point to the Mayo Dark Sky Park. Undertake discussions on following Newport’s lead to become an International Dark Sky Community. This will involve preparing a lighting policy and retrofitting publicly owned lighting within five years. Work with the Dark Sky partners to highlight the coastal dark skies – particularly at Downpatrick Head.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Short to medium term</p>	<p>MCC / FI</p>	<p>CCCC</p>

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>The Western Way and North Mayo Trails Network</b>				
<p>The county has the most extensive network of recreational trails and greenways for walking, hiking and cycling in Ireland. In North Mayo it is the trails network that offers the key potential to building a strong positioning for <i>wild adventure</i>. The Western Way, in particular, brings the wilderness experience to the fore with its route through the Wild Nephin National Park. It provides a unique opportunity to connect with Oughterard in Galway, through Co. Mayo and north to Dromahair in Co. Leitrim creating an iconic long-distance trail over 300 kms. While critical elements of the long-distance trail experience are in place, action on the ground is still needed to connect sections within North Mayo and to address supporting infrastructural needs. The importance of looking at trails from a strategic perspective is core to this catalyst project and to fully leveraging all that has been achieved locally and regionally.</p>				
<p><b>The Western Way and North Mayo Trails Network</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<p><b>THE WESTERN WAY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to progress the strategic development of Western Way within North Mayo. Identify locations where connections with existing trails are required and where additional work is needed to establish new off-road sections. The key objective is to link the trail from Letterkeen through to Ballycastle, Ballina and eastwards to Bonniconlon, to facilitate connection with the Sligo Way, including the National Mountain Bike Centre at Coolaney. Identify where further feasibility analysis is needed to determine the projected route <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to assess directional and interpretive signage, accommodation options, trail infrastructure, naming protocols in areas where it connects with existing recreational trails, and branding for the proposed 300 km+ trail.</li> <li>○ In looking at trail infrastructure, assess the feasibility of installing a new suspension bridge where the trail approaches Ballycastle. This would open up a viewpoint towards Downpatrick Head and would create visual connection with the Céide Coastal Path.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue working collaboratively to upgrade the trail through Wild Nephin National Park and reroute through Oweninny (including addressing the need for an underpass at Oweninny). Explore options for linking through Bellacorick via an off-road section. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Address requirements for cyclists, including removing board walk sections where necessary.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to explore and pursue relevant options for the development of <b>accommodation</b> that can meet the requirements of different trail users. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to advance the development of the string of bothies (overnight shelters left unlocked) across the Nephin Beg Range and establish a model for the care and maintenance of these structures. This could be achieved through an existing or new voluntary organisation. (Similar hut to hut trail structures in British Columbia on the Sunshine Coast and in the Shuswap are maintained through local groups.)</li> <li>○ Continue to assess the feasibility of creating hostel accommodation in existing disused buildings that are located in close proximity to the trail, including the barracks building at Bellacorick.</li> <li>○ Work with existing accommodation businesses to identify options representing different levels of comfort, and the capacity of these businesses to transfer luggage for visitors.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	NPWS	Coillte; Bord na Mona; FI

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>The Western Way and North Mayo Trails Network</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<p><b>NORTH MAYO TRAILS STRATEGY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider developing a <b>county-wide trails strategy</b> as a policy document that will align with and support the implementation of the forthcoming Mayo Outdoor Recreation Plan. This should be a working document that can reflect and respond to arising opportunities, and should seek to address the current fragmented approach to trails development – particularly at the community level.</li> <li>Establish a <b>North Mayo trails forum/working group</b> that will work with Mayo County Council on an ongoing basis to determine strategic priorities in developing, managing and leveraging recreational trails and greenways. This forum could be the same as the structure being established by the Outdoor Recreation Committee and should allow for the representation of local community groups.</li> <li>Use the forum and the county-wide strategy planning process to identify all existing trails networks, proposed projects and aspirational initiatives, including route options for the Western Way and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) interurban greenway concept (connecting Ballina to Castlebar and onward to Westport). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work towards identifying priorities and development opportunities in a way that can leverage local commitment and use the proposed outdoor recreation knowledge hubs (forthcoming Outdoor Recreation Plan) to streamline grant applications and related development studies.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Medium term	MCC Mayo Sports & Recreation Partnership	Community Walking groups; Mayo County Outdoor Recreation Committee; TII
	<p><b>LOCAL INITIATIVES:</b> There are a wide range of trails-related initiatives that need to be stitched together to strengthen <i>our wild adventure</i> offering, and should be further assessed for their capacity to enhance the visitor’s appreciation of <i>our heritage of life, land and sea</i>. The following are examples of current and/or proposed projects that need to be supported in an appropriate manner.</p>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Erris/Mullet looped trails:</b> proceed with the recommendations outlined in <i>the Erris Coastal Walks 2023 Site Assessment Report</i>, including work on a full feasibility study. The report outlines a series of recommendations relating to stiles and gates, and the establishment of trail heads; evaluation of traffic volumes; ensuring that the road surface is suitable in bog areas and extending boardwalks where necessary; appropriate waymarking and information boards; evaluating and addressing safety concerns at the blowhole, and the need for a management and maintenance plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Comhar Dún Chaocháin Teo to establish Carrowteige – An tSeanscoil as a prominent staging area for the looped trails in Cill Chomáin. The Sliabh Sneacht Centre in Inishowen provides a model for a rural-based staging area, offering a base for hill-walking and hiking, bird-watching, photography, washrooms, food and drink, and retail; while also acting as a community resource and heritage centre.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	Comhar Dún Chaocháin Teo	MCC; Údarás na Gaeltachta; landowners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Bangor Trail / Bangor Erris trail head:</b> explore options to strengthen the role of Bangor Erris as a hub within a wider trail network through assessing opportunities to develop a trail system westwards to Geesala and eastwards to the Western Way. This would enhance the wider adventure experience in the Bangor Erris and Carrowmore Lake area.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	MCC	Coillte; SW Mayo Development Co. (SWMDC)

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – catalyst projects:		Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
The Western Way and North Mayo Trails Network (Catalyst)	<p><b>LOCAL INITIATIVES</b> continued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Céide Coastal Path extensions:</b> explore the opportunity to extend the Céide Coastal Path.</li> </ul>		Longer-term	MCC	FI; landowners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crossmolina to Enniscoe</b> cycle trail: this initiative is part of a longer trail project that would connect Crossmolina with Keenagh. It has the capacity to strengthen the role of Crossmolina as a hub to explore Enniscoe and Lough Conn. With further extensions of the trail system beyond Keenagh, there is the potential to ultimately connect Crossmolina to Nephin Beg and the wider wilderness area, which is much in keeping with the community's vision of its role as a 'gateway' to the mountain.</li> </ul>		Ongoing	Nephin's Haven Tourism Group	MCC; FI; landowners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pontoon to Knockmore:</b> the proposition for a trail along the shores of Lough Conn and Lough Cullin has been at the proposal stage for some time. It is a project that has faced issues arising from the conservation values of the Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA. Ideally, the potential to move forward or not, should be clearly determined through a facilitated discussion with all stakeholders. Its location vis-à-vis the proposed intra-urban cycle network, the prospective development at the site of the former Healy's Hotel and the Pontoon Bridge Hotel (contracted to the State at present), and its capacity to link with other trail systems and activity bases should all be carefully considered in the decision making. Currently, the road is regarded as too dangerous as an alternative walking option. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assist the local community with further environmental studies if this is required.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		Medium	Knockmore/ Pontoon Development Group	NPWS; MCC; FI; landowners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Foxford trails:</b> strengthen the profile of the Ox Mountain trails. These trails are favoured by cyclists but are not promoted to this activity group. The Foxford area is likely to increase in its cycling appeal with the development of the proposed National Cycle Network corridor through Co. Mayo (the route of the intraurban greenway). Passing through or close to Foxford, provides the community with new opportunities to develop and promote looped spurs and to position the town as a cycling destination.</li> </ul>		Ongoing	MCC	Mayo North East Leader Partnership Company; landowners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Killala to Ballina</b> – the Monasteries of the Moy recreational trail: this 14 km trail is well advanced. Continue to identify options to deliver a complete off-road experience. This trail is of particular importance given its strategic route between the two towns via two of the monasteries and through Belleek Woods. In time it will become part of the Western Way as it connects through to the Sligo Way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explore ways of extending the trail westwards to link through to the Céide Coastal Path.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		Ongoing	MCC	FI; landowners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ballina to Enniscrone</b> – continue to progress the development of the proposed recreational trail between the two communities through advancing the implementation of the 2022 feasibility study.</li> </ul>		Ongoing	MCC	Mayo NE Leader

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – supporting initiatives	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>SUPPORTING INITIATIVES</b>				
<b>Infrastructure to support water-based activities</b>				
<p>As North Mayo looks to create a more coordinated, cohesive and strategic approach to the development, management and promotion of its <i>wild adventure</i> offering, attention will need to focus on its infrastructural asset base for water-based activities. In particular, the scope for marine-based activities is significant. Releasing this potential requires a critical look at the piers around the coastline – many of which are now the staging areas for marine-based activities. Viewing these structures and their associated facilities as tourism assets (in addition to their initial role), reveals shortcomings that are constraining the growth of this activity sector and are detracting from the visitor experience.</p> <p>The importance of these piers as amenity assets and the need to maintain them with regard to safety are highlighted as clear objectives in the MCC <i>County Development Plan 2022-28</i>. The following recommendations builds on the emphasis of this policy direction and addresses a range of priorities.</p>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conduct a comprehensive assessment of all piers and slipways</b> that are being used for leisure and amenity purposes, with an emphasis on pier maintenance and safety issues, parking requirements, supporting facilities, and how leisure usage can be managed along side other forms of traditional commercial usage.</li> <li>• Develop ongoing maintenance plans for the piers and slipways.</li> </ul> <p>The following piers should be addressed as a priority given their immediate potential to support water-based activity and adventure.</p>	Ongoing	MCC	
<b>Infrastructure to support water-based activities</b>	<p><b>BLACKSOD PIER:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a matter of urgency, develop an agreement between MCC and current users to address maintenance and cleaning issues that will improve visitor safety.</li> <li>• Develop visitor servicing facilities in line with the emerging role of the pier area for a range of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Install portaloos during the main visitor season. These will service visitors to the Lighthouse, as well as visitors going to the Inishkea Islands (an important consideration identified in the Inishkea Management Plan).</li> <li>○ Work with Comharchumann Forbartha Ionad Deirbhile (CFID) to install a portable service centre at the pier that will provide Wi-Fi connectivity, light refreshments and ticketing services for Blacksod Lighthouse, Solas, boat operators and other water activity providers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to assess infrastructural requirements to develop direct access to Doogort. The initial opportunity lies in providing cyclists with a link to Achill Island and the Great Western Greenway.</li> <li>• Re-evaluate the marina plans that were drawn up for Blacksod approximately five years ago. The deep water and the shelter than the harbour offers could be developed to attract a wider boating sector.</li> </ul>	Short term	MCC	CFID; Údarás na Gaeltachta

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – supporting initiatives		Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
Infrastructure to support water-based activities	<p><b>KILLALA PIER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The significance of Killala Pier as a tourism asset will grow substantially with the implementation of the Killala Town Centre First Plan. In summary, this DEDP supports the proposed public realm projects that are targeting the harbour area and are recommending a ‘harbour makeover’ that would activate the pier area with improvements to the linkages with the town, the addition of seating, shelters, public toilets and showers, and the development of camping facilities in the adjacent lands.</li> </ul> <p>These actions will enhance the appeal of Killala as a new diving base (following the sinking of the Shingle to form an artificial reef), and will support the growth of water-based activities, including the potential for boat tours to Kilcummin, Ballina and Enniscrone.</p>	Short to medium term	MCC		
	<p><b>KILCUMMIN PIER:</b></p> <p>Kilcummin is increasingly recognised as a base for surfing, kayaking, swimming, fishing, diving, snorkeling, and has hosted national events in water sports. The pier offers easy access to deep, clear water year-round and does not require boats to facilitate access to these waters (unlike Killala and Ballina).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address immediate maintenance issues relating to cleaning the steps and the slipway.</li> <li>Develop a change facility at the pier to meet the growing needs of the outdoor adventure sector, and to strengthen the positioning of North Mayo as an adventure hub.</li> </ul>	Short to medium term	MCC		
	<p><b>KILLERDUFF, RATHLACKAN, BALLYCASTLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address immediate safety and maintenance issues to facilitate the outdoor sector and to service ongoing needs relating to fishing, and search and rescue.</li> <li>Continue to work with the Céide Coast Community Company to assess the feasibility of developing a tidal pool at Killerduff, and to advance the concept accordingly.</li> </ul>	Short term	MCC	CCCC	
	<p>In addition to the importance of addressing pier and slipway related issues, there are wider coastal issues that need to be given consideration.</p> <p><b>ROSS BEACH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the upgrades to toilet facilities with the recently acquired funds to prevent the current problems arising from over-use and limited tank capacity.</li> <li>Undertake a feasibility study on a proposed coastal walkway or alternative water-based connectivity between Killala and Ross Beach. This will strengthen the appeal of Killala as a coastal base for walking and will reduce vehicular traffic.</li> </ul> <p><b>RINROE BEACH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an assessment of the environmental impact of wild camping in commonage areas. This is a growing issue since the Covid pandemic. Identify appropriate actions to mitigate impact.</li> </ul>	Medium term	MCC		

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – supporting initiatives	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Initiatives to support angling</b>				
<p>Traditionally, fishing been a strong activity sector and the backbone of the Bangor Erris area – Carrowmore Lake, the Owenmore and Owenduff Rivers. The River Moy is internationally famous for its salmon, with Ballina and Foxford having widespread recognition. Angling as a visitor activity is particularly important in the shoulder season, characterised by both a healthy lengthy of stay and visitor spend. The significance of the sector and the need to work collaboratively to maintain and grow market share is often poorly understood. The actions below are designed to elevate the activity. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) play a critical role in promoting and developing the sector across North Mayo – advocating <i>fish for wild fish in wild places</i>.</p>				
<b>Initiatives to support angling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with IFI to heighten the tourism industry’s awareness of the importance of this sector, and the needs of the visitor who comes to North Mayo for an angling trip, including a good drying room, access to a freezer, flexibility regarding meals, packed lunches, and angling material. Highlight core resources, including the <i>County Mayo Game Angling Guide</i>, and ensure that businesses servicing this sector have a good working knowledge of game angling in North Mayo.</li> <li>• Support angling through developing new imagery of the activity. The anglers fly-fishing in the centre of Ballina is a unique image that highlights the presence of ‘<i>our wild adventure</i>’ even within an urban context.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	IFI	FI; Mayo North Tourism
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with IFI develop a strategy that will encourage the return of operators to the charter business. Changes to national policy and insurance requirements have caused this sector to shrink, and sea angling has become under utilised as a base for angling in North Mayo. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to highlight the impressive number of species that can be caught at sea.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI	IFI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to improve the angling experience and public awareness of related issues of sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with local angling clubs, community groups and the IFI to identify infrastructural improvements that are required to improve access to the experience and the quality of it – such as bush clearance, the erection of stiles and footbridges, and provision for wheelchair access. Clubs, such as the Bangor Erris Angling Club, have been very active in this regard with the recent development of the marina on Carrowmore Lake.</li> <li>○ Assist the Cill Chomáin community to develop angling platforms at Portacloy and Rinroe.</li> <li>○ Similarly, work collaboratively to highlight where habitat enhancement projects, such as the need to improve rivers in terms of spawning, and identify steps required to undertake projects. Use such situations to review opportunities for regenerative tourism, where visitors could get actively involved in restoration projects.</li> <li>○ Work with IFI and tourism operators to assist IFI in developing packages, such as events that focus on attracting women, and continue promoting community events that celebrate the angling sector.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work with the IFI to further develop the concept of the salmon tours of the weir, and workable solutions for delivering the experience on a regular basis.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	IFI	Local angling clubs; MCC; Tourism operators

OUR WILD ADVENTURE – supporting initiatives	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Initiatives to strengthen Lough Conn and Lough Cullen water trail and eco-adventure</b>				
<p>Lough Conn and Lough Cullen lie between Crossmolina and Foxford. The loughs and surrounding area have been designated as a Special Protection Area under the E.U. Birds Directive, and represent one of only four breeding sites in the country for the Common Scoter. The loughs are also recognised as being of importance for wintering waterfowl. Any supporting experience that could be developed, would have to ensure that conservation of the protected species is well maintained. Efforts to develop trails adjacent to the loughs have stalled to date, highlighting the issues of sensitivity that will have to be addressed. An attempt to designate a ‘blueway’ was made in the past, but this too has not advanced. The development of any new visitor experience will have to be carefully designed in full consultation with all stakeholders, particularly NPWS, and should keep the conservation values of the SPA at the forefront of all discussions.</p>				
<p><b>Initiatives to strengthen Lough Conn and Lough Cullen water trail and eco-adventure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a cross-community stakeholder group, inclusive of NPWS, farming groups, land owners, Fáilte Ireland, and relevant activity operators to engage in preliminary discussions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Build on the recent Council proposal to develop a LIFE project in Pontoon to explore opportunities for the lakes and Drummin Woods.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review the 2021 Crossmolina to Foxford ‘Blueway’ initiative, and determine what prevented this initiative from maintaining a position in the marketplace.</li> <li>• Explore the potential to develop an appropriate water-based experience with associated elements of land-based activities, taking into account the camping facilities at Gortnor Abbey Pier, the potential to develop additional facilities at the pier, and the NPWS proposed concept for a reserve and a rare breeds base at Enniscoe House. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use the planning process to identify a location for a pontoon that is available for use on Lough Conn.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Assess suitability for new infrastructure that will provide an experience in keeping with the sensitive environment while still allowing for good access to the water.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>EXAMPLE: Acres Lake Floating Boardwalk, Ireland’s first floating boardwalk, is a 600m boardwalk in Drumshanbo and the start of a 6.5 km walking and cycling trail. Further facilities are being developed to create a new base for outdoor water-based activities such as kayaking, surfing, paddleboarding, and angling.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: <a href="#">Kristianstads Vattenriket Biosphere Reserve</a>, Sweden. The area has large areas of wetlands and coastal waterways, and is a refuge for approximately 20% of the country’s red-listed species. Long stretches of boardwalk provide access to dense willow thickets and extensive reed beds, providing many varied opportunities for nature observation, interpretation, guided activities and fishing off jetties, with kayaking permitted in many of the water channels. Activity-based ecotourism of this nature has potential for the Lough Conn/Lough Cullen setting and would add a distinctive element to the ‘wild adventure’ theme</p> </div>	<p>Short to medium term</p>	<p>NPWS</p>	<p>IFI; MCC; FI; Waterways Ireland; Knockmore/ Pontoon Development Group</p>

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>The Gaeltacht</b>				
<p>The Erris Peninsula or Iorras, forms part of the Mayo Gaeltacht. This part of North Mayo has a distinctive cultural heritage and language to offer visitors. Community identity is very strong. The wild weather that is experienced across Erris heightens the strong sense of place that visitors invariably feel. Storytelling is strong – from the ancient past to the lives of recent generations. Opportunities to engage in <i>wild adventure</i> provide an experience that feels different with the welcome spoke in Irish and the legends of the past coming through stronger than elsewhere. With a significant diaspora, many return looking to discover their <i>heritage of life, land and sea</i>.</p>				
<p><b>The Gaeltacht</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRENGTHEN BELMULLET AS A CORE HUB AND DESTINATION TOWN WITHIN THE GAELTACHT</b></p> <p>The town, which was the last of Ireland’s planned towns, is located on an isthmus between two bays – Blacksod Bay and Broadhaven Bay, and is a destination hub offering ease of access various experiences adventure and cultural experiences within the Mullet Peninsula, the northern area of Erris, Geesala and beyond the Gaeltacht into Wild Nephin National Park. Its role can be considerably strengthened through the following initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Belmullet Tidal Pool:</b> Work is set to commence on re-lining the three external faces of the tidal pool. Completion of this project will provide a memorable ‘adventure’ experience year-round, regardless of tide levels. The pool’s orientation with the western skies and evening sunsets adds to its celebrated acclaim. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explore opportunities through capital investment programmes to further improve the experience with the addition of toilet, shower and change facilities. Currently there is nowhere to change in an area that is very open and offers no privacy. Consider the potential to add a seating/refreshment area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work with the community to expand the appeal of Belmullet as a core hub and destination town within the Gaeltacht. Continue to undertake planning discussions that are focused on bringing new concepts forward. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop the proposed looped walk around the town, taking in the seascapes of both bays. Integrate this with the work that was initiated through the Destination Town initiative and continue efforts to strengthen sense of place at the harbour front as part of this circular walk.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Belmullet Water Towers:</b> the three towers, which are still in use, are a prominent landmark in the local landscape. As a blank ‘canvas’, the towers offer an opportunity to become a visual statement of aspects of life in the Gaeltacht – making them an attraction in their own right. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider working with Irish Ways and the community to identify themes that could be illustrated on the towers. Use community discussions to illustrate how art of this nature can enhance identity.</li> <li>○ Assess opportunities for developing trail access to the towers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>EXAMPLE: There is a strong Silo Art Movement in Australia which is regarded as a dynamic force of transformation and rejuvenation. The <a href="#">Australian Silo Art Trail</a> stretches over 10,000 km. The first silo was painted in 2015: <i>It is not just art; it is a resurrection, a new dawn that ushers in hope, economic vitality, and social resurgence.</i></p> </div>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>MCC</p>	<p>Turasoireacht Iorrais Teo; Údarás na Gaeltachta; Belmullet Chamber of Commerce; Uisce Éireann</p>

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
	<p><b>GOLF</b> is a significant demand generator within the Belmullet area. Carne Golf Links attracts 14,000 visitors per annum, with North America being core to its international market. For many of these overseas visitors, playing golf on the Mullet Peninsula is both an experience of <i>wild adventure</i> and an opportunity to become further immersed in the culture of the Gaeltacht. The activity has considerable potential to grow further and to contribute to the growth of the local economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the plans to develop on-site accommodation at Carne Golf Links. Bed space is limited within the area, particularly in light of the size of the wedding market in Belmullet, and new accommodation is required to grow this sector.</li> <li>• Work with Carne Golf Links in its aspirations to host the Irish Open.</li> <li>• Explore ways of elevating the Irish language within the Gaeltacht golf experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Highlight the small course at Doohoma as a distinctive experience in a stunning setting, and encourage new approaches to packaging it with a wider regional offering.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Short to medium term	Turasoireacht Iorrais Teo; Carne Golf Links	
The Gaeltacht (Catalyst)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRESENTING LOCAL LIFE IN THE GAELTACHT</b></p> <p>This initiative is primarily about stimulating a greater level of awareness on how to make experiences within the Gaeltacht distinctive. It is about bringing the language and local identity forward. It is further supported by subsequent actions relating to interpretive / visitor centres and aspects of storytelling, experience development in agritourism, the creative sector and the emphasis on biodiversity and sustainability – all elements that relate to North Mayo as a whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop a cluster-based approach</b> to enriching existing and developing new experiences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mullet Peninsula – continue to promote well-established activity operators within the peninsula and Blacksod that have a strong language focus as best practices, and support their ongoing development where feasible. In particular, assist with developing winter offerings.</li> <li>○ Gaoth Sáile / Geesala – work with the community to build up the growing sport tourism element. For many, the existing work on developing specialist training programmes and attracting clients off-season may not be regarded as tourism. Assist organisers to enhance the programming through local visits, a heightened use of Irish, and packaged experiences for family members.</li> <li>○ Cill Chomáin – work with the community to realise their aspirations for developing ecotourism and creating experiences that exemplify the local culture and traditional skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify mechanisms for assisting with the implementation of tourism actions outlined in the <i>Cill Chomáin Development Plan 2022-2026</i></li> <li>▪ Support Comhar Dún Chaocháin Teo in developing a stronger cultural-heritage / outdoor activity base at Carrowteige.</li> <li>▪ Explore new ways of animating the Táin Bó Flíodhais / Cattle Raid of Mayo story.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>		Údarás na Gaeltachta	FI; MCC; CFID Comhar Dún Chaocháin Teo; Seirbhísí Curam Chill Chomáin Cuideachta Faoi Theorainn Ratháíochta; Local community groups

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>The Gaeltacht</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<p><b>PRESENTING LOCAL LIFE IN THE GAELTACHT</b> continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rossport – work with Seirbhísí Curam Chill Chomáin Cuideachta Faoi Theorainn Rathaíochta to assist in advancing the proposed glamping and organic gardening initiative. This is being positioned as a training centre for organic food production and has the capacity to build a distinctive niche market.</li> <li>• Work with businesses and residents that are currently involved in hosting Irish language students and delivering related educational programmes, to deepen their awareness of this activity as an element of tourism and one that can be further leveraged in terms of its value to the community.</li> <li>• Ensure local festivals that highlight Gaeltacht traditions, sport and language are promoted as visitor experiences</li> <li>• Review directional signage across the Gaeltacht and engage with communities and visitors to determine the consensus regarding Irish only or bilingual signs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Install welcome signage on key access routes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Inishkea Islands – work with boat tour operators, the commonage owners, NPWS, the LIFE on Machair programme representatives, MCC and FI to agree on a sustainable approach to facilitating visits to the islands. The ground work has been established through the recent <i>Inishkea Islands Visitor Management Assessment</i> conducted through the LIFE programme, which highlights the environmental sensitivity of the islands, the impacts of recreational activity and concerns regarding visitor management, and potential measures that should be taken to address the related issues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Action the management plan through establishing consensus on the recommendations that should be progressed, and set agreements in place with relevant stakeholders. Proposed initiatives relate to signage, education, wardening of the islands, capacity decisions, the development of way-marked trails and related visitor facilities.</li> <li>○ Work through the recommendations for Blacksod Pier area, particularly the action relating to toilets, to implement initial steps to manage visitor impact on the islands.</li> <li>○ Ensure that the Irish language is incorporated into the experience, and woven into the storytelling.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Údarás na Gaeltachta</p>	<p>FI; MCC; CFID Comhar Dún Chaocháin Teo; Seirbhísí Curam Chill Chomáin Cuideachta Faoi Theorainn Rathaíochta; Local community groups; NPWS; Boat tour operators; Commonage owners</p>

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Ballina Town</b> Ballina holds a strong hub position – the gateway to North Mayo and to Mayo as a whole, with rail links to Dublin, Castlebar and Westport, and within a short distance of Ireland West Airport, Knock. It sees itself as a town that still retains the spirit of old Ireland, and one with a strong affinity with its diaspora from President Biden to the many that have returned to explore their roots. <i>Our heritage of life, land and the sea</i> is evident in the street-side murals, in scenes of anglers at the weir, and even in the stories of the past that are captured in the shop windows of business premises that have seen better times. The Ballina Town catalyst initiative seeks to build on this strong sense of authenticity and to bring to life a series of visitor experiences that will solidify its hub position.				
<b>Ballina Town</b> (Catalyst)	<p><b>BALLINA QUAY</b></p> <p>Plans to regenerate the Quay area have been in progress for a number of years. The actions recommended below reinforce existing initiatives, and present them in a broader context of regional destination development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Amenity area:</b> Continue to work on developing the amenity value of the area and its potential to become a strong micro-destination recognised for its access to water sports, quality food offerings, and distinctive business outlets with a high level of visitor appeal. A feasibility assessment may be required to fully maximise the Quay as a new amenity resource. (EXAMPLE: the new Surf Centre at Strandhill illustrates the way in which the right mix of visitor offerings and support services can have a significant catalytic impact within a destination).             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure that the public realm hard landscaping and design will draw visitors to the quay and will improve access to the water. Work towards separating motorised and foot access to heighten safety and the overall ambience of the area.</li> <li>○ Install a pontoon at the southern end to complement the new northern pontoon. This will improve access to boating, kayaking, SUP, and to dragon boats.</li> <li>○ Continue to look at options to separate water access for boats from access to non-motorised craft through the development of a new slipway.</li> <li>○ Continue to look at options for boat storage, including containers and/or the Kennedy Glasgow House.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Connectivity:</b> Develop a summary plan that presents the active transportation routes designed to connect the Quay with the proposed pedestrian/cycle link to Belleek Woods and to the town centre, and work towards improving the linkages as project funding becomes available.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explore use of the embankment for pedestrian access, as an alternative to the public road.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>New attractions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with partners to develop a kayaking trail along the Moy Estuary linking the Quay to Killala. This in turn could be used to develop a kayak and cycle trail between the two harbour areas, where visitors could kayak one way and return by bike along the Monasteries of the Moy recreational trail through Belleek Woods.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Short term / ongoing	MCC	FI; Waterways Ireland

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>Ballina Town</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<p><b>BALLINA QUAY</b> continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Salmon Life Centre Concept:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Re-assess the concept of the Salmon Life Centre as a new visitor experience that has the potential to fit well with The Ballina Quay development – possibly within the Kennedy Glasgow House. This concept has scored highly on Fáilte Ireland’s platform for growth indices, and the centre would have the opportunity to present many themes that would resonate with the visitor, and would complement other interpretive themes in the interpretive/visitor centre network. Examples include the story of climate and environmental change on the salmon, scientific research on the salmon and sea trout, mythology of the salmon, and the story of salmon around the world. Connecting with live under-water camera links at the new ‘ship to reef’ diving experience in Killala Bay would add a distinctive element to the attraction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>An attraction of this nature would solidify Ballina’s position as Ireland’s salmon capital and would provide new opportunities to twin with other wild salmon capitals, such as Ketchikan, Alaska and Campbell River in British Columbia, Canada; and Norway as the global capital in salmon farming. It is also likely to generate demand in salmon fishing and salmon charters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a small working group to re-define the concept. Consider including IFI, and relevant academic / scientific representatives.</li> </ul>	<p>Medium to longer term</p>	<p>MCC</p>	<p>FI; IFI; LEO; Academic partners</p>
	<p><b>CULTURAL QUARTER</b></p> <p>The Cultural Quarter is a multi-faceted experience that is ideally located in the centre of Ballina adjacent to the River Moy. It has the capacity to connect the future to the past, and offers a range of themes that will have wide appeal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Military Baracks:</b> Continue to work collaboratively to animate the Square through a programme of events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Highlight the story through interpretation as part of a Cultural Quarter Trail that focuses on pulling the attractions together into a more holistic cultural experience.</li> <li>○ Highlight examples of innovation through temporary exhibits to create interest and pride in the achievements of the Ballina business sector.</li> <li>○ Use temporary exhibits to promote progress of Ballina in other areas of advancement such as active transportation plans and achievements, or sustainability objectives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>MCC</p>	<p>Mayo North Tourism; Ballina Chamber of Commerce</p>

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>Ballina Town</b> (Catalyst)</p>	<p><b>CULTURAL QUARTER</b> continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MARY ROBINSON CENTRE: consider repositioning the concept to heighten the significance of the centre in relation to leadership, sustainability, climate change, and human rights. As a centre focused on the principle of meitheal, it has the capacity to be an international gathering place for discussions of global significance – a centre of dialogue in all the areas of life that have been core to Mary Robinson. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with partners to develop a programme of events and research that will attract new markets to Ballina.</li> <li>○ Support events at the centre with a packaging of North Mayo experiences that reflect event themes.</li> <li>○ Highlight the connectivity with the river, and continue to develop the garden area as a reflective space.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• GARDA BUILDING: continue to work towards developing the Garda Building as a new cultural centre with a focus on the visual arts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with the Mary Robinson Centre to build connectivity between the two buildings. Physical connections can be further enhanced through programming that brings the two facilities together.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• JACKIE CLARKE COLLECTION: work towards updating the brand proposition to create greater resonance with the marketplace, particularly international markets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Highlight the success of the award-winning heritage garden for its excellence in sustainability practices and as an oasis within an urban setting, and continue to promote its educational role.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• BALLINA ARTS CENTRE: the centre contributes significantly to the cultural vibrancy of Ballina through a wide range of arts from contemporary to classical, and has a stunning location overlooking the river towards the weir. Nevertheless, it has virtually no pedestrian footfall from the street and is unlikely to be readily perceived as part of the Cultural Quarter. A trail initiative and new branded signage should be carefully designed to integrate this important offering into the wider cultural concept.</li> <li>• BECKETT HOUSE: continue to explore options for this building that complement the Cultural Quarter experiences.</li> <li>• Work with MCC to review amenity and conceptual design for the proposed redevelopment site at the back of Tesco. Work towards creating connectivity between any tourism elements and the Cultural Quarter, to create an integrated Ballina visitor space.</li> <li>• Work through Ballina Flood Relief Scheme to maximise the enhancements of the riverside area and its connections through treed space back into the Cultural Quarter.</li> <li>• FESTIVALS: Use events such as the Ballina Salmon Festival, the longest running community event on the Wild Atlantic Way, to highlight the community’s heritage and cultural neighbourhoods, and to elevate Ballina’s position on the Wild Atlantic Way.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	MCC	Mayo North Tourism

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Ballina Town</b> (Catalyst)	<p><b>BELLEEK WOODS</b></p> <p>The 200-acre site is one of Europe’s largest urban woodlands. It offers an exceptional experience of Irish woodlands and their native wildlife within walkable access of the centre of Ballina, with walking and cycle trails that connect through to the Monasteries of the Moy recreational trail. The rich cultural heritage of the area, Belleek Castle and the associated restaurants, the Distillery, and the intent to prioritise an active transportation cycling link between the Quay and Belleek Woods Work are all working together to position Belleek Woods as a core tourism asset of Ballina and North Mayo.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake an assessment of the arrival experience into the Woods and determine whether there is potential to create a stronger tree-lined arrival route. The current access route provides an underwhelming approach.</li> <li>• Explore new uses of the restored Gate Lodge that complement Ballina’s <i>heritage of life, land and sea</i>.</li> <li>• Continue to work on trail maintenance, signage and general orientation (particularly at point of arrival).</li> <li>• Continue to work on the restoration of the pond, and develop interpretive panels that will highlight the related themes of sustainability and biodiversity.</li> <li>• Continue to work on the preservation and presentation of local heritage elements, including the Hermitage, the boathouse and the graveyard.</li> </ul>	Short to medium term	MCC; Coillte	Belleek Woods Enhancement Group

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Killala Town</b>				
Killala is the first town in the county to be chosen to develop a Town Centre First Plan. It has focused on creating a destination – a place with a range of experiences that call out its <i>heritage of life, land and sea</i> and will entice visitors to stay over rather than simply driving through. This DEDP supports the implementation of the Town Centre First Plan, with a particular emphasis on the following projects given their likely wider catalytic impact.				
	<p><b>TOWER HUB INITIATIVE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the re-imagination of the Tower Bar as an orientation point to the town’s heritage, biodiversity and its perspective on sustainability; and, as a community hub that will stimulate social engagement and learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assist with developing interpretive themes for its integrated Killala Story Space. This will provide an ideal opportunity to bring forward the themes relating to Killala, including the Souterrain, the Humbert theme and the story of the French invasion, the monastic heritage and neolithic archaeology. Killala sits adjacent to the largest monastic cluster in the country and within an area that has a high density of ring forts, and is therefore well located to bring these themes to life through static and audio-visual interpretation, guided activities, events and storytelling.</li> <li>○ Similarly, the town’s emphasis on wind power and its diversity of ecosystems and designated sites provides a strong basis for bringing these themes to the fore, and celebrating local aspirations and achievements.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work with partners to develop a programme of tourism education and training.</li> <li>• Position the Tower Hub as a staging point for new guided experiences within Killala and beyond. Work towards developing new guides and provide the mechanisms for promoting and booking local experiences.</li> </ul>	Short to medium term	MCC	Killala Tourism Group; FI
	<p><b>KILLALA PIER AREA</b></p> <p>The Killala Town Centre First Plan has a series of recommendations designed to revitalise the harbour area, improve the public realm and strengthen connectivity with the town centre. All of these actions will support the objectives of this DEDP. In particular, the following are highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to explore options for the sensitive development of the community council owned land on Geyerris Head as a small-scale campervan and camping site, with shower and toilet facilities. These facilities could also be used to service visitors arriving by yacht and those using the pier area to access water sports. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the short term, develop provisional camping facilities at the Community Centre. (In both cases consider the Rosses Point and Strandhill model which sees user fees being invested back into maintenance of the site and into wider aspects of community tourism).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Medium term	MCC	Killala Tourism Group

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
Killala Town (Catalyst)	<p><b>KILLALA PIER AREA</b> continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support the feasibility and environmental assessments that will arise from pursuing this initiative given that the community land is located within the Killala Bay / Moy Estuary Special Area of Conservation. Elements of the site are reclaimed land from former dredging activity – careful attention needs to be directed towards mitigating any likely environmental impact on the adjacent sand and mudflats.</li> <li>• Explore options to purchase fresh catch at the pier and/or a seafood experience.</li> <li>• Continue discussions regarding accessibility from the sea into the harbour area. A preliminary dredging report has been prepared. The last dredging maintenance took place in the 1990s. With some degree of dredging, it would be possible to open up Killala to additional boat traffic and to create boating access to Moyne Abbey. This in turn could strengthen the concept of a water recreational trail between Ballina Quay and Killala. It would also provide an opportunity for tender vessels to transport passengers from smaller berthed cruise ships in the Bay, as a more sheltered option to Kilcummin.</li> </ul> <p>The development of a walking trail and boardwalk to Ross Beach (see page 31) would further strengthen the pier area as the starting point.</p>	Medium term	MCC	Killala Tourism Group
	<p><b>MONASTERIES OF THE MOY</b></p> <p>The monasteries represent one of the most concentrated monastic archaeological clusters in the country and a key asset in the story of North Mayo.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners, including MCC and OPW to prepare a strategy for the ongoing development of the visitor experience, including access, interpretation, directional signage, infrastructure for cyclists, and the potential for outdoor events. Establish a strong vision for this experience.</li> <li>• Link the story back to the ruined Augustinian Abbey beside St Muiredach’s Cathedral in Ballina.</li> <li>• Work through the proposed Killala Tower Hub initiative to support storytelling, both at the hub building and through guided services.</li> <li>• Progress the work on improving access and parking at Moyne Abbey, and improve access to Rosserk Abbey.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	MCC	FI; OPW

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – supporting initiatives:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>SUPPORTING INITIATIVES</b>				
<b>Networking storytelling and visitor/interpretive centres</b>				
<p>The breadth of stories in North Mayo and the region’s commitment and investment to telling its story is remarkable and is a particularly distinguishing characteristic. Stories of the past and the present are relayed through an extensive number of visitor and interpretive centres, themed trails and interpreted sites on the ground, and in the murals on the walls. The real potential now lies in connecting the themes and sites more effectively to create greater critical mass for each story, and to work towards positioning the visitor centres as a network that encourages the visitor to keep exploring elements of interest, in addition to other aspects of the Mayo story.</p>				
<p><b>Networking storytelling and visitor/interpretive centres</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a mapped database of the story elements across the region, identifying where the stories are presented to the visitor. Key themes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Legends and mythology – the Children of Lir, St. Deirbhile, stories related to Neolithic promontory forts – e.g. Dún Briste, which means "broken fort" / associated with St. Patrick, Fionn mac Cumhaill (Lough Conn and Lough Cullin), and the Táin Bó Fliodhaise Cattle Raid</li> <li>❖ The Neolithic sites and the wider story of early agriculture – e.g. Belderrig, Blanemore;</li> <li>❖ Sacred landscapes of early ecclesiastica heritage and Patrician sites, and medieval monastic heritage;</li> <li>❖ Lighthouses and coastguard stations;</li> <li>❖ The French invasion and the story of General Humbert;</li> <li>❖ The story of Admiral Brown;</li> <li>❖ The Spanish Armada;</li> <li>❖ Political figures past and present – Michael Davitt, Mary Robinson</li> <li>❖ Emigration and genealogy</li> <li>❖ Military themes – the middle ages through to the Second World War, including the legacy of the look-out posts;</li> <li>❖ Social enterprise – past and present (Foxford Woollen Mill, Solas);</li> <li>❖ The environmental theme, including climate change, biodiversity / rewilding / rewetting the bogs; rare breeds (Irish Moiled Cattle and Cladoir Sheep); regenerative farming practices; renewable energy / wind farms; and the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve initiative.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop new collateral that presents the key themes and stories of North Mayo and where each one can be explored. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Highlight the linkages between interpretive / visitor centres and sites on the ground that present more of the same story.</li> <li>○ Position the interpretive / visitor centres as points on a journey of discovery, rather than stand-alone attractions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI / MCC	Turasoireacht Iorrais Teo; Mayo North Tourism

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – supporting initiatives:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner														
<p><b>Networking storytelling and visitor/interpretive centres</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with themes to explore ways of consolidating disparate elements into a stronger and more cohesive offering that will encourage extended lengths of stay. Assess interest for building a network of interpretive centres/themed attractions to work on the wider North Mayo story.</li> </ul> <p>The emigration and genealogy theme is an example of one that can be explored from different angles and in different places. Elements include:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>❖ Solas Visitor Centre</td> <td>❖ Addergoole Titanic Memorial Park</td> </tr> <tr> <td>❖ North Mayo Heritage Centre</td> <td>❖ James Hack Tuke story of assisted emigration</td> </tr> <tr> <td>❖ Blacksod Memorial Garden – the story of the emigrant ships</td> <td>❖ Potato pickers and links with Scotland</td> </tr> <tr> <td>❖ CFID database for those that left from Blacksod</td> <td>❖ Story of the strip farms and Tubary rights at Geesala</td> </tr> <tr> <td>❖ Blacksod Bay <a href="#">song</a></td> <td>❖ Hills of Bones – history in the language / Cnoc na gCnámh</td> </tr> <tr> <td>❖ Resource publications: e.g. <i>The Placenames and Heritage of Dun Chaocháin; Cill Ghallagáin Graveyard</i></td> <td>❖ Deserted village of Attymass – the links with North America – Irish Hunger Memorial in NY State, Scranton etc.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>❖ Moygownagh – the work of St Cormac's (Heritage) Society – including the ANSEO project</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With this particular theme, consider establishing a working group of ‘experts’ from across North Mayo to discuss ways of strengthening existing saleable experiences and encouraging further exploration of North Mayo.</li> <li>• Reassess the Humbert theme and its presence on the ground (Kilcummin, Killala, Ballina, Lahardane, into Castlebar). This storyline has had stronger traction in the past, and has seen a level of revival with the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary events of the French Landing. Assuming that the theme may find a base in the proposed Killala Tower Hub, explore the potential to strengthen its presence on the ground through new way marking or through the development of an annual hiking event.</li> <li>• Explore further development options for the Táin Bó Flíodhaise Cattle Raid story and develop a preliminary feasibility plan on its potential as an attractor.</li> <li>• Liaise with Irish Lights to explore tourism options for Ballyglass Lighthouse and ways of heightening the story of lighthouses and coastguard stations within Erris.</li> <li>• Continue to support the community in Foxford with strengthening the Admiral Brown story. Focus on developing significant recognition in 2027 – the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. Work with MCC to identify possible locations for the former museum.</li> </ul>	❖ Solas Visitor Centre	❖ Addergoole Titanic Memorial Park	❖ North Mayo Heritage Centre	❖ James Hack Tuke story of assisted emigration	❖ Blacksod Memorial Garden – the story of the emigrant ships	❖ Potato pickers and links with Scotland	❖ CFID database for those that left from Blacksod	❖ Story of the strip farms and Tubary rights at Geesala	❖ Blacksod Bay <a href="#">song</a>	❖ Hills of Bones – history in the language / Cnoc na gCnámh	❖ Resource publications: e.g. <i>The Placenames and Heritage of Dun Chaocháin; Cill Ghallagáin Graveyard</i>	❖ Deserted village of Attymass – the links with North America – Irish Hunger Memorial in NY State, Scranton etc.	❖ Moygownagh – the work of St Cormac's (Heritage) Society – including the ANSEO project		Ongoing	FI / MCC	<p>Visitor centres; Local community groups and heritage groups; Irish Lights; SWMDC; Mayo North East Leader; Bord na Móna; Údarás na Gaeltachta</p>
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OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – supporting initiatives:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>Networking storytelling and visitor/interpretive centres</b></p>	<p><b>INTERPRETIVE / VISITOR CENTRES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a full inventory of all the interpretive/visitor centres in terms of thematic content, visitor services and facilities, and programming. Use this assessment to highlight gaps, opportunities and new ways of leveraging the centres as a network of experiences.</li> <li>• Consider ticketing options that would encourage visits to multiple centres. Where feasible, use centres as booking locations for extended guided experiences and activities allowing visitors to explore key themes beyond the walls of the centre</li> <li>• SOLAS: this is the tourism hub for the Mullet Peninsula – ensure that it has a strong food offering that is focused on local foods and well networked with local suppliers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work towards developing an innovative programme of activities and events that will raise the profile of the centre and increase footfall, including a new AV/AR experience. Any programme of events should be integrated into a wider programme of events offered by other centres within the network.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• MICHAEL DAVITT MUSEUM: explore options to move forward with the initiatives that the Museum itself is proposing, including the need for a reconfiguration of existing space, a refresh of the exhibits and implementation of the 2024 interpretation plan, and the potential for a new auditorium.</li> <li>• NORTH MAYO HERITAGE CENTRE: explore opportunities to further upgrade the centre and its storytelling role in rural traditions. Continue to expand its profile in geneology.</li> <li>• FOXFORD WOOLLEN MILL: consider the potential for developing new higher-end exclusive experiences that will give a small group a private and immersive experience, in addition to the current tours.</li> <li>• OWENINNY: continue to develop and implement the proposed recreation plan to further diversify the experience and broaden the centre’s appeal.</li> <li>• Work with bespoke operators to develop new Wild Mayo themed tours that take in a number of centres in any given tour.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>EXAMPLE – innovative thinking in visitor centre programming:  The Seamus Heaney Home Place in Northern Ireland exemplifies a multi-faceted approach to programme delivery. In addition to its exhibitions, the centre offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A comprehensive events programme of artists, writers, visionary thinkers, and family activities, with many of the events being held in the evening and the weekend year-round.</li> <li>❖ A ‘Creative Zone’ to encourage people to explore the life and works of Seamus Heaney through engaging in arts and craft-based activities, using Seamus Heaney’s work as a source of inspiration.</li> <li>❖ Workshops and targeted lectures for schools that align with the curriculum.</li> <li>❖ ‘Open Ground’ – a series of Open Ground guided tours that give visitors the opportunity to visit sites beyond the centre to discover how these locations held significance for Seamus Heaney.</li> <li>❖ On-line ticketing for all saleable experiences.</li> </ul> </div>	Ongoing	FI	MCC; Údarás na Gaeltachta; Visitor centres/ attractions

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – supporting initiatives:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Strengthening emerging sectors</b>				
<p>The opportunity to experience <i>our heritage of life, land and sea</i> can be found in a number of emerging areas. The creative arts sector has particular strengths and has a very strong connection to the landscape. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, artists were drawn to Connemara. Today, the destination of choice is Mayo, and North Mayo in particular, where its scenic wildness, its light, the colours of the landscape and its elemental qualities have attracted many. Visitors have growing opportunities to interact with the creative sector and are increasingly able to look at the environment from the artist’s perspective.</p>				
<p>In contrast, experiencing the produce of the land and the sea is more difficult in North Mayo and there are surprisingly few opportunities to connect directly with producers despite the strong presence of farming and fishing within the wider area. Addressing this weakness will fill a gap and will present a different aspect of North Mayo’s <i>life, land and sea</i> to the visitor.</p>				
<p>A third area where there is a clear strength to build on, moving forward, is in relation to the clearly recognised ecological value of North Mayo and the underlying ethos of sustainability. Large tracts of land and water are designated for their environmental significance, and the value of the extensive stretches of Atlantic blanket peat bog as areas critical for carbon sequestration as come to the fore. On the basis of these inherent strengths, there is considerable scope to attract the ecotourism market and to develop new guided experiences that will resonate with the interests of this sector. Many of the interpretive elements that relate to the environmental theme are already in place. The initiatives recommended below are designed to add value to these elements.</p>				
	<p><b>THE CREATIVE ARTS SECTOR</b></p> <p>Tír Sáile represents North Mayo’s iconic expression of the artist’s interpretation of the landscape and mythology through sculpture. The sculpture trail was established in 1993 and is the largest public arts trail ever undertaken in Ireland. It currently consists of 11 works between Killala and Blacksod. Over time, many of the works have fallen into disrepair and the trail no longer enjoys the same degree of recognition or visibility. There is still a high level of pride and commitment to the trail, and a full review was undertaken in 2024 to assess how it could be elevated again as a key product offering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the findings of the report – <i>A Review of the Tír Sáile Sculpture Trail</i>. This should include the recommended decommissionings of sites that have been lost to the landscape, the repair actions, and improvements to interpretation and signage. Access and road repair issues need to be addressed, and new marketing collateral should be developed.</li> <li>• Reposition the trail to include the Spirit of Place sculptures, highlighting the evolution of the original trail in the interpretive overview.</li> <li>• The review recommends the addition of audio narratives at the various sites. This should include the option of listening to the narrative in the Irish language for all the installations in the Gaeltacht.</li> <li>• As recommended in the report, consider further enhancing the experience through AR and digital storytelling.</li> <li>• Assess options for improving inclusion and accessibility for all.</li> <li>• Use all arts facilities and visitor centres to promote the Tír Sáile experience.</li> </ul>	Short term	MCC	FI; Údarás na Gaeltachta; Mayo Creative Network; Arts Council of Ireland; Arts centres

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – supporting initiatives:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>Strengthening emerging sectors</b></p>	<p><b>THE CREATIVE ARTS SECTOR</b> continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards identifying strategies that will further strengthen the arts in existing centres and explore the economic return that is generated through the arts. There are already strong linkages with North America (Ballinlen Arts Foundation), Dublin (potentially through the proposition for the new cultural centre to be housed in the barracks building in Ballina), and with the wider regional market (the Ballina Arts Centre), while Áras Inis Gluaire in Belmullet is Ireland’s only bilingual arts centre with deep diaspora connections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Establish an arts working group that can identify ways of leveraging the region’s artistic strengths to extend the length of stay. The galleries can play a role similar to the visitor centres in encouraging movement around the region.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• While the arts in North Mayo have always drawn their inspiration from the landscape, the synergy between the arts and the environment has intensified and provides a strong basis of differentiation. The emerging artistic voices and forms of dialogue are expressing the bio-cultural identity of North Mayo in exciting new ways, and are playing a stronger role in elevating environmental issues. These trends have the potential to significantly underpin potential work on the proposed UNESCO Biosphere Reserve initiative – see page 47. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explore the feasibility of presenting <i>Art in the Landscape Festival of Change</i> on an ongoing basis – whether in the original format or an adapted format that can be sustained more readily. The inaugural two-day event was hosted in both Offaly and North Mayo in 2024, offering a diverse range of opportunities for participants to discuss art in the landscape, experience different forms of artistic expression inspired by landscape, and gain insights on place-making through art.</li> <li>○ Promote the intrinsic value and the activities relating to new forms of environmental dialogue through the arts. These are already happening at community level (e.g. the Creative Ireland BluePrint project that looked at climate change and flooding in Crossmolina together with communities in Northern Ireland), and have the potential to generate new market interest and overnight stays from non-traditional markets.</li> <li>○ Similarly, promote the work of Wilderland project - a public art and community ecology project in Mayo that is using creative processes and art in the landscape to deepen people’s appreciation of their environment, including processes such as rewilding Wild Nephin National Park. Opening these events to the visitor has significant potential to deepen their relationship with both place and community, and will likely generate repeat visitation from the domestic market. It will also highlight North Mayo’s core commitment to sustainability.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work with artisans to identify bespoke opportunities that will profile traditional skills and offer enriched experiences. Examples include the story of wool processing (Carrowteige and Ballycastle), and the potential for a lace-making activity in Belmullet.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>FI</p>	<p>MCC;  Údarás na Gaeltachta;  Mayo Creative Network;  Arts Council of Ireland;  Creative Ireland;  NPWS;  Arts centres;  Local arts and artisan groups</p>

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – supporting initiatives:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>Strengthening emerging sectors</b></p>	<p><b>AGRITOURISM AND LOCAL FOODS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the gaps in this area of experiences through working with emerging entrepreneurs and identifying new potential business operators – with a focus on a cluster-based approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Build on the work of businesses that are showing a strong commitment to regenerative farming and sustainability practices. Examples include the organic garden at North Mayo Heritage Centre, the Elly Bay Farm, the potential horticultural business at Rossport, and producers such as Black Book Foods. Consider developing new training/learning experiences around these businesses that would add value to their existing activities and could offer the potential for new overnight stays.</li> <li>○ Develop a training programme that highlights good practice elsewhere. Knocknarea Farm in Strandhill, for example, not only provides an opportunity to buy organic produce direct, but also offers foraging tours and ‘pop-up’ overnight immersive retreats. Similarly, but on a much larger scale, Glen Keen Farm at Louisburgh provides a multi-faceted agritourism experience that integrates tourism with agriculture and conservation in an innovative and award-winning way.</li> <li>○ Work with farm businesses to explore appropriate options for developing farm-based accommodation and low-service facilities to expand opportunities for visitors to in rural settings.</li> <li>○ Develop and pilot a cluster-based mentorship programme. Participants could be selected on the basis of application. The programme should work through developing a market-ready, shelf-stable product to offer local markets and/or an immersive experience on the farm, from initial business concept to piloted market entry.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>EXAMPLE: The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission in British Columbia, Canada has been highly successful at developing and delivering an Agriculture to Agri-Tourism Programme – the first of its kind in the province. A customised agri-tourism business planning guide, site visits, a speaker series, and one-on-one business coaching over a four- month process has seen the initiation of many new agri-tourism products and experiences. The programme has matured and evolved into an online programme offered by the regional destination marketing organisation.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with existing restaurants and local suppliers to strengthen the presence of local foods in restaurant menus. Opportunities to eat local fish are very limited, and discussions are required to explore new ways of addressing this gap.</li> <li>• Work with distilleries to promote related tours, tastings and visitor experiences.</li> <li>• Continue to highlight and build experiences around local products and achievements, such as brown bread (Pulathomas), seaweed soda bread (Belmullet), honey mead (Carrowteige), Erris lamb; and work with distillery and brewery businesses to bring new recognition to the region’s spirits and beers.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI	North Mayo Heritage Centre; Local producers; Irish Farmers Association

OUR HERITAGE OF LIFE, LAND AND SEA – supporting initiatives:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<p><b>Strengthening emerging sectors</b></p>	<p><b>ECOTOURISM AND BIODIVERSITY</b></p> <p>The ecological value of the North Mayo landscapes is well recognised and large tracts are designated areas under EU and national legislation. While developing experiences in these areas has to be handled with a keen awareness for their environmental sensitivity, it also highlights an opportunity for low-impact ecotourism and educational tourism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to encourage communities, such as Ballycastle, that have developed strong educational markets for field studies to build new academic links and to explore ways of enhancing the destination experience for the incoming ‘field-students’.</li> <li>• Work with registered tour guides to identify opportunities for bookable eco-tours. Guided bird watching in particular, offers scope for further growth. Enhancing these eco-tour experiences with opportunities to engage in local community activities will further strengthen the offering for this niche market.</li> <li>• Work with the Clew Bay Tourism Network and related partners to explore the opportunity to advance the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve concept – with the possible intent of extending its boundaries into North Mayo. As has been documented in the Preliminary Scoping/Feasibility Study for the proposed Biosphere Reserve, the concept has significant potential to further shape and underpin tourism offerings that promote the ecological and bio-cultural values of the area. Biosphere Reserves elsewhere, including all that were documented in the case-studies, have used the UNESCO designation to further develop sustainable tourism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The recommendations for the creative arts sector and for agritourism and local foods could all gain uplift from this designation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support Mayo NE in their exploratory enquiries to look at developing a centre that focuses on the theme of bog restoration – potentially in Bangor Erris. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with partners to develop and promote opportunities to engage in regenerative activities, such as eradication of invasive species, and bog restoration.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Dark Skies – work with Ballycastle and Belmullet to position the towns as northern gateways to the Mayo Dark Skies Park. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with Mayo Dark Sky Park to coordinate promotion of events.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI	CCCC; NPWS; Clew Bay Tourism Network; Mayo North East

OUR VIBRANT AND CONNECTED DESTINATION – catalyst projects:		Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Accommodation</b>					
The Fáilte Ireland Accommodation Supply and Pipeline analysis conducted across Co. Mayo in April 2025 highlighted the need for additional stock aligned with the nature of the tourism product across accommodation types. Gaps and shortfalls in coastal and rural areas in particular need to be addressed, although the situation will improve somewhat as national policies on housing for international protection applicants are further reformed.					
<b>Accommodation</b> (Catalyst)	<b>STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOCUS</b> To position North Mayo as a premier destination along the Wild Atlantic Way, Fáilte Ireland will work closely with the local authority to support the stimulation of new accommodation across North Mayo. This will involve actively pursuing the development of distinctive, high-quality accommodation offerings that reflect the region’s unique character through focusing on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and enabling strategic sites for eco-lodges, boutique guesthouses, and heritage conversions that align with the area's natural and cultural assets.</li> <li>• Engaging with investors and developers to promote innovative models such as glamping, wellness retreats, and experiential stays that appeal to emerging market segments.</li> <li>• Supporting planning and infrastructure readiness to fast-track viable projects, particularly in underutilized or high-potential areas.</li> <li>• Collaborating with local communities to ensure developments are sustainable, inclusive, and contribute to year-round tourism.</li> <li>• Collaborating with An Bord Pleanála and MCC to address the growing interest in nature-immersed accommodation experiences in remote areas. Opportunities exist for innovative glamping facilities, often as a form of agritourism, though current planning policies may limit potential.</li> </ul>		Ongoing	FI	MCC
	<b>SERVICED, OUTDOOR AND HOLIDAY LET ACCOMMODATION</b> Additional specific initiatives include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging current accommodation businesses to invest in upgrades and extensions, such as those needed to support the golf market and Carne Golf Links.</li> <li>• Identifying strategies to reopen or redevelop stalled projects or closed premises.</li> <li>• Highlight options for increasing hostel accommodation in areas offering wild adventure, focusing on communities like Killala, Ballycastle, Belmullet, and Bangor Erris. This includes regenerating and repurposing buildings no longer in commercial use, such as the old grain store in Killala and the disused building at Bellacorick.</li> <li>• Support the proposed renovation and development of Kilmurray Yards as a multi-faceted accommodation concept, recognising that it strongly aligns with the experiential themes in this plan and has the potential to strengthen the offering in the Crossmolina area with its distinctive focus on wellness.</li> </ul>		Ongoing	FI MCC	Accommodation providers

OUR VIBRANT AND CONNECTED DESTINATION – catalyst projects:		Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
Accommodation (Catalyst)	<p><b>CAMPING AND MOTORHOME INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p> <p>There is a distinct shortage of camping infrastructure across North Mayo and a growing issue of wild camping in sensitive and scenic areas, such as Rinroe Beach. The lack of managed toilets or waste disposal services in many areas exacerbates the situation and increases the negative environmental impact.</p> <p>Support communities and private investors in increasing camping facilities from a policy perspective, such as proposed initiatives for Killala Pier, Rossport, and Belmullet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage further development of facilities at informal field sites, particularly those near towns and villages with supporting food and drink options, such as in Ballycastle.</li> <li>• Promote the development and use of legitimate waste management ('sani-dump') facilities for campervans. For example, RV Dump Sites Sites (<a href="https://rvdumpsites.net/">https://rvdumpsites.net/</a>) provides a searchable database of facilities across North America with user-generated content.</li> </ul>		Ongoing	FI MCC	

OUR VIBRANT AND CONNECTED DESTINATION – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Building Capacity</b> A competitive destination requires a clear focus on growing the capabilities of the tourism industry and ensuring that communities, local government, agencies and local organisations are all working together to deliver memorable experiences based on the principles of the VICE model. Real progress will only be made when there is a balanced and sustainable approach that benefits the visitor, the industry, the community and the environment in a harmonious manner. This requires working together to build capacity, communicate progress, understand impact, and collaborate to initiate meaningful action.				
<b>Building capacity</b> (Catalyst)	<b>LEADERSHIP AND NETWORKING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a North Mayo Implementation Working Group that can assess the implementation of the DEDP and determine the necessary actions to secure success on an ongoing basis. The structure and approach taken in Clew Bay with the establishment of the Clew Bay Tourism Network (CBTN) should be mirrored in North Mayo with cross-sector representation to enable good dialogue between all key tourism actors.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure that the two groups work together on projects that benefit both regions, such as Dark Skies, the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve initiative, and inter-regional trails projects.</li> <li>○ Adopt a similar approach to the Clew Bay Tourism Network in areas relating to networking, reporting of progress and overall communication. The monthly news bulletins that the CBTN produces on industry-related news, the progress reports on the DEDP’s implementation, and the online posting of the reports and initiatives arising from the implementation of the DEDP keeps everyone up to date, and generates both pride in overall accomplishment and a sense of momentum arising from such progress.</li> <li>○ Hold an annual North Mayo networking meeting to review implementation of the DEDP.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to build on the initiation of county-wide networking events – both across the county and within the North Mayo region. Creating a networking platform will foster partnerships and provide new opportunities for cross-selling between sectors – particularly between accommodation businesses and activity operators.</li> <li>• Combine networking events with local familiarisation tours to increase industry knowledge.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI	
	<b>CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Fáilte Ireland to engage industry in business support programmes relating to climate, digitisation, accommodation development, people and performance and commercial resilience.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In particular, encourage uptake in Fáilte Ireland’s industry digitalisation initiatives to improve visibility of North Mayo’s visitor experiences, and to enhance bookability. The national emphasis on encouraging the establishment of national booking platforms will boost operational efficiencies. Businesses will be assisted in developing a bespoke digital transformation roadmap and action plan, and will be given one-to-one support designed to move entrepreneurs along the journey of maturity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI	

OUR VIBRANT AND CONNECTED DESTINATION – catalyst projects:	Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>Building capacity</b> (Catalyst)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage increased participation on existing booking platforms.</li> <li>• Adopt a cluster development approach to support emerging new niche sectors. Three key areas include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agri-tourism: this potential sector needs an entrepreneurial development programme that will highlight new opportunities and nurture innovative thinking and business development on a one-to-one basis.</li> <li>○ The Gaeltacht: work with Údarás na Gaeltachta to facilitate the initiatives recommended for supporting adventure operators and community groups seeking to strengthen local heritage experiences.</li> <li>○ Activity operators bring value to the overall development of tourism. Target special interest groups, such as local walking and hiking groups, other activity groups, heritage groups and conservation groups to identify potential opportunities for promoting new and strengthening existing business development. Here again, niche sector training will be required.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work through networking and mentorship programmes to create composite offerings and to strengthen emerging clusters. These programmes should also address succession planning and ways of attracting the next generation into the tourism industry.</li> <li>• Strengthen existing image banks with imagery that depicts the sense of wildness and wilderness found in North Mayo, and ensure that images relating to all aspects of <i>our heritage of life, land and sea</i> are maximised to portray the dynamic offering that is available.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure that there is representative imagery of accessible and inclusive tourism.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work across industry to encourage participation in Fáilte Ireland’s Climate Action Programme.</li> <li>• Encourage industry’s participation in training that relates to accessibility and inclusion.</li> <li>• Work with communities and businesses to explore ways of strengthening niche markets. Many communities are already tapping into such markets (education and field studies, diaspora and genealogy, Argentina, the UK angling market). It is likely that with a more strategic approach, these markets could be further leveraged.</li> <li>• Continue to work closely with Mayo North Tourism to build a strong regional marketing voice, and work collaboratively to strengthen a coordinated approach at trade shows and events such as Meitheal.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI	Údarás na Gaeltachta; Local Enterprise Offices; Mayo North Tourism; Mayo NE; SWMDC

OUR VIBRANT AND CONNECTED DESTINATION – catalyst projects:		Actions	Timeframe	Lead	Partner
<b>SUPPORTING INITIATIVES</b>					
<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>		Ongoing	FI; MCC	Bus Éireann; TII: Ireland West Airport, Knock
	<p><b>TRANSPORT TO NORTH MAYO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Bus Éireann and TII to explore opportunities to strengthen timely bus connections with Ireland West Airport, Knock. In particular, assess and strengthen linkages with flights from the UK.</li> <li>• Encourage dialogue between public transport to streamline time-tabling to facilitate convenient movement from one form of transport to another to complete a journey.</li> <li>• Continue to promote direct rail linkages with Dublin, and the opportunities to travel by train within the county.</li> </ul>				
	<p><b>ACCESS WITHIN NORTH MAYO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Bus Éireann and/or Local Link to create new public transport linkages along the north coastal route with a particular emphasis on supporting the Céide Coast Path. Ideally this service should be a flexible pick-up and drop-off service.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>EXAMPLE: Translink Ulsterbus 402 Causeway Rambler to the Giant’s Causeway – this is a daily bus service running between Coleraine and Ballycastle along the Causeway Coast Area. A dedicated <a href="#">webpage</a> highlights all the details, including the following: <i>The Ulsterbus 402 runs scheduled half-hourly departures, and covers a total of 12 stops in each direction....from.... 9:20 am (to) 7:20pm. Other than the Giant’s Causeway, the Ulsterbus 402 also covers prominent locations such as Portrush, Dunluce Castile, Bushmills, Dunseverick Castle, and Ballintoy (Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge).</i></p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review connectivity in general and work with Bus Éireann and Local Link to address critical gaps and improve local service.</li> <li>• Conduct an assessment of all roads to key attractions and Tír Sáile installations. Prioritise repair issues on roads such as to Doohoma Discovery Point, and the access to Kilcummin loop walk.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to improve/recreate access to viewsapes for visitors touring North Mayo – for example, the R310 as it runs parallel to Lough Conn.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to open up and/or improve opportunities to pull off the road to appreciate the panoramic views – for example, along the N59. Where there are existing pull-offs that provide a significant view, assess the potential to improve the experience through interpretation.</li> <li>• Work with relevant agencies such as the Irish Wheelchair Association and the National Disability Authority to conduct appraisals of accessibility at sites and attractions across the region, and address issues where feasible.</li> <li>• Work with businesses to promote digital accessibility and compliance with the EU Accessibility Act.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	FI; MCC	Bus Éireann / Local Link; TII: Irish Wheelchair Association; National Disability Authority	



# SECTION 5

## Appendices

## Appendix A – ACRONYMS

**CCCC** – Céide Coast Community Company

**CFID** – Comharchumann Forbartha Ionad Deirbhile

**FI** – Fáilte Ireland

**IFI** – Inland Fisheries Ireland

**LEO** – Local Enterprise Office

**NPWS** – National Parks and Wildlife Service

**MCC** – Mayo County Council

**OPW** – Office of Public Works

**SWMDC** – South-West Mayo Development Company



## Appendix B – SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Sustainable Tourism

Fáilte Ireland recognises that it has never been more important that the safeguarding and successful growth of Ireland’s tourism sector is based on a sustainable and balanced approach. Environmental protection, economic competitiveness, community and visitor awareness and involvement, all play a part in successfully achieving and benefiting from this approach – this is a landscape that inspires a zeal for life.

This Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) provides an opportunity to ensure that all existing and future tourism projects and initiatives within the Wild Mayo DEDP area are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner. The Plan has full consideration for the following:

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and specifically the implementation of policies to promote sustainable tourism;
- The Sustainable Tourism Working Group’s Guiding Principles; and
- The VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism

The VICE Model has been integrated into this Plan in the following way:

- Proposing the development of motivating tourism experiences that are easy to access, and should exceed **visitor** expectations;
- Building and unlocking capacity in the local tourism **industry**, increasing employment levels within the sector and supporting the development of the required skills;
- Spreading the economic and social benefits of of tourism more widely to **communities** that currently do not derive significant benefits from tourism; and
- Valuing, promoting protecting and enhancing the **environment** and heritage as the cornerstone of Irish tourism.

This Plan will enable and motivate stakeholders and industry in the area to amplify their local tourism offering. It aims to increase visits, dwell time and spend in the locality in a sustainable manner, and to maintain and enhance sustainable tourism for the North Mayo region.

Through using the VICE model as a framework for sustainable tourism planning and development, it has been possible to examine the relationships and potential conflicts between the four components, thereby assisting destination managers and policy makers in identifying critical areas and developing strategies to ensure that tourism activities are balanced and contribute positively to the long-term viability of the destination.

Ultimately sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and requires constant monitoring of impacts. With any evidence of imbalance, it becomes imperative to introduce the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures as necessary.

Sustainable tourism is also required to maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to visitors, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

Promoters/businesses shall adopt a responsible and sustainable tourism approach with ongoing monitoring of environmental impacts as appropriate, through the implementation of best practice and/or tourism guidelines: e.g. key relevant Fáilte Ireland guidance documents. These include:

- Climate Action Programme – empowering your business to become more sustainable. Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns
- Tourist Accommodation Quality Assured – code of ethics
- Sustainable Festival Guidelines 2023
- All subsequent updates to above as well as future FI guidance relating to visitor management, sustainability & environmental protection.

## Environmental Protection

The Wild Mayo DEDP provides an opportunity to ensure that all existing and future tourism projects and initiatives within the Plan area are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner. As noted, the VICE Model for Sustainable Tourism is the approach the Wild Mayo DEDP is developed from and strives to implement.

Fáilte Ireland recognises the need to integrate environmental considerations into this Plan in a way that responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. Environmental considerations including inland and coastal water quality and amenity, climate change, traffic, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, landscape, critical infrastructure and communities, all play a vital part in our tourism sector.

The protection, enhancement and promotion of our most important tourism asset – the natural environment has been an integral part of the formation of this Plan as is evidenced in this section.

## Environmental Assessment

Consideration has been given to the requirement to undertake an environmental assessment of this Plan in order to ensure full legal compliance and to further integrate sustainability, protection, enhancement and promotion of the environment in developing and implementing the Plan.

The environmental assessments undertaken to inform the development of this Plan include Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Plan was screened for the need to undertake a SEA. The process established the need to undertake a full SEA which was completed having regard to SEA Directive 2001/42/EU and to Statutory Instrument No. 435/2004 as amended.

The outcome of this process can be reviewed in the SEA Environmental Report (ER) and, once the plan is finalised, the SEA Statement that will accompany this draft Plan.

## APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA). On initial examination of the Plan and in completing screening for AA, it was determined that Stage 2 AA would be required as the possibility of significant effects on European sites could not be excluded. The assessment process was undertaken having regard to the Council Directive 92/43/EEC, the Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and the Birds Directive. The outcome of this process is the AA Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) that accompany this draft Plan.

## Key Findings of the SEA and AA Process for the Draft Plan

Having completed the full SEA and AA on the draft Wild Mayo DEDP, it is evident that these processes have had a positive influence on the evolution of the Plan and integrating environmental protection as part of the plan-making process. The SEA process will also continue to have a positive environmental influence as the plan enters its implementation phase.

The outcome of completing the environmental assessments has resulted in the following:

- Identifying and mitigating, where relevant, potential environmental effects resulting from the Plan through making changes to the Plan itself, embedding the principles of sustainability and protection of the natural environment into the Plan text and projects.
- Identifying and promoting potential positive environmental effects arising from the Plan and promoting environmental protection, enhancement and restoration of the natural and built environment. This is carried out through for example the development of visitor management plans, project-level environmental assessments and sustainable tourism education and training.
- Developing mitigation measures to ensure that any potential negative environmental impacts are avoided, reduced or mitigated at plan implementation stage. These mitigation measures include the requirement to comply with all relevant planning and environmental legislation and policy as part of the statutory decision making process and/or consent process and also to relevant policies and guidance developed by Fáilte Ireland. Particular emphasis is placed on the following:
  - Requirements for undertaking environmental assessments at project level including but not limited to: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and site-specific floodrisk assessment (SSFRA);
  - Compliance with the policies and objectives of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028;
  - The Climate Action Plan 2025 and subsequent updates;
  - The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030, the County Mayo Heritage & Biodiversity Strategy 2024-2030 and the upcoming County Mayo Biodiversity Plan 2026-2033;
  - Preparation of visitor management plans, as appropriate inline with current and upcoming guidance documents from Fáilte Ireland;
  - Consideration for critical infrastructural capacity at tourism sites;

- Promotion of blue and green infrastructure including integration of nature-based solutions that can also provide eco system services, and
- Development and execution of an Environmental Monitoring Programme for the Plan during implementation and operation.

## Environmental Monitoring of the Plan

Having completed the full SEA and AA on the draft Wild Mayo DEDP, it is evident that these processes have had a positive influence on the evolution of the Plan and integrating environmental protection as part of the plan-making process. The SEA process will also continue to have a positive environmental influence as the plan enters its implementation phase.

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. The table below details the measures that have been selected in order to monitor the likely significant effects of implementing this Plan.

Monitoring can demonstrate the positive effects facilitated by the Plan and can enable, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action. The occurrence of persistent significant adverse environmental effects which are directly attributable to this Plan would necessitate consideration of the effects in the context of the Plan and a possible review of part(s) of the Plan.

The environmental monitoring programme will have targets and indicators that allow for a quantitative measurement of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) developed during the SEA process.

A variety of sources of information will be used to undertake the Environmental Monitoring. The responsibility for monitoring is with Fáilte Ireland. Monitoring will be undertaken at key stages as part of the implementation phase of the Plan. It will be reported on to the Plan's implementation group where relevant information sources allow, and the findings of the monitoring will influence the actions of the plan as it progresses.

Refer to Chapter 10 of the accompanying SEA Environmental Report for a proposed monitoring programme.

## Implementation and Consent

This DEDP is a non-statutory tourism plan – it does not provide consent, and/or establish a framework for granting consent.

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects that emerge as part of specific, competitive, themed and time-bound grant schemes or as part of wider strategic partnerships.

This Plan has been informed by and is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management. These include (but is not limited to) the National Planning Framework (NPF), Climate Action Plan (CAP), the National and County Biodiversity Action Plans, the Northern & Western Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (SRRSEs), and the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 and local area plans located with the plan area.

Implementing the DEDP will involve Fáilte Ireland working collaboratively to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes. (including requirements for project level Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form part of the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework, of which this Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Such legislation, policies, plans and programmes include:

- Compliance with statutory higher-level plans and policies including the NPF, RSES, Climate Action Plan, etc.
- Compliance with statutory land use plans that form part of the statutory decision making and consent granting framework (e.g. Development Plans, such as the Mayo County Development Plan 2022- 2028 and Local Area Plans),
- Requirements for project level environmental assessment, including EIA, AA & SSFRA, as required.

## Integrating Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management into the Plan

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan preparation team at Fáilte Ireland to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan. Projects are varied and relate to land use, infrastructural development and land use activities and attractions. Reference made to such projects included in the Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

The SEA and AA identified the potential significant effects as a result of implementing the Plan. Key considerations for the sustainable development of the tourism sector include ensuring there is sufficient infrastructure capacity; visitor management plans are developed for sites experiencing high demand; and that developers/promoters protect and provide opportunities for the sustainable development of green and blue infrastructure while also delivering ecosystem services. These areas of focus are discussed in the sections below.

### INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

With respect to infrastructural capacity (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) the potential environmental impacts associated with increased visitor numbers and increased pressure on capacities of existing infrastructure (including accommodation) will require careful planning and assessment. The potential environmental effects of the likely increase in tourism volumes resulting from the relevant projects in this Plan will need to be considered at project level and mitigated as appropriate. This aspect should be linked to the development of visitor management plans as appropriate.

The promotion of developing visitor friendly supporting infrastructure where it is required will also be encouraged.

## **VISITOR MANAGEMENT**

Those receiving funding shall seek to sustainably manage existing and any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour to avoid significant effects on the environment including loss of habitat and/or disturbance to sensitive species (including human beings and biodiversity). This shall include for example, ensuring that new projects are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities.. Visitor management plans will be required for proposed plans, programmes and projects that are to receive funding as relevant and appropriate.

## **CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF INVASIVE SPECIES**

Proposals and the development of Visitor Management plans shall consider the control and management of invasive species, having regard to existing objectives contained with the County Development Plan.

Developers and managers of existing tourism or recreational sites and/or future development should adhere to best practice and facilitate the development of appropriate facilities to minimise the spread of invasive species including along blueways and greenways. Further information and resources on “Check, Clean, Dry, Disinfect” should be sought on [invasives.ie](http://invasives.ie)

Fáilte Ireland shall work with partners to encourage greater awareness of potential threats caused by invasive species and how they can spread.

## **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**

Those receiving funding shall contribute towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and its ecosystem services, taking into account the output of the Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services project being undertaken by the NPWS ([NPWS - Ecosystems Services Mapping & Assessment](#)). Proposals for the development of any green infrastructure should demonstrate the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the: provision of open space amenities; sustainable management of water; protection and management of biodiversity; protection of cultural heritage; and protection of protected landscape sensitivities.