

County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030

Pre-Draft Public Consultation

Issues and Options Paper



April 2022

Your Plan

Key Issues

Key Questions

Introduction #1

What is the purpose of this document?

This paper sets out some of the key development issues facing Donegal across different topic areas and asks the public key questions about those issues to help inform the preparation of the new County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030.

What is the County Donegal Development Plan?

The development plan will set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Donegal from 2024-2030. It will include development objectives, policies and zonings.

Specifically, it will also include:

- Local Area Plans (with detailed policies and zonings) for Buncrana and Bundoran.
- A Settlement Framework Plan for Ballybofey/Stranorlar dealing exclusively with economic development opportunities arising from the TEN-T Donegal Priority Route Improvement Project.

Why do we Need a Development Plan?

The plan will help to guide future planning and investment decisions around:

- The type and location of new housing (e.g. Rural urban)
- The nature and location of new economic Development.
- How we help mitigate the impacts of, and adapt to, climate change.
- The requirements for new strategic transport infrastructure (e.g. roads, walking and cycling).
- How we manage our natural and built heritage (e.g. Landscape, protected buildings).
- How we develop renewable energy (e.g. Wind, solar).
- How we manage flood risk in the county.
- How we develop our tourism potential.
- How we develop our marine resource and manage our coastal areas.
- How we support Community development.

Introduction #2

How/When is the Plan made?

- The plan is made in 3 stages over a 2 year (maximum) period namely:
 - Stage 1: Pre-Draft Preparation
 - Stage 2: Draft Plan
 - Stage 3: Amendments to the draft plan.
- In turn each stage includes the following individual steps:
 - Public consultation.
 - A report to councillors on the consultation.
 - The consideration/adoption of the draft plan, changes to the draft plan, or the final plan by Councillors.

Who makes the plan?

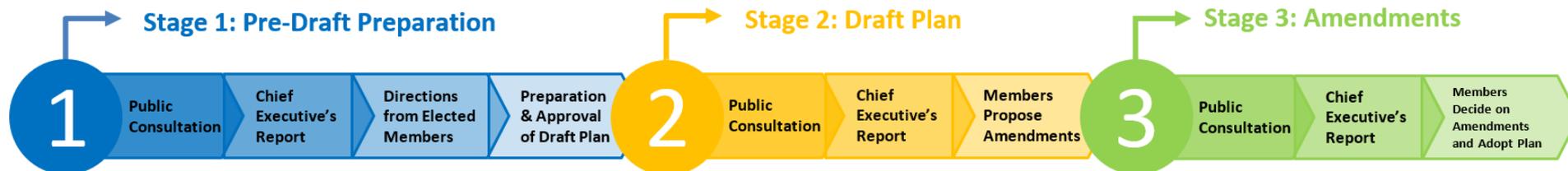
The development plan is made by the County Councillors (Elected Members) with the support of the Council's planning section following consultation with the public and other bodies.

Pre Draft Public Consultation
Friday 8th April to Friday 3rd June

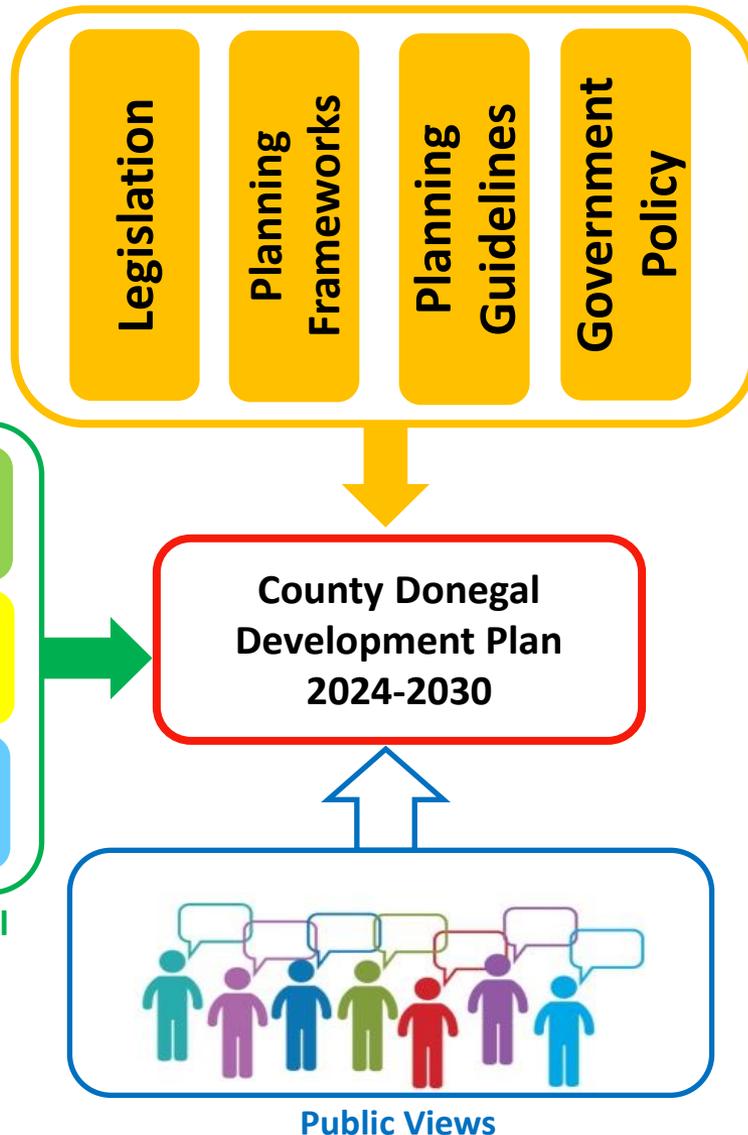


Make a **written submission** by:

- **Email:** donegaldevplan@donegalcoco.ie
- **Online:** at www.donegaldevplan.ie
- **Post:** CDP Review, Central Planning Unit, Donegal County Council, County House, Lifford, Co. Donegal, F93 Y622



What Informs the Development Plan?



Legislation, Government Policy, Guidelines, Local Issues and Environmental Assessments

The plan is guided and informed by, and where appropriate must comply with, for example:

- EU and National legislation (e.g., the Planning Act, Habitats Directive, Climate Act 2021, Water Framework Directive)
- Government Policy (e.g., Renewable Energy, Town Centre First)
- National and Regional Planning Frameworks (e.g., National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy).
- Planning Guidelines (e.g., on flood risk management, retail Development, rural housing & wind energy).
- Local issues and the views of the public.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Key Requirements, Objectives and Principles For the Plan

The above legislation, guidelines and frameworks set out a broad range of requirements and objectives which will guide the plan, for example:

- Compact growth in our towns and villages.
- Sustainable mobility (e.g. walking, cycling and public transport).
- Regional accessibility to the Northwest.
- Avoiding development in flood risk areas.
- A town centre first approach to urban regeneration.
- Focusing new retail development in our town centres in the first instance.
- Protecting our environment, landscape, and built heritage.
- National targets on renewable energy and climate change.

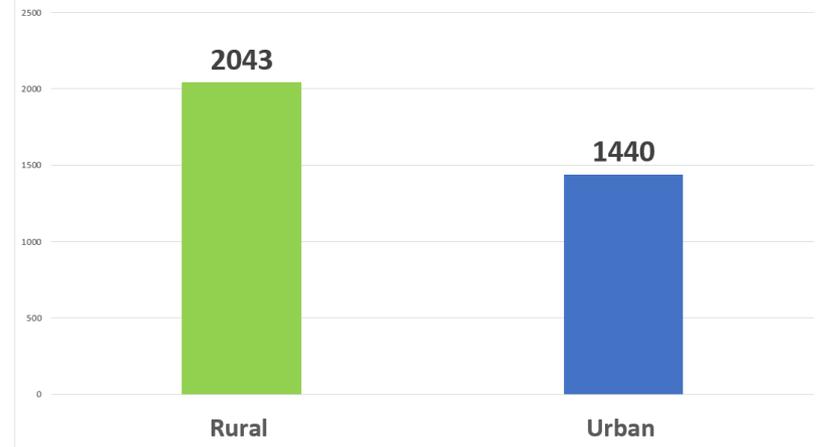
Housing



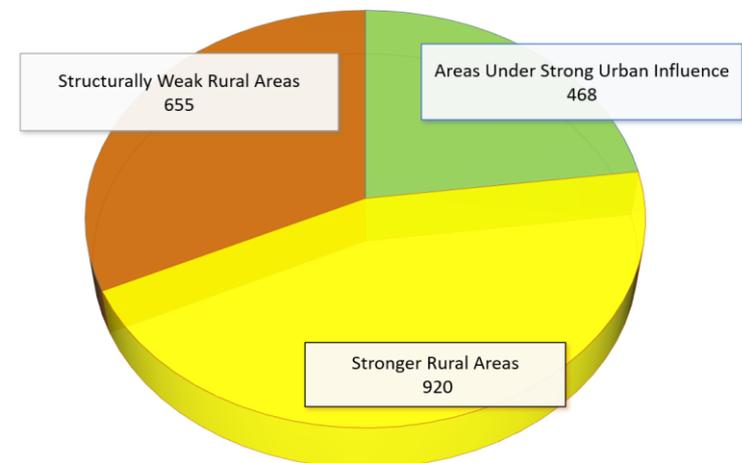
Key Issues and Trends

- High levels of vacant residential units in certain towns and villages (e.g. Letterkenny 366, Bundoran 246, Ballybofey/Stranorlar 203).
- Increased cost of building related to cost of materials, labour and land constraining supply and the viability of multiple residential developments.
- Housing supply shortage leading to affordability issues for both purchasers and renters and constraining housing choice.
- **Planning Permissions:** During the current plan (June 2018 to 2022) a significant proportion of dwellings have been permitted in rural areas compared to urban areas.
- Largest amount of rural dwellings permitted in the Stronger Rural Area rural area type.

Housing Permissions Granted June 2018 to Present
Urban V Rural



DWELLINGS GRANTED IN SPECIFIC RURAL AREAS TYPES JUNE 2018-2022



Housing



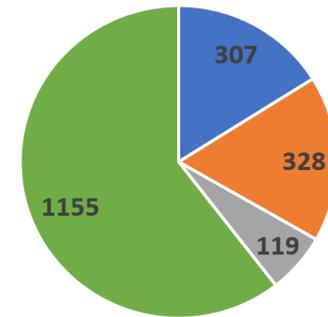
Key Issues and Trends

Housing Completions (ESB completions Data)

- 1909 dwellings were completed in Donegal in the years 2018-2021.
- Significant clusters of completions close to key urban areas and in coastal locations.
- A significant percentage of dwellings were completed in rural areas (59%) compared to urban areas (41%).
- Significant shortfall in housing completions (vis-à-vis Development Core strategy housing unit requirements) in Letterkenny and Strategic towns.

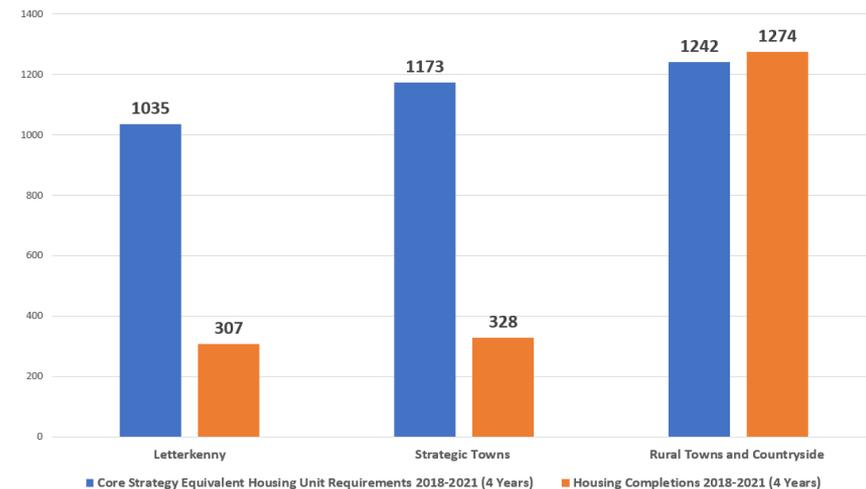


Housing Completions 2018-2021 in the Three Layers of the County Settlement Strategy



■ Layer 1 Letterkenny ■ Layer 2 Strategic Towns ■ Layer 3 Rural Towns ■ Layer 3 Open Countryside

Core Strategy Performance: Housing Completions 2018-2021 V Core Strategy Requirements 2018-2021

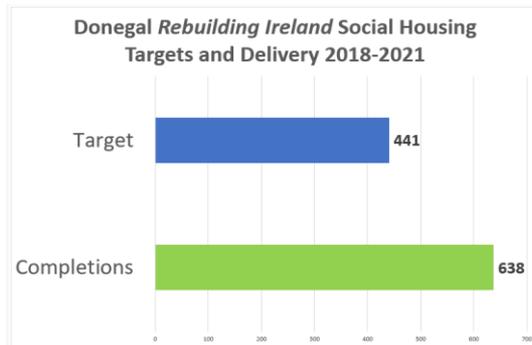


Housing



Key Issues and Trends

- Overall lack of new housing supply particularly in urban areas over the past decade.
- Social Housing: Donegal has exceeded government's *Rebuilding Ireland* Social Housing Targets for 2018-2021. However significant social housing waiting list remains.



- Housing stock significantly impacted by defective block (Mica) crisis and consequent demand for additional alternative accommodation for affected owners and occupiers.

Key Questions?

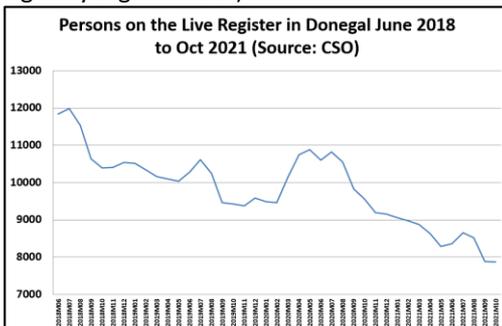
- Where should new housing be located (e.g. Letterkenny, large urban centres, smaller town of villages rural areas etc).
- How can the new plan tackle the lack of new housing supply in key strategic towns?
- How can the new plan address residential vacancy rates in certain towns?
- What type of housing is required (social, affordable, cost rental, private).
- What type of housing unit is required (e.g. Detached, semi detached, apartment etc).
- Should the council provide serviced sites for people to build their own homes in smaller towns and villages?
- What specialist housing provision is required (e.g. Elderly, traveller etc)?

Economic Development



Key Issues and Trends

- Need to improve regional connectivity and address key infrastructural deficiencies (e.g. strategic road, broadband, air, and wastewater).
- Impact of Brexit on Donegal including on the Fisheries/Seafood sector and associated coastal communities.
- High level of vacant commercial units in both large and small urban areas (E.G. Ballyshannon, Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Glenties etc).
- Lack of economic vibrancy in smaller towns and villages.
- Need for Grade A Office/Business accommodation space in town centres (e.g. soft landing opportunities).
- Need for strategic serviced land initiatives to facilitate economic development particularly in border locations.
- Need to identify locations for bio-energy technologies to facilitate decarbonisation.
- Need to capitalise on the potential of the North West City Region to attract inward investment.
- New opportunities arising from the offshore renewable energy sector (e.g. Killybegs harbour).



Key Questions?

- How can the plan help to address key infrastructural deficiencies?
- How can the plan respond to the economic challenge posed by Brexit?
- Where is the most appropriate location for different forms of new economic development?
- How should the plan help to tackle commercial vacancy in our towns and villages?
- How should the plan facilitate economic regeneration in our smaller towns and villages?
- Where are strategic serviced land initiatives required to facilitate new economic development?
- How can the plan maximise the economic potential of the North West City Region.
- How can the plan realise the potential of Donegal's cultural and tourism assets?
- What improvements in marine/harbour infrastructure should the plan facilitate?

Urban Regeneration



Key Issues and Trends

- Changing nature of town centres (e.g. loss of retail and residents) has resulted in high vacancy and dereliction rates.
- Lack of vibrancy and footfall in rural towns and villages.
- Poor quality public realm, civic spaces and underutilised built heritage assets.
- Lack of/poor quality pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and green/blue infrastructure.
- Significant new urban regeneration projects currently being progressed by the Council (e.g. Killybegs, Burtonport, Carndonagh, Letterkenny, and Ballybofey/Stranorlar). Total funded investment of approximately €52.3m since 2018.
- New economic development opportunities for rural towns and villages. (e.g. enterprise and remote working hubs).
- New opportunities arising from both the Government's Town Centre First Initiative and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

Key Questions?

- How should the plan help to reduce vacancy and dereliction in our towns and villages?
- What are the main issues affecting the commercial viability of your town and village?
- What specific urban regeneration interventions are needed in your town and village (e.g. upgrading civic/public spaces, new green spaces, re-utilising built heritage assets).
- How do we make our towns and villages more pedestrian and cycling friendly?
- How do we attract more economic development to our town and villages.
- What new tourism and cultural facilities are required in your area?

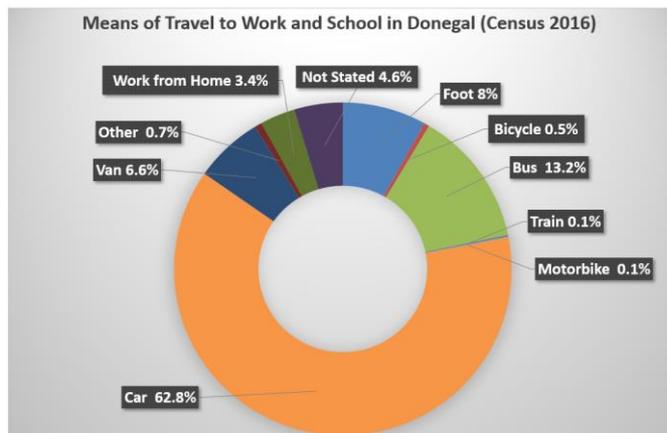


Transport



Key Issues and Trends

- Poor regional strategic connectivity between Donegal and other regions.
- Traffic congestion in key urban areas (e.g. Letterkenny, Ballybofey/Stranorlar)
- Overreliance on the private car as the primary means of transport to work, services and school.
- Inadequate public transport infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.
- Lack of walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Lack of rail connectivity to Donegal.



Key Questions?

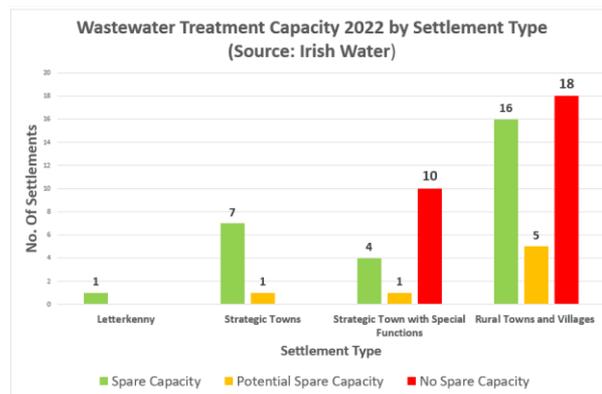
- What strategic roads projects should be prioritised?
- What improvements are required in our regional and local road network?
- How should traffic congestion in key urban areas be tackled?
- How do we integrate new development with transport infrastructure?
- How should the plan support sustainable travel modes.
- Where is additional walking and cycling infrastructure required?
- Where is additional public transport infrastructure required?
- How to implement National Roads Policy regarding access onto National Roads?

Water and Wastewater



Key Issues and Trends

- Spare wastewater treatment capacity requirements in key urban centres (e.g. Letterkenny, Carndonagh, Buncrana Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Dungloe and Donegal Town)
- Lack of spare waste water treatment capacity in many smaller towns and villages (e.g Merville, Milford, Falcarragh, Raphoe, and Mountcharles)
- Significant investment by Irish Water in Water and Wastewater Projects since 2018. For example:
 - Wastewater: Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Bundoran, Killybegs, Convoy, Glencolmcille.
 - Water Supply: Letterkenny, Dunfanaghy, Southwest Donegal.
- Significant number of/reliance on Individual Wastewater Treatment systems (30,345 registered systems or 6.4% of state total in 2020 – Source: CSO).
- Over 600 group water schemes in the County.



Key Questions?

- How should the plan align new development with the provision of adequate waste water and water services?
- How to progress new residential and commercial in developments towns and villages with no existing wastewater treatment capacity?
- How should the plan reduce reliance on individual wastewater treatment plants in Donegal?
- How should the plan ensure that new individual Wastewater Treatment plants achieve satisfactory treatment standards?

Natural and Built Heritage



Key Issues and Trends

Natural Heritage

- Threats to terrestrial habitats and species arising from habitat loss/fragmentation and disturbance (e.g. blanket bog, hedgerows).
- Threats to aquatic habits and species arising from deterioration in water quality (e.g. Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Atlantic Salmon, estuaries).
- Pressures on scenic coastal areas and rural areas outside key urban areas arising from one off housing developments.
- Pressures on scenic uplands areas arising from new Wind Energy Developments.

Architectural Built Heritage

- Ministerial Recommendation to add more NIAH structures to the RPS.
- New and emerging markets for the reuse and adaption of heritage buildings for economic, community uses, rural and urban housing, meet the green development agenda.
- Funding is available for RPS property owners to conserve and enhance their properties.
- Best practice heritage led regeneration initiatives in town centres are ongoing:
 - Cathedral Quarter Letterkenny
 - Ramelton
 - Ballyshannon Mall
 - Ballyshannon Diamond

Archaeological Heritage

- Threats to archaeology arising from new development.

Key Questions?

- How should the plan manage new development in order to protect terrestrial habitats and species?
- How should the plan manage new development in order to protect water quality and aquatic species?
- What quantity and type of development should be permitted in scenic coastal areas?
- How should the plan manage new developments in scenic upland areas?
- How can we better use our heritage buildings in the county?
- Should policies be developed to positively encourage re-use and regeneration?

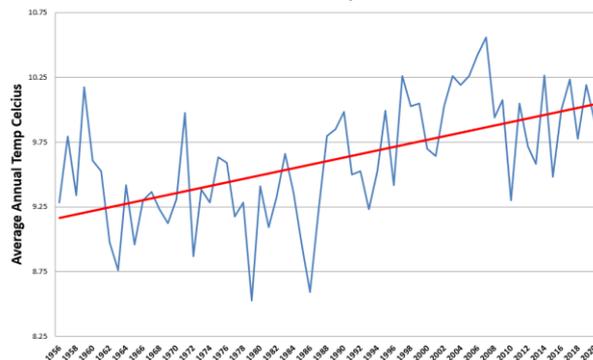
Climate Change



Key Issues and Trends

- Higher temperatures, more frequent heatwaves and associated water resource issues.
- Increased frequency and severity of rainfall related flood events (e.g. Letterkenny Hospital 2013, Inishowen 2017).
- Vulnerability of low lying areas to river and coastal flooding and erosion.
- Changes to natural ecosystems and landforms.
- High car dependency and low usage of sustainable transportation modes.
- Extent of hard surfaced areas within urban areas.
- Adapting and reusing existing built stock in towns and villages to reduce carbon footprint.

Malin Head Mean Annual Temperature 1956-2020



Key Questions?

- How should the plan facilitate more sustainable transport (e.g. walking, cycling and public transport)?
- Where are new Electric Vehicle charging points required? What forms of renewable energy development (e.g. wind, solar) should the plan facilitate?
- Where should new renewable energy developments be located (e.g. Wind, solar)?
- How should the plan support micro/small scale and community related renewable energy development?
- How should the plan help Donegal adapt to future climate change related events (e.g. extreme rainfall events, river and coastal flooding and erosion)?
- Should Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (e.g. permeable parking, attenuation ponds etc) be mandatory for new developments?

Tourism



Key Issues and Trends

- Donegal has a wealth of natural, coastal, upland, cultural and historical tourism assets (e.g. Glenveagh National Park, Sliabh Liag and Grianan An Aileach).
- The Wild Atlantic Way provides an opportunity to realise Donegal's tourism potential has been a key driver in a growth of tourism visitors from 2010-2019.
- In 2019 Donegal received:
 - 354,000 overseas visitors (representing 10% of overseas visitors to the Wild Atlantic Way)
 - 445,000 domestic trips (representing 9% of domestic to the Wild Atlantic Way)
 - €117m expenditure from overseas visitors (6% of overseas spend along the Wild Atlantic Way)
 - €97m expenditure from domestic visitors (10% of domestic spend along the Wild Atlantic way)
- However Donegal still receives significantly less tourism visitors than other regions on the Wild Atlantic Way (e.g. Galway, Kerry).
- Ongoing and planned development of tourism infrastructure at key Wild Atlantic Way discovery points (e.g. Sliab Liag, Fort Dunree and Malin)
- In order to capitalise on the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way there is an overall need to:
 - Protect our natural, landscape and built heritage resource,
 - Sustainably develop our signature tourism attractions,
 - Facilitate additional experience based tourism attractions.
 - Provide ancillary tourism infrastructure.
 - Diversify our tourism accommodation offering.

Key Questions?

- How should the plan protect Donegal's landscape and built heritage resources whilst facilitating new tourism development?
- How should the plan sustainably manage and develop Donegal's strategic tourism attractions (Glenveagh, Sliabh Liag, Malin Head)?
- What types of other tourism attractions should the plan support (e.g. greenways, activity centres, adventure or water based tourism, cultural/historical etc) and where should they be located?
- What form of tourism infrastructure is required (e.g. interpretation centres, public conveniences, parking campervan stopover points, improved beach access, viewing areas) and where should they be located?
- What form of tourism accommodation should the plan support (e.g. caravanning camping, campervan, holiday homes, hotels/hostels, resorts etc) and where should they be located?

Community



Key Issues and Trends

- Community development is an essential component of Donegal's social, cultural and economic life and the quality of life of its residents.
- There is an ongoing need to provide, maintain and improve community infrastructure (e.g., green spaces, playgrounds, active travel infrastructure, sporting facilities, education, and cultural facilities) in accessible locations and in tandem with new development in order to create strong, sustainable, healthy and inclusive communities.
- Donegal County Council is responsible for the management of 46 playgrounds throughout the county.
- Over the life of the current development plan (2018-present) the Council has been an active partner in Community development mechanism as: Town and Village Renewal, Clar, Leader, Peace, the Outdoor Recreation Strategy, the Development Fund Initiative, northwest greenway network etc.
- Since 2018 such schemes have provided approximately €24.5m in funding for a wide range of community development. for example: recreational infrastructure and equipment, youth enhancement and development facilities, play parks and necessary extensive investment for sporting, tourism, education, health and wellbeing, recreation and community organizations.
- There is a need to locate new community infrastructure in accessible and socially inclusive locations to justify, sustain and maximise their potential and to benefit from synergies with other services (e.g. retail, café, restaurants, casual trading etc).

Key Questions?

- What additional community facilities are needed in your locality?
- Where are new amenity areas/green spaces and public parks and playgrounds required?
- Where should new recreational walkways, cycleways and greenways be prioritised?
- How can we encourage the dual use of existing school and community buildings and recreational facilities?
- Are the current standards for public amenity areas for new residential developments adequate?
- Where and what improvements are required to arts and cultural infrastructure?
- How can new community infrastructure be made more age and child friendly?
- Where are new public conveniences required in our towns and villages, coastal resorts or recreational areas?

An Ghaeltacht

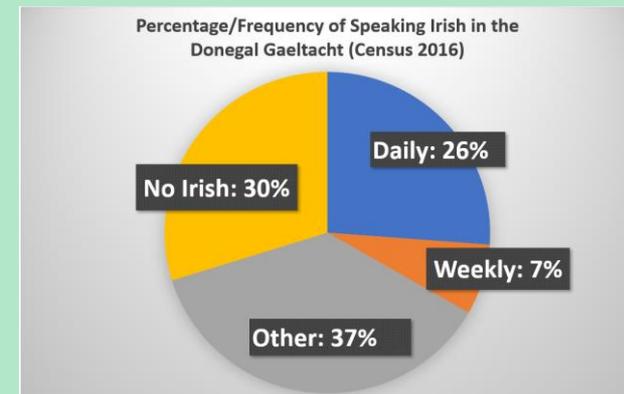


Key Issues and Trends

- The Donegal Gaeltacht has a population of 23,346 (Census 2016) (23.4% of the total Gaeltacht population), a geographical area of 1,502 km² and includes areas with the highest percentage of daily Irish speakers in the state (Mín Lárach 73.3% and Rann na Feirste 66.6%).
- The total Gaeltacht population decreased by 5.6% relative to the 2011 Census (24,744).
- Reports over recent decades indicate the usage of Irish in the Gaeltacht is declining driven by such factors as social dynamics, demographic movements and socialization of young people through English.
- There are now 8 Language Planning Areas (LPA) and one Gaeltacht Service Town in the Donegal Gaeltacht. By the end of 2021, language plans were being implemented in 7 LPAs, with seven language planning officers.
- 286 new jobs were created in the Donegal Gaeltacht during 2021 — the largest number of jobs created in a single year in the county since 2008 (Source: Udaras Na Gaeltachta).

Key Questions?

- How can the plan best support social, economic and cultural development in the Gaeltacht and in particular promote the Irish Language?
- Should language impact assessment be used for new residential developments in Gaeltacht areas and if so in what circumstances?
- What specific economic or infrastructural developments are required to strengthen the socio economic and linguistic vibrancy of Gaeltacht towns and villages?



Buncrana



Key Issues and Trends

- 2nd largest urban centre in Donegal and a key node in the Northwest City Region.
- Commercial vacancy rate in 2020 of 14.8% (61 properties).
- Residential vacancy rate in 2020 of 4.9% (159 properties).
- Housing stock in wider area significantly impacted by defective block (Mica) crisis and resultant need for additional replacement housing.
- Limited development on existing lands zoned for new residential development.
- Traffic congestion in parts of the town and need for completion of inner relief road.
- Significant opportunity afforded by scenic coastal tourism assets.
- Need for improved physical connectivity of Main Street with the Shorefront Amenity area and improvement of, and better linkages between green spaces and public realm.
- Need to harness potential of Greenway & Blueway networks and capitalise on the towns strong suite of natural and heritage resources.
- Need for Grade A Office/Business accommodation space in town centres (e.g. soft landing opportunities) and light industrial space on edge of the town to encourage new innovation and diversification.

Key Questions?

- How does Buncrana maximise its potential as a key urban centre in the Northwest City Region?
- How should the Council tackle commercial vacancy and regenerate Buncrana town centre?
- How should the plan tackle residential vacancy in Buncrana?
- How might the plan facilitate housing options for Mica affected residents?
- Where is the most appropriate location for new housing in Buncrana having regard to the efficient use of existing services and infrastructure?
- What transport improvements are required for Buncrana? (e.g. inner relief road, walking and cycling infrastructure etc).
- How does Buncrana maximise its tourism potential including scenic coastal tourism assets?

Bundoran



Key Issues and Trends

- Continued popularity of Bundoran as a regional tourism destination.
- Development management on the waterfront.
- Commercial vacancy rate of 12.8% (33 properties).
- Residential vacancy/dereliction rate of 9.6% (246 properties).
- Location, amount, and seasonality of existing mobile home/caravan parks.
- Opportunity for linking the West End and the Rougey/Waterfront Walks.
- Traffic congestion and enhancement of the main street.
- Limited development on lands zoned for new residential development.

Key Questions?

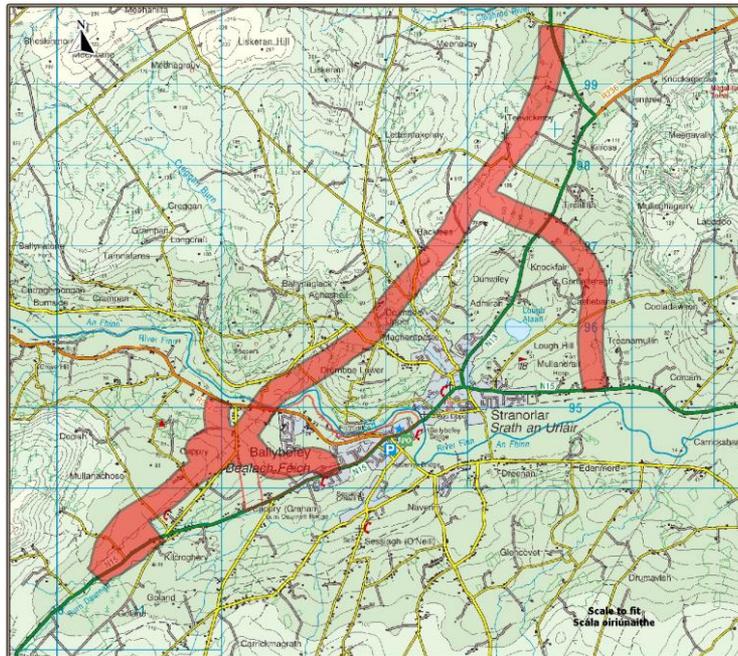
- How should development along the waterfront be managed?
- What role should the waterfront play in Bundoran's future development?
- What priority should be given to linking the West End Walk with the Rougey/Waterfront Walks?
- How can Bundoran best cater for caravan park/mobile home park development?
 - Where should such parks be located?
 - Does Bundoran have enough of this type of accommodation?
 - How does the provision of caravan parks/mobile home parks affect the town centre?
- Where should new housing development be located in Bundoran?
- What type of housing is required?
- To what extent should there be a focus on the re-use of vacant and derelict housing?
- How can town centre traffic be best managed during the peak tourist season?
- What measures might be taken to enhance the Main Street experience for businesses, residents and visitors?

Ballybofey/Stranorlar and the TEN-T PRIPD Strategic Roads Project



Key Issues and Trends

- Existing poor strategic roads access for economic developments within Ballybofey/Stranorlar.
- New economic development opportunities arising post completion of the TEN-T strategic roads project.



Key Questions?

- How should the plan maximise the economic development opportunities arising from the completion of the TEN-T Strategic Roads Project in Ballybofey/Stranorlar?
- Where might new economic developments be located to take advantage of improved strategic roads access post completion of the TEN-T Strategic Roads project?
- Note: the TEN-T project remains subject to significant external dependencies (including statutory approvals and funding).

Pre-Draft Public Consultation

Friday 8th April to Friday 3rd June



Make a **written submission** during the pre-draft consultation process by:

- **Email:** donegaldevplan@donegalcoco.ie
- **Online:** at www.donegaldevplan.ie
- **Post:** CDP Review, Central Planning Unit, Donegal County Council, County House, Lifford, Co. Donegal, F93 Y622