

Destination Management Strategy – The Causeway Coast Way	13th December 2016
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Information	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets. Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities.
Outcome	Citizens and visitors will have access to natural environments to enhance their physical and emotional health
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation
Cost: (If applicable)	N/A

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the potential upgrade of the Causeway Coast Way.

Background

The Causeway Coast Way (CCW) is a long distance coastal walk connecting Portstewart and Ballycastle. The route is 33 miles in length and is waymarked along the entire route.

Although sections of the route have been in existence for many decades, the CCW was developed as a long distance route in 2000 as part of Outdoor Recreation NI's Waymarked Ways project, working closely with the former Coleraine and Moyle Councils.

The route traverses stunning coastal landscapes but also connects coastal communities, bringing potential economic benefit to the settlements of Portstewart, Portrush, Portballintrae, Bushmills, Ballintoy and Ballycastle.

The majority of the route is off-road, following coastal paths, beaches and cliff paths, although significant sections remain on-road.

Usage and Visitor Markets

The CCW is readily accessible to a large resident population within the Borough, owing to the fact that the route passes through all the major settlements along this section of coast.

Thousands of people regularly use short sections of the route for their daily or weekly walk, while others combine short sections to make a longer route between two attractions or suitable start/finish locations.

The route also has a strong appeal to visiting tourists from Europe, especially those coming from Germany and Holland, specifically for a walking holiday. Along the entire length of the route there is a variety of accommodation types to suit all budgets, and a range of associated services and facilities to cater for walkers' needs.

Additionally there are a number of international class visitor attractions along the route including Dunluce Castle, the Giants Causeway and Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge.

The Walking Experience

As alluded to above, the majority of the route is off-road, following coastal paths, beaches and cliff paths. Signage, way markers and interpretation panels have been installed at strategic locations to guide and inform potential users. Undoubtedly, some sections of the CCW are among the most stunning coastal walks in the British Isles.

However, significant sections of the route remain on-road, most notably the section from Whiterocks to Portballintrae, and the section from Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle.

In order for this route to be classed and marketed as a truly high quality international walking trail, Council officers believe it is imperative that efforts must be made to create more off-road sections, thus reducing the amount of on-road walking to an absolute minimum.

Potential Improvements

With reference to the above, opportunities currently exist to explore the feasibility of creating new off-road sections of the Causeway Coast Way. Upgraded Trail Heads, the creation of new coastal paths on current farm land, development of permissive path agreements and improvements to existing sections are all examples of works that could be implemented to improve the overall walking experience.

Way Forward

In order to develop the existing Causeway Coast Way (CCW) walking experience to create a truly high quality international walking product, officers will bring a detailed paper back to Council in early 2017, exploring further options and the feasibility of delivering the above opportunity.