



Causeway Coast Way Blueprint



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1.0

Introduction



1.1 A Blueprint for the Causeway Coast Way

The Causeway Coast Way (CCW) is a 33 miles (51km) way marked coastal walking trail connecting Portstewart and Ballycastle. The route encompasses stunning coastal landscape throughout its entire length and features iconic world-renowned attractions including Whiterocks, Dunluce Castle, the Giants Causeway and Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge.

Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that the CCW has significant shortcomings and is currently not fulfilling its potential due to the absence of a strategic vision and a coordinated management approach concerning the long term sustainability of the route and the development, maintenance and marketing of this product.

This Blueprint document has been produced as a strategic response to provide a way forward in addressing these issues.

1.2 Project context

The CCW, in its current format (i.e. waymarked route connecting Portstewart and Ballycastle), has been in existence for almost 20 years. Prior to that, the majority of the route was recognised as The Ulster Way, but it didn't have any specific identity or branding to highlight its Causeway Coast locality.

Prior to local government reorganisation in 2015, the former Councils of Coleraine and Moyle were responsible for the management of the CCW, along with the National Trust.

In 2012, Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI), working in partnership with both Councils, the National Trust and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, produced a Strategic Path Review of the Causeway Coast Way which highlighted recommendations to develop, improve and maintain the trail, with the overarching aim of securing long-term,

sustainable access for the entire CCW. Some, but not all, of the report's recommendations have since been implemented.

Following local government reorganisation in 2015, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is the only council responsible for the management of the CCW, along with the National Trust.

The Council's Tourism and Recreation Service in general, and its Coast and Countryside team in particular, has recently identified the strategic development, management and promotion of the CCW as one of its strategic projects, providing the context for the compilation and delivery of this Blueprint document.

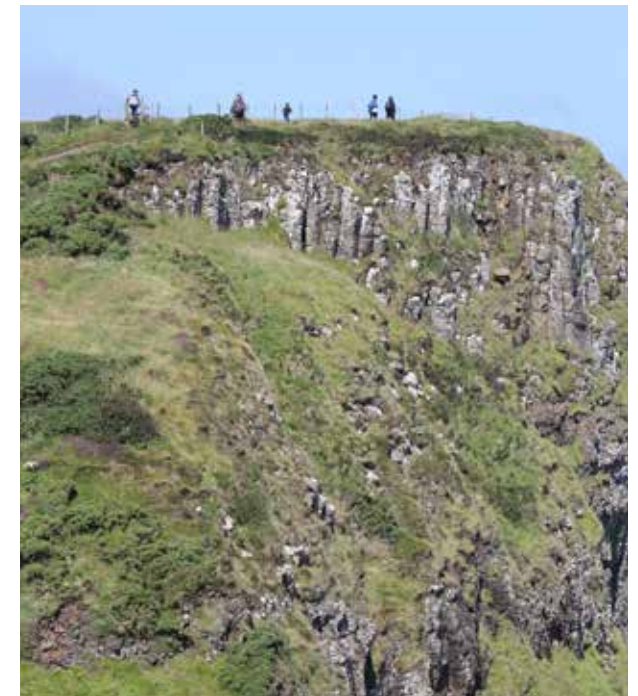
In October 2016 a brief outline paper was presented to Council, outlining the CCW as a product with possible options for improvement, and seeking members' approval for officers to proceed with the production of a Blueprint document.



1.3 The Trail

The trail of the Causeway Coast Way stretches along the coastline between Portstewart in the west and Ballycastle in the east. Within this stretch of 33 miles there are shorter noted ('themed') sections which can be walked separately.

The trail tightly hugs the coastline over much of its length, with the exception of sections at Portballintrae and the significant on-road stretch from Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle. Along the trail there are many points of interest and facilities, including opportunities to engage with other activities and experiences.



Section 1	Portstewart to Portrush	Port Path/Ballyreagh Castle	6 miles
Section 2	Portrush to Portballintrae	Dunluce Castle & Girona	6 miles
Section 3	Portballintrae to Giant's Causeway	Runkerry & Giants Causeway	3 miles
Section 4	Giant's Causeway to Dunseverick Harbour	Girona & Dunseverick Castle	5 miles
Section 5	Dunseverick Harbour to Ballintoy Harbour	Harbours & Trade	5 miles
Section 6	Ballintoy Harbour to Ballycastle	Carrick-a-Rede	8 miles

1.3 The Trail



2.0

Understanding the Causeway Coast Way

2.1 Site Location and description

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 in both directions.

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, involving close partnership working with the legacy Coleraine and Moyle Councils and the National Trust.

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, and individual businesses located along, or close to, the route. The majority of the route is off-road, following coastal paths, beaches and cliff paths, although significant sections remain on-road.

2.2 The history of the trail

The Causeway Coast has had individual sections of coastal access provision for many decades. One of the best-known was the North Antrim Cliff Path, developed by the National Trust in 1960, connecting the Giant's Causeway and Ballintoy Harbour.

Other sections existed in Portstewart, Portrush and Portballintrae, but the idea of a continuous, waymarked route, capable of being marketed as a quality long-distance walking trail, didn't become

a reality until 2000, when the Causeway Coast Way was developed as part of Outdoor Recreation NI's 'Waymarked Ways' project. At that time the legacy Coleraine Borough Council was responsible for the section from Portstewart to Portballintrae, while the legacy Moyle District Council covered the section from Portballintrae to Ballycastle. Within this section, the National Trust were responsible for the Giants Causeway to Dunseverick section.

Following local government reorganisation in 2015, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is the only Council with responsibility for the CCW, along with the National Trust as was previously the case.

2.3 Route description

The trail currently starts in the resort town of Portstewart, offering walkers several miles of formal surfaced cliff paths in an urban setting with uninterrupted sea views towards Inishowen in Donegal. The section between Portstewart and Portrush, known as The Port Path, mostly follows surfaced paths and allows walkers to experience the relative peace and tranquillity of the coastline away from the adjacent busy coast road.

Having passed through the busy resort of Portrush, two miles of golden sand and spectacular white cliffs at Whiterocks await walkers leaving the town, before giving way to roadside footpaths passing Dunluce Castle on the approach to Portballintrae. On leaving Portballintrae, and heading further east towards the Giants Causeway, walkers have the option of following the heritage railway pathway, or the more challenging beach and headland route around Runkerry.

The section from the Giants Causeway (NI's only World Heritage Site) to Dunseverick Harbour is arguably one of the most spectacular stretches of coastal walking anywhere in Ireland, and perhaps the UK, characterised by high cliffs and hidden coves, and abundant birdlife throughout. The high cliffs give way to lower-lying sections of rugged coastline, including the picturesque Portbraddon and Ballintoy Harbour, located at either end of the stunning White Park Bay beach. The last off-road section connects Ballintoy Harbour and Carrick-a-Rede where, by virtue of a short detour, walkers can enjoy the thrills of crossing the famous rope bridge.

The remaining section, approximately 5 miles long, connecting Carrick-a-Rede and Ballycastle, is virtually all on-road along the busy, and in places narrow, coast road. The busy small resort town of Ballycastle signals the end of the route, offering walkers a wide variety of facilities and amenities. Ballycastle is also the start/finish point, depending on direction of travel, for the Moyle Way (part of the Ulster Way), another Waymarked Way within the Borough.

2.4 Analysis of the Existing Trail and the Walking Experience

The majority of the route (approx. 80%) is off-road, following coastal paths, urban footpaths, beaches and cliff paths. However, the section from Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle is predominantly on public road (B15 Whitepark Road). This road is part of the Causeway Coastal Route driving tour and, as a result, is particularly busy with tourist traffic including coaches.

Signage, waymarkers and interpretation panels have been installed at strategic locations to guide and inform users. Countryside furniture including stiles, kissing gates, steps and bridges together with significant sections of surfaced pathways, facilitate comfortable access. The only section of on-road walking is the section from Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle.

In terms of accessibility, the majority of the trail could be classed as easy to moderate walking. The only sections that present a degree of challenge are the western and eastern ends of White Park Bay, where 'bouldering' may be necessary depending on certain tidal conditions.

The existing trial has definite start and finish locations, although opportunities exist to raise their profile on the ground through, for example, installation of bespoke interpretation pieces or public art sculpture. Other similar trails throughout the UK already have such features in place e.g. England's South West Coast Path and Scotland's Fife Coastal Path.

The trail passes through a number of settlements, fairly evenly spread along its length, resulting in readily available services and amenities for walkers. Owing to the proximity of adjoining coast roads (A2 / B146 / B15), public transport opportunities are available when planning trips along the route. Portrush has the added advantage of having a railway station linked to Coleraine and onward to either Belfast or L/Derry.

Formal car parking opportunities are also readily available along the entire route, again adding to the ease of planning shorter walking trips along

sections of the route.

Undoubtedly, some sections of the CCW are among the most stunning coastal walks in Ireland and the UK. However, significant sections of the route remain on-road, most notably the section from Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle. The section from Whiterocks to Portballintrae follows roadside footways.

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, with the ultimate aim of having the entire route off-road.

2.5 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 lengths of the route e.g. Portstewart Cliff Path, for their daily or weekly walk, quite probably unaware that they are on the CCW, while others combine short sections to make a longer route between two attractions or suitable start/finish locations e.g. The Port Path from Portstewart to Portrush, or The Giants Causeway to Dunseverick.

It is very difficult to accurately assess usages numbers for a route of this nature, but available counter data would suggest that during 2015 approx. 200,000 people used Portstewart Cliff

Path, while approx. 45,000 used the section of route between The Giants Causeway and Dunseverick.

Owing to its location on the Causeway Coast, the route will experience usage from the usual range of tourists visiting this region from Great Britain, Republic of Ireland, USA and Canada. 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 is a number of international class visitor attractions along the route including Dunluce Castle, the Giants Causeway and Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge.

Further information relating to tourism market segmentation is contained in Appendix A.



2.6 Legal and Policy Context

2.61 Statutory designations

Access development along the CCW is influenced by numerous statutory environmental designations that protect the natural heritage and unique landscapes of the Causeway Coast. The following apply:

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – Causeway Coast
- Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) – Castle Point, Carrick-a-Rede, White Park Bay, Giant’s Causeway and Dunseverick, Runkerry, Portballintrae, White Rocks and Portrush West Strand
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – North Antrim Coast, Skerries and Causeway
- National Nature Reserve (NNR) – Giant’s Causeway, Portrush
- World Heritage Site (WHS) – Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast from Portnaboe to Benbane Head (extent same as Giant’s Causeway NNR above)

All recommendations made in this review relating to routes and infrastructure works will take account of their impact on protected sites, habitats and species.

2.62 Strategic Context

There is a wide range of national and regional strategic documents and policies, for both

Northern Ireland and the local region, that has been considered as part of this report. Please refer to Appendix B for further details.

Should the opportunities proposed within this Blueprint be realised, then it will align with and help achieve many of the key outcomes contained in these strategic documents.

For the purposes of this report, particular significance has been given to the findings and recommendations contained in the following two documents:

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Destination Management Strategy (March 2015):

The Destination Management Strategy was produced in 2015 by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CCGBC). BTS was commissioned by CCGBC to prepare the strategy from the creation of the new council from the legacy councils of Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle. It identifies the way forward and actions required to develop tourism during the period 2015-2020.

The report states the need to extend the tourist season and the potential to develop activity and events based tourism. It notes that 8 out of 10 visitors come to the Giants Causeway, with hiking/walking one of the key activities undertaken. Families are more likely to stay in self-catering accommodation with hiking and walking the most popular activity and are more likely to visit a historic attraction during their visit. Couples, although preferring to stay in hotels, also have hiking/walking as their most popular activity.

The report states that the Causeway Coast and

Glens destination has become recognised as a place for visitors to participate in both adrenalin-fuelled recreation and gentle outdoor activities such as walking. The quality of the area’s natural environment is highlighted in the report. Tourism operators have identified that there is a need to encourage visitors and especially ‘day visitors’ to stay longer and that countryside access needs to be addressed for walkers and ramblers with the Causeway Coastal Route being the backbone of the destination.

Emphasis and focus should be on key prospects such as Game of Thrones and the Borough’s 3 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Seasonality and dispersal was addressed in the report as a key challenge and focusing on the natural environment encouraging all year round visitation. Promoting existing, and investing in new, product supporting the dispersal of visitors and visitor spend to remote areas is also highlighted.

Causeway Coast and Glens Outdoor Recreation Action Plan (2014/15)

The CCGORAP was produced by the Causeway Coast & Glens Outdoor Recreation Forum, a body, facilitated by Council and Sport NI, representing the interests of outdoor activity providers, practitioners and statutory bodies in the Causeway Coast and Glens area.

The Action Plan identifies many proposed actions and projects aimed at enhancing the existing outdoor recreation offering in this area, with associated priority and urgency rating.

With specific reference to the Causeway Coast Way, it makes the following recommendations:

– **Create and secure formal access across the Council area for walking**

New local council authority continues to exercise its power to enter into formal access agreements and protect/dedicate public rights of way to secure access to key routes and areas, in particular the Causeway Coast Way and Moyle Way.

– **Enhance and where required upgrade the existing walking product**

Causeway Coast Way – create more off-road sections particularly Dunluce Castle to Portballintrae, Runkerry Head and Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle.

Causeway Coast Way – renew permissive path agreements.

It also makes reference to developing community paths, including signage, in and around Portballintrae, which could constitute part of the CCW.

Conclusion of Analysis

The work carried out by Council officers has allowed an analysis of key findings and conclusions:

- The majority (approx. 80%) of the existing route is off-road
- Significant sections remain on-road, compromising the quality of the route and its reputation among international tourists
- The majority of the existing route is owned and

maintained by the Council and the National Trust

- The route has suitable start/finish destination towns in the form of Portstewart and Ballycastle
- The route is well serviced along its length by a number of settlements offering a range of services and amenities, including a range of quality accommodation options
- The entire route is waymarked and easily accessed at multiple points along its length
- A number of world-famous attractions, benefitting from high annual visitor numbers, are located along the route
- The high quality of the landscape through which the route passes has been recognised by a number of environmental and landscape designations
- The existing trail is already well-used and promoted by the tourism and outdoor recreation sectors
- There exists limited brand recognition among local tourism providers
- There is a limited range of visitor services providing specific services for walking tourists e.g. baggage transfer, pick-up/drop-off services
- There are benefits to be gained by being an integral section of the longer Ulster Way and International Appalachian Trail
- There are benefits to be gained from the juxtaposition of the internationally-acclaimed Causeway Coastal Route driving route



3.0

Vision

3.1 The following Vision is proposed:

Through sensitive development, meaningful engagement with landowners, sustainable management and creative promotion, the CCW will become established as a must-do coastal trail and, in so doing, will help to market and promote the Causeway Coast region as a must-see destination to a worldwide audience, resulting in tangible economic benefits for coastal communities and businesses.



3.2 Blue Print Concept

The Causeway Coast Way is an existing walking trail that, owing to shortcomings in its current format, does not meet the high standards international visitors expect from a national trail.

The key blueprint concept is the creation of a high quality off-road walking trail, on a par with other national trails, which offers visitors an exceptional coastal walking experience and generates economic benefits for the Causeway Coast region.

The following key components will play an integral role in the realisation of this concept:

- **Accessibility:** Improving on the existing accessibility along the Causeway Coast Way through recognising the existing gaps and overcoming these with further development.
- **Interpretation & Signage:** Ensuring that the Causeway Coast Way is both signed and interpreted through signage, panels, branding and development of product knowledge.
- **Raising the Profile of the Product:** Initiate trade engagement and marketing aimed at increasing visitor numbers on a year-round basis, resulting in economic benefits for current businesses in the Causeway Coast locality.



4.0

Proposed Blueprint Projects

4.1.1 The purpose of this blueprint document is to provide strategic direction for future development proposals aimed at improving the quality of the Causeway Coast Way.

Based on Council officers' knowledge and experience of the Causeway Coast Way, together with the outcomes of in-house desktop analysis, the following projects are proposed. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive and it is anticipated that other viable projects will emerge in due course, but the following projects are proposed for priority action:

1. Review existing permissive path agreements along the CCW and propose appropriate mechanism to secure and extend existing public access for at least the next 20-25 years.
2. Conduct trail condition survey to identify priority sections for upgrading works, identify appropriate maintenance materials and standards, and agree action plan for proposed works.
3. Engage with local landowners in an attempt to identify and create new off-road sections on coastal farm land.
4. Identify suitable sites for the development of trail heads at strategic locations along the CCW.
5. Explore the need for the installation of visitor and security monitoring equipment at strategic locations along the route.
6. Establish a steering group to manage the development of, and implement interventions for, the CCW.
7. Explore opportunities for trade engagement to boost local economic benefits.
8. Explore opportunities for visitor engagement and marketing to domestic and international visitors.

Review, secure and renew existing permissive path agreements along the CCW

In 1992 the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (DANI) introduced, under EC Regulation 2078/92, the Agri-Environment Regulation which accompanied Common Agricultural Policy reform measures – this regulation made provision, among other things, for measures relating to public access in the form of the Countryside Access Scheme.

The objective of the Countryside Access Scheme was to provide new opportunities for access in the countryside for walking, horse riding and other forms of quiet recreation so that the public's appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside might be increased.

The scheme was voluntary and enabled modest payments to be made to farmers who provided access to the public where their lands lay along routes which had been included in a District Council Access Strategy document, which had been approved by the DoE's Environment and Heritage Service.

DANI provided the annual payments for the provision, management and maintenance of the routes. A requirement for inclusion in the DANI scheme was that landowners signed up to a permissive path agreement with the local council.

Under the above scheme, 4 landowners along the Causeway Coast Way between the Giant's Causeway and Dunseverick took part in the DANI Countryside Access Scheme, signing up to permissive path agreements. Three of these agreements are due to expire in November 2019 and one in February 2020.

The DANI Access Scheme ceased to exist in 2002 and the renewal of the permissive path agreements (or any other mechanism for securing long-term sustainable public access) requires to be addressed by Council and any subsequent agreed payment for access will be the responsibility of Council.

It is recommended that Council recognises the need to begin consultation and negotiations with

the above-affected landowners and the Land & Property Service (LPS) as a matter of priority, and gives authorisation for Council officers to begin such work, if guaranteed public access is to be secured along this section of the Causeway Coast Way.

For information, an additional 2 landowners between Dunseverick Harbour and Portbraddan signed permissive path agreements in 2015 for a 25 years term which expires in 2040.

4.1.2 Conduct trail condition survey to identify priority sections for upgrading works, identify appropriate maintenance materials and standards and agree action plan for proposed works.

In order to target existing resources efficiently, and to help inform any future funding bids related to trail development, Council will oversee the production of a trail condition survey to identify necessary repairs and upgrading works along the existing CCW route.



Council is aware of the scenic and environmental quality of the landscape through which the CCW runs, and recognises its responsibilities in ensuring that any proposed interventions are carefully considered and sympathetic to the quality of the surrounding landscape setting. In this regard, Council will refer to guidance contained within the following documents:

'Principles and Standards for Trail Development in Northern Ireland' – Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland
'Footpaths – A Practical Handbook' – British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

4.1.3 Engage with local landowners in an attempt to identify and create new off-road sections of trail on coastal farm land

In keeping with the overall vision for the CCW, namely to have the entire route off-road, a priority action should be engaging with local landowners to explore the feasibility of identifying and creating new off-road coastal headland trails on sections where the route currently follows the coast road. Consideration should also be given to identifying and creating alternative routes on sections of existing trail where access restrictions are often experienced due to environmental factors e.g. high tides.

In terms of seeking to develop a high quality user experience, the following sections should be considered:

New off-road trails

1. Carrick-a-Rede to Ballycastle (approx. distance 5 miles)
2. Magheracross Car Park to Dunluce Castle & Bayhead Road (approx. distance 1.5 miles)
3. Bayhead Road to Seaport Avenue, Portballintrae (approx. distance 1 mile)
4. Clare Road, Ballycastle (approx. distance 0.5 miles)

Alternative route desirable (tidal requirement)

5. Whitepark Bay to Ballintoy Harbour
6. Portbraddon to Whitepark Bay

Each of these sections is detailed as follows:

1. CARRICK-A-REDE TO BALLYCASTLE

Preferred Option – coastal headland route

The preferred option is a coastal headland trail following the coastline as closely as possible. It is Council's understanding there may be at least 9 private landowners involved with this section along with the National Trust.

This proposal would take walkers off the busy, and at times dangerous, coast road and offer a stunning coastal walking experience hugging the cliff-line, with uninterrupted views of Rathlin Island and beyond towards Scotland.

In addition to securing access across private land, it is accepted that such a proposal would require a detailed technical feasibility study to determine a specific route and identify necessary engineering works and associated costs, and may require planning permission and other statutory consents.

Within this option, there is the possibility of directing the trail along the National Trust's (NT) path to the Rope Bridge, and then negotiating access through private farmland before emerging onto Whitepark Road in very close proximity to Portaneevey Viewpoint/car park. At this particular point the roadway is very narrow and steeply inclined with no suitable verge, and sightlines are limited due to topography. Ambitious proposals could include investigating the feasibility of installing a section of cantilevered walkway on the seaward side of Whitepark Road to 'bridge' the ravine below and provide a safe walking experience by removing the trail from the road. As part of this proposal, the walkway could be extended around

the western perimeter of Portaneevey car park, culminating in a projecting viewing gallery at the cliff edge, providing a magnificent vantage point from which to observe the famous Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and Sheep Island below.

Secondary Option – inland route following Glenstaghey Road

It is generally accepted the preferred option outlined above is not straightforward, and the timeframes for project delivery could be lengthy. Accordingly, with visitor safety and quality of user experience to the fore, officers have identified the following 'interim' option for re-routing this section of the trail away from the busy coast road.

It is anticipated this alternative route (with variations available) could be delivered on the ground in a much shorter timeframe, although it is anticipated permission would need to be sought and received from various agencies/landowners, depending on which option is delivered e.g. Department for Infrastructure for the installation of directional road signage where the route is signed along public roads; Forest Service where the route is signed through forests; private landowners where the route is signed through private land.

Within this option, there are a number of possibilities for diverting this route back towards the coast, some of which involve using minor country roads and others involving securing access through private farmland.



The following interim options are listed for consideration:

Interim Option 1

Divert the route along the full length of Glenstaughey Road, a distance of 2 miles, to re-join Whitepark Road, and follow the current route into Ballycastle (permission required from Department for Infrastructure)

Interim Option 2

Divert the route along Glenstaughey Road for a distance of approx. 0.5 miles, and attempt to negotiate public access through private farmland to re-join Whitepark Road opposite Portaneevee Viewpoint/Car Park, and follow the current route into Ballycastle (permission required from Department for Infrastructure & private landowner/s)

Interim Option 3

Divert the route along Glenstaughey Road for a distance of approx. 1.5 miles, enter Clare Forest and emerge through private land and laneways to join Novally Road on the immediate outskirts of Ballycastle (permission required from Department for Infrastructure, Forest Service & private landowners)

For all of the above options, there is the possibility of developing an off-road trail along a section of the old Glenstaughey Road in close proximity to the entrance to Carrick-a-Rede

Rope Bridge. The land is owned by the National Trust and initial discussions with them have revealed their willingness to consider clearing this overgrown land corridor to provide public access. Owing to topography and underfoot conditions it is envisaged approx. 400m of new path construction would be necessary depending on site investigations. Such a route would divert walkers away from the potentially dangerous upper section of the 'S bends' on Whitepark Road at this particular locality.

For the interim options outlined above, walkers would be diverted off Whitepark Road on to Glenstaughey Road. It is anticipated advice and permission would need to be sought and received from the Department for Infrastructure concerning this proposal.

2. MAGHERACROSS VIEWPOINT/CAR PARK TO DUNLUCE CASTLE AND BEYOND TO BAYHEAD ROAD

The trail currently follows the roadside footway between Magheracross Viewpoint and Dunluce Castle, and onwards along Dunluce Road and the Port Hedge Path into Portballintrae.

The preferred off-road route would be a coastal trail linking Magheracross viewpoint and Dunluce Castle initially. Discussions and agreements are needed from private landowners and Department for Communities (DfC).

An off-road trail could also be created around the coastal headland between Dunluce Castle and Bayhead Rd. Due to the presence of several private

dwelling in close proximity to the coastline it may be necessary to divert back onto the roadside footway.

The trail is currently signed along Dunluce Road towards Bushmills, and then along the Port Hedge Path into Gortnee Drive and Dunluce Park housing development to re-emerge onto Bayhead Road in Portballintrae. In line with recommendations in previous reports it is proposed to reroute the trail along Bayhead Road at its junction with Dunluce Road. A roadside footway exists along the length of Bayhead Road and this route affords excellent sea views towards Portballintrae and beyond.

3. BAYHEAD ROAD TO SEAPORT AVENUE, PORTBALLINTRAE

An off-road coastal trail in this vicinity has been mooted previously, and has been an aspiration of Council and the local community group/s in Portballintrae for many years. Council owns a portion of the coastal headland on the seaward side of Bayhead Road, with the remaining land being in private ownership. NI Water also has a facility bounding Council's land at this location.

Councillors will be well aware of the ongoing legal disputes surrounding land ownership and access issues associated with Seaport Avenue. Notwithstanding such challenges, the delivery of this key section remains a viable aspiration for Council's Tourism and Recreation Service.



4. CLARE ROAD, BALLYCASTLE

Council has had discussions with the developer of the recently-opened caravan park on Clare Road regarding the feasibility of diverting the existing signed route away from Clare Road on to a new purpose-built coastal pathway (approx. length 0.5 miles) hugging the cliff-line on the seaward boundary of the caravan park.

The existing route is signed along the busy Clare Road on its approach to Ballycastle, where there is no roadside footway provision until well inside the 30mph limit.

The developer has indicated his intention to gift a coastal strip of land along the seaward edge of his site to Council to allow for public access and amenity, in the understanding that Council would carry out all necessary fencing, path and ancillary works along the length of the path. It is proposed that discussions should continue in an effort to progress this project.

5. WHITEPARK BAY TO BALLINTOY HARBOUR (TIDAL ALTERNATIVE ROUTE)

During certain high tide conditions, the route along the foreshore at the extreme eastern end of Whitepark Bay beach becomes completely impassable, and walkers following the CCW route eastwards are forced to turn back and complete their onward journey towards Ballintoy via the A2 Whitepark Road. The same applies to walkers heading west from Ballintoy Harbour towards Whitepark Bay beach.

Council should explore the feasibility of identifying and creating an alternative route through the higher farmland at this location, to enable walkers to continue their walk during high tide conditions. Such a proposal would involve negotiations with local landowners.

6. PORTBRADDON TO WHITEPARK BAY (TIDAL ALTERNATIVE ROUTE)

As with the above section, during certain high tide conditions, the route along the foreshore at the extreme western end of Whitepark Bay beach becomes completely impassable, and walkers following the CCW route eastwards are forced to branch inland away from the coast at Portbraddon via the Portbradden Rd, and then follow the Whitepark Road which has no footway. Depending on tidal conditions, walkers can re-join near the iconic white Church of Ireland building at Ballintoy.

The same applies to walkers heading west along Whitepark Bay beach towards Portbraddon. Council should explore the feasibility of identifying and creating an alternative route along the cliff top overlooking the beach, through the higher farmland at this location, to enable walkers to continue their walk during high tide conditions. Such a proposal would involve negotiations with local landowners.

In addition to securing access across private land, the above proposals would require detailed technical feasibility studies to determine specific routes and associated costs.

Securing access across private land is rarely straightforward and inevitably involves much consultation, communication and negotiations with the landowners involved. It is recommended that such consultation should proceed as a matter of urgency, given the importance of these particular proposals to the overall vision for the CCW.

There is a range of mechanisms available to Council to consider in attempting to secure access across private land (please refer to Appendix C for further details).

4.1.4 Development of Trail Heads along the CCW, including installation of directional signage to trailheads from road network

It is important to provide positive first and last impressions for all trailhead visitors and users of the route. As such, a series of trail heads with identifiable and consistent branding is proposed along the route.

A Trail Head can be taken to mean an access point to a trail that is normally accompanied by a range of facilities including parking for cars/bikes, toilets, access to drinking water, welcome & orientation signage and interpretation and distinctive visual branding/identity.

In locating trail heads, it is important to consider accessibility. Where possible, they should be

reasonably accessible by public transport and consideration should be given to provision of car parking.

It is proposed to develop trail heads within the following settlements, although the specific locations will be subject to specific site identification and investigations:

Portstewart, Portrush, Portballintrae, Dunseverick, Ballintoy and Ballycastle.

It is not proposed to build new car parks or toilet facilities at each of the above locations, but rather to use existing suitable facilities strategically located along the route. It is envisaged the priority emphasis will be on providing appropriate visual branding at such locations, with welcome & orientation signage and interpretation forming the main centrepiece.

Of primary importance are the starting and finishing locations of Portstewart and Ballycastle. In addition to the usual trail head provisions, it is proposed to highlight these two locations and give them a specific identity as the start/finish points for the famous Causeway Coast Way. The desire is to create a sense of arrival and achievement, as well as photo opportunities, for walkers completing the trail. Other similar trails in the UK e.g. South West Coast Path, Fife Coastal Path and West Highland Way, all have recognised start/finish points, often marked by an appropriate piece of sculpture or street furniture.

The installation of directional signage on the road network to direct people to the trailheads is considered to be an important priority moving

forward. Once suitable trailheads have been identified for development, early consultation with the Department for Infrastructure is considered a priority action. As well as providing directions, such signs can also help to raise the profile of the signed 'attraction', in this case the Causeway Coast Way walking trail.

Importantly, the presence of trailheads and trail information boards meet minimum national trail standards, i.e. best practice.





4.1.5 Install visitor monitoring and security equipment at strategic locations along the route

Reliable data for usage figures is an important tool for effective and sustainable management of outdoor recreation sites, including walking trails. Such data can also provide evidence and justification for funding for ongoing trail development and future maintenance.

It is proposed to identify a number of strategic locations along the route where the installation of counters would capture a realistic estimate for the numbers of people walking the CCW.

Consideration should also be given to the installation of CCTV at strategic car parks and trail heads along the route, to reassure potential visitors that the safety of their property is of primary concern to Council.

4.1.6 Establish a steering group to manage the development of, and implement interventions for, the CCW.

It is proposed to establish a Steering Group, serviced by Council, to manage the development of the Causeway Coast Way. Specific Terms of Reference for this group would be drawn up by the group members. It is envisaged that such a group would meet no more than twice a year and could include, but not be limited to, representatives from the following groupings:

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council –
councillors and officers
The National Trust
Local Landowners

Local Tourism Trade

Outdoor Recreation Providers utilising the CCW

Tourism NI

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Sport NI

4.1.7 Explore opportunities for trade engagement

To support the appeal of the coast it is important to explore opportunities to develop experiences focussing on local food, local culture and activities and attractions to encourage further exploration of the area.

There is the potential for the CCW, as part of the Causeway Coastal Route, to link up with other renowned walking routes e.g. Moyle Way and North Sperrins Way.

The development of the CCW has the potential to provide various opportunities for the tourism trade. An increase in visitors walking the CCW will lead to the potential of increased spend within the local towns and villages. Accommodation providers should benefit from the booking of overnight stays and the tourism and hospitality sector has the opportunity to provide a 'welcome service to walkers' providing them with a stop for food and drinks. Opportunities also exist for a 'pick-up/drop-off' service and baggage transfer specific to walkers' needs. With longer stays comes the opportunity for visitors to engage in other activities such as visiting local heritage sites or participating in outdoor activities such as surfing, coasteering or sea safaris amongst many others.

Tour guides and tour companies should also benefit from increased footfall in the area.

It is proposed to explore the feasibility of establishing a network of “Welcome Ports” along the length of the Causeway Coast Way. A Welcome Port is a facility which offers information and key facilities to any users of the trail. Officers from within Council’s Tourism and Recreation team would deliver this development with the trade.

Typically a Welcome Port should be within 500m of the trail with existing access in place allowing people to walk to and from the CCW easily. Other qualifying features could include some or all of the following:

- Display the Welcome Port logo in a prominent place at the entrance to the facility
- Ideally open seven days a week for a minimum of 5 hours each day but if not then there must be accurate published opening hours available
- Clean and managed toilet facilities including full disabled access
- Ability to allow walkers to fill water bottles
- Ability to distribute CCW maps and leaflets
- Availability of public transport information for walkers either through leaflets or through online access
- Ability to allow dog walkers to provide a drink for their dog (outside)
- Provide an informed welcome to users of the CCW

Such networks have been developed on other trails, notably the Fife Coastal Path in Scotland.

4.1.8 Explore opportunities for visitor engagement and marketing to domestic and international visitors

It is important for the Tourism Trade to produce offers that can be fed to the international market, strengthening the appeal to visit the CCW and Causeway Coast and Glens destination.

With the developed product of the CCW there is a large market domestically and internationally that provides the opportunity for engagement through many forms of marketing. Opportunities exist for co-operative campaigns through various media and also campaigns on buses, tubes and trams provide possibilities. Digital campaigns, direct and e-marketing and attendance at consumer and trade events are also paths that can be explored.

Another initiative that could align with marketing the CCW is the ‘Slow Adventure’ initiative, currently being trialled in the wider Strabane and Sperrins area. Slow Adventure embodies slow, immersive journeys, living in and travelling through wild places and natural spaces and experiencing and connecting to nature. The CCW provides a conduit to this and packages could be developed along the trail within the Slow Adventure website and campaigns.

In order to guide the future development and marketing of the CCW, it is also proposed that Council commissions a survey to measure the usage and economic impact of the CCW. Such a survey should elicit people’s reasons for walking the CCW and also identify revenue generated for the Causeway Coast economy.

Lonely Planet Travel Guide

At time of writing this Blueprint, one of the world’s most influential travel guides has endorsed the Causeway Coast’s position as a must-see travel destination. Lonely Planet chose the area, alongside Belfast, as the ‘Best Region to Visit’ for 2018.

The guide praised the Causeway Coast’s ‘timeless beauty and high-grade distractions’ which it said are more popular now than ever.

(Lonely Planet has produced a number of short videos which showcase why it chose the Causeway Coast as its Number 1 region for 2018. To view the videos go to www.lonelyplanet.com/best-in-travel/regions#1).

The CCW was also voted the ‘Favourite Coastal Walk’ in WalkNI’s Awards for 2017, as voted by members of the public.



5.0

Blueprint Summary

5.0 Blueprint Summary

This blueprint document has attempted to highlight the significance of the Causeway Coast Way as a viable tourism product in its existing state, and also proposed recommendations which, if implemented, could raise its profile and help to establish it as a truly international-class ‘must-do’ coastal walking trail.

Maximising the amount of off-road walking opportunities along the trail is the key challenge facing Council. Attention must also be given to agreeing management structures to ensure the existing trail is managed, maintained and marketed in such a manner to deliver a high quality visitor experience that encourages continued sustainable growth in visitor numbers and results in economic benefits for the local Causeway Coast region.

Success will largely depend on the realisation of the development actions listed within the body of this report, namely:

- Review existing permissive path agreements along the CCW
- Conduct trail condition survey
- Creation of new off-road sections of trail on coastal farm land
- Development of trail heads at strategic locations along the route
- Installation of visitor and security monitoring equipment
- Establish a Steering Group
- Explore opportunities for trade engagement
- Explore opportunities for visitor engagement and marketing



Appendix A

Tourism Northern Ireland Market Information

In relation to targeting suitable tourism market segmentation, Tourism NI have identified 'Great Escapers' as one of the main target markets, largely comprising couples, approximately 30 years old. They are specifically interested in rural holidays and like to get physical with nature. More of them are likely to take part in more strenuous, but not extreme, exploration.

From their holiday they want 'to connect with the landscape, to feel the earth beneath their feet.' Tourism NI have identified this group as the one most likely to be seen escaping to breath-taking landscapes, actively exploring more remote and exciting places on foot or by bicycle. This group likes to gently explore by walking, cycling or pleasure boating.

Another segment recognised as a target market is 'Time Together' who look for romance, nightlife, gentle walking, shopping, relaxation, good quality food and drink, natural scenery, contemporary cultural experiences and landmarks.

'Mature Cosmopolitans' may also be a relevant target, given the following descriptors: curiosity, authenticity, insight, exploration, eating out, natural beauty, relaxation, good quality food and drink, scenic drives, theatre experience, authentic pub experience.

Figures from research carried out by Tourism NI show that the proportion of people taking overnight trips in NI who participated in hiking/cross country walking in

2014-2015 was as follows:

	2014	2015
NI Domestic overnight trips	21.5%	31.9%
External overnight trips (GB and overseas)**	7.1%	6.0%

Clearly there is opportunity to build on the GB and Overseas market.

A number of Tour Guides and Companies provide organised tours of the Causeway Coast Way, amongst them the following:

Away a Wee Walk, Dalriada Kingdom Tours, Let's Go Walking, Nine Glens Walking Tours.

The CCW has also been the subject of interest for a number of bloggers.

A significant number of charity events, and other commercial events, are held annually along the CCW e.g. Causeway Coast Marathon. Undoubtedly these events attract a high volume of use and raise the profile of the Causeway Coast as a walking destination, but caution must be exercised concerning carrying capacity and sustainability of the route, in terms of erosion caused by mass participation events.

Activity Tourism Background: Development of activity tourism in Northern Ireland is delivered 'through a service level agreement with Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland who is responsible for industry engagement and development of activity specific websites'. Tourism NI is currently focussed on adventure, walking, mountain biking, cycling and canoeing.

Key market data: Tourism NI estimates that the activity tourism market is valued at between £90m and £100m per annum. Of this it is estimated that £55m comes from overseas tourists engaged in activity tourism. In 2009, 236,000 overseas tourists took part in an activity whilst in Northern Ireland. The most popular activity was walking (63% of respondents took part in this activity), followed by golf (14%).

Tourism Ireland Market Information

German Tourism Market

According to Tourism Ireland market research, Germany is the third most important source of visitors to the island of Ireland. Recent market performance has also highlighted Germany as being the largest provider of visitors from mainland Europe.

Results for 2016 from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) suggest that visitor revenue from mainland Europe to Northern Ireland increased by 11% to £80 million when compared to the same period in 2015 and mainland European visitors to Northern Ireland grew by 14% to over 270,000 during the same period.

The Island of Ireland welcomed 651,000 visitors from Germany in 2016 and 69,000 visits were made to Northern Ireland. German visitors account for 6% of all visitors to the island. This is a visitor growth of 7% of German visits to Northern Ireland.

The typical German holiday maker arrives in Ireland throughout the year with the most popular months being May to August.

The decision to where they are going on holiday is made up to a year in advance. 89% travel by air with the remaining 11% travelling by sea. 56% use a car, giving them the freedom and opportunity to follow their own itinerary and visit more than one place. German visitors to NI stay an average of almost 10 nights and almost one-in-ten stay for 15 nights or more. Hiking and cross country is the most popular activity making up 22% of the activities that they engage in. 'The green landscape, the clean sea, the easy way of enjoying the day' sums up what they look for from their visit.

The two main segments seen as best prospects to target are:

'*The Culturally Curious*' who want to broaden their minds and expand their experiences through landscape, history and culture. The German visitor also falls within the 'Great Escapers' segment, whose principle motivation is to enjoy the beauty of breath-taking landscapes.

A third segment which can also be taken into consideration which has a strong potential for short breaks and during off peak periods is the 'Social Energisers' who want to enjoy a fun time with friends in places that are new, unique and vibrant.

Ireland's natural assets are seen to match many of the German consumer's motivations and this gives Council the opportunity to build on this given the high quality of the landscape and available experiences along the CCW.

Some of the pillars that Tourism Ireland have recognised as delivering Ireland's brand to the German market are:-

Living Historical Stories: Discover authentic stories in towns, villages and the spectacular scenery.

Awakening the Senses: Stimulating, natural, multi-sensory experiences are created by dramatic settings and unspoilt landscapes.

Active in Nature: Connect with nature through revitalising activities and experiences in spectacular landscapes and scenery.

These segments and pillars brought together give us a good understanding of what the German visitor wants and the relevance the development of the CCW would have in encouraging more visitors to our destination. Ireland's coastline is considered to be a compelling motivator for the German market therefore the CCW is a great asset in promoting Ireland internationally.

The opportunity to communicate with this market is through television campaigns and the web to bring about awareness followed by engagement. Other forms of mixed media are print and radio where adverts and PR work well. As a destination we must stand out as a 'must-see-must-do' and developing a walk such as the CCW, with icons including the Unesco World Heritage site along the route, works as a strength in the appeal.

Visitors to Northern Ireland 2016 Source: NISRA & Failte Ireland

Germany	69,000
Great Britain	1,389,000
Republic of Ireland	456,000
United States.....	196,000
Canada	54,000
Other Overseas	135,000

Appendix B

National Context

- Draft Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2016-2021
- Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015 (Department of Regional, Development 2010)
- Health and Wellbeing 2026 Delivering Together (Department of Health, 2016)
- A Fitter Future for All – Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland (Department of Health, 2012-2022)
- Our Great Outdoors – The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland (Sport NI, Tourism NI and DCAL Inland Waterways, 2013)
- Sport Matters: Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 (Sport NI)
- Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Policy (2004)
- Planning Policy Statement 16: Tourism (2013)
- Draft Tourism Strategy to 2020 (DETI, 2012)
- Valuing Nature – A consultation on a Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 (DoE)
- Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Economy, scheduled for 2017)
- Creating Experiences – A Toolkit for the Northern Ireland Tourism Industry (Tourism NI, 2014)
- Our Passion, Our Place: NIEA Strategic Priorities 2012-2020 (NIEA, 2012)

Regional Context

- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Council Strategy 2015-2019
- Causeway Coast and Glens Destination Management Strategy 2015-2020
- Causeway Coast and Glens Outdoor Recreation Action Plan (2014)
- Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2013-2023
- Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan 2017-2030
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2013-2018

Appendix C

There is a range of mechanisms available to Council to consider in attempting to secure public access across private land including, but not limited to, the following:

Outright purchase of a coastal strip of land

Council, or any other body working in partnership with Council to promote the ethos of the CCW, could purchase a strip of private land from the landowners along the line of the proposed route to facilitate public access.

The scale of land acquired could vary, depending on the goals and aims of the acquiring authority. Provision of access only may not necessitate a land take of more than 5m-7m, whereas a proposal to accommodate access within a broader coastal biodiversity project could effectively involve a much broader corridor of land, or even whole fields. From a Council perspective, the purchase price involved

in any such proposal would be regulated by central government's Land & Property Services (LPS).

Making a Permissive Path Agreement

Within the scope of the Recreation and Youth Services (NI) Order 1986, district councils can enter into permissive path agreements with landowners for the purposes of providing public access.

A permissive path is not a public right of way and can be provided on whatever terms and conditions, be subject to whatever limitations and endure for whatever period of time, the council and landowner are willing to agree. Such an agreement will normally run for a set number of years (usually no less than 10 years) after which there is no further obligation on either the council or the owner (although both are free to renew or re-negotiate the agreement if they wish to do so).

Conditions can also be set that would be inappropriate for a public right of way, for example, that the path will only be open to the public at certain times of the year, that it shall not be used after dark or can be closed or diverted by the landowner whenever he or she considers it necessary.

Making a Public Path Creation Agreement

Under Article 11 of the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983, the district council may enter into agreement with any person who has "the necessary power" to create a public path. It must be noted that a public path creation agreement creates a public right in perpetuity. The agreement may provide for payment and for the new path to be subject to limitations and conditions. Once an agreement has been made, the council has a duty

to carry out whatever works are needed to bring the path into a fit state for use and thereafter to maintain the path in that state (Article 13).

Compulsory Powers for Creation (Public Path Order Article 12)

Under Article 12 of the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983, a public path order may be made by the council as a result of a request made to it, or it may itself decide to make an order without having been requested to do so. However, orders can only be made for one or other of the specific reasons provided for in the Access Order.

Both in making an order and in confirming an order as unopposed, the council must be satisfied that the criteria and tests laid down in the Access Order can be met. If the order is opposed, the council must also be able to demonstrate to the Department that they can be met. They include general tests such as being satisfied that the path is needed and it is "expedient" to make the order, and more specific requirements relating to each type of path order.

Compulsory acquisition / Vesting powers

Councils are empowered to acquire land and property to facilitate functions for which they are responsible. Legislation includes powers under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972; The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 2002; and the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

