



CLIFFS OF MOHER

Preliminary Draft

2040 STRATEGY

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy focuses on the setting out of a long-term vision for the sustainable development of the world-class visitor attraction over the next 20 years. The proposals have been informed by detailed analysis of the natural, heritage, architectural, tourism and economic context of the Cliffs of Moher site and wider region.

A multi-disciplinary team of international consultants has developed the strategy, with guidance provided by a Steering Group of representatives from the Cliffs of Moher Experience, Clare County Council, Fáilte Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, private industries and the wider community. The shared vision arising from this process represents a consensus about what stakeholders want the Cliffs of Moher Experience to be in 2040.

The strategy is driven by a clear need for change, underpinned by the limited capacity of visitor facilities on site. Over the past 10 years, visitor numbers have far exceeded that which the site was originally designed to cater for. This has had significant negative impacts on the quality of the visitor experience, from congestion on arrival to overcrowding along paths and inside the visitor centre. Erosion of the cliff-edge presents a real threat to the site’s most vulnerable habitats and creates a major health and safety hazard for visitors going beyond the designated pathways. High traffic on local access routes impacts negatively on surrounding communities and a lack of partnerships and transport connectivity means the benefits of large visitor numbers at the attraction are not felt across the county.

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy presents an exciting opportunity to enhance the naturally wild qualities of the landscape for visitors while allowing for the restoration of its beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats. The popularity and worldwide recognition of the Cliffs of Moher as a top visitor attraction can be maximised to create a resilient tourism product that extends economic benefits across the wider region. The success of the strategy will rest on achieving a sustainable balance between the priorities to create high quality visitor experiences, protect the cultural authenticity and wildness of the natural assets, increase tourism revenue across the season and within the county, and minimise any adverse impacts on local communities.

The strategy is guided by four key objectives. The transformational strategic initiatives that support each of these core principles are summarised in the following pages.



1 Providing Sustainable Access

Significantly improve visitor access to the Cliffs of Moher while protecting the natural assets and maximising positive impacts on local communities.

2 Optimising the World-Class Experience

Deliver a world-class tourism model in which audience needs and value for money are central.

3 Transforming the Natural Landscape

Significantly enhance the biodiversity value of the natural environment, while increasing its aesthetic appeal for a wide range of audiences.

4 Enhanced Economic Benefits Across the Region

Establish sustainable access links and partnerships that disperse visitors and increase tourism revenue across the wider area.

PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE ACCESS

The strategy focuses on establishing a sustainable transport provision for visitors and locals that allows for safer, cleaner and more efficient visits to the site and wider region.

Pro-active management of traffic to the site will create a new arrivals sequence that reduces negative impacts on local communities and provides enhanced control of visitor numbers on site during peak periods. Key projects include establishing shuttle systems, promotion of cycling and walking and provision of e-charging facilities.

Strategic Initiative 1: New off-site park and ride hubs and a shuttle system that operates at peak times will ease traffic congestion on local approach roads.

Strategic Initiative 2: A best practice visitor management plan will be implemented to alleviate any traffic issues on the R478 road, including enhanced control and management of all vehicles arriving on site.

Strategic Initiative 3: A new pedestrian footbridge over the R478 will provide safe and easy elevated access to the site for visitors and avoid causing traffic queues on entry.

Strategic Initiative 4: Enhanced partnerships with local businesses will encourage overnight stays and visits earlier and later in the day, and during the off-peak and shoulder seasons.

Strategic Initiative 5: Development and promotion of cycling and walking trails in the hinterland of the Cliffs of Moher, connecting with Greenways, Blueways and existing EURO Velo routes as they are developed.

Strategic Initiative 6: The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk will be integrated into the Cliffs of Moher Experience via a Coastal Walk Management Plan developed in partnership with landowners and key stakeholders.

Strategic Initiative 7: A high benchmark in sustainability measures will be achieved across the site development by implementing good passive design techniques, utilising renewable energy sources, and upgrading existing infrastructure to the latest European building regulations.

An integrated Traffic and Transport Plan is required for the wider local area which aligns to the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, Burren and Cliffs of Moher DEDP, Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 and Wild Atlantic Way 10 year plan.



Clare County Council in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Clare Local Development Community will progress a Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk with landowners and other key stakeholders to secure the future of this iconic walking route.



OPTIMISING THE WORLD CLASS EXPERIENCE

The strategy will achieve a step change in the visitor experience by providing streamlined access to the site and prioritising exhilarating encounters with the cliffs and immersion in untamed nature.

Key projects include the creation of an expanded network of safe graded walks and viewing points, enhanced landscape interpretation and targeted event and activity packages.

Strategic Initiative 1:
Engagement with the special qualities of the cliffs will happen before visitors arrive, with the shuttle journey acting as an immersive event in its own right and the implementation of a revitalised marketing and branding strategy.

Strategic Initiative 2:
A new access gateway building will create a unified and improved warm welcome for all visitors, providing a shelter and base for the subsequent visitor journey and an outstanding locally provenanced retail, food and drink offer.

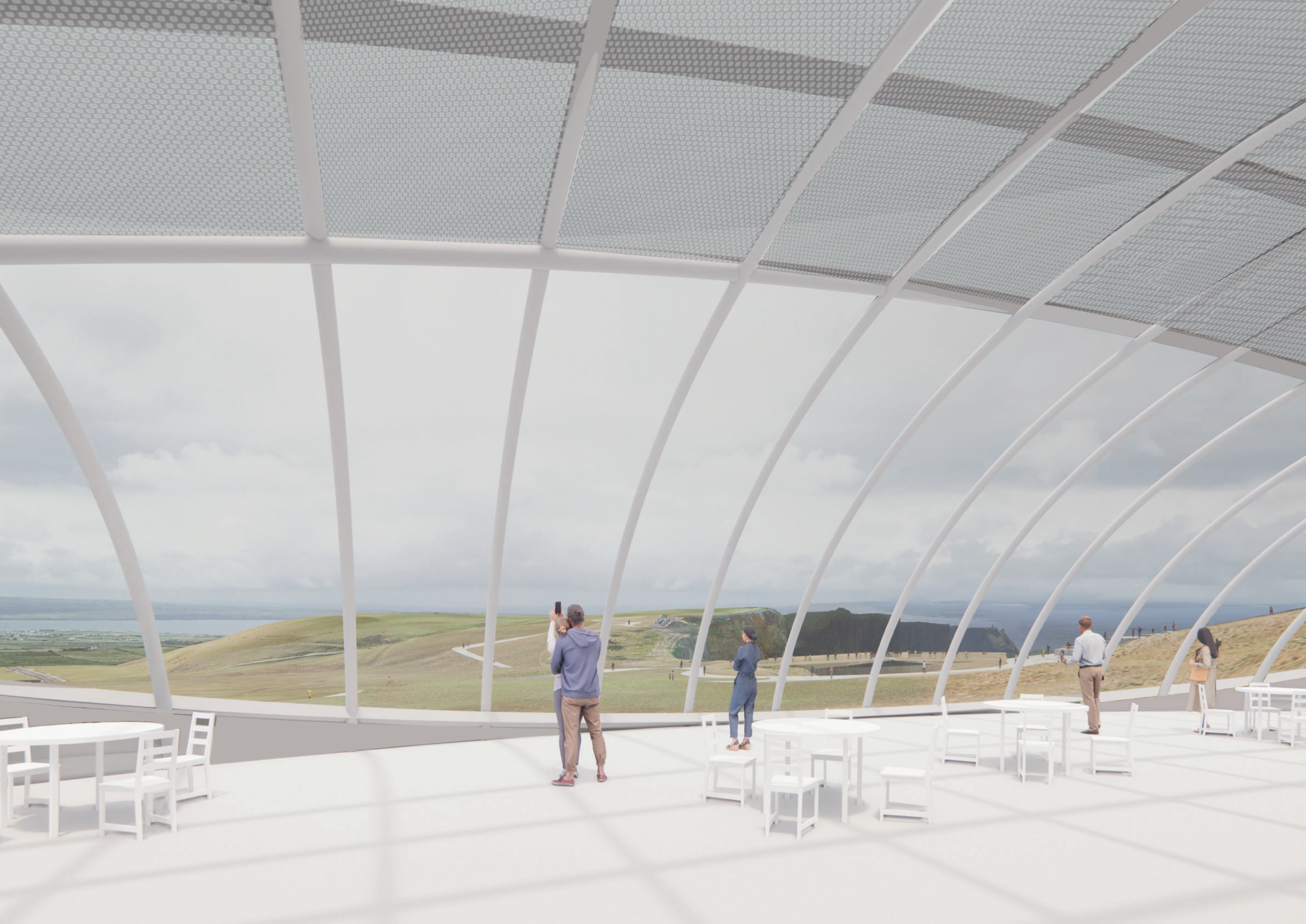
Strategic Initiative 3:
A Habitat Management Plan will be implemented which includes nature conservation in the agricultural landscape in accordance with the Special Area Protection guidelines for birds and other wildlife. This will create beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats that enhance the authentic wildness of the visitor experience.

Strategic Initiative 4:
Limiting the number of visitors via site capacity measures and creating an expanded network of paths will give visitors the space to explore the wild landscape safely.

Strategic Initiative 5:
A variety of viewing opportunities will be established that increase the length of visits, encourage repeat trips and safely provide iconic photo opportunities that create enjoyable life-long memories. New events in the landscape will include elevated views, raised walkways and over the edge structures.

Strategic Initiative 6:
Robust new interpretation and signage across the site combined with enhanced personal experiences with local guides will bring to life the geological, natural, social and mythological heritage of the cliffs, while complementing the showpiece attraction that is the wild landscape and stunning views.

Strategic Initiative 7:
These compelling and unique stories ‘set in stone’ will be brought together within an immersive and interactive interpretation hub located in the existing visitor centre. The re-purposed facility will also provide a base for a vibrant new education and community engagement programme.



TRANSFORMING THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Enhancing the biodiversity value and increasing the aesthetic appeal of the natural environment is a key driver for the strategy. With appropriate conservation measures and on-going maintenance, the existing agricultural grasslands can be brought back to a diverse mosaic of flora and fauna habitats that reflect the original cliff landscape.

Proactive land and visitor management across the wider area will strengthen opportunities for conservation research, monitoring and education via strategic partnerships.

- Strategic Initiative 1:**
Consolidating all arrival, welcome and support facilities to the east of the R478 access road will allow the cliff side of the road to be returned to a natural, rewilded habitat.
- Strategic Initiative 2:**
A new sustainable environmental land management approach will be adopted, utilising rewilding conservation measures that create a naturally variable mosaic of grassland, heathland and scrub habitats, with significant biodiversity benefits for the cliff landscape.
- Strategic Initiative 3:**
Significantly expanding the site of the Cliffs of Moher Experience and establishing a sensitive network of paths will allow visitors to walk more and disperse more widely, reducing erosion along the clifftop.
- Strategic Initiative 4:**
Setting back the clifftop pathway from the cliff edge will allow for the rehabilitation of the rocky sea vegetation and coastal grassland community.
- Strategic Initiative 5:**
Indigenous species of flora and fauna will be protected through habitat management, and regular ecological surveys will be carried out alongside maintenance regimes to encourage and maintain biodiversity.
- Strategic Initiative 6:**
Existing links with third level educational institutions will be developed in the areas of conservation, research and monitoring of the landscape, birds, wildlife, biodiversity and climate.
- Strategic Initiative 7:**
Thought-provoking messaging around sustainability will be integrated across site interpretation, marketing and local communications in order to build a deeper understanding and care of the landscape, its historical significance and its diverse uses today.



ENHANCED ECONOMIC BENEFITS ACROSS THE REGION

A core principle of the strategy is realising enhanced economic benefits for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and surrounding towns and villages.

Through strategic partnerships that focus on sustainable transport networks, the Cliffs of Moher will act as a magnet to attract and disperse visitors more widely around the county, thereby increasing tourism revenue and transforming the economic and social future of settlements across the region.

Strategic Initiative 1:

An integrated transport system will be implemented via a new hop on hop off shuttle service and further promotion of walking and cycling options, alleviating congestion issues and creating a network of diverse experiences that result in increased length of stay, visitor spend and dispersal within the wider county.

Strategic Initiative 2:

Strengthen existing partnerships with key strategic assets, businesses and communities in the area to develop new joint marketing campaigns and regionwide visitor packages that help to create the conditions for new infrastructure, accommodation and services in local towns and villages.

Strategic Initiative 3:

The unique culture and heritage of the wider Burren and County Clare will be highlighted via engagement activities, on site interpretation and marketing communications, providing a platform to capture interest in festivals, events and visitor experiences across the wider region.

Strategic Initiative 4:

The new Gateway building will increase opportunities for local and regional food, drink and craft suppliers to sell to a global audience.

Strategic Initiative 5:

Key output information from the Cliffs of Moher will be utilised to inform the development of the wider tourism product of the county and resolve the key issues impacting communities.

Strategic Initiative 6:

A coordinated approach with local businesses will seek to ensure increased overnight stays and visits to towns, villages and experiences by independent travellers and tour groups, creating the conditions for investment in new tourism products and provision of accommodation in County Clare.

Strategic Initiative 7:

The expanded visitor offering will lead to an increase in direct and indirect employment on the Cliffs of Moher site, reinforcing the status of the Cliffs of Moher Experience as a key employer that sustains rural populations, local communities and retention of spend.





Our mission is to deliver world-class experiences in a safe, accessible, authentic, and welcoming environment. We will champion best practice in managing for sustainability and conservation of the Cliffs of Moher, our environment and our culture and heritage, while protecting the status of The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. We will collaborate with stakeholders to contribute to the development of a prosperous, vibrant local community and economy for future generations.

CLIFFS OF MOHER MISSION



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