

Draft



# CLIFFS OF MOHER

**2040 STRATEGY**  
June 2024

# FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



## Foreword by Clare County Council

Clare County Council is committed to implementing the objectives of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040. This will occur through its ownership of the Cliffs of Moher site and supported by county, regional and national development plans.

I wish to acknowledge Fáilte Ireland as our partners in developing this innovative strategy. In a particular way, I wish to express my appreciation to our Elected Members and the Board and staff of Cliffs of Moher DAC for journeying with this vision and plan. Thanks especially to the local community and the tourism sector for engaging with the strategy development process and for informing its final contents and objectives. A visitor attraction of this renown, scale, and geological and environmental importance requires such extensive engagement and proper planning for future protection and to ensure economic benefit for the wider region.

The 'Clare Tourism Strategy 2030', as the overarching tourism plan for Clare, sets out clear sustainable tourism objectives. It recognises that tourism in the county is heavily dependent on the aesthetic, environmental and heritage qualities of our landscape and seascape. Sustainability, therefore, is at the heart of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040, which focuses on creating world-class experiences, enhancing the special qualities of the site, and growing the Cliffs of Moher's contribution to the county in a sustainable way.

This exciting blueprint delivers for local communities, the environment, and visitors to Clare through targeted measures such as dispersing visitors across the county, encouraging visitors to stay longer, increasing bed nights, generating employment, and delivering sustainable access to the Cliffs of Moher site and beyond. The ongoing and proposed changes in processes, practices and structures at the Cliffs of Moher also underline the strategy's strong commitment to combatting climate change and the threat it poses to our natural environment and the tourism economy.

I would urge everyone interested and directly involved in tourism in Clare to fully support the objectives set out in this important strategy which, once implemented, will have immediate and long-lasting positive benefits for the local economy, environment and communities across the county.

**Pat Dowling,**  
**Chief Executive, Clare County Council**



## Foreword by Fáilte Ireland

The Cliffs of Moher visitor experience has played a central role in building a positive image of Ireland at home and abroad for many decades and is a signature discovery point on the Wild Atlantic Way. The Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 will ensure that this iconic international tourism landmark delivers for the whole region through the development of enhanced relationships and links with the Burren, the Wild Atlantic Way, and the wider hinterland.

Through our Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher, we are delighted to have been able to work with Clare County Council and local communities in the delivery of a strategy that promotes the development of the Cliffs of Moher and County Clare as a sustainable and desirable tourism destination. Embracing a community-led approach to establishing a destination with international appeal and wide-ranging benefits to the wider economy and environment has been a key part of the process.

This strategy sets out to deliver greater economic benefits across the county through a range of actions. Amongst the key measures outlined is the positioning of the Cliffs of Moher as a 'must do' destination, improving the overall economy of communities by motivating visitors to stay overnight and spend more in Clare, creating greater cross promotion and linkages within the local tourism sector, extending the length of the season, and delivering transport solutions that improve access and protect the environment.

Fáilte Ireland looks forward to working closely with industry partners, communities and Clare County Council to support its implementation in the years ahead.

**Miriam Kennedy**  
**Head of Wild Atlantic Way, Fáilte Ireland**



## Acknowledgements

In the development of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, Clare County Council gratefully acknowledges the important contribution and guidance provided by Leonard Cleary, [Director of Rural Development and West Clare MD, Clare County Council](#); Geraldine Enright, [Director of Cliffs of Moher Experience; Tourism Dept. of Clare County Council](#); and other members of the [Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Steering Committee](#), namely;

Cllr. Shane Talty & Cllr. Gabriel Keating, [Elected Members, West Clare MD, Clare County Council](#); Ruth Hurley, [Architect, Clare County Council](#); Miriam Kennedy, [Head of Wild Atlantic Way, Fáilte Ireland](#); Paul Carty, [Tourism Consultant](#); Bobby Kerr, [Chair of Cliffs of Moher Centre, DAC Board](#); Fiona Monaghan, [New Projects Manager, Fáilte Ireland](#); Trina Rynne, [Financial Accountant, Clare County Council](#); John Leahy, [Senior Executive Engineer, Clare County Council](#); Sheila Downes, [Environmental Officer, Clare County Council](#); [Clare County Council](#); Helen Carty, [District Conservation Officer, NWPS - National Parks & Wildlife Service](#); Deirdre O'Shea, [Head of Tourism, Clare County Council](#); John McNerney, [Commercial Manager, Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC](#); Mark O'Shaughnessy, [Head of Operations, Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC](#); Melanie Lennon, [Sales & Marketing Manager, Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC](#); and Sheila Browne, [Projects Coordinator, Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC](#).

Clare County Council wishes to acknowledge the late Chris Smith, Project Lead, Haley Sharpe Design, for his vital contribution to the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.

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Miriam Kennedy, Fáilte Head of WAW, Fáilte Ireland

# FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy has been developed through a multiphase programme of research, development and consultation, taking on board the views and considerations of a wide range of statutory and community stakeholders.

## A Multi-Disciplinary Team

Clare County Council, supported by Fáilte Ireland, has developed the strategy with a multi-disciplinary team of international consultants. These consultants are specialists in a range of disciplines including:

- Tourism, Heritage, Cultural and Interpretation Consultant – Project Lead – Haley Sharpe Design
- Tourism, Economic and Financial Consultant – Haley Sharpe Design
- Architect / Masterplanner – Henchion + Reuter Architects
- Planning and Environmental Consultant – The Planning Partnership
- Project Coordination and Consultation - Dale Lewis Consulting
- Landscape Architects – Arup Landscape
- Transport Planning and Engineering: Infrastructure, Civil, Structural- Roughan & O’Donovan
- Engineering and M&E Services – Bennett Freehill
- Café and Retail Consultant – JB & A
- Quantity Surveyor – KSN
- PSDP – Turner & Townsend

## Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Steering Group

The development of the strategy has been guided by a Steering Group comprising representatives from:

- Clare County Council
- Fáilte Ireland
- Cliffs of Moher Experience
- Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC Board
- Clare County Council Elected Members
- National Parks & Wildlife Service
- Private industry
- The consultation process

Committee members include:

- Geraldine Enright
- Leonard Cleary
- Bobby Kerr
- Miriam Kennedy
- Fiona Monaghan
- Deirdre O’ Shea
- Trina Rynne
- Sheila Downes
- Helen Carty
- Mark O’Shaughnessy
- Melanie Lennon
- John McNerney
- Cllr. Shane Talty
- Cllr. Gabriel Keating
- John Leahy
- Martin Henchion
- Wessel Vosloo







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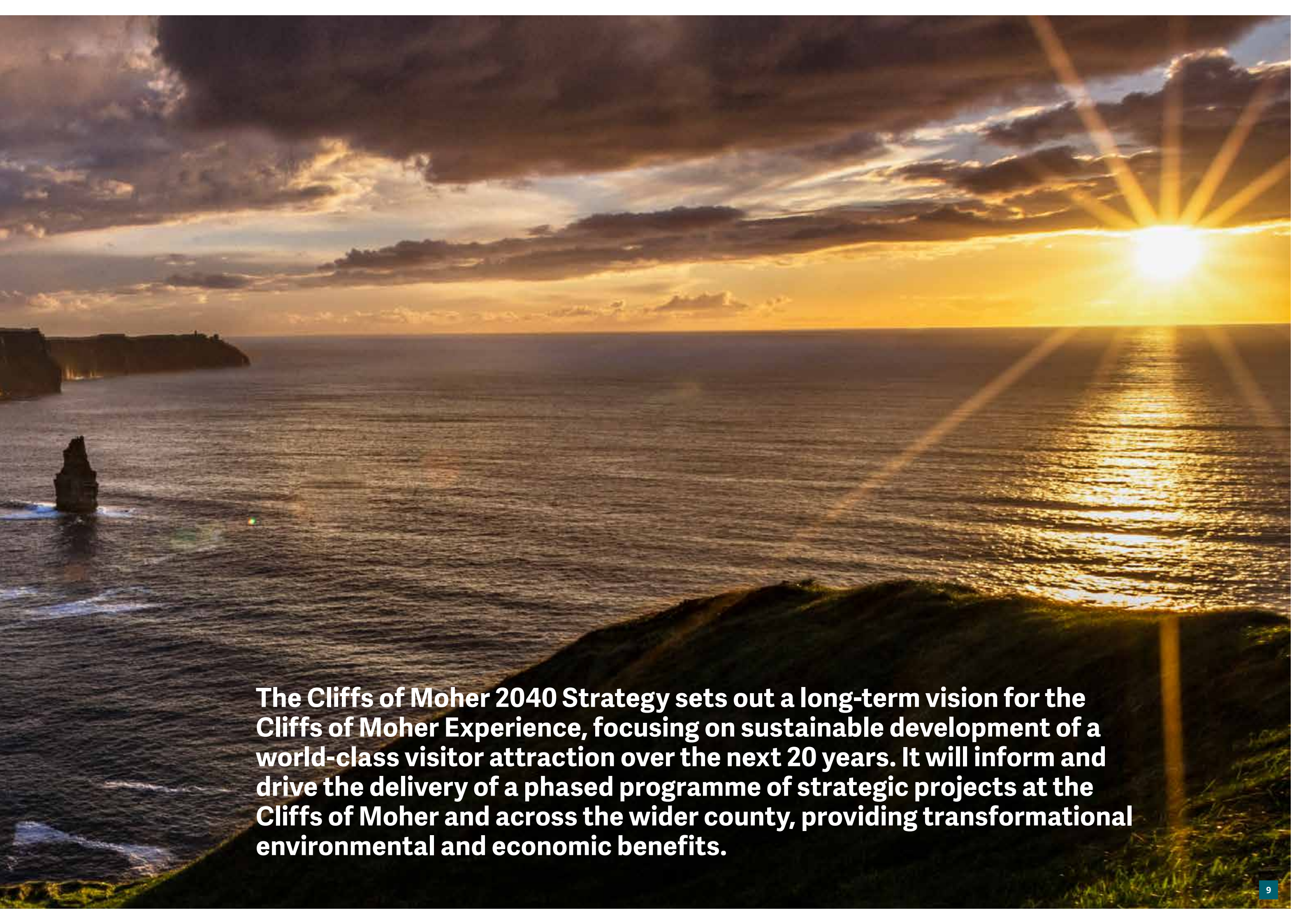
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# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION



A full-page background image showing a sunset over the ocean. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the right side of the horizon, casting long, golden rays across the sky and reflecting on the water's surface. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, some of which are illuminated from below by the sun, creating a dramatic contrast. The ocean is a deep blue-grey, with white foam from breaking waves visible in the foreground and middle ground. On the left, a dark, rocky coastline extends into the sea, featuring a prominent, jagged rock formation. In the far distance, a small, white lighthouse sits atop a grassy cliff. The overall mood is serene yet powerful, capturing the raw beauty of a coastal landscape at dusk.

**The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy sets out a long-term vision for the Cliffs of Moher Experience, focusing on sustainable development of a world-class visitor attraction over the next 20 years. It will inform and drive the delivery of a phased programme of strategic projects at the Cliffs of Moher and across the wider county, providing transformational environmental and economic benefits.**



# INTRODUCTION / CORE OBJECTIVES

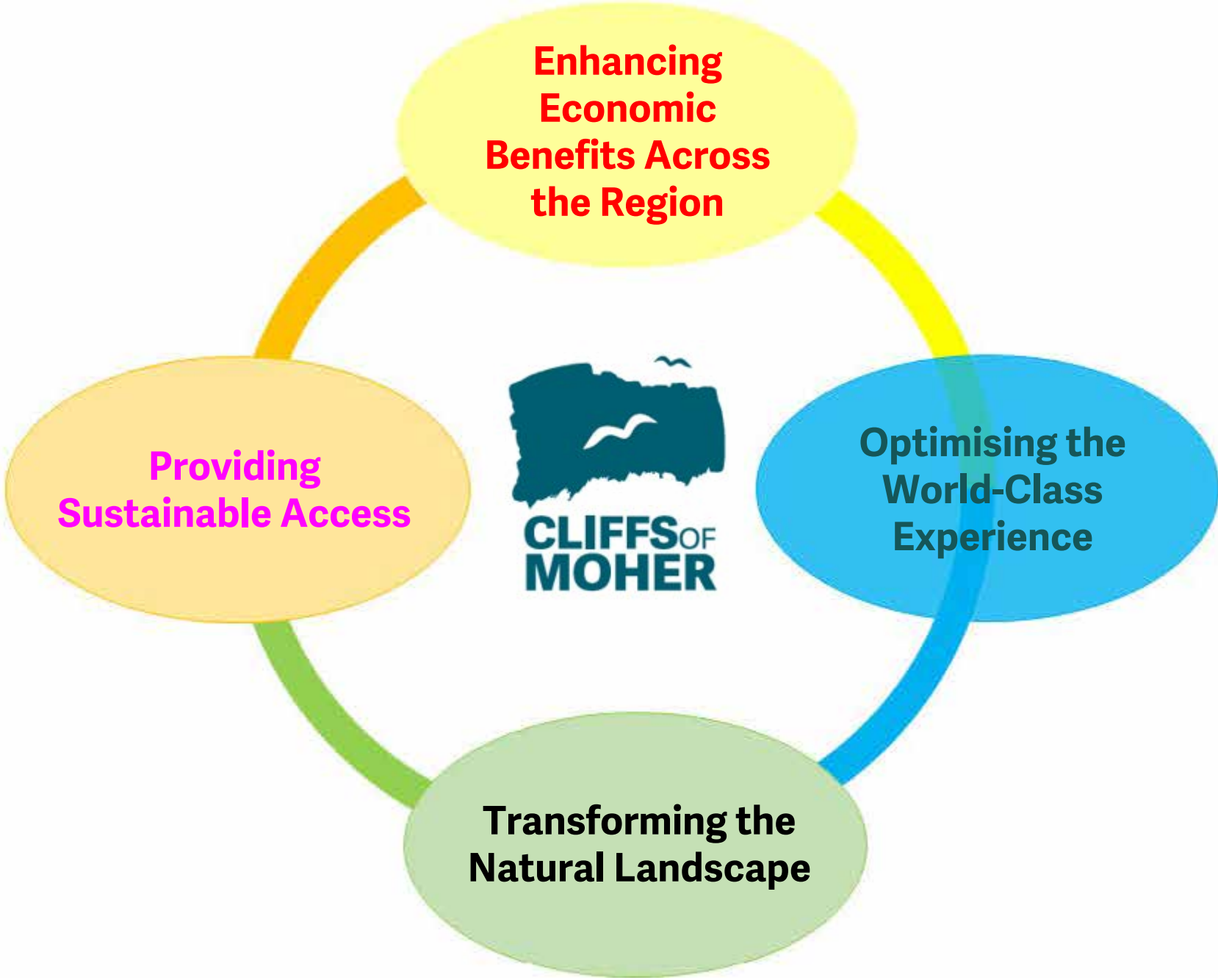
One of Ireland’s favourite visitor experiences, the Cliffs of Moher tower over the rugged west Clare coast. Rising out of the Atlantic waters to a height of over 700ft at O’Brien’s Tower and running along the coast for almost six miles, the Cliffs of Moher were formed over 320 million years ago and today are part of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark.

The Cliffs of Moher host major colonies of nesting seabirds and are one of the country's most important seabird breeding colonies. The area has been designated a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds.

The Cliffs are a Signature Discovery Point on Fáilte Ireland’s Wild Atlantic Way and a wholly owned tourism asset of Clare County Council.

Clare County Council, supported by Fáilte Ireland, has collaborated with a multi-disciplinary consultancy team led by Haley Sharpe Design to prepare a new Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, including an overall site masterplan. This is a strategy of transformational and ambitious ideas driven by four core objectives.

In order to create the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, a comprehensive multiphase consultation process was undertaken with the public, local community groups and businesses, state bodies, customers, elected members and landowners. Statutory consultation has also been held with relevant organisations as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. This listening process has played an important role in developing and refining the project proposals. The feedback has demonstrated widespread support, in the local area and across County Clare, for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy and Masterplan.





The priority of the wider strategic economic model for the Cliffs of Moher is to encourage visitors to stay longer in the area, especially overnight, spend more and facilitate greater benefits and investment into local towns and villages. The key to realising economic benefits for the area in the future will be development of enhanced partnerships and greater coordination between the Cliffs of Moher Experience and local businesses and communities. This approach will minimise adverse impacts on local communities and sustainably increase tourism revenue across the season. The strategy will align with local, regional and national policy priorities to create high quality visitor experiences within County Clare.

The Cliffs of Moher must offer excellent value for money via diverse visitor offers and added value, delivering a world-class tourism model in which audience needs and satisfaction are central. The strategy will develop a sequence of memorable experiences that prioritise exhilarating encounters with the cliffs and immersion in untamed nature through a network of safe graded walks, enhanced landscape interpretation, and targeted event and activity packages.

The need to conserve and highlight the beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats of the cliffs is a key driver for the strategy. Rewilding and recovery of the natural environment will significantly enhance the biodiversity value as well as increase its aesthetic appeal for a wide range of audiences. Proactive habitat and visitor management will reinforce commitments to protect the cultural authenticity and wildness of the natural assets, designated habitats and protected species (and associated ecological corridors / linkages) within the site and wider area. This approach will also strengthen opportunities for conservation research, monitoring and education through strategic partnerships.

A new park and ride hub and shuttle service for visitors to the Cliffs of Moher, developed as part of an integrated transport system for the wider area, will provide sustainable access to the site and beyond. The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk and the developing greenways present major opportunities for sustainable access links with the Cliffs of Moher site and for managing visitors across the wider area. These assets provide valuable community amenities and can also deliver in terms of attracting visitors, increasing visitor revenue and transforming the economic and social future of the towns, villages and rural areas around the region. At the Cliffs of Moher site, the provision of new and enhanced facilities, services and network of walkways and features, will facilitate sustainable and enhanced universal access for all visitors.

The strategic aim is to enhance significantly the visitor experience within a restored and re-wilded natural landscape, create sustainable access to and within the enlarged site, and encourage managed dispersal of visitors across the area to deliver widespread economic benefits for local communities.



**THE CLIFFS OF MOHER'S ABILITY TO ATTRACT TOURISTS AND PROMOTE IRELAND OVERSEAS BRINGS SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL ECONOMY.**

**TO MAINTAIN ITS PREMIER MARKET POSITION, THE DESTINATION MUST INVEST IN THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND COMPETE WITH OTHER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS.**

# INTRODUCTION / DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

The strategy has been developed by the multi-disciplinary team in three distinct stages and has drawn on the expertise and views of a wider network of sector and community stakeholders.

## 1 Stage 1

Strategic review of the visitor journey and Cliffs of Moher hinterland, a region of international significance in terms of Irish tourism.

## 2 Stage 2

Proposals for arrival, access and circulation across the Cliffs of Moher site.

## 3 Stage 3

A Masterplan setting out physical interventions on the site including visitor facilities, the existing visitor centre and ancillary buildings and services.

The findings have been assessed and presented by the consultant team at each stage of the strategy development, with feedback provided by the Steering Group. The key decisions arising from these discussions are highlighted in Section 4.

In order to create the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy a comprehensive multiphase consultation process was undertaken with the public, local community and community groups, state bodies, customers, elected members and landowners. The details and findings of this consultation are included in Section 3.

Throughout the development process, the consultants have drawn on international benchmarking examples of other environmentally sensitive and world heritage sites. Case studies highlighting comparative sustainable tourism and development initiatives are presented throughout Section 4.

The development of the strategy and the site masterplan has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.

The scope and remit of the work was set out in a detailed provision of services as described in Appendix 1 to the Request for Tenders issued by Clare County Council.

In summary, the Services comprised the engagement of a Multidisciplinary Integrated Team to provide tourism strategy, hinterland and site masterplan consultancy services to develop an overall Visitor Experience Strategic Review for The Cliffs of Moher that will set out the future of the Cliffs of Moher for the next 20 years that fully informs the visitor journey from start to finish in a sustainable way ensuring the wider economy benefits and that the visitor experience is at a world class level. The Principal Services and Specialist Services to be provided were:

### Principal Services

- Tourism & Interpretative Consultant (Project Lead)
- Economic Consultant
- Planning and Environmental Consultant
- Architect / Masterplanner
- Financial Consultant

### Specialist Services

- Landscape Architects
- Transport Planning
- Engineering (Infrastructure, M&E Services, Civil, Structural)
- Heritage and Cultural Consultant
- Café & Retail Consultant
- Researcher
- Systems and IT Consultant
- Quantity Surveyor
- PSDP





**Our vision is to bring the magic of the Cliffs of Moher Experience alive, inspiring our people while caring and safeguarding the future of our natural environment.**

**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**



# INTRODUCTION / HISTORY OF THE CLIFFS

The Cliffs of Moher is an area that has a rich geological, environmental and social history and has existed as a visitor attraction for almost 200 years. The strategy will safeguard and enhance these special qualities, securing its long term future as a unique natural visitor destination where the land meets the sea.



<b>c.320 million years ago</b>	<b>c.2,000 years ago</b>	<b>1588</b>	<b>1600-1800</b>	<b>1835</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1989</b>
Ireland’s ancient rivers lay down sediments on the seabed that will form the rocks of the Cliffs of Moher. The great ice ages eventually carve out the spectacular cliff face that can be seen today, extending 9.5km and reaching 214 metres at its highest point.	The Iron Age Fort of Mothar is established on the clifftops, of which no trace now remains. Moher Tower, which gives the cliffs their name, stands near its former site.	The Spanish Armada is seen from the Cliffs of Moher en route home following the unsuccessful invasion of England.	Young Irish nobles visit the cliffs during Grand Tours along the coasts of counties Clare and Galway.	Local MP Cornelius O’Brien builds a folly near the highest point of the cliffs to provide a striking vantage point for visitors, along with a wall of Liscannor Flagstone atop the cliff.	Clare County Council acquires land at Lislorkan North from a local landowning family and opens the restored landscape to visitors.	The Cliffs of Moher are designated a Special Protection Area (SPA Site Code No.: 004005) under Irish and European Union legislation. The site is of special conservation interest due to the presence of the following species: Fulmar, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin and Chough. The presence of two species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, Chough and Peregrine, is of note. The Cliffs are also of special conservation interest for holding an assemblage of over 30,000 breeding seabirds.



1837-1842



1888-1913



1995



2000



2005



2010



2017



2019

## Land Change Over Time

The series of images show how the clifftop landscape has evolved, with farms reorganised to create distinct field patterns. As the land running along the cliff-edge is of lower quality and valuation, it was not divided into smaller fields and would have been used for rough grazing during the summer months.

Like the rest of Ireland, the ownership of the land at the cliffs changed considerably during the late 19th century and early 20th century. This was due to the successive Irish Land Acts signed into law by the UK Parliament. The Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act 1870 and the Land Law (Ireland) Act 1881 granted extensive rights to tenant farmers. The Wyndham Land Purchase (Ireland) Act 1903 enabled tenant farmers to purchase their plots of land from their landlords. This legislation created a large group of small property owners in the Cliffs of Moher and Liscannor area. Many of the large fields in the locality were subdivided due to this change of ownership.



2007

The new Cliffs of Moher Experience officially opens, comprising the underground visitor centre building, as well as cliff-edge pathways, steps and viewing platforms.



2011

The Cliffs of Moher and wider Burren area becomes a UNESCO Global Geopark, an internationally designated area of geological interest and the third Geopark in Ireland.



2013

The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk is opened on private lands by agreement with landowners under the National Walks Scheme, following the cliff-edge with trail heads in Doolin and Liscannor.



2014

The Cliffs of Moher becomes one of the 15 signature discovery points along the Wild Atlantic Way, a major coastal touring route launched by Fáilte Ireland.



2019

O'Brien's Tower undergoes significant restoration, providing a new experiential tour of the tower and viewing point for the Cliffs of Moher and the Aran Islands.



2020

The Cliffs of Moher is closed to visitors during Covid-19, providing an opportunity to relay paths and monitor and restore natural habitats.



2024

Publication of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy document to set out the long term vision for the Cliffs of Moher.



# INTRODUCTION / STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy must be fully integrated within the context of wider national, regional, county and local development plans and strategic frameworks so that it can strengthen fundamentals, strategic priorities and partnerships.

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy will align with the policy priorities to create high quality visitor experiences within the county, while protecting the cultural authenticity and wildness of the natural assets, sustainably increasing tourism revenue across the season, dispersing visitors more widely within the region, and minimising any adverse impacts on local communities.

Specifically, the strategic development of the Cliffs of Moher site must deliver the overarching objective of nature recovery that underpins the ongoing drive to recover biodiverse land and sea areas.

The following appraisal of plans and strategies represents a moment in time. As the strategy is implemented, proposals will be subject to the relevant planning legislation applicable at that time. A more comprehensive review of key relevant national, regional, sectoral and environmental plans, detailing links and key inter-relationships with the COM 2040 Strategy, is set out in the SEA documentation.

## Formal Designations

The Cliffs of Moher form part of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, an internationally designated area of geological interest since 2011. The Cliffs of Moher are a Special Protection Area (SPA Site Code 004005) and also a Proposed National Heritage Area (pNHA Site Code 000026). The proximity to both statutory and non-statutory ecological protected areas, and location within Ballysteen ED with a Pobal HP Deprivation Index classification as being ‘marginally below average’ (i.e. slightly more disadvantaged), presents key challenges and opportunities for development.

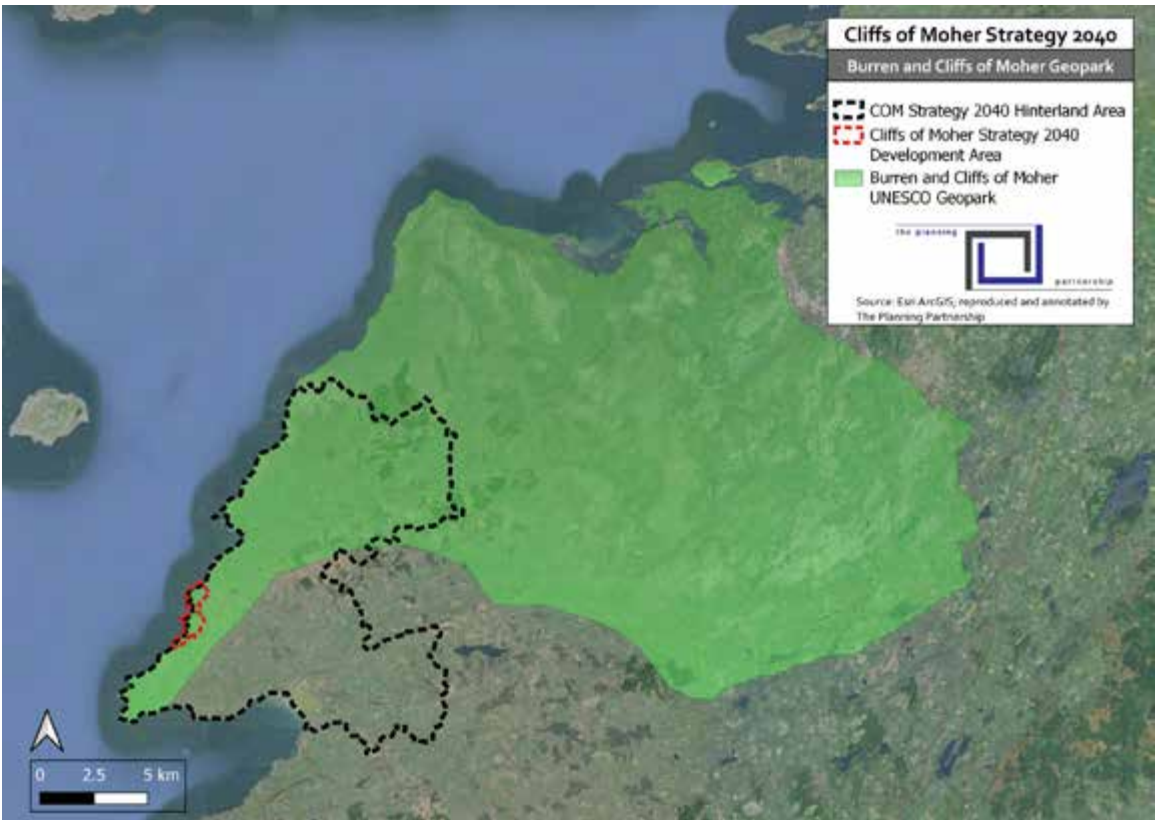
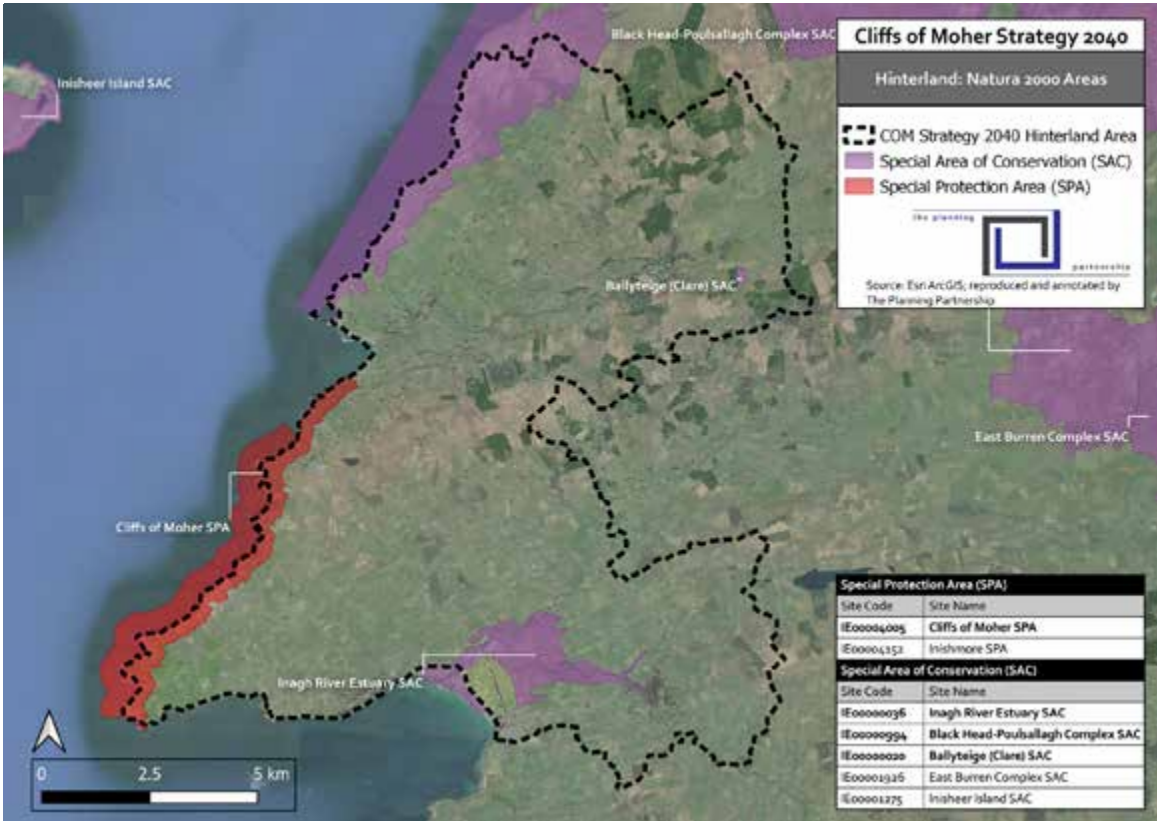
The Cliffs of Moher SPA is one of the most important seabird colonies in the country, with nationally important populations of five species. The presence of two species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, Chough and Peregrine, is of note. Owing to the importance of the bird populations, the Cliffs of Moher SPA was designated as a Refuge for Fauna in 1988.

Other Natura 2000 sites that lie within the Cliffs of Moher development area and Hinterland are:

- Inagh River Estuary Special Area of Conservation - Part of the site is a legally protected Wildfowl Sanctuary (SAC site code 000036)
- Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC site code 000020)
- Ballyteige (Clare) Special Area of Conservation - State-owned and managed as a nature reserve.(SAC site code 000994)

Reporting on the status of Ireland’s seabirds, based on monitoring data, is an obligation under Article 12 of the EU Bird’s Directive. The latest reporting provides species trends for the long-term period (1985/87-2015/18) and the short-term period (1998/2002-2015/2018), as well as site-specific trends for the Cliffs of Moher.

Ongoing seabird, Chough and Peregrine surveys are being undertaken at the Cliffs of Moher.





## Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027

The Wild Atlantic Way plays a significant role in raising the profile of the County Clare coastline and in generating a growth in touring visitors along coastal routes.

The strategic priorities for the brand include extension of the seasonal appeal for the southern half of the trail, along with protection and enhancement of its authenticity and wildness.

The challenge is to sustainably increase tourism revenue, extend the season and disperse visitors more widely within the region, minimising any adverse impacts on local communities and maximising benefits for them. Given that the tourism offering at the Cliffs of Moher Experience centres on its unique natural heritage, it is crucial that the quality, character and distinctiveness of these assets are protected, and any development enhances and protects the wildness of the landscape.

The visitor strategy for the southern half of the Wild Atlantic Way will focus on increasing year-round footfall among the domestic market and growing international visitor numbers from North America and mainland Europe. This will include diversification into more luxury and 'slow tourism' orientated markets, with the aim of attracting higher-spending and longer-staying visitors.

The strategy will focus on creating, enhancing and refreshing compelling visitor experiences and visitor management plans for iconic and signature attractions, including the Cliffs of Moher.

Fáilte Ireland has produced Wild Atlantic Way Visitor Management Guidelines (2020) which includes an overview of visitor management at a strategic level and shares experiences and success of good design and management at a project or site level.

The Cliffs of Moher have been monitored as part of the Wild Atlantic Way Environmental Surveying Strategy. This took place in 2015 and most recently in 2018. Recommendations were that:

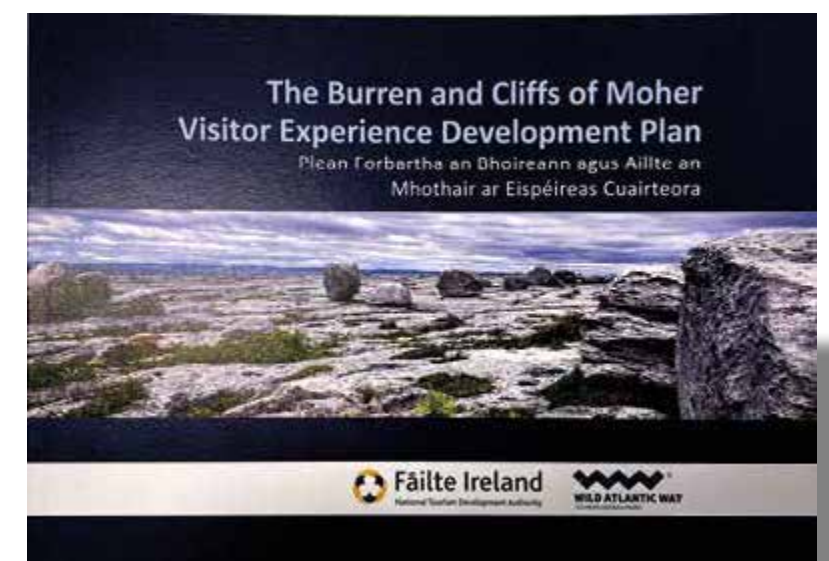
"Consideration could be given to control / manage visitor movements to reduce erosion at the site, and potentially facilitate the rehabilitation of the grassland habitats. ... Potential sources for disturbance such as drone use should be managed and monitored carefully at the discovery point. Consideration needs to be given to control / manage visitor access to sensitive areas to prevent further damage to sensitive habitats. Future ecological monitoring is recommended particularly in the context of a way marked trail being established in the area".

## The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan

Fáilte Ireland is developing and implementing a series of Visitor Experience Development Plans (VEDPs) that aim to extend the length of stay and increase the visitor expenditure within the area. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan recognises the need for improved development and promotion of the area's unique features to achieve increased international cut through. The primary target markets for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher are identified as the Culturally Curious and Great Escapers.

This plan also provides a clear direction towards strengthening and growing the destination's international market share through the delivery of hero, supporting and ancillary experiences that will:

- Motivate visitors to stay longer and spend more
- Extend the length of the season
- Align to the relevant brand, target markets and segments
- Sustain and increase job creation in the local area
- Protect the special environmental character of the region

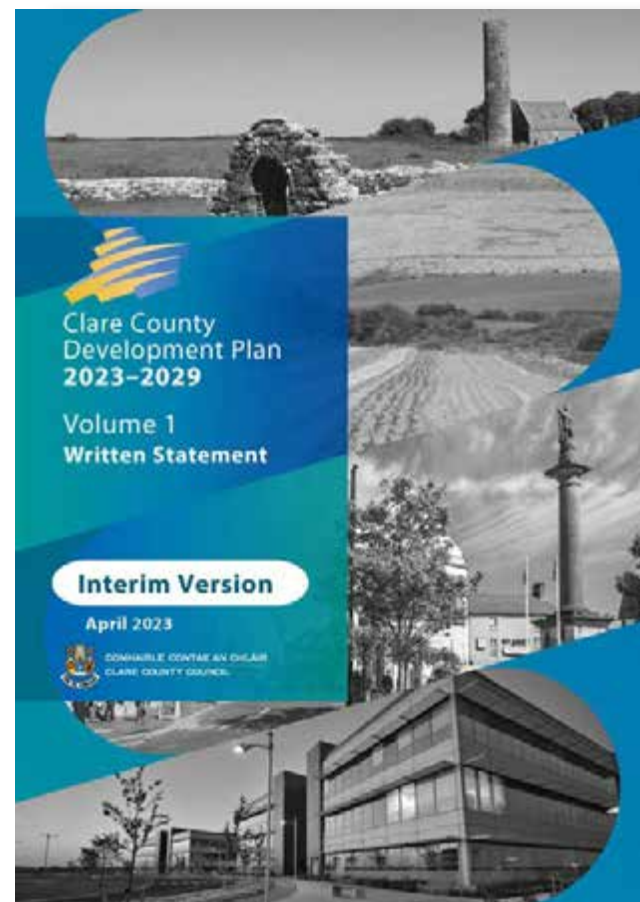


"The protection, enhancement and promotion of our most important tourism asset, the natural environment is of strategic importance to Fáilte Ireland. Environmental monitoring undertaken by Fáilte Ireland has shown improved environmental outcomes (including improved attainment of conservation objectives) in areas with visitor management practices in place. In this regard, there is an opportunity to collaborate through the implementation of Fáilte Ireland Strategies to protect, preserve and enhance the Cliffs of Moher site and visitor experience alongside equally tangible benefits for the North Clare region." (Fáilte Ireland).



## INTRODUCTION / STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

"A county in which tourism growth continues to play a major role in the future development of the county ... a place that is globally recognised as a sustainable destination and where the benefits of tourism are spread across the county throughout the seasons."



# Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was adopted by the Elected Members of Clare County Council at a Special Planning Meeting on 9th March 2023. The Plan came into effect 6 weeks from the date of adoption, on 20th April 2023. The County Development Plan sets out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County over a 6-year period and aligns with the national and regional framework of strategies, policies and guidelines.

The County Development Plan recognises that Clare County Council is developing the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 to be implemented as part of the overall development and management of the Cliffs of Moher Experience.

## Tourism

The strategy is to develop and implement an integrated and sustainable high-quality, year-round tourism sector based on the county's unique natural heritage, culture, music, traditions and an extensive array of both built and natural features and attractions (including the Cliffs of Moher). It is recognised that infrastructure development must meet the needs of both resident and visitor populations and generate economic benefits for all areas of the County. The objectives include:

- To develop the potential of the Cliffs of Moher as a key destination on the Wild Atlantic Way by supporting and facilitating the delivery and implementation of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 in line with the findings of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy Environmental Assessments
- To maintain and enhance the Cliffs of Moher as one of Ireland's premier tourist attractions and harness its potential as a driver of tourism in County Clare
- To support Park and Ride sites at appropriate locations which provide for visitor parking associated with the Cliffs of Moher
- To sustainably develop greenways, blueways and peatways and walking and cycling trails including the West Clare Railway Greenway to achieve greater accessibility to the countryside and the marine environment by sustainable modes and to achieve maximum benefit and connectivity at the local, regional and national levels

## Biodiversity and Natural Heritage

County Clare has a wealth of natural heritage and biodiversity of local, national and international importance. Objectives are presented to promote County Clare as an environmentally sustainable county through the conservation, protection and enhancement of its natural resources. The EU Habitats and Birds Directives provide for the conservation, protection and, in some cases, restoration of habitats and species (plants and animals) of European importance which may be rare, threatened or in danger of disappearance in the EU. The Directives also seek to establish 'Natura 2000' sites, which form a network of protected areas throughout Europe. These protected areas include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). It is a requirement that future developments must not have or perpetuate adverse effects on the conservation objectives and/or integrity of a European site.



## Landscape

County Clare accommodates areas of significant landscape value (including the Cliffs of Moher) which are important for both their natural beauty and for the opportunities they provide for recreation, tourism and other uses. 'Heritage Landscapes' are envisioned as the most valued parts of the county due to their importance to the people of County Clare as well as the wider community, both nationally and internationally. All proposed developments in Heritage Landscape are required to demonstrate that every effort has been made to reduce visual impact.



## County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030

Clare County Council developed a new 10-year tourism strategy for County Clare. The strategy sets out a vision for a cohesive and sustainable tourism sector that maximises the county's unique characteristics and strengths, making a significant contribution to the local economy and enhancing the county as a regional and national centre for culture and tourism. The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy dovetails with this through a joint focus on sustainable tourism. Its ongoing implementation will:

- Strengthen the overall framework of the County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030
- Provide a focus and catalyst for the destination experiences
- Enshrine the key fundamentals, strategic priorities and partnership approach

## UNESCO Global Geopark

The Cliffs of Moher are located within a UNESCO Global Geopark and, therefore, are a member of an international partnership of significant geological landscapes. Along with other Geoparks across the world, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark uses its UNESCO designation to raise public awareness of its internationally significant geological heritage and related natural and cultural heritage assets. UNESCO Geoparks encourage a holistic approach to managing, conserving and promoting the landscape, as each aspect of the environment - geological, ecological, climatic, oceanographic and anthropogenic - is mutually influenced by the other.

Traditional agricultural practices successfully prevail, enabling the conservation of the unique character and biodiversity of the landscape. The collaborative efforts of community-based education, ecotourism, and conservation initiatives are an essential part of the sustainable social, environmental, and economic development of this Atlantic Edge region.

Relevant services and projects delivered include:

- The Burren Ecotourism Network comprises over 60 tourism businesses in the area dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism. Members sign up to the UNESCO Global Geopark Code of Practice in Sustainable Tourism and in return the UNESCO Global Geopark provides training and marketing and co-ordinates group products such as Food and Activity trails.
- GeoparkLIFE is an EU LIFE project focusing on balancing tourism and conservation in the Burren. This project involves working with national tourism and conservation agencies, local farmers and tourism businesses to minimise environmental impacts and maximise the social and economic benefits of tourism in the Burren.
- The Burren and Cliffs of Moher are among nine European Geoparks to receive EU funding for a project to promote and disseminate geological and cultural initiatives and information by connecting visitor experiences across the Atlantic area.



## Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES)

This 12-year strategic regional development framework sets out how government policies and objectives will be delivered for the Southern Region. In line with international best practice, the RSES adopts a territorially differentiated and place-based approach to regional planning and development.

The region has a wealth of natural, cultural and heritage assets of national importance and is a significant tourist destination. The RSES supports the promotion of the tourism assets of the Mid-West Spatial Planning Area, subject to the outcome of environmental assessments and the planning process, comprising natural, cultural and heritage assets including the Cliffs of Moher, Burren, Loop Head, and towns and villages in West Clare.



# INTRODUCTION / STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

## VICE Model

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy is framed within the international VICE Model for sustainable tourism development. Fáilte Ireland has also deployed the VICE Model approach in its strategic development of a sustainable tourism sector. This focuses on the interaction between:

- Visitors
- The industry that provides services to them
- The Community and Culture that hosts them
- Their collective impact on, and response to, the Environment where it all takes place



## EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 sets out the general objective of reversing biodiversity loss, so that Europe's biodiversity is on the path to recovery by 2030 and that by 2050 all the EU's ecosystems are restored, resilient and adequately protected. This is in keeping with global commitments as set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022. One of the commitments in the EU Biodiversity Strategy is to put forward a proposal for legally binding EU nature restoration targets. The proposed regulation on nature restoration (also known as the Nature Restoration Law) aims to fulfil this commitment.



## EU Nature Restoration Law

In September 2020, at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, Taoiseach Micheál Martin, together with 93 other world leaders, signed the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, which recognises that the business case for biodiversity is compelling: the benefits of restoring nature outweigh the costs ten-fold and the cost of inaction is even higher.

Ireland voted in favour of the Nature Restoration Law at the EU Council Meeting on 20th June 2023. The revised text maintains the high ambition for nature set by the EU Commission, while providing flexibility with regard to implementation at the national level. It allows Member States to define appropriate restoration measures to reach the targets through the preparation, content, assessment and review of the Nature Restoration Plans.



This document acknowledges that coastal areas are a key driver for Ireland's tourism sector, which the successful branding of the Wild Atlantic Way and internationally recognised location shoots for the film industry have highlighted in recent years. Ireland's coastline is a remarkable but fragile resource that needs to be managed carefully to sustain its character and attributes in physical, environmental quality and biodiversity terms.

The Cliffs of Moher and Burren are among the distinct landscapes in Ireland being identified, mapped and characterised as part of this national strategy. The key objective is the collection of data and qualitative information about the landscapes of Ireland through liaison between local planning authorities, agencies and community organisations. The ultimate aim is to establish a National Landscape Character Map using the evidence base that can describe and assess distinct landscape character areas at a national scale, informing effective spatial planning and landscape-centred decision making. The database and associated maps will use Landscape Character Assessment methodology and will result in an outline Historic Landscape Characterisation.

The SEA process is a statutory process which, in the instance of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, will be guided by the terms of the European communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, and amending European communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2011).

The Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 has been subject to SEA in terms of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, as amended by European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes (Amendment Regulations 2011.

AA is an appraisal of the potential adverse effects of a plan or project (and the cumulative effects in combination with other plans or projects) on European sites (Natura 2000 sites) i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Note the term European site is now used in place of Natura 2000 site in AA. SACs are protected by European law via the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), while SPAs are protected by European law via the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). The statutory requirement for AA is set out in the Habitats Directive. Both directives have been transposed into Irish law via the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

The map displays the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 SEA Study Area, which is highlighted in orange. The area includes several localities: Cloghaun, Liscage, Lisnagawalla, Killybegh, Keshmuglanahane, Glacanna, Ballyvaughan, and Errislyssan. A red dashed line indicates the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 Development Area. A legend in the top right corner defines the symbols used. An inset map shows the location of the study area within Ireland. A scale bar at the bottom left indicates distances up to 5 km.

**Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040**  
Strategy 2040 SEA Study Area

- COM Strategy 2040 Hinterland Area
- Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 Development Area
- SEA Study Area EDs

the planning partnership

Source: Eir ArcGIS, reproduced and annotated by The Planning Partnership





# SECTION 2: THE CURRENT SITUATION





**A comprehensive appraisal has been undertaken of the existing Cliffs of Moher site and its surrounding environs, including the visitor experience, its natural and architectural assets and transport access. The need and opportunities for transformational change identified in this section have driven the development of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.**



# THE CURRENT SITUATION / A NEED FOR CHANGE

A summary is provided here of the key challenges that currently exist at the Cliffs of Moher and within the wider county area. These demonstrate the underlying need for a long-term strategy and underpin the subsequent approaches and ideas to enhance the Cliffs of Moher Experience.

The popularity of the Cliffs of Moher, with particularly high visitor numbers at peak times, is the critical factor in future development of the destination. High visitor numbers can provide a consistent contribution to the wider economy to ensure a commercially sustainable tourism attraction, however, they also bring many negative impacts to the site, visitor experience and local towns and villages.

## Limited Capacity of Visitor Facilities

In 2019 more than 1.6m people visited the Cliffs of Moher, making it the most visited natural attraction in Ireland. In 2007, when the visitor centre opened, the number of visitors was 927,000. Over the past 10 years, visitor numbers have far exceeded those which the site was originally designed to cater for. This has significant negative impacts on both the quality of the visitor experience and the special qualities and environment of the site.

Visitors come to the Cliffs of Moher to enjoy the natural beauty and the outdoor experience. An important part of this is to enjoy the dramatic cliff-edge walks and views and the feeling of being at the edge of the world. However, with the increasing popularity of the site, the limited capacity of its infrastructure and facilities results in severe overcrowding at peak times. The peak season (May - August) accounts for 55% of total visits and the site is extremely busy on many days between 11am and 4pm during this period.



Month (2019)	Total Visitors inc c/w	% Total Visitors
January	39,888	2%
February	43,698	3%
March	102,171	6%
April	141,708	9%
May	186,191	12%
June	211,496	13%
July	237,286	15%
August	248,589	15%
September	172,968	11%
October	125,967	8%
November	53,362	3%
December	41,675	3%
TOTAL	1,605,000	100%

## RELEVANT UPDATES

### On-going Visitor and Tourism Research

Cliffs of Moher and Clare County Council are working with the University of Limerick and Atlantic Technological University Sligo is undertaking on-going research on visitors and tourism impacts. Professor Jim Deegan and PhD Student Ernesto Sanchez of Limerick University are conducting research on visitors to the Cliffs of Moher relating to all stages of the visitor journey (pre-arrival, on-site and post-visit) and are building detailed profiles of visitor demographics, visit patterns and motivations. Dr James Hanrahan and Fiona McKenna of ATU Sligo are carrying out County wide research measuring and monitoring tourism impacts on economy, communities, heritage and the environment. The findings from this work will provide key data and analysis to assist with monitoring, evaluation and future decision making on the Cliffs of Moher marketing and audience strategies.



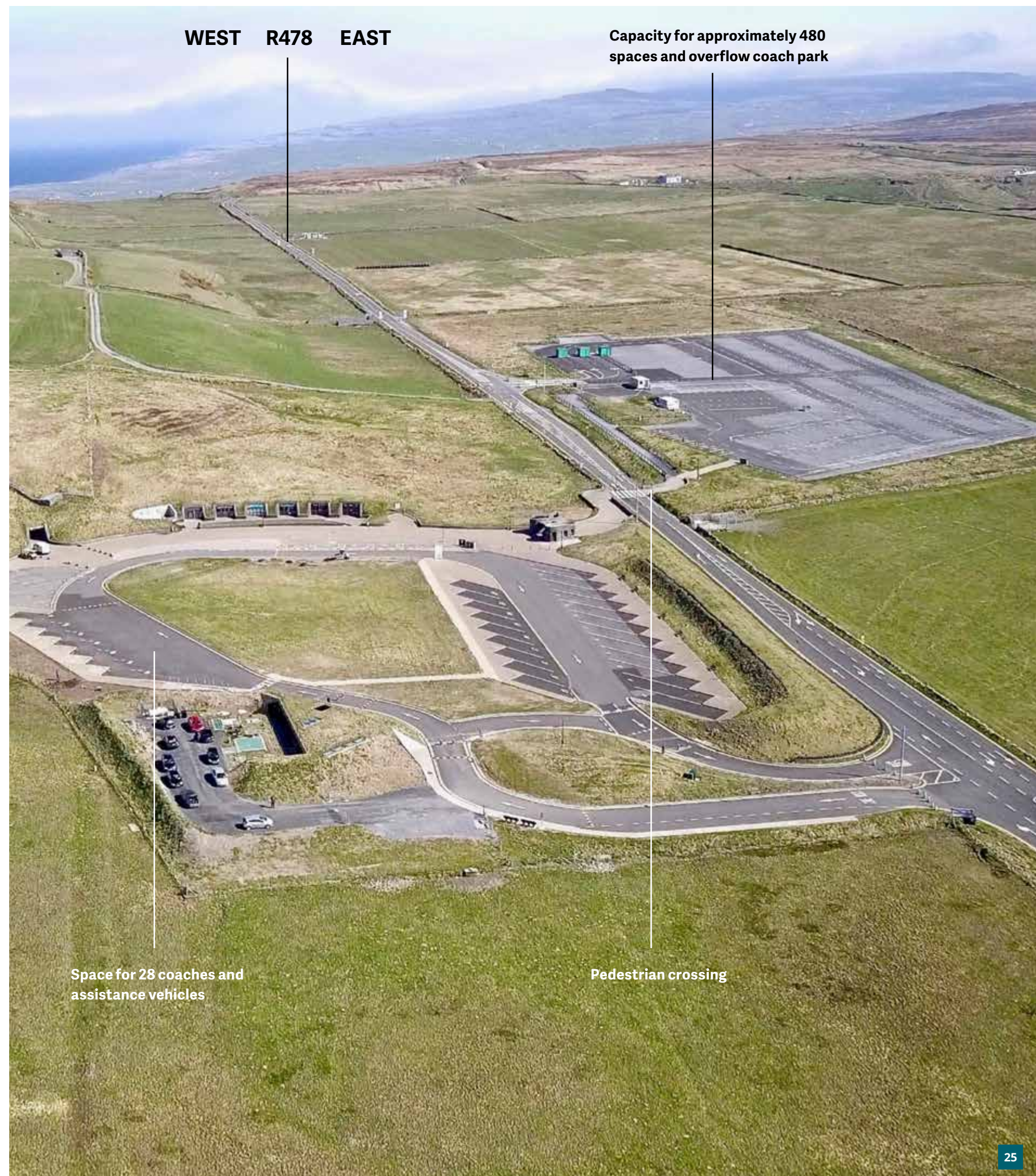
## Arrivals and Admissions

The current car park located on the eastern side of the R478 road (land side) has capacity for approximately 480 spaces. The R478 is locally widened to provide a right turn lane for the northbound traffic entering the car park and there are three ticket lanes and booths just inside the entrance. Each lane can cater for up to seven vehicles, however, during the peak season queuing and congestion often builds back onto the R478. This results in a poor sense of arrival for visitors arriving by car. The reason for this is due to a number of factors, including:

- The high volume of traffic on the R478 accessing the Cliffs of Moher.
- Visitors arriving when the car park is already full and then queuing on the road waiting for a space to come free.
- An at grade zebra crossing on the R478 connecting the car park and the Cliffs of Moher.

In 2019 the implementation of traffic management measures at the entrances and along the R478 were designed to manage queues and minimise delays. Although this eased the situation, increasingly high visitor numbers will continue to create congestion.

The coach parking located on the western side of the road, closest to the cliffs, has capacity for up to 28 coaches and special need vehicles, with overflow coach parking provided in the car park on the opposite side of the road. In recent years, coaches are required to pre-book slots and this has enabled the coach traffic and parking to be suitably managed.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / A NEED FOR CHANGE

## Congestion on Access Routes

While the Cliffs of Moher is very well served by coaches, which helps ensure that the number of vehicles per visitor is reduced compared to a pure car-based attraction, a number of coach tours use unsuitable routes such as the Wild Atlantic Way through North Clare and other local roads. Large coaches choosing to travel and park on these narrower roads results in congestion at pinch points on local access routes.

There are several way-marked walk and cycle routes in the area, including the Cliffs Coastal Path and the Burren Way, which are primarily suited to hikers and long-distance cyclists.

## RELEVANT UPDATES

### COME Limiting Number of Coach Route Licences

Cliffs of Moher Experience has responded to the issues of traffic congestion from coaches. Since 2016 they have not approved any new route licences. This has resulted in a significant reduction of day trip coaches on the access routes to the Cliffs.

### Clare County Council (CCC) Commitment to a Traffic and Transport Study for West Clare

Clare County Council has responded to the critical issue of traffic congestion and disruption and has committed to carry out a Traffic and Transport Study for West Clare. This will provide sustainable proposals for resolving current issues for resident and business communities. It will explore solutions for the towns, villages and attractions (including Cliffs of Moher) in the area and consider the opportunities for integration with wider County transport initiatives.

### CCC Progressing a Park and Ride Hub and Shuttle Service on a site in Lisdoonvarna

Clare County Council is progressing the COM 2040 Strategy proposal for a Park and Ride Hub and shuttle service to provide access to the Cliffs of Moher and links to other towns, villages and attractions in the area. Following Expressions of Interest a Masterplan is now being prepared for a Park and Ride Hub in Lisdoonvarna.

### Crowded and Linear Journey to the Edge

High levels of visitors in the outdoor areas, particularly at the cliff-edge, significantly detracts from the quality of the core experience at viewing points. Paved pathways, flagstone walls and designated observation areas are well maintained, however the current direct routing to the edge and the presence of large crowds means that the cliff viewing journey lacks drama and a sense of wildness. As a result, the current experience can feel linear and disconnected from the wild and untamed atmosphere of the cliffs.







### Crowding, Safety and Conservation Issues at the Edge

The restricted cliff-edge paths also create health and safety issues, resulting in erosion of the cliff-edge itself as visitors go beyond the designated pathways. The paths beyond the visitor experience are considered to be a major safety hazard due to their proximity to the unstable cliff-edge and unpredictable weather conditions. Visitors rarely heed the warnings in situ and try to get as close to the edge as possible for photograph opportunities.



# THE CURRENT SITUATION / A NEED FOR CHANGE

## Current Built Infrastructure

To date, the architectural strategy has been to subsume the buildings into the landscape, meaning the opportunity to use the architecture to offer a “gateway” orientation point and to assist in visitor planning is lost.

The design of the current visitor centre, retail and catering spaces does little to mitigate the impact of crowds and are underscaled for the current needs and expectations of visitors at a world-class experience. In general, the size and capacity of the visitor centre facilities are not equipped to deal with the volume of visitors at peak time, which leads to long queues and crowded spaces that are difficult to navigate. This is most apparent in the entrance foyer, where a cross-flow of visitors accessing the reception desk and gift shop prevents circulation and creates a sense of disorder and disorientation upon entry.

The location of coach parking and large paved concourses on the approach to the cliff-edge detracts from the experiential concept of “standing at the edge of the world”.



## Vulnerable Habitats

Much of the coastal headland is grasslands which have been regularly fertilised, grazed by cattle or cut for silage. The fauna here are considerably diminished, reducing the attraction for ground nesting birds and small mammals.

The most important habitat is the rocky sea cliff vegetation and coastal grassland community that provides foraging areas for the Chough. This habitat has been subject to considerable erosion along the pathway and there is now large bare ground along the clifftop.



## RELEVANT UPDATES

### New Habitat Management Plan

As part of its commitment to the recovery of the natural landscape at the Cliffs of Moher, Clare County Council commissioned a Draft Habitat Management Plan. It covers a 5-year period and provides a proposed framework for the conservation and enhancement of the ecological features, and sets out draft objectives and management strategies aimed at increasing floristic and habitat diversity at the site. This Draft Plan will be revised and finalised as part of the detailed development and planning process for the Cliffs of Moher site.

### On-Going Bird Surveys

Cliffs of Moher Experience has commissioned bird surveys to provide baseline data as part of the development of the 2040 Strategy. Seabird, Chough and Peregrine surveys are being undertaken at the Cliffs of Moher as part of on-going monitoring of the wildlife and habitats at the site.



## Limited Benefits for the Wider Hinterland

The current lack of partnerships between tourism products and the absence of connected transport and accommodation infrastructure means the benefits of the high visitor numbers are not felt across the county. County Clare has the second lowest average spend by international overnight visitors.

There are very limited public transport options providing the flexibility that encourages people to stay and explore the area. Local bus routes from Galway to Doolin via the Cliffs of Moher and Ennis are infrequent. A pilot shuttle bus service was trialled by Clare County Council in 2019 and was discontinued due to low uptake and high operating costs. To date there has been limited development, management, maintenance and promotion of sustainable transport routes such as the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk.

## RELEVANT UPDATES

### COME Limiting Number of Coach Route Licences (See page 26)

### Clare County Council (CCC) Commitment to a Traffic and Transport Study for West Clare (See page 26)

### CCC Progressing a Park and Ride Hub and Shuttle Service on a site in Lisdoonvarna (See Page 26)

### Preparation of a Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk

Clare County Council, Clare Local Development Company, Fáilte Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development have commissioned the preparation of a new ‘Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk’. This will consider sustainable transport options including appropriate trailhead / car parking facilities and ancillary trail infrastructure. The plan will also identify technological solutions to support visitor management, wayfinding and interpretation. The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk is located within the Cliffs of Moher Special Protection Area and consideration for the protection of sensitive habitats must also be incorporated.

### CCC to Establish a Cliffs of Moher Community Fund

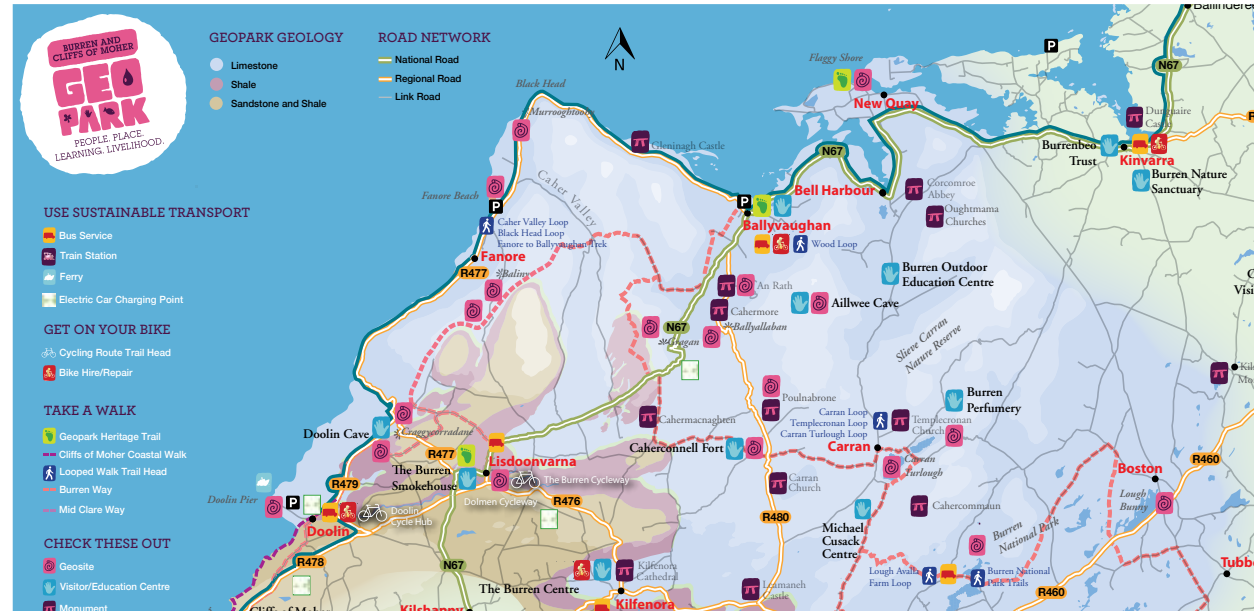
Clare County Council has committed to setting up a new Cliffs of Moher Community Fund. COM already supports tourism and community related activities and this new initiative, funded through the operational surplus will offer a grant programme for local communities to develop infrastructure, activities and skills to benefit local people and encourage sustainable tourism.







# THE CURRENT SITUATION / STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES



The unique ecological and cultural importance of the landscape, and worldwide recognition of this significance, means there is huge potential to develop a world-class visitor experience with far-reaching benefits for visitors, the environment and local communities.

## A Powerful Sensory Experience at the 'Edge of the World'

The Cliffs of Moher can be appreciated for its elemental qualities as a visceral and universally accessible sensory experience. The views of the dramatic sea cliffs and Burren beyond, the bracing wind, the smell of the fresh coastal air and the power of the Atlantic waves create the sense that you are at the very edge of the world.

Better management and physical improvements to the walkways and wider coastal path will deliver a safer and more expansive cliff-edge experience.

## Global Recognition of Geological and Natural Heritage

Through its UNESCO designation, the Cliffs of Moher is internationally recognised as a unique landscape of outstanding natural beauty and geological importance. The dramatic, open and sparsely vegetated coastal headland and rugged vertical sea cliffs are an outstanding example of the glacial karst landscapes of western Ireland. In the stunning rock formations, you can discover the 300-million-year evolution of the environment and see dramatic coastal erosion in action. The enormous cliff face provides a habitat for one of the largest and best-known seabird colonies in Ireland.

The natural and physical improvements at the Cliffs of Moher provide an opportunity to conserve and enhance these precious assets.





### Proactive Recovery of Natural Habitats

Through a range of habitat recovery measures, the strategy will allow the Cliffs of Moher's unique ecology to re-establish itself from the impact of tourism, particularly high footfall at the cliff-edge.

Significant extension of the Cliffs of Moher landholdings and rewilding of the landscape can help to achieve targets set out in the EU Nature Restoration Law, namely the continuous, long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse land and sea areas, resulting in increased climate mitigation and adaptation through restoration.

### Links to Local Culture and Social History

The Cliffs of Moher has an important connection to the cultural traditions, built heritage and social history of the region. Visits to the cliffs can provide tangible insights into ancient monuments, local folklore, and quarrying and tourism during the 19th and 20th centuries.

High-quality interpretation that is more evenly distributed throughout the visitor experience will highlight stories that are currently understated.



# THE CURRENT SITUATION / STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES



## A Popular and Resilient Tourism Product

Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC, a successful self-funded business unit of Clare County Council, manages the site with a focus on providing world-class experiences through autonomous decision making and active external partnerships.

There is worldwide recognition of the Cliffs of Moher as a top attraction to visit and the site is marketed as a key landmark along the Wild Atlantic Way. The tourism product is closely aligned with the two key market segments – Culturally Curious and Great Escapers – and is of significant appeal to international audiences, particularly American visitors.



## Opportunities for Enhanced Partnerships

The Cliffs of Moher is situated close to other vibrant towns and villages within County Clare, including a variety of natural and cultural attractions. There is huge potential to connect these into a network of diverse experiences, resulting in increased length of stay, visitor spend, and dispersal of visitors across the region.

## Economic Benefits

The Cliffs of Moher are a major economic engine for County Clare. It is estimated that 90% of staff live within 20 miles of the cliffs and 70% of Cliffs of Moher expenditure on food, drink, art, craft design, operational and maintenance services go to local businesses. All of these existing economic benefits can be significantly increased as the 2040 strategy is implemented.





## Comparator Case Study: Stonehenge, UK

Stonehenge is the most significant and frequently visited Ancient Monument in Britain. The World Heritage Site is overlaid with social, economic and religious narratives and has been characterised by the quest to ascribe meaning. This £27 million English Heritage project aimed to reconnect visitors with the ancient landscape, transitioning from a stopover or quick photo opportunity to a more exciting and longer visit. The key driver for the development was high visitor numbers, with more than one million visitors annually and arrivals set to rise in the following years. A vital component of early planning work was an assessment of how the volume of visitors would best be accommodated within the new facilities and exhibition spaces.

Developed with the support of the National Trust, Wiltshire Council, The Highways Agency and Natural England, the project transformed the setting of Stonehenge. The section of A344 road that ran past the monument was grassed over, with the remaining part closed to public vehicles and now the route of the visitor shuttle service. Today the visitor centre is 1.5 miles away from Stonehenge itself.

Opened in December 2013, visitor numbers have increased by 40% to around 1.4 million. Dwell time, retail income and café income have all approximately doubled. Permanent employees have increased from 43 to around 100, with approximately 40 additional seasonal staff during the months of April to October.

The planned project to move the A303 into a tunnel under the Stonehenge World Heritage Site will complete the strategy to remove traffic that began with the 2012 closure of the A344 road. This will significantly enhance the visitor experience at the stones.

“After nearly 30 years, English Heritage finally has a scheme that will transform the setting of the stones and our visitor’s experience of them.”

English Heritage Chief Executive Dr Simon Thurley





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL



1. Coastal stacks and rock formation



2. Limestone pavements, The Burren



3. Limestone erosion

A baseline assessment of the landscape character and quality has defined the geological, biodiversity and cultural value of the Cliffs of Moher and its surrounding environs. Local Authority landscape character assessments and available habitat mapping of the Strategy area, and the wider but related landscape of the Burren, have been taken into account.

## Geology and Landform

Part of the iconic status of the Cliffs of Moher as a tourist destination derives from the scenic qualities which are a direct result of the distinctive geological systems and processes from which they were formed. The Cliffs of Moher is the most visited geological site in Ireland. Composed of layered bands of carboniferous shales and flagstones, the striations of the cliffs are, by contrast to the nearby rock formations of the Burren, of comparatively rapid formation, the legacy of sand and silt being washed into the sea by a long-vanished river system.

In contrast, the rocks of the Burren formed over tens of millions of years, with the fossil rich limestones in the north and east formed in tropical, equatorial seas and deposited over a period of c.20 million years. It is these limestones which define the austere Burren landscape with its characteristic limestone pavements, and which are overlain by the younger siltstones, shales and sandstones of the Cliffs of Moher in the south and west.

The formation and folding of the rocks is also partly the legacy of continental drift and tectonic plate collision, with the entire landmass on which the rocks are sited having collided with what is now mainland Europe shortly after their formation. This resulted in the hitherto flat rocks becoming gently folded and distinctly tilted, as at the Burren. The cracks, fissures and splits frequently evident in the rocks today are the legacy of the enormous forces acting on them during this process.

Some 1.8 million years ago, during the Ice Age, vast masses of ice more than 200 metres thick scoured the surface from the north and north east, carving a series of valleys and depositing drift material in places on top of the bedrock. These are apparent in the series of scattered rocks apparent across much of the Burren to this day, as well as on a number of the beaches on this stretch of the coast, with granites and red sandstones from as far away as Connemara.

Distinctive features of the geology of the cliffs include a variety of structures which are the result of seawater erosion on the soft rocks, such as caves, limestone stacks and arches. There are also rare fossilised neopteran pterygote insects near Doolin, which were an early and major evolutionary advancement in insect development, enabling accurate dating of the rocks. A diversity of trace fossils is also found in the sandstone ledges and the Moher Flagstones. The Doolin to Hags Head County Geological Site is of International importance under the IGH 9 Upper Carboniferous and Permian theme and the IGH 3 Carboniferous - Pliocene Palaeontology theme. Significant features include sand volcanoes in the carboniferous beds and the Fisherstreet Slide, which is part of the Gull Island Formation and a notable example of sedimentary rock slide, being some 30 metres thick and several kilometres long.



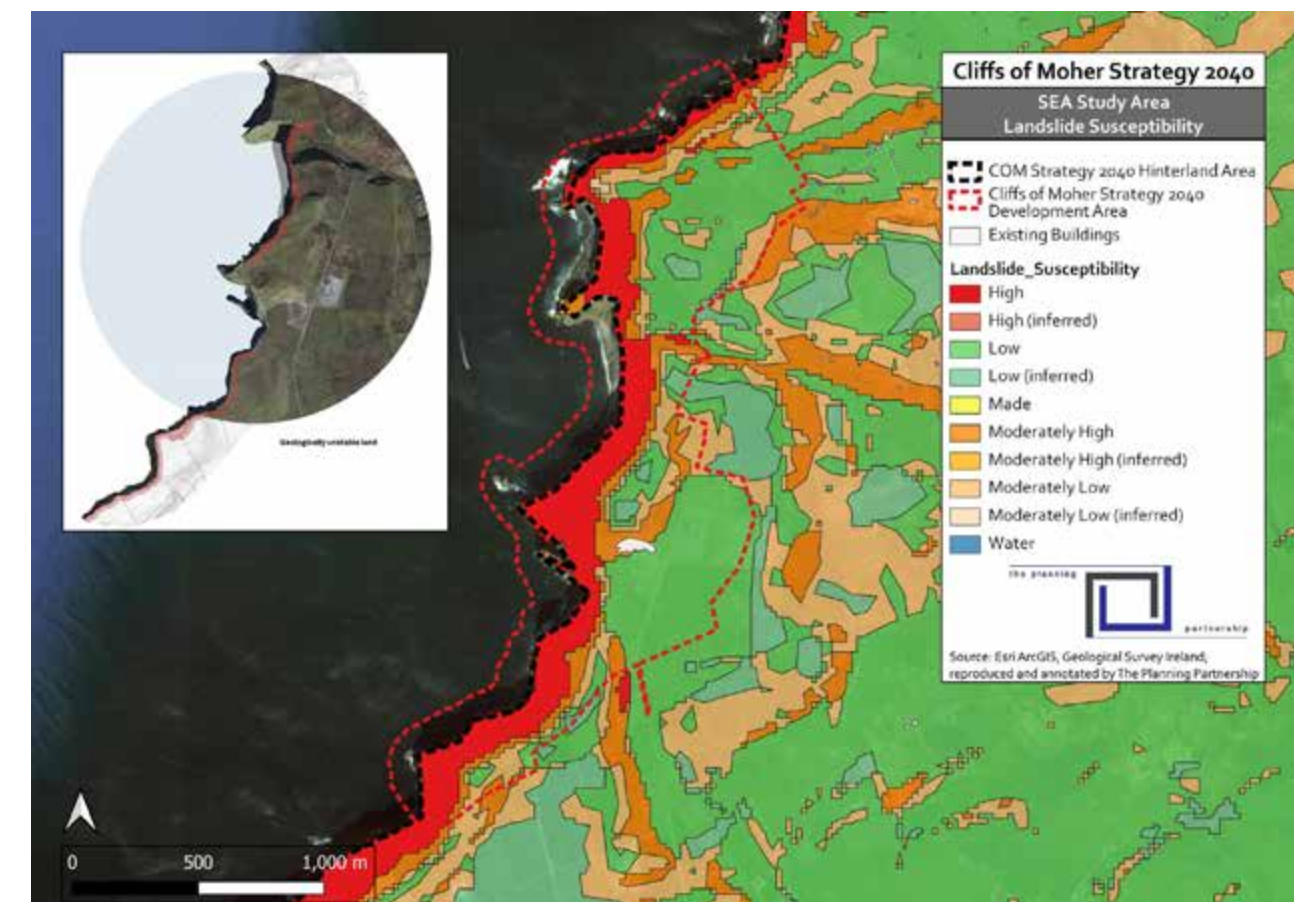


## Cliff Walkway Inspection

In August 2019, visual inspections of the cliff walkway were undertaken approximately 1.3km north and 1.4km south of the existing visitor centre to identify any potential signs of instability or recent activity that may compromise its safety. On the basis of the appraisal, it was concluded that further considerations with respect to assessing the risk of significant slope failure and future natural regression of the cliff from erosion are required.

The key outcome from the survey affecting the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy is the recommendation that, where possible, the public should be prevented from accessing the cliff-edge. Overarching guidance was given to move the walkway back to create a no-walk zone directly along the cliff-edge.

Short term measures recommended include the widening of the walkway to the north and south of the Cliffs of Moher Experience. Where the walkway is cutting directly through existing landslide systems it is recommended that either the walkway is re-routed at these locations, and should this not be possible an engineered retaining solution should be implemented to prevent destabilising the historic landslides.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

## Ecology

The Cliffs of Moher comprise habitat for a wide variety of seabirds, coastal flowers and lichens, plus land mammals including badgers, hares and stoats. The seascape is characterised by marine life and sea mammals such as whales, basking sharks and seals. The Cliffs of Moher are designated a Special Protection Area due to its population of over 30,000 breeding seabirds which winter at sea and return to the cliffs for the nesting season. The site is of special conservation interest due to the presence of Fulmar, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin and Chough. The presence of two species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, Chough and Peregrine, is of note.

The flora and fauna of the limestone plateau of the Burren in particular is diverse, overlaid upon limestone rock and soils, forming a habitat for around 1,100 plant species, approximately three quarters of the total found in Ireland. The elevated oceanic climate gives rise to a unique combination of flora, either simultaneously or in succession across the seasons, including Mediterranean orchid, hoary rock rose and spring gentian, plus a mosaic of ferns and mosses in autumn and winter. The valleys that dissect the plateau are overlain with thick deposits of glacial till and blanketed with fertile grazing lands which have long supported the lamb and beef that characterise much of Irish agriculture.

The landscape also supports numerous emblematic animal species, such as the pine marten, the internationally endangered Lesser Horseshoe Bat, over 70 species of land snail due to the presence of calcium carbonate, and 28 of Ireland's 30 species of butterfly.





Existing Habitats at the Cliffs of Moher

Grasslands and Siliceous Areas

The principal habitat types are currently grasslands, which vary from an ungrazed fringe along the clifftop to improved agricultural grasslands on the landward side of the existing fence line bordering the cliff pathway, which are regularly fertilised and grazed by cattle or cut for silage.

Invertebrate species in these grasslands are considerably diminished, which reduces the habitat’s attractiveness for a range of ground nesting bird species along with its suitability for various small mammals. There are some areas of dry siliceous heath associated with shallow soils and small areas of exposed siliceous rock, mainly in the north of the site.

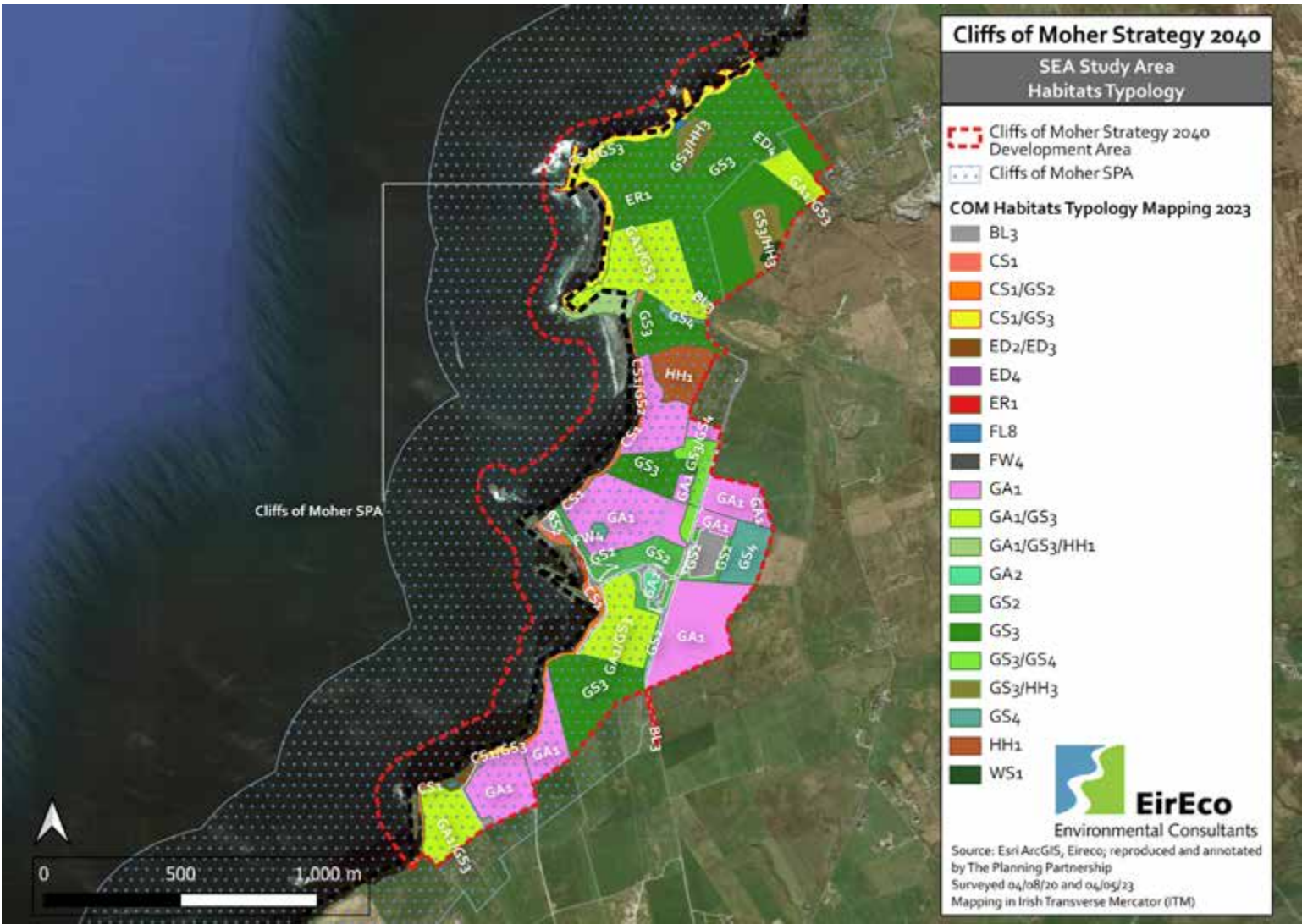


Rocky Sea Cliff Vegetation and Coastal Grassland

The most important habitat within the study area is the rocky sea cliff vegetation/coastal grassland community which provides the preferred foraging habitat for Chough, one of the principal special conservation interests for the Cliffs of Moher SPA.

This habitat has however been subject to considerable erosion along the clifftop pathway with the result that there are now large areas of bare ground along the entire clifftop.

The disturbance of the grassland strip on the seaward side of the wall along the section of trail leading from the current visitor centre to O’Brien’s Tower has resulted in the establishment of a suite of opportunistic weed species, which further limits the foraging value for the Chough along the clifftop.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

## Cultural and Social Influences

### Neolithic and Bronze and Iron Ages (c.10,000 BC to AD 43)

The Cliffs of Moher literally translates as Cliffs of the Ruined Fort, a reference to the Iron Age Fort of Mothar on the clifftops of c.2,000 years ago, of which no trace now remains, although Moher Tower stands near its former site.

### Medieval (1066-1600)

The cliffs formed the last destination of the Spanish Armada of 1588. The Spanish fleet, under the Duke of Medina Sidonia, having been unsuccessful in their attempted invasion of England, sailed north around Scotland and wide around Ireland as part of a planned return home, but was annihilated by storms en route.

Boetius Clancy, High Sheriff of Clare, spotted the fleet in distress on 16th September 1588 and was ordered by the Lord Deputy William Fitzwilliam to capture and execute any Spanish sailors. Two more ships carrying almost 700 men sank on 20th September on the reef near Mutton Island. The four survivors were taken prisoner by Clancy and along with survivors from other ships were hanged in a gruesome execution near Spanish Point, before being buried thereafter in a mass grave known as Tuama na Spaineach.

### Post-Medieval (1600-1800)

From the latter 16th century until the early 19th century, young Irish nobles would embark on the Grand Tour from the coast of County Clare and Galway. Irish travel journals of the 1780s frequently describe the sublime beauty of the Cliffs of Moher, which many of the travellers on their Grand Tour experienced when sailing across to mainland Europe.





### Early Modern and Modern (1800 to Present Day)

The great landowners of County Clare created a designed landscape and architectural legacy which shapes the character of the cliffs to this day. A notable example was Cornelius O'Brien MP of Birchfield House, Liscannor, who built the folly O'Brien's Tower in 1835 near the highest point of the cliffs, to provide a striking vantage point for visitors. O'Brien was also responsible for the wall of Liscannor Flagstone along the clifftop. The tower forms part of a wider programme of building works by O'Brien in the area, notably the bridge across the Inagh River between Liscannor and Lahinch, his monument at Liscannor, St Brigid's National School, local road schemes and the well house at St Brigid's Well.

The other principal element of the landscape in this period shaping how it is experienced today was flagstone quarrying through the 19th century and into the early 20th. In its heyday, the industry employed around 500 men, resulting in Liscannor becoming a busy port shipping stone to London and Liverpool, and with a village being built for workers near the Doonagore Mines. The mines largely closed with the advent of the First World War, although some reopened in Liscannor in the 1960s, producing the distinctive local flagstone which influences much of the built vernacular in the locality, along with Moher slate

The clifftop also has a long-held popular association with open air musical performances, which continue to take place in the 21st century, and is a scenic backdrop for numerous motion pictures since the 1960s.

1. Monument to Cornelius O'Brien, Liscannor
2. Active quarrying behind the cliff face
3. Interlocking sequence of coastal headlands, coves and wild, elemental seascape creating a dynamic and visually exciting, engaging set of views far beyond "honeypot" sites such as O'Brien's Tower
4. The geology of the site is expressed everywhere including distinctive vernacular detailing such as the Liscannor flagstone clifftop wall





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

## Key Views

The views arising from the elevated aspect, including intervisibility with the Aran islands, the seascape and adjacent landscapes of the Burren, plus natural and man-made landmarks of the cliffs are a key part of the visitor experience at the Cliffs of Moher.



1. Hag's Head viewpoint



2. Main Platform viewpoint



3. O'Brien's Tower viewpoint





4. Viewpoint S1



5. Viewpoint South





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / VISITOR JOURNEY

A comprehensive review is provided of the existing Cliffs of Moher Experience in its entirety, from pre-visit, to onsite experience, to post-visit.

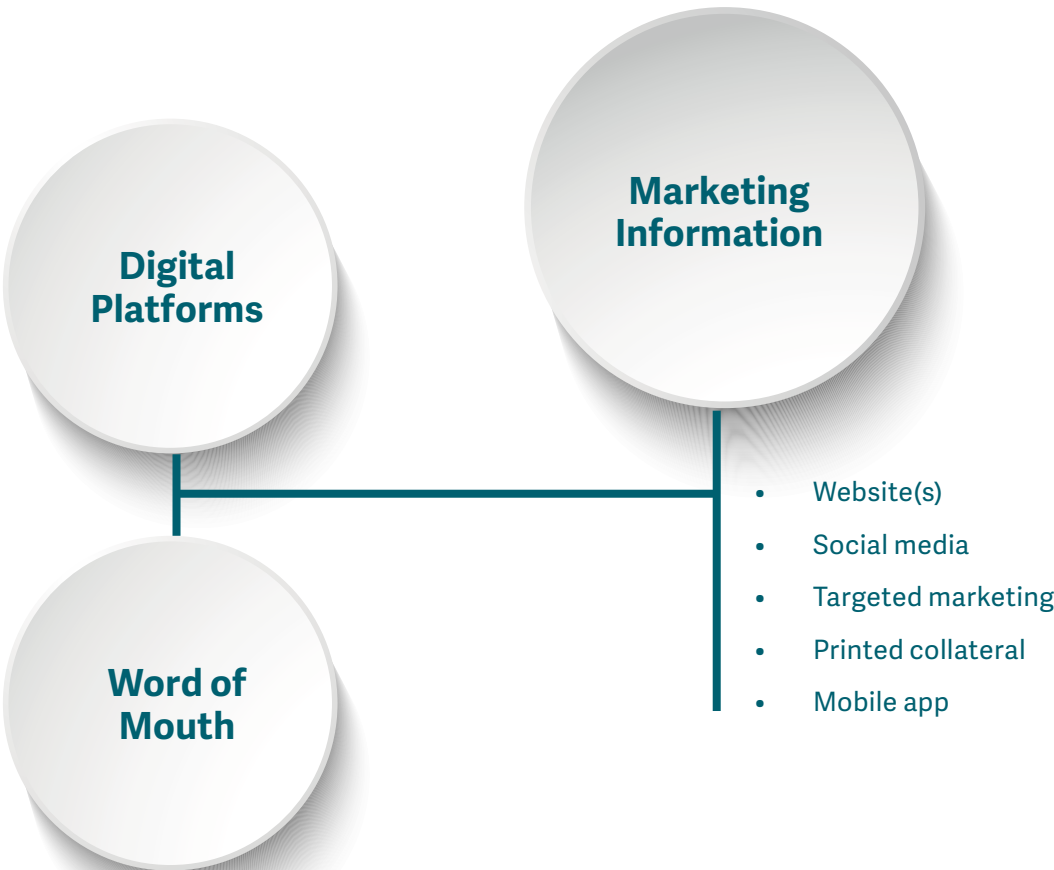
This appraisal has been developed through site visits and an assessment of market research, secret customer evaluations, social media reviews and digital data analysis.

## Cliffs of Moher Experience

# 1

## Pre-visit

PLAN AND PREPARE

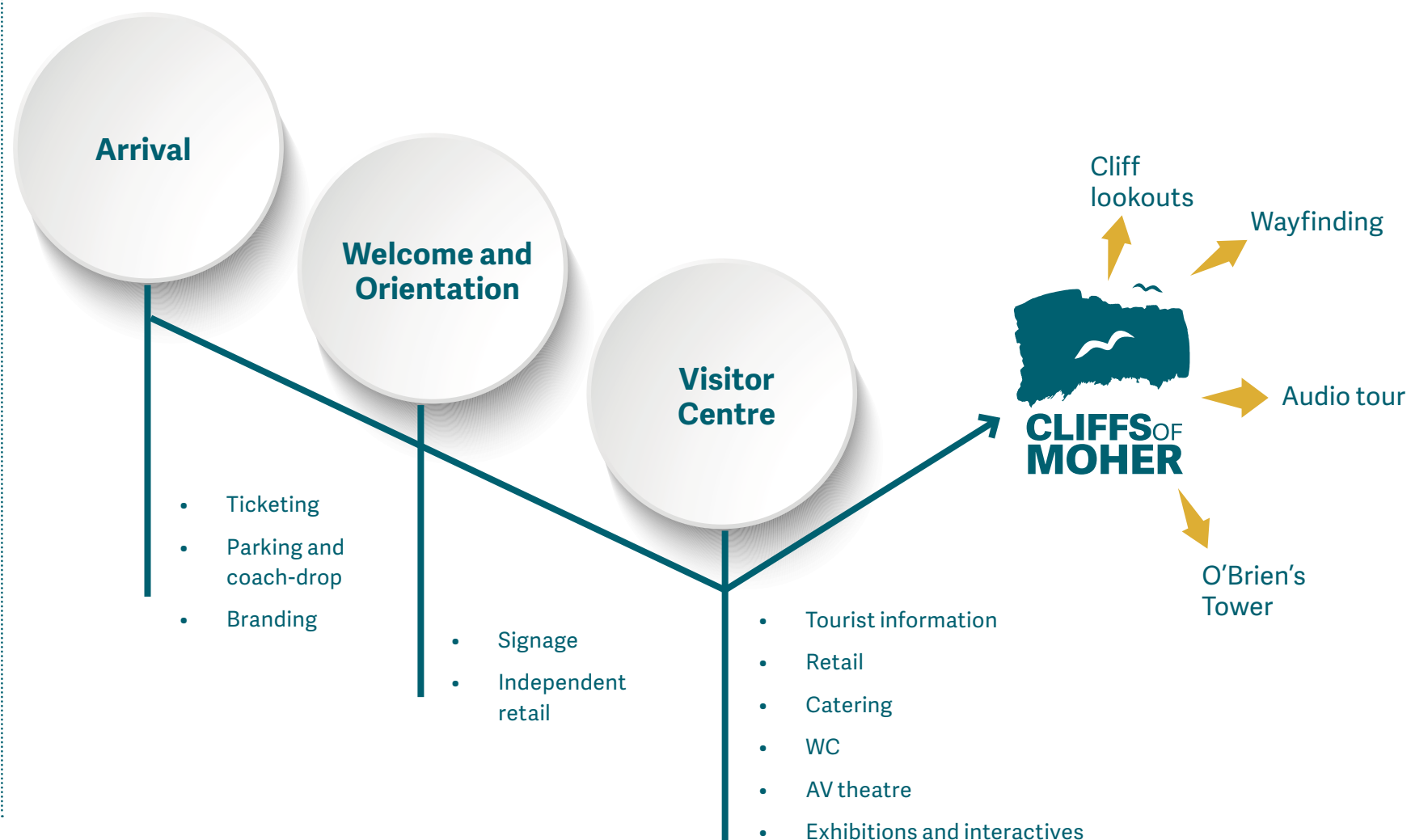




# 2

## Onsite

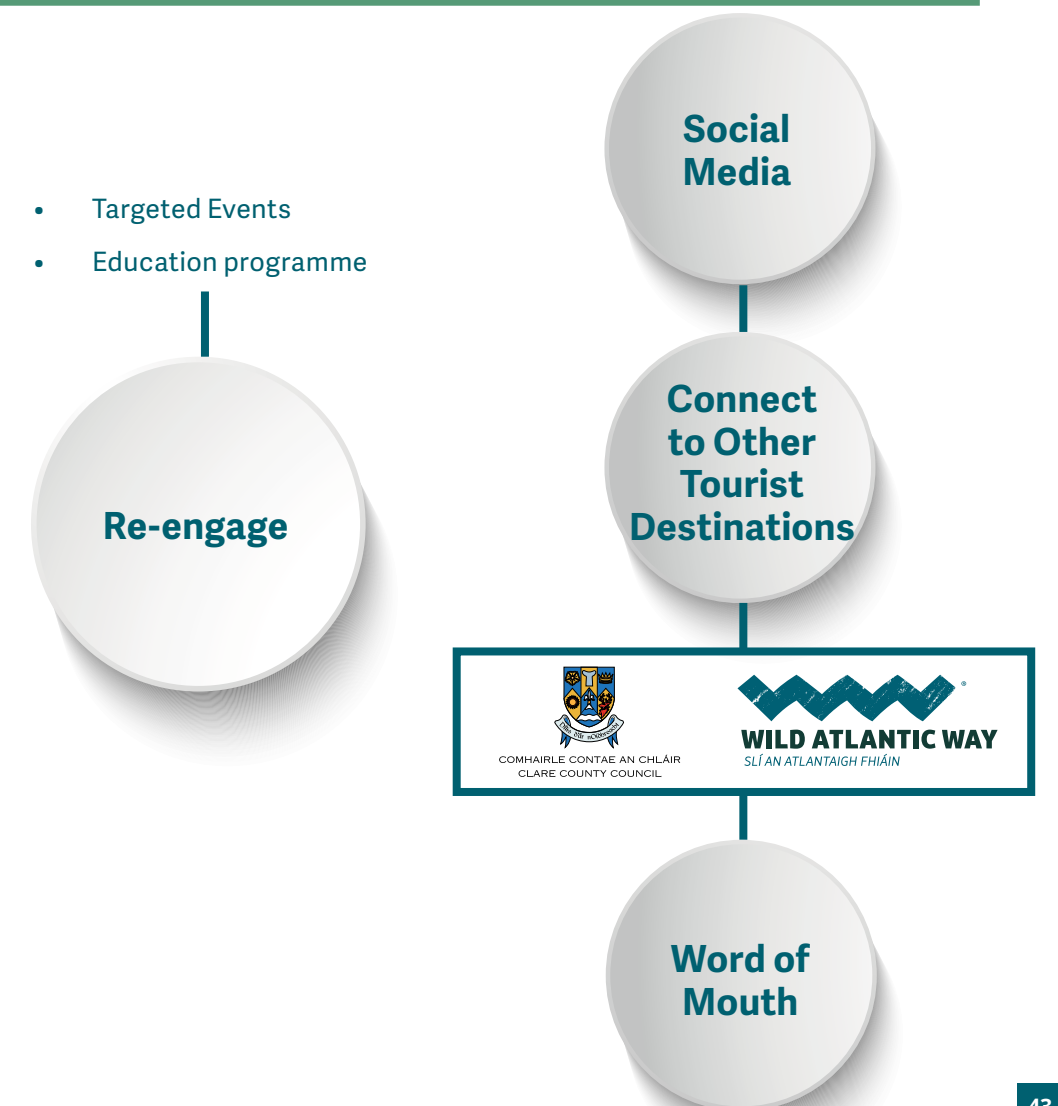
### ARRIVE AND EXPLORE



# 3

## Post-visit

### DEPART AND EXPLORE FURTHER





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / VISITOR JOURNEY

## 1 Pre-visit PLAN AND PREPARE

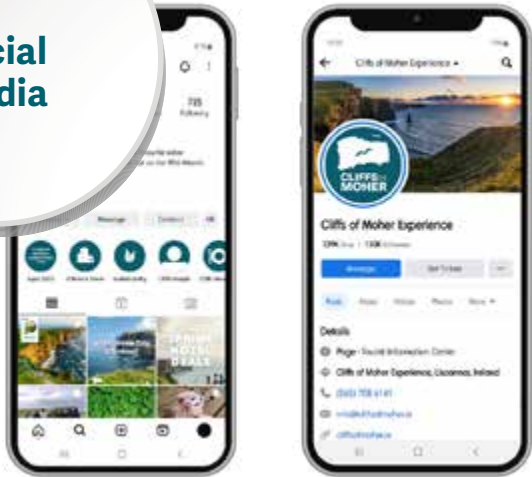
According to market research, pre-visit awareness of the cliffs is strong with 75% of overseas having heard of them prior to arriving in Ireland. However, word of mouth and films are the most used information source, with the official website mentioned by only 10%.

The website itself is rated highly for ease of use and practical information and the booking function is easy to find. The 'Things to Do' feature has a large proportion of page views and a low bounce rate.

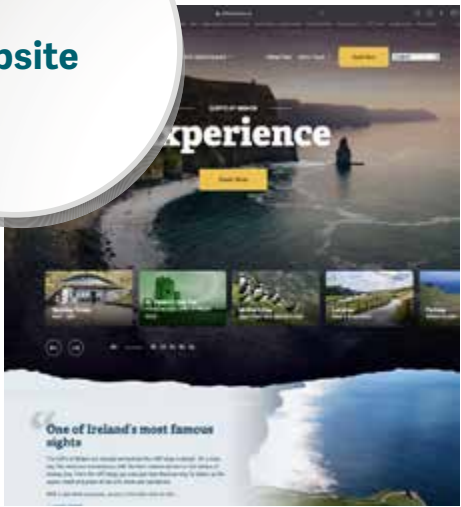
Drone footage is effective at emphasising the wildness of landscape but there is a lack of motivating imagery showcasing its appeal during different seasons and times of the day.

Telephone enquiries directed to the reception desk are generally dealt with promptly and in a friendly manner, enabling the centre to provide personal and tailored information about the cliffs and local attractions.

The number of visitors accessing visit information through social media channels has increased annually.



Updated information including weather warnings, seasonal events, festivals and sector news.



**Context**  
Summary of geology, natural and built heritage assets and related historical events.

**Wider Attractions**  
Information about attractions in the County Clare area.



**Practical Information**  
Booking, transport and directions, weather, onsite visitor facilities, group visits.

Opportunities at pre-booking stage to influence visitors to fly Shannon and stay locally, including developing packages with other businesses and accommodation providers as saleable experiences. Further investment in digital marketing and digital transformation is required.



# 2

## Onsite

### ARRIVE

The first interaction visitors have with staff on site is through attendants at one of four car park booths. Staff are able to provide a friendly and personal welcome

There can be lengthy queues to enter the car park and occasionally limited spaces to park during peak times. Long tailbacks along the road can cause problems for cars trying to pass, contributing to a sense of disorder and overcrowding on arrival.

High levels of dissatisfaction from a small minority of visitors on TripAdvisor relate primarily to a feeling that they are paying for parking at a natural heritage site that should be free to access. This is compounded by a sense of resentment that visitors walking along the public footpaths either side of the visitor experience are accessing the same site for free.

As visitors presume that tickets are for parking rather than for access to visitor facilities, there is further dissatisfaction that entry fees are per person rather per car, leading to negative perceptions of value for money.

There is an underwhelming sense of arrival and welcome, with a lack of interpretation that promotes the visitor offer and raises expectations for the experience to come.

Visitors are required to cross a busy main road before entering through the old visitor ticket gateway, now repurposed as a meditation room. This creates a false welcome point and confusion is further compounded by a lack of directional signage to the visitor offers beyond.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / VISITOR JOURNEY

## 2 Onsite WELCOME AND ORIENTATION

There is a mix of signage and interpretation introduced at different locations, with inconsistent branding and format generally lacking cohesion.

The independent retail offer is unappealing as the first facilities that visitors encounter to the site, and they lack a clear connection to the cliffs.

The coach park is directly opposite the visitor centre entrance, resulting in a large volume of vehicles blocking the view as visitors enter the site.

There is generally a high volume of staff in high visibility jackets providing guidance to visitors as they explore the site, including promotion of other attractions throughout Clare. For many visitors this personal interaction and locally focused advice is the most memorable element of their visit.



## 2 Onsite VISITOR CENTRE FACILITIES

In general, the size and capacity of the visitor centre facilities are not equipped to deal with the volume of visitors at peak time, which leads to long queues and crowded spaces that can be difficult to orientate.

This is most apparent in the entrance foyer, where a cross-flow of visitors accessing the reception desk and gift shop makes it difficult to circulate and creates a sense of disorder and disorientation upon entry.

The catering facilities are consistently the worse rated element of the visitor attraction, mainly due to long queues, poor signage and limited menu choice.

The visitor centre is generally scored highly by visitors in terms of its architectural design, blending in with the natural surroundings and retaining a modern look and feel.





# 2

## Onsite

### VISITOR CENTRE INTERPRETATION

The interpretative experience is generally well received, mainly because of its clear and open layout and mix of mechanical and digital interactives. The 'Postcards from the Edge' interactive, which superimposes your image over the cliffs backdrop, is particularly popular across audience demographics and provides a takeaway souvenir that can be accessed at home.

Overall, interpretation is starting to look dated and, like external signage, differs in presentation style and format. Digital interactives are frequently out of order, providing visitors with little value for money in case of bad weather obscuring the cliff view.

A large-scale AV presentation explores the cliffs vista along with underwater life from the point of view of a bird in flight. This immersive experience is currently being updated with new computer-generated assets.

Visitors can explore displays along curved walkways with the central area mainly dedicated to children's handling and digital interactives focused on local wildlife. The themes of these different areas can appear disjointed and there is a lack of clear hierarchical messaging that quickly conveys what is significant about the cliffs.

Content is delivered through a variety of media, including light box graphics, an interactive table about deep time and a map showing geological features across Ireland. Some displays are text heavy, with little layered information catering for both children and special interests.

The social history of the cliffs – fishing, bird catching, farming, music – is interpreted through replica objects and photography displayed in niches along the outer walkway. In general, however, there is a lack of human interest stories and people are not visible in displays, preventing visitors from engaging on an emotional level with the cliffs as a cultural landscape.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / VISITOR JOURNEY

## 2 Onsite CLIFFS LANDSCAPE

Visitors frequently go straight to see the cliffs and may bypass the visitor centre altogether in sunny weather. The spectacular sight of the cliffs is usually considered to be the highlight of a visit, and often override negative feelings regarding visitor facilities and overcrowding.

Paved pathways with flagstone walls and three observation platforms provide views of the cliffs, sea stacks, islands and seabird colonies. This infrastructure is generally received positively, being well maintained and facilitating safe and easy access to the views that visitors come for. For some visitors however, this carefully managed routing and presence of large crowds can lead to an experience that is too linear and limited in exploration of the wild landscape.

As with the rest of the site, external signage is inconsistent in presentation and displayed in a piecemeal fashion, creating an eyesore in the natural environment.

Permanent interpretation in the landscape is limited to a downloadable online app with an audio tour, however members of staff are present at some viewing points to provide expert advice on nesting birds. In good weather, professional musicians also provide live entertainment in fixed busking locations.

O'Brien's Tower, is located on the far end of the walkway and offers the best views of Galway Bay and the Clare coastline.

The flagstone walls are damaged in parts and provide obstacles in an effort to distinguish between general footpaths and walkways managed by the Cliffs of Moher Experience.

The paths beyond the visitor experience are a major safety hazard due to their proximity to the unstable cliff-edge and unpredictable weather conditions. Visitors rarely heed the warnings in situ and seek to get as close to the edge as possible to take Instagram-worthy photographs.





# 3

## Post-visit DEPART

67% of visitors would post on social media following their visit to the Cliffs of Moher compared to a national average of 53%, suggesting it is one of the most photogenic and talked about places in Ireland.

The Cliffs of Moher Experience retweets and shares some of this content and promotes the ongoing events programme, while the official social media platforms actively promote wider attractions across the county.

School visits are encouraged but there is currently a limited range of special events or activities encouraging visitors, particularly from the domestic market, to re-engage with the attraction. There is considerable scope for expansion of the programme through partnerships with regional festivals and events.



### Programming

#### School Visits

Guided tours and resident geologist offered but no targeted activities.

#### Special Events

Celebrate relevant days in calendar (e.g. St Brigid's feast day) but no formal themed talks or activities.



### Geopark and Wild Atlantic Way

#### Wider Festivals / Events

Burren Food Trail, European Geoparks Week and National Heritage Week events focus on the whole Geopark.

#### Signposting

Signage and roadside branding encourage visits to wider visitor attractions.



### Social Media

#### Local Tourism

Promoting tourism, accommodation, food and drink businesses in Burren and Clare.

#### Visitor Reviews and Photos

Reposting of reviews and photography from visitors. Management respond to business review websites, including Tripadvisor and Google reviews.

#### Post-visit Emails

Visitors who have accepted marketing via Wi-Fi receive a post visit email. Post-visit engagement can be expanded and developed.



# THE CURRENT SITUATION / BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

The following review of the built infrastructure at the Cliffs of Moher provides an overview of the investment made to date into visitor facilities as well as a critical assessment of the assets in terms of quality, function and impact on the visitor experience.

The primary physical assets have been identified as;

1. **Car park and payment kiosks**
2. **Entrance pavilions and pathway**
3. **Retail units and adjoining public space**
4. **Main visitor centre**
5. **Coach park and coach entrance building**
6. **Hard landscaping to cliff walk**
7. **O'Brien's Tower**







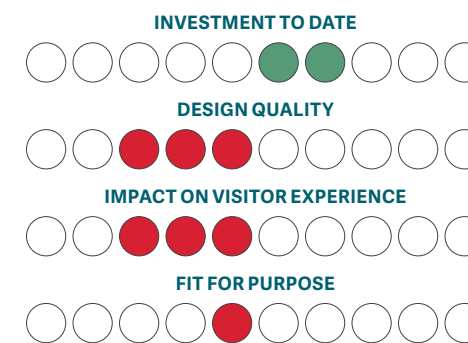
## Car Park and Payment Kiosks

The current visitor car park at the Cliffs of Moher is 3.3ha and is situated to the west of the main visitor attraction on the R478 from Liscannor to Doolin.

In its current layout, the car park has the capacity to hold 450-480 cars with provision for six disabled parking bays.

The car park was constructed in 2007 as a temporary facility but has been in use ever since. This is the first arrival point for all visitors arriving by car. Vehicles enter at portacabin ticket booths and pass through a barrier when they have paid. In addition to the three ticketing booths, there are two temporary WC portacabins in the car park.

The car park surface and kiosks appear to be temporary and parking spaces are poorly delineated. The site offers no shelter and is windswept and open to the elements. There is no mitigation of the visual impact of the cars in the landscape.





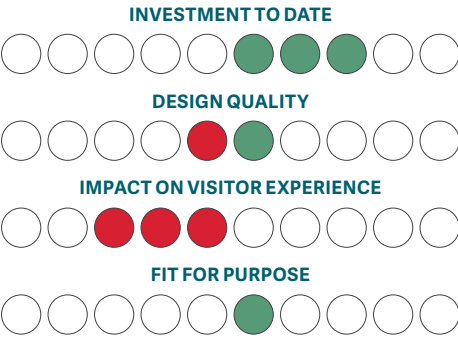
# THE CURRENT SITUATION / BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE



## Coach Park

The coach park is currently located adjacent to the visitor centre to the west of R478 Liscannor Doolin road. It currently will hold 28 coaches and there are 5 disabled car parking bays in this area. The coach park was completed with the new coach entrance building in 2019.

Orientation and wayfinding are poor, and like the car park, there is no mitigation of the visual impact of the coaches in the landscape.

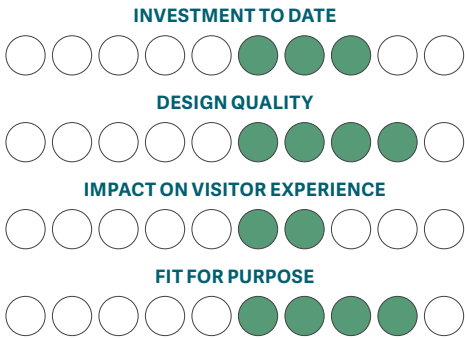


## Coach Park Entrance Building

Designed by Denis Byrne Architects and completed in 2019, this is the newest piece of built infrastructure on the site.

The 280 m2 subterranean building is an arrival point for coaches. Accommodation includes 10 unisex toilets, a meeting room and offices and a pedestrian route through from coach arrival to the visitor centre.

While the building serves its purpose, non-coach visitors are unaware that there are additional WC facilities in the building due to poor wayfinding.







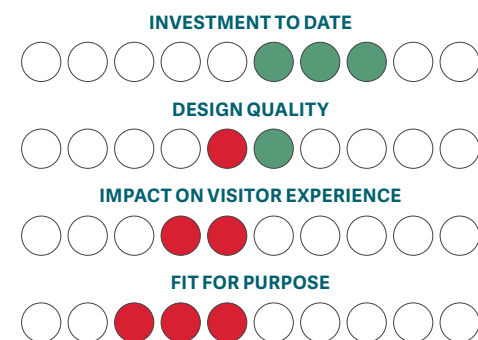
## Entrance Pavilions and Pathway

The entrance pavilions define the main pedestrian entrance to the site. Clad in Liscannor stone and constructed in 2007 with the visitor centre, they were originally built to be ticket and information booths. The right-hand pavilion currently houses a small meditation room.

Visitors can pass between the pavilions or on the pathway to the right to enter the site. The pathway leads from the roadway to the entrance of the visitor centre, a distance of 200m on a concrete block paved pathway of weathered stone appearance.

The scale and location of the pavilions does not create a coherent threshold and their functions are now largely redundant. The buildings have accumulated infrastructure in the form of lighting and signage. Separation between ingress and egress would help with crowd control, however this is not achieved here.

Generic 'suburban' paving is out of context in this location and sets a bland tone.



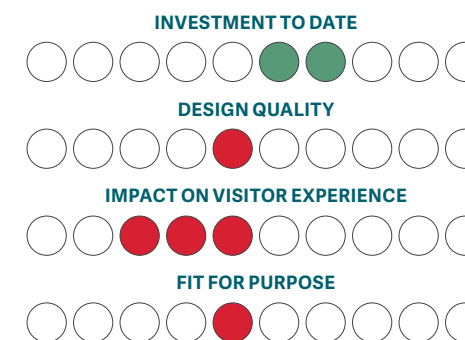
## Commercial Units and Public Space

There are six permanent shop kiosks constructed in 2007 along with the main visitor centre. The kiosks are constructed as concrete vaults with the external façade faced in stone. They are built into the hillside to the east of the main entrance walkway.

Each unit is approximately 20m2. The opening times of the units differ from the visitor centre and are often closed in low season. There is a small cycle parking bay adjacent to the units.

Visitors pass these commercial units before arriving at the visitor centre, which may not convey the right message. The adjacent storage facility is an eyesore that is not in keeping with the subterranean architectural strategy used elsewhere. Their design does little to mitigate visitors' exposure to weather at this critical juncture.

The counterflow of visitors accessing the retail offer and arriving at or leaving the site is frustrating at peak times.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE



## Visitor Centre

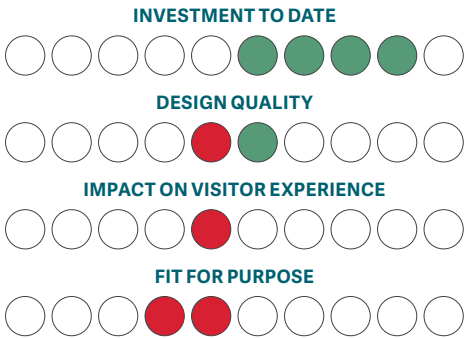
Completed in 2007, the visitor centre was designed by Reddy O’Riordan Staehli Architects. The 2,500 m2 building is a subterranean, self-supporting concrete structure set into the hill so that the external envelope blends into the contours of the surrounding topography.

The entrance foyer has low ceilings, dim lighting and the sparse interior evokes a cave-like atmosphere. Liscannor stone is used for flooring surface throughout. Supporting concrete columns and the ceilings are imprinted with the textured stone motifs.

The building is undersized to cope with the volume of visitors at peak times. A significant area of the existing visitor centre is underutilised in the exhibition space, thereby putting excessive pressure on the entrance sequence and the restaurant. A defined entrance and separate exit would help to mitigate the crowding pressure.

The design significantly buries the built infrastructure, meaning the opportunity to use the architecture to offer orientation and identification has been lost. There is a lack of legibility of functions internally which is not resolved by the current wayfinding. Specifically, the exhibition space is not visible or easily found from the reception.

There is a lack of natural light, and the exhibition space enjoys no relationship to the external landscape or the cliffs.







## Hard Landscaping to Cliff Walk

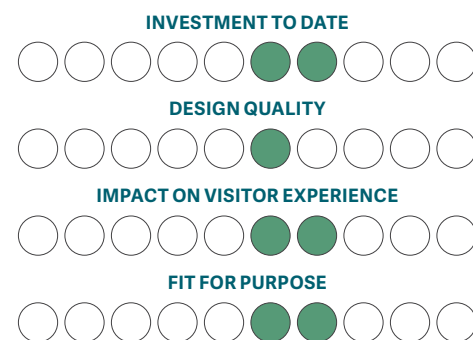
Significant hard landscaping to the northern half of the site was designed by Brady Shipman Martin and completed with the new visitor centre in 2007. As part of this work, public access to the cliffs was moved back 5m to allow for the ongoing natural erosion of cliff-edges. Walkways were widened from 3m to 5m to take account of increased visitor numbers, drainage problems were rectified and steps redesigned to deal more effectively with high winds.

The protective walls to the Cliff Walk are made from approximately 1.2m high flags of Liscannor Stone, laid in an overlapping pattern. Liscannor Stone, or Moher Flagstone, is the name given to a variety of flagstones and sandstones that rise from the lands around the Cliffs of Moher and the nearby fishing village of Liscannor. This hard naturally riven quartz sandstone was formed in the Namurian of the Middle Carboniferous Period over 320 million years ago. The stone bears the fossil tracks of marine animals that lived during Carboniferous times. These tracks give the stone a highly textured surface of infinitely varied character.

Two raised and cantilevered viewing platforms were constructed at either end of the site. The walkways were improved for accessibility although due to the natural slope of the terrain they were not made fully accessible.

Pedestrian travel direction is an out-and-back scenario and is not looped meaning that there is always a counterflow of people which can be frustrating for visitors during peak times. The increase in visitor numbers has added pressure to the non-landscaped pathways to the south of the site.

The design does little to mitigate the exposure of visitors to weather in this area.



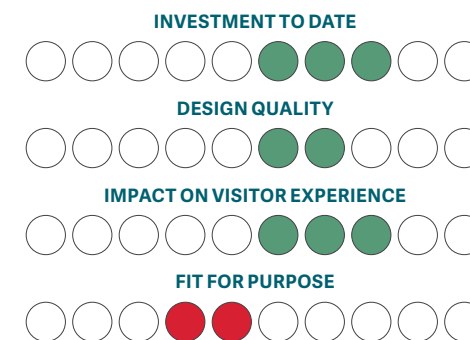
## O'Brien's Tower

O'Brien's Tower was built on the cliffs in around 1835 by local landlord and MP Sir Cornelius O'Brien as an observation tower. It is listed in Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 Record of Protected Structures – RPS No. 292 with the following summary description:

“Detached three-bay single-and-two storey rubble stone-built gothic-style observation complex, built c.1835, comprising single-bay two-storey to centre on a circular plan with base batter, battlemented roof parapet. Single bay two-storey lower tower to left on a circular plan and single-bay single-storey battlement screen wall to right having segmental-headed door opening; renovated, c.1970 (NIAH, 2000). Assigned regional rating by NIAH. Set in newly landscaped grounds as part of the Cliffs of Moher redevelopment.”

In 2019 Clare County Council substantially upgraded and renovated the tower. It now provides a safe elevated viewing platform for the cliffs and Clare coastline and further to the Aran Islands and Connemara.

The design does little to mitigate visitor's exposure to weather at this critical junction.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

The following review of current visitor access to the site along with the Coastal Walk and wider vehicular and non-vehicular transport networks was carried out through a desk-based study and consultation with relevant stakeholders.

## Strategic Transport Links

The Cliffs of Moher are located on the west coast of Ireland close to Liscannor village in County Clare. They are easily accessed by road from Galway (90 minutes), Ennis (40 minutes) and Limerick (75 minutes). Dublin is approximately a four-hour drive, on either the northern route (via the M4 / M6 / M18 / N67) or the southern route (via M7 / N85 / N67).

A ferry service sails from Tarbert in Kerry to Killimer in Clare (45 minutes from the cliffs).

The nearest train stations are at Ennis and Galway.

The Cliffs of Moher is served by a daily public bus service. The Bus Éireann service (Route 350) runs six times a day in the summer each way between Ennis and Galway.

Shannon International Airport, located one hour away, has direct connections from the USA and mainland Europe, serving the west coast of Ireland and the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW).

The WAW is Ireland's first long-distance touring route, stretching along the spectacular Atlantic coast from Donegal to West Cork. The route can be explored by car, bicycle or on foot. Among its many Discovery Points there are 15 special "Signature Points", including the Cliffs of Moher. The WAW has been a significant success and a wide range of businesses along its route have reported direct benefits (93%) with increases in overall footfall, especially of USA tourists, a lengthening of the season and higher turnover.

Fáilte Ireland is continuing to invest in and promote the WAW, aiming to disperse visitors more evenly along the route and into towns and villages in the region. In partnership with Clare County Council, Fáilte Ireland must continue to secure appropriate and sustainable facilities and infrastructure in these local communities to facilitate access and realise economic benefits.

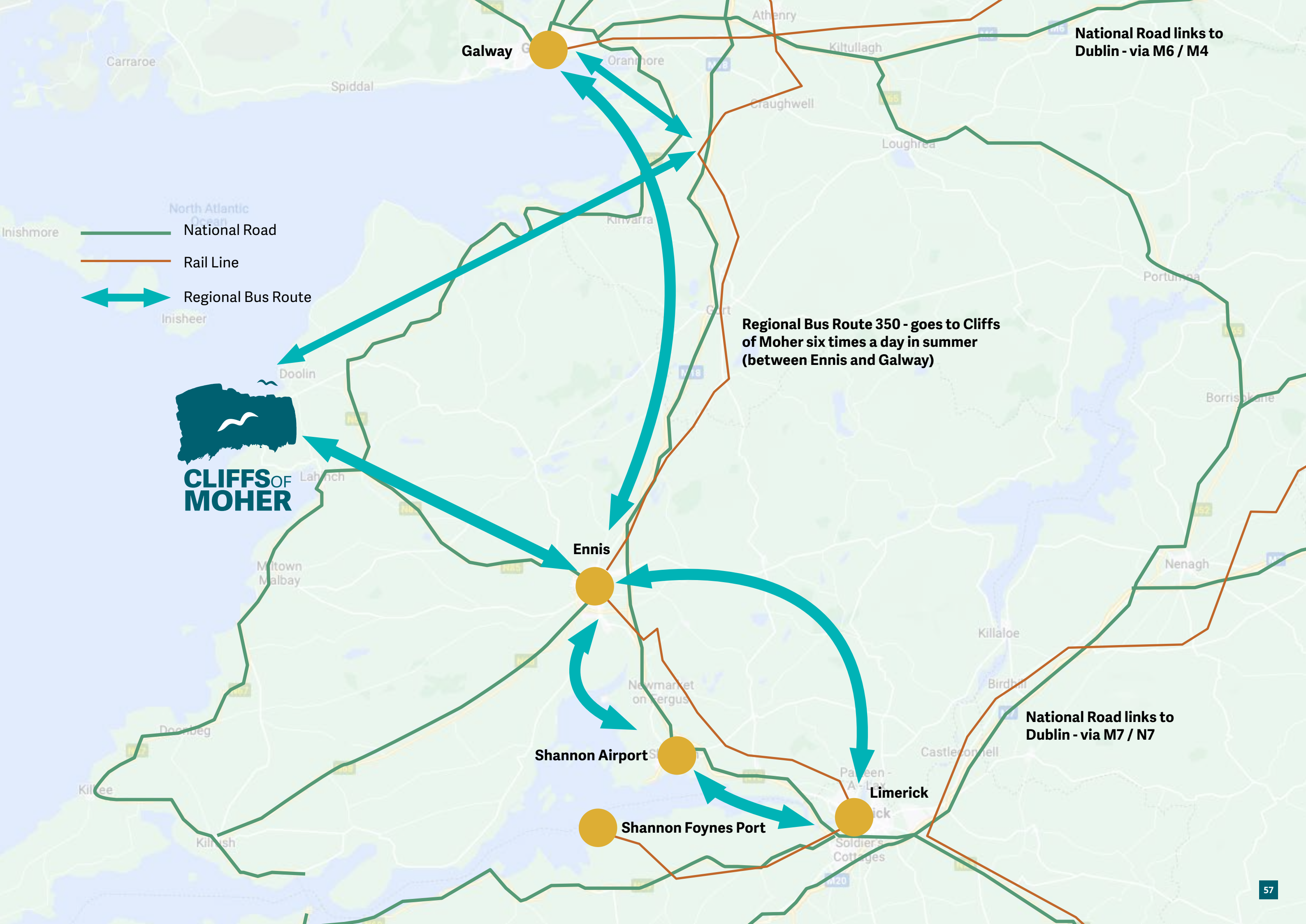
## The main towns and villages in the area are:

- Lisdoonvarna (12 km north)
- Liscannor (6 km south)
- Ennistymon (13 km south-east)
- Lahinch (9 km south)
- Doolin (7 km north)

## The nearest larger urban areas are:

- Ennis (40 km east)
- Galway (76 km north)
- Limerick (80 km south-east)





**CLIFFS OF MOHER**

National Road

Rail Line

Regional Bus Route

National Road links to Dublin - via M6 / M4

Regional Bus Route 350 - goes to Cliffs of Moher six times a day in summer (between Ennis and Galway)

National Road links to Dublin - via M7 / N7



# THE CURRENT SITUATION / TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

## Access to and from the Cliffs

The National Secondary Road N67 runs from Galway to Tarbert, connecting the towns of Lisdoonvarna to Ennistymon, approximately 12 km from the cliffs. The Regional Road R478 connects the town of Lisdoonvarna with Lahinch. Part of the road is on the Wild Atlantic Way and it is the only access route to the Cliffs of Moher. The R478 travels west from Lisdoonvarna, passing nearby Doolin, the Cliffs of Moher and Liscannor before joining the N67 in Lahinch. The Ballyellery Road is a local road that goes from North to South, connecting Doolin village with the northern area of Lahinch.







# THE CURRENT SITUATION / TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

## Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk

The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk is one of Ireland's most majestic coastal trails, linking the villages of Doolin and Liscannor, via the Cliffs of Moher. The coastal walk, opened in 2013, is managed by Clare Local Development Company in partnership with landowners under The National Walks Scheme. Spanning 14 km along the west coast, the popular walking route is the most memorable way to discover these towering cliffs that hang over the wild Atlantic Ocean. It has a terrain of exposed clifftop path, narrow and steep ascents, flagstone steps, farm tracks, local and regional roads.



The 8 km-long northern part of the coastal walk from the existing visitor centre to Doolin and takes around 3-4 hours to complete. The walk to the south side towards Hags Head from the visitor centre measures 6 km in length and takes approximately 1.5-2 hours to complete.

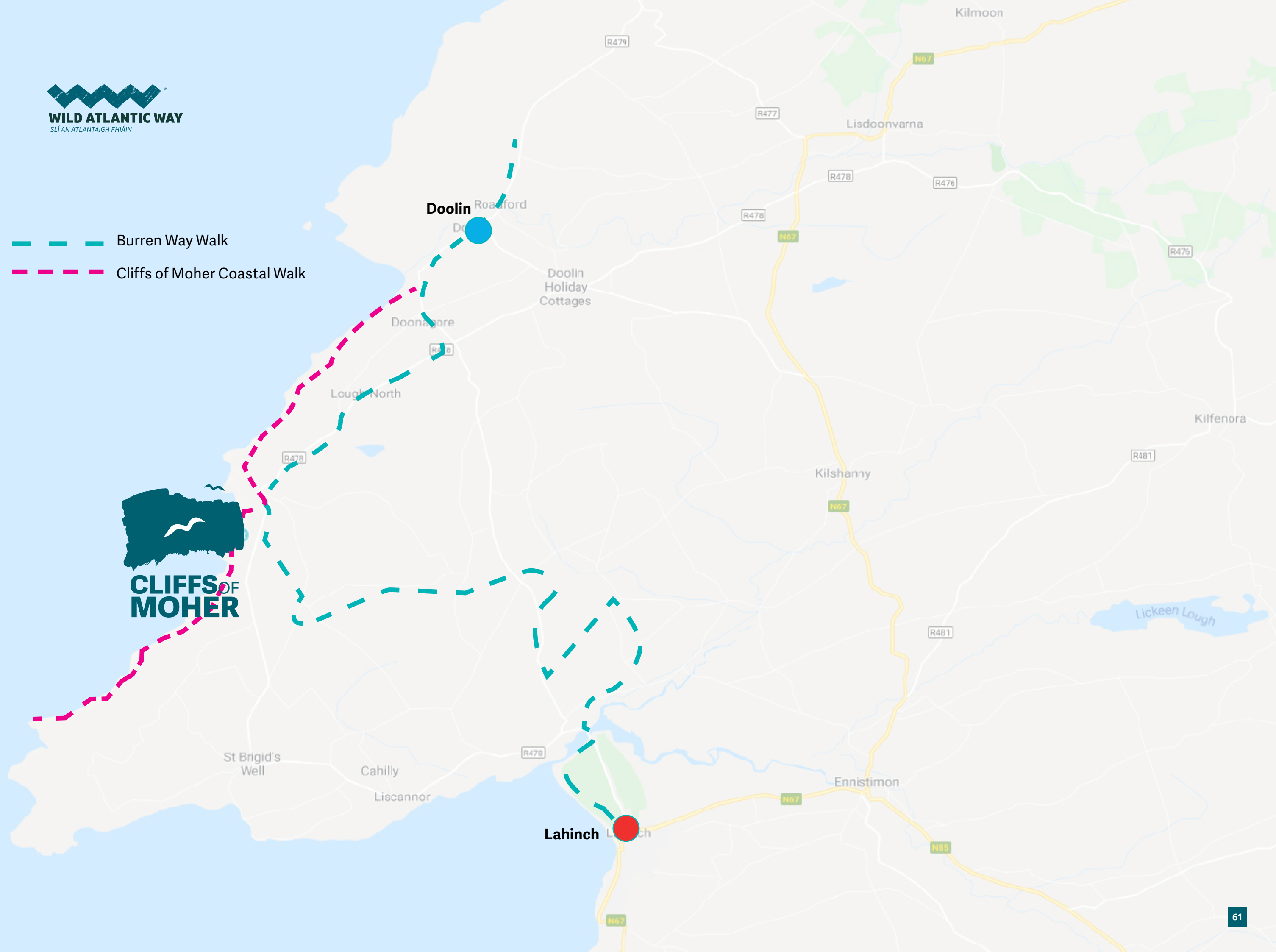
The coastal walk is a key tourism and recreational asset in North Clare. It brings many visitors to the area and is well used by locals. The walk has received international accolades and is often described as the most outstanding coastal walk in the country.

The Burren Way extends 123 km from the towns of Lahinch to Corofin, passing through Liscannor, Cliffs, Doolin, Ballyaughan, Carran and Tubber. The walk follows a mix of green roads, pathways, minor roadways, and grassy/rocky tracks.





-  Burren Way Walk
-  Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

## Parking Facilities

Car parking at the Cliffs of Moher is located on the eastern side of the R478 Regional Road, while the coach parking is located on the western side. Access to the car parking from the R478 includes a widened road and a right turn lane for the northbound approach. The car parking is linked to the visitor centre access through a pedestrian zebra crossing of the R478 located at the southern corner of the car park.

The car park ticket booths have been moved further inside the site in order to create three lanes to reduce the congestion at the access point. Each lane can cater up to seven vehicles. However, during the seasonal peak time, usually from February to the end of October and between 11 AM to 4:30 PM, congestion often extends back onto the R478. In addition to the visitor centre car park, there are a number of other public and privately owned car parks located nearby, including:

- Doolin park and ride - located 6.9 km from the Cliffs of Moher
- Liscannor car park - located 5.6 km from the Cliffs of Moher
- Lahinch car park - located 10.3 km from the Cliffs of Moher
- Hag's Head (local) car park - located 5.1 km from the Cliffs of Moher





## Coach Parking

Access to the coach parking is provided with a right turning lane for the southbound traffic on the R478 Regional Road.

The coach parking has been expanded to accommodate up to 28 coaches and special need vehicles. A one-way system that operates in a clockwise direction has also been introduced to minimise conflict points and ease traffic movements into and out of the site.

The west side of the concourse has been upgraded with the scheduled service bus area being removed in order to provide seven additional coach spaces. Nine coach spaces have been provided at the east side of the concourse.

Additionally, the set down area for special needs vehicles and mobility impaired people has been expanded. At busy times some coaches are directed to park in the car park after they have dropped off their passengers before returning later when their passengers are ready to depart.





# THE CURRENT SITUATION / SWOT ANALYSIS

This analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats brings together a summary of the key findings and issues from a baseline analysis of the site and a general review of tourism and expansion in County Clare. These have underpinned the development of strategic approaches and ideas to enhance the Cliffs of Moher Experience.

## Strengths

- Excellent transport connections to County Clare via the M4 M6, the M18, the rail line and Shannon International Airport.
- Strong local tourism networks and community groups, with a commitment to sustainable development and promotion of tourism.
- Proactive local authority that has clearly highlighted the importance of tourism as a cornerstone of Clare's economy and identity, and is working to strengthen the sector.
- Current and planned investment in the tourism product.
- County Clare has the third highest average level of spend by domestic visitors (€237.57).
- New Visitor Experience Development Plan for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher destination.
- Very high international market awareness of the Cliffs of Moher.
- Close alignment between two key market segments (Culturally Curious and Great Escapers), identified for national, regional and county tourism and the Cliffs of Moher and Burren products.
- Abundance of attractive tourism resources, including natural and cultural attractions, vibrant towns and villages and contrasting landscapes within County Clare.
- Globally distinctive karst landscape with protected areas for outstanding wildlife and UNESCO Global Geopark status.
- Geopark travel app and promotion of a wide range of transport options to and around the area.
- Burren Ecotourism Network and Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism.
- Ability to offer a diversity of experiences throughout the region, helping to increase length of stay, visitor spend, and disperse visitors within the region.
- High and growing levels of visitor numbers attracted to Cliffs of Moher, as Ireland's second biggest visitor attraction and most visited natural attraction site.
- Cliffs of Moher is a financially successful operation generating significant revenues, an operating surplus and supporting a significant number of jobs.
- Growing importance of American visitors at the Cliffs of Moher, who are now the largest group of visitors (30%).
- Success of new pricing system to help reduce demand at peak hours, with 15% movement in the number of visits from peak to off-peak hours.



## Weaknesses

- The county as a destination lacks a clear identity in the marketplace.
- Promotional activities are limited overseas, with few online packages.
- County Clare has second lowest average spend by international overnight visitors (only €210.95).
- Low economic benefit from coach day visitors, with an average spend of only €12.08 per person.
- Lack of adequate overall road infrastructure and network, resulting in transport and parking congestion and traffic management.
- Negative impacts of traffic on travel and quality of life for local residents.
- Lack of transport and access connectivity across the county.
- Internal public transportation systems are limited and coordination between existing services can be difficult.
- A lack of green infrastructure and ad-hoc trails system which could facilitate alternative active modes of transport within the county.
- Traffic concerns for cyclists with potential to undermine the experience.
- Significant weaknesses, quantity and quality within the accommodation sector, which are constraining the growth of overnight visitation.
- Gaps in community infrastructure and services, including lack of adequate sewerage facilities, public toilets, street lighting, signage, parking and litter facilities.
- Broadband and connectivity issues.
- Limited access to visitor information services at points of entry to Clare and many rural settlements.
- Insufficient mechanisms to facilitate countywide collaboration and strong leadership within the industry.
- Seasonality is a pronounced vulnerability and accentuates many of the weaknesses, with towns, villages and clusters “closing” during the off-season.
- Current visitor demand exceeds the capacity of infrastructure at the Cliffs of Moher.
- Services and wastewater treatment constraints at the Cliffs of Moher visitor centre and facilities.
- Coastal path erosion and lack of visitor respect for the Cliffs of Moher amenity.
- Inconsistent monitoring information relating to the bird species.

## Opportunities

- Tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest-growing economic sectors, with significant financial benefits.
- Facilitate the recovery of habitats and biodiversity, and promote environmental enhancement through a sustainable tourism approach with opportunities for conservation focused education, research and monitoring initiatives.
- Develop a world-class visitor experience with transformed interpretation, effective visitor management and infrastructure.
- Greater travel off the beaten track will ease congestion in tourism hubs and spread economic benefits.
- Improved visitor accessibility to the site through wider network of graded pathways and new visitor facilities.
- Ambitious strategy led by Fáilte Ireland to tap into the huge potential that exists in the tourism sector.
- Growth in trips and expenditure of overseas visitors to Ireland and to Mid-West region, especially from North American market, and significant levels of spend on accommodation and food and drink.
- Significant growth in domestic tourism via trips and expenditure.
- Close match between the Cliffs of Moher product offer and the most important destination issues when considering a holiday to Ireland, including beautiful scenery, friendly and hospitable people, and a good range of natural attractions.
- Creating new Greenway and Blueway connections across the destination.
- Popularity of hiking and cross-country walking among overseas and domestic tourists.
- Development of new County Tourism Strategy, with supportive context of overall strategic planning framework.
- Introduction of a Visitor Management Plan to disperse visitors throughout the area and greater use of capacity management principles.
- Redesigning and managing the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk to become a walk of global significance with managed access and extended value.
- Amplifying recognition of the Burren as an internationally-significant landscape.
- Promoting exceptional experiences relating to Burren adventure, wellness and education.
- Creating all year-round visitor experiences to capture Great Escapers, extending the season and sustaining employment.
- Strengthening the partnerships between local organisations and creating a stronger coordinated proactive marketing alliance.
- Improving accommodation options.
- Integrate new digital technologies into orientation and interpretative media.

## Threats

- Heavy reliance of tourism on energy-intensive modes of transport including aeroplanes and automobiles, with high carbon emissions.
- Risks from impacts on natural environment
- Impact of overcrowding at flagship natural heritage sites is a key challenge, involving diverse interests and questions of ethics and values.
- Impact of political and terrorism incidents, global natural disasters and pandemics on public’s motivation and opportunity to travel.
- The loss of air routes into Shannon Airport and the increasing dominance of Dublin International Airport.
- Limited ability to fully control bus travel patterns and passenger behaviour.
- Negative impacts on biodiversity and landscape quality from non-sustainable growth in visitor numbers.
- Potentially inadequate insurance capacity to assist landowners in creating new opportunities to access local areas.
- Cliff erosion along the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk.
- Declining housing stock for tourism workers.
- Increasing costs of business rates, insurance and electricity.
- Macro-economic impacts and financial recession.
- Negative impact on nesting birds.





# **SECTION 3: CONSULTATION**





**A comprehensive public consultation programme with local communities, organisations, businesses and residents has been central to developing the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, enabling participation and input via an integrated engagement and listening process.**

**As part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), consultation has also been carried out with statutory environmental authorities and relevant non-statutory bodies.**



# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / OVERVIEW

Feedback received from stakeholders via consultation has informed development of the strategy at each stage. The listening process has ensured that the proposals address the collective aspirations for the Cliffs of Moher and the benefits that the destination can bring to the surrounding local communities and wider county.

## Phase 1

The focus of the first part of the consultation process was on extensive preliminary research, onsite investigations and desktop studies to understand the challenges facing the Cliffs of Moher, along with future aspirations. This process included initial consultation with a range of key stakeholders.

## Phase 2

There followed more comprehensive phase two consultations with local communities, organisations, businesses and residents, to allow the strategy team to hear the views of a wide range of stakeholders. These opportunities for people to “have their say” were widely publicised in local and national media, and on social media.





## Commitment to Ongoing Consultation

Business organisations and community groups voiced concerns at the beginning of the consultation process including:

- The need for appropriate timing of the consultation, at a point when considerable planning and reporting had not already been completed by the consultants.
- The need for greater visibility of reports on which community stakeholders could comment.
- That questions are answered and that consistent information be shared across workshops.
- A request for clarity on the objectives of the consultation.

The Cliffs of Moher Steering Group and Clare County Council acknowledged these concerns and a robust and comprehensive Phase One consultation and engagement process was carried out.

A commitment was made to continue ongoing engagement with all sectors of the local community, through extensive phase two consultation on the draft strategy and masterplan proposals.

Business organisations and stakeholder groups welcomed the engagements, which were facilitated with representatives from across the communities. A commitment was made to an ongoing collaborative partnership between the management at the Cliffs of Moher, Fáilte Ireland, Clare County Council, local community stakeholders and representative bodies for the tourism sector in the region.

Previous  
visitors

Online  
surveys

**5100**  
Local residents

**14**  
Key  
stakeholders

**6**  
Business  
organisations

**6**  
Community  
groups



# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / PHASE 1 PROCESS

A comprehensive process was carried out with key stakeholders, business organisations and community groups, local residents and visitors. This engagement ran from the commencement of the work on the 2040 Strategy in November 2019 until September 2021.

Face-to-face / virtual meetings and site visits were held across the county. In addition to the feedback from this engagement process, over 30 written submissions were also received from key stakeholders, local business organisations and community groups.

## The focus of this phase was:

- Understanding the relevant context and wider framework relating to the Cliffs of Moher.
- Identifying concerns about current and future issues relating to the Cliffs of Moher.
- Gaining views on the potential opportunities for developing the Cliffs of Moher.

## This phase of consultation included:

- Virtual meetings.
- Face-to-face meetings.
- Site visits.
- Consultation boards at six locations across County Clare.
- Online consultation material including a video (2,225 website visits / 526 views on YouTube).
- Online questionnaires (May 2021 – June 2021).
- Online submissions via a dedicated project email address.



Key Stakeholders	Community Groups
Cliffs of Moher Steering Group	Community group representatives
Board of Cliffs of Moher Centre DAC	Clare Public Participation Network (PPN)
Clare County Council (Executive / Elected Members)	Doolin Community Council
Representatives to Clare County Council of the Ennistymon Electoral Area	Planning Group of the North Clare Strategic Planning Project
Fáilte Ireland	Lisdoonvarna Fáilte CLG & Community
Clare Local Development Company (CLDC)	Ennistymon Town Team
National Parks & Wildlife Service	
Cliffs of Moher onsite tenants / Shannon Heritage DAC	Business Organisations
Local landowners	County Clare accommodation providers
Clare County Council – Planning	Local business community
Clare County Council – Roads	Burren Ecotourism Network
Cliffs of Moher staff	The Irish Farmers’ Association (IFA) / Clare IFA
Clare County Council – Tourism	Doolin Tourism
Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark	Ennis 2040
	Local residents and visitors





# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / PHASE 1 FINDINGS

A number of key considerations relating to the function of the Cliffs of Moher and its role as an international visitor destination were identified by key stakeholders.

## Audiences and the Cliffs of Moher

- The Cliffs of Moher has the potential for further development to appeal to new audiences and users.
- Visitors are central to all thinking and future development. The strategy should look to provide a universal experience for all types of visitors, from arrival to departure.
- Reaching and influencing the customer pre-visit.
- Review a shift away from the Cliffs of Moher Experience as a “day tour” and photo stop destination.
- A focus on improving the visitor experience, reviewing the existing infrastructure and identifying what is required to ensure the delivery of a world-class visitor experience to 2040.
- Opportunities to use pre-booking and dynamic pricing as a mechanism to manage visitor capacity.
- Transport and parking.
- Need to resolve the negative impacts of traffic disruption, especially the size, frequency and volume of large coaches on local roads at peak times.
- Implementing a park and ride solution by developing sustainable transport and greenway links.
- The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk has been an outstanding success and should be at the centre of future plans for investment and maintenance, creating links with local villages and towns.





## Tourism and Local Benefits

- Review the role of the Cliffs of Moher as a more sustainable tourism model, including creating an integrated experience, redistributing visitors around County Clare and retention of visitor spend.
- Act as a tourism driver in the wider Clare area, with a strong ten-year focus to 2030 and a vision to 2040.
- The planning, infrastructural, social and economic imperatives of the wider Clare area and the hinterland beyond.
- Take account of the needs of local residents, local tourism businesses, business interests generally, visitors and the environment.
- Seek to share locally the benefits from significant visitor numbers, while mitigating the negative impacts.
- Managing capacity to maintain a high-quality visitor experience while minimising disruption to the local communities.
- Review the ability of the wider hinterland's infrastructure to cope with more visitors (roads, parking, wastewater treatment etc.).
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer / overnight in the area and bring real economic benefits to local businesses.
- Cliffs of Moher needs to be seen as a good neighbour.
- Greater transparency of where the Cliffs of Moher profits go and how local communities benefit.
- Request to add an economic pillar to the Cliffs of Moher Strategy and Masterplan via a more detailed economic and social impact study to be carried out as an integral part of the work.

## Environmental Impacts

- Maintaining, protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Explore opportunities for sustainable energy initiatives.





# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / PHASE 1 FINDINGS

## Concerns Raised by Residents

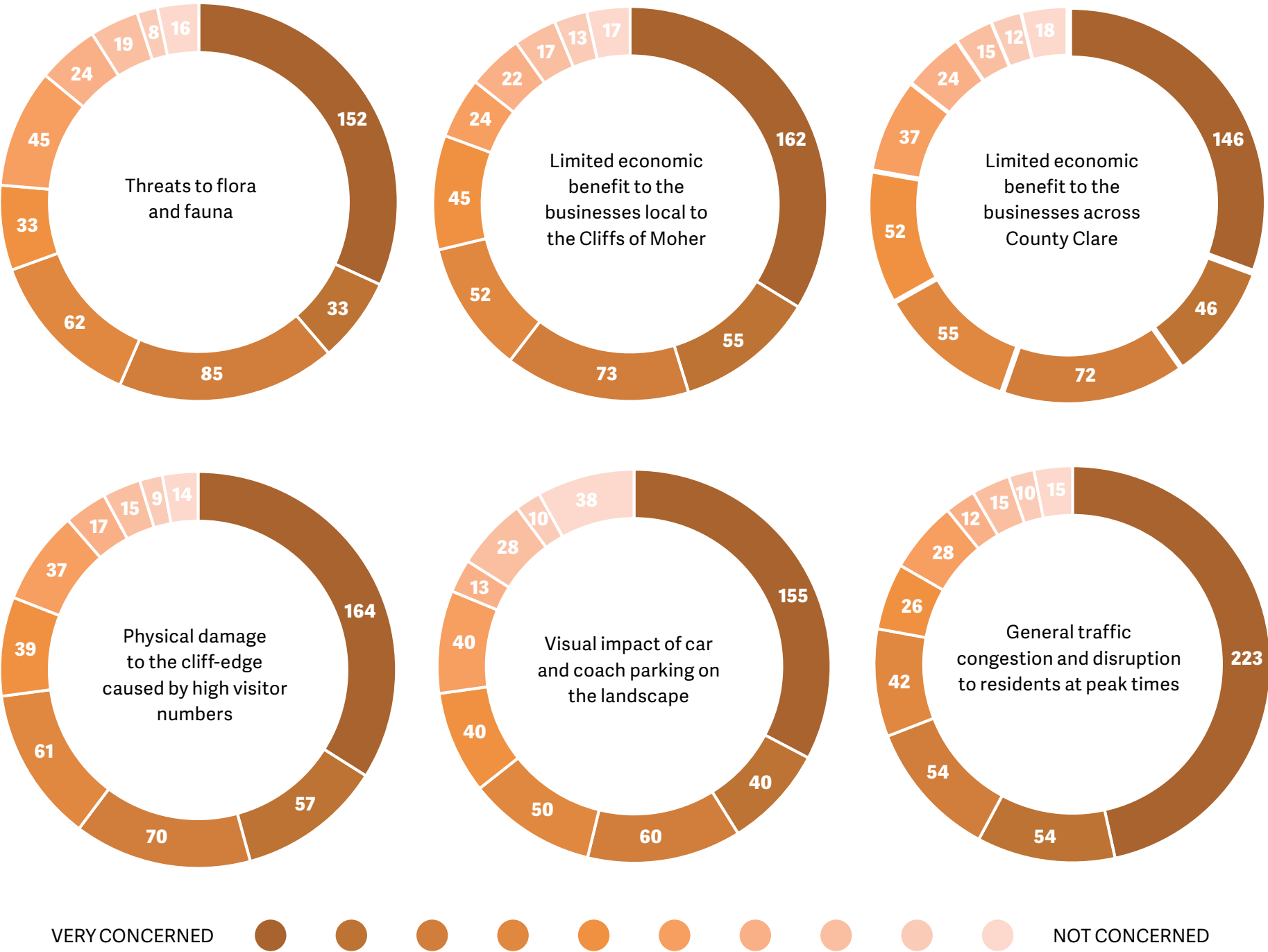
County Clare residents were very concerned about a wide range of current issues relating to the Cliffs of Moher. On average, just over one third of people were “Very Concerned” on all issues (rated 1 on a scale of concern of 1-10).

The highest-rated concern was general traffic congestion and disruption caused to residents by large visitor numbers at peak times:

- This was rated 1 (on a scale of concern of 1-10) by 47% (223 people) of respondents. 78% of people were concerned over traffic congestion / disruption (rated 1-4).
- 71% of respondents identified both cars and coaches as the main cause of congestion while 22% identified coaches as the main cause.

The highest level of concern (rated 1) was very similar for each of the other issues:

- Limited economic benefits to businesses local to the Cliffs of Moher (34%) / to businesses across County Clare (31%).
- Physical damage caused to the cliff-edge by high visitor numbers (34%).
- Threats to the flora and fauna of the site (32%).
- Visual impact of car / coach parking on the landscape (31%).



These diagrams show level of concern by respondents. The numbers in each segment represent the volume of respondents based on a scale of 1-10. Highest level of concern is shown in the darkest colours.



Potential Opportunities Identified by Residents

County Clare residents were very positive in their views on the range of potential opportunities for developing the Cliffs of Moher. On average, almost one third of people were very positive about all future opportunities (rated 1 on a scale of 1-10).

The highest-rated potential opportunity for future development was a sustainable transport system for access to the Cliffs of Moher and around County Clare:

- This was rated 1 by 43% of respondents (206 people).
- 78% of people were positive regarding a sustainable transport system (rated 1-4).

The greatest positivity (rated 1) for other future development opportunities were:

- Enhancing the special qualities of the Cliffs of Moher (36%).
- Realising greater economic benefits to local businesses by encouraging visitors to stay longer at the cliffs and the area (31%).
- Promotion of the Cliffs of Moher as a magnet to attract and disperse visitors across County Clare (26%).
- Development of more things to see and do at the cliffs (19%).



These diagrams show level of opportunity by respondents. The numbers in each segment represent the volume of respondents based on a scale of 1-10. Highest level of opportunity is shown in the darkest colours.



# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / PHASE 1 FINDINGS

## Concerns Raised by Visitors

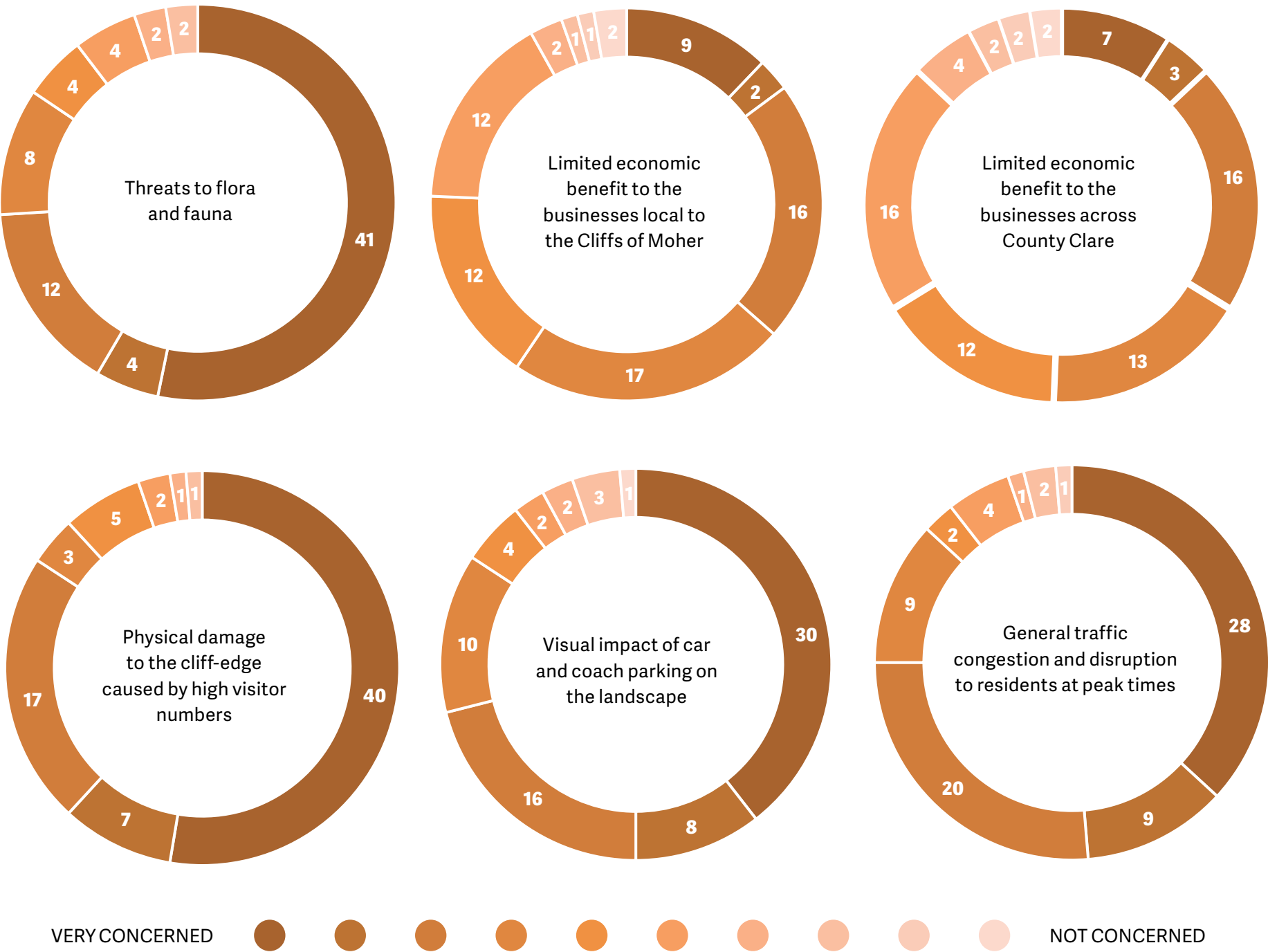
Completed questionnaires were received from 77 people living outside County Clare who had previously visited the Cliffs of Moher. Responses came from residents living across the world, with most living in the USA , Canada and other areas of Ireland.

The highest-rated concerns were physical damage caused to the cliff-edge by high visitor numbers and threats to flora and fauna. These were both rated 1 (on a scale of concern of 1-10) by 53% of respondents.

- 88% of people were concerned by physical damage caused to the cliff edge by high visitor numbers (rated 1-4).
- 84% of people were concerned by threats to flora and fauna (rated 1-4).

The next highest levels of concern (rated 1) were:

- Visual impact of car / coach parking on the landscape (39%).
- General traffic congestion / disruption caused to residents (37%) – 78% of respondents identified both cars and coaches as the main cause of congestion.
- Limited economic benefits to businesses, both local to the Cliffs of Moher and across Clare, were not identified as a significant concern by previous visitors from outside the County.
- Promotion of the Cliffs of Moher as a magnet to attract and disperse visitors across County Clare (26%).
- Development of more things to see and do at the cliffs (19%).



These diagrams show level of concern by respondents. The numbers in each segment represent the volume of respondents based on a scale of 1-10. Highest level of concern is shown in the darkest colours.



Potential Opportunities Identified by Visitors

Previous visitors were generally positive in their views on the range of potential opportunities for developing the Cliffs of Moher, except for developing more things to see and do at the destination.

- On average, almost one third of people were very positive about all future opportunities (rated 1) – excluding developing more things to see and do at the Cliffs of Moher.

The highest-rated potential opportunities for future development were:

- A sustainable transport system for access to the Cliffs of Moher and around County Clare (rated 1 by 38% of respondents).
- Enhance the qualities of the Cliffs of Moher’s environment, flora and fauna (rated 1 by 35% of respondents)



These diagrams show level of opportunity by respondents. The numbers in each segment represent the volume of respondents based on a scale of 1-10. Highest level of opportunity is shown in the darkest colours.



# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / PHASE 2 PROCESS

The detailed analysis of the phase one consultation responses helped shape the development of the draft strategy and masterplan proposals.

These proposals were set out in a consultation document which provided the basis for the ongoing engagement process with key stakeholders, business organisations and community groups.

This phase of consultation included:

- A consultation document made available as a download from the Cliffs of Moher website from 5th May 2022.
- The consultation document was issued directly to all key stakeholders, business organisations and community groups in advance of meetings.
- Consultation meetings (mostly held face-to-face) with core stakeholders and also Incoming Tour Operators Association, Ireland and The Coach Tourism and Transport Council of Ireland.
- Eight written submissions were also received from key stakeholders, local business organisations, community groups and individuals.

Key Stakeholders	Additional organisations
As Phase One	Incoming Tour Operators Association, Ireland
	Coach Tourism and Transport Council of Ireland
Community Groups	
As Phase One	
Business Organisations	
As Phase One	





# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / PHASE 2 FINDINGS

The core strategic initiatives and the masterplan proposals contained in the consultation document were developed, taking account of the feedback and key considerations identified by key stakeholders.

## Opportunity

The scale of investment and the vision for future development of the Cliffs of Moher was welcomed:

- It was reiterated that the Cliffs of Moher is a key local, regional and national asset – supporting tourism and economic development.
- Support was given for the focus on high quality visitor experiences integrated within a new rewilded environment, supporting sustainability and economic benefits for local communities.
- The need for an emphasis on quality not quantity was expressed, particularly if visitor numbers are increased.
- Support was given for increased showcasing of the best of local produce as well as encouraging arts and crafts through the retail activities at the Cliffs of Moher.

## Transport and Access

The proposals for transport and access to the Cliffs of Moher was identified as the key challenge:

- There was general support for the concept of remote parking hubs located adjacent to local settlements.
- The need to explore further opportunities for integrating the proposed shuttle service as part of a wider public transport network.
- Support was expressed for greater, proactive management and enforcement measures relating to traffic (cars and coaches).
- The importance of the Coastal Path was raised as a consideration, particularly the need to pursue the opportunity to integrate the Coastal Path and Cliffs of Moher visitor experiences.
- The need to ensure future investment and resources provided for maintenance / health and safety works.
- The need to develop an integrated transport plan for North Clare.

## Sustainability

The need to ensure continuity of operation and a high-quality visitor experience during future development of the Cliffs of Moher site, in particular:

- Providing an ongoing, sustainable business plan for the Cliffs of Moher.
- Maintaining economic benefits to the area.
- Clare County Council's intention to develop a sustainable strategy for the Cliffs of Moher, underpinned by commitments to responsible and sustainable tourism was welcomed.
- The emerging strategy is an opportunity to protect, preserve and enhance the Cliffs of Moher site and visitor experience on the one hand, alongside equally tangible benefits for the North Clare region on the other.
- The need to address legacy tourism impacts on local communities, most notably the negative effects of traffic congestion, especially coaches.
- There was support for Clare County Council carrying out detailed studies to identify the impacts of Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy on the towns, villages and communities of North Clare and on the measures to be taken to ensure that the region, as a whole, benefits fairly from the future vision.

## Collaboration

The request to ensure resources are provided to facilitate development of infrastructure, facilities and services within the local towns / villages (especially accommodation stock), and develop greater links between local businesses and Cliffs of Moher for the benefit of all, such as:

- Identifying short-term projects that can be taken forward to act as a catalyst for the future.
- Ensuring future development of the Coastal Path.
- The need to develop a structure for enhanced communication between the local authority, Cliffs of Moher and local communities.
- The need for a continual mechanism for the involvement and oversight by the host communities in the implementation of the strategy.
- Consultation on the strategy has been welcomed and a structure must be put in place to ensure continued, ongoing engagement in the delivery process.
- The need for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy to be integrated with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, the Coastal Path, the proposed West Clare Railway Greenway project and the wider social, cultural and economic activities of communities across North Clare.
- The importance of developing and managing the implementation of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 in close and ongoing collaboration with the host communities.
- The ongoing need for the Cliffs of Moher and Clare County Council to provide transparency to help communities understand the Cliffs of Moher Business Plan, including levels of capital investment and phasing.
- A requirement for clear goals and measurable targets to be set for the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040, in alignment with goals of the Clare County Development Plan and Clare County Council's Tourism Strategy.





# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / PHASE 2 FINDINGS

## Survey Findings

As part of Phase 2 of the consultation process, survey questionnaires were received from 214 people comprising 153 residents living within County Clare and 61 previous visitors (living outside County Clare). The feedback on the Draft Strategy and Proposals were very similar and hence the findings are presented on the total responses received.

Overall, the responses of local residents and previous visitors showed strong positive support for all of the key strategic initiatives and for the site masterplan proposals relating to the future development of the Cliffs of Moher. Almost all of the individual initiatives and proposals received positive ratings from around 70% of all respondents.

The least level of support was expressed for developing a new access gateway building, although it should be noted that this proposal was supported by 54% of respondents compared to 46% who expressed a negative view, excluding those who stated that they were neither negative nor positive. From the discussions with the stakeholders, local businesses and community groups, there was a concern over the scale of the retail and catering provision that may be developed as part of this new building and this may account for the feedback on this specific proposal.

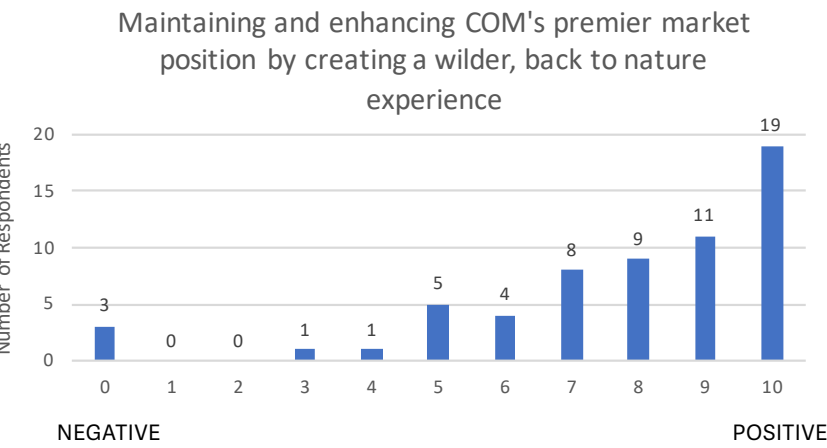
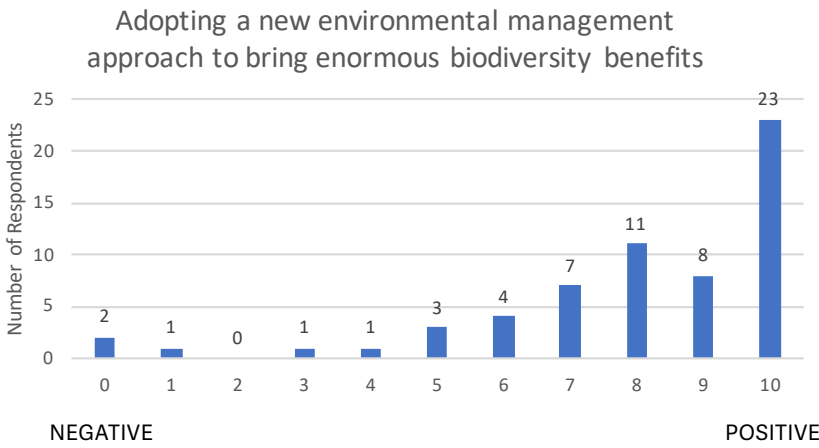
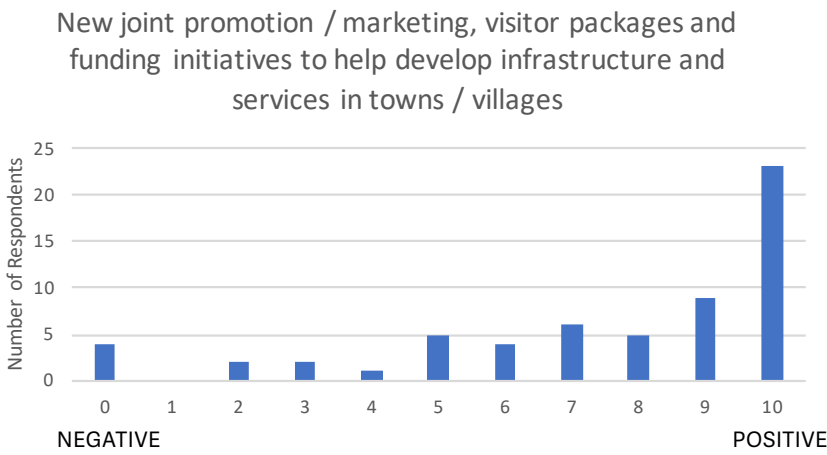
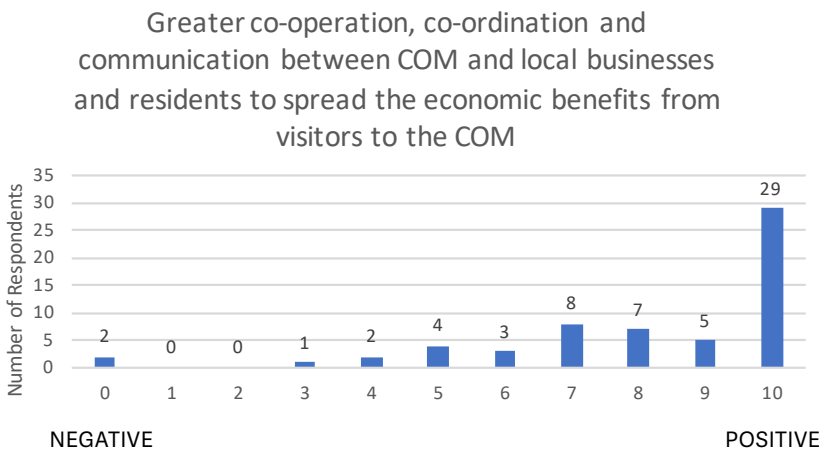
This table shows the overall percentage of respondents expressing their rating for each the strategic Initiatives and site masterplan proposals:

- Negative (rating 0-4)
- Neutral (rating 5)
- Positive (rating 6-10)

Strategic Initiative / Site Masterplan Proposal	Response		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Greater cooperation, coordination and communication between Cliffs of Moher and local businesses and residents to spread the economic benefits from visitors to the Cliffs of Moher.	7%	6%	87%
Adopting a new environmental management approach to bring enormous biodiversity benefits.	9%	5%	86%
New joint promotion / marketing, visitor packages and funding initiatives to help develop infrastructure and services in towns / villages.	9%	8%	83%
Maintaining and enhancing Cliffs of Moher’s premier market position by creating a wilder, back to nature experience .	10%	12%	78%
Creating a larger site, with a sensitive network of paths, to allow visitors to disperse more widely and reduce erosion.	20%	6%	74%
Providing park and ride hubs and a shuttle system to significantly reduce traffic congestion for residents.	19%	8%	73%
Developing new cliff-edge viewing platforms to provide safe experiences for visitors and reduce site erosion.	21%	6%	73%
Consolidating all arrival, welcome and support facilities to the east of the R478 – allowing the Cliff side of the road to be returned to a natural habitat.	20%	9%	71%
Repurposing the existing visitor centre to create a viewing atrium with interpretation / education facilities.	22%	7%	71%
New proactive transport management / enforcement.	19%	12%	69%
Restoring the existing coach park and wastewater treatment areas to natural habitat.	19%	12%	69%
Developing a new pedestrian footbridge over the R478 to provide easy elevated access to the site for visitors and avoid causing traffic queues.	25%	7%	68%
Reducing coach numbers at peak times.	17%	16%	67%
Greater proactive management and pre-booking for all visitors and limiting numbers at peak times.	24%	14%	62%
Developing a new access gateway building.	37%	19%	44%

Economic Initiatives

These graphs show the emphatic levels of positive support (ratings 6-10) for the proposed economic initiatives with the local towns, villages and businesses, a new environmental approach and developing the tourism and visitor experience.





# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION / SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

## KEY CONCERNS

### Business and Community Groups

The potential negative impacts of traffic disruption, especially size, frequency and volume of large coaches.

The need to realise greater economic benefits through enhanced coordination and relationships, including the need for the Cliffs of Moher to be “a better neighbour”.

Ensuring investment in general infrastructure in towns / villages so that it can cope with increased visitor numbers.

### Residents

The key concern relating to the Cliffs of Moher for Clare County residents was general traffic congestion and disruption caused by large visitor numbers at peak times.

### Previous Visitors

The key concerns relating to the Cliffs of Moher for previous visitors were physical damage caused to the cliff-edge by high visitor numbers and threats to flora and fauna.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES

### Business and Community Groups

Overall, business organisations and community groups welcomed the key strategic initiatives and for the site masterplan proposals relating to the future development of the Cliffs of Moher. There was support for developing a sustainable strategy for the Cliffs of Moher, underpinned by commitments to responsible and sustainable tourism. This will involve protecting, preserving and enhancing the Cliffs of Moher site and visitor experience alongside equally tangible benefits for the North Clare region.

They highlighted the importance of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy to be integrated with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, the Coastal Path, the proposed West Clare Railway Greenway project and the wider social, cultural and economic activities of communities across North Clare. Furthermore, clear goals and measurable targets must be set for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy and its delivery must be done in close collaboration with the host communities. Greater transparency and new partnerships must be at the heart of this ongoing engagement process.

### Residents and Previous Visitors

The responses of local residents and previous visitors showed strong positive support for all of the key strategic initiatives and for the site masterplan proposals relating to the future development of the Cliffs of Moher.

Almost all the individual initiatives and proposals received positive ratings from around 70% of all respondents.

There were emphatic levels of positive support for:

- The proposed economic initiatives with the local towns, villages and businesses
- A new environmental approach
- Developing the tourism / visitor experience.



**THE HIGHEST-RATED POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT WERE A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR ACCESS TO THE CLIFFS OF MOHER AND AROUND COUNTY CLARE, AND ENHANCING THE QUALITIES OF THE CLIFFS OF MOHER’S ENVIRONMENT, FLORA AND FAUNA.**







# SEA CONSULTATION / OVERVIEW AND CCC RESPONSES TO SCREENING SUBMISSIONS

It is intended that the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy and an incorporated Cliffs of Moher Site Masterplan will guide the management and development of the Cliffs of Moher Experience for the next 20 years. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the assessment of the significant effects of plans, projects and / or programmes on the environment at a strategic level.

There are four stages to the SEA process and each stage involves a period of statutory public consultation.

1. The first stage is Screening, where a plan / project / programme is screened to determine whether it will have a significant effect on the environment.
2. If the competent authority determines that the plan / project /programme is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, the second stage, Scoping, involves a process to determine the extent and nature of the likely significant effects the plan / project / programme will have on the environment.
3. Having scoped the likely significant effects on the environment of the plan / project / programme, stage three is the writing of the Environmental Report, where these likely effects are described and evaluated in detail.
4. The final stage of the SEA process is the ongoing Monitoring of the effects of the plan / project / programme on the environment.

In accordance with the statutory requirements set out in the relevant Articles of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended) consultation was carried out with statutory environmental bodies. To ensure as broad a range of input as possible, additional consultation not statutorily required, was undertaken with other relevant bodies.

Statutory Environmental Authorities	SEA Screening	SEA Scoping	Non-Statutory Consultees	SEA Screening	SEA Scoping
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	✓	✓	Fáilte Ireland	✓	✓
Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Development Applications Unit)	✓	✓	Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience	✓	✓
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine	✓	✓	Birdwatch Ireland	✓	✓
Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity		✓	The Burren Centre	✓	✓
Minister for Social Protection		✓	Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark	✓	✓
Minister for Rural and Community Development	✓	✓	The Southern Regional Assembly	✓	
Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications (Geological Survey Ireland)	✓	✓			
Minister for Transport		✓			
Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	✓	✓			
Irish Water	✓	✓			
National Parks and Wildlife Service	✓	✓			
Transport Infrastructure Ireland	✓	✓			
Consulted – No Submission / No Observations Received	✓				
Consulted –Submission / Observations Received	✓				

Clare County Council, having had regard to the observations and submissions received from statutory environmental authorities and non-statutory consultees to the SEA Screening, issued a determination that an environmental assessment is required for the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 on 24th June 2020.



The submission, comments and recommendations received from the EPA included reference to relevant SEA resources and guidance documents. These will be referred to in the SEA of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040. The SEA will comply with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, where relevant. Key findings and recommendations of Appropriate Assessment will be incorporated into the SEA and the Strategy.



The submission and comments received from Fáilte Ireland included reference that an SEA must be carried out on the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040.



The submission, comments and recommendations received from the Department of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, included acknowledging that an SEA must be carried out of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040. It is acknowledged that the challenge is to deliver a world class visitor experience utilising best practice visitor management and environmental management principles to ensure the future of the natural assets is safeguarded and conserved as well as minimising any adverse effects on the quality of life for those who live in the area. To safeguard the future of the natural assets through the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040, adequate facilities on-site will be provided while securing a continued contribution to the wider economy to ensure a commercially sustainable tourism attraction into the future, while maintaining the Cliffs of Moher Experience market position. The Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 will be subject to AA and the likely impacts of the strategy on European sites (e.g. Cliffs of Moher SPA (Site code 004005) and Inagh River Estuary SAC (Site code 000036)) and Qualifying Interests and their Conservation Objectives, will be considered. Conservation conditions relating to the feeding / forage area for birds listed as an Annex I bird species on the Birds Directive will be acknowledged and mitigated against, including mechanisms to monitor local and regional changes and pressures, and the scope of ecological surveys and data collection that may be needed to understand these changes in terms of implications for the conservation objectives and integrity of the European sites concerned. Effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna will be outlined and in combination effects of other plans and projects will be acknowledged. Plan-level mitigation and scenarios where corrective measures or restoration are required will be addressed and reference to the EPA's Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment best practice guidance and SEA of Local Authority Land-Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources 2023, Version 1.19. is acknowledged. The Development Applications Unit's reference and requirements relating to archaeological protection is acknowledged.



The submission, comments and recommendations received from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Geological Survey Ireland), including reference to relevant resources and guidance documents. The Cliffs' geological and geomorphological characteristics and its relationship with surrounding geological features, including the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO-designated Geopark, is acknowledged.



The submission, comments and recommendations received from TII included acknowledging the relationship between the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 land uses and the national road(s) in the area from a Traffic and Transportation perspective and will be included in the SEA Environmental Report. The TII's reference to Design, Construction and Maintenance Standards, Treatment of Air Quality and Environmental Noise is acknowledged. The undertaking of Traffic and Transportation Assessments for key development areas, including Visual Impact Assessments to and from the existing and proposed national road network, will be acknowledged and best addressed at Detail Design/Construction Proposal stage.



# SEA CONSULTATION / SCREENING – KEY FINDING

## Developing the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy – Responding to the Feedback


The comments received in response to the SEA Screening consultations, as well as the feedback received from community consultations is at the heart of shaping the further development of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy vision, the key strategies and the Site Masterplan proposals.

## Extending the COM Site

One of the key outcomes of the assessment of the feedback received has been the need to extend the footprint of the study area and the focus area of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, in relation to the originally envisaged extent of the site.

The 'Cliffs of Moher Development Area' for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy has been amended to comprise:

- lands extending some 1 km to the south-west of the Cliffs of Moher Experience, encompassing the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk in the townland of Slievenageeragh
- lands extending to the north/north-east of the Cliffs of Moher Experience, encompassing the (Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk, Pollboy Lookout and ending some 800m north-east of Aillenasharragh point, in the townland of Luogh South.






**THE 'CLIFFS OF MOHER DEVELOPMENT AREA' HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO INCLUDE LANDS TO THE SOUTH WEST AND NORTH / NORTH EAST OF THE CLIFFS OF MOHER EXPERIENCE, ENCOMPASSING STRETCHES OF CLIFFS OF MOHER COASTAL WALK**



## Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040

### Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 Development Area

-  Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 Development Area
-  Cliffs of Moher Experience Site
-  Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk
-  Existing Buildings



Source: Esri ArcGIS; reproduced and annotated by  
The Planning Partnership



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# SEA CONSULTATION / CCC RESPONSES TO SCOPING SUBMISSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

Clare County Council has noted and acknowledged the observations and submissions received from statutory environmental authorities and non-statutory consultees to the SEA Scoping. Where relevant responses have been incorporated within the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy and will be contained as Mitigation within SEA Documentation.



The submission, comments and recommendations received from the EPA acknowledged the notice of SEA Scoping of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 issued in terms of Article 11(1) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended). Observations were submitted by email on 3rd November 2023, covering the following:

1. Recommendations regarding the content of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040.
2. The scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the SEA Environmental Report.
3. Appropriate Assessment.
4. Links to recommended Guidelines and resource documents.



Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), the national earth sciences agency (a division of the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment), submitted observations in a letter dated 25th October 2023. These covered the following:

1. Because the Cliffs of Moher is possibly the most visited geological site in Ireland, after the Giant's Causeway in Antrim and that, aside from the spectacular nature of the cliffs, the average visitor has no concept of the geological or geomorphological interest of the cliffs, any upgrade to the Visitor Centre and or/infrastructure at the Cliffs should include accessible explanations of the geology of the area.
2. Highlights that the County Geological Site (CGS) Doolin to Hags Head (Cliffs of Moher), Co. Clare (GR 103521, 192478) as adopted under the National Heritage Plan and included in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, is located within the 'Cliffs of Moher Development Area' and broader 'Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Hinterland Area'. It recommends that this CGS should be assessed as a constraint to account for potential impacts on the integrity of the site resulting from proposals in the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy and/or the incorporated Site Masterplan.
3. Data sources, information and guidelines which may be of assistance.



The Development Applications Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage coordinated heritage-related observations and associated recommendations which were submitted by letter dated 17th November 2023. These covered the following:

1. Welcoming the inclusion in the SEA Scoping Consultation Report of specific reference to Cultural Heritage, including the archaeological and architectural heritage of the Cliffs of Moher and environs.
2. Compliance with all archaeological statutory protections and frameworks and consideration of policies and objectives of core national policy documents.
3. Notes that the Environmental Report is required to contain information on the environmental characteristics of the areas likely to be affected
4. significantly by the plan and provides recommendations on additional items to be added to Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna sections of potential environmental effects) in the Scoping Consultation Report.
5. Recommendations on the SEA Monitoring Programme.
6. Nature conservation observations in relation to Appropriate Assessment.



The submission and comments received from Fáilte Ireland, by email on 17th November 2023, welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback on the SEA Scoping Consultation Report.

Fáilte Ireland affirmed that it fully supports the development of a sustainable strategy for the Cliffs of Moher and looks forward to engaging throughout the development process.



## Key Observations Relating to the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040

Several observations highlight the need for the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 to provide clarity and substance in its provisions and implementation proposals so that the SEA can best determine the correct scope and level of detail of the environmental assessment.

Emphasis is placed on the need for the Strategy to:

- Ensure that the requirements of relevant environmental legislation are reflected, as relevant and appropriate, in any plans/projects that may arise in implementing the Strategy
- Be aligned with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as relevant national, sectoral and local climate action plans
- Be specific and clear about different levels of proposals and related implementation pathways to enable the SEA to differentiate between impacts related to broad/strategic or programme-level actions/targets and project-level implementation that would be subject to a more detailed level of environmental assessment



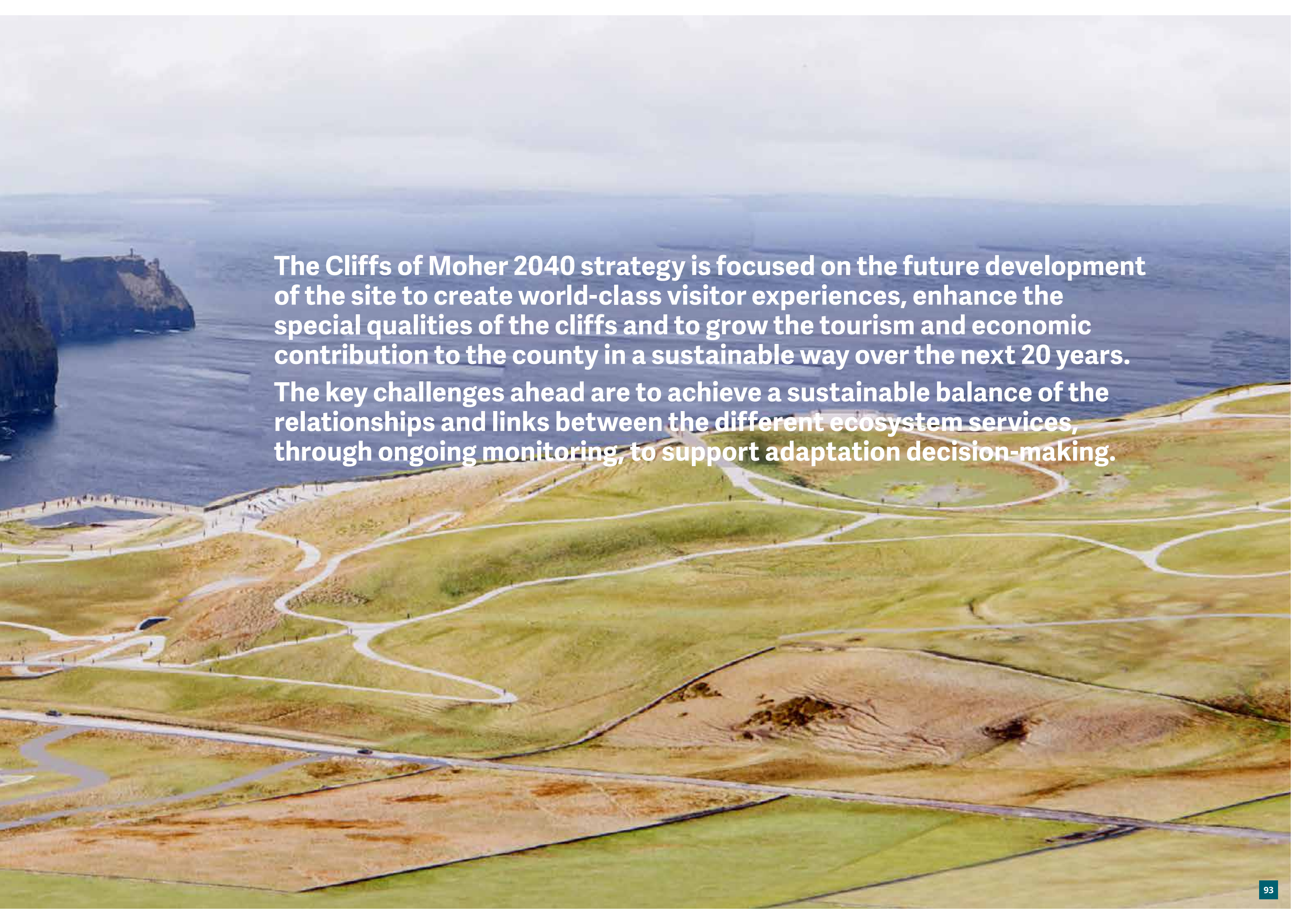
**IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR THE CLIFFS OF MOHER STRATEGY 2040 TO BE DRAFTED IN A WAY THAT THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IS ABLE TO ADOPT A CLEAR APPROACH TO THE SCOPE AND LEVEL OF DETAIL OF THE INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT.**





# SECTION 4: THE STRATEGY



An aerial photograph of the Cliffs of Moher coastline. The image shows a rugged cliff face on the left, meeting the ocean. A network of winding paths and roads cuts through a grassy, hilly landscape in the foreground and middle ground. The sky is overcast and grey. A text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**The Cliffs of Moher 2040 strategy is focused on the future development of the site to create world-class visitor experiences, enhance the special qualities of the cliffs and to grow the tourism and economic contribution to the county in a sustainable way over the next 20 years. The key challenges ahead are to achieve a sustainable balance of the relationships and links between the different ecosystem services, through ongoing monitoring, to support adaptation decision-making.**



# THE STRATEGY / ARRIVING AT THE SITE TO A TRANSFORMED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Enhanced welcome and support facilities will be developed at the Cliffs of Moher site, creating a high-quality sense of arrival for all visitors.

These facilities will play a key role in orientating visitors in the rewilded landscape and the key experiences on offer at the site to allow them to begin their journey to the Cliffs with confidence, anticipation and inspiration. In addition to welcoming visitors, provision will include a range of support functions for visitors (toilets, catering, retail etc.) and operational management requirements (ticketing, offices, welfare etc.)

## ! KEY STRATEGIC DECISION

The strategic proposal to develop enhanced welcome support facilities at the Cliffs of Moher will deliver a sustainable access solution for managing visitor arrival to the site and facilitate an improved, more enjoyable visit. An alternative option of locating welcome and support facilities as part of a visitor centre at a remote location (e.g. at a nearby town) was evaluated and discounted. This approach would result in less built infrastructure at the Cliffs of Moher site and bring significant direct economic benefits to the remote location. However, the site criteria for a single arrival point are extremely demanding, especially to successfully manage peak season traffic, and potential site options are very limited. A year-round, comprehensive shuttle system would also need to be funded and operated to take all visitors arriving in cars to and from the Cliffs. Furthermore, the Cliffs are often subject to extreme changes in weather conditions, even in summer periods, and sudden heavy rain and strong winds mean visitors need on-site shelter and the shuttle system would be under significant pressure from high numbers of visitors waiting to return to the remote location. These disadvantages of a remote visitor centre increase with the distance it is away from the Cliffs.

The visitor experience at the Cliffs of Moher will be greatly improved, enhancing its premier market position while conserving and facilitating a recovery of its beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats.

Visitors will have a 'wilder' back-to-nature encounter with the landscape, enhanced through new thrilling cliff views, layered interpretation and a high-quality arrival. Creating a larger Cliffs of Moher site is a key part in the recovery of the natural habitats and delivering this step change in the quality of experience for visitors, providing more space for them to enjoy and immerse themselves in the wild atmosphere of the cliffs.



## VISITOR EXPERIENCE

CONFIDENT  
DOWN TO EARTH  
INCLUSIVE  
WELCOMING  
WARM  
VIBRANT  
INSPIRING  
ALIVE  
POSITIVE  
BEAUTIFUL



### CREATING A WILDER AND MORE EXTENSIVE LANDSCAPE

A significantly larger, appropriately managed, landscape with a sensitive network of paths and routes will allow visitors to disperse more widely and enjoy an authentic sense of the cliff's dramatic wildness, while reducing damage and erosion of the historic landscape.

New environmental approach will create a truly wild experience with a naturally variable mosaic of grassland, heathland and scrub habitats, bringing enormous biodiversity benefits.

### PRO-ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF ARRIVALS

Arrivals, welcome and support facilities will be relocated and consolidated to the east of the R478, allowing the cliff side of the road to be returned to nature.

Greater pro-active management and pre-booking of all visitors, limiting arrivals to the site at peak times



# THE STRATEGY / PROACTIVE CAPACITY MANAGEMENT

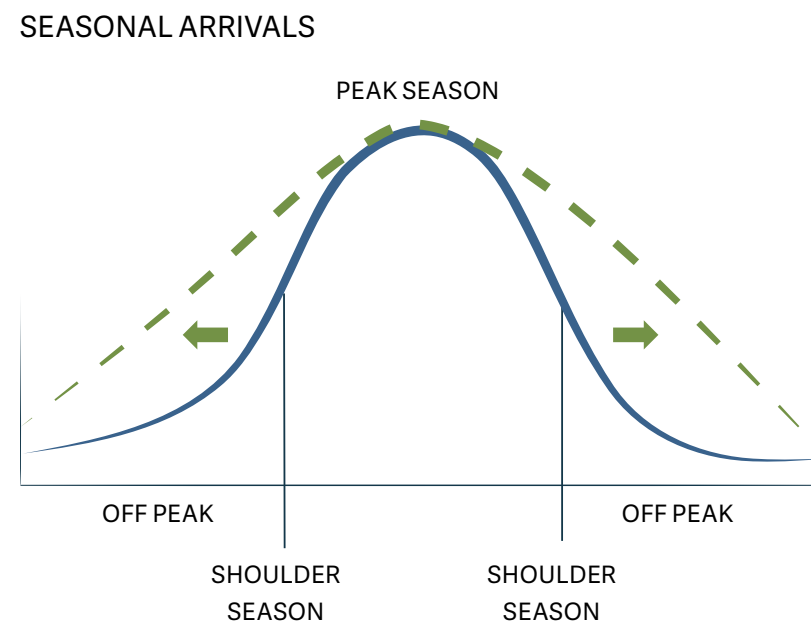
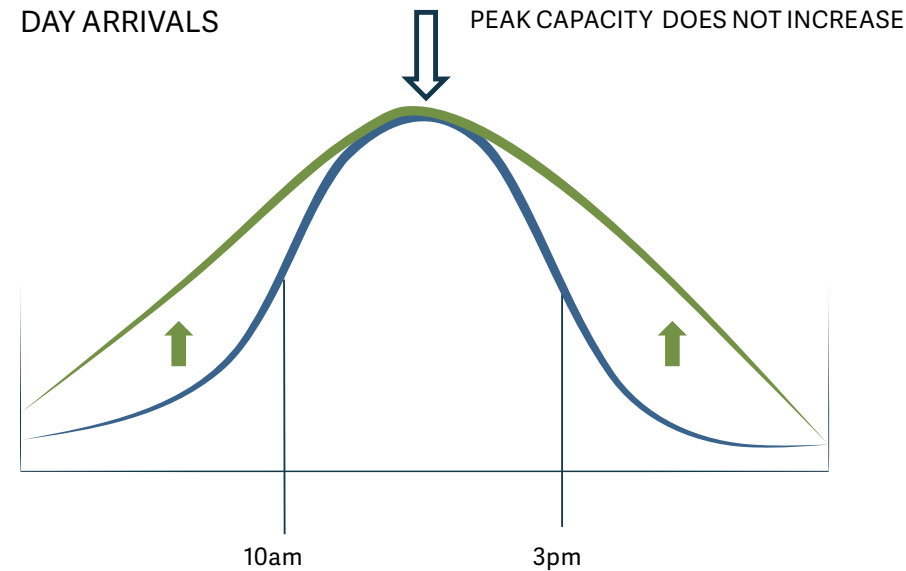
To address the core issue of high visitor numbers at peak times, it is considered that arrivals at peak periods should be capped at the 2019 peak levels.

Any increase in visitors should be limited to quieter times during peak periods, and during the shoulder and low seasons. The strategy proposes to limit the peak number of visitors, on any one day, to the previous peak level of c.10,500 visitors and achieve better distribution throughout the day and the year, thereby enhancing the visitor experience and improving management of access to the Cliffs of Moher.

This visitor management strategy is framed within the international VICE model for sustainable tourism development, which focuses on the interaction and balance between:

- Visitors
- The Industry that provides services to them
- The Community and Culture that hosts them
- Their collective impact on, and response to, the Environment where it all takes place

It also reflects the Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021-2023 set out by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group, established under the aegis of the Tourism Leadership Group and chaired by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and including senior representatives of the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC), Fáilte Ireland, and Tourism Ireland.



## The Key Strategic Objectives are:

### 1 Promoting Earlier and Later Arrivals Throughout the Day

An improved visitor experience aims to spread visitor arrivals earlier and later in the day and encourage audiences, especially Fully Independent Travellers, to explore the wider area. Currently the peak days of the year at the Cliffs of Moher attract c.10,500 visitors. It is proposed visitor numbers at any time will be capped at this level and any increase in visitor numbers will take place outside of the peak times.

### 2 Flattening the Season Peak Curve

Enhanced facilities and tourist packages at the Cliffs of Moher, developed in partnership with local businesses, will increase visits during the off-peak and shoulder seasons to reduce seasonality and provide greater all year-round viability. The proposals will look to increase the dwell time of visitors at the Cliffs of Moher and facilitate exploration of the wider area.

Extending Fully Independent Traveller (FIT) visits

FITs will experience an increase from less than two hours to a stay of approximately three hours on site, plus additional time on the shuttle experience. An average stay of 3.5 to four hours will give them time to visit somewhere else locally, while limiting the potential to travel out of the area or county. More FITs will also be encouraged to visit at earlier and later times of the day.

This approach will generate opportunities for additional premium experiences, such as guided tours to O’Brien’s Tower, while also encouraging the development of overnight packages with local accommodation.

The strategy will work towards a change in the visitor mix to help facilitate greater opportunities for realising economic benefits for the local area. Reprofileing the visitor mix for the Cliffs of Moher reflects a sustainable scenario that balances the strategic and local issues whilst delivering a robust operational business.

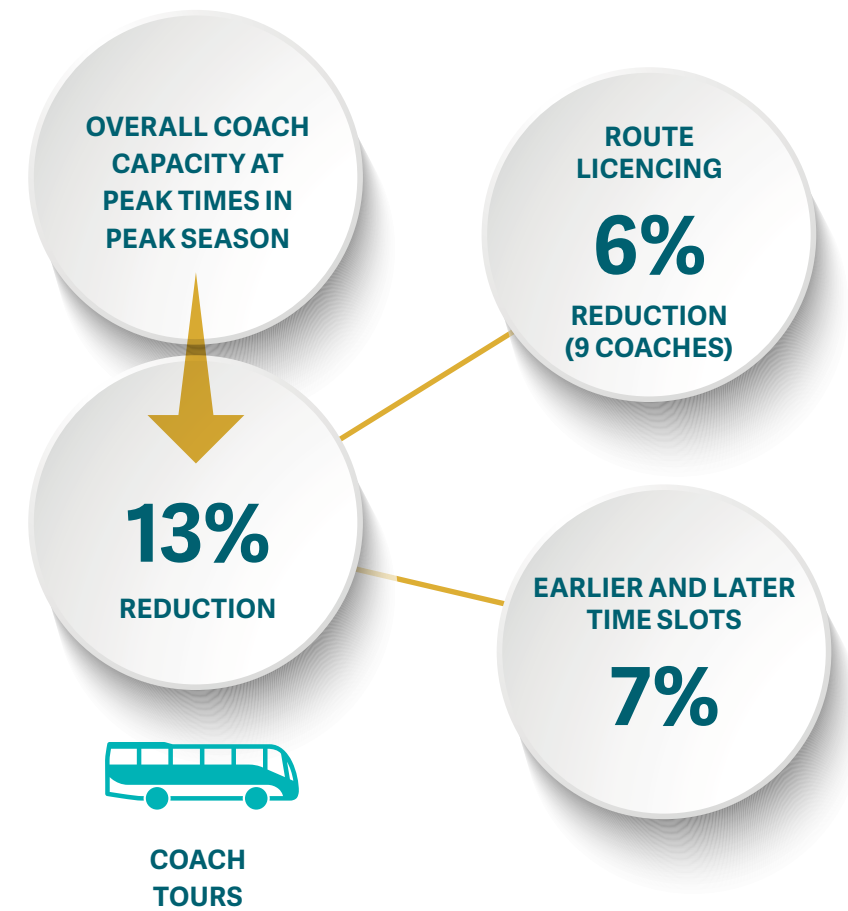


Managing and Re-distributing Coach Arrival Times

It is anticipated there will be some reduction in coach tour visitor numbers, with a consequent increase in FITs. Any increase in visitor numbers will result in them arriving outside of peak times, in the early morning and late evening.

The average dwell time of coach visitors will increase from less than two hours to two hours or more. A coordinated approach with local businesses will seek to ensure additional stops in the Clare area as part of route licensing.

COME will continue its policy of not approving any new route licences. This has resulted in a significant reduction of day trip coaches on the access routes to the Cliffs.









## Visitor Management Case Study: Machu Picchu, Peru

Tourism in Peru has increased at a rate of 25% over the past five years, faster than any other country in South America. Visitor numbers to this iconic World Heritage Site has grown from the low 100,000s in the 1980s, to a peak of nearly 1.5 million tourists in 2018. Cultural tourism accounts for approximately 9.8% of Peru's GDP. However, new measures to curb tourism were implemented by the Peruvian Ministry of Culture in 2011, with UNESCO recommending that the park limit its visitors to 2,500 a day.

### The following measures were also put in place:

- Visitors are only allowed to enter during one of two time slots, between 6am and noon or between noon and 5.30pm. Visitors have to be accompanied by an accredited guide, who must follow pre-designated paths.
- Access to the Inca Trail, a four-day trek leading hikers to Machu Picchu, is limited to 500 permits a day, 300 of which go to porters and guides.
- Group sizes may not exceed 15 visitors.
- The trail is closed one month each year for maintenance.
- Only licensed tour operators are permitted to sell Inca Trail packages and these must be booked three to six months in advance.
- The nearby town of Aguas Calientes now receives 10% of ticket receipts from Machu Picchu to improve the infrastructure, including sewage and waste treatment.





# THE STRATEGY / SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT ACCESS

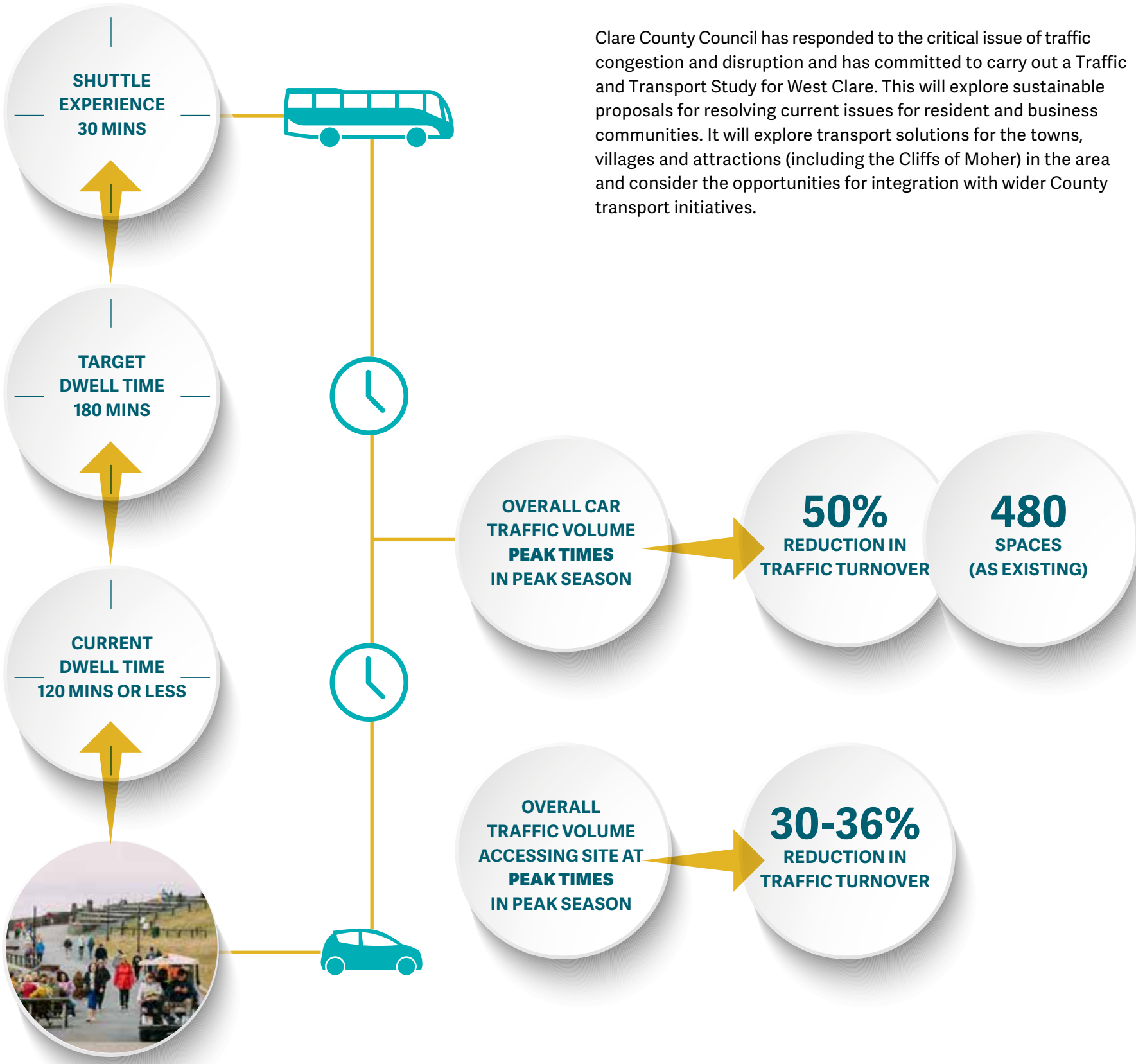
Improving access to the Cliffs of Moher will require a more strategic and proactive approach to traffic management at the site and across the wider hinterland.

The focus of the future access strategy is encouraging and facilitating sustainable transport provision for tourists and locals to create safer, cleaner and more efficient visits to the site and wider destination.

The expanded facilities at the Cliffs of Moher and the increased dwell time for Fully Independent Travellers (FITs) will result in a reduction in the turnover of car parking spaces and requirement for the implementation of park and ride hub(s) and shuttle bus services at peak times.

**! KEY STRATEGIC DECISION**

The strategic proposal to establish park and ride and shuttle bus service, for FITs during peak periods, was made to provide a more sustainable access system and a better experience for visitors to the Cliffs. It will also address the additional car parking demand that will result from the extended dwell time of visitors on-site. The alternative option of continuing to allow all car visitors to park at the Cliffs would require significantly increased car parking areas to accommodate the same number of visitors. This would compound the current issues of congestion and disruption on local roads during the peak season. New park and ride facilities will relieve these pressures as well as extend the benefits of tourism by encouraging visitors to stay and explore local towns.



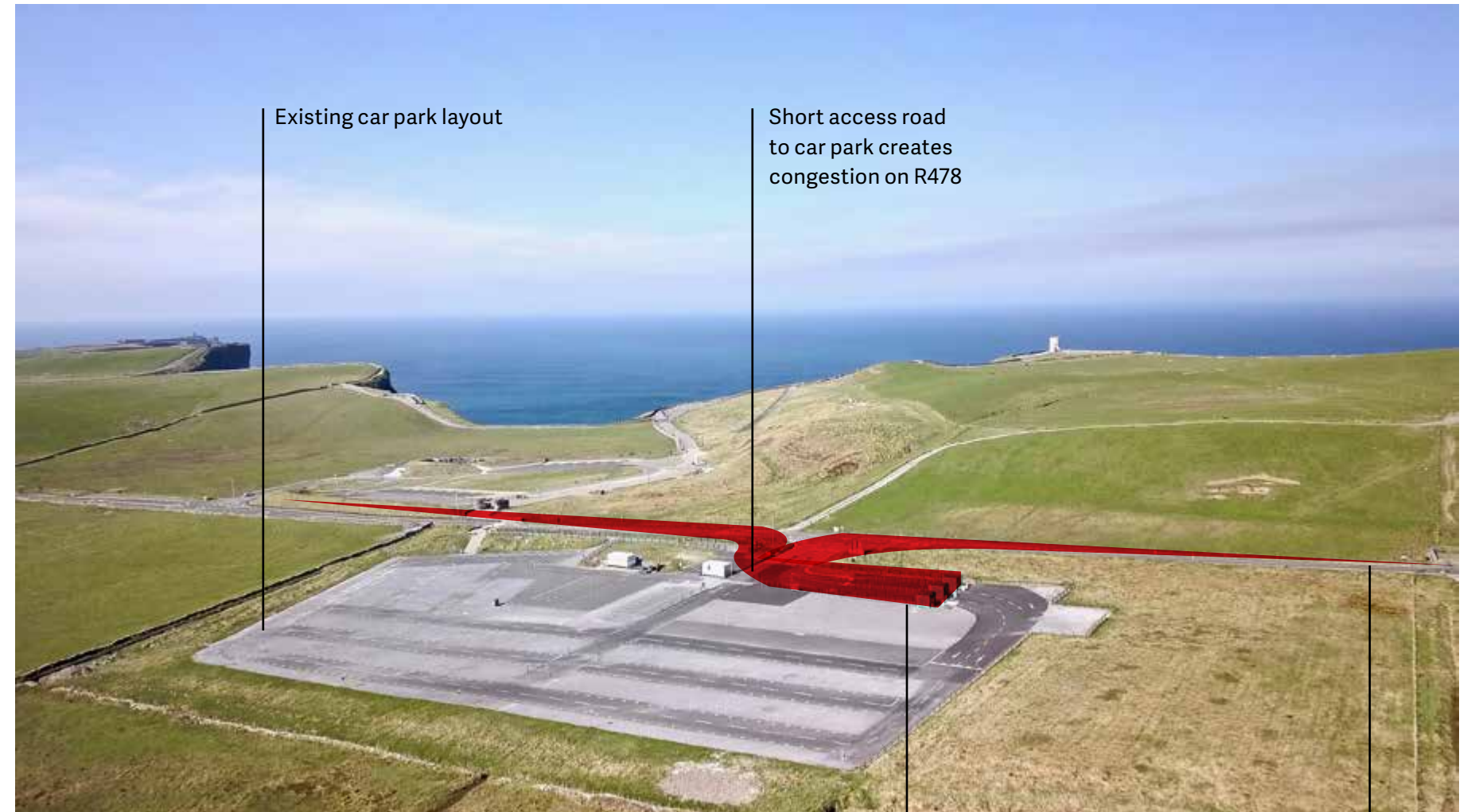
## FITs Car Parking and Traffic Management

Key elements of future transport and access focus on reducing the number of car-borne FITs to the Cliffs of Moher site. This will deliver visitors in a more sustainable way and also significantly reduce the issues of traffic congestion and disruption along the approach routes and on the R478 road close to the site. The aim to is reduce visitors arriving at the site by car by 50% during peak times.

The proposed improvement in the visitor experience, attractions and amenities at the cliffs is projected to increase the current average dwell time on the busiest days from 1.5 hours to three hours. This will result in car parking space turnover at the cliffs reducing by up to 50%. Given this increased average dwell time, proposed car parking provision of around 480 car parking spaces will be required at the Cliffs of Moher site, the same level as the current onsite car parking provision.

It is proposed that all car arrivals during the peak season will require pre-booking, similar to the current situation for coaches, which will eliminate the occurrence of visitors arriving at the Cliffs of Moher site speculatively. This will further reduce the risk of people, many who will have potentially travelled a long distance, arriving when the car park is full and queuing on the main R478 road adjacent to the site.

The proposed car access arrangements will include a longer access avenue along with an automatic entrance barrier, which will provide a more efficient arrival system and will speed up the entry process. Combined with the reduced car traffic volumes accessing the site, this will significantly reduce any risk of queuing and delays occurring on the main road.



Ticket barriers too close to R478 create congestion on road. Replace entrance ticket booths with automated barriers.

Three ticket booths with space for seven cars to queue from the R478 creates congestion at peak times. Replace with automated barriers further from road.

R478



# THE STRATEGY / SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT ACCESS

## Park and Ride Hub

A new park and ride hub will provide a key element of the integrated, sustainable transport system for access to the Cliffs of Moher and beyond. Fully Independent Travellers (FITs) will be directed to the hub and then transferred to the Cliffs of Moher site via hydrogen powered shuttle buses.

Any shuttle system and service for the Cliffs of Moher should be developed within the context of a wider, integrated transport strategy for the county to deliver optimum benefits. This will involve coordination with a wide range of organisations.

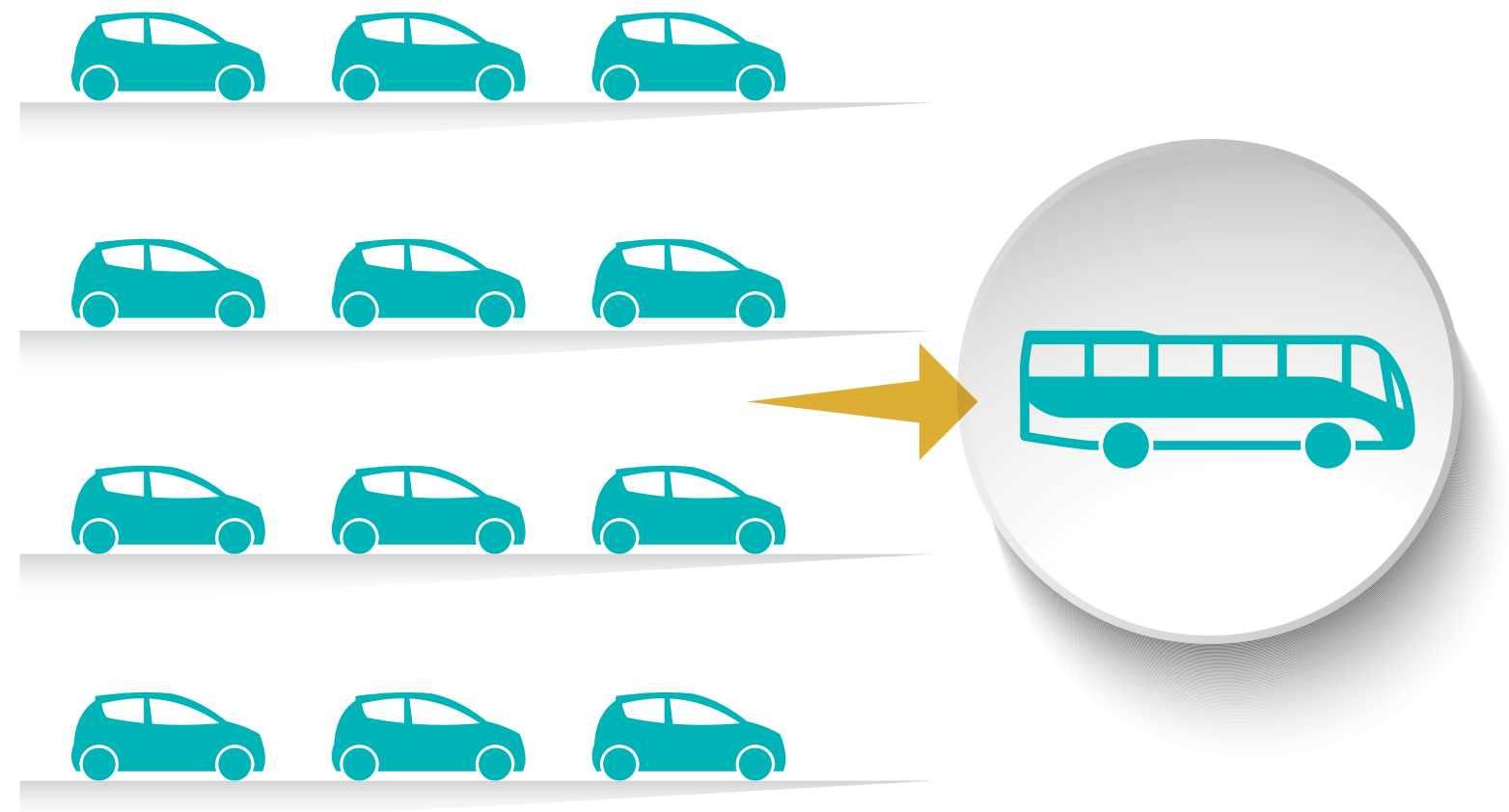
Considerations for the shuttle system will include:

- 'Express Shuttles' providing a direct service, some with limited stops at key locations en-route to the Cliffs of Moher
- 'Explorer Shuttles' offering more leisurely routes across the Burren and the wider area before reaching the Cliffs of Moher. These can provide beneficial transport service links, integrated with other public transport services, to local residents
- The potential for a longer circular hop-on / hop-off service, to allow visitors to see and do more things as part of their visit to the Cliffs of Moher

It is envisaged that the park and ride hub will operate during the peak and shoulder seasons and special event periods, to ease the traffic congestion and disruption to local residents and provide an enhanced experience for visitors. Pre-booking will be available to ensure that the frequency of vehicle pick-ups and drop-offs align with overall visitor demand.

The reduction in car traffic accessing the Cliffs of Moher will be somewhat offset by the shuttle buses transferring people to and from the proposed park and ride hubs, however, one mid-sized shuttle bus with 30 passengers would replace 12 cars on the road.

In addition to car parking, the hubs may also provide some remote parking for coaches. This would also help to relieve pressure on the access road to the Cliffs of Moher and coach parking requirements at the site itself.



One mid-sized shuttle bus with 30 passengers would replace 12 cars on the road

## Hub Locations

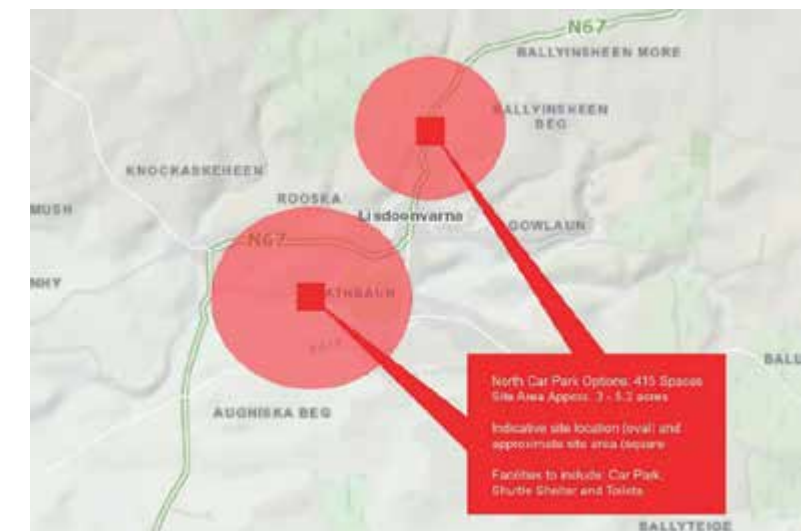
The hub will be strategically located to enhance access and tourism across the wider area, on the main feeder routes to the Cliffs of Moher from both the north and south approaches. Ideally the hub will be situated on the edge of a local town to enhance tourism, employment and business connections and encourage visitors to spend more time and money in the wider area.

### Potential Remote Car Park Location North – Lisdoonvarna

The potential Lisdoonvarna park and ride site requires 285 parking spaces based on existing visitor numbers, potentially increasing to up to 415 spaces by 2040 depending on the increase in visitor numbers.

A park and ride site could be located on the north and west side of the town to intercept traffic travelling southbound on the N67, which avoids traffic passing through the town centre. Alternatively, subject to an assessment of capacity on the existing roads through the town, a site could be located on the south side of the town off the N67 and before the R478 that leads to the cliffs.

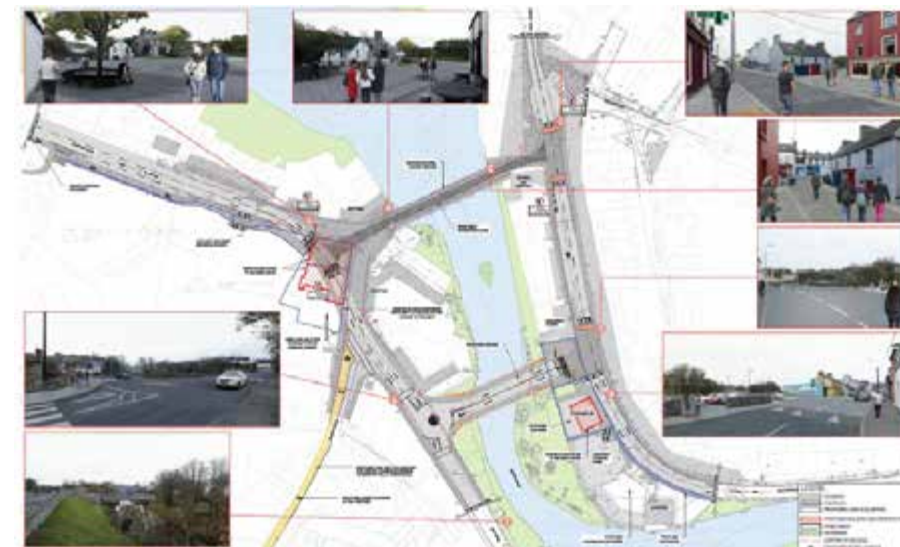
Following Expressions of Interest a Masterplan is now being prepared for a Park and Ride Hub in Lisdoonvarna.



### Potential Remote Car Park Locations South – Ennistymon

The potential Ennistymon park and ride site requires 250 parking spaces based on existing visitor numbers, potentially increasing to up to 450 spaces by 2040 depending on the increase in visitor numbers.

A park and ride site would ideally be located on the east side of the town, to intercept traffic travelling southbound on the N85, which avoids traffic passing through the town centre.





# THE STRATEGY / SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT ACCESS

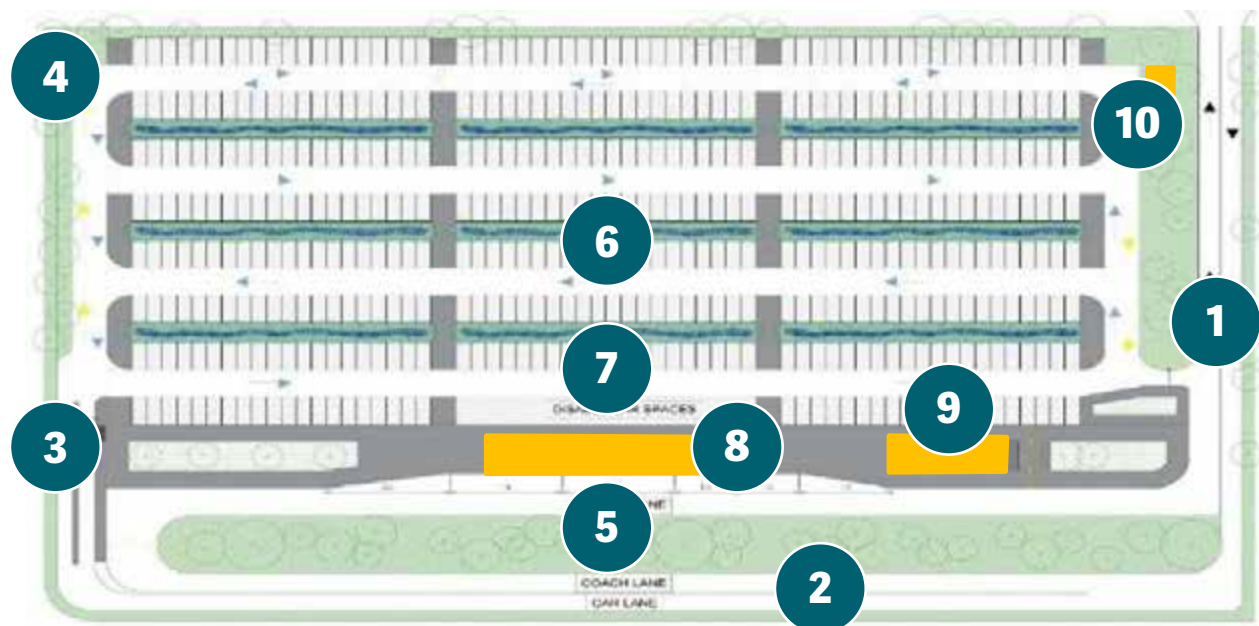
## Hub Facilities

The range of facilities envisaged at the park and ride hubs include:

1. Extensive feeder road into site
2. Designated car/coach route and shuttle bus route into site
3. Automated entrance barrier
4. Landscaped with hedgerow screening and native tree planting
5. Shuttle bus drop off and pick up area
6. Parking for up to 450 cars
7. Disabled parking adjacent to terminal
8. Sheltered waiting areas
9. Building with toilets and staff area
10. Services that are screened and landscaped

Key features of the shuttle vehicles and services include:

- Shuttles powered by sustainable energy source running between parking hub(s) and cliffs
- Vehicle sizes to be limited to ensure accessibility on local road networks, possibly large minibus style (30-seaters)
- Interpretive opportunities to create a more engaging and enhanced visitor journey to the cliffs
- Frequency of vehicles to be flexible to suit peak and low season times
- Improved pick-up locations, shelters, information points and branded signage
- Free or reduced travel costs available to those employed at the Cliffs of Moher





## Shuttle Transport Case Study: Yosemite National Park, USA

In 1980, a masterplan for the national park proposed to ban private vehicles from parts of the valley to ease congestion. The park put in place a free, 8.5-mile shuttle system designed to transport 47 seated and 22 standing passengers. Two types of shuttle services are offered, one serving all stops along the Yosemite Valley and one limited to the eastern Yosemite Valley area.

In addition, the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) runs services from nearby counties into the park. It is funded mostly by the counties it serves and by the park, which provides around 36% of the operating budget. Revenue from passengers using Amtrak and Greyhound train links accounts for 18% of the budget. Local hotels and RV parks are on the stops for this service and therefore help promote the use of the public transport to the park. There is also now a direct shuttle from Fresno Airport, with the service picking up almost 700 people in the summer of 2016.







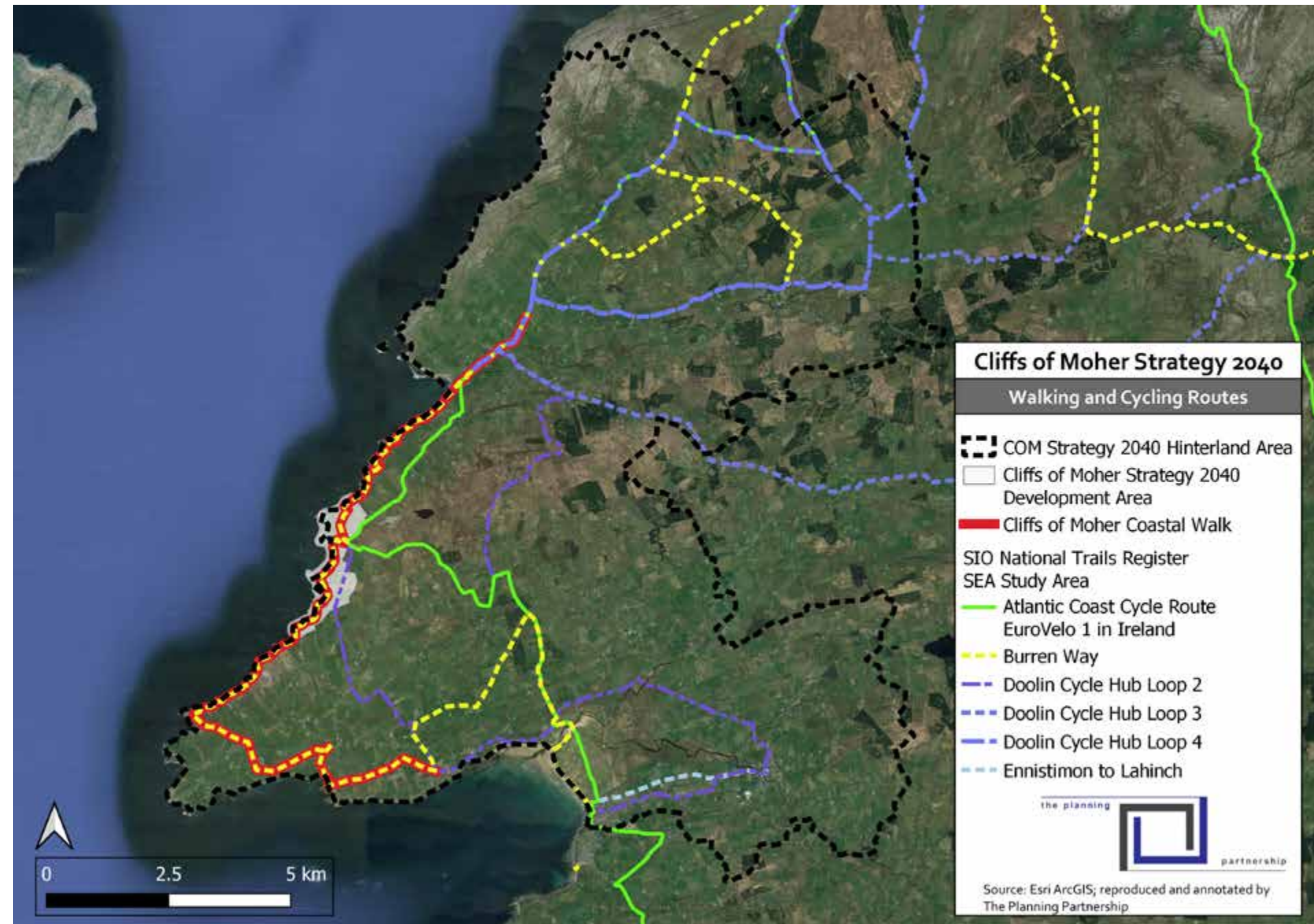


## Enhancing Links to Cliffs of Moher and the Wider Region

Access concerns, issues and opportunities are at the core of the strategy. A key principle is enhancing the links to the Cliffs of Moher and the wider area through an expanded network of sustainable and integrated access opportunities.

In addition to a greater pro-active traffic management, including a park and ride shuttle system, there will be a focus on facilitating and improving the connections with strategic transport routes and services. Alongside this will be an increasing shift to encouraging more use of greenway access links across the wider region, resulting in the dispersal of visitors across the area.

These assets provide valuable community amenities and can also deliver in terms of attracting visitors, increasing visitor revenue and transforming the economic and social future of the towns, villages and rural areas around the region.





## THE STRATEGY / SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT ACCESS

## Enhanced Network of Green Infrastructure

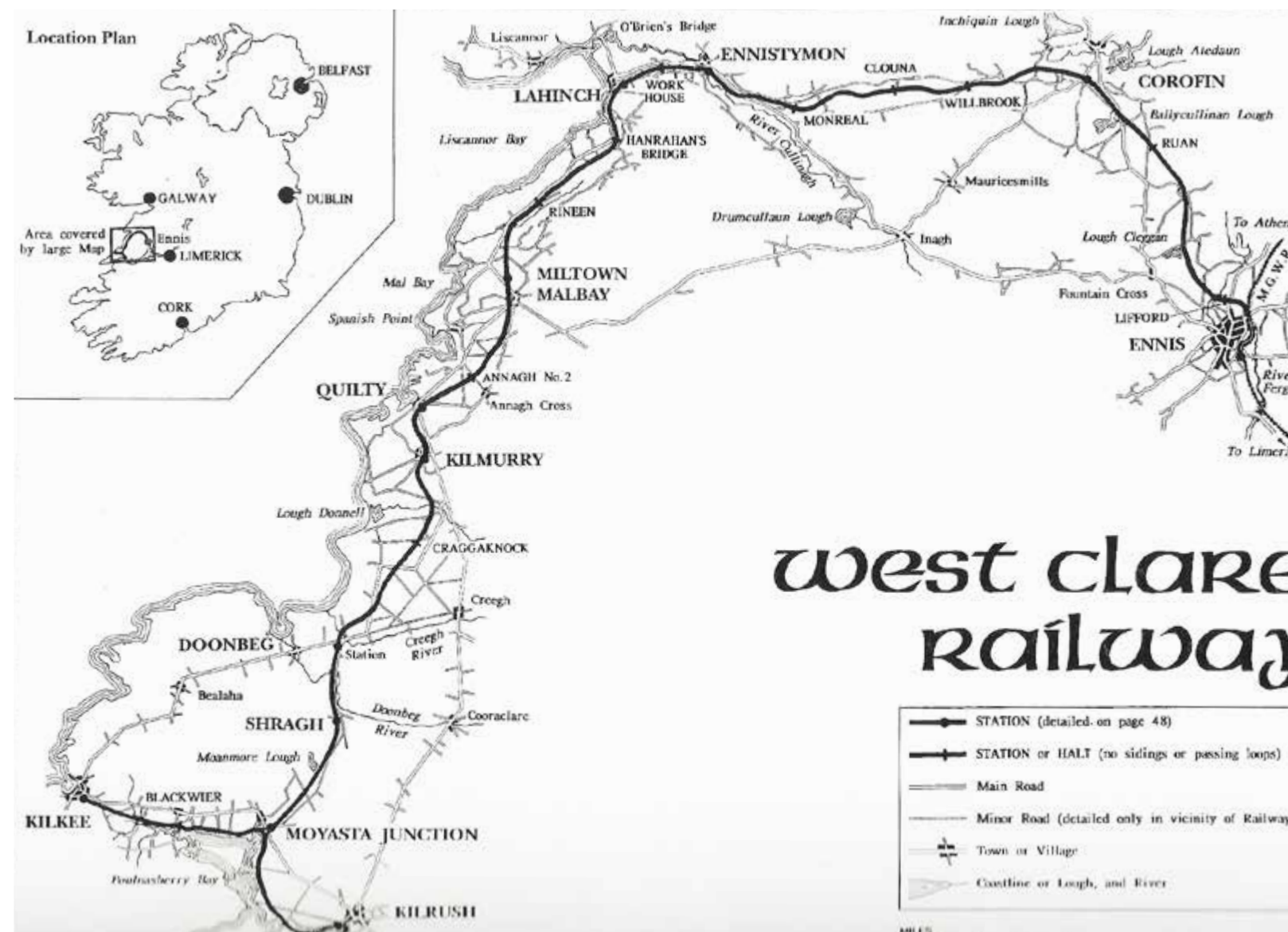
The 2040 Cliffs of Moher Strategy provides a catalyst to facilitate an enhanced network of integrated green infrastructure as a tourism product with significant potential to attract overseas visitors and deliver economic and health benefits for local communities. Clare County Council can play a leading role in facilitating a strategic framework of sustainable access routes for cycling and walking throughout the West Clare area, with improved links to the county and beyond. This will enable greater exploration of local heritage assets and create increased demand for tourism-related facilities and services that will boost the local economies in surrounding towns and villages.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has allocated funds to Ireland's local authorities with a view to spending €289 million on 1,200 active travel projects, contributing to the development of almost 1,000 km of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure across the country by 2025. Active travel investment grants for County Clare total £4.5m, comprising 28 projects. The local authority has also been allocated €2.13m in funding as part of the Transport Infrastructure Ireland grant allocations for greenways in the county.

A key focus of the Clare investment is the West Clare Railway Greenway Project, which will follow the 85km route of the old West Clare railway line. Clare County Council is currently progressing public consultation on the development of two sections of this route: Section 1 from Kilrush to Kilkee and Section 2 from Ennis, via Corofin to Ennistymon.

The project will enable communities from Ennis to Kilkee and Kilrush to be connected whilst also enhancing the county's tourism offer, educational amenities and recreational facilities. The development has the potential to create local employment and enterprise opportunities, particularly in the hospitality and leisure industries, while also providing sustainable infrastructure to promote and encourage the uptake of active travel modes.

Further sections of the West Clare Railway Greenway project will run from Ennistymon to Miltown Malbay and from Miltown Malbay to Moyasta (Section 3).



### Historical Alignment of West Clare Rail Line



## Greenways Case Study: The Waterford Greenway, South East Ireland

The Waterford Greenway is a spectacular 46 km off-road cycling and walking coastal trail developed by Waterford City and County Council. The trail runs along a disused railway line from Ireland's oldest city, Waterford, to the stunning harbour town of Dungarvan. It has become an important national tourism asset, creating employment and benefiting local communities and the economy in a rural area that was in decline.

Since its opening in 2017, the project has been a stunning success with almost 250,000 walking or cycling Waterford Greenway in its first year. It has resulted in a significant boost for tourism; 68% of users said they travelled to Waterford mainly to use the greenway. Local people see the greenway as an excellent opportunity to pursue enterprises not previously considered viable, including tourism and recreation-related spending on items such as bicycle hire, food and accommodation.

The subsequent development of Green Routes has integrated green areas and open spaces to provide pedestrian and cycle greenways that link communities and also create strategic 'green wedges' to promote biodiversity.

Developed at the cost of €15m, the Waterford Greenway has shown its impact across the county, benefitting the local economy in the southeast of Ireland. More than 90 new jobs were created and a range of businesses have benefited: 80% of visitors came from outside the county, stayed in paid accommodation and spent money on leisure. The project was awarded the Grand Prix and Best Tourism Initiative at the All-Ireland Community and Council Awards 2018 and a Chambers Ireland Excellence Award in 2017. In 2019 it was recognised as the second-best greenway in Europe at the 10th European Greenway Awards.

The success of the Waterford Greenway benefitted from on-going investment. Works are currently nearing completion of a €2.6m extension linking the Bilberry entrance with the historic Viking Triangle, bringing together two of Waterford's most popular tourist attractions. The introduction of the 2.1km stretch is also expected to help provide future greenway links to New Ross as well as Rosslare to the east and Tramore to the west.











## Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk

Walking within the region will be promoted through an improved Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk and enhanced connectivity to other waymarked routes, including the Burren Way. Improved signage and information will be developed at the access points to the Coastal Walk between Doolin, the Cliffs of Moher, Liscannor and Lahinch. Links will also be developed with transport services, including the proposed Cliffs of Moher park and ride shuttles, to provide greater opportunities and flexibility for visitors wishing to explore the wider area on foot. The proposed looped bus service will enable visitors to hop on and off the bus at multiple locations, thereby facilitating people seeking to walk the length of the Coastal Walk before returning to their starting point by bus.

Clare County Council has carried out maintenance and upgrading of 1 km either side of the Cliffs of Moher visitor centre. Clare County Council, Clare Local Development Company, Fáilte Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development have commissioned the preparation of a new 'Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk'. This will consider sustainable transport options including appropriate trailhead / car parking facilities and ancillary trail infrastructure. The plan will also identify technology solutions to support visitor management, wayfinding and interpretation. The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk is located within the Cliffs of Moher Special Protection Area and consideration for the protection of sensitive habitats must also be incorporated.



# THE STRATEGY / A WILDER AND EXPANDED LANDSCAPE

The core concept for the future development of the Cliffs of Moher is to create a wilder, back to nature experience with a high-quality arrival to commence the visitor journey.

A key attraction of the Cliffs of Moher is the wild experience many visitors seek. As such, the proposals will seek to recover and rewild the degraded and agricultural landscapes, adopting a regenerative landscape approach as a driving principle.

This will highlight the site's beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats and provide a more expanded landscape to explore with enhanced viewing points. Delivering this step change in the quality of the experience will require more space for visitors to be able to disperse widely and enjoy a true sense of walking in the wild at the edge of the world.

The visitor journey to the cliff-edge will be carefully staged through a series of landscape and architectural interventions. Rather than just a photo-stop, the core experience for every visitor will be a paced emotional journey that maximises the exhilaration of the final cliff view.

## Conceptual Boundary

In addition to a significant expansion of the landholding for the Cliffs of Moher, a dramatic change in the nature of the environment is also required. At the heart of the concept is not only an opportunity to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the location, but also a strategy to dramatically increase the biodiversity value of the Cliffs of Moher.

## ! KEY STRATEGIC DECISION

An emphasis has been placed on relocating and consolidating the arrivals, welcome and support facilities to the east of the main R478 access road. This will create a conceptual boundary between the road and the cliff side environment, allowing each location to have a primary purpose and character. A new habitat management approach will transform the uniform sward of grasses in a regular field system to a naturally variable mosaic of grassland and scrub habitats, with enormous benefits to the site's biodiversity.

An earlier option to create new coach and shuttle bus drop off points in screened areas to the west of the R478 was discounted on the basis that it did not achieve the rationale to create a wilder and more expansive cliff landscape. It would also mean there would not be a single arrival point and experience for all visitors.

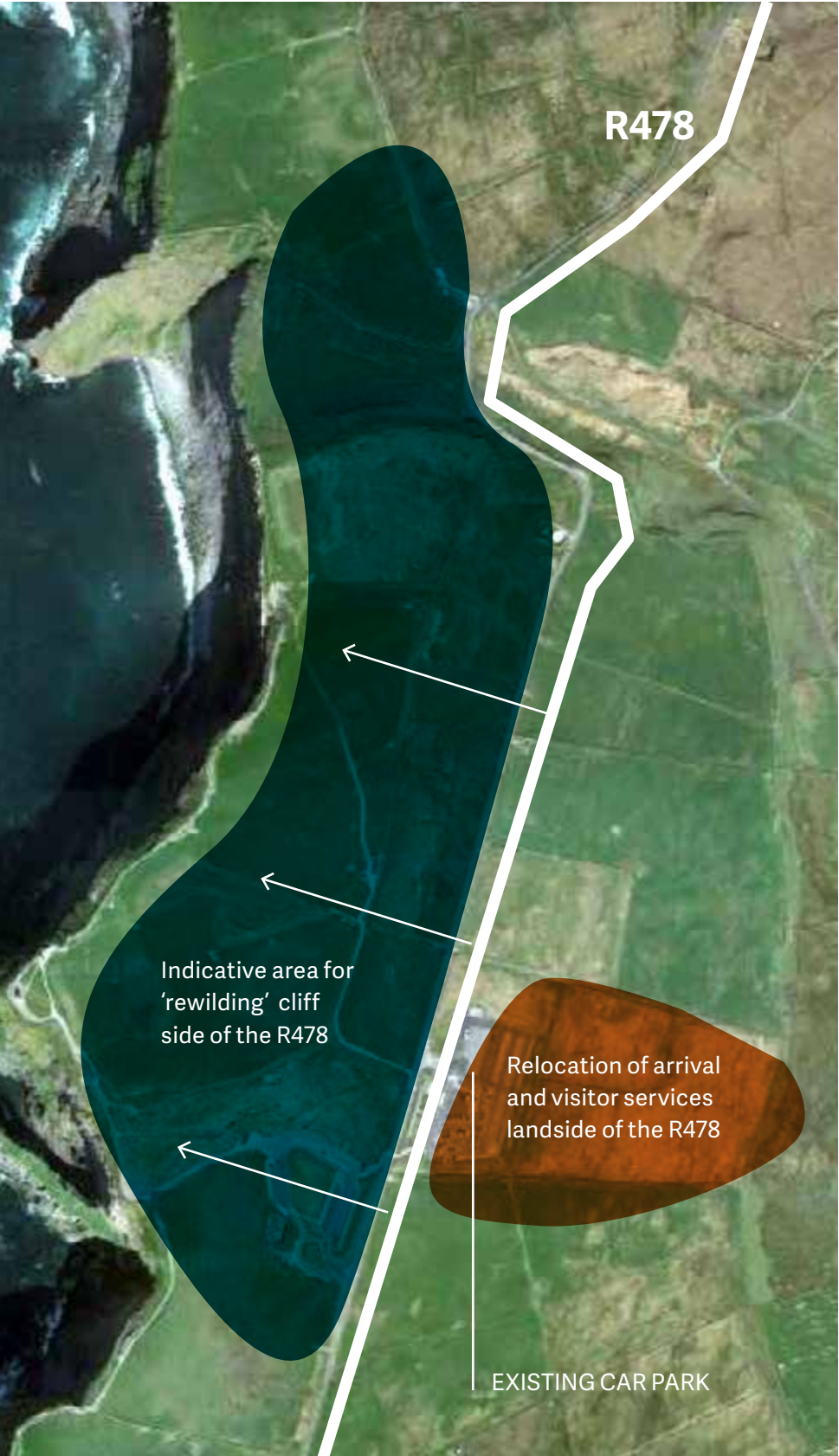


An evaluation of alternative options for the location of development of arrival and welcome facilities is set out in the matrix below.

Assessment of the key impacts (Positive / Neutral / Negative) for each option has been made against the four core objectives of the COM 2040 Strategy.

Positive
Neutral
Negative

Core Objectives	Option 1 – Do Nothing (On-going provision of split arrivals / parking and existing visitor facilities to the west of R478)	Option 2 – Provision of split arrival / parking on both side of R478 and extended existing visitor centre (New coach and shuttle bus drop-off points developed to the west of R478)	Option 3 – Provision of unified and improved arrival / welcome facilities for all visitors to the west of the R478 (remove existing arrival and parking east of the R478)	Option 4 – Provision of unified and improved arrival / welcome facilities for all visitors to the east of the R478 (re-wilding and recovery of landscape to the west of R478)
Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region	Traffic queues and disruption at peak times – limits appeal for visitors to explore areas served by this main access route.	Reduced traffic queues and disruption as easier to manage visitor arrivals – greater opportunity / appeal for visitors to explore areas served by this main access route.	Reduced traffic queues and disruption as easier to manage visitor arrivals – greater opportunity / appeal for visitors to explore areas served by this main access route.	Reduced traffic queues and disruption as easier to manage visitor arrivals – greater opportunity / appeal for visitors to explore areas served by this main access route.
	On-going disruption issues for local people.	Reduces disruption issues for local people.	Reduces disruption issues for local people.	Reduces disruption issues for local people.
Optimising the World-Class Experience	Poor sense of arrival for car visitors – traffic queues, conflict with cars and limited views of site.	Reduced traffic queues and improved sense of arrival – but visitors experience a greater awareness of built infrastructure on journey to the Cliffs.	Reduced traffic queues and improved sense of arrival – but visitors experience a greater awareness of built infrastructure close to the Cliffs.	Reduced traffic queues and significantly enhanced sense of arrival – visitors engage with spectacular views and positive sense of anticipation of visit.
	Safety issues of visitors mixing with traffic, often in inclement weather	Requires access infrastructure for car visitors to cross R478.	Visitors not required to cross R478.	Requires access infrastructure for all visitors to cross R478.
	No unified arrival / welcome experience for all visitors.	No unified arrival / welcome experience for all visitors.	Provides a unified arrival / welcome experience for all visitors.	Provides a unified arrival / welcome experience for all visitors.
	No change to visitor experience.	No change to core visitor experience	Improved facilities but visitors experience a greater awareness of built infrastructure close to the Cliffs.	Significantly enhanced visitor experience – rewilding of the landscape to the west provides a wilder environment with enlarged areas to explore.
Transforming the Natural Landscape	Environmental impacts of on-going traffic queues.	Improved landscape and environment but negative impacts of new built infrastructure close to the Cliffs and within SPA.	Significant negative impacts of extensive new built infrastructure close to the Cliffs and within SPA.	Significantly enhanced landscape and environment with the rewilding and recovery of an enlarged area to the west of the R478.
	On-going environmental impacts from visitors on the SPA, especially erosion at the Cliff edge			
Providing Sustainable Access	On-going traffic queues and disruption at peak times traffic queues – pollution issues.	Reduced traffic queues – decrease existing pollution issues.	Reduced traffic queues – decrease existing pollution issues.	Reduced traffic queues – decrease existing pollution issues.
	On-going environmental impacts across the site, especially erosion at the Cliff edge and habitat disturbance.	Significantly improved access across the site – new paths.	Improved access across the site – new paths	Significantly improved access across a larger site and the SPA – new paths.
		Improved habitat and landscape benefits but impact of new built infrastructure in SPA and close to the Cliffs.	Limited habitat and landscape benefits due to scale of built infrastructure in SPA and close to the Cliff as visitor arrival is at a low level on the site.	Substantial benefits to the natural environment and wildlife.
Result	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Positive





# THE STRATEGY / A WILDER AND EXPANDED LANDSCAPE

## Recovery of Habitats

The new Cliffs of Moher Experience presents a unique opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value and aesthetic appeal of the location through the concept of 'rewilding', which in this scenario means recovering farmland to a natural landscape and a wilder Atlantic Way.

The existing agricultural grasslands at the site have been intensively managed for many years, producing a resultant uniform sward of grasses in a regular field system. With appropriate management, the landscape can be brought back to a naturally variable mosaic of grassland and scrub habitats that reflect the original cliff landscape. This is expected to increase the floristic diversity in the grassland habitat from approximately five species under the current management to 20 or more species.

The approach will facilitate the dispersal of visitors across the site, creating more space and opportunities for an intimate 'back to nature' experience with the cliffs. It will respond to the constantly changing conditions throughout the day and year and will evolve with the wider landscape. The proposals within this special environment will be light touch but also confident, acknowledging the importance of this cultural landmark.

Whilst natural recovery is "nature looking after itself", owning the land comes with obligations and responsibilities in the long term. The Strategy and the Habitat Management Plan are committed to minimising the risk of spread of invasive species. The Cliffs of Moher Experience will provide an ongoing commitment and resources to support land management, including providing specialist ecological input and oversight by an experienced land manager and the implementation of a Habitat Management Plan.

Clare County Council commissioned a Draft Habitat Management Plan, which covers a 5-year period and provides a proposed framework for the conservation and enhancement of the ecological features. This Draft Plan will be revised and finalised as part of the detailed development and planning process for the Cliffs of Moher site. It will facilitate the Strategy's commitments to safeguard designated habitats and protected species (and associated ecological corridors / linkages) within the site and wider area.

**A series of key actions are recommended in order to achieve the most rapid transformation of the site from a managed landscape to a semi-natural mosaic of habitats:**

**1**

The proposed setting back of the clifftop pathway from the cliff-edge will allow for the recovery of the rocky sea cliff vegetation and coastal grassland community. This will have a significant positive impact on both the habitat and its suitability for foraging for Choughs.

This habitat should host a wide range of salt and wild tolerant herbaceous plants with corresponding dramatic flushes of colour during the flowering period. The extensive areas of bare ground will require rehabilitation to speed up the process of revegetation through soil preparation and potential translocation of sods from appropriate donor locations.

**2**

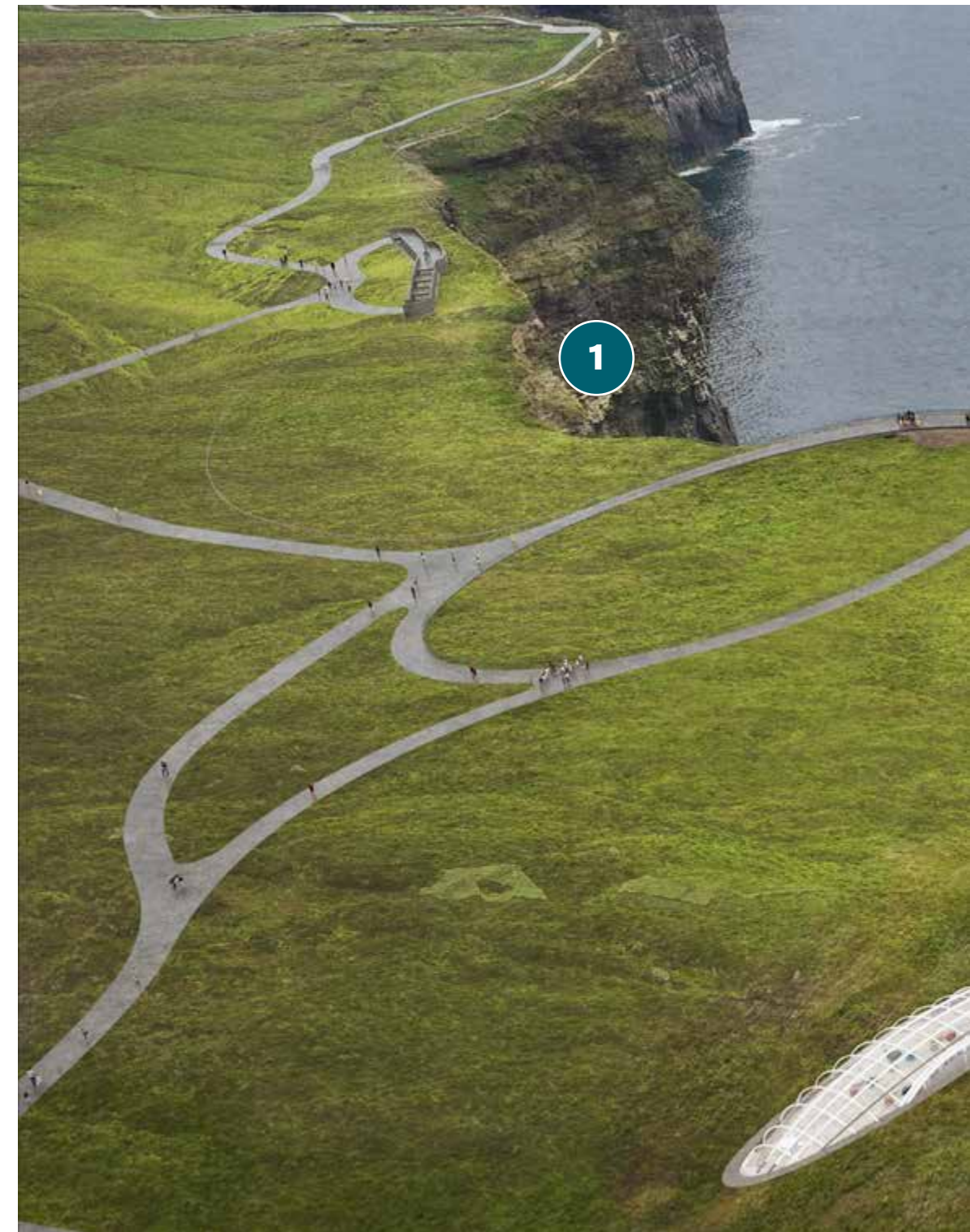
The wetlands to the east of O'Brien's Tower were subject to drainage in the past. The vestigial seasonal pond can be redeveloped as a valuable habitat and attractive landscape feature. Other opportunities may exist elsewhere in the site to create wetlands by judicious blocking of drains and some sensitive land-shaping.

**3**

The incorporation of the agricultural grasslands to the north of the visitor centre provides a valuable opportunity to enhance the landscape's biological diversity through a combined approach of specific interventions and hands-off recovery. This includes developing a suite of semi-natural habitats that will grade into a mosaic based on the prevailing environmental conditions, including the level of exposure.

The primary focus will be reducing the soil fertility in order to promote the development of a semi-natural grassland, including dry-humid acid species which have a higher floristic diversity and therefore attracts a wider range of invertebrate, ground-nesting birds and small mammals. Scrubs will establish in sheltered areas and spread as it matures.

A suitable grazing regime will also form a key element in the process which will require suitable livestock and management at appropriate stocking densities.









# THE STRATEGY / A WILDER AND EXPANDED LANDSCAPE

## Focus on the Northern Topography

Currently, for most visitors, the journey to and from the cliff-edge is concentrated through a relatively narrow 'corridor' of access that is primarily hard landscaped. This encourages visitors to go directly to the cliff-edge, promoting a short dwell time leading to overcrowding and a reduced quality of experience, with large areas of hard standing that diminish the natural beauty of the site as a whole.

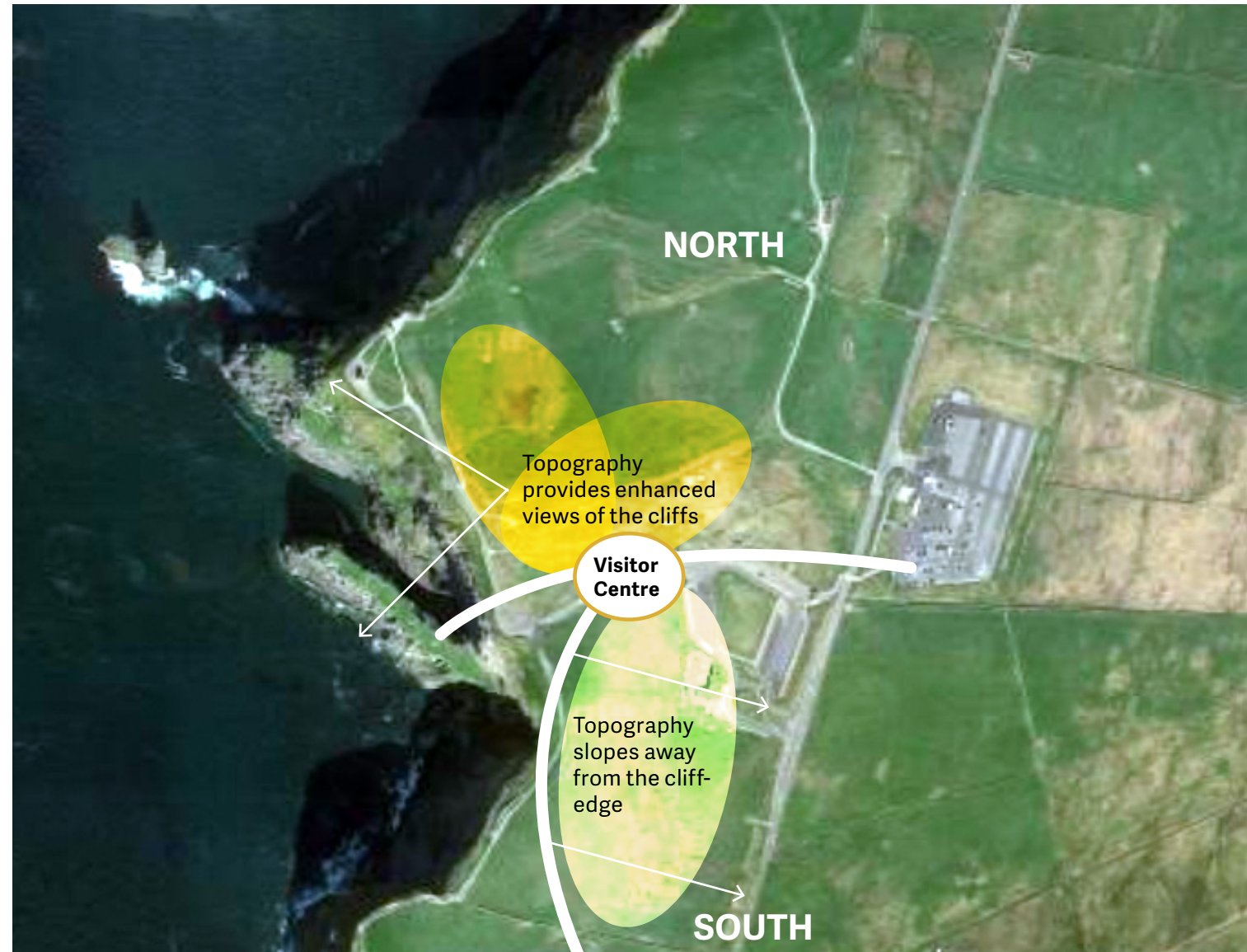


To encourage widespread visitor distribution across the site and provide additional and varied views of the cliffs, a new approach to the visitor experience is proposed.

### ! KEY STRATEGIC DECISION

Following site visits, it was determined that the northern topography rises higher in many places along the route than the southern topography, giving a much-enhanced view of the cliff landscape. This led to the proposal to focus on habitat recovery in the north as well as inland, encouraging visitors to navigate various routes to the cliffs, depending on ability, time and interest. The reinstatement of historic features such as the lake, which can provide wetlands to the east of O'Briens tower, will enhance the visitor experience in this northern zone.

As the topography of the site naturally slopes away from the cliff-edge, a focus on developing and encouraging more visitors into the land to the south of the existing visitor centre would likely encourage more visitors towards the cliff-edge and, consequently, would not provide the enhanced views that the north of the site naturally provides.





# Aerial View Looking South



Northern ridgeline

Existing visitor centre

Trigonometry point

O'Brien's Tower

Hag's Head

Coastal view point



THE STRATEGY / A WILDER AND EXPANDED LANDSCAPE

Aerial View Looking North

Pollboy headland

Trigonometry point

Views into the Burren

Northern ridgeline



## Rewilding Case Study: Naturum Vattenrike, Sweden

Established in 2005 and officially recognised by UNESCO, this Biosphere Reserve demonstrates how to tackle the practical challenges of combining nature conservation with development. Kristianstad is a middle-sized Swedish city with 85,000 inhabitants built upon and surrounded by wetlands. Because of economic growth in Sweden and the rapid expansion of the city in the 1960s and 70s, the wetlands were identified as a problem and were subsequently drained. In the 1980s and 1990s, the wetlands began to be perceived as a resource rather than an issue, and the work on restoring and creating the “Water Kingdom” started. 150 hectares of wetlands have since been restored. In parallel, several nature reserves were created to protect the area’s birdlife and sensitive ecosystems.

The restoration of the wetlands produced hugely positive outcomes for biodiversity. The area covers less than two miles of Sweden’s surface, but 20% of the country’s red-listed species exist here. Both new and old species such as cranes, wild otters and catfish have found their way back to the area and their numbers have stabilised. In 2019, the reserve started an initiative to improve survival rates of ground nesting birds by working with the Kristianstad-Bromolla Game Preservation Association and Skåne Hunting Association to control predators (fox, badger, crows etc.) on the grasslands.

Nature tourism is a rapidly growing part of the hospitality industry. Vattenrike attracts around 300,000 visitors a year. In 2010, a €10 million public investment was dedicated to building a large visitor centre in the middle of the wetlands. The return on the investment came in the form of increased tourism activities in the city.





# THE STRATEGY / A UNIFIED AND IMPROVED ARRIVAL

As part of the return to nature principle for the site, a new visitor reception building and parking area will be created east of the R478 access road, providing enhanced site-wide welcome facilities through which all visitors will pass in and out of the site.

The proposed new arrival facilities to the east of the R478 will create a unified and improved welcome for all visitors, allowing for more effective management of arrivals. Importantly, this will also allow for significant areas of the landscape around the current visitor centre on the site to be rewilded, removing the need for large areas of hard standing and coach parking facilities close to the cliff-edge and improving the quality of views towards the cliffs.

An earlier option to create new coach and shuttle bus drop off points in screened areas to the east of the R478 was discounted on the basis that it did not achieve the rationale to create a wilder and more expansive cliff landscape. It would also mean there would not be a single arrival point and experience for all visitors.

## Arrivals and Parking

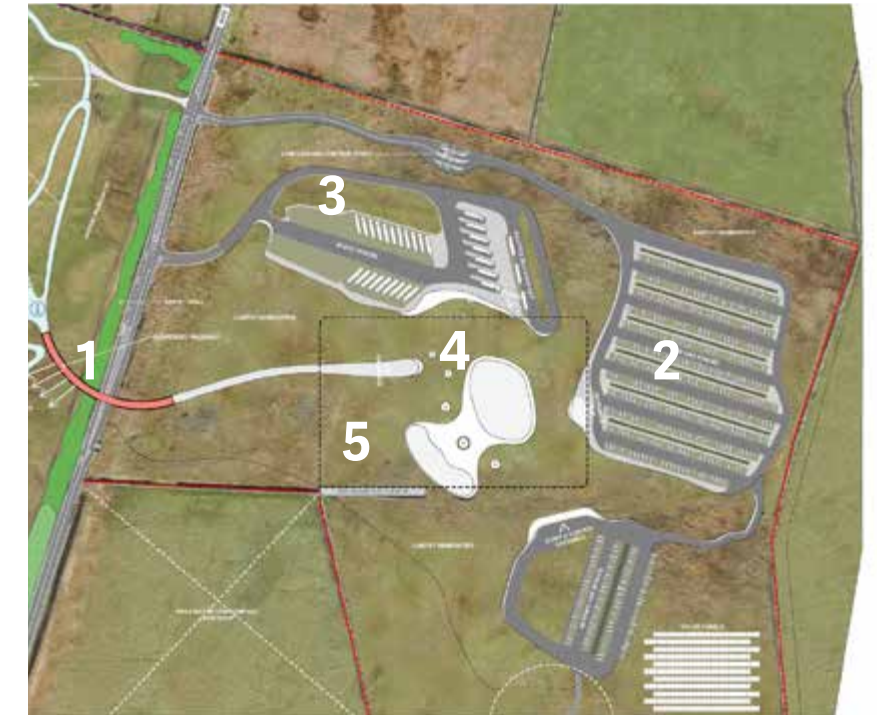
Arrival and parking for all visitors will be provided to the east of the R478 access road. Two separate access roads for cars and coaches and the shuttle will assist the safe and easy entry of all vehicles, thus minimising or eliminating tailbacks onto the R478. Drop-off points will also be provided for local bus services.

This will provide enhanced control and management for all of the various vehicles arriving on site, including coaches, organised tours, shuttle buses, cars and public transport. In conjunction with pre-booking of tickets for all visitors, entry barriers via number plate recognition and ticket scanning will provide the necessary level of security and streamlined access to the site.

The onsite parking requirement is for 40 coach spaces and 480 car spaces, with levels of use restricted in the peak season to some 380 spaces and access supplemented with the shuttle system. This extent of provision is required to accommodate the longer stays on site by visitors at peak times, rather an increased number of visitors. In peak periods, the shuttle bus service will also bring independent visitors to the site from remote parking hubs in nearby towns and villages.

All parking will be set within a more natural landscape, using bunds to minimise visual impacts of both the road and parking areas, to create a high-quality sense of arrival. Landscaping in these areas will be modest and sensitive to the setting. Tarmac surfaces will be used for road surfaces and impermeable hardstanding areas will be kept to a minimum. Natural materials such as locally-sourced Liscannor stone gravel, stone and timber will be used to create subtle demarcations in the parking bays.

Electric charging points will be provided for vehicles as part of the sustainable transport approach and secure bicycle racks will be available along with ancillary support facilities.



**1 Separate access road to car parking**

**2 Secluded car parking area**

**3 Shared coach and shuttle bus entrance**

**4 Shuttle to drop to left hand side of back doors to access reception**

**5 Coaches to drop off at right-hand side and park**

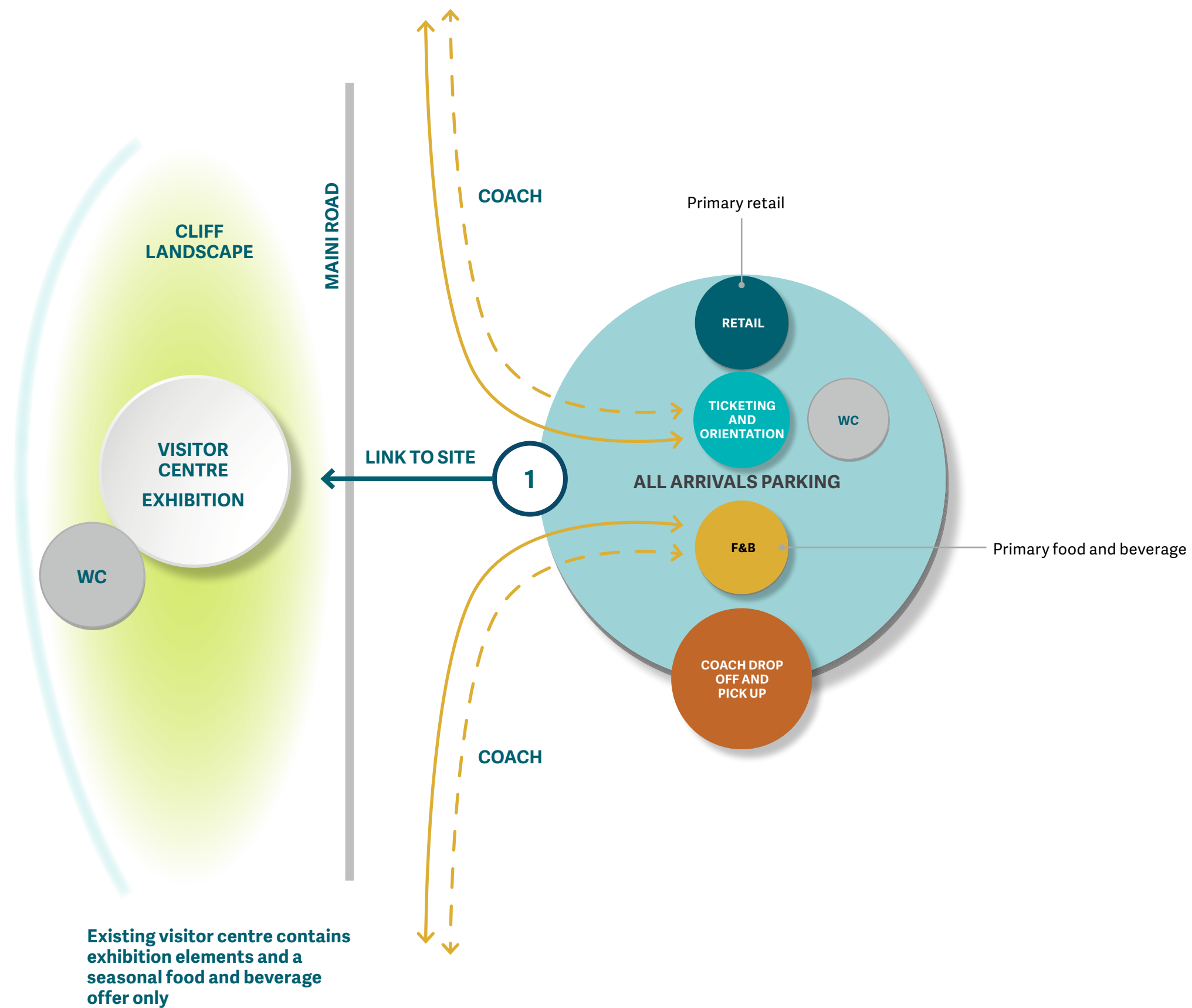




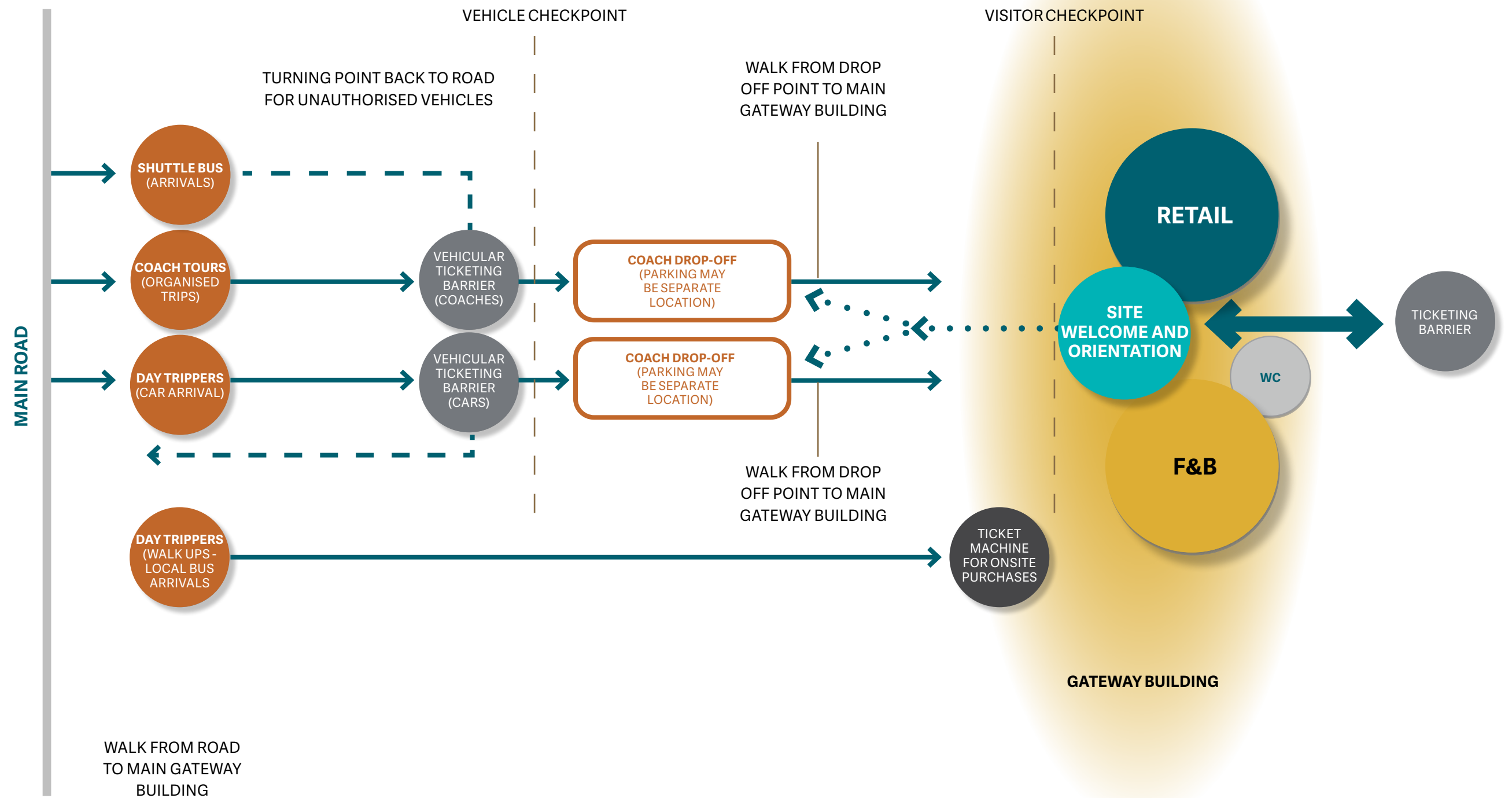


# THE STRATEGY / A UNIFIED AND IMPROVED ARRIVAL

## Arrivals Sequence









# THE STRATEGY / A UNIFIED AND IMPROVED ARRIVAL

## Welcome to the Reception Building

All visitors will be greeted on arrival within a reception building that can be scaled to flexibly support high and low visitor numbers throughout the year. This new facility will provide all visitors with an improved sense of arrival and welcome. It will facilitate enhanced control and management for all of the various arrival types, including coaches, organised tours, shuttle buses and cars. In conjunction with pre-booking for all visitors, the reception facility will enable streamlined ticketing that delivers the necessary level of security while improving access to the site.

The building will also create a critical threshold between the visitor arriving at the site and entering the site. The architecture itself screens the visual impact of parked cars and buses. Once visitors have passed through the facility, they will enter the core “back to nature” experience and leave the cars and buses behind.

The reception will cater for a wide range of visitor support and operational services, including:

- Toilets
- Orientation
- Retail
- Food and beverage
- Staff facilities including offices and welfare
- Coach and shuttle driver facilities









# THE STRATEGY / A UNIFIED AND IMPROVED ARRIVAL

## Orientate and Raise Anticipation

Upon arrival via shuttle transport, coach or car, the immediate objective must be to orientate visitors in the cliff landscape and highlight the key experiences on offer within the site boundary. Locating facilities, exhibitions, circular walking routes and viewing vistas through a central orientation hub and unified wayfinding system allows visitors to begin their journey at the cliffs with confidence.

The reception building will orientate visitors as they start their journey to the cliffs. Site wayfinding and interpretation will help visitors to better understand the arrangement and opportunities of the site, as well as increase anticipation for the magic and wonder of the cliff landscape.



3D maps will allow visitors to gather and plan their visit, helping to distribute them across the landscape.



Large scale statements conveying the core interpretive themes and emotive messaging that can easily be absorbed while visitors and groups are on the move.



Sculptural elements that evoke the spectacle and scale of the cliffs.



## Welcome Facility Case Study: Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland

The new visitor centre opened in 2012 in response to the increase in overseas visitors. At the time, the World Heritage Site welcomed 600,000 – 700,000 visitors a year. The new facility welcomed over one million visitors in 2017 and 2018. Pre-covid, the site was the top generator for tourism in Northern Ireland, with most visitors originating from Canada, USA, Great Britain and China.

The building designed has achieved a BREEAM 'Excellent' Award, which is based on overall sustainability in design, materials, energy, construction management and ecology. The design life of the building is 100 years, with minimal services intervention required during subsequent refurbishments.

5km of pipe runs underneath the car park to provide the centre with ground source heat and draw in cooler air. Water is collected from the green roof in an underground tank which is used for the toilets in the centre. Indigenous grasses and wildflower seeds collected from the surrounding area are used for the green roof planting to maintain the sensitive ecology of the site. Building materials are sourced from local and recycled materials, while a park and ride reduces traffic congestion and provides sustainable economic links with the town. The site car parks each feature Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to avoid increasing the load on the local storm drainage infrastructure.





# THE STRATEGY / **LOCALLY SOURCED PRODUCE**

## The new catering and retail provision at the Cliffs of Moher will allow the destination to act as a showcase for the outstanding produce of County Clare.

The approach is about embracing what local artisans and suppliers are doing and serving as a beacon for this area of the Wild Atlantic Way. This strategy will appeal not just to visitors, but also to Irish people who in turn will become real ambassadors for the food, drink and retail offer.

Local suppliers can greatly benefit from the Cliffs of Moher Experience as it offers a rare opportunity for them to showcase their products to a global audience. This unparalleled exposure can significantly impact the business outlook of local artisans, as well as provide them with a valuable platform while supporting the local community. Clare County Council is uniquely positioned to create the conditions for new and developing craft enterprises to flourish.

### **Operational Management will be Outsourced**

The operation of the catering and retail facilities at the Cliffs of Moher will be outsourced to specialist contract managers. This is in line with a recent decision by Clare County Council that management of catering and retail operations at its sites are to be outsourced.

### **Food and Drink Offer**

The core principles will be to celebrate local and seasonal Irish produce in a contemporary way, to cook everything on site, and to cater for different price points to variable visitor numbers over a 12-month period.

The West of Ireland is home to some of the country's most important artisans, including the Burren Smokehouse, St. Tola Farmhouse Cheese, Achill Oysters and Velvet Cloud yoghurt. There are already 15 local food suppliers to the Cliffs of Moher and the aim will be to support more local businesses in the future. This will be achieved by focusing on local products and engaging and championing suppliers in a collaborative way. Delivering a programme of events will build awareness of their culinary excellence, including festivals, workshops and supper clubs.

#### **Future provision will include:**

- A serve-assist counter with a full open-plan kitchen offering a range of dishes, with some prepared to order and some residing in the counter.
- A Grab and Go offer, supplied from the open-plan kitchen and supplemented by tea, coffee and soup via serve assist. This will include a picnic provision in peak months, made up of the existing offer but presented in a customised container.
- An unassisted Grab and Go offer, in or adjacent to the retail offer.
- Some third-party seasonal carts, for example ice cream and cold drinks.
- An assisted Grab and Go offer with adjacent seating in the re-purposed visitor centre viewing hub for peak months.
- Ancillary carts to be provided for peak months, serviced by suitable power points but without plumbing and waste being required.

There will not be a licensed bar on site.

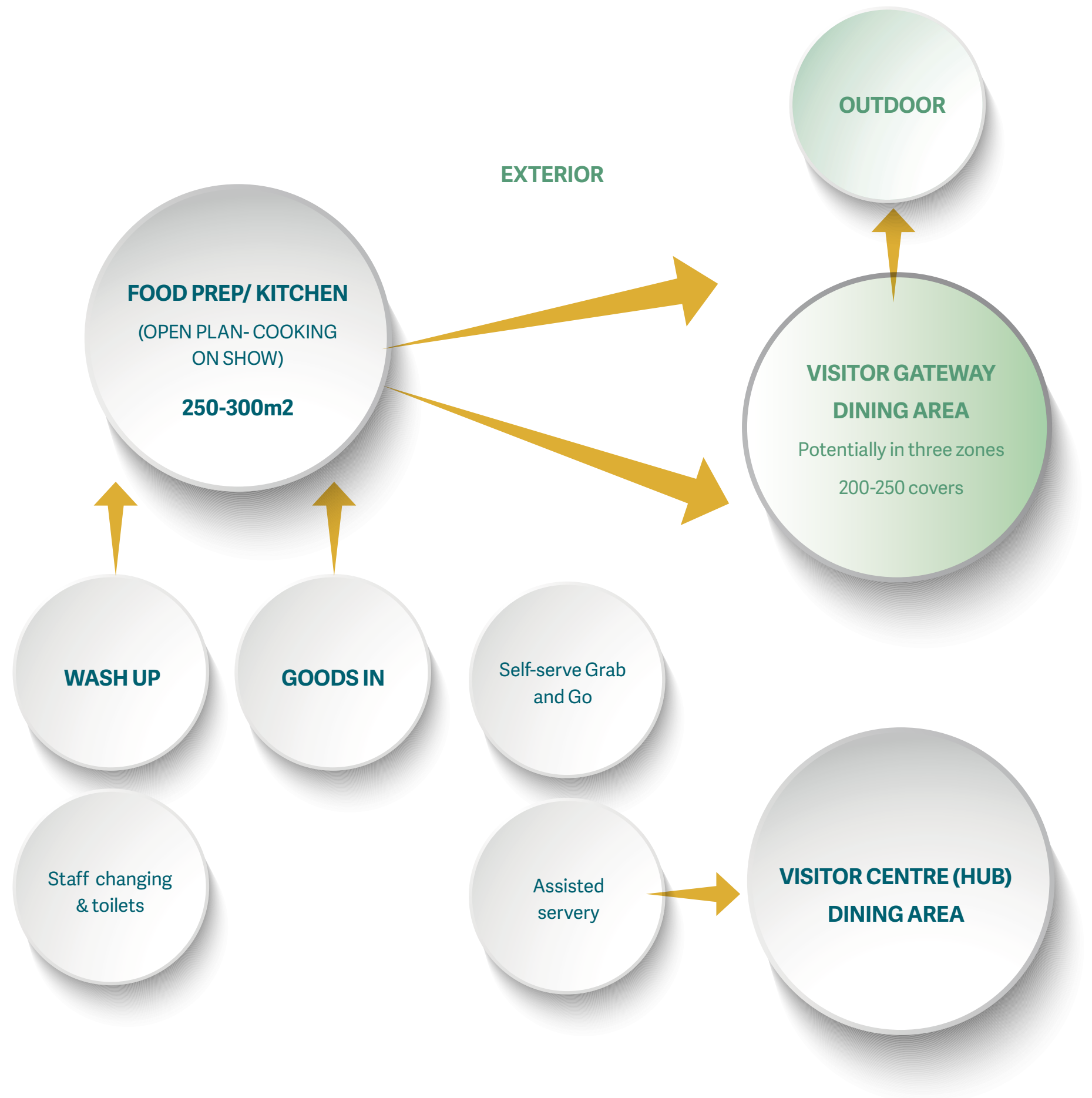




## Catering Operation

The main kitchen will be open-plan with cooking “on show”, supplemented with a hidden wash up area and provision for a goods-in area, fridges and store rooms. Staff changing and toilet facilities also need to be adjacent, and extraction provided.

An adjacent seating area for approximately 200-250 covers will be broken up into three interconnected areas, which have flexibility to close without impacting the customer journey for quieter periods.





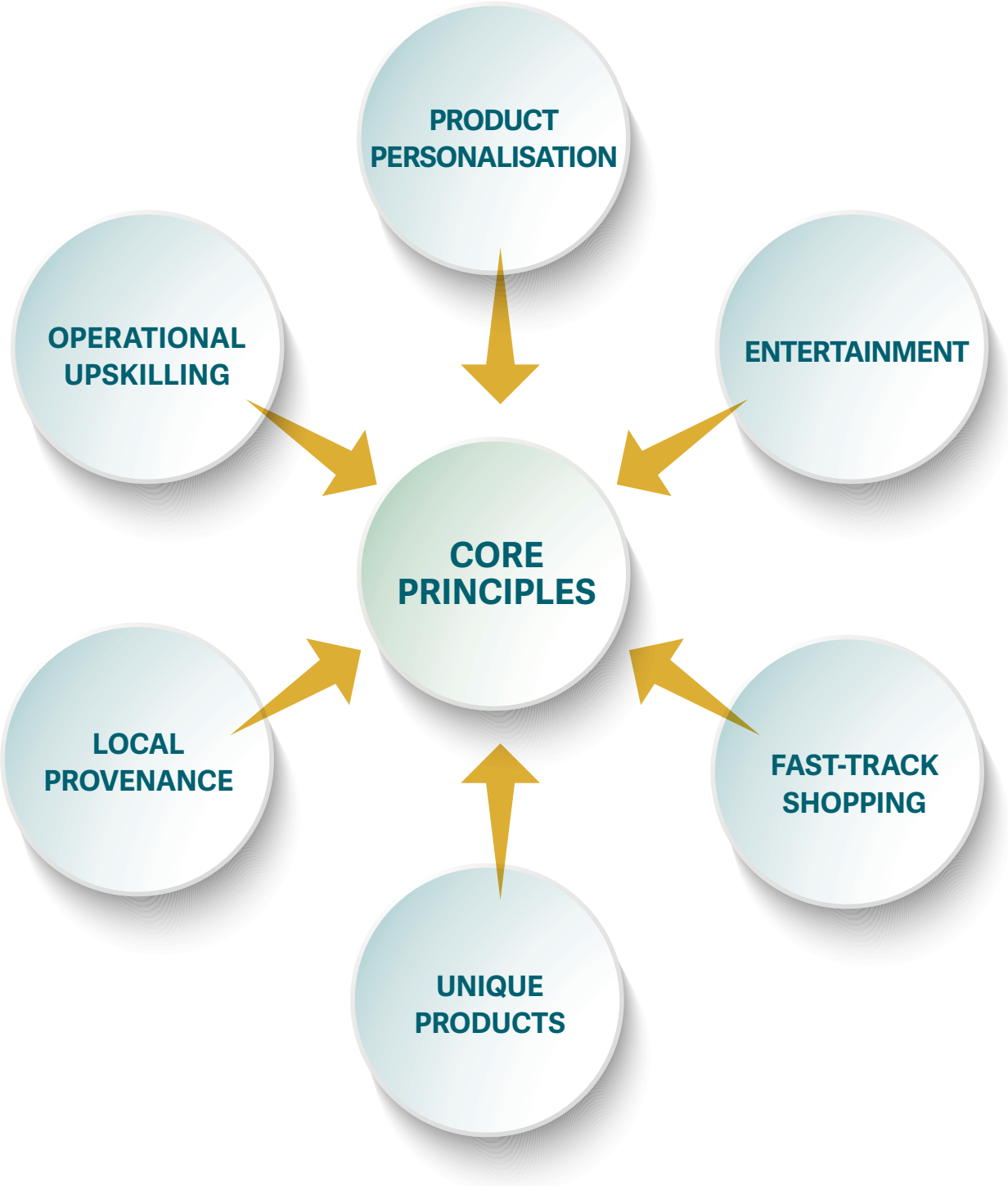
# THE STRATEGY / **LOCALLY SOURCED PRODUCE**

## Retail Offer

The Cliffs of Moher retail spaces will reflect modern retail dynamics and incorporate the latest global trends and best practice. The core principle of the new retail operation centres on provenance, Irish craft skills and local supply.

The Cliffs of Moher already plays an important role in supporting other businesses across County Clare and beyond. The six craft units at the Cliffs of Moher, leased by local businesses, will be relocated as an integral part of the new reception building. There are more than 40 County Clare craft and design suppliers across the site and the aim will be to encourage more local suppliers in the future.

The retail strategy will also incorporate sustainability statements that focus on eco-product ranges and recyclable packaging solutions, and maximise the global brand that is the Cliffs of Moher Experience.





### **Bring Local Provenance to Life**

The retail offer will showcase Irish and local produce via a large contemporary feature display celebrating Irish fashion and craft at the entrance point. The display would change seasonally through strategic partnerships with organisations such as The Design & Crafts Council Ireland. Within the retail space there will be a display selling products by local makers.

The backstory behind products will be brought to life throughout the shop via innovative signage and on-shelf communication. Makers will be encouraged to share photos and narratives to be used in a constantly updating series of life stories.

### **Facilitate Product Personalisation**

At least one product at the site should allow for personalisation. For example, a guest photograph taken by an auto camera at the cliff-edge that can be dated, contain a personal message, and be framed before being made available for collection in the retail shop at the end of the visit.

### **Retail Entertainment**

The retail space will embrace elements of retail entertainment and consumer engagement. An additional showcase stage will be located within the retail footprint, which will accommodate a rolling calendar of “meet the maker/crafter” events. An interactive video wall will tell the makers’ stories when the showcase stage is not in use.

### **Fast-Track Shopping**

For those who are time constrained, fast-track shopping solutions will include technologies such as self-scan checkouts and “just walk out” technology. Omni-channel retailing will be facilitated through a dedicated online dispatch hub that allows products purchased instore to be dispatched onwards. A dynamic online retail store will incorporate sophisticated, technology-driven programmes such as automated marketing. For online orders and products coming via the dispatch hub, “pick and pack” will be completed in an offsite facility.

### **Unique Product Ranges**

Success will be predicated on stocking unique ranges that are not available at other retail destinations. A dedicated eco-range will be made available, using the Eden Project product range as a benchmark, and further range extensions will take place on exclusive Cliffs of Moher products.







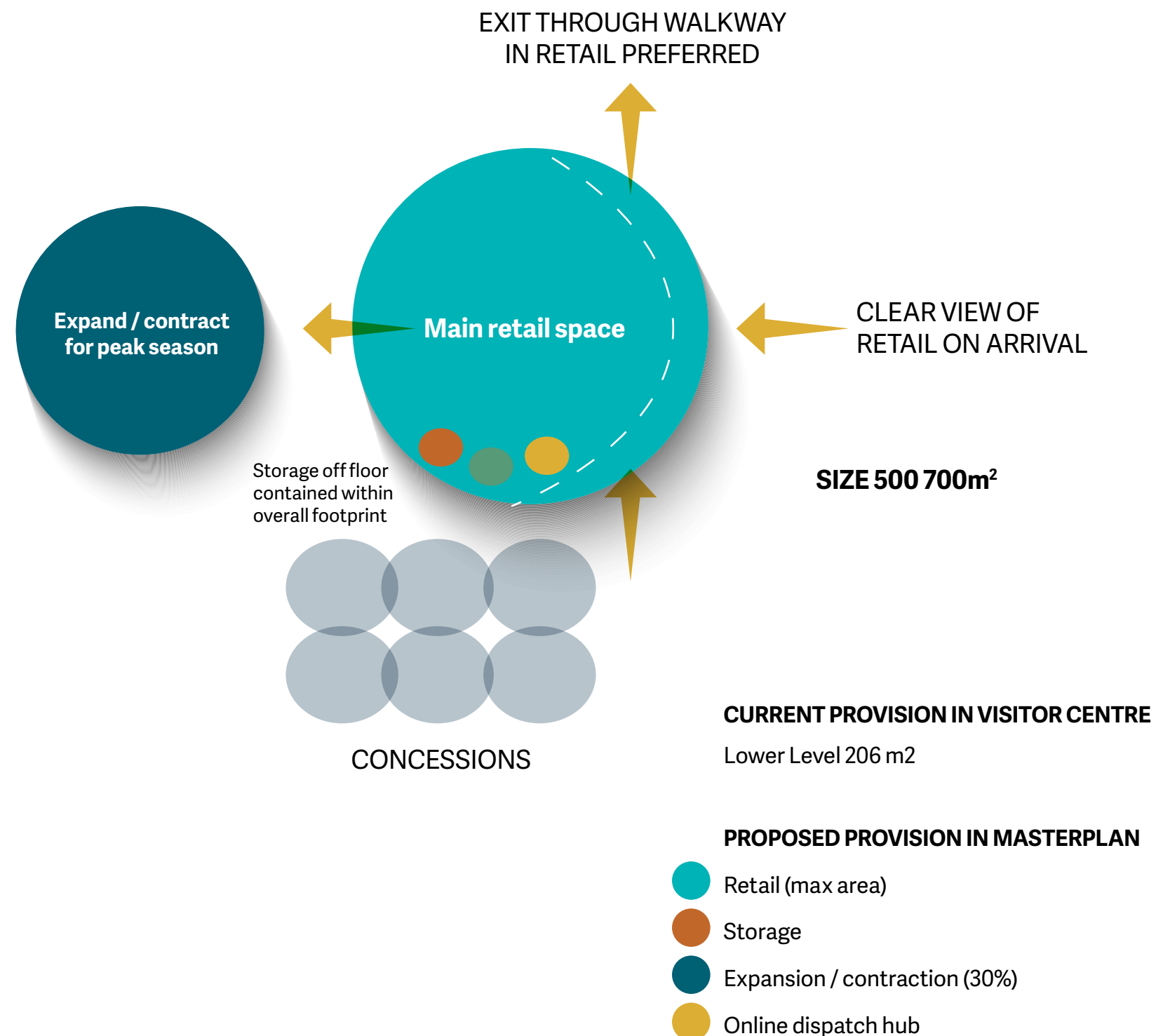
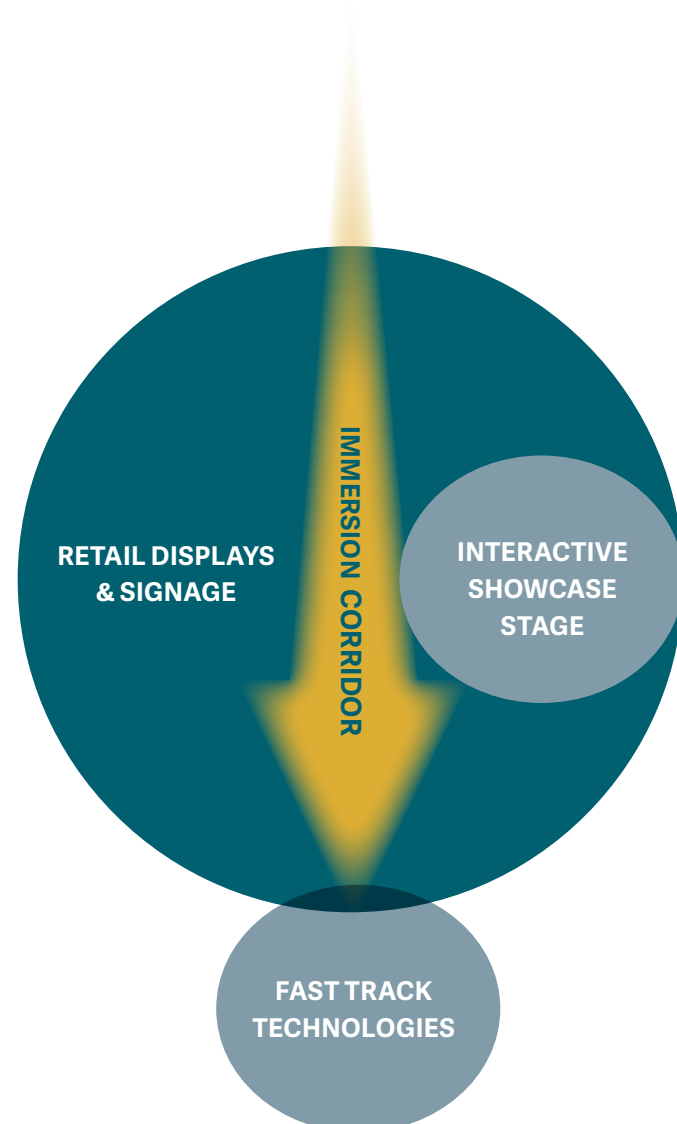


## Retail Operation

It is envisaged that all visitors, on exiting the visitor experience, will pass through the retail space through a wide immersion corridor which will “walk” the customer through the retail offer, thus enhancing impulse purchases and showcasing product ranges. Customers will be encouraged to leave the central walkway by stunning visual displays and the interactive showcase stage area.

Those with less time on their hands will be encouraged to shop in units strategically located throughout the retail space. Signage will tell the stories of the makers and will link the shoppers to the backstory behind certain products, creating an emotion-led shopping experience.

Towards the exit, fast egress will be facilitated using technologies like self-checkout counters and “just walk out” technology.





# THE STRATEGY / ELEVATED ACCESS TO THE CLIFFS

Visitors will transition from the reception building facilities to the cliff side of the R478 access road via a new pedestrian bridge.

!

KEY STRATEGIC DECISION

The creation of a new footbridge will bring visitors to the rewilded cliffs experience at an elevated level. This will provide enhanced accessibility for all across the site, as the need for steep pathways is reduced and views of the site are improved.

It will also resolve a key access issue whereby visitors crossing the road from the current car park disrupt the flow of traffic on the main road, causing significant queues and delays for visitors, local residents and other traffic passing the Cliffs of Moher site.

The footbridge design will mitigate the impact of strong wind and rain on visitors at this elevation, while appearing visually integrated into the surrounding wild landscape.

An underpass was considered for visitors to pass across and under the R478. However, this approach would be at direct odds with the strategy to engage visitors with spectacular views. It would bring visitors out at a low level, making ease of access to the cliff side of the site more difficult, as well as being more environmentally invasive.

An evaluation of alternative options for how visitors will cross the R478 is set out in the matrix below.

Assessment of the key impacts (Positive / Neutral / Negative) for each option has been made against the four core objectives of the COM 2040 Strategy.

Positive
Neutral
Negative

Core Objectives	Option 1 – Road Crossing (All visitors cross the R478 at road level)	Option 2 – Provide an Underpass (All visitors cross underneath the R478)	Option 3 – Provide a Pedestrian Footbridge (All visitors cross over the R478)
Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region	<p>Traffic queues and disruption caused by visitors crossing the road – limits appeal for visitors to explore areas served by this main access route and creates issues for local people.</p> <p>Current disruption issues for visitors and local people will be exacerbated in the future when additional visitors cross the road to access the site.</p>	<p>Minimal or no traffic queues and disruption as visitors pass under the road.</p> <p>Construction of an underpass would require closing the road for some months – causing disruption.</p> <p>Reduces disruption issues for local people (after construction).</p>	<p>Minimal or no traffic queues and disruption as visitors pass over the road.</p> <p>During construction, the road can be kept open at all times.</p> <p>Reduces disruption issues for local people.</p>
Optimising the World-Class Experience	<p>Poor sense of arrival for visitors – increased traffic queues, conflict with cars and limited views of site.</p> <p>Significant safety issues of visitors mixing with traffic, often in inclement weather.</p>	<p>Poor sense of arrival – no engagement with the spectacular views as visitors cross underneath the road.</p> <p>Risk of wind tunnel affect.</p>	<p>Enhanced sense of arrival – visitors engage with spectacular views and positive sense of anticipation of visit.</p>
Transforming the Natural Landscape	<p>The R478 currently divides the landscape as regards the visitor experience.</p>	<p>The construction of an underpass is an extensive engineering project with a significant embodied energy footprint.</p> <p>The resulting access would provide reduced engagement with the natural landscape as visitors cross underneath the road.</p>	<p>The Footbridge would have a lesser environmental impact than an underpass.</p> <p>The construction of the footbridge will join both sides of the R478 road into a continuous visitor landscape experience.</p>
Providing Sustainable Access	<p>Increased traffic queues and disruption caused by visitors crossing the road.</p> <p>Significant safety issues of visitors mixing with traffic, often in inclement weather.</p>	<p>Reduced traffic queues – decrease existing pollution and visual impact issues.</p> <p>Visitors emerge from the underpass at low level making ease of access onto the site more difficult for visitors of limited mobility</p>	<p>Reduced traffic queues – decrease existing pollution and visual impact issues.</p> <p>The bridge provides a solution to reach all aspects of the site with max 4% rise not currently available to O'Brien's Tower for example - the underpass would make access worse.</p>
Result	Negative	Negative	Positive





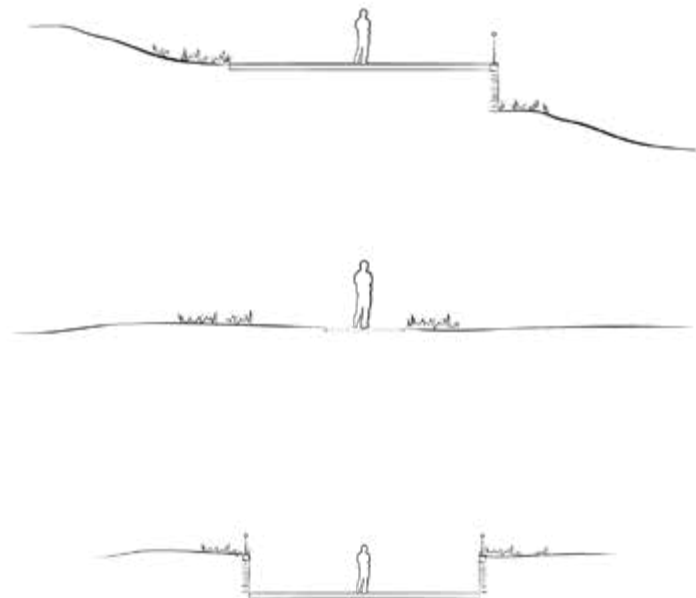


# THE STRATEGY / TIERED NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Different tiers of natural environments will provide a distinction between the more managed landscape and the wild and rugged areas.

Three tiers of landscape will mark the transition from the controlled and comfortable environment to the wild and natural. The principle of having tiers within the landscape is to strike a balance between the built interventions which provide accessibility for visitors and the wild nature and valuable habitats of the site. Each tier of the landscape will have its own events and attractions to spread the visitors across the site.

Each space will feel like part of the same experience. However, a light touch approach will maintain a degree of subtlety and visual reference from the context. The simple, sturdy and robust aesthetic will reference the geology of the site, including a muted colour palette that highlights the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. The low profile of each environment will reduce impact on the wider views and the proposals will consider ecological impact.

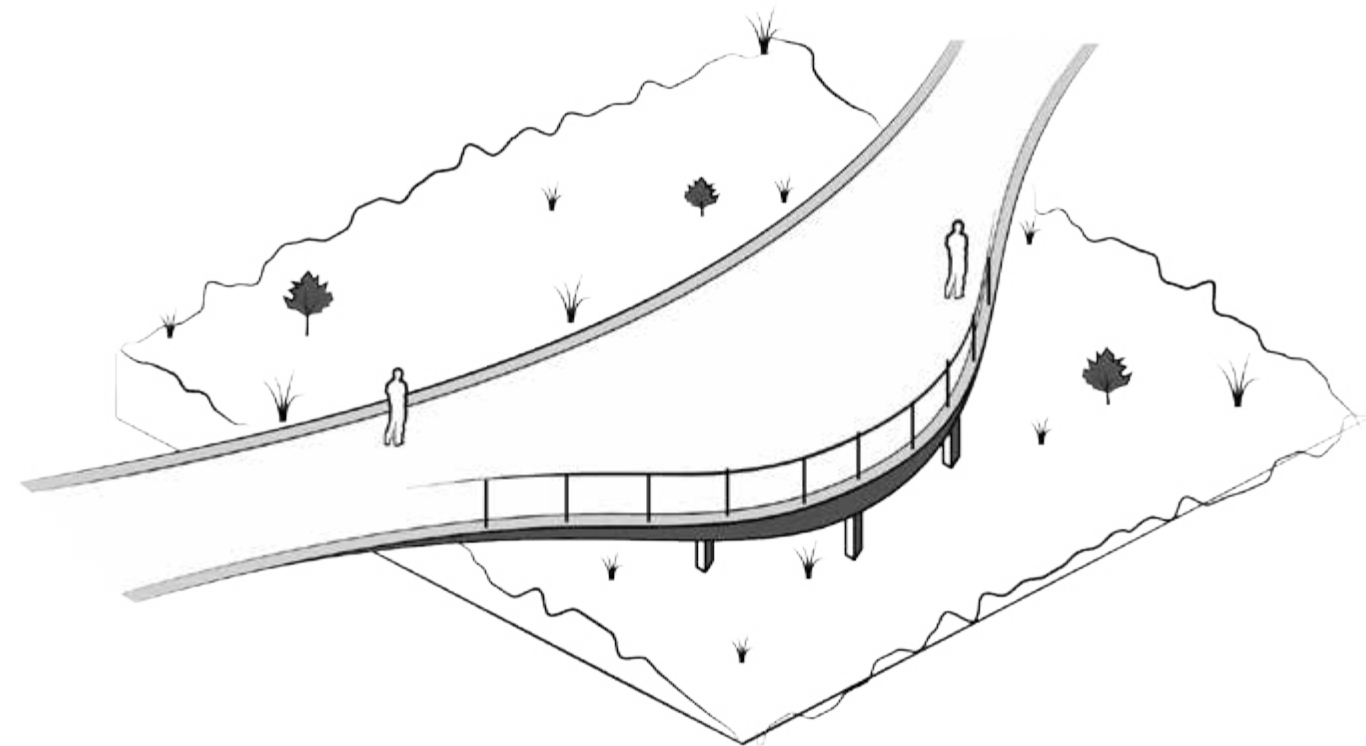
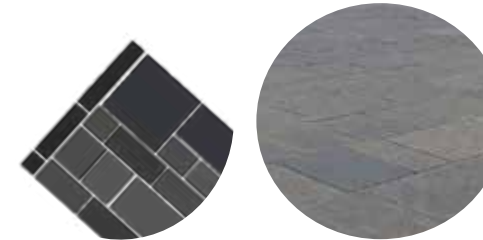


## Tier 1

This will be the “core experience” from arrival, around the visitor centre and onward to the closest cliff-edge experiences. This tier will ideally be fully accessible to everyone with a formal, comfortable aesthetic and well-defined edges. There will be landform changes or elevated walkways to maximise accessibility and reduce the gradients of the primary paths.

Primary paths - formal

Slopes 0-2% (0.6% ramps)



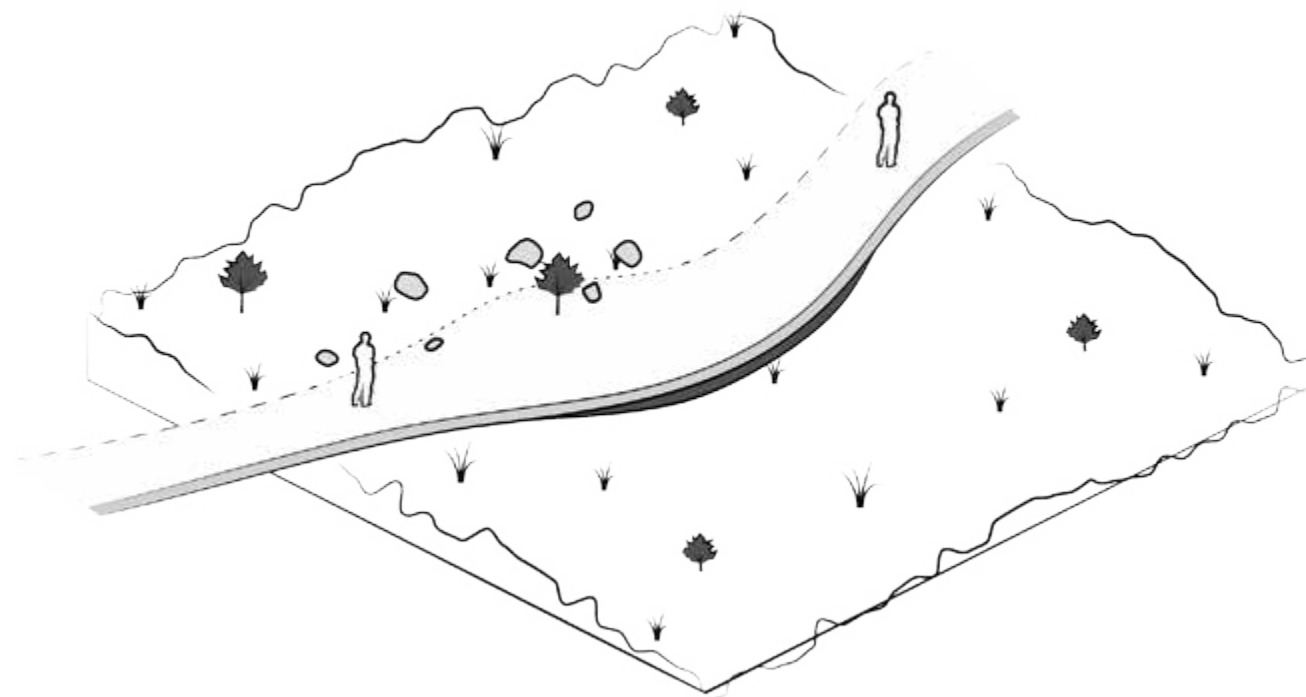
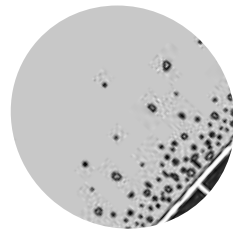


## Tier 2

This environment will be easy to access, but a degree of nature will be introduced through the courser materiality and a feathered edge merging the paths with their context. There are modest landform changes to remove the most challenging slopes, but generally the paths will follow the existing ground levels. These paths lead to cliff-edge experiences beyond the core experience, thereby encouraging exploration.

Secondary paths - tamed nature

Slopes 0-8%

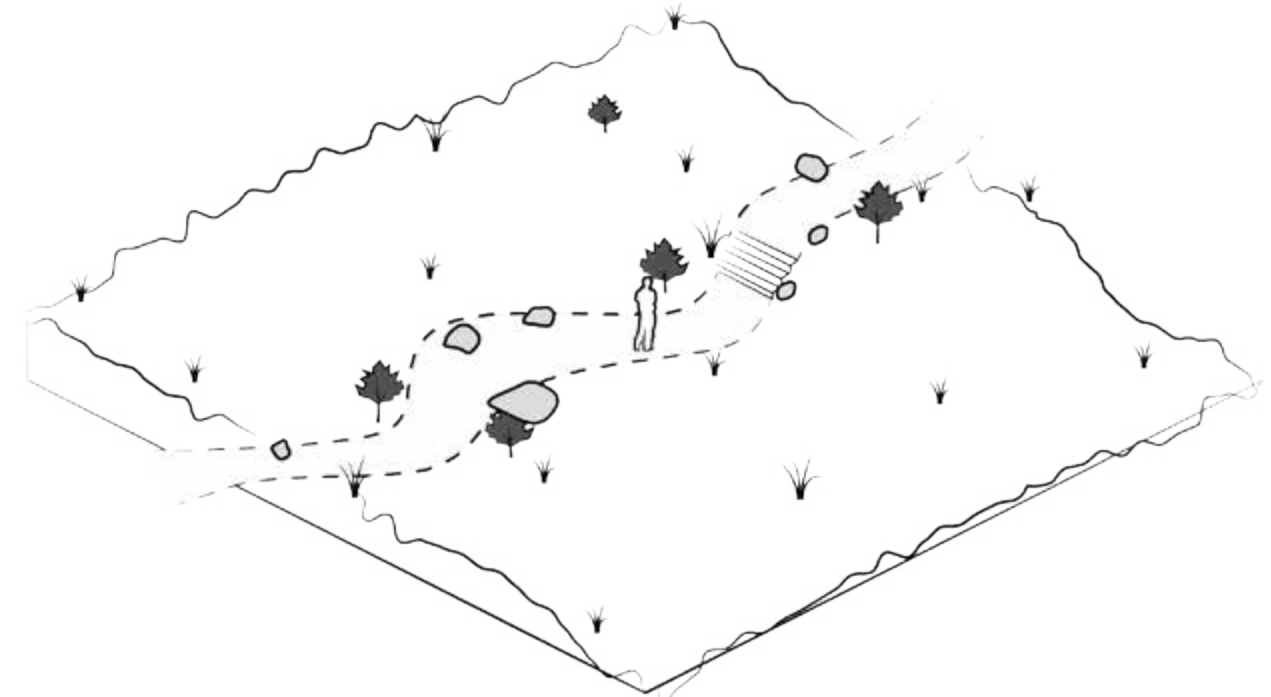
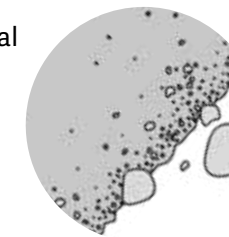


## Tier 3

This will most closely resemble a wild experience, being fully immersive and remote. Whilst the paths will be arranged to be safe and avoid the steepest gradients, there will be little to no landform changes where practicable to maximise the adventurous nature of the landscape furthest from the core experience. The edges of the paths will blend into the setting, letting the ecology and restored natural habitats take priority.

Tertiary paths - wild and natural

Natural slopes

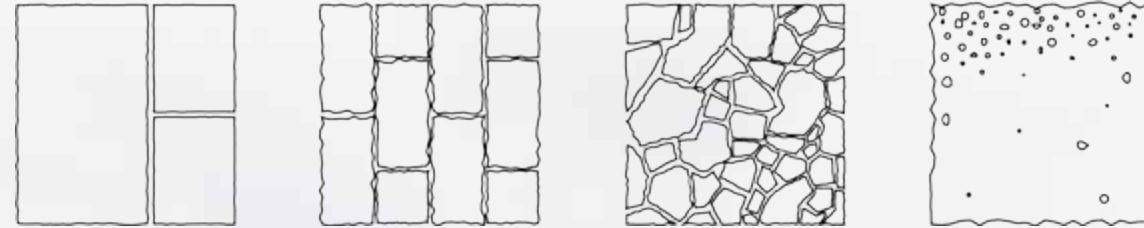




# THE STRATEGY / TIERED NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

## Liscannor Stone

Liscannor Stone reflects the local geology and design vernacular whilst also telling the story of the geological and industrial history of the area. It is a robust material with a dark colour which camouflages the built elements into their setting. Using it as a key material will support local industry and skills whilst avoiding a larger carbon footprint transporting foreign materials to the site. The stone can be used in different formats in each of the different tiers of the landscape, creating a unifying element across the site that brings cohesion to the design and experience.









# THE STRATEGY / NEW EVENTS IN THE LANDSCAPE

The proposals for new events in the landscape will maximise and enhance the natural assets of the Cliffs of Moher. From the elevated and windswept trigonometry point to rare habitats and endangered birds, there are a wide range of locations to create unique encounters with the wild landscape.

The network of paths and variety of experiences will allow visitors to customise their visit depending on their interests, timeframe, mobility and weather conditions. Looped walking routes will encourage dispersal throughout the site to reduce overcrowding, and the array of landscape events will increase the length of visits and encourage repeat trips.

## Highlight experiences include:

- Elevated views
- Raised walkways with cliff-edge or inland views
- Over the edge structures with glass-bottomed viewing opportunities
- Heritage assets such as O'Brien's Tower

## Sitewide experiences include:

- Viewing of special flora and fauna
- Ecotourism, grazing livestock and rewilding land management
- Interpretation focusing on geology, ecology and historic land-use



## Viewpoint Names

A series of breathtaking new viewing opportunities will be created, with names inspired by the traditional Irish culture of the local area. Research into historic maps and guidebooks has revealed the historic names that have been given to each natural feature and passed down through generations. These evocative names will give visitors a profound insight into the richness of Irish language and the deep emotional connection our ancient ancestors had with the landscape.

1. Aileen's Wave
2. Burren View
3. Aill Na Searrach
4. Arran Islands View
5. Raven's Rock
6. Branaumore
7. O'Briens Tower
8. Stookeen Point
9. Wetland View
10. The Ledge
11. Goat Island View
12. Puffin's Point
13. Mal's View









# THE STRATEGY / NEW EVENTS IN THE LANDSCAPE

## Cliff-edge Experiences

A range of dramatic new experiences will be provided at the cliff-edge, ranging from adrenalin rushes to quiet reflection. A series of cliff-edge viewing points serve up an exhilarating conclusion to one's journey to the "edge of the world".

Physical barriers will be an important element for visitor safety and management. These will be designed to take account of the impacts on views and heritage features. Different approaches are appropriate across the site in areas with distinct characters.

The cliff-edge structures will match the design aesthetic of the destination spaces using a light surface layer of in-situ concrete with muted colours and textures. Wire mesh or cables will maximise outward views and prevent climbing, and glass floors in key viewing locations will provide a sense of adrenaline accessible to all visitors.

### ! KEY STRATEGIC DECISION

A new cliff-edge walk will be created further inland, aligning with recommendations to avoid geologically unstable land and allow habitat recovery at the clifftop. Moving the cliff walk inland is not detrimental to the visitor's ability to maintain a view of the cliffs as the topography is higher inland than at the cliff-edge. However, a variety of new engineered viewing platforms will bring visitors back to the edge where views are particularly dramatic. Therefore, visitors will be discouraged from leaving designated pathways to seek adrenaline experiences and photograph opportunities.

Engineering platforms will be restricted from extending over the cliff edge, acknowledging potential impacts on breeding seabird populations.



### Heritage Area (O'Brien's Tower)

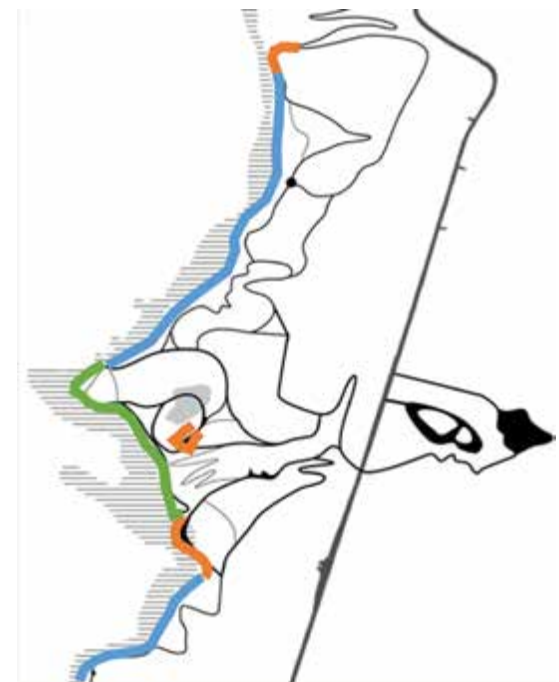
Maintain historic flagstones with additional "windows" in specific locations.

### Along the Cliff-edge

New stone fence and mesh to maximise views but prevent climbing.

### Along Raised Walkways, Ramps, Stairs and Viewpoints

Sleek steel railing to maximise views with opportunity for signage and interpretation









# THE STRATEGY / NEW EVENTS IN THE LANDSCAPE

## Distinct Design Palettes

Whilst the spaces have a cohesive design approach, each area type will have bespoke designed elements to convey their distinct character. The materiality of these spaces contrasts with the tiered landscapes to highlight them as special events within the landscape. There is a complimentary family of material palettes which repeats across each area to create a unified look and feel.

### Vehicular Space Palette

Located in the arrival area, this palette should be modest and sensitive to its setting, minimising impermeable hardstanding areas and utilising natural, local materials for surfaces and demarcation. Disabled parking space surfaces and locations will prioritise accessibility.



### Destination Space Palette

The palette in the external visitor centre spaces and key event points within the landscape will be uncluttered, using muted colours and textures that encourage visitor movement and gathering. The feathered edges of hardstanding features will demonstrate integration with the surrounding landscape and internal and external spaces will be blended where possible.



### Elevated Palette

The palette in locations where there are raised walkways, cantilever structures and on the access bridge will match the aesthetic of the destination spaces to unify the design language. A light surface layer of in-situ concrete with muted colours and textures will complement the built structures.





## Cliff-edge Experience Case Study: Austria

The 5 Fingers Viewing Platform opened on Mount Krippenstein in October 2006, creating a structure that reaches out like a hand over the 400 m drop.

Each 4 x 1 m 'finger' has a different viewing experience. One platform is made entirely of glass, and another enables visitors to gain their own personal view of the Hallstatt World Heritage site through a large Baroque picture frame. One has a hole in the floor you can look through, and the fifth finger features a free telescope.

Located in the Stubai Glacier Ski resort, the Tyrol Viewing Platform is 3.2 km above sea level and offers visitors the opportunity to view 109 peaks across the full dimensions of the landscape. An example of modern architectural design that blends into the landscape, it uses 20 tonnes of weather-resistant Corten steel in its foundations and the upslope rock anchors. The platform extends 9 m beyond the rock edge and provides visitors with an innovative Viscope telescope.





# THE STRATEGY / INTERPRETATION AND VIEWING HUB

The existing visitor centre will be repurposed as part of the overall concept of moving visitor support services away from the cliff side of the R478 access road.

The building will be remodelled to provide a spectacular panoramic viewing point towards the cliffs and a centralised interpretation hub for the stories of the cliffs. The improved internal facilities will also provide an opportunity to establish the Cliffs of Moher as a valuable local learning and cultural resource.

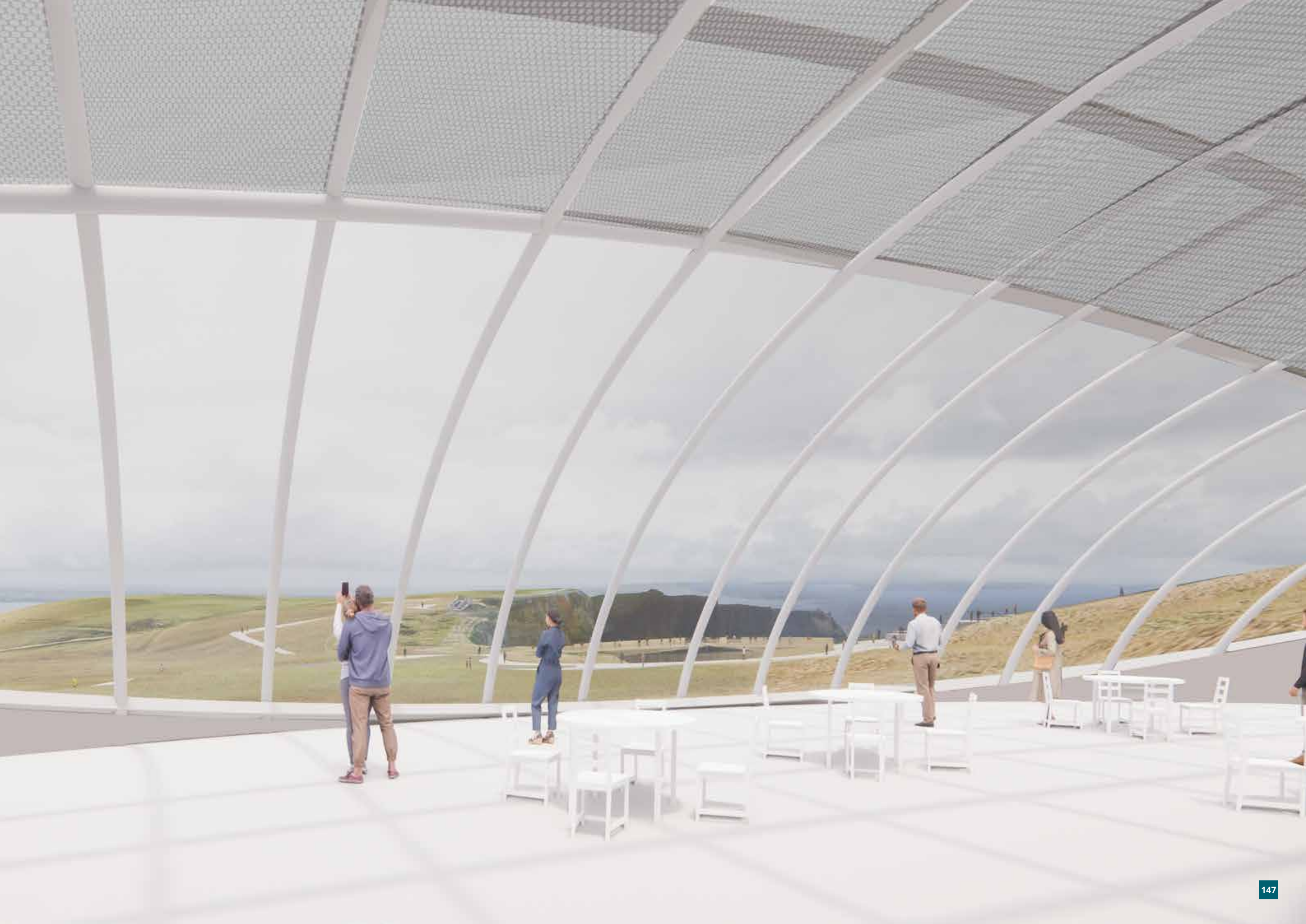
## ! KEY STRATEGIC DECISION

A key justification for transferring visitor facilities and commercial offerings from the visitor centre into the new reception building facility is to avoid the need to expand the existing building. To adequately cope with high visitor numbers, the visitor centre in its current form would require a significantly increased footprint, impacting on views and conservation of habitats in a location that is at the heart of the wild cliffs experience.

The shift in function will significantly reduce the pressure on the building and allow it to provide an alternative role in the visitor experience. The building will be reorganised as an interpretation hub with a focus on providing updated and additional facilities for education, research and groups. The building will continue to play an important role in offering shelter in inclement weather and it will maintain a seasonal food and drink offer.









# THE STRATEGY / INTERPRETATION AND VIEWING HUB

## Combined Facilities

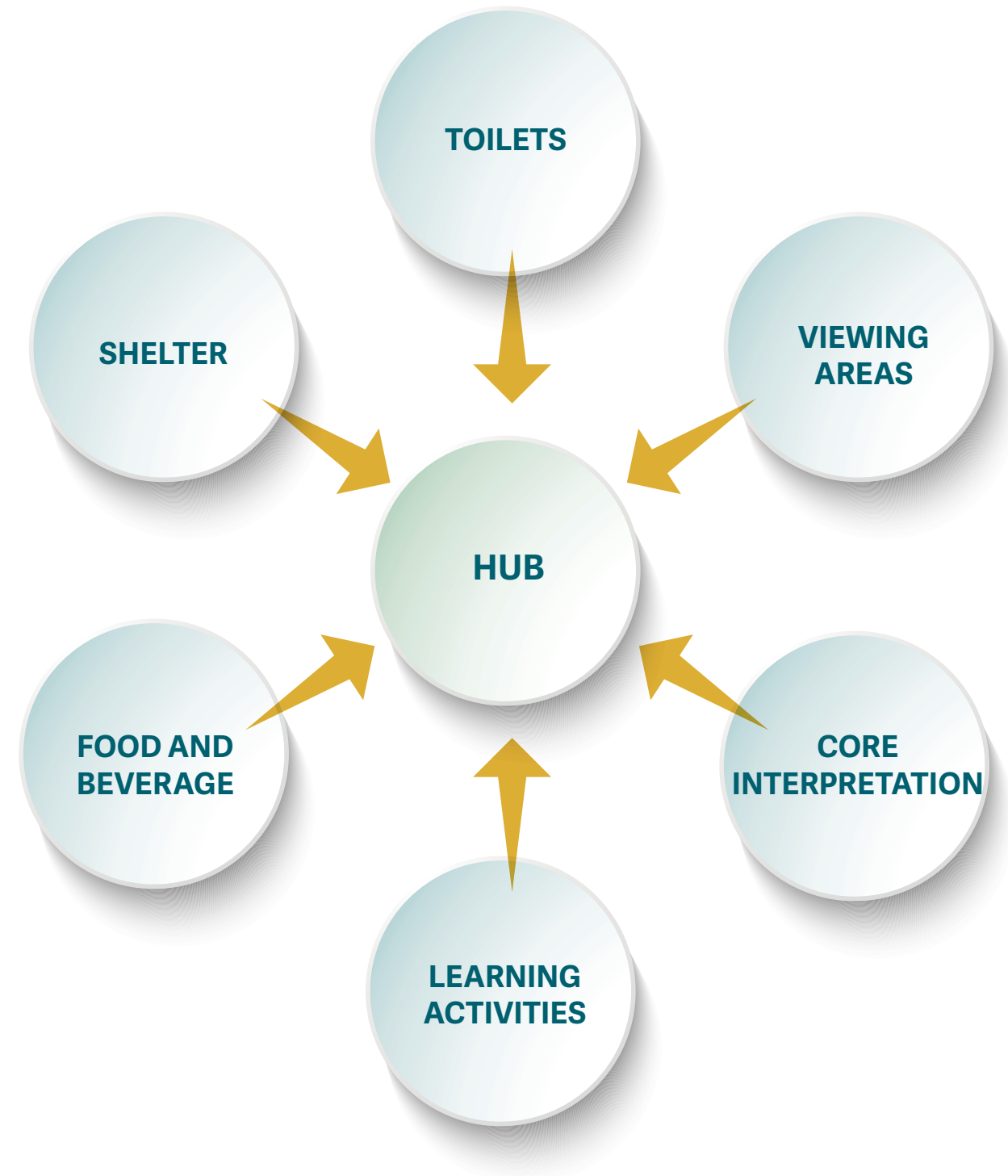
As the visitor centre is no longer the primary destination that fulfils all visitor functions, it can become a destination that is more effectively managed. The internal architecture will be de-cluttered through the removal of ramps, stairs and smaller spaces, creating larger open areas that focus on the following core facilities:

- Extensive internal viewing areas
- Main location for interpretation bringing together the stories of the cliffs
- Education, research and learning spaces
- Seasonal food and drink offer
- Shelter from inclement weather
- Toilets

The simplified arrangement on the upper level will offer enhanced views of the landscape and potentially an outdoor terrace for all-season events, with increased space in the summer.

The core interpretation spaces across two levels will deliver a standalone offer that can be experienced at the beginning or end of the visitor journey. These will feature permanent displays and a showpiece immersive experience that consolidates all the themes through the contrasting concepts of:

- Time and seasonal change
- The cliffs' immovable ancient rock layers





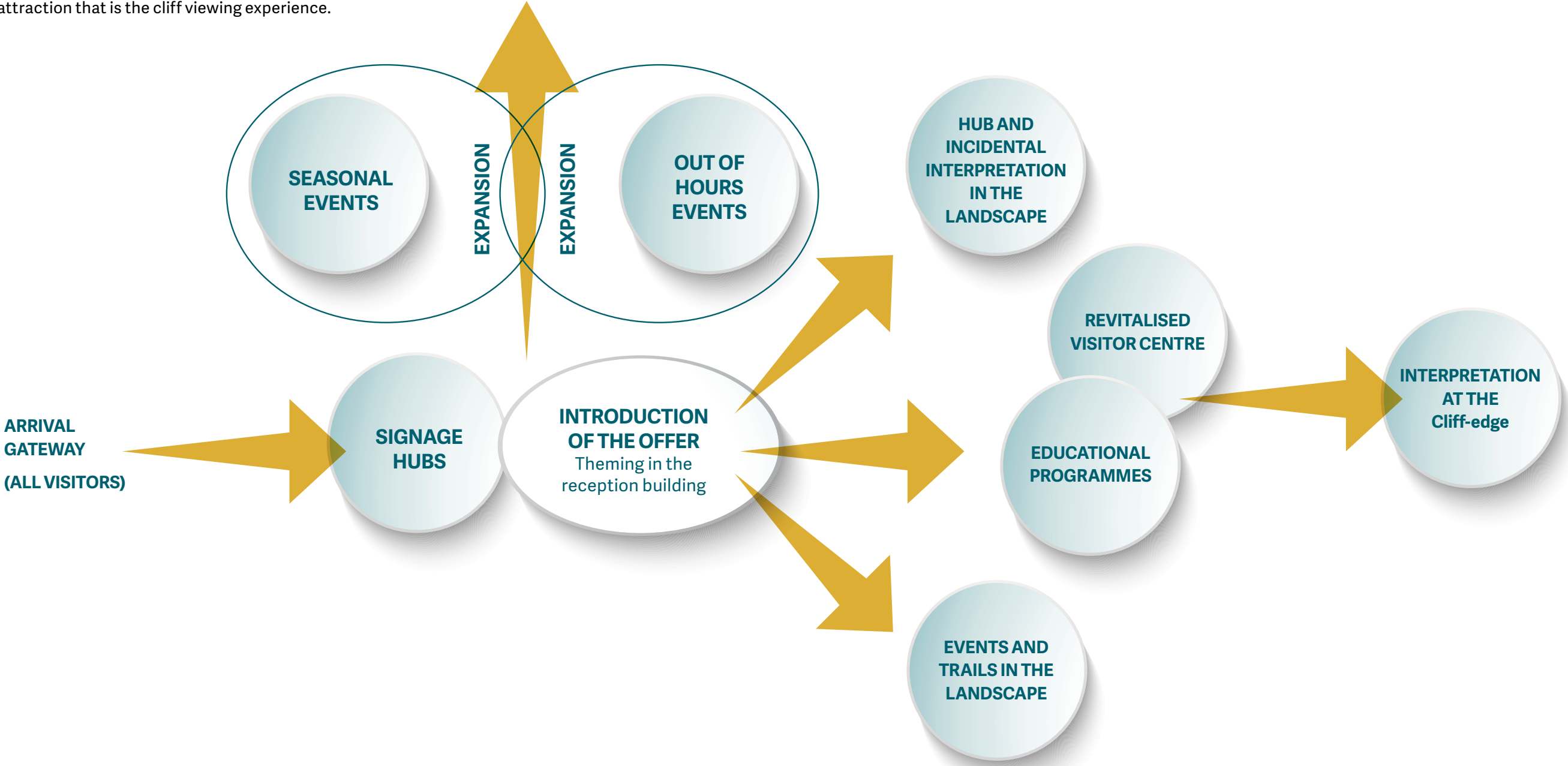




# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE

Improving the interpretative offer at the Cliffs of Moher is central to the long-term strategy to create a world-class visitor experience.

Graphic, audio-visual and immersive media will be distributed across the arrival points, wider landscape and interpretation hubs through a strategic and holistic approach that complements and supports rather than attempts to compete with the showpiece attraction that is the cliff viewing experience.







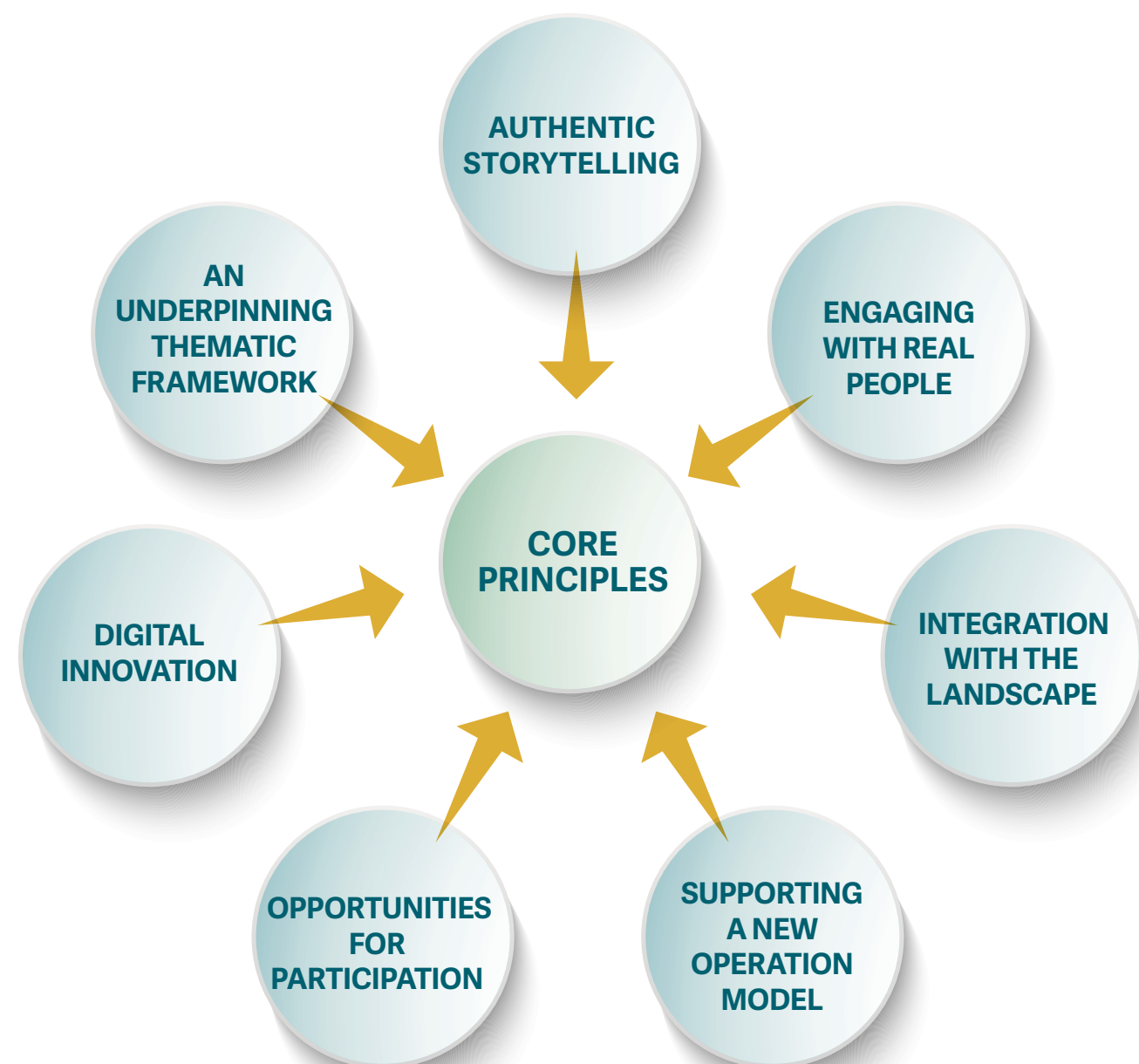
## Authentic Storytelling

Personalised and tailored content will connect visitors to the authenticity of the site, immersing them in the wildness of the setting and reflecting the vibrant cultural heritage of the region.

The first component of this is the storytelling, which will focus on bringing to life personal and cultural stories, evoking emotional responses that will make the history of the place feel tangible.

The experience itself will be participative, stimulating and multi-sensory in a way that helps the visitor to feel absorbed and connected to the essence of the natural landscape.

This strategy will connect with wider strategies to promote the wider Burren landscape as a place of wellness, where contact with the natural elements relaxes the mind and delivers a rejuvenating encounter.



## Engaging with Real People

Interacting and connecting with real people remains a key motivator at heritage sites in Ireland. Although recent social and demographic changes in Irish society have made opportunities to interact with people few and far between, connecting with local communities and their heritage is a significant part of Fáilte Ireland's objective to deliver "real experiences".

**Building on the traditional presence of guides and musicians across the clifftop, an integrated programme of ranger-led tours and events will provide personal insights into the geology, wildlife and folklore and magic of the cliffs and wider county.**



# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE



## Integration Within the Landscape

A key challenge for interpretation lies in providing bold and engaging experiences across the landscape while ensuring that structures, signage and interactive media blend seamlessly into the wild natural setting.

The geometric forms and materials of external interpretation will reflect the landscape, evoking the cliff topography, flight of the seabirds and fossil trail patterns. Theatrical and sculptural elements, all inspired by the folklore legends of the cliffs, will act as landmarks that surprise as well as orientate visitors in the landscape.

Interpretative media will be integrated into the engineered walkways and viewpoints, delivering content that overlays and augments the stunning views. Signage will consolidate orientation information, utilising consistent icons and colour schemes that quickly highlight nearby destinations and codes of conduct.



## Support the New Cliffs of Moher Operational Model

Interpretation will reinforce the operational strategy to disperse visitors across the landscape and provide flexibility to diversify the offer for peak, shoulder and off-peak seasons. A “hub and spoke” approach for signage will deliver centralised orientation that distributes visitors to destinations across the landscape.

Delivering a kit of parts will allow clusters of interpretation to expand and contract based on predicted seasonal footfall. Crucially, this will allow the Cliffs of Moher to increase and decrease interpretation based on visitor numbers throughout the year.



## Opportunities for Participation

Providing opportunities for local and wider communities to participate in projects at the Cliffs of Moher, thereby getting closer to the historical roots and sustainability ethos of the landscape, is an important strategic objective.

The Cliffs of Moher can capitalise on the revival of volunteering in Ireland by establishing new programmes for specific groups, particularly young people, to participate in research and ecological conservation, and in the process develop important skills and generate a genuine sense of place and belonging.

Events and activities that are developed and delivered in partnership with the wider Geopark, focusing on geo-tourism, ecotourism, cultural heritage and wellness across the Burren and cliffs region, will help visitors to consider the landscape holistically and meet joint strategic priorities.

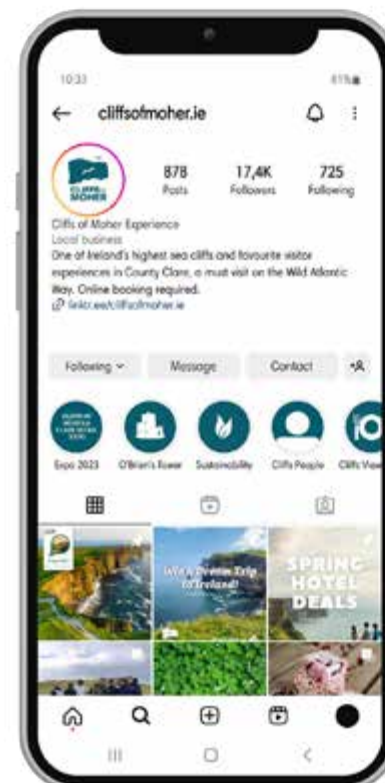


## Digital Innovation

The strategy recognises that technology is playing an ever-increasing role in all stages of the visitor journey. Digital media will be seamlessly integrated into the visitor experience where it can deliver content in surprising and immersive ways while supporting excellent orientation and customer services.

This allows the delivery of flexible multi-language content that is accessible to the increasing range of nationalities visiting Ireland and the Cliffs of Moher, allowing the organisation to continually improve and expand information services in foreign languages.

Initiatives proposed include delivery of digital content on visitor's own devices and providing location-based information during landscape exploration. Augmented and mixed reality technologies that immerse visitors in digital content while they remain rooted in the real world will provide particularly exciting opportunities for the future visitor experience at the Cliffs of Moher.





# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE

## Interpretative Theme Framework

A series of core themes have been developed that will engage visitors with the Cliffs of Moher's most significant assets and stories. These will be inserted into a framework that underpins the approach to interpretation and community engagement activities.

Narratives will showcase the 'big picture' of the wider Burren and County Clare landscape, providing a jump-off point to explore and capture interest in heritage and cultural experiences across the wider region. Sustainability messaging will also be incorporated into each theme, supporting the strategy's overarching emphasis on sustainability.

The ancient stone that forms the Cliffs of Moher is the source of all its stories. The Cliffs' geological and geomorphological characteristics and its relationship with surrounding features, including the UNESCO-designated Geopark and the Doolin to Hags Head County Geological Site, will form a key theme within the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040. This idea is at the core of the central interpretative concept, **Stories Set in Stone**, which brings together a collection of narratives that run across the entire site and wider destination. This overarching theme acts as an introduction to all interpretation that can be experienced at the Cliffs of Moher, setting the scene and orientating visitors so they can explore the site with clarity and purpose.

It is through the rock that we can understand the geological evolution of the landscape (**Reading the Landscape**), the people that have thrived here (**Living on the Edge**), the beautiful wildlife that calls it home (**Haven**), the exhilaration of its towering cliff precipice (**Wild Atlantic**), and the majestic folklore it has inspired (**Legends of the Cliffs**).

### STORIES SET IN STONE

READING THE  
LANDSCAPE

LIVING  
ON THE  
EDGE

HAVEN

LEGENDS OF  
THE CLIFFS

WILD  
ATLANTIC





## Theme 1: Reading the Landscape

This theme focuses on what is perhaps the Cliff's greatest asset – its ability to tell us something about the local environment that existed over 300 million years ago.

Just as the pages of a book tell us part of a bigger story, each layer of ancient rock at the Cliffs of Moher can be “read” to reveal how the landscape has evolved over millions of years. The aim of this theme is to arm visitors with the background information and visual clues they need to identify and understand signifiers of deep time at the cliffs.

The theme will allow visitors to understand the geology of the cliffs in the context of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, showing how these distinct Clare landscapes were formed within a wider chronology of geological events.

The following stories will support this overarching idea:

### How Were the Cliffs Formed?

Here we tell the Cliffs of Moher origin story, starting over 300 million years ago when the towering cliffs were merely the mouth of a large river that flowed down to a shallow warm sea at the Equator, 5,000km away from where Ireland is situated today. Great floods of water deposited sand and mud at the delta and over millions of years these sediments were gradually compacted into solid layers of sandstone, shale and flagstone. These layers rested on an older sequence of Carboniferous limestone rocks that can be seen in the dramatic landscape of the surrounding Burren.

Shortly after the rocks which make up the cliffs were formed, the entire continent collided with another one to the south. Originally horizontal, the rocks were gently folded. The enormous tectonic forces also resulted in the many cracks and fissures that can be seen in the Burren limestone pavement. This collision produced mountains which have been eroded as the tectonics plates transported the rocks from the Equator to where they are now.

The rocks were then subject to the great ice sheets of the last ice age, which carved out the landscape to expose the rock. It was only after that ice melted 16,000 years ago that the sea level began to rise, and eventually coastal erosion began to form the spectacular cliff face we know today.

### Each Fossil Tells a Story

The cliffs provide a unique opportunity to learn about the life that existed in the ancient delta as it migrated into the ocean. This story encourages visitors to look closer at the stone itself, conveniently displayed in the paving and walls around the landscape. The most obvious feature is the squiggly trails, which are feeding trails left by a marine creature such as a worm, or a snail or slug-like mollusc as it crawled through the sediment, feeding on organic matter transported to the delta by the rivers. This tells us that the flagstones were probably formed in very shallow water along the ancient coast. Other flagstones are marked with fossilised ripple marks formed by waves moving the sands and silts on the ancient sea floor.

A particularly unusual fossil was found in 2013 on a Liscannor Stone paving slab. It has eight nodes, which indicates 8-fold symmetry, something seen in jellyfish, corals and anemones which are classified as “cnidaria”. University College Galway recently identified it as a burrowing anemone. Geologists and researchers have not been able to find another specimen like it anywhere in the world.

### UNESCO Global Geopark

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher region of County Clare was designated a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2011 due to its distinct mix of outstanding geology, ecology, archaeology, history, culture, and community. The Geopark has 12 Geosites – areas like the Cliffs of Moher - that are of particular geological significance. Along with other Geoparks across the world, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark uses its UNESCO designation to raise public awareness of its internationally-significant geological heritage and its preservation ([www.burrengeopark.ie](http://www.burrengeopark.ie)).





# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE

## Theme 2: Living on the Edge

Visitors will engage with the personal and emotive stories of communities and individuals that have made their mark on the cliffs throughout history.

From the earliest settlers in the Burren, people have been drawn to this ancient landscape to visit and make a living. This people-led narrative, which is underplayed in existing interpretation, is crucial to engaging visitors on an emotional level with the landscape. They need to be able to imagine the people that have walked the cliff-edge across time in order to understand the impact it has had on the lives of the community.

This theme refers to the early history and archaeology of the wider Burren, as well as the vibrant industry and culture within its surrounding communities.

The following stories will support this overarching idea:

### Early Inhabitants

The cliffs take their name from an ancient caher or stone fort, known as Mothar or Moher, that stood near Hag's Head. No trace of the structure remains today; however, the fort's existence suggests that the cliffs were likely inhabited as early as the Neolithic period. The abundance of stone structures such as wedge tombs and forts across the Burren show that a significant population once inhabited the region. The earliest evidence of humans in the Burren comes from further up the coast at Fanore, where archaeologists have found discarded cooked seashells from the later Mesolithic Period, around 6,000 years ago.

### Quarrying

Quarrying of Liscannor stone has played an important role in the economy of the local area since the 19th century. Flagstone and slate quarried at the Cliffs of Moher can be seen in the field boundaries, building materials and even along the paths you travel along today. The story goes that the local landowner Cornelius O'Brien won a bet with a neighbour that he could construct a wall "six foot high and one inch thick". This wall is still standing, attesting to the durability of the stone. Marketed as "Shamrock Stone", the industry became so prosperous that a village was built around the Doonagore village where around 500 men were employed. The distinctive textured surface patterns created by the fossil tracks of marine animals continue to make the cliff stones a valued product that offer a beautiful expression of the site's geological heritage.

### Tourism

The Cliffs of Moher was already on the tourist trail from the end of the 16th to early 19th centuries, when young nobles would visit during their grand tours of Europe. Local landlord and MP Cornelius O'Brien really put the cliffs on the map when he built the first visitor centre in the 1830s. Described as "an ornamental building in the castellated style", O'Brien's Tower provided a safe platform with spectacular views of nearly the whole line of coast. He also installed a stables and iron picnic table and even provided a piper to entertain visitors, thereby starting the tradition of busking at the cliffs which continues to this day. In the late 1950s, Denis "Dinny" McMahon became a well-loved part of the visitor attraction. He sold postcards, played the tin whistle and charmed visitors with stories of local gods and goddesses, and the habits of the birds that flew around him daily.

Tourism is still critical to the wellbeing and preservation of the cliffs, Geopark and the wider County Clare. The Geopark is working with tourism businesses to create a sustainable model of tourism within the region.



### Making a Living where Sea Meets Land

For thousands of years local people have thrived along this wind and rain-swept coast by harvesting from the cliffs, shore, sea and pastures. Fisherman used a traditional sea craft known as a currach to catch cod, ling, sole, plaice, haddock, mackerel, herring and hake. On shore, many varieties of seaweed were collected to use as a fertiliser or for food and drink. Bird catching and egg gathering on the cliffs was a common practice until World War II. Farming is widespread across the Burren and, despite the challenging coastal conditions, the fields and livestock around the cliffs continue to be the source of unique and lovingly crafted artisan products.



### Theme 3: Haven

Visitors are connected to the designated natural heritage of the site, demonstrating how the distinct topography of the landscape provides the perfect haven for a world-renowned seabird colony.

This theme focuses on the significance of the cliffs as a fragile habitat that supports a spectacular diversity of wildlife within a Special Protected Area (SPA). Visitors will be able to identify specific species and understand the importance of ecological conservation on the site. In doing so it connects strongly to the natural heritage of the whole region and the conservation element has the potential to address climate change and human impact issues throughout the Geopark landscape and beyond.

The following stories will support this overarching idea:

#### Bird Colonies

The horizontally-layered flagstones of the cliff face provide ideal nesting ledges for seabirds. Every year they welcome over 30,000 breeding pairs, including Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes, Peregrine falcons, Puffins and Choughs. At 1,365 individual adults, the cliffs are home to the largest mainland colony of Puffins, the majority of which can be seen at Goat Island. Most seabirds come in the spring to breed and are rarely seen near the shore for the remainder of the year. The Guillemot lays its egg directly onto the ledge and despite the perilous position its hatched chicks rarely fall. Great black-backed gulls patrol the cliffs for a chance encounter with an unguarded egg or chick and Kestrels hover over the clifftops in search of field mice and large insects.

Further inland, four pairs of Choughs can be seen feeding on the short grass at the clifftop. Stonechat and many other common breeding birds are spotted on the bushes and slate stone walls. A wetlands area will be reestablished as part of the landscape strategy, providing valuable habitats for waterfowl, Mallards and Moorhens.

#### Fascinating Flora

The sheer cliffs are largely unvegetated, though some wide slopes support fescue sward and the more scarce roseroot. Typical maritime vegetation that can be seen on the clifftop are thrift, sea campion, buck's-horn plantain, and rock samphire. The wider landscape will be rewilded as part of the masterplan, allowing dry-humid grasslands to flourish with high floristic diversity and attracting ground nesting birds and mammals. Heathland will develop in shallower soils and scrubs in sheltered areas.

The unique coastal plants at the cliffs represent a tiny proportion of the world-renowned flora that can be seen across the wider Burren. The Geopark is home to almost three quarters of the total flora of 1400 plant species found in the whole of Ireland.

#### Beneath the Waves

Depending on the season, seals, basking sharks, dolphins and whales have been seen in the waters beneath cliffs. Hag's Head is a popular spot for whale watching.

#### Protecting the Cliffs

Teams at the Cliffs of Moher and within the wider Geopark are addressing challenges relating to landscape protection and the interconnectivity of biodiversity and climate change. The acceleration of coastal erosion and impact of tourism means that a careful balance must be struck between sustainability and conservation, ensuring that the cliffs can remain a haven for both wildlife and visitors for generations to come. Future conservation priorities for the site include the sustainable management of bird habitats and the collection of bird count data for ongoing analysis.





# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE

## Theme 4: Wild Atlantic

This theme focuses on the cliffs and crashing waves as an awe-inspiring and occasionally fear-inducing spectacle that has attracted visitors for generations.

The Cliffs of Moher have been shaped and influenced by the wild Atlantic - it is impossible to consider one without the other. The towering waves have proved to be a big draw for surfers as well as a treacherous foe, as experienced by the Spanish Armada in the 16th century.

The theme conveys the sheer power and uncontrollable force of the Atlantic Ocean along Ireland's west coast, connecting strongly to the thrilling and visceral experience of travelling the Wild Atlantic Way.

The following stories will support this overarching idea:

### Shaped by the Atlantic

Many of the most famous features of the cliffs have been carved out of the rocks by the forces of the Atlantic. The great sea stack below O'Brien's Tower stands 67 metres high. Its name, An Branán Mór, has a literal translation as the Big Prince or the Big Raven or Rook, probably due to its resemblance to a large chess piece when viewed from the sea. The column of rock was once part of the cliffs but coastal erosion slowly removed the layers of rock joining it to the mainland. Further west, a number of sea caves have formed at the foot of the cliffs. One of these featured famously in the 2009 film 'Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince'. A large sea arch can also be seen at Hag's Head below the Napoleonic signal tower and multiple smaller sea arches can be seen from sea level.

### Giant Waves

Known to ancient inhabitants as Aill na Searrach (Foals' Leap), Aileen's wave has been linked to the story of seven Celtic gods who were transformed into seven foals and leapt into the afterlife, furious at St Patrick for bringing Christianity to Ireland. Rarely spotted, the wave has remained enigmatic and sought after by some of the world's best surfers. The combination of energy from the storm swells rushing in on the warm Gulf stream and the pull of the tide is what gives Aileen her awesome height and steepness.

### Spanish Armada

The same ocean forces would prove to be fateful for the Spanish Armada following their defeat at the sea battle of Gravelines in northern France. The Armada fleet planned to return to Spain by sailing north around Scotland before turning south down Ireland's west coast. Boetius Clancy, High Sheriff of Clare, looked out in concern from the Cliffs of Moher on 16th September 1588 as two large ships lurked off the Aran Islands. Two galleon ships were wrecked in terrible gale conditions, resulting in the loss of over 450 lives.





## Theme 5: Legends of the Cliffs

Through the legends and myths associated with the cliffs, visitors are brought closer to the rich oral and musical traditions of the region, specifically nearby Doolin.

The Cliffs of Moher have inspired many stories and myths throughout their history, many related to the physical features of this legendary landscape. This theme shines a light on the legends themselves, along with the special ability of local musicians and storytellers to capture the essence and atmosphere of the cliffs and wider west coast.

This theme intends to capture imaginations and drive visits to nearby towns such as Doolin, Lisdoonvarna, Kilfenora, Miltown Malbay, New Quay and Kinvara, where they can experience the best of the area's authentic music and storytelling scene.

The following stories will support this overarching idea.

### Myths of the Cliffs

The number of myths linked to the cliffs demonstrates the long-standing fascination with the awe-inspiring landscape and offers fantastical origin stories for some of its key features. The Legend of the Hag and Cú Chulainn tells the story of a witch that falls in love with a mythological hero and in her chase crashes into Hag's Head, which is said to take the shape of her profile. The Irish saint Macreehy features in The Corpse-Eating Eel. Two stones of the cliffs that are only visible during low tide are said to mark his bed. The Leap of the Foals relates to the spread of Christianity in Ireland and explains the name of Aill Na Searrach, or the Cliff of the Foals. In The Lost City of Kilstiffen, legend has it that a city lies underneath the waves and rises every seven years. The keys to the city are supposed to be hidden in a little island off the cliffs.

### Storytelling

The distinct music and storytelling traditions of Clare have drawn a number of renowned collectors to the area, seeking to record and preserve material for future generations. Seamus Delargy, a young founding member of the Folklore of Ireland Society, travelled to Doolin in 1929 to collect Irish language folktales on an Ediphone machine.

Delargy was amazed by the storytellers' extraordinary memory for detail and their ability to impress their personality on a story through gestures and mood, weaving their creativity and the folktales together to provide a performance. The audience would be active participants, reacting through comments of approval or criticism.

### The Home of Traditional Irish Music

There is a long tradition of busking at the Cliffs of Moher and nearby Doolin in particular is considered to be the home of traditional Irish music. The music played at the cliffs is said to reflect the distinct rolling landscape, as well as the rough seas and soaring coastline of the cliffs. According to local tradition-bearers, the popular instruments of the early 1900s were concertinas, flutes and whistles, mouth organs and Jew's harps.

The cliffs lend their name to a traditional Irish jig and many musicians from the area continue to produce music that is inspired by unique features of the cliffs landscape. The diversity of traditional music in the region is celebrated at events such as the Corofin Traditional Festival, Doolin Folk Festival, Willie Clancy Summer School in Miltown Malbay and the Feakle Traditional Music Festival.






# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE


## Interpretative Hierarchy

A carefully paced sequence of immersive, informative and participative experiences will make up the re-imagined interpretative offer for the Cliffs of Moher.


### ATTRACT

 **Introduce visitors and raise anticipation for the Cliffs of Moher Experience**


### ORIENTATE

 **Help visitors to plan their visit and familiarise themselves with the site's various offers**


### ENGAGE

 **Immerse visitors in the core narrative themes, messaging and related storylines**

### DISCOVER

 **Encourage visitors to discover more through interaction and exploration**

### ADVENTURE

 **Visceral and multi-sensory experiences that connect to the wildness of the setting**







# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE

## Journey to the Edge

Passengers on the shuttle between the park and ride hubs and the Cliffs of Moher will have an exciting and interactive start to their journey through onboard interpretation.

The shuttle experience will become an immersive event in its own right, generating a strong sense of anticipation and arrival as visitors approach the cliffs. Focused interpretation should prepare visitors for the wildlife and landscape features they can look for at the cliffs, wherever possible referring to scenery along the way.

Aligning with Fáilte Ireland's strategy to prioritise first-person interpretation by local people, live interpreters can provide a strong personalised welcome and deliver theatrical storytelling recounting myths and legends associated with the cliffs.

Digital content can be layered over the scenery outside through large window projection screens, providing an opportunity for initial orientation and atmospheric visualisations that build excitement about what visitors can see and do when they arrive.

New virtual reality-based technologies can deliver an awe-inspiring and exhilarating virtual experience of the cliffs. This approach would need to be balanced with the risk of isolating visitors from the landscape outside and lessening the impact of the actual cliff-edge experience.





## Shuttle Experience Case Study: VR Bus Roma, Italy and The Ride, New York

VR Bus Roma is a 30-minute virtual reality (VR) experience tour of Rome launched in 2022, that enables visitors to imagine the ancient monuments as they would have been seen over 2000 years ago. The experience is delivered on an all-electric bus that runs nine tours a day at €15 a ticket.

The 3D reconstructions are brought to life without the need for a VR headset – they are superimposed on transparent OLED screens fitted within the windows of the bus. Motorised curtains allow you to directly compare the Rome of today with the Rome of the past.

The real movements of the bus are transferred into the reconstruction sequences, enabling onboard passengers to experience the physical sensation of travelling through Rome 2000 years ago.

The Ride delivers an interactive sightseeing tour in New York using floor-to-ceiling glass windows and stadium-style seating with 40 LCD TV screens, 3,000 LED lights and surround sound.

Trained hosts and performers provide live interpretation, while a VR experience at specific locations recreates iconic moments of Downtown New York





# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE

## Interpretation in the Landscape

Interpretation will complement and blend into the landscape, giving visitors the choice to access compelling stories that are relevant to the stunning views and natural environment around them.



### Travel Through Deep Time

A series of graphic and sculptural elements along the first visitor walkway from the bridge to the wetland area will reveal the 300-million-year-long geological formation of the cliffs, beginning with sediments gathering at the mouth of a large river and ending with the great ice ages that carved out the landscape.



### Incidental Interpretation Points

Graphic and tactile interpretation will be integrated into pathways to highlight visible features across the landscape, such as the lake and flora and fauna of the rewilded habitats. Robust interactive elements such as fossil rubbing and wind-up or solar powered audio can add to the sense of discovery and adventure.

Strategically located first-person interpretation can provide surprising moments of personalised storytelling relating to cultural traditions and human interest narratives, such as the quarrying industry.



### Site-Wide Wayfinding

A colour-coded network of signposted routes along and around the cliffs will deliver themed narratives based on audience interests and learning objectives, including birdwatching and geological features.

Robust signage materials will reflect and reinforce the cliff's heritage assets, including the landscape topography and fossil trails. Integrated digital signage can deliver updatable visitor information such as weather and safety warnings.



### Interactive App

There is significant scope for enhancing visitors' experiences of adventure and discovery across the landscape through a mobile app, particularly for families. Identification and treasure hunt features can encourage visitors to search for natural features or location specific geocaches hidden in the landscape.

Augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) applications can reveal the geology under your feet and encourage interaction without distracting visitors from immersion in the environment. The app can also have a secondary role as an orientation and what's on guide, providing a map with real-time GPS locations and notifications about events, activities and safety warnings during the day.

Although difficult to implement in daylight conditions, this technology is likely to continue to evolve and become more commonplace on a range of mobile devices and wearable technology.

### Enhance Iconic Views

Graphics embedded in the safety barriers complement rather than compete with views, highlighting key wildlife and features along the cliff face and into the wider Burren landscape.

Virtual viewfinders and augmented reality accessible on visitor's own devices will animate content onto the landscape in front of them to deliver enhanced immersive experiences.

Sculptural elements can act as intriguing way markers at viewpoints, connecting visitors with the mythology of the cliffs, for example the legends of the corpse-eating eel, the witch of Hag's Head, and the Cliff of Foals.





## Interpretation Hub

A simplified internal arrangement within the existing visitor centre provides opportunities for a sequence of striking multi-sensory exhibition displays and participatory engagement activities.

### Immersive Experience

The curved walls and domed ceiling of the interpretation hub will be used as the surface for a panoramic audio-visual presentation that is visible in the round. Based on the evocative concept of time and change at the cliffs, this immersive and emotional engaging film will use the existing double height space to provide a linking experience between the two levels of the hub.

For visitors just arriving at the Cliffs of Moher, this will act as an exciting trailer for the features and activities that they can discover outside. For those having experienced the cliff-edge, this provides a powerful conclusion that adds context and emotion to the stunning views they have witnessed.



Seasonal changes attract a diverse array of wildlife throughout the year



The force of the Atlantic Ocean constantly reshapes the cliff-edge



The connection between people and the cliffs continues to evolve



Geological formation of the cliffs occurred over millions of years



Fantastical ancient legends of the cliffs are passed down through generations

# THE STRATEGY / REVITALISED INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE

## Stories Set in Stone Permanent Exhibition

The lower level will host an enlarged and enhanced exhibition space with expandable thematic display islands. This “Stories Set in Stone” experience will offer layered interactive and multimedia content that supports and expands on the narratives explored in the immersive show.

### READING THE LANDSCAPE

Interactives exploring rock layers and fossil trails as signifiers of deep time, and links to geology of the wider Geopark.

### STORIES SET IN STONE

A central rock ledge sculpture provides a striking multisensory centrepiece and navigational tool to explore surrounding thematically-arranged displays.

### LIVING ON THE EDGE

People-led storytelling combined with artefact displays focus on the communities that make a living off the cliffs.

### LEGENDS OF THE CLIFFS

Evocative origin stories of the cliffs are recounted in traditional folktale style.

### WILD ATLANTIC

Immersive films and soundscapes evoke the thrill and immense force of towering waves at the cliffs.

### HAVEN

Bird species and their synergy with cliff habitats are introduced through interactive digital media and potentially taxidermised specimens.







### Learning and Engagement Facilities

Flexible classroom spaces will provide a base for dynamic indoor and outdoor learning sessions that target primary and secondary schools, and community groups. These can utilise immersive storytelling and investigative learning techniques led by a team of “ranger” education professionals. The core school offer will consist of a self-led tour of the indoor interpretative experience combined with a range of bookable ranger-led workshops and tours linked to the Irish curriculum, specifically Social, Environmental and Scientific Education subjects.

Indoor workshops will take place in a new suite of visitor centre classroom facilities, which have easy access to the cliff landscape, while outdoor tours and learning activities will maximise the expanded, rewilded environment. The school offer is able to focus on the geological and natural history and wildlife of the cliffs and wider Burren through activities like interactive field work conservation, archaeology, environmental art, orienteering and wildlife identification. More creative sessions can explore the storytelling and musical traditions of the local area.

Improved indoor facilities can provide the catalyst to expand the volunteering programme and deliver a series of targeted projects that engage local communities and under-represented groups in outdoor conservation, monitoring and planting.

Clare County Council is developing a new Habitat Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher, and this will be a focus for ongoing research and studies of the local flora and fauna. COME has also commissioned bird surveys to provide baseline data to inform the 2040 Strategy. Seabird, Chough and Peregrine surveys are being undertaken at the Cliffs of Moher as part of ongoing monitoring of the wildlife and habitats at the site.

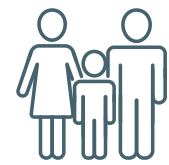
These opportunities can be aligned with regional community archaeology and citizen science initiatives, delivered in partnership with the wider Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark.



### Temporary Exhibitions

A dedicated rotating exhibition space can provide a different offer every year, driving repeat visits and delivering fresh topical content. Exhibition themes can focus on current issues such as climate change and the mitigation of its impacts at the cliffs. Displays can also focus on contemporary art displays and installations that offer surprising and multisensory responses to the cliffs and the wider Burren landscape.

# THE STRATEGY / VISITOR JOURNEY SCENARIOS



## Young Family Arrives by Car to Remote Car Park:

- Pleasant weather conditions
- 5-10 min negotiating car park
  - 10 min wait for shuttle
- 12 min transit time
  - 10 min negotiating reception building
  - (visitors pass through)
  - 15 min to cantilever
  - (visitors feel they have arrived and orientate themselves)
  - 1.5 hours exploring
  - (possibly including 20 mins at the interpretation hub)
- 15 min back to reception
- 45 min retail and snack
- 10 min wait for shuttle
- 12 min transit time
- 10 min negotiating car park



## Three Explorer Friends Arrive by Car to Remote Car Park:

- Pleasant weather conditions
- 5-10 min negotiating car park
  - 10 min wait for shuttle
- 12 min transit time
  - 10 min negotiating reception building
  - (visitors pass through)
  - 15 min to cantilever
  - (visitors feel they have arrived and orientate themselves)
- 30 min at the hub for coffee
  - 2.5 hours exploring all pathways
- 15 min back to reception
- 60 min retail and meal
- 10 min wait for shuttle
- 12 min transit time
- 5 10 min negotiating car park



## Elderly Couple Arrives by Car to Remote Car Park:

- (Mediocre weather conditions)
- 5-10 min negotiating car park
  - 10 min wait for shuttle
- 12 min transit time
  - 25 min negotiating reception building
- (visitors have coffee)
  - 15 mins at interpretation hub
  - (visitors feel they have arrived and orientate themselves)
  - 30 mins loop of skywalk
- 15 min back to reception
- 45 mins retail and snack
- 10 min wait for shuttle
- 12 min transit time
- 5-10 min negotiating car park







### Young Family Arrives by Car to Onsite Car Park:



Poor weather conditions



5-10 min negotiating car park



35 min negotiating reception building



(visitors looking for gap in the weather)



10 min to interpretation hub



(visitors feel they have arrived and orientate themselves)



30 mins loop of skywalk



15 min back to reception

45 mins retail and snack



10 min wait for shuttle

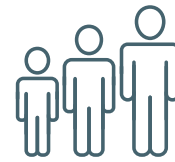


12 min transit time

5-10 min negotiating car park



€ €  
MODEST SPEND



### Three Explorer Friends Arrive by Car to Onsite Car Park:



Pleasant weather conditions



5-10 min negotiating car park



10 min negotiating reception building



(visitors pass through)



15 mins to cantilever



(visitors feel they have arrived and orientate themselves)



30 mins at the hub for coffee



2 hours exploring all pathways



15 min back to reception

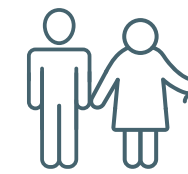


45 mins retail and meal

5-10 min negotiating car park



€ € €  
HIGHER SPEND



### Elderly Couple Arrives by Car to Onsite Car Park:



Mediocre weather conditions



5-10 min negotiating car park



25 min negotiating reception building



(visitors have coffee)



15 mins to interpretation hub



(visitors feel they have arrived and orientate themselves)



30 mins loop of skywalk



15 min back to reception.



25 mins retail and snack

5-10 min negotiating car park



€ €  
MODEST SPEND

# THE STRATEGY / INSPIRE MORE VISITORS

The marketing strategy focuses on championing the personality of the Cliffs of Moher and translating its essence into a coherent and recognizable visual language that will promote it as a whole.

## Existing Brand

The Cliffs of Moher is a world-recognised brand that has evolved over nearly 200 years. The story began in 1835 when local parliamentarian Cornelius O'Brien brought lords and ladies to his tower to amuse and enthrall. In the 1950s Dinny McMahon, a self-appointed guide, saw the opportunity in tourism as he entertained American visitors at the cliffs. The Cliffs of Moher welcomed 1.6 million visitors in 2019, demonstrating the power of its draw.

It is a signature discovery point on the Wild Atlantic Way, a Special Protection Area for Birds and Wildlife, an important geosite in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, and a must-see attraction for visitors coming to Ireland.

## Capitalising on this unique brand, we will seek to:

1. Increase visitation to the Cliffs of Moher during the shoulder season, thereby extending the season.
2. Drive consideration for other activities and attractions in County Clare and encourage exploration of the region.
3. Convert one-time visitors into repeat visitors.
4. Grow the year-round appeal of the Cliffs of Moher domestically and internationally, ensuring that it attracts and disperses high-value visitors into and throughout the region.





## Core Objective 1: Deliver High Quality Experiences

The visitor experience at the Cliffs of Moher will be greatly improved, enhancing the visitor attraction's market position while conserving its beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats. Visitors will have a "wilder" back-to-nature encounter with the landscape, enhanced through new thrilling cliff views, layered interpretation, and a high-quality arrival. Visitors will have the opportunity in this new enhanced space to enjoy uninterrupted spectacular views, and immerse themselves in nature and wildness. Visitors will travel far to reconnect with families and friends, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

### Initiatives

1. Continually gather insights from buyers in order to inform the development of saleable visitor experiences and value-added packages.
2. Understand the consumer segments and target markets to deliver sustainable growth of the destination, while identifying clear priorities and alignment around new experiences to be created.
3. Create new itineraries from Shannon International Airport, car rentals, hotels and other attractions that will inspire wider exploration and encourage longer dwell times in the region.
4. Monitor and audit experiences to align with market demand and work with buyers to identify products suitable to grow international visitor numbers.
5. Continuously monitor global tourism and destination trends, visitor sentiment, and international consumer research to build on emerging opportunities.

## Core Objective 2: Capitalise on Digital Innovation

### Initiatives

1. Invest in digital marketing spend to ensure the Cliffs of Moher is ranked high in return search.
2. Understand the path to purchase to ensure visitors are converting.
3. New and improved booking engine to yield high conversions with dynamic pricing to ensure distribution of visitors throughout the day.
5. Use digital assets to connect to the visitor pre-visit, to inform, educate and upsell.
6. Develop an e-commerce function, capitalising on the brand recognition.
7. Seamlessly integrate digital media into the visitor experience where it can deliver content in surprising and immersive ways, while supporting excellent orientation and customer services.
8. Virtual reality-based technologies will deliver an awe inspiring and exhilarating virtual experience of the cliffs.
9. Enhanced digital capability will result in onsite and off-site visitor research and provide new opportunities for differentiated approaches in marketing and promotion.

# THE STRATEGY / INSPIRE MORE VISITORS

## Core Objective 3: Increase Visitor Dispersion and Season Extension Across the Region

### Initiatives

1. Greater cooperation, coordination and communication between the Cliffs of Moher, local businesses and residents to spread the economic benefits from visitors to the wider community.
2. Flexible classroom spaces will provide a base for dynamic indoor and outdoor learning sessions that target primary and secondary schools, and community groups.
3. Improved indoor facilities can provide the catalyst to expand the volunteering programme, and deliver a series of targeted projects that engage local communities and under-represented groups in outdoor conservation, monitoring and planting.
4. Highlight the culture and heritage of the wider Burren and County Clare landscape via onsite interpretation, providing a platform to capture interest in visitor experiences across the wider region.
5. Strengthen partnerships to develop new joint marketing campaigns and regionwide visitor packages to help develop infrastructure and services in local towns and villages, promoting all there is to uncover in the county.
6. Enhance partnerships and achieve greater coordination between the Cliffs of Moher and local businesses and communities. A unified landscape with interconnected experiences will be offered, engaging visitors and the local community with a wider sense of place that incorporates the Cliffs of Moher, Burren and surrounding towns and villages.
7. Attract more luxury visitors from core markets with the aim of retaining higher-spending and longer-staying visitors within the region.
8. Attract adventure and slow tourism markets on a year-round basis, including food lovers, walkers and cyclists, working in partnership with stakeholders such as Burren GEOfood.
9. Continue to work with accommodation providers and the Shannon Region Conference Sports Bureau to increase high-yield business visitors across the association conference, incentive and corporate meeting segment.
10. Deliver packaging offers, joint ticket initiatives within Clare County and a calendar of events for the year, including peak, shoulder and off-season events and offers.
11. Establish collaborative partnerships and public relations with online influencers, tour operators and travel media in the region.
12. Continue to attract best-prospect consumers to fill midweek and weekend business across the full calendar year.
13. Work with the community to give visitors easy access to meet with local people, hear stories, interact with nature and encounter the cultural heritage of the area.



## Core Objective 4: Deliver on New Domestic and International Segmentation Models

The marketing strategy is guided by the Cliffs of Moher and Fáilte Ireland domestic visitor segmentation model, which provides clear insights into consumer motivations for travel through continuous visitor research. Similarly, the strategy is informed by Tourism Ireland's global segmentation model and will respond to any future iterations. This will provide new opportunities for differentiated approaches in the marketing and promotion of the Cliffs of Moher Experience.

75% of all visitors coming to the Cliffs of Moher are international, with 40% being from the USA market. Opportunities exist to grow and expand the domestic market and other international audiences.

### Domestic visitors

Fáilte Ireland's new Motivations Segmentation for the domestic market has unlocked insights that have allowed the region to identify priority segments for targeting and development. Research has shown that motivation is by far the most important driver for taking a trip. Half as important is what visitors want to do on the trip, followed by when they want to travel, and finally, the demographics of the travelling party.

Definitions of personal motivations for domestic markets are as follows:

- Social Energy: to enjoy the atmosphere, vibrancy and energy of a place.
- Time Out: to escape everyday life and de-stress.
- Adventure: to push yourself and do things out of your comfort zone, mainly in the outdoors.
- Reconnection: to relax and do very little, mainly with people or friends closest to you.
- Exploration: to explore the new and unfamiliar in an area, including culture.
- Bonding: to nurture relationships with family and those closest to me.
- Celebration: to celebrate a special occasion.

### International visitors

Definitions of personal motivations for international markets are as follows:

- North America: American holidaymakers like lots of variety in their holiday itinerary and prefer "bite-sized" experiences so they can explore a wide range of experiences. Iconic historic attractions differentiate Ireland and are an important driver for travel. Activity is generally of an easy nature as they explore and engage within the landscape and historical sites.
- Germany: The dramatic coastal scenery at the Cliffs of Moher is a Unique Selling Point for the German market. They are more likely to consume the landscape in an active way, and soaking up the atmosphere of the authentic local culture is also important.
- France: French holidaymakers enjoy wandering off the beaten track, away from perceived visitor hotspots, as a means to explore unspoilt landscapes. French visitors are attracted to authenticity and local experiences.
- Great Britain: The British market mirrors much of the behaviour of the Irish domestic market in their attraction to bundled holiday-type experiences with lots to see and do to. British people want to experience a different culture that they cannot get at home. Easy walking is their favoured way to explore both urban and rural settings, along with leisurely activities on or near water such as coastal hikes and boat trips.

## On-going COM Visitor and Tourism Research

Cliffs of Moher and Clare County Council are working with the University of Limerick and Atlantic Technological University Sligo are undertaking on-going research on visitors and tourism impacts. Professor Jim Deegan and PhD Student Ernesto Sanchez of Limerick University are conducting research on visitors to the Cliffs of Moher relating to all stages of the visitor journey (prearrival, on-site and post-visit) and are building detailed profiles of visitor demographics, visit patterns and motivations. Dr James Hanrahan and Fiona McKenna of ATU Sligo are carrying out County wide research measuring and monitoring tourism impacts on economy, communities, heritage and the environment. The findings from this work will provide key data and analysis to assist with monitoring, evaluation and future decision making on the Cliffs of Moher marketing and audience strategies.

# THE STRATEGY / INSPIRE MORE VISITORS

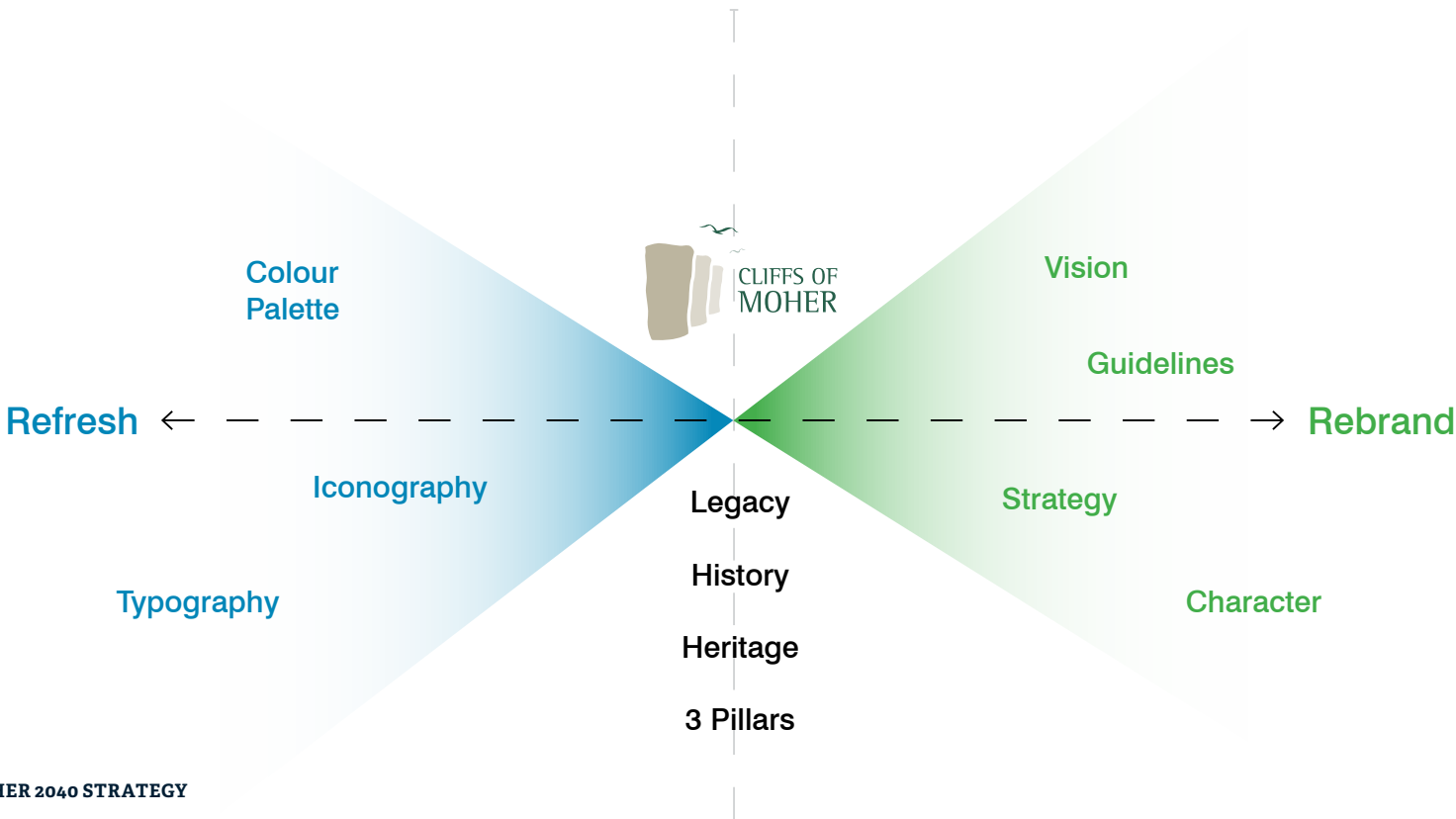
## New Brand Identity

The development of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy has provided the ideal opportunity to review and update the Cliffs of Moher brand and consider how it functions within the wider strategy for promoting the destination.

As part of an independent commission to the 2040 strategy, a new study was undertaken to refresh and refine the Cliffs of Moher logo and brand guidelines. These have been developed to focus on the unique, inspiring, mystical and wild aspects of the new visitor experience, with an emphasis on promoting and marketing the cliffs as a sustainable tourist destination.

The new guidelines will inform the Cliffs of Moher communications and presentation of information, interpretation, retail and signage to the visitor, both online and onsite. The message that the Cliffs of Moher, along with the nature and wildlife surrounding the site, must be appreciated in person can be clearly expressed through a dynamic identity system that can evolve with the future requirements of the site.

The strong brand strategy can be implemented across various inputs, including signage and wayfinding, social media and traditional marketing materials such as brochures, flyers and gift shop merchandise. Examples from the brand strategy process and guidelines, which will be incorporated into the revitalised site experience, are included here for reference.



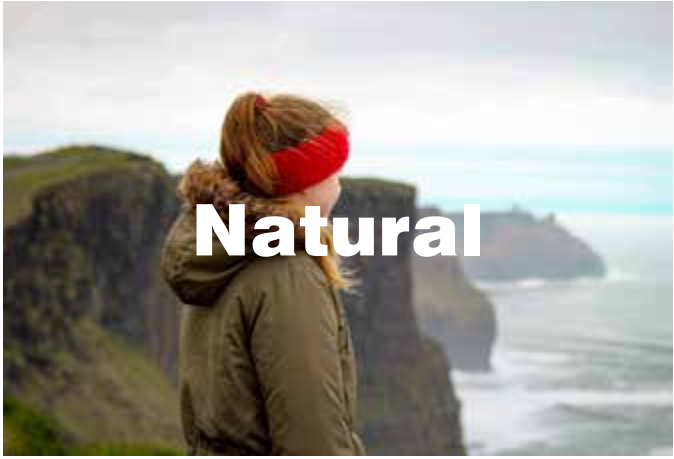
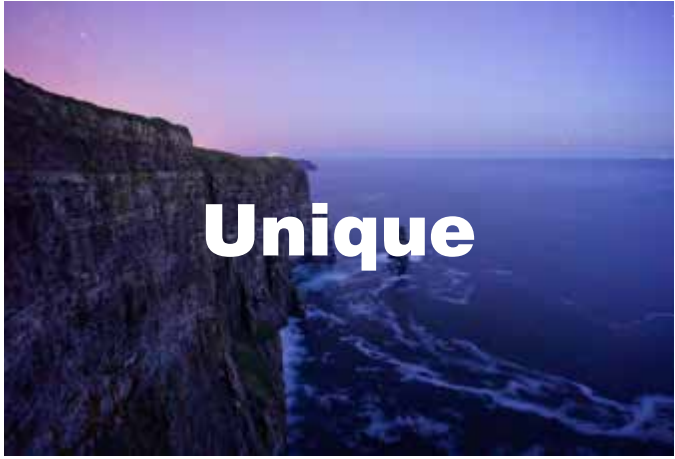
## CORE BRAND LOGO



## SECONDARY LOGOS









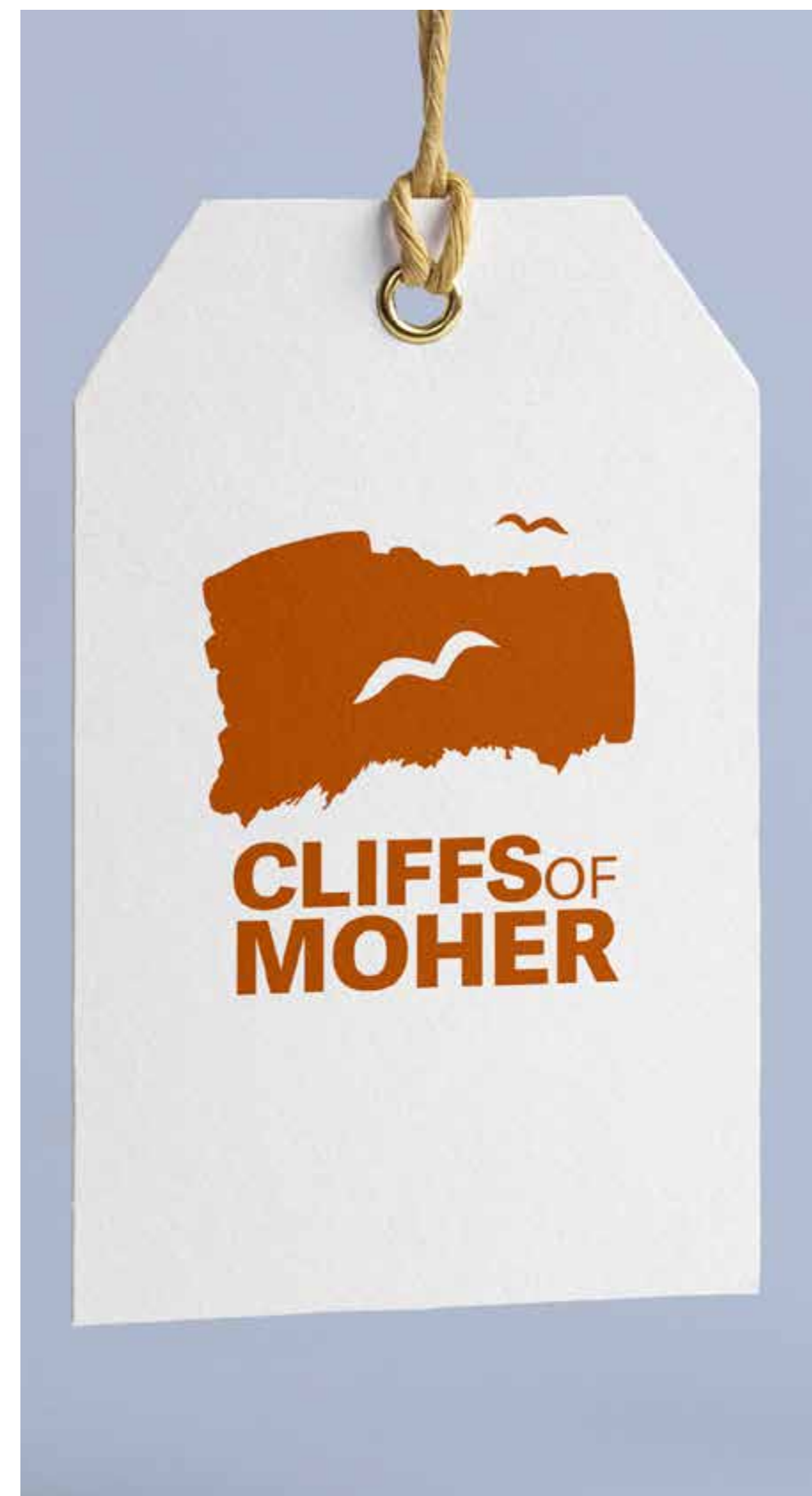
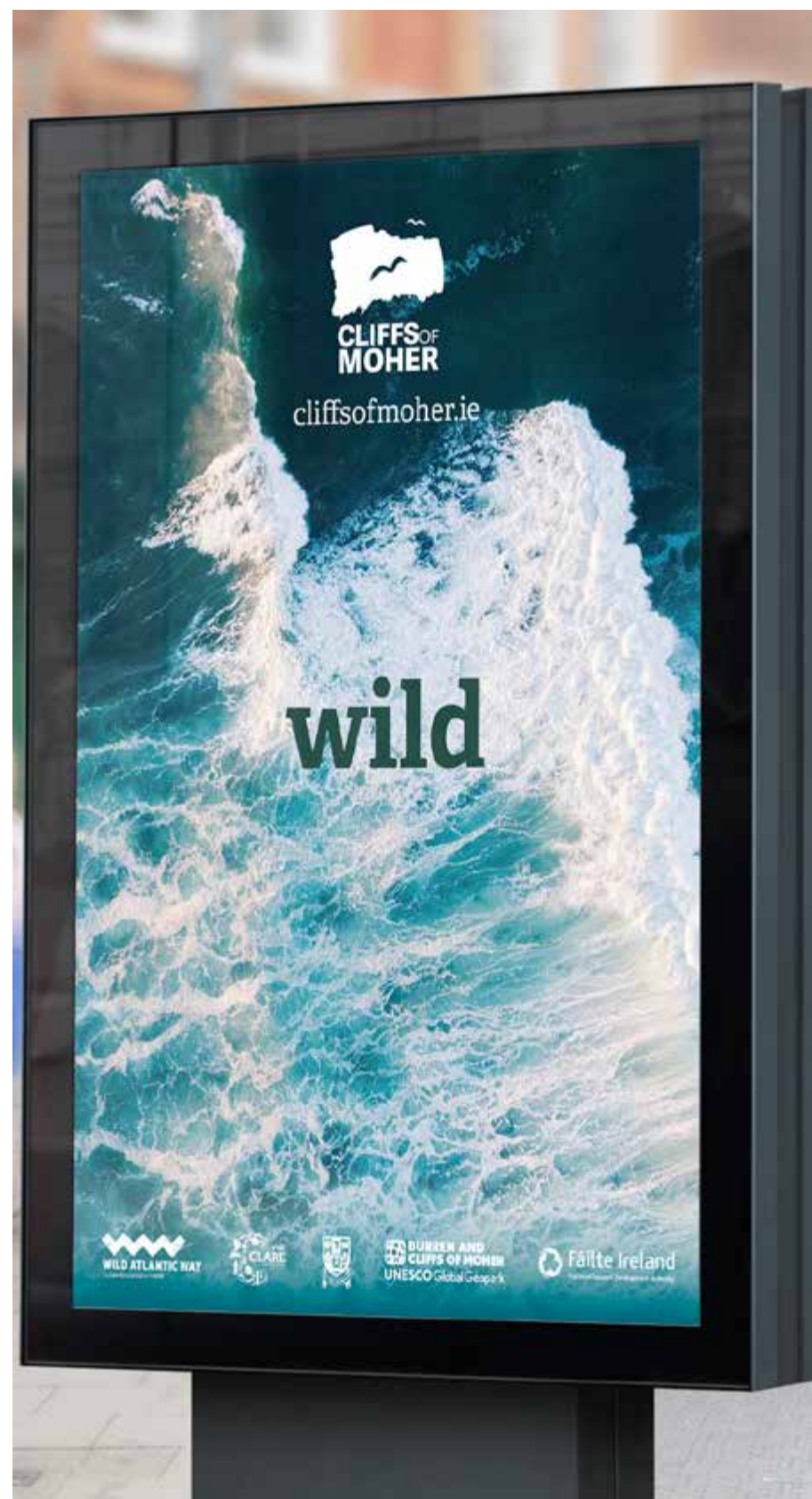
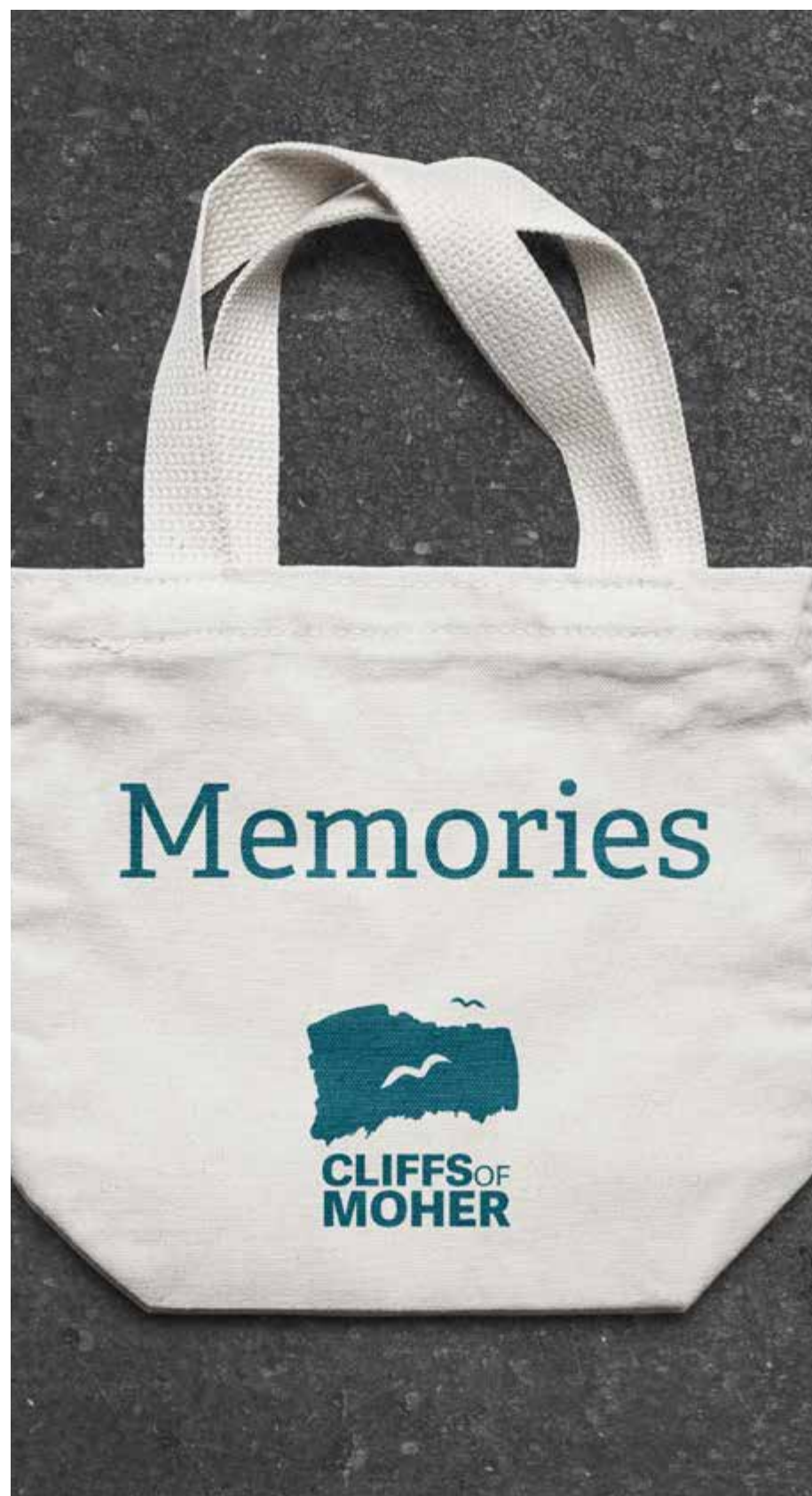
THE STRATEGY / **INSPIRE MORE VISITORS**



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# THE STRATEGY / SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A series of sustainability workshops held in 2021 with the principal stakeholders, Clare County Council and the masterplan design team identified a range of primary sustainability themes for the Cliffs of Moher.

The sustainability strategy has been developed in response to the 2050 Climate Action Strategy. The Cliffs of Moher Experience needs to be significantly more energy efficient to align with the EU goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 80–95 % in time for 2050. About two thirds of its energy should come from renewable sources and electricity production needs to be almost emission-free, despite higher demand.

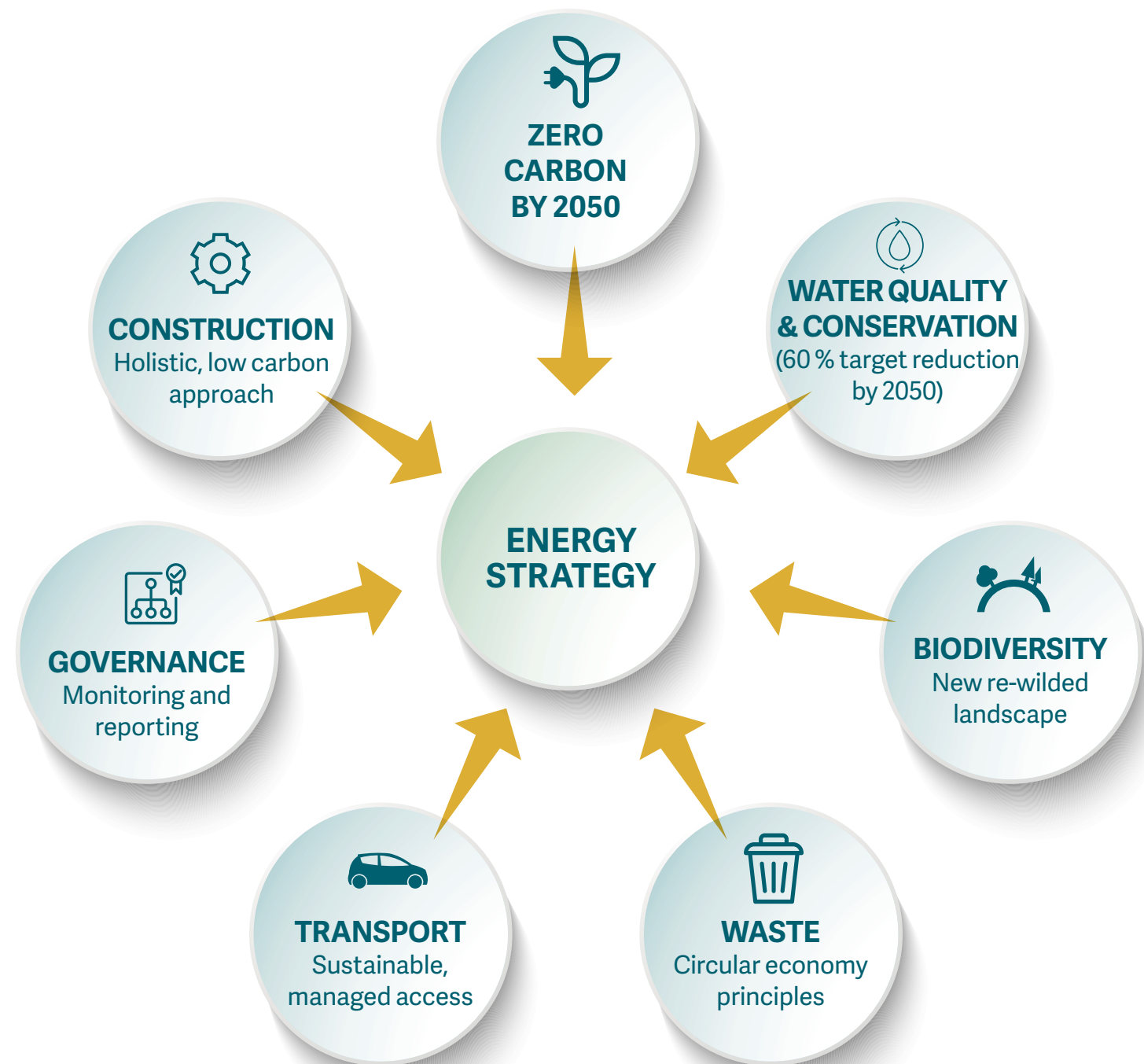
The Cliffs of Moher can lead the way by investing in realistic technological solutions that focus on energy use, carbon and climate change, water quality and conservation, waste, biodiversity, transport, construction, health and wellbeing, sustainability education, community relations, education and governance.

## Balanced Approach to Ecosystem Services

The key challenges ahead are to achieve a sustainable balance of the relationships and links between the different ecosystem services, through on-going monitoring, to support adaptation decision-making. The COM 2040 Strategy recognises that Ecosystem Services are the outputs of ecosystems from which people derive benefits. There are four service types, often directly linked to one or more other services, and each has its own value or worth:

- Supporting (e.g. ecosystem processes such as retention of biodiversity)
- Regulating (e.g. hazard regulation such as soil erosion)
- Provisioning (e.g. energy)
- Cultural (e.g. tourism / recreation)

The COM 2040 Strategy focuses on understanding the links between these different ecosystem services and on-going monitoring will support future decision-making. This holistic approach to ecosystem services will ensure that the potential for cumulative effects associated with the implementation of the Strategy are considered, in association with other relevant plans, programmes and projects within and adjacent to the Strategy area.







## Energy, Carbon and Climate Change

The COM 2040 Strategy is committed to addressing climate change and contributing to moving Ireland towards a low carbon, climate resilient economy and society. The strategic approach to audiences, transport and access, environment, development and operation is focused on long term sustainability. It is consistent with the framework of national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development, the National Climate Action Plan 2023 and the National Adaptation Framework. The COM 2040 Strategy will also take account of the EPA's publications on Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions and its updates and reviews of previous guidance documents (Integrating Climatic Factors into the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process in Ireland and Development Plans – Guidelines for Planning Authorities). The COM 2404 Strategy is also in line with relevant sectoral, regional and local adaption plans. Clare County Council has produced a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024, creating a roadmap of goals and objectives across six thematic areas to adapt to the effects of climate change.

- Theme 1: Local Adaptation Governance and Business Operations
- Theme 2: Infrastructure and Built Environment
- Theme 3: Landuse and Development
- Theme 4: Drainage and Flood Management
- Theme 5: Natural Resources and Cultural Infrastructure
- Theme 6: Community Health and Wellbeing

The COM 2040 Strategy incorporates relevant goals and objectives of these themes to ensure climate adaptation is at the forefront of service delivery and transition to a low carbon climate resilient future. Implementation of the Strategy at the COM will be based on on-going environmental monitoring and reporting on the climate change adaptation and mitigation measures set out in the SEA. The SEA Monitoring Programme will be developed in such a manner as to ensure that it will identify the effects on the environment that will or may arise and monitor the effectiveness of any mitigation on which the assessment relies. In developing and implementing mitigation-related measures, opportunities will be sought to maximise the potential co-benefits for the wider the environment and society (e.g. air quality, water quality, biodiversity, public amenity, renewable energy, tourism etc.).The strategy aims to reduce the demand on primary energy consumption onsite through implementing good passive design techniques, including natural ventilation, air tightness principles and utilising exposed thermal mass to regulate the temperature of the built infrastructure. Developments will aim to deliver Net Zero Energy, including the target of 100% renewable energy consumption.

The buildings proposed onsite shall seek to reduce energy requirements by optimising design elements of the building, such as insulation values, air tightness, building orientations, solar shading and solar control glass. The focus on minimising primary energy demand should align with the Passivhaus design model, ensuring that primary energy demand is minimised throughout the development.

The availability of renewable energy at grid level within the region shall be utilised as a low carbon source for the new site. Technologies such as battery storage and hydrogen generation shall be used to reduce the peak demand from the grid network and allow energy to be stored and utilised when it is available. This will mitigate the visual and ecological impact of incorporating low-carbon energy technologies within the immediate vicinity of the site.



## Water Quality and Conservation

The Strategy is committed to protect both surface water (rivers, lakes and estuaries) and groundwater. This includes their associated habitats and species within and adjacent to the Strategy area. Relevant objectives and measures for individual water bodies (as set out in the Draft Third River Basin Management Plan) will be considered, as part of tourism and ancillary related development at the site, to ensure water quality is protected, maintained and improved.

Where possible, water consumption shall be minimised to 0.6 M3/per year by 2050. This will be achieved through a combination of measures, including incorporating best practice in Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), installing greywater systems to BS 85251:2010 or equal and approved, optimising greywater infrastructure in each building, installing rainwater systems to BS 85151:2009 or equal and approved, monitoring water usage against predicted usage, installing leak detection systems where appropriate and including water efficient solutions at a high level for process requirements where necessary.

# THE STRATEGY / SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



## Transport

The focus of the future access strategy is to encourage and facilitate sustainable transport provision for tourists and locals to create safer, cleaner and more efficient visits to the site and wider destination. Improving access to the Cliffs of Moher will be delivered through a more strategic and proactive approach to traffic management at the site and across the wider hinterland.

New park and ride hub(s) and a shuttle service aims to reduce visitors arriving at the site by car by 50% during peak times. This will significantly reduce the issues of traffic congestion and disruption along the approach routes and on the R478 road close to the site. Clare County Council is committed to carry out a Traffic and Transport Study for West Clare and this will consider the opportunities for integration of the COM within wider County transport initiatives.

The 2040 Cliffs of Moher Strategy provides a catalyst to facilitate an enhanced network of integrated green infrastructure to improve walking and cycling links to with adjacent West Clare, the county and beyond.

## Biodiversity

The Strategy will select suitable species for landscaping, retain existing flora and fauna that are consistent with the existing habitat, conduct regular ecological and biodiversity surveys, and adopt landscaping maintenance regimes designed to encourage biodiversity.

The Strategy, and the developing new Habitat Management Plan, are committed to minimising the risk of spread of invasive species.

## Construction

Cliffs of Moher will ensure that future infrastructure will be designed and constructed to have the smallest possible impact on the environment. All development at the site will be built more efficiently to conserve precious resources to meet challenging climate action plan targets, reduce waste and increase productivity. This will be achieved by climate sensitive design which takes account of the orientation, topography and surrounding features so as to control wind effects, while optimising the benefits of daylight and solar gain as well as the installation of renewable energy technologies. The approach will also include using materials with a lower carbon footprint or incorporating greater amounts of recycled materials or reusing resources that are currently sent to landfill. Building Information Modelling will be used to accurately measure the embodied carbon of all development projects in the construction stage and in the operation of the built assets. This will also drive significant efficiencies from the point of view of time, and cost and enable a better-quality outcome.

## Waste

Waste management at COM will adopt and promote circular economy principles prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, to support a healthy environment, economy and society. This is a full life cycle commitment to prevention and management of construction and demolition wastes and resources from design to construction of a project, including consideration of the deconstruction of a project.

The COM 2040 Strategy will implement these practices and document these activities in a project Resource Waste Management Plan (RWMP) which will develop as the project progresses. It will encourage and facilitate the development of new options and technological advances in relation to waste management. It will adopt 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects' (EPA 2021) and any subsequent guidelines.

## Health and Wellbeing

Opportunities for community healthcare on site will be developed, including provision of external views for most building users where practical, measures to promote the use of stairs and promotion of universal access to facilities, informal recreation and activities.

Development will allow for a purge period on completion of buildings prior to occupation, provision of natural ventilation wherever practical, and regular public access to drinking water. The internal and external acoustic properties of the design and the impact on users will be considered and shared use of space and facilities encouraged. Passive surveillance will be integral to all aspects of design.

## Governance and Sustainability

The development will encourage annual monitoring of the sustainability and energy strategy and make the monitoring report publicly available.

## Community Relations

Consultation, engagement and partnerships will be developed with the local community and Stakeholders.

## Sustainability Education

Initiatives will include sharing of sustainability information via the website and newsletters, stakeholder adoption of measures to encourage sustainable behaviour, and peer-to-peer teaching of sustainability issues via formal training and coordinated outreach activities. Further support will be provided to departments involved in sustainability research, and collaboration with other campuses will share lessons learned. Sustainable technologies will be visible throughout the site, allowing them to be used as a learning tool, and sustainability messages will be integrated throughout the interpretation scheme.



## Sustainable Building Case Study: Brockholes Nature Reserve, UK

Lancashire Wildlife Trust secured £8 million of funding from the North West Regional Development Agency to construct a visitor centre which closely adheres to best practice principles in sustainability.

The building sits on a floating platform above the water, which brings visitors right up to the wildlife and provides a solution to the site's inherent flood risk, essential given that the site is situated within 127 hectares of mixed wetlands and ancient woodlands.

The environmental strategy included natural ventilation throughout, state-of-the-art insulation and glazing, rigorous draught proofing, grey water use and a biomass boiler. Rainwater runs off the buildings and the pontoon straight into the surrounding lake. In turn, water is pumped from the lake for WC flushing. The heavy-duty air handling plant serves a commercial kitchen and is integrated within the roof architecture.

Translucent windows conceal interstitial filaments that provide solar shading and insulation. The windows utilise bespoke joinery with thermal breaks and the highest specification of double glazing available. This has resulted in a façade of exceptional thermal and daylight performance. Large sections of window also slide open to provide summer ventilation to densely occupied spaces.

The ceiling surface finish is a spray on acoustic absorber designed to reduce reflected sound, producing a comfortable acoustic environment. Steep pitched roofs enclose larger volumes, good for air circulation and extraction, and are clad in oak shakes which otherwise would be burned as waste. Insulation is made from recycled newspapers.



# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The priority of the wider strategic economic model for the Cliffs of Moher is to encourage visitors to stay longer in the area, especially overnight, spend more and facilitate greater benefits and investment into local towns and villages.

The key to realising enhancing economic benefits for the area in the future will be enhanced partnerships and greater coordination between the Cliffs of Moher Experience and local businesses and communities.

The Cliffs of Moher Experience will continue to respond to visitor aspirations and provide high-quality facilities onsite, ensuring it remains a commercially sustainable tourism attraction into the future and maintains its premier market position. Visitors will have a deeper and more rewarding experience, stay longer, spend more, make more return visits to the area and encourage family, friends and colleagues to visit.

## Diverse New Tourism Products

Opportunities will be created for wider ranging experiences at the Cliffs of Moher and in the wider area that target existing and new audiences. This includes new bespoke visitor packages which target low-volume and high-value visitors for special access and specialist interest experiences, for example opportunities to participate in future conservation activities, adrenaline experiences, targeted family activities, and bird and wildlife watching. Specific experiences for domestic markets and audiences will be considered, focusing specifically on new products and uses during the shoulder and off-peak periods, such as events and conferences.

## Extended Economic Benefits

A unified landscape with interconnected sites and experiences will be offered, engaging visitors and the local community with a wider sense of place that incorporates the Cliffs of Moher, Burren and surrounding towns and villages.

Development and partnership initiatives will encourage greater exploration and redistribution of visitors around County Clare, with greater retention of visitor spend through incentives to stay overnight. A new local supplier showcase approach will feature local produce and products as part of the Cliffs of Moher retail and catering offer.

## Sustainable Destination Protected by All

This approach will focus on celebrating the richness of the landscape and its values to embed respect and appreciation in visitors. This will be built through a deeper understanding and care of the landscape, its historical significance and its diverse uses today. Ultimately, this will foster greater community stewardship of the landscape and a greater understanding of the benefits of the coexistence with tourists.

## Ongoing Monitoring of Economic Impacts

Commitment to the new strategic economic model and the Cliffs of Moher Destination by the local community and wider industries will be critical to its ultimate success.

This involves communicating and enhancing transparency of the economic benefits of the Cliffs of Moher with the local community, demonstrating that surpluses from the Cliffs of Moher operation supports Clare County Council's budget to promote and develop the tourism product in the county.

Ongoing monitoring of the financial and social impacts should be carried out across the county to help demonstrate how the strategy is spreading the benefits more widely throughout the local economy and enhancing the quality of life for residents.



Doolin



Lisdoonvarna



Ennistymon



## Economic Benefits Case Study: Stonehenge, UK

Stonehenge, a prehistoric stone circle monument, cemetery, and archaeological site, is perceived internationally as a 'must see' attraction and around half its visitors come from abroad. Visitor numbers to Stonehenge increased rapidly, from around 500,000 visitors per annum in the late 1970s to 1.5m visitors in 2018. Stonehenge ranks as the 7th most visited paid attraction in England, the 1st most visited paid attraction in the south west region and is the most visited archaeological site in Britain.

In December 2013, as part of a major redevelopment at Stonehenge, a new Visitor Centre and shuttle bus service to take visitors to the Stone Circle were opened. This development has seen a significant increase in average dwell times at the site. Coach / group visitors now stay around 2 hours whilst individual visitors stay around 2.5 hours – previously most visitors only stayed at Stonehenge for an average of 45 minutes. Working with VisitWiltshire, the Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum, English Heritage has proactively encouraged visitors to explore other parts of the county and extend their stay. This includes joint promotional activity, website links, joined-up travel trade, public relations and consumer marketing activity and joint digital information panels at the Visitor Centre. More recently, Stonehenge has been promoted as the iconic flagship of the Great West Way, a new 125-mile-long touring route, which joins up many of England's destinations and attractions along a corridor west of London through to Bristol.

Stonehenge is fundamental to the tourism economy of Wiltshire and the south west. The redevelopment at Stonehenge has supported a significant improvement in the performance of Wiltshire as a tourism destination, especially in the growth of staying visits and the average length of stays. It supports employment, infrastructure and services which in turn benefit the local community. In 2018, it was estimated that it generated an estimated £103 million for the local economy.



## Economic Benefits Case Study: Eden Project, UK

Since opening in 2001, Cornwall's Eden Project has established itself as one of the most popular tourist attractions in the UK. It regularly attracts more than 1m visitors a year and these numbers and local sourcing of products and services (from over 3,000 Cornish firms) have driven significant economic regeneration across the region. Eden is a significant attractor for visits to the area – over three quarters of Eden visitors are staying on holiday and 47% state they were 'extremely or very influenced' in their destination choice by the possibility of visiting. Eden has launched various initiatives to extend the tourist season into the winter. A winter ice rink was built among a number of other weatherproof attractions, and torchlight parades and firework displays attract both locals and tourists. As visitors come into the area to go to Eden, other tourist businesses, such as hotels and restaurants, also find their season being extended. Eden employs around 350 people with another 150 people who volunteer. Since opening to the public in 2001, it has attracted more than 18m visitors and inspired an economic renaissance in Cornwall by contributing more than £1.7 billion to the local economy.



## Economic Benefits Case Study: The National Forest And Conkers, UK

Established in the early 1990s, the National Forest aimed to create a new, multi-purpose forest by restoring a 200 square mile woodland area across parts of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Very early in the Forest's development, in 2001, the Conkers Discovery Centre was opened to help provide a strategic, central focus for the Forest. This flagship attraction has helped bring significant tourism benefits for the area and stimulate investment in related facilities including the National Forest Way (a walking trail extending over 75 miles), the Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre, a YHA Hostel, a National Forest Caravan and Camping club site and a series of over 30 gateway sites.

Total investment in the National Forest between 1991 and 2010 was £89m with overall benefits to the associated region estimated at £228m. Recreation benefits, including tourism, accounted for £186m – over 80% of all benefits. Over this period the National Forest's visitor economy grew strongly, with staying visitors in both serviced (40% increase) and non-serviced accommodation (184% increase) increasing faster than day visitor numbers (8.3% increase). Since 2018, the National Forest has been welcoming 8.2m visitors per year and supporting nearly 5,000 jobs. The visitor economy is now worth around £324m per annum. By 2030 gross value added across the forest area is expected to reach £5.6 billion, a 60% increase from 2011. The economy is becoming more diversified with secondary manufacturing and a stronger service-led sector.



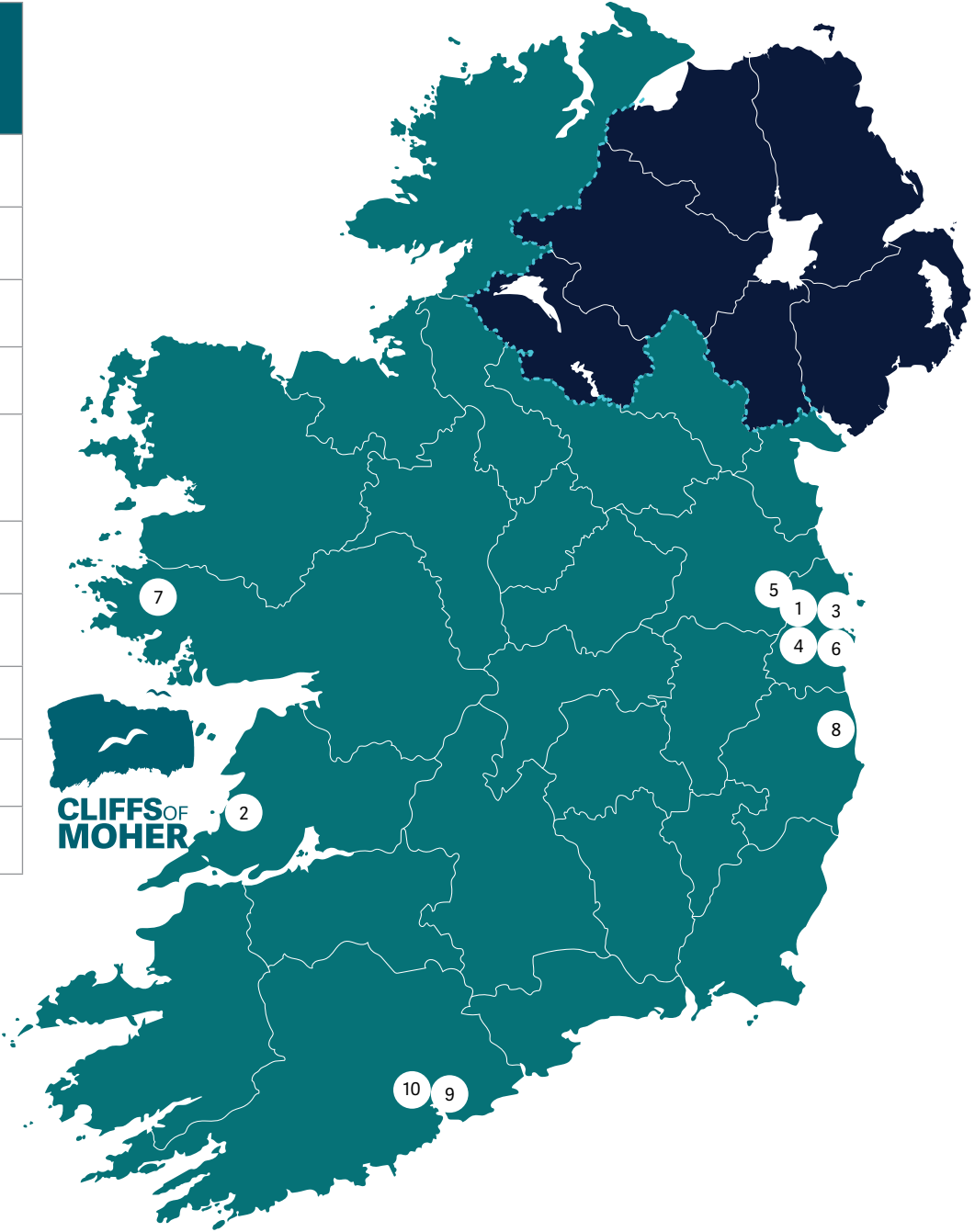
# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Visitor Numbers

The Cliffs of Moher Experience attracts high levels of visitors and generates significant employment, income and economic benefits. It is the most visited natural attraction in Ireland and the second most popular visitor attraction in the country. The Cliffs of Moher Experience has a premier market position in terms of its success in attracting visitors and in its international promotional profile and role in selling Ireland to overseas visitors.

Ranking (Fee- Charging Attractions)	Attraction	County	Visitor Numbers (2019)	Adult Admission Charge* (€) (2023)
1	Guinness Storehouse	Dublin	1,700,000	26.00
2	Cliffs of Moher Experience	Clare	1,600,000	7.00
3	Dublin Zoo	Dublin	1,283,424	19.00
4	Book of Kells	Dublin	1,144,410	18.50
5	Tayto Park (renamed Emerald Park in 2023)	Meath	720,000	39.00
6	St Patrick's Cathedral	Dublin	628,000	9.00
7	Kylemore Abbey & Gardens	Galway	560,000	16.00
8	Powerscourt House, Gardens & Waterfall	Wicklow	487,876	12.50
9	Fota Wildlife Park	Cork	462,047	18.00
10	Blarney Castle and Gardens	Cork	460,000	20.00

\* Based on lowest adult prices in August 2023



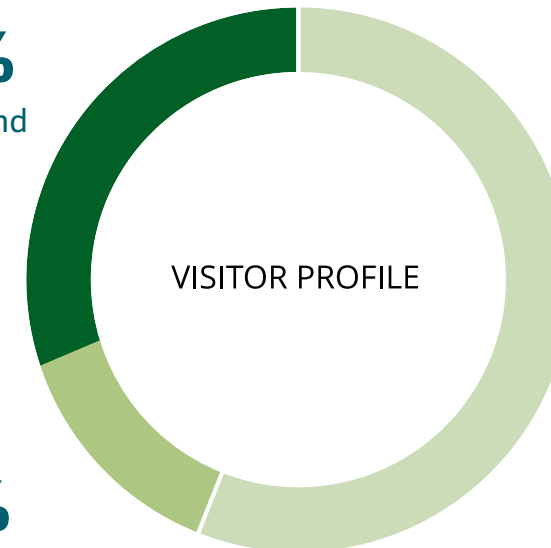




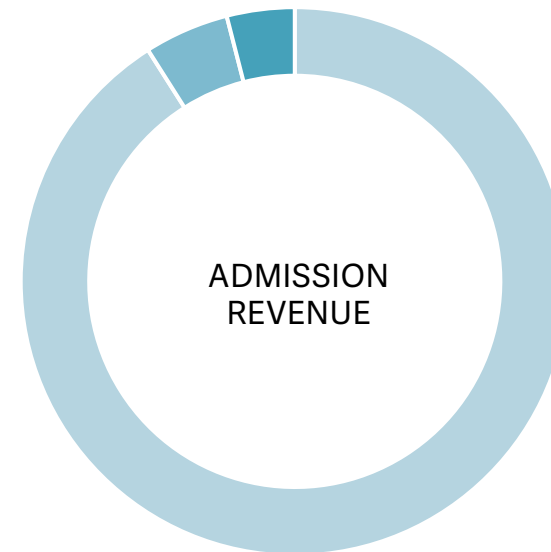
**27%**  
Travel and  
Route

**17%**  
Route  
License

**9%**  
Non-Admission  
Revenue  
Generating  
(Coastal Walk 5%)  
(Children 4%)



**56%**  
Free  
Independent  
Travellers (FIT)



**91%**  
Admission  
Revenue  
Generating

# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Managing the Site

The Cliffs of Moher Experience is managed by a wholly owned subsidiary of Clare County Council established to operate the Cliffs of Moher Experience on the local authority's behalf, including all elements of staff recruitment, training, and staff management of those who work at the Cliffs of Moher.

A number of other businesses operate at the site and play an important role in providing employment, generating income and creating economic benefits.



The Visitor Centre



Craftworkers





Cliff View Café



Craft and Gift Store



Puffins Nest Café

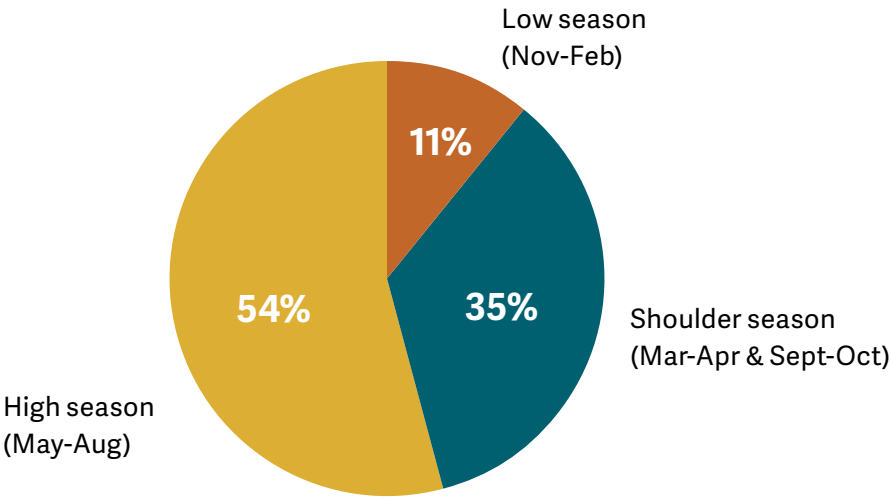
# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Financial Performance

In 2019, the Cliffs of Moher site generated an estimated overall income of €18m from visitor spend. The core Cliffs of Moher Experience operation is the most significant generator of revenue.

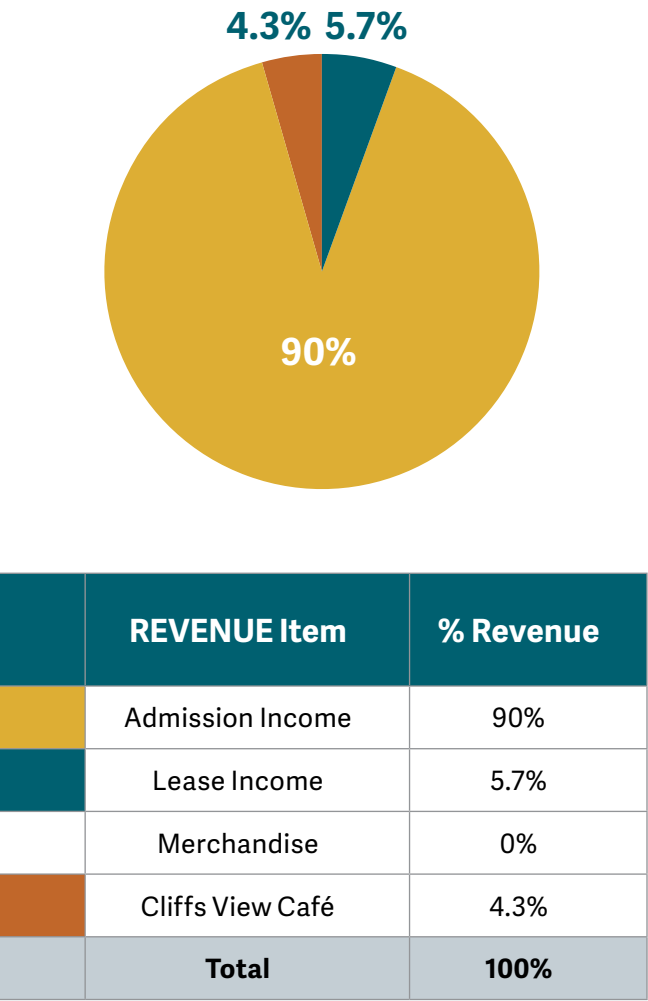
### Revenue

In 2019, the seasonal breakdown of the revenue for the Cliffs of Moher Experience was:



The Shannon Heritage Craft and Gift store Revenue is accounted for under Shannon Heritage, only lease income is reflected in the Cliffs of Moher Experience revenue currently.

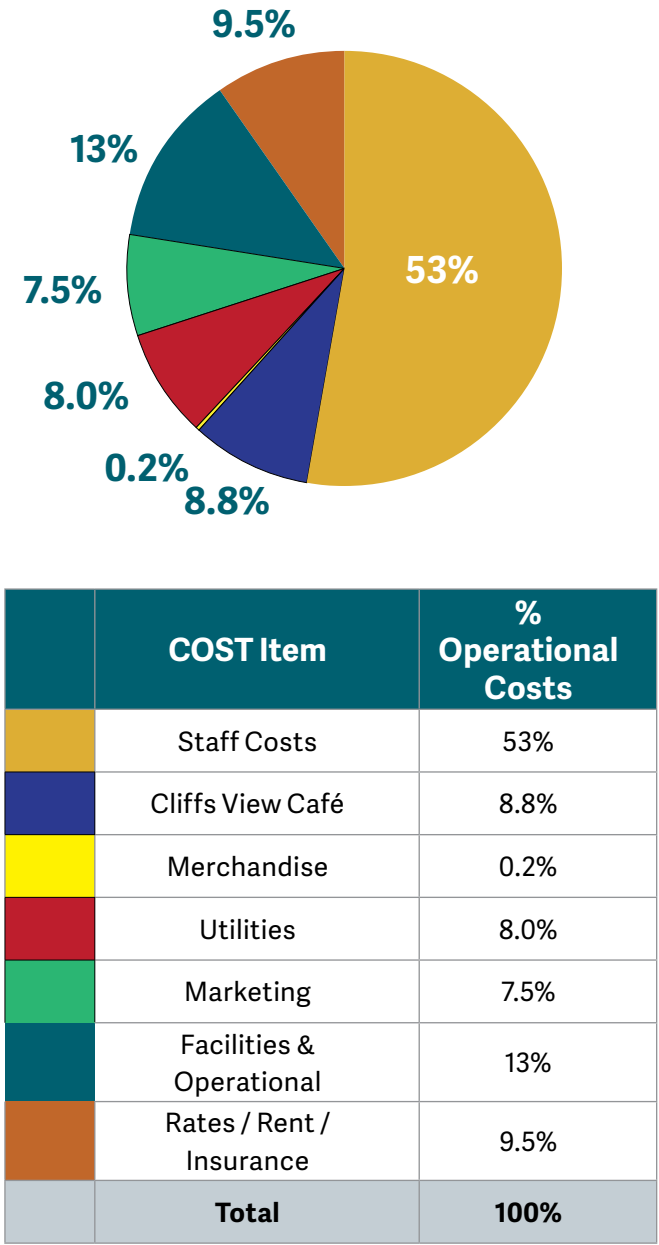
Admission income accounted for 90% of total revenue.



### Expenditure

Staff costs, including salaries (for 76 directly employed staff) accounted for 53% of total operational costs.

The operational surplus generated by the Cliffs of Moher Experience was 54% of total revenue. The net surplus, after capital and finance charges, was 40%







## The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher were designated a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Global Geopark in 2015. The region achieved this status because it was recognised as a place with unique geology, landscapes, history, and culture.

Geoparks are managed with a focus on education, conservation, sustainable tourism, and community engagement. Our Geopark, where you are now, is managed by Clare County Council working in partnership organisations that oversee tourism, education, and conservation programmes. Attaining UNESCO Global Geopark status involves scientific, cultural, sustainable and management criteria, which are reviewed by UNESCO every four years. As of 2021-22 there are 169 UNESCO Global Geoparks worldwide spread across 44 countries.



## Explore and Experience Our UNESCO Global Geopark

Given the status of a UNESCO Global Geopark because there is so much to explore and experience.

From the wild Atlantic ocean, the stunning Cliffs of Moher is not only a world famous place but also an important breeding ground for sea birds. Moving North the landscape changes to a place of limestone rock full of 300 million years old fossils. The land might appear to be close and you will see an extraordinary combination of Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean side by side, while beneath your feet there is a vast network of mysterious caves. You will see the traces of generations of people who have lived, worked and worshipped. It continues in the energy of the thriving local farming traditions, traditional music and food produced from this 'fertile rock'.



## Sustainable Tourism in the UNESCO Global Geopark

Tourism is an important part of UNESCO Global Geoparks, and our Geopark has been a pioneer and international award winner in this area.

In order to develop sustainable practices among tourism businesses we developed the Geopark Code of Sustainable Tourism. Businesses that adopt this code of practice become members of the Sustainable Tourism Network. This is an award winning and internationally recognised network that works with the Geopark in promoting the sustainable development of the region. These are excellent, high quality accommodation, food and experiences. You can find out more about them on [www.burren.ie](http://www.burren.ie).



**BURREN AND CLIFFS OF MOHER**  
UNESCO Global Geopark



# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Current Benefits

The Cliffs of Moher is a major economic engine for County Clare. It plays a key strategic role in the county’s economy and tourism industry and delivers significant economic benefits.

## Benefits from the Operating Surplus

The annual operational surplus that is generated by the Cliffs of Moher Experience plays an important role in supporting and developing the county tourism product. This includes providing funding for:

- The Tourism Department of Clare County Council
- Development and maintenance of the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk
- The Burren Ecotourism Network
- Tourism marketing initiatives
- Other relevant Clare County Council projects

Direct employment by the Cliffs of Moher Experience comprised 76 staff (44 permanent and 32 seasonal) at an estimated total annual cost for all employment of €2.6 million. Other employment at the site included:

Puffins Nest Café – 12

Cliff View Café – 38

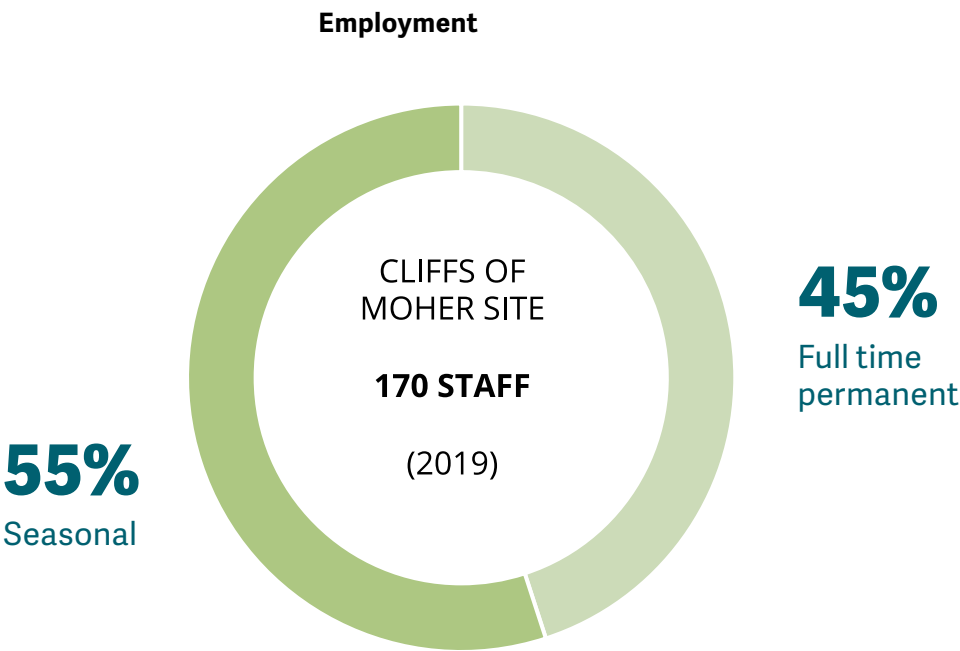
Craft and Gift Store – 26

Craftworkers – 18

The local impact of this employment is highly significant as almost 90% of staff live within 30km of the Cliffs of Moher site:

54% of staff live within 15km

34% of staff live within 16-30km







Market	Numbers (000's)	Total Revenue (€m)	Av. Rev. Per Tourist (€)
All Overseas	1,432	472	330
Northern Ireland	23	8	348
Domestic	1,197	217	181



## Supporting Businesses

The Cliffs of Moher Experience plays an important role in supporting other businesses across the county and beyond.

There are more than 40 County Clare craft and design suppliers in the Cliffs of Moher Craft and Design Shop, accounting for 40% of all suppliers at the site. The remaining 60% are Irish suppliers. There are 15 local food producers supplying the Cliffs of Moher. The six craft units at the Cliffs of Moher are leased by local businesses.

In addition, the Cliffs of Moher Experience operation also makes significant spend on a range of cultural and heritage services. In 2019, this expenditure of €2.3m included food, drink, art, craft design, operational and maintenance services. This spend by the Cliffs of Moher Experience has a significant impact in supporting the local economy, as around 70% of this expenditure is spent with local businesses.

The Burren and County Clare has some of the country's most important artisans celebrating local craft products. The craft units and the retail shop at the Cliffs of Moher already act as an important showcase for outstanding local suppliers. Future opportunities can be safeguarded and enhanced through direct in-house management of the retail shop, combined with greater liaison with the enterprise function of Clare County Council to develop new local tourism products, services and further collaborative partnerships between the Cliffs of Moher and local businesses.

## Visitor Spend

The Cliffs of Moher generates further benefits to the local, county and national economies from the expenditure by visitors.

Fáilte Ireland research shows that in 2019, overseas holidaymakers had an average spend of €96 per day and domestic overnight visitors had a spend of €74 per day.

Applied to visitors to the Cliffs of Moher, these expenditures would generate an estimated total spend of €141m.

The Mid-West Region includes the counties of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, and is ranked fourth of the six regions (excluding Dublin) in terms of total tourist numbers and revenue. However, it is ranked third in terms of overseas tourists and sixth in terms of tourists from Northern Ireland.

In 2019, the Mid-West attracted 2.65m tourists who spent a total of €697m, with an overall average spend per tourist of €263.

County Clare commands a strong position in terms of attracting international visitors (ranked fifth in 2017). However, the market share of expenditure is considerably less.

In 2018, Clare County welcomed 769,000 overseas visitors (8% of all overseas tourists who came to Ireland) and hosted 510,000 domestic trips (5% of all Irish domestic trips).

In total, tourism in Clare contributed €244.5 million to the economy:

Overseas visitors spent €156.5 million (3% of overseas tourism expenditure in Ireland), an average spend per visitor of €203.51 (the second lowest in Ireland).

Domestic tourism generated €88 million – an average spend per visitor of €172.55.

# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Tourism

The total economic contribution of tourism to the Clare economy is €395m. Despite its significant strengths, the County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 identifies key strategic challenges; “the value of tourism for the county as a whole is considerably lower than its market size rankings given a low average spend per overseas visitor and a high level of seasonality, and the distinctly uneven geographic spread of benefits.”



### The Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 estimates that:

- Tourism supports 6,600 tourism jobs in Clare (2017), which equates to 4,440 full-time equivalent jobs.
- Tourism employment earnings in Clare are just over €110 million.
- When multiplier impacts are included, the total economic impact of tourism in Clare is €395 million.

As the key visitor attraction in the county, the Cliffs of Moher Experience makes a major contribution to the tourism economy and benefits.

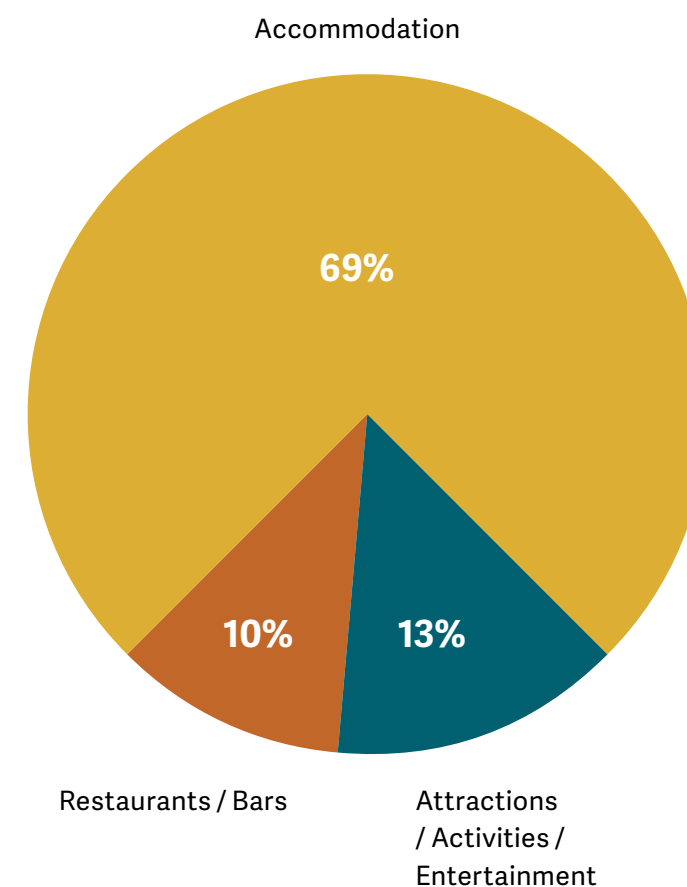
County Clare gains a considerable level of direct and indirect benefit from visitors to the Cliffs of Moher. However, there are opportunities to gain further benefits, especially for the businesses in local towns and villages. These include overnight accommodation, food and beverage, spin off cottage industries, microenterprises, service suppliers and employment expenditure. This can be delivered through a new partnership model, facilitating new tourism product development and encouraging visitors to the Cliffs of Moher to disperse more widely, stay longer, and spend more across the area.

Most coach licences issued by the National Transport Authority stop at another location within Clare as well as the Cliffs of Moher.

Research in 2018 by the Incoming Tour Operators Association Ireland (ITOA) highlighted the scale and scope of the economic benefits of visitors to the cliffs. They estimate that almost 200,000 ITOA visitors to the Cliffs of Moher spent €12m with suppliers in key tourism and hospitality sectors across County Clare:

- Accommodation – 69%
- Attractions / activities / entertainment (excluding Cliffs of Moher) – 13%
- Restaurants / bars – 10%

This indicates an average spend per ITOA visitor within County Clare of €60.

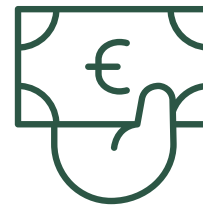




In addition to the direct economic benefits on the Cliffs of Moher site, and those from visitor expenditure, there are significant multiplier effects which bring further benefits to the national, regional and local economy.

Applied to the Cliffs of Moher site, the €18m direct visitor expenditure helps to support 486 tourism jobs and generates €4.14m in tax.

At a wider level, the estimated total economic impact of €141m from spend by Cliffs of Moher visitors supports 3,807 jobs and generates €32.43m in tax.



Every **€1m** of tourist expenditure helps to support **27** tourism jobs.



**1,000** additional overseas tourists support **20** jobs in the tourism industry.



For every euro spent on tourism (domestic and overseas), **23c is generated in tax.**

Source: Key Tourism Facts 2019 (Fáilte Ireland, March 2021)

# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Future Development

All of the existing economic benefits of the Cliffs of Moher will be significantly increased as the 2040 strategy is implemented. There will be enhanced benefits at local, regional and national level from the major capital investment and from the enhanced future operation of the site.

The implementation of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy will result in major capital investment on the site. The total capital cost for delivery of the strategic and masterplan proposals will depend on the final scope of works, the scheme design and phasing.

The funding for the implementation of the strategy proposals will require a multi-strand approach. Through facilitating and enhancing the aspirations and objectives of other strategies, initiatives and plans, the strategy will work in partnership to help secure resources to achieve its vision. The potential funding package will encompass direct investment from Clare County Council, including reinvestment from the projected annual operational surplus from the Cliffs of Moher Experience, and commercial loans. The project will also seek substantial grant aid from a range of sources including Fáilte Ireland, European and National Programmes and specialist enterprise, tourism, environmental and development bodies. The funding package will be developed alongside the phasing plan to ensure the most cost-effective programme is put in place to realise the significant economic and social benefits that can be generated.

This scale of investment will generate significant temporary jobs (spread over many years) in construction and associated multipliers.

- Every €10m of capital investment creates around 24 jobs in the construction industry.
- Every 10 jobs in the construction industry create a further four jobs indirectly (Source: Construction industry Federation – Ireland).





### **World-Class Sustainable Destination**

The 2040 Strategy aims to develop a world-class, sustainable destination for the long-term future of the site. The Cliffs of Moher will continue to respond to visitor aspirations through the development of high-quality facilities. This approach will deliver a commercially sustainable tourism attraction into the future and maintain its premier market position.

The future business plan for the Cliffs of Moher will depend on the final scope of works, and more specifically on the phasing. Nevertheless, it is projected that the implementation of the 2040 strategy will deliver a more profitable and more robust operation for the future. This scenario will result in significantly increased economic benefits at site, local, regional and national level.

### **Local Suppliers**

Currently, there are up to 45 County Clare craft suppliers generating significant expenditure and spin-off employment in the area. Utilising support from the local enterprise office, there is potential to establish a craft retail innovation hub that optimises the conditions for startup business, with the expertise in the Cliffs of Moher retail playing a key role in bridging product concept to finished product. Research shows visitors are seeking out gifts from that local area, and view this as a way of contributing back into the local economy and sustaining local communities with minimal impact on the environment.

### **Capacity and Spend**

The strategy looks to limit the peak day capacity of the expanded Cliffs of Moher site and achieve a more even distribution of visitors throughout the year. Pre-booking for all visitors and dynamic pricing will help with spreading visitors more evenly across the day and across the year.

There will be a focus on encouraging visitor arrivals earlier and later in the day, with greater use of special experiences and events. Enhanced facilities and packages at the Cliffs of Moher, in partnership with local businesses, will result in increased visits in the off-peak (20%) and shoulder seasons (25%). This will significantly reduce seasonality and provide greater all year round viability for the site and businesses in the local area.

Admission charges for the Cliffs of Moher will change in line with the development of the new facilities and to reflect the “world-class” status of the new and expanded visitor offer. Greater use of dynamic pricing will further enhance value for money and provide increased access opportunities for all, throughout the year.

Following completion of the proposed 2040 Strategy works, the balanced approach to visitor numbers and pricing is projected to double income from admissions to the extended site.

### **Increased Partnerships and Staffing**

Increased partnerships with local businesses and suppliers, and enhanced facilities for the onsite local craftworkers is projected to see modest increases in the income from catering, retail and lease arrangements.

Projected expenditure will also rise considerably as the 2040 strategy proposals are implemented. When fully operational, it is projected that direct staff costs will rise by 66%. Other operational costs (utilities / marketing / maintenance etc.) are projected to double to ensure the delivery of a high-quality environment and visitor experience.

Overall, the operational surplus from the Cliffs of Moher site is projected to increase by more than double. It is projected that there will be a significant increase in direct and indirect employment on the Cliffs of Moher site. Overall numbers of people employed are projected to double and this will have significant economic benefits, particularly for the local area.

# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS



## Wider Tourism Product

Engaging visitors in and raising awareness of the wider Cliffs of Moher destination - its tourism and visitor accommodation, attractions and hospitality facilities - will be critical to the success of the 2040 Strategy. Visitors will have a deeper more rewarding experience, stay longer, spend more, make more return visits to the area, and encourage family and friends to visit.

The Cliffs of Moher will play an enhanced role in stimulating and supporting future investment in the wider tourism product of County Clare. The growth of its premier market position as a key attractor to the county will act as a stimulus and support further development of the wider tourism product. This integrated approach at the heart of the strategy will provide opportunities for securing investment in new products, especially overnight accommodation, to meet visitor demands. The focus on managing capacity and spreading and dispersing visitors more evenly across the year will help address the key issue of seasonality.



New park and ride hubs will act as a key element of the integrated transport system for access to the Cliffs of Moher and beyond. Situated on the main feeder routes to the cliffs from both the north and south approaches, they will help disperse visitors across the wider area. Ideally located on the edge of local towns, these hubs will enhance tourism, employment and business connections and will encourage new core infrastructure and tourism investment in the wider area.

Development and partnership initiatives will encourage greater distribution of visitors around County Clare and greater retention of visitor spend, especially by providing incentives to stay overnight.

Creating bespoke visitor packages will target low-volume and high-value visitors for special access and interest experiences. A key focus will be encouraging these audiences at the shoulder and off-peak seasons to help reduce seasonality.

Opportunities will be created for wide-ranging, diverse experiences targeting existing and new audiences.

These may include opportunities to be involved in future conservation, adrenaline experiences, family and children's activities, bird and wildlife watching, new interpretation experiences and events.



Offering a unified landscape with interconnected sites and experiences will engage visitors and the local community with the landscape and the wider sense of place encompassing the Cliffs of Moher, Burren and surrounding towns and villages.

New local suppliers and products will be showcased as part of the Cliffs of Moher Experience retail and catering offer.

The sustainable approach will focus on celebrating the richness of the landscape and its values to embed respect and appreciation in visitors. This will be built through a deeper understanding and care of the landscape, its historical significance and its diverse uses today. Ultimately, this will foster greater community stewardship of the landscape.

Sustaining a living landscape by bringing economic and social benefits to the community, businesses and other organisations will enhance and enrich local life.



## **FUTURE ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

**The Cliffs of Moher site is projected to generate an overall income of €36m from visitor spend and employ more than 300 people. This expenditure will help support over 900 tourism jobs and generate over €8m in tax revenue.**

**The total expenditure of visitors to the Cliffs of Moher is projected to be over €300m per annum. This will support over 8,000 tourism jobs and generate more than €60m in tax.**

# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Links with Key Assets

The key to increasing economic benefits for the area in the future will be enhanced partnerships and greater coordination between the Cliffs of Moher, key strategic assets, and businesses and communities in local towns and villages.

Ongoing communication between all parties and monitoring, along with annual reviews and updates to the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, will be required. This will ensure it adapts and reflects the needs and opportunities of the wider tourism initiatives and the local towns and villages.







Fáilte Ireland’s vision for the Wild Atlantic Way is for it to be world-renowned for its spectacular seascapes, raw beauty and warm hospitality, as one of the top five touring routes in the world. Its aim is to disperse visitors more evenly along the route and into towns and villages in the region. The Cliffs of Moher and Clare County Council must continue to work closely with Fáilte Ireland to further develop the international and national promotion of the wider Cliffs of Moher destination and secure appropriate and sustainable facilities and infrastructure in the local towns and villages.

“Fáilte Ireland fully supports the development of a sustainable strategy for the Cliffs of Moher, underpinned by commitments to responsible and sustainable tourism – protecting, preserving and enhancing the Cliffs of Moher site and visitor experience alongside equally tangible benefits for the North Clare region.”



A five-year management plan is needed for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher to retain its UNESCO Global Geopark status. This includes a plan to manage peak demand impacts, both social and environmental, better engage consumers in the story of the region and boost awareness of the Burren as an internationally important, vibrant and sustainable world-class destination. This process should include enhanced integration, management and coordination with the Cliffs of Moher to deliver wider benefits to local communities.



The Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk, a linear route of 20km, connects the lively villages of Liscannor and Doolin, via the Cliffs of Moher Experience. The 2040 Strategy has identified the Coastal Walk as a key tourism and economic asset. Clare County Council, Clare Local Development Company, Fáilte Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development have commissioned the preparation of a new ‘Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk’. This will consider sustainable transport options including appropriate trailhead / car parking facilities, ancillary trail infrastructure and technology solutions to support visitor management, wayfinding and interpretation.



The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy is focused on creating a wider destination to help spread visitors and their spending across a larger area. The key hubs of Ennis and Shannon Airport can play mutually beneficial roles as key arrival points for visitors and as promotional and marketing tools. Tourism Ireland has recently announced a US\$1 million campaign in the United States, highlighting Shannon Airport as the gateway to the Wild Atlantic Way. Future forward planning for both of these key locations will require on-going dialogue with the Cliffs of Moher to help facilitate the dispersal of visitors across the destination.

# THE STRATEGY / ECONOMIC BENEFITS

## Local Partnerships

Clare County Council recognise the importance of integrating the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy within a framework focused on the social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits to communities in the local area. To ensure the opportunities and benefits from future development of the Cliffs of Moher are fully realised, the local authority is facilitating and supporting economic and development work for key local towns and villages in the local area.

A key part of the new partnership approach will be for Clare County Council and the Cliffs of Moher to develop structured relationships with local communities and key stakeholders. This process will be facilitated by the creation of a new post, Cliffs of Moher Community Officer, who will provide the key focus for all community and local business liaison. Clare County Council is committed to establishing an organisational framework and a multi-stakeholder co-ordinating body to review and report on progress on the implementation of the 2040 Strategy. The aim is to embed a mutual understanding of, and commitment to, the importance of restoring and conserving the habitats, soils, geology, water resources, sustainable transport modes and landscape of the Cliffs of Moher and environs, as a core socio-economic asset for the region.

Clare County Council has committed to setting up a new Cliffs of Moher Community Fund. COM already supports tourism and community related activities and this new initiative, funded through the operational surplus, will offer a grant programme for local communities to develop infrastructure, activities and skills to benefit local people and encourage sustainable tourism.



Doolin has a highly successful, award-winning sustainable tourism industry with a diverse range of high-quality businesses. Its vision for 2030/40 is to promote “Doolin as a tourism destination to the domestic and international markets in a sustainable way, with the aim of increasing the average length of stay, extending the length of the season and focusing on higher spending visitors versus volume.” Priorities are attracting independent travellers to stay overnight and to proactively manage and control the negative impacts of large coaches. Clare County Council is currently supporting work to identify an enhanced and more integrated relationship with the Cliffs of Moher and to help realise the future economic benefits, whilst protecting the needs and special characteristics of the village.



Lisdoonvarna is famous for its Victorian Spa Complex and Health Centre, which is set in an attractive parkland setting, and has an ongoing tradition of music and festivals. It has a wide selection of hotel and guest accommodation and recently this has become utilised for accommodating large numbers of refugees from Ukraine. The village offers significant opportunities for development of greater links with the Cliffs of Moher to help revitalise its future economic wellbeing. Lisdoonvarna has been identified as a potential site for a park and ride hub for the cliffs and an expression of interest submission is currently being evaluated. Clare County Council is supporting future development planning and a new Heritage Plan for Lisdoonvarna is also being carried out so that the people of the town can decide how best to protect their shared heritage for the future.



Ennistymon has a long history as a market town for the surrounding Burren community. It is a lively and bustling town, with the majority of the businesses still family-owned and run. An Enhancement Strategy for Ennistymon’s Town Centre is currently being carried out in partnership with Clare County Council and Clare Local Development Company. The emerging vision is to “support community and businesses by creating more attractive and vibrant streets and public spaces, celebrating the history, rich culture and unique natural beauty of Ennistymon” and to “create an accessible, walkable town centre that is easy to get around, encouraging people to stay longer, gather, meet and play”. Future development of the Cliffs of Moher and Ennistymon can bring mutual benefits for creating a wider destination and experience for visitors to the area.



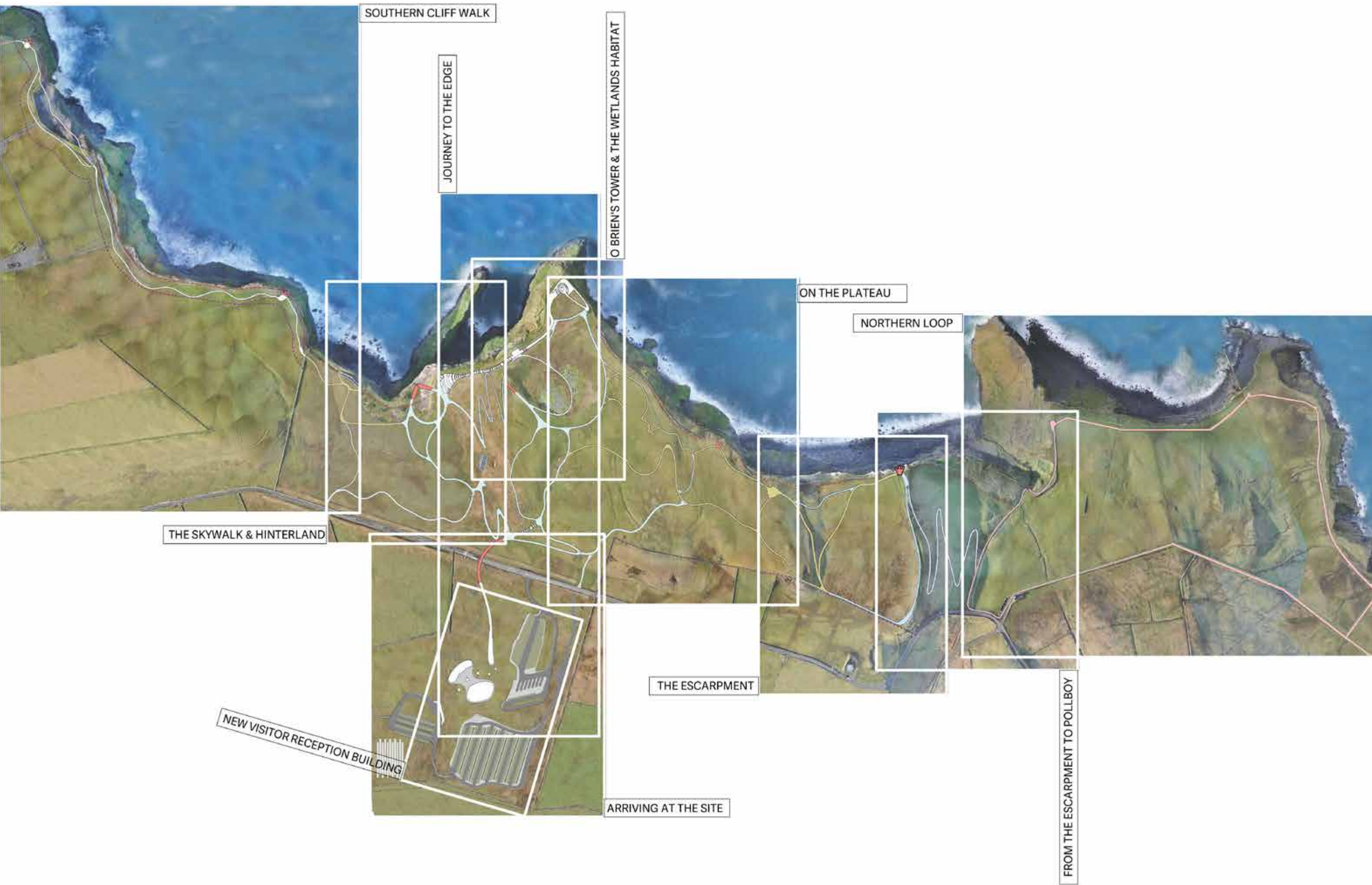






# **SECTION 5: SITE MASTERPLAN**





SOUTHERN CLIFF WALK

JOURNEY TO THE EDGE

O BRIEN'S TOWER & THE WETLANDS HABITAT

ON THE PLATEAU

NORTHERN LOOP

THE SKYWALK & HINTERLAND

THE ESCARPMENT

ARRIVING AT THE SITE

NEW VISITOR RECEPTION BUILDING

FROM THE ESCARPMENT TO POLLBOY



## SITE MASTERPLAN / OVERVIEW









# SITE MASTERPLAN / REWILDING AN ENLARGED LANDHOLDING

Clare County Council has begun negotiations for the purchase or leasing of an extended landholding to facilitate an improved visitor experience. This strategy presents a unique opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value and aesthetic appeal of the site through “rewilding” of the landscape.

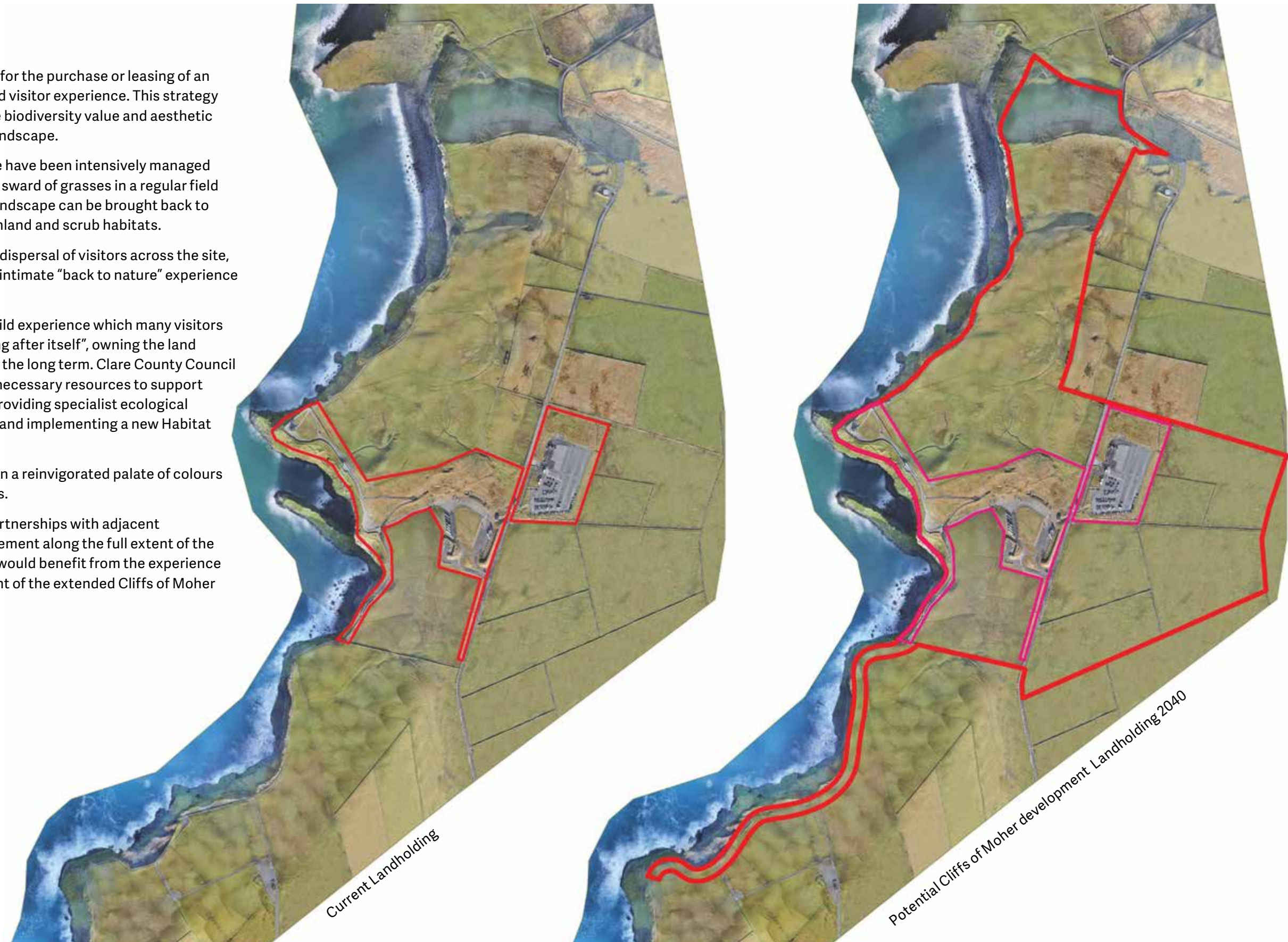
The existing agricultural grasslands at the site have been intensively managed for many years, producing a resultant uniform sward of grasses in a regular field system. With appropriate management, the landscape can be brought back to a naturally variable mosaic of grassland, heathland and scrub habitats.

The approach will also facilitate the managed dispersal of visitors across the site, creating more space and opportunities for an intimate “back to nature” experience with the cliffs.

A key attraction of the Cliffs of Moher is the wild experience which many visitors seek. Whilst natural rewilding is “nature looking after itself”, owning the land comes with obligations and responsibilities in the long term. Clare County Council will provide an ongoing commitment and the necessary resources to support appropriate habitat management, including providing specialist ecological stewardship by an experienced land manager and implementing a new Habitat Management Plan.

This habitat management strategy will result in a reinvigorated palette of colours and textures that will change with the seasons.

There are significant opportunities to form partnerships with adjacent landowners to achieve further habitat improvement along the full extent of the coastal walk in the future. Such partnerships would benefit from the experience and expertise accumulated in the management of the extended Cliffs of Moher Experience site.







Colours and textures of the re-wilded landscape



# SITE MASTERPLAN / ARRIVING AT THE SITE

As described in earlier chapters, the revised access arrangement to the Cliffs of Moher site has been designed to anticipate the following:

- 10,500 visitors per day at peak.
- New shuttle services from remote car parks to deliver 3,300 visitors per day at peak.
- Coach facilities to deliver 3,300 visitors per day at peak.
- Onsite car parking to deliver 3,300 visitors per day at peak.
- A significant seasonal change from days with high visitor numbers to low visitor numbers.

A new reception building has been designed at the confluence of these three groups of arriving visitors. Bus drop-off for eight coaches with parking allocation for 30-40 more coaches of various sizes is provided to the north of this building.

The coaches share an entrance to the building with a looped shuttle service drop-off facility. Further east is a surface car park for 450 cars with separate building access. A delivery area and separate staff car park is located to the southeast of the centre at a lower level.

The topography is manipulated throughout by contour modification and berming to screen the impacts of the reception building and parked vehicles. By this means, the bus visitors cannot see the car park and vice versa, visitors cannot see the staff and delivery area.



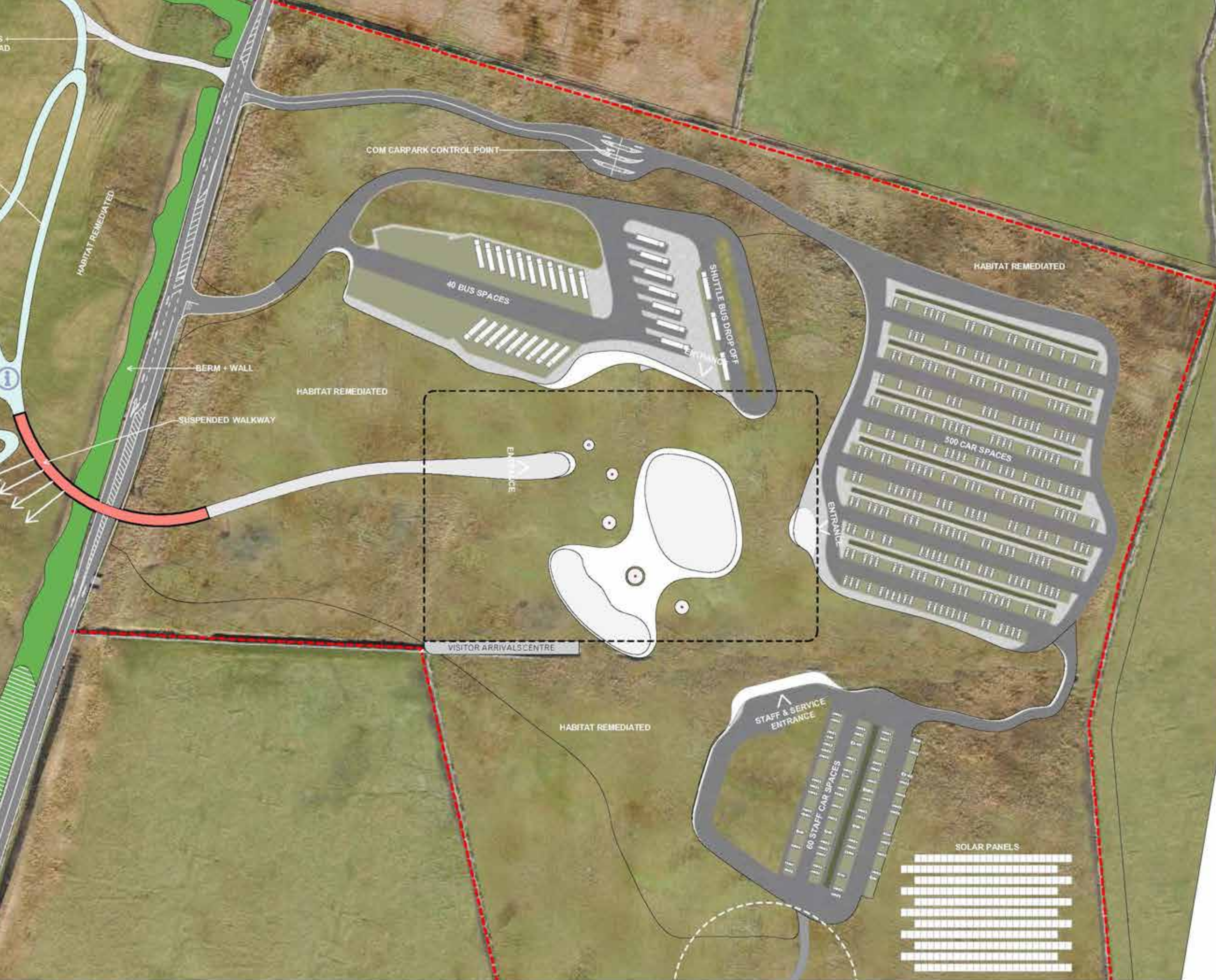
Arrival from car park



Arrival from bus and shuttle park







BOUNDARIES			
WALL	Model Entrance		
TEMPORARY	Site Entrance		
GATES	Passage Gate		
ROAD	Car Road		
STREET LIGHTS	Bridge Lighting		
STREET LIGHTS			
STREET LIGHTS			
STREET LIGHTS			
STREET LIGHTS			
STREET LIGHTS			
STREET LIGHTS			
PATH HIERARCHY			
Path Type	Width	Material	Color
MAIN	3m	Paved and Accessible	
STREET	3m	Paved and Accessible	
STREET	3m	Paved and Accessible	
ADVENTURE TRAIL	3m	Gravel and Accessible	
TRAIL	3m	Gravel and Accessible	
COASTAL PATH	3m	Gravel and Accessible	
BRIDGE	3m	Gravel and Accessible	
TAGS			
POLE		INFORMATION	
SHUTTER		PLAY AREA	



# SITE MASTERPLAN / NEW GATEWAY BUILDING

The new reception building creates a critical threshold between the visitor arriving at the site and entering the site. The building itself screens the visual impact of parked vehicles.

Once visitors have passed into and through the building the visitor will partake of the core visitor experience and leave the world of cars and buses behind.

The building creates a concealed enclosed courtyard at its centre. This protected external space will have a microclimate protected from the winds and will allow outdoor activities to develop that are not currently possible at the site. This outdoor space will facilitate an extension of the restaurant and retail on peaks days.

The restaurant has an external patio that enjoys views of the western landscape.

Facilities at the new reception building include:

## Ground Floor

- 400-450 m2 restaurant and cafe
- 350-400 m2 retail
- Visitor “lounge” area 80m2
- Two WCs
- Office
- Education space/reception
- First aid and sanitation
- Coach drivers’ facilities
- Retail kiosks

## Lower Floor

- Restaurant kitchen, prep and storage
- Storage for retail
- Administration offices
- Admin storage
- Equipment storage
- Staff welfare
- Plant

The anticipated net building area will extend to circa 3300 m2.



Reception building - aerial view of courtyard



Landmark on plateau



Reception building - courtyard



Courtyard material quality



Reception area - covered entrance to courtyard

# SITE MASTERPLAN / NEW GATEWAY BUILDING



Aerial view over reception building to Liscannor



Reception building - internal space with view to courtyard





# SITE MASTERPLAN / NEW GATEWAY BUILDING



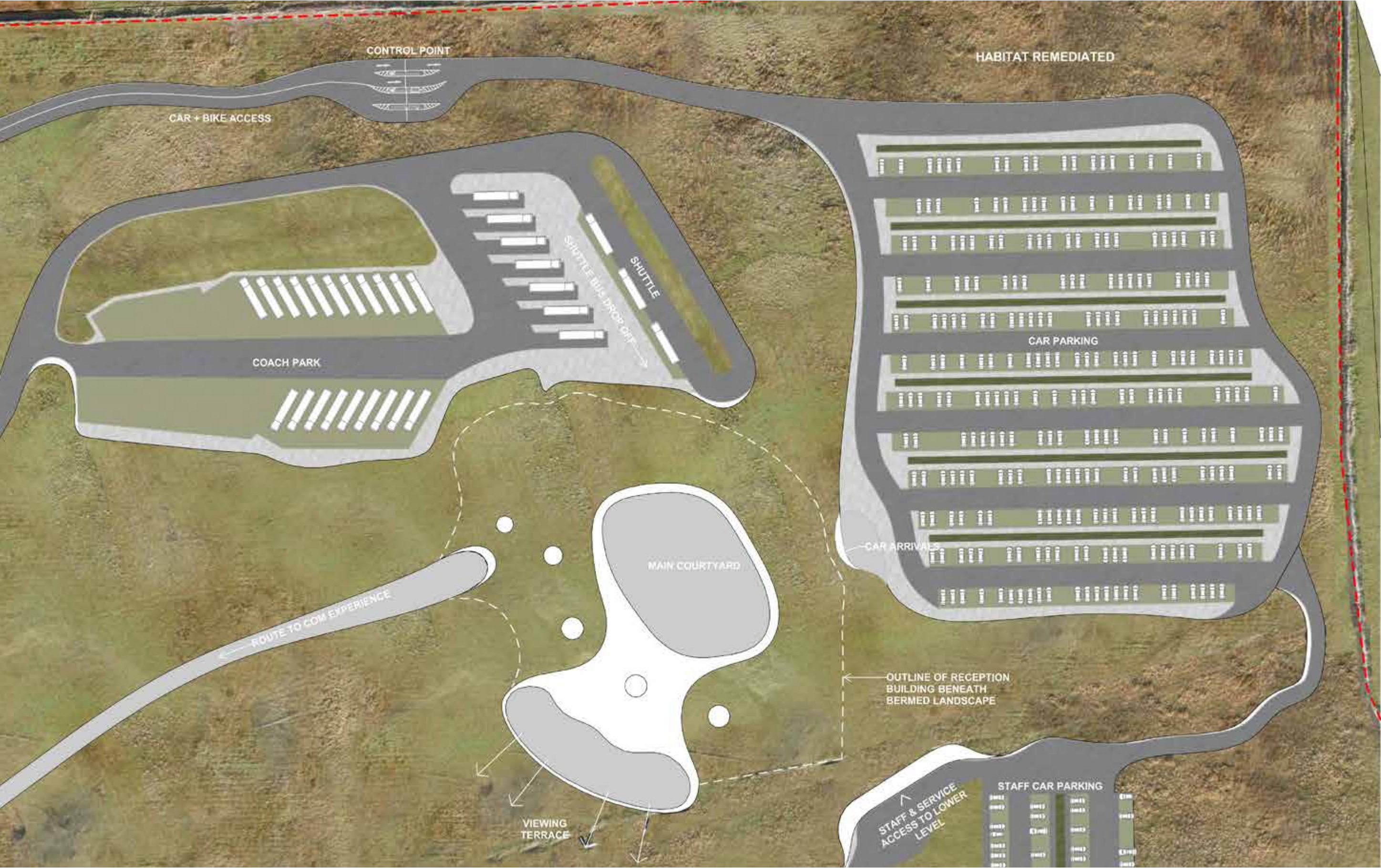
Reception building - internal space with view to external patio and Liscannor



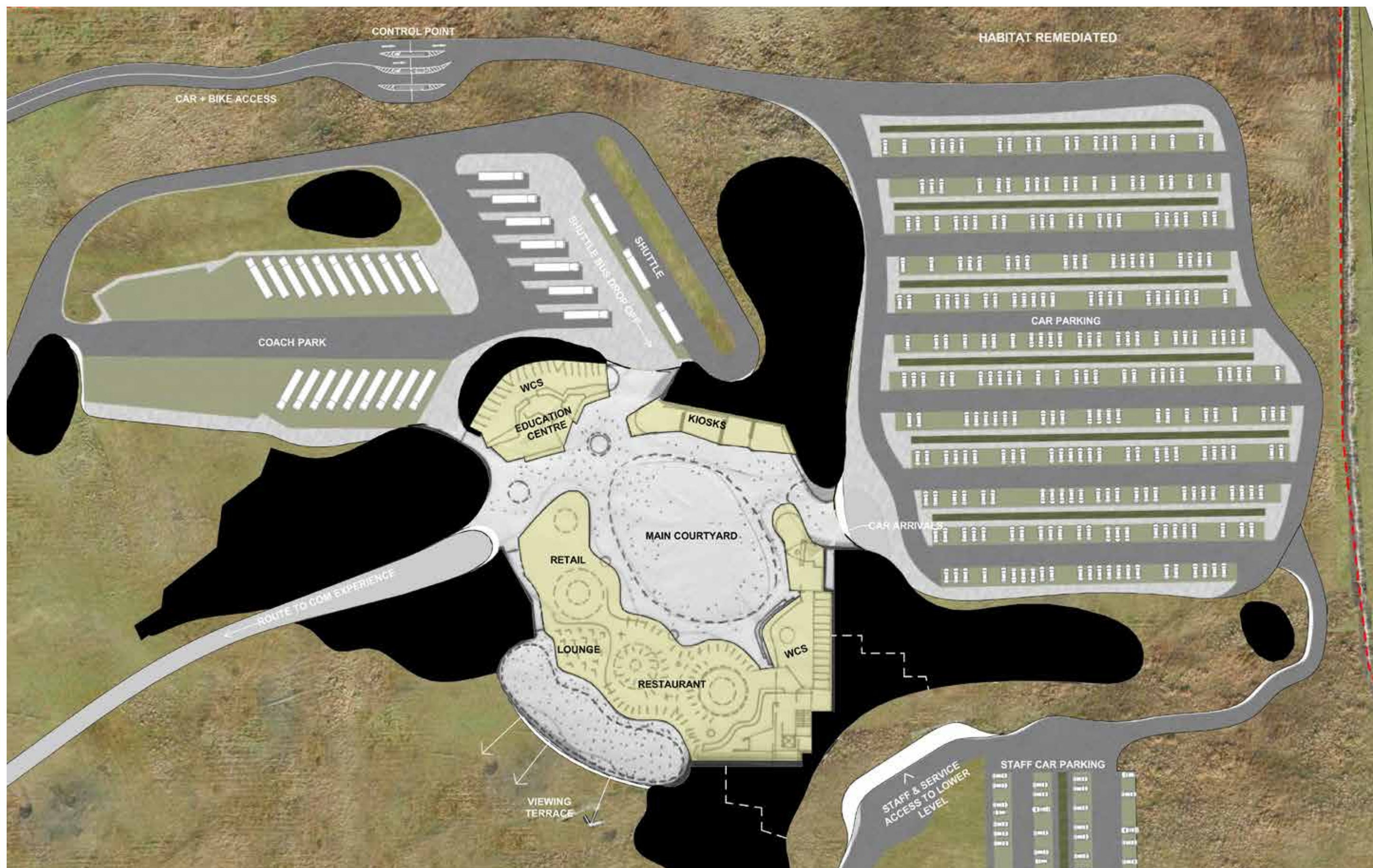




# SITE MASTERPLAN / NEW RECEPTION BUILDING

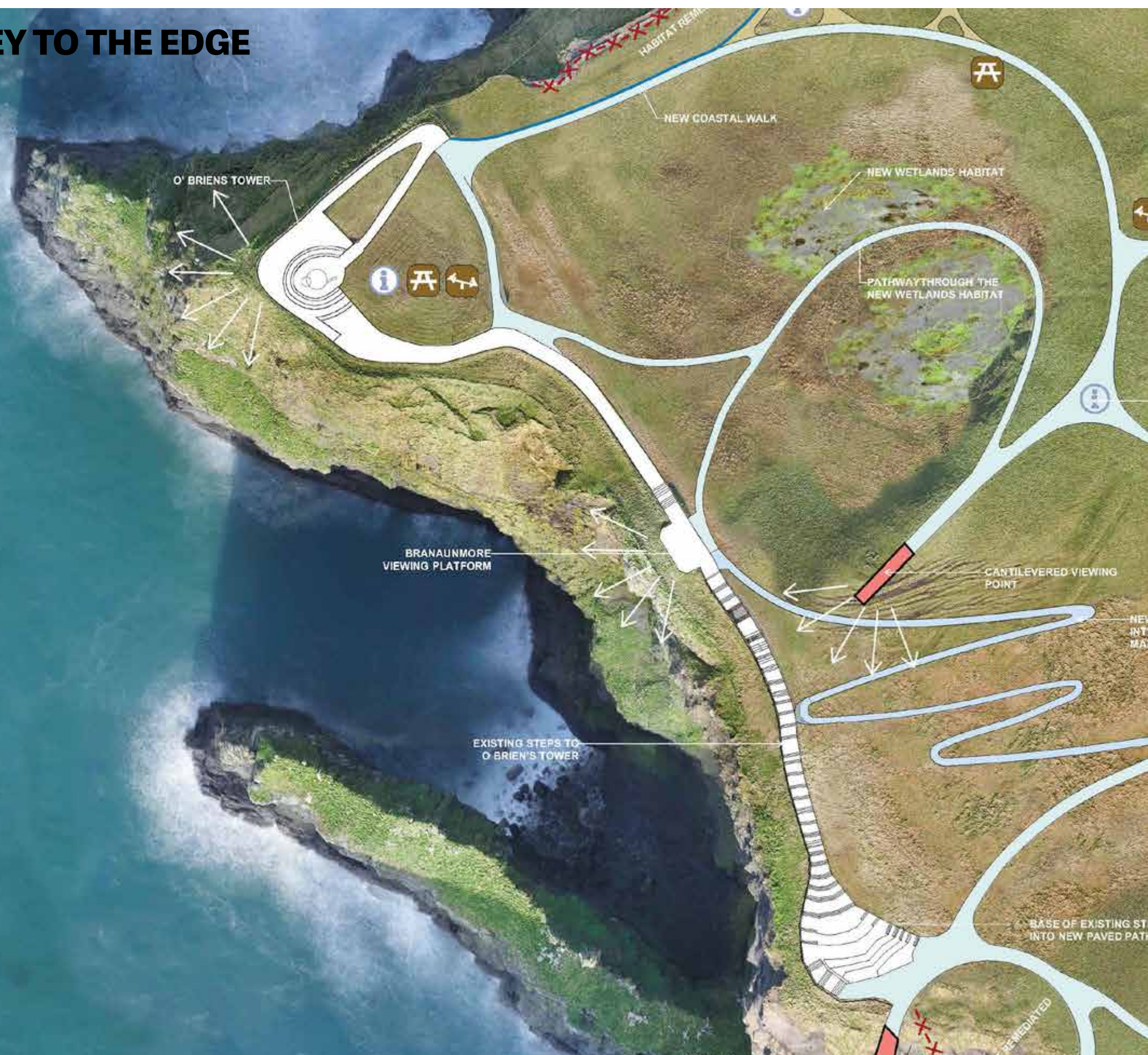
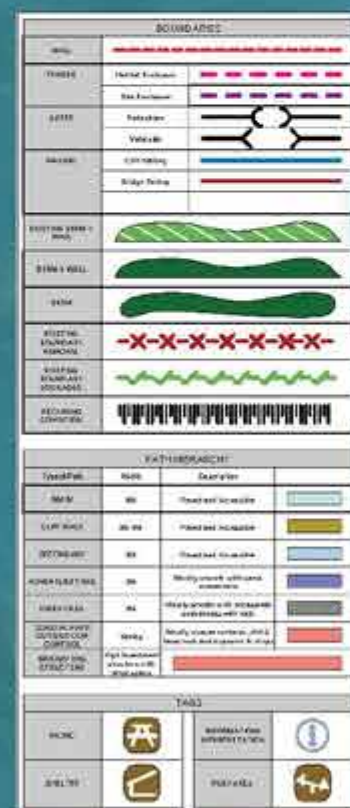




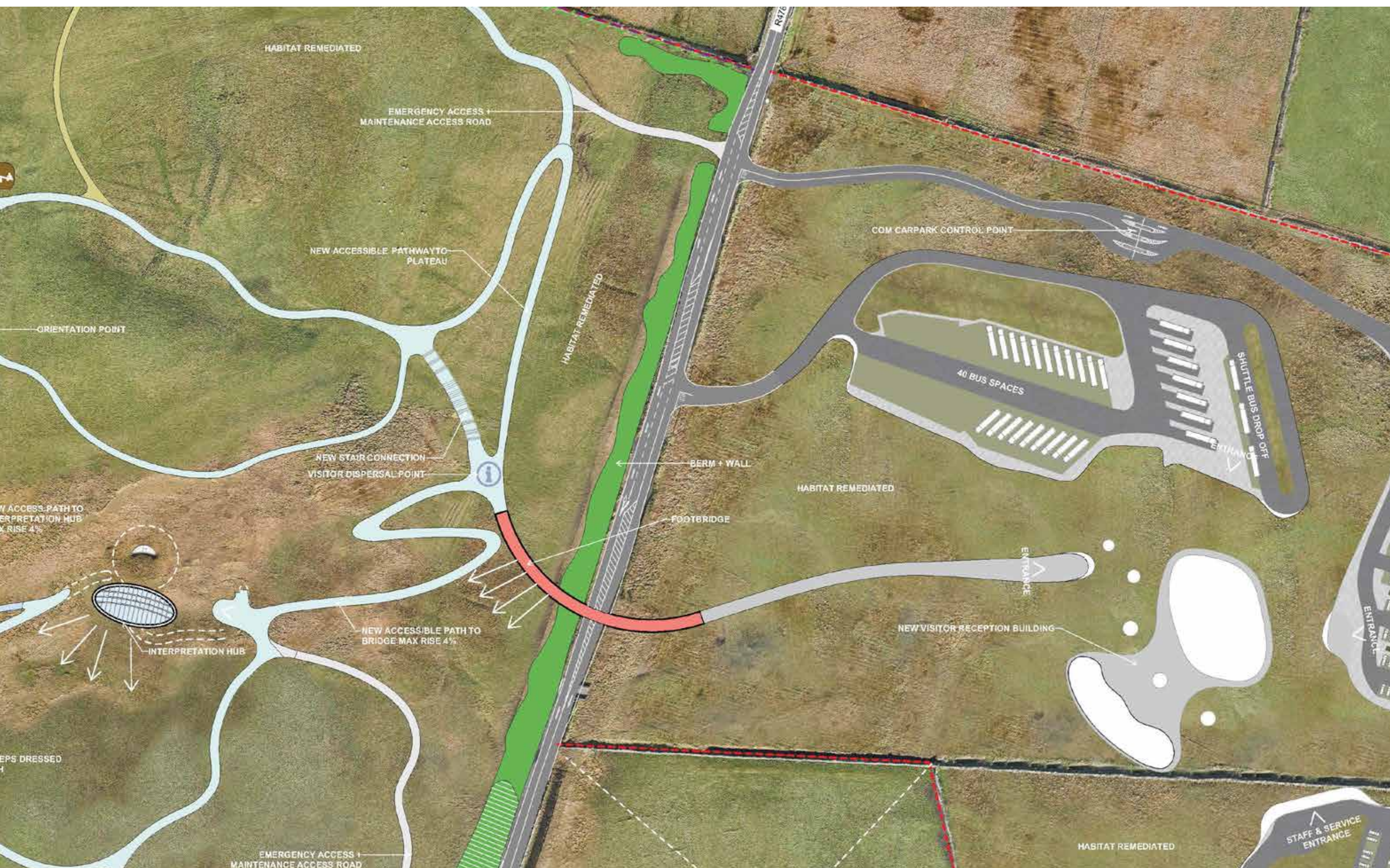




## SITE MASTERPLAN / JOURNEY TO THE EDGE









# SITE MASTERPLAN / JOURNEY TO THE EDGE

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy has identified in earlier chapters that the current arrangement of how the visitor reaches the cliffs is underwhelming. The masterplan sets out a spatial arrangement to create an increased sense of anticipation with a slower reveal of the primary attraction. This is achieved in several steps:

**Step 1:** The new reception building creates a critical threshold between the visitor arriving at the site and entering the site. The building itself screens the visual impact of parked cars and buses.

**Step 2:** On leaving the new reception building, the visitor emerges from the bermed landscape to enjoy a panoramic view of the southern cliffs and the landscape though to Liscannor, and the northern plateau. Further on, the visitors continue to enjoy this broad view as they are lifted over the R478 by a footbridge connecting to the landscape north of the current visitor centre.

**Step 3:** Where the footbridge lands on the northern plateau, the visitor arrives at a three-way fork in the pathway. At this point, the masterplan foresees interpretative signage inviting the visitors to disperse into the landscape.

**Step 4:** From this dispersal point, the primary route is to climb the steps facing you and rise over the back of the plateau. On this path, the visitor remains in the wind shadow of the hill and the cliff views for now are obscured. As visitors crests over the top of the hill, the wide expanse of the Cliffs of Moher Experience is slowly revealed. This theatrical reveal is a critical moment for the visitor.

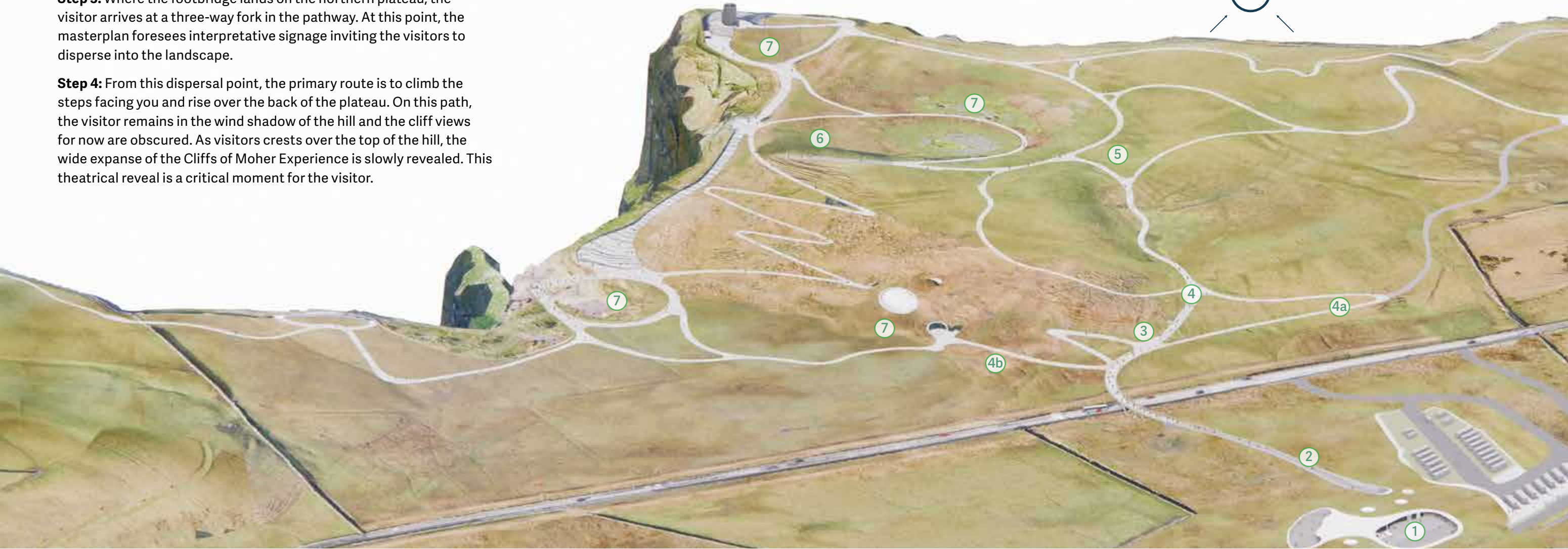
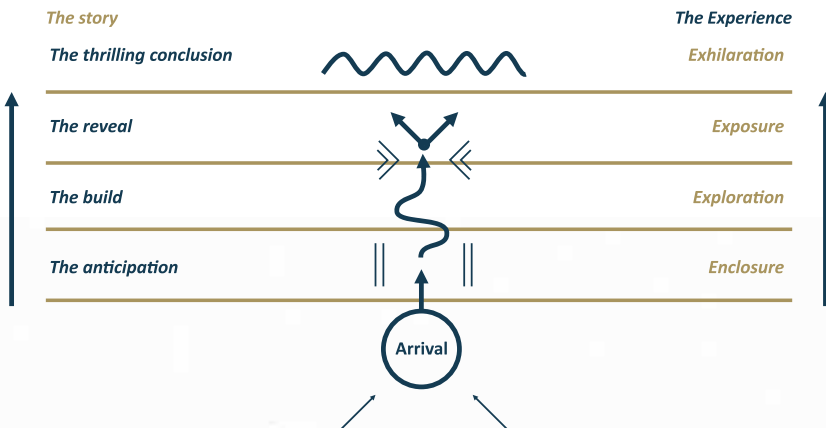
**Step 4a:** From the dispersal point, a pathway to the right will take you up the hill for the same experience. This route has been designed for the less able visitor to avoid the steps. The rise here is never more than 4%.

**Step 4b:** From the dispersal point, a route to the left gives visitors access to the southern landscape, the skywalk and the interpretation hub. This will be the return route for many visitors.

**Step 5:** Having crested the hill, the visitor arrives at a second dispersal point which will offer several further alternative routes.

**Step 6:** For most visitors, the initial arrival sequence onto the site will end at a new cantilever point with panoramic views in all directions. At this point, the visitor has the first “edge of the world” experiences. However, there is more to be revealed and explored as the visitor has still not reached the edge.

**Step 7:** The visitor can now enjoy a 360-degree overview of the site and see the various options that they may wish to explore. For example, they may travel over the wetland habitat to O’Brien’s Tower, hook left for the skywalk and return by the interpretation hub, or head north to explore the plateau landscape that is demarcated by the landmarks in the distance.







Site access - exiting reception building



Site access - walking towards footbridge



Site access - view from footbridge



# SITE MASTERPLAN / JOURNEY TO THE EDGE









# SITE MASTERPLAN / JOURNEY TO THE EDGE



Site access - visitor dispersal



Site access - View looking back from steps







Northern landscape



View over rewilded wetlands





# SITE MASTERPLAN / THE SKYWALK AND HINTERLAND

The stone ledge in front of the existing visitor centre has long been the focus of activity for visitors to the Cliffs of Moher. In the 19th century, Cornelius O'Brien built an iron and stone picnic table at this location. The ledge also is of particular interest to geologists as there have been fossil finds at the location. In recent years, access to the ledge has been restricted to better manage the safety of visitors.

The masterplan proposes the construction of a double cantilever at this location to bring the visitor out to experience the cliff-edge. Visitors also have an excellent vantage point to enjoy a view of the southern headlands from this location. Within the circle of the skywalk, the topsoil will be removed to expose more of the clifftop ledge as a geological exhibition.

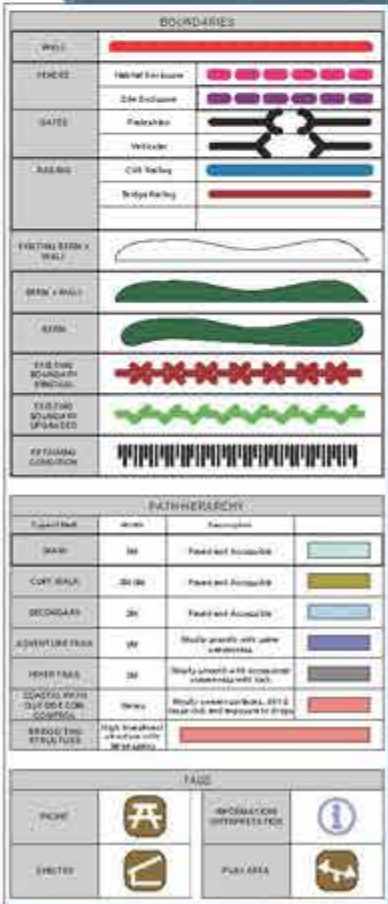
Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided as indicated.



Skywalk









## SITE MASTERPLAN / THE SKYWALK AND HINTERLAND









# SITE MASTERPLAN / THE INTERPRETATION HUB

The masterplan foresees a revised role for the existing visitor centre in the new arrangement of the Cliffs of Moher Experience. With the emphasis of the visitor activity adjusted further north to the plateau, the current building will no longer be at the centre of the project, with many primary visitor functions being provided in the new reception building.

This shift will significantly reduce the pressure on this building and allow it to provide an alternative role in the visitor experience. The building will be reorganised to be an interpretation hub, which will focus on providing an updated interpretative exhibition with additional facilities for education and groups.

The building will continue to play an important role in offering shelter in inclement weather and it will maintain a seasonal café, the kitchen support for which will be in the new reception building.

Vehicular traffic needed to sustain activities at the building will be minimised and a significant reduction in hard landscaping around the building can therefore be achieved, in keeping with the ambition to rewild as much of the landscape as possible.

The revised facilities at the interpretation hub include:

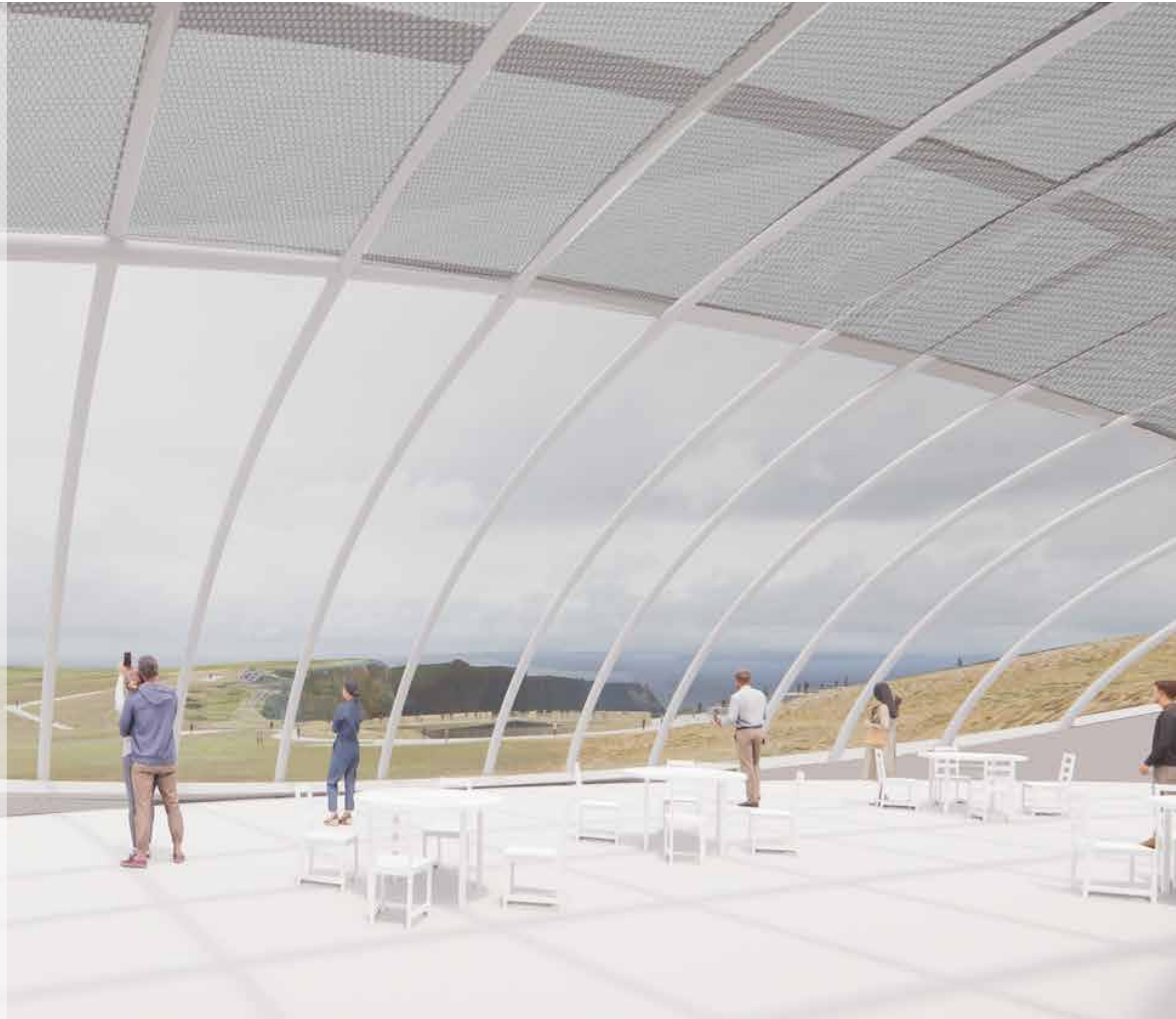
## Ground Floor

- Entrance lobby (with adjusted lobby/entry).
- Interpretation exhibition in main domed space.
- Audio-visual projection in rear interpretation space.
- Café and retail repurposed as education spaces.
- Current WC will suffice due to lower demand.
- Relocation of back-of-house administration facilities to the new reception building.

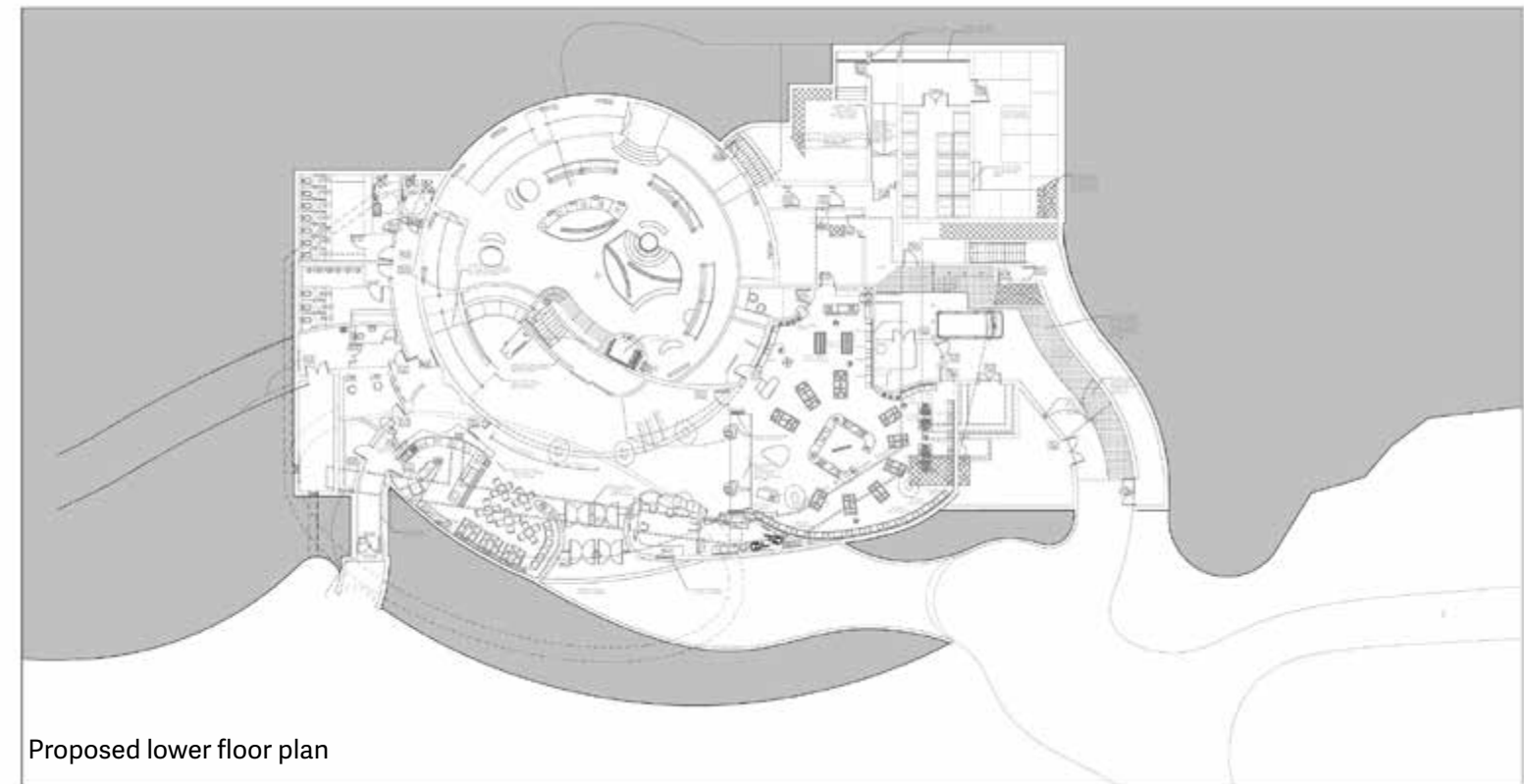
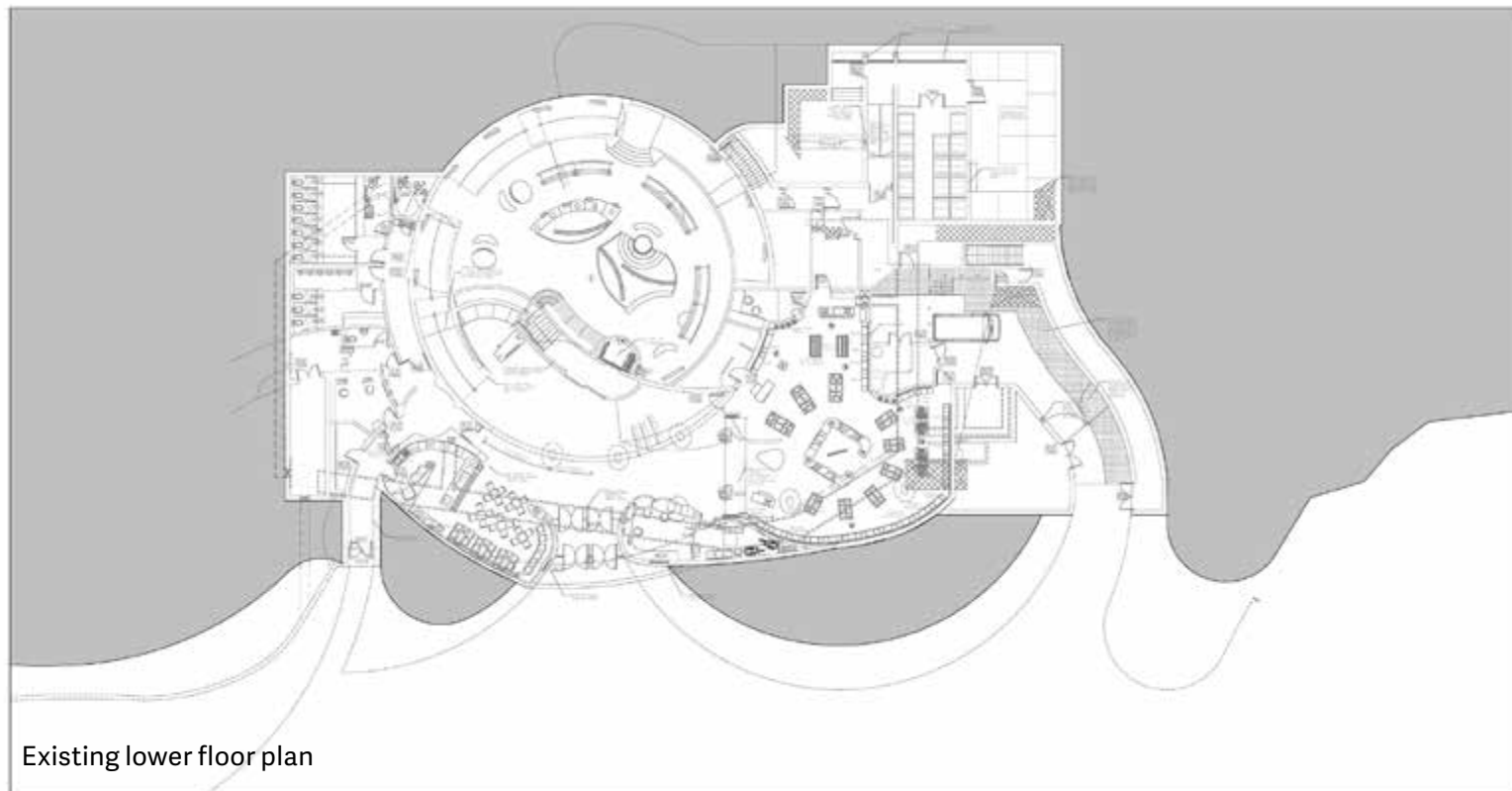
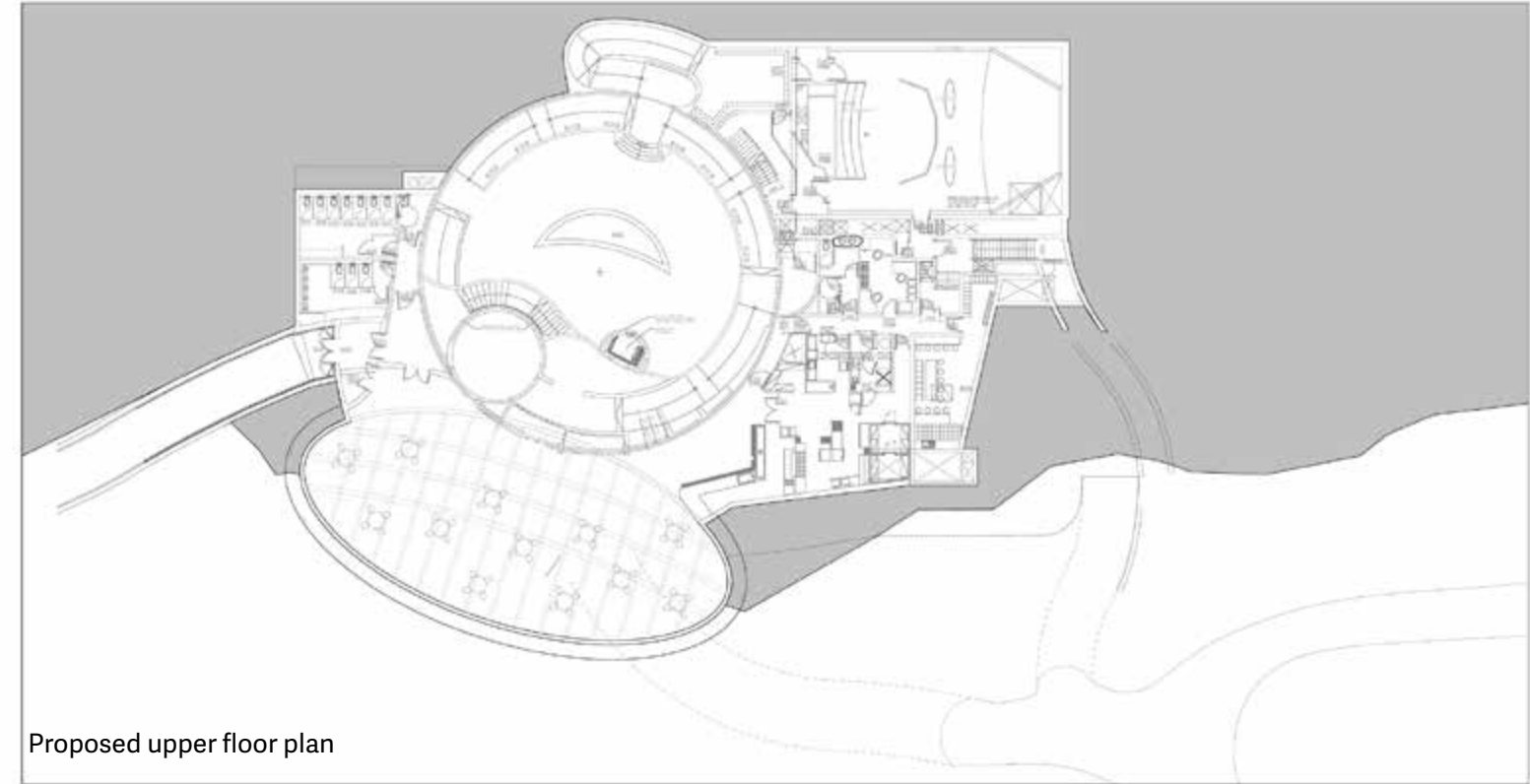
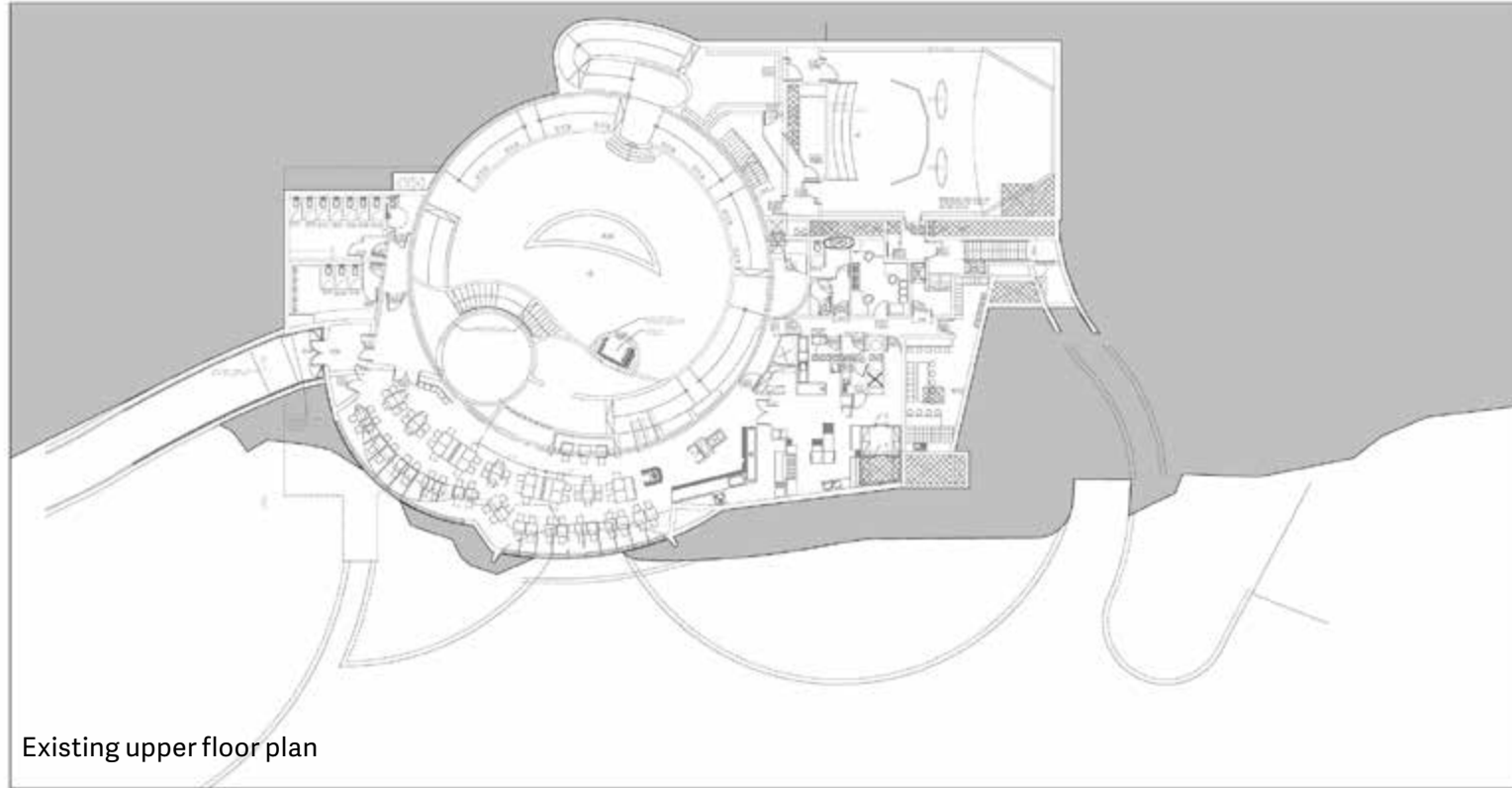
## Upper Floor

- Enlarged café with panorama view.

The anticipated net building area will extend to c. 2700 m<sup>2</sup>









# SITE MASTERPLAN / O'BRIEN'S TOWER AND THE WETLAND HABITAT

O'Brien's observation tower was built on a cliff promontory point in 1835 by local landlord and MP Sir Cornelius O'Brien. The structure has been repeatedly upgraded and is well maintained. It will remain the focus point of the Cliffs of Moher Experience for many visitors as it enjoys a particularly strategic view of the southern headlands. The masterplan foresees no physical changes at this location.

To the east of O'Brien's Tower is a natural hollow in the topography. Historical maps indicate that there was once a freshwater lake at this location, traces of which can still be identified. The masterplan proposes to establish a freshwater wetland habitat at this location, which will benefit flora and fauna and create another natural feature for the visitor to engage with. A suspended pathway is designed to pass through this wetland habitat.

To the south of O'Brien's Tower, the stone cliff-edge path will be retained including the concrete viewing bastion.

South of the wetland habitat, a raised promontory point has been identified as another excellent viewing point of the southern headlands. A cantilevered structure will be built at this location to capitalise on this view. This structure is the end point of the revised primary site access route described previously.

Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided as indicated.



New rewilded wetlands









# SITE MASTERPLAN / ON THE PLATEAU



View north on the plateau



View south on the plateau



View south from trigonometry feature

Between O’Brien’s Tower and the escarpment is an elevated plateau landscape which is the primary focus of the core project within the COM 2040 Strategy. It enjoys dramatic panoramic viewing opportunities and from various locations in this landscape, the visitor can engage with views of the southern cliff headlands, views to Liscannor and Lahinch, views inland (eastward) and views to the Burren and North Clare from the trigonometry point.

Instead of the visitor experience being constricted to the current narrow clifftop walk, a new landscape of looped walkways offers more options to navigate through the habitats. Looped walking routes of varying distance and duration can therefore be offered to visitors, based on their fitness level and willingness to engage with the climate. On busy days the routes can be organised to into a one-way system, if necessary.

Moving north from O’Brien’s Tower, an analysis of the stability of the current clifftop walk has identified where this is unstable. A new cliff-edge walk will be created further inland, allowing habitat remediation at the clifftop to be carried out where it is most critical for seabird foraging. Moving the cliff walk inland is not detrimental to the visitor’s ability to maintain a view of the cliffs as the topography is higher inland than at the cliff-edge. However, the masterplan does foresee the construction of some engineered viewing platforms to bring the visitor back to the edge where views are particularly dramatic.

The trigonometry point will be developed as a primary “destination” point in the landscape with the addition of a significant sculptural feature and viewing platform. A sculpture at this location will create a marker in the landscape that will allow the Cliffs of Moher site to be identified from the wider hinterland.

The landscape between the pathways will be rewilded and developed as an optimal foraging habitat for seabirds. A new Habitat Management Plan is being prepared to address this issue in detail.

Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided as indicated.







# SITE MASTERPLAN / THE ESCARPMENT



The escarpment at the northern perimeter of the plateau is a natural elevated position from which the visitor can enjoy dramatic cliff views. Views north to the Burren and North Clare from this location will allow the visitor to gain a better understanding of the wider geographical context.

The poorly drained landscape between the trigonometry point and the escarpment has been identified as a valuable foraging area for the Chough. Therefore, the visitor pathways will skirt around the edges of this landscape.

Additional routes from the trigonometry point to the escarpment will be developed to provide easier access for walkers with additional pathways constructed to have less than 6% rise.

The clifftop walkway will be moved back from the cliff-edge to improve visitor safety and the foraging habitat for seabirds.

An engineered cantilevered platform will be constructed at the Cliff of the Foals to provide a safer opportunity to enjoy this particularly dramatic view.

The trigonometry point will be developed as a primary “destination” point in the landscape with the addition of a significant sculptural feature and viewing platform. A sculpture at this location will create a marker in the landscape that will allow the Cliffs of Moher site to be identified from the wider hinterland.

Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided as indicated.







# SITE MASTERPLAN / FROM THE ESCARPMENT TO POLLBOY



The escarpment at the northern perimeter of the plateau is a natural elevated position from which visitors may enjoy dramatic cliff views. Views north to the Burren and North Clare from this location will give visitors a better understanding of the wider geographical context.

At the Cliff of the Foals, an engineered cantilevered platform will be constructed to provide a safer opportunity to enjoy this particularly dramatic view.

Additional routes from the escarpment to the Pollboy lookout will be developed to provide easier access for walkers with additional pathways constructed to have less than 6% rise.

The viewing point at Pollboy offers an exceptional visitor experience as it is lower than the cliffs to the south and allows the visitor a vantage point of the cliff structure and the bird life that is unavailable elsewhere.

The cliff-edge walkway will be moved back to improve visitor safety and the clifftop foraging habitat for seabirds.

Where the coastal path engages with the R478 road, access will be provided for emergency services.

Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided as indicated.







# SITE MASTERPLAN / NORTHERN LOOP



The northern loop could provide a considerable extension to the Cliffs of Moher Experience.

Adding this loop to the project would offer the visitor a more remote walking experience, particularly on busy days, as it is not envisaged that all visitors will reach this far from the core facilities. Built interventions on the Northern Loop should be limited to gravel pathways and information panels to guide the visitor away from the cliff-edge where it is appropriate to do this.

The viewing point at Pollboy is an exceptional visitor experience as this viewing point is lower than the cliffs to the south and allows the visitor a vantage point of the cliff structure and the bird life that is unavailable elsewhere.

The lands within the loop do not form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy. However, in partnership with the landowners, the strategy recommends exploring how this area could be included in the habitat's remediation plan.

At the time of the strategy's publication, a specialist review of the stability of the cliff-edge is ongoing at this location, so the final position of the coastal path is not yet determined.

The northern loop connects with the coastal path to Doolin to the north. The threshold between the two projects shall be demarcated and signage provided.

Where the Coastal Path engages with R478, access could be provided for emergency services.

Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided as indicated.







# SITE MASTERPLAN / SOUTHERN CLIFF WALK



To the south of the COM 2040 Strategy visitor experience is an opportunity to develop a further extension to the core project area.

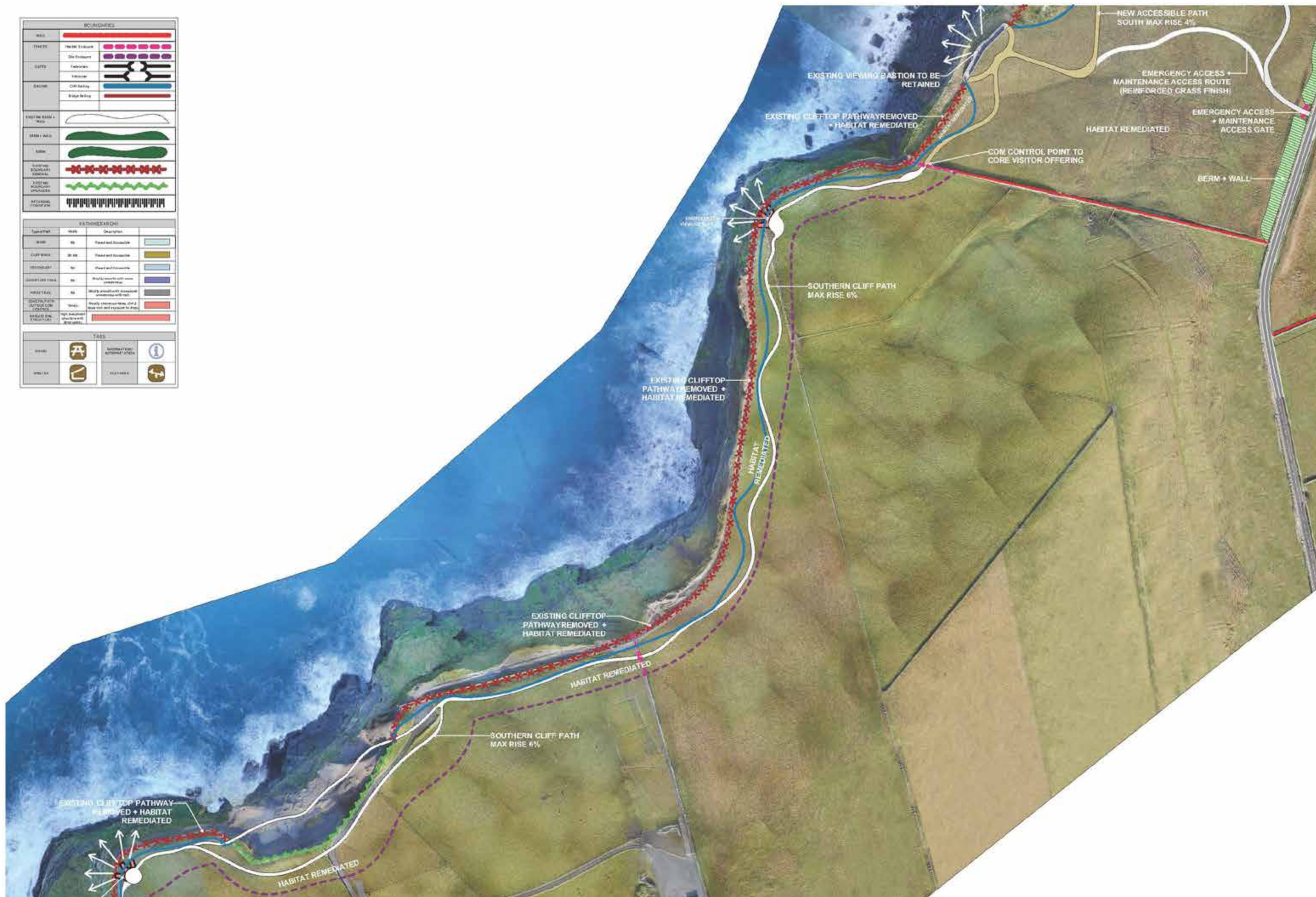
The southern cliff walk extends south of the current visitor centre for circa 1.5km and connects onto the coastal walk to Hags Head and Liscannor.

Here a new cliff-edge walk could be created further inland to allow habitat remediation at the clifftop where it is most critical for seabird foraging. At the time of the publication of the COM 2040 Strategy, a specialist review of the stability of the cliff edge is still ongoing, the degree to which the cliff-edge walk might be set back is still, therefore, to be confirmed.

The landscape between the pathways will be rewilded and developed as an optimal foraging habitat for seabirds. A new Habitat Management Plan is being prepared to address this issue in detail.

Core vantage points have been identified as viewing platforms. Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided as indicated.



[illegible]



# SITE MASTERPLAN / VISUAL ASSESSMENT

This part of the masterplan sets out to make a visual assessment of the proposed interventions at the Cliffs of Moher site.

The negative impact of the current arrangement of exposed coach and car parks directly in line of sight of the road and the arriving visitors has been identified in previous chapters.

The proposed rewilding of the site will result in subtle seasonal changes in colour and texture of the landscape – it would be difficult to represent this in the masterplan imagery. The impact of the built interventions is, however, easier to assess and is presented in the following pages.

The masterplan foresees the following reorganisation of the primary infrastructure at the site:

- Removal of the existing car park.
- Removal of the existing coach park.
- Removal of the WWT centre.
- Reduction in paved surfaces on the cliff side of the R478 road.
- Set-back of the new arrival's facilities from the R478.
- Re-organisation and relocation of the arrivals sequence to the east of the R478.
- Manipulation of the topography to screen the impacts of parked cars and coaches to the east of the R478.
- Manipulation of the topography to screen the impacts of the reception building.

The masterplan has carefully calibrated the location and design of the proposed new interventions into the existing topography. Through this approach a significant improvement in the visual impact of the buildings and parking facilities will be achieved, to the benefit of the environment and the visitor experience.

Note: To produce the following images (and most of the previous masterplan images) the whole COM site was scanned by Lidar photogrammetry and a point cloud model was created to a significant degree of detail. HRA have modelled the new interventions into this base model allowing us to make the following before and after imagery. Images on pages 252 and 253 are a collage of a photographic foreground combined with a modelled background. For Images on pages 243, 246, 247 and 248 the distant background was added by collaging photographs with the model as illustrated in the adjacent image. The resulting imagery is an accurate representation of the project outcomes.







Existing



Proposed



# SITE MASTERPLAN / VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Existing



## SITE MASTERPLAN / VISUAL ASSESSMENT





# SITE MASTERPLAN / VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Existing



Proposed





Existing



Proposed



# SITE MASTERPLAN / VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Existing



Proposed





Existing



Proposed



# SITE MASTERPLAN / VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Existing



Proposed





Existing



Proposed



# SITE MASTERPLAN / VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Existing



Proposed





Existing



Proposed



# SITE MASTERPLAN / CONSTRUCTION PHASING

## CONSTRUCTION PHASE ONE








In the second phase, the new visitor facilities established in Phase One will be available to maintain a viable visitor product. Once this is fully functioning, a construction precinct can then be isolated for the upgrade the interpretation hub, construction of the skywalk, removal of the WWT and remediation of the coach park etc.

Further subdivision of the core project phasing may emerge over the timeframe of the strategy depending on the availability of funding.

The Northern Loop and Southern Walk are envisaged as later extensions to the core project of the COM 2040 Strategy.



A dramatic landscape photograph of the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland. The image shows a steep, grassy cliff face dropping down to a turbulent sea. A dirt road runs along the top of the cliff, with a few small figures of people visible in the distance. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is majestic and serene.

# **SECTION 6: SEA AND AA SUMMARY, OUTCOMES AND KPIs**





**The vision for the Cliffs of Moher in 2040 brings together a comprehensive new masterplan for the site, underpinned by a wider strategic tourism framework.**

**This long-term vision will create outstanding visitor experiences, implement sustainable transport measures and create a network of new access links through integrated greenways. These initiatives will encourage visitors to disperse across the area bringing enhanced social and economic benefits for local communities.**

**A new environmental management approach, for an expanded Cliffs of Moher site, will create a truly “wild” experience in a more natural and dramatic landscape, bringing enormous biodiversity benefits.**

**The development of the detailed implementation plans will provide targets and ongoing monitoring in line with data collection and key indicators set out in the Strategic Environmental Assessment.**



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic and iterative process for evaluating, at a strategic level, the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme put forward by a proponent at the earliest appropriate stage, that is, during the preparation of a plan or programme and before a decision is made to adopt it. Accordingly, the Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy and its incorporated Site Masterplan has been subject to SEA to achieve the following:

- A strategic assessment of the likely significant effects (either negative or positive) of implementing the proposals set out in the Strategy and its incorporated Site Masterplan;
- The integration of key environmental considerations identified into the preparation of the Strategy and its incorporated Site Masterplan; and
- Ensuring that environmental considerations have been flagged throughout the process of the formulation of the Strategy and its incorporated Site Masterplan.

There are four stages to the SEA process with the first three stages involving a period of statutory public consultation.

**Stage 1 Screening:** Where a plan or programme is screened to determine whether it will have a significant effect on the environment. As detailed in the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Determination June 2020*, having had regard to the observations and submissions received from statutory environmental authorities and non-statutory consultees, Clare County Council issued a determination that an environmental assessment is required for the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

**Stage 2 Scoping:** If the competent authority determines that the plan or programme is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, the second stage, Scoping, involves a process to determine the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report. The *Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Consultation: Responses Report December 2023* provides a summary of the submissions and observations received from the statutory environmental authorities and non-statutory consultees on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report.

**Stage 3 Environmental Report:** Having determined the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report, stage three is the Environmental Assessment and the writing of the Environmental Report, where the likely significant effects on the environment of the plan or programme are described and evaluated.

**Stage 4 Monitoring:** The final stage of the SEA process is the ongoing Monitoring of the effects of the plan or programme on the environment.

## Environmental Baseline for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy SEA

In line with Article 12.(1)(a) of *S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004* (as amended), following the requirements set in Schedule 2(f) of said Regulations and informed by guidance drawn from the *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* issued by the EPA (May 2022), the environmental baseline presented in the Strategic Environmental Assessment DRAFT Environmental Report of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* covers the following SEA Topics as confirmed in Stage 2; Scoping:

- Population and Human Health
- Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna
- Land
- Soils
- Water
- Air Quality
- Climate
- Material Assets
- Cultural Heritage (architectural and archaeological)
- Landscape

Based on a synthesis of the baseline information and considering the outcomes of the SEA consultation undertaken, Key Strategic Environmental Issues were identified as relevant.

## Setting Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs)

Given the level of detail of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the incorporated Site Masterplan, the formulation of Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) was undertaken in response to the identified Key Strategic Environmental Issues acknowledging the following:

- Statutory requirements in relation to the implementation of environmental protection objectives (EU Directives and the transposition of these into Irish law);
- Guidance from policies governing environmental protection objectives at EU, state and local level; and
- Specific focus on the scope of the provisions set out in the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and responding to these at an appropriate level of detail.

These SEOs were used to evaluate the provisions of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the alternatives that were considered to determine:

- The likely (significant or non-significant) positive environmental effects of implementing the provisions of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the incorporated Site Masterplan.
- The likely (significant or non-significant) negative environmental effects of implementing the provisions of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the incorporated Site Masterplan.
- The identification of instances where the likely effects of implementing the provisions of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the incorporated Site Masterplan are considered to be neutral (i.e. neither negative or positive).
- The identification of instances where the likely effects of implementing the provisions of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the incorporated Site Masterplan are considered to be uncertain or unknown based on the current state of information available.

The SEOs formulated are set out in the following Table.



*Table: List of Identified Strategic Environmental Objectives for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*

SEA Topic	Key Strategic Environmental Issues	Strategic Environmental Objectives
<b>Population and Human Health (PHH)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Impact of the Cliffs of Moher Experience on quality of life for local community, businesses, and visitors (access, recreation, vehicular parking, educational, full year use).</li> <li>b. Impact of vehicular traffic (visitors, staff and service providers/suppliers).</li> <li>c. Potential for socio-economic beneficiation and deepening of linkages between the Cliffs of Moher Experience and local businesses and communities.</li> </ul>	<p>PHH1. To improve the social, educational, recreational, and economic fabric for communities.</p> <p>PHH2. To protect the health of residents of the study area as well as visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Experience.</p> <p>PHH3. To bring the magic of the Cliffs of Moher Experience alive and deliver world-class experiences in a safe, accessible, authentic, and welcoming environment.</p> <p>PHH4. To encourage visitors to stay longer in the area, especially overnight, spend more and facilitate greater benefits and investment into local towns and villages.</p> <p>PHH5. To enhance enhanced partnerships and greater coordination between the Cliffs of Moher Experience and local businesses and communities.</p> <p>PHH6. To deliver sustainable access to the Cliffs of Moher to resolve current negative impacts on local businesses and residents, especially at peak times.</p>
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Cliffs of Moher SPA (Site Code 004154), Inagh River Estuary SAC (Site Code 000036), Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (Site Code 000020), Ballyteige (Clare) SAC (Site Code 000994): (conserve, develop, knowledge).</li> <li>b. Habitats Directive (Annex I – habitat type and flora).</li> <li>c. Habitats Directive (Annex II – flora and fauna species).</li> <li>d. Habitats Directive (Annex IV – strict protection species).</li> <li>e. Birds Directive (Annex I – avian species and habitat).</li> <li>f. Invasive Species (Flora and Fauna).</li> <li>g. Non-designated habitats including landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna such as ecological corridors as referenced in Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</li> <li>h. Species protected under the Wildlife Act including protected flora and Red data book species.</li> </ul>	<p>BFF1. To support the achievement of the Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 (SPA and SAC) sites in the study area</p> <p>BFF2. To restore the biodiversity and habitats at the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>BFF3. To recognise and value the Cliffs of Moher Development Area natural heritage and bio-cultural diversity.</p> <p>BFF4. To support the protection and improvement of other sites important for nature conservation including the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the pNHAs in the study area.</p> <p>BFF5. To support the protection and improvement of other sites important for nature conservation including areas covered by the Wildlife Act.</p> <p>BFF6. To support the protection and improvement of other sites important for nature conservation including any identified ecological corridors in the study area.</p>
<b>Land (L)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Obtaining adequate land interests to implement the <i>Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy</i>.</li> <li>b. Effects of construction and operational impacts including Visitor Numbers, Agriculture: Farm Holdings, Farm Type, Land Quality and Land Interests.</li> </ul>	<p>L1. To achieve net positive effects for the environment based on land under the control of Clare County Council within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>L2. To achieve effective land management on lands within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p>
<b>Soils and Geology (SG)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Soil degradation and topsoil loss due to human activities.</li> <li>b. Geological events (cliff stability).</li> </ul>	<p>SG1. To minimise the impact of visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Development Area and facilitate restoration of the soil resource.</p> <p>SG2. To minimise the impact of visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Development Area and facilitate reduced impact on cliff failure (geological events).</p> <p>SG3. To ensure that all site works including excavation and movement of soils is subject to monitoring and compliance with a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan.</p> <p>SG4. To restore the soil resource within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p>



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

SEA Topic	Key Strategic Environmental Issues	Strategic Environmental Objectives
<b>Water</b> <b>[Ground and Surface Water]</b> <b>(W)</b>	<div><div>a.</div>Conservation of water resource (source, use, reuse and recycle).</div> <div><div>b.</div>Enhancing surface water drainage systems (integration with existing infrastructure).</div> <div><div>c.</div>Flood Risk (surface water mitigation measures).</div>	<div><div>W1.</div>To protect both surface water and groundwater, and their associated habitats and species within and adjacent to the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</div> <div><div>W2.</div>To ensure that the status of water resources is protected, maintained, and improved within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area, in line with the requirements of the WFD and MSFD.</div> <div><div>W3.</div>To ensure the protection where applicable of areas at risk of surface water flooding from the proposed development through avoidance, mitigation, and adaptation measures.</div>
<b>Air Quality</b> <b>(AQ)</b>	<div><div>a.</div>Cliffs of Moher Experience (air quality impact from increased traffic flows).</div> <div><div>b.</div>Satellite Park and Ride system implementation (satellite locations, vehicular movements – potential congestion and idling).</div>	<div><div>AQ1.</div>To ensure that all development implemented in terms of the <i>Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy</i> supports the <i>Clean Air Strategy</i>.</div>
<b>Climate</b> <b>(C)</b>	<div><div>a.</div>Climate neutral conceptualisation and design of new build proposals (building concepts).</div> <div><div>b.</div>Management of Construction Stage (materials and methodology).</div> <div><div>c.</div>Operational Stage (sustainable energy sources / renewables).</div>	<div><div>C1.</div>To contribute positively towards achieving the national targets to deliver Ireland’s climate ambition.</div> <div><div>C2.</div>To reduce and minimise greenhouse gas emissions.</div> <div><div>C3.</div>To ensure that all construction works and related activities are monitored and subject to a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan.</div>
<b>Material Assets</b> <b>(MA)</b>	<div><div>a.</div>Drainage (foul and surface water connectivity and pump station functionality where required).</div> <div><div>b.</div>Waste management (public refuse [littering], collection, disposal, reuse and recycling and operationally generated waste).</div> <div><div>c.</div>Access Infrastructure (pedestrian footpaths, access for mobility impaired, roads).</div> <div><div>d.</div>Operational services – energy (gas), electricity, communications).</div>	<div><div>MA1.</div>To ensure the protection of the receiving environment from WWTP percolation discharge.</div> <div><div>MA2.</div>To ensure that the operation of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience adheres to waste reduction, nature-based drainage solutions and energy efficiency strategies.</div>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b> <b>[Archaeological and Architectural]</b> <b>(CH)</b>	<div><div>a.</div>Identification (opportunity to highlight prehistoric, medieval and 19th century area history).</div> <div><div>b.</div>Importance Level (assessment of recovered artefacts).</div> <div><div>c.</div>Protection (in-situ and documentation).</div> <div><div>d.</div>Heritage protection and conservation (direct impact of new development).</div> <div><div>e.</div>Enhancement (complementary expansion by incorporating existing structure into design and reuse of structures).</div>	<div><div>CH1.</div>To ensure the protection of all places, buildings, features and landscapes of archaeological or architectural heritage significance within their settings in the landscape of the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</div> <div><div>CH2.</div>To ensure that all construction works and related activities are monitored and subject to a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan.</div> <div><div>CH3.</div>To ensure that post-construction operational activities are monitored and subject to a comprehensive Visitor Management Plan.</div>
<b>Landscape [Visual Character]</b> <b>(LVC)</b>	<div><div>a.</div>Natural (landscape character designations, feature preservation).</div> <div><div>b.</div>Historic (relationship with pre-historic environment, medieval and Burren).</div> <div><div>c.</div>Views, relationships and access to Cliffs (Cliffs of Moher SPA and views from sea via Doolin Pier).</div> <div><div>d.</div>Visual relationship to Existing Development (Cliffs of Moher and O’Brien’s Tower).</div>	<div><div>LVC1.</div>To ensure compliance with the framework for the protection of significant landscapes set by the <i>National Landscape Strategy</i> and the <i>Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029</i>.</div> <div><div>LVC2.</div>To enhance the visitor experience of the landscape.</div>



SEA Evaluation Framework to Evaluate the Provisions of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy

The adopted SEA Evaluation Framework and sequence of steps taken systematically in the assessment of the different elements of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* is comprised of the following:

- 1. A set of Significance Criteria, which were used to assess whether each identified relevant element/provision of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the incorporated Site Masterplan would likely have or cause an effect in relation to achieving the SEOs set out above. These 'Significance Criteria' are set out in the Table below.
- 2. Using the Significance Criteria, each identified relevant element/provision of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* was assessed and evaluated against the individual SEOs set per SEA Topic.
- 3. To determine an overall summary evaluation of the likely significance of the effect of each identified relevant element/provision of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and the incorporated Site Masterplan, a balanced summary approach was used where the final assessment conclusion (e.g. ++, +, O, -, - or ?) was calculated based on the assessment of each SEO and then apportioning an overall rating in relation to the number of SEOs assessed per Topic.

Table: Significance Criteria in Relation to SEOs

Likely Significance of Effect	Description of Effect Significance
Substantially supports SEO ++	Effect is considered significant, e.g. beneficial impacts are substantial, substantially accelerate an improving trend, substantially decelerate a declining trend, substantially support delivery of a declared SEO.
Supports SEO +	Supports SEO but not to a significant extent (e.g. beneficial impacts are not substantial, do not substantially accelerate an improving trend, do not substantially decelerate a declining trend, do not substantially support delivery of a declared SEO).
Neutral Contribution to SEO O	Either no impacts or on balance (taking account of positive and negative impacts) a neutral contribution.
Detracts from SEO -	Detracts from SEO but not to a significant extent (e.g. adverse impacts are not substantial, do not substantially decelerate an improving trend, do not substantially accelerate a declining trend, do not substantially detract from delivery of a declared SEO).
Substantially detracts from SEO --	Is considered significant (e.g. adverse impacts are substantial, substantially decelerate an improving trend, substantially accelerate a declining trend, substantially detract from delivery of a declared SEO).
Effect on SEO Uncertain ?	Interactions with SEO are uncertain

Description And Evaluation Of Alternatives

In line with the requirements set under Article 5 of the SEA Directive as transposed into Article 12 of the *European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No.: 435/2004)*, it is necessary for an Environmental Report to set out the consideration given to "reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme."

Limited Alternatives Available

In acknowledging the need to consider "reasonable alternatives", it is important to highlight that the key motivation for embarking on the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* is the need to deal with challenges that have been identified over a period of several years relating to the limited capacity in certain instances of the existing visitor facilities at the Cliffs of Moher Experience, concerns over the impact of the seasonal influx of tourists (and related vehicle traffic) drawn to the Cliffs of Moher attraction, and the need to broaden the positive spin-offs from tourism into a wider region to benefit local communities.

It is also important to highlight that the Cliffs of Moher are acknowledged as being Ireland's most visited natural attraction (and the second most visited attraction overall), with over 1.6 million visitors annually. As such, the Cliffs of Moher are a Signature Discovery Point on the Wild Atlantic Way, which itself is a core route in Ireland's portfolio of Regional Experience brands.

These facts establish the geographical scope of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, which is that the focus of the Strategy is on the existing physical attraction (the Cliffs) and surrounding lands. As such, the reasonable alternatives considered were identified as follows:

- 1. Business as Usual (Alternative 1: the Status Quo)
- 2. Prepare the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* (Alternative 2: Plan for Change)



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## Alternative 1: Business as Usual (the Status Quo)

Under a ‘Status Quo Scenario’, it is likely that the key challenges and constraints that currently prevail at the Cliffs of Moher Experience and in its hinterland would persist and further entrench current negative effects. As noted, these key challenges and constraints include:

- Poor sense of arrival for visitors due to the current difficulties in managing traffic volumes and congestion at the entrance to the existing parking located on the eastern side of the R478 road during Peak Season. In addition, the location of coach parking and large paved concourses on the approach to the cliff-edge detracts from the experiential concept of “standing at the edge of the world”.
- Congestion on local access routes due to some coach tour operators making use of unsuitable routes, which has been mitigated to an extent since 2016 by the decision not to approve any new route licences, thus limiting the number of day trip coaches on these routes.
- The limited capacity of the existing Visitor Centre and associated facilities, which were not designed to accommodate the current annual number of visitors (around 1.6m visitors per annum), especially during the Peak Season. The design of the current visitor centre, retail and catering spaces does little to mitigate the impact of crowds and are under-scaled for the current needs and expectations of visitors at a world-class experience. This is most apparent in the entrance foyer, where a crossflow of visitors accessing the reception desk and gift shop prevents circulation and creates a sense of disorder and disorientation upon entry.
- The current direct pathway from the Visitor Centre to the cliff edge leads to a high number of visitors and crowding along the route, which detracts from the quality of the experience at viewing points. As a result, the current experience can feel linear and disconnected from the wild and untamed atmosphere of the cliffs, again especially during Peak Season.
- The limited nature of the existing cliff-edge path creates health and safety issues, linked to erosion of the cliff-edge itself because of visitors going beyond the designated pathways. The cliff paths beyond the designated Visitor Experience are a major safety hazard due to their proximity to the unstable cliff-edge and unpredictable weather conditions. Visitors rarely heed the warnings in situ and try to get as close to the edge as possible for photograph opportunities.
- These behaviours have also impacted on vulnerable habitats. The most important habitat is the rocky sea-cliff vegetation and coastal grassland community that provides foraging areas for Chough and this habitat has been subject to considerable erosion along the cliff path. In addition, much of the coastal headland is grasslands which have been regularly fertilised, grazed by cattle or cut for silage. The fauna here are much diminished, reducing the attraction for ground nesting birds and small mammals.
- The current lack of partnerships between local and regional tourism products and the absence of connected transport and accommodation infrastructure means the benefits of the high visitor numbers drawn to the Cliffs of Moher Experience are not felt across the county. It is notable that County Clare has the second lowest average spend by international overnight visitors.
- There are limited public transport options to provide the flexibility that encourages people to stay and explore the area. Local bus routes from Galway to Doolin via the Cliffs of Moher and Ennis are infrequent. Moreover, to date there has been limited development, management, maintenance, and promotion of sustainable transport routes such as the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk.

The absence of a strategic approach to dealing with the above challenges and constraints would likely result in a need for Clare County Council to continue to adopt reactive solutions to negative effects without addressing directly and systematically the core challenge that the existing visitor facilities were designed for a volume of visitors that has been significantly exceeded for several years.

## Alternative 2: Prepare the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy (Plan for Change)

The need to respond to the current situation at the Cliffs of Moher Experience in an integrated manner led the Clare County Council to undertake the formulation of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* with its incorporated Site Masterplan, to set in place a long-term Vision for the sustainable development of the Visitor Attraction.

It is understood that the unique ecological and cultural importance of the Cliffs of Moher – and the worldwide recognition of this significance – means there is great potential to develop a world-class visitor experience with far-reaching benefits for the environment, visitors and local communities.

The decision to plan proactively to address the current constraints and challenges and seek to maximise opportunities for improvement and enhanced development acknowledges that the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* charts a course forward but does not give statutory effect to the proposals set out therein.

It is recognised, therefore, that the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* is a plan that would not grant consent or establish a framework for granting consent for any proposed development. Any projects selected for implementation that are not classed as exempted development under the *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended) would be subject to compliance with all applicable statutory development consent procedures.

## Key Strategic Decisions And Alternatives Considered Under Alternative 2

Several key strategic decisions were taken in relation to the Core Objectives set for the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*, some of which entailed the consideration of potential alternative solutions. These are identified as follows:

1. **Strategic Decision A:** Locating welcome and support facilities as part of a new Visitor Centre at a remote location.
2. **Strategic Decision B:** Proposal to establish a Park and Ride Shuttle Bus Service.
3. **Strategic Decision C:** Relocating and consolidating the visitor arrivals, welcome and support facilities to the east of the main R478 access road.
4. **Strategic Decision D:** Focus on the Northern Topography.
5. **Strategic Decision E:** Visitors will transition from the new Reception Building facilities to the cliff side of the R478 access road via a new pedestrian bridge.
6. **Strategic Decision F:** Cliff- edge experiences.
7. **Strategic Decision G:** The existing Visitor Centre will be repurposed.



## Evaluation Of Key Strategic Decisions And Alternatives

Within the limited scope of the identified reasonable alternatives of ‘Alternative 1: Business as Usual’ or ‘Alternative 2: Plan for Change’, the preferred alternative was to proceed with the formulation of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*.

Within the scope of the Strategy, the Strategic Decisions and, where relevant, the Alternatives considered were assessed comparatively for the purpose of this SEA of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*.

### Methodology

A standard assessment methodology was applied using the Significance Criteria set out above. The following steps were followed systematically in the assessment of the Strategic Decisions and the relevant Alternatives considered:

1. Each element of the Strategic Decisions and, where applicable, the Alternatives considered under a Strategic Decision, were assessed and evaluated against the individual SEOs set per SEA Topic using the Significance Criteria set out above;
2. Thereafter, a summary conclusion rating was determined for each element of the Strategic Decisions and, where applicable, the Alternatives considered under a Strategic Decision by applying the method set out above.

### Detailed Evaluation of Strategic Decisions and Alternatives

#### *Strategic Decision A: Locating Welcome and Support Facilities as part of a new Visitor Centre at a Remote Location*

The Strategic Decision in this regard considered a development option where almost all existing visitor facilities at the current Cliffs of Moher Experience site apart from visitor drop-off and collection facilities and basic on-site facilities (ablutions etc.) would be removed from the current site and developed at a remote location. The key features of such a development option included the following:

- There would be significantly less built infrastructure at the Cliffs of Moher Experience site, which is a positive in relation to the core objective to rewild/restore the habitat and landscape at the site.
- The development of new parking, arrivals and visitor facilities at a remote Cliffs of Moher Experience centre would bring significant economic benefits to whichever location was selected for the development, which also met the requirements of the core objective to enhance economic benefits related to the Cliffs of Moher attraction more broadly across the region.
- However, from a design and implementation perspective, the site selection criteria for a single arrivals and collection point at the Cliffs site are extremely demanding as there would still need to be adequate provision for visitor needs as well as shelter for staging of arriving visitors and those waiting to be collected and transported back to the remote Visitor Centre.
- As the scenario contemplated that no independent arrivals at the Cliffs site would be catered for and all visitors would need to travel to the Cliffs from the remote location, a year-round comprehensive and responsive bus shuttle system would be needed, which would require significant resources to be funded and operated on a full-time basis, regardless of season.
- The shuttle system would also need to be set up and adequately resourced (i.e. numbers of available vehicles, drivers, maintenance and operations etc.) to deal with exigencies. For example, extreme changes in weather conditions are not uncommon at the Cliffs site, even in summer periods, and sudden heavy rain and strong winds mean visitors need on-site shelter and the shuttle system would be under significant pressure from high numbers of visitors waiting to return to the remote location.

All the above factors, taken together, led to this development option being disregarded for further consideration.





# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## Strategic Decision B: Proposal to Establish a Park and Ride Shuttle Bus Service

The Strategic Decision in this regard addressed the objective of achieving longer visitor dwell times on-site at the Cliffs of Moher Experience through a combination of setting in place a cap on the number of visitors to be accommodated at the site (proposed to be set at the 2019 peak levels of c. 10,500 visitors per day), the development of expanded facilities and a wider range of activities (routes and experience opportunities) and the provision of a Park and Ride bus shuttle service to cater for car-dependent visitors (so-called Fully Independent Travellers – or FITs) during peak periods. It is proposed that all car arrivals during the peak season will require pre-booking (as is the case currently for all coaches) which will eliminate the situation where visitors arrive at the Cliffs of Moher site speculatively. This will also further reduce the risk of FITs, many of whom will have potentially travelled a long distance, arriving when the car park is full and queuing on the main R478 road adjacent to the site. The key features of this Strategic Decision include:

- Overall, the provision of a more sustainable access system that will reduce the number of car-borne FITs to the site using lower-emission vehicles to provide mass transportation during peak seasons.
- By providing a more orderly and managed access system, a better experience for visitors to the Cliffs would be achieved from the outset.
- The use of the Park and Ride shuttle system during peak periods will address the additional car parking demand that will result from the extended dwell time of visitors on-site, thus allowing the existing number of car parking spaces provided to be maintained without expansion.
- The ultimate development and operation of 2 no. Park and Ride hubs (to the north and south of the Cliffs of Moher Experience, most likely to be in or near Lisdoonvarna and Ennistymon) would be an important element in achieving the core objective of extending the benefits of tourism by encouraging visitors to stay and explore local towns in the area.

### Alternatives Considered:

The Alternatives considered to the provision of a Park and Ride Shuttle system during peak periods were:

- **Option 1 – Do Nothing:** This option, where extended dwell times on-site by visitors is achieved but no Park and Ride service is offered and all car-borne visitors are accommodated to park at the Cliffs of Moher Experience site, would likely require significantly increased car parking areas to accommodate the same total number of visitors (as there would be less turnover in parking spaces).
- **Option 2 – Maintain the Current Situation:** Under this option, where no changes are made to the overall Experience, it is likely that pressure from visitor numbers will compound congestion and disruption on local roads during tourism peak periods.
- **Option 3 – Provide a Year-Round Comprehensive Shuttle System:** Under this option, all parking would be removed from the Cliffs site and the same disadvantages as were noted to apply to the provision of a comprehensive shuttle system under the development option where a completely new Visitor Centre at a remote location was considered apply.

All the above factors, taken together, led to the adoption of a Park and Ride Shuttle to form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.

## Strategic Decision C: Relocating and Consolidating the Visitor Arrivals, Welcome and Support Facilities to the East of the Main R478 Access Road

The Strategic Decision in this regard is that all major facilities related to visitor arrivals, welcome and visitor experience support would be developed in an integrated fashion to the east of the R478 access road. Facilities to be developed would include a new gateway Reception Building. A key consideration for this development option was that it facilitates the creation of a wilder, back to nature experience for visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Experience. Accordingly, the main features of this Strategic Decision include:

- The consolidation of visitor arrivals facilities (car parking facility, gateway Reception Building etc.) supports the adoption of a new habitat management approach to transform lands (regular field system) to the west of the R478 to benefit the restoration of the site’s biodiversity.
- The development option entails the development of new coach and shuttle bus drop-off points in screened-off areas to the east of the R478 road and the decommissioning of the existing coach drop-off facility to the west of the R478, which also then provides for the restoration of those lands.

### Alternatives Considered:

The alternatives considered in respect of the visitor arrivals, welcome and support facilities were as followed:

- **Option 1 – Do Nothing:** Under this option, negative aspects of the current situation would prevail, including traffic queues and disruption at peak times; the pollution/air quality impacts of queuing vehicles; a poor sense of arrival for car-borne visitors; safety issues associated with visitors having to cross the R478; and ongoing environmental impacts across the site.
- **Option 2 – Provision of split arrival/parking on both sides of the R478 road and extend the existing Visitor Centre (also with new coach and shuttle bus drop-off points developed to the west of the R478):** Under this option, traffic management is eased and traffic queues and disruption would be reduced; however, an increase in built infrastructure is required which negatively impacts the visitor’s sense of arrival and also may negatively affect the adjacent lands in the Cliffs of Moher SPA; and access infrastructure would be required to address the safety issues associated with visitors crossing the R478.
- **Option 3 – Provision of unified and improved arrival / welcome facilities for all visitors to the west of the R478 (remove existing arrival and parking east of the R478):** Under this option, traffic management is also eased and a reduction in traffic queues and disruption is achieved; however, visitors are aware of an even greater degree of built infrastructure within the sensitive landscape to the west of the R478; the impacts of the increase in built infrastructure/hard surfacing footprints on the sensitive landscape and lands some of which would likely have to be located within the Cliffs of Moher SPA.
- **Option 4 – Provision of unified and improved arrival / welcome facilities for all visitors to the east of the R478 (rewilding and recovery of landscape to the west of R478):** The selected option, which would lead to significantly less built infrastructure at the existing Cliffs of Moher Experience site, which is a positive in relation to the core objective to rewild/restore the habitat and landscape at the site.

All the above factors, taken together, led to the adoption of Relocating and Consolidating the Visitor Arrivals, Welcome and Support Facilities to the East of the Main R478 Access Road to form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.



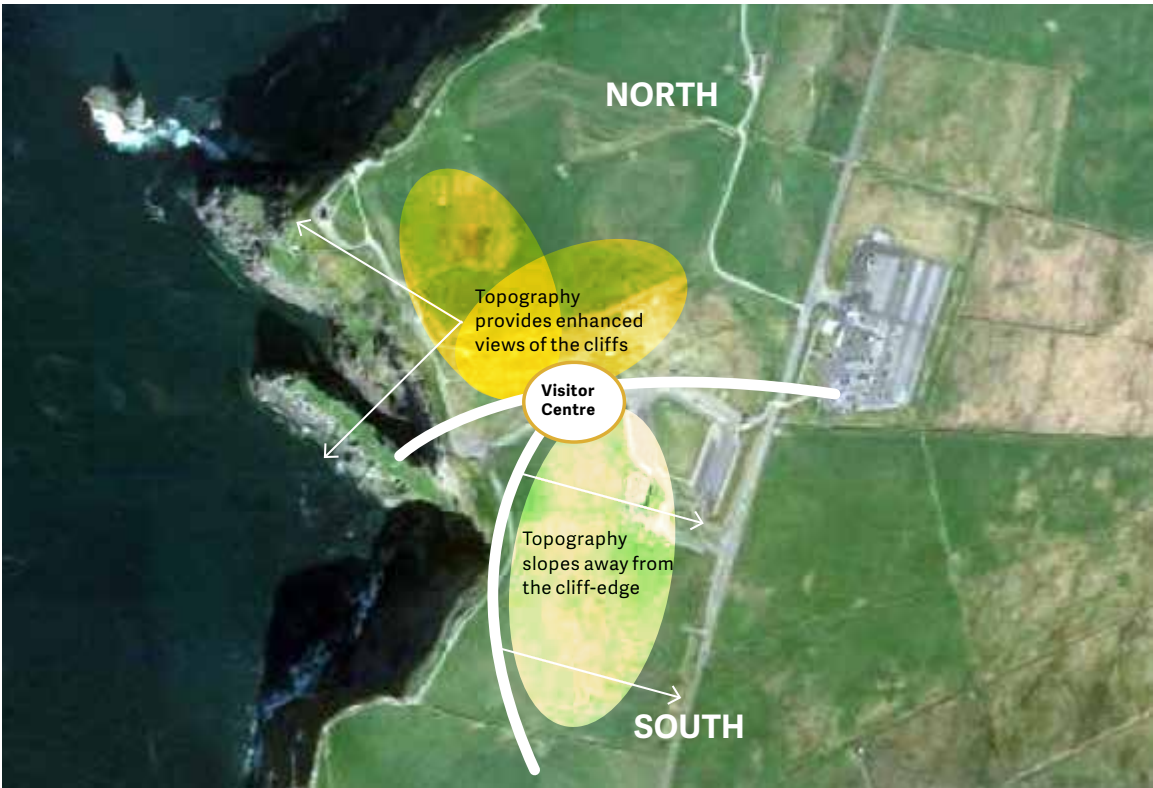
*Strategic Decision D: Focus on the Northern Topography*

The Strategic Decision in this regard considered that, for most visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Experience, the journey to and from the cliff-edge is concentrated through a relatively narrow access ‘corridor’ that is mainly hard landscaped. This encourages visitors to go directly to the cliff-edge, promoting a short dwell time and leads to overcrowding and a reduced quality of experience. The large areas of hard standing diminish the natural beauty of the site. Analysis of the subject site highlighted that focusing on securing access to and restoring lands to the north of the existing Visitor Centre (labelled the ‘northern topography’) offered potential positive outcomes.

The key aspects of this Strategic Decision include the following:

- A focus on the northern topography would encourage more widespread visitor distribution across the site and provide additional and varied views of the cliffs whilst facilitating a focus on habitat recovery in the north as well as inland. This would encourage visitors to navigate various routes to the cliffs, depending on ability, time and interest.
- The decision to focus on the northern area was determined because of the topography of the site. The northern topography rises higher in many places along the route than the southern topography, giving a much-enhanced view of the cliff landscape.
- As the topography of the site naturally slopes away from the cliff-edge, a focus on developing and encouraging more visitors into the land to the south of the existing visitor centre would likely encourage more visitors towards the cliff-edge and, consequently, would not provide the enhanced views that the north of the site naturally provides.
- The reinstatement of historic features such as a lake that can provide wetlands to the east of O'Brien's Tower will further enhance the visitor experience in the northern zone whilst further advancing the Strategy's core objective of transforming and restoring the natural landscape.

All the above factors, taken together, led to the adoption of a Focus on the Northern Topography to form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.



*Strategic Decision E: Visitors will Transition from the Reception Building Facilities to the Cliff Side of the R478 Access Road via a New Pedestrian Bridge*

The Strategic Decision in this regard provides that Visitors will transition from the new reception building facilities to the cliff side of the R478 access road via a new pedestrian bridge. The key aspects of this Strategic Decision include the following:

- The creation of the new footbridge will bring visitors to the rewilded cliffs experience at an elevated level.
- The footbridge design will mitigate the impact of strong wind and rain on visitors at this elevation, while appearing visually integrated into the surrounding restored landscape.

**Alternatives Considered:**

The alternatives considered in respect of the means of crossing the R478 access road were:

- **Option 1 – Road Crossing (visitors cross the R478 at road level):** Under this option, traffic on the R478 would likely be disrupted by visitors crossing the road, as at present. The road is experienced as a dividing line between the point of arrival for car-borne visitors and their entry to the Experience. This option also forms part of the poor sense of arrival and represents a safety issue due to potential conflicts between pedestrians and traffic.
- **Option 2 – Provide an Underpass (all visitors cross underneath the R478):** Under this option, conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic are avoided and safety is enhanced. However, the construction of an underpass would require the closure of the R478 for some months which would cause disruption to all traffic along this route. Moreover, the construction is regarded as a substantial project with a significant embodied carbon footprint. The option also results in a poor sense of arrival for visitors as it provides no engagement with the views of the landscape as visitors cross underneath the road. Visitors emerge from the underpass at low level, making ease of access to the site more difficult for visitors with limited mobility.
- **Option 3 - Provide a Pedestrian Footbridge (All visitors cross over the R478):** The selected option, this proposal achieves minimal traffic disruption as visitors pass over the R478. Construction of the footbridge would not require the closure of the road. The footbridge provides an enhanced sense of arrival and a more integrated visitor experience of the landscape as visitors cross over the R478 to engage with the spectacular views ahead of them. The construction of the footbridge would likely have a lesser environmental impact than the underpass.

All the above factors together, led to the adoption of a New Pedestrian Bridge across the R478 Road to form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.





# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## *Strategic Decision F: Cliff-Edge Experiences*

The Strategic Decision in this regard provides that a range of new experiences will be provided at the cliff-edge, ranging from adrenaline-rush experiences to opportunities for quiet reflection. Physical barriers will be an important element for visitor safety and management. These will be designed to take account of the impacts on views and heritage features. Different approaches are appropriate across the site in areas with distinct characters. The key aspects of this Strategic Decision include the following:

- A new cliff-edge walk will be created further inland, aligning with recommendations to avoid geologically unstable land and allow habitat recovery at the clifftop.
- A variety of new engineered viewing platforms will bring visitors back to the edge in places where views are particularly dramatic.
- Visitors will be discouraged from leaving designated pathways to seek adrenaline experiences and photograph opportunities.
- Engineering platforms will be restricted from extending over the cliff edge, acknowledging potential impacts on breeding seabird populations.

All the above factors, taken together, led to the adoption of a new design and visitor management approach to Cliff-Edge Experiences to form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.



## *Strategic Decision G: The Existing Visitor Centre will be Repurposed*

The key aspects of this Strategic Decision provide as follows:

- The existing visitor centre will be repurposed as part of the overall concept of moving visitor support services away from the cliff side of the R478 access road.
- This decision avoids the need to expand the existing building, which would impact on views and the conservation of habitats in a location that is at the heart of the wild cliffs experience.
- The Visitor Centre will be remodelled to provide a spectacular panoramic viewing point towards the cliffs and a centralised interpretation hub for the stories of the cliffs.
- Improved internal facilities will also provide an opportunity to establish the Cliffs of Moher as a valuable local learning and cultural resource with a focus on providing updated and additional facilities for education, research and groups.
- The building will continue to play an important role in offering shelter in inclement weather and it will maintain a seasonal food and drink offer.

All the above factors, taken together, led to the decision to retain and repurpose the existing Visitor Centre to form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.





Table: Summary Assessment of Strategic Decision and Alternatives

Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
STRATEGIC DECISIONS/ALTERNATIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
Strategic Decision A	Locating welcome and support facilities as part of visitor centre at a remote location											
	A.1 Less built infrastructure at the Cliffs of Moher site.	+	++	+	++	++	++	++	++	O	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision A would have supported/not hindered achievement of the SEOs as the removal of significant built infrastructure at the Cliffs of Moher Experience would be expected to permit more extensive restoration of habitats and the showcasing of an authentic and wilder Cliffs experience. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED.
	A.2 Bring significant direct economic benefits to the remote location.	++	+	O	O	O	O	?	O	O	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision A would have supported/not hindered achievement of some of the SEOs, particularly in relation to Population and Human Health, by facilitating improved local economic development and enhanced investment in local infrastructure and facilities at the remote locality that may have been selected. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED."
	A.3 Site criteria for a single arrival point are extremely demanding when facilities are at a remote location.	-	?	?	?	?	O	?	?	O	?	Overall, an uncertain to potentially negative effect would be anticipated due to the likely negative effect on the Population and Human Health SEOs of this aspect of Strategic Decision A in relation to the likely negative effect of selecting a suitable site as an arrivals and departure point fit for purpose under complex weather and logistical circumstances. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	A.4 Year round, comprehensive shuttle system would also need to be funded and operated to take all visitors arriving in cars to and from the Cliffs	+	O	O	O	O	-	-	?	O	O	Overall, an uncertain to potentially negative effect would be anticipated as this aspect of Strategic Decision A would likely lead to an increase in funding needing to be dedicated to a year-round shuttle bus transport and, notwithstanding the commitment to make such a shuttle service based around low-emission vehicles, it is envisaged that related logistical inefficiencies, including the need to accommodate all car-borne visitors at the remote location, would ensue. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	A.5 Extreme changes in weather conditions, even in summer periods, and sudden heavy rain and strong winds mean visitors need on-site shelter and the shuttle system would be under significant pressure from high numbers of visitors waiting to return to the remote location.	-	O	O	O	O	O	-	O	O	O	Overall, an uncertain to potentially negative effect would be anticipated as this aspect of Strategic Decision A would likely lead to additional infrastructure being required to be retained and/or developed at the Cliffs of Moher Experience site as well as an increase in year-round shuttle bus transport being required and related inefficiencies. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
STRATEGIC DECISIONS/ALTERNATIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
Strategic Decision B	Proposal to establish Park and Ride and shuttle bus service											
	B.1 Provide a more sustainable access system.	++	+	+	O	O	+	++	+	+	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision B will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the development and implementation of a seasonal Park and Ride shuttle service during peak periods as part of a more sustainable access system.
	B.2 Better experience for visitors to the Cliffs.	+	+	+	O	O	O	O	O	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic decision B will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by presenting visitors with a clearer, more orderly and sustainable access system to travel to and from the Cliffs of Moher Experience during peak periods.
	B.3 Address the additional car parking demand that will result from the extended dwell time of visitors on-site.	+	+	+	O	+	+	+	O	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision B will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs as the Park and Ride system is designed to function during peak periods to reduce the numbers of car-borne visitors seeking to access the car parking facilities at the Cliffs of Moher Experience site at any one time, thus obviating the need for an expansion of car parking facilities at the site.
	B.4 Extending the benefits of tourism by encouraging visitors to stay and explore local towns	++	+	+	O	O	O	O	+	O	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision B will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs as the Park and Ride system will function to return visitors to the Hub Locations and form part of a revitalised visitor experience that would be designed to encourage visitors to remain for longer in the local area and explore other attractions.
Alt_B	B.1 Option 1 – Do Nothing: To allow all car visitors to park at the Cliffs would require significantly increased car parking areas to accommodate the same number of visitors.	-	--	--	--	-	--	--	-	-	--	A significant negative effect is anticipated if a Do-Nothing option had been selected as an unmanaged, free-for-all situation with regard to car-borne visitors without even a limited shuttle service would likely lead to increased demand for on-site car parking, congestion during peak periods and more severe disruption of local traffic. This would not support the achievement of the SEOs. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	B.2 Option 2 – Current situation: Will continue/compound congestion and disruption on local roads during the peak season.	--	-	--	-	-	-	-	O	-	-	A negative to significant negative effect is anticipated if the option to maintain the Current Situation had been selected as the current unsatisfactory conditions would continue to be perpetuated. This would not support the achievement of the SEOs. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	B.3 Option 3 – Requirement for a year-round comprehensive shuttle system where all parking is removed from Cliffs.	O	++	++	++	O	O	-	O	O	O	Within the constraints of this scenario being considered as an alternative to a seasonal Park and Ride shuttle system only, no significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective would have supported or not hindered achievement of the SEOs by removing to a significant extent the current challenges and negative effects of car-borne traffic at and around the Cliffs of Moher Experience site. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED



Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										<i>Response</i>
STRATEGIC DECISIONS/ALTERNATIVES	(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	<i>Overall Comment</i>

Strategic Decision C	Relocating and consolidating the arrivals, welcome and support facilities to the east of the main R478 access road.											
	C.1 Facilitates a new habitat management approach to transform regular field system to benefit site's biodiversity.	+	++	++	++	++	+	+	O	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision C will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the reduction of built infrastructure and hard surfacing (e.g. coach arrivals facility) west of the R478 and enabling additional land areas to be subject to restoration under the envisaged Habitat Management Plan.
	C.2 Create new coach and shuttle bus drop off points in screened areas to the east of the R478.	+	+	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision C will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs, particularly in relation to Landscape, by facilitating the reduction of built infrastructure and hard surfacing associated with the existing coach arrivals facility west of the R478 and permitting restoration of those lands.
Alt_C	C.1 <b>Option 1 - Do Nothing:</b> (ongoing provision of split arrivals / parking and existing visitors' facilities to the west of R478)	-	-	-	O	O	O	O	-	O	-	A neutral to negative effect would be anticipated if a Do-Nothing option had been selected as it represents the status quo and would likely result in the continuation of existing challenges and negative effects. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	C.2 <b>Option 2</b> - Provision of split arrival / parking on both sides of R478 and extended existing visitor centre (New coach and shuttle bus drop off points developed to the West of R478)	-	--	-	-	O	O	O	?	?	--	An overall neutral to negative effect would be anticipated if Option 2 had been selected as it represents an intensification of the status quo through the extension of the existing Visitor Centre and the addition of new/extended coach and shuttle bus drop-off points west of the R478, which would increase the land take in areas closer to and more directly linked to the Cliffs of Moher SPA. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	C.3 <b>Option 3</b> - Provision of unified and improved arrival / welcome facilities for all visitors to the west of the R478 (remove existing arrival and parking east of the R478)	-	-	-	--	O	O	-	?	?	--	An overall negative effect would be anticipated if Option 2 had been selected as it represents an even stronger intensification of the status quo through the extension of the existing Visitor Centre, the addition of new/extended coach and shuttle bus drop-off points plus the relocation of existing car parking facilities west of the R478, which would increase the land take and create more additional built infrastructure in areas closer to and more directly linked to the Cliffs of Moher SPA. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	C.4 <b>Option 4</b> - Provision of unified and improved arrival / welcome facilities for all visitors to the east of the R478 (facilitates restoration of landscape to the west of R478)	++	++	++	++	O	+	+	++	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Option, the selected Alternative, will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the development of a unified arrival, welcome and visitor support facility with associated services and infrastructure and permitting the transformation of larger areas of the lands west of the R478 through restoration.



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
STRATEGIC DECISIONS/ALTERNATIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
Strategic Decision D	Focus on the Northern Topography											
	D.1 To encourage widespread visitor distribution across the site and provide additional and varied views of the cliffs the visitor experience could focus on habitat restoration in the north as well as inland. This would encourage visitors to navigate various routes to the cliffs, depending on ability, time and interest.	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	O	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision D will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating habitat restoration and the 'opening up' of new routes to enhanced viewing points, which would permit a new approach to visitor management by spreading visitors more over a wider site and away from the narrow corridor that currently leads directly to the Cliffs.
	D.2 The decision to focus on the northern area was determined because of the topography of the site. The northern topography rises higher in many places along the route than the southern topography, giving a much-enhanced view of the cliff landscape.	+	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision D will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating a new approach to visitor management by spreading visitors more over a wider site and away from the narrow corridor that currently leads directly to the Cliffs.
	D.3 As the topography of the site naturally slopes away from the cliff-edge, a focus on developing and encouraging more visitors into the land to the south of the existing visitor centre would likely encourage more visitors towards the cliff-edge and, consequently, would not provide the enhanced views that the north of the site naturally provides.	-	-	-	-	O	O	O	O	-	-	A negative to significant negative effect is anticipated as this statement highlights the likely consequences of not opening up the northern topography, which is that a greater concentration of visitors would congregate in the area to the south of the existing Visitor Centre where the topography encourages them to venture closer to the cliff-edge to experience views that are more easily and safely obtained in the northern topography.
	D.4 Reinstatement of historic features such as the lake, which can provide wetlands to the east of O'Brien's tower, will enhance the visitor experience in the northern zone	+	++	+	+	++	O	O	O	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision D will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the reinstatement of a historic lake feature that could provide wetlands east of O'Brien's Tower, which would accord with the restoration of habitats and permit additional visitor experiences to be offered as part of a new approach to visitor management on-site.



Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
STRATEGIC DECISIONS/ALTERNATIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
Strategic Decision E	Visitors will transition from the Reception Building facilities to the cliff side of the R478 access road via a new pedestrian bridge.											
	E.1 The creation of a new footbridge will bring visitors to the rewilded cliffs experience at an elevated level.	+	+	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision E will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs through the development of a footbridge that will permit the safe crossing over of the R478 and will also allow designers to create a structure that provides visitors with a more impactful entrance to the restored landscape of the Cliffs of Moher Experience west of the road.
	E.2 The footbridge design will mitigate the impact of strong wind and rain on visitors at this elevation, while appearing visually integrated into the surrounding wild landscape.	+	+	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision E will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs through the development of a footbridge to a design specification that will provide a safe and sheltered means of crossing the R478 whilst integrating with the surrounding landscape in order to minimise visual impact.
Alt_E	E.1 <b>Option 1</b> - Road Crossing (All visitors cross the R478 at road level)	-	-	-	O	O	O	O	O	O	-	An overall neutral to negative effect would be anticipated if Option 1 had been selected as it represents a continuation of the status quo and would likely result in ongoing traffic disruption as well as safety risks for pedestrians crossing whilst perpetuating the poor sense of arrival at the site. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	E.2 <b>Option 2</b> - Provide an Underpass (All visitors cross underneath the R478)	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	An overall neutral to negative effect would be anticipated if Option 2 had been selected as it removes safety risks for pedestrians crossing the R478 but does so through a construction process that is more complex and represents a larger embodied energy footprint than the footbridge alternative. AN ALTERNATIVE WAS SELECTED
	E.3 <b>Option 3</b> - Provide a Pedestrian Footbridge (All visitors cross over the R478)	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Option under Strategic Decision E, the selected Alternative, will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the development of a footbridge that will permit the safe crossing over of the R478 and will also allow designers to create a structure that provides visitors with a more impactful entrance to the restored landscape of the Cliffs of Moher Experience west of the road.



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
STRATEGIC DECISIONS/ALTERNATIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
Strategic Decision F	Cliff-edge Experiences											
	F.1 A new cliff-edge walk could be created further inland, aligning with recommendations to avoid geologically unstable land and allow habitat recovery at the clifftop.	+	++	++	++	+	O	+	O	O	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision F will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs through ensuring that a new cliff-edge route is selected that aligns with safety recommendations and is developed and managed in a way that ensures visitors do not stray from the pathway and allows habitat recovery along the cliffs.
	F.2 A variety of new engineered viewing platforms will bring visitors back to the edge where views are particularly dramatic.	+	++	++	++	O	O	O	O	O	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision F will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs through the provision of viewing platforms engineered to comply with safety recommendations and which provide visitors with dramatic viewpoints of the cliffs whilst not extending beyond the cliff-edge.
	F.3 Visitors will be discouraged from leaving designated pathways to seek adrenaline experiences and photograph opportunities.	+	++	++	++	+	O	+	O	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision F will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs through ensuring that a combination of appropriate design of pathways and viewing platforms and visitor management are implemented on-site.
	F.4 Engineering platforms will be restricted from extending over the cliff edge, acknowledging potential impacts on breeding seabird populations.	+	++	++	++	O	O	O	O	O	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision F will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by ensuring that no engineered viewing platforms or viewpoints would be permitted to extend beyond the cliff-edge to prevent visitor impacts on breeding seabird populations on the cliff face.



Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
STRATEGIC DECISIONS/ALTERNATIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
Strategic Decision G	The existing Visitor Centre will be repurposed.											
	G.1 The existing visitor centre will be repurposed as part of the overall concept of moving visitor support services away from the cliff side of the R478 access road.	+	O	+	+	O	O	O	+	+	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision G will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by ensuring that the existing Visitor Centre would not be extended (limiting further land take) but would rather be repurposed to complement the proposed new welcome and arrivals facilities and Reception Building to be located east of the R478.
	G.2 Avoid the need to expand the existing building, thereby impacting on views and conservation of habitats in a location that is at the heart of the wild cliffs experience.	+	+	++	++	+	O	+	+	O	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision G will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by ensuring that the existing Visitor Centre would not be extended (limiting further land take).
	G.3 Re-modelled to provide a spectacular panoramic viewing point towards the cliffs and a centralised interpretation hub for the stories of the cliffs.	+	+	+	O	O	O	O	O	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision G will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the sensitive repurposing and remodelling of the existing Visitor Centre to enhance its role in the overall Visitor Experience whilst also offering expanded opportunities for offering the visitor new cultural and learning opportunities.
	G.4 Improved internal facilities will also provide an opportunity to establish the Cliffs of Moher as a valuable local learning and cultural resource with a focus on providing updated and additional facilities for education, research and groups.	++	++	+	O	O	O	O	O	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision G will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the sensitive repurposing and remodelling of the existing Visitor Centre to enhance its role as a hub for educational experiences as well as enhanced facilities for researchers.
	G.5 The building will continue to play an important role in offering shelter in inclement weather and it will maintain a seasonal food and drink offer.	++	+	+	O	O	O	O	O	+	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this aspect of Strategic Decision G will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the sensitive repurposing and remodelling of the existing Visitor Centre to enhance its role in the overall Visitor Experience.



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## Evaluation of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Provisions

The SEA assessment has been undertaken in line with the standard model of ‘source-pathway-receptor’ following the methodology set, acknowledging the degree of uncertainty that is associated with a high-level strategic plan such as the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*. In this regard, the following were key informants for the assessment:

1. The nature, scope and level of detail of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and Site Masterplan;
2. The nature, scope and level of detail of the individual elements of the Strategy and Site Masterplan identified for assessment; and
3. The SEOs set, which were formulated in relation to the nature, scope and level of detail of the key elements of the Strategy and Site Masterplan.

### Overall Assessment Outcome

As reflected in the Figure below, the following was concluded:

- Of the total of 273 no. individual elements that were assessed as part of the Core Objectives evaluation:
  - 73 no. elements (26.7%) were assessed as being substantially supportive of the achievement of the SEOs (significant positive effect);
  - 137 no. elements (50.2%) were assessed as being supportive of the achievement of the SEOs (positive effect not to a significant extent);
  - 59 no. elements (21.6%) were assessed as being neutral in relation to the achievement of the SEOs (no impact or a neutral contribution); and
  - 4 no. elements (1.5%) were assessed as having an uncertain effect on the achievement of the SEOs (insufficient detail or uncertainty regarding the element assessed);
- Of the total of 728 no. individual elements that were assessed as part of the Site Masterplan evaluation:
  - 128 no. elements (17.6%) were assessed as being substantially supportive of the achievement of the SEOs (significant positive effect);
  - 320 no. elements (44%) were assessed as being supportive of the achievement of the SEOs (positive effect not to a significant extent);
  - 258 no. elements (35.4%) were assessed as being neutral in relation to the achievement of the SEOs (no impact or a neutral contribution);
  - 18 no. elements (2.5%) were assessed as having an uncertain effect on the achievement of the SEOs (insufficient detail or uncertainty regarding the element assessed); and
  - 4 no. elements (1.5%) were assessed as likely detracting from the achievement of the SEOs (negative effect not to a significant extent).

Figure 1: Graphic Depiction of SEA Summary Assessment

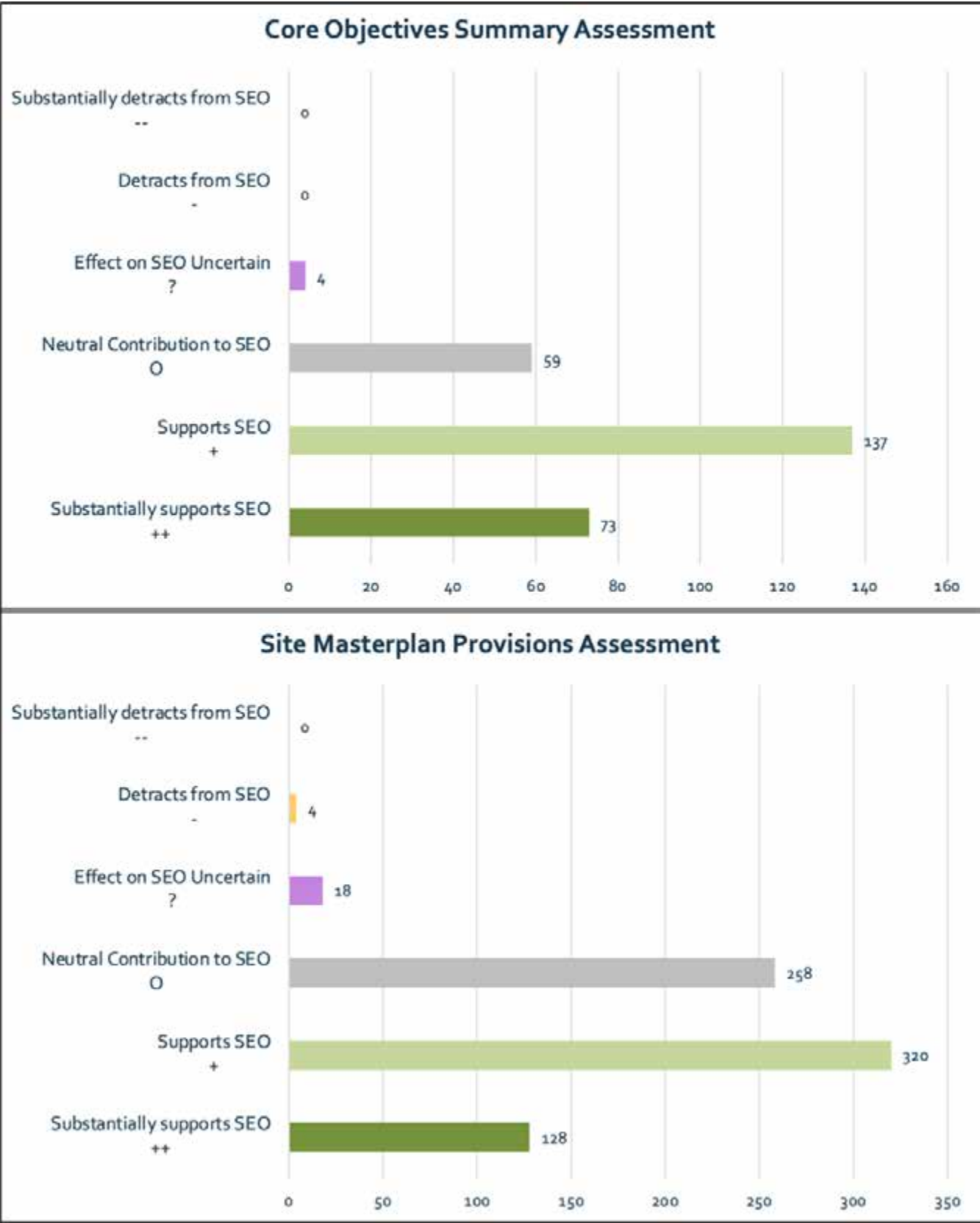




Table: SEA of Core Objectives of Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy

Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
CORE OBJECTIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
CO1	Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region											
CO1.1	Encourage visitors to stay longer in the area and facilitate greater benefits and investment into local towns and villages	++	+	O	O	O	O	?	+	O	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs, particularly in relation to Population and Human Health, by facilitating improved local economic development and enhanced investment in local infrastructure and facilities.
CO1.2	Develop enhanced partnerships and greater coordination between the Cliffs of Moher Experience and Local Businesses and Communities	++	+	++	O	O	?	?	+	O	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating improved relationships between the Cliffs of Moher Experience, Clare County Council, key stakeholders and local communities.
CO1.3	Align with the Local, Regional and National policy priorities to create high quality visitor experiences within the county	++	++	O	O	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs through ensuring that alignment with key environmental policy goals and adherence to statutory processes are integrated into the implementation of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy.
CO1.4	Minimising adverse impacts on local communities	++	++	+	O	++	++	++	++	+	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by requiring that a holistic and integrated approach be adopted to the implementation of projects flowing from the Strategy so that improvements made at the Cliffs of Moher Experience lead to improved local economic development, enhanced investment in local infrastructure and facilities as well as a sustained focus on the restoration, protection and conservation of local habitats and the suite of ecosystem services that underpins the wellbeing of local communities.
CO1.5	Sustainably increasing tourism revenue across the season	++	+	+	O	O	O	O	+	+	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs, particularly in relation to Population and Human Health, by facilitating improved local economic development and enhanced investment in local infrastructure and facilities.
CO2	Optimising the World-Class Experience											
CO2.1	Deliver a world-class tourism model in which audience needs and satisfaction are central	++	+	O	O	+	+	+	++	++	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs as it is understood that a world-class tourism model is one that ensures that the needs of visitors (audiences) are catered for in a way that delivers memorable experiences within authentic socio-cultural settings and a natural and built environment that is sustainable .



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
CORE OBJECTIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
CO2.2	Offer excellent value for money in delivering a sequence of memorable experiences that prioritise exhilarating encounters with the cliffs and immersion in untamed nature	++	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs, particularly in relation to Population and Human Health and Landscape, by placing an emphasis on accessing the unique aspects of the Cliffs of Moher Experience and its hinterland in a safe and sustainable manner.
CO2.3	Provide a sequence of memorable experiences through a network of safe graded walks and enhanced landscape interpretation	++	+	+	O	+	O	O	O	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs, particularly in relation to Population and Human Health and Landscape, by placing an emphasis on accessing the unique aspects of the Cliffs of Moher Experience and its hinterland in a safe and sustainable manner.
CO2.4	Develop targeted event and activity packages	++	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	++	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by focusing on ensuring that a wide range of activities are presented at the Cliffs of Moher Experience to meet the needs of a diverse target audience.
CO3	Transforming the Natural Landscape											
CO3.1	Conserve and highlight the beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats of the cliffs	+	++	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support achievement of the SEOs by giving effect to the need to set in place measures to conserve, restore and protect the Cliffs habitat and associated ecosystem services.
CO3.2	Restoration of the natural environment will enhance the biodiversity value as well as increase its aesthetic appeal for a wide range of audiences	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	O	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by giving effect to the need to set in place measures to conserve, restore and protect the Cliffs habitat and associated ecosystem services.
CO3.3	Proactive habitat and visitor management will reinforce commitments to protect designated habitats and protected species and associated ecological corridors/linkages at the Cliffs of Moher site and wider area	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support achievement of the SEOs by implementing a systematic and planned approach to managing visitor behavior on-site and ensuring the conservation, restoration and protection of the Cliffs, their habitat and associated ecosystem services.
CO3.4	Strengthen opportunities for conservation research, monitoring and education through strategic partnerships	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support achievement of the SEOs by prioritising the establishment and/or strengthening of partnerships to bolster conservation research and education outreach programmes as well as monitoring of on-site activities and the outcomes of visitor behavior, implemented projects etc.
CO3.5	Protect the cultural authenticity and wildness of the natural assets	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	++	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support achievement of the SEOs by giving effect to the need to set in place measures to conserve, restore and protect the Cliffs habitat and associated ecosystem services.



Draft Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy		STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SEOs)										Response
CORE OBJECTIVES		(PHH)	(BFF)	(L)	(SG)	(W)	(AQ)	(C)	(MA)	(CH)	(LVC)	Overall Comment
CO4	Providing Sustainable Access											
CO4.1	New Park and Ride hub and shuttle service for visitors to the Cliffs of Moher as part of an integrated transport system for the wider area	++	+	O	O	O	+	+	+	O	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs generally by facilitating improvements in how traffic is managed in the local area and, particularly, by ensuring that a system is put in place that makes use of low-emission vehicles to provide sustainable transport solutions to visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Experience during peak periods to avoid traffic congestion on local routes.
CO4.2	At the Cliffs of Moher site, the provision of new and enhanced facilities, services and network of walkways and features, will facilitate sustainable and enhanced universal access for all visitors	++	+	+	++	++	O	+	++	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs by facilitating the development of new fit-for-purpose infrastructure, services and visitor facilities to accommodate the number of visitors set as a maximum based on the peak daily number of visitors of 10,500.
CO4.3	Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk and the developing greenways present opportunities for sustainable access links with the Cliffs of Moher site	++	++	+	++	+	O	+	O	+	+	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs as the integration of the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk into the proposed network of pathways at the Cliffs of Moher Experience site will broaden access to the site subject to the provisions of the Cliffs of Moher Experience Visitor Management Plan and Habitat Management Plan, and the Coastal Walk Management Plan.
CO4.4	Managing visitors across the wider area	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	+	+	++	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support achievement of the SEOs by ensuring that visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Experience and to its hinterland area will be subject to the provisions of the Cliffs of Moher Experience Visitor Management Plan and the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk Management Plan.
CO4.5	Provide valuable community amenities	++	+	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs as it is understood that it represents a commitment to ensuring that a sustainable approach is adopted towards managing visitor activity and ensuring that the assets that are the Cliffs of Moher and related tourism routes such as the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk are conserved and protected.
CO4.6	Attracting visitors, increasing visitor revenue, and transforming the economic and social future of the towns, villages and rural areas around the region	++	+	+	O	O	O	?	+	O	O	No significant negative effect is anticipated. It is likely that this Core Objective will support or not hinder achievement of the SEOs, particularly in relation to Population and Human Health, by facilitating improved local economic development and enhanced investment in local infrastructure and facilities.



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## Key Findings

The provisions of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* are assessed to have a likely positive, likely positive significant or a neutral effect.

Within the overall framework of the assessment, only 4 no. elements of the Site Masterplan were assessed to have likely negative effects in relation to the achievement of the SEOs. These elements were related to the development of the proposed new visitor facilities insofar as they are assessed as detracting to a certain degree (but not substantially) from the BFF SEOs, in the absence of mitigation.

### Compliance with Environmental Legislation: Incorporation of SEA and AA Recommendations

The Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* is assessed as being compliant with the requirements of applicable environmental legislation. SEA and AA as processes have informed the preparation of the Strategy to contribute towards sustainable development, enhanced environmental protection outcomes, and improved environmental management in the following manner:

- Adherence of the Strategy to statutory planning guidelines.
- Established ongoing Bird Survey Programme.
- Incorporation of design-led solutions to mitigate potential impacts and negative effects of proposals.
- Habitat Management Plan
- Visitor Management Plan
- Environmental Monitoring Programme
- Cliffs of Moher Experience Climate Action Strategy
- Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan
- Land-Legal Rights Securement Programme

### Potential for Cumulative (In-Combination) Effects

Annex 1 of the SEA Directive requires that the Environmental Report must, during the evaluation of a plan or programme, consider information relating to the “likely significant effects on the environment” including “cumulative effects” of implementing the plan or programme.

In the case of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy, such effects are seen potentially to arise either because of the cumulative effect of implementing projects identified in the Strategy itself (intra-plan cumulative effects), or in combination with the effects of other plans or projects (inter-plan cumulative effects).

### *Intra-Plan Cumulative Effects*

Given the nature of the provisions set out in the Strategy, and hence the level of uncertainty that exists with regard to the precise scale and location of some of the objectives and actions set out within it, it is recognised that the identification of specific cumulative effects is limited at this point and, therefore, that the assessment of cumulative effects will have to be undertaken in a more comprehensive manner at project-level as part of the development consenting process.

This forms part of the inherent mitigation that is accepted as an important element in the overall SEA of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* insofar as all actions and development proposals are statutorily required to comply with relevant planning policies and will undergo any applicable screening and full adherence with the relevant development consenting process.

### *Inter-Plan Cumulative Effects*

The *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* has the potential for inter-plan cumulative effects to arise due to the nature of the Strategy’s focus: namely, tourism centred on the Cliffs of Moher Experience but conceived, marketed and managed so as to increase tourism revenue, distribute the load of visitor numbers at the site more evenly over seasons, and to do so whilst restoring, protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

This focus intersects with national, regional county and local plans to promote and develop the tourism industry across Ireland and in regional tourism destinations/routes such as the Wild Atlantic Way. Typically, these plans undergo SEA and AA requirements, and it is important to note that the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* forms part of this wider, extensive policy and planning framework covering a variety of sectors, including tourism development.



# Mitigation

Mitigation measures have been identified as part of the SEA process to prevent, reduce and/or offset as fully as possible any significant negative impacts on the environment of implementing the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*.

Mitigation involves identifying actions or responses that serve to address significant negative effects. Mitigation measures can be described as those that avoid significant negative effects; reduce the magnitude or extent, probability and/or severity of effects; repair effects after they have occurred; and compensate for potential negative impacts by providing environmental benefits elsewhere.

While the assessment of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* against the SEOs is largely positive, the SEA evaluation did identify certain actions deemed to be necessary to mitigate anticipated or potential negative environmental impacts. For the purposes of this SEA, the broad categorisation of such identified mitigation encompasses the following:

- Inherent Mitigation
- Strategic Mitigation/Mitigation Through Design

## Inherent Mitigation

Inherent mitigation is held to apply in any instance where a specific action/set of actions or project that is proposed in the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* and its incorporated Site Masterplan is bound to comply with or be subject to statutory requirements and/or statutory development consent procedures.

The applicability of such requirements and/or development consent procedures depend on the nature and scale of the type of development being proposed. Examples of such compliance would include:

- Compliance with the statutory planning and policy framework, as applicable (e.g. compliance with the relevant provisions of the *National Planning Framework*; the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region*; the *Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029*).
- Compliance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).
- Screening of projects for EIA and, where applicable, statutory EIA.
- Screening of projects for AA and, where applicable, full AA (NIS).
- Following best practice during construction stages.

## Strategic Mitigation/Mitigation Through Design

Strategic mitigation (or mitigation by design) applies where measures were adopted that respond to issues flagged during the planning and environmental assessment process. Examples of such measures include:

- Visitor management (i.e. the formulation and implementation of a Visitor Management Plan).
- Habitat management (i.e. the formulation of a Habitat Management Plan to facilitate the restoration, extension and protection of habitats and associated ecosystem services).
- Capping the visitor capacity of the Cliffs of Moher Experience and committing to a systematic approach to managing daily and seasonal visitor flow and associated traffic through the implementation of measures such as requiring 'Pre-Booking' for all visitors to access the site, and a Park and Ride shuttle system to be operational during peak season periods.
- Key design elements including:
  - Ensuring adequate design standards for key infrastructure such as water supply, wastewater treatment, waste management, traffic flow management and parking provision.
  - The location of new integrated visitor arrival and visitor services facilities east of the R478 to facilitate the reduction in hard surfacing and infrastructure required to the west of the road.
  - The development of an extended network of pathways and visitor experiences within an extended site footprint to facilitate pro-active management of the concentration of visitors across the site to ensure visitor distribution and prevent concentrated focus points of visitor activities.
  - Where required, to re-align the cliff pathways further from the cliff to protect cliff stability and enhance visitor safety.
  - Design standards to prevent any viewing platform or structure near the cliff edge from extending beyond the cliff-edge, acknowledging potential impacts on breeding seabird populations.



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## Specific Mitigation Identified in the Strategic Environmental Assessment

A summary of the mitigation identified is presented in the Table below.

*Table: Summary Overview of Identified Mitigation Measures*

Mitigation	Purpose
<b>Surveys and Monitoring</b>	
1. Annual Tourism Monitoring Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Record and monitor the length of visitors' stay in the area on an annual cycle; and</li><li>Survey and determine tourism revenue in the area.</li></ul>
2. Five-Yearly Economic Benefit Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Determine the level of investment into local towns and villages in the area every five years</li></ul>
3. Annual Visitor Satisfaction Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Record and monitor visitor/customer satisfaction to identify issues that need to be addressed in the delivery and management of the Cliffs of Moher Experience.</li></ul>
4. Annual Bird Survey Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify key actions, status and indicators as well as the provision of monitoring/survey of Chough, Peregrine, Seabird and Productivity.</li></ul>
5. Annual Environmental Monitoring Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Record and monitor groundwater vulnerability in the area on an annual cycle;</li><li>Record and monitor emissions and ambient air quality in the area on an annual cycle; and</li><li>Record and monitor greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy and energy efficiency in the area on an annual cycle.</li></ul>
6. Cliff Stability Monitoring Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Record and monitor cliff stability in the area on an ongoing basis and maintain cliff stability records.</li></ul>

Mitigation	Purpose
<b>Management Plans and Strategies</b>	
7. Cliffs of Moher Experience Visitor Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Guide and manage the visitor experience from pre-booking stage through the journey to the Cliffs of Moher Experience and on to the activities/routes/key attractions and key messaging at the site</li></ul>
8. Cliffs of Moher Experience Habitat Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify key actions, baseline and indicators as well as the provision for periodic monitoring/survey of terrain that is the subject of restoration.</li></ul>
9. Cliffs of Moher Experience Climate Action Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Set targets on greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy and energy efficiency in line with EU and Ireland Public Sector targets set in the Public Sector Climate Action Strategy.</li></ul>
10. Cliffs of Moher Experience Park and Ride Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify Park and Ride Hubs and operational elements including routes, seasonal timetables, specification of vehicle fleet etc.; and</li><li>Monitor the efficacy of the Park and Ride Shuttle Service. Key parameters to be referenced against baseline data include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No., size and emissions rating of vehicles;</li><li>Trip frequency and average loads per trip; and</li><li>Trip distance per vehicle per month</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Other</b>	
11. Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop structured relationships with local communities and key stakeholders to embed a mutual understanding of and commitment to the importance of restoring and conserving the habitats, soils, geology, water resources, sustainable transport modes and landscape of the Cliffs of Moher and environs, as a core socio-economic asset for the region; and</li><li>Create an organisational framework and establish a multi-stakeholder co-ordinating body to review and report on progress on the implementation of Strategy 2040.</li></ul>
12. Research and Education Partnership Outreach Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish strategic partnerships with Third Level institutions/conservation organisations and research entities</li></ul>
13. Land-Legal Rights Securement Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Obtain adequate land-legal rights through acquisition/lease/agreements to facilitate control of key priority lands in the Cliffs of Moher Development Area to pursue implementation of Strategy 2040.</li></ul>



# Monitoring

Article 10 of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) provides that the significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme shall be monitored to identify at an early stage unforeseen negative effects and to enable appropriate remedial action to be identified and implemented in response.

While the apparent focus is on unforeseen negative effects, it is understood that monitoring of the implementation of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* can also demonstrate positive effects over time that may be of value in enhancing the knowledge base and facilitating further refinements in the provisions of the Strategy and/or projects being implemented.

The information gathered through monitoring is seen to be of value in the following respects:

- It serves as a test of the effectiveness of the SEA process insofar as it reveals the effects of implementing the Strategy over time and enables a comparison to be drawn between the likely significant effects identified in the SEA and what has unfolded.
- It permits data to be assembled in relation to areas of uncertainty encountered in the course of the SEA where the scope and nature of the Strategy may have led to difficulties in the assessment.
- Monitoring the effects of the implementation of the Strategy may help to identify further mitigation measures or remedial actions in response to issues that are flagged.
- It permits the assembly of data that could be used to inform the review of the Strategy or inform other planning processes of a similar nature.

## The Monitoring Framework: Linking SEOs to Monitoring Indicators and Targets

For the purposes of the Monitoring Framework proposed to monitor the effects of implementing the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*, a set of Key Indicators, Targets and Data Sources have been identified to permit the assembly and collation of quantitative measures in trends over time in relation to the achievement of the SEOs identified above.

These are arranged in relation to each of the SEA Environmental Topics and are set out in the Table below.

## Responsibility and Reporting

In terms of Article 17 of the *European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No.: 435/2004)*, "The competent authority shall monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme".

Accordingly, as Clare County Council is the competent authority, being the authority which is responsible for the preparation of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*, it shall be responsible for monitoring the effects of implementing the Strategy.

This responsibility is to be undertaken within the context of the Monitoring Framework but should be incorporated into the proposed system of reporting on the overall implementation of the Strategy through the Stakeholder and Communications Plan to ensure transparency in this regard.



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Table: Monitoring Indicators, Targets and Data Sources

SEA Topic	Key Indicators	Targets for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy	Data Source
Population and Human Health	<p>PHH1. Increase/decrease in length of visitors’ stay on-site at the Cliffs of Moher Experience.</p> <p>PHH2. Number of visitors to the Cliffs of Moher Experience per month.</p> <p>PHH3. Percentage increase/decrease in numbers of overnight visitors to accommodation establishments in the SEA study area per month.</p> <p>PHH4. Percentage increase/decrease in spend of visitors to accommodation, leisure and hospitality establishments in the SEA study area per month.</p> <p>PHH5. Number of employment opportunities at Cliffs of Moher Experience.</p> <p>PHH6. Number of employment opportunities in the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors in the SEA study area.</p>	<p>PHH1. To contribute to the strengthening of the local economy and increase employment opportunities as presented in statistical data.</p> <p>PHH2. To design and implement a network of experiences (physically, educationally, and culturally) within the region to benefit the wider community.</p> <p>PHH3. To create a physical environment that provides a bespoke arrival process and a range of engagement experiences throughout the Cliffs of Moher site to increase levels of satisfaction with the COM Experience.</p> <p>PHH4. To maintain its premier market position of the COM and its ability to attract tourists, promote Ireland overseas and deliver a financially sustainable business.</p> <p>PHH5. To increase levels of satisfaction with the COM experience.</p> <p>PHH6. To increase length of stay of visitors in the area.</p> <p>PHH7. To increase overnight stays in County Clare.</p> <p>PHH8. To increase average visitor spend in County Clare.</p> <p>PHH9. To increase partnerships between COME and (i) local businesses and (ii) residents.</p> <p>PHH10. To protect designated habitats and protected species (and associated ecological corridors / linkages) within the site and wider area.</p> <p>PHH11. To provide a sustainable access system to the Cliffs of Moher.</p> <p>PHH12. To reduce environmentally related pressures associated with the health and wellbeing of the wider community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual Tourism Monitoring Programme</li><li>• Annual Visitor Satisfaction Survey Report</li><li>• Annual Report on Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Implementation Progress</li><li>• 5-Yearly Economic Benefit Study</li></ul>



SEA Topic	Key Indicators	Targets for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy	Data Source
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b>	<p>BFF1. Level of adherence of visitors to designated pathways and appointed viewing points.</p> <p>BFF2. Annual Bird Survey outcomes.</p> <p>BFF3. Percentage of habitat restored versus baseline of Habitats Survey 2023.</p>	<p>BFF1. To provide pathways, viewing points and physical visitors' infrastructure at the Cliffs of Moher Experience and the wider Development Area.</p> <p>BFF2. Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, their Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests, and function.</p> <p>BFF3. To stop the loss of biodiversity and deterioration of habitats at the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>BFF4. To implement a Habitat Management Plan within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area, to ensure its long-term sustainable management.</p> <p>BFF5. To increase the Chough and Peregrine population within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>BFF6. To protect seabird breeding sites and fledglings from disturbance within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor Management Plan Annual Review</li> <li>Habitat Management Plan Annual Review</li> <li>Bird Survey Programme Annual Summary Report</li> </ul>
<b>Land</b>	<p>L1. Area of land (in hectares) over which Clare County Council has control within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p>	<p>L1. To obtain appropriate legal interests in lands within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>L2. To implement a Habitats Management Plan within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area, to ensure its long-term sustainable management.</p> <p>L3. To establish and implement a Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report on Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Implementation Progress</li> </ul>
<b>Soils and Geology</b>	<p>SG1. Area of land (in hectares) over which Clare County Council has control within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>SG2. Cliff-edge stability status Periodic cliff stability assessment reporting.</p>	<p>SG1. To obtain appropriate legal interests in lands within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>SG2. To implement a Habitats Management Plan within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area, to ensure its long-term sustainable management.</p> <p>SG3. To establish and implement a Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk.</p> <p>SG4. To confirm Cliffs of Moher cliff stability status.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Report on Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Implementation Progress</li> <li>Annual Cliff Stability Monitoring Programme Report</li> </ul>



# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

SEA Topic	Key Indicators	Targets for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy	Data Source
Water (Ground and Surface Water)	W1. Percentage improvement/deterioration in EPA surface water quality assessment outcomes.	W1. A sustainable network of SUDS and nature-based solutions using natural features/landscapes to manage surface water while increasing biodiversity.  W2. Sustainable water management solutions to be integrated within development proposals in the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.  W3. Proposed development to be subject to Flood Risk Screening Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Annual Environmental Monitoring Programme (Groundwater Vulnerability Monitoring Component)</li><li>EPA Water Quality Data</li></ul>
Air Quality	AQ1. Quarterly and annual data on numbers of vehicles servicing Park and Ride system.  AQ2. Quarterly and annual data on numbers of vehicles accessing the Cliffs of Moher Experience parking facility.	AQ1. To ensure that all development implemented in terms of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy reduces emissions from transport and energy usage at the Visitor Experience.  AQ2. To comply with applicable Air Quality Standards in terms of the <i>Air Quality Directive</i> (2008/50/EC) to include for the protection of human health.  AQ3. To implement the proposed seasonal traffic management approach (Park and Ride and online booking) to ensure that the volume and intensity of traffic to and from the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is reduced, with resulting reduction in emissions.  AQ4. To monitor queuing at accesses to COM parking and Park and Ride facilities to reduce/negate idling vehicles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Annual Environmental Monitoring Programme (Emissions and Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Component)</li></ul>
Climate	C1. Quarterly and annual data on numbers of vehicles servicing Park and Ride system.  C2. Quarterly and annual data on numbers of vehicles accessing the Cliffs of Moher Experience parking facility  C3. Percentage renewable energy source utilisation at the Cliffs of Moher Experience.	C1. To ensure that all development implemented in terms of the <i>Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy</i> delivers on Ireland's climate ambition as evaluated against the Climate Action Plan.  C2. To reduce and minimise greenhouse gas emissions  C3. To implement the proposed seasonal transport and traffic management approach (Park and Ride and online booking) to ensure that the volume and intensity of traffic to and from the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is reduced.  C4. Deliver Net Zero Energy, including the target of 100% renewable energy consumption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Annual Environmental Monitoring Programme (Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Monitoring Component)</li></ul>



SEA Topic	Key Indicators	Targets for the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy	Data Source
<b>Material Assets</b>	<p>MA1. Water consumption in M3 per year at the Cliffs of Moher Experience.</p> <p>MA2. Volume of solid waste in metric tonnes generated annually at the Cliffs of Moher Experience.</p> <p>MA3. Compliance of influent and effluent samples taken at the Cliffs of Moher Experience Wastewater Treatment Plant.</p>	<p>MA1. Where possible, water consumption shall be minimised to 0.6 M3/per year by 2050.</p> <p>MA2. To make optimal use of existing infrastructure where possible and to ensure that existing infrastructure is enhanced and operates within the parameters of all regulatory requirements to comply with applicable technical and environmental standards.</p> <p>MA3. To ensure that all new infrastructure operates within the parameters of all regulatory requirements to comply with applicable technical and environmental standards.</p> <p>MA4. To relocate, upgrade and enhance the existing wastewater treatment and drainage infrastructure capacity to cater for all development implemented in terms of the <i>Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy</i>.</p> <p>MA5. To support circular economy principles prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery of waste.</p> <p>MA6. To implement a Zero-Waste Strategy and audit use of compostable packaging/materials in relevant on-site operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Infrastructure Standards Compliancy Report based on monthly monitoring of key indicators.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Heritage (Archaeological and Architectural)</b>	<p>CH1. Level of visitors' awareness, knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage of the Cliffs of Moher.</p>	<p>CH1. To increase visitor awareness, knowledge and understanding of the area's cultural heritage.</p> <p>CH2. To ensure that only development is permitted which protects/enhances places, buildings, features and landscapes of archaeological or architectural heritage significance within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>CH3. To design and implement a network of experiences (physically, educationally, and culturally) within the region to benefit the wider community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Visitor Satisfaction Survey Report</li> <li>Annual Report on Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Implementation Progress</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape (Visual Character)</b>	<p>LVC1. Level of visitors' satisfaction of their experience of the landscape of the Cliffs of Moher.</p>	<p>LVC1. To ensure landscape design proposals integrate with the implementation of a Habitats Management Plan within the Cliffs of Moher Development Area.</p> <p>LVC2. To ensure that any assessed significant negative visual impacts of development on the receiving landscape are appropriately mitigated resulting from the implementation of the <i>Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy</i>.</p> <p>LVC3. To monitor visitor satisfaction of their experience of the extended COM Experience landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Visitor Satisfaction Survey Report</li> <li>Annual Report on Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy Implementation Progress</li> </ul>



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## Appropriate Assessment

A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in support of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (hereafter referred to as the “Habitats Directive”).

The Cliffs of Moher is a Special Protection Area (SPA 4005) designated under the EU Bird’s Directive (S.I. No. 269/2010 - European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds (Cliffs of Moher Special Protection Area 004005)). The SPA extends a distance of some 9.5 km along the north Clare coast from Faunmore in the north to just south of Cancregga Point in the south (NPWS, 2015a). The Cliffs of Moher is one of the most important seabird colonies in Ireland and has been designated as a SPA because it supports nationally important populations of five breeding seabird species namely Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), Common Guillemot (*Uria aalge*), Razorbill (*Alca torda*) and Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*). The Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocora*) is an additional Special Conservation Interest. Furthermore, the site is of special conservation interest for holding an assemblage of over 20,000 breeding seabirds making it of international importance.

### Legislative background

Natura 2000 sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the EU Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under the EU Birds Directive. As signatories to these Directives, Ireland like other EU Member states, has designated prime areas of ecological importance as SACs and SPAs, and these are part of a network of European sites of ‘community importance’ for biodiversity across the EU called the ‘Natura 2000’ network.

The obligation to undertake Appropriate Assessment arises from Articles 6 (3) and (4) of European Union (EU) Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations S.I. No 477 of 2011; further amended by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2021.

There are 4 stages in an Appropriate Assessment as outlined in the European Commission Guidance document (EU Commission, 2001). The following is a brief summary of these steps.

**Stage 1 - Screening:** This stage examines the likely effects of a project/plan either alone or in combination with other projects/plans, upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. The assessment of significance is carried out in consultation with the relevant nature conservation agencies.

**Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment:** In this stage, the impact of the project on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site is considered with respect to the conservation objectives in place for the site.

**Stage 3 - Assessment of Alternative Solutions:** Should the Appropriate Assessment determine that adverse impacts are likely upon a Natura 2000 site, this stage examines alternative ways of implementing the project or plan that, where possible, avoid these adverse impacts. In the absence of any reasonable alternatives for a project/plan that would be less damaging to the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, it is then necessary to proceed to Stage 4.

**Stage 4 -** Where imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist, an assessment to consider whether compensatory measures will or will not effectively offset the damage to the Natura site will be necessary.

The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy is not directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of any European site. The *Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 Appropriate Assessment Screening Assessment Report* (January 2021) screened in the potential for significant negative effects on the following Natura 2000 (European) sites occurring:

- Cliffs of Moher Special Protection Area (SPA 4005) – c.0 km distance.
- Mid Clare Coast Special Protection Area (SPA 4182) – c.14.2 km distance.
- Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands Special Area of Conservation (SAC 1021) - c.14.2 km distance.
- Inagh River Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC 0036) - c.6 km distance.
- Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC 0020) - c.3.4 km distance.
- Inisheer Island Special Area of Conservation (SAC 1275) - c.8.5 km distance (offshore).
- East Burren Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC 1926) - c. 17 km distance.
- Galway Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC 00268) – c. 24 km distance.
- Galway Bay Special Protection Area (SPA 4031) – c. 24 km distance.

Clare County Council as Competent Authority determined under PART 5 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT *Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Appropriate Assessment of implications for European Sites* Article 42(6) of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*, as amended by the *European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2021*, that:

***“An Appropriate Assessment of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 is required in terms of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and in accordance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended by the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.”***

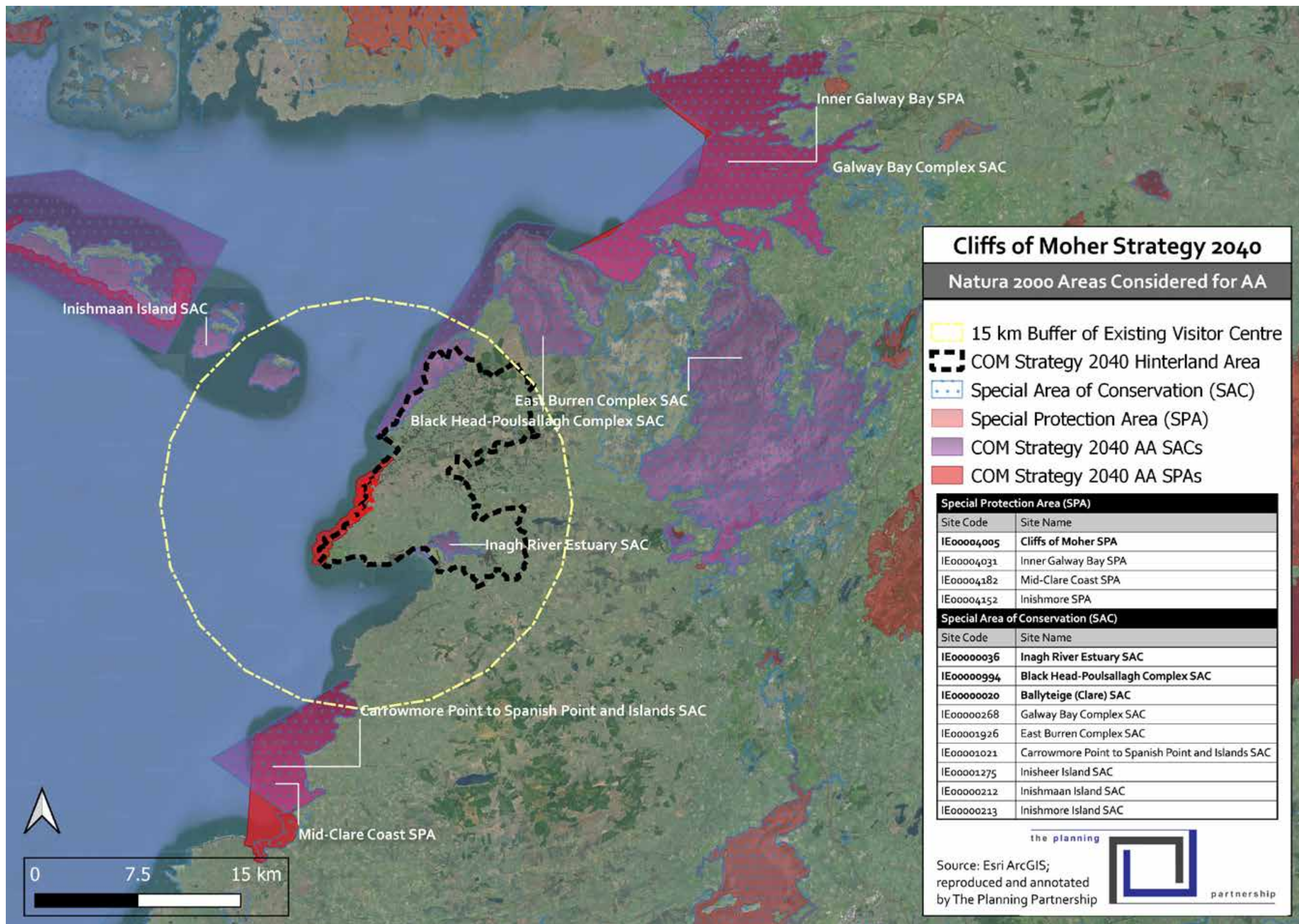
Therefore a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*.

During the process of preparation of the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*, it was required that consideration also been given to the potential for indirect links to sites within the Cliffs of Moher hinterland on a precautionary basis.

- Ballyteigue (Clare) Special Area of Conservation (SAC 0994) - c.9.5 km distance.
- Inishmaan Island Special Area of Conservation (SAC 00212) - c.13.5 km distance (offshore).
- Inishmore Island Special Area of Conservation (SAC 00213) - c.17 km distance (offshore).
- Inishmore Special Protection Area (SPA 4152) – c. 17.5 km distance.

These 13 aforementioned Natura 2000 (European) sites are therefore assessed within this Natura Impact Assessment.







# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Assessment of likely significant effects of implementing the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*– Core Objectives. ‘J’ means that significant effects cannot be ruled out, while ‘X’ means that significant negative impacts are considered unlikely.

Core Objectives	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	‘The Aran Islands’	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<i>Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region</i>											
<i>Encourage visitors to stay longer in the area and facilitate greater benefits and investment into local towns and villages.</i>	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J
<p><b>Rationale:</b> This objective aims to encourage visitors to stay in the local area, and region as a whole. This broad objective has the potential to lead to various negative impacts upon Natura 2000 sites. Examples include direct impacts such as habitat loss/habitat modification and disturbance (to habitats and species within European sites) as a result of people visiting Natura 2000 sites, or indirect impacts such as those that might result from pressures upon the infrastructure of towns and villages as a result of increased levels of visitors (e.g. increased wastewater loadings and insufficient capacity in wastewater treatment plants).</p> <p>All ‘relevant’ Natura 2000 sites could be affected, the exception perhaps likely to be Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC which is a managed meadow (traditional hay making) and a nature reserve. However, as visitor management practices are not known for this site, and as the site has no management plan in place, a precautionary approach has been taken - impacts such as trampling could occur if visitor numbers increased in an unmanaged and unmitigated way.</p>											
<i>Develop enhanced partnerships and greater coordination between the Cliffs of Moher Experience and Local Businesses and Communities.</i>	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J
<p><b>Rationale:</b> This objective relates to retail and marketing initiatives, amongst others. Partnerships with local landowners and farmers to, for example, achieve habitat management objectives, are inherently designed to bring about positive improvements, but will require project-specific AA before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA can be ruled out.</p> <p>A precautionary approach has been taken, and all sites are included as having a potential for impacts, because details of the partnerships/coordination and geographical areas over which these will occur are not known.</p>											
<i>Align with the Local, Regional and National policy priorities to create high quality visitor experiences within the county.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this broad objective will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.</p>											
<i>Minimise adverse impacts on local communities.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this broad objective will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.</p>											
<i>Sustainably increase tourism revenue across the season</i>	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The Strategy aims to sustainably increase tourism revenue across the season, disperse visitors more widely within the region, and minimise adverse impacts on local communities. Specifically, the strategic development of the Cliffs of Moher site must deliver the overarching objective of nature recovery that underpins the ‘ongoing drive to recover biodiverse land and sea areas’. Increasing tourism revenue through increased numbers of visitors and dispersal more widely across the region, presents a challenge for minimising impacts upon designated sites for nature conservation. As the strategy is implemented, proposals will be subject to the relevant planning legislation applicable at that time. Implementation will also align with relevant national, regional, sectoral and environmental plans. However, achieving this objective may require the completion of other necessary plans to avoid negative impacts upon Natura 2000 sites; one example being Management Plans for SAC and SPA sites.</p> <p>Visitor management lies at the very core of any strategy that aims to increase tourism revenue, whilst protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Visitor management will be central to achieving many of the Strategy’s objectives and a Visitor Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher is required. This plan will be subject to AA.</p> <p>At the Cliffs of Moher, spreading visitor numbers, for example, to earlier or later in the day, or to off-peak seasons will need to be assessed carefully. For instance, the current behaviour and distribution patterns of Chough and Peregrine across the site may be influenced by the birds having habituated to current visitor numbers and timings. The birds may forage more actively in areas perceived to be subject to lower visitor numbers at certain times of the day. The on-going research on these two species will be of importance in assessing the impacts, and on-going monitoring will likely be required. Visitor numbers, locations and key areas for breeding seabirds and potential impacts upon them, will also need careful consideration.</p>											



Core Objectives	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	‘The Aran Islands’	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA
<b>Optimising the World-Class Experience</b>											
<b><i>Deliver a world-class tourism model in which audience needs and satisfaction are central.</i></b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this broad objective will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites as long as the conservation requirements/objectives of the Natura 2000 sites in the region are considered within the tourism model.											
<b><i>Offer excellent value for money in delivering a sequence of memorable experiences that prioritise exhilarating encounters with the cliffs and immersion in untamed nature.</i></b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this broad objective relating to value for money, will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.											
<b><i>Provide an enhanced landscape interpretation through a network of safe graded walks and enhanced landscape interpretation.</i></b>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> The provision of new/upgraded walk paths has the potential to cause significant negative impacts upon the SCIs of the Cliffs of Moher SPA if inappropriately designed or constructed. The creation of pathways within the Cliffs of Moher will result in habitat loss of a certain amount of natural/modified habitat within the SPA. Other potential impacts include disturbance to SCI species.											
<b><i>Develop targeted event and activity packages.</i></b>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> The provision of events and activity packages at the Cliffs of Moher site has the potential to cause significant negative impacts upon the SCIs of the Cliffs of Moher SPA if inappropriately designed, or with little/no mitigation. Potential impacts include disturbance to SCI species.											
<b>Transforming the Natural Landscape</b>											
<b><i>Conserve and highlight the beautifully rugged and ecologically rich habitats of the cliffs.</i></b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> Conservation of the Cliffs of Moher is an inherent part of this core objective. This objective is in line with the conservation objectives, goals and aims of the Natura 2000 network. In itself, this broad objective should not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) site.											
<b><i>Rewilding and recovery of the natural environment will enhance the biodiversity value as well as increase its aesthetic appeal for a wide range of audiences.</i></b>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> Habitat management and restoration will need to be carried out with the requisite level of scientific research, expertise etc. so that the conservation objectives of the SCI species are not undermined. Project-specific AA will be required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA can be ruled out. Mitigation will likely be required and this is provided in Section 8.											
<b><i>Proactive habitat and visitor management will reinforce commitments to protect designated habitats and protected species and associated ecological corridors/linkages at the Cliffs of Moher site and wider area.</i></b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> Visitor management lies at the very core of any strategy that aims to create a sustainable tourism venue, whilst protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Visitor management will be central to achieving many of the Strategy's objectives.											
This broad objective should not lead to negative impacts upon Natura 2000 (European) sites, indeed correct implementation should result in positive impacts.											
<b><i>Strengthen opportunities for conservation research, monitoring and education through strategic partnerships.</i></b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> Research and monitoring will be required to develop many elements of the Strategy e.g. habitat management (as above). However, in itself, this broad objective will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites. Rather, conservation research, by definition, should lead to positive impacts upon designated sites for nature conservation.											
<b><i>Protecting the cultural authenticity and wildness of the natural assets.</i></b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this broad objective will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.											



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Core Objectives	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	‘The Aran Islands’	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<i>Providing Sustainable Access</i>											
<i>New Park and Ride hub and shuttle service for visitors to the Cliffs of Moher as part of an integrated transport system for the wider area.</i>	√	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Project-specific AA will be required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA, and potentially other Natura 2000 sites can be ruled out.</p> <p>Impacts on habitats and species in greenfield sites to be developed as Park &amp; Ride facilities should be confined to the footprint of the works and if these sites are located outside of the boundaries of Natura 2000 sites, then impacts upon Natura 2000 sites are not anticipated. Further development of Park and Ride facilities at Doolin, Liscannor and Lahinch have the potential to cause indirect negative impacts on nearby Natura 2000 sites if, for example, visitors stay longer in the area, which results in pressures upon existing infrastructure. One example of this could be increased loadings to wastewater treatment plants which could cause negative impacts upon the water quality of receiving bodies if adequate treatment is not in place. That said, this transport objective is aligned with other regional and national policies that aim to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is in place in towns/villages to accommodate future population growth and reduce traffic congestion.</p> <p>The Strategy aims to encourage a shift in the modes of transport currently used, by encouraging increased usage of public transport and a shift away from car usage. More sustainable travel and transport should result in a decrease in traffic volumes on the</p> <p>Local and regional roads which will result in lower noise levels, an improvement in the quality of road runoff and improved (lowered) air emissions. Overall, implementation of this objective with project-specific AA and the incorporation of mitigation as required, should not lead to significant negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 site.</p>											
<i>At the Cliffs of Moher site, the provision of new and enhanced facilities, services and network of walkways and features, will facilitate sustainable and enhanced universal access for all visitors.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The provision of new/upgraded walk paths and new and enhanced visitor facilities have the potential to cause significant negative impacts upon the SCIs of the Cliffs of Moher SPA if inappropriately designed or constructed. Potential impacts include habitat loss and disturbance to SCI species. Project-specific AA will be required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA can be ruled out.</p>											
<i>Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk and the development of greenways present opportunities for sustainable access links with the Cliffs of Moher site.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The provision of new/upgraded walk paths and new and enhanced visitor facilities have the potential to cause significant negative impacts upon the SCIs of the Cliffs of Moher SPA if inappropriately designed or constructed. Potential impacts include habitat loss and disturbance to SCI species. Project-specific AA will be required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA can be ruled out.</p>											
<i>Managing visitors across the wider area.</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Objectives to increase the numbers of visitors more widely across the region, presents a challenge for minimising impacts upon designated sites for nature conservation. As the strategy is implemented, proposals will be subject to the relevant planning legislation applicable at that time. Implementation will also align with relevant national, regional, sectoral and environmental plans. However, achieving this objective may require the completion of other necessary plans to avoid negative impacts upon Natura 2000 sites; one example being Management Plans for SAC and SPA sites.</p> <p>Visitor management lies at the very core of any strategy that aims to increase tourism revenue, whilst protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Visitor management will be central to achieving many of the Strategy’s objectives and a Visitor Management Plan for the Cliffs of Moher is required. This plan will require AA.</p>											
<i>Provide valuable community amenities.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Depending on the amenities to be developed, there may be a requirement for project-specific AA. Mitigation will be required, and this is provided in Section 8.</p>											
<i>Attracting visitors, increasing visitor revenue, and transforming the economic and social future of the towns, villages and rural areas around the region.</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>This objective aims to encourage visitors to stay in the local area, and region as a whole. This broad objective has the potential to lead to various negative impacts upon Natura 2000 sites. Examples include direct impacts such as habitat loss/habitat modification and disturbance (to habitats and species within European sites) as a result of people visiting Natura 2000 sites, or indirect impacts such as those that might result from pressures upon the infrastructure of towns and villages as a result of increased levels of visitors (e.g. increased wastewater loadings and insufficient capacity in wastewater treatment plants). All ‘relevant’ Natura 2000 sites could be affected, the exception perhaps likely to be Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC which is a managed meadow (traditional hay making) and a nature reserve. However, as visitor management practices are not known for this site, and as the site has no management plan in place, a precautionary approach has been taken - impacts such as trampling could occur if visitor numbers increased in an unmanaged and unmitigated way.</p> <p>This objective will likely result in the requirement for new or upgraded infrastructure which may require project-specific AA.</p>											



Assessment of likely significant effects of implementing the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* – Masterplan Objectives. ‘√’ means that significant effects cannot be ruled out, while ‘X’ means that significant negative impacts are considered unlikely.

Objectives: Rewilding an enlarged landholding/arriving at the site	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<b>Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region</b>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Clare County Council has begun negotiations for the purchase or leasing of an extended landholding to facilitate an improved Visitor Experience.</i></li> </ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p>Clare County Council has begun negotiations for the purchase or leasing of an extended landholding to facilitate an improved visitor experience. This strategy presents a unique opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value and aesthetic appeal of the site through “rewilding” of the landscape. The Council will provide an ongoing commitment and the necessary resources to support appropriate habitat management, including providing specialist ecological stewardship by an experienced land manager and implementing a Habitat Management Plan.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This long-term strategy is welcomed as the restoration of natural habitats lies at its core. However, site habitat management will need to be developed in consultation with specialists and conservation staff of the NPWS to ensure that actions aimed at being positive for targeted flora/fauna, are not negative for others. Project phasing will likely be required, as well as-going monitoring to assess the efficacy of management actions undertaken.</p>											
<b>Optimising the World-Class Experience</b>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The topography is manipulated throughout by contour modification and berming to screen the impacts of the reception building and parked vehicles.</i></li> </ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The approach will also facilitate the managed dispersal of visitors across the site, creating more space and opportunities for an intimate “back to nature” experience with the cliffs.</i></li> </ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Re-development of the existing site to include contour modifications and berming will require project-specific AA to ensure that there will be no significant impacts upon the SCI species, including any indirect impacts through changes to habitats that the species utilise. Managed dispersal of visitors across the site will require careful consideration of Chough and Peregrine distribution and behaviour across the site, especially where there are proposals to introduce people to areas where they were previously excluded.</p>											
<b>Transforming the Natural Landscape</b>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This strategy presents a unique opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value and aesthetic appeal of the site through “rewilding” of the landscape.</i></li> </ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>With appropriate management, the landscape can be brought back to a naturally variable mosaic of grassland, heathland and scrub habitats.</i></li> </ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>There are significant opportunities to form partnerships with adjacent landowners to achieve further habitat improvement along the full extent of the coastal walk in the future.</i></li> </ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Clare County Council will provide an ongoing commitment and the necessary resources to support appropriate habitat management, including providing specialist ecological stewardship by an experienced land manager and implementing a new Habitat Management Plan.</i></li> </ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The above four actions under the heading ‘transforming the natural landscape’ have the potential to result in many positive impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA and its SCI species, as well as the local and wider biodiversity. However, habitat management and restoration will need to be carried out with the requisite level of scientific research, expertise, timing, phasing and monitoring etc so that the conservation objectives of the SCI species are not undermined. There is considerable scope to enhance/restore the existing habitats which will lead to positive impacts upon the SCI species that utilise them. However, project-specific AA will be required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA can be ruled out. The proposed Habitat Management Plan will also require AA.</p>											



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Objectives: Rewilding an enlarged landholding/arriving at the site	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
Providing Sustainable Access											
• The new Cliffs of Moher site has been designed to anticipate 10,500 visitor per day at peak, new shuttle services from remote car parks to deliver 3,300 visitors per day at peak, coach facilities to deliver 3,300 visitors per day at peak, onsite car parking deliver 3,300 visitors per day at peak, and a significant seasonal change from days with high visitor numbers to low visitor numbers.	√	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Bus drop-off for eight coaches with parking allocation for 30-40 more coaches of various sizes is provided, with separate building access.	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• A surface car park for 450 cars with separate building access.	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• A delivery area and separate staff car park is located to the southeast of the proposed new Gateway Reception building, at a lower level.	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Project-specific AA will be required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA, and potentially other Natura 2000 sites can be ruled out.</p> <p>Impacts on habitats and species in greenfield sites to be developed as Park &amp; Ride facilities should be confined to the footprint of the works and if these sites are located outside of the boundaries of Natura 2000 sites, then impacts upon Natura 2000 sites are not anticipated. Further development of Park and Ride facilities at Doolin, Liscannor and Lahinch have the potential to cause indirect negative impacts on nearby Natura 2000 sites if, for example, visitors stay longer in the area, which results in pressures upon existing infrastructure. One example of this could be increased loadings to wastewater treatment plants which could cause negative impacts upon the water quality of receiving bodies if adequate treatment is not in place. That said, this objective is aligned with other regional and national policies that aim to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is in place in towns/villages to accommodate future population growth and reduce traffic congestion.</p> <p>The Strategy aims to encourage a shift in the modes of transport currently used, by encouraging increased usage of public transport and a shift away from car usage. More sustainable travel and transport should result in a decrease in traffic volumes on local and regional roads which will result in lower noise levels, an improvement in the quality of road runoff and improved (lowered) air emissions. Overall, implementation of this objective with project-specific AA and the incorporation of mitigation as required, should not lead to significant negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 site.</p>											



Assessment of likely significant effects of implementing the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* – Masterplan Objectives. ‘√’ means that significant effects cannot be ruled out, while ‘X’ means that significant negative impacts are considered unlikely.

Objectives: New gateway reception building/The interpretation Hub (repurposed existing visitor centre building)	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<b>Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region</b>											
• <i>The new Gateway Reception building creates a concealed enclosed courtyard at its centre, protected from the winds and will allow outdoor activities to develop that are not currently possible at the site, including facilitating an extension of the restaurant and retail areas on peak days.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>The existing Visitor Centre building (anticipated net building area extending to circa 2,700 sq m over 2 floors) will be reorganised to be an Interpretation Hub, which will focus on providing an updated interpretative exhibition with additional facilities for education and groups.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> Redevelopment of the Cliffs of Moher site has the potential to cause significant negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA, such impacts could include habitat loss, habitat degradation and disturbance to SCI species. Redevelopment of the site, including the Gateway Reception Building, will require project level Appropriate Assessment with mitigation as required. The provision of a green roof may provide Chough foraging habitat, and such outcomes should be aimed for. The provision of educational/research space is welcomed.											
<b>Optimising the World-Class Experience</b>											
• <i>Once visitors have passed into and through the Gateway Reception building, they will partake of the core Cliffs of Moher Experience and leave the world of cars and buses behind.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this broad objective will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.											
<b>Transforming the Natural Landscape</b>											
• <i>Vehicular traffic needed to sustain activities at the existing Visitor Centre building will be minimised and a significant reduction in hard landscaping around that building can therefore be achieved, in keeping with the ambition to rewild as much of the landscape as possible.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this broad objective will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites. Indeed, this objective aims for positive impacts upon the site and local biodiversity.											



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Objectives: New gateway reception building/The interpretation Hub (repurposed existing visitor centre building)	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
Providing Sustainable Access											
• The new Gateway Reception Building (anticipated net building area extending to circa 3300 sq m over 2 floors) creates a critical threshold between the visitor arriving at the site and entering the site.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• The new building itself screens the visual impact of parked vehicles.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• The restaurant has an external patio that enjoys views of the western landscape.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• The masterplan foresees a revised role for the existing Visitor Centre, where it will no longer be at the centre of the Cliffs of Moher Experience, with most primary visitor functions being provided in the new Gateway Reception building.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• The existing Visitor Centre building will continue to play an important role in offering shelter in inclement weather and it will maintain an enlarged seasonal café with panoramic view.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, these broad objectives will not lead to any direct negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites. Redevelopment of the Cliffs of Moher site however, has the potential to cause significant negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA, such impacts could include habitat loss, habitat degradation and disturbance to SCI species. Redevelopment of the site, including the Gateway Reception Building, will require project level Appropriate Assessment with mitigation as required.											



Assessment of likely significant effects of implementing the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* – Masterplan Objectives. ‘✓’ means that significant effects cannot be ruled out, while ‘X’ means that significant negative impacts are considered unlikely.

Objectives: The Skywalk and hinterland/O’Briens Tower and wetland habitat	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<b>Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region</b>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided.</i></li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this objective is unlikely to result in significant impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.											
<b>Optimising the World-Class Experience</b>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>O’Brien’s observation tower will remain the focus point of the Cliffs of Moher Experience for many visitors as it enjoys a particularly strategic view of the southern headlands, and no physical changes at this location is foreseen.</i></li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this objective is unlikely to result in significant impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.											
<b>Transforming the Natural Landscape</b>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The stone ledge in front of the existing visitor centre is of particular interest to geologists as there have been fossil finds at the location.</i></li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Within the circle of the skywalk, the topsoil will be removed to expose more of the clifftop ledge as a geological exhibition.</i></li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, these two objectives are unlikely to result in significant impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.											
<b>Habitat remediation will occur within the double cantilever circle.</b>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Historical maps indicate that there was once a freshwater lake to the east of O’Brien’s Tower, and it is proposed to re-establish a freshwater wetland habitat at this location, which will benefit flora and fauna and create another natural feature for the visitor to engage with.</i></li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this objective is unlikely to result in significant impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites. Re-establishment of the former wetland habitat has the potential to be a positive impact on site and local biodiversity.											



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Objectives: The Skywalk and hinterland/O’Briens Tower and wetland habitat	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
Providing Sustainable Access											
• The stone ledge in front of the existing Visitor Centre has long been the focus of activity for visitors to the Cliffs of Moher and will be used as part of the geological exhibition.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• The masterplan proposes the construction of a double cantilever skywalk at this location to bring the visitor out to experience the cliff-edge, without protruding over the cliff edge.	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Visitors also have an excellent vantage point to enjoy a view of the southern headlands from this location.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• A suspended pathway is designed to pass through the established wetland habitat east of O’Brien’s Tower.	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• An inland cantilevered structure will be built south of the established wetland habitat to capitalise on the views from the existing raised promontory point and would be the end point of the revised primary site access route.	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed cantilever skywalk and suspended pathways have the potential to result in negative impacts upon the designated SPA and its SCI species, as well as the local and wider biodiversity if undertaken in a manner not consistent with the conservation sensitivities of the site. In particular, the positioning of the structure must not impact the distribution of SCI species across the site, or in any way cause impacts upon the nesting seabirds, Chough or Peregrine. Project-specific AA is required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA can be ruled out.											



Assessment of likely significant effects of implementing the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* – Masterplan Objectives. ‘√’ means that significant effects cannot be ruled out, while ‘X’ means that significant negative impacts are considered unlikely.

Objectives: On the plateau/The escarpment/The escarpment to Pollboy	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<b>Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region</b>											
• <i>Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, this objective is unlikely to result in significant impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites.											
<b>Optimising the World-Class Experience</b>											
• <i>Between O'Brien's Tower and the escarpment is an elevated plateau landscape that enjoys dramatic panoramic viewing opportunities.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>From various locations in this landscape, the visitor can engage with views of the southern cliff headlands, views to Liscannor and Lahinch, views inland (eastward) and views to the Burren and North Clare from the trigonometry point.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>The escarpment at the northern perimeter of the plateau is a natural elevated position from which the visitor can enjoy dramatic cliff views.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>Views north to the Burren and North Clare from this location will give visitors a better understanding of the wider geographical context.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>The viewing point at Pollboy offers an exceptional visitor experience as it is lower than the cliffs to the south and allows the visitor a vantage point of the cliff structure and the bird life that is unavailable elsewhere.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> Re-development of the existing site to include additional or new pathways to viewing platforms and the provision of engineered viewing platforms will require project-specific AA to ensure that there will be no significant impacts upon the SCI species, including any indirect impacts through changes to habitats that the SCI species utilise. Managed dispersal of visitors across the site will require careful consideration of seabird, Chough and Peregrine distribution and behaviour across the site, especially where there are plans to introduce people to areas where they were previously excluded. The dispersal of people away from the cliff edge and rehabilitation of cliff edge habitats could result in major positive impacts for the Cliffs of Moher SPA, particularly seabirds, Choughs, and biodiversity as a whole.											
<b>Transforming the Natural Landscape</b>											
• <i>A new cliff-edge walk will be created further inland to improve visitor safety, allowing habitat remediation at the clifftop to be carried out where it is most critical foraging habitat for birds.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>The landscape between the pathways will be rewilded and developed as an optimal foraging habitat for birds in terms of a dedicated Habitats Management Plan.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>The visitor pathways will skirt around the edges of poorly drained landscape between the trigonometry point and the escarpment, identified as valuable foraging area for the Chough.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Objectives: On the plateau/The escarpment/The escarpment to Pollboy	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Additional routes from the trigonometry point to the escarpment will be developed to provide easier access for walkers with additional pathways constructed.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Habitat management and restoration will need to be carried out with the requisite level of scientific research, timing, phasing and monitoring so that the conservation objectives of SCI species are not undermined. Project-specific AA will be required before negative impacts upon the Cliffs of Moher SPA can be ruled out. Re-development of the existing site to include additional or new pathways to viewing platforms and the provision of engineered viewing platforms will require project-specific AA to ensure that there will be no significant impacts upon the SCI species, including any indirect impacts through changes to habitats that the species utilise. The proposed Habitat Management Plan will require AA.</p> <p>Managed dispersal of visitors across the site will require careful consideration of seabird, Chough and Peregrine distribution and behaviour across the site, especially where there are plans to introduce people to areas where they were previously excluded. The dispersal of people away from the cliff edge and rehabilitation of cliff edge habitats could result in major positive impacts for the Cliffs of Moher SPA, particularly seabirds and Choughs – these objectives are particularly welcomed.</p>											
<i>Providing Sustainable Access</i>											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Instead of the visitor experience being constricted to the current narrow clifftop walk, a new landscape of looped walkways offers more options to navigate through the habitats.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Looped walking routes of varying distance and duration can therefore be offered to visitors, based on their fitness level and willingness to engage with the climate.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Some engineered viewing platforms at optimal locations are proposed to bring the visitor back to the edge where views are particularly dramatic.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The trigonometry point will be developed as a primary “destination” point in the landscape with the addition of a significant sculptural feature and viewing platform.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>An engineered cantilevered platform, not protruding over the cliff edge/face, will be constructed at the Cliff of the Foals to provide a safer opportunity to enjoy this particularly dramatic view.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Additional routes from the escarpment to the Pollboy lookout will be developed to provide easier access for walkers with additional pathways constructed.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>On busy days the routes can be organised to into a one-way system, if necessary.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Where the coastal path engages with the R478 road, access will be provided for emergency services.</i></li></ul>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Re-development of the existing site to include additional or new pathways to viewing platforms and the provision of engineered viewing platforms will require project-specific AA to ensure that there will be no significant impacts upon the SCI species, including any indirect impacts through via changes to habitats that the species utilise. The proposed Habitat Management Plan will require AA.</p> <p>Managed dispersal of visitors across the site will require careful consideration of Chough and Peregrine distribution and behaviour across the site, especially where there are plans to introduce people to areas where they were previously excluded. The dispersal of people away from the cliff edge and rehabilitation of cliff edge habitats could result in major positive impacts for the Cliffs of Moher SPA, particularly Choughs.</p>											



Assessment of likely significant effects of implementing the *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy* – Masterplan Objectives. ‘√’ means that significant effects cannot be ruled out, while ‘X’ means that significant negative impacts are considered unlikely.

Objectives: Northern loop/southern cliff walk	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
<b>Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region</b>											
• <i>The Northern Loop connects with the coastal path to Doolin to the north and the threshold between the two projects shall be demarcated and signage provided.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>The Southern Cliff Walk extends south of the current visitor centre for circa 1.5km and connects onto the coastal walk to Hags Head and Liscannor.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>Interpretative signage and rest/picnic opportunities will be provided along these routes.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> In itself, these objectives are unlikely to result in significant impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) sites, but also see below.											
<b>Optimising the World-Class Experience</b>											
• <i>The northern loop could provide a considerable extension to the Cliffs of Moher Experience, offering the visitor a more remote walking experience, particularly on busy days, as it is not envisaged that all visitors will reach this far from the core facilities.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>Core vantage points have been identified as viewing platforms along the Southern Cliff Walk.</i>	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> The Northern Loop represents a considerable extension to the existing Cliffs of Moher experience. While it is not anticipated that all visitors will walk this far, it is reasonable to expect a greater number of visitors than at present, will undertake this walk to a more remote part of the site. This type of managed and increased dispersal of visitors across the site will require careful consideration of Chough and Peregrine distribution and behaviour across the site, especially where there are plans to increase the number of frequency of people in areas previously of low intensity use. The location of seabird nesting colonies and potential impacts will also need to be considered. The dispersal of people away from the cliff edge and rehabilitation of cliff edge habitats could result in major positive impacts for the Cliffs of Moher SPA, particularly seabirds and Chough.											
<b>Transforming the Natural Landscape</b>											
• <i>The lands within the Northern Loop do not form part of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy. However, in partnership with the landowners, the strategy recommends exploring how this area could be included into a dedicated Habitats Management Plan.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• <i>The landscape between the pathways at the Southern Cliff-edge walk could be rewilded and developed as an optimal foraging habitat for birds in line with a dedicated Habitats Management Plan.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rationale:</b> These recommendations are unlikely to result in significant negative impacts upon any Natura 2000 (European) site. Indeed, these objectives aim to deliver many positive benefits to the site and local biodiversity. Partnerships with local landowners, particularly farmers, in the development of habitat management measures, could have significant positive impacts for Chough.											



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Objectives: Northern loop/southern cliff walk	Cliffs of Moher SPA (4005)	Mid Clare Coast SPA (4182)	Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Islands SAC (1021)	Inagh River Estuary SAC (0036)	Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (0020)	The Aran Islands	Ballyteigue (Clare) SAC (0994)	East Burren Complex SAC (1926)	Galway Bay Complex SAC (00268)	Galway Bay SPA (4031)	Inishmore SPA (4152)
Providing Sustainable Access											
• Lands to the north and south present further physical and ecological development opportunities.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Based on ongoing analysis of the clifftop stability, a new Southern Cliff-edge walk could be created further inland to allow habitat remediation at the clifftop where it is most critical for sea bird foraging.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Built interventions on the Northern Loop will be limited to gravel pathways and information panels to guide the visitor away from the cliff-edge where it is appropriate to do this.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• At the time of the publication of the Strategy 2040, a specialist review of the stability of the cliff-edge within the Northern Loop is still ongoing and the degree to which the cliff-edge walk could be set back has yet to be confirmed.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rationale: These four above recommendations are still in development and cannot be assessed with any certainty at present. Each should be subject to project-specific AA when concepts and design are developed.											



### Mitigation Measures to Protect Natura 2000 Sites

To ensure that a comprehensive approach is taken regarding the identification of recommendation measures for mitigation of the potential significant effects of the Draft *Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy*, the text below sets out verbatim the mitigation measures identified in the Natura Impact Statement to protect Natura 2000 sites. This provides for specific details that are discussed in the Natura Impact Statement to be reflected, and to inform further qualifying details to be addressed within the overall mitigation measures as outlined within the SEA Environmental Report.

#### A Improvements to, or new infrastructure outside of the Cliffs of Moher site

Inherent mitigation applies in the case of proposals for new or updated infrastructure, as all planning authorities and relevant stakeholders are statutorily required to comply with relevant planning policies and statutory requirements. In the majority of cases, proposals to introduce new infrastructure should be subject to environmental assessment, which at site level, should take into account the existing baseline ecological conditions of the site, the ecological value of on-site features, and contain bespoke mitigation and environmental protection measures to protect site and local ecology/biodiversity. Appropriate Assessment may be required in certain cases where:

- Any Natura 2000 site lies within or adjacent to the project area, or,
- Any Natura 2000 site lies within the likely zone of impact of the project. The distance of the zone of impact (or zone of influence ZOI) should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in-combination effects.

#### B Redevelopment of the Cliffs of Moher site and/or improvements to existing infrastructure

Re-development of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor site will require project-specific Appropriate Assessment which should consider the nature conservation implications of each action/proposal before the decision is made to allow the projects(s) to proceed (DoEHLG, 2009).

Certain aspects of the site redevelopment have the potential to result in positive impacts upon the SCI species of the Cliffs of Moher SPA. For instance, the proposed setting back of the cliff-top pathway, whilst aiding the habitat restoration programme (see D below), will effectively move people away from the cliff top and reduce disturbance to seabirds, Chough and Peregrine. Overall, this could lead to better protection of habitats, lower disturbance to cliff-dwelling species such as seabirds, Chough and Peregrine, and will aid in the restoration of favourable conservation condition of the Special Conservation Interests of the Cliffs of Moher SPA'.

#### C Climate change

The Cliffs of Moher Experience Climate Action Strategy should set targets on greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy and energy efficiency in line with EU and Ireland Public Sector targets set in the Public Sector Climate Action Strategy. The Strategy should comply with the most up to date Climate Action Plan, National Climate Change Adaptation Framework and National Mitigation Plan, including contributing towards efforts to decarbonise the tourism sector, and improve low carbon travel, such as clean alternatively fuelled vehicles, walking and cycling. An Environmental Monitoring Programme is recommended which should include *inter alia* the monitoring of noise, groundwater, ambient air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy and energy efficiency in the area.

Proposed Park and Ride facilities and shuttle bus services serving the Cliffs of Moher site and wider hinterland should prioritise the use of electric vehicles. Clean (alternatively fuelled) buses will offer considerable advantages. Reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases, air pollutants and noise have the potential to bring about considerable public health benefits as well as resulting in positive environmental impacts.

#### D Habitat management

A Habitats Management Plan is required to identify key actions and indicators as well as the provision for periodic monitoring/survey of parts of the site that will be subject to habitat restoration.

Restoration of habitats at the Cliffs of Moher lies at the very core of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy. While one aim is to 'create a wilder, back to nature experience' for visitors, it is well recognised that the natural cliff-top habitats within the site have been subject to considerable erosion as a result of the existing cliff-top pathway. In addition, the agricultural grasslands within the site have been intensively managed for decades and could be managed in a less intensive and more appropriate way for foraging Chough.

Choughs are specialist feeders of soil invertebrates and are thus susceptible to changes in land use and agricultural practices which affect abundance and accessibility of invertebrate prey (Hayhow et al. 2018). The link between short-cropped grass (grazing) and Chough foraging success is well documented, as is the requirement for the presence of animal dung: invertebrates and invertebrate larvae within dung being a food source. Management practices such as grazing, short-cropped grass, and animal dung will form important components of a habitat management plan for Chough, along with avoidance of macrocyclic lactone (ML) cattle treatments (Avermectins) which are known to reduce/kill invertebrates. Restoration of cliff-top habitats will also result in positive impacts upon Chough as foraging successfully close (<300m) to cliff ledge nest sites is important during the period of feeding chicks (e.g. Kerbiriou et al. 2006; Carroll et al. 2010).

The proposed Habitats Management Plan should be prepared in consultation and agreement with the NPWS, and/or integrated with any Management Plan that is being developed for the Cliffs of Moher SPA by NPWS.



# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## E Protection and conservation of species of special conservation interest

The birdlife and biodiversity of the Cliffs of Moher are as renowned and important as the rich landscape and geological heritage of the site. The Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy recognises this importance and proposals to undertake habitat and visitor management will reinforce commitments to protect the designated habitats and protected species. We recommend that a formal Bird Survey Programme be developed to identify key actions, status and indicators. This programme should be developed in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This programme should include the provision for continued monitoring of the Chough, Peregrine and seabird populations at the site. Given that the conservation condition (status) of Peregrine and Chough within the Cliffs of Moher SPA is unfavourable (compared to the baseline status), the required target is to increase numbers of breeding pairs of both species within the SPA. This mitigation action will also strengthen opportunities for conservation research, monitoring and education and has the potential to be an exemplar of habitat and species restoration projects along the Wild Atlantic Way.

The Cliffs of Moher should seek to develop structured relationships with local communities and key stakeholders to embed a mutual understanding of, and commitment to, the importance of restoring and conserving the habitats, soils, geology, water resources, sustainable transport modes and landscape of the Cliffs of Moher and environs.

## F Seabird watching/viewing and code of conduct

To remove the potential for disturbance to nesting seabirds, a formal code of conduct for ferries, cruises and other boats which operate trips to the Cliffs of Moher should be developed and put into practice, with each boat operator signing up and following the code of conduct thereafter.

Disturbance can cause long-term negative effects upon nesting seabirds (e.g. Jarrett et al., 2022) due to the energetic costs of disturbance (i.e. increased energy expenditure from moving away from source of disturbance), (ii) a reduction in efficient foraging and consequent reduction in prey caught and rate of provisioning chicks, and (iii) increased stress in response to disturbance. Seabirds leaving their nesting or roosting sites is a common consequence of disturbance. This results in chicks becoming more vulnerable to predation while the adults are away - eggs are not being incubated, hatching is delayed and/or eggs are knocked off the cliff. Furthermore, it has been known for frightened seabird chicks to fall off their cliff ledge sites in response to boat-based disturbance.

The seabird watching code of practice should be prepared by experienced seabird ecologists and in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

## G Direct habitat creation - provision of nesting habitat

The reasons why Choughs are taking up nest sites in buildings, often unused old agricultural sheds, as opposed to the more 'traditional' cliff nesting sites is not known. The use of farm sheds and barns appears to have increased in Ireland over the last decade or so. Recent work for the 2021 national Chough survey found an increasing proportion of West Cork Choughs now favouring farm buildings, including some buildings that are in use (C. Heardman pers. comm). Scott (2020) purported that the decline in breeding pairs on Dursey Island may have been linked to increased mortality of adult birds during the exceptionally severe weather in early March 2018 when severe cold for this area led to snow cover for several days and an inability therefore for Chough to forage, leading to birds in poor condition or starvation. With climate change we are seeing an increase in winter storms. For a species traditionally adapted to cliff-top and coastal living, could the increase in Chough moving inland to nest in buildings be linked to the birds simply retreating from severe weather?

To aid the recovery of the species at the Cliffs of Moher SPA (see also point E above) we recommend the provision of a disused farm building(s) at a suitable location within the site. The building should be enclosed with no human access and should be provisioned with a nest box, and under licence and NPWS guidance, could be fitted with a nest camera, which could replay live images back to the Visitor Centre for visitors to gain an intimate experience with this special and protected species during the nesting season. While this is not a novel idea (see <https://www.npws.ie/news/nestflix-and-chill-new-live-stream-nature-lovers-npws>), this would provide potential important Chough nesting habitat while providing visitors with a special encounter with the species. Under licence and guidance of NPWS, Chough chicks could also be colour-ringed, which provides a way of uniquely colour marking individual birds – useful for future monitoring of the site population.

## H Visitor Management – Cliffs of Moher

A core objective of the Strategy is to 'encourage visitors to stay longer in the area and facilitate greater benefits and investment into local towns and villages.' In addition, the Strategy aims to increase visitor numbers at the Cliffs of Moher during quieter times or off-peak seasons, while capping the numbers of visitors at peak times. Notwithstanding the positives, a Visitor Management Plan should be developed and implemented to include an annual monitoring programme which determines the length of visitor stay in at the Cliffs of Moher site and within the wider area.

Within the site itself, the layout of new walk paths and facilities such as viewing points, cantilever walk paths etc. needs to carefully identify both the areas/locations where visitor numbers/walkers can be increased without causing negative impacts to SCI species, and also what areas should be avoided, for example, areas close to nesting SCI species. It may be necessary for seasonal visitor management practices to be put in place, for example, excluding visitors from areas close to Chough nest sites during the period of time when the parent birds are feeding their young.



I      **Visitor Management – local and regional**

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive requires that Member States establish the necessary conservation measures for European sites involving, if needs be, management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans. Fáilte Ireland and local authorities should engage with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in order to ensure that where Strategy objectives will result in increased visitor numbers to Natura 2000 sites, that management measures and measures to prevent disturbance to habitats and wildlife are in place. One action, for example, could be a collaborative, regional/national public educational campaign on the seriousness of disturbance to wintering and breeding waterbirds, with practical and achievable management methods aiming to result in lowered occurrences of this type of negative impact.

J      **Management of Invasive species**

The Cliffs of Moher site does not currently support any invasive, alien species (IAS species). Development of the site, however, leads to the risk that such species may be introduced accidentally via vehicles, machinery or materials. To safeguard this happening, the future undertaking of site projects should be accompanied by a project-specific Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) which contain measures to prevent the introduction and spread of IAS. The proposed habitat management plan should contain an early-warning system that sets out procedures/monitoring to identify the occurrence of IAS species at the earliest possibility, including the training of site staff to identify such species.

**Appropriate Assessment Conclusion**

Stage 1 Screening and Stage 2 AA of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy have been carried out. These assessments demonstrate that the implementation of the Strategy has the potential to result in significant negative impacts upon the integrity of the Natura 2000 network of sites, if unmitigated. That said, many of the objectives relate to actions that aim to restore the ecological integrity of the site, and if achieved, have the potential to aid in restoring the favourable conservation condition of the species listed for the Cliffs of Moher Special Protection Area.

The potential for significant negative impacts has been addressed by the identification and inclusion of mitigation measures. In many cases, proposed actions relate to projects that themselves will be subject to (lower tier) Appropriate Assessment with a requirement for bespoke mitigation measures to be identified and implemented at that time. In the case of in-combination (cumulative) impacts, particularly in the case of increased visitor numbers, a rationale is provided as to what is needed to safeguard the Natura 2000 network along the Cliffs of Moher, and across the network of ‘relevant’ sites in the hinterland. Full incorporation and correct implementation of mitigation will be required to fully safeguard the integrity of these Natura 2000 (European) sites.



# STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND ON-GOING MONITORING

The implementation of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy will be based on comprehensive plans developed through a process of on-going monitoring in line with data collection and indicators set out in the SEA.



Cliffs of Moher Experience will take a leadership role, supported by Clare County Council to progress and secure the COM 2040 Strategy and objectives. It will foster a collaborative approach with local communities, stakeholders, elected members, sectoral interest groups and adjoining authorities.

Detailed development plans for all key aspects of the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy will be a key part of the implementation process. These will include:

- Planning and development
- Land acquisition
- Traffic and transport plan
- Access plan
- Audience and visitor planning
- Operational plan
- Funding plan
- Phasing plan
- Marketing plan
- Sustainability plan
- Natural habitat plan
- Economic impact plan
- Consultation plan
- Research, monitoring and reporting plan

These detailed plans will provide key targets and analysis to inform future implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation and monitoring framework will function as a formal feedback loop, and through on-going evaluation and reporting will provide the evidence base for the formulation and refinement of the Strategy. This identifies any significant data and knowledge gaps and seeks to address these on a priority basis and where relevant, in association with other government departments / organisations, during the implementation phase of the Strategy with a view to strengthening the evidence base for future reviews and iterations of the Strategy.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been prepared in tandem with the Cliffs of Moher 2040 Strategy to assess the likely significant effects of the policies and objectives, and their implementation over the period of the Strategy. COM has carried out considerable research as part of the development of the Strategy in line with the SEA Directive which requires that monitoring should be carried out in order to identify at an early stage any unforeseen adverse effects due to the implementation of the plan, with a view of taking remedial action where adverse effects are identified through monitoring. The Strategy is committed to the environmental monitoring programme developed as part of the SEA. It is based on environmental indicators which have been developed to show changes attributable to the Strategy and which have been selected to track progress towards achieving strategic environmental objectives and reaching targets, thereby enabling positive and negative impacts on the environment to be measured. Depending on monitoring results, adjustments to targets and indicators may be made to ensure the continued effectiveness of the monitoring programme in the interest of optimal environmental protection.



# KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR COM 2040 STRATEGY

In developing the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 it will be critical to measure and report on the ongoing progress of these ambitious plans as well as outcomes in operating the Cliffs of Moher Experience. The provision of these evidenced based reports will inform stakeholders and will be an aid to support collaboration and partnership. The development of the detailed implementation plans will provide targets and ongoing monitoring in line with data collection and indicators set out in the SEA.

## Enhancing Economic Benefits Across the Region



- Carry out an annual monitoring programme to determine the length of stay in the area by visitors to the Cliffs of Moher.
- Undertake an Economic Impact Survey, every 5 years, to determine the level of direct and indirect benefits and investment in local towns and villages from visitors to the Cliffs of Moher.
- Ensure monitoring and alignment with applicable policies and statutory requirements and consent procedures.
- Create and manage an organisational framework and establish a multi-stakeholder co-ordinating body to review and report on progress on the implementation of Strategy 2040.
- Employ a Cliffs of Moher Community Officer to develop and co-ordinate structured relationships with local communities and key stakeholders.
- Establish, manage and monitor a new Cliffs of Moher Community Fund to develop infrastructure, activities and skills to benefit local people and encourage sustainable tourism.

## Optimising the World-Class Experience



- Annual monitoring and review of progress on the implementation of the COM 2040 Strategy and Site Masterplan
- Facilitating control of key priority lands in the Cliffs of Moher Development Area to pursue implementation of Strategy 2040 through adequate land-legal rights (via acquisition / lease / agreements).
- Develop, implement and review a COM Visitor Management Plan to guide and manage the visitor experience from pre-booking through the journey to the Cliffs of Moher Experience and on to the activities / routes / key attractions in the area. Monitoring of key visitor baseline and indicator data including numbers, satisfaction and feedback on an ongoing basis.
- Develop, implement and monitor a structured, targeted event and activity programme.

## Transforming the Natural Landscape



- Develop and implement the Habitats Management Plan to monitor key actions, baseline data and indicators through periodic surveys.
- Develop and implement a Bird Survey Programme to identify and monitor key actions, status and indicators through surveys of Chough, Peregrine and seabirds.
- Develop a Cliffs of Moher Experience Climate Action Strategy to set targets and monitor progress on greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy and energy efficiency in line with EU and Ireland Public Sector targets.
- Develop and implement an Environmental Monitoring Programme to record and monitor key indicators in the area, including groundwater vulnerability and quality; emissions and ambient air quality; and renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Formulate, implement and monitor a Research and Education Partnership Outreach Programme through establishing strategic partnerships with Third Level institutions / conservation organisations and research entities.

## Providing Sustainable Access



- Monitoring of transport and traffic data for arrival and departure modes and routes for all visitors to the Cliffs of Moher on an ongoing basis.
- Implement and monitor the efficacy of the Park and Ride Shuttle Service for the Cliffs of Moher. Annual surveys of key baseline data including number, size, type and emissions rating of vehicles used in the Park and Ride service; trip frequency; average loads per trip; and trip distance per vehicle per month.
- Develop and implement a monitoring programme to determine cliff stability in the area on an ongoing basis and maintain cliff stability records.
- Develop, implement and monitor the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk Management Plan.





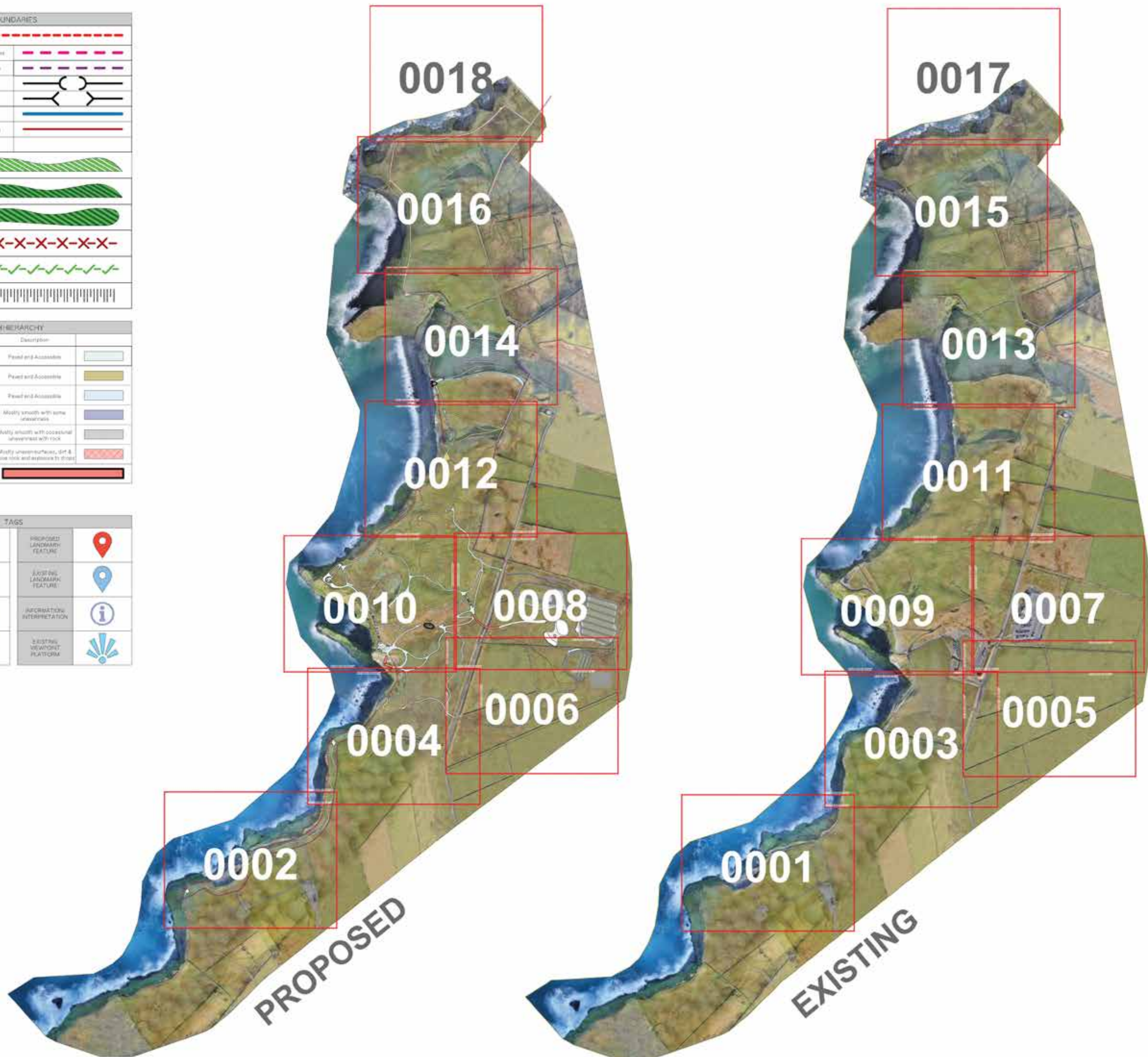
# **SECTION 7: SCALED MASTERPLANS**



BOUNDARIES		
WALL		
FENCES	Habitat Enclosure	
	Site Enclosure	
GATES	Pedestrian	
	Vehicle	
RAILINGS	Cliff Railing	
	Bridge Railing	
EXISTING BERM + WALL		
BERM + WALL		
BERM		
EXISTING BOUNDARY REMOVAL		
EXISTING BOUNDARY UPGRADED		
RETAINING CONDITION		

PATH HIERARCHY			
Typical Path	Width	Description	
MAIN	3M	Paved and Accessible	
CLIFF WALK	3M/5M	Paved and Accessible	
SECONDARY	1M	Paved and Accessible	
COVENTURE TRAIL	2M	Mostly smooth with some unevenness	
HIKER TRAIL	1M	Mostly smooth with occasional unevenness with rock	
COASTAL PATH OUTSIDE COAST CONTROL	Varies	Mostly uneven surfaces, dirt & loose rock and exposure to drops	
BRIDGE, TUNN, STRUCTURE		High Investment structure with large assets	

TAGS			
POPC		PROPOSED LANDMARK FEATURE	
SHELTER		EXISTING LANDMARK FEATURE	
PLAY AREA		INFORMATION INTERPRETATION	
PROPOSED VIEWPOINT PLATFORM		EXISTING VIEWPOINT PLATFORM	















COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0015 / 0016 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0017 / 0018 (LINE)

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0011 / 0012 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0013 / 0014 (LINE)

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0003 / 0004 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0005 / 0006 (LINE)



CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT	CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT	CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT	CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT	CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT	CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT
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841	842	843	844	845	846
847	848	849	850	851	852
853	854	855	856	857	858
859	860	861	862	863	864
865	866	867	868	869	870
871	872	873	874	875	876
877	878	879	880	881	882
883	884	885	886	887	888
889	890	891	892	893	894
895	896	897	898	899	900
901	902	903	904	905	906
907	908	909	910	911	912
913	914	915	916	917	918
919	920	921	922	923	924
925	926	927	928	929	930
931	932	933	934	935	936
937	938	939	940	941	942
943	944	945	946	947	948
949	950	951	952	953	954
955	956	957	958	959	960
961	962	963	964	965	966
967	968	969	970	971	972
973	974	975	976	977	978
979	980	981	982	983	984
985	986	987	988	989	990
991	992	993	994	995	996
997	998	999	1000	1001	1002

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CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT

TILE 2-EXISTING - IMAGE

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0003 01

1:750 16/08/2023

EM EW MH 594 x 841mm



















COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0023 / 0024 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0025 / 0026 (LINE)

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0007 / 0008 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0009 / 0010 (LINE)



Scale	North Arrow	Grid	Scale	Scale	Scale
1:750	1:750	1:750	1:750	1:750	1:750

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October 2022

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CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT

TILE 4 EXISTING - IMAGE

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0009 01

Scale: 1:750 Date: 16/06/2023

Format: KM EW MH 594 x 841 mm











COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0007 / 0008 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0009 / 0010 (LINE)

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0011 / 0012 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0013 / 0014 (LINE)



NO.	REVISION	DATE	BY	CHKD
1	ISSUED FOR TENDERS	16/08/2023	EW	MH
2	REVISED	16/08/2023	EW	MH

#### MASTERPLAN

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Dublin + Berlin

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W: www.henchionreuter.com

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PROJECT:  
CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT  
DRAWING NO:  
TITLE: EXISTING - IMAGE

DATE:  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0007 / 01

SCALE: 1:750  
DATE: 16/08/2023  
DRAWN: EW  
CHECKED: MH  
594 x 841 mm











COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0011 / 0011 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0012 / 0012 (LINE)

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0013 / 0016 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0017 / 0018 (LINE)

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0019 / 0020 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0021 / 0022 (LINE)



Scale	1:750
North Arrow	
Grid	
Legend	
Notes	

**MASTERPLAN**

Henichon + Reuter Architects  
Dublin + Berlin

We designed the 1000-year-old castle (1000 & 1000)  
1. 1000 (1000) 1000  
2. 1000 (1000) 1000  
3. 1000 (1000) 1000  
4. 1000 (1000) 1000

**CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT**

**TILE 6-EXISTING - IMAGE**

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0011 / 0011

Scale: 1:750  
Date: 16/08/2023

Author: KM  
Editor: EW  
MH  
594 x 841 mm









COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0113-2024 (IMAGE)  
COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0113-2024 (LINE)



Scale	1:750
North Arrow	
Grid	

MASTERPLAN

Henichon + Reuter Architects  
Cliffs of Moher  
16/08/2023

CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT

TILE 7 EXISTING IMAGE

COM-HRA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0013 01

Scale	1:750	Date	16/08/2023
Author	KM	Editor	EW
Checker	MH	Reviewer	























**Figure 1** Schematic representation of the different steps of the DNA microarray fabrication process. The process starts with a glass slide, followed by surface modification with silane, then deposition of a thin layer of photoresist. The photoresist is then patterned using a mask and UV light. The unexposed areas are removed, leaving a pattern of exposed glass. This process is repeated for each layer of the array. The final step is the deposition of a thin layer of gold or other conductive material.

THE 100 TOP 100 TOP 100			
Category	Rank	Company	Score
Overall	100	Microsoft	100
Software	100	Microsoft	100
Hardware	100	Microsoft	100
Services	100	Microsoft	100
Cloud	100	Microsoft	100
Mobile	100	Microsoft	100
Security	100	Microsoft	100
AI/ML	100	Microsoft	100
IoT	100	Microsoft	100
Blockchain	100	Microsoft	100
AR/VR	100	Microsoft	100
Autonomous	100	Microsoft	100
Quantum	100	Microsoft	100
Space	100	Microsoft	100
Energy	100	Microsoft	100
Healthcare	100	Microsoft	100
Finance	100	Microsoft	100
Transportation	100	Microsoft	100
Manufacturing	100	Microsoft	100
Education	100	Microsoft	100
Government	100	Microsoft	100
Media	100	Microsoft	100
Telecommunications	100	Microsoft	100
Real Estate	100	Microsoft	100
Food & Beverage	100	Microsoft	100
Retail	100	Microsoft	100

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[illegible]

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Henchion + Reuter Architects  
Quincy • Berlin

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CLIFFS OF MOHER COMPANY.

CLIFFS OF MOHER REDEVELOPMENT

TILE 9-PROPOSED IMAGE

-----0033

1:750

594 x 841mm





Draft



**CLIFFS<sup>OF</sup>  
MOHER**

**2040 STRATEGY**  
June 2024