

Draft



# CLIFFS OF MOHER

**2040 STRATEGY**

June 2024

Executive Summary



# INTRODUCTION

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. The proposals have been informed by detailed analysis of the natural, heritage, architectural, tourism and economic context of the Cliffs of Moher site and wider region.

A multi-disciplinary team of international consultants has developed the strategy, with guidance provided by a Steering Group of representatives from the Cliffs of Moher Experience, Clare County Council, Fáilte Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, private industries and the wider community.

To develop 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.

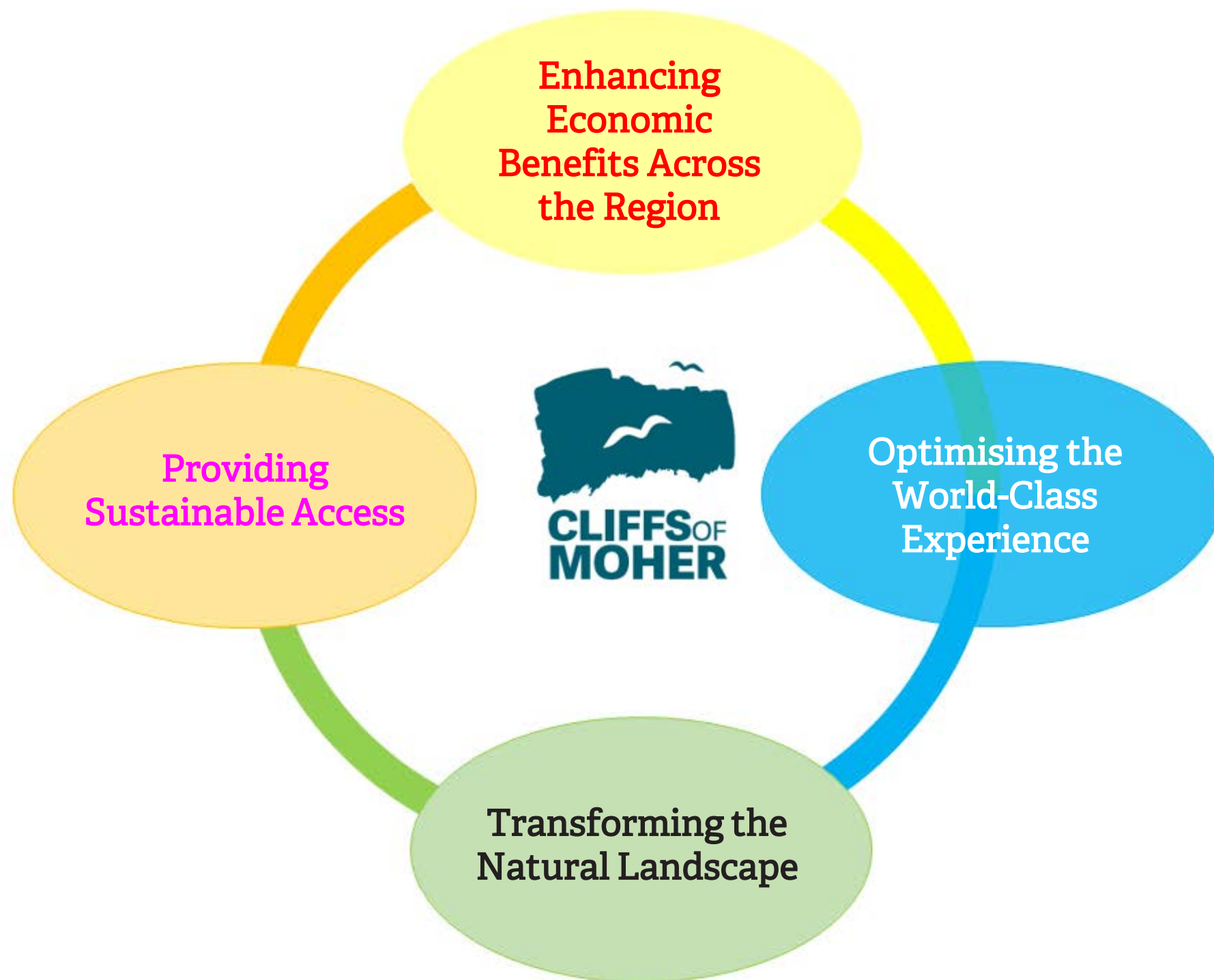
The strategy is driven by a clear need for change, underpinned by the limited capacity of visitor facilities on site. Over the past 10 years, visitor numbers have far exceeded those which the site was originally designed to accommodate. This has had significant negative impacts on the quality of the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

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

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







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 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 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.**



# PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE 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.

A new network of carefully designed routes and paths will deliver enhanced, sustainable access across an enlarged Cliffs of Moher site.

COM will achieve a sustainable balance of the relationships and links between the different ecosystem services, through ongoing monitoring, to support adaptation decision-making.

## Strategic Initiative 1:

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 (c. 10,500 per day) and pre-booking required for all visitors.

## Strategic Initiative 2:

Strategic capacity management will include working with local businesses to develop packages to promote earlier and later arrivals throughout the day and increase visits during the off-peak and shoulder seasons.

## Strategic Initiative 3:

New off-site park and ride hubs and a shuttle system for car-borne visitors, that operates at peak times, will ease traffic congestion on local approach roads.

## Strategic Initiative 4:

New vehicular access arrangements and management to provide a more efficient arrival system and alleviate traffic queues on the R478.

## Strategic Initiative 5:

Provide safer, easier and enhanced access across an enlarged Cliffs of Moher site, whilst facilitating the recovery of the COM's special environment.

## Strategic Initiative 6:

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

## Strategic Initiative 7:

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

## Strategic Initiative 8:

Facilitate an enhanced network of green infrastructure across the area, linking the Cliffs of Moher with greenways, blueways, peatways, and walking and cycling trails, to achieve maximum benefit and connectivity at local, regional and national levels.

## Strategic Initiative 9:

A holistic, balanced approach to ecosystem services will be adopted, and the implementation of the Strategy will move the COM to a low carbon, energy efficient, climate resilient operation.

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



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.







# OPTIMISING THE WORLD CLASS EXPERIENCE

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.

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, whilst reducing damage and erosion of the historic landscape. A sequence of memorable experiences will be enhanced by landscape interpretation, and event and activity packages.

## Strategic Initiative 1:

Engagement with the special qualities of the cliffs will occur before visitors arrive at the site, with the shuttle journey acting as an immersive event in its own right, and the implementation of a revitalised marketing and branding strategy.

## Strategic Initiative 2:

Proactive capacity management, including pre-booking for all visitors and limiting numbers on peak days, will achieve better distribution throughout the day and the year, thereby enhancing the visitor experience and improving management of access to the Cliffs of Moher.

## Strategic Initiative 3:

Enhanced vehicular access, including separate entrances for cars and coaches / shuttle buses, will assist the safe and efficient entry of all vehicles, and minimise or eliminate tailbacks onto the R478.

## Strategic Initiative 4:

A step change in the quality of the visitor experience will be delivered by creating a wilder, natural landscape across a significantly enlarged landscape, giving visitors more space and greater opportunities to engage with the cliffs.

## Strategic Initiative 5:

A new gateway building, providing 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.

## Strategic Initiative 6:

A new footbridge will bring visitors to the rewilded cliffs experience at an elevated level. This will provide enhanced accessibility for all visitors to the cliffs and provide spectacular views across the site and beyond.

## Strategic Initiative 7:

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

## Strategic Initiative 8:

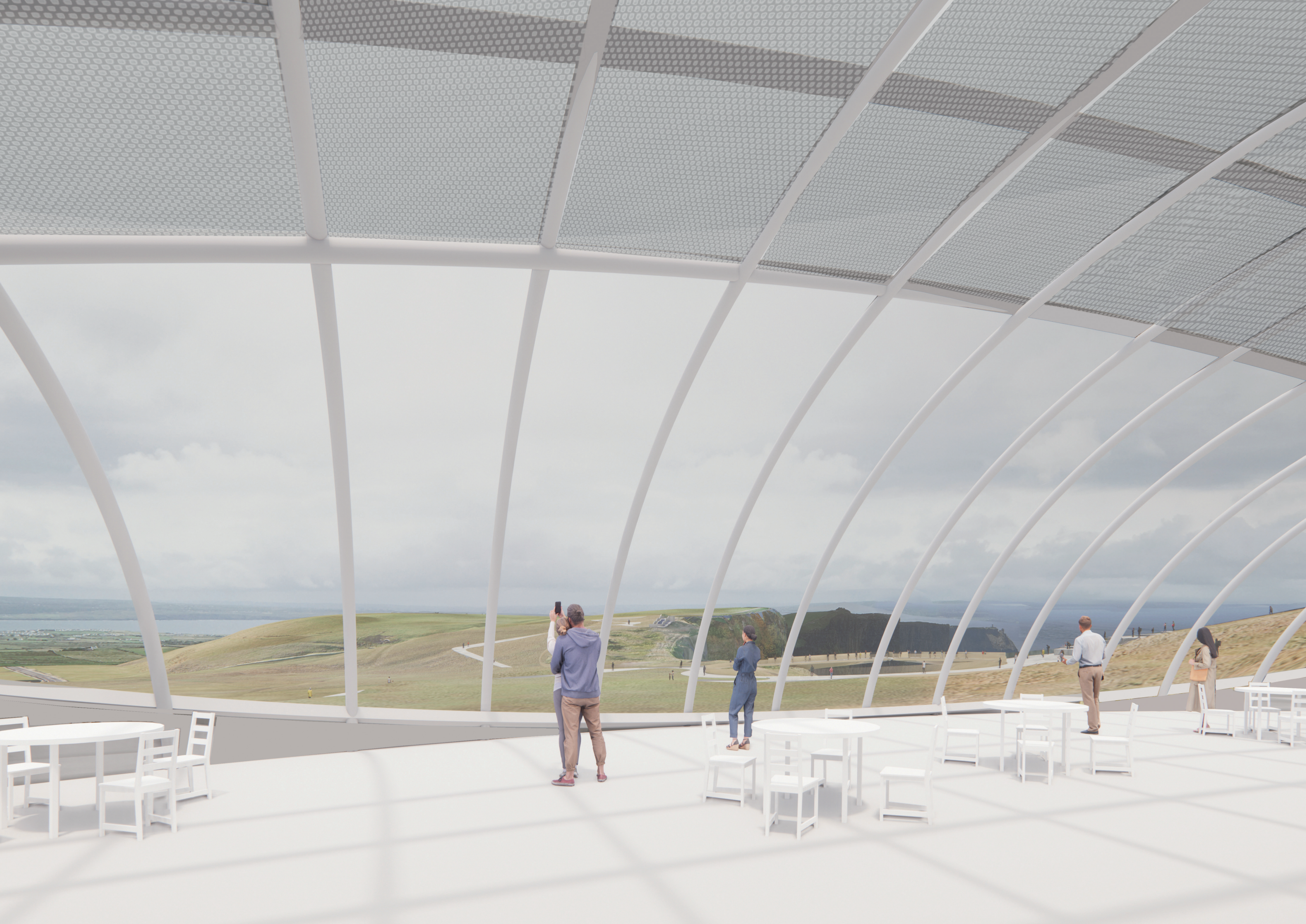
Robust new interpretation and signage across the site, combined with enhanced personal experiences with local guides, will bring to life the geological, natural, social and mythological heritage of the cliffs. These will complement the showpiece attraction that is the wild landscape and stunning views.

## Strategic Initiative 9:

Compelling and unique stories 'set in stone' will be brought together within an immersive and interactive interpretation hub located in the re-purposed existing visitor centre. The hub will also provide the base for a vibrant new education and community engagement programme.









# TRANSFORMING THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Enhancing the biodiversity value and increasing the aesthetic appeal of the natural environment is a key driver for the strategy. A Habitat Management Plan for the enlarged COM site will see the recovery of existing agricultural grasslands to a diverse mosaic of flora and fauna habitats that reflect the original cliff landscape.

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

## **Strategic Initiative 1:**

Consolidating all arrival, welcome and support facilities to the east of the R478 access road will allow the cliff side of the road to be returned to a natural, rewilded habitat.

## **Strategic Initiative 2:**

A new sustainable environmental land management approach will be adopted, utilising rewilding conservation measures that create a naturally variable mosaic of grassland, heathland and scrub habitats, with significant biodiversity benefits for the cliff landscape.

## **Strategic Initiative 3:**

Significantly expanding the site of the Cliffs of Moher Experience and establishing a sensitive network of paths will allow visitors to explore further and disperse more widely, reducing erosion along the clifftop.

## **Strategic Initiative 4:**

Setting back the clifftop pathway from the cliff edge will allow for the rehabilitation of the rocky sea vegetation and coastal grassland community.

## **Strategic Initiative 5:**

Indigenous species of flora and fauna will be protected through habitat management, and regular ecological surveys will be carried out, alongside maintenance regimes, to encourage and maintain biodiversity.

## **Strategic Initiative 6:**

Existing links with third level educational institutions will be developed in the areas of conservation, research and monitoring of the landscape, birds, wildlife, biodiversity and climate.

## **Strategic Initiative 7:**

Thought-provoking messaging around sustainability will be integrated across site interpretation, marketing and local communications to build a deeper understanding and care of the landscape, its historical significance and its diverse uses today.









# ENHANCED ECONOMIC BENEFITS ACROSS THE REGION

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 for local towns and villages.

The Cliffs of Moher will act as a magnet to attract and disperse visitors through enhanced strategic partnerships, focusing on sustainable, integrated transport networks and new coordinated visitor offers.

**Strategic Initiative 1:**

An integrated transport system, including proactive traffic management, park and ride hubs and shuttle bus services, and further promotion of walking and cycling options, will alleviate congestion issues. This will create a network of diverse experiences that result in increased length of stay, visitor spend and dispersal within the wider county.

**Strategic Initiative 2:**

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

**Strategic Initiative 3:**

Cliffs of Moher will 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.

**Strategic Initiative 4:**

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. This will offer a grant programme for local communities to develop infrastructure, activities and skills to benefit local people and encourage sustainable tourism.

**Strategic Initiative 5:**

The new catering and retail provision at the Cliffs of Moher, including enhanced spaces for the existing craft businesses, will act as a showcase for the outstanding produce of the local artisans and suppliers of County Clare.

**Strategic Initiative 6:**

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.









# SITE MASTERPLAN

The COM 2040 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.

The masterplan will deliver an enhanced visitor experience, effective operational management, and greater biodiversity and future sustainability of the special qualities of the environment.

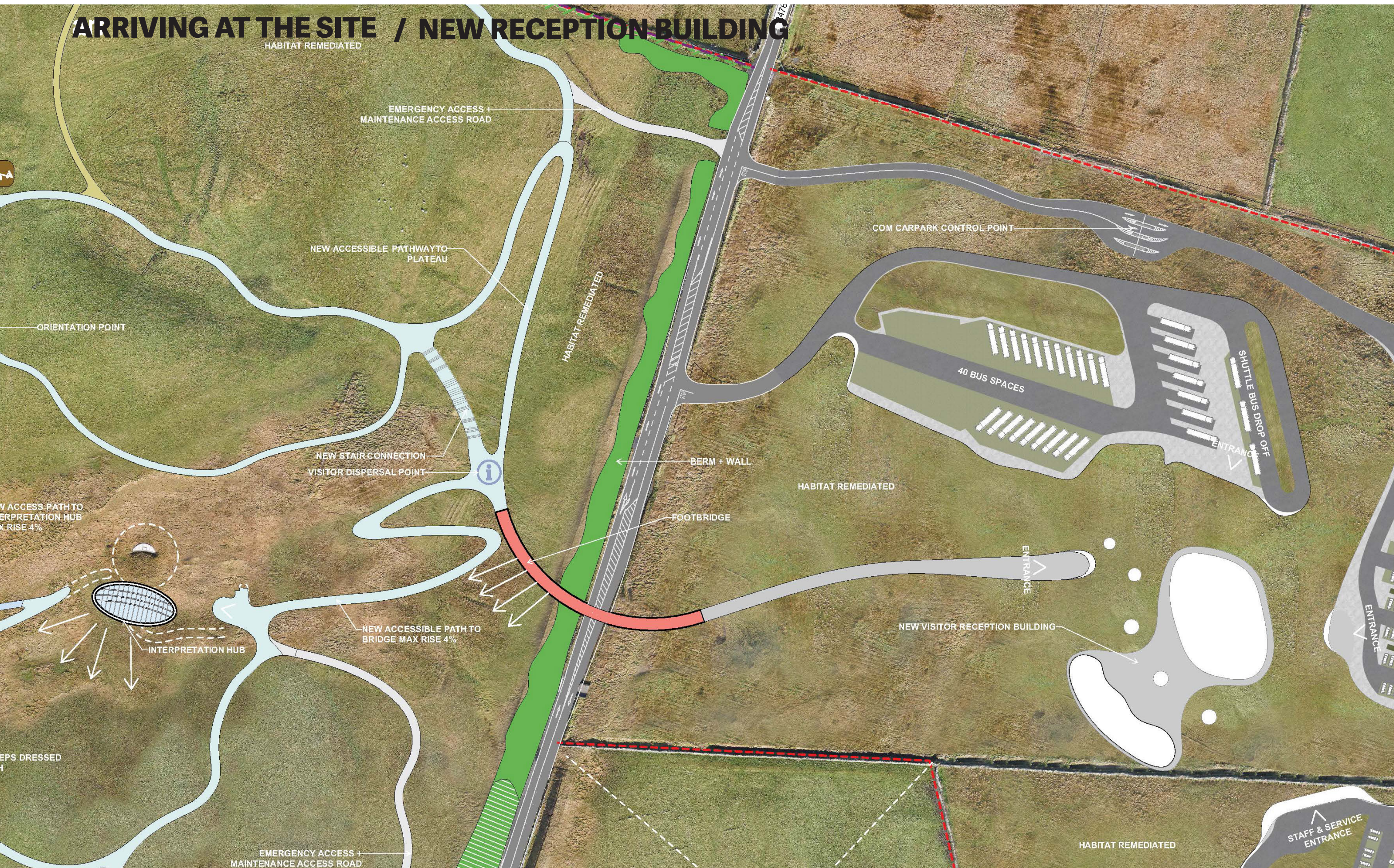
Our vision is to bring the magic of the Cliffs of Moher Experience alive, inspiring our people while caring and safeguarding the future of our natural environment.

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.





# ARRIVING AT THE SITE / NEW RECEPTION BUILDING





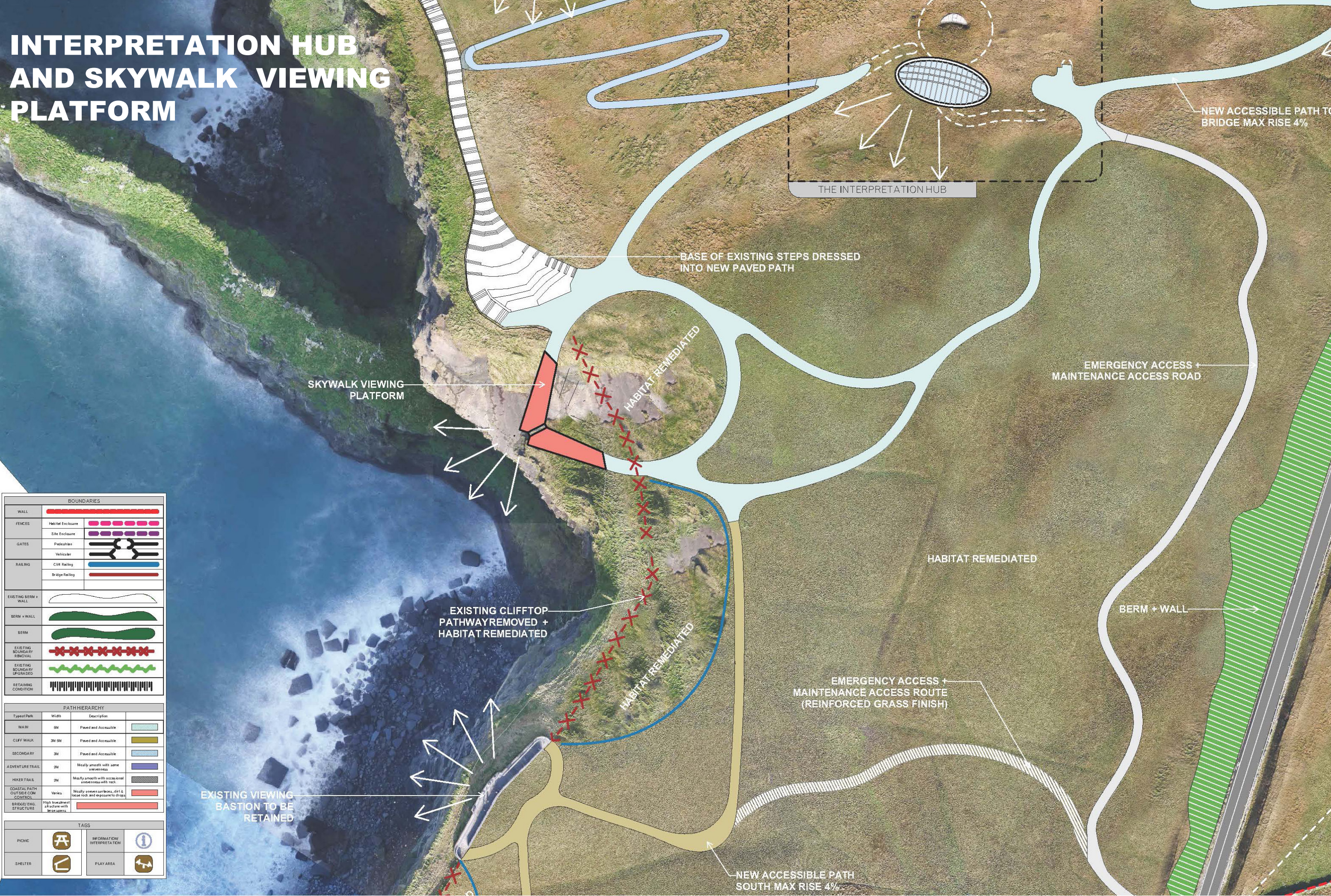
# JOURNEY TO THE EDGE

BOUNDARIES			
WALL			
FENCES	Habitat Enclosure		
	Site Enclosure		
GATES	Pedestrian		
	Vehicle		
RAILING	Cliff Railing		
	Bridge Railing		
EXISTING BERM + WALL			
BERM + WALL			
BERM			
EXISTING BOUNDARY REMOVAL			
EXISTING BOUNDARY UPGRADED			
RETAINING CONVICTION			
PATH HIERARCHY			
Type of Path	Width	Description	
MAIN	2M	Paved and Accessible	
CLIFF WALK	3M 5M	Paved and Accessible	
SECONDARY	3M	Paved and Accessible	
ADVENTURE TRAIL	2M	Mostly smooth with some unevenness	
HIKER TRAIL	2M	Mostly smooth with occasional unevenness with rock	
COASTAL PATH OUTSIDE CONVICTION	Varies	Mostly uneven surfaces, dirt & loose rock and exposure to drops	
BRIDGE / ENG. STRUCTURE		High Investment structures with steel girders	
TAGS			
PICNIC		INFORMATION / INTERPRETATION	
SHELTER		PLAY AREA	





# INTERPRETATION HUB AND SKYWALK VIEWING PLATFORM





# O'BRIEN'S TOWER AND THE WETLAND HABITAT

BOUNDARIES			
WALL			
FENCES	Habitat Enclosure		
	Site Enclosure		
GATES	Pedestrian		
	Vehicle		
RAILING	CRR Railing		
	Bridge Railing		
EXISTING BERM + WALL			
BERM + WALL			
BERM			
EXISTING BOUNDARY BY REMOVAL			
EXISTING BOUNDARY BY UPGRADE			
RETAINING CONDITION			

PATH HIERARCHY			
Type of Path	Width	Description	
MAIN	5M	Paved and Accessible	
CLIFF WALK	3M-5M	Paved and Accessible	
SECONDARY	3M	Paved and Accessible	
ADVENTURE TRAIL	2M	Mostly smooth with some unevenness	
HIKER TRAIL	2M	Mostly smooth with occasional unevenness with rock	
COASTAL PATH OUTSIDE COM CONTROL	Varies	Mostly smooth surfaces, dirt & loose rock and exposure to drops	
BRIDGE/ING STRUCTURE		High Investment structure with long spans	

TAGS			
PICNIC		INFORMATION/ INTERPRETATION	
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EXISTING VIEWING BASTION TO BE RETAINED

NEW ACCESS PATH TO INTERPRETATION HUB  
MAX RISE 4%



**ON THE PLATEAU**

**LEGEND**

**BOUNDARIES**

WALL	100m/100m	
FENCES	100m/100m	
GATES	Pedestrian	
RAILING	Vehicle	
EXISTING BERM + WALL		
BERM + WALL		
BERM		
EXISTING BOUNDARY REMOVAL		
EXISTING BOUNDARY UPGRADED		
RETAINING CONCRETE		

**PATH HIERARCHY**

Type of Path	Width	Description
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**TAGS**

PENETRATION	INFORMATION/INTERPRETATION
SHELTER	PLAY AREA

**PLAN DETAILS**

- THE TRIGONOMETRY POINT WILL BE DEVELOPED AS A 'DESTINATION' IN THE LANDSCAPE WITH SIGNIFICANT SCULPTURE FEATURE + VIEWING PLATFORM
- HABITAT REMEDIATED
- LOOPED PATHWAY
- EXISTING CLIFF WALK REMOVED
- INTERPRETATIVE FEATURE + VIEWING POINT
- SHORTCUT BACK TO BRIDGE + ARRIVALS CENTRE (ALSO EMERGENCY ACCESS + MAINTENANCE ACCESS ROAD)
- NEW CLIFF EDGE PATH
- NEW COASTAL WALK
- WETLANDS HABITAT
- PLAY EQUIPMENT
- PATHWAY THROUGH THE



# THE ESCARPMENT

EXISTING CLIFFTOP  
PATHWAY REMOVED +  
HABITAT REINSTATED

ENGINEERED VIEWING  
PLATFORM

THE PATHWAY ALONG  
ESCARPMENT EDGE  
ENJOYS DRAMATIC VIEWS  
NORTH

THIS AREA HAS BEEN  
IDENTIFIED AS CRITICAL  
FORAGING TERRITORY  
FOR THE CHOUGH

OUTLOOK POINT TO  
BURREN + NORTH CLARE

ACTIVITY AT THIS CORNER  
OF THE ESCARPMENT  
WILL ANNOUNCE THE  
EXTENT OF THE COM  
TERRITORY TO CARS +  
BUSES ON THE R478

NEW PATHWAY WILL  
INCLUDE SOME STEPS

NEW ACCESSIBLE  
PATHWAYS

EXISTING CLIFFTOP  
PATHWAY REMOVED +  
HABITAT REMEDIATED

THE TRIGONOMETRY POINT WILL BE DEVELOPED  
AS A 'DESTINATION' IN THE LANDSCAPE WITH  
SIGNIFICANT SCULPTURE FEATURE + VIEWING  
PLATFORM

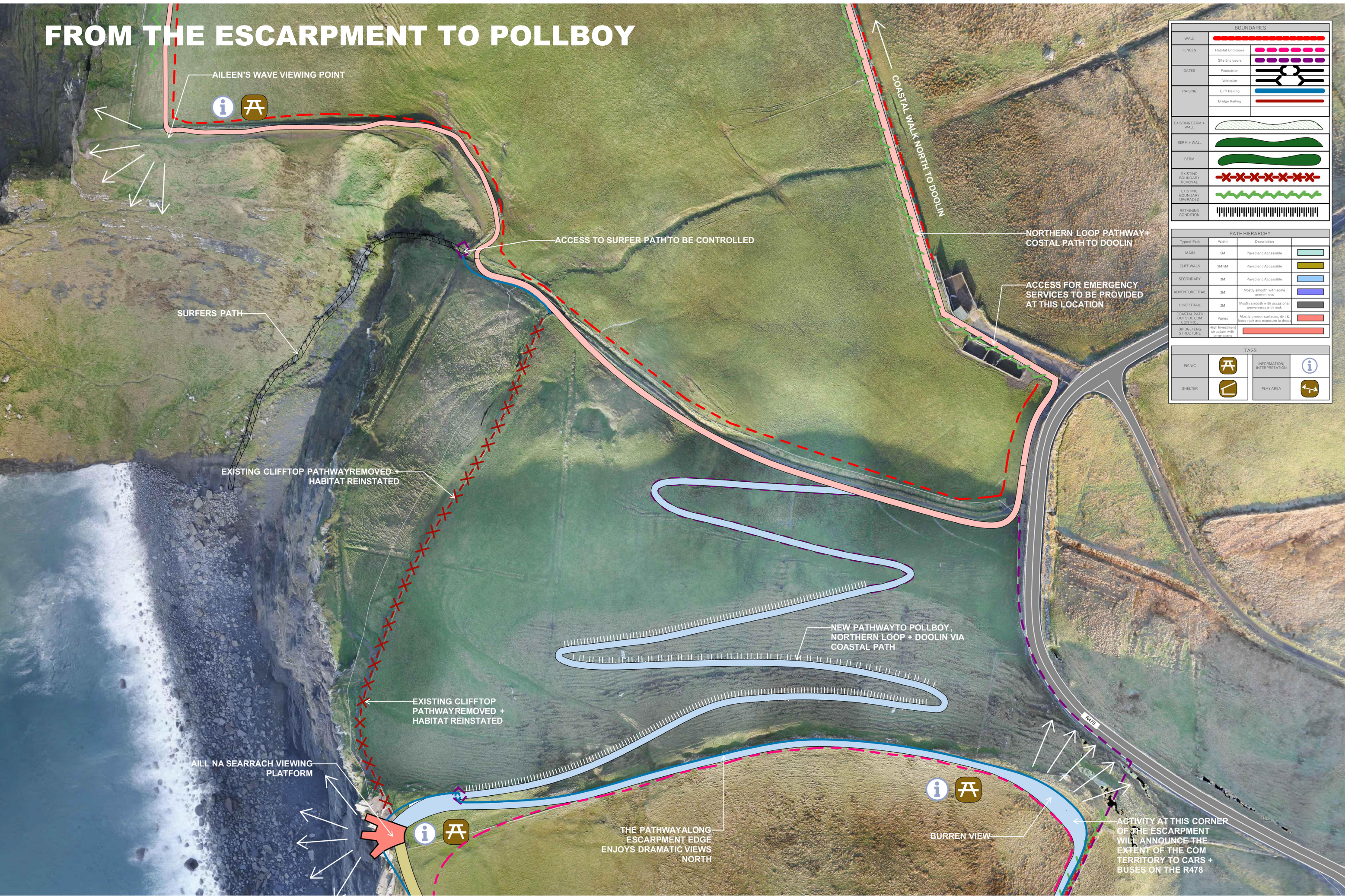
BOUNDARIES		
WALL		
FENCES	Habitat Enclosure	
	Site Enclosure	
GATES	Pedestrian	
	Vehicular	
RAILING	CMH Railing	
	Bridge Railing	
EXISTING BERM + WALL		
BERM + WALL		
BERM		
EXISTING BOUNDARY REMOVAL		
EXISTING BOUNDARY UPGRADED		
RETAINING CONDITION		

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HIKER TRAIL	2M	Mostly smooth with occasional unevenness with rock	
COASTAL PATH OUTSIDE COM CONTROL	Varies	Really uneven surfaces, dirt & loose rock and exposure to drops	
BRIDGE/ENG. STRUCTURE	High level/detail structure with large spans		

TAGS			
PICNIC		INFORMATION/INTERPRETATION	
SHELTER		PLAY AREA	



# FROM THE ESCARPMENT TO POLLBOY



BOUNDARIES		
WALL		
FENCES	Habitat Enclosure	
	Site Enclosure	
GATES	Pedestrian	
	Whiculus	
RAILING	Cliff Railing	
	Bridge Railing	
EXISTING BERM + WALL		
BERM + WALL		
BERM		
EXISTING BOUNDARY REMOVAL		
EXISTING BOUNDARY UPGRADED		
RETAINING CONDITION		

PATH HIERARCHY			
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