

BERE ISLAND
COUNTY CORK





BERE ISLAND COUNTY CORK

CONSERVATION PLAN

The Bere Island Community
with assistance from
M. C. O'Sullivan & Co. Ltd
and associated heritage consultants:
Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd, Roger Goodwillie & Associates, Ray McGinley Architects,
Department of Folklore and Ethnology (UCC)

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Dedication

*The Bere Island Conservation Plan is dedicated to the memory of
Mr John G. Harrington who was one of the main instigators of the Plan.*

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FOREWORD

The Bere Island Conservation Plan is the result of a number of years' work and co-operation between the Bere Island inhabitants, Cork County Council and the Heritage Council, all of whom are delighted to see the information it contains brought into the public domain through this publication.

Drawn together by M.C. O'Sullivan and Co. Ltd and their associated consultants through desk and field research, and public consultation, detailed results are contained in the Appendices which may be consulted by contacting the Heritage Council.

The stimulus for this Plan arose from the islanders' concern to ensure the long-term survival of their island's unique features. The significance of Bere Island, as the Plan reveals, is due to the presence of a mosaic of different aspects of its heritage, both built and natural. Since any impact on one will impact upon the others, an integrated management strategy is required.

The Plan should be viewed in the context of the Bantry Bay Charter, both in its recommendations and the process used in its drafting, with consensus as the cornerstone. Government policy, as expressed in the National Heritage Plan, emphasises the role of heritage conservation in maintaining the quality of life and the need to encourage local communities to become involved in heritage protection. This Conservation Plan provides a framework within which these policies can be realised.

The development and agreement of this Plan demonstrates the ability of local communities to work with State agencies, Government departments and local authorities in planning for the future. We hope that it will be used to inform and guide development on the island and that its implementation will see the continued co-operation of all involved.

We hope too that the Bere Island Conservation Plan and the processes involved in its preparation will mark a way forward for others by acting as an inspiration to other islands and places on the mainland as well.



Dr Tom O'Dwyer
Chairperson



Michael Starrett
Chief Executive

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Lead Consultant: M.C. O'Sullivan & Co. Ltd

Including:

- Sustainability Issues
- Infrastructure
- Waste
- Geology and Hydrogeology
- Agriculture
- Fisheries/Aquaculture/Marine

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Folklore Heritage: Department of Folklore & Ethnology (UCC)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bere Island lies approximately 1.5km off Castletownbere in Bantry Bay on the south-west coast of Ireland. The physical characteristics of the island are similar to the undulating mountainous character of the Beara Peninsula on the mainland. Land use is dominated by extensive agriculture, with species-rich peaty grasslands and heathland the predominant habitats. The waters around the island are generally sheltered and clean, supporting diverse fish communities. There has been a military presence on the island since the 18th century which has continued to the present day with the Irish army base located at Rerrin village. The economy of the island is based on small-scale extensive agriculture, fisheries/aquaculture, tourism, and employment in industries on the mainland.

The cultural heritage of the island has been largely influenced by its maritime nature and the island's strategic position at the mouth of Bantry Bay. The importance of the island's natural and cultural heritage lies not in individual sites but rather in the collection of diverse habitats and historic buildings found on the island and the lifestyle and traditions valued by the islanders.

Like many of our island communities, the Bere Island population is declining and the number of permanent residents is currently at the threshold level for sustaining a viable community. Although there is a healthy age mix among the 200-strong permanent residents, the expectations of today's youth are unlikely to be satisfied with the educational, employment and social opportunities available on the island. Significant development is required to sustain the existing population and to attract additional permanent residents if a viable and vibrant community is to remain on the island into the future.

Since the natural and cultural heritage of the island is largely unrecorded, unprotected and unmaintained, there was concern among some of the islanders that 'development' would have a negative impact on the island's heritage. Conversely, there was a perception that heritage conservation would effectively limit the potential for development on the island and thus negatively impact on the long-term viability of the island population.

From this potential conflict of interest was born the concept of a Conservation Plan for the island that would address both heritage conservation and the sustainable development of the island, taking into account the environmental, social and economic aspects of future developments. The Plan was developed by the Bere Island Community with assistance from a consortium of specialist consultants and co-funded by Cork County Council and the Heritage Council. It is not an economic development plan for the island but a framework within which any subsequent development plan should operate.

Through a process of consultation with both permanent and temporary residents, a 'Vision' for the island's future was formulated. The Bere Island Community envisage an island of the future where:

- People can live and work to their satisfaction, while being able to fulfil their social and recreational needs.

- The traditional skills and way of life are appreciated and built on.
- Economic development goes hand-in-hand with care for the environment and heritage.
- The Community has influence over what developments take place.

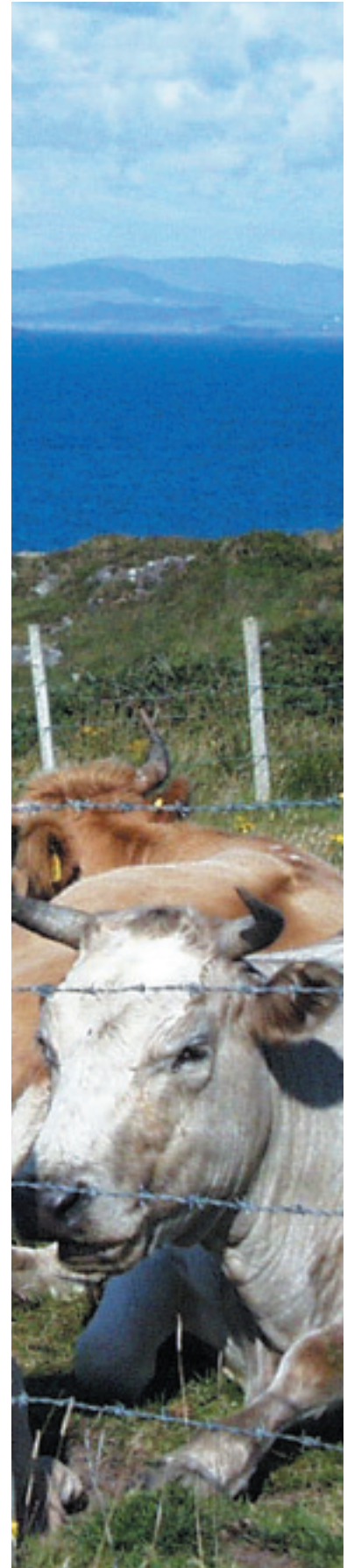
Following studies by the specialist consultants, policies and management strategies to achieve this Vision were developed and collated to form the Conservation Plan. The principal policies and management strategies, an implementation strategy and a framework for assessing the sustainability of proposed developments are included in the Plan. Detailed studies, policies and management strategies for specific heritage and development aspects are included in the Appendices.

For the purposes of the Plan, the term *conservation* is interpreted as meaning 'wise use'. The following principal policies were identified in relation to the conservation of the island's natural and cultural heritage.

- The diverse cultural and natural heritage of the island should be managed as collections of sites and habitats rather than focusing on individual sites.
- The current extensive nature of agricultural and other land use practices on the island should be maintained.
- An inshore fisheries management programme should be implemented to limit fisheries activities to within the carrying capacity of the island's waters.
- Maintenance/preservation measures should be put in place to halt the deterioration and maintain the material integrity of the archaeological and built heritage of the island.
- An interpretive centre and heritage archive should be developed to interpret and record the island's heritage for the islanders and visitors to the island.
- Islanders should be encouraged to develop a sense of 'pride of place' and personal responsibility with regard to caring for the island environment.

The principal policies identified in relation to sustainable development on the island include:

- Development should be sought across all areas of the current economy and skills base of the island, as major development in one area only is likely to be unsustainable.
- New skills should be introduced which complement traditional skills.
- The focus of tourism development should be on enjoyment of the island's natural and cultural heritage.
- A co-operative approach among farmers should be adopted; REPS (Rural Environmental Protection Scheme) type plans which treat the island as a single entity should be introduced.
- Establish a fisheries co-operative, develop a sustainable fisheries plan for the island's marine waters and apply for aquaculture/foreshore licences for the co-operative.



Principal policies identified in relation to influencing what development takes place on the island include:

- An Island Representative Body/Island Council should be formed to direct/promote sustainable development and to act as a consultative body for potential developers.
- The policies and strategies documented in the Conservation Plan should be adopted in the Local Area Plan prepared by Cork County Council.
- The sustainability of any proposed development should be assessed using the framework included in the Conservation Plan.

The Bere Island Community has approved the Conservation Plan in principle. The Plan must now be adopted by the community before it can be implemented. The exact structure of the Island Representative Body/Island Council must be decided upon by the community, funding sought and a Plan Co-ordinator appointed.

The Bere Island Conservation Plan offers both an opportunity and a challenge for the island community to take ownership of directing the future of the island.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Bere Island of today is a product of its past and a springboard for its future. The current island community has been shaped by the natural heritage of the island, the productivity of the land and the sea that surrounds it, and the patterns of conquest, settlement and emigration over previous generations. The island's natural heritage is a product of the land and fisheries management practices which have been carried out since those settlement patterns began. Any significant alteration to one element of heritage is likely to have a knock-on effect on the other elements. Thus the conservation of the Bere Island of today requires the management of all elements of its current heritage.



2. BERE ISLAND — THE PLACE

Bere Island is located in Bantry Bay on the eastern side of the Beara Peninsula in West Cork. As such, it is covered by the Bantry Bay Coastal Zone Charter (integrated management proposals for the coastal zone of Bantry Bay). The island is approximately 9.5km long by 3km wide, with the main axis of the island orientated east-west. It is approximately 18.5km² in area and lies about 1.5km offshore from Castletownbere (Figure 1).

2.1 PHYSICAL CHARACTER

This undulating island is typical of the mountainous character of the Beara Peninsula. The southern side rises steeply from the sea, the highest point being Knockanallig, while the northern side sweeps gently down to the shore. The main areas of productive land are concentrated on the northern side and the gently rolling peninsula at its eastern end. These lower areas are dominated by species-rich peaty grasslands, with well-developed heathland dominating the higher areas. On the southern side, there is a maritime influence on this heathland from salty spray. Roadside banks also provide species-rich habitats due to the lack of traffic and road widening.

There are two lakes on the island, Lough Alimin and Lomanagh Lough. The island provides a suitable habitat for a notable number of butterflies, along with birds such as the Black Guillemot, Chough (a type of crow) and Twite (a rare finch).

2.2 LAND USE

Agriculture dominates land use, with approximately 1,600 hectares available for farming. The main farming activity is animal husbandry, particularly sheep. The land quality varies from reasonable grazing to rough mountain pasture. One thousand hectares are privately owned, with the remainder in commonage. While the Department of Defence (DoD) own approximately 72 hectares, most of this land is leased to local farmers. The remainder is used for light military training, principally during the summer months. While no part of the island is proposed for a designation in terms of natural heritage protection, the island's variety and combination of habitats are considered to be of regional or county interest due to the extensive nature of current land management practices. In terms of natural heritage, the island should be seen as one unit which should be managed so as to retain all aspects of its ecology.

2.3 MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Bantry Bay is one of the deepest harbours in Europe, with Berehaven Harbour (Sound), the body of water between the island and the Beara Peninsula, providing an area of shelter for ships, fishing boats and yachts. Castletownbere is home to the largest whitefish fishing fleet in Ireland. Until 1938, the bay was used as a base for the British Atlantic Fleet; indeed the development of the island and its population have been intrinsically linked to its maritime history for many centuries.

Figure 1: Location Map



The shores and surrounding waters have good habitat diversity, with some beds of maerl (a soft white sediment, high in calcium) off the coast and the presence of many warm-water species characteristic of the south-west. Although listed as being of relatively high value in terms of marine habitats by the national BioMar Survey (a national survey of marine and coastal environments), the offshore areas adjacent to the island have not received any statutory protection. Water quality around the island is generally considered satisfactory, although some deterioration is suspected due to discharges from the Castletownbere area on the mainland and Rerrin village on the island itself.

Traditionally, the waters around the island have contributed significantly to the livelihood of the islanders, with scallops, lobsters, oysters and sea urchins the most profitable species fished. Current commercial fishery activities are based principally on aquaculture (mainly salmon), shellfish farming (abalone, scallops, urchins, rope mussels) and the harvesting of seaweed (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Rope mussel lines off the northern shore of Bere Island

The continued diversity of the waters and habitats around the island, as well as the success and sustainability of commercial fishery enterprises, are dependent on the maintenance of good water quality, sensitive exploitation of wild fisheries, and the maintenance of aquaculture developments to within the natural bearing capacity of the surrounding marine environment. (This bearing capacity has yet to be established.) The final results of a study (by Aberdeen University, in conjunction with the Bantry Bay Coastal Zone Charter) carried out to determine the harbour's water quality will go some way towards establishing a baseline of water quality around the island.

2.4 CULTURAL HERITAGE

Bere Island's cultural heritage has been largely influenced by its maritime nature and its strategic defence position near the mouth of Bantry Bay.

The island is rich in archaeological sites dating from the Bronze Age through medieval times. The majority of these consist of ringforts/cashels, often with associated souterrains, standing stones, wedge tombs and burial sites. Many of the sites can be linked by a continuing story of defence, fortification, exploitation of marine resources and the power of the sea. Individually, few of these sites would attract more than local interest. As a collection, however, the island's archaeological sites are of great interest and an amenity asset to those willing to explore the island on foot.

The architectural heritage of the island is also largely linked with the theme of defence and fortification, with the most significant buildings being those associated with a military presence on the island. The buildings date from two distinct periods: the Martello Towers of the late 18th century; and the batteries and associated buildings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Plates 2 and 3). Once again, the importance of the architectural heritage of the island lies not in individual buildings but in the collection of buildings which present the extensive and largely unique military history of the island.



Plate 2: View of Martello Tower on Clochann Hill



Plate 3: View of Derrycreeveen Battery

The island's rich folklore heritage, primarily influenced by its military history and maritime nature, has essentially been kept in the memory of its residents and expressed for the most part in the oral tradition. With the dramatic decline in this oral tradition in recent years, there is a danger that this heritage will be lost unless collected, recorded and made available on the island, as is currently taking place through the Culture 2000 project.

2.5 COMMUNITY

The current population of Bere Island is in the region of 200 permanent residents. This can treble in the summer season with the arrival of holiday-makers and the presence of army and Reserve Defense Forces personnel on training exercises at the military camp. While the permanent population has remained fairly stable over recent years, there has been a dramatic decline since the heyday of the island's military base in the mid 1800s when the population was over 2,000. This population loss reflects the national trend in the general decline in rural populations over the past centuries; the loss of the permanent full-time military base in the late 1930s also had a significant impact.

There are two main centres of population on the island: Rerrin village and harbour at the eastern end of the island, adjacent to the military camp (Plate 4); and Ballinakilla, towards the centre of the island. While the current level of population is considered viable and sustainable in terms of both community interaction and the maintenance of basic levels of services, it is essential that this is maintained. Nearly one-quarter of the current population is over 65, while a further quarter is under 16 years of age. Attractive employment opportunities on the island or in the immediate vicinity on the mainland are thus needed in the near future. This will ensure that the island's youth will remain as part of the permanent population and that new residents in the 'productive' age bracket will be attracted to the island.

Current employment opportunities on the island are based on part-time farming and fishing, small-scale tourist enterprises, and service industries such as building work. At present, 35 permanent residents commute daily to the mainland for work.



Plate 4: Rerrin Village

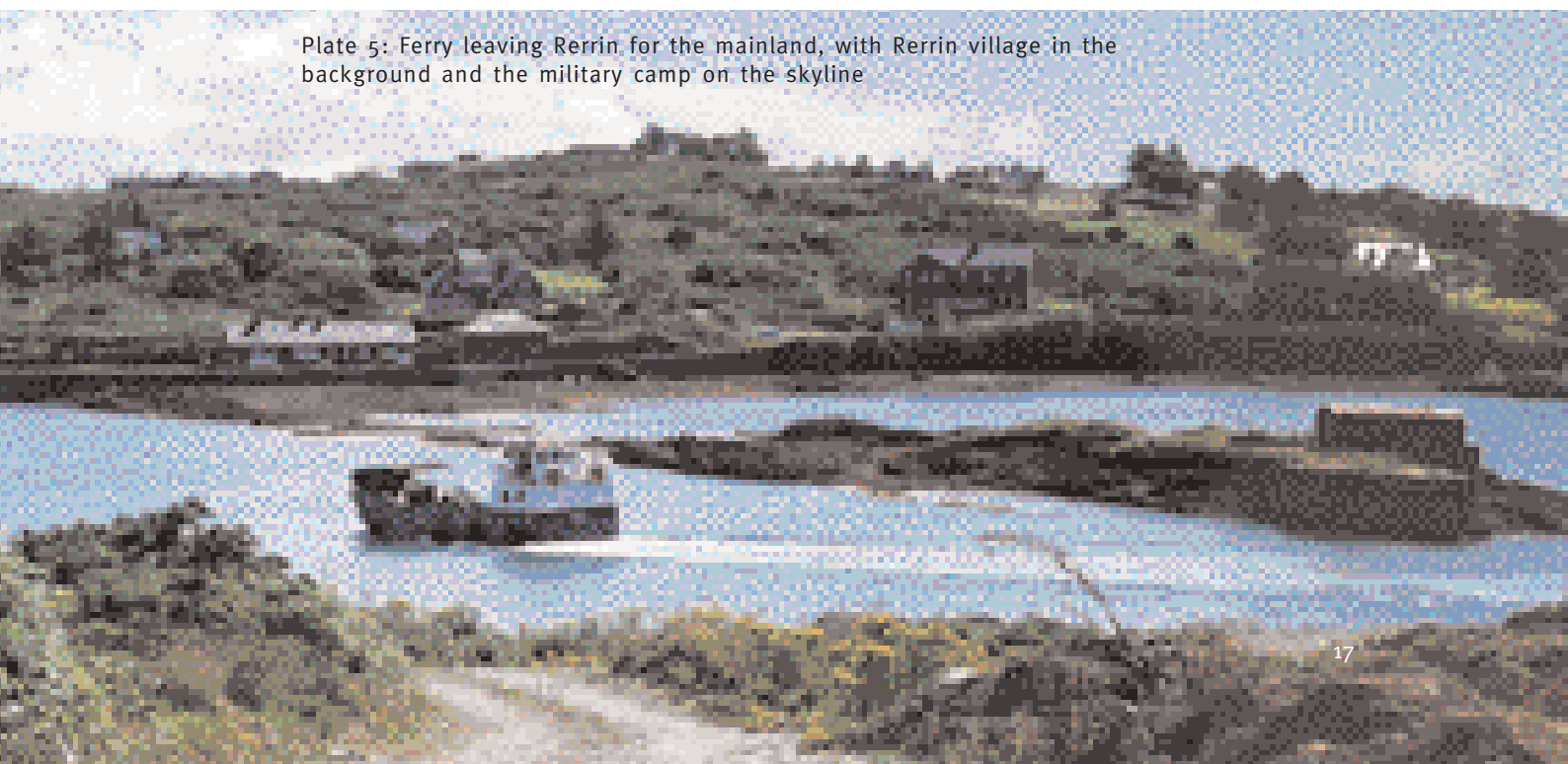
2.6 ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Access to the island is by ferry. Regular ferries run from Pontoon to Rerrin at the eastern end of the island, and from Castletownbere to Oilean na gCaorach at the western end (Plate 5). In general, the islanders feel that access to the island is satisfactory, although provision of emergency access and late-night ferry sailings which allow access to recreational opportunities on the mainland would enhance island life. Infrastructural services are generally considered to be satisfactory, although the existing wastewater and drinking water systems in Rerrin village currently operate at capacity during the summer season. Therefore any future development will need to provide its own water and wastewater facilities. While the road network is generally adequate for the traffic generated on the island, lack of maintenance is a problem. Road safety is an issue, especially in the summer with the high number of visitors' cars. Road signage, markings and passing bays are required to cater for both visitors and permanent residents.

Energy and communications facilities are considered inadequate. Broadband is necessary if teleworking is to be an employment possibility. Given that the current provision of electricity to the island is by a single submarine cable, the ESB should undertake a survey to determine the island's needs in terms of improvements to grid infrastructure.

Although health and social services facilities are generally adequate, there is room for improvement, particularly for those islanders who are less mobile. While the islanders are happy with the quality of the limited range of existing services, they see the need for a much expanded range of services: regular clinics conducted by a registered nurse; regular visits by a doctor; a health centre to accommodate other visiting professionals etc. The Southern Health Board (SHB) is in the process of producing a health plan for the island which will outline the need for this expanded range of services.

Plate 5: Ferry leaving Rerrin for the mainland, with Rerrin village in the background and the military camp on the skyline



The management of waste on the island, particularly scrap metal, is considered a significant issue.

While the level of infrastructure and the social services available on the island are not seen as limiting factors in terms of maintaining a permanent population, the lack of recreational opportunities for the youth of the island is.

2.7 DEVELOPMENT

At present, there is no integrated development plan for the island. Development occurs on an *ad hoc* basis and is generated by individual entrepreneurs or community groups. This situation is unlikely to create significant sustainable employment on the island and may lead to conflict over the exploitation of scarce resources between the different interest groups.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSERVATION PLAN

The islanders recognise that the current community is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term unless significant development can be instigated to provide employment opportunities for the youth of the island and to attract additional permanent residents. Since the islanders wish to conserve the island's rich heritage and traditions, they are therefore anxious that, as a community, they can influence if not control any such development.

To that end, the Bere Island Community, in partnership with the Heritage Council and Cork County Council, has developed this Conservation Plan. They have been assisted in its development by a consortium of specialist consultants who are listed on page 7.

Extensive public consultation was carried out with permanent and part-time residents of the island and with those statutory bodies and agencies involved with various aspects of the island.

The purpose of the Conservation Plan is to assist the community and various agencies in the following:

- Conserving the island's heritage
- Planning a sustainable future for the island
- Delivering the 'Islanders' Vision' of Bere Island's future

The term *conservation* can be broadly defined as the 'wise use' of the island's heritage, while *sustainable development* is defined as 'development which meets the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations'. Environmental, economic and social aspects must be considered when assessing whether a particular development is sustainable.

This Conservation Plan is not an economic development plan for the island. Instead, it is a framework within which any subsequent plans should operate.

4. VISION FOR THE ISLAND

The following is the Islanders' Vision of the future of Bere Island.

'The community of Bere Island has embraced this opportunity to document and plan for the future development of their island's unique human, natural and cultural resources, and to ensure their future role as a viable and vibrant island community. It is a chance for the community to work together towards the common aim of having a Bere Island of the future where:

- 1. People can live and work to their satisfaction, while being able to fulfil their social and recreational needs.*
- 2. Traditional skills and ways of life are appreciated and built on.*
- 3. Economic developments go hand-in-hand with care for our environment and heritage.*
- 4. The community has influence over what developments take place.'*



5. PROPOSED PRINCIPAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The principal policies and strategies which should be adopted in order to achieve a future for the island as envisaged by the Bere Island Community are presented here. Where possible, they are divided into the various elements of that vision. As the elements are inter-linked, however, the division of policies and strategies is not always clear-cut. This section should therefore be read as a whole.

In addition, the management strategies proposed under the Bantry Bay Coastal Zone Charter should be applied on the island where appropriate.

5.1 VISION 4: THE COMMUNITY HAS INFLUENCE OVER WHAT DEVELOPMENTS TAKE PLACE

The most important aspect in achieving the aims of this Conservation Plan is that the community must have a say in any development which takes place on the island, ensuring that it is in line with their vision for the island.

5.1.1 PROPOSED POLICIES

1. Any future development on the island will be consistent with the Islanders' Vision as documented in the Conservation Plan. It will:

- be sustainable
- build on (traditional/existing) island skills, if possible
- provide satisfactory work opportunities for the islanders
- not conflict with the current island culture or way of life
- not harm the island's environment or the surrounding environment

5.1.2 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. An Island Representative Body/Island Council which represents all interests on the island should be formed. With members drawn from the island population, such a council will direct/promote sustainable development on behalf of the island as a whole and would be consulted about any proposed development by individual developers/proposers. (See 6.1.2)

2. Cork County Council should be lobbied to adopt policies in their Local Area Plan which have been documented in this Conservation Plan. (Local Area Plans are to be carried out in each electoral area, with work commencing on them within two years of the completion of the County Development Plan.)

3. A Life-cycle Analysis of any proposed development or grant application should be carried out by the developer/proposer. Such analyses should use Figure 2 ('Framework for assessing the sustainability of new development projects', page 35) and Appendix 9, and should then be presented to the proposed Island Council for consideration. Each analysis should include an economic assessment of the proposal as well as a social and environmental assessment, thus ensuring the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the proposal.

5.2 VISION 1: PEOPLE CAN LIVE AND WORK TO THEIR SATISFACTION, WHILE BEING ABLE TO FULFIL THEIR SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL NEEDS

5.2.1 PROPOSED POLICIES

1. Maintain and, where possible, increase the permanent population on the island and maintain the current mixed-age profile.
2. Access is required to improved training and employment opportunities if people are to be able to work to their satisfaction. (See 5.3)
3. Maintain and increase the existing level of services on the island, particularly medical, social, emergency and recreational facilities.
4. The current level of access to the island must be maintained, with increased frequency during off-peak hours and provision of access in emergency.
5. Affordable housing for all existing and future permanent residents should be available, including social/council housing, if required.
6. All other things being equal, precedence should be given to planning applications for dwellings submitted by existing and potential permanent residents. Preference should be given to those applications which seek to renovate existing/deserted properties.
7. Roads should be sufficiently maintained and adequately signed to provide a safe network for use by both islanders and visitors.

5.2.2 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. As a body, the island community should promote and co-ordinate development on the island in line with the policies adopted in the Conservation Plan.
2. Regular meetings of island representatives and Cork County Council planning officials should be established. Such meetings should clarify planning policies and the planning process, and provide for an exchange of views with regard to planning issues on the island.
3. Through measures such as Culture 2000, a sense of belonging, ownership and civic pride should be encouraged, especially among the youth. Educational programmes and events/projects celebrating the heritage and unique aspects of island life should be developed.
4. Develop emergency-response capabilities on the island, particularly in relation to fire-fighting, transport and other facilities for medical emergencies.
5. The promise of funding for the installation and maintenance of a helicopter pad from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (formally the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands) should be followed up.
6. In the coming years, seek commitment and funding to improve medical, emergency and recreational facilities, including the implementation of the Southern Health Board (SHB) Islands Plan.

5.3 VISION 2: TRADITIONAL SKILLS AND WAYS OF LIFE ARE APPRECIATED AND BUILT ON

Farming, maritime activities (fishing, aquaculture and boat-building/repairs) and tourism are the major traditional skills on the island. While every effort should be made to generate employment in these areas, a major development in any one of them is unlikely to be sustainable (socially, economically or environmentally) in the long term. Thus, development/employment opportunities need to be generated across all these skill bases, with new skills introduced which complement traditional skills and which are in keeping with the island's way of life. It should be remembered that development in one skill area can have a positive knock-on effect on another area.

5.3.1 PROPOSED POLICIES FOR AGRICULTURE

1. Farming should be carried out in a sustainable manner which will provide aesthetic, environmental, economic and social benefits to the island community (Plate 6).
2. The current extensive approach to farming on the island should be maintained.



Plate 6: Cattle on the eastern side of the island

5.3.2 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR AGRICULTURE

1. Develop a co-operative approach among farmers by introducing a REPS-type plan which is specifically tailored to meet the island's unique needs. Such a plan would treat the island as a single entity, incorporating all the farms on the island. (See also 5.4.2 [1])
2. Develop the 'organic' and 'traditional' aspects of farming currently practised. Promote the 'island status' of the farms by marketing and branding their products. Re-instatement of traditional skills such as butchering and butter-making should be investigated.

5.3.3 PROPOSED POLICIES FOR MARITIME ACTIVITIES

1. Fishing and aquaculture activities should be carried out in a sustainable manner. This will ensure the continued ecological diversity and health of the marine environment around the island which supports these activities.
2. Fisheries and aquaculture opportunities should be fully exploited within the sustainable carrying capacity of the marine ecosystem for the benefit of the island economy.
3. Boat-building and repair facilities should be developed, where viable and sustainable.

5.3.4 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR MARITIME ACTIVITIES

1. Develop a co-operative approach among fishermen by commissioning and implementing a sustainable fisheries plan for the island's marine waters, and by applying for community aquaculture/foreshore licences.
2. The plan should include recommendations on the following:
 - The carrying capacity of the island's marine waters
 - The development of sustainable aquaculture enterprises (scallops, sea urchins, lobsters, rope mussels, seaweeds)
 - Shore angling and deep-sea fishing opportunities
 - Put 'n' take freshwater fisheries
 - Tank aquaculture on land using sea water
 - Applications for community aquaculture/foreshore licences
3. An assessment of the potential for developing the island's boat-building and repair facilities should be undertaken by interested parties, in consultation with relevant statutory agencies/bodies.

5.3.5 PROPOSED POLICIES FOR TOURISM

1. Sustainable tourist development, based on the promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of the island, should be promoted to contribute to a balanced economy.



Plate 7: Recreational activities at the pier in Rerrin, with Lawrence Cove Marina in the background

5.3.6 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM

1. Depending on the structure of the Island Council, consider establishing a Special Interest Group (e.g. the Tourism and Environmental Committee) as part of the Island Council (see 6.1.2) which promotes and co-ordinates all tourism development. This body would have the authority to assess the sustainability of any proposed tourist development and would ensure that tourism is developed for the benefit of the island as a whole.
2. Conduct a survey to discover the requirements/expectations of existing and potential tourists to the island.
3. Draw up an Integrated Sustainable Tourist Development Plan, taking cognisance of the 'Islanders' Vision'. This would be based on survey results and should make recommendations on the following:
 - The range and geographical spread of accommodation required on the island.
 - Methods of financing, promoting and sustaining accommodation developments, including new categories of accommodation and with special consideration given to island-providers.
 - Promote the island as an eco-tourism destination, with tourist activities based on the enjoyment of the island's natural and cultural heritage (Plates 7 and 8).
 - Develop a guidebook which promotes the archaeological and historical heritage of the island and highlights its diverse natural heritage. The guidebook should also include walking routes, tourist activities and facilities etc.
 - Obtain access to heritage sites through negotiation of rights-of-way with the military and other landowners.
 - Consider transport facilities for tourists which minimise the use of cars and preserve the 'unspoilt' atmosphere of the island.



Plate 8: Lawrence Cove Marina provides berths and facilities for some 40 yachts

5.4 VISION 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS GO HAND-IN-HAND WITH CARE FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

The importance of the island's natural and cultural heritage lies not in the importance of individual sites but in the collections of the diverse habitats, archaeological sites and historical buildings found on the island. Policies and strategies must therefore be developed for conserving these collections rather than focusing on the conservation of individual sites.

5.4.1 PROPOSED OVERALL POLICY

1. The island's natural and cultural heritage should be conserved for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations, both residents and visitors, through a series of appropriate measures such as the following:

- Promote individual responsibility for the consequence of actions.
- Provide for the sustainable management of natural resources, including waste management.
- Provide statutory protection for buildings and monuments, where appropriate.
- Introduce measures to halt any further deterioration of the fabric of buildings or monuments.
- Interpret the island's heritage to reinforce an island identity.
- Establish sustainable promotion of the island's heritage as a tourist attraction.
- Develop a full inventory of buildings etc. of importance and maintain a status report in relation thereto.

5.4.2 PROPOSED POLICIES SPECIFIC TO NATURAL HERITAGE

1. Conserve the diversity of habitat and species on the island by maintaining the extensive nature of agricultural practices and other current land uses. Efforts should be made to balance grazing pressures on the island, particularly in upland commonage where some over-grazing has been noted (Plate 9). Grazing and other cropping methods should be encouraged in those lowland areas which are currently showing signs of neglect. (See 5.3.2 [1])



Plate 9: Closely grazed grassland at Shee Head

2. Conserve the marine environment around the island by implementing an inshore fisheries management programme. This should limit fishing and aquaculture activities to within the carrying capacity of those waters. It would also limit discharges to these waters from land-based or floating activities. Such management programmes are currently being co-ordinated by BIM (Bord Iascaigh Mhara) in seven inshore fisheries around the Irish coast. In the interest of the conservation and rational exploitation of fish stocks, and pending a review of the state of stocks and levels of fishing activities, no new fishing licences for bivalve molluscs have been issued by the DoMNR (Department of Marine and Natural Resources) since 1999. (See 5.3.4)

3. Disposal of wastewater from facilities on the island or the mainland must not jeopardise/impair the marine environment around the island or any sustainable uses of those waters.

4. All wastewater generated on the island and in surrounding areas must be treated appropriately before disposal to the marine or groundwater environment.

5. The islanders should adopt the principles of the National Strategy for Waste Management (*i.e.* reduce, reuse, recycle, safe disposal) with support from Cork County Council and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

6. The islanders should acknowledge their own individual responsibility by ensuring that the waste they generate is managed in an appropriate manner. Structures to facilitate any initiatives need to be put in place as soon as possible.

5.4.3 PROPOSED POLICIES SPECIFIC TO CULTURAL HERITAGE

- 1.** Conservation measures aimed at halting any further deterioration of the fabric of the island's cultural heritage should be put in place. These should retain the material integrity of the archaeological and built heritage sites noted in this Conservation Plan.
- 2.** Any conservation of heritage should satisfy statutory requirements, particularly current building regulations and health and safety legislation. This would apply especially where military batteries are concerned and where these buildings are intended for public access.
- 3.** Preservation mechanisms should be investigated and, if deemed suitable, should be put in place to safeguard such heritage as: the military batteries, other military buildings, Rerrin village, and certain civilian buildings. These mechanisms should include listing buildings as 'protected structures' under current conservation legislation, if not already listed.
- 4.** The military batteries on Bere Island should be viewed as forming a collective whole in telling the military story of the island and should be preserved as such. Similarly, the archaeological heritage of the island should be viewed as a collective whole.
- 5.** Activities which can affect archaeology (including farming, fishing, construction and current tourism) and the ways in which they might affect it should be identified. Residents must be aware of all of the constraints relating to archaeology as set out in National Monuments legislation and should know whom to contact for information.
- 6.** The feasibility of establishing a Community Oral History Archive on Bere Island should be investigated. The archive would function as both a repository and a research facility for material of specific traditional and historical heritage value. Work has already begun on such an archive through involvement in Culture 2000.
- 7.** Conservation planning for the heritage of Bere Island should be linked with policies and planning for tourism. The island's military history, archaeology and folklore present a positive educational opportunity (Plate 10).
- 8.** The conservation, interpretation and promotion of the island's heritage must be carried out in a sustainable manner. It should have the approval of the island's landowners regarding any access issues. (See 5.3.6)



Plate 10: Standing Stone, Ballykilla, taken from the south-east

5.4.4 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. Depending on the structure of the Island Council, consider establishing a Special Interest Group as part of the Council which will promote the conservation and interpretation of the island's heritage. This group should also address the 'environmental protection' brief as it is intrinsic to protecting the natural heritage. It should network with agencies and local interests concerned with natural and cultural heritage in the Bere Island area, including networks established by the Bantry Bay Charter. This might include networking with non-resident islanders via the Bere-L-List on the internet (<http://lists.rootsweb.com>).

2. The Special Interest Group should develop a programme which identifies and prioritises the implementation of measures relating to heritage conservation on the island. Priority issues should include the following:

- Through consultation with the DoD, resolve the current issue regarding access to the island's military buildings and investigate possible ownership transfer (e.g. from the DoD to Cork County Council/Dúchas/Island Council) which would afford the best protection and conservation funding for this collection of buildings. The Lonehort Battery should be studied in more detail, if access is possible, and prioritised in terms of conservation planning.
- Resolve current issues regarding access to archaeological sites, walking routes and scenic areas around the island. (See 5.4.3 [8] and 5.3.6 [3])
- Disseminate existing guidelines for heritage protection throughout the island with regard to land use, development and access. These should include: guidelines/regulations relating to the protection of National Sites and Monuments produced by Dúchas; and guidelines on developing walking routes devised by the Heritage Council and Sports Council covering access, land use, ecological heritage and the principles of extensive farming. The Heritage Council and Dúchas should be consulted about tailoring these guidelines to the island environment.

3. Interpret the island's heritage for both islanders and visitors.

- An Interpretative Centre and Heritage Archive should be developed as soon as possible. These should hold records and inventories, and should be equipped to necessary archival standards (see 5.4.3[6]). The archive should be an active research and publication unit, with the ability to produce CD-ROMs and audio-visual material on the island's heritage; it should also conduct training workshops on the island's oral history collection. Heritage buildings such as the Martello Tower and old schoolhouse should be utilised, where appropriate, for promoting the island's heritage. Since the cost of upkeep and maintenance of such centres can be significant, commitment for long-term financing should be secured for an Interpretative Centre as a priority.
- Based on the theme of 'defence, fortification, exploitation of marine resources and the power of the sea', develop a walking route encompassing the island's diverse natural, archaeological and built heritage. The issues of access and visitor pressures must be considered when developing this route. The incorporation of the Beara Way is advisable. Signage, levels of information, advertising, notice boards etc. must be agreed with developers and landowners as in 5.3.6(3). After the first year in which the new routes/trails are established, a Tourism Impact Survey should be carried out through the Tourism and Environment Group. Subsequent surveys should take place every 2-4 years.
- Prepare a guidebook to highlight the island's heritage. (See 5.3.6 [3] and 5.4.1 [1])
- Develop a Schools' Programme which emphasises the island's heritage, using CD-ROMs, material held in the Heritage Archive and other available resources or new material developed through the archive.

4. Continue the extensive nature of agriculture and land use on the island. Some reallocation of grazing pressures from upland commonage to lowland areas would not only benefit the ecology of the upland areas but would also increase the visibility of heritage features in lowland areas.

5. With the assistance of relevant statutory bodies, conduct a survey to determine the current bearing capacity of the marine environment both in terms of its capacity to assimilate discharges and its capacity to support fishing and aquaculture activities. (See 5.4.2 [2] and [3])

Discharges and fishing/aquaculture activities should be regulated to within the bearing capacity of the marine environment. (See 5.3.4)

6. Obtain agreement from statutory bodies and NGOs to take part in a regular review of the state of the island's heritage.

7. In terms of both household and industrial waste, an awareness programme should be instigated informing islanders, both individually and collectively (e.g. farming, tourism, fisheries sectors etc.) of the ways in which they can implement the national and county strategies for managing waste. Waste prevention/minimisation should be the initial focus of the island's waste management strategy. The use of home composters should be encouraged.

8. The impact of inappropriate disposal of ‘waste’ items (pesticides, sewage, animal waste etc.) should be highlighted in terms of potential pollution risk, health and safety, and aesthetic aspects.

9. Islanders should be encouraged to develop a sense of ‘pride of place’ about the aesthetic character of the island. ‘Good housekeeping’ should be encouraged through the appropriate disposal of all ‘unwanted’ or unused items and through an educational campaign.

10. In order to reduce the amount of scrap cars (Plate 11) requiring disposal, the islanders need to stop the importation of such cars from the mainland. A number of strategies are proposed.

First, they should instigate an awareness programme highlighting the aesthetic impact of these wrecks, as well as the safety aspects associated with inappropriate disposal and driving un-roadworthy cars.

- Peer pressure should be exerted on individuals who import and abandon cars.
- The Island Council could ask for a deposit from those islanders who bring cars onto the island. This could be returned when the car is finally removed or used to off-set the cost of removing cars from the island.

The islanders must address this issue as a matter of urgency and should devise an agreed methodology to minimise the dumping of scrap cars on the island.

11. Cork County Council should be asked to assist the islanders in the implementation of waste management measures by: including the island in its waste initiatives; supporting the island’s waste management initiatives; and making the best use of the waste transfer station in Castletownbere.



Plate 11: Abandoned cars on the island

6. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

6.1 ADOPTION OF THE PLAN

The development of this Conservation Plan was based on widespread public consultation. Following an opportunity to review the draft plan, all islanders should be asked to approve the adoption of the final Plan.

If this Plan is to achieve its stated aims, it must be accepted fully and adopted by the vast majority of the islanders, particularly the permanent residents. Those adopting the Plan must be willing to adhere to all the policies and management strategies relevant to their circumstances — not just those which are directly beneficial to them (*i.e.* no ‘cherry picking’).

6.1.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

If the Plan can be incorporated into the County Development Plan or the Local Area Plan, Cork County Council can then implement many of its policies through the planning process. The aims of this Conservation Plan are thus more likely to be achieved. The islanders themselves must drive the Plan’s implementation.

6.1.2 ISLAND REPRESENTATIVE BODY/ISLAND COUNCIL

The appointment of a central Island Representative Body/Island Council is essential for the successful implementation of the Conservation Plan. Among other things, this body will: administer and review the proposed strategies; liaise with Cork County Council and other statutory bodies on behalf of all the islanders; review development proposals and assess their sustainability. Since this body must be representative of all interests on the island, it might be formed from existing (*e.g.* the Tourism and Environmental Group) or new groups which represent the various aspects of the island community: community development, agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, tourism, heritage and environment. The structure of the body will depend on the agreement of all permanent residents and will require much further investigation.

A structure which reviews planning applications and grants, and which assesses/reviews the sustainability of proposed developments on the island should be put in place. Such a structure should represent all island interests and should seek agreement from Cork County Council that it will be consulted about any planning applications for the island. (A detailed framework for assessing the sustainability of proposed developments is included in Appendix 9. It is also summarised here in Figure 2, page 35.)

The Island Representative Body should draw up an implementation programme for the policies and management strategies suggested in this Conservation Plan, with priority given to establishing the structures mentioned above. It should initiate contact with the various statutory bodies and initiate public awareness campaigns.

Implementation of specific policies and strategies should be delegated to the relevant interest groups noted above. As a minimum, the representative body and interest groups should hold annual review meetings with the island community.

6.1.3 PLAN CO-ORDINATOR

A Plan Co-ordinator should be appointed. He/She will: assist with the implementation of the management strategies adopted by the different interest groups; liaise with these groups; ensure that the implementation of the Conservation Plan is fully integrated; co-ordinate funding etc.

6.1.4 REVIEW

The implementation of the Conservation Plan should be reviewed on a regular basis and measured against the agreed implementation programme. Reviews should be carried out on a six-monthly basis for the first year and thereafter on an annual basis. Reviews should involve the Plan Co-ordinator, the Representative Body (including the various interest groups), statutory bodies and funding agencies.

7. FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It will be necessary to establish whether a proposed development will contribute to the sustainable future of the island community or whether it will have a detrimental impact on the island's heritage and resources. Figure 2 (page 35) shows a model which may assist in the assessment of sustainable development on the island. Ideally, Steps 1 to 3 should be carried out by the developer/proposer and presented to the Island Representative Body. (For the purpose of explaining Figure 2, an example of how the model should be used is given in Appendix 9. In the example, the sustainability of a proposed hotel development in Rerrin is examined.)

The following points outline what is involved in the assessment of sustainable development.

Step 1

Identify the type, main characteristics and location of the proposed development.

Assess whether the development is in line with the 'Vision' for the island's future.

- Will it provide permanent jobs for the islanders or will jobs created attract permanent residents to the island?
- Will the job skills required be based on existing or traditional skills on the island?
- Will the development conflict with or negatively impact on the traditional way of life on the island?
- Will the development be sustainable in the long-term: *e.g.* is it financially viable?
- Will the development enhance or impair the island's environment or heritage? (Refer to the following steps.)

Step 2

Identify the characteristics of the development in terms of any potential positive or negative impacts on the island's environment or heritage due to: emissions and discharges (including solid waste); land take or use of resources and infrastructure. It is important to consider temporary and permanent impacts at all phases of the development, including:

- Construction
- Operation
- Decommissioning

Step 3

Evaluate the overall sustainability of the development in terms of its:

- positive or negative impact on the environment and heritage of the island
- impact on infrastructure and resources
- creation of employment
- compliance with the 'Islanders' Vision' for the future

If negative impact/s are identified, the developer should be asked to propose measures to neutralise/minimise the impact.

Step 4

Based on the above steps, a decision can be made as to whether the proposed development is considered sustainable in the context of Bere Island and the 'Islanders' Vision' for its future.

Figure 2: Framework for assessing the sustainability of new development projects

