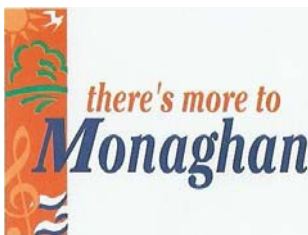


AUDIT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN COUNTY MONAGHAN

2007-2013



August 2007

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Appendix 1 – Written Submissions

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

This document presents an assessment of the tourism development opportunities for County Monaghan for the 2007-2013 period. The assessment is based on an extensive consultation programme with the public, private and voluntary sectors, as follows:

- Joint consultation between officers of Monaghan County Council and Monaghan County Enterprise Board (including Monaghan Tourism) and representatives of the private and community sectors at a tourism strategy meeting, held on 23rd November 2006
- Fáilte Ireland's trade consultation meeting, held on 11th December 2006 at the Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan.
- Consultations with Officers from the Northern and Eastern Regional Fisheries Boards
- Consultation with Monaghan County Councillors
- Written submissions invited by Monaghan Tourism, through local press adverts and by mailshot, on tourism project proposals for the county. A total of 32 submissions were received (Refer Appendix 1).

In addition to the above, a review of various strategies, reports and feasibility studies of relevance has been undertaken. The documents examined include:

- Draft Monaghan County Development Plan 2006-2012
- Monaghan Integrated Strategy for the Social, Cultural and Economic Development of County Monaghan 2002-2012
- Clones Regeneration Strategy 2001
- Socio-economic Study of the Ulster Canal (April 2006)
- Proposed Canoeing Centre (Ballybay) – Stage One Feasibility Study (September 2005)
- Tourism Product Audit of Cavan-Monaghan 2000
- Blackwater Catchment Rural Development Strategy 1997

In addition, potential sources of funding have been examined and are summarised in section 4. These include

- National Development Plan Funding (through Fáilte Ireland)
- PEACE III funding
- Interreg IV funding
- Cavan/Monaghan Rural Development LEADER funding

The primary purpose of this document, compiled by Monaghan Tourism, is to provide an audit of tourism development opportunities and proposals which exist, which are being developed and which may have the potential to be implemented over the 2007-2013 period, subject to the usual statutory consents and viability assessments. These opportunities comprise proposals from the statutory, voluntary/community and private sectors. The proposals outlined in this document are not intended to be exhaustive, and it is anticipated that further proposals will come forward over the next seven year period. Chapter 4 of this document also provides a summary of potential

sources of funding, under which these proposals may be considered. Monaghan Tourism will continue to act in a facilitation role, through advising and signposting project promoters to appropriate sources of professional advice and guidance and to potential sources of funding.

2. TRACK RECORD

Monaghan Tourism has been successful in securing and managing funding for a range of tourism and leisure projects in the County for the past number of years. Many of these projects are being managed on a cross-border basis, with local authority partners in other border counties and in Northern Ireland. Monaghan Tourism will continue to adopt this co-operative approach to the delivery of tourism projects where opportunity exists and as deemed appropriate.

Recent examples of projects, which Monaghan Tourism has and is playing a central role, are:

- **INTERREG IIIA – Priority 1 Measure 1 - Business and Economic Development**
 - Village enhancement projects
 - Festivals and events
 - Visitor Servicing Initiative

- **INTERREG IIIA - Priority 1 Measure 4 - Rural Initiative**
 - *Promoting Pride in Our Villages* – a small-scale investment programme in across the County's villages.

- **INTERREG IIIA - Priority 1 Measure 4 - Rural Initiative**
 - Improving access to historic sites
 - Enhancement of walking and recreational amenities
 - Heritage tourism project comprising signage programme at key historic sites and associated heritage marketing programme

- **Peace II – Measure 5.2 - Improving Cross Border Public Sector Coordination**
 - Short breaks campaign targeting the Great Britain market – Spring 07-Autumn 08, in conjunction with the Armagh Down Tourism Partnership and Tourism Ireland

3. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES – COUNTY MONAGHAN

3.1 OVERVIEW OF COUNTY MONAGHAN TOURISM PRIORITIES

From the perspective of tourism development opportunities for County Monaghan, the development of a number of flagship projects is viewed as a particular priority. These flagship projects include:

- **Ulster Canal:** direct investment in and encouraging investment in the Canal side tourism product
- **Canoe Watersports Centre:** to include a training and competition area on the Dromore River system and a canoe trail from Ballybay to Fivemiletown.
- **Lough Muckno:** Development of an outdoor regional recreation centre
- **All-Weather, activity/adventure centre:** targeting the family market and to be developed and managed by the private sector

Beyond the above flagship projects, further targeted investment is required in:

- **The Walking Product:** focused on extending existing routes, the provision of additional looped walks, trail infrastructure and walking festivals
- **The Soft Adventure Product:** including the relocation and redevelopment of the Tanagh Outdoor Education Centre to the Dartrey Estate and provision of signed walking, cycling and equestrian trails, angling facilities and provision of a leisure centre and swimming pool. Both Rally School Ireland and Irish Country Quads are seeking to improve the facilities available to visitors.
- **The Equestrian Product:** centred on the development of a network of off-road cross-border horse riding trails in the Sliagh Beagh area.
- **The Angling Product:** centred on habitat restoration, improving access and enhancing infrastructure at angling waters.
- **The Built Heritage:** to include town and village enhancements and a series of themed heritage trails in the county's towns and historic villages, using latest technologies
- **Heritage, Environmental and Rural Culture Attractions:** providing opportunities to invest in existing and new opportunities to showcase the County's heritage, environmental and rural culture assets and improving access to sites of historic significance
- **The Arts & Culture Product:** with a particular opportunity for investment in theatre facilities for Clones, as part of a mixed-used scheme for the redevelopment of Clones Courthouse and also within Monaghan town.
- **Festivals and Events:** seeking opportunities to raise the profile of the County, create bednights and visitor spend and extend the tourism season through the development of the festival and events calendar. The establishment of a Festivals Network for the County will also be considered.

- **Website Development:** continuous investment in the Monaghan Tourism website to ensure this meets the needs of users
- **Training:** Gearing up with industry with a particular focus on customer care training

3.2 FLAGSHIP TOURISM PROJECTS

3.2.1 The Ulster Canal

The feasibility of re-opening the Ulster Canal is currently under consideration. The Canal which linked Lough Erne to Lough Neagh was opened in 1841, and is 58 miles long. If re-opened the Canal could bring significant economic, environmental and social benefits to County Monaghan particularly to the towns and villages of Clones, Smithborough and Monaghan itself.

The Ulster Canal Socio-Economic Study 2006 identifies the potential for various Canal side developments including those associated with walking, cycling, angling and improving access from the Canal to existing visitor attractions. Monaghan Tourism through Monaghan County Enterprise Board, Monaghan County Development Board and Monaghan County Council will play a central role in the development of the proposed Masterplan, which aims to identify and present all the corridor development opportunities and proposals associated with the Ulster Canal restoration, including private sector development opportunities.

The merit of hosting a tourism conference in the County eg on the Ulster Canal, may be considered for the future.

3.2.2 Canoe Watersports Centre (Ballybay)

A feasibility study (with support from Irish Canoe Union and the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland) to assess the potential for developing a canoe training area, competition area, and artificial international white water course on the Dromore River (a tributary of the Erne System) in Ballybay, was undertaken in 2005. The next stage of the feasibility process is to undertake a detailed design and cost plan. The Canoe Watersports Centre will complement the development of the Ballybay Wetlands Centre.

In addition, the development of a canoe trail from Ballybay to Fivemiletown via Rockcorry, Cootehill, Drum, Ballyhaise, Butlersbridge, Belturbet, Lisnaskea, Maguiresbridge and Brookeborough, with associated facilities has been identified. This project will be developed in a series of phases commencing with the development of a brochure, overview map and website outlining the canoe trail route. Longer term it is envisaged that information signage will be provided along the route and that the canoe trail could be expanded to include Clones, Wattlebridge and Cooneen, subject to safety inspections and river surveys.

The development of access to **Lough Egish** for rowing regattas and sailing is a complimentary development project to the Ballybay-Fivemiletown canoe trail and longer term, to the watersports centre.

3.2.3 Lough Muckno (Castleblayney)

Lough Muckno and its environs is an Area of Primary Amenity Value (designated because of its outstanding natural beauty and/or special recreational value). It covers 900 acres. The primary aim is to develop Lough Muckno as a premier tourist attraction for the area. Particular opportunities with regard to the future, sensitive development of Lough Muckno include:

- Development of infrastructure for angling (has large quantities of Pike, Rudd, Bream, Perch and Roach and some Trout) (see section 3.6.2)
- **Watersports** development including windsurfing, sailing, boating and canoeing. It should be noted that significant investment has taken place over the past three years, in the development of water based infrastructure, as part of Lough Muckno Waterski & Wakeboard Club's phased strategic development plan. The Club is bidding to host the European Waterski Championships in 2008. Further investment is now required to provide infrastructure for less abled water-skiers.
- Development of **walking routes** through Black Island Forest, at Lough Muckno

The development of this important recreational resource will require a co-ordinated multi-agency approach with the involvement of all statutory and voluntary/community sector stakeholders to ensure its long-term environmental and financial sustainability.

3.3 WALKING

3.3.1 Monaghan Way

The Monaghan Way has recently received National Waymarked Way status. The route stretches from Monaghan in the north east of the county to Inniskeen (40 miles in length) in the south east. In the short term, the following is required to ensure that the Monaghan Way is continuously enhanced:

- Development an alternative, safer approach to Castleblaney town, avoiding the main road
- Development of a series of loop walks that connect to the main Monaghan Way
- Development of en-route toilet and refreshment stops
- Development of car parks, along the route
- Development of information panels at strategic points along the route.

Over the medium to longer term, there is an opportunity to expand the Monaghan Way across other parts of county Monaghan, including Glaslough, joining up with Sliabh Beagh.

The involvement of the private sector will also be sought through potential restoration of redundant mills and other buildings of merit for use as tea rooms, museums etc (see 3.8.3).

3.3.2 Sliabh Beagh Way

The Sliabh Beagh Way is a 46 Km long waymarked distance walk. A recent detailed audit of the route revealed that sections of the Co Monaghan section of the route have fallen into disrepair. There are a series of actions to be undertaken to upgrade and improve the route for walkers.

3.3.3 The Famine Walls

The Famine Walls is a cross-border project focusing on the area around the three estates of Castle Leslie (Co Monaghan), Caledon (Co Tyrone) and Tynan (Co Armagh). The project is focused on developing a series of on-road and off-road thematic linear and looped walking and cycling trails with associated viewing points, orientation and interpretation points. A feasibility study has been conducted and Phase 1 of the project is about to commence.

3.3.4 The Knockatallon Walks

The Knockatallon area of North Monaghan, which includes four looped walks, is already well established as a walking area. Continuous upgrading and enhancement of these walks, particularly in relation to trail furniture, is required.

3.3.5 Billy Fox Memorial Park, Latton

There are further opportunities to expand the network of forest trails throughout the Billy Fox Memorial Park. Consideration is also being given to the potential for a children's play area, development of a habitat trail, historical trail (information on Billy Fox/the 'Troubles') and a sculpture trail. The proposals will be subject to further investigation and consultation with the local community and public sector agencies.

3.3.6 Walking Festivals

There are opportunities to raise the profile further of existing walking festivals and to expand the range of walking festivals hosted in Co Monaghan. Some of these festivals are managed on a cross border basis. Examples include the Slieve Gullion/Castleblaney Walking Festival, the Sliabh Beagh Walking Festival and the Knockatallon Walking Festival.



3.4 SOFT ADVENTURE



The relocation of the Tanagh Outdoor Education Centre to the Dartrey Estate, near Rockcorry represents a particular opportunity to develop County Monaghan's soft adventure tourism product. The aim is to

provide a range of participative activities ranging from kayaking, abseiling, orienteering and night hikes to archery, canoeing and climbing walls. The project promoter is the County Monaghan Vocational Educational Committee.

Dartrey Forest, part of the Estate, also lends itself to the development of walking, cycling and themed heritage trails and associated visitor infrastructure such as seating, toilets and signage. The development of angling facilities and equestrian trails are also envisaged. Proposals for this site, which straddles the Monaghan/Cavan border, also include a leisure centre and swimming pool along with outdoor playing facilities. Cootehill Chamber/Area Development Ltd, the project promoters, plans to acquire the required land from Coillte.

Meanwhile, Rally School Ireland in Scotstown are seeking to extend and expand the range of facilities they have on offer in order to accommodate other activities, predominantly to develop the 'thrills' aspect of the rally experience.

As the current National Motorsport Coaching & Training Centre, initial proposals for further development centre upon becoming a cross-border driver training institute.

In addition, Irish Country Quads at Inniskeen are giving consideration to enhancing and extending their range of facilities including:

- Construction of a complex to include catering facilities
- Provision of proper fencing, security system i.e. alarm, CCTV, yard lights and new signage
- Replacement bridges on the quad trail
- Construction of garage including maintenance equipment
- Equipment for doing repairs on the quad trail
- Conversion of old cottage into self-catering holiday home

The opening of the 18-hole Christy O'Connor designed golf-course at Concra Wood, Castleblayney in Spring 2008 will be a major boost to the golfing product in Monaghan and there are plans to further enhance the development by the provision of a Clubhouse and accommodation facilities in the future.

Interest has also been registered in the development of a gymnastics training facility, with the possibility of this being based at Lemaculla. Olympic gymnastics is reportedly a popular activity in the Monaghan, Cavan, Fermanagh region with numerous clubs through this area. Indeed, national level competition as well as gymnastics training camps have been hosted here. Such a facility may also be used for other community activities.

Given the nature of this proposal, a sport or community scheme may be the most appropriate avenue to explore in terms of funding.

3.5 EQUESTRIAN TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Proposals, through a market and technical feasibility study, are being developed by British Horse Society, Ireland, for the establishment of a network of off-road, cross border horse riding trails of approximately 70km in the Sliabh Beagh area covering the counties of Monaghan, Fermanagh and Tyrone. The trails, a combination of long distance and one-day loop trails, would allow people to travel from accommodation to accommodation (eg B&B to B&B), spending a few days travelling solely on horseback. It is proposed that at the designated accommodation establishments, tourists will be able to find stabling and bedding for their horses and accommodation for the riders. Visitors to the region looking for day rides, or long distance rides will be able to be serviced by local equestrian centres. British Horse Society, Ireland aims to work with a range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies, to develop these proposals further.

There is potential to expand this concept further over the 2007-2013 period, through developing new trails and linking existing off-road equestrian trails with equestrian trails in other neighbouring counties eg Armagh. This will be the subject of further discussion and investigation.

3.6 ANGLING

Angling is one of Co Monaghan's key product strengths. However, considerable investment is required to ensure that access to angling waters and angling infrastructure is in place. Habitat restoration programmes are also required.

3.6.1 Northern Regional Fisheries Board Area

As part of the Clones Erne East Partnership cross-border angling project, the Northern Regional Fisheries Board carried out an audit of the lakes in the Clones area to determine those lakes with most potential for development. Many of the lakes in the area are what is considered 'derelict' and therefore in need of investment in facilities (e.g. paths, styles, fishing stands etc) in order to attract the angling market, particularly overseas anglers. Importantly, the Regional Fisheries Board undertook a study and the waters included below are clean with potential for good fish stocks. Considering their potential, the habitat, fish stocks, landowners' agreement and current facilities the following is a selection of waters in the Clones area which are identified for development:

- River Finn
- Dummies Lake
- Summerhill Lake
- Tirnahinch Lake
- Gortnawinny Lake.

Other waters identified for development in the Northern Regional Fisheries Board area include:

- Lough Major
- Corravoo Lake
- Dromore River
- Drumsaul Lough
- Lisnalong Lake
- Knappagh Water

This list is not comprehensive and merely provides a sample of works required.

3.6.2 Eastern Regional Fisheries Board Area

The Eastern Regional Fisheries Board has also identified a series of priority fishery projects ranging from fishery habitat enhancement to infrastructure improvements. These projects comprise the following:

- **Lake Development:**
 - Development of Emy Lake as a prime trout fishery
 - Development of a Carp fishery in the Castleblaney area (Malone's Lake)
 - Various access and angling infrastructure improvements to Muckno, Quighlough, Creevy, Killygola, Kilty and Milltown Lakes
- **River Restoration:**
 - River Blackwater: restoration required following major drainage in the 1970s to redress the consequential damage to fishery habitats. This project also aims to create salmon spawning sections and improve access for anglers.
 - River Fane: This is a well known, highly productive, salmonid fishery. The aim of this project is to develop the River Fane catchment and to continue the planting of eyed salmon eggs from the Stephenstown hatchery in Dundalk
 - Mountainwater: This is a spate river, which flows through Emyvale. Water retention is a problem during low flow periods with few holding pools to encourage fish to remain in the system. This project would involve the construction of a series of boulder weirs and the creation of pools to address this problem.

3.6.3 Monaghan County Council Angling Projects

In addition, Monaghan County Council has identified the need for improved access, through parking facilities, to the following angling lakes in the county:

- Drumsnat Lough
- Corcaghan Lough
- Greagh & Blackraw Lough
- Drumreaske (Ballinode road)
- Lough Oony



3.7 THE BUILT HERITAGE

3.7.1 Town & Village Enhancements

There are numerous opportunities to improve the visitor experience across the County's towns and villages. These are likely to be small scale projects involving improvements to amenity areas and car parking, the creation of viewing points, improving access to sites of historic interest, the provision of interpretation, signage and orientation points, landscaping and community festivals.

Proposals for the enhancement of the County's various towns and villages have been submitted and are presented in summary, below. These include proposals which have been submitted by Monaghan County Council's Area Engineers.

Carrickmacross

Proposals for Carrickmacross include:

- **Windmill on Gallows Hill:** The 18th century mill is currently closed to the public, as it is unsafe. It is located in the centre of a public park on an elevated site with walkways, playground etc. around it.
Plans include the following:
 - Provide staircase inside the mill and a viewing platform around it to exploit hilltop situation
 - Put cap and sails back on the mill (important visual monument for Carrickmacross)
 - Provide lighting to enhance the building
- **Magheross Church and Graveyard (16th Century):** Magheross Church was built at the time of the Reformation (1550). The graveyard contains many ancient tombstones, dating back at least to the middle of the 17th century.
The plan is to undertake the following:
 - Restoration work to the building
 - Improvement to the grounds (pathways etc)
 - Develop index of graves
 - Provide interpretative panels
- **Lisanisk Lake:** Included as part of the town's development plan is the provision of a pedestrian walk around the east side of Lisanisk Lake. The land is at present in private ownership but the expectation is that this will be in public ownership by 2009. The plan is to extend the walkway around the back of the lake to link up with the existing pathway.

Castleblayney

- Castleblayney Tourist Association Committee is developing proposals in conjunction with trade organisations, associations, clubs and societies for the development of tourism facilities in the town. Initial plans include:
 - The development of a landmark building, eg the **Market House**, as a focal point for providing information to visitors to the town. Information that could be included would be on agricultural activity in the area; its history as a market town and the associated role of the Market House; and the history of the town itself.

- The development of arts, crafts, activity, spa, angling, walking and event packages in association with local providers, including accommodation providers.

Beyond this, proposals exist for the following schemes in Castleblayney:

- **Drumillard Park:** Development of a Town Park at Drumillard, Castleblayney. The site consists of 2 acres of green space and the plan would be to develop walks, tennis courts, football pitch & etc. Landscaping and picnic furniture would also be required. Phase 1 would consist of a Development Plan to include public consultation.
- **Lakeview Park:** the proposals for the Park include extending the walkway around the back of the park and developing a walkway on stilts over the lake itself. Phase 1 would consist of the formulation of a Development Plan
- **Streetscape Enhancement:** The local Tidy Towns Committee have several small proposals for general streetscape enhancements to include flower provision, street furniture & etc

Clones

Proposals outlined for Clones include:

- **Barry McGuigan Park:** This park is currently under-utilised. Clones Town Council wishes to undertake a major piece of work to ensure that the park becomes a focal part of the town. The plan is to provide the following:
 - Play area
 - Landscaping
 - Pathways & trails
 - Stone bridge over stream
- **Canopy over High Cross:** The High Cross in the Diamond is at the mercy of the elements which are adversely affecting the carvings on the cross. Clones Town Council wishes to provide a canopy over the cross for its future protection.
- **Round Tower:** The 10th century round tower is located in the centre of Clones. However, the area around the tower itself requires enhancement in terms of upgrading of pathways, landscaping etc in order to exploit the full potential of the site in terms of attracting visitors.
- **Heritage Town Designation:** Obtaining formal recognition for Clones as a Heritage Town is also an aspiration.

Ballybay

Proposals outlined for Ballybay include:

- Proposals for Ballybay include provision of a walkway around Lough Major and restoration of two old buildings in the park.

Inniskeen

Proposals for Inniskeen include:

- **Pedestrian Bridge over River Fane:** The old bridge (listed) over the River Fane is for two way traffic but is not buggy or wheelchair friendly as this is too narrow. Monaghan County Council wishes to provide a pedestrian bridge either beside, or within the vicinity of the existing bridge.
- **Inniskeen Playground:** Monaghan County Council wishes to replace play equipment in the existing public playground.

Donaghmoyne

Proposals for Donaghmoyne include:

- **Church in Donaghmoyne:** Monaghan County Council has a long term lease on this building. However, it is in a dangerous condition as the roof is coming off and funding is therefore required to do the necessary restoration work.

Errigal Truagh

- Truagh Development Association have also put forward proposals for an **internet café**, possibly housed in The Blackwater Valley community Learning, Cultural, ICT & Peace Centre and an Arts & Crafts centre at Moybridge. Improved access and Interpretation is also required at Errigal old church and ancient graveyard and at St.Mellon's Well and the Errigal Heritage Centre.

Glaslough

Proposals for Glaslough include:

- Restoration works are required at the old famine graveyard in Glaslough.

Mullan

The proposition for Mullan is multi-faceted and includes:

- Hosting 'The King of Mullan' festival in the village, in which a well-known member of the extended Mullan Clan is crowned each year
- Hosting a Mullan Clan reunion (to include Mullen, Mullin, Mullins, Mullane etc.) in the village
- Investigating the feasibility of twinning Mullan, Co Monaghan with the city of Mullan, Idaho, USA. Initial contact has been made with the Mayor of Idaho and there is understood to be interest in the twinning concept.
- The establishment of a Mullan Old Shoe Museum, reflecting the village's main source of employment from the 1920s to the 1970s ie the Mullan Mills Limited Shoe and Boot Factory; the factory building still remains.

3.7.2 Town & Village Heritage Trails

A particular opportunity exists for the development of themed heritage trails for Co Monaghan's main towns (Monaghan, Clones, Carrickmacross, Castleblaney and Ballybay) and historic villages such as Glaslough. In order to capitalise on the growing use of ICT, the aim of this project is to develop a series of podcasts which can be downloaded from Monaghan Tourism, Monaghan attractions and accommodation establishment websites and then used by visitors when in the relevant town or village. County Monaghan is part of a cross-border group, currently piloting this initiative ie through the Monaghan County Museum.

This trail concept could be broadened to include the development of touring car/bus trails to points of environmental and heritage interest across the county. This would require further detailed investigation as to its feasibility.

3.8 INVESTMENT IN HERITAGE, ENVIRONMENTAL & RURAL CULTURE ATTRACTIONS

3.8.1 Heritage, Cultural & Great Garden Attractions

Investment is required in the County's heritage and cultural attractions in order to keep pace with visitor expectations. Enhancements are likely to include investment in access to the centres, displays and visitor welcome and orientation facilities. The **Carrickmacross Lace Gallery**, the **Clones Lace Exhibition at the Ulster Canal Stores** in Clones and **the Wildlife & Heritage Centre at Clontibret** are all potential candidates for future investment. At the **Patrick Kavanagh Centre** in Inniskeen (open since 1994), the need for further investment in this attraction is highlighted by the Inniskeen Enterprise Development Group. Investment priorities include:

- Redevelopment of the exhibition
- Refurbishment and modernisation of the Gallery and to the wider Centre to allow for increased capacity for performances and events.
- Investment in the annual events programme
- Support for joint marketing with other tourism providers in the County

Failte Ireland NDP Soft Adventure/Visitor Attractions

Proposals have also being formulated for the development of heritage and tourism facilities at the **Carrickmacross Workhouse**, as part of the initial feasibility study conducted for the Farney Community Development Group Ltd. Phase I of this project, which was completed in 2003, included the development of community-based office and training facilities. Plans for Phase II – heritage and tourism facilities include:

- **Tourism Office:** The Farney Community Development Group Ltd already deal with numerous queries from overseas residents on their descendants that emigrated from the area in the mid-1800s. The Group wishes to establish further IT Links to Carrickmacross Library, Monaghan County Library, the Health Service Executive's Register of Births, Deaths & Marriages and other repositories of genealogical and historical records throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland. There may be an opportunity for the Carrickmacross Workhouse to become the genealogical centre for the County (see 3.8.3 below)
- **Museum:** focusing on the restoration of the Children's Dormitory to be used as a museum dedicated to the Great Hunger with sufficient flexibility to cater for outreach exhibitions, international delegations/receptions, schools tours etc.

Furthermore, consideration is being given to the potential relocation and development of a new purpose built building to house the **Monaghan County Museum**. The Museum, due to its relatively small exhibition area, is reportedly able to display only 10% of its Museum collection of over 50,000 objects to the general public. Restrictions on alterations to the existing building (as a protected structure) mean that the Museum is unlikely to be able to become a fully accessibility facility and the lack of dedicated parking is also cited as restricting the Museum's ability to attract more visitors. As an initial stage, a feasibility study to investigate the above and other issues is being considered.

Proposals for further development of **Castle Leslie, Glaslough** are being developed and aim to target the international and domestic day visitor market. Current plans centre on the restoration of the four-acre Italian Walled Gardens and Orangery and the Model Farm project, both of which were built in the mid 19th Century. The principal elements of each include:

- Restoration of the Italian Walled Gardens & Orangery:
 - Restoration of the principal Victorian features- terraces, Ewe Walk, glasshouses etc
 - Creation of new decorative garden features including pools, mazes, and terraces (with the involvement of Dermot Gavin.)
 - Production of flowers, organic foods and herbs in support of Castle Leslie's kitchens and Cookery School
 - Provision of a plant, garden accessory, Castle Leslie Food produce and gift retail outlet
 - Development of the orangery incorporating a tearoom and an events/banqueting/conference space.

- The Model Farm:
 - Stripping away modern accretions and refurbishing the original cut stone buildings to their original condition
 - Restoring as many of the important industrial archaeological features as is practicable (engine house, clock-tower, dovecotes, indoor railway etc)
 - Laying out the central yard as a plaza to accommodate a monthly/weekly speciality craft food 'Farmers Market'
 - Accommodating the new Castle Leslie Fine Gifts and Goodies production facility
 - Adapting the side ranges to house small artist, artisan, craft and craft food studio/production/retail units
 - Adapting the main two storey Clock Tower block to house a Heritage Centre/Border Museum that will form the focal point for the Famine Walls and Border Walks project linking the Glaslough, Tynan and Caledon villages and demesnes.

3.8.2 Showcasing Vintage Collections & Farming

Given the County's agricultural traditions, there is considerable interest in the provision of facilities for the display of vintage farming implements and vehicles. Proposals are also being formulated for the development of an open farm at Coolcooragh, Threemilehouse. The aim of this facility is to allow visitors an opportunity to interact with and learn about farm animals.

3.8.3 Industrial, Archaeological, Environmental and Genealogical Heritage

Although the County has a wealth of sites and monuments of historic interest, access to many of these is either restricted or completely unachievable. Where possible, and subject to the appropriate insurances being in place, the feasibility of improving access to such sites will be investigated.

The County Monaghan Heritage Forum, as part of a five year action plan for heritage in County Monaghan – *The County Monaghan Heritage Plan 2006-2010* has outlined the following heritage projects as being of importance in the developing the link between the county's heritage and tourism products:

- **Industrial Archaeology – Mills:** the aspiration here is for the restoration of a mill(s) across the county for use as visitor accommodation, museum, artist studios. Such sites were identified county-wide as part of the industrial heritage survey in 2006.
- **Industrial Heritage – Railways:** Following completion of a survey related to surviving railway structures (scheduled for completion in Autumn 2007), it is anticipated that there will be opportunities for the creation of walking/cycling routes and their interpretation along the former railway lines.
- **Sliagh Beagh and the Bragan Mountains** have been identified as having the potential to be conserved as a regional park, as part of an eco-tourism initiative which offers opportunities for low impact tourism, including walking and hiking, birdwatching, cycling and field studies for summer schools.
- **Environment/Wetlands:** the development of the **Ballybay Environmental Wetlands Centre** is an example of how heritage and the environmental resource can be utilised for tourism. Further development of this Environmental Centre could be assisted through funding for provision of a boardwalk, bird-hides to allow managed access to the wetlands area by visitors.
- **Architecture:** County Monaghan has a rich architectural resource both in main towns, villages and also associated with historic demesnes. Particular opportunities in this regard could include provision of a publication and trails highlighting these aspects and as a related strand, improvements to access, conservation and interpretation of some of the historic demesnes which are now in public ownership including Rockcorry and the Dartry Estate.
- **Genealogy:** The development of a genealogical centre and archive would allow a more co-ordinated approach to the availability of materials for people wishing to research their 'roots' (see 3.8.1 above). Furthermore, the production of a county map focusing solely on the location of old graveyards and burial grounds may prove a valuable resource, coupled with improved signage to many of the sites.

3.9 ARTS & CULTURE

3.9.1 Theatre Space

Plans are in place for the provision of a mixed use arts space in the Courthouse in Clones. The Courthouse, built in 1840, will undergo a programme of refurbishment and enhancement.

In addition, the Garage Theatre which has been in operation since 1993, is seeking funding for its relocation and the development of a new theatre building within Monaghan town.

3.9.2 Crafts

County Monaghan has a growing local crafts sector, but access to crafts for visitors is relatively limited. Emphasis will be placed on providing opportunities to showcase local crafts, which include ceramics, woodturning, glass and textiles, through for example the provision of gallery space, retail space and craft trails.

3.10 VISITOR ACCOMMODATION

A number of proposals have been put forward for the development of the county's visitor accommodation stock. These include:

- Development of guesthouse accommodation proposals at Scotshouse, particularly targeting the visiting friends & relatives market.
- Development of self catering holiday accommodation with associated gym facilities, near Annyalla, Castleblayney using redundant farm buildings.
- Development of 7 new self catering holiday units at Drumgole, nr Rockcorry
- Development of self catering holiday accommodation in Clones
- Further development of visitor facilities at **Hilton Park** including provision of a flexible conservatory style space to cater for large-scale indoor events, performances, exhibitions, workshops and to be used as a garden restaurant. Opportunities are being investigated in relation to the provision of additional overnight accommodation and plans are also afoot for an organic food outlet, retailing produce grown and cultivated at Hilton Park. Expansion proposals for Hilton Park also include the creation of a lakeside Eco-campsite to accommodate the education and eco-tourism market wishing to participate in nature, learning how food is grown and having the opportunity to eat food directly from the Estate.

Longer term, the aspiration is to develop the courtyard which is located to the rear of the house for additional accommodation, activities and visitor infrastructure.

3.11 FESTIVALS & EVENTS



Recognising the potential of well managed festivals and events to raise the profile of County and to create bednights, additional visitor spend and lengthen the season for tourism operators, the annual Monaghan Harvest Time Rhythm and Blues Festival is being revived and will be hosted in September 2007, for the first time in a number of years. Based on its past success, it is expected that the Festival will act as a draw for visitors from across the North West region and Northern Ireland. There may be possibilities for cross-border and trans-national (Western Scotland) links with similar themed festivals which will help to raise its profile to a wider market.

The Committee of the **St Patrick's Festival**, are seeking to improve and develop the Monaghan-based festival over the next three years ie 2008 onwards. Extensive work has already been undertaken in broadening the appeal of the event and in broadening the number and range of groups participating; future planning for this event will continue to centre on developing the range of Festival activities and participants.

Consideration is also been given to the development of a Country and Western-style festival to be hosted annually in Spring; the festival is likely to start in 2008. Interest has also been expressed in the development of American/Irish Country Music packages, with venues across Monaghan and Donegal hosting these events. It is envisaged that such Country & Western packages (to include flights, accommodation, performance entry etc.) will be targeted at consumers in the southern states of America, with the assistance of Ireland's national tourism agencies.

The Monaghan Harvest-Time Blues Festival was revived in 2007 and there are plans to run it annually thereafter. One other new addition to the Monaghan Festival Calendar in 2007 was the Flat Lake Literary & Arts Festival and the intention is to build on its success and make it an important fixture in the future.

Calls have been made for the establishment of a Festivals Network for the county (but could be expanded to include other local authority areas) to allow event organisers to meet and share, learn from and support each other. It is apparent that festival organisers face the same challenges in the running of their events. The proposed Festivals Network could, with the appropriate supports, investigate and address the following aspects of festival management on a collective basis:

- Marketing
- Insurance
- Sourcing of plant and equipment
- Sharing performers/artists
- Specialist skills workshops
- Funding including grant aid
- Professional consultancy to advise on event development

3.12 WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

Monaghan Tourism’s website will continue to form one of the central elements of marketing the county both to domestic and international visitor markets. Although significant investment has already taken place, advances in technology and the expectations of internet users, means ongoing investment in the Monaghan Tourism site will be required. This is likely to comprise interactive elements such as virtual tours of key sites of interest and downloadable podcasts of town and village heritage trails, as referred to above.

3.13 TRAINING

There is widespread acknowledgement of the importance of training for those working in the tourism industry. County Monaghan requires to ‘gear up’ to new opportunities arising from tourism and training is viewed as an integral aspect of this process. Identified training needs, which can in large part be met through the Cavan/Monaghan LEADER, relate mainly though not exclusively, to customer care training. Other industry skills training could include tourism marketing training with training in e-marketing being of particular importance.



3.14 CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

Clearly, the private sector has an important role to play in developing Co Monaghan’s tourism product. There has been recent, significant investment by the private sector, such as the 18 hole Christy O’Connor designed golf course at Concra Wood, due to open in Spring 2008 as well as significant investment at Castle Leslie including the opening of a cookery school, Spa and Hunting Lodge. Whilst the public and voluntary sector in the county fund and manage the heritage, walking and angling aspects of the product, the private sector are the primary providers of quality accommodation including large, business hotels and more specialist activities such as Rally School Ireland, paintballing, equestrian centres etc.

Beyond the potential involvement of the private sector in projects associated with the Ulster Canal and the Monaghan Way, it is believed that there is a particular opportunity in the county for a new all-weather, year round, flagship facility, catering for the needs of the family market. Given the county's growing profile as a destination catering for visitors interested in (adventure) activities, a significant scale project capable of adding to the county's activity/adventure product portfolio would be particularly welcomed, subject to the usual viability assessments and planning considerations.

Project promoters will continue to draw upon Monaghan Tourism as an initial source of information and advice regarding the development of proposals including potential funding sources.

3.15 Full-Time County Tourism Officer

Funding is required in order to ensure the continuation of the role of a dedicated Tourism Officer for Co Monaghan. In addition, the following are necessary/desirable:

- Marketing/costs
- Full-Time staff for Tourist Office

4. POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

This chapter outlines some of the primary sources of funding available over the 2007-2013 period.

4.1 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – FÁILTE IRELAND

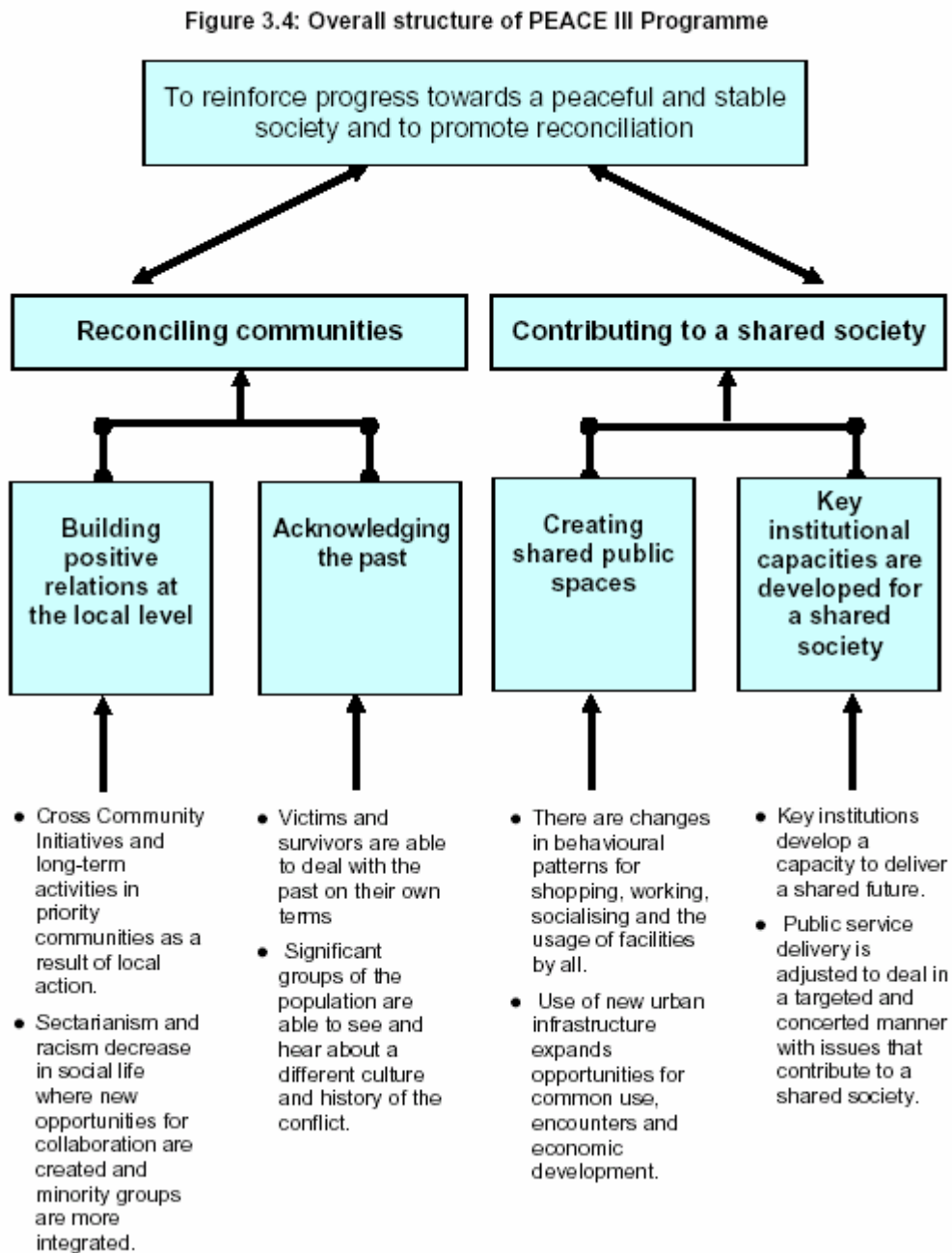
Fáilte Ireland's Product Development Strategy 2007-2013 sets out the priorities for the future development of the tourism industry in Ireland over the above period. The strategy establishes that there should be less support for providing accommodation, except in specified circumstances and that more investment is needed in tourism infrastructure. It further highlights that investment is also necessary in major new events and other tourism products that will attract visitors.

The Strategy sets out how the proposed €280 million allocated for product development over the period of the NDP 2007-2013, should be allocated, as follows:

1. **Fund for Tourism Infrastructure (€133 million)**
 - €105 million will be used to develop physical products primarily through the local authorities with €28 million used to reinvest in walking and cycling routes and moorings and jetties.
2. **Fund for feasibility studies and encouraging innovation (€21 million)**
 - This will support feasibility studies, research and the establishment of a National Institute for Tourism Innovation.
3. **Fund for a small number of new major annual events (€28 million)**
 - This fund will provide support for 2-3 major new festivals and cultural events.
4. **Fund to create attractions of international class (€70 million)**
 - The 20 most strategically important existing visitor attractions in the country will be identified and prioritised for reinvestment. Two or three totally new attractions may also be identified.
 - About €6 million of this fund will also be used to invest in historic or other 'great Gardens'.
5. **Fund for private sector investment in 'soft-adventure' products (€28 million)**
 - Certain key products, provided by the private sector should receive funds including water-sports centers and boat rental facilities, equestrian facilities and trails and other outdoor activity centers.
6. **Fund to improve communication with visitors, and to bring the product alive (€102.5 million)**
 - This additional fund will be used to develop E-marketing, software for itinerary planning and mapping, to communicate with PDAs and mobile phones and links between different product organizers so that everyone can access all products and for the dramatization of local history.
7. **Fund to expand capability of human resources, productivity and quality control (€156 million)**
 - To support human resources, improving productivity and introducing quality systems.

4.2 PEACE III

The eligible area for the PEACE III Programme 2007-2013 is Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The figure below sets out the overall structure of the PEACE III Programme as established in the PEACE III Draft Operational Programme.



The Priority likely to be of most relevance to County Monaghan, in terms of tourism (note there is no specific intervention for tourism proposed) is Priority 2: Contributing to a shared society

This Priority will focus on two key areas:

- Creating shared public spaces;
- Key institutional capacities are developed for a shared society.

Creating shared public spaces

Aim

This objective aims to regenerate urban, rural and border areas that appear derelict, segregated, underused, threatening and/or unwelcoming and transform them into shared spaces. The intervention seeks to tackle the problems of separation of communities within society and address the underlying problems of sectarianism, racism and prejudice by encouraging the development of physical environments that are not 'marked out' with symbols that define it as a territory of one side of a community but as open to and welcoming to all. Building on what has been achieved under the PEACE II and URBAN II Programmes, projects will develop new and innovative approaches for changing the physical environment in a way which maximizes potential for reconciliation and economic development. In particular, through infrastructural developments, the Priority will expand the opportunities for common use, interaction and engagement, and economic development in areas that have been particularly affected by the conflict. These developments will also contribute to changes in behavioural patterns in relation to shopping, working and socialising in the areas supported.

4.3 INTERREG IV

The scope of the Eligible Area for INTERREG IV funding includes:

- North, East and South areas of **Northern Ireland** (ie all of NI except Belfast Metropolitan area)
- **Border Region of Ireland** – Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo
- **West Coast of Scotland** - Lachaber, Skye and Lochalsh, Argyll and the Islands, Dumfries and Galloway and East, North and South Ayrshire

As set out in the INTERREG IV Draft Operational Programme, the primary objective of Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013 is to support strategic cross-border co-operation, promote integrated regional and improve access to services and the quality of life for those living in the eligible area

Two Key Aims

- **Priority 1: Co-operation for a more prosperous cross-border region:** this Priority aims to diversify and develop the economy of the eligible region by encouraging innovation and competitiveness in enterprise and business development, and **promoting tourism**;
- **Priority 2: Co-operation for a sustainable cross-border region:** this Priority aims to promote cross-border cooperation in policy development and improve access to services and the quality of life for those living in the eligible area.

Scope of Funding

- The Programme will fund two types of projects;
 - Ireland / Northern Ireland;
 - Ireland / Northern Ireland / Scotland

NB It is a legislative requirement that projects involving Ireland / Northern Ireland will form a significant majority of the projects assisted.

Priority 1: Co-operation for a more prosperous cross-border region

Tourism

Rationale:

- Need to establish partnerships and linkages that will improve the tourism product and attract domestic and overseas visitors
- Particular opportunities to develop tourism products that will draw on the **natural environment** of the region and **the strong cultural linkages between the West Coast of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Border Region.**

Aim:

- The **tourism products (accommodation, venues and visitor events)** will be supported on a cross-border basis and will be based on niche areas such as **culture, heritage, natural resources and marine and water based tourism.**
- Support will be provided to promote the tourism product of the region through **tailored marketing approaches.**

Targets Beneficiaries:

- **Tourism promotion and development agencies;**
- **Tourist providers,** including those responsible for accommodation, venues and visitor events

Indicative Operations:

- Tourism product development in thematic or specific interest areas such as **culture and heritage, natural resources,** and **marine and water based** tourism;
- **Signposting, visitor information, visitor services and visitor events;**
- **Tailored marketing approaches** to promote tourism products.

4.4 CAVAN MONAGHAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER FUNDING

Comprehensive details on potential LEADER funding are, at the time of writing, still unknown. At this stage, it is anticipated that rural projects could be funded up to a maximum of €100,000 (previously €65,000 ceiling) and in exceptional cases projects up to €150,000 could be considered for funding.

5. THE WAY AHEAD

This document has provided a summary of the tourism development opportunities for County Monaghan over the 2007-2013 period. These opportunities are predominantly based on submissions received by Monaghan Tourism and proposals which have arisen through the series of consultations undertaken as part of the preparation of this report. *Although not exhaustive, this audit serves to provide an indication of the types of proposals likely to come forward over the coming seven years; undoubtedly many others will be developed.*

5.1 FUTURE DELIVERY OF TOURISM IN COUNTY MONAGHAN

Monaghan Tourism will continue to play a pivotal role in the co-ordination and delivery of tourism over the next seven years, working closely with all stakeholders in the County as well as regionally, inter-regionally and nationally. In particular, Monaghan Tourism will build on the past success of co-operating with local authority partners on a cross-border basis, where appropriate.



Monaghan Tourism is part financed by the European Union Peace and Reconciliation Programme and the Irish Government under the National Development Plan and managed for the Special European Union Programmes Body by Monaghan County Council-Led Task Force

Appendix 1 – Submissions Received

Heather Hoffman, British Horse Society, Ireland
Kingspan Muckno Mania Festival
Rally School Ireland
Robert Mizzell/Patrick McFadden
Wildlife & Heritage Centre, Clontibret
Gavin Shipley
Eoin O’Mathuna
Mary Donaghy
Committee of St Patrick’s Day Parade, Monaghan
Don Mullan
Declan Connolly, Alices Loft & Cottages
Ciaran Agnew – Lough Muckno WaterSki & Wakeboard Club
Bernie O’Rourke, Community & Enterprise Administrative Officer, Monaghan County Council
Martina Hurson, Administrator, Garage Theatre
Seamus Keenan
Jim McGinn
Shirley Clerkin, Heritage Officer, Monaghan County Council
John Madden, Hilton Park
Fabiola Martin & Brian Courtney
Rosaleen Kearney, Inniskeen Enterprise Development Group
Cllr. Joe Brennan
Yvonne Marron, Farney Community Development Group Ltd
Liam Bradley, Curator, Monaghan County Museum
Castleblayney Tourist Association
John McDonald
Irish Country Quads
Mary Devlin & Marian Dudley, Truagh Development Association
Christina Cassidy, Ballybay Development Association
Brendan Lillis
Eastern Regional Fisheries Board
Northern Regional Fisheries Board
Daphne Purdy, Monaghan County Council
Kevin McNally, Monaghan County Council
Monaghan County Council Area Engineers
Carrick Gallery , Julie Corcoran
Sammie Leslie – Castle Leslie Trust