

Options Report for Glenfarne Wood

**Options for the Development of new
Tourism Infrastructure and Outdoor
Recreation Facilities at Glenfarne
Wood, Co. Leitrim**

October 2020

**Jointly Commissioned by
Coillte and Leitrim County Council**

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Tourism Development through Partnership & Innovation



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Foreword

It gives us great pleasure to present this options study for Glenfarne Wood which results from the recently formed Coillte and Leitrim County Council Working Group. The report is a joint production and marks the first public output of this collaboration in County Leitrim.

Glenfarne Wood is a Coillte -owned, working forest. However, this definition gives no hint of the lakeside treasures within – a tranquil yet living place with paths to suit every ability, wild nature, sculptures, history, heritage and scenic views at every turn: all this on the cross-border shores of Lough MacNea. It is with these qualities in mind that the project was launched.

The study was undertaken to explore what measures might enhance Glenfarne Wood as a recreational space. In turn, any increase in visitor numbers acts as an economic driver for Glenfarne and the wider Leitrim and North West Area. Foremost in considering any potential developments were the views and knowledge of the existing visitors to Glenfarne Wood and the local and national stakeholders.

This work started just as we faced into the most serious public health crisis of our lifetime. It is a testament to the esteem in which Glenfarne Wood is held that participants engaged with the adapted process and were eager to join the conversation. Their considered input has enriched the study and helped provide options that we can fully endorse as supported by the community and wider stakeholders.

The options outlined are just those, options. However, Coillte and Leitrim County Council continue to work together to ensure the momentum of the study process is not lost and that sustainable actions can be implemented. Apart from its own magic, Glenfarne Wood is perfectly placed in space and time to capitalise on so many opportunities: its location between Sligo and Enniskillen and the proposed Greenway; the existing tourism assets of the Rainbow Ballroom and MacNea House in Blacklion and beyond; trends in activity, wellness and rural holidaymaking; increased interest in nature, biodiversity, history, heritage and cultural events.

For these reasons we are delighted to present *Options for the development of new tourism infrastructure and outdoor recreation facilities at Glenfarne Wood, Co. Leitrim*.

Our thanks to the consultants, Eileen McGloin of EMcG Solutions and Ethna Murphy of Ethna Murphy Consulting and everyone that helped us with their knowledge and opinion.



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1 Executive Summary

Glenfarne Wood is a new entrant to the tourism and recreation market in County Leitrim that can provide evolving, innovative approaches and experiences to attract existing and future tourism and recreational visitors to County Leitrim. This option analysis unites the ambition and focuses the efforts of Leitrim County Council and Coillte to develop a unique visitor proposition and offering at Glenfarne Wood.

Glenfarne Wood is a 216-acre Wood on the shore of Lough MacNea. The Wood is located just off the N16 on the main route between Sligo and Enniskillen. It incorporates lands of the former Tottenham Estate, providing a rich natural, built, and social heritage, containing archaeological sites and monuments, woodlands, natural water features, sculptures and looped walks.

As a highly regarded and indeed much-loved destination, Glenfarne Wood has much to build on, with multiple new opportunities to be explored and developed. Extensive desk research, benchmarking, case studies, consultation activity, and professional expertise informed the options for development at Glenfarne Wood. This coupled with community support and buy-in for the development has positioned Glenfarne Wood as having the potential to become a sustainable, holistic hub for natural harmony in North Leitrim.

The development options are grouped around five key themes and include recommendations on the basic building blocks suggested to bring the themes to life. The themes, building blocks and their associated objectives are:

Themes	Objectives
Health and Wellness	<i>To create a suite of interventions and infrastructure positioning Glenfarne Wood as a holistic hub for natural harmony, offering programmes and experiences that build reputation and attract a growing market and consumer segment.</i>
Family Fun	<i>To develop amenities and infrastructure within Glenfarne Wood to support the offering of a range of healthy, engaging, and exciting family fun experiences, catering for all ages and abilities and in particularly attracting intergenerational family groups.</i>
Active in Nature	<i>To create a collection of visitor centric spaces and accommodation for larger groups, opening up the potential for events and activities, thereby delivering more benefits to the local and regional economy.</i>
Trails and Tales	<i>To ensure all who visit are motivated to get out, explore and enjoy the natural and built heritage of Glenfarne Wood and its environs via its trails and pathways.</i>
Unlock the Water	<i>To build capacity and provide facilities to allow local activity providers to unlock slow adventure tourism experiences on the Lough and within the Wood for local and overseas visitors.</i>
The Basic Building Blocks identify and list the core interventions suggested as fundamental requirements to enable delivery of the expected facilities and visitor services across all themes.	

The development of each theme and investment in the required infrastructure to deliver these has the capacity to act as catalysts to attract more visitors to this holistic hub, allowing the Glenfarne Wood to become a sustainable operating business model in its own right. The phasing and implementation need to be planned to ensure that their associated objectives are achievable and present a good return on investment.

Development phases have been outlined - each may be subject to change depending on external macro impacts such as COVID 19, Brexit and local impacts such as increased footfall and funding secured to the SLNCR Greenway and construction underway.

Pre-development Immediate Action and Quick Wins:

- Zone Glenfarne Wood in terms of themes, use, and potential visitors service areas.
- Develop a long-term schedule of tree planning and cutting.
- Instillation of counters at four points to gather baseline data. Areas to include main entrance; trail head orientation point and mid-point through two of the trails.
- Trails audit, consideration and agreement of the trail development options to be taken forward.
- Installation of CCTV or Web Cams for key activity zones in advance of implementation.
- Adapt, use, and promote "Leave no Trace" visitor management program.
- Assess capacity and infrastructure to support digital and social media initiatives.
- Install traffic counters near Glenfarne Wood to have access to baseline data.
- Assessment of Water Quality on Lough MacNeane and its suitability for unlocking the Lough.

Development Phase:

- Interpretation Plan – articulation of the visitor experience and detailed interpretation plan which will inform Coillte and Leitrim County Council on new themes and suggested experiences. This will include signage, directional and wayfinding, and potential visitor information dissemination via marketing collateral, and visitor interpretation mediums.
- Support Infrastructure – development of a new car parking facility located at the entrance to Glenfarne Wood (50 spaces) and development of a 2.3 km scenic walk, past the standing stones adjacent to the Cornavannoge River to the current car park and orientation point at the Lough shore.
- Design and build a visitor service / information block at the Lough shore – it is recommended that this is in keeping with the environment and an attractor in its own right. It may house visitor services such as toilets, showers and changing facilities, self-service indoor orientation and interpretation, a storage facility for operators, a café and possibly a viewing platform.
- All weather shelters in the Wood, will provide an opportunity for the visitor to engage the senses, reflect and nurture an appreciation of nature.
- Marketing and communications investment and activity over each of the implementation phases.

Phased Approach to developing and augmenting the themes:

- Implementation of all the themes on a phased basis.
- Build on the health, wellness and sustainable tourism theme that is synonymous with the area. Any development of Glenfarne Wood must be sympathetic to the natural environment.
- Design and develop the network of trails within and adjacent to the Wood to celebrate and cluster its rich built, cultural and natural heritage and link this to stories of the wider area, aligned to the Trails and Tales theme.
- Develop the potential of the Wood as an events space to deliver on the Active in Nature theme.
- Create a family fun offering for locals, domestic and international visitors coming to experience the outdoors through the provision of new family facilities.
- Consider a public/private/community partnership structure for delivery that effectively provides a support structure for each partner. This should be based on a business model that meets all stakeholder objectives.

- The development at Glenfarne Wood should also harness public funding as well as maximise on other opportunities and innovations.

Each of the above options are further explored in detail in Sections 7 and 8.

In the current climate there is an emerging body of evidence to suggest that the rural location of Glenfarne Wood, and the potential experiences it can offer have to become more compelling to future visitors. Glenfarne is situated in a rural and remote area that provides a generous outdoor space which lends itself to be a hugely important factor in holiday planning for visitors post 2020. This area will be a highly attractive and appealing destination in the future, attracting a wider audience of visitors seeking an extended wellbeing, secure and cultural break in rural Ireland.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

In February 2020 EMG Solutions Ltd. and Ethna Murphy Consulting were appointed by Leitrim County Council and Coillte to identify feasible and practical options to develop the tourism potential of Glenfarne Wood. The overall objective was to research and suggest new tourism recreation infrastructure and outdoor facilities that would support the development of a range of experiences that will attract visitors to the area, support the local community and enhance the reputation and attractiveness of Glenfarne Wood as a place to spend time in. In doing so, the opportunity to add value to Leitrim's wider outdoor and slow adventure offering and Irelands Hidden Heartlands proposition could be explored.

2.2 Study Approach

The options analysis and feasibility assessment study for Glenfarne Wood has been informed by the following:

- A review of the forest resource, current visitor offering, existing assets and an exploration of its historical heritage.
- The context for the development of Glenfarne Wood, including consideration of national and regional policy objectives and strategies, tourism trends and consumer needs.
- Identification of tourism interventions that have potential to maximise the dwell time for visitors in the wider Glenfarne area and integration with existing tourism attractions and businesses, activity offers, as well as existing and future trails and routes within the wider area.
- In depth client, community, and stakeholder consultation.
- International and national benchmarking including a review of comparable woods and forest parks.
- Development and analysis of a suite of options, themes, and recommendations for delivery.
- Consideration of delivery arrangements for the future implementation and development of the project.

2.3 Project Delivery

The study was undertaken in an unprecedented time, the COVID 19 Global Crisis had just taken hold and lockdown measures were underway in Ireland. Leitrim County Council and Coillte took the decision to continue with the study in the knowledge that when the COVID 19 crisis passes, visitors and locals will be looking for new and creative experiences to immerse themselves in. Glenfarne is rural and remote with a low population and Glenfarne Wood provides a generous outdoor space which lends itself to being hugely inviting to anyone with fears about COVID 19, after the lockdown ends and beyond. The area will be an attractive and appealing destination in the future, and this is likely to generate a competitive advantage.

The consultants were aware that they needed to adopt a creative approach to the development of the Glenfarne Wood visitor experience. A culture of creativity and innovation has permeated all aspects of this study from dealing with the obstacles presented by the COVID 19 crisis, the associated extensive consultation exercise and the development of options in line with maintaining the balance of unspoilt character and hidden beauty associated with Glenfarne Wood. The team are confident that the options outlined in this report will have the propensity to transform the area, bring about economic benefits, environmental, social and cultural benefits.

3 Strategic Context

3.1 Strategic Fit

Tourism is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors and has significant potential to play a further role in economic and rural renewal. International and consumer research highlights the importance of developing experiences that allow people to connect, discover and be inspired by the landscape, culture and history of a destination. National Tourism Policy emphasised the importance of people and place and developments of the tourism product portfolio of villages and towns are key to this. North Leitrim has all the attributes to build a connected portfolio of experiences that resonate with holiday makers.

The proposed Glenfarne Wood development project is in alignment with national, regional, and local strategies¹ as outlined in Appendix 1 and can deliver economic and social benefits for all its stakeholders by:

- 1.3.1 Offering a suite of adventure and activity experiences that support Fáilte Ireland's vision for Ireland to be recognised internationally as a world-class, year-round activity destination, extend the season and contribute to rural economy.
- 2.3.1 Providing a platform to work with other providers in the area to create quality packages that deliver memorable experiences aligned with Ireland's Hidden Heartlands proposition.
- 3.3.1 Highlighting, protecting and animating the built and natural heritage of the area both on and adjacent to the wood.
- 4.3.1 Further nudging North Leitrim from a tourism transit zone to a touring zone through the development of a wellness experience hub.
- 5.3.1 Encouraging and supporting public, private and community efforts to unlock new opportunities, support innovation and network development.

3.2 The Consumer

The most powerful and internationally distinctive parts of the Irish tourism offering are the natural landscapes. These are in rural areas where other economic activity is harder to sustain. Considerable research has been carried out in Ireland and overseas to better understand what visitors are looking for when considering a holiday break in Ireland. It is clear from this research that tourists generally choose a destination based on experiences that they consider to be unique and authentic to the place and location, are connected to the people, and are memorable.

Adventure tourism is recognised as one of the largest and fastest growing segments within the global tourism marketplace as more and more consumers seek to interact and be active in nature. As consumers become more active and seek to connect with the outdoors and nature, adventure tourism in Ireland is one of the fastest growing and most exciting sectors². Valued at €1.2 billion annually, with walking and hiking being the most popular with over 2.679 million visitors participating in the activity, it offers significant potential in supporting the development of rural areas.

¹ Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017-2021; Fáilte Ireland *A Strategy for Investment Grant 2016 – 2022*; People Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025; Hidden Heartlands Brand Values and Proposition; Leitrim County Development Plan 2015- 2021; Leitrim Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021; Leitrim Tourism Strategy; Leitrim Recreation Strategy 2015-2021 and The Leitrim Brand.

² Ireland's Association for Adventure Tourism 2018

The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) report, 20 Adventure Trends to Watch In 2018, highlights the importance of slow travel/adventure, predicts demand for Trail Tourism and the consumers desire to live like a local.

“Leitrim, with its varied landscape, offers active engagement with people, culture, natural & built heritage. It is ideal for adventure travellers in terms of walking routes, angling, equestrian trails, water based activities, centre based and multi activity holidays”³. County Leitrim is the home of slow adventure in Ireland; several slow adventure experiences have been created, branded and marketed effectively.

County Leitrim, and particularly North Leitrim, offers a strong cluster of eco-tourism products, services, festivals and events providing a perfect fit between the natural environment and people who are interested in sustainable tourism experiences based around walking, cycling, water based activities, and built and landscape heritage experiences.

The development of Glenfarne Wood fits with these markets providing a visitor experience that will attract the: *Culturally Curious, Great Escapers and Irish Diaspora (International), Connected Families, Footloose Socialisers and Indulgent Romantics (Domestic and Northern Ireland)*.

3.3 The Tourism Market

Following the ambitious investments and consumer led marketing campaigns over the last decade, Ireland is an attractive destination for both leisure and business tourists. This has led to unprecedented growth, with a 56% rise in overseas trips to Ireland by non-residents recorded between 2009 and 2019.

Relative to other regions of Ireland, the Border region, as classified by Fáilte Ireland, is the least visited.

	Overseas	%	Domestic	%	Total	%
Leitrim	41,000	6%	206,000	17%	247,000	13%
Donegal	255,000	40%	376,000	31%	631,000	34%
Sligo	173,000	27%	247,000	20%	420,000	23%
Cavan	107,000	17%	206,000	17%	313,000	17%
Monaghan	60,000	9%	179,000	15%	239,000	13%
Total	636,000	100%	1,214,000	100%	1,850,000	100%

Source Markets Border Region – 2018 FI		
Market	Visitors	%
all Domestic	1,001,000	41.8%
NI	644,000	26.9%
GB	283,000	11.8%
Cont Europe	246,000	10.3%
N America	147,000	6.1%
Other	76,000	3.2%
Total	2,397,000	100%

³ <http://slowadventure.ie>

The Domestic and Northern Ireland markets continue to be the bedrock of the Irish tourism industry as, when combined, these markets accounted for 56% of all trips and 32% of revenue in 2018⁴. These markets will be even more important in the short term in sustaining the industry post 2020.



Glenfarne is located on the N16 between Blacklion and Manorhamilton on the main route between Sligo (40 Km) and Enniskillen (27 Km) and on the main cross border transport corridor from Galway/Sligo to Belfast. It is therefore ideally located to attract visitors from Northern Ireland.

In 2018, visitor data for Leitrim recorded by Fáilte Ireland highlighted:

- 1.3.1 International visitors to Leitrim numbered 41,000, spending €19.5m, on average €439 per capita⁵.
- 2.3.1 The number of visitors from Northern Ireland was 38,000, spending €8.5m, on average €222 per capita.
- 3.3.1 Leitrim's total visitor numbers were 151,000 an increase of 5% from 2013, its total tourism revenue was €38.5 million, increased by 13% from 2013.
- 4.3.1 Targets have been set for tourism in Leitrim by 2021, total visitors 296,000; tourism revenue €70m⁶; and jobs supported 2,400⁷.

Fáilte Ireland has promoted the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands as a regional branded experience to explore the green heartlands of Ireland's natural beauty, where activity and relaxation are centred around rural communities. Leitrim is within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and therefore has great opportunity to grow visitor numbers. In 2018, figures recorded for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands highlighted:

- 5.3.1 0.4m overseas tourists visited the region generating €117m and spending on average €290 per capita.
- 6.3.1 Overseas visitors came from Great Britain: 47%; North America: 24%; Mainland Europe: 22%; and other long haul: 7%.
- 7.3.1 Some, 0.5m domestic tourists visited Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, generating €63m, spending on average €126 per capita.

⁴ CSO 2018

⁵ The evidence suggests that the tourist to Leitrim is staying longer and spending more.

⁶ In real terms, i.e. 2014 prices.

⁷ This will double the size of the tourism sector.

Local Tourist attractions in North Leitrim have also been experiencing year on year increases in the number of tourists visiting the area. The following data is interesting and provides a basis from which to set visitor number targets for Glenfarne Wood:

- Rainbow Ballroom of Romance welcomed 15,500 visitors in 2019. This was based on events, rental, and people to the exhibition.
- Visitors to Glencar Waterfall (28 Km from Glenfarne) were 86,070 in 2019, increasing 69% from 2013⁸.
- Figures recorded from Glenade Lake (28 Km from Glenfarne) also indicate increasing numbers from 4,246 in 2019 increasing 62% from 2013⁸.

It is evident that there are increasing numbers of visitors travelling to attractions in the local area. The development of Glenfarne Wood will enhance the visitor offering in the area, providing people with the opportunity to extend their dwell time to enjoy the experience. There are no baseline figures for Glenfarne Wood; it is a recommendation of this options analysis to install counters as an immediate quick win (see Section 7.3).

3.4 COVID 19

The current impact of COVID 19 is hard to quantify accurately, the impact on tourism demand will continue beyond the COVID 19 pandemic, a full recovery could take up to 10 years⁹. Tourist behavior will undoubtedly be impacted in the long-term by this pandemic, for geopolitical, economic and psychological reasons.

It is anticipated that post 2020 those who do travel will be looking for wellbeing, credibility and culture, things they know and where they feel secure. This is where Ireland, particularly the more rural areas, will have enormous strengths¹⁰. Glenfarne is rural and remote with a low population and Glenfarne Wood provides a generous outdoor space which lends itself to be a hugely positive factor to anyone who has fears about COVID 19. This area will be a highly attractive and appealing destination in the future, and this is likely to be a competitive advantage.

In addition, approximately three million Britons visit Ireland every year. With travel to the Continent looking unlikely until at least the end of the summer, UK travelers will be looking closer to home for their 2020 trips. Ireland presents itself as a natural destination for Britons' post-lockdown trips. "Ireland stands out as a real opportunity – 20 per cent of people from the UK come here by sea; they can bring their own car, have a road trip, drive on the same side of the road¹¹.

Similarly, the opportunities afforded from visitors from Northern Ireland for first post-lockdown trips (2020) and over the coming years offers significant potential for the Glenfarne Wood experience.

Given all of the above, it is evident that a plan for future development at Glenfarne Wood is timely. The Wood has the potential to become a holistic hub for natural harmony and attract a wider audience of visitors from Northern Ireland, domestic, and international seeking an extended wellbeing, secure and cultural break in Rural Ireland.

⁸ Visitor Monitoring Report, Glenade Lake, 26/04/2013 to 31/12/2019

⁹ Potential impact of COVID 19 on the Irish Tourist Industry E&Y Report 30 April 2020

¹⁰ Fáilte Ireland, the country's tourism body, will pursue a quality kitemark similar to that announced by Visit Britain, to allow accommodation providers and attractions an opportunity to show travellers they are working safely in a post-virus world.

¹¹ Tourism Ireland Chief Executive – Niall Gibbons May 2020

4 Current Situational Analysis

The consultants carried out one site visit to Glenfarne Wood on Thursday 27 February; more were planned, however, this was not possible due to the outbreak of COVID 19 and the associated lockdown. The initial visit was hosted by Leitrim County Council and Coillte and Councilor Sean McDermott. The visit comprised of a comprehensive tour of the site, to review the current visitor offering as well as identify experiences that could be considered for further development as part of this project.

4.1 Key Facts

Geographical area: 215.7 acres **Location:**

Glenfarne, County Leitrim **Ownership:** Coillte

Context: Glenfarne Wood is not a Tier 1 recreational site; it is on the lower level of a Tier 2 recreational site.

Main focal points:

- The site is on the shore of Lough MacNea, a large freshwater lake and natural boundary of Leitrim, Cavan and Fermanagh.
- The Wood forms part of the Tottenham Estate (existed from 1780-1919) a Tottenham House Ruin exists (one wall). There is a brief history illustrated on a small board in English and Irish language.
- A loop forest road network allows for driving, walking and cycling on two trails: the Glenfarne Wood Cycle and Loop Walk (approximately 3.75 kms); and the Lough MacNea Walk (approximately 2.5 kms).
- In 1999, Lough MacNea Sculpture Trail Committee¹², secured funding to develop a Lough MacNea sculpture trail 11 sculpture pieces were developed and situated along the Lough¹³. Three sculptures are in the Glenfarne Demesne. "Inis Ocha" and "Glean Fearnmuigh" is a pair of mirrored panels set in such a way as to reflect the Leitrim and Fermanagh shores. "Reflectress"¹⁵ is sited at Ladies Rest, the shape of the piece represents the hooped skirts of the 1800s and the four blue glass panels echo the colour of the water. "Point of Contact"¹⁶, at Island View represents the two chemical symbols for hydrogen and oxygen, separate, but when combined, create water.
- There are a number of other features on the loop walk which include: **The Ladies Rest** where the ladies of Tottenham Hall used to come to swim and relax (it is still used for swimming by locals); **Myles Bigstone**, thought to have been an ancient place of worship; **The Fort of Sile O'Reilly**; and **The Badgers Well**.
- Archaeological sites and monuments in the wood include: a Caiseal Ringfort; 2 crannogs; and within the wood, but located on private land, is an alignment of three standing stones, dated to the Bronze Age 2500 – 500 BC.
- The car park is on the edge of Lough MacNea. There is space for approximately 10 cars. There is a small slipway and 3 picnic tables. There is signage at the car park detailing the walks and the recreational area at Glenfarne wood.
- There are 2 small islands that can be seen on the Lough, Bilberry Island and Patrick's Island.
- Currently there are 4 fishing stands. In 2020, through Catchment CARE Community Incentive Scheme, investment, there are planned installations of a further 6 fishing stands, within and adjacent to Glenfarne Wood 2 of which have access for people with disabilities (see 4.2.9 for detail).

¹² A partnership between the Manorhamilton Arts Group and the Belcoo and District Development Group

¹³ The aim of the project, which is cross-border and cross-community, is to promote reconciliation between the communities of these three counties through the medium of sculpture and the visual arts.

¹⁴ (Artist: Martina Galvin)

¹⁵ (Artist Anna Macleod)

¹⁶ (Artist Derek Whitticase)

- **Main Entrance:** Signage for Glenfarne Wood and the Gate House (which is currently in private ownership).¹⁷

Maintenance: Coillte have been maintaining, ensuring health and safety and exposing viewpoints and placing signage and seating through the forest.

Current visitor numbers: visitor numbers to the Wood are currently not captured.

Opening hours: Daily, All Year Round – weather permitting

4.2 Current Visitor Experience

4.2.1 Overview

The Wood does not have a visitor experience: it is a working forest and currently does not have a wide-ranging product or service offering for visitors. Current amenities at Glenfarne Wood is outlined below.

4.2.2 Location

Glenfarne Wood is situated in Glenfarne Co Leitrim. Glenfarne Village is located on the N16 between Blacklion and Manorhamilton on the main route between Sligo and Enniskillen. It is on the main cross border transport corridor from Galway/Sligo to Belfast and the heart of the North Leitrim Glens, 16 Km from the iconic attractions of the Marble Arch Caves (County Fermanagh) and 28 Km from Glencar Waterfall. Glenfarne is strategically positioned providing visitors with a rewarding stop point on the Belfast/Fermanagh/Sligo/Galway route.

4.2.3 Glenfarne Community Development Projects

The rural community and private sector are involved and committed to investment and developments in the area. Examples of this have included the various phases in the development of the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance, including management and staffing, refurbishment of Cullentragh School, development of a play area, a 2km demonstration stretch of the Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) Greenway. In addition, there has been private sector investment in the old Glenfarne Railway Station, including restoration of the buildings to their original state. This is available to view by appointment.

4.2.4 Heritage and Culture

Glenfarne Wood contained the former Tottenham Hall, built circa 1820 with later additions circa 1850s. It was a large house with a walled kitchen garden of 3.8 acres and hot houses. It's difficult to establish the size of the house in the 1800s. Records of court proceedings in April 1927¹⁸ listed the house as having: 18 rooms downstairs, 17 Rooms upstairs; gardens and vineries; thirteen cottages; stable for 30 horses; garages; 2,000 acres; 520,000 cu ft of the finest timber; turbarry and quarry with traces of coal and oil not developed; and 160 acres of tillage.

The Tottenham family owned the property from the 1820 -1880. The first Tottenham in Glenfarne was Nicholas Loftus Tottenham (1745- 1823); it is thought the Hall was built for his son Charles Henry. In all there were just 4 generations and their link with Glenfarne ended when Arthur Loftus, the last of them in Glenfarne, went bankrupt in the 1880's following the building of the Sligo Leitrim & Northern Counties Railway. With the bankruptcy and departure of Arthur Loftus Tottenham, the direct link with Glenfarne and the Tottenham was broken.

¹⁷ Consultations have identified that a local businessman is in communication with the owners of the gate lodge, for the purposes of [a] overseeing its renovation, in accord with listed-building regulations; and [b] renting it as private accommodation.

¹⁸ Lee Nixon Vs Irish State

After Arthur Loftus Tottenham left, the estate was taken over by Sir Edward Harland¹⁹. He used it as a hunting retreat and died in Tottenham Hall while on a holiday in Glenfarne in 1895. In 1902 Colonel JG Adamson bought Glenfarne Hall and private wood of 2000 acres along with “2 grouse mountains”. Adamson sold the property in 1918 to a Belfast timber harvesting company, Lee and Nixon. Lee and Nixon constructed a narrow-gauge railway through the property in 1918. This allowed them to transport timber from the wood up to Glenfarne railway station. There were at least seven powered saws located throughout the woods which were used to cut the harvested timber into planks.

The War of Independence and the subsequent Civil War from 1919 to 1923 was a period of lawlessness. Lee and Nixon abandoned the property, but their machinery and a large stockpile of sawn timber were left behind. By the 1950s little remained of Tottenham Hall. Glenfarne Wood remains an area of outstanding beauty.

Extensive research has been undertaken on the families associated with Glenfarne Hall; this has been well documented in several publications, most notably in the History of Glenfarne developed by the Local History Group, extracts of which have been provided in Appendix 2 of this report.

4.2.5 Archaeological sites and Thur Mountain²⁰

Archaeological sites and monuments in the wood include: a Caiseal Ringfort located towards the top of a South East facing slope overlooking the West shore of Lough MacNea Upper, and a small stream just in the south of the wood. It is a circular area defined by a stone spread²¹, with no identifiable original entrance. There are two crannogs close to the shoreline that borders Glenfarne Wood²². Close to Glenfarne, adjacent to the Cornavannoge River within the wood but located on private land is an alignment of three standing stones, dated to 2500 – 500 BC (the Bronze Age period in Ireland)²³.

Myles Bigstone, an ancient place of worship, is situated on an east facing slope at the foot of Thur Mountain and 400m from the west shore of Lough MacNea Upper. This is a large Glacial Erratic²⁴. Nearby is the Fort of Sile O’Reilly, which is reputed to have been an ancient burial ground and a famine graveyard for infants. A fort and burial ground are listed at Carrickrevagh. There is no evidence of an enclosure other than the perimeter of the burial ground.

Near Glenfarne Wood is Thur Mountain range. Local researchers have identified that Thur hosts a series of prehistoric settlement features, boulder monuments, rock art and sculptures that are present in the Cavan Burren and Marlbank in Fermanagh.

In and around the 19th Century there was a proliferation of therapeutic environments in or around North Leitrim West Cavan, West Fermanagh, See Appendix 4 Map Therapeutic Environments in the Area²⁵. Regarding Irish sweat houses,²⁶ it is thought that there are the remains of 78 of them in County Leitrim. In the area around Glenfarne wood, the consultants have found 13 Irish Sweat houses.

¹⁹ Of Harland and Wolf, Ship Yard, Belfast

²⁰ Mythology: The folklore associated with Thor in the area outlines the tradition of Crom Cruach (a pre-Christian Irish deity). On Thor mountain the Pagan idol was Thor. The people of Ireland before St. Patrick came offered sacrifices to this idol – sometimes even human sacrifices. There are four divisions in Thor Mountain – Thor More, Thor Lar, Thor Caorach and Thor Beg. Situated between Thor More and Thor Lar is a cave known locally as “Leaba Diarmuid”. There are numerous accounts of the Diarmaid and Grainne story with the Cave on Thur.

²¹ (int. diam. 15.5m) (Wth 2.8m; H 0.45)

²² Known as Crannoge Island and Creevaghern Island

²³ They are generally accepted to have been aligned according to significant solar and lunar events and would have potentially served as significant ritual sites for the wider area.

²⁴ Dimension 5m x c. 4m; height c. 2m

²⁵ <https://bit.ly/33jhGis> *Nature and the Environment in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* edited by Matthew Kelly

²⁶ These structures are often beehive-shaped, like this one, with a tiny entrance. Today, ferns have grown around the entrance and in the shadowy interior. The origins of sweat houses are mysterious, but they were still used into the 20th century. Originally, the chamber was heated by fire for a day then the naked “sweaters” would crawl inside, blocking the entrance behind them. It was a treatment for rheumatism. This one could have held three sweaters, or five if they were particularly friendly. They were often built near streams, Scandinavian style, for a cold dip immediately on exit. They are generally uncommon but, for some reason, there are dozens in this area. It seems this borderland was gripped by the sweating trend during the 19th century.

4.2.6 Walking/jogging/cycling and woodland walk

The Wood seems most popular as a walking or jogging spot for locals. The current forest road network is used for recreational walking, running and cycling on two trails: Glenfarne Wood Cycle and Loop Walk (approximately 3.75 kms, 1.5hrs walk, and 0.5 hrs cycle, difficulty moderate, start and finish point at the car park by the Lough, waymarking red) and the Lough MacNea Walk (approximately 2.5 kms, 1hrs walk, difficulty easy, start and finish point at the car park by the Lough, waymarking blue). The proposed SLNCR Greenway runs immediately outside the entrance of the wood.

4.2.7 Link to the SLNCR Greenway

Glenfarne is the first or last village on the Greenway in County Leitrim (depending on whether you start in Fermanagh /Cavan or Sligo). The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross TD, opened a 2.2km demonstration stretch of the SLNCR Greenway near Glenfarne, Co. Leitrim on Friday 22nd February 2019²⁷.

Leitrim County Council, as Lead Partner, applied in January 2020 to the "Greenway Funding Round Carbon Tax 2020" programme at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The application is for the development costs of the SLNCR Greenway from Sligo Town to Blacklion, Co. Cavan. This involves a programme of works up to March 2021 to bring it to an An Bord Pleanála planning application and with the projected date of December 2021 to proceed to construction procurement. It is the culmination of considerable developmental work and the project has seen Sligo and Leitrim County Councils develop 13km or 23% of the route to date in demonstration stretches including the demonstration stretch at Glenfarne. A commitment to progressing the SLNCR Greenway is included in the text of the deal restoring devolved government to Northern Ireland in early 2020.

4.2.8 Bilberry Island and Patrick's Island on the Lough

Patrick's Island it is situated about 130m from the West shore of Lough MacNea Upper and 80m North of Bilberry Island. Patrick's Island is an oval island. There is a subrectangular drystone structure within it. Bilberry Island (1.06 ha), and Patrick's, Island (0.07 ha) are mainly Norway Spruce and mixed Broadleaves planted in 1967. It is possible that the trees on the islands could be removed to make room for a development if required. This would require specialised expertise to clear these islands of trees, also the following would also need to be in place:

- Felling Licence (this could take up to one year).
- Approval from the Forest Service if the Islands were not to be restocked.
- Alternative land sourced to replace forest cover lost due to not restocking islands (if this was required by Forest Service).
- Specialised contractor sourced to undertake the work.

4.2.9 Fishing

Lough MacNea is classed as a mesotrophic lake²⁸ with an approximate size of 983 ha, this is a joint jurisdictional water in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. Inland Fisheries Ireland has responsibility for a small amount of the lake in the Cavan and Leitrim area the rest of the lake is in Fermanagh and looked after by Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs.

²⁷ The demonstration project forms part of the proposed 56km of SLNCR Greenway and part of the Sligo-Enniskillen cross-border Greenway (forming 74km in total with 18km in Fermanagh). The demonstration stretch was funded from an award of €300,000 from Transport Infrastructure Ireland as part of a road alignment project. The road schemes on the N16 are the Cornacloy to Sradrine project. It was delivered over two phases. Total cost of €7.6 million and the road scheme was 3.1 km in length.

²⁸ Lake or pond that has a moderate amount of plants

The Lough was surveyed in 2017 through Inland Fisheries Ireland's, Catchment-wide electro fishing survey it highlighted that the Lough has a large selection of fish stocks mainly Bream, Roach, Hybrids, Pike, Perch and Eels. A small stock of Brown Trout is also present²⁹. The main rivers feeding into the lake from the south are the Cornavannoge River, Eskey River and Black river. Upper and Lower MacNean are connected by the Belcoo river which eventually discharges to the Upper Lough Erne via the Arney river.

There are no current figures on angling usage of the Lough. The Kiltyclogher Angling Club runs competitions on the Lough annually. In addition, there have been pike angling competitions on the Lough over the years, where pike weighing 20- 25 lbs have been caught. More often the Lough is used by trout anglers fishing from boats. The Lough is consistent and has a reputation for fishing well in flood.

Improvements to the fishing stands are due in 2020, Catchment CARE Community Incentive Scheme plans to invest in a further 6 fishing stands, 2 of which have inclusive access. The following locations are being considered: Tracey's Shore, one inclusive access stand and one straight stand; Taddy's Bay, one straight stand and one T stand; Oak Tree, one straight stand; and Lady's Rest, one inclusive access stand. The Oak Tree stand may be more practical to do as large boulders rather than traditional stand construction, due to the high stone content of the uneven ground surface. The raised surface comprised of boulders would be more natural in the setting and provide a multi-purpose area (reading/resting/birdwatching/photography) as well as accommodating more than one angler.

4.2.10 Water-based activities

There is currently no provision for water-based activities at Glenfarne. There are no designated bathing locations on the Lough, so water quality is tested from the perspective of the Water Quality Framework. The Lough waterbody data (EPA) has classified the water quality³⁰ at Lower Lough MacNean as bad and Upper Lough MacNean as poor. However, the Lough is used for recreational purposes: there is a swimming gala and festivals in Blacklion for two weeks in July and swimming takes place in Glenfarne Wood at My Ladies Rest.

Consultations identified that rocks in the Lough makes it difficult to access for several water sports e.g. speed boating, Jet Skis, Water Skis etc. Navigation access areas would have to be determined to facilitate this. The Lough is ideal for flatwater canoeing, stand up paddle boarding etc. and should be considered a key asset to the Glenfarne area. The water quality and suitability of the water may require some investment and collaborative work from the three Local Authorities along Lough MacNean.

²⁹ Inland Fisheries Ireland survey these each year for REDD counts, Redd surveys are carried out on rivers where salmonids lay their eggs, in this case trout, the Cornavannoge River produces approximately 10-12 REDD counts per year which is a good number of REDD for the size and type of river.

³⁰ As of January 2019 - the characterisation assessments are automatically generated from the information stored in the WFD Application. They are based on information available to the end of 2015 but may be subject to change until the final 2018-21 river basin management plan is published.

4.2.11 Environment and Ecology

Glenfarne Wood's diversity of landscapes provide a large range of habitats for flora and fauna. Large areas of forest are dominated by bilberry and wood rush as field layer species. The wet woodland contains a flora typical of lough shore habitats with willow, alder and ash and at several locations a fringe of reedswamp vegetation along the shoreline. Dominant species include common reed, common clubrush and bottle sedge³¹. Under the European Union Habitats Directive there are no Annex I Habitats present or Annex II species present at Glenfarne Wood. As a result, the site need not be managed in accordance with the ecological needs of the species or habitats. In addition, there is no Irish Red Data Book (RDB) species classed as critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN) or vulnerable (VU) at Glenfarne Demesne.

The Wood is largely a Conifer Forest, the breakdown of species is as follows:

- 4.2.11.1 175 ha of conifers planted from early 60's to present day.
- 4.2.11.2 8 ha of broadleaf's planted from 1950s to 2011.
- 4.2.11.3 12.0 ha of mixed conifer /broadleaf planted from 1940s to present day.

4.2.12 Events

A series of events have been held at Glenfarne Wood, mainly as part of the Glenfarne Gala Festival, which has run annually for over 50 years³². The events held at Glenfarne Wood have included: a children's treasure hunt; a 5km and 10km race for young people and for adults; and a fishing competition on the lakeshore.

In addition, a triathlon has been held at Glenfarne Wood and charity walks regularly take place in Glenfarne Forest - approximately 2/3 per year. In 2012, the John Murray RTE Radio 1 charity walk took place at the wood and 1,300 people participated.

In the summer months several music and dancing sessions often take place at the Lough and jetty near the picnic tables. Poems in Glenfarne Wood are organised by local poets; these involve a walk with stops to read poems inspired by nature. Annual children's events include an Easter Egg hunt and a teddy bears picnic in early summer.

In conjunction with "Big Days Out in Leitrim" there have been several groups and birthday parties using the Wood. This often involves three activities; a guided walk; canoeing; and electric bike ride (see Section 4.3.3).

4.2.13 Arrival

There is a sense of arrival at the park, as the entrance has signage but there is no welcoming visitor interpretation at the entrance to the park.

There have not been any traffic counts, near to Glenfarne Wood. The following traffic counts have been undertaken at locations, which are some way from the Wood itself.

1. T11 (roadside) traffic counter, Loughlynn House – 2019 figures: Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) – 2,781 with 5.5% of that, HGV's.
2. St. Michaels Church Junction – recorded: 9th -19th October 2018 – Average Daily Traffic 2,387 with 11.95% of that, HGV's.
3. N16 Cornacloy Realignment – recorded by Sligo County Council in July 2018 – Average Daily Traffic 2,709, with 11.74% of that, HGV's.

³¹ Coillte Biodiversity Management Plan

³² On and around the early bank holiday weekend in August

These figures are only indicative of the National Road. Further specific counts should be undertaken for a two weeks analysis, near Glenfarne Wood.

4.2.14 Car parking

Currently there is one car park in Glenfarne Wood with 10 spaces at the lake shore.

4.3 Supportive Local Facilities

4.3.1 Additional Local Visitor Attractions/Experiences

The network of tourism sites in the area around Glenfarne include the Rainbow Ballroom for Romance³³ and the Railway Station. Further into North Leitrim Sean Mac Diarmada's Cottage, North Leitrim Glens, the Leitrim Way and Glencar Waterfall. The wider Leitrim area and sites in North West Cavan (e.g. Bréifne, the Burren UNESCO Global Geopark, Neven Maguire Restaurant Cookery School) and Fermanagh (e.g. Lakelands, Marble Arch Caves and Cuilcagh Mountain Cuilcagh Boardwalk Trail etc.). All contribute to create a tourism experience that can be presented in a variety of ways to attract local, national and international tourists (see Appendix 4 for more detail).

4.3.2 Accommodation Provision Locally

There are several accommodation providers in North Leitrim, with two situated in Glenfarne itself. There is accommodation for 27 visitors to the village³⁴. Within a 8 Km radius a further 4 self-catering beds are available and within a 16 Km radius there is accommodation for 103 people in self-catering accommodation, approximately 14 guest house/ B&B spaces and a caravan and camping park with 38 touring pitches; 20 static pitches; and 10 tent pitches.

Table 4.1 Summary of provider, B&B Self-Catering and Caravan and Camping Accommodation³⁵ in North Leitrim

Name	Accommodation	Proximity to Glenfarne
<i>B&B, Guest House, Self-Catering Accommodation and Caravan and Camping</i>		
Jim Clancy – Clancy's Glenfarne	Guest House Accommodation – 8 ensuite bedrooms	Glenfarne
Jim Clancy – Clancy's Glenfarne	2 bed Self-catering apartment sleeps 4	Glenfarne
Majella McPartland	Glenfarne, 3 bed stone cottages, sleeps 7	Glenfarne
Nuala McNulty	Tawnylust Lodge, 4* self catering apartment sleeps 4	8 Km
JJ O'Hara	W8, 14*3 bedrooms Manorhamilton, Bed Spaces 85	10 Km

³³ An Interpretation Plan and Framework for the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance was developed May 2020

³⁴ A guest house with eight ensuite bedrooms (sleeps 16) and two self-catering establishments (sleeping 11)

³⁵ Self-Catering beds in the North Leitrim Area Jan 2019

Name	Accommodation	Proximity to Glenfarne
Bluebell guest house Manorhamilton	Double or Triple ensuite room and twin room with ensuite	10 Km
The Oaks Kiltyclogher	Double and Twin ensuite rooms, Family room and a Double/Twin with bath and shower.	11 Km
Paul Slattery / Joe Sheerin	Kiltyclogher, 3*6 rooms, and a dorm Bed Spaces 18	11 Km
Cathal O'Dolan – Rushin Caravan Park Belcoo	38 touring pitches 20 static pitches 10 tent pitches	13 Km
JJ O'Hara	Riverside apartments Dromahair Bed Spaces 22	24 Km
Mary Luther	Dromahair, Alder Cottage, sleeps 6	24 Km
Mary McCormack	Drumkeerin 3*self-catering cottages, sleeps 20	29 Km

4.3.3 Adventure Tourism Providers in the Local Area

There are several adventure tourism providers in the local area details of which are provided in the table below. The adventure tourism providers have created several Slow Adventure visitor experiences, as a standalone experience or have clustered to offer highly interactive experiences over a day/days.

Name	Adventure	Proximity to Glenfarne
Adventure Tourism Providers		
Leitrim Landscapes Guided Walks Walks & Tours Manorhamilton, Leitrim ³⁶	Local guides Tina Pommer, Paul Keogh and Dave Lawless offer guests and locals "off the beaten track" walks and talks giving guests an opportunity to experience the North West in a unique way. The themes of the walks are nature, archaeology, foraging, forest bathing, gentle hill walks with a little local history and folklore. Leitrim Landscapes Guided Walks specialise in tailor made walks for groups of 4 to 10. They are open all year round.	10 Km
Electric Bike Trails – Leitrim Village ³⁷	The provider will meet the visitor at their chosen venue and get kitted out with an electric bike, safety helmet, hi-vis vest and pannier bag if needed. A local guide will lead the way along the chosen route which consist of mainly quiet country roads for a 1-hour cycle. The cycle will be taken at a leisurely pace and include stops at any places of interest along the way.	41Km

³⁶ Contact Details: www.leitrimwalks.com walkleitrim@gmail.com and 085 856 0962

³⁷ Contact Details: www.electricbiketrails.com; info@electricbiketrails.com Phone: 071 9623609 and 087 7386439.

Name	Adventure	Proximity to Glenfarne
Adventure Gently Canoeing ³⁸	Adventure Gently offers guided tours of the waterways of Northwest Ireland in Canadian Canoes providing a gentle, enjoyable, safe experience but still with excitement and achievement. The guided trips are suitable for novice paddlers of all ages, 5 to 80+ years young, however children must be accompanied by an adult. All essential equipment is supplied, i.e. buoyancy aids, waterproof jackets, canoes, paddles etc. The trips are led by Graham and Adrienne, qualified guides passionate about canoeing and the great outdoors. Instruction on land is given prior to getting in the boats and continues during the trip. This is an environmentally friendly activity, where you take nothing but photographs and leave nothing behind but ripples. Adventure Gently Canoeing have both lake and river trips, tuition and team building sessions, which range from half day through full day to multi day canoe / camping trips and welcome small groups, individuals, and families.	28Km
Big Days Out in Leitrim ³⁹	BIG DAYS OUT in Leitrim provided by <i>Leitrim Landscapes Guided Walks, Electric Bike Trails and Adventure Gently Guided Canoe Tours</i> . They have partnered to offer visitors a day in the following locations: Glenfarne Forest/Lough MacNeane; Dromahair, Lough Gill/ Bonet River; and Leitrim Village Lough Allen Canal. Groups of 10 can be catered for, activities start 11am and finish up about 4pm and visitors are asked to bring a packed lunch. Visitors get to experience the beauty of the Leitrim landscape on foot, on water and from the saddle. Group prices from €60 per person based on groups of 10 or more.	10 Km
Leitrim Surf Company ⁴⁰	Specialise in Stand-Up Paddling and Surfing with guided safaris on The Shannon Blueway and tours of the Leitrim coastline. Leitrim Surf tailor-make safaris/tours to suit individual group's needs, wind direction on the day, preferred locations etc.	39 Km
Blacklion Golf Club ⁴¹	On the border between Cavan and Fermanagh is a 9-hole Eddie Hackett designed golf course along the shores of upper Lough MacNeane. The Course is Open Daily 8am – 8pm Weekdays and Weekends. Busy times are Wednesday 11 till 3, Saturday 9 till 2 and Ladies Day is Thursday. The Clubhouse Opening Hours are 10am – 8pm Wednesdays – 10am – 6pm Weekends.	7 Km

³⁸ Contact Details: www.adventuregentlyireland.com; adventuregently@hotmail.com Adrienne 085 1821 547 or Graham 083 1297 300

³⁹ Contact Details: www.bigdayoutinleitrim.com Phone Eileen on 0877386439

⁴⁰ Contact Details: Web – www.leitrimsurf.ie Call – 086 349 4013

⁴¹ Contact Details: www.blackliongolf.com

Name	Adventure	Proximity to Glenfarne
Corralea Adventure Centre – Belcoo ⁴²	<p>A family run business established in 1994. They offer a range of outdoor activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Bike tour experience Fermanagh Lakeland, Duration: 2 hr 30 min Cost: £50. • Caving experience in Fermanagh, Duration: 2 hr 30 min Cost: £50. • Canoe Hire SINGLE BOAT exploring the islands of Lough MacNea, Duration: 2 hr 30 min Cost: £20. • Canoe Hire DOUBLE BOAT exploring the islands of Lough MacNea, Duration: 2 hr 30 min Cost: £30. • SUP Board Hire stand up paddle boards on Lough MacNea, Duration: 2 hr 30 min Cost: £20. • Waterpark Teen (9-17 years) Every day in July and August, Duration: 1hr Cost: £15. • Waterpark Child (6-8 years) Every day in July and August, Duration: 1hr 30 Cost: £10. • Waterpark Adult (18+years) Every day in July and August, Duration: 1hr Cost: £15. <p>Corralea Activity Centre is suitable for families, groups of friends, Hens/Stags and Birthday Parties. They offer onsite accommodation in the form of 4 small self-catering cottages in the forest on the shores of Upper Lough MacNea.</p>	8 Km

⁴² Contact Details: <https://www.activityireland.com>, infor@activityireland.com and Phone 004428 66386123

5 Consultation Analysis

The consultants carried out a series of consultations between March and April through a variety of platforms and mechanisms to establish current views of the community and key stakeholders of Glenfarne Wood to capture their vision for the recreational experience. This also contributed to the development of a realistic assessment of feasible options for development of the Wood.

5.1 Stakeholder Consultations Meetings

A series of consultation meetings and workshops were held. This included meetings and consultations with:

Leitrim County Council and Glenfarne Development Trust	Sean Mc Dermott Mary McLaughlin
Leitrim County Council	Joseph Gilhooly – Senior Directorate Team Tracy Ferguson – Project Development Officer Sinead McDermott – Leitrim Tourism
Coillte	Paul Jordan – Business Area Unit Leader Gerry McTiernan – B3 Estates Conor English – Estate Manager Daithi deForge – Head of Recreation Jesper Petersen – Recreation Manager Richard Jack - Recreation Manager
Fáilte Ireland	Paddy Mathews – Head of Operations – Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Sarah McCarthy – Programme Officer – Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands
Consultants involved in the development of the Interpretive Strategy and Plan for the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance	Deirdre Black
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Lisa Doyle – Catchment CARE Community Incentive Scheme
Railway Station	Frances White, Local Historian
Angling	Philip Rooney, Local Angling Representative
Haldon Forest Park	Toby Bowen-Scott, Recreation Manager, South West Recreation Hub, Forestry England
Lough Key Forest Park	Louise Fitzpatrick, General Manager Lough Key Forest & Activity Park /Boyle /Co. Roscommon
Slieve Gullion Forest Park	Michelle Boyle Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

In addition to the consultation meetings a public consultation event was planned for the 1st April 2020. The purpose of each interaction was to: build enthusiasm and engagement with Glenfarne Wood by gaining insights into its potential and benefits; and seek valuable information from local communities and key stakeholders while securing buy-in and build partnerships for future delivery.

5.2 Revised Consultation Programme

As a result of COVID 19 and the associated lockdown measures that were put in place, it was not possible to hold the scheduled event. The consultants proposed alternative consultative methods utilising technology-based solutions through Zoom Conferencing⁴³ and Survey Monkey which were agreed by the Project Steering Committee on the 13th March 2020. As momentum and interest had built behind the Glenfarne Wood project, it was considered that delaying the project would impede progress and future support. Clearly, the decision to continue was the right one, demonstrated by the level of engagement and buy in from key stakeholders and the local community.

Zoom conference calls were held over 3 nights (1st /2nd and 7th April 2020) with 23 attendees. Invitations were issued through a variety of channels⁴⁴. The contributors to the Zoom meetings were wide ranging and included representatives from Leitrim Recreational Forum, Leitrim Tourism Network, Slow Adventure Experiences in Leitrim, Glenfarne Development Association, SLNCR Greenway Group, Walking Clubs, the Trade, Accommodation Providers Public Bodies, and the Local Community. The complete list of attendees is provided in Appendix 5.

A survey via SurveyMonkey was conducted between 18th March 2020 and Wednesday 8th April 2020. The survey was carried out on-line and distributed through the following media channels: Leitrim County Council website and posts on the council's social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – and Leitrim PPN website and notices; two interviews on both Ocean FM and Shannonside Radio, and press release on 4th and 25th March in the Leitrim Observer newspaper. The survey response representing 42 respondents exceeded expectations.

In addition to the zoom calls and survey, eight additional submissions were sent to the consultants. Five were from attendees at the Zoom calls providing additional ideas for consideration, two from invitees who were unable to participate in the calls and one local resident.

On the 28th of April 2020, a **further Zoom meeting** was held with 12 representatives of the Leitrim County Council/Coillte Working Group and Fáilte Ireland to share the outputs of the stakeholder and community consultation process and present the draft findings and emerging themes. The complete list of attendees is provided in Appendix 5.

The consultants are confident that the response rate was highly representative.

5.3 Zoom Calls & Submission Analysis

The consultants were most impressed by the level of engagement from all who participated in the Zoom workshops. This is important for building commitment and support for the project in the longer term. Each session took approximately 90 minutes. It was evident that all participants were well prepared and had considered their responses to the questions outlined in the invitation:

1. Views on Glenfarne Wood and its environs and what makes this a special place
2. The future experiences it could offer to attract and encourage more locals and visitors to come and enjoy the wood, including a consideration on: who would come; and what they will do?
3. What are the most important things to deliver the best for the area and its visitors?
4. Who needs to be involved and what needs to be in place to deliver the ambition?
5. What needs to be sustained and protected?

⁴³ Zoom was chosen as you can have audio or video conferencing and messaging from a desktop and mobile phone. Community representatives can dial in from their phone and take part in the discussion, up to 100 people can join in.

⁴⁴ The project officer at Leitrim County Council (23); to Members of Leitrim Recreational Forum through the secretariat Leitrim Development Company; and members of Members of Slow Adventure Experiences in Leitrim through Leitrim Tourism. In addition to this, the project officer Leitrim County Council, was monitoring survey responses identifying survey participants who wanted to be further engaged with the process, this engaged 2 additional attendees.

5.3.1 Zoom – Key Findings

- The unspoiled beauty of the area was viewed as “most valued” words such as – *tranquil, peaceful, wild, calming* and *holistic experience* were used frequently. The importance of developing the right experiences that would not detract from the Wood and the need to protect the area was mentioned several times. Its historical and archaeological heritage, and the stories associated with the Wood were all referenced as an opportunity to add value to the visitor experience.
- The development of visitor infrastructure and services to allow all to explore, walk, enjoy the lake and take their time was considered important.
- “Location” was referenced many times in connection with Glenfarne Wood. Ease of access to its beautiful walk and trails, were elements that contributed to it being an ideal stopping point for day trippers and travellers coming from Northern Ireland to the West of Ireland and vice versa.
- The opportunity to develop connected and clustered experiences and packages by linking with others in the wider region was highlighted by many.
- It was considered that, with the right plan and investment, Glenfarne Wood could be a key part of the slow adventure proposition of ‘Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands’ and Leitrim’s slow adventure brand with bundled land and water-based activities and experiences for the non-specialist market and families in particular.
- The need for funding and capacity building was noted and developments associated with guiding, interpretation and health and wellness were frequently mentioned. Many highlighted the opportunity for Glenfarne Wood to become an innovation hub supporting experience development and capacity building
- It was commonly suggested that the development of the woods and its experiences must be delivered in collaboration with Leitrim County Council, Coillte and the community and that there is scope to work in partnership with cross border communities, businesses and agencies to optimise future development opportunities.

Specific development opportunities suggestions included:

- Enhanced signage, including directional, wayfinding and interpretation.
- Interpretation themes and stories within and along the trails.
- Development of basic visitor infrastructure such as toilets and weather shelters.
- More infrastructure to support universal access, including lighting, path surfaces etc.
- Alternative access / linked walks from other locations in the area to allow locals and visitors to avoid the main road.
- Dog friendly element should be communicated to attract more visitors.
- A marketing and promotion plan with shared digital and print content to be used by agencies, businesses, community and other stakeholders etc to put Glenfarne on the map.
- Development of suitable and attractive accommodation options within the wood including space for camper vans, glamping pods or forest huts.
- Developing Glenfarne Wood and access to Lough McNea to establish an activity hub with services and visitor experiences such as kayaking, fishing, orienteering and family fun activities.
- Developing more events and festivals such as Park Runs and walking festivals
- Build on its location as a possible stopping point / overnight for holiday makers travelling from Northern Ireland to Wild Atlantic Way and other locations within Ireland.
- Work with business partners to consider how this resource may support more youth activity / camps, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student experiences and build on out of season activity.
- Link with other projects in the area and national and cross border developments such as Greenway; Beara Breifni Way via Leitrim Way links, Battle, Bricks and Bridges links, Blueways etc.

Whist all agreed that there are many opportunities a number stated that a **big bold idea** was important to position Glenfarne wood as a magnet for the area and to set it apart from the many other beautiful places that visitors could go to. Suggestions included:

- The development of an events space and infrastructure to host and run international events and performances.
- Establishing an eco-themed hub with zones for accommodation, workshops / activity, space to support immersion in the experience.
- Position Glenfarne Wood as the most accessible nature tourism offer (accessibility, sustainability and multi access) catering for a variety of groups.
- Developing an Equestrian Cross-Country Trail and Cross-Country Running Course around the Perimeter of Glenfarne Wood.

Implications for the development of Glenfarne Wood

- Glenfarne Wood's future can be informed by an ambitious vision once fundamentals are addressed and this needs to recognise its strategic importance as a potential hub in the context of SLNCR development and future trails development.
- Resources, such as management and coordination are required to deliver experiences, support businesses and manage events.
- Partnership structure for delivery must involve community and link with wider area networks and development groups.
- Development and investment can add value to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands initiative and therefore benefit from increased support and marketing once experiences are in place.
- Facilities and services need to consider more car parking, visitor servicing, including onsite café for light refreshments and takeaways.

5.4 Survey via SurveyMonkey

The purpose of the survey was to identify local community and business views on: the USPs of Glenfarne Wood; development opportunities for Glenfarne Wood; issues and concerns around the development of Glenfarne Wood; the current strength of community and business engagement with Glenfarne Wood; views on improvements to Glenfarne Wood that would enhance the visitor/tourist experience; and ensure that local potential visitors and businesses felt a sense of commitment to the development of Glenfarne Wood. A summary of the analysis is presented in the paragraphs below, the detailed analysis is presented in Appendix 6.

5.4.1 Survey Analysis

The survey respondents highlighted that Glenfarne Wood was a special place due to its natural environment (54%); peaceful setting (25%); historical heritage (9%); and its location on the Northern Ireland – to the West N16 route providing good access and an ideal opportunity to stop for a day/days (9%). Overwhelmingly, the respondents mentioned the beautiful natural setting and the peacefulness the area offers. There were several comments highlighting that the area be sympathetically developed to retain the natural heritage and the calm experience in the wood.

A greater appreciation of former big houses and their demesnes now exists in Ireland and Glenfarne Hall should be able to attract more visitors i.e. families, historians, hikers etc., given its close proximity to the N16 thus helping local economy.

I believe we should focus on highlighting the history of Glenfarne Wood and especially its link with Belfast.

Many of the responses proposed variations on making the most of the existing natural habitat rather than any large-scale development. Developing and enhancing tracks and trails, and developing visitor signage and interpretation to help visitors to embrace and learn about their natural surroundings were strongest, Pods, glamping and wild camping was also mentioned several times, again presumably, to allow the visitor to get close to nature.

The survey highlighted that a number of key stakeholders need to be involved to make the development of Glenfarne Wood happen including: the local community/residents (29); other agencies/groups (24), (*Local clubs and support groups; Fáilte Ireland; Leitrim Recreational Forum; National Parks and Wildlife Service, Irish Wildlife Trust, Birdwatch Ireland*); Leitrim County Council (22); Local industry/economy representatives (11); Coillte (9) and the Department of Rural and Community Development/LEADER programme (4).

5.5 Consultation Implications for the Glenfarne Wood Option Analysis

Glenfarne Wood is currently extensively used by local visitors. The consultees were passionate about the development of the Wood and the importance of protecting the area as a special place. It was considered that any development of Glenfarne Wood must be sympathetic to the natural environment and not over developed. The table below presents a summary of the strengths of Glenfarne Wood and barriers to overcome in the development of Glenfarne Wood as a visitor experience.

Strengths	Considerations and barriers to overcome in the development of Glenfarne Wood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful, calming and holistic experience • Offering a combination of the forest and Lough – that needs to be packaged • Natural environment and existing biodiversity • Leitrim, in particular, is well known for its connectivity with nature, eco- friendly and slow tourism attributes and it has an abundance of providers who can connect with Glenfarne Wood to provide packages • A place that can be used by all ageing population, children, young adults and families • Rich natural, social, cultural, historic and archaeological heritage at the wood and in its surrounds • The proposed SLNCR Greenway passes the entrance to Glenfarne Wood and the vision for the development of the wood must consider the wood as a place where Greenway users could stop off and have a visitor experience that will enable them to spend more time in the area and make them want to come back • Desire by all to develop and create a visitor experience with facilities that meet visitors' expectations and requirements • Wide range of stakeholders identified to support the development and become involved. • Sense of 'ownership' by respondents • Community interest in being involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about over-development • Balance between providing visitor infrastructure and facilities and protecting woods uniqueness • Requirement to be financially sustainable, create jobs, contribute to economic development and social regeneration of the area balanced with local concern about over- commercialising • Proposals to develop trails versus retaining peace and tranquillity of the woods • Engagement with local community at all stages including advising how they can help and benefit – potential to set up small, manageable stakeholder group to include local community • Management and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders including ensuring wide-ranging objectives are met • There is little accommodation for visitors in close proximity to the Wood

Glenfarne Wood is a place to enjoy outdoor activities, and experience general wellness. Developing innovative products and services that build on this would offer visitors a chance to further enjoy an outdoor lifestyle within this rural setting. It is a location for trails and tales, family fun, wellness and themed events and festivals would allow visitors to spend time experiencing Glenfarne Wood rather than somewhere to pass merely an hour or two.

5.6 Emerging Themes

The stakeholder and community consultation process highlighted several findings and emerging themes. The Top Five themes identified through consultation have been illustrated below. The options presented in the analysis have been developed from this input.



6 Research and Benchmarking

6.1 Good Practice Review

Society has become more aware of the health benefits of exercise, and increasingly appreciative of the natural environment and the need to ensure it is well protected. As a result, demand for both active and passive pursuits in the outdoors grows. Forest Parks/Woods are being developed and enhanced through public and private sector collaborations⁴⁵ offering a range of outdoor; lifestyle; cultural and educational visitor experiences; family attractions; hiking and biking trails; nature and wildlife activities; and adventure activities.

The aspiration for the development of Glenfarne Wood is to make a difference to the repositioning of outdoor tourism in County Leitrim; enhance the health and wellbeing of the community; be world class in its value proposition; and reflect the inherent values and strengths of its product and service offering in line with best practice.

In line with these aspirations, this section presents summary data on developments in three forest parks all of which have been researched for good practice in adding value to the visitor experience. The sites chosen for case study had two general attributes:

1. Potential replicability at Glenfarne Wood; and
2. Offering enough operational examples to support the development options and delivery models (see Sections 7 & 8).

The case study analysis focused on the following key sites:

Theme	Case Study
Forest Parks and Woods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lough Key Forest Park, Boyle Co. Roscommon • Slieve Gullion Forest Park Newry, County Armagh • Haldon Forest Park, Kennford, Exeter, England

The complete case studies are in Appendix 7 of this report.

In addition, to the case-based analysis, the consultants reviewed their own recent research to extrapolate lessons and insights that could inform this study. This included collating information related to the following sources: Visitor Experience Frameworks; Visitor Management plans; Trails strategies; Angling Tourism Strategies; Interviews with International Adventure Travel Trade Association members; Interview with National Parks Canada Management; and Best Practice Recommendations including Leave No Trace.

6.2 Key Learnings: Parks and Forest Parks and Woods

The information presented is a synthesis of good practices used in the forest sites, national parks and other outdoor attractions. The paragraphs that follow present a summary of key learnings that link to Glenfarne Woods development options established as part of this study.

⁴⁵ For example between Coillte, Fáilte Ireland, local authorities and private sector providers

Layout and Design

1. one areas according to use and market.
2. Maintain landscape quality despite high levels of use.
3. Manage usage for example limiting the number, type, location of activities and events to assist with visitor dispersal.
4. Define requirements for public safety and security.
5. Visitor and routes need to be dispersed and trails and experiences need to be designed to accommodate different profiles.
6. Well planned routes – linked to stories and the type of experiences.
7. Get public buy-in for landscape quality goals through education and engagement. Since the public plays an active role in respecting landscape rehabilitation and resource conservation efforts.
8. Control circulation and access – universal design of pathways and entrances to accommodate visitors' needs (e.g. multiuse trails).
9. Visitors love to have the opportunity to overnight – or wild camp in a Pod⁴⁶, accommodation and style must be appropriate to the environment.
10. Control access to an area for safety and protection of the landscape.
11. Design for ease of maintenance – standardise and limit the numbers and types of site furnishings.
12. Develop specific areas to accommodate events.

Operations

1. Create comprehensive and accessible products and services related to family fun, trails, older people and events with universal appeal.
2. Cluster products and services providing a range of experiences to ensure that visitors will choose to spend a day or more in the area.
3. Have a clear management and delivery structure for the forest park.
4. There is a perception that people do not expect to pay for product and services at forest parks but will do so if the products and services are innovative, unique and fit for purpose.
5. Parking charges should be considered to generate revenue for the maintenance of the park.
6. Develop strong working relationships with catering operators, activity providers and event organisations.
7. Ensure ongoing collaboration and good working relationship with park maintenance and activity/event staff to ensure coordination and communication.

Visitor Centers and Interpretation

1. Design all structures in line with the forest landscape
2. Small considered better. Best used as a gateway / gathering point, staffed with informed rangers / staff – objective inspire visitors to get into the forest to enjoy.
3. Present coordinated visitor information, orientation and interpretation signage.
4. Encourage the responsible behaviour of visitors, Leave no trace display positive messaging and park rules.
5. Orientation and education use a variety of approaches for education and information, including web-based tools, apps, traditional interpretive panels, and iWalks and trails.

⁴⁶ This could and should be considered and collaboration with the right and responsible operator could make this work

Visitor Engagement

1. Investment in a digital strategy is considered important and must include social media engagement and interpretation.
2. Branding and well-developed propositions are important⁴⁷. Establish a sense of place reinforce place and character through branding — use of logos and consistent site furnishings.
3. Hold familiarisation trips and site visits for key visitor groups such as older walking groups or mobility restricted groups to introduce them to any new facilities and reassure them that developments are accessible to them, and remove any perception that developments are aimed at other markets such as families only.
4. Ensure that communications and marketing include clear information on the offering for older people and removes any perceived barriers to access.

Management Models, Partnerships and Leveraging Community Resources

1. Partnership with local communities and business providers are essential to deliver experiences that can attract visitors to stay and spend time in the area.
2. The development of any park/ wood is a long- term project. Success depends on the local communities buy in which the consultation exercise highlighted Glenfarne Wood has in abundance.
3. Collaboration with private operators with long term leases: formal relationships between a community and/or business organisation whose mandate include looking after leased buildings, grounds, adventure activities and nature areas in the Parks is necessary.
4. Partnerships with the “right commercial operators” who sign up to a code of ethics are important.
5. Community engagement can support building a network of ambassadors and champions for the forest park/ Wood who ensure that everyone in the area values and appreciates the amenity and engages in activities and events
6. Working with other local organisations (e.g. Public Health, Heart & Stroke, and Local Health Networks, Active Age Groups, Disability Groups and Autism Ireland) can help address chronic illness management and support health promotion. Coillte actively promote this in several of their forest parks. Forest Parks infrastructure, activities and events have the potential to become community health hubs (see Section 7 Forest Bathing).
7. Work with “Leave no Trace” to ensure the public understands and implements responsible behaviour in enjoying the forest.

Visitor Management

1. The challenge in balancing demand and conservation. Many highlighted the importance of targeting market and consumer groups and segments who value nature, sustainable development, and understand the need to conserve and sustain. Therefore education, messaging such as Leave No Trace and stakeholder management are essential.
2. Measurement is important – numbers, off season development, visitor satisfaction survey, research on tracking where visitors are coming from and build a profile of habits and usage.

⁴⁷ Sweden www.nationalparksofsweden.se 29 National Parks – have a common brand / look/ logo , Imagery across all is encouraging engagement, showing family enjoyment, camping, adventure, **Tyerst³a** – on the doorstep of Stockholm it is positioned at the gateway and introduction to the National Park Network. Examples in their system reinforces the message to all citizens to get out and enjoy the real outdoors – can be seen by the small things – Shelters, Camping Services, support for Forest Schools, support to specialist Operators that package the experience.

6.3 Conclusion

The case-based analysis has informed the development, delivery and the sustainable approach to tourism development as illustrated within this feasibility study and option analysis for Glenfarne Wood.

The benchmarking review has provided a rich source of data for the future development of Glenfarne Wood ensuring its sustainability as a unique visitor experience. The sites reviewed were forest parks that are well established and have evolved considerably through their life cycle. Each has provided a learning opportunity for the development of this project.

7 Development of Options

7.1 Options Overview

The desk research, benchmarking, case studies, consultation activity and the consultants' expertise has informed the following suite of options. These are grouped around five key themes and include recommendations on the basic building blocks suggested to bring these themes to life. The themes and their associated objectives are:

<p>Health and Wellness <i>To create a suite of interventions and infrastructure positioning Glenfarne Wood as a holistic hub for natural harmony, offering programmes and experiences that build reputation and attract a growing market and consumer segment.</i></p>
<p>Family Fun <i>To develop amenities and infrastructure within Glenfarne Wood to support the offering of a range of healthy, engaging, and exciting family fun experiences, catering for all ages and abilities and in particularly attracting intergenerational family groups.</i></p>
<p>Active in Nature <i>To create a collection of visitor centric spaces and accommodation for larger groups, opening up the potential for events and activities, thereby delivering more benefits to the local and regional economy.</i></p>
<p>Trails and Tales <i>To ensure all who visit are motivated to get out, explore and enjoy the natural and built heritage of Glenfarne Wood and its environs via its trails and pathways.</i></p>
<p>Unlock the Water <i>To build capacity and provide facilities to allow local activity providers to unlock slow adventure tourism experiences on the Lough and within the Wood for local and overseas visitors.</i></p>

The Basic Building Blocks identify and list core interventions suggested as fundamental requirements to enable delivery of the expected facilities and visitor services across all themes.

Optional actions have been aligned to phases for illustrative purposes. All phases are dependent on the resources available at any time and the emerging character of Glenfarne Wood as its visitor profile grows.

The indicative Phases may be understood as :

Phase	Years
Phase 1	1: Actions that are necessary to facilitate other phases and/or are relatively easy or inexpensive to achieve.
Phase 2	2- 3: Actions that build on initial developments and sustain momentum and allow for Phase 3.
Phase 3	4-5+ : Complex and ambitious projects that rely on sound implementation of previous phases and visitor number growth.



Key explanatory notes and assumptions for each deliverable are outlined.

7.2 Themes

HEALTH AND WELLBEING: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood is valued as a holistic hub for natural harmony		
Activity	Description	Phase
Forest bathing ⁴⁸	<p><i>Basic steps for the introduction of forest bathing at Glenfarne Wood include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone an area for forest bathing ensuring there are paths within the Wood that people can use to enjoy the natural environment. • Programme and develop specific forest bathing events, offer familiarisation trips, and provide guided tours. Build awareness by inviting the local community, visitor representative organisations Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland; neighbouring Local authorities, local trade, and businesses; health care representative organisations; special needs teachers and representative groups. No special equipment or facilities are necessary; rather information and encouragement for visitors by practitioners on how to forest bathe, who can outline the benefits of bathing. • Include clear and easy to follow information re wellness and forest bathing on Glenfarne Wood's website and social media profile. Publish blogs and testimonials from a variety of people explaining how they forest bathe and how they benefit from the experience. These should include a wide range of people as it is not a niche activity with a demographic. • Develop an app to supplement the experience with activities to be completed, soundtracks to listen to etc. • Install trigger point signage at key points to encourage forest bathing and help visitors know what forest bathing activities they can do. This could be supported by activity sheets to complete available from the visitor centre, or to download in advance. • Record a podcast for people to download and listen to on their forest bathing journey. • Include 'science' in promotional material as appropriate for different target audiences <i>e.g. Green outdoor settings reduce ADHD symptoms in children across a wide range of individual, residential, and case characteristics.</i>⁴⁹ 	<p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <p>Phase 3</p>

⁴⁸ Forest bathing is simply the experience of immersing oneself in the natural environment and being aware of all the sights, sounds, smells and sensations. This Japanese practice is a process of relaxation, known in Japan as *shinrin yoku*. It is a simple method of being calm and quiet amongst the trees, observing nature around you whilst breathing deeply can help both adults and children de-stress and boost health and wellbeing in a natural way. Rather than walking for exercise, the aim is to take the time to really focus on the natural world around: from the rays of sunlight catching the leaves to birdsong echoing from the canopy, to teach concentration and mindfulness.

⁴⁹ Kuo and Taylor 2004 http://nhsforest.org/sites/default/files/Dose_of_Nature_evidence_report_o.pdf

HEALTH AND WELLBEING: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood is valued as a holistic hub for natural harmony		
Activity	Description	Phase
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with local mental health support organisations and charities to develop programmes and opportunities. • Coillte have been working with doctors and health service professions on use of their Forests for Green Prescriptions the objective being to reduce reliance on prescribed medication.⁵⁰ Forest Bathing could be an extension of these practices developing a holistic approach to health and wellbeing of all. • Work with Coillte to provide information to promote forest bathing – Glenfarne Wood could act as a pilot for Forest Bathing in Ireland. 	
Health and Wellness Programme - Mindfulness; Yoga; Meditation and Pilates Retreats		<p>An annual Health and Wellbeing Programme is a great opportunity for the Wood to further promote itself as a healthy holistic space. The development and promotion of a programme of Mindfulness; Yoga; Meditation and Pilates, classes and retreats. The programme will gain momentum and provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the Wood and new developments through this event platform. There is also an option to explore the opportunity of hosting the retreats on Billberry or Patrick's islands on the Lough (detailed in 4.2.8).</p>
		<p>Programmes throughout =-</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <p>Phase 3</p>

⁵⁰ http://nhsforest.org/sites/default/files/Dose_of_Nature_evidence_report_0.pdf

HEALTH AND WELLBEING: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood is valued as a holistic hub for natural harmony		
Activity	Description	Phase
All Weather Yurt ⁵¹	Purchase and storage of a mobile yurt with a floor space of 34.4 m ² 2.9m height. The yurt will act as an all-weather facility with enough space for the health and wellbeing retreats/ yoga studio, forest weddings, classrooms, cinema, or music practice room etc.	Phase 1
Diaspora Commemorative Arboretum	 <p>A diaspora commemorative arboretum developed to commemorate the Diaspora of North Leitrim⁵². It could comprise 100 different types of trees that are native to the countries to which people emigrated during and since The Famine. This will commemorate the good that came out of this terrible period for many emigrants who went on to develop new lives overseas.</p>	Phase 2 Phase 3
Sensory Trail (links to Trails and Tales outlined below)	<p>A Sensory Trail may be developed in a quieter zone of the wood, primarily designed for children and adults with additional sensory needs; however, it can be used by anyone looking to have a slow adventure through the forest, exploring using all the senses for wellness and to increase engagement with nature. A visual aid to help prepare for a visit should be available on their Glenfarne Wood website. Examples of potential activity points along the trail could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plants with texture and smells • Forest chairs • Blind rope challenge • Tree rings • Instant poetry • Nature's orchestra • Water music 	Phase 2 Phase 3




⁵¹ <https://www.yurtsdirect.com/buy-a-yurt-classic-price-meters.html>

⁵² Leitrim has a significant Diaspora. Building on the success of the Gathering in 2013, the Diaspora is to be a key focus for Tourism Ireland in 2015. This represents a good opportunity for Leitrim to capitalise on Tourism Ireland's activities to reach out to its Diaspora. The Leitrim Roots Festival is a draw for the Diaspora and there is a Genealogy Centre in Ballinamore and the County Library.



FAMILY FUN: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood is attracting family groups from far and wide and is valued for offering healthy, engaging, and exciting family fun for all ages and abilities within the extended family		
Activity	Description	Phase
Natural Play Space	 <p>A natural play space may include: a natural play area, sand areas and natural water features, picnic area, mud kitchen and creative construction/den area including a lockable storage pod for loose natural and loose construction materials (e.g. logs, pine cones, buckets, pebbles, stones wood blocks, branches, canvas covers for dens etc.), biodiversity planting to attract butterfly/bugs, butterfly bath, pond, composting bin, bird feeders, wildflower area, native flowers, fruit trees, sensory elements, creative drawing trail and a raised bed areas to encourage children to plant and grow of flowers, vegetables and herbs.</p>	Phase 2
Family Walking Trail (<i>links to Trails and Tales outlined below</i>)	 <p>A woodland walk using existing trails with animal sculptures, wishing chairs, fairy doors, fairy plaques, a bug hotel all sculpted from wood to further engage children with the woodland and nature all around them.</p> <p>Go along for a day out. Pick up a free activity sheet and look out for some minibeasts who roam around Glenfarne Wood. Bugs to identify, questions and puzzles to solve. It is a great way to get kids into the outdoors, to play, learn, discover, and explore.</p>	 <p>Phase 1 <i>(to be reviewed as part of the Trails Development and Enhancement Plan below)</i></p>

FAMILY FUN: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood is attracting family groups from far and wide and is valued for offering healthy, engaging, and exciting family fun for all ages and abilities within the extended family		
Activity	Description	Phase
Significant Visitor Attraction of Scale and Ambition	<p>While not defined, as Glenfarne Wood develops its unique character and attracts increasing numbers of visitors there is ambition for an attraction of scale. This would be chosen and implemented in latter phases of development. This attraction would be appropriate to Glenfarne Wood, Family fun, and take consideration of the growing visitor profile. It is likely that a relationship with an operator who would act as a 3rd party licensee would be required for a significant attraction. This would require Glenfarne Wood be an established destination in the area.</p> <p>During consultation, the idea of a Zipline Course consisting of up to 4 x 100m ziplines across the lake was raised. After serious consideration by Coillte and Leitrim Council it was agreed that this option is not appropriate for Glenfarne Wood. However, the need for a significant and unique attraction remains part of the development ambitions of this Options Outline.</p>	Phase 3



ACTIVE IN NATURE: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood is performing to its full potential by offering events and activities that attract visitors during shoulder and off season and is valued by all stakeholders for its impact on the local economy		
Activity	Description	Phase
Parkrun	<p>There are currently no parkruns in County Leitrim return to the same area for the run and are repeat visitors enjoying what the area has to offer. The Glenfarne Wood park run has the potential to draw runners and running clubs in Leitrim. Research has shown people travel great distances to participate in parkruns and often North and South Leitrim, Fermanagh, South Donegal, Sligo and Cavan⁵³. Coillte have a national licence with parkrun Ireland to hold Park runs in their forests.</p>  <p>Parkruns are normally 5km. In Glenfarne wood the current trails are 3.75km and 2.5km a loop run would have to be developed, incorporating both trails, this will have no cost associated. An alternative would be to start the parkrun at the entrance to the forest run the 2.3km along a scenic trail developed adjacent to the Cornavannoge River to the Lough shore and then join the 3.75km loop trail. This would have no cost provided the trail infrastructure adjacent to the Cornavannoge River had been put in place (see section 7.3 below). Implementing a parkrun involves initial set up costs for a barcode scanner⁵⁴ along with minor equipment, road markers for each km mark, and a start and finish line material.</p> <p>A strong community lead is essential also, parkrun will not run successfully without this.</p>	Phase 1
Events programme	<p>The Wood could be used to facilitate across all the themes an events programme including: water-based events – angling, Slow Adventure – canoe/ kayaking and Stand Up Paddle board (as stand-alone or in connection with other events) Introductory forest bathing; gong immersion and sound meditation, yoga and Pilates in the yurt; concerts and orchestras; Big Forest Find – family nature and wildlife events; citizen science programmes – one-off participation during visit or sustained data collection; outdoor cinema; Love Later Life – a free activity days for over 60s connecting them actively to nature; and Footsteps in the Forest – cultural and heritage and family events schedule.</p> <p>It may be that Leitrim County Council and Coillte partner with an operator to deliver events although some event infrastructure such as electricity and water may be required.</p>	Phase 1 Phase 2 Phase 3


⁵³ There are Park runs in both Enniskillen (Lakeland Forum) and Sligo town (Doorley Park) both are run on a mixture of tarmac paths, gravel paths, trail paths, concrete paths and gravel running tracks. Both park runs use shared paths and must **give way** to other park users. There are no park runs in South Donegal the nearest being Portnoo and Falcarragh. There are no park runs in West Cavan the nearest being Cavan town and Coothill.

⁵⁴ Which must be purchased from the parkrun company

ACTIVE IN NATURE: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood is performing to its full potential by offering events and activities that attract visitors during shoulder and off season and is valued by all stakeholders for its impact on the local economy		
Activity	Description	Phase
Outdoor events infrastructure	The Wood with its open spaces and its natural amphitheater i.e. high mound provides a natural opportunity as an outdoor events space. While it would be anticipated that an operator would deliver events, it would be expected that basic infrastructure is in place i.e. power and water, to facilitate a 'plug and play' event. The operator would be expected to bring staging, flooring, seating (if required), toilets, fencing, signage, security and other staff and other operational requirements.	 Phase 2
Forest Weddings/ Naming Ceremonies	 For a wedding with a difference in the beautiful natural forest surroundings (weather permitting). If the weather poses a problem using the yurt or all-weather domes for the celebrations and host the reception afterwards in the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance.	Once infrastructure in place
Dawn/dusk experience with guide	Taking part in the health and wellness activities available, in trails and for special events, water activities a sauna and wild swimming, dinner (local chef), dancing at the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance sleep in the forest – wild camping or accommodation pods.	Once infrastructure in place

TRAILS AND TALES: DESIRED OUTCOME: Visitors of all ages and interests are attracted and motivated to spend time at Glenfarne Wood to explore in nature, discover its stories and appreciate its beauty		
Activity	Description	Phase
Trails Development and Enhancement of Existing Trails	<p>During consultation the following trails were identified as suggestions for development: cycle trails; orienteering trails; Tree celebrities – information panels about tree species, traditional uses, folklore, ogham; seasonal bio-tours/bio-blitzes; mushroom hunt; nature trails and foraging; seasonal walks; history and heritage (detailed in section 4.2.4 and Appendix 2); archaeological trails (detailed in section 4.2.5 and Appendix 3); and children’s fun (as outlined in family fun above) and sensory trails (as outlined in Health and Wellbeing above).</p> <p>A trails development and enhancement plan would have to be commissioned to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current trails and marks. • Identify opportunities and links to other linear trails mentioned through consultation, e.g. the SLNCR Greenway, Leitrim Way, Breffni Way, Kiltyclogher trail. • Surface assessment to identify if the current trails are fit for purpose in terms of universal access. • Identify enhancements required. • Identify action points and trail features. • Identify locations for action points and trail features. • Plot trails, trail markings. • Develop interpretation – Articles/Videos/Podcasts (see Interpretation). <p>The trails identified as the most popular included: children’s fun and sensory trails (suggestions for which have been provided) followed by history and heritage and nature /foraging.</p>	Phase 1

UNLOCK THE WATER: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood offering a range of slow adventure tourism experiences on the Lough and within the Wood for local and overseas visitors		
Activity	Description	Phase
<p>Canoe/ Kayaking and Stand Up Paddle Board Trails – Blueway Development</p>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Linking the Lough to the developments at Glenfarne Wood will provide a network of multi- activity recreational trails based on and linked with the water. Canoe/ kayaking and Stand Up Paddle board trails are particularly linked to a range of experience types such as 'Soft Adventure' with little real risk, 'Slow Adventure' which supports 'living in the moment' and savouring the experience, a concept branded by Leitrim. Furthermore, canoe/ kayaking and Stand Up Paddle board participants are all within the category of seeking to be the 'Active in Nature' promoted by the Hidden Heartlands.</p> <p>The success of such trails is dependent on the provision of local water access and amenities, and the ability to integrate and co-promote existing land and water-based resources and events. Supporting services such as hire, and instruction and animation activities are also required.</p> <p>There are several dimensions or stages to developing the potential of the Lough these include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infrastructure/resources: access, egress, parking, signage, showers, toilets, changing facilities, trails, trail heads and loops identified, other land-based trails, heritage, and scenery. 2. Services: direct activity provision (instruction, hire), indirect recreation provision (dining, accommodation). 3. Animation: promotional material, social media, events and offers (5k races, walking festival, artisan tour, community festival) <p>Trails linking the Lough MacNean, through the Arney river, into the Erne system with several stopping off points to facilitate all abilities and encourage local exploration require further research.</p> </div> </div> <div style="margin-top: 20px; text-align: right;">  </div>	<p>Once Infrastructure and Resources in Place</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Animation of same –</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <p>Phase 3</p>

UNLOCK THE WATER: DESIRED OUTCOME: Glenfarne Wood offering a range of slow adventure tourism experiences on the Lough and within the Wood for local and overseas visitors		
Activity	Description	Phase
Sauna and Wild Swimming⁵⁸	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <p>Inspired by the Irish Sweatboxes (detailed in section 4.2.5 and Appendix 4) located near the Wood and in County Leitrim itself. An outdoor sauna, followed by wild swimming offers people the opportunity to feel invigorated, madly alive and have great conversation. The outdoor sauna allows you to run from 100-degree temperatures to an icy Lough and offers a chance to reconnect with nature in a way that many of us have forgotten. This idea is also linked to health and wellbeing considering how desperate people are to experience feelings of well-being and relaxation and how much people self-medicate to feel good. There is also an option to explore the opportunity of putting the saunas on Bilberry or Patrick’s islands on the Lough (detailed in 4.2.8).</p> <p>It is possible to pilot this initiative by contacting the owners of Bosca Beatha⁵⁹ a hand built wooden sauna has been touring around Ireland since 2012. At any time, it could be in Cork, Galway, the Wicklow Mountains or out and about on the festival circuit during the summer months. It may be an idea to discuss the possibility of them coming to Glenfarne or their experiences in travelling around Ireland over the years with their mobile sauna.</p> </div> </div>	Phase 2

⁵⁸ The outdoor sauna is an integral part of Scandinavian culture and has been recorded in Finland from the Middle Ages.

⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/BoscaBeatha/>

7.3 The Basic Building Blocks

The consultants have determined the need for a visitor management and interpretation plan in Phase 1. This will ensure that future investment is informed through the mapping of a detailed visitor journey that tests the best locations for the suggested suite of visitor infrastructure and facilities and themes in this report. It should map the zones of activity and include detail specifications for the location of two to three viewing points (architect design) all weather shelters, seating areas, site for unique visitor accommodation, location of yurts, play areas, events spaces, as well as most appropriate access points to Lough for all water based leisure activity.

The articulation of the visitor experience and detailed interpretation plan will inform Coillte and Leitrim County Council how each of the above themes and suggested experiences are communicated and brought to life including signage both directional and wayfinding and visitor information dissemination via marketing, digital and print communications and collateral, and visitor interpretation mediums. It is suggested that the same brief includes a review of existing trails to support universal access, family friendly walking and cycling as well as further requirements for themed trails such as sensory, family, heritage and culture and nature and forging. Access to and on water taking note of Blueway development principles as outlined above should also be assessed in detail.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Phase
Following dissemination of final Glenfarne Options Report and agreement on Phase 1 actions, the visitor journey and associated interpretation must be scoped in detail. This will require a mix of expertise, to include visitor management and interpretation, trails analysis and wayfinding informed by detailed understanding of visitor needs and experiences. This could be undertaken as an in-house development or through external procurement.	Phase 1 Year One

The **infrastructure** from which the themes and experiences described previously can be realised is described in the following table:

INFRASTRUCTURE	
Car Parking	
<p>Description. The development of a new car parking facility located at the entrance to Glenfarne Wood. To accommodate additional capacity and remove anticipated congestion at existing orientation point. It is anticipated that as this is in a brownfield site the development may cater for 50 vehicles and allow for an overspill to cater for those that come for events such as parkruns and gatherings. There should be spaces to suit all travelers with approximately 47 car spaces, space for 3 coaches with motor bikes and bicycles provided for. The 10 car parking spaces close to the slipway would be maintained, mainly for universal access provision and cycle stands.</p>	<p>Phase Phase 1</p>

INFRASTRUCTURE	
TRAIL TO ORIENTATION POINT and TRAIL HEAD	
<p>Description: Making the walk to the Lough shore from the car park an essential part of the visitor journey and experience. Develop trail link adjacent to existing access road, with appropriate signage to encourage all to take the 2.3 km scenic walk, past the standing stones adjacent to the Cornavannoge River to current car park and orientation point at the Lough shore. Surface specification to ensure suitability for universal access and family friendly use.</p> <p>Trial Head at existing car park should be the focal and gathering point for all visitors – it is in the right setting at the edge of the wood and overlooking the Lough.</p> <p>Map boards and other orientation signage are currently in place and will need upgrading following outputs of overall visitor management and interpretation study.</p> <p>The suggested Lough Shore Visitor Services Hub described below is in this location.</p>	<p>Phase</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 1</p>
VISITOR SERVICES HUB	
<p>A phased approach to this service hub would provide initially for service building e.g. registration area along with toilets seating etc. with aspiration to elements outlined in report being retained for development at later stages.</p> <p>Description: Design and build visitor service / information block at the Lough shore – this should be designed in a manner that is in keeping with the environment, is an attractor in its own right, has visitor services and facilities such as toilets, showers⁶⁰ and changing facilities and an area for self-service indoor orientation and signage including maps, information and interpretation, events and things to do.</p> <p>To ensure this facility can support local guides, business providers offer a range of activities within the Wood and on the Lough through the provision of storage facilities for kayaks, Stand up boards, bicycle hire, tramper⁶¹/mobility scooter hire.</p> <p>Explore the opportunity to allow visitors pause, rest, and purchase basic refreshments, or develop café offering in partnership with local provider via the development of indoor and outdoor seating / picnic area. This would have to be commercially viable getting the right operator in here makes a real difference – active on social media Instagram being all about the messages from the forest.</p> <p>Consider the design and imagine an instillation such as a glass encased viewing platform that offers great views of Lough and is an attractive place to spend time in at the start or at the end of a visitor's time in the woods or on the Lough. With an imaginative design this facility could become an attractor offering great photo and Instagram opportunities This design could be promoted as an architectural competition to provide lots of opportunities for innovative design.</p>	<p>Phase</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <p>Phase 2</p>

⁶⁰ Showers are essential for the visitors using the Lough; in particular, however, they introduce significant cost through water heating, cleaning and maintaining. It may be worthwhile to consider solar panels on the visitor service block.

⁶¹ Off road mobility scooter

INFRASTRUCTURE	
ALL WEATHER SHELTERS/SPACES TO REST/REFLECT:	
<p>Description:</p> <p>For visitors of all ages to immerse themselves in the wood and enjoy all the suggested activities, there is an option to provide several attractive all-weather shelters in the wood. These can be basic structures at key locations that are designed to fit seamlessly into the landscape. The location for each will be informed by the more detailed Visitor Experience and Interpretation plan referenced above. However, to differentiate Glenfarne Wood they should provide an opportunity for the visitor to engage the senses, reflect and nurture an appreciation of nature.</p> <p>To further develop and support the options suggested within Health and Wellbeing, the instillation of two to three glass Domes, similar to the specifications at Finn Lough, Enniskillen is suggested.⁶² This could be enhanced by developing a commercial partnership with an operator who would offer the inflatable dome tents for events and/or overnight stays.</p>	<p>Phase</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 2</p>
ACCOMMODATION	
<p>Description:</p> <p>Unique accommodation in remote areas of natural beauty will continue to grow in appeal.</p> <p>In keeping with emerging themes and suggested infrastructure and design, Glenfarne Wood may be positioned as a test bed for forest tourism and innovation. Therefore, it is suggested that zones and sites are identified to provide temporary and fixed unique forest accommodation. Proximity to service hub may cater for positioning of inflatable dome tents, referenced above, yurts and glamping units⁶³. Additional sites may be identified for with a few fixed units such as tree houses and forest cabins.</p> <p>This development may unlock partnership arrangements with private and community operators. This has been suggested as Phase 3, however, depending on footfall and need this may be revisited at an earlier phase. In Phase 1 or 2, it might be an idea to consider servicing the accommodation zoning in the wood so that it could be used for temporary camping/glamping/inflatable bubbles (non-fixed units) for various festivals and events.</p>	<p>Phase</p> <p>Phase 3</p>

⁶² Finn Lough, Enniskillen, see <https://www.finnlough.com/en/accommodation/bubblehouse> and <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/stay-transparent-bubble-domes-northern-ireland>

⁶³ <https://glampinghub.com/>

INFRASTRUCTURE	
VISITOR PROPOSITION, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS	
<p>Description: Investment in the development of the suggested themes will result in a range of visitor experiences that may be offered within Glenfarne Wood. Each can attract more visitors and deliver benefits for the local community and economy. However, to realise this further consideration of the overarching visitor proposition will be required as this will inform and support all marketing and communications investment and activity over the three phases of implementation.</p> <p>The following actions could therefore be considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the overarching Glenfarne Visitor Experience Proposition, narrative, visual identity, toolkit, and guidelines to inform collateral design of online and print applications to include initial print run for posters for events, brochure, and maps 2. Develop digital /web/online content and website to support consumer engagement, social media communications, events promotions, and community activation 3. Plan and execute an annual publicity and promotions campaign that harnesses local community champions, supports visitors share and tell stories of their experiences via social media, invite, and host bloggers and offer 2 to 3 competitions to encourage specific segments to visit 4. Work with local trade and accommodation providers to support them develop saleable packages, tours, and experiences within the Wood 5. Support linkages to amenities at other local forest such as the Burren 6. Consider building cross boarder partnerships to pilot and develop niche/new experiences 7. Design an appropriate dashboard / measurement tool to evaluate impact 	<p>Phase</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 1</p> <p>Phase 1</p>

IMMEDIATE QUICK WINS – Phase 1
Action:
Zone Glenfarne Wood in terms of themes, use, and potential markets service areas.
Develop a long-term schedule of tree planting and cutting for the wood based on the options and associated Zones being taken forward
Installation of counters at four points to gather baseline data and numbers to inform future evaluation and measurement. Areas to include main entrance; trail head orientation point and mid-point through two of the trails.
Consider implementing CCTV or Web Cams in key activity zones in advance of implementation
Adapt, use, and promote Leave no Trace visitor management program
Assess capacity and infrastructure to support digital and social media initiatives
Install traffic counters near Glenfarne Wood for 2 weeks to inform baseline data
Assessment of Water Quality on Lough MacNeane and its suitability for unlocking the Lough

Each of the above options have the capacity to act as catalysts to attract visitors, their phasing and implementation needs to be planned to ensure they are achievable and present a good return on investment. In the current climate there is an emerging body of evidence to suggest that the rural location such as Glenfarne Wood and the experiences it can offer have the potential to become more compelling to future visitors post 2020.

The options and themes presented above each require resources and expertise to deliver. Development of tourism experiences is often dependent on successful partnerships (Public/Private/Community). These can unlock the right skills and mix of funding that ensures each partner achieves their objective in a variety of ways. Recommendations for consideration for delivery are presented in Section 8 below.

Planning and Development Considerations:

- Certain works outlined may require planning consent to include environment assessments (screening for Appropriate Assessment at a minimum) and this will impact on the timeframe involved.
- Coillte have no exemptions in this regard. Development of a car park, visitor service block, café, accommodation units, etc. may well require to be brought through a planning consent process thereby requiring a minimum of 6 – 8 months to be included in any proposal timeframe.
- The proposed N16 realignment route corridor encroaches onto Glenfarne Estate. While this should not be a significant factor on any future development, designers should be made aware of this fact.
- Part of the Coillte landholding is identified in the Leitrim County Development Plan as an Area of High Visual Amenity so again this should be considered to minimize the visual impact of any development.
- Lough MacNeane Upper is proposed as a Natural Heritage Area (in Cavan) and adjoins the estate which would also be an environmental consideration to be considered at planning consent stage.

8 Delivery Models

8.1 Overview

The themes and options presented in the previous sections of this report require resources, funding and expertise to deliver. Through the consultation exercise the consultants discussed possible strategic partnerships and operating models that could support Leitrim County Council and Coillte to deliver their vision for Glenfarne Wood as a must-visit destination for Domestic, Northern Ireland and International visitors.

The good practice case studies and research identified that the development of tourism experiences is dependent on successful partnerships. These can unlock the right mix of skills and funding and ensure that each partner achieves their objective in a variety of ways.

The following became evident:

- Several tourism experiences are best delivered by commercial partners who are committed to growing visitors and delivering quality visitor services.
- A private model requires commitment with regard to the duration of lease and level of investment required to deliver a service and make a profit.
- The Irish market is small therefore the pool of private partners who have the resources and commercial ambition to partner may be limited.
- Community groups require extensive supports and objectives vary depending on area, expertise and available resources.
- Terms vary with a mix of leasing agreements and licence fee based on percentage of turnover or fixed fee per annum.
- Community/charity groups may be able to access funding that the Coillte and Leitrim County Council cannot. Examples include membership fees, donations, friends club and volunteer networks.
- Development tourism business through social enterprises to maximise improvements in financial, social and environmental well-being in the community often work well. There are a number of well-established community groups in the North Leitrim area that already have social enterprises that provide services to tourism, for example Glenfarne Development Trust - the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance; An Caislin, Manorhamilton - running Manorhamilton Castle and tea shop; and Leitrim Tourism Network - tourism marketing support and exploring provision of tourism packages across county Leitrim.

8.2 Recommendations for consideration

1. Consider funding and resource the appointment of full time Business Development Manager to manage the development of the Wood and ensure that both private and community partners are delivering on service agreements and commitments
2. Following initial Phase 1 development and investment Coillte and Leitrim County Council could consider tendering for a commercial operator partner with the offer of a longer-term lease (20-year) on managing visitor activity and services. The tender should be structured to include:
 - Management of pods - accommodation management.
 - Delivery of activities and events to cater for the family fun market.
 - Development of outdoor activities and events.
 - Management of the trails kayaking, Stand Up Paddle boarding, canoeing, belly boats and related activities.

- Management of bicycle hire, mobility scooters and trampers.
 - Visitor and consumer website and content management.
 - Community and trade partner engagement plan.
 - Management for VTECH qualifications for gillies; guides; ambassadors; outdoor pursuits etc.
 - Management of provision of courses and events in Forest Bathing, mindfulness, yoga etc.
3. Coillte and Leitrim County Council may divide the tender into several lots based on the recommendations above to test market capability and interest.
 4. Coillte and Leitrim County Council appoints a private sector camping operator who has first preference to use and/or develop additional facilities and services over the period of the lease
 5. Coillte and Leitrim County Council identifies preferred events and festivals and goes to market to invite events companies to deliver on the events under a fee agreement.
 6. Coillte and Leitrim County Council to develop relationships with existing businesses in the area as preferred suppliers.

It is likely that the best fit funding opportunity for Glenfarne Wood, would be the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme, other opportunities may exist with Rural Regeneration and Rural Development Funds. The next round of the Fáilte Ireland's Platform for Growth Schemes will potentially be directed toward activity/adventure projects; however, specifications have not been drawn up yet. The location of the Glenfarne Wood in close proximity to the Northern Ireland Border may provide for funding opportunities through cross border funds, however, specification for these have not been concluded as yet.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The proposed Glenfarne Wood project is in alignment with all the strategies outlined in the paragraphs below.

Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017-2021

Within the plan investment in outdoor recreation has an economic impact on local often rural areas in terms of job creation, increased tourism numbers as well as the health and wellbeing impacts for both physical and mental health. The outdoor recreation plan has 7 strategic themes and the development of the Glenfarne Wood meets the following 5 themes:

- Establishing the Partnership Framework - *to implement a programme of initiatives to promote best practice and establish a network between public bodies to support to guide, inform and coordinate recreation provision on public lands; support and promote the work of the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group (VSCG); support and promote the work of Leave No Trace Ireland; and to develop a volunteer programme for supporting recreation on public lands.*
- Managing Current and New Infrastructure - *to agree and implement common safety approaches to recreation on public lands and provide common training approaches and guidance and to maintain new and existing national recreation infrastructure on all public lands and waters.*
- Developing and Upgrading Infrastructure - *improve the angling experience and access to public waters; improve walking trails on public lands through a programme of phased upgrading and development; identify opportunities to develop major new experiences (e.g. primitive recreation) on public lands and waters particularly those that take advantage of contiguous boundaries across state landowners; and to facilitate the development of sites for natural learning and natural play.*
- Promoting Outdoor Recreation on Public Lands and Waters - *Marketing and publicity of the newly developed infrastructure to grow awareness and visitor number*
- Volunteering and communities - *where a key objective identified around "developing opportunities to provide adventure activities with commercial partners, identify recreation hubs or recreation sites where more recreational services can be delivered in partnership with communities and the private sector".¹ Investment in the Glenfarne Wood development will meet this objective through enhancing local service provision, supporting and improving new job creation through local start-ups in recreational type activities like accommodation, biking, kayaking, canoeing etc.*

Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland, published Tourism Development and Innovation; *A Strategy for Investment Grant 2016 – 2022* which recognised a flourishing tourism industry as vital for Ireland's economic wellbeing and recovery and will also shape Ireland's image and attractiveness as a great place to live, work and invest. Ireland's tourism reaches into every village, town and city, offering employment to approximately 205,000 people, or 11 % of the working population. In total the sector contributes over €6 billion to the economy, and accounts for 4 per cent of our GNP.

¹ Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017-2021 Pg 17

The strategic objectives of the Strategy include:

1. To successfully and consistently deliver a world class visitor experience;
2. To support a tourism sector that is profitable and achieves sustainable levels of growth and delivers jobs;
3. To facilitate communities to play an enhanced role in developing tourism in their locality, thereby strengthening and enriching local communities; and
4. To recognise, value and enhance Ireland's natural environment as the cornerstone of Irish tourism

Growth Metrics	2014	2017	2025
Foreign earnings	€3.6 billion	€4.2 billion	€5.0 billion
Tourism Employment	€205,000	€230,000	€250,000
Visitor Numbers	€7.6 million	€8.2 million	€10 million

There are four strategic outcomes which will be sought across all the propositions as follows:

1. Increasing the number of overnights spent by overseas visitors and increasing spend
2. Creating employment opportunities
3. Leveraging public or private sector investment into the tourism experience
4. Stimulating international awareness and demand

People Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025

The overall tourism goal of Government is that: by 2025, revenue from overseas visitors, excluding carrier receipts, will increase to €5 billion in real terms (i.e. excluding the effects of inflation); employment in the tourism sector will be 250,000 by 2025, compared with around 200,000 at present; and here will be 10 million visits to Ireland annually by 2025.

In order to achieve this target, the Government affirms and has agreed that: *It will place tourism as a key element of its economic strategy, with development in the tourism sector reflecting the highest standards of environmental and economic sustainability, and the role of tourism in promoting peace and political co-operation on the island of Ireland will continue to be recognised and encouraged.*

The quality of the tourism offering, including natural scenery, culture, and visitor attractions and events, are all contributors to the overall attractiveness of the destination. Therefore, the effective combination of Ireland's people and place are key to our tourism success.²

"Culturally Curious": Travellers in the over 45 age group taking a holiday with their partner. They are out to broaden their minds and expand their experience by exploring new landscapes, history and culture.³

The most frequently cited reasons are again our people and our place; the friendliness and hospitality afforded to our overseas visitors, the quality of our environment, the range of activities to see and do, and our history and culture⁴

² People, Place & Policy pg 14

³ People Place & Policy pg 17

⁴ People Place & Policy pg 21

It is well-recognised that the warmth and welcome of our people, complemented by the richness and beauty of our places, landscape and heritage – which are closely intertwined at community level – are at the heart of what makes Ireland a unique experience for the overseas visitor.⁵

The quality of our natural scenery and physical environment, physical heritage, and the range of activities for visitors, are areas in which the State has a key role to play, through preservation of that which is irreplaceable and the development of that which enhances the visitor’s overall experience.⁶

The development at Glenfarne Wood will provide a unique and innovative visitor experience and showcasing the place, people and heritage of the area complimenting what is envisaged by the National Tourism Strategy through creating opportunities to increase visitor numbers and dwell time in North Leitrim and in the County as a whole. Due to its proximity to the Northern Ireland border it also allows for development projects that will enhance *the role of tourism in promoting peace and political co-operation on the island of Ireland*.

Hidden Heartlands

Leitrim is within Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands a brand launched in April 2018. Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands is not strongly identified as a tourism destination – there is poor consumer awareness and it’s a permeable transit zone. It represents 3.5% overseas overnights and 3.5% domestic overnights in Ireland, there is some good accommodation, but only 4% of registered bedstock. There is currently a limited range of visitor experiences across the region.

In 2018, 0.4m overseas tourists visited Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands, generating €117m, spending on average €290 per capita in Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands. Overseas visitors to the region are coming from Great Britain: 47%; North America: 24%; Mainland Europe: 22%; and other long haul: 7%. There is a growth target of 3% year on year domestic ahead of international.

Key Issues	Explanatory Comment	Potential Opportunity
Low visitor numbers in Ireland’s <i>Hidden Heartlands</i> , attracting 4% of visitors and 3% of revenues, respectively.	Low visitor numbers and short dwell times in IHH	Increase the visitor numbers, dwell time and regional distribution in County Leitrim is linked to <i>Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands’</i> core strategic initiatives.

Regional Investment Activities

Fáilte Ireland’s strategic focus is on developing and improving visitor experiences. The tourism sector, supported by Fáilte Ireland, works to create the conditions to deliver these experiences consistently and to a very high quality. Fáilte Ireland’s brand experiences successfully continue to drive tourism within the different regions of Ireland. Fáilte Ireland invests significantly in product development to support the experience brands.

There are several overarching themes apparent in building and cementing Fáilte Ireland’s regional experience brands: food through Taste the Island initiatives; historic and heritage trails; local culture through music, art, recreation and storytelling; outdoors and adventure; land and sea trails; and festivals and events etc.

⁵ People place & Policy pg 7

⁶ People, place & policy pg 21

Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021

The development of a unique visitor experience at Glenfarne Wood will bring life to the core Development Plan ambitions. It will also contribute to specific Plan aims in terms of:

- Renewal of Rural Areas – by developing the tourism potential of Glenfarne as a tourism hub and the wider North Leitrim area;
- Enterprise and Employment – by supporting opportunities for tourism services and facilitating business growth and development and job creation;
- Encouraging/facilitating Sustainable Tourism by improving both Glenfarne and the wider hinterlands' attractiveness and its tourism offering.

The policies and objectives set out the Plan that the proposed Glenfarne Wood project aligns with are:

- **Tourism Policies:**
 - o Policy 1d - deliver a County Tourism Strategy which will promote the development of tourism in a sustainable manner and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism accommodation and facilities, subject to location, design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and other planning considerations
 - Objective 1h - deliver a County Tourism Strategy which will establish touring routes around the County's natural assets to reduce the 'corridor effect'

Walking and Cycling:

Objective 29a - seek opportunities for the development of suitable walking routes, cycle tracks and bridle paths along redundant railway lines and other suitable locations such as along waterways and historical access routes

It is considered that the proposed development of Glenfarne Wood would improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike, improving the opportunities for employment creation in tourism and the hospitality sector whilst ensuring that the project does not adversely impact upon its sensitive yet beautiful receiving environment. The project is therefore fully compliant with the vision which permeates through the County Development Plan.

Leitrim Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021

The LECP supports the development of Glenfarne Wood across several its sustainable Development Objectives:

SEDO1: "Leitrim will be a visionary leader in a region which is innovative and competitive, with a high-quality environment, first class infrastructure and a quality of life that is among the highest in the world." The development at the Wood will provide a unique, innovative and state of the art service which will compliments Leitrim's Slow Tourism brand and ultimately positions Leitrim at the heart of the Hidden Heartlands and can ultimately strengthens the wider Upper Shannon Future Economies region as well as the border area.

SEDO 5 (E): Enhance the potential for Economic Development in the Tourism Sector by ensuring a united cohesive approach by the Tourism Trade and agencies in the County.

A3: Develop experiences around key selling points and products with market leading potential.

Community Theme 1: Living and Well Being. – Supporting our native people and visitors alike to engage in outdoor activities both on water and walking and cycling will ultimately lead to enhanced living and wellbeing with improvements in both physical and mental health.

SCO.1: Maintain Leitrim as a safe and attractive place for all age groups to live in, work in and visit.

A6: Promote Leitrim's unique beauty, habitats, heritage and environment to maximise opportunities for learning and enjoyment⁸.

The development of the Glenfarne Wood supports this objective in developing participation opportunities and support groups to develop physical, social and recreational opportunities.

Leitrim Tourism Strategy

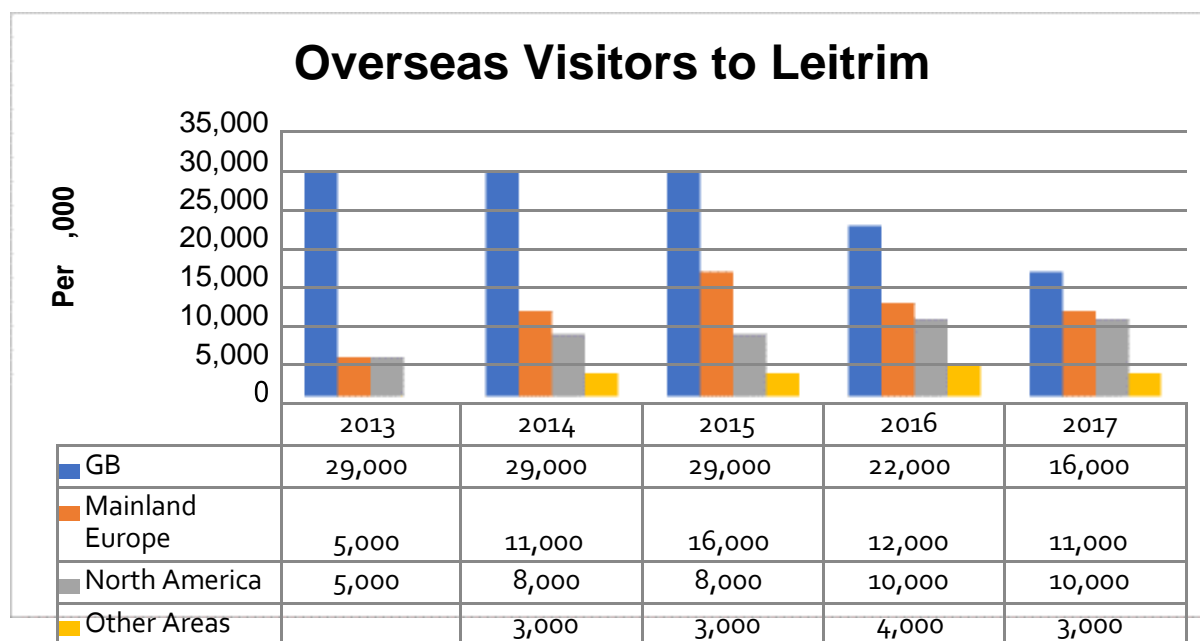
Relative to its potential to deliver economic growth and jobs, there are opportunities for tourism in Leitrim to perform better. The Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 states "... *there are plenty of opportunities to double the size of the tourism sector in Leitrim*". While this is ambitious, projected future growth is from a low base and is targeted from segments and markets where there is a clear fit between customer motivations and Leitrim's key selling points.

The county scores highly on many of the attributes that make a tourism destination successful but alongside the positives are several challenges. Trade and agencies are keen to see results, and together, must address the issues to drive sustainable future growth. A cornerstone of the strategy is the development of experiences that capitalise on Leitrim's strengths. Success will not happen overnight and there will be challenges ahead. However, the opportunities are many and the potential is clear.

The proposed project for Glenfarne Wood has strong links to the local tourism Strategy and will help deliver on a number of the actions around experience development

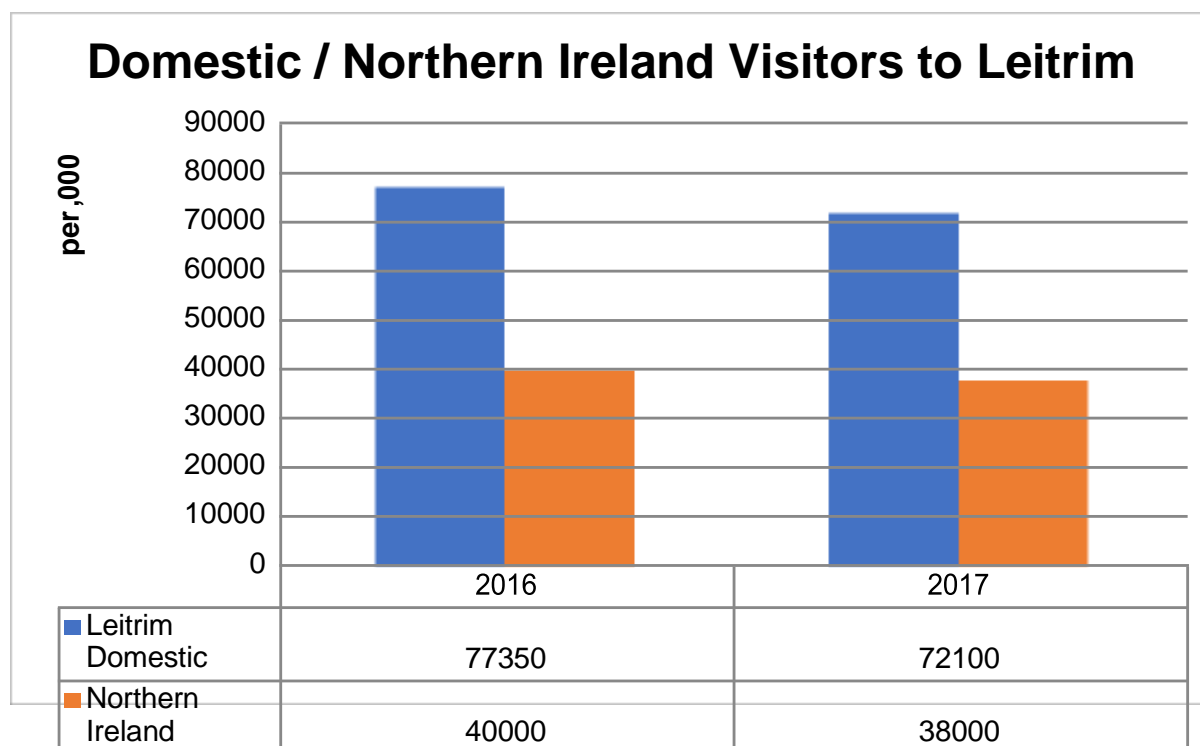
Visitors County Leitrim

The following table outlines the number of overseas visitors for the years 2013 to 2017:



- The actual number of overseas visitors for 2017 was 41,000 against a target for the county of 53,761;
- The 2017 target for overseas visitor's spend was €19m and that was achieved;
- Average spend per overseas visitor was €439 per person;
- Evidence suggests that the tourist to Leitrim is staying longer and spending more.

The number of domestic/Northern Ireland visitors in the years 2016 and 2017 are outlined below.



- Average spend per visitor from Northern Ireland was €222 per person, a value of €8.5m.
- Average spend per domestic visitor was €153 per person, a value of €11m.
- Total Revenue in 2013 was 34 million – 2017 38.5 million increased by 13%.
- Total Visitor Numbers in 2013 144,000 – 2017 151,000 increased by 5%.

Most of County Leitrim's accommodation is in the south of the county. Accommodation is limited in other parts of the county, particularly, in and around Glenfarne (see paragraph 4.3.2 Current Profile) but as tourism grows, investors and accommodation providers will see business opportunities to fill gaps.

Leitrim Recreation Strategy 2015-2021

Several key actions were identified in the Leitrim Recreation Strategy for further development:

- Enhanced walking Trails and Loops
- Water based and land-based recreation and adventure activities, canoeing, kayaking, rowing, walking, cycling, equestrian.
- Encourage micro-business start-ups in canoe/ biking/accommodation/ guiding.⁷

The development of Glenfarne Wood supports the delivery of all of these actions outlined as well as continuing to develop the inter connectivity across the region and the border with Northern Ireland.

7. Leitrim Recreation Strategy pg 17

The Leitrim Brand

Consumer research identifies Leitrim's key highlights as; friendly people, landscape/scenery, water (the Shannon, lakes, canals), family connections, culture and atmosphere/pace of life. The components of the Leitrim brand are:

- Brand promise: Memorable holiday experiences, friendly and authentic people, natural and scenic landscape
- Brand values (who is Leitrim?): Memorable, friendly, warm, intriguing, proud of our heritage, proud of our unspoilt environment
- Brand essence (core of Leitrim brand): Gracious, authentic

Every €1mn of tourist expenditure helps to support 34 tourism jobs. Based on tourism revenue of approximately €34m from Leitrim's overseas, Northern Ireland and domestic visitors in 2013, tourism in Leitrim currently supports in the region of 1,200 jobs. Tourism is one of the county's most important economic sectors and has significant potential to play an important role in its economic future.

2021 Targets

Targets have been set for tourism in Leitrim by 2021 from international, domestic and Northern Ireland visitors. This will double the size of the tourism sector.

Tourist numbers	Tourism revenue	Jobs supported
296,000	€70m	2,400

The segments and markets that represent potential for Leitrim are summarised in the table.

Segment	Market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Curious • Great Escapers • Connected Families • Great Escapers Irish Diaspora • Footloose Socialisers • Irish Diaspora Indulgent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GB • US & Canada • Germany • Domestic • Northern Ireland

Policy Conclusion

National Tourism Policy outlines how tourism is about people and place, developments of the tourism product portfolio of villages and towns are key to this. North Leitrim does currently does not have a tourism rich product; it lacks a connected portfolio of attractions linked to the developments in Leitrim itself.

The proposed Glenfarne Wood development project is in alignment with all the strategies outlined above and provide meaningful tourism experiences by:

- Delivering high quality to maximise the opportunities North Leitrim presents attracting visitors to the area, creating a quality and memorable experience which will encourage visitors to return, stay longer, spend more and recommend to others. All aspects contribute to the overall offer of the region and are important also in the context of Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand.
- Providing the levels of outdoor/activity experience sought by both the leisure tourist and slow adventure tourist.
- Highlighting and animating the built and natural heritage of the area both on and adjacent to the wood.
- Integrating existing outdoor recreation activities within the broader visitor proposition, for example the natural, built and social heritage experience.
- Supporting the clustering and bundling of services under a shared experience, for example activity, dining and accommodation bundling.
- Further nudging County Leitrim and the Hidden Heartlands from a tourism transit zone to a touring zone through the development of a wellness experience hub.
- The development at the Wood will promote, support and enable collaborative networks of representative agencies, organisations and private sector to realise the economic opportunities and allow for new and improved experiences in North Leitrim.

In summary, Glenfarne Wood has the potential to become a holistic hub for natural harmony and attract a wider audience of visitors Northern Ireland, domestic, and international seeking an extended break, and to capitalise on opportunities to extend the dwell-time of visitors to the area.

APPENDIX 2 – HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The History of the Tottenham Estate of Glenfarne

The First Tottenham in Glenfarne was Nicholas Loftus Tottenham (1745- 1823). He married Ann May from May Field Waterford in 1778 and was the 2nd son of Charles Loftus Tottenham of Loftus Hall Wexford.

In all there were just 4 generations, and their link with Glenfarne ended when Arthur Loftus the last of them in Glenfarne, went bankrupt in the 1880s following the building of the Sligo Leitrim & Northern Counties Railway.

Nicholas Loftus Tottenham (1st in Glenfarne)

Nicholas Loftus came to own Glenfarne around 1797. The house was built sometime after that. The exact date of building is not clear. (Possibly around 1820). It seems likely that the House was built for Nicholas Tottenham's son, Charles Henry who was married in 1814.

Local folklore tells of the Glenfarne estate being in the possession of the Maguires of Fermanagh and it being taken off them in an underhanded fashion by the Tottenhamhs. (1938 school folklore collection). It appears this is not true, and the loss of the local Irish ownership can be traced back to Sir Fredrick Hamilton who took possession around 1632. James Hamilton, son of Fredrick, had two daughters, Hannah and Sidney. Hannah inherited the Manorhamilton estate which subsequently went to the Clements family. Sidney inherited the Glenfarne/Glenade estate. She married Sir John Hume of Enniskillen. The Hume estates subsequently transferred by marriage to the Loftus family and from there to the Tottenham family.



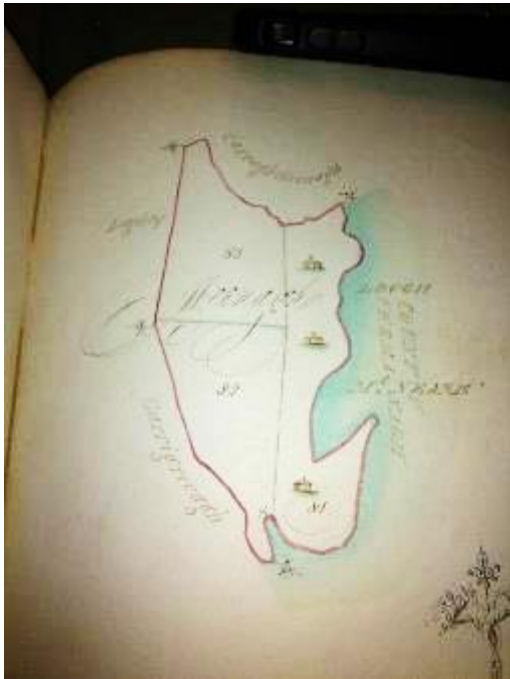
Nicholas Loftus Tottenham the first of the Tottenhamhs in Glenfarne was the son of Charles Loftus pictured here. He had a sister Ann Loftus Tottenham who was locked away by her father Charles and later died young. Her ghost is said to still haunt Loftus Hall on the Hook head peninsula.

Charles Loftus Tottenham, Marquis of Ely. 1738 – 1806, The father of Nicholas Loftus Tottenham who was the first Tottenham associated with Glenfarne.

First Map of the Tottenham Estate

A Book of maps exists (MS 9837) in the National Library which was commissioned by Nicholas Loftus Tottenham in January 1797 and copied by Richard Frizell. Townlands are mentioned with a total of 7,112 acres in Glenfarne/Kiltyclogher and a further 1,970 acres in Glenade. (See Appendix)

Sample page below showing townland of Meenagh.



Sample page from Frizell's Map of 1797 showing the townland of Meenagh, apparently split into three "farms". There are three houses shown which all correspond to ruins still visible today. The upper most house being a stone ruin in a wood owned by Patrick Keany, The Middle house being the ruins of a mudwall cabin on Whites (formerly Keany's) land. The lower house corresponds to a stone ruin now converted to a byre and occupied by the Dolan family in the 19th century. The lower part of meenagh shown is today part of Carraigreevy.

Charles Henry Tottenham (2nd in Glenfarne)

Nicholas Loftus' son, Charles Henry (1786- 1836) married Dorethea Crowe of Nutfield Co. Clare in 1814.

Charles Henry was a progressive and industrious Landlord. He laid out the village of Kiltyclogher and had local minerals tested with a view to opening an Iron works on Doagh. It seems that it was Charles Henry who was the first occupier of the house in Glenfarne sometime around 1820.



Tottenham Hall Glenfarne built circa 1820 but with later additions circa 1850s

The early years of the Tottenhams in Glenfarne coincided with a typhus epidemic that peaked between 1818 and 1819 and a general Famine of 1822. This hardship was Europe wide and was caused by very bad weather due to a dust cloud from the Tambora volcano in Indonesia. 1816 was known in Europe as the "year without a summer".

In Leitrim where the living was always precarious, the 1822 famine was particularly bad.

These were very difficult times in Glenfarne and perhaps even worse than the great potato famine of 1847. Peter Mc Hugh RIP, Loughcross, told of isolation huts being built along the "Big river" in Annagh. Any person suffering disease had to be taken from their house and put in one of these huts to reduce the chance of disease spreading. Peter Mc Hugh's grandfather also Peter "was around 1818 walking through Annagh with his older brother when they talked about the terrible condition of the people in the huts. With that, the wind carried some of the foul smells of the huts towards them and within a week the brother was dead himself from fever". His wife also died and their children were reared by their grandparents and later by their uncle Peter along with his own children who included PA Mc Hugh later a land league activist and MP for North Leitrim.

Some contemporary records from the period noted how the Typhus if contracted by a well to do class was usually more fatal than if contracted by the poorer classes who had a better recovery rate. It seems their general upbringing and hardiness offered them better protection. Nevertheless, they died in significant numbers.⁸

⁸ . Ref. Surgeon Brady Carrick on Shannon 40% fatality versus 4% fatality. Gerard Mc Atasney, *The Other Famine, The 1822 crisis in Leitrim*, 2010 The History Press Ireland

The Tottenhams have a good record in preventing hunger on their estate and contributed to the economic development of the area. In both the 1822 and 1847 famines the Tottenhams were prominent on relief committees. Charles Henry in 1822 was listed as Treasurer on the Dromahair Baronial committee for the distribution of relief.

Some local families however did not have good word for the Tottenhams and this ill will can be traced back in some cases to the original clearing of the estate to make room for a private demesne. Some of the greenest and driest land in the parish is to be found in the townlands of lower Ardmoneen and Moneyduff which were adjacent to the site of the newly built Glenfarne Hall.

There are no records of who was living in these areas in the early 1800's but given the better than average land it must surely have been farmed intensively. Lorcan Rooney gives the example of his ancestors being moved from green land up to high in the mountain at Tullyskerney in Kiltyclogher.



Sarah Tottenham, Daughter of Charles Henry who died from falling off a horse in 1828. Her name is remembered on an inscription on Kiltyclogher courthouse. The Town being christened by Tottenham as "Sarahville"

Nicholas Loftus Tottenham II (3rd in Glenfarne)

Charles Henry's son was Nicholas Loftus (1815- 1851) who married Ann Maria Hopkins of Athboy Co. Meath in 1835.

Nicholas Loftus Tottenham died aged 36. He did much to relieve the poverty of the 1847 potato famine and it is said that he himself died of "famine fever" in 1851. On his death his wife Ann Maria (Hopkins) Tottenham took control of the estate.

Ann Maria Tottenham later (around 1885) moved to Tuddenham Park Mullingar. This was formally known as the Rochford estate but was bought by Sir Francis Hopkins in 1836 when Rochford got into financial difficulty. The Tuddenham estate was left on his death to his sister Ann Maria of Glenfarne.

She was a formidable woman and lived to over one-hundred-year-old. She died in 1906. Her name Ann Tottenham still appears to this day on the title deeds of land in the Glenfarne Kiltyclogher area. It seems she was politically Conservative like her son Arthur Loftus who later became a Conservative MP.

It was Ann Maria Tottenham, who according to local tradition, objected to the situation of the proposed new St Mary's Church in 1857. She objected to it being so close to the entrance of her estate. Because of this, the new lower avenue was built together with the gate house.

There is also a tradition of Ann Maria Tottenham refusing the builders of the church access to water for mixing cement. The Priest, (thought to be Fr. John Rogan) is said to have stamped his foot on the side of the roadway where water immediately sprung forth. This well was visible on the road below the turn for many years where despite the best efforts of Leitrim county council it kept bursting the tarmac until some 10 years ago or so when an underground pipe was installed to drain the well and prevent it eroding the road. Note that Fr. Maguire was curate in Glenfarne up to 1850 before moving to Kinlough eventually coming back as parish priest Cloonclare in 1866. The Parish priest in Cloonclare from 1836 to 1866 was another Glenfarne native, Fr. John Rogan. He was an uncle of the man who succeeded him, Fr. John Maguire.



1830's Map showing Glenfarne Hall and also a Walled Kitchen Garden of 3.8 Acres with Hot houses.



Early 1900's Map showing Glenfarne Hall and Walled Gardens. The house was greatly extended during the time of Ann Maria Tottenham. She is also said to have invested heavily in extending the gardens.



The Gate House Today. One of the few surviving Tottenham buildings. This was built around the time of the building of St Marys Catholic Church in 1857.

George Tottenham of Glenfarne and Glenade.

George Tottenham was a younger son of Nicholas Loftus and Ann Maria Tottenham. He had a BA, (Trinity College Cambridge). He was a writer and lived in a house on the estate but later moved to Larydonnell, Glenade. He was not married. He wrote four books:

- *Charlie Villiers at Cambridge, 1868*
- *Harry Egerton, or the younger son of the day, 1869*
- *Terrence Mc Gowan the Irish Tenant, 1870*
- *Harcourt, 1873*

According to Peter Mc Hugh RIP, he used to tell people that he had only 2 friends, "*the horse he rode on and the dog that followed him*". Lorcan Rooney RIP, said that when he met people, he sometimes asked several questions at once. This was a habit that bamboozled the locals and perhaps added to George's reputation of being eccentric. One day he met Mrs Dan Dolan from Carraigreevagh who was returning from the fair in Blacklion. Her normal route to Blacklion was to cut across from the boat quay to Annagh by crossing the "big river". On her return from Blacklion, she met George Tottenham who was out for a stroll in the estate. George greeted her with: "*how high is the river and what time is it and what price are eggs*", to which Mrs Dolan replied without breaking stride, "*Up to your arse at quarter to five and 10 pence a dozen*".

In 1870, George Tottenham published a book called "*Terence Mc Gowan, The Irish Tenant*". This was published in two volumes. The book is fiction and traces the events of a general election in which the local landlord is pitted against an outsider named Brady who is being heavily promoted by the Catholic clergy. This has a direct link to the actual election for Leitrim in 1852 when Dr John Brady a Catholic tenant right candidate defeated the Liberal candidate Charles Clements a local Landlord by 7 votes. Brady held the seat up to 1880 and was heavily supported by the Catholic clergy.

While the events are fictional there are many references to local Glenfarne characters. Terence Mc Gowan son of Pheilim marries Kathleen O Hara and many locals believed that his character was based on the real-life person, Terence Mc Gowan son of Phelim of Meenagh who married Kathleen O Hara of East Barrs.

The real-life Terrence had a reputation of being very hard working and ambitious and the Tottenham's rewarded his industry by granting him leases on more land. Eventually the real-life Terence and Kathleen moved to the townland of Kiltyclogher near Straduffly cross and their descendants became known as the "Wee Terrys of the Rocks."

The Tracey's married into the Mc Gowans in their original homestead in Meenagh and the farm owned by other distant relations in Meenagh, the "Faily Frank" Mc Gowans was later bought by Eugene Lee in the 1930s.

In George Tottenham's book, he examines the issues of voter intimidation and how the Priests were influential in the outcome. There is a Father Hugh De Rogan who is painted as an older man well liked and mild mannered. Father John Maguire is mentioned but he is as a very austere and bullying man who uses the local people's fear to his advantage. The author does not hide his contempt for Father Maguire.

In real life there was a Father John Rogan who was curate in Glenfarne from 1823 became parish priest in 1836 and died in 1866. There was also a Hugh De Lacey parish priest in Killanagh from 1839 until 1874 and it appears that the fictious Hugh De Rogan is an amalgam of these two local priests.

Father John Rogan died in 1866 and was succeeded by John Maguire who became Parish Priest and also Vicar General in 1866 up to his death in 1904. This John Maguire was by all accounts a very formidable man. He was responsible for building St Clare's Church in Manorhamilton and also was responsible for major renovations on St Michaels in 1869 when a new high altar was installed.

It is clear from the tone of the first Volume that while the author is clearly from the landlord ascendancy, he has a great dislike for some of the English attitudes and has no time for absentee landlords. He does not however see anything unjust in the landlord tenant system. He highlights many of the bad practices that were carried out in the 19th century including the subdivision of land which was something that amenable landlords like the Tottenhams tolerated but was not always beneficial in the long term. Also, on marginal land, if a tenant improved a plot of ground and made it more productive some landlords took this as an opportunity to increase the rent thereby penalising the productive tenant. There are also references to a practise that must have existed in Glenfarne of a private market in leases. This was something that English landlords with no experience of Ireland found absurd.

In practice there was a system whereby rights to a lease were traded locally. If a younger farmer wanted to get land from a person emigrating or a distant relation, he would have to pay a sum upfront to the current holder of the lease. (he would also of course have to pay an annual rent to the landlord). Once having obtained a lease by these means, having paid an upfront charge, he would then feel that he should be compensated for giving up the lease. This practise was tolerated by many of the Irish Landlords it seems including the Tottenhams but was very much frowned upon by the English Landlords.

In Part 2 of George Tottenham's, fictional book "Terrence Mc Gowan The Irish Tenant", there are many references to Fenianism. Cornamore is mentioned as "a nest of ribbon men". Here the issues of land rights are explored further and it appears from the author's attitude that he was in favour of giving some more rights to tenants because it was the lesser of two evils and clearly he felt threatened by the rise in violence and "Ribbionism" around land issues. He gave the view that the English establishment had a very poor understanding of the issues in Ireland.

In part 2 of "*Terence Mc Gowan, The Irish Tenant*", the fictional storyline is that the Rochford estate becomes bankrupt when the local benevolent landlord is murdered and the ownership changes to a new English landlord who brings in a new set of stringent rules regarding leases and subdivision. When Terence Mc Gowan's father dies, the new landlord will not grant a new lease to Terence and in a fit of rage Terence murders the new landlord and goes on the run. He eventually escapes to America and evades capture but has to leave his wife and family behind. (nothing like this happened in the case of the real life Terence Mc Gowan).

Other fictional characters that may have been based on real Glenfarne people include Bartley Mc Loughlin who in the book was a bailiff on the Rochford estate. According to Frank Mc Hugh RIP, his character was based on a Bartley Mc Loughlin who was a coach driver for the Tottenhams. The Florrie Mc Loughlins are said to be descended from this Bartley.

In the appendix of his book, George Tottenham gives some very interesting real-life incidents which are worthy of mention. There is the case of a young boy from the area who was brought to George Tottenham to be examined by him with a view to further education. This young person was expert in algebra and mathematics and Tottenham was amazed at his proficiency. There is no further mention of how he progressed or who he was. There is also the case of young person in court (most likely Kiltyclogher) on the charge of stealing a cow and the distraught parents who were ashamed at the actions.

In later life George Tottenham lived in Glenade and was a regular letter writer to the Irish Times and other publications. He was a justice of the Peace and was appointed High Sheriff in 1888.

Arthur Loftus Tottenham (4th Tottenham Glenfarne)

Arthur Loftus (1838 -1887) married Sarah Ann Gore of Gores bridge Co. Kilkenny in 1859. He was the oldest son of Nicholas Loftus and Ann Maria Tottenham.



Arthur Loftus Tottenham from Vanity Fair 1882

- Educated at Eaton
- High Sherriff 1866
- Conservative MP for Leitrim 1880- 1885
- MP for Winchester 1885 - 1887

He became first Chairman of the Sligo Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway in 1877. He resigned his position shortly afterwards and acted as the Contractor to construct the railway when they found that there was no contractor available to construct at their budget.

The railway opened in Sections. Glenfarne to Enniskillen opened on New Year's Day 1880. In September 1881 the railway reached Collooney.

Tottenham acting as contractor became indebted because he was paid mainly in shares by the railway company. The railway itself was also in financial difficulties and did not have enough cash to pay its own debts and running costs with a receiver being appointed in 1890. By the mid 1880's Arthur Loftus Tottenham had become bankrupt.

Tottenham had been elected as MP for Leitrim in April 1880 but by November that year he was ordering evictions in the Killea area of Kiltyclogher. By 1885 he had lost control of his estate and moved to Hove, East Sussex in England. He was elected MP for Winchester in 1885 but died in 1887 while on a trip to New York aged 49. His mother and it seems, some of her older grandchildren moved to her other property in Tuddenham Park, Mullingar. His son Charles Gore Loftus Tottenham contested the 1885 election for Leitrim but was heavily defeated by local land league candidate PA Mc Hugh.

His personal estate on his death was given as £648, 1s 8d.



Tuddenham Park, Mullingar Co. Westmeath.

Formally home of the Rochfords but bought following bankruptcy by Francis Hopkins, a brother of Ann Tottenham. She inherited the property in the 1860s and in the 1880s she went to live there. She died in 1906

With the bankruptcy and departure of Arthur Loftus Tottenham, the direct link with Glenfarne and the Tottenhams was broken. They had been resident landlords for a period of just over 60 years. In general, they were regarded as good landlords in that they invested heavily in their estate and had a good humanitarian record in times of hardship. The Sligo Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway would probably never have been built without the energy and investment from Arthur Loftus Tottenham. It was the railway that finally bankrupted Tottenham although they, like other landlords, may well have left anyway by the early 1900s. The whole system of landlordism was coming to an end and their private demesne on its own would not have been sufficient to maintain their lifestyle. Ironically it was one of the Tottenham's own neighbours, PA Mc Hugh, who contributed hugely to ending landlordism in Ireland. PA Mc Hugh had grown up within sight of Tottenham Hall just across the Glenfarne river in Annagh.

The Wyndham act of 1903 facilitated the transfer and purchase of farms by tenant farmers and this finally ended the days of the big landlords and with them their fabulous big houses and private demesnes went into decline.

After Arthur Loftus Tottenham left, the estate was taken over by Sir Edward Harland. He used it as a hunting retreat and died in Tottenham Hall while on a holiday in Glenfarne in 1895. (separate article on Sir Edward elsewhere in this publication)

Adamson of Glenfarne Hall

In May 1902 Colonel JG Adamson bought Glenfarne Hall and private demesne of 2000 acres along with "2 grouse mountains" for £4,500. A sum of £200 was retained by him to meet compensation for turbary and other rights to be conceded to tenants.

There were subsequent court cases with a number of tenants in the Loughcross area concerning turbary rights (turf cutting). Adamson was from Linden Hall, Northumberland. Adamson had 2 daughters, Muriel and Eve who lived in Glenfarne and were educated there by a French Governess. The Adamsons were generally well liked and gave good local employment.

Adamson sold the property in 1918 to a Belfast timber harvesting company called Lee and Nixon. The price was £18,000 which was 4 times the 1902 price of £4500. The Adamsons returned to Linden Hall. This house in Northumberland is now a hotel. It is said that the Adams fireplace in the reception area came from Glenfarne hall.

Lee and Nixon

Lee and Nixon constructed a narrow gauge railway through the property in 1918. This allowed them to transport timber from the demesne up to Glenfarne railway station.

There were at least seven powered saws located throughout the woods which were used to cut the harvested timber into planks. For a time there was good employment for local people in the harvesting of the oak wood planted in the early 1800s by Charles Henry Tottenham.



Crossing point on Glenfarne Kiltyclogher road of the Lee and Nixon narrow gauge railway

Looting and destruction of the property.

The war of independence and the subsequent civil war from 1919 up until May 1923 was a period of lawlessness in Glenfarne and elsewhere in Ireland.

Lee and Nixon abandoned the property but their machinery and a large stockpile of sawn timber was left behind. Local tradition is that the house was initially broken into by local republicans when the civil war broke out in June 1922. It was later occupied by the opposing free state forces who used it as a military base. Around this time there was a general free for all and most of the furniture was looted from the building. The sawn timber that was stockpiled around the woods and at Glenfarne Station was also looted.

There are many stories told locally of this. There was one man who travelled a journey and arrived with a horse and cart and loaded it up with furniture. He went back into the house for one last piece of furniture only to find that most of his cart had been emptied and stolen by others. In a rage he exclaimed that they were "all a crowd of robbers in Glenfarne."

There is another story of a man from Loughross who brought home a large mirror. When he got home, the mirror was too big to fit in the door of his cottage. It was left outside leaning against the wall of the byre. When the cow came up to be milked that evening she saw her reflection in the mirror and thinking that there was a new addition to the herd, she head butted the mirror and smashed it.

John James Charley Cullen from Carraigcreevy was one of the local leaders during the 1916 rebellion and was an ardent republican. He was a good musician and according to Michael Keany RIP of Meenagh, he took a large white piano from Glenfarne Hall. He brought it home to his house which was on an beautiful elevated site overlooking Lough Mc Nean. The Piano would not fit into the house and was stored in a shed beside it. In good weather John James would wheel the piano out on the street and play it. Michael Keaney said that when he was young he remembered the tunes of the piano wafting down across Meenagh and Corracloona towards Lough mc Nean !

The local Catholic clergy took a stern line against the looting of the property and preached fire and damnation on those that had stolen from it. Many of the local people in Glenfarne and Kiltyclogher returned property that had been stolen. However this was all retaken by others from Manorhamilton ,Glangevlin and further afield!

Court case for damages

In 1927 Lee and Nixon instigated a court case against the new free state government for damages caused during the Civil War. Some interesting details were revealed in the initial proceedings by the Irish Times coverage.

Lee and Nixon claimed £120,000 in damages for destruction and looting between 1922 and 1923. They claimed that repairs and machinery installation were carried out on purchase costing £18,176. 10 miles of railway had been constructed at a cost of £7,402.

Glenfarne Hall is listed in the April 1927 court case as having :

- 18 rooms downstairs, 17 Rooms upstairs.
- Gardens and Vineries
- Thirteen Cottages
- Stable for 30 Horses
- A Motor Garage
- 2,000 Acres
- 520,000 cu Ft of the finest timber
- Turbary and Quarry with traces of Coal and oil not developed.
- 160 Acres of Tillage and a considerable number of Cattle.

Unfortunately it seems that the final outcome of the court case was not covered by the Irish Times and this remains to be discovered by future researchers. Photographs were presented as evidence by Lee and Nixon and if these still exist they may provide a valuable local record if they can be located.

Final days of the Demesne

There have been reports that Glenfarne Hall was burnt and destroyed during the civil war. It was never set on fire. Following the civil war, there was no appetite or no funds to maintain any of the big houses in Ireland. They were seen as symbols of oppression and of English rule. There was no political will to preserve these properties.

Looking back from our relatively affluent position today, it is easy to say that this was a very short sighted position. It was in fact short sighted. But it should be remembered that there was the great poverty locally. Survival of the new state and tending to immediate poverty meant that the policies were short sighted.

By the 1930's the Irish land commission was in charge of the redistribution of the Tottenham demesne. It was decided that the 2000 acres of land should be divided between a mixture of forestry and new small farms. The Glenfarne estate had always been heavily wooded but was mostly felled by Lee and Nixon. The new policy was to plant conifers rather than the native hardwoods. The area that was wooded was greatly extended and even the old walled gardens were covered in conifers. There were three new houses built around this time. The Mc Hughs were housed in Loughross. The Clancys (now Mc Governs) and the Mc Girls were housed adjacent to what was left of the Hall. These new land commission houses were built with stone that was recycled from the hall and the outhouses.

By the 1950s very little remained of Tottenham Hall. Some of the older people today remember the coach house with an ornate stone entrance and the Tottenham Lion. This was said to have been sold to a building contractor in the 1950s and was re-erected elsewhere in Ireland. Nobody locally seems to know exactly where it was transported to.



Mc Girl's stone cottage originally built by the land commission from stone recycled from Tottenham Hall.

The former Tottenham Demesne remains an area of outstanding beauty. It is now operated as a commercial forestry by state owned Coillte.

Appendix to Tottenham Estate History

MS 9837 National Library (manuscripts)

FX Bourke collection. Maps (26) of the estate of Nicholas Loftus Tottenham in different counties (mostly Leitrim).

Copied by Richard Frizell, with names of tenants and description of farm . Jan 1797

Page No	Farm	Tenant	A	R	P
2	Lemanaigh	Executors of Willian Armstrong	82	1	0
4	Casheleveel/Bunn	Widow Gregg	175	3	24
6	Bolibuoy	Rev Cairncross Cullen	465	0	0
8	Casheleveel Barrs	Rev Cairncross Cullen	512	0	0
10	Killea	Rev Cairncross Cullen	428	0	0
12	Kiltyclogher	Representatives of Patrick Cullen Esq	1030	1	6
14	Deragoon/Lugasnaghta	Executors of Francis Johnson	342	0	5
16	Carran/Minedaltin/Shraduffy	Chris. Armstrong & Geo. Wilson	319	2	5
18	Glankeel	Christopher Inghram and Thos. Brocks	191	0	33
20	Bar of Tomneshunsheagh	Robert Hamilton	73	3	25
22	Tullincloy/Aughavaney	William Hamilton	613	3	19
24	Curraghclonagh	William Fredrick	428	1	11
26	Meenagh	William Whiteacre	311	2	38
28	Ardmoneen/Carrigrevagh	Jason Hassard	495	1	39
30	Moneyduff	Jason Hassard	90	1	35
32	laghty/Laughtybar	Jason Hassard	437	2	20
34	Loughrus	Jason Hassard	406	2	11
36	Stranagross/Curleskin	Jason Hassard	183	3	2
38	Lacoon/Mohir	Andrew Johnson	524	1	10
			7112	1	25

**Notes: F
White**

Curleskin appears from the Maps to be part of present day Stranagress. There is no townland of this name in Glenfarne although there is a Corleskin in Kiltyclogher

Mohir appears from the maps to be part of present day Lacoan. This Townland does not exist in Glenfarne today but there is a Moher in Rossinver.

Minedaltin appears to be a sub division of Straduffy/Carran and is not now an official townland

Tenants listed would have likely never farmed the land themselves but probably sublet to the native Irish

Glenade Townlands Listed

Page No	Farm	Tenant	A	R	P
	Aughanlish	James Johnson	606	0	33
	Largidonnell	James Maglowin	448	1	27
	Keelogue	Rev Francis Johnson	308	1	29
	Dromons/Meenagagough	Widow Mc Sharry	216	1	7
	Carinoona/Aughamore	John Ellis	391	0	15

Sir Edward Harland

Sir Edward Harland was founder member of Harland and Wolfe shipyard in Belfast. He was born in Scarborough, England in 1831. During the late 1880's he took possession of the Tottenham estate in Glenfarne, Co. Leitrim. Arthur Loftus Tottenham had been declared bankrupt having been chief contractor on the building of the Sligo Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway.

Sir Edward Harland was an MP and Former Lord Mayor of Belfast and he used the Glenfarne Estate as a hunting retreat.

The Following story was related by the late Frank Mc Hugh of Loughros Glenfarne in the early 1990's. Frank was a local historian who never wrote much down but who had a wealth of information including family genealogies. Much of what Frank had gathered came from his grandfather Patrick Mc Hugh. As a young boy Frank listened carefully to the fireside stories told by his grandfather. In general Frank was always very accurate with the information he gave out. He was a man of few words and would never embroider a story.

It was coming up to Christmas a few years before 1900 when Patrick Mc Hugh attended mass in St Mary's Church Glenfarne. At the same time Sir Edward Harland and a party of friends from Belfast were out hunting in the Tottenham estate beside the church. The hunting activity became concentrated around the grounds of the church as mass was going on. Inside the church the noise of the hounds and of gunfire could be heard clearly. It was obvious to the priest and to the congregation who was responsible. The priest at this stage addressed the congregation from the altar saying, "do not worry for it will be that man's last Christmas in Glenfarne".

That very night after a rousing party a huge meal and too much to drink, Sir Edward Harland retired to an upstairs room of Glenfarne Hall. It is said that he choked on his own vomit.

The Impartial Reporter of the time said that Sir Edward Harland died on Monday evening 23rd of December 1895. The removal of the remains took place from Glenfarne Hall to the railway station and on to Enniskillen on Friday the 27th of December.

The priest "responsible" for the death of Sir Edward is thought to be a Fr. Flynn but this is not certain.

APPENDIX 3: LOCAL AREA ATTRACTIONS

The Rainbow Ballroom of Romance, Glenfarne

The late John McGivern built the Rainbow Ballroom in Glenfarne in early 1934. John was a native of Brockagh, Glenfarne. During the great years of the showband era from the mid-fifties to the early eighties all the top bands played in the Rainbow Ballroom of Romance⁹. Apart from the dance programme John also held many concerts during his years in the business¹⁰.

It was during those dancing times in the Rainbow that John introduced what he called "the romantic interlude"¹¹. In between verses of these songs John would ask the dancing couples to get to know each other. Also during this romantic interlude session the hall lights would be dimmed and the men folk would be encouraged to take their lady friends to the bar for a cup of tea or a mineral - no alcohol bar in those days - before the dance would end. Several happy marriages resulted from meeting at these interludes. From this, John then added "The Ballroom of Romance" to the name of the hall, that is how this name came to be.

The English writer William Trevor while passing through Glenfarne noticed the hall with the writing on the front wall "Ballroom of Romance". After making some inquiries about the hall he wrote a book. The BBC made a film of the book which was screened worldwide.

In January 2007 Glenfarne Development Trust Ltd. carried out small scale works to the building with the assistance of €130,000 LEADER +funding, this phase of work was completed in March 2008. In 2012 the group were successful with an application to Leitrim Development Company under the LEADER programme to complete the project. The group received a grant of €485,349.37. This along with their own funds and a loan that secured from Western Development Commission means that approximately €700,000.00 was spent on finishing off the Rainbow Project.

The Rainbow Ballroom of Romance is still going strong with many top acts playing at the venue such as recent visitors The Nathan Carter, Wolfe Tones and Louise Morrissey.

Seán Mac Diarmada, Kiltyclogher

Seán Mac Diarmada¹² was member of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. He was the principal Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) organiser; fought in the General Post Office (GPO) during the 1916 Easter Rising; and was one of the seven signatories¹³ of the Irish proclamation document issued by the IRB on April 24th 1916 which proclaimed Irish independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The visitor attractions in the area include the Seán MacDiarmada, family home the three-roomed thatched cottage, overlooking Lough Mc Nean which remains in its original condition today and the Kiltyclogher Heritage Centre and the Seán MacDiarmada Summer School has been held in the Kiltyclogher since June 2009.

Bréifne

⁹ Bands such as Hugh Toorish and the famous [Clipper Carlton from Strabane were regular performers on the Rainbow stage. Other bands to come regularly to the Rainbow included Brendan Bowyer and the Royal, Dickie Rock and The Miami, Joe McCarthy and the Dixies, Sean Fagan, Sonny Knowles and the Pacific, The Royal Blues and Doc Carroll, The Black Ages, Maurice Mulcahy Band, Eileen Reid and the Cadets, Donnie Collins Band, Gay McIntyre from Derry, Big Tom and the Mainliners, Susan McCann, Philmeona Begley, Joe Dolan, Brian Coll and the Buckaroos and hundreds more as at that time.

¹⁰ Many of the top groups and solo performers played in the Rainbow from both Ireland and abroad including The Dubliners, Foster and Allen, Dublin City Ramblers, Wolfe Tones, Anna McGoldrick, Joe Lynch, Ruby Murray, Bridie Gallagher, Daniel O'Donnell, Eileen Donaghy, Altan (Irish group) Gallowglass Ceili Band.

¹¹ This interlude consisted of approximately fifteen to twenty minutes during the dance when John dressed in a black suit, white shirt and black bow tie, would join with the band on stage and sing such romantic songs as "Have you ever been lonely" the popular Jim Reeves song "He'll have to go" and others.

¹² (1883- 1916) was born in Corranmore near Kiltyclogher, North Leitrim

¹³ Thomas J. Clarke, Sean Mac Diarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, P. H. Pearse, Eamonn Ceannt, James Connolly, and Joseph Plunkett

Bréifne is an area of outstanding natural beauty, a place of wild bogland, green valleys, wandering waterways and immense mountains. Located in the North West of Ireland, Bréifne is a region with strong ties to the past and a home to exciting wildlife, unique geology and some truly remarkable archaeology.

Bréifne is an ancient kingdom and a geographically and geologically distinct region, part of which is in the Republic of Ireland while part is in Northern Ireland. Bréifne encompasses five counties; Fermanagh, Cavan, Sligo, Roscommon and Leitrim.

The seven delightful green glens of this region are Glencar, Glenfarne, Glenaniff, Glenboy, Glenkeel, Gleniff and Glenade.

Gleniff

Along the deeply cut valley of Gleniff you will see Benbulbin Shale Formation, the Glencar Limestone Formation and the mudbank facies of the Dartry Limestone Formation all of which have been exposed. There is also a large "raft" of younger Meenymore Limestone Formation that has been dissolved by rainwater.

This area is typical of the Glencar Limestone and Dartry Limestone. The Glencar Formation consists of alternating calcareous shales and limestones, which are bioturbated and contains locally abundant fossils with specimens of solitary rugose (horn-shaped) corals *Solenodendron martini* and *Solenodendron irregulare*, suggesting an Asbian age.

The large "raft" of Meenymore Formation contains an exceptional fauna including brachiopods, bryozoans, rugose coral, bivalves, gastropods, nautiloids, goniatites, trilobites, ostracodes and echinoids - some of the echinoids represent taxa more commonly related to the Permian of Timor than the Irish Carboniferous.

Glencar limestone formation

The last ice age to affect Ireland began around 20,000 years ago. Most of the country was covered by a great ice sheet composed of a number of ice domes that spread out from local centres. Bréifne was affected by ice from two domes, one centred on a line running northeast from Carrick-on-Shannon and one that spread out radially from the Donegal mountains. At the maximum extent of the glaciation, the ice sheet was over 650 metres thick.

Ice shapes the land in different ways. Thick glaciers can grind out the rock beneath them, widening and steepening valleys. Such valleys are a distinctive part of Bréifne's landscape: Glencar, Glenade and the Erne valleys are all products of glacial action. As the glacier flows over the ground, it picks up ground rock material and other loose debris in its path. Eventually, as the ice melts this material is left behind in the form of till, a soft clay-rich material that forms much of the subsoil in Ireland. The till may be deposited in thick sheets or moulded by the ice into rounded, elongate hills called drumlins. Drumlins are especially common in Bréifne, forming a distinctive "basket of eggs" landscape in the southeast of the region.

There is hardly any part of Bréifne that is not touched by the last ice age. Almost every stretch of ground contains a trace, however subtle, of the enormous power that glaciers possess to mould and sculpt the landscape.

Valleys and lakes

The Dartry Mountains for the more adventurous, long distance hikers will enjoy the rolling hills of the Leitrim Way which runs from Manorhamilton to Drumshanbo thirty miles away and a little further on, Leitrim town. The footpath itself is well sign posted.

Most of Lough Gill is in neighbouring Sligo, but Leitrim has the eastern end of it, where you can see Parke's Castle built in 1609 for Capt Robert Parke – the site itself had seen previous habitation, as it was once a five storey tower owned by the O'Rourke clan. The Parke family abandoned the castle before the end of the seventeenth century, and it was left derelict before restoration in the mid twentieth century using many of the traditional building techniques.

Lough Allen and Lough Melvin are two more of the lakes in County Leitrim, and the lakes and rivers of Leitrim are a big draw for those who enjoy fishing. Boats can also be hired for cruises too, or a combination of the two. The waterways of Leitrim are generally well stocked with fish.

Glaciers begin near mountain summits, flowing out from corries and squeezing into V-shaped river valleys. In this way, the pre-existing topography controls the flow of the ice sheets. Ice from several corries or ice fields may join together to flow down a valley. The ice deepens and widens the valley into classic U-shaped glaciated valleys

Bréifne contains a number of fine examples of these valleys, with perhaps Glencar, Glenade and the Erne valley the most famous. All trend west to northwest, which was the direction of ice flow. The cliffs of the Dartry Mountains also show excellent examples of corries, notably in Gleniff valley and in the cliffs around Eagle's Rock.

As the ice melted it left behind thick deposits of clay and rock fragments called till, the remains of bedrock that was ground up beneath the flowing ice. Till deposits can have various forms (see Drumlins and Moraines) but among the more significant if least obvious till deposits in Bréifne are those that have helped create the region's lakes. Although the glaciers scoured out the deep valleys it is the till left behind that provided the impermeable material needed to impound the water and create the lakes. Thus, Bréifne's lakes can be seen as the result of ice erosion and deposition acting together. Loughs Melvin and Allen are impounded by moraines while Lough Arrow and Lower Lough Erne are both impounded by drumlins, as are most of the small lakes in the region.

Eagle's Rock, in Glenade Valley, forms an even more striking feature. Viewed from the main road through the valley, it appears only as a steep cliff face, similar to the other scarps that are a feature of the Dartry Mountains. But viewed from the minor road that runs at the base of the cliffs, Eagle's Rock reveals itself as a spectacular example of a landslip. A steep-sided, isolated rock stack stands some 80 m away from the cliff face from which it has been detached.

Organic Center, Rossinver

The Organic Centre was founded in 1995 by local organic growers, farmers and supporters, the site, gardens, cafe and training facilities was developed on a 19-acre green field site at the foot of limestone hills beside Lough Melvin. The Centre was developed to encourage organic production, the sustainable and ecological use of land, and to promote education and inclusion. The centre offers high quality information and training; established of SEED a national network for school gardens; links with local accommodation providers to develop local tourism; and runs various festivals and events e.g. Organic Fair and Green Festival North West. The Organic Centre are open 7 days a week from 10am – 5pm. They have an onsite shop and our cafe has great food on offer. The cafe is open every weekend, and if you are coming for a group visit or a tour, our cafe can cater for all your needs.

The Leitrim Sculpture Centre, Manorhamilton

Leitrim Sculpture Centre support innovation and understanding in contemporary art by facilitating artists wishing to extend their practice or knowledge.

We provide opportunities through residencies, workshops, commissions, training and exhibitions and explore new ideas and processes within a range of community, educational and environmental contexts.

North Leitrim Glens Centre, Manorhamilton

The Glens Centre is an intimate venue housed in a converted church. The performance space seats up to 129, has excellent natural acoustics and superb technical facilities. The Glens Centre is a lively arts centre hosts a large number of classes and activities, concerts, drama, recitals, readings. It is the home of North Leitrim Glens Tourism Coop which organises fishing, hill walking etc.

Edergole Kitchen, Dromahair

The Edergole Kitchen is a family-run, vegan catering company that hosts regular supper clubs and vegan cookery classes. Servicing Leitrim, Sligo, and the North-West of Ireland, the business is run by Mike Harris and Jo Lewis. They have been living, working and cooking together since they met over twenty-five years ago. Call 087 778 1914 edergolekitchen@gmail.com

McNean House & Restaurant Experience, Blacklion

Neven Maguire's award-winning MacNean House & Restaurant. Blacklion is nestled in the picturesque foothills of the Cuilcagh Mountains, Co. Cavan, near to the MacNean Lakes that give the restaurant its name. The restaurant offers a series of Menus. Sunday Lunch; Prestige Menu; Vegetarian Menu; Wine List; Accommodation; Cook with Neven. Recipes of the Month; Cookery School and Cookery School Courses.

UNESCO Global Geopark

Marble Arch Caves are the focal point of the Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark, which stretches from the northern shores of Lower Lough Erne, to the Lough Oughter in Co. Cavan. The Geopark presents an integrated approach to the iconic sites, interpretation and services in terms of walking trails, environmental education programmes etc. The Geopark facilitates an improved level of tourism service provision for regional development.

Marble Arch Caves

The Marble Arch Caves are one of Europe's finest caves. Informative guides conduct tours past a variety of cave formations, explaining the formations, the history of the caves, cave explorers and the myths and legends associated with the caves. Stalactites glisten above streamways while fragile mineral cascades of creamy calcite coat walls. Walkways allow easy access and lighting reveals the beauty of the caves. Electrically powered boats glide through caverns (weather permitting) carrying visitors on a short trip along the river. The Marble Arch Caves are in a National Nature Reserve near Cuilcagh Mountain and have coach and car parking, toilets and baby changing facilities, souvenir shop, restaurant, exhibition area, free audio-visual presentation (in the Theatre) and free WiFi.

There are 4 tours of the Marble Arch Caves offered, (2 including the boat trip and 2 without). This allows for the impact of heavy rainfall on the proposition. Tours of the Marble Arch Caves are approx. 75 minutes; are suitable for average fitness levels; have 154 steps; the distance is 1.5km (walking and boat); and the maximum number of participants per tour are 21. The suggested duration: 2-3 hours, as if time and weather permit's there are some attractive walks on the property. Admission for adults is £11 and children under 5 go free.

An events programme is delivered throughout the year, these are a mix of educational and leisure for example, on the 12th September this year there will be music sessions in the caves* and in the past have had theatre.

Approximately 600 people per day visit the caves and from April to June 2019 -63 tour groups have visited. The management would welcome tour groups morning and later in the evening as it is very busy during the day with independent visitors.

Cuilcagh Boardwalk Trail

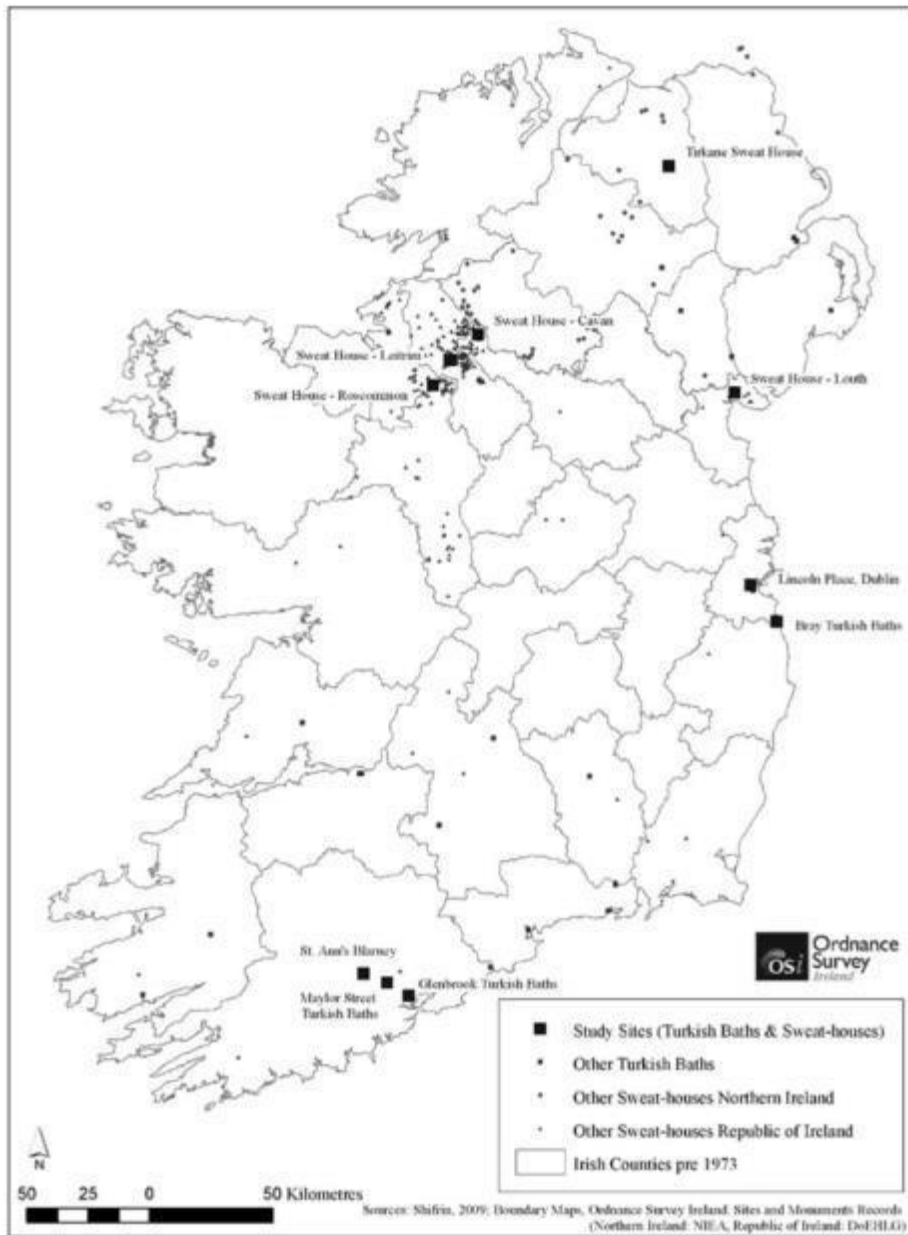
At Cuilcagh Mountain **Cuilcagh Boardwalk Trail** has been introduced, the route is through one of the largest blanket bogs in Northern Ireland, over tracks, boardwalk and staircase (to heaven). A steep climb is required to reach the viewing platform which provides views of the surrounding lowlands. The walk passes through the limestone landscape, visible are abandoned Irish cottages, drystone walls and potato cultivation ridges ("lazy beds") (remnants of Ireland's past heritage). After 4km, the ascent starts and is negotiated by a section of boardwalk, providing protection to the blanket bog beneath. The final ascent is via a steep section of steps, to the viewing platform. The distance is 4 miles, linear, there are no guided walks, the visitor facilities are limited to 2 car parks and resting areas.

* Information gathered and event scheduled prior to ongoing public health restrictions.

APPENDIX 4 – THERAPEUTIC ENVIRONMENTS GLENFARNE

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THERAPEUTIC ENVIRONMENTS



Reference: An extract of Ronan Foley's book on the subject:

<https://books.google.ie/books?id=PIIHDAAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&dq=Ronan%20Foley&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q=Ronan%20Foley&f=false>

19th Century - Sweathouses Near to Glenfarne Wood

SMR No.	Class	Townland	ITM Easting	ITM Northing	Irish Grid Easting	Irish Grid Northing
LE012- 056- ---	Sweathouse	BRONAGH	598076	835794	198124	335789
LE012- 051- ---	Sweathouse	CLOONAGHMORE	599832	835348	199881	335343
LE012- 057- ---	Sweathouse	CLOONAGHMORE	599300	835901	199349	335896
LE012- 049- ---	Sweathouse	SRANAGROSS	598515	837099	198563	337094
LE012- 050- ---	Sweathouse	SRANAGROSS	599359	836894	199408	336889
LE013- 011- ---	Sweathouse	MEENKEERAGH	600788	836317	200837	336312
LE013- 012- ---	Sweathouse	MEENKEERAGH	601021	836191	201070	336186
LE012- 047- ---	Sweathouse	LOUGHROS	600003	838627	200052	338623
LE012- 048- ---	Sweathouse	LOUGHROS	600127	839288	200176	339284
LE009- 009----	Sweathouse	CARRICKREVAGH	601302	839964	201351	339960
LE013- 008- ---	Sweathouse	ANNAGH (Drumahaire By., Cloonclare ED)	601681	838093	201730	338088
LE018- 053- ---	Sweathouse	ANNAGH UPPER	598008	826168	198056	326161
LE018- 069- ---	Sweathouse	ANNAGH UPPER	598003	826334	198051	326327

Reference: <https://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>

APPENDIX 5: ONLINE MEETING ATTENDEES

ZOOM On-Line Meeting Attendees (1st/2nd & 7th April 2020)		
Sheila	O'Keefe	Holey Soles – Walking Club
Gerard	Scott	Mountaineering Ireland, Walking and Cycling Club
Ashling	Cartwright	Leitrim Recreation Forum
Tracy	Ferguson	Leitrim County Council
Peter	Kearns	Independent Living Movement of Ireland
Cathal	O'Dolan	Rushin Caravan Park
Nuala	McNulty	Tawneylust Lodge (& Eco tourism)
Sean	Clancy	Glenfarne Wood Products
Gerry	Creamer	Bee Park, Manorhamilton/Historian
Frank	White	Railway House Glenfarne and Historian
Barney	Devine	Cuilcagh to Cleenish
Brian	Smyth	Leitrim Development Company
Michael	Feeney	Leitrim Recreation Forum
Sean	McDermott	Glenfarne Development Association
Conor	Maguire	SLNCR working group
Ciaran	Rock	Kiltyclogher Heritage Centre
Sinead	Maguire	Cllr, Sligo
Keith	McNair	Chair & CEO
Paul	Murphy	Celtic Experience
Patricia	Forde	Leitrim Sports Partnership
Jim and Assumpta	Clancy	Clancy's of Glenfarne
Rob	Henshall	Archaeologist

ZOOM Presentation of Draft Findings and Emerging Themes (28th April 2020)		
Declan	Boyle	Leitrim County Council
Johanna	Daly	Leitrim County Council
Tracy	Ferguson	Leitrim County Council
Richard	Fleming	Leitrim County Council
Patricia	Forde	Leitrim County Council
Sinead	McDermott	Leitrim County Council/Leitrim Tourism
Bernard	Greene	Leitrim County Council
Padraic	MacShera	Leitrim County Council
Shay	O'Connor	Leitrim County Council
Conor	English	Coillte
Paul	Jordan	Coillte
Sarah	McCarthy	Fáilte Ireland

APPENDIX 6: GLENFARNE WOOD – SURVEY ANALYSIS

1.1 Analysis of responses

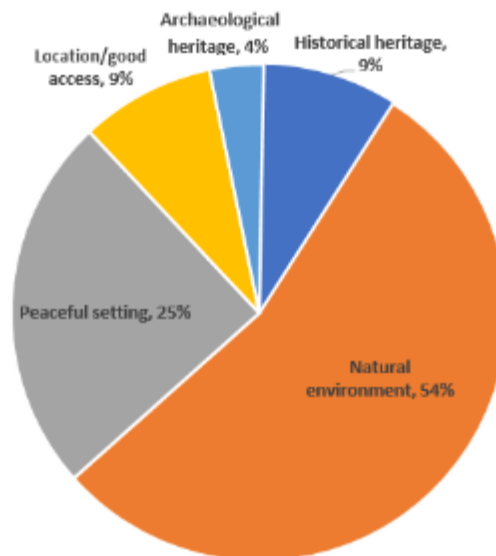
Q1. What in your opinion makes Glenfarne Wood and area a special place?

Survey responses to were categorised under a number of recurring key themes:

- Natural environment
- Peaceful setting
- Historical heritage
- Location/good access
- Archaeological heritage

39 people responded to this question, with a significant number mentioning more than one key theme.

Q1. What in your opinion makes Glenfarne Wood and area a special place? (n=39)



Summary Q1: What in your opinion makes Glenfarne Wood and area a special place?

Top three responses (Theme 1)

- Natural environment (54%)
- Peaceful setting (25%)
- Historical heritage (9%)
- Location/good access (9%)

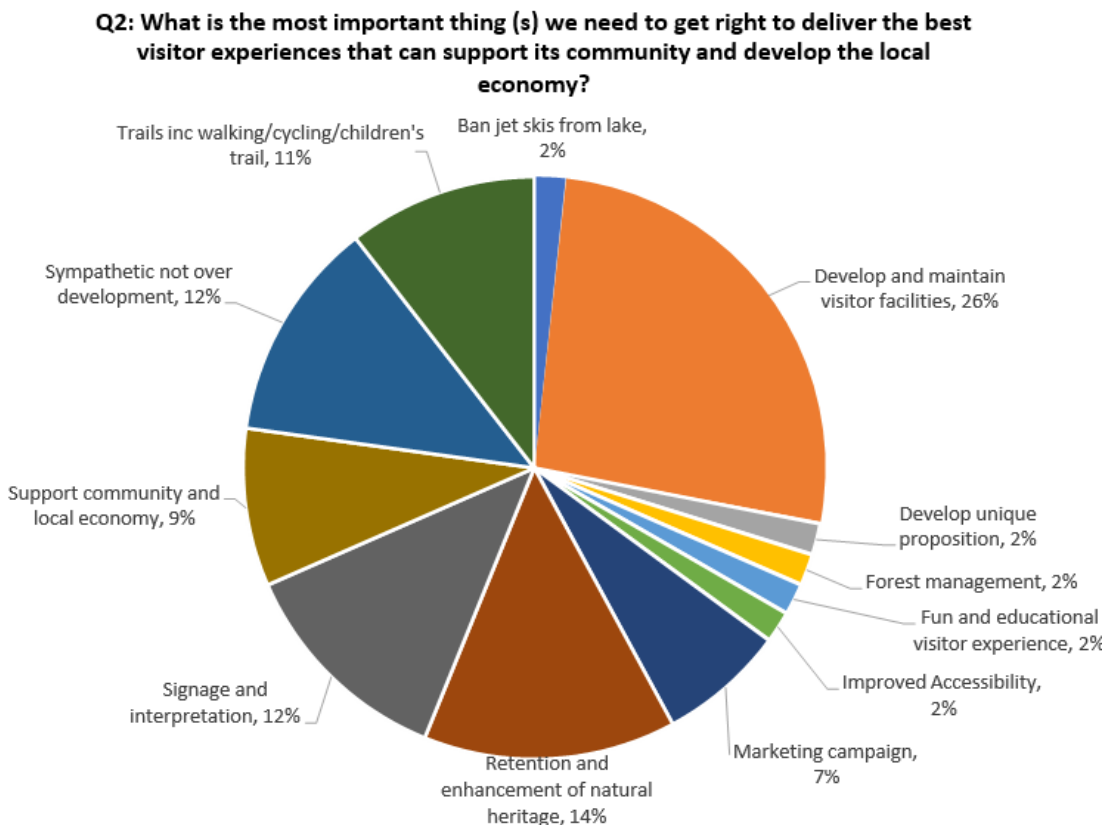
Commentary

Overwhelmingly, the respondents mentioned the beautiful natural setting and the peacefulness the area offers. There were a number of comments requesting that the area be sympathetically developed to retain the natural heritage and the calm experience in the park.

Quite a few respondents noted the easy access to the woods. A significant number of others were keen to celebrate and note the historical and archaeological assets in the area.

Q2: What is the most important thing(s) we need to get right to deliver the best visitor experiences that can support its community and develop the local economy?

Survey responses were categorised under a number of recurring key themes.



Summary Q2. What is the most important thing (s) we need to get right to deliver the best visitor experiences that can support its community and develop the local economy?

Top five responses

- Develop and maintain visitor facilities (26%)
- Retention and enhancement of natural heritage (14%)
- Signage and interpretation (12%)
- Trails including walking/cycling/children’s trails (11%)
- Marketing campaign (7%)

Commentary

The need for visitor facilities was the key theme among many responses as well as enhanced visitor experience with improved signage and interpretation to help visitors to appreciate their surroundings including developing tracks and trails.

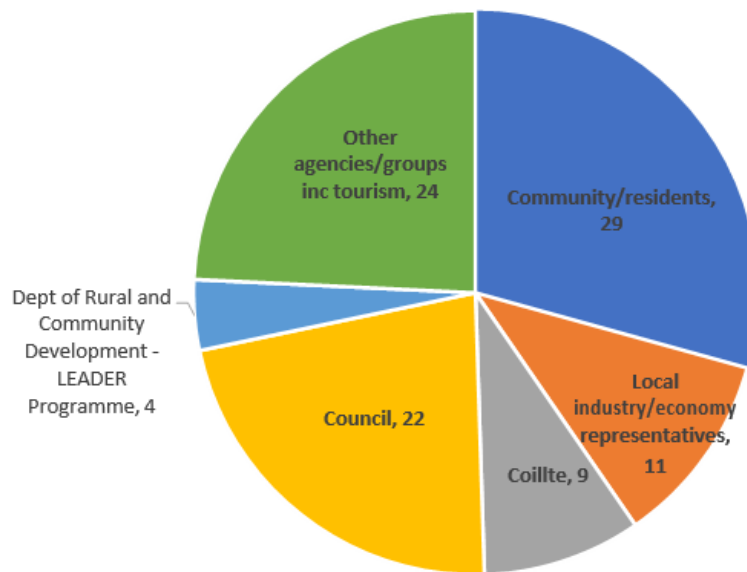
Similar to the responses to Q1 re what makes the area a special place, many respondents were emphatic that any development should be sympathetic to the natural environment and that the area is not over developed.

Importantly, supporting the local community and benefitting the economy was also a significant theme and reflects the desire of the local area to engage with and benefit from the site.

Q3. Who needs to be involved to make this a success?

The survey responses were grouped into categories; total mentions are represented in the chart below.

Q3. Who needs to be involved to make this a success? Total references to stakeholders (n=39)



Summary Q3. Who needs to be involved to make this a success?

Responses by rank (number of mentions)

1. Community/residents (29)
2. Other agencies/groups (see below) (24)
3. Leitrim County Council (22)
4. Local industry/economy representatives (11)
5. Coillte (9)
6. Dept of Rural and Community Development/LEADER programme (4)

Other agencies/groups specifically mentioned include:

- Local clubs and support groups
- Fáilte Ireland
- Leitrim Recreational Forum
- Leitrim Tourism Network
- Local heritage groups/representatives/sites such as Kiltyclogher Heritage Centre
- Nature organisations such as National Parks and Wildlife Service, Irish Wildlife Trust, Birdwatch Ireland

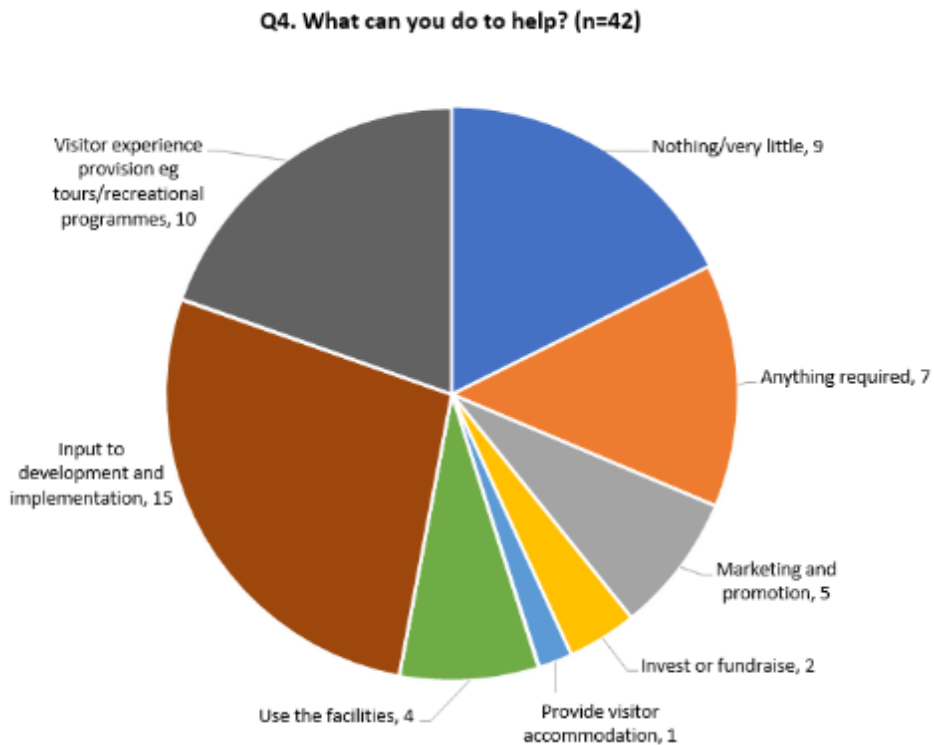
Commentary

The interest from the community in engaging with the development of Glenfarne Wood must be a key consideration for Coillte and Leitrim County Council going forward.

Quite a large range of stakeholders were mentioned so it would be imperative to ensure any steering group established was manageable with a clear Terms of Reference and responsibilities agreed. As a number of special interest groups were mentioned, it could be that smaller short-term sub-groups were established to input on particular elements of the development when required.

Q4: What can you do to help?

The survey responses were grouped into categories; total mentions are represented in the chart below.



Summary Q4. What can you do to help? Responses

by rank (Top Five number of mentions)

- Input to development and implementation including consultation (14)
- Developing the visitor experience e.g. tours and recreational programmes (10)
- Anything required (7)
- Marketing and promotion (4)
- Use the facilities (4)

Commentary

- ‘No responses’ were counted as ‘nothing/very little’ as the assumption was made that they do not know how they can contribute.
- A significant number of respondents were happy to contribute to any consultation and planning process; additionally, a number of people responded that they were happy to help in any way.

Considering those who responded that they are happy to help in any way, or do not feel they can contribute, this would suggest that many are unsure how they can help specifically; there will be a need to communicate and suggest practical and clear ways in which people can help.

Q6. Other comments

Many of the other comments submitted reiterated the responses to previous survey questions, proposing things to consider and what they feel is important about Glenfarne. Some comments in particular are shown below.

Slow tourism, connecting with nature and mental health awareness: Glenfarne Wood has the potential to be a holistic hub for natural harmony.

Potential for more to be done with the lake to facilitate more activities; however we need to be aware of safety issues

I believe we should focus on highlighting the history of Glenfarne Wood and especially its link with Belfast.

Just keep things simple, increase biodiversity, maintain the environment. And people will come, they seek an escape from modern life, peace, nature, etc... So give it to them

Please keep Glenfarne Forest as a natural space and don't over-commercialise it.

It's a fantastic opportunity. It needs to be developed to make it accessible & safe but it shouldn't be allowed to be spoilt.

There is so much to build on. The existing estate is attractive as it is. It appears to be largely unknown. It is also located in a largely unknown North Leitrim. The potential of the facility to complement the promised SLNCR greenway gives its development an added dimension. It can also complement the many other attractions nearby, including the Rainbow Ballroom, even Maguire's Restaurant, Marble Arch Caves, Cuilcagh Mountain Park, Florencecourt etc.

Great location and needs whole community involvement not just the same few all the time, to upgrade and maintain Glenfarne Wood.

It would be great for the area to develop Tottenham estate who built the titanic as tourism potential for north Leitrim.

Integrate Thur Mountain into the project as geographically the forest is situated where Thur rolls down to Lough Mac Nean. There is interesting geology and neolithic remains and the mountain is accessible in terms of rights of way but would require a small investment in wooden steps/foot bridges to make it easier to climb. Also pursue integration with the Cavan Fermanagh Geopark as many of the features on Thur share very similar characteristics with the Cavan Burren.

For years I've dreamed of mythical tours in Leitrim/Sligo and Roscommon, where the rich mythical history can be portrayed bilingually (with Irish English and European Languages) through interesting trails for families and communities. There's so much we could do here at Glenfarne.

A greater appreciation of former big houses and their demesnes now exists in Ireland and Glenfarne Hall should be able to attract more visitors i.e families, historians, hikers etc, given its close proximity to the N16 thus helping local economy

2.1 Summary strengths and barriers to overcome

Strengths	Considerations and barriers to overcome in the development of Glenfarne Wood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful, calming and holistic experience • Offering a combination of the forest and Lough – that needs to be packaged • Natural environment and existing biodiversity • Leitrim in particular is well known for its connectivity with nature, eco-friendly and slow tourism attributes and it has an abundance of providers who can connect with Glenfarne Wood to provide packages • A place that can be used by all ageing population, children, young adults and families • Rich natural, social, cultural, historic and archaeological heritage at the wood and in its surrounds • The proposed SLNC Greenway passes the entrance to Glenfarne Wood and the vision for the development of the wood must consider the wood as a place where Greenway users could stop off and have a visitor experience that will enable them to spend more time in the area and make them want to come back • Desire by all to develop and create a visitor experience with facilities that meet visitors’ expectations and requirements • Wide range of stakeholders identified to support the development and become involved. • Sense of ‘ownership’ by survey respondents • Community interest in being involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about over-development • Balance between providing visitor infrastructure and facilities and protecting woods uniqueness • Requirement to be financially sustainable, create jobs, contribute of economic development and social regeneration of the area balanced with local concern about over- commercialising • Proposals to develop trails versus retaining peace and tranquillity of the woods • Engagement with local community at all stages including advising how they can help and benefit – potential to set up small, manageable stakeholder group to include local community • Management and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders including ensuring wide-ranging objectives are met. • There is very little accommodation for visitors in close proximity to the wood

APPENDIX 7: GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: Haldon Forest Park

LOCATION - Kennford, Exeter, England

OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

Haldon Forest Park is made up of 3,500 acres of woodland, just 15 minutes from Exeter. Open 364 days a year, it's the perfect place for the visitor to immerse themselves in the great outdoors. There are miles of trails for walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders. Visitors can enjoy expansive views, exhilarating mountain biking, tree top adventures and orienteering courses.



The park is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.⁶⁵¹⁴

DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

In 2006 Haldon Forest Park received approximately £800,000 under the Active England Programme (a three-year programme established in 2003 with Big Lottery and Sport England funding to increase community participation in sport and physical activity in England). Haldon Forest park was one of five woodland projects to receive funding under the programme.

The programme delivered:

- an all ability play trail with traditional and natural play features
- a central hub with information and a ranger presence
- a butterfly trail
- a sensory trail at Mamhead (this is away from the central hub area at Haldon – i.e. the main car park area)
- a family cycle track
- cycle trail
- adventure cycle track
- a freeride area
- freers red run – technical single track
- horse riders trail
- concessions scheme
- Employed a project manager and outreach ranger who developed a range of activities and events through targeted outreach work.

A project evaluation report conducted in 2009¹⁵ reported that:

- There was a significant increase in family use of the site from 31% in 2005 to 61% in 2007. This suggested a significant rise in the number of under 16s using the site due to the new play equipment installed and new family walking and cycling trails.
- There was a large decrease in the number of people reporting a lack of facilities on site as a barrier to using the site from 17% in 2005 to 2% in 2007.
- There was an increase in first time visitors from 10% in 2005 to 24% in 2007.
- There were significant increases in cycling, mountain biking and play activities.
- There was an increase in the average length of time spent at the site from 1.5 hours to 2.2 hours.
- There was a significant increase in people doing multiple activities from 48% to 61%.
- There was a large decrease in people reporting anti-social behaviour (from 16% to 4%) as a barrier to accessing the site.
- 42% of respondents said the new facilities would make them more active.

¹⁴ <https://www.explored Devon.info/activities/wildlife/haldon-forest-park-wildlife/>

¹⁵ https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/791/active_england_haldon_site_report.pdf

Site visits were arranged for specific demographic groups including for example a group of mobility-impaired pensioners who hadn't visited the park in a number of years, to show them the new improved accessible facilities. Similar 'fam trips' were also held for walking groups for older people.

VISITOR PROPOSITION AND EXPERIENCE

Current¹⁶

- Small visitor centre.
- Walking trails.
- Discovery trail: an all-ability 2.5 km trail suitable for walkers, children and beginner cyclists. The surfaced trail is accessible to wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility vehicles and has regular resting points. There are regular resting points and some stunning views to be enjoyed as well fun features along the route for children such as photo spots and a large wooden xylophone, as well as clues along the trail part of the Gruffalo Trail and orienteering offering outlined below.
- Gruffalo Trail/orienteering: at various points throughout the forest, there are markers with Gruffalo-themed clues for children to find 'animals' hidden in the forest and spot the shelters made out of branches and leaves where the animals 'live', and a wooden Gruffalo statue near the end for photo opportunities. There was an app to support this but this is currently unavailable as Forestry England had plans develop this further in 2020 into a full Gruffalo Spotters Trail with an enhanced app, although this is currently on hold.¹⁷ However Forestry England has Gruffalo-themed and other activity sheets which can be downloaded.¹⁸ The new Gruffalo Spotters trail plans to feature an augmented reality app, fun activity pack and trail. Children will get to interact with all their favourite characters as they go in search of the Gruffalo in the forest.
- Five cycling trails including mountain bike trails
- Cycle hire via partner organisation: for riders with reduced fitness or mobility, specialist hire options are available including electrically assisted bikes. All cycle hire is heavily discounted for over 55s.
- Trumper/mobility scooter hire.
- Running route 1-5km.
- Go Ape Tree Top Adventure: family tree top experience with wobbly bridges, intricate crossings and zip wire finale.
- Go Segway.
- Nordic Walking (poles available for hire), Nordic Walking instructor training, Nordic Fitness Club.
- Picnic areas.
- Café.
- Yurt hire: wheelchair accessible for activities and events including. Note, this is not visitor accommodation. There is one permanent 24ft structure that can hold ten people for floor-based activities such as yoga, or more if standing or seated.
- Parkrun.
- Horse riding trails: network of riding trails that include a quarter mile stretch for galloping.
- Trumper/mobility scooter hire: four Trampers (off-road mobility scooters) are available to hire by anyone aged 14+ as part of the Countryside Mobility Scheme. These were secured through funding secured by Age UK Devon.¹⁹
- Toilets.
- Dog friendly.



¹⁶ <https://www.forestryengland.uk/haldon-forest-park>

¹⁷ <https://www.forestryengland.uk/gruffalo-spotters>

¹⁸ <https://www.forestryengland.uk/gruffalo>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/haldonforestpark/videos/vb.50828815835/423601651726123/?type=2&theater>

Attracting older visitors

In 2019 Haldon Forest Park has unveiled a number of new features, developed in partnership with Age UK Devon, to improve access to the woodland for older visitors. A grant of £163,000 from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development for the Haldon Forest Attracting Older Visitors project, supported a number of initiatives ensure that people in later life can access and enjoy the huge benefits of spending time in the forest. The changes were made to ensure that visitors of all ages and abilities can enjoy the physical and mental benefits of being active in the forest. The new developments include:

- Two sheltered viewing platforms with play features have been constructed on the all-ability Discovery Trail to offer convenient resting points with views across the forest. This trail has also been modified to offer a new accessible loop created for visitors wanting a shorter route.
- A nature hide with seating and information boards brings visitors closer to the beautiful wildlife that lives in Haldon Forest including majestic birds of prey, adders, lizards and frogs, and ground-nesting nightjar, which can be heard calling at dawn and dusk during the summer;
- A new orienteering course developed in partnership with Devon Orienteering Club, with graded routes to suit all abilities, including complete beginner.
- Two additional off-road mobility scooters were made available to hire via the Countryside Mobility Scheme. These 'Trampers' can access three of Haldon's four walking trails, as well as the extensive network of forest roads. For visitors who prefer pedal power, six electric bikes will shortly be available to hire, with 40% discount to visitors over 55, to take some of the uphill struggle out of Haldon's mountain bike trails.
- More seating areas.²⁰



Forest bathing

Haldon Forest Park actively promotes forest bathing for health and wellbeing, encouraged and led by guidance from Forestry England.²¹

Forest Bathing - Initiatives at Haldon Forest Park include:

- Sharing Forest Bathing guide on social media²² - Forests For Wellbeing²³
- Events such as Gong Immersion and Sound Meditation in the yurt.
- Forest Bathing taster session in partnership with the Forestry Commission²⁴
- Introductory forest bathing six-week course to deepen sensory awareness.²⁵
- Love Later Life: a free activity day for over 50s, in conjunction with Age UK and Active Devon which runs a programme called Connecting Actively to Nature. This includes guided walks, gentle Pilates, forest bathing and gong bathing, in which the sounds and vibrations from gongs are used to help people reach a state of deep relaxation.

Nature and wildlife

- Viewing points are positioned to see one of the five species of birds of prey and an accessible bird hide.
- A dedicated 'Butterfly Trail' is a three-mile circular route leading to an area specially managed for butterflies, of which over 30 species have been recorded in the park.²⁶

²⁰ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/devon/about-us/news/articles/2019/haldon-forest-park-reveals-new-accessible-features-ready-for-summer-2019/>

²¹ <https://www.forestryengland.uk/search?keywords=bathing>

²² <https://www.facebook.com/haldonforestpark/posts/10155535256770836>

²³ <https://www.forestryengland.uk/resource/wellbeing-booklet>

²⁴ <https://aquafolium.co.uk/2017/10/29/haldon-forest-bathing-1st-december-2017/>

²⁵ <https://wildernessguide.wordpress.com/forest-bathing/courses-events/>

²⁶ <https://www.explored Devon.info/activities/wildlife/haldon-forest-park-wildlife/>

Planned

New visitor centre plans approved (October 2018)²⁷

Plans were approved for a new visitor centre and to increase the number of car parking spaces at Haldon Forest Park. The plans which have not yet been implemented were to ensure that the visitor facilities are fit for purpose, safe to use, sustainable, improve visitor flow and orientation, and attract a wide range of visitors. The existing visitor centre was developed in 2006 using surplus forest industry buildings, but resulted in the development having an industrial character and gave the site a lack of connectivity.

The plans include:

- New visitor centre to include cycle hire, retail outlet, women's and men's changing rooms and WCs, an accessible WC, office, front desk, welfare room, and self-service information point.
- Relocation of the operations area to a more discreet location away from the visitor area.
- Upgrading existing parking and extending provision.



It is noteworthy that they have stated that main goal of the redevelopment is not to hugely increase visitor numbers or to create new attractions, but to safeguard the existing business for the future and to focus on the target markets to maximise use through the year including providing opportunities for new local businesses and increase employment opportunities for local people.

OPERATIONS AND OWNERSHIP

Ownership, site management and maintenance, and visitor facilities management

Forestry England

Visitor experience development and management

- Orienteering: developed in partnership with Devon Orienteering Club.
- Segways: operated by Go Segway.
- Trampers (all terrain mobility scooters): operated in partnership with the Countryside Mobility Scheme.
- Cycle hire: operated by Forest Cycle Hire Limited²⁸
- Yurt hire: managed by Haldon Forest Park for Forestry England.

VISITOR CENTRE DESIGN AND INTERPRETATION

Design

The existing visitor centre is too small and was built with surplus forestry buildings but is considered not fit for purpose and not fitting with the park. As outlined above, plans for a new visitor centre have been approved.

Interpretation

- Interpretation boards/panels
- Directional signage
- Gruffalo orienteering leaflets with a certificate and map available for sale for £1.50.
- Orienteering full colour waterproof map available from the Rangers Office for £1.50 or free to download from British Orienteering.²⁹

²⁷ <https://www.devonlive.com/news/approval-given-plans-new-visitor-2063970>

²⁸ <http://www.forestcyclehire.co.uk>

²⁹ https://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/poc/haldon_forest_park_fc

COMMUNITY VALUE

- Opportunities for local businesses to partner in operations of specific activities which will increase when the new visitor centre opens.
- Employment opportunities for local people.
- Health and wellbeing for local people.
- Annual membership is a cost-effective opportunity for locals to utilise the facilities often at minimal cost.

VISITOR NUMBERS AND SPEND

Visitor numbers

Visitors numbers are difficult to source. The park does not feature in any Visit England visitor attraction statistics, likely because some parks are excluded as numbers may include visitors to the park only. However some visitor figures have been obtained as below:

Year	Visitor numbers	Increase/ decrease on previous year	Increase/ decrease % on previous year available	% increase since initial figure available
2007	80,000	-	-	-
2008 ³⁰	224,280	144,280	180%	
INTERVENING YEARS NOT KNOWN				
2018 ³¹	450,000	225,720	101%	463%
RECENT FIGURES NOT KNOWN				

The very significant increase in visitor numbers between 2007 and 2008 is attributed to the installation of new play equipment and development of walking and cycling trails. Since then the offering has continued to be developed

Annual revenue projections

Not available.

Pricing

Activities: Prices vary to take part in the various activities.

Parking: parking is also paid for including disabled spaces. The park has had significant criticism re parking charges but the site has explained that money raised from car parking goes directly back in to the maintenance of the park including all the trails and facilities so that the park can be kept in prime condition for visitors.

Haldon Forest Membership – Discovery Pass³²: an annual membership Discovery Pass costs £38 per year and offers a wide range of discounts on many activities within the park as well as selected taster sessions and parking for the year.

³⁰ active_england_haldon_site_report.pdf

³¹ <https://www.radioexe.co.uk/news-and-features/local-news/major-improvements-to-haldon-forest-site-approved/>

³² <https://www.forestryengland.uk/article/haldon-forest-park-membership-benefits>

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Current promotion

Digital media

Social media

- Facebook: 16,855 likes/18,687 followers @haldonforestpark
- Twitter: no account.
- Instagram: 1,902 followers but directs to the Facebook page.

Market segments

<i>Destination markets</i>	<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Special interest groups</i>
Local, national with some international visitors. However the visitor segmentation breakdown is not known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families. • Health and wellbeing. • Outdoor/nature lovers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and wellbeing. • Running, cycling and walking groups. • Bird and butterfly watchers.

Events

A variety of events are held including:

- Big Forest Find: family nature and wildlife event.
- Outdoor Cinema with the Alfresco Film
- Company³³
- Haldon Summer Series: four running events over four summer months starting with 5k and ending with 10k.
- Shaun the Sheep Farmageddon Glow Run: Halloween event.
- Haldon Christmas Fair.
- Bark in the Dark at Christmas: after dark dog walk.
- Gong Immersion and sound meditation³⁴
- Introductory forest bathing six-week course.³⁵
- Love Later Life: a free activity day for over 50s, in conjunction with Age UK and Active Devon which runs a programme called Connecting Actively to Nature.³⁶

Awards

2018 and 2019: Day Out with the Kids "Family Favourites" winner.

Reviews

Facebook: 4.6 out of 5

Trip Advisor: #7 of 102 things to do in Exeter. 4.5 out of 5.

Google: 4.6 out of 5.

³³ <https://www.alfrescofilm.co.uk/useful-info-haldon/>

³⁴ <https://www.meetup.com/it-IT/Chudleigh-Meditation-Meetup/events/263756959/>

³⁵ <https://wildernessguide.wordpress.com/forest-bathing/courses-events/>

³⁶ <https://www.theexeterdaily.co.uk/news/local-news-social-diary/over-50s-invited-love-later-life-and-get-active-nature>

WALKING MAP OF SITE - Haldon Forest Park



CASE STUDY 2: Slieve Gullion Forest Park

LOCATION - Newry, County Armagh, Northern Ireland

OVERVIEW

Slieve Gullion is referred to as Ireland's Mountain of Mystery. Slieve Gullion Forest Park offers walking trails, a scenic drive, an Adventure Playpark, Giant's Lair children's story trail and Courtyard with café and gift shop.



Slieve Gullion Forest Park offers the unmissable opportunity to experience tranquil woodland trails, stunning views across the Ring of Gullion, Mourne Mountains, Cooley Peninsula and Armagh Drumlins and top-class facilities for walkers and families. Visitors can play in the adventure playpark; explore the Giant's Lair; the Hawthorn Hill Forest Nature Reserve (2km woodland trails), explore the ornamental walled garden with picnic benches and an outdoor performance stage, and enjoy an al fresco coffee bar (open in the summer) near the wildlife pond and covered seating areas.

The Forest Park is situated in the Ring of Gullion, near a unique geological landform, unparalleled elsewhere in the British Isles. The ring of low, rugged hills forms a 'rampart' around the heather clad Slieve Gullion mountain. Rich semi-wild habitats of heath, bog and woodland contrast with the neatly patterned fields and ladder farms. It is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The area has some of the best biodiversity in the region and has a multitude of protected areas. Visitors have the chance to see wildlife on the Red Squirrels Safari.

The Ring of Gullion offers a variety of opportunities for visitors to enjoy the countryside. Walkers and cyclists can follow several routes ranging in length and difficulty all of which give users the chance to explore the geology, archaeology, wildlife and legend of the area. Anglers are also catered for and can enjoy high quality game and coarse angling at several premier locations. For equestrian enthusiasts, there are two centrally located equestrian centres, one near Mullaghbane and the other at Forkhill. A jetty for watersports is also available at Cam Lough.

A 10km drive around the slopes of Slieve Gullion offers visitors spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. There is a mountain-top trail to two cairns (North, bronze age; and South Neolithic) and the Lake of Sorrows, with stunning views across the Ring of Gullion, Mourne and Cooley mountain ranges and Armagh Drumlins, with over 2,000 years of legend and history. There is a full events programme throughout the year.

VISITOR PROPOSITION AND EXPERIENCE

Current

Visitor facilities: a new visitor facility 'amenity building' opened in 2018.³⁹ The new building houses new toilet facilities, including a baby changing area and a disabled toilet, an information centre, storage room, first aid and staff room.⁴⁰

Specific visitor offering and facilities are:

³⁹ <https://www.newrymournedown.org/slieve-gullion-forest-park-gets-four-stars-for-visitor-experience>

⁴⁰ <http://newrytimes.com/2018/07/10/new-slieve-gullion-amenity-facility-will-help-enhance-visitor-experience/>

- Syngé & Byrne Café and Coffee Dock
- Clanrye Tuck Shop and Gullion Treasures gift shop
 - Visitor Information Office
- Wildlife pond
- Toilets
- Trails - Giant's Lair, Sensory Trail, Walking Trails, Cycling Trails
- Groups/Coach parties welcomed
- Open every day except Christmas Day
- Guided Tours available
- Picnic Area
- Euro, Credit and Debit Cards accepted
- Parking for up to 200 cars and a number of coaches
- Wi-Fi
- Baby changing facilities
- Free (parking charges may apply)
- Facilities for meetings and conferences
- Dogs allowed (except in Adventure Park)

Distinctive Offering

Giant's Lair: A key offering is the Giant's Lair Children's Storybook Trail, an innovative magical living storybook trail.



Adventure Playpark: The Adventure Playpark includes a specially designed toddler's area, adventure and play equipment for older kids, Slieve Gullion Zip, and a trim trail for adults with slides, climbing frames and outdoor gym equipment, a wishing chair and a maze. The Playpark attained the 'Green Apple Environment Award' and Best Tourism Partner Initiative at the 2013 Northern Ireland Tourism Awards.

Sensory Trail: The site also offers a sensory trail, which was the first purpose-built trail of its kind in Ireland. It is designed for children and adults with additional sensory needs; however it can be used by anyone looking to have a slow adventure through the forest, exploring using all the senses for wellness and to increase engagement with nature. A visual aid to help prepare for a visit is available on their website. ⁴¹

In late 2018 a Sensory Trail was developed in a quieter part of the park. It aims to help visitors to explore the forest using all their senses, supporting forest bathing via a number of activity points along the trail including:

- Forest bathing chairs
- Blind rope challenge
- Tree rings
- Instant poetry
- Nature's orchestra
- Water music
- Bare your souls



⁴¹ <https://www.ringofgullion.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Sensory-Trail-visual-aid.pdf>

Planned

In 2019, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council planned to submit a full application to the DAERA Rural Development Programme. Enhancements planned include: outdoor space with tiered seating; walled garden landscaping; stage and purpose-built seating area and audio-visual enhancements; improved access to the car park, courtyard and Giant's Lair; Giant's Lair innovative technology and interpretation; and development and refurbishment of Chambre House as an interpretive centre with exhibition space and external terrace or rooftop garden; and development of an on-site office for staff and play park attendants and a tourist office, public toilets and showers.

The application was subsequently amended, and funding was received in 2020 for the Giant's Lair innovative technology and interpretation, and stage and purpose-built seating area and audio-visual enhancements.

INVESTMENT

The main funders are The National Lottery through its Heritage Lottery Fund, Northern Ireland Environment Agency through its Natural Environment Fund and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Over £2million has been invested in the site including Play Development, Giants Lair, additional parking, visitor facilities etc.

OPERATIONS AND OWNERSHIP

Ownership

Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Licensing

License to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to use the land at Slieve Gullion for the Giant's Lair project.⁴²

Operation of the Giant's Lair

In the initial stages there was a Service Level Agreement with Sticky Fingers Arts.⁴³ It is now run by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Development funding

The National Lottery through its Heritage Lottery Fund; Northern Ireland Environment Agency through its Natural Environment Fund; Tourism NI; and, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Site management and maintenance

Managed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Visitor centre management

Managed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Café

Operated by Synge and Byrne, an artisan café company based in Northern Ireland, in the buildings operated by the Clanrye Group.⁴⁴

⁴² <http://www.crossexaminer.co.uk/no-decision-yet-on-slieve-gullion-admission-charge-council/>

⁴³ <https://www.stickyfingersarts.co.uk/who-are-sticky-fingers> : Sticky Fingers was established in 2002 as the first dedicated arts program for very young children in Northern Ireland. Since then they have worked directly with over 100,000 children, creating magical arts events across Ireland, visiting schools, playgroups and special needs settings to create new ways of engaging with young children.

⁴⁴ Clanrye Group is a voluntary and community organisation providing specialised training for those who are unsure about their future career direction and require considerable support and guidance. It commits to train, motivate and develop people for a brighter future. Clanrye Group's objective is to provide training and support to people with disabilities and / or people from disadvantaged communities that will improve employability and enable them to develop and acquire the necessary life skills to progress onto further education, other training, employment or self-employment.

Gullion Treasures gift shop and tuck shop ⁴⁵

Operated by Clanrye Group. ⁴⁶

Training Centre

Operate the courtyard buildings, leasing the café and utilising the buildings for social enterprise training for people of all abilities. In the initial start-up phase weddings were facilitated at the Forest Park, but were soon stopped due to issues associated with parking and the Forest Park being so busy with visitors.

Staff Structure

There are three full time paid staff working on the Ring of Gullion AONB and LPS. All three staff are employed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. There is one Tourism Facilities Manager (based in Slieve Gullion but a remit for tourism facilities across the District); and two Park Attendants (they are not on duty together) responsible for daily checks, litter, reporting issues for maintenance etc.

In addition, seasonally there is a minimum of two parking attendants with a remit for litter picking from Easter – September, this can increase as demand dictates. There is also one seasonal Visitor Information Staff member.

VISITOR CENTRE DESIGN AND INTERPRETATION

Design

The existing visitor 'amenity building' provides essential facilities rather than interpretation, with facilities including toilets, baby changing, visitor information and staff facilities.

Interpretation (current)

- Signage including trails.
- Giant's Lair: innovative magical living storybook, inspired by the rich tapestry of local legend and mythical folklore on over a mile of woodlands within the Forest Park.
- Sensory Trail: downloaded pdf and signage at key activity points.
- Optional guided tours.
- Funding in place to develop Giant's Lair innovative technology and interpretation.

COMMUNITY VALUE

Synge and Byrne employ several local people including a manager, supervisor, counter staff/baristas and cooks.⁴⁷

The Clanrye Group operates a social enterprise onsite offer an onsite training for people with a range of abilities.

⁴⁵ <https://www.clanryegroup.com/retail-at-gullion-treasures>

⁴⁶ Clanrye Group is a voluntary and community organisation providing specialised training for those who are unsure about their future career direction and require considerable support and guidance. It commits to train, motivate and develop people for a brighter future. Clanrye Group's objective is to provide training and support to people with disabilities and / or people from disadvantaged communities that will improve employability and enable them to develop and acquire the necessary life skills to progress onto further education, other training, employment or self-employment.

⁴⁷ Exact numbers of employees for Synge and Byrne are not available.

TOURISM VALUE**Visitor numbers and spend***Visitor numbers*

Year	Visitor numbers	Increase/ decrease on previous year	Increase/ decrease %	% increase since initial figures available
2014	311,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015 (Giant's Lair Opening Year)	360,111	49,111	16%	16%
2016 ⁴⁸	388,000	27,889	8%	25%
2017 ⁴⁹	484,000	96,000	25%	56%
2018 ⁵⁰	462,000	-22,000	-5%	49%
2019	Not yet known			

There has been a fall in visitor numbers to the Park between 2017 and 2018, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have attributed this to problems and lack of visitor parking and other facilities opening up with innovative visitor experience offerings.

Visitor Spend

Slieve Gullion Forest Park do not have an admission charge therefore there is a small annual income of circa £20,000 from vendors and events.

This is a challenge for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as the park requires on going investment, maintenance and innovation. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council plan to look at introducing car park charges to generate income, they plan to do this across all their forest park sites in order to generate income for further investments in their Forest Parks.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS*Current promotion**Digital Media:*

Slieve Gullion Forest Park is promoted on a variety of websites including: Ring of Gullion⁵¹, Discover Northern Ireland⁵², Walk NI⁵³ and Outdoor NI⁵⁴

Social media:

Facebook: Slieve Gullion Forest Park has only 250 likes whereas the Giant's Lair has almost 30,000 likes and followers.

Twitter and Instagram: N/A.

⁴⁸ Slieve Gullion Forest Park visitor figures were not reported in NISRA NI Visitor Attraction Statistics 2016. This may be simply that the park did not provide figures. The 2016 figure presented in the table above was calculated based on the 2017 figure of 484,000 which the 2017 report states was a 25% increase on the previous year.

⁴⁹ https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Northern-Ireland-Visitor-Attraction-Survey-2017_o.pdf

⁵⁰ www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Annual-NI-Visitor-Attraction-Survey-2018.pdf

⁵¹ <https://www.ringofgullion.org/things-to-do/slieve-gullion-adventure-playpark/>

⁵² <https://discovernorthernireland.com/Slieve-Gullion-Forest-Park-Adventure-Playpark-and-The-Giant-s-Lair-Killeavy-Newry-P2848/>

⁵³ <http://walkni.com/mourne-mountains/the-giants-lair-slieve-gullion/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.outdoorni.com/local-outdoors/venues/slieve-gullion-forest-park/>

Market segments

<i>Destination markets</i>	<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Special interest groups</i>
Breakdown unknown but Newry, Mourne and Down District Council stated that the park attracts national and international visitors ⁵⁵	Primarily families. Some older market re mature cosmopolitans.	Geo and biodiversity.

Reviews

Facebook: no reviews available.

Trip Advisor: Slieve Gullion Forest Park including Giant's Lair – 4.5 out of 5.

Events

2017: Ghostly Slieve Gullion (October 2017)

2019: Lúnasa Festival 2019 – Geotastic Extravaganza: learn about dinomite dinosaurs, vicious volcanoes, earth-shattering earthquakes and other wonders of the planet.

2019: Lúnasa Festival 2019 – Slieve Gullion Murder Mystery: murder mystery experience.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have developed an events programme called Giant Adventures which has brought a marked increase in visitors to the district, that have provided a positive economic impact on the local economy⁵⁶. Giant Adventures are flagship festivals in the Council's events programme of tourism events. As well as Festival of Flight in Newcastle and Wake the Giant in Warrenpoint, the Giant Adventures programme includes Footsteps in the Forest at Slieve Gullion Forest Park. Footsteps in the Forest was planned to be held in summer/autumn 2020. The event them theme is to help rescue Fionn MacCumhaill (Finn McCool) who has been taken prisoner by his arch nemesis Calliagh Berra.⁵⁷ The Footsteps in the Forest at Slieve Gullion cost Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in the region of £80-100K to operate. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council also operate a number of smaller events at Slieve Gullion out of season as they don't have the capacity for events in season. All the Events held at Slieve Gullion Forest Park are opened for the first hour only for families with special needs for example autism or ADHD symptoms.

Awards

2013: Green Apple Environment Award' and Best Tourism Partner Initiative, Northern Ireland Tourism Awards.

2016-2019: Green Flag Award (for the management of parks and green spaces)⁵⁸ 2018: Four Star Visitor Experience rating, Tourism Northern Ireland.

2019: Family Friendly Walk (winner), NI Walk's Awards.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ <https://www.newrymournedown.org/slieve-gullion-forest-park-gets-four-stars-for-visitor-experience>

⁵⁶ <https://www.newrymournedown.org/giant-adventures-2020-dates-announced>

⁵⁷ <https://www.ringofgullion.org/events/footsteps-in-the-forest-2019/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.newrymournedown.org/green-flag-awards-for-newry-mourne-and-down-district-council-parks>

⁵⁹ <https://www.newrymournedown.org/slieve-gullion-forest-park-gets-four-stars-for-visitor-experience>

GIANT'S LAIR MAP - Slieve Gullion Forest Park



SENSORY TRAIL MAP - Slieve Gullion Forest Park



CASE STUDY 3: Lough Key Forest and Activity Park

LOCATION - Boyle, Co. Roscommon

OVERVIEW

Lough Key boasts one of the most extensive and picturesque forest parks in Ireland, covering 324 hectares on the west coast of Ireland, 40 km south east of Sligo. The spectacular views, abundant wildlife, historic buildings and islands draw in many visitors. The area is steeped in history from Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements, Cromwellian settlements of the 17th Century right up to 1957 when the King family residence was destroyed by fire. The estate was taken over by the Irish State in the late 1950s.⁶⁰



Lough Key Forest Park is in an area of great historical interest⁶¹ and is comprised of vast woodland and numerous islands. Now after major development the historic backdrop encompasses a landmark cluster of unique attractions serving the needs of a 21st century visitor with a new lakeside centre providing an ideal gateway for gentle leisurely activities or more energetic pursuits in the Park.

VISITOR PROPOSITION AND EXPERIENCE

Current

- Visitor Centre
- Lakeside Café (can host birthday parties)
- Caravan and Camping Park
- Moylurg meeting room
- 50-berth marina
- Car parking
- Picnic area
- Toilets
- Paths and trails



Distinctive experiences:

- Lough Key Experience: audio-guided tree canopy walk.
- Canal walk.
- Outdoor Adventure Play Kingdom.
- Zipit outdoor adventure with ziplines.
- Lough Key boat tours.
- Orienteering: including Wheel-O for those with limited mobility can follow a waymarked trail and identify their location at control points along the way.⁶²
- Electric bike trails with bike hire.⁶³
- Segway tours: guided tours, glides and group activities. Note that as of April 2020 the operator was unable to source insurance renewal, so the understanding is that these tours are currently unavailable.⁶⁴
- Boda Borg: A 'quest' experience with a number of rooms where groups between 3-5 people per team have to solve challenges, activities, puzzles and tasks with no instructions. This is based on a Swedish concept and is aimed at groups including families and friends, corporate groups, sports groups, school tours and social organisations. It is suitable for up participants aged seven and over.

⁶⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/ireland/new-lease-of-life-for-major-irish-landmark

⁶¹ There is reference to Castle Island in the annals of Lough Ce as early as 1184. During this time the park was called Moylurg and the Kings of Moylurg were the McDermotts. A concrete viewing tower called The Moylurg Tower was built on the site of the former Rockingham House in 1973.

⁶² <https://loughkey.ie/activities/orienteering-and-wheel-o/>

⁶³ <https://electricbiketrails.ie/lough-key-bike-hire.html>

⁶⁴ <http://www.woodlandsegway.com>

Natural Environment:

Natural and historical features including 19th century parkland with majestic trees, follies, bridges and canals to the numerous walks and trails through the native woodlands, Bog garden and forests. Wildflowers in the Park include bluebell, wild garlic, wood anemone, ragged robin, summer snowflake, wood sorrel, primrose, yellow iris and meadow sweet. The Park is home to many species of wildlife. Mammals present include the fallow deer, fox, hare, rabbit, red squirrel and stoat, while the bat, otter and badger, Birds to be seen along the lakeshore include the heron, swan, mallard and tufted duck, while the jay, pheasant, wren and blue-tit are common throughout the Park. Moorhen, robin and the colourful kingfisher are most visible along the canal banks.

Historical and archaeological environment:

A variety of historical and archaeological points of interest can be found throughout the Park including ringforts, a souterrain, Fishing Pavilion, Fairy Bridge, Wishing Chair, Icehouse, Stables and Estate Chapel.

Planned

*2019 - Reopening of disused canal:*⁶⁵

Plans were announced in September 2019 by Waterways Ireland to reopen a disused canal at Lough Key Forest Park. It was not intended that the canal would be open to motor cruisers which frequent the nearby 50-berth Waterways Ireland marina. But it would be available for kayaks, canoes and paddle boarders. As of February 2020 the work was still to be completed.

*2019 – linkage with Lough Key Forest Park cycleway:*⁶⁶

In December 2019 it was announced that €470,000 of funding has been secured from Fáilte Ireland Boyle funding to link Boyle town with Lough Key Forest park with a new walkway, an investment in the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands tourism region.

Boyle Town – repurposing of vacant properties for tourist accommodation:

The Boyle Town Team is exploring the feasibility of repurposing vacant properties, located in Boyle town centre, into tourist accommodation based on the Italian Albergo Diffuso (AD) model. The aim of the Italian model is to repurpose abandoned or vacant buildings in villages or towns as tourist accommodation in order to reanimate the town centre, stimulate economic activity and halt the depopulation of those towns. Additional tourist accommodation is likely to benefit Lough Key Forest and Activity Park.⁶⁷

OPERATIONS AND OWNERSHIP

Operations: Moylurg Rockingham DAC (Designated Activity Company) trades under the name of Lough Key Forest and Activity Park and operates the park as a commercial private entity. It is a joint venture between Coillte and Roscommon County Council who established the company in 2005. The shareholders do not offer financial support and therefore the company runs commercially. The positive story behind this is that it has always sustained itself. Moylurg Rockingham DAC was established to develop and manage the most economically viable elements of the park, a core area of 44 hectares.

The company was successful in securing 75% grant aid from Fáilte Ireland, under the European Union's National Development Plan Tourism Product Development Scheme 2000 - 2006, raising €2.3 million as matching funding for the €8.0 million redevelopment programme.⁶⁸

Funding to open the visitor centre came from European money via the NDP and administered by Fáilte Ireland. Roscommon County Council also contributed €2 million to the project and Coillte granted use of the lands.

⁶⁵ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/waterways-ireland-to-reopen-canal-at-lough-key-forest-park-1.4018847>

⁶⁶ <https://upload.latest.facebook.com/DenisNaughtenTD/videos/vb.287733421298823/544986572723699/?type=2&theater>

⁶⁷ <https://www.realboyle.com/pre-development-study-for-an-albergo-diffuso-in-boyle/>

⁶⁸ <http://www.coford.ie/media/coford/content/publications/projectreports/small-scaleforestryconference/Murphy.pdf>

Site management and maintenance

Moylurg Rockingham DAC trading as Lough Key Forest and Activity Park.

Visitor centre management

Moylurg Rockingham DAC trading as Lough Key Forest and Activity Park.

Caravan and camping site management

Moylurg Rockingham DAC trading as Lough Key Forest and Activity Park.

Visitor

Zipit: operated by Zipit Forest Adventures⁶⁹

Lough Key Boats: operated by Lough Key Boats⁷⁰

Electric bikes: operated by Electric Bike Trails

Segway tours: operated by Woodland Segway.

VISITOR CENTRE DESIGN AND INTERPRETATION

Design

The Lakeside Visitor Centre is the gateway to more than 800 acres of parkland and forest at Lough Key. Its contemporary design showcases timber frame construction from renewable sources while embracing the landscape it sits in. The large area of glazing to the front of the centre captures the magnificent views over Lough Key in addition to maximising passive solar gain making the building highly energy efficient.

Environmental sustainability and energy efficiency are continued throughout the design with the use of a wood pellet heating system, solar water heating panels on the roof and reduced glazing to the northern aspect of the centre.

Visitor centre facilities

- Reception Area with information on parks activities and attractions and where you can purchase tickets.
- Lakeside Café with outdoor deck area.
- Gift shop area in the visitor centre.
- Ice-Cream Bar with take away.
- Moylurg Room: private room with conference facilities overlooking the lake.
- Toilets and baby changing facilities.



Interpretation

Visitor centre: some interpretation/exhibition panels.

Visitor information: available at reception area in the visitor centre.

Maps: Forest Park, walking path and cycle trail downloadable maps.⁷¹

Lough Key Experience: tree canopy self-guided walk with audio trail with key audio point signage.

Guided tours are also available.

⁶⁹ <https://www.zipit.ie/locations/lough-key>

⁷⁰ <https://www.loughkeyboats.com>

⁷¹ <https://loughkey.ie/lough-key-park/park-map/>

COMMUNITY VALUE

- Job opportunities for the local community: Staff employed by MRD in 2019 was 65.
- Visitor spend for other local tourism businesses could be increased if the plans for the development of vacant properties as visitor accommodation are realised.

TOURISM VALUE**Visitor numbers and spend***Visitor numbers*

Official visitor numbers are not available, but research indicates the following:

Total Park Visitor Numbers

Year	Total number of visitors (non and fee paying) to Lough Key Forest & Activity Park	Increase/ decrease on previous year	Increase/ decrease % on previous year available	% increase since 2016
2007 ⁷²	5,000	-	-	-
INTERVENING YEARS NOT KNOWN				
2016	150,000	-	-	-
2017 ⁷³	200,000	50,000	33%	33%
2018	200,000	0	0%	0%
2019	150,000	-50,000	-33%	

Note: In 2019 MRD had approx. 80,000 visitors and the balance is a mix from other users of the park

Visitors using paid facilities:

Year	Visitors paying to use facilities at Lough Key Forest & Activity Park	Increase/ decrease on previous year	Increase/ decrease % on previous year available	% increase since 2016
2016	75,000	-	-	-
2017	82,000	7,000	9%	9%
FURTHER FIGURES NOT AVAILABLE				

Visitor spend

Figures not available.

Local government tourism policies and strategies have specifically targeted the county's underperformance, and strategic plans across many stakeholders prioritise tourism growth with a target of +10% per annum to 2021.⁷⁴

⁷² <https://www.shannonside.ie/news/local/roscommon/plans-underway-expansion-lough-key-forest-park/>

⁷³ <https://www.shannonside.ie/news/local/roscommon/lough-key-forest-parks-visitor-numbers-soared-2017/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.realboyle.com/pre-development-study-for-an-albergo-diffuso-in-boyle/>

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Current promotion

Digital media

Lough Key Forest and Activity Park is promoted on a variety of websites including: Lough Key Forest and Activity Park⁷⁵, Discover the Shannon⁷⁶, Days Out With the Kids⁷⁷ and Discover Ireland⁷⁸

Social media

Facebook: 25,839 likes/26,321 followers [@loughkeyforestpark](#)

Twitter: 2,236 followers [@loughkeyforestp](#).

Market segments

<i>Destination markets</i>	<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Special interest groups</i>
Limited information is available, figures Roscommon domestic tourism accounts for approximately 75% of the estimated 180,000 tourists who stay at least one night in the county (February 2018). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of tourists to Boyle are on daytrips with many visitors overnighing in Carrick on Shannon or Sligo.	Culturally Curious Great Escapers ⁷⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors with accessibility requirements. • Nature and wildlife groups. • Corporate, sports, schools and other groups re Boda Borg.

Branding

Lough Key Forest and Activity Park is a key destination within Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.⁸⁰

Reviews

Facebook: 5 out of 5.

Trip Advisor: 4.5 out of 5. #1 of 13 things to do in Boyle.

Google: 4.7 out of 5.

Awards

2019: Irish Tourism Industry Awards 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Best Tourism Experience' - winner⁸¹

2019: Irish Hospitality Awards March 2019 'Tourist Attraction of the Year' – finalist⁸²

2020: Irish Independent Reader Travel Awards 2020 'Ireland's Favourite Local Attraction' - winner⁸³

2020: All Ireland Community and Council Awards "Best Public Park" – winner.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ <https://loughkey.ie>

⁷⁶ <http://discovertheshannon.com/listings/lough-key-forest-and-activity-park/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.dayoutwiththekids.co.uk/attractions/lough-key-forest-family-activity-park-bcdb2c41>

⁷⁸ <https://www.discoverireland.ie/Activities-Adventure/lough-key-forest-and-activity-park/10195>

⁷⁹ <https://www.realboyle.com/pre-development-study-for-an-albergo-diffuso-in-boyle/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.failteireland.ie/IrelandsHiddenHeartlands.aspx>

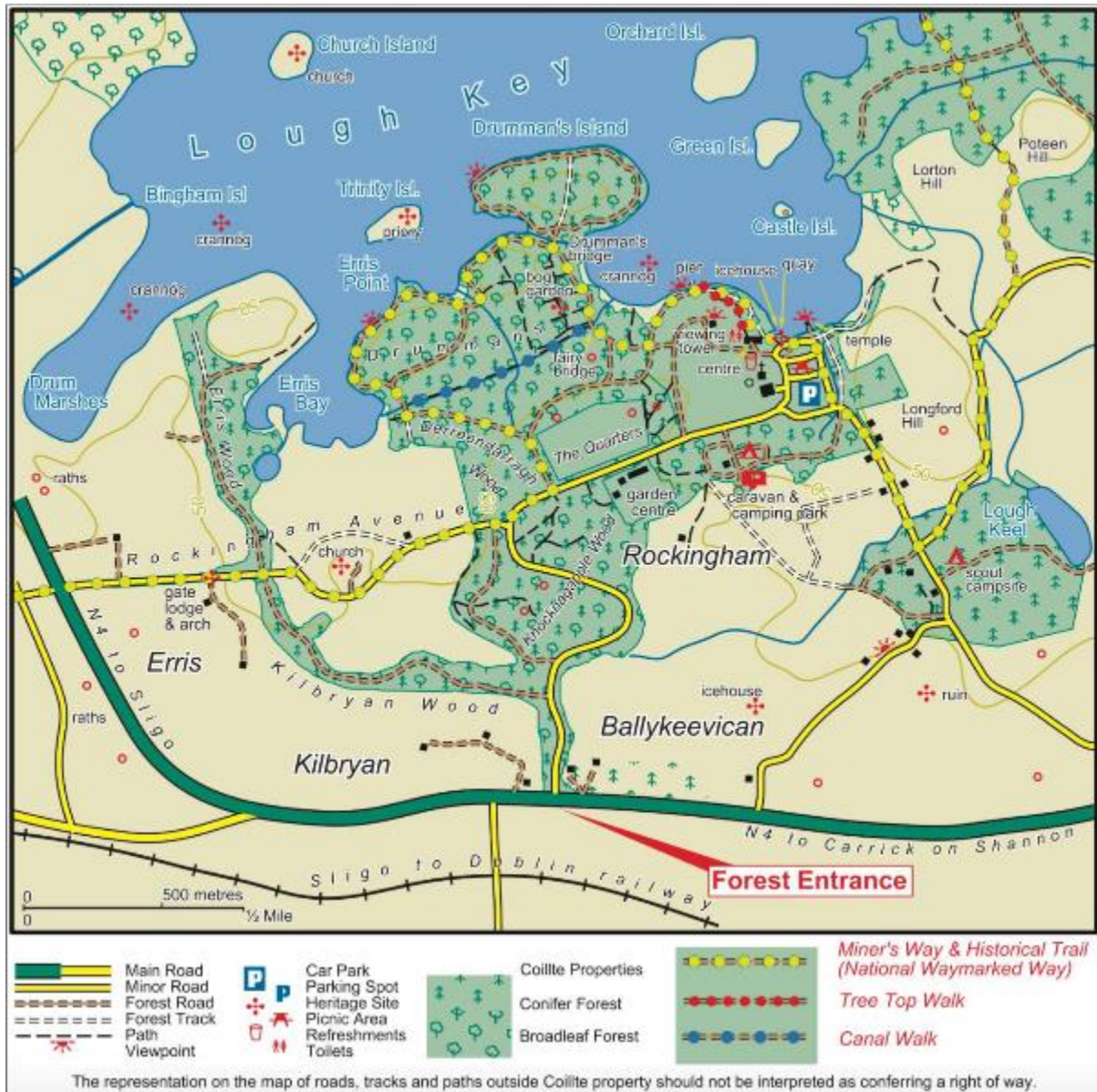
⁸¹ Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Best Tourism Experience lough key

⁸² <https://www.boyletoday.com/lough-key-forest-park-in-awards-final/>

⁸³ <https://www.heritageisland.com/travel-trade/what-s-new-for-2020/>

⁸⁴ <https://www.shannonside.ie/news/local/roscommon/plans-underway-expansion-lough-key-forest-park/?fbclid=IwAR3wSpXvOyCVOjIhfXNOrdOh7DI-rcMpopw7hJrW9AsvwZd2ttO2zqbygHU>

LOUGH KEY FOREST AND ACTIVITY PARK



MAP OF CAMPSITE - Lough Key Forest and Activity Park

