Landscape Assessment
Of County Leitrim

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Comhairle Chontae Liatroma

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For and on behalf of
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Consultation Report
INTRODUCTION

In June 2001, Environmental Resources Management (ERM) in association with ERA-Maptec Ltd was commissioned by Leitrim County Council to prepare a Landscape Assessment of County Leitrim. The objective of the study was to complete a thorough assessment of County Leitrim with respect to the character, value and sensitivity of its landscape in order to provide the basis for policy formulation and informed decision-making regarding landscape conservation and protection in County Leitrim.

County Leitrim (shown on Figure 1) contains a great variety of landscapes. High moor topped mountains in the north of the County rise above drumlin covered lowlands and glens which extend to a short but dramatic stretch of coastline. Geological features shaped by glacial action are a distinctive feature of many uplands and are most conspicuous where they enclose glens. In the south of the County, drumlins cloaked in lush green pastures, extend over many miles and are interspersed with hilly outcrops, loughs, rivers, wet pasture and raised peat bogs. Human interaction with the natural environment has created a wide range of distinctive rural landscapes and settlement patterns. Many areas are noted for their scenic beauty and nature conservation value.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study offers the opportunity for the County to lead the way in landscape assessment and landscape policy in Ireland and address issues of landscape change in a positive and proactive fashion. The study represents the first detailed Landscape Assessment in Ireland and the first opportunity to apply the draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines following the publication of the consultation draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in June 2000.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

The landscape of Leitrim has been the subject of a number of studies and assessments. However these studies have largely focused on aspects of cultural heritage or ecology rather than on the landscape as a whole. This report addresses this and has five main objectives:

- to provide an agreed assessment of landscape character, value and sensitivity that will inform the preparation of a new development plan under the Planning and Development Act 2000, including an illustrated report, digital maps and other data for future reference by the County Council;
to command the support of both ‘communities of interest’ such as forestry and farming agencies and organisations and ‘communities of place’ such as local community and residents groups by actively involving these stakeholders in the assessment process;

• to provide the County Council with clear, reasoned policy advice on three specific topics, namely the location and extent of new wind farm development, new forestry development and potential Landscape Conservation Areas; and

• to give strategic guidance on priorities for landscape conservation and management within the County and provide a baseline against which to monitor the effects of change on landscape character and diversity.

The Leitrim Landscape Assessment adopts a holistic approach to landscape and considers the landscape of Leitrim as a mosaic of different landscape types and landscape character areas, each with particular characteristics and forces for change and provides a full and detailed record of Leitrim’s landscapes.

1.3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The study has used accepted, systematic methods of landscape assessment (1) supplemented by further new guidance on Landscape Assessment (2) and guidelines specifically designed for use in Ireland (3).

The main tasks of our approach were:

• familiarisation with the study area through overlay mapping, desk study and classification of landscape types (physical units);

• site survey including completion of field survey forms for character areas, verification and correction of landscape types, mapping of landscape character areas and preparation of a photographic record;

• background research into the geological and physical evolution of the landscape, human influences, existing designations and ongoing land use change and development pressures;

• consultation with key individuals and organisations to inform the study team’s understanding of local landscape character and forces for change;

• report preparation.

1.4 **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

This report presents initial findings on landscape character, diversity, key characteristics, sensitivity and forces for change. It provides a detailed picture of landscapes in Leitrim and will provide an important platform on which future work will be based. The report is structured as follows:

**Chapter Two:** The landscape patterns we see today have evolved gradually over thousands of years through both natural and human forces. The Landscape Assessment report begins by describing the principal forces that have shaped the Leitrim landscape. Important and distinctive geological, cultural and habitat features are highlighted and their distribution described.

**Chapter Three:** This establishes a framework for the following section, which reviews landscape character across the County. The assessment identifies and describes fourteen landscape character types (physical units) and fourteen landscape character areas (image units), each with a distinctive character based upon local patterns of geology, landform, land use and cultural and ecological features. Attention is drawn to those characteristics and features that are particularly distinctive, rare or special. An important aspect of the assessment is that all landscapes matter and that characteristics and features may be identified even in non-designated landscapes. The key to accommodating landscape change successfully is to understand landscape scale and character and appreciate patterns of geology, soils, landcover, habitats, communications, field boundaries and settlement. Therefore for each landscape character area, a description of influences, key characteristics, forces for change and sensitivity has been prepared. Generic landscape guidelines and area specific landscape guidelines are also presented.

**Chapter Four:** The development of a sound landscape classification has laid the foundations for all subsequent work and in particular the production of the Landscape Overview chapter. This has been based on extensive consultation and stakeholder participation, provides an overview of landscape values within the County and strategic advice on priorities for landscape conservation and management. The report concludes with a *glossary* of key terms and a *bibliography*.

*Annex A* presents the Consultation Programme and Workshop Outputs.
THE EVOLUTION OF THE LEITRIM LANDSCAPE

It is the wide variety of rocks that forms the basic structure of the Leitrim landscape. However, solid geology is not the only factor to have shaped this landscape. The interplay between underlying bedrock, glaciation, soil formation, ecology and human activity has had a significant role in shaping the landscape. Patterns of ownership and activity, industry, agriculture, ritual and settlement have all been adapted to suit local conditions reflecting basic geological, topographical and meteorological contrasts. To understand the landscape we see today, we must first examine how it has evolved.

2.1 PHYSICAL INFLUENCES (1)

2.1.1 Topography and Drainage

In the County two broad topographic zones (Figure 2) may be identified, with Lough Allen providing a convenient divide.

In the northern uplands table-like mountains alternate with spectacular glacial glens. Many of these display dramatic colluvial and scree slopes. Glacial erosion and the nature of the underlying geology are the most dominant factors influencing topography in this northern region. By contrast, the deposition of vast quantities of drift geology by glaciers has formed the distinctive, undulating, drumlin landscapes in the southern lowlands.

In general the drainage pattern of the County is determined by the principal rivers: the Shannon, Bonet, Duff, Diffreen and by tributaries to Lough Erne and Lough Melvin. The Shannon catchment is by far the largest and drains the centre and south west of the County. The gradient is generally very small and flooding occurs frequently. Similar conditions prevail in the south east of the County where the slow moving tributaries of the Erne drain the landscape. The Bonet, which flows into Lough Gill, drains much of the north west of the County. The north east of the County is drained by tributaries to Lough Melvin which in turn is drained by the Drowes which forms the boundary between Leitrim and Donegal. The extreme north west is drained by the Duff. Elsewhere along the coast small streams flow directly into the sea.

2.1.2 Solid Geology

The underlying geology of Leitrim (Figure 3) is formed from five major rock formations, each rock type being associated with particular landscapes. The oldest rocks within the County are the highly folded metamorphic rocks, which represent a prolongation of the Ox Mountains in County Sligo. These consist of highly altered quartz-feldspar rich sediments and occasional marbles. Lower Palaeozoic rocks emerge from beneath the glacial deposits in the south

(1) Principal information source for this section is M.J. Gardiner, County Leitrim Resource Survey, An Foras Taluntais, 1973
east of the County where slates and impure sandstones were tilted and raised during a phase of folding in the Silurian period. Following this phase of uplift and deformation, *Devonian* red sandstones and conglomerates were deposited by fast flowing rivers. However, these are largely masked by later glacial deposits. *Lower Carboniferous* rocks including calp sandstones, limestones, calp shales and basal clastics represent different types and phases of deposition and include deposits from rivers, marine transgressions and deltas. These rocks generally occupy the extreme northern and southern portions of the County where the overlying, younger rocks have been eroded. The *Upper Carboniferous* sandstones and shales are the youngest rocks in County Leitrim and can be found in the north where they form horizontally bedded plateau hills. These were eroded and weathered long before the glaciations of the last three million years but despite this, various levels survive containing clay-ironstone and coal seams.

The influence of geology in the County is most noticeable in the northern uplands. However, even in the drift-covered lowlands, isolated rock outcrops, stone walls and building materials reflect the geological foundation of the landscape.

2.1.3 Effects of Glaciation

Leitrim, like other counties in Ireland, was subjected to total glaciation on a number of occasions. Glacial episodes have had a profound influence on the landscape, shaping the underlying geology and depositing massive volumes of drift. Little is known about earlier glacial episodes as all traces have been erased by subsequent glaciations. In Ireland the most recent glaciation is called the Midlandian Glaciation and occurred roughly 20,000 years ago. The ice extended across Leitrim from south west to north east in the vicinity of the Lough Allen basin. Ice streams flowed north west along the Drumkeeran corridor, the Melvin trough, Glenade and Glencar and southwards from Sliabh an Iarainn across the limestone lowlands of Drumshanbo, Ballinamore and Mohill. Some boulders of harder rock were carried considerable distances from their source. However most of the glacial material was carried a short distance and therefore is similar to the underlying bedrock. The effects of both glacial erosion and deposition have had a very strong influence on the nature of the Leitrim landscape.

During glaciation, erosion was most severe on the higher summits and in the deeper valleys such as Glencar and Glenade which were aligned parallel to the direction of the ice flow. The lowlands by contrast were mantled by a thick cover of stiff, clayey till deposited during a later stage of glaciation which was moulded into the form of small hills or drumlins. These drumlins are generally oval in plan however a broad range of shapes and sizes exists. The drumlins are orientated in the general direction of the ice flows and are a valuable indicator of glacial activity. Drumlins were responsible for blocking whatever drainage systems were in place prior to the ice ages and have forced water to be ponded back into a multitude of small lakes. Surrounding the drumlins are marshy flats and lakes. In the south of the County, eskers – long,
sinuous ridges of sand and gravel deposited by sub-glacial streams – also occur. In the north of the County along the coast, where conditions did not favour the formation of drumlins, calp and sandstone moraines were deposited as the ice sheet retreated northwards to Donegal Bay.

When the ice sheets became active again around 17,000 years ago outflow glaciers were confined to the glens. Being strongly erosive these gouged out massive quantities of material and caused spectacular landslips which found their way into the valley below, forming gentle undulating slopes and foothills. Beneath the ice flow, boulder clay produced from ground down pieces of bedrock, was deposited and moulded into drumlins.

By about 15,000 years ago the last remnants of ice had melted away from the valleys. However, during an exceptionally cold period between 8,800 and 8,300 BC, small corrie glaciers appeared in the higher mountains and coarse debris was washed into the lowland lakes and depressions. Soon after this there was a rapid improvement in the climate which marked the beginning of the post-glacial period.

2.1.4 Soils and Agricultural Capability

The various soil types in Leitrim have developed from the combination of numerous factors, most notably of the parent material from which the soils are derived, terrain, climate and vegetation cover. Because most glacial material was carried only a short distance the bulk of material from which soils are derived is similar to the underlying bedrock. Leitrim’s soils have been forming since the last glacial episode when all previous land cover was stripped from the land surface.

The majority of soils display significant limitations to agriculture. Combined with the nature of landform, grassland agriculture has been the dominant land use within the County. The majority of the soils are Gleys, which tend to be very sticky in wet conditions. Even for pasture production these soils present difficulties; the weak structure and poor drainage renders them susceptible to poaching damage by grazing stock. This factor limits the length of the grazing season and proportion of fodder required. Despite their shortcomings, if well managed and manured these soils have a moderately high pasture production capacity. Gleys are also considered to be relatively productive forest soils. However, poor root penetration can often lead to windthrow.

Peats are most extensive soils after Gleys. These are characterised by a high content of organic matter. Two types of peat may be identified; basin peats of which raised bogs and fens are composed, formed in lake basins, hollows, river valleys; and blanket peats which accumulate under conditions of high rainfall and humidity in the uplands of central and north Leitrim. Where drainage is adequate basin peats are suitable for grassland farming and vegetable growing. Blanket peat is generally suited to extensive grazing although sward improvement can be achieved through drainage, manuring and re-seeding.
A small percentage of Leitrim’s soils are suitable for tillage. However, a high boulder density and frequent rock outcrops present significant obstacles to successful crop farming. The County’s high incidence of rain days and low sunshine hours relative to most of the country further reduce agricultural diversification.

2.1.5 Land Cover

The County comprises a mosaic of vegetation and habitat types (Figure 4) that has evolved in relation to underlying geology, topography, glacial drift, soil and the influence of man on the environment. In the northern section of the County, north of Lough Allen, the higher areas of land are dominated by blanket bogs and heathland with natural grassland occupying steeper slopes. On the slopes of mountains, coniferous plantations have been established over vast areas although at high altitudes the quality of woodland is often poor. Broad leaf woodland is sparse within this northern area, although it can be found in valleys/ravines and gorges on steeper hillsides and around older hill farms. On the lower, gentler mountain slopes and in the drumlin covered lowlands, grassland agriculture predominates. Small coniferous plantations are widespread. Deciduous woods often occupy loughside locations with some scattered areas around the coast. The dense network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees gives the impression of a well wooded landscape.

In the southern part of the County, grassland agriculture dominates although vast areas are rush infested due to undergrazing. Scattered areas of coniferous plantations can be also found throughout the area and are particularly frequent south and east of Lough Allen. Broad leaf woodlands are generally concentrated in the east of the area with particularly large areas around Lough Rinn and along the Shannon. Again, the dense network of hedgerows on drumlins gives the impression of a well wooded landscape. Raised bogs are restricted to the southernmost part of the County (south of Mohill) where they occupy long, narrow inter-drumlin hollows. Inland wetlands are sparse in southern Leitrim; small areas are often associated with lough margins, inter-drumlin wetlands and along the course of the Shannon.

2.2 Human Influences

Overview

Since the Mesolithic period (when Leitrim was first settled) each successive generation has left an imprint on the landscape whether it be in the form of field enclosures, farms, settlements, fortifications, communication routes or places of worship/ritual.

However, certain events have left more visible traces than others. For example, the effects of thousands of years of Neolithic farming and settlement are virtually invisible; whereas evidence of ritual activity from the period is immediately recognisable throughout the County as megalithic tombs. The
physical legacies of our ancestors offer a tangible link to the past and are frequently protected by legislation.

Prehistoric Leitrim

As the climate improved around 8,500 BC, the glacial ice sheets retreated and meltwaters separated Ireland from Britain. Early vegetation cover composed of heath and grasses were rapidly followed by dense forests of pine on the higher ground and deciduous woodlands of elm and hazel in the lowlands. It was into this landscape that Leitrim’s earliest human inhabitants settled roughly 9000 years ago (c. 7000BC). These first settlers were Mesolithic hunters and gatherers who moved between seasonal hunting grounds. Traces of Mesolithic activity are rare. Their homes were built of erodable materials such as mud and wood and were perhaps only occupied for a single season. However finds discovered on the northern shores of Lough Allen which date to the late Mesolithic may represent the site of a temporary hunting camp.

Elsewhere in Ireland the discovery of Mesolithic settlements on riverbanks, lake margins and coasts highlights the intimate relationship these communities had with their food supplies (1).

The spread of farming in Ireland around 4000 BC and the custom for communal burial in stone structures known as megalithic tombs marked the arrival of the Neolithic period. The spread of farming had a dramatic impact on the landscape. A piece of land was worked until its nutrients were depleted. The community would then move on to newly cleared land and would establish a new settlement and fields. Over generations this would have led to a large-scale reduction of native woodland.

With their primitive farming tools, Neolithic communities avoided heavy soils and gravitated to drier sand and gravel and limestone soils. Leitrim is noted for the extent of soils poorly suited to agriculture. However, the number of funerary monuments in the County suggests that large scale Neolithic settlement took place. Most of these megalithic tombs occur singly, but at Tullaghan in North Leitrim a megalithic cemetery composed of at least a dozen tombs remains as a lasting monument to the dead of the Stone Age period. Other tombs from that period are to be seen at Fenagh (Fenaghbeg and Commons), Lough Scur, Lough Allen (Kilnagarns Lower) Sheemore and in the area around Manorhamilton. An interesting single court grave occurs at Corracloona close to Kiltyclogher. The landscape around the collapsed dolmen overlooking Lough Scur offers much evidence to support the presence of a considerable Neolithic population (2). However, it has been shown that in Leitrim, megaliths were almost all sited on small pockets of good land associated with outcrops of rock in areas regarded as poor for settlement. It is possible therefore that with future investigation of the wider landscape, traces of houses and settlements will be discovered. The distribution of the tombs themselves throughout Leitrim (covering the four principal types of megalithic tomb known in Ireland) may represent territorial divisions

between diverse religious or political groups and suggests that there may have been large populations with a degree of centralised control and strong ritual beliefs (1).

Sometime around 2,500 BC, techniques of bronze working reached Ireland and later County Leitrim. As metal tools became available, larger trees could be felled and heavier soils worked allowing settlement to expand in lowland areas. A dearth of settlement sites is notable in the Bronze Age although a number of fulachta fiadh may be identified across the County and represent the remains of cooking sites dating from 1900 BC to 1400 BC. From studies in County Mayo it has been established that these sites typically occupied marshy ground. Further investigation in Leitrim may reveal a similar distribution pattern, particularly in drumlin areas and glens.

During the late Bronze Age deposition of hoards occurred more frequently. This may represent a general response to the climate deteriorating in the latter half of the second millennium forcing communities to hoard valuables in fear of future calamity. During this period climate change and the effects of farming are believed to be partially responsible for the spread of upland bog; tree regeneration was hampered by farming and resulted in soils becoming wetter and more poorly drained.

Towards the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age kingdoms were established and territories consolidated. This led to a period of political turbulence and warfare which is evidenced by the hoards deposited throughout Ireland and by the occurrence of spearheads and swords in the archaeological record. Hillforts and linear earthworks are testimony to the defensive outlook of Iron Age communities. The ‘Black Pig’s Race’ (2) in the north-east of Leitrim represents part of the Black Pig’s Dyke which runs from Dorsey to the Atlantic coast as an intermittent series of banks and ditches. This earthwork, dating to 390 - 370 BC, is generally regarded as a defence against cattle raiding but may also have had ritual significance, defining tribal boundaries (3). Between 338 BC and 44 BC the massive ramparts of the Doon of Drumsna were constructed. Although outside Leitrim, the earthwork delineates a sophisticated frontier fortification to control access from the Leitrim side of the Shannon across the numerous fording points formed by the river’s rocky bed. The scale of the monument implies the existence of a powerful centralised body, which oversaw the planning and construction of the fortification. Despite extensive trade with the Roman world towards the end of the Iron Age, particularly along the east coast, County Leitrim would have been virtually unknown to the Romans. Indeed Tacitus when writing of Ireland at the end of the first century AD commented ‘the interior parts are little known…’.

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(2) Known locally as Black Pig’s Dyke and referred to as such in subsequent chapters
(3) Leitrim County Council et. al., Leitrim A Guide to it’s beauty, Activities and History, Turner Print Group.
Early Christian and Norman Period

Before the introduction of Christianity, the spirituality of the indigenous populations was Celtic in origin, with druids occupying important religious and political positions. The introduction of Christianity by St. Patrick in the fifth century brought about considerable change and one of the major developments was the introduction of the written word. The earliest writing in Ireland probably began around 300 AD, with an alphabet known as Ogham, after Ogmios the Celtic god of writing. Inscriptions using this alphabet were carved on standing stones. Of the three hundred Ogham stones in Ireland only thirteen are found in Connaught. The only example from Leitrim stands at Cloonmorris.

The introduction of Christianity also allowed for closer contacts with the Roman world, which facilitated the spread of technologies such as a new type of plough and the horizontal mill, which improved agricultural productivity and permitted population increases. Economic and demographic expansion led to the construction of many small ringforts or raths. In areas where soils are shallow the banks of these structures are constructed of stone and are known as cashels. Raths and ringforts are numerous in the Leitrim countryside and may be identified as banks marking the perimeter of enclosed single farmsteads involved in a predominantly pastoral economy. These are typically sited on sloping sites within lowland areas where there was access to better drained soils and views over the surrounding landscape. Broadly contemporary with the ringfort was the crannóg (1), so named because of the large amounts of wood in its construction. Crannógs occupy semi-artificial islands made of timber, sods and stones and are conspicuous in many of the Leitrim loughs, as round scrub and tree-covered islets.

As Christianity spread through Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries, a number of small religious enclosures of earth or stone were established. A proportion of these developed into full scale monasteries or, as the foci of social organisation, became the site of later towns and villages. Many enclosures were abandoned. However, some continued as isolated church and graveyard sites and burial grounds (cillíní or cellúracha) (2). A number of ecclesiastical enclosures and early Celtic establishments are known in Leitrim, often sited in low lying areas. At Fenagh, two ancient church ruins mark the site of a 6th century monastery founded by St. Cailin. It is said that some form of community life continued up to 1652 when it was sacked by Cromwellian soldiers.

At this stage the County of Leitrim did not exist. Instead the land formed part of the old Gaelic kingdom of Breifne which was ruled by the O’Rourkes who were frequently engaged in dynastic power struggles. The Normans arrived in Ireland in 1169 and by the end of the twelfth century had conquered much of the country. Norman occupation was carried out according to the customs of feudalism, the colony being divided on the basis of Knight’s fees and

(1) Crann = tree (gaeilge).
further sub-divided as lands that were distributed to sub-tenants. Across Ireland a network of towns, motte-and-bailey castles and roads made settlers secure and wealthy. The initial phase of colonisation was largely concentrated into the period 1170-1135. However, Leitrim was settled in the second sub-infeudation of Norman areas, probably in the thirteenth century, when rectangular defensive sites were the most common form of Norman settlement.

Despite some Norman activity it seems that Breifne largely remained within the Gaelic system under the lordship of the O’Rourkes and their control lasted up until the Elizabethan conquest. The fifteenth century saw a further period of unrest and economic decline, in part due to the Black Death and climatic deterioration. It is in this period that the tower house became a distinctive feature of the landscape, representing as it did a defensible rural stronghold for upper class landowners. These sites are testimony to the strength of Gaelic lords prior to the Tudor conquests and the insecurity felt by many people due to an absence of centralised authority. The low number and distribution of tower houses indicates that at this time Leitrim continued to occupy a peripheral position on the edge of Anglo-Norman territories. The remains of the tower house found beneath Parkes Castle on the northern shore of Lough Gill is thought to have been the stronghold of the O’Rourkes.

The Leitrim Plantations

The resurgence of the Irish landlords and a general breakdown of social order at the end of the sixteenth century led to a full scale war between the Irish Lords and English Royal Government. In 1601 at the Battle of Kinsale, Irish powers were dashed and the Gaelic social order collapsed. Following this in 1603, Leitrim Castle, the stronghold of the O’Rourkes and the last of the Irish castles to resist the invading armies fell, and their estate and castles were handed over to English and Scottish settlers.

Only after the downfall of the native chieftains could the invading forces secure the abolition of the kingdom of Breifne and create the shire of Leitrim as an administrative entity. In 1607 Leitrim was defined by Sir Anthony Leger building upon the work of the Elizabethan Lord Deputy Sir John Perrott who marked out the boundaries of the shire in 1583. In a survey it was revealed that of its 43,200 acres only 12,240 were inhabited, the large proportion (23,760 acres) being regarded as waste. The civil survey of 1654-56 further described the County as “generally very course and mountaneous” (1).

English Government further asserted its power over the native ruling class by instigating state-organised schemes of large scale colonisation (plantation) in which ownership of large areas of land were transferred to immigrant landlords. One of the conditions of obtaining a large land grant was that a manor house or strong house surrounded by a bawn be built. Settlers were also entitled to wall off a number of acres as demesne lands.

As well as these large, enclosed houses and demesnes, military and civil ‘plantation’ settlements quickly made an impression on the landscape. Up until the plantations, Leitrim had largely been untouched by outside influences and as a result no settlements had grown into anything of great size or importance. However, English and Scottish settlers, keen to establish markets from which to trade, established towns such as Manorhamilton, Dromahair, Jamestown and Carrick. Plantation towns often acted as local markets or centres of law enforcement.

The plantation towns were either extensions of pre-existing medieval settlements or entirely new. For example at Dromahair, English landlords based the layout of the planter settlement on a plan of a village in Somerset, England. Outside the planter towns, settlers reclaimed forests, established farms and laid out a regular pattern of enclosed fields which were in contrast to the scattered pattern of farmsteads and small or irregular fields of the indigenous population.

Industry and Agricultural Improvement

The plantations marked a new era of landscape change centred on the demesne and estate village, influenced by prevalent ideas of agricultural improvement operating within a reformed and rationalised field system; the essential elements of the present day rural landscape.

With the old mosaic of lordship and kinship shattered by the centralising state, the landed estates became the principal engine of growth throughout the eighteenth century. In particular, the economy was fuelled by a rent paying tenantry (1). Settlers embraced with enthusiasm new crops, vegetables (such as the potato), deciduous trees, improved breeds of sheep and cattle and innovations such as improved liming, crop rotation, drainage and enclosure.

Other enterprises embraced and initiated by settlers included the expansion of mining operations within the ‘Connaught Mineral Field’ bringing great wealth to land owners. Iron had been mined as far back as the fifteenth century, however it was from the seventeenth century that large scale coal and iron mining was undertaken, largely by local, wealthy landlords. For example, Sir Charles Coote owned mines in Leitrim and Roscommon and brought 3,000 men from England and Holland to work the mines, in order that the secret of iron mining was kept from the indigenous population. The landscape around Sliabh an Iarainn (Iron Mountain) and the Arigna valley to the west would have been dotted with numerous furnaces and kilns. In the early phase of iron working these would have been fuelled by charcoal, the dense local woodlands providing a ready and seemingly endless supply. However, towards the end of the eighteenth century indiscriminate use of timber caused the supplies to run out causing the furnaces such as the Drumshanbo works to close and would-be industrialists to turn to coal. For example, around this time the O’Reillys began to use coal in their furnace on Furnace hill, just

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outside Drumshanbo (1). The new enterprises encouraged by the Plantations demanded good communications and the 18th century bought an ambitious canal building programme. Navigation works on the Shannon began in the 1750’s by a board of Commissioners funded by special levies and had reached Carrick by the 1780s.(2)

The Cromwellian and Williamite victories greatly consolidated the position of the new ascendancy. Industrial interests also gave settlers the confidence and resources to establish estates and large un-fortified residences. Defensive bawns gave way to walled gardens. This was accompanied by an enthusiasm for lavish houses and ornate gardens as a means of expressing the power, wealth and taste of the ruling landlord class. Once the natural style of demesne design had replaced the earlier formal designs, the location of grand houses and gardens shifted to the slopes of river valleys and lough shores as a means of exploiting picturesque locations.

Outside the demesne and town, rural Leitrim, like much of the Atlantic littoral, was covered with small farms. However, the first Ordnance Survey maps of the County show a large area of Leitrim un-enclosed, suggesting that the countryside was largely empty until the middle of the nineteenth century (3). The population increases of the 18th and 19th centuries generated intensive reclamation of previously un-settled landscapes. The settlement and farming of what was previously regarded as marginal land was made possible by the potato’s ability to flourish in wet, nutrient poor soils, the ready supply of turf for fuel, and the effectiveness of the rundale and clachan system. Landlords were tolerant of the expansion as it ensured extracting maximum rent from marginal land.

Thus a sparsely populated County saw a significant population increase as more of the landscape was bought into small farm cultivation. Initially settlement would have spread along new roads which were part of a communication network opening up areas of bog and moor. However, as pressure on land increased, small farms based on intensive spade cultivation and potatoes also developed on mountain slopes above the 150 m contour which had once been communal mountain pasture. An interesting feature of the landscape dating to the period are the sweathouses of which 78 survive in Leitrim.

By the early 19th century the diet of the poor labourer was becoming increasingly dependent on the potato, key reasons being the crop’s suitability for the climate, its nutrient value, and the trend towards selling oats, which had once been a traditional part of the diet, to pay rent. Under the right conditions the potato was more than an adequate means of ensuring survival particularly if grown in lazy beds, which maximised the resource potential of even the poorest soils.

In the years up to the Great Famine, the vast proportion of the population in Leitrim lived on small plots of land. These were generally five acres or less, farmed by families forced to concentrate their efforts and energies on growing potatoes. The small size of plots was a result of sub division whereby farm plots were divided between offspring on the death of the father.

**Famine, Agricultural Reform**

The Great Famine of 1845 - 52, caused by the arrival in Ireland of potato blight, was the greatest social catastrophe in the history of Ireland. The blight destroyed over 90% of the potato crop, its impact being most severe in counties in the west of Ireland such as Leitrim where there was a high dependency on the lumper variety of potato.

As a result of the famine and un-sympathetic relief policies from England, death, disease and emigration spiralled. Its consequences are most starkly represented by an analysis of pre and post- famine populations. In 1841 the population of Leitrim stood at 155,297. By 1851 it had dropped to 111,915. Population density decreased over the same period from 253 to 183 people per square mile. Further analysis reveals that the brunt of the famine was met by the poorest sector of the population; in Leitrim, the percentage of the population living in the poorest accommodation (single roomed huts) fell from 50% in 1841 to 25% ten years later. (1)

The thousands of famine victims were buried in the small famine graveyards that were established throughout the County and remain in the landscape as a poignant reminder of the suffering endured. It is interesting to note that the lack of food did not account for the majority of deaths; many were a consequence of diseases such as typhus and scurvy which resulted from malnutrition.

After 1847 there was a marked increase in evictions as landlords looked towards clearing their estates of small holders. This was partially motivated by the dual effects of an increase in taxes and a dramatic fall in the payment of rents by destitute and starving tenants. Across Ireland in the aftermath of the famine, strong farmers and graziers increased their holdings at the expense of weaker neighbours, the pastoral sector increased and live cattle exports rose, helped by railways and expanding English markets. The small mud cottages fell into ruin and the abandoned lazy beds were covered in bracken and gorse.

After 1880 widespread centralised intervention led to long term re-organisation of the rural landscape. It is to this period of re-organisation that the majority of the current field systems, rural settlement patterns and hedgerows in Leitrim date, superseding the open fields and rundale system of the pre-famine era. Restructuring gathered pace following a well publicised near famine in the west of Ireland in 1889-90 which led to the establishment of

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the Congested Districts Board (CBD). Leitrim was wholly regarded as a Congested District by 1911(1).

The CDB initiated infrastructure development, agricultural improvement and promoted far-reaching changes in the countryside by re-modelling the landscape and encouraging the dispersion of farms. Land-holdings were re-organised; the clustered farm settlements and rundale holdings were replaced by owner occupied strip holdings, each with a new farm house located on re-planned roads. It is to this period that the farm cottages which are found throughout Leitrim date, housing being a major item of Board planning and expenditure. The vernacular style is simple without having architectural pretensions, often having lime plaster walls (white or colour washed) and slate or tiled roofs. It was also at the turn of the 20th century that landlords, who had forfeited British sympathy during the famine, were encouraged to divest their lands causing the dereliction of demesnes.

The Land Commission, formed from the older CBD, completed the transfer of the rural landscape to owner occupancy. The crude form of environmental restructuring provided families with holdings of eight to twelve hectares which have largely endured in Leitrim thanks to the symbolic importance of owning land. Indeed, very little land has passed onto the market and has therefore fossilised the land ownership pattern which arose out of the transfer to owner occupancy. The mechanics of the family farm system stressed impartible inheritance, therefore forcing the non-inheriting family members to emigrate resulting in a shrinking rural population, exacerbated by the mechanisation of farming and the resultant displacement of agricultural labourers and their families. By the 1950s emigration was a serious drain on rural communities. Indeed census figures for Leitrim in the period 1946 to 1996 show a steady fall in population from 44,591 to 25,032 (2).

The Modern Day

The opening of Ireland to Multi National Companies (MNC’s) in 1958 and entry to the EEC in 1973 has had little impact on Leitrim. Elsewhere in Ireland, MNC’s were scattered across the regions and acres of rural landscape were transformed into industrial units. Also at this time, farming was transformed into an intensive large scale industrial process thanks to the introduction of cheap fertilisers, machinery and specialised production methods, fuelled by the ‘big-farm lobby’ who were anxious to benefit from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

On the whole Leitrim’s rural landscapes have escaped industrialisation. The large factory on the Jamestown/Drumsna bypass represents the largest and most conspicuous industrial element in the County’s landscape. Elsewhere the landscape remains deeply rural, with part time farmers maintaining small farms comprised of hedges, fields and modest farm and out-buildings. Indeed Leitrim’s part time farmers did poorly under the CAP, many finding it

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(2) Leitrim County Council, From Age to Age, 1999.
difficult to obtain grants and assistance from Europe. Income support and reliance on off-farm part-time jobs have been more important than price supports and capital grants. Throughout the 1980s emigration continued and increasingly led to the collapse of elements of rural infrastructure such as schools, post-offices and shops, which fuelled further emigration.

Between 1986 and 1996, the population of Leitrim declined by 7 per cent to 25,057. At the same time, the national population increased by 2 per cent. There are only 41 people per square mile in Leitrim compared to 135 at national level. Just under a quarter of the population live in towns, indicating that the County is exceptionally rural (1).

The County’s agricultural sector is still heavily dependent on direct payments from either Europe or the domestic exchequer at present. Cattle-based farming gets most of the funds but there has also been a good uptake of the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) with approximately 50% of the County’s farmers participating. About one-third of gross farm revenue in Leitrim comes from subsidies and about half of farm output is from beef farming with dairying producing another 30%. The farming sub-sector in Leitrim showing most growth and with the greatest potential is organic farming, where the County is well ahead of the national average and where market growth is highest. The Organic Centre in Rossinver has been instrumental in providing training and research in organic farming in the County.

In recent years Leitrim has witnessed an upsurge in commercial and residential development. The Upper Shannon tax incentive scheme is helping the commercial sector and much investment is being directed towards infrastructure around the County. Currently there is a population of approximately 3,000 people in Carrick-on-Shannon. With at least 1,100 houses proposed to be constructed in the town it is predicted that Carrick-on-Shannon will grow to a population of 5,000 by 2005 and 10,000 by 2010. The rural renewal scheme has also encouraged development in other towns around the County such as Ballinamore, Drumshanbo, and Manorhamilton.

Leitrim is rich in artistic talent and this is facilitated by centres such as the Leitrim Sculpture Centre, a training and residential arts facility situated in Manorhamilton and the Leitrim Design House in Carrick-on-Shannon. The latter is devoted to promoting excellence and economic development in contemporary art, craft and design created in County Leitrim. The County is an excellent base for green tourism such as fishing, walking and cycling holidays and will likely experience increased usage by holidaymakers in these areas.

Leitrim has experienced much positive change in the past five years. While its population has continued to decline, the pace of the decline has been slowed. For the first time ever, more people moved in to the County. Housing trends

and incentives indicate that people are continuing to locate in Leitrim while more local people are opting to stay. There has been a sharp decline in youth unemployment. New forms of employment particularly in the services sector are replacing traditional industries. The County presently has one of the highest levels of planning applications per capita in Ireland.
Leitrim is a county of contrasts: wild and remote upland areas are juxtaposed with intimate agricultural landscapes. Since the agricultural reforms of the previous century and the dramatic effects of famine and emigration, County Leitrim has remained rural. In contrast to so many of the surrounding counties, Leitrim has no large towns and the countryside has been spared from the damaging effects of urban expansion and of agricultural mechanisation. Leitrim’s landscapes are among the country’s finest environmental assets, a resource valued for their scenic, ecological and historical qualities as well as for their economic potential for forestry and tourism.

Leitrim’s landscapes are largely rural, dramatic and varied. In very broad terms the County may be divided into two distinct halves with Lough Allen representing a convenient boundary. In the north of the County landscapes are wild and high with several distinct, exposed table-like mountains separating dramatic, sweeping glens floored with drumlins and loughs. Towards the coast the gently undulating glen farmland gives way to subtler landform as it extends to the short rocky coastline which overlooks Donegal Bay. To the south of Lough Allen an intimate landscape of drumlin farmland unfolds where peat bogs, loughs, rock outcrops and river shore landscapes punctuate the relentless undulations.

The intervisibility of these contrasting landscapes is an important characteristic adding to the appeal of the County. On clear days there are extensive views from the high moor topped mountains and their grassy slopes to the lowland landscapes which in places stretch to the horizon. From the bottom of the glens and where views between drumlins allow, the impressive outlines of distant mountains and hills may be seen, reminding the viewer how close the dramatically different landscapes are to each other.

Despite there being remarkably distinct and varied landscapes in Leitrim, particular landform and landcover elements combine to produce distinctive landscape types (physical units).

3.1 LANDSCAPE TYPES (PHYSICAL UNITS)

A wide variety of landscapes may be found in County Leitrim. High moorland plateau, scree slopes, lowland ridges, farmed drumlins, river floodplains and coastal flats are all represented across the County. Landscape types have been derived from detailed desk study and refined through extensive field survey. A map illustrating the distribution of the fourteen landscape types across Leitrim is presented in Figure 5 and descriptions of each landscape type are presented in the summary table below.

**Landscape types** are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different localities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landscape Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Moorland Plateaux</td>
<td>The most remote, exposed and expansive landscape type in Leitrim generally characterised by level or gently rolling landform although there may be isolated steep escarpments and rocky cliffs. These are generally found above 300 m AOD. Landcover is predominantly blanket bog and heath, extensively grazed by free roaming sheep. Localised erosion gives rise to crags and peat hags exposing the underlying rocks. Small upland loughs drained by streams are located throughout the landscape type. The plateaux have a sense of wilderness, remoteness and space, strengthened by the dominance and enormity of the sky. Few roads or tracks reach up onto the plateaux although where wind farms or radio masts have been built, access roads have been provided. The mosaic of upland habitats are of significant nature conservation value. Colours are muted and monochromatic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clifed Uplands and Landslips</td>
<td>Below the moor topped uplands and particularly within the major glens which were formed by the erosive action of glaciers, clifed margins, detached masses and landslips form a distinctive and dramatic landscape type. Huge sections of the upper parts of the cliffs have broken off and have either slipped downwards leaving extensive scree and colluvial slopes, bare rock faces and cliffs remain hanging above the agricultural landscapes below as detached masses. Landcover is typically sparse although grassland has colonised some of the stabilised scree slopes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Moorland Hills</td>
<td>The rolling Moorland Hills are generally located between 300 m and 200 m AOD and are positioned above the upper limits of enclosure. Hillsides generally allow long views across the surrounding lowlands except where woodland cover is extensive. Landcover is typically blanket bog, heather moor and unimproved grassland extensively grazed by free roaming sheep although some field patterns are discernible as low earth banks and post and wire fences. Large coniferous plantations have been established over extensive areas of hillsides and scrub has colonised many hill slopes. Fast rocky streams draining the upper peat bogs wind through the hills and offer secluded steep sided valleys and ravines in which scrub and trees can shelter. The moorland hills are generally unsettled although small isolated farms and outbuildings become focal points on some hills. A higher number of tracks and roads distinguish these lower areas of moorland from the wilder moorland plateaux. Roads and tracks are often fringed by post and wire fences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Steep Mountain Peaks</td>
<td>These steep sided mountain peaks have a smooth profile and small scree slopes creating a distinctive, notched skyline. These occur as a result of particular geological conditions where a largely chert free form of limestone exists as mudbanks forming rounded hummocky hills. Natural grassland is the predominant landcover with heath and coniferous plantations occupying gentler slopes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Tabular Hills**

Distinctive tabular hills formed from karstic weathering of cherty limestones in horizontal beds. Rough pasture and scrub occupy the tabular hills and grazing is located within the increasingly rush infested fields on gentler lower slopes. Scrub is most visible where it has colonised the flat top of the tabular hills and disguises the distinctive bedding planes. Deciduous and coniferous woodlands are numerous on the gentler undulations. Settlement is sparse and restricted to a small number of isolated farms off main routes on narrow tracks and lanes.

6. **Upland Farmland and Foothills**

Fringing the moor topped mountains between the sparsely populated Moorland Hills and the intensively farmed lowlands are transitional enclosed landscapes. Landform is diverse, ranging from gentle sloping foothills to steeper hillsides. Pastures are grazed within a patchwork of hedged fields which stretch up the hillsides often within distinctive linear formations. Tree cover is sporadic. Coniferous plantations are located on many slopes, utilising marginal pastures. Many streams draining the hillsides cut narrow valleys which are often colonised by scrub and trees. Waterfalls are found where the streams cross harder layers of geology. Major routes occupy the lower fringes of the area, a network of minor, narrow roads winding through the hills running off these routes. A higher proportion of settlement is located in these farmed areas when compared to the upper slopes of the Moorland Hills. Isolated farm houses are often located at the end of long winding lanes. Modern housing development tends to be located along the busier arterial routes.

7. **Undulating Hill Farmland**

An agricultural landscape on undulating terrain within an uplifted domed unit. The distinctive rolling nature of the summit gives way to sloping sides fretted by numerous streams draining the uplands. Soils tend to be poorly drained and are generally suitable for grassland farming. Improvement of some soils and hedgerow removal, particularly on the gentle slopes, has allowed for areas of silage production. Settlement is sparse and few clusters occur. The majority of dwellings are located along long winding lanes, fringed with tall rambling hedges. Where landform and landcover allow, extensive views over the surrounding lowlands are possible. On the summit, undulations give the sense of a secretive and hidden landscape.

8. **Low Limestone Outcrops**

Distinctive hilly areas with outcropping limestone rising above the surrounding lowlands. These are low in comparison to the mountainous areas but have a distinctive hilly profile when viewed from the surrounding lowlands, providing a sense of orientation. Shallow soils support grazing which is often within fields defined by a network of stone walls, a contrast to the surrounding lowlands where hedgerows are dominant. Woodland is restricted to steep slopes although hedgerow trees, isolated trees within pasture and scrub provide some cover. Historically these sites provided important vantage points and clusters of Megalithic tombs indicate that they had some form of ritual or strategic significance. The outcrops are largely unsettled. Houses are strung out along the roads fringing the lower slopes and isolated farm houses and derelict farms at the end of narrow winding lanes can be found in sheltered areas on some hillsides. The distinctive ridge is the natural location for communication masts which gain visual prominence in this location.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.  <strong>Drumlin Farmland</strong></td>
<td>A distinctive landscape characterised by a ‘field’ or swarm of rolling drumlins. The consistent orientation of the hills gives the landscape a uniform grain which is difficult to appreciate within the field and relates to the direction of glacial ice flows. The regular green hillocks have steep sides with broad rounded tops although the size, shape and slopes of drumlins may vary considerably. Rushy pasture predominates within a patchwork of small fields bounded by hedges which rise up over the drumlins accentuating their form and at distance contribute to the wooded character of the drumlins. Land between the drumlins is boggy and poorly drained with a proliferation of lakes of all sizes and a network of narrow winding streams. Post and wire fences tend to delineate field boundaries in the flat hollows. Blanket coverage of some drumlins by coniferous plantations is widespread, obscuring the distinctive landform and field patterns. Traditional cottages are located on the side of drumlins at the end of short narrow hedged lanes off the main arterial routes which wind between the drumlins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. <strong>Drumlin Lough and Stream Margins</strong></td>
<td>A small scale and intimate landscape of flat or very gently undulating topography punctuated with occasional drumlins. These landscapes are associated with a high number of loughs and feeder streams within the wider drumlin swarm. Water within the loughs and streams are an important component of the landscape and are bordered by extensive areas of boggy, poorly drained pastures formed from clays deposited by streams. These landscapes display many of the characteristics of the River Floodplain landscape type although views tend to be more constricted, areas of open water tend to be smaller in scale and linked by narrow streams rather than a wide meandering river. One conspicuous difference is the occurrence of crannógs. The wet rushy pastures are seasonally grazed but can become unusable during wet months. Field boundaries are generally defined by post and wire fences which are often invaded with scrub giving the impression of established hedgerows. Hedges define field boundaries on the drier drumlins. Views from the lough margins across extensive areas of water are possible. However views are often restricted by the surrounding drumlin landform, bankside coniferous plantations and isolated trees and scrub patches. Areas of common reed, reedmace and bulrush occupy the margins of the loughs. These landscapes are particularly popular for passive recreational pursuits and a number of loughs are fringed by car parks and picnic sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. <strong>Eskers and Raised Peat Bogs</strong></td>
<td>A gentle, undulating landscape of grazed lowland eskers and elongated areas of raised peat bog. The eskers – long, sinuous ridges of sand and gravel formed by sub-glacial streams - are covered by a network of hedged pasture fields and this emphasises the landform. Many areas of pasture appear to be becoming invaded by rushes due to undergrazing. Long, narrow stretches of raised peat bog and elongated loughs occupy the hollows between the eskers. Stands of Scots pine and other coniferous woodland occur, often on reclaimed peat bogs and on the margins of loughs. Road and settlement patterns are distinctive and contrast strongly with the Drumlin Farmland type. The main arterial routes follow the top of eskers and are lined with clustered small traditional farmsteads, often surrounded by small copses. Narrower roads bordered by drainage ditches cross the raised bogs and link the main arterial routes. These tend to be sparsely settled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. River Floodplain</td>
<td>A flat, low lying pastoral river landscape associated with the Shannon. The river itself consists of a number of loughs mostly connected with sluggish river sections and dominating the drainage pattern of small feeder channels which drain the surrounding drumlin swarms and mountains. Water, both in the river channel and loughs, is an important landscape element. The meandering course of the Shannon is bordered by flat floodplains, gently sloping grazed banks, meadows and rough grazing. Landform is typically flat although slight undulations are present. Occasional floodplain trees such as Alder, Ash and Willow stand out as features. Pasture, grazed by cows in drier months, occurs in open fields bordering some stretches of river. Field boundaries are typically defined by post and wire fences, often colonised by scrub species and ranker growth, giving the appearance of established hedgerows. There is virtually no settlement within the type. Roads are also generally absent. However a small number of isolated houses do exist, occupying small undulations to escape flooding. These isolated dwellings tend to be reached by narrow winding lanes and often enclosed by tall species rich hedgerows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Coastal Lowlands</td>
<td>An extensive, gently undulating plain extending from the busy coast road towards the mountains and glens to the south. The area is generally underlain by terraced deposits of stony moraines although the underlying sandstone bedrock outcrops in isolated locations. Landcover varies between extensive raised bogs and gently undulating pastures, often grazed by horses, which are contained by low stone walls and post and wire fences. The landscape appears well wooded due to areas of broad-leaved woodland and small coniferous plantations. Fairly extensive areas of transitional woodland scrub also contribute to this wooded appearance. Settlement is limited due to the extent of bogs but is typically clustered along the long roads crossing the higher ground and at the end of narrow winding lanes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Coastal Fringe Farmland</td>
<td>A small scale landscape with extensive views to the sea with a quiet, exposed character. A rocky inter-tidal zone shelving gently to the sea leads to low rocky cliffs and onto gently undulating pastures contained by stone walls and hedges. Many walls and fields show signs of bramble and gorse invasion. Individual dwellings, usually small brightly coloured bungalows, are located along the narrow hedged and walled roads which run parallel to the coast. New houses lie alongside old, derelict and overgrown stone cottages which also shelter wind blown hawthorns.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2 Landscape Character Areas (Image Units)

Country Leitrim has been sub divided into fourteen unique Landscape Character Areas (Figure 6).

**Landscape character areas** are units of the landscape that are geographically specific and have their own character or sense of place. They are useful in terms of landscape planning and management, as appropriate policies and actions can be applied at a local level. County Leitrim has been divided into fourteen distinct landscape character areas, within which there is a repeating matrix of landscape types (physical units).
Each of the landscape character areas is described in turn. The physical and human influences that have shaped the character of the landscape are summarised. The character description forms the basis for an analysis of landscape condition and sensitivity to change. This is followed with specific guidelines for landscape management and built form in each character area.
Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform of kames and kame terraces composed of stony moraines deposited by retreating ice sheet.

- Predominantly agricultural land interspersed with raised peat bogs bounded by a combination of hedgerows, stone walls and post and wire fences.

- Extensive woodland scrub invasion of areas of agricultural land, coupled with hedgerow trees and a combination of coniferous and broadleaf woodland gives the appearance of a well wooded landscape.

- The use of stone walls represent the close proximity of geology to the surface in some areas.

- Settlements limited to small villages and individual dwellings dispersed along country lanes.

- Rural road network predominates, with the only major roads being the N15 and R280.

- Archaeological sites found primarily along the coastal edge, including Tullaghan Cross, numerous megalithic tombs, barrows and holy wells.

- Panoramic views to the Tievebaun, Truskmore and Arroo mountains in the south and over the sea towards Donegal bay.
Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 106 - 120)

The **Tullaghan Coast** Character Area is located in the most northern part of the County and includes the only section of coast within County Leitrim. The landscape is a gently undulating landscape of peat bogs and pastoral farmland with limited settlement shelving to a short, rocky stretch of coastline. The area is defined to the north by Donegal Bay and the drumlins of Glenade to the south above which rise the distinctive mountain profiles of Arroo and Tievebaun. The rocky coast, rolling farmland and raised peat bogs contrast dramatically with the mountainous region to the south and despite some long views, the landscape is relatively intimate.

**Geology and Landform**

The undulating topography of the coastal area is formed from kames and kame terraces, which are derived from the underlying sandstone and shale geology. Covering the hummocky mounds are well drained soils. In areas, most notably the area south of Tullaghan, the underlying bedrock is visible and has created sandstone outcrops rising to 34 m AOD. The landscape shelves gently to low rocky cliffs and extensive area of intertidal flats predominantly formed from boulders and pebbles.

**Landcover**

Although extensive areas of raised peat bogs are apparent, most landcover is agricultural, large areas having been reclaimed to grassland. Some areas have been subject to extensive scrub invasion whilst other areas are used for grazing and silage/hay production. The fields are commonly medium in size.
and boundaries tend to follow landform, accentuating the hummocky topography. They are enclosed by a combination of stone walls, hedgerows and post and wire fences. The condition of stone walls varies; a number are of relatively good condition, whilst others are in a poor state of repair, though bramble and scrub are often associated with both. The frequency of stone walls generally increases where underlying geology is close to the surface. Although some hedgerows occur on the coastal fringes, they become more numerous inland except in areas of raised bogs where post and wire fences predominate. Small areas of broad-leaved and coniferous woodland scattered throughout the area give an appearance of a relatively well wooded landscape, along with hedgerow trees and extensive areas of transitional woodland scrub. Vegetation, especially along the coast road, is frequently wind blown due to strong winds from the sea.

**Human Influences**

Settlement is limited due to the extent of peat bogs but is typically located along long roads crossing the landscape or at the end of narrow winding lanes. Small clusters of houses exist on higher ground, a distinctive example being that surrounding the outcrop of sandstone at Gargrim. Tullaghan and Kinlough are the largest true villages and mark the junction of numerous roads. Dwellings located along the narrow hedged and walled road running parallel to the coast are typically small, brightly coloured bungalows with well maintained lawns and urban garden species, often alien in the farmed landscape. New houses frequently lie alongside old, derelict and overgrown stone cottages and barns.

Areas of historic interest are most frequently found on land adjacent to the coastal edge and consist of numerous megalithic tombs, barrows and holy wells, perhaps representing the high ritual significance of the landscape in prehistory. Today, located within the area is a church, positioned to allow views over the coast and out to sea. The Tullaghan Cross, believed to have come from an ancient monastery on the shore of the River Drowes in the 11th or 12th century, is also located within this area, north of the N15 and west of Tullaghan. It was recovered in 1770 from the sea and erected by the local landlord. North of Tullaghan lie the remains of a castle overlooking the Atlantic Ocean which was destroyed in 1641.

Telecommunications are conspicuous within the landscape due to their height and location in the gently undulating landform. Also distinct within the coastal area is mining of the hummocky landscape for sand and gravel, however this only apparent in limited places.

**Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change**

The farmed landscape is in a variable condition. In parts there is extensive scrub invasion, hedgerow loss, derelict stone cottages and un-maintained stone walls. Elsewhere however, farming activities and scattered dwellings and villages, especially along the coastal road, continue to provide a sense of activity.
In places the landscape is very vulnerable to further settlement, particularly in bog areas and along the coast road. Elsewhere the undulating topography, field boundaries and woodlands mean that further settlement could be accommodated.

Although the landscape currently appears relatively well wooded due to scrub invasion, hedgerow trees, small plantings of coniferous and broadleaf woodlands, it would be sensitive to large scale coniferous plantations as local variations in landform would be lost and views to the coast and mountains may become restricted. Wind farm developments along the coast would also be intrusive due to open landscape and long views over the area.
Key Issues for Tullaghan Coast

- Housing development pressures along coastal road
- Communications infrastructure pressures

Principles for Landscape Management

- Agricultural activity should be encouraged. Further scrub invasion could damage landscape character by obscuring field patterns and distinctive landform.
- Encourage maintenance of stone walls and hedgerows as they contribute to the overall character.
- Limit the scale of peat cutting areas and ensure the most intact areas of raised peat are protected.
- Site commercial forestry plantations in lower, less prominent areas and ensure they do not impinge on the open character of the area and obscure views to the coast and mountains.

Principles for Built Form

- Monitor future development and ensure that distinctive settlement patterns are not obscured. Small villages and scattered dwellings along roads are characteristic; however continuous ribbon development along the rural and coastal roads and bog roads would be inappropriate.
- Management of further development may be necessary, especially if pressure for tourist development increases.
- Any new development should be encouraged to use traditional colours.
- The use of traditional building materials and styles should be encouraged.
- Any new development should be accompanied by stone walls and native planting to integrate buildings into the surrounding landscape pattern and should avoid prominent locations.
Key Characteristics

- Highly valued lakeland scenery around Lough Melvin.

- Long rounded hills of glacial deposits and gentle ridges with small rivers between them.

- Patchwork of small, enclosed fields, rush infested pastures and herb-rich hay meadows, with evidence of declining agricultural activity.

- Fields separated by overgrown hedgerows, or earth hedge banks.

- Low native tree cover, except around farms, river valleys and on shores of Lough Melvin.

- Moderate scale coniferous forestry conspicuous on lough margins and covering undulating landform.

- Small scale settlement of old cottages along roads and new bungalows.

- Black Pig’s Dyke, an important Iron Age linear earthwork.
Typical Photograph

![View looking westwards south of Kiltyclogher (Viewpoint number 125)](image)

**Landscape Description**

(Viewpoints 117, 123, 124, 125, 131, 132)

The *Lough Melvin Lowlands* Character Area is located in the north eastern part of the County and is an extension of the Garrison Lowlands character area in County Fermanagh. The area is defined by the Drowes, Bradoge and County rivers to the north, Lough Macnean Upper in the east, the uplands of the *Arroo Mountain and Outliers* character area to the south and the *Tullaghan Coast* character area to the west. The landscape is structured, intimate and well maintained. However, rush infestation and colonisation by gorse and scrub gives the sense of abandonment and dereliction, particularly in low lying flat pastures bordering rivers. Views are in places significantly limited due to undulating landform and dense hedgerows. However long views to the surrounding mountains are possible from a few locations, particularly on higher drumlins and ridges and along the shores of Lough Melvin.

**Geology and Landform**

Gently sloping topography to the north of Lough Melvin is formed from the underlying sandstone and shale bedrock. Streams draining into Lough Melvin and the surrounding rivers have shaped the underlying geology into a number of gentle ridges orientated east to west. To the east of Lough Melvin these ridges give way to limestone geology which has become overlain by long rounded hills formed from glacial deposits. Many streams drain the uplands, weave between the drumlins and flow through a number of small loughs, bogs and wet meadows. Soils tend to be poorly drained with a limited use range most suited to forestry or light stock grazing.
**Landcover**

The gently undulating ridges and drumlins support a patchwork of pasture and silage fields and herb rich meadows, textured by areas of rushy pasture and scrub. Between the ridges and alongside streams, peaty soils have developed which have largely been drained for pasture or woodland although small remnants of raised peat bog survive in the far north and south of the character area. Woodlands are moderately sized. However, the dense, largely unmanaged hedgerow network gives the sense of well wooded landscape. Lough Melvin is a key landscape and wildlife feature, and supports four distinct trout species in addition to salmon, char and perch. It is designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation and a proposed Natural Heritage Area.

**Human Influences**

Little evidence of prehistoric and historic activity is testimony to the poor agricultural capacity of the soils. During the Iron Age the area represented a frontier between the ancient provinces of Ulster and Connaught. The boundary is marked by the early Iron Age earthwork, Black Pig’s Dyke, which was constructed as two parallel earthen banks on a timber palisade. Stretches of the earthwork, which weaves through the drumlins to the south of the County River, are still visible in the landscape. Evidence of early Christian activity may be found at Rossinver where a sixth century monastic site is said to have been established by St Aiden (also known as St Mogue). A cross-inscribed slab in the graveyard is the sole reminder of the early monastery. Other early settlement includes a number of crannógs on Lough Melvin. Later features include other islands on Lough Melvin such as MacClancy’s Island (Rossclougher), where nine Spaniards, survivors of the Armada, took refuge from a siege by Fitzwilliam 1588 (1). Another valued feature in this area is the birthplace and homestead of Sean MacDiarmada at Laughty Barr in Kiltyclogher.

The modern landscape of dispersed settlement, enclosed fields and woods largely dates to the nineteenth century. Land use is dominated by small, enclosed rush-infested pastures. Herb-rich hay meadows are common, due to traditional, low intensity farming methods. In larger, well drained and gently sloping fields small scale silage production is evident. Fields are separated by overgrown hedgerows or by hedge banks with low trees and shrubs and some post and wire fences. A dense hedgerow network gives the sense of a well wooded landscape at distance. In the extensive flat pastures bordering the County River, post and wire fences demarcate rushy pastures, which are increasingly becoming colonised by gorse and scrub. Small scale settlement, a mixture of modern bungalows and houses and older whitewashed cottages, is dispersed along roads. On the gentle slopes of Lough Melvin, roads run along the grain of the landscape formed by the ridges with houses either along the

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(1) Source: The Armada and Maclancy of Rossclougher, Coiste Armada Kinloch. N.D.
course of the road or on short tracks running at right angles to the main routes. In the drumlin areas, roads weave between the undulations, with houses occupying their lower slopes. Small towns such as Rossinver and Kiltyclogher tend to be located at road junctions and river crossings.

*Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change*

There is evidence of a decline in farming activity leading to dereliction and rough grazing. The loss of fields and boundaries to rush and scrub gives the area a forgotten and isolated character. However, the survival of traditional farming methods has resulted in the conservation of distinctive herb-rich meadows. Elsewhere on drier, less undulating landform accessible to machinery, silage is a conspicuous feature.

Recent forestry plantations are beginning to mask the former field boundaries and will lead to a sterile landscape if it becomes widespread. Forestry also obscures stretches of the Black Pig’s Dyke and tree roots threaten delicate archaeological remains. Where large forestry blocks exist on undulating landform, large scale felling leaves significant areas of the landscape scarred. Many cottages remain basic and whitewashed although an increasing number of new bungalows and houses are appearing along roadsides. A number of farms have large pitched-roof sheds in addition to older style domed roof outbuildings, which are conspicuous elements of the modern agricultural landscape and are often visible from surrounding uplands.

Despite dereliction and abandonment the landscape is in relatively good condition. A dense hedgerow structure and undulating landform allows the landscape to accommodate a degree of change. However the lough fringes and in particular the low ridges projecting into the water forming points and islands are sensitive to change. Lough Melvin has very clean water and supports a range of rare and protected species of flora and fauna. The Lough is used for fishing, boating and water abstraction while much of the terrestrial part is used for grazing. Consequently the main threats to the lough and surrounding streams are from agricultural pollution and recreational pressure.
Key Issues for Lough Melvin Lowlands

- Housing development pressure and impact on water quality
- Inadequate application of current guidelines for forestry development

Principles for Landscape Management

- Retain the existing fine grain of the landscape with its patchwork of hay meadows, bog, forestry and broad leaved woodland. Management of abandoned flower rich hay meadows through grazing and cutting would prevent their reversion to rush and scrub.

- Forestry plantations would have less impact if they were planted in smaller irregular patches within established field boundaries and vegetation. Smaller blocks would not mask distinctive views to Lough Melvin. Particular attention should be given to siting forestry so as to preserve Black Pig’s Dyke and views to both the monument and the Lough itself.

- The repair or replanting of traditional field boundaries, either earth banks or hedgerows would be preferable to the use of wire fences.

- Recreational use of Lough Melvin should be monitored and measures taken to protect its delicate habitats.

Principles for Built Form

- Development should be accommodated within groups of trees at former housing sites. New buildings would be in keeping with the landscape if they used traditional materials and styles, were sited back from roads and were associated with native rather than exotic planting.

- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone and thatch cottages, and painted barns would be beneficial in landscape and historical terms.

- Careful management of tourism development around Lough Melvin would prevent damage to settlement character and water quality.
LOUGH MACNEAN UPPER CHARACTER AREA

Key Characteristics

- Highly valued lakeland scenery at Lough Macnean.
- Extensive estate forestry and woodland around lough shore and Glenfarne Demense.
- High quality lake flora and fauna.
- Traditional settlement pattern.
- Number of significant archaeological features.
- Fields separated by hedgerows.
- Distinctive sculpture trails at Lough Macnean Upper.
Typical Photograph

View looking towards eastwards towards County Fermanagh from shores of Lough Macnean (Viewpoint 199)

Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 195 - 197)

The Lough Macnean Upper Character Area is located in the north east of the County and is an extension of the Lough Macnean Valley in County Fermanagh. It is defined by the Garrison Lowlands to the North and the Lough Macnean valley to the south-east which includes Lower Lough Macnean (both within County Fermanagh). Thur Mountain (part of Arroo & Mountain outliers) dominates upland views to the west. The Esky River provides the border of this area, along the County Boundary. Long views are afforded across and along Lough Macnean from the shores. The source of Lough Macnean is in the Thur Mountains. The shoreline constitutes wooded promontories and sheltered bays with reed swamps and fen and carr woodland. The fields around this shoreline display evidence of rush infestation and overgrown hedges. Generally small farm units support cattle and sheep grazing.

Geology and Landform

Lough Macnean Upper and Lower were formed as a result of glaciation, which scoured deep basins in a variety of Carboniferous rocks. Upper Carboniferous rocks form the bedrock in this area, and the dominant surface geology is sandstone and limestone. During the glacial period approximately 17,000 years ago, boulder clay was deposited and moulded into drumlins or hillylacks in the direction of the ice flow. This ice flow migrated towards what is now County Cavan, and the drumlins around Glenfarne radiate from the Cavan border.
The soils belong mainly to the Gley Group series, but around the Glenfarne lowlands they are dominated by the Drumkeeran Series, the parent material largely being glacial drift. Soils are generally poorly drained with a high clay content, and lowland areas are prone to flooding.

**Landcover**

The principal land use constraint is one of poaching. There is extensive forestry around Lough Macnean within the Glenfarne Demense. This is principally composed of spruce with some old Scots pine and European larch. Elsewhere land use is predominately rough grazing for cattle and sheep.

This is a well wooded landscape, with established hedgerows defining field boundaries as well as a significant amount of post and wire fencing. There is some evidence of older stone walls and in places, hedgebanks. Lough Macnean Upper itself is a high value coarse fishing site, containing bream, roach and hybrids.

**Human Influences**

Black Pig’s Dyke extends between Lough Melvin and Lough Macnean Upper. It consists of a timber palisade and series of banks and ditches 24 m across. Other ancient features include standing stones at Annagh, and a crannōg on Lough Macnean. Later features include a sweathease near Annagh. Glenfarne Demense is part of the former Tottenham Estate, settled by the Tottenhams in 1780 and abandoned in the Troubles around 1919.

Current settlement is post famine, and scattered dwellings are most frequently found parallel to the shores of Lough Macnean, along the Kiltyclogher-Glenfarne road or on narrow tracks running at right angles to this road. Houses are a mixture of traditional whitewashed cottages, two storey farmhouses and modern bungalows.

**Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change**

This area has a number of attractive landscape elements: loughs and shorelines, woodlands and grassland. The dense vegetation both around the shores of Lough Macnean Upper and within the field boundaries creates a fairly intimate and robust landscape. However, the shorelines, inlets and islands are very sensitive to change. There is evidence of agricultural decline in parts with rush and scrub infestation and a number of derelict homes. In the southern part of the area blocks of coniferous forestry block views to the lough; this area is vulnerable to further afforestation.

The lough supports a wide range of fish species and is surrounded in a large part by the Glenfarne Demense, which is an important amenity area. The principal threat to water quality in the lough is likely to come from run-off.
from dwellings close to the lake and possible agricultural inputs. Future developments on the lake shore should be sensitively approached.

**Key Issues for Lough Macnean Upper**

- Lough shores sensitive to further housing development
- Insensitive afforestation
- Potential recreational pressure on high quality lough

**Principles for Landscape Management.**

- The repair or replanting of field boundaries by hedgerows or restoring stone walls would be preferable to the use of wire fences.
- Protection of the natural shoreline vegetation through controlled access to the shore would avoid any future damage.
- Recreational use of Lough Macnean Upper should be monitored and measures taken to protect its delicate habitats.
- Improved siting of new forestry on the upland slopes would prevent forestry from blocking views and obscuring Thur Mountain from the loughshore.

**Principles for Built Form**

- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone and thatched cottages would be beneficial in landscape and historical terms.
- The siting and design of tourist and recreational infrastructure, such as car parks, should be carefully considered to avoid visual intrusion and promote and enhance sustainable recreational and tourism activities.
Key Characteristics

- Series of plateaux with rock outcrops, intact blanket bogs, heath and small loughs with remote, isolated and windswept character in upland areas.

- Access to upper mountain slopes and plateau extremely limited accentuating the sense of isolation.

- Steep-sided moorland hills with extensive views over the surrounding drumlin farmland and coastal lowlands.

- Contrasting landcover on mountain sides including hill and lowland farmland, forest, heath and blanket bog. Dominant land cover of forestry plantations on Dough and Thur Mountain.

- Field boundaries create strong patterns on lower hill slopes and show signs of dereliction in places.

- Distinctive upland valleys shelter small farming communities.

- Semi-natural woodlands on steeper slopes, in cloughs and around farms.

- Concentration of farming settlements along roads which occupy lower slopes and follow contours.

- Traditional farm cottages with outbuildings scattered along roads fringing the upper limits of farmland on hillsides and in high valleys.
Typical Photograph

Distinctive u-shaped valley viewed from glen near Bradoge Bridge (Viewpoint 141).

Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 121, 116, 122, 123, 139, 140, 132, 138, 127, 128, 129, 130, 141)

The Arroo and Mountain Outliers Character Area is a large mountain complex which rises above Lough Melvin, Glenade and Lough Macnean Upper. It has contrasting elements of moorland plateau, moorland hills and farmed slopes. The area is dominated by Arroo Mountain, which rises to 523 m AOD. The other major summits of Sheenun, Dough Mountain and Thur Mountain reach 421 465 and 442 m AOD respectively and are separated from each other by high, remote, settled valleys. The range and quality of habitats and the variety of rare species has resulted in Arroo Mountain being designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation and proposed Natural Heritage Area and along with Ben Bulben has been called the botanically richest mountain in Ireland. The summit of Arroo is remote and extensive views are possible, particularly from difficult to access moorland hills surrounding plateau areas. There is a high degree of intervisibility between these upland areas and the surrounding lowlands. On lower slopes the screening effect of hedgerows and woodlands creates more intimate landscapes.

Geology and Landform

Arroo and Sheenun represent the most easterly part of the limestone mountains of the Ben Bulben complex, and share many geological similarities. However, they form a continuous character area with the lower Thur and Dough Mountains to the east which are largely formed from sandstone and shale. These two geological units are separated by a fault line associated with a continuation of the gneiss geology of the Ox Mountains and Benbo. On the surface this is marked by a high valley created by the Ballagh and Owenbeg.
Rivers, which drain into Lough Melvin and the Bonnet respectively. The high moorland plateaux are gently domed units and fall, often steeply, to lower, gentler slopes. In places post-glacial slippage of sections of limestone cliffs has formed interesting geomorphological features. On Dough and Thur Mountains sandstone and shale predominate, creating smoother profiles and a gentler plateaux landscape. Rocky streams draining off the sodden hills have cut narrow valleys. Waterfalls tend to be found where streams cross harder layers. Fowley’s Falls, a series of cascades on Glenaniff River are one of the best known of these features. Stronger streams have eroded distinct upland valleys, which offer natural routes for communications through the mountains. The lower hill slopes and valleys are more gently sloping and shelve gradually into the drumlin farmland, glens and loughs which fringe the upland. Aughty Series peat soils occupy the moorland plateaux and hills. On the lower slopes, there are gley soils originating from the underlying bedrock.

**Landcover**

The plateaux areas are covered by a mosaic of heath and blanket bog. On Arroo and Sheenun the undulating limestone and sandstone plateau is fretted with numerous small upland loughs. The fringes of many bogs show signs of cutover bog where peat was extracted by hand. Elsewhere overgrazing and climatic conditions have caused the loss of bog and the exposure of underlying geology.

On the summit of Arroo, numerous specialist habitats have evolved; swallow holes have been colonised by willow, holly and ash and the almost vertical limestone cliffs and slips are home to a number of very rare species of arctic-alpine vascular plants and bryophytes. There is a gradual transition off the moorland plateau from open moor to grazed hillsides where steep smooth slopes retain fragments of scrub woodland, often associated with deep gorges and streams. On a number of slopes long linear earthworks indicating landholdings are also increasingly becoming colonised by scrub. The lower, gentler slopes and upland valley pastures enclosed by a network of bushy hedgerows. Many fields are improved, however rush infestation is conspicuous in many areas. Large proportions of the moorland hill slopes and lower gentle farmed slopes on Dough and Thur Mountains have been planted with forestry in regular blocks of uniform age. These tend to mask the underlying features and varied terrain which are crucial in the appreciation of the landscape. Elsewhere, small plantations following landform at lower elevations, such as those near Brackary Beg, are more successful.

**Human Influences**

The limited number of sites and monuments suggests that these high mountains have been marginal to settlement throughout history. However, a small number of megalithic monuments fringing the uplands and raths on lower slopes indicate some activity. Megalithic tombs, enclosures and long cairns were recently found at Aghamore, above Glenade. In addition, there are several mass rocks and a number fairy and other prehistoric forts within
this area and Glenade Lake is associated with the legend of the Dobharchu (water dog).

Population increases in the nineteenth century forced more marginal land to come into production and gradually small farms were established on hillsides at increasing altitudes although it is likely that before this time the mountains were used for extensive grazing, domestic peat cutting and stone extraction. Stone circles on the uplands may have been used as sheep holding pens.

The consolidation of farming units by the CBD established the current pattern of settlement and field boundaries. Pasture is largely concentrated off the peat soils on the gentler, lower slopes and along the upland valleys where there is a network of hedged and walled fields and small farms. Field patterns are a distinctive feature of many slopes. Strong linear features stretch up towards the open upper slopes and contain an intricate patchwork of small fields. This pattern is particularly well preserved on the northern slopes of Sheenun. Elsewhere hedgerow loss makes the pattern less evident although the survival of low hedgebanks ensures that the pattern remains discernible. Farms are generally worked at low intensity with a predominance of rough, rush infested pasture. Settlement is concentrated on the lower slopes, small whitewashed farm houses being loosely clustered on roads which fringe the lowland and cross the mountains through the upland valleys. Many are associated with small corrugated barns. The upper, steeper slopes are generally extensively grazed by sheep however post and wire fencing and banks and ditches demarcate the perimeter of some landholdings. Above the line of agriculture settlement is absent. A number of bog and forestry roads, which are quite inaccessible, extend up the mountain towards the moorland plateau which is largely devoid of roads and tracks and as such is largely undisturbed and remote.

Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change

The extensive and largely inaccessible plateaux are generally in good condition although overgrazing and peat extraction threatens delicate and sensitive habitats. Arroo is particularly well preserved and its various habitats highly regarded for their nature conservation value. The areas of moorland plateaux are particularly sensitive to tall infrastructure developments such as wind farms and radio masts and forestry which would be detrimental to their open and isolated character and habitats.

On the moorland hills vast expanses of blanket bog, heath and extensively grazed grassland are crucial elements of the landscape and contribute to their wild and remote character. However, in the east of the character area, particularly on Dough Mountain, extensive blanket forestry obscures pre-existing variations relating to topography, vegetation and cultural features such as field boundaries and farms. Elsewhere scrub encroachment invades large areas of open, extensively grazed grassland. Combined, these factors threaten to blur the distinct visual differences between the lower, enclosed
and upper, open slopes of the hillsides and mask elements crucial to the appreciation of the landscape.

The character of the sparsely settled lower farmed slopes and upland valleys is largely intact although hedgerow loss and the increasing use of post and wire fences threatens the intricate pattern formed by hedged field boundaries. Rush infestation and scrub growth also give the landscape a degraded character. Modern housing development in these areas is as yet not a major factor. However, the high visibility of lowland slopes and traditional nature of existing dwellings and settlement patterns makes these landscapes particularly sensitive to change.
### Key Issues for Aroo and Mountain Outliers

- Wind farm
- Forestry development
- Public access issues

### Principles for Landscape Management

- Maintain ecological value of habitats by establishment of a sustainable grazing regime on the mountains.

- Improved siting and design of forestry plantations, favouring lower sites, smaller blocks and the inclusion of deciduous species especially along the edges and on stream sides, would benefit the landscape.

- The retention of open areas of moorland, heath and grassland is crucial to the conservation of panoramic views over the lowlands and will ensure the distinction between these areas and the lower farmed slopes.

- Maintenance and repair of hedges and stone walls is preferable to the use of post and wire fences.

### Principles for Built Form

- Maintain the distinctive pattern of sparse rural settlement and avoid settlement patterns stretching up onto the moorland hills;

- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone cottages and simple painted barns would be beneficial to landscape character.

- In so far as practicable site wind farms and radio masts away from sensitive habitats, close to established mountain roads.
Key Characteristics

- Wild, remote and largely inaccessible moorland plateau.

- Varied and highly valued habitats.

- Distinctive mountain profile visible from neighbouring lowlands.

- Extensive views of the surrounding lowlands.

- Steep glacial scoured slopes are distinctive geological and landform features bordering both Glenade and Glencar.

- Possibility of extensive evidence for prehistoric settlement.

- Largely unsettled except for limited settlement on the gentler slopes to the south east.
Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 114, 120, 142-144, 147, 150, 154-155)

Tievebaun is an extensive area of mountainous upland in the north west of the character area rising above the Tullaghan Coast and Northern Glens, Central Lowlands & Lough Allen. The area is an extension of a limestone mountain range which extends to Ben Bulben, Truskmore and Kings Mountain in County Sligo. The plateau is a wild and largely inaccessible landscape. The scree slopes and landslips fringing Glenade and Glencar are highly visible from the lowlands and contribute significantly to the scenic quality of the glens.

Geology and Landform

The moorland plateau is almost entirely flat or gently undulating and largely formed from hard Dartry limestone although on the higher peaks small remnants of sandstone cap survive. Beneath the Dartry Limestone is the Glencar Limestone, consisting of alternations of limestone and softer shale bands which in turn sit on the softer shales. An apron of scree consisting of fragments of limestone derived from the erosion of the cliffs by freeze thawing forms the lower, grassy slopes which themselves lie above the lowland drumlins.

During glaciation the entire area was overlain by ice. However in lower levels its flow was directed by pre-existing topography and was forced to gouge out the north and south sides of the mountain and neighbouring uplands into classic ‘U’ shaped valleys. Towards the end of the glaciation, the ice grew
thinner and ice flows were channelled through these valleys shaping them even further. As the ice melted, large-scale landslips occurred as the valley walls lost the support that had been provided by the ice. As a result, steep scree slopes, cliff scarps and hanging masses are conspicuous features of glaciation on the northern and southern slopes of the mountain facing onto Glenade and Glencar. The Swiss Valley, a ‘dry valley’ is a mass of rock which became detached from the uplands and is a dramatic landform feature on the northern slope of Glencar.

The limestone plateau is well drained and a number of streams run off the uplands. On the steep northern slopes of the mountain streams feeding into the Black River, occupy a distinctive corrie at Crumpaun. These streams occupy deeply incised gullies, which are distinctive features on otherwise smooth grassy slopes.

**Landcover**

Blanket bog in mosaic with areas of heath covers much of the plateau, which in places has been eroded to bedrock. Cutover peat is also evident between Truskmore and Tievebaun where machine cutting has occurred. Peat hags and gullies have formed in places and break up extensive areas of peat on the summit. Surrounding the plateau extensively grazed natural grasslands extend up the steep slopes with scree slopes and cliffs indicating the nature of the underlying geology. Scrub has become established on some slopes and in valleys formed by streams which drain the uplands. Where this scrub is established, sheep shelter and cause localised poaching damage. On gentler, lower terrain surrounding the mountain but most extensively on the gentler lower slopes, small pastures enclosed by hedgerows have been established. The stone wall field boundaries on the higher land are another distinctive element of this area.

Coniferous forestry is largely absent and the absence of extensive planting is regarded as enhancing the high ecological value of the area. However, a moderately sized block is located above Carickeeny with smaller blocks on lower slopes to the east. Small areas of deciduous woodlands are located on the steep slopes which drop into Glencar, although in areas the dense and overgrown hedgerow network gives the appearance of small woodlands when viewed from distance.

The area is noted for the range of rare arctic-alpine plants and famous for its diverse bryophyte flora. The most important areas for these are around Glencar Waterfall and the Glenade Cliffs.

**Human Influences**

Typical of upland landscapes, the area appears to have been marginal to settlement throughout history. However, on the gently sloping plateau to the east, small clusters of Neolithic houses, field boundaries and tombs have emerged from eroding bogs. The presence of cairns and megalithic tombs in the character area suggest that in the future evidence for extensive upland
settlement may be revealed. Pound Hill at Lurganboy is an important historic site and the barytes mines extending from Sligo were mined from the mid 18th century until approximately 1982.

Current land use is dominated by extensive sheep grazing on the plateau and the upper slopes where low earth and stone banks can often be seen rising up the steep hillsides demarcating large rectangular enclosures. Cattle grazing, hay and silage making is located in the fields on the gentler slopes fringing the lowlands. A large communication mast on the summit of Truskmore, is visible from the surrounding lowlands and is a dominant feature of the mountain. It is reached by a mountain road which follows the County border. Settlement is largely absent although small isolated farm houses exist on the gentle slopes to the east. These are largely located off a small number of roads rising up the hillside above Lurganboy, Bradoge Bridge and Glencar Lough.

*Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change*

The upland moorland landscapes of Tievebaun, highly valued for their range of habitats, are largely intact although sheep trespass threatens to erode large areas of peat bog and heath and important habitats. These areas of moorland plateaux are particularly sensitive to tall infrastructure developments such as communication masts and forestry which would be detrimental to their open and isolated character and habitats. Access roads onto the moorland plateau and the communication mast on Truskmore erode the sense of isolation. The access road also offers an opportunity for large numbers of tourists and hill walkers to access open moorland and the extensive views the uplands afford of the surrounding lowlands and of Donegal Bay.

The steep slopes facing onto Glenade and Glencar are also particularly sensitive to change. Scrub encroachment and coniferous plantations threaten to obscure views to the lowlands and obscure areas of scree and landslips which contribute to the character and visual amenity of the glens.

The pattern of settlement and pastures on the lower slopes is largely intact modern housing development and hedgerow loss is yet not a major factor in the landscape. These lower farmed slopes are particularly sensitive to change due to their visibility from the surrounding lowlands.
Key Issues for Tievebaun

- Wind farm development
- Forestry development
- Access issues
- Upland erosion

Principles for Landscape Management

- Maintain ecological value of habitats by establishment of a sustainable grazing regime on the mountains and control of turbary activity.

- Improved siting and design of forestry plantations, favouring lower sites, smaller blocks and the inclusion of deciduous species especially along the edges and on stream sides, would benefit the landscape.

- The retention of open areas of moorland, heath and grassland is crucial to the conservation of moorland plateaux and hills and will ensure the visual qualities of the steep slopes is retained.

- Maintenance and repair of hedges is preferable to the use of post and wire fences.

Principles for Built Form

- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone cottages, and painted barns would be beneficial in landscape and historical terms.

- Site communication masts/wind farms away from sensitive habitats and wilder more remote landscapes. Utilise existing infrastructure where possible.
Key Characteristics

- Varied limestone geology has created distinctive landform features, mountain profiles and scree slopes.

- Contrasting land uses including extensive grazing, coniferous plantations and areas of both upland and lowland peat bog.

- Semi-natural woodlands fringing Lough Gill.

- Sparse settlement pattern of isolated farmhouses amongst areas of rush infested pasture.

- Scrub encroachment and coniferous plantations obscure distinctive landform features.

- Parkes Castle in an attractive lough side setting.

- Lough Gill and its shores, noted for their nature conservation value.
Typical Photograph

View looking westwards from Newtownmanor. (Viewpoint 160)

Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 158-160)

This is a complex landscape to the west of the Benbo character area on the western boundary of Leitrim. It has contrasting elements of upland and lowland landscapes. The area is dominated by the mountains of the Crockauns and Leann in the north and the Doons in the south which shelve down to Lough Gill. The distinctive and unusual profiles of these hills are peculiar to this area of Leitrim. They also form the southern slopes of Glencar.

Geology and Landform

The area is almost entirely underlain by hard Dartry Limestone. This forms both the upland mountains and lowlands fringing Lough Gill. However, local variations have created very different formations. Chert free limestone on the mountain ridge between the Crockauns and Leann occurs as mudbanks and forms rounded hummocky mountain peaks, which rise to 463 m AOD. Glacial action has shaped the northern face of these mountains to create dramatic cliffs and scree slopes facing onto Glencar. Where the bedding or layering of cherty limestones is horizontal, they form tabular hill outlines such as the Doons. Here karstic weathering dissolves away the limestone to leave behind a chert residue which has proven a suitable base for the development of peat bogs. Surrounding Lough Gill drift deposits and low drumlins create softer landscapes. The mountains drain north into Glencar and south through the Doons into Lough Gill where they weave between the undulations. A strong valley is formed by the stream which enters Lough Gill from the north east. This occupies the fault line between the Doons and Benbo.
**Landcover**

Natural grassland is the principal landcover on the hummocky mountain slopes of the Crockauns and Leann, with heath and bogs occupying small areas of gentler topography between the peaks. Coniferous plantations are fairly extensive on the northern slopes and largely occupy sheltered locations fringing the streams that drain the uplands. Commercial forestry on the southern slopes is limited to natural, extensively grazed grassland.

The lower, tabular hills of the Doons are largely managed for pasture. Hedgerows are limited and many fields are delineated with post and wire fencing. Where they do exist, hedges are gappy. Where scrub occurs on the slopes of the tabular hills, it sometimes obscures their distinctive profiles and layering.

Extensive areas of peat bog occupy stream channels feeding into Lough Gill. The Lough is also fringed by a large number of small semi-natural woodlands, including old oak woodlands and alluvial forest, which are noted for their nature conservation value. These woodlands help integrate moderately sized coniferous plantations which also fringe the Lough. Rush infestation is considerable in many areas, indicating a widespread decline in farming and giving a general sense of abandonment. The drumlins surrounding Lough Gill appear more productive, with an established network of bushy hedgerows delineating pasture. Many of the drumlin fields appear to have been enlarged for silage production.

**Human Influences**

The landscape shows few traces of prehistoric settlement indicating the marginal nature of the area’s soils and difficult terrain. The exception is a concentration of cashels and raths in the Doons indicates widespread settlement. The most visible historic monument within the area is Parkes Castle. This fortified manor house, believed to occupy the site of a tower house belonging to the O’Rourkes, dominates the lough shore.

Modern settlement is extremely sparse and almost entirely located within the tabular hills and drumlins surrounding Lough Gill. A small number of whitewashed cottages are located in sheltered positions along tracks off the main routes through the area although they are barely visible from the road as they are hidden by small deciduous copses and landform. Particular clusters of houses may be identified along the main routes through the area and at crossroads although none can be regarded as true villages.

**Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change**

The mountain slopes of the Crockauns range are generally in a good condition although scrub encroachment and extensive coniferous plantations obscure underlying variations in landform and field systems. These uplands are particularly sensitive to any development that may obscure their distinctive hummocky profile.
Areas of pasture within the tabular hills are showing signs of extensive rush infestation and have a general sense of abandonment. Hedges are often gappy and are frequently replaced by post and wire fences. Scrub has encroached onto the tabular hills to obscure their distinctive form and evidence of their horizontal layering. The drumlins and woodlands fringing Lough Gill are generally in a better condition although again hedgerows are gappy in places. In some areas, hedges appear to have been removed to accommodate large silage bailing machinery. The drumlins and lough shore landscape is particularly sensitive to large scale development as large areas are visible from the surrounding hills and are valued habitats. The rural settlement pattern is largely intact.
**Key Issues for Doons and Crockauns**

- Housing development
- Habitat decline and loss

**Principles for Landscape Management**

- Establish suitable grazing regimes to limit scrub and rush infestation.
- Maintenance and repair of hedges and stone walls is preferable to the use of post and wire fences.
- Improved siting and design of forestry plantations on the mountain slopes facing onto Glencar would be beneficial. These should occupy lower sites, be in smaller blocks and include deciduous species along their edges and on stream sides. The exposed Crockauns mountain and tabular hills of the Doons are not suitable for large scale forestry.
- Conserve semi-natural woodlands on the fringes of Lough Gill as important habitats for wildlife.
- Monitor and protect water quality; the implications of changes in land use and agricultural activity close to the lough fringes is a critical factor.
- The retention of open areas of peat bogs, moorland, heath and grassland is crucial to ensuring the distinction between these upland areas and the lower farmed slopes.

**Principles for Built Form**

- Careful management of tourism development around Lough Gill would prevent damage to local landscape character and water quality.
- New scatters or loose clusters of development located throughout the lowland landscapes would fit with the existing settlement pattern and may be accommodated within the robust framework of undulating topography and hedgerows. Traditional housing styles and sheltered locations within existing copses would be preferable.
- Avoid ribbon development and siting housing along the shores of Lough Gill and Lough Doon.
**Key Characteristics**

- Ancient and hard metamorphic rocks, shaped by glacial ice flows form rugged heather-clad hills and a distinctive mountain profile.

- Smooth upland slopes are covered with heath and natural grassland.

- Underlying bedrock is exposed where peaty soils are thinnest.

- Streams occupying shallow valleys drain the hillsides and flow off the lower slopes into rivers which encircle the hard rock outcrop.

- Gorges and streams shelter linear clusters of scrub and woodland.

- The lower slopes are fringed by marginal, rushy pastures largely enclosed by post and wire fences and coniferous plantations. Distinctive low stone walls are evident stretching up some hillsides forming long rectangular fields.

- Roads encircle the mountain along which are located small, isolated farm cottages, often occupying sheltered locations and are surrounded by small copses. There is no settlement on the mountain itself.

- Distinct lack of archaeological monuments.

- Panoramic views over the adjacent lowlands.
Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 154-157,166, 188)

Occupying a position between the tabular hills and mountains of the Doons and Crockauns character area and the lowland drumlins of the Northern Glens and Central Lowlands is the distinctive mountain profile of Benbo. The hard underlying geology has strongly influenced patterns of land use, landcover and settlement.

Geology and Landform

The ancient and hard metamorphic rocks, mostly gneisses, forming Benbo represent an extension of those east of the Ox Mountains in County Sligo. The mountain has been bared and sculpted into a distinct mountain ridge by the glaciers of the last Ice Age which streamed over it. At its highest in the east the ridge stands 415 m AOD and shelves gently to the west where small hillocks rise steeply from the surrounding landscape. The lowest slopes of the mountain are covered by drift geology. Peat soils predominate and are thin enough on particularly steep slopes to reveal the underlying bedrock.

Landcover

The steep slopes of Benbo support an area of extensively grazed moor and heath and natural grassland which is in strong contrast to the lush green pastures on the lowland drumlins surrounding them. A number of quick flowing streams drain the steep hillsides occupying shallow, steep sided gorges and drain into the streams which encircle the mountain. Limited areas of scrub woodland have found shelter in these linear depressions and on
lower slopes. Small fields fringe the mountain and are enclosed by post and wire fences and low stone banks. Some intensive grazing is evident where soils are deepest. On the lower and gentler slopes of Benbo in the west of the character area, significant sites have been forested, obscuring any traces of field patterns and the distinctive smooth and simple mountain profile. A small lough (Lough Anarry) is located between the hillocks of Carrigeencor and Corrudda and is almost entirely encircled in coniferous woodland.

**Human Influences**

The thin peaty soils of Benbo and steep slopes have ensured that the mountain has been marginal to settlement since earliest times. A number of cairns are the only visible traces of prehistoric human activity in the character area. There is also a mass rock to the west of Benbo, a legacy of the penal times.

Modern roads and settlement are largely absent from the mountain. However roads encircle the hills and cross the lower slopes in the east. Small whitewashed cottages are dotted along roads encircling the mountain frequently containing small fields to the rear stretching up the low shallow slopes of the mountain. Fields are largely defined by post and wire fences although on the southern side of the mountain low stone banks demarcate improved fields. The fields on the lower slopes of the mountain are lusher and greener than muted tones of moor and heath beyond and provide a striking contrast. Many are showing signs of undergrazing by rush and scrub invasion.

**Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change**

The heather clad slopes of Benbo are generally in a good condition and its distinct mountain profile instantly recognisable. However, limited scrub and rush invasion threatens to blur the distinction between the lower farmed slopes and the heather covered mountain and indicates a degree of abandonment. Its open exposed character, with panoramic views, is particularly sensitive to change. Forestry plantations in the east of the area have, on the whole, been well sited. However further afforestation would threaten to obscure the distinct mountain profile and field boundaries which stretch up the mountain sides in some areas.

The isolated and uninhabited character of the mountain is particularly sensitive to most forms of built development including the construction of additional routes across the hills. The lower slopes to the west are less sensitive.
Key Issues for Benbo

- Overgrazing
- Upland erosion

Principles for Landscape Management

- Conserve the open character of Benbo and views to and from it.
- Monitor the grazing regime on the upland moors and prevent erosion of the thin peaty soils.
- Further forestry should be sited on the lower hills in a small scale irregular patchwork with a good proportion of the trees being deciduous. Irregular edges following landform and varied age structure will help prevent the creation of large uniform blocks.
- Encourage the maintenance of the distinctive rectangular pattern of low stone walls on lower slopes. This is preferable to the use of post and wire fences.

Principles for Built Form

- New development is best accommodated on the lower slopes of Benbo, reflecting the pattern of existing development and making use of shelter from existing vegetation and landform; development on skylines should be avoided.
- New development would blend more sympathetically with the rural environment if native planting rather than exotic conifers were used and buildings were in scale and keeping with traditional styles.
Key Characteristics

- Extensive, mountainous uplands retain a sense of isolation.

- Rough grazing on moorland hills and plateau.

- Extensive areas of coniferous forestry.

- Sparsely populated. Small houses associated with outbuildings are evident across many of the lower, gentler farmed slopes.

- Impressive panoramic views from higher ground of surrounding mountains and lowlands.

- Field boundaries creating strong patterns on lower hill slopes showing signs of dereliction in places.

- Distinctive upland valley sheltering small farming communities.

- Semi-natural woodlands on steeper slopes above O'Donnell’s Rock.
Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 133-136, 168, 171, 173-176, 178, 181-182, 188)

The **Boleybrack Uplands** is a large mountain complex which rises above the **Northern Glens, Central Lowlands and Lough Allen** character area. It has contrasting elements of moorland plateau, steep moorland hills and gentle farmed slopes which rise above the lowland drumlins. The area is dominated by Boleybrack which rises to 449 m AOD. This overlooks the lower summit at Larkfield at 305 m AOD. The summit of Boleybrack is remote and inaccessible and offers extensive views over vast areas of moorland plateau and over the surrounding lowlands. In the agricultural landscapes on the lower slopes hedgerows and woodlands screen long views and create more intimate landscapes. However large scale commercial forestry has covered many of these slopes with extensive plantations.

**Geology and Landform**

Similar to neighbouring Sliabh an Iarainn, the flattish-topped mountains are capped by hard sandstone which forms an extensive, gently undulating plateau. Near Tullyskeherny peat covers an area of limestone pavement which is actively being eroded to form typical karstic features such as clints and grikes. The mountain slopes are underlain by softer limestone and shale and shelf steeply to the more gently sloping lowlands which surround them. The many streams draining off the sodden hills have cut narrow valleys in the bedrock, shaping the southern face of the mountain into a series of deep gorges interspersed with rolling, sloping landform which is largely hidden by coniferous forestry. Glacial erosion to the north of Larkfield Lough has
eroded the limestone cap into a low cliff and the lower shale into a steep scarp slope forming a distinctive and well known landscape feature.

**Landcover**

The extensive areas of plateau are covered by a mosaic of heath, blanket bog and natural grassland. The steeper moorland hills are predominantly covered by heath and natural grassland with extensive coniferous plantations occupying upland and lowland slopes. Plantations are particularly large on the south eastern and south western slopes of the mountain and in the upland valley of the Scardan River. Deciduous woodland at O’Donnell’s Rock is one of only a few naturally developing woodlands on the Leitrim limestone mountains. The young age of the wood is of particular interest as it demonstrates the natural succession of this woodland type on steep ground. Lower portions of the wood were once part of an estate woodland which has been mostly felled although some exotic species remain. Barlear and Lackagh Bog are also of considerable ecological interest.

Elsewhere deciduous woodland is restricted to narrow river valleys and gorges, small deciduous copses surrounding established hillside farmhouses and outbuildings and hedgerow trees. Farmland is largely found on gentle mountain slopes below the 200 m contour and is predominantly pastoral with an intricate network of hedgerows extending up the slopes of the mountain. The patchwork of pasture fields and hay meadows are textured by rush infested fields. The inaccessibility of the uplands areas due to lack of infrastructure is considered a valued landscape element. The sense of remoteness and wilderness is retained and consequently, the habitats benefit also.

**Human Influences**

The moorland hills and plateau show little evidence for occupation or ritual. However, a cluster of megalithic tombs, cashels and souterrains indicate habitation in the upland valley of the Scardan river and some of the lower, gentler slopes. Several of the tombs are constructed from limestone taken from the clint and grike limestone pavement.

Field enclosures are traditionally small and on lower slopes are defined by a dense network of hedgerows, increasingly replaced with post and wire fences, stone walls and low earth and stone banks at higher altitudes. Where the hedgerow network is intact, geometric fields may be seen extending up the hillsides. In many areas however the distinctive patchwork of pasture fields is blurred by rush infestation and hedgerow loss.

Modern settlement is located below the upper limits of farming clustered along or close to the main roads which fringe and criss-cross the farmed slopes. Small farmhouses, often associated with small stone outbuildings are located throughout the hill pastures and are often visible from the surrounding lowlands. Most are traditional whitewashed cottages in sheltered locations surrounded by small copses. A small number of more
isolated cottages are located higher on the moorland hills, reached by long straight tracks which rise up the steep mountain sides. Many of these turn into logging roads and run parallel to the streams draining the mountain. Another distinct cluster of houses is located in the high valley of the Scardan.

*Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change*

The moorland plateau is largely in a good condition, with extensive areas of Boleybrack retaining a wild, isolated character, and is therefore particularly sensitive to any form of built development.

Large coniferous plantations mask vast areas of the underlying landscape and field patterns and often screen important views to upper slopes and the lowlands. Logging roads are also conspicuous on many of the hillsides. Their negative landscape effect is particularly strong when large areas are felled and their course up the hillsides is revealed. Smaller plantations also have a negative effect on landscape quality, especially when viewed from neighbouring hills when their full extent can be seen against their grassland backdrop. The hillsides are already extensively wooded and can accommodate no more plantations. The distinctive scree and cliffed slopes below O’Donnell’s Rock are particularly sensitive both in terms of visual amenity and important wildlife habitats. Coniferous plantations would be inappropriate here.

Dereliction of field boundaries and an increase in areas of rushy pasture indicates a degree of abandonment of the upland, extensively grazed pastures and lowland farmed landscapes giving an air of degradation and blurring the boundary between these two distinct landscapes. Post and wire fences are increasingly being used in preference to traditional earth banks in upland areas. The rolling nature of the hillsides and the robust hedgerow network ensure that the lower farmed slopes can accommodate a degree of change. However, any development should recognise the style of local vernacular buildings and the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern.
Key Issues for Boleybrack Uplands

- Wind farm development
- Forestry development
- Overgrazing

Principles for Landscape Management

- Encourage restructuring and sensitive felling regimes within the existing coniferous plantations to avoid large scale scarring of the hillsides. Consider the impact of logging roads.

- Establish sustainable grazing regimes to prevent scrub encroachment on lowland slopes and over grazing on the moorland plateau.

- Improve the siting and design of forestry plantations favouring lower sites, smaller blocks and the inclusion of deciduous species especially along the edges and on stream sides, would be beneficial.

- Retention of open areas of moorland, heath and grassland is crucial to the conservation of moorland plateaux and hills and will ensure the distinction between these areas and the lower farmed slopes.

- Maintenance and repair of hedges and stone walls is preferable to the use of post and wire fences in the conservation of the small scale field pattern.

Principles for Built Form

- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone cottages, and stone barns would be beneficial in landscape and historical terms.

- Consider views to and from hillsides when siting new development.

- New development should respect traditional building styles and locations.

- In so far as practicable site wind farms and radio masts away from sensitive habitats, and close to established mountain roads.
THE NORTHERN GLENS, CENTRAL LOWLANDS & LOUGH ALLEN CHARACTER AREA

Key Characteristics

- Undulating, drumlin covered lowlands and glens confined by sharp break in slope and mountainous areas.

- Meandering rivers and loughs fed by streams from the surrounding hills, fringed by trees and extensive areas of wet pasture contrast with the surrounding patchwork of drumlin fields.

- Small blocks of deciduous woodland and some coniferous plantations.

- Linear settlements strung out along roads winding through the lowlands.

- Local geological and topographical conditions give each glen its own particular character.

- Major communication routes through the mountains. Major towns often sited where several routes meet.

- Sense of enclosure within the drumlin swarms with occasional long views to the surrounding uplands providing orientation.

- Castles are important local landmarks and an indication of the strategic importance of these landscapes in history.
Typical Photograph

View towards the southwest on R280 road, northwest of Manorhamilton (Viewpoint 155)

Landscape Description

(Viewpoints - 119, 133, 135-137, 142-155, 163, 164-166, 169-171, 178, 183, 186, 188-191, 194)

The Northern Glens, Central Lowlands and Lough Allen Character Area extends from the shores of Lough Allen to the Tullaghan Coast and is bordered by a number of mountain complexes. The glens and lowlands are economically and culturally significant in the area as they provide communication links through the surrounding relatively inhospitable terrain and a sheltered landscape for agriculture and settlement. The surrounding distinctive mountain profiles and glen sides are landmarks among the drumlins and contrast with the neat, small scale patchwork of pastures.

Geology and Landform

Towards the end of the last ice age the glens were filled with glaciers, generally flowing northwards. The erosive action of the glaciers scoured the rock faces of the surrounding mountains and produced a vast range of relief features on the sides of the valleys, giving each valley its own distinctive character and scenic quality. As the ice melted, the steep slopes lost the support given by the glaciers and in places huge rock masses broke away and slipped onto the valley floor. The ice also deposited drumlins in the base of the valley and obscure almost all traces of underlying geology. The drumlins are of varying sizes and shapes and generally lie parallel to the valley sides which contain them, giving a clear indication of the direction of glacial movement through the valleys. The principal rivers of the Bonet, Duff and Diffreen meander through the drumlins, often feeding loughs in the valley.
These rivers and streams may be bordered by extensive flat or gently undulating landform created by the vast volumes of eroded material deposited by water courses filling the inter-drumlin hollows. Shaas Falls at Newbridge near the northern end of Lough Allen is an important landscape feature within this area.

**Landcover**

The drumlins are mainly covered in pasture. A network of even aged hedgerows defines the patchwork of small fields, many of which are showing signs of rush infestation and abandonment. The hedgerows largely follow and accentuate the undulating topography of the drumlins. The extensive areas of flat land fringing the rivers and streams are generally wet pasture. Post and wire fences are tending to replace hedgerows. Many pastures appear to have been reclaimed from raised peat bog, which survives in small patches throughout the area, often bordering streams. There are many coniferous plantations of small to moderate size; larger plantations occur south and east of Dromahair. There are few deciduous woodlands in the area although small copses surrounding farms and dense hedgerows and hedgerow trees give the landscape a well wooded character.

**Human Influences**

The distribution of historic sites and monuments indicates that these lowland passes were much more heavily settled than the neighbouring uplands with numerous megalithic tombs, raths and enclosures indicating widespread settlement. Castles are a conspicuous feature of the lowlands and indicates a concerted effort to control or monitor movement through mountainous regions. Many are sited at the entrance to a glen or valley at the point where routes converge. The villages such as Dromahair and Manorhamilton also appear to defend river crossings. Creevelea Abbey built in 1508 is an important historical feature near Dromahair. The village of Dromahair itself is significant historically, as it has associations with St Patrick and was the seat of one of Ireland’s most powerful families, the O’Rourkes. The Tobar Mhuire, a holy well at Killarga devoted to the Virgin Mary and associated with an earlier holy woman, St Fearga, is another important feature within this area.

Communication routes continue to be an important feature of the lowlands and many busy roads such as the N16 and R280 weave through the drumlins. A number of routes appear to share an alignment with river channels and may well have ancient origins. Bridging and fording points occur throughout the area, with stone bridges often being important architectural features. The dispersed settlement and farming pattern is typical of drumlin areas and was largely established in the 19th century. A complex network of rural roads weaves through the undulating landform with small, traditional cottages set back in sheltered locations on the side of drumlins, often surrounded by small deciduous copses. Towns such as Dromahair, Drumkeeran, Killarga and Manorhamilton are a conspicuous feature of the landscape and like castles appear to have grown up (or been established during the Plantation Period).
where many roads meet. These are often popular with tourists who use them as a base from which to explore the surrounding uplands.

Since rural electrification the valleys have proved an ideal site through which to run overhead transmission lines. However these are largely screened by trees and woodland or are lost against mountainous backdrops.

**Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change**

The glens and lowlands appear relatively unspoilt and retain much of their rural character. However, fast roads are placing the area under increasing pressure from new built development as commuters favour rural locations with easy access to good roads and the scenically dramatic glens are easily accessible to large numbers of tourists. Road improvements, power lines and expansion of existing towns and villages are also likely to have an increasing impact on local landscape character.

Undulating landform and a robust hedgerow network allow the landscape to accommodate a degree of change. However, the lowland landscape is overlooked by extensive upland areas, making it highly sensitive to large scale built development or development which is not in keeping with the existing pattern of small scale fields and dispersed settlement. For example fish farms on Lough Allen, largely invisible from the lough side, are highly visible from the slopes neighbouring Corry Mountain. Conversely, the character of each individual glen or valley is largely created by the distinct mountain profiles and geological features which contains it, therefore making many areas highly sensitive to development and forestry, especially on roadsides, where development may obscure views to the surrounding uplands.
### Key Issues for Northern Glens, Central Lowlands and Lough Allen

- Increasing forestry application on Glenade side of N16

### Principles for Landscape Management

- Intervisibility is a crucial element of appreciating these landscapes and therefore commercial forestry should be sited or restructured to ensure that important site lines are not obscured to and from the surrounding uplands.

- Conserve and manage riverbank vegetation and monitor water quality. Enhance the setting and structure of stone bridges and fords.

- Retain areas of raised peat as these are crucial to the conservation of lowland habitats.

- Maintenance and repair of hedges is preferable to the use of post and wire fences.

### Principles for Built Form

- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone houses and painted barns would be beneficial in landscape and historical terms.

- Careful management of tourism development in the Glens and on lough shores would prevent damage to settlement character and water quality.

- Built development should reflect vernacular styles and consider visual amenity within the lowlands and respect views to and from the surrounding uplands.
Key Characteristics

- Extensive, mountainous uplands bordering Lough Allen.

- Rough grazing on moorland hills and plateau.

- Extensive areas of coniferous forestry.

- Sparsely populated. Small houses associated with outbuildings are evident across many of the lower, gentler farmed slopes.

- Impressive views from higher ground.

- Moorland plateau retains sense of isolation despite access roads and infrastructure.

- Field boundaries creating strong patterns on lower hill slopes showing signs of dereliction in places.

- Distinctive upland valleys sheltering small farming communities.

- Semi-natural woodlands on steeper slopes and around farms.

- Concentration of sweathouses on some of the lower farmed slopes.
Typical Photograph

View eastwards over moorland plateau near Ballynameeltoge (Viewpoint number 101)

Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 92-95, 99-105, 183, 185-186, 189-190, 192-193)

_Sliabh An Iarainn_ is a large mountain complex above Lough Allen and the lowland drumlins. It has contrasting elements of moorland plateau, steep moorland hills and gentle farmed slopes. The area is dominated by Sliabh An Iarainn, which rises to 585 m AOD. The summits are largely remote and inaccessible. However mountain roads to infrastructure developments offer extensive views over vast areas of moorland plateau and over the surrounding lowlands. In the agricultural landscapes on the lower slopes hedgerows and woodlands create more intimate landscapes.

Geology and Landform

The flattish-topped mountains are capped by hard sandstone which forms occasional rocky crags and cliffs which are often visible from the surrounding lowlands and contribute to the mountains distinctive profiles. The mountain slopes are underlain by softer shale and become gentler towards the drumlin covered lowlands which surround them. The many streams draining off the sodden hills have cut narrow valleys in the shale bedrock and become increasingly fast flowing and rocky on lower slopes. This area is a small part of larger upland area of Cuilcagh Mountain which extends into neighbouring County Cavan.
Landcover

The extensive areas of plateau are covered by a mosaic of heath, blanket bog and abandoned cutaway bog. Narrow geometric blocks of woodland occupy steeper slopes on the southern and eastern edge of Sliabh an Iarainn. Deciduous woodland is restricted to narrow river valleys and gorges and to small copses surrounding established hillside farmhouses and outbuildings. There are also remains of an ancient woodland with 500 year old oak trees at Aughacashel; and limestone features including potholes at Mullaghgarve are valued natural features. The gentle mountain slopes below the 200 m contour are a patchwork of fields and hay meadows, textured with rush infestation in parts. An intricate network of hedgerows extends up the slopes of the mountain.

Human Influences

The moorland hills and plateau show little evidence for occupation or ritual. However, a number of megalithic tombs and clusters of raths on the lower slopes indicate that there has been a tradition of pastoral farming in these areas for hundreds of years. Mining for both coal and iron is known to have taken place on Sliabh an Iarainn, whose name means the Iron Mountain. However, there is little evidence of extraction as the neighbouring Arigna coal field to the west was found to be more productive and was more heavily worked. In addition, iron was mined by scavenging stream beds for nodules, a process which leaves few traces. This industrial heritage is increasingly valued with specific mention of the disused coalmines, flag quarry and tramway at Knockcullion by consultees.

A conspicuous cluster of sweat houses can be identified in areas of farmland around the Yellow River to the west of Ballinagleragh although many are not visible due to dereliction or the dense hedgerow network.

Field enclosures are traditionally small and on lower slopes are defined by a dense network of hedgerows, replaced with post and wire fences at higher altitudes. Elsewhere on the upper slopes, low, often derelict earth and stone banks demarcate fields. In close proximity to the fast flowing streams, walls are constructed with river rolled boulders.

Modern settlement is located below the upper limits of farming clustered along or close to the main roads which fringe and criss-cross the farmed slopes. Small farmhouses, often associated with small corrugated outbuildings are located throughout the hill pastures. Most are traditional small whitewashed cottages in sheltered locations surrounded by small copses. A number of more isolated cottages are located higher on the moorland hills, reached by narrow winding lanes. There is no settlement on the plateau itself although the roads fringing Bencroy provides access to the conspicuous telecommunication mast on its summit. Villages are largely absent from the character area.
Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change

The moorland plateau is largely in a good condition, with extensive areas on Sliabh an Iarainn retaining a wild, isolated character. Deterioration of field boundaries and spread of rushes onto pasture land indicate abandonment of both upland pastures and lowland farmed landscapes. This tends to blur the boundary between these two formerly distinct landscape types. Post and wire fences are increasingly being used in preference to traditional earth banks in upland areas.

Large coniferous plantations mask vast areas of the underlying landscape and obscure old field patterns, further detracting from the quality of upland landscapes. Their negative landscape effect is also strong when large areas are felled, leaving vast scars on the uplands. The regular rectangular blocks are particularly conspicuous on the southern slopes of Sliabh an Iarainn.
Key Issues for Sliabh an Iarainn

- Afforestation
- Telecommunications infrastructure

Principles for Landscape Management

- Encourage sensitive felling regimes within the existing coniferous plantations to avoid large scale scarring of the hillsides.
- Establish sustainable grazing regimes to prevent scrub encroachment on lowland slopes and over grazing on the moorland plateau.
- Discourage burning on tracts of heath and blanket bog.
- Improve the siting and design of forestry plantations favouring lower sites, smaller blocks and the inclusion of deciduous species especially along the edges and on stream sides.
- Retention of open areas of moorland, heath and grassland is crucial to the conservation of moorland plateaux and hills and will ensure the distinction between these areas and the lower farmed slopes.
- Maintenance and repair of hedges and stone walls is preferable to the use of post and wire fences, helping to conserve small scale field patterns.
- Careful management of access to the moorland plateau would prevent damage to upland landscapes.
- Consider opening up views or improving access to sweathouses.

Principles for Built Form

- The distinctive red and green painted barns and white farm buildings in sheltered locations are important features of the landscape. New development should respect traditional building styles and locations.
- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone cottages and painted barns would be beneficial in landscape and historical terms.
- Consider views to and from hillsides when siting new development.
- In so far as practicable site wind farms and masts away from sensitive habitats and close to established mountain roads.
Key Characteristics

- Extensive, mountainous uplands bordering Lough Allen.

- Rough grazing on moorland hills and plateau.

- Extensive areas of coniferous forestry.

- Sparsely populated. Small houses associated with outbuildings are evident across many of the lower, gentler farmed slopes.

- Impressive views from higher ground.

- Moorland plateau retains sense of isolation despite access roads and infrastructure.

- Field boundaries create strong patterns on lower hill slopes but show signs of dereliction in places.

- Distinctive upland valleys sheltering small farming communities.

- Semi-natural woodlands on steeper slopes and around farms.
Typical Photograph

View looking southeastwards near Seltan (Viewpoint number 184)

Landscape Description

(Viewpoint 184)

Corry Mountain is an upland area which rises above Lough Allen and lowland drumlins. It contains elements of heathy plateau, hills and gentle farmed slopes. The area is dominated by Corry Mountain, which rises to 436 m AOD. Mountain roads to infrastructure developments offer extensive views over vast areas of moorland plateau and over the surrounding lowlands. In the agricultural landscapes on the lower slopes hedgerows create more intimate landscapes.

Geology and Landform

Corry Mountain is part of the Upper Carboniferous bedrock series with shale. The flattish mountain-top itself is capped by sandstone. The mountain slopes are underlain by softer shale and become gentler towards the drumlin covered lowlands which surround them. The streams draining off the sodden hills have cut narrow valleys in the shale bedrock and become increasingly fast flowing and rocky on lower slopes. This area is a small part of larger mountainous area that extends into neighbouring County Roscommon.

Landcover

The extensive areas of plateau are covered by a mosaic of heath, blanket bog and abandoned cutaway bog. There is evidence of extensive sheep grazing with field boundaries enclosed largely by post and wire fences. On the lower slopes there is rough pasture with scrub invasion in places. There are also extensive blocks of forestry plantation on the eastern and northern slopes of
Corry Mountain. Telecommunication masts and wind farms are conspicuous features in this mountainous area.

*Human Influences*

Mining for both coal and iron is known to have taken place on Corry Mountain. However, there is little evidence of extraction as the neighbouring Arigna coal field to the west was found to be more productive and was more heavily worked and also because iron was mined by scavenging stream beds for nodules, a process which leaves few traces. However, there are a number of disused coalmines and sweathouses located on the Roscommon side of this area. The Miners’ Way, which passes close to the summit of Corry Mountain, is a tangible link to the area’s mining past as it follows many of the paths used by miners who worked the Arigna Coalfield. Evidence of settlement is very sparse on the higher slopes with the exception of the remains of seasonal boolies.

Field enclosures are traditionally small and on lower slopes are defined by a dense network of hedgerows which are replaced with post and wire fences at higher altitudes.

Modern settlement is located below the upper limits of farming clustered along or close to the main roads which fringe and criss-cross the farmed slopes. Small farmhouses are located throughout the hill pastures. Most are traditional whitewashed cottages in sheltered locations surrounded by small copses. Some more isolated cottages are located higher on the moorland hills, reached by narrow winding lanes. There is no settlement on the plateau itself, although the road onto Corry Mountain provides access to conspicuous telecommunication and wind turbines on the summit. Villages are largely absent from the character area with the exception of Drumkeeran and a number of townlands. Drumkeeran has associations with the 1798 Rebellion and General Humbert. It also houses a heritage centre. The Creevalea Iron Works are located approximately 7 km outside the village.

*Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change*

The dereliction of field boundaries and increases in areas of rushy pasture results in blurring of the boundary between the distinct upland, extensively grazed pastures and the lowland farmed landscapes. Post and wire fences are increasingly being used in preference to traditional earth banks in upland areas. Large coniferous plantations mask vast areas of the underlying landscape and old field patterns and further detract from the quality of upland landscapes.

Forestry plantations are highly visible on the slopes. Roads onto the moorland plateau erode the sense of isolation. These roads over the mountain also offer an opportunity for large numbers of tourists and hill walkers to access open moorland with the risk of erosion and littering. Areas of heath and blanket bog are burned to encourage grass growth, which causes areas of peat to dry out and alters vegetation structure.
Key Issues for Corry Mountain

- Forestry Development
- Overgrazing
- Windfarms

Principles for Landscape Management

- Encourage sensitive felling regimes within the existing coniferous plantations to avoid large scale scarring of the hillsides.
- Establish sustainable grazing regimes to prevent scrub encroachment on lowland slopes and overgrazing on the moorland plateau.
- Discourage burning on tracts of heath and blanket bog.
- Improve the siting and design of forestry plantations favouring lower sites, smaller blocks and the inclusion of deciduous species especially along the edges and on stream sides.
- Retention of open areas of moorland, heath and grassland is crucial to the conservation of moorland plateaux and hills and will ensure the distinction between these areas and the lower farmed slopes.
- Maintenance and repair of hedges and stone walls is preferable to the use of post and wire fences and will help conserve small scale field patterns.
- Careful management of tourist access to the moorland plateau would prevent damage to upland landscapes.
- Site new wind farms/communication masts close to existing development on the plateau to minimise impact on more remote areas of upland.

Principles for Built Form

- The restoration of traditional whitewashed stone cottages, and painted barns would be beneficial in landscape and historical terms.
- Consider the views to and from hillsides when siting new development.
- New development should respect traditional building styles and locations.
Key Characteristics

- Area of drumlin hills and loughs fed by streams draining the surrounding uplands.

- Intricate pattern of small fields, hedges, traditional farms and wet meadows and areas of boggy, poorly drained pasture.

- Water within the loughs, canal and streams is an important component of the landscape.

- Relatively well wooded landscape due to broadleaf and coniferous plantations and the network of hedgerows.

- River Erne dominates the drainage pattern of the area.

- Highly valued lakelands area.

- Distinctive rural road and settlement patterns. Large settlements located at junctions of major communication routes.

- Particular concentrations of megalithic tombs and defensive sites on loughs evident across the landscape. Possibly good preservation of organic archaeological remains in boggy areas.

- Car parks and picnic sites on lough edges off main roads.
Lying in an arc from Lough Scur to Gulladoo Lough, the Ballinamore Loughlands is a distinct lowland area. It is similar to the South Leitrim Drumlins and Shannon Basin character area but is strongly influenced by the Sliabh an Iarainn uplands to the north and the drainage pattern of the Erne. The striking pattern of drumlin hills creates a strong sense of enclosure which is emphasised by the small fields, tall hedges and abundant trees. Inter-drumlin hollows and lough shores reveal long views over water to distant mountains.

Geology and Landform

The underlying limestone geology is cloaked by a dense drumlin field formed during the last Ice Age. These hummocky hills were responsible for blocking streams draining off the hills to the north and have forced water to be ponded back into a multitude of small lakes and extensive marshy flats occupying lough fringes and inter-drumlin hollows formed from stream deposited clay. Rivers, streams and canals weave between the hills and link many loughs together with navigable routes. A distinctive feature is the turlough drainage close to Ballinamore town.

Landcover

The drumlin topography supports a pastoral landscape of farmed fields textured by areas of rushy pasture. The extensive hedgerow network on the
drumlins accentuates the undulating topography and combined with broadleaf and coniferous woodland, gives the sense of a well wooded landscape. Small forest plantations and woods are dispersed across the area adding variety to the landscape pattern. Small plantations generally fit well into the landscape although blanket coverage, particularly on lough side drumlins, limits long distance views. Deciduous woodlands in these locations are much more in harmony with their surroundings. Hedgerows, woodland and plantations are largely absent from the extensive areas of wet meadow where landholdings are defined with post and wire fences. Large areas of inland wetland are located to the south of Ballinamore. The views from the numerous lakes are highly valued. The loughs are also considered important for wildfowl.

**Human Influences**

Despite the difficult nature of the poorly drained drumlin soils there is evidence of widespread Neolithic activity surrounding many loughs. A number of megalithic tombs surrounding Lough Scur and St. John’s Lough indicate that there was a considerable population fishing, hunting, farming and worshipping here around five thousand years ago. Finds from the area are impressive; a dugout canoe and several wooden shields, now housed in the National Museum, suggest that the wet soils are capable of preserving delicate organic archaeological remains. The loughs have also been the natural sites for defensive dwellings. A number of crannógs, ringforts and stone built towers are testimony to more unsettled times.

There are two important church ruins on the site of an earlier monastery, founded by St Caillin in the 6th century, with a number of standing stones said to represent the petrified bodies of druids who attempted to expel the saint from Fenagh. An important portal tomb in the north of village is associated with the burial grounds of a number of Gaelic kings.

There are few large villages and towns in the area. The largest is Ballinamore, the main market centre for surrounding parishes. The town is well known as a base from which to explore local fishing loughs and the Ballinamore-Ballyconnell Canal which was built in 1853-60 and which weaves through the drumlins linking many loughs. Other small towns and villages such as Carrigallen and Fenagh are located at the junction of many rural roads. Elsewhere settlement is dispersed along winding roads, houses occupying sheltered sites on drumlin sides. Small farm outbuildings are associated with many traditional houses.

Roads and settlement are largely absent from the wet, inter-drumlin hollows and lough shores, although the drumlins fringing some smaller loughs are becoming increasingly popular for new housing developments. Where roads pass close to the shores of larger loughs, car parks and picnic areas are often located.
Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change

The intricate patchwork of open water, fields and wet pastures is generally in good condition, with the exception of rushy pasture in some areas due to under-grazing. The rolling patchwork of bushy hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands provides a robust framework, which allows the drumlin landscape to accommodate a degree of change. Poor drainage impedes agriculture and has allowed the retention of large areas of wet meadow and inland wetland alongside streams and loughs, which are all particularly sensitive to nutrient enrichment from fertiliser run off from the surrounding drumlin farmland and distant hillsides.

Loughs and lough fringes are often in excellent condition and would be sensitive to changes in local land use, water quality and water levels. Views are often interrupted by complex landform or forestry. However, elsewhere, long views across open water and pasture fields to distant hillsides are possible. These areas are sensitive to built development and forestry.

The distinctive pattern of drumlin roads and settlement is largely intact.
Key Issues for Ballinamore Loughlands

- Shoreline development pressures

Principles for Landscape Management

- Conserve semi-natural vegetation and field patterns on lough fringes and shores to benefit wildlife and visual amenity.

- The management of hedgerows and deciduous woodlands through appropriate planting, thinning and pruning would ensure their long term retention.

- Consider the use of zoning to control recreational use and boat speeds to help resolve the conflict between recreation and conservation.

- Monitor and protect water quality of the loughs and wetlands. The implications of changing land use and increased use of agricultural fertilisers is critical.

- Control litter associated with lough side car parks and picnic areas.

Principles for Built Form

- New development should be sensitive to prominent locations on lough shores and drumlins overlooking loughs.

- Site new rural housing with regard to local settlement patterns having regard to the Leitrim County Councils Location, Siting and Design Guide.

- The design, size and location of tourist and recreational development requires careful consideration as the lough shores are very sensitive to all forms of development.
Key Characteristics

• Undulating landform comprising drumlins and eskers of varying size, shape and orientation.

• Farmed landscape dominated by pastoral land textured with areas of rushy pasture on hills above surrounding damp lowlands, wetlands and raised peat bogs.

• Relatively wooded landscape due to broadleaf and coniferous plantations and the network of hedgerows.

• Large settlements located along, or at junctions of major communication routes.

• River Shannon dominates the drainage pattern of the area and is a popular tourist and recreational resource.

• Rural roads and settlement patterns are distinct and vary according to topography.

• Particular concentrations of raths and megalithic tombs evident across the landscape.

• Outcrops of limestone form prominent features of the lowland landscape and provide orientation in the confusion of the drumlins.

• Raised peat bogs, loughs and River Shannon, highly valued for their nature conservation value.

• Turbary evident in lowland bogs.

• Churches provide a vertical accent in the landscape.
Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 4 - 26, 32, 35, 36, 38, 53 - 56, 75, 77 - 80-88, 126)

The South Leitrim Drumlins & Shannon Basin Character Area is located in the south of County Leitrim. Its boundary is formed by Lough Allen, the foothills of Sliabh an Iarainn and the Ballinamore Loughlands in the north and by the Corriga Uplands in the east. In the south and west the landscape extends beyond the County boundary into neighbouring County Roscommon and County Longford. The hummocky landform, hedgerows and areas of woodland combine to create an intimate landscape. Elevated views are possible across extensive areas from the top of some drumlins and isolated rocky outcrops which rise above the surrounding landscape.

Geology and Landform

The undulating topography is composed mainly of drumlins which cloak the underlying limestone geology. Drumlins were created by the erosion and deposition action of glacial ice sheets and by ice moulding boulder clay into oval whaleback hills. The alignment of the drumlins, though difficult to appreciate in the field, gives a distinctive alignment to the landscape and indicates the direction of ancient ice flows. Two drumlin fields of different orientation are evident in the area. The largest of these is aligned south-east to north west. A small area of drumlins around Carrick-on-Shannon is aligned south-west to north-east and represents the northern most limits of a drumlin field which runs through County Roscommon.

The limestone outcrops of Sheemore and Sheebeg and the pattern of roads and streams emphasise these two alignments in the landscape. The size and shape
of drumlins varies across the character area. Eskers also occur to the south of Mohill; these are generally lower and longer than the drumlins and have lighter soils.

Inter-drumlin hollows are generally flat and occupied by small loughs and streams, most of which drain into the Shannon which dominates the drainage pattern and occupies an extensive area of flat or very gently undulating stretch of land along the full length of the western boundary of the character area. The river is sluggish and braids into multiple channels as it passes though drumlin swarms. Extensive seasonal flooding of surrounding shallow lowlands is frequent.

Landcover

The distinctive drumlin topography of the character area supports a pastoral landscape of farmed fields textured by areas of rushy pasture. The extensive hedgerow network which generally follows landform and accentuates the undulating topography, combined with broadleaf and coniferous woodland, gives the sense of a well wooded landscape. Coniferous plantations are small and isolated, although medium sized plantations to the west of Drumna and Sranadarragh cloak drumlins and disguise the underlying field patterns and topography. Deciduous woodlands are generally also small although particularly large areas are found associated with demesne landscapes on Rinn Lough and along the course of the Shannon. These are often closely associated with other demesne features such as stone boundary walls and distinctive gate houses. In the south of the character area woodlands are largely absent although small birch copses on the raised peat bogs which occupy long hollows between the eskers provide some shelter.

Wetlands are numerous along the course of the Shannon and the floodplain and associated features contain a number of highly valuable ecological habitats. Rinn Lough is also one of the few lakes in the whole of County Leitrim which is underlain by limestone. This has a partially calcareous source and is noted for species rich wet grassland, several freshwater marshes and wet woodland located close to the shore. Rinn Lough, The Shannon south of Lough Boderg and numerous areas of raised peat bog are designated as proposed Natural Heritage Areas.

Human Influences

Owing to its irregular terrain and poor drainage the drumlins have been regarded as barrier to communication since prehistoric times. However throughout the character area there is evidence of widespread Neolithic and early Christian activity. On the limestone outcrops, which rise above the lowlands, are a concentration of megalithic tombs, possibly representing the high level of ritual significance these areas of high land possessed. A further cluster may be observed fringing the Corriga Uplands. Between Carrick-on-Shannon and Sheebeg and on the south-west to north east orientated drumlins between Sheemore and the Shannon there are significant clusters of raths, signifying that the area was well settled and utilised as a pastoral landscape.
These typically occupy sloping sites with views over the surrounding lowlands.

The existing pattern of rural settlement and field systems largely dates to rationalisation of post-famine Leitrim in the nineteenth century. However a number of much older settlements may be identified. For example Jamestown and Carrick were both Plantation towns; indeed the layout of the main street along which Jamestown was established endures today. Other significant settlements, including Leitrim, Drumshanbo, Drumsna, Dromod, Mohill and Cloone, are located where numerous roads meet.

The rural settlement pattern is predominantly scattered dwellings and farms along roads and small villages at cross-roads. Two distinct patterns may be identified.

Throughout most of the drumlins, roads weave between undulations with houses traditionally sited in sheltered positions on their slopes at the end of short lanes off the main arterial routes. In the south of the area on the eskers however, long roads and houses occupy sheltered sites on the higher ground. Running east – west off the main arterial routes, largely un-settled roads cross raised peat bogs. Whether in the north or south however, traditional houses are simple, whitewashed, often surrounded in native tree planting and occupy sheltered locations ensuring they are in harmony with their surroundings. There is much evidence of the dereliction of older properties and their replacement with new housing along roadsides. Churches, often simple and with a spire, are located close to settlements or loose clusters of houses and often provide an important reference point in the landscape.

Along the course of the Shannon floodplain where fields and tracks are enclosed by a combination of species rich hedgerows and post and wire fences, settlement is largely absent due to seasonal flooding. Similarly on Sheemore and Sheebeg, where stone walls predominate, there is little settlement.

*Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change*

This is an area of small scale pastoral drumlin farmland, wet pasture, raised peat bog and highly visible ridges and hills. The landscape is generally in good condition, with the exception of rushy pasture in some areas and the extensive extraction of peat which has scarred some areas. The dense pattern of hedgerows and woodlands in the drumlins ensures that landscapes are relatively robust, although features within the landscape such as the Shannon, Sheemore and Sheebeg are particularly sensitive. Elsewhere poorly managed field boundaries are being replaced with post and wire fences.

Small coniferous plantings are generally in scale and keeping with their surroundings. However, in some areas large scale ‘blanket’ planting has resulted in deterioration of landscape condition due to field patterns and topography being obscured.
**Key Issues for South Leitrim Drumlins and Shannon Basin**

- Shannon Corridor is under a variety of development pressures

**Principles for Landscape Management**

- The management and replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and maintenance of stone walls will ensure their survival. This is preferable to the use of wire fences.

- Site new woodland within existing fields or in individual drumlin sized patches, retain hedgerows and plant deciduous species to soften edges.

- The retention of river meadows and inter-drumlin wetlands would be beneficial. Keep drainage and the use of fertilisers on more elevated land.

- Management of woodland through appropriate planting, thinning and pruning will ensure long term retention as part of the landscape.

- Care with the scale and location of peat cutting areas and further designation of the most intact areas of raised peat bog for conservation will help protect this valuable resource.

- Management of streams, rivers and loughs, bankside and marginal vegetation and monitoring of water quality, along with allocated areas designated for tourist activities will help protect this resource.

**Principles for Built Form**

- New housing development should reflect more closely vernacular building styles and locations and respect distinctive settlement patterns. Native planting should be used to help integrate new development with its surroundings.

- Site new vertical elements such as electricity pylons away from drumlin tops and avoid cutting through forestry.

- The protection of distinctive riverside setting of the Shannon is advisable. Areas of raised peat bog should be kept free from development. Careful control of development around Sheemore and Sheebeg is desirable.

- The siting and design of tourist infrastructure, such as car parks, visitor facilities and marinas on the Shannon should consider the scale and character of their surroundings and avoid visual intrusion.
- Promote the reuse of redundant buildings and brownfield sites.

- Existing settlements should avoid expanding outwards onto prominent drumlin tops.

- Where possible site new development away from the Shannon floodplain and inter-drumlin hollows to avoid seasonal flooding having regard to the Development Plan.

- Recognise the Shannon corridor as a distinctive zone with its own sensitivities and pressures.
**Key Characteristics**

- An undulating domed unit of uplifted geology rising above the surrounding drumlins and damp lowland.

- Patchwork of small, enclosed fields and rush infested pasture.

- Large scale silage fields offer an interesting contrast to the intricate patchwork of smaller pasture fields.

- Fields separated by overgrown hedges.

- Low native tree cover except around farms and hedgerows.

- Small scale settlement of old cottages away from roads.

- Hillsides fretted by numerous streams draining the upland.
Landscape Description

(Viewpoints 27-35, 37-42)

The Corriga Uplands is a distinct, sparsely settled, small scale intricate landscape in the south of County Leitrim rising above the surrounding lowlands. The southern slopes shelve gently to a series of small loughs which are linked by the Cullies river. Landscapes within the heart of the area are intimate and secretive with views restricted by landform and vegetation. Long views are possible from sloping hillsides over the surrounding lowlands.

Geology and Landform

The area is formed from Lower Palaeozoic rocks which are part of the Longford-Down massif. The rocks are mainly slates and impure sandstones with small areas of volcanic and intrusive rocks which were tilted and raised at the end of the Silurian period. The landscape is gently undulating and rises to 190 m AOD at Lugganammer. Rocky streams draining the uplands generally flow northwards and southwards, and have eroded the slopes into a series of distinctive undulations. These streams flow into the Cullies River, which is bordered by extensive wet pastures and links a series of small loughs. Soils are moderately well drained and have a moderately wide use range.

Landcover

The distinctive undulating topography of the character area supports a productive pastoral landscape of farmed fields textured by areas of rushy...
pasture and isolated patches of raised peat bogs. The extensive hedgerow network which generally follows landform, accentuates the undulating topography and gives the sense of a well wooded landscape, although the network appears gappy in places. Hedgerow removal is conspicuous on some gentle slopes where large silage fields have been created. Woodland is largely absent although small copses surrounding established farmhouses and larger woods on the northern slopes of the upland area contribute to the character area’s wooded character.

*Human Influences*

The farmed hills are largely devoid of ancient monuments although the area is fringed by a number of megalithic tombs and standing stones, indicating that the uplands may have had some ritual significance in prehistoric times.

The current rural settlement pattern largely dates to post famine rationalisation. Main roads encircle the uplands, usually occupying their lower slopes. A series of minor routes criss-crosses the upland areas. Small traditional cottages are dispersed along hedged roads with farms at the end of narrow winding lanes. There is a predominance of large farmhouses, barns and fields, indicating a greater degree of affluence and higher levels of productivity than the surrounding drumlins. No true towns or villages exist although certain hamlets such as Corriga provide simple community facilities. The course of the Cullies River and the series of inter-connected loughs is largely devoid of settlement. Numerous routes onto the uplands cross the river at bridging points between the loughs.

*Landscape Condition and Sensitivity to Change*

This is a well managed, productive agricultural landscape with a strong robust structure capable of accepting some degree of change. Field boundaries are largely intact and offer a high degree of unity and enclosure.

The sloping hillsides and undulating summit are particularly sensitive to large scale built development or forestry as they form local sky lines and offer views over the surrounding lowlands. The course of the Cullies River and the series of loughs fringing the lower slopes of the uplands are also potentially vulnerable to change as they are largely un-developed. The sparse settlement pattern is a distinctive feature particularly on the undulating summit of the uplands.
Key Issues for Corriga Uplands

- Maintenance of productive landscape

Principles for Landscape Management

- The management and replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees will ensure their survival. This is preferable to the use of wire fences.

- Ensure land use changes are in scale and keeping with the existing balance of pasture, hay and silage meadows. Large scale tree planting or the further enlargement of fields would alter the intricate grain of the landscape.

- Site new woodland within existing fields or in individual small scale patches, retain hedgerows and plant deciduous species to soften edges.

- The retention of open wetlands and loughs along the course of the Cullies River would be beneficial. Avoid the use of fertilisers on more elevated land which may cause damage to wetland habitats and water quality below.

- Conserve remaining areas of raised peat bog where possible.

Principles for Built Form

- Small stone cottages and large whitewashed farms in sheltered sites close to streams and surrounded by small deciduous copses are characteristic of older settlement.

- The conservation and reuse of redundant buildings and barns would be beneficial.

- Large scale agricultural sheds should be carefully sited to avoid undue visual intrusion.
4  LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW – ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1  INTRODUCTION

The Landscape Assessment focuses on the landscape character and diversity within the County. It describes the distinctive elements and features that characterise each Landscape Character Area. It also identifies the key, valued elements and features of each area and informs policy and planning decisions for a broad range of sectors as to the specific sensitivities to change of different parts of the Leitrim landscape.

This final Chapter gives an overview of the landscape issues facing the County, and makes broad recommendations on how to address these issues at a strategic level in partnership with local communities, farming and business interests, developers, government departments and agencies.

4.2  THE BENEFITS THAT LEITRIM’S LANDSCAPES PROVIDE

Throughout the course of this project, consultees have consistently highlighted the fact that the scenic, ecological, historical and cultural characteristics of the Leitrim landscape are of great value locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally. Landscape resources bring considerable benefits to the County.

The most important landscape resources and benefits include:

• Attractive, highly distinctive and generally unspoilt scenery that is the product of generations of human occupation and a long agricultural tradition - this provides high quality environment for Leitrim’s residents;

• Dramatic upland areas and glens in the northern part of the County that are an outstanding, national landscape resource, retaining a strong sense of remoteness and isolation, and having a high habitat value;

• Numerous loughs, wetlands, rivers and canals that offer landscape, historical, ecological, recreational and economic benefits – in particular Lough Melvin, Lough Macnean, Lough Allen, the Ballinamore Loughlands and the Shannon catchment;

• Softer, intimate, diverse drumlin farmland landscapes with peat bogs, loughs, rock outcrops and rivers and lake shores that provide a great wealth of landscape and habitat features;

• A strong historical and cultural resource that includes Neolithic sites, industrial features associated with the mining heritage, distinctive-post famine building and settlement patterns, and local elements such as mass rocks and holy wells that are of great spiritual importance.
4.3 THE NEED FOR A STRATEGIC APPROACH

This Landscape Assessment has highlighted a wide range of issues to be considered when assessing the capacity of the landscape to accommodate change. A strategic approach to balancing different land use interests, coupled with knowledge each Landscape Character Area’s specific sensitivities to development, can ensure that appropriate planning and management is undertaken that enhances development and maintains the integrity of the Leitrim landscape.

The current planning framework for County Leitrim is the County Development Plan 1997-2002. The new plan is currently being written. The Landscape Assessment will inform the development of the new County Development Plan. It offers greater detail on landscape description and analysis than has been previously available and should therefore become a vital reference source for County and regional policy. In addition it should guide and inform landscape management within the County.

This Landscape Assessment should be equally useful to a wide range of partner organisations, as it promotes a proactive approach and helps foster a shared vision of future landscapes within the County. It provides the context for consistent and robust decision-making that takes account of human perceptions and values in addition to physical, cultural, spiritual and historical ones.

4.4 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

At a strategic level the principal issues affecting the landscape of County Leitrim can be summarised as follows:

- The impact of new buildings on the countryside
- Changes to landscape settings and settlements
- The erosion of distinctive rural landscape patterns and features
- The impacts of afforestation and infrastructure developments
- Pressures for tourist and recreation developments.

The remainder of this chapter examines each of these strategic issues and supports the recommendations of the previous chapter by identifying key actions. There is a crucial need for the integration of actions by communities and agencies and this is supported through recent reform of local government and the County Development Strategy. An indication is given of the groups and bodies that would be responsible for implementing these actions.
4.5 THE IMPACT OF NEW BUILDINGS ON THE COUNTRYSIDE

Settlement patterns in Leitrim are traditionally associated with villages and scattered farmhouses or cottages. A reduction in the long trend of population decline is to be encouraged and promoted. However, the increase in planning applications, frequently in rural locations, creates an urgent need for high standards of siting and design that reflect the distinctive building traditions and layout.

Key organisations: Leitrim County Council; Department of Environment and Local Government; Local Development Associations; An Taisce.

The priorities for action in this area are listed below:

- Consider the variations in landscape character and sensitivity for each area and promoting more integration with the surrounding landscape, for example in relation to boundary treatments and use of building materials.

- Encourage the wider use of design guides for housing developments and for developments on sensitive or prominent sites.

- Consider the preparation of a location, siting and design guide to assist in raising the quality of rural developments. This guidance could include advice on the use of local building materials, patterns and building styles in different parts of the County, building on information in the Landscape Assessment.

- Promote initiatives such as the Windows of Leitrim to widen public understanding of elements of built form.

4.6 THE LOSS OF DISTINCTIVE LANDSCAPE SETTINGS TO SETTLEMENTS

The landscape setting of settlements is very important in Leitrim, where many settlements are relatively small and the character of the surrounding countryside has a strong influence on landscape character. This relationship between landscape and settlement patterns is emphasised further by the fact that many settlements occur on the boundary of one landscape character area and the next, for example at Glenade, Kinlough and Drumkeeran.

Distinctive landscape features including views or local landmarks frequently contribute significantly to local settlement identity and a sense of place.

Key organisations: Leitrim County Council, Local Development Associations, An Taisce, Private Developers.

Priorities for action:
• Incorporate the Landscape Assessment into the County Development Plan, Local Area Plans and town development plans, and into the strategic planning process for the County and Border-Midland-Western Region as a whole.

• Include landscape buffers, distinctive landscape settings and prominent ridgelines in development plans and refer to these during the development control process. Establish a principle for recognising new landscape settings as towns and villages expand and develop in forthcoming years.

• Record these distinctive landscape features alongside built and natural heritage features and designations on settlement maps, and ensure that the development proposals and development limits form a positive relationship with the surrounding landscape.

• Ensure new development is associated with landscape enhancement schemes, particularly at key locations along main approach roads and junctions. Where possible, site new development on brownfield or derelict lands within the settlement boundaries or where there is scope to enhance the existing urban fringe through appropriate landscape measures.

4.7  THE EROSION OF DISTINCTIVE RURAL LANDSCAPE PATTERNS AND FEATURES

This Landscape Assessment defines and describes important variations in landscape character throughout County Leitrim. The unique rural landscape patterns that contribute to scenic quality at local, regional and national scale are identified through this process. Prominent features such as glens or mountains are recognised as being of national, regional or county importance.

However, more subtle variations in landscape quality also merit further consideration and recognition. Examples include different enclosure methods, ranging from hedgerows to stone walls, to earth banks at high altitudes at the Boleybrack Uplands. Vernacular buildings and associated outbuildings also make a significant contribution to local landscape character.

Distinctive landscape features and patterns are unique to each location as they reflect the underlying bedrock and other geographic features. This can be seen in the increase in stone walls towards the coastal area of Tullaghan where the bedrock is closer to the surface. Many other features have evolved over centuries of settlement and differing land uses and practices.

As many of these features are relicts of past practices, they may be particularly vulnerable to landscape change through development, changes in landscape management, or neglect. The Landscape Character Area descriptions highlight important, traditional landscape patterns and features. Their erosion could be a threat to the integrity of the landscapes of Leitrim.
Key organisations: Leitrim County Council, Teagasc, Bord Failte, Border-Midland-Western Regional Assembly, Local Development and Farmers’ Organisations.

Priorities for action:

- Recognise the importance of maintaining and enhancing distinctive landscape features and patterns throughout the County by incorporating the Landscape Assessment and its recommendations into the County Development Plan, Local Area Plans and other development plans.

- Develop landscape management and action plans to ensure the conservation and enhancement of key landscape areas such as the North Leitrim Mountains and Glens, Sliabh an Iarainn, the Ballinamore Loughlands and the River Shannon.

- Launch programmes to rehabilitate the County’s stock of traditional buildings as part of any new tourism or rural diversification programmes. Promote landscape character and distinctiveness to tourism and farming interests, highlighting its marketing potential.

- Encourage the further uptake of REPS within the Leitrim County Area, and if possible, tailor and target REPS funding to address the particular needs of local landscapes.

4.8 THE IMPACTS OF FORESTRY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Forestry and infrastructure developments have a particular impact on the landscape in County Leitrim.

In the case of forestry, there is an existing legacy of less sensitive development on the fringes of many of the upland areas, and also on lower ground where views to the hills and to the water have in places been blocked. In these areas, existing forest cover needs to be reduced, restructured and redesigned. New woodland plantings, may, however, bring benefits to other parts of the landscape, such as abandoned farmland, amenity landscapes, the settings of settlements and areas degraded by industrial or infrastructure development.

Roads can have a homogenising effect on the landscape. They may cut across landscape patterns; they may also bring new structures and associated developments. They affect how we perceive the surrounding countryside.

Other infrastructure developments including overhead transmission lines, pylons, communication masts and wind turbines are often prominent in upland areas, especially when they are seen upon the skyline. In the case of wind energy, development in the County is still at an early stage, but strong pressure for expansion is likely, given the County’s excellent wind energy
resource. With careful siting of wind farms to minimise landscape and visual impacts, serious effects on Leitrim’s landscape can be avoided.


Priorities for action:

- The County Council should work closely and cooperatively with the Forest Service, Coillte and private forestry interests to address the existing landscape impacts of forestry in County Leitrim and optimise the benefits of new forestry and woodlands in the landscape.

- Planning controls and consultative arrangements for forestry applications should be kept under review and the Planning Strategic Policy Committee should be used as a medium. The establishment of a County Forestry Advisory Committee to work alongside forestry interests on major new applications should be considered.

- Landscape capacity to accommodate forestry should be a key consideration in deciding whether and where forestry expansion occurs. A good proportion of new woodlands within the County should be broadleaved.

- Minor road improvements and access roads should be accompanied by reinstatement of local landscape features especially hedgerows along the new alignment.

- Available national policy and guidance in relation to the planning and siting of telecommunication masts and overhead pylons should be adhered to. Landscape capacity to accommodate wind farms should be a key consideration in deciding where new wind farms are sited.

- Environmental Impact Assessments for major infrastructure projects should include careful consideration of the landscape character, opportunities and constraints as a key part of the process. Landscape and visual impact assessments should take full account of the Landscape Assessment of County Leitrim and utilise the Landscape Character Area descriptions.

4.9 Pressures for Tourist and Recreation Development

Leitrim has considerable tourism potential, largely based on high quality environment and landscape. Care must be taken not to destroy these key assets which form the basis of tourism in the County. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are specific areas such as the Shannon basin that are under significant pressure from tourism and recreation. Any new tourist
development in these areas needs to pay particular regard to issues of siting, layout and design as well as wildlife and heritage issues.

Activity-based tourism including walking and cycling also has considerable potential but the associated infrastructure for these activities must be managed sustainably. For example, the resurfacing of footpaths, additional footpaths on the hills and mountains and the increased use of signage need to be handled sensitively to ensure they do not become conspicuous elements in the landscape. Although appropriate tourist development in the countryside can help to diversify the rural economy, enhance the countryside and create new jobs, it needs to be undertaken in a sensitive manner to ensure there are no detrimental effects on this valuable resource.

*Key organisations: Leitrim County Council, Border-Midland-Western Regional Assembly, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, North-West Tourism, Local Development and Tourism Organisations.*

Priorities for action:

- Consider the development of Sustainable Tourism in the County, building on the Landscape Assessment as a resource, integrating landscape characteristics and features and promoting sustainable options for recreation and tourism in the County.

- Any new tourism developments should take into account the descriptions and guidance presented in the Landscape Assessment to ensure that future developments integrate with and enhance the surrounding landscape.

- Highlight the promotional benefits of local landscape character and distinctiveness – for example when used to help market holidays and local farm produce.

- Monitor carefully the development of further recreational facilities around sensitive mountain tops, loughs and shores.
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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT GLOSSARY

LANDSCAPE TECHNICAL TERMS

An explanation of how the terms are being used in the context of the County Leitrim Landscape Assessment.

Analysis - the process of breaking the landscape down, usually in descriptive terms, into its component parts in order to understand how it is made up.

Approach - the step-wise process by which a landscape assessment is undertaken.

Assessment - an umbrella term used to encompass all the many different ways of looking at, describing, analysing and evaluating landscape.

Character - a distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape.

Character Area (Image Unit) - a unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity.

Character Type (Physical Unit) - a generic term for a landscape with a consistent, homogeneous character. Landscape character types may occur in different parts of the County, but wherever they occur, they will share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation or human influences.

Characteristic - an element that contributes to local distinctiveness (eg narrow winding lanes, vernacular building style).

Classification - a process of sorting the landscape into different types, each with a distinct, consistent and recognisable character.

Description - verbal description of what a landscape looks like. This is usually carried out in a systematic manner, but it may also include personal reactions to the landscape.

Element - a component part of the landscape (eg hedges, roads, woods).

Feature - a prominent, eye-catching element (eg wooded hilltop, church spire).

Landcover - combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

Landform - combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.
**Landscape** - the term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.

**OTHER TECHNICAL TERMS**

**AOD** - abbreviation for ‘above ordinance datum’

**Barrow** - a general term for burial mound dating from Neolithic up to early medieval period.

**Bawn** - (babhun) Irish word generally taken to mean a fortified enclosure or bulwark of mud or stone walls. These are a particular feature of the Plantation Period. One of the conditions of obtaining a large land grant was that settling landlords construct a manor house or strong house surrounded by a bawn.

**Biogeography** - the study of plant and animal distributions together with the geographical relationships with their environments over time.

**Bronze Age** - (2500 BC to 500 BC) during this period, Bronze became the primary material in tools and weapons, enabling settlement to expand into lowland areas. Burials were in pits and cists, sometimes in cemeteries and much simpler than in the Neolithic period. Greater emphasis was placed on worship of the living with the construction of ceremonial megalithic stone circles.

**Blanket bog** - a bog which drapes all features of the terrain such as filling hollows. It is composed essentially of peat on which rough wet moorland or marshland vegetation prevails. It is formed in high rainfall and low evapotranspiration conditions.

**Carboniferous Period** - period of the Palaeozoic era which ranged from 345 million years to about 280 million years BP (Before Present). The Carboniferous can be divided into the Lower Carboniferous and the Upper Carboniferous separated by a boundary dated at about 325 million years BP.

**Chert** - a hard siliceous rock, which occurs as bands or layers in sedimentary rocks. Flint is a variety of chert.

**Clachan** - nucleated group of farm houses where landholdings were organised communally, frequently on a townland basis and farmed by communities with strong kinship ties. Houses were surrounded by a permanently cultivated infield, defined by a study wall outside which lay the outfield and commonage.
**Clint** - flat topped rock features which together make up a limestone pavement. Each clint is bounded by a grike.

**Colluvial** – deposition of sediment or rock particles accumulating from overland flow at the base of a slope and originating from higher slopes where sheet erosion is in progress.

**Demesne** - lands held by the manor for its own use and occupation incorporating farmland, gardens, woods and buildings. With Medieval origins the concept survived until the break-up of the estate system in last present century.

**Devonian** - the fourth geological period of the Palaeozoic era extending from 395 to 345 million years. It comprises marine and continental deposits, the latter being referred to as the Old Red Sandstone.

**Drumlin** - an Irish term widely accepted to describe a streamlined, elongated egg-shaped hillock of glacial drift formed under a moving glacier during the ice age. The long axis of the hillock is aligned parallel to the direction of the ice flow. Drumlins usually occur in swarms or ‘fields’.

**Erratic** - a large rock fragment which has been transported by moving ice away from its place of origin and deposited in an area of dissimilar rock types.

**Esker** - long, sinuous ridge of sand and gravel deposited by sub-glacial stream.

**Eutrophic** - the state of a water body when it has an excess of nutrients usually derived from agricultural fertilisers. The process by which a water body becomes overloaded with nutrients is known as eutrophication an leads to a dense plant population, the decomposition of which kills animal life by depriving it of oxygen.

**Fault** - a rupture or fracture of rock strata due to strain.

**Flush** - an area of soil enriched by transported materials, either dissolved mineral salts or rock particles. Wet flushes are found surrounding springs and rivulets and appear as bright green, rushy areas on a hill slope.

**Fluvio-glacial** - a term referring to the processes and landforms related to the action of glacial meltwater.

**Fulachta fiadh** - a Bronze Age cooking site. The method of cooking involved the heating of stones in a fire until they were hot enough to drop into a trough of water to bring it to the boil at which point a parcel of food could be dropped in. The shattered stones were thrown into a pile surrounding the trough on three sides which over time formed the distinctive horseshoe-shaped mound which may be identified today.
**Geomorphology** - the scientific study of the origin of landforms based on a cause and effect relationship.

**Gley soils** - Soils characterised by being affected by periodic or permanent saturation by water in the absence of effective artificial drainage. Various gley soils exist.

**Grike** - a deep cleft in a bare limestone pavement, formed by solution along a line of weakness.

**Infield** - large open field surrounding houses within a clachan. This large open field was situated on the best ground and was divided up into a multiplicity of strips separated by sods or stones in which potatoes or stones were grown. Each family used a variety of strips which were periodically re-distributed (rundale). The infield was permanently cultivated and nutrients were replenished by the use of lime, seaweed and dung.

**Iron Age** - (500 BC to Early Christian Period) A period of antiquity in which iron metallurgy superseded the use of bronze for tools and weapons. Elsewhere in Europe Iron Age communities succumbed to Rome. However, in Ireland the ‘celts’ survived for many centuries. The Iron Age saw the emergence of kingdoms and the consolidation of territories defended by hilltop fortifications and earthworks.

**Kame** - kames can result from the accumulation of glaciofluvial sediments in a supraglacial position whence they are lowered by ice melting until they form a tumultuous hummocky terrain after the ice has disappeared.

**Kame terrain** - an undulating landscape composed of groups of kames and/or kame terraces interspersed or pitted with kettle holes. This type of landform is sometimes termed a kame complex and is created when glaciofluvial sediments are lowered onto the sub-ice surface as the glacier or ice-sheet decays, especially when it can be established that the kame sediments were formed in separate basins of accumulation on the ice surface.

**Karstic** - term referring to the terrain created by limestone solution and characterised by a virtual absence of surface hollows, depressions and fissures and an extensive subterranean drainage network.

**Lazy bed** - garden like method of farming used in marginal areas to maximise the capacity of thin or nutrient poor soils. Manure was laid out in lines on which sods were lapped over using a thin bladed spade (loy) to create a series of ridges and furrows of equal width.

**Lower Palaeozoic** - first of the eras of geological time lasting from about 600 million years to 240 million years BP. In Europe it comprises the Cambrian, Ordovician and Silurian (which together constitute the Lower Palaeozoic) and the Devonian, Carboniferous and Permian which form the Upper Palaeozoic.
**Lough** - an Irish term for a body of water, either enclosed as a fresh-water lake or a long, narrow penetration of sea water extending inland from the ocean.

**Lumper** - a high bulk variety of potato which tolerates poor soils and requires little manure.

**Limestone pavement** - a glacially planed and smoothed surface of bare limestone which has subsequently been dissected by vertical joints (grikes) to produce clints.

**Megalithic tomb** - a construction made of large stones, largely dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Four types of megalithic tombs have been identified on the basis of architecture, excavation artefacts and distribution patterns: court, portal, passage and wedge. The various tomb types have been interpreted as a chronological sequence, starting with court tombs and ending with wedge tombs. However, the extensive age range provides evidence for a considerable overlap and other explanations for their distribution in the landscape are required.

**Mesolithic** - (9000 BC - 4000 BC) an archaeological term meaning ‘middle stone age’ and used to describe the culture of the early Post Glacial period. It is a period of transition in the early Holocene when mankind moved from the hunter-gathering practices of the Palaeolithic of the last glaciation and the farming and pottery of the post-glacial Neolithic. Mesolithic inhabitants frequently lived along coasts, rivers or lake shores and may have used fire to clear forested land for semi-permanent villages. Mesolithic tool kits reflect a need to adapt to the changing environment and are characterised by the presence of microliths and stone axes.

**Metamorphic rocks** - rocks which have been altered from their original state by various metamorphic processes, generally as a result of mountain building and the intrusion of magma.

**Midlandian glaciation** - the name given to the final glacial stage of the Pleistocene.

**Moraine** - accumulation of rock debris carried by glacier or ice sheet and deposited by ice to become a depositional landform.

**Motte-and-bailey castle** - the earliest form of Norman castle established along key communication routes after the Conquest. An inner courtyard was protected by simple earth and wood defences.

**Mudbanks** - masses of fine-grained limestone which were formed by the production of huge amounts of calcium carbonate by organisms. These rose above the general level of the sea floor in a manner similar to modern day coral reefs.
Neolithic (4000 BC - 2500 BC) an archaeological term meaning ‘new stone age’ which describes the period of antiquity in which people began to use ground stone tools, cultivate plants and keep domestic livestock. The gradual spread of farming though Europe bought with it the custom of communal burial in megalithic tombs.

Outcrop - the area where a particular rock type, stratum or vein appears at the surface.

Outfield - poorer, more marginal or boggy ground where occasional reclamation might be made for the purposes of growing potatoes.

Peat hag - mossland that has formerly been broken up; it could be a pit, break, gap or chasm in the moss, or an area of turfy or heathery ground which rises out of the peat bog.

Pedology - the scientific study of soils.

Plantation- a newly established settlement generally associated with a period of subjugation of the native Irish élite and colonisation by a Protestant and British landed class in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Poaching - to become muddy or broken up from being trampled. Largely used to describe stock damage on grassland.

Rath - a type of ring fort found in Ireland mainly dated in Ireland to the early Christian period, c. 5th-10th centuries AD.

Raised bog peat - under suitable climatic conditions this is built up on top of fen peat. As the depth of the fen peat increases its living vegetation is less influenced on ground water and becomes more dependent on atmospheric precipitation as a source of moisture. This change in moisture supply results in the growth and development of a raised bog with its characteristic convex surface and acid plant remains.

Riparian habitat - riverbank habitat.

Rundale - periodic re-distribution of strips of land in the infield of a clachan practically universal throughout the poorer lands of the west of Ireland. The re-distribution of strips of land ensured a fair distribution of all soil types to each family of the clachan.

Turbary - the right of digging turf on another man's land or the ground where turf is dug.

Scree slopes - through weathering, water contained in rocks expanded on freezing and blocks and fragments were prised off and crept downhill to accumulate as features known called scree slopes.
**Semi-natural vegetation** - any type of vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.

**Silurian period** - third period of the Palaeozoic lasting from 440 million years ago to about 395 million years ago. Its rocks comprise thick layers of sandstones, shales, mudstones and limestones.

**Souterrain** - a long stone-built chamber sunk into the ground and roofed with stone slabs, usually beneath a house and intended for cold storage, roughly dating to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.

**Sweathouse** - a small stone building in which a fire would be lit to heat the stones. Two people would enter and have the entrance stopped by a stone behind them. The patients would stay in the sweathouse for as long as was bearable before leaping into the nearby stream. The sweathouses offered a cure for rheumatism, sciatica and general aches and pains up until the establishment of dispensaries after 1851.

**Tundra** - the tundra lies between the polar region of perpetual snow and ice and the northern limit of tree growth. The term is used to describe landscapes which are characterised by treeless vegetation consisting of mosses, lichens, sedges and stunted shrubs growing on permafrost. During the quaternary tundra like conditions were translated south as continental ice sheets expanded.

**Vernacular** - buildings constructed in the local style, from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings.

**Veteran tree** - a tree which is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition.
Annex A

Consultation Report
1 CONSULTATION PROGRAMME REPORT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Environmental Resources Management has been commissioned by Leitrim County Council to undertake the first full Landscape Character Assessment for the County. A key element in the work programme is consultation with the local community (communities of place) and the numerous agencies that operate and have an influence on the changing landscape of the County. The aim of this report is to outline the consultation programme and to present the outcomes of this process to date.

1.2 CONSULTATION PROGRAMME

There were two separate phases to the consultation programme. The first phase took place during the course of the fieldwork programme. This involved a series of informal interviews between agencies and the project team. The second phase involved a more formal consultation programme, which took place on the 7th and 8th March 2002 at the Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon with two workshops. The participants of the workshops included local community and voluntary groups and state and semi-state agencies.

In addition, a weeklong public exhibition from 4-8th March supplemented the above programme. This exhibition was held in Carrick-on-Shannon, Manorhamilton and Ballinamore. Comments from the public over the course of the exhibition was noted on Feedback Forms and integrated into this report.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF CONSULTATION

The aims of the consultation process are listed below:

- To encourage the participation of consultees in the assessment process;
- To foster greater understanding of landscape issues in County Leitrim;
- To improve the quality of the landscape assessment, and
- To make the resulting planning policies more robust and acceptable.

1.3.1 Structure of Workshops

The workshops were structured in the following way:

1. General introduction;
2. Introduction to the process and potential uses of Landscape Character Assessment;
3. Brief overview of the main characteristics of each draft Landscape Character Area, and
4. Workshop exercises based on the following key areas:
   - Boundaries and names for each Landscape Character Area (LCA) - are these correct/any suggestions?
   - Key features/valued elements within each LCA that have not yet been identified?
- Identification of forces for change in each LCA
- How these forces for change should be addressed?
WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The recommendations and comments from both workshops and the public exhibition have been integrated in the following sections. In this section the issues raised during consultation in relation proposed LCA names, boundaries and features or valued landscape elements are discussed. Names relate to the suggested names of each LCA, boundaries relate to the suggested demarcation between each LCA. Valued features relate to any natural or man-made feature within the landscape that consultees identified as being highly valued within the County usually for cultural, historical, spiritual or ecological reasons.

2.1.2 General comments on Valued Features.

There was consensus that more reference should be made to natural features including the numerous loughs and rivers within the County. Built heritage features were also highly valued and consultees specifically mentioned fairy forts and other prehistoric features. Mass rocks, Holy wells, sweathouses and industrial archaeology were identified as meriting further consideration in descriptions of LCAs. Railways, roads and hedgerows also warranted further comment.

A general consensus emerged that north western Leitrim contained the most valued landscapes with the North West glens such as Glenade and Glencar being the most well known. Ballinamore loughlands were also considered to be of high landscape value. A final general comment related to the distinctive post-famine settlement patterns of Leitrim and that this legacy is of national or even international significance.

2.1.3 Tullaghan Coast (LCA 1)

No comments emerged in relation to the name, boundary or valued features of this LCA.

2.1.4 Lough Melvin Lowlands (LCA 2)

A number of issues were raised in relation to the boundary and name of this LCA. Recommendations included the point that Lough Melvin and Lough Macnean should be separate LCAs as they have different hydrological properties, i.e.: Lough Melvin is part of a chain of smaller loughs and different river systems, while Lough Macnean’s source is in the Thur Mountains. There was a suggestion that the boundary should lie at the watershed just east of Knobble on the County Boundary.

In addition, there was a recommendation that the archaeological feature called Black Pig’s Race in the Ordnance Survey maps should be changed to the
better-known local name of Black Pig’s Dyke. Valued features in this LCA included:

- Sean McDermott’s house at Kittyclogher,
- the high conservation value of Lough Melvin, a designated candidate SAC with a number of rare fish species and an important bird habitat, and,
- Crannogs and other islands with historical significance (such as Clancy’s Island, associated with the Spanish Armada) were also raised as valued elements.

2.1.5  Arroo & Mountains Outliers (LCA 3)

A recommendation emerged that Arroo and Tievebaun could be merged as they are underlain by a similar limestone geology and support similar flora. Another suggestion related to the name of this LCA, that it be changed to Dartry Hills or Breifne (Breffni) or O’Rourke Hills. This would reflect the local nomenclature of this area. Lough Macnean was recommended for inclusion in descriptions of this LCA.

Important valued natural features discussed by consultees included Fawley Falls, rock formations and cliffs, the presence of feral goats, as well as the designation of Arroo Mountain as a SAC/NHA. Evidence of fossilised fish in Ballagh River was also discussed. In addition to several megalithic rocks, mass rocks and numerous fairy and other prehistoric forts were identified as being highly valued features.

2.1.6  Tievebaun Uplands (LCA 4)

Apart from the suggestion of merging Tievebaun with Arroo mentioned above, there were no other comments in relation to name and boundaries of Tievebaun.

Valued features included the fact that the moorland is not extensively planted and has considerable value for flora and fauna habitats. Also the presence of rare coral flora was raised in the feedback form. The field boundaries composed of stonewalls in the high hills of this LCA are considered a distinctive feature.

There are also undisturbed archaeological sites in the area, for example, Pound Hill at Lurganboy is an important historic site. The Barytes mines, although more within the Sligo Boundary are also considered to be worth mentioning as they were mined from the mid 18th Century until approximately 1992.

2.1.7  The Doons & Crockauns (LCA 5)

Some consultees stated that this name is not appropriate and recommended that an alternative name be found if possible. Also consultees suggested merging this LCA with the Benbo LCA and extending the boundary southwards to Dromahair village boundary. The reasons cited for this was
that the consultees felt that there is no significant difference between these two upland areas.

In relation to the name change, it was mentioned that the town of Newtownmanner is locally known as the Manor and the highest peak in Crockauns is called Leenane. Therefore the name of Leenane & Manor was suggested as an appropriate name for the LCA.

A final comment relating to the name of Doons and Crockauns was that it is too generic and a more specific name would be more appropriate.

No comments were raised in relation to particular valued features in this LCA.

2.1.8 Benbo (LCA 6)

Again, apart from comments discussed in the previous section, there were no other comments relating to this LCA in terms of name and boundary.

A mass rock to the west of Benbo was commented upon as a valued feature.

2.1.9 The Boleybrack Uplands (LCA 7)

No comments were raised in relation to the boundaries or name of this LCA. The higher areas of these uplands are considered of considerable nature conservation value and are also identified as high landscape value. In addition, due to the lack of access roads, the only way of getting to these areas is by walking and hence the sense of wilderness is retained. It was anticipated that this area will be designated as a nature conservation area.

2.1.10 The Northern Glens and Central Lowlands (LCA 8)

This LCA was considered by many consultees to be too diffuse and that the distinctiveness and importance of Lough Allen in its own right merited further consideration. A suggested boundary area from north of Lough Allen up to Manorhamilton was suggested and it was considered that the landscape in the northern glens around Glenade and Glencar are very different.

Creevalee Abbey (Dromahair) and the Holy Well at Killangue were identified as important built features in the area, and Shaas Falls at Newbridge near the northern end of Lough Allen was identified as a valued natural feature.

2.1.11 Sliabh an Iarainn & Corry Mountain Uplands (LCA 9)

The name of this area should be changed to the Irish spelling i.e.: Sliabh an Iarainn. Secondly, it was suggested that this LCA be divided into two distinct LCAs as Sliabh an Iarainn extends into Cavan and Corry Mt is considered to be a different landscape type with different geological features.

The designation of Sliabh an Iarainn as a SAC was raised. In addition, the disused coalmines, flag quarry and tramway at Knockacullion were
2.1.12 **Ballinamore Loughlands (LCA 10)**

There was no issue raised by consultees in relation to the name or boundary of this LCA. Ballinamore Loughlands are generally considered as an important landscape at county or national level with several islands in the larger lakes, turlough type drainage near Ballinamore town and important vistas from the lakes. The importance of the loughs for wildfowl and the high number of NHA designations was raised as a highly valued feature, particularly as the frequently shallow loughs support vegetation for wildfowl. Other valued features included the canals, ring forts, crannogs and Fenagh Abbey.

2.1.13 **South Leitrim Drumlins & Shannon Basin (LCA 11)**

There was a considerable amount of discussion relating to the River Shannon corridor and the issue of this being classified as a distinct LCA. The reasons cited in support of this included the fact that it is a major distinctive landscape feature with many aspects, bordered by a flood plain and containing numerous high value habitats. The planning aspects for this corridor are considered different from the wider drumlin area and as there are considerable development pressures the corridor should be treated differently in planning and development terms.

Valued features aside from the Shannon river related to Rinn Estate and its underutilisation.

2.1.14 **Corriga Uplands (LCA 12)**

There were no comments in relation to this LCA.
3 FORCES FOR CHANGE AND THE MEANS TO ADDRESS THESE.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this part of the workshop, consultees were asked to identify forces for change (land use and development pressures) for individual LCAs or the County as a whole. The final part of this workshop involved the consultees writing and nominating a speaker to discuss their suggestions for addressing the forces for change. The remainder of this chapter outlines general forces for change, followed by distinctive forces for each LCA and finally discusses the means to address these forces.

3.2 General forces for change

These have been separated into key themes.

Housing
There was considerable discussion in relation to the siting and planning of housing within the County. One consultee made the point that clustered housing development can also have negative impact and is often unsympathetic to landscape. An increase in scattered housing was identified by some consultees as also being problem, however prohibition of this was considered by some to contribute to further depopulation, another key area of concern amongst consultees.

Another view emerged in relation to the perceived aims of the National Spatial Strategy and the promotion of village-based development. Some consultees felt that there could be a potential conflict between this aim and the traditional scattered settlement pattern within the County. For example, it was argued that farmer’s offspring are returning to Leitrim but are unable to get planning permission for houses on the parent’s farmland. However these offspring would not want to live in the villages, having been reared on farms, village living would be alien to their wishes. An alternative comment was made that for many younger people the urban and city pull is very strong. A further comment related to one-off housing and associated issues of land speculation and rising land/house prices.

Forestry
There is an overall issue of both lowland and upland forestry and a feeling that there is too much coniferous planting. While the national target is for 17% planting in Leitrim, it is regarded as a major issue and is perceived to threaten and accelerate depopulation.

Another issue was raised in relation to forestry being planted by people who don’t live in Leitrim and as a consequence the economic benefits of forestry are not always going to Leitrim residents.
Furthermore, consultees commented on what they perceive as a great reluctance on the part of the Forest Service to fund broadleaf planting and that many Forest Service staff have little experience in broadleaf management.

**Wind farm Development**
All upland areas it was argued, are targeted for wind farm development and it was suggested that the ESB will not purchase energy unless it is from sites with the highest wind speeds. Some consultees feel that as a result the ESB tendering process is flawed and there is too much emphasis on economic benefits alone. An example was cited of an application for 25 turbines in County Cavan. Leitrim County Council made a submission in relation to this and the numbers of turbines have been reduced but their proposed size is larger and a decision is now awaited on 13 x 60 metre turbines.

Further north, wind farms are considered to be more intrusive and wildlife considerations may be more significant given the presence of, for example sparse grouse populations in northern Leitrim.

**Agriculture**
The Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS), encourages hedges rather than stonewalls. Consequently, it was argued that farmers are being expected to hedge up towards mountainous areas where the hedges are less likely to grow or may negatively impact on existing flora and fauna. A comment was made that REPS plans also needs to be more sensitive to landscape areas and considerations.
Slurry spreading and associated run-off problems are also identified as an issue by consultees, in part due to slatted houses and excessive slurry spreading.

The pressures on farmers, both fulltime and part time was recognised by consultees. It was argued that with the declining viability of farms there is an increased economic attractiveness for forestry development. A further comment raised was with the high incidence of bachelor farmers within the County, frequently there are no immediate offspring to pass on the land to and landholdings get bought up in their entirety and afforested.

**Roads**
Road improvements are considered to be creating negative visual and environmental impacts. A further comment was that excessive road usage is often related to lack of public transport.

**Natural Resources**
There were numerous comments that directly or indirectly related to natural resources and their management. It was felt by consultees that water based recreational activities are an increasing pressure on the larger loughs. Peat extraction and degradation to raised and blanket bogs also remains an issue for consultees. A concern was also expressed in relation to gas exploration and drilling and that this could negatively impact on population in North Leitrim. A further point was made in relation to the integrity of
designated habitats and that these continue to be under on-going pressures and consequently continue to be degraded.

1. Tullaghan Coast
   - Development pressure along the coastal road was identified including housing (increasingly for commuters) and communications infrastructure.

2. Lough Melvin Lowlands
   - Housing pressures and the peace dividend have implications for water quality, and
   - Guidelines for forestry development are not being followed in this area.

3. Arroo and Mountains Outlier
   - Pressures from wind farm and forestry development, and
   - Frequently opposition from farmers to public access (public liability on farmers land identified as a cause for opposition).

4. Tievebaun
   - Pressures from Wind farm and forestry development;
   - Frequently opposition from farmers to public access, and
   - Access issues and erosion risks

5. Doons & Crockauns
   - Housing development pressure, and
   - Habitat loss

6. Benbo
   - Overgrazing, and
   - Erosion.

7. Boleybrack Uplands
   - Wind farms;
   - Forestry, and,
   - Over grazing.

8. The Northern Glens & Central Lowlands
   - Road improvements along the N16 (Manorhamilton to Sligo) will lead to increased development pressure along this route, and
   - A lot of forestry applications on the Glenade side of N16.

9. Sliabh an Iarainn and Corry Mountain
   - Generally a lot of ribbon development from Drumkeeran towards Sligo. This is in effect becoming a commuter belt, and
   - Emphasis that this is a different issue to once off housing.

10. Ballinamore
• Shoreline development increasing as generally regarded as attractive locations in conjunction with fiscal policy and tax incentives.

11. South Leitrim Drumlins & Shannon Basin
• Development pressure along the Shannon River.

12. Corriga Uplands

No specific pressures identified for this LCA.

3.3 ADDRESSING THESE FORCES FOR CHANGE

Consultees recommended the following actions.

General issues
• A clear need for integrated communication between local and government agencies, as there are conflicting policies at present;
• The County Development Plan must resolve these conflicts;

Community & Agencies
• Need to consult and involve everyone;
• Framework of the National Development Plan and its impacts need to be considered;
• County Council needs to be fully resourced to implement recommendations;
• Local people must contribute;
• County Development Board is co-ordinating actions of all agencies, and
• LCA Report should be freely available to everyone in the County.

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• Limit second home development such as a % of total occupancy of any area should be allowed for second homes but it must be area specific;
• Housing development should be linked to public transport;
• Housing development should also fit within the landscape background.

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• Increase planning constraints on forestry with restrictions on location and regulations regarding type of forestry (increase deciduous planting);
• Any forestry development that is grant aided should be subject to planning permission;
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• Increased consultation about forestry development;
• Landscape Assessment provides opportunity to look again at how forestry is planned and to revise future plantations, and
• Coillte, landowners, farmers, forestry agencies need to work together.
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- Identify areas suitable for wind farms and areas where wind farms should be restricted;
- Cluster wind farms together if possible;
- Be aware of the conflict between nature conservation and landscape; Least visible uplands often have highest conservation value and highest wind speeds.

Agriculture
- Special support for agriculture in Areas of Visual Amenity and SACs to maintain the amenity value;
- Department of Agriculture must support landscape protection;
- Commonage Framework Plans for upland areas, need to be aware of these;
- Financial support must move from production to stewardship basis;
- Due to the high amount of small landholdings some farmers are under-employed, as a result there is a need to stimulate part time employment opportunities;
- Government agencies need to reassess current farming practices and work with farmers to assist change;
- REPS should also be more sensitively planned;

Roads
- No comments on this topic

Natural Resources
- Undertake a baseline survey of the County’s habitats not just in designated areas but in systematic, county wide basis;
- Different landscapes and habitats are sensitive to different pressures for examples, lakes very sensitive to pollution;
- Establish limits of change that can be tolerated;
- Need for increased awareness about micro-climates and its effects on landscape;
- Need to balance the conflicts between wanting access and retaining inaccessibility for remote vulnerable habitats.

Landscape Character Assessment
- LCA process very positive and will open up debate particularly in regards to capacity;
- Emerging consensus on issues;
- Possible future hierarchy of assessment types;
- Important that there is national co-ordination of LCAs through the Department of Environment & Local Government or bilateral agencies.
- Waterways Ireland and the Fisheries Boards should be very involved in developing and utilising this LCA.

Tourism
- Use Landscape as basis for sensitive tourism development;
• Opportunity to develop adventure parks and active tourism especially in North Leitrim;
• Over 75 sweathouses (good for treating rheumatism), their location is a landscape statement;
• Industrial archaeology is also important and should be considered as having tourism potential.
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<th>Name</th>
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Annex A

Consultation Report
1 CONSULTATION PROGRAMME REPORT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Environmental Resources Management has been commissioned by Leitrim County Council to undertake the first full Landscape Character Assessment for the County. A key element in the work programme is consultation with the local community (communities of place) and the numerous agencies that operate and have an influence on the changing landscape of the County. The aim of this report is to outline the consultation programme and to present the outcomes of this process to date.

1.2 CONSULTATION PROGRAMME

There were two separate phases to the consultation programme. The first phase took place during the course of the fieldwork programme. This involved a series of informal interviews between agencies and the project team. The second phase involved a more formal consultation programme, which took place on the 7th and 8th March 2002 at the Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon with two workshops. The participants of the workshops included local community and voluntary groups and state and semi-state agencies.

In addition, a weeklong public exhibition from 4 –8th March supplemented the above programme. This exhibition was held in Carrick-on-Shannon, Manorhamilton and Ballinamore. Comments from the public over the course of the exhibition was noted on Feedback Forms and integrated into this report.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF CONSULTATION

The aims of the consultation process are listed below:

- To encourage the participation of consultees in the assessment process;
- To foster greater understanding of landscape issues in County Leitrim;
- To improve the quality of the landscape assessment, and
- To make the resulting planning policies more robust and acceptable.

1.3.1 Structure of Workshops

The workshops were structured in the following way:

1. General introduction;
2. Introduction to the process and potential uses of Landscape Character Assessment;
3. Brief overview of the main characteristics of each draft Landscape Character Area, and
4. Workshop exercises based on the following key areas:
   - Boundaries and names for each Landscape Character Area (LCA) - are these correct/ any suggestions?
   - Key features/valued elements within each LCA that have not yet been identified?
• Identification of forces for change in each LCA
• How these forces for change should be addressed?
2 WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The recommendations and comments from both workshops and the public exhibition have been integrated in the following sections. In this section the issues raised during consultation in relation proposed LCA names, boundaries and features or valued landscape elements are discussed. Names relate to the suggested names of each LCA, boundaries relate to the suggested demarcation between each LCA. Valued features relate to any natural or man-made feature within the landscape that consultees identified as being highly valued within the County usually for cultural, historical, spiritual or ecological reasons.

2.1.2 General comments on Valued Features.

There was consensus that more reference should be made to natural features including the numerous loughs and rivers within the County. Built heritage features were also highly valued and consultees specifically mentioned fairy forts and other prehistoric features. Mass rocks, Holy wells, sweathouses and industrial archaeology were identified as meriting further consideration in descriptions of LCAs. Railways, roads and hedgerows also warranted further comment.

A general consensus emerged that north western Leitrim contained the most valued landscapes with the North West glens such as Glenade and Glencar being the most well known. Ballinamore loughlands were also considered to be of high landscape value. A final general comment related to the distinctive post-famine settlement patterns of Leitrim and that this legacy is of national or even international significance.

2.1.3 Tullaghan Coast (LCA 1)

No comments emerged in relation to the name, boundary or valued features of this LCA.

2.1.4 Lough Melvin Lowlands (LCA 2)

A number of issues were raised in relation to the boundary and name of this LCA. Recommendations included the point that Lough Melvin and Lough Macnean should be separate LCAs as they have different hydrological properties, i.e.: Lough Melvin is part of a chain of smaller loughs and different river systems, while Lough Macnean’s source is in the Thur Mountains. There was a suggestion that the boundary should lie at the watershed just east of Knobble on the County Boundary.

In addition, there was a recommendation that the archaeological feature called Black Pig’s Race in the Ordnance Survey maps should be changed to the
better-known local name of Black Pig’s Dyke. Valued features in this LCA included:

- Sean McDermott’s house at Kittyclogher,
- the high conservation value of Lough Melvin, a designated candidate SAC with a number of rare fish species and an important bird habitat, and,
- Crannogs and other islands with historical significance (such as Clancy’s Island, associated with the Spanish Armada) were also raised as valued elements.

2.1.5 Arroo & Mountains Outliers (LCA 3)

A recommendation emerged that Arroo and Tievebaun could be merged as they are underlain by a similar limestone geology and support similar flora. Another suggestion related to the name of this LCA, that it be changed to Dartry Hills or Breifne (Breffni) or O’Rourke Hills. This would reflect the local nomenclature of this area. Lough Macnean was recommended for inclusion in descriptions of this LCA.

Important valued natural features discussed by consultees included Fawley Falls, rock formations and cliffs, the presence of feral goats, as well as the designation of Arroo Mountain as a SAC/NHA. Evidence of fossilised fish in Ballagh River was also discussed. In addition to several megalithic rocks, mass rocks and numerous fairy and other prehistoric forts were identified as being highly valued features.

2.1.6 Tievebaun Uplands (LCA 4)

Apart from the suggestion of merging Tievebaun with Arroo mentioned above, there were no other comments in relation to name and boundaries of Tievebaun.

Valued features included the fact that the moorland is not extensively planted and has considerable value for flora and fauna habitats. Also the presence of rare coral flora was raised in the feedback form. The field boundaries composed of stonewalls in the high hills of this LCA are considered a distinctive feature.

There are also undisturbed archaeological sites in the area, for example, Pound Hill at Lurganboy is an important historic site. The Barytes mines, although more within the Sligo Boundary are also considered to be worth mentioning as they were mined from the mid 18th Century until approximately 1992.

2.1.7 The Doons & Crockauns (LCA 5)

Some consultees stated that this name is not appropriate and recommended that an alternative name be found if possible. Also consultees suggested merging this LCA with the Benbo LCA and extending the boundary southwards to Dromahair village boundary. The reasons cited for this was
that the consultees felt that there is no significant difference between these two upland areas.

In relation to the name change, it was mentioned that the town of Newtownmanner is locally known as the Manor and the highest peak in Crockauns is called Leenane. Therefore the name of Leenane & Manor was suggested as an appropriate name for the LCA.

A final comment relating to the name of Doons and Crockauns was that it is too generic and a more specific name would be more appropriate.

No comments were raised in relation to particular valued features in this LCA.

2.1.8 Benbo (LCA 6)

Again, apart from comments discussed in the previous section, there were no other comments relating to this LCA in terms of name and boundary. A mass rock to the west of Benbo was commented upon as a valued feature.

2.1.9 The Boleybrack Uplands (LCA 7)

No comments were raised in relation to the boundaries or name of this LCA. The higher areas of these uplands are considered of considerable nature conservation value and are also identified as high landscape value. In addition, due to the lack of access roads, the only way of getting to these areas is by walking and hence the sense of wilderness is retained. It was anticipated that this area will be designated as a nature conservation area.

2.1.10 The Northern Glens and Central Lowlands (LCA 8)

This LCA was considered by many consultees to be too diffuse and that the distinctiveness and importance of Lough Allen in its own right merited further consideration. A suggested boundary area from north of Lough Allen up to Manorhamilton was suggested and it was considered that the landscape in the northern glens around Glenade and Glencar are very different.

Creevalee Abbey (Dromahair) and the Holy Well at Killangue were identified as important built features in the area, and Shaas Falls at Newbridge near the northern end of Lough Allen was identified as a valued natural feature.

2.1.11 Sliabh an Iarainn & Corry Mountain Uplands (LCA 9)

The name of this area should be changed to the Irish spelling i.e.: Sliabh an Iarainn. Secondly, it was suggested that this LCA be divided into two distinct LCAs as Sliabh an Iarainn extends into Cavan and Corry Mt is considered to be a different landscape type with different geological features.

The designation of Sliabh an Iarainn as a SAC was raised. In addition, the disused coalmines, flag quarry and tramway at Knockacullion were...
mentioned. The remains of ancient woodland with 500 year old oak trees at Aughacashel and limestone features including potholes at Mullaghgarve were described as valued features as were the numerous megalithic tombs and ironworks within this area.

2.1.12 **Ballinamore Loughlands (LCA 10)**

There was no issue raised by consultees in relation to the name or boundary of this LCA. Ballinamore Loughlands are generally considered as an important landscape at county or national level with several islands in the larger lakes, turlough type drainage near Ballinamore town and important vistas from the lakes. The importance of the loughs for wildfowl and the high number of NHA designations was raised as a highly valued feature, particularly as the frequently shallow loughs support vegetation for wildfowl. Other valued features included the canals, ring forts, crannogs and Fenagh Abbey.

2.1.13 **South Leitrim Drumlins & Shannon Basin (LCA 11)**

There was a considerable amount of discussion relating to the River Shannon corridor and the issue of this being classified as a distinct LCA. The reasons cited in support of this included the fact that it is a major distinctive landscape feature with many aspects, bordered by a flood plain and containing numerous high value habitats. The planning aspects for this corridor are considered different from the wider drumlin area and as there are considerable development pressures the corridor should be treated differently in planning and development terms.

Valued features aside from the Shannon river related to Rinn Estate and its underutilisation.

2.1.14 **Corriga Uplands (LCA 12)**

There were no comments in relation to this LCA.
3 FORCES FOR CHANGE AND THE MEANS TO ADDRESS THESE.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this part of the workshop, consultees were asked to identify forces for change (land use and development pressures) for individual LCAs or the County as a whole. The final part of this workshop involved the consultees writing and nominating a speaker to discuss their suggestions for addressing the forces for change. The remainder of this chapter outlines general forces for change, followed by distinctive forces for each LCA and finally discusses the means to address these forces.

3.2 General forces for change

These have been separated into key themes.

Housing
There was considerable discussion in relation to the siting and planning of housing within the County. One consultee made the point that clustered housing development can also have negative impact and is often unsympathetic to landscape. An increase in scattered housing was identified by some consultees as also being problem, however prohibition of this was considered by some to contribute to further depopulation, another key area of concern amongst consultees.

Another view emerged in relation to the perceived aims of the National Spatial Strategy and the promotion of village-based development. Some consultees felt that there could be a potential conflict between this aim and the traditional scattered settlement pattern within the County. For example, it was argued that farmer’s offspring are returning to Leitrim but are unable to get planning permission for houses on the parent’s farmland. However these offspring would not want to live in the villages, having being reared on farms, village living would be alien to their wishes. An alternative comment was made that for many younger people the urban and city pull is very strong. A further comment related to one-off housing and associated issues of land speculation and rising land/house prices.

Forestry
There is an overall issue of both lowland and upland forestry and a feeling that there is too much coniferous planting. While the national target is for 17% planting in Leitrim, it is regarded as a major issue and is perceived to threaten and accelerate depopulation.

Another issue was raised in relation to forestry being planted by people who don’t live in Leitrim and as a consequence the economic benefits of forestry are not always going to Leitrim residents.
Furthermore, consultees commented on what they perceive as a great reluctance on the part of the Forest Service to fund broadleaf planting and that many Forest Service staff have little experience in broadleaf management.

Wind farm Development
All upland areas it was argued, are targeted for wind farm development and it was suggested that the ESB will not purchase energy unless it is from sites with the highest wind speeds. Some consultees feel that as a result the ESB tendering process is flawed and there is too much emphasis on economic benefits alone. An example was cited of an application for 25 turbines in County Cavan. Leitrim County Council made a submission in relation to this and the numbers of turbines have been reduced but their proposed size is larger and a decision is now awaited on 13 x 60 metre turbines.

Further north, wind farms are considered to be more intrusive and wildlife considerations may be more significant given the presence of, for example sparse grouse populations in northern Leitrim.

Agriculture
The Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS), encourages hedges rather than stonewalls. Consequently, it was argued that farmers are being expected to hedge up towards mountainous areas where the hedges are less likely to grow or may negatively impact on existing flora and fauna.
A comment was made that REPS plans also needs to be more sensitive to landscape areas and considerations.
Slurry spreading and associated run-off problems are also identified as an issue by consultees, in part due to slatted houses and excessive slurry spreading.

The pressures on farmers, both fulltime and part time was recognised by consultees. It was argued that with the declining viability of farms there is an increased economic attractiveness for forestry development. A further comment raised was with the high incidence of bachelor farmers within the County, frequently there are no immediate offspring to pass on the land to and landholdings get bought up in their entirety and afforested.

Roads
Road improvements are considered to be creating negative visual and environmental impacts. A further comment was that excessive road usage is often related to lack of public transport.

Natural Resources
There were numerous comments that directly or indirectly related to natural resources and their management. It was felt by consultees that water based recreational activities are an increasing pressure on the larger loughs.
Peat extraction and degradation to raised and blanket bogs also remains an issue for consultees. A concern was also expressed in relation to gas exploration and drilling and that this could negatively impact on population in North Leitrim. A further point was made in relation to the integrity of
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   - Road improvements along the N16 (Manorhamilton to Sligo) will lead to increased development pressure along this route, and
   - A lot of forestry applications on the Glenade side of N16.

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   - Generally a lot of ribbon development from Drumkeeran towards Sligo. This is in effect becoming a commuter belt, and
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• Shoreline development increasing as generally regarded as attractive locations in conjunction with fiscal policy and tax incentives.

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• Development pressure along the Shannon River.

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No specific pressures identified for this LCA.

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Consultees recommended the following actions.

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- Establish limits of change that can be tolerated;
- Need for increased awareness about micro-climates and its effects on landscape;
- Need to balance the conflicts between wanting access and retaining inaccessibility for remote vulnerable habitats.

Landscape Character Assessment
- LCA process very positive and will open up debate particularly in regards to capacity;
- Emerging consensus on issues;
- Possible future hierarchy of assessment types;
- Important that there is national co-ordination of LCAs through the Department of Environment & Local Government or bilateral agencies.
- Waterways Ireland and the Fisheries Boards should be very involved in developing and utilising this LCA.

Tourism
- Use Landscape as basis for sensitive tourism development;
• Opportunity to develop adventure parks and active tourism especially in North Leitrim;
• Over 75 sweathouses (good for treating rheumatism), their location is a landscape statement;
• Industrial archaeology is also important and should be considered as having tourism potential.
**List of Consultees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Byrne Maureen</td>
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