



# Step by Step



A walking strategy  
for **County Waterford**



## Table of Contents

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Introduction (County Mayor)	3
Summary - Short Steps	4
Strategy Implementation Structures	6
Background Information - Stepping Back in Time	7
Policy Context - Marching in Tune	19
The Strategic Approach - Making the Path Easier	21

### Vision & Strategies

For Co-ordination	23
For Access	24
For Participation and Social Inclusion	26
For Trail Development	27
For the Environment	30
For Safety	31
For Tourism & Economic Gain	33
For Trail Management and Maintenance	35
For Supporting Services	35
For Information and Data	36
For Promotion and Marketing	37

### Appendices

1. Framing Documents	38
2. Public Meetings	38
3. List of stakeholders	39

### Membership of Steering Group

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**John Browne**, Dungarvan Hillwalking Club;  
**Des Cowman**, Copper Coast Tourism; **Michael Fanning**, Comeragh Mountaineering Club;  
**Rosarie Kealy**, Waterford Sports Partnership;  
**Ann Kiely**, Engineering Section, Waterford County Council;  
**Mairéad Linneen**, Visit-Net Tourism Project Office, Waterford County Council;  
**Jim Shine**, Scouting Organisations;  
**Mary Wall**, Nire Valley Walking Festival; **Richie Walsh (Facilitator)**, Waterford County Council



## Introduction



Mayor of County  
Waterford, Ger Barron

As Mayor of County Waterford, I am delighted to pen a few words of introduction to this most innovative work - a Walking Strategy for County Waterford. I am particularly delighted that it is a work which has been conducted and led by Waterford County Council. I am also delighted that it is a work which has been developed in a true spirit of partnership. In particular, it has been a collaboration among state and local development agencies, most especially the Regional Tourism Authority, Waterford Leader Partnership and Waterford Sports Partnership. It has, however, also been developed in partnership with the communities of Co. Waterford and with all the interested stakeholders.

There is now a national recognition of the need to invest time and thinking into the whole area of physical recreation and activity. There is also a recognition of the need to invest resources into the development of facilities and services in these areas to provide for the needs of both our communities and our visitors. Our tourists, our urban communities and our countryside demand it. Our health and our pockets also demand it. As a nation we do not participate in enough physical exercise and, from a tourism perspective, if we do not have enough top-quality tourism product in place at the right price, the potential visitor will, quite simply, go somewhere else. Walking, then, is the way by which we can address both situations. In Waterford, we have an absolutely stunning landscape and a potentially brilliant walking product when fully developed. The combination of our mountains, valleys, woodlands and coasts is unsurpassed anywhere - either at home or abroad.

I have to admit to having a particular personal fondness for the launch of this work. My home lies at the foot of the beautiful Comeragh Mountains, a walker's paradise if ever there was one. I live but a few yards from the old Waterford-Dungavan Railway line which has the potential to be one of the greatest European Greenways. And recently, I have been a founder member of a newly formed Walking Club, where I regularly see the social and recreational pleasures of a Community doing something together in a positive and healthy environment

At a time when national bodies and workgroups such as Fáilte Ireland, Comhairle na Tuaithe, the Obesity Task Force and the National Trails Strategy, are addressing these issues, we are delighted that we are the first County to address them at a local level. We hope that our work will contribute to the national thinking and, equally, that the evolving work at national level will give strength to our local implementation plans.

I acknowledge the contribution of all the Working Group to this work and especially the community representatives. I also congratulate Brian White, Director of Services, and his staff in Community & Enterprise, especially Richie Walsh, who facilitated the process. Now, however, the real work begins. The strategy contains a range of actions which will need to be undertaken in order to make County Waterford the "Walking Capital of Ireland". They will need resources and commitment. They will need partnership and collaboration. I ask everyone to contribute to the "Walk Waterford" idea. Not necessarily in one fell swoop, but little by little - STEP BY STEP

Gerard Barron

## Summary - Short Steps

### The Problems as identified

- **Health:** We have become a more sedentary nation with less participation in physical activity. This has brought with it many health problems
- **Environment:** We damage our environment very easily, know too little about our heritage and, with growing urbanisation, are more and more removed from the land
- **Economy:** Walking tourists are good spenders but, until such time as we have quality walking product and services, we will not be able to take advantage of this
- **Social Inclusion:** Walking is an excellent mechanism for integrating into communities and a highly accessible means of sharing experiences with family, friends and neighbours. We need more safe local walking opportunities
- **Recreation:** Walking is one of the most positive and cost-free leisure activities but there are too many restrictions on participation
- **Transport:** Although traffic congestion and air pollution increase, and although fuel prices threaten to rise sharply, fewer and fewer people walk to work, school or to the shops

### Why a Walking Strategy for Co. Waterford?

Because of its wonderful array of landscapes; its proximity to a number of large urban centres and to significant points of tourist access to the region and to the state and because its communities asked for it.



“Walking is the very best exercise.  
Habituate yourself to walk very far.”

*(Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826)*

Main Trends in The Walking Sector	Main Issues to be Addressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worldwide increase in participation</li> <li>• Majority of walkers are recreational, not specialists</li> <li>• Preferred form of route: Circular routes of 2-3 hours duration</li> <li>• Family aspect very important</li> <li>• Strong presence of women</li> <li>• Large numbers of over-50's involved, requiring tailored walks</li> <li>• Growing numbers of walkers from higher socio-economic groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access</li> <li>• Participation</li> <li>• Trail Development</li> <li>• The Environment</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Tourism &amp; Economic Gain</li> <li>• Trail Management and Maintenance</li> <li>• Supporting Services</li> <li>• Information and Data</li> <li>• Promotion and Marketing</li> <li>• Co-ordination</li> </ul>

**Our Vision**

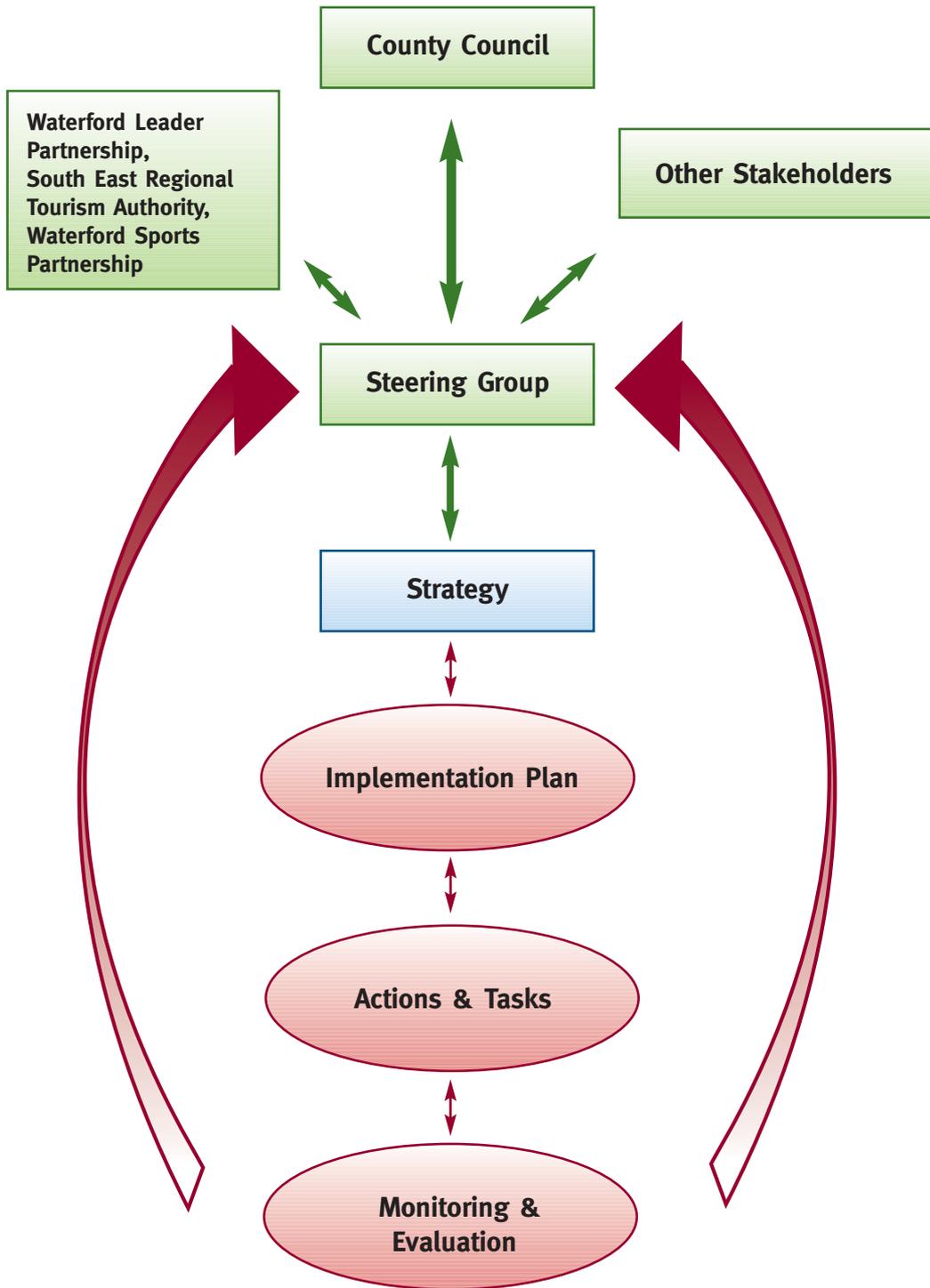
A Waterford where all people of all ages and all abilities - local and visitor alike - walk conveniently, safely and often.

**The Message...**

**“ Go on, get out there and ... WALK WATERFORD ”**



# Strategy Implementation Structures



## Background Information - Stepping Back in Time

### Lifestyle and Social Change

Over the last ten years, Ireland has gone through enormous social change, much of it fuelled by economic development but also by sociological and political factors quite independent of economic trends. Much of this change has been extremely positive, contributing to a vastly improved quality of life for many families. We have become a very diverse and multi-cultural society - a nation quite confident in its own abilities. Simultaneously, however, there are also many negative side-effects. For the purposes of this strategy, some of the most important socio-economic changes could be summarised thus:



- We have become a more sedentary nation spending much less time involved in physical activity, leading to a whole range of negative health issues.
- There has been an ever-increasing urbanisation, leading to a reduced association, for many people, with the countryside and with rural living
- There has been a huge increase in motorised traffic on our roads leading to urban congestion, pollution and safety issues for all users of the roads but, especially, pedestrians - both rural and urban
- There has been a growing nationwide tension between landowners and, mainly urban, groups who claim rights of access to the Irish landscape. It is a classic, though sometimes exaggerated, confrontation between private property rights and public rights of access
- Landowners have become conscious of a growing “compensation culture” which suggested it to be prudent to disallow access for fear of liability in the event of an accident. This fear is only gradually being dissipated by recent legislation, which places more of the onus of responsibility on the visitor rather than on the landowner
- The post-Fischler era of agriculture has seen the reduction in the number of family farm units and the increasing need for the development of alternative rural enterprises and off-farm economic activities in order to sustain rural communities
- There has been a growing consciousness of the importance and value of our heritage - both natural and man-made, and, quite often, of its vulnerability
- The significance and value of “green” tourism is only recently being understood as a potentially sustainable model of rural tourism
- There has been an increasing breakdown in family and neighbourhood social support structures and, quite often, an increasing sense of isolation for certain vulnerable social groups, such as older people (especially those living alone), the unemployed, new arrivals (especially non-nationals) and single parents
- Changing labour patterns, such as increased working hours, both parents working and non-family childcare solutions has led to less time spent together as a family unit
- Education is, more and more, seen to be best delivered in a practical and tangible environment. Where better to learn about our streets, our valleys, our heritage and natural history than by being there!

## Health Habits

A survey conducted as part of “Our children, their future ... Why weight???” - Survey Series & Literature Review on Childhood Obesity (Health Service Executive, Southern Region, 2005) found that:

- Family preferences are for gentle/sedentary pastimes rather than moderately vigorous exercise as a family unit
- One-third of 1st class children surveyed have a TV in their bedroom
- Most children have less than 40 minutes actual exercise in PE class during the school week
- 40% of primary schools have a “no running in the yard” policy

It further states: “Ireland is in the throes of a global obesity pandemic. Obesity is threatening our children's wellbeing, their development and their future health as adults. Over 155 million school aged children worldwide are now overweight or obese; in developed countries it is estimated that almost 1 in 10 children are either overweight or obese. A national study of obesity in school aged children will shortly be launched which will define the exact prevalence in this country”

Lest anybody think that obesity in Ireland is merely confined to children, let them be informed by The Health Promotion Unit's report on obesity which has the following to say:

- The key causes of obesity are linked to food habits and physical activity levels.
- Obesity is directly associated with a number of serious diseases including diabetes, heart disease, many forms of cancer and high blood pressure.
- In Ireland, 47% of people report being overweight or obese (13% obese, 34% overweight; SLÁN 2003).
- Ireland has the fourth highest prevalence of overweight and obesity in men in the EU and the seventh highest prevalence among women.

(Source: <http://www.healthpromotion.ie/topics/obesity/> accessed April 2005)

These, and other studies, very much confirm what every medical professional, and indeed layperson, knows anecdotally:

**Ireland has a growing obesity problem, affecting both children and adults, and caused by inappropriate food habits, but also by a lack of proper participation in physical activity.**

“Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart,”

(Oscar Reizenstein II, 1895-1960, *You'll never walk alone*)



## Tourism and Walking

Over the last twenty years or so there has been a significant increase in the number of tourists who participate in walking as part of their holiday experience. In 2003, 168,000 overseas visitors to Ireland cited “Walking” as one of their main holiday activities and spent in excess of €110 million.

From a rural perspective, the huge benefit of this spend is that it is almost exclusively outside of Dublin and quite a lot of it is spent in the remoter rural areas. From a local perspective, however, the South-East Region acquires little of this spend as the visiting walker has a tendency to gravitate almost invariably towards the West and the South West. In actual fact the number of bed nights spent by walking holiday makers in the South East Region 2003 was the lowest for any region in the country and was only 25% of the equivalent South-West figure. This is mainly due to the undeveloped state of the walking product and its appropriate marketing.

The development of this market is critical because it is a market which has some very positive aspects:

- Walking/Hiking continues to be the main activity for foreign visitors
- The average spend of walking activists is greater than for any other activity
- The average length of holiday stay is greater at 16 nights
- The potential for repeat business is extremely high in this market - 88% are very/quite likely to revisit
- There is also a significant growth in the domestic market (estimated at 235,000)

“Waterford is gifted with many beautiful and unique features. Its pristine environment, its diversity of landscapes, rivers, and a range of important heritage sites provide a key resource. It is the foundation on which to build a strong tourist industry, set within an international framework that combines best sustainable practice and economic opportunity. The recent designation by UNESCO of the 'Copper Coast' of Waterford to the status of 'Geopark', provides the County with instantly recognised importance in world-class amenities.

Our high quality resources must be complemented by high quality facilities and a high quality of service. This can bring year-round benefit to the county. However, development must not contribute to an erosion of resources or amenities. Our efforts must integrate sustainable development, and a Sustainable Tourism Strategy, into the County's development generally”.

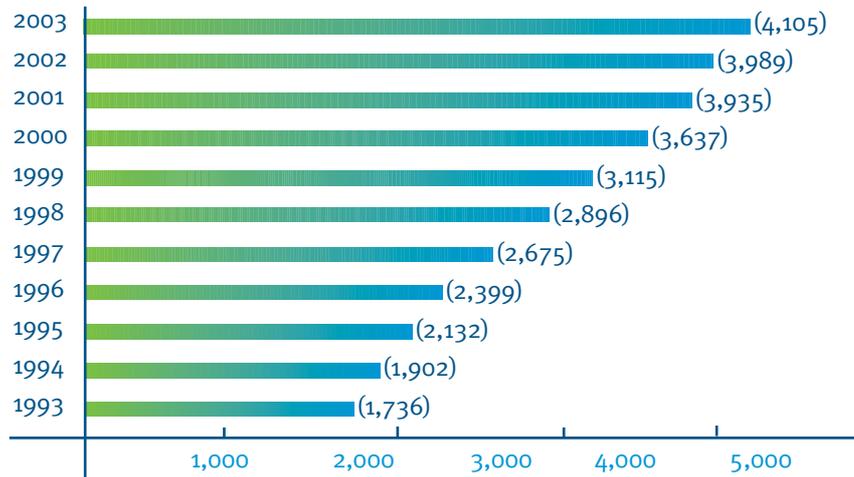
[Source: [Waterford Co Development Board Strategy 2002-2012](#)]

### Market Origin of Ireland's walkers (2003)

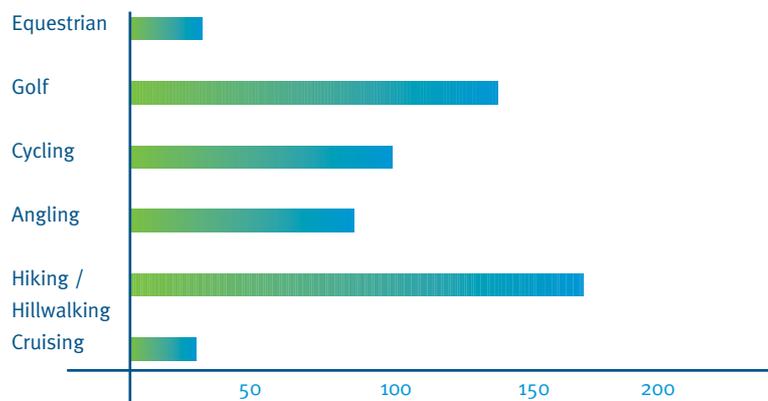
Mainland Europe	47%
Britain	27%
North America	21%
Other	5%

### Tourism Performance in 2003

Expenditure by visitors to Ireland (including receipts paid to Irish carriers by foreign visitors) was estimated to be worth €4.1 Billion in 2003.



### What activities did they engage in ?



Source: Failte Ireland, Tourism Facts, 2003

- The majority of tourist walkers are recreational, not specialists i.e. rather than coming to Ireland to walk, they come to Ireland and walk.
- The general motivators for a visitor coming to Ireland for a walking holiday and for a general holiday are the same - people, place and pace - and issues which affect the general market also affect the niche product sectors
- From the perspective of specialism, it would be unwise to over-concentrate our marketing resources in competition with the well developed walking product of Scotland and Wales and the now much more accessible markets of Europe, South America, Asia and New Zealand.
- The need is for a combined and clustered package which can give a wide-ranging experience to the visitor, mindful of the growing importance of the Domestic Market, especially in terms of short breaks



## Waterford - People and Place

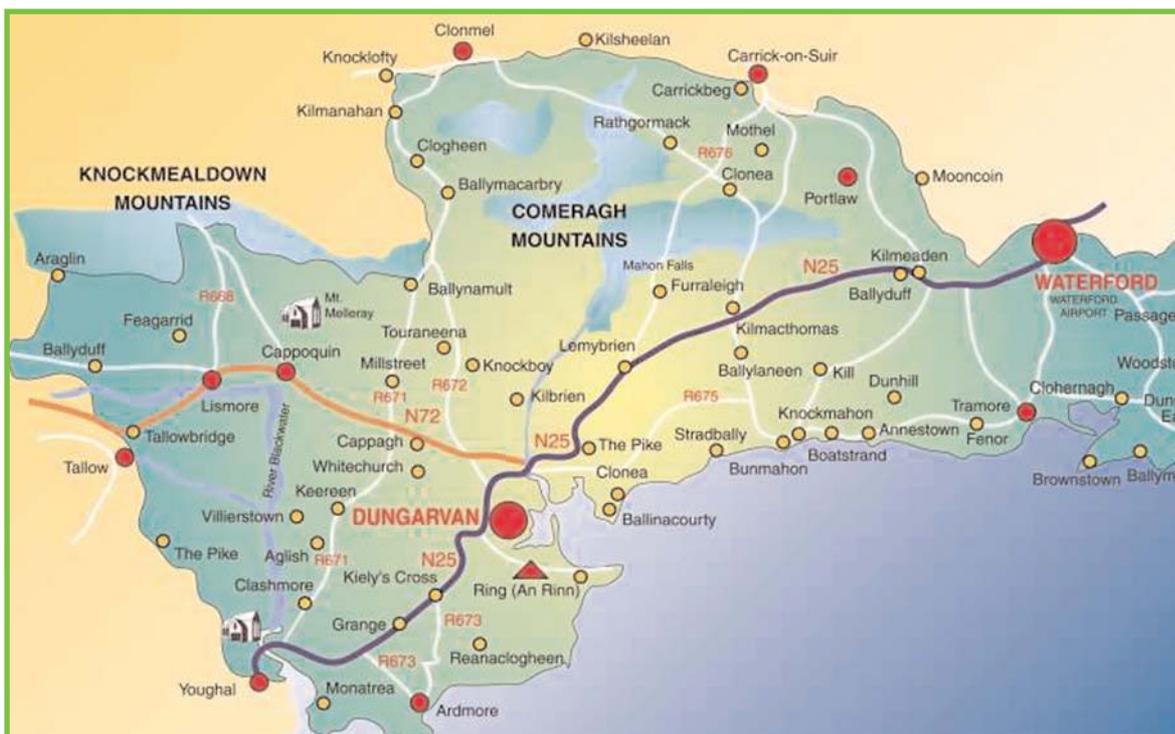
### Topography

County Waterford is a coastal county, some 1,839km<sup>2</sup> in extent, located on the south eastern coast of Ireland bordering the counties of Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny and Wexford. Together with Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Wexford, and Waterford City, it forms the South East Region. From East to West the county spans approximately 80 km while from North to South the maximum distance is less than 50 km.

The County has an extensive coastline along its southern boundary, and extends from the estuary of the River Suir in the East to Youghal in the West. There are also a number of natural harbours in the County, the largest of which is Waterford Harbour. Of the other bays and harbours the most important are located at Tramore, Helvick, Dunmore East, Dungarvan and Ardmore. The chief other physical features of the County include the rivers Suir and Blackwater along with the smaller valleys of the Mahon, Bride, Colligan, Nire, Lickey and Tay Rivers and the impressive Comeragh and Knockmealdown mountain ranges, which flank the northern frontiers.

The Gaeltacht area of An Rinn and An Sean Phobal, is a flourishing Irish-speaking area, with its own particular heritage and culture.

From an access perspective, the County is serviced by the N25 National Primary Route, which connects Cork to Rosslare and the N72 which connects Killarney with Dungarvan. Other important transportation linkages include Rosslare Harbour, Cork Airport, Waterford Regional Airport and Plunkett Train Station in Waterford City.



## Demography

County Waterford is primarily a rural county with a population density of only 31 persons per sq. km. compared with a national average of 55 and an EU average of almost 120. Even within this there are huge variations with some Electoral Divisions having very low population densities:

### High population E.D.s

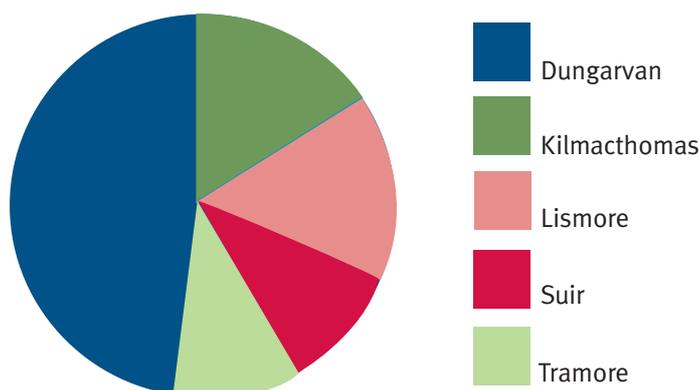
Electoral Division	Per. per Sq Km	Electoral Division	Per. per Sq Km
Dungarvan No. 1 Urban	1513	Killea	123
Lismore Urban	1422	Faithlegg(pt)	71
Dungarvan No. 2 Urban	1216	Islandikane	68
Tramore	472	Dungarvan Rural	61

### Low population E.D.s

Electoral Division	Per. per Sq Km	Electoral Division	Per. per Sq Km
Mountstuart	3	Coumaraglin	8
Rathgormack	4	Mocollop	8
Gurteen	6	Ballyin	8
Knockaunbrandaun	6	Ballynamult	9
Ballydurn	6	Ballysaggartmore	9
Tinnasaggart	6	Grallagh	9
Ardmore <sup>1</sup>	7	Kilwatermoy West	9

In 2002, the population of the County was 56,592, an increase of 9.6% on the 1996 figure and greater than the average national increase of 8%. However, this growth was mainly confined to the East of the County near the City and along the coast, especially near Dungarvan. Most of the north and west of the County enjoyed only a minimal population increase or, in some cases, even a decrease.

### Persons/Sq km per electoral Area



<sup>1</sup> There are 2 Electoral Divisions named Ardmore. This one refers to Ardmore E.D. in Dungarvan Rural District



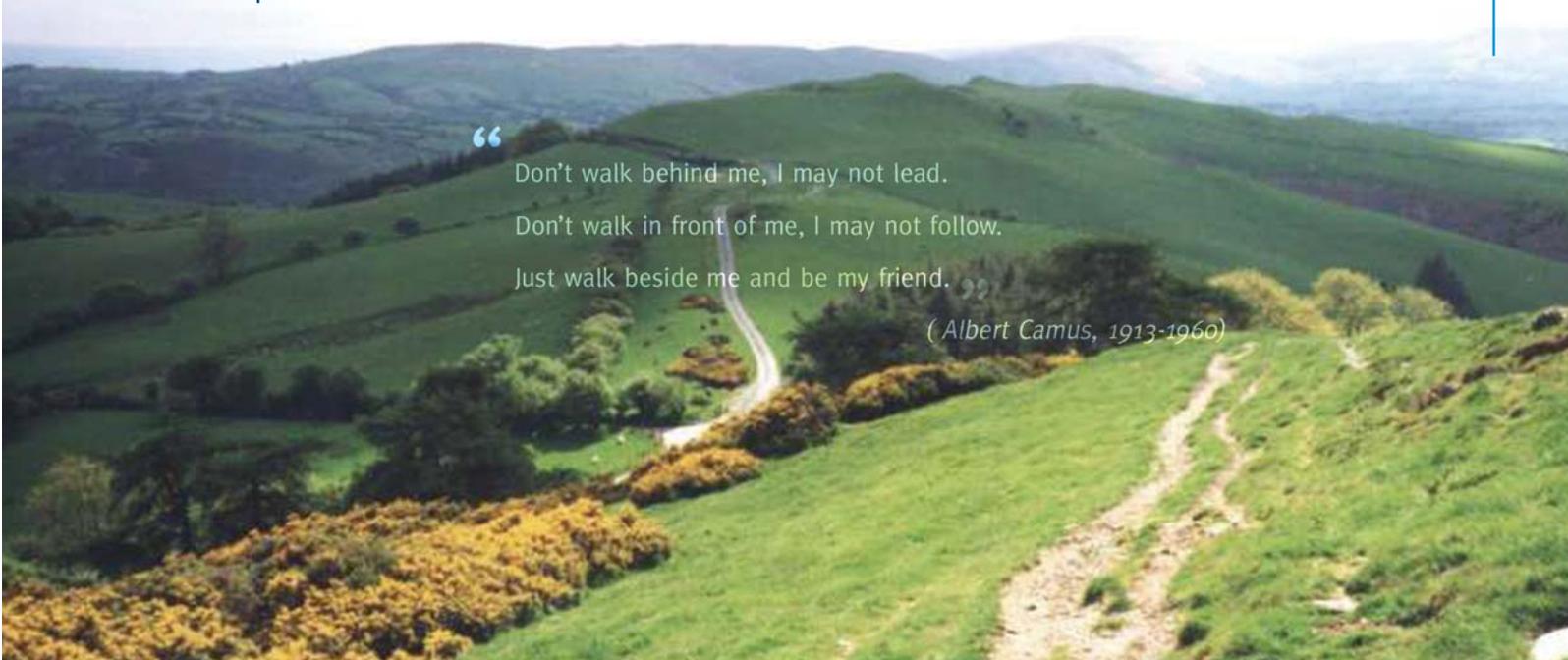
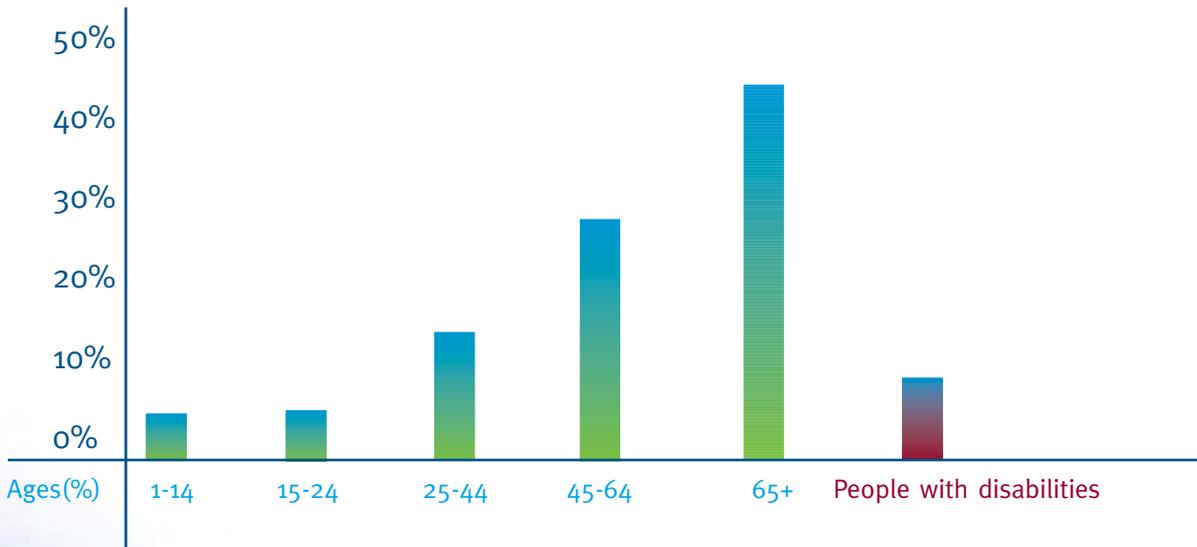
**Food For thought in Co. Waterford**

- We have an ageing population - over **12.5%** of County Waterford's population are **“Retired”**
- **11.4%** of households are headed by **lone parents**
  - almost 50% of these have at least one child aged under 15
- More than **16%** of people aged **over 45 live alone**
- Some **6.4%** of people describe their nationality as **other than Irish**
  - in 7 Electoral Divisions this figure is over 10%

**Further Food**

- **7.8%** of people in Co. Waterford describe themselves as **having a disability**.  
This figure rises to 46% for those aged 65+

Disability in Co. Waterford (% of Population)

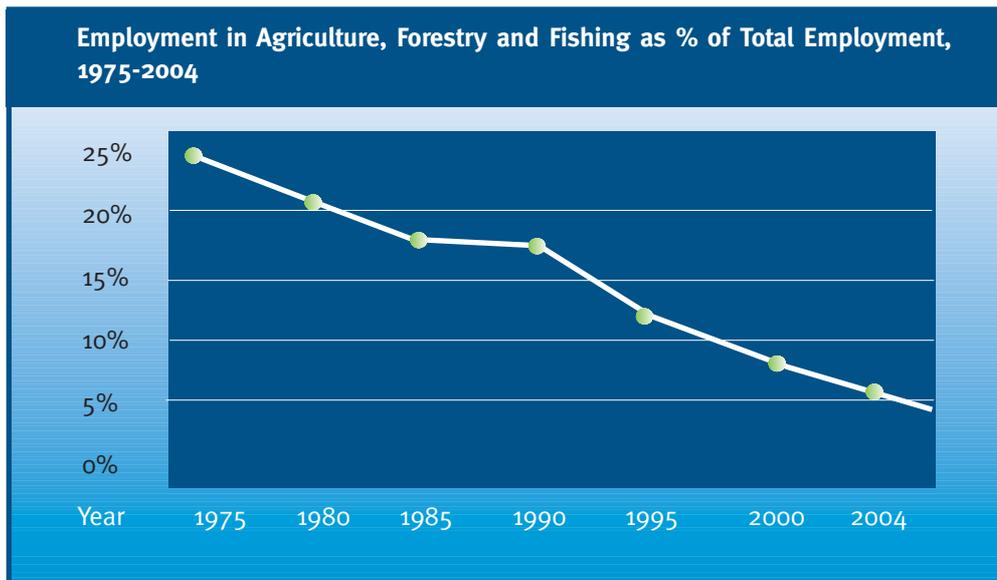


“  
 Don't walk behind me, I may not lead.  
 Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow.  
 Just walk beside me and be my friend.”

( Albert Camus, 1913-1960)

## Key Socio-Economic Data

One of the most dramatic changes in the last 30 years is the decreasing importance of agriculture as the driving sector within the Irish economy. This has been caused mainly by decreasing farm incomes in relative terms, the availability of off-farm employment opportunities and young people leaving the land, leading to the combination of smaller farms into larger more viable units.



Source: Compendium of Irish Agricultural Statistics, 2004 (Department of Agriculture & Food)

In such an environment it is economically and socially prudent to see the land as being a multi-functional resource which can have benefits other than just for agricultural production. However, the major benefits of this multiple use of the land has to exist with either the landholder or, at least, the local community.

### % of farm households with off farm job, 1993 - 2003

Year	Holder or Spouse	Holder	Spouse
1993	31.4%	23.7%	12.2%
1994	33.3%	23.9%	15.2%
1995	36.8%	26.5%	17.4%
1996	40.1%	28.1%	19.8%
1997	42.6%	29.3%	21.5%
1998	43.5%	29.8%	22.0%
1999	45.2%	32.2%	22.0%
2000	45.1%	32.7%	23.1%
2001	45.2%	32.9%	24.1%
2002	48.2%	34.8%	25.9%
2003	50.2%	34.1%	28.6%

Source: Teagasc (National Farm Survey)

### Some Socio-Economic Food for thought:

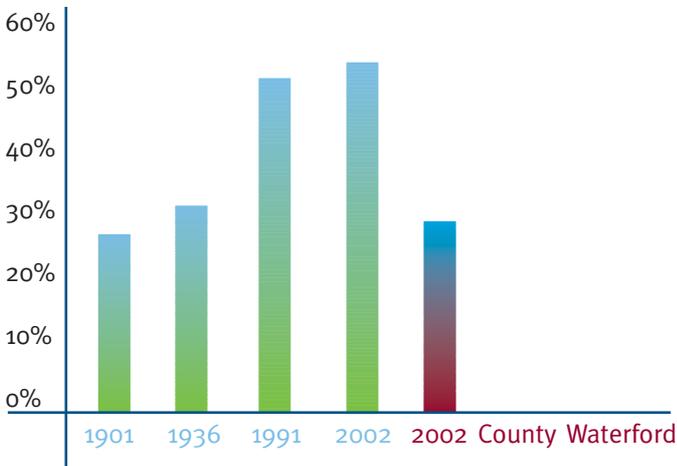
- 42% of households in Co. Waterford have PC's
- 32.5% of Waterford households have access to the internet
- We have over 1.8 million televisions in Ireland and over 2 million mobile phones



## Urbanisation

Ireland has a relatively low level of urbanisation. In Ireland a town size of 1,500 (population clusters of 1,500 or more) has been taken as the dividing line in applying the classifications 'aggregate town' and 'aggregate rural'. In 1901 only 28.3% of the total population was in aggregate town areas whereas by 1936 this proportion had risen to 35.5%. At the 1991 Census 57.0% of the population was in aggregate town areas. By 2002, this figure had risen to 59.6% for the state, while the equivalent figure for County Waterford was only 32.2%, with this percentage being concentrated almost completely in Tramore and Dungarvan.

Urban population 1901-2002 (State)



However, County Waterford is quite unique nationally in that it is ringed on its borders, but just outside its local authority area, by a number of substantial towns - Youghal, Fermoy, Clonmel, Carrick-on-Suir and especially Waterford City with its population of over 45,000 people. Many of the people who live in these towns see County Waterford as a place to access leisure opportunities such as beaches, open spaces and amenity areas. This, naturally, brings economic opportunities but also the attendant costs of developing and maintaining those amenities, most of which provide no direct revenue. However, it is important to see the urban populations, both within the County and proximate to it, as ready markets for quality amenity services and ensuring that there is local economic gain from that market. Perhaps even more important is the urban population in the rest of the state, as selling County Waterford to those areas guarantees significant increases in valuable bed-nights within the domestic tourism market.

With increased urbanisation, there also increases the responsibilities for planners and developers to institute quality amenity infrastructure and services both within our towns and within easy access of them.



## Transport Habits

In 2002, the percentage of households in Co. Waterford with no car stood at 15.9% while the national figure was 21.7%. As the factors determining car ownership - e.g. affluence, access to public transport, whether or not living in urban environments, number of children in household etc - it is quite difficult to deduce anything from that fact. What is significant, however, is that 43% of households in the County had two or more cars, with almost 9% having three cars or more.

On a national basis, even from 1996 to 2002, the dependence on the private car as the prime mode of transport increased dramatically.

### Modal split of transport types between 1996 and 2002

Census Year	1996 (CSO)	2002 (CSO)
Motor Vehicle (including passengers and vans/lorries)	35.54%	60.1%
Foot	13.48%	12.58%
Bicycle	4.85%	1.77%
Bus	15.59%	11.64%
Train	.07%	.12%
Motor Cycle	1.04%	.73%

From the perspective of this work, the key fact is that the percentage of people who cite walking as a key means of transport decreased from 13.5% to 12.6% in the space of just six years and this, in an environment of greater urbanisation, where walking to the shops, schools, work, leisure activities etc. should be a real option.

From a County Waterford viewpoint, the percentage of those aged 5+, who travel by foot to school, college or work, according to Census 2002, is 12.6%, where the National Average is 17%.



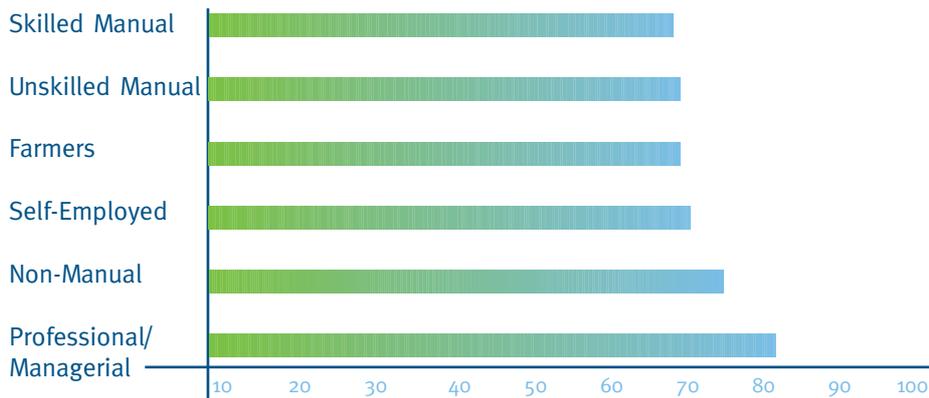
## Recreational Walking<sup>3</sup>

In 2002, the Economic and Social Research Institute conducted, on behalf of the National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee, a survey on recreational walking. The basis of the survey was an on-going random telephone survey of 1,250 people per month. The following results correspond to 2,431 completed questionnaires<sup>4</sup> taken from July to October, 2002. The objective of the exercise was to get an indication of the level, type and frequency of participation in recreational walking.

### Results

- 74.3% of the respondents confirmed that they had participated in recreational walking in the previous three months
- Walking was by far the most significant form of physical activity
- Participation by females (79.9%) is far greater than by males (68.4%)
- No great disparity across age cohorts, except people aged 70 or over, when participation decreases considerably
- Participation increases with educational attainment (e.g. Third level graduates, 85.4%; Primary education only, 65.5%). Similar correlations exist with income and occupational category

### Percentage of Respondants participating classified by occupation



- Participation rates are highest in the South-East Region (86.5%) and lowest in the South-West (66.7%)
- 54.3% of respondents indicated that there were walking areas near their homes which were safe during daylight hours
- Most walks are of less than 1 hour's duration (63.7% of respondents); 16.7% of respondents participated in walks of 1-4 hours duration and < 1% in walks of over 4 hours or more than one day (Figures add to greater than 74.3% because of individuals taking multiple walks in different categories.)
- Short walks generally begin from (70.4%) or close (17.3%) i.e. from 1 -15 minutes to people's residences. As the duration of walk increases so does the likelihood of it beginning further away from home. However, the figure for 1-4 hour walks beginning at home is still 65.6%.

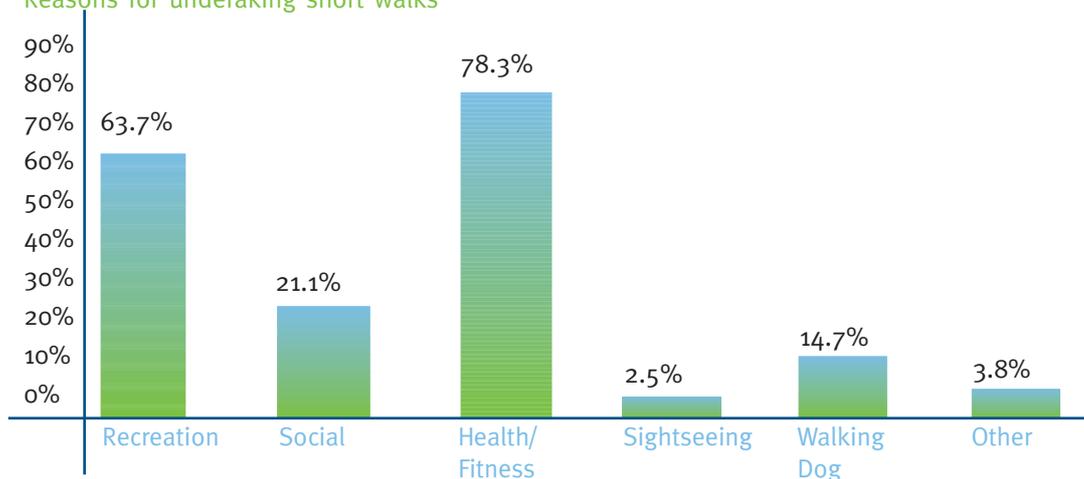


<sup>3</sup> Does not include walking to work, school, shop, services etc

<sup>4</sup> The participants in the survey comprised 52% of the total valid contact

- Most frequently used walking areas vary between urban and rural areas but are in order of importance:
  - Footpaths/Streets/Public Roads
  - Parks and green areas (Urban)
  - Non-designated walking areas (Rural)(beaches, forests, hills and open country)
  - Designated walking routes
- Though more men participate in longer walks (1-4 hour walks and longer) than women, they do so less frequently (i.e. fewer women than men, but more regularly)
- Almost half of the people (49.8%) who take short walks do so alone. As the duration of the walk increases so does the inclination to have companions
- It is calculated that half-day and full-day walkers spent in excess of €7 million on food and drink from July to October with most of this being spent close to the location of the walks
- Respondents were asked for the two main reasons for taking walks and these varied in significance, but not in order of importance, according to the duration of the walk

Reasons for underaking short walks



“ I’ll walk where my own nature would be leading;  
 It vexes me to choose another guide;  
 Where the grey flocks in ferny glens are feeding;  
 Where the wild wind blows on the mountain-side ”  
 (Emily Bronte, 1818 - 1848)

## Policy Context - Marching in Tune

As part of the evolution of the County Development Board's "Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Waterford, 2002-2012", Walking and Walkways were identified as having major strategic potential for the County.

### Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Waterford, 2002-2012

#### Goal 14, Objective 5

- "To enable County Waterford to become the walking capital of Ireland"
- The action, which has been seen as most likely to deliver this objective, is:  
"To establish a County Waterford Walkways Working Group", one of whose priorities should be to develop a Walking Strategy for County Waterford  
Lead agency on this action is Waterford County Council

Waterford County Council's Corporate Plan 2005-2009 identifies the following as being one its nine key objectives:

### Waterford County Council's Corporate Plan 2005-2009

#### To promote and develop tourism in the County

- To promote Waterford as a tourist destination through the completion of a number of key projects and marketing strategies over the term of the plan

The Walking Strategy is seen as being one of these key projects for Waterford County Council and was delivered to two Strategic Policy Committees for adoption (SPC5: Arts, Culture & Heritage and SPC4: Economic Development and Community Services)

### Equally, Waterford Sports Partnership's Strategy has the following objective

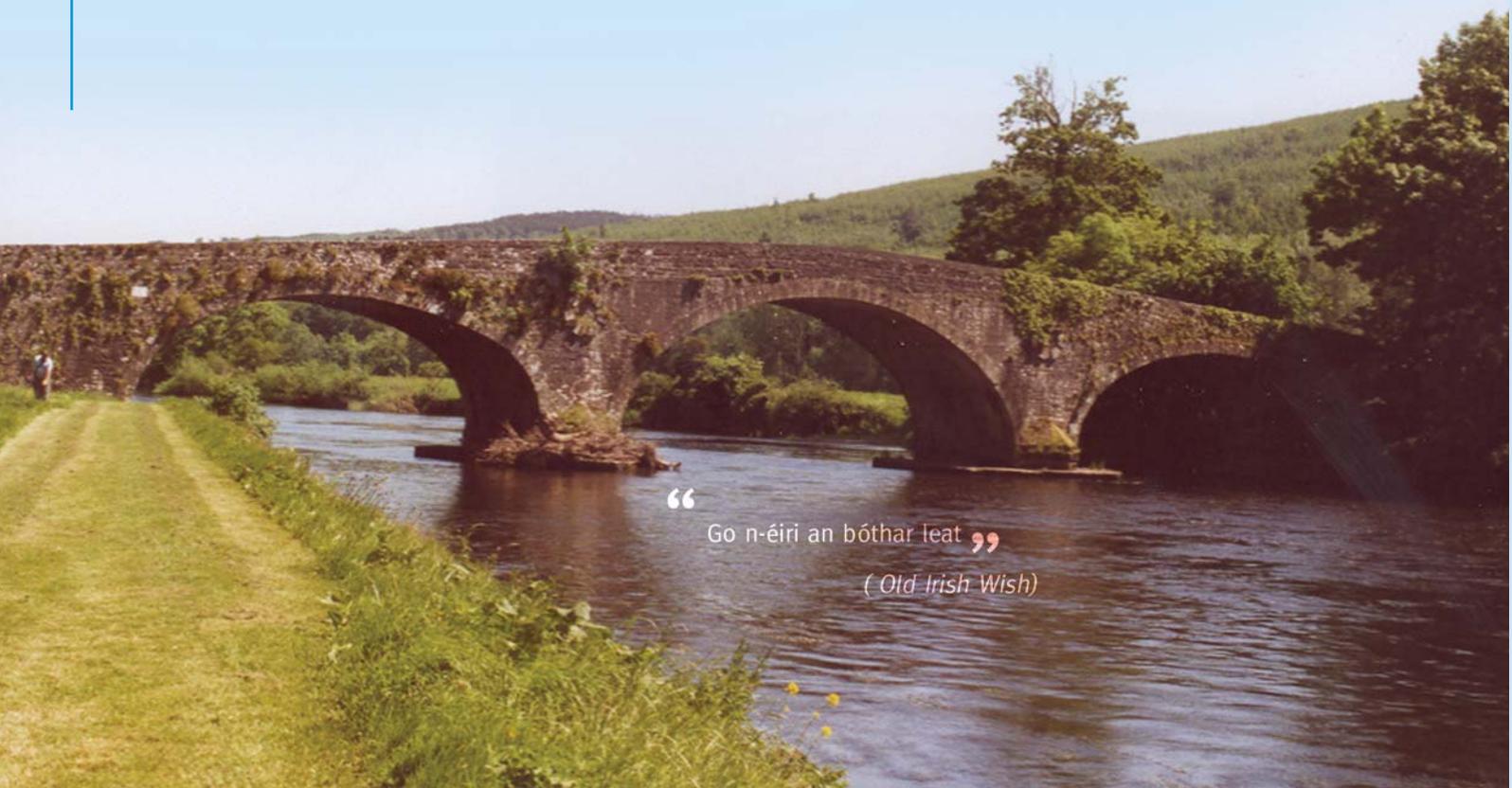
#### Waterford Sports Partnership Strategy 2003-2006

- "To develop and support programmes aimed at increasing general participation in sport and physical recreation."
- The following two actions are prioritised  
**Action 1.1.2** - To promote walking in the Community (Lead partner: Waterford Sports Partnership)  
**Action 1.1.3** - To support the development of a Waterford Walking Strategy (Lead Partners: Waterford County and City Councils)

From a tourism perspective, the chief policy support is the “Strategic Development Plan for Ireland’s Walking Tourism Product, 2003-2006” published by Fáilte Ireland in 2003. This plan emphasised the ideas of coordination and partnership, sustainability, quality access and the development of a quality consumer-led product. This Waterford strategy very much adheres to the principles and objectives of this plan.

The Irish Sports Council’s commitment to the development of physical participation opportunities is outlined in “Sport for Life - The Irish Sports Council’s Statement of Strategy 2003-2005”. The Council’s National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee has led in establishing over 3500km of waymarked recreational walking trails throughout Ireland. These well developed and managed trails, which attract thousands of recreational walkers of all ages and abilities annually, from both Ireland and abroad, highlight the Council’s commitment to the promotion of lifelong participation in recreational sporting pursuits.

Another key national supporting policy instrument, though, is the recently published Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity. This document outlines the lack of proper physical activity and inappropriate food habits as being the main reasons for our population’s current obesity crisis. The Report makes a number of recommendations and strongly emphasises the positive effect which the development of walkways and the promotion of walking can have on our nation’s health.



“  
Go n-éiri an bóthar leat ”

( Old Irish Wish )

## The Strategic Approach - Making the Path Easier

One of the key aspects of this work is that it be for the long haul and for the whole County and yet fit within a local, national and, even, European context. The work should act as a framework to give strategic direction to any actions in this area over the next ten years. Already much work has been done in the County in the area of walking development and marketing - what this attempts to do is to bring this work together and to make an easier road and a policy context for further work in the future.

Some of the major principles in the development of this work are that it would be:

- Informed
- Consultative
- Simple
- Deliverable

There would be a genuine attempt

- to gather together the key data, information and policy
- to ensure that there was a shared vision of where we wanted to go
- to avoid getting embroiled in local controversies or single-issue situations
- to avoid making the thing too complex
- to ensure that there was commitment from the various agencies (and appropriate resources available) to perform the actions
- to develop some mechanisms for monitoring progress and for evaluating the impact of the strategy over a period of time



To this end:

- We decided on who would be the key players in developing and delivering the strategy Waterford County Council, Waterford Leader Partnership, South East Regional Tourism Authority, and Waterford Sports Partnership. This would be the Walk Waterford Partnership
- We gathered together all the stakeholders for an initial large consultation (see Appendix 3)
- We decided on the key issues
- We elected a steering group who would be largely responsible for the strategy's development (see Inside Front Cover)
- We had a series of public meetings in order to advance the work (see Appendix 2)
- We performed appropriate desk research
- We developed a Work-Plan aimed at having the Strategy in place by mid 2005

**Next Steps:**

The draft strategy was adopted by Waterford County Council at its June meeting and thereby became official County Council policy.

The main work now is:

- Formally launch the Strategy
- Reconstitution of the working group
- Consideration by the working group of submissions received
- Develop Implementation Plan
- Decide on a set of Performance Indicators so that the Strategy can be monitored
- After two years, evaluate the impact of the Strategy

**The Key Issues:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access</li><li>• Participation</li><li>• Coordination</li><li>• Trail Development</li><li>• The Environment</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety</li><li>• Tourism &amp; Economic Gain</li><li>• Management &amp; Maintenance</li><li>• Support services</li><li>• Information &amp; Data</li><li>• Promotion &amp; Marketing</li></ul> |
|---|---|

“ There is a difference between knowing the path  
and walking the path ”

( Andy and Larry Wachowski, *The Matrix*, 1999)

## Vision and Strategies - Stepping into the Unknown

### Our Vision

A Waterford where all people of all ages and all abilities - local and visitor alike - walk conveniently, safely and often.

### Coordination

Currently, there is much activity in County Waterford in the area of developing and improving walking routes. Many community groups have spent much time and energy in developing walking product and services for both their own people and for visitors. Equally, there are many genuine but under-resourced attempts at the promotion and marketing of these routes. Much of this work, however, is uncoordinated and very dependent on local champions leading to a patchwork quilt type of scenario across the County. Nonetheless, the work of the volunteer and the community will continue to be the bedrock on which the success of this strategy will depend. One of the main strategies for coordination will be the formation of a Walking Group for the County, which will be representative of all the key stakeholders. This is the key for the County but there is one other major coordinating requirement, and that is with our local authority neighbours in Waterford City. With over 45,000 people and with major requirements for access to the countryside it would be remiss of us if we did not see it as an opportunity for developing routes and services in a coordinated and cooperative way

### Strategies for Coordination

- 1.1 Establish and support a Walk Waterford Strategy Group
- 1.2 Develop coherent structures for Strategy Implementation
- 1.3 Agree on one County Waterford point of contact for all Walking matters
- 1.4 Establish locally-based Route Committees where appropriate
- 1.5 Develop a mechanism for cooperation with Waterford City

## Access

The access<sup>5</sup> issue is the area in many parts of the country where much controversy and negative energy has been expended over the last number of years. It is also an issue which has received much media attention. Thankfully, however, it is an issue which, up to now, has not affected County Waterford to any great extent. Over the years, a mutual respect has developed which ensures that issues of access are at a minimum. However, it is important to create an environment where this situation does not deteriorate.

Access issues are normally based on various private and public rights, either actual or perceived, and are sometimes, and wrongly, perceived to be typical of urban-rural social division. Most often, they are based on the conflict between private property rights and public rights of access. Many of the conflicts around the country have been the result of people “standing up for their rights” in a non-negotiated environment, where, quite often, there are genuinely two sides to the argument. Some of the important points in the debate are:

- With growing urbanisation, there is an increasing demand for access to the countryside
- In relative terms, farmers' incomes have been falling and they see that allowing access creates costs and very little associated income
- Public rights of way have not been properly mapped and some have been closed off by development
- Under Section 73 of the Roads Act, 1993, it is a function of a local authority to protect the right of the public to use public rights of way in its administrative area
- In the event of an accident, there is the fear of liability and associated compensation claims
- Fears of liability carry increased costs of Insurance
- There are issues around damage to crops and animal health and safety caused by reckless walkers
- It is only in the environment of mutual respect for each other and for the land that landholder and walker can contribute to each other's welfare and to the tranquillity of the countryside



One of the most critical contributors to the Access conflict has been the fear of liability and subsequent compensation claims in the event of an accident. The Occupiers Liability Act, 1995 sought to reduce the onus on an occupier in terms of his responsibilities to trespassers<sup>6</sup> and to place more of the onus of responsibility for their own safety on the visitors themselves. Since 1995 no successful claim has been lodged against an occupier and in a recent landmark judgement by the Supreme Court in the case of Weir Rodgers vs The SF Trust Ltd, the judgement in favour of the occupiers emphasised that reckless disregard needs to be shown in order for somebody to have a reasonable claim. This ruling very much reduces any fears which occupiers might have with regard to accidents to visitors while on their property and subsequent compensation claims.

<sup>5</sup> "Access" in this instance refers to physical access to or through private lands. Other aspects of access such as cost, mobility difficulties etc are dealt with in other sections <sup>6</sup> Anybody who is not an invited guest of an occupier

## Strategies for Access

- 2.1** Use the Walk Waterford Strategy Group as a mechanism for negotiating settlements in dispute situations
- 2.2** Waterford County Council to develop a methodology and time-frame for the registration and mapping of public rights of way
- 2.3** Investigate the use of joint or shared insurance policies, where appropriate or necessary
- 2.4** Support the work of Comhairle na Tuaithe in its attempts to get national agreement on the Access issue
- 2.5** Agree on the key points and routes of access to our various landscapes, ensuring that these universally recognised and undisputed access points are well signposted
- 2.6** Institute a campaign targeted at landholders emphasising the positive local economic, social and environmental impact of quality access
- 2.7** Ensure walkers understand their obligations to the countryside and to private property
- 2.8** Waterford County Council to be conscious of its responsibility to maintain existing rights of way and its entitlement to establish new rights of way where appropriate



“  
Courage: it is in the small things we see it,  
The child's first step,  
As awesome as an earthquake ”

*(Anne Sexton, 1928 - 1974.)*

## Participation and Social Inclusion

The National Survey of Recreational Walking showed that, while overall 74.3% of people report themselves as having walked for recreational purposes in the previous three months, this figure varies hugely across different target groups. Participation by women at 79.9% is higher than for men at 68.4%. Participation across age cohorts is relatively balanced except for the over 70's when participation falls significantly. All evidence would also indicate low participation rates among children and young people. The study also shows a positive correlation between education levels / socioeconomic status / income and participation i.e. the people at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder participate less. People who work long hours and have major family commitments tend to take shorter walks and to do so less often. People, generally speaking, enjoy walking most when they do so in group situations, such as with family, friends or in formal walking groups. In such situations, it can be a major vehicle for recreation and for social inclusion.

Last year, as part of European Car-Free Day, Waterford Sports Partnership developed a pilot Walking School Bus initiative with Abbeyside National School. For everybody concerned, it was an extremely enjoyable experience, though demanding of much human resource for supervision and safety purposes, and it gave to children the sense of the fun of “walking to school”. Further pilots should be supported in order to establish local best practice in this area.

One of the key non-participant groups are people with disabilities, for whom lack of access to appropriate walking opportunities can sometimes be the critical factor. Whether impaired by either mobility or sensory disabilities, people's decision to walk, or wheel, will be determined by such factors as ease of access and safety. This strategy does not suggest that every metre of every walking route should be absolutely disability-proofed but the visually impaired should be able to travel around town independently and safely, mobility impaired people should not be faced with steep steps at the entrance to what is otherwise a highly accessible walking route and a wheelchair user, no more than a parent with a pram or buggy, should not be prevented from accessing a walking route due to lack of disability-proofing on key parts of the infrastructure. One of the major encouragements to participate in regular and challenging walking is membership of walking clubs. There are three clubs in the County which are affiliated to the Mountaineering Council of Ireland - Dungarvan Hillwalking Club, Ballyduff Walking Club and Kilmac Walkers. Most members of Comeragh Mountaineering Club come from Waterford City.

### Strategies for Participation and Social Inclusion

- 3.1** Develop a promotional campaign aimed at prioritised target groups
- 3.2** Support the establishment and development of officially affiliated Walking Groups and also of non-affiliated “Walking for Fun” groups
- 3.3** Support the establishment and operation of Walking School Bus initiatives
- 3.4** Cooperate with the Irish Heart Foundation in rolling out the Slí na Sláinte programme in the County
- 3.5** Ensure that as many walking routes as possible are disability proofed and made accessible for wheelchair use
- 3.6** Develop campaigns aimed at group participation in walking during the winter months
- 3.7** Develop programmes aimed at making walking more fun e.g. walk orienteering



## Trail Development

One of key aspects of this strategy will be to ensure that there are walking facilities and infrastructure in place which are suitable for:

- All ages and abilities
- All times of the year
- All parts of the County
- All of our landscapes
- Our local communities and our visitors

Having said that and considering that the County is already well endowed with a variety of walks, there should be little need for the establishment of new walks and much of the work should concentrate on the improvement and promotion of already existing routes. One of the key objectives of this strategy is to ensure the sustainability of routes, both environmentally and economically i.e. not to invest in route development beyond the point of having the resources to properly promote, manage and maintain them. Where trails are to be developed the work should adhere to best practice models and to national guidelines and standards. One of the key aspects of all routes is that they should have multi-purpose usage, if possible, but not of a motorised nature and not if such multi-purpose usage conflicts with the safety of walkers. Such other uses could be for running, cycling and equestrian activities.

There is in County Waterford the opportunity of developing themed walks based on our natural history, our landscape and our culture. Such a themed approach could emphasise our mountains (especially the Comeraghs), our coastal areas (especially the Copper Coast area), our valleys and riversides (especially the Blackwater Valley), our woodlands, our towns and villages, our urban environments, our Gaeltacht and our Christian Heritage

### Strategies for Trail Development

- 4.1** Adopt models of best practice and standards for trail development, especially those recommended by the National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee.
- 4.2** Decide on a Priority One set of 10-12 routes which will receive immediate priority treatment in terms of
  - Development
  - Management and maintenance
  - Marketing
- 4.3** Ensure, where practicable and safe, that trails have multi-purpose usage
- 4.4** Develop and promote a number of themed walking opportunities throughout the County
- 4.5** Develop and promote a “rosary of walks” celebrating the County's Christian Heritage
- 4.6** Ensure that there is at least one recognised walking route, preferably off-road, in every community
- 4.7** Recognise the work of Volunteers in the area of walks development activity by participation in the Community Awards Scheme
- 4.8** Ensure that the abandoned Waterford-Dungarvan Rail Line is developed to the very highest Greenway standard
- 4.9** Investigate the long-term resource issues for St. Declan's Way and agree on way forward

## The Jewel in the Crown

### The Waterford-Dungarvan Railway

The Railway line runs in an East-West direction for about 45km and connects directly the City of Waterford and the County Town of Dungarvan, and travels roughly parallel and close to the National Primary Route, the N25, which it crosses on three occasions. For more than 35km of its length, it is less than 2km distant from the N25, making it highly accessible at a number of points.

The track, the building of which began in 1872 taking over six years to complete, starts right in the centre of Dungarvan Town and provides panoramic views of Dungarvan Bay, the Comeragh and Monavullagh Mountains, the Atlantic Ocean and the Suir Valley. For much of its length, it runs through quiet, unspoilt country and presents a huge environmental diversity. A journey along its course is a voyage through Waterford's heritage - an ecological, geological and architectural adventure. Some of the features which it boasts are three huge viaducts and a tunnel almost 400 metres in length. Most of the infrastructure of the track including surface, bridges, viaducts, level crossings and tunnel, is in excellent condition and requiring only limited immediate remedial attention.

CIE ceased using the line from Waterford to Mallow in 1967, but most of the line between Dungarvan and Waterford City continued to be used on a private basis for goods purposes by Quigley Magnesite until 1982. This was facilitated by the building of a spur from the Crooked Bridge outside Dungarvan to Ballinacourty, the site of the Magnesite factory.

In 1999, the Board of CIE agreed to sell the line to Waterford County Council, with the Council wishing to develop the line as a Walking and Cycling route to European Greenways standard. In the meantime, pledges of funding have been received from Fáilte Ireland and from Waterford Leader Partnership. However, there have been administrative delays in the transfer of the property from CIE to Waterford County Council. These delays have been frustrating to those who see this as having the potential to be a huge tourism and community flagship project but they have also created opportunities for breaches of the line for industrial, agricultural, residential and roads developments, which breaches may require legal actions to make good. These delays, thankfully, are finally being resolved and, hopefully, by year's end development will be under way.

The town of Kilmacthomas is strategically placed directly in the centre almost equidistant from Waterford and Dungarvan and roughly 22 km from both. For many walkers, this is an ideal stopover point while also operating as a vantage point for access to walking in the Comeragh Mountains. Dungarvan, Kilmacthomas and Waterford City have all got the key services which walkers and cyclists need. One of the key objectives of the development will be to provide Community Loops of varying difficulty in these three places. Along the route there are various safe locations for Car Parking, which will provide a range of options for users of the trail.



From Kilmeaden, towards Waterford City for about six kilometres, The Waterford & Suir Valley Railway Company operates a narrow-gauge railway for recreational purposes. This is currently being extended and negotiations are underway to bring this service into the heart of the City. This is a potential add-on tourist experience for users of the trail.

The trail will provide suburban pedestrians and cyclists with the opportunity of accessing services in both Dungarvan and Waterford City as it already passes through a number of suburban estates in Dungarvan and recent developments in the City lie just to the South of the line and can be accessed from it. Waterford Rural Transport Initiative has expressed an interest in the development and is willing to act as a transport co-ordinator for the project. As a direct linear route, there will be a limited need to provide and maintain signage and most of the signage will concentrate on points of access and egress, re-assurance, community loops, and relevant services in close proximity to the trail. Due to the remoteness of much of the trail, loose furniture will be kept to a minimum and any investments will be as vandal-proof as possible. As there are occupied Railway Cottages at most of the level crossings, re-assurance of travelling through a living countryside will always exist. These, or others near the trail, could well see the potential of developing accommodation or food services.

In 1982, the last train ran on this line. In the meantime, nature has found here a haven for ecological diversity. Now is such an appropriate time for this line to be returned to the people and to be developed in such a way that its transport heritage, its architectural heritage, its natural diversity, its scenery and the physical recreation needs of our citizens can all be gathered and enhanced under its influence.



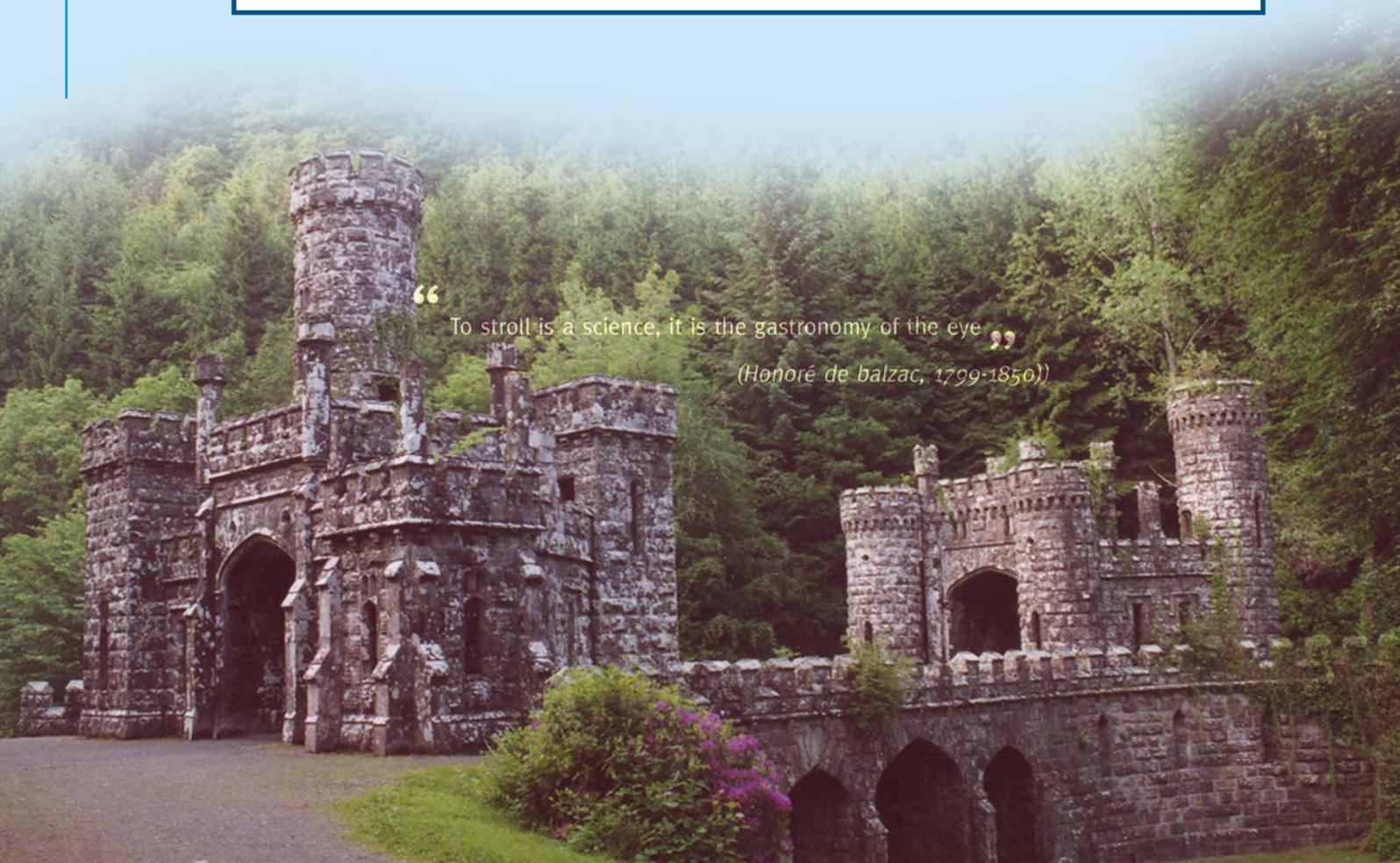
“  
I like long walks, especially when they are  
taken by people who annoy me”  
(Noel Coward, 1899-1973)

## The Environment

Walking can have simultaneously both extremely beneficial and detrimental effects on our environment. On the one hand, while providing the very “greenest” transport option, it also provides a mechanism for people to educate themselves on the vulnerability and beauties of our natural, built and archaeological heritage. On the other hand, it can create access to some of our most vulnerable ecological arenas, where increased presence of people can create greater damage. Equally, unthinking visitors can destroy our most pristine environments by leaving litter behind. Also, many of our walking areas are remote and unguarded areas which can, on occasion, be vulnerable to reckless vandalism. Many of the national NGO's have countryside codes and, currently, Comhairle na Tuaithe is endeavouring, among other things, to agree a Countryside Code which will address issues such as access and the Environment

### Strategies for the Environment

- 5.1 Use the development of the County's Heritage Plan to ensure that the connections between walking, access and heritage are well established
- 5.2 Support programmes such as Car-Free Day and “Leave-the-Car at Home” campaigns
- 5.3 Develop a programme to promote the idea of the “Classroom without Walls” as a means of delivering physical education combined with history, geography and environmental studies by using appropriate walks close to schools
- 5.4 Ensure that physical access to extremely vulnerable heritage areas is not facilitated
- 5.5 While ensuring that their functionality is not restricted, ensure that trail signage, information boards, and furniture is as unobtrusive and as vandal-proof as possible
- 5.6 Adopt an agreed Countryside Code and display it at all key points of access



“  
To stroll is a science, it is the gastronomy of the eye”  
”  
(Honoré de balzac, 1799-1850)

## Safety

Some of the major reasons why many people do not participate in walking are the inherent safety issues involved. At one time or another, most walkers have experienced a fear of accident, of getting lost, of anti-social behaviour, of innocently trespassing or of being the victim of crime. For walkers, there are as many on-road dangers as there are off-road. Most safety issues for pedestrians are around traffic speed and volume, narrow roads, lack of footpaths and lack of appropriate lighting. From an off-road perspective, most safety issues revolve around the danger of accident on rough ground, lack of access for emergency services, lack of telecommunications, remoteness, use of trails by other user groups (especially scramblers, quads, motorbikes, horses and mountain bikes). Much of the danger to walkers can be dealt with by relatively simple and non-costly methods such as walking in groups, wearing appropriate clothing, having appropriate equipment and carrying a mobile phone, where appropriate. In the last five years, there have been two pedestrian fatalities on County Waterford roads, one in 2001 and one in 2002. Equally, over the last number of years, there has been a reduction in pedestrian fatalities on a national level. Whether this is an indication of greater safety measures being put in place or because of significantly reduced numbers who walk the roads is difficult to say for certain. The following table gives road deaths for the state for the period 1997-2002:

<b>Road Accident Deaths by Road User Type</b>						
<b>Road user type</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Pedestrians</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Pedal Cyclists</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Motor Cyclists</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Car Users</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Other Road Users</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>376</b>

Source: Ireland North and South - A Statistical Profile -2003 Edition

### Strategies for Safety

- 6.1 Institute traffic calming measures where there are high volumes of pedestrians
- 6.2 Provide footpaths and/or good quality lighting in all urban pedestrian areas
- 6.3 All development plans to give consideration to pedestrian safety including the establishment of appropriate pedestrianised areas and streets and safe walking opportunities in urban estates
- 6.4 Create good access to already-existing pedestrian and walker safety manuals via publication agreements, web-site and links
- 6.5 Chief safety risks to be pointed out to walkers at main access points
- 6.6 Encourage accommodation providers to have safety clothing and equipment (e.g. reflective jackets) available for use by guests
- 6.7 Have appropriate warning signs at particularly dangerous points on trails
- 6.8 Perform and publish on the Internet a mapping exercise of mobile phone coverage for all of the County
- 6.9 Support the development and use of guiding services, especially in upland areas
- 6.10 Publish occasional articles on pedestrian and walking safety in the local press
- 6.11 Restrict multiple use of a trail if it presents a genuine danger to walkers
- 6.12 Support walking leadership training programmes for clubs and communities.

“

Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you ”

*(New Testament, John xii, 35.)*

## Tourism and Economic Gain

- Walking/Hiking continues to be the main physical activity in which overseas visitors engage (although there has been a diminishing demand, mainly attributed to the Foot and Mouth Crisis of 2002)
- The average spend of walking activists is greater than for any other activity area
- €112.7million was spent by overseas visitors engaged in Walking in 2003
- The average length of stay by Walking Visitors is greater than for other activities/interests at 16.1 nights (figure varies by country of origin)
- High potential for repeat visits - 88% very or quite likely to revisit
- Walking has also made a substantial contribution to the economy in relation to domestic tourism (estimated 235,000 domestic walkers)
- In 2003 domestic visitors accounted for 53% of visitors to the SouthEast region and 33.4% of tourism spend
- Experienced Walkers will also travel off-season, which helps to bolster shoulder times

[Source: Fáilte Ireland]

### “Waterford County: a Monument of the Future - Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, 2002-2012”

Waterford County Development Board

**Goal 14** That the people of Waterford will gain maximum benefit from the sustainable development of its tourism potential

The development of the Walking Product fits perfectly within the notion of Green Sustainable Tourism. Properly developed, we should see significant economic gain for local communities with no negative impact upon the environment or depletion of resources for future generations.

Whilst the creation of local economic gain is a major factor in a rural tourism context, it should not be discounted either in an urban setting. The average spend of visitors to Ireland, who cite walking as one of their chief activities, is almost €1,000, much of this is spent in local hostels, B&Bs, restaurants and pubs. It is worth noting, however, whilst bed-nights should always be the main target, we should not discount the importance of domestic visitors/local users of trails. The Survey of Recreational Walking, 2002, calculated that half-day and full-day walkers spent in excess of €7 million on food and drink from July to October with most of this being spent close to the location of the walks.

In Waterford, we have the scenery, we have the heritage - natural and man-made, and we have a growing portfolio of cultural festivals and events. Our main requirements will be to develop the trails, to package the experience and to market it to as wide an audience as possible. To that end, we do not aim to treat Walking as a niche/specialist interest and to compete in that way, but rather as a mainstream one presenting a wide range of walks to a wide range of walkers.

### Strategies for Tourism and Economic Gain

- 7.1** To undertake Research to better understand our visitor requirements and needs and to identify a Unique Selling Point (USP) for Walking in Waterford
- 7.2** To co-ordinate a cohesive framework by adopting a local partnership approach to develop walks incorporating sense of place (i.e. local heritage & traditions, language, crafts etc)
- 7.3** To institute a campaign to encourage farmers and local communities to develop appropriate support facilities and services, whilst recognising where there is investment already made and identifying where there is a dearth of amenities
- 7.4** To develop and support general training programmes for the tourist industry in destination and product awareness, in hospitality and in quality issues
- 7.5** To support the development of Walking Festivals
- 7.6** To develop a Marketing Campaign which appeals to overseas, domestic and local users of walks, clustering events and attractions, local restaurants etc
- 7.7** To identify best opportunities for further promotion through trade, consumer, media and online marketing activities
- 7.8** Work with tour operators, domestic and overseas, and local accommodation providers to package and promote general and themed walks in the County
- 7.9** Support the establishment or development of locally-based businesses which focus on the development of Walking packages

The work needed to further Waterford as a Walking Tourism destination is already well underway with many local communities having developed local product supported especially by Waterford Leader Partnership and the County Council (as in the examples of the Nire Valley Walking Festival and the Rathgormack Hiking Centre). The Visit-Net Project Office of Waterford County Council has performed preliminary research to identify Waterford's 60+ recognised walking trails and the South East Regional Tourism Authority is actively marketing the region's walking product both at home and overseas.

Any future Walking Waterford campaign should appeal to overseas and domestic visitors as well as local users. Given the increasing trend towards reduced length of stay and the fact only 20% of all visitors use Way Marked Ways, consideration should also be given to the provision of loop walks, themed walks and spurs off linear routes.

We need to significantly improve the quality of the product to market it accordingly. This is the strategic approach on a national basis advocated by Fáilte Ireland. Here in Waterford, we can give local life to this national approach.



## Trail Management and Maintenance

One of the major difficulties with developing the walking product for our own people and for visitors is the whole area of management and maintenance of the walks. There is nothing worse than a visitor being directed to a trail and then finding the route inaccessible or in very poor shape. One of the major objectives of this strategy should be to limit overall development to a level at which proper management and maintenance can be achieved, to encourage the commitment of resources for this work and to develop innovative approaches in this whole area. One of the key aspects of this work will need to be a renewed sense of community participation and ownership in monitoring, overseeing and maintaining local walkways.

### Strategies for Trail Management and Maintenance

- 8.1** Develop and support Local Route Committees where appropriate
- 8.2** WCC to devote a percentage of its Annual Roads Budget to develop, manage and maintain our walking routes
- 8.3** Develop a coordinated approach to maintenance through a Partnership of WCC, LEADER, FÁS and Community Volunteers
- 8.4** Investigate the potential of volunteer-based initiatives such as i-to-i for conservation and maintenance
- 8.5** Pilot the maintenance of one or two routes under the Rural Social Scheme
- 8.6** Organise “clean-up” days as a partnership between WCC and local community groups
- 8.7** Develop local maintenance projects which could be instituted into the Transition Year Programme and the Gaisce awards

## Supporting Services

To a certain extent, many of the issues and strategies dealing with secondary support services are addressed in other areas of the strategy. Certainly, though, the County has a lack of suitably-located and appropriate secondary services such as accommodation, restaurants and entertainment. Hardly any B&B or guesthouse has drying facilities for walkers' equipment and clothing. Without a car, it is almost impossible to reach the access points to many of our key routes. There are very few public toilets in the vicinity of our main routes. However, the remoteness of many of these walks would make it costly for these facilities to be environmentally-friendly and vandal-proof. It might be well argued that market forces would dictate the development of these services i.e. if people could see the need for them, and a potential for viability and profitability, then they would exist. However, without a commitment to the development of the walking product, which this strategy should provide, it is understandable why a lack of certainty would militate against investment in such facilities and services

### Strategies for Supporting Services

- 9.1** Encourage the development of walker-friendly accommodation
- 9.2** Decision on Priority One routes to be influenced by the existence of secondary services
- 9.3** Waterford Rural Transport service to pilot an initiative aimed at supporting rural walking tourism
- 9.4** Investigate the need for toilets and car-parks at major points of access
- 9.5** Support the development and use of guiding services, especially in upland areas

## Information and Data

We need to collect, store and disseminate data, especially local data, about our walks - where they exist, their condition and the state of the local environment - but also about the people who use them, where they come from, how did they find out about us and what contribution they make to our local economy. We need to collect other data as well but only in as much as it can contribute to good planning and decision-making.



On the other hand, information is that which we supply to our clients or our potential clients - our tourists, our local communities, our school children etc. Some of the key requirements of good information are that it be current, sufficient, timely, accessible, innovative and appropriate to the needs of the client. All of which indicates an immediate need for the development and maintenance of a quality web-based Walk Waterford information service, which could provide up-to-date information on Waterford's walking product and services both to local users and tourists alike.

However, there is a significant need to use other more traditional media as well. From our brochures to our signage, we need market penetration, clarity and dependability. The message has to be clear - our walkers are important to us and the way we look after them reflects this.

### Strategies for Information and Data

- 10.1** Perform an audit of County Waterford trails and routes by cooperating with the Audit currently being undertaken by Coillte on behalf of the Irish Sports Council
- 10.2** Develop a Walking Waterford Web-Site with links to other appropriate Web-sites
- 10.3** Decide on an appropriate set of Performance Indicators which can contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy
- 10.4** Review current walking literature for the County
- 10.5** Perform occasional surveys of route usage and recreational and other walking
- 10.6** Develop a folder of County Waterford Walking brochures, including one generic county-wide one
- 10.7** Map all identified walking routes and public rights of way
- 10.8** Maintain a database of Walking groups and contacts
- 10.9** Support the publication of books on walks and walking, local history and heritage and also the publication of guides, brochures and other similar literature
- 10.10** Adopt models of best practice with regard to information boards and signage

## Promotion and Marketing

While promotion and marketing also imply the transfer of information and data, there is also the implication of “selling” the idea, the product, the services or the place. Generally, “promotion” will imply the selling of the idea and the value of walking to visitors but especially to our own communities, mainly from a social and cultural perspective. “Marketing”, on the other hand, implies the hard sell of Waterford as a place and walking as a Tourism activity with all the attendant support services and with a subsequent local economic spin-off.

Most of the promotion & marketing of the walking experience in Waterford will be performed by already-existing agencies such as the Regional Tourism Authority, the County Tourism Committee and Waterford Sports Partnership. The major new initiative will be the already-discussed Walking Waterford Web-Site. Generally speaking, educational campaigns will be run as part of already existing initiatives such as health promotion programmes, environmental education programmes and heritage awareness programmes

### Strategies for Promoting and Marketing

- 11.1** Develop a Walking Waterford Web-Site with links to other appropriate Web-sites. Over time this site should have
  - Downloadable Maps and Directions
  - On-line ordering of maps and guide books
- 11.2** Publish occasional promotional articles in the local press
- 11.3** Prioritise the promotion of areas, villages and towns as centres of walking excellence where community activity has already led to organisation and development of walking product and services
- 11.4** Prioritise the marketing of walks which are recognised, defined and non-contentious (no access/safety difficulties)
- 11.5** Ensure that all access points for tourism information have information on, and that appropriate front-line staff have awareness of, Waterford's walking product and services
- 11.6** Connect walking opportunities to local, national and international events e.g. Kellogg's Great Walk and Tall Ships
- 11.7** Submit occasional interesting articles to key journals and magazines e.g. The Irish Mountain Log



## Appendix 1 - Framing Documents

- Corporate Plan 2005-2009 (Waterford County Council, 2005)
- A Monument of the Future: Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Waterford, 2002-2012 (Waterford County Development Board, 2002)
- Strategy for the Development of Sport and Physical Recreation in Waterford, 2003-2006 (Waterford Sports Partnership, 2003)
- Strategic Development Plan for Ireland's Walking Tourism Product 2003-2006 (Fáilte Ireland, 2003)
- Sport for Life - The Irish Sports Council's Statement of Strategy 2003-2005 (Irish Sports Council, 2002)
- Planning for the Future of Ireland's National Waymarked Ways (National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee on behalf of the Irish Sports Council, 2003)
- A National Survey of Recreational Walking in Ireland (prepared for the Irish Sports Council by the Economic and Social Research Institute, 2002)
- Guidelines for the Developing and Marking of Ireland's Waymarked Ways (Irish Sports Council, The Heritage Council and the National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee, 2002)
- Environmental Policy Documents (Mountaineering Council of Ireland, 2003)
- Encouraging Walking: Advice to Local Authorities (UK: Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000)

## Appendix 2 - Public Meetings

Location	Venue	Date 2004
Ballyduff	St. Michael's Hall	Tuesday, 2nd November
Rathgormack	Hiking Centre	Wednesday, 3rd November
Dungarvan	Civic Offices	Thursday, 4th November
Tramore	Civic Offices	Wednesday, 10th November
Kilmacthomas	Rainbow Community Hall	Thursday, 11th November



## Appendix 3 - Invitations to Stakeholders' Meeting, September 2004

### State Agencies, Local Authorities and Local Development Agencies

Waterford County Council  
 South East Regional Tourism Authority  
 Waterford Leader Partnership  
 Waterford Sports Partnership  
 Coillte  
 Teagasc  
 Health Services Executive  
 Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs  
 The Heritage Council  
 Irish Sports Council

### Tourism Organisations

Lismore Heritage Company  
 Dungarvan and West Waterford Tourism  
 County Waterford Tourism Committee  
 Visit-Net Tourism Project Office, Waterford County Council

### Community/Rural Organisations

County Waterford Community Forum  
 IFA  
 ICMSA  
 Waterford Rural Transport

### Accommodation

An Óige

### Walking/Related Activities Groups

Nire Valley Walking Festival  
 Dungarvan Hillwalking Club  
 Ballyduff Walking Club  
 Rathgormack Hiking Centre  
 St. Declan's Way  
 Copper Coast Tourism  
 Waterford & Suir Valley Railway  
 Dungarvan Cycling Club  
 West Waterford Athletic Club  
 Comeragh Mountaineering Club  
 Peaks Mountaineering Club  
 South East Mountain Rescue

### National Voluntary Bodies

National Waymarked Walks Advisory Committee  
 Mountaineering Council of Ireland  
 Walking Routes Ireland

### Interest Areas

Scouting, Orienteering





**Community and Enterprise Section,  
Waterford County Council,  
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