

The Tourism Development Potential of Blackhead Path



Feasibility Study Report

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1. INTRODUCTION & TERMS OF REFERENCE

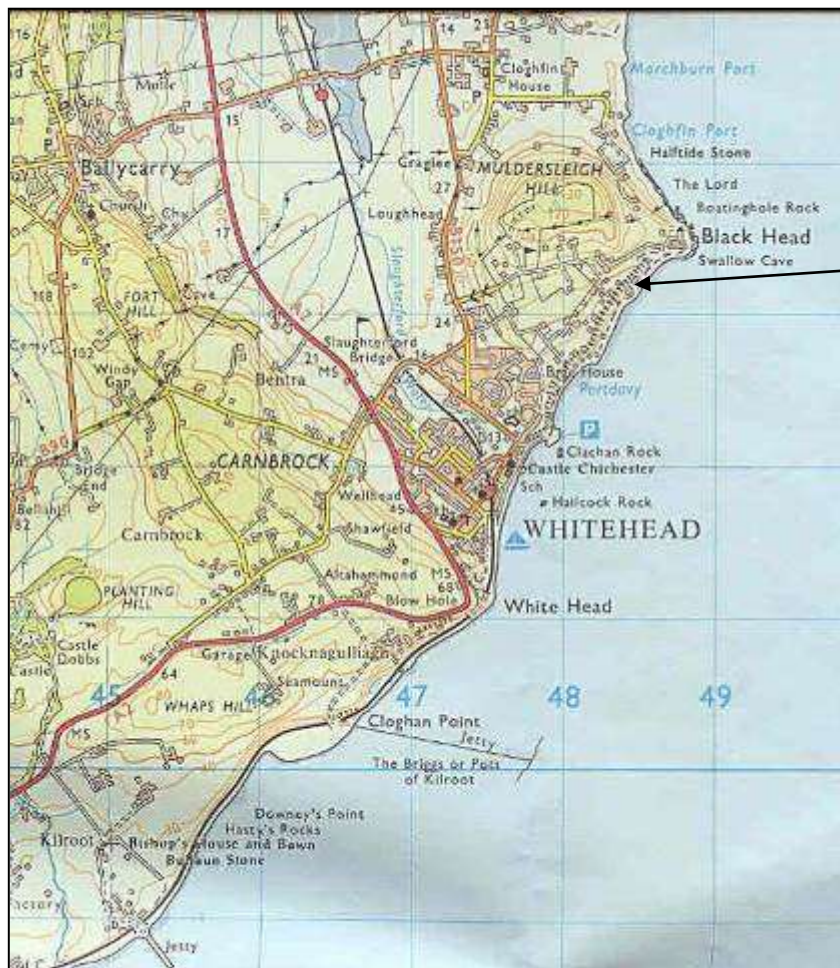
- 1.1 In the preparation of a rural development strategy for South Antrim, it was recognised that rural villages would benefit from the availability of capital grants to enable the implementation of projects that would contribute to ensuring sustainability. To take this initiative forward, a master-planning process was developed. The contract to prepare a masterplan for Whitehead was won by The Paul Hogarth Company. That plan recognised the existing popularity of the Black Head Path with locals and visitors to the village and suggested that the Path had the potential to attract more visitors. As a result, the restoration of Blackhead Path was identified as a high priority regeneration initiative.
- 1.2 Carrickfergus Borough Council, from direct and very recent experience, recognised that if the use of the Path was to be promoted such that it would attract many more visitors, a restoration programme would be required to ensure its ability to deal with the wear and tear arising from greater use and to protect users against the potential for rock falls that had at that time closed that part of the path under Black Head Lighthouse. Accordingly, the Council (with financial support from GROW / South Antrim) determined that it should engage consultants to prepare a feasibility study on the potential for tourism development arising from the Path as a first step.

Terms of Reference

- 1.3 The terms of reference for the study proposed by Carrickfergus BC included: -
- A site assessment of Blackhead Path as a tourism, heritage and environmental asset with a concise comparative study of similar amenities
 - A local and national context review
 - Consideration of neighbouring Council's plans in the context of RPA
 - Research into the social and physical historical context of the Path and its hinterland
 - Meetings with all relevant current and potential stakeholders including but not exclusively: NI Tourist Board; Heritage Lottery Fund; NI Environment Agency;
 - Identification of innovative yet pertinent development projects to enhance the Path's potential as a popular heritage and visitor amenity
 - Consideration of revenue related activities to generate sustainable activity on the Path such as marketing, interpretation and education programmes
 - Identification of appropriate funding sources to support future development
 - Liaison with any other specialists currently engaged on the Blackhead Path.
 - Complimentarity with other Town and Council activity such as signposting; promotion and coastal walk initiatives
- 1.4 This document details the findings of the feasibility study.

Blackhead Path

- 1.5 Blackhead Path lies directly north of the town of Whitehead. It runs from the car park north of the Promenade along the coast to the base of the cliffs at Black Head¹. The path continues around the headland and rises up means of steps and inclines to the Lighthouse. The path winds south round in front of the lighthouse complex to a gate where it connects with the access road to the lighthouse. A smaller path returns along the top of the headland before dropping down to meet the coastal path again.



Blackhead Path

Map to show location of Blackhead Path

¹ See Appendix 1 for Description

2. THE PATH & ITS IMPORTANCE TO WHITEHEAD TOURISM IN HISTORY

- 2.1 The importance of Blackhead Path is inextricably linked to the history and development of Whitehead as a town and tourist destination. In order to understand how such a path developed, it is necessary to look at the history and development of the town. This history reveals the interesting stories behind the buildings, natural formations and features found on or near the path and which could draw tourists once again to Blackhead Path. We are indebted to Paddy O'Donnell for allowing us to reproduce historical information from his book *'The Town with No Streets'*.

The History of Whitehead

- 2.2 In 1604 Sir Moses Hill was responsible for the building of a castle, Castle Chichester, just along the Lough from Carrickfergus. The castle comprised a manor house, stable and outbuildings and provided protection from local tribes during the Plantation period. The castle gave its name to the settlement which grew up around it and as late as the 1880s newspapers referred to Chichester as a popular watering place on the Antrim coast.
- 2.3 On an undated map by J Rocque and in a later map of 1822 by Thomas Kitchen Geog, what is now known as Belfast Lough is shown as Carrickfergus Bay, the headland of White Head is referred to as Cape Whitehaven and Island Magee as Magee Island.
- 2.4 It wasn't until the completion of the county road from Carrickfergus to Larne in 1854, that the town lands of Knocknagullagh and White Head became accessible. The majority of local people lived in three hamlets, Chichester, Whitehead and Knocknagullagh. White Head was situated near the present day entrance to Cable Road to the Brooklands Estate; Chichester centred around the Castle and Knocknagullagh grew up around the limestone quarries and small natural harbour.
- 2.5 A new road, known now as Cable Road and Beach Road, was made to gain access into White Harbour. This was a natural harbour cut out by the sea; limestone, quarried from the headland, was shipped from here in small boats. A wooden pier was erected at the north end for the use of larger boats but by the 1800s, demand for limestone persuaded David Stewart Ker, the owner of the townlands at White Head and Knocknagullagh, to build a proper harbour for exporting purposes.

White Harbour

- 2.6 This new harbour used the limestone blocks cut and shaped in the local quarries and was constructed at the north end of the inlet with the entrance of the harbour facing the inlet to allow easy maneuverings of boats. The remains of the old timber pier foundations at the harbour entrance were found during excavations in the late 1980s.
- 2.7 The fact that the harbour (now known as White Harbour) was tidal meant that it was prone to silting up, so a large wooden pier was erected out in deeper water which allowed the turnaround time for boats to be speeded up and for larger boats to be accommodated. Part of the harbour wall had to be removed to allow this to be built. To transport the limestone from other local quarries, a tramway was constructed to run from the quarry face to the harbour.
- 2.8 Small cottages were built nearby at Knocknagullagh to house those working in the quarries and harbour. In 1857, to provide schooling for the children, the local land owner, David Stewart Ker, built a schoolhouse close to the harbour. It was called White Head National School and was built of stone with a slated roof. The community of forty families of the workers at the quarry and the harbour also had their own public house, post office and shop. A railway halt was built close to the harbour and opened in 1863.
- 2.9 In late 1859 the Carrickfergus and Larne Railway Company had drawn up plans for another line to link the two towns despite previous opposition which had scuppered plans to do this much earlier, in 1845. The plans were passed and work commenced early in 1861. Workers came from all over Ireland as well as from the vicinity and agreement was reached with David Stewart Ker to build a six arched wooden viaduct at the harbour end of the inlet. The original route to the harbour was now closed, which suggests that silting had closed the original harbour and that it was no longer in use, except by smaller boats. All exporting was now taking place from the large wooden pier and a new archway was erected with a clear span of nine feet and headway of eight feet underneath the railway line to allow continued access. The existing tramway was re-routed to accommodate the new line.
- 2.10 The exporting of limestone from White Harbour ceased in the late 1880s. By 1898, the railway company decided that the old viaduct was unsafe and had four of the original spans filled in with an embankment. Further improvement works in 1927-8 filled in the remaining spans. The harbour fell into disuse and lay derelict for almost 100 years. Grass and weeds covered the quay, the sea wall had been breached, the harbour itself was silted up to a depth of many feet



and the wooden pier had disappeared.

In 1988 it was purchased by Wesley Murdock who intended to make the harbour re-usable again. A new road was constructed to the harbour in 1988-1990, the sea wall was repaired and the harbour basin cleaned out and deepened. The entrance to the harbour was narrowed and new breakwaters built allowing the harbour to be used by pleasure craft.

Blackhead Path

- 2.11 As early as 1866 a proposal had been put forward by William Valentine, a director of the Carrickfergus and Larne Railway Company that a path should be laid out from the railway halt to the headland known as Black Head. He brought forward the proposal again in 1881, but owing to difficulties with land owners, the laying of the path was delayed for some years.

- 2.12 On August 10 1888 at the half yearly Annual General Meeting of the Carrickfergus and Larne Railway Company it was recorded that excursionists would have a better outlet along the shore to Black Head, as a path had been laid out, and seats put at several points, together



with a large wooden house for picnic parties and shelter in case of rain. It was hoped that these improvements would tend to popularise the watering place of Whitehead. In the summer of 1892 bridges were constructed at the bottom of the Blackhead cliffs so that the path could be continued round the headland. This work was carried out under the planning and supervision of Mr Berkeley Deane Wise.

- 2.13 At a well attended meeting in the Victoria Cafe in July 1900, the residents of the town paid tribute to the tremendous help they received from the railway company (especially from Mr Wise) in the development of the town. During the meeting Mr Wise stated that he would like it to be known that it was a local resident, Mr William McKeen, who had put the initial idea into his head about bridging the cliffs, opening up the caves and improving the path to Black Head. Later the path was constructed up to the lighthouse and along the cliffs descending again onto the main path at Sunshine House. It was originally intended to extend the Blackhead Path to The Gobbins cliffs. Another smaller path, known as the top path, was constructed to run from the upper end of Old Castle Road, along the top of the banks above Kennedy's Point and joins the main path near the Wren's Eggs.

- 2.14 A right of way called the Golden Stairs, so named because it was made of railway sleepers, was also constructed from the Blackhead Path to houses and holiday homes on the hillside above the path. Repairs were carried out to this right of way in 1941 by the Whitehead Urban District Council (WUDC). One of the most historical rights of way in the district joins the Path at Port Davey. The section of the path from the seaward side is known locally as Hoy's Lane, on account of the Hoy family who lived in the farmhouse beside the lane for a few hundred years. The proper name of the right of way is the Port Davey Road which for hundreds of years was the route from the busy little port. Port Davey Road links up with the Islandmagee Road north of Wayside Cottages, where in bygone days travellers could find their way to the old Irish Highway via Slaughterford, Raw Brae and Ballycarry or if need be Chichester or north Islandmagee. The original entrance at the Islandmagee Road is seldom used, as a road through the Fairview Estate now joins onto the Port Davey Road, at the other end Hoy's Lane is overgrown and neglected. Very little attention is paid to these rights of way; it is to be hoped that they will not be closed off and forgotten.
- 2.15 In 1929 major alterations and improvements were carried out on the Blackhead Path, mainly on the section from Kennedy's Point to the green shelter. The work was not long under way when the workers went on strike for more pay, they were being paid nine-pence per hour and received no pay if the weather was not suitable for work. After a meeting with officials they were informed that they were being paid the standard rate.
- 2.16 The Path had always been maintained by the railway companies but by the early 1930s the railway company was in the process of handing over the Promenade and the Blackhead Path to the care of the WUDC. In 1934 the bridges at the Blackhead caves were in such a poor state of repair that the railway company would not accept responsibility for them, so they had them dismantled. The company also cancelled the payment of way-leave to the Donegall Estate and other land owners. The Blackhead Path was now the responsibility of the WUDC. In the next few years the council built new bridges and upgraded the Path.
- 2.17 In the 1950s the paths and slopes adjoining the sea shore from Whitehead to Black Head were transferred from the Donegall Estate to the care of the WUDC for a modest cost. In 1971 a gate was put across the promenade to stop vehicles using the path to Black Head.

Port Davey

- 2.18 At the time of the Islandmagee Massacre in 1642 it was reported that passengers had arrived at Port Davey from Scotland, and Richard Dobbs in his writings of 1683 mentions Port Davey as being a busy port, used by fishing boats, and many boats of 16 or 18 tons which traded back and forth from Scotland. The port could only be used at high tide and Dobbs states that even then it was dangerous for strangers the

shore being clad with tumbling great stones, some as big as a cottage. These are glacial erratics, known locally as the Wren's Eggs.

- 2.19 Other users of the port during the 18th and 19th Centuries were the Cameron family. Robert Cameron (1750- 1863) owned a farmhouse and large parcel of land at Bentra, which included a small limestone quarry and lime kiln. He had three sailing vessels which were used to transport wheat, beans and limestone to Portpatrick, Scotland. His son, Robert Cameron (1790-



1863) owned a schooner called *Jane Campbell*. Forty-seven acres of land (which included a wharf and lime kiln) in the townlands of Cloughfin and Temple-Effin, Islandmagee, were also leased by the Cameron family from Arthur, Viscount Dungannon. The lease of December 23 1823 was for a period of 31 years.

- 2.20 The land at Bentra was later owned by James Long, and the land at Cloughfin and Temple-Effin was owned for many years by the Milliken family. The Hagan and Auld families who have long connections with Port Davey and the townland of Castletown are related to the Cameron family. In later years it was mainly used by the seafaring residents of Castletown, such as Captain Auld and Captain Hagan. Up until about 30 years ago rowing boats and the occasional motor boat could be seen entering and leaving the little port.



- 2.21 Drastic changes were made to Port Davey when the breakwater on the Black Head side of the port was removed and the stones used to repair the path near the lighthouse. A number of years later work commenced on upgrading the Blackhead Path. This work entailed laying a complete new path in reinforced concrete, with a wall of rocks on the seaward side. The work commenced in November 1991 and was completed by April 1992.
- 2.22 During this work a large rock which was embedded in the seaward side of the path at Port Davey was removed. This rock had been put there a few hundred years ago as a marker rock to act as a guide to help boats navigate the narrow entrance, and at night time a lantern was placed on the rock. It is now impossible to launch or bring a boat in at the port as a wall of rock has been built around it. Today it lies closed in with seaweed and debris piled up, where once boats lay on their sides waiting for the high tide.

- 2.23 One reminder still exists at Port Davey and it is Captain Auld's old boat house nestling amongst the trees. The old homestead of the Auld family, Port Davey House, and may still be seen on the hill overlooking the port. It is now in the possession of the Hunter family.



- 2.24 Not so many years ago holiday cottages and houses adorned the side of the Blackhead Path. Hoy's farmhouse which had stood at Port Davey for a few hundred years was demolished in the late 1980s, having previously been damaged by fire. Earlier Miss Hoy's cottage and Captain Auld's cottage (these were rented out) which stood near the farmhouse were demolished. The garden walls of these cottages may still be seen at the site. Mr Bonugli ran a little shop at Port Davey from 1913 until the late 1920s.
- 2.25 Fire and vandalism have removed the rest of the holiday homes, leaving only Sunshine House, and a new house close by, built on the former site of some old holiday homes.

Black Head Lighthouse

- 2.26 Black Head Lighthouse is a familiar landmark overlooking Whitehead's seafront and was erected after many years of discussion regarding the need for a lighthouse in the locality. In reply to a question by Mr William Johnston in the House of Commons in March 1898, regarding the refusal of the Commissioners of Irish Lights to put up a light and fog signal on Black Head, County Antrim, the secretary of the Board of Trade said that his board agreed with the Irish Lights Commissioners that a light and fog signal at Black Head would only be for the benefit of local traffic and could not properly be provided at the cost of the Mercantile Marine Fund.
- 2.27 At a meeting of the Belfast Harbour Board on April 5 1898, Captain Molyneux the Harbour Master read out a list of shipping disasters near or at Black Head. He then said there was a long stretch of shore without light or fog signal and unfortunately Black Head was eight miles outside the harbour limits, over which they had no jurisdiction, but there was a great necessity for a lighthouse and fog signal there. Captain Molyneux went on to say that the Belfast Chamber of Commerce had given additional reasons to the Commissioners of Irish Lights, in that Belfast Harbour was largely a harbour of refuge. In his final statement the harbour master said that the Commissioners would give the matter renewed consideration. After a considerable weight of argument and representations made by local MP



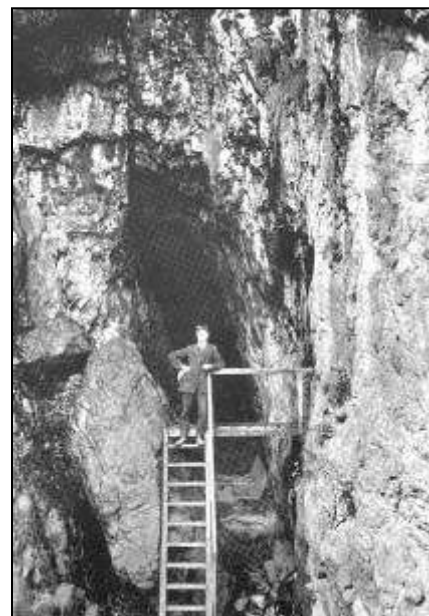
Colonel McCalmont and the Belfast Chamber of Commerce and discussions between the Harbour Board and the Irish Lights it was finally decided to build a lighthouse and fog signal at Black Head.

- 2.28 By early 1900 the construction of the lighthouse was under way. It went into operation on 1st April 1902. Mr E.A. Kennedy was appointed Chief Lighthouse Keeper. The lighthouse had only been in operation a short time when the captains of some ships complained about another light flashing in the town with the same frequency as the lighthouse. On investigation by an official of the Irish Lights it was discovered that the beam from the lighthouse was reflecting from a large mirror in the bedroom of a house in York Avenue. The occupant of the house was asked to change the position of the mirror or keep the blinds closed. He refused, stating that the arc of light from the lighthouse should not sweep across the seaward side of the town. Alterations were made to the lighthouse to stop the light from flashing on any part of the town.
- 2.29 Telephone communications were instigated between the lighthouse and coastguard station in June 1912. The lighthouse itself is 51 feet in height and stands 148 feet above high water mark. It was originally painted red, but in August 1929 it was repainted its present colour white. At the present time Black Head is an unmanned lighthouse, a far cry from the days when keepers had to keep a close watch for shipping entering and leaving Belfast Lough.



The Schoolmaster's Bedchamber

- 2.30 One of the caves at the Blackhead cliffs is known as the Smugglers' Cave. It is the first cave you come to from the Whitehead direction and is the largest of the caves. It may have been used by smugglers in days gone by, but it certainly was used for many years by a man called Thomas McCartney. McCartney came to the district about 1804 and set himself up as a schoolmaster. At this time there were no schoolhouses in outlying districts like Islandmagee as the National School system had not started. The children living in these areas were taught by learned men who were known as hedge teachers of which McCartney was one. He first taught in the district near Red Hall, but only for a short period, then he moved to the Windy Gap, teaching and sleeping in barns. Eventually he established his school at Fairview, Castletown. It was at this time he made his home in the Smugglers' Cave at Black Head. High up on the right-hand side of the cave just inside the entrance is a cavity in the rock face. It was in this cavity that McCartney



lived and it is now known as the Schoolmaster's Bedchamber. At high tide the sea flows right into the cave but McCartney's bedchamber remains high and dry and more or less protected against wind and weather.

- 2.31 A powerfully built man with a forbidding manner, McCartney did not have many friends, and, as he lived in a cave and spent most of his leisure time pottering about the beach near Black Head, some people thought he was mad, and he became known as 'Mad McCartney'. Renowned as a good teacher and very kind to children, his classes were always well attended. In later years he left his home in the cave, and lived and taught in a barn. As the years passed by and McCartney became an old man, some parents of the children he had taught built him a little cabin, where he spent the latter days of his life. It was there that he died in 1855, and was buried in an unmarked grave in the old churchyard at Ballykeel. His teaching days in Islandmagee had spanned nearly 50 years.
- 2.32 During the summer months, when Whitehead was a favourite holiday resort, a wooden platform with steps leading to it stood at the entrance of the Smugglers' Cave. An attendant was in charge of the platform and he collected the fee of half a penny or penny from anyone wishing to climb up onto the platform and look into or enter the Schoolmaster's Bedchamber.

The Lido

- 2.33 One of the first established places to bathe was at the white rocks, near the railway tunnel. Boards provided walkways and ladders from the boards enabled those bathing to enter or leave the sea relatively easily. Originally used by the Coastguards, as their building was just a short distance away, the workers from the quarry and other locals started to frequent the waters. As more and more visitors arrived, the railway company built separate ladies' and gent's bathing places at some distance one from the other to preserve the modesty of the 'shyer' bathers.



- 2.34 In September 1927, the Whitehead Urban and District Council approved the decision to build a new round bathing pool. Although some residents were critical of the plan, a vote was taken and 346 out of 513 returned papers were in favour of the plan. The swimming pool project was to comprise diving stages, chute, spectators gallery, ladies' and gent's changing rooms, a restaurant, public toilet facilities and shelters. Work started in 1930 and was completed in 1931.



- 2.35 The swimming pool was the scene of many aquatic galas, diving and racing events and championships. By the early 1950s, two thousand bathers were using the pool every week. Unfortunately in 1954, the restaurant and adjoining changing rooms were gutted by fire and it cost £7,000 to reconstruct the building and café. The pool continued in use until 1988 when it was closed by the District Council and the premises were taken over by the Glasgow Rangers Supporters Club who renovated the building and continued to open the pool during the summer months. The pool eventually closed completely but remains an enigmatic presence on the promenade.

A Short History of the UK Lido

- 2.36 The golden age of lidos in the United Kingdom was in the 1930s, when swimming became very popular, and 169 were built across the UK as recreational facilities by local councils. Many closed when foreign holidays became less expensive, but the remaining lidos have a dedicated following of supporters.
- 2.37 The first open air swimming pool that was officially called a lido was 'The Edmonton Lido' in Houndsfield Road, London, following reopening after refurbishment on 27 July 1935. The newly built 'Tottenham Lido', opened on 5 June 1937 and the 'West Ham Municipal Lido', opened on 30 Aug 1937 also in London, were officially called lidos from the outset. Elsewhere, the Woodford Times reported on 13 May 1932 on the new 'Lido' being constructed at Whipps Cross. The Kentish Times on 9 June 1933 similarly carried the headline: 'Lagoon 'Lido' Opened on Bank Holiday'. Neither of these two pools was officially called a 'lido' at this time, however. The term 'lido' was also applied to several private sector swimming facilities, including Ruislip Lido (part of a reservoir) opened in May 1936 and Rush Green Lido in Romford (in old gravel pits), Essex, in Sept 1935.

- 2.38 Notable examples of open lidos are Saltdean Lido in Sussex, Tooting Bec Lido in South London, Jesus Green Swimming Pool in Cambridge and Sandford Parks Lido in Cheltenham. There were numerous lidos (particularly in London and the south-west), but hundreds have closed in the UK in recent years.
- 2.39 In 2005 a major breakthrough in lido revival took place when English Heritage published *Liquid Assets - the lidos and open air pools of Britain*, produced as part of the 'Played in Britain' series. Author Janet Smith had spent years researching (and swimming in) lidos around the country and her book explored the past, present and future of open air pools. This, in turn led to two major conferences in 2006: 'Reviving Lidos' and 'Making a Splash'.
- 2.40 Although there have been many setbacks, long-running campaigns have resulted in some important successes: In October 2006 London Fields Lido re-opened in Hackney after a campaign lasting nearly 20 years; Droitwich Spa Lido has also re-opened after a six year battle by the group SALT (Save a Lido Today); Brockwell Lido celebrated its 70th Birthday (1937–2007) on 10 July; Clifton Lido reopened in 2008; Wood Green Pool in Banbury reopened in 2009.
- 2.41 On-going campaigns include: reopening Broomhill Pool, Ipswich, the Cleveland Pools, at Hampton Row in Bath, (here the historic Grade II* listed baths, which date back to 1815, are believed to be the oldest surviving public outdoor swimming pools in the country) and Grange-over-Sands (this pool is another Grade II listed baths and the only Art Deco lido in the north).
- 2.42 The Daily telegraph also ran an article in September 2008 listing the top 10 lidos in the UK acknowledging the growing interest by the general public. There are websites devoted to Lidos with information on those still open, those ones which are now closed and which ones could be re-opened.

The Development of Whitehead as a Tourist Destination

- 2.43 The moving of the railway halt from the harbour to the hamlet of Chichester in 1864 had more impact on the development of the place than the opening of the county road and the coming of the Carrickfergus and Larne railway line. The introduction of the 'Villa Ticket' system in 1860, proved beneficial to both Carrickfergus and Larne. This allowed anyone building a three-storey house within a mile of a railway station to be issued with a free first class ticket for ten years but it had little effect on Chichester.

- 2.44 The first person to recognise the potential of Chichester as a seaside retreat was an English gentleman, Hugh Andrews. Soon after John Raphael, who was originally from Cookstown, had purchased the quarry and surrounding lands from the local farmer, he bought the town lands of White Head and Knocknagullagh. Mr Andrews approached him about the purchase of land for development on the sea front. Andrews planned to build blocks of houses and let them out during the summer season. Under an indenture, land passed hands and Andrews built four houses before John Raphael took back the land in 1876. The only other buildings of note in the townland were the Coastguard Station and a large villa beside it, now known as the Dean's House.



- 2.45 The next major development to affect the area was the building of the station. This opened in June 1877 and was a large impressive building which looked to the future. The building was designed by a leading architect, John Lanyon and is considered one of his finest works. The station reached its busiest period in the 1890s and an extension was design by another well known architect, John Hanna, to accommodate the large number of day-trippers now coming to the town. As these numbers continued to increase, the railway company decided to implement more ambitious plans for the station. This would result in a new long central platform, an engine shed, a water tower, windmill, engine turn-table and signal cabin. Also included were ladies' and gents' toilets, a large goods shed, cottages for railway staff, a Station Master's house, outbuildings and stables. Although the development was opened in 1907, it was never used to its full extent as the number of visitors to the town fell shortly afterwards due to an economic slump, followed by the start of the First World War.
- 2.46 In 1885 Chichester café was opened by Isaac Kennedy to provide refreshments for day trippers and holiday-makers visiting the sea front. As more building works were completed with new roads and villas, the area started to expand. A new bridge was erected beside the station so that the dangerous crossing could be closed, making it safer for local residents.

- 2.47 In 1888, the railway company appointed Berkeley Deane Wise as Chief Engineer. Soon after his appointment, he drew up a comprehensive set of plans which he envisaged would turn the area into a lovely town and a premier holiday resort. To start things off, a path was opened to Black Head. As the number of



visitors increased, the railway company decided to implement Wise's plans starting with the building of ladies and gents bathing places, a promenade of railway sleepers and a bandstand.

- 2.48 To improve the beach, the railway company transported hundreds of tons of sand from Portrush but locals and farmers kept carting it away for building purposes. Legal action was threatened and signs were erected prohibiting the removal of sand, stones and gravel from the new beach. Groynes made of railway sleepers were piled into the sea bed at intervals in an effort to prevent the remaining sand from shifting. John Raphael sub-let portions of his land for building purposes and development began in earnest. Roads were marked out and building works increased particularly in the White Head townland, including the building of notable buildings such as the Methodist Church, St. Patrick's Hall, the Police Station and a Post Office. More houses were erected together with a bank, the Congregational Church, Bentra Golf Club, the clubhouse of the County Antrim Yacht Club and the Signal Station. By the late 1890s it was necessary to provide a sewerage system, water, street lighting and refuse disposal for all this new development. Although the area was under the control of Larne Rural District Council, they were more interested in providing better amenities in Larne so the Whitehead Ratepayers Associations was established to try and alleviate problems and provide realistic solutions. Thus by 1909 most of the pipes had been laid for a new sewerage system, plans had been drawn up for a new reservoir and a number of roads had been adopted by Antrim County Council.
- 2.49 The development of the town was reflected in the census figures. In 1861 the population of the area was 130. The first census which recognised Whitehead as a town was that of 1901 and this calculated the population at 471. This grew to 630 in 1902, 700 in 1903 and by 1911, the population stood at 1209.
- 2.50 It was mainly the railway that was responsible for Whitehead becoming a popular tourist destination. Extensive advertising and cheap excursion rates brought visitors who wanted to spend time in the area. Cafes and hotels were built and by 1900, there were four hotels and many cafes for them to frequent. The Gobbins Cliff Path, two miles north of Whitehead, opened in August 1902 and proved a great attraction with visitors continuing their journey from Whitehead station by charabanc or jaunting car. At the height of its popularity as many as 6000 visitors would arrive on a Saturday from Belfast and other parts of the province.
- 2.51 When the economic slump came in 1909, Whitehead developed more as a residential town than a seaside resort. It wasn't until the town was granted urban powers in 1927 that more effort was put into making it a popular holiday destination again. Whitehead businessmen began organising tours to encourage tourists back to the town with travel and accommodation all part of the package.

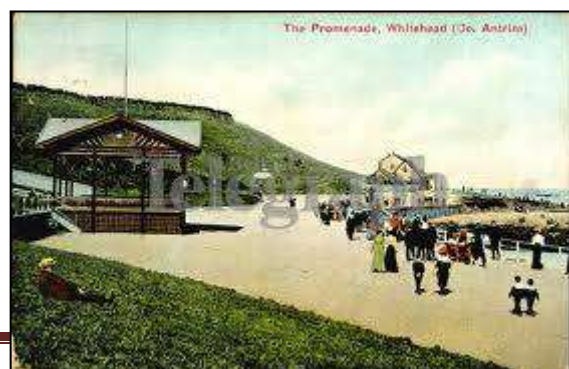
- 2.52 Local cafes started to run concerts, dances and meetings to encourage tourists and give them entertainment. Some of the sea front hotels had swing boats for hire, public tea rooms, ball rooms as well as dining rooms. Although most of these hotels and cafes were situated in the town, one, Sunshine House, was located on Blackhead Path. It was designed by



Berkeley Deane Wise and over the years was used as a private hotel, café and tea rooms and proved a popular stopping point on the path as lunches and dinners could be served in the open air, either on the verandah or on the lawns, as the weather permitted.

- 2.53 In the early 1900s the Belfast Central Mission was looking for suitable holiday accommodation for young people. John Young, a prominent member of the Methodist community in the town, notified the Mission that a suitable house had become available in Whitehead. In May 1909 a Mission Holiday Home was opened and by the September over 500 working girls had had a holiday in Whitehead. In 1913 a more suitable house was acquired in Edward Road and even more working girls and children were given the opportunity of a holiday beside the sea.
- 2.54 The erection of a landing stage for boats in 1897 and the licensing of a steamer the May Queen to carry passengers between Whitehead, Bangor, Carrickfergus and Larne also contributed to increased visitor numbers. This led to elaborate plans for a new pier being drawn up in 1898. The pier was to be 33 feet wide and stretch 300 yards out to sea. There was to be a concert hall to accommodate 1,000 people at the end of the pier and would mark Whitehead as the 'Brighton of the North'. Work never started on the project. In July 1904, another pier was planned. This one was to have accommodation for berthing boats carrying coal and other produce. There was widespread opposition to the plan with public opinion divided about how they wanted to see the future development of Whitehead. This project also never started although several small and temporary piers graced the seafront for periods of time and the steamer was withdrawn in 1906.

- 2.55 In 1900 the Belfast and Northern Counties railway Company decided to build a promenade along the sea front. It was constructed using railway sleepers but most of it was washed away during a gale in 1922. In 1936 the sleepers were removed and a new promenade built in concrete with a sloping battery wall to provide some protection. The promenade was also



extended to link up with the start of the Blackhead Path. The railway company also built a bandstand on the promenade and it became the focal point during the summer months for various types of entertainment. Pierrot and Vaudeville acts were booked, bands were popular and the railway company gave free passes for many of the bands to encourage them to Whitehead. A large tent was erected beside the bandstand to give shelter to the audiences during inclement weather and also provide a venue for concerts.

- 2.56 The tourist industry thrived because people could get to their destination easily – by train; cheaply – special excursion rates; and had something to do when they got there – visits to cafes, the promenade, the bandstand and of course, walks along the shore and up to the lighthouse.



3.0 THE PATH TODAY

Use

- 3.1 The path is still in constant use today. The main users are probably local to Whitehead with some from Carrickfergus, Larne and Belfast. Access to the carpark is via Old Castle Road which is some distance out of the main commercial part of Whitehead. The presence of a large carpark at the start of the Path makes it easy for visitors to come by car but the fact that this carpark is out of the main town centre means that there is little passing traffic or contribution to trade for local businesses.

- 3.2 The first part of the Path from the carpark is far from prepossessing. The works to the pumping station mean that it is not attractive or encouraging to those expecting scenic views as they head for the Path. There is an information board at the start of the path but it rather lets down the opportunity that is the Blackhead Path by showing an image of the Gobbins Path in Island Magee.



- 3.3 There is the remnant of a higher path at the start of the carpark but this path is not stable and parts of a former concrete laid base have fallen away over recent years. It leads along the rear of the houses in Donegall Avenue and eventually drops down to join the main Blackhead Path just before Port Davey.

- 3.4 Once past the start, the concrete path is level and reasonably wide with a functional mild steel handrail to the sea side. The path winds round towards Port Davey and makes for an easy and more pleasant stroll (than the views at the start would suggest) for the elderly and small children.

- 3.5 There are three shelters spaced along the level section of the Path. These again are functional and probably date from the improvement works carried out when the Path was transferred to Whitehead Urban District Council. More recent repairs have been carried out to the path and railings, probably in the early 1990s.



- 3.6 Just before the final shelter, the Path narrows in width and divides with one leading towards the base of the cliffs and the other leading uphill past the shelter. The lower path, still concrete, follows the base of the cliffs, crossing gulleys by means of concrete bridges and having mild steel handrails to parts of the path particularly near the edge of the shoreline. The Path leads on around the headland and



begins to climb in a series of steps, hugging the cliff and in one case through a tunnel of rock before turning inland with a series of steep steps leading up to the lighthouse. Views of the lighthouse are restricted by way of a high stone wall surrounding the whole complex. The path levels out again at the top where access is possible over a stile on to a public road. The Path winds across the top of the headland, back towards Whitehead, before dropping down in a series of steps and inclines to the third shelter and then rejoins the wider level path leading back to the carpark at Whitehead.

- 3.7 It is only the middle section of this walk that requires effort with conditions underfoot less stable than that of the first part. It is also this part of the walk that offers spectacular views across the Irish Sea and up the coast towards Island Magee.



Redevelopment Context

- 3.8 The Path could be left as it is but it will not attract more visitors and will eventually require some element of repair, particularly the area around the base of the cliff which is presently rather ineffectually fenced off in response to rock falls in spring 2011 and the potential for their reoccurrence. If the Path is to be fully utilised then it is essential that the following works are carried out: -

Essential:

- *Rock fall protection* - To provide for a more interesting walk, it is essential that the path be made safe at the base of the cliffs to allow walkers the opportunity to walk out around the headland and back up the steps to the lighthouse. At present, the path is ineffectually fenced off and notices are displayed warning of rock falls in the area. Some of the cliffs have already been secured with a steel stabilisation netting system. We would

recommend that the findings contained in the report prepared for Carrickfergus Borough Council be implemented with the fixing of the necessary additional steel stabilisation netting system to unstable rock faces as required.

- *Repairs to shoreline concrete path* – The concrete ground slab (the path) is in a serviceable state over greater than 90% of its length. There are areas of localised repair required to remove trip hazards. Some short lengths of slab should be re-laid due to ground slippage resulting in significant cross falls.
- *Sea wall* - There is evidence to suggest that the cantilever steel sheet piles have rotated outwards away from the concrete sea wall. This could be due to the rotation of the piles below ground or corrosion at ground level due to exposure to the sea water. The path behind the wall has rotated and settled in places. The magnitude of movement has not had a significant effect on the serviceability of the path and the path continues to be in a serviceable state. We would not suggest any repairs to this for the time being but the situation should be monitored on a regular basis.
- *Repairs to handrail along flat part of shoreline path* - Work is recommended to the existing ballustrading which needs maintenance and repair. It is propped in two places to prevent it falling over. Individual members are damaged or badly corroded and should be replaced. The galvanised protective coating has failed in many localised areas. A new protective external coating is required to arrest corrosion. The ballustrading has also rotated outwards in places due to the rotation of the concrete edge beam. We would recommend that new areas of ballustrading be provided and a protective coating is applied to all the ballustrading including the new areas. If the handrail was powder-coated, preferably in colour synonymous with the town, it would provide a much more attractive setting to the walk.
- *Repairs to shelters* - Each of the shelters needs some repair. It is mostly weather damage which has left the re-enforcement exposed. Where possible this should be repaired but in some cases it may be more prudent to replace the damaged element.
- *Refuse bins / dog waste bins* - There are some refuse bins / dog waste bins at the start of the path. Ideally some more should be provided in a suitable style and colour used in the town. This will help provide a visual link between the town and the path.



- *Viewing platform* – the area at the top of the steps immediately below the lighthouse appears to be used informally as a viewing platform. It would be prudent to provide a level decked 'floor' with handrails and glass screen protective panels with proper access from the path. Some simple bench



style seats should also be provided. A path needs to be extended from the existing path to provide safe access. The interpretative panels, might include a panoramic panel around the edge, with information on:

- What can be seen, in what direction it is and a little bit of information about it, e.g. The Copeland Islands, to the south-west, made up of three islands – Lighthouse, Mew and Copeland – important for bird breeding, coastal plants and geological features.
- Species of wildlife – sea birds, sea creatures e.g. seals
- Locations of shipping wrecks e.g. *Chirripo*: a 4,126-tonne Elders & Fyffes cargo liner and banana boat running the Avonmouth to Jamaica route, either struck a mine or was torpedoed and went down near Blackhead lighthouse in Belfast Lough, on 28 December 1917 without loss of life.

There may also be an opportunity to provide a fixed telescope at this location.

- *Information Boards* - Panels should be provided at the start of the walk, at each of the shelters and at the new proposed viewing platform at the lighthouse. These panels should show what can be seen from that point together with some information about the area, e.g. the commercial history of Port Davey, information about wildlife and perhaps some more esoteric information such as local shipwrecks, smugglers etc. The panels at the shelters and at the viewing platform should be panoramic in style.
- *High level 'return' path & steps hand rails* - Some new sections of ballustrading with a protective coating² should be fitted to sections of the high level path where there is a danger of falling, particularly to the sea side of the existing concrete steps which run from low to high level. We would also suggest the provision of a new timber handrail on timber



² See Appendix 3 for Paint Specification

posts to be fitted on the steeply sloping parts of the path descending from the top at the lighthouse down to where it rejoins the main path.

- *Surfacing of high level 'return' path* - Some new sections of concrete path are required where the original has broken up or become uneven.
- *Top path* - The concrete remnants from the 'top path' to the rear of the houses in Donegall Avenue which have slid down the hill or been dumped when it was last resurfaced should be removed from the grass verge at edge of main path.
- Repairs to existing benches with provision for some new ones, particularly along repaired sections of path.
- There is a need for regular maintenance of the hedgerows and grassed areas particularly at the top of the path leading from the lighthouse back towards Whitehead.



Longer term

3.9 In addition to the undertaking of these essential safety measures, we would also recommend the following:

- Re-rendering footbridge walls at headland – there is a need for some concrete repairs to the bridges at the base of the cliffs which exposed constantly to sea water. Stainless steel mesh approx. 150m² with applied hydraulic lime render should be used as this will cope with the exposed and wet conditions and still reach full strength.
- Repairs to shelter with provision of access paths to each shelter. At present there is no designated access path to the shelters which sit on grass just beyond the path. We would propose that a concrete path, 1.2m wide, should be provided at either side of each shelter. Repairs to the concrete at each of the shelters should also be carried out. Where necessary the damaged elements should be repaired but if this is not feasible then they should be replaced in a similar style and material.
- We would recommend repairs to the concrete paths where they have slipped, cracked or are damaged.

Adding Value

3.10 To fully exploit the potential of the path as a destination, it would be necessary to look at other ways to add value to the Path. Looking back at the past when the Path was only part of what was available and many thousands of visitors descended on Whitehead, there were many other attractions. Some ideas for the future might include: -

- Selling event tickets as part of a package with travel by train to and from Whitehead would add another dimension to events and could attract people to the village. Signs should be provided at the station indicating the way to the Promenade and from there to either White Harbour or Blackhead Path and the Lighthouse. Advertisements could also be provided to publicise cafés and tea rooms in the town as well as the Historic Town Trail.



- The provision of a new bandstand³ particularly in the summer months with regular music events at weekends or evenings with local bands, school choirs etc would be an added attraction.
- A simple tea / coffee venue either in a 'beach hut' style or a marquee echoing the historic marquees of the past could be used for more sheltered seating. Ice-creams and soft drinks could be sold with reference to the local shops in the town centre.



- New seating could be provided along the promenade and at the edge of the carpark, tying in with an agreed images and style for the town and which would be reflected in the information boards, seating, bins etc along Blackhead Path.

- The picnic area (with tables and barbecue stands) which is currently provided at the grassed area at the start of the path is virtually invisible behind the over-grown grass. This should be cleaned up, signposted and made more attractive or relocated and expanded to the current 'dog toilet' area. Some basic play park equipment could also be installed in the same area for the use of small children under parental supervision.



- The picnicking area could be repeated at the junction of the paths just before the third shelter.
- Upgraded WC facilities should be provided in the carpark

³ Banbridge District Council restored Scarva bandstand and run a series of very well attended Sunday concerts over the summer months.

- Fixed telescopes could be provided at the various viewing areas or shelters.
- The Lido could be re-opened. Now that Pickie Pool in Bangor has gone, the Rock Pool in Newcastle remains as the only open air swimming pool in Northern Ireland. Re-opening the Lido in Whitehead would potentially be a huge attraction to visitors from across the UK and from the continent.
- Downloadable 'apps' /mobile website could be available through mobile phones giving details of events, more information on what can be seen, the wider history of the area and other walks and trails.
- With the merging of the two neighbouring council areas, thought should be given to providing some sort of link with the Gobbins Path.



General Signage

- 3.11 We would propose that new signs indicating the whereabouts of the path be situated on the promenade and at the Recreation Grounds. These should also give an indication of the distance to the Path from that location.

Interpretative Signs

- 3.12 Apart from the interpretative signs at the viewing platform we would suggest that a further six should be prepared. One panoramic style should be placed along the entrance to each of the shelters again giving the same type of information as to what can be seen. A new panel should be placed at the start of the Path, giving information about the Path itself, the distance and walking conditions. Another panel should be located at Port Davey, giving some historical information together with some old photographs of the area and a final one at the junction of the path at the base of the cliffs giving some information about Blackhead Lighthouse and the Schoolmaster's Bedchamber.

Additional Street Furniture

- 3.13 There are a number existing seats and litter bins along the Path at present. We would suggest that these remain as some commemorate the lives of local people. Some additional benches should be provided at vantage points along the Path such as at:
- Port Davey
 - The junction of the main path and the path returning down the hill. This could be a picnic area with picnic benches, seats, an enclosed area for bins and some barbeque areas.
 - At the viewing platform
 - At vantage points along the smaller path leading down from the lighthouse to the main path, particularly where there are views of Whitehead and the County Down coast.

The Start of the Path

- 3.14 It is important to make a good impression at the start of the path. At present works are on-going to the Pumping Station. Once these works are complete, there should be an opportunity to look at the area and plan how to make the entrance to Blackhead Path more attractive⁴. We have proposed a new sign but there might be the prospect of providing a small play park for young children together with new WC facilities, some attractive seating, bins and a fixed telescope.

Budget

- 3.15 The team's Quantity Surveyor has prepared the following cost estimates based on the information set out in this report: -

⁴ NI Water have agreed that the roof of the Pumping Station be accessible as a viewing area

1.0 Preliminaries

Allowance for preliminaries (plant, supervision etc)	£4500.00
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2.0 Restoration Works

Re-coating Galvanised railings along shore	£15,000.00	
Re-render footbridge walls at headland	£ 8,500.00	
New concrete paths on wooded slope	£ 6,000.00	
Timber handrails on wooded slope	£ 5,500.00	
Viewing Deck with frameless glass balustrade	£11,000.00	
Repairs and access paths to 3no. brick shelters	£ 7,500.00	£53,500.00

3.0 Provisional Sums

Repairs to galvanised railings	£ 5,000.00	
Repairs to concrete paths and steps	£ 5,000.00	
Interpretative Signs (7nos)	£ 4,900.00	
General signage	£ 1,000.00	
Additional street furniture	£ 3,500.00	£19,400.00

4.0 Contingency

Contingency Sum	£5,000.00
	<u>£5,000.00</u>

TOTAL (Excluding VAT)	£82,400.00
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N.B. These costs do not include for the fixed telescopes or the play equipment suggested for the refurbished area beside the Pumping Station.

4. WALKING TOURISM

Definition

4.1 A simple definition of walking tourism might be - “Holiday and day visits where recreational walking is a significant part of the visit⁵”. This definition may, in turn, be stratified as follows: -

- Walking holidays – holidays and short breaks where walking is the main purpose of the holiday.
- Holiday walking – where walking is an important part of a holiday (although not the main purpose) and where good walking country is an important factor in holiday destination choice.
- Walking day visits – day visits where walking is the main purpose of the visit.

4.2 This stratification may, in turn, be used as the basis for a more detailed segmentation, which might be set out as follows⁶: -

Main Segment	Sub-segments	Description
Holiday Walking	Primary Holiday Walkers	People for whom walking is an important part of holiday, but not the main holiday purpose
	Incidental Holiday Walkers	People who will go for occasional short walks while on holiday, but very much as an incidental holiday activity that is not necessarily a factor in destination choice
Walking Holidays	Independent centre-based walking holidays and break-takers	People basing themselves in one location for a holiday or break that they organise themselves, which is entirely or primarily focused on walking
	Independent point to point walking holidays and breaks	People on self-organised walking holidays and breaks that involve stopping at different places each night along a long distance walking route
	Independent hill walking breaks	People taking high-level or mountain walking breaks that they plan and organise themselves
	Long distance walkers	Walkers on self-organised walking holidays on long distance paths and walking routes
	Group walking holidays and Breaks	Ramblers and other walking groups and clubs going away as a group
	Packaged walking	People buying a packaged walking holiday

⁵ Brecon Beacons walking tourism strategy

⁶ Best Foot Forward: A Walking Tourism Strategy for Wales 2002 – 2010, Wales Tourist Board, May 2002.

	holidays and breaks	or break from a walking holiday operator
Walking Day Visits	Primary Walking Day Visitors	Day visitors whose main visit activity is walking
	Group Walking Day Visits	Ramblers and other walking groups and clubs going out for a day's walking in an area
	Incidental Day Visit Walkers	Day visitors who will include a short walk as part of a day out, but for whom walking will not be their main purpose of visit.

4.3 Just as 'walkers' need to be segmented dependent on their approach to walking as a recreational opportunity, to start the process of aligning the walker to the opportunity, the 'walk' must itself be graded as an indication of the conditions and the difficulties the walker can expect to meet. Walkingworld.com, a commercial website that provides information on walks available across the UK, has developed a grading system based on the type of terrain, rather than the effort required. Their grading system has five levels as follows: -

- (i) Gentle Stroll: the walk is likely to be under 3 miles and there are no obstacles, such as difficult stiles, awkward footbridges, steep slopes, etc. The route is well-surfaced, and could be done in almost any type of footwear.
- (ii) Easy Walk: the walk is likely to be under 7 miles. Paths and tracks are easily walked in any weather, there are no significant navigational difficulties, and stiles and gates are in good repair. In favourable weather the route could probably be walked in trainers or other lightweight shoes.
- (iii) Moderate Walk: the walk is likely to be more than 7 miles. There may some more awkward obstacles, like badly maintained gates, and places where navigation involves more thought and skill. The walk should be done in boots or walking shoes.
- (iv) Hill Scramble: the walk goes into regions where exposure to weather and difficult terrain means that walkers should always be equipped with proper footwear, spare clothing and food and drink. Map and compass skills are necessary, though they may not have to be used. The route may require some mild scrambling - the use of hands as well as feet - but the dangers are limited. Walking the route in winter should be carefully assessed.
- v) Mountain Challenge: the walk reaches higher altitudes (e.g. over 2,500ft) where weather conditions can change rapidly. Groups should always have an experienced leader. There may be sections where the path is exposed or difficult and a fall could be serious. Participants must be fit, familiar with this type of terrain, and equipped for every eventuality. Walking the route in winter would require specialist skills.

- 4.4 In Northern Ireland, the Countryside Access & Activities Network (CAAN) who work with the NI Tourist Board on the development of the outdoor recreation product, have a simpler definition dependent on length – short (under 5 miles), medium (5-20 miles) and long (over 20 miles). On their website they list 106 separate walks in the ‘short walk’ category (see appendix 2). The Black Head path is listed as a 2.4mile, linear, beach, coastal and woodland walk (see appendix 1).

The Popularity of Walking

In-bound Visitors

- 4.5 Statistics from Visit Britain show that one-in-four holiday visitors took a walk in the countryside (2007) and one-in-ten went for a walk along the coast (2009). Not surprisingly 47% of the 2.4 million inbound visitors who ‘walked’ in 2010 undertook the activity in the July to September period and a further 29% did so during the period April to June. German holiday makers were the main geographic group ‘going for a walk’ (38%) in the countryside and also the most likely to be found exploring coastal paths (92%). Overall, 2.4 million (c. 8%) visitors said that they had ‘walked along the coast’ during their trip to Britain in 2010 (ONS International Passenger Survey 2010).
- 4.6 Holiday visitors from Canada, Netherlands and Australia were also significant coastal walkers. Only 13% of holiday visitors from Poland said they went for a walk in the countryside, while only 3% of holiday visitors from Japan went for a wander by the coast while in Britain. For a significant number of markets the journey purpose most closely associated with going for a walk along the coast is visiting friends and relatives.
- 4.7 Market research by Fáilte Ireland⁷ has shown that most walking visitors are occasional walkers - broadly defined as a person who has variable fitness levels, limited navigation skills and unlikely to have done research on walks prior to arrival. Tourism statistics for 2009 put the number of overseas visitors claiming to have gone hiking/cross-country walking at over 800,000. The number who walked off-road, for more than 5km on average, is 388,000; they spent an estimated €183 million. Holidaymakers who stated that walking was an important factor in their choice of Ireland as a holiday destination numbered 366,000 (estimated spend €215 million while in Ireland).
- 4.8 Statistics arising from the Northern Ireland Passenger Survey 2009 (see table) show that walking (146,400 visitors reporting) is the largest single participative activity reported by visitors, only visits to historic properties coming anywhere close. However only 2,700 visitors actually chose to holiday in NI for the opportunity to go walking.

⁷ See Appendix 4 & 5 for Fáilte Ireland’s – Coastal path Development Draft Guidelines and ‘10 Easy Steps to Promote Walking Trails in Your Area’

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY VISITORS TO NORTHERN IRELAND 2009

SOURCE - NORTHERN IRELAND PASSENGER SURVEY
EXCLUDES REPUBLIC OF IRELAND RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ENTERING VIA REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

ACTIVITY	ACTUAL REASON FOR VISIT	PARTICIPATED	TOTAL
GENEALOGY	8,200	7,100	15,300
HISTORIC PROPERTIES	1,500	110,400	111,900
MUSEUMS/EXHIBITIONS	0	45,400	45,400
FESTIVAL/EVENT	10,300	14,800	25,100
SPECIAL INTEREST SPORT	8,100	10,800	18,900
WALKING	2,700	146,400	149,100
SEA FISHING	100	4,600	4,700
GAME FISHING	600	2,500	3,100
COARSE FISHING	600	1,500	2,100
GOLF	9,000	24,900	33,900
FIELD SPORTS	600	3,300	3,900
CYCLING	800	14,100	14,900
EQUESTRIAN	400	5,300	5,700
GARDENS	0	41,800	41,800

The above figures are derived from survey estimates and extreme caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions, particularly where the smaller special interest and activity products are concerned.

What Visitors Are Looking For In A Walking Holiday

- 4.9 Research by Fáilte Ireland has established that Visitors are looking for quality looped walks in areas of outstanding scenic beauty, off road and of 1.5 to three hours in duration. Visitors also want to interact with local people and enjoy a relaxing, peaceful holiday in rural areas.
- 4.5 In the preparation of the Brecon Beacons Walking Tourism Strategy tourism enterprises in the Brecon Beacons NP ranked the kind of walking experience that their visitors were looking for as: -
- 1 'Rolling hills and open ridges'
 - 2 'Upland terrain, including popular summits'.
 - 3 'Gentle terrain following paths through farmland and villages'
 - 4 'Managed countryside sites'
- 4.6 According to Visit Scotland, family walking holidays shouldn't be too long; they should be relaxing, fun and full of interest for all. It is also important, they say, to treat the walk as a journey of exploration or adventure and to go at the child's pace. they also suggest that it is a good idea to "head for a landmark that will appeal to them" (the children).

4.7 The English Tourist Board's Walking Holidays Tool Kit recognises the great importance of walking as part of the holiday, as distinct from the serious walking holiday. Their research suggested that casual walkers were turned off by association with the professional Rambler and dissatisfied with the lack of information tailored to their needs, rather than to the serious walker's. They identified five key motivators which they defined by life-stage as: -

- Young Socialisers – Informal groups of friends, aged 16-34, ABC1s – wanting an active get-away with friends – drinking, **activity, achievement and having fun** are key ingredients of the holiday.
- Young Leisure Adventurers – Couples, aged 18-34, especially ABC1s – contemplating a break with a partner – **walking gives the sense of well-being, time with each other and a chance to unwind.**
- Family Actives – Families with children under 16, ABC1s – a fun, active, countryside holiday with **'togetherness', the outdoors and fresh air.**
- Leisure Explorers – Empty nester couples, aged 45-59, particularly ABs – taking a short break to experience natural England. **Being free from the pressures of everyday life and feeling a sense of well-being** are key motivators.
- Older Organised – Early retired, singles or couples, aged 55-65, ABC1s – a safe adventure with lots of opportunities to explore the countryside – **feeling good, fresh air and exercise** are key motivators.

GB Domestic 'Walkers'

4.10 At a domestic level, the Ramblers Association (RA) with, 119,000 members in England, Scotland and Wales is the largest and best organised of all the walking clubs. The association is strongly weighted towards older age groups: 76% of their members being 50+. A very high percentage of their membership are active walkers.

4.11 Growth in walking activities is expected to be promoted by the following trends: -

- The growth in the number of those over 55, who are increasingly active and healthy and have time and money available. This group is already well disposed to walking. Similarly, the 45-54 year old age bracket is also increasing in size and well disposed to walking, including serious walking. Walking holidays are generally not sought by families with children, a life cycle group which is diminishing in size.
- The increasing stress of urban life and the growing interest in health, fitness and improving activities. There is growing medical evidence and general awareness that walking is an ideal form of exercise and promotes good health.
- A growing awareness of environmental issues. Walking is seen as a 'green' activity, compatible with the conservation of the countryside.

- The changing image of walking, illustrated by the movement of walking and outdoor gear into the High Street.

4.12 Amongst the best ways to reach walkers in GB are to communicate with them through the three most popular walking magazines: -

- Country Walking (102,699 readers),
- Trail (77,545 readers) and
- TGO (The Great Outdoors),

each regularly carries features that relate to the walking interests of their readership, which are very well regarded by them.

4.13 Walkers from the UK and the Republic of Ireland still don't regard Northern Ireland as a walking destination⁸.

NI Domestic Visitors

Walking Clubs

- 4.14 There are currently two governing bodies for walking clubs in Northern Ireland: the
- Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs - 32 member clubs with c.2,000 individual members
 - Mountaineering Ireland - 14 affiliated clubs with c. 700 individual members.

Some of the clubs are affiliated to both organisations. Both UFRC and MI provide members with insurance, civil liability and personal accident cover. In addition, the Walking for Health programme, which was established in 2001 by the (now) Public Health Agency with the aim to encourage inactive people to increase their level of physical activity by participating in locally led walks, has around 2000⁹ groups with over 10,000 people walking on a regular basis and Disabled Ramblers Northern Ireland (DRNI), which provides members and their friends and family, opportunities to get out and enjoy the countryside, has 146 members (total walking club membership 12, 846).

- 4.15 There are also many other walking clubs or walking groups not affiliated to any of the above organisations exist. These clubs or groups are usually set up within an already established community such as a church or community group and provide walks to their members on a regular basis as an alternative activity or social event¹⁰.

⁸ Source: CAAN Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding in NI (2010)

⁹ 1,500 people have been trained as Volunteer Walk Leaders

¹⁰ Source; CAAN – Trends in Walking, Cycling, Horse Riding in NI (2010)

Participation levels

- 4.16 Information collected through the Continuous Household Survey (2007-2008) and reported in DCAL's report, 'Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation in Northern Ireland', showed that 26% of respondents (sample of 4,500) walked continuously for at least 10 minutes at a time in each of the 7 days before completing the interview. Visitor numbers to NIEA, Forest Service and National Trust properties also give an indication of those participating in walking, 2008/09 saw around 378,000 day visitors to Forest Service sites and 1,677,000 to Country Parks with around 558,000 visitors to selected National Trust properties where walking would be the significant activity. Where pedestrian counters are used on recreational areas, 1.725m visitors were recorded in 2009. While these statistics do not specifically record 'serious walkers', they are indicative of the potential participation levels across the various sites where they were recorded.
- 4.17 Of greater note when it comes to defining the domestic visitor potential of 'serious walking', although not necessarily of more relevance to the Black Head Path, is the number of walkers (151,639) making use of the 8 'way-marked ways' in NI and the 113,659 unique visitors to the Walk NI website.
- 4.18 The major factors militating against the development of walking as a structured activity are the problems of countryside access and the lack of money to develop and maintain trails. With regard to the information on the ground (according to CAAN), some organisations find that improved signage, interpretation and literature are needed. In certain popular walking areas (Mournes, North Coast) erosion is a pressing issue and litter and anti social behaviour is another significant concern along walking routes across Northern Ireland. Other issues highlighted by the CAAN report include:
- Conflicts between various users of paths, such as between walkers and
 - Inadequate facilities around the walks (signage to/along the walks, car parking, toilet facilities etc.)
 - Inadequate public transport system to take walkers to the walks
 - Need of greater importance given to walking by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board
 - Need of greater partnership working between those organisations involved in walking
 - Lack of clarity of routes available in uplands, particularly in the Sperrins and the Mournes.

Residents & Other Local Casual Walkers

- 4.19 The Blackhead Path is known to be extensively used by local residents and other casual walkers all year round but particularly at weekends. No statistics are available for use by this group.

5. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND WHITEHEAD

Newcastle - A Relevant Benchmark Redevelopment

- 5.1 Whitehead started life as an excursion town and carried forward its tourism opportunity until the 1960's, However, since then as the visitor opportunity has drained away so has its tourism infrastructure which is now at the point where it is no longer able to effectively support the visitor opportunity. Whitehead is not alone in that both Newcastle and Portrush found their visitor opportunity with the railway and have been desperately trying to reinvent themselves for the current century; it was only scale that kept them alive during the last.
- 5.2 Newcastle has certain similarities with Whitehead and in the redevelopment of the promenade that has taken place over recent years it has, perhaps, the most to offer as an exemplar of what can be achieved by investment in core infrastructure.
- 5.3 Newcastle's Victorian promenade and seafront was completely redesigned to integrate the town with the beach and make it a welcoming space for local residents and tourists. The design concept drew heavily on the colours and shapes of the beach environment and in scale was 'big and bold' to complement the powerful landscape that defines Newcastle's location between the Mournes and the sea. Access to the beach was restored with ramps at easy gradients and wide steps. The promenade and the gardens on its inland edge were raised to allow access from the busy street level; splash was considerably reduced with a new wave return wall. The footpath was widened, new seating and modern stainless steel railings were added along with a 'watery wall' in keeping with the sea theme, and a bold new lighting scheme was adopted. A footbridge and innovative art work were also incorporated into the redevelopment. The seating was made to be inclusive by ensuring that a wheelchair or buggy could easily be integrated as part of the seating group quite easily. Overall, the new promenade has greatly improved the quality of the environment for tourists and local residents. The total investment was £3.8m.
- 5.4 The post project evaluation concluded from various pedestrian counts that footfall in the town had increased by 17,205, an increase of 306% on the 2005 baseline figure and, from the consultation with statutory stakeholders and businesses in the town, that there has been additional tourist activity outside the traditional summer months, specifically general recreational visitors and walkers. These consultations also indicated that five new businesses had opened in the town and that four existing businesses have invested significantly in their premises as a direct result of the environmental improvement scheme with a further 22 existing businesses investing in general improvements to shop frontages and interiors.

- 5.5 Another point of similarity between Newcastle and Whitehead is that they both still have a Lido. However, unlike in Whitehead, the Rock Pool in Newcastle is still very well used by the general public and considered an important attraction. Looking forward, Newcastle has already considered the potential of extending the promenade as far as the harbour, incorporating the redevelopment of the Rock Pool as part of an overall scheme, which will see the harbour redeveloped as part of the overall tourism delivery.
- 5.6 Whitehead's promenade is much shorter than that of Newcastle but when the Blackhead Path is added in, the walk becomes a much more significant recreational opportunity, however, in terms of the commercial opportunity arising and in its general level of attraction it loses out because of its separation from the town. This is a significant issue when any development proposals are put forward for the Path.

Whitehead's Current Tourism Assets (Excl. Blackhead Path)

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

- 5.7 The Blackhead Path is very well used by locals and at the weekend attracts visitors from around and about. However, Whitehead's greatest potential opportunity is undoubtedly the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland's plan to develop a heritage engineering attraction at its premises in Whitehead, which it expects to attract 25,000 visitors p.a. Currently RPSI operates a museum and gift shop and offers guided tours of its workshops. It's planned spend of £3.6m will enable it to: -
- Offer self-guided visits to the planned heritage engineering centre.
 - Run steam trains between Belfast and Whitehead to connect cruise ship tourists to the Gobbins Path.
 - Offer a weekly steam service Whitehead- Belfast- Portrush during the tourist season (May-August).
 - Run additional Whitehead-Belfast-Dublin steam excursions.
 - Link Belfast and Londonderry by steam in support of the 2013 City of Culture celebrations.
 - Connect Carrickfergus Castle and Conferences in Belfast by steam train.

The society is still in process of raising the finance to take the project forward.

- 5.8 According to research by RPSA, their current facilities are seen as 'lacking signage and a welcome point where a visitor can get a clear explanation of what there is to see, boring, noisy, dirty and unsuitable for children, too (older) male orientated and not female friendly, in need of a good clean up'. Their plan is to redevelop the site and completely restructure their visitor offer to provide an open air working railway museum comprising a railway workshop and a 'museum on the move' (a unique, all-island, working, travelling, interactive visitor attraction; which tells the story of the railway in Ireland and its place in the Industrial, Political, Economic and Social History).

5.9 It will also support rail tours and excursions (5 routes scheduled – Whitehead site, Whitehead-Belfast, Belfast-Bangor, Belfast-Portrush, Belfast-Londonderry, Belfast-Dublin supported by audio-visual presentations, maps, guide books/leaflets, on-train talks, apps etc.).

5.10 The site will be redeveloped in three stages to provide: -

- Station Building – visitor introduction & orientation/tickets/café/shop
- Restored Stables – Chief Mechanical Engineers Office / learning space/ entrance to workshops/galleries and open air display area
- Loco Workshop & Viewing Gallery (5 buildings – all accessible)
- Carriage Shed & Viewing Gallery (3 display areas)
- Signal Box – displays to show how signals work and why they are used
- Turntable – visitors will be able to view the turntable in action
- Open air spaces (for informal displays)

Note: The Whitehead site visit plan will be important for the insights it will provide on the development of the site and the development of the town by the railway company, the construction of the Blackhead and Gobbins Paths and the World War 2 history of the site.

5.11 RPSI also plans to develop extensive use of digital media on site which will also support the development of its web-presence, an important opportunity to promote the site and Whitehead generally.

5.12 To date RPSI have secured planning permission and the funds to proceed with building the new station, the engineering works, signalbox, turntable, loco and carriage sheds will be delivered between September 2012 and June 2014, the stables, landscaping, outdoor interpretation etc., are subject to Interreg funding, if successful they will be delivered between January 2013 and June 2015.

5.13 The site will be open to visitors 5 days a week during the summer months and 3 days a week during the rest of the year. RPSI will be employing an Events Manager to run an annual programme of activities e.g. Steam and Jazz events, Vintage Days Out etc., which might start and/or end at Whitehead as well as 8 special events centred at station every year and an Education and Interpretation Officer who will work with schools and groups.

5.14 RPSI is keen to play its part in the general tourism development of Whitehead and believe that they can contribute significantly to the visitor attraction of the town. As they see it, other tourism activities happening in the village will help extend the dwell time and make a visit to RPSI and Whitehead more worthwhile for the average visitor.

Co Antrim Yacht Club

- 5.15 Given the Club's location and the fact that its races happen relatively close to shore and should, accordingly, be visible along the length of the promenade, yacht racing has the potential to offer a spectator opportunity if properly promoted. The greatest potential exists with races where the fleets are large, the yachts involved are in some way special e.g., off-shore racers with large crews, historic racing classes, old sail powered working boats etc., or where the racing is likely to be spectacular. The club has an extensive programme (see appendix) and with its registered training club status already brings people to the village to participate in its activities; building a spectator base would require a different sort of effort from the normal but could add to the general visitor opportunity. Routing the participating boats in Carrickfergus Sailing Club/Old Gaffer's Association's 'Classic Sail' event to sail close to Whitehead promenade might be another way of making a visitor connection as might the development of rowing gig racing which is growing around the coast of the UK and Ireland

Golf

- 5.16 Whitehead boasts two golf courses, Whitehead Golf Club, which claims to provide a challenging but fair 18 hole course coupled with excellent clubhouse facilities and Bentra Golf Course, which is a well matured 9 hole parkland course with wide fairways but some particularly long holes. Bentra and Whitehead also offer bar and restaurant facilities and cater for golfing societies and visitors. Golf is a major contributor to NI tourism but is unlikely to contribute significantly to the current project.

Events

- 5.17 Whitehead's major events are: -
- Easter Monday Road (running) Race - believed to be the oldest road race in Northern Ireland (first held in 1924), this traditional 5 mile road race is organised by Whitehead Community Association and sponsored by Carrickfergus Borough Council
 - Whitehead Festival (end-July)
 - 'Victorian Day' at the end of November, which coincides with the switching-on of the Christmas Lights.

The Path to White Harbour

- 5.18 A path also exists extending from Beach Road Nature Reserve in the direction of Carrickfergus which runs between the railway line and the sea the whole way to White Harbour (see 2.5-2.10 above). At this time the path is the direct pedestrian route connecting Quarry Cottages to Whitehead and more or less the residents' only way to and from home. The path is unsurfaced for most of its length and in places it is being undermined by the sea; recently NI Railways remade part of the path at the urging of the residents of Quarry Cottages. White Harbour is a scheduled monument and in private ownership. Subject to the willingness of the owner to allow visitors to access White Harbour on foot, with a relatively small investment the path (c.1.5mls in length) could be restored as a shoreline and nature walk; this could be done in association with the promotion of visitor access to Beach Road Nature Reserve and the development of Nature Safaris. It is already well used informally. Surfacing a path approx 750 mtrs to a width of 1.0 to 1.5m wide (concrete on blinded hardcore) would cost of the order of £60,000 - £70,000. Galvanised metal railings to 10% of path say 75m would add approx £12,000 - £15,000 to this cost.

Beach Road Nature Reserve

- 5.19 Beach Road Nature Reserve is set in an old disused limestone quarry which was in use through to the 1920's. The bulk of the limestone excavated from this area through White Harbour was transported to the harbour in bogies hauled by a small steam engine which ran tracks laid from the quarry to the harbour.
- 5.20 The two main types of rock exposed in the quarry and on the foreshore are basalt and chalk. The white chalk (the Ulster White Limestone Formation) was deposited between 80 million and 65 million years ago during the late Cretaceous Period. The fossilised remains of belemnites, echinoids, brachiopods and sponges can be seen in the quarry as can bands and nodules of greyish-brown chert (or flint), mostly formed as the chalk compacted after deposition. Overlying the chalk and forming the upper part of the quarry walls is a basalt layer which erupted as lava through volcanic vents and fissures around 60 million years ago. The southwest face of the quarry exposes up to 30m of basalt lava flows with columnar jointing, similar to that seen at the Giant's Causeway, but in miniature.
- 5.21 Robert Bell (1864-1934), a native of Whitehead, made an important collection of local zeolites, which is part of the National Collection of Zeolites, and may be seen in the National History Museum, London.
- 5.22 At present, there are no regular / organised visits to the nature reserve.

Historic Walking Trail

- 5.23 Carrickfergus Borough Council has recently instigated a tender for ‘The Whitehead Heritage and Wellbeing Walking Trail’. It is envisaged that this will comprise a heritage trail around the town including the commercial centre. Navigational finger posts will be used to aid travel throughout the town and ensure that key areas of interest can be located with ease. It is anticipated that Blackhead Path and the path to White Harbour will be signposted as part of this trail.
- 5.24 This is also the opportunity to showcase the fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings that make up Whitehead. Mention should also be made of the Conservation Area designation. Whitehead was designated in November 1992 and was the 30th area to be designated in Northern Ireland since the process began with Gracehill in March 1975.
- 5.25 The trail should include all the listed buildings in the town and should provide some information on each of the featured buildings, together with a brief history of the town and why it is worthy of Conservation Area status, either on a downloadable ‘app’/mobile website or printed leaflet.
- 5.26 Listed Buildings which the consultants believe should be included for their contribution to the overall character of the town include:



Building	Address	Date	Description
Castle Chester, gate and walling	34 Marine Parade	17 th Century	A two storey, five-bay, stone tower house. Built as the Manor House of Castle Chichester
St Patricks C of I	Victoria Avenue	1908	A neo-Gothic building of basalt and sandstone, with steeple and north transept facing the roadside.
Methodist Church	Balmoral Avenue	1900	A rendered building in Arts and Crafts style, comprising a hall and column-framed apse.
Presbyterian Church	King’s Road	1905	A brick and sandstone building with brick and basalt tower. Galleries extend round three sides.

Building	Address	Date	Description
Lourdes RC Church	Victoria Avenue	1908	A Hiberno-Romanesque Revival church with engaged round towers, constructed of basalt with stone and brick dressings.
Northern Bank	12 Edward Street	1905	A two-storey corner building of red brick and sandstone construction, strongly modelled in Renaissance style. The main elevations rise to triangular pediments with oculi.
Former Coast-guard Station	5 -10 Beach Road	c.1863	A range of brick buildings erected to the designs of the Board of Works. The terrace is 13 bays long with the Chief Officer's house at the south end, now finished in render with hipped gables. At the north end, the lookout tower supports cantered oriel windows on the two main elevations. A modern extension has been added at the rear of the tower.
Whitehead Railway Station		1877 & 1890s	Complex of one and two-storey brick buildings comprising station-master's house and porter's office with one-storey half timbered additions in 1890s comprising waiting room and platform canopy. Also signal box and smaller waiting room. Station opened by Carrickfergus and Larne Railway in 1977.
House	18 York Avenue	1900 – 1919	This Edwardian house has a complicated plan with a variety of projections and roof arrangements. The decorative veranda to the entrance and the tower over the entrance are particularly noteworthy. The well landscaped setting in addition to an intact interior make this an impressive example of an early 20th century detached seaside villa.

Building	Address	Date	Description
Telephone Box	King's Road	1940 - 1959	A freestanding cast-iron K6 Telephone kiosk, erected c. 1940, based on designs of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, located to the east side of Kings Road. The telephone kiosk is an earlier K6 model, indicated by the Tudor crown cipher (later models contain the St Edwards Crown, since 1952). The kiosk retains much of its original fabric and remains in use in its town centre location, contributing positively to the Whitehead conservation area.
Boat House	Beach Road	1860-1879	This detached single-storey single-cell boat house was originally constructed to house the lifeboat, in conjunction with the coastguard cottages. Despite the current near-derelict state, original features are still partially intact, such as ornate timber fretted bargeboards and stone detailing. The boat house, along with the terrace, is a fine remnant of the maritime history of the area. The boat house has strong group value with the terrace of coastguard cottages and shares the same historical interest.

Building	Address	Date	Description
House	19 Balmoral Avenue and 21 Balmoral Avenue	1900-1919	An attached two-bay one-and-a-half storey Arts and Crafts style house, built c.1905, located to the west side of Balmoral Avenue. It is one of a pair and it retains original plan layout and many architectural features both externally and internally. Arts and Crafts influence is articulated by half-timber panelling on the facade, and ornate timberwork to the veranda structure. The house, along with the adjoining property contributes positively to the conservation area of Whitehead. These houses are two of the best examples of semi-detached houses from the Edwardian era when Whitehead developed rapidly under encouragement from the railway company.

Developing The Tourism Opportunity – Bringing The Themes Together

Extending the walking route

- 5.27 The Blackhead Path as currently developed is linear (i.e. return is by the same route) and too short to constitute a route for serious walkers. It could be made circular by returning to the car park in Whitehead using first the road that services the lighthouse and the Whitehead Golf Club and then the main road but this raises issues with regard to the safety of walkers and the use of main roads, which is generally not appreciated by walkers. Adding to its length would, under ideal circumstances, see the route from the top of Black Head extended cross country to join up with the Gobbins Path (as it did in Victorian times) and from there it would follow an off-road route to Port Muck and Brown's Bay. However, that would mean that Larne Borough Council would have to start the process of negotiating with every farmer and/or asserting a right of way, which, given their experience with the path to Wise's Eye, seems unlikely and potentially more expensive than the returns it would be capable of bringing in, in the short to medium term at least.

- 5.28 It would be helpful if the circular route from the light house to Whitehead were signposted but on consideration, the consultants believe that the route as it is presently set out is the core of the opportunity, therefore development should be focused on what is there already. This being the case, it is important not to expect more by way of opportunity from it than is realistic; it will not develop as an opportunity for serious walkers but development is worthwhile if the path is thought of in the same context as the promenade at Newcastle and the same recognition of the need to integrate path and town is accepted.
- 5.29 As stated previously, the start point for any development must be to deal with the current closure of the part of the path under the cliff face; the attraction that will draw visitors to walk the path is the opportunity to climb the steps to the top of the cliff and the lighthouse. Carrickfergus Borough Council has already taken advice on what is required to stabilise the cliff face and protect walkers from rock falls and the next step should be to have the work required costed. The physical development needs to make more usable and attractive what is already there have been set down at paras 3.8-3.15 above.
- 5.30 The Commissioners of Irish Lights have indicated that they would consider opening the lighthouse to visitors from time to time e.g. to coincide with events in Whitehead, provided appropriate indemnities were put in place.

Strategic Positioning of Blackhead Path & The Fit With The Whitehead Opportunity

- 5.31 The proposed improvements to the Blackhead Path will not themselves increase the visitor base using it. The Path is well used by locals and people from the surrounding area at weekends, if it is to be developed as a tourism asset then it needs to be promoted as such and things need to happen along the path that attract visitors. At the simplest level increasing the number of people who go for a 'stroll along the prom' at weekends would be a start as would increasing the use of the Path as a charity fund raising venue. That activity would potentially bring economic benefit to Whitehead if the visitor was encouraged to visit the shops and the cafés in the village. The logic follows the Newcastle lead - provide a focus and greater number of visits will follow bringing economic opportunity in its wake.
- 5.32 However, a more proactive opportunity exists to position the Path strategically as *a venue, a place where visitors meet and where locals and tourists can engage with cultural and general leisure opportunities*. The Path and the area between the public slipway, boat park and the pumping station collectively provide a space where things can be made to happen. The village masterplan¹¹ recommends the development of an events space, visitor orientation point and café in the area around the present car park and cites the potential to develop an outdoor amphitheatre using the sloping topography of the ground extending from Donegall Avenue to the sea.

¹¹ Paul Hogarth Co. 2011

- 5.33 The consultants might not go that far but would generally agree with the broad idea and particularly with the need to minimise the visual impact of the boat park. The biggest single issue would be making any sort of high capital spend café development work well enough on the site all year round to encourage an operator to take up the challenge.
- 5.34 It is unlikely that simply improving the Path will of itself generate more visitors, there needs to be more promotion and more events that use the Path and the 'events area' that have the ability to draw visitors to the village from beyond the immediate locality. In reality that is going to be difficult in the off season because of the weather but the success of the Victorian day shows what can be done if the event is good enough. In the first instance the target for off season use by non-residents should simply focus on making the Path 'front of mind' when it comes to a bracing seaside walk at weekends (or during the week for those not working).

Events

- 5.35 The first target and perhaps the best single promotional opportunity in this regard will be attracting 'casual' walking groups to follow the heritage trail and walk the Path (including the climb to the lighthouse). Promoting this opportunity might be more successful if the walk was to be supported by a 'leader' from within the local community able to talk authoritatively about Whitehead's history, the Blackhead Path and the Gobbins Path, some of the more notable historic events to happen in this part of Belfast Lough and (perhaps as an alternative) the bird life. It would also benefit from being supported by the cafés in the town, perhaps by a discount voucher that would, in turn, benefit from the increase in passing trade.
- 5.36 Not every walk needs to be accompanied by a guide but every walker would get more enjoyment from the opportunity if information was made available to inform and enliven the walk. As Council is moving ahead with the heritage trail already, the consultants would encourage them to reference the Blackhead Path walk within whatever promotional material they develop to support this initiative.
- 5.37 Other than connecting with the Victorian Day event and with events run by RPSI, this might constitute the extent of off-season promotion for the Path. It might also contribute to business during the shoulder seasons but in the better weather and at key times such as Easter, more thought needs to be given to how best to develop events that will grow interest in visiting Whitehead and walking the Path. In so doing it will be important to engage the local traders to ensure an economic return.
- 5.38 The major opportunity, of course, lies in the summer months and at weekends in particular. To support the general weekend opportunity, the consultants would commend the success of Scarva bandstand restoration as an initiative worth copying. To support the visitor opportunity and generate local economic opportunity, Council might also consider locating a number of brightly coloured 'beach huts' on the promenade/'events' area which would provide commercial accommodation – ice cream/confectionery/tea & coffee etc. This accommodation might need to be moved

into storage to secure it over the winter months, also operators would need to ensure no stock was left over night.

- 5.39 An additional walking opportunity might be provided by the development of a path to White Harbour, subject to the owner's willingness to allow visitors to access the Harbour (see 5.18) supported by appropriate interpretation at Beach Road Nature Reserve and the development of wild life trails, talks and tours (wildlife safaris).
- 5.40 Events and the RPSI are the key to developing the tourism opportunity for Whitehead; Blackhead Path can contribute to the visitor experience and help extend dwell time but events will provide the high volume draw. It will be important for Whitehead to connect with RPSI events and their planned development of the Excursion Station, the workshops viewing galleries and tours. The most obvious connection that can be made with the visitors RPSI will bring in is probably the heritage walking tour but to make that connection happen, a group tour timetable will have to be developed and/or a tour guide book/leaflet will have to be put into the hands of the visitor and signage to the Blackhead Path needs to be put in place.
- 5.41 At present the major event held in the village is the Victorian Day, which coincides with the switching-on of the Christmas lights; with 10,000 visitors (PSNI Estimate) this very successful event has been particularly good at engaging with community organisations. It would make sense to repeat the event during the village's summer festival, perhaps running a two-day weekend event during the middle weekend of the event. In subsequent years, as awareness and recognition grows, this might move to two or even all three weekends of the festival fortnight. The current practice of using church halls and the community centre to provide indoor space to beat the weather would provide a fall back to what would otherwise be scheduled as an outdoor event based around the 'prom'/bandstand/events area and Blackhead Path. The event should fully involve the RPSI and exploit the opportunity to make the event special for children by promoting the idea that visitors access Whitehead by rail as would have been the norm in Victorian times (not necessarily by RPSI steam train but that would add another distinguishing dimension).
- 5.42 Other key events times would be Easter and bank holidays. The Easter road race event could be expanded into a light-hearted festival of running with events for children, older people and groups; a speed walking event might be developed for the Blackhead Path. Bank holiday events might take up the Victorian theme with living history presentations and casual encounters with costumed interpreters in character engaging with visitors following the heritage trail. The local drama club might be involved here and should certainly be engaged with the main Victorian Days events.
- 5.43 The strategic context for development of tourism of the type and scale described above is the concept of 'neighbourhood tourism' where residents show-off the place they live and their culture to visitors. If Carrickfergus Borough Council were to have to find the money to pay for the development and management of the initiatives listed above and their delivery 'on the day' the outlays would exceed the likely income. If the community takes the lead, the quality of the delivery experience is significantly enhanced by the opportunity for visitors to interact with the community, community spirit is strengthened (as the community has ownership of

the event), economic opportunity goes to the traders in the town before it goes to anyone else and in turn new economic tourism enterprise may be fostered.

- 5.44 Engaging the community can, in turn, lead to the development of new events and more regular activities e.g. encouraging a local history group to manage the heritage trail and offer regular guided tours but it is important not to expect too much involvement from the community. When developing and running an event becomes a chore the community will walk away.
- 5.45 For Whitehead, running a Victorian Weekend as part of the summer festival, the winter Victorian day, the Easter running event and say either a spring or August bank holiday event would be a good start and enough. When the Victorian Days event schedule expands over several weekends, it is likely that additional organisations/different individuals from within the community will have to get involved so as not to 'burn-out' the whole of the organising team. RPSI would represent a core part of the team in this regard and one of the weekends should be scheduled to fit with their plans for Whitehead based events.
- 5.46 Post the reopening of the Gobbins Path a weekend walking event might be developed specifically to link the Blackhead and Gobbins Path, which could be led by Larne borough Council and might be the start of restoring a more permanent link between the two.
- 5.47 Yacht racing as a spectator event and the opportunity to view boats that take part in Classic Sail, Carrickfergus has already been mentioned.

6. WHAT NEIGHBOURING COUNCILS ARE DOING

- 6.1 Carrickfergus Borough is bordered by Newtownabbey and Larne Boroughs; formerly all three were partners within the Causeway Coast and Glens Regional Tourism Organisation.

Newtownabbey

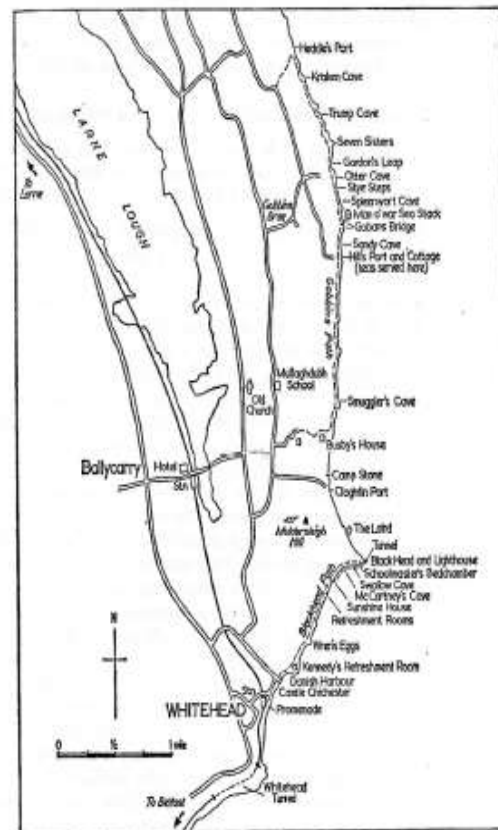
- 6.2 Newtownabbey recognises two major issues with regard to tourism development, proximity to Belfast and lack of outstanding product opportunities. Over the last few years they have begun to develop a heritage product offer focused around four main attractions, the Museum at the Mill, Sentry Hill, the Whitehouse and Patterson's Spade Mill; these attractions have been steadily building up a group tourism business. In addition, Newtownabbey has implemented an events led tourism strategy with three main offers, Ballyclare May Fair, the Shoreline Festival and a 3-day Halloween events programme and with the 'Theatre at the Mill' is developing an Amateur Drama Festival and a One-Act Play Festival which have both local and out-of-state opportunities.
- 6.3 With regard to walking, the Council has developed its shoreline walking opportunity as far as physically possible with walks extending across the whole of their coastal fringe through Hazlebank and Lough Shore Park. This development has been supported by NITB grant aid and has interpretative panels at strategic locations. The Council has also been developing the 'Newtownabbey Way' with financial support from Sustrans; this runs from the lough shore at Whiteabbey, through the glen to Mossley Mill and beyond to meet up with the Ulster Way. Newtownabbey BC points out that the old Monkstown to Carrickfergus railway line through Greenisland could be developed for walking with the agreement of NIR.

Larne

- 6.4 Larne Borough Council's major and most relevant tourism development project is the restoration of the Gobbins Path. In 1902 a 1200 metres (¾ mile) path was built and opened to the public along the base of the Gobbins Cliffs by the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway Company as a commercial venture to attract passengers to use their rail link between Belfast and Whitehead. Visitors were picked up from the station and taken to the site. The cover charge was six pence per person. Berkeley Deane Wise the design engineer for the project had also prepared plans for a further 1200 metres beyond Gordon's Leap suspension bridge, the work on which started but never completed. There have been several previous attempts since 1972 to bring forward restoration of the Gobbins Cliff Paths, each involving technical studies

6.5 Larne's current proposal is "to restore the original path in its entirety using more durable and more easily maintained materials but still retaining, as far as possible, the original features and notable structures which made the attraction so special for visitors"¹². In preparing the plan, consideration was also given to extending the path to Heddles Port to achieve a link to a cliff top path but this was ruled out due to cost. The project therefore focuses on the section from the rock portal at Wise's Eye to the dramatic suspension bridge over Gordon's Leap. Visitors would then retrace their steps along the same route to repeat the experience.

6.6 The major 'components' of the visitor opportunity will comprise: -



Whitehead and Islandmagee with Black Head Path and The Gobbins Path as originally planned

- A restored section of the Gobbins Cliff Path from the entrance at the rock portal at Wise's Eye to the suspension bridge over Gordon's Leap. Visitors would then retrace their steps along the same.
- A reception/visitor centre to provide an arrival and ticketing point, car parking and visitor service area to be located at Ballystrudder as part of a multi-purpose community and visitor centre. The facility also providing for the transfer of visitors to the shuttle bus, and the issuing of personal protective equipment to visitors in preparation for their visit.
- A Shuttle Bus service taking visitors to the existing access point on the Gobbins Road. Subject to agreement with the National Trust and land acquisition an alternative more interesting and less steep access at the (NT) property along the Gobbins Road may be developed.
- The provision of guides / wardens to accompany visitors at the site and on the shuttle bus.
- A cliff path would be provided to allow visitors to walk along the cliff top above the Gobbins Cliff Path. A section of this walk would be provided on an 'Access for All' basis.
- The project entails a paid for, controlled and managed visitor experience within certain site capacity limits.

¹² Gobbins Cliff Paths Final Report (July 2008)

- 6.7 The costs envisaged for this project are: – Stage 1 £530,000 (preparatory studies and land purchase) / Stage 2 £4,950,000 (restoration of cliff path) / Stage 3 £330,000 (Upper Cliff path to Port Muck). The target operating level is 70,000 visitors p.a. for breakeven (deficit funding required to that point).
- 6.8 The current 'state of play' is that the project has stalled; funding has been agreed but the Council has been unable to agree a purchase price with one land owner and this is preventing access to the site. Council is in process of collecting evidence in order to assert a right of way and expects the issue to come to court later in the year after which they fully expect to be in a position to proceed.

Extending The Walking Opportunity Beyond The Gobbins Path And To Connect With Blackhead Path

- 6.9 The proposal to extend the cliff path to Heddles Port to join with an upper cliff path to provide a circular return route is not a part of the current plan but it does highlight the potential opportunity to create a coastal walk between the Gobbins access point and Portmuck (approx 7500m). Going further, the National Trust has the aspiration to link Port Muck with Brown's Bay and has already created a new coastal access path at Portmuck to facilitate this.
- 6.10 Of more interest to the present project is the potential to extend the cliff top path back from the Gobbins access point towards Whitehead to meet up with the Blackhead path. The National Trust has confirmed that they would be supportive of the development of a path in the area but their land holding at Ballykeele could facilitate this little so Larne BC would need to either purchase land for a path or assert a right of way. Given that this does not constitute part of the agreed plan and their experience to date in seeking to secure access to the Gobbins, it seems very unlikely that they would be prepared to tackle this issue now or at any time soon.

7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The consultants have concluded that the Blackhead Path does not represent a major walking tourism opportunity but will be important to the tourism development of Whitehead as an opportunity for casual walkers and as a venue for events. To get it ready to more fully play that part, it is vital that the path under Black Head is reopened to walkers as a matter of urgency; to that end Carrickfergus Borough Council needs to proceed with a project to stabilise the cliff and add protection for walkers from rock falls as soon as possible. Other work by way of general improvements is not extensive and will cost in the order of £85,000. As mentioned previously, given the historic nature of both paths, funding may be available from HLF particularly with Carrickfergus Borough Council being readily available as a partner. See Appendix 7 for further details on HLF grant opportunities.
- 7.2 A second casual walking opportunity exists by developing a path along the shoreline to White harbour (subject to owner's agreement). This should be tied in to the development of better more informed access to Beach Road Nature Reserve through interpretation and possibly an active wildlife viewing weekend guided 'safari' product opportunity. The cost of a pedestrian path to White harbour would be of the order of £85,000.
- 7.3 The development of a village heritage trail will be an important add-on to both these walking opportunities (see the GROW S. Antrim Tourism programme for grant opportunities – Appendix 7).
- 7.4 Whitehead's tourism future lies in the proposed development by the RPSI of an 'Excursion Station', visitor galleries for its workshops and events and the creation of new events that build on the success of Whitehead Victorian Day, which is normally held in late November and attracts around 10,000 visitors.
- 7.5 The context for event development, if it is to be successful, is one of 'neighbourhood tourism' which leaves the initiative with the residents and recognises that trying to do too much turns the event(s) into a chore and ultimately leads to failure of the initiative.
- 7.6 The consultants recommend that the community seeks to build on its current events, expanding the reach of the Easter 'road races' and duplicating the success of the Victorian Day, making it a two-day event as a part of the summer festival (middle weekend) over time expanding this to 2 or 3 weekends. Bank Holiday events might also be developed providing the community is willing to put in the organisational effort and expectations are not set too high. It is vital that in any event development the local traders are fully involved and the event fits within RPSI's event schedule so as to avoid a clash of dates (See Appendix 7 for details of NITB's Event Grants).
- 7.7 The village regeneration masterplan recommended the development of an events area on the land between the public slipway, the car and boat parks and the start of the Blackhead Path, the consultants generally concur with the opportunity.

- 7.8 The consultants also see an opportunity to redevelop the lido as one of only two left in Northern Ireland and would recommend a more detailed study to consider this opportunity further, particularly as it would further enhance the Victorian identity of the village.
- 7.9 The consultants, with 'identity' reinforcement firmly in mind, would also highlight the success of the redeveloped Scarva bandstand with its regular series of Sunday band concerts at generating visitor traffic and would encourage Council to consider reinstating the bandstand as part of the general development of the events area or of the promenade.

Funding Opportunities - Signpost

- 7.10 Appendix 7 sets out a range of grant funding opportunities which might be used to support the proposals made in this document. The Heritage Lottery Fund is, undoubtedly the most obvious source of funding for the work to the Path but GROW South Antrim can also contribute to tourism and heritage infrastructure, albeit the budget available is limited. Also, GROW's tourism funding support can be applied to heritage trails, such as that suggested for Whitehead and detailed within the document and to the development and promotion of events.
- 7.11 HLF's 'Your Heritage' grant scheme would be the most appropriate as it deals locally with applications and decisions are made on the recommendation of NI officers. This scheme offers grants between £3,000 and (from April 2012) £100,000.00. If the cliff stabilisation were to be included in the application or the Lido were to become part of the plan, the higher levels of grant support might come from the main Heritage Grants programme offers grants of more than £100,000 for projects that relate to the national, regional or local heritage of the UK
- 7.12 Event Grants are also available from the NI Tourist Board. The grant scheme for 2012-13 is closed at present but in due course a funding programme for 2013-14 will probably be launched. The Appendix sets out the rules for the scheme now closed as an indicator as to what may be expected.

Action Plan

- 7.13 An action Plan to move these recommendations forward is included at Appendix 9.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Blackhead Path

County	Distance	OS Map
Antrim	2.4 miles	15
Nearest Town	Route Shape	Route Type
Whitehead	Linear	Beach, Coastal, Woodland
Terrain	Grid Reference (Start)	Grid Reference (Finish)
Point of Interest	The Blackhead Lighthouse	
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Other Area	
Route Description	This walk starts at Whitehead Yacht Club and leads along a coastal path and up some steep steps to Blackhead Lighthouse. From here walkers descend some more steep steps back to the coastal path and back to the car park.	
Getting to the Start (by Public Transport)	Whitehead can be reached by train and bus from Larne or Belfast. Call Translink on 028 9066 6630 or click www.translink.co.uk .	
Getting to the Start (by Car)	By car take the A2 from Carrickfergus or Larne. Car parking is available at the start of Blackhead Path.	
Accessibility Grade	Grade 5	
Level surfaced path, steep steps	J478923	J478923

The following facilities are available for users with limited mobility:

Accessible Facilities



Disabled toilets

Car park, toilets - 10p. There are also several shelters along the walk.

Facilities

Whitehead has a number of cafe facilities and public toilets.

Whitehead can be reached by car, bus and train. For further information on public transport options visit www.translink.co.uk.

Publication

Whitehead Wildlife Trails and Whitehead Highway to Health

Publication Availability

Contact Carrickfergus Tourist Information Centre 028 9335 8000.

This seaside walk goes from Whitehead Boat Club to Sunshine House. The path runs northeast from Whitehead and is lined by interesting wildlife habitats including grassland, woodland (known locally as the 'Magic Forest') and a rocky shoreline. The Lough itself is an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) famed for its bird population.

Appendix 2

CAAN – Walk NI (website)
Short Walks (under 5mls)

Location/Title	Description	Distance (Miles)	Nearest town
Ballymoney Heritage Trail	Historic town trail	2.5	Ballymoney Town Centre
Barnetts Demesne	Scenic parkland walk	1.5	Malone Road, Belfast
Belfast Castle Estate	Scenic parkland walk	2.4	Fortwilliam, Belfast
Blackhead Path	A scenic coastal walk with beautiful views of sea and land.	2.4	Whitehead
Bog Meadows	Short walk though an urban nature reserve	1.1	Falls Road, Belfast
Botanic Gardens	Historic botanical park	0.8	University area, Belfast
Buttermilk Bridge	Riverside village walk, excellent for wheelchair users	1.5	Broughshane
Carnfunnock Country Park	Mostly wooded landscape	5	Larne and Ballygally
Carnmoney Hill	A beautiful woodland walk, with wonderful views.	3	Carnmoney village
Carrick-a-Rede	Coastal cliff scenery & an exhilarating rope bridge experience	2	Ballintoy
Cave Hill Country Park	Overlooks Belfast	4.5	Antrim Road Belfast
Clement Wilson Park	Along River Lagan	1.2	Shaws Bridge Belfast
Colin Glen	Pretty riverside walk	4	Stewartstown Road, Belfast
Cranny Falls	A gentle walk uphill	3	Carnlough
Crumlin Glen	Short walk with steep sections	1.8	Crumlin
Cushendun	Beach and village walk	1.2 to 1.5	Cushendun
Divis & Black Mountain	Mountain and bog walk	3.6 - 5.2	Hannahstown Belfast
Dunluce Castle	Magnificent cliff top castle	0.5	Bushmills
Giant's Causeway	World Heritage Site and geological wonder steeped in legend	2	Bushmills
Glenariff Forest Park, Rainbow Trail	A detour off the Waterfall walk, crossing the Rainbow Bridge	0.4	Cushendall
Glenariff Forest Park, Viewpoint Trail	View the sea in the distance.	0.6	Cushendall
Glenariff Nature Reserve Waterfalls Walk	Forest walk with spectacular waterfalls	1.5	Glenariff
Glenarm Coast Walk	A stoney and flat path.	1	Glenarm
Glenoe Waterfall	Steep valley of a small river.	1	Glenoe and Larne
Heritage Railway Path	Coastal walk	1.5	Portballintrae
Lagan Meadows	Local Nature Reserve	2.2	Stranmillis, Belfast
Lagan Meadows Nature Trail	Walk in species rich meadows	1	Malone/ Stranmillis, Belfast
Lagan Towpath - Shaws Bridge to Lock Keepers Cottage	A short circular walk along the edge of the River Lagan	1	Belfast
Layd Church	Monument and coastal scenery	0.5	Cushendall

Layde Walk	A short walk through the streets of Glenarm village.	2	Glenarm
Lisanduff	Unusual twin earthworks on a coastal headline	0.5	Portbalintrae
Mill Race Trail	Short linear riverside walk	1.6	Antrim town
North Antrim Cliff Path to Dunseverick Castle	Dramatic cliff headlands & views, secluded bays, castle ruins	4.8	Bushmills
Ormeau Park	A short walk close to the River Lagan	1.3	Ormeau, Belfast
Portmuck	Tranquil harbour and dramatic coastal walk	2	Portmuck
Rambles for people with limited mobility - Ormeau Park	Ramble through the Park overlooking River Lagan	1.3	Ormeau, Belfast
Rambles for people with limited mobility -Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park	Various rambles through the park and gardens	5	Belfast (Dunmurray)
Rathlin Island Roonivoolin Walk	A breathtaking cliff top and lakeland walk	4	Rathlin Village
Rathlin Trail to the RSPB Seabird Viewpoint	Coastal walk with splendid land and seascapes	4	Rathlin harbour
Rea's Wood	Woodland walk along Lough Neagh shore	2.5	Antrim
Riverside Park	Flat walks in quiet parkland	4	Ballymoney Town Centre
Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park	Urban park, horticultural interest	2.5	Upper Malone Belfast
Skernaghan Point	Beach to Skernaghan Point	3	Larne and Ballycarry
Slemish	Steep rocky track	1.2	Nearest village Buckna
Slievenacloy - Ballycolin	Hill walk in wildflower meadow	1.5	Stoneyford near Lisburn
Slievenacloy - Boundary	Hill walk in wildflower meadow	4	Stoneyford near Lisburn
Slievenacloy - Priest's Hill	Short hill walk, amazing views	1.7	Stoneyford near Lisburn
Slievenacloy - Stoneyford River	Hill walk in wildflower meadow	2.5	Stoneyford near Lisburn
Straidkilly	Woodland wildflower walk	0.7	Glenarm
The Milibern	Scenic Hillwalking Route	3	Magherahoney Village
Toome Canal	Short linear riverside walk	1.2	Toome
Waterworks	Ponds & birdlife in Belfast	1.4	Antrim Road, Belfast
Whitepark Bay	A classic embayment beach of white sands & wild dunes	3	Ballintoy
Antrim Town Heritage Trail	Short heritage trail	2	Antrim town
Bonamargy Friary	State Care Monument	0.5	Ballycastle
Crumlin Heritage Trail	Short Heritage trail	1	Crumlin
Curran Park	Walks within grassy playpark.	1	Larne
Drumaheglis Nature	Quiet woodland trail	0.75	Balnamore Village
Ecos Reserve Trail	Riverside & parkland walk	2	Ballymena
Falls Park	Views of Divis	1.5	Falls Road Belfast
Glenarm Forest - 3 walks	3 scenic walks through this forest	2	Glenarm
Glenside Community Woodland	Short walk through woodland	4	Hannahstown
Highway to Health, Antrim Loughshore	Short urban walk	2	Antrim town
Highway to Health, Avoneil	A short circular walk starting at	0.8	Belfast

Leisure Centre	Avoneil Leisure Centre		
Highway to Health, Ballee	A short circular route through the Ballee area.	1.3	Ballymena
Highway to Health, Ballymena North	A short walk Ballyloughan, Dunclug and Park wards of Ballymena	2.7	Ballymena
Highway to Health, Ballymena Town (A&B)	Two short, circular walks in Ballymena town centre	2.9	Ballymena
Highway to Health, Ballymoney	A flat walk through Ballymoney town and parkland	3	Ballymoney Town Centre
Highway to Health, Ballysillan Leisure Centre	A short circular walk at Ballysillan Leisure Centre	1	Belfast
Highway to Health, Belfast City Centre	A short walk through Belfast City Centre	1.6	Belfast
Highway to Health, Carrick	A short circular walk through Carrickfer via the Marine Highway.	2.2	Carrickfergus
Highway to Health, ECOS	A short circular walk	1.9	Ballymena
Highway to Health, Larne	A long road with coastal views to Scotland.	4	Larne, Carnfunnock Country Park
Highway to Health, Lisburn	Urban footpaths	3.5	Lisburn
Highway to Health, Mater Hospital	A series of six short circular walks in the Mater Hospital area.	1-2	Belfast
Highway to Health, Musgrave Park	A short circular walk around Musgrave Park	1	Belfast
Highway to Health, Randalstown	Short circular low impact walk taking in the best of Randalstown	1.7	Randalstown
Highway to Health, Rathcoole	Series of three circular walks around the Rathcoole Estate	1.8	Newtownabbey
Highway to Health, Royal Hospital	A short circular walk through the grounds of the Royal Hospital	1.2	Belfast
Highway to Health, Six Mile Water - Antrim/ Muckamore Route	Beautiful historic riverside historic walk	3.8	Antrim Town
Highway to Health, Six Mile Water River Park - Ballyclare	A short circular walk around Six Mile Water River Park	1.24	Ballyclare
Highway to Health, Threemilewater	A short circular route around Threemilewater Park	1.3	Newtownabbey
Highway to Health, Toomebridge	Circular walk in and around Toomebridge	1.9	Toomebridge
Highway to Health, Valley Park	A short circular walk through Valley Park	1.45	Newtownabbey
Highway to Health, Whiteabbey Hospital	Short walk around Whiteabbey Hospital.	1	Rathcoole, Whiteabbey
Highway to Health, Whitehead	A short linear walk linking Whitehead and Blackhead	1.2	Whitehead
Highway to Health, Whiterock Leisure Centre	A short circular walk through Falls Park	1.2	Belfast
Inver River Walkway	A pleasant riverside walk leading to a weir	1	Larne
Larne Town Parks	A hilly coastal setting.	3	Larne
Linn Glen	Small river valley	1	Larne

Lisnafillan	Level riverside walk	2	Gracehill & Galgorm
Maine Riverside	Permissive path	2	Cullybackey
Metal Bridge	Quiet rural countryside walk	3	Stranocum Village
Motte & Bailey	Short, steep in parts walk.	2	Ballymena
Musgrave Park	Urban park	1.3	Stockmans Lane, Belfast
New Mossley Woodland Walk	An urban linear woodland walk	1.2	New Mossley
Pennybridge	Level riverside walk	2.5	Ballymena
People's Park	Infants walk	0.6	Ballymena
Portglenone Forest Walk	Walks through an ancient woodland	1.3	Portglenone
Randalstown Forest	Short forest walk	2.5	Randalstown
Randalstown Heritage Trail	Short heritage trail	1.5	Randalstown
Skerry Trail	Scenic circular route	2.5	Newtowncrommelin
Tardree Forest Walk	Short, forested hill walk	2.5	Parkgate
The Drum	Steep grassland track	1.5	Cargan
Tullagharley Bridge	Permissive & public paths	3.5	Gracehill & Ballymena
West Bay & Ramore Head	Coastal walk around Portrush	2 - 3	Portrush

Appendix 3

Paint specification for Balustrade (600m)

- (i) Wire brush and wash to remove rust scaling and salt
- (ii) Spot paint bare steelwork with Inter plus 256 (125 micron thickness)
- (iii) Second coat Inter plus 770 (125 micron thickness)
- (iv) Third coat Polyurathane 990 gloss or 870 semi-gloss (50 microns)

Note: This is for a C3 environment and should give 15 years to next maintenance

The whole specification will cost about £3.50/ m² + application

Appendix 4

Coastal Path Development – Draft Guidelines

1. Introduction

Overall, a coastal path should;

- offer a variety of landscape with quality scenery and good viewing points providing regular marine views (maximum horizontal distance recommended is 400 metres to sea shore;
- provide a range of physical challenges with good underfoot terrain;
- incorporate a range of sites of interest (e.g. architecture, archaeology, biology, heritage);
- be easily accessible and have supporting facilities and services;
- be safe for the walker;
- be sustainable.

A coastal path should be developed to cater to the needs of the *occasional walker*, broadly defined as a person that;

- walks for more than 2hrs on average less than twice a month;
- has limited though variable fitness levels;
- has limited navigation or emergency procedures skills;
- has limited knowledge of access issues
- is unlikely to have done any research on the loop prior to arrival.

2. Trailheads

A coastal path should take the walker from trailhead to trailhead which provide;

- ample, safe car parking;
- access to services (shops, pubs, restaurants, toilet/changing facilities, phone, etc);
- close proximity to public transport links and accommodation outlets.

The trailheads should be located at reasonable distances along the path. As the fitness levels and walking speeds of walkers vary considerably, a distance range is estimated at 10km to 20km - but this will depend on the level of ascent and difficulty of terrain.

Each trailhead should contain a mapboard clearly outlining details of the trek to the trailheads on either side to include;

- distance
- estimated duration
- points of interest
- overview of terrain
- level of ascent
- degree of difficulty (easy, moderate or hard).

The mapboard should be weatherproof, vandal resistant and comply with planning regulations.

3. Path Development

A coastal path should be as *natural* as possible. In this regard;

- physical development should only be undertaken where the walker's *safety* would be compromised by not doing so (e.g. erecting handrails along a clifftop section, constructing a footbridge at a stream crossing); or the *sustainability* of the loop would be compromised by not doing so (e.g. boardwalking or surfacing to prevent erosion).
- the path should avoid trafficked roads and never along primary or busy secondary roads unless there is a wide footpath. Overall, tarred roads should not exceed 20% of the overall path length.

The path must provide *assured access* to the walker. In this regard

- the path should be clearly waymarked in both directions using a consistent scheme throughout that is in keeping with the landscape.
- walkers should not encounter any physical obstructions. This will require the erection of high-quality furniture including gates or stiles (to give access through field boundaries, fences, walls, etc.), sturdy, slip-resistant footbridges (to give access across waterways).
- *permissive access* should be secured for all sections of the path, in particular, sections over private property.

4. Walker Safety

The path should be developed in a way that minimizes, manages or avoids all potential dangers or hazards to the walker including;

- crags or cliffs,
- steep slopes,
- heights over 300m
- tidal areas.

5. Conservation and Protection

A coastal path should respect and protect all habitat and wildlife designations and comply with the legal requirements in relation to Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and adjoining areas, the resting and breeding places of protected species of animals and birds and the habitat or environment of any protected species of flora.

The path should avoid, in particular;

- special areas such as wildlife or nature reserves, rare habitats or heritage sites.
- environmentally sensitive sites or easily eroded surfaces which are too fragile to handle large numbers (e.g. dunes).
- using heavy machinery.

6. Sustainable Trail Management

Overall development must include a plan for

- regular monitoring and maintenance;
- meeting ongoing public liability insurance obligations;
- the marketing of the path.

This may be taken on by one organisation (e.g. Local Authority), or may involve a partnership between community organisations, landowners, public bodies and/or private agencies

Appendix 5

10 Easy Steps to Promote Walking Trails in Your Area

1. Work from your community outwards.

Experienced walking organisations all agree that you need to get your local community on board as advocates for your new walk. Make sure your key influencers in your community know all about the walk, from its starting point to special features along the way. Talk to pub and B & B owners, bus hire and taxi companies, the local churches, Macra na Feirme, teachers, local special interest groups.

2. Build the buzz with a good website.

Remember the web is a visual medium. Capture people's hearts and minds with great pictures, engaging text and lots of news about upcoming events. You're promoting experiences so consider adding video clips to showcase your beautiful walk.

3. There are so many Benefits – Take your Pick!

Depending on who your audience is, you can feature and describe the benefits of your walk to attract different groups of people. For families it's a great day out together; for others it's a chance to get fit and healthy; for nature lovers, a walk gives them a chance to discover the landscape at their own pace. For local tourism businesses, walking brings visitors and revenue to your area all year round.

4. It's time for Strong Language!

What is the difference between a tourism product and a tourism experience? A tourism product is what you buy. A tourism experience is what you remember. This calls for a different type of language and imagery. Here is an example of a product-based description: a 5 k looped walk suitable for all types of walkers. An experience-based description: The Glenrue Trail brings you from the mountains to the sea, along deeply wooded paths, finishing at the quaint village of Glencarrig.

5. Iconic Images

What are the most famous images associated with your area? Is there a wellknown historical monument, or a captivating view of a mountain or lake that is immediately recognisable to visitors and local people? Use well known images to promote your walk because these are the ones that are most instantly recognisable to your target audience. This helps you to promote the area more easily because people feel it's already very familiar.

6. The People behind the Places

Create a sense of place through the people you choose to help you promote your

new walk. If you are lucky enough to have a great walking guide, a local historian or a storyteller who can enthuse people about the walk, then this is your very best spokesperson to work with local and national media.

7. Working with the Press

Create strong links with the press – including freesheets - by getting to know your local journalists and editors, their deadlines and their particular news interests. Make their jobs easier by providing them with good quality pictures and captions. A good picture has a focal point, so lots and lots of people in a picture is not as powerful as a small group taken in a location that is recognisable and shows off the walk very well. Announce events in the community diary.

8. Talk Radio!

Talking about walks on the radio is very much a trend so approach your local radio stations and offer to do an interview about your new walk. Time it to coincide with upcoming holiday periods when the radio stations – and audiences – are more receptive to features about leisure activities. Have some stories that are interesting and memorable about the walk. People remember stories long after they have forgotten facts.

9. Social Media – A great free marketing channel

Choose one or two social media tools and do them well. Consider setting up a Facebook account for each trail so that you can build up a group of followers and extend the use of the trail. It can also be used to search for people in the neighbourhood you might like to become friends of the trail.

10. Work Smart – Identify your Key Support Organisations

Experienced walking trail promoters work closely with Fáilte Ireland and other tourism support organisations to get their message out there. Fáilte Ireland will provide you with great marketing support, maps and route descriptions. The success of your work will rest on how well those materials are used and disseminated in your community. Also consider your local Sports Partnership, an organisation that supports people participating in sport, activity and physical exercise. They have an excellent database of people in your county who have an interest in engaging with physical activity.

Source: Fáilte Ireland

Appendix 6 County Antrim Yacht Club 2012 Programme

High Tide	Day	Date	Event	Info/Location
13.55	Sun	11-Mar	Spring series starts	CAYC
	Sat/Sun	31-Mar-1-Apr	Topper Leinsters	Howth Sailing Club
12.04	Sat/Sun	7-8 Apr	Race Training - Toppers / Lasers	CAYC - approx 10 weeks
	Sat/Sun	14-15 Apr	Titanic Commemoration Event	Carrickfergus SC
17.51	Sun	29-Apr	Spring series ends	CAYC
10.57	Sat	5-May	Opening Day	CAYC
11.46	Sun	6-May	Early Sunday Series - Start	8 weeks
14.23	Wed	9-May	Early Wednesday Series - Start	8 weeks
17.18	Sat	12-May	Flying 15 Classic Open Event	TBC - Laser Event?
	Sat	12-May	Topper Traveller 1	TBC
10.33	Fri	18-May	Fat Boys Race	CAYC
11.14	Sat	19-May	RYA Regional RIB Challenge	CSC
	Sat/Sun	19-20 May	Flying 15 Northern Championships	Strangford Sailing Club
	Sat	26-May	Topper Traveller 2	CAYC requested 7 Jan
21.18	Fri	1-Jun	Ladies Race	CAYC
9.42	Sat	2-Jun	Race Training Finishes	CAYC
9.42	Sat	2-Jun	BBQ Sail / Kayak - Portmuck	CAYC
	Sat/Sun	2-3 Jun	Classic Sail	Carrickfergus SC
	Sat	9-Jun	Topper Traveller 3	Donaghadee SC
	Sat /Sun	09-10 Jun	SB3 Northerns	Carrickfergus SC
15.55	Sat	9-Jun	RUYC Regatta	Royal Ulster YC
10.00	Sat	16-Jun	Junior Regatta (3 Races)	CAYC
	Sat/Sun	23-24 Jun	Topper Ulster Championships	Carlingford Lough YC
	Sat/Sun	23-24 Jun	Flying 15 Southern Championships	Carlingford Sailing Club
14.11	Sat	23-Jun	BYC Regatta	Ballyholme YC
	Sat	23-Jun	Mid Summer BBQ	CAYC
14.55	Sun	24-Jun	Early Sunday Series - Finish	CAYC
17.37	Wed	27-Jun	Early Wednesday Series - Finish	CAYC
20.53	Sat	30-Jun	Try Sailing Day	CAYC
9.25	Sun	1-Jul	Late Sunday Series - Start	9 weeks
12.12	Wed	4-Jul	Late Wednesday Series - Start	9 weeks
14.38	Sat	7-Jul	HYC Regatta	Hollywood YC (150)
	Fri/Sat/Sun	6-7-8 Jul	Irish Topper Nationals	Wexford Harbour SC
	Fri/Sat/Sun	20-23 Jul	Flying 15 British Championships	Largs SC
	Fri/Sat/Sun	20-22 Jul	GP14 Nationals	Ballyholme YC
	Sun -Fri	22-27 Jul	Topper - British Championships	Pwellihi, Wales
13.06	Sat/Sun	21-22 Jul	EABC Regatta	East Antrim BC
19.21	Sat	28-Jul	CAYC Regatta Day	CAYC
	Fri-Sun	27-29 Jul	RS Elite Nationals	Royal North Ireland YC
	Sat	4-Aug	Topper Traveller 4	TBC
13.28	Sat	4-Aug	Swim & Raft Race	CAYC
13.38	Sat	4-Aug	CIBC Regatta	Cockle Island BC
18.48	Sat	11-Aug	RNIYC Regatta	Royal North Ireland YC

	Fri/Sat/Sun	17-19 Aug	Flying 15 Championships of Ireland	Strangford Lough YC
12.11	Sat	18-Aug	Balloon Race	CAYC
12.11	Sat	18-Aug	DSC Regatta	Donaghadee SC
	Sun -Fri	19-24 Aug	Topper - World Championships	Wokum, Holland
17.45	Sat	25-Aug	CSC Regatta	Carrickfergus SC
19.06	Sun	26-Aug	Late Sunday Series - Finish	CAYC
22.33	Wed	29-Aug	Late Wednesday Series - Finish	CAYC
	Fri-Sun	31-2 Sep	SB3 Irish Nationals	Royal Ulster YC
13.04	Sun	2-Sep	Autumn Series - Start	CAYC
	Sat/Sun	8-9 Sept	Topper Munsters	Lough Derg Sailing Club
	Sat/Sun	15-16 Sept	Flying 15 West Coast Championships	Carrickfergus SC
	Sat	23-Sep	Topper Traveller 5	TBC
	Sat/Sun	29-30 Sep	RYA Youth Championships	TBC
	Sat/Sun	6-7 Oct	Flying 15 East Coast Championships	National Yacht Club
16.12	Sun	21-Oct	Autumn Series - Finish	CAYC

Appendix 7

Grant Aid Possibilities

Heritage Lottery Fund as Funding Partner

We have contacted HLF regarding the most suitable grants scheme from which Carrickfergus Borough Council or Whitehead Regeneration Committee* could seek funding for the works to Blackhead Path.

Conservation and Refurbishment of Blackhead Path

It would appear that 'Your Heritage' would be the most appropriate as it deals locally with applications and decisions are made on the recommendation of NI officers. Your Heritage offers grants between £3,000 and (from April 2012) £100,000.00 and provided HLF funding was less than or equal to 50% of the total costs, a single application could be made for both Blackhead Path and the restoration of the path to White Harbour.

Your Heritage Grant Scheme programme offers grants for projects that relate to the local, regional or national heritage of the UK. HLF welcome applications that help people to learn about, look after and celebrate heritage in a fun and enjoyable way.

There are three aims which applications should endeavour to fulfil and these relate to learning, conservation and participation.

To receive a grant the project must:

- help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage.

The project must also do either or both of the following:

- conserve the UK's diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy.
- help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.

Your Heritage is a rolling programme and there are no deadlines for applications. A decision on your application will be made within 10 weeks from HLF receiving the completed application.

HLF strongly recommend that contact is made for advice before making an application. A pre-application enquiry form and full application should be submitted online.

Restoration of the Lido

The conservation and restoration of The Lido would probably be a much more costly exercise. HLF have advised that the main Heritage Grants programme would be the most appropriate in the case.

Heritage Grants offers grants of more than £100,000 for projects that relate to the national, regional or local heritage of the UK. The Programme prioritizes applications which help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage. The project must also do either or both of the following:

- conserve the UK's diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy;
- help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.

HLF assess all applications in two rounds. Heritage Grant is a rolling programme and there are no deadlines for applications under £5million. It will take three months from the submission date of the first and/or second-round application to assess it. HLF will decide on the application at the next available meeting after the three-month assessment process has passed.

Your grant request is the combined total of your development grant (if applicable) and delivery grant.

Grants of over £100,000 and under £1million

The Country and Regional Committees meet four times a year to make decisions on Heritage Grants of over £100,000 and under £1million – June, September, December and March.

Grants of over £1million and under £5million

Our Board meets six times a year to make decisions on Heritage Grants of over £1million and under £5million. Application forms and all supporting materials will need to have been received by HLF no later than the following dates:

- 17 October 2011 for the Board meeting on 24 January 2012
- 19 December 2011 for the Board meeting on 27 March 2012
- 15 February 2012 for the Board meeting on 22 May 2012
- 5 April 2012 for the Board meeting on 16/17 July 2012
- 25 June 2012 for the Board meeting on 1/2 October 2012
- 6 August 2012 for the Board meeting on 13 November 2012
- 22 October 2012 for the Board meeting on 29 January 2013
- 19 December 2012 for the Board meeting on 26 March 2013

Grants of £5million or more

Applications for grants of £5million or more are assessed, in a competitive batch, once a year by the HLF Board. The deadline for first-round applications is 30 November for each year with a decision by April the following year. If the first round application is successful, then the second-round applications may be submitted at any time within two years of the original decision and it will be considered by the Board at the next available decision meeting. If you are submitting an application the deadlines are as follows:

- First-round applications: 30 November 2012, with a decision in April 2013.
Applicants will have until March 2015 to work up and submit their second-round application for decision.

From April 2012 HLF will introduce single stage Heritage Grant applications *by exception* when there is an urgent external deadline, for example on partnership funding. Our local Committees will take decisions on Heritage Grant applications up to the value of £2m from April 2012.

HLF strongly recommend contact is made with the local office for advice before making an application. The pre-application enquiry form and full application form should be submitted online.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

NITB's events funding programme is now closed for 2012-13 but the details set out below are indicative of what will be required by NITB in future funding programmes.

The National Tourism Events Fund:

This fund primarily supports home-grown events, with a positive geographical spread across Northern Ireland highlighting the best that the regions have to offer. To apply for this fund, events must satisfy at least the following requirements: total visitor numbers greater than 1,000 (not participants), funding requests between £5,000 and £30,000, overall total event costs of at least £50,000 and an aimed return of investment of 5:1

The International Tourism Events Fund:

This fund primarily supports events which have the potential to attract out-of-state visitors and high international media coverage. To apply for this fund, events must satisfy at least the following requirements: total visitor numbers greater than 4,000 (not participants), funding requests greater than £30,000 and an aimed return of investment of 8:1

Funding Principles

The four guiding principles of the funding model are 'additionality', leverage of other funding, partnership working and funding for events of national or international significance. NITB are not core funders for events and it is key that applicants demonstrate how NITB funding will enable 'additionality'.

New for 2012 & 2013

Events applying for the 2012/13 funding programme are encouraged to take part in the themes of 2012 and 2013:

- 2012 'Our Time, Our Place:' The Giants of Northern Ireland (the 'giant' famous people and iconic landmarks of Northern Ireland)
- 2012 'Our Time, Our Place:' Titanic built in Belfast (100th Anniversary) and Maritime/Industrial Heritage
- 2013 UK City of Culture: Purposeful inquiry - Telling the world new narrative through purposeful culture-led inquiry which will allow for alternative views and ideas to be absorbed and considered.
- 2013 UK City of Culture: Joyous celebration - Events should resonate with the city of Derry~Londonderry, its people and have the capacity to attract new visitors by uncovering and shedding new light on the city's stories and heritage.

Who Can Apply

Applications will be open to legally constituted organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Financial assistance will not exceed 50% of an event's eligible costs. Event organisers may only submit one application per event to either the National or the International Tourism Events Fund, not both. The financial award given will depend on the funds available and on the number of applications received that have achieved the pass

mark.

Grow South Antrim**Support for Rural Tourism and Rural Heritage**

Aim: To provide support to new and existing tourism providers, including Private Sector, Social Economy Organisations and Public Bodies in order to:

- Develop tourism and heritage activities
- Promote tourism and heritage activities
- Develop the tourism infrastructure of the local rural area
- Preserve and upgrade rural heritage
- Improve access to heritage sites and trails
- Create employment opportunities

Activities which may be eligible for support under this Measure include:

- Self-catering accommodation
- Activity tourism
- Eco-tourism
- Marketing of rural tourism and heritage
- New festivals or events
- Tourism infrastructure
- Monument or heritage site conservation and protection
- Provision of signage for heritage trails.

Activity	Level of support	Maximum grant
Iconic Tourism Infrastructure*	Up to 50% for the private sector Up to 75% for social economy sector Up to 75% non departmental public bodies	£250,000
Tourism & Heritage Infrastructure	Up to 50% for the private sector Up to 75% for social economy sector Up to 75% non departmental public bodies	£50,000
Heritage trails	Up to 50% for the private sector Up to 75% for social economy sector Up to 75% non departmental public bodies	£50,000
Marketing programme	Up to 50% for the private sector Up to 75% for social economy sector Up to 75% non departmental public bodies	£5,000

Appendix 8

Contacts

Robert Sparks – Commissioners of Irish Lights

Don Wilmont – Causeway Coast & Glens RTO

Lisa O’Kane – Newtownabbey BC

Rosemary Lightbody – NITB

Lynda Foy – Larne BC

Ainsley McWilliams – Larne BC

Pauline Acton – Resident of Quarry Cottages

Albert Sampson – Resident of Donegall Park

Bill Luney – Resident of Whitehead

John Lockett - RPSI

Helen Keys - RPSI

Francis Richards – RPSI

Steven Canning – Co Antrim Yacht Club, Whitehead

Mike Dobson – National Trust

Aideen Exley & Clare Wright – Countryside Access & Activity Network

Appendix 9

Action Plan

	Planning
<u>1</u>	Whitehead Community Development Committee (WCDC) to discuss and agree a plan to take the events opportunity forward; Events committee to be strengthened to provide adequate leadership resource for development of additional events.
<u>2</u>	WCDC to meet with RPSI to discuss RPSI capital development programme and events programme.
<u>3</u>	Carrickfergus Borough Council (CBC) to establish cost of stabilising cliff face.
<u>4</u>	CBC & WCDC to enter into discussions with Whitehead Rangers Supports Club ref: improvements to Whitehead Lido
<u>5</u>	CBC to meet with HLF to discuss funding possibilities
<u>6</u>	CBC & WCDC to meet with Whitehead traders with regard to establishing interest in local traders taking on management of summer-time retail kiosks to be located on or near Blackhead Path; subject to outcome of discussions, CBC to price supply and operation
<u>7</u>	WCDC to discuss possibilities of Grant Funding during 2012/13 with GROW S. Antrim
<u>8</u>	WCDC to meet with Co Antrim Yacht Club and Carrickfergus Sailing Club/Old Gaffers Association ref: promoting sailing events and connecting with Classic Sail Carrickfergus
<u>9</u>	CBC to liaise with CAAN/Larne BC/National Trust with regard to future development of walking on Island Magee inc. Gobbins Path Re-development Timetable
<u>10</u>	WCDC to seek advice on development of Wildlife Safaris from Ulster Wildlife Trust with a view to generating greater visitor use of Beach Road Nature Reserve
<u>11</u>	WCDC to develop events plan for 2012/13 and promote to residents
	Capital Works
<u>12</u>	CBC to consult with all residents of Quarry Cottage, owner of White Harbour, other land owners inc., NI Railways with regard to creation of paved walking route to White Harbour
<u>13</u>	CBC to draw up plan for redevelopment of 'events area' at commencement of Path noting need to reduce visual impact of fencing around boat park, opportunity to use roof of pumping station as a view point, need to improve site conditions around picnic tables etc.
<u>14</u>	Subject to (5) above, CBC to purchase and rent out kiosks
<u>15</u>	CBC to commission preparation of town heritage tourism trail along with signage and interpretation plan to facilitate visitor engagement; funding application to GROW S. Antrim to follow
<u>16</u>	CBC to reinstate Band Stand and plan summer band concert series and promote programme in agreement with WCDC's events plan (could be included in funding application to GROW)
<u>17</u>	CBC, after discussion, to apply for Heritage Lottery (HLF) Funding to effect repairs and improvements to Path, creation of White Harbour Path installation of Interpretive Panels etc.
<u>18</u>	If grant awarded CBC to proceed with procurement of improvements to Path etc.
<u>19</u>	CBC to fund preparation of mobile website to support growth of Path user base and recognition of Path across both general visitor and walking communities
	Promotion
<u>20</u>	CBC & WCDC to agree event programme and collectively devise PR & promotional programme to support
<u>21</u>	WCDC to apply for event funding/promotional funding support to GROW
<u>22</u>	Subject to funds raised, WCDC to implement promotional activities