

SECTION 4B RURAL AREA

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The rural area of the Sneem Functional Area Local Area Plan, shown in Figure 1, is defined as all the rural area within the functional area boundary and outside the boundaries of the town, villages and the small villages/development nodes. The rural area, as defined in this plan, is functionally linked to the urban settlements.

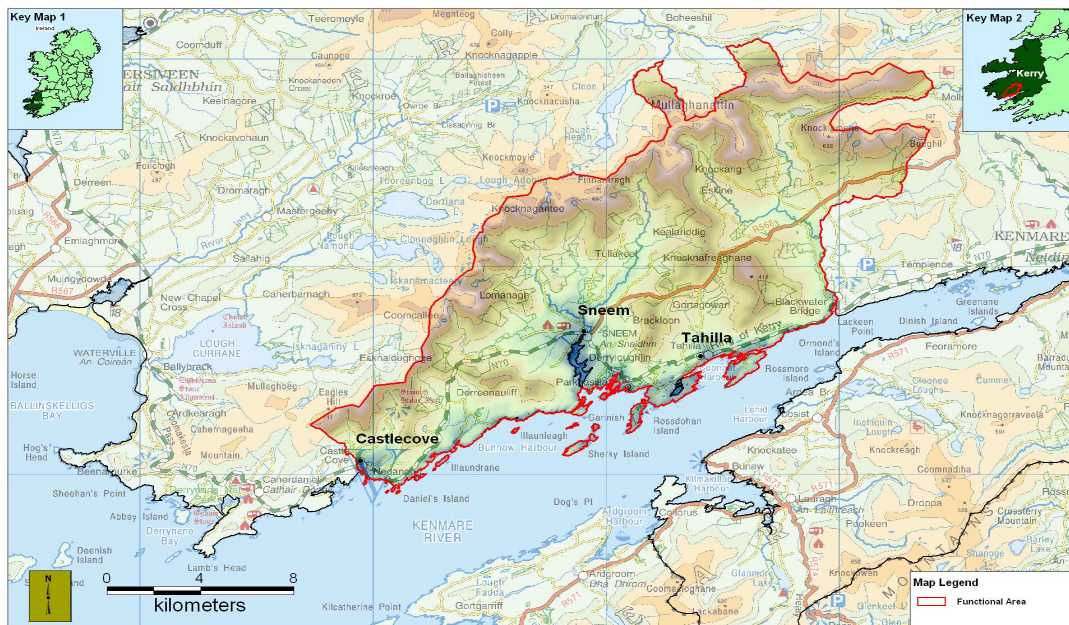


Figure 1: Sneem Functional Area

Those living in the rural area are largely dependant on the town and villages for services such as schools, services and employment. It is likely that a substantial proportion of people travel to larger towns such as Killarney and Kenmare for employment. Tourism and agriculture are strong in this area.

1.2 Purpose of Rural Area Plan

The functional area local area plan will;

- Look at rural area at a local level as opposed to the more strategic level of the County Development Plan.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats in the rural area.
- Gather information on the rural area.
- Identify protected structures in the rural areas.
- Identify objectives for the rural area that are not at the strategic County Development Plan level.

1.3 SWOT ANALYSIS FOR RURAL AREA

<i>Strengths</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong urban centre (Sneem Village) as a focal point • Major tourist destination • Strong architectural & cultural heritage • Attractive and varied landscape/seascape with coastline, inlets, rivers, pastures and mountains • Strong economic and social linkages between the rural area and urban settlements • Villages have in the most part retained their character • Area with some of the best scenery in the country • The Ring of Kerry is an important tourist routes • Existing piers and Outdoor pursuits e.g. bird watching, fishing, walking, hill and mountain climbing, marine leisure etc • 12 hole golf course at Parknasilla and close to numerous 18 hole golf courses • Close to the blue Flag Beach at Derrynane • Situated within the Kerry Geopark
<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peripheral location • Difficulty in competing with the range of services and attractions on offer in Kenmare and Killarney • Reliance on tourism with seasonal nature • Limited employment opportunities
<i>Opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve built heritage • Protect the natural environment and biodiversity • Increase level of marine leisure activities, ecotourism and other niche markets in a sustainable manner • Promote walking tours, hill and mountain climbing at sustainable levels • Promote sustainable mari-culture • Greater use of the marine environment for sustainable leisure activities • Promotion of the Geo Park.
<i>Threats</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emigration and loss of population and consequent reduced demand for services • Unemployment • External economic factors • Over-development of rural area. • Pollution of surface and groundwater • Loss in quality of landscape. • Loss of biodiversity • Competition from cheaper locations • Affordability of transport fuel

1.4 Population

The population of the entire Functional Area as contained in the 2006 Census was 1,233 persons and in 2011 it was 1,244. The population growth target indicates that the population of the entire plan area will grow by 113 persons between the years 2012 and 2018 to a total of 1,357.

	2002 census	2006 census	2011 census	2012 estimate	2018 target
Sneem Functional Area	1,377	1,233	1,244	1,260	1,357

Table 1; Existing and projected population in rural Sneem Functional Area

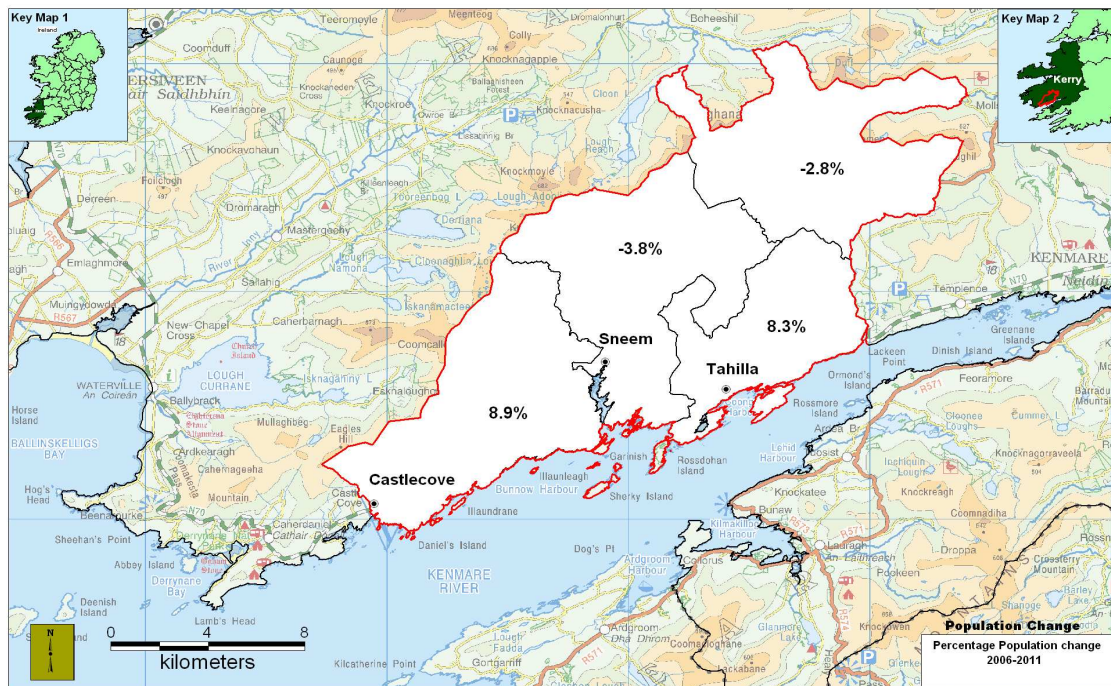


Figure 2: Population change 2006-11

1.5 Transport

The area is served by the N70, national secondary routes, the R568 regional road and a network of local roads. It is important that any development in the rural area is acceptable in terms of traffic safety and does not impact negatively on the carrying capacity and general safety of public roads in accordance with Chapter 8 and section 13.9 of Chapter 13 in the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015.

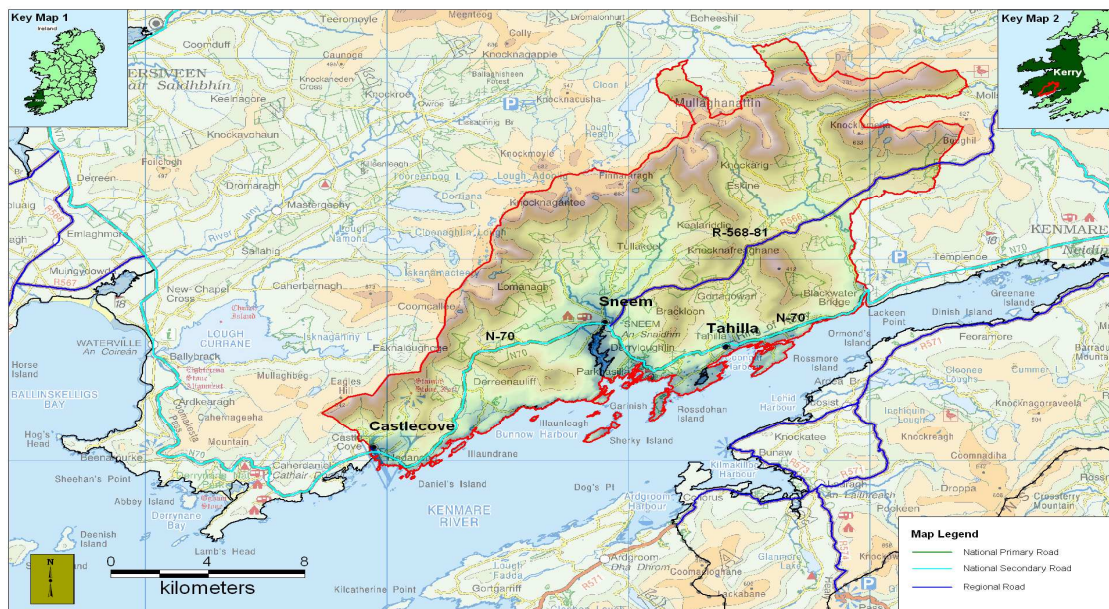


Figure 3: Road Network in the Sneem Functional Area

1.6 Cycle paths / Walkways

Marked paths and cycle routes are an important resource for attracting tourists and providing recreation for local residents. They can also open up potential for farm diversification into small-scale tourist services. The Kerry way intersects the plan area and never strays too far from the N70. The Sneem-Fermoye Loop walk meanders for 9 miles to the north of Sneem passing many geological and historical features. However, in order to protect the underlying environmental attributes and resources in the area, upon which much of the tourist industry is based, it is important that due consideration is given to these when providing for new routes or intensifying use of less established routes.



Figure 4: The Kerry Way (outlined with a red dashed line) intersecting the Sneem functional area

1.7 Water Supply

The area is served by public water mains, group water mains and private water supplies. It is imperative that groundwater is protected from polluting development. All development must have regard to the zones of influence for groundwater public water supplies and catchments for surface water public supplies within the functional area.



Figure 5: Water supply and source in the Sneem Functional Rural Area

1.8 Wastewater Treatment

Developments in the rural area are served by individual septic tanks/treatment units based on an assessment of soil characteristics in accordance with the EPA's "*Code of practice- Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems serving Single House (p.e. ≤ 10)*" or any subsequent amendment or revision documents.

1.9 Landscape

The study area located on the Southern aspect of the Iveragh Peninsula is centered on the village of Sneem and delineated by the sea to the south and by a line of Mountain ranges to the North and east. Several different sub landscapes are notable here with peat bogs, natural vegetation, coniferous/mixed forest and pasture (Corine Data 2006).

Having regard to the spectacular landscape present here a number of views and prospects are designated in this functional area. These are illustrated in Figure 6 below.

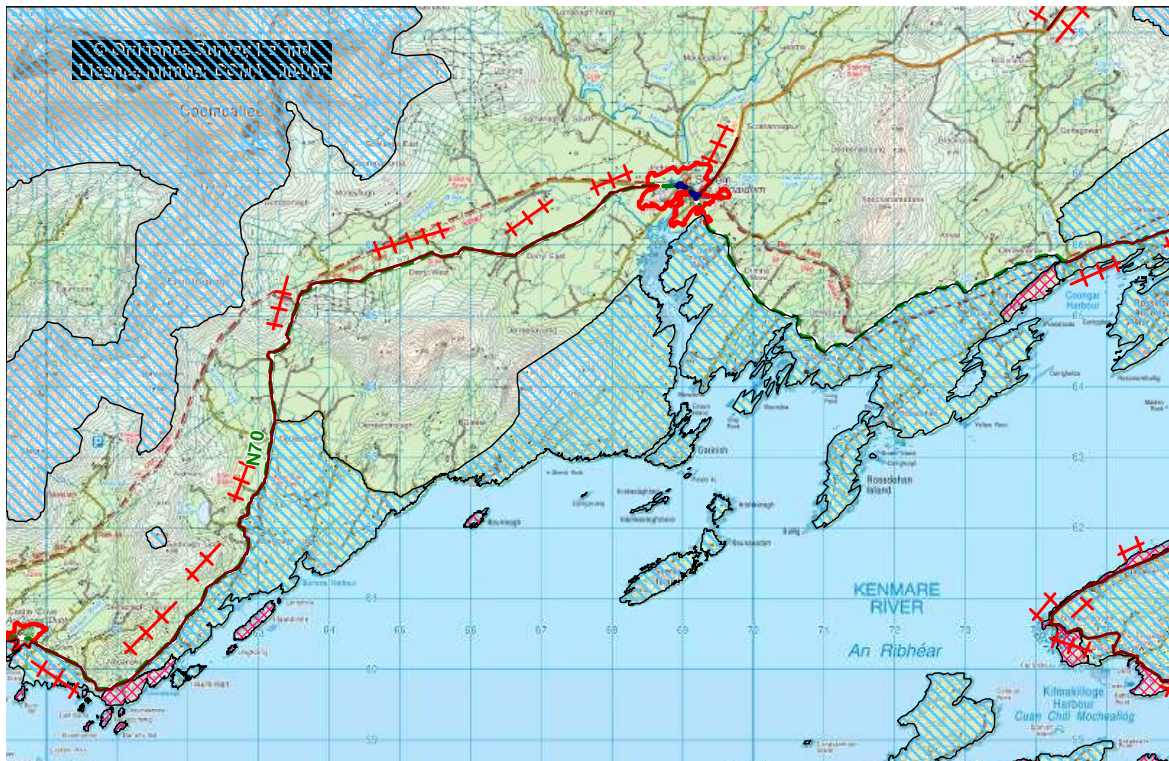


Figure 6: Views and Prospects and Secondary Special Amenity areas in the Rural area

1.10 Natural Environment

The Sneem functional area has a variety of spectacular physical features and biodiversity which combined produce some of the most intriguing natural environment in Ireland.

The extent of the SAC (Special Areas of Conservation) areas are shown in Figure 7 and Map Ru-3 and are listed in Table 2. Natura 2000 site boundaries are subject to change refer to www.NPWS.ie for current boundaries.

Designation Type	Site Code	Site Name
SAC	002098	Old Domestic Building, Askive Wood
SAC	002158	Kenmare River
SAC	00365	Killarney National Park, MacGillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment
SAC	002173	Blackwater River (Kerry)
SAC	002187	Drongawn Lough

Table 2: Natura 2000 sites in the Rural Area

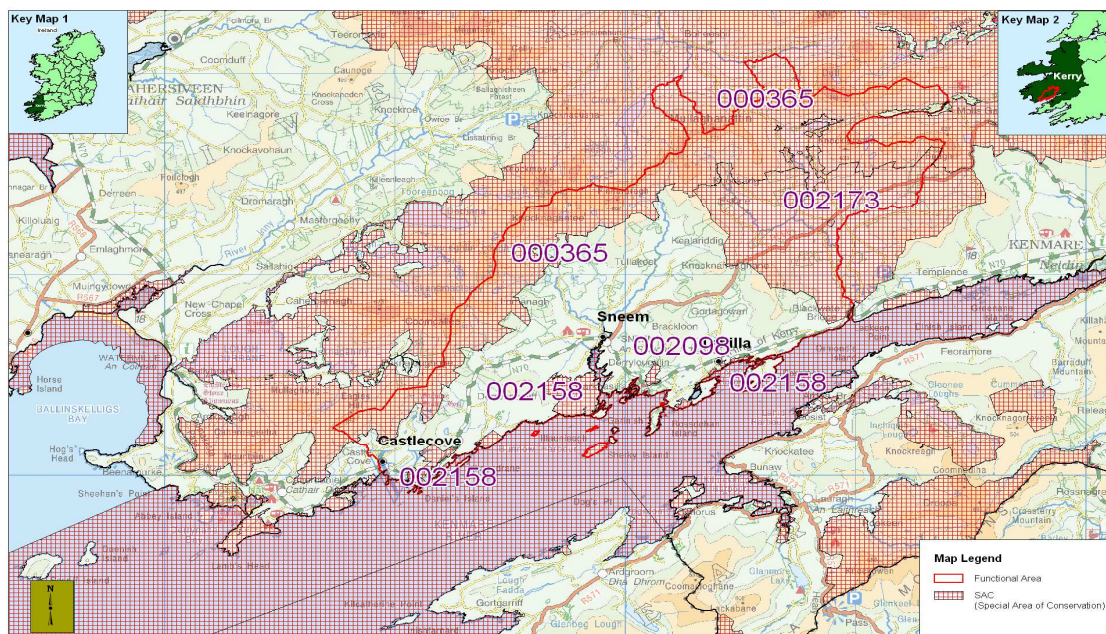


Figure 7: cSACs in the Rural Area

There are no Special Protected Areas, National Heritage Areas or Natural Reserve designations in the plan area.

There are a number of mature trees and woodlands which are important in terms of biodiversity and providing amenity areas to the public.

1.11 Amenity

While there are numerous blue flag beaches within easy access to the Plan area there are none within this study area. The whole area is linked by the Kenmare River with one of the most attractive scenery and landscape on the South West coast of Ireland. Numerous established coastal and mountain walks are dotted throughout the local landscape.

1.12 Tourism

South Kerry is well known as a tourist destination, and tourism contributes significantly to the economic activities in the area. The Sneem Functional Area is well endowed with a number of tourist attractions that have been developed and promoted, including Parknasilla Resort.

The attractive coastline attracts a large number of tourists in the summer months. The coast is more rugged than that in Cahersiveen and Waterville FALAP areas. A number of accessible South Kerry islands provide the visitor with a contrasting schedule of views and experiences along with an attractive countryside of hills, wild mountains, rugged cliffs, rocky shores and sandy beaches.

The area has a beautiful and challenging environment with a range of facilities and services, for marine leisure activities. Sailing, kayaking and other water based sports occur in the area.

There are a number of archaeological, architectural and historical attractions throughout the functional area, including Staigue Fort which is one of the finest and largest stone ringforts in Ireland. The development of an archaeological trail through the area should be promoted.

The availability of a range of holiday accommodation is an important factor in developing the area's tourism potential.

Large-scale tourism developments should normally be located in the larger settlements. New development for the tourist industry should respect the existing settlement pattern of the area. Integrated tourism development facilities (i.e. those serving both tourists and local residents) such as sports and recreation activities will contribute to a more diverse range of visitor attractions, encourage longer visitor stays, help extend the visitor season and add to the quality of life for people who live in the area. Facilities like the Eclipse Activity & Adventure Centre offer a large range of outdoor activities.

The region has a number of valuable natural and cultural assets that support the tourism industry. It also benefits from its reputation for quality food, with local and global brand names and a range of high quality hotels and restaurants.

The potential for sustainable niche eco-tourism in the area is immense, and is currently being promoted through the development of a Geopark. Since 2003, the local community have been establishing and developing the area as a Geopark in the bid to encourage more sustainable development throughout the region by promoting Geotourism.

A Geopark can be defined as 'an area an area that exhibits a particular geological heritage which has a related sustainable development strategy such as the promotion and development of Geotourism'.

More simply put a geopark is an effective tool that allows communities to take greater control over their tourism product by adopting a grass root approach to the promotion of geological, ecological, cultural and historical resource which exists throughout the region.

Responsible ecotourism includes programmes that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment, and enhance the local community. Therefore, an integral part of ecotourism is the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and the creation of economic opportunities for the local communities.

The area is also rich in traditional ways, folklore, writing, music, and historic and archaeological sites. The landscape, cultural and linguistic heritage and amenities of the area constitute a prime asset on which the tourism industry is based. The size of the settlements and their unique character make them particularly sensitive to development. It is accepted however that expansion of the tourism industry is based on appropriate development. This plan, in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism development outlined by Fáilte Ireland promotes suitable sustainable tourism development. When considering proposals for new tourism development, priority will be given to those that are encouraging longer visitor stays and add to the range of facilities available to people who live in the area all year round.

1.13 Built Heritage

There are seven protected structures in the area;
Reg Ref 21309201 Blackwater Bridge post Office
Reg Ref 21310002 dwelling house, Glashnacree
Reg Ref 21310003 Parknasilla.
Reg Ref 21310005 Derryquin Castle
Reg Ref 21310012 Derryquin Castle Gatelodge
Reg Ref 21310701 Detached dwelling Scart
RPS-100-002 Former Bishops House, Parknasilla

There is no proposal for additional protected structures.

1.14 Archaeology

The archaeology of the Sneem area is representative of all periods from the Early Bronze Age to the medieval period. Bronze Age ritual monuments such as standing stones, pairs, alignments and rock art are scattered throughout the area. There is extensive evidence of Early Medieval settlement around the coastal margin though the lack of early monastic or ecclesiastical monuments, with the notable exception of the monastic enclosure at Cloon West (National Monument) with its two outstanding cross slabs, is in contrast to other areas of the Iveragh peninsula. The functional area includes extensive upland and there are a number of important pre-bog field systems with associated enclosures, hutsites and cairns. The northern extent of the plan area does include the extensive rock art landscape at Derrynablaha/Derreenny, near Ballaghbeama Gap, while the iconic Staigue Fort (National Monument) is also located in the area, both monuments/areas would be regarded as being of national and in the case of the rock art at Derrynablaha, international, importance.



Photo 1: Staigue Fort

In general terms the Sneem Functional Area Plan contains an archaeologically diverse area of the county. There are approximately 320 monuments listed in the Record of Monuments & Places within the functional area, a number of which are archaeological complexes comprising numerous individual monuments and features. The monuments range in date from the Early Bronze Age to the Early Medieval period.

There are 3 National Monuments located here of which one is in state ownership the other two being subject to a preservation order.

The National Monuments within the functional area are listed below in Table 3, while particularly important landscapes in two particular areas are outlined in the following pages. Finally general and specific archaeological objectives for the plan are set out.

TOWNLAND	DESCRIPTION	STATUS	RMP	NM/PO
Staigue	Cashel	Guardianship	KE099-013----	143
Behagane	Castlecove Castle	Preservation	KE107-007----	PO154
Cloon West	Monastic Enclosure	Preservation	KE082-020----	PO145

Table 3: National Monuments within Sneem Functional Area

1.14.1 Derrynablaha/Derreenny

This extensive rock art landscape contains the second highest concentration of rock art scriptions in the country and is of national and international importance. The decorated stones are scattered over the east facing slopes of Mullaghanattin Mountain overlooking Ballaghbeama Gap to the north-north-west and Lough Brin to the East. The only larger though more widespread concentration of rock art in Ireland, is in the already protected Kealduff/Coomsaharn area.

The exact function of rock art is unknown though it is generally dated to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age and is thought to have some ritual significance possibly relating to water, as it is most often found near the heads of river valleys.

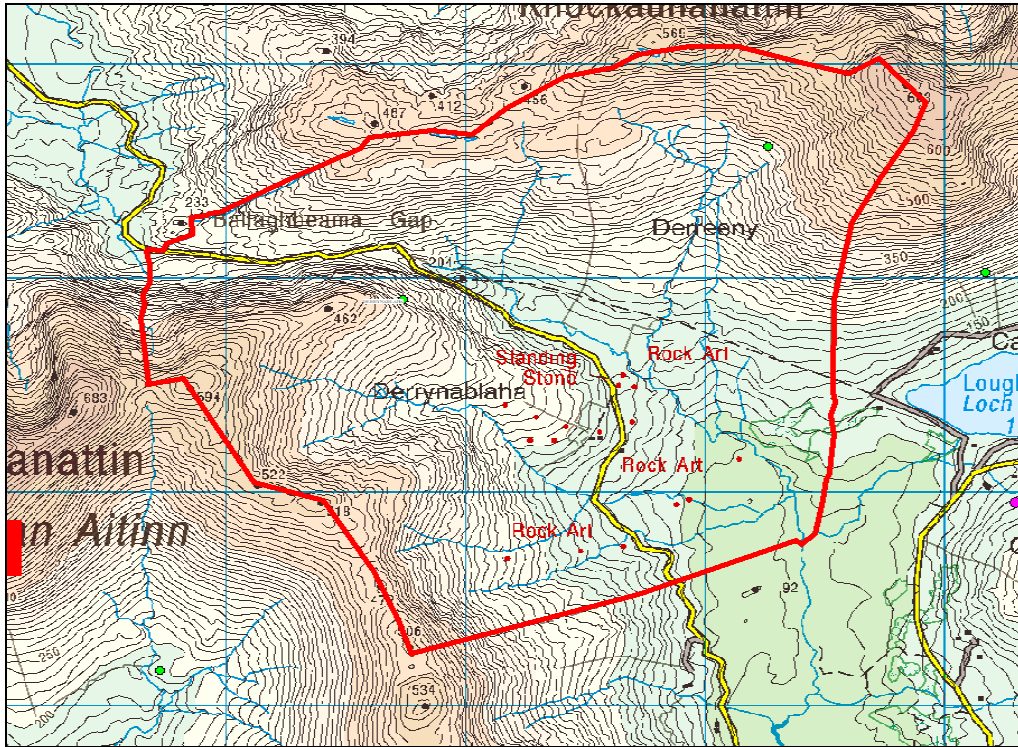


Figure 8a: Derrynablaha/Derreenny

This landscape is worthy of special protection given its national and international importance and the significance of the broad landscape setting to any understanding of the function of rock art.

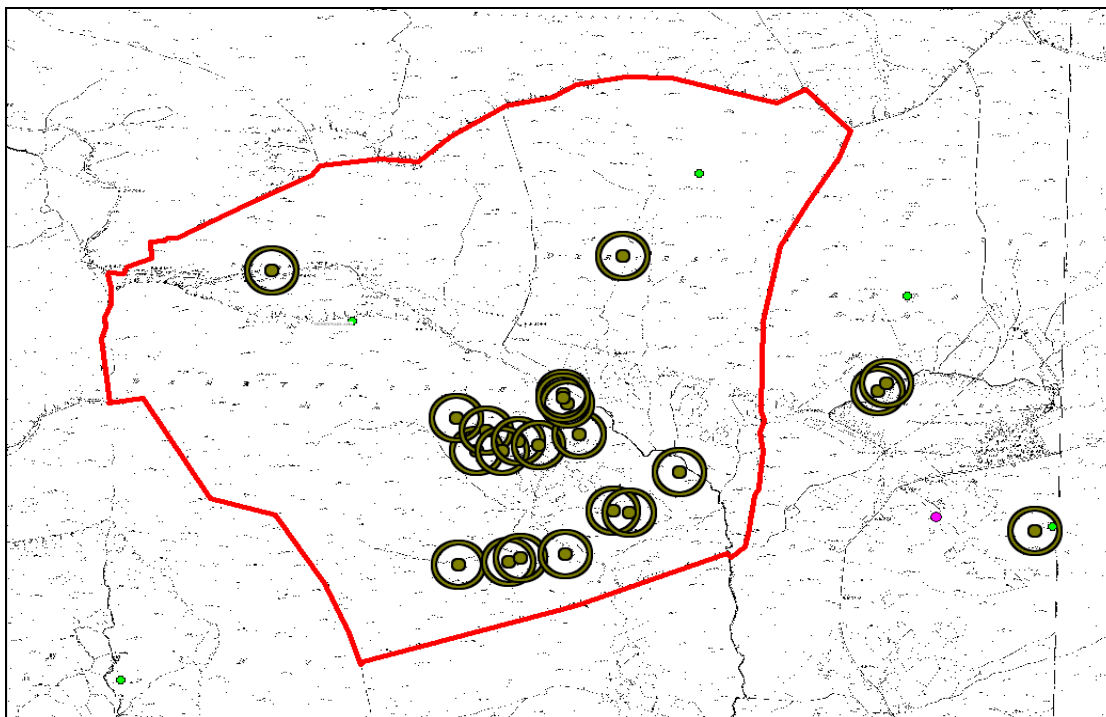


Figure 8b; Derrynablaha Area OS 6 inch map

1.14.2 Staigue

The stone fort/cashel at Staigue is a National Monument in state guardianship and is one of the monuments in the Western Stone Forts proposed World Heritage Site. The stone fort is located at the head of a broad valley that runs south towards the sea, with extensive views. The fort probably dates to the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age.

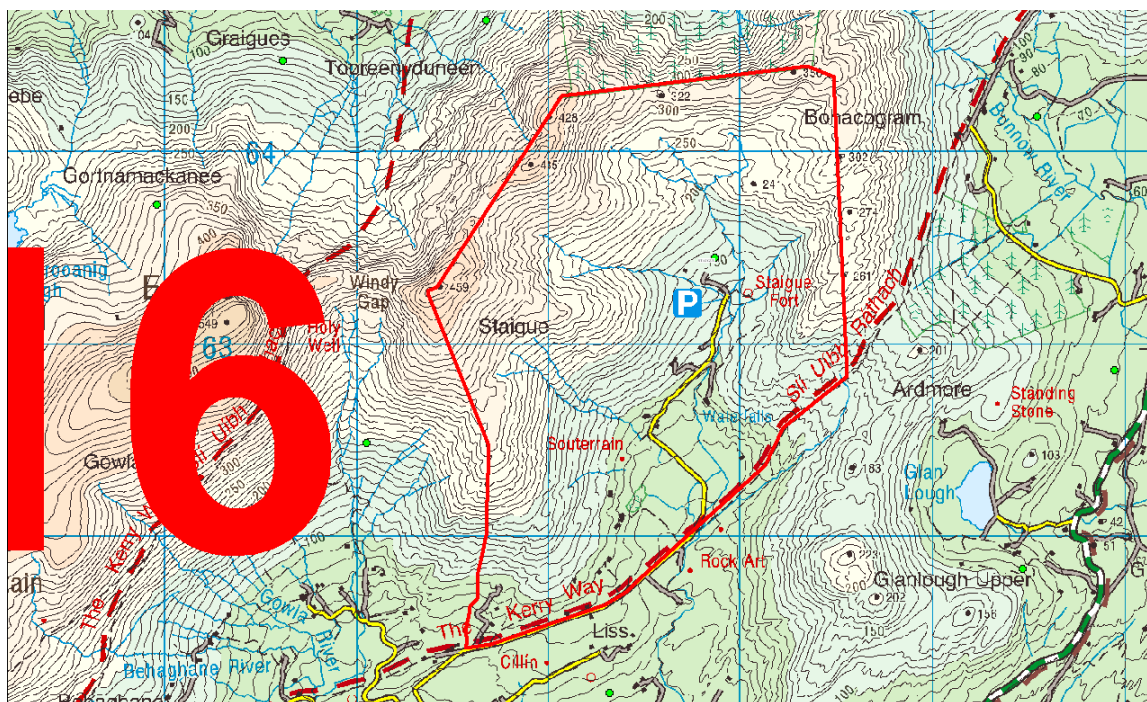


Figure 9a: Staigue Area OS Map

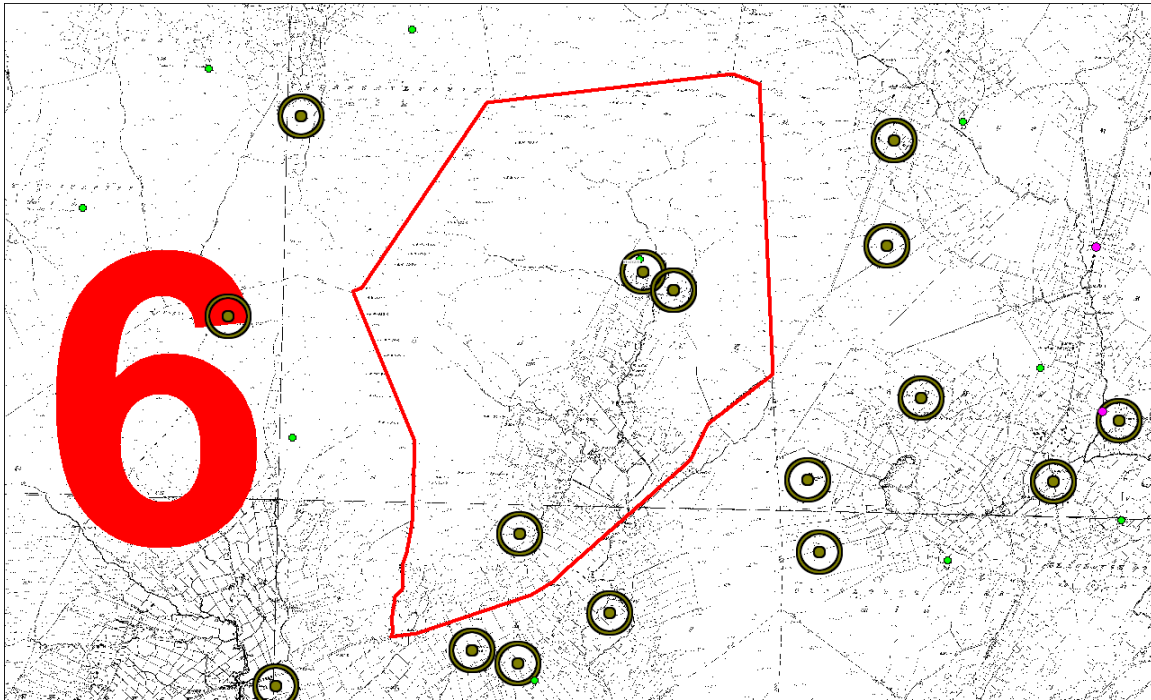


Figure 9b: Staigue Area OS 6 inch map

These two areas, Derrynablaha/Derreeny and Staigue, located in upland regions, would be particularly sensitive and provision should be made to ensure that these areas are protected in as much as possible, given that they represent two outstanding examples of relict prehistoric and early medieval landscapes.

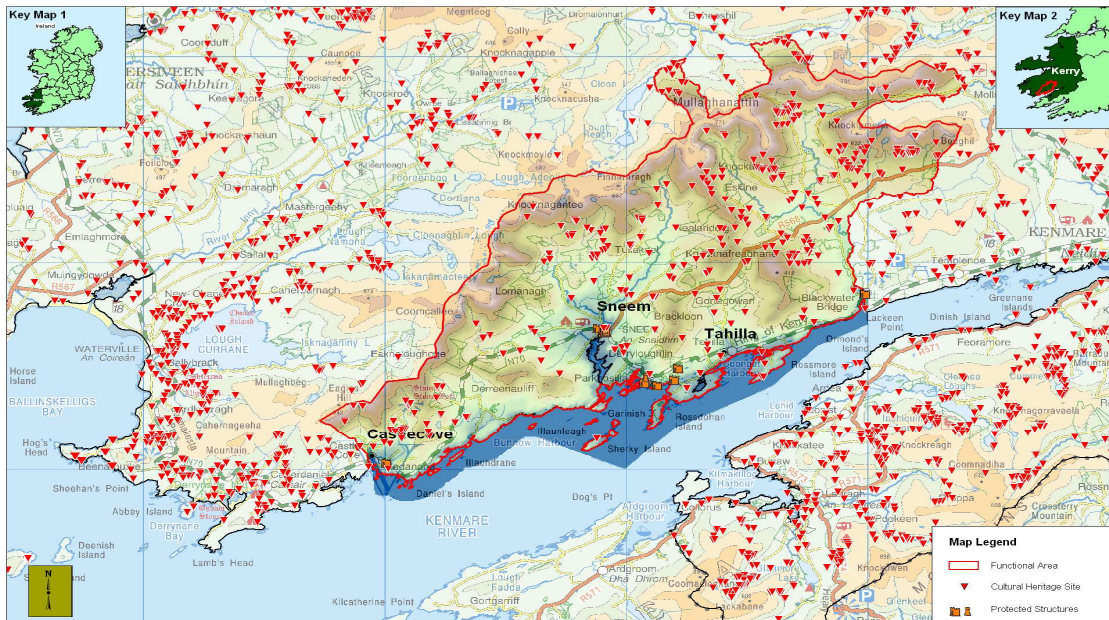


Figure 10: Archaeological Monuments and proposed protected structures

1.15 Flood Risk Management

Flood Risk Data for the functional area has been mapped on figure 11, using soil maps, recorded flood event locations and lands benefitting from OPW drainage schemes (available on www.floodmaps.ie). The OPW have published draft preliminary flood Zone Maps for the County. Flood Risk Management in the area will be in accordance with the 2009 Government Guidelines on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management', the relevant development objectives of this plan and with Section 11.4 of the Kerry County Development Plan 2009-2015.

Figure 11 shows recorded flood locations and other identified potentially vulnerable areas.



Figure 11: Flood Data in the Rural Area

Kerry County Council has a policy to limit and manage the permitted runoff from all new developments, in order to protect river water quality and to avoid downstream flooding of the sewer network or river. Any large scale developments must incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to restrict the discharge of stormwater from developments. Kerry County Council has a number of interim standards covering river quality protection, river regime protection and river and coastal flooding protection.

1.16 Windfarms

There are no areas designated for Wind farm development in this functional area. Kerry County Council is currently preparing a Renewable Energy Strategy. The adopted strategy will be incorporated into the County Development Plan 2009-15.

1.17 Piers / Harbours

There are a number of small piers and harbours located around the coast of the functional area. These piers are used for various purposes including fishing, tourism and leisure. These piers are maintained by Kerry County Council. It is the policy of Kerry County Council to maintain and repair these piers for public use and to support the sustainable development of the piers as potential economic generators for the area and support the maintenance of other facilities such as slipways and to protect them from inappropriate uses.

2.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVES

	It is an objective of the Council to:
Ru-1	Provide for balanced growth throughout the area by promoting the strengthening of rural communities and provide the infrastructure to facilitate job creation and diversification in these areas in a sustainable manner
Ru-2	Ensure that development on un-serviced lands comply fully with the “Code of Practice; Waste water treatment and disposal systems serving single houses” and where necessary “Wastewater Treatment Manuals - Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels”.
Ru-3	Ensure that all fish bearing watercourses within the plan area and their riparian zones including flood plains are protected from significant harmful development and from the effects of wastewater discharges.

3.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

	Amenity & Tourism It is an objective of the Council to
Ru-AT-1	Encourage the development of geo trails & walking routes within the plan area and associated car parking facilities at appropriate locations so as to facilitate sustainable outdoor recreational activities in the plan area.
Ru-AT-2	Encourage the improvement of sensitively designed tourist information boards and signage at appropriate locations.
Ru-AT-3	Protect and encourage the development of literary, musical, linguistic, artistic, sporting and other cultural heritage initiatives.
Ru-AT-4	Facilitate the sustainable extension and diversification of tourist facilities.
Ru-AT-5	Promote the sustainable development of a Geo Park
Ru-AT-6	Protect the sand dunes / dune system in the plan area in particular Castlecove area, and prohibit any development that would damage or lead to erosion of any dune system
Ru-AT-7	Protect from inappropriate development the protected views and prospects in the plan area as identified in Figure 6.

	Built Environment It is an objective of the Council to:
Ru- B-1	Encourage the appropriate reuse and sensitive restoration of unused/derelict properties.

	Employment and Economic Activity It is an objective of the Council to :
Ru-EE-1	Facilitate sustainable diversification of the rural economy
Ru-EE-2	Provide the infrastructure and support for the sustainable development and expansion of employment opportunities, including indigenous knowledge based industries.

	Archaeology Objectives It is an objective of the Council to:
A-1	Secure the inclusion of the structures included the archaeological special protection area into the Record of Protected Structures
A-2	Protect the views and vistas around the monuments, the inter-visibility of the monuments and the integrity of the existing archaeological landscape setting in the prehistoric landscape identified (see Figs 8 & 9). Applicants are advised to liaise with the County Archaeologist in advance of any application for development within these sites.