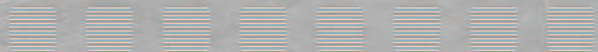


Walking in the West

...a Step-by Step Guide



Delivering a world-class walking product in the Western Region of Ireland



Acknowledgements

July 2005

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- Arigna Catchment Area Community Company
- Comhair Iorrais LEADER
- Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann
- Donegal Local Development Company
- Galway Rural Development Company Ltd.
- Inishowen Rural Development Ltd.
- Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltacta Teo
- Mid South Roscommon Rural Development Company Ltd
- Rural Resource Development Ltd (Clare)
- Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Ltd.
- South West Mayo Development Company Ltd
- Western Rural Development Company Ltd

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For further information contact:

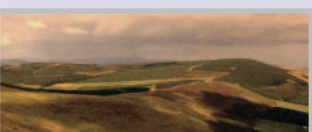
Western Development Tourism Programme,
Business Innovation Centre, IT Sligo.
Email: wtdpadmin@eircom.net
Tel: 071 9155323
Website: www.truelreland.com
(for pdf download of all background information to *Walking in the West*).

¹ The Western Development Commission is a statutory agency which has responsibility for fostering and promoting economic and social development in the Western Region. The Western Region comprises of the 7 counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE: WALKING IN THE WEST



Over the last ten years there has been considerable development of the walking product throughout Ireland. Over 403,000 overseas and domestic tourists engaged in walking and hiking in Ireland in 2003². This represented an increase of 16% over the 2002 total but remained well below the 2000 level of 685,000. In total there was a decline of 41% in walking tourists in Ireland between 2000 and 2003. The sector has never really recovered since the foot and mouth scare of 2001. Despite this decline however, walking remains central to activity tourism in Ireland accounting for 29% of activity holidays in 2003. In that year overseas tourists who engaged in walking spent €112.7 million in this country.

Given the importance of tourism to rural economies and in light of the above recent trends in walking tourism, LEADER and the Western Development Tourism Programme (WDTP)³ have identified the need to revitalise the walking product.⁴ Researched and produced by LEADER and the WDTP, *Walking in the West* proposes to create a new integrated development process that, when implemented, will attract walkers to the Western Region⁵ and in turn commercially sustain the walking product. Extensive research by the WDTP and LEADER into international walking trails has led to the development of a model of best practice. The model, in the form of a Step-by-Step Guide, and a regional framework to assist in its implementation are presented in this document.

Analysis of the case studies in the document concludes that the key success factors in ensuring that walks are attractive to international walking tourists include:

- The public sector playing a key role in funding route development, maintenance, marketing and sales.
- The public sector recognising and supporting communities as the initial 'drivers' in identification of the routes and negotiation of the lines of way.
- Walk development, maintenance, marketing and sales being properly resourced with dedicated personnel.
- A strong product and service provider network along the walk delivering a high quality product that specifically meets walkers' needs. This includes a range of accommodation, drying and laundry facilities, maps, published guides, transfers from point of entry, luggage transfers and good quality local food. The network and the services delivered on the walk are supported by a Route Manager.

² These figures are taken from the latest statistics available from Fáilte Ireland.

³ The Western Development Tourism Programme (WDTP) is an initiative that emerged from the recommendations of the *Blueprint for Tourism Development in the West* published by the Western Development Commission in December 2001. The impact of the WDTP and its strategic regional development projects is significant throughout the seven counties of the Western Region. *Walking in the West* is another of the WDTP's strategic projects.

⁴ This document has as its main focus the commercialisation of Waymarked Ways.

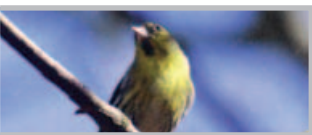
⁵ Throughout this document the 'Region' refers to the WDTP Region i.e. Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare.



Recommendations

Based on the above findings the WDTP and LEADER propose the following recommendations for the delivery of a quality walking product in the Western Region:

- A National Policy Framework for Walking based on the emerging strategies from Fáilte Ireland, the Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee and *Walking in the West* should be prepared and implemented.
- To implement the new National Policy Framework, Regional Walking Partnerships should be established in each of the areas of the Regional Tourism Authorities (Western Region) and Shannon Development. Each Partnership, made up of public, private and community sectors, should prepare and oversee the implementation of a commercially focused Regional Walking Strategy *which* will provide guidance on walk development, maintenance, marketing and sales.
- A Regional Walking Officer should be recruited within each regional tourism body to implement the Regional Walking Strategy.
- A Regional Route Ranger, located within one of the regional tourism bodies, should oversee the development of quality standards for the walking product within the entire Western Region.
- Local Walking Partnerships, facilitated by LEADER and mirroring the Partnership at regional level should be proactively established and facilitated by LEADER. A Local Walk Plan for each walk, encompassing development, maintenance, marketing and sales should be prepared. A Walk Manager, reporting to LEADER, should be recruited for each Local Walk Partnership and be responsible for the overall commercialisation of the walk. The Step-by-Step Guide in Part II of this document outlines this process in detail.



Further detail on these recommendations is provided in Section 3 of this document. It is recommended that the above proposals be implemented on a pilot basis in the Western Region. It should be noted that the regional supports through the public sector must be put in place before the walking product can become truly commercial. The WDTP and LEADER will work closely at national level to ensure that these are put in place and endorsed by national policymakers and agencies.

The next phase of the *Walking in the West* project is that the LEADER companies of the Western Region will prepare a detailed and fully costed plan for the implementation of the above recommendations that directly involve the regional players. As an interim measure, LEADER and the WDTP will assist in piloting the Step-by-Step Guide on a number of walks in the Western Region. These can then act as the model for others once new structures have been put in place.

The WDTP and LEADER believe that any proposed changes at national tourism policy level should consider carefully the recommendations in this document. The project is grounded in extensive consultation, original research and expert analysis and provides a solution to delivering a high quality rural tourism product. If implemented, visitor numbers will increase and rural areas will benefit.

INTRODUCTION BACKGROUND TO WALKING IN THE WEST GUIDE

Given the importance of tourism to rural economies and in light of recent tourism trends⁶, the twelve LEADER Groups in the Western Region⁷ along with the Western Development Tourism Programme (WDTP) identified the need to revitalise walking tourism in the Region. The potential of enhancing the commercial opportunities that walking tourism can bring to rural communities was identified as a tool to achieve this. A Steering Group was established to assess and drive the delivery of the initiative. The Steering Group is made up of representatives of:

- LEADER
- Western Development Tourism Programme
- Western Development Commission (WDC)
- The community and voluntary sector
- Regional Tourism Authorities (RTA)
- NWWAC – Irish Sports Council (ISC) [Observers]

In recognition of the need to provide a more strategic national framework for walking in Ireland, both Fáilte Ireland and the National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee (NWWAC) of the Irish Sports Council (ISC) launched national walking initiatives. This will have important implications for the development and commercialisation of walking tourism in the Western Region.

The Fáilte Ireland study aims to set out a strategy to maximise the potential of walking holidays. The objectives of the study are to undertake an audit of existing looped walks throughout the country and identify a strategy to develop a network of looped walks. The NWWAC/ISC: the ISC under the aegis of the NWWAC is co-ordinating the development of a multi-agency Irish Recreational Trails Strategy which is due for completion in September 2005. Underpinning the initiative is recognition that, for the potential and benefits from walking in Ireland to be maximised, there is a need for a more strategic and co-ordinated approach at national and regional level. The completion date for both studies is September 2005. While these are emerging strategies and *Walking in the West* will be launched in advance of their completion, they have been taken into account in the finalisation of the document.

The recommendations from the *Walking in the West* project will ultimately feed into and contribute to the initiatives moving forward.

Study Objectives

The *Walking in the West* Steering Group agreed that there was a need for an 'Action Research Project' to advance the initiative with the output being valuable in introducing commercial possibilities and 'best practice' into under-performing walks.

The approach to the research identified of key factors that have contributed to the success of walking tourism in a selected number of regions globally. Using the lessons learned from these case studies a generic model of good practice for the development and commercialisation of walking tourism was produced. The final component was to set out in a Step-by-Step Guide advice on how to apply the model to existing walking routes in the Western Region. The specific terms include:

- An examination of case study examples of best practice in the provision and development of walking tourism/walking holidays internationally.
- Detailed descriptions of complete models of walking routes and walking holiday provision (including destinations) that demonstrate international examples of good practice, with particular emphasis on the economic features (i.e. commercialism and sustainability, etc) of the routes identified.
- Identification of the markets for these walks outlining how best practice in marketing and promotional activity to effectively 'sell' the product to the consumer.
- Development of a model of good practice that can be applied to the walking product of the Western Region of Ireland, through a co-ordinated and cohesive mechanism and approach.
- Consideration of aspects of sustainability including economic, environmental and social issues.
- Identification and implementation of an optimum marketing strategy to sell the Western Region of Ireland as a world-class walking holiday destination.

⁶ Spend by overseas tourists who engaged in walking declined by 30% from €160 million in 2002 to €112.7 million in 2003, which contrasts with a decline in total overseas numbers by 18% and thus is not an insignificant decrease.

⁷ The Western Development Tourism Programme covers the counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare (www.trueireland.com)



Approach

A comprehensive approach was adopted to achieve the objectives of the *Walking in the West* initiative. This involved:

- A background review of key documents, reports and strategies on walking tourism in Ireland and the Western Region.
- An analysis of the current performance of walking tourism in the Western Region.
- A review of the economic importance of walking tourism in Ireland and the Western Region.
- An examination of international examples of walking tourism, including a review of the commercial opportunities that have evolved along the different routes and the key features of successful walking tourism. Twenty walking routes in fifteen countries across four continents were assessed. Following this, six case studies of good practice were selected for more detailed examination and included consultations with key stakeholders involved in the establishment, maintenance and marketing of these walkways.
- A programme of consultations with key stakeholders and tourism sector representatives including representatives of local communities, local authorities, tourism product and service providers, Fáilte Ireland, National Waymarked Ways, Regional Tourism Authorities and local tourism committees. Facilitated group sessions were held with representatives from the Region.
- Consultations were held with tour operators who provide walking tourism packages in the Region.



Outline of the *Walking in the West* Document

The document is set out as follows:

Part I: Walking Tourism

A Profile of Walking Tourism

International Success Factors for Walking Tourism

Key Recommendations

– **Potential for Commercialising Walking Routes**

Structuring for Success – The Walking Partnership Model

Part II: Step by Step Guide to Walking Route Development and Commercialisation

Getting Organised

Auditing the Existing Product

Walk Management

Preparation of a Local Walking Plan

Implementation

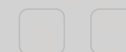
Monitoring and Review

This document is a summary of the larger study conducted by DTZ Piedad Consulting, Dublin: Walking in the West of Ireland – Action Research Project (June 2005). The summary including detailed analysis of international case studies is available on the Western Development Tourism Programme's website www.truelireland.com



PART II

Walking Tourism



1 A Profile of Walking Tourism

1.1 Introduction

Research highlights that, of all the outdoor activities pursued by visitors, walking is the most popular and it is considered to be the most important recreational activity in the State. Walking activity can be divided into two categories:

- Short walks lasting less than one day. These walks are usually not the main reason why tourists visit particular areas. Local residents also regularly complete short walks for health/lifestyle reasons.
- Walks taking more than one day to complete. These walks are usually undertaken by tourists both national and international. The walk is usually the main reason why tourists are visiting the particular area.

This document has as its main focus the commercialisation of National Waymarked Ways and as such concentrates on the latter category above. This is by no means intended to ignore the health benefits of casual walking which is beyond the scope of this study. The main walking schemes in Ireland include:

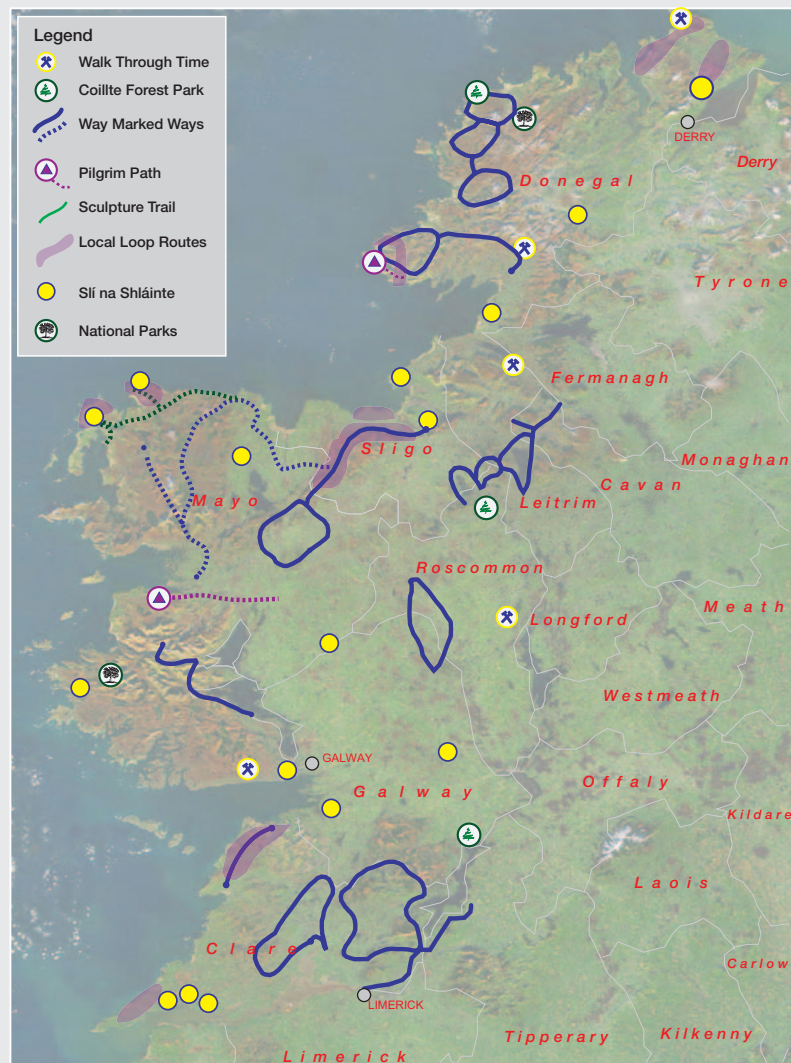
- National Waymarked Ways
- Slí na Sláinte Scheme
- Coillte Recreational Forests.

The walking infrastructure that is currently available under these schemes in the Region is illustrated in Figure 1 below. For further information on each of the schemes visit Chapter 2 *Walking in the West* – Action Research Project (June 2005) at www.trueireland.com

1.2 Organisations Involved in the Development and Marketing of the Walking Product

Local communities, working with a range of public sector bodies, currently play a central role in route development, maintenance, marketing and sales. Considering the range of public sector organisations and their varying objectives, it is often a challenging task for local community groups to harness and maximise the level of public support for the development of walking infrastructure in their area. In addition, they need to display commitment to the ongoing maintenance and management of this infrastructure.

Figure 1: Walking Infrastructure in the WDTP Region
(Note: Does not show many short local walking routes or Coillte forests)



Satellite base courtesy of NPA

The range of bodies engaged in supporting the development of the walking product include: community groups, LEADER Groups, Local Authorities, County Tourism Committees, Regional Tourism Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Tourism Programme, FÁS, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Comhairle na Tuaithe, Peace II, INTERREG, National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee, and Government Departments (see Table 2.3. in *Walking in the West – Action Research Project* for further information on organizations and supports for the walking product www.truelreland.com). The supports from these bodies covers the following strands:

- Recreational and amenity development
- Tourism development
- Health and fitness promotion
- Social inclusion
- Training and education.

A number of organisations are involved in the promotion and marketing of walking at national and regional levels.

- Nationally, walking tourism is marketed by Fáilte Ireland which has set up a dedicated walking tourism website and is circulating, to a targeted database, brochures and Compact Discs (CD) promoting the product and providing useful contacts. Fáilte Ireland also gather and present useful tourism research.
- Through its international network of offices Tourism Ireland plays a key role in globally promoting the island of Ireland as a tourism destination. This includes marketing activity holidays, such as walking holidays to overseas tourists through print material, media and the internet. Tourism Ireland has the responsibility for the overseas offices and staff.
- Walking is also promoted nationally by the NWWAC and Irish Heart Foundation. The NWWAC has a website (www.walkireland.ie) which provides information on the Waymarked Ways throughout Ireland along with information on recreational walking. Walking is strongly promoted as a form of exercise by the Irish Heart Foundation.

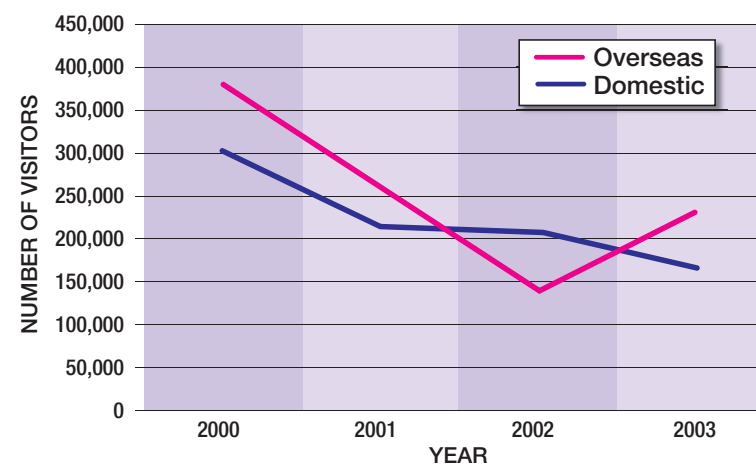
- At a regional level, the Regional Tourism Authorities and Shannon Development promote tourism in their respective areas.⁸ Importantly Ireland West Tourism has recently stated that one of its strategic priorities is to develop and promote walking tourism in the West
- Through their health promotion units, regional offices of the Health Executive also promote walking as a fitness/health activity

There is no overall national or regional walking tourism development or marketing strategy that brings all of the strands of the product together.

1.3 The Importance of Walking Tourism

Based on the most up to date statistics available from Fáilte Ireland, over 403,000 overseas and domestic tourists engaged in walking and hiking in Ireland in 2003. This represents an increase of 16% over the 2002 total. Further assessment illustrates that there are mixed signals in relation to the performance of this sector.

Figure 2: Number of Domestic and Overseas Tourists Engaged in Hiking/Walking in Ireland 2000-2003



⁸ Shannon Development and the two RTA's, Ireland West Tourism Ltd. and North West Tourism Ltd., operate in the Western Region. The WDTP Region consists of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare.



1.4 Trends in Walking Tourism Numbers

Figure 2 illustrates the trends in domestic and overseas tourists engaged in walking in Ireland between 2000 and 2003. While the number of domestic and overseas walking tourists increased from 348,000 in 2002 to 403,000 in 2003, it remains below the 2000 level of 685,000 and represents an actual decline between 2000 and 2003 of 41%. The underlying factors are attributed to the impact of 9/11 and the restrictions put in place to limit the potential spread of the Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 and 2002 respectively. The growth in walking tourism between 2002 and 2003 was mostly influenced by the 66% growth in domestic walking tourists.

In 2003, the main overseas market was Mainland Europe which represented 48% of overseas tourists who engaged in walking. This was followed by the British and North American markets which represented 26% and 20% respectively of the total number of overseas walking tourists. The remaining 6% travelled to Ireland from 'other' locations to engage in walking.

Figure 3: Overall Visitor Numbers by Activity Sector in Ireland 2000-2003

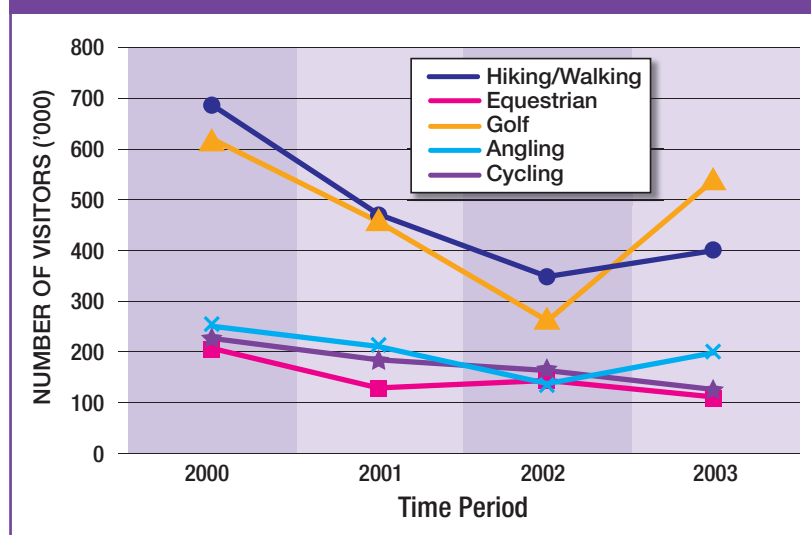


Figure 3 illustrates the relative importance of walking tourism both in the domestic and international tourism markets.

Despite the evident decline, walking has been the main activity engaged in by overseas tourists every year, until 2003, when golf became the most popular activity.

It should be noted that walking tourism is more seasonal than tourism generally and this has implications for the commercialisation of routes.

1.5 Walking Tourism in the West of Ireland

For organisational and statistical reporting purposes, Fáilte Ireland has divided the country into regions. The counties of these regions do not correspond with those covered by the Western Region. However, to illustrate the importance of tourism and walking tourism in the Western Region, the data provided by Fáilte Ireland for the North West, West and Shannon areas which comprise the Western Region are examined.

In 2003, overseas visitors who engaged in walking and hiking visited multiple regions. The most popular were Dublin (49%), West (48%) and South West (46%) followed by Shannon (33%), the Midlands-East (20%), the South East (18%) and the North West (16%). The figures illustrate that there is a relatively lower level of interest in staying in the regions covered by the WDTP.

The South West and West each account for 20% of international walking tourist bednights and the combined three regions covering the WDTP Region some 38%. When set against the better performance of other areas of the country, the findings highlight the considerable scope for increasing the number of bednights spent in the Region.

The West was the most popular amongst overseas walking tourists in 2003, with 33% engaging in walking and hiking in the region. However, Shannon and the North West do not perform as well with only 11% and 10% of overseas walking/hiking tourists actually engaging in walking in those regions respectively. The factors that contribute to this low level of participation in walking in these regions need to be assessed and local strategies put in place to improve their performance.

1.6 Walking Tourists and the Economic Impacts of the Product

Key points to note about walking tourists are summarized below. Visit www.truelireland.com and www.failteireland.ie/research for further information on this section.

- Visitors who engage in walking and hiking stayed on average 16.1 nights in Ireland in 2003. Length of stay is found to depend on the origin of holidaymakers with British and North American visitors staying 9.3 and 10 nights respectively, whilst those from Mainland Europe stay on average 12.5 nights. Fáilte Ireland expects the picture of reduced length of stays to continue as trends indicate that increasingly visitors take more frequent but shorter holidays. This may indicate the need to provide short or looped walks for convenience.
- International walkers tend to be independent, young to middle aged, affluent and discerning.
- Spend by overseas tourists who engaged in walking declined by 30% from €160 million in 2002 to €112.7 million in 2003, which contrasts with a decline in total overseas numbers by 18% and thus is not an insignificant decline. By dividing the total spend by the total number of tourists and the average stay, an average spend per day of overseas tourists engaging in walking/hiking can be derived. In 2002, the average spend was found to be €46 per day and this reduced to almost €42 in 2003. The figures raise considerable issues and questions on the performance of walking tourism and how the decline in attraction can be best redressed.
- Walking, either as a recreational or tourist activity has made a substantial contribution to the economy. The statistics reiterate the relative importance in relation to numbers and spend by domestic tourists and local walkers and suggest that marketing campaigns should ensure that this market is properly targeted. The Pembrokeshire Coastal Path National Trail in Wales estimates that 1 job is sustained for every €36,000 spent by visitors. In 1996/7, that route sustained 126 jobs in the area and returned over €6million to the local economy. This exemplifies what can be achieved and delivered through effective walking route development and management. (See Table 1: Case Studies)

- Compared to the spend by overseas visitors generally, walking tourists spend on average: more on accommodation; slightly less on food and drink; more on internal travel; a similar amount on shopping; and, less on miscellaneous expenditure. International case studies indicate that walkers consume less alcohol but enjoy good quality food.
- Statistics are available in relation to the nature of the walking holiday for example in respect of whether international walking tourists travel independently or seek guided/planned packages. The information provides a starting basis for ensuring that marketing and sales programmes are tailored to attract walking and hiking tourists. The most recent statistics for 2003 indicate:
 - The majority (71%) of overseas tourists who engage in walking/hiking travel either alone or as a party of two persons.
 - The majority (72%) of overseas walking/hiking tourists in Ireland travel independently as distinct to as part of a group. The internet is the choice research tool for the majority of walkers.
 - Some 59% of international walking tourists walked more than 5km per day – the most popular distance walked.

The figures indicate the requirement to ensure that marketing and sales activities target the independent traveller and acknowledge the self-sufficient nature of walking tourists. However further in-depth research needs to be carried out to assess the economic benefits derived from independent walking tourists and those on packages. International research would indicate that walkers availing of packaged holidays remain for a number of days on the route while independent walkers may only walk for as little as a number of hours. Therefore comparing numbers alone is likely to provide a false impression regarding the economic importance of both sectors.



*The key findings of two recently completed studies, **Economic Impact of the Western Way (Ireland), 2000** and **Visitor Statistics and Economic Impact for Hadrian's Wall Way National Trail, England, 2003** are available in **Walking in the West – Action Research Project (June 2005)** available on www.truelireland.com*



2 International Success Factors for Walking Tourism

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the key findings of the review of a selection of case studies of successful walking routes in Ireland, the UK and Mainland Europe. Initially, a total of 20 routes in 15 countries and 4 continents were examined. Following a review of these 6 case studies were selected for detailed analysis. The case studies were selected on the basis that they displayed key ingredients of successful walking tourism product that could be replicated in the Region. A summary of the international case studies is provided in Table 1. The key success factors identified from the case studies are outlined below.

- 1 The over-riding success factor identified relates to support structures. In most successful cases a **tripartite partnership** exists amongst public, private and community players, at both local and regional levels. Clear management structures with clarity of roles and responsibilities are established (not always from the outset), through a simple legal entity such as a 'company limited by guarantee'.
- 2 For many successful walks attracting international tourists, resources are provided both in-kind and financially, primarily from the **public bodies**. Considerable variation exists from country to country because of different public funding mechanisms.
- 3 The public sector recognises and supports communities as the initial 'drivers' in the identification of the routes and negotiation of the lines of way.
- 4 The public sector assists the communities in the resourcing, development and marketing of routes, and frequently assumes management of the walks in the longer term. This is particularly well demonstrated in the UK and French examples, where there has been a strong tradition of state support for recreational walking since the 1950s.
- 5 Walk development, maintenance, marketing and sales, are properly resourced with dedicated personnel. The private sector provides services, such as accommodation, meals, transport, tours, guides and marketing.⁹
- 6 Many international walks have **dedicated staff** such as Route Managers and Rangers for the long term management, networking and marketing of the routes. Strong networks of product and service providers exist along the walk delivering a high quality product that specifically meets walkers' needs. This includes a range of accommodation, drying and laundry facilities, maps, published guides, transfer from points of entry, luggage transfers, walker information points and good quality food.

Each of the above factors if adopted in Ireland will assist in the successful development of sustainable walking routes as niche tourism products.



⁹ Along the Beara Way, 100 approved service providers are accredited by the management team and display a logo to show that they are 'walker-friendly'. Each provider contributes €50 annually to be part of the scheme.

Table 1: Summary of International Case Studies

Case	The Beara Way – Ireland	Southern Upland Way – Scotland	Hadrian's Wall – England	Pembrokeshire Coastal Path National Trail – Wales	Le Sentier De Grande Randonnee 20 – Corsica France	Senderos de Pequeno Recorrido – Spain
Contact Details	Mr. Jim O' Sullivan, Beara Tourism & Development Association, The Square, Castletownbere, Beara, County Cork.	Mr. Andrew Case, Southern Uplands Way Limited, The Bothy, Ford House, Garoch Estate, St. John's Town of Dalry, Nr. Castle Douglas, DG& 3XP, Scotland.	Janine Ord, National Trails, Countryside Agency, 3rd Floor, Cross House, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE14XX, England.	David Machlachlan, Trail Officer, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire, SA61 1PY, Wales.	Jon Millen, Sherpa Expeditions, 131a Heston Road, Hounslow, TW5 0RF, England.	Brian & Patricia Fagg, Hotel El Frares, Avenida Pais Valencia 20, Quatretondeta, 03811 Alicante, Spain.
	www.bearatourism.com	www.southernuplandway.com	www.nationaltrail.co.uk/hadrianswall	www.pembrokeshirecoastpath.com		www.inn-spain.com
The Route	160km route along the Beara Peninsula, County Cork. Two deviations at Dursley Island and Beara Island. Route is divided into 10 sections each between 10km - 15km. Each section has an 'escape route' after 5km to 10km.	Linear route that links Scotland's east and west coasts. Approximately 340km. One of Scotland's more difficult routes.	Hadrian's Wall is a 135km linear route that links the east to the west coasts of northern England. It follows the route of the Roman wall which was built in 122 AD, marking the most lasting border of the Roman Empire in Britain.	This is a 299km linear route stretching from Amroth in the south to St. Dogmaels in the north of Pembrokeshire, primarily following cliff top paths with shoreline sections. There are three main sections of the route.	Le Sentier De Grande Randonnee 20 - Corsica France, is a 177km linear route linking Calenzana near Calvi in the north west with Conca near Porto Vecchio in the north east coast of the island.	Senderos de Pequeno Recorrido 23 is one of one of 200 short distance rambling paths in Alicante, Spain. This is a 13.2km linear route that connects the villages of Quatretondeta and Benasau. The entire route generally takes 4.5 hours to complete.
Route Establishment	The route was established in 1990 by the local tourism association – now Beara Tourism.	Route was established in 1984 by the Countryside Commission for Scotland – now Scottish Natural Heritage.	Elements of the route have been in place since 1996 but it was officially launched in 2003.	Concept originated in 1950s, however the path was not formally opened until 1970.	The route was established in the 1970s by the Federation Francaise de Randonnee Pedestre (French Long Distance Walks Association)	Route established for the 1999/2000 season by the Valencian Mountain Federation.
Voluntary Groups	Beara Tourism is a voluntary group, limited company, which was established to promote and develop all tourism, including the walkway of the route.	Southern Uplands Way Ltd. was established to market and promote the route. The organisation also organises walking packages. A new organisation, the South Uplands Partnership Way, is currently being established to oversee all management, maintenance, development and marketing /sales of the route. The Southern Uplands Way Partnership consists of representatives of: ■ Scottish Enterprise ■ the local authorities ■ the local tourist boards ■ Southern Upland Way Ltd. ■ The local communities	Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership was established to co-ordinate marketing of the area. Organisations represented in the partnership are: ■ The Countryside Agency ■ The National Trust ■ English Heritage ■ ONE North East ■ Local authorities and ■ The National Park	Established in 1994, Pembrokeshire Greenway seeks to promote access to the countryside by sustainable modes of walking, cycling, bus and train. Partners involved in Pembrokeshire Greenway include: ■ Countryside Council for Wales ■ Environment Wales ■ National Trust ■ Pembrokeshire Access Group ■ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority ■ Pembrokeshire County Council and ■ PLANED	Volunteers involved in route maintenance, but co-ordinated by the Parc Naturel.	Volunteers organised on an ad hoc basis to maintain and manage the route.
The Walker	It is estimated that 70% of walkers travel independently, with the remaining travelling as part of a package. There are three types of walker: long distance, short loop and hill.	Approximately 70,000 walkers use the route every year, of which some 1,000 walk the entire route. There is a decline in the number of walkers using the route since its establishment in 1994. Approximately 50% of walkers travel independently while the remaining 50% travel as part of a package.	A total of 403,000 walkers used the route between May 2003 and September 2004. Of this 6,264 were long distance walkers. It is estimated that walkers spent in the order of €6.5 million in the area over that period.	A 1996/1997 study indicated that in the order of 10,000 long distance and 300,000 short distance walkers use the route on an annual basis. According to the respondent there are minimal annual fluctuations of this number.	The route attracts in the order of 17,000 visitors, of which approximately 7,000 walk the entire route. Approximately 63% of walkers are domestic tourists, with the remaining predominantly coming from the rest of Europe.	Approximately 1,000 domestic and 350 foreign visitors use the walk every year. Up to 70% of foreign tourists are British, with the remainder coming from North America and Continental Europe. Walkers are predominantly in the 45 - 60 years age group.



Table 1: Summary of International Case Studies

Case	The Beara Way – Ireland	Southern Upland Way – Scotland	Hadrian's Wall – England	Pembrokeshire Coastal Path National Trail – Wales	Le Sentier De Grande Randonne 20 – Corsica France	Senderos de Pequeno Recorrido – Spain
Accommodation	There is no official count of accommodation providers on the route however, accommodation ranges from 5-star hotels to B&B and camping. Beara Tourism manage a programme marketing walker friendly accommodation on the route. Approximately 100 accommodation providers participate in this programme. To participate in this initiative accommodation providers contribute €50 per annum to Beara Tourism.	There are 455 accommodation providers on the route, ranging from 4 star hotels to basic shelters such as wooden wigwams. 'Walkers Welcome' scheme in operation, managed by Visit Scotland. However, only 5% of accommodation providers on the route participate in this scheme. Southern Uplands Way Ltd. operates a web site that promotes walker friendly accommodation i.e. those who provide drying facilities, packed lunches etc.	There are approximately 200 accommodation providers in along the route. A mix of accommodation is available from bunk houses to high quality accommodation. Accommodation providers can advertise on the Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership website.	Full range of accommodation available on the route, with B&Bs the more popular option for walkers.	There is a limited number of hotels along the route. Walkers generally stay in 'refuges' or simple mountain huts, which offer basic accommodation.	There is a limited number of B&B and guesthouse accommodation and one hotel on the route. However, there are plans to extend the hotel and additional accommodation is emerging.
Food & Drink	Wide range of food and drink available on route. Accommodation providers will provide walkers with packed lunches. Walker's preference for fresh local produce.	500 shops, restaurants and pubs on the route. Opening hours or menus are not specifically tailored to cater for walkers, however, promotional packages targeting walkers are in place. These are commercially driven.	Range of cafes and restaurants. However they do not specifically cater for walkers.	The route is served by range of cafes and restaurants primarily located in the main towns and villages along the walk. Some accommodation providers offer packed lunches.	Food is available in local restaurants and packed lunches are provided by some accommodation providers.	Meals and packed lunches available.
Transfers	Provided by accommodation providers from bus station at Glengarriff and to stops along the route. Standard charge of €10 per transfer.	Southern Upland Way Ltd. provide transfers from Prestwick Airport and to points along the route. In addition, one other private company provides transfers along the route. These are available to those travelling independently or as part of a package. There are standard charges for transfers.	Transfer and bus services are provided along the route by the private sector. Point to point luggage transfer usually costs €5 per bag.	Private operators provide transfers from point of entry and luggage transfer along the route. A public bus route serving the route was recently launched by the relevant local authorities	Transfers by local taxi or bus operators can be pre arranged as part of a package holiday or by independent travelers.	Available from accommodation providers and local taxi companies.
Other Attractions	Efforts are being pursued to make the walk unique. The only cable car in Ireland brings walkers from Beara Peninsula to Dursley Island. Programmes are in place that promote archeology, flora and fauna and built heritage of the entire area. A programme is currently being developed which involves erecting display panels with 'clan crescents' informing walkers when they are entering into areas that were historically dominated by particular families.	Main attraction is scenery. Currently improving access to non-motorised access, bicycle, horses etc. Other activities available but limited interest among walkers.	Hadrian's Wall was constructed in 122 AD by the Romans to demark the territory of the Roman Empire in Britain. This is the main attraction of the route. Efforts are made to consolidate services and produce of the route under one brand based on the Wall. The Wall is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.	The main attractions are the scenery and landscape. However there is also a range of attractions in the towns and villages along the route.	The main attraction is the scenery and local culture.	Near the Costa Brava a beach resort, but find that this is not an attraction to walking tourists. Also in close proximity to historic rock painted sites and medieval towns.

Part I

Table 1: Summary of International Case Studies

Case	The Beara Way – Ireland	Southern Upland Way – Scotland	Hadrian's Wall – England	Pembrokeshire Coastal Path National Trail – Wales	Le Sentier De Grande Randonnee 20 – Corsica France	Senderos de Pequeno Recorrido – Spain
Entertainment & Festivals	Beara Tourism prefer not to use festivals to promote walking. The group seek to increase tourism numbers in a sustainable manner. Respondent of the opinion that walkers prefer to experience traditional entertainment, but not necessarily as part of a festival.	A number of walking festivals are run by local communities. These are considered to be somewhat successful. According to the respondent the level of attendance at events and festivals has flattened.	A number of events are organised by the local communities. These are listed on the Hadrian's Wall web site and range from Roman experiences to Victorian picnics.	There are up to 200 events and festivals in towns and villages along the route throughout the year. Of these, approximately 10 are walking specific. The annual 'coast-to-coast', organised by National Trails takes 16 days but is limited to 25 participants.	Festivals usually organised for local residents. No specific walking festivals organised.	Local festivals predominantly attract the local residents for example St. George's Day of 22 - 24 April. There are no specific walking festivals.
Environmental Management	No specific environmental management programme. The countryside code is promoted.	No specific programme - countryside code promoted by Southern Uplands Way Ltd.	A passport system was recently introduced by the Countryside Agency. The objective of this system is to encourage walkers to visit different sections of the route, with a view reducing route erosion due to walking.	Development along the route is subject to approval by the National Parks Authority, which is the planning authority for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The countryside code is promoted and a detailed 'Coastal Path Code to Safety' booklet is available.	The walk is situated in the Parc Naturel and is well managed as part of the overall operation of the park.	Dependent on local voluntary involvement. Lack of public sector assistance identified by the local community as a problem.
Route Management	Primarily voluntary - managed by local voluntary group, the Beara Way Committee, with assistance from the local authority, Cork County Council.	Route management and maintenance is the responsibility of specific local authorities whose areas the route traverses. Funding available from Scottish Natural Heritage towards route management. Three fulltime rangers employed to manage the route. No voluntary groups involved in route maintenance.	The Countryside Agency is responsible for management of the route. Two dedicated staff are employed to maintain the route. In addition a Trail Manager is employed by National Trails. They are supported by a team of 150 volunteers.	Route is currently managed by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. A Trail Officer is responsible for the management of the route and he is supported by a staff of rangers. The work of this team is guided by a Coastal Path Management Strategy. An annual work programme is agreed between the National Park Authority and Countryside Commission for Wales. The Countryside Council for Wales and the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority fund management and maintenance of the route with a dedicated annual budget of over €507,000.	The Park is managed by a team of wardens employed in the Parc Naturel. In addition, a voluntary team assists with park maintenance.	Route is managed and maintained by a voluntary force of 300 persons.
Funding	Funding for route development, maintenance and management is available under a number of sources such as the Rural Social Scheme (RSS), FAS Community Scheme, Rural Environmental Protection Scheme, LEADER, Cork County Council and Failte Ireland.	Route establishment funded by Scottish Office (now Scottish Executive). Ongoing management and maintenance funded by local authorities and Scottish Natural Heritage.	Route development was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Countryside Agency. Route maintenance is funded by the Countryside Agency along with the local authorities whose administrative areas the route crosses.	The Countryside Commission for Wales provides capital and revenue funding towards route development, management and maintenance along with employment of a dedicated route staff. Additional funding provided by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.	The Parc Naturel along with the Federation Francaise de la Randonnee Pedestre fund the ongoing management and maintenance of the walk.	Route development funded by Valencia's Environmental Department. Route is managed by volunteers with support from Valencia Mountain Federation and the local authority.
Guides	Archaeology tours take place every Sunday. These are organised on a voluntary basis. Guides are provided as part of commercial packages. Guides are currently being trained by Beara Tourism, funded by local accommodation providers and under the RSS. This service will be available for 2005 summer season.	Of the order of 10% to 15% of walkers request guides. Guides are not available on a commercial basis. Rangers may provide guiding services subject to their availability.	Guides are provided by the private sector as part walking holiday packages.	Private sector provide guiding services. Prices range from €45 to €90 per day, depending on the length of the route and other services required.	Tour guides are available as part of a package or to independent travelers. There is no training accreditation of tour guides. Guidebooks and maps are available for sale.	Independent guides available at a price of €30 per day or as part of a package.



Table 1: Summary of International Case Studies

Case	The Beara Way – Ireland	Southern Upland Way – Scotland	Hadrian's Wall – England	Pembrokeshire Coastal Path National Trail – Wales	Le Sentier De Grande Randonnée 20 – Corsica France	Senderos de Pequeno Recorrido – Spain
Route Marketing	<p>Route is marketed by Beara Tourism and by Failte Ireland through their web sites and promotional literature. The Beara Tourism web site provides information on walking routes, tour guides and accommodation.</p> <p>In addition, Cork-Kerry Tourism prepared a brochure promoting walking in the Beara Peninsula.</p> <p>Beara Tourism does not have a fixed annual marketing budget.</p>	<p>Traditionally function of local authorities. Now being undertaken by Southern Uplands Way Ltd. (SUWL).</p> <p>SUWL has established a website. Using that website, walkers can book packages and accommodation and get information on a range of issues pertaining to the walk including flora, fauna, heritage etc. In addition, the route is marketed by Visit Scotland, the Scottish Tourist Board.</p> <p>SUWL spend an annual marketing budget of approximately €17,000 promoting the way.</p>	<p>The route is marketed by the Countryside Agency through the National Trails website. Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership also market the route, as part of the tourism offer in the area.</p> <p>Using the Hadrian's Wall website, walkers can book accommodation and walking packages. The site also provides information on the heritage and history of the wall and its importance as a heritage site. In addition, local produce is available for sale on the site.</p> <p>Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership spend an annual marketing budget of approximately €145,000 of which €15,000 is funded by the Countryside Agency to specifically to promote walking.</p>	<p>The route is marketed by National Trails, Pembrokeshire Coastal Park Authority, the Wales Tourist Board, Countryside Commission for Wales, and the British Tourist Authority. In addition, local tourism product providers market the route, be it on an ad hoc basis. An annual budget of approximately €15,000 to €22,000 is provided by National Trails to market the route.</p> <p>A website has been established which promotes and provides maps of the route.</p>	<p>The route is marketed on the Corsica tourism web site as part of the promotion of all activities on the island.</p>	<p>Route marketed by the private sector. Alicante Municipal Tourism do not explicitly market walking/hiking holidays.</p>
Sales Structure & Operation	<p>One tour operator providing walking packages along the Beara Peninsula is advertised on the Beara Way website. Packages are provided by the private sector eg. 7 nights, 5 days walking, 5 packed lunches and 6 dinners €840.</p>	<p>Information on the number of tour operators is not available from the respondent or the website.</p> <p>Packages available through Southern Uplands Way Ltd. 6 nights €300 to €427 per person, including accommodation and transfers.</p>	<p>Approximately 14 tour operators are promoted on the Hadrian's Wall website.</p> <p>Sales are a function of the private sector who offer packages. 8 nights including accommodation and transfers would cost in the order of €516 to €652 per person. However these are self-guided walking tours. 3 day guided tours cost in the order of €362 per person.</p>	<p>Only one tour operator is advertised on the website. Private sector operators offer a range of packages. Four day packages including guides, accommodation and transfer services cost in the order of €470. A 12 day package would cost approximately €1,300 per person.</p>	<p>Two week walking holiday including flights to Corsica from the UK, accommodation, transfers, food and guides would be in the order of €1,200 to €1,700.</p>	<p>Walking packages are available from the private sector. A five night package including guides, accommodation, evening meals and picnics would cost in the order of €550 to €645 per person sharing.</p>
Other Issues	<p>The respondent recommended that there is a need for a joint approach to walk development, management and maintenance with the community sector, the local authority and local development groups such as LEADER.</p> <p>Global Positioning System (GPS) in place for safety of walkers. This allows positioning to be calculated accurately using satellite technology.</p> <p>Walking is conditional on access of walkers through land under private ownership, usually farmed land. A condition of the Rural Environmental Programme (REPS) was that farmers had to allow access through their land. In the absence of REPS, there is no incentive for farmers to continue to allow access to their land by walkers. Whilst liability is cited as a reason to restrict access, local authorities have played a key role in insuring walk ways.</p>			<p>Approximately 41% of the route is now wheelchair accessible. A dedicated bus service for the route is provided by the local authorities in the area.</p>	<p>The internet is emerging as an important sales tool. It was reported by one tour operator that in the order of 90% of bookings are made using the internet.</p>	

Part I

3 Potential for Commercialising Walking Routes – Key Recommendations

3.1 Introduction

Although there is relatively good provision of recreational walking infrastructure in the Western Region, the commercial potential can best be harnessed through an integrated strategic approach to route development, maintenance, marketing and sales within the Region. The adoption of such an approach would put the Western Region of Ireland at the forefront of international best practice.

3.2 Recommendations

To achieve the objectives of *Walking in the West*, and to inform the emerging national strategy and framework for walking tourism, nine key recommendations can be made:

1. Devise National Framework for Walking

An integrated **National Framework for Walking** encompassing route development, quality standards, maintenance, marketing and sales should be prepared, agreed, adopted and implemented based on the emerging Fáilte Ireland and National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee (NWWAC) and *Walking in the West* strategies. Such a Framework must be championed at Government level and implemented by the relevant agencies at regional and local level.

2. Establish Regional Walking Partnerships

Regional Walking Units should be established in each of the regional tourism bodies to implement the proposed national framework. Tripartite Regional Walking Partnerships (RWP), representing the public, private and community sectors should be established in each of the areas of the Regional Tourism Authorities and Shannon Development.¹⁰ This should be led by the Regional Tourism bodies.

The key objective of the Regional Walking Partnerships should be to prepare and implement a Regional Walking Strategy, to ensure that an integrated and consistent approach is taken to route development, maintenance, marketing and sales. A Regional Walking Officer should be recruited within each regional tourism body to implement the Regional Walking Strategy.



3 Prepare Regional Strategies

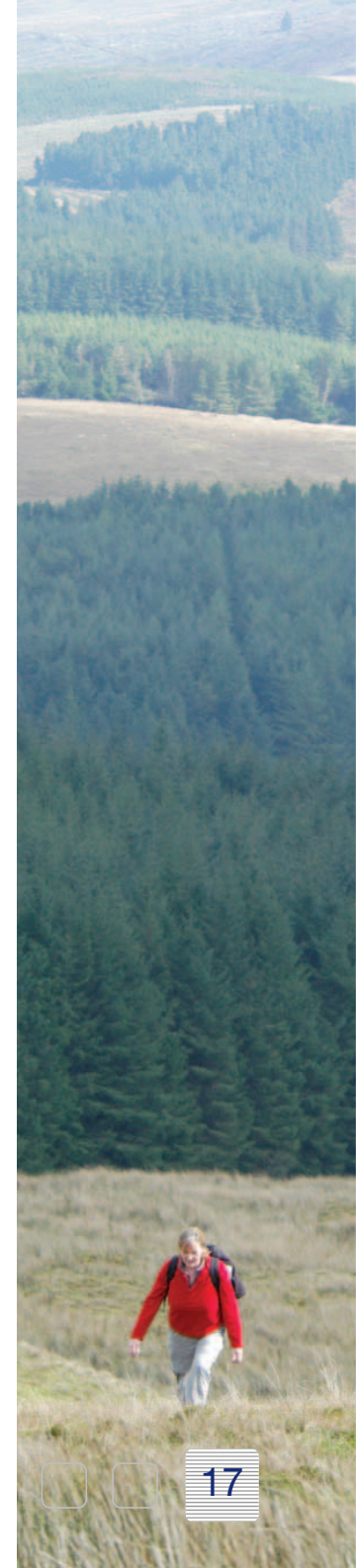
Guided by the National Framework, it is recommended that a Regional Walking Strategy for each RTA region within the Region is prepared. These strategies should set out the framework for developing both existing and proposed walking routes and provide an integrated marketing and selling strategy to attract walkers to the regions. The strategy should also set out how stronger performing areas can cross-sell to weaker performing areas, promoting a suite of 'honey pot' attractors in each region and into the wider Western Region.

The Regional Walking Strategy should provide:

- Product development strategy
- Centralised marketing and sales strategy and the development of a regional walking brand.
- Integrated training plan for stakeholders in the Region
- Quality assurance framework for route maintenance (based on the NWWAC guidelines).
- Quality standards for products and services along the route grounded on the model best of practice contained in this document.

The Regional Walking Strategies would ensure that walking is an attractive tourism product focused on improved interpretation, quality guiding, attention to walker comfort and safety, walking festivals and promotion of commercial and environmental sustainability.

¹⁰ The regional tourism bodies covering the counties of the Western Region (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Galway, Mayo and Clare) include North West Regional Tourism Authority, Ireland West Regional Tourism Authority and Shannon Development (who have responsibilities for Co. Clare).





4. Facilitate Local Walking Partnerships

Local Walking Partnerships (LWP) proactively facilitated by LEADER should be established for individual routes or geographically contiguous routes. Composition of the LWP should mirror that of the Regional Walking Partnership. The objective of the LWP is to implement the local components of the Regional Walking Strategy. Critically, the LWP will be responsible for the commercial sustainability of the route by:

- Recruiting a Walk Manager (reporting to LEADER)
- Ensuring that local points of celebration are encompassed in the walk
- Organising local walking festivals where appropriate
- Ensuring that the route is maintained to national Waymarked Ways standards
- Ensuring quality standards are maintained by product providers locally
- Ensuring that access is agreed by local landowners through their lands.

Although facilitated by LEADER, the host community and service providers must take ownership if the walking route is to be commercially sustainable. The Step-by-Step Guide, which follows, provides the public, private and community sector with clear direction and advice on how they can prepare and implement their Local Walking Plans.

5. Local Action Plans & Development Strategies

Guided by the Regional Walking Strategies, a Local Walking Plan for the development and management of individual walks should be prepared. This plan should set out the steps required to implement the recommendations of the Regional Walking Strategy locally. A more detailed approach to the preparation and implementation of this plan is provided in the Step-by-Step Guide.

6. Route Maintenance Plans

A programme of route management and maintenance should be put in place to ensure walker comfort and the environmental sustainability of the route from the outset. It is recommended that sufficient resources be deployed to ensure that a high quality walking product is well maintained. This will protect the brand integrity and ensure that the requirements of walking tourists are being met. It is proposed that a Regional Route Ranger covering the entire Western Region is recruited to manage route maintenance and quality assurance. It is proposed that this post be a pilot under the proposed National Framework for Walking and located in one of the regional tourism bodies.

7. Marketing Strategy

The RWO should develop a marketing strategy for the Region's walking product. This should be carried out in close cooperation with the National Walking Product Marketing Group and Walk Managers of the Regions trails. The strategy should ensure that the Region's walking product is properly represented at national marketing level and enable the local product to exploit both national and international sales opportunities.

8. Sales Strategies

The proposed Regional Strategy should include a Regional Sales Strategy which will identify the key players and guide all development of sales plans by the Local Walking Partnerships. The application of new technology and intensive e-commerce training will be a core element of this initiative.

9. Economic Evaluation

An independent economic evaluation of this project should be carried out as a pilot three years after the Step by Step Guide has been fully adopted by a Walk in the Region.

It is recommended that the above proposals be implemented on a pilot basis in the Western Region. It should be noted that the regional supports, through the public sector, must be put in place before the walking product can become truly commercial. The WDTP and LEADER will work closely at national level to ensure that these are put in place and endorsed by national policymakers and agencies.

The next phase of the *Walking in the West* project is that the LEADER companies of the Western Region will prepare a **detailed and fully costed plan** for the implementation of the above recommendations that directly involve the regional players. As an interim measure, LEADER and the WDTP, will assist in piloting the Step-by-Step Guide on a number of walks in the Western Region. These can then act as a model for others to follow once new structures have been put in place.

The Step by Step Guide that follows can only be successfully implemented if the above recommendations are endorsed, resourced and implemented at national policy level.

4 Structuring for Success: The Walking Partnership Model

Based on the key success factors identified earlier, a regional and local structure is proposed to guide the development and commercialisation of existing walking routes in the Western Region.

Regional Structure

These following structures are formulated on the principle that current national initiatives will lead to the establishment of a National Walking Framework.

It is proposed that a Regional Walking Partnership (RWP) be established in each of the areas of the regional tourism bodies. They should reflect a tripartite partnership among the public and private sector and local communities. The RWP will provide advice and strategic direction to Local Walking Partnerships (LWP) at community level and act as a co-ordinating body for all LWP initiatives in a given region.

The RWP should comprise representatives of the following range of interests:

- Regional Tourism Authorities and Shannon Development
- Fáilte Ireland
- National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee (NWWAC) of the Irish Sports Council (ISC)
- Local Authorities
- Government Departments
- Representatives of local communities and development groups
- Private tourism service providers (accommodation/ food/ entertainment/ transport/tours/ guides/ etc)
- LEADER Groups
- Western Development Tourism Programme
- Coillte Ireland
- National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- Farming Bodies

Within each of the regional tourism body areas a **Regional Walking Unit** should be established. A **Regional Walking Officer** should be recruited and operate from this unit. The role of this person should include:

- Development and implementation of a regional walking strategy encompassing development, quality standards, marketing and sales
- Development and delivery of appropriate training programmes

- Liaison with Local Walking Partnerships and their Walk Managers
- Liaison with the Regional Route Ranger
- Creation of marketing linkages at national and international levels with marketing agencies and the commercial sector
- In co-operation with the other two Regional Walking Officers in the RTAs development of a regional walking brand which builds upon the success of the Western Regions Joint Marketing initiative.¹¹

A **Route Ranger** covering the entire Western Region will be recruited and located in one of the Regional Walking Units. The key responsibility will be the maintenance of product quality throughout the region.

Figure 4 illustrates the tripartite structure.

Figure 4: The Proposed Tripartite Partnership



¹¹ WDTP facilitated a joint marketing initiative between the two RTAs, Shannon Development and LEADER (2004)

Local Structure

Within each RWP, **Local Walking Partnerships (LWP)** will be set up for individual routes or geographically contiguous routes with the full support of the Local Authorities, LEADER, the Regional Tourism Authorities and Shannon Development. The LWP will be the “driver” of the local walking route.

A **Walk Manager** responsible for development, management, maintenance, marketing and sales should be employed. The Walk Manager would facilitate networking among the community, private and public interests, to ensure that the walking product is effectively managed to deliver full benefits to stakeholders along the route. Specific roles and responsibilities are given for the Walk Manager in the Step by Step Guide. Figure 5 below graphically summarises the above proposed structure.

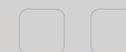
Figure 5: Proposed Walking Partnership to Develop and Commercialise Walking Tourism in Ireland





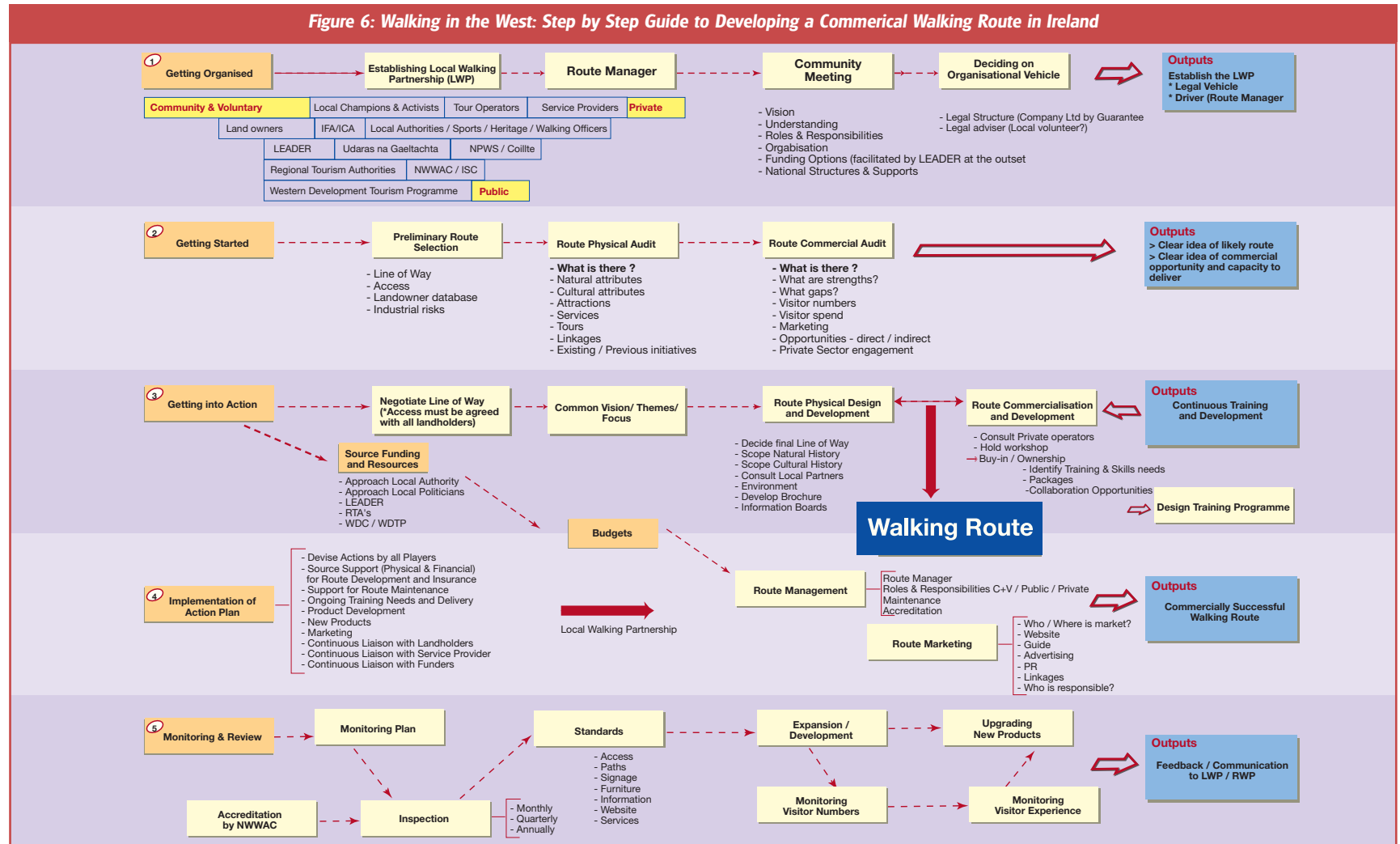
PART II

Walking in the West: Step-By-Step Guide to Walking Route Development & Commercialisation



5 STEP ONE: Getting Organised

This Step-by-Step Guide provides a continuum through the various stages and actions to be taken to develop a commercially successful walking route, suitable to projects at different stages of maturity and/or organization. An overview of this Guide is given in Figure 6.



The Step by Step Guide is provided to assist the Local Walking Partnership implement the Model of Best Practice on under-performing walking routes. The Model is taken from in-depth analysis of the case studies in Table 1. A list of contacts for support agencies are provided in Appendix I.

5.1 Establish a Local Walking Partnership

The make-up of a Local Walking Partnership (LWP) will mirror the same composition as the Regional Walking Partnership (See Page 19).

The public sector should take the co-ordinating role in establishing the LWP working through a delegated LEADER Project Officer.

From the outset, it will be essential to ensure that the partnership has a commercial outlook, which seeks to harness business opportunities. Therefore, it will be critical to ensure that there is good representation from accommodation providers, restaurateurs, walking tour operators, specialist retailers and the hospitality sector. The private sector may need to be proactively encouraged by the LEADER Project Officer to attend the initial meeting, as very often the benefits of a commercial walking route may not be immediately apparent.

Rotation of membership of the LWP at agreed intervals should be a mandatory requirement. This will enable fresh thinking and innovative ideas to emerge while at the same time alleviate the fear amongst members of an open ended commitment.



It would be useful for service providers to walk sections of the route, to fully appreciate the walking experience and anticipate the requirements of walkers. Additionally, this simple mechanism could be used to build a sense of collective opportunity and get some 'joined up thinking' for collaboration among providers.

5.2 Focusing the Local Walking Partnership

An overview of the contents of the *Walking in the West* document and Step by Step Guide should be presented at an initial meeting of the LWP.

The meeting should conclude with agreement on the following:

- The broad vision for the initiative, what it seeks to achieve and the benefits that will emerge from collaboration and partnership
- A clear understanding of the role the LWP can play, what its responsibilities are and its capacity to take on the responsibility
- A practical organisational framework to ensure successful delivery of a walking route
- The need for provision of excellent services along the route by the private sector

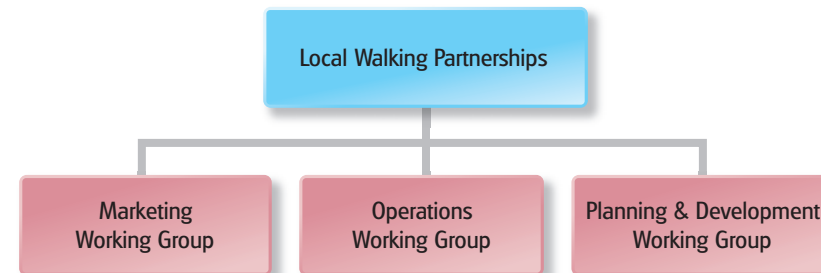
- Technical co-ordinating support that will be made available by the public sector
- Programmes and training that will enhance skills and capacity within the community
- The range of funding sources and practical resources available for project development and implementation, such as the Local Authorities, LEADER, Rural Social Scheme (www.pobail.ie) and Fáilte Ireland (www.ireland.ie), LEADER (www.irishleadernetwork.org)

5.3 Organisational Structure

The LWP should decide on the most appropriate legal structure for the organisation. The decision-making path should consider the scope and ability of the legal structure to attract and manage funding, grant assistance, staff recruitment/secondment, along with public liability insurance associated with visitors using the route. The recommendation for Local Walking Partnerships is to form a Company Limited by Guarantee.

A practical structure, which creates smaller working groups within the Local Walking Partnership (LWP), is suggested below. This has been used elsewhere to good effect.

Local Walking Partnership Suggested Organisational Structure



There has been much progress recently on making public liability insurance available at competitive prices. A 2005 Supreme Court decision should considerably allay the genuine fears of landholders in that they are not liable for recreational walkers who access their lands, provided reasonable duty of care has been taken.



6 STEP TWO: Auditing the Existing Product

Part II

6.1 Auditing the Walking Product

Before any strategic development takes place an audit of the route should be undertaken. The LWP can then establish what is on offer along the walking route, both physically and in terms of services. Under the proposed Regional Walking Structure appropriate training programmes will be provided by the Regional Walking Officer for the LWP to carry out the audit themselves.

The audit should seek to identify innovative features, latent capacity within the community and unique characteristics of the walk. The walk should be measured against both the NWWAC criteria and the *Walking in the West* model. The criteria from both are provided in Table 2: Audit Checklist. The National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee (NWWAC) provides excellent advice on the auditing of routes - see www.walkireland.ie.

The topics listed Table 2 relate to the full range of issues that should be considered as part of any walking route development project including the undertaking of a detailed physical route assessment and identification of the full range of services and facilities available along the route.



4 *Increase 'Buy-In' to the Project: Once the initial audit is completed, it is useful to invite other members of the Local Walking Partnership and business providers to walk along the route with a guide. This will provide stakeholders with an insight to the nature and potential of the walk and is a great way to encourage 'ownership' of the project.*

The topics listed in this checklist relate to the full range of issues that should be considered as part of any walking route development project including the undertaking of a detailed physical route assessment, identifying the full range of supporting services and facilities available in a region and also identifying the most appropriate marketing, management and promotional strategies deemed necessary.

Table 2: Audit Checklist

Checklist	✓
Nature and Characteristics of the Route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Varied landscape and natural heritage ■ Diversity ■ Links between villages, towns and countryside ■ Natural attributes – woodland, bog, river, coast ■ Built heritage, archaeology ■ Key landowners along the route ■ SACs/ NHAs¹² (through County Heritage Officers) along the route 	
Key Physical Strengths of the Route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accessibility ■ Diversity of landscape ■ Scenery and heritage ■ Suitability for all levels of walker ■ Standards ■ Potential local, national and international recognition ■ Events and walking festivals 	
Physical Attributes of the Route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Environmental management, practice and assets ■ Maintenance ■ Percentage of route that is tarred or on the road ■ Safety of road walking sections, quiet country roads or busy roads ■ Identification of all landowners along the route for consultation ■ Access through private property ■ Identify all landowners along the route for consultation ■ Opportunity to provide long and short looped walks and spurs 	

¹² SAC Special Area of Conservation / NHA National Heritage Area – both are EU designations which offer special protection to defined environmental and heritage sites.

Table 2: Audit Checklist (continued)	
Checklist	✓
Commercial Walking Products and Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Walker friendly services ■ Accommodation provided on or close to route ■ Availability of associated products and services e.g. visitor attractions and activities ■ Availability of cafes, pubs and restaurants providing packed lunches/ evening meals ■ Availability of existing tour packages and operators ■ Opportunity to cross-sell to other activities and attractions ■ Opportunity to provide services required by walkers ■ Transport e.g. baggage transfer and transport from points of entry ■ Entertainment e.g. music at night and festivals 	
Management and Organisational Structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public sector role and involvement ■ Private sector role and involvement ■ Voluntary sector role and involvement ■ Evidence of existing or previous partnership/collaborative working ■ Legal i.e. type of structure ■ Insurance 	
Existing or Previous Public Sector Investment / Supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Route development, management and maintenance ■ Route marketing and promotion ■ Training programmes – marketing and guiding ■ Events and walking festivals ■ Guides 	
Marketing Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Marketing skills audit ■ Marketing personnel ■ Budget ■ Research/ user profile (existing customers) ■ Marketing plan (link to Rural Walking Strategy) ■ Channels of distribution 	

Table 2: Audit Checklist (continued)	
Checklist	✓
Sales Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sales skills audit ■ Sales personnel ■ Budget ■ Sales plan (link to Rural Walking Strategy) ■ Website with booking facility ■ Enquiry handling facility ■ Packages sold to general public ■ Link to sales intermediaries (i.e. tour operators) ■ Packages sold to sales intermediaries 	
Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ General skills audit ■ Profile of unique skills e.g. languages, networks ■ Training plan ■ Training budget 	

The second action is to critically appraise the findings of the audit, identify the gaps, identify the opportunities for the commercial development of the walk and assess the critical components for long term success and sustainability of the walk. This part of the audit should document the services available and define opportunities and weaknesses, with suggestions for options / mechanisms to exploit / redress them.



5

Carrying out the audit will reach a broader audience of actual and potential stakeholders in the vicinity of the route, thus increasing buy-in to the opportunity to commercialise walking tourism in the locality. It is a good idea to publish a short article in a local newspaper and / or parish newsletter to disseminate the broad results of the physical and commercial audits.



7 STEP THREE: Walk Management

7.1 Walk Management

It is recommended that each Local Walking Partnership employ a Walk Manager. The Walk Manager will have as his/her key responsibility the development and operation of the walk in a manner which ensures it fulfills its commercial potential.

The Walk Manager will be responsible for the implementation of the Local Walking Plan under the direction of the Local Walking Partnership and will report on a day to day basis to the local LEADER manager.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Walk Manager should include:

- 1 Providing advice and secretarial support to the Local Walking Partnership
- 2 Working with the Local Walking Partnership to prepare the Local Walking Plan
- 3 Ensuring that the walking route is developed in a manner that meets changing consumer demand
- 4 Developing holiday packages in collaboration with local product providers and tourism sales intermediaries
- 5 Developing, maintaining and regularly updating a walk website with an inter-active online booking facility for accommodation, transfers, etc.
- 6 Dealing with email and telephone enquiries
- 7 Ensuring that the walking product is maintained to agreed national quality standards
- 8 Developing and implementing training plans which ensures that all product stake holders have the capacity to maximise the effectiveness of the walk
- 9 Negotiation and liaison with land owners to ensure that access and goodwill are maintained
- 10 Co-ordinating and managing route maintenance with assistance from the regional route ranger and Rural Social Scheme (RSS) workers
- 11 Ensuring that local tourist information offices are aware of the walking route and the full range of facilities and services along the route
- 12 Ensuring that all new commercial opportunities are harnessed and that the product providers maximise the economic potential of the walk
- 13 Developing links with a wide range of national and international tour operators and liaising between them and local product providers
- 14 Assisting the Regional Walking Officer to effectively market the walk
- 15 Feeding into the implementation of the regional tourism strategy and county development plans
- 16 Developing a network of product providers along the route.

Part II



8 STEP FOUR: Preparation of a Local Walking Plan



At this stage, a Local Walking Plan which clearly sets out the key activities to be undertaken and the roles and responsibilities of each player to deliver all components of the walking route should be prepared by the Local Walking Partnership (LWP). The proposed Regional Walking Officer will provide assistance to the LWP when preparing their local plan. The Local Walking Plan should comprise of the following key components:

- Common Vision
- Route Development
- Product Development
- Route Maintenance
- Route Marketing & Sales

8.1 Agree a Common Vision

The Local Walking Partnership should agree a common vision for the route, focusing on its key assets, uniqueness and the fundamental objectives of route development. This should include a vision for the commercial opportunities which the walk presents. Ideally, the walk should complement other community initiatives or local development plans. The vision will vary for each walk, but may include one or all of the following:

- Encompassing of local celebration
- Maximisation of the tourism profile and economic development potential of the area
- Enhancement of green and sustainable tourism
- Harnessing of the heritage and culture
- Provision of recreational amenities for the local community
- Enhancement of the economic impact of the development of the route.

8.2 Route Development

This section of the LWP should address what work will be required to make the route suitable for customer demands such as development/improvement of pathways, cycle-friendly sections, shelters, picnic areas, viewing points, interpretative displays etc.



A variety of models exists for the negotiation of access, but this is best done by local community members of the LWP who know the landowners and can fully explain to the community the benefits of the walking route.

This could be resourced by a range of sources including LEADER, Local Authorities and in border counties mechanisms such as the EU funded INTERREG and Peace II programmes (see www.csfinfo.com) plus the International Fund for Ireland (see www.internationalfundforireland.com). Implementation resources are available through the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs' Rural Social Scheme (www.pobail.ie). There will generally be a requirement for co-funding and/or local matching contributions. The issue of 'matching funds' is complicated and it is worth getting advice on what sources are acceptable.

Under the proposed Regional Walking Strategy within this document the Local Authority would be best placed to manage the procurement of route development infrastructure.

Environmental and heritage (see www.heritagecouncil.ie) management along the proposed route must be addressed, in full consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Services (www.enviro.ie), the Local Authority Heritage Officers, the Irish Peat Conservation Council (if boglands are to be traversed), and Coillte (if state forests are to be accessed). All of these agencies are very helpful and will freely offer advice and guidance on ongoing management of the route environment and habitats.



The simply understood Countryside Code is applied internationally by walking route managers as guidelines for walkers to observe. The Mountaineering Council of Ireland have developed excellent 'Good Practice' Environmental and Safety guides for walkers and climbers – see www.mountaineering.ie – where they are downloadable as .pdf files.



Part II

8.3 Product Development

A product development plan needs to be created to address gaps in product and services along the route. The product development plan will include:

- Animation of potential partners illustrating to them that walking is a profitable business
- Maintaining standards
- Capacity building
- Increasing commercialisation
- Funding for business development.



"The sum of the parts is greater than the whole - Ní neart go chur le chéile"! The more collaboration in service provision and marketing, the more likely the walking product will succeed commercially and be of benefit to all.

Animation of potential partners

Using the audit and market research findings, the Local Walking Partnership should hold an animation workshop with invited private sector product and service providers to discuss the findings and the potential identified. As with the initial meeting of the LWP, this could be facilitated independently or by the LEADER Project Officer. It will be important to present the positive findings of the research to the gathering.

Walking is a highly competitive tourism product internationally. The private sector operators along the route should be encouraged to look at ways in which they can "collaborate to compete" – how to develop packages of 'meet & greet' at entry points to the area, accommodation, transport, food and entertainment, which can be advertised to potential clients. Significant cost benefits can be achieved in marketing efforts and development of joint websites.

Some of the international case study data could also be used to demonstrate that in the medium to long term, walking can deliver significant economic benefit and jobs for communities.



It is recommended that providers interested in enhancing their services should look at the websites of the international case studies to see what the competition offers in terms of pricing and structures: e.g. www.southernuplandway.com or www.bearatourism.com. This should assist in formalising ideas for packages.

Maintaining Standards

The route and all its services will be expected to conform to the NWWAC quality standards and the *Walking in the West* Model of Best Practice. Under the proposed changes in this document to implement regional structures an annual audit will be conducted by the Regional Route Ranger.

Capacity Building

An important component of the Local Walking Plan will be to undertake training needs assessment and analysis, which would identify the training requirements of the Local Walking Partnership members and staff together with local product and service providers. To ensure that all training is relevant and of an appropriate standard it should be approved by the appropriate bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and NWWAC.

Following definition and agreement of training requirements, capacity building should be provided using a combination of sector-based workshops or one-to-one mentoring. Ongoing support should be provided by the proposed Regional Walking Partnership to the service providers and walking tour operators to ensure that the training is being applied and its objectives being met.

It should be recognised that commercialisation will not be solely achieved through capital investment. With the support of public agencies, investment in skills and training will be required to optimise the opportunities and potential of all those operating along the route.



Specialist outdoor shops are attractive to walkers and act as a good medium to communicate with visitors. See www.thegreenwelystop.co.uk for a good example



Increasing Commercialisation

A key objective of product development and enhancement is to increase commercialisation of the walk. Using the results of the audit, the LWP should identify the activities required to ensure that commercialisation can be achieved and enhanced. (see new model www.norhtkerryway.ie).

This will primarily be implemented by the private sector, but facilitated initially by public sector agencies. However, the level of awareness of the commercial opportunities and returns from walking may vary and must proactively be promoted to engage the private sector.

8.4 Route Maintenance

The route should be maintained through the local Rural Social Scheme under the guidance of the Regional Route Ranger. Materials required should be provided by the Local Authority.

8.5 Route Marketing & Sales

It is essential that the marketing and selling strategies at local, regional and national levels are working in harmony. Co-ordination, innovation and synergy are keywords for success. The Regional Walking Officers will have a pivotal role to ensure that at national level the walking product emerging from the Western Region is properly represented and integrated into the strategies of Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. A close working relationship should be cultivated with the National Walking Product Marketing Group. The Local Walking Plan must be supported and given the

necessary exposure via regional strategies. There are obvious economies of scale in relation to the Regional Walking Strategy being fully integrated into the overall regional tourism strategy being rolled out by the RTA's and Shannon Development. Inter-regional co-operation and joint planning between the Regional Walking Officers (RWO) will be facilitated.

After a period of consultation (and possibly training) the RWO will initiate the process of developing a regional marketing and selling strategy. The input by the national agencies into this planning process will be vital. The strategy should address the following issues:-

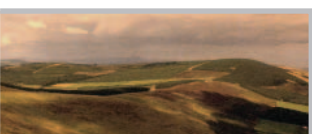
- The target market
- The partners (capacity and resources)
- The strategy
- The management of the strategy
- Costing and resources required
- Outputs and targets
- Research, monitoring and evaluation



The walking visitor will easily spot marketing language/images from a fellow walker. Always have an experienced walker proof marketing and selling material.



Part II



During the initial establishment period (1-2 years) it would be advisable for the plan to be focused on delivering quantifiable new business through recognised tools such as:

1. Ensure each walk to be marketed and sold has adequate up-to-date information reflected through a templated print piece and web site (with maps). The case studies provide excellent links for exploration.
2. The web site must be walker-friendly and inter-active allowing the visitor to book the primary elements of a walking holiday i.e. accommodation and transfers. The on-going efficient management of this site will be essential
3. Route marketing should focus on the image or 'personality' of the regional and the individual local walks should concentrate on authenticity, quality of product/services, a spectacular and clean landscape and above all walker friendliness. All initiatives should be checked against these criteria.
4. Priority should be given to employing IT technology for sales from the outset. The majority of visitors will come via the internet. Be disciplined in capturing enquiry data and use it to build up a 'personal' relationship with the potential customer. Technology can be easily harnessed to enhance the network of operators.
5. Invest in a comprehensive media strategy with a sister initiative developing links with tour operators/ground handlers. Co-operation is important in this field.
6. Time spent exploring joint marketing and selling opportunities will pay dividends. The goodwill benefits should not be ignored.
7. A broad annual communications strategy should be delivered ensuring that all stakeholders are informed on progress at local, regional and national level.
8. Ongoing research should be conducted. Research can be a combination of acquired national data, specially commissioned regional studies and LWP annual customer feedback returns. Research findings should be disseminated via a dedicated annual publication to stakeholders.
9. The RWO must ensure all partners have access to tailor-made training. An emphasis should be placed on e-commerce from the outset.
10. A tri-annual independent review of marketing and selling effectiveness for the regional strategy should be commissioned employing criteria such as value for money, innovation, synergy and capacity building.



12

Develop a dialogue with the Business/Tourism Department of your regional Institute of Technology. There are opportunities to secure under-graduate and post-graduate students to conduct specific project work e.g. market research

13

Many of Ireland's walking tour operators (see Appendix I for list) arrange a complete 'all-in' package, meeting international visitors at the airport/ferry and organising all aspects of the walkers' needs until their departure (see www.walkingcyclingireland.com for examples of packages and pricing).

9 Step Five: Implementation

9.1 Implement the Local Walking Plan

Following completion of the Local Walking Plan it should be formally adopted by the Local Walking Partnership. This will assist in building overall ownership and buy-in for future implementation, particularly from the private sector.

The Walk Manager will ensure that the Local Walking Plan is implemented on time. Potential sources of assistance in terms of advice and funding are outlined in Table 3.



9.2 Establish Walk Office

A walk office should be established as a base for the Walk Manager. Consideration should be given to the location of the office. Locating it where other community staff work would enable cover during absence of the Walk Manager. Consideration should also be given to access to broadband when locating the office. The office could also act as a drop-in information point.

Table 3: Potential Sources of Assistance		
Action	Advice	Funding
Route Development		
Route Development	RTA Fáilte Ireland NWWAC	RSS LEADER Local Authority Fáilte Ireland
Product Development		
Training Needs Analysis	LEADER RTA WDTP Fáilte Ireland NWWAC	LEADER Fáilte Ireland
Training Implementation	LEADER Fáilte Ireland Institutes of Technology	LEADER Fáilte Ireland
Commercial Product along the Walk	Proposed Regional Walking Officer	LEADER Fáilte Ireland CEB
Strategic Attractions	RTA – Shannon Dev.	WDC's Investment Fund
Route Maintenance		
Maintenance	Proposed Regional Route Ranger	RSS FAS Social Economy Local Authority
Insurance	Local Authority	Local Authority
Walk Marketing & Sales		
All Marketing & Sales Initiatives	Tourism Ireland Fáilte Ireland Proposed RWO	LEADER RTA Fáilte Ireland Tourism Ireland CEB Local Authority



10 Step Six: Monitoring & Review

Monitoring of the overall route development and commercialisation should be viewed as a positive and necessary step in maintaining standards and assuring product quality. A high level of local balanced stakeholder involvement is essential for the long term sustainability of the walking route and the consistent delivery of standards set in the National Framework and Regional Walking Strategies.

10.1 Quality Assurance

International best practice identifies that it is important to undertake regular inspection and monitoring of the physical routes followed by the appropriate repair/corrective measures. Services such as accommodation, meals, and baggage transfers must be formally monitored on a regularly basis.

10.2 Monitoring and Inspection

Monitoring of the route(s) should be co-ordinated by the Local Walking Partnership with the advice of the Regional Route Ranger. The following physical requirements should be monitored:

- Path repair and upgrading
- Vegetation and water control on paths
- Signage and interpretation
- Trail furniture: 'walking-man' posts, benches, signs remain in place etc
- Litter management
- Information provision: ensure that it is up to date and accurate
- Access: continuous liaison with landholders and redress of problems in a timely manner where appropriate.

Similarly, the Local Walking Partnership with the advice of the Regional Walking Officer



A new Walking Festivals Manual has recently been published by Ballyhoura Development. Tel: 063 91300 See: www.ballyhouracountry.com

should monitor at regular intervals product and service providers as follows:

- Ascertaining that accommodation providers are meeting agreed standards, with additional facilities such as drying facilities, local information provision, baggage transfers, packed lunches etc.
- Check that cafés, bars and restaurants provide catering meet the needs and expectations of the walking tourist.
- Monitoring the individual components of advertised packages, with particular emphasis on the 'passing the baton' stage where service providers are working together on package delivery.
- Ensuring that the website is of attractive, easy-to-navigate design, with up-to-date information which is routinely updated.
- That email and telephone queries are being answered in a timely fashion.
- Ensuring that commercial opportunities continue to be fostered and harnessed, such as linkages to existing attractions or local events.
- That marketing is being carried out effectively (see Marketing and Selling Section 8.5).
- A matrix of criteria for monitoring and evaluation should be developed by the Route Manager, which can demonstrate the evolution of the walking product over time.

10.3 Continuous Improvement & Development

Where monitoring has identified 'weak links in the chain', immediate steps must be taken to redress them, as part of continuous improvement and development ethos.

Importantly, the Local Walking Partnership structures, skills and local stakeholders' capacity will have been soundly established in the process.

It will be important that the Local Walking Partnership continues to be informed by the evolving strategies being pursued at regional and national levels, and conversely, that the LWP continues to impart its 'on-the-ground' experience into the regional and national strategies.

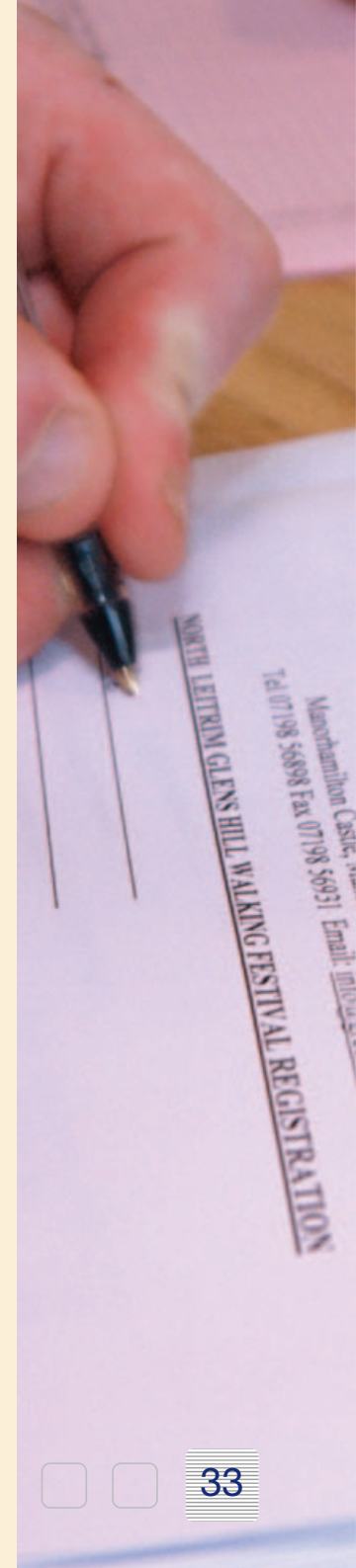
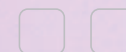
APPENDIX I: Useful Contacts

Useful Contacts – Walking in the West			
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT	Address	Telephone	Website
Department of Agriculture and Food	Kildare Street, Dublin 2	01 6072000	www.agriculture.gov.ie
Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism	Kildare Street, Dublin 2	01 6313800	www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Dun Aihirgin, 43-49 Mespil Road Dublin 4	01 6473000	www.pobail.ie
Department of Health and Children	Hawkins House, Dublin 2	01 6354000	www.doh.ie

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	Address	Telephone	Website
Coillte (Irish Forestry Board)	Newtownmountkenedy Co. Wicklow	01 2011111	www.coillte.ie
Countryside Ireland	100 Ballygall Road East Glasnevin Dublin 11	01 834 8279	www.countrysideireland.ie
Faillte Ireland	Baggot Street Bridge, Dublin 2	1890 525 525	www.failteireland.ie
Irish Heart Foundation	4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge Dublin 4	01 6685001	www.irishheart.ie
Mountaineering Council of Ireland	Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way Parkwest Business Park, D12	01 6251115	www.mountaineering.ie
National Way Marked Ways	Top Floor, Block A, Westend Office Park, Blanchardstown, D15	01 8608823	www.walkireland.ie
Sports Council of Ireland	Top Floor Block A Westend Office Park Blanchardstown, D15	01 8608800	www.irishsportsCouncil.ie
Teagasc	Oak Park, Carlow	05991 70200	www.teagasc.ie

REGIONAL	Address	Telephone	Website
Western Development Tourism Programme	BIC, IT Sligo	071 9155323	www.trueireland.com
North West Regional Tourism Authority	Aras Reddan, Temple Street, Sligo	071 9161201	www.irelandnorthwest.ie
Shannon Development	Shannon, Co. Clare	061 361555	www.shannon-dev.ie
Shannon Regional Tourism Authority	Shannon, Co. Clare	061 361555	www.shannonregiontourism.ie
Western Development Commission	Dillon House, Ballaghaderreen Co. Roscommon	094 9861441	www.wdc.ie
Western Regional Tourism Authority	Aras Failte, Galway	091 537700	www.irelandwest.ie

Useful Contacts – Walking in the West			
COUNTY	Address	Telephone	Website
Arigna Leader Company (North Roscommon)	Arigna, Co. Roscommon	071 9646994	www.arignaleader.org
Clare County Council	New Road, Ennis	065 6821616	www.clare.ie
Clare Rural Resource Development	Shannon Business Centre Town Centre, Shannon Co. Clare	061 361144	www.rrd.ie
Comhar Iorrais Leader	Béal an Mhuirthead, Co. Maigh Eo	097 82303	
Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann	Inis Oirr, Arainn Cuan na Gaillimhe	099 75096	www.oileain.ie
Donegal County Council	County House, Lifford	074 917 2222	www.donegal.ie
Donegal Local Development Company	Millenium Court, Pearse Rd Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	07491 27056	www.dldc.org
Galway County Council	Aras an Chontae, Prospect Hill, Galway	091 509 000	www.galway.ie
Galway Rural Development	Old Church St., Athenry Co. Galway	091 844335	www.grd.ie
Leitrim County Council	Aras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon	071 962 0005	www.leitrimcoco.ie
Inishowen Rural Development Ltd.	Pound Street, Camdonagh Inishowen, Co. Donegal	074 9373083	www.inishowen.ie
Mayo County Council	Aras an Chontae, Castlebar	094 902 4444	www.mayococo.ie
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teo	An tEastáit Tionsclaíoch Na Doirí Beaga, Leitir Ceanainn, Tír Chonaill	074 9532017	www.mfg.ie
Mid South Roscommon Leader Company	Curraghboy, Athlone	090 6488292	
Moy Valley Leader	Cathedral Road, Ballina Co. Mayo	096 70711	www.moyvalley.ie/leader
Roscommon County Council	Courthouse, Roscommon	090 663 7100	www.roscommoncoco.ie
Sligo County Council	County Hall, Riverside, Sligo	071 915 6666	www.sligococo.ie
Sligo Leader Partnership	Cleveragh Rd. Sligo	071 9141155	
South Mayo Development Company	Carey Walsh Building Georges St., Newport Co. Mayo	098 41950	www.mayo-ireland.ie
Western Rural Development Co. Ltd.	Green Hills Estate Bunrea Road, Ballina Co. Mayo	096 70905	

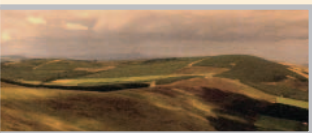


APPENDIX I: Useful Contacts

Useful Contacts – *Walking in the West*

TOUR OPERATORS	Address	Telephone	Website
Burren Walking Holidays	Carrigan Hotel, Lisdoonvarna Co. Clare	065 7074036	www.gateway-to-the-burren.com
Go Ireland	Killorglin Co. Kerry	066 97262094	www.govisitireland.com
Connemara Safari	Sky Road, Clifden, Co. Galway	095 21071	www.walkingconnemara.com
Irish Ways	The Old Rectory Ballycanew, Co. Wexford	055 27479	www.irishways.com
Croagh Patrick Walking Holidays	Belclare Westport Co. Mayo	098 26090 /26282	www.walkingguideireland.com
Killary Tours	Leenane, Connemara Co. Galway	095 42276 /42245	www.killary.com
Dirty Boots Treks	697 Old Lucan Road Chapelizod, Dublin 20	01 6236785	www.dirtybootstreks.com
Kippure Walking Centre	Manor Kilbride, Blessington Co. Wicklow	01 4582889	www.walkingwicklow.com
Footfalls Walking Holidays	Trooperstown Roundwood Co. Wicklow	0404 45152	www.walkinghikingireland.com
Michael Gibbons Walking Ireland	Connemara Walking Centre, Clifden Co. Galway	095 21379	www.walkingireland.com
SouthWestWalks Ireland	6 Church Street, Tralee Co. Kerry	066 7128733	www.southwestwalksireland.com
The Hidden Ireland Tours		087 2214002	www.hiddenirelandtours.com
Walking and Talking in Ireland	Clemenstown, Ballylar Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	074 9159366	www.walktalkireland.com
Walking Boots Tours	The Anchor Main Street Annascaul, Co. Kerry	066 9157382	www.walkingbootstours.com
Wonderful Ireland	63 Dundrum Gate Dundrum, Dublin 14	087 7613344	www.wonderfulireland.com

Appendices



APPENDIX II: Potential Funding Sources in the Western Region

<p>Various EU Funding Sources:</p> <p>LEADER Local Leader companies</p>	<p>Feasibility Studies/Market Research @ 80% to max €12,500 Training @ 100% to max €65,000 Infrastructure @ 50% to max €65,000 Marketing @ 50% to max €50,000 Tourist Accommodation (B&B) @ 50% to max €60,000 Self Catering from farm buildings @ 40% to max €40,00 Gernat Self Catering @ 30% to max €40,000</p> <p>Further information www.irishleadernetwork.org</p>	<p>Dept. Enterprise Trade & Employment www.entemp.ie</p> <p>FÁS www.fas.ie</p> <p>Dept. Community Rural & Gaeltacht www.pobail.ie</p>	<p>Social Economy Programme may be re-instated –review underway by Minister. Would be an excellent source of funding for managing community group/ vehicle.</p> <p>Community Employment schemes may be able to provide part time administrators Local Walking Partnership.</p> <p>Rural Social Scheme (RSS) administered through LEADER and Udarás na Gaeltachta.</p>
<p>CLÁR</p>	<p>Funding for infrastructure. Further information www.pobail.ie</p>	<p>Clann Credo (The Social Investment Fund)</p> <p>Paul O'Sullivan, Chief Executive Clann Credo Ltd Irish Social Finance Centre Inchicore Dublin 8</p> <p>01-453 1861 (tel) 453 1862 (fax) paul@clanncredo.ie</p> <p>Ms. Tracey Hannon (094) 98 61441 traceyhannon@clanncredo.ie</p>	<p>Promotes social investment & mobilises capital as an agent of positive social change. It seeks a social & financial dividend, highlighting projects & opportunities which might otherwise not be considered. Capital is made available to projects which yield a social as well as financial return. It has built alliances with other agencies such as Credit Unions, WDC & Triodos Bank.</p> <p>Does not have a standard application form for applicants (i.e. seeks to shape the finance to the project, rather than vice versa). Applicants should submit a proposal which will be evaluated.</p>
<p>InterREG III</p>	<p>Aims to stimulate inter-regional cooperation in EU between 2000-6. Financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)</p> <p>Initiative is designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion throughout the EU, by fostering the balanced development of the continent through cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. Special emphasis has been placed on integrating remote regions and those that share external borders with the candidate countries. Stringent criteria applied.</p>	<p>Social Finance Executive (Western Investment Fund joint venture agreement with Clann Credo Ltd)</p> <p>Ms. Tracey Hannon (094) 98 61441 traceyhannon@clanncredo.ie</p>	<p>SFE is a collaborative arrangement between the WDC's Western Investment Fund and Clann Credo to promote social and community development.</p> <p>Strong Business Plan essential. <i>Provide loan finance to groups & organisations that demonstrate repayment capacity and social dividend.</i></p>
<p>INTERREG-IIIb</p> <p>WDC Investment Fund (Western Investment Fund)</p> <p>Ms. Gillian Buckley (094) 98 61441 Email: info@wdc.ie Web: www.wdc.ie</p>	<p>Programme 2000-2006 funds projects that promote harmonious and balanced development of the European Area and involve transnational interregional partners from Ireland, Spain, France, the UK and Portugal.</p> <p>WIF provides seed and venture capital or loans to projects under three sub-funds. Investments are made on a commercial basis by way of share capital, preference share capital and loans, or a combination of these.</p> <p>The Business Investment Fund provides venture capital and in certain cases loans to 'high-potential' businesses in the Western Region of up to €1m. Provides pre-establishment, early stage or development stage finance to realise a business's growth potential. The Fund's investment period is typically 3-7 years.</p> <p>The Local Investment Fund is designed to offer communities access to capital for socio-economic improvement projects.</p> <p>The Special Projects Investment Fund offers investment on a partnership basis for flagship projects, which can have an impact on regional western development, with widely dispersed socio-economic benefits. Renewable energies are specifically listed under the SPIF key sectors for investment.</p> <p>Strong management team and Business Plan essential for all WIF projects</p>	<p>County Councils</p> <p>The Wheel A voluntary network for community and voluntary sector/ non-profit making companies and charities. www.thewheel.ie</p> <p>Rotary International Contact local branch</p>	<p>Community Development Plan could be submitted which could form the basis for funds/ once-off grants/ maintenance assistance etc.</p> <p>Gives useful advice and information to community and voluntary sector groups on C&V policy, links & networking, funding options and related issues. Particularly useful for upcoming funding applications from Government/ EU programmes.</p> <p>Unlikely to give funding, but may be able to assist with accountancy / management training in kind</p> <p>Submit proposal/ letter to open the dialogue.</p>



APPENDIX III: Basic Guidelines for new Route Development

The Local Walking Partnership, in association with the local authority and NWWAC, must identify the precise line of way which the walk will follow, taking into account factors such as:

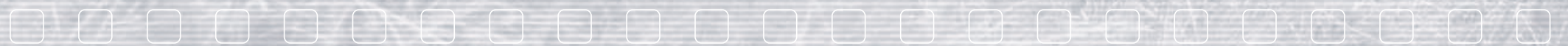
- Involvement of landowners in the LWP as they will be critical in providing knowledge, access to lands and route management over the longer term
- Appraisal of landownership and access issues as early as possible. A variety of models exists for the negotiation of access, but is best done by local community members of the LWP who know the landowners and can fully explain the community benefits of the walking route concept. Some landowners may insist on a formal legal agreement to allow access, but historically, most agree verbally on the basis of community spirit. A simple agreement between the LWP and each landowner may be drawn up.
- Traditional/existing routes or other infrastructure¹³
- Identify if special conservation status¹⁴ such as SACs or NHAs have been assigned to any sections of the route through the County Council Heritage Officer and/or the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS). If so, special measures may need to be taken to avoid sensitive sites
- Local attractions available along the route – castles, gardens, waterways etc
- Supporting tourism infrastructure – the private sector will be critical to route success. Consult walking tour operators, the hospitality industry and accommodation providers on or close to the route
- Length and gradient of the route. Be mindful that the market for walking is varied and includes people of variable physical ability such as children, active aged and wheelchair users
- Potential to provide loops, spurs or staged walks along the route. Recent research shows that the vast majority of Irish and international walkers prefer shorter looped walks to high endurance linear routes.

¹³ Note that in Ireland 'rights of way' are somewhat ambiguous in law and are not as clear-cut as in Britain. However, a recent (2005) court decision regarding public access along a track in Co. Wicklow upheld the right of walkers to access that particular track as historical precedent indicated that it had been used for public access since at least the mid-nineteenth century. See www.mountaineering.ie for more information on Rights of Way.

¹⁴ SAC Special Area of Conservation / NHA National Heritage Area – both are EU designations which offer special protection to defined environmental and heritage sites.

APPENDIX IV: Walking in the West Consultation Panel

Name	Organisation
Alan Hill	Western Development Tourism Programme
Andrew Case	Southern Uplands Way Ltd (UK)
Brian & Patricia Fagg	Hotel El Frares (Spain)
Brian Quinn	Ireland West Tourism
Catherine O'Keeffe	NLG Tourism Co-op
Conor Daly	Donegal County Council
Cormac MacDonnell	National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee
David Machlachlan	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (UK)
Des McCallion	Carndonagh Development
Fiona Candon	Western Development Commission
Gearóid Ó Smoláin	Geal Saoire/Udarás na Gaeltachta
Gerry Goldsmith	Croagh Patrick Walking Tours
Janine Ord	National Trails, Countryside Agency (UK)
Jeremy Smith	Donoagh Consultants
Jim Egan	Mayo County Council
Jim O'Sullivan	Beara Tourism & Development Association
Joe Millen	Sherpa Expeditions (UK)
Joss Lynam	National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee
Karin Flynn	Dept. Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Karina Kelly	BB Tourism Partnership
Katherine Carney	The Benwiskin Centre
Lorna Hewson	Arigna LEADER
Majena MacNamara	Galway Rural Development
Marie Barlow	The Swallows B&B
Martin Dunne	Suck Valley Way
Mary Howard	Burren Walking Tours
Maureen Lally	Tochar Valley Community Group
Noelle Sheridan	North West Tourism
Paddy O'Mahoney	Fáilte Ireland
Padraic Brennan	Moy Valley Resources
Pat Daly	Mid Roscommon LEADER
Siobhan Green	Udarás na Gaeltachta
Stasia Moroney	East Mid Clare
Tony Hennessy	Coillte
Wilma Hoyne	Killary Tours





Western Development | Tourism Programme