

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ARRANMORE ISLAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008-2013

Prepared on behalf of
Comharchumann Oileán Árann Mhóir Teo
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PROFILE.....	1
Community Profile	1
Population Profile	1
Age Dependency	1
Education.....	1
Social Class Composition.....	2
Unemployment	2
Relative Deprivation	2
Social Welfare Dependency	2
Population Trends	2
The Impact of Emigration on the Island.....	2
The Geographical Imperative	3
ACHIEVEMENTS	3
Comharchumann Oileán Árinn Mhóir Teo (COAMT)	3
Progress since the 1993 Development Plan	3
VISION FOR THE FUTURE	4
Core Concerns	4
STRATEGIC THEMES	6
DELIVERING THE PLAN.....	6

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Goals, Objectives and Actions under each Development Theme.....7

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1	Location Map
Map 2	Aerial View and Places of Interest

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CnO	Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann
COAMT	Comharchumann Oileán Árainn Mhóir Teo
DCRGA	Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCC	Donegal County Council
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
FI	Fáilte Ireland
NDP	National Development Plan
RnG	Roinn na Gaeltachta
SEI	Sustainable Energy Ireland
UnG	Údarás na Gaeltachta
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

INTRODUCTION

The Development Plan for Arranmore Island was compiled on behalf of the people of Arranmore Island as represented by Comharchumann Oileán Árinn Mhóir Teo, the Island Co-operative. Funding for this work was provided by Údarás na Gaeltachta, with funding for the concomitant socio-economic survey by Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann, the Islands Federation.

The Plan was prepared during 2006 and 2007. A household and socio-economic survey was carried out as part of the Plan in August/September 2006 and is separately published. This provided detailed information regarding potential resources, demographics, income, employment, and living standards; and gauged attitudes and opinions of the Islanders. From these results the Development Plan has identified the key problems of the area, the potential development opportunities and assessed the main issues to be addressed on the Island.

The Plan stresses that unless positive and co-ordinated action is taken at all levels Arranmore Island is facing into a future that looks much like its past. The island has a steadily declining population, a high unemployment rate, a high age dependency ratio, and a high level of reliance on social welfare and other means of state support.

PROFILE

Community Profile

The future of Arranmore depends so much on maintaining a permanent resident population on the Island. What is even more critical to the island's survival is that a young and vibrant population be sustained. As borne out in Census statistics for Arranmore since the last Island Plan in 1993 this has not been the case.

Population Profile

Arranmore's population profile consists of fewer young people and more people in the older age groups. Simply put, the island population is declining. A healthy demographic profile would have a greater number of younger people than older people, however in Arranmore there are over 5 times as many people aged over 65 as there are infants.

Age Dependency

What is more worrying is that while the population in total is decreasing on the Island, the percentage of people who are of a dependent age is increasing.

Education

Educational attainment is low in Arranmore with 57.3% of the population having primary education only. This is a shocking statistic when compared with 29.8% in Donegal and 18.9% nationally in 2006.

Social Class Composition

The changes in social class composition (the percentage of professionals and semi- and unskilled manual workers) mirror closely the levels of educational attainment in a community. Arranmore again scores low in comparison with the County and nationally in terms of social class composition and in fact has the lowest levels in social class composition in all of Donegal.

Unemployment

Arranmore again ranks highest in Donegal, this time in unemployment. The Island has the highest male unemployment rate in Donegal at 56.4% and female unemployment rate at 26.2%.

Relative Deprivation

Arranmore has the distinction of being among the most disadvantaged EDs in Ireland. The Island has the added distinction of being classed the single “extremely disadvantaged” ED in all of Donegal with a relative deprivation score in 2006 of -58.3.

Social Welfare Dependency

The numbers of Islanders in receipt of benefit further confirms these telling Census statistics for the Island. In total 284 people or 54% of the Island population was dependent on some sort of social welfare benefit in December 2006.

Population Trends

Arranmore’s population was the fourth largest of Ireland’s nine most populous islands in 1841. All island populations have declined over this historical period and all islands except Arranmore have experienced a near steady decline from the mid 1960’s to a levelling off to relatively stable populations in recent times.

Arranmore’s population fluctuation since the mid 1960’s has been more marked and shows a steady decrease. There was a healthy population increase in the late 70’s and early 80’s only to continue decline in more recent times. Overall, Arranmore has maintained the second largest population of these nine Irish islands since 1961 behind Inishmore.

The Impact of Emigration on the Island

A decreasing population and declining age profile have been key factors in the abandonment of islands. As populations decline commercial and social services become less economical to run; shops and pubs close and services are cut back or transferred to the mainland. As a result emigration increases and community morale declines. The process of emigration and depopulation become self-reinforcing.

This is precisely the situation in Arranmore today. The primary aim of this Plan must be to steady, if not reverse this population decline.

The Geographical Imperative

Arranmore's size, geographic location and accessibility must certainly be contributing to its status as the second largest island of Ireland in population terms.

Arranmore is Ireland's second largest island in terms of land area, again behind Inishmore. Arranmore is only 5km distant from the Donegal mainland. The island is served by two ferry services.

The choices now open to Islanders and visitors alike with improved ferry access and timetables now make it possible for people to travel daily to and from the mainland. This should make the island more attractive as a place to live and visit and may help reverse the population decline in future.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Comharchumann Oileán Árinn Mhóir Teo (COAMT)

The Island co-operative Comharchumann Oileán Árinn Mhóir Teo (COAMT) was founded in 1976 and is the main representative community and development body for the Island. The aims of the Comharchumann are to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the Island.

Developments in tourism, horticulture, fishing, services and the crafts industry are undertaken for the benefit of the entire community. The co-operative liaises with relevant authorities and can access agencies and funding directly.

COAMT is representative of the island population. It has provided sub-contracting and construction services. With full time staffing and premises, the Co-operative has established capabilities for promoting broad based development in many areas with long experience of working with and support from a range of agencies and delivery of projects.

Progress since the 1993 Development Plan

The previous Island Development Plan was launched in 1993, 15 years ago. Since then many of the recommended projects and actions have been achieved.

Greater social, access and physical infrastructure are now in place on Arranmore. The improvement of the national economy has offered employment and educational opportunities in Ireland, particularly Letterkenny, Sligo and Dublin; that has deflected emigration out of the country. New technologies such as the World Wide Web, broadband and mobile phone networks offer instant communications. Some sectors particularly farming and fishing have experienced serious decline. Different issues such as waste, energy and sustainability have emerged.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Core Concerns

The recognition of the core concerns of Arranmore residents defines the direction of the development strategy for the Island. These are described below.

Irish Language

The language is under threat. The issue with Irish not being the main medium of teaching in the secondary school has been of grave concern to many Islanders.

Community Sustainability & Self-Reliance

Although there are high levels of relative deprivation and dependency, the Island has a strong community spirit, and a good record of sustainability and self-reliance. Much has been achieved as documented over the past 30 years by the Islanders through their Comharchumann. Community, health and educational facilities are in place with much needed facilities including the respite centre and Indoor Sports Centre further proposed. Many Islanders engage in full-time work on the mainland and abroad. The Island must sustain its permanent population to survive.

Economy

Employment is needed on the Island. The traditional economic activities of fishing and particularly Island agriculture are in decline, as well as the near demise of traditional crafts such as home knitting. Key problems on the island with regard to employment opportunities are the following:

- Higher transportation costs due to lack of access to mainland
- Limited hours for vehicular access to the mainland
- Poor access to information on markets which could be targeted
- Higher costs of living
- Higher environmental protection costs

Attending to these issues would have a dramatic knock-on effect in targeting the economic issues of the Island. The improvement of employment opportunities will in turn generate wealth and expenditure on the island.

Possible economic and employment opportunities on the island include the services sector and micro enterprise, tourism, renewable energy and diversification in fishing and food production. Development of these sectors to their full potential could have a remarkably positive effect on the Island.

Tourism

Tourism has always been an important source of income for Arranmore and has the potential to produce further income and employment. Many households provide accommodation, which is important supplementary income. Accommodation providers, services and the local bars particularly depend to a great deal on tourists and visitors. There is a range of existing tourism accommodation, some in need of upgrading, and a need for more and innovative tourism activities.

Environment

The Island forms part of the west Donegal archipelago. This is a high quality land and seascape with hill and upland moor containing several lakes leading to precipitous cliffs. There are more sheltered small fields and pasture on the side facing the mainland. There are dramatic views of the Donegal coast, uplands and nearby Islands and on the western island side the expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. European environmental designations apply to the western fringes of the Island and to the seaward areas to the east between the Island and the mainland. The Islanders are proud of the physical beauty and setting of their Island and the surrounding sea.

The sea has been a source of livelihood for many on the Island for centuries. This tradition has led to the establishment of the Arranmore Lifeboat station and to renewed marine based activities such as the recently formed rowing club.

Dumping and litter are damaging the Island's environmental assets. Waste management is the most important current issue with Islanders. Adverse reports in the media give the Island a negative image with real financial impacts on tourism and service economy.

Access

Regular and affordable access to the Island is of paramount importance. There is now better physical access and two ferries with presently extended hours of service. Transport costs are burdensome on Islanders and increasing fuel costs will increase this.

STRATEGIC THEMES

There are nine complimentary strategic development themes identified for the integrated strategic plan.

The themes in order of priority are:

- Irish Language & Culture
- Community Development
- Employment
- Sustainability & Renewable Energy
- Tourism
- Farming & Fishing
- Access & Communication
- Waste
- Housing

The final summary table lists the goals, objectives and actions under each development theme.

DELIVERING THE PLAN

The Development Plan is a process that can push forward and enable projects to be carried out. During the consultation process and preparation of the Plan several actions outlined in the Plan have already been achieved. From what has been achieved in such a short time it is clear that many of the actions listed in the Plan are achievable over the next five years.

The implementation of the Plan is the ultimate responsibility of COAMT, the various community committees on the Island and the islanders themselves as represented by the Comharchumann. Agency involvement and support will be vital to the Plan's success.

The implementation of the Development Plan for Arranmore will place a further burden on the development staff of the Comharchumann thus the Plan recommends further staff to support the development role of COAMT.

A steering committee should be established with agency representation to direct the implementation of the various actions scheduled. This should also include monitoring and review of progress on the Plan on at least an annual basis.

Table 1. Goals, Objectives and Actions under each Development Theme

THEME: 1	IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE				
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Strengthening the Irish language and culture of the Island</i>				
Objective	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(1.1) Promote the language	1.1.1 Approval and implementation of Irish Language development plan	COAMT UnG	UnG	All Short Term	<p>More people will be proud of speaking Irish and enjoying their culture.</p> <p>More people will speak Irish on a daily basis, whatever their age or ability.</p> <p>The local environment and culture will be enhanced by uniquely Irish signage and public arts projects.</p>
	1.1.2 Promote the drawing up of Irish language plans and policies by Island businesses and community and voluntary groups.	Promoters UnG	UnG		
	1.1.3 Employ a language development officer	UnG	UnG		
	1.1.4 Promote language equality in the Secondary school	VEC			
	1.1.5 Increase the use of the Irish language by offering regular programmes of courses and social events for all ages and abilities.	COAMT Irish Colleges	UnG		
	1.1.6 Erect more bi-lingual signage	DCC - Roads RnG	Foras na Gaeilge DCC RnG		
	1.1.7 Carry out a public arts project reflecting the language and complementary cultural/historic event	DCC – Roads RnG	DCC RnG		

THEME: 2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND FACILITIES							
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Stronger and co-ordinated community development with a greater range of facilities</i>						
Objectives	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes		
(2.1) Strengthen community development	2.1.1 Organise sporting activities for all ages	All the Island clubs and committees facilitated by COAMT	UnG	All Short term	COAMT will continue to be supported in its community development role.		
	2.1.2 An integrated approach to provision and promotion of activities		CnO				
	2.1.3 Maximise use of existing community facilities as venues for education, events	COAMT				Island resources will be used more efficiently.	
	2.1.4 Increase communication among groups and all-island promotion					There will be greater communication around the Island.	
	2.1.5 Increase frequency of publication of community newsletter					People will feel safe in their homes and looked after.	
	2.1.6 Organise all-island community alert group	An Garda Siochana COAMT					
	2.1.7 Continue seasonal Garda	An Garda Siochana					
	2.1.8 Continue trans-national and island links	COAMT	INTERREG IV				Island life will be enhanced through learning from the experience of other island communities.

(2.2) Provide More Community Facilities	2.2.1 Facilitate provision of VEC promised multi-use indoor sports & rec. building at secondary school	VEC, RnG, COAMT	UnG, RnG, VEC	Short term	The community will have a wider range of sporting and community facilities that will lead to an improved quality of life and encourage people to stay and new families to come.
	2.2.2 Facilitate provision of all weather pitch beside Baile Saoire or football field	Football Club COAMT RnG	RnG	Medium Term	
	2.2.3 Investigate provision of heated swimming pool using renewable wind or wave energy	COAMT Energy Developer	Energy Developer, SEI	Long Term	

THEME: 3		EMPLOYMENT			
<i>Goal</i>	<i>To encourage and widen the employment and educational opportunities on Arranmore</i>				
Objective	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(3.1) Provide wider training base, attract inward investment and promote entrepreneurship	3.1.1 Training Needs Analysis	COAMT FÁS	FÁS/UnG	All Short Term	The Island will participate more fully in local, regional and national economies. There will be more returned emigrants who will set up businesses on the Island. The Islanders will have developed marketable skill sets in new technologies.
	3.1.2 Organise a business development conference to promote entrepreneurship and inward investment	COAMT FÁS UnG	FÁS UnG CnO		
	3.1.3 Target business development initiatives to Island emigrants to encourage them to return	COAMT DCC			
	3.1.4 Offer training in required skills such as business and information technology, renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency	FÁS COAMT SEI	FÁS UnG CnO		
(3.2) Develop a commercial business translation service	3.2.1 Investigate the potential for developing a translation service including certifications required	COAMT Promoters	UnG	Short Term	A uniquely Irish business will have been established.

THEME: 4 SUSTAINABILITY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY					
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Develop sustainable and renewable energy forms of energy on Arranmore</i>				
Objectives	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(4.1) Attain a commercial renewable energy source on the island that will benefit the community	4.1.1 Commission a Wind Energy Feasibility Study for the Island	COAMT	UnG	Short Term	Groundwork will have been completed for a community wind energy project that has the potential to bring significant revenue and jobs to the Island.
	4.1.2 Investigate Community partnership with a commercial wind energy company based on models promoted by the Western Development Commission; or those implemented by the Scottish islands of Eigg and Gha.	COAMT UnG SEI DCC Energy developer	UnG SEI	Short Term	
(4.2) Provide and encourage renewable and sustainable technologies for existing and new buildings	4.2.1 Identify a pilot or demonstration project such as at Baile Saoire for renewable energy and/or energy efficiency	COAMT SEI RnG UnG	RnG UnG	Short Term	Baile Saoire will become a more profitable enterprise.
	4.2.2 Incorporate renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency in all new build and for retrofitting in older properties	COAMT SEI RnG UnG	RnG UnG SEI	Short Term to Long term	Island community will become self sufficient.
(4.3) Exploitation of Biomass	4.3.1 encourage and provide know how for growing biomass fuels on redundant farm land on the Island	SEI Teagasc COAMT Private promoters	SEI UnG CnO	Short Term	New business opportunities for farmers; use of agricultural lands; leading to island self-sufficiency

THEME: 5 TOURISM					
Goal	Strengthening and expansion of tourism product				
Objectives	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(5.1) Development of tourism facilities and accommodation	5.1.1 Seek development of the bird and whale watching station	COAMT DCC	DCC	Short Term	More visitors will come to the Island for day trips and overnights.
	5.1.2 Develop unique offerings, packages and local products that maximise use of the Island's own resources (location, sea, people, bird life, Irish language) and co-ordinating transport for tourists	COAMT UnG	UnG/ CnO RnG SEI	Short Term	More business and thus jobs will be created in the services and tourism industry.
	5.1.3 Facilitate development of Leabgarrow promenade	DCC COAMT RnG	DCC RnG	Short Term	Islanders will gain a deeper sense of appreciation of their environment and the need to protect and beautify it.
	5.1.4 Promote development of the dive centre; sea and lake angling; and passenger trips such as an Island-hopping ferry, birds, whale and dolphin watching	Promoters COAMT	CnO UnG NDP	Short to Medium Term	Tourists will want to come back to the Island year after year.
	5.1.5 Identify and promote private and community enterprise opportunities in tourism for the Island including for new and upgraded varied accommodation, and new facilities such as luxury treatments/spa/seaweed baths	Promoters COAMT FI	CnO UnG NDP	Short to Medium Term	
	5.1.6 Renovate and upgrade holiday village units with renewable energy features	COAMT SEI UnG	UnG SEI	Short Term	
	5.1.7 Develop on-shore facilities such as a slipway at Poolawaddy; toilets and shelter at the Ferry Pier Offer	RnG DCC	CnO RnG DCC	Short to Medium Term	

	5.1.8 Offer a camping facility for tents and camper vans	RnG DCC	CnO RnG DCC	Short to Medium Term	
(5.2) Develop new tourism products, promotion and training facilities	5.2.1 Develop a flagship tourism project	COAMT	FI UnG CnO	All Short to Medium Term	More visitors will come to the Island.
	5.2.2 Provide new or upgrade existing café/restaurant outlets emphasising locally produced foods. Develop Arranmore branded artisan products such as fish and seafood, Brewery, organically grown produce, lamb and mutton	Promoters COAMT	CnO UnG		More business and job opportunities will be developed to service the tourism economy.
	5.2.3 Devise and encourage tourism initiatives based on Island assets of language, birds, sea; added value to stag and hen parties.	Promoters COAMT	CnO FAS CnO		Small-scale projects promoted jointly will bring more visitors.
	5.2.4 Promote development of the dive centre; sea and lake angling; and passenger trips such as an Island-hopping ferry, birds, whale and dolphin watching.	CnO COAMT Promoters FÁS	CnO FI NDP UnG FÁS		The quality of service and tourism product will improve.
	5.2.5 Promotion of Island tourism through national campaigns and web sites.	CnO COAMT FI	CnO FI NDP UnG		Islanders will have an increased appreciation and pride in their own Island culture and Irish language and will want to showcase the best for visitors.
	5.2.6 Offer tourism and hospitality training	FÁS COAMT	FÁS		
	5.2.7 Offer a regular programme of general courses in Irish language, traditional music, and arts and crafts to support actions in tourism development.	COAMT UnG Irish College Local Teachers	UnG DCC RnG		

THEME: 6		FARMING AND FISHING			
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Develop new sustainable fishing and farming opportunities</i>				
Objective	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(6.1) Fishing diversification and retraining	6.1.1 Offer a training programme for fishermen who wish to leave sector	Fishermen COAMT FÁS	FAS/UnG	Short Term	Fishermen will have diversified their business and found new employment in alternative enterprises.
	6.1.2 Promote enterprise development targeted at the fishing sector including aquaculture	Fishermen COAMT FÁS UnG	FAS UnG CnO	Short to Medium Term	
	6.1.3 Facilitate proposed pier development at Rannagh	Fishermen COAMT DCC	€8million	Short to Medium Term	
(6.2) Agricultural diversification	6.2.1 Promote organic horticulture production	All COAMT/ Promoters	UnG CnO	Short Term	Agricultural lands will be made more productive with new business and employment opportunities to farmers
	6.2.2 Support local agricultural enterprises through branded food products including sheep meat and horticulture			Short to Medium Term	

THEME: 7 ACCESS AND COMMUNICATIONS					
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Better access and communications</i>				
Objectives	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(7.1) More Flexible Island Access	7.1.1 Extend subsidies for passenger ferry service as well as vehicular ferry service	RnG Ferry operators	All RnG DCRGA	Short to Long Term	Access will continue to be improved and more economical.
	7.1.2 Ensure flexible ferry time services for early morning, late evening and weekend journeys	COAMT		Short to Long Term	
	7.1.3 Investigate all island wireless internet access	COAMT		Short Term	Islanders will be better connected to the mainland and wider world. Business will be facilitated.
	7.1.4 Continue roads improvement programme	DCC-Roads COAMT		Short to Long Term	
	7.1.5 Provide pilot solar powered street lighting	DCC-Roads COAMT		Short Term	
(7.2) Reduce on Island Car Dependency	7.2.1 Adopt a free bicycle scheme for visitors	COAMT	Private promoters/advertisers	Medium to Long Term	Island will become more self-sufficient
	7.2.2 Investigate introduction of electrically powered vehicles	COAMT			

THEME: 8 WASTE					
Goal	<i>Elimination of Dumping and Improved Physical Environment</i>				
Objectives	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs & Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(8.1) Waste Minimisation	<p>8.1.1 Develop a civic amenity site for recycling, bulky goods and hazardous material</p> <p>8.1.2 Develop a more reliable waste collection service</p> <p>8.1.3 Examine the re-use potential for waste produced on the Island e.g. road surfacing</p> <p>8.1.4 Educate locals on waste minimisation</p> <p>8.1.5 Determine realistic costs for waste disposal</p> <p>8.1.6 Promote and continue the Council's collection service for end-of-life vehicles</p> <p>8.1.7 Initiate household or community composting and recovery of bio-gas for heat and fuel</p> <p>8.1.8 Work with County Council in implementing the Island Waste Management Plan including providing realistic cost estimates and a programme of management for waste collection and amenity site services.</p>	All COAMT and DCC	DCC UnG	All Short Term	<p>The island environment will be improved.</p> <p>People will have a greater understanding of the impact of waste management problems on the Island.</p> <p>Recycling will be increased and dumping will be decreased.</p> <p>Tourists will notice an improved environment and want to return.</p>
(8.2) Close Lough Shore Dump	8.2.1 Clean up and close The Dump at Lough Shore	COAMT DCC	DCC	Short Term	The Island's water supply will be protected and major eyesore will be removed.

(8.3) Improved Physical Environment	8.3.1 Adopt a zero tolerance approach to dumping and littering	COAMT DCC		Short Term	The Island will be more attractive to tourists and Island residents. The quality of life for Islanders will be improved.
	8.3.2 Undertake regular Island clean ups	COAMT DCC	DCC		
	8.3.3 Strive to achieve better marks in the Islands Tidy Towns Competition	COAMT	Private promoters and community committees		
	8.3.4 Promote and continue the Council's collection service for end-of-life vehicles	COAMT DCC	DCC		

THEME: 9 HOUSING					
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Improved housing range and provision</i>				
Objectives	Action(s)	Responsibilities	Costs and Funding Sources	Timescale	Anticipated Outcomes
(9.1) Provide Respite Centre	9.1.1 Work with and facilitate construction timetable for the Respite Centre	Respond Housing Association COAMT	Respond via national housing programme from DoEHLG	Short Term	Residents and returning emigrants can remain in their community and be cared for in their older years in a familiar environment.
(9.2) Better Housing	9.2.1 Investigate provision need for more social & affordable housing	COAMT DCC-Housing	DCC-Housing	Medium Term	There will be an adequate housing supply that meets the needs of the Island residents.
	9.2.2 Encourage refurbishment of vernacular buildings	DCC-Heritage COAMT	DCC-Heritage fund	Short-Medium Term	The Island's built heritage will be protected and improved.