



**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council



Planning Policy Statement

for

Donegal County Council

*Tullan Strand Facilities Centre for Water Sports Activities
and Accessible Pathway to Tullan Strand Beach*

at

Finner, Bundoran, Co. Donegal

January 2026

Feaver.

Preface / Introduction

This statement has been prepared by Feaver Planning on behalf of Donegal County Council and Fáilte Ireland in support the proposed Facility Centre for Water Sports Activities and Accessible Pathway to Tullan Strand beach and associated infrastructure at Tullan Strand Road, Finner, Bundoran, Co. Donegal. The project entails the construction of a purpose-built single storey facility with accessible changing rooms, showers, a Changing Places toilet, public conveniences, storage areas, associated external amenities, car and bus parking, new seating, public realm landscaping, site drainage, wastewater pumping station, connection to existing utilities, supporting ancillary works, accommodation works, closure and decommissioning of the existing unauthorised beach access development, construction of a pedestrian pathway along a section of the L-1058-O Tullan Strand Road, an accessible pedestrian/equestrian pathway/boardwalk onto Tullan Strand beach and an emergency vehicle access route towards Tullan Strand beach.

Situated adjacent to Tullan Strand beach along the Wild Atlantic Way and overlooking the Donegal Bay, the development supports the regional tourism strategy and aligns with national, regional, and local planning objectives for infrastructure investment, coastal resilience, and the provision of inclusive public facilities.

As the proposed development is being undertaken by a local authority and is located adjacent to Donegal Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) (OO4151), the application is required to be made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála, in accordance with Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Article 249 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). A public notice must also be issued stating the intention to submit the application to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

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Site Context and Planning History

The subject site is located at Tullan Strand Road, Finner, Bundoran, Co. Donegal, overlooking Tullan Strand and the Atlantic Ocean, and forming part of a well-known surf and recreational destination along the Wild Atlantic Way. The site lies within an area zoned for High Amenity under the Bundoran Local Area Plan 2024–2030 and the Donegal County Development Plan. It adjoins the existing public car park and grassed activity area commonly used by surf schools for student gatherings, equipment setup, and event staging.

In addition to casual recreational users, the site supports a small but active cluster of local surf schools and seasonal vendors who operate from the vicinity of the public car park and beach access. These surf schools offer lessons and guided experiences for beginners and tourists, particularly during the high summer season and weekend periods. Their presence contributes significantly to the local tourism economy and plays a role in shaping the character and activity levels at Tullan Strand. Equipment hire, surf instruction, and group staging activities frequently take place in the adjacent grassy area, highlighting the need for improved and dedicated amenities. Similarly, mobile food and retail vendors intermittently trade near the car park area, especially during events or peak holiday times, further intensifying demand for structured public infrastructure and services to support safe and organised use of this important coastal node.

The immediate setting includes scenic cliffs, open dune landscapes, and pedestrian access routes to the beach, though current beach access relies on a steep, unauthorised informal path unsuitable for people with limited mobility. The site is heavily used by tourists, surfers, and local residents, particularly during summer months, and its strategic location offers direct visual and physical connection to the Donegal Bay Special Protection Area (SPA).

Fáilte Ireland understands in order to be recognised internationally as a best-in-class activity destination, it is crucial that Ireland invests in compelling activity infrastructure, the visitor experience and building the capacity of the activity providers to ensure the Irish experience meets and exceeds visitor expectations. Bundoran has the potential to offer high-quality outdoor experiences, however the current standard of visitor infrastructure and surf-related facilities falls short of international expectations. This project aims to address those shortcomings with the new fully accessible Facility Centre for Water Sports Activities which offers, toilet provision, shower provision, changing provision, secure storage, induction space, external equipment washdown facilities and orientation points to support surf schools, visitors, and community users alike.

There is no record of recent planning permissions for a public facility of this scale on the site. However, the proposal represents a long-identified need within the local tourism and access framework. The project is being advanced by Donegal County Council in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, however, as the development is being undertaken by a local authority and is located adjacent to Donegal Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) (OO4151), the application is required to be made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála in accordance with Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Article 249 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises the construction of a facility centre for water sports activities, associated infrastructure and an accessible pathway to Tullan Strand beach, works will include construction of a purpose-built single storey facility with accessible changing rooms, showers, a Changing Places toilet, public conveniences, storage areas, associated external amenities, car and bus parking, seating, public realm landscaping, site drainage, wastewater pumping station, connection to existing utilities, supporting ancillary works, accommodation works, closure and decommissioning of the existing unauthorised beach access development, construction of a pedestrian pathway along a section of the L-1058-0 Tullan Strand Road, an accessible pedestrian/equestrian pathway/boardwalk onto Tullan Strand beach and an emergency vehicle access route towards Tullan Strand beach.

The project aims to enhance public amenity, improve beach accessibility, visitor management and support the tourism and recreational function of this key coastal location along the Wild Atlantic Way. Located adjacent to the existing public car park and overlooking Tullan Strand beach, the development is designed to provide inclusive, high-quality facilities for water-based activities and general beach use, while protecting the surrounding natural and visual environment.

The new building will provide:

- Accessible unisex WCs and ambulant facilities
- Multiple shower and changing rooms
- A “Changing Places” toilet and accessible washroom
- Plant and electrical rooms
- Secure lockers, benches, bike repair station and equipment washdown facilities

In addition to the building, the proposal includes significant public realm improvements:

- Landscaped public realm connecting the new building with the existing car park
- Additional car parking spaces, including accessible bays and two bus parking spaces to support visitor access and school/surf group use
- New footpaths and road-edge safety measures
- Construction of a fully accessible segregated pedestrian and equestrian pathway to the beach, including:
 - A footbridge over a small stream
 - A raised boardwalk across dune area
- Construction of an emergency vehicle access route towards the beach, including a turning area for emergency vehicles
- New public seating, lighting and wayfinding signage
- Soft landscaping including raised grass areas and planting beds
- High-quality finishes including corten steel cladding, precast concrete panels and a sedum green roof
- Landowner accommodation works
- Closure of an existing unauthorised beach access path

As part of the commitment to safety and accessibility, the development will provide improved access between the carpark and beach through the creation of new dedicated pedestrian & equestrian pathways. These pathways will be located to the side of proposed emergency vehicle access laneway, ensuring safe segregation of foot traffic and enhancing the experience and safety of beach users.

The proposed pathways and raised boardwalk will replace the existing unauthorised beach access route, which currently provides only limited and uneven connectivity across the dune landscape. The new alignment has been designed to meet universal access standards through the use of gentle gradients, elevated construction, and slip-resistant coastal materials, ensuring safe, inclusive access for people of all ages and physical abilities. By clearly separating pedestrian movement from vehicle circulation and integrating seamlessly with the surrounding public realm, the design improves both user safety and visual coherence.

The development is designed to integrate into its sensitive coastal setting, using durable, low-maintenance materials and a low-profile form that complements the landscape. It will serve beach users, water sports activity users, local residents, and the wider tourism economy by providing modern, inclusive facilities that support active recreation and environmental sustainability.

Policy Context

The proposal is assessed in the context of the applicable planning policy framework at national, regional, and local levels. The development aligns with strategic goals for sustainable tourism, coastal amenity enhancement, and community infrastructure.

National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF establishes a long-term strategy for compact growth, environmental sustainability, and enhanced quality of life through targeted public investment. The proposal in Bundoran aligns strongly with several key objectives, including:

NPO 14 – Strengthen and diversify rural towns – Promotes regeneration and targeted investment. The proposal contributes to revitalising Bundoran by supporting year-round tourism and leveraging its coastal setting to enhance local economic and social activity.

NPO 20 – Vibrant Towns and Villages – Supports development that stimulates population, employment, and activity in existing settlements. The proposal enhances Bundoran’s vitality by providing improved public amenities for both residents and visitors.

NPO 23 – Sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape – The proposal supports National Policy Objective 23 by enhancing Bundoran’s distinctive surf and coastal identity through a sensitively designed, inclusive facility. The low-profile building, coastal materials, and integration with natural features strengthen the town’s character while protecting the scenic and cultural value of the rural landscape.

NPO 24 – Reversing Rural Decline – Aims to counteract rural decline through investment in amenities and public infrastructure. The scheme delivers high-quality recreational infrastructure and durable public realm upgrades, contributing to long-term community resilience.

NPO 26 – Appropriately designed development in rural towns – Encourages context-sensitive, well-designed interventions that support regeneration and renewal, including improvements to the public realm. The proposal delivers a landscape-integrated design aligned with Bundoran’s character and coastal tourism profile.

NPO 27 – Sustainable Mobility and Access – Supports the development of a comprehensive and safe network for walking and cycling. The proposal incorporates new and improved pedestrian footpaths, an accessible boardwalk to the beach, and cycle-friendly infrastructure, encouraging active travel and safer connectivity.

NPO 34 – Tourism – The proposal supports National Policy Objective 34 by delivering sustainable, low-impact recreation infrastructure along the Wild Atlantic Way. It enhances tourism and public access while aligning with biodiversity, climate resilience, and environmental compliance goals.

NPO 37 – Covenant alternatives to car – The proposal supports National Policy Objective 37 by improving pedestrian and cycling access through new footpaths and an accessible boardwalk, encouraging active travel and inclusive recreation.

Summary: This proposal for a Facility Centre for Water Sport Activities and associated public infrastructure at Tullan Strand, Finner, Bundoran, delivers a high-quality, inclusive facility that addresses both local infrastructure gaps and strategic planning priorities. It enhances public access to a valued coastal amenity, supports the area's tourism and recreational function, and strengthens Bundoran's identity as a vibrant, year-round destination along the Wild Atlantic Way.

The development has been sensitively designed to integrate with the surrounding dune landscape, prioritising environmental protection, climate resilience, and universal accessibility. It replaces informal infrastructure with durable, purpose-built facilities, improves pedestrian and cycling connections, and enables safer, more inclusive access to Tullan Strand beach. The scheme also supports local enterprise by facilitating continued use of the area by surf schools and seasonal vendors.

The proposal is fully consistent with the principles and objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF), including compact growth, rural regeneration, active travel, environmental sustainability, and inclusive design. Accordingly, the development represents a balanced and policy-compliant response to the needs of Bundoran and the wider region, and planning approval is respectfully sought in support of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) – Northern and Western Region

The site lies within the North-West Strategic Growth Area and benefits from its location on the Atlantic Economic Corridor and the Wild Atlantic Way. Key Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) supported include:

RPO 4.1 – Coastal and Countryside Access – Supports improved access to coastal areas and the maintenance of trails and paths. The proposal contributes to this by delivering a formalised, accessible route to the beach that enhances safe public access and protects the surrounding dune environment.

RPO 4.3 – Visitor Experience Development Plans (VEDPs) – Encourages implementation of regional tourism strategies to enhance visitor infrastructure and promote destination development. The proposal directly contributes to this by providing upgraded beachside recreational infrastructure that supports surf tourism and coastal activity.

RPO 4.4 – Wild Atlantic Way Network – Supports upgrades to visitor infrastructure along the Wild Atlantic Way to accommodate increased use by tourists. The proposal contributes to this by improving beachside amenities, parking, and access routes for visitors arriving by car, bus, or on foot.

RPO 4.5 – Coastal Walking and Cycling Routes – Promotes the development of coastal walking and cycling routes connected to the Wild Atlantic Way. The proposal supports this objective through the delivery of an accessible boardwalk and enhanced pedestrian pathways that link key recreational assets at Tullan Strand.

RPO 5.6 – Natural Heritage and Well-being – Promotes awareness of the benefits of natural heritage for health, wellbeing, and ecosystem services. The proposal supports this by enhancing access to Bundoran’s coastal environment in a way that encourages outdoor activity, nature appreciation, and environmental stewardship.

RPO 7.9 – Public Open Space and Accessibility – Supports provision of inclusive, well-designed recreational spaces at heritage and coastal sites. The proposal achieves this by enhancing pedestrian access and amenities at Tullan Strand, contributing to the creation of a healthy, walkable, and socially active environment.

RPO 7.11 – Active Living and Health Policy Integration – Promotes planning that supports physical activity and public health. The proposal delivers infrastructure that encourages year-round outdoor recreation, walking, and active living in alignment with Healthy Ireland principles.

Summary: The proposal aligns with the strategic goals of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region by enhancing sustainable tourism infrastructure, improving public access to coastal amenities, and supporting the vitality of Bundoran as a key destination on the Wild Atlantic Way. It contributes to regional objectives around active travel, outdoor recreation, environmental protection, and community wellbeing. The development also reinforces the area's role within the North-West Growth Area and the Atlantic Economic Corridor, supporting balanced regional development and long-term resilience.

County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030

The proposal is consistent with several key objectives and policies in the County Development Plan, particularly in relation to coastal infrastructure, inclusive design, and environmental integration:

T-O-2 to T-O-4 – County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030 – Support the delivery of safe, high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure connected to key destinations, including recreational and tourism areas. The proposal contributes to these objectives by formalising pedestrian access to Tullan Strand through an inclusive boardwalk and path network that enhances connectivity, safety, and non-vehicular movement.

T-P-3 – Requires development to incorporate active travel infrastructure and protect linkages such as trails and greenways. The proposal supports this policy by delivering a coherent access route that integrates with existing public realm improvements and facilitates safe, sustainable travel within the coastal environment.

TOU-O-1 – Sustainable Tourism Development – Seeks to enhance Donegal’s tourism offering while protecting the landscape, heritage, and community character. The proposal supports this by delivering environmentally sensitive, inclusive infrastructure that strengthens Bundoran’s coastal tourism appeal without detracting from its natural setting.

TOU-P-1 – Wild Atlantic Way Implementation – Supports development of strategic tourism experiences consistent with the Wild Atlantic Way brand. The proposal aligns with this by upgrading key coastal access infrastructure and visitor amenities at Tullan Strand, a recognised tourism node.

Policy TOU-P-5 – Activity-Based Tourism – Supports resource-related tourism such as surfing and water sports where the development is dependent on the coastal setting and delivers wider economic and community benefits. The proposal meets these criteria by enhancing facilities for surf schools, promoting inclusive access, and supporting Bundoran’s local tourism economy.

CCG-O-1 – Sustainable and Inclusive Communities – Supports the creation of socially inclusive, healthy, and culturally vibrant communities through the provision of high-quality recreational infrastructure. The proposal contributes to this by enhancing equitable access to coastal recreation and promoting community well-being.

CC-O-2 – Green and Active Infrastructure – Seeks to deliver a network of green, active, and recreational spaces in inclusive locations. The proposal aligns with this by formalising and improving a popular coastal accessway that serves both residents and visitors year-round.

Policies CC-P-1 & CC-P-2 – Promote the provision of new community infrastructure that is well-located, safe, accessible, and compatible with surrounding uses. The development responds to these policies by delivering a well-designed, low-impact facility that integrates with the landscape and existing public access networks.

Policy CC-P-6 – Active Travel – Encourages design that facilitates walking and cycling and reduces car dependency. The proposal supports this by improving pedestrian and cycling connections within the beach precinct.

PROW-O-1 & PROW-P-1 – Public Rights of Way – Seek to protect access to places of natural and recreational value. The proposal supports this by formalising an existing informal public access route to the beach, ensuring continued public connectivity without obstruction.

Summary: The proposal supports the overarching goals of the County Donegal Development Plan by promoting sustainable tourism, enhancing inclusive public access to the coast, and delivering high-quality recreational infrastructure that respects the surrounding landscape. It contributes to the creation of healthy, socially inclusive communities, encourages active travel, and reinforces the role of Bundoran as a strategic tourism destination. The development aligns with policy priorities for environmental sensitivity, connectivity, and the protection of public amenities, while supporting long-term community wellbeing and economic resilience.

Bundoran Area Plan

Bundoran is a nationally recognised seaside town and surf destination along the Wild Atlantic Way, with strong tourism and recreation value. The County Development Plan identifies the need to enhance coastal infrastructure, accessibility, and public amenities in towns like Bundoran to support sustainable tourism, community wellbeing, and environmental protection.

This proposal aligns with those objectives by delivering a modern, inclusive Facility Centre for Water Sports Activities, improved public realm, and safe, accessible beach access. It addresses longstanding infrastructure gaps – including inadequate changing facilities and informal, unsafe beach paths – while supporting year-round use by residents, visitors, schools, and surf groups. The development strengthens Bundoran’s capacity as a resilient coastal hub and contributes to the delivery of local and regional planning goals for tourism, active travel, and public access to nature.

Conclusion

The proposal represents a high-quality, well integrated public infrastructure project that addresses a clear local need for improved coastal amenities to create internationally recognised best-in-class activity destination. The modern Facility Centre for Water Sports Activities and accessible pathway to Tullan Strand beach will be an accessible and environmentally sensitive development, the

scheme will enhance user experience, support sustainable tourism, and strengthen the public realm in a key recreational location along the Wild Atlantic Way.

The proposal is fully consistent with the objectives of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030, Bundoran Local Area Plan, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and the National Planning Framework. It aligns with policy priorities for inclusive design, environmental integration, and the development of resilient public infrastructure in rural and coastal communities.

Accordingly, the development is policy compliant and in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Planning approval is therefore respectfully sought.