

Chapter 6 Recreation and Amenity

6.1 Introduction

The protection of the recreational and amenity value of County Louth is of great importance to both inhabitants and visitors to the county. Recreation areas perform an important role in creating a sense of community by providing people with an opportunity to congregate and also for children to interact and play together.



In addition to its many fine beaches and scenic mountains, Louth has much to offer in terms of active and passive recreational facilities, such as parks, children's play grounds, picnic areas, designated walking and cycling routes and other amenities such as Stephenstown Pond and the facilities at Rathescar Lakes.

6.2 Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy and Louth Play Policy

The *Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006 – 2012* outlines the council's commitment to the development of quality opportunities and facilities for sport, recreation and leisure activities for all through the protection and development of both natural leisure and amenity resources.

The adoption of the *Louth Play Policy* in 2006 and its implementation has contributed significantly to the provision of high quality, age appropriate play facilities and opportunities throughout Louth. Playground facilities have been provided or are proposed to be provided in the towns and villages as set out in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Existing and Proposed Playground Facilities

Existing Playgrounds	Secured Playground Sites	Proposed Playground Sites
Ardee	Blackrock	Annagassan
Carlingford	Kilcurry	Dromiskin
Clogherhead	Kilkerly	Collon
Drogheda (2)		Faughart
Dundalk (3)		Louth Village
Omeath		Tallanstown
Tinure		Termonfeckin

Playgrounds may be provided at other sites subject to demands and resources

Policy

- RA 1** To implement the *Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006 – 2012* and the *Louth Play Policy 2006*.
- RA 2** To require developers to provide play and recreational facilities in new residential areas where there is an identified need.
- RA 3** To resist the loss of recreational and amenity land and facilities and to ensure that new developments do not impact negatively on existing facilities or designations.
- RA 4** To seek improvement in the range, quality and capacity of sporting and recreational facilities through initiatives in partnership with community groups and sporting organisations.

6.3 Environment and Amenities

Under the provision of Section 10 (2)(e) of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000* there is an obligation on the planning authority to include provision in the development plan for the protection of landscapes, including the preservation of views and prospects and amenities of places and features of natural beauty and interest. County Louth has a number of important areas of outstanding beauty and high amenity value in addition to views and prospects that require protection.

6.3.1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

County Louth contains two distinct areas that have been designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by reason of their unspoiled natural landscapes and spectacular scenic quality. These are listed in table 6.2 and illustrated on map 6.1.

Table 6.2: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Reference	Area
AONB1	Carlingford and Feede Mountains
AONB2	Clogherhead and Port Oriel

The larger of the two areas is found in the north of the county and encompasses the Carlingford and Feede Mountains. Slieve Foye at 588 O.D and Black Mountain at 508 O.D are the highest points in the range. Much of the area remains in its natural state, covered in gorse, bracken and heather, parts of which are designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) under European and Irish legislation. Spectacular views are available from a number of vantage points over Carlingford



Lough to the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland and over Dundalk Bay to the central and south of County Louth.

The second area designated as an AONB is located at Clogherhead and encompasses Port Oriel and the surrounding headland. Although less rugged and remote than the Carlingford and Feede Mountains, this area, nevertheless, contains equally spectacular views eastwards to the Irish Sea, southwards towards the Boyne Estuary and County Meath and northwards over Dundalk Bay to the Carlingford and Mourne Mountains. This area is encompassed within the boundaries of Clogherhead Local Area Plan.

Both these designated areas are extremely sensitive environments and are therefore afforded a high degree of protection in the Plan.

Policy

RA 5 To protect the unspoiled natural environment of the AONB for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

6.3.2 Areas of High Scenic Quality

The Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ), whilst not quite possessing the exceptional natural beauty and landscape quality of the AONB, nevertheless add significantly to the stock of natural scenic reserves within the county.

All of these areas are currently farmed, although the quality of the land for farming purposes varies considerably from area to area. The council considers it important that AHSQ are protected from excessive development, particularly from inappropriate one-off urban generated housing, in order to preserve their unspoiled rural landscapes.



AHSQ as identified in the 2003 – 2009 Plan have been retained but it is considered appropriate to add additional areas at Dunany Point, Ardee Bog and to make an adjustment to the Mount Oriel AHSQ in order to include the pNHA to the east of Collon Village.

Table 6.3: Areas of High Scenic Quality

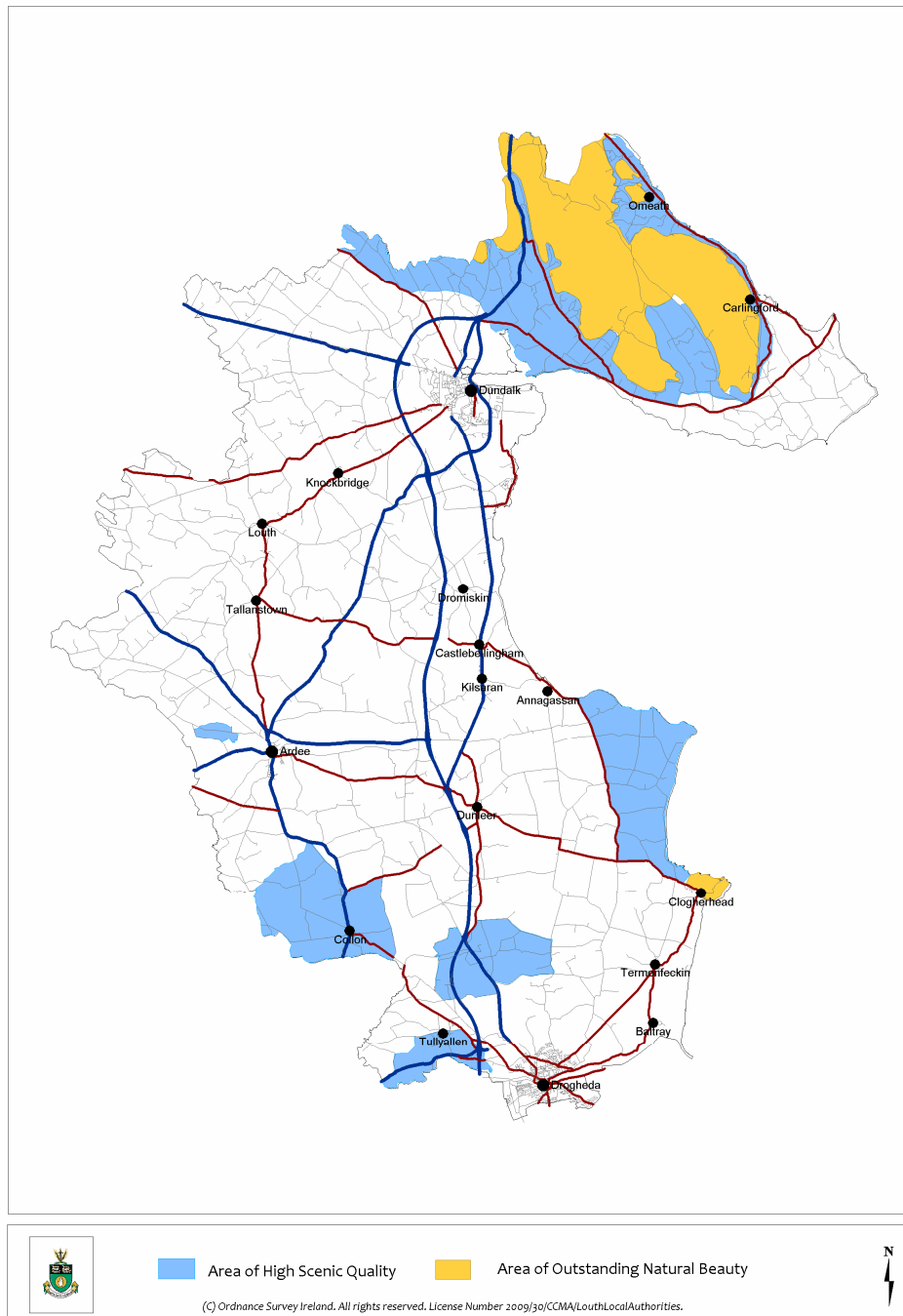
AHSQ 1	Feede Mountains and Cooley Area
AHSQ 2	Monasterboice
AHSQ 3	Boyne Valley / King Williams Glen
AHSQ 4	Collon Uplands
AHSQ 5	Dunany
AHSQ 6	Ardee Bog

Policy

RA 6 To protect the unspoiled rural landscapes of the AHSQ for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

The map below illustrates the locations and boundaries of the AONB and AHSQ in County Louth.

Map 6.1: Location and boundaries of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Scenic Quality



6.4 The Coastline

The coastline of County Louth stretches for more than 120 kilometres, from north of Omeath in Carlingford Lough to Baltray in the Boyne Estuary. The coastline and the adjoining landscapes vary considerably in character from the steep mountainous slopes of Carlingford



Lough to the flat and undulating landforms and sand dune systems of mid and south Louth. There are a number of attractive beaches which provide excellent recreational opportunities for local residents and day trippers from the surrounding counties. These include Blackrock, Port Beach, Lurganboy, Termonfeckin Strand, Gyles' Quay, Shellinghill (Templetown) and Clogherhead. The latter two are blue flag beaches.

The production of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) plan for Louth is a requirement of the EU and the Irish government. Currently, a national ICZM is being progressed by the Coastal and Marine Resources Centre, Cork. The purpose is to put in place mechanisms to manage both the landscape and seascape and to ensure that the resource is protected indefinitely into the future.

A Scoping Study for an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan for Carlingford Lough was undertaken in 2007. This study contains a review of the current roles of those responsible for the Lough, details conflicts and opportunities that may benefit from an ICZM approach and recommendations for implementation of an ICZM.

There is an ICZM plan covering the northern side of the Lough and it is considered desirable that a similar management plan should be put in place on the southern side.

Policy

- RA 7** To protect the amenity value of the coast and improve public access to coastal amenities, including the provision of car parking facilities at popular beaches.
- RA 8** To protect areas at risk from coastal erosion and flooding, subject to available resources.
- RA 9** To co-operate with the Coastal and Marine Resources Centre in the preparing of an integrated coastal management plan, in so far as it relates to County Louth and to support the preparation and implementation of a special ICZM to complement the existing management plan for the north side of Carlingford Lough.

6.5 Scenic Routes

A number of important scenic routes which require protection are listed in table 6.4 below and illustrated on map 6.2 in appendix 9. Any development that would interfere with or adversely affect these scenic routes will not be permitted

Table 6.4: Scenic Routes

Ref:	Route
SR1	Faughart Hill, Faughart Upper
SR2	Ravensdale Road (Rockmarshall to Drumad)
SR3	Deerpark Road
SR4	Dromad via N1, Broughattin –Doolargy
SR5	Anaverna
SR6	Doolargy
SR7	Jeninstown (Minor and Hill)
SR8	Ballymakellett
SR9	Jeninstown to Piedmont
SR10	Jeninstown to Omeath via Windy Gap
SR11	Piedmont – Benagh -Spellickanee
SR12	Bush – Windy Gap – Edentober
SR13	Bush – Carlingford including Commons
SR14	Greenore – Carlingford-Omeath
SR15	Coast Road – Whitestown- Ballagan –Ballytrasna
SR16	Coast Road, Dromiskin
SR17	Townparks, Ardee
SR18	Castlebellingham – Annagassan -Clogherhead – Termonfeckin
SR19	Baltray – Queensborough-Beaulieu
SR20	Slane Road, Townley Hall
SR21	King Williams Glen
SR22	Mount Oriel (Collon – Belpatrick)

Policy

RA 10 To prohibit development that would interfere with or adversely affect the scenic routes as identified in table 6.4.

6.6 Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value

A number of specific views and prospects of special amenity value are identified in the Plan and are listed in table 6.5. They are illustrated on map 6.2 in appendix 9. These views and prospects are reflective of Louth's unique scenic quality and are notable for their natural scenery and striking landscapes.

Table 6.5: Views and Prospects

Ref:	Views and Prospects
VP 1	Drummulagh – View towards Narrow Water
VP 2	Clermontpase Bridge
VP 3	Clermont Cairn RTE mast
VP 4	Windy Gap
VP 5	Carlingford Lough
VP 6	Glenmore – mountains and valley
VP 7	Glenmore – mountains and valley
VP 8	Barnavave and Carlingford mountain
VP 9	Jeninstown Hill towards Dundalk Bay
VP 10	Jeninstown Hill towards Dundalk Bay
VP 11	Ballymakellett towards Dundalk Bay
VP 12	Faughart Hill
VP 13	Views from Dungooly Crossroads
VP 14	Views of Castle Roche
VP 15	Hackballscross - views of mountains towards Forkhill
VP 16	Killin Golf Course - views of mountains towards Forkhill
VP 17	Dromiskin -sea views across to Dundalk, Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 18	North of Annagassan - sea views across to Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 19	Salterstown - sea views across to Dundalk Bay towards Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 20	Corstown - sea views across to Dundalk Bay towards Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 21	Lurganboy - sea views across to Dundalk Bay towards Cooley and Mourne Mountains
VP 22	From Clogherhead Harbour
VP 23	Callystown to Clogherhead
VP 24	Dardisrath towards coast and Clogherhead
VP 25	Brownstown southwards over AHSQ towards Drogheda
VP 26	Newtown Monasterboice towards Monasterboice Tower
VP 27	Tullyallen southwards towards Boyne
VP 28	South of Tullyallen Village towards Battle of the Boyne site.
VP 29	South of Tullyallen Village towards Battle of the Boyne site.
VP 30	South of Tullyallen Village towards Battle of the Boyne site.
VP 31	Mount Oriel northwards
VP 32	N2 Funshog eastwards
VP 33	Millockstown southwards
VP 34	Townparks north and southwards

Policy

- RA 11** To preserve the views and prospects of special amenity value as identified in table 6.5.
- RA 12** To improve, where necessary, public access to viewing points subject to the availability of resources.

6.7 Walks and Cycle Paths

The attraction of walking and cycling as a recreational pursuit has increased significantly in recent years. Both walking and cycling are considered to be essential components of an integrated sustainable transport system as they provide an alternative to the private car or public transport systems.

6.7.1 Walks

The promotion of walking as a simple, inexpensive way to increase participation levels in physical activity across all ages in county is highlighted in the Louth Local Sports Partnership and addressed in the *Louth Local Authorities Sports and Recreation Strategy 2006 - 2012*. It is proposed in the strategy to provide more walking routes throughout the county and to expand the Slí na Sláinte routes. A new Slí na Sláinte Sli route has been developed in Carlingford and it is proposed to provide additional routes on an ongoing basis.

Improvements have been made to the Tain Way in the Carlingford and Omeath areas by the provision of a safer off road route through forest and on mountain commonage. Signage of the Tain Way has also been upgraded.

A *Walking Strategy for the Cooley Peninsula* has been prepared by the council. This strategy has identified looped walks at Slieve Foy, Maeve's Gap, Greenore, Templetown and in Cooley which will be developed in due course.

Map 6.3: The Tain Way



Policy

- RA 13 To develop and promote walking trails throughout the county, utilising disused transport links where feasible.
- RA 14 To provide additional Slí na Sláinte routes and to improve the existing Tain Way.
- RA 15 To work in partnership with Louth Local Authorities and local authorities in adjoining counties to provide a network of walking trails extending both within and beyond the boundaries of County Louth.
- RA 16 To implement the *Walking Strategy for the Cooley Peninsula* subject to the availability of resources.

6.7.2 Cycling

The *Development of Irish Cycle Tourism – East Coast Midlands* includes detailed proposals for a long distance east coast cycling route running from the Cooley Peninsula through counties Louth, Meath and Dublin. It focuses on areas with high potential for holiday cycling and details measures to make them popular and attractive to both domestic and overseas visitors.

It also explores the development of inland routes within Louth amongst other counties, with an emphasis on re-examining the existing Táin Trail cycling route. Dundalk has been identified as being an ideal cycle ‘hub town’ where visitors might base themselves and explore the surrounding countryside using a number of loop routes. The viability of new cycle paths is under constant review.

Policy

- RA 17 To support the implementation of the *Strategy for the Development of Irish Cycle Tourism 2007* in so far as it relates to County Louth
- RA 18 To promote and develop cycle routes throughout the county.

6.8 Amenity Schemes

The council completed a number of amenity schemes during the course of the previous development plan at various locations throughout the county. This process will continue during this Plan period subject to the availability of funding.

It is proposed to complete the amenity schemes as set out in table 6.6 during the course of the Plan. Other projects may be added to this list depending on the availability of funding.



The council will, where appropriate, co-operate with development agencies and community groups in the carrying out of schemes designed to improve the stock of amenity and recreational facilities in the county.

Table 6.6: Amenity Schemes

Location / Facility
Installation of exercise route at Darver GAA training grounds
Additional Sli na Slainte routes

Policy

RA 19 To co-operate, where appropriate, with development agencies and community groups in carrying out schemes designed to improve the stock of amenity and recreational facilities in the county.